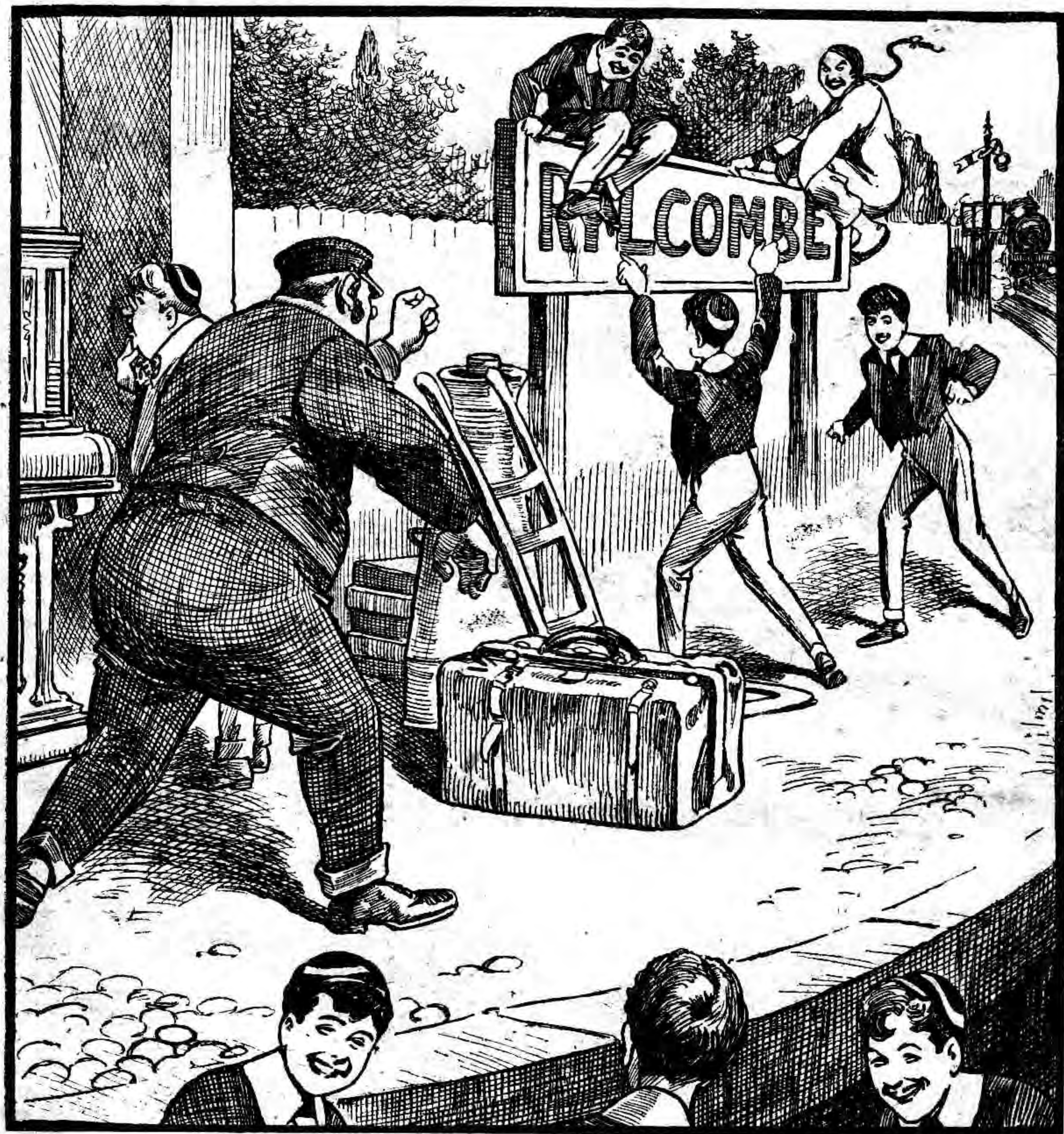


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THE SHYLOCK OF THE SECOND!



THE SECOND-FORMERS AT THE STATION!

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

The Shylock of the Second!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. At Rylcombe Station.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Wherefore this thushness?"

The speaker was Bob Cherry of the Greyfriars Remove.

He and his chums of the Famous Five—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, familiarly known as Inky—had just passed through the wicket-gate on to the platform of the little country station of Rylcombe. They had ridden over together to fetch a parcel which Wharton expected, and which all of them regarded as important.

The Rylcombe Station platform was not, as a rule, at all a crowded spot. But just now it looked crowded—hence Bob's query.

"Pretty nearly all the Second here. What are they after?" said Johnny Bull.

"Not quite as bad as that," replied Harry Wharton, laughing. "I can count eight."

"Eight of the Second are about as many as anyone could stand at a time!" growled Johnny.

"More—heaps more!" agreed Bob.

"The wheezefulness must be the meetfulness," Inky said thoughtfully. "Perhapsfully the Second have come to welcomefully greet a highly-respected parent."

"What? Parent of all of them?" queried Johnny.

"Anybody who had that little lot in his quiverful would be a greedy bounder if he wanted any more," Frank said. "There's my minor among them. Hi, Dicky!"

"Do you want me?" yelled back Nugent minor.

"Yes. That's why I called."

"Well, you can come here, then!" replied the undutiful younger brother. "I'm not going to run about after you, don't you think it, old top!"

"Shall we go and slaughter the whole crowd?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Too hot," answered Harry. "Besides, we really haven't any sufficient cause for such a drastic measure as that."

"They're checky, the young rips!" growled Johnny, whose temper did not appear to have been improved by the torrid temperature.

"Nugent minor was," Harry said. "Frank has my full leave to correct him in any manner he thinks fit."

"Tain't worth the trouble in this weather," said Frank lazily. "And you know as well as I do that it's no good thinking of improving Dicky."

"There being no roomfulness for the improvefulness?" purred Inky.

"There being heaps and heaps!" replied Frank emphatically. "But no hope!"

"Might slay Sammy Bunter, anyway," suggested Bob, with a grin that was not exactly bloodthirsty. "No one could miss Sammy, and he's fat enough for killing—in spite of the rations."

"That would be too kind to the rest of the kids," Harry said. "They bar

Bunter minor no end. Can't make out why they've let him come with them!"

"I can. Ain't he the Owl's brother, with a beautiful family resemblance?" Bob answered.

And it certainly was a fact that William George Bunter—Bunter of the Remove, and the elder brother of Samuel Tuckless—was not, to say the least of it, easily choked off when he desired to favour unwilling schoolfellows with the inestimable benefit of his society.

There were eight of the Second—the junior Form of all at Greyfriars—present, as Wharton had said. Dicky Nugent was supported by his chums, Gatty and Myers. Hop Hi, the little Chinese, and Sylvester, the American youngster, had come along together; and Castle and Pettifer had joined the throng.

Careful counting was necessary before the fact that the number was only eight could be established to the satisfaction of anyone really interested, however.

The tropical heat might make Johnny Bull a trifle morose, and Frank Nugent very languid; but it had no effect whatever upon the high spirits of the fags. Sammy Bunter, penniless, as usual, stood sadly contemplating an automatic-machine; but the rest were simply all over the place, in a manner not at all pleasing to the one ancient porter on duty.

"Hi, Sylvester!" sang out Bunter minor.

"What do you want?" called back Sylvester, swinging by his hands from the top of the station name-board, while the agile Hop Hi, seated above him, flourished his legs to repel the attentions of Castle and Pettifer.

"Come down from there!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"What you sayee, Bullee? No can hear," replied Hop Hi blandly.

"Now then, you young furrin inip, just you drop off that, an' quick sharp about it!" rumbled the porter.

"No savvy," said Hop Hi.

"I want you, of course!" answered Sammy Bunter to Sylvester. Sammy's fat face was wrathful and discontented. "Ain't you coming?"

"Not likely! I don't want you, you know!" Sylvester said, scrambling up beside his Chinese chum.

"Those kids will get the stationmaster on their track," grumbled Johnny.

Harry Wharton had gone into the office to inquire for his parcel. Frank Nugent had sunk down upon a seat, and was fanning himself with his straw. Inky, who revelled in the heat which seemed to the rest almost unbearable, stood on the edge of the platform, in the full sunlight glare, gazing over the low roofs of the station buildings to the distant hills, which shimmered under the torrid rays.

"That's their look-out," answered Bob lazily. Bob was not as near collapse as Frank, but even on him the heat had its effect.

"Well, it is in a way. But they ought to be stopped, and I'm going to stop them!" growled Johnny.

"I shouldn't bother, if I were you, old chap."

"You would if you were me, because you wouldn't be so beastly slack, then."

"Are you coming here, Sylvester?" howled Sammy.

"I am not!" shouted back the boy from the States.

"Look 'ere, young gents, you gottor come—"

"Get away, young Castle, or—"

"We kickeee you in the nugeee!" finished Hop Hi, for Sylvester.

His foot swung within an inch of Pettifer's nose. Castle grabbed the swinging boot of Sylvester.

"Lend me a penny, Bull, there's a decent chap!" pleaded Sammy. "I can't get this thing to work without one, and there's chocolate in it!"

"I'll lend you something to teach you to be honest if you don't stop that, you young sneak-thief!" snorted Johnny. "All right, Bowker! I'm coming! I'll soon fetch them down!"

The faces of Nugent minor, Gatty, and Myers appeared above the edge of the platform. The inquiring minds of those three young gentlemen were busy upon an oft-tried juvenile experiment. They had just placed two pins, crosswise, upon one of the rails, with intent to see what shape they would have assumed when the wheels of the train had run over them.

There are very strong objections to this experiment. You have no right on the permanent-way. You are in more or less danger there. You cannot, as a rule, find the pins after the train has passed, and if you do, they have been spoiled as pins and have not taken on any useful new role. But the trio on the line were not worried by those or any other objections.

Now, for the first time the ancient porter perceived the three.

"You come outer that!" he said crossly. "Come outer it d'rectly this minute, or I'll fetch the stationmaster to ye! Why, you might go a-gettin' of yourselves run over! The train, she'll be along most any time now!"

"She's not signalled yet," replied Dicky coolly.

"Come out of it, you young idiots!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Lend me a penny, somebody!" wailed Sammy. "Sylvester, you young beast, lend me penny! Tain't anything to you! You've always got plenty of tin, and—"

"Djeer? Come outer it! Come down offen it!" rumbled the porter, directing his glances first to the three on the metals, and then to the two on the board.

"You kids really are the giddy limit," remarked Bob, standing in the shade and gasping.

"Come and help me to stop them, slacker!" snapped Johnny.

"No, thank you! It's a bit too vigorous for me. Got a clean hanky about you, Johnny?"

"No, ass! Why?"

"Never mind, then. I shall have to stop mopping my 'eated brow, that's all."

My wiper's wringing wet, and so hot I can hardly hold it."

"Yooop!" yelled Pettifer, as Hop Hi's foot, at the end of a leg which seemed magically elongated, caught him a tap on the back of the head.

"That not hultee," said Hop Hi kindly. "But me givee you one that will hultee if you no stopee!"

"There's the signal down, Dicky," said Teddy Myers.

"I do wish someone would lend me a penny!" burred Sammy Bunter.

"Come down—come up!" roared Bowker.

"Whichee we doee?" asked Hop Hi.

"You come down, f'others come up, else I'll know the reason why!"

"If you kick me again, young Sylvester—"

"I shall if you don't leave me alone, Castle! Yaroooh! Stoppit!"

"Come down!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"And you three, come up! The train's—"

Oh, you young—Yooop!"

Castle had dragged Sylvester. Sylvester had clutched Hop Hi. Hop Hi, his position already imperilled by the attentions of Pettifer, came down, being unable to stay where he was, and brought his chum with him. Hop Hi came without a sound. But if he could not be heard he could be felt, and Sylvester made noise enough for two.

Johnny Bull felt Hop Hi, if he failed to hear him. The little Chinese tumbled right on the head of Johnny.

Johnny stumbled backward, and smote Bowker. Bowker went down like one shot. He rolled over the edge of the platform, and pulled Johnny over with him.

Like an avalanche the two smote Dicky Nugent, Gatty, and Myers, who were just scrambling up. Dicky and Myers were flung across the rails, with Johnny and the porter on top of them. Gatty fell clear, into the six-foot way.

The rails quivered beneath the shock of the train, now close at hand. The stationmaster and Harry Wharton came running out of the office together. Bob Cherry sprang down from the platform, waved his arms wildly, and sent his stentorian voice through the heat-laden air. Inky came out of a day-dream of India, and was down beside Bob in an instant. Frank Nugent opened his eyes, gave a yell of agony, and followed Inky.

"Come back! Clear out of the way! Oh, dear, they'll all be killed!" shouted the stationmaster.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The New Second-Former.

HARRY WHARTON followed the rest to the rescue without a second's delay. Inky and Frank had grabbed old Bowker, and dragged him into safety. Johnny Bull had struggled up, and pulled Myers out of the heap. Bob Cherry continued to wave and yell to the driver of the oncoming train. And he could have done no better, for it was very near now, though, of course, with steam shut off, and slackening down.

Harry seized Dicky under the arms. There was just time, perhaps, to get him clear. The doubt did not daunt Harry.

"Let me!"

It was Frank Nugent's voice by his side.

"Oh, why don't you stop?" wailed little Sylvester.

A tanned, red face showed for a moment, looking out of the cab of the engine. Then came a squealing of brakes, and the train pulled up just as Harry threw himself and his burden into safety.

But for his promptitude Dicky must have been killed. The driver had done

his best; but his Best would not have been good enough.

"I say, if you'd only let me get up myself—"

Frank Nugent broke in on his brother's complaint.

"Don't, Dicky! You'd have been dead now if it hadn't been for Harry. And what should I have said to the mater?"

Frank's voice shook. He was quite unstrung.

But Dicky took his narrow squeak far more lightly.

"Oh, rats!" he said. "What's it matter what you'd have had to say if there's nothing to be said? And, of course, there isn't."

"You might be decently grateful, anyway," Frank said huskily.

"Oh, I'm grateful enough! Thanks no end, Wharton! I'll do as much for you if I ever get the chance. And now let me get up on to the platform. We've come to meet a new kid, you know, and Twigg ain't to know that this happened, so I shall be expected to meet him all the same."

By "Twigg" the disrespectful Dicky meant the Second Form master, Mr. Twigg.

He was about to cut in front of the engine; but Frank caught his arm.

"You go round by the back!" he said. "I should think you've run enough risk for one day."

"Well, leave go of me, chump!" replied Dicky, wriggling hard. "I shouldn't be run over by a giddy engine that's standing still, anyway. Good thing Wharton's got a bit more nerve than you have!"

And Dicky bolted for the rear and the platform and the new boy.

The rest followed him, Johnny Bull limping. Gatty ran on ahead of them after Dicky; but Myers, a good deal shaken, and very pale of face, seemed to have rather lost interest in the new arrival.

"Did Twigg send the whole crowd of you, kid?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Oh, no! He only told Dicky and Gatty to go. I came with them, of course. We three always go about together."

"And the rest hitched on?"

"Well, we didn't mind Sylvester and Hop Hi. They're all serene. And we didn't much mind Castle and Pettifer, though we couldn't see what they wanted to come for. But that rotten young Sammy's the limit. He would come, though. There was no choking him off."

