

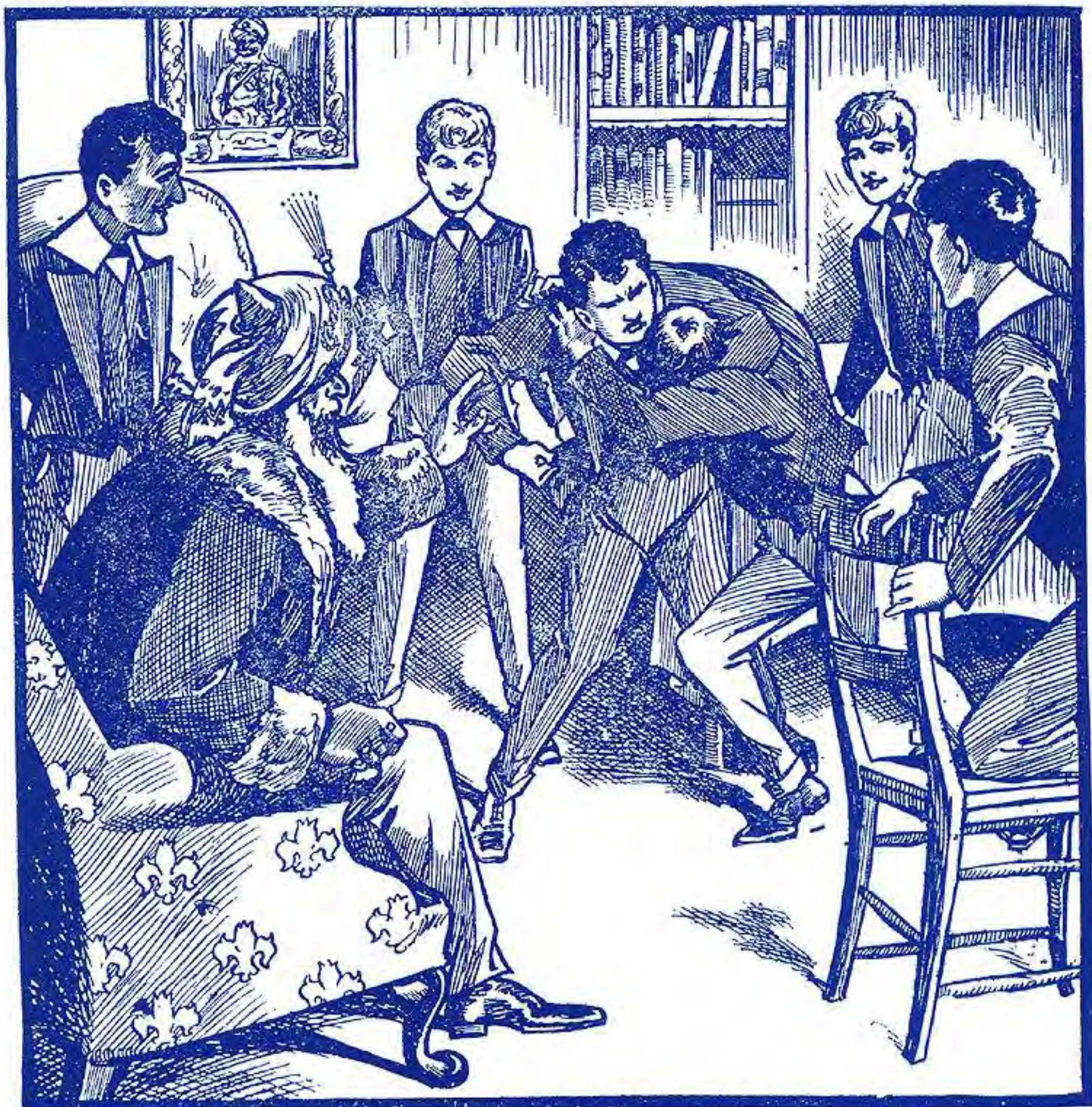
LOOKING AFTER INKY!

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



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JOHNNY ON THE JOB!

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

LOOKING AFTER INKY!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Down on His Luck!

OUT with it!" Four voices spoke at once. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the member of the Remove Form at Greyfriars who hailed from India's coral strand, was leaning against one of the old elms in the quad.

His eyes were fixed upon the ground, his dusky brow was corrugated with thought.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull, had been looking for their dusky chum; and they had found him—thus!

They surrounded him, and spoke, as with one voice, and with great emphasis. "Out with it!"

Hurree Singh coloured under his dusky skin as he looked up.

"My esteemed chums—" he murmured.

"Out with it!" roared Bob Cherry.

"My worthy and ridiculous Bob—"

"Out with it!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Don't play the giddy ox! Get it off your chest, Inky!"

"There is nothing on my esteemed chest, my worthy Bull!"

"Now, then, Inky!" said Harry Wharton. "That won't do! There's something the matter with you, and you're going to confess! Out with it!"

"For a whole day," said Bob Cherry warmly, "you've been looking like a bear with a sore head. You've been dodging your pals!"

"Sneaking away by yourself!" said Nugent.

"Moaning!" said Bob.

"Looking as if you've got all the troubles of the universe on your inky shoulders!" said Nugent.

"Something's up!" said Wharton. "Now, then, Inky, if anything's wrong, tell us what it is, and we'll set it right!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave his friends an affectionate look. But he did not speak.

"Confide it to your Uncle Robert!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly.

No reply.

"Look here, Inky, is anything the matter?" demanded Wharton.

"There is a certain modicum of matterfulness!" said Hurree Singh, in his weird and wonderful English—the result of careful instruction by the best native masters in Bhanipur.

"What is it?"

Inky did not speak.

"Can't you tell us?" asked Bob.

"The preferfulness not to tell is great. The still tongue saves the cracked pitcher from going longest to the well, as the English proverb says."

"Good old English proverb!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I wonder what your English would have been like, Inky, if you'd learned under the worst native masters in Bhanipur, instead of the best?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Inky did not smile. It was evident that the Nabob of Bhanipur had some trouble on his mind, and equally evident that he did not wish to confide it to his devoted chums.

"Better make a clean breast of it, Inky!" urged Frank Nugent. "Five heads are thicker than one, you know!"

"We want to help you out," said Harry.

"The helpfulness is not possible," said Hurree Singh sadly. "The troublefulness has descended like the bolting from the blue. I cannot impart the trouble—some botherfulness to my esteemed chums. It is necessary to indulge in the excessive thinkfulness, and for that reason I have avoided the entertaining and ridiculous society of my ludicrous chums."

"Well, your ludicrous chums don't intend to allow you to think alonefully, with a face like a bear with a soreful head!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You can impartfully confide the terrific secretfulness to your ridiculous pals!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his head.

"The excusefulness is great," he said apologetically. "But in the present dubious and problematic frame of mind I should like to meander alonefully."

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh proceeded to meander alonefully, leaving his chums staring after him in dismay and concern.

"What on earth's the matter with him?" said Bob Cherry blankly.

"Must be something!" Johnny Bull sagely remarked.

Wharton wrinkled his brow.

"There's something up, that's a cert!" he said. "Something or somebody is troubling Inky. He ought to tell us."

"Hallo, you fellows!" Wibley of the Remove came up. "I've been hunting for you. Don't you know it's time for rehearsal?"

"Oh, bother rehearsal!"

"Thinking of footer?" asked Wibley sarcastically. "Got no time for amateur theatricals—what? Look here, if you fellows don't buck up, I'll cut you out of the cast of the 'Pearl of India'! After I've taken the trouble to write the whole dashed play, and get all the things for making up as a rajah, I can't even get you to turn out for rehearsals! Do you want me to give Bunter your bit, Wharton?"

"Oh, rats! Have you noticed anything up with Inky?" asked Harry.

"Yes; he's a silly ass!" said Wibley warmly. "I told him the rehearsal was for six, and the chump said the rehearsalfulness could be blowed! Nice set of actors I've got, I must say! If it wasn't for his complexion I'd cut Inky out of the cast! Look here, never mind Inky! Come on!"

"Oh, bother!" said Bob Cherry crossly.

"Inky seems to be down on his luck, and he won't say why!"

"Bless Inky!" growled Wibley. "Inky can go and eat coke!"

"Why, you ass—"

"I'm fed up with Inky! I'm thinking about the rehearsal!" said Wibley. "Inky be blowed! Look here— Oh, leggo, you asses!"

The chums of the Remove collared the indignant Wibley, and sat him down in the quad with considerable force. The enthusiastic chief of the Remove Dramatic Society had tackled them at the wrong moment. They were worried about their chum, and rehearsals of amateur plays were far from their thoughts.

"Yow!" gasped Wibley, as he sat down. "Yooop! You rotters! I'll give Bunter your part, Wharton! I'll give Fishy yours, Cherry— Oh, my hat!"

Bump!

Wibley sat down again, and the juniors left him sitting, gasping spasmodically. Harry Wharton & Co., having thus disposed of their worrying manager, walked away to the School House, whither Hurree Singh had gone.

The Nabob of Bhanipur had gone up to his study, No. 13 in the Remove passage. Mark Linley and little Wun Lung, the Chinese, were there. Both of them looked very seriously at the nabob. Nearly all the Remove had noticed, that day, that the usually sunny and cheery nabob was down in the deepest dumps.

Mark was about to speak, but Hurree Singh's look was not inviting, and he went out of the study.

Little Wun Lung watched Inky for some minutes with his sleepy almond eyes. The nabob, unheeding the little Celestial, moved restlessly about the study. Wun Lung spoke suddenly.

"Hullee Singh in trouble?"

The nabob looked at him.

"Chinese solly!" murmured Wun Lung.

"Inkee stoney, plaps? Chinese lendee money."

"The borrowfulness is not possible, when the payfulness would be the uncertain problem," he replied.

"Allee samee, Chinese lendee."

"The thankfulness is terrific, my esteemed friend, but the answer is in the esteemed negative!"

Wun Lung nodded, and said no more. The door opened, and the Co. looked in.

"Coming to the rehearsal, Inky?" asked Wharton.

"I do not feel inclinefully fit for rehearsalfulness."

"Won't you tell us what's the trouble?"

"The disinclinefulness is great!"

"Fathead!" said Bob Cherry politely.

And the chums of the Remove went along to the box-room for the rehearsal of the "Pearl of India," the great original Eastern drama written by William Wibley of the Remove; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was left to his trouble—whatever it was.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Jam Wanted!

"O H, you've come!" said Wibley sarcastically.

"Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry.

"For goodness' sake don't kick up a row here, Cherry——"

"You silly ass! I was singing!" said Bob indignantly.

"It sounded more like an air-raid warning to me!"

"Look here, Wibley, if you want a thick ear——"

"Order!" interjected Peter Todd.

"Thick ears are off, though thick heads seem as plentiful as ever. We've come here for a rehearsal, not a dog-fight!"

"Where's Inky?" demanded Wibley.

"He can't come," Wharton explained.

Wibley gave a snort.

"Can't come! Why, the silly chump? If he's not going to rehearse, I'll put in somebody else as the Jam of Jubjub."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, clear off, Bunter!"

Instead of clearing off, Billy Bunter rolled in.

"Look here, Wibley, if Inky's slacking, you'll want a chap to take the Jam's part in the play. You've said so yourself. Well, I'm your man."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Dramatic Society, and even Wibley grinned, cross as he was.

The Indian prince in the play was supposed to be a young, handsome fellow with a noble presence. Hurree Singh, with some artistic touches to make him look older, filled the part very well—his beautiful complexion being ready-made, so to speak. But the fattest junior at Greyfriars was not exactly suited for the part.

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly through his big spectacles at the hilarious company.

"Look here, you fellows, I'm blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! You want a fellow suited for the part—'tain't everybody who can play a prince. You want a chap with a figure—a presence——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A fellow who's something to look at on the stage," urged Bunter. "Inky standing out will really be a benefit to the cast—it gives you a chance of improving it, Wib. This may mean that the play will be a success—and you know what it's likely to be without me."

"Roll that barrel out, somebody!" said Wibley.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Dry up, Bunter!" urged Squiff.

"You've done your funny turn. Now take a back seat."

"Look here, Field——"

Squiff took Bunter by one fat ear and led him to the door. He deposited him outside, and closed the door.

"Now let's get on," he remarked.

"Can't get on without the Jam," said Wibley decidedly. "If Inky isn't going to take the role, I must fix on somebody else."

"Nobody else will do it as well as Inky," urged Wharton.

"But Inky's keeping out."

"He will come up to time all right. He's a bit worried now——"

"Blow his worries! I'm worried, too!" snapped the stage-manager. "I've got to coach a lot of goats into acting without making asses of themselves. I can't have the show mucked up because Inky's worried."

"But——"

"I'll go and talk to Inky," growled Wibley. "You fellows can get on mugging up your lines—you can do with it."

Wibley, in a state of great wrath, quitted the box-room, and hurried to

Study No. 13. It was really too bad, from Wib's point of view. Wib was a good-natured fellow, and he liked Hurree Singh, as most fellows did. But there were limits. Inky's private troubles couldn't be allowed to muck up the greatest performance ever planned by the Remove Dramatic Society. The "Pearl of India," written by William Wibley, was a corker; and the "Pearl of India" had got to be a success.

Wibley kicked open the door of No. 13, and marched in with a stormy face.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh was moving restlessly about the study, with a grim and gloomy brow. He glanced at Wibley with some annoyance. His reflections were apparently unpleasant; but he did not like the interruption.

"Rehearsal!" bawled Wibley.

"Oh, bother!"

"Are you coming?"

"No!"

"Look here, Inky, this won't do!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"You silly ass!" howled Wibley. "You—you jabberwock—you burbling bandersnatch! If you don't come to rehearsal, I shall cut you out of the cast!"

"My esteemed and fat-headed chum, I do not feel equal to the ludicrous actfulness. Perhaps it would be better to leave me out of the ridiculous cast. I offer you the resignfulness."

Wibley snorted.

It was really very trying.

Hurree Singh's rich complexion was generally a bar to his taking a prominent role in the Remove plays. On this occasion Wibley had been able to give him a fat part for once. It was too exasperating to have the fat part thrown back at him like this.

The excited stage-manager shook his fist at the nabob.

"You silly ass—after I've fairly written the play round you!" he hooted. "Why, you get as big a part as the Jam as I do as the rajah! You're the noble young prince backing up the British Empire, and I'm only a wicked old rajah under Hun influence. You kill me in the last act, to cheers. You get more than half the limelight. And now you want to resign! What's the matter with you, you fathead?"

"The worryfulness on my esteemed mind is great."

"Chuck it off, then!"

"The chuckfulness is not possible."

"Look here, Inky, if you resign now, it's a go. Do you mean it? I warn you that I shall fill your place."

"All screcnful."

"Oh, rats!"

Wibley departed, slamming the study door after him with a terrific slam. He returned to the box-room with a heightened colour.

"Inky coming?" asked Rake.

"Inky's resigned his part!" snorted Wibley.

"Resigned!" exclaimed Wharton & Co., with one voice.

"Yes, the ass! Yes, the chump! Nice fix it leaves me in! Who's going to fill the part I've written round him?" hooted Wibley. "I could take it myself, but I'm the rajah. I've got to find somebody else! Yah!"

"Well, there's lots of chaps," said Vernon-Smith. "I'll take the part myself if you like."

"Thanks! I don't want to play a prince who smokes cigarettes and invites people to games of banker!" growled Wibley.

Vernon-Smith flushed.

"Oh, draw it mild, Wib!" said Harry Wharton sharply.

