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BILLY BUNTER UNDER FIRE!

(An Exciting Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.) 25-10-19



A Magnificent Long,
Complete School Story of
Harry Wharton & Co.
:: at Greyfriars School. ::

BY
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Rats!

"HALLO! Hallo! Hallo!"
Bob Cherry's voice came
warningly to the fat figure
of Billy Bunter as he poked
his face round the door of Study No. 1.

"I say, you fellows—"
"Scat!" said the Famous Five.
"But I—"
"Buzz off!"
"Look here!" exclaimed Bunter. "I
say—"

"B-r-r-r-r!"
"I say—"
"Biff!"
A boot struck the door with considerable force.

"I want to tell you—" yelled Billy Bunter.

"No other boot coming!" sang out Nugent. "Mind the step!"

"Biff! Bang!"
"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. "Yo! Yo!"

"Oooooo-er!"

The boot had struck the wall, and, glancing off, caught Bunter on the ear. With a roar of pain Bunter slumped the door.

"Poor old Bunter!" laughed Wharton, turning back to the tea which the Famous Five were sharing in Study No. 1. "He's short of a tea, I suppose!"

"Serve him right!" said Johnny Bull. "He's much too fat!"

"The hungerfulness of the esteemed Bunter," said Luffy, in his wonderful English, "must be terrific. Listenfully hear the noise!"

From somewhere in the passage came a roar of pain in Bunter's voice, followed by the loud slamming of a door. "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bob Cherry. "He's been cast forth by someone else. He'll be lucky if he gets a sardine's tail to-night!"

There was a short pause, and then another muffled roar in Billy Bunter's voice. A second door was slammed violently.

"And so the poor doggie had none!" chanted Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five continued their tea. There wasn't a lot to eat, as they were rather short of funds.

Five minutes passed, and the door-handle rattled again. The gleaming spectacles of Billy Bunter appeared round the door.

"Get out!" roared Wharton and Nugent together.

"But I want—"
"Buzz off!"

"I want to explain—"
"That you're hungry!"

"I was going to say—"
"Needn't worry," said Wharton.

"We're short ourselves. We can't afford to feed you to-day!"

"I only want—"
"Scat!"

"Look here—"
"Whiz!"

A Greek lexicon flew across the study, and narrowly escaped Bunter's head. He disappeared for a second, only to reappear when the danger seemed to be over.

"You'll get hurt if you stay there!" warned Johnny Bull, posing a ruler.

"But I want—"
"Go away ee!" roared Nugent.

"I tell you I want—"
"What do you want?" demanded Wharton shortly.

"Poison!" said Bunter hurriedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've known that for a long time!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Rat poison!" added Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll buy you some any time you like to mention it!" said Wharton cheerfully.

"I don't mean I want to eat it myself!" howled Bunter.

"But you said you did!"

Bunter glared through his specs with an angry glare. The lenses, being used to it, did not quack. And the Famous Five only grinned.

"I didn't say I wanted rat poison at all!" growled Bunter.

"You did!"

"I didn't!"

"Well, it doesn't matter whether you

said it or not," said Wharton soothingly.

"It's what you really require."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter glared again.

"Look here, you fellows," he said warmly, "I'm trying to explain something. Do you want any rat poison?"

"Rat poison?" asked Bob blandly.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To kill rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter scowled.

"I'm langed if I can see what you're laughing about!" he growled. "I've asked you a question. It's a jolly good stuff, too."

"Rat flesh?"

"No, the rat poison!"

"Oh!" said Bob innocently. "I thought you wanted us to eat rats. We haven't come to that yet."

"The rats must be caught!" said Bunter.

"What rats?"

"The rats that are eating all our food!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five laughed. The idea of Bunter shifting the blame for scoffing food on to the rodents struck them as very funny.

"I've been thinking things out, you fellows," said Bunter, taking opportunity of the lull when the laughter had subsided. "There's been heaps of grub disappear from our cupboard lately. I can never find anything there now when I want a snack!"

"Go lion!"

"And I find other fellows' cupboards— I mean, other fellows tell me," corrected Bunter hastily, "that their cupboards are the same!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So I've decided that, in the interests of food economy," pursued the fat junior, "it's got to be stopped."

"Hear, hear!"

"We've stopped you pretty well to far, haven't we?" demanded Nugent.

"Eh?"

"You haven't had anything out of our cupboard for a long time."

Bunter glared speechlessly.
"But, of course, if you think that we'd better give you a dose of rat poison to make sure," said Nugent indulgently, "we'll raise a subscription at once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter's expression became perfectly Hunch.

"I wish you wouldn't try to make those rotten jokes, Nugent!" he howled desperately. "I've told you once that I don't want any rat poison."

"Oh!"
"Then what on earth are you burbling about?" demanded Johnny Bull. "You're wasting good air, and every breath of air will tell in the long run." "I'm trying to sell you some rat poison," said Bunter, not seeking to conceal his mission with fair words any further.
"Oh!"

The Famous Five exchanged meaning glances. Bunter took the opportunity of proceeding with his conversation.

"I've found out that the reason why the food keeps disappearing is because the place is infested with rats. The rats have spread everywhere. I've seen them myself."

"You have?"
"It's the last stage when fellows see rats," said Bob Cherry, with mock seriousness. "Were they punk or green?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

BILLY BUNTER gasped.
The Famous Five were enjoying the fun immensely. They quite realised that Bunter had got some new scheme on foot, and it was evidently a scheme for raising the wind.

