

THE GREYFRIARS FLYING CORPS

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

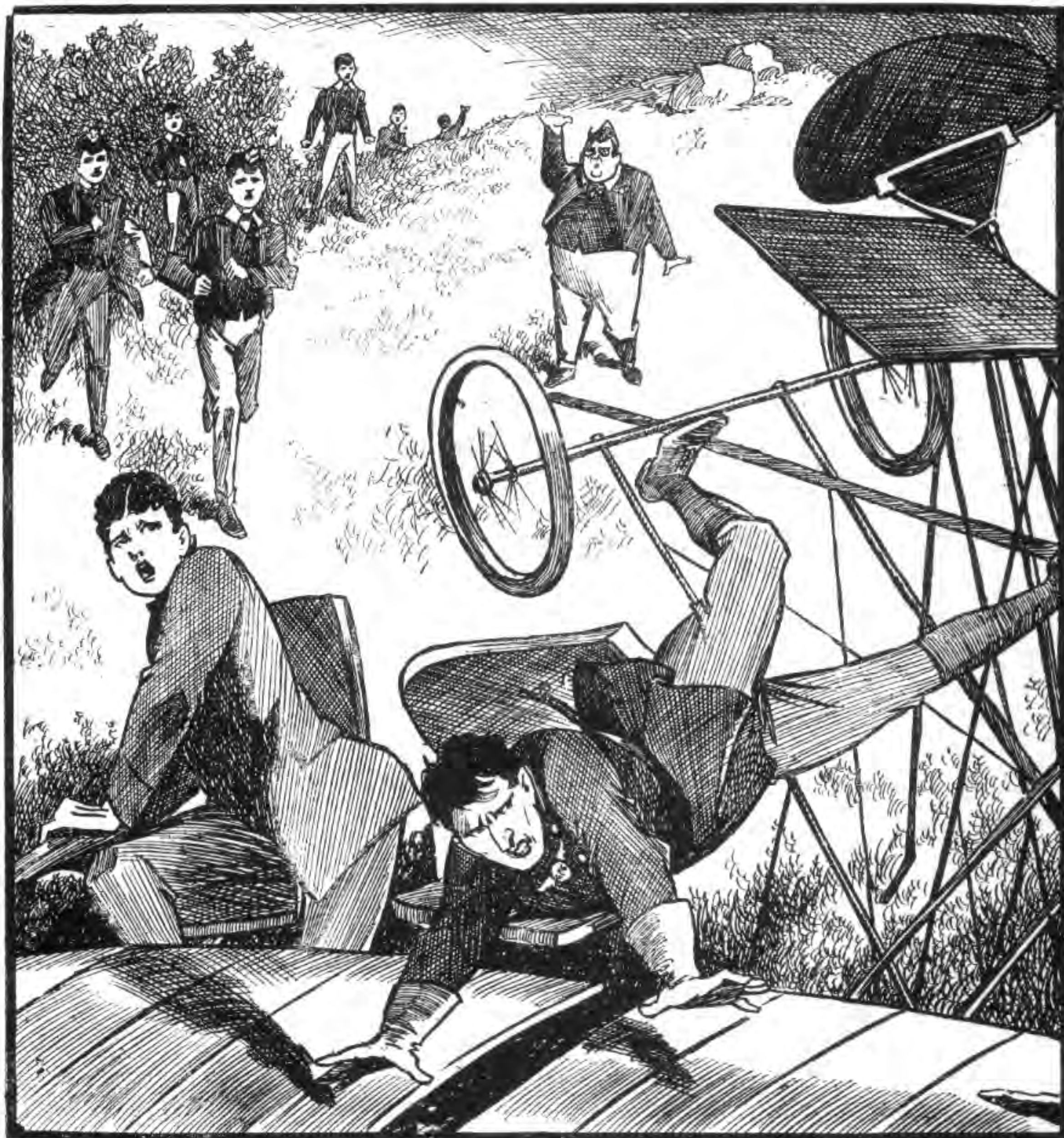


The Magnet 1st Library



No. 476. Vol. 11.

March 24th, 1917.



FISHY FLIES!

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Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.



THE GREYFRIARS FLYING CORPS.

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Friendly Invasion!

THERE'S something in the air!" Bob Cherry, the sunny, happy-go-lucky member of the Famous Five, made the remark as he leaned against the goalpost on Little Side.

"Explain yourself, chump!" said Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, who was flushed from his exertions at potting at goal.

Bob pointed upwards, and a dozen juniors followed his gaze.

"My hat!" said Nugent. "An aeroplane, by Jove!"

"And another!" said Johnny Bull, as a whirring sound came from the distance.

Footer was forgotten for the moment. The players kept their eyes on the two machines with great interest.

Even as they watched a third aeroplane came in sight, gaining rapidly on the other two.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "There's a whole giddy fleet of 'em!"

"The fleetfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "They skim through the esteemed air birdfully! Look!"

The leading aeroplane suddenly dipped and descended swiftly to earth.

"Something gone wrong with the works!" murmured Peter Todd, in alarm.

"No fear!" said Vernon-Smith. "She's coming down all serene. So are the other two."

"Mind your heads!" rapped out Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The first machine descended, straight and clean, on to the football-field, the engine was shut off, and a smart-looking young officer of the Royal Flying Corps, who occupied the pilot's seat, deftly unstrapped himself and stepped out of the plane. He lighted a cigarette, and nodded cheerily to the juniors.

"Good-afternoon!" he said. "Playin' the grand old winter game—what?"

"Yes, sir," said Bob Cherry—"at least, we were, until you came along. This is the first time we've seen a whole fleet of aeroplanes on the go."

The officer smiled.

"You'll have plenty of opportunity for doing so now," he said. "We're taking up our quarters in Colonel Ranter's field yonder."

"Oh, good!" said Harry Wharton. "That'll be ripping!"

One by one the rest of the aeroplanes dived down to earth. It was a fine sight to see them skimming the ground before finally coming to a standstill.

"Why have you landed here on the footer-ground, sir?" asked Nugent.

"Because," said the young airman. "Greyfriars is my school, and I haven't had a glimpse of the dear old place since I was ex—I mean, since I left."

The speaker flushed, and puffed vigorously at his cigarette to hide his confusion.

Harry Wharton saw that the lieutenant was ill at ease, and hastily switched to another topic.

"Will you come and have some tea in our study, sir?" he said. "The others as well, if they care about it?"

"We shall be proudly honoured to wait on you entertainfully, airman sahib," murmured Hurree Singh.

The officer signalled to his comrades, who had stepped clear of their machines; then he turned to the captain of the Remove.

"That's awfully sportin' of you," he said. "By the way, I haven't introduced myself. I'm Jones—Lieutenant Jones. They used to call me the Masher when I was here ten years ago, and the name's stuck. I'm still the Masher in flyin' circles."

"What about your machines?" asked Johnny Bull. "You can't very well leave 'em here. The fellows'll swarm over 'em like ants, and they'll look like wrecked Zepps in a few minutes."

The Masher pointed to a column of khaki-clad figures advancing briskly towards Little Side.

"The air-mechanics," he explained. "They'll see to the planes all right. Didn't you fellows notice the sheds which have been put in Colonel Ranter's field?"

"We did," said Vernon-Smith; "but we didn't think they were airship sheds. And where are you all going to sleep, sir?"

"Billeted in the village. Hallo, here are all the other chappies! I say, you men, we've got an invitation to tea! Buck up!"

And the Flying Corps officers strode on in front towards the main building.

"My hat!" muttered Bob Cherry. "What a stunning crew! They're men, with a capital M!"

"Rather!" said Wharton. "Lucky we're in funds. If that quid hadn't come from my uncle this morning these chaps would have to make a meal out of a stale sardine and a week-old loaf. Now, Bob, you've got the longest legs. Nip round to Mrs. Mumble's and buy up the best stuff she's got. She's sure to have some sosses, and some new-laid eggs as well."

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry.

And he sped along to the school tuckshop.

Bob realised that it would be bad form to keep the gallant airmen waiting for their tea. Accordingly, he put the pace on, and his long legs fairly swept over the ground.

Suddenly, as he rounded a corner to enter the Close, a fat figure emerged from the opposite direction. There was a heavy thud, a duet of gasps, and then the two victims of the collision went sprawling on to the flagstones, locked in a loving embrace.

"Ow-ow-ow! Cherry you clumsy beast!"

"Bunter you—you building great bladder of lard!"

Bob Cherry picked himself up, feeling himself all over to make sure that his limbs were still intact. In a collision between two people the lighter party usually comes off second best, and so it was in this case. Bunter's massive great weight of fourteen stone had made Bob Cherry feel like a squashed table-gully.

"I've a jolly good mind to wade in and slaughter you, you lumbering porpoise!" he growled.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Billy Bunter adjusted his big, round spectacles and sat up. He looked like a person seated on the crater of a volcano after an earthquake shock.

"Buzz off, before I dribble you round the Close like a footer!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Owl of the Remove leaped up like a jack-in-the-box, and backed hastily away.

"Beast!" he howled. "I'll tell my pal Jones what a rotten bully you are, Bob Cherry!"

"Your pal Jones! What in thunder are you talking about?"

Billy Bunter smiled superior, as a novelist would say.

"Aha!" he chuckled. "You didn't know I was pally with the tip-top men in the Flying Corps, did you? You've always sneered when I've mentioned my titled relations, but you won't sneer now!"

"Dry up, you fat worm!"

"As a matter of fact," continued Bunter, "I'm just going to have tea with the Masher, bless him! I——"

"If you so much as set foot in Study No. 1," said Bob grimly, "you'll never leave it alive!"

Billy Bunter's eyes blinked with satisfaction.

"So they're having tea in No. 1!" he exclaimed. "Good! Thanks very much for the tip, Bob!"

And Billy Bunter trotted off into the building, Bob Cherry's boot missing him by inches.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Foot for Bunter!

"My hat!"

Bob Cherry, his shopping completed, staggered in at the doorway of Study No. 1, and stopped short in breathless astonishment.

Billy Bunter had kept his word. He had taken the place of honour at the end of the table—the place which had been left for Lieutenant Jones.

The flying officers were leaning back in their chairs, with amused smiles; while Harry Wharton & Co. were looking glum, and darting glances of exasperation at the unspeakable Owl of the Remove.

"Buck up with the grab, Bob!" said Billy Bunter peevishly. "What have you got there? Sosses? That's good! Turn 'em out, and I'll get the frying-pan going!"

"You—you——" muttered Bob Cherry, looking as though he could stretch Bunter in his gore.

But there was company present—distinguished company—and it wouldn't do to take such drastic steps. It would have to be a case of live and let live.

Bob reluctantly handed over the sausages, and Billy Bunter got busy at the fireplace. The fat junior was a cook of the first order, and the Famous Five lost some of their animosity towards him

as they listened to the familiar sizzling sound and smelt the appetising odour.

Lieutenant Jones led the conversation.

"I s'pose you kids are hot stuff at footer—what?" he said.

"Well," said Harry Wharton modestly, "we could knock spots off most of the junior elevens in the country."

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear, hearfulness is terrific!"

"That's good!" said the Masher approvingly. "Glad to see the Remove are as good sportsmen as they were in my day. I remember, when I was skipper of this Form, we had a fellow called Sinclair—Bobby Sinclair—and, by gum, he was the hottest of hot stuff! He filled the centre-forward position as if he'd been born for it. Once, in a match with Abbotside, he dashed through seven times on his own and scored, and the goals were real corks. No milk-and-water touch about 'em!"

"He must have been a marvel!" said Bob Cherry.

"He was—at footer, at any rate. But there were weak sides to his character. He hadn't much moral courage. Still, we all have our faults, and on the whole Bobby Sinclair was a jolly good fellow."

"Rather!" said one of the other officers heartily. "He was one of the best!"

"What became of Sinclair, Mr. Jones?" asked Nugent, after a long pause.

The lieutenant puffed vigorously at his cigarette before replying.

"He died," he said. "He was killed in France. The report was not official, but we've heard nothing of the poor chap, so there's little doubt that he's a goner."

"What regiment did he belong to?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The Royal Flying Corps," said the Masher proudly. "He was attached to the Kite Balloon Section."

"But—but I didn't think Flying Corps men stood much risk of getting killed," said Johnny Bull. "I've heard fellows sneer at 'em, and say that members of the Flying Corps neither flew nor fought, but had a soft time of it."

The Masher turned to one of his companions.

"You hear that, Bowen?" he said. "That's the sort of slander that the pro-Germans revel in! Why, kid," he added, "the majority of our chaps carry their lives in their hands. Look at the wireless fellows, who are popping in and out of the trenches all the time. Then there are the motor-cyclists, who have to carry despatches in a storm of shell-fire. And the kite-balloonists have about the most dangerous job of the lot. Bobby Sinclair was making a survey over the German lines when he was forced to descend. They say his parachute failed to open, and he was dashed to death. Whenever you hear the Flying Corps run down, don't scruple to hit out straight from the shoulder!"

"I won't!" said Johnny Bull.

"Rotten luck, Sinclair going under like that!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I s'pose the fellows fairly worshipped him when he was at Greyfriars? Did he ever play for the First Eleven?"

"He did," said the Masher; "and the school only lost a couple of games all the time he was in the team. But I wasn't here to see his final displays. I—I left—er—rather suddenly, don't you know."

"I'm not an old Greyfriars fellow," said Lieutenant Bowen, "but I've seen Bobby Sinclair turn out for the Flying Corps, and he was great!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Billy Bunter, turning a flushed and perspiring face from the fireplace. "Give Sinclair a rest! He's in his grave, I suppose? Let him stick there!"

"You—you fat worm!" hissed Wharton.

The Owl of the Remove set the steaming sausages out on a dish, and smiled beamingly on the Masher.

"Of course," he said, "these fellows talk as if they know something of footer; but between me and you and the gatepost, they're hopeless duffers. Some of 'em don't know a goalpost from a maiden over. There's only one first-class footballer in the Remove, and he's better than all your Bobby Sinclairs!"

"Really? Then I should like an introduction to him," murmured the Masher. Billy Bunter bowed, splashing himself with gravy as he did so.

"I'm the chap!" he said loftily. "When you Flying Corps johnnies have been here a few days you'll have noticed my form."

"We've noticed it already," said Lieutenant Bowen, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see what there is to cackle at!" said Bunter. "I say, Nixon, old sport, you might pass me the sauce."

"Shurrup, you fathead!" muttered Nugent, digging the Owl of the Remove in the ribs. "Don't you know that you're talking to a captain?"

"You must take no notice of Bunter's bad manners, Captain Nixon," said Harry Wharton, with a glare at the fat junior. "He was always like that. He didn't come here at our invitation, either. It's a little habit of his to walk into a place uninvited."

"Oh, really!" said Bunter. "I'm sure my pal Jones would raise no objection—"

"Your pal Jones!" echoed the lieutenant. "Are you referin' to me, begad?"

Bunter nodded.

"Well, don't do it! It hurts me! I can't bear the thoughts of being the pal of a prize porpoise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But contempt was lost on Billy Bunter. He had the hide of a tortoise in that respect, and he piled into the sausages with great gusto. He stowed them away at such an alarming rate that the officers were thunderstruck.

"He—he isn't a tame boa-constrictor, by any chance?" gasped Lieutenant Bowen. "Oh, my stars! Just look at him!"

Bunter was hungry. He always was, as a matter of fact, but on this occasion his appetite was keener than usual. The sausages on his plate vanished as if by magic, and another plateful followed. Then, bidding Bob Cherry buck up and pour out the tea, the feaster extended a fat hand towards the cream-buns.

"We must choke him off!" growled Johnny Bull, under his breath. "It's disgusting! What ever must these Flying Corps chaps think?"

"I say," mumbled Billy Bunter, "is there any pineapple?"

"No, there isn't!" said Harry Wharton warmly. "But I'll tell you what there will be in a minute."

"What?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"A dead cormorant!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter lifted his eyes from his plate for the first time.

"If you fellows don't stop cackling," he said, "I shall have to kick you out of the study. I don't want to make a scene before my pal Jones and these other chaps, but you'll give me no alternative if you don't behave yourselves."

"Oh, don't mind us," said the Masher graciously. "If you want to eject these kids on your own, go ahead. I didn't know you were a Hackenschmidt."

"Ahem! I—I think I'll give 'em another chance. I'm rather busy just now," said Bunter. "Johnny, old fellow, you might nip round to the tuck-shop for half a dozen doughnuts."

"I'll see you hanged first!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five were fast becoming fed up. They had invited the airmen to tea in Study No. 1 hoping to hear thrilling stories of flights over the German lines and so forth; for Billy Bunter, with his usual nerve, had barged in as if he owned all Greyfriars, and was making a beast of himself before the distinguished guests. It was more than flesh and blood could stand.

Ignoring the deadly glares of his schoolfellows, Bunter went merrily ahead with his meal. He had laid a solid foundation by this time, and began to take things more easily, letting his tongue wag freely.

"I wish I was a few years older," he said, with a sigh. "I'd join this silly old Flying Corps, and wake things up."

"You'd go into the balloon section, of course?" said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Balloons be blowed!" said Bunter, missing the point of Frank Nugent's satire. "I'd take a commission, and be a flight-lieutenant right away. You'd be able to read something like this in the papers: 'On the night of Monday last a fleet of super-Zeppelins were sent to their doom by that gallant flying officer, W. G. Bunter, who bombed the enemy airships from a high altitude.'"

"Dry up!" roared Bob Cherry, who felt he wouldn't be able to contain himself much longer.

"Close your rat-trap shutfully!" exclaimed Hurreo Singh.