"Oh, rats! Anyway, Smithy is a dashed jemindar, and he can't be a jemindar and a Jam, too!" growled Wibley. "Besides, I want a real nigger.

Why couldn't there be another nigger at Greyfriars, blow it? I suppose St. Jim's is too far off for me to borrow their nigger?"

"Ha, ha! A little bit!"

"There's an Indian at Redclyffe," said Frank Nugent. "He's a friend of Hurree Singh's, too. He might take it on. Redclyffe's not so very far."

Wibley brightened up.

"Good egg! I never thought of him. What's the fellow's name?"

"Kuri Din."

"Yes, that's it—Kuri Din. Any of you chaps know him?"

"Haven't seen the chap."

"Well, I can bike over and jaw to him," said Wibley. "He's bound to be complimented by being asked to take a part. I'll look him over, and see whether he can act. If he can, he'll fill the bill. It's a jolly good idea! Now, let's get on with the rehearsal. That stool is the prince, for this rehearsal."

"Ha, ha!"

"Play up, you chumps!"

The "chumps" played up, and they got through the "Pearl of India" with more or less success, Wibley assuming the stage-manager's privilege of slanging them all the time. Wibley himself, as the rajah, was certainly the best of the bunch. When Wib had his war-paint on he was quite impossible to recognise as a Remove fellow. He lived and moved and breathed his part.

Harry Wharton had formerly been head of the junior dramatic society, but he had cheerfully resigned that distinguished post to Wibley when Wib came to Greyfriars. He freely admitted that Wib could play his head off, and could manage a company in a far more professional manner. And certainly Wibley had brought the junior actors up to a great pitch of excellence.

When the rehearsal ended Wib condescended to tell his company that they had done fairly well. Which was praise indeed from Wibley.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hurree Singh Has Another Engagement!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were considerably exercised in their minds the following day.

It was not the latest effort of the Remove Dramatic Society that troubled them, however. They were thinking of Hurree Singh.

The nabob was in trouble of some sort.

It was not apparently a trouble that he could confide to his chums, and that was one of the most puzzling circumstances.

What the trouble could be was a mystery. It could scarcely be a money trouble, for Inky had a handsome allowance. Besides, his chums were quite prepared to place their financial resources at his disposal if he said a word. But he did not say a word.

Inky had no vices. Fellows like Skinner and Snoop sometimes landed themselves into trouble through their shady pursuits. The Bounder, in his wild days, had often had trouble enough in that line. But Hurree Singh was not a fellow of that sort. It was impossible to suppose that he was in a bother through dealing with a bookmaker, as Smithy had been.

The nabob had become more quiet and reserved, and he had fallen into a way of avoiding his chums, partly because he did not want to throw a cloud over their cheerfulness, and partly because he did not want to be questioned.

His chums were puzzled and worried. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and a clear, cold day. Harry Wharton & Co. turned out to footer practice, but the dusky nabob declined to join them.

He did not feel inclined, he explained, for the football gamefulness.

When the practice was over, the Co. intended to bike over to Cliff House to tea with Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends. Inky was to be a member of the party. Harry Wharton ran down under the leafless elms in the quadrangle, and clapped him on the shoulder. "Time!" he said.

The nabob looked at him inquiringly. "Cliff House, you know," said Harry. "You're coming?"

Inky coloured under his dusky skin. "The forgetfulness was great!" he murmured.

"Well, now I've reminded you," said Harry. "Come and get out your jigger, old chap!"

"I—I'm not coming to Cliff House, my esteemed chum."

"Marjorie will miss you, Inky."

"The sorrowfulness is great!"

"Look here, Inky!" said Wharton seriously. "This won't do! You can't keep this up! You've resigned your part in the play. I suppose you'll be standing out of the footer next? You've got to buck up, you know!"

The nabob did not reply.

"Look here! Why can't you come over to Cliff House?" exclaimed Wharton.

"I have another engagefulness."

"You're engaged to mooch about the quad with your hands in your pockets!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I am going outfully."

Wharton looked at him sharply. Inky did not volunteer the information where he was going.

"Well, I've no right to ask you questions if you don't choose to answer!" said Harry, somewhat tartly. "Good-bye!"

He joined his chums, and they wheeled out their machines.

"Inky's not coming?" asked Hazeldene, who was in the party.

"No. He's off somewhere."

"He seems jolly queer lately."

"Yes, he does."

"The duffer!" said Hazel. "Marjorie wants to see him. He was teaching her some Indian words for her part in the play. That will have to be cut out now, and it would have been effective."

"Can't be helped!"

The five juniors wheeled out their machines. Wibley was in the bike-shed mending a puncture. His visit to Redclyffe School was to come off that afternoon. Harry Wharton & Co. mounted in the road, and pedalled away down the lane. They were not quite so cheerful as usual.

Hurree Singh's mysterious conduct weighed on their minds somewhat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Inky!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking back from the top of the hilly ascent some distance from the school.

The juniors looked round.

Hurree Singh, on his bicycle, was in view on the lower road, and as they glanced towards him he turned into Redclyffe Lane.

"And there's Wib!" said Nugent.

Wibley came pedalling up from the direction of Greyfriars, and he, too, turned into the Redclyffe Lane.

Wharton started a little.

"Is Inky going to Redclyffe?" he ejaculated.

"Might be. He knows a chap there," remarked Johnny Bull.

Wharton was very thoughtful as he rode on. He wondered, now, whether Inky's mysterious trouble was connected with the Indian junior at Redclyffe. He did not know Kuri Din, but he knew that Kuri Din was a rather reckless young bouncer, who had called on Hurree Singh once before to shoulder

the troubles he had brought upon himself.

Wharton wondered, but he dismissed the matter from his mind as the juniors arrived at Cliff House. They met three Highcliffe fellows there—Derwent and Tunstall and Merton—and they met them quite amicably. Marjorie and Phyllis and Miss Clara and Philippa Derwent gave them a cheery greeting, and at tea in the school-room Harry Wharton & Co. were quite cheery. But they did not quite forget Hurree Singh, and Wharton wondered several times what the Nabob of Bhanipur was doing at Redclyffe.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

At Redclyffe!

TING-TING-LING!

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked back as a bicycle-bell sounded loudly behind him on the Redclyffe Road. Wibley was coming on behind at a good speed.

He slacked down as he came level with the nabob.

"Hallo, Inky!"

"Hallo, my esteemed Wib!"

"Going to Redclyffe?" asked Wibley.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hesitated before replying; but the cheerful Wibley ran on without waiting for a reply.

"If you are, we'll ride together, my infant. I'm going there."

"You are going to Redclyffe?" ejaculated the nabob.

"You bet!"

"Oh! I—I was not awareful that you had esteemed friends at Redclyffe."

"I haven't," said Wibley cheerfully.

"Don't know a soul there, excepting the chaps I've happened to see at the matches. I don't know them, for that matter."

"Yet you are visiting them?"

"Not at all. I'm visiting your stove-polish pal, Kuri Din."

Hurree Singh started.

"But—but you do not know Kuri Din!" he exclaimed.

"Not a bit."

"Then—then why—"

"I'm going to introduce myself," explained Wibley. "I'm going to offer your place in the cast to Kuri Din, if he likes to take it. I want the genuine article, you know, and it must be a nigger—excuse me, I mean Indian!"

Hurree Singh looked troubled.

"Get a move on!" continued Wibley.

"I'd like your company, but I've got to get back to tea. What are you slacking for?"

"I do not feel inclined for the road-racefulness, my esteemed Wib."

"Then I'll leave you behind. Ta-ta!"

Wibley drove at his pedals, and shot ahead.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh followed him more slowly, with his brows knitted. For some reason, he did not seem pleased by the idea of the Greyfriars junior visiting Kuri Din at Redclyffe.

Wibley, who was thinking of nothing but his theatricals, did not even notice that the nabob was disturbed. He pedalled on rapidly, and Hurree Singh soon lost sight of him.

It was rather a long spin to Redclyffe, but Wibley covered it in good style, and he came up to the school gates with a rush.

He jumped off his bike, left it at the porter's lodge, and went in.

Fane, the junior skipper of Redclyffe, was in the Close, and Wibley walked towards him. He knew Fane slightly. Fane generally skippered the Redclyffe team in the junior matches with Greyfriars. Fane nodded to him.

"Good-afternoon!" said Wibley

cheerfully. "You've got a chap here named Kuri Din, haven't you?"

"That's so; in my Form."

"I want to see him. Is he anywhere about?"

Fane looked at him rather curiously.

"You're the chap he's expecting this afternoon, I suppose?" he said.

"I don't think I can be," smiled Wibley. "He doesn't know me."

"But you're from Greyfriars?"

"Oh, yes!"

"He's expecting a chap from Greyfriars," said the Redclyffe Fourth-Former. "He's been grouching about the chap being late, and I heard him. Look here, Wibley—I think your name's Wibley—"

"You've got it!"

"Well, I don't want to be personal," said Fane, in a quiet, deliberate way, "but if you've come over here for anything shady, it would be better for all concerned for you to get on your bike again!"

Wibley stared at him blankly.

"You cheeky ass!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean? Do I look shady?"

"Not at all. But I don't see what you've got to do with Kuri Din if you're not!" said Fane drily.

Wibley whistled.

"Oh, my hat! Is that the kind of merchant he is?" he ejaculated.

"He's not a bad sort, in his way, but he's a howling ass, and under anybody's thumb who chooses to put him there. I don't mind telling you that we ragged a chap from Highcliffe the other day—chap named Ponsonby—who came to see Kuri Din. They got playing banker for quids behind the chapel, and that's not good enough for Redclyffe. We licked Kuri Din with a cricket-stump, and ran Ponsonby out on his neck."

"Oh, my hat!" said Wibley. "Well, serve him right! But do I look as if I've come to play banker with your tame blackguard, you ass?"

"I was only giving you a tip," said Fane coolly. "Kuri Din doesn't seem to know what's expected of a chap in this school, and we're teaching him. No offence, you know; simply a friendly tip."

"I've come to talk amateur theatricals with him!" growled Wibley.

"Oh, all right! No harm in that. You'll find him by the fountain yonder, deep in the blues. I fancy his gee-gees have been coming in eleventh, to judge by his phizog."

"Blow him!" grunted Wibley. "He won't be of much use to me if that's the sort of dummy he is. But I may as well speak to him as I've come over."

He hurried towards the fountain, and found a dusky junior seated there on a bench. The Indian junior had his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a deep frown on his brow. He was watching the gates as if in expectation of an arrival. But Wibley's arrival was not what he expected, for he had made no movement when the Removite came in.

He glanced up in a surly way as Wibley stopped before him.

"Kuri Din?" asked Wibley.

The Indian nodded.

"I've come over to see you. My name's Wibley. I'm in the Remove at Greyfriars."

Kuri Din started.

"Oh! I understand! You know Hurree Singh. He's a friend of yours, I suppose?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Good!" said Kuri Din, in a tone of relief.

Wibley was puzzled. He did not see what his friendship with Hurree Singh had to do with the matter.

"Well, I've come over specially to see you, Kuri Din," he began. "I—"

Kuri Din jumped up. "Hush! We can't talk here. Come to my study!"

"Why can't we talk here?" "Hush! The fellows will hear!" muttered Kuri Din. "Come with me!"

He started for the School House as he spoke, and Wibley followed him, in a state of great astonishment. Wibley had no objection to all Redclyffe hearing what he had to say to Kuri Din.

However, he followed the Indian into the house and up the staircase. Kuri Din did not speak at once, but he seemed in a state of almost feverish excitement.

He threw open a door.

"This is my study," he said.

"But, I say—" "Go in—go in!" exclaimed Kuri Din hastily, as one or two fellows in the passage glanced at them.

Wibley entered the study, more amazed than ever, and Kuri Din followed him in and closed the door. Then he turned eagerly to the Greyfriars junior.

"You've got it?" he exclaimed.

"Got it!" repeated Wibley, wondering whether the excited Asiatic was quite in his right mind.

"Yes, yes! Give it to me! You've got the fifteen pounds, surely?"

"Fif-fifteen pounds!" stuttered Wibley.

"Yes, yes—quick!" Then the Indian's expression changed. "Oh! Do you mean to say you have not got it?"

Wibley only gasped. He couldn't do anything else.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Very Peculiar Interview!

WIBLEY fairly blinked at the Redclyffe fellow.

He was a perfect stranger to Kuri Din. He had come there to make his acquaintance, and talk amateur theatricals with him. And Kuri Din had taken him mysteriously to his study, and fired at him, as it were, a sudden demand for fifteen pounds! Fifteen pence was nearer the actual figure of William Wibley's financial resources, as a matter of fact. He blinked at the dusky junior, quite taken off his balance.

Kuri Din was watching his face eagerly, and with evident disappointment and chagrin.

"You haven't got it?" he muttered.

"You haven't got it, after all? Oh!"

"Did—did you say fifteen pounds?" stuttered Wibley at last.

"Yes, yes! That is the amount!"

"Are you potty?"

"What?"

"If you're not potty, what the merry dickens are you driving at?" exclaimed Wibley. "Do you think I'm the Bank of England paying you a visit?"

"You are from Greyfriars—"

"It's not a Greyfriars custom to carry fifteen pounds about to give to anybody who asks for it, that I know of."

"How much have you?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't you understand English?" snapped Kuri Din. "How much money have you?"

"Eh? About a bob or eighteen-pence!" gasped Wibley, astounded.

Kuri Din made a furious gesture.

"A shilling—eighteenpence!" he exclaimed. "Are you out of your senses? What is the use of that to me?"

"Blessed if I know! But I know I'm keeping it in my trousers-pocket!" said Wibley. "I know it's going to stay there! What the thunder do you mean by asking me for money?"

Kuri Din stared at him.

"You have brought me no money?"

"Of course I haven't!" shouted Wibley.

"Then why have you come?"

"My hat! I've come to tell you about a play we're getting up at Greyfriars—"

"A—a—a play?"

"Yes; the Remove Dramatic Society, you know," said Wibley more cordially, now he was on his favourite subject. "We're getting up a ripping play, the 'Pearl of India,' and Inky—I mean Hurree Singh—was going to take a part—"

"Oh, nonsense—nonsense!"

"What? It's jolly well not nonsense!" exclaimed Wibley warmly. "Hurree Singh has resigned his part, and I was thinking of offering it to you, if you can act, and would care to attend rehearsals."

"What?"

"It's a bit difficult at such a distance," said Wibley. "But I'd bike over here to give you coaching, and so on, and you could bike over to Greyfriars for the rehearsals. That's fair!"

"No message!" exclaimed Kuri Din.

"Certainly not!"