And, having to tolerate Bunter when he tried all the old wheezes, they saw no reason why they should not enjoy the situation when he got hold of a novelty. It was evident that there was one now.

"I wish you fellows would be reasonable for a minute!" howled the fat junior at length.

The Famous Five wiped the tears of laughter from their eyes.

"Do go on, Bunter," said Wharton. "They say laugh and grow fat. You must be in the pay of the Food Controller."

The Owl of the Remove blinked.
"I'm not joking!" he growled. "It's a fact about the rats. There's thousands and thousands of them about. If you leave a scrap of food in the cupboard to-night it will be gone before to-morrow morning."

"Really?"
"It will," said the Owl seriously. "Just put a tin of sardines in the cupboard to-night before you go to bed. I bet they'll be gone in the morning."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"
"Dread if I can see anything to cackle about!" growled the fat junior.

"Shall we leave a tin-opener?" queried Johnny Bull.

"Why?"
"For the rats to open the tin with!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five laughed again. Bunter's offer was not quite as genuine as it seemed to be, and they were well aware of the fact. There was no doubt that the food would disappear if it was left in the cupboard, but that did not prove that the rats were responsible if Bunter was anywhere in the vicinity.

"It's very good of you to make the offer, Billy," said Wharton. "But we

haven't got a scrap of food anywhere for you. We'll take your word that there's lots of rats about."

"I wish you'd put it to the test," said Bunter, with a fat smile.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The profusion of the estimated sardines would surely be terrific!" laughed Hurree Singh, in his quaint English. "But a bird in the hand gathers no moss."

Bunter scowled.
"It's a fact about the rats, anyway," he said. "Now, look here. I've been appointed as the sole agent for a new rat poison, and I'm willing to sell it very cheaply. You'll find it's jolly effective."

"Shall we?"
"Rather!" said the Owl enthusiastically. "I caught seventeen this morning."

"All at once?"
"All of the twenty were dead!" said Bunter graphically. "They were lying about the floor stiff and stark. I put down a saucerful of the stuff, and it killed the whole twenty-four."

"Go on!"
"Thirty is a pretty good catch, isn't it?" demanded Bunter.

"Jolly good!" said Wharton seriously. "And what did you do with all the bodies?"

"I buried them," said Bunter quickly. "I didn't want fifty rats lying about the study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Famous Five laughed heartily.

Perhaps they ought not to have done, considering that, according to Bunter, the rats, even when dead, were able to increase from seventeen to fifty in the short space of a couple of minutes. But they knew Bunter of old. He had a bad head for figures.

"Well, do you want any of the rat poison?"

"I don't think that it matters."
"I'm selling it dirt-cheap," protested Bunter. "It's only two shillings a tin, and there's a prize of half-a-crown for the fellow who catches most rats."

"Really?"
"And it will cut down your losses so that it pays for itself in no time," pursued Bunter. "All of the rats will be killed in a very short time if you only use plenty of the stuff. I can let you have a large quantity at a reduced price."

"That's very good of you!" said Bob Cherry, with mock seriousness.

"Thank you, Cherry," said Bunter. "One tin, did you say?"

"Eh?"
"Did you say you wanted a tin of it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter blinked indignantly.

"Look here, Cherry," he said severely. "don't rot! You're wasting my time. There's hundreds of fellows waiting to be served."

"That's good!"
"But I've given you fellows first chance, you see," pursued Bunter glibly.

"Then what was all the noise just before you came in here?" asked Nugent.

"I—I was chucking the fellows out of my study because they were fighting so hard to get a tin of the rat poison," explained the Owl of the Remove easily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Famous Five shook with laughter.

The idea of Bunter refusing anyone was humorous, and, by the evidence of their own ears, the chums did not think that the story had any foundation except in Bunter's fertile imagination.

"Well, are you going to have any of the stuff?" demanded Bunter, after a pause.

"Not to-day, thanks!" said Wharton, still chuckling. "Look here, Billy, I know a better scheme than that."

"What's that?"
"Just catch the rats and give 'em a shave, and charge 'em a bob each," he said. "They'll never come back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"That's ridiculous!" growled the Owl of the Remove. "You couldn't charge a rat a bob!"

"I've done it!" said Nugent. "Sixty of 'em died of fright."

Bunter's eyes flashed.
"That's a lie, Nugent!" he said viciously. "What did you do with the bodies? Let's see 'em."

"Can't!"
"Why not?"

"I buried 'em, Billy," said Nugent, "just like your rats."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Owl of the Remove glared. It occurred to him that the Famous Five might be pulling his leg.

"Well, what about the rat poison?" he demanded. "I shan't give you another chance of buying some. It's splendid stuff. Paralyse them, and absolutely finishes them off."

"No, thanks!"
"Dirt-cheap at the price!" said Bunter eloquently.

"Not to-day, thanks!"
"I tell you you'll save pounds' worth of grub over it!" roared the Owl.

"Go away!"
"You'll be sorry you said no!"

"Travel!" said Johnny Bull, picking up a boot threateningly.

"I shan't give you another chance!" roared the Owl. "I—"

"I shan't give you another, either!" snapped Johnny Bull. "One—two—"

"Look here—"
"Three!"

"Whiz!"
"Yarooooogh!"

Bunter clapped a hand to his nose and retreated promptly. The boot was only a light one, but the toe had caught the Owl on the nose with quite sufficient force to discourage further efforts.

He slammed the door, and wandered dismally off.

"Another commercial catastrophe!" chuckled Nugent. "Still, it doesn't matter. He told us that there's heaps of customers clamouring for it. He—"

"Listen!"
The sounds of bumps and howls drifted in through the door. It sounded uncommonly like Bunter's voice.