But Bunter, feeling secure in the knowledge that there were visitors in the study, went rambling on:

"I'd be a better pilot than Warneford and Robinson and all the lot put together. My exploits would make the world gasp and stare. When it was nightfall I'd go up—"

"You'll go up now!" interposed Harry Wharton, springing to his feet. "Come on, you fellows! I hope you gentlemen of the Flying Corps will forgive a little violence. But we can't let you sit and hear this conceited ass go on spouting any longer."

"Quite so!" said Captain Nixon. "We'll lend a hand, if you like!"

"It won't be necessary," said Bob Cherry. "If five of us can't manage Bunter, I'll eat my Sunday topper! Pile in, chappies!"

The Famous Five laid violent hands upon the Owl of the Remove, who, after a brief struggle, floundered helplessly in their arms.

"Now!" said Wharton. "Swing him up, you fellows. Imagine you're chucking a sack of coals on to a lorry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you ready? One—two—three!"

As the last words left Wharton's lips, Billy Bunter shot upwards and outwards, to land on the linoleum in the passage. The airmen watched him disappear with amused chuckles.

A wild yell came from without.

"Yow-ow-ow! Oh, you beasts! Oh, you rotters! I'll get even with you for this! Just you wait, you beastly cads, and I'll make you all sit up! Ow!"

And the sudden slamming of the study door deadened the last discordant wail of the Owl of the Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Dramatic Exposure!

"THE order of the boot!" said Lieutenant Jones cheerfully. "You kids made quite a rippin' job of it, begad!"

The Famous Five resumed their panting from their exertions.

"I hope you didn't mind, sir," said

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Harry Wharton. "But we were fed up with that conceited beast. We couldn't have stuck it another moment!"

The Masher nodded.

"You did quite right," he said. "Grunter, of whatever his confounded name is, was gettin' on our nerves. Now we can have our grub in peace. Pass the mustard, Bowen."

The next moment the feed was in full swing, and the Famous Five, after seeing that their guests were well supplied, attacked the good things with relish.

But they would have been a shade less easy in their minds had they been able to follow the movements of the Owl of the Remove.

Billy Bunter was feeling very sore, both physically and mentally. Just when he had been going strong in his natural element, gorging, he had been pitched neck and crop from the study. The fact that he had already eaten enough for three was no consolation.

"Oh, the rotters!" he muttered savagely as he limped along the passage. "They think they've got the best of me this time, but they don't know me yet! I'll soon settle their bash! Ow! Yaroooh! Look where you're going, you silly idiot!"

Too short-sighted to notice that Mr. Quelch was coming along the passage with sweeping strides, Billy Bunter bumped fairly and squarely into the Form-master.

Mr. Quelch staggered from the concussion.

"Bunter!"

The Remove-master's tone was so terrific that the fat junior's knees fairly knocked together.

"Oh, sir! I—I'm awfully sorry sir! I didn't see you coming!"

"Apparently not!" said Mr. Quelch tartly. "or you would not have ventured to refer to me as a silly idiot. Why were you limping along in that ridiculous manner?"

Billy Bunter played the part of the injured martyr.

"I've been shamefully ill-treated, sir!" he said pathetically. "In fact, I'm a mass of bruises from—from head to foot, sir!"

"What?"

"It's as much as I can do to stand, sir, let alone walk."

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Who has ill-used you in the way you describe?"

"Wharton and the rest, sir. They set upon me in their study—went for me bald-headed, sir, just to swank before a lot of officers."

"Officers?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. It's only right that you should know that they've brought a lot of Flying Corps fellows into the building without permission. There's wines and spirits on the table, sir," added Bunter, letting his imagination run riot, "and they're having quite a gay time, sir!"

Mr. Quelch pursed up his lips.

"I will look into this!" he said. "Remain where you are, Bunter."

But the Owl of the Remove had reasons of his own for not wishing to remain. He slunk off down the passage as soon as Mr. Quelch was out of sight.

The Remove-master threw open the door of No. 1 Study and entered. His keen eyes, which his pupils always likened to gimlets, swept over the table, and he gave a quick breath of relief. There was certainly no sign of intoxicating liquors, and it was obvious that Bunter had been romancing.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Bob Cherry demurely. "Will you have some—ahem!—some jam-tarts, sir?"

"No, Cherry, I will not!" said Mr. Quelch drily.

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Then, turning to Harry Wharton, he added:

"May I ask who these gentlemen are, and at whose invitation they came here?"

"We invited them, sir," answered Wharton boldly. "They are going to occupy a temporary base close to the school, and as Lieutenant Jones here is an old boy, we thought he'd like a feed in the study."

"Lieutenant Jones!"

Mr. Quelch grew very stern, and his eyes darted an accusing glance at the flying officer.

"You here!" he rapped out. "You are Ivor Jones?"

"That is my name," answered the lieutenant quietly.

"And you have the amazing effrontery to come to this school after the degrading circumstances in which you left it?"

"What do you mean, hang you?" shouted Captain Nixon, springing to his feet, and shaking his fist at Mr. Quelch.

"Jones is my friend, and he shall not be slandered in my presence! Why, man, you speak as if he were a criminal."

"One might so term him," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "You are doubtless in ignorance of the facts, so I will lay them before you. A few years ago this man was expelled—"

"Expelled!" gasped the Famous Five in one breath.

The Remove-master nodded.

"He was expelled from Greyfriars for a particularly mean theft from the school tuckshop."

"Great Scott!"

"A large sum of money was stolen from Mrs. Minble's till," continued Mr. Quelch. Jones was convicted of the theft, and expelled accordingly. Had he expressed contrition for his act of meanness, I should raise no objection to his sitting here to tea with you boys. But I fear he is quite hardened, and will never confess to his wrong-doing."

Lieutenant Jones shrugged his shoulders. He was pale, but met Mr. Quelch's eyes fearlessly.

"Indeed, I shan't confess," he said, "for the simple reason that I have nothing to confess to. As for you fellows—"

he turned to his comrades—"I give you my word of honour, as an officer and a gentleman, that the charge against me is groundless."

"We believe you, Masher, old sport!" said Lieutenant Bowen cordially.

"Same here!" Bob Cherry could not help exclaiming.

"Take a hundred lines, Cherry!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Your conduct, Lieutenant Jones, is unworthy of a man holding the King's commission. You yourself admitted the offence when you were taxed with it years ago."

"I may have done," said the Masher, "but I was innocent, all the same. Lootin' tuckshop tills was never a hobby of mine, begad. I'm not a Raffles."

Mr. Quelch gave a cough.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I must ask you to be good enough to place yourself on the other side of the school gates, and not to enter the premises again."

"Very well," said the Masher.

He took up his cane and his Glengarry cap and swung out of the study. After a moment's hesitation, his fellow-officers followed him.

Mr. Quelch waited until the retreating footsteps of the flying men had died away in the distance; then he turned to Harry Wharton & Co.

"You boys will on no account have any dealings with Lieutenant Jones in the future," he said. "He is a discredit to the corps of which he is a member. I

hope you will bear in mind what I have said—otherwise things will go hard with you!"

And Mr. Quelch strode away, leaving blank looks and bitter consternation behind him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

An Old Boy's Honour!

GREYFRIARS had plenty of food for conversation that evening. The arrival of the flying men, and the dramatic disclosure which Mr. Quelch had made, formed the chief topics in the Remove dormitory.

"It's a howling shame!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, taking off his boots. "The Masher's one of the best. He wouldn't do anything that wasn't on the square."

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I can make Quelch out! It was a bit too thick, to go for an officer baldheaded like that!"

"As if the Masher would descend to picking and stealing!" said Nugent, with a sniff. "The whole idea's absurd! I think Quelch ought to be made to apologise!"

"Rats!" growled Bolsover major. "You can bet your life Quelch knew what he was talking about. This Masher fellow's a thief, pure and simple. From what I saw of him, he's just the sort of chap to spend his time in looting tills."

"Rather!" said Skinner. "Matter of fact, I asked Mrs. Minble if she remembered the robbery, and she did. Jones was the chap's name, she said, Ivor Jones. I wonder he's got the cheek to show himself at Greyfriars, after such a mean trick. I reckon—"

Whiz!

A boot came sailing through the air, and there was a wild yell from Skinner as he caught it on his chest.

"Yaroooh!"

"Dry up, you rotter!" roared Bob. "Chuck that boot back along the floor, and if you breathe another word you'll get its twin brother!"

Skinner became silent, save for an occasional grunt of pain.

But the honour of Lieutenant Jones yet remained to be defended; for although Skinner took Bob Cherry's advice, Bolsover major and Stott carried on the attack.

"Just like Wharton & Co. to pal up with a thief!" sneered Bolsover.

Harry Wharton scrambled out of bed in his pyjamas.

"Repeat those words, Bolsover," he said, "and you'll be sorry for it!"

"Bow-wow! If you think I'm afraid of you, Priggy Wharton, you're hopelessly off-side! As I said before, it's just like you to pal up with a thief!"

Smack!

Harry Wharton's open palm came with a sounding report across the cheek of the bully of the Remove.

Bolsover drew back with a snarl of rage. From the expression on his face it was obvious that he wasn't going to take the blow lying down.

"Rally round, you fellows!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

In a twinkling Skinner and Stott slipped from their beds and rushed to the assistance of their leader. Snoop, coward to the core, discreetly remained where he was.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Vernon-Smith. "I'm a pro-Jones, but I'm too comfy in bed to get out and start scragging. Besides, Wharton can polish off those three freaks off his own bat."

"He'll need the esteemed helpfulness, I thinkingly consider," remarked Hurree Singh.

And a moment later the Nabob and Wharton stood shoulder to shoulder, ready to avenge the contemptible attack upon the Masher's character.

Fights were not infrequent in the Remove dormitory; but the present encounter was of exceptional heat and violence. Harry Wharton was the equal of Bolsover major, and Hurree-Singh was as good a fighting man as Skinner and Stott put together. Therefore the fray proved fiercely exciting.

"Go it, Skinney!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "Give the bouncers socks! Show 'em we don't encourage any Artful Dodgers here!"

"Or cheeky cormorants either," said Bob Cherry, seating himself on the fat junior's stomach.

"Gerooooogh!" gasped Bunter, making a noise like a deflating tyre.

"Lie down!" snapped Bob. "I want to see the fireworks!"

And see them he did. The next moment the battle was at its height, and Skinner and Stott were swept off their feet like ninepins.

"Good!" murmured Bob Cherry admiringly. "That's the first instalment. Go ahead with the slaughter!"

But although Skinner and Stott had soon thrown up the sponge, Bolsover major was made of sterner stuff. His crashing fist took Hurree Singh under the chin, and the dusky junior reeled and fell.

Then Bolsover turned to Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove was quite ready for him. He and Bolsover were enemies of long standing.

Everybody in the dormitory save Bunter, who was weighed down by Bob Cherry, sat up in bed to witness what was sure to be an exciting duel.

"Come on, Skinner, you beastly funk!" hissed Bolsover. "Don't lie skulking there!"

"I guess he's sort of out of the running!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior. "'Nuff's as good as a feast—eh, Skinney?"

Skinner made no reply, and Bolsover had no time to appeal to him again, for Harry Wharton was coming for him with upraised fists.

Biff!

Bolsover only half-parried Wharton's first straight blow, and the second, taking him full in the ribs, almost made him double up. But he hung on like grim death, and succeeded in landing a terrific punch on his adversary's nose, causing Harry Wharton to blink in uncertainty.

"Hooray!" chortled Snoop, from the safety of his bed. "Pile in, Bolsover, old man! That was great!"

Bolsover's success gave him fresh heart, and he kept Wharton on the move for the next few minutes. But skill and stamina eventually began to tell, and slowly but surely the captain of the Remove wore his adversary down.

"There's a good time coming, boys!" chuckled Peter Todd. "Get ready to pick up little bits of Bolsover!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There followed a hurricane exchange of blows, some terrific slogging on both sides, and then—crash! The burly Bolsover was fairly lifted off his feet, to alight in a sprawling heap in front of Wingate, who had just come into the dormitory with the twofold object of seeing lights out and inquiring what the row was about.

The captain of Greyfriars didn't stand on ceremony. He prodded Bolsover sharply in the ribs with his toe.

"Don't lie grovelling there!" he said curtly. "Get up, and give me an explanation of this confounded horseplay!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Get up, I tell you!"

There was such a menacing look on Wingate's fagged face that Bolsover deemed it prudent to obey. He lurched unsteadily to his feet.

"I—I was having a scrap with Wharton!" he blurted out.

Wingate frowned.

"If your face is anything to go by, you've been scrapping with a steam-roller!" he said. "Now, Wharton, what was it all about?"

"I was defending Lieutenant Jones against a charge—a mean and cowardly charge—of theft," said Harry.

"Hear, hear!" came in stentorian tones from Bob Cherry, who had at length relieved Billy Bunter of his weight.

"Silence, Cherry! Do I understand, Wharton, that Lieutenant Jones, of the

the Remove dormitory, and the st. porters and non-supporters of Flight, Lieutenant Ivor Jones buried the hatchet for the time being and went to sleep.

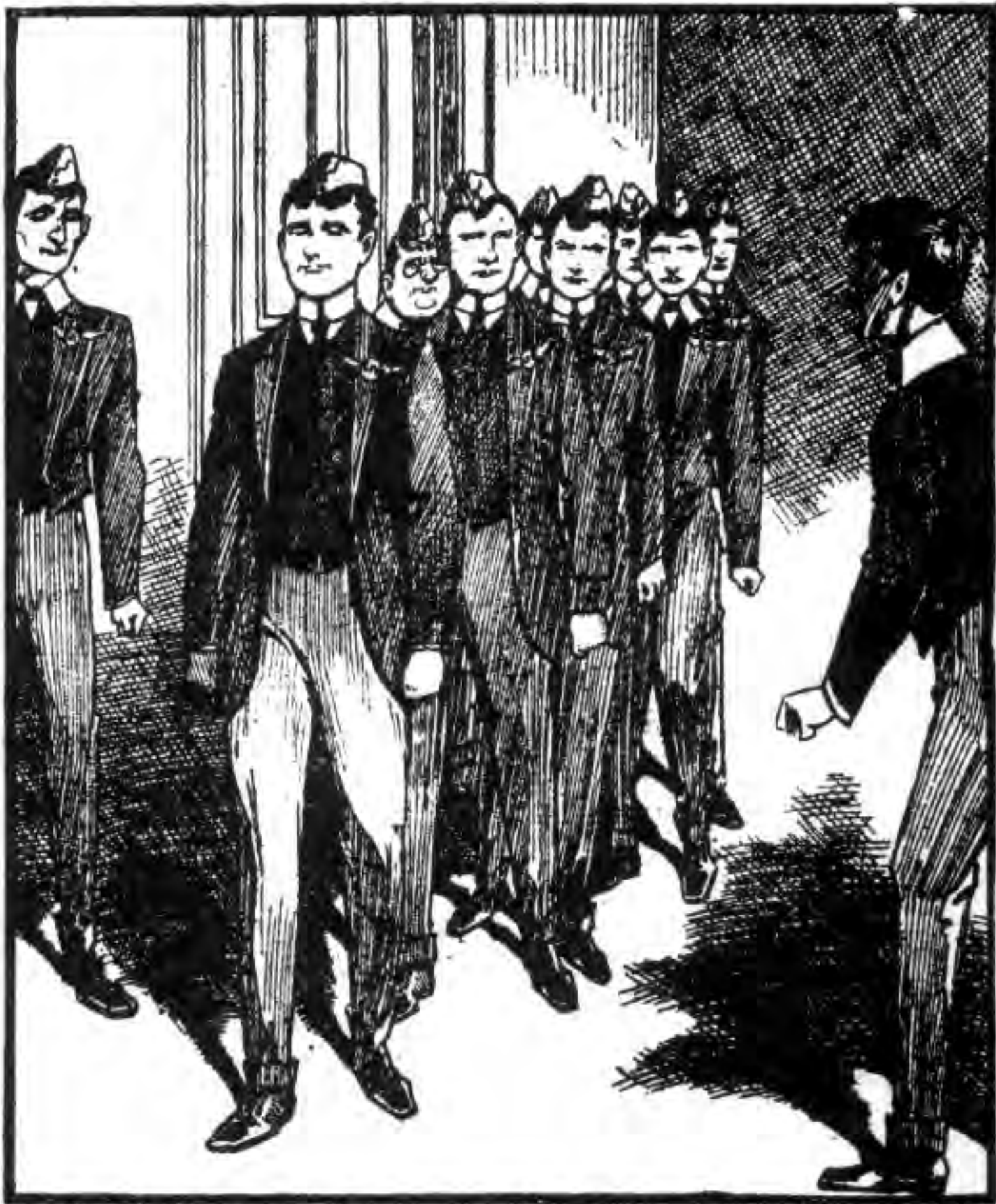
THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Fish to the Fore!

"O H, my stars! Carry me home to die, somebody!"

The speaker, Bob Cherry, sank back into Harry Wharton's arms in a state of collapse.

The Famous Five had paused before the notice-board in the hall before breakfast, and Bob Cherry's keen eye had been attracted by an announcement, written in a spider-like scrawl which could only



With Coker leading . . . the first batch of recruits for the Greyfriars' Flying Corps shambled along the passage. (See Chapter 6.)

Flying Corps, has been referred to as a thief?"

Wharton nodded.

"Then Bolsover deserves all he's got! I've a jolly good mind to lick him myself."

"But Mr. Quelch himself said Jones was a rotten thief!" said Skinner.

Wingate coloured.

"Oh, did he? Then I'm afraid I can't see eye to eye with Mr. Quelch in the matter. I have seen and spoken to Lieutenant Jones, and am satisfied that he's a white man. Anyone who says otherwise will have to answer for it to me. Now, get into bed, everybody, or there'll be some impositions knocking round!"

