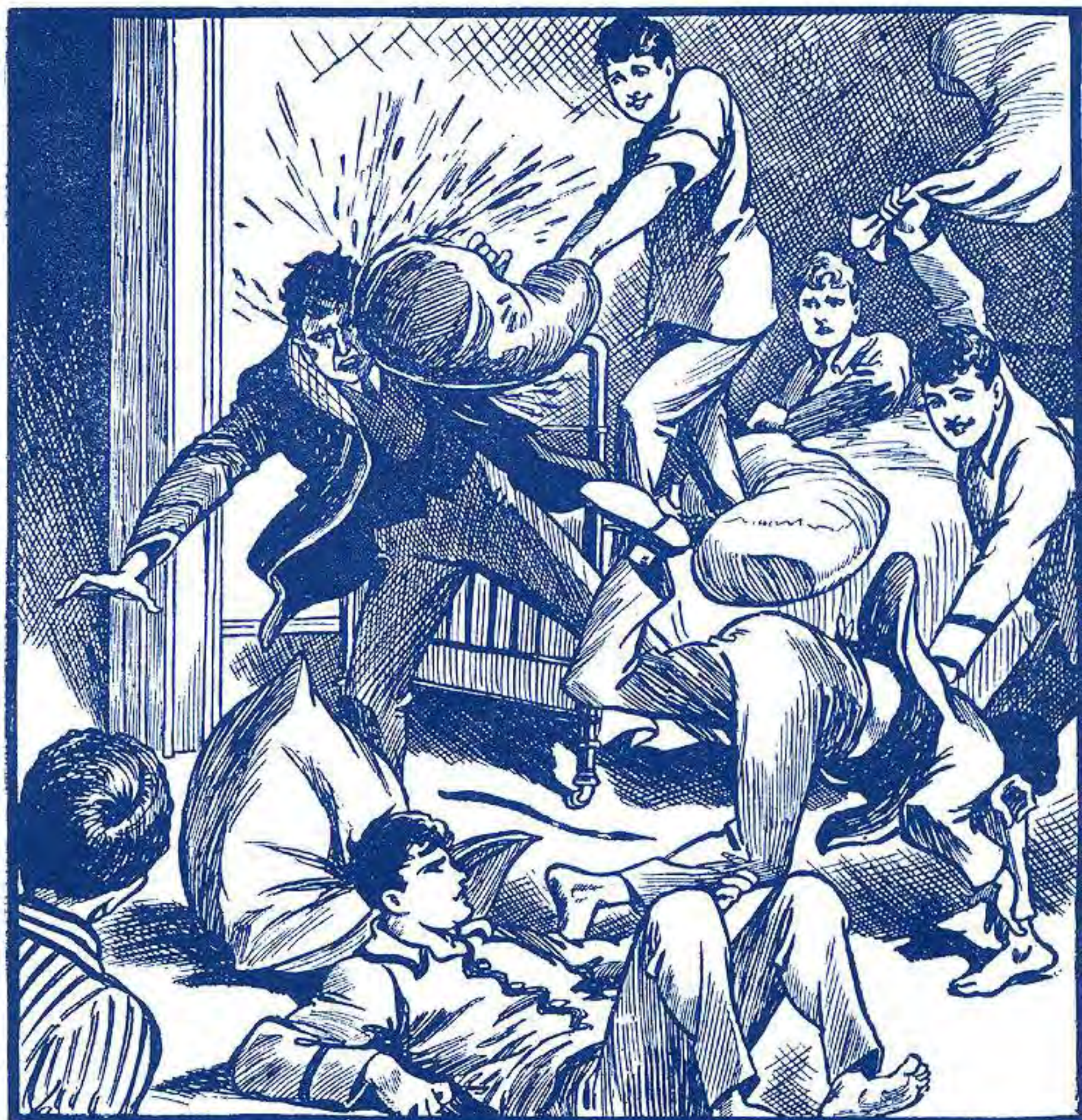


A SOLDIER'S SON!

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BAGGING QUELCHY!

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A SOLDIER'S SON!

By FRANK RICHARDS

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

WHAT a burbling idiot!" Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, made that remark. He was not referring to himself, though he might have done so with a great measure of truth.

The great Coker was fuming. He had succeeded, after a good deal of argument, first with Mr. Prout and then with the Head, in getting permission to come to London to see a cousin off to the Front.

After many delays, he had arrived; but of Second-Lieutenant Percy Harper, his cousin, there was no trace or sign.

The great railway terminus was packed with people, and the boat-train was almost due to start.

Coker turned almost pale.

"The thundering ass!" he exclaimed. "He'll miss the train! And then he'll get it fairly in the neck. Wonder where he's wandered off to?"

Coker was alarmed for his cousin. Percy Harper had not long left school, where he had been renowned for his japes and rash exploits. Perhaps he would try on some of those japes in the Army. If so, Coker reflected, he would find himself heavily up against it.

The surging, hustling crowd became noisier than ever. The guard gripped his flag, and farewells were being exchanged from one end of the train to the other. The departing khaki heroes bore themselves bravely; but there were those among them who would never see London again.

Coker stamped angrily up and down the platform. Night had fallen, and it was very chilly; besides which, he was exceedingly hungry.

And now, to add to his list of troubles, his wayward cousin was missing the boat-train.

"He'll be court-martialled!" muttered Coker. "There's no hope for him—none whatever! And the confounded train's about to start, too!"

A couple of porters slammed the wooden barriers, to prevent any more people from coming on to the platform. No sooner had they done so, however, than a young, almost girlish-looking sub took a flying leap from the other side, clearing the barrier in brilliant style. He then promptly dived for the nearest first-class carriage.

"Percy!" roared Coker, in astonishment.

Second-Lieutenant Harper, now safely ensconced inside the carriage, hastily thrust his head out of the window.

"Good for you, Horace!" he said gaily, as he sighted his cousin. "Shake!"

"You—you duffer!" gasped Coker breathlessly. "You cut things jolly fine that time!"

"I know. But a miss is as good as a mile—especially if she's a nice miss, with golden locks!"

"You—you've been fooling around after a girl?" exclaimed Coker.

"Why not? Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we—well, one can't do much courting in the Flanders mud, you know!"

The train was on the move now, and the Greyfriars fellow ran alongside, keeping pace with it.

"Glad you're going, Percy?" he jerked out.

"Yes, rather! Don't suppose I shall do much towards winning the war, though," added Percy ruefully. "Wish I wasn't so undersized."

"Rats! Little men have altered the map of Europe before now."

The young lieutenant's hand met that of his cousin in a close grip; and the long train thundered on, leaving Coker standing rather giddily on the platform, and wishing he were a year or two older.

The Fifth-Former glanced at his watch. In a short time his return train to Friar-dale would be due to start. He began to look for the platform.

Somehow, however, things had become strange and uncanny. The station lights had gone out, and it was almost impossible to distinguish the platforms at all.

"What on earth's the matter?" muttered Coker. "It's not late, and—"

A startled porter brushed hastily by him, and was about to plunge into one of the subways. Coker's arm shot out, and he gripped the man by the shoulder.

"What's the little game?" he demanded.

"Lemme pass!" growled the porter. "An' don't stand there, unless you wants to be blowed to bits!"

"My hat!"

"Listen!" gasped the porter hoarsely.

"They're 'ere!"

Boom!

It was the sound of a gun—and not very far off, either.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Then the why and wherefore of these things dawned upon Coker's slow brain. He had walked into an air-raid!

"Great Scott!" he muttered; but made no attempt to move.

Air-raids had no terrors for Coker. There had been a few in the vicinity of Greyfriars, and they had excited curiosity rather than fear. Such events relieved the monotony of life.

Meanwhile, the porter with whom Coker had been in conversation disappeared into the nether regions. The roof of the railway-station was of glass, and it was tempting Providence to stand beneath it, as if to say, "Please hit me." Like a celebrated comic character, the porter knew of "a better 'ole."

Coker could hear other sounds now, besides the booming of the guns. There were hissing, crackling noises, followed by the detonations of bombs.

By this time Coker was alone on the platform, save for a cheery-looking man in khaki.

"The bang-boys are here," said the latter.

Coker grinned.

"I'm going to see the fun," he said.

And, nodding to the soldier, he walked out of the station.

There were certainly great things going on overhead. The very stars in their courses seemed to be performing strange revolutions. Occasionally would come a blinding flash of light and the spatter of falling shrapnel.

Coker stopped short in the deserted street. Was it altogether wise to expose himself to danger like this? He hated the idea of taking cover, and yet—it would not be funky, but wise. Coker had no wish to be cut off untimely by the shrapnel of his protectors.

A deluge of fragments close at hand decided the issue. Coker turned, and bolted into the nearest shelter.

This happened to be a spacious building—the offices of an insurance company.

As Coker rushed in he heard a sudden cry of warning from the street without. The door through which he had entered was slammed to, and at the same instant came a jagged flash of light, whilst the earth seemed to rise up and strike Coker in the face.

"My stars!" he gasped; and the next moment he measured his length on the floor, stunned and insensible.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A Close Call!

WHEN Coker came to his senses he was conscious of a feeling that all was not for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

To begin with, he was extremely giddy and unbalanced. It had not been a nice sensation, to be hurled to the floor by the impact of an exploding bomb.

But this was not the only shock to Coker's nervous system. There was something in the air which heralded imminent danger.

Fire!

Yes, that was it. Somehow or other, the building in which he had taken shelter had caught fire.

"My hat! I must get out of this!" muttered Coker.

But he found it difficult to rise. His head was singing, and strange lights danced before his eyes.

"Confound those beastly Huns!" he growled.

And then he sank back on the floor once more.

The situation was so tragic as to be almost farcical.

Coker could almost have burst out laughing. He ought to be en route for Friar-dale now; yet here he was—apparently alone—in a strange building, which, to judge by the clouds of suffocating smoke which filled the room, was in flames.

Coker wondered vaguely what was going on at Greyfriars just then. He supposed the fellows would be going to bed. Or perhaps a raid warning had been given, and they were staying up in the hope of seeing the fireworks.

His friends in the Fifth would be getting anxious about him. When he was

with them they persisted in regarding him as a mere funny man; but, for all that, they were strongly attached to him. The Fifth Form would have been dull without Coker.

The smoke-fumes were rapidly becoming more intense, and Coker realised that it was high time he should seek safety.

He stumbled to his feet with an effort, and groped his way towards the street door. This, however had not only been slammed after him, but locked on the outside. It was a stout door, and Coker could not possibly have effected an exit in his present exhausted state.

He turned, and went back into the inner room. The boom of the guns was distinctly audible. The raid was still in progress.

"It means bashing in a window, by the look of it," mused Coker. "I shall have to do something desperate, unless I want to be roasted alive!"

And then, for the first time, he noticed a ray of light shining through the chink of an adjoining door, and heard the voice of a girl. It was a cool, clear voice, and its owner was apparently quite unruffled by recent happenings.

"Hallo! Is that the fire-station? This is the Premier Insurance Company. Buck up! The building's on fire! No one's in danger, but there are a lot of valuable documents here. What's that? You're coming right now? Oh, good!"

Coker heard the receiver put up, and marvelled. He had read of wonderful cases of self-possession during air-raids, but this was the first time he had come up against it in reality. The girl had spoken as if a piece of plaster had fallen off the ceiling, instead of a German bomb having exploded within a few yards of her.

It then occurred to Coker that he might as well make his presence known. He coughed; and, getting no response, he barked.

The door between the two offices was swung open, and the girl came into view.

Coker noted her slim figure and her cheerful, smiling face with approval. He rather prided himself on his good taste in girls.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the girl. "Where did you spring from?"

Coker explained. He did so with difficulty, for the smoke was denser than ever now, and was affecting his lungs and speech.

"Air-raid. Dodged in here. Bomb came. Heard you 'phoning," he managed to announce.

The girl nodded.

"Are you aware that the building's on fire?"

"I knew something had happened."

"It's serious. You'd better clear out."

"Can't! The door's locked."

"In that case, we must make our way out by the basement. This place looks as if it's on the verge of a total collapse! Come with me."

Horace Coker, who was in the habit of leading rather than being led, hardly liked the idea of being given commands by a girl. But then, this was no ordinary girl. She was the sort of girl whom he felt he could readily follow to the ends of the earth.

They made their way down a flight of stone steps and entered the basement, at one end of which, the girl explained, was a garage.

Coker stumbled once, and nearly fell, and the girl caught him by the arm with some concern.

"You are hurt!" she exclaimed.

"No, not! Only shaken up a little," protested Coker. "I—I shall be all right. I say, why didn't you come down



Miss Malcolm takes it coolly! (See Chapter 2.)

here when you first knew there was a raid?"

"I wouldn't let an air-raid frighten me from my duty."

"You're a plucky kid!"

"Thank you! I am a soldier's daughter!"

There was pardonable pride in the girl's tone. Her father had just won the D.S.O. for leading a glorious charge in Flanders.

"I wish there were a few more like you, anyway," said Coker. "We'd have had this war through by now."

They had reached the garage by this time. A driver, who had been dozing in his car, came forward at their approach.

"The all-clear signal's been given," he said.

"Good!" said Coker. "We've had enough excitement, I think."

The next moment the clanging of a fire-engine sounded.

"They'll soon get the flames under now," said the girl confidently.

Coker nodded.

"May I ask your name?" he asked.

"I—I owe you something for this."

"Nonsense! My name is Connie Malcolm; but please don't speak as if you're under an obligation to me."

"You saved my life!" said Coker stoutly.

A ripple of laughter burst from the lips of Miss Malcolm.

"I led you to a safe place," she said; "that was all. It was nothing. I'd much rather you didn't make a fuss about it."

But Coker was not going to let this slide so easily.

"Is there no return I can make you, Miss Malcolm?" he asked. "This is too one-sided to suit me. You've done all the giving, and I've done nothing. Are you sure I can't be of service to you in some way?"

Connie Malcolm had regarded Coker curiously whilst he was speaking. When he concluded, she looked up at him quickly.

"You are a Greyfriars boy?" she queried.

"Yes."

"I thought so, by your cap. Well, there is certainly one way in which you can help me if you're really keen."

Coker caught eagerly at the chance. "Just say the word," he said. "I don't care what you ask. It shall be done!"

Connie smiled.

"My young brother goes to Greyfriars very shortly," she said.

"Good!"

"It's very far from being good, if you only knew it. He's a tartar."

"Tartars are soon tamed at Greyfriars. Surprising how quickly they fall into line, you know."

The girl looked dubious.

"I'm afraid Roy will be a big handful," she said. "He's very impetuous, and very headstrong, and—and I'm afraid it may land him into trouble. In short, he wants someone to keep a fatherly eye on him."

"You need look no farther than me for the fatherly eye," grinned Coker.

"That's very nice of you! But I hope you understand clearly what you're taking on. If you really mean this, I want you to stand by Roy in everything. He will be getting into endless scrapes. He's absolutely reckless—almost a barbarian, in fact. There! The keenness has worn off a bit now, I expect?"

"Not a bit of it! I'm game to take this brother of yours under my wing, Miss Malcolm. I'll be his—ahem!—his guardian angel. He can come to me for advice of any sort on any subject, and he'll get it—free, gratis, and for nothing. I'm thought no small beer of at Greyfriars, you know."

