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HIS MAJESTY THE MAJOR!



THE RESULT OF BOB CHERRY'S BATTING!

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.) 17-5-19



His Majesty the Major

A Magnificent Long, Complete School Story of
HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GREYFRIARS.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Love's Labour Lost!

"WHAT'S going on?" Temple of the Fourth asked that question in astonishment. The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were ascending the stairs leading to the junior studies, and it was evident that they were very much on the war-path. Each of them carried a cricket-stump; and Bob Cherry, in addition, was swinging a pail of tar. He swung it so recklessly that some of the tar splashed upon the elegant Temple's trousers.

"Look out, you clumsy idiot!" roared Temple. "I don't want a shower-bath of that stuff! What's going on, I say?" "We are!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

And the Famous Five surged past the Fourth-Former like a wave, leaving Cecil Reginald Temple sprawling on the stairs with a bewildered expression on his face.

Temple's first impulse was to rush after the Famous Five and slaughter them. But wiser counsels prevailed. Five determined fellows, five cricket-stumps, and a pail of tar could do considerable damage to Temple's appearance. The captain of the Fourth grunted, and went on his way. He was, as a matter of fact, relieved to find that the tar was not meant for him.

Bob Cherry halted outside the study which Vernon-Smith shared with Skinner. The rest of the procession halted, too, and grinned.

"This is Skinner's benefit," said Bob. "Are you fellows ready?"

"Pile in!" said Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry threw open the door, and marched into the study. The others followed, with cricket-stumps held ready for action.

Vernon-Smith was not at home. He had gone on a cycling jaunt with Tom Redwing, leaving the study to Skinner, who had invited Snoop and Stott in for the afternoon. As the majority of their Form-fellows would be out of doors, the slackers of the Remove had counted upon having a good time, in their own delightful way, without interruption.

The three juniors jumped up in alarm at the Famous Five's entry.

"What's the merry game?" asked Skinner.

"Cricket practice!" said Bob Cherry promptly. "Everybody's turning out

this afternoon! We're rounding up the slackers!"

"Oh!" said Skinner, quite taken aback.

"Even the halt, maimed, and blind have got to come and take a turn at the nets. We're serving friends and foes alike—no favouritism! When we've collared you three—either by forcible means or not, as you choose—we're going to rout out Bunter and Fish and Mauly!"

"The routfulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh.

"Of course, it's all rot!" said Stott. "You can't interfere with us! We shall do as we like!"

"I should advise you, in the language of P.C. Tozer, to come quietly," laughed Harry Wharton. "It's a ripping afternoon, and you'll find it a jolly sight better playing cricket than fooling around indoors."

"You can clear out!" said Skinner, recovering himself. "We wouldn't come down to the cricket if you beseeched us on bended knees!"

"No, rather not!" said Snoop.

Bob Cherry glanced reflectively at the pail which he had placed on the floor.

"P'raps a little tar—" he suggested pleasantly.

Skinner backed hastily away.

"You wouldn't dare—" he muttered.

"We'll soon see about that!" said Bob. He lifted the brush from the pail, and made a stride towards Skinner.

"Gerraway!" panted the cad of the Remove. "I don't want to be smothered with that messy stuff!"

"Will you come along to the cricket, then, like good little boys?" purred Bob, holding the dripping brush perilously close to Harold Skinner.

"No—I—I mean—yes!"

"Good!" said Johnny Bull. "That's three converts! March 'em out, and tickle 'em with a stump if they don't show willing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Inwardly fuming, Skinner and Snoop and Stott left the study under escort. They detested cricket almost as much as lessons, which was saying a good deal. But the Famous Five were firm, and there was no possibility of escape.

"Bunter next!" said Nugent.

"He'll be in the tuckshop," said Wharton. "He's stony, but he haunts the place. He's trying to explain a new credit system to Mrs. Mimble, I expect!"

Wharton was right. The Owl of the Remove was run to earth in the school tuckshop. He was leaning over the counter, chatting confidentially to Mrs. Mimble, in the hope that a number of tarts—on tick—would fall to his portion. But Mrs. Mimble, knowing Bunter, turned a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer.

Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh each inserted an arm in one of Bunter's and dragged him away from the counter.

"Hold on, you fellows! I—I mean, leggo!" protested Bunter. "What's on?"

"Cricket practice!" said Johnny Bull tersely. "You'll come in handy for rolling the pitch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme alone!" howled Bunter. "I—I was just going to buy some tarts!"

"Well, buy 'em, and look sharp!"

Billy Bunter hesitated.

"The fact is," he said, "I'm stumped until I get my postal-order in the morning. I'm sure you fellows wouldn't mind having a whip-round for me, just to see me through."

The Famous Five gasped. The coolness of the request almost took their breath away.

"You—you want us to see you through?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Bunter nodded eagerly.

"Right you are, then! We're always willing to oblige! There's the doorway! See him through, Johnny!"

Johnny Bull grinned, and the next moment his heavy boot clamped upon Bunter's person. The fat junior vanished through the doorway like a stone from a catapult, and landed with a bump in the Close.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep a brotherly eye on him," said Johnny Bull, "while I go and fetch Fishy. He's in the study, working on some new stunt of his."

Johnny disappeared into the building, returning a few moments later with Fisher T. Fish. The Yankee junior was gesticulating wildly. He vowed he wouldn't go within yards of the cricket-ground.

"You're a set of elabrided jays!" he yelled, as Johnny Bull brought him into line with the other victims. "I guess I'm a free citizen, and—"

"I kinder sorter guess and calculate that you're coming along to the cricket!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's only Mauly to fetch now," said Wharton.

"And there's all this tar left," said Bob Cherry ruefully. "Pity to waste it!"

"If I know anything of Mauly and his habits, it won't be wasted!" chuckled Nugent.

The Famous Five and their prisoners, on whom they kept a wary eye, proceeded to Lord Mauleverer's sumptuously furnished study.

His lordship reclined on the couch, with his noble head buried in cushions. His breathing was regular, and he was at peace with the world.

But not for long. Bob Cherry raised the sleeper's head, and suspended the tar brush over his nose.

"Groooh! Gug-gug-gug!"

Those weird sounds proceeded from Lord Mauleverer as the tar dripped off the brush on to his aristocratic features. His expression, as he opened his eyes and blinked up at Bob Cherry, made the juniors roar.

"Yow! Take that beastly stuff away, begad!" spluttered the schoolboy earl. "Groo! I believe I've swallowed some!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dose to be repeated every two minutes until you make up your mind to come along to the cricket!" said Bob Cherry calmly.

"Oh, my aunt!"

Lord Mauleverer wanted no more tar. His brain was slow to work, as a rule, after slumber; but on this occasion he realised the wisdom of falling promptly into line.

"That completes the collection of slackers!" said Harry Wharton. "Now for the cricket!"

And the juniors, willing and unwilling, left the study, Lord Mauleverer's countenance bearing a marked resemblance to that of Hurree Singh.

It had been Bob Cherry's suggestion that the slackers of the Remove should be made to take an active part at the nets. Bristling with energy himself, Bob was always eager to inspire energy in others. The fact that the others failed to appreciate his good intentions didn't worry him in the least.

Billy Bunter and Fish, Skinner and Snoop and Stott, and Lord Mauleverer, went in front. They had no chance to turn tail. And the smell of that tar told them that it would be good policy to knuckle under.

When the procession came in sight of the cricket-ground Harry Wharton uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There's no one playing!" he said.

As a rule, cricket was in full swing on half-holidays. The juniors rubbed their eyes, and gazed in wonder at the large stretch of deserted green.

"What on earth—" began Nugent.

Closer observation revealed the fact that the ground was roped in. A number of seniors had packed up their cricket gear, and were in the act of dispersing. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was one of them.

"What does this mean, Wingate?" asked Harry Wharton, indicating the ropes.

"The ground's not in use!" growled Wingate. "Orders have just been given by the Head that no cricket is to be played on it for a week."

"My hat!"

"Alterations are to be made, apparently," said Wingate. "The various pitches require re-turfing."

"No cricket for a week!" gasped Bob Cherry. "And we were to play Highcliffe on Saturday!"

"It can't be helped," said Wingate.

"We shall feel the draught as well. The

First Eleven are due to play a team from Wapshot on Wednesday."

Skinner burst into a chuckle.

"This is where we score!" he said.

"Dry up, you worm," growled Johnny Bull, "or you'll get the rest of the tar!"

Wingate glanced at the pail of tar, and at Lord Mauleverer's jet-black countenance; but he passed on without asking any questions. He was feeling very sore at the fact that the cricket practice had been interrupted.

"This is a lively prospect!" said Wharton. "We shall either have to cancel our match, or play it at Highcliffe. Why couldn't they have repaired the blessed ground in the winter?"

The Famous Five were frankly disgusted. Not so Skinner & Co., who were only too glad that the cricket was "off."

"Wouldn't be a bad wheeze to take

out, the necessary alterations to the cricket-ground could have been made during the winter. The general verdict was that it was "rotten!"

But relief came next morning, in the form of an announcement on the notice-board. The announcement made pleasant reading.

"NOTICE."

"The school cricket-ground having been closed for a week, arrangements have been made for the boys to use the large field adjoining Major Thresher's premises.

"It should be noted that, although this field is rented by the Governors of Greyfriars, the adjoining property must in no way be molested.

H. H. LOCKE, Headmaster."

"Cheers!" said Bob Cherry, when he



"Why are you eating no breakfast, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Are you ill?"

"Nunno, sir—that is to say, I'm very ill indeed, sir!" said Bunter. "I believe it's a form of wasting disease, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 5.)

these beauties on a cross-country run!" said Nugent.

"No; let them go!" said Wharton. "We can put them through the mill another time, if necessary."

The slackers were accordingly released, and the Famous Five, feeling very annoyed that their efforts at reform had ended in failure, went along to Study No. 1 to discuss what was to be done about the Highcliffe match.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On the War-path!

GREYFRIARS bitterly resented being balked of its cricket. Fellows in every Form raised a strong protest against the existing state of affairs. As Wharton pointed

read the notice. "That solves the giddy problem. We're not to be dished of our cricket, after all."

"Who is this Major Thresher?" asked Johnny Bull.

"A crusty old stick like Sir Hilton Popper, I believe," said Wharton. "He's taken a house here for the summer."

"Jolly decent of him not to object to our playing cricket near his stately halls," said Nugent.

"Rats! He may have objected already, for all we know. Anyway, the field belongs to the Governors, so he can do nothing."

"The ludicrous major is of the hotful stuff variety!" said Hurree Singh. "He chucks his esteemed weight about throwfully."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he makes war on us," said Johnny Bull grimly, "we shall know how to deal with him. We've made old Popper sing small more than once, and we're always ready to repeat the dose!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Famous Five strolled out into the Close. As they emerged into the sunshine a fat figure came speeding towards them, and Billy Bunter's voice was raised in wild alarm.

"Help! Fire! Murder! I say, you fellows, he's potty! Ow! Keep him off!"

The Famous Five stared at the fat junior in amazement. Then, glancing further afield, they saw a stern and portly martinet hurrying in Billy Bunter's wake. He brandished a stick as he came, and, judging by the fierce grunts which accompanied his laboured movements, he was very angry.

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter, dodging behind the group of juniors. "Don't let him touch me! He—he means murder!"

The Famous Five had no love for Bunter, but, as Bob Cherry remarked, they could not very well leave him to the tender mercies of his furious pursuer. They formed up in line, keeping the intruder at bay, while Billy Bunter continued his headlong flight.

"Let me pass!" hooted the portly gentleman. "Do you hear me? I am Major Thresher, and I have been insulted—grossly insulted!"

"It's all right, sir; you can't catch him now!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Better take a breather while you've got the chance."

The major glared.

"That young cub—that impertinent young monkey," he exclaimed, "approached me as I was coming in at the gates, and actually had the temerity to ask me—me!—if I could make him an advance on a postal-order he was expecting! The cheek of it! The confounded impudence of it!"

The major paused, almost overcome.

The Famous Five chuckled. They knew that Billy Bunter never grew weary of telling the story of the postal-order and the titled relations; but that he would have the nerve to spring it upon a comparative stranger was astounding. They could well understand the major's wrath.

"My original object in coming here was to see your headmaster," the major said, glaring at the Famous Five. "Direct me to his study at once!"

"He thinks he's on parade, rapping out orders!" muttered Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton, however, making due allowances for the major's abruptness, indicated the way to the Head's study. Without a word of thanks, the major strode away.

His annoyance with Billy Bunter was but a trifle compared with his annoyance with the headmaster of Greyfriars. It had come to his ears that the field adjoining his property was to be utilised as a cricket-ground; and the knowledge exasperated him. Why had he not been consulted in the matter? Was he a mere nobody, that he should be treated with this lack of consideration? The major's lower jaw protruded ominously as he gave a thunderous knock on the door of the Head's study.

"Come in!"

The patient tones of Dr. Locke added to the major's irritation. He stamped into the study, nearly shattering a valuable vase with his stick.

"Ah!" said Dr. Locke, rising to his feet. "Major Thresher, I believe?"

"Yes, sir! Major Thorndyke Thresher, late of the Guards! You conduct this kindergarten, sir?"

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"I beg your pardon?" said the Head coldly.

"You—you rule the roost in this confounded place, I presume?"

"I am the headmaster of Greyfriars," said Dr. Locke, with dignity. "I fail to see why you should address me in this discourteous manner, Major Thresher."