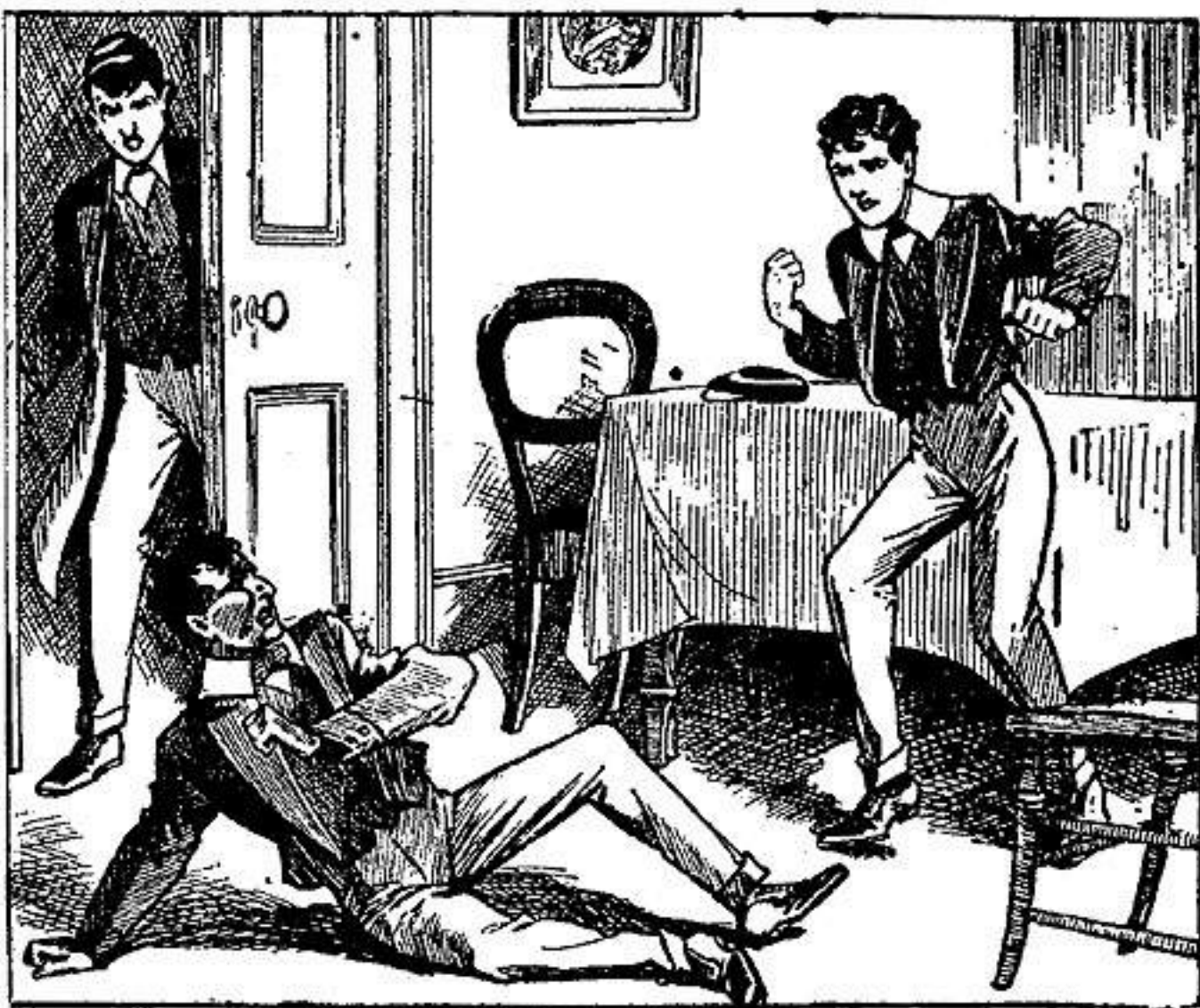
"Then why have you come, if you have not brought the money, or a message from Hurree Singh?" exclaimed Kuri Din.

Wibley understood at last. He would have understood before if his mind had not been filled with his own business to the exclusion of everything else.

"Why, you pink-eyed rabbit!" he exclaimed. "Is that what's the matter with poor old Inky? You've been sticking him for money, you toad, to spend on your dashed games of banker with Ponsonby! You rotter!"

"Why did you come here, then?" shouted Kuri Din. "Why have you come to see me, if you have not come from Hurree Singh?"

Wibley grinned. Kuri Din's mistake had been a natural one. He had been expecting Hurree Singh, and as a Greyfriars junior whom he did not know, a friend of Inky's, had come over specially to see him, he had concluded that it was a messenger from the nabob.



Wibley on the war-path! (See Chapter 5.)

"Are you out of your senses?"

Wibley snorted. It was not a polite question.

"If that means that you don't like the idea, you can say so, I suppose?" he exclaimed tartly. "The role won't go begging. I'd rather have an Indian for it, if he can act. But there's lots of fellows to take it on. And I shouldn't give it to you, either, unless you can fill the bill. You can bet on that! I should want to see you do some acting first, under my eye, to see how you shape. Have you done any amateur theatricals?"

Kuri Din was not even listening.

He strode about the study with angry, excited gestures, and finally turned to the Greyfriars junior again.

"Nonsense, nonsense! You did not come here to talk this foolishness to me, I suppose? What message did Hurree Singh send, if he has no money?"

"Hurree Singh?"

"Yes, yes. I suppose he has sent a message?"

"Not by me!"

"Oh, I catch on, my pippin!" said Wibley. "I passed Inky on the way here. So he's coming to see you, I suppose?"

Kuri Din's dusky face lighted up.

"Oh, he is coming! Good!"

"Not so jolly good!" grinned Wibley.

"I'll bet you ninepence to fourpence that Inky hasn't got the money; that's why he's been so down in the mouth. I jolly well hope he hasn't—I know that!"

"Oh, you are a fool! Why did you come here?"

"I've told you why I came here."

"Oh, fool, fool! To talk nonsense to me about childish games—"

Wibley fairly bristled with wrath.

"You confounded, cheeky, sneaking, gambling, rabbit-faced waster!" he shouted. "Childish games! My hat! Why, I wouldn't give you a part in my play now if you begged for it on your knees! I wouldn't have you found dead in my cast, you apology for a bunny rabbit! You sneaking, gambling toad—"

"Oh, hold your tongue, and get out!" napped Kuri Din.

Wibley was crimson with anger. His visit to Redclyffe could not be called a success in any way.

Kuri Din, angry and contemptuous, threw open the door.

"You have deceived me!" he exclaimed. "You pretended you came from Hurree Singh, and I supposed—"

"I didn't deceive you—you deceived yourself, you blackguardly worm!" shouted Wibley. "I thought you were a decent chap, or I wouldn't have come! You're a rotten gambler, sponging on a fellow whose boots you're not fit to black—that's what you are, you inky-faced worm!"

Kuri Din clenched his hand, and raised it. He didn't have time to use it. Wibley's fist landed on his nose, and he went backwards.

The Oriental collapsed on the study carpet with a yell, and Wibley, in towering wrath, fairly danced round him.

"Get up, you rotter! Get up, you worm! I'll lick you till you can't crawl, you apology for a polecat! Childish games—eh? I'll give you childish games! Not quite so childish as banker, you sneaking cad! Get up, and have some more!"

"Ow! Oh! Ah!"

"Get up, you crawling jabberwock—"

"My esteemed Wibley!"

Wibley spun round towards the door. Hurree Jamset Singh had arrived. The nabob looked into the study in amazement and dismay.

"Hallo, Inky!" said Wib, ceasing his warlike demonstrations all of a sudden.

"What is the matterfulness?"

"The matter is that your friend Kuri Din is a beastly blackguard, and you'd better let him alone, and come back to Greyfriars with me!" said Wibley. "He wants to stick you for fifteen quid, to play banker with Ponsonby of Highcliffe. Leave him alone, and come back with me, Inky!"

Hurree Singh shook his head.

"Oh, you're a silly ass!" snorted Wibley.

He strode out of the study, leaving Hurree Singh picking up his queer friend from the carpet. With a wrathful brow Wibley strode to his bicycle and mounted, and pedalled away from Redclyffe.

He had had a long ride for nothing, and his only consolation was that he had punched Kuri Din's nose. And he was really comforted by the reflection that he had punched it hard.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wibley Explains!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were pedalling home from Cliff House in the dusk when they came on Wibley of the Remove. Wibley had dismounted at the cross-roads to light his lamps.

He looked round at the cyclists.

"Hallo, you chaps! Slow down, and I'll come along with you."

"Right-ho!"

Wibley joined the bunch of cyclists on the road. They all wanted to know how he had fared in his quest of a new recruit for the "Pearl of India" cast.

"How did you get on with Inky's friend?" asked Wharton.

Wibley grunted.

"Rotten!"

"Isn't he taking it on?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"No fear! He didn't want to, for one

thing. He calls amateur theatricals a childish game!" said Wibley, breathing hard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at! I call it rotten cheek!"

"So it is," said Nugent, laughing.

"Then he won't do for the Jam?"

"I wouldn't have him at any price, anyway! He's a rotter!"

"Because he doesn't care for theatricals?" asked Johnny Bull, with a chuckle.

"No, ass! Because he's a sneaking cad. I'm jolly glad I punched his nose!"

"You punched Kuri Din's nose?" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"Yes, I did."

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Because he asked for it!"

"Dash it all, you needn't have gone over there for a row with a friend of Inky's!" said Johnny Bull gruffly.

"Precious friend for Inky!" snorted Wibley. "If Inky were my pal, as he is yours, I'd keep him away from that rotten cad, if I had to take him by the scruff of the neck!"

"Inky never sees him, or hardly ever," said Frank Nugent.

"Rot! He's there now."

"Oh! So old Inky was going to Redclyffe, after all?" said Harry.

"Yes, the ass!"

Wibley was about to say more, but he checked himself. He intended to acquaint Inky's chums with the matter, but he did not want to talk before Hazeldene. He did not speak again till the juniors arrived at Greyfriars.

Hazeldene went into the Common-room and the Co. up to the Remove-passage. Wibley followed the Co.

"Don't trot off, you chaps," he said, as Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were going on to their own studies. "I want to speak to you."

"Oh, give us a rest about rehearsals!" said Johnny Bull. "There's such a thing as getting fed up, Wib!"

"It isn't rehearsals this time, fat-head!"

"Then what is it?"

"Inky."

"Come into the study," said Wharton quietly.

The four chums and Wibley went into Study No. 1, and Wharton shut the door.

"Now go ahead, Wib!" said the captain of the Remove. "I can see that something's happened over at Redclyffe."

Wibley nodded.

"I think I ought to tell you chaps, as you're Inky's pals," he said. "I don't see standing by while a sneaking cad lands Inky into a heap of troubles!"

"Oh!" said Johnny Bull.

"I know that Kuri Din was in some shady sort of mess before," said Wharton. "He worried Inky to help him out. You remember Skinner saw the chap at the Cross Keys one day. That's the kind of fellow he is, I'm afraid. I can see now what Inky's been worrying about."

"Kuri Din, of course," said Bob, with a nod. "I never thought of the fellow; but I can see it now."

"Money wanted, I suppose?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Tell us all about it, Wib. You're bound to!"

"I think I'd better," said Wibley. "Inky's got to be got away from that shady cad. Then he'll come round and play up all right in the 'Pearl of India,' I hope—"

"Bother the 'Pearl of India'!" said Johnny Bull testily. "What about Inky?"

"Look here, Bull—"

"Get on, old chap!" said Wharton.

Wibley bestowed a sniff on Johnny Bull, and told his story. The four chums listened with expressive looks to his description of his meeting with Kuri Din, and what had transpired.

Johnny Bull made the first comment.

"I'm glad you punched his nose!" he remarked.

"Yes, that's all to the good!" agreed Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"We might really have guessed this," he said. "Fifteen quid, by Jove! What on earth has he been doing, to want such a sum as that?"

"Betting, of course."

"He can't owe so much as that," said Harry. "If it's Ponsonby and banker, Pon wouldn't play him on I O U's to that extent. Looks to me as if it isn't a debt at all, but money wanted to play with."

"The rotter!"

"No wonder Inky was upset. The cad cleared him out of money before," said Harry, frowning. "Blessed if I know why he sticks to him. He can't like him. Inky's too jolly soft and good-natured, and the rotter takes advantage of it!"

There was a snort from Johnny Bull.

"Inky's a silly ass! If he hands that hound fifteen pounds, I'll jolly well tell him what I think of him!"

"He can't. He hasn't got it, or anything like it!"

"He's been a bit hard up lately," said Bob Cherry reflectively. "I fancy I can guess where the money went now."

"Well, that's how the matter stands," said Wibley. "I thought you fellows ought to know. That leech is simply bleeding Inky for money, and spending it in gambling. You fellows ought to be able to put a stop to it!"

"We'll jolly well try."

"And if Inky chucks this rot off his mind he can take up his part again in the play," said Wibley. The "Pearl of India" was evidently the uppermost subject in William Wibley's mind. "We want that play to be a success, and to knock out Temple's rotten Fourth Form plays—"

"Oh, bother the 'Pearl of India'!" said Bob Cherry crossly.

"Eh?"

"Blow the 'Pearl of India,' if you like that better!"

"Oh, you're a silly ass!" said Wibley, and he quitted the study with a snort.

The chums of the Remove were left in a troubled frame of mind.

Hurree Singh, good-natured and easy-going to a fault, was evidently being victimised by the unscrupulous Kuri Din. The claims of friendship formed in early boyhood in India were being enforced, and the nabob was being saddled with his former friend's troubles. The juniors would not have minded that, if the troubles had been of a different nature. But for Inky to be called upon continually to make good the losses of a reckless and selfish gambler was not, as they expressed it, good enough.

They were troubled for Inky; and they were exasperated with him, too. There was a limit to easy-going good-nature.

In rather a grim mood they waited for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to come in. There was going to be some plain talk when he came.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Plain English!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH arrived just in time for calling over in Hall.

There was an unquiet expression on his face as his chums joined him in the corridor after roll-call.

He was aware that Wibley must have talked of the incident at Redclyffe, and he was anticipating a somewhat unpleasant interview with his friends.

"Come up to the study, Inky," said Harry.

"I think I will proceed to the Common-room, my esteemed chum."

"We want to speak to you."

"The speech is silvery, but the esteemed silence goes longest to the well, my worthy chum."

"Look here, you've got to come!" said Bob Cherry, taking the nabob's arm. "Are you going to walk, or be carried?"

"I shall not enjoy the terrific jawfulness."

"You're not expected to enjoy it," grunted Johnny Bull. "You're jolly well going to get it, all the same!"

"My esteemed chums—" murmured the nabob.

"Oh, come on!"

Hurree Singh had very little choice in the matter. His chums marched him up the staircase to the Remove passage, and Inky had to go.

He was looking very restive as he was taken into Study No. 1.

"Now, look here, Inky—" began Wharton.

"The dry-upfulness of my worthy friends would be the proper caper," suggested the nabob. "I can observefully see that the esteemed and idiotic Wibley has been talking. The esteemed Wib is a cracked pitcher that will gather no moss, as the English proverb says."

"You're going to have it plain," said Johnny Bull. "Your pal Kuri Din is a gambling blackguard, and you oughtn't to have anything to do with him!"

The nabob coloured.

"Kuri Din was my friend in early childish days," he explained. "He is somewhat dufferful, but he is fellow with good heart. I cannot desert him when he is downful on his luck."

"How did he get down on his luck?"

No reply.

"Playing banker with Ponsonby of Highcliffe—what?"

"My esteemed chums, the discussfulness is—"

"He's trying to squeeze fifteen pounds out of you, Inky," said Harry Wharton quietly. "This is the second time he's landed you with rascally gambling debts. It's not good enough, old chap."

"I cannot hand him the esteemed cash, my dear and ridiculous pals," said the nabob, with a look of distress. "Like-wisefully, I cannot borrow it, because the payfulness would be the problematic doubt. But somehow I must see the foolish and ridiculous ass through his troubles."

"Why should you?" exclaimed Bob.

"He was my childish friend in India."

"There's a limit to friendship," said Johnny Bull drily. "The limit comes in when a chap's pal doesn't play the game."

"It is the last time," pleaded the nabob. "Kuri Din has said swearfully that there shall be no next time, as the gabbleful political johnnies express it."