Five minutes later silence reigned in

be the work of one person—Fisher Tarleton Fish, late of New York City.

"Don't be a funny ass, Bob!" laughed Harry Wharton. "What are you doing the dramatic stunt for? Is that some more of Fishy's rot?"

"It is," gasped Bob. "And it's the limit—the absolute giddy limit! Read it yourself, old chap, and assure me it's a fact. I believe I'm dreaming, or something."

Harry Wharton and the other turned to peruse the announcement.

Accustomed as they were to startling notices by Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior's latest wheeze fairly took away their breath.

The announcement was worded as follows:

"THE GREYFRIARS FLYING CORPS."

"General Officer Commanding—Fisher T. Fish."

"NOTICE!—The work of the Royal Flying Corps having been rather disappointing of late, it has been thought fit to form a similar corps at Greyfriars, for the purpose of putting the kybosh on Zepps, and giving instruction in aviation to galoots who care to join."

"Of course, we can only get to business in a small way at the start, and the Officer Commanding is already constructing a

FIRST-CLASS, GILT-EDGED 'FISH' AEROPLANE,

which will put all other makes, such as Sopwith, Nieuport, etc., completely in the shade.

"Pilots, observers, and air-mechanics are urgently needed, as well as disciplinarians, and anybody who wants to join the Greyfriars Flying Corps should hustle around without delay to the Special Recruiting Office, No. 14 Study."

"(Signed) FISHER T. FISH,
"General Officer Commanding."

"The champion ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "He must be rotting."

"No fear!" growled Johnny Bull. "We've seen enough of Fishy by this time to know that he's capable of any sort of lunacy. This is just the sort of thing we might have expected, now that the Flying Corps men are here. Fishy wants to go one better by getting up a corps of his own. And he's turning my study into a recruiting-office!" added Johnny Bull, with a snort of rage. "I'll jolly well scalp him!"

But the scalping had to be postponed on account of breakfast, and between that meal and morning school Fishy could not be found anywhere.

He turned up in time for lessons, though throughout the morning his thoughts rested not on the beauties of Virgil, but on the beauties of the first-class, gilt-edged "Fish" aeroplane which was going to take the world by storm.

Mr. Quelch's patience was very sorely tried, and he had occasion to give Fish an imposition which put on Fish, so to speak, as the morning advanced. But Fishy didn't care a rap for lines just then, or floggings, either. He was full of his new scheme—a scheme which he hoped would give him not only the conquest of the air, but of his schoolfellows' pocket-money. In this, as in all his former undertakings, the Yankee junior was on the make.

When the Remove were dismissed, Fish became the centre of a jostling, excited crowd.

"Here he is!"

"Collar him!"

"Ask him what he means by it!"

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I guess you needn't get on your ears," he remarked. "This hyer Flying Corps stunt of mine's going to be a thumping success right from the word go!"

Johnny Bull clenched his big fist, and poked it beneath Fishy's somewhat pointed nose.

"You see that?" growled Johnny.

"Yep!"

"Well, you'll jolly well feel it if you start any recruiting rot in my study!"

"I guess you're a slabsided jay, Bull! Where can I conduct my aerial plans if I can't have the use of my own study?"

"Waal," drawled Bob Cherry, "I guess and calculate you'll have to emigrate to the coal-hole, or the vaults!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fish's jaw dropped. He knew that

Johnny Bull was in sober earnest. Johnny had had his study turned into a pawnshop and all sorts of weird things in the past, and he was fed up with Fish and his little games. There was nothing for it, therefore, but for the General Officer Commanding the Greyfriars Flying Corps to look elsewhere for suitable headquarters.

He tried Alonzo Todd.

"I guess you're an obliging sort of galoot, Lonzy. Might a chap use your study?"

"With the greatest of pleasure!" beamed the gentle Alonzo. "My permission is accorded readily and spontaneously, and—"

Peter Todd gripped his innocent cousin by the collar and swung him back.

"No, you don't, Lonzy!" he said briskly. "We're not going to upset the noble reputation of No. 7 by making a sort of Swindlers' Club of it. Sorry, Fish, old man, but you'll have to fish elsewhere."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I were you, Fish," said Harry Wharton seriously, "I should chuck up this hare-brained scheme of yours. You know what it'll end in—smoke! And as for trying to build an aeroplane—why, you've no more chance than a tom-cat has of building a Noah's Ark!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'm not going to be discouraged," said Fish stubbornly. "Are any of you jays going to stand in with me in this hyer enterprise?"

"Yes, rather! I will, Fishy, old chap," said Billy Bunter.

The fat junior had an eye to business. He remembered the time when Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, had introduced a form of military service at Greyfriars, and had paid a sum of money to each recruit on enlistment. It occurred to Bunter that Fisher T. Fish might possibly conduct his business on the same lines.

"Good!" said Fish, with satisfaction. "You shall be my right-hand man, Billy. Later on we'll form a kite-balloon section."

"Fish being the kite, and Bunter the balloon," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Skinner, "I believe there's something in Fishy's wheeze, after all. Hanged if I don't join his giddy corps!"

"Same here!" said Bolsover major.

"Nobody's got any objection to your making champion asses of yourselves," growled Johnny Bull, "but you're not going to do it in my study. Twig?"

"Keep your wool on!" growled Bolsover. "Fishy can have our study."

"I guess you're some sport!" said Fish, his face lighting up with enthusiasm. "Kim on!"

The Yankee junior was in great spirits as he went along to Bolsover's study. He had only bagged three recruits so far, and they were hardly of the type he wished for; but he consoled himself with the fact that the Greyfriars Flying Corps had not yet got into its stride. When it was properly under way, Fishy reflected, the Masher and the rest of the so-called airmen who had come to the district would hang their heads for very shame, and be forced to "vamoose the panch."

Arrived at Bolsover's study, Fish proceeded to indite a huge placard, which he placed on the outside of the door. It bore the words:

"SPECIAL RECRUITING OFFICE,
GREYFRIARS FLYING CORPS.
ROLL UP IN YOUR THOUSANDS
AND HELP TO STRAFE THE
ZEPPS!"

"That ought to fetch 'em!" said Skinner.

"Absolutely!" said Bolsover major.

Fish rubbed his skinny hands together with keen satisfaction.

"I'll get you galoots to sign your names as members of the corps," he said, producing one of Bolsover's copy books for the purpose.

Billy Bunter gave a cough as he made out his straggling signature.

"Ahem! Do we get any tin for this?" he asked.

Fisher T. Fish looked pained.

"I guess not," he said. "You oughter be proud to do your bit. By the way, I want five bob from each of you."

"What!" howled Skinner.

"Don't get your mad up! We're going to wear special badges and Glen-garry caps, and I reckon they cost money. You can't expect me to provide all the greenbacks."

"You won't get a cent out of me!" said Bolsover, with conviction. "I might have guessed you were up to one of your rotten money-making dodges again!"

"I guess you won't be allowed to join the corps unless you stump up," said Fish.

"And you won't be allowed the use of this study!" said Bolsover grimly. "It cuts both ways."

"Waal, I swow! You're about as tight-fisted as anybody I've ever seen on this side of the pond. Still, you're all pals of mine, and I'll do you a square deal. You three can join up for nix."

"Very kind of you!" sneered Skinner.

"There goes the bell for dinner!" said Billy Bunter. "See you later, Fishy!"

"Salute your commanding officer before you go!" chuckled Bolsover.

But Billy Bunter didn't wait to conform with this rule of military etiquette. He waddled briskly away along the passage, and his comrades-in-arms followed at a more leisurely rate. Fisher T. Fish keeping up a running fire of conversation concerning the glorious future of the Greyfriars Flying Corps!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Airmen!

"IT'S a mighty fine idea!"

Thus Coker of the Fifth, as he sat at dinner with Potter and Greene, two fellows who had a deep regard for Coker, or for Coker's almost unlimited tin.

"What's a mighty fine idea, old man?" mumbled Greene, in the middle of an attack upon the roast beef of old England.

"Why, that stunt of young Fish's. It ain't often that a Remove kid has anything like a brain-wave, but the record's been broken this time. I'm a generous-minded chap," continued Coker loftily, "and I always give credit where it's due."

Potter coughed.

"Ahem! I—I thought the Flying Corps wheeze was rather a wash-out, myself!" he murmured.

"You would!" said Coker crushingly. "You consider a lot of things wash-outs that are really first-rate—my poems, for instance."

Potter flared up.

"I should jolly well think I did!" he said. "Of all the drivelling doggerel—"

"Shurrup, you ass!" muttered Greene, nudging Potter in the ribs. "Don't make him rat, or we shall be done out of our feed this afternoon."

Potter changed his tune at once.

"Ahem! I—I was only rotting, of course, Horace," he said. "What I meant to say was that you wrote ripping poetry, as good as—as Wilkie Bard."

"What's that? I'm not a confounded comedian, am I?" howled Coker.

"Sometimes," murmured Greene, under his breath.

"Anyway, to get back to the point," Coker went on. "This Greyfriars Flying Corps stunt isn't at all bad, but it wants careful handling. A freak like Fish is bound to make a hash of it. The aeroplane he's constructing, for instance, won't fly as high as the box-room window. You see what I mean. The germ of the idea's all right, but it wants perfecting. And it's up to us to do it."

"I see," said Potter; not very heartily; however.

"We must go about it tactfully," declared Coker. "No good barging in and trying to rule the roost first go-off. Let's go along to Fish's recruiting-office directly after dinner, congratulate him on his wheeze, and ask if we can join up. We'll knuckle under to him for a bit, and when we've been in the show a week or so we'll collar the control of it for ourselves."

"Good egg!" said Greene.

"And when we've put the kybosh on Fish, and I'm the commanding-officer, things will begin to move!" said Coker dramatically. "We shall prove a hornet's nest for any Zepps that come over here."

"What, with one aeroplane?" gasped Potter.

"Certainly! One aeroplane is capable of great things. Look at Robinson. Look at Warneford. And now look at me!"

Potter and Greene did, though it was as much as they could do to keep their faces straight in the process.

"I shall go great guns," said Coker confidently. "I know all about motor-bikes, so it won't take me long to master the giddy aeroplane."

"You—you're thinking of going up?" stammered Greene.

"Of course!" said Coker, with a freezing glare at his chum. "Aeroplanes ain't made to roll along the ground like marbles, are they?"

"But you'll break your neck!"

"That won't matter, if it's in the cause of the country."

Potter and Greene said no more, but went on with their dinner. But although they were silent, they thought a good deal. It alarmed them greatly to think that Horace Coker was taking up flying in grim earnest. Coker was such a duffer that his efforts to emulate certain famous pilots were certain to be covered with ridicule.

Upon the whole, Potter and Greene would rather have been out of it; but they didn't wish to get into Coker's black books for very good private reasons.

When the meal was over, they proceeded with their chief to Fish's study. Johnny Bull, who was seated in the arm-chair, dived instinctively for the poker.

"Pav, kid!" said Coker. "We looked in to see if Fish was here."

Johnny Bull snorted.

"If he was, he'd be lying on the carpet in little pieces," he said. "He's in Bolsover's study at present, recruiting fellows for his idiotic Flying Corp."

"Thanks!" said Coker.

When the Fifth-Formers eventually came upon Fisher Tarleton Fish they found that young gentleman in the best of spirits.

"You want to join?" he said. "Good biz! I've already got Skinner and Bolsover and Bunter, and Alanzo Todd says he'll join as soon as he can raise the spondulicks."

"Why, what does he want spondulicks for?" exclaimed Coker.

"To pay for the cap and badge, I guess," said Fish. "You might as well

stump up while we're on the subject. It'll be five bob apiece."

Coker made a grimace, and counted out fifteen shillings. He handed the amount to Fish with a mental resolve to get his own back before many days were over.

"Where are these caps and things?" asked Greene.

Fish stepped over to a big box which stood in a corner of the study. The lid had been prised off, revealing a stock of khaki caps and a number of common bronze badges bearing the letters "G. F. C."

Greene gave a grunt, and helped himself. After some hesitation Coker and Potter did likewise.

"Put 'em on," said Fish. "Nothing like letting people know you mean business."

The Fifth-Formers obeyed. The caps were all ridiculously small, and looked like peanuts perched on their heads.

"Does this comprise the whole of our equipment?" growled Potter.

"I guess so. Now, where have those other galoots got to? I told 'em to come in after dinner."

Even as Fishy spoke Bunter, Bolsover, and Skinner came in.

"Your headgear's arrived," said Fish. "Better put it on, and come round to the aerodrome."

"The—the what-er?" gasped Bolsover.

"The aerodrome. These Fifth-Form fellows have joined up, and I'm taking 'em round to see my machine in course of construction."

"My only aunt!" said Coker. "You mean to say you're actually building an aeroplane?"

"You've hit it first time!"

"But where's the aerodrome, as you call it?" said Potter.

"Follow me," said Fish. "Half a jiffy! I guess we ought to march through the building. We're soldiers now."

"Airmen," corrected Skinner.

"I guess it's all the same. Fall in here!" said Fish.

Coker turned crimson.

"I don't take my orders from a fag—" he began.

"Then I guess you can varnouse. Either you respect me as your commanding officer, Coker, or you quit. Got that?"

Coker muttered something under his breath, and the little party formed up.

"Left turn! Quick march!" rapped out Fish.

With Coker leading, and Billy Bunter bringing up the rear, the first batch of recruits for the Greyfriars Flying Corps shambled along the passage, where a goodly crowd at once assembled.

"Oh, my stars!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Just look at 'em!"

"The boys of the G.F.C.!" said Nugent.

"Which, being interpreted, means Gone Fairly Crazy!" said Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is there a raid on?" asked Vernon-Smith innocently. "If so, bring us back some relics!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With flushed faces the followers of Fish marched on. Right through the building they went, Fish shouting out "Left! Right! Left! Right!" in shrill tones, until Coker felt like committing assault and battery on the Yankee junior.

Fish halted his men outside the cricket pavilion.

"I guess these are our training quarters," he said. "Come inside, and I reckon you'll open your eyes wide!"

The recruits tramped into the pavilion.

"There!" said Fish, pointing with pride at a boxlike contrivance on the

floor. "I guess that's the original Fish aeroplane—just a few!"

Coker & Co. regarded the object with interest. It was certainly fearfully and wonderfully made, and how Fish had managed to get the engine installed was a mystery. The control-levers, the pilot's and passenger's seats, were on the approved lines, but there was a sort of one-sidedness about the general structure which made the spectators feel uneasy. Was it possible that Fish would expect them to pilot the machine?

It was more than possible, as the Yankee junior's next words proved.

"I guess we'll make a start to-morrow afternoon," he said. "For the present you galoots will consider yourselves passengers. You will go up with me, one at a time, and receive the necessary instruction."

"Ow!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I—I don't feel very well. I think I'll go along to the sanny."

"Bats!" said Fish. "What you want is plenty of fresh air, obtained at the highest possible altitude. You want to feel the winds of heaven whistling about your ears—"

"Grooh!"

"I don't exactly relish the idea of making a flight in that thing, myself," said Coker.

"Why, what's wrong with it?" demanded Fish warmly.

"N-nothing—at least, I don't think there is. But I don't understand aeroplanes. I s'pose if you're game enough to risk your neck in it we shall have to do the same."

"There's no risk," said Fish. "Get that silly idea out of your cabeza at once. It'll be safe as houses."

"Houses are no longer safe, with the Zepps about," said Greene.

"Oh, dry up! You jays haven't a ha'porth of gumption between you. I guess we'll have some drill now."

"Drill!" hooted Coker.

"You! And don't get your mad up, or you'll be kicked out of the corps."

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Coker.

For the next hour the members of the Greyfriars Flying Corps were hard at it, marching and doubling and going through the most extraordinary antics, much to the amusement of the grinning crowd of Removites who watched them.

But far more extraordinary were the antics which Fisher T. Fish and his fellow-airmen were destined to perform on the morrow!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

Passenger Flights!

GREYFRIARS in general and the Remove Form in particular had plenty of food for conversation the following afternoon, when Commanding-Officer Fish, assisted by Air-Mechanics Skinner and Bolsover, dragged the Yankee junior's amazing invention on to the cricket-field.

"My only summer chapeau!" gasped Bob Cherry. "W-what is it?"

"The first-class, gilt-edged Fish aeroplane!" grinned Wharton.

"My hat! I thought it was a new arrangement for rolling the pitch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Write to the Editor of

ANSWERS

If you are not getting your right PENSION

"See hyer, you jays," said Fisher T. Fish, approaching the Famous Five, "are you making any passenger flights? The charge is five bob per head—"

"Payable by our parents after deace, I s'pose?" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be funny!" growled Fish. "I guess you won't get a chance like this again. Are you going up or are you not?"

"Not!" said Harry Wharton promptly. "We wouldn't risk our necks in that old 'bus for a pension!"

Fisher T. Fish grunted, and roamed about the crowd in search of victims. But he drew blank every time. The fellows weren't funks, but they didn't see the fun of jeopardising life and limb to suit a mad whim of Fishy's. Consequently, the commanding-officer had to fall back upon his own men.

"Coming up, Skinner?" he asked pleasantly.

"Ahem! My—my heart's rather rocky," said Skinner.

"Excitement isn't good for me."

"Oh, shucks! What about you, Bolsover?"

Bolsover dashed off, shouting back over his shoulder something about an appointment he had forgotten.

Fish began to get angry.

"I guess I didn't make that machine for an ornament," he said. "It's got to be piloted, and I'm game to do that part of the bizney if some galoot will come up with me. Now then, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Fishy! Look here, I think we ought to postpone this, and go in for night-flying instead. Quelchy, or somebody, might come along if we start now—"

"Blow Quelchy! You've jolly well got to come up!"