Coker could not resist the temptation to collar a little limelight.

"Yes, you must be a great man when you're at home!" said Miss Malcolm gravely. "Thank you so much for offering to take charge of Roy! He'll need it, I can assure you."

It was cold standing in the garage, and, the raid being over, and the firemen having extinguished the flames which had menaced the premises, Coker and Connie Malcolm parted company after a handshake.

Coker glanced at his watch, and realised that, late though the hour was, there would yet be another train to

Friardale, and he walked back to the station with a light heart.

He had undertaken to show Roy Malcolm the ropes, and to act as his guide, philosopher, and friend. And—not for the first time in his life—Horace Coker had bitten off rather more than he could chew.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Goes West!

GREYFRIARS is the place for you, my son! You may argue till you're black in the face, but I shall not waver in my resolution!

Captain Malcolm, D.S.O., home on short leave from Flanders, looked at his son with a firmness that was unmistakable.

Roy Malcolm, passionate and rebellious, stood before his unyielding parent. He was by no means bad-looking, and he had certainly a fine fighting chin.

"I tell you, dad, it's no use!" he rapped out. "I want the Army life—that, and no other! I've had enough schooling at that beastly preparatory place, and now I want—as you know I've always wanted—to be a soldier. I don't care if it means joining up as a private. I'll chance that. But I mean to fight! No feather-bed life for me, thanks!"

"You impertinent young puppy! You're only fifteen!"

"Fellows of fifteen have fought in the trenches before now—yes, and fallen, too!"

"True; but because a number of lads have let the glamour of war get into their heads, and in many cases made asses of themselves, it doesn't follow that you should. And you're not going to—understand? Not another word! If I can command a company, I can certainly command my own son!"

Roy Malcolm gnawed his lip savagely. His cheeks were burning, and he had never come so near defying his father as now.

"Your trunk is packed," went on Captain Malcolm, more quietly, "and Dr. Locke is anticipating your arrival at Greyfriars. I'm sorry, Roy, if I do you an injustice; but I don't think you will ever make a soldier. The enthusiasm's there all right, but when you came up against the stern reality of war I fancy you'd waver. In any case, you're too young to think about soldiering yet."

Roy threw out his arms wildly.

"You don't understand, dad! I—I've got the fighting spirit, but you don't seem to recognise it. Just give me the chance. I'll jolly soon show you—"

"That's enough! There's no necessity to prolong this interview. You should give your father credit for acting in your best interests."

The captain laid an affectionate hand on his son's shoulder.

"Look here, Roy!" he said. "I do wish you'd understand that I'm your pal as well as your father. If I considered it a false move to send you to Greyfriars, I shouldn't dream of doing it for a single moment. Don't you see that I've got your welfare at heart? I want you to go through your school career with a straight bat, and then—then we'll reconsider the question of your future."

But Roy, like Rachel of old, refused to be comforted. He had set his whole heart and soul on going into the Army, and it maddened him to think that his father would not fall in with his wishes.

He stamped out of the room, sullen and resentful.

"I'll jolly soon show him whether I've

the makings of a soldier or not!" he declared to himself. "I don't know what sort of a place Greyfriars is, but it's going to get a thundering good shaking-up when I come on the scene, anyway!"

An hour later Roy Malcolm had bidden farewell to his father and sister, and was on the way to the school.

Very black and bitter were his thoughts as he sat in his corner seat and watched the flying landscape. A wild idea of breaking away from all ties had occurred to him. Supposing he joined the Army off his own bat?

But he had too much respect for his father to do this. After all, Captain Malcolm meant well. He simply couldn't see how great a grip the martial spirit had on his son—that was all.

Roy continued very restive. He glared everybody in the carriage out of countenance, and had made himself silently disliked long before the train steamed into Courtfield Junction.

"Change 'ere for Friardale!" grunted a sleepy porter.

Malcolm hauled his trunk on to the platform, and jumped down after it. He was feeling weary and fagged and fed up, and ready to quarrel with anybody.

He was not prepared for a reception when he reached Friardale. His sister had told him about Coker, but he had not supposed that the great Horace, who, from all accounts, outshone Solomon in all his glory, would put himself out to meet a mere junior.

But Coker was there all right. He had reached Greyfriars in the small hours of the morning, to the general relief of the fellows, who had not been happy in the thought that he might have stopped a German bomb.

And now, worn out though he was with the adventures of the previous evening, Coker was fulfilling his promise to Connie Malcolm, and was ready to take the boy to his bosom.

He was not the only Greyfriars fellow on the Friardale platform. Billy Bunter, who had heard vague rumours that the Malcolms were princes of wealth, was determined not to miss such a golden opportunity of getting a postal-order cashed in advance.

Billy Bunter had not bargained for Roy Malcolm being anything but amiable. That was just like Bunter. He butted in at all times, in season and out of season, and frequently had to pay a heavy price for his indiscretion.

Poking a fat elbow in Coker's ribs, Billy Bunter rolled up to the new boy.

"Welcome to Greyfriars!" he said impressively.

Roy Malcolm gave a queer whistle.

"Well, if you're a real live representative of Greyfriars—oh, my hat! I thought Greyfriars was a public school—not a barrel warehouse!"

"Oh, really, you know—" protested Bunter feebly.

"I'll bet the Food Controller never comes down here," went on Roy. "His eyes would bulge out of his head if he saw you. It's disgusting! You'd be the envy and wonder of Berlin!"

The crushing sarcasm was completely wasted on Billy Bunter, who at once started on his pet topic.

"I—I say," he began. "I take an awfully keen interest in you, you know!"

"Very good of you!" said Malcolm drily.

"Not at all. I believe our paters are in some way connected. They went over the top together as—as privates, in nineteen-fourteen."

"That's a whopper, anyway! My pater has never seen service in the rank and file."

"Ahem! Well, they—they were old college chums."

"My pater has no old college-pudding chums!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"That's one in the eye for you, Bunt! Still more evidence that your pater was the proprietor of a coffee-stall!"

Roy Malcolm spun round at the voice.

"Are you 'Porker'?" he exclaimed.

"Eh? What? I'd have you know my name's Coker!"

"All right, Joker! Keep your wool on!"

"Don't take any notice of Coker," said Billy Bunter. "He's only here to cadge from you."

"Why, you fat rotter—" began Coker wrathfully.

Billy Bunter linked his arm affectionately in Malcolm's.

"On the strength of our family ties," he said, "would you advance me a quid until next week? I'll be awfully grateful!"

Malcolm made no reply. Billy Bunter hung on hopefully. People who refused to advance him a loan usually replied at once—and straight from the shoulder, too.

Malcolm seemed to be scanning the platform intently. A goods train had just slowed up in the station—a long train, chiefly coal and cattle.

With a twinkle in his eye, Roy turned to Coker.

"I think we'd better get rid of this undesirable alien," he murmured. "Give me a hand!"

Coker cottoned on to the little game, and the next moment, to his intense surprise and anguish, Billy Bunter found himself being hurled bodily into one of the rear trucks, where he almost disappeared beneath a perfect avalanche of dusty coal.

"Yaroooooh! Oh, you beasts—"

The sudden restarting of the goods train cut short the fat junior's screams of reproach. He went careering merrily down the line, his coal-black face, peering from the top of the truck, giving him the appearance of a Christy Minstrel.

And the amazing Roy Malcolm stood on the platform shaking with suppressed laughter, and whistling "It's a long, long way to Tipperary!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Extraordinary Behaviour!

SO you're Croaker, are you?" said Malcolm, when Billy Bunter had disappeared from human ken, so to speak.

"I've told you my name once!" growled Coker. "I believe you're rotting!"

"Rats! Life's too short and serious to rot. Bring my portmanteau along, and don't stand there like a stuffed dummy!"

"W-w-what?" gasped Coker.

He could scarcely believe his ears. Coker always insisted on respect from those he chose to term common fags, and the new boy's impertinence amazed him. Malcolm's conduct was on a par with that of a private soldier who tells his sergeant-major to go and masticate coke.

"And you might tip the porter for me," added Malcolm. "I've got no small change."

Coker looked grim. For two pins he would have felled Malcolm to the platform.

But two things stayed Coker's hand. Firstly, he had a sneaking admiration for the cool way in which Malcolm had got rid of Billy Bunter; and, secondly, he realised that he had to discharge faithfully his promise to Connie Malcolm. He had assumed the guardianship of

the new boy; and he could not very well open the innings by knocking him down. It wouldn't do.

So Coker, after clenching and unclenching his hands, and emitting a queer gurgle from his throat, shouldered the heavy portmanteau. The porter helped him to lift it into the waiting cab, and then Coker handed him a shilling.

"Hop in!" said Malcolm briskly, stepping into the vehicle. "You'll come in useful to pay the fare at the other end!"

"I'm not your giddy banker, you know," grumbled Coker.

"Really? You'll find yourself occupying lots of funny positions before I've finished with you! What sort of a show's Greyfriars?"

"Top-hole! But it won't be prepared to stand any of your rot."

"How awfully interesting! I hope they won't jump to the conclusion that I'm a new kid of the usual milksop variety. If they do, some of 'em will suffer!"

"One of the first things you must remember," said Coker, fighting to keep control of himself, "is not to put on side!"

"Oh, dry up! I don't want advice from a boot-faced idiot like you!"

"Boot-faced!" Coker nearly tore his hair. Even his best chums, Potter and Green, who sometimes took liberties with him, never referred to him as boot-faced. The insult stung him like a dart.

But he must keep a firm grip on himself, he reflected. It was infra dig. to have to submit to such unparalleled cheek; but there was Connie Malcolm to consider. He had given her his word; and Coker's word was as good as his bond.

The cab rattled over the ancient flagstones of the Close, and Coker, stepping out first, paid the fare. He was resigned to his fate now. Come what may, he must stand by Malcolm. Even if the fellow struck him, he must steel himself to turn the other cheek.

"Cart this portmanteau along to my study!" said Malcolm, in a commanding voice.

Coker grinned.

"Puzzle to know which is your study," he said. "Most of the Remove studies are already packed to overflowing."

Malcolm reflected for a moment.

"All serene," he said. "I'll shave yours."

Coker gasped.

"But—but—"

"Oh, don't keep butting like a blessed billy-goat! I'll shave yours, I say. Got me? Very well, then. Lead on, Mac-duff!"

Coker swallowed his pride with a tremendous effort, and humoured the new boy. He bore the heavy portmanteau along to his study, much to the amazement of Potter and Greene, who stood in the doorway.

"What the merry dickens—" began Potter.

"Have you taken up furniture-removing, old chap?" asked Greene.

"Who's this funny new freak, anyway?"

Roy Malcolm stepped quickly in front of Coker.

"Be careful," he said. "Only one person has ever called me a freak. He never did it again. They buried him!"

"My-my only aunt!" was all that Greene could say.

"You should never judge others by yourself," continued Malcolm calmly. "It's a dangerous habit. Now then, Smoker! Buck up with that portmanteau!"

Like a fellow in a dream, Coker tottered into the study, and dumped the portmanteau on to the floor. Malcolm followed him in, and cast a critical eye round the room.

"What a one-eyed show!" was his verdict.

The owners of the study were too thunderstricken to argue.

"In the first place," said Malcolm, "I don't approve of these pictures. There's not enough life and spirit in 'em. I'll jolly soon alter that!"

So saying, the extraordinary new boy calmly proceeded to strip the study of its pictorial adornments. The three Fifth-Formers watched him helplessly.

"And this bust of Homer," went on Malcolm, "it's horribly out of place. Make it Oliver Cromwell instead."

With which remark he caught Homer up in both hands and dashed him to the floor of the study. There was a rending crash, and Coker & Co. hastily dodged the flying fragments.

"My hat!" spluttered Potter, at length. "This is the limit—the absolute outside edge! Are you going to stand by and see the happy homo smashed up, Coker?"

The great Horace shrugged his shoulders wearily, as if the affair were beyond his control.

"Once I've got this room rigged up to my satisfaction," said Malcolm, "I think I shall be fairly happy. And you can come in now and again, Broker, so long as you wash your neck and scrape the outer layer of mud off your boots. But nobody else is going to invade this sanctum; understand that! You two cheerful idiots—the speaker indicated Potter and Greene—"can stand clear of the gates."

The fellows addressed looked positively murderous. They could not understand why Coker had not waded in long ago and wiped up the floor with this presumptuous intruder.

But if Coker was going to remain passive, they weren't. Moved by the same impulse, they advanced towards Roy Malcolm; and that young gentleman would certainly have had a sorry time of it had not Coker intervened.

"Stand back!" he exclaimed.

"What?" howled Potter. "You're going to side with this young Hun? You're going to turn against your own pals?"

"Needs must when the devil drives!" muttered Coker.

"You—you must be rotting!" gasped Greene.

"I'm not," said Coker. "I'm in sober earnest. If you lay so much as a finger on Malcolm, I shall be painfully compelled to chuck you into the fireplace one after the other."

"You mean that?"

"Every word!"

There was a long pause.

"So—so this study is out of bounds to us in future?" said Potter, at length.

"If Malcolm wishes it."

"Well, I'm jiggered! Come along, Greene. I shall burst in a minute, if I stay here. Coker's gone clean off his rocker, if you ask me. We shall have to wait till he's sane again."

And the two Fifth-Formers, amazed beyond measure at Coker's extraordinary conduct, threw one deadly look at Roy Malcolm and stamped slowly out of the study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Fun in the Form-room!

"H"AS anyone seen Bunter?"

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye, roving round his class, had noted that the Owl of the Remove was absent from his place.

There was no reply from the Remove. Not a single fellow there was aware of Billy Bunter's precise whereabouts at that moment. Even Roy Malcolm, who had sent the fat junior careerer down

the line, had no idea what his ultimate destination might be. And for this—as well as for other reasons—he held his peace.

"Really!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a gesture of annoyance. "I cannot understand Bunter's conduct. When was he last seen?"

"He's been absent all night, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"What?"

"He went into Friardale yesterday afternoon, and hasn't been seen or heard of since."

"But—but why was I not informed?"

"Wingate has been on the track, sir," said Wharton. "He sent out a search-party late last night, but they had no luck. Wingate himself waited up until very late, but Bunter didn't turn up."

"Can you suggest what may have happened to him?"

Harry shook his head.

"I haven't the remotest idea, sir."

"He may have walked into an air-raid," said Nugent.

"Not likely," said Bob Cherry. "It was blowing great guns last night. The Huns gave us a miss."

Mr. Quelch looked considerably worried. He had no love for Bunter, who was a slacker in class and out of it. At the same time, there was a heavy responsibility attaching to him as a master, and the thought that Billy Bunter might have got in the way of a motor-car, or tumbled over a lonely cliff, was not a pleasant one.

"Would you like us to go and hunt for Bunter, sir?" said Skinner eagerly.

"No, Skinner, I should not!"

"If he's lying unconscious somewhere, sir," said Bolsover cheerfully, "there might still be time for us to render first aid. I'll lead the expedition, sir, and we'll search every inch of the cliffs."

"You will do nothing of the sort, Bolsover! I will organise a further search-party at midday. We will now commence lessons."

But very few of the Removites could concentrate on their daily round. All sorts of conjectures were tumbling over each other in their minds.

