CHRISTMAS WEEK NUMBER!

The Magnet Library 1d.

No. 464. Vol. 10. December 30th, 1916.



A SMASH-UP IN THE ROAD!

(A Dramatic Scene in the Grand Long Complete Story in this issue.)

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 1d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.



For Next Monday:

"GETTING RICH QUICK!"

By Frank Richards.

Fisher T. Fish is the leading figure in next week's very humorous story, and Ernest Wibley, whose clever impersonations have so often amused our readers, also plays an important part. Fishy bears something that was not intended for his ears; but that fact does not prevent him from making use of the information. To get out of it the value that he sees in it, however, it is necessary that he should find some trustworthy person of above twenty-one to carry out a transaction for him, since the rules of the Stock Exchange, as well as the laws of the land, prohibit dealing in stocks and shares by minors. Fishy tries to find such a person. He approaches Major Cherry on the subject, but meets with rather less than no encouragement in that quarter. Who it is that, after all, takes on the job for him, and what comes of it, you will read next week; but it is not too early to say here that Fishy does not exactly meet with entire success in his great scheme for

"GETTING RICH QUICK!"

OUR NEW SERIAL.

As I told you last week, "The Fourth Form at Frankleinham" is nearing its end. I had hoped to be able to start the new serial in the first number of the new volume; but this has not proven possible. In a week or two, however, you will be able to read the opening chapters of Mr. Beverley Kent's fine new yarn,

"IN A LAND OF PERIL!"

which is, beyond doubt, one of the finest stories of African adventure ever written. Africa has always been "the Dark Continent"—the continent of hidden things, of horrible savagery, of big game, of witchcraft and idol-worship, a land teeming with perils. "Ex Africa semper aliquid novi," wrote an old Roman hundreds of years ago. "There is always something new from Africa," is the English of this; and even now, when the explorers have done so much, and the whole continent is marked out by boundaries that define the possessions of influence of half a dozen European Powers, there are yet many dark spots—there is yet adventure to be met, and peril to be faced, and strange, hidden things to be revealed there. All these things come into Mr. Kent's fine story.

TELL YOUR CHUMS ABOUT IT!

NOTICES.

As I indicated a week or two ago, I intend to alter for the better the system of sending in notices, and next week I shall give you particulars. Some of you will not take kindly to the change; but you will have to make the best of it. During the year now fast drawing to its close, too much precious time has been wasted in this office in dealing with the letters containing notices, and—worse than they—the querulous and thoughtless complaints of those senders who expected their notices to appear at once, no matter where were kept back. Under the new system all such complaints will go straight into the waste-paper basket, and the same doom will be meted out to notices which do not comply with the regulations. When I tell you that I am doing my best, it should be good enough. If it is not, don't send your notices—that's all! Just remember that they do not benefit us in the slightest degree, and that it is very bad manners indeed to show dissatisfaction because a free gift is delayed a little longer than you would like!

YOU MUST ORDER IN ADVANCE!

I want to impress upon every one of my readers how necessary it is for them to order their copies of the "Penny Popular" containing the story entitled

"THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!"

You will find a facsimile of the cover on the back page of this issue.

Naturally, you will all be on tenterhooks until this issue is in your hands, and you will be very disappointed if you are not successful in securing a copy. You are sure, however, of getting a copy if you take my advice and

ORDER WELL IN ADVANCE!

You should also get your chums to do the same. I am confident there will be a greatly increased demand for this particular issue, and only those readers who take the necessary precaution will be able to avoid disappointment.

REMEMBER, THE ISSUE OF THE "PENNY POPULAR," ON SALE FRIDAY, JANUARY 5TH, WILL CONTAIN THAT FAMOUS STORY ENTITLED "THE MAKING OF HARRY WHARTON!" AND ALSO A SPLENDID PRESENTATION PLATE OF THE GREYFRIARS CHUMS.

FOOTBALL NOTICES.

Matches Wanted By:

BRYNMENYN ALBION A.F.C. (15)—6-mile r. Bridgend.—Cyril C. Evans, 15, Penybryn Terr., Brynmenyn, Bridgend, Glam.

SIX BELLS RAMBLERS A.F.C. (16-18)—in Monmouthshire.—W. Pincott, 48, Windsor Rd., Six Bells, Abertillery, Mon.

OLD GOOLE ATHLETIC F.C. (16-17)—20-mile r.—J. W. Reed, jun., 82, Percy St., Old Goole, Goole.

RUDDINGTON JUNIORS F.C. (14-16) 6-mile r.—H. Saxby, The Green, Ruddington, Notts.

QUEEN'S UNITED F.C. (15½)—on Hackney Marshes.—J. Slade, 41, Herbert St., East Rd., City, E.

ST. GEORGE'S A.F.C. (16½) 3-mile r.—W. Purvis, 40, Dockwray Square, North Shields.

QUEEN'S ROVERS F.C. (16½)—anywhere in Liverpool. J. W. Cernian, 66, Northcote St., Everton, Liverpool.

D.A.F.C. (14-16).—A. Brown, 69, Hows St., Kingsland Rd., N.E.

BRADFIELD SCOUTS AND CADETS F.C. (15½) 3-mile r.—A. Newport, 142, Granin Rd., Peckham, S.E.

ARNSDOWN UNITED F.C. (15). D. Thomas, 1, Comet St., Cardiff.

EVESHAM F.C. (14-16) 3-mile r.—E. Weaver, 2, Evesham Rd., Bowes Park, N.

TOOSLEY JUNIORS F.C. (14). H. C. Pilcher, 31, Toosley Place, East Hill, Wandsworth, S.W.

WOODLARKS A.F.C. (15)—35-mile r. L. G. Finch, 137, Woodlands Rd., Barry Dock, Glam.

WESTBURY ATHLETIC F.C. (16) 5-mile r. Hon. Sec., 62, Perth Rd., Barking.

FARADAY GROVE A.F.C. (16)—6-mile r. C. S. Hetherington, 275, Brighton Rd., Gateshead-on-Tyne.

A Stockton-on-Tees Team, 12-mile r. H. Walker, 11, Shaftesbury St., Stockton-on-Tees.

Your Editor

A Complete School-Story Book, attractive to all readers.

The Magnet Library

The Editor will be obliged if you will hand this book, when finished with, to a friend. . . .

VICTIMS AND VICTORS!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The military team looked all over the Remove as regarded weight and strength. A six-foot lieutenant tossed with Wharton, and the visiting side won. (*See Chapter 11.*)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Trying to Raise the Wind!

"Oh, really, Wharton, you ought to believe a fellow! You know what a strictly honourable chap I am."

It was Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, who made this remark.

The Owl of the Remove stood half in and half out of the doorway of No. 1 Study.

"We do—we does!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Rather! We know exactly how honourable you are, Porpoise!" said Frank Nugent.

"That's why we ain't lending you anything!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The honourfulness of the disgusting and ludicrous Bunter," purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, "is——"

"Terrific!" chimed in Bob Cherry.

"I simply decline to talk to you fellows!" said Bunter loftily. "Wharton is the only chap here with whom I would think of being pally. As for the rest of you cads—— Ow, Cherry, you beast—yow! Stoppit! Yarooooph!"

Bob Cherry had caught up a big paste-brush from its pot, and had dabbed it hard into Bunter's face.

Copyright in the United States of America.

William George Bunter was very hungry indeed. It was half-past three on a wet half-holiday, and he had not had as much as a mouthful since dinner—that is, except for about half a tin of mixed biscuits which he had found in No. 7, the study which had the honour of his portly presence when he was at home, so to speak.

He preferred not to be at home just now, because those biscuits, although found by Bunter, had never been lost by anybody.

They had belonged to Tom Dutton, the dear junior.

But it was one of Bunter's pleasant little habits to find things which were not lost, and to act on the quite illegal principle of "findings is keepings." Not that Bunter ever kept anything in the edible way very long.

Though the Owl was so hungry, he did not appear in the least to appreciate Bob Cherry's liberality with the paste.

"It's all right, Fatty! The stuff's made of flour. Arctic explorers have had to eat worse grub!" said the cheery Bob.

"Ow—yow! Keepimoff! I'm not a blessed cannibal!" howled Bunter, whose ideas on dainty subjects except grub were of the most mixed and weird description.

"We're not advancing anything on the strength of a postal-order that never turns up," said Frank Nugent, as Bob lowered the brush.

"I didn't ask you to advance me anything, Nugent. I don't apply to paupers!" said Bunter, sticking his fat little nose into the air, and glaring at Frank through his glasses.

"Are you going out on your fat legs now, or on your fat neck in about half a jiffy?" roared Johnny Bull.

"I want to speak to Wharton. I suppose I'm allowed to speak to Wharton, ain't I?" said Bunter plaintively.

"As long as you speak aloud—not if you whisper; that ain't allowed," said the humorous Bob.

"Harry's the only one of you who has generosity enough to do a chap a good turn."

"Besides which, he's the only one of us who has any cash just now, and you know it, you sponging crocodile!" Johnny Bull growled.

Harry Wharton looked up from some copy for the "Greyfriars Herald."

"You can't get round me with that rot, Bunter," he said quietly.

"Oh, but, Harry, old man——"

"If you call me 'Harry, old man' again, you'll get——"

"Oh, really! You chaps are beyond my comprehension! When——"

"Lots of things are beyond your fat comprehension, Tubby," said Bob Cherry, "but I shouldn't wonder if you can understand this!"

And Bob flourished the paste-brush again.

"Oh, do stop it, Cherry! When a chap wants to be friendly and civil, you might——"

"Lend him all your tin to blue at the tuckshop, and get paid back when a postal-order that isn't coming comes," put in Nugent. "We don't quite cotton to your style of friendship, Bunter. It's rummy, but it's so."

"The rumfulness of the esteemed and ridiculous Bunter's friendship is terrific," remarked Inky. "But the bluefulness——"

"Oh, ring off, you fellows!" said Wharton. "What's this new yarn about getting your postal-order and losing it, Porpoise?"

"It isn't a yarn; it's the truth—honour bright, it is, Harry, old man!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Monkey Brand?" inquired Bob Cherry innocently.

"I don't understand you, Cherry."

"Well, I guess it would want some polishing up before it was very bright, Bunty."

"You can't polish up a thing that doesn't exist!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" said Bunter peevishly.

"I fancy it's that imaginary article known as your honour," said Frank Nugent drily.

But Bunter, cherishing hopes now that Wharton might do something to relieve the financial tension, refused to see the insult.

"Look here," Wharton said, "can you prove you had a postal-order this morning, Bunter?"

"Yes, of course I can!"

Everybody surprised—or would have been, if everybody had not known that Bunter could lie like a Prussian.

"And that you lost it?" went on Wharton sharply.

"Oh—er—yes—I mean—— Oh, really, Wharton, it ain't so easy for a chap to prove right out that he's lost anything, you know! But I have lost it—really and truly I have!"

"The fat cham's cashed it and gorged the proceeds!" growled Bull.

"I haven't!" howled Bunter. "How could I? Wasn't I kept in till right up to dinner-time? You know I was, Bull. You were there, too."

"Well, there's been time since dinner," said Nugent.

"I haven't been out since dinner. It's poured with rain all the time; you know that. You can feel me if you like. I haven't a wet stitch on me."

"If I feel you, it won't be for wet stitches," said Bob Cherry.

"Bring somebody who can prove that you had a postal-order this morning, and I'll lend you something," said Harry Wharton.

Bunter beamed upon him through his glasses.

"Right-ho, Harry, old man! I always know you were a good pal!" he said effusively.

"Oh, hang all that! Buzz off and fetch the evidence," said Wharton.

Bunter started to go.

But it appeared that he had chosen an unlucky moment.

Bob Cherry, with his eyes apparently anywhere but upon the Owl, made a sudden swinging movement with the paste-brush.

"Ow! You bub-bub-beast, Cherry!"

Bob turned, looking quite innocent.

"Why, Bunty, I do believe I must have touched you with this brush!" he said.

"Touched me with it, you rotter! Why, you've plastered all one side of my face! Ow, you cad! Yarooogh! Keep-timoff, you chaps! Ow—yow! Oh, don't—don't!"

Bunter tumbled out of the door, and sped down the passage as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

"I guess he'll think twice before he comes back," said Bob.

Johnny Bull snorted.

"Don't you know Bunter any better than that?" he said. "He's on the track of Wharton's remittance, and wild horses wouldn't keep him from coming back!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Bunter Produces Evidence!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER blinked into No. 7 Study.

He found the state of affairs there pleasing.

Peter Todd was absent. That was not a matter for regret. For Peter was a person of determination and resource. Peter had notions of discipline which ran very much in the direction of cricket-stumps.

Bunter had no particular use for cricket-stumps, anyway. But he liked them least of all where Peter Todd was apt to put them.

Tom Dutton was present, but he was peacefully reading the "Boys' Friend." Bunter argued thence that the loss of the biscuits had not yet been discovered—by anyone but himself, that is.

It was Alonzo Todd whom the Owl wanted.

The Duffer of Greyfriars sat, with his elbows on the table and one hand on each side of his head, diligently studying "The History of a Potato," an informative work which had an ever-enduring charm for Alonzo.

"Lonzy!"

Alonzo looked up.

"Yes, my dear Bunter?" he said politely.

Then he sighed deeply, and shut his book, but put his forefinger inside it to mark his place.

"Oh, really, you know, it's awful rot to waste so much time over that fatheaded stuff!" remarked Bunter scornfully.

"What's that about a cuff?" asked Tom Dutton, looking up in turn. "Don't you talk about cuffs to me, Bunter, or you'll be getting one or two to be going on with."

The Owl turned his back upon Tom Dutton.

"I want you to do me a favour, Lonzy," he said, rather with the air of one conferring what he asked for.

"Certainly, my dear Bunter. As you well know, I am always happy to oblige a schoolmate in any way consistent with the precepts of my revered Uncle Benjamin and the dictates of my own conscience," answered the Duffer.

"Oh, bury your Uncle Benjamin and bury your conscience!" said Bunter, who had no Uncle Benjamin and no conscience worth mentioning.

Alonzo looked and felt pained.

"Dear me, Bunter——"

"Come along, do!" broke in the Owl crossly. "We haven't got all day, you know."

The Owl rolled along the passage to No. 1 Study, and Alonzo went meekly in his wake.

"You again, Porpoise! Here, buzz off! Scoot! Hook it!" said Bob.

"What do you want, Lonzy?" said Nugent.

"Really, my dear Nugent, I do not want anything. I have merely come hither at Bunter's request."

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE!

Johnny Bull dipped a ball of blotting-paper in his inkpot, and hurled it at the mild face of Alonzo, where it appeared above Bunter's shoulder.

It was a bad shot, in one sense, for it did not hit Alonzo. But Bull was satisfied, for it landed plump upon the Owl's fat little nose.

"Oh! Bull, you beast!"

"A bull certainly is a beast," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "You're right so far, Porpoise, and that's something for you. But——"

"The beastfulness of the esteemed Bull may be terrific, but the beastfulness of the disgusting and ludicrous Bunter is——"

"Terrific rot!" grinned Bob.

"We'll never get this job through if you fellows keep on rotting," said Harry Wharton. "Now, then, Bunter!"

"All right, Harry, old chap! Now, Lonzy, didn't I have a postal-order this morning? You saw it, and you ain't quite such an idiot that you can't remember, I suppose?"

"What? Who says the days of miracles have passed?" cried Bob Cherry. "If Lonzy, the truth-teller, says he saw that P.O., I—I'll believe anything Bunter likes to tell me next—well, almost anything, then. A chap must draw the line somewhere."

"Didn't you have a fit, Todd?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The fitfulness of the——"

"Excuse me, Singh. My time has a certain value," said Alonzo very politely, but quite firmly. "Yes, Wharton, I am able to assure you that Bunter is speaking the truth in this instance, though I fear that he does not always adhere to the straight path of veracity."

The Owl gave Alonzo a vicious push.

"Oh, I say, Lonzy, you fathoaded ass, it's a bit too thick taking away my character like that! Everybody knows what an upright and truthful chap——"

"You're not!" chipped in Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton fixed Alonzo with an eagle eye. But it was scarcely necessary. The gentle Duffer was almost as incapable of lying as Bunter was of telling the truth.

"You saw the postal-order, Lonzy?"

"My dear Wharton, I have already said so."

"There you are, you disbelieving beasts! Don't ever say I'm telling whoppers again! Lonzy saw it with his own eyes," said Bunter, in triumph.

"And he's still got the use of 'em!" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Buzz off now, Lonzy," Bunter said, giving the Duffer a none too gentle push. "That's all, you know."

"Half a tiff, Lonzy!" rapped out Wharton. "That isn't quite all. How much was the order for?"

"Six——"

The Duffer was cut short, and nearly winded by the application of Bunter's elbow to his waistcoat.

"Dear me, Bunter, I must really protest against such extreme rudeness and roughness! You have pained me greatly!"

"There you are, Wharton," said Bunter, disregarding this mild protest. "Six shillings. It wasn't what I'd hoped for, of course; but it would have paid for a decent smack. And I've gone and lost it!"

"But——"

"Shurrup, Lonzy! Wharton don't want to talk to you. You're only hindering. We want to get on with the washing, you know!"

"But, my dear Bunter, there is——"

"Scat—do you hear? I should be jolly well ashamed of myself if I stayed where I wasn't wanted, like you're doing."

The Famous Five grinned.