"That's it," said Coker, who was nervous lest the invitation should be extended to him. "Strap him in the giddy seat!"

Amid wild expostulations, the Owl of the Remove was bound securely to the passenger's seat.

"We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go!" grinned Potter.

"Bon voyage!"

Then, amid breathless excitement, Fisher T. Fish took possession of the pilot's seat. Exactly what was going to happen nobody knew; but the general opinion was that Fishy's aeroplane would do anything but fly.

Assuming an air of great importance, Fisher T. Fish set the engine going. Then he began to manipulate the lever.

"Mercy! Mercy!" shrieked Billy Bunter at the top of his lungs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior was shaking from head to foot. This, he felt, would be his first and last flight in an aeroplane. Whom the gods love die young, and Bunter was confident that the gods loved him.

But his fears were groundless, for the first-class, gilt-edged "Fish" aeroplane failed to live up to its name. It made progress, certainly, but its progress was confined to the ground, along which it rushed at a terrific speed, causing a crowd of Removites standing in the vicinity to scatter like frightened rabbits.

"Fish! Fishy, you idiot! We shall be k-k-killed!" screamed Bunter.

But Fish held grimly on, until the machine skidded, and collided none too gently with the railings which skirted the cricket-ground. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

The onlookers were nearly in hysterics. The opening performance of the Greyfriars Flying Corps suggested unlimited fun to come.

"Ow, ow, ow!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"I'm hurt all over! Several ribs are cracked, and I felt my spinal column smash, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five rushed to the rescue of the unhappy Owl of the Remove, and unstrapped him from his seat.

"Coker next!" sang out Bob Cherry. "Come on, Coker, old man! Prove your pluck!"

Coker hesitated. He hadn't relished the idea of ascending to the clouds in Fishy's extremely modern aeroplane; but he didn't mind a joy-ride along the ground, such as Billy Bunter had experienced.

He came up with becoming modesty, and took Billy Bunter's place.

An ironical cheer went up from the crowd.

"Good old Coker!"

"I p you go, old man!"

"I guess we shall do something more than skedaddle along the ground this time," said Fisher T. Fish. "Sit tight, Coker, and you'll be as safe as a bank!"

"If anything happens I'll jolly well scalp you!" growled Coker.

Once again the engine started, and Fish twisted himself up like a contortionist in his efforts to get the machine going.

The aeroplane was obstinate at first. It bumped up and down a good deal, but seemed to have no serious intention of rising more than a foot or two.

Suddenly, however, there arose a wild cry of amazement from the watching crowd. The first-class, gilt-edged Fish aeroplane was in full flight!

Higher and higher it went, and Coker's heart was thumping wildly. He hadn't bargained for anything like this!

"I guess you'd better begin making observations," shouted Fish. "If you weren't such a thick-headed galoot, you'd have brought a log-book up for the purpose."

"You—you—" stuttered Coker. "Take the confounded thing down at once! I—I don't feel safe!"

The aeroplane was going along in a series of spasmodic jerks, as if it hadn't quite decided what to do. Fortunately, it was flying at no great height, otherwise an ambulance might have been needed down below.

To the dismay of Fisher T. Fish, and the great uneasiness of Coker, the engine suddenly stopped, and the machine dived to earth. It landed, as Bob Cherry afterwards described it, like a Zeppelin bomb, and bumped along the turf several yards before it finally came to a full stop. It was a wreck, thorough and complete, and, had it been flying at a higher altitude, pilot and observer would certainly have been in little pieces.

As it was, both had a nasty shaking up, and when Potter and Greene, amid the hilarity of the crowd, unstrapped Coker from his seat, the Fifth-Former was white and furious. He rushed round to the pilot's seat—or what remained of it—and punched Fisher T. Fish violently on the nose.

"Varooooop! I guess you're potty!" squealed Fish.

"I—I—" Coker was almost at a loss for words. "Come out of that—that blessed apology for a machine! I'm going to smash it up entirely!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" howled Fish.

"Won't I? I'll jolly soon show you!"

The incensed Coker wrenched at the straps which secured the enterprising pilot, and yanked him out of the machine. Then, with Potter and Greene's willing aid, he stamped furiously upon the already battered aeroplane, reducing it to fragments.

The Famous Five, who witnessed the proceedings, were doubled up with merriment.

"What price the Greyfriars Flying Corps now, Fishy, old man?" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"I guess my number isn't up yet!" growled Fish, caressing his nose.

"I guess it is!" snarled Coker. "I resign from your tuppenny-ha'penny corps at once, and any fellow who doesn't do the same will get a dot on the nose!"

That settled it. Already the members of the ill-fated corps were feeling fed-up, and the prospect of receiving a straight drive from Coker's powerful fist was anything but inviting. So the corps was disbanded there and then.

Wingate of the Sixth strode on to the cricket-pitch with a clouded brow.

"What does all this mean?" he demanded, indicating the remains of the aeroplane.

"It's Fishy's latest," said Wharton.

"He started a giddy flying corps, and this is the result. Trust Fishy for coming a cropper with anything he puts his hand to! But you needn't worry about it now, Wingate, old man. This is the last of the passenger flights."

And Wharton was right.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Masher Gets Ready!

"A MIDNIGHT feast!"

Bob Cherry made that sudden exclamation as the Famous Five left the cricket-ground, still chuckling over the weird and wonderful antics of the Greyfriars Flying Corps.

"A midnight feast!" echoed Johnny Bull. "Wherefore this thushness? Has your pet aunt tipped you a tanner?"

"Don't be rude!" said Bob. "Matter of fact, the state of my exchequer doesn't run to even a tanner at the moment. But you and Harry and Inky are flush, and I shouldn't say no if you laid in a stack of provender and asked me to help you dispose of it."

"I don't suppose you would," laughed Harry Wharton. "But why this sudden brain-wave? Is it anybody's birthday, or are we going to celebrate Fishy's coming a cropper, or what?"

"Oh, it's just a whim," said Bob Cherry. "We haven't had a midnight feast for ages, and it's about time we got busy again. So to-night's the night!"

"All serene!" said Nugent. "We'd better buzz off to the village for the grub while we've got the chance."

"That will save breaking the esteemed bounds during the nightfulness," said Hurree Singh.

So the Famous Five quitted the school gates and tramped briskly down to the village for supplies.

"Look here," said Harry Wharton, "we might as well do the thing in style, and stand a feed to the whole dorm. It won't break the bank."

"Good egg!"

"We can stagger back with the stuff all right," said Nugent. "There's nothing new about Bob's wheeze, but it's just the thing, all the same. We'll have a feed to-night that'll live in history."

Nugent said the words in jest, but he little dreamed how true they were destined to be.

Arrived at the little store in the High Street, the juniors got busy with their orders, which were varied and extensive. Loaves of currant bread, butter, and rolls and buns, shortbreads and sweets and pastries, were swiftly made up into parcels, and at the end of half an hour the Famous Five, loaded up like so many miniature editions of Santa Claus, retraced their steps to Greyfriars in the gathering dusk.

They were passing through the High Street when a familiar voice hailed them.

"Doin' the family shoppin'—what?"

"The Masher!" exclaimed Bob Cherry joyfully. "We didn't think we should be lucky enough to see you again, sir, after what happened the other evening."

The Masher laughed merrily.

"Oh, I'm not such an outcast as all that," he said. "Mr. Quelch has even unbent to the extent of lettin' me turn up on Big Side."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton.

"We've fixed up a match between our fellows and your First Eleven, explained the Masher. "It's to take place on Saturday, and I'm fillin' the bill at inside-left. We've got our team practically complete—only a left-winger wanted."

"But surely you can find somebody in your crowd who can play at outside-left, sir?" said Bob Cherry.

The lieutenant nodded.

"There are several who could put up a passable sort of game," he said. "But we want a really toppin' man—a man like Bobby Sinclair, whom I told you about, who plays as if he's been born to it from the cradle. I understand that your First Eleven are hot stuff, and bein' skipper of our side, I mean to leave nothin' to chance."

"It'll be a great game," said Nugent. "I wouldn't miss it for worlds!"

"We'll endeavour to give your fellows run for their money," said the Masher. He cast his eye skywards.

"It's going to be a troublesome night," he said, half to himself. "The conditions are ideal for a Zepp raid. There's no moon, and it's dead calm. Yes, there's trouble brewing to-night, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Shall you go up, sir?" asked Wharton.

"If there's anythin' doin', of course. I'm sick of this beastly inaction. The fellows in France get all the fun, and we're out in the cold. But in my opinion things will be warm to-night—the dickens they will!"

"Zepps or no Zepps, we'll have our feed," said Nugent. "We shall know we're safe, you see, with two lots of Flying Corps chaps close at hand."

"Two!" said the Masher. "What d'you mean?"

Nugent explained how Fisher T. Fish had been trying to stagger humanity, and how splendidly he had succeeded, though not quite in the way he had intended.

Lieutenant Jones laughed heartily.

"Some fellows are born comedians," he said. "It's a good thing, too. Causes a lot of healthy amusement, don't you know. Well, I mustn't detain you any longer, or you'll be late for locking-up. Good-night, kids!"

"Good-night, sir!"

"Best of luckfulness, honoured ashb!"

The Famous Five picked up their packages, which had been placed on the ground during their conversation, and arrived at the gates of Gressfriers just as Gosling was on the point of locking up.

"Which I'll report yer!" growled Gossy. "Young rips! Who knows they ain't bombs as you're a-cartin' into the place?"

"Ah, who knows?" said Bob Cherry tragically. "Stranger things have happened."

"We'll undo 'em if you like, Gossy," said Nugent. "Of course, there's bound to be some sort of an explosion, but it may only mean the loss of a limb here and there."

Gosling raised his hands in horror.

"It's all right, Master Nugent," he said hastily. "Pass on!"

The Famous Five had rather a difficult task in conveying their purchases up to the Remove dormitory, but they went warily, and soon had the satisfaction of dumping the parcels safely under their beds.

Courtney of the Sixth saw lights out that evening, and he was blissfully unaware that anything was amiss.

When the prefect's retreating footsteps had died away, Harry Wharton spoke:

"There's a feed on to-night, you fellows," he said, "so don't go to sleep."

"Hooray!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "That's ripping! I may say it's a change for you fellows to do the Good Samaritan bizney, but we'll forgive you for being so stingy in the past. Out with the grub!"

"Shut up, you silly ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "You'll put the kybosh on everything if you're not careful. The feed's not till twelve."

"Grooh! How's a chap to keep awake all those hours?"

"We'll rout you out when it's time," said Peter Todd graciously. "Now, do keep your rat-trap closed, Porpoise, or we shall have one of the beaks nosing round."

Silence prevailed in the Remove dormitory, to be broken in a few moments by Billy Bunter's sonorous snore. Most of the other juniors, by propping themselves up on their pillows, contrived to keep awake.

Boom!

Midnight sounded from the old clock tower.

Harry Wharton stifled a yawn, and sprang softly out of bed.

"Shake a leg, you fellows!" he said. "Give me a hand with the parcels, Bob."

"Right!" came Bob Cherry's cheery voice in the gloom.

Candle-ends were lighted, and pyjama-clad figures flitted about the dormitory. Blankets were outspread on the floor, and the good things were set out in tempting array.

Peter Todd grabbed Bunter by the ear as if he were a rabbit.

"Grub!" he rapped out.

The words acted on Billy Bunter like a magic charm. In a twinkling he rolled out of bed, and blinked his way towards the tempting viands.

"Pile in, chappies!" said Bob Cherry.

The Removites needed no second bidding. They attacked the provisions like members of a starving garrison which had suddenly been relieved. The harmonious champing of jaws and the gurgling sound of ginger-pop made merry music.

And then, just as the feast was at its height, and Billy Bunter was remarking that he had fairly got into his stride, a muffled boom was plainly audible.

The feasters regarded each other with startled faces. Harry Wharton echoed the thought which was in the mind of each.

"Gunfire!" said the captain of the Remove. "The anti-aircraft guns are in action on the coast. The Masher was right. It's the Zepps!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Night Adventurous!

"STRAFE the 'Huns'!" said Johnny Bull.

"They always come when we're in the middle of a feed, or a ripping dream," said Vernon-Smith. "Jolly inconsiderate of 'em, I call it."

With the exception of a few of the craven spirits, the juniors had recovered their composure. Some of them calmly

continued their feed, in defiance of the danger which menaced overhead.

Boom! Boom!

The gunfire was fiercer now, and the searchlight's dazzling rays were clearly discernible through the dormitory windows.

Billy Bunter turned a sickly colour.

"Oh, dear!" he exclaimed fearfully. "What shall we do?"

"Sit tight and chance it," said Peter Todd. "No good gettin' panicky. If the blessed 'ombs come, they'll come. I s'pose. There's no stopping 'em."

"Ow!"

"I guess if my aeroplane hadn't been done in by those galoots I'd be up like a shot!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"And down like a stone the next minute," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess—"

Crash!

There was a terrific noise without, and the shattering of glass could be heard.

"Bombs!" said Johnny Bull grimly.

Billy Bunter lost his head completely.

"Ow, ow, ow! Let's get down to the vaults, you fellows! We shall be b-b-buried alive up here!"

"Dry up, you fat funk!" said Nugent scornfully.

Crash! Crash!

"Bombs galore!" said Vernon-Smith. "There's something doing to-night, and no error. They must be jolly near here. Listen!"

Then came a sudden rushing sound, which ended in an explosion so loud and deafening that two of the windows in the Remove dormitory were smashed, and the glass went rattling down into the Close. At the same instant half a dozen juniors were literally blown from one side of the room to the other.

Then, in spite of the efforts of Harry Wharton & Co. to prevent a panic, Snoop and Stott and Billy Bunter became fairly hysterical. Bunter broke loose completely, and, making for the door, fled down the stairs at a truly terrific speed, bowling over heaps of fellows as he continued his headlong career.

"Help! Murder! Zepp bombs!" he shouted, in a frenzy of fear. "Save me, somebody, for goodness' sake!"

A tall figure loomed up in the gloom, and a sharp voice exclaimed:

"Bunter, cease making that ridiculous noise, and go quietly into the vaults, if you consider your life is imperilled. You are behaving in an absurdly childish manner!"

"But the Zepps, sir!" groaned Bunter. "They'll smash the school to its foundations! Ow! There goes another bomb! Mercy!"

Mr. Quelch seized the fat junior, who was quivering like a huge table-jelly, and hustled him into the vaults, where the members of the domestic staff were already gathered, pale and frightened.

"Remain there until the danger is past," said Mr. Quelch.

And Billy Bunter slunk up against the damp wall, looking like a man experiencing his first taste of sea-sickness in mid-Channel.

Back in the Remove dormitory great excitement was afoot. By an ingenious arrangement, Bob Cherry had piled a number of beds on top of each other, and he and a few favoured chums had a good view of the fireworks, as Bob expressed it.

The bomb-dropping had now ceased, and so had the gunfire. But there was a whirring noise overhead which told its own tale.

"Aeroplanes," said Harry Wharton. "Hope the Masher's safe!"

And then the Famous Five had the pleasure of witnessing a spectacle which

they would remember throughout their lives.

A dull glow suddenly appeared in the sky—a glow which grew brighter and more intense at every second, until it developed into a massive ball of flame.

Then it shot down through the void like a huge comet, whilst a vivid glow lit up the countryside for miles around.

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry frantically, almost toppling out of the window in his supreme excitement. "They've brought down a Zepp! Hip, hip, hip!"

"Hurrah!"

For a few moments it seemed that everybody in the Remove dormitory had gone stark, staring mad. Fellows wrung each other by the hand, executed a species of leap-frog over the beds, and sent up a sufficient volume of noise to have awakened the Seven Sleepers.

"Oh, it's great!" chorused Peter Todd. "You can bet your life these Flying Corps chaps have had something to do with that! The glow comes from Courtfield way. Who's game to bike over and see the smouldering Zepp?"

"I am!" exclaimed a dozen voices as one.

Rules and regulations were thrown to the winds on that eventful night. Nobody gave a thought about breaking bounds. A Zepp was down; and the juniors would have risked dozens of lickings and impositions to witness the sequel to that dramatic scene of fire and flame.

The Famous Five, with Mark Linley, Peter Todd, Vernon-Smith, Dick Russell, and several more, hastily quitted the dormitory. Wingate of the Sixth shouted to them to stop as they brushed past him on the stairs; but the excited juniors did not heed. They made speedy tracks for the bicycle-shed, and brought out their machines.

As they crossed the Close in the darkness, something glinted before them on the gravel, and Bob Cherry, who was leading, stopped short.

"Glass!" he said. "Be careful how you go with your jiggers."

"Where the merry dickens has it all come from?" asked Nugent.

"Looks as if a botch's fallen on the Head's summer-house," said Harry Wharton.

"My hat!"

"It's very thrilling and all the rest of it," said Harry; "but we can't stop to investigate. There's bigger doings out yonder."

And he indicated the glow, which, though it had waned somewhat, still continued to illuminate the countryside.

Gosling flatly refused to open the gates; but desperate situations required desperate remedies, so the Removites set upon the surly porter with one accord. They bore him to the ground, while Hurree Singh deftly extracted the keys from his horny hand.

The gates were swung open, and the cyclists, indifferent to danger—for a few searchlights still played overhead—mounted their machines, and sped away like the wind.

When they reached Friardale, however, they were obliged to jump off and walk, owing to the crowd of people which thronged the village street. Everybody was cheering the magnificent feat of an unknown airman, or of a skilful gunner, and a huge throng was making its way towards Courtfield, where the dramatic affair was reported to have taken place.

After a terrific struggle, Harry Wharton & Co. got ahead of the eager, clamorous crowd; and then they mounted their machines once more and covered the intervening distance to Courtfield.