"Huh!" The major rapped angrily on the floor with his stick. "You won't fail to see it, sir, when I explain my object in coming here. I'm not one of your polished drawing-room fops, Dr. Locke. I speak my mind—straight from the shoulder! I understand that my field is being appropriated for use as a cricket-ground?"

The Head smiled slightly.

"You seem to be under a misapprehension," he said. "The field in question is rented by the governors of this school."

The major was taken aback. He knew, of course, that the field was not really his; at the same time, he had hoped it was not the school's, either. The Head's statement rather took the wind out of his sails.

"Without going into the question of ownership," he said, "I strongly object to having ball games played under my very nose. I know only too well what it means—broken windows, considerable damage to property, and, what is worst of all, a continual noise going on. I won't have it, sir! And that's flat!"

"I think you are taking much too strong a view of the matter," said the Head. "I have made it clear to the boys that they are in no way to molest your property. You will, I fear, suffer some slight inconvenience in the way of noise; but it will only be for a week, at the end of which time the field will no longer be required."

The major grunted.

"Should any untoward events take place," the Head went on, "you may report them to me, and I shall take action immediately. Please understand that I am not attempting to interfere with your privacy."

"You are determined to allow your boys to play in this field?"

"Quite!"

"Then there is nothing more to be said. But," added the major, as he turned to depart, "if any intrusion is made upon my property, it shall go hard with the culprits!"

With which Parthian shot the major withdrew, slamming the door with unnecessary violence behind him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Certain Liveliness!

WHEN afternoon lessons were over, quite a number of Removites changed into their flannels and went along to the new cricket-ground.

The Famous Five were there, of course, and Squiff and Tom Brown, Vernon-Smith and Redwing, Mark Linley and Peter Todd and Dick Penfold, joined the merry throng.

The Higheliffe fellows were rather an uncertain quality in the cricketing line. They had a happy knack of springing surprises; and the Remove didn't intend to be caught napping when they met Frank Courtenay & Co. on the Saturday. Strenuous practice was the order of the day.

The field which skirted the major's premises was not an ideal cricket-ground. It sloped here and there, and the grass was rather long. The middle of the field was nicely rolled, but, unfortunately, it was being used by the mighty men of the Sixth.

"The seniors collar all the privileges!"

growled Johnny Bull. "I suppose we must pitch out nets in a blessed quagmire!"

"It's not too bad," said Harry Wharton. "The ground's fairly level here."

He indicated that part of the field which immediately adjoined the major's garden.

"Is it safe?" asked Mark Linley. "We're at rather close quarters, you know. And the major values his greenhouse, I expect."

"Bless the major!" said Bob Cherry. "We've got to play somewhere. And there's not much chance of balls going over the garden wall, because of the net."

But Bob's prediction was not borne out. The practice had been in progress barely five minutes when Frank Nugent, who was batting, played a swift ball from Hurree Singh over the net. An instant later the ball crashed into the major's chrysanthemums.

"Haw! Cheeky young cubs!" came a voice from the garden.

"The major!" muttered Peter Todd.

"Halt! Front! Stand at ease! Pull your socks up!"

The juniors stared. They could not understand why Major Thresher should address them in this way. Was it possible that he was suffering from the effects of the sun?

"Form fours, you thundering idiots!"

"I—I say, he's got it bad," faltered Nugent. "It's a form of sunstroke. I should think. We'd better give the old chap a helping hand."

Harry Wharton raised himself up on the wall, and peered into the garden. A look of blank bewilderment came over his face. There was no sign of the major!

"Where is the old buffer?" asked Vernon-Smith, clambering up beside Wharton.

"Give it up! I can't even see his shadow!"

"Haw! Cheeky young cubs! Cricket in my field, begad! I won't have it!"

Vernon-Smith gave a chuckle. He pointed to a cage hanging outside the greenhouse. It was from the parrot, Adolphus—the major's pride and joy—that those remarks had emanated.

Adolphus was a parrot possessing intelligence above the average; and he could imitate the major's speech and his celebrated cough to perfection.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith exchanged glances, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"What's the little game?" asked Squiff. "Has the major gone potty?"

"It isn't the major at all—it's a precious parrot!" said Vernon-Smith.

"My hat!"

"What about searchfully bringing to light the esteemed ball?" observed Hurree Singh, who was anxious to carry on with the bowling.

"I'll nip over!" said Wharton.

He was in the act of doing so when a heavy tread became audible on the garden path, and the major came into view.

For a moment he failed to see the two juniors on the wall. Instead, he walked straight to the parrot's cage, and addressed the bird in tones so affectionate that Wharton and Vernon-Smith were too amazed to slip back out of view.

"He's jawing to it as if it were a long-lost brother!" muttered Vernon-Smith. "Did you ever?"

The major opened the cage, and smoothed the parrot's ruffled feathers. Adolphus submitted to the process with an air of unconcern. Then the major fastened the cage, and, chancing to look up, saw Wharton and Vernon-Smith perched on the wall.

The major turned pink. He felt uncomfortable to think that a couple of

schoolboys had seen him caressing Adolphus. The grim old martinet was capable of warm affection, but he never liked to demonstrate his affection before strangers. It was inconsistent with his dignity.

"What do you boys want?" he barked out. "After my cherries—eh?"

"You're quite off-side, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "Would you mind returning our ball, please?" he added sweetly. "It's in the chrysanthemum-bed."

The major nearly choked.

"You—you dare to damage my chrysanthemums!" he spluttered.

"It was a pure accident, sir."

"Buck up with our ball!" came in a chorus from the Greyfriars side of the wall.

The major snorted, and picked up the offending ball, then he hurled it forth so fiercely that Johnny Bull—who fortunately saw it coming—just managed to duck his head in the nick of time.

"Understand this!" snarled the major, as Wharton and Vernon-Smith were about to resume operations at the nets.

"If any more balls come over into my garden I shall pocket 'em! I rented this house in order to have a quiet time, and this disturbance is distractin', begad!"

"Halt! Right turn! Quick march!" sang out Adolphus cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The major stalked into the house, and Harry Wharton & Co. went on with their practice. Frank Nugent was clean bowled by Hurree Singh, and Peter Todd took his place. Peter batted quietly for several minutes, then he ran out to pull the ball round to leg. Unfortunately, the movement was too sweeping, and the ball whizzed over the wall like a bullet from a machine-gun.

For one breathless second the juniors stared at each other, and then—

Crash!

"Bang goes the whole box of tricks!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "That's the roof of the greenhouse!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The major, busily engaged in his study upstairs, compiling his "History of Famous Bombardments," heard that crash, too. He went down the stairs three at a time, and plunged down the garden path like a bull.

"Haw! Cheeky young cubs!" said Adolphus shrilly. "Impudent young monkeys, begad!"

The major paused on reaching the greenhouse. A couple of panes of glass on the roof were badly cracked, and two more were missing, believed smashed. The ball which had caused the casualties lay on the floor of the greenhouse. The major picked it up and put it in his pocket.

"Would you mind returning our ball, sir?" came in dulcet tones from the other side of the wall.

The major danced with rage.

"No!" he stormed. "I will not return your ball! Neither will I return any more balls which are being employed to smash up my home! I shall speak to your headmaster on this subject. It's disgraceful!"

"Fall in, the stretcher-bearers!" chirped Adolphus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The major went back to his study fuming. The ball reposed in his pocket, out of harm's way. It did not occur to the major that the juniors could easily get another.

Bob Cherry sped away to Study No. 1, and returned in a few moments with a fresh ball.

"We must go easy now," said Harry Wharton. "The old boy will hang on to every ball he gets."

"I feel sorry for him, in a way," said Squiff. "It isn't pleasant to have cricket-

balls raining down on you all the afternoon. But the Sixth have bagged the middle of the field, and we had to strike our pitch here."

The practice went on for half an hour without incident. Then Bob Cherry started batting, and the inevitable happened. Once again the major's garden was in jeopardy.

No damage was done on this occasion, but the recovery of the ball was essential. Frank Nugent, the treasurer of the Remove Cricket Club, pointed out that the funds would not permit of the purchase of new balls ad lib.

"I'll pop over and get it," said Bob Cherry.

"Mind your eye!" advised Johnny Bull.

Bob laughed, and swung himself over the wall.

He had not supposed that the major had been disturbed this time; but he was wrong. As he was peering about among the flower-beds the major's strident tones exclaimed:

"Got you, you young rascal! How dare you trespass in my garden!"

Bob Cherry saw that it was a time for swift action. He spotted the ball, snatched it up, and took to his heels. The major chased him round and round the greenhouse, and the other fellows, who had clambered on to the wall to see the fun, roared with laughter.

"Stick it, Bob!"

"Keep to windward of him, old scout!" said Peter Todd. "He looks dangerous!"

The major was brandishing his stick in the air, and breathing threatnings and slaughter. Adolphus chattered merrily to pursuer and pursued as they ran.

"Three to one on Bob!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "Go it, ye cripples!"

The major paused, pumping in breath. His days of active service were over. With a farewell flourish of his hand, Bob Cherry shinned over the wall and rejoined his chums.

A peal of laughter from the juniors put the finishing touch to the major's discomfiture.

"Cheeky young monkeys!" he snorted. "You'll hear more of this! You understand me? You'll hear more of this, I say!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then, as the major stamped away in high dudgeon, the croaking voice of Adolphus exclaimed:

"Forward, the Light Brigade! Down with the Kaiser!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Adventures of Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter had entered Study No. 1 without knocking, and stood blinking on the threshold.

Twenty-four hours had elapsed since the Famous Five had come to loggerheads with the major, and they were getting ready for another game at the nets. They gave a gasp when they caught sight of Bunter—and well they might!

The Owl of the Remove was attired in flannels. They were borrowed plumes, and the comical tightness of the trousers, to say nothing of the general appearance of William George Bunter in this guise, caused considerable merriment.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Carry me home to die!" murmured Bob Cherry, commencing to sob on Frank Nugent's shoulder. "What a picture! It ought to be in a glass case!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "My flannels are as good a fit as yours, anyway! I had them

specially made for me by a leading London tailor."

"If you ask me," said Johnny Bull, "those bags belong to Toddy. They are about six sizes too small for you, fatty."

"And the shirt looks like Toddy's, too," chimed in Harry Wharton. "Did he say you could borrow his flannels, Bunter?"

"Oh, we're a happy family in No. 7!" said Bunter carelessly. "It's an understood thing that we can borrow what we like from each other, you know. We believe in give and take."

"And you seem to do more than your share of the taking!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should keep at a safe distance from Toddy, if I were you," advised Wharton.

"That's all right. He's gone over to Courtfield for the afternoon. That's why I collared his togs. I—I mean—"

"Where does the London tailor come in now?" inquired Nugent.

"That was a—a figure of speech, you know."

"Oh!"

"What's the idea of getting yourself up in those things?" asked Wharton.

"To play cricket, of course!"

"What?"

The Famous Five stared. Only a couple of days before, when they had kidnapped Bunter and taken him to the cricket-ground by force, he had raised violent protests. And now Bunter was actually volunteering to take up cricket!

"The age of the esteemed and wonderful miracles has not pastfully expired!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"I didn't come here to collect any of your precious sneers!" said the Owl of the Remove. "Are you, or are you not, playing cricket this afternoon?"

"We is—we are!" said Bob Cherry.

"Very well, then. You can count me in. I've noticed for some time—since the season started, in fact—that you're very weak in the batting department. What you want is a brilliant, solid batsman."

"Well, you're certainly solid enough!" said Wharton.

"When I'm touching my true form," said Bunter, "I'm as good as Steve Bloomer."

"Steve Bloomer was a footballer, you ass!"

"I'm not going to argue with you, Wharton. But you'll need me when you play Highlife on Saturday. If I'm not there the Remove will go down with a bump—"

"So will you, if you talk such a lot of silly rot!" growled Johnny Bull. "Come on, you fellows!"

The Famous Five started off for the cricket-ground, and they were joined en route by a dozen others. Billy Bunter walked gingerly in the rear. He had to walk gingerly, owing to the tightness of Peter Todd's flannels. It was surprising that he didn't burst.

"I say, you fellows," he shouted to those in front, "I'm having first knock!"

"Oh, you are, are you?" said Bolsover major, aiming a none too gentle blow at Billy Bunter with a cricket-stump.

"Ow! Bolsover, you beastly bully—"

"Well, you insisted on having first knock," said Bolsover, in surprise. "What are you grousing about now? Do you want jam with it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not bat first. He didn't bat at all, as a matter of fact. Instead, he posted himself at the far end of the major's garden wall, well out of range of the batsmen.

The juniors played hard for an hour, undisturbed save for the occasional criticism of Adolphus, the parrot. Only on one occasion was a ball smitten into the

sacred precincts of the major; and Frank Nugent succeeded in retrieving it without observation from the major's study window.

"Where's Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry suddenly.

The juniors had been so absorbed in their game that they had forgotten the existence of the Remove's prize porpoise. When last seen he had been standing at the far end of the major's garden wall. Now he was invisible.

"The craze for cricket has worn off," said Wharton. "He's gone along to the tackshop I expect."

"Oh, bless Bunter!" growled Johnny Bull. "Your turn to bat, Inky!"

