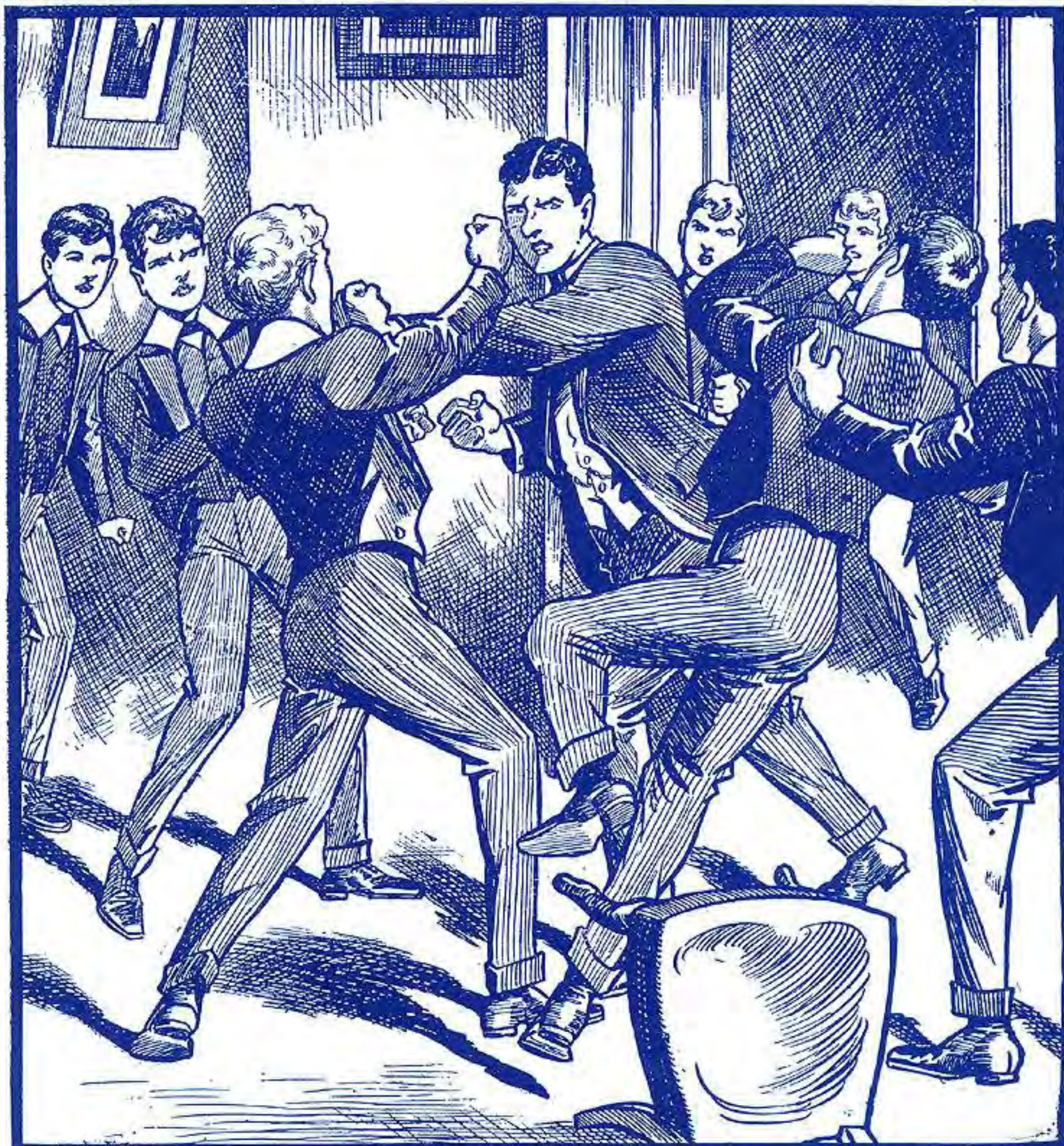


ON THE MAKE!

The
Magnet 1st
Library

No. 493. Vol. 11.



COKER v. THE COMMITTEE.

Copyright in the United States of America.

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

ON THE MAKE!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Talking It Over!

"THE fellows at ever so many schools are doing it," said Harry Wharton to a small crowd in the Common-room. "I don't see why we shouldn't!"

"Doing what?" asked Dick Rake, who had only just come in.

"I can't see any special reason why we should go on copying other schools," growled Johnny Bull.

"And I can't see any why we shouldn't, as long as their lead is worth following," said Peter Todd.

"Oh, have it your own way! Prizes ain't much in my line," said Johnny.

"But that's not the way to look at it, old scout!" Peter replied. "They aren't in my line to any extent worth mentioning. They aren't in Bolsover's. But just see what an intelligent interest Boley's taking in this argument! You can tell by his face that he's following every word he hears, and understands nearly as much as half of it!"

"Unless you want a tick ear, Todd—"

"Haven't I said that prizes are not in my line, Bolsover?"

"But what on earth is it all about?" asked Rake.

"Wharton would like Linley and himself to get cash instead of morocco-bound volumes when they go snivelling up to take their prizes—including, of course, those for good conduct!" sneered Skinner.

Snoop and Stett, Trevor and Elliott sniggered.

"As a matter of fact, there is no good-conduct prize offered," said Mark Linley quietly. "I shouldn't say, on the whole, that the Form deserves one. I don't think I should annex it if it were given; but certainly I shouldn't be ashamed of it if I did. I quite agree with Wharton that the money spent on prizes might better be handed over to war charities, and certificates be given to prize-winners instead."

"There's a giddy speech for you! The boulder ought to be in Parliament!" said Trevor.

"Well, it's clear enough, anyway," said Rake. "I do know what this is all about now. It would have taken me a giddy long time to find out, with Toddy chipping Bolsover, and Boley talking thick ears, and you rotters sneering."

"If Linley were in the House of Commons he would have four hundred pounds a year. He wouldn't need to win scholarships here to keep the wolf from the door at home!" said Skinner.

"And if the prizes were money ones instead of books he wouldn't be so jolly ready to hand them over to the Red Cross, or anything of that sort!" chimed in Snoop.

Mark Linley flushed slightly, but did not answer the two cads. He had learned to let their frequent mean, spiteful references to old troubles pass unnoticed.

The subject at issue was scarcely one which concerned closely the majority of the Remove.

Peter Todd might win prizes if he cared to try. He was clever enough. But fellows like Mark Linley and Harry Wharton, and Dick Russell and Monty Newland, who not only had brains but used them in classes, were likely to take most of the honours.

Skinner & Co. were most assuredly not really affected. Fisher T. Fish might be in the running for a mathematical prize. He did lots of arithmetic outside the Form-room.

But it was confined to a few rules, and the golden rule was not one of them. It was chiefly subtraction and addition—subtraction from others' cash, and addition to the cash of Fishy!

He came in at this moment with Bunter and Trelice. Just behind them came the three Colonials—Squiff, Tom Brown, and Delaney—and Ogilvy and Russell, and Morgan and Micky Deamond, and Vernon-Smith and two or three more.

Nearly all the Remove had now gathered. And now there followed a rush of the Upper Fourth. The great Temple led, with Dabney and Fry in the usual close attendance.

"What are you kids gassing about?" inquired Temple, in his lofty manner.

"Tell him in two-syllable words, Harry, and give him a chance to catch on," said Bob Cherry, grinning.

"Haven't got anything over two, Bob, so it will have to be done that way. If you really want to know, Temple, this is it."

He proceeded to explain.

Temple & Co. listened with more patience than might have been expected of them.

"Quite a good idea—for you," said Cecil Reginald at length. "You've cribbed it, of course; but there's nothing in that. After all, what does a chap care about a morocco-binding? What's inside doesn't count. No sane person could possibly want to read it."

"Been borrowing Fry's prizes, or Scott's, Temple?" asked the Boulder blandly.

"Dry up!" snapped Temple. "Pity there shouldn't be a good-conduct prize in the Remove, decided by the votes of the Form. You'd have a fine chance of a dead-heat with Skinner and Snoop for last place!"

"Did you really think that all cut your self, Temple?" returned Vernon-Smith. "If so, you're improving. But there's no prize offered for sarc, so you won't score there."

"Go and eat coke, Smithy! Well, you fellows, as far as I'm concerned—"

"But you're not concerned at all, you know, Temple. You're much too high and mighty to try for prizes," said Skinner, "and too jolly ignorant and stupid!"

"Rats! I suppose I could win them as well as any other chap if I tried?"

"Question!" said Bob Cherry grinning.

"No question about it," Bulstrode said.

"Temple couldn't," added Hazeldene.

"Not in a hundred giddy years!" chortled Rake.

"Oh, ring off!" growled Johnny Bull. "Most of us are in the same boat as Temple there!"

"Speak for yourself, whatever!" said Morgan.

"Oh, you go to Aberdovey! There's no Welsh paper; I dare say you could score if there were. The thing is this. It doesn't matter that lots of us can't win anything. We're bound to make the request a general one, or no notice will be taken of it."

That was sound common-sense, as everyone perceived, even the heated Temple.

"Of course no notice would be taken," said Billy Bunter eagerly. "Take my case, frinstance!"

"Can't be done, perpoise. You haven't a case. You're right out of court!"

"Oh, don't you try to be funny, Peter Todd. You're only showing yourself up, you know! I've as much right to express an opinion as—as Temple."

"Come off it, you fat rot!" You aren't jolly well going to use my name to back up your rot!" snapped Temple.

And he seized the Owl of the Remove by the collar.

"Oh, really, Temple! Lemme be! I—I only mentioned your name out of respect, and as—as the most important person present, you know!" burred the wriggling Owl.

"You worm!" breathed Bob Cherry. But Temple looked appeased, and let the fat junior go free.

Incense was always grateful to the nostrils of the great Cecil Reginald, even incense of flattery from the very dubious censor swayed by Billy Bunter.

"It's like this," went on Bunter, setting his collar straight with pedgy fingers, that left marks of dirt upon it.

"Then it's nearly ready for the wash," said the humorous Bob.

"Oh, dry up, Cherry! It's like this. No one can know, you know, who will win prizes until the results are out, so—"

"But we know who won't, tubby. You won't!" said Skinner.

"Well, it's jolly certain you won't, Skinney! But it's not certain anyone won't, really. Anyone might. In fact, I'm rather expecting to carry off two or three."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows could see Bunter carrying off two or three prizes.

Bunter looked surprised and grieved at the howl of laughter.

"I don't see what you silly asses are laughing at," he said peevishly. "I can't see anything to laugh at!"

"Fetch him a mirror, somebody," said Bob.

"Oh, you're such a silly kid, Cherry! Of course, if I wanted to see anything comic there's always your face. Ow-yow! Keepimoff, Temple!"

"Let him alone, Cherry!" snapped Temple. "You're a bit too fond of chucking your weight about!"

"You're not, are you?" answered Bob hotly.

"Ease up on it, old chap!" said Delarey. "We shall never get on to bizney at this rate."

Bob smiled at the Rebel, and glared at Temple.

Bunter went on. He was determined to have his say. And he was on the make, as usual.

Bunter really differed little from Fish in that respect. Their methods might vary a good deal, but not their object, which was always No. 1.

"It will be fair to everybody," said the Owl, blinking around him from behind his big glasses.

"I wonder you've the sense to see that, tubby," said Harry Wharton. "You don't generally want anything that way, either."

"Oh, I'm not talking about what you propose—at least, not the way you've got it. The worst of you is that you never see more than half-way round a thing, Wharton!"

"And that's best part of a day's work, when the thing's a Bunter," said Peter Todd.

"Let the ass speak his piece, Toddy—nobody else will have any peace till he does!" Rake said.

"It's like this," went on Bunter. "No one knows—"

"Not even Toddy's? It's about the longest here."

"If someone would gag Cherry—"

"I'd like to see anyone try, porpoise!"

"No one knows—"

"Or even any two noses? Say Peter's and Lonzy's!"

"Ring off, Cherry!" snapped Peter.

"You fellows don't seem to have any understanding—"

"Cherry's well off there, porpoise. Look at 'em!"

"You'd better keep off my feet, Toddy!"

"I'll try, Bob. But I shall have to move a bit farther away to be sure of doing it."

"You fags are the giddy outside edge!" said Dabney. "No one has a chance—"

"Silence in court!" yelled Peter Todd.

"Go on, Bunt! Dabney wants to hear the words of wisdom flowing from your —"

"Shows Dabney's got more sense than you have, anyway!"

But Dabney himself did not seem quite so sure of that; and quite certainly Dabney had no special yearning to listen to Bunter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Idea!

"NO one know's who's going to get the prizes, and, consequently"

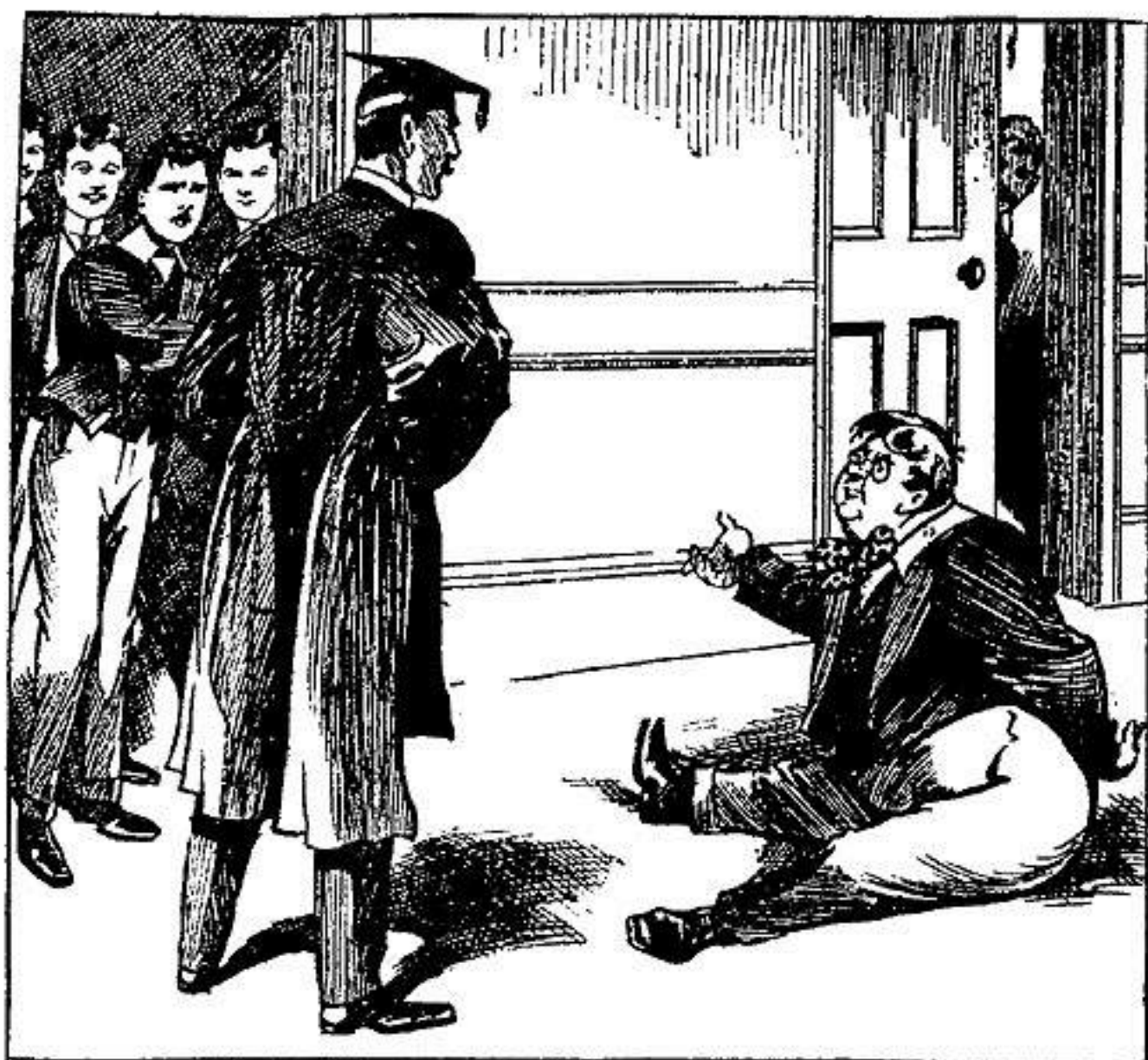
—Bunter stammered and boggled a bit over that word, but got it out at last—"till the results are known, they practically belong to all of us, don't they? Well, then—"

"If you can't get a bit of a move on, you porpoise—"

"Don't interrupt me till I've finished, Nugent! This is my notion. The certificates are all right, of course—for those who want them, and who win prizes. But the prizes, as I've explained, really belong to all of us. It's all very well to talk about giving them up for the Red Cross, and that sort of thing; but I consider it's too much to ask. What I would do is this. Lump all the money together, and divide it among the Form. Then anyone who wants to give to the Red Cross can do it, and get proper credit for it, too! I'm not sure that I shouldn't give my share."