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Within a few moments they came upon the blazing wreck, which was surrounded by a handful of special constables and a number of Flying Corps men.

"Ye gods!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What a blaze it must have been when it was at its height!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Has the crew perished?" he asked.

"Every man-jack of them," answered one of the Specials. "Their remains were removed a few minutes ago. They have paid the full penalty of their barbarity."

The crowd which congregated around the remains of the monster of the air grew larger at each moment. Busy journalists, armed with their notebooks, were early on the scene, gleaning impressions of the Zeppelin's downward dive from witnesses of the thrilling scene.

"Did you see it, kids?" asked a corporal, edging up to the Greyfriars juniors.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "How was it brought down?"

"By aeroplane. One of our fellows, you know," said the corporal proudly. "We shall know all about it in the morning."

"It's morning now," said Peter Todd, with a shiver. "We've seen all there is to see, you chaps. Let's skedaddle."

But most of the Greyfriars fellows found a strange fascination in remaining at the spot. They could not tear themselves away, and lingered until a Flying Corps lorry came on the scene to take away the fragments of the giant airship.

"What a night!" said Bob Cherry, as they cycled back to the school. "We've had a share in a good many exciting doings before now, but this crowns everything! When we're doddering old jossers with the gout we shall be able to tell our grandchildren that we saw a Zepp brought down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three o'clock was chiming as the Removites re-entered the gates of Greyfriars. The last two persons they wished to encounter just then were waiting for them in the Close—the Head and Mr. Quelch.

"Boys," exclaimed the former, "where have you been? Your absence has caused considerable anxiety."

"We're awfully sorry, sir," said Frank Nugent penitently, "but we were dying to see the burning Zepp. It was a chance we might never have got again."

"Then it is quite correct that a Zeppelin has been destroyed?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Rather, sir! One of the Flying Corps officers did it, I believe."

"That is great good news," said Dr. Locke. "I shall not punish you, my boys, in the unusual circumstances; but in the event of future air raids you will remain in the building. You should realise that your masters have quite enough responsibility without having it added to by reckless excursions on your part. Is the raid over?"

"I think so, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Then you will put your machines away and retire at once to your dormitory."

"Certainly, sir! Thank you very much for overlooking our—ahem!—conduct, sir," said Harry.

"I shall not do so again," said the Head. "Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

Devoutly thankful at having got off so lightly, the members of the exploration party replaced their bicycles in the shed and clattered up the stairs to their dormitory.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Who Was the Hero?

THERE was no sleep for anybody in the Remove for the remainder of that night. With the destruction of the Zepp all hope of slumber was destroyed also.

"So you fellows actually saw the wrecked Zepp?" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"We did, and it was a sight we shall never forget," said Johnny Bull.

"It blaze-furiously ignited and lit up the whole countryside," said Hurree Singh. "We saw the esteemed glow from here."

"Yes, we know all about that. But who brought it down?" inquired Ogilvy.

"That's the question," said Bob Cherry. "It's generally believed to have been a Flying Corps man. The Masher will tell us all about it if it was. I don't suppose they'll keep it a State secret."

"It'll mean the D.S.O. for the giddy pilot, I guess," said Peter Todd.

"Just think what Fishy's missed!" grinned Dick Penfold.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I wouldn't have rested content with bringing one down," said the Yankee junior. "I'd have sent the whole blessed shoot to kingdom come!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I'll say this much for Fishy," said Frank Nugent. "He didn't bolt when the danger threatened, like Snoop and Bunter and the rest."

"Talk of angels!" said Bob Cherry, as the dormitory door was thrown open, and Billy Bunter, looking pompous and important, and swelling visibly, strutted in.

"Come out of your funk-hole!" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I fail to understand you!" said Bunter, with dignity. "Bravely, and without a thought for my personal safety, I faced the dangers of the night—"

"In the coal-cellar!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter chuckled, and began to address.

"You'll change your tune when my exploits are made known," he said mysteriously.

"What exploits? Have you raided the pantry, you fat rascal?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Rats! I—I've put the kybosh on a Zepp; and if that's not a good night's work, then I'd jolly well like to know what is!"

"You've put the kybosh on a Zepp! Why, what in thunder do you mean?" roared Nugent.

Billy Bunter assumed a melodramatic attitude, and faced the astonished crowd of Removites. Now that the tension of the past few hours was over, and the last raider was well away from England's shores, Billy Bunter had become suddenly brave. The sound of the falling bombs had frightened him out of his wits; but now that the "all clear" signal had been given, and the menace was removed, Bunter had returned to his old bombastic bluster.

Imagination lent him wings as he proceeded.

"Yes," he went on, "surprising though it may seem to you fellows, I'm the dark horse. Off my own bat I destroyed that Zepp at—at Wapshot."

"Wapshot! Why, it was brought down on Courtfield Common!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Ahem! It's rather difficult to get one's bearings in the air, don't you know," said Bunter feebly.

"Great jumping crackers!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Am I dreaming, or are you actually taking the credit for bringing down that Zepp?"

"I've told you once that it was me," said Bunter. "You can believe me or not, as you choose. I don't suppose you will. You always were a set of doubting Thomases."

The Removites stared at Billy Bunter in speechless amazement.

The Owl of the Remove had told some wild fables before, but nothing quite so colossal as this. That he would have the brazen nerve, on top of his cowardly behaviour, to boast of destroying a Zeppelin, was, as Peter Todd truly remarked, the absolute giddy limit!

It was some moments before anybody spoke. Harry Wharton was the first to find his voice.

"Before we believe you, Buntz," he said, "you'll have to give us proof—yards and yards of it!"

"Very well," said Bunter. "Being a modest chap, it goes against the grain for me to have to describe my own bravery, but—"

"Ugh!" grunted Johnny Bull. "He makes me feel sick! Stop me to my bed, somebody, or I shall have to get out and commit murder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go on, Buntz!" said Vernon-Smith. "Never mind Bull! He's as interested as anybody, really; but he doesn't want to press you too much, in case you get swelled head!"

"Well, it was like this," said Bunter. "You remember when the guns went off—"

"Yes; you went off, too!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did," said Bunter, unmoved by Bob's crushing sarcasm. "I went straight down to—to—"

"To the vaults?" suggested Mark Linley.

"No; to the aeroplane base, in Colonel Ranter's meadow, you know. I saw a lot of Flying Corps officers there. They were shaking in their shoes, and one of 'em fell down in a dead faint when he heard the bombs dropping. I asked that Masher fellow if he was going up in his aeroplane, and he said he wouldn't do it if all the crowned heads of Europe went down on their hands and knees and implored him to!"

"Oh, you fat fibber!" gasped Russell.

But Billy Bunter was galloping away so furiously with his narrative that he failed to notice Russell's remark.

"I couldn't persuade any of those chaps to go up," said Bunter; "so there was only one thing for it. I had to out-gander one of the machines myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I lifted it out of the shed—" continued Bunter.

"Oh, help!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"And was up among the stars the next minute. It was fearfully risky work, but I stuck to my guns, and after a time sighted the Zepp directly underneath me. Then, hauling out a number of the biggest bombs I could find, I—I—"

"You woke up?" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I discharged them upon my quarry. There was a rending spurt of flame, and the monster dived down to earth, never to visit our coast again!" concluded Bunter dramatically.

"Is that all?" asked Nugent. "You're sure you didn't cadge a few postal-orders off the crew while they were falling?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you expect a reward for this dashing exploit!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, I'm certainly entitled to one!"

"Then you shall have it. Nobody shall ever be in a position to say we're ungenerous and unpatriotic."

Bunter's eyes glistened.

"I say, that's awfully good of you, Cherry!" he said.

"Not at all," said Bob, carelessly throwing a blanket on to the floor.

"Would you like your reward now?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good! Lend a hand, you fellows!"

The juniors obeyed with alacrity. They knew exactly what was in Bob's mind and the sort of reward which was to crown Bunter's long string of fabrications. He was to be tossed in a blanket.

"Ready, Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry politely.

"Yes. As I said before, it's awfully kind— Here, I say! Wharrer you up to?"

"Rewarding a Zepp hero!" said Bob,

time the juniors had finished with him he hadn't a breath left in his body.

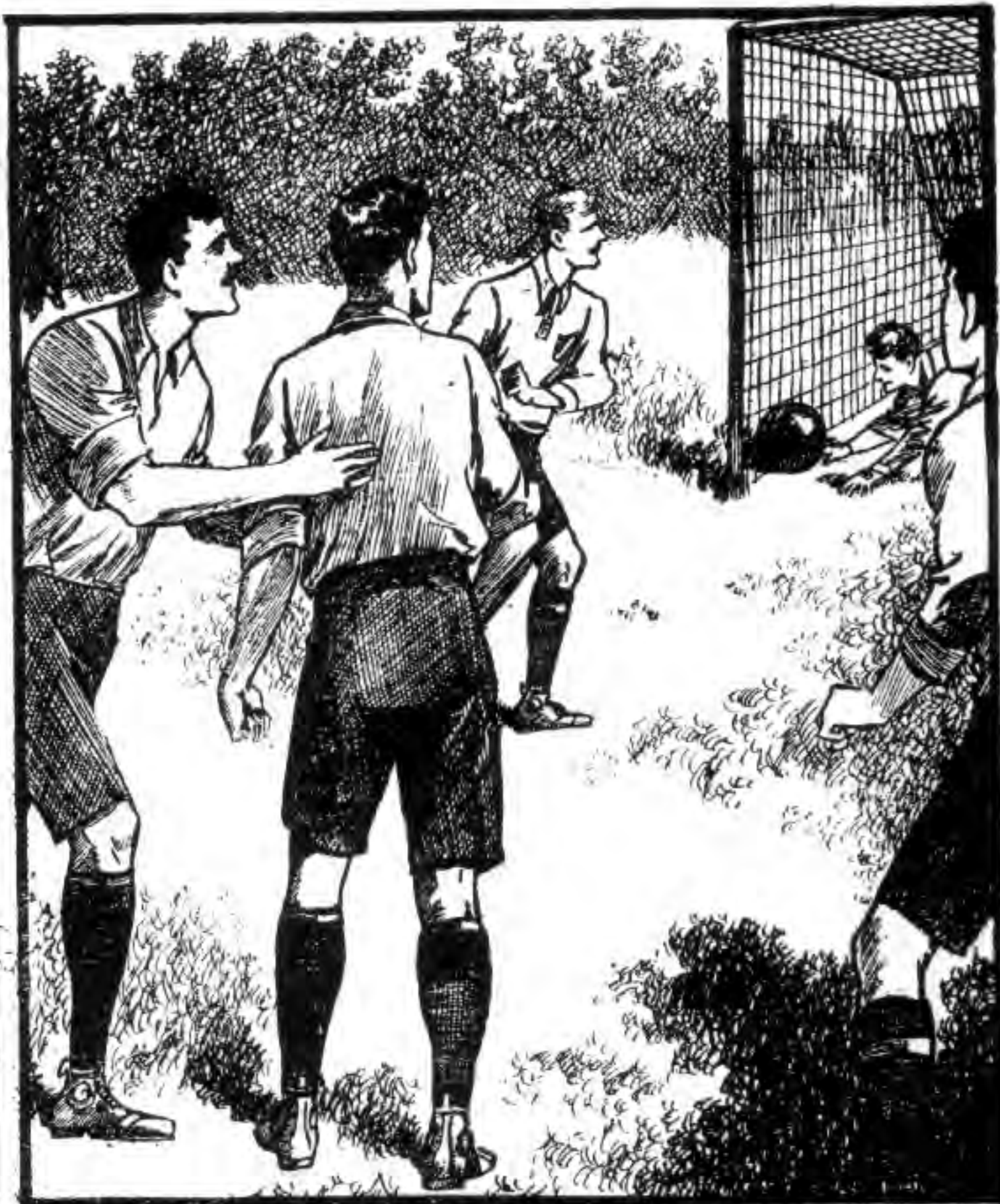
And when, some moments later, Billy Bunter crawled painfully to his bed, he resolved that he would never, never destroy a Zeppelin again—not even in his fertile imagination!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Man Who Overcame!

BOB CHERRY was the first of the juniors to learn the news, shortly after the first grey glimmer of dawn crept in at the high windows of the Remove dormitory.

Bob had ventured downstairs in order to see the extent of the damage caused by the raiders, and he spotted Gosling,



The Masher was executing a sort of postman's knock on Bobby Sinclair's back. (See Chapter 12.)

seizing the fat junior by the collar, and hustling him towards the blanket. "Now, you fellows! Grab hold! One to be ready, two to be steady, three to be—"

"Off!" chuckled Peter Todd.

And Billy Bunter shot up into space like a stone from a catapult.

"Yarooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For one dizzy second the Owl of the Remove hovered in the air; then he alighted in the blanket after the manner of a huge fish being netted.

"Give him another!" ordered Bob Cherry. "Being an alman, he's used to the queer sensation!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Again, and yet again, Billy Bunter was sent spinning into space. By the

the porter, standing outside his lodge, his eyes bulging in front of a daily paper.

Gosling was as excited as a fag in the Third. He had evidently hit upon some great, good news.

"What's the latest, Gossey, old chap?" asked Bob Cherry. "Don't keep it to yourself."

Gosling glanced up from the paper, and recognised Bob Cherry as being one of the juniors who had defied him overnight. But in his present frame of mind Gossey felt genial towards all the world, and he actually favoured Bob with a beaming smile.

"Which they've brought another o' them there Zepps. down, Master Cherry!" he said jubilantly.

"Is that all?" said Bob. "You're

rather late with your information, Gossy. We saw the thing come down, and we saw what was left of it afterwards."

"But it gives the name o' the bloke who done it!" said Gossy. "It were a chap I knew werry well. Lieutenant Ivor Jones is name is. 'E was a scholar 'ere—jest sich a one as you might be, Master Cherry, and I shall never forget the day when 'e was expelled. 'Twas said as 'ow 'e stole money from the till of Mrs. Mumble's shop, but I doubt it." Gossy shook his head sagely. "Jones was sufferin' the punishment fer another, if yer asks my opinion. 'E was too good a feller to go in for pickin' an' stealin'. 'Onest as the day, 'e was. An' now 'e's bin an' brought down a Zeppelin!"

"What!" shouted Bob Cherry. In a twinkling he had snatched the paper from Gossy's hand, and eagerly scanned the headlines. Then, with a wild whoop of delight, Bob bolted off to the Remove dormitory.

"What the merry dickens—" began Wharton, starting up in bed.

"The Zepp hero!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Who d'you think it was?"

"Flight Commander Bunter?" queried Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats! It was the Masher—the dear old Masher!"

"Hurrah!"

"Just listen to this!" continued Bob Cherry excitedly.

"ZEPPELIN FALLS IN FLAMES! ANOTHER RAIDER PAYS THE PENALTY!"

"A number of hostile airships visited the South-East coast shortly after midnight last night, and bombs were dropped in various localities, without, however, inflicting serious damage.

"Early intimation was received that a Zeppelin of the new and more vulnerable type was totally destroyed during the raid. The dashing airman responsible for this brilliant achievement is Lieutenant Ivor Jones, of the Royal Flying

Corps, an officer who has made an extensive study of night-flying.

"The Zeppelin was flying at a great altitude when Lieutenant Jones manoeuvred his machine above it, and achieved the feat which will win him a nation's lasting admiration.

"After the giant airship had crashed to earth in flames, tremendous crowds began to assemble, and the enthusiasm was enormous.

"We hope to publish a photograph of Lieutenant Jones in our next issue."

"Oh, how ripping!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Fancy the old Masher turning up triumphs like this! I shouldn't think Quelch would bar him after what's happened!"

"I say, I'm simply dying to congratulate him!" said Nugent.

"We shall see him at the footer match," said Johnny Bull. "Meanwhile, what about getting up a subscription for a testimonial as a tribute to his bravery?"

"Topping!" said Wharton. "I'll start the fund at once. We'll get him the best smoking outfit that money can buy!"

"Here's an esteemed quid to set the ball rolling," said Hurree Singh.

"Good for you, Inky!"

As the day advanced the subscription list put on flesh considerably. Fellows in all Forms insisted upon being included, and by dinner-time Harry Wharton had collected sufficient to buy half a dozen smoking outfits of the highest quality.

"We must get the Masher something else by way of overweight," he remarked to the other members of the Famous Five.

"Yes, rather! A gold wrist-watch, or something of that sort," said Nugent.

"We've got eight quid, so far," said Harry, consulting the list. "Might as well bring it up to a tenner!"

"Get the masters to subscribe," said Bob Cherry.

"Good egg!"

Mr. Quelch was crossing the Close at

that moment, and Harry Wharton approached him.

"Well, Wharton, what is it?"

"Will you contribute to a good cause, sir?"

"It all depends, my boy. Let me see what it is."

Wharton handed over the list to the Remove-master. It was headed:

"SUBSCRIPTION ON BEHALF OF LIEUTENANT IVOR JONES, THE GALLANT OLD GREYFRIARS BOY WHO BROUGHT DOWN A ZEPP."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I should certainly never dream of subscribing to such an object, Wharton!" he said stiffly.

"Oh, sir!"

The captain of the Remove was thunderstruck. He knew that a week before the Masher had been out of favour with Mr. Quelch, but naturally imagined that with the destruction of the Zepp the Form-master's animosity towards the old boy had vanished.

But Mr. Quelch was as bitterly disposed towards Lieutenant Jones as ever. He even went further.

"I warned you, Wharton, to have nothing whatever to do with that man," he said, "and I will not tolerate your proposed subscription! You will return the money to the various donors, and destroy that list!"

"Sir, I—"

"Do not presume to question my authority, Wharton!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "You will do as I tell you, and at once!"

But Bob Cherry, who was standing near, could not refrain from chiming in.