Of course, William George Bunter never had been known to thrust his fat little nose and his fat big waistcoat in where his presence was not desired. Oh dear no!

"But has not some great writer in the old Roman days remarked: 'Magna est veritas et prævalebit'?" said the mild Duffer.

"Shouldn't wonder if he did; but it's the Yewnited States to a green gooseberry that Bunter doesn't know what he meant by it," grinned Bob.

Bunter didn't know, but was not going to admit his ignorance.

"Oh, don't talk such blessed rot, Cherry!" he said peevishly. "You fellows all know what a dab I am at Greek."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I know what you silly asses are cackling about!"

"Lonzy's quotation," said Wharton, "happened to be Latin, not Greek. It means——"

"That the greatfulness of the truth is terrific, and its prevailfulness is also terrific," put in Inky.

"'Tain't likely Bunter knows anything about 'veritas,'



The Caterpillar begged for a good leg-up to lessen his own trouble, and he got so good a one that he came down on Bull's head. (*See Chapter* 14.)

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE!

when he doesn't know what the truth means in English," growled Johnny Bull.

It was certainly not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth that Bunter wanted just then.

"Hand over, Wharton!" he said. "You promised, you know, and a really honourable chap always keeps his promises."

"How much was the postal-order for?"

"Don't I tell you it was for six shillings?"

"Really, you dear Bunter——"

"Shurrup, Lonzy, you ass! I suppose I know more about my own——"

"But, really—— Dear me, this is exceedingly painful to a well-regulated mind!"

"It's going to be a jolly sight more painful to a skinny body, if you don't buzz off directly!" howled Bunter.

"How much was it, Lonzy?" asked Wharton.

"Sixpence!" gasped the Duffer, reeling back as Bunter prodded him in the waistcoat again.

"My hat! The giddy spoofer!"

"Oh, crumbs! You'll never be able to make a Prussian of Lonzy, Tubby!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave Alonzo the look of a basilisk. Lonzy withdrew. He was sorry that he could not do Bunter a good turn—at least, he would have been sorry if the Owl had not behaved so rudely to him. Even as to that, the Duffer's gentle soul hardened no malice. But not for Bunter or for anyone would Alonzo tell a lie.

Harry Wharton took a handful of coins from his pocket. Bunter's piggish little eyes glistened behind his spectacles as they discerned the glint of gold among the silver.

But it seemed that what Harry wanted was not there.

"Lend me a ha'penny, Bob," he said. "I'm clean out of coppers."

"Right-ho, old scout! If you'd said a penny I'd have been done. The ha'penny busts the bank; but here goes! Be a man or a mouse!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You promised——"

"I promised I'd lend you something. So I will—a ha'penny, and that's two farthings more than you deserve, you Bun!"

"I didn't think you'd be such a mean beast!"

"Oh, bump the rotter! I'm fed-up with him!" roared Johnny Bull.

Bunter turned to flee. He succeeded in escaping unbumped, but not wholly unscathed. For Bob Cherry planted a scientific kick in the right quarter as he departed.

"Yarooooogh! I'll pay you out for that, Cherry, you beast!" hooted the Owl, as he rolled disconsolately down the passage.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Bunter's Friend!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER made his way back to No. 7 Study in no very amiable frame of mind.

He blinked in. The mild Alonzo had returned to his muttons—or to his potatoes. But Tom Dutton, having read every word in the "Boys' Friend," seemed suddenly to have awakened to the fact that some little time had passed since dinner.

It occurred to Bunter that, as Dutton was going to the cupboard, no doubt for his biscuits, presence of mind on the part of W. G. Bunter called for absence of body on the part of the same individual.

He started to act upon this theory.

But Peter Todd was in the way.

"Hallo, Porpoise!" said Peter, barring his exit. "I've got a word or two to say to you."

"Cu—cu—can't stop, Pu—Pu—Peter!" mumbled Bunter. "I'm in a hurry."

"I guess your hurry will have to wait Tubby. What's this yarn about your dragging Lonzy into a wangle about your wretched sixpenny postal-order? Lonzy may be an ass, but he's dead straight, and I'm not going to have him dragged into any of your shady schemes!"

"My dear Peter!" objected Alonzo. "How often has our Uncle Benjamin said that to call a friend by the title of a quadruped not held to be conspicuous for its wisdom——"

"Oh, blow old Benjie! What's the matter, Dutton?"

The deaf junior had just given vent to something between a howl and a groan.

He had got the lid off the biscuit-tin at last. Bunter knew how that lid stuck. Bunter also knew the state of affairs inside that tin.

"Oh, really, Toddy, I'll explain another time!" he mumbled, trying in vain to dodge round the active Peter.

"There—there's some mistake, you know."

"There would be if I let you go," said Peter grimly. "The Spaniards say that to-morrow is also a day; but I'm not going to put up with any Spanish onions—I mean, Spanish notions—in this study. What's the giddy row, Dutton?"

"Some thieving rotter's bagged all my biscuits!"

"I rather fancy that explains the Porpoise's urgent engagement," said Toddy, with a grin. "We haven't a long way to look for the thieving rotter!"

"Cook? Don't be so silly, Toddy! Biscuits, I said. Biscuits don't want cooking. I believe it was that greedy rotter of an Owl!"

"Shouldn't wonder," answered Peter, shoving Bunter back.

"Thunder! Who said anything about thunder?" returned Dutton crossly. "It's raining cats and dogs, but I haven't heard a blessed thunder."

"No, and you jolly well wouldn't if it thundered ever so hard! No, you don't, Porpoise! Tell the truth now, or there'll be a dead Bunter making a mess in this study in about two twos! Have you been wolfing Dutton's biscuits?"

Toddy gave Bunter his shoulder as he spoke, sending him into the middle of the study. Then Peter closed the door behind him.

"We get lots of dirty linen to wash in this study," he said. "But there's no particular reason why all Greyfriars should witness our laundry-work. Hand me a cricket-stump, Lonzy!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—— Ow-yow! Don't! Look here! Oh, I say, I'll make a clean breast of it all! I may have had just a biscuit or two—well, then, I'll own I did have a few. But I never thought Dutton would be such a mean beast as to grudge a mouthful to keep me from starving. I—I—I felt quite faint."

"You're going to fall fainter before you've finished, my son!" said Peter, flourishing the stump.

"Ow—yow! Keep off! Fire! Murder! Thieves!"

"Part of that's true—part of the last word," said Peter Todd. "But you've nothing to howl for yet, Porpoise; that's coming! How many biscuits are there left, Dutton?"

"Of course it's theft, Toddy. You can't call it anything else. I'm jolly well fed-up with Bunter, I can tell you!"

"I—asked—you—how—many—biscuits—there—are—left—in—the—tin!"

"There's no need to yell at me like that. I'm not deaf; only a little hard of hearing. Yes, theft's a sin. Everybody knows that, I suppose. I don't want to come any pi-jaw over Bunter; but if he goes on like this he'll get locked up some day!"

"Oh, my only aunt!" groaned Peter. "Lonzy, you can bear, anyway, if you are a born ass! Are there any biscuits left?"

"I regret to say, Peter, that there are only a few crumbs."

"Oh, really, I never thought Dutton would make such a fuss as this over a few miserable cheap biscuits!" squeaked Bunter. "Taking my character away like that, too! I shan't stand——"

"No, you'll lie; I don't mean the way you're always lying, but across the table," said Peter grimly. "You've got to sing small in this act, you thieving oyster! It would be a jolly fine thing for you if anybody could take your character away, because none at all would be a heap better than the notion one you've got."

And Peter Todd proceeded to give Bunter the lesson which he held to be needed. Dutton obligingly assisted in getting the Owl into position; but Alonzo firmly refused to have anything to do with the execution of such summary justice.

"I cannot avoid thinking, Peter, that if you were to reason with Bunter——"

"I'm going to," said Toddy, lifting the stump.

"I mean, if you were to point out to him the error of his ways——"

"That's just my notion, old ass," said Peter, and let the stump drop upon Bunter's trousers.

"Yaroooogh! Oh, stoppit, Toddy! That hurts!"

"My mistake if it doesn't," replied Peter pleasantly. "I mean it to."

Write to the Editor of
ANSWERS
if you are not getting your right PENSION.

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE!

Whack, whack, whack!

"Draginoff, someone! Stoppit, I say! Ow-yow! What's the sense of making such a fuss about a few—yoooop!—measly biscuits!"

"I'm not making any fuss," said Peter calmly.

Whack, whack, whack!

"You're the chap who's making the fuss," he went on. "The bisnetts are Dutton's bizney. What I'm thinking about is making a man of you, Porpoise."

"I—I—I don't want to be— Yoooop! Oh, stoppit, Toddy, do!"

"I'm going to now," said Peter. "I've finished."

Released, Bunter rolled off the table, groaning like one in mortal agony, and hurried to the door.

"Yah! Bullying beast you are, Toddy!"

He fled. But he did not flee with enough speed to prevent Peter Todd from catching him at the top of the staircase and expediting his departure by a hefty kick.

Sore in body and mind, the Owl of the Remove made his way downstairs and into the Close.

The rain had ceased now, and the sky was clearing fast. But the mental sky of William George Bunter showed no rift in the clouds.

He had been treated with what he regarded as brutal cruelty. All his schemes had come to naught. He was stony-broke. And since dinner he had had nothing but two or three pounds of mixed biscuits.

Life seemed to William George a dark and dreary pilgrimage, and Greyfriars a dismal hole.

He rolled up to the gates. The only thing that kept him from trying to touch Gosling for a loan was the absolute certainty that any such attempt would be a failure.

So he passed Gossy without a glance, and took the road to Friardale.

For half a mile or so he walked on through the puddles, too hopeless even to care that he was getting his feet wet.

Then something lying by the side of the road caught his eye.

The object was a pocket-book; a cheap-looking, red-covered thing.

The Owl fairly pounced upon it. It seemed well filled!

But with what?

Even if the contents were papers of no consequence to anyone but the owner, there might be a reward offered. And in his present sad plight Billy Bunter would have been glad of even so modest a sum as half-a-crown.

Bunter looked up the road, blinking through his glasses. Bunter turned, and blinked through his glasses down the road.

But he forgot to look nearer; and, though no one seemed to be in sight, someone was.

A face looked over the hedge to the right. It was the face of Harold Skinner, the cad of the Greyfriars Remove.

Bunter opened the pocket-book.

At a glance he saw that among its contents was quite a wad of currency notes.

His fat fingers fairly trembled as they gripped the wad.

"Oh, I say, what luck!" murmured the Owl ecstatically. "And it isn't like that rotten Highcliffe teapot. That had been burgled, and, of course, it belonged to the burglar—I mean to Dr. Voysey—at least, I can't really see but what it belonged to me. But people are so beastly unjust. I never do get my rights. Findings is keepings this time, anyway."

And then Skinner spoke.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Halves!

"HALVES, Bunter!" cried Skinner.

Billy Bunter swung round.

His jaw dropped. The pocket-book nearly dropped, too, as he made a hasty attempt to thrust it into his breast-pocket.

But Skinner, who had leaped the hedge, clutched his fat wrist.

"Halves!" repeated Skinner, grinning unpleasantly.

"Oh, rot, Skinny! I'm blessed if things haven't come to a pretty pass if a chap mayn't pick up what he's dropped without some silly ass singing out 'Halves!'"

"Rats, you spoofing Prussian! You never dropped that pocket-book. As a matter of fact, I saw it before you did, only I happened to be on the other side of the hedge."

"Oh, really, Skinner! Then someone else must have dropped it, and I'm going to find the owner, and hand it back to him. I consider it's up to me to do so. My principles are high; I'm not like you, Skinney!" said Bunter virtuously.

"Then I'll go with you," said Skinner promptly.

"But I don't want you with me. It's no business of yours!"

"It's jolly well going to be, though!" said Harold Skinner.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 464.

"You're only trying to do me out of half the reward, you cad!"

"Bet your last dollar I'm not! What's the fatheaded use of talking about a reward, Bunty? A bob, very likely—or a 'Thank you!' How would that suit you, my pippin?"

"Oh, really, Skinney, there's nothing in it of any value, you know!"

"Rats! You wouldn't hang on to it so blessed tight if there wasn't!"

Bunter weakened a bit. He saw that Skinner would not be choked off.

But he did not weaken enough to hand over the pocket-book for Skinner's inspection.

"I say, Skinney, you know, half is too much," he said wheedlingly. "I needn't really give you anything; but you were always a pal of mine. Look here, I'll stand you a quid out of it. There! That's a generous offer; but I always was a generous chap."

"I don't think!" grinned Skinner.

"Do you say 'Done'?"

"Not likely, Porpoise! If I did I should be done in the eye!"

"Oh, really, Skinney! You don't seem to believe a word I say," said Billy Bunter pathetically.

"Of course I don't! Nobody but an ass would."

"Bub—bub—but—oh, I say, will you dry up and clear off if I make it two quid?"

"Pull yoke half, and not a giddy fraction less," replied Harold Skinner firmly. "And if you don't cough it up at once I'll trot along and report your find to the police, my fat swindler!"

Trembling like a jelly, Billy Bunter held out the white flag of surrender.

"Oh, I say, though, Skinney, old pal, you'd never do such a mean thing as that!" he burbled.

"I don't mind doing mean things," answered Skinner, getting much nearer the truth than was pleasant all round with him. "Trot up a quarter, Skinney—do, now! Be fair! I don't believe you're half such a cad as the chaps all say you are!"

This neatly-turned compliment failed to propitiate Skinner.

"I'm not half such a mug as you take me for, you fat thief!" he said savagely. "We're going halves, my tulip, just to prove what pals we are, you know."

Bunter groaned; and inwardly cursed his luck. But he was helpless, and he realised the fact.

"Don't look at it that way," said Skinner. "Somebody may come along any minute. Ain't safe. Come over to the barn in that field."

Bunter looked wildly down the road towards Greyfriars, and for a moment contemplated seriously the desperate plan of doing a bolt.

But he knew that he could not outrun Skinner. And, even if he had been able to, it would have been no use. Skinner knew, and Skinner would blackmail him mercilessly.

They pushed through a gap in the hedge, and trampled through the soaking grass to the barn.

Within its gloomy interior Bunter opened the pocket-book again.

Both the young rascals gasped as they saw how thick the wad of notes was.

"Why, there must be a giddy hundred of them!" said Skinner. "What a stroke of luck for us, Bunty!"

Again William George groaned dismally. The more notes there were the harder it seemed to him that he should be forced to divide them with this young scoundrel. Bunter could have wept tears of regret and virtue as he thought of the gross depravity of Harold Skinner.

He licked his fat forefinger, and very slowly began to count.

"There ain't a hundred," he said, in very disappointed tones, when he had finished. "There's only a measly fifty. Oh, I say, Skinney, don't you think ten pounds would do you?"

"I don't think, my fat tulip! Halves!"

"Be a sport, Skinney, old pal, and say fifteen!"

"Do you take me for a potty ass, Porpoise?"

"Well, then, how much do you want?" asked Bunter desperately.

"Twenty-five ten," was Skinner's cool reply. "You didn't count right, Tubby. There's fifty notes—and one over!"

"Well, you'll let me have that once, won't you?" inquired Bunter, not in the least abashed at having been caught out trying to cheat his fellow-rascal.

"Oh, all serene, then," said Skinner, who was in a fidget to be off. "Hand over the twenty-five, and don't play any tricks with the counting, mind, because I've got my eye on you!"

Very unwillingly Billy Bunter parted. It was like rendering

up his heart's blood. He felt that Skinner was robbing him of what was his beyond all doubt—as long as no one else knew he had it.

"I suppose you'd burst or something if you hadn't managed to wangle more than your share!" said Skinner, putting the notes carefully away. "Not that I'd care a rap if you did. See here, Bunter, you've got to be pretty wide about this bizney, you know. If it leeks out there'll be the merry dickens to pay!"

"Oh, really, Skinney! I suppose I've as much commonsense and judgment as you have!"

"Then there's something wrong with your supposer! You've got blessed little sense and less judgment! Still, you've a certain amount of low cunning, and that may keep you from opening your ugly mouth too wide—except to cram tarts into it. I'm off. We'd better not go back together."

Skinner made off.

Bunter waited. He saw his partner in guilt squeeze through the hedge. Then his heart almost jumped into his mouth, where, in his present hungry state, it might have been in danger of failing to get back to its proper position in his body.

For a man had come up and spoken to Skinner!

Bunter was glad that Skinner had gone first. He felt that the end of the Remove could do the necessary lying so very much better than he could—which was rather to underrate his own powers, though Skinner was certainly talented in the same direction.

Of course, Bunter could not hear what was said. But his fat limbs trembled, and goosefish came over him as he realised that this must really be the rightful owner of the pocket-book.

Skinner was keeping up his end, however. He shook his head vigorously two or three times in succession, and the man seemed dubious. Bunter reflected that, after all, he could not be very sure where he had dropped the pocket-book.

He was chucking it! He was turning away! Bunter could have sung for joy.

Skinner nodded unconcernedly to the fellow, and walked on towards Greyfriars.

"Queer-looking sort of chap to have fifty pounds in his pocket-book!" murmured Bunter to himself. "I can't believe he came by it honestly. I dare say that accounts for Skinney being able to chuck him off so easily. Blessed if it isn't surprising how many dishonest people there are about!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
What Bunter Overheard!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Whence this thasness?"