"Didn't he say that before?" asked Nugent.

"Ahem!"

"What does he want the money for, Inky?"

"To pay some esteemed debts."

"Gambling debts?"

Inky was silent.

"Ponsonby, of course?"

"I—I think so."

"Now, look here, Inky," said Wharton. "We know that Ponsonby is a gambling rotter, and not much better than a card-sharper. If he's won money from a silly ass at cards, he's not entitled to be paid. Anyway, you're not called upon to pay him. But I don't believe for

a single minute that Kuri Din owes him so much money. He's trying to get money out of you to gamble with, not to pay debts."

The nabob started.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"How is it impossible?"

"He would not be so rascalful."

"Well, I've my own opinion about that. Look here, Inky, it won't do—it's not good enough. Let the fellow alone till he becomes decent."

"I have no wish to seek his honourable and disgusting company. But I must see him through his difficulty somehow."

"It's only a pretended difficulty, I believe. He knows you wouldn't lend him money to play with, and he's making out that it's a debt for that reason."

"Rats!"

"Wha-at?"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"I know Pon," growled Johnny Bull. "Wasn't he playing the same game with that ass Hazeldene? He never would play for wastepaper. I don't believe

Kuri Din owes him a penny; and I don't believe Kuri Din would care twopence about paying him if he did owe him anything. Pon couldn't enforce it. It's money he wants, to keep on his silly gambling; and he's stuck you for a big sum this time because you parted with money so easily last time."

The juniors nodded. They were quite of Johnny's opinion. Ponsonby of Highcliffe wasn't the fellow to waste time collecting I O U's from a fellow like Kuri Din, who was evidently hard up.

But the nabob's face set hard.

"You are making out my childish pal to be the complete and thorough rascal!" he exclaimed.

"That's what he is, I think," assented Johnny Bull.

"Then there is nothing more to be said!"

Hurree Singh walked out of the study, and closed the door after him.

The Co. looked at one another in wrath and dismay.

"The silly ass ought to be jolly well ragged!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Why, it's as plain as anything that his precious fellow-countryman is taking advantage of his softness, and simply spoofing him and robbing him!"

"It looks like it to me," said Wharton. "Anyway, Inky ought not to be bothered with the fellow's gambling debts, if they are debts."

"He ought to be stopped," said Bob.

"Let's go over to Redclyffe tomorrow," suggested Johnny Bull, after some thought.

"What good would that do?"

"We could give him a jolly good hiding!"

"That wouldn't do any good, fathead!"

"Well, it would be some satisfaction, at least."

"What about Inky?" said Nugent.

"He's got his back up already."

"Oh, bless Inky!"

The talk with Inky had not done much good. When the chums met in the Common-room later there was some constraint among them. The unsuspecting nabob refused to distrust his fellow-countryman, and he resented the opinion his chums entertained of Kuri Din.

And there was further annoyance for the Co. the next day. For after morning lessons they found a notice on the board in Inky's handwriting. It ran:

"First-class and top-hole jigger for sale. Most extensive cashful offer accepted gladly. Apply H. J. R. S. Study No. 13, Remove."

"I say, you fellows, Inky's selling his bike!" chortled Billy Bunter. "I wonder if he'd take a quid for it? I'd take

it off his hands if he would. One of you fellows lend me a quid?"

"I guess I could take that bike off Inky's hands," remarked Fisher T. Fish reflectively. "I could polish it up into a new bike for next season, and make a few dollars on that. I guess I'll tackle Inky."

"It's too bad," said Harry Wharton, as the chums went on their way. "Inky's going to sell his jigger, and give the money to that spoofing cad at Redclyffe!"

"He ought to be stopped!" growled Johnny Bull.

"How can he be stopped?"

"Blessed if I know!" confessed Johnny.

"The rotter ought to be choked off somehow," said Bob Cherry. "Why, there'll be no end to this! I know he stuck Inky for about ten quid last time. Now he's raised it to fifteen—not because he needs it, but because Inky's soft. I shouldn't wonder if he's laughing at Inky in his sleeve all the time!"

Wharton made a gesture of exasperation.

"We're not going to see old Inky worried and done like this!" he exclaimed. "Why, it's fairly turning his hair grey! He's thinking about nothing else but raising money to help that cad. If Inky can't look after himself, it's up to us, as his pals, to look after him."

"But how?"

"Oh, goodness knows!"

The chums of the Remove joined the nabob when the dinner-bell rang. Inky's dusky face was set.

"Well, what are you scowling about, Inky?" asked Johnny Bull gruffly.

"The scowlfulness exists only in the fatheaded Johnny's imagination. It is more the sorrowfulness than the angerfulness, as Poet Shakespeare remarks," said the nabob mildly. "It is not pleasant to hear the detractfulness of a childish chum."

"You ought to give the fellow a wide berth."

"Rats!"

"Look here, Inky—"

"The discussfulness is not useful," said Hurree Singh. "I do not request my esteemed friends to bother about the matter."

"We can't help bothering about it, can we?" grunted Bob Cherry. "You're not going to sell your bike, Inky?"

"The salefulness awaits the esteemed offer. The Honourable Fish has offered me thirty shillings. That is not enough. But I hope to sell that top-hole jigger today for a tenner."

"For that cad, Kuri Din!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"He is not a cad, my worthy Johnny; only a somewhat weak and foolish duffer."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I cannot listen to slangful remarks about my childish chum. The excusefulness is great, but I must leave you departfully."

And the nabob walked on.

"I'm fed up!" announced Johnny Bull. "If Inky wants to play the giddy ox, let him rip!"

Harry Wharton shook his head. He was not disposed to let Inky rip. But how he was to help the nabob, in spite of himself, was a puzzle.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Politeness Required!

THE following day Hurree Singh joined his chums after morning lessons with a troubled look.

"My esteemed friends—" he began.

"Well?"

"Latterfully there has been slangfulness, and the deplorable rift in the lute," said Hurree Singh. "The distressfulness of my worthy self is great. The ancient and ludicrous flame of friendship burns undimfully in my breast. But my worthy chums have shown the stand-offish cloven foot."

His worthy chums chuckled. Hurree Singh's English was even more mixed than usual, in his worried frame of mind.

"My dear ass, the ancient and ridiculous flame of friendship is going as strong as ever," grinned Bob Cherry. "We only want to stop you playing the giddy ax for your own sake!"

"I am about to demand the proof of friendship."

"Oh!"

"If it's a loan for Kuri Din, you can demand till you're pink about the ears!" said Johnny Bull.

"I should not think of raising the cash windfully from my excellent chums," said the nabob reproachfully. "The esteemed Johnny is offside. All I request is the polished and urbane politeness."

"The what?" ejaculated Wharton.

"The politeful and urbane civility that should distinguish the tribe of Vere de Vere, as Poet Tennyson remarks."

"Do you mean we're not polite enough?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Or do you mean anything at all?"

"I am expecting a visit from my esteemed childish chum, Kuri Din."

"Oh!"

The juniors understood now.

"He is coming over bikefully to visit me in my own excellent habitat," explained Hurree Singh. "Can I dependfully rely upon the elegant and charming manners of my worthy chums?"

"I'm not going to be civil to him!" said Johnny Bull deliberately. "I don't believe in being civil to a fellow you despise. I'll keep out of his way, if you like."

"That will be a boon and a blessing, my dear, grumpy Johnny. Your excellent mode of conversation is somewhat remindful of the manners of the ludicrous Huns."

"Why, you cheeky ass——"

"Oh, we'll be civil to him, if we see him," said Harry Wharton. "I'd rather not meet him in a friendly way, if you don't mind, Inky."

"I have always shown the polished politefulness to the friends of my esteemed chums," said Hurree Singh, with gentle reproach.

"But our friends ain't arrant blackguards, you know," said Bob.

"I was politeful to your esteemed cousin, my worthy Bob, though he was a terrifically bounding person."

"Oh!" said Bob, rather taken aback.

"Also your minor, my dear Franky, is a cheeky and obstreperous little rascal, but I have never failed to treat him with politeful consideration."

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent.

"And your uncle, my dear Johnny——"

"What's the matter with my uncle?" snorted Johnny Bull.

"He is a somewhat growful and terrific old codger——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"But I was extremefully careful not to remark upon his mannerfulness, which resembled that of the Kaiser——"

"Why, you—you—you——"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Don't keep on the list, Inky. You'll come to my relations next! One good turn deserves another. We'll be civil to your blessed Kuri Din!"

"I won't!" said Johnny Bull.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 516.

"Now, look here, Johnny——"

"Rats!"

"The esteemed Johnny could not be very civil if the tryfulness was terrific. Perhapsfully he will oblige by keeping off the honourable grass."

"You can bet on that!" said Johnny Bull, with emphasis. "I'm not going to speak to Kuri Din—I know that!"

"Then he will be quite happy and comfortable here on his esteemed visit."

"Look here, Inky——"

"When is he coming?"

"To-morrow afternoonfully."

"I suppose that means you'll be cutting footer practice, and the rehearsal afterwards?"

"The supposefulness is correct. Kuri Din will have tea in my study, and I trustfully hope my dear pals will back up and help me entertain him politefully."

"We'll do our best," said Nugent.

"The thankfulness is terrific!"

Hurree Singh walked away, evidently relieved in his mind. The chums of the Remove were in a rather awkward position. They had no right to set up in judgment on Kuri Din, and Inky had a right to expect them to be civil to his friend. But they did not want to meet the amateur blackguard of Redclyffe.

"Well, we're in for it," said Harry.

"We're bound to be civil."

Grunt from Johnny Bull.

"It won't do any harm," said Bob.

Eat less Bread

"We can't punch the fellow's head when he comes here on a friendly visit, that's certain."

"Friendly visit be blowed!" said Johnny Bull forcibly. "He's coming after the money, because Inky hasn't been able to send it to him yet."

"Oh!" said Bob uncomfortably.

"That bike is hanging fire," said Nugent, grinning. "The fellows aren't loaded up with ready cash just now, and winter isn't the best time for selling a bike. I believe Inky's only had Fishy's offer, so far."

"All the better!"

"And the cad is coming to see Inky, to make him toe the line!" growled Johnny Bull. "Inky's going to be worried into finding money for him somehow. More fool he! I'd answer the cad sharp enough, in his place. And you fellows can be civil to him if you like. I sha'n't!"

And Johnny Bull stalked away with a very dogged expression on his rugged face. Johnny evidently had no politefulness to waste upon a designing knave.

"Rehearsal, you chaps!" called out Wibley from the doorway.

"Oh, bother!"

"Bother be blowed!" said Wibley warmly. "Is Inky coming? Look here, I'm willing to give Inky his role back if he will buck up!"

"Better ask him," said Wharton.

Wibley hurried after the nabob. But

he came into the box-room to rehearsal without him.

In his present state of worryfulness Hurree Singh did not feel equal, as he expressed it, to playfulness. So the playfulness proceeded without him.

Wib was considerably ratty during that rehearsal. He had failed to bag the Indian at Redclyffe in Inky's place, and he was not satisfied with the other substitutes that offered. And, having found out what Inky's worry really was, Wib was naturally exasperated. It wasn't, as he indignantly told the Co., a real trouble at all. All Inky had to do was to thump the fellow's nose, as Wibley had done. That would settle the affair at once.

"I jolly well wish he would!" said Harry, as they came away from the rehearsal. "But he won't, and that's an end!"

"Something's got to be done!" said Wibley, wrinkling his brows. "Inky's got to play the Jam of Jubjub in the 'Pearl of India.' I simply can't replace him! He got on awfully well with Marjorie in her part, too. I'm not going to have my play mucked up because of a sneaking cad like this Kuri Din! Look here, you fellows, make Inky throw him over!"

"Can't!" grunted Bob Cherry. "The merchant is coming over here to-morrow, too, to visit Inky, and we've agreed to be civil."

Wibley fairly howled.

"I'm not going to stand it! Inky's got to rehearse! I'm not letting him off! What about the play?"

"That isn't the worst!" growled Wharton. "Inky's even chucking footer, with that silly worry on his mind!"

"Blow footer!" snorted Wibley.

"Why, you ass——"

"Footer be blowed! The play's the thing! Look here, suppose we take Inky in hand? He's got a guardian, or something, hasn't he? Who's that tremendous nigger who came to visit him last term?"

"Better let Inky hear you calling his Uncle Ram Bahadur a nigger!" grinned Nugent.

"Ram Bahadur!" said Wibley. "Ye gods, what a name!"

"It means something or other in Indian lingo! Bahadur is some sort of a big gun."

"Well, this Ram Bahadur—what a cheery patronymic!—this old ram, suppose we ask him to chip in? Is he in England?"

"I believe so."

"Then we'll bring him down on Inky! If he's Inky's uncle, he can't want Inky to be mixed up with that gambling cad. Why, Kuri Din's own schoolfellows rag him for being such a rotter!"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Can't give Inky away to his uncle, you ass!" he said.

Wibley growled.

"I'd give him away with a pound of tea rather than have my play mucked up by his silly rot! I understand that there's some official johnnies at the India Office who keep an eye on Inky. Suppose they were told——"

"Fathead!"

"For Inky's sake, you know——"

"For the sake of your one-eyed play, you mean!" grunted Bob.

"Well, something's got to be done!" said Wibley decidedly. "If Inky's going to play the fool like this as long as Kuri Din is bothering him, Kuri Din has got to be squeezed out! I'm going to squeeze him out!"

"I wish you could, fathead! You can't!"

"I'm going to have a big think!" announced Wibley. "After all, I'm the only chap in the Remove with any brains

to speak of. I'm going to fix it. The thing that's quite certain is this, that the 'Pearl of India' is going to be a dramatic success, and anything that's in the way is going to be shifted! Kuri Din's in the way—and the shiftfulness is going to be terrific, as Inky would say himself! See?"

"Br-r-r!"

"The fellow's a scoundrel!" said Wibley excitedly. "I don't believe he owes money at all. It's a lying trick to get money out of Inky to gamble with!"

"We all think that."

"Then the chopper's coming down!" said Wibley determinedly. "You leave it to me. I'm going to think it out!"

To which the Co replied with one voice:

"Rats!"

They had not the slightest faith in the results of Wibley's big think. Why, even their own thinking had been without result!

But William Wibley was on his mettle. His new play—his great drama—was at stake, and the theatrical manager of the Remove meant business.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wibley's Great Wheeze!

"COME along!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were heading for the footer-ground on Saturday afternoon when Wibley hailed them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You coming down to footer?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No, ass! Do you think I've got time for footer?" said Wibley witheringly. "I've thought it out, and I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"The wheeze!"

"What wheeze?"

"Oh, you ass! Oh, you bander-snatch! Have you forgotten that I told you yesterday that I was going to think out how to get Inky out of the claws of that stove-polish-faced Hun?"

"Quite forgotten!" grinned Bob. "We're going down to footer now, old chap. We've got to do the polite bizney presently to Inky's pal."

"You're not going to footer! Blow footer! I've got the wheeze, and you're going to help me work the oracle! Come along with me!"

"Oh, all right!"

Wibley led the way to a secluded spot under the elms, and the chums of the Remove followed him.

Wib was evidently greatly taken with his scheme, whatever it was, and they were quite willing to give him a hearing. If he had thought of a workable scheme for getting rid of Kuri Din, they were eager and ready to back him up.

"It's a corker!" announced Wibley, when they were out of hearing of all ears. "I could do it on my head!"

"What could you do, ass?"