"Haven't you heard, sir, what Lieutenant Jones has done?" he exclaimed.

"I am aware, Cherry, that he destroyed a Zeppelin, and that the general public is suffering from a form of hysteria in consequence. But what happened last night in no way blots out the stain of ten years ago. Lieutenant Jones is a thief!"

"I don't think—" began Bob.

"Silence, Cherry! Not another word! I will exact obedience from my




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pupils in this matter, or know the reason why! Remember, none of you are to have any dealings with Lieutenant Jones again! If you defy me, the affair shall pass out of my hands into those of Dr. Locke!"

And Mr. Quelch swept away with rustling gown, leaving blank consternation behind him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Somebody Turns Up!

SATURDAY dawned a perfect day, crisp and clear, and ideal for football.

It was by way of being a record crowd that stood shoulder to shoulder on the touchline on Big Side to witness the forthcoming tussle between Greyfriars First and the Royal Flying Corps.

All Greyfriars was present to a man, and from the surrounding villages quite five hundred people had streamed in, their main object being to get a glimpse of the man who, with supreme courage, had piloted his plane through the trackless deserts of the sky and brought the Zeppelin to earth.

Apart from the Masher's great feat, the air raid was scarcely mentioned. Some damage had been inflicted upon the out-buildings of the school, the gymnasium having been affected, in addition to the Head's summer-house. But there had been no casualties, and the sum total of the Huns' exploit had been to put some work in the way of the village glazier.

Wingate and his men were early on the scene, practising. They had been spending quite a lot of time on the football-field during the past week, realising that they would have all their work cut out to avoid defeat at the hands of the airmen.

Never had the Greyfriars team been better balanced and more capable of rendering a good account of itself.

When the visiting team appeared on the ground, a ringing cheer went up from the crowd. It was meant for the Masher, who smiled his acknowledgments.

But he was not smiling a moment later when he shook hands with Wingate.

"It's most annoyin'," he said. "We've had a chapter of accidents. As I was tellin' some of your juniors the other day, we hadn't anybody who could fill the bill at outside-left with any satisfaction. We tried a fellow named Freke, an' he lived up to his name, so we chucked him. Then a chap named Barry said he'd have a shot, an' we were delighted to find that he had an amazin' turn of speed, an' was really hot stuff. But this mornin', as luck would have it, he was drafted to France. Result, we're a man short!"

"Hard cheese!" said Wingate sympathetically.

"It's putrid luck!" said the Masher. "I shall have to take the place of two men, I s'pose!"

Then he sighed.

"By gum, I'd give the world to have old Bobby Sinclair here!"

"Sinclair!" echoed Wingate.

"Yes. We went great guns when we were at school together. He was outside-left, an' I was next to him, an' we bagged goals as easily as fallin' off a form. It was ripping!"

"I should like to see Sinclair, sir," said Wingate, with interest.

"So should I," said the Masher gravely. "But no one will ever see him again—not on this side of the border, at any rate. He's gone West!"

"How rotten! Was he a Flying Corps man, sir?"

"Yes—kite balloon section. He was reported killed some time ago."

"But, luckily, it wasn't confirmed," said a cheery voice. "Hallo, Ivor, old fellow! How goes the merry game?"

The Masher swung round, petrified. Joy and bewilderment made him dumb.

"Don't look at me as if I were Hamlet's ghost, old man! Here I am, all alive and kicking! Bobby Sinclair, in the flesh!"

"Good gad!" was all the Masher could say.

"You thought I was a goner—what?" said the new-comer, who was attired in Flying Corps uniform. "Well, it was touch and go. I'm back from the jaws of hell. Had a nasty tumble when I was over the Hun trenches, and they took me prisoner. After a weary spell of waiting, I got clear. I'll tell you all about it over cigars and wine in the officers' mess. Meanwhile, I understand you want an outside-left?"

The Masher recovered his power of speech—and action. He wrung his old schoolfellow warmly by the hand, and burst into a torrent of rapturous greeting.

"Cut it short, Ivor!" said Bobby Sinclair. "We're keeping the crowd waiting. Let's treat the dear fellows to a dashing exhibition of footer, as in the olden days!"

"All serene," said the Masher. "Come and get into some tegs, Bobby, an' we'll play the game of our lives!"

And they did. Nobody was ever likely to forget that great game, which proved a delightful thrill from the kick-off to the final whistle.

Wingate, winning the toss, elected to kick with the wind, and the Greyfriars seniors speedily warmed to the attack. Their passing was perfect, their footwork a dream. At the end of five minutes' play Courtney put them one up.

"Hurrah!"

The cheer which went up from the clamorous host on the touchline was terrific. The early success was as welcome as it was unexpected.

"Stick it, Friars!" roared Bob Cherry. "Pile 'em on!"

But although play proved fast and exciting after Courtney's goal, there was no addition to the score when the whistle went for the interval. It had been a great game so far, and the second half promised to provide a rare number of thrills.

Bobby Sinclair had made the crowd gasp. He was truly a marvel, and it was miraculous that he had failed to score during the first half.

"We shall see some fireworks now!" said Nugent, as the two teams lined up for the resumption.

"Yes, rather!"

Greyfriars First attacked strongly, and after a fine bout of passing, in which all the forwards participated, Wingate scored a grand goal, thus putting his side two to the good.

Bobby Sinclair turned to the Masher with a wry face.

"This sort of thing's got to stop!" he said emphatically. "I can stand goal-scoring in moderation, but we don't want 'em to find the net at the rate of twice a minute. Send me out some nice passes, Masher, and I'll see what I can do by way of levelling things up."

The Masher nodded. And the next moment he was speeding away like a deer, with the ball at his toes. Walker and Valence closed in to check him; but before they could do so the ball was deftly touched out to Bobby Sinclair, who, smiling cheerfully, sent in a scorching shot, which had the Greyfriars goalie beaten all the way.

"Good man!" grinned the Masher. "You're fairly into your stride now, Bobby. We shall get into double figures if we keep on like this."

But the Masher had not taken into consideration the sterling worth of the Greyfriars defence. The Flying Corps

men had by far the better of the play at this point, but each time they took the leather down the field they came up against a rocklike resistance. The Greyfriars First were clinging with the tenacity of terriers to their goal lead. They realised that to defeat the Flying Corps would be a deed which would ring in the school's history.

The Masher and Bobby Sinclair combined in a sweeping movement towards the Greyfriars goal and when within close range the former passed to Lieutenant Bowen, who was at centre-forward. At point-blank range the latter shot, and the hearts of the watching crowd sank into their boots.

But luck plays a big part in football. The sphere struck the crossbar, making it quiver with the impact, and then rebounded on to the field of play. It fell at the feet of Wingate, who went away like the wind.

Swerving past man after man, the captain of Greyfriars raced ahead, and wound up his fine run by scoring the grandest goal of the day—a real beauty, which caused the crowd to go into a perfect pandemonium of cheering and clapping.

"Three to one!" chortled Bob Cherry. "Hoo-giddy-ray! We've got the game now! It's all over, bar shouting!"

But was it? On the resumption, Bobby Sinclair gained possession, and then began the usual bout of passing with the Masher. Yard by yard the ball was taken down to the home team's goal, until the airmen forced a corner.

From the resultant kick the Masher headed through.

"There's life in the old dog yet!" grinned Bobby Sinclair. "Five minutes to go, and we're still a goal to the bad. I wonder——"

"No time for wonderin'," said the Masher grimly. "We've got to play up for that giddy goal as if the winnin' of the war depended on it!"

Those last five minutes were crowded with glorious incident. Both goals had very narrow escapes, and once it seemed a dead cert that Captain Nixon would score for the visitors; but Walker just managed to get his head in the way in time.

"Two minutes!" panted the Masher, at length. "Now or never!"

He took the ball from Valence's toes and raced towards goal. Men loomed up in front of him, and on either side. He felt like a fly about to become entangled in the meshes of a spider's web.

But out of the corner of his eye he got a glimpse of Bobby Sinclair's beckoning figure. Yes, he thought, he would pass to Bobby. Old Bobby would "make good."

Whiz!

The ball darted across the turf, and Bobby Sinclair fastened upon it with a do-or-die expression on his handsome face.

Crash!

Straight as a die, the ball sailed into the unguarded portion of the net. The goalie was groping helplessly on the ground. The Masher was executing a sort of postman's knock on Bobby Sinclair's back; and the referee was blowing a shrill blast on his whistle, signifying that the great game was over.

"A draw!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Three to three. Well, I'm not sorry. It would have been a pity for those Flying Corps fellows to have lost, after the stunning fight they put up when they were a couple of goals down."

"Sinclair was their best man," said Nugent. "Fancy him turning up like that, when they thought he was dead! It beats the story-books!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 476.

"We must invite him to a top-hole spread in the study," said Johnny Bull. "Can't let such a ripping footballer as that go empty away."

"But we can't invite him without asking the Masher as well," protested Bob Cherry. "And the Masher's barred. You remember what Quelch said."

Johnny Bull ground his heel savagely into the turf.

"Blow Quelch! What right's he got to run down the Masher, who's proved himself to be one of the very best? It's a scandal!"

"What's a scandal?" asked the Masher, strolling up with his arm linked in Bobby Sinclair's.

"Why, that Quelch forbids you to enter the School building, sir," said Harry Wharton.

Bobby Sinclair glanced inquiringly at his companion.

"That so, Masher?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But why?" exclaimed Sinclair, in amazement.

"Quelch's got up a cock-and-bull story about Lieutenant Jones, sir," said Frank Nugent. "Says he raided the tuckshop till, when he was a boy here, and was expelled for it."

Bobby Sinclair changed colour. His face was very white, as he turned to his fellow-officer.

"Masher, old man, you have suffered all this on my account!"

"Shush!" said the Masher. "No need to rake up the beastly past."

"Isn't there, by Jove?"

Bobby Sinclair's voice was tense and excited.

"Come along to Mr. Quelch's study," he said. "You kids as well. I'm pretty

much of an outsider, I know, but I'm not going to stand by any longer and see the Masher bearing the burden of another's guilt! I'll show Mr. Quelch that his innocence is as clear as noon-day! Come on!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

With Flying Colours!

MR QUELCH was at work on his typewriter when his study was suddenly invaded by the Famous Five and the two Flying Corps officers. He glanced up from his "History of Greyfriars," and frowned when he saw that the Masher was among the intruders.

"Lieutenant Jones—" he began.

"Captain, if you please," drawled the Masher. "I've been gazetted this week."

"Were you a general I should not hesitate to speak plainly to you," said Mr. Quelch. "I have warned you not to enter this school again unless you care to acknowledge, and express regret for, your past conduct."

"This is where I step in," said Bobby Sinclair. "You remember me, Mr. Quelch?"

The Remove-master looked keenly at the smart young officer, and gave a start.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed.

"Surely you are not Sinclair?"

"The same," said Bobby.

"But I thought you were—er—killed!"

"So did a good many more people. Luckily, the nation has sustained no such great calamity."

"I am certainly delighted to see you again, Sinclair!" said Mr. Quelch, rising from his seat and shaking the old boy

cordially by the hand. "I have secured Dr. Locke's sanction in forbidding Lieutenant—ahem!—Captain Jones to enter the school, but no such restriction will be placed on you."

"I'm not so sure," said Bobby Sinclair grimly. "You'd better hear what I've got to say first. Captain Jones is innocent of the charge which has been connected with his name."

"Sinclair, how can you be so absurd as to tell me this? If I remember rightly, you yourself were a scholar here at the time of the theft. You saw Jones convicted and expelled."

"I was a worm!" said Bobby Sinclair. His voice shook, and his face was still pale. "I was a cowardly worm! Mr. Quelch, it was I who rifled the tuckshop till."

"Sinclair!"

"I know it sounds fearfully rotten; but there were extenuating circumstances. As you know, I came to Greyfriars on a scholarship, and at that time my people were very poorly off. They got behind with the house-rent, and were reduced to desperate straits. I resolved to help them out, and that—that was the only way. It's the first and last time I've ever stolen anything in my life. And now"—the speaker extracted a bundle of Treasury Notes from his pocket—"I shall make it my duty to replace the amount I stole—fifteen pounds."

Mr. Quelch looked flabbergasted.

"I—I quite fail to understand—" he began.

"I dare say you do," said Bobby. "It must come as an awful shock to you, Mr. Quelch, especially as I was one of your favourite pupils. Well, to continue, the theft was discovered, and suspicion fell upon me, as you know; then, at the

WHY BE TOO FAT?

A WONDERFUL FAT-REDUCING REMEDY.

It is distressing to hear men and women who are getting stouter and stouter every day, and who have, perhaps, weakened themselves by trying to starve down the over-fatness, exclaiming: "Oh, it can't be helped, I suppose; obesity is a family complaint; father was awfully stout—" and so on. This is ridiculous; it can be helped; and thousands have proved this by taking a short course of Antipon when all sorts of dieting and drugging treatments have utterly failed to eradicate the obstinate obese tendency. Antipon is the one remedy

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REGD TRADE MARK

assembly in Big Hall. Ivor Jones, here, came forward and insisted that he was the thief. He knew all the circumstances, you see, and didn't like the thought of my being sent home in disgrace. So he took the blame entirely upon his own shoulders, and was expelled in my place. Yes, the Masher was the truest and best chum a chap ever had!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bob Cherry involuntarily.

"Bobby, old fellow, there was no need for this dramatic bizney," said the Masher, in great distress. "We kept up the deception for ten years, and we might as well have let it hang out a lifetime."

"Oh, rot!" said Bobby Sinclair. "You've endured quite enough on my account, and although my confession's been made ten years too late, better late than never. Now, Mr. Quelch, you will understand the position."

The Remove-master turned to the Masher. Never had the Famous Five seen Mr. Quelch look so utterly remorseful.

"Captain Jones," he exclaimed, "my treatment of you has been shameful! Had I been in possession of the real facts, had I believed you when you said you were innocent, all would have been well. But I chose to slight you in the presence of these boys, and have wronged you greatly. Can I—may I ask your pardon?"

The Masher made no reply, but his hearty handgrip convinced Mr. Quelch that he bore no malice.

"As for me," said Bobby Sinclair, "I'm downright sick with myself, and

you can give these kids orders to kick me out of the gates as soon as you like, Mr. Quelch."

The Remove-master smiled.

"I shall certainly adopt no such drastic measures," he said. "Your confession has amply atoned for what took place years ago. Besides, you acted under great stress, since it was for your parents' sake that you took the money. No, Sinclair, I do not feel called upon to judge you. We are none of us fit to cast a stone. Let the wretched past be a sealed book. I am sure these juniors will say nothing of what has transpired this afternoon."

"Not a word, sir!" said Harry Wharton promptly.

"Then we will consider the matter closed. And now, Captain Jones, I should like to congratulate you upon your magnificent achievement the other night."

"Thanks!" said the Masher. "I've already been slapped on my back till it's sore, and been photographed about fifty times against my will. Never mind! Let 'em all come!"

"I will ask Dr. Locke to give the boys a whole holiday to celebrate your gallantry," said Mr. Quelch.

"You're a brick, sir!" said Bob Cherry joyfully.

Mr. Quelch resumed his seat at the typewriter with a smile, and the little party left the study. The clouds had been chased away, and harmony reigned once more in the place of discord.

The feed which took place in Study No. 1 that evening was on a gigantic

scale. As usual, accommodation was limited, for several staunch admirers of the Masher, including Peter Todd, Vernon-Smith, and Mark Linley, had been invited; but everybody was serenely happy, including Bobby Sinclair, who was made to feel as if the unpleasant incident of the tuckshop had never occurred.

"We're packin' up our traps in a day or two," remarked the Masher. "Goin' overseas, I believe. You'll keep our memory green—what?"

"We shall never forget the exciting times we've had since the Flying Corps chaps were stationed here," said Harry Wharton. "It's been topping!"

"And we hope you'll bring down some more Zepps when you get across the water, sir," chimed in Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

The meal progressed merrily, and when airmen and schoolboys parted in the twilight Close the best of good-fellowship prevailed on every side. Even Fisher T. Fish came out to have the honour of shaking hands with the Masher; and the Yankee junior admitted, though somewhat grudgingly, that the exploits of Captain Ivor Jones and his comrades had completely overshadowed the short-lived endeavours of the Greyfriars Flying Corps.

THE END.

(Don't miss "HARRY WHARTON'S RIVALS!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"HARRY WHARTON'S RIVALS!"

By Frank Richards.

Peter Todd and Percy Bolsover are Wharton's rivals. Each aspires to the captaincy of the Remove, and Todd is backed up by a number of fellows carrying weight in the Form, while Bolsover rally such as Skinner, Stott, Snoop, and Fish. Peter Todd falls foul of Bolsover on account of deserved chastisement administered to Skinner; but, after all, it is Harry Wharton, not Todd, who faces Bolsover in the gym with the gloves on. How this chanced—what was the result—of the part played by Bunter in all the mix-up—and of the division of the Remove into three clans, each with its leader—you will read next week. And I have no hesitation in saying that I think you will like it!

"THE GREYFRIARS HERALD."

Don't prick up your ears and fancy that I am going to announce the immediate re-issue of the best halfpenny-worth of good, sound, healthy, humorous stuff boys were ever offered!

For that we must wait till the war is over—till the Kaiser has been thrust down where he belongs by right—till the tramp of the Allied Armies has sounded in the ears of the sullen Berlin Huns! May it be soon!