Had Bunter come to grief somewhere? In any case, something extraordinary must have happened, or the Owl of the Remove would certainly be back by this time.

The morning was well on the wing when a heavy footfall sounded in the corridor without. A murmur of anticipation swept round the class.

Then the door of the Form-room opened, and the portly and familiar figure of P. C. Tozer appeared.

This in itself is a breathless event; but the person who brought up the rear—a fat lump of humanity, smothered from head to foot in coal-dust and grime, and with handcuffs clinking on his wrists—was, as Bob Cherry truly remarked, a sight for gods and men and little fishes!

Mr. Tozer cleared his throat. He was aware that forty-odd fellows were on tenterhooks to know the why and wherefore of his startling arrival on the scene, and he wished to be as impressive as the occasion demanded.

"Which I have took this young raskil into custody, sir," he said to Mr. Quelch. "He will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law!"

"But who—what— I don't understand!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"It's Master Bunter, sir!"

"Bunter!"

"My only hat!"

"He looks like a walking advertisement of Coolie Cut tobacco!" said Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Mr. Quelch raised his hand for silence. P.-c. Tozer then proceeded to get off his chest a further fund of information.

"Which it is my painful dooty to report, sir," he said, "that this young scamp was a-runnin' away from school. Caught in the hact, he was—in the werry hact!"

"Bless my soul!" muttered Mr. Quelch.

"He 'id 'isself in a coal-truck," continued the constable, "an' crawled out at Folkestone disguised as a nigger!"

"Folkestone! Great jumping crackers!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The railway officials nabbed 'im," went on Mr. Tozer; "an' 'e was brought back 'ere this mornin' an' 'anded over to me. Wot would you like me to do with 'im, sir?"

"Leave him here," said Mr. Quelch promptly.

P.-c. Tozer looked very disappointed. Sensations were rare at the local police-court, and he had been hoping to explode quite a lively bombshell there.

"Which I've took a lot of trouble in connection with this 'ere case," he growled.

"It was your duty to do so," said Mr. Quelch drily.

"When a man goes through all wot I've gone through this mornin'," hinted Mr. Tozer darkly, "some sort of a reward is generally 'anded to 'im. I reckon—"

Smack! Thud!

A couple of peashooters had opened fire from the back row. The peas were distinctly hard, and the aim was good. Mr. Tozer's nose and chin were at once placed on the casualty-list.

"Yow-ow-ow!" he roared.

The firing-party, spurred by their opening success, rained a perfect volley of peas on the long-suffering constable. Some of them struck Billy Bunter, and a brilliant duet of wails and groans followed. The village constable groped blindly for the door and fled.

When silence, more or less, was restored to the hysterical class, Mr. Quelch turned to Bunter.

"I will ask for no explanation of your outrageous conduct!" he thundered. "Go and cleanso yourself, and then return to me for a sound flogging!"

But Billy Bunter had no intention of going through with this cheerful programme. He had been wronged, and he meant to show all the world that he had been wronged.

"Do you hear me?" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

But Bunter had no ears for the Form-master. His furious round eyes had espied Roy Malcolm, and he at once rolled up to his tormentor, blinking at him angrily through his big spectacles.

"You beast!" he yelled. "You rotten cad! I've had a horrible night, all through your chucking me into that coal-truck!"

"Gerraway!" hissed Malcolm. "I don't want to be smothered!"

But the Owl of the Remove, though not a fighting-man as a rule, went all out on this occasion. He clasped Malcolm lovingly round the neck, and yanked him out of his seat; and then, locked in a close embrace, the pair rolled over and over on the floor of the Form-room, fighting like wild-cats.

Mr. Quelch, his temper already strained to its farthest limit, strode up to the spot with his cane, and did terrific execution.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Both the coal-black objects—for Malcolm was now quite as black as Bunter—received a series of stinging lashes. They rolled this way and that

way, but could not escape the vials of Mr. Quelch's wrath.

"There!" panted the Form-master, desisting only when his arm was limp with exertion. "I trust that will be a lesson to both of you. Malcolm!"

Roy struggled to his feet, feeling himself tenderly all over, as if to convince himself that no pieces had been chipped off him.

"You apparently were responsible for Bunter's disappearance from the school," rapped out Mr. Quelch. "I warn you to be very careful. Practical jokes will be put down with a firm hand. You are new to Greyfriars, and I shall therefore take no further action on this occasion. But if you transgress in this way in future—"

Mr. Quelch left the rest of the sentence to Malcolm's imagination.

"You will now go and make yourselves presentable," he added, after a pause.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the Form-room, shedding coal-dust and consternation wherever he moved, and Roy Malcolm followed him, feeling that his little jape on Bunter had not been attended with good results, and that he himself had hardly emerged from the affair with flying colours.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Malcolm Makes a Mess!

IN the short time he had been at Greyfriars Roy Malcolm had certainly made history.

He was snugly settled in Coker's study, and Potter and Greene, and even Blundell, the skipper of the Fifth, were refused admission. Coker's rash promise to Connie Malcolm was costing him dear.

For a Remove fellow to live, move, and have his being in a Fifth Form study was practically unheard-of, and Harry Wharton & Co. went their way in wonder. They couldn't understand why Coker allowed the new boy to take so many liberties.

Coker was rapidly making himself extremely unpopular. He cut his former friends, and was ever at Roy Malcolm's side, standing by him in scrapes, and conferring all sorts of favours upon him.

Roy himself hurled all this kindness back in Coker's teeth with rank ingratitude. He didn't want to be molly-coddled, he said. He was quite capable of looking after himself.

But that was where Coker disagreed. Malcolm was decidedly incapable of looking after himself. He kicked over the traces at every opportunity, and had he been given a free hand he would have secured for himself the sack from Greyfriars within a week. It was only Coker's unflinching loyalty that saved him.

But there were occasions when even Coker had no control over the wayward, reckless new boy. When Roy was in the Remove dormitory, he was, to a large extent, his own master, and he didn't forget to let things rip.

Harry Wharton & Co. had treated him very civilly, but Roy did not take to the Famous Five. He upset Hurree Singh's apple-cart by calling him a chocolate-coloured coon. He asked Johnny Bull why he wasn't on Active Service with the Heavy Brigade, and he referred to Bob Cherry as a grinning geeser.

But his summing-up of Harry Wharton went farther than this.

"Pretty fine sort of skipper you are—I don't think!" he said, slightly. "You look as if you'd stepped out of a box of tin soldiers. If I had any ambition in this cock-eyed show, I'd be captain of the Remove before you knew where you were! Luckily for you, I'm

not particularly keen to get on at Greyfriars. I'd rather get out."

"So you will if you talk like that—through the window!" said Harry grimly.

Malcolm sniffed.

"It would take more than you to do it!" he said. "Why don't you wake up in this sleepy old show, and make things a bit exciting? Dash it all, there's a war on!"

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry. "I heard a rumour to that effect three years ago. If you're so keen on making a stir, why don't you go out and have a smack at the Huns?"

Malcolm's eyes flashed.

"I'd love to!" he said. And there was no possible shadow of doubt as to his sincerity.

"Why not, then?" said Bob. "Get rid of those Eton togs, and you'd pass for eighteen with ease."

"I know; but my pater happens to be right up against the idea."

"Lucky for you! You'd be wanting to cry off after a week of bully beef and biscuits!"

"I don't think so," said Malcolm quietly. "You don't know me. But never mind that just now. Can't we organise an expedition of some sort? Haven't you any rivals you can score off?"

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "There's Coker & Co. of the Fifth—"

"Oh, but they're too feeble! We want something worth japing."

"Well, there's the Fourth. They've been on the war-path a good deal lately."

"Ripping! Then we'll go and pulverise the bounders!"

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner and Bolsover. The rascals of the Remove didn't quite know what to make of Roy Malcolm yet. They couldn't tell if he was for them or against them, or if he was preserving a blameless neutrality. Meanwhile, they thought it prudent to keep on the right side of him.

"Afraid it can't be done," said Harry Wharton. "You know what a row there was the other night, when Quelch bowled us out. He said that if he came across any more pillow-fighting he'd come down jolly heavy. Wait till he's gone to bed, if you like. If we do it now we shall simply be asking for trouble. Quelch's prowling around in search of victims."

"Oh, rot!" said Malcolm. "You've about as much spirit as a dormouse! Afraid to take the risk—what? Well, I'm not! Are there any more of the same mind?"

"Count me in," said Bolsover promptly.

"And me," added Skinner, not without a note of uneasiness in his voice, however.

"Sure, an' I'm wid yo entirely!" said Micky Desmond.

"Same here," said Bulstrode and Russell and Ogilvy together.

"That's the style! We are seven, as the poet says. And if we can't make ourselves felt, and reduce those Fourth Form idiots to a pulp, I'm a Dutchman!"

"I warn you—" began Harry Wharton.

"Oh, shut up! You make me tired! What does Quelch matter, anyway? After all, he can only lick us, and a fellow who funks a licking is a wash-out, pure and simple."

Bob Cherry bounded out of bed with a roar.

"I'm not standing this!" he exclaimed. "We can't let a blessed upstart of a new kid try and come it over us like this! If he's game to take the risk, then we are!"

The rest of the Famous Five followed Bob Cherry's lead. They were not

going to let Roy Malcolm conduct a campaign off his own bat. It would be a bad thing for the Remove—especially if the little expeditionary force proved a failure.

By this time Roy himself had secured a pillow-case and carefully stuffed it with soot from the chimney. It was evident that somebody in Temple's dormitory was booked for a joy-night.

"Where does the enemy hang out?" asked Malcolm.

Skinner gave the required information, and then Roy darted from the dormitory, hugging his deadly weapon and chuckling.

Fired with the joy of battle, the rest of the Removes sped hot-foot in his wake. For the moment they had forgotten Mr. Quelch and his threat of severe punishment if they were caught pillow-fighting again.

Temple & Co. were calmly enjoying the first sweet sleep of night. They were aware that the Remove had been warned off the grass, and did not dream that Harry Wharton & Co. would defy their Form-master.

Cecil Reginald Temple was considerably surprised when a hefty bolster, wielded vigorously by Bolsover major, smote him as he lay.

At the same time other thuds sounded in various parts of the dormitory. The invaders were getting busy. In a pillow-fight, as in many other undertakings, the old saying holds true that "thrice is he armed who gets his blow in fast."

"A raid!" yelled Temple, and he and Dabney and Fry sprang out of bed. The rest of the Fourth-Formers, dimly realising what was happening, speedily followed suit.

The Remove did tremendous execution. They were out for scalps. Most of them had been loth to take part in the raid; but, being in, there was nothing faint-hearted about their methods.

"Sock it into 'em!" boomed Bob Cherry's voice above the fray.

But it was Roy Malcolm who directed events in the main theatre of war. He stood his ground calmly in the centre of the dormitory, in defiance of the heavy blows, which the now fully-awakened Fourth-Formers rained upon him, and his voice rang out above the din.

"Mark your man, Russell! He's attacking you from the rear, like a Hun! Put some more ginger into it, Skinner! Try and imagine you're beating carpets!"

And so the merry game went on, and when the fight was at its zenith the uproar was terrific.

Roy Malcolm raised his soot-filled pillow-case above his head and prepared to go into action.

Peering through the gloom, he saw a tall figure loom up in the doorway. Surely it was one of Temple's men, he reflected. No Remove fellow was that size. He would smite, he told himself, and when he smote he would smite hard.

A curious hush had fallen upon the fellows near him, but Malcolm was too excited to notice it. He brought down the pillow-case with terrible force upon the head of his victim, and the soot emptied itself in one fell swoop.

The tall figure completely collapsed under the avalanche of soot, and muttered and spluttered like a maniac.

Then a sudden chilling fear gripped Roy Malcolm's heart, as Temple of the Fourth, completely unnerved, gave vent to one tense exclamation of awe:

"Quelch!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Real White Man!

HOSTILITIES had ceased, of course—with one wicket down, as Bob Cherry put it. Bob's sense of humour revealed itself at the most unexpected times and places. It could never be kept in check.

As for Mr. Quelch, that gentleman was striving to gouge the soot from his eyes and mouth, and his efforts were so pathetic as to be really comical.

None of the Fourth-Formers made any attempt to get into bed. They were bowled out fairly and squarely, and Mr. Quelch was not a person whom it was easy to deceive.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Temple. "What hopes?" muttered Dabney. "He'll come down like a thousand of bricks!"

By this time Mr. Quelch was beginning to recover.

"Who—who is responsible for this outrage?" he thundered. "In spite of my repeated orders to the contrary, I find the members of my Form indulging in a display of the wildest hooliganism! Wharton!"

"Sir?"

"What have you to say in connection with this disgraceful affair?"

The captain of the Remove was about to speak, when Roy Malcolm intervened. "It's my funeral, sir!" he said. All trace of panic had left him now, and he was smiling, and even cheerful. "I conducted this business off my own bat, sir. I as good as called these fellows a set of chicken-hearted cowards, and said it was up to them to come and trounce Temple & Co. They responded nobly," he added, with a glance at the scowling Fourth-Formers.

Mr. Quelch seemed in imminent danger of choking.

"And it was you, was it not, who plastered me with this—this black substance?" he stormed.

"The soot? Yes, sir. But I assure you it was quite unintentional. I was under the mistaken impression that you were a Hun——"

"What?"

"Ahem! I mean, a Fourth-Former, sir."

"You shall pay a heavy penalty for this," snapped Mr. Quelch. "You accept the whole of the responsibility for what has taken place?"

"Yes, sir."

"I—I say——" began Harry Wharton, stepping forward.

Malcolm pushed him aside. "Keep off the grass!" he muttered. "You don't want the whole Form to go through the mill, do you?"

Before Wharton had time to speak again Mr. Quelch had taken up the running.

"Temple," he said, "I shall report you to your Form-master, who will best know how to deal with you. The boys in my own Form who had a hand in this will forfeit the next half-holiday! I should have made the punishment considerably heavier but for Malcolm's timely confession. You, Malcolm, will report to me in my study after breakfast!"

"Splendid!" murmured Roy.

"You will return to your beds at once, all of you!" said the enraged Mr. Quelch. After which he rapidly made himself scarce.

The soot was worrying him, and he felt that, in his present deplorable state, he did not cut a very imposing figure. And he resolved to make Roy Malcolm pay dearly for the hour which he now had to spend in the bath-room.

The Removes, ignoring Temple & Co., returned to their dormitory, sober and chastened. But they were bubbling

over with gratitude to Malcolm, who had unhesitatingly volunteered to bear the whole burden. They felt that, whatever his shortcomings, lack of pluck was not one of them.

"It'll mean a jolly stiff licking, old son!" said Nugent.

Roy shrugged his shoulders. "I can stand it!" he said.

"And you'll probably be gated for whole terms!" threw in Johnny Bull. "Sorry to be such a Job's comfortor, but I know Quelch of old. He never does things by halves."

"I'll face the music," said Roy lightly. "Don't worry about me! I started this bizney, and it's up to me to see it through!"

There was really nothing more to be said. But many who had been inclined to doubt Roy Malcolm's qualities now speedily changed their views. It required a good deal of grit to take the sins of the whole Form on his own individual shoulders, and the juniors admired him for it.