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter, after a great deal of puffing and panting, had succeeded in hoisting himself up on to the garden wall, and he had dropped down on the other side. The major's cherry-tree was situated close at hand; and Billy Bunter, whose sudden interest in cricket was merely a cloak to cover his base designs, had determined to have the feed of his life.

Unlike many of the cherry-trees in that part of the country, the major's tree gave forth fruit abundantly. The cherries themselves happened to be a trifle sour; but that little detail didn't worry Bunter. He tucked in with great relish.

From the other side of the wall came the occasional shouts of the Removites. They were deeply engrossed in their game. Billy Bunter chuckled, and the red smears round his lips grew more and more conspicuous.

"My hat! This is prime!" murmured the fat junior. "Jolly lucky I happened to hear Toddy say there was a cherry-tree in the major's garden. I wouldn't have missed this for worlds! Won't young Sammy be wild when I tell him!"

Billy Bunter had already eaten sufficient cherries to provide dessert for a dozen ordinary people. Had he known where to draw the line all might have been well; but he lingered on in the major's garden, selecting the biggest and ripest cherries, and making short work of them.

Whilst he was still busily engaged a shadow was thrown suddenly across the grass, and the feaster looked up with a start. He nearly fell down when he caught sight of the major.

"Pon my soul!" roared the irate warrior. "This fairly caps all the impudence I've had to put up with during the last few days! You—you cheeky young glutton! So you spend your afternoons holding disgustin' orgies in my garden—what? I'll teach you!"

Out of the corners of his startled eyes Billy Bunter saw that the major was about to pounce upon him with the spring of a tiger. The obvious thing for Bunter to do was to bolt—to put as much distance between the major and himself as possible; but he was not in condition for strenuous exercise just then. The cherries were already beginning to take their toll.

A happy inspiration came to Bunter. He would save himself yet! The French windows of the major's drawing-room were open; and from the room itself Bunter caused an indignant voice to proceed.

"Major Thresher! You forget yourself, sir! What do you mean by bullying that boy? You are a tyrant, sir—a cross-grained old tyrant!"

The major spun round, petrified. What impertinent intruder dared to address him in this manner? It was amazing—positively unheard-of!

With an inarticulate cry the major darted towards the house. Billy Bunter darted, too—in the direction of the greenhouse. The wall was easier to climb at that part, and Billy Bunter

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meant to be on the safe side of it before the major discovered the hoax.

Partly owing to his short-sightedness, and partly to the fact that dusk was beginning to set in, Billy Bunter failed to observe the parrot's cage suspended outside the greenhouse. He cannoned into it in his retreat, and the cage clattered to the ground.

Bunter passed on, unheeding. A moment later he had reached the wall—and safety. He did not stop to look back, but walked swiftly across the now deserted cricket-ground, congratulating himself that he had successfully outwitted the major.

Meanwhile, the cage having become unfastened in its descent, Adolphus, the parrot, hopped cheerfully out, and, like Bunter, made good his escape.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"WHAT'S the matter with Bunter?"

Everyone was asking that question at the Remove breakfast-table next morning.

As a rule, Billy Bunter consumed more food at one sitting than any three of his schoolfellows put together. The lean times were past, and the fare served up in Hall was varied and plentiful.

On this particular morning, however, Billy Bunter sat blinking biliously at an untouched plate. He had scoffed so many of the major's cherries overnight—and the majority of them had been unripe—that his sins were now coming home to roost. The very sight of food sickened Bunter. Every time his eye rested on Bolsover major, who sat opposite, attacking a rasher of bacon with a healthy appetite, the Owl of the Remove felt like a seasick passenger making a rough Channel crossing.

The juniors were very solicitous for Bunter. Bob Cherry passed him the jam; Micky Desmond thrust a newly-opened tin of sardines under his nose; and Squiff fairly put the golden helmet on it, so to speak, by asking the fat junior if he would care for a choice piece of fat bacon.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter audibly.

Mr. Quelch, at the head of the table, looked up sharply.

"Why did you make that absurd noise, Bunter?"

"I, sir? I never even opened my mouth, sir."

"You are telling me a falsehood, Bunter. I distinctly heard an articulation from your lips!"

"I—I was asking Field to be good enough to pass me the salt, sir."

"But you have nothing on your plate!" said Mr. Quelch. "Why should you require the salt?"

"To—to put in my tea, sir," stammered Bunter. "I always think salt gives it a flavour."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Why are you eating no breakfast, Bunter? Are you ill?"

"Nunno, sir—that is to say—"

Bunter suddenly realised that here was a splendid chance to dodge morning lessons. "I'm very ill indeed, sir. I—I believe it's a form of wasting disease, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "There must certainly be something the matter with you, Bunter, or you would eat your breakfast. You had better go to the sanatorium afterwards."

"Yes, sir. With pleasure, sir!"

"The gentle art of wangling," murmured Bob Cherry. "Wish I could work the oracle like that. Do I look pale, Harry?"

"You ass!" grinned Wharton. "You're as pink as a lobster!"

"Bunter gets all the luck!" sighed Bob, helping himself to the marmalade.

Morning lessons commenced without the Owl of the Remove. Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes singled out so many juniors for impositions that Bob Cherry became more firmly convinced than ever that Bunter had all the luck. The Form-master seldom allowed a moment's levity, and this morning he seemed to be more exacting than ever.

But relief came at length. The door of the Form-room was thrown open, and Major Thresher stalked in. He wore an expression on his face which suggested that somebody was going to get it very much "in the neck."

"What's the rumpus?" muttered Frank Nugent.

"Somebody's in for it!" whispered Bob Cherry. "I expect it's little us!"

Mr. Quelch was annoyed at the interruption, but he tried not to show it.

"Good-morning, major!" he said. "Has any trouble arisen? You seem—er—a trifle distracted."

"Huh!" The major gave the floor such a resounding bang with his stick that Mr. Quelch jumped. "I have every reason to be distracted, sir! Some of these young villains"—he took in the Remove with a flourish of his stick—"have played upon me a wanton and unpardonable trick, sir! They—they"—the major fairly bubbled over—"they have appropriated my parrot, sir!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. "Can you substantiate your accusation, major?"

"I can!" said the major, fighting to keep himself under control. "For some days past—ever since these boys have indulged in horseplay near my premises—I have been grossly affronted and insulted, begad!"

"You surprise me!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

"My chrysanthemums have been ruined; the roof of my greenhouse is smashed to smithereens; and I have been under heavy fire—cricket-balls raining down incessantly, sir! I have had occasion to reprimand some of these young cubs, and by way of revenge they have taken from me a bird I greatly prized—as rare and intelligent a parrot, sir, as was ever transported to this country!"

The major paused, breathless after his vehement outburst.

Mr. Quelch scarcely knew whether to be angry or amused. The loss of the parrot, so appalling in the major's eyes, was quite a trivial matter to Mr. Quelch's way of thinking. The Form-master had no idea of the extent of the major's affection for Adolphus. He thought his visitor was exaggerating. Certainly he failed to understand that the bird was the apple of the major's eye.

"You say that some of these juniors appropriated your parrot by way of revenge?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes—confound 'em!" growled the major.

"Have you any evidence to offer?"

"The young rascals were playing cricket near my garden yesterday afternoon, and my parrot must have been taken during that time, or at any rate shortly afterwards. I had occasion to give chase to a fat young freak in spectacles who was helping himself to my cherries; but my suspicions do not rest upon him. My cherry-tree is some distance from the greenhouse, where the parrot is kept. No; I feel sure that the boy in question, although a greedy young cormorant, had nothing to do with the kidnapping of Adolphus. It is among the cricketers—the boys who bore me a grudge—that we shall find the culprits."

Mr. Quelch turned to the class.

"Wharton!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?"

"Do you know anything of this affair?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"You were playing cricket near Major Thresher's garden yesterday?"

"I was, sir. There were a dozen of us playing. When we left the ground the parrot was still going strong. We could hear him screeching."

"Very good, Wharton. You may sit down. Does any other boy here, apart from those who were playing cricket, know anything of this matter?"

No one spoke. Mr. Quelch turned rather impatiently to the major.

"I am afraid your suspicions are unjustified," he said. "Wharton is not the sort of boy to tell me a falsehood, and he can vouch for those who were playing with him at the time. I am quite satisfied, Major Thresher, that the individuals who interfered with your parrot are not here."

"And I, sir, am equally satisfied that they are!" barked the major. "You are shielding the young scamps, sir! It is monstrous! It would not surprise me to learn that you were hand-in-glove with the guilty parties!"

"I think," said Mr. Quelch coldly, "you are not quite yourself. The loss of your parrot seems to have affected you strangely. Otherwise I should not permit you to address me in such a manner!"

"Very well!" snapped the major, with a final flourish of his stick. "Since you are determined to defeat the ends of justice, I can expect no help from you. To appeal to the headmaster would, I know, be futile. But, mark my words, I shall leave no stone unturned to find the young miscreants who carried off my parrot; and when they are found, I shall thrash them, sir, with such soundness that they will be unable to resume their seats in class for some days! That is all!"

And the major, glaring first at Mr. Quelch, and then at the grinning Removites, turned on his heel and stamped furiously out of the Form-room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Coker Takes a Hand!

"I DON'T profess to be a superhuman sort of chap," said Coker of the Fifth.

"You don't?" exclaimed Potter and Greene, in astonishment.

"But when it comes to clearing up a bit of a mystery, I'm the man!" Coker went on. "Pass the cake, Potter. Now, this little affair of the major's parrot—"

"Oh, blow the major's parrot!" growled Greene.

"Blow it by all means," said Coker; "but it's got to be found. It's clear as daylight that those Remove fags know nothing about it. Wharton & Co. are cheeky young sweeps, but they don't tell fibs. If they knew where the parrot was, they'd own up like a shot."

"Granted," said Potter. "But what's the idea of taking such a fatherly interest in this parrot, old man? Not going to adopt it when it's found, are you?"

"Don't be a funny ass, George Potter!"

"Certainly not. I know you hate competition!"

Greene chuckled. As for the great Coker, he came within an ace of declaring war on his two study-mates.

"I don't care a tuppenny rap for the parrot," said Coker. "It can go and strangle itself for all I care. It's the mystery of the thing that appeals to me. I've been thinking it over a good deal, and I've decided to take up the case."

"Good old Sherlock Holmes!" said Greene.

"The major isn't a bad sort," Coker went on. "He gets his wool off at times; but then, who wouldn't? It's no joke to have your property trampled on by a horde of fags!"

"Look here," said Potter seriously. "you know what generally happens when you butt into an affair that doesn't concern you? You come a cropper every time. Horace, old man, you're quite all right in your own limited sphere—"

"Very limited!" murmured Greene.

"But when you go beyond that sphere, there's ructions. We feel that it's up to us, in a way, to look after you—"

"To—to look after me!" stammered Coker.

"Yes. You need the brotherly eye, you know. When you start plunging into things that are above your weight you're like the funny man on the film. You see—"

Coker didn't see. He jumped up so suddenly that he nearly wrecked the tea-table.

"Nunno!" said Greene hurriedly. Neither he nor Potter wished to become involved in an undertaking which necessitated trespassing in the major's garden. If the major were to catch them, he would probably misunderstand their motive.

"I promised to go along and see old Blundell about the cricket," said Potter suddenly. "So-long, Horace! Hope you track down the merry culprits."

"Yes, rather! So-long, old chap!" muttered Greene.

Coker's study-mates beat a hasty retreat; and the great Horace, the bright particular star of the Fifth, was left to tackle his little problem alone.

Coker was convinced that he—and he only—could solve the mystery of the missing parrot. He had dabbled in detective work before; and the fact that he had put his foot in it, so to speak, on every occasion, did not daunt him. Coker had considerable faith in his own abilities, and he was glad, in a way, that Potter and Greene had shown no stomach for the undertaking. After all,



The major, grim and imposing, stood glaring down at Coker. "So this is the little game, hey?" he rumbled. "You are a trespasser, sir, and a looter of my cherries!" So saying, the major brought his stick into action! (See Chapter 6.)

"You—you—" he spluttered.

"Pax!" said Potter hastily. "No offence meant, old chap. You can go ahead with the detective stunt if you like."

Coker grunted and sat down.

"I shall certainly go ahead with it," he said firmly. "I mean to recover that parrot, and return it to the major. The old boy's fearfully upset about it. I shall be doing him a real good turn by handing him back his parrot."

"Did you take it, then?" asked Greene innocently.

"You chump! Of course I didn't! But I mean to find out who did. The Remove fags had no hand in it—that's certain. Now, the first thing to do is to examine the scene of the—ahem!—crime."

Potter and Greene stared.

"You—you're going to start messing about in the major's garden?" gasped Potter.

"I hope to be able to discover some footprints," said Coker. "Once I do that, I shall be hot on the trail. You fellows can come along if you like."

he reflected, they would only be a nuisance, and hinder his efforts.

For a long time Coker sat in the arm-chair in his study and gave himself up to profound meditation. Dusk was falling when he eventually put on his cap and sallied forth to the major's garden.

The very amateur detective strode across the new cricket-ground with resolute tread, and, after a moment's hesitation, clambered over the garden wall. He crept on tiptoe towards the greenhouse, not wishing to be interrupted in his investigations.

The cage, which Billy Bunter had knocked over in his flight, had been replaced on the wall of the greenhouse. Coker flashed his electric torch upon it, and saw that it was empty. The whereabouts of Adolphus had not yet been discovered.