It was Bob Cherry who spoke. Someone had tapped at the door of No. 1 Study. Bob had yelled, "Come in, ass!" and Wingate, skipper of Greyfriars, had appeared.

"What public kids you are!" remarked Wingate. "But I suppose the inference to be drawn is that anyone who wants to see you must be an ass—eh?"

"We didn't know it was you, Wingate," said Harry Wharton apologetically.

"Your visits are always an honour," Frank Nugent added in his politest manner.

"The honourfulness of a visit from the esteemed and ludicrous captain sahib is—"

"Terrific!" chipped in Bob, finishing Inky's speech for him.

"What's the row, Wingate?" asked Johnny Bull, who never wasted time in coming to the point.

"There's no row at all, Bull, so far as I know. And if any of you have guilty consciences I'm not asking you to unburden them. I have come to ask you a favour."

"Consider it done, Wingate!" said Harry Wharton.

"Hear, hear!" chimed in the rest. And Inky started to remark that "the wishfulness towardfully the obligefulness of—"

But Johnny Bull cut him short.

"We were just going to have tea," said Nugent. "Have some with us, Wingate?"

"Don't mind if I do."

"You'll have to shin off the table, then!" growled Johnny Bull.

Wingate took the armchair, and the Famous Five at once embarked upon preparations for a goodly spread.

Inky made the toast. Bob measured spoonfuls of tea from the canister, and kept a wary eye on the kettle meanwhile. Johnny Bull laid the cloth with quite a professional sweep, and then proceeded to place the crockery on the table, not without a good deal of clatter. Wharton and Nugent transferred from the cupboard to the table quite an array of the very pick of Mrs. Mimble's goods.

"I guess somebody's had a remittance," said Wingate. "Ever heard of war-time economy, you kids?"

"But a chap must eat something," growled Johnny Bull. "It wouldn't be any real economy to starve ourselves!"

"Not much danger of that, I think. Aren't you afraid of all becoming Bunters?"

"Not much!" grinned Bob. "This is one of our fat days. We do have some lean ones, you know."

"Is Bunter one of your guests, by the way? I observe you're laying for eight," said Wingate.

"My hat, no! Shouldn't wonder if he rolled in, but if he does he'll go out on his neck. It's the Bounder and Toddy we've asked. Any objection to talking before them, Wingate?"

"None at all. In fact, they are more or less concerned in what I'm going to talk about."

"Then I guess it's footer," said Frank Nugent.

Wingate nodded.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob. "The Sixth are going to play us at last!"

"Thought they couldn't keep on funking it," said Johnny Bull.

Wingate only grinned. The Remove Eleven was a very good junior team—very good indeed. But it was by no means up to the form of the Greyfriars Sixth.

Peter Todd arrived, bringing with him the MS. of his Herlock Sholmes' story for the "Herald," which he modestly announced as the best thing the paper had had up to date.

"Wingate's come with a foster challenge, Toddy," said Bob.

"Jolly good notion!" said Peter heartily. "The Sixth can pick up a lot of wrinkles from us."

Still Wingate refused to be drawn.

Vernon-Smith now appeared, completing the party. Chairs were drawn round the table, and tea began.

But the door was scarcely closed behind the Bounder when the fat form of Billy Bunter rolled along the passage.

The pound currency-note was clutched tightly in his hand. Twenty-four other pound notes were hidden away upon his ample person. He had changed one already, and the amount of silver received when he had finished his little snack at the tuckshop was not so weighty as to give him any trouble in carrying.

Bunter had no intention of showing the twenty-four notes, or of saying anything about them. But he meant to show the one in his hand.

In fact, the Owl had worked himself up into a state of virtuous indignation.

These beasts would not believe that he had lost a postal-order. They accepted Ahaiser's word as to its figure rather than his.

Well, now they should see!

They could not refuse him belief when he showed them the note, and explained that it was the proceeds of the postal-order, now found and safely cashed.

William George almost believed that it was, and he had completely forgotten that he had given six shillings as the figure.

His hand was on the door-knob when Wingate's voice fell upon his ears.

He halted—partly out of insatiable inquisitiveness, partly because he did not care much about explaining things before Wingate.

He stooped, and applied a fat ear to the keyhole. Bunter was not afraid of earache. His auricular organs were used to this sort of thing.

It was Wharton who spoke now.

"My only aunt, Wingate! Why can't you tell us what it is?" asked the Remove captain.

"Rats, Harry! We know already; we're going to play the Sixth, or, perhaps, the School team—it's not much odds which," said Bob.

"It wouldn't be," said Wingate. "I'll have another cup of tea, if you don't mind, Wharton. It's jolly good tea!"

"Have some ham, Wingate," suggested Nugent.

"Try those sardines, Wingate," said Peter Todd.

"This pie isn't half bad, Wingate," observed the Bounder critically.

"And those cream-tarts aren't dusty," said Johnny Bull.

"Put 'em all round me, if you like," said the skipper cheerily. "By the way, are you chaps taking me for Bunter?"

"Sneering beast!" muttered the eavesdropper.

"Well, it's like this, Wharton. I've had a letter from a chum of mine in the Army. His crowd want us to give them a match next Saturday, and we can't, on account of our match with Abbeyside. They would expect to be thanked if they met us, he says; so I gather your lot might have a chance against them."

"My hat! If you weren't skipper, Wingate, I'd tell you

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE!

what I thought of the cool cheek of that!" said Johnny Bull.

"If the School team could beat 'em, we could pulverise them, of course!" said Toddy.

"Oh, I dare say! The thing is—are you on?"

"Rather!" cried Bob.

"I should say so!" said Nugent.

"The rather!unless, honoured sahib, is terrific!" added Inky.

But Harry Wharton looked very thoughtful.

"I don't know, really, Wingate," he said. "Saturday isn't exactly our best day. There's Linley in the sanny with a bad cold; Bulstrode and Hazel are both crocked. But Delarey is pretty hefty in goal, so we can make out there all right-ho. But Rake's going home, and Tom Brown with him. And Penfold can't play—his pater wants him. Oh, and Newland is off, too! I thought of getting up a scratch game with the Third, but a real match is a different thing."

Bob Cherry looked rather alarmed.

"Rats, Harry!" he said. "We can scratch up a pretty decent team. There are seven of us here, all fit and good enough: Squiff and the Rebel make nine."

"And what about the other two? The side can't be full strength, anyhow, and I don't see how I can afford to put in two third-raters, though Bolsover isn't useless, of course."

Wharton's office as captain of the Remove Eleven was not entirely a bed of roses. Ever since the team was licked there were always plenty of malcontents ready to proclaim it his fault; and he had become rather sensitive on the point, objecting to field anything short of a full team for a match of any moment.

"Look here, Wharton!" said Wingate. "On the face of it, you've got nine pretty hefty men. I think you'd have a chance, for this is the first game the military lot will have played together, and even if they are good individually, they can't be much combination among them. You only want two more useful men. Why not Temple and Dabney of the Fourth?"

"But it wouldn't be the Remove Eleven then," objected Wharton.

"Never mind. Call it my team—that is, if you aren't too proud."

Harry brightened up at once.

"Jolly good notion!" he said. "We should like to play as your team no end, Wingate! But, I tell you what—I'd a leap rather have two of the Highcliffe chaps than any Fourth-Former!"

"I don't see anything against that as long as it's not that rattlesnake Ponsonby," replied Wingate.

"Wouldn't be seen dead with the rotter!" said Wharton bluntly. "The chaps I mean are Courtenay and the Caterpillar."

"That's De Courcy, isn't it? They're the right stuff."

"And you won't rag us if we happen to get licked, Wingate?"

"Not likely, Wharton! I shall feel sure you've done your best, anyway. And see here. These fellows aren't at Wapshot, they're at Wotherden—a nasty little hole of a place miles from anywhere, with only an absurd light railway to it. You can't get back by train, though you can get there. But that's all serene. I'll stand a motor char-a-banc from Courtfield."

"Oh, I say, Wingate, that's ripping of you!" said Frank Nugent. The beaming faces of the rest showed how thoroughly they shared his appreciation.

The captain of Greyfriars was one of the most generous of fellows, but he was not rich. Evidently he was in funds just now, however.

"What will the Head say to it?" asked Bull.

"Oh, I'll put it right with him——Hallo! What's that? Sounds like a pig being killed, by Jove!"

The door opened, and Squiff and Delarey appeared, each holding one of Bunter's fat ears.

"A pretty sort of skipper for any—yaroooogh!—school—yooop!—to have, I must—yaroooogh! Stoppit, Field! Lemme alone, Cherry, you rotter! I wasn't listening—on my honour I wasn't! Can't you believe a chap when he makes himself on his honour? I didn't hear a word about the match at Wotherden, and you fellows playing as Wingate's Eleven because you're too mean and jealous to give a really good player a chance, and—— Ow-ow! You're pulling my ear off, you beastly Robs!"

"Same old game, Wharton!" said Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, called Squiff, because his was short. "Always getting ratty over something every day. Purpose, and nobody here wants to see a Greyfriars chap lagged, you know."

"Oh, really, Toddy, it's too bad of you not to speak up for me! I'm the most here——"

"You are!" chipped in Bob. "Anyway, I never saw a more horrible fat toad!"

"That aint—— I was going to say that I am the most horribly misjudged chap alive! Everybody's on to me—even Toddy, and he, being in my study——"

"That's just it," said Delarey. "Todd naturally knows you better than anyone else does."

"Rats to you—I mean, you don't understand, Delarey. Being a Boer, which is the same thing as being a foreigner, you——Yaroogh! Leggo my ear, you rotter!"

"You don't ask prettily, Bunter."

"These fellows as good as called me a liar, Toddy, because I said I'd lost a postal-order. And after talking into me with cricket-stump for dragging that ass Lonsy into my wangle. Oh, dear!" wailed Bunter. "There wasn't any wangle, and I've come to prove it, and to make these beasts ashamed of themselves—if there's any shame to them!"

"What's the fat worm got in his hand?" asked Johnny Bull.

Bunter was now inside the study. His two captors released him, and Squiff kicked the door shut.

The fat Owl flourished his pound note triumphantly.

"He's been robbing a bank," said Nugent.

"We all know how this will end, Bunter," said Squiff.

Eugene Aram act. Ten stern faced men—Bunter in between, with grave topics on which to talk—and the other twenty-four, which he was more than ever resolved not to show.

"Rot, Cherry!" he said peevishly. "Rot!" he repeated more boldly, as his brazenness consorted itself. "You chaps wouldn't believe that I'd lost a postal-order, so I came to prove it. And I was just tying up my——"

"Socks," said Peter Todd. "It was your socks you said just now, Porpoise! But I don't mind a——"

"Oh, really, Toddy! It's the same thing, practically."

"No, it's not! If you must lie, stick to one lie! Don't go hopping about like a flea on a hot gridiron!"

"You're so blessed fully particular, Toddy. I was tying up my socks when I mean, pulling up my bootlaces!—when these two rotters pounced on me like tigers. They accused me of listening! Silly rot, I call it! I never heard a word! I don't know anything about you fellows having a match at Wotherden, and Wingate paying the exes. Silly ass! Why doesn't he spend his tin in grub, like any reasonable fellow? And I don't care a scrap if you do ask those two Highcliffe cads to play! I've lost all interest in footer, owing to being kept out of the team by personal jealousy! But, of course, I don't know what Bolsover and Skinner and the rest will say about it. I expect they'll kick."

"The fat, spoofing, gorging, ugly toad!" roared Bob.

"He must have heard every giddy word!"

"I haven't! I didn't! Don't tell you I never heard anything at all!" howled Bunter. "Look here, you chaps, don't you want to see my postal-order?" he asked, in desperation.

"Of course we do! We'll subscribe to buy it from you, and have it framed in gold!" said Bob. "Why, that giddy postal-order is a document of real historic interest!"

"The archives of Greyfriars are the only place for it!" added Squiff gravely.

"You chaps talk the silliest pills I ever heard!" said Bunter loftily. "Of course, I know that it's only due to

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Scarcely a Satisfactory Explanation!

"O H, I'm off now! I'll see you again about this matter, Wharton," said Wingate.

"Oh, really, Wingate! 'Tain't fair!" howled Bunter. "You're a prefect, and it's your duty to stop bullying! I shall have to report you if you shirk like this, blessed if I sha'n't! Yooop! Leggo my ear, you beastly Boer! Drop it, Squiff! Yarooooogh!"

"I'm not going to interfere," said Wingate, locking down at the Owl with contempt. "It's pretty nearly time you had those prying ears of yours cropped, I think, Bunter! Don't quite kill him, you fellows, and for any sake don't make a horrible row!"

The captain strode away.

If you shirk like this, blessed if I sha'n't! Yoooop! Leggo my ear, you beast of a Boer! Drop it, Squiff! Yarooooogh!"

Wingate paid no heed. He knew that Bunter would get no more than he well deserved.

NEXT MONDAY— "GETTING RICH QUICK!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

jealousy of my having titled relations who can keep me well supplied with tin! But I won't argue with you. I'll settle this thing once for all, and then perhaps you'll dry up. Here's the postal-order!"

He showed the note, but it had not the expected effect. No one looked in the least overwhelmed.

"That ain't a postal-order!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Different thing altogether. And we don't even know it's yours. Has Mauly been missing chink again, Rebel?"

"I don't think so," answered Delarey. "I'm looking after the old ass as well as I know how."

"Where did you get that note, Bunter?" asked Harry sharply.

The Owl's fat face turned pale again, and then went a flaming red.

"Just because you've gug-gug-got all these chaps to back you up, you think you can—can insult me as you like!" he spluttered. "If we were alone, I'd——"

"Right-ho! Get out of the way, you chaps! Bunter's going to give me a hiding!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"I—I—I meant Wharton—at least, I didn't really mean anybody!" stammered Bunter. "I—I don't think you fellows really meant to be insulting!"

"Oh, yes, we did!" said Johnny Bull. "Every blessed time, Porpoise!"

"I—I forgive you!" gasped Bunter. "I'm too high-minded to quarrel!"

"If you have any explanation to make, make it and clear out, you worm!"

"All right, Harry, old chap! Only it ain't very friendly of you to call me names, you know! But I can overlook it, as it's you. I was going to whack out this quid with you chaps, of course, though you can't expect that now. Oh, leave go my ear, Toddy! Yoooop!"

"That's enough, and a bit over!" said Toddy. "I know all about your miserable postal-order—Lonzy told me! One of those papers that run competitions was honest enough to send it back to you because, like the silly fat ass you are, you sent in a shot that didn't begin to comply with the rules. You didn't lose it, either—you waddled across to the tuckshop with it. And you couldn't have got a pound note from a sixpenny P.O., anyway!"

Peter stopped for breath.

"He told us it was for six bob," said Nugent. "But you couldn't get anyone to give a quid for a six-bob order, either."

"Oh, really, I never did see such a set of unbelieving fellows! It wasn't either of those orders. It was—er—another one altogether!" said Bunter feebly.

"Must've been," said the Bounder, with a grin. "By the way, where did you change it, Fatty?"

"At Friardale, of course!"

"Ah! When?"

"About an hour ago, Smithy."

"Jolly good of them to let you in, but against official rules," said Vernon-Smith drily. "This happens to be early-closing day at the Friardale Post Office. But, of course, they might make an exception in Bunter's case. I dare say they would. Everybody loves Bunter."

"Special exceptions be blowed!" roared Bob Cherry. "The fat oyster is jolly well trying to spoof us! I reckon it's more than a little suspish about that pound note. I think, in Bunter's own interests——"

"Oh, let him go, Bob!" said Wharton wearily. "You'll never get the truth out of him!"

"Well, bump him first!" said the irrepressible Bob cheerfully.

Bunter turned to flee. But Delarey clutched him. He was seized, and bumped well and truly. Then the bumpers left him sitting on the cold and unsympathetic linoleum in the passage, with a pound note crumpled up in his fat right hand and a woebegone look on his fat face.

He struggled to his feet at length, and rolled away, muttering:

"Beasts! After all I've done for them, too!"

No. 7 was barred to Bunter for the time being, by his dread of the wrath of Tom Dutton. So he rolled off to the Common-room, to tell Bolsover and Skinner and Stott and Snoop and the rest of the malcontents of the base plot concocted between Wingate and the Famous Five.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Bolsover & Co. Make Trouble!

"THERE ain't any match on on Saturday!" growled Bolsover major. "I spoke to that cocky ass Wharton this morning about it. I told him that if a few of his friends were off the books there were plenty of fellows as good as they are who could play. He was cheeky about it—said——"

"He didn't know anything about this, then," broke in Bunter eagerly. "It was only fixed up at tea-time. They asked me to tea, you know, just—er—to meet Wingate. Of course, when you are having the captain of the school to tea it's as well to have some chap with conversational powers and really good manners to meet him!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Skinner.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Micky Desmond.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Percy Bolsover.

"Well, I swow!" said Fisher T. Fish, looking at Billy Bunter rather as if he were some rare zoological specimen.

Billy Bunter blinked furiously at them from behind his spectacles.

"Oh, really, you fellows, I don't see what there is funny about it! Everybody knows——"

"That you're a fat Ananias!" said Stott, grinning.

"It will be a blessed long time before you're invited to tea to meet Wingate, Stott!" said Bunter loftily.

"Hope so!" replied Stott, who, on the whole, preferred steering clear of the skipper.

"Cut out all the giddy whackers, Tubby, and tell us all about the match!" commanded Bolsover. "It's no odds to us how you heard it."