When, after a sound and dreamless sleep and a hearty breakfast, Malcolm entered Mr. Quelch's study, he found the Form-master in a decidedly black mood. Despite his bath overnight, Mr. Quelch had not succeeded in totally effacing the soot-marks, and parts of his face presented a very raw appearance, caused by much rubbing and scrubbing.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as the culprit stood before him. "I take a very serious view of your conduct, Malcolm, and shall punish you with the utmost severity!"

Roy made no reply. Mr. Quelch took up a cane, and the victim obligingly put out his hand without waiting to be told.

Swish, swish, swish!

Mr. Quelch was in form. His temper and nerves had suffered a good deal, and in thrashing Malcolm he found a suitable outlet for his wrath.

Not that the Remove-master was brutal. He did not realise how savagely he was wielding the cane at that moment.

Swish, swish, swish!

Roy was beginning to think that his right hand had had about enough. Already ugly weals were forming on his palm: but Mr. Quelch kept on keeping on, until he was obliged to pause for breath.

"Now the other hand!" he rapped out.

For one brief second a flash of rebellion leapt into Malcolm's eyes. But he steadied himself, and calmly obeyed the order.

Swish, swish, swish!

The victim darted back with a gasp of pain. The last stroke had missed its mark, and the cane had lashed across Roy's wrist, causing him intense agony.

Then Mr. Quelch made an unfortunate blunder. He mistook the junior's retreat for an act of defiance.

"How dare you!" he thundered, and brought the cane into play once more.

He had barely delivered a couple of strokes, when the door opened and Wingate of the Sixth looked in.

"I came to see you, sir," he began, "about——"

The captain of Greyfriars stopped short, noting the expression on Roy Malcolm's white, tense face. Then he looked hard at Mr. Quelch, and saw that the latter had performed the rare feat of letting himself get completely out of hand.

"Excuse me, sir!" said Wingate quietly. "I've no right to interfere, and yet it—it looks as if Malcolm has had about as much as he can stand."

Wingate's tone was not lacking in respect, and it brought Mr. Quelch to himself with a start.

"I—I—— Bless my soul!" he muttered, as Malcolm reeled, and leaned

heavily against the wall of the study. "In my anger I have punished Malcolm more severely than I imagined. This boy, Wingate, was responsible for a most flagrant breach of the rules last night. He also assaulted me with a quantity of soot. I was angry—I should have curbed my anger. You may go now, Malcolm."

Roy braced himself up, darted one quick look of bitter reproach at the Form-master, and then walked out of the study, his hands still twitching.

"I'd a jolly good mind," he said, when he was on the other side of the door, "to get even with the brute for that!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "Just had a pleasant five minutes in the torture-chamber?"

Malcolm had no need to reply in speech. He merely held out his hands for Bob's inspection.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Quechy laid it on thick that time, and no mistake! He doesn't usually overstep the mark like this. Buck up, kid! It was awfully decent of you to carry the thing through off your own bat. You're a real white man!"

"I wonder," mused Malcolm, as he passed on—"I wonder if he'd say the same thing if I got a bit of my own back? Personally, I rather think not!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Joy-ride!

"ONE motor-bike—complete with side-car!"

Horace Coker made that statement with a vast deal of pride.

Roy Malcolm was stretched out on the sofa in Coker's study, busily turning over the pages of the Army List.

"In perfect running order—" murmured Coker.

"Br-r-r!" growled Roy.

"Two-and-a-half horse-power, twin cylinder, in topping condition—"

Roy Malcolm hurled the Army List at Coker's head.

"Dry up!" he shouted. "I'm not going to have all this drivel in my study!"

"Your study?" gasped Coker.

"Precisely. I'm monarch of all I survey here, and you ought to have got that fact well established in your bullet head by this time!"

"Look here!" roared Coker. There were times when his patient handling of Roy Malcolm threatened to come to a full stop. "I'm not going to be fooled with like this! You've got to understand that I'm your guardian—"

"Appointed by will, and approved by the High Court?"

"Don't be funny! I'm your guardian at Greyfriars, anyway, and I'm not going to stand by and see you make a prize duffer of yourself, as you did over that pillow-fight affair. You ought really to sleep in my dormitory; then you'd be under my wing the whole time."

"Rats!"

Coker frowned.

"You'll say that once too often, before long," he said darkly. "It's a wonder I've kept my temper up to now. If it weren't for Connie—"

"Eh? What's that?" exclaimed Malcolm sharply.

Coker flushed.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "Look here! You're coming for a spin in my side-car this afternoon. It'll keep you out of mischief."

"Thanks!" said Roy sweetly. "It's very nice of you, but I'm playing footer this afternoon."

"You're coming with me!" insisted Coker.

Malcolm threw out his hands wearily.

"My good idiot," he said, "how can I possibly ride in a side-car and kick goals for the Remove at the same time? It's like you—impossible!"

Coker's lower jaw set very stubbornly.

"I've been giving you a jolly sight too much rope!" he said. "I can see that I shall have to be firm with you. If you spend a half-holiday inside the gates of Greyfriars, there's no knowing what might happen. What you want is a fatherly eye."

"And what you want—and what you'll get if you're not careful—is a brotherly boot! I tell you, I'm turning out for the Remove this afternoon. Wharton went out of his way to give me the chance, and I'm not fooling it away. We're playing a tough team of townies, from Courtfield, and they've got to be beaten to a



KEEP ONE OF THESE CARDS.

It is mostly on the impulse of the moment that we fritter away our money. If we stopped to think we should remember that we are asked to save, so that our money may make things easier for the boys "out there."

If you carry a War Savings Card in your pocket, it will be a very useful reminder.

You won't mind going without some pleasures when you remember it is for the boys at the Front that you are saving, will you?

If you haven't one of these War Savings Cards, get one to-day from any post-office.

Each card is divided up into thirty-one spaces. Whenever you have 6d. to spare, you just buy a stamp at the post-office and fix it on one of the spaces. As soon as all the spaces are filled up, you can take the card to a post-office and exchange it for a 15s. 6d. War Savings Certificate.

In five years' time that certificate will be worth £1.

This is the very best way for a patriotic boy to put money by. Won't you try it?

frazzle. Reserve your joy-rides, Horace, my child, for another occasion."

"You're coming with me!" muttered Coker, breathing hard.

"Not on your life!"

"We'll jolly soon see about that!"

Coker strode to the study door, and, flinging it open, gave a sudden yell, which was answered by the prompt appearance of Fitzgerald, Potter, and Greene.

"Collar the young cub!" said Coker. "He refuses to come with me of his own accord. We'll yank him downstairs, and strap him into the side-car."

Roy saw at a glance that the situation was a desperate one. Yet what could he do? To show fight to four sturdy members of the Fifth all at once would be suicidal.

He knew that Harry Wharton & Co. would willingly have come to his aid, but they were out of reach at the moment, putting in some practice on Little Side,

where the match was due to take place in an hour.

He was fairly cornered. An attempt to run away would be worse than useless, for Blundell barred the door.

"You'll sing to another tune now, my pippin!" said Coker grimly. "Are you coming quietly?"

"You needn't nimb the local police. I give you best."

Coker was surprised to see his victim give in without a struggle; but he was suspicious, too, and made his Form-fellows accompany him down into the Close, Roy being wedged in between them.

"Going to strap him in?" grinned Fitzgerald.

"Yes, rather! He'll be taking a flying leap, or something, if we don't, and we shall be had up for fag-slaughter."

Coker produced some stout straps from the seat of the side-car, and Roy was hauled into the vehicle and made secure.

He looked around him wildly. If only the Removes were within reach at that moment!

But Coker held all the cards, and when he set the machine in motion, and whizzed down to the gates, Roy realised that all hope of liberty was past.

"You rotter!" he said furiously. "You've got the pull over me now, but I'll see that I get my own back for this! I was jolly keen on playing for the Remove this afternoon, too. It's too thick!"

Coker grinned. He looked a weird object with his goggles, and the grin made him appear positively hideous.

In the ordinary way Roy Malcolm would have enjoyed the spin; but he didn't enjoy it now, for two reasons. First and foremost, he had been robbed of a brisk afternoon's football; secondly, the straps were chafing his wrists, and he felt decidedly uncomfortable.

As the journey progressed, however, his spirits seemed to revive. Whether he had resigned himself to his fate, or whether he was evolving some scheme for gaining his own ends, was uncertain.

Coker whizzed on through the country lanes, enjoying himself immensely. In the past his guardianship of this tameless new boy had proved a dismal failure; but the present outing was certainly a great feather in his cap. He felt he would be able to look Connie squarely in the face when next they met.

Courtfield was passed in a flash, and Roy seemed to have quite settled down to the journey. He even became affable towards Coker.

"You're hot stuff!" he said admiringly.

"How far have we come?"

"Twelve miles. And we've been on the road barely twenty minutes. It's good going. But, of course, I understand this bike perfectly. I'd never let a motor-bike master me!"

"Quite so," said Roy. "You are a giddy genius!"

Coker melted.

"I'll take those beastly straps away now, if you like," he said.

"Good! I'm cramped all over."

Coker leaned over and removed the straps. Then the machine leapt ahead once more.

Before the next town was reached, however, great drops of rain began to fall. Roy pounced upon his opportunity.

"Might as well drop in for tea somewhere," he said. "Look! Here's a place just handy."

And so there was. Grateful for the chance of temporary shelter, Coker dismounted, and passed into the tea-shop, Roy Malcolm following in his wake.

"Might as well have a good feed while we've got the chance," said Coker. "Grub's scarce at Greyfriars, with all

these beastly war-time restrictions. What shall I order?"

"A cup of tea's good enough for me, thanks!" said Roy.

The waitress brought it, and Coker ordered sardines on toast.

Malcolm waited until Coker was well under way; then he gulped his tea down, and made swift and noiseless tracks for the door. Coker, who was enjoying himself immensely, failed to notice him.

In a flash Roy had gained the street and leapt on to the saddle of the motor-bike.

He glanced hurriedly at his wrist-watch.

Half an hour to go before the Remove faced Courtfield Ramblers.

Could he do it? Of course he could! He felt within him at that moment the enthusiasm that conquers the world. It would conquer a motor-bike, anyway.

The machine bucked and jumped, and then streaked away like a flash.

Turning his head, Roy saw that Coker, fuming and furious, had reached the street, and was gesticulating like a mad-man.

"Poor old Coker!" chuckled Roy. "I finished top-dog, after all. He's got a long, long way to go to get back to Greyfriars; but I can't help his troubles. And now for ninety minutes of crowded, glorious life! Topping day for footer, too!"

Meanwhile, Horace Coker was engaged in hacking up portions of the pavement with his boot, and bitterly abusing Roy Malcolm and all his works.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Tanks in Action!

THE Remove Eleven, under the captaincy of Harry Wharton, had played a variety of teams in their time, but this was their first meeting with the Courtfield Ramblers. The latter usually played against Wingate's Eleven, for in normal times they were a hefty, bustling side, above the weight of the Greyfriars juniors.

Most of the original team of Courtfielders were fighting on the various fronts. It was therefore believed that the present team would be a very weak and fifth-rate crowd.

But calculation often goes astray, and it did so in this case.

When the visitors arrived the hearts of the Removeites disappeared into their boots.

They were not up against boys after all, but men, and full-grown men at that.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Looks as if we've bitten off more than we can chew this blessed journey! These blessed giants will wipe the ground with us!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"It's not playing the game," he said. "They've sent over the hottest crowd they could rake together. Most of 'em are munition-workers, I expect. We shall be swept off our feet!"

The rest of the juniors dolefully agreed, and Peter Todd hardly poured oil on the troubled waters by remarking that Malcolm had not turned up.

Wharton stamped impatiently up and down.

"This is too thick!" he said. "I went out of my way to give him a game, and he might have had the decency to tell me if he wanted to back out."

"Curious chap, Malcolm," said Frank Nugent. "You never know what he's going to do next."

Gwynne of the Sixth blew the whistle for the teams to line up. Simultaneously there came a sudden whirring sound,



Bringing in Bunter! (See Chapter 5.)

which fell like music upon the ears of the Remove players.

Malcolm had arrived!

And he arrived in style, too, without stopping to introduce himself. Coker's motor-bike thumped across the ground at a truly terrific rate, narrowly missing Mr. Prout, who stood on the touchline.

Roy Malcolm didn't stop to apologise for having almost sent Mr. Prout out of this world at a most premature moment. He went right ahead, until the machine reached the Remove goalpost, against which he left it.

The game started a moment later; but the new arrival soon whipped off his coat and joined the fray. He flushed angrily as he noted the stature of the Remove's opponents.

"What's the little game?" he inquired. "I thought this was a junior match."

"So did we," said Harry Wharton. "We've been badly let down. But it's up to us to see the thing through now. We shall be licked, but we shall go under fighting."

"You seem mighty sure we shall be licked," said Malcolm. "Personally, I don't think so."

He sped away after the ball, which at that moment happened to be in the possession of a burly Courtfielder—a huge fellow, with a bulldog chin and tremendous shoulders.

Malcolm didn't funk. He went hard at his man, and came up smiling, with the ball at his toes.

Cheers went up from the watching crowd. Whatever Malcolm was not, he was certainly a footballer.

Hard pressed though he was, Roy refused to yield an inch. He continued his swift run, and finally drove the ball across to Vernon-Smith, who, with a clear chance, promptly notted.

"Goal!"

The crowd echoed the word in astonishment. They had certainly expected an early score, but not to the credit of the Remove.

"Good for you, Malcolm!" sang out Bob Cherry. "That's the stuff to give 'em!"

The Remove, encouraged by their early success, played up like Trojans.

But they were heavily up against it.

The Ramblers retaliated with vigour, so much so that Gwynne had to keep a firm grip on the game. The visitors were not above fouls, and the referee had his hands full.

Bulstrode, in goal, was in form. The backs were brilliant, likewise the halves. The Remove forwards seldom got to grips with their opponents, but when they did they were brilliant, too. And of the five Roy Malcolm was easily the star player.

Right through the gruelling first-half the Remove held their own. Their goal had many miraculous escapes; but fortune favoured them, and they were very cheerful as they trooped into the dressing-room.

Bob Cherry slapped Malcolm on the shoulder. So did Frank Nugent, and so did Johnny Bull. Johnny never did things by halves, and his slap was more in the nature of a knock-out blow. Roy reeled and gasped.

"Steady on, you burbling chumps!"

"My son," said Bob Cherry, "we're proud of you! We've got to let off steam somehow. You're great! We'll pulverise those bounders yet!"

Harry Wharton looked dubious.

"They'll go all out in the next half," he said, "and they won't be particular about their methods, either. They're a nice, gentle sort of crowd! If they can't win by fair means, they'll win by foul!"

"They'll have a job, anyway!" said Bulstrode grimly.

He felt in fine form that afternoon.

When the game was resumed Harry Wharton's predictions were fulfilled up to the hilt.

The Ramblers had been rough before. They were positively savage now. They threw science to the winds, and behaved as if they were on a battlefield.

Vernon-Smith was their first victim. The Bounder was racing away on the wing when the opposing backs made a sandwich of him, and he was so badly bruised and shaken that he was compelled to retire from the game for the time being.

Then Peter Todd, who had been a tower of strength at centre-half, twisted his ankle in a plucky attempt to stop

one of the visiting forwards. He tried to play on, but it was futile, and he had to clear off.