Coker went down on his hands and knees, and by the light of the torch he examined the ground close at hand. Footprints were certainly visible in the soil, but they were so numerous and varied that Coker was nonplussed at the

outset. How could he make head or tail of such a confusing maze of tracks?

Whilst he was still grovelling on the ground, with a perplexed frown on his rugged face, Coker became aware of the approach of hurried footsteps. At the same instant a door opened, and a light flashed down the garden path.

Then the major's voice exclaimed:

"Ha! So I've caught you, you young rascals!"

Coker's brain worked slowly. The average fellow would promptly have taken to his heels; but Coker remained where he was. After all, he was working in the major's interests, so why should he feel alarmed?

At that instant three forms sprawled over Coker in the dusk, and a voice—which sounded suspiciously like that of Skinner of the Remove—muttered:

"Quick, you fellows! Drop 'em, and scoot!"

The three forms then sorted themselves out, and dashed away towards the wall. Blinking dazedly through the gloom, Coker saw them scramble up the wall and disappear over the top.

"My hat!" he muttered. "Who—what—"

Then a blinding glare of light descended full upon Coker, putting the feeble rays of his own torch to shame. The major, grim and imposing, stood glaring down upon the bewildered Fifth-Former.

"So this is the little game, hey?" rumbled the major. "You are a trespasser, sir—and a looter of my cherries!"

"Ch-ch-cherries?" stammered Coker. "Yes, cherries! Don't attempt to deny it, sir! The proof lies there!"

And the major pointed with his stick to an overturned basket which lay beside Coker. Scores of cherries had fallen out on to the grass.

Coker stared at the fruit with bulging eyes.

"I—I—What's all this?" he exclaimed wildly.

"You know only too well what it is!" said the major grimly. "There is enough evidence there to convict you in a court of law! I am astonished—dumb-founded, sir, that a great, hulking rascal like you should stoop to such petty pilfering! You are, I should imagine, one of the biggest boys in your school, and yet you have the cheek to raid my garden like an irresponsible village urchin, and to hold a disgusting orgy with my fruit!"

"I wasn't—I didn't!" gasped Coker.

"I came along here to—to—"

"To make a beast of yourself!" snarled the major. "You ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself, sir! I should report this occurrence to your headmaster, but that I fear he would take too lenient a view of the matter. As it is, I shall punish you myself!"

So saying, the major brought his stick into action.

Coker could not have been in a happier posture to receive castigation, from the major's point of view.

Whack, whack, whack!

The major raised the dust, and Coker writhed and yelled.

"Yaroooooh! Give over! I—I didn't touch your mouldy fruit! Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The major was going strong. Memories of what he had had to suffer since the new cricket-ground started lent zest to his blows.

Skinner and Snoop and Stott—the three guilty parties—were safe and sound inside the building; and Coker was taking sufficient punishment for all three.

"There, sir!" panted the major, getting in a final blow. "Let that be a

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lesson to you to give my premises a wide berth in future. Now, clear out!"

Coker was only too glad to drag his limp form out of the danger-zone. Groaning and gasping, he made his way to the garden wall, which he scaled with some difficulty; then he slowly and painfully crossed the deserted cricket-ground, feeling that life—as an amateur detective, anyway—was not worth living.

Later in the evening Potter and Greene chuckled at the thought of what they had escaped. But they were careful not to chuckle in Coker's presence. Coker was not a safe person to come to close quarters with just then.

The great Horace wound up a memorable evening by consigning the major, and the major's parrot, to utter and complete destruction.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Taking Precautions!

"A NY news of Adolphus, John?"

The major put that question to his butler on the morning after Coker's misadventure.

There was no doubt that the major felt the loss of his parrot acutely. It worried him by day; it robbed him of sleep at night. His devotion to the bird was extraordinary. He had spent many hours in its company when he might have been going ahead with his "History of Famous Bombardments."

And now, the bird had flown!

The major hoped against hope that

whoever had taken it would return it; but as time went on, and there was no sign of Adolphus, he was beginning to grow very restless.

He had instructed his butler to keep his eyes open, and to do his utmost to ascertain the whereabouts of Adolphus. He had even placed an advertisement in the local paper, offering a tempting reward for information which would lead to the recovery of the parrot.

"I'm afraid it's a 'opeless case, sir," said the butler. "Somebody's walked off with that there bird; an', wot's more, they don't intend to bring it back. I should give it up, sir, if I was you."

"Give it up!" snarled the major. "Have you ever known me, in an affair of this sort, to give up? I shall continue my investigations until I get satisfaction, even if it costs me a small fortune!"

"You're worritin' too much about it, sir. You're goin' off your feed, an' sech like. It ain't right that a man should fret so much, all along of a bird."

"That parrot, John, was worth its weight in gold, and I mean to get it back. Report to me at once if you hear anything."

"Werry good, sir."

"One other point, John. I am entertaining a large number of guests at a garden-party to-morrow afternoon. Several distinguished ladies and gentlemen will be present, including the Mayor of Minchington, and I have engaged a special orchestra from Courtfield."

"My heye!" said John.

"I want the affair to be a bumper success," the major went on. "You will confer with the cook, John, and see that my guests get everything of the best."

"Certingly, sir."

The butler was about to withdraw, when he suddenly seemed to remember something.

"Excuse me, sir, but I thought I'd jest mention to you that them young rips at the school are playin' a cricket-match 'ere to-morrow afternoon."

"The dickens they are!" snapped the major. "That's most annoying! Their confounded cricket-match will clash with my garden-party, and I know what that means. Cricket-balls will be raining down upon my guests all the afternoon! It will frighten the ladies out of their wits! Great Scott! This is more than flesh and blood can stand! I'll go and see the headmaster at once!"

The major put on his hat, and hurried away in the direction of the school.

He was genuinely alarmed for the safety for his guests. No garden-party could be successfully conducted under heavy fire.

"Good-morning, major!" said Dr. Locke, when his visitor strode in. "Have you any complaints to make regarding any of my boys?"

"I have recognised long ago the futility of making complaints to you, sir!" said the major bitterly. "From what I know of your methods, you set too much store by the quality of mercy. You spare the rod. Now, when I was at school—"

"Please come to the point, Major Thresher," interposed the Head. "I have no time to waste. I am due to take the Sixth Form at Latin."

The major plunged into his topic.

"I am holding a garden-party to-morrow afternoon," he said, "and I understand that a cricket-match is to be played in the adjoining field. It is too much to expect you to order the match to be cancelled. At the same time, I insist that steps are taken to prevent cricket-balls coming over into my garden. My guests—among whom the



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His dignity thrown to the winds, the major sprang to his feet and cheered wildly. "Hurrah!" "Jolly well hit, sir!"
(See Chapter 11.)

Mayor of Minchington will be a conspicuous figure—must not be inconvenienced."

"I promise you that every precaution shall be taken," said the Head. "I will give instructions that the wicket must be so pitched as to render it improbable that any ball will find its way into your garden. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Yes," growled the major. "The wicket must be as far away from my garden wall as possible—at the extreme end of the field, begad!"

"We must be fair to both boundaries," the Head said. "That will mean having the pitch in the middle of the field. It is extremely unlikely that any boy—particularly a junior boy—could hit a ball over your wall from there. You may set your mind at rest, major."

The major snorted, and retired.

Later in the day he saw from his study window that the headmaster of Greyfriars was keeping his promise. The wicket was being pitched in the centre of the field, and it would require, apparently, the hitting capacity of a Jessop to flog a ball over into the major's garden. So the Head thought, anyway. Harry Wharton & Co.—to whom the situation had been explained by Dr. Locke—thought quite differently. The Remove had one or two big hitters, and when they started punishing loose balls there was no knowing what might happen. The worshipful head of the Mayor of Minchington—and, indeed, the heads of all the honoured guests at the garden-party—would be exposed to danger.

"They think it's impossible for a fellow to lift a ball into the major's garden from there," said Bob Cherry. "Well, we'll see."

"There's going to be great sport to-morrow," said Johnny Bull. "I shall bribe the Caterpillar to send me down a full-toss, and we'll see what happens."

"The major will feel what happens if he gets the ball on his boko!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he certainly deserves to be made to sit up," said Harry Wharton, "after accusing us of carrying off his precious parrot."

"If we wipe up Highcliffe, and the major's garden-party as well," said Bob Cherry, "it'll be a good day's sport. I feel rather sorry for the guests; but we can't afford to be sentimental. Highcliffe has got to be licked."

"The lickfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "Likewise, the wrath of the ludicrous major, when the cricket-balls arrivefully turn up on his esteemed tea-tables!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five walked away, chuckling. The major watched them from his study window with an expression of triumph on his face. He had prevented the young rascals from doing damage on the morrow, he reflected. His chrysanthemums, his greenhouse, and his guests would be safe.

But the young rascals themselves thought otherwise.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Trouble for Three!

NEXT morning the major was early astir.

For the time being the loss of his parrot had ceased to trouble him. His mind was full of the forthcoming garden-party, and he was very anxious to make an impression, and to please his guests. The Mayor of Minchington was travelling from a great distance; and it was up to the major to entertain him well.

"John," he said, encountering the butler in the hall, "I want you to help me erect a bandstand. Come along!"

And John was whisked away into the garden before he could breathe a protest.

Although nominally the major's butler, all sorts of menial duties fell to his portion. He was boots, gardener, assistant-cook, and man-of-all-work.

"It need only be a simple structure," said the major reflectively. "The simpler the better, begad! The band should be given an elevated position, if possible."

"Which they're only a pack of second-rate musicians from Courtfield!" growled John.

"Be silent, sir! It is not for you to criticise any guests of mine!"

John subsided, with a grunt.

"You see this platform?" said the major, indicating with his stick an ancient and mildewed contrivance. "That will serve as a base for the band."

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stand. Now, we want to erect three sides to it. There are plenty of boards available, and it only means hammering nails into 'em. I'll hold 'em in position, while you do the rest."

As a small boy, John had delighted in hammering nails. As a middle-aged and portly man he loathed it. But the major's word was law; and he reluctantly got on with the job.

He had been banging hard for a few moments, and the major watching him with a critical eye, when something small and hard smote him with great violence under the chin.

"Ow!"

"What's the matter with you, man?" roared the major.

"Yow! I've bin stung by a wops, as ever was!"

"Nonsense! It's too early in the year for those pests! Get on with your job, and stop giving imitations of an expiring pig!"

John turned again to his task. He raised the hammer to strike, and as he was about to bring it down forcibly upon the nail another hard, round object came with stinging force against his left ear.

John gave a roar of anguish. His blow was diverted, and the hammer struck the major on the elbow. The major roared, too; and it seemed for all the world as if a couple of lions were holding a duel.

"You—you clumsy maniac!" spluttered the major, nursing his injured elbow. "How dare you assault me in that fashion!"

"I couldn't 'elp it!" growled John. "It was that there wops agen! I—I'll slaughter the dratted thing!"

"You're talking like a confounded lunatic!" snapped the major. "Didn't I tell you it wasn't the season for wasps? I never heard such a lot of—"

"Hellup!" roared John, clapping his nasal organ. "It's gorn an' stung me agen!"

"You're mad," said the major—"hopelessly and utterly mad! I won't have such carryings-on! Take a month's notice!"

"That's the third month's notice I've had this week!" growled John.

"Silence!"

"I may be mad," went on John, unheeding, "but I know somebody who's a jolly sight wuss! Present comp'ny not excepted!"

The major fairly exploded.

"You impertinent scoundrel! For two pins I'd knock you down! In all my years of service I—"

The major paused. He happened to catch sight of a small object which lay at his feet. He picked it up, and examination revealed it to be a pea.

Then it dawned upon the major that an unknown sniper—possibly two or three—had been at work with peashooters.

The major said nothing further, but he cocked his eye thoughtfully in the direction of the shrubbery near by.

"Wot's the little game?" growled John.

"Hold your tongue!" snapped the major.

Watching intently, he detected a slight movement among the leaves.

So he was correct in his surmise! Snipers were concealed in the shrubbery.

"The cheek of it!" muttered the major. "Now, if I can only collar 'em, begad—"

"Wot are you mumblin' about?" said John. "Sounds to me as if you've got bats in your belfry!"

The major made no reply. Instead, he darted suddenly into the shrubbery.

Cries of alarm became audible.

"Run for it!" panted Harold Skinner, who was sniper-in-chief.

Snoop and Stott hastened to obey. The

trio rushed blindly towards the garden wall; but before they could scale it the major was upon them.

John, whose slow wits had at last tumbled to the situation, joined his master, and the pair of them succeeded in hauling Skinner & Co. down from the wall.

"Now," said the major sternly, "what have you got to say for yourselves?"

Skinner and his two precious companions looked glum. They had trespassed in the major's garden only a short time since; and Coker of the Fifth had paid the price of their offences. They were lucky to have got clear away on that occasion; but Nemesis was levelling things up.

"We—we weren't doing any harm, sir—" stammered Skinner.

"You were potting at my butler with a peashooter!" said the major. "I verily believe you'd have had the impudence to pot at me as well! You are out of bounds; and you are guilty of using peashooters with intent to do grievous bodily harm! If that doesn't provide sufficient grounds for prosecution, I should like to know what does!"

"'Ear, 'ear!" said John. "One on me nose, one under me chin, an' one on me left ear, broadside on! The owdacious young rips—"

"It—it was only a lark!" faltered Sidney James Snoop, trembling at the knees as he thought of the possible consequences.