"You fellows object to Inky's uncle, the old ram, or whatever he is, being told about—"

"Yes, fathead! That won't do!"

"Well, then, my idea is to produce another old ram, who will do the trick equally well. Kuri Din is coming here to-day to see Inky. While he's here he's going to be interviewed by an Indian gentleman, sent down by the great jaw-bones at the India Office, because Inky's acquaintance with a sporting bounder has been notified—"

"But it hasn't!"

"Fathead! The Indian gentleman will be spoof. Me!" explained Wibley.

"You?"

"That's it?"

"But you're not an Indian gentleman! You're a silly ass!"



Welcoming the Indian gentleman! (See Chapter 10.)

"Am I the best actor in the Remove Dramatic Society, or am I not?" demanded Wibley warmly. "Can I play any other chap's head off, or can't I? Can I make-up as a blinking Indian, or can't I?"

"Oh!"

"That's the game!" said Wibley, with considerable satisfaction. "I've got all the things I need. I'm going to use them later as the rajah in the play. I'm going to drop in this afternoon as an Indian gentleman, sent down here by the great big Lord Tom Noddies at the India Office, to look into Inky's conduct and warn that cad Kuri Din off the grass!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But—but they wouldn't send an Indian, if they sent anybody," said Wharton.

"They might. There are Indian chaps connected with the place. Lots of big guns from India are over here now, about the war. The Great Panjandrums ask one of them to come and see Inky, and point out to him the error of his ways. It's just what they would do. Well, I'm the Indian gentleman! Made up with a stove-polish complexion, my own grandfather wouldn't know me—it's the safest disguise of all!"

"But you don't know their nutcracker language."

"That's not necessary. They talk in English in England—an ornamental sort of English. Inky won't know me. The gentleman from the India Office will be a stranger to him, naturally!"

"He'll know you're not a real nigger!" howled Nugent.

"He won't! If I can't make-up to take in Inky I can't make-up at all! I tell you I could do it on my head!"

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton, with a whistle. "You might! You can make-up, Wib! It's about the only thing you can do, but you can do that!"

Wibley sniffed.

"Perhaps I can't kick a silly ball across a field as far as you can," he growled. "I'm sure I don't want to, either. But when it comes to acting I can make rings

round the lot of you. I'm going to do it, and you're going to play up!"

"Well, if it fails, there's no harm done!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Fathead! It won't fail! How can it, when I'm going to take it in hand? I'll get one of the chaps in my study to help me make up out of gates somewhere. Dick Rake will do it for me; he's rather a dab at such things. I come here in the station cab as if I've come down by train. I catch Kuri Din in Inky's study—quite by chance, of course—and nail 'em! Leave the rest to me! I'll fairly make the swindling rotter's wool curl!"

"It's a go!" said Bob, with a look at his companions.

"Oh, yes, it's a go," said Harry. "It won't do any harm, and it will be fun, anyway. If Kuri Din takes Wib for a real man from the India Office he will be scared out of his skin, that's a cert."

"I'll show him up!" said Wibley, with a chuckle. "I'll show Inky the kind of mean hound he is. I'll make him own up that he doesn't owe any money, for one thing. That will open Inky's eyes. Why, Inky's such a soft ass that the fellow might lead him into his own games one of these days if he's not stopped! Inky isn't the kind of chap who's safe to chum with a rorty bounder."

Harry Wharton's face became very grave. He did not fear such a possibility, but he was uneasy for his Oriental chum. The example of a cunning and rascally acquaintance was not good for any fellow, especially for a fellow like Hurree Singh, who found it difficult to say "No" to anybody.

"It's a go!" said Wharton. "Get on with the washing, Wib, and we'll do our best to see you through!"

"Right! Mind you're on the scene when I come. Never mind your blessed footer for once. It's not a match, anyway. You see, if you fellows swallow me whole when I turn up it makes it easier."

"Right you are!"

A quarter of an hour later Wibley of the Remove might have been seen, as a novelist would put it, quitting the school gates with a big bag in his

hand. Dick Rake went with him, wearing a broad grin.

Harry Wharton & Co. punted a ball about on Little Side for some time, but they came back to the School House early in the afternoon. They were anxious to see Wibley's wheeze carried out.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was in his study, not looking happy. He had the study to himself—Mark Linley being with the footballers, and little Wun Lung having gone on an excursion with his minor.

The nabob smiled and nodded as his chums presented themselves.

He glanced, however, a little doubtfully at Johnny Bull, who had come in with the rest.

"My esteemed Johnny!" he murmured.

"All serene, Inky; I'm not going to bite the chap's head off!" said Johnny Bull. "I'll give him the glad eye if you like!"

"The worthy Johnny is very kindful. I should not like my childish chum to feel like fish out of water in my esteemed quarters."

"He's going to be the apple of our eye!" said Bob solemnly. "I'll take him to my waistcoat and weep over him if you like!"

"Sold your bike yet, Inky?" asked Nugent.

"The salefulness is not yet the accomplished fact!" said Hurree Singh, with a clouded brow.

"Then the esteemed cash is still shortful?" grinned Bob.

"Yes."

"Too bad!" said Bob, but he did not look as if he thought it too bad. He was quite pleased, in fact, to know that Hurree Singh had not yet succeeded in raising the wind for his "childish chum" to tempt fortune again at the great game of banker.

Inky was evidently very much relieved by the way his friends were taking the visit of Kuri Din. There was quite a cheery chat going on when a tap came at the door, and the Redclyffe junior presented himself. He was early.

"Come infully, my dear friend," said Hurree Singh at once. "I did not know when to expect you, or I should have met you gratefully. Come in!"

"A chap told me the way here," said Kuri Din. Kuri Din's English was not so flowery as Hurree Singh's; probably he had not had the inestimable advantage of being trained under the best native masters in Bhanipur.

Kuri Din glanced at the Co. far from cordially. It was pretty clear that he had wanted to catch his friend alone.

Hurree Singh presented his chums, apparently not noticing the Redclyffe fellow's grim look.

It was an uncomfortable moment for the Co. They did not want to shake hands with a fellow they heartily disliked and despised; but they could scarcely refuse to do so with a pal of their pal's.

That certainly would not have been politeful; and they had agreed to turn on politeness for the occasion.

To their relief, however, Kuri Din merely gave them an Oriental salaam, and kept his dusky hand to himself.

His manner was not in the least gracious. Every fellow there, excepting Hurree Singh, could see that he had come on business, not on a friendly visit. And he wanted to get to business.

The Co. were determined not to see it, however. They proceeded to talk to Kuri Din quite pleasantly. They spoke of the weather, and of the war, and of Redclyffe football, and asked after Fane, and Byng, and other Redclyffe fellows.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 516.

Kuri Din's answers were short, and they grew shorter and shorter. He hardly concealed the fact that he wanted to be rid of them.

Hurree Singh was uncomfortable, too. He wanted his chums to join him at tea with Kuri Din, but just now he would have been relieved by their temporary departure.

The Co. took pity on him at last, and left the study, leaving the two Indians together. There was a sound of wheels in the quadrangle, and they guessed that the gentleman from the India Office was at hand.

Bob Cherry breathed hard as they went down the passage.

"Did you ever see such a worm?" he asked.

"Never!" grunted Johnny Bull.

A buzz of voices sounded in the quadrangle, and the chums of the Remove hurried out.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Gentleman from the India Office.

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter met the Co. as they came out, with a fat, excited face.

"I say, there's a regular Arabian Nights chap just come!" exclaimed Bunter. "Some relation of Inky's, I expect."

"You don't say so!" murmured Bob.

"Yes, rather! Tremendous swell!" said Bunter. "Must have thousands of pounds worth of jewels on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! He's simply glittering! Look at him yourselves!"

The juniors were looking. So were a good many other fellows, from various directions.

The old hack from the station was coming up the drive, and a dusky-complexioned gentleman was seated in it.

Harry Wharton and Co. almost rubbed their eyes.

They had been expecting Wibley in the guise of an Indian gentleman! But this—was this Wib?

He looked a man of about fifty. His long beard was tinged with white; his deep olive complexion glimmered in the sun. His turban was magnificent, and fastened with glittering jewels. If they were stage jewels, they certainly looked very like the real thing.

His manner was one of imposing dignity.

"By gad! Some blessed Indian nabob!" said Loder of the Sixth, and he respectfully capped the distinguished visitor.

The other fellows followed the prefect's example.

"Jolly big gun, I should say!" Coker of the Fifth remarked to Potter and Greene. "Indian prince, I suppose?"

"Perhaps one of the Indian johnnies from the Front," remarked Potter. "He looks a bit of an old ramrod!"

"Rolling in money, I guess!" observed Greene. "I say, if he's from the Front we ought to give him a cheer!"

The station cab stopped.

Coker of the Fifth rushed to open the door for the great man. The Indian gentleman stepped out.

Now that he was standing he was not so tall as Coker, though his big turban made him look much taller than he really was.

Harry Wharton & Co. simply stared at him. It was not polite, but they couldn't help it. If this was Wibley, he was unrecognisable. And they were feeling rather dismayed. It looked as if a real Indian gentleman had arrived that afternoon, and if Wibley came along later in disguise it might lead to trouble.

"That's not Wib!" said Bob, in a low voice. "My hat! If it's a visitor for Inky, and then Wib happens in—"

"It's dashed unlucky," muttered Wharton. "But—but that may be Wib!"

"Can't be! This is the genuine goods!"

"Welcome to Greyfriars, sir!" said Coker of the Fifth officiously.

The Indian gentleman gave him a gracious smile.

"Ko ro ka wiggy!" he said, in a deep, guttural voice.

Coker started.

"Excuse me, sir, I don't understand Hindustanee," he said.

"Na pa poodle napoo."

"Ahem!"

"I thank you," said the Indian gentleman, apparently recollecting himself, and speaking in English. "Good boy!"

"Oh!" said Coker.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, appeared in the doorway. He had spotted the Indian gentleman from his study window.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood dumb. If it was Wibley, how was he going to face his Form-master, and carry it through? But it couldn't be!

If it was Wibley, certainly he had plenty of nerve. He salaamed deeply in reply to the Form-master's bow.

"You shall excuse this visit—which is a surprise and not announced, sahib," he said gracefully. "I am deputed by honourable sirs at India Office to visit Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, youthful student in so great and honourable school."

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch politely. "Pray step into my study. I will send for Hurree Singh at once."

"I thank you for so great kindness!" The Indian gentleman fairly swam in, with great dignity. "I trust that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh is within doors?"

"Is Hurree Singh indoors, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir, in—in his study!" gasped Wharton. "Sh-sh-shall I show the gentleman there, sir?"

If it was Wib, certainly he wanted to be shown to Hurree Singh's study, not to Mr. Quelch's.

"That is what I wish," said the Indian gentleman. "I should like to see Nabob of Bhanipur in own habitat. You will excuse, sahib, because it is necessary to catch train in short time."

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch. "Show this gentleman to Hurree Singh's study, Wharton, by all means!"

"Yes, sir!"

With slow and stately tread the Indian gentleman ascended the big staircase, and Mr. Quelch went back to his study.

"I say, ain't he a nob, you chaps?" murmured Billy Bunter. "I wonder whether he'll leave Inky a tip? I say, I think I ought to be present as a pal of Inky's."

Harry Wharton conducted the Indian gentleman along the Remove passage. He glanced at him once or twice, expecting a sign of recognition if this was really Wibley in a wonderful disguise. But there came no sign of recognition from the Indian gentleman. His face was grave and calm and almost expressionless.

Wharton tapped at the door of No. 13.

There was a murmur of voices within; and he heard the words: "But I owe Ponsonby the money, and he is dunning me, and—" The voice ceased abruptly as Wharton tapped again.

"Come in!"

Wharton threw open the door.

Hurree Singh looked round inquiringly, and Kuri Din with a scowl on his dark face.

"Inky, old man, there's a visitor for you," said Wharton hurriedly. "He—he

says he's from the India Office. He—Here he is."

The stout Indian gentleman appeared in the doorway.

"Here's the study, sir," said Wharton.

"I thank you, my good boy!"

"Not at all, sir!"

Wharton stepped back, and the voluminous gentleman swam in. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh saluted him very politely. Kuri Din set his lips. The interruption exasperated the Redclyffe fellow, and he feared that it was likely to be a long one. Outside the study Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Nugent joined Wharton, with dubious looks.

They could not believe that this was Wibley. It seemed incredible. He was a middle-aged and somewhat pompous Indian gentleman to the life.

"Excuse this so sudden and un-announced visit, my young friend," said the Indian gentleman. "You are Hurree Jamset Ram Singh?"

"That is my name, sir."

"I am deputed by honourable gentlemen at India Office to pay this visit."

"You are very welcome, sir," said Hurree Singh, placing a chair for his visitor. "Will you have the bountiful goodness to sit downfully?"

The Indian gentleman sat down. He glanced benevolently at the juniors outside the open door.

"Are these your friends?" he asked.

"Yes, sir! They are my esteemed and ludicrous pals."

"Let them enter! I will speak to you in their presence."

"Come infully, you chaps!"

The four juniors came in. Wharton closed the door. Kuri Din set his lips harder. His annoyance and exasperation were growing.

"The name of honourable self is Nuncomar Singh," said the Indian gentleman. "I am sent down here with serious purpose by honourable sirs. It is to make serious inquiry." He started, as his eyes turned on Kuri Din, apparently noticing the Redclyffe fellow for the first time. "Who is this?"

"It is my childish chum from India, Kuri Din."

"Ah! He is here!" exclaimed the Indian gentleman. "Then it is true, the report that has been received by honourable sirs at India Office!" He rose majestically to his feet, his eyes fixed on Kuri Din, who shrank a little. "Rascal!"

Kuri Din jumped.

"You—you—you call me—" he stammered.

The gentleman from the India Office waved a dusky hand.

"Rascal! What are you doing here?" he thundered.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In His True Colours!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH frowned.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood still and silent. There was nothing else they could do.

"Sir!" exclaimed Hurree Singh indignantly. "You must not speak like that to my friend in my study!"

"Silence, boy!"

"What?"

"I fear that it will be necessary for me to report you to honourable headmaster, and demand punishment," said Nuncomar Singh sternly. "Report has been received on your conduct. Young gentleman of name of Wibley has given full information, and in consequence I am deputed by honourable sirs to investigate."

The Co. started, and exchanged glances. Hurree Singh set his lips hard.

"Wibley has been telling tales!" he exclaimed.

"Master Wibley has made full report, and it is serious matter," said Nuncomar Singh, in his deep voice. "This boy—this Kuri Din—is great rascal. Do not go, Kuri Din—I command you to stand where you are! I have not yet finished. When you return to your school, I go with you."

"You will not come with me!" hissed Kuri Din.

"I shall come, to see honourable headmaster of Redclyffe, and acquaint him with whole story."

"Oh!" gasped Kuri Din.

His jaw dropped, and his knees fairly knocked together.

A report of the whole story to the headmaster of Redclyffe meant the finish of Kuri Din's career at that school, and he was well aware of it.

And if Wibley of the Remove had taken it upon himself to report the whole affair to the India Office officials, undoubtedly some such step would be taken, as the nabob was a ward of the India Office while in England.

Hurree Singh stood dismayed.

The Co. shared his dismay. They thought they understood what Wibley's wheeze really was. He had given Inky away, and it was a real emissary from the India Office who had come down to Greyfriars. The chums mentally promised Wibley the licking of his life, later on.

"You are rascal, Kuri Din!" went on Nuncomar Singh, with increasing sternness. "All is known. You have gambled, and you owe large sum to another schoolboy—one Ponsonby."