"The cads!" said Harry Wharton. "They can't lick us fairly, and they're trying to do it by low-down tactics!"

"Makes you think reprisals are worth while, doesn't it?" said Malcolm.

His eyes were gleaming, and his whole heart and soul was in the game.

"We'll get through it with clean hands, or not at all!" said Wharton. "Pile in!"

And the Remove, with only nine men, continued to play up for all they were worth.

It seemed a hopeless business, though. By degrees they were overwhelmed, and presently the Ramblers broke through Bulstrode's heroic defence, and brought the scores level.

It was hammer-and-tongs after that. The Remove put up a desperate fight, and fell back to defend their citadel. It was the only way. Bulstrode and the two backs had been worked almost to a standstill, and were in sore need of help.

The Ramblers came on again and again. There was no stopping them.

But they did not add to their score. Harry Wharton & Co. saw to that. Their repeated attacks were baffled and broken.

"Bravo, Remove!" came the shouts of the loyal crowd on the touchline.

The minutes were ticking by, and if only the Remove could hold out to the end they would have forced a draw; and to draw with a hefty team like the Ramblers would be a grand achievement.

Ten minutes to go, and the Remove still holding the fort!

"Go it, ye cripples!" muttered Bob Cherry, between his teeth.

Bob was a wreck. His jersey and knickers were plastered with mud; one of his knees had been badly cut in an encounter with an unscrupulous opponent, and his face and hair were in a rare state. But he kept on keeping on, and the Ramblers ground their teeth with rage as they saw victory slipping from their grasp.

"Come on!" roared their skipper. "We're not going to be done by a beastly kindergarten!"

And then Vernon-Smith came back. His return to the side was a godsend. At a word from Harry Wharton the Remove forwards changed their tactics with startling suddenness, and swept the field.

They were hotly contested every inch of the way, but they forged on and on, and finally Vernon-Smith was able to break away on his own.

"Good old Bounder!"

"Right away, old man!"

The Bounder steadied himself, and out of the corner of his eye he saw the crouching figure of Roy Malcolm not far distant. In a trice he whipped the ball across, and Roy, shooting on the instant, scored a great goal, the custodian rolling over and over in a frantic but futile endeavour to save.

"Hurrah!"

There was nothing half-hearted in the cheer which went up as Gwynne put the whistle to his lips for the last time.

The Remove had trampled down all opposition, and had won. And Roy Malcolm had scored the winning goal!

The juniors could not make enough of Malcolm. They thumped his back, they mistook his hands for pump-handles, and finally they bore him in triumph from the scene of action. He had certainly won his spurs; and even Coker, who had experienced a long and weary tramp back to Greyfriars, was considerably mollified when he heard the news, and even went so far as to refer to Roy as a jolly good fellow. Which, coming from Coker, was praise indeed.

Roy Malcolm was fast becoming popular. Invitations were showered upon him to be the guest of honour in various studies that evening; but Roy showed his indifference to them by curling himself up on Coker's sofa and going to sleep. He had other aims in life than popularity. There were other worlds for him to conquer, far removed from the Greyfriars playing-fields.

He was a soldier's son!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Blow in the Dark!

DARKNESS reigned in the leaf-strewn Close—darkness deep and impenetrable.

Silence reigned there, too—to be broken anon by the patter of feet.

The Famous Five were taking exercise. They were in their running shorts, and Bob Cherry had suggested a sharp sprint before bed-time in order that they might sink more easily into the arms of Morpheus.

"Geo! What a night!" gasped Nugent, scorching ahead of his companions. "Talk about the Plague of Darkness! This knocks any old plague into fits! It's the giddy limit! Why, my hat—"

"Get a move on, Franky!" panted Johnny Bull, from the rear.

Nugent had stumbled, and nearly fallen. His chums supposed at first that he had collided with a tree in the corner of the Close.

"Go ahead, old man!" said Harry Wharton impatiently.

"Hold on a minute!"

Nugent's voice was tense and excited. He had stopped short, and it was obvious that something was wrong.

"There's a—a body here!" he announced.

"A what-er?"

"You're seeing spooks, you duffer!" laughed Johnny Bull.

"The spookfulness is terrific!"

"I'm not rotting. Swish on your electric-torch, Inky!"

Hurree Singh did so, and the Famous Five, following the rays, started back in stupefied surprise.

Lying prostrate on the ground, with his face upturned to the sky, was Mr. Quelch!

"Quelch!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Good heavens! What's happened?"

What had happened was only too obvious, when the juniors had sufficiently recovered themselves to make an examination.

Mr. Quelch was unconscious, and a thin stream of blood trickled from his temple, where a dark bruise had formed.

Close at hand was a stick—a heavy, silver-mounted stick, which spoke for itself.

Harry Wharton raised the Form-master up by the shoulders.

"Some cad," he said—"some awful rotter has slogged Quelch with this stick!"

"In the dark, too," said Bob Cherry. "Oh, the brute!"

He peered into the shadows, but Mr. Quelch's assailant had vanished.

"We'll soon see who this stick belongs to, anyway," said Bob, turning it over in his hand. "Here we are. There's some initials engraved on the knob. 'R. M.' Whos' that—Morgan? No; can't be Morgan."

"Malcolm," said Nugent suddenly. "Roy Malcolm!"

"Great Scott!"

"Come to think of it, I've seen Malcolm trotting around with this stick," said Johnny Bull.

The juniors looked at each other uncomfortably. They didn't care to associate Roy Malcolm with an outrage of this sort. He was headstrong and wilful, they knew; but surely he would draw the line at attacking a defenceless master in the dark?

And yet—who else could it have been? A cold conviction gradually began to take shape in the minds of the juniors.

They recalled the many troubles Malcolm had had with Mr. Quelch, and they knew that there was no love lost between the Form-master and his wayward pupil.

"I remember how savage Malcolm was that day Quelch licked him," said Bob Cherry. "He was simply fierce. He swore he'd get even with Quelch for it!"

"And it looks as if he's kept his word!" said Wharton grimly. "Come along! Let's get Quelch up to his study. Then I'll nip down to the village on my jigger and fetch the doctor."

Bearing their burden gently between them, the juniors proceeded to the Form-master's study, and laid Mr. Quelch on the sofa. Scarcely had they done so when he came back to consciousness.

He stretched out his hands helplessly.

"Bless my soul! Where am I? I—I cannot remember. It is all a blank to me!"

"You're all serene, sir," said Bob Cherry. "This is your study, and we're looking after you. You've had rather a nasty knock on the forehead, sir, and Wharton's going for the doctor."

"Oh, yes!" said Mr. Quelch. He seemed to be struggling to remember what had occurred. "I was walking down to the school gates, and was made the victim of a sudden and savage attack. I was struck down with something—"

"A walking-stick, sir," said Johnny Bull.

"Very probably—yes. I was felled to the ground, and must have lost consciousness."

The Form-master made an effort to pull himself together.

"I shall not need the doctor, Wharton," he said. "My head is extremely painful, but it is not really serious. Will you bring me some warm water and a sponge?"

Harry Wharton sped off at once, and brought what was necessary. In a few minutes Mr. Quelch was sitting up and taking a little nourishment, so to speak. But there was a determined gleam in his eye which foretold that his assailant, if caught, would have a sorry time of it.

"Have you any idea who could have struck me down, my boys?" he asked.

Bob Cherry glanced at the stick he carried, and shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other. Despite what had happened, he still had a sort of sneaking regard for Malcolm. He could not easily forget Roy's great game against the Ramblers, and the many other proofs of his courage and ability.

"We—we can't say for certain who it was, sir," he said. "This is the stick we found lying close to you. It's Malcolm's. But that's no proof that Malcolm used it, sir," added Bob hastily.

"We will soon sift this affair to the bottom," said Mr. Quelch. "Nugent! Go and request Malcolm to come here at once. And please give him no hint as to why he is wanted."

"Very good, sir!" said Nugent.

He found Roy Malcolm in Coker's study. Strictly speaking, it was bed-time, but Roy was showing his usual contempt for rules and regulations.

He was writing a letter by the rays of a reading-lamp—a letter to his father, urging the latter to remove him from Greyfriars and allow him to join the Army.

Greyfriars was a first-rate school, but it was too tame for Roy. He wanted the excitement and clamour and clash of war. A soldier's blood raced through his veins, and he would do anything to get away from Greyfriars and join the khaki heroes on the other side of the Channel.

"It's the only game worth playing now," he muttered. "Oh, dash it all! Why am I such a kid? If only I were a couple of years older—"

"Malcolm!"

Roy started at the sound of his name.

"Hallo!" he said, sighting Nugent in the doorway. "What's wanted?"

"You are! Quelch wants to see you in his study."

Roy rose calmly to his feet. He didn't look like a fellow who had recently committed assault and battery upon his Form-master.

Nugent felt relieved. It could hardly have been Malcolm after all.

The two juniors went along in silence to Mr. Quelch's study.

Never had the Remove-master's eyes reminded the juniors more forcibly of gimlets than when he looked at Malcolm.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Roy.

"I did. I wish to question you, Malcolm. Is the stick which you see here your property?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did you last use it?"

"This evening, sir."

Mr. Quelch's jaw set like a vice. Glancing round at the Famous Five, Roy saw that their faces were grave and accusing.

"I have been the victim of an outrageous attack," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I was struck down in the dark, and this stick was found lying close beside me. Can you throw any light on this matter?"

There was a long pause. It seemed an age to Harry Wharton & Co., who hung upon Roy Malcolm's answer.

Roy himself appeared to be making rapid mental calculations.

"Well, Malcolm? I am waiting. Can you give me any clue as to the identity of my assailant?"

Yet another pause. And then—

"Yes, sir," said Malcolm deliberately. "It was I!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Counsel for the Defence!

THE Famous Five regarded each other uneasily.

So this was the end of the little drama. Roy Malcolm stood self-condemned, with nothing to say in his own defence.

It did not seem possible that he could have been such a cad and a coward. He had boasted so often that he was a soldier's son—that he was eager to go and fight; but this was not the sort of warfare a Briton admired.

"You have behaved like a young hoodigan, Malcolm!" said Mr. Quelch. "It is true that I caned you with perhaps unnecessary violence a few days ago; but no generous-hearted lad would harbour feelings of revenge. It will always be to me a bitter memory that one of my own pupils should seek to do me harm. Your proper course, if you regarded the punishment I dealt you as being too severe, was to approach the headmaster, not to lie in wait for me, like an assassin, after dark, Wharton!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Kindly request Wingate to come here at once."

The captain of Greyfriars arrived a few moments later. He looked concerned on seeing how pale and shaken the Form-master was.

"I hope nothing is wrong, sir?" he said.

"I am afraid much is wrong, Wingate. Have any of the boys gone to bed yet?"

"The juniors are just going, sir."

"Then they must be stopped. The whole school will assemble in Big Hall. An unparalleled outrage has taken place, and I cannot rest until the matter has been dealt with by Dr. Locke. This boy"—he indicated Roy Malcolm—"confesses to having attacked me an hour ago in the Close. He will doubtless spend the night in the punishment-room, and—unless my judgment of Dr. Locke is at fault—will leave Greyfriars by the first train in the morning!"

"Very good, sir. I'll summon the assembly."

It was an unusual occurrence for Greyfriars to be gathered together at such a late hour; and as the fellows streamed into Big Hall they realised that something of exceptional gravity must have taken place.

The Head arrived at length, not best pleased at having been disturbed; but he agreed with Mr. Quelch that the matter was urgent, and that judgment should be passed without delay.

A hush fell upon Big Hall as Dr. Locke stepped up to the dais.

"My boys," he said, in his quiet, even tones, "I am called here to-night to perform a very painful duty. Mr. Quelch was struck down in the Close this evening by Malcolm of the Remove. This stick"—the Head held it up for inspection—"was used for the purpose."

A murmur went up from all parts of the big room.

"I understand that you confess to this base and cowardly action, Malcolm?" said the Head.

"That's so, sir."

"You have nothing to say in extenuation of your conduct?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

Roy spoke quite naturally, and without a trace of embarrassment. Neither did he look in the least ashamed.

"Brazen-faced rotter!" murmured Vernon-Smith. "He'll be sacked for this, as sure as Fate!"

"And serve him jolly well right!" growled Peter Todd. "With all his faults, Quelch's one of the best, and it was a cad's trick to bowl him over!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Silence!" commanded the Head. "Malcolm, I—"

There was a sudden commotion in the ranks of the Fifth, and Horace Coker sprang forward. His face was flushed and excited.

"Hold on, sir!" he exclaimed. "I'm ready to swear that Malcolm is not guilty, sir! He's too decent to do a thing like that. I know him well, and I know his sister, and—"

"Be silent, Coker!" thundered the Head. "How dare you intervene on behalf of that wretched boy, who stands self-confessed before me? If there were any doubts whatever of Malcolm's guilt your evidence would be of value. As things stand, you have no right whatever to interfere."

"I'm backing up Malcolm, sir," said Coker stonily.

He strode up to Roy, and, to the astonishment of the whole school, grasped him by the shoulders.

"Why don't you speak the truth, you silly ass?" he demanded. "You know jolly well you're innocent! What's the little game?"

"Coker!"

The Head's voice rose almost to a roar.

"I—I'm sorry, sir! I can't help it! I'm convinced Malcolm didn't attack Mr. Quelch, and I mean to stand by him in this, whatever happens!"

"You forget yourself, Coker," said the Head more kindly. "I like to see loyalty when rightly directed. In the

present case, though, it is uncalled-for. Go back to your place, and do not speak to Malcolm again!"

"I will, and I must! I assure you, sir—"

Coker got no further. The door of Big Hall was thrown open, and a fat junior came limping in, blinking about him in amazement.

"Bunter!"

A gasp of astonishment arose from the crowd in Big Hall.

The Owl of the Remove, still blinking, and with his fat face screwed up as if he were in pain, proceeded up the gangway.

"Come here, sir!" boomed the Head. "How dare you drift into the Hall in this unseemly manner! Why were you not here ten minutes ago, when the proceedings started?"

"Groooh! Yow-ow-ow!" said Bunter.

"Cease uttering those ridiculous ejaculations, and answer my question," insisted the Head.

"Yow! I—I couldn't come before, sir. I was lying on the sofa, in Study No. 7, in—in terrible agony, sir!"

"What do you mean, boy?"

"All eyes were fixed upon Billy Bunter. Even the more poignant tragedy of Roy Malcolm was forgotten for the moment.

"I've been bullied and ill-treated!" blurted out Bunter indignantly. "Loder lammed me till I couldn't stand up, and—"

"You must defer your complaint until the morning," said the Head.

"But the brute has bruised me all over, sir! Just because I refused to go down to the village for him, he laid into me right and left with Malcolm's walking-stick—"

"What?"

The Head was interested now. Everybody was interested.

"Luckily," said Bunter, "I got the stick away from him, after a terrific struggle, or I'm sure he'd have killed me!"

"You—you got the stick away!" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"And what did you do with it?"

"Threw it out of the study window with all my force, sir, so that Loder shouldn't touch me with it again."

"You—you threw it out of the window?" gasped the Head.

He was beginning to see daylight now.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter, wondering why the Head should show such concern.

"What time was this?"

"Nine o'clock, sir. I remember the clock striking as I did it."