"Still chucking his impatient customers out!" laughed Wharton. And the Famous Five joined in the laughter.

Bunter seemed to be going through it again.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Gives It Up.

"SOLD much?" inquired Peter Todd.

"No!" growled the Owl of the Remove, dropping dismally into a chair.

Alonso Todd looked up from the book he had been reading.

"Has many rats was it you caught this morning, Bunter?" he inquired mildly.

"Thirty-seven!" growled the fat junior.

Alonso stared incredulously.
"I really could not have believed that there were so many in the school," he said, in surprise. "I have never seen one."

"But the grub goes all the same, doesn't it?" said Bunter triumphantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Peter Todd. "It does!"

"Can't see anything to cackle at, Toddy!" growled Bunter.

"If you want to stop the grub going, Bunter," said Peter Todd, with a grin, "take the poison yourself."

Bunter glared. He was too fed up to speak. Hard words and blows had rewarded his efforts at seamanship. When he had taken up the agency for rat poison, he had expended a whole half-crown on purchasing the supply, for the first time, though they did not know Bunter would not let him have credit.

The fat junior, however, had heroically gone without a feed to buy the first consignment, confident that he would be able to do a roaring trade with very inflated prices. But, so far, he had not met with any success.

The story of rats eating the food might have washed better if Bunter had not been known as a first-class consumer of any spare provisions left about. He was perpetually hungry!

He pulled a box out from under the table and surveyed the contents dimly. There were ten small tins of "Ratto, the Guaranteed Vermin Destructor," contained in it. The fat junior frowned. Now, they represented so much dead capital—a lost half-crown which might have been converted into a solid feed with Mrs. Mimble.

Even Mrs. Mimble, however, had refused to take Ratto in exchange for jam-tarts. The Owl of the Remove realised that the scheme had fallen through with a sickening crash.

"Say, Toddy," said Bunter suddenly.

"Hallo?"

"You know we're old pals, don't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you wouldn't laugh, Toddy," said Bunter seriously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter glared through his thick spectacles.

"Being old pals, Toddy," he said at length, "I realise that I couldn't make any profit out of you. I'm willing to let you have a tin of Ratto for 1s. 6d."

"Go on!"

"Er—you might let me have the money now, Toddy," said Bunter, with a fat smile.

"And I might not," said Peter grimly.

"But you've bought it, haven't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter glared speechlessly. It was evident from Peter Todd's manner that there was nothing doing.

"Aren't you going to buy a tin?" demanded Bunter at length.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then I hope that you jolly well get bitten by a rat!" snapped the Owl of the Remove.

Tom Dutton looked up from the book that he was reading. The deaf junior was, like Alonzo Todd, somewhat of a book-worm, but Bunter's tones roused him.

"Did you say that you could get us a kitten or a cat?" he asked.

Bunter transferred his attentions to Dutton.

"No," he said bluntly. "But I can put you on to a good position for rats."

Dutton got up indignantly.

"You say that you like to put the boys on to rats!" he snapped indignantly.

"That's the sort of cruelty that would appeal to you, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked.

"I've been trying to explain to Toddy," Bunter said desperately, "that the rats are stealing all our grub!"

Dutton flushed.

"You rotter!" he snapped.

"Wh-wh-whatcher mean?" gasped Bunter.

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"Just the sort of thing that would appeal to you!"

"What would?"

"What you just said," said Dutton angrily. "That you'd like to hear the cat squealing in a tub!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked.

"I didn't say that at all!" he howled.

"You'd like to hear the cat howl!"

"No!" yelled Bunter. "I'm not talking about cats at all!"

Dutton looked inquiringly at Peter Todd.

"Then what is he talking about?" he asked, having heard correctly at last.

"He's trying to strike a bargain!" said Peter Todd.

"He's trying his bike in the morning!" asked Tom Dutton. "I don't see what that's got to do with me. What does he mean? Is he trying to run over cats, or something?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd gave up the unequal struggle. When Dutton had some of his deaf moods it was impossible to tell him anything. And this was evidently one of them.

Bunter, however, was desperate. He wanted money badly.

"Don't you see, Dutton," he shouted desperately, "that we'll soon be starving if we don't catch the rats?"

"Halving the cats?"

"No! Catching the brutes!"

"Scratching the brutes?"

Bunter frowned. He was getting beyond words, and Tom Dutton was becoming annoyed. He was sure in his own mind that Bunter was trying to induce him to take part in some cruelty to cats.

"The rats are pinching all our food!" roared Bunter.

"What?"

"Food!"

"Who's rude?" demanded Dutton.

"They want poisoning!" roared the Owl.

"I want poisoning!" demanded Tom Dutton.

"I didn't say that! Oh, my!"

"You'd like to see me die?" snapped Tom Dutton. "Then I'll give you what you're asking for!"

Smack!

The deaf junior's open palm caught Bunter a ringing smack on the cheek.

The Owl of the Remove sprang back with a roar of alarm.

"Skoppit!" he roared.

"Do you want some more?" demanded Dutton, advancing.

"Yarough! No!" gasped Bunter, dashing for the door.

Bunter disappeared into the corridor, feeling that the study was getting too warm for him.

Dutton paused, and the flush left his face.

"Bunter is very silly," he said, unclenching his fists. "He says a lot of things that he doesn't mean."

"Ha, ha!" Yes! gasped Peter Todd, feeling that Tom Dutton had dealt with Bunter admirably.