"What's his interest in the new kid?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Says he knew him at home—ain't sure whether they aren't relations," answered Myers. "Sammy's a beastly young liar!"

"He'll soon find out whether they're relations or not," said Bob. "If the other chap will only say how much chink he's got, Sammy would settle that on the spot."

"Not he!" Myers said. "Sammy would be anyone's cousin or niece or uncle or anything for sixpence—until the sixpence was spent, anyway."

"H'm! So that's the new kid?" said Bob.

A boy, who looked at first glance little, if any, older than the fags around him, stood with a suit-case at his feet in the midst of the small crowd. No one was paying much attention to him as yet. They were all listening to the stationmaster, who was saying things about breaches of the railway bylaws, and criminal recklessness, and so on; and the Second-Formers were listening anxiously, hanging with bated breath upon the official's words, so to speak. He ought to have felt pleased by the earnest

attention given to them—unless he guessed the true reason of it.

That reason was made plain the instant he was called away to his duties.

"He didn't say a blessed word about reporting us to the Head!" said Gatty, with obvious relief.

"He ain't half a bad old stick, after all," remarked Dicky.

"I guess he didn't think of it," Sylvester said. "Lots of time yet for thinking."

"What have you kids—or—you chaps been up to?" asked the new boy, with an easy smile.

Somehow, both the smile and the manner of speaking made Harry Wharton fancy that the new arrival was older than most of the Second.

"You wait till you're spoken to!" said Dicky Nugent severely. "We know how to deal with cocky bounders in the Second! What's your name?"

"Spring," replied the new boy.

"He's been to school before, I'm sure," thought Harry. "A kid fresh from home would have mentioned his Christian name, too, sure as eggs."

"Well, not so much of it!" said Dicky. "Spring ain't so very different from bounce, and I'm blessed if you haven't a bit to spare of that. We'll call him Bouncer, you fellows!"

Spring only smiled. His manner was very assured, though perhaps bounce was hardly the right word to describe it. He was not taller than Dicky Nugent, and not as tall as Gatty; but he looked older than either.

His age was not a matter of importance to Harry, of course. As a rule, the Remove and the Second did not come very closely into contact. But Dicky Nugent was Frank's minor, and that fact caused the Famous Five generally to look upon the Second with something like a fatherly eye.

"I say, you new chap, have you a penny about you?"

It was Sammy Bunter who put that question, of course.

"Oh, here you are, you sponger!" said little Sylvester. "You don't want to go bothering a new chap before he's fairly out of the train, I guess!"

Sammy pocketed the penny in haste. Then, with all the dignity he was capable of, he said:

"I was talking to Spring, young Sylvester! You shouldn't butt in, you know—it's rude! Got a penny about you, Spring?"

"I have," replied the new boy, still with that assured smile which Wharton was beginning to dislike.

"Lend us one, then! Two, if you like!"

"Don't let the beastly young sponger bag your cash, kid!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I shouldn't," answered Spring, coolly. "I'd take jolly good care no one did that. But I don't mind lending him twopence. What's your name, young fatty?"

"I'm Bunter minor. Look here, though, if you're going to lend me money I expect you to be civil!" said Sammy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you silly asses are cackling at!" Sammy said crossly. "Thanks, Spring, no end! I'll pay you back one day before long."

"At about the date of the Greek Kalends," murmured Frank Nugent.

"That's about it. We all know Sammy!" agreed Bob.

"The payupfulness is not the Bunter caperfulness!" purred Inky.

"I don't know what you mean about the Greek calendar, or whatever it is," Spring said. "I hate Greek and Latin and all that silly rot."

"My brother means never," said

Dicky. Nugent minor had no great store of classical lore; but he knew that the Greeks had no Kalends, and that "at the time of the Greek Kalends" meant "never."

"Beware of the Bunters! They borrow, but they pay not back!" said Frank.

"I'll jolly well see that that fat young beggar pays me back!" replied Spring. And his face took on a hard look. He might not be keen on Greek or Latin—no one in the Second was, for that matter—but there was something he was keen on—his money.

So Harry Wharton thought, and wondered why the new kid should have lent that twopence so readily. The fact of his not knowing Sammy Bunter would not account for it. True, Sylvester, who knew Sammy well, had lent him a penny. But Sylvester did not expect it back, and would not have missed a hundred pennies. A fellow so keen on his cash as Spring seemed to be would have liked to know the borrower before he lent, one might have thought.

But it really didn't matter. The Famous Five went off with Harry's parcel, leaving Spring to the tender mercies of Dicky Nugent & Co. He seemed very well able to take care of himself, and, in any case, Dicky and the rest would have the handling of him sooner or later.

The train had steamed out again. The stationmaster had gone into his office without delivering any threat as to a report to Dr. Locke. Sammy Bunter came back from the automatic-machine with a brown smear under his lower lip. The Second-Formers cleared off.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Queer Fish!

"I DON'T cotton to Bouncer a little bit," said Dicky Nugent frankly.

The Second were in their own quarters, the Form-room. Most of the Form were present, and Gatty had just lighted a fire in the grate. The heat was rather more intense, if anything, than it had been earlier in the day. But as Gatty said, quite truthfully, you couldn't cook herrings without a fire of some sort, and a fellow would have to be beastly hungry before he ate raw herrings.

"Me either!" agreed Myers. "I say, old man, are you dead sure those herrings are good?"

"Good? Oh, don't be a silly ass, young Myers! Of course they're good! I bought them myself, so I ought to know!"

"Here you are, Gatty—some more old impot papers," said Castle, coming up loaded with wastepaper.

"Chump! It's wood we want! You can't make a fire fit to cook by just with paper!"

"Try your head, old top!" suggested Marsden facetiously.

"I'll try yours—with my fist!" snorted Gatty. "My hat! I never saw such a set of duffing asses as there are in this giddy Form! We never shall get these herrings cooked at this rate."

"We'd better, and quick about it," remarked Dicky Nugent, sniffing.

"Why?" snapped Gatty, handling one of the half-dozen rather dissipated-looking fish almost lovingly.

"'Cause they won't keep much longer. I fancy they're some of the season-before-last's stock that the man palmed off on you, kid."

"Gatty looked so fresh that the merchant thought it wouldn't matter if the herrings were a bit waxy," Marsden

said. Marsden had lately set up as the wit of the Form, and, although severely sat upon, persisted in making jokes which the rest, as a rule, persisted in not seeing.

They failed to see this one. Their interest was centred upon the herrings.

"I don't mind 'em just a little bit waxy," said Myers thoughtfully. "It gives 'em more flavour, and when there's only about a quarter of a bloater to each chap—"

"These ain't bloaters, you silly chump! They're fresh herrings!" howled Gatty.

"They're herrings, all serene!" replied Dicky. "But they ain't fresh—not by long odds!"

"When a bloater or a kipper is a bit off," Myers said, "it doesn't really matter so very much. You can kid yourself it's too high-cured, or something of that kind. But—"

"And get pot-o-maine poisoning!" squeaked Sammy Bunter. "Not any for me—not if I know it! I don't want to be poisoned, if you chaps do!"

"Well, you weren't going to have any, anyway!" said Gatty, pushing one of the doubtful fish, on the end of a penholder, into the smoke—the fire was as yet a possibility of the future. But Gatty, who was something of an optimist, drew hope from the smoke; and perhaps he thought that the fish would be none the worse for smoking in any case.

"What kind of poisoning are you going to have, Sammy?" inquired Dicky Nugent, winking at Sylvester.

"I'm not going to have it, you chump! I jolly well sha'n't risk it," replied Sammy crossly.

"Oh, sorry! But what kind—"

"Sorry? What are you sorry for?" barked Sammy.

"Because you aren't going to be poisoned, of course, you fat young duffer! But the Second never do get any luck. What sort of poison d'd you say?"

"I'm not going to boil my cabbage—"

"That's an old one, porpoise minor, and it's beastly cheek, too!" said Dicky, catching Sammy by the scruff of his fat neck, and squeezing hard. "I don't put up with cheek from you, let me tell you!"

"Yaroooh! Stop it! Lemme be, you cad!" howled Samuel.

"What kid of poison did you say? I'll leave go when you tell me that!"

"Potomaine, of course! What an ignorant chap you are, young Nugent!" warned Sammy, his face red and his breathing hard from Dicky's handling.

"Where did you pick up that word?" asked Marsden. "It didn't drop out of the dic, I know."

"Oh, chuck all that rot!" snapped Gatty. "There, you silly chumps! You've made me drop that fish into the fire!"

"I guess it's easier to see the fish than the fire!" remarked Sylvester.

"F'shee muchee smellee!" said Hoo Hi, who had just come in.

"Well, you Chinks eat stinking fish!" growled Gatty. "Didn't Twigg tell us so the other day in geography lesson? Voon! Who says there's no giddy fire there? I've burnt my blessed hand!"

He had rescued the fish, however. It scarcely looked more attractive, covered with scraps of charred paper. But Gatty took out a handkerchief that had obviously seen considerable service; and that might once have been clean, to put that trifling matter right.

"That was the Japanese," said Pet-tifer.

"What Japanese? There ain't any here, ass! If there was, and I knew they'd made me burn my hand—"

"I mean what Twigg said. It was Japan we were doing. We haven't got to China yet."

"Did you ever know anyone who had pot-of-marmalade poisoning, Sammy?" asked Dicky Nugent.

"No, I didn't, then. There's no such thing, you silly chump! It's potomaine."

"That's news!" said Marsden sarcastically. Marsden read the daily papers sometimes—an unusual habit for a Second-Former. It was not a habit of Dicky's, but Dicky happened to run against a case of ptomaine poisoning, and he knew better than Sammy.

"How do you spell it?" he asked.

"Any way you like, fathead! Yaroooh! Stop it, Nugent minor, you young beast! You're always bullying a chap!"

"I dunno!" said Gatty thoughtfully. He was sniffing one of the herrings as he spoke, and not thinking the least in the world about the subject which interested Dicky and Marsden from the heights of their superior knowledge.

"Nobody ever supposed you did," said Dicky. "You're about the worst speller in the Form, old bean."

"Who's talking about spelling? I'm not. I really dunno, Myers. They do niff a bit—not quite a nice kind of niff, either. And the fire won't burn. It's a pity, after paying all that for them, to sling 'em over to Sammy; but he's the only chap here who would eat them raw, and if they poison him it doesn't much—"

"Yah! Think I'm going to eat your giddy smelly fish, Gatty, do you? 'Tain't likely!"

"Sammy's going to spell potomaine, not put in for a dose of it," observed Dicky, grinning.

"I'm not jolly well going to spell it, and I'm not jolly well—Yooop! Keep that fish away from me, young Nugent! Ow-yow! I shall be—Yaroooh!"

"Spell it!" commanded Dicky, swinging a decidedly decayed herring by the tail so that it flicked Sammy's nose. It had to go very near indeed to Sammy's face to do that, his nose not being at all a prominent feature of the landscape.

"I—I— Oh, don't! I can't; dunno how. But it begins with 'p,' and then there's a 't'—"

"I wish there was!" sighed Myers. "Of course there is in Hall, if you can call that tea. But it doesn't look as if we should get any here, Gatty's herrings being off."

"The doctor at home thought Billy had it once," went on Sammy. "That's how I know about it. He'd wolfed two big tins of salmon. But it was only tummy-ache. I don't see how the doctor knew that, though. He seemed quite sure as soon as he heard how much my major had had. But if a little bit of salmon could give anyone potomaine because it came out of a tin, two whole tinsful would be enough to kill a fellow with it, you'd fancy."

"What a pity it didn't!" said Castle. "It would be something to get rid of that brother of yours, even if we still had to bear you!"

"It's spelt 'ptomaine,' and the proper way to pronounce it is 'tomaine,' like that," said Marsden, with an air of importance. "I looked it up in the dic once."

"What's the 'p' for?" snarled Sammy. "You think you know everything and a bit over, Marsden. Yah! Fancy looking up a word in the dic!"

Sammy's contempt for such a proceeding seemed to be shared by the majority of the Second. Marsden's display of erudition fell flat. Gatty was mourning the fact that the herrings really were too

far gone even for Second Form consumption, and the rest were more inclined to mourn with him than to argue about spelling.

"Pity to waste 'em!" said Myers. "Let's ram them down young Bunter's neck!"

"Yah! You just try it on, that's all!" snarled Sammy.

Myers advanced at once with a herring in hand. Sammy backed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Second.

Sammy Bunter was by long odds the most unpopular fellow in the Form. He deserved that distinction, too. There really was not anything nice about Sammy.

"Leave off, you cad! Lemme be! Stop him, you rotters! I won't—"

"What are you kids doing to my minor?" demanded a voice at the door; and the face of William George Bunter, like unto the moon at the full, appeared.

"What's that to do with you?" snapped Gatty. "Clear out, porpoise! We don't allow Remove bounders here."

"Oh, really, don't be so absurd! You ought to be more respectful to your seniors, Gatty!" replied Bunter, with immense dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The notion of being respectful to Billy Bunter appeared to strike the Second Form as humorous. Bunter failed to see why it should, but it did.

"We're going to shove these wangy herrings down Samuel's neck!" announced Castle.

"You'd better not try to do anything of the sort!" snapped the Owl of the Remove. "I'm not going to have my minor—"

"Oh, shut up, Billy!" squeaked the ungrateful Sammy. "They won't take any notice of you, tain't a bit likely. It will only make them do it all the more if you butt in, you fathead!"

"Tell you what. There's too much of the fish even for a greedy young beggar like Sammy," said Dicky Nugent. "Half each for them—that's the ticket!"

Billy Bunter began at once to back towards the door, but quite a small crowd of the Second were between him and retreat.

"Here, none of that!" he said nervously. "I came here to see the new chap—Spring, ain't his name? Isn't Spring here?"

"No; it's summer here," Marsden replied, "and jolly hot!"

"You can sponge on the new chap as much as you like, if he'll let you," said Dicky, "but—"

"He won't," put in Myers. "Spring may be a bouncer, but he's fly. He'll twig Bunter for a fishy customer by the look of him."

"Or the smell of him!" added Gatty, with a grin that William George Bunter did not like at all.

As Gatty spoke he picked up one of the herrings, and moved nearer to the visitor.

"Here, I say, put that down, you know! I won't—I shall hurt some of you if you aren't jolly careful!"

That threat sealed the doom of Bunter. As he spoke he gave a sweep with his fat arm, and Gatty, Myers, and Castle were all touched. Not one of them was hurt. But it was a gross error on the part of the Owl to fancy that the Second would be so easily frightened.

Gatty, Myers, and Castle went for him as one man.

"Yaroooh!" howled Bunter, as he crashed down right before the joint assault.

"Take that!" yelled Gatty, dabbing the odorous herring on his perspiring face.

"Turn him over and shove it down the back of his neck!" shouted Pettifer.

"No can dooce. Buntel's neck too



Bunter goes through it! (See Chapter 5.)

much fatce. Fillee collal!" remarked Hop Hi blandly.

"Catch hold of Sammy! The young sweep's trying to do a bunk!" roared Dicky.

Pettifer put out a foot to trip up Sammy in his flight. Sammy, with more agility than might have been expected of him, stooped, snatched at the outstretched leg, and brought Pettifer floundering down.