"Faith, then, 'tis to me!" said Micky Desmond. "I'm not after wantin' to be told what Bunter heard at a keyhole!"

"You can go, then!" said Bolsover.

"Sure, an' I thank you for nothin'!" replied Micky.

He went. So did Ogilvy and Dick Russell. Wharton might or might not want them for the team, but, anyway, they were too straight to care about this kind of thing.

The seven or eight who remained were not too particular. Some of them were not above the use of keyholes themselves, indeed, though that was hardly Bolsover's line.

"Now then, Porpoise!" said Bolsover roughly.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, you might be civil!" protested the Owl.

"That's the sort of civility you'll get, my pippin!" said Bolsover, putting a big fist within half an inch of Bunter's podgy nose.

And in truth it was the sort of civility that anyone weaker than himself was likely to get from Percy Bolsover.

"I—I'll tell you, Bolsover!" gasped the Owl. "It—it's like this!"

And he proceeded to give a very garbled account of the conversation he had listened to.

"He said he could only get duffers like you and—— Oh, droppit, Bolsover! It was that rotter Wharton who said it, not me. He said such a scratch lot was jolly certain to lose, and, anyway, he wouldn't be seen dead with such fumblers. What're doing? Leave go, you cad! You'll choke me, Bolsover, I know you will!"

"Let him go, old man," said Skinner. "You'll never get the truth out of the barrel by shaking him to death."

"No, nor yet any other way," said Snoop, who was himself a liar of the authentic Prussian breed.

Bolsover relaxed his hold on Bunter's throat.

"Get on with the washing," he snarled, "or——"

"I'll tell you all about it, if you'll only give me half a chance, Bolsy, old man," whined the Owl, fingering his throat, where the marks of Bolsover's thick fingers were still plainly to be seen. "Wharton said he wouldn't have any clumsy duffers like——"

"Be careful, you fat toad!" roared the bully.

"Like—like Fishy," amended Bunter, after a glance round in search of the least combative individual present.

"Jerusalem crickets! I'll make potato-scrapings——"

"Dry up, you rotten neutral! Go on, Porpoise!" ordered Bolsover.

"So he said he'd get Courtenay and the Caterpillar," went on the Owl, meaning to cut his story short lest worst might befall him.

"Utter rot!" snorted Bolsover. "You're making this up, you fat cad! Highcliffe fellows in the Greyfriars Remove team! The thing's an impossibility—clean off the rails!"

"Bunter's potty!" said Stott.

"Or Wharton," put in Skinner. "That chap's been allowed to ride the high horse until he thinks he can do just as he likes, and no one will raise a finger to stop him. But this sort of thing's a bit too thick, and I vote we don't put up with it!"

"We're not going to!" said Bolsover determinedly. "Come along, you cripples! We'll go and interview the high and mighty one together!"

It was rather foolish on Bolsover's part, for he was the one fellow of the small crowd who really could play footer a bit, though he was too slow and clumsy to be more than a moderately good back. But he knew Wharton would have support, and he did not care to go alone.

As they trooped out after him Bunter held Skinner back.

"I say, Skinney——"

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE!

"You'd better not say. It isn't safe to talk."

"Bub-bub-but what did that fellow in the road say to you?"

"What fellow in the road?"

"You know—the chap who dropped the pocket-book."

"What pocket-book? Have you been dreaming, you fat idiot? I don't know anything about any dropped pocket-books."

Bunter's jaw fell, and he stared at the end of the Remove in genuine amazement.

"Oh, really, Skinney, that's a little too thin, you know! We're both in it, and——"

"Don't you make any mistake, my fat tulip! I'm not in it! I don't know a blessed thing about it, and if the story comes out, I shall deny it point-blank, and stick to it!"

"Bub-bub-but that would be lying, Skinney!"

"Well, you ought to know. There isn't a chap at Greyfriars who is a bigger liar than you are, Porpoise."

Bunter, who scarcely realised his own powers of prevarication, thought he knew at least one. But he did not say so. He was genuinely alarmed at Skinner's attitude.

"I—I——"

"Oh, you—you—— See here!" hissed Skinner. "I've got sense enough to keep my mouth shut. If the thing comes out, it won't be my fault, and I refuse to take any blame for it. But you're such an utter ass that you don't know how to keep a secret, so you can't expect me to stand in with you."

And with that Skinner left.

He was not in time to catch up Bolsover & Co. before they reached Study No. 1.

The bully of the Remove looked round at his scratch band of followers with a curling lip. Of them all only Trevor would have been of the least use, even in the Second Eleven. But it did not matter much. He only wanted their support; he would not have given twopence to get any one of them into the team.

He shoved open the door.

Only Wharton and Nugent were now there.

"Don't trouble to knock, Bolsover," said Harry, looking up with a slight frown.

"I didn't, and I don't see any reason why I should. Look here——"

"I'm looking already. It isn't pretty, but I can stand it for a little while, and I suppose you don't mean staying long?"

"I shall stay as long as I choose. And I don't want any of your cheap, funny rot, you swanking idiot!" roared the bully.

"Bolsover's brought the nice manners of his with him, Harry," observed Frank Nugent.

"You shut up, Nugent! I'm not talking to you!"

"The loss is mine," answered Frank blandly.

"Look here, Wharton, you've fixed up a match for Saturday, and you are going to play two Highcliffe rotters!"

"Dead off it!" said Harry. "I haven't any intention of playing any Highcliffe rotters!"

"Do you mean to tell me that you aren't going to shove Courtenay and that drawling ass of a Caterpillar into the team?"

"I don't see any necessity for telling you anything. But I am going to ask Courtenay and De Courcy to play for me, and I hope they will consent."

"Well, then, what did you deny it for?"

"I didn't deny it!"

"You hear him, you fellows?" hooted Bolsover.

"We hear him!" said Trevor.

"He's wriggling," remarked Stott, from a safe position well to the rear.

"Someone else will wriggle, Stott, if I have any of your confounded cheek!" snapped Wharton. "What's footer to do with you? You aren't up to kindergarten eleven form. They wouldn't have you in the Second Form team!"

"Oh, chuck that!" said Bolsover roughly. "I'm not saying Stott is a crack. But if he's the biggest duffer going——"

"He's not quite that. There's always Snoop," said Wharton.

"He has a better right to play in a Greyfriars team than any Highcliffe cad!"

"Quite correct!" replied Wharton coolly.

Bolsover looked puzzled. He was not too brainy.

"I kinder guess and calculate that you galoots will have to stop talking conundrums and listen to reason," said Fisher T. Fish. "You sure do appear to have got the notion into your cabezas that there's nobody worth a bean in this hyer institoot except yourselves and your caboodle. Now, I reckon——"

"Shurrup, you Yankee gasbag!" snorted Bolsover. "I want to know where I come in, Wharton."

"The answer is, that you don't come in, Bolsover!"

Skinner came up at this moment.

"But—but——"

"That's what a goat does," remarked Nugent.

"I—I'll jolly well wipe the floor with you two rotters!" howled Bolsover.

NEXT MONDAY— "GETTING RICH QUICK!"

"Yes; pile in on them, Bolsover, old chap!" squeaked Snoop encouragingly.

"Make potato-scrapings of the jays, Bolsover. I'll help you!" said Fishy, getting behind Snoop—which is to say, as far from Wharton and Nugent as might be. But he could not keep that place; Snoop regained it within two seconds.

But Bolsover major, though well aware that argument was not his strong point, was not yet ready for an appeal to arms.

"You can't play Highcliffe chaps in a Remove side, Wharton!" he growled.

"I'm not going to," said Harry. "It won't be a Remove side!"

"What the merry dickens will it be, then?"

"That's my blessed business."

"Oh, rush the sweeps!" roared Bolsover, his temper getting completely out of hand.

There was a rush, but it was rather a feeble one. Most of Bolsover's followers preferred rushing the other way when it came to a scrap.

But, with such odds in their favour, even Snoop and Fish joined in. Only Harold Skinner stood aside, with a mocking grin on his face.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Skinner's Cool Proposition!

BOLSOVER flung both arms around Harry's body. Trelure gripped him round the neck, almost throttling him.

He went crashing down on top of Treluce, with Bolsover on top of them.

Trevor and Stott piled in on Nugent, and even Fish and Snoop lent their valuable aid.

"Hold off! Stoppit!" yelled Wharton, half-choked.

"Rescue!" sang out Frank Nugent.

There came a rush of feet along the passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Go for the cads!" yelled Squiff.

And Bob Cherry and Squiff, Inky and Johnny Bull, Delarey and Tom Brown, Peter Todd and the Bounder, all piled in.

The study was full of struggling, writhing, yelling juniors. The dust rose in clouds.

Fishy tried to sneak out. The Bounder and Inky seized the neutral, and hurled him on the way he would go, though Fishy would have preferred going with less fuss.

"Yooop! What are you doing, you silly ass?" howled Skinner, as Fishy clutched at him and brought him down.

"Gerrout my way, you durned galoot!" yelled Fish.

Snoop came plunging out, with a hand over both eyes, and fell on top of them.

"Yaroooph!" squealed Fish. "Jerusalem crickets! Can't you look where you're coming to, you mugwump?"

Delarey sent Stott crashing against the wall.

Stott's head was not exactly Worcester china, and it did not break. But it hummed quite sufficiently to take away any further appetite for the fray Stott may have had.

But probably he hadn't any.

Off came the tablecloth, and black ink and red besprinkled liberally the combatants. Over went the table. Over, too, went the burly Bolsover, who had managed to scramble to his feet and meet the rush of the rescue party. Over he went, howling, kicking, punching still.

Trevor and Treluce went out on their necks. In less than nineteen seconds the fray was at an end; and Billy Bunter only rolled up in time to get Trevor's head in his ample waistcoat, and stagger over, moaning that his backbone was broken.

But that was quite as much of the fray as William George had any use for—possibly a little more.

Bolsover stalked away. The rest slunk off—all but Harold Skinner and Billy Bunter.

Skinner came forward boldly. Bunter stood on and off, very curious as to what his confederate wanted, but not daring to follow him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry gaily. "Here's a remnant of the hostile forces left. Will you have the remnant, Johnny, or is it mine?"

"Oh, you're welcome to it, Bob!" replied Johnny Bull. "Skinner ain't really worth handling."

The end of the Remove scowled. But as the cheery Bob advanced towards him, he said hastily:

"Pax! I wasn't in that bizney!"

"What a whopper!" said Tom Brown. "My hat! I saw you making a feather-bed of yourself to save Fishy from getting hurt."

"Rats! I shouldn't have cared if the Yankee rotter had broken every blessed bone in his body!" said Skinner humanely. "I wasn't in the attack, was I, Wharton?"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Where's the town?" demanded Bolsover threateningly. The grey-headed man, who seemed to be the station staff rolled into one, grinned. "I never heerd tell of no town," he said. *(See Chapter 10.)*

"I must say I didn't see you in it, Skinner," said Harry.

"Attacks not being much in Skinner's line!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Considering there were seven or eight to two when it started— What are you cackling at, you asses?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Skinney won't beat that in a hurry!"

"The best give-away I ever heard in my life!"

"Still, we ought to give Skinner a bit of credit for resisting such a temptation," said Delarey, with his slow, half cynical smile.

"For he couldn't have been dead sure there'd be a rescue," added Vernon-Smith.

Skinner glared like a basilisk at those two. Their sarcasm could pierce his hide where the blunter weapons of Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were powerless.

But Harold Skinner smoothed his face into a more pleasing cast, and did his best to smile.

"I've something to say to you chaps," he said.

"Say it, then. Speech is free," answered Wharton, shrugging his shoulders.

"Though it ain't a case of four hundred pounds a year for talking blessed rot here, as it is in——"

"A certain place that must be nameless," put in the Bounder gravely. "Remember the Defence of the Realm Act, Cherry!"

"My only topper! If the defence of the realm depended upon that——"

"They think it does," said Squiff. "At least, they think they think it does. My notion is that when they think they're thinking they only——"

"Oh, dry up, Squiff! What is it, Skinner?"

Skinner came inside the study uninvited, and carefully shut the door behind him. It was just what Bunter had waited for. He rolled silently up and applied a fat ear to the keyhole.

"See here, I'd like to play in that match on Saturday," said Skinner coolly.

It was no great compliment to Skinner's ability as a footballer that everyone there stared at him in silence for a few seconds, and that when the silence was broken it was not broken by words, but by a great roaring laugh from Bob and Johnny Bull together.

"Well, you can't," said Wharton, civilly enough, but quite decidedly.

"But I'm willing to pay my share of the exes, and a bit over," said Skinner eagerly. "In fact, I'll go further than that. I'll stand the whole team a first-class tea after the game!"

Skinner looked round him as if sure of getting what he wanted after that liberal offer. It did not strike him that it might not seem as liberal to these fellows as it did to him.

Not one of them but would have shared his last shilling with a chum. To them it was the natural thing to do.

But to Harold Skinner it came just as natural to keep a tight grip on his money.

If he was prepared to spend it now, it was because he had some definite object in view.

And he had. The sudden accession to what seemed wealth to him had put quite a new idea into Harold Skinner's mind.

He was tired of the selfish so-called friendship of such fellows as Stott and Snoop. What did friendship mean to them? Nothing but hanging together until panic seized them, when each would get his own way—every man for himself, and the fiend take the hindmost, as the old proverb has it. Nothing but sponging and fawning on a fellow in funds, and giving him the cold shoulder when he was stony again.

In spite of himself, Skinner had come to see that the friendship of the Famous Five and their circle meant a great deal more than this; and, in spite of himself, he had longed at times for something of the same sort.

The nearest approach to it he had ever known was the feeling that had developed between him and Bolsover after that sacrifice in the school chapel. For a time it had seemed that Bolsover would never forget what Skinner had done then. He never had quite forgotten it; but the vividness of the memory had worn away now.

And at his best Bolsover was a very unsatisfactory chum, for he wanted everything his own way.

But Harold Skinner made the mistake of his life when he fondly imagined he could buy the friendship of the fellows he faced now.

Not a face there smiled upon his proposal. Such smiles as there were had quite another character.

"Thanks, Skinner!" said Wharton coldly. "But there isn't a place open, and if there was, no one could buy it."

Hot wrath flared up in Skinner. His face went red, and his hands clenched.

He looked round him as if wanting to choose the most suitable recipient of his wrath.

In an ordinary way he would have felt more angry with Wharton than with anyone else. He was up against Wharton continually.

But now the slow smile of Piet Delarey infuriated him even more than Harry Wharton's curled lip of contempt.

He lunged forward, and dashed his fist full at the South African boy's face.

"Take that!" he panted.

But his wrist was caught in a grip like steel before he had touched the smiling face.

"No, thanks!" drawled Delarey. "I really haven't any use for it, you know."

"Chuck the rotter out!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hear, hear!" cried Bob Cherry.

"The chuckoutfulness of the esteemed and disgusting Skinney——"

"Oh, leave him alone, and let him clear!" said Delarey. "There's harm done."

He dropped Skinner's wrist. Mad with rage, the end of the Remove struck out again.

This time Piet Delarey was not quite quick enough. He had not expected a second blow. There had been real good nature mixed with his easy contempt of Skinner. But Skinner had perceived only the contempt, and it fairly maddened him.

The blow struck the Afrikander's cheek. Before he could return it, Squiff, Tom Brown, Johnny Bull, and Bob Cherry had seized Skinner. Nugent obligingly opened the door, and Harold Skinner went out of the study on his neck, bumping Billy Bunter down with him.

"You fat worm! Spying again!" yelled Peter Todd.

"Yaroooph! Oh, really, Toddy—— Gerroff me neck, Skinner! I never saw anyone so unjust as you are! I——"

"No, ear, I think," said the Bounder. "You don't listen with your eye." Nugent shut the door.

"He wasn't worth fighting, Piet," said Squiff, half apologetically.

"That's all right," replied Delarey coolly, though his face showed bruised where Skinner had struck him. "I wasn't going to fight him, anyway. Queer chap, Skinner!"

Some of them thought Delarey rather a queer chap, too. But they did not say so. Most of them liked him, but none quite understood him.

That grin of Skinner's might have been a danger-signal to anyone else who had seen it. But it did not act in that way to Bunter.

"Right-ho!" said Skinner. "It's a jolly good idea! Of course, you don't think of asking for a place in the team? I dare say they will want some silly ass to carry their bags."

Bunter snorted.

"You ought to know me better than to suppose that I should go with those fellows in a menial capacity!" he said loftily. "But if the team happens to be made up, I don't mind going as a reserve. I'm not too proud for that."

Skinner grinned again, and walked slowly away.

Bunter tapped at the door of Study No. 1.

"Oh, come in, whoever you are!" shouted Harry Wharton impatiently.

Bunter wasted no time.

Scarcely had he shoved his fat face before Bob Cherry caught up a cushion and Johnny Bull a stout lexicon.

"Stoppit!" yelled Bunter. "Wharton said 'Come in, whoever you are!'"

"I didn't know it was you, though," said Harry. "Let him say what he has to say, and bunk, you chaps."

"I've come to say that I'd like to go with you on Saturday," announced the Owl.

"So would several other outsiders, it seems," observed Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, rats to you, Bounder! I'm talking to my pal Harry. If you fellows had any sense of delicacy, you'd clear out and not stay gaping at a private conversation."

Bunter could not understand why everybody except Wharton laughed at that.