The deaf junior paused suddenly, and pulled a box out from under the table. He extracted a small tin and examined it.

"Ratto, the Guaranteed Vermin Destructor," he read.

He turned to Peter Todd.

"There's some rat poison here," he said innocently. "I wonder if Bunter knows anything about it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder where it's come from?"

Dutton stared.

"What are you laughing at, Toddy?" he asked.

"Bunter wanted to tell you about that!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Then he'd better let me catch him

trying it on a cat!" he said, as he sat down. "I think that Bunter is very cruel at times. We'd better not let him see that poison."

He took the box up and hid it on top of the cupboard. Then he dropped into his chair again and started reading.

Half an hour later Bunter returned to the study looking very crestfallen. He had not had any luck, and he was feeling more than depressed. He statted with his prep without a word.

The rat poison was, for the moment, forgotten. Bunter grunted silently over Virgil, and proceeded to scatter blots of ink over what had been a clean page.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Surprise Packet.

"PARCEL for you, Inky!"

Bob Cherry bust into the study excitedly.

Wharton and Inky were just finishing prep, and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull, having finished theirs, were waiting to go down to the Common-room when Bob entered with the big brown-paper parcel in his arms.

Bunter had not worried them any more. He had returned to his own study with the object of doing prep, and he had done it. The rat poison had had such a depressing reception there, for the moment, any hopes of raising the wind from that source had failed, and the Famous Five had been left alone by the Owl of the Remove.

"Who's it from, Inky?" asked Johnny Bull.

Hurree Singh shook his head. "The unknownfulness of the esteemed sender is terrific," he said.

"It looks as though it's come from India," said Bob, laying the parcel on the table.

"Then it won't be grub," said Nugent.

"That's a pity!"

Inky nodded, as he looked curiously at the package.

"The pitifulness of the esteemed matter," he commenced, "is—"

"Terrific!" added the others.

The parcel was very securely tied with string. There were knots and seals all over the paper, but they were all plain, and the address was printed in capitals. It did not give the dusky junior any clue from whom it had come.

Hurree Singh produced a knife and commenced to slash at the knots. In a couple of minutes he had removed the first paper, only to find that the parcel was enclosed in a second paper.

"Well packed up," said Harry Wharton. "Must be something pretty important. Inky—a regular surprise packet!"

Hurree Singh nodded.

"The careful packfulness of the esteemed contents is terrific!"

The second paper came away, revealing a wooden box inside. There was only one string round that, and to this was attached a small key. The juniors saw that there was a lock on the box.

Nugent eyed the parcel doubtfully, and gripped his nose.

"Hums a bit!" he muttered. "Perhaps they sent you something, and it's gone bad!"

The others exchanged glances. There certainly was a curious odour from the box. Inky was the only one who did not worry about it. He was excited.

The last string came off, and the Indian junior inserted the key in the lock. Then he turned it.

What happened next occurred in a few seconds. There was a small click, and the lid of the box flew open. At the same moment Inky gave a yell and sprang back.

"A snake!" he shouted.



Bunter tolled for five minutes. Then he paused, and turned a red, unhappy face to Peter Todd. "I'm not going on—I can't really, Toddy!" he said pathetically. "You're going on strike—eh?" said Todd, brandishing the cricket-stump. "I reckon my strike will last longer than yours." (See Chapter 8.)

The Famous Five recoiled from the box as one man. As they did so the wicked head of a snake reared itself from the box.

Harry Wharton saw the flat, broad head of what was evidently a cobra swinging from side to side as its body came out of the box. The little green eyes gleamed wickedly. The red, forked fangs shot out of its head as though charged with all the venom that the snake had accumulated in weeks of travelling, with only the cunning food which the Indian sander had put in the box to keep it alive.

Wharton realised in the same second that he and his chums were in deadly peril. They were alone and unarmed. The snake was casting its eyes round, moving its head slowly from side to side. Evidently it was measuring its distance. The chums knew that if they moved it would probably spring. They remained against the wall like statues.

For a minute the numbing terror faced them. Then suddenly Wharton saw a faint hope of saving the party. It was attended with considerable risk to himself, but he did not consider that at the time. He stooped suddenly, and snatched up an old cloth from the floor. Then he leapt swiftly at the box.

His intention was to catch the snake in the cloth and force it back in the box. But as he moved the snake moved, too. Evidently the cloth frightened it, for it glided out of the box, and in another couple of seconds wriggled out of the door.

Wharton dashed to the door. He saw the snake gliding along the corridor.

"Quick!" he roared. "Shut your doors! There's a live snake escaped!"

Bunter blinked out of the doorway of Study No. 7.

"What was that, Wharton?" he called. "A snake? What sort of a snake? Was it— Yarcooooh! Ooo-er! Here it comes! Yoooooooop!"

The door of the study slammed violently, and Bunter dashed across the study and leaped on the table with marvellous agility.

"What's up, duffer?" growled Peter Todd.

"Snakes!" howled Bunter. "Thousands of 'em! All along the corridor, and fighting to get in here! Yarcooooh!"

"Snakes!" gasped Peter Todd. "Are you mad?"

"Look for yourself!" hooted Bunter, peering furtively around him. "Millions of snakes! Grooooooh! Yooooooop! Murder!"

Wharton's warning voice sounded again, and Peter Todd heard it.

"Did you see it, Bunt?" he demanded.

"See it!" roared Bunter. "Thousands of them, I tell you! All of them dashing at me!"

Peter Todd grinned in spite of the seriousness of the situation.