The Head turned excitedly to Mr. Quelch.

"Do you remember what time you were struck down?" he asked.

"Yes. It was at nine o'clock as nearly as possible."

"Then we have accidentally stumbled upon the explanation of the whole thing. Bunter threw this heavy stick from the window, and the force of it knocked you down!"

"Then why," gasped Mr. Quelch—"why has Malcolm made such an extraordinary confession?"

"That is best known to himself. I came very near to expelling you from this school, Malcolm; and, had I done so, your own folly would have been responsible. Why did you assert that you were guilty?"

"I wanted to be expelled, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I'm fed up with this tame sort of existence, sir, and I've written to my father asking him to let me go into the Army. I didn't think his reply would be favourable, so when I saw a chance of

getting away from Greyfriars I jumped at it."

"You are a very reckless and foolish boy, Malcolm! If Bunter had not come forward with the facts, you would have carried a stain of black disgrace with you throughout your life. I shall expect you to refrain from doing anything of this sort again. You may go!"

"And me, sir?" said Bunter.

"Yes. You have, for once, been of use," said the Head. "You will return to your place also, Coker. Your loyalty to Malcolm has been amply justified. Now, Loder!"

The black sheep of the Sixth, who had been shuffling uneasily in his place, came forward.

"This is not the first time I have had to draw your attention to the fact that bullying is prohibited," said Dr. Locke. "If you wished to cane Bunter for failing to obey an order, you should have done so in the proper manner, and not used a heavy stick of this kind."

"He was downright insolent to me, sir," said Loder sullenly.

"Then, if you were incapable of punishing him in a fit manner yourself, you should have handed him over to his Form-master. But for the fact that I am so relieved to find that no boy in this school deliberately attacked Mr. Quelch, I should punish you severely. As it is, I shall content myself with this reprimand. The school will now dismiss!"

Thus ended one of the most eventful and exciting evenings in the history of Greyfriars School.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Fresh Worlds to Conquer!

"YOU champion ass!"
"You fatheaded duffer!"
"Of all the cheerful idiots I've met you take the giddy bun!"

These were among the comments levelled at Roy Malcolm's head by the Famous Five in the Remove dormitory.

"What d'you mean by it?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You made us think you were an awful outsider, when all the time you were straight as a die!"

Roy smiled.

"I don't care a great deal what other people think of me," he said. "All I knew was that I wanted to get clear of this place; and I'd have done it, too, if that ass Bunter hadn't come barging in at the eleventh hour with his confounded evidence!"

"And now that your little game's knocked on the head I s'pose you'll settle down like a good chap?" said Harry Wharton.

"Not a bit of it! I've got a premonition——"

"Good word, that!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I've got a premonition that I sha'n't be in this show another week."

Malcolm's surmise proved correct, for a letter arrived for him the next morning from his father—a letter which brought a sparkle to Roy's eye and a flush to his cheek.

"My dear Roy,—It is rather singular for a father to make an apology to his son; but I feel that I owe you one.

"Before I sent you to Greyfriars I was under the impression that you were not of the stuff of which soldiers are made. I thought you lacked the fighting spirit; but I don't think so now.

"I have been kept informed of most of your exploits, and of your dash and enthusiasm, and I feel that you deserve to realise your ambition.

"I shall not send you into the Army direct. That, in view of your extreme youth, is impossible; but I have made arrangements for you to go to a military college, where you are sure to find things interesting.

"By this post I am writing to your headmaster, arranging for you to leave Greyfriars in a few days. I am detained

in London on military duty; but Connie will call at the school, and will accompany you home.

"I am proud of you, my boy.

"Ever your affectionate

"FATHER."

That letter brought joy to the heart of Malcolm. He lived during those next few days like a fellow in a dream; and even when Connie Malcolm arrived, and Coker poured into her ears a vivid account of how gallantly he had taken her brother under his wing, Roy made no attempt to contradict him.

Connie was very charming to Coker. Exactly how much of his narrative she believed is uncertain; but she accepted his invitation to tea, poured out the beverage with her own hands, and expressed regret that she was not a boy at Greyfriars. All of which pleased the great Coker mightily.

That same evening Roy Malcolm bade farewell to the Famous Five in the starlit Close.

"Good-bye, you fellows! You've been awfully decent to me while I've been here, and I expect you think I'm ungrateful. It's not that. But I'm not a fellow who forms very many friendships; and my mind's been so full of going into the Army that I've given most other things the go-by. On the whole, though, I've had a topping time!"

"We wish you were staying!" said Harry Wharton, as he shook hands. "You're the sort of chap we don't like losing, Malcolm!"

"Hear, hear!"

And as Harry Wharton & Co. gazed after the retreating figure of Roy Malcolm they felt that, for all his recklessness, he was a rattling good fellow and a true Soldier's Son!

(Don't miss "THE MAN FROM THE SOMME!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday:

"THE MAN FROM THE SOMME!"

By Frank Richards.

Most of you will remember, I am sure, the story about Snoop's father, telling of his escape from prison, and how he came to the Greyfriars neighbourhood hoping to see his son; of Sidney James Snoop's desperate state of funk; and of how the Bounder and Harry Wharton, though at the time they were by no means chummy, took together the big risk of helping Josiah Snoop to elude capture in order that he might join the Army and try to redeem the past.

In next week's story you will read how Snoop again had a somewhat similar ordeal to face, though under very different conditions. I am not going to give away too much in advance; but I know you will be glad to hear that Tom Redwing plays a part in what happens. The sailor's son, who came to Greyfriars under a false name, has become a great favourite with my readers. Also the Bounder comes into it; and you all like the Bounder.

OUR NEW SERIAL STORY.

Some of you are not very keen on serials, I know; but I want you all to read the one I am starting to-day.

It is not a school story. It is an adventure yarn. And, again, I know that school stories are what the majority want.

But I believe in a change now and then, and this is really a very special adventure story. No more popular serials than those which Mr. Drew wrote for the MAGNET in the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 535.

old days have ever appeared in the paper. Everyone talked of Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga and the rest of the crowd as everyone talks of Harry Wharton and Bunter and the other Greyfriars characters. Sidney Drew holds one because the people he writes about are really alive—not the mere names that the heroes of some adventure stories are. Then, too, his stories are not just successions of hair-raising incidents. He knows how to weave into them scenes of real, rollicking humour. To my mind Gan-Waga is as funny as Bunter. One can hardly say more than that, I think. So you must all read "The Brown Torrent"—you really must!

LIST OF GREYFRIARS STORIES IN THE "MAGNET" (continued).

I tried to make it clear when I started this list that it was not in any sense an advertisement of back numbers. Yet readers will persist in regarding it as such. My dear fellows, I do wish you would read a trifle more carefully! I explained why I was giving the list. We have none of these numbers for sale—not a solitary one!—Some of them, judging from the demand for them, must be worth their weight in silver, at least. But we have them not!

- 141.—"The New Firm."
- 142.—"Harry Wharton & Co."
- 143.—"The Head of Study 14."
- 144.—"Billy Bunter's Minor."
- 145.—"Coker's Catch."
- 146.—"The Leader of the New School."
- 147.—"The Schoolboy Traitor."
- 148.—"Bunter's Bust-Up."
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Your Editor

A Great New Serial Story.

THE BROWN TORRENT.

BY SIDNEY DREW.

A Thrilling Story of Adventure, in which Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and other Popular Characters, play their parts.

CHAPTER ONE.

Mr. Rupert Thurston has a Great and Pleasant Surprise.

"FIFTY rupees!" said Nathan, the Jew. "and very sheep, sahib! Very sheep and very ugly, sahib—very, very sheep!"

Nathan was yellow and shrivelled. His gloomy little shop was filled with strange odours and many flies. It was oppressively hot. The streak of sky above the narrow street was grey-blue and burning. Here and there an awning, once gaily coloured, but now bleached into drabness by the sun, cast a shadow as black as ebony. In the centre of the street, its body half in the shade, half in the glare, lay a skinny, mangy cow.

"I don't know so much the cheapness, you old thief; but I admit its ugliness," said the customer. "I don't think I ever saw anything uglier until I met you. I know I am being robbed, but here's the money."

The Jew grinned, not at all offended.

The customer, a bronzed Englishman, in a suit of spotless white duck, carried his purchase into the light, and sat down on the unprotesting cow to examine it. Evidently it was an idol, the image of some hideous and ferocious-looking god, roughly shaped out of a block of dark green marble.

The East has many idols, and myriads of gods. Rupert Thurston was not unfamiliar with the East and its images, but this particular deity was new to him. The figure was squatting at the foot of a tree. One hand held a bundle of arrows, the other what appeared to be a cone with a flame bursting from the apex. The face was not good-humouredly ugly, but diabolically sinister and hideous. Round the base, in strange characters, an inscription was chiselled.

"Can you read this stuff, Nathan?" asked Thurston, as the greasy old Jew squirmed and rubbed his hands.

"No, sahib, I cannot read it," said Nathan, with another grin—"not for fifty rupees, sahib. I have a wife and many children, and I am a very poor man. Masra-Dal read it for me, and charged me two rupees. For five rupees, sahib."

"You miserable old pirate!" said Rupert Thurston. "I don't believe Masra-Dal—whoever he may be—read it, or anybody else. You've faked up some invention of your own, and are trying to swindle me out of five rupees for it!"

Nathan, the Jew, vanished into the many-coloured gloom of his shop, and emerged with a piece of notepaper.

"If I swindle you, then Masra-Dal has also swindled me, sahib, as I am an honest man," he said. "By my father's grave, I paid him two rupees for that, and wrote it down as he spoke it! I was a fool, for, after all, it is nothing! And also, like a fool, I first gave him the money, which he would not return! He is dead, and well he deserves it. But that will not bring back my two rupees. It was Masra-Dal's funeral the sahib saw passing through the bazaar."

Nathan's handwriting was not of the clearest, and Thurston read it with some difficulty. This, according to the defunct Masra-Dal, was the translation of the inscription at the base of the green marble figure:

"When Sharpra flames the forests awaken and walk and drink blood. River and lake and mountain shall not stay them in the day that Sharpra arouses himself from his slumbers and shakes from his shoulders the sleep of ten thousand moons. I am Sharpra the Slumberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble."

"Hallo! I hadn't noticed that the handsome gentleman has his eyes shut!" said Thurston. "You'll get no five rupees out of me for that rubbish, Nathan. But as you are so honest, and have such a large family, I'll give you the two Masra-Dal managed to squeeze out of you. No wonder he's dead! The strain of getting money out of you would kill an elephant. Why, the old cow is laughing at the very thought of it!"

The cow uttered a few grunts that sounded exactly like an attempt to laugh.

Wrapping a handkerchief round his purchase, Thurston braved the scorching heat. It was somewhat cooler on the veranda of the little hotel. His luggage was piled there, waiting for the ox-cart to take it on to Payton's bungalow at Rangapur, fourteen miles away. Payton held a position in the Woods and Forests Department, and he had promised to find Thurston a tiger or two worth skinning.

Thurston called for an iced drink that came up luke-warm. Then he sat down in a wicker chair and went to sleep, and awoke to find the sky gemmed with stars, and Payton shaking him by the shoulder.

Payton was short and fat. Even the Indian sun had not been able to melt the plumpness out of him. The two men were members of the same West End club in London. Thurston, who had a handsome income and plenty of leisure, had invited Payton to Thurston Prior to shoot pheasants and partridges when he was last in England, and in return Payton had promised to introduce Rupert to some larger game if he would visit Rangapur.

"I met the ox-cart with your luggage on my way down," said Payton, when many questions had been asked and answered. "When the mare has had a rest she'll soon rattle us home in the buggy. I've been ignoring complaints from the natives about a tiger for over a week—saving the beggar up for you. That's the train, isn't it? Punctual for once! I've a case of whisky to pick up off that train, and also to meet a chap who is going up country, shooting or prospecting, or something. He must be a bigish pot, for my instructions are to treat him with every respect and give him every assistance I possibly can. Some friend of the Viceroy, I expect. We poor beggars in the Service have to do these things."

The train was puffing and snorting across the viaduct. There was an unusual bustle in the little hotel, for the telegraph had warned the proprietor to prepare for visitors.

Rupert walked down to the one-horse railway-station with Duke Payton. It was cool now—gloriously cool—and thousands of stars were shining, but paling swiftly as the rim of the moon lifted itself over the dark ridge beyond the river, where a poor attempt at cultivation ended and the jungle began. And then Rupert Thurston stood still and rigid, like a man petrified.

"Why, of all the Seven Wonders of the world," he said, recovering from his amazement, "it's the chief! It's Ferrers Lord!"

It was a special train, not the dusty, sun-blistered six-forty-five that usually grunted in an hour late. The truck next the engine carried a long-bodied, speedy-looking motor-car painted khaki colour. A man who wore a grey tweed coat and cap, riding-breeches, and leggings, stepped out of the second compartment almost before the train had come to a standstill. His eyes twinkled as Rupert Thurston advanced to meet him with outstretched hand.

"Great Scott! I thought you were at the North Pole or Terra del Fuego!" said Rupert. "What are you doing here?"

"Shaking hands with you at the moment," answered Ferrers Lord. "I have brought the

usual encumbrances with me. The yacht struck a mine, but we managed to keep her afloat. It will take weeks to repair her, so I thought I would try a little mahseer-fishing and bag a few tigers. Of course, I knew you were here!"

"Payton," said Rupert, turning, "I have no doubt this is the gentleman you were expecting. My friend, Mr. Ferrers Lord. It was Payton who invited me," he added. "He was shooting with me at Thurston Prior a couple of years ago."

Mr. Ferrers Lord's "encumbrances" were discharging themselves from another compartment, to the astonishment of many natives and a few Europeans who had come down to meet the train. The engine was uncoupled, and drew clear.

"Now, by honey," roared a gruff-voiced, clean-shaven man, "get a fair wind, and have at it!"

Followed by two of his companions—Mr. Barry O'Rooney and Mr. Thomas Prout—he made a dash for the truck that carried the motor-car. In three minutes the car was off the truck and in the road, and they were dumping out the luggage at express speed from the special train.

There was another passenger, who took no interest in the proceedings at all. He was short and fat and olive-skinned. His hair and little, beady eyes were jet-black, and, to make up for the smallness and snubness of his nose, Nature had provided him with a mouth of ample size. His attire consisted of a suit of pyjamas, gaily striped. He emerged slowly and heavily from the carriage, carrying a large watering-pot. Holding the pot above his head, he let the cooling shower pour over him to the very last drop, and then sat down on a packing-case with a grunt of content.

His solitary pocket seemed to be perfectly waterproof, for he took a cigar and a box of matches out of it, and lighted the cigar at the first attempt.

Mr. Barry O'Rooney, bearing a heavy trunk on his shoulder, paused and glared at him.

"Ye lazy son of a gun, phwat d'ye mane by ut?" he asked, in a racy Irish brogue. "Will ye do nothin' at all, thin, for a livin', ye blubber-atein' tallow factory? Must we do ut all, me and Tom and Ben, while ye sit at aise loike a full-soized tub of margarine, only greasier, smokin' yer tuppenny stinkadoras? Whoy, ye miserable lakimo, for a packet of hairpins Oi'd knock ye solidways into the middle of next week! Get a move on ye, Gan-Waga, for the sake of Moike, and shift somethin'!"

Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, smiled a wide but gentle smile. One fat hand clasped the spout of the watering-pot.

"Runs away, Barry, ole dears; runs away and play," he said, in a soft, gurgling voice. "Only foolkes and donkeys work. Ifs yo' nots runs away quickness, Barry O'Loonatics, yo' gets a butterfuls cosh on the ear with this merriness ole watering-pots. Ho, ho, hoo! I was awful hotness, but I feel betterer now."

Mr. Barry O'Rooney left.

From the waterproof pocket Gan-Waga produced another cigar and lighted it. Then he rose, gazed at by scores of wondering eyes, waddled along the platform, smoking two cigars at once, and smote Rupert Thurston on the shoulder.

"How yo' wases, Ru? Yo' oll rightness, hunk, ole merry and brightful?"

"What, Gan!" cried Thurston. "Why, you'll melt! There'll be nothing left of you but a shadow!"

"I melt if my ole Chingy nots come along soonfuls," said Gan-Waga, while Duke Payton stared at the apparition in mute surprise.

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"Chingy comings soonful. Oh, yo' laughs, Ruperts. We gotted blowed upsies. Ho, ho, hoq! And we couldn't boatses the launches—I mean hauntses the launches, Ruperts; and there was a big holes in the yacht, and Prouts and Maddocks and Barry O'Rooney—ha, ha, ha, hah!—they shake hands and nearly kisses each others, and say good-byes. And— Oh, ha, ha, ha, ha, hah!"

Gan-Waga's laugh was something terrific. It shook earth and air like an air-raid with many bombs.

"But where does the joke come in?" asked Rupert. "I can't see any joke in being mined and unable to launch a boat."

"Whys, it was only fifty miles from shore, Ruperts. Whys we wants boatses? I could have swummed it on one ear. And—"

The horny finger and thumb of Barry O'Rooney closed like a vice on the lobe of the Eskimo's left ear, and the equally tough finger and thumb of Bos'un Benjamin Maddock shut down on the lobe of his right ear.

"Marreh, ye ink-headed bunch of tallow!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Marreh, ye chunk of margarine!"

"Move it quick, souse me, you whale-eating cannibal!" said Mr. Benjamin Maddock.

Gan-Waga said nothing at all. As a swimmer the Eskimo was unrivalled by any living thing that was not born with fins, flippers, or webbed feet. He was almost equally at home on snow and ice, for he was a son of the Far North; but otherwise he was somewhat sluggish in his movements. This time he was swift and energetic. Withdrawing the cigars from his mouth, he placed the glowing tips so close to the noses of Maddock and O'Rooney that the two mariners recoiled, scorched and snorting. Then, with a whoop of joy, Gan-Waga made a waddling run for the motor-car, sprang in, and drove away, leaving O'Rooney and the bos'un doubled up and sneezing furiously.

"What an extraordinary object," said Payton. The grease in the pyjamas I am alluding to."

"Yea, Gan-Waga is something of a character!" laughed Thurston. "He is a privileged person, and is allowed to do pretty much what he likes. All those fellows belong to my friend's yacht. This is a big and pleasant surprise, for Mr. Ferrers Lord has a habit of springing surprises on one. You have heard of him before—eh?"

Before Payton could answer, Ferrers Lord, who had been talking to Prout, came towards them. They walked up to the hotel together, followed by Maddock and O'Rooney and a procession of native porters carrying the baggage.

CHAPTER TWO.

A Camel and a Conjurer Create Another Surprise.

PAYTON remained for dinner as Ferrers Lord's guest. They were smoking their cigarettes and sipping coffee when Rupert Thurston remembered his purchase.

"By the way, Payton," he said, "I fancy you are a bit of an authority. I bought a green marble idol from the Jew in the bazaar. I'll get it for you. Some native told my hard-bargaining friend Nathan that it represented Sharpra the Slumberer. Have you ever heard of that particular old heathen joss?"

Payton stirred his coffee and pondered.

"No; but there's a big peak up yonder that I sighted a year or so ago, when some of the hill tribes were giving a bit of trouble," he answered. "I only saw it through the mist, and it wasn't mapped on my chart. One of the prisoners told me they called it Sharpra, the mountain that sleeps. That was the time Flexter's column was ambushed and so badly mauled. That is the only Sharpra I know anything about."

Thurston went for the idol, and Ferrers Lord looked at his guest and nodded.

"I have also viewed Sharpra through the mist," he said. "I meant to push on, but several of my men were sick, and we were running short of ammunition. There was plenty of game, but it was a very bad country, the worst jungle I ever encountered. I heard of tremendous forests ahead beyond an alkali belt that was very difficult to cross. I was not prepared for a long expedition, so I turned back. The natives were very shy, and not at all friendly."

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," said

Thurston, returning with his purchase. "What do you think of it?"

Payton and the millionaire examined the idol. To the amazement of Payton, Ferrers Lord read the inscription almost word for word as it was written on the paper Thurston was searching his pocket-book to find.

"It is just a form of Sanscrit," he said. "Our friend is merely a sun-god or a fire-god. There is nothing particularly novel about him except his excessive ugliness."

"The inscription is unusual, though," said Payton. "This old fellow and the mountain seem to be related."

"If they are, I presume Sharpra, the mountain, is a volcanic peak, either extinct or dormant," said Ferrers Lord. "When Sharpra flames the forests shall awaken and walk and drink blood. Sharpra seems to be making the Sleeping Beauty look very small beer, for ten thousand moons are quite a long time to rest. Doubtless a volcanic eruption would shake up the forests, and cause landslides, and make the world tremble in the immediate vicinity. Is this to go into my collection, Rupert?"

"Yes; I bought it for you," said Thurston. "I'm fond of curios, but I prefer pretty ones. Now we'll return to our muttons. Payton has a tiger for me. You see, Payton, our friend Ferrers Lord is a bit of a glutton when he's out after big game. Do you think you can satisfy him at Rangapur? He has a greed for big bags."

"I am afraid not, for I have thinned the big stuff down," said Payton. "I'll do the utmost I can to find you sport."

"A day, or a couple of days, will satisfy me, Mr. Payton," said Ferrers Lord. "Another friend has promised to join us. We shall push right up. I want to find what there is in the forests the natives spoke about. This purchase of Rupert's has brought Sharpra back to my mind. There should be good shooting there. Are the natives quiet?"

"I don't get into the hills much now," said Payton. "You see, sir, I'm getting old and fat after twenty-five years in the Service. They think I'm too old, I suppose. Though I was never a military man, I've done my share of fighting and policing." His faded blue eyes sparkled. "They weren't so tame then. We used to have our tight corners, really tight corners. They were a lawless lot, those hill chaps, and you had to put up a fight or else go under. Oh, they're quiet enough now. They've learned sense."

"Did you ever cross the cactus country north of the Gingundra foothills, Mr. Payton?" asked Ferrers Lord.

"I wasn't within six hundred miles of it in my life," answered Payton. "Once I saw a man who tried. Out of seven of them he came back, a skeleton of a man, with a yellow skin stretched over his bones. A friend of mine, who was out after a rogue elephant, picked him up. Whether the poor fellow lived or died I never knew. It was a few years back."

"Yea, a few years back," said Ferrers Lord. "I happen to be the man. At the time the cactus country beat me; and I dislike to be beaten. All my life I have had a weakness for the odd corners of the earth, and I have generally succeeded in exploring them. The Gingundra region I raise my hat to. I think I must make it raise its hat to me. If you have seen Sharpra, Mr. Payton, you were nearer the cactus country than you imagined by a good many hundred miles." The millionaire rose, and held out his hand. "Forgive me," he added; "but I have a good many letters to write. Before making a plunge into the wilds it is just as well to settle one's more pressing affairs."

Payton ordered his mare to be harnessed, and drove off with Rupert Thurston to his bungalow at Rangapur in the brilliant moonlight.

Mr. Thomas Prout, Mr. Barry O'Rooney, and Mr. Benjamin Maddock had taken possession of the veranda. They sat there smoking their pipes in peace, comfort, and comparative coolness. Mr. O'Rooney gazed at the white, shining moon, and it made him feel poetical, for Barry was a poet. And it made him think of home and his forefathers, and of Ballybunion Castle, now a mere mound of forgotten glory, but once the proud possession of his ancestors.

"Oi haven't got an almanac, bhoys," said Barry, breaking the long silence, "but Oi expect this same old moon is shoinin' on swate Ballybunion—swate Ballybunion! The thought of ut fills me heart wid tears!"

"If you start giving us any of that tosh,

Barry, my lad," growled Benjamin Maddock. "souse me, I'll soon fill your eyes with tears!"

"Home of me childhood's joy!" said Barry, taking no notice of the bos'n's threat. "Oi was a merry bhoys. Playin' golf and binnis wid me Uncle Dinnis. Ut fills me heart wid tears, after all these years. Och, wid would grief Oi'm dray clane off me onion. Whin Oi recall thee, darlint Ballybunion!"

As the bos'un gave an angry snort, and looked round for something hard to throw at the poet, six dusky-skinned, turbaned natives came into view. They were carrying a large lead cistern. They placed the cistern on the veranda, salaamed to the sahibs, and went away. They returned, each man bearing a tall earthenware jar on his shoulder. They emptied the contents of the jars into the cistern with a cool, splashing sound, salaamed once more, and again departed.

"Oh, puts me in my butterfuls little cots and rockses me to sleepiness!" warbled the voice of Gan-Waga. "For I am very wearifuls after my suppers."

The red, glowing tip of a cigar loomed out of the shadows like a small danger-signal. Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, was behind the cigar. Gan did not trouble to divest himself of his pyjamas. He got into the cistern, and lay back with a grunt of content.

"Yo' shifts yo' ugliful faces round the other ways, or else I get nightmares!" he said to Prout, O'Rooney, and Maddock. "Dears, dears! I so tiredness! I work too badfuls hard. Good-nights!"

The three mariners ignored him. Barry, still deep in poetic thought, stared at the moon. Gan-Waga closed his little black eyes, and snored in his cool bed. But the tip of the cigar kept glowing out and fading, and two jets of tobacco-smoke emerged from his nostrils at regular intervals.

"Bedad," said O'Rooney suddenly, "ay me oleasought isn't failin' me, the ould moon is gettin' the colour of a ripe tomato! D'ye notice ut, Tom?"

"If I was a gaping owl like you, with nothin' better to do than stare at it, I'd have noticed it long ago, by honey!" answered the steersman of Ferrers Lord's yacht. "Perhaps you've mistook it for the reflection from your own nose."

"It is changing colour all the same," said Maddock. "Bad weather comin', I guess. And ain't it turnin' hot?"

The breeze had fallen. A faint puff came now and again, but it had no freshness in it. It was dry and scorching, and carried with it a scent of hot sand. The moon was no longer silvery, but tinged with a curious, pale pinkish colour.

"Ut's a dust-athorm comin' up," said Barry, as he refilled his pipe. "Murthert. But ut's warm! And phwat's this at all, at all? Is ut the first chunk of a circus-percession, or is ut visions?"

A camel was swinging down the white road with an ungainly roll. It came straight towards them, settled its long, splay legs under it, and knelt. The rider dismounted. He was a little man, with an enormous head and an enormous beard. He spread out his hands, and salaamed till his turban touched the ground.

"Oh, illustrious sahibs," he said, in a husky voice, "I am a poor man, but, by this beard, I am honourable! I make stunts, and of the mysteries most wonderful. I juggle 'em to the deceiving of the eye so quick the illustrious sahibs call hot stuff. The great sahibs shall tickle themselves with big surprises how it is done. So, so!"

The stranger produced a square of carpet apparently from the left ear of the camel, and spread it on the ground. Prout threw a rupee, which the man caught and tossed into the air. Down came a shower of rupees, as if from the sky itself, tinkling and glittering till the carpet was covered with them. The juggler caught the carpet by one corner, gave it a shake, and the rupees were gone.

"Purty nate!" said Barry. "But Oi wish he'd do the same thing wid his whiskers, for they worry me. Talkin' about jugglin' and thricks that desave the oie, ye ought to have seen me Uncle Dinnis do the pudden-on-the-hob thrick. Oi remember wan Christmas—"

"To Timbuctoo with your Uncle Dennis!" said Maddock. "Shut up, souse me, and let barbed-wire whiskers get on with it!"

Mr. O'Rooney grinned and subsided. The juggler bowed low.

"Generous sahibs," he said, "the night is

hot. I beseech of extreme attention for the successful trick the most beautiful next time. It is the trick of the fountain squirt most grateful and sparkling of coolness. For this trick powerful and tremendous rajahs have give my humility praises and much gold. To see him perform is great stunt. It fill you with coolness like you drinking cold snow-water from Himalaya Mountains. So, so! La, la!"

At that moment a noise of tom-toms sounded from the native quarter behind the hotel.

"By honey, you'd better be quick about it, whiskers," said Prout, throwing another rupee, "or the light will be gone! The moon is snuffing out like a flash-lamp with a used-up battery."

The juggler waved his hand over the carpet, and muttered some strange incantation. In the centre of the carpet a bright green light appeared. A moment later other lights glowed at the four corners—white, blue, yellow, and red. The juggler seized the tail of the camel, and began to work it up and down like the handle of a pump.

"Bravo!" cried Barry O'Rooney. "Sure, that's purty, and, bedad, ut's the first toime Ol've seen ut done! Bravo, dure-mat face!"

Five jets of water sprang from the lights, and rose higher and higher, widening into the shape of a fan. The sparkling spray fell back, gleaming with various colours. As the three mariners applauded the noise of the tom-toms grew louder.

Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, awoke, and looked over the edge of the cistern. The juggler pumped harder.

"Souise me, that's worth another rupee of anybody's money!" said Mr. Benjamin Maddock, plunging his hand into his pocket. "Old barbed-wire whiskers knows his job all the way through. As pretty as a rainbow, ain't it?"

"Illustrious ones," cried the juggler, "beseech yourselves great more attention to this stunt! I am call him the fountain of rainbows. All invent by my humility, and never other time imitate by any faithful imitator. So, so! As you see, adorable sahibs, the fountain squirt magnificent with beauteous dazzle colours. In great quickness of magic I change him to the thunderstorm raging. La, la! Give us therefore of the thunder, Enver Pasha, thou hairy monster!"

Ur-ur-umph! Ur-r-r-r-umph! Gher-ur-umph! rumbled the camel. The uprising jets thickened into gushes, and, writhing his prehensile lips and sinuous neck, the camel grunted his hardest to imitate the rumbling thunder. The delighted mariners clapped their hands. Then, all at once, when the raging storm had reached its most furious pitch, the carpet stood on end as stiffly as a board, with the result that the five hissing jets, instead of being vertical, became horizontal.

"Wa-ow!" yelled Barry O'Rooney. "Phwat in the name of murther—Hilp! Spa-ew! Whoosh!"

Barry must have been born lucky, for he got more than his fair share. Three of the jets came his way, and washed him backwards out of his seat. Prout and Maddock were also in the line of fire. On such a baking night they ought to have been grateful for the cooling showers; but gratitude, unfortunately, is a virtue rarely found in mankind. For some reason—perhaps to escape getting wet—Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, stood on his head in the cistern, waving his fat legs in the air.