"You'll clear out in a minute!" said Bob Cherry. "But it won't be from a sense of delicacy. It will be because you'll jolly well be hoofed out!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Plotting a Plot!

"You fat rotter!" said Skinner hotly. "What do you want, following me about like this? You'll get it where the chicken got the chopper if I have any more of it."

"Oh, really, Skinney, I don't see how you can say I've been following you about! I suppose I've a right in this passage, haven't I? I was just going to speak to my pal Wharton."

"What about?" snapped Harold Skinner.

"Well, it's not really your biney; but I don't mind telling you that I'm going to make arrangements to go with them on Saturday."

Billy Bunter had heard all that Skinner and the other fellows had said. In his crass folly he imagined that what had been refused to Skinner might be granted to him on the same terms that the end of the Remove had suggested.

He did not see why they should refuse him because they had refused Skinner. Again and again he had contrived to thrust himself upon tea-parties, picnics, and the like at which his presence had been by no means in request. What he had done before he could do again, he thought.

Skinner grinned — not at all sumbly.



"Halves, Bunter!" cried Skinner. Billy Bunter swung round, and his jaw dropped at the sight of Harold Skinner. (See Chapter 4.)

"Look here, Harry—"

"It's no go, Bunter! We don't want you, and we won't have you—that's flat!"

"But you don't quite understand, old man. I'm in funds, and I should like to stand you chaps a feed. If I go with you—"

"Spying again, porpoise? Got a cricket-stump handy, Wharton?" said Peter Todd grimly.

"Bunter's going to stand us a whack out of that mythical postal-order of his," grinned Nugent.

"And I'm going to stand Bunter a whacking with a cricket-stump for being an eavesdropping oyster," said Toddy.

"Oh, really, Toddy! I never heard a word of what Skinner said! Honour bright, I didn't! And as for my postal-order, I could surprise some of you fellows if I chose. You know what I know," said Bunter, in tones of mystery.

"Take what you know away with you and bury it!" growled Bull.

"You'd surprise us all if you produced the postal-order," said Bob. "I might survive it—I'm pretty tough; but it would be sudden death from shock for some of us, I fancy."

"Where's that stump?" asked Peter Todd, looking round for the desired article. "It's a mistake not to keep one handy, Wharton. The Porpoise may blow in any time, you know."

"Cut, Bunter!" said Wharton sharply. "You must be an utter idiot to suppose that you can buy your place in the team, any more than Skinner can."

"I don't know anything about Skinner," replied the Owl obstinately. "I can't think why you chaps keep harping upon Skinner. I'm not thinking of myself, I'm sure. And I really don't mind much whether I play or not—as long as I go with you. See here!"

Bunter plunged his hand into his breast-pocket. He was just about to bring out the wad of notes. That would prove that he was able to redeem his promise.

For the moment he forgot entirely to what awkward questions the display of those notes was bound to give rise. The humorous Bob covered his face with his hands.

"Don't, Bunty—don't!" he said imploringly. "The sight of that postal-order would be too, too much!"

"If you can show us twenty quid it won't make a scrap of difference, so there you have it straight from the shoulder!" said Wharton.

Bunter's hand dropped. He remembered the risk now, and he saw at last that pleadings were of no avail.

"You're a set of selfish rotters!" he squeaked.

"Outside!" said Bob Cherry.

"Where's that stump?" repeated Peter Todd again. For a fellow of his brains, Toddy's ideas as to the correct way of dealing with Bunter certainly did run rather in one groove.

"I'm not going till I choose!" said the Owl defiantly.

"You're mistaken! You're going now!" retorted Johnny Bull.

The upshot proved that Johnny Bull was right. Anyway, if Bunter chose to go at that moment, it is fairly certain that he did not choose to go in that manner—which was with half a dozen boots applying vigorous propulsion to him.

"Yarooogh!" he howled, and took a seat on the cold and unsympathetic linoleum.

Bob kicked the door to. Out in the passage, Harold Skinner contemplated the indignant face of William Bunter with a grin of malice on his own lean face.

"The beast!" said Bunter.

"Looks rather as if they'd said 'No!' and said it a bit emphatically," replied Skinner sarcastically.

"They're rotters! But I'll be even with them yet!" howled Bunter.

"Not by making a silly row about it out here, you won't," said Skinner. "Come along with me, Fatty. You and I are in the same boat, and if we put our heads together we ought to be able to get our own back on them."

"Have you got a plan, Skinney?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Shut up, ass! You don't want them to hear, do you? Come along to my study. The Bounder's in there with the rest of the crew, and we can have it all to ourselves."

Skinner had a plan of vengeance. He would not have chosen that every leaky vessel, William George Bunter, as a confidante in it, however, but for two reasons.

One was that Bunter possessed information about the arrangements for Saturday, and that Skinner wanted to know as much about these as possible.

The other was that, with his accustomed close-fistedness, Skinner saw no reason why he should buy vengeance with his own money while Bunter, who also desired it, had cash in hand.

So the two young rascals adjourned to the study which Skinner shared with Herbert Vernon-Smith, and there, behind a locked door, they plotted a plot.

Others were to be brought into it. Skinner had no doubt that Bolsover, Stott, and Snoop would gladly take part. Trevor, Treluce, and Fish might also be won over, if wanted.

But Harold Skinner wanted everything cut and dried before he asked their aid.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Enjoying Themselves!

THERE were a good many absentees from the Remove ranks at the dinner-table on Saturday.

Harry Wharton & Co. had had things made easy for them by Wingate. An early lunch had enabled them to leave the school in the motor char-a-banc at about the time when the other fellows were being summoned to the meal.

But more places were vacant—those of Skinner, Bolsover, Bunter, Snoop, Stott, and Fish.

The seventy half-dozen had contrived to get special permits to be absent from dinner. Bunter had not risen to Skinner's suggestion that he might devote part of his wealth to the hiring of a rival motor vehicle. Bunter did not see why Skinner should not shell out, he said.

But shelling out was altogether too painful a process for Skinner. Anyway, he or Bunter, or he and Bunter between them—but Skinner meant that it should be Bunter if by any dodge he could be induced to it—would have to entertain the other four at Wethersden. The four had made their attitude on that point perfectly clear.

The railway would do, Skinner decided. It was a very awkward journey, as he saw when he looked it up. From Courtfield they must go to a small town some distance away, whence a light railway ran to serve the needs of the Wethersden folk.

Trains were not run in connection; indeed, the stations were half a mile or more apart. But, according to Skinner, the connection could be made all right, and the rest trusted to him. Bolsover, Stott, Snoop, and Fish also trusted to him—or to Bunter—they were far too high-minded to care which—to pay their fares.

But they said nothing on this score until the time for taking tickets came.

"Oh, that's all right," said Skinner. "Bunty will foot the bill, and I'll square up with him later on."

"Oh, really, Skinney, that's hardly good enough, you know!"

"Got to be," said Harold Skinner airily. "I find I've left my cash behind."

"Don't be such a suspicious rotter, Fatty!" growled Bolsover, to whom it was a matter of perfect indifference who paid as long as his hand did not go into his pocket.

"That's all very well; but I don't trust Skinney—neither would you chaps. He's worse than a Hun about paying back. I'm not going—"

"You're going to have the licking of your fat life if you don't shell out this moment!" growled Bolsover meaningly.

Bunter shelled out. In the train he got an I O U from Skinner. Skinner did not mind giving him that. The cad of the Remove was quite Hunnish enough to regard such things as mere scraps of paper. Bunter might have enough of them to cover the walls of No. 7, for all Skinner cared.

The day was a bleak one. Grey clouds hung low, and a

VENTRILOQUISTS Double Throat; fits roof of mouth; astonishes and mystifies; sing like a canary, whine like a puppy, and imitate birds and beasts. Ventriloquism Treatise free. Sixpence each, four for 1s.—T. W. HARRISON (Dept. 0), 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.

50 COMIC SONGS. 150 Riddles and Conundrums, 1 Stump Speeches 1 Card and Dumbbell Tricks, 50 Jokes, 20 Humorous Recitations, 100 Witty Toasts, etc., etc. Lot 6d. (P.O.)—IDEAL PUBLISHING CO., CLEVEDON, SOM. 5 Comical Postcards, 6d.

INCREASE YOUR HEIGHT 2 to 3 inches. No Appliances 7/6
Its System never fails. Price 7/6 complete. Particulars id. stamp.
PROF. T. ROBINSON, LANCASTER ROAD, HARROGATE.

100 CONJURING TRICKS. 37 Joke Tricks, 30 Puzzles, 60 Games, 12 Love-letters, 23 Jokes, 30 Magic Tricks, 63 Many-Making Secrets (WORTH 10/-), 1001 more simple and attractive, 6d. P.O. the lot.—G. HUGHES & CO., HOCKLEY HEATH, BIRMINGHAM. Smoking Powder, 9d. Pkt.

IF YOU SUFFER from nervous, worried feelings, blushing, lack of self-confidence, will-power, mind concentration, or feel awkward in the presence of others, you should send at once 2 penny stamps for particulars of my guaranteed cure in 13 days.—GODFREY ELLIOTT-SMITH, 473, Imperial Bldgs., Ludgate Circus, London, E.C.

IF YOU WANT a Camera, send postcard for Samples and Catalogue FREE.—Works: JULY ROAD, LIVERPOOL. Good Cheap Photographic Material

Be sure to mention this paper when communicating with advertisers.

shrill nor'-easter whistled. To the merry footer party, well wrapped up and full of mirth, weather made little difference. But the rival expedition found travelling by a slow and unwarmed local train no great catch.

Bolsover was especially morose, and he made both Bunter and Skinner feel the weight of his displeasure.

"The biggest beastly wash-out I ever let myself in for!" he growled.

But Percy Bolsover did not yet guess how very big a washout the expedition was to prove before it was over!

Their train was late at the station at which they had to get out.

"We shall have to scoot if we're going to catch that blessed cattle train on the other line," growled Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, I can't run a yard! How can you expect me to with this heavy coat on?" groaned Bunter.

"You needn't unless you like. Shell out a couple of quid, and you can go back straight away, if it suits you," answered Bolsover.

Bunter looked round him wildly, ready to invoke the aid of a policeman, had such a representative of law and order been visible.

But no policeman was to be seen, and the Owl knew that Bolsover was quite capable of taking his money from him by force, while the rest would aid and abet without any fantastic scruples.

So Bunter ran, puffing and blowing and perspiring in spite of the cold. To keep him up to the mark, Bolsover ran behind him, and used a big boot whenever signs of flagging were shown.

They reached the little shed which served as a station for the light railway terminus one minute after the train should have departed—and waited forty minutes longer before it did depart.

As there was no waiting-room, there was necessarily no fire in the waiting-room. The six were a very dejected crew by the time the little train began to crawl on its way.

Bolsover used language of a blood-curdling description, and Fish kept up a running fire of grumbling, making comparisons between the absurd railway arrangements of this effete and out-of-date little island and those of the great "Amurrican continent." It was, unfortunately, a fire which did not serve to warm anybody, though Fishy felt somewhat warmer —also somewhat sore—after Bolsover had lost patience with him, and taken measures accordingly.

At last they reached Wetherden, and alighted. They had to alight, because the line ran no further. But even the evidences of human habitation scarcely convinced Bolsover that this could be their destination.

"Where's the town?" he demanded threateningly, as though insisting that one of his companions should produce it on the instant from his pockets, or suffer dire penalties for default.

The grey-headed man, who seemed to be the station staff rolled into one, grinned.

"I never heerd tell of no town," he said. "The village —sich as it is—lies somethin' better than a mile an' a half away."

"He means something worse," said Stott hopelessly.

"There's a tea-shop there, I suppose?" said Snoop.

"There worn't when I were there last," was the reply.

"When was that?" snapped Bolsover. "Don't you live at Wetherden?"

"Ees, mournin'. Oh, yes, I live there all right; though I shouldn't if I'd anywheres else to live."

All this sounded very hopeful indeed. Bolsover scowled upon his fellow-adventurers, and Harold Skinner began to wonder whether the game was worth the candle. But he did not drop it. As they had come so far, at considerable personal inconvenience, it scarcely seemed worth while to the amiable mind of Harold Skinner to go back without causing as much inconvenience as possible to their enemies.

"Oh, come along, you chaps!" he said. "I dare say it isn't half as bad as that old fool makes out. Anyway—come along!"

And they came along, grumbling, one and all. The merry blades were enjoying themselves immensely!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Fought, and Fairly Won!

"THIS is IT!" said Rob Cherry, as the big motor swept on at a fine pace, through villages and over bridges, by leafless woods and swollen streams, under the grey sky.

Everyone agreed. They were ruddy with health; they were well protected against the biting wind; and they had a footer match in prospect. What more could they want?

"Happen to know where Bunter and that rat-faced merchant—oh, yes, Skinner, by gad—and the buffalo-bull specimen—Bolsover, is it?—and their merry little lot are off to this afternoon?" asked the Caterpillar.

It had been quite easy to get Frank Courtenay's consent to fill a place in the team. But De Courcy had pretended that he considered the match a bore, though the invitation was an honour, of course, and had only agreed at length to go "so that Franky shouldn't feel hipped, by gad!"

"Don't know, and don't care," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, by gad, I don't care either," answered the Caterpillar. "Only I feel some slight interest in them as queer specimens, y'know. They're not so interesting as the merry Pon, of course; Pon really is worth watchin', by gad! But they have their merry little ways, and when I saw them at Northside Station bullyragging one another about who should pay for the tickets, I just happened to wonder whither they were bound, and wherefore. That's all. It's of no consequence, of course. If you come to that, nothing's of any real consequence—only some things are a trifle more interesting than others. Pon, for instance."

"Thing's the word for Pon," remarked the Bounder.

"That's it, dear boy—quite the word!"

The footballers did not pass the station in reaching Wetherden, and their first impressions of that remote spot were not quite so bad as those of the rival party. But they were not charmed with it. Frankly, Wetherden did not amount to much, and they could not help wondering why a military camp should have been constructed there.

But there was the camp, and there were their opponents, ready and eager to begin. And there was a crowd of cheerful Tommies to look on; and there was a decent public-house, at which the char-a-banc was put up, and tea ordered for after the game.

"A lot of kids!" they heard one Tommy say. "Our chaps ought to fairly chaw them up!"

They smiled. Beaten they might be; but they were not afraid of being disgraced.

The military team looked all over them as regarded weight and strength. But there are many other things in football besides weight and strength.

A six-foot lieutenant tossed with Wharton, and the visiting skipper won. He elected to play with the wind.

The inclusion of the two Highcliffe players, both forwards, made it necessary that one of the Greyfriars juniors should leave their usual places; but it was a pretty lefty and workmanlike side that lined up thus:

Delarey; Field and Bull; Cherry, Todd, and Nugent; De Courcy, Vernon-Smith, Wharton, Courtenay, and Hurree Singh.

The opposing side were rather at sea to start with. They were all capable players; but they lacked knowledge of one another's play. For the first quarter of an hour the mere kids, playing together admirably, faced overman them, and the generous Tommies around the ropes roared applause.

The Bounder was the first to score, with a deft hook past the goalkeeper in a mix-up in front of goal. Then Wharton put in a real piledriver from twenty-five yards' range, and the wind helped him by swerving it just as the goalie seemed to have covered it. Frank Courtenay had a turn, and a crossshot from his foot found the net.

But soon the khaki team buckled up. The tall lieutenant, an old Oxford Blue, played a dashing and clever game at centre-forward, and behind him, at centre-half, a short, hardbitten little man, showed fine form. He could not have been much under forty; but for all that, as they learned later, an old First League pro. and as fit as training could make him.

These two were conspicuous in a hot attack on the visiting team's goal. Twice Delarey saved in fine style; then the little man sent in a high shot, as the Highcliffe skipper leaped to meet it, the big man charged him, ball and all, into the net.

"Awfully sorry, old top!" said the big man.

"Oh, don't mench! It's all in the game," replied Delarey coolly.

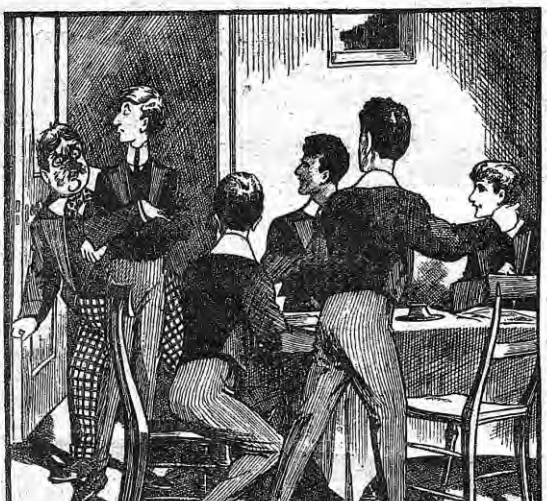
Wharton kicked off, and De Courcy and Vernon-Smith ran the ball up on their wing. The Caterpillar centred well, but Wharton's shot went a foot or so wide. From the goal-kick the ball was transferred to the other half.

Delarey was nailing good; there was no mistake about that. His coolness was an invaluable asset to a goalkeeper. Between Bulstrode or Hazeldene, some of them thought him. But, as a matter of fact, the South African junior had no wish to get a place in the junior team as goalie. He knew that the forward line was his proper sphere.

The best goalkeeper cannot stop everything. Delarey had no chance of saving the shot which gave the khaki team its second goal. It might have beaten anybody.