"How many did you kill, Bunt?" he asked.

"A dozen, easily!" snapped the fat junior. "You'd have a look at them."

Peter Todd crossed to the door, and opened it very carefully. But he saw no sign of a snake, and presently he peeped

out. He saw Wharton still in the doorway of his study.

"What's the matter, Harry?" he asked quickly.

Wharton told him briefly, and Peter Todd whistled.

"A venomous one, eh?" he said, lifting his brow. "That's jolly serious."

"It is!" said Wharton. "I can't say where the brute went to. But I'm going to warn the whole school to keep indoors for a bit, and then we'll have to hunt for it with sticks."

"I'll come with you," said Peter, emerging into the corridor.

Wharton came out of the study, and the other four followed him.

"Go back, you chaps!" snapped Wharton. "It's not safe!"

"Rot!" snapped Johnny Bull. "It's as safe for us as it is for you. And there's a lot of people to be warned. We'll all take a cricket-stump, and then split up into twos."

"Right-ho!" said Wharton. "But be careful!"

A minute later the party split up, and, keeping a very careful look-out for the snake, they toured the building, shouting out the news, so that no one would be likely to do anything rash. There were startled inquiries, but the juniors did not have time to give many details.

Mr. Quelch heard the news with amazement and dismay. He was not alarmed for his own safety, but for the boys. He knew what a cobra at large in the school could do.

"Have you boys seen this—this creature since it escaped?" he asked of Wharton and Bob Cherry.

"No, sir."

"And the others have not, either?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch paused. Then he crossed his study and took up a heavy stick.

As he returned to the door the other four juniors joined Wharton and Cherry.

"Have you seen the snake, boys?" asked the master anxiously.

"No, sir!" came the chorus.

"Then all of you come into the study and shut the door. I am going to have a look for the snake myself."

"But, sir—" began Wharton.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"That is an order, Wharton!" he said sharply. "I know what you want to say, but you have done enough already. I can look after myself."

The Famous Five did not argue. They trooped into the study and closed the door.

Mr. Quelch was gone for quite twenty minutes. When he returned he looked somewhat relieved.

"I think the snake must have escaped from the school," he said. "And I should not say that it will live long in this climate. I have been right over the school twice very carefully, and there is no sign of it anywhere. Wait here, however, while I inform the headmaster."

Dr. Locke accompanied the master of the Remove back to the school, and, armed with a cricket-stump, he accompanied Mr. Quelch on a further search. But he saw nothing of the snake.

They returned after ten minutes, and it was evident to the Famous Five that they had drawn blank again.

"It certainly seems that this snake has escaped, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "The boys had better go to their dormitories and shut the doors. Then we can have a thorough search of the building. But I will first ask the masters to search the dormitories, and see that the passages are clear."

"Very good, sir!" said the Fourth Form master.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Mr. Prout!

BUNTER peeped out cautiously into the corridor.

He had remained well under cover while the search for the snake was carried on, but he had kept

his ear glued to the keyhole, so that he would not miss any remarks which were dropped in the corridor.

And it seemed, from what Bunter had heard the Head say, that the coast was clear.

The corridor was silent and deserted. There was no sign of any vicious reptile waiting to spring upon the unwary.

For a minute Bunter remained at his point of vantage to make sure that everything was what it seemed. Then, taking his courage in both hands, he opened the door, and bolted across to the study which the Famous Five had left.

There was no one inside. Bunter entered quickly and closed the door. He crossed to the cupboard and peeped on to the shelf, and his little eyes glinted with satisfaction. There was a small piece of plain cake which Wharton had put the Owl's hand clutched it greedily.

The cake vanished in a few seconds, and Bunter turned to the cupboard again. But there was nothing remaining there. The Owl gave a disconsolate grunt, and ambled across to the door again.

He paused, with his hand on the knob. There was a soft step in the passage. Bunter's guilty conscience hinted that it was one of the Famous Five; but, to his relief, the step passed the door. As a matter of fact, it was Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, and Mr. Prout was armed with the celebrated rifle with which he had, according to himself, done such execution in the Rockies.

Billy Bunter waited for a minute before daring to open the door, and then he peeped cautiously out. For a moment he saw nothing to alarm him; and then, suddenly, his heart seemed to miss a beat.

He saw a dark shape at the end of the corridor. It was protruding round the angle of the wall, and it lay on the floor. Bunter's eyes goggled.

It struck him at once that it was the snake's head. It did not move, but that only heightened the impression. Bunter argued that the snake was only waiting for him to come out into the corridor before it tried to eat him. It did not strike the fat junior that the snake would have required a very elastic system to attempt anything in the shape of a Bunter.

The fat junior broke out into a cold perspiration. He did not wish to stay

in Study No. 1, but he was afraid to leave. He was quite convinced that it was the snake he saw. It did not occur to the Owl of the Remove that the corridor was dark, and, in addition, his sight was by no means perfect.

He racked his brains for something to do, and then an idea struck him. There was a heavy cricket-bat standing just inside the door, and the sight of it suggested a way out of the difficulty.

Bunter's hand fastened on the bat, and then, very cautiously, he opened the door a little wider and took aim. For once in his life Bunter threw a straight. The cricket-bat landed on the dark object with a thud that would have caused a snake to have something more than a headache.

"Yaroooogh!"

Bang!

There was a startled yell and the loud report of a rifle. Bunter leapt through the door as though he had been shot himself.

"Help!" he roared. "Yaroooogh! I'm killed! B-b-b-burglars! Fire! Snakes! Grooooooh! Yooooooop!"