But Sammy came with him, and next moment there sounded a great spluttering and howling, as Dicky clapped his queer fish upon the face of Sammy.

"What does this tumult mean?"

It was a voice from the passage which asked that question.

"Twiggy!" gasped Myers. "Cave, you chaps!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bouncer's Little Ways.

"YAROOOH!" roared William George Bunter.

"Yarooo-ooo-ooo!" came the long drawn out echo from Bunter minor.

Neither wanted Mr. Twigg to be in any doubt that he had been maltreated.

Dicky Nugent & Co., forsaking their victims, stood and looked at one another somewhat sheepishly, expecting every second the opening of the door and the advent of their Form-master.

"Get up, you fat-headed sneaks!" growled Gatty, giving Sammy a dig with his boot, and glaring down at William George. "We don't want Twiggy to see you like that."

"I do!" gasped Billy Bunter, gouging very highly-scented fish out of his eyes and the back of his neck.

"So do I!" piped up Sammy. "Serve you right, you cads!"

"I'll give you jip afterwards for your giddy cheek!" hissed Gatty, with an anxious look at the door.

Still the door did not open.

"I don't believe it was Twiggy at all," said Myers, at length.

"Who else could it have been?" objected Castle. "It was Twiggy's voice, all serene."

"That great fat Owl can imitate voices," said Pettifer.

"Not with half a wangy herring in his mouth," replied Dicky, grinning cheerfully. "It will be what your minor calls potomaine poisoning this time, sure enough, porpoise—not just a pain in your little tummy. I should think myself you're doomed, for a dead cert! That was the wangiess one of the whole lot. The niff of it nearly knocked me over!"

"And Bunter took quite a lot of it down!" Myers said cheerfully.

"Buntel die velly quicke," said Hop Hi cheerily. "We allee goec funelal and dancee on Buntel's glave—velly nicee!"

"You Chinese beast!" snorted Bunter, recovering a fragment of herring from his left ear.

"Twiggy would have put his napper in before now," said Gatty. "I'll just have a squint outside, and see whether he's pottering round."

Gatty squinted outside. Mr. Twigg was not there. The only person visible was the new boy, Spring, who came down the passage as Gatty looked out of the door.

"Hallo, Bouncer!" said Gatty.

"Seen Twiggy?"

"Do you mean our respected Form-master?" asked Spring.

"I don't know about respected," growled Gatty. "There ain't a fat lot of that going, though the merchant might be a worse chap than he is. Yes, I mean him."

"I saw him just now," replied Spring. "He came from this passage with another master."

Gatty thought he perceived how matters stood. Mr. Twigg had meant to investigate the row in the Form-room; but in the very nick of time, with his hand on the knob of the door, had been carried off by Mr. Quelch or Mr. Capper.

It would have surprised Gatty to learn that Mr. Twigg, in his own room, had heard nothing of the tumult. That Bunter should be able to imitate the Second Form master's voice surprised no one. Bunter had a natural gift for that.

kind of thing. But Spring had as yet only seen Mr. Twigg in one brief interview; and nobody was aware of any such gift in the case of Spring.

"All serene, you chaps!" said Gatty, bobbing back. Spring followed him in. "Twigg's gone off. Bouncer saw him. I say, let's finish the job properly! There's another herring or two left, you know."

"Oh, I guess they've had enough!" answered Dicky.

"I shall sing out if you touch me again!" said Bunter major hotly.

"So shall I! I'll jolly well make the whole blessed school hear!" squeaked Bunter minor.

"What are we going to do about grub?" asked Myers. "It's too late now for tea in Hall."

"Where's young Sylvester?" inquired Castle.

Sylvester was the one fellow in the Second who always had money, and he was very generous. It was not to be expected that he should stand tea to the Form every day; but at a pinch he would not shy at doing so.

"Sylvester gone to tea with Delaley and Mauly," replied Hop Hi.

"Sucking up to Remove bounders!" growled Gatty, with a touch of moroseness.

"Not at all," said Hop Hi. "They ask him; he plomise; he goec. Sylvester's patel likee Delaley."

Gatty grunted. He knew that there was a strong friendship between the American youngster and Delaley of the Remove—a protective friendship on the South African junior's part, almost a worshipping one on Sylvester's. And he knew that Abraham Sylvester, the youngster's millionaire father, approved of it wholly. Not that Gatty troubled his head about such considerations. What really did matter was that all chance of Sylvester's standing a feed to replace those very disappointing herrings was off.

"Anybody here got any chink?" asked Dicky Nugent. "Bunter, old bean, lend me a quid."

"Oh, really, Nugent minor, I should think you ought to know that borrowing like that is very unprincipled! Besides, I haven't got any money. I want to borrow some myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

No one had thought that Dicky could borrow from Bunter—Dicky as little as anyone.

"I can't see what you silly fags are cackling at!" said Bunter peevishly. "But I didn't come here to talk to you. I want to speak to Spring."

The new boy grinned—an inscrutable kind of grin. The Greyfriars Second did not quite know what to make of the new boy. Already he had made upon them the impression that Harry Wharton had got of him—that he was older than his supposed age—twelve.

He took coolly the hints of ragging that had already reached him. This was no youngster fresh from his mother's apron-strings, that was plain. He knew the ropes. He had told them nothing about his former school, though he had been questioned—the Second had no bashfulness about asking questions. He evaded inquiries as to where his home was and what his pater was. And now he did not repudiate—as the Second considered a new boy worthy to be in their ranks should have done—any desire to talk privately with the obese and sponging Bunter.

Of course, he did not know as much about Bunter as they did; but Dicky Nugent & Co. were not given to making allowances for such things as that. They knew all about Bunter; and to

them it seemed that his character should have been plain at a glance to Spring.

"My pater knows yours, Spring," said Bunter patronisingly.

"Oh, does he?"

The tone was indifferent; but somehow it did not suggest that the new boy wanted to choke Bunter off.

"Yes—knows him well. Look here, I'll see that you're all right at Greyfriars, you know. Mind that, young Nugent, and all the rest of you! Spring's under my protection."

"Thank you no end!" said Spring, with a slightly sarcastic inflection.

"Rats!" snapped Dicky.

"If Spring is under Bunter's protection, then Spring had better have the herrings that are left," said Myers kindly.

"That's the ticket!" yelled Gatty. "Let's see Bunter protect him."

"Like he did himself," grinned Marsden.

The face of Spring looked less self-assured now. It even looked a trifle pale.

"He's a funk!" whispered Castle to Pettifer.

"I say, I don't cotton to that sort of thing," Spring said. "Did I hear one of you fellows saying that you wanted to borrow some cash for grub?"

"Unless you're deaf, you did," growled Gatty.

"Well, I can lend you a few bob."

"Good egg!" said Myers exultantly.

"I must say that Bouncer's got more decency in him than I thought," Dicky said approvingly.

"Of course, I shall expect it back."

"You'd better stand a feed," suggested Castle.

"Can't quite see that," Spring replied. "I don't really know you chaps yet."

"Ah, but you soon will, though!" Gatty said, with deep meaning.

"Later on—perhaps," said the new boy. "If five bob is any use—"

"Any use—oh, my hat!" yelled Pettifer.

"You can have that. But I shall want it back next week, with a bob interest."

Curious looks were cast at him. This was certainly a new thing in the way of new boys. He had not been at Greyfriars more than four hours or so; and already he was talking about lending money at interest! The Second seldom refused to lend when in funds, and were always ready to borrow when out; but this kind of lending was new to them—in the Form, anyway. Fisher T. Fish had done it in the Remove; but the Second moved rather outside Fishy's orbit.

But they wanted the money, and they had no thought of refusing.

"Who's to pay the bob?" asked Gatty.

"I don't care who pays it as long as I get it. Here's the chink. I shall want some of you to sign an IOU for it."

Again they stared. Spring seemed very businesslike in his usury.

"Well, I'll sign for one," said Dicky. "I expect a remittance next week."

"Like Bunter?" gibed Castle.

"No. Bunter's postal-order is always coming to-night or to-morrow morning," corrected Myers.

"As a matter of fact—" began Bunter, with dignity.

"As a rotten crammer, you mean!" put in Gatty.

"I have one coming to-night—that is, if it doesn't come to-night it will—"

"Never come at all!" chipped in Marsden.

"And you know it won't come to-night," added Castle.

"Here you are," said Spring, who had been writing with a stylograph pen. "If three or four of you will sign that, you can take the chink."

The paper he had prepared rather impressed those who saw it. It made them "jointly and severally responsible" for the repayment of the loan within the space of "one calendar week from the date thereon."

Spring seemed to know all about the ways of moneylenders, they thought. But they did not like Spring any the better for it.

Hop Hi refused to sign. Hop Hi could have stood treat; he was never without money. But the Second had come to know that in matters of this sort the little Chinese was a law unto himself.

He would or would not; if he did not offer, or agree at once when the request was made of him, nothing could move him.

Gatty, Myers, Dicky Nugent, and Castle all signed. The money was handed over, and three or four of the fags made tracks for the tuckshop.

Mrs. Mumble's stock was nothing like former days' affluence; but the tuckshop was not yet a Hubbard cupboard, and there was still corn in Egypt.

Billy Bunter lingered a moment or two. He was thinking of staying to tea. But the Second were not thinking of asking him, or of having him at any price; and a gentle hint, in the shape of a combined rush, which carried him outside the door and deposited him, wrong way up, on the cold, unsympathetic linoleum, got rid of him.

Spring followed him out, and when Bunter had resumed the perpendicular they passed down the corridor together.

"Bouncer's a rum 'un," said Dicky thoughtfully.

"We shouldn't have had a feed without him, though," remarked Pettifer.

"S'pose not. I don't like him, all the same. We shall have to teach him his blessed place!" replied Dick.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bouncer and Bunter.

"SO you know my pater?" said Spring to Bunter when they were out of doors.

"Nanno—not exactly. At least, it's my pater who knows him, not me," answered Bunter.

"Sure?"

"Oh, quite!"

"It's a rum thing, then. I don't happen to have a pater, you see!"

"Oh, really! But you're not in mourning. Did he get killed out in France? I'm sorry!"

"I'm not. He was never any good to anybody, as far as I can make out, and I'm not going to waste any sorrow over him. He wasn't killed in the war. I can hardly remember him. What did you tell me that lie for?"

Bunter was almost shocked. He was not used to having new boys in the Second Form talk to him in this strain, though not much gloss needed to be rubbed off the newness of the average fag before he began to treat William George Bunter with the disrespect that he deserved.

But Spring evidently had money, and Bunter was stony, as usual. There was quite a possibility that the postal-order he was waiting for would not turn up that evening or the next morning; in fact, no one would have been more surprised than Bunter if it had turned up.

So he did not resent Spring's candour as he might otherwise have done.

"I—I— It was only a mistake!" he mumbled. "Must have been someone else of the same name."

"What do you want to suck up to me for?" asked Spring, with a curious, hard, old look in his eyes.

"I— Oh, really, Spring, you do talk in a strange way! I don't know that I—"

"Oh, you needn't begin to ride the high horse with me! I can see everybody thinks you're a worm; and that little beast of a brother of yours is another! But you can be useful to me, so I don't mind that."

Bunter gasped. It was not an unusual thing for Bunter to be treated with contempt; but such language as this from a new boy—and a mere fag in the lowest Form of all, too—was just a little bit surprising.

"I—I— Look here, Spring—"

"Come along to the tuckshop!" said Spring.

Bunter's eyes goggled, and his mouth watered. He choked down his resentment. Even after swallowing that, he would still have room for all that Spring was likely to stand.

Gatty, Myers, and Castle were coming out of the tuckshop as the two went in.

"I hope you kids haven't cleared out everything," said Bunter, with quite a worried look at the parcels they were carrying.

"No, worse luck!" answered Gatty.

"Postal-order come, porpoise?" asked Gatty.

"No. My friend Spring is going to stand treat," Bunter answered, with a smirk.

Spring grinned. Gatty stared.

"You two are just the right sort to be pals!" said Myers.

He did not appear to be intending a compliment to either.

"It's going to cost you more than five bob to fill Bunter up, Bouncer!" Gatty growled.

"It's jolly well not!" said Spring, with decision.

Bunter's face fell at that.

But he brightened up when Spring gave quite a liberal order, which included several bottles of lemonade. Bunter had always room for plenty of that; it did not seem to affect his storage capacity.

Mrs. Mimble had only just finished serving them when the voice of her husband was heard calling her from somewhere in the back regions.

"Coming, Joseph!" she called back. And she went, casting a doubtful glance at Bunter, whom she did not entirely trust.

No sooner had she disappeared than Spring coolly lifted the lid of a glass case, and helped himself to a packet of chocolate.

"Have some, Bunter?" he asked affably.

Bunter's hands trembled, and his mouth watered. There was no doubt whatever in his mind that his host meant to steal that chocolate; but he told himself that he could not know that—it was not fair to think it, really. Of course, the fellow meant to pay when Mrs. Mimble returned!

William George Bunter took some. He thrust it hastily into his pocket—which would have been quite an unnecessary thing to do if he had really believed that Spring meant to pay.

Mrs. Mimble came back, and failed to notice the loss. Spring winked at Bunter, who did not feel entirely comfortable. William George's notions of the laws of meum and tuum were unsound at the best of times; but this manner of theft was not in his general line.

Glancing out of the window, he saw Joseph Mimble cross the quad. Next moment, to his intense surprise, the voice of Mr. Mimble again came from somewhere at the back.

"Jest one moment, me dear!" said the voice.

Mrs. Mimble waddled off. Spring helped himself from a stack of cakes, and signed to Bunter to do likewise.

Almost gasping Bunter did so. He rammed what he had taken into his capacious mouth in such big mouthfuls that he came near to choking himself. His eyes goggled at Spring behind his big glasses. His head was in a whirl.

Again Mrs. Mimble came back. The stuff Spring had ordered was disposed of. Bunter looked round longingly. He was not yet replete.

"Come along!" said Spring.

Bunter sighed, and got down off his stool. He might have argued the matter at another time; but just now he did not feel equal to it.

Spring gave Mrs. Mimble a cool "Good-day!" Bunter departed without a word to that wronged woman.

Bunter's conscience was not a specially tender one; but it did not feel at ease just then.

Outside, another surprise awaited him.

"You did that jolly well, old top!" said Spring.

"Did what?" gasped Bunter.

"Why, got that fat old girl out of the way so that we could help ourselves, of course."

"But I never did anything of the sort!"

"Oh, rats! That was your ventriloquism. I know all about it."

"I—I— Oh, really, Spring, how do you know that I am a ventriloquist at all?"

"Perhaps I may know a thing or two more than you think," answered Spring. He looked more cunning and older than ever as he spoke. Billy Bunter had a feeling that he was in the grip of one stronger than himself, and he did not altogether like it.

He knew that he had not called Mrs. Mimble out of the shop by making the voice of her husband appear to come from the back regions. It had really been Joseph Mimble's voice the first time; but quite certainly it had not been so the second time, for the gardener was then crossing the quad.

To Bunter it was a complete mystery. He began to doubt whether he had not played the trick unconsciously. It did not occur to him that the most accomplished ventriloquist cannot throw his voice when his mouth is full. Bunter's mouth had been full from the beginning to the end of that snack.