"It's not true!" gasped Kuri Din.

"What?"

"I owe nothing—I swear it!"

"You speak falsehoods, Kuri Din. I repeat that all is known. You have sought to obtain money from Hurree Singh to pay your debts."

"I—I did not," faltered the wretched sport of Redclyffe. "I owe nothing. Ponsonby will tell you so."

"My friend!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"I tell you I owe Ponsonby nothing!" snarled Kuri Din. "I—I wanted money, and—and I asked Hurree Singh to lend me—"

"To pay gambling debts?" said Nuncomar Singh sternly.

"No!" shrieked Kuri Din. "No! I owe nothing!"

"Then you deceived Hurree Singh?"

"I—I wanted money—"

"Did you deceive Hurree Singh?"

"Yes!" panted Kuri Din.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's face was a study.

He was learning a little more of his precious friend than he had suspected before.

"You deceived Hurree Singh!" resumed the Indian gentleman sternly. "But that is not all! You are dangerous acquaintance for him! I shall take measures to remove you from neighbourhood."

"I—I—"

"You need say nothing. It is resolved!"

"It—it is false!" stammered Kuri Din. "I—I am not—perhaps I have been led into foolishness by friends—"

"What friends?"

Kuri Din panted.

"It—it was not I so much as Hurree Singh!" he said desperately. "You cannot punish me without punishing him. It was he who led me into it, and that I will swear!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh started as if an adder had stung him.

"What!" he breathed. "My ears do not hear arightfully!"

"Let us have the whole truth!" said

the Indian gentleman sternly, while Harry Wharton & Co. looked daggers at the cringing rascal from Redclyffe. "Young gentleman named Wibley informs that you are gambling rascal, and that Hurree Singh is nothing of that kind. Hurree Singh must be relieved of dangerous acquaintance, and therefore honourable headmaster of Redclyffe must know truth!"

"I—I will swear it!" said Kuri Din huskily. "I will tell my headmaster so. My friend Ponsonby will bear me out in this! It was Hurree Singh all the time! He persuaded me—he urged me—"

"Then it is Hurree Singh who is gambling rascal, and you who are the foolish victim?" said the Indian gentleman, evidently puzzled.

"Yes!" panted Kuri Din.

"Hurree Singh, what have you to say?"

The nabob drew a deep breath. The look he cast at Kuri Din made even that hardened young rascal wince. But he did not waver. He was determined that half, at least, of his own rascality should be thrown upon the nabob. It was the only way he could save himself, and his unsuspecting friend had to be the victim.

"I wait for answer!" said Nuncomar Singh severely.

"I have nothing to say, esteemed sahib, exceptfully that Kuri Din speaks with falseness of disgusting Prussian. I back him up because he was childish chum in India, and I try to raise money windfully for him because he tells me that he is deepful in debt. That is all."

"It is false!" hissed Kuri Din. "I was not to blame. It was Hurree Singh—first and last!"

"You miserable cad!" broke out Bob Cherry, unable to contain his wrath. "You know you're lying!"

"Silence, please!" said the Indian gentleman.

"Excuse me, sir. But—"

"I shall question your friends, Hurree Singh," said Nuncomar Singh. "They shall give evidence. Tell me, young gentlemen, which is speaking truthfully?"

"Inky, sir!" said Wharton. "Kuri Din is lying like a Hun! Inky was a silly ass to back him up! He's only done it because Kuri Din deceived him!"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"That's so!"

"They would speak for Hurree Singh—they are his friends!" said Kuri Din sullenly. "It is all false! I will swear to my headmaster that it was all Hurree Singh!"

"I'm not going to keep my hands off that rotter any longer!" gasped Johnny Bull. "I can't!"

"Hands off!" yelled Kuri Din, as Johnny rushed round the study towards him.

"Silence! Order!" rapped out the Indian gentleman.

But Johnny Bull did not heed. His wrath was overflowing.

He grasped Kuri Din in his powerful arms, unheeding the savage blow struck at his face, and got the Redclyffe fellow's head in chancery.

Pommel, pommel, pommel!

Kuri Din struggled and yelled furiously.

Hurree Singh looked on quietly. He did not make a movement to aid his treacherous pal. The claims of his "childish chum" no longer had any weight with the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Pommel, pommel, pommel!

"Yaroooh! Help! Oh, help! Hound! Yah! Help!" shrieked Kuri Din, as the energetic Johnny punched away at him.

"Give him beans, Johnny!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Mop him up, old scout!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 516.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Indian gentleman looked on, blinking. He did not seem to feel called upon to interfere.

Kuri Din tore himself loose at last, and raced for the door.

Bob Cherry met him with a violent shove, and the Redclyffe junior sprawled on the floor, panting and gasping.

"Get up, you rat!" roared Johnny Bull.

"That'll do, Johnny!"

"Rats! He hasn't had half enough!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came in a mumble from the Redclyffe junior. And he did not get up.

"Enough of this!" said the Indian gentleman. "This is not scene for respectable presence of elderly gentleman!"

"Sorry, sir!" panted Johnny Bull.

"But that lying cad—"

"Let him go!" said Nuncomar Singh.

"Turn him out, and let him return to own school. I shall consider whether to call upon honourable headmaster of Redclyffe. Let him go!"

Harry Wharton opened the door.

Three or four boots clumped on Kuri Din, and he rolled into the passage, yelling. There he picked himself up, and fled.

A minute later Wharton caught a glimpse of him from the study window streaking across the quad for the gates.

He vanished out of the gates, still running.

Kuri Din was gone, and he was not likely to trouble Greyfriars with another visit. But the Indian gentleman remained.

He rose from his chair after some minutes' thoughtful silence.

"You don't believe what that cad said, sir?" exclaimed Frank Nugent anxiously. "He was lying, sir! Inky is as straight as a string!"

"Hurree Singh has at least had rascally acquaintance," said Nuncomar Singh drily. "There is a proverb that evil communications corrupt good manners."

"Yes, sir; but he was only a good-natured ass!"

"The asininefulness was terrific," said Hurree Singh ruefully. "I was not aware of true nature of rascally childish chum. Henceforthfully, if he speaks to me, I shall bestow the punchfulness on the nose!"

"I must report to honourable sirs who have sent me," said Nuncomar Singh. "Now I take my departure."

"But, sir—"

"Enough is said!"

And, with a graceful salaam, the Indian gentleman sailed out of the study and returned to his cab. From the window the chums of the Remove watched him drive away, capped by the fellows in the quad. The cab disappeared, and they turned to the silent and dismayed nabob.

"Inky!"

"Oh, Inky, you ass!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Only Wib!

THERE was dismay in Study No. 13.

Harry Wharton & Co. had feared that Inky's dangerous acquaintance might land him into some trouble. But they had hardly been prepared for such utter rascality on the part of Kuri Din.

If the young rascal stuck to his story—as evidently he intended to do—matters might be bad for Hurree Singh.

The Co. knew the facts, but only from their faith in Inky. To impartial strangers it would seem as likely that

Hurree Singh was the worse of the two as that he was not. Kuri Din's rascality having come to light, he would put all he could on Inky's shoulders—that was certain.

"I have had a painful shock, my esteemed chums," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "My childish chum is terrific rascal!"

"Pity you didn't find that out before!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The pitifulness is terrific!"

"Well, you're rid of him, at any rate," said Wharton. "That's something! I suppose you won't speak to the cad again?"

Hurree Singh's dark eyes gleamed.

"If I see him, I shall punchfully assault his disgusting nose!" he exclaimed.

"The donefulness with the howling cad is great!"

"He's taken a prize nose away with him, anyway," said Johnny Bull.

"That's one comfort!"

"But—but we'll scrag Wibley!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"That was his wheeze, after all—giving Inky away! He was only pulling our leg."

"We'll scalp him!"

"Oh, the rotter!"

"It's too rotten!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I'd never have suspected Wib of such a dirty trick! He made us believe he was going to spoof Inky, and he's simply given him away. He must have done it days ago, too, and kept it dark, or that dark old johnny wouldn't have arrived here to-day. Oh, it's rotten! Of course, he's not coming here in disguise at all. Simply getting out of the way while the real man came!"

"What is my esteemed idiotic chum driving at?" inquired Hurree Singh quietly.

Wharton explained.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh listened quietly to the story of the intended wheeze. He smiled slightly and shook his head.

"The esteemed and rotten Wibley was talking out of his neck," he remarked. "He could not have spoofed me as Indian gentleman. But it was easy for him to give rascally information to honourable sirs at India Office."

"We'll scrag him! All the fat's in the fire now!" growled Wharton.

"The Head's sure to be dragged into it! That cad Kuri Din will swear black is white to save his own dirty skin! Oh, you ass, Inky!"

"The regretfulness is terrific!"

"Well, the damage is done now," said Bob Cherry. "The only thing is to scrag Wibley! Oh, we'll rag him bald-headed!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five had a dismal tea in Study No. 13. They were full of uneasiness as to the possible results of the visit of the Indian gentleman.

They had not finished tea when a tap came at the door.

It opened, and William Wibley's cheerful face grinned in.

"Hallo, kids!" he said. "Had a visitor?"

The Co. gave him deadly looks.

"Come in!" said Bob Cherry ominously.

Wibley stepped jauntily into the study. He seemed quite satisfied with himself, and did not realise that there was danger. As a matter of fact, he was stepping into the lion's den.

The chums of the Remove rose as one man, and laid violent hands upon William Wibley.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Wibley.

"Wharrer you at? I— Oh! Yah!"

"Bump him!"

"Scrag him!"

"Lynch him!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yaroooh!" roared Wibley. "Oh, you idiots! Wharrer you at? Is this what you call—yaroooh!—gratitude? You know what I've done— Yow-ow-ow!"

"Yes, we know what you've done, and this is what you're getting for it!" panted Bob Cherry. "Hold the rotter while I get some soot!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Woooo! You frabjous jabberwocks!" shrieked Wibley.

"Haven't I worked the oracle, as we arranged?"

"What?" shouted Wharton. "You never gave us a hint of what you were going to do,—or, rather, what you'd done! We'd have bottled you up fast enough—"

"Oh, you're potty!" gasped Wibley, blinking at them. "I told you all about it this afternoon, didn't I, before I went out with Rake?"

"No, you didn't! You said you'd spoof Inky, and show up that Redclyffe cad by coming here as an Indian man!" howled Bob Cherry. "And, instead of that, you gave Inky away to the red-tape panjandrum!"

"I didn't!" yelled Wibley.

"The man said you did."

"You—you—you frabjous, burbling chump! What man?"

"The man from the India Office!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"An old pompous johnny named Nunky something!" howled Johnny Bull. "He's been here hauling Inky over the coals, and there's going to be trouble, you sneak!"

Wibley yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" shouted Wharton, greatly incensed. "Inky may get a flogging over this—or even the sack."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Wibley, sitting on the floor and yelling. "Oh, you silly jabberwocks! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll give him something to laugh at!" gasped Bob Cherry, dragging a shovelful of soot from the chimney. "Yank him over here! Stick his head over the fender!"

"Hold on!" roared Wibley. "Give a chap a chance to explain, you burbling asses— Grrrrrrrrggg!"

"There's nothing to explain, except that you've told tales!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Give him the soot!"

"Gug-gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now bump him!"

"Leggo!" shrieked Wibley, struggling frantically in the grasp of the Famous Five. "I tell you— Yaroooh!"

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed sneaking Wibley!"

"Yaroooh! I tell you — Yooop!"

Bump, bump!

"Now give him the ink!"

"I tell you you're mistaken!" roared Wibley. "Give me a chance, you howling idiots! I never gave Inky away— Yow-ow-ow!"

"Who did, then?"

"Yow-ow! Nobody!"

"The man said—"

"Grooh! There wasn't a man!" shrieked Wibley.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass! There's been a man here from the India Office while you've been out an old johnny in whiskers and a turban—"

"Give him the ink!"

"Stop it!" howled Wibley. "Oh, you asses! That was me!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Who?"

"Me!" yelled Wibley. "Me—mo—me!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

The juniors released Wibley in blank astonishment.

Wibley sat on the carpet, gouging soot out of his hair, panting for breath, and

looking as if he belonged to the most disorderly dustheap in the county.

"Oh, you asses!" he groaned. "Oh, you chumps!"

"You!" yelled Nugent.

"Yes, you burbler! Didn't I tell you I was coming here got up as a Johnny from the India Office?" snorted Wibley.

"But—but—but—"

"Gammon!"

"How could it have been you?" grunted Johnny Bull. "It was a man of fifty—"

"Oh, you idiots! I could make up as a man of fifty thousand if I liked!" groaned the unhappy Wib. "Oh, you dummies! Who the dickens do you think it was if it wasn't me?"

"Rats! The man said Wibley had informed—"

"So I had. Informed myself, hadn't I, you dummies?"

"You—you—you mean to say it was you all the time?" gasped Harry Wharton, in blank astonishment.

Wibley scrambled up.

He had been bumped and rolled and sooted, and he was feeling as if he had been wrestling with a Tank on the war-path. But a grin dawned through the soot. That ragging was severe. But it

was a great testimonial to his skill as an actor.

"You silly asses!" he gasped. "Of course it was me! I was deputed by honourable sirs at India Office—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were convinced now, as Wibley spoke in the deep voice and flowery English of Nuncomar Singh.

"I had received report of disreputable goings on, and was deputed to 'make complete inquiry—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only esteemed hat!" gasped Hurree Singh. "And—and—and I took the spoofing asinine Wibley for a real genuine article!"

"I say, we withdraw that ragging!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you could withdraw these bumps, you frabjous ass!"

"Take it as an unsolicited testimonial!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wibley grinned.

"Never mind, you asses! It shows how jolly well I did it, anyway!" he said.

"Why didn't you own up afterwards?" demanded Bob.

"Fathead! Old Quelchy had seen me, and if a gentleman from the India Office came here and didn't go away again, Quelchy would have been on the track, wouldn't he? Quelchy hasn't any sense of humour. We shall have to keep it jolly dark as it is."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's so!"

"Rehearsal this evening," said Wibley briskly. "You're taking the part of the Jam of Jubjub in the play, Inky?"

"I shall be terrifically honoured, my esteemed chum!"

"And no more rot, you know!"

"That is all overfully, my esteemed idiotic Wibley. I have dismissed Kuri Din from friendship and from memory, and it is good riddance to bad rubbish!"

"Hear, hear!"

The "Pearl of India," when it came off, was a great success. But that success, as Harry Wharton & Co. admitted, was due to the success of Wibley's great wheeze.

(Don't miss "IN ANOTHER'S PLACE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 52.—REGINALD COKER.

HORACE JAMES, the magnificent, is Coker major, of course. Reggie is only Coker minor.

But while Horace is only in the Fifth, and ought to be in the Shell, Reggie's name is on the Sixth roll.

The fact of the matter, is that Horace got the muscles and Reggie got the brains.

Probably they would not change. Quite certainly Horace would not be on. He is quite satisfied with his own brains, thank you!

When Horace announced that he had a minor coming Potter and Greene did not half like it. They knew that their chum and leader was the possessor of strong family affections, and they anticipated having an inky kid always about the study, very likely snivelling because someone had been pulling his ears, as Greene put it. Horace thought Reggie might get into the Shell, as he was an awfully clever young beggar. If he was put into the Remove, Horace meant to teach him to box, make him captain of his Form—how did not transpire, and the task might have proven above Horace's weight—and instruct him to keep those unruly fags in order.