This was none too good. The visitors had the advantage of a strong wind, and, to possess a decent chance of winning, must be more than two goals up before changing over.

But now Frank Courtenay and Inky came well into the picture. The mabob ran the ball up along the touch-line, with



Bull was satisfied, for the pellet landed plump upon the Owl's fat little nose. "Ow! Bull, you beast——" (*See Chapter 2.*)

the Highcliffe man in close attendance. Inky passed in deftly, Courtenay trapped, made as if to pass the leather to Wharton, and then swerved round a defaded back with it at his toes.

He went hot-foot for goal with a half in close pursuit. But the half was panting and straining. Courtenay was not. An extra spurt, the goalkeeper kept guessing, a clever feint, and the ball was in the net.

Then Bob Cherry headed in from a scrimmage in the goalmouth, and just before half-time Peter Todd found the net with a shot that seemed uncannily to find its way through a small forest of legs.

So the interval was taken with the score six to two in favour of the schoolboy team, and that meant a stern chase for the heavier and more powerful side.

"Did you perceive the dear Bolsover, Wharton?" asked the Caterpillar, as they were about to line up again.

"No, I didn't. You don't mean to say Bolsover was on the ground? My hat! I wonder what that means?" said Harry, in surprise.

"Give it up, dear boy. There really isn't time to think it out. But I take it that Bolsover's presence means that the rest of the merry gang—Punter and Skinner and that Yankee specimen—are on the spot. Don't ask me what for. But in the day's prior to my comin' under Franky's chastening influence, an' bein' plucked like a brand from the burnin', I might have offered you a small bet that the merry lads aren't here for any good."

Harry quite agreed. But he could not see what Bolsover & Co. could very well do to make things unpleasant for them. The whole business puzzled him.

But he soon forgot it in the excitement of the game.

For now he and his team had a hard task to face. They must cling tightly to their lead, for it did not look likely that they would get through again.

The advantage of the wind was really a bigger one to the

khaki team than it had been to them, apart from the fact that it was now blowing with greater strength. The military backs and halves kicked hard, lifting the ball; the forwards played the rushing game, using their weight very effectively, though quite fairly.

Wharton and his men found themselves penned, kept almost wholly on the defensive. Scan forwards as well as backs and halves were playing close up to the goal-line, except that the Caterpillar and Inky hung about further up field, waiting for chances that hardly seemed likely to come.

It was only a question of time for the home side to score. They had to wait twenty minutes before they could put on their third point of the game, but a fourth came within three minutes, and a fifth soon after.

Then the Caterpillar broke away, and made a splendid single-handed run which was only just not successful.

Again he had the leather, and found Wharton and Inky in line with him. The three of them made a fine raid, passing from one to another. But again there was narrow failure at the very finish.

Then, with twenty minutes still to go, the tall lieutenant put his side level, and the thousand Tommies roared to their side to put on another and win.

Easier said than done!

Squiff and Johnny Bull played up like Trojans. Delarey saved again and again. The long legs of Peter Todd carried him wherever the fight was hottest. Bob Cherry was all there. Frank Nugent, better used to a place among the backs, had shown to less advantage than anyone else so far. Not once had he been really conspicuous, though he had put in some useful work in a quiet way.

Now, with the referee looking at his watch, Frank saw his chance.

They told him afterwards that he had not been in his place. It was true. But the ball had come out to him, and he found himself unmarked. It was "a long, long way" to the other goal, but he went for it like an unleashed greyhound.

Up the field rushed the forwards. But Frank was well ahead of them all. Quite on his own he tricked and passed two men, and his speed never slackened. A big back bore down upon him. In the very nick of time Frank passed.

Inky might have trapped, but he let the ball pass on to Courtenay, better placed for a shot. The Highcliffe skipper put in a regular pile-driver. But the wind made the leather hang, and the goalkeeper got a number eleven boot to it.

It sped down the field. But Squiff yelled lustily as he saw Bob Cherry arrest its flight and pass it coolly to Peter Todd.

Bob was not cooler than Teddy. Teddy kept the ball low, ran it on, and swung it across to the Bounder just as he was tackled.

The Bounder was as cool as either of them. A man was rushing him, but De Courcy was unmarked. The Bounder passed, side-stepped, and let his would-be tackler measure his length.

For an instant the gusty wind lulled, and in that instant the Caterpillar sent in a high diagonal shot—a rare nasty one to stop. The goalkeeper got his fingers to it, but Harry

YOU MUST NOT FAIL TO TURN TO THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Very Hard Case of Bolsover & Co.

SKINNER came out of the yard of the Coach and Horses Inn with Wetherden and Stott, rather a scared lot.

"Where's Bolsover?" he asked sharply.

Bunter, Fishy, Snoop, and Stott stood in a forlorn little group in the dull village street. They were not enjoying themselves in the very least.

They had declined to share the cask of doing what was to be done, and Bolsover major and Skinner, recognising the fact that half a dozen fellows would be rather a crowd for the job in hand, had sneaked in together to accomplish the fell deed.

It was done now. Very little petrol was left in the tank of the big motor vehicle, and none at all in the bidons carried as a reserve stock. Unless the driver happened to make a careful investigation before starting, there would be a stoppage before Wharton & Co. were far from Wetherden. It did not seem likely that he would be very careful, for, mindful of regulations, he had brought a bottle with him to tide over the hours during which no alcoholic drinks might be served, and was attending to the bottle assiduously. Moreover, Wetherden looked just the sort of place where no one but an optimist could hope to buy petrol—or anything else he wanted in a hurry.

Skinner and Bolsover had barely done their job when there was an alarm. They took refuge in different hiding-places. Bolsover had the better luck. He was able to sneak out inside five minutes. But Skinner found his exit barred, and by trembling in some not over clean straw for fully twenty minutes ensured his chance to escape unseen.

He was not by any means in a pleasant temper, and the reply he got to his query did not tend to improve his feelings.

"He said he was going on to the field to have a squint at the game," said Stott.

"My hat, what a silly idiot! If any of the other rotters see him our game's fairly given away!" returned Skinner.

"Jerusalem crickets! Skinney, don't you open your saurp-trap too wide about our game!" said Fishy. "I calculate I wasn't in this—not if there's heap big trouble about it!"

"What did you come for, then?" howled Skinner.

"To have a look at this hyer one-horse show of a village, an' see just precisely how far this effete little planet can jog behind the times," replied Fishy. "Republic ain't built that coolly. "And I don't mind tellin' you that I guess I've seen enough. The sooner we make back tracks the better it's going to suit this galoot. Wetherden's no class. I reckon the people here are all deaders, only the unfortunate critters don't know, an' so keep on walkin' about."

"Oh, ring off, you rotten neutral, or you'll be getting a thick ear!" snapped Harold Skinner angrily. "What's that you say, Bunter?"

"I—I—I only said that I'm not in it any more than Fishy is," stammered the Owl. "I don't know what you've been doing in there, and I don't want to. I should never have agreed to emptying all the petrol away. A dirty trick, I call it! Owl! Lemme alone!"

"Why, you lying, fat worm, you've deeper in it than anybody; in fact, right up to your fat neck!" howled Wetherden, shaking Bunter furiously. "You financed the whole thing!"

"I didn't!" bleated Bunter. "I lent you money, that's all. I've got your I O U's for it—you know I have, Skinney!"

"You're welcome to them," replied Skinner, grinning coolly. "Much good may they do you!"

"Hallo, here's Boley!" said Stott, just in time to prevent Sidney James Snoop from adding his disclaimer of any part in the plot to those of Fishy and Bunter.

Stott would probably have followed suit. But neither he nor Snoop was prepared to risk it in the presence of Percy Bolsover.

No one asked how the game was going. No one but Bolsover felt the smallest interest in it.

"We'd better go and get some tea," said Skinner.

For a moment the face of William George Bunter was wreathed in cherubic smiles.

Here at last was something worth doing.

Then it clouded again. For Bunter remembered who would have to pay for that tea. Even Skinner's I O U's would not comfort him now that he knew the value Skinner himself attached to them.

"Where? that's the question," said Bolsover, with a sniff.

The rest looked round rather helplessly. In the wind-swept street there was no sign of anything in the nature of a teashop. One could not make a tea off bullseyes, peppermints, and fly-blown sticks of rock. To go to the Coach and Horses was out of the question, of course.

"We must find another pub," said Stott, not very hopefully.

They found a beerhouse; the kind of place at which any one of them would have turned up his nose at an ordinary time. But they were all hungry, and it was a case of any port in a storm.

Tea which tasted like a decoction of ink and dish-rags, thick bread spread with what might have been called butter by a Hun war correspondent, a cake so doubtful in appearance that only Bunter had the temerity to sample, and some cheese which looked like yellow soap, and tasted like nothing else on earth—such was the tea they got at the sign of the Shepherd's Crook. Everything was twenty-fifth rate except the bill. Bunter gasped when that was presented. But he had to pay; and, such as they scrambled at the fare, no one seemed to consider that what was paid for it was a matter of any consequence—no one but Paymaster Bunter, that is.

"We'd better get along to the station now," growled Bolsover.

Everyone sadly agreed. From the footer-field came cheerful shouts. The game was not yet over.

"They may think they're all right-ho; but they'll sing another tune in an hour or so, I guess!" said Skinner spitefully.

The rest seemed to find in this reflection but cold comfort.

As they drew near the little station their uneasiness increased. There was not the least sign of life about the place.

"Oh, there's plenty of time yet!" said Skinner. "The last train doesn't go for twenty minutes."

"Are you sure there is a last train?" growled Bolsover.

"There must be, fathead!"

"Yes; but it may have gone," said Snoop dismally.

"Not likely! I was jolly careful looking up the time-table, I can tell you."

Skinner had been careful—in every way but one. He had not supplied himself with an up-to-date time-table. The last train—the train by which they should have travelled—had been knocked off at the beginning of the month.

Bolsover turned furiously upon Skinner when once this fact was put beyond doubt.

"I'll pound you into a jelly for this!" he howled.

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"If you do, none of you will get back to-night," he said coolly. "You're like a lot of silly kids. I suppose one of you could have asked about the trains, couldn't you?"

"We trusted to you," said Snoop weakly.

"It doesn't pay to do that," replied Skinner, getting much nearer the truth than any of them all used for him. For, indeed, it did not pay to trust Harold Skinner.

The only thing was to go back to "that dog-hole," as Bolsover politely called the village, and see what could be done in the way of hiring a car of some kind.

They went, sullenly and on the worst of terms with one another. Before the village was reached Bolsover had smitten Sidney James Snoop on the nose, even to the effusion of blood, had kicked Bunter till that unfortunate junior howled with pain, and had hustled Fishy and Farncombe into a muddy ditch. In the case of Skinner and Stott, he contented himself with verbal abuse; but, to make up for it, those two pleasant specimens fell foul of one another, and would have damaged each other's good deal had their ability to do so been equal to their will.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

On the Road Back!

BY the time the adventurers had reached Wetherden again the match was over, and the two teams were adjourning to the Coach and Horses for an excellent tea.

The six, huddled up together in a dark corner that they might not be seen, saw them go, and said many unsavoury things about them.

It was quite dark by the time the char-a-banc started. The wind was blowing great guns now, and black clouds raced across the sky.

"By gad, I should say that this is a dirty night in the Channel!" remarked the Caterpillar languidly.

"I should call it a dirty night here," said Frank Nugent, shivering a little.

Harree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, was shivering too much to feel at all inclined to say anything.

But they went off cheerfully, with the ringing "Hoorays!" of their opponents to hearten them, and no notion that anything aboard was wrong. The driver had filled up his tank before settling down to his bottle, and had not even glanced at it again before starting.

They had travelled about five miles when the discovery was made.

"Petrol running low," said the chauffeur. "Will one of you young gents give a hand with the lamp?"

Bob Cherry got out. Inside the char-a-banc there had been shelter from the wind and the rain, driving fast now. But on the road the force of the blast was such that keeping one's feet became a matter of difficulty, and the sleety rain cut cruelly at Bob's face.

Bob was the first to get some notion what had happened. While the man at his side stared stupidly at empty bidons which he knew should be full, Bob grasped the situation. How they had come to be empty was for the moment quite a minor matter. The important thing was that they were empty.

"I say, Harry—Courtenay!" he called. "Get down, will you? No, not the rest of you: stay where you are. It's not a blessed picnic out here!"

Wharton and Frank Courtenay got down, and with them came the Caterpillar, prompted, as he said lazily, by his insatiable curiosity.

"This," he said, when he had heard what was the state of affairs, "is plainly the work of the bullheaded merchant—oh, by gad, yes. Bolsover's the name. Wharton—not that it matters!"

"I don't think Bolsover would do a thing like this," said Harry Wharton doubtfully. "It's too beastly thick for anything. Why, we may be hung up all night here!"

"There's an old adage—not that I believe in 'em much, generally speakin', by gad—which says that a fellow is known by the company he keeps," replied the Caterpillar, in Harry's ear. "And it must be admitted that the virtuous Bolsover wasn't exactly in the choicest of company when I saw him at Courtfield Station."

"I'm afraid there is something in it," said Harry reluctantly. "I suppose the whole rotten gang followed us up to put this beastly trick through. Question is now—what's to be done?"

"What's gone wrong?" howled Johnny Bull from inside.

"Oh, stay where you are, and don't ask silly questions!" snapped Harry.

"No use getting your wool off, dear boy," said the Caterpillar, in his cool drawl.

But Johnny was down beside them now, and Squiff and Peter Todd and Delarey followed.

"Staying where I am is good enough for me a bit longer," said the Bounder. And Inky and Frank Nugent, both shivering still, also stayed.

The driver did not know this road very well, it appeared. But he knew it was at least five miles to the next village, and he reckoned it at about fifty to one against petrol being obtainable there.

This sounded very hopeful indeed.

"Is that a signpost over there?" asked Toddy, with chattering teeth. "If it is, we are within a mile of a biggish house, and when we passed this afternoon I saw a car in the yard. I should think the folks there would let us have some petrol at a pinch like this."

"I guess not," growled the driver. "Them that's got petrol hangs on to it pretty tight these days."

"By gad, my man, it's a pity you did not hang on a bit tighter to what you had!" said the Caterpillar sharply.

Frank Courtenay nudged him. It was no use getting their driver's back up, he thought.

But that back was already up. The fellow absolutely refused to go along to the house Peter Todd spoke of. He did not believe there was any such house, he said; and, if there was, they would get no petrol there; and he didn't care a rotten potato if he stayed all night where he was—someone would have to pay him for it.

They had not expected him to go alone, but they had thought he might have a better chance of getting the petrol than they had. As it was, some of them must go and do their best.

In the event, nine of them went together, leaving only Nugent and Inky in the car. For, now that there was something definite to be done, the Bounder was no better content to sit idle than the rest were.

AN AMAZING OFFER

to readers of the COMPANION PAPERS.

ORIGINAL SKETCHES BY THE FOLLOWING FAMOUS ARTISTS:

C. H. Chapman, R. J. Macdonald, P. Hayward, E. E. Briscoe, J. A. Cummiags, A. Jones, Harry Lane.

FOR NEXT TO NOTHING!

All you have to do is to send three of the coupons appearing below, together with three from this week's issue of the "Penny Popular," to "Picture Department," the MAGNET *Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C., together with a penny stamp for postage, and a magnificent sketch by one of the above artists will be sent to you. When writing do not fail to state the name of the artist whose sketch you require.*

PICTURE COUPON ("Magnet")

I, ... of .....

.....

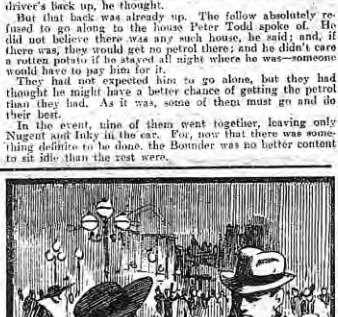
.....

.....

beg to apply for an original sketch by *(state here the artist's name)*

.....

I enclose the necessary coupons—three from the MAGNET No. 464, and three from the "Penny Popular" No. 221, together with a penny stamp for postage.



Secrets of a Great City

This thrilling, powerful story of mystery, romance, and adventure in modern London, is appearing in that well-known paper the

JESTER

Get a Copy To-day.

ONE PENNY. EVERYWHERE.

The wind was behind them, and they moved along the dark road at a good pace.

"But it will be rough enough, by gad, on the way back!" said the Caterpillar consolingly.

They reached the house at length. But it was nearer two miles than one from where they had halted.

"Don't look very likely," said Squiff, looking up at the dark front. "There doesn't seem to be anyone at home."

"It's too early yet for them to have gone to bed," growled Johnny Bull. "I'll make the merchants hear if there are any of 'em about!"

And he dragged on the bell-pull with all his strength, while Bob Cherry agitated the knocker in no half-hearted manner.

No response!

"Week-ending, I guess," said Delarey, smiling grimly in the darkness.

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry continued their discordant duet. And at last an answer came.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Unsolved Mystery.

"WHO'S there?" called a harsh voice from inside the heavy oak door.

"We're strangers to you," answered Wharton, yelling at the top of his voice to make himself heard above the howling wind. "We've run out of petrol, and are hung up a couple of miles down the road."

"Your misfortune. You'll get no petrol here!" said the voice, with an unpleasant snap to it.

"I say, you know, you can't be so churlish as that!" shouted Frank Courtenay.