"I am, though," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, nobody would expect you to,



Mr. Capper looks into it! (See Chapter 2.)

Cherry. You ain't very patriotic, and you're horrid greedy!" replied Bunter, completely misunderstanding Bob. For it had been Bunter's line of action Bob had been so sure about, not his own. "I should like to see my name in print—'W. G. Bunter, Esq., £10,' or whatever it might be."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fatuous smirk on Bunter's fat face faded, and a look of wrath succeeded.

"What are you asses cackling about?" he asked crossly.

"Ten pounds as a forty-fifth share or thereabouts of the cash spent in prizes for one Form!" shouted Temple. "Oh, my hat!"

"But it wouldn't be just one Form, you silly fathead—it would be the whole school!" retorted Bunter.

"Sounds likely, doesn't it?" asked Ogilvy. "The Head would be jolly pleased with us if we suggested that the prizes for the whole school should be commuted on a cash basis, and the proceeds handed over to the Remove to do as it pleases with—I don't think!"

Put like that, it hardly sounded likely—even to the obtuse mind of William George Bunter.

But Bunter had the most extravagant notions of what morocco-bound books cost. There was one at home—a prize that his father had somehow fluked in the days of his youth. It was cherished highly, dusted regularly, and not allowed to be touched by grubby hands. The consequence was that Billy and his minor, Sammy, had never handled it save by stealth; even their Sunday standard of cleanliness had not reached that demanded by their mother before she would allow "the prize" to be inspected.

And each Form had quite a pile of books like that as prizes at the end of each summer term! Bunter had always understood that that book—Josephus' "Wars of the Jews," it was, and woe betide the boy who tries to read anything duller!—had cost pounds and pounds; and for that reason, and that alone, the prizes had made his mouth water.

Regarded as books, he had no use for them. He did not want books at all.

But regarded as "pounds and pounds" in ready cash, or in its equivalent of grub—ah, that was a very different matter!

"It's absolute rot!" said Wharton. "Just the sort of silly rot you might expect from Bunter when you give him his head! What he proposes simply amounts to pooling the cash value of the prizes for division among everybody."

"Jerusalem crickets!" said Fish, to whom that version seemed to come as a new light. "That's some notion, Bunter, you galoot! I never thought you had so much hoss sense! Nope, sirc!"

"There you are!" said Bunter, much bucked up by this unexpected support. "Fishy thinks it's all right, and everybody knows what a keen business chap Fishy is."

"It wouldn't be half a bad notion, if it were only possible," said Skinner regretfully. "But it ain't poss. The Head wouldn't hear of it."

"Oh, really Skinner, we can't tell that till we've tried!"

"I'd agree with it, like a shot," remarked Snoop. "I'd rather have a measly tanner than see Linley romp off with half a dozen prizes, or Wharton, or any of the other swots!"

"Same here!" said Stott, and two or three others murmured agreement.

"It's utter rot to talk about it, and I don't know that I'd agree to it, even if I thought it could be done," said Bolsover. "Just you dry up, fatty, and let Wharton go on with what he's been trying to say for the last half-hour!"

Bolsover was not always keen on fair play; but he had more regard for it than Bunter, Skinner, Fish & Co. Moreover, he was not so covetous as Fish, and not so hard up as most of the others—which may have made a difference.

"My idea will sound a bit dull after Bunter's," said Wharton, smiling. "There isn't any Socialism about it. I don't even propose that everyone shall have a certificate saying that he was top of the Form in everything—though I suppose they could be printed cheaply

enough, and Bunter's people would be a heap more surprised when he took his home than they ever will be by any prizes he's likely to get!"

"You leave my people alone, Harry Wharton!" burred Bunter. "I ain't going to have my people insulted, so I tell you! Has he any right to insult my people, Temple?"

"Oh, ring off, you fat worm! No one's insulting your people. I should think myself they'd die of the shock if either you or that measly, bloated minor of yours took home a prize!" snapped Temple.

"Not any more than yours would, you swanking tailor's dummy!" howled Bunter, making a strategic retreat in Hamlike haste.

But Bob Cherry and Peter Todd were in the way of the strategic retreat, and for once Remove helped Fourth against Remove. Bob and Peter were fed-up with William George Bunter, and they stopped him for Temple.

"Yarooogh! Stoppit, Temple! You cad, Cherry! I'll be even with you for this, Toddy! Ow-yow! That hurts!"

"Hope so!" answered Temple cheerily. "Let's sling him out on his fat neck, you chaps!"

"You can't do it! I've as much right in the Common-room as you have, and I jolly well won't be put out!"

"You're wrong there, Bunt. You're going to be!" said Bob.

He and Toddy seized each an arm, Temple and Dabney each a leg, and Bunter was frogs-marched out, the crowd making ready way.

That Remove and Upper Fourth should unite—even against a general nuisance like Bunter—was much as if the lion and lamb had lain down together.

It was quite too good to last. But the harmony continued for the present.

"Yah! Beasts! Rotters! You won't agree to a fair whack-out of the prizes, and you shove the only chap who's got pluck enough to suggest it out of the room!" howled the expelled one from the passage.

That did not disturb the harmony in the least. Everybody grinned. Not even Fish or Skinner, Snoop or Stott had any sympathy to spare for the deviser of the scheme they agreed with.

"Look here," said Newland, "this sort of thing can't be done just by one or two Forms on their own. Hadn't some of us better see Wingate and Blundell and Hobson about it, and get them to put it to their little lots? Then we could draft a joint petition to the Head."

"No jolly fear!" said Temple promptly. "Where do I—I mean, we—come in if the Sixth and Fifth and Shell are once given the tip about this? Back seats for us then, you bet! I say, let's keep our idea to ourselves!"

It struck several who heard that Temple had no more claim to the idea than Wingate or Sammy Bunter, say. But no one said so, for most of them agreed with him.

"That's it," said Dabney. "Let the Upper Fourth have the credit of—"

"Upper Fourth be hanged!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Wharton ain't Upper Fourth, is he? Remove, you mean, you shrieking ass!"

"I meant the Fourth generally, of course," answered Dabney, in haste. "We're all one Form, really."

Which was true, in a sense. But it was most unusual for any of the higher section of the Form to admit it, and Temple and Fry looked as if they thought Dabney had said too much now.

"Let's form a committee to represent the two Forms, and talk it over," suggested Scott of the Upper Fourth.

"Don't you mean the one Form?" inquired the Bounder, with a grin.

"Four of each, with Temple as chairman," said Dabney.

"That's the style!" said Temple, ceasing to glare at his chum for the false step he had made.

"With Wharton as chairman!" growled Johnny Bull. "That's only fair."

"Four Remove besides Wharton and four Upper Fourth asses—I mean fellows—same thing," said Bob Cherry.

"Can't you work in the Famous Five without that?" sneered Skinner.

"I don't want to be on the blessed committee, so you can go easy on that, Skinner!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"I am likely minded with my honoured pal Bull," said Hurree Singh, in his weird and wonderful English. "I do not wishfully incline to be satonfully numbered with the august committee."

Bob and Frank Nugent said nothing, because they did very much want to be upon the committee. In their absence, they held, Wharton might have a difficulty in keeping the aspiring spirit of Cecil Reginald in check.

"Hanged if I'm going to agree with anything of the sort!" said Temple. "Our Form's the senior Form—"

"Same Form. Question of seniority cannot therefore arise," put in Peter Todd solemnly.

"I never said anything of the sort! It's utter rot!"

"Dabney said it. He does talk rot, though," remarked the Bounder. "He suggested you as chairman!"

"Oh, well! See here, Wharton, it's for a good cause, and we don't want to squabble about it, you know. But—"

"Let Temple have his own way about everything, and there won't be any squabbling, Wharton," said Squiff.

"I don't want to squabble, I'm sure, Temple. But I'm not ready to hand over the whole bizney to you."

The great Cecil Reginald seemed to be forced to swallow something before he could answer. Bob remarked upon that to Peter Todd.

"See old Temple choking in his throat, Toddy?" he said.

"Yes; it's his choler," said Peter.

"Ass! How can it be? That's outside his throat!" replied Bob.

"It depends upon how you spell it," Peter said.

"It's three inches high," said Bob.

"It's sometimes quite immeasurable," answered Peter.

"I don't believe we're talking about the same thing, fathead!"

"I know we're not, chump! My word's c-h-o-l-e-r, yours is c-o-l-l-a-r."

"Look here, Wharton, I'm willing to agree to four each, and a chairman, making nine in all. And I'll toss you for the chairmanship," conceded Temple.

"Done!" said Wharton, with a readiness that made Temple feel a trifle suspicious. There seemed some catch about it.

They tossed then and there, and Wharton won.

Temple did not like it, but he could not go back on his own proposition. This meant, of course, that whenever Upper Fourth and Remove differed in committee the victory would be with the Remove, since they had five members to the other Form's four.

When Temple pointed out this difficulty Wharton merely grinned cheerily, and Temple could say no more—then.

But, with the ancient feud between the two Forms to be considered, it seemed hardly likely that the new-found harmony would long endure.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Committee Meeting!

"I AIN'T interested in it, and I decline to talk about it, Peter Todd," said Bunter loftily.

"Right-ho!" replied Peter. "Though as a matter of fact I wasn't talking to you, porpoise. I was telling Lonzy, so that he could yell it to Dutton after I've finished tea and cleared out."

"My dear Peter, I do not find it necessary to yell to our study-mate," replied the mild Alonzo. "He himself says that if anyone can speak clearly and distinctly to him there is no necessity for shouting; and I have endeavoured to conduct my conversation with him on those lines, with, I may add, quite a gratifying measure of success. I am sure our dear Uncle Benjamin—"

"Never mind old Benjy! You're in luck if you can make Dutton seem less like an ass without getting hoarse yourself," said Peter.

"That's a rotten pun, Toddy!" snorted Bunter.

"Pretty rotten," admitted Peter good-temperedly. "But more than good enough for you. And Lonzy doesn't like them if he understands them—which he never does, anyway; and Dutton can't hear—"

"What's that about me, Toddy?" asked the deaf junior unexpectedly.

"Bunter says you ought to be on the committee," replied Peter.

"I never did! What rot! Dutton wouldn't be any use on a committee. He can't hear a thing. Besides, I don't know anything about a committee."

"What? Weren't you tying up your hootlace outside the Common-room door? Well, well! Who says the day of miracles has passed?"

"Is there a committee, Toddy? Look here, who's on it, if there is? I ought to be, of course; but—"

"Did anybody say you weren't?"

"Am I? Oh, I say, Toddy, is that straight?"

"I don't say you are, and I don't say you are not," replied Peter, in the oracular way which Bunter himself was wont to employ when he wanted to be impressive and mysterious.

"Well, how am I to find out? Oh, you might tell a chap, Toddy!"

"Better go and ask Wharton," said Peter, grinning.

"What is it Bunter wants to know, Toddy?" inquired Tom Dutton.

"Whether he's on a committee."

"Why, the gorging beast had tea some time ago!"

"Not tea! Committee!" bawled Peter.

"Eh? You needn't shout, you know. I'm not deaf; only a little bit hard of hearing. Who promised Bunter, and what did he promise?"

But it was too much for Peter Todd. He remembered an urgent engagement, and hurried out.

Bunter also hurried out. He was quite hopeful. At last, it seemed, he was to be allowed to carry weight—otherwise than in avoirdupois—in the Form. He made up his mind to push his own scheme for all it was worth. If the Head were a reasonable man—but Bunter had some doubt about that, for had not the Head once birched him?—he would be sure to see the justice of it.

Peter Todd was not on the committee. His name had been proposed, but he had declined the honour. The four chosen besides Wharton, the chairman, were Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, and Monty Newland. Mark Linley, like Peter, had declined to stand; and Vernon-Smith had said that he really was not in the least interested.

Bunter drew Study No. 1 on the Remove passage blank.

As Harry and Frank were not at home, it struck him as a good chance to make sure that they were not food-hogging. Bunter was uncommonly severe on food-hogging.

But a glance into the cupboard, after he had shown his zeal by a long search for the hidden key, revealed no evidence against them. A fellow had to get his whole hand sticky even to reach down to the jam in the pot. And then it was only gooseberry. Measly, Bunter called it.

He rolled out, sucking his fat fingers and looking rather disconsolate. In the passage he met Hurree Singh.

"Where's Wharton?" he growled. "I want him."

"I do not know whether the wantfulness is of the bothsidedness," replied Inky. "But the ludicrous and venerated Bunter will find the honourable Wharton in the study of the absurd and respected Temple."

And Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, who never had much use for William George Bunter, passed on.

"Swanking beast!" muttered Bunter. "He doesn't like it because they've put me on the committee instead of him, I suppose. I shall vote that we all write 'M.C.' after our signatures—member of committee. I don't see why we shouldn't."

There was a particular reason why Bunter should not. But he did not know that yet.

"It's a meeting—that's it!" he said, a sudden thought striking him. "And the rotters never told me about it! But I'm certain I'm a jolly sight fitter for the post than those two asses!"

He stopped outside the door of the study in the Upper Fourth passage which Temple shared with Fry and Dabney. From within came the murmur of voices.

Sheer force of habit very nearly caused Bunter to apply his ear to the keyhole.

But, as he imagined, there was no need for that now.

Nor did there seem to him any need for knocking.

He opened the door and rolled in—or nearly in. Nine fellows were present, and nine made quite as big a crowd as the study could comfortably accommodate.

"Hallo! What on earth do you want here, you disgustin' porker?" inquired Temple sharply.

"Well, I like that! I suppose you can't keep out a member of the committee?"

"There isn't any question of that," said Harry Wharton. "We're all here."

"Yes; now that I've come. Oh, really, Wharton, I think you might have told me about the meeting! But it's always the same way—nothing but beastly jealousy of a fellow you know to be your superior!"

Still nobody felt quite sure what the Owl was driving at. It did not occur to them at once that even so egregious an ass as Bunter could imagine that he had been chosen on the committee.