Mr. Prout dashed round the corner, the smoking rifle in his hand. He was limping badly.

"Snakes!" he gasped. "Where?" The Owl of the Remove waved a terrified hand towards the ceiling. Words failed him. He did not know where Mr. Prout's next shot would land, but he imagined that it would drill a neat hole in his own carcass.

Bang!

Mr. Prout fired again—at the ceiling this time—and a lump of plaster fell. It caught Bunter on the head with a loud crack.

"Yarooogh!" roared the fat junior, sitting down with a thud. "I'm killed—shot in the heart! Grooooooh! Oooooo-er!"

The Fifth Form master dropped his rifle and ran forward.

"Where are you hit, Bunter?" he asked anxiously, dropping to his knees.

"Groooooh!"

"Where?"

"Oooooo-er!"

Bunter roared lustily. The Owl was not seriously hurt, but he was very frightened. And he wanted sympathy. Inquiring faces were peering out of all the studies.

"Where are you hurt, Bunter!" repeated Mr. Prout more anxiously.

"Yoooop!" howled Bunter. "All over. I'm peppered with bullets. I'm dying! Yaroooogh!"

Bunter was giving a creditable imitation of a stuck pig. Mr. Prout became more and more anxious. He really feared that his short-sightedness had led him into shooting the fat junior and injuring him seriously.

"Bunter—Bunter!" he said hoarsely. "Tell me where you are hurt! Something must be done quickly. Fall yourself together!"

"Yaroooogh!"

"Can you feel the bullet?"

"Groooooh!"

"Where?"

"Ah, over!" roared Bunter. "Thousands of 'em! I'm full of bullets!" There was a hurried step at this end of the passage, and Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch swept round the corner.

"What ever has happened, Mr. Prout?" he demanded quickly.

Mr. Prout turned a white face upward. "I fear there has been an accident, sir!" he said in a low voice. "I thought I saw the snake, and fired. I fear that I hit Bunter!"

"Hit Bunter?" gasped the Head.

"Yaroooogh!" roared the Owl of the Remove, seeking to improve the shaming

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"Snake!" yelled Sammy. Bunter saw the black object land almost at his feet and turn over. He gave a piercing yell, and, dropping his purchases, bolted for the school. "Help!" he roared. "Yoooop! Snakes! I'm bitten! Yaroooooh!" (See Chapter 12.)

boor. "Goooooh! Ooooo—er! Yoooop!"

Mr. Quelch glanced about him quickly. He took in the few details of the scene more coolly than Mr. Prout. He knew Bunter, and he knew that the fat junior did not play on the soft pedal at any time. Bunter was making too much noise for one seriously hurt.

The Form-master looked at the broken ceiling and the pieces of plaster lying on the floor round Bunter. He stepped forward and looked at Bunter's head. There was some powdery plaster in his hair, and a swelling on his head, but that was all.

Bunter roared again, to make sure everyone should know he was suffering untold agony. Mr. Quelch looked at him with scorn.

"Stand up, Bunter!" he snapped. The Owl of the Remove stopped short in the middle of a groan, and blinked in amazement. Mr. Quelch's tone took him off his guard.

"I fear the—the boy is injured!" murmured Mr. Prout anxiously. "I—I certainly did not point the rifle in his direction. I—I fired at the ceiling. But—"

The Remove-master nudged his colleague. He understood Bunter well, and he thought that he saw what the trouble was.

"Stand up!" he snapped. "Eh?" gasped the Owl. "I'm shot all over! I—"

"Stand up!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

To the surprise of everyone except Mr. Quelch, Bunter lumbered to his feet.

"Ooooo!" he groaned. "Yoo—" "Stop that noise, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch firmly. "You are not hurt. A piece of plaster struck you on the head—that is all. I will take you down to the matron for a little attention."

"I—I'm dying, sir!" groaned Bunter. "Lying!" muttered Peter Todd, from the doorway.

Mr. Quelch did not hear the remark, but he was thinking the same thing. He frowned heavily. The worry of the snake was enough to think about without having trouble from Bunter.

"You should not have been out of your study at all, Bunter!" he snapped. "Come with me. I will take you down to the matron now!"

Bunter hesitated for a second, and then followed. Mr. Quelch had taken the wind out of his sails.

There was a short silence as the two left the passage. Doors closed discreetly as the Head glanced about him.

"Er—Mr. Prout!" he said. "Sir?"

The Head handled the stick he was carrying.

"I appreciate your motives, Mr. Prout," he said at length. "But you had better be careful with your gun. I do not think that the snake is still in the building."

"No, sir."

"Perhaps—perhaps you might find a stick just as useful, Mr. Prout," said the

Head. "You had better not use that rifle again, except in absolute necessity."

"Quite so, sir," said the amateur sportsman humbly.

The Head turned.

"I am just going to examine the corridors and dormitories before sending the boys to bed," he said. "You had better accompany me. And, Prout," he finished, with a nervous glance at the abandoned gun on the floor, "I do not think that we shall need firearms!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Little Mistake!

HAS anyone seen the snake?" Skinner asked the question excitedly.

The Remove had just been ushered to their dormitory, and the door closed. There was a buzz of conversation on all sides. Everyone was asking questions.

"I did!" growled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I told you I did!"

"When?"

"I saw it twice!" howled Bunter. "It made a dash at me when it barked out of Wharton's study, and if I hadn't repelled it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By slamming the door!" observed Peter Todd blandly.

Bunter blinked indignantly.

"I reckon I killed the snake the second time I saw it, anyway!" he howled.