But it appeared that the person with the harsh voice not only could, but meant to be.

He made no answer. They shouted again, and still he did not reply. Whether he had gone from the door or not they could only guess. But they were soon forced to guess that he had.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" yelled Bob Cherry.

But all Bob's yelling was of no effect.

"It wouldn't be a bad move to go round to the back," said the Bounder. "I fancy we can get what we need if we only worry them enough. But this isn't enough."

They marched round to the back. As they turned the corner of the house the wind met them with great violence, almost taking them off their feet.

A high wall shut off the house there. There was a gate in it, but the gate was fast or barred.

"Who is game for going over?" asked the Bounder.

"Are you?" snapped Johnny Bull.

"Yes, or I shouldn't have suggested it."

"I'll go, by gad, if anyone will give me a leg-up!" said De Courcy.

"So will I," volunteered Johnny Bull, repenting his snappiness.

Vernon-Smith went first, and the other two quickly followed, the Caterpillar begging plaintively for a good leg-up to lessen his own trouble. He got so good a one that he came down on Bull's head.

Johnny said things.

"Hist!" said the Bounder in Bull's ear. "Don't make that silly row! There's something going on here that I don't quite fumble to. Just you listen."

There were lights in the back part of the house, and one of these showed a gleaming in the basement. The Bounder's quick ears had caught sounds from within that grating. Now the others heard, too.

Some machinery was at work there.

"Sounds like a printer's place, by gad!" said the Caterpillar.

"What's the odds?" said Johnny Bull. "The thing is whether the rotters inside will let us have petrol or not. What they're playing at in their own house isn't our blaney."

They rapped hard at the back door. But they had to go on rapping for some time before anyone came.

At last the door was flung open. A man stood there with a lamp in his hand. He scowled at them menacingly. It was not one to be exactly welcome like, but the scowl was plain enough. And the Bounder thought that he could also detect upon the man's face a look of anxiety. The Bounder was more than commonly shrewd, and he felt pretty sure that whatever was going on in that basement workshop was a dead secret.

"Petrol? We've none. If we had you wouldn't get any of it, confound you! How did you get in here?"

"Over the wall, by gad, as you were so rude as to lock the gate!" was the Caterpillar's swift answer.

"Then you'll go back over the wall inside ten seconds, or——"

"Excuse my interrupting you, sir," said the Bounder. "But I should really like to know what——"

"Get out of this, or I'll let daylight through you!" roared the man, producing a revolver.

NEXT MONDAY— "GETTING RICH QUICK!"

"Can't be did. There isn't any left!" said the Caterpillar, not turning a hair.

But it was time for them to go, they saw, and they went. The man with the shooting-iron unbent so far as to let them out of the gate.

"We really have no petrol," he said; "and there is an invalid in the house—a mental case. It is most important that he should not be in any way upset."

With the gate locked behind them they took counsel with their comrades.

The consensus of opinion favoured a return—on foot, of course—to Wetherden. If petrol could not be got there, they must try to find some other method of getting back. The village ahead offered no certainty of either.

So they fought their way back against the roaring wind and the stinging sleet. As they drew near the place where the chara-banc stood they became aware of a confused sound of voices, amidst which some of them discerned the high notes of Billy Bunter's vocal organs.

Then, in the light of the lamps, they saw that there had been a smash-up. A horse, with the broken shafts of a market-cart still fastened to its harness, stood by the side of the road, trembling and drenched. Grouped round a man with a whip in his hand were Nugent, Inky, the chauffeur, Bolsover, Bunter, Fish, Skinner, Stott, and Snoop!

Driver and chauffeur were arguing heatedly as to whose fault the collision was. Bolsover & Co. looked as though they had come to a hanging party in the rôle of chief performers.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry.

"My hat, the rotters!" gasped Wharton.

"Oh, Perfidee, Perjoise!" said Peter Todd sadly.

Through the wind and the rain the hoot of a motor-horn behind them came to their ears.

And just at that moment a voice broke in on them.

"Excuse me, young gentlemen," said the voice, "but I think you are in need of petrol. You may be able to get it at a house a couple of hundred yards or so down the road to the right, where I know that a car is kept."

Some of them recognised the voice as that of the man who had spoken to them from the front of the lonely house.

But there was recognition of another sort. A lamp was held up, and the light fell full upon his face. He stepped back at once, as if unwilling to be seen. But Bunter had seen him, and the Bounder heard the words Bunter gasped into Skinner's ear.

"Skinney—that man—he's the chap who dropped the pocket——"

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" hissed Skinner, with a fearful glance around. But he could not discern that anyone had heard. The Bounder showed no quite obvious sign.

Now the car behind had reached them, and had perforce to pull up, since the road was pretty completely blocked.

But the motorist's annoyance gave place to sympathy when he was told the true state of affairs—as far as it was possible to tell him it. For the honour of Greyfriars some part of it must be kept secret.

He had petrol to spare, and he supplied them.

"I suppose we'll have to take these cads on board?" said Harry Wharton to his chums. "They'll never get home to-night if we don't."

"Personally," said the Caterpillar, "I really don't mind that."

But Frank Courtenay, good-tempered Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Inky were all for mercy; and Peter Todd said that, although his prize porpoise would be much more respectable dead, yet he would not like him to die in a blizzard; and Vernon-Smith appeared to be thinking so hard that he did not answer when asked for his opinion.

So the six adventurers were taken up and huddled together at the back, whence proceeded frantic yells to time the most piteous groan from Bunter, who declared that he was being squashed to a jelly. It was no pleasant drive for any of them, and their forebodings of rough justice after their return did not help to make it less wearisome.

As for Harry Wharton & Co., wet, tired, and hungry though they were, they were yet cheery. After all, things had not turned out so badly for them.

But one member of the team Wingate had sent to Wetherden was very thoughtful indeed. The Bounder had no relish for unsolved mysteries. There was a mystery about that lonely house with the clank of a printing-press going in its basement; and in some way, at some distance, Bunter and Skinner were connected with that mystery!

So Herbert Vernon-Smith was thinking hard as the big char-a-banc rolled on through the wind and rain, carrying the six chastened plotters and those they had sought to harm —victims in a sense, yet in a double sense victors!

THE END.

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Our Great School Serial.

THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINGHAM.

By Richard Randolph.

THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS TOLD HOW

two new boys appeared at Franklingham School on the same day. One is a senior—CONRAD HARDING CARDENDEN—the cousin and enemy of HARRY GRANVILLE, the popular captain of the school. The other is a junior—JOHNNY GOGGS, who looks soft, but is by no means as soft as he looks. Goggs chums up with three other members of the Fourth—BLOUNT, THICKETT, and WATERS—and shares their study. Goggs is quite an exceptionally good all-round athlete for a boy of his age, but he does not blow his own trumpet, and though his chums know that he can run and jump, and that he has made a heavy entry for the school sports, it is quite by chance that his ability as a footballer is discovered. In the school sports Goggs shows up finely, and it is mainly through him that his House secures first place, beating Hayter's by a single point. Goggs' uncle pays him a flying visit, and warns him against Cardenden. Cardenden meets a dissipated adventurer, MR. BRIGHTON FORTESCUE, and conceives the idea of using him in a plot against Granville. In a House Cup-tie between Hayter's and Grayson's, Cardenden brutally fouls Goggs, and is sent off the field. The junior pluckily plays on, in spite of a dislocated wrist, and Grayson's win by 5—4. Some of the juniors concoct a plan of vengeance against Cardenden, but Goggs refuses to take part in it, and warns his enemy by means of an unsigned letter to be wary. The ragging comes off. Cardenden returns in the middle of it, and prefects arrive on the scene. Goggs also appears, having grown anxious about his chums. Tilson has seen Cardenden coming out of the village inn. The prefects tell the senior plainly what they think of him, and suggest that the sooner he leaves Franklingham the better it will be for the school. The part Goggs has played—and does not deny—in warning Cardenden causes him to be sent to Coventry by all the juniors except his three special chums. They stand by him; and as he is plainly incapable of fighting Allardyce himself, with an arm in a sling, Blount takes up the battle for him. Cardenden and Fortescue meet again.

(Now read on.)

Stopping the Fight.

"Let's go over and talk in there," Cardenden said. "It's going to rain before long, I reckon; and, anyway, I mustn't be seen with you."

"Is there anything in the appearance of yours to a cinder that marks him out as an unfit person for a Franklingham senior to converse with?" asked Mr. Fortescue playfully.

There was. But Cardenden did not say so.

"It isn't that," he answered. "You'll tumble when I've told you what I want done. If we are spotted together now, it may give rise to suspicion later on."

They clambered over the gate, and made their way to the barn, which was half-filled with straw. Feeling safe there, Cardenden accepted one of the big cigars, and condescended to empile his companion's flask.

Then he proceeded to tell the story of himself and his cousin. He did not tell the whole truth, and he said a good deal that was not true at all. But that was Cardenden's way.

"I twig," said Fortescue, laying a dirty forefinger against a purple nose. "It's like this. Cousin Harry has made himself obnoxious to you. One good reason for settling his hash! Cousin Harry stands in your way. If he gets the dibs, you don't. There's no chance of an equal divvy-up, but he don't know that—a point to you, dear boy! And a second good reason for upsetting his apple-cart. It should not be past the wit of a man to hit upon a device. I take it that the dear uncle would kick him out if he happened to be kicked out here—eh?"

"Ship him off to Australia or New Zealand with fifty pounds in his pocket, I guess," Cardenden answered. "Oh, yes, expulsion would do the trick! I've had that in mind all along. But I can't see how to work it."

"Hasn't Cousin Harry any little weakness? Doesn't he put a bit on the gee-gees now and then? Is the flowing bowl poison to him? Doesn't he ever go on the ran-tan-tan?"

"No! If he did, it would be ever so much easier. There's no working it that way, Fortescue. He and all the rest of the gang are mere schoolboys; they haven't any taste for that sort of thing."

"Then," said the adventurer, gripping Cardenden's knee, "it must be managed by other means! He wouldn't be guilty; it's only necessary that he should appear so—see? The question is, what do I stand in for? This isn't the sort of thing to be done for a trifle, dear boy—understand that! I shall have to take the risk of appearing before a stony-hearted judge and jury on a charge of conspiracy. Moreover, I must do some heavy bribing. I shall want cash down, and an undertaking as to more to come."

"You won't find me a screw," Cardenden answered. "As far as the present moment goes, I can't shell out heavily. But if you can work the oracle properly, I'll undertake to pay you two pounds a month till I go up to Oxford, five pounds a month after that—I'm bound to have a good allowance then—and a couple of hundred down when the old man goes off the hooks."

Fortescue's eyes gleamed with greed. This was more than he had expected. But at present it was merely a promise; he must see to it that he kept such a hold over Cardenden as would ensure the fulfilment of the promise. And he must not bungle. If he made a mess of the plot he would lose the best chance of blackmail that had ever come his way.

So he set his brains to work, and they were cunning brains. And he proceeded to outline to his companion a scheme for bringing about Harry Granville's ruin.

Meanwhile, the juniors had arrived, and when Cardenden glanced out of the door to see whether the expected rain had

NEXT MONDAY— "GETTING RICH QUICK!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

yet come on, he saw quite a crowd of Fourth-Formers in the field.

"Oh, confound it!" he said. "We shall have to wait here until they've cleared off. They mustn't see me. What on earth can they be after?"

"It looks to me like a fight, dear boy," answered Fortescue.

"Yes, I really think it must be a fight."

There could be little doubt about that. Bags and Allardyce were peeling for the fray, and the rest had formed a rough ring, inside which were only the two combatants and their seconds, Trickett and Bliss.

They faced one another now, without gloves.

An encounter of this sort was a rare thing at Frankleigham. Nowadays there is far less fighting at public schools than there used to be a few years ago. Impromptu struggles in class-room or dormitory or quadrangle, more or less friendly spars with gloves in the gym—these things were common enough. But some of those present had never seen an organised fight with bare fists in real earnest.

Grayson's v. Hayter's again! Grayson's had won the Williamson Shield, and had pulled off a fine victory in the House Cup-tie. But they could hardly hope to score in this minor event.

Bags meant to die game, of course. His good-tempered face had taken on a look of stern resolution. But he was not as clever with his fists as Allardyce, and he knew it, and everybody else knew it, too.

"You'd better shake hands first," said Champneys, who was to referee.

They shook hands. There was no malice between them. They had always been pretty good friends, and had much in common.

Then they drew back a foot or two, and squared up again.

At that moment the sound of a dog's bark came—or seemed to come—from the road.

"That's old Scamp!" cried Benton. "Grayson's jolly sure to be close handy if Scamp's about! We're in for a beastly row, all of us!"

"Shove on your coats, you two," said Champneys. "He'll smell a rat, anyway; but he won't catch you fighting, he can't very well do anything. We're not out of bounds."

Goggs stepped forward with Bags' jacket, and helped him on with it, looking as innocent as a new-born babe. And not even Bags, for all that he knew, suspected Goggs.

Two or three of the juniors sauntered towards the gate, trying to look unconcerned, and making but a very poor job of it.

They looked up the road. They looked down the road.

Neither Mr. Grayson nor the brindled Scamp was visible.

But the view in one direction was a short one, owing to a curve of the road. It was just possible, though it did not seem likely, that the Housemaster had passed the gate with-out looking into the field, and without being seen by those inside.

The scouts ran back and reported.

It was not a pleasant state of affairs. There was too big an element of doubt in the situation.

"If we go over into that corner," said Bliss, "we shall be out of sight from the gate, anyway. It's jolly near the road, though, and you chaps will have to remember not to shout."

This would be difficult. To watch a fight and not to shout your man on—it was scarcely worth calling a fight under such conditions!

But they moved into the corner.

This brought them quite close to the barn in which Cardenden and his fellow-conspirator were hidden.

Fortescue was eager to see the fray. Cardenden was not.

"Mere kids!" he said, with a sniff of contempt.

"But the youngsters have science, dear boy," answered the other scornfully. "I don't mind betting you two to one in quids that the dark-haired infant wins."

This was Allardyce. Cardenden took the bet, though he had little hope of being paid if he won.

Now the two fared each other again, and again there came an interruption.

"I tell you I saw them in here, Hayter!" said Mr. Grayson's voice.

"Nonsense, my dear fellow! They can't all have cleared off so quickly," answered Mr. Hayter. "Besides, there is a match to-day. They will all be on the ground."

"I think not, if a fight should tempt them away. I can trust my own eyes, in any case. Goggs, are you there?"

The voice was raised on this question. No one there doubted that the two Housemasters had met in the road on the other side of the hedge—no one, that is, but Johnny Goggs. And he can hardly be said to have doubted, for he knew they had met.

Again the sound of Scamp's bark came to the ears of the listeners. Again Bags and Allardyce hurried on their jackets, and the rest tried to make their faces look perfectly innocent.

"Are you going to answer, Goggs?" snapped Allardyce.

"I really do not see why I should," replied the new junior coolly. "And I do not think you ought to speak to me, Allardyce, as you have put me in Coventry!"

The giggles that this evoked did not tend to make Allardyce feel better-tempered.

"I think you'd better answer, old man, or we shall have those two over the gate in half a jiffy," said Bags.

"Very good, Bags! If you wish it, I will reply."

And even then Bags suspected nothing.

No Fight, After All!

"Yes, sir! Did I hear you call me, sir?" cried Goggs.

Back came the answer at once:

"You know best whether you heard, Goggs! You have taken your time about replying! What is going on there? And who are with you?"

"Say we're—we're—oh, playing kiss-in-the-ring or something, you idiot!" prompted Allardyce.

"We are playing kiss-in-the-ring or something, you idiot!" said Goggs at once.

Consternation fell upon the crowd of juniors. Goggs must really be mad, after all. Who ever heard of such an answer being given to a master?

"Now you've done it, you—you absolute ass!" hissed Allardyce.

"Really, Allardyce, I fail to see what you have to complain about!" repeated what you said word for word."

"I did not catch your remark, Goggs. What was it?" came—or seemed to come—from over the hedge.

"We are just about to start back, sir, as it seems to have begun raining," said Goggs.

Great drops of rain began to fall at that moment.

"You had better take shelter. You would be wet through before you got to the school," the voice from over the hedge replied. "Come along, Hayter! We must run for it!"

Scamp barked—or so it seemed—just as Scamp would have barked on seeing his master start to run, and some of the juniors felt sure that they heard the sound of hurrying feet on the hard road—which tends to show how strong the power of imagination is.

The crowd bolted for the barn. Now the rain was pouring down hard.

As they neared it the door was slammed to.

"You can't come in!" cried a voice that some of them recognised.

"It's all right, Cardenden! We're not up to any larks! We only want shelter!" cried out Allardyce.

"Then you won't get it!" was the answer.

"Rush the door!" yelled Allardyce. And he and Bags, their enmity forgotten, were foremost in the charge.

Inside, Cardenden and Mr. Brighton Fortescue planted their backs against the door, and braced themselves to resist the onslaught.

"Why not let them in?" asked Fortescue.

"Don't I tell you it won't do for us to be seen together?" snapped Cardenden.

"We shall be, though," answered his companion. "Those young ruffians mean to get in, and they're too strong for us."

"They'll have to break the hinges first," said Cardenden, suddenly shifting. "For the door opens outwards, as you might have noticed when I shut it, though, for that matter, I forgot all about it myself."