Bunter's eyes roamed around the room. There was no vacant seat.

"If you'd any sense of politeness, Dabney," he said loftily, "you'd get up and offer a chap a chair."

Dabney arose.

"I'll offer you something much more suitable to those trousers than a chair," he said. "Turn round!"

"What for?" asked Bunter.

Dabney did not wait to explain. He was a much more active fellow than the Owl of the Remove, and it was not too difficult for him to get round and make an attack from the rear.

"Ow-yow! Who're you kicking, you beast?" yelled Bunter.

"If there's any blessed doubt about that, it shall be dispelled at once," said Dabney, lifting his foot again.

"Here, drop it, old scout!" protested Scott, who was the fourth of the Temple crowd. "It sounds too much like pig-killing!"

"Hoof the fat toad out, and let's get on with the washing!" said Fry.

"Stop them, Wharton! Bob, old pal! I'm ashamed of you chaps, letting me be knocked about by these cads! It's a disgrace to the Form!"

The five Removites grinned. No one but Dabney had touched Bunter, though no doubt William George's imagination showed him to himself as encompassed by the hosts of the Amalekites.

"Sling him out, Dab!" said Temple.

"Look here! I've come to the meeting!" howled Bunter.

"And jolly well like your blessed cheek, too!" replied Tom Brown.

"Oh, really, Browney! I'm a member of the committee, I suppose?"

"Then the best thing you can do is to get a new supposer, tubby," said Bob Cherry.

"The present instrument certainly seems defective," grinned Frank Nugent.

"Who told you that you were a member, Bunter?" asked Wharton.

"Toddy did. Yah! You ain't going to call Toddy a liar, I suppose?"

"Well, if he said that, he isn't exactly a George Washington, you know."

"Look here, Wharton, we aren't holdin' this meetin' for the purpose of lettin' you Remove kids show how funny you can be," said Temple, in his high-and-mighty manner. "I don't find Bunter amusin'. Kick him out Dab!"

"You're not exactly bossing this show, Temple," remarked Bob.

"Oh, dry up, Bob! Clear, Bunter!" snapped Wharton.

He was not precisely pleased with Temple's lordly manner; but he had made up his mind before coming to the meeting that the old feud between Upper Fourth and Remove should not be allowed to interfere with the proceedings, and he was resigned to putting up with something.

"Toddy said——"

"Todd has nothing to do with this bizney. We've got enough Lower Fourth kids on this committee without havin' Todd dragged in," Temple said.

"Don't you think you might as well be civil, Temple?"

"Who's uncivil? If you've anythin' to say against my manners——"

"We haven't! Glad to hear you've got any!" Bob retorted. "But it might be as well if you gave us a little evidence of it beyond your word. Tubby, there, claims to have manners!"

"I'm not goin' to be compared to that prize pig!" growled Temple, his face flaming.

"Scat, Bunter!" said Tom Brown. "As a member of the committee, you're non est. Nobody thought of electing you, and Toddy was only pulling your fat leg. And as a member of a very junior Form, upon which the magnates of the Upper Fourth naturally look with royal contempt, you're being set a giddy bad example!"

"Look here, Brown——"

"No, thanks, Temple! Try a genial smile, and then I don't mind so much. As it is, I don't want my eyes hurt, thanks!"

"Are you goin', Bunter?" roared Temple, feeling that he must vent his wrath on someone.

"Certainly I'm not!" answered Bunter, tossing his head. "I have just as good a right here as——"

"What! In my study?"

"Oh, really! I don't see what difference that makes! I'm rather surprised at Wharton for not insisting that the meeting should be held in No. 1, though. I consider that he gives way to you Upper Fourth fellows too much. But I mean to stick up for the rights of my Form."

Temple arose. This had gone too far. He glanced at the Removites defiantly, as if he expected them to interfere.

They had no notion of interfering, however.

Bunter needed chucking out. He often needed it, and it often fell to them to meet the need. There was no charm of novelty for them in helping to chuck out Bunter. And it wasn't worth while to row with Temple & Co. on the Owl's account.

"Come along, Fry!"

Fry also arose. Scott sat still. Scott was the most level-headed of the four, and less under the domination of Temple than Dabney and Fry.

"Yaroooooh! Lemme alone! Bob—Harry—Frank—Browney—rescue! Newland, you cad, haven't you any—Ow-yow!"

"Nothing to compare with that, Bunter," said Monty Newland, grinning.

Temple & Co. swung Bunter with plenty of vigour, if with some lack of that scientific method which long practice with Bunter had enabled the Famous Five to attain.

"Yow!"

Bunter pitched out into the passage. His head struck the opposite wall. It was not a fragile head, but that impact made it sing.

"Yaroooooh! Yow! You've busted my napper!"

"What does this unseemly noise mean?" demanded a sharp voice.

It was Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth, who asked that question. Mr. Capper was an irascible little man. The fellows in his Form found him tolerable; but he was not well disposed towards the Remove generally, and now he glared in at the open study door as though he felt sure that the presence of juniors from Mr. Quelch's bold, bad band—as Bob Cherry put it afterwards—accounted for the row.

"We—it was—er—only Bunter, sir. He yelled out," said Temple weakly.

"I heard him," was the master's dry reply. "I should imagine everyone in the building heard him. And, not being an absolute idiot, Temple, I feel sure that Bunter had some reason for yelling!"

"It's a committee meeting, sir, and they tried to turn me out!" burred the Owl.

"It would not be entirely a misfortune if everything attempted here—in so far as it was of a laudable nature, that is—were attended with the same measure of success as this effort, Bunter!" replied the Upper Fourth master.

"Sarcastic beast!" muttered the Owl.

"What did you say, Bunter?" snapped Mr. Capper.

"I—I said that I quite agreed with you, sir!"

"What you said did not sound in the least like that. However, what you say is a matter of no possible importance. I cannot conceive of anyone's being so misguided as to appoint an obtuse youth like you to serve upon a committee. But if you have been so appointed——"

"He hasn't, sir!" said Temple hastily.

"I have!" shrieked Bunter. "Toddy told me so!"

"Then it would appear that you have tried to attend the wrong meeting, Bunter. I should recommend your inquiring of Todd as to the place at which your committee are sitting. This does

not appear to be it. You had better go."

Bunter went, mumbling things he dared not speak out. Mr. Capper, having dealt out justice after his own notion—Mr. Capper's notion of justice was apt to include a leaning to his own Form's side—also departed.

And the meeting went on, with tempers a trifle ruffled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Splits!

THE meeting went on, and Bunter went off, sore in mind and body.

When Bunter was in that state he was inclined to be revengeful.

He rolled out into the Close, pondering upon how best he might get even with the committee which had refused his valuable services in such contumelious fashion.

The thing was to get at them all—not to try for each of the nine individually.

And to get at them all they must be got at through this scheme.

That was obvious, even to Bunter, for it was little the Upper and the Lower Fourth had in common.

"It ain't any secret, or else I might let it out to someone, and get at the rotters that way!" muttered the Owl.

Then it was that the bright idea struck him.

After all, was it not something of a secret?

It was pretty plain that the two Forms had no idea of sharing the scheme with the three Forms senior to them—the Shell, Fifth, and Sixth.

If the seniors got to know, they would either take a hand in it, or else do their utmost to squash it.

Either alternative would suit Bunter's book.

If Wingate and Courtney and Gwynne of the Sixth, Blundell and Bland of the Fifth, and others high up in the school came in, Temple & Co., with the Removites, would sink at once into a position of insignificance. Even Hobson of the Shell would consider himself better fitted to decide, or help in deciding, such a question than any Upper Fourth or Remove fellow.

And, of course, if the seniors did not approve, they would throw in their whole weight against the proposal; and the Head was much more likely to listen to them than to Wharton and Temple.

Bunter made up his mind to go to Wingate.

At least—well, he was not quite sure that it would be good policy to go to Wingate first.

It was an unfortunate fact, for which Bunter could not account in the least, that the skipper of Greyfriars really did not seem fond of William George Bunter. He had treated that important personage with something very like contempt on many occasions. When a fellow says that he does not believe a word you say, you cannot help suspecting, if you are at all keen, that his respect for you is not high.

Blundell, then?

It was unlucky, but Blundell, skipper of the Fifth, had never shown any greater leaning towards Bunter than Wingate had. On the last occasion upon which they had exchanged words Blundell had called Bunter a fat, lying cad. Bunter might forgive that in time, but the time was not yet.

Hobson was hardly important enough. No; someone of more weight than the captain of the Shell must be told the secret first.

There was Loder. Loder of the Sixth.

was always ready to catch at a chance of getting in ahead of Wingate.

And there was Coker. Coker of the Fifth wasn't really more important than Hobson. But Coker did not realise that. To Horace Coker, Horace Coker was the hub around which Greyfriars revolved.

Moreover, Coker was such a noisy beggar that to give him even an inkling of the scheme meant that all Greyfriars would probably know of it within half an hour. Loder was quite different. If he saw anything to his advantage in keeping it dark he would do so.

On the whole, it seemed to Bunter best to try Loder first. He had never known Loder anything but stingy. But "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and Loder would sometimes shell out if he saw his profit in doing so.

Billy Bunter rolled indoors and upstairs.

In the hall he met Squiff and Delarey going out. He was passing them with his little fat nose in the air when Sampson Field said:

"Come down from the serene heights of contemplation, Bunter, and tell us what pig it was squealing a quarter of an hour or so ago."

"Oh, you do talk rot, Squiff!" replied Bunter impatiently.

"Is it true that Capper threatened to have sausages made of you if you were caught in the Upper Fourth passage again?" inquired Piet Delarey.

"No, it is not. And you know jolly well it's not! As a matter of fact—"

"Bunterese for 'thumping lie,' Piet. Go on, tubby!" said Squiff gravely.

"I refuse to have any more to say to you fellows until you can talk sense!" sniffed Bunter. "I'm going to have a chat with my friend Loder now."

"You're welcome," said Delarey.

"And we haven't got any friend Loder, Piet! Poor sad us!" gibed Squiff.

Bunter rolled on.

He tapped at the door of Gerald Loder's study.

"Come in!" rapped out the prefect.

Bunter entered. Loder looked up with a scowl on his face.

"You can cut!" he said acidly.

"Oh, really, Loder, you might be more civil to a chap who has come along to tell you something for your own good."

"And without any profit to himself, of course?" said the prefect sarcastically.

"Not the slightest!" said Bunter virtuously.

"Get out! I know that's a dashed lie!"

"Well—oh, really, Loder, don't be so sharp on a fellow! You'd better hear what I've got to say, anyhow. If you think it's worth anything to you, I'm not so proud that I should refuse to accept a—er—small testimonial from a—er—a chap I respect so highly as I do you, Loder!"

The Sixth-Former looked at him long and hard. Then he said:

"You'd better shut the door. I don't suppose for a moment you've anything to tell me that it is worth my while to listen to. But, if you have, there isn't any particular reason why a dozen other chaps should hear it."

"Oh, it's all serene, Loder. I peeped into the other studies as I came along," said Bunter ingenuously. "There's nobody about in the passage, unless it's Valence. His is the only door that's shut."

But Bunter closed the door, and sidled nearer Loder.

"The Upper Fourth and some silly asses in our Form are going to lay a scheme before the Head," he said, in a mysteriously lowered voice.

"If that's all you have to tell me you may as well clear before I start in to

boot you! I'm not interested in sag schemes."

"But this— Oh, I say, Loder, don't be so hasty! This is a thing that might do you a bit of good. It's about the prizes."

"I don't care a twopenny curse for the prizes!" snapped Loder.

"I know you don't, so far as that goes, Loder. Of course, not being likely to win any of them!"

"What?"

"I—I mean that you could win them all if you cared to, Loder! You're so jolly clever. But, of course, you've above such potty things—a chap like you would be. They're going to ask the Head if certificates can be given instead of prizes, and the cash go to the Red Cross, or—er—or something or other."

"Let 'em!" Loder growled. "It's no affair of mine. Might be if they were proposing to turn the cash my way, but that's out of the question."

"I don't quite see that, Loder. In fact, I suggested a plan by which fellows like you and me, you know, might get a share."

"You young idiot! And don't you class yourself with me, see! Fellows like me and you, indeed! Are you like me?"

"I should be sorry— I—I mean, not at all, Loder! Of course, you're in the Sixth, and all that. But I mean, you're not mug enough to want to give away anything worth having if you can freeze on to it yourself."

Loder smiled grimly. He certainly was not that particular sort of mug. But he knew that there was no more chance of his walking off with with any share of the money usually spent in prizes than there was of his being allowed to put the Crown jewels under his arm and take them off to the nearest pawnshop.

"The thing is that Wingate doesn't know yet, and I thought it might suit your book to know before him," said Bunter, coming to the point suddenly.

Loder bit the end of his pen, and his narrow eyes darted a keen look at the Owl.

"H'm!" he said thoughtfully.

"Don't you see, Loder? What's the good of letting Wingate chip in and take the credit when you might collar it yourself?"

"Wingate happens to be skipper, and I happen not to be, that's all," returned Loder.

But the Owl noted that he was still very thoughtful.

"That's no odds at all. You're much above Temple or Wharton. If they can go and suggest a thing like that to the Head, I suppose you can?"

"Well, yes, I could. But I don't see any use in it."

That was untrue. Loder's consistent policy was to keep in with the masters. It saved lots of trouble, though it entailed some. And if the Head approved of this scheme it would be a bit of a score to the fellow who suggested it. Also, it would be a score over Wingate—getting in ahead of him.

"Oh, really, Loder, I should think my best plan would be to go and tell Wingate, if that's the way you look at it. After all, I suppose he is the right person to lay it before the Head."

Bunter took a roll or two doorwards. He expected to be called back, and his expectations were not disappointed.

"Stop! You need not go to Wingate. Keep this dark till to-morrow, and I'll think over it."

"Oh, I'll do that for you, Loder! It's always a pleasure to do anything for you. By the way—"

"That's enough! I'm not cashing postal-orders."

"I shouldn't think of asking you to. Naturally, I go to fellows of my own

Form for little favours like that. My pal Mauly is always ready to oblige."

"Go to him, then!"

"I am going—I mean that, as a matter of fact, I don't happen to be expecting a postal-order just now. And I won't ask you for a loan."

"Just as well. You wouldn't get one."

"But I consider the information I have given you ought to be worth a trifle," Bunter said. "That's business."

"More like blackmail, a jolly sight!" growled Loder.

"Well, you know best, Loder," replied the Owl, humbly. "Anyway, half a sov—"

"You can have this. You won't get another copper," said Loder, and threw two half-crowns at him.

Bunter retreated without thanks. He did not feel grateful. It was a stingy payment, he considered.

"Mean beast!" he muttered. "Five measly bob! I'll go and tell Coker."

To this resolve it might have been objected that to tell Coker a secret was to ensure that the scheme should not long remain a secret.

But Bunter did not care whether it so remained or not.

It is true that he had agreed to keep the matter dark till next day, and had received five shillings from Loder on that understanding. But he had conveniently forgotten all about that before he reached Coker's study.

Coker answered his knock, and the Owl saw at once upon entering why Coker's mellifluous voice had not bidden him come in.

Coker had in hand an enterprise of great pith and moment.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Resolves to Take a Hand!

COKER was shaving!

There was no apparent reason why Coker should shave. But for that matter, the evidence that it was wasted labour, if such evidence existed, was hidden from sight; and underneath the thick lather that covered the chin and upper lip of Horace Coker there might have been a fine crop of stubble—or down.