"I—I— Well, I can do a little in that line," he admitted. "I don't brag about it, of course; but I can do it jolly well. In fact, if I wasn't such a modest chap I might say quite truthfully that there isn't a better ventriloquist than me living!"

"I shouldn't let my modesty stand in the way if I were you!" said Spring drily. Neither the tone nor the words were that of a boy of twelve or so.

"Oh, I'm a modest chap; I can't help it!" Bunter replied fatuously. "Some chaps ain't modest a bit. Wharton ain't, for instance. And as for Cherry—"

"Stow all that! Look here, Bunter, I want a bit of advice, and I think you're about the right chap to give it to me."

Bunter fairly puffed himself out with importance.

"Oh, rather!" he said. "You've come to the right shop if you want advice. What's it about?"

"Are there any chaps in your Form who want to borrow money?"

"You bet! Why, I—"

"Keep yourself off the list. I mean, fellows who will pay it back."

"Oh, really, Spring, if you doubt my honour—"

"I don't—not for a moment."

"That's all right, then. I can always take an apology."

Spring grinned cunningly, and his voice was insolent as he said:

"I don't doubt your honour. I know jolly well you haven't any. But that's no odds. You needn't think you're coming it over me with imaginary postal-orders. But I want putting up to the ropes, and if you give me a tip or two—well, I'll chuck out a tip of two of another sort to you now and then."

It was not quite pleasant for Bunter, but he managed to bear it.

"There are lots of chaps who borrow at times," he said. "Mauly has no end of chink; but I've known him to—he's so careless. And the others nearly all do it, if they can get anyone to lend. Fishy lends sometimes, but they don't cotton to Fishy's ways."

"What's the matter with Fishy's ways? Too fishy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Bunter. That was a joke, of course; and fellows like their jokes laughed at. He thought it would be worth his while to keep in with Spring, though the fag did cherish the unaccountable delusion that he was not a strictly honourable person.

"What's the matter with him?" repeated Spring. "That's the American merchant with the hatchet-face and the nose, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's Fishy. The chaps don't like his way of lending, because he charges interest."

"Why, of course he does!" replied Spring. "A fellow would be a silly mug to lend without."

"Lots of fellows in my Form do it, to oblige a chum—when they've got it, that is. They're rather a poverty-stricken lot on the whole, I must say."

"To oblige a chum? Oh, my hat! Catch me on that hop, and tell me of it when you catch me! I don't believe in having chums, for that matter. There's no profit in it."

"But I'm your chum, you know, Spring!" said Bunter oilily. He felt sure that Spring must have a lot of cash.

"Not jolly well likely! If you were you'd be continually sponging on me, and I'm not going to have that!"

As that was exactly what Bunter intended, he naturally felt indignant. But he choked his indignation down, with an effort.

"What interest do you charge?" he asked ingratiatingly.

"Penny a week on each shilling—or less. If you borrow sixpence—"

"I'd rather borrow half-a-quid," said Bunter; "or a quid, if you can spare it."

"You won't, though. What I mean is, a penny is the minimum rate. If the loan's sixpence, or even twopence, I expect a penny interest. Your minor borrowed twopence of me at the station. He will have to shell out threepence next week to make it straight."

Bunter had his doubts. They were justified, for there was a really remarkable resemblance between William George and Sammy, and William George was, to put it mildly, hardly famous for the punctuality of his repayments.

"It seems fair enough," he said.

"It's no end reasonable!" said Spring. "No chap would expect to pay less."

It was at the rate of well over four hundred per cent. per annum. But in charging at that rate Spring was not so very unlike grown-up moneylenders. And talking in pennies and shillings seemed to lessen the grossness of the charge.

"Well, I know of a good dodge," said

Bunter. "Lend me a bit, you know, and the other chaps will think—"

"That I'm a silly, soft ass!" Spring struck in, grinning. "Well, that won't hurt me, and they'll find out their mistake before long. You mean, you'd go on wagging your tongue about it."

"I should talk in certain quarters, and with due discretion, of course!" said Bunter loftily.

"Oh, I dare say! You've a fat lot of discretion—I don't think! Here's five bob. You can pay me back out of your next postal-order, and I sha'n't charge interest in your case. But if you hear of any chap in your Form, good to repay principal and interest, who is hard up for a bit, just you let me know. No duds, mind! That's what I want you to do. I'll attend to the Second, and the Third as well. But you can help me with the Remove, and perhaps with some of the other Forms."

"There's chaps in the Sixth—"

"None for me, thank you! How are you ever to make the beasts pay if they don't choose to—eh?"

Bunter reflected that Spring might have as much difficulty in getting such fellows as Skinner and Bolsover major to cash up as he would with Loder and Carne. But he did not say so. Bunter was quite willing to act as decoy-duck for Spring in the Remove as long as Spring treated him with proper consideration; and any loss Spring made would not fall upon Bunter's shoulders, so that there was no need for him to worry in the least about that.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Sammy Hears Something!

"THERE'S that sweep of a Bouncer going off with fat Sammy!" said Dicky Nugent.

Gatty stared.

"What's the matter with that?" he replied. "They suit each other a heap better than they suit anyone else."

"They're both rotten outsiders!" added Myers.

"Yes; but— Oh, never mind them, anyway! Come along!"

Dicky could not find words to express exactly what he felt, and, as he was not much in the habit of giving his attention to moral questions, he let it slide, and forgot all about it. But probably the thought that was in his mind was that, rotter as Sammy Bunter was, and as Herbert Spring seemed to be, the two were likely to become worse rotters through association.

Spring had no special liking for Bunter minor. Yet it was a fact that Sammy suited him better than anyone else in the Second. The rest were mere healthy, noisy kids; and Spring was neither noisy nor healthy—in mind, at least. Sammy, like his elder brother, was ready to toady to any extent if he found it profitable; and, though after only three or four days the Second had already discovered that Spring was notably tight-fisted, he would now and then relax in favour of the Bunters.

The crafty-faced new junior and the obese Sammy strolled together down the road towards Pegg and Cliff House. Sammy kicked loose stones as he walked; and Spring, with hands thrust deep into his trousers-pockets, and his shoulders humped up, looked no better satisfied with things in general than the scowling Sammy.

"Where's that filthy fat major of yours?" snapped Spring at length.

"I dunno. How should I? I don't

keep the beast in my pocket!" grunted Sammy.

"Well, I wanted him; but I couldn't find him."

"Tain't my fault, is it? What did you want him for?"

"That's no bizney of yours, is it?"

"No, I s'pose not. And, come to that, I don't care a hang about it. But you'd better look out, Spring, or Billy will do you down. He's that sort."

"He'd find it took all his time to do me down. I'm pretty fly, I can tell you!" said Spring boastfully.

"You think you are, I know. All the fellows say so. You ain't very popular in the Second, Spring, old top!"

"Who cares?—What's the use of being popular, anyway?"

"And I heard Bob Cherry say that you were a grasping little cad—a regular Shylock, in fact," went on the agreeable

Sammy was no warrior, he was by no means above kicking, biting, and scratching, if assaulted. Whether Spring was a funk or not, he had a lively regard for his own skin and his own comfort.

"Because I wouldn't fight Marsden, I suppose," he said sneeringly. "I don't mind telling you this, young Bunter, I could lick Marsden, or any other chap in the Form—easy! I'm jolly strong, and I can box, and I'm old—I mean, I could—"

"You can brag all serene!" Sammy interrupted him, with a sniff. "But that doesn't go far. If you don't fight the next chap you quarrel with the Form will rag you for funking, I know—they've ragged me. They seem to think a fellow ought to fight to amuse them."

"They won't catch me on that hop," Spring said. "All the same, I could wipe the floor with the best man among them, I know that."

"Rats!" said Sammy rudely.

Spring lost his temper, and seized Sammy by the back of the neck.

"Yaroooh!" howled Sammy. "Stop-pit, you beast!"

"Just you be civil, then!" said Spring, shaking him savagely.

"I sha'n't—I mean, I will, of course! Don't you like a chap to tell you the truth, Spring?"

"You Bunters can't tell the truth if you try!" growled Spring, releasing him with a vicious shove.

"Well, then, tain't our fault, and nobody ought to blame us for it. But I'm not a liar. Billy is, if you like. I never saw such a chap for pitching them. Hallo! Here's that red-headed kid from Cliff House! She's a bit gone on me, Bouncer—you see!"

Sammy put on his most agreeable smirk—that sort of facial ornament calculated to make a healthy-minded fellow want to slay him. It did not arouse any such desire in Spring; but as his eyes followed the direction in which Sammy's were gazing, with an expression in them that reminded one of the look of a boiled codfish's eyes, his face went pale, and he bit his lower lip.

Yet there was nothing really terrifying in the aspect of either Miss Molly Gray, the Cliff House junior, with the brilliant mane of red hair, or in that of her dark-haired companion.

"I say, Bunter—Sammy—let's turn back. I don't care about girls!" muttered Spring.

"I do," replied the gallant Sammy. "Catch me turning back! Come on! I'll—what do you call it?—produce you, you know."

It looked as though Sammy would have little chance of either introducing—which was no doubt what he meant—or of producing Spring, for the new boy turned abruptly.

"I say, don't be bashful, you know; I'm not," said the fatuous Sammy, catching him by the arm. "I get on with girls like a giddy house on fire. You just watch!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" muttered Spring, trying to wrench his arm away.

But Sammy held on. The fact of the matter was that Sammy was just a trifle doubtful of his ability to keep up his end in a conversation with two girls. Moreover, he did not really believe that Molly Gray had cast the eye of favour upon him; or, if he did, he was capable of believing against all the evidence. He was counting upon the cool and ready-tongued Spring to do the talking, while he stood and fascinated the little red-headed girl with his beautiful boiled-codfish orbs.

"Thpring—Herbert Thpring!"

"She's spotted me!" groaned Spring. "Oh, here's a beastly mess!"



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Samuel. "Did he mean Shylock Holmes?"

"Sherlock Holmes, you fat young duffer!"

"Well, what's the odds? If Bob Cherry's so ignorant, I can't help it, can I? Did Sherlock Holmes lend money? I thought he was a detective."

"He didn't mean Sherlock Holmes; he meant a Jew chap in one of Shakespeare's plays," said Spring morosely.

"Oh, Shakespeare's all rot—silly stuff, I call it! But you are a bit of a Jew, Bouncer."

"Just you be careful how you talk to me, young Bunter! I'm not putting up with any of your cheek."

"I'm not afraid of you, you know, Bouncer. You're a funk! The chaps all say so."

Spring gasped. To be taunted thus by the obese Sammy was about the limit. But it was a very hot day, and, though

It was Molly Gray who had called. Spring saw that it was no use to attempt a bolt now. He turned with a sullen face, and lifted his hat as the girl came up.

She did not hold out her hand. Spring did not hold out his. He seemed rather inclined to lurk behind Sammy Bunter. Molly's companion stood a little aside, as if realising that this meeting was not a very pleasant one for the two concerned.

But Sammy had no notion of standing aside. He wanted to hear all that he could.

"Yes, it's me," Spring said sullenly. "But I'd no idea you were anywhere down this way."

"I am at Cliff House," answered Molly, who lisped. "I did not expect to thee you—and in Greyfriarth colourth, too!"

"Well, what's the matter with that?" mumbled Spring, flushing, and looking at her in a manner intended to suggest that it would be wrong for her to say too much.

But it was possible that the ideas of Miss Gray and those of Master Herbert Spring as to what was too much differed.

"I shouldn't have thought they would have had you," said the small girl frankly.

"Look here, you know, you don't want to talk like that—before this fat ass, too!"

"I thall thay what I like! You know I don't like you, Herbert Thpring. I just hate you!"

And she spoke as if she meant it.

"I don't care," said Spring sullenly. "What's a kid like you know about things?"

"I know that you got my brother into trouble, and that he would have been expelled if—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Spring savagely. "It will be the worse for you if you don't!"

"Do you think I am afraid of you, coward!" flashed the child.

She was under twelve. Spring was understood to be about twelve. But there looked years of difference between the two.

"I'll protect you, Miss Gray," said Sammy, rather tremulously.

It was too good an opportunity to be missed, Sammy thought. But he did hope that no protection would be needed.

"You!"

Volumes could not have told of more scorn than was concentrated into that single word. Somehow, the Bunter brothers did not exactly go down at Cliff House.

"Get away, you fat young cad!" snapped Spring. "You're only trying to hear all you can, you rotter!"

"Oh, am I? I'm doing nothing of the sort, Bouncer! And, anyway, I've as much right here as you have; and I'm not going to clear out to please you, that's flat! Besides, Miss Gray may need my protection."

"She'll jolly well need somebody's if she isn't particularly careful!" snarled Spring, his face old and vicious.

"She's not afraid, anyway," retorted Molly. "But I don't want to tell Thamy Bunter all about you. He's not a nithe boy at all, and if I were you I wouldn't go about with him. And he's only in the Thecond."

"Well, so's Spring," said Sammy, in evident surprise.

"Don't be thilly! How can he be, when he's ath old as Harry Wharton?"

"My hat! That's news!" gasped Sammy.

"Rot! You don't know anything about my age," growled Spring.

"Oh, indeed! I should think I ought



Sammy's protection not wanted! (See Chapter 6.)

to, when you lived nextth door to us till a few monthth ago—didn't I?"

"I'm thirteen next birthday."

"Fifteen last birthday, you mean!" retorted the unsparing Cliff House girl.

"But, of courthe, you were alwayth a dunthe in the theool, I know that. Where do you live now when you are at home?"

"Find out for yourself!" snarled Spring. "I'm not going to tell you all my business."

"I don't want to hear it. Thome of it wathn't very honeth before, and I don't thuppothe you've improved much. You don't look as if you had, anyway!"

"Leave my looks alone! I don't see why you want to pitch on to me at all. We could pass without speaking, I suppose, couldn't we?"

"Yeth, but—well, you thee, I've friendth at Greyfriarth."

"Me and others," said Sammy importantly. "Really, I don't think you ought to be so rude to the young lady, Spring—I don't, really. If she knows anything bad about you, the best thing she can do is to tell it out straight. I'm to be trusted, I suppose?"

Miss Gray pointedly ignored Bunter.

"There's Algy Merton at Highcliffe, too, Thpring," she said. "I gueth you'd better keep out of Algy's way unleth you want thingth to come out."

"That beast?" groaned Spring. "I thought he'd left!"

"He came back. I shall leave you to him, I think—that would be betht. Algy will know how to deal with a—"

"Just you stop! Don't you dare to say another word before this fat ead or I'll—"

He flourished his fist in her face. His own face was convulsed with rage, and, though he may not have intended to strike her, he looked quite capable of it.

Sammy shrank back. If Miss Gray despised his protection it would be improper for him to force it upon her—especially as there seemed some need for it now.

"My hat! If that cad Bouncer isn't going to hit a girl!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Spring Fights!

IT was Dicky Nugent who spoke thus, appearing suddenly round a corner, with Gatty, Myers, Hop Hi, and Sylvester.

"You howling cad, Bouncer!" roared Gatty.