Reggie came, big of forehead and with eyes a little watery, good-natured enough for anything, and beefy enough for—well, just about nothing! His body had gone to seed while he was cultivating his mental crop; and, anyway, as so often happens with clever fellows, it was no great shakes of a body at best.

Horace was greatly annoyed when Reggie modestly suggested that it was possible he might find a place in a higher Form than the Shell.

"I couldn't have a minor in the Fifth. It wouldn't be the thing," Horace said.

Well, he didn't! Reggie was put at once into the Sixth! It was a shock for Coker major—so big a shock that he went to the Head to argue the matter. But, of course, he got no change out of that. The Sixth had a shock, too. Beside fellows like Wingate, Loder, Courtney, and the rest Reggie really looked a mere kid.

Loder wanted to protest, or that Reggie should ask the Head to change his mind. But the new boy showed unexpected firmness on that point. If he could do the Sixth work, he said, it was only fair that he should be in the Sixth—which was an eminently reasonable way of looking at it. Loder tried to bully him, but Wingate soon put a stopper on that.



Of course he was bullied by some, chivvied by more, and ragged by most. Every boy—and every man who has ever been a real boy—can understand. There never was yet a case of a weakly, clever boy who did not have something to put up with. His cleverness is apt to be resented, and the resentment takes the form of showing him that he does not amount to much in other ways.

He was "a rotten spooney," "a blessed noodle," and all that sort of thing, according to fellows in the Forms below him. Now, though mild and meek, Coker minor was cer-

tainly neither spooney nor noodle. But it was difficult for him to prove that he was not, because to prove it he was called upon for what would have overtaxed a fellow with five times his strength—to hold his own against a crowd. Even to hold his own against one fellow stronger and heavier and better skilled than he was too much to expect from him.

Bolsover major wanted to fight him. Reggie had no chance against the Remove bully, and he knew it. He gave in tamely—which may have been wise, but is not the sort of wisdom any boy admires. Better to fight hopelessly than to give in without a struggle!

Temple was annoyed with him for his timidity, and threatened him. Reggie put up one leg—not to kick. Oh dear no! Almost better to kick than to show no fight at all, though kicking is dead off—even for a junior, let alone a fellow in the top Form! No; Reggie said that if Temple hit him while he had one leg up he could not help falling; and that, as it appeared to Reggie, would be the end of the business.

It was not, naturally. It was only the beginning. Funk—that was what everyone called it. Coker major felt it very much indeed. He would have nothing to do with a brother who disgraced him in that way! Like Pharaoh of old, he hardened his heart.

The Remove—some of the Remove—wanted to be kind to Reggie. They took him for a run, and he finished the run by a headlong plunge into a very odorous pigsty. The Upper Fourth had no mind to his kind. In the temporary absence of Mr. Capper Reggie was sent to preside over that Form. It was Walker who had been asked; but Walker turned the job over to Coker minor. The result was pandemonium in the Form-room.

But there was another result. Horace came round! He could not stand it any longer.

"This is my brother," he told Temple & Co., "and I'm backing him up!"

Some of you say you don't like Coker. Perhaps you will like him better if you bear that incident in mind.

That was not the end of trouble. Horace Coker's backing is not quite all that Horace imagines it. It may serve the purpose while Horace is on hand; but Horace absent is not the object of awe that he fancies. Reggie had a rough time of it. Bolsover major put Reggie across his knee and

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 516.

smacked him. Coker major, having thrashed Bolsover—oh, yes, Bolsover stood up to him!—did likewise to Bolsover. But that did not wipe out the indignity to Reggie. Horace saw that drastic measures were necessary. He started in to give his minor a boxing lesson. It was scarcely proving a success when Bunter opportunely rolled in. Then Horace offered Bunter half-a-crown if he could lick Reggie. Bunter was on. Bunter tried. But Bunter failed!

This was only a boxing bout. But a little later Reggie and Bunter met in an actual fight. Bad news had come from Aunt Judy. It seemed for a time that the loss of all her

money was likely. Bunter said that he had always suspected the Cokers of being fishy. Reggie called him a lying beast and a fat cad—very strong indeed for Reggie! The Owl did not want to fight; he was afraid he might kill Reggie. But he had to fight. Neither was killed, and it was not Reggie who was whacked!

It was while Horace was away, gone to comfort Aunt Judy, that Hobson & Co. made Reggie entertain them to tea, as was told last week. But Harry Wharton & Co., full of sympathy for the Cokers, had promised the absentee to keep an eye on Reggie, and they put his tormentors through it.

Coker minor has never made a conspicuous figure in the Sixth otherwise than at work. It is unlikely that he ever will. But the fellows have come to understand in his case, as in that of Alonzo Todd, that it is good-nature more than anything else which makes him shun fighting. He is not really a funk at heart; but he knows that he can never be a real fighting-man, and he would rather not fight. That is all very well, so long as behind it there is a spirit that will make a fellow stand up for a licking instead of lying down for one. I think Reggie has acquired that spirit now, if he lacked it at first.

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

HOW THEY WILL SPEND CHRISTMAS!

Interesting Interviews by Our Special Representative.

WHARTON was looking jolly serious as I entered Study No. 1. And so were Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Bull for that matter.

They were sitting round the table, which was simply smothered with papers of all descriptions and sizes, writing as quickly as they possibly could.

Wharton looked up as I entered, and gave me a fierce glare.

"You've come at last, have you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," I murmured, not quite liking Wharton's expression.

"And a jolly long time you've been coming!" remarked Wharton coldly. "Don't you know that it's the duty of a special representative not to keep his editor waiting?"

"Y-y-yes," I said quietly.

"Well, now you've come," said Wharton, "we'll get to business. We're now preparing the Christmas number of the 'Herald.' We want you to do something extra special for us. In short, we want you to interview a number of well-known personages at Greyfriars and St. Jim's, and find out how they intend to spend their Christmas."

"Oh!" I gasped. "How many articles do you want?"

"One only!" snapped Wharton impatiently. "But you've got to embody all the interviews into one article. Now then, buzz off, and do as you're told. Shut the—"

"But you haven't told me whom I've got to interview!" I protested.

"Sorry," said Wharton promptly. "Here you are. The names are all on this list." He handed me a strip of paper. "Mind, I want the article first thing in the morning. 'Hop it, quick!'"

I hopped it at once.

Wharton can be snappy at times, and he was in a snappy mood now with a vengeance.

Having closed the door of Study No. 1, I gazed at the list of names. The first name was that of Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars. I forthwith wended my way to the Head's private sanctum.

Luckily, Dr. Locke was alone. I entered, and explained clearly and concisely the object of my visit.

"I intend to spend Christmas quietly with friends in the country. In these times of stress and trouble it behoves every patriotic Britisher to refrain from any form of revelling."

I nodded my head in agreement.

"On Boxing Day, however," continued the Head, "I hope to help in entertaining a number of wounded soldiers. I am afraid we may be a little noisier then, but to my mind there is no harm in our heroes indulging in a little pleasure. They deserve some relaxation for their gallantry in keeping the invader from our shores, and I for one intend to give it to them."

I concurred, feeling no doubts as to the extent of Dr. Locke's patriotism. I thanked him for his kindness in granting me an interview, and then went in search of Fisher T.

Fish. Fishy was sitting in his study reading the "New York Times" when I found him.

"How do you intend to spend Christmas?" I asked, coming to the point straightaway.

"Waal," drawled Fish, "can't ye guess? I'm gwine to spend my Christmas as every Amurrican in this yere country should. I'm writing to my popper over there, and asking him to send me as many Amurrican papers as he can lay his paws on. I reckon I want to larn something about the boys who're coming over to fight the Hun. Some boys, I reckon they are, too. Mister Fritz will get the wind up when he meets the Amurrican boys. Now, jest you read this yere article about the Amurrican—"

I would very much have liked to peruse the article, but, as I told Fishy, I had got an almost superhuman task on hand, and time was valuable. In Fishy's own language, I vamoosed, and went in search of Billy Bunter.

I found Bunter in the tuckshop, trying to knock Mrs. Mimble for a couple of buns. Mrs. Mimble wasn't having any, and, seeing that Bunter was in a disagreeable mood, I thought it best to appease his hunger before talking about Christmas.

I paid for the buns, and Bunter commenced to eat ravenously.

"I'm going to have the time of my life this Christmas," said Bunter, in reply to my question; "that is, if I'm alive then. The grub they supply at this rotten show is killing me fast. The quality is rotten, and the quantity—well, they don't give you enough to fill a tooth, let alone your stomach! Now, this morning I had—"

"Excuse me," I interrupted politely, but firmly. "I was talking about Christmas. Now, what I want to know is—"

"Keep your wool on!" snapped Bunter. "I was only going to enlighten you on a matter of great importance. But Christmas!" Bunter grinned all over his fat face. "I'm going to have the feed of my life then. I'm going to have turkey, and ham, and Christmas-pudding, and nuts, and sweets, and cakes, and—and anything else I can lay my hands on. My people have been hoarding it all up for weeks, and we're going to have a regular blow-out. I've had enough of this food-rationing business."

"You intend to disobey the Food Controller's orders, then?" I asked.

"I suppose I can do as I like!" said Bunter, with a sniff. "Besides, I must live. Supposing I were to die?"

I didn't say that it would probably be a good thing for everybody if this did happen. I merely remarked:

"But think, Bunter, supposing everybody was of the same frame of mind as you, there wouldn't be enough food to go round."

"Well, whose fault would that be?" said Bunter unreasonably. "The Government must find the grub. If they can't do it, then they deserve to be shot. Besides, the people ain't half smart. They don't know the way to hoard like my people do. Now, if you want a tip—"

I was not in need of Bunter's tips, so I

took my departure, and walked across to the porter's lodge. Gosling was warming his feet by a roaring fire when I entered his parlour.

"I suppose, Mr. Gosling," I remarked, "you intend to spend Christmas with your sons and daughters, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—"

"Now, look here, young man," said Gosling, with an evil look in his eye, "if you mean that for impudence—"

"Not at all," I replied. "I had no intention of being impertinent."

"Well, drop the great-grandchildren then!" snorted Gosling. "Which as I'm not quite so old as all that. I've got one or two grandchildren, bless 'em, but no great-grandchildren. And just you make a note o' that! Now, as regards Christmas, we shall be very quiet—just me and the missus you know. We sha'n't 'ave much to eat, for the simple reason that we can't afford a lot. Food's werry dear, and drink—well, it's water for me this Christmas."

"Water!" I ejaculated. "But surely you will be able to afford a bottle of lime-juice?"

"Lime-juice!" exclaimed Gosling. "That ain't in my line. It's a kid's drink. If I could only run to a bottle o' g—I mean, wh— 'Ere, young feller me lad, watcher grinning at?"

"I'm sorry," I said plaintively. "I had no idea that I was smiling. You—er—didn't finish your remark, Mr. Gosling. You were saying something about a bottle of—"

"Young himp!" exclaimed Gosling. "Can't I say what I like? It's my opinion as you're trying to get at me. If you're wise, you'll take your 'ook before—"

Old Gosling looked very warlike just then. I didn't even say good-bye; I left the lodge at a run, quite sure that, in spite of all, the old porter would secure his bottle of gin by hook or by crook.

I was making my way to the School House when I espied Wun Lung, the little Chinese.

"Ha, Wun Lung," I said. "I presume you are looking forward to Christmas?"

"No savvy," replied the Chinese.

"You're longing for the Christmas holidays, I hope?" I further remarked.

"No savvy."

I coughed impatiently.

"Where do you intend to spend your holiday?" I asked.

"No savvy."

"Are you going home with Wharton?"

And still there came the reply:

"No savvy."

Wun Lung was in one of his obstinate moods. I gave him up as a bad job. He evidently did not want to savvy, and I had learned from experience that when this was the case the best thing to do was not to try and make him.

I still had two more fellows to interview at Greyfriars. They were Mark Linley and Lord Mauleverer.

I caught sight of Linley making his way to the footer-ground. I collared him at once, and put the question to him in regard to Christmas.

"I'm going home!" said Mark Linley, his

eyes sparkling with eager anticipation. "I am looking forward to seeing the old folks once again. Dad's been having a pretty busy time of it lately. He's on war work, you know, and working overtime every night in the week. But he's going to have four days off at Christmas, thank goodness! He's stuck it jolly well, and I'm only too glad to think he hasn't cracked up before this. It will only be a little family gathering, but, all the same, it will be a very happy one."

I impressed upon Linley that I hoped he would have a pleasant time, and then went in question of Lord Mauleverer.

I found his lordship where I expected to—lying on the couch in his study.

He looked up slightly as I entered, and waved his hand as though he expected me to depart.

"Please don't worry me," he drawled. "I'm beastly tired, and—"

"I won't detain you a minute, my lord," I said. "I've merely come to inquire how you intend to spend your Christmas."

"I intend to sleep!" declared his lordship. "I presume everybody will sleep at night."

I said. "But what do you intend to do during the day?"

"Sleep!"

"Sleep all day?" I questioned.

"Yaas!" drawled Mauleverer. "Finest way to spend a holiday. What's better than a good long sleep? A comfortable couch and—er—er—a good fire, and—well, I ask for nothing more."

Neither did I. His lordship's method of spending Christmas did not appeal to me in the least.

I had no one else to interview at Greyfriars. Next came the journey to St. Jim's. And a rotten journey it was, too! A fearful gale was blowing at the time, and it was jolly cold. I can tell you I was thoroughly glad when I arrived there.

The first fellow I came into contact with was the very fellow I especially wanted to see—Herbert Skimpole.

The genius of the Shell was crossing the quad, deeply engrossed in reading some bulky

volume. If I hadn't side-stepped quickly I should have charged into him for a cert.

Skimpole stopped, and gaped at me in surprise.

I didn't give him time to discourse on the merits of Professor Barmyrumptet. I came to the point immediately.

"Ah, my friend," said Skimpole, "I shall put the Christmas vacation to great use! I am at present engaged in writing a work of extreme importance. It is entitled 'The Necessity for Enlightening the Hun.' I have already written nine hundred and ninety-eight pages, but the Christmas vacation will provide me with an excellent opportunity for finishing the other two thousand-and-two pages."

"Whew!" I gasped. "You intend to do all that whack in a few weeks?"

"Why not?" queried Skimpole.

"But you'll have no time to eat!" I protested.

"That is of little importance," said Skimpole. "A true Determinist puts work before all. The satisfying of one's appetite must be deferred when there are matters of far greater importance to be attended to. The outrageous Hun is in great and urgent need of enlightenment, and my book, when circulated amongst our unprincipled enemies, will perform a greater deed than any performed by the sword. Now, I will read you the first chapter of my book. It—"

"H'm!" I interrupted. "Will you tell me where I can find Trimble?"

"He was in his study ten minutes ago," replied Skimpole.

"Thanks very much!" I said, making off.

Skimpole caught hold of my arm and dragged me back.

"I will proceed to read you the first chap—"

Skimpole must have thought me very rude, for I pulled my arm free, and raced pell-mell towards the School House. I really could not have stayed to listen to Skimpole's recitation if he had paid me to do so!

I found Baggy Trimble in his study, and was very glad, too. I was feeling very tired,

and not at all keen in chasing all over St. Jim's for the fat junior.

"How do you intend to spend Christmas, Mr. Trimble?" I asked.

Baggy looked at me critically.

"If you're sponging for an invitation—"

he began.

"I don't follow you!" I interrupted.