There might have been, but there was not.

"Bunk, you fat toad!" said Potter, as soon as he sighted the visitor. "You ain't wanted here!"

"Oh, really, Potter, Coker won't say that when I've told him what I've come to tell!" replied the Owl. "What's Coker doing?" he added inquisitively.

"Setting a trap for spiders," answered Greene, with a wide grin.

"Ass! I'm shaving, Bunter, you idiot! Can't you see that?"

"Oh, yes, Coker, I can see you're shaving. But what for?"

"What does a chap usually shave for, you fatheaded imbecile?"

"So as to get hair off his face, I suppose. But there isn't any hair on yours, Coker!"

"Oh, isn't there, though!" roared Coker, flourishing his razor in a manner that made Bunter feel very uncomfortable indeed. The mighty Horace looked very queer with a lathered face—quite mad, Bunter thought.

"I—I mean, there's lots, Coker!" he bumbled. "You're as hairy as—as Jacob! I was remarking to Bob Cherry the other day that it was rather disgusting of you not to shave."

"There you are, you fellows!" cried Coker, in triumph. "Bunter's noticed it—a fatheaded specimen like Bunter! The wonder is that Prouty hasn't dropped down on me before now for being untidy."

"He has!" murmured Potter.

"Eh?"

"I say he has."

"But not because of my face, ass!"

"Because of your ass's face—same thing, old chap!"

"George Potter—"

"I've got something to tell you, Coker—something really important," said Bunter.

"If you've been listening at anybody's door—"

"Nothing of the sort! My high principles would not allow me to do such a thing!"

Greene put his handkerchief to his nose.

"What's the matter, Greene?" asked Potter sympathetically.

"It's Bunter's principles. They've got so very high that they don't smell nice. Can't you chaps 'niff them?"

"Oh, that's only Bunter's usual aroma. Nothing to do with his principles—unless you call not washing except when he's obliged a principle," replied Potter.

"I didn't come here to talk to you silly asses! I came to talk to Coker!" howled Bunter.

"You'll have to wait till I've finished shaving, then," said the lordly Horace.

"Come along to the gym, and I'll knock your head off, Greene!" said Potter liberally.

They departed together. Coker was a trifle annoyed. He thought the interesting operation upon which he was engaged should have chained them to his side.

"You can sit down, Bunter," he said affably. Even William George was better than no spectator at all.

Bunter sat down, with a gasp. The manner in which Coker used his razor fascinated Bunter. He was glad that it was the Fifth-Former's own throat which was being scraped, not his.

But it certainly was interesting. Bunter had often read in the papers of cut throats. He had never seen one. Of course, he did not exactly want Coker to cut his throat—it might be serious. But if he was resolved on doing it—as he seemed to be—Bunter rather wanted to be there at the moment, if only that he might tell the story afterwards. Bunter's tastes were not really nice, and he loved to be the centre of attraction.

Coker flourished the razor in the most reckless way; but—though this fact eluded Bunter's notice—the dashing recklessness ceased just as it neared the lather. The motion became quite gingerly. That razor had an edge, as Coker well knew. Had he not stropped it for a solid hour on end?

And, whenever it got really near, Coker had an inclination to use the back instead of the edge.

He did not give way to this inclination. But there was really no danger at all of the catastrophe that Bunter awaited with bated breath.

It is always fifty to one that a nervous shaver will cut himself, however. And presently Coker cut himself.

"Yooop!" he yelled, as a red stain appeared amidst the lather, and spread with magical quickness.

Bunter rushed to the door and flung it open.

"Help! Help!" he roared desperately. "Coker's cut—"

"Shurrup, you fat ass!" shouted Coker. "There's no real harm done. Don't you suppose I know how to— Oh, you utter idiot! Kick that door to!"

But it was too late. The sound of hurrying footsteps came from the passage, and three fellows appeared—Peter Todd, his cousin Alonzo, and Hobson of the Shell.

"Why, he's still here!" said Peter, staring at Coker.

"Of course I am here, you silly tag!" roared Coker. "Why shouldn't I be here? Where else—"

"I've been had!" said Peter. "I'm going! Bunter ain't truthful. He said Coker had cut, and I wanted to see whether the good news was true. But I might have known Bunter couldn't tell the truth!"

And Peter went off in pretended indignation.

Alonzo lingered.

"Coker, my dear fellow, you have cut yourself," he said kindly.

"Think I don't know that, you burbling chump?"

"Do not be rude to me, Coker! My intentions, I assure you, are of the best. Shall I fetch—"

"Fetch nothing! Take your intentions away, and boil them!"

Alonzo sadly departed.

There remained Hobson. Coker and Hobson had been close chums in the old days, before promotion fell to the lordly Horace. Since then the state of affairs between them had varied from a decided coolness to an angry warmth.

"Well, my hat!" said Hobson, to nobody in particular. "What on earth will the lunatic be doing next?"

"Go away! Can't you see I'm shaving?" howled Coker.

"No, I can't!" snorted Hobson. "I can see that you are monkeying around with a razor. That ain't shaving. What have you got to shave?"

"Rats! I've simply got to shave, or look horrid!"

"I don't see how shaving's going to prevent that," replied the skipper of the Shell thoughtfully. "Now, if you could get a new face—"

"Ass! I tell you I'm as bristly as—as a porcupine!"

"Never noticed it myself. But I suppose that's why you've got Bunter here. Kind of fellow-feeling, you being in the porcupine class, and Bunter in the pining porker."

"I suppose you think that's funny, Hobson?" roared Coker.

"Not half so funny as your face, Coker!"

"I—I came here to tell Coker something. But it concerns you, too, Hobson," said Bunter. "In fact, I meant to tell you later on. Shall I tell him now, Coker?"

"Tell him anything you like!" replied Coker. "It's sure to be lies, anyway. But I dare say it will be good enough for Hobby."

"I dunno—I'm not sure—well, you see—it's a sort of a kind of a secret."

"Better tell it at once, Bunter, or there'll be an explosion," said Hobson, his curiosity aroused.

"I don't want to hear it!" growled Coker. "You Shell chaps can encourage this fat worm in his prying if you like; but it's below the dignity of the Fifth."

"The Fifth haven't any dignity!" retorted Hobson. "They never had a fat lot, and they lost all they had when a certain ignorant, stuck up ass, whose name I won't mention, was pitchforked into the Form!"

"I—I don't think it's polite of you to call Coker names, Hobson," said Bunter, in his most honeyed tones. Bunter had realised that it was very unlikely that Hobson would pay for information received. It was not Hobson's way.

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Coker!" said Hobson. "Even an idiot like Bunter knows the chap I mean."

"That's only because Coker's the only ignorant, stuck-up— I—I mean, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 499.

Coker's nothing of the sort, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Hobson! And it's a silly whopper to say Coker doesn't need shaving! If he didn't he'd have whiskers, and think what he'd look like then!"

"So he would—some day," answered Hobson, grinning broadly. "As for what he'd look like—Oh, my hat! The missing link all over!"

"If you ain't wanting anything, Hobson, you had better get, and look sharp about it!" said Coker, breathing hard.

"But I do want something. I want to hear Bunter's yarn. I'm nuts on real up-to-date fiction," replied Hobson.

Thus encouraged, Bunter told the secret.

"The cheeky young sweeps!" yelled Coker, brushing off some of the lather in a desperate hurry. "Yow! I've got my mouth full of this wretched stuff!"

"Don't waste it! Shave your tongue!" suggested Hobson.

"None of your barefaced cheek!"

"Can't say the same for you, Coker! Plenty of it. The whiskers are lying low, as far as I can see. But this is a bit too thick. I agree with you there. Those rubs will have to learn that the Shell is a senior Form to the Upper Fourth."

"Shell be hanged! It's the Fifth this concerns!" hooted Coker.

"Go and butt in, then, and get yourself bumped!" snapped Hobson.

"You're afraid to butt in, I suppose, and—"

"I'm a senior, with a sense of the dignity of my position," said Hobson loftily. "I shall take what I consider the proper course!"

"That's just what I'm going to do!" roared Coker. "And that means setting those fags in their places. Bunter, cut off to the gym, and tell Potter and Greene I want them. Oh, and just look in at Blundell and Bland's study, and tell them to come here instanter. You might pass the word to Fitzgerald, too."

"Oh, I imagined you were going to do it all on your own!" said Hobson, as he went.

"I say, Coker—"

"Don't stand there, you fat young idiot! Cut off, and do what I tell you!"

"But—Oh, look here, Coker! I—I've been disappointed about a postal-order—at least, it's sure to come tomorrow; but—"

"I suppose you mean you want paying for what you've told me?" said Coker, with unusual acumen. "Why didn't you sub on Hobby? But, here you are! You sha'n't say I'm stingy, anyway."

Two half-crowns jingled on the table. Bunter snatched them up.

"I—I—Oh, really, you know, Coker, I shouldn't think of sponging on anybody! When my postal-order comes—"

"You'll pay it back to my grandchildren—eh? All right! Cut off now!"

"The meeting's in Temple's study," said Bunter. And he went.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Trouble All Round!

"I'M not going to stand any more of it!" flashed Temple.

He got up as he spoke, and kicked his chair away.

"Don't you mean sit?" asked Tom Brown pleasantly.

"Oh, you silly asses think there's something to jape about in everythin'! I'm fed-up! If I can't have my own way—"

"Now we know!" said Frank Nugent.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 499.

"As soon as Temple can't have his own way he's fed-up!"

"I said nothin' of the sort! But I'm not going to have every blessed suggestion I make voted down, just because you Remove kids have wangled a majority on the committee!"

"We've got to vote about things when we aren't agreed, you know, old fellow," said Scott reasonably.

"And as for wangling, that be hanged for a tale!" said Bob Cherry, with some heat. "You tossed with Wharton for the job of chairman, and he won. If you'd won, it would have been the other way round, and you would have had everything your own way."

"That's what I'm complainin' about!" snapped Temple.

"Temple's frank, anyway," remarked Monty Newland. "But how would you arrange things, Temple?"

"The Upper Fourth, being the senior Form, ought to have a majority on the committee, of course. Any ass could see that!"

"But we, not being asses, don't see it," put in Wharton quietly.

"Sit down, old man!" said Fry placably.

"Things ain't going so far wrong, you know," Dabney added. "I'd have voted for some of what these chaps have proposed if it hadn't been for the principle of the thing."

"What a heap of principle you've got, Dab!" said Bob Cherry admiringly.

"Do you suppose I like sittin' here an'

Don't Fail to Read
'FRANK RICHARDS'
SCHOOLDAYS!
By Martin Clifford,
in
THE BOYS' FRIEND.

seem' my scheme mucked up by a lot of kids like you?" Temple blustered.

"Oh, draw it mild, Temple!" said Tom Brown. "It's no more your scheme than it is mine. Wharton proposed it."

"Wharton may have got it out first. I'm not denyin' that he did. But I thought of it—"

"Years and years and years ago!" chipped in Bob. "You're so slow, Temple, old scout. That's what's the matter with you."

"The matter with you, if I have any more of your cheek, Cherry, will be a thick ear!"

The genial grin on Bob's face faded. He no longer found Temple amusing.

"I'll take it now!" he said. And he also arose and kicked away his chair.

"Clumsy ass, Cherry!" snapped Fry. The chair had fallen on Fry's toes.

"Are you wanting anything to be going on with, Fry?"

"Oh, chuck it, Bob!" groaned Harry. "I wish I'd never mentioned the idea at all. It ain't worth all this squabbling."

"You'd better leave it to us," said Dabney.

"I would, only I'm dead sure you idiots would make a mess of it!" rapped out Harry. His temper was also rising.

"Sit down, Bob," said Tom Brown.

"It's enough to have Temple ramping round on his hind legs like the unicorn in the Royal arms, without—"

"Rats!" roared Bob.

"That's enough, Brown!" snapped Temple.

"More than enough, I should say!" flashed Wharton.

"Is this any new?" asked Newland.

"Of course it's not!" snorted Fry. "But we might have known what to expect from you Remove chaps!"

The old feud was blazing up again. Tom Brown's usually good-tempered face was taking on an angry look, and Dabney frowned, while Frank Nugent's slim hands clenched and unclenched themselves as he stood by Harry's side.

Only Scott and Newland kept their seats and their tempers.

"We'll go!" said Harry Wharton. "And next time you ask us to a meeting in your study, Temple, we shall know what to expect!"

With the possible exceptions of Scott and Newland, no one there could now have told what had precipitated the crisis. It certainly was not a matter of any real importance. But there had been a different opinion between Wharton and Temple, and, of course, all the Removites had supported Wharton, and the Upper Fourth quartet had been outvoted—as had happened every time.

It was galling, no doubt. But the boot would have been on the other leg had Temple won the toss and the chairmanship.

Newland got to his feet as Harry moved towards the door.

"Time you went!" snapped Temple. "It saves you from being chucked out on your necks!"

The procession halted at once.

"Chuck us out, then!" shouted Bob.

Temple rushed to do it.

Dabney and Fry followed their leader.

Just one moment Scott hesitated. But he knew that it would be of no use to say afterwards that Temple had been in the wrong. When things had come to such a head as this little matters of that sort were unimportant. So Scott, calling himself an ass and Temple a bigger one—but in his mind only—piled in.

Bob Cherry met the furious attack of the Upper Fourth captain with a sturdy shoulder, and Temple reeled against Fry. Fry propped him up for a second, and then flung himself upon Bob, and clutched that worthy round the neck in an embrace less loving than it may have looked.

"Yarooogh!" howled Dabney, as Harry and Frank turned him upside-down.

Fry and Bob Cherry, clinging together, collapsed on top of him.

"Yooop! Gerroff! You're squashing me!" yelled Dabney.

"Serve you right, you ass!" roared Bob. "Ow!"

Temple and Wharton had locked, and Tom Brown had seized Temple by the leg. Temple went down all right, but Wharton went with him, which Tom Brown had not intended. And they landed fairly on top of what was already a quite sufficiently mixed heap.

"Pax!" said Scott, grinning. Scott saw no use in taking on Tom Brown and Monty Newland together.

"Just about what might have been expected of you kids!" said a loud voice from the doorway.

There stood the majestic Coker, sniffing contemptuously.

"Let's all go for dear Horace, Scott!" suggested Tom Brown.

"Good egg!" replied Scott heartily.

But Coker paid no heed to them. He did not look quite as imposing as he imagined, for there were still streaks of lather about his rugged face, and the cut was still bleeding.

"I was told there was a meeting here," he said. "Seems to have been a mistake of somebody's. Is it a bear-garden, or is it an acrobatic performance?"

"It will be an ass-baitin', if you don't clear, Coker!" howled Temple.

"But that won't be any change!" replied the great Horace, with a quickness

of repartee that surprised even himself. "See here, you kids, you've taken on a job above your weight, that's easily to be seen."

The heap was sorting itself out now. Fry rubbed a damaged shin, and Bob Cherry caressed his waistcoat. That was not damaged in itself, but the accidental impact of someone's knee had caused pain within it.

Temple, growling, looked at himself in the glass, and did his best to put right his collar and tie. Such things came first with Temple, unless his hurts were really serious. Wharton hugged an elbow, and Dabney held a handkerchief, rapidly growing red, to his nose. Frank Nugent and Scott, Tom Brown and Monty Newland grinned, and shifted closer to the new-comer.

"You'd better leave this prize business to me," went on the great man of the Fifth. "It ain't half a bad idea. I'm a bit surprised that I didn't think of it myself."