"I—I— Oh, look here! I wasn't going to hit her, you know! I was only threatening her!" stammered Spring.

"I don't think he would have dared to hit me," said Molly Gray, with a toss of her red mane. "He ith a coward!"

"What was it all about?" asked Myers.

All the new-comers knew Molly by sight, if they had never spoken to her before, and there was no shyness on the part of any of them but Sylvester, who was somewhat more sensitive than the rest.

"I don't think I want to tell you, Thpring can tell if he liketh. But I don't think he will. Pleathe do not thpeak to me if you thee me again, Herbert Thpring! I do not with to know you. Come along, Bella!"

The two small girls hurried off.

Spring would have hurried off also; but there was no chance for him to do that. The five new-comers crowded round him and Sammy. Sammy did not want to clear out. He felt important, for he had got hold of the tail of a secret. It was only the tail, and the body seemed still completely hidden in the burrow, so to say; but Sammy had his hopes of finding out more later—and of making his profit out of it. There was nothing high-minded about Samuel Tuckless.

"Now, then, you sweep!" said Dicky. "What were you after? Hitting a girl, eh? Oh, crikey, ain't you a giddy disgrace to the Form?"

"To the school," said Sylvester gravely.

"Bouncel hitee galee—not have pluck hitee one of us," added Hop Hi.

"I'll jolly soon hit you, you little yellow-faced savage!" snapped Spring.

"Muchee thankee!" replied Hop Hi.

There was nothing quarrelsome about the little Chinese; but he really seemed to want Spring to hit him. Hop Hi had learned some lessons at Greyfriars; it was not his home-training that made him indignant with the new junior.

"Not while I'm here!" said Dicky Nugent hotly. "Now, Bouncer, we know you don't cotton to fighting; but you can't do this sort of thing and get off scot-free. You'll have to fight one of us—me or Gatty or Myers, I mean."

"That's right!" murmured Myers.

"Better be me," said Gatty truculently.

"Or me," Sylvester said, very quietly indeed.

"Notice leavee me out!" protested Hop Hi.

"Oh, rot!" said Dicky uneasily. He had a shrewd suspicion that Spring, if forced to fight, would prove overweight for either Hop Hi or Sylvester. "Now, Bouncer, you cad, you'll fight one of us three—"

"One of us five!" corrected Sylvester.

"Heal, heal!" said Hop Hi. He meant to say, "Hear, hear!"

"Oh, one of us five, then!" Dicky said, conceding the point. "But I'm not going to throw Sammy in, so you can't choose him. You'll fight one of us five, or we'll rag you bald-headed!"

"I shall fight!" said Spring sullenly.

"Which?" asked Dicky eagerly.

"Me!" snapped Gatty. "I'm about his weight."

That was exactly the reason, however, why Spring had no intention of selecting Gatty. Myers he also passed over without considering him. He was not so sure of Dicky. Dicky was slight, and Spring did not know that, for a youngster of his age, he was quite a redoubtable warrior. But he guessed that the admitted Form leader would be no duffer.

Hop Hi or Sylvester—which? After a moment's thought he decided against the Chinese. It was likely he might have Oriental tricks of fighting which would prove troublesome to meet.

"I'll take on that little American bouncer," Spring said sulkily. "I don't want to fight, mind you. I can't see that there's anything at all to fight for. I could lick the best man of you; but I choose him because it will be the easiest job."

"Right-ho!" said Sylvester.

"Aint he a giddy hero?" jeered Myers.

"I don't pretend to be anything of the sort," Spring said. "I can't see any use in fighting. I don't believe in it anywhere or anyhow."

"You don't believe in the war?" gasped Gatty.

"Of course I don't. It's all silly rot! What's the use of fighting the Huns when we might have kept out of it and made pots of money by supplying them with things at top prices?"

"My hat! What a—a— Oh, I don't know what to call you!" yelled Dicky.

Sylvester was taking off his upper garments. He looked very resolute. No one at Greyfriars had ever seen him fight, and he had done very little boxing; but there was the fighting look in his face now. He came of a stock that had fighting blood in it.

Spring, Pacifist of the dirtiest kind though he might be, looked altogether too much for him, however. As he took off jacket and waistcoat and rolled up his sleeves it was evident that he was far better developed muscularly than the little, slim American.

There were biceps on Spring's arms—quite visible biceps. Sylvester's had to be taken on faith. Spring had a chest nearly twice as wide as the other fag's.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 545.

He had a much longer reach. And, by the manner in which he squared up, he appeared to have a much more extensive knowledge of the game.

The four looked on with apprehension. But Sammy Bunter grinned. Sammy was not fond of Sylvester, though he sponged upon him whenever possible.

The little American showed no trace of funk. From the very outset he was overmatched; yet he stuck to it like a hero. Spring knocked him about almost as he chose; but in return he did manage to get home one or two punches which hurt Spring, and it was plain that Spring greatly disliked being hurt.

"Oh, crumbs! We never ought to have let this start!" groaned Dicky, as Sylvester struggled up for the third time.

"We can't stop it now. But he'd better give in—it's no sort of use," Myers said dismally.

Gatty did not speak; but his hands, big for a kid of his age, clenched hard, and his burly chest heaved.

"Sylvester licked," said Hop Hi sorrowfully, a moment later.

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It was even so. The champion of Molly Gray, the chosen opponent of her would-be assaulter, could not struggle up again. He lay panting, his olive face bruised and battered; and Spring looked down upon him with an exultant grin.

But Molly would not have despised her champion, defeated though he was; and his conquerer had no one's admiration but his own—not even Sammy Bunter's.

"Now me!" said Gatty grimly.

Spring's face changed on the instant.

"Here, I say, none of that!" he protested. "The agreement was that I should fight one of you—whichever I chose. Well, I chose Sylvester, and I've licked him. That's good enough, ain't it?"

"Not by long chalks, it's not!" answered Gatty.

Dicky helped Sylvester up.

"Never mind, kid!" he said consolingly.

"I don't mind—at least, not so very much!" panted Sylvester. "I thought he'd lick me. He's stronger—"

"And ever so much older!" chipped in Sammy Bunter.

"Shurrup!" hissed Spring in Sammy's ear.

"What do you mean, fatty?" asked Myers curiously.

"Nothing—at least, not much, you know. I—I—"

"Are you going to take me on, Spring?" roared Gatty.

"Not if I know it!" returned Spring resolutely.

Gatty was taking off his jacket and waistcoat. Spring hastened to put on his.

"Look here, let me give him toko!" pleaded Myers.

"No, me!" snapped Dicky.

"Spring bettel like to fight me!" said Hop Hi.

"I'm not going to fight any of you. I've done all that—"

"Think you're going to get out of what you deserve for being such a cad as to hit a girl—"

"I didn't hit her! Bunter minor knows that. I never meant to."

"By licking a kid not half your weight!" stormed Gatty, with some slight exaggeration.

"Well, you gave me my choice," replied Spring sulkily.

Then from over the hedge came the sharp notes of Mr. Quelch's voice, or so it seemed.

"What are you boys doing there? To me it looks very suspiciously as if you had been fighting!"

"Oh, hang! There's Quelchy!" groaned Dicky. "Let's clear!"

Mr. Quelch was the master of another Form, but he was also the right-hand man of Dr. Locke, Head of Greyfriars, and the Second held him in considerable awe.

"Where is he?" asked Gatty, hurrying on his jacket.

"Can't see him. But that was his voice all serene," Myers said.

"Come along, Sylvester, old sport!" said Dicky. "Now then, Hop Hi, chase yourself! But you wait till we catch you out in some more of your rotten caddishness, Bouncer! You won't have any choice then. You'll jolly well get me on top of you!"

"No, me!" corrected Gatty.

"All of us!" said Myers emphatically.

The five went, and Spring stood grinning.

"I can't see Quelchy," said Sammy Bunter, completely puzzled.

"He wasn't there," answered Spring.

"Wha-a-at? That was his voice, I know jolly well!"

"All the same, he wasn't there. Come on, you fat young lout! I've a good mind to tan your hide, but I'll let you off this time."

Sammy was as obtuse as his major. Either might have been expected to see through such a happening as this, or the calling of Mrs. Mumble from the shop, but neither did.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

"Jointly and Severally!"

"PAY back next week?" said Spring.

"Oh, yes, you can count on that all serene," replied Bolsover major off-handedly. "Can't he, Nap?"

"Oui, oui, mon ami!" said Napoleon Dupont, the French junior, who shared Bolsover's study.

It was by no means certain that Napoleon properly understood the transaction just put through, but it was very much his way to say "Oui, oui!" when Bolsover asked for his support. Napoleon had not exactly loved Bolsover at the outset, but they were very good friends now.

Spring departed, with a sly grin on his face. He had just lent Bolsover major ten shillings on an understanding, backed by an I O U, that Bolsover should hand him twelve-and-six a week later.

This rate was more than the penny per bob per week which Spring had told Bunter was the interest he meant to charge. But Spring no doubt intended that as a minimum interest, not as a maximum.

The Shylock of the Second—Spring had not been given that name yet, but it was on its way—had already several clients in the Remove.

There was Billy Bunter, of course. Spring would have had no difficulty in doing without any other client if he had been willing to lend all that Bunter was willing to borrow. Whatever capital he had for his moneylending enterprise, Bunter would have taken over, hypothecating for the purpose any number of dubious postal-orders.

But that was not quite the way Spring did business. He had let Bunter have five shillings—as a gift. That was what it came to. It hurt him to part with the sum, but he fancied he saw his profit in doing so.

Provided that those who had borrowed of him had paid up principal and interest, that investment might prove profitable, for it was largely owing to Bunter's tutoring that Bolsover, Skinner, Snoop, Stott, Trevor, and Rake of the Remove had suffered their names to appear in Spring's black pocket-book.

Of all these, however, Dick Rake was the only one who could absolutely be depended upon to keep his word. Bolsover and Trevor would pay some time, but even that could not be said with certainty about the other three.

Temple of the Upper Fourth had condescended to borrow a pound in a temporary dearth. Kenney of the same Form had been obliged to the extent of half-a-sovereign. Temple would pay; Kenney might or might not. With all his cunning, Spring was not yet equal to sorting out the sheep from the goats—or, say, the black sheep from the rest of the flock.

Spring cared nothing for games. Mr. Twigg found him dull in Form. But there was no lack of keenness, no sign of dullness about him when money was concerned. He seemed almost to live for that. Such a pursuit is common enough among men, but it seldom takes so strong a hold upon a boy of Spring's age.

But Spring's age was something of a mystery. Sammy Bunter had let drop another hint or two, and there had been quite a lot of talk in the Second about it. Some of the Remove had got wind of the doubt, and Harry Wharton remembered how on the day of the new boy's arrival he had thought him uncommonly old-looking for a Second-Former.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" sounded the stentorian voice of Bob Cherry. "Here's the giddy hero. Taken on anybody else since you settled young Sylvester, Spring?"

Spring stopped. He had to stop, for the Famous Five were across his path, and they showed no disposition to make way for him.

"There wasn't much of the heroic about that," growled Johnny Bull. "The kid ain't up to this young sweep's weight."

"Not by a chalkfully long interval!" agreed Inky.

"Or his age!" put in Frank Nugent.

"What is your age, Spring?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Is it true that you ought to be in the giddy Sixth if it went by that? You do look a bit ancient about the mug for the Second, when a chap comes to think of it."

"It's nothing to do with you!" an-

swered Spring sulkily. "But, as a matter of fact, I shall be thirteen next birthday."

"And the rest!" Wharton said, looking at the fag with unconcealed distaste. "See here, Spring, we don't want any of your rotten moneylending dodges in the Remove! Keep off the grass. That's a word of warning to you if you have the sense to take it."

"Who said I'd been lending to anyone in your Form? And what's it to do with you if I have? They don't need protecting against a chap in the Second, I suppose? Anyway, you needn't be afraid that I shall get offering a loan to any of you. Will you let me pass, please?"

"When we've finished with you!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Wharton! Bull! Cherry! Why are you barring the passage in that unseemly manner? I will not allow horse-play. How many times must I tell you that?"

The tones were the tones of Mr. Paul Prout, master of the Fifth. But when the Famous Five looked round Mr. Prout was nowhere to be seen.

They let Spring pass, however. It was not worth while to fall out with Mr. Prout over a person of so little consequence as Spring.

He passed, with a sly grin. Hardly were the five round the corner before the bulk of William George Bunter stood in his way.

"Spring, old top, you're the very fellow I wanted to see!" said the Owl of the Remove affectionately.

"Rats! You're not the fellow I want to see, anyway!" returned Spring unpleasantly.

"I want you to—"

"Well, I won't! You can save your breath. I don't care what it is, though I can guess easily enough. I won't!"

The Owl looked at him very reproachfully.

"And you call that being chummy, Spring!" he said, with pathos.

"I don't call it anything of the sort! I don't want to be chummy!" Spring replied.

"Oh, very well! Perhaps you'd like those fellows you were talking to just now to know how old you really are?"

It appeared that, for some reason or other, Spring would not like this in the least. He flushed, and shuffled his feet in an uneasy manner quite unlike his usual assurance.

"You don't know anything about that," he said, with an effort.

"But I know who does, and I can find out," answered Bunter. "Queer thing they should call you Herbert, too, ain't it? You're down on the roll-call as Conrad Arthur."

"That's my name, you silly chump!"

"Oh, really! I wonder what that red-headed kid at Cliff House would say about that?"

"I'll slay that fat little beast of a brother of yours!" hissed Spring.

"Do as you like about that," returned William George, with lamentable lack of interest in what might chance to Samuel Tuckless. "But lend me ten bob, anyway!"

"You won't go and blab—"

"Spring, old pal, did you ever know me to let a chum down?" Bunter asked reproachfully.

He got his ten shillings, though Spring hated parting. It was blackmail. Bunter knew that, and Spring knew it. But Bunter did not mind; Spring dared not refuse.

The Shylock of the Second passed on, feeling distinctly less pleased with himself.

"Hallo!" said Dicky Nugent.

Dick had not spoken to Spring for

three days or more. He did not look friendly now.

"Well?" said Spring.

"Some of us owe you five bob," said Dicky.

"Six!" was Spring's terse reply.

"You're a rotten Shylock! But here you are. I've had a remittance this morning. You needn't say anything to the other chaps. I'm settling up for them all, because I don't like having myself or any of my chums in debt to a rotter like you—see?"

Spring scowled at the frankness of this speech, but took the money.

"It doesn't matter about the paper we signed," said Dick contemptuously. "You needn't think you can get the dubs out of us twice!"

"Do you suppose I'm dishonest?" snarled Spring.

"Well, yes—that's just about what I do suppose," said Dicky. "I say, you needn't bother about speaking to me in future, Spring. I should see if I couldn't get a lift into the Third if I were you. The Second has had a bit too much of you already."

Spring was left to muse upon his growing unpopularity. He could not quite understand it, for he saw no objection to his own methods.

It was later in the day that Teddy Myers approached him.

"Look here, Bonceer, I've been thinking," said Myers.

"I shouldn't bother if I were you," Spring said. "You're not really cut out for that sort of thing."

"Don't you try to be funny, or you'll jolly well get your ugly head punched! We owe you five bob, some of us."