"Well, that's all right, then!" snapped Baggy. "What I mean is, that if you're hanging after an invitation to Trimble Hall for the vac. you've come to the wrong shop!"

"Trimble Hall!" I repeated. "And what is that, may I ask?"

"The home of the Trimbles," explained Baggy. "Trimble Hall is the finest mansion in the country. It's about ten times as big as St. Jim's, and stands in about a thousand acres of ground."

"A very fine place, I should imagine," I remarked. "I suppose all your relations will be invited?"

"Yes; my titled relations will all be there," said Baggy, placing the emphasis on the "titled." "There's my uncle, Lord Grabpenny, and a cousin, Viscount Hogfooder; and then there'll be the Marchioness of Mugport, and—well, altogether there will be about twenty lords, ten viscounts, half a dozen dukes, and; according to a letter I received from my guv'nor this morning, a couple of princes. I can tell you, all the nobility in the land will be at Trimble Hall this Christmas! I should like to ask you, but, of course, you'd feel very much out of place at Trimble Hall. If you want a job as waiter, or—"

I was not very keen on my job as Special Representative of the "Herald" by this time, but even that was better than being a waiter at Trimble Hall.

I thanked Baggy for his offer, and started on my return journey to Greyfriars, weary, worn, and in need of a good sleep. It is not all beer and skittles being a Special Representative!

THE END.

FOILING FISHY!

By FRANK NUGENT.

"BUNTER, my fat clam, what's your verdict?"

"They go down like—like lollipops!" said the Owl, fixing his glistening eyes upon Fishy's basket. "Hand me another, Fishy, old chap! I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Nope!" said Fish promptly. "Now, you fellows, I guess Bunter's the great judge in these matters. Roll up and buy! Sixpence a time, I reckon!"

[Before I go any further with this I want to caution the reader not to mention a word of what I have to say to the Rhondda bird if you happen to run up against him in the street. It would be the Old Bailey for Fishy. And whom should we have left to bump then? Bunter is such a weight!]

We weren't very keen on Fishy's offer at first. So far as we could see, his delicacies were those celebrated currant-buns made on the brickbat principle, which take about a week to digest.

"Sixpence is a pretty hefty price to pay for a mouldy bun," remarked Wharton. "I don't think you'll find many takers, Fishy."

"I guess these are something surprising for war-time," said Fishy. "The new loyalty bun! Kim on! Slick's the word! Roll up!"

Bolover was in funds, and bought one. He had barely taken two mouthfuls before he snapped up half a dozen.

After that there was a rush. Harry and I and Bob and Johnny and Inky all had one apiece.

They really weren't currant-buns at all, save for the crust. The insides were full of a rich, creamy substance—that prime favourite of pre-war times. Fishy did what he called a roaring trade, and his stock diminished swiftly.

"Where on earth did you get these from, Fishy?" demanded Wharton. "Don't you know the Food Controller has put his foot down on these?"

"Guess you're going to split, hey?" chuckled Fishy, handing them out.

"Don't be an ass! Who sold you them?" Fishy winked.

"Gee-whiz! Likely to tell you that, ain't it? Sold out now! So-long! I'll have another lot to-night."

His stock exhausted, he went off to his everlasting accounts.

Wharton looked round at the throng of fellows who were munching loyalty buns. He had thrown his into the fire, and I and a few others—after taking a few delicious bites—had followed his example.

"I suppose you chaps aren't going to encourage Fish in this?" he demanded.

"Hallo! Here's goody-goody Wharton in the pulpit again!" snorted Skinner. "It's Fishy's own look-out—he sells them! There's nothing illegal in buying them."

A murmur of assent rose from some of the fellows, and the bell for classes rang before further words could be exchanged.

As soon as we were dismissed Fishy made off down the lane with the basket on his arm. He returned in time for tea laden with loyalty buns.

His welcome was anything but cold. The lower Forms at least could not resist such a toothsome offer, and some of the Remove were pretty keen.

Fishy was doing a roaring trade in the Common-room when Bunter pelted into our study, puffing like a very fat steam-engine. Wharton was standing at the window with knitted brows, whilst I was pouring the third kettle of boiling water on the same leaves—never did that before the war!

"I say, you fellows," exploded the Owl. "I know where Fishy gets his stuff from! I followed him!"

Wharton spun round.

"Out with it, Fatty!"

"In Friardale, you know. An old rogue called Crimes sells 'em—specialises in 'em, according to a notice in his window. That rotter Fish ought to be shown up, I say! It's our duty to inform the Food Inspector for this district of his swindling stunt. He charges a tanner, and they're only fourpence!"

Bunter was bubbling over with virtuous indignation, and Wharton patted him on the back.

"Good for you, Bunter! Thanks for the tip! Here's a couple of bob."

"How many shall I fetch for you, then?" asked Billy, pocketing the florin. "You'd

better have a quid's worth while you've the chance."

Wharton laughed, and shook his head.

"You're going for them yourself, then?"

"Nunno; not exactly. We don't want any."

Bunty stared, and waddled out of the study, knitting his fat brows. He couldn't fathom Wharton at all.

"I dare say this Crimes chap has been hard hit by the war," mused Harry. "But this isn't playing the game, you know. It's a halfer to-morrow. We'll give him a call."

There are plenty of kids around Friardale, and Crimes got most of his custom from them. He thought this cream-bun wheeze would brighten things up a bit. Goodness knows things need it!

The sun shone through the window upon the innocent—if unpalatable—looking currant-buns, which suggested everything that was righteous.

Unfortunately, Mr. Crimes himself banished any suspicion of righteousness. He was a narrow-browed, squint-eyed, bald-headed little man, with a face which nearly frightened us out of the shop.

The currant-buns were labelled "Loyalty buns, 3 for 1/-," and Wharton ordered three and planked down half-a-crown.

Crimes handed over the goods with such a cunning grin that he gave us the impression we were being swindled; and Wharton counted his change very carefully. It was quite right, however.

Then he broke a bun across, and was about to deliver a well-prepared lecture for the old man's good, when he observed the bun to be quite genuine! The distrust was evidently mutual.

Mumbling "Good-afternoon!" we trooped out, and left the old joker rubbing his hands and leering.

"He only serves the pastries to those he can trust, I suppose!" grunted Bob. "It's wonderful how rogues can sniff each other out! Fishy found him!"

It was quite a warm day, but the sun had that wintry appearance which warns us that the autumn is on its last legs. So, accepting

(Continued on page 16.)

FOILING FISHY!

(Continued from page 15.)

Old Sol's warning, we resolved to make the best of it, and walked along slowly.

And we were not the only ones making the best of the lag-end of autumn, if walking slowly has anything to do with it. A baker's boy, balancing a tray of loyalty buns on his head, approached us with an expression of such guilty mystery on his face that I thought at the very least he had come to confess a lengthy series of murders he had committed.

"Sit, young gint," he whispered, poking Wharton. "If ye've nothing much on, yer might jest watch the bake'us for a matter o' twenty minutes! I'm going for a leetle—you know!" He made a motion with his hands indicative of shuffling cards. "I'll see yer right for a bun apiece—a real whipped cream 'un—what!"

Harry was about to give an indignant refusal when a sudden idea struck him. My elbow struck him first—in the ribs, as a hint to move on. But the idea must have struck harder, for he did not move on.

"There's the bake'us," indicated this daring young blade, taking silence for consent. "If Junk's pops in, tell 'im I'm wiv Crimes; an' if Crimes pops in, tell 'im I'm wiv Junk's—see?"

Wharton smiled and nodded, and the youngster, after depositing his tray on Crimes' counter, scudded away to join his reckless companion.

Harry, Inky, Johnny, and I went into Crimes' bakehouse, whilst Bob stood at the door keeping cave in case of Mr. Junk's.

There were about half a dozen trays covered with loyalty buns in here, and a few corded boxes, ready to be despatched, containing the same loyal foodstuff. Crimes had "sniffed out," as Bob put it, all the food-hogs of the district, and these parcels were for them.

Harry's eye roved over the boxes, and he spied one labelled "Mr. Ponsonby, Fourth Form, Highcliffe."

The box was quickly opened, the tops of the loyalty buns prised off, and the whipped cream scooped out. Each of us then set to work with paper and pencil.

Johnny's billet ran: "Heat and be 'appy!" Harry's affectionate inquiry was: "Is this how you like it done?" My contribution was a quotation from Tennyson: "Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand!" etc., by way of an edifying change. Inky's was rather more elaborate, and ran thuswise: "Question—Whyfore is this ludicrous loyalty bun like the esteemed head of Pon? Answer—Because it is emptyful!"

Wharton, probably thinking he was at work on the "Herald," blue-pencilled the "ful" as inconsistent with "empty," and then these notes, along with a few more of the same type, were placed in the hollow buns and the tops jammed on.

The majority were filled with sawdust, which we found in a box, and then the parcel for Ponsonby was repacked.

All the buns on the trays had shared the same sawdusty fate by the time a low whistle from Bob drew us helter-skelter to the door.

A figure with knock-knees and a white linen hat emerging from the door of the Sprint Inn indicated the approach of the terrible Mr. Junk's.

The baker's boy tore round the corner at that moment, and managed to reach us just before Mr. Junk's, which quite satisfied him. Indeed, he was more than satisfied, for had he not won threepence-halfpenny and a promissory note for a penny from his neck-or-nothing comrade round the corner?

We went for a stroll for half an hour, and made it in our way to pass Crimes' coming back. Loud voices raised in anger emanated from the shop, but we made no attempt to discover the cause of the altercation. Still, we observed that the word "sawdust!" was repeated many times and oft.

We were resuming our promenade to the school, when striding down the road came a massive-shouldered youth with a furious face. In one hand he carried a huge clump of wood, and in the other a loyalty bun which seemed to us to contain sawdust.

"O. M. B.!" chuckled Bob, which he confidentially told us meant "On Murder Bent!"

We passed several furious-faced villagers on our way back to the school that after-

noon, and for some remarkable reason they were all heading in the direction of Crimes'. Our attention was especially claimed by the appearance of a shrill-voiced lady, with her hair in papers, waving a pair of tongs in the air in a suggestive manner, and leaving a trail of sawdust in her wake as she made towards the loyalty bun purveyor's.

An hour afterwards Old Crimes received a parcel from the grubby hands of a very small boy. Opening it, he found it to contain a mass of sticky whipped cream, a little adulterated with ink, along with a note saying: "In the name of the law, desist!" And Crimes' only course was to desist. Anyway, he desisted.

But that concerns only the cream of the buns. The cream of the joke is this:

Fishy appeared at the gates round about tea-time with a beaming smile on his chivvy and a basket of currant-buns on his arm. Little dreaming that they were the lawful old stale ones, he had bought a quid's worth of the still imperfectly reformed Crimes, intending to sell them at eightpence apiece instead of a tanner, as before, thereby making one quid into a cool couple by the deal.

Did Fishy sell out his stock?

Well—er—nope! I rayther guess not, sires!

THE END.

—:O:—

COKERISH!

[A correspondent sent me the following, and claimed it was the original work of H. . . . O of the Fifth. I doubt it! For one thing, the spelling is correct; for another, the rhyme and metre are just above O 's "weight." Otherwise—well, it's Cokerish!—H. W.]

Oh, eyes, so nice and blue! So full of charm, of charm!

Oh, how I hope you never come to harm, to harm!

Oh, hair so soft, so wavy, and so brown, so brown!

I hope to see you as I go to town, to town.

Oh, how I like to meet you in the street, the street!

And love to see you smile; it is a treat, a treat,

To hear you speak, in charming voice and fair, so fair,

It makes me feel that I would do and dare, and dare.

And oh, I hope you like this little rhyme, this rhyme,

For it has taken me such a long time, long time

To make; but it has been a pleasure, a pleasure

To write and send to you, my treasure, my treasure.

(The remaining ten verses are "held over"—for ever!—H. W.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"IN ANOTHER'S PLACE!"

By Frank Richards.

This fine story tells of a big, hefty fellow who did not want to go to Greyfriars, and of another fellow who did want to. You will find out which of them went, and what became of the other one; but you will not get to the end of the business next week, though you will reach the end of a definite stage in it.

A few of you complain of the series type of story, but I think most of you like it. It gives Mr. Richards a far better chance, you know. Think what you would have missed if he had tried to cram the whole story of the Greyfriars barring-out into one yarn! When he sent me along the first of the series—"Judge Jeffreys"—I wrote to him by return to say: "This is going to be a barring-out, I can see. Well, don't rush it. Let it run on into several stories." I am not sure that he needed telling, though;

Mr. Richards knows a thing or two. I should not have minded if it had run on longer, and I don't think any of you would. But it was good—as good as the very best—as it was, so we have no right to grumble.

STARTING A NEW VOLUME.

Next week's number will be the first of Volume 12. A new volume does not mean so much to us as it does in the cases of some papers which have several serials starting all at once. But still, the beginning of a volume is quite a good time to start taking a paper. You might tell your chums that!

CHEERING WORDS.

You will remember that a few weeks ago I inserted, at the request of the Rev. Kenneth Ashcroft, a notice of a meeting at Hackney at which the Bishop of London was to address lads of between fourteen and eighteen. Since then I have heard from Mr. Ashcroft that the hall was absolutely packed, and he is good enough to say that he thinks quite a number of the fellows present came because of what I had said here and in the "Gem."

Well, I think it had some effect, for I believe that the two papers exert a very real influence, and I am glad to believe it.

Another clergyman who was present at the meeting told Mr. Ashcroft that the headmaster of a boys' school in his parish read to his senior boys what I had written, and asked them how many of them were readers of the MAGNET and "Gem." Fully three-quarters of them put up their hands! And it appeared that the girls read them, too. I don't know whether that surprised the headmaster—to whom I offer my thanks—but, anyway, it does not surprise me. That is the sort of school I like to hear of; and those of my readers who were numbered among the crowd who put up their hands will please accept my best wishes and hearty congratulations.

FOOTBALL.

Matches Wanted By:

RAVENSCLIFF JUNIORS—15½.—John Perry, 34, Greenside Road, Shepherd's Bush, W. 10.

HIGHGATE JUNIORS—12-15—4 mile radius.—C. Isaacs, 18, Belden Lane, Great Horton, Bradford.

NEWTON AMATEURS—16½—6 mile radius.—S. Ratcliffe, 80, George Street, Hyde, Cheshire.

LEWIS DAVIS ATHLETIC—16-17.—J. Kaufman, Messrs. Lewis Davis & Co., 22, Queen's Road, Dalston, N.

Six players wanted for football club—14-16½—write or call.—F. J. White, 26, Edenvale Street, Fulham, S.W.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED BY:

S. G. Finch, 35, Landseer Avenue, Manor Park, London, E.—with boy readers in Africa, India, Australia, and South America interested in ornithology.

R. P. Hirst, 9, Victoria Terrace, Dudley—with boy readers in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

T. W. MacCormack, 32, Park Place, Clapham, S.W. 4—with readers overseas interested in stamp collecting.

A. Feldman, 71, West Grove Street, Bradford—with readers overseas interested in stamp collecting.

Chas. Swinnerton, 44, Colehill Lane, Fulham, London, S.W. 6—with boy readers anywhere overseas.

Ernest Clowes, The Lodge, Melbourne General Cemetery, Carlton, Melbourne, Australia—with boy readers in British Isles—age 16.

J. McCarthy, Cambridge Street, Gladeville, Sydney, Australia—with boy readers in British Isles—about 15.

Miss Florrie McBride, 339, City Road, South Melbourne, Australia—with girl readers anywhere—14-16.

Your Editor