"Didn't you?" inquired Tom Brown innocently. "You amaze me, Coker! I felt sure you would be like Temple—with it all worked out in what, by courtesy, we'll call your brain—only you unaccountably forgot to mention it!"

"Look here, Brown—" "Shut up, Temple!" snapped Coker. "If you have no more sense than to be playing childish games on the floor with these Remove fags—but, of course, there's no real difference between the Upper Fourth and the Remove, come to that—then—"

"Oh, rush the silly swanker!" roared Temple.

"Go for him!" yelled Bob Cherry, at the same moment.

And the Upper Fourth and Remove, sinking their differences, went as one man for Coker.

He had fairly asked for it. He had done all that he well could do to annoy both factions. But he seemed quite surprised at the results of what, no doubt, he considered a particularly tactful intervention.

"Keep off!" he hooted, and let out with his four-point-seven punch as they came at him.

A four-point-seven punch is a very useful thing to have. But it is not in itself an effective reply to the combined assault of nine hefty and vigorous fellows.

Twice Coker landed. One punch took Temple under the chin, and sent him backwards into the arms of Tom Brown, who put him on the floor to recover from its effects. The other smote Bob Cherry's chest, but failed to stagger him.

Then, as before the fierce assault of the pack the lordly stag goes down, so fell the great Coker, and in an instant was lost to sight!

But he could still make himself heard.

"You cheeky—yooop!—kids! Yow! Help! Rescue! Potter, you idiot! Groooh! Greene, you ass! Blundell—Ow-yow!"

The stentorian howls of the great Coker rang through the School House, upstairs and downstairs, startling Mr. Quelch at his typewriter, awakening Mr. Prout from his slumber, alarming the kitchen staff, reaching the ears of Loder and Carne and Walker and Valence just as they were sitting down to a game of nap, bringing Wingate and Courtney to investigate, summoning crowds of Remove and Upper Fourth fellows to the scene of battle, and even causing Mauleverer to sit up and inquire of Delarey and Jimmy Vivian whether "someone wasn't makin' a beastly row, begad?"

But Potter and Greene, busy in the gym with the congenial task of bashing one another's faces, heard not at all. And if Blundell and his chum Bland heard they regarded not. As for

Banter, he had not troubled about carrying Coker's messages. Why worry about little things like that when life was short and grub was fleeting, and anyway, it wasn't likely that Coker would stump up any more?

"Got anything sticky—jam, treacle, glue, any old thing, Dah?" asked Bob Cherry breathlessly.

"What-ho!" replied Dabney, and with flowing nose went for the cupboard.

"Any soot up your chimney, Temple?" Wharton asked.

"Oh, rather!" answered Temple.

"Get some, one of you chaps!"

"Stop it! I'll jolly well slay you all! Yooop!" hooted Coker.

But Dabney came hurrying with a tin of golden syrup and a big bottle of gum; and Frank Nugent and Fry, less afraid of getting grubby than the stylish Temple, had their hands up the chimney, and Tom Brown passed a bottle of red ink to Bob, who, seated astride the

or— Oh, never mind! Give the ass all he's asked for! Let me come and operate, Cherry!"

"No fear!" replied Bob emphatically. "I'm going to see that this thing's done properly!"

"What's all this mean?" demanded the voice of Wingate at the door.

Behind Wingate stood Courtney; and in the passage sounded the quick footsteps of Mr. Quelch, and the querulous voice of Mr. Capper made itself heard farther away, and Mr. Prout beamed from his study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Going to the Head About It!

THE after-effects of the little affair in Temple's study had not entirely vanished next day.

Wingate and Courtney had been laying about them with ashplant



Coker shaves! (See Chapter 5.)

chest of Coker, was in the best position to deal with him.

"That will teach you not to butt in, Coker!" said Dabney, as he up-ended the tin above Coker's face.

"Don't be greedy with the golden syrup, Coker!" said Frank Nugent reprovingly. "If you must wolf it like that, have some soot with it!"

"And a little in your hair, Coker, old chap!" chortled Fry.

"With a drop or two of red ink!" added Bob.

"And all well rubbed in!" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"With a clothes-brush," said Monty Newland, using one.

"Stop, you idiot! That's my brush!" howled Temple.

"Would you disturb the harmony of the meeting at a golden moment such as this, Temple?" asked Tom Brown reproachfully.

"What's a clothes-brush more or less?" said Scott.

"That's all very well. 'Tain't yours,

before the masters appeared on the scene. Mr. Quelch had then invited the five Removites to a small entertainment in his study. The invitation had been too pressing to be declined; and there was further pressure afterwards—of hands under armpits. But Bob Cherry said it had been worth it.

Mr. Capper was also urgent in his desire to discuss the matter with the members of his Form concerned; and perhaps the discussion was the more painful to Temple & Co. because canings were less frequent in the Upper Fourth than in the Remove. Moreover, Mr. Capper said scathing things, and Temple was very vulnerable to sarcasm, though Fry and Dabney and Scott would have preferred to take it all out in that measure.

Coker was not caned. He had a narrow squeak of it. Only the fact that he was sent to clean himself before attending Mr. Prout saved him. It took some time to accomplish that operation

after the ministrations of the enemy; and Mr. Prout had cooled down somewhat when the crestfallen Coker appeared. There was a theory that the cane was not in use in the Fifth; and it was true that Mr. Prout never caned such fellows as Blundell and Bland. But he had been known to relax the rule in the case of Coker.

The position of affairs on the following day stood somewhat thus.

Wharton and Temple were not quite so keen on the self-sacrificing scheme as they had been; but neither had given it up. What both had given up was the notion that the Upper Fourth and the Remove had any chance of working it in concert.

Loder had lain low. He had not even mentioned the matter to Carne and Walker and Valence—possibly because he knew they would not be interested. But he meant to use his knowledge of the scheme to acquire merit with the Head, if and when it should seem good to him so to do.

Wingate had heard nothing about it. The cause of the trouble in Temple's study had not been inquired into by him and Courtney, owing to the arrival upon the scene of the three masters whose Forms were concerned.

Coker had not been choked off. He had mentioned the scheme to Blundell and Bland, who were not enthusiastic—they never seemed so when the great Horace wanted to give a lead. Potter and Greene said it was all tommy-rot; but what did the opinion of Potter and Greene matter? Coker resolved that he would put the scheme through on his own—except, of course, for the polite formality of consulting the Head about it.

Hobson, like Loder, lay low for the present. But he did not keep the matter a secret from the other leading spirits of his own Form; and Hoskins and the rest agreed with him that it would be a score worth making for the Shell if that Form were first in the field with the suggestion that certificates should be given instead of prizes, and the money thus saved contributed to some war charity.

There remains to be accounted for only Bunter—who was at the bottom of a good deal of the scheming, if not of all the squabbling.

Bunter was still on the make. He had scooped in ten shillings, which was exactly half-a-sovereign more than the value of any prize he was at all likely to get.

But, of course, he was not satisfied. The ten shillings had vanished like snow in summer, and William George was left pining for more. It made his mouth water—even after he had attained as near to repletion as ten shillings would allow—to think of the possibilities of grub which still remained for one who could use judiciously that scheme.

His mind lingered lovingly around the absurd notion of inducing the Head to let the school share the prize money. Not equally—that would be silly, Bunter thought. He could not shape precisely the manner in which the cash should be apportioned. But it was vaguely present in his mind in the form of a pyramid. The Remove was at the top of the pyramid, with the other Forms down below somewhere; and the pyramid's very topmost stone was William George Bunter. The distribution would begin at the top, of course, and those at the top—the topmost stone especially—would get the biggest share. The crowd below might be jolly thankful if they got anything. But if Bunter had his way they

would have precious little to be thankful for!

In all Greyfriars there was not another fellow foolish enough to give such a scheme more than a passing thought. Skinner and Stott and Snoop and Fish—and not they alone—would have welcomed it. But they knew better than to hope for it.

But Bunter hoped it might be managed somehow. If only it could be so worked that the rest should ask for what he wanted, believing themselves asking for something quite different, and should not know enough to claim what had been given them!

That, or something like that, was Bunter's foolish dream. He did not see as yet how it was to be realised; but he lived in hopes of finding a way.

Meanwhile, discussions were going on in some Forms, and in others fellows were preparing to act without discussing the matter with anyone.

Loder meant to act alone. For him to talk the project over with others of the Sixth would mean Wingate's going to the Head—or the rejection of the scheme. The Sixth would not choose Loder as their spokesman.

Coker had talked the project over with some of the Fifth, but to no avail. So Coker was going alone.

But Hobson had consulted some of his Form, and he and Hoskins had appointed themselves a delegation. And Temple had harangued the Upper Fourth, with the result that he and Dabney and Fry had been chosen to lay the scheme before the Head. And Wharton and his chums had talked it over, and Wharton and Bob Cherry were to go and explain the plan to Dr. Locke.

And, partly through Bunter's being busy buying half-a-sovereign's worth of indigestion, none of the Forms was aware what any other Form was doing.

Hobson and Hoskins happened to be first in the field.

The time chosen was after afternoon classes, when the Head preferred to receive anyone who wanted to see him. Mr. Hacker's watch was a minute or two fast, and the Shell were out of their Form-room before anyone else.

The delegates made their way to the Head's private quarters, and Hobson tapped at the study door.

No answer came. "Better wait," said Hoskins, who was rather a nervous person, like most musical geniuses. "He may not be in yet. With the Sixth, very likely."

"I shall tap again," said Hobson. And he did so.

But still there was no reply from within.

Two or three minutes more they waited. Then footsteps were heard approaching.

"Here he is!" said Hobson.

"It doesn't sound much like the Head," replied Hoskins doubtfully.

The next moment Coker appeared.

He glared at them.

"What are you chaps doing here?" he snorted.

"What's that to do with you?" snorted Hobson.

They did not look pleasant or friendly as they faced one another.

"I say, no rot here, you know!" pleaded Hoskins. "The old boy will be frightfully annoyed if—"

"There isn't going to be any rot!" snapped Coker. "I'll see about that. I know very well what you chaps have come for, and you can leave the matter in my hands—as a senior, you know."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" retorted Hobson. "Leave anything in your silly hands? Not jolly well likely! Why,

you couldn't drive a nail into a board without smashing your thumb! You couldn't scrape your silly face, that's got as much hair on it as an apple, without cutting it!"

"You—you— Oh, if I didn't remember where I am I'd slay you, Hobson!"

"Forget it, and get on with the slaying!" snarled Hobson.

Coker reached out a hand and seized the nose of Hobson between thumb and forefinger. Hobson clenched his hand and let drive full at the nose of Coker.

Coker hurt Hobson—in mind, if not much in body. Hobson hurt Coker both in mind and body.

"Yoop!" howled Coker, and grabbed Hobson in a bearlike hug.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the merry row?" asked the cheerful voice of Bob Cherry. Bob and Wharton had just appeared.

"Stop it, you asses!" said Harry, in much lower tones. "You'll have Mrs. Locke hear you. This sort of thing won't do here!"

Hobson and Coker let each other go. They would far rather have faced the Head's wrath than Mrs. Locke's shocked surprise.

But Coker did not subside.

"Clear off!" he snorted. "There's no need for you fags to come putting your oars in! I've just explained to Hobson that I'm willing to represent the Shell—"

"Yes; we saw you explaining," said Bob, with a grin.

"And as you don't know what we have come for you can't very well represent us," added Wharton.

"Don't be a young idiot! I know perfectly well what you want. It's about that prize gadget."

"Prize which?" inquired Bob, looking bewildered.

"Gadget—wheeze, suggestion, whatever you like to call it," said Coker impatiently. "Can't you understand English?"

"Is that English? I thought it was Eskimo," Bob answered.

"You're not representing us, anyway, Coker!" said Harry firmly.

"Oh, ain't I? I tell you —"

"Shush! Here's the Head!" Hoskins warned them.

But it was not the Head. It was Gerald Loder.

Nobody there liked Loder; but nobody there feared him.

"What's this crowd doing here?" the prefect asked snappishly. "The best thing you can do is to get out of this. I've important business with the Head, and he will be here directly."

It did not occur to anyone that Loder's business was the same as theirs. But it did not occur to anyone to clear out at Loder's bidding, either.

As he stood glaring at them the crowd received an addition. Temple & Co. arrived.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Head Is Not Pleased!

AND next moment the Head appeared upon the scene.

He came whisking along in his gown, with the hand of his little daughter Molly in his. He was smiling at something the child had said; but the smile faded from his face as he saw the waiting crowd.

It really amounted to a crowd by this time. One each from the Fifth and the Sixth, two each from the Remove and the Shell, and three from the Upper Fourth made nine.

At first glance the Head, seeing Loder, quite naturally thought that the

perfect had brought the rest along to prefer some complaint against them all. The sight of the great Coker should have disabused him of this notion. But somehow it failed to do so, though Coker would have been hurt and surprised had he known that.

Dr. Locke was very far from being in the best of health. He had borne many troubles in his time. Just now no special worry was occupying his mind. But he felt worn and older than his years, and there were times when he wondered whether he had not better retire from his post and seek the rest he had so well earned.

"Go to your mother, Molly," he said. "There is business for me to attend to, it seems."

"Oh, don't cane any of them, dad!" whispered the small girl. "Unless it's Loder, because I don't like him. Don't cane Wharton, or Bob, or Temple, please, dad!"

"I hope that I shall not have to cane anyone, little sweetheart," replied the Head gently.

Molly ran off.

The Head spoke to none of the crowd. His hand was upon the knob of the door. Then, still under the impression that Loder had brought the rest along, he said wearily:

"Come in, all of you."

"But, sir—"

Loder began a protest. Loder conceived that his position as a prefect should give him a right to speak first. And he did not want to speak in the presence of that crowd.

But Coker interrupted Loder. Coker was very much like the average upholder of the Rights of Man. He believed that one man was as good as another—and a jolly sight better! The superior type where all were equal was, of course, Horace Coker. Why should Loder get a chance before him, just because Loder was in the Sixth? And why should not he—Coker—have his chance before Hobson, who was only in the Shell?

"I was here before Loder, sir!" said Coker.

"Oh! You are not— But never mind that! I take it that you have some complaint to lay, Loder?"

"Not exactly that, sir," said Loder.

"I think I am entitled to claim a—er—an audience before Loder, as I was here first," Coker said.

"But you were not here first!" spoke up Hobson. "Hoskins and I came before anyone else!"

The Head looked from one to another of the crowd in some natural bewilderment.

"Then you were not brought here by Loder, Hobson?"

"Nothing of the sort, sir! I should decline—I mean—er—nothing of the sort, sir!"

"Did you bring any of these boys, Loder?"

"No, sir. I came entirely on my own account."

"Then I take it that your business with me is private and personal? In that case—"

Loder would have said "Yes" had he dared. But his business was not private. Unless it concerned the whole school, it was nothing. The Head would not be at all impressed by the willingness of Gerald Loder to give up prizes that there was not the smallest likelihood of Gerald Loder's winning.

"Not exactly that, sir," he said, very deferentially.

"Have any of you private business with me? Have you all come on the same errand, or—"

"I come in the name of the Fifth, sir, to propose—"

"Cherry and I have been chosen by the Remove, sir—"

"Hoskins and I represent the Shell, sir—"

"We, sir, are from the Upper Fourth, and—"

The Head raised his hand.

"I can make nothing of what you wish to tell me if you all talk at once," he said. "But I begin to perceive that you are deputations from the Forms of the Upper and Middle School, waiting upon me for some purpose which you evidently regard as important. What is that purpose?"