"Six!" Spring said. He had not forgotten that in actual fact none of them now owed him anything. But he saw no use in telling Myers that—as yet, anyway.

"Shylock!"

The name was getting fixed.

Spring glared at Teddy Myers.

"It was the bargain!" he said.

"Oh, I know what a chap you are for sticking to a bargain—when it suits you!" snorted Myers. "There was Sylvester."

Spring's defeat of the little American seemed to have done much to make him unpopular. Roderick Sylvester, who was rather a delicate kid, had had to go to the sanatorium next day; and, though he had been out again within twenty-four hours, the Second generally were angry at the manner in which Spring had pasted one certainly not up to his fighting weight.

And not only the Second. Pict Delarey, the South African junior in the Remove, had given Spring a lecture couched in a very sarcastic vein, and Bob Cherry had referred to the affair. "Sylvester wanted to fight me!" said Spring.

"So did I—and Gatty—and Nugent minor, but you didn't take us on! I want to now—are you on?"

"No, I'm not! I've told you already I don't like fighting. I thought you were going to cash up for—"

"So I am! Makes me sick to think we should be in debt to such a sweep as you, Spring! I had a bit this afternoon, and I've borrowed a bob or two to make up the money. Here you are! You had better keep dark about it to the rest. They would say I was a silly ass to settle with you, p'raps."

One moment Spring hesitated. Then he put out his hand, and took the proffered money.

Myers swung away without another word.

Spring took a paper out of his pocket. "Jointly or severally!" he muttered.

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"That means that I could call upon any one of the cads to settle up, and it's past time—well, it will be to-morrow, anyway. It ain't my fault if two of them come along and pay me—I never asked for it. I don't suppose they'll say anything to each other; they both seemed to want it kept dark."

He did not feel quite easy. But what troubled him was not conscience.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Tried by His Form!

"**H**ALLO! Here's a stroke of luck!" said George Adalbert Gatty.

He had just opened a letter which had reached him by the afternoon post, and had found a postal-order inside it.

Neither Myers nor Dicky Nugent chanced to be there. But Castle and Pettifer were.

"You'd better cash up to that beast Bouncer," remarked Castle, who was one of those "jointly and severally" responsible, and who liked Spring no better than Dicky Nugent & Co. did.

"Oh, had I?" growled Gatty.

He turned the ten-shilling postal-order over and over in his hands thoughtfully. Castle's suggestion struck him as worth considering.

"I should, if I had that. Tell you what. If you will, I'll owe you half of it, and pay you out of my pocket-money—a bob a week."

"I say, though, Castle, where do young Nugent and young Myers come in, if you and Gatty are going to settle up?" asked Pettifer. "And the rest of us, come to that. We're all in it. I'll go sixpence a week for a fortnight to clear it off. I hate Bouncer!"

"Blow Dicky and Myers! Blow the rest of you! Do you think I'm so stingy that I mind?" Gatty growled. "I'll go and see the rotter now, if I can find him."

"There's Sammy Bunter," said Castle. "He'd know, very likely. Hi, Sammy! Where's your chum Bouncer?"

"He's not my chum—I've done with the rotter!" squeaked Sammy. "Why, he wanted me to pay back fourpence for that two d. I borrowed from him the day he came! What do you think of that?"

"I should just have paid him the twopence and told him to whistle for the rest," said Pettifer. "You didn't promise him any interest. Bob Cherry says he's a beastly young Shylock!"

"I didn't pay him any," replied Sammy. "Why should I? He lends my fat beast of a major cash without asking for it back, and I know more about the rotter than Billy does! I shall jolly well let it out, too, if he isn't careful!"

"Stow all that! We ain't interested in blackmailing," said Gatty roughly. "Where is Bouncer?"

"I saw him under the elms a few moments ago," answered Sammy.

The trio found him under the elms still. Sammy followed them, and looked curiously when he gathered that they meant to repay a debt. The idea of doing anything in that way—unless forced—struck the virtuous Samuel as decidedly queer.

"Well, I don't know any particular reason why you should cash up," said Spring, when Gatty had gruffly explained his mission.

Spring was suspicious. He began to wonder whether this could possibly be only a string of coincidences. It looked to him very much like a put-up job.

But Gatty's manner convinced him

that it was not, and he succumbed to the temptation to take the amount a third time.

"It's no bizney of yours which of us pays it!" growled Gatty. "We don't cotton to being in your debt, lemme tell you. Just you hand over that paper you got us to sign. After that you needn't speak to any of us until you're spoken to!"

Spring took the postal-order, gave four shillings change, and brought the paper out of his pocket.

His hand shook. He was nervous. But the thought that he might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb came to him, and he hoped that Gatty would say nothing to the other two.

"He's trembling with joy at getting it," said Castle contemptuously. "Money's all right, but I wouldn't like to care as much about it as this pig does. Ugh!"

"Don't let on to Dicky and Myers till they say something," said Gatty to the other two.

"Right-ho!" answered Castle and Pettifer together.

None of them thought of Sammy Bunter, who had rolled away without making a remark on the proceeding he thought so queer.

He rolled off to Little Side, and found Dicky and Myers at cricket.

"He, he, he! I could tell you chaps something!" he chuckled.

"Yes, a thumping big lie, I dare say!" said Dicky.

"Nothing of the sort! It's the truth for once—I mean, I never do tell lies, Nugent, you beast! This is gospel. Gatty's paid Bouncer. He, he, he! Never thought the chap would be such an ass! I wouldn't, you bet!"

"Gatty's done what?"

"You're gassing, young Bunter!"

"Ask Gatty, if you don't believe me. He's got that paper back, too. I don't fancy Shylock's going to do much trade in the Second. Everybody seems to bar the beast. I know I sha'n't pay him what I owe him. I don't think he deserves to be paid."

"Gatty! Oh, I say! I paid the rotter after dinner!" gasped Dicky.

"And I paid him after classes!" shouted Myers.

"Come along, Teddy! This has got to be seen into."

Off went Dicky and Myers, all thought of cricket forgotten. Sammy rolled after them.

Spring was not to be found. He had prudently mizzled. But Gatty was hunted up, and notes were compared.

No room for doubt was offered. Bouncer had accepted repayment of the debt three times over; and there was not enough charity in the Second—at any rate, where Spring was concerned—to suggest that he might only have done it as a joke.

He turned up for prep, but got a seat near the door, and had dodged out before anyone could grab him. He vanished with despatch almost miraculous, and at bed-time—which was fairly early for the Second, of course—was still absent.

"The rotter knows we shall take it out of his hide!" growled Gatty, as he began to undress.

"Well, he's bound to come along soon," Dicky replied.

"Unless he runs away," suggested Pettifer.

"Jolly good job if he does!" said Myers fervently.

"What! With our oof?" snapped Gatty.

"Worth more than twelve bob to get rid of Bouncer," Myers said.

The Second in general agreed. The Second had had quite enough of young

Shylock. They could see no redeeming trait in him.

"Here he comes!" said Castle, just as most of them were getting into bed.

Castle's bed was near the door. The footsteps of Spring were light and rather stealthy, but he had twigged them.

Then Wingate's voice spoke.

"All right, kid. Report to me if there's any bullying. We don't allow new kids to be put upon; though I must say you look hefty enough to deal with anyone in your Form, if need be."

It was Wingate's voice, Castle felt sure of that. But the queer thing was that he could not hear Wingate's step; and the foot of the captain of Greyfriars, lithe athlete though he was, fell more heavily than that of Spring of the Second.

Not only Castle heard. At least a dozen others caught the words, and, more than that, heard Spring's reply.

"Thanks, Wingate! Of course, I don't like sneaking; but I can't stand much more, and I thought it best to speak to you about it."

Again Castle listened for the skipper's step. He could not hear it, and he wondered. His suspicion was vague. He did not see through Spring's dodge, for he lacked the clue—the clue which Sammy Bunter might have supplied had he not been so thick-headed; or Billy Bunter, but for the double difficulty of thick-headedness equal to his minor's, and absence from the scene.

Spring came in, and faced the daylight, for it was still practically broad day, though bed-time for the Second—more than a score of accusing and contemptuous faces.

He tried to brazen it out, walking straight to his bed, and beginning to undress without a word.

"You swindling cad!" piped Dicky Nugent. "You awful outsider!"

A storm of hisses followed.

Spring's face was pale, and he trembled. But still he made some show of bravado.

"It was only a joke," he said. "I wanted to see how big asses you chaps could be. And you daren't touch me! You'll have Wingate on your track if you do. Besides, the paper said jointly and severally, and that means that I could get the money back from anyone who signed it. Well, I've got it. If Gatty and Myers and Nugent minor all wanted to pay me, I don't see why I should object."

"You say it was a joke?" roared Gatty.

"Yes. So it was. A howling joke, I call it!"

But Spring did not look as though he were really enjoying the joke greatly.

"Then you mean to hand our cash back?" snapped Myers.

But even yet Spring had no intention of doing that if it could be avoided.

"Well, you see—" he began.

"Do you or don't you?" yelled Dicky.

"I don't see why I should. It was jointly or severally. If you don't know what plain English means, it ain't my fault."

"We know what plain swindling is, anyway!" said Castle.

"Give the young rotter a Form trial," suggested Marsden.

The suggestion was received with acclamation. The Second rather liked Form trials, anyway, and here was real occasion for one.

"You'll have Wingate along if—"

"Hang Wingate! Who cares for him, anyway?" chirped Dicky. "You won't get out of it that way, Bouncer!"

Spring was dragged out of bed. The light was failing partially now, but there was still plenty for a trial. Dicky elected himself judge, and put a chair

upon a washstand. As an interested party, Dicky Nugent was not really a very eligible judge; but such small considerations as that weighed little with the Second.

The culprit was placed in a dock formed by putting four chairs together to make an enclosure, and Gatty, Myers, Castle, and Hop Hi sat on the four chairs to keep him penned.

"Velly nice," said Hop Hi. "Makee Bouncel squilm!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Discoveries!

SPRING was already squirming somewhat. He did not like this. He might be able to bear the contempt of his Form, though he was not so thick-skinned that that failed to get home on him. But more than contempt was coming to him now.

"Let's have the giddy evidence," said Dicky magisterially.

"Here, hold on! I'll cash up, if you'll agree to say no more about it," put in Spring.

"You'll cash up—we'll see to that!" growled Gatty. "But we're going to say a jolly lot more about it."

"And do a jolly lot more, too," added Myers.

"Silence in court!" sang out Dicky. "P'raps I'd better give my evidence first, as it seems I cashed up first—which shows I wasn't such an ass as the other two, I think."

"Oh, does it?" snapped Gatty.

"Not likely!" said Myers.

"What's all this about? Get to your beds, before I come in and lay an ashplant about you!"

It was—or seemed to be—the voice of Wingate, and it came from outside the door—or it seemed to come thence.

There was an immediate scuttle for the safe harbour of the sheets.

Spring would keep. But if Wingate arrived on the scene there would be trouble for someone.

But, while others scuttled for their beds, Castle made for the door. Again, though a hush had followed the momentary exclamation of Myers, he had failed to catch the well-known sound of Wingate's footsteps, which ought certainly to have been audible.

Castle was not slow of brain, and his suspicions had already been aroused. He acted boldly. Risking everything, he flung open the door.

Wingate was not there.

"It's spoo!" howled Castle. "That chap's a—a— Oh, you know—like Sammy's beastly brother!"

"What, a ventriloquist?" howled Gatty.

"Yes, that's it!" cried Sammy Bunter. "I know now. I really knew before, but—"

"Hallo! He's bolted!" yelled Dicky.

The Second, heedless of everything but the excitement of the moment, dashed pell-mell out of the dormitory.

They were just in time to get a glimpse of Spring as he ran for the box-room.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the giddy row?" boomed the voice of Bob Cherry.

The Removites were just trooping up to bed.

"It's Spring!" yelled Dicky, and held on in chase.

"Thought it was summer," said Peter Todd. "It's hot enough."

"Ass!" snapped Gatty, following Dicky.

A fearful shriek burst upon the ears of all, Removites and Second Formers alike.

"He's chucked himself out of the window!" yelled Castle.

Another shriek sounded. It seemed to come from quite a distance away, as it

must have come had Spring thrown himself out.

Everybody rushed to the box-room now. There was consternation on all faces. Tragedy seemed in the air. No one cared about Spring alive; but Spring after a descent from the box-room window to the flags far beneath would not only be an object of sympathy, if the fall left him still living, but also the cause of heavy trouble were he living or were he dead.

"What have you young asses been doing?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Nothing!" replied Pettifer. "We were only going to do it."

"He's been swindling!" said Marsden.

"And doing us down with his beastly ventriloquising!" added Myers.

"Oh, really! I'm the only ventriloquist at Greyfriars. Everybody knows that," burred Billy Bunter. "Spring couldn't. My hat, though! I believe he can! I'm sure of it! That was what he did in the tuckshop!"

"And when we were ragging you in our Form-room," said Myers, stopping short at the box-room door, more than half afraid to enter. "He made Twiggy's voice come from the corridor. And Quelch's after he'd thrashed Sylvester. It's all clear enough now. But what's the good if the chap's killed himself?"

"I think there's a reasonable doubt whether he has done that," remarked Vernon-Smith drily.

Some of the Second hung back, but the Removites pushed their way into the box-room, filling it to overflowing.

The window was open. Dicky Nugent and Gatty and Hop Hi had their heads thrust out so far that they seemed in some danger of tumbling on their own account. Dicky and Gatty were both rather frightened, but Hop Hi preserved his Oriental calm. He probably did not mind if Spring had hurled himself out.

"Can't see him," said Dicky, his voice shaking. "But he must have chucked himself out. The window was open, and you all heard that horrible shriek."

"Let me come, kid," said Vernon-Smith coolly. The Bounder was almost the only fellow there besides Hop Hi who was not taken badly aback.

He leaned far out.

"He's not there," he said. "It wouldn't be a bad notion to look round the box-room. After all, according to you the chap's a giddy ventriloquist. That may explain."

Sighs of relief burst from the overcharged bosoms of many there. Peter Todd threw open a big trunk close by the window.

"Eureka!" he said.

"It ain't! It's Spring!" howled Sammy Bunter.

Spring got out sulkily.

"I only meant to put them into a funk," he said. "Look here, Wharton, I appeal to you! These rotters are continually bullying me, and I can't stand any more of it. I shall do something desperate if they don't stop!"

"I fancy I can see you doing something desperate!" said the Bounder cynically. "You're the kind of specimen I'd trust with a razor, even in your most desperate moments!"

"There's a yarn that he's pretty nearly old enough to need one," grunted Johnny Bull.

"I fancy I can detect signs of fluff," said Peter Todd. "I more than half believe that yarn."

"It's a lie!" burred Spring. "I'm not thirteen yet! And, anyway, what's that to do with anyone?"

"There's worse than that," said Dicky Nugent bitterly. "The cad's been swindling us all round!"

"You fellows had better look out!" remarked Bob, turning to Bolsover major and Skinner.

"Oh, he can't swindle me!" returned Skinner lightly.

"But I wouldn't guarantee him against being swindled by you!" said the Bounder drily. "Not that would worry me. What's the yarn, kids?"

"It was their own fault," said Spring sulkily. "They—"

"We don't want your version!" snapped Harry Wharton.