"How, Bunt?" asked Peter Todd, with a wink at his chums.

Bunter swelled proudly. He rather fancied himself in the role of snake-killer. "I did it alone, you chaps," he explained. "It wanted some pluck to tackle that venomous reptile single-handed."

"I should think it did!" observed Bob Cherry, with mock seriousness.

"The—brute might have eaten me," explained Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked indignantly as the juniors roared with laughter.

"It would have been a jolly serious thing, certainly!" said Bob Cherry, with a wink.

"It would!" said Bunter. "A very bad day's work!"

Bunter smiled. "Yes; I might have been killed. But I didn't think of that!"

"I didn't mean that," said Bob, interrupting.

"Eh?"

"It would have been a bad day's work for the snake," explained the junior, with a grin. "The poor brute would have been poisoned."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Owl of the Remove stared.

"I'm hanged if I can see anything to laugh about, Cherry!" he howled. "I reckon I did a jolly plucky thing to-night."

"Rather!"

"Of course, it was nothing for a chap like me, I know," admitted Bunter. "I realised that I was the man for the job."

"Naturally!"

"The brute was poking its head round the end of the passage," went on the fat junior, feeling flattered. "I saw its wicked little eyes gleaming, and its thousands of fangs shouting—I mean shooting—in and out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So I grabbed up a bat and thumped it on the head," explained the Owl. "And just at that moment old Prout fired, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter, for some reason which was quite a mystery to Bunter.

"What happened to the s-s-snake?" gasped Bob Cherry at length.

"Dunno!" roared Bunter above the howl of laughter. "Old Prout started chasing me with that blessed gun. He seemed to think I was the snake. I suppose he was wild because he hadn't killed it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared afresh. They did not seem to be half as impressed with the heroic work as Bunter himself.

"Hanged if I can see anything to laugh about!" howled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! No! Quite so, Bunt!" admitted Nugent, the tears running down his face.

"Then, what on earth are you burling about?" roared the Owl of the Remove. Wharton wiped the tears from his eyes.

"You always were a prize duffer, Billy," he explained.

"What?"

"But you didn't kill the snake to-night!"

"What—what do you mean?" gasped the fat junior.

"That wasn't a snake at all that you huffed, you cuckoo," laughed Wharton. "Didn't you see old Prout lumping about?"

"No. Of course I didn't!"

"Well, he was," said Wharton. "And I heard him telling the Head that someone caught him a whack on the ankle."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 611.

with a bat just when he was stalking the snake."

"Kik-kik-kik-caught P-P-P-Prout!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Yes!" laughed Wharton. "He was working along on his stomach, proper Red Indian fashion. Unfortunately, he must have left one foot sticking round the corner. That was the snake you killed!"

"Mum-mum-my hat!" groaned the Owl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter again. Bunter's face was a study in scarlet.

"The fact is, Billy, my boy," said Peter Todd, at length, "you've put your foot in it!"

"Prout put his foot in it, too!" tittered Snoop.

Bunter blinked.

"I don't believe it!" he growled. "That was the snake I killed. Old Prout must have put a bullet through his foot, or something like that! He's jealous!"

"Ha, ha! Furious would be more like it!" grinned Nugent.

Bunter turned away.

"Well, I'm going to get into bed!" he growled. "I don't believe it, but I haven't got time to argue!"

The juniors grinned, and carried on the discussion of the snake problem. It was still a little early for the usual bedtime, and there was a lot to talk about.

The Famous Five were cross-questioned about the snake until the Remove knew all the details of the sensational present which Inky had received.

Inky, naturally, was the most serious. He knew that he had enemies in India, and on at least one occasion they had come to England to injure him. Who had sent the parcel he did not know.

For another thing, it did not really matter. Probably it was the act of a madman.

At the same time, the dusky junior could not forget it, nor could he fail to see that indirectly he was responsible for a grave danger in the school.

It seemed so far that the school was safe, for a thorough search everywhere had failed to reveal the snake. But they could not be absolutely easy in their minds until the reptile was found, alive or dead.

Harry Wharton noted the Indian junior's dejected appearance, and slapped him heartily on the back.

"Cheer up, Inky!" he said. "There's nothing to worry about."

Inky smiled faintly.

"The dangerousness of the esteemed snake is terrific!" he replied. "If I could have knownfully foreseen—"

"Rats! How on earth could you have known that there was a beastly snake in the box?" growled Johnny Bull blunty.

"I expect the blighter is dead now! That box was specially made by a jolly cunning fellow to keep the snake alive. But it won't live long in the fresh air."

"It's a marvel to me why the snake wasn't dead," said Frank Nugent.

Inky shook his head.

"The cleverfulness of some of my esteemed countrymen is great," he said. "The way it was done is not known, but the successfulness of the esteemed and ludicrous plan was—"

"Terrific!" finished the others with a laugh.

Inky smiled.

"The no-goodfulness of worrying is certainly apparent," he said.

The chums turned in soon after that. There was a little more conversation, and then, one by one, they dropped off to sleep.

The Head, however, could not think of sleep then. With the other masters

he was still engaged in the snake-hunt, making absolutely certain by a still more systematic search that there would be no danger when the boys turned out in the morning.

It was not until midnight that he gave up and the other masters turned in. By that time every foot of the building had been explored, and doors and windows were closed to make it impossible for the snake, if it had escaped from the building, to get in again.

Then Dr. Locke turned in, to sleep the sleep of the uneasy. He had done all that he could in the strange responsibility thrust upon him, but he was still perturbed in his mind.