The juggler seemed dazed, utterly petrified with horror at what had happened and was happening. Spluttering and yelling, Maddock seized a wicker chair and hurled it at him. The juggler became unperturbed enough to dodge it. Then Prout and the boy made a savage rush at him. Barry O'Rooney was just scrambling to his feet, and not yet firmly fixed on them, when the dripping Eskimo righted himself. He put a loving arm round the Irishman's neck and gave a violent forward pull that brought Barry headlong into the tank with a merry splash.

"Mercy, illustrious sahibs! Mercy!" shrieked the juggler, as the two enraged mariners bore down on him with clenched fists. "I am a poor man. Slay me not, and give me not hard thumps, magnificent ones! Pardon!"

He snatched up the carpet, screening himself with it, and leapt aside. Gan-Waga's little black eyes were tightly shut, and his mouth was wide open, but no sound came. As Barry rose to the surface to breathe the Eskimo's hand pushed his head under water again, gently, but very firmly.

"Tear him to tape, by honey!" roared Prout. "Pound him to rags!"

"Break him to matchwood, souise me!" howled the boy's'n. "Bash him to bits, the blackguard!"

The juggler was too nimble. They missed the carpet behind which he had taken shelter and swung round, wild for revenge. The carpet fell, revealing, not the bewhiskered juggler with the turban, but a slight figure clad in beautifully-creased white flannels, a silk shirt with a soft collar, buckskin tennis-shoes, and a boater hat. Gan-Waga's eyes snapped open, and the Eskimo uttered a wild whoop of joy, and pushed Barry's head under water again.

"The prince!" gasped Prout and the boy's'n with one voice.

"Exactly, and very pleased to meet you!" said the man in flannels, raising his straw hat.

Gan-Waga flopped out of the cistern, which was rather a fortunate thing for Barry O'Rooney, who was turning black in the face.

"Chingy, my butterfals Chingy!" shouted the Eskimo. "Kisses me, Chingy. Gives me a great bigness hug!"

Ching-Lung waved him away.

"Not in those pyjamas, Wagtail!" he answered. "Put yourself through a mangle three or four times first, and then call round again. At present there's nothing doing: Prout, I leave my faithful camel in your care. Give him a whisky-and-soda and a box of cigars. Good-evening, gentlemen!"

As Prince Ching-Lung walked into the hotel the tom-toms rattled more noisily than ever, and the weakening beams of the moon were lurid red.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Sharpra the Slumberer Half Awakens.

FERRERS LORD greeted Prince Ching-Lung with a warm handshake. They were old friends. They lighted their cigars, and talked of many things, as old friends will when they meet after a long separation.

"Then it is merely to be a sporting trip, I take it," said the prince. "You have no other object in view?"

"It was only the accident to my yacht that brought me here," answered Ferrers Lord. "You remember, we suggested a visit to the cactus country and the Ginguindra foothills long ago, but the idea did not materialise. We may as well do it now as never. I have brought enough stuff to see us through. You are not tied in any way, I hope?"

"I can spare a few months," said Ching-Lung. "Did you bring a 'plane?"

The millionaire shook his head.

"No," he answered smiling. "The cactus country beat me once when I was tackling it in the old-fashioned way, and I am determined to obtain my revenge in the old-fashioned way. I brought a car, but that may be useless when we reach the cactus belt, except that it will have carried up a lot of useful stuff. I have promised to shoot with Thurston's friend, Payton, for a couple of days, and then we'll push ahead."

Ching-Lung fanned himself with a newspaper.

"I've known some torrid weather, but this must be about a record," he said. "I believe there's a hurricane coming, or a tremendous dust-storm. The natives were making a din with their tom-toms just now to frighten it away. I brought a car, too, but I broke down, and hired a camel to cover the dozen odd miles. I shall want to borrow Prout and Maddock from you to-morrow to take the camel home to its owner and patch up the car."

"You may borrow them with pleasure!" said Ferrers Lord. "You are right about the heat, Ching. It is terrific!"

"Which accounts for the absence of Gan-Waga," laughed the prince. "He has gone back to his tank. Hallo! What's that? You still indulge in your old hobby, then? You still buy horrors and monstrosities?"

Ching-Lung had caught sight of the idol. He crossed the room and picked it up.

"That is one of Thurston's discoveries," said Ferrers Lord. "He bought it in the bazaar here, and made me a present of it. It is Sharpra the Slumberer, a fire-god or sun-god. We have been admiring its beauty. Hideous, isn't it?"

"Almost as handsome as Barry O'Rooney. I notice there's an inscription. Have you read it?" said the prince.

Ferrers Lord quoted the inscription from memory. Ching-Lung replaced the idol on

the table and sat down again. The punkah had ceased to swing.

"I suppose the boy is asleep," said Ferrers Lord, and went to see.

The boy was not there. The millionaire emptied the contents of the water-jar over the punkah and rang the bell. The proprietor of the hotel came himself in answer. He was a Frenchman, who had spent most of his life in India.

"A thousand pardons," he said, "but I cannot help it. The imbeciles of servants have all run away. The fools say the moon is sick, m'sieu, and that a great storm is to come, and they have fled to beat tom-toms and to make prayers and to give yells to frighten away the disease from the moon and drive off the storm, that will destroy the corn and beat down the sugar-cane. Imbeciles!" He spread out his hands hopelessly. "If it was that the Government would let me use a whip I would lash the nonsense out of them. But that is forbidden, m'sieu, and I am sorry."

"If it cannot be helped, it cannot be helped," said Ferrers Lord, "so we must be content to gasp and make the best of it. You have a barometer. Have you looked at it?"

"I have looked, m'sieu, and I am surprised, for it stands high and steady," answered the landlord. "Seldom—never, I think—have I known greater heat. I gasp also, I melt; but if m'sieu wishes it, I will work the punkah."

"No, no!" said Ferrers Lord. "We shall survive it. We do not want to make a white slave of you. Bring us the coolest thing you have to drink, and another jar of water. We are not blaming you, M'sieu Augustin, not at all!"

It was far too hot to dream of going to bed with the prospect of obtaining sleep. The only person who gained any real repose was Gan-Waga, who had made a humble apology to Barry O'Rooney for having in a moment of excitement and absent-mindedness attempted to drown him. By this time Prout, Maddock, and the Irishman were quite dry again, except for perspiration. They sprawled limply in their chairs on the veranda, too overcome either to smoke or to talk. All that remained of the moon was a crimson smear on a sky of ink.

"There's a smell, something like the smell of roast pork, Tom," said Barry in a faint and weary voice. "O'm afraid poor old Ben must be scorchin'. O'm not sure whether ut's the smell of roast pork or roast goat, but ut's wan of the two. As ye're nearest, just look and see if poor Ben is alive."

"If I didn't feel like a bit of melted suet I'd get up and give you a beauty, souise me!" said the boy's'n savagely.

"Oh, chuck it!" groaned Prout. "Can't you frizzle in decency without any rows? Let it alone and dry up."

The tom-toms had ceased to drum and rattle, and it was intensely still, until Gan-Waga began to snore. He commenced with a soft and gentle gurgle, and if he had left it at that nobody would have complained. But the Eskimo was seldom satisfied to let well alone. He gave an imitation of a circular-saw cutting through hard and knotty planks, of a train entering a tunnel, and finally of the whistling, shrieking flight of a shell from a seventy-five French gun. Barry rose with rage and anguish in his eyes. As his twitching thumb and forefinger sought for the Eskimo's snub nose, Ching-Lung, in the room beyond, happened to glance at the idol.

"Great Jupiter!" he cried, after a long, wondering stare. "Look, look! If I'm not going raving mad, the hideous thing is opening its eyes!"

Almost before Ferrers Lord could grasp the meaning of his friend's extraordinary words the whole hotel was shattered to its very foundations amid a riot of heaving floors, bulging walls, and an uproar of deafening sounds.

(To be continued next week.)

Are you reading the Series
of Sports Stories in the

"GEM"?

This week's fine yarn is:

"RACKE'S MAN!"

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 71.—SOLLY LAZARUS.

WE are getting very near the end now. Solly Lazarus must be a complete stranger to many of those who now read the *Magnet*. It is quite a long time since we heard anything of him.

But old readers would not like him to be left out of the series, I am sure. There are memories of Solly—one memory in particular—which endear him to them.

He is one of Dick Trumper's chums, of course. He is also the son of Mr. Lazarus, the pawnbroker at Courtfield, who supplies the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society—I trust that I have the name and style correctly; but I am not sure—with most of its properties. Was it not at the establishment of Mr. Lazarus that Harry Wharton and the rest got the wigs and feminine costumes which enabled them to meet, as a girls' school team, and to defeat Dick Rake's rebels?

Lazarus the elder is a crafty old soul, with a very keen eye to the main chance. He has before now made profit out of Fishy. Lazarus the younger is also crafty; but I think he is a better fellow than his father. Not but that old Lazarus has his good points.

Solly is a great fighting-man. Probably his father never was. But there have been men of their race who have made history in the prize-ring. The annals of the Ring tell of Mendoza and Dutch Sam, both Jews, both very hard indeed to beat. If Solly Lazarus had lived in those days he might have been such another as they were. Even now one would not be surprised to hear of his winning fame with the gloves. But in the days of Mendoza and Dutch Sam gloves were not used. They fought with the bare mauleys. I don't think Solly would mind that, though.

The incident referred to above is, of course, his great fight with Bol-over major. That burly and hefty young man had descended upon the Remove like an avalanche. He was bigger and stronger by far than any of them. He knew how to use his fists a bit, though he was far from being as clever a boxer as they were at first inclined to take him to be.

He began on Bulstrode, against whom he ran in the train on his way to the school. George Bulstrode was returning to Greyfriars after the absence caused by the death of his minor.

When they landed at Fjardale Bulstrode looked rather dusty, and his nose was swollen, and there was a streak of red on his face.

Three Courtfield Council School boys were outside the station—Dick Trumper, Walter Graftame, and Solly Lazarus. They commented upon Bulstrode's damaged appearance. Bulstrode said he had been in a row, and added, with some temper, that he was quite ready for another.

"Peathe, say thone—peathe!" said Solly. "The dear boy has had enough trouble. He has been running his nothe against something hard, I should thay."

A speech such as that was hardly calculated to make for peace. It is not quoted here as a model for similar circumstances, but mainly to show up a characteristic of Solly's which, though not important, calls at least for mention. Solly is afflicted with a kind of intermittent lisp. He makes "th" of an "s" at times—not always. Probably he cannot help it; but it certainly has the effect of making him appear simpler than he is—which, you may be sure, Solly does not mind.

Bol-over came out of the station, and there was trouble at once. Trumper suggested that Solly should "knock some of the conceit out of the rotter." Solly, a head shorter than Bol-over, and much more slightly built, took on the job with the utmost cheerfulness.

Bol-over did not know that the Jewish lad was a simply wonderful boxer; but he soon had cause to suspect it. It ended with Percy Bol-over on his back.

Then came the reign of terror in the Remove, with Bol-over as cock of the walk. Even Harry Wharton and Mark Linley went down before his big fists. Then Bulstrode suggested that the Courtfield boy should be called in to teach the bully a lesson. The suggestion was voted good. Bob Cherry went to fetch Solly, whom he found swinging his legs on the garden fence of his home, talking to Trumper. They readily agreed to

go over to Greyfriars, and in the gym there the deft, active, clever Council School boy put Bol-over through it. It was a lesson, though the effect was not quite all that had been hoped for by those who planned it. Bol-over has had a good many such lessons since; they have not taught him to beware of a quarrel, however. He is still always ready to fight.

It was Solly who foiled the dastardly plot between Hazeldene and Pousonby of Highcliffe, when Pon persuaded Hazel to drug the drinks of the Remove Eleven. Solly, taken between two fires, as it were, with Highcliffe colours showing in one direction and Greyfriars in the other, sought refuge in a loft, and heard the whole base scheme.

A few days before Solly and other Courtfield boys had caught Hazel, and had chalked his face, causing Billy Bunter to take him, in the gloom, for a ghost. When Solly went to Greyfriars to disclose the plot to those against whom it was levelled, he ran against Hazel, and Hazel was furious. He would have been still more furious if he had had any idea of the Jewish lad's errand.

Through Solly the plot was frustrated, and Pon's plan—the Boulder was in it, too—to win the match and his bets fell through. That Harry Wharton & Co. knew what a good, sound, reliable fellow Solly is was shown by their acceptance of his yarn. Once he had said that he was in earnest they had no thought of looking upon it as a take-in. That they were grateful goes without saying.



Solly was all there in the business of the haunted island, too. A mysterious light had been seen on the island in the river—the same island which Sir Hilton Popper claims as his property—and there was a legend of a ghostly monk; and some of the Remove went to investigate the matter. They ran against Trumper & Co., also investigating, and Solly's exclamation was "Thilly atheth!"—which is rather a favourite epithet of Solly's. It sounds much more cutting than "Silly ass!" But, of course, it means just the same.

There was a collision between the two bands before the mystery was discovered. In the darkness they clashed, and among the casualties was that Solly's "nothe" with thquathed—or so he said. The damage was probably something short of that. Then, again, Harry Wharton and Solly, each scouting singly, fell foul of one another. It was largely owing to the craft of Solly that the discovery was made of the gambling crew that had made the ruins of the old island its haunt. Banks and Cobb were there, and gentlemen of the name of Parsons and Mugg—less well-known to us—and the Boulder and Hazel. But that was stopped, and the island ceased to show its mysterious light, though neither Vernon-Smith nor Hazel ceased thus early to play the giddy goat!

Perhaps there may be other things that might be told about shrewd, black-eyed Solly Lazarus, with his keen brain and his ready fists; but enough has been told to indicate the sort of fellow he is.

NOTICES.

Pack Numbers, etc., Wanted.

J. Williams, Halse House, High Street, Lillecombe—"Penny Popular," *MAGNETS*, and "Gems."

C. Element, 101 Woodlane Street, Smethwick, Staffs—"Gems," 1-300; *MAGNETS*, 345, 390, 405, 358; also any 3d. books dealing with St. Jim's, Rookwood, or Greyfriars.

G. Robinson, 32, Westbourne Street, Hesse Road, Hull—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "Bunter the Blade," "Through Thick and Thin."

D. R. Ison, 63, Mildenhall Road, E. 5—"After Lights Out," "School and Sport," "Rivals and Chums," "The Boy Without a Name," "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays"; also *MAGNET*, 520. 5/- offered for the set.

P. Lewis, 33, White Lion Street, Angel, Islington, N.—"Bob Cherry's Barring-Out," "The Boy Without a Name," "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," "Figgins' Folly," "Fishy's Fag Agency," "Schoolboys Never Shall be Slaves," "John Bull Junior." Good prices offered for clean copies.

Miss N. G. B., Meldrum Villa, Sydney Road, Broadmeadow, Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia—"Gems," 265-360, 373, 377, 378, 381, 382, 398, 455, 482-485.

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J. Speed, 53, Hallville Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool—"A Schoolboy's Sacrifice," "A Pal in Peril," "The Outcast's Luck," "Cardew of the Fourth," "Hard Lines for Levison." 1/- and postage paid.

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Matches Wanted by:—

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BRACKENHURST C.C.—16-17.—E. H. Sweetland, 70, Milton Road, S.E. 24.

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