"The Remove think—"

"I consider, sir, that it would be a good thing if—"

"It is the opinion of the Upper Fourth—"

"And the Shell, sir! We're senior to the Upper—"

"Be silent, and let me speak to Dr. Locke!" rapped out Loder.

"You, Loder, appear on behalf of the Sixth, I take it?"

Loder hesitated. The Sixth might repudiate him—he knew that. Besides, admitting that he represented the Form would take away from the personal credit he wanted to gain.

"Not precisely, sir. I have an idea of my own to propose," he said, hurrying to speak lest Coker should step into the gap left by his pause. "It has occurred to me that at a time like this it would be an evidence of good feeling on the part of Greyfriars if certificates were substituted for the usual expensive book prizes—"

So far Loder was allowed to get, because until he had said so much no one was quite sure on what errand he had come. But now that they knew, not even their awe of the Head prevented their howling him down.

Who was Loder, the most unpopular of all the Greyfriars prefects, a fellow who never ran straight, that he should coolly annex their scheme? It was their scheme—well, Wharton certainly had been the first to mention it—but anyway, it was much more their scheme than Loder's. And they had no notion of standing by and letting Loder take all the credit. No one knew, even at least, no one there knew—how Loder had got hold of it; and assuredly no one gave him credit for having thought it out himself.

"And the money sent—"

"I'm willing, sir, and I'm sure all the Fifth—"

"It's being done at other schools, you knew, sir, and—"

"We thought you would not mind our mentioning—"

"Silence!" said the Head sternly.

The eager voices died away. Some of the delegates shuffled uneasily. Hoskins and Dabney wished they had not come. Loder's face was very discontented, and Coker's classic countenance flared with wrath. Why could not the rest let Coker expound?

"I understand now for what you have come," said the Head. "What I fail completely to understand is the manner of your coming. You are evidently in no sense a joint delegation. Some of you" he glanced at Loder in a way that pleased the rest—"appear to represent no one but yourselves. None of you has yet presented the necessary credentials. This is a matter that concerns the whole school, and if I agreed to the course proposed it would only be if the school in general gave me a mandate for it. I do not hold out for unanimous agreement, for I recognise the fact that there might possibly be some selfish obstruction which it would be my duty to disregard. But I must insist that any request of this sort should

be properly preferred, and I think that any deputation sent to me should include the captain of the school and the head of the Form next to his—the Fifth. Loder, can you claim to speak with Wingate's sanction?"

"I did not seek it, sir," replied the prefect sullenly. "The idea occurred to me."

"That is enough! It shows little judgment on your part to come to me thus. No, do not go! Coker, did Blundell know of your coming?"

"I don't see what Blundell's got to do with it—at least, not any more than I have sir. I—"

"Enough! You, again, only represent yourself! Hobson?"

"I talked it over with several of the fellows, sir."

"Not with the whole Form?"

"Well, no, sir! Not with the whole Form. I'm the skipper of my Form, sir!"

"Yes. So far, your right is better than either Coker's or Loder's. But you are not ruler, except in a very limited and constitutional sense. Temple?"

"The Form appointed us, sir!" said Temple eagerly. "We held a meeting about it."

"That is somewhat better. Wharton?"

"It was the same with us, sir."

"So far, good! Did either of you, mention the matter to Wingate?"

Harry and Temple looked at one another. They could guess what was coming.

"No, sir!" they answered together.

"I will not ask you why you did not. I give you credit for having intelligence enough to perceive now that that was your proper course. But, as representing your Forms, you have naturally brought with you signed requests from the majority of these Forms?"

The elegant Cecil Reginald left Harry to reply to this.

"We didn't think of that, sir," confessed the Remove captain.

"But we could get it all right, sir!" added Bob Cherry.

"Did you ever hear of the nine tailors of Tooley Street, who presented a petition to the King, in which they spoke of themselves as the people of England?" asked the Head, with unusual sarcasm.

"I do not wish to hurt your feelings. The project is quite a worthy one. It has my complete sympathy. But it must be presented to me in due form, and preferably by the captains of all the Forms concurring, though I do not insist upon that. You can go!"

"Will you hear me, sir?" asked Loder, frowning.

"You can go, Loder!" snapped the Head.

Loder strode off in a black rage. He had been snubbed before fellows junior to him, fellows he counted his enemies. It did not make it any the easier to bear that the snub had been most thoroughly deserved.

Coker was in much the same boat. But Coker had acted with far more honest intentions. And to be a witness of the snubbing of Loder was some comfort to the great Horace.

As for the rest of them, though all felt crestfallen, they found very considerable comfort in Loder's defeat.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Petition!

"YOU were silly young asses not to mention it to me before you went to the Head!" said Wingate candidly. "But it's quite a good notion, and I don't really mind much. We'd better have a school meeting about it, I think. I'll call one."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 499.

"Thanks, Wingate!" said Harry Wharton. And he and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent departed.

They had only just had time to get clear when Temple, Dabney, and Fry appeared.

"We've come——"

"I've eyes!" snapped Wingate. "And I've business to attend to just now. I see you've come. Get on to the rest of it!"

"If you want to hear, Wingate——"

"Ass! That ain't the way to talk to him!" muttered Fry in the ear of his chief.

"I don't!" said Wingate. "But I'll spare you two minutes."

And he took out his watch.

Temple began to explain.

"Oh, that's enough!" said Wingate, cutting him short. "Some of the Remove kids have been here about it. Good scheme—quite good! Glad to know it has your august approval, Temple. But I won't detain you to talk it over. Ta-ta!"

Temple opened his mouth to protest, but Dabney poked an elbow into his ribs.

The trio went out. Dabney and Fry were more or less satisfied; but the lofty Temple was very much otherwise.

"Wingate might have been civil," he growled resentfully. "An' I don't see playin' second fiddle to those fags like this. It's lettin' the Form down!"

"If you hadn't taken so much time changing your collar and tie——"

"I don't wear my collars a week, Fry!"

"Hallo, Hobby! Anything on?" inquired Dabney.

"I'm going to see Wingate, that's all," replied Hobson.

"And enough, too!" said Fry cryptically. "Go on, fair youth!"

Hobson went on. He came out of Wingate's study less than forty seconds later with a ruddy and scowling face.

Wingate had asked him whether all the silly idiots in the school, after being dressed down by the Head, were now minded to do what they would have known they ought to do in the first place if only there had been a pennyworth of sense among them. Hobson had waited for no more; but the slam he gave the door as he retreated sounded like a bomb explosion.

Coker brushed past him, with nose in the air. The scowl faded from the face of Hobson. Hobson grinned. He did not lack a sense of humour.

"Well, Coker?"

Wingate's greeting was rather more brusque than Coker considered proper. But Coker did not let that fact influence him.

He said half a dozen words.

Wingate said two.

"Get out!" he snapped.

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Coker.

"Do you want me to shout at you?"

"No. In fact, I decline to be shouted at, Wingate! I consider——"

"Go and do it somewhere else! Hallo, Blundell! If you've come about this noble, self-sacrificing wheeze—though I'm hanged if my imagination is vivid enough to figure Coker getting within a hundred miles of a prize!"

"I haven't," said Blundell. "It's about the match on Saturday. The other dodge is all right; but it ain't worth all this fuss."

"Oh!" Wingate seemed relieved. "As you haven't come about it, we may as well talk it over—after the cricket, of course. You're concerned. Farewell, Coker!"

"I'm much more concerned than Blundell is!" snorted Coker.

"You look more than concerned—"

positively furious, in fact!" remarked Blundell.

"Oh, you shut up, Blundell!"

"Blundell's skipper of the Fifth, I believe, Coker?"

"Yes; but I ought to be!"

"Better go and tell the Head so, or get your Aunt Judith to tell him! They say he takes some notice of her."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blundell.

Coker looked from Wingate to Blundell, and back again, with a glance of concentrated fury. Then Coker stalked out.

Hobson had slammed the door mightily, but Coker's slam came near to bringing it off its hinges.

"Poor old Coker! Well-meaning old ass!" said Wingate.

"Ought to be muzzled," replied Blundell. "But, never mind him. I came to suggest that Vernon-Smith might be given a show in the team, old chap. He's in ripping form, and for some reason or other the Remove aren't playing him."

"H'm! I'll think it over, Blundell. It's an idea. And, with one or two of ours crooked, it might answer. Now, about this prize bizney. The scheme's quite all right. Wharton first proposed it, I understand, and his head's screwed on all serene. Don't you think we might draft some sort of petition to the Head for all the fellows to sign. No one will mind our taking the matter into our hands except Loder, and he doesn't count for much."

"You forget Coker!" said Blundell, grinning.

"Coker doesn't count for anything. I'll call in Courtney and North and Gwynne. Five of us will be enough, unless you want Bland."

"Oh, Bland won't care! He's like me—agrees with the scheme, but doesn't see the use of getting excited about it."

So four of the Sixth and the Fifth Form skipper drew up the form necessary, and actually did it without serious disagreement or a solitary exchange of left-handed compliments, which certainly would not have been the case had the matter been left to the Shell, the Upper Fourth, and the Remove.

A school meeting was called for that evening. Some of the fellows in the Forms which were certainly not senior, but which did not think themselves junior, said it was all rot for the opinion of the fag tribe to be asked at all. But the fag tribe did not see it that way, and they cheered Wingate's brief speech until they were hoarse. Even those who had hoped to take home prizes cheered, as ready to make the sacrifice as any of their elders.

"As the scheme seems to have been first mooted by Wharton of the Remove," said Wingate, "I should like to propose that he act as secretary. It means work, for he will have to get the petition typed out, and take round the sheets for signature. But I dare say others will help him. Temple and Hobson and Coker

will naturally be on, in their Forms, and aid may be found in other Forms."

"Hanged if I'm goin' to play lackey to Wharton!" growled Temple.

"I don't much mind, Wingate," said Hobson, "though I think——"

"Glad to hear it!" chirruped Bob Cherry, behind him. "Keep on thinking, Hobby! Some of us fancied you might make a start one day."

"There's no need to drag Wharton in, Wingate!" hooted Coker. "If I take a hand I shall naturally expect——"

The rest of what Coker meant to say was drowned by a mighty shout.

North arose from his seat on the dais.

"I second Wingate's proposition," he said. "Wharton's quite the right sort, and he deserves some recognition of his being first in the field."

There was some opposition when a show of hands was asked for.

Skinner & Co. opposed, out of pure cussedness, and Temple & Co. and Coker from very much the same motive. But seniors for the most part, the Middle School generally, and all of the fags, were in warm agreement.

So the rough draft of the petition was handed over to Harry Wharton.

"I'll get Mr. Quelch to lend me his typer, Wingate," said Harry. "Thanks for what you said—and you, too, North. I don't want any particular credit; but I should like to have a hand in the work, I'll own."

Bunter sidled up to Wharton as they went out.

"I say, Wharton, I'll help you!" he said generously.

"Thanks, tubby. But what for? There's no cash in this, you know; and it isn't a picnic."

"There might be cash in it, though," replied the Owl, lowering his voice cautiously. "I've got a dodge!"

"Take it out and bury it, then!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I wanted to propose something at the meeting, only that ass Squiff put his arm round my neck and wouldn't let me speak!"

"All the way round?" gasped Wharton. "What an arm!"

"And what a neck!" said Squiff, beside them.

"I won't say another word, Wharton!" howled Bunter.

"Thanks, porpoise!" said Harry.

But while Harry Wharton was busily clicking away on the typewriter in Mr. Quelch's study, Bunter sat by himself in a secluded corner of the crypt and did some hard thinking.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Scheme!

"**H**ERE you are, tubby! Place your illustrious signature there, after Bolsover's," said Peter Todd.

There was already quite a row of names on the sheet which Peter indicated. Even Skinner & Co. had signed, grumbling that they did not agree, nevertheless. Though it was hard to see what it mattered to Skinner & Co., who were not likely to receive certificates instead of prizes, since prizes did not come their way. Fish had signed, too. He said he supposed it was up to him now that the war was being directed from Washington. But Bunter had only just come in.

"What's it about?" asked the Owl, sniffing.

"The prize bizney, of course," replied Hazeldene.

Bunter turned the paper over and over in his grubby hands.

"This don't say anything about it," he said. "How do I know I sha'n't be signing away my rights?"

*Eat less
Bread*

"That's all right, Bunter. You haven't got any rights," Bulstrode said soothingly. "What rights can a prize pig expect to have?"

"Oh, rot! I ain't going to sign. For all I know Wharton may wangle in something that I don't agree with at all. He could do it, and all you idiots who have signed would be done down. You don't catch me like that!"

Peter Todd looked at the Owl narrowly. He felt a trifle suspicious. Bunter was apt to give himself away to a keen observer who knew him well.

Peter did not know what was in Bunter's obtuse mind. But it was tolerably certain that it was something in the way of a wangle. For if Bunter suggested the possibility of Harry's wangling, it was only because the notion of doing so had occurred to him.

Bunter was very like the Huns, who, having made up their minds to do something more than usually atrocious, pave the way by accusing the wicked British of having done that very thing.

But to no one except to Peter Todd did this occur.

"There's something in what the fat beast says," remarked Skinner, always glad of anything out of which he could raise a sneer at Harry Wharton's expense. "I don't see just what Mr. Magnificent Managing Wharton, whom our noble skipper trusts so fully, can do. But I wouldn't trust him not to do it!"

None of the Famous Five chanced to be there; but Wharton did not lack defenders of his good name.

"See this, Skinner?" said Rake, thrusting a fist within an inch of Skinner's prominent nose.

"Yes. Take it away and wash it!" snarled the end of the Remove.

"We'll take you out and bump you if you ain't careful," Russell told him.

"Well, I sha'n't sign till I see what I'm putting my name to," said Bunter.

"You heard the thing read out," Tom Brown told him.

"I heard something read out," replied the Owl. "It may have been something I should fancy signing to, or it may not. And what Wharton puts in front of all these signatures may be what you fellows think, or, again, it may not. Understand, I'm not saying anything against Wharton. But I ain't obliged to sign, and I don't mean to."

And Bunter rolled away. No one chased him. It was not really a matter of great importance whether Bunter's autograph adorned the petition or not.

Bunter rolled away to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage. He did not want to see either Wharton or Nugent. It was something else he wanted. Somehow, that refusal to sign had crystallised his vague notions.

"I don't see why I shouldn't," he murmured to himself. "No one will ever be able to prove that Wharton didn't do it. Besides, the fellows ought to be pleased. Some of them will be pleased. Skinner will, I'm sure. And the Head ain't likely to look at it very closely. He knows all about it already."

He tapped at the door of No. 1. No one answered. The inference was that no one was within.

Very carefully and quietly he opened the door. Not wide, only far enough to let his fat anatomy through.

He turned the key in the lock. It was rather a risky thing to do, for it was sure to cause suspicion if Frank or Harry came along. But he did not think of that.

Then he began a search.

It did not last long. There was no particular reason why Wharton should hide the neatly-typed petition. Perhaps the asking fellows to sign without seeing it was rather a departure from ordinary

methods; but everyone knew what the matter in hand was, and no one had objected until Bunter did so.

Harry's notion had been to keep the petition itself clean. He had not had time to make a copy for each Form.

Bunter's eyes gleamed as he looked over it.

It would be quite easy, he thought, to carry out the plan now full-formed in his mind. Only an obtuse mind would have dreamed of success. But Bunter's was that kind of mind. He imagined the Head as giving his consent without doing more than glance at the petition, and being bound thereafter by his consent thus given. And if the Head was annoyed, his annoyance would be with Wharton, not with Bunter, of course. How should he think of Bunter?