"Such larks," said the major grimly, "are not to be encouraged! However, I'll make you a sporting offer!"

Skinner & Co. pricked up their ears. "Either I report you to your head-master, and see that you get duly flogged, or you stay here until morning lessons begin and help us erect this bandstand. You can take your choice."

Skinner jumped at what he considered the lesser of two evils.

"We'll stay, sir!" he said promptly. "You'll find us very industrious workmen, sir!"

"We'll pile in like niggers!" said Stott.

"Very well! Get some more hammers, John, and we'll set the young rascals to work!"

John grinned, and obeyed.

"You see these boards?" said the major, addressing the trio. "I want 'em nailed up on three sides of the platform. Rather a crude sort of bandstand, I'm afraid, but it can't be helped. Carry on! And every time you show signs of slacking, I'll warm you up with my stick!"

Neither Skinner nor his companions had an extensive knowledge of carpentry; and manual labour was at all times distasteful to them. But they were fairly up against it now.

The nails were driven home one by one, and the major, mounting guard over his prisoners, gave them no respite. Skinner said afterwards that it was worse than working a treadmill.

"Fire away!" said the major gruffly. "You'll find me a hard taskmaster. I mean to see this bandstand completed before you go in to lessons!"

The major kept his word. Skinner asked for a breather, and the major readily gave him one—in the form of a stinging cut across the legs. Skinner asked for no more breathers.

At last the task was completed. The major sent for some green paint, and embellished the word "Bandstand" upon the outside of the woodwork. Had he not done this no one could possibly have known what the curious structure was intended to be.

"To my mind," said John, with a doubtful glance at the bandstand, "this 'ere will collapse as soon as ever anybody

sets 'foot on it. It looks sort of top-heavy. Still, as I said before, they're only second-rate moosicians from Court-field, an' serve 'em jolly well right if they all goes down with a bump!"

"If you say another word, sir, you shall be given a month's notice!" barked the major.

"I'm used to that. You've bin givin' me a month's notice reg'lar for the last twenty years!"

The major scowled, and turned to the three Removites, who were almost in a state of collapse.

"You can cut off now," he said, "and don't let me catch you ever trespassing in my garden again!"

Skinner & Co. crawled limply away, feeling far from satisfied with their early-morning adventure. The major's words had taken root, and the trio, after their unhappy experiences in the construction of the bandstand, were determined to give the major's garden a very wide berth in future!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Match with Highcliffe!

"WELCOME, little strangers!" Bob Cherry addressed that cheery greeting to the Highcliffe juniors as they descended from their brake.

Very fit and capable Frank Courtenay & Co. looked in their flannels. They, too, had been putting in plenty of practice. The Greyfriars Remove would need to go all out to beat them.

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends!" said the elegant Caterpillar. "I wasn't down to play at first, but Franky insisted. Very nerve-rackin' business, cricket! Thank goodness, it's only a single innings match!"

"He pretends to be bored stiff!" laughed Frank Courtenay. "But when the time comes he'll be as keen as anybody."

Courtenay was right. Behind the Caterpillar's mask of indifference was the desire to do his best for his side. He only played cricket under pressure; but when he did rouse himself to play he was a foeman worthy of his steel.

"We've got a new ground," explained Harry Wharton, as the rival teams passed through the Close. "It's a bit bumpy in places, but that can't be helped."

"By the way," said Bob Wilkinson, of Highcliffe, "are you expecting any of the nobility and gentry to turn up—from outside the school, I mean?"

"No," said Wharton, in surprise. "What made you think so?"

"We passed a funny collection of freaks on the road. There was a very stout, important-looking cove, and a party of old jossers—"

"To say nothin' of the beauty chorus!" chuckled the Caterpillar. "Ancient ladies of the maiden-aunt variety, you know."

"They're the major's honoured guests, I should say," said Frank Nugent. "There's a garden-party at Major Thresher's place this afternoon. We're thinking of adding to the entertainment by slogging a few balls over the garden wall."

"You won't have the chance to take those sort of liberties with our bowling!" said Frank Courtenay warmly.

"Rats! Peter Todd's good for a century at least. Look at his determined frown!"

Peter gave a grunt.

"I was scowling at the condition of my bags!" he growled. "Bunter borrowed 'em the other day. They're stained with cherry-juice."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When the cricketers arrived at the ground a fair sprinkling of spectators were already on the scene. It was well known at Greyfriars that the major was holding a garden-party on the other side of the wall, and the fellows were expecting something exciting to happen.

Even the great Coker had condescended to come and watch a junior match. Coker had little love for the Remove, but he had considerably less for the major, in view of recent events, and he wanted to see that gentleman taken down several pegs.

"Play up, kids!" he said, as the players passed him. "Remember, it's six every time you get one over the wall, Cherry."

"Thanks for the tip," said Bob. "And if I can land one on your napper I shall ask the scorer to make it a round dozen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared, and the cricketers passed on to the marquee which had been erected to serve as a pavilion. A few moments later the Remove team followed the umpires on to the field. Highcliffe had won the toss, and were taking first knock.

The game was opened quietly. Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar started the innings, and there was too much at stake for them to take risks. Most of Hurree Singh's swift deliveries were stopped dead, and Vernon-Smith, at the other end, also bowled with such accurate length that runs were not easy to get.

The game had settled into a steady groove when suddenly an unearthly noise came from the major's side of the wall. The orchestra from Courtfield had started operations. The music, such as it was, might have pleased the major's guests, but it certainly failed to please the cricketers.

The Caterpillar mopped his brow with a silk handkerchief.

"What a row!" he groaned. "Can't somebody drown it? It's most annoyin' and exasperatin', begad! I'm sure it'll put me off my stroke!"

Whether the band adversely affected the Caterpillar's play or not, his wicket had fallen before the first selection had been played.

Hurree Singh sent down what appeared to be a medium-paced ball, but it swerved in sharply, and uprooted De Courcy's middle-stump.

"I can't play cricket to ragtime!" growled the Caterpillar, as he lounged back to the marquee.

"You've made a dozen, anyway!" said Bob Wilkinson. "That's more than some of us will do."

In spite of the band, however, the batting improved. Frank Courtenay began to open his shoulders, and Smithson, who had joined him, played sound cricket. Fifty had been registered before these two were separated.

Then came the brothers Wilkinson; and each of them in turn helped Frank Courtenay to take the score to 90.

Highcliffe were certainly doing well, and the Friars began to feel very anxious. They had hoped to dismiss the whole side for much less than had been scored already.

Hurree Singh and Vernon-Smith were given a rest; and when they resumed operations they bowled with such good effect that the Highcliffe tail gave no trouble. The visitors closed their innings with 120—a performance well above the average.

Frank Courtenay was cheered as he came off. He had carried his bat for 60.

"Well played, Franky!" said the Caterpillar. "You've deserved well of your country, begad! Wish I could have

stayed in with you a bit longer, but the sound of that band—"

The Caterpillar shuddered.

Tea was served on tables outside the marquee, and the juniors ate their buns and bread-and-butter to the accompaniment of terrible wailing sounds from the Courtfield musicians.

"I'm not a chap to bear malice," said Bob Cherry, "but if I had a bomb handy I'd shy it over that wall!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We haven't any bombs, worse luck," said Peter Todd; "but we'll see what a cricket-ball can do. That band wants squashing badly."

The major's garden-party had, so far, been undisturbed. Everything had gone without a hitch. The major himself had peeped over into the field once or twice, and he was satisfied that the wicket was too far away for any damage to be done. He felt assured that no errant cricket-balls would descend upon the devoted head of the Mayor of Minchington, and his guests would continue to enjoy themselves in perfect safety.

**MAGNIFICENT
NEW
Long, Complete Stories
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**will shortly appear in
THE
PENNY
POPULAR!**

(See the momentous announcement on page 15.)

Had he known that the Remove had a goodly number of runs to get, that they had only a limited time in which to get them, and that Bob Cherry—and possibly one or two others—would indulge in big hitting, the major's sense of security would have diminished very considerably.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Making Things Hum!

GREYFRIARS, with an uphill task before them, started badly.

It was more a question of ill-luck than anything else. Harry Wharton was given out l.b.w. when he had scored only five, and Frank Nugent was in little better case. He was bowled off his pads for two.

"The procession begins!" said Bob Cherry dolefully. "Try and stop the rot, Smithy, for goodness' sake! I can't stand that beastly grin on Coker's chivvy!"

Vernon-Smith, determined not to add to the list of failures, mended a very poor situation by hitting his first ball as

far as the garden wall. With a little more force behind the stroke the ball would certainly have gone over the top, and caused havoc amongst the major's guests.

"Good old Smithy!"

"Over the top next time, old sport!"

Vernon-Smith laughed, and continued to bat well. His strokes were tempered with sound judgment, and not once did he leap out of his ground in the hope of lifting the ball clean over the wall. That sort of thing could more safely be left to Bob Cherry, who revelled in big hits.

The score was putting on flesh now. Mark Linley was Vernon-Smith's partner, and the lad from Lancashire was doing much more than merely keeping his end up.

With forty runs registered on the telegraph-board the hopes of the spectators revived. All the same, they cast wistful glances towards the major's garden. Surely somebody would soon succeed in drowning the strains of the unspeakable orchestra?

In the major's garden all was merry and bright. Serene enjoyment was written on every face save that of John, who was finding the guests a big handful.

The members of the orchestra, too, seemed rather uneasy. They were wishing that the major's bandstand were a little more solid and reliable.

Tea was being served, and under its genial influence the sour old spinsters smiled, and the Mayor of Minchington became eloquent—a thing he rarely did in his native town.

"Really, my dear major," he said, "it makes one feel young again to survey this—er—tranquil scene. It revives memories of picnics, of—ahem!—Sunday-school treats, when we nibbled buns and quaffed ginger-beer with youthful zest! There is only one drawback to your most excellent programme, that I can see."

"And that, sir?"

"Is the orchestra!" The Mayor of Minchington frowned a little. "Really, their noise is most distracting! Is it possible that they bear you a personal grudge?"

The major was about to reply when a sharp cry went up from the other side of the wall:

"Heads!"

The ladies fell into a flutter, and the Mayor of Minchington—whose house had been damaged by a bomb from a Zeppelin—nervously scanned the heavens.

"What the dickens!" muttered the major.

Crash!

A cricket-ball landed with sickening force in the middle of one of the tables. Fragments of crockery flew in all directions, ladies screamed, and old gentlemen gave fierce grunts of disapproval.

"Upon my soul," exclaimed the major, "this is too bad! I distinctly gave orders that no outrage of this sort would be permitted. Those young rascals have set me at defiance! I must apologise to everyone present—"

"Would you mind sending back our ball, sir?" came in a polite chorus from the other side of the wall.

The major's face grew mottled.

"I will not!" he stormed. "Your headmaster shall be acquainted with this outrage, and you shall be made to pay for the damage, which is considerable!"

"Why not move your tables farther back, out of the line of fire, sir?" suggested somebody.

"I refuse to do anything of the sort! I should not dream of altering my arrangements to suit the convenience of a gang of young hoodligans!"

"Bow-wow!"

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The major turned a crimson face towards his guests.

"I repeat, I am very sorry for what has occurred," he said. "Doubtless, if I confiscate their ball, the young scamps will leave us alone henceforth."

"If you think there is likely to be a repetition of the occurrence, Major Thresher," said an elderly lady, "I shall go home. I shall refuse to risk life and limb by remaining here!"

"Pray do not distress yourself, madam," muttered the major. "I am confident there will be no recurrence of the incident."

But the major's guests looked and felt far from confident. Panic had spread through the gathering like a fire through gorse. The members of the orchestra, swaying uncertainly on the improvised bandstand, were particularly ill at ease. It was bad enough to have to perform on such a frail structure without running the risk of stray cricket-balls arriving from the other side of the wall.

The major continued to pour oil on the troubled waters. The broken crockery was cleared away, and the orchestra struck up afresh.

"Now we shall be left in peace," said the major.

But he was an optimist. Scarcely had the orchestra got into its stride again when from the other side of the wall came a cry of:

"Heads!"

The warning was becoming familiar. The major's guests hastily stepped backwards. The members of the orchestra did the same, and the bandstand toppled dangerously.

Crash!

The ball landed fairly upon the bandstand, missing the conductor by inches. The startled players swayed backwards still more, with the result that the stand completely collapsed, carrying its human freight with it in its descent.

"G-g-good heavens!" stuttered the major. "This is monstrous! The limit and the last straw rolled into one, begad! Those impudent young rascals shall be made to pay the penalty! 'Pon my soul—"

"Our ball, sir!" came a request from the other side.

"Hope there are no casualties, sir!"

The major glanced towards the wreckage, from which a dozen bruised and dishevelled musicians were slowly and dazedly emerging.

"You destructive young pests!" roared the major. "Clear off! Clear off at once! Do you wish to be held guilty of manslaughter?"

The conductor of the orchestra, his clothes torn, his dignity in rags, stamped up to the major.

"On behalf of my orchestra," he said, "I wish to tell you that you're a fool, sir!"

"What?"

"A fool and a boot-faced idiot, sir, to allow those kids to wreck the show like this! It was your fault from the beginning. How could you possibly expect us to do ourselves justice in that—that beastly rabbit-hutch?"

And the conductor pointed furiously to the wrecked bandstand.

"I will not be insulted in this way!" fumed the major.