Dicky and half a dozen of the others told the tale. It was not easy to follow told this, but the Removites got the main facts of it.

"H'm! I should think they can be trusted to do justice upon him," said Peter Todd.

"We're jolly well going to, anyway!" growled Gatty.

"Don't quite kill him!" Squiff said, smiling. "Better clear off to your dorm, I guess."

"Oh, really, Field! It's not half finished yet!" protested Bunter, thrusting himself forward. "What does the fellow mean by coming here and ventriloquising? Cheek, I call it—beastly cheek!"

But Bunter was shoved away, and the Second went off in triumph with their prisoner. From their dormitory, as the Removites passed, sounded the squeak of Sammy Bunter.

"He ain't a kid—he's over fifteen! That red-headed girl kid at Cliff House says so, and she knows him at home! And he's here under a false name, too! I know that! Merton at Highcliffe knows, too! Ask him!"

"Looks as if the Second were making discoveries about Spring," said Ogilvy, grinning.

"Well, I hope we can trust them to give him what he deserves," Harry Wharton said.

"I rather think we can do that," remarked the Bounder. "Shouldn't wonder if young Shylock asks his people to take him away after they've finished."

But Shylock of the Second did not do that, and more will be heard of his career at Greyfriars later.

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

NOTICES.

W. Bowker, 87, Manchester Road, Denton, near Manchester, wants printer for magazine. Either typewriter or hectograph.

W. M. Hatchard, 2, Carlton Road, Leytonstone, E. 11, wants to buy a cheap hectograph.

A. Ramsey, 21, Spofforth Road, Edge Hill, Liverpool, wants readers for amateur magazine called the "Star."

T. Waters, 19, Sheepcote Lane, S.W. 11, wants members for a club.

"Amateur's Own," 130, Sewerby Street, Moss Side, Manchester, wants contributions and readers. Published monthly, price 1½d.

A. Durning, 307, Nuneaton Street, Bridge-ton, Glasgow, wants four boys for the editorial staff of magazine—age 12-14.

R. M. Stewart, 15, Palmerston Road, E. 17, wants readers for amateur magazine.

Editor, 42, Raleigh Road, Hornsey, N. 8, wants contributions for magazine, price 2d.

G. Rose, 8, Lord Street, Gainsborough, wants readers and contributors for magazine.

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THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 545.

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.

NEW READERS START HERE.

Rupert Thurston buys an idol bearing the inscription, "I am Sharpra the Slumberer, and at my awakening the world shall tremble!" Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, Maddock, Prout, and O'Rooney arrive. The idol's eyes are seen to open, and with a terrific crash the hotel collapses.

A lank Indian, named Gadra Singh, is employed as cook; and the one-time rebel, Larput Raj, is the shikari. While watching the idol he sees its eyes open, but they quickly shut.

Duke Payton arrives and joins the expedition to the cactus country. They are out hunting a tiger, and Ching-Lung manages to shoot it. They find a blue-eyed native who has been killed by a python, and bury him. Maddock, Gan-Waga, Barry O'Rooney, and the cook are left in camp. Some rebelling natives fire on them. The natives are beaten, and the party proceeds in peace to Dandu's village. Barry accidentally releases Rosti, the python. Barry, Maddock, and Prout go to get Gan-Waga's fowl. Through his field-glasses Ferrers Lord sees a horde of natives advancing. Gadra Singh's rifle goes off, and is a signal for the attack. The natives are badly beaten.

(Now read on.)

The Fight (continued).

"I NOTS thinks I sittings on the eases yo' losts, Barry," said Gan-Waga mournfully. "Oh, bad enoughs awfuls! I thinks I got them both safeness stuck on the tops of mines. Yo' quite welcomeness to yo' two, old dears. Takes them off mine gentliness."

"Oi didn't think ut was in the bony scare-crow," said O'Rooney. "Bedad, he handed me out a couple of lovely swipes! Niver moind the ears Oi've lost, blubberboiter. Kape all the three, and good luck to you! Oi'll shake hands wid that same cook. Oi respect a man, black, blue, brown, or whoite, who can deliver goods loike that. There was only wan man who could sarve out the sthuff, and that was my Aunt Biddy. Whisht, whisht! Av coorse, she was a woman, but ut's alsy, Gan, to make a mistake whin ye're sthane deaf and can't hear yerself talkin'. Troth, whin Oi think of those happy choilhood's days, and the swoipes that Aunt Biddy used to swoipe me, Gadra Singh's swoipes are only a blow wid a feather. But Oi wish the chafe had towld somewan else to collar his ould gun."

"Still more of the brown polishers coming over the top!" boomed Maddock from his watch-tower. "This is lot six!"

Presently Ferrers Lord ordered Maddock to descend. The millionaire had sent the shikari for Duke Payton.

"Come up with me, please, Payton," said the millionaire. "I want to talk to you."

Payton climbed to the little platform at Ferrers Lord's heels. He was a fairly heavy man, and the crosspieces creaked beneath his weight. There was a taint of sulphur in the breeze that met them. The bronze figures and the lines of spears had increased in numbers, but the warriors of the strange army were as inert and motionless as their spears. A marksman like the shikari could have picked them off by scores and dozens, but sniping of this kind would have been sheer murder. These quiet tactics did not puzzle Ferrers Lord, and Payton, too, was beginning to understand.

"We have made a blunder, sir," he said. "I know now you were right and I was wrong."

Ferrers Lord nodded. "Yes," he answered, "I am afraid it was a blunder, Payton. If we had kept quiet, they would most likely have attacked after they had expended their arrows. I do not think they will stir before dark now, unless to throw more men over the ridge. They are almost certain to attempt to rush the ravine after nightfall. You realise how serious it is. What can you do? What can you suggest?"

They talked together for nearly an hour. Then Ferrers Lord descended alone.

"Old wolf," he said to the shikari, who had been waiting patiently below like a faithful watchdog, "bring thou to me old Nacha and another of the lustiest of thy men, one that is strong and fearless. It is for a message. Wilt thou go?"

"Am I then a bearer of chits and a letter-carrier, sahib, when the enemy is yonder and

the rifle the Viceroy gave me is in my hand?" said Larput Raj scornfully. "Turn thy back, and then, knowing all is lost, so will I when the last cartridge is gone. Is not old Sharpra our aim, sahib—thou and I? Will this horde of yellow dogs stay us? Nay, I will strike off this hand rather than be a letter-carrier! We may go back, but ever with our faces northward, fighting always!"

The millionaire laughed, and went into the tent. He wrote a letter, enclosed a note from Duke Payton in it, and sealed it. Outside the tent Nacha and one of the younger bearers were squatting. They rose and salaamed.

"Who is this youth, Nacha?" asked the millionaire.

"He is my sister's son, sahib, the last of our race. The smallpox slew the rest in the year of the famine."

"Take provisions, and get back swiftly, Nacha, with this letter," said Ferrers Lord. "There is a summer camp of British soldiers at Narbuddi. If one fails, the other must go on and give this letter to the sahib in command of the camp. Do this, then, Nacha, and I promise thee I will wed thy nephew to the daughter of the headman of thy village, and buy him a farm. For thyself, I will give thee many rupees and make thee rich, so that in days to come thou mayst sit at the gate of the village in the cool of the evening holding thy head high, and tell how thou didst send help to Ferrers Lord Sahib, thy benefactor, when he and his little band battled with the brown invaders. Haste, then, Nacha, and sail not, for our lives may hang on thy speed!"

Nacha's eyes glistened, and his nephew's chest swelled visibly, more with pride at having been chosen for the task than at the thought of the great reward Ferrers Lord had promised them. Ten minutes later the two set out on their journey.

As Ferrers Lord came out of the tent shortly afterwards Gadra Singh bent low before him.

"Oh, most worshipful and excellent of sahibs," said Gadra Singh, "I am thy cook, and shamefully have I been abused! There is one O'Rooney Sahib who with violence hath taken from me the most valued of all my possessions, the gun with which not long ago I put the foe to flight, filling them with wounds and lamentations. Thou thyself, noble sahib, didst say that I had done well. Truly I have smitten O'Rooney Sahib, and the sahib with the shiny face who did abet him in the wrong and grin at my grief. Noble sahibs, I ask thee for justice!"

"Get thee to thy cooking-pots, thou destroyer of good food!" said the millionaire. "O'Rooney did this thing at my bidding. Truly thy gun did good once, but to-day it has done much evil. A hard beating would be thy proper reward. Away to thy pots! I am angry with thee!"

Gadra Singh had not expected a reception like this. There was somebody else angry with him, and that was Gan-Waga. As O'Rooney had two damaged ears and the Eskimo only one, the Irishman, according to a very simple calculation in very simple

arithmetic, ought to have been twice as angry with the cook as Gan-Waga. As a proof of the weakness of such calculation, Barry was not angry at all, but merely surprised. To have been knocked down twice by a despised Asiatic did not add to his sense of dignity. Only Gan-Waga had witnessed his double downfall, and, as Gan had likewise suffered, he was not likely to mention the matter to Prout and Maddock.

Gan-Waga found the mallet used for driving in the tent-pegs, and with this weapon in his hand he went in search of the cook. Sounds of woe and lamentation reached him. Gan tiptoed forward and raised the mallet, but he had not the heart to smite. The cook sat beside the smoky fire with ashes on his head, beating his bony chest with his clenched fists, and uttering moans of woe. Gan-Waga thought this was a good deal of fuss to make over the loss of a wretched old gun that probably would have burst some day and blown its owner to pieces had it remained in his possession. Gang swung back his arm, took aim at the cook's ear, and hit out, making the ashes with which Gadra Singh had decorated his hair fly off in a grey cloud. Then the Eskimo made tracks for the trench.

"My poor olds ear feel a lot betterer now, Barry," he said to his fellow-victim. "Ho, ho, hoo!—I gotted my owns back, Barry! I biffed him a loveliful one. He biffs me when I nots lookings, so I biffs him back."

"Was ut a raal swoipe?" asked the Irishman, cheering up. "Did ye put some kick in ut, Gan, my jool?"

"I knocks him sidewayses with his head in a pans of drippings, Barry," replied Gan-Waga, with the happy smile of a person who has done a good and noble deed. "Dears, dears! It was a butterfuls kerslap, Barry!"

"Sure, you said just now that ut was drippin', ye wavil!" said Barry. "Well, good luck to ye, Gan! We are honourably avenged, my son, and Oi ax no more. Kape ut a darrk sacret. Av Prout and Maddock got to larn that me and you, bhoy, had been laid out by Gadra Singh we should be driven to suicide. Kape ut darrk."

Meanwhile, Ferrers Lord and Thurston walked along the line held by the bearers, keeping out of range of any chance arrow. The millionaire had sent the shikari to Dandu to see how the chief and his warriors were faring.

"We may as well look facts in the face, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "We are in a tight corner. We can't retreat."

The prince nodded. "That's true, chief," he said; "but we hold a very strong position."

"Unless they obtain canoes, Ching. That is the danger. If they succeed in throwing a strong force across the lagoon, the result will not be a pleasant one for us. This is going to develop into a fight for sheer life."

"I understand," said Ching-Lung. "And there's a brain behind these brown fellows, too. Don't you think, chief, that we ought to get Dandu's people on the trek? Women and children can't travel fast. We may

have to make a fighting retreat, and then they would hamper us badly. I think Nacha will get through, but it will take a long time."

They reached the point where the natural bridge had been destroyed. The gurgling and hissing of water rose from the chasm. Ferrers Lord folded his arms, and looked across. At that moment the seventh wave of spears swept over the ridge in a long, gleaming line, and faded out as the warriors came into their positions, a silent, motionless army.

As they went back the shikari met them. He had brought Dandu with him, and the chief made the sign of the snake.

"Hail, Azada!" he said. "I bring tidings!"

"Good tidings, Dandu, I trust," said the millionaire, "for we need them!"

"They are not evil, sahib. Shaldza, who is brother to my wife, is returning from the fishing. He will bring canoes, some sixty warriors, and much dried fish. That is good; but there is fear in the hearts of my young men—yet, perhaps it is not fear, but rather despair. They see the mighty hosts that are against us, and ask who can battle against such odds and not be eaten up. And the women are weeping, and Zapra, the priest, tells of misfortune and death; and now he has fled."

"Get thy womenfolk and children away, and send with them some of the older men, Dandu," said Ferrers Lord. "Perhaps we may be able to put heart into thy warriors. Tell them I have sent for help. This coming of thy wife's brother is excellent. With his canoes he must patrol and guard the lagoon and the swamps. There lies the danger."

The sun went down blood-red, and grey clouds came scurrying up from the north in ragged, storm-threatening wisps.

Maddock carried a number of star-shells and a Verrey pistol to the top of the lookout post.

The gloom deepened, and blotted out the strange army. There was something terrifying in the patience and silence of these prone ranks.

Guns were loaded. Dandu's men had sharpened their arrowheads and spearheads; but little real help could be expected of them.

It was very dark, except for the faint glare over Sharpra, and so cold that Maddock bawled down to Prout that he was freezing, and would like some kind creature to bring him up an extra coat.

Ching-Lung took him one.

"Souse me, aren't they quiet, sir?" said the bos'un, as he buttoned up the coat. "It's hard to fancy they're there at all."

"Switch on a light, and let us see if they are up to any mischief," said Ching-Lung. "Strike a decent sort of match, Ben."

A star-shell soared up, and filled the night with its green glare. It was a parachute-shell. It sank steadily earthwards like a great lamp.

Still those ranks had not stirred; but something had, and Maddock noticed it.

"Look out, below, souse me!" he shouted, as the star-shell spluttered out in velvet darkness. "Look out for arrows! All six Tanks have been shifted closer to the ravine, so I expect they're filled with fresh archers."

"Keep very quiet!" cried the deep voice of Ferrers Lord. "Yes, here come the hornets!"

In the silence they heard the whistling of the arrows. As they fell they made a pattering like hail. The defenders were well screened, for they had strengthened their position during the day.

The firing started by Gadra Singh's unlucky gun had prevented a daylight attack—or that, at least, was Ferrers Lord's opinion—when he would have welcomed it. It was possible that the same result might be obtained again.

He fired three crisp shots with his automatic-pistol. A second star-shell leapt into the air. Rifles began to spit. Horns uttered hoarse blasts, and at the sound the first line of spearmen leapt to their feet and came charging down at the ravine. They knew where the crossing was.

In an instant they were scrambling down the steep side in bunches of ten or a dozen.

Then Prout's machine-gun began to talk.

More star-shells went up, and Sharpra, not to be outdone, sent out a great blaze of flame that tinged the black, driving clouds with crimson, and the roar of a tremendous volcanic explosion came to them on the wind. Brown figures toppled and fell, and went hurtling into the abyss below.

Dandu and his men, posted behind the barricade on either side of the machine-gun, poured their arrows into the ranks of the attackers.

The first line wavered. They fell before the storm of bullets like grass before the keen edge of a scythe.

Once more the horns brayed, and the second rank sprang to the assault.

"These brown rabbits have more pluck than I thought, sahib!" chuckled the shikari grimly, as he jerked the empty shells out of the rifle the Viceroy had given him. "Truly this war, and the skies join us and aid us to slay!"