But, meanwhile, I have been trying to meet the wishes of my readers by giving them extracts from Harry Wharton's great little paper. For the time being these came to an end last week, as far as the "Magnet" is concerned. But

IN THIS WEEK'S "GEM"

you can find them again, with extracts from "Tom Merry's Weekly" added. There are five pages of the most varied

and interesting matter. Squiff tells a story about Billy Bunter; Talbot one about Skimpy; Kerr another about Fatty Wynn, and Mulvaney minor yet another about Tompkins. Peter Todd contributes a "pome," and there are miscellaneous matters which go to make up a budget worth the penny charged for the paper, without taking into account the fact that the story which precedes them is one of the best Mr. Martin Clifford has ever written. Don't fail to get it!

MORE ABOUT AMATEUR MAGAZINES

The reader referred to in a recent Chat par, whose father is a printer, says his magazine, which goes round his school, has a circulation of just over two hundred. When the printing was done elsewhere, the loss was about five shillings per week; now it is done by my correspondent's father at special cheap rates, and expenses are cleared. Good! But all my friends who want to run magazines are not in the lucky position of having printers as fathers.

A LOYAL READER.

An old reader writes from Bloomsbury as follows: "I thought I would write to you, telling you my opinion, and that of my friends, about the alterations in the companion papers due to the war. We think that as long as we get the stories to read there is no need to grumble about any changes due to such a cause. The shortage of paper is bound to be met somehow. Even if the stories were cut down, we should understand that you have been forced to do it, and what right has anyone to grumble at you?"

It does one good to read such a letter as this!

FROM MESOPOTAMIA.

It was an old lady who said that it always gave her such a comfortable feeling in church to hear "that blessed word Mesopotamia." I am not an old-lady—even my bitterest foe among the

grumbling clan has never accused me of that—but I do like to see the word "Mesopotamia" at the head of a letter, for a fellow must be really keen to sit down and write me a long and friendly scrawl from that land of sand and flies, where the Garden of Eden once was (so it is said), but certainly isn't now!

Private S. Strickland, of the 2nd Leicesters, is my correspondent. I have heard from him before. He has read the "Magnet" since the first number, and the "Gem" since No. 40 or thereabouts, and is still as keen as ever on both—though he does not always receive them now, worse luck!

Both these papers and their senior, the good old "Boys' Friend"—the oldest weekly boys' paper still in existence—are much appreciated out there. Private Strickland tells me, "I see you get a grumble now and again," he says: "but there is a rogue in every play. If they only knew how keenly we fellows who are serving King and Country enjoy your papers they would stop their piffle, I think. We see nothing to grumble at. Rally round, and keep the flag of the old papers flying!"

There is a message for you, as well as for me. But you are doing it. I have nothing to complain of on that score. As for the grumblers—well, see this week's "Gem."

NOTICES.

Football Matches Wanted By:

Rob Roy (15-16)—away only, 5-mile r.
—T. W. Scott, 9, Wine Office Court, Fleet St., E.C.

MANFORD STAR (14)—Hackney Marshes or neighbourhood.—C. H. Simms, 19, Spring Hill, Clapton, N.E.

Your Editor

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 12.—THE EARL MAULEVERER.

HE is "Mauly" to Greyfriars, of course. Undue respect for titles is, luckily, not a great feature of public school life. With the average schoolboy the sentiment is that of Robert Burns' lines

"The rank is, but the guinea stamp—
A man's a man for a' that."

Toadies there are at every school; but the Greyfriars tufthunters are not encouraged by Mauly. No fellow there is less of a snob than he. With all his seeming laziness, mental and physical, he is a very fair judge of character. Bunter, Skinner, and the rest of the crowd who would make much of him because he has a handle to his name, and more money than he knows what to do with, have never got much change out of Mauly.

To think of him as a fellow whose chief characteristic is a certain weak good nature is to take a mistaken view. Good-natured he is, almost to a fault, and the trait is sometimes shown in ways that may seem weak—as, for instance, when he tells a would-be borrower to help himself out of his pocket-book. But there is in this less weakness than carelessness. He is careless about money, because it has always been his in almost boundless measure, and he has never learned what it means to deny himself anything it can buy for lack of it.

And he is not careless all through. He cares for his honour, his friends, for the traditions of noblesse oblige, by which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sets such store.

There is a strong likeness between him and D'Arcy, and again—though in a less degree—between him and Rupert De Courcy, of Highcliffe. But Mauleverer lacks the bubbling energy of Gussy as completely as he lacks the good-tempered cynicism of the Caterpillar. He is simpler than either of the others, yet has not Gussy's talent for doing the right thing in the wrong way, or the wrong thing in a way that redeems it. All three are really decided enough; but where De Courcy and Mauleverer disguise their decision by their affectations, Gussy's affectations only serve to show up his.

Some readers may cavil at the description of Mauly as decided. But he is so—when it really seems to him to matter! He cares so little about the things that absorb most of the energies of his friends. Those things seem to him rather a bore. He was born bored, and also somewhat tired. But he can wake up, and take a stand when it is necessary; and, however lacking he may be in energy for everyday affairs, he has never been found lacking in pluck in a crisis.

Do you recall his arrival at Greyfriars: a slim, well-groomed figure, with pale-blue eyes and light eyelashes, which gave his face, a trifle heavy in feature, an air of exceeding boredom and some slight insipidity? How he drove up to the school and through the gates behind four horses, bringing with him Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, Mark Linley, and Fisher T. Fish, whom he had happened to meet on the way? How he told the Head that the expense was really nothing—a mere £20 or so?

The snobbish brigade tried hard to make up to him at first, and were disgusted to hear that Mr. Quelch had arranged that he should have a study to

himself. Any one of them was more than willing to squeeze up in order to make room for a titled millionaire. Even Coker, not a snob at heart, wanted to be friendly. Bolsover, finding toadying useless and a nuisance, relapsed into his much more congenial game of bullying; but the decent fellows stopped that sort of thing. They all liked Mauleverer from the outset; he might be queer and lazy, but he was a good sort.

He soon showed that he had an iron nerve in times of emergency. His driving of a car in a dangerous situation was proof enough of that. He showed it again when, after his failure as a milk-cart driver, he behaved with the greatest courage when a mad bull had got loose at the farm to which he went with some



of the rest to work—a spasm of well-intentioned energy which did not last.

And it is not because he cannot do anything at cricket or footer that he shuns those games. He might win laurels if he cared to. He kept goal for the Remove once, and quitted himself manfully, though the trouble of training under Bob Cherry's strenuous system so told upon him that it actually caused him to walk in his sleep, and, so walking, to conceal his own wealth among other people's property! And on one memorable occasion he helped Harry Wharton's side to beat Gordon Gay's team in a cricket-match at Shoremouth. But, of course, he found it a terrible fag.

He made evident the fine stuff that is really in him when his uncle, Sir Reginald Brooke, told him—to try his mettle—that his fortune had vanished. Peter Todd later on gave him another such trial. The latter Mauly had, telling him that he was practically a pauper, was signed "Reginald." Peter had got Reggie Coker to sign it. A more suspicious fellow than Mauly might have smelt a rat—nobbies don't usually use their Christian names thus in writing to nephews. Mauly believed, took his supposed misfortune manfully, even started in to cram for a scholarship. Thereof came trouble, due to Bunter's spite; but Peter Todd was not responsible for that. Peter meant well; but his success was only a brief one. Mauly would not stay awake!

Do you remember Mauly in love—how he went day after day to Bumbury's bookshop, at Courtfield, for the sake of gazing upon the fair Miss Bella; how he

ordered good things, which Bunter ate for him; how he had parcels sent anonymously to his friends at the school just to get a chance to look his unspoken adoration; how he fought Snoop and Stott and Bolsover and Micky Desmond, all in one day, and all for love of Bella; and how decently he took it when it turned out that the affections of the fair Miss Bella were engaged by a worthy and stalwart Sergeant Brown?

His generosity in money matters may be put down in part to the ease with which money flows into his purse. He would not prosecute Paul Tyrrell, the wastrel cousin of Bob Cherry, who defrauded him of a large sum; and, when he and his chums had run down Tyrrell at Monte Carlo, and had recovered the money, Mauly let the infatuated gambler have some of it to pursue his "infallible system"—which turned out like other infallible systems, of course! He got Blundell of the Fifth out of a nasty scrape by a timely loan. He let his gold watch be pawned when Miss Fluffy, Johnny Bull's cousin, the Sandow girl, had to be entertained and funds were low. He has more than once come to Bunter's aid, though he dislikes Bunter extremely.

There is not an atom of swank about Mauleverer. One of his best chums is Dick Penfold, the son of the village cobbler. He looks up in all sincerity to Mark Linley, the lad who came from a Lancashire mill to Greyfriars. He has not kept a study to himself all the time; but it was sheer good nature, not any rubbishy sentiment about titles, which caused him to offer room to the German princeling, Rupprecht von Rattenstein—good nature which he had cause to regret.

He had never regretted the chance which sent Piet Delarey as a study-mate; those two are rare good chums. And he willingly made room for his curious relative, Sir Jimmy, from the slums.

He has often been taken in—once very badly by that scheming nut, Ponsonby, of Highcliffe, when Pon played Mr. Sharp, the detective. He has often done silly things—as when he lit the gas in his study with a fifty-pound note, out of which arose trouble for Herr Gans.

But he is no fool. Bunter found that out—Bunter, who played the masked midnight burglar in Mauly's early time at Greyfriars, who has again and again tried vainly to relieve him of some of his cash. And Loder has found it out. Mauleverer would share his last shilling with a chum; but, with his pocket-book bulging, he can resist the shady wiles of the rascally prefect.

A good fellow, for all his slack ways—one of the very best! That's Mauly.

SEE
THIS WEEK'S
"GEM"

FOR
EXTRACTS FROM
"THE GREYFRIARS HERALD!"

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Two Queer Customers.

With her syren whistling, the great ship came slowly up the harbour, and among the passengers crowding on the deck Bob Masters, a lad of sixteen, stood gazing spell-bound at the fine vision of Table Mountain.

The long voyage was over. At last he had arrived at Cape Town. He was on the threshold of Africa, that land of adventure and mystery of which he had read till a great longing to explore it had seized him. He was there at last by the freak of Fate, and his heart beat fast at the realisation of his dream.

The vessel came to her berth. All was hustle on the wharf. Friends there were gazing eagerly up to the deck.

Passengers descending them were struggling with land folk seeking to reach the deck. Mail-bags were being hurried ashore; the donkey engines were already throbbing as they hoisted the luggage from the hold; the hatches covering the cargo were being raised.

Bob went to the taffrail to get a better view. The crowd there was not dressed like the folk at home. The men wore white clothes, and large hats shaded their tanned or yellow faces; coloured natives, very scantily clad, ran hither and thither; and a blazing sun from an iron-blue sky cast a dazzling glare over wharf and houses in the distance.

A quarrel arose. A medium-sized but very powerful man had pushed his way roughly into the crush of people at the foot of one of the gangways. They, too, wished to get on deck, and had, of course, fallen into queue, but he would not



Falk raised the lad above his head and shook him.

(See Chapter 3.)

Glad cries broke forth as relations, after years of parting, recognised one another, and an unaccountable chill suddenly fell on Bob.

For he, too, was expecting a relative to meet him, and for the first time he had given that consideration a really serious thought. His Cousin Jasper—what would he be like? Only a distant cousin, it was true, but much depended on the greeting he would give this lonely lad. If Jasper welcomed him cordially, then indeed his cup of happiness would almost overflow. But there was no certainty of that—nothing definite to go upon. Bob would not pursue the thought. He turned to watch the scene around him.

The gangways had been lowered by this time, and pas-

sengers waiting his turn. As he shoved along, some women screamed, and a couple of men clutched his shoulders to drag him back. He flung them off as lightly as if they were flies. He nearly sent a couple more into the water. He pushed a girl against the railing, and trod on a child's foot; and then he went up the gangway with long, slouching steps, indifferent to the pain he had caused and the abuse that followed him.

"Bully!" Bob muttered.

The man disappeared from sight when on deck, and Bob continued to lean over the taffrail, speculating as to which of the people in the crowd his Cousin Jasper might be. He was aroused from his reverie by a sharp tap on the shoulder,

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and, looking around, he saw the fourth officer, with whom he had got on very friendly terms, and the bull-necked man who had caused the disturbance down below.

"This is Robert Muaters," the fourth officer said.

"How do?" the bull-necked man jerked out. "I'm your Cousin Jasper. Glad to meet you!"

Bob started. A thrill of dismay swept over him.

"Are you Jasper Orme?" he gasped, unable to hide his consternation.

But if the other noticed it he seemed in no way troubled.

"I guess you're right first shot!" he replied, rubbing his chin hard, and scrutinising the lad from head to foot. "And you've the making of a tough chap in you, which is all to the good, for you've come to a country where big muscle and a bigger heart are the best assets. You'll do, I reckon. Fetch your traps, and we'll get ashore. I've got a job fixed up for you."

"I can start work at once?" the lad asked, his eyes alight, for the last thing he wanted was to be beholden for anything to this man. He had already taken a great dislike to Jasper Orme.

"You'll be on your own to-morrow," Jasper Orme replied. "You stop to-night with me. There's a friend waiting at my house to meet you. Look sharp, and let us get out of this."

The lad had not much luggage; what there was lay in his state-room. So in ten minutes he was off the vessel and driving through the streets. Orme lit a big cigar and puffed hard. So far not a word of a cousinly nature had been said between them. Though all was new and interesting, yet Bob sat back so uneasy in mind as to feel indifferent to his surroundings. Orme twisted the cigar in his mouth, and broke the silence at last. Perhaps he had read Bob's thoughts.

"Well, you've got here all right?" he began, in a more pleasant voice. "And, of course, when I received that letter from your mother, I at once agreed to give you a start. That's my way, as everyone knows; and, besides, we're relations! And how is your mother?"

At the question Bob's heart began to stir rather strangely. "She's never got over father's death," he said. "And Uncle George wouldn't help us, and I couldn't be a drag on her and my sister Florrie. We lost nearly everything when father died. So mother thought of you, and I've always longed to come to Africa. It's a grand place for making money, isn't it? If only I could do well, and send back some to mother every year."

Orme had been looking at him out of the corner of his eye.

"There's money to be made, and plenty of it, but one must take risks," he cut in. "If a fellow's a coward, he'd best go back home by the first boat. Now, have you grit and gumption in you? That's the whole business."

The lad sat up on the instant. He felt stung.

"I'm not afraid," he answered; "if that's what you mean."

Orme chuckled.

"Then you'll do," he said. And with that he puffed harder than ever and stared ahead.

Soon they stopped before a small house with a veranda along the front and a garden at the back. Orme lumbered out, wrangled with the driver, paid the fare, roughly told the man to clear off, and opened the gate. Carrying his traps, the lad followed him up the steps and on to the veranda. The door and the windows were wide open, but the house seemed empty. Orme whistled, and bade Bob drop his traps.

"Old Chaka will come here soon to fetch 'em, or else I'll put the whip across his back," he said. "And Faik may be here at any moment to see you. Sit down! There's just a bit more I want to know."

He seemed to have some difficulty in continuing. He took the cigar from between his teeth, eyed it, knocked off the ash, moistened a broken leaf, and then spoke in a careless voice as he began to smoke again.

"That fellow, George Gardiner, your uncle, of whom you spoke," he said—"he's my cousin, too, you know. How is he going along? Fit and all that, eh?"

"He's not in very good health I've heard. But I don't know much about him. He never comes near us," Bob replied, with a touch of bitterness.

"That so! Then he ain't like me. You didn't happen to meet anyone on the vessel who knew him?"

"No," the lad answered, in surprise.

"And you haven't had any letters since you left England?"

"Of course I haven't!"

Orme flung the cigar away, dived his hands into his trousers pockets, and rattled the coins there.

"I was thinking about your mother," he said, in the most cheery tones he had used yet, and with his face positively beaming. "But you'll hear from her, no doubt, by the next mail. I'll send your letters along, and—"

"You'll send them along?"

"Yes. You start off early to-morrow with Faik, for he's about ready, and— But here he is! Hallo, Faik! The youngster has arrived!"

The gate had been opened, and the lad saw a man coming up to the veranda. He was very different from Jasper Orme; almost the opposite in appearance. He was a giant in height, but spare. He had a long neck, and a small head and tousled, sandy hair. Orme's eyebrows were black and very bushy, and his eyes small and deep-set. Faik was almost without eyebrows, and his large eyes protruded. He walked with a stoop, each long arm swinging with the regularity of a pendulum; and when he spoke Bob noticed, to his surprise, that his voice was soft.

"Glad to hear it," he said. "It must be a great joy to you, Orme, to have him with you. Blood is thicker than water, and for a warm-hearted fellow like you to meet your own kith and kin must stir up old memories. It's a pity we must trek so soon, but we'll be back before long. And I'll take great care of him. Why, what a fine lad he is!"

He smiled, his wide mouth displaying large and irregular teeth, while his eyes remained as cold as oysters. Bob took his hand, and found it lay heavy and lifeless in his. He took as big a dislike to Faik as to Orme. But these were the only two men he knew in the new land as yet. His future was in their charge. He felt he must face things with courage. So he hid his feelings, though not easily.

"Where are we to go, Mr. Faik?" he asked.

"We are trekking right away up country," Faik replied.

"We're after big game, and—and anything else we can get. Elephants' tusks fetch no end of money. We ought to come back with thousands of pounds' worth of ivory. It's a grand, free life. You'll see more of Africa in six months than most fellows do in a lifetime; and after this experience you'll be able to start on your own, if you like, and make a bid for a fortune. You'll drop across all that you have ever read and wanted to see."

Bob's eyes sparkled. Surely he was in luck! For this he had longed, while he had feared that he might be doomed to an office life in Cape Town, with only an occasional holiday on the veldt. What did it matter what Faik was like? The lad vowed to himself that he would work hard, and take all the roughing it without complaint. Then all would be well.

At this moment an old, wizened-faced Kaffir came out of the house.