"I like that! We're the injured parties, not you. Give me the fees for the orchestra, and we'll quit."

"My dear fellow—" began the major, in alarm.

The departure of the orchestra would knock the bottom out of the whole concern. So the major thought, anyway.

"We don't intend to stay here a

moment longer!" said the conductor firmly.

"Then go, and jolly good riddance!" growled the major, realising that further entreaty would be futile.

He handed over the amount demanded, and the conductor rounded up his ruffled and indignant colleagues and departed.

"I shall go, too!" said the elderly spinster who had already complained. "I am not a timid woman, but I shrink from such scenes of destruction. They are repellent to me, sir!"

The major could only groan. Never had his feelings towards the Greyfriars juniors been so bitter as now.

The garden-party seemed to be fizzling out. Many of the guests had departed from the danger zone; others were wondering, with mixed feelings, what was going to happen next.

"I'll go and see the headmaster!" spluttered the major. "This is a pre-arranged plot to spoil the success of my garden-party! I—I am undone! What with the loss of my parrot, and—"

"Cheer up!" said the Mayor of Minchington. "The garden-party has been far from a failure. The orchestra has packed up, anyway. That's something to be grateful to the cricketers for. Don't reproach yourself, major. You have done your best."

The major felt slightly mollified.

"In my young days," continued the Mayor of Minchington, "I took an active interest in cricket. I was never happy unless I was handling a bat. Let's invite ourselves to the match, and see this mighty hitter."

"Sir!" gasped the major.

He was not quite sure whether he had heard aright.

"I am in earnest," said the Mayor of Minchington. "The ladies can amuse themselves in your grounds whilst we watch the cricket for an hour. I feel sure they will have no objection when I explain the situation to them."

The mayor did so, and then drew his arm through that of the major, and they made a detour towards the cricket-ground. Some of the male guests followed.

The major was too astonished to protest. Like one in a dream he accompanied the Mayor of Minchington to a seat in front of the marquee. A group of juniors respectfully made way for the new-comers.

"Who is the boy responsible for those big hits?" inquired the Mayor of Minchington.

"Shure, an' it's Bob Cherry!" said Micky Desmond proudly. "If only he can keep it up Highcliffe will be licked entirely!"

"He's trying to pull the game out of the fire—what?"

Micky Desmond nodded.

"In that case," murmured the mayor, his own boyhood days returning vividly to his memory. "I must say I wish him the best of luck!"

"Well, I—I'm beat!" gasped the major, collapsing into his seat.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Surprising!

BOB CHERRY had gone in to bat at a critical time. Five good men were out, and the Remove were still a matter of fifty runs behind Highcliffe's total.

Some of the fellows had grumbled at Wharton for not sending Bob Cherry in first; but they now had to admit that there was method in his madness.

Bob had taken about ten minutes to get the measure of the bowling; then he had opened his shoulders, and two of his

mighty hits had been responsible for all the damage and consternation on the other side of the wall.

The Highcliffe feeling was very keen, and although Bob Cherry continued to hit with vigour, he could get no one to stay with him. Peter Todd, Johnny Bull, and Squiff formed part of a gloomy procession back to the marquee. Unless somebody could stay in at the death, so to speak, with Bob, it looked as though all his good work would be wasted.

The Mayor of Minchington watched the changing fortunes of the game with keen interest, joining in the applause which followed each of Bob Cherry's big hits.

The major, on the other hand, sat biting a cigar, and glaring savagely at the cricketers in general, and Bob Cherry in particular. He had only come to the cricket-match under great pressure, and he fervently wished that he had remained in his garden, and turned a deaf ear to the persuasions of the Mayor of Minchington.

As the game advanced, however, the hostile look faded from the major's face, and he began to take more than a passing interest in the proceedings. The excitement and enthusiasm of the spectators were infectious. Gradually the major became caught in their grip, and he stirred excitedly in his seat.

The loss of his parrot, the feud with the Greyfriars juniors, and, finally, the wrecking of his garden-party, were, for the time being, forgotten. The major was a sportsman at heart, and the closing stages of the tussle between Greyfriars and Highcliffe began to fascinate him strangely. When the hundred was hoisted, bringing the Remove's score to within twenty of the Highcliffe's total, the major was cheering as loudly as anyone.

The juniors seated near the major were astonished. They had imagined him to be a hard-headed old tyrant, incapable of displaying any emotion. Least of all did they suppose that he would show his emotion by cheering the Greyfriars Remove on to victory!

"What fathead was it who said the age of miracles was past?" murmured Bolsover major. "The old boy's fairly yelping with joy!"

"Faith, an' he'll be flinging his bat in the air in a minute!" chuckled Micky Desmond.

In spite of all the enthusiasm on behalf of the Remove, Highcliffe still held all the cards. The ninth wicket fell before the hundred had been added to.

Last man in!

Bulstrode was the last. He emerged from the marquee with his bat under his arm, feeling far from confident. Why couldn't Wharton have sent him in earlier? he reflected. How could any fellow do himself justice when his nerves were on edge?

Bulstrode had to face the Caterpillar. That youth stood waiting for him with a cheerful grin.

The major, as he watched the Caterpillar start his run, felt as if he could eat him. The Highcliffe junior bowled what seemed to be a very simple ball; but it generally tied the batsman up into knots at the finish.

The major groaned audibly as Bulstrode spooned the very first ball feebly into the air.

Smithson, at point, dashed up quickly, but he was just too late to bring off a catch. The major, and the majority of the spectators, breathed freely again.

"Keep a straight bat, old man!" sang out Bob Cherry, from the other end of the pitch.

Bulstrode felt his confidence returning to him. He stopped the remaining balls

of the over dead; and then Bob Cherry came into the picture again.

"Play up, Bob!" chorused the spectators.

"Yes, play up, begad!" roared the major, now as excited as anybody on the ground.

Bob Cherry continued to hit freely, and, by scoring a single at the end of the over, he contrived to keep the bowling.

The Highcliffe fellows worked like niggers in the field; but Bob Cherry gave no chances, and at length the Remove required only six runs to win.

Only six! But the time for drawing stumps had almost arrived.

When six o'clock chimed from the old tower the match would be over.

Bob Cherry realised this as he took his stand against the Caterpillar. Those six runs had to be obtained almost instantaneously. There was no time to get them in dribs and drabs.

The Caterpillar's first ball was too good to take liberties with, and Bob Cherry reluctantly tapped it back to the bowler. The second ball, however, was just what Bob wanted, and he made the most of it. His bat met the leather fair and square, and away it went—away and away—over the wall into the major's chrysanthemums—for six!

And no one was more delighted than the major himself! His dignity thrown to the winds, he sprang to his feet and cheered wildly.

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly well hit, sir!"

Bob Cherry was borne off the field amid great rejoicing. The Highcliffe fellows, who had the satisfaction of having given the Remove a good run for their money, joined in the general applause. Bob had made seventy, not out.

When he was set on his feet, panting and breathless, beside the marquee, the major pushed his way forward and slapped him warmly on the back.

"A capital display, by George!" he exclaimed. "Capital! Even I, when I was at the height of my batting fame, could not have equalled such a performance!"

"Nor I," murmured the Mayor of Minchington. "You were great, my boy—great!"

With these and other compliments ringing in his ears, Bob Cherry staggered into the marquee.

"Hold me up, somebody!" he gasped. "I feel quite faint. The major—the grizzled old lion-tamer—actually thumped me on the back and called me nice names! I—I must be dreaming!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It fairly beats the band!" said Bob. "I put the kybosh on his garden-party, and, instead of biffing me, he bubbles over with congratulation!"

"We've rather misjudged the old boy," said Harry Wharton quietly. "The major's a cut above Sir Hilton Popper—he's a jolly good sportsman!"

To which the Removites responded gallantly:

"Hear, hear!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The End of the Feud!

STUDY No. 1 was the scene of a royal repast that evening, in celebration of the Remove's victory.

When the feed was over, and the Famous Five were alone in the study, Frank Nugent had a suggestion to make.

"The major's collared about a dozen of our cricket-balls," he said, "and we've got to get 'em back. It's a delicate job, I know; but it's got to be faced. The club funds won't run to the purchase

of a dozen new balls. I vote we go and put it nicely to the old boy."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"It's a risky game, bearding the lion in his den," he said. "I can picture the butler slinging us down the steps one at a time."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "We couldn't approach the old bird at a better time. He's as gentle as a cooing-dove now. To-morrow he may be in the tantrums again. Therefore, I'm in favour of going along to see him right now."

"Now that he is in the pleasantful humour," said Hurree Singh, "he will returnfully hand us back our esteemed property."

This being the general view, the Famous Five donned their caps and set out for the major's house. They were not supposed to be abroad at that hour, but no prefects were on the prowl, and they were comparatively safe.

The cricket-ground lay still and silent under the early stars. The Famous Five trekked noiselessly across it. They did not scale the garden wall, but let themselves in at the gate some distance farther down.

They were approaching the house, wondering what sort of a reception they would get, when a familiar voice hailed them through the gloom.

"Haw! Cheeky young cubs! Cricket

in my field—downright disgraceful, begad!"

"My hat!" said Johnny Bull, stopping short. "It's the major's parrot!"

"Move to the right in fours!" said Adolphus shrilly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's come back to the fold," said Harry Wharton. "The major will be awfully bucked to see him again."

Adolphus was perched on one of the lower branches of an apple-tree. Where he had been and what he had been doing were mysteries which the Famous Five could not solve. He had certainly not lacked food and drink in his absence, for he seemed in the best of spirits.

Harry Wharton reached out his hand for the prodigal. Adolphus demurred at first; but after a brief struggle, during which he shed a few feathers, he yielded himself up to the captain of the Remove.

"We won't make a song about this," said Harry Wharton. "The best plan will be to put Adolphus back in his cage, and let the major find out for himself that he's come back."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "If we handed him to the major ourselves, it would look as if we were trying to curry favour."

Adolphus was replaced in his cage, which was securely fastened on the outside, and then the Famous Five passed on into the house.

The butler encountered them in the

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Adolphus was replaced in his cage, which was securely fastened on the outside, and then the Famous Five passed on into the house.

The butler encountered them in the

hall.

in my field—downright disgraceful, begad!"

"My hat!" said Johnny Bull, stopping short. "It's the major's parrot!"

"Move to the right in fours!" said Adolphus shrilly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's come back to the fold," said Harry Wharton. "The major will be awfully bucked to see him again."

Adolphus was perched on one of the lower branches of an apple-tree. Where he had been and what he had been doing were mysteries which the Famous Five could not solve. He had certainly not lacked food and drink in his absence, for he seemed in the best of spirits.

Harry Wharton reached out his hand for the prodigal. Adolphus demurred at first; but after a brief struggle, during which he shed a few feathers, he yielded himself up to the captain of the Remove.

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hall.

"Is the major in?" asked Bob Cherry sweetly.

"My heye!" exclaimed John. "You've got a cheek, you 'ave, to come 'ere like this! Owdacious young rips! I'd a good mind to kick you hout—"

"Try it on, old pimple-face," said Bob Cherry, "and you'll find you've woke up the wrong passengers!"

"You imperent young wagabone—"

"Here, what's all this?" came an imperious voice from the back of the hall; and the major, pushing his butler to one side, loomed in the doorway.

"We wish to know, sir, if you'd be good enough to let us have our cricket-balls—"

"Which found their way—"

"Ahem!"

"Quite by accident—"

"Into your garden, sir?"

The major grunted.

"I don't know that you deserve to have 'em back—" he began.

"We're going to be good little boys in future, sir," said Frank Nugent. "We sha'n't be using this field any longer, so you needn't think that by returning the balls you're providing us with ammunition for a fresh attack on your garden."

"Be a sport, sir!" urged Johnny Bull.

The major, around whose grim lips a smile seldom flickered, now laughed outright.

"You think I bear malice—hey?" he chuckled. "Not a bit of it! Step inside, all of you!"

The Famous Five obeyed, wondering.

When they emerged, half an hour later, they were wreathed in smiles. The major had insisted that they should partake of a feed from the good things left over from the garden-party. Harry Wharton & Co. had declined, on the grounds that they had already had one repast that evening. Whereupon the major had ordered the cook to pack a variety of tuck in a hamper, in order that the juniors could convey it to Study No. 1 for consumption when they felt disposed.

That was not the only pleasant surprise which the major unfolded. He restored the cricket-balls to the juniors, and he handed to Frank Nugent, on behalf of the club, a substantial subscription.

The Famous Five had been frankly astonished. Little did they think that the stern old martinet—who had had good cause to show irritation and annoyance—would unbend in this way. They had thanked him in a rather confused and dazed manner; and when the rest of the Remove were given full details of the major's generosity, they one and all voted him a jolly good sort.

As a matter of fact, the cricket-match with Highcliffe had opened the major's eyes, and much of his former sourness had evaporated. He had also come to the conclusion that Harry Wharton & Co. were not the sort of fellows to purloin his parrot, and his suspicion no longer rested upon them. Added to which, the thought that no more cricket-balls would disturb his peace had a soothing effect upon the major's temper.

Early next morning he made the pleasing discovery that Adolphus had returned. The major did not concern himself with the why and wherefore of the parrot's reappearance. It was sufficient to know that Adolphus was safely restored to him.

The school cricket-ground having been declared fit for use again, the major's sanctity was no longer disturbed. He went his way in peace, and had a cheery word for most of the fellows when he happened to meet them.