The Owl was folding the paper to put it in his pocket when the handle of the door turned.

"Why, it's locked!" said Wharton's voice. "Are you there, Franky?"

"Yes!" replied Bunter, thrusting the petition under an exercise-book.

The voice sounded like Nugent's.

"What have you locked yourself in for?" asked Wharton.

"I haven't," said Frank Nugent, at his elbow.

"My hat! It sounded like you, Frank!"

"Must be Bunter," returned Frank.

Bunter heard that, and acted upon the impulse of the moment. He unlocked the door.

"Someone locked me in, Wharton," he explained.

"Yes; and someone's name was Bunter!" said Frank.

"It wasn't! I didn't!"

"Then how does the key come to be inside?" snapped Harry.

"I—I—"

Bunter stared at the key helplessly.

"Oh, bump the fat cad!" growled Johnny Bull, who had just come up.

"Let's see what he's been after first," Harry said. "Hold him while I look, Johnny."

"I—I never touched anything! There ain't anything in the cupboard worth—Ow! Yarooogh!"

The cupboard showed no sign of having been tampered with. But Wharton and Nugent very naturally supposed that that was only because the Owl had not been given time enough.

A bumping would do him no harm, anyway. So bumped he was.

He rolled disconsolately away. But he brightened up as he thought of the measure of success he had achieved. He knew where the typescript was now, and it would be quite easy for him to get it when he needed it.

That must be at night, and after Mr. Quelch had retired to rest.

"And I don't care a scrap if the Head does notice," muttered the fat schemer. "Wharton will catch it for trying to work the dodge. No one can possibly think it was me. And it will serve Wharton jolly well right! I hope he gets birched for it!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Scheme That Slipped Up!

"THE porpoise needs keeping an eye on," said Peter Todd to Harry Wharton before bedtime that night. "He's up to some sly game!"

"We caught him locked up in our study to-day," replied Harry.

"H'm!" said Peter thoughtfully.

"Not that that goes for anything, of course. He meant to raid the cupboard."

"I wouldn't be so sure," said Peter. "Do you know that he refused to sign the petition?"

"No. What's it matter?"

"Nothing at all, Wharton, as far as his signature is concerned. But he said things that made me feel a bit suspicious—though I don't quite know what of. Never mind, I'll watch him. Got the thing pretty nearly through now?"

"Yes. All the signature sheets are in except the Upper Fourth, and I'm just going along to get that. The Head will have it to-morrow. Why, Toddy, I thought you weren't much interested!"

"Oh, I'm interested in the scheme all right; but I don't mind owning that I'm more interested in my porpoise. He ain't exactly a credit to No. 7, but he pays for studying."

Wharton did not agree. He expressed himself as quite fed-up with Bunter.

The Owl went about during the rest of that day with a fat smirk on his face. He thought his scheme no end great. Even if it did not succeed, he stood in no danger—as he saw things.

But he was leaving Peter Todd out of account.

Peter noticed that Bunter popped into bed without fully disrobing that night. If it had been a winter night Peter would not have been surprised; left to his own devices, the Owl would have been quite capable of going to bed dressed, if he left cold. But the night was hot.

Toddy was a light sleeper. Bunter was not. The snoring of the Owl was for Peter a sign that he could afford to doze off himself, making up his mind as he dozed off that a cessation of that trumpet sound was to be for him a signal to awaken.

It did not act quite that way. But when Peter Todd did wake, he remembered at once that last thought in his mind before he slept; and he realised that the snoring had ceased.

A moment later he knew that Bunter's bed was empty.

A glance at his watch by the carefully-shielded light of a match showed him that it was half-past eleven. No one else was absent from the dormitory, which made it plain that Bunter had not gone on a gay-dog expedition. He would not have gone alone.

Very softly and quickly Peter drew on his clothes and stole downstairs. He had thought at first of waking Wharton; but that scarcely seemed necessary—at least, until he was sure what the Owl was doing.

Peter made for the Remove study passage. This was only a guess; but it turned out a good one. Before he was half-way along it he heard the noise of laboured breath. He drew up to the wall, and in the gloom Bunter rolled past him.

He had come from Study No. 1. So far Peter had guessed aright. But he failed to guess where the Owl was going.

Not upstairs again, it appeared.

"My hat! He's making for Quelch's study!" said Peter Todd to himself.

It was even so. Bunter had a little typing job to do, and it was not quite the sort of thing for which he cared to ask the Form-master's leave. So he had waited till a time when he felt sure that Mr. Quelch would have gone to bed.

His shadower followed. The door of the master's study was shut when he reached it; but from underneath it a thin streak of light showed.

Peter hesitated a moment. Then he did something that did not at all suit his tastes. He looked through the keyhole. For the time being he was justified in considering himself as a detective; and, anyway, there was no great harm in turning Bunter's methods against Bunter.

The Owl sat at Mr. Quelch's table. In front of him was the typewriter, and by the typewriter he had laid down several sheets of paper.

Peter Todd's eyes were unusually keen, and they saw that the topmost sheet of

paper was covered with signatures. For some unknown reason of his own Bunter was engaged in a fakement with the petition!

He did not seem to find it easy. He sat with his head propped up by both hands, evidently in deep thought.

Then he began to mutter, and some words came brokenly to Peter.

"Better write it out before . . . type it . . . silly asses . . . but I don't suppose the Head . . . look . . . here goes!"

He took a pen, and began to scrawl something on a loose sheet.

Peter Todd slipped away from the door and upstairs. Bunter was safe for the next twenty minutes at least, he considered, and he was not so greedy that he desired to keep all the fun to himself.

He woke Wharton, and Harry woke the rest of the Famous Five. Then Squiff sat up, and asked what was going on, and Squiff insisted on bringing in Tom Brown and Delarey. Vernon-Smith added himself to the party, and Newland also came.

They stole downstairs to the Form-master's study, and one by one they took a squint through the keyhole.

Bunter was hard at work, and perspiring over it. Probably Bunter had over-rated his own powers as a corrector of draft petitions.

But by-and-by he seemed to have got more satisfied. The typewriter began to click irregularly.

"The fat rotter!" gasped Wharton.

"What's he up to?" asked Bob. "I can't think for the life of me."

"Wangling the petition! I don't know what he's putting into it, but—"

"I rather think I can guess," said Peter Todd. "Do you remember that wild notion of his about the money for the prizes being divided up? He's putting that in, I'll bet; and he counts on the screed going in to the Head with all our signatures asking for something that we'd never have dreamed of!"

"My hat! If that doesn't out-Bunter Bunter!" said the Bounder, with a grin.

"But the thing's imposse. We'd have been sure to notice," objected Frank Nugent.

"It isn't such a dead cert. He would have put the papers back, and very likely neither Wharton nor Wingate would have glanced again at the petition, having made up their minds it was all right," Tom Brown said.

"But the Head would have noticed, you bet!" Delarey said.

"Cave! That sounds like Quelch's tread!" Squiff warned them.

They melted away into the gloom of the passage, holding their breaths for the moment.

The Form-master did not see or hear them. He strode straight to the door of his study, and flung it open angrily.

"Oooh!"

"Bunter, what are you doing here? From my bed-room I saw the lighted window: but—"

"Oooh! You stut-stut-startled me, sir!"

The Owl's tone was quite reproachful. He evidently considered it very unkind of Mr. Quelch to startle him in this way.

The fellows in the passage only wished they could see his face. He was fairly caught out, and the general opinion was that it served him jolly well right!

But it was still a matter of doubt whether the full extent of his iniquity would become known to Mr. Quelch, and the juniors waited in eager suspense for the master's next words.

"What are you doing here?"

"Only practising on the typer, sir. I—I thought—"

"You should have thought twice, Bunter! That might have enabled you to realise that what you are doing is at once a breach of the school rules and an act of almost unparalleled impudence!"

"Oh, really, sir, I assure you—"

"What is this, Bunter?"

"Quelch's getting warm!" murmured Squiff to Tom Brown.

"The—the list of signatures for the petition to the Head, sir. I was—I was just going to copy them out, sir."

"And what is that paper in the machine? That does not look like a list of signatures!"

"Hot now!" said Squiff.

"That! It's pup-pup-private, sir! Oh, don't look, sir!"

"I shall certainly insist upon looking, Bunter! It is plain to me that you are engaged in something in the nature of trickery."

"I—I— Oh, really, sir! I hope you know me too well—"

"I regret to say that I do know you too well, Bunter. What! What! Surely—"

"It doesn't mean anything at all, sir, really! I was only just practising!"

"And we beg that you will be pleased—you need practice in spelling, Bunter—to ordain that the money for the prizes—more usually spelled p-r-i-z-e-s. Bunter—shall be ekwally—you should look up that word in the dictionary—or otherwise divided among the various Forms, so that each boy may give to any fund that seems best to him."

Mr. Quelch's tone as he read was very sarcastic. He ceased now, and the hidden juniors, who had heard every

word, nudged one another in the dark. Not one among them felt the slightest sympathy with the suffering Bunter.

"What did you intend to do with this absurd suggestion, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir. Don't I tell you I was only practising on the typer? I wish you'd believe me, sir!"

Bunter's voice rose almost to a wail.

"I do not believe you, Bunter! Although it seems almost incredible that even you should be so grossly foolish as to fancy that Dr. Locke would be swayed by your ridiculous suggestion, it is my firm conviction that your errand here is the almost criminal one of attempting to foist upon your schoolfellows by trickery your own selfish idea. You will take your own copy of the petition, Bunter—I see that you were just finishing it. You will look up each word in the dictionary, and make sure of its spelling. And you will then write it out five hundred times. But that alone is not sufficient punishment for your wicked absurdity. Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Ow-yow! Ow! Don't, sir! I—I never will again, sir!"

"I hope not, Bunter! The other hand!"

Swish, swish, swish!

Bunter was getting disconsolately into bed, the tears running down his fat cheeks, when he was surprised to see a dozen or so fellows enter the dormitory.

"Is that how you like it done, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, you naughty, naughty porpoise!" said Peter Todd reproachfully.

"I'll lend you my die, tubby," Frank Nugent said.

It was a long time before Bunter heard the last of that. Gradually the story leaked out of how he had told Loder and subbed upon him; told Coker, told Hobson—of how, in short, he had been on the make all through the piece.

"Profits—ten bob—thousands of lines, and three on each hand, Bunter!" said Peter Todd. "Was it really worth while?"

Bunter thought it wasn't.

The Head said "Yes," of course. What he would have said if Bunter's amended petition had gone in no one ever knew. Mr. Quelch did not tell him the story of that midnight typing practice.

(Don't miss "THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR!"

By Frank Richards.

Our old friend Bob Cherry is the schoolboy inventor, and his device is one for the improvement of telephonic communications at the Front. Bob does not strike one, at first thoughts, as the likeliest of the Remove to become an inventor. But these things don't go by probabilities, and we all know that, without reckoning himself as a clever fellow, Bob has no lack of brains for practical purposes.

An accident in connection with the invention keeps the Famous Five away from Greyfriars for a time, and in Harry Wharton's absence Bolsover major, Wun Lung, and Bunter all aspire to the office of acting-

captain of the Remove. Bolsover has a kind of notion of right divine. Wun Lung bases his claim on the great schemes he has evolved for the defeat of Germany in the field. But Bunter seeks the suffrage of the electors as an inventor!

What he has "invented" you will learn next week, and also what chanced to him in consequence of the claim he put forward.

THE NEW GEM SERIAL.

Not many of you, I think, will miss next Wednesday's "Gem," for most of the readers of this paper are also firm supporters of our companion journal.

But none of you—not a single one—ought to miss it, for in that number appears the first instalment of a great new serial story:

"THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA,"

which will appeal to you all, dealing as it does with Highcliffe firstly, Cliff House secondly, and Greyfriars thirdly.

The twins are Philip and Philippa Derwent, known at home as Flip and Flap.

You will like them both, I am sure. You will also like Cocky, their white cockatoo, whose part in the story is by no means an unimportant one.

You will meet again Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar, Ponsonby, and the rest of the nuts; Marjorie Hazeldene, Phyllis Howell, and Clara Trevelyn, and the Famous Five of Greyfriars. Bunter may roll on to the stage now and then. Johnny Goggs makes a brief appearance in the first two instalments, and will reappear later.

I want you to tell your friends about it. The complete stories in the "Gem" were never better. This week's

"WALKER!"

is a really great humorous yarn, which might have been called "The Vanishing Junior!" or "The Mystery of Albert Adolphus!" but which I called "Walker!" in preference to either of these titles, or to two which Mr. Clifford had suggested, because—well, because I thought "Walker!" was the right name for it. Read and see!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 35.—RICHARD RUSSELL.

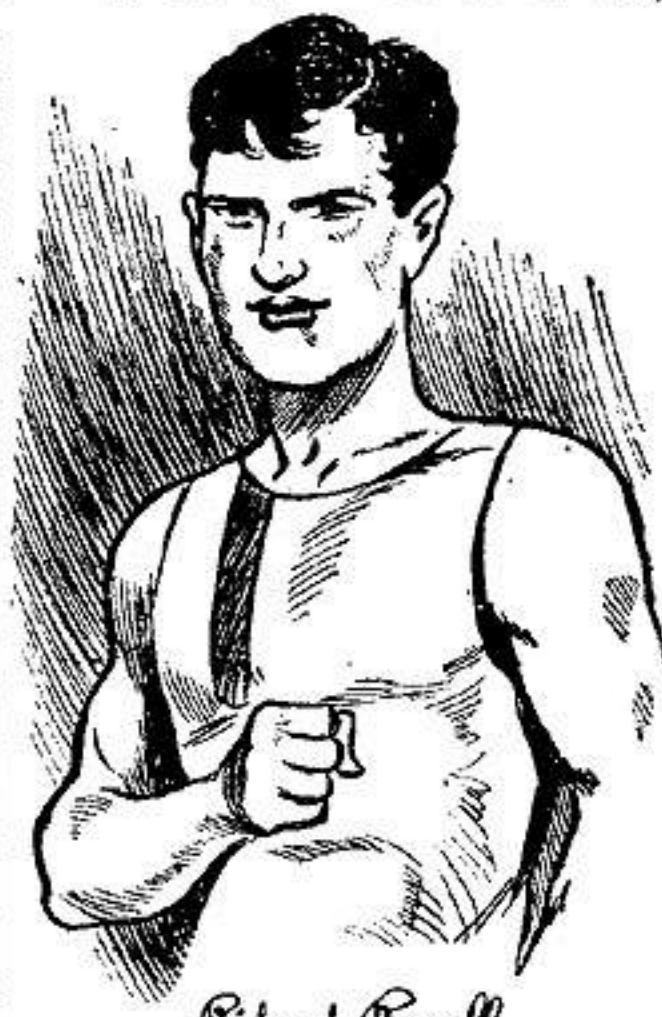
IT may be news to some readers that Dick Russell—like Desmond, Ogilvy, Prelude, Trevor, Morgan, and one or two others who have not often played parts of importance in the stories—has figured in the Remove ever since the coming of Harry Wharton, with which the series began.

Not till some time after that, however, do we find him emerging from the crowd to do anything which marks him out from the rest. One remembers him in that swindling sweep-stake which Carberry of the Sixth got up; but merely as taking a ticket and being disgusted—which was the common plight. Then one comes across him as one of Wharton's supporters in the contest with Bulstrode for the captaincy.