"That's Chaka!" Orme grunted. "Cut along with him, and he'll show you your room. Then have a look around for an hour until we dine, and after that you had better turn in early. I've some business to talk over with Faik. Hi! Chaka, you old villain! Get a move on you, lean shanks, and carry in those traps!"

Bob followed the old man into the house and upstairs. The latter deposited the luggage on the floor of the bed-room, and looked at the lad.

"You a friend of Mr. Orme?" he asked.

"He is my cousin, and to-morrow I am going up country with Mr. Faik," Bob replied.

The old man shivered. He opened his mouth, and closed it with a click. Then, muttering in an unknown tongue, he went away.

Bob, standing in the middle of the room, heard Orme's rough laugh. He heard him speak, too.

"You'll find it, Faik!" he guffawed. "And you'll manage the other job, too. Don't you dare funk it! For if you do, you know I can pay you out."

What was Faik to find? What was the other job?

For the second time that day a chill crept over Bob's back.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bob Speaks Out.

Three weeks had passed. Cape Town had been left far behind, and Bob was toiling painfully beside a waggon. He was on the wide, rolling veldt, stretching bleak and sand-strewn on all sides, far as the eye could see, except in front, where, fifty miles away, great mountains stood up like clouds on the horizon.

There were three waggons grinding along, each drawn by a score of bullocks and driven by Kaffirs. Of these there were a dozen. Faik, astride a raw-boned horse, rode up and down the line, shouting curses, and lashing beasts and men with his long whip. The only other member of the party was a lad about Bob's age, who tramped by the side of the first waggon.

The day was stiflingly hot, the sand cloud suffocating, the going heavy. From break of day the outfit had been on the move. Men and cattle were thoroughly exhausted. Bob, with perspiration streaming down his face, with his teeth clenched, his tongue dry as a bone, and his head aching,

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bursting, kept pace with the last team, feeling that at any moment he might drop.

Suddenly Faik cried a halt. The sweltering bullocks stretched their necks, their great bodies heaving. The Kaffirs got into a group, and began chattering together. Faik rode up to Bob.

"Look sharp and get out the grub!" he said. "We out-span for a couple of hours, and then we start again, for we must fetch the river to-night. And don't let these dogs of Kaffirs near the provision waggons. They're thieves, all of them. If you don't watch 'em I'll lay my whip about you, too!"

He rode off, and a gleam came into the lad's eyes. He had endured much already. After the first ten days Faik had changed altogether. The soft purr in his voice had gone; he had bullied and blustered; the veneer had slipped away, and he had shown himself selfish, callous, and cruel. And Bob was wondering what all this could mean.

Far from civilisation as he was now, and as yet quite unversed in the ways of the veldt, he had already learned enough to realise that to attempt to return alone to the coast would mean certain death. He would only wander helplessly around until he fell from exhaustion. To go on was the only alternative. But for how long now could he bear with Faik? Not for many days, unless the latter changed his ways. It would be better to die and end it all!

He went to the provision-waggon, served out the rations to the Kaffirs, carried a meal to Faik, who was resting in the shade under the first waggon, and went down the line again. At the end he was joined by the other lad, who, stumbling at every step, sank on the ground with a groan.

Bob gave him a drink of water from a leather bag, and that revived him somewhat. Presently he sat up.

"Have something to eat?" Bob suggested.

"I will, after a bit," the other replied. "I'm off my feed just now. Say, Musters, what ever made you come on this trip?"

"I might ask you the same, Ted," Bob replied.

"Oh, my case is different. I'd been wandering round Cape Town starving," Ted O'Brien replied. "I hadn't a friend to turn to. I'd got to do something, and other fellows had told me about the veldt. It seemed all right. So it is, I'm sure, if a chap goes with a decent crowd. But that cur, Faik—" He broke off. "I wonder what his game can be?" he said abruptly.

Bob turned his head quickly. A curious look was in his eyes.

"What do you mean?" he asked, surprised at the odd strain in his own voice.

Before answering Ted raised himself on his elbow, and looked under the waggon and up the line, to make sure that he could not be overheard. Then he sank to his full length again.

"My back is aching so that I must rest it," he muttered. "What do I mean about Faik—eh? Well, he told us that he was going on a long trek after big game. But where are the guns? I haven't seen them. There are a few rifles, it is true, but you want an elephant gun to shoot elephants, don't you? And any amount of ammunition, and all sorts of other things. Big game! That was all a blind. And I'm wondering what he's up to."

"The same thought has been in my mind all these days and nights," Bob replied. "I can't make it out. And Faik is quite different from what he was in Cape Town. I wish I had had the chance to find out a bit about him, but this trek was fixed up for me before I landed."

"Who was it that fixed it up?" Ted O'Brien asked.

"My cousin, Jasper Orme, in Cape Town."

"Then you weren't long in the city before."

"I started the morning after I landed."

At this Ted, forgetting the pain in his back, sat up and whistled.

"I've never yet heard the like of that!" he said. "It beats Banagher, as they say in Ireland. Och, I wish I was there again, with the green fields instead of this burnt grass and sand, and the running streams full of jumping fish, and the silver bells coming across the valleys, and the kindly folk, and— But, there! It's no use talking. We're in this, and we must go through with it; but, faix, it's a rum thought if two chaps of our age have got to take on that wicked old varmint nosing his grub in the shade of yonder waggon, and knock him into a cocked hat!"

"I've felt inclined to punch his head more than once already," Bob said grimly.

"And it won't be long before you'll be all over him with your dukes, I'm thinking," Ted replied. "We don't much learn boxing in Ireland. I wish I was a bit handy that way. But give me a stick, strong and two feet long, and I'd dance a Kilkenny dance around him and crack his skull, if he'd a rifle in one hand and a revolver in the other!"

Bob had to laugh.

"You're fond of a fight?" he suggested.

"No, I'm not; but when I see one I can't keep out of it," Ted explained. "My legs go into it in spite of my reason."

'Tis the way with us all. And mebbe it's just as well, as we are now, for I own up that if I stopped to think I might be scared by that old villain's ugly looks. Did you ever see the equal of them in all your born days? The length of him, and the neck of a crane, and the bulbous eyes, and the tufts of hair on his egg-shaped head, for all the world like a cockatoo! I'm glau I've been able to let off steam. I've been bottling this up till my chest nearly burst. I'm better now, and I'll have some grub."

He helped himself plentifully, and for some minutes there was silence. Bob looked out across the lonely veldt. The air was shimmering, and everything seemed to dance before his eyes. The great space gave a feeling of loneliness.

"I wish you and I had met before either of us had tumbled into this job," he said.

"If we'd done that neither of us would be here now," Ted replied, gulping down a mouthful as he eyed Bob. "But what's come over you? You've been thinking hard whilst I've been—"

"I'm more than fed up!" Bob cut in.

"So am I," Ted O'Brien agreed. "But what's the use of talking that way?"

"I'm going to cut it all!" Bob said. "If you stand by me, then I don't think we'll come to grief."

"What? Do you mean to clear out and leave old Faik on his lonesome?" the Irishman asked, his eyes round with wonder.

Bob drew a deep breath.

"It will have to be done sooner or later," he urged. "Faik isn't straight. He lied when he said he was going on a big game expedition. And my cousin, Jasper Orme, hasn't been straight, either. There's something I can't puzzle out, but some day perhaps I'll get the hang of it. I'll tell you a curious thing. The day before we left Cape Town I overheard my cousin saying to Faik, 'You'll find it, and you'll manage the other job, too.' Now, what could he have meant by that?"

Ted put aside the food, and sat twirling his thumbs.

"That explains something," he replied. "Twice on the trek up I have seen Faik looking at a map when he thought we all were asleep. And we haven't come the way he said. I know that, for I've been out here a year, and I've learnt a bit about the stars as we see 'em in this latitude. This is a deep business, and—and— But hush! Here he comes!"

Faik was striding down the line of waggons. The Kaffirs were dozing in the hot sun. He kicked one as he came to the group, and the black man squealed.

"Inspan, you rascals!" he shouted. "We're starting again. Where are those two white cubs? Ha, Musters! And you here, too, O'Brien! Didn't I tell you to keep to yourself? I'll have no jabbering between the two of you! Get to your work! I've looked at the map, and we're farther from the river than I thought. It will take us all our time to get there before nightfall."

Bob whispered to Ted.

"You'll stand by me?" he asked. "We'll sink or swim together."

"Ay, ay!" the other replied, as he scrambled to his feet.

Bob slowly rose and faced the lanky giant. The lad was very pale, but his eyes were like hot coals, and his voice rang firm and clear.

"Mr. Faik?" he began.

Faik, whirling his long whip, wheeled round.

"Yes. What is it?" he asked.

"You've called me a cub! You've bullied me ever since you got me so far from Cape Town that I couldn't go back," Bob said. "That's not playing the game, and it's not the way you spoke when first you met me at my cousin's house. I'm not going to stand any more of it!"

For two seconds Faik stared. His under jaw dropped in his astonishment. Then very slowly a dusky colour gathered on his face, and the veins in his lean temples began to throb violently. His hand closed tightly on the whip.

"So you two mean mutiny?" he said. "You think that a couple of boys can get the better of me? All right. I'll show you at the start that you've made a big mistake! Load up the grub now. I haven't time to deal with you. But when we're in camp for the night I'll make an example of you, Musters! I'll tie you to a waggon and thrash you before all these Kaffirs! After that you'll sing small, I guess!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Cutting Themselves Acreit.

Faik walked away, and Bob and Ted looked at one another. The same thought was in both their minds. The moment to fight had come sooner than expected. But they had no chance to make any plans.

Faik shouted to Ted to hurry to the end of the line. Already the Kaffirs were inspanning. Soon the waggons moved on again.

Through the long, hot afternoon they trailed along, the

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IN A LAND OF PERIL!

(Continued from page 19.)

poor beasts panting, the drivers urging them, and Faik trotting up and down the line, using his whip continually. He took no notice of Bob, and the lad was left to his own reflections.

That Faik would try to fulfil his threat was certain; Bob had already seen enough of him to know that. As the lad looked at the giant figure astride the horse his heart grew cold, but only for a moment. Then he clenched his fists. At least he would give the bully more than he expected. He would die fighting, rather than allow himself to be tied to a waggon and thrashed before the Kaffirs.

Hours passed, and sometimes Faik cantered ahead for a mile or two, and then returned to vent his temper on the bullocks or the drivers. It lacked two hours of sunset when for the last time he galloped back, and shouted that the river was about three miles distant. The drivers urged on the tired animals, and the latter, as if knowing they would soon be able to quench their thirst, made a spurt and kept it up.

By this time Bob had made up his mind. If he fought Faik it would be impossible for him to stay with the caravan. And he was determined to fight. Nothing was left, therefore, but to strike out into the unknown and get back to civilisation as best he could. It was a terrible situation, enough to cause despair to the bravest heart; but he would take the slender chance.

And then he asked himself—how could he possibly manage? It was Faik's cruelty that drove him to this. Why, then, should he face starvation? He must have the means to support himself. So, as they drew near to the river, he took provisions from the last waggon and dropped them on the road. Two rifles were in the waggon, and he dropped them also, together with some ammunition. After that the prospect before him did not seem quite so alarming.

They came at last to the river, and outspanned for the night. The cattle were watered and driven into a laager, formed in the centre of the waggons. The evening meal was soon cooking. The sun sank, and darkness came swiftly over the veldt.

The moon came up round and full, throwing a silver light over land and river. A great hush fell. There was no sound except the splashing of a hippopotamus and the hooting of an owl. Faik didn't come from the spot where he was resting. Had he fallen asleep? Was he not going to carry his threat into execution after all?

But the hope was short-lived. The Kaffirs had heard the threat, and were obviously waiting in keen expectation. Perhaps, had it not been for this, Faik might have stayed his hand; but to show mercy would have been taken by them as weakness, and thus he might lose his power over them. However this might be, Bob saw him rise slowly and grasp his whip.

The lad braced himself for the ordeal as the bully slouched towards him. The Kaffirs ceased their chatter.

"Now, Musters, get to the waggon yonder!" Faik said coolly. "Where's that imp O'Brien? Hi, there, O'Brien, fetch a rope, and strap up this cub! If he shows fight I'll lay my whip about him. You have nothing to fear from him."

To Bob's surprise, Ted emerged from the laager and ran for the rope. Faik, pulling the long whip-thong through his fingers, waited. Bob had begun to tremble. It was the suspense—worse than the inevitable tussle. He felt sure that with the first blow his strength would come back.

Ted advanced with the rope.

"Tie him up!" Faik commanded.

Ted stood some paces away, seemingly irresolute.

"Tie him up!" Faik bawled. "If you don't, I'll serve you as I'm going to serve him!"

Ted came a few paces closer.

"Go with him to the waggon!" Faik continued, addressing Bob.

"I won't!" the lad said firmly, and the Kaffirs began to clap their hands and dance about in their excitement.

"You won't?" the bully sneered. "You dare to defy me? I meant letting you off lightly, but after that I'll thrash you till you can't stand! There, for a start! Take that—and that!"

The long lash swept around his head, and the end fell with a report like a rifle-shot across the lad's face. With a moan of pain he staggered back. Then he shouted in wrath, and dashed forward.

Faik's whip spun round his body. As the fellow pulled it back the lad was twisted off his feet and fell.

He staggered up. Faik struck again, but Bob was past feeling pain now. All the blood in his body seemed to have surged into his head. Fury lent him treble strength.

He dashed in at Faik. So unexpected and so rapid was the charge that he had butted fair into the bully's middle before Faik could get out of the way. Faik doubled up with

a grunt, and Bob struck at his face. The blow went home, and shook the bully from head to foot. But he stood his ground. Quick as lightning his arm shot out, and he clutched the lad by the collar.

It seemed all up with Bob now. His very life was in danger. Infuriated by the attack, Faik had lost all sense of proportion. He could lift the lad high above his head and dash him to the ground—ay, if he willed he could break his spine, and he meant to do it! Held in that powerful grip, Bob twisted like an eel, yet knew in his heart that escape was impossible.

Faik dropped the whip. He caught the lad in both hands. With a blood-curdling laugh, he raised him above his head, and shook him till his teeth rattled. Then he tensed his muscles for a throw.

"Now I'll pay you, once and for all!" he snarled, his big, irregular teeth showing like the fangs of a wolf. "I can get on with the job without you; and Orme's chance has come, too!"

He bent his knees, to hurl the lad yards away, as one throws a weight, but he did not straighten himself. Instead, he swayed, stumbled, and then pitched headlong, releasing Bob to save himself. The lad fell within a foot of him, and rolled away.

The Kaffirs shrieked in their excitement. Ted's voice rang out sharp and insistent.

"Run, Bob—now, now, whilst you've got the chance!" he cried. "He can't follow you. I've got him on the end of the rope!"

Bob scrambled to his feet. He saw Faik trying to rise, a-foam at the mouth, his big, fishy eyes bloodshot with fury. He saw Ted, four yards from him, holding on to the rope, tugging at Faik's foot. He saw the Kaffirs clapping their hands, and thumping one another in their joy. There were few of them who had not already felt the weight of the bully's fist, and they were delighted to see him defied.

At one glance Bob took in all this. Then he raced away. On and on he ran, at first hearing clearly the shouts of joy and Faik's yells of baffled rage. Both ceased when he was a hundred yards beyond the last waggon. He went at full speed, and did not look back until he had covered fully half a mile.

Then he saw that he was being followed, but only by one figure. The Kaffirs were not in pursuit. Could it be Faik, running so fast? The light was deceptive, as it usually is on the wide veldt, but certainly the giant looked very small. Still, Bob would leave nothing to chance, and so he was taking to his heels again when a voice hailed him.

"Hold on! Wait for me!"

It was Ted! Bob stood panting hard. Ted, even more out of breath, came up with a rush, and dropped to the ground.

"Sakes! What a joke!" he gasped, half-stifled, and still spluttering with laughter he could not control. "We got the drop on the old ruffian fair! He was all coiled up in the rope when I cleared off, but I heard him bawling for his horse. He means tracking us down if he can."

"You were splendid, Ted!" Bob said, in heartfelt gratitude. "But for you he would have killed me at the finish. I couldn't make out why you were so quick to get that rope. But if he's coming here, let us make for a donga. I saw one as we came along this evening."

Ted was on his feet in an instant, and they went off at a long, steady trot. In a few minutes they were in the donga. Not a moment too soon! They heard the thud of horse-hoofs, and, peeping out, saw Faik go thundering past.

He rode back again before long, his face horrible with rage. Up and down he galloped, and at last he turned and jogged slowly towards the waggons.

"That's an end of it, Ted," Bob said. "And I'm not going back!"

"Nor yet me!" said Ted. "It's better to chance our luck out here than to be flayed alive; though how we're going to live—"

"I saw to that for a bit, anyhow," Bob cut in. "I chucked a lot of grub out of one of the waggons, and a couple of rifles. Are you a good shot?"

"I might be a better one," Ted replied; "but I've had some practice, anyway. At home, on the bogs, I've shot grouse, and I've bowled over rabbits, and— But I say! Hold on a second! Have a look at these papers. They fell out of Faik's pocket when I had him on the ground, and I clutched 'em just as I bolted."

Bob looked at the papers whilst Ted went on talking.

"And did you hear what he said when he went to dash your brains out?" he continued. "'Orme's chance has come, too,' he said. Bob, that cur Orme sent you up here, meaning to have you put out of the way!"

But Bob was not listening. He was staring at one of the papers.

"Ted!" he cried, and there was a touch of awe in his voice. "Now I know the job that Faik is on. This paper shows it. He's after treasure—big treasure! Great Scott! We'll go for it: and some day we may be millionaires!"

(Another grand, long, thrilling instalment next week.)