Probably there were only two fellows at Greyfriars—Coker and Billy Bunter—who entertained anything but pleasant recollections of His Majesty the Major!

THE END.



Goggs Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Johnny Goggs comes to Rylcombe Grammar School from Frankingham in company with Blount, Trickett, and Waters.

Lively times ensue. Goggs at first gives the impression of being a simpleton; but after a series of fights with the Rylcombe juniors, and a number of japes worthy of Gordon Gay at his best, Goggs shows that there is much more in him than meets the eye.

During an amusing cricket match between the Grammar School and St. Jim's, Grundy and Larking comes to blows.

(Now read on.)

A Set-back for the Grammarians.

"SO, after they'd said a few more kind words, Grundy pulled his nose," continued Gunn.

"I hold Grundy completely justified!" pronounced Lowther.

"Well, so do I," admitted Dane.

"But that cad!" snorted Wilkins, pointing to Larking. "Just look at old Grundy's face!"

"You leave my face alone!" growled Grundy. "What's the matter with it? For two pins I'd pull your nose, George Wilkins!"

Wilkins dodged behind Lowther.

But Lowther skipped.

"It is evident that you would prefer to have your nose pulled by proxy, Wilkins," he said. "I have a high respect for you, old top. For a fellow without either intelligence or pretty ways you are not half a bad sort. But I decline, kindly but firmly, to be your proxy."

"Oh, I'm not going to pull Wilky's nose!" grunted Grundy. "I say, that cad really has marked my face—it's bleeding, you know. He'd better clear out, or I shall get going for him again!"

"Come on!" retorted Larking furiously.

"If you can get him away, Carpenter, you'd better," said Dane quietly.

Carpenter shrugged his shoulders. His face was working with feeling. The scene had been a trifle too much for Carpenter. He had stood by Larking more than once when a less loyal chum would have cleared out. But this was his limit.

"I never want to speak to the fellow again!" he said hotly.

And he strode away.

He meant it. But the mood would not last. His weakness and his strength alike would draw him back to Larking. There were the bonds of old association—an association that had never done Carpenter any good, it is true—and there was his loyalty, mistaken, but real for all that.

"If you don't go you'll be chucked out, Larking!" said George Gore roughly.

"I'm going—for him!" howled Larking.

Some measure of strength had returned to him. He hurried himself at Grundy.

"Trickett! Where's Trickett? The silly chump's wanted!" sounded the melodious notes of Carboy.

Wootton minor was out for a well-hit 32. Tricks hurried off to the vacated wicket just as a dozen hands seized Larking.

Grundy stood aside.

"If I have to handle him again I shall hurt him!" he said grimly.

Larking was helpless. In the centre of a crowd of a score or so he was escorted to the gates.

"In consideration of what you have had already we won't kick you out!" said Dane.

"We'd better!" growled Gore. "He might be coming back."

"He better not show himself here again for the next century or two!" Wilkins said wrathfully. "Look at poor old Grundy's face!"

"Yes, it is unfortunate, isn't it?" glibbed Lowther. "But Larking isn't responsible for that misfortune—only for the love-mark which adorns it."

"I meant the scratch, you fathead!" snorted Wilkins.

"Oh! You should make your meaning plainer, Wilky. But you could hardly make it quite as plain as the subject under discussion, could you?"

Grundy did not hear that. He had gone off to attend to the libelled countenance.

Larking went off, too, still seething with rage.

It was not likely that he would show his face at St. Jim's for some time to come.

So far, Goggs had worked effectively. But even Goggs, effective as he was, could not always foresee the outcome of his schemes; and most certainly he had not anticipated anything like this.

His face grew very grave when Bags told him of all that had chanced.

"Bagshaw," he said sadly, "much I fear me that I have let the school down!"

"You didn't. It was that sweep Larking. But I'm sorry—"

"I am more than sorry. I am remorseful. Only confession full and explicit can ease my wounded conscience."

"You can't confess here. Hallo! There's old Tricks out! My turn now!"

And off went Bags.

He and Gay hit off the runs required for victory before they were parted by Gay's getting his leg in front of a straight one. The Rylcombe skipper had made 68; but all his pleasure at starting the season so well was spoiled when he heard what had happened.

"The rotter!" he said. "It was the absolute outside edge! I knew Larking was a wrong'un, but I never thought—"

"Nobody could have thought it would turn out like that," said Tricks.

"It? What do you mean?" snapped Gay.

"Was this—"

He stopped short, looking hard at Goggs.

It was not safe to say more. There were too many ears at hand.

Cardew came up to Goggs a few minutes later, just before the last of the Grammar School wickets fell with the total 177.

"It must have shocked you extremely, O'Hooligan," he said.

"Sure, phwat?"

"The—er—shall we say little disagreement between Grundy and your man Larking?"

"Faith, an' 'twas little enough of it that I was ather scuin'. It's mesilf that doesn't be likin' foightin'."

"But I really thought—pardon me if I er—that I saw you there or thereabouts at the time when the trouble developed?"

"Did yez? Well, then, I'm not ather denyin' to yez that I did see the throuble beginnin'. Then, bein' of a peaceful disposition, an' not likin' foightin'—sure, I cleared out! Phwat would yez have had me do?"

"Oh, you did quite the right thing, dear

boy! You are really a model of correctness, O'Hea!"

And Cardew lounged away.

Did he really suspect anything?

Goggs was not sure. The one thing that he was sure of was that in Ralph Reckness Cardew he had run up against a fellow very nearly as wide and wily as himself, if not quite.

"Don't mention it, old fellow," said Tom Merry, when Gordon Gay tried to apologise to him for Larking's misconduct. "I've heard all about it; but, hang it all, you don't think any of us blame you, do you?"

"We know well enough that Larking and that lot aren't your sort," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus.

But Gordon Gay and the other Grammarians felt that the guilt had been taken off their victory.

They went off quite low-spirited.

Goggs did not wait until the school was reached to explain. He told his story on the way.

He was surprised to find that no one blamed him heavily.

"You couldn't have been expected to know what sort of an utter outsider Larking is," said Gay dejectedly.

"None of us really knew he was so bad as that," added Monk.

"And, anyway, it can't be helped now," Wootton major said. "Take that silly wig off, Goggles, and don't look so much as if you'd a funeral in the family!"

O'Hoggarty of St. Jim's!

"SURE, an' is it yez, O'Hooligan?"

"Sure, an' that it's not, for me Cardew was the first speaker; name's O'Hoggarty!"

Johnny Goggs, in the guise of Phelim O'Hoggarty, the second.

Goggs, approaching the gates of St. Jim's after tea-time on the Monday following the match, had not seen Cardew until he was right up to the porter's lodge. For Cardew was inside, lounging against the wall, and exchanging chaff with Taggles—or, rather, exchanging his chaff for sundry grunts, grumbles, and threats from Taggles.

But Cardew had seen Goggs before that. He had caught sight of the red wig gleaming in the distance, and had popped inside at once. Cardew spent quite a lot of time lounging at the gates, while Levison and Clive were at cricket. But he did not usually waste much of that time in pulling the leg of Ephraim Taggles.

If Goggs—or Phelim, as it would be better to call him for the present—had seen Cardew, he might have waited or turned back. Possibly Cardew guessed that. Anyway, he had lounged inside directly he sighted Phelim, and had waited there.

Goggs had sized up Cardew far more shrewdly than most people did. Even now the St. Jim's fellows held Levison keener than his chum. That was a mistake. Levison was keen and crafty. But behind the lazy manner and smiling face of Ralph Reckness Cardew, below his folly and his whimsicality, there lay unusual analytic power, knowledge of human nature, and quickness of perception.

Cardew suspected Phelim of not being what he seemed; and if anyone was to wreck the

plan for which Phelim had come into being, Cardew might do it.

"Same thing, dear boy!" drawled Cardew. "O'Hea, or O'Harrigan, or O'Thingimagig—what's it matter? Come to look us up again—eh?"

"Faith, an' I'm afther comin' here!" replied Phelim.

He had a raincoat over his arm, and was carrying a handbag.

"For good, by gad?" asked Cardew.

"Sure, thin, an' I'm hopin' it's for good!"

"This is joyful news indeed!"

"It's pleased I am that yez are pleased, entirely!"

"You'll be wantin' to see the Head an' Railton, of course?"

"Faith, thin, an' there's no nade! I've seen them!"

There was a gleam of suspicion in Cardew's eyes. He had no notion at all who Phelim really was; but somehow he smelt a rat as to this transference to St. Jim's.

"Ah, earlier in the day, I presume?"

"It's right yez are. I was afther seein' Mr. Railton this afternoon!"

This was quite true. As Phelim had come from Rylcombe he had chanced to pass Mr. Railton, who would have known Johnny Goggs at once, but did not recognise him in Phelim O'Hoggarty.

Goggs had also seen the Head, but that was some time ago.

He had wangled things at Rylcombe. Permission had been granted him to be away for the night; in fact, he had twenty-four hours' leave of absence, though it was unlikely he would use it all. The wangling had not been easy; but it had been done, and it had been done without lying. Goggs was an artist in that kind of thing.

So much having been accomplished, the resourceful Johnny was not going to have his plans upset by Cardew, if he could help it.

"Ah! What Form are you in?" inquired Cardew.

"Sure, the Fourth!" replied Phelim.

Goggs would have preferred the Shell for some reasons. But to have said the Shell would have meant lying. He was in the Fourth at Rylcombe.

"I congratulate the Fourth, by gad!" said Cardew.

"Faith, I'll have to be afther fixin' up about a study!" Phelim observed, scratching his red wig.

That observation was not made idly. It was rather in the way of a test. If Cardew had any strong suspicions, it seemed likely he might suggest Phelim's coming into Study No. 9, so that that doubtful character might be under his own watchful eye.

But either Cardew was less suspicious than Goggs imagined him, or he was too wide-awake to fall into such a trap.

"Oh, yaas!" he said. "Try Mulvaney minor and Tompkins. They ought to suit you, an' there's only two of them. Easy enough to make room for a third."

"Sure, an' that's a good notion entirely! It's thankin' yez I am, Cardsharp!" answered Phelim.

"Cardew, O'Hooligan, Cardew—not that it matters much! Goin'? Thanks no end for this brief sample of your entertainin' society! I trust to have more of it in the near future, dear boy!"

"Bedad, an' I'll come to tay wid yez tomorrow, me frind!"

"Do! Oh, do!"

Phelim moved on.

He had a risky game to play. But, in his true character as Johnny Goggs, he had learned the ways of St. Jim's, and he saw no great difficulty in getting through the hours between this and bed-time, and in going up to the Fourth dormitory with the members of that Form, without being spotted by anyone in authority.

He had a bit of luck at the outset. He ran against Mulvaney minor, and that exuberant youth welcomed him with enthusiasm, and took him off to the Fourth Form passage at once.

Tompkins was several shades less enthusiastic. One wild Irishman was as much as Tompkins had any use for. But he made no objection to Phelim as a third in the study.

Prep passed without interruption, and Phelim declined supper in Hall, on the ground that he was too hungry for it—an explanation that made Tompkins stare. But the stare of Clarence York Tompkins changed to an expression of beaming satisfaction when the supposed new boy produced from his handbag a large pork-pie, together with

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE CEM. THE BOYS' FRIEND. CHUCKLES. THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Monday:

"TREASURE-TROVE!"

By Frank Richards.

Our next grand long complete story of the Greyfriars chums describes how Billy Bunter stumbles upon an exceptional piece of good fortune in the shape of buried treasure. The way in which the Owl of the Remove smuggles his precious "find" to Greyfriars, building rosy dreams of future wealth, makes a very amusing story indeed. I will not disclose more of the plot this week; but all my chums should make a special point of reading

"TREASURE-TROVE!"

one of the most humorous MAGNET stories ever published.

THE NEW "PENNY POPULAR"!

On Sale Friday, May 23rd!

No. 18 of the "Penny Popular" will be a feast of the gods. As my chums are already aware, the old reprint stories are to be discontinued, and next week's issue of our splendid companion paper will contain

THREE ENTIRELY NEW SCHOOL STORIES

from the facile pens of Messrs. Frank Richards, Martin Clifford, and Owen Conquest.

TO THE LADS OF LANCASHIRE!

I would like to draw special attention to the stories dealing with Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. You will read how these schoolboy heroes make a tour of England for the purpose of meeting representative County teams in all forms of sport.

Their first visit will be to Lancashire, and no Lancastrian can afford to miss the glowing account of the many stirring tussles which take place at Blackpool between Greyfriars and a team of Lancashire boys. There will be a cricket match, a swimming race, a boxing contest, and so forth; and the story is a breathless thrill from start to finish.

"THE LADS OF LANCASHIRE!"

By Frank Richards,

is a story which no Lancashire boy or girl will ever forget.

Every county in England will be visited in turn by the Greyfriars fellows; and this fine series is one of the most delightful and daring ventures ever contemplated.

There will also be a new long complete story of

TOM MERRY & CO.

By Martin Clifford;

and a splendid new complete story of

JIMMY SILVER & CO.

By Owen Conquest.

These three new features will, I feel confident, cause next week's issue of the "Penny Popular" to go like hot cakes!

I had hoped to be able to place

AN EXTRA 500,000 COPIES

on the market; but this project has been defeated by the paper restrictions, which are still in force to some extent.