As the shikari spoke the storm that had been threatening burst overhead. A flash of lightning that paled the glare of the star-shells tore across the sky from east to west—a zigzag bar of flame that turned night to day—and the deafening crash of thunder that followed it shook down a torrent of icy rain.

Then came lesser flashes, so swiftly that a dozen separate storms might have been raging instead of one.

Still the rifles sounded and the machine-gun hammered and pounded. A lull came, and with it darkness, and then another braying of horns.

"Souse me, they're going!" shouted Maddock. "That's the stuff to give them! The brown polishes have had enough!"

The icy rain had turned into a downpour of hail. Duke Payton sent up a couple more parachute star-shells. They did not burn very long, for the hail beat them down rapidly; but their light showed the brown army retreating towards the ridge, leaving its dead and wounded behind.

"I think it is the sudden cold that has beaten them as much as our guns, Ching!" said Ferrers Lord. "How are your men, Payton?"

"Shivering, and so numbed that they can scarcely hold a rifle, sir," said Payton. "We have a couple of inches of hail in the trench. You can almost hear the teeth of the poor beggars chattering from here. The stuff is coming down hard enough to blister their skins. And Sharpra is busy, too."

The parapet seemed to quiver as the millionaire leaned against it. Sharpra was flaming and in full eruption, as if in fulfilment of the curious prophecy.

Even through the thick-falling screen of hail the northern sky seemed ablaze. The shikari shivered, and swung his arms to warm himself.

"Well, they've had a very nasty pasting," said Ching-Lung. "If they make another rush to-night I shall be more than surprised. Do you think any of them got down, Tom?"

"If they did, by honey, it must have been just after the rain started, sir," answered Prout. "It got in my eyes with the smoke that blew back. I'd got hold of a bad belt of cartridges, too, and a foot or so of them ran through without exploding. Better have a look. Where's that Verrey, Barry?"

"Oi don't know," said Barry O'Rooney. "Oi laid the thing down; but, hehah, ut's that darrik Oi can't hear meself think, and all my fingers are frozen into thumbs! Here, blubberboiter, Oi know you'd never fraze av you were put in cowlid storage for six months! Oi've got the thing in my hip-pocket. Pull it out!"

Prout took the pistol, and climbed over the barricade.

"Be careful, Tom," said Ching-Lung. "This slush must have made it pretty slippery. If you go over there with a rush there won't be enough of you left to make a decent funeral."

"If I do flop over I don't deserve a decent funeral," said Prout. "As a precaution, by honey, will any kind person who doesn't owe me a grudge or any money hold my leg? I want somebody I can trust not to push me in for the sake of what I'm insured for!"

Ching-Lung volunteered, and, as Prout crawled to the edge of the chasm in the light of the millionaire's flash-lamp, the prince followed.

The hail was melting, and little rivulets of ice-cold water was trickling into the ravine. While the prince grasped him by the ankles Prout looked over.

The ravine was filled with darkness to the very brim. Prout fired the pistol vertically into the air. The ball of fire it emitted showed Prout something that more than startled him.

Yelling, he grasped the shaft of a spear with his left hand, and with the hand that held the pistol he struck downwards at the brown face of the owner of the spear.

"Tumble up and repel boarders!" he shouted. "Some of 'em did get through, and, by honey, they're on us!"

A Strange Engine of War.

NO one could tell how many of the attackers had managed to evade the rain of lead from the machine-gun and cross the ravine and attempt the perilous ascent. The raid was a failure, for it was detected in time.

The cheerless night dragged on, with Sharpra rumbling and growling, and a cheerless dawn broke sullen and grey.

The bearers had suffered greatly from the cold, and Dandu's warriors looked miserable and shivering. The chief declared it had been one of the chilliest nights he could recall.

"It cuts both ways, anyhow," said Ching-Lung, as he sipped a welcome cup of coffee. "The brown chaps must have felt it just as much as our fellows. This is where Gan-Waga has the laugh of us. He likes it."

Mr. Benjamin Maddock's duties had not been enviable ones, for he had found his exalted position both wet and draughty. He took a turn round the camp to restore circulation and to move the stiffness out of his knees and shoulders. His nose had changed colour. O'Rooney said it was blue, and was proof positive of what he had often suspected—that the bos'un was related to that curiously-tinted monkey, the blue-nosed baboon. The enemy seemed to have found some comparatively dry combustibles, and had lighted numerous fires. The smoke of them blew across the ravine as thickly as if they were preparing an organised smoke attack sheltered by it.

Of course, nothing of the kind was contemplated. The numbed warriors of the strange army were merely trying to get warm. It was comfortless in the trench, but it must have been much more so in the open.

"This vile weather may last for days," Payton, said Ferrers Lord. "It will help us, perhaps, for these chaps won't have much heart to fight while their knees are shaking with cold."

"Or our men either, sir," said Payton. "This clammy cold takes all the starch out of them."

"It doesn't seem probable that there will be any more fighting for some time to come," said the millionaire; "so they had better join Dandu's men and cut timber. We'll put a floor in the trench to keep our feet out of the mud, and put up a barricade that will keep off chance arrows. A little hard work will soon warm them."

The north wind blew in angry gusts, with frequent scurries of cold rain. Gan-Waga enjoyed it.

About noon Dandu brought his brother to the tent. Shaldza was a thick-set young warrior. He did not understand the vernacular.

"Tell him, then, Dandu," said Ferrers Lord, "that he and his people must have a thousand eyes. We shall hold fast here, as thou hast seen, and the foe will break each time he hurls himself at the ravine, as he did last night. It is in my thoughts that he will build rafts and try to ferry a force over the lagoon and surround us. Let thy brother be all eyes, for it may go hard with us. Be brave, and if we win through I will show your people a great magic. The foe swarms yonder thick as ants. I cannot show this magic at once, but I have sent messengers to prepare it and send it to us from beyond the cactus country. That our peril is great I do not try to hide from thee. We are a little band, but our hearts are big. We can die but once, and if that is fated, let us, then, die like men."

"Thy words are brave and good, Azada," said the chief. "And this great magic, Azada—when will it come?"

"I cannot tell you," answered the millionaire, shaking his head. "I cannot tell how swiftly my messengers will travel. When they reach the goal the magic will come speedily. It is not the nonsense magic of that fat, cheating priest Zapra—mere words and folly. It will amaze thee and thy people and turn the hearts of our enemies to water."

The supply of fish Dandu's brother had brought in was very welcome. There was no real danger of any shortage of food if they could hold up the enemy, for there was a good head of cattle, and fair grazing in the hilly country behind them.

The trenches were speedily rendered more comfortable.

Gan-Waga, being proof against cold and damp, took a spell of duty aloft. He saw no sign of activity in the enemy's lines. When night closed down thousands of little red fires could be seen, as if the plain swarmed with glow-worms. Towards midnight Ching-Lung went into the tent to waken Ferrers Lord, but the millionaire was already awake.

(To be continued.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 81.—Mr. COBB and Mr. HAWKE.



MR. BEN COBB is the landlord of the Cross Keys at Friardale. Mr. Jeremiah Hawke lodges with Mr. Cobb, and plies several trades. In all of them he has the able assistance of Mr. Cobb, and it would not be at all an easy thing to say which of the two is the greater rascal. Their presence in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars is about as bad a thing as can be for the school. But it is no unusual thing to find such people in the neighbourhood of a big public school. "Where the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together," Messrs. Cobb and Hawke are of the vulture type; and there are pickings for them in plenty among the Greyfriars fellows disposed to go on the randan, some of them with plenty of money to throw away.

Of course, it is throwing away money. There can be no possible doubt of that. Through all the stories which deal with the escapades of the black sheep the moral has been clear and strong. Mr. Richards is "on the side of the angels," as the old saying has it. He has shown us Loder and Carne, Skinner and Snoop, Vernon-Smith, and others less really prone to vice, being enticed into foolishness by Cobb and Hawke; but he has shown them risking much for very small satisfaction. No boy of any sense who reads can believe that the game they play is in any way worth the candle. Certain trouble if they are caught, possible expulsion, in spite of the fact that Dr. Locke is more merciful and long-suffering than most headmasters; heavy heads in the mornings after their silly outbreaks; the contempt of the sound and wholesome among their schoolfellows—and all for what?

For the pleasure of playing with greasy cards in a stuffy atmosphere; of winning at billiards when the man in opposition think fit they should win, and losing when the stakes are increased sufficiently to tempt him; of smoking, and perhaps of drinking, though the Removites who go on the razzle don't usually transgress far in that direction; in short, of being uncomfortable in order to get fleeced! Do you think it is worth while? Do you think that sort of thing is ever worth while as long as there are clean games to play, and interesting books to read, and good chums to walk and talk with? I don't. Beware of the delusion that doggishness is manliness. You don't really need these things; and no one whose opinion is worth having thinks any the better of you for going in for them. You learn much in bar-parlours and billiard-rooms, maybe; but it is not worth learning. A clean heart, and a clean mind are far better value. It is not priggish to shun evil; better even be a little bit strait-laced than be a gay dog. But there is no need at all to be strait-laced. You can be an athlete, if you have it in you; and you can get far more enjoyment out of life than the gay dog gets without going in for any of his methods of enjoyment. You must know of fellows who have proved that. And even if to be an athlete is beyond your reach, being a decent chap is not; and you are more likely to be that if you shun the company of such as Messrs. Cobb and Hawke and that of the young fools who admire such greasy, grasping, foul-mouthed, drink-sodden swindlers.

Something of a sermon—eh? I don't often preach them; they are not in my line. And I don't think they are often necessary. Our stories, read in the right spirit, are more effective than sermons. But Messrs. Cobb and

Hawke are the sort of people who naturally form a text for a sermon.

Many of the Greyfriars fellows have got into their clutches at one time or another; and, once in them, have found no end of difficulty in getting out. You will remember the case of Rupert Valence in that very Hawke saw his chance there; a forger is open to blackmail, for a forger is usually a weak popular story "A Very Gallant Gentleman," and misguided person. And Valence might have been blackmailed to almost any extent if it had not been for Arthur Courtney. It might have been thought that Courtney's death, directly due, as it was, to his rescue of Valence from the burning Cross Keys—the fire, by the way, unluckily did not destroy that shady establishment—would have proved a very serious matter for Messrs. Cobb and Hawke. And so it would have done—so might other matters in which they had been mixed up have done—had Dr. Locke been free to take the action he would naturally wish to take if he had not the credit of his school to consider. There is much that the Head of Greyfriars does not know about the dealings of his boys with those two shady specimens; but he does know enough to make Cobb's ability to hang on to his licence very doubtful, if what the Head knows were reported to the police, and by them laid before the licensing bench. No doubt there will come a day when Mr. Cobb will go too far and will lose his licence. It is not likely that he and Hawke pluck no pigeons except those from the Grey-



friars dovecote; and, of course, the card-parties late at night are absolutely illegal. But when the crash comes for him Greyfriars will not be mixed up in it if Dr. Locke can help it. A stronger and more resolute man than he might think it worth while to clear out such a sink of iniquity at any cost; but if Dr. Locke lacks something in the matter of strength, he more than atones for it in other qualities.

Cobb is a publican and a sinner. Hawke is a bookmaker and a blackmailer. Both are swindlers, not to be trusted a yard. If they ever play any game on the level, they do it with difficulty and with reluctance, and also in order to profit later, when their intended victim has been lured into confidence.

Skinner is astute enough; but they pluck Skinner. They found Ernest Levison a hard nut to crack. Levison had precious little money, and that little he had no mind to throw away. But he was a victim, too. Herbert Vernon-Smith, in his unregenerate days, was quite a little gold-mine to the precious pair. The cynical Rounder did queer things. He would let himself be done down with his eyes open to all that was going on if it happened to suit his whim, as it sometimes did. Money was nothing to him; a millionaire father supplied him with all that he could want and more than was good for him. But he did not want to be expelled; and it was partly through Hawke's blackmailing tactics that he fell back into his old bad ways, though in rather a different spirit than that of old, with little real relish of them, and with something like loathing for the shady partners of his pleasures. He was

under Hawke's thumb, owing to the possession by Hawke of a paper that would have ruined him with the Head. But Ernest Levison came along, and that crafty brain devised a plan to get the paper back. It was recovered, and the Bounder owes Levison a debt that he will repay tenfold if ever the chance comes his way.

It would be waste of time to tell of all the fellows who have fallen under the evil influence of these two scoundrels. Ponsonby and the Highcliffe nuts have been there, of course; Aubrey Angel is the latest pigeon for plucking—the easier to pluck, maybe, because he has so high a notion of his own smartness. Carne and Loder are frequent visitors; but one needs not to waste any sympathy on them. If they do not swindle Cobb and Hawke, it is only because they cannot get the chance, not because their will to do so is lacking.

Enough of Cobb and Hawke! There is no good to be said of them.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"ANGEL OF THE FOURTH!"

By Frank Richards.

This week we have Shylock of the Second. Next week we have Angel of the Fourth. Spring really is a young Shylock; but there is nothing in the least really angelic about Angel, who is a very complete rotter. It is not giving much away to tell you this, for the story soon makes it very clear.

Vernon-Smith, Temple, and Sir Jimmy Vivian have all known Angel before his advent at Greyfriars. All play some part in the events that follow that event, Temple figuring most prominently at the outset, Sir Jimmy later, in another story. You will like these stories, I feel sure. Many of you are keen on Sir Jimmy Vivian. Harry Wharton, somewhat in the background this week—but there is really no reason why Harry should be always in the limelight—plays a considerable part, too.

AN IDEAL HOLIDAY.

Captain Elgee, of the Ministry of National Service, who has the control of the Flax Harvest Scheme, about which I have told you, has asked me to insert the following letter, received by him; and I do so with pleasure.

"16, Stamford Street, Blackfriars.

"Dear Sir,—Just a few lines to let you know that I enjoyed myself immensely while I was at Glemsford working with the flax hoers. I only wish I could go for another fortnight—or for two months—I wouldn't mind. I will conclude by hoping that all who go may enjoy themselves as much as I did. Thanking you for giving us such a good holiday.—I remain, yours truly, J. W. ALLISON."

The next three camps open on July 25th, August 11th, and August 25th. Volunteers should send in card at once, as the companies fill up fast.

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

- 301.—"Cast Up by the Sea."
- 302.—"The Biter Bit."
- 303.—"The Scapegoat."
- 304.—"In Borrowed Plumes."
- 305.—"The Four Heroes."
- 306.—"Harry Wharton's Christmas Number."
- 307.—"Good Old Coker!"
- 308.—"Ructions in the Remove."
- 309.—"Held Up!"
- 310.—"The Right Sort."
- 311.—"Trouble with Highcliffe."
- 312.—"Bunter's Black Chum."
- 313.—"The Factory Rebels."
- 314.—"Peter Todd's Plot."
- 315.—"The Snob's Lesson."
- 316.—"The White Feather."
- 317.—"Blunder's Prize."
- 318.—"The Missing Chinese."
- 319.—"Alonzo's Marvellous Mixture."
- 320.—"Easy Terms."
- 321.—"April Fools All!"
- 322.—"Wibley's Wheeze."
- 323.—"The Runaway."
- 324.—"Harry Wharton's Diplomacy."

YOUR EDITOR

20-7-16