A quiet and rather reserved fellow on the whole, a good second-rate performer in the playing-fields, a member of the Amateur Dramatic Society, but not distinguished there, considered by the Form a trifle close, though his people are said to be well off—that is Dick Russell as one finds him at the time when he first comes really into notice.

Russell had entered for the Founder's £100 Prize, and Frank Nugent, visiting him to collect a games subscription, told him that such scholarship aids should be left to those who really needed them. Then Russell confided to Frank the fact that he was one of the needy ones; his people were not at all wealthy, and keeping him at Greyfriars had become difficult since certain losses his father had had. Bunter heard, and spread the tale; and that led to a row between Bolsover and Russell. Russell was knocked down, and Bolsover kicked him—after which Bob Cherry attended to Bolsover!

Russell's father came along to see him, but would not come up to the school. Father and son were agreed that nothing but the winning of the prize could justify Dick's staying on, and the boy remarked that he wished he knew what was likely to be in the papers set. The remark was quite innocent; but the quickness with which Mr. Russell jumped upon the idea tended to impress the matter upon his son's mind. And then temptation came! Mr. Quelch gave up time to coach Russell; and alone in the master's study the boy had a chance to look at what he imagined to be one of the papers set—the Latin one. The temptation was too great. He did little more than glance at it; but the consciousness of having cheated preyed upon his mind until he went to Mr. Quelch, and, without explaining why, told him he felt he could not sit for the exam. Mr. Quelch, naturally annoyed after all the trouble he had taken, wrote to Mr. Russell, who came down. To his father Dick dared not explain; but after he had gone he screwed together all his courage, and went to the Head. And then it turned out



Richard Russell

that he had seen only an old paper of some previous exam! His relief was tremendous, and the Head found it easy to overlook his fault in consideration of the moral courage he had shown in confessing.

In the troubled times of the feud between Wharton and Vernon-Smith Russell fell away from Harry, and was persuaded by Bulstrode to resign from the Remove team. But this defection did not last long; and Russell has been, on the whole, a pretty consistent supporter of the Remove skipper. He was one of those who sympathised strongly with Bob Cherry at the time of the barring-out.

The fact that Russell has more than average moral courage has been noted. Yet he failed badly once in the matter of physical courage, and was written down a coward by practically all his Form-fellows. His help was wanted against Highcliffe odds; but he bolted. He was sent to Coventry for a week; but Wharton and his chums protected him from being ragged. Skinner's sneers hit him hard, for Dick Russell is a sensitive fellow. But

the Caterpillar brought him comfort. He went to the Caterpillar's help when De Courcy was attacked by a tramp who meant robbery; and the Highcliffe dandy perceived that the fellow who would do this was not really a funk, though his pluck may have failed him once. Through De Courcy's kindly offices Russell had lessons from a professional boxing trainer, and the upshot of it was that he proved to the Remove that the right stuff was in him, and in the enforced absence of Bob Cherry boxed for the junior section of Greyfriars in the Public Schools Competition at Aldershot. And he won honour for Greyfriars, too, and came back to give Bolsover a long-deferred licking!

Dick Russell fairly found his feet then. He had gained self-confidence, and had lost his exaggerated sensitiveness, upon learning that he was as well able as another fellow to hold his own with the rest. In some ways he has been a different fellow since—has come out of his shell more, taking a more prominent part in the doings of the Form. Lately we have seen him playing on Bolsover an elaborate jape in connection with the Remove election. The Dick Russell of old would scarcely have carried through that jape, one fancies.

He was in the limelight when he boxed with Talbot in the contest which followed the "forbidden match," and though the St. Jim's man won, there was no shadow of disgrace in Russell's defeat, for he fought a good fight.

But the best of him has still to be told. His moral courage was very conspicuously shown when he sent the whole school to Coventry rather than desert his best chum, Donald Ogilvy, when the Scot was in heavy disgrace.

That was Russell's own way of putting it. He was told that he would be sent to Coventry if he persisted in clinging to Ogilvy; and he replied that it was quite unnecessary—he had already made up his mind to send the school there till it came to its senses!

Not when things seemed blackest—not when Ogilvy himself could not explain, though he denied—was Dick Russell's faith shaken. He stood firm; and it was largely through him that the truth was brought to light at last, and Bunter shown to have been guilty of the crime for which the Scots junior had suffered the penalty. In the course of his work in putting matters right Russell came hard up against Temple & Co.; and it was due to a row in their study, from which Russell retired leaving Temple, Dabney, and Fry in considerable confusion, that the missing banknote which had been at the bottom of the whole business was discovered.

In some ways Russell is not unlike Harry Wharton. In some ways he bears resemblance to Frank Nugent. All three are sensitive, apt to be too easily cast down because they feel slights and misunderstandings more than the average fellow, but with pluck that does not allow them to remain cast down too long. But neither Russell nor Nugent has the same strength of character as Wharton, or the talent for leadership which he possesses.

Extracts from "The Greyfriars Herald."

"LOVE!"

By MONTAGONIO LOWTHERONIO.

AHEM! As a matter of fact, this title has scarcely anything to do with the story—though, of course, you must judge that for yourselves. Certainly, there is no love lost between the various parties concerned.

But I have introduced no heroines and heroes with romantic names, such as Margarine and Thomas, so our elderly maiden readers must bear their disappointment manfully.

I have really intended the title for a blind. The nom-de-plume also is another cunning dodge, the author being—prepare yourself, as writers of cheap novelettes say, for the great surprise—none other than Montague Lowtheron-me!

You see, there are some hopeless idiots who won't read a story when it is written by

me. But, with a title like this, some of you will read it just to see what bosh it is; and others—our numerous elderly maiden readers afore-mentioned—will read it for romantic reasons. So, now that I have got you all to start it, you may as well finish it. Twig?

Early the other morning, before brekker, I was taking Tom and Manners down to the River Ryll for a swim—just as a keeper might take a couple of lunatics for an amble round the asylum—when what should we see before us but an inverted boat walking on four legs in the same direction!

From the big blobs of ink on the bags it wore, and the whiff of kippers which surrounded it, we easily deduced that the bags belonged to a couple of fags supporting it. D'Arcy minor and Frayne, in all probability,

Blending beautifully with the odour of kippers was the perfume of bad eggs. The boat had obviously been made by themselves out of a few egg-boxes—most decidedly egg-boxes.

"They look overdone," I murmured sympathetically. "Let's give them a helping hand."

Tom Merry and Manners evidently thought I was potty. Anyway, that's nothing to what I thought of them.

I rushed to the boat, and pushed it on in front of me. Muffled howls of astonishment and annoyance came from the interior of the uncanny construction, but the fags had to run. They couldn't dodge from under it for fear of dropping it upon themselves.

In this cheery manner we sped to the

(Continued on page 16.)

"LOVE!"

(Continued from page 15.)

river-bank, and just as they thought I was going to tinkle them in the river, I swerved to the left. Then up the towing-path we cantered gaily, and when the kids were about done up I playfully knocked the boat to one side, with the result that all three—Wally, Frayne, and the boat—sprawled upon the grass.

"Ow!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

And with these expressions of gratitude in my ears I hurried back to my worthy partners, who were grinning broadly.

"Before we plunge," I said, "we must prepare against r-r-revenge!"

"Eh?"

"I mean that if we leave our togs here, those two faglets will very likely snap them up and make off with them."

So we hid our togs in the low foliage of a tree, and donned our swimming-costumes.

"But, not to disappoint them," I said considerably, "behold what we have here!"

Three piles of togs! The fact that they belonged to Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger, who were swimming farther down the river, did not really worry us much.

Just at that point the Ryll, you know, is divided—like old Caesar's "Omnia Gallia"—into three parts—one for the seniors, one for the juniors, and one for the little boy that cries; I mean, a shallow portion for fags who are learning to swim.

We placed Cutts & Co.'s togs where ours should have been, and then took a header apiece.

Glory! You can't imagine how invigorating

an early-morning dip is until you've tried it, though it may be a trifle cold.

When we reached the opposite bank we clambered on shore.

"Here they come!" I said, as Wally and Frayne hove in sight. "Get behind that tree, and I'll hide behind this."

A second later two wild howls rent the air. They came from Thomas and Manners.

"Yaroo!"

"Yarooooh!"

"Why, what's the matter?" I asked.

"Matter!" they both howled, as they danced about in quite a masterly fashion.

"There's a thousand nettles behind that tree!" groaned Tom.

I nodded.

"Yes; that's why I pointed to it," I said soothingly. "I wanted to know if they were nettles or ferns."

They were so far from being pacified by this that they seemed inclined to go for me.

"Pax! Here come Wally and Frayne! Get behind that tree again—or, if you like," I added quickly, as they showed signs of turbulence, "take cover behind the one next to it."

It was a grand old English oak they chose, and, believe me or call me a fibber, its width was great enough to hide both pairs of feet!

The two fags were beginning to examine the togs.

"Crikey! What monstrous bags!" we heard Wally, who was holding a can of red paint in his hand, exclaim. "Never thought those asses were so giddy long in the legs!"

"Go it, Wally! Make 'em look pretty!" urged Frayne.

And forthwith Wally commenced to paint artistic red stripes across the legs of the trousers.

After the jackets had shared the same fate the pair of young rascals retired to a distance to await events.

Cutts and Gilmore and St. Leger came out

of the water in high spirits, and shook themselves on the bank.

"Some morning!" said Cutts enthusiastically, glancing to where his clothes should have been, and letting his eyes wander along the bank until they rested upon the gaudily-striped garments.

"Most delightful!" agreed Gilmore, looking casually in the same direction.

The change was gradual, but complete. And, what with the expressions on the faces of these three, and the smiles of Tommy and Manners, poor old Phœbus seemed inclined to set again, though he had only just risen.

The bellow Cutts & Co. emitted might almost have been heard at the source of the Ryll.

"It's those cackling young sweeps!" roared Cutts, glaring at the fags.

Wally and Frayne, however, were not cackling. They were glancing at each other in a very sickly way.

"I'll—I'll—" Cutts picked up an oar, and the two fags fled, with the three seniors after them, saying things neither proper nor polite.

Unluckily, or luckily—it's the point of view that decides—Cutts stumbled over an out-cropping root, and Gilmore ran full-tilt into the half-raised oar, uttering a mighty "U-u-ugh!"

St. Leger tried vainly to swerve, and then sat negligently—but forcibly—down upon them both.

Then they sat up, rubbed their injured parts, and gazed at the specks in the distance which represented Wally and Frayne. And then they said, with one accord—

But as it's no good doing things by halves, and Tommy won't allow me another column or two—will you, Thomas?—I'll end, as I began, with "Ahem!"

[J'ai fini (French).—M. L.]

[Bout time! (English).—T. M.]

GREYFRIARS AT THE FRONT!

III. Peter Petrifies the Prussians.

:: :: ::

By FRANK NUGENT.

PRIVATE PETER TODD reluctantly put away his Trench Edition of "The Technique of Territorial Barter," and gazed along the trench.

They had had a quiet day, and Peter had been improving the shining hour by mugging up legal jargon. That is Peter's hobby. He hopes to be an eminent K.C., or something like that, one of these days.

Various things which he observed, however, warned him that there was likely to be something doing very shortly, and Peter did not wish the learned pages of the "T. of T. B." to be sullied by the footprints of energetic and impetuous Tommies. So he put the book in the bookcase. [Trenches don't have bookcases.—Ed. This one did, anyway. I'm telling the story!—F.N.]

Shortly after came the call to prepare for action. And then, while there was a lull in the artillery preparation, they were off—over the trench, and across the strip of "No Man's Land" in the direction of the Huns.

Peter Todd was amongst the first. He dashed along unscathed, chasing Huns hither and thither. The first two lines were emptied, and that much ground gained.

Peter still pushed on, and, jumping into a trench which was apparently deserted, he turned a corner. And then it was that he found he had come on alone—and there were five armed Huns facing him.

"Surrender!" he shouted.

But before he could raise his rifle one of the Hun guns was pointed at his head, and the other Huns started advancing towards him. What was Toddy to do?

[Oh, ask me another!—Ed.]

Well, Toddy has always been gifted with what they call the "gift of the gab." And now he made good use of it.

"That gun," said Peter, "is useless."

"Why?"

"It was made in Germany. German things are rottenly made. It won't go off—at least, it won't hit me." It might blow back and knock out your brains—if any. You'll do better to lower it, and not run the risk."

The Hun lowered his gun. But the others continued to come on.

"That ground," Peter said, shaking his head, "is decidedly risky. Your comrades have been expecting us to advance, and they have mined a lot of the trenches to give us a hot reception. They would not trouble to

warn you, of course. In addition, there are several 'blind' bombs lying about. They will explode if you touch them!"

The Huns hesitated. Peter shook his finger at them wisely.

"You may not realise it," he continued, "but I am a man of remarkable strength. I have wrestled with fifteen men at once—five necks were broken, and the remainder were stunned. I forget how many died."

The horrible confession evidently unnerved the Huns.

"Ve—ve don't believe it!" stammered one.

"You may not," said Peter Todd calmly.

"But do you imagine, for one instant, that I

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT!

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any news-rendor to get it from

Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
111, Rue Reamur,
PARIS.

should have entered this trench—alone and without any help at hand? Not at all. There are a hundred men at my call. I am only warning you. I wish to be kind to—to my prisoners!"

"Kamerad!" whispered the Hun who had not spoken before.

Peter Todd glanced calmly behind him. There was no help in sight. But, of course, the Huns did not know that. Toddy saw that he would have to go on telling the tale. He did not intend to be taken prisoner.

"As it's a secret," he pursued calmly, "I really ought not to tell you. But we've mined this place. The mine is not going up for a few minutes yet. But it is ready. That, of course, is why I did not fire. It might accidentally be exploded."

The Huns groaned in chorus.

Peter Todd took off his helmet, and picked some of the shrapnel out. Shrapnel will collect in these shrapnel helmets.

"You have waited too long to escape now," he said. "You will have to stay here, because

your own men have retired, and they would shoot you if you appeared in the open—either taking you for our men, or for spies. You had better put your guns down!"

"But—"

"Do as I tell you," said Toddy. "I don't want to call my men, because they are rather an excitable lot, and they would want to bayonet you. That is all. Of course, I will if you like—"

"Kamerad! Ve surrender!"

The Huns laid down their arms.

"Now form up in single rank," said Toddy, as he collected the rifles. "Quick march!"

"Ve won't!" said one of the Huns sullenly.

"Ve'll get shot if we do!"

"You'll get shot if you don't!" snapped Peter Todd. "As a matter of fact, my men are farther away than I thought, and I don't want to lose any time in joining them. Now then, quick march, you chumps! That's right!"

The Huns marched!

NOTICES.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED BY:

Miss Lily Lamb, 220, Tempest Road, Dewsbury Road, Leeds, with a girl in Australia or Africa.

M. A. Farrow and A. D. Clark, Palm Place, Hackney, South Australia, with readers anywhere, 15-16.

R. T. Harvey, c/o Mr. W. J. Hounslow, Torrensville, South Australia, with readers of about 16 anywhere.

Cloete van Vuuren, High Street, Oudtshoorn, Cape Province, South Africa, with boy readers.

R. C. Freema, c/o Messrs. Rutherford & Connell, Box 35, Palmerston North, New Zealand, with readers in the United Kingdom and foreign countries, with a view to exchanging stamps.

Thos. Bray, 10, Derrynane Road, Dublin, wants readers and contributors for an amateur journal dealing with hobbies, clubs, etc. Specimen copy sent for 1d.