Unfortunately, there will only be the usual number of copies on sale, and as there is bound to be

AN UNPRECEDENTED RUSH

for copies, especially in the North of England,

my readers will be well advised to place an order with their newsagents at once for

THE "PENNY POPULAR," No. 18!

On Sale Friday, May 23rd!

A COMPETITION AT LAST!

I have been bombarded of late with letters clamouring for a competition in one of the Companion Papers.

Competitions are always a popular feature, and I am sure you will agree that the one which appears in "Chuckles," on sale Friday, May 23rd, is a very novel contest, and well worth entering.

Quite apart from this feature, the issue of "Chuckles" referred to will contain the first instalment of a magnificent new serial, and also a couple of splendid complete school stories, to say nothing of a

WONDERFUL COLOURED PLATE,

which is thrown in free, gratis, and for nothing.

My chums should make a special point, therefore, of adding the "Penny Popular" and "Chuckles" to their list of reading-matter for next week.

THE HOUSE OF MIRTH!

Percy R., of Walthamstow, writes to me in great distress.

It appears that Percy R. has a chum—an excellent fellow in every way—who is beginning to cause anxiety by a new craze of his—a craze of going to music-halls six times a week.

"I've told him he's a silly chump," writes Percy plaintively; "but he won't take any notice. Can you advise me what further steps to take, Mr. Editor?"

Well, Percy, I have nothing to say against boys visiting music-halls—in moderation; but when it comes to spending six nights a week at the House of Mirth, listening to blue-nosed comedians who explain that their wives have gone to the country, or that "Percy's grown too big for father's pants," it is time to draw the line.

As for a remedy, surely you can suggest some counter-attraction, Percy, to your chum? Before I went to the war I remember that Walthamstow contained several flourishing MAGNET Leagues. Have they all shut up shop?

Anyway, Percy's chum will do well to restrict his music-hall visits to, say, two nights a week. The other evenings could be devoted to study. I do not necessarily mean scholastic work, but the study of some manly pursuit—boxing, for instance. Or perhaps he could assist the distracted Percy to run an amateur magazine. There is certainly no need for him to devote all his time to patronising music-halls.

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc., Wanted.

T. Brown, 14/2, Corporation Buildings, Leith, wants members for correspondence club. Monthly record issued free. 1d. stamp, please, for postage.

Percy Atkinson, 3, Francis Grove, Vernon Avenue, Nottingham, wants members for up-to-date sale and exchange club.

Jack Jackson, 61, Howard Road, Church Hill, Walthamstow, Essex—with a French boy, or an English boy in France, in either language. Or with a boy in America.

D. Schleich, c/o B.E.D., 17, Hart Street, London, W.C.1—with fellow-reader in Australia.

W. Hosgood, c/o Sherwell Davy, Chelston, Torquay, Devon, wants a set of boxing-gloves in good condition. State lowest price.

(H. A. H.) YOUR EDITOR.

several bags which obviously held lighter refreshments.

Mulvaney minor locked the door, and the three settled down to a capital supper. Clarence York made coffee; Phelim dispensed pie and other things in liberal helpings; and Mulvaney bustled about doing nothing in particular until the time to start came—after which he did considerable execution in a most businesslike manner.

It suited Phelim's plans very well to lie low thus till bed-time. But the mind of the red-wigged spoofer was by no means free from anxiety. He could not dismiss the suspicion that Cardew suspected him.

There was something else he was anxious about, too. He knew that Larking & Co. would upset his and his companions' schemes if they could find a way to do it.

They would be on the alert as soon as they knew he was absent from the Grammar School. They could hardly guess whether he had gone; but it was quite possible that they might find out. Carker, an ally of the three for the time being, was in the habit of hiding out things, and Snipe was not above playing the same game as Carker.

Larking, it seemed to Goggs, would hardly dare to show his face at St. Jim's after what had happened on the Saturday. But Carpenter was already chumming with Larking again, and Carpenter had his own score to settle with Goggs. So that he had to be reckoned with as well as the scheming Snipe and the crafty Carker.

Goggs found some pretext for getting out of the study, and made his way down to the quad. If any of the Rylcombe malecontents meant to warn St. Jim's it would be over the wall they would come. It was too late to ask at the gates for a junior.

It was twilight in the quad—a beautiful evening, with a faint afterglow still showing in the west, and the moon rising.

No one else seemed about. There were lights in many windows, both in School House and New House, and few blinds had been drawn. Goggs could see figures moving in the lighted rooms. But no one was likely to spot him.

He knew the place at which getting over the wall was easiest, and he made his way towards it in a casual and unconcerned manner.

As he drew near he heard a low whistle—a whistle that he recognised at once.

In a moment he was at the top of the wall, concealed by the thick foliage of the old oak-tree that grew by it.

"Bags!" he whispered.
"That you, Goggles? Where are you?"
"Up in the tree. I can see you. Come under!"

Blount drew nearer, and gazed up.
"What's the row?" asked Goggs.

He spoke as he only did in moments when there was need for haste—that is to say, he spoke like any ordinary schoolboy.

"Larking & Co. on the rampage! They're coming along here!" answered Bags.

"Why didn't you get Gay and the rest to stop them?"

"Couldn't, chump! I only got on to it just in time. Saw them dodge out, and dodged out after them, and cut across the fields as hard as I could pelt, so as to get ahead of them. Tricks is following them up, and Wag-tail's gone to tell the other chaps. But they won't be in time to do anything."

It was plain that Bags had been running hard. He panted as he spoke.

"If they aren't coming along here," said Goggs, "it doesn't matter. But I fancy they are!"

"I'm jolly well sure they are!"

"Which proves nothing, Bags! But it's fifty to one you're right, and there isn't much time to spare. I must do something, and do it quickly. What's your game coming here?" said Goggs.

"Hide somewhere near here, and wait for Tricks. Then we shall be on hand if anything happens."

"Something's bound to happen, my son! By the way, aren't you children going to get in a row for being absent at lights-out?"

"That's all serene. Barton's the prefect on duty, and he's a slack beggar. I heard him tell Gay that we could see lights out for ourselves to-night; he wasn't going to fag all round the dormitories. Delamere's out for the evening, and none of the others will bother."

"A very reprehensible example of slackness on the part of Barton, but decidedly convenient, my dear Bagshaw. I am aware that getting in and out of the Grammar School is as easy as a sum in simple addition. Still, I would counsel caution—Shush! They're coming!"

Bags stole away in the shadow of the wall. Goggs dropped down inside.

Through the deepening dusk came three figures—those of Carpenter, Snipe, and Larking. Carker was doubtless in the affair; but he had not come along. And Snipe would not have come if he could have got out of it.

They halted close to the tree.

"This is the place," said Carpenter.

"But what's the good?" snarled Snipe. "A wild-goose chase—that's what I call this."

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Larking.

"Well, what is the use?" persisted Snipe.

"We're running a big risk, and all for nothing, as far as I can see. Nobody's likely to be about as late as this."

"We might throw a note over," suggested Carpenter. "Anything that would put them on the qui vive would do the trick. Let them once know that the red-headed bounder is Goggs—"

"What's the use of a note?" broke in Snipe. "It wouldn't be seen until the morning, and then it would be too late. Carker's sure the bizney's to be put through to-night."

"If there's nothing else for it, one of us must get over and into the place," said Larking resolutely.

"Well, you can't do that," said Carpenter rather uneasily.

"I dashed well will, though, if it comes to a pinch! I'm dead sure now that it was that bounder Goggs who put those words into my mouth and made that hulking lout of a Grundy go for me on Saturday; and I mean to get him fairly in the soup here! My word, they won't half maul him when they know he's only got in among them, making out he's changed schools, just to let in our gang of idiots and to down Merry and his crew!"

"The chap has the most colossal nerve of anyone I've ever set eyes on," remarked Carpenter. "I owe him one, but I can't help half liking him."

Goggs heard that, as he had heard all that preceded it. He would not forget it, either. He had been sure before that Carpenter was not quite of the same breed as Larking, and certainly not of the same as Snipe.

If Johnny Goggs could ever give Carpenter a helping hand, he would do it willingly. But Carpenter's essential weakness made it difficult for anyone to help him.

"I hate the simpering idiot!" said Larking viciously.

"So do I!" kissed Snipe.

Goggs would not forget those speeches, either.

If he had felt any qualms about playing the part of a listener, he would have dismissed them now. But he had not felt any. Listening was justified, for these fellows were traitors to their side.

But he thought it about time to get into communication with the enemy.

"Anybody over there?" he asked, in a drawl that he was certain would take in the three.

The Traitors Trapped!

"Is that you, Cardew?" asked Carpenter, after a moment's pause, during which Larking had nudged him as a hint to speak.

"I am me, certainly," replied Goggs. "There's no dashed doubt about that, by gad! Who are you?"

"I'm me, too," replied Carpenter, laughing.

"Yaas, but who is me—I mean who am I?"

"Why, you're you, aren't you, chump?"

"Oh, chuck that rot, Carp!" snorted Larking.

"Hallo, Larking, old bird! Do I recognise your mellifluous accents? Carpenter there, too, I gather. Have I also the honour of receivin' Snipe?"

"I'm here, too," replied Snipe sulkily.

"Good! Nice little party, by gad! But you're a trifle late for supper, an' a wee bit early for breakfast, dear boys!"

They never doubted it was Cardew who held converse with them then. Goggs had climbed to the top of the wall again now, but he was concealed by the branches of the oak. The voice was that of Cardew; and the half-sardonic manner of speech was his.

Goggs had not studied Cardew for nothing. "We haven't come to supper, or to breakfast," answered Larking.

"Sorry, I'm sure!"

"We've come to tell you that that chap who—"

"Wait, a moment, Snipe!" interrupted Larking angrily. "I say, Cardew, is that red-headed sweep of an O'Hoggarty here?"

"Yaas; the red-headed sweep's here, old top! Can't you bear to part with him? Dashed sorry, but if this a kidnapping expedition, I'm afraid I can't take a hand in it. I have some principles, y'know—not like you fellows, we've shed all that kind of thing."

"Oh, rats! We don't want the silly ass back! Do you know who he is?"

"There seems a dashed lot of confusion of identities to-night, by gad! Who can O'Hooligan be if he isn't O'Hooligan?"

"Goggs!" hissed Larking.

"Goggs? Who's he? Or—you puzzle me, old bean—should I say what, and not who? Who is Goggs, and what is he, that Larking thus should seek him—as the poet didn't exactly say. What he did say was, 'Who is Sylvia, what is she that all the swains—'"

"Oh, confound it, can't you be serious for a minute, Cardew?"

"Carpenter, old gun, I can be serious for a week—a month—a year! I am in reality an extremely serious person. But—"

"You must remember Goggs—chap that stayed here a little while ago—wore glasses—blessed ventriloquist, and all that?"

"Oh, I remember him now! Oh, yaas, I remember the old bird. What about him?"

"O'Hoggarty is Goggs, in disguise!" snorted Larking.

"What? You don't say so? It's a trifle hard to credit, dear boy."

"It's true, all the same."

"Very kind of you to come an' let us know. But it wasn't really necessary. We were bound to find out for ourselves before long. Quite a popular character, Goggs, when he was here before!"

"He'll be dashed popular this time, I don't think!" growled Larking. "He's come along pretending to have got a change to St. Jim's; but that's all bunkum! His game is to let our fellows in to-night—"

"An' you're givin' it away, Larking! Is that because you love us more or Goggs—O'Hooligan less?"

"We're givin' it away because we've a down on the sweep!"

"I see! Better come over an' explain the whole bizney, hadn't you? I'll trot along some of our fellows. Let's see. What do you think of fetchin' Tom Merry, an' Talbot Blake, too, say—an' Levison an' Clive—"

"That's right! You go an' fetch them," said Larking.

"Come over first, won't you? It will never do for the dear boys to sit in a row on the wall—too conspicuous for anythin' with the moon risin'."

"They can come over here," said Larking.

"Yaas, they can, but I don't think they will."

"Oh, I'll go over," volunteered Carpenter. "Come along, Snipey! You'd better stay here, though, Lark."

"I'll get up on the wall, under the tree," Larking answered.

Goggs dropped, and stood well in the shadow. Carpenter came over at once. Snipe followed more slowly. Then Larking appeared on the wall.

Someone whistled softly. It was Goggs, but for the moment none of them twigged that, or suspected that the whistle was a signal.

But as a signal it was intended, and Goggs' hope was strong that it would be heard and understood by Bags and Tricks.

If they had heard the conversation just closed they would guess what he meant to do, and he could trust them to deal with Carpenter.

He moved away, imitating Cardew's lounging gait. There was a moment of danger when he emerged into the half-light beyond the gloom under the tree; but none of the three perceived that it was not Cardew.

Goggs had no intention whatever of fetching any of the fellows he had named. He had not said that he would fetch them. They would not be suitable tools for his purpose.

It was to Grundy that he went.

George Alfred Grundy, though he had never realised the fact, was quite an easy person to take in; and he would be very wrathful when he heard that Larking & Co. were trespassing.

Grundy—Wilkins—Gunn—those three would serve Goggs' purpose, though neither Wilkins nor Gunn was as dense as Grundy.

But three would not be enough. A force sufficiently strong to overpower the trespassers at once must be raised. And Bags and Tricks could only help in one way. They must not show up after they had given that aid.

(Another grand long instalment of this magnificent school serial will appear in next Monday's issue. Order early.)