Even as he spoke the door was pulled open, and Mr. Brighton Fortescue plunged out backwards, and went to grass, taking half a dozen juniors with him.

Goggs had noticed. His eyes did not miss much, with spectacles or without. He had whispered in the ear of Bags, and the result had been an abandonment of the battering-ram tactics, and the use, instead, of a sudden pull, which had resulted in the downfall of Mr. Fortescue.

That accomplished gentleman was using language of a very

EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

THE "TITAN" AIR PISTOL.
A Magnificent Little Weapon. BRITISH MADE FROM START TO FINISH.
Guaranteed to be the strongest shooting and most accurate Air Pistol on the market. Will shoot any kind of No. 1 Pellets, Darts, or Round Shot. Just the thing for indoor or outdoor practice. 1,000 charges may be fired with "Titanic" force at a cost of 1/- only. Trains the eye and cultivates the judgment. Packed in strong box, with supply of Slugs and Darts, price 12/6 each; postage 6d. extra. May be obtained from any Gunsmith or Ironmonger, or direct from the maker—FRANK CLARKE, Gun Manufacturer, 6, Whitfall Street, BIRMINGHAM.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 456.

NEXT MONDAY— "GETTING RICH QUICK!" A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

lurid description as the crowd rushed in over his prostrate body.

"It is useless, my good sir," said Goggs politely. "No one here understands Hindustani."

Goggs had not joined in the rush. Fellows might forget his injured wrist at such a moment, and the slightest knock was very painful to it. He did not appear to mind the rain, which was pouring down faster than ever.

"Shall I help you up?" he asked. "Courtesy to strangers, even of dubious appearance and bad manners, was impressed upon me by my dear grandmother, though I am not sure that she would not have made an exception against a stranger who was so very—er—fluent in Hindustani!"

"Come inside, you old idiot, and let him get up himself!" cried Bags.

"On the whole, as he does not appear grateful for the offer of help, I will take your advice, Bags," answered Goggs gravely, and stepped inside.

Cardenden, with a scowl on his face, had retreated further into the barn. This thing did not please him at all. He had not wanted to be seen with Fortescue. Now he had been seen; and no one was likely to imagine that he and the fellow were strangers who had taken refuge singly from the rain, for nobody passing along the road would notice the barn, and, moreover, it must be clear to the juniors that both were there before the storm broke.

Mr. Fortescue scrambled to his feet. He picked up the remnants of the big cigar, which had fallen from his teeth, regarded the mud upon it with a thoughtful eye, and then threw it away. After that he came under shelter. But he did not join Cardenden. He stayed near the door. Evidently he meant to behave as if he and the senior were strangers.

Cardenden had dropped the butt of his cigar when he retreated, and had forgotten all about it. Neither he nor anyone else had yet noticed a smell of smouldering. The cigar-end had fallen into the straw.

"I say, you fellows, this would make no end of a good place for the fight!" said Champneys, gazing round. "We only want to shift some of this straw a bit, and clear a ring."

"Jolly hard stuff for a chap to be knocked down on," answered Tricks. The barn had a floor of cement.

"Oh, that's no odds!" said Bliss. "Our man isn't going to get knocked down, you know."

"Capital idea, Champneys, would make no end of a good place for the fight!" said Champneys, gazing round. "We only want to shift some of this straw a bit, and clear a ring."

"Jolly hard stuff for a chap to be knocked down on," answered Tricks. The barn had a floor of cement.

"Oh, that's no odds!" said Bliss. "Our man isn't going to get knocked down, you know."

"Capital idea, that," said Mr. Fortescue approvingly. "Get on with the combat. I will act as referee."

"Oh, will you?" snorted Champneys, eyeing him with extreme disfavour. "Not in those clothes, I think!"

Cardenden spoke up.

"There will be no fighting here," he said.

"Who's going to stop it?" demanded Allardyce.

"I will!"

"Oh, rats! You're not a prefect, and we don't care twopence what you say!"

"That's the style, old Dicebox!" said Bags. "Come along, and let's get to business. It's nothing to do with Cardenden, anyway."

They began to draw away the straw from near the door, piling it up on that further back, but, at Trickett's suggestion, leaving a little on the floor. Their work, as it chanced, did not interfere with the smouldering stuff, and though a thin spiral of smoke was now curling up from this, nobody noticed it.

Off, for the third time, came the jackets of Bags and Allardyce.

Neither was very keen on fighting now. They felt much more friendly than they had done half an hour before. But the other fellows were expecting them to fight, and Cardenden had said that they shouldn't, so what could they do but peel again?

Mr. Fortescue stepped forward. His flask was a large one, and he had been using it freely. He felt that he ought to assert himself.

"I insist upon acting as referee!" he said pompously. "I am a Briton, and the motto of all Britons is——"

"Get out or get under!" broke in Champneys, shouldering him aside.

This brought him up against Evans and Blair, who, having no particular use for him, passed him on.

Mr. Fortescue's temper was rising. It was too much to bear, a man of his age and experience being pushed about by a crowd of schoolboys!

He struck at Blair savagely. He did not use his fist, but the stone in a flashy ring that he wore scratched the junior's face, and drew blood.

"Oh, look!" cried Evans; and then the crowd swarmed in.

They rushed Mr. Brighton Fortescue fairly off his legs. They picked him up, and slung him on to the straw near Cardenden.

"Better keep this friend of yours out of our way!" said Allardyce. "We've no use for him!"

"He's no——"

Cardenden's denial of Fortescue was cut short. The smouldering straw burst suddenly into flame, and fiery tongues licked at Fortescue's trousers.

He sprang up with a howl of fear, and scuttled out of danger.

"Oh, I say! The whole place will be burned down!" cried Bliss.

"If we let it," answered Bags undauntedly. "But we're not going to. Come along and fetch water, some of you!"

He was darting out into the rain, when Goggs called him back.

"No!" said Goggs. "You would never get enough here in time, unless there's a fire-engine handy. See that tarpaulin? Unroll it, as quickly as you can. No, not right out—so; there's a good whack of it that way! Down with it on top of the fire, and then stamp on it!"

He could not do much to help, with only one hand for use, but what he could he did. The big tarpaulin, in four-fold thickness, was plunked down on top of the burning straw, and they stamped on it until they felt sure that every spark was out.

Mr. Fortescue thought it time to go. He did not speak to Cardenden, but to the junior he said:

"I shall not report you to your headmaster, although I think you deserve it. Let me tell you, however, that I consider the standard of manners at Franklinghan leaves much to be desired. You are no gentlemen!"

"You've no judge!" answered Bliss promptly.

"That's an old one, Misery; but it will do," said Allardyce. "Here, you chap, don't be in a hurry! There'll be a row about this fire. I expect the tarpaulin's spoiled. And I suppose you did it by chucking your matches about——Here, hold on!"

"We don't want to keep you, but we think you ought to stay," chanted Evans.

But Mr. Fortescue had mizzled into the rain. The downpour was slackening now, and Cardenden went off within a few minutes.

"Whose barn is this, Bags?" asked Goggs.

"Belongs to a fellow named Barley, at Lower Biddenden Farm, just by the station. Decent chap enough, but he'll want paying for that tarpaulin."

"I will see Mr. Barley and explain to him, Bags."

"Ready to start now, Blount?" asked Allardyce.

"Oh, I'm ready!"

"Better put it off," suggested Bliss. "It isn't going to hold up for long—look at the sky! It we do a bunk now we may get back without a wetting; but if we stay we might have to stay for hours. And you've forgotten about Baxter and Grayson, too. I guess there'll be ructions if you chaps turn up with damaged dials!"

A rush was made for the school. It was not until half the distance had been covered that Goggs' chums discovered that he was not with the crowd.

They turned back at once, but reached the field without seeing anything of their missing comrade.

"He's gone straight to Barley's, I'll bet!" said Tricks. And at that moment Goggs came round the bend of the road in company with the farmer.

An inspection of the barn was made. Mr. Barley said that the tarpaulin was an old one, and he didn't reckon it worth while to charge anything for it. He commended their prowess of mind in using it, and, of course, the other three had thought that was Goggs' idea.

"Ah, I thought as much!" he said. "An old head on young shoulders, he's got. Come along, and have some tea with me, all of you!"

Allardyce Looks In.

Allardyce sauntered across the quad.

It was Sunday afternoon, and one of those sunny, cloudless days of the Indian summer that we sometimes get in late October. The bad weather of the day before had been blown away, and only the sodden fields and roads told of all the rain that had fallen.

Allardyce wanted to know something, and he did not see how he could find it out without visiting Study No. 11 in Grayson's House. Such a visit was scarcely the correct thing in the circumstances, and that was why he had slipped out without saying anything to Bliss.

He looked up at the row of windows on the first floor, and saw the face of Tricks, with a cheerful grin upon it, at one of them.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

Printed and published by the Proprietors at the Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, England. Agents for Australasia: Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z.; for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, December 30th, 1922.

THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINGHAM.

(Continued from page 20.)

He entered by the side door, and made his way up to No. 11.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he said, opening the door.

"Hallo, yourself!" answered Tricks.

Wagtail nodded. Bags did not speak.

"Solkey, Bags?" asked the chief of the Hayter junior clan.

"Not particularly. But I thought we were in Coventry?"

"Oh, that's off! What's the use of it, anyway?"

"None at all, that I can see. We were getting along quite nicely. It made no odds to us. I say, though, what about the fight? Your asses will say you oughtn't to come over here and be friendly when you're going to fight me."

"Let 'em say! See here, Bags, do you want to fight?"

"I don't mind."

"Well, I'm not keen on it, really. It's awful rot, because we haven't anything to fight for."

"Yes, we have, Dicebox! You insulted old Goggles."

"I'll apologise, if it comes to that. He'll take it all right, I'm sure. Where is Goggs?"

"Dunno," answered Tricks. "We don't keep him on a string."

"No, I've noticed that. It wouldn't be a bad notion to, though."

"Do you want him?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter. See here, you fellows, I'm no end puzzled about yesterday afternoon. Where did you bot got to?"

"We went and had tea with Barley at Lower Biddenden Farm. No end of a spread—ham, new-laid eggs, cake, jam! Oh, scrumptious!" answered Tricks.

"You don't half go it, I must say! That's his barn, isn't it? Did you tell him about the fire and spoiling the tarpaulin?"

"Yes. That's why we were asked to tea."

Allardyce stared.

"You're talking riddles," he said.

"Fact of the matter is, old Goggs went down to see him, and offered to pay for the tarpaulin. We met them coming along together, and Barley seemed no end pleased. He said the thing didn't really matter, and took us all in to tea with him."

"Rummy chap, Goggs! But he's jolly straight, too. That was a decent thing to do."

"I thought it rather reckoned he wasn't straight," said Tricks. "He's in in Coventry because he wrote a wicked anonymous letter—without his name to it, as one of your geniuses said. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I dunno! Goggs seems somehow to have a sort of a kind of a reason for the maddest things he does. I guess he had for that. I say, do you fellows know that Hayter and Grayson couldn't possibly have been on the road yesterday afternoon, because they both stuck out the match from start to finish, in macintoshes and leggings?"

"But—but we heard them the other side of the hedge," said Tricks.

He hesitated in his answer, because there had dawned upon his mind a vague suspicion of the truth. It grew less vague with every second, and within a minute it was a certainty. He met the eyes of Bags, and he knew that Bags also had tumbled.

But Wagtail had not, and he chimed in with:

"That's all rot, Dicebox! They must have been there. First Grayson and old Scamp, then Hayter; and they met him as they came back."

"Quite true, Wagtail; but also quite impossible. They could prove an alibi. The match was beginning when we started, and they were there before it began, and they stayed there all the time."

"Who says so?" asked Bags.

"A dozen chaps. Oh, there's no possible doubt about it! Somebody had us on a string. Could it have been that rad Cardenden, or his rotten sweep of a friend?"

"Was the red-nosed johnny a friend of that hounder?" Tricks inquired.

"Of course he was! Only they pretended not to know one another. I've been wondering why. I rather reckon they must have been up to some gambling game or other there."

"But how can you be sure they're chummy?"

"You chaps are as slow as snails! You should ask Goggs; he could tell you, I'll bet. What could they have been doing there if they weren't together? They must have been in the barn before we came, and it didn't start to rain till after that, so they weren't there for shelter."

"That sounds like sense," answered Bags. "You do talk sense now and then, old man. But I'm jolly sure neither Cardenden nor Red nose played tricks on us!"

"Who did, then?"

"Ah, that would be giving away too much!" Bags said. "I know!" cried Wagtail, in triumph.

He had just tumbled.

"Look here, you three are too giddy mysterious for anything!" said Allardyce. "And you think nobody can see through you, whereas—"

"You can't, anyway, Dicebox!"

"Can't I, Wagtail? Then I'll show you in one word that I can!"

"What's the word?"

"Goggs!"

The door opened again, and the owner of that name appeared, as if in answer to a summons.

"Did you call me, Allardyce?" he asked. "Pardon me if I am in error. I was under the impression that we were not on speaking terms, but doubtless that was my silly mistake. I'm always making them!"

"Oh, come off it! No, I didn't call you. I only spoke your name, just to show these three duffers I'm not such an ass as I look!"

"That is a subject for congratulations. I offer mine," answered Goggs gravely.

"Oh, you—you Goggs! Look here, I apologise to you for what I said the other day. Let's wipe it all out, and make a fresh start. Hang the anonymous letter! I don't care a scrap about that!"

"Then I may consider that my face was not smacked?"

"Of course you may!"

"I am sorry that I can only offer you my left hand—the hand which penned that letter. But I do not mind admitting now that I am sorry I wrote it. I only did it to stop you fellows—and these three especially—from getting into a silly row!"

Allardyce took the offered hand, and gripped it heartily.

"The Fourth for ever!" he cried. "After all, it's better we chaps should pull together, even if we do belong to different Houses!"

"I agree," Goggs answered. "But may I ask how the mention of my name could serve to prove that you are—the expression is rude, but your own—not quite such an ass as you look, Allardyce?"

"Because we were talking about yesterday, and the way the fight was hung up by—by what sounded like Hayter and Grayson. You're an artful dodger, Goggs! It made me go funny all over when you sang out that kiss-in-the-ring rot. But you knew it was all serene, because there wasn't anybody on the other side of the hedge, and you were doing all the talking yourself!"

"How did you know?" asked Bags eagerly.

"I didn't know five minutes ago. You chaps gave me the clue, and then I remembered the night of the sports, and Bobby Bussy and Robins and Jarker and cook, and then I tumbled. You're a ventriloquist, Goggles, like that Valentine What's-his-name? Something to do with popular, I know—"

"I think you are confusing Valentine Vox with 'vox populi,' which is quite a different matter," said Goggs, in his most precise manner.

"Dare say I am. What's the odds? I'm right, aren't I?"

"You are right, Allardyce. In my humble way, I am a ventriloquist."

"I say, though, what a chance for japes! I wonder you chaps haven't stirred up this sleepy old show a bit with such a dodge as that!"

"Well, we have done a bit; but we can't force Goggles to do anything," answered Bags. "He only does it when the spirit moves him, or something of that kind. It's not a case of pull the string and the figure works. Yesterday it was to stop the fight!"

"I'm not sorry that was stopped, anyway," said Allardyce. "I say, Goggs, couldn't you work up something for the class-room? It would be no end funny to have old Lee laid out of his senses to know what it all meant!"

"I decline most emphatically," replied Goggs. "The class-room is not the proper place for that kind of thing, and the probable result would be detention for the whole Form!"

"There's something in that; but there are plenty of other dodges. Nobody knows except us, I suppose?"

"It was very like Allardyce to elect himself of their number in that cad way; but nobody objected.

"No; we alone are in the secret," answered Goggs. "I think it is possible that I may be able to devise some plan for your amusement, Allardyce. I will let you know later. For the present you must excuse me!"

He darted out of the room.

"I believe he really is half-mad!" said Allardyce.

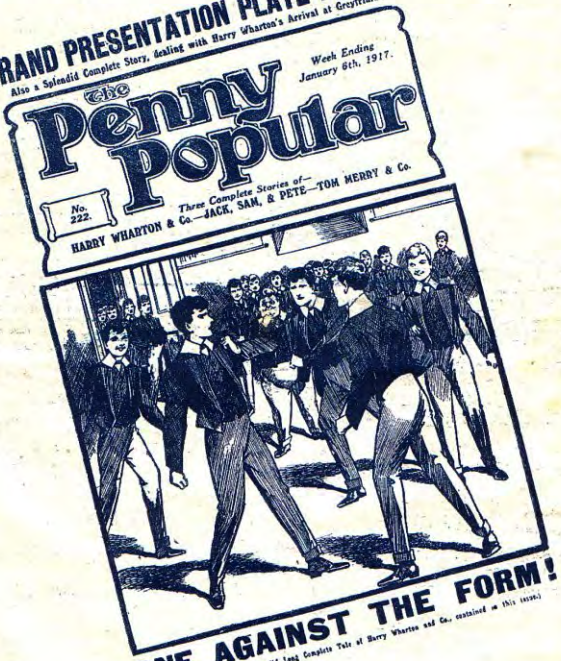
(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET *Library. Order your copy in advance.)*

ON SALE FRIDAY, JANUARY 5th.



GRAND PRESENTATION PLATE INSIDE!

Also a Splendid Complete Story, dealing with Harry Wharton's Arrival at Greyfriars!





YOU MUST ORDER IN ADVANCE!