And, although he had only eaten a light supper, he spent the night in a wild land, where he was slaughtering purple snakes wearing top-hats and large boots.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Another Snake!

"YOOOOOOOP!" Billy Bunter emitted the howl.

He was still in bed in the Remove dormitory. Most of the fellows had turned out, and were washing. But Bunter was still snuggled under the blankets.

"Groooogh!" roared Bunter, a moment later.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Turn out, you fat porpoise!" he called. "You'll get another sponge in a minute!"

Wharton laughed. He had finished drying himself, and was watching Bunter.

"No one's chuckled a sponge!" he said.

"Then what on earth is up with the duffer?" asked Bob, lowering the towel.

"Yowl!" came from the bed. "I killed that one! Yaroooh! Stoppit, you beast! I won't be eaten! Yarooogh!"

Bunter started fighting with the bed-clothes furiously.

"He's dreaming!" grinned Peter Todd. "Let him get on with it! It's the only way Bunter will ever kill snakes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The scrimmage continued in the bed. Bunter was evidently having a very bad dream. He was rolling about and groaning, occasionally raising his voice so that the others could hear.

Skinner grinned as a sudden thought struck him. He crossed to Bunter's bed, and, taking up one of his stockings, stuffed another inside it and laid it on the pillow.

Then he took a sponge and squeezed it deftly over Bunter's face.

Bunter's eyes did not open at once. He was a heavy sleeper, and never in a hurry to turn out at the best of times.

The Owl of the Remove blinked and turned his head slowly. Then he suddenly emitted a roar of alarm and leapt out of bed.

"Snakes!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter as Bunter scrambled under the bed and proceeded to roar for help.

"There's a snake on the bed!" howled the fat junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kill it, you chaps!" roared Bunter. "It's after me!"

"Why don't you kill it yourself?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Do kill it, Bull!" implored Bunter. Johnny Bull chuckled.

"I don't see why I should!" he said.

"I'm not a snake killer. You're the expert!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter trembled like a leaf.
"I say, Bull—" he commenced.

"Hallo!"
"I—d-d-don't feel like killing snakes now," confessed Bunter.

"No!"
"I wish you'd kill it, Bull."
"Why don't you do the same as you did last night?"

Bunter groaned.
"I—I don't really believe that I killed the snake," muttered Bunter. "I gave it a nasty bang on the head, and—and I expect it's a bit shirty with me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Johnny Bull grinned, and taking a spring, landed on Bunter's bed. The mattress, naturally, gave, and caught the cowering junior.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull jumped off the bed.
"I've killed the snake, Bunter!" he exclaimed.

"Grough!" responded Bunter, rubbing his head. "I should think you jolly well have! You nearly killed me, too!"

"Now that the danger was over Bunter was not disposed to be thankful. He was full up with his own troubles at once."

"You're a grateful sort of brute!" chuckled Johnny Bull, as the fat junior crawled out from under the bed. "That's all the thanks I get for killing the snake, is it?"

Bunter continued to rub his head.
"There's nothing in killing snakes!" he growled. "I've killed dozens of them!"

"In your sleep!"
Bunter blinked indignantly and turned his head. His eyes fell on the stocking on the pillow. He was fully awake now, and he suddenly realised what he had done!

"Where's the snake?" he gasped, picking up the stocking hurriedly.

"Ha, ha, ha! In your hand!" laughed Bob Cherry.

Bunter turned to the grinning juniors in amazement.

"W-w-wasn't there any snake there at all?" he demanded.

"Only that one!" said Johnny Bull. "But it's dead all right now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter flushed red as the juniors laughed. He realised that his leg had been tucked—happily.

"Then then you didn't kill—kill a snake at all, Bull!" he gasped.

"If it isn't alive now, is it?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"No!"
"And you asked me to kill a snake," pursued Johnny Bull, "so I must have done it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter did not reply. He started dressing in moody silence. His had revealed himself in his true colours for nothing. Not, of course, that that really mattered. Everyone—except Bunter himself—knew that the Owl of the Remove was an ardent coward.

A few minutes later Mr. Quelch came into the dormitory. It was not often that he was seen up there so early. But he had a message from the Head.

"You can come down to breakfast, boys," he said. "There is no danger of seeing the snake in the school. But for a few days, at least, everywhere outside the quad is out of bounds."

"Out of bounds, sir?" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Quelch nodded.
"I am sorry," he said, "but the fact that that venomous creature is at large is a serious matter. If anyone should

see the snake, it is to be reported at once. That is all."

The door closed as Mr. Quelch left the dormitory, and there was a whistle of dismay from the juniors.

"We'll be cooped up like bally prisoners!" growled Skinner. "It's all your fault, Inky!"

"Don't talk such rot!" growled Johnny Bull. "Inky couldn't help the brute being sent to him!"

"It's a bit thick being cooped up like this, though, isn't it?" said Snop peevishly.

Johnny Bull chuckled grimly.
"It would be thicker if someone got bitten!" he snarled.

"There's no fear of that!" said Snop confidently.
"Right!" retorted Johnny Bull. "I'll admit that it wouldn't matter if the snake got hold of you. So perhaps you'll volunteer to lead the way into the field, just to show us that it's safe!"

"Eh?"
"Then, if the snake is in the grass, it'll have a go at you first," explained Johnny Bull easily. "That will give us time to nip for safety."

"Good idea!" said Wharton heartily. "Are all you fellows ready to follow Snop among the grass?"

"Rather!" came the chorus.
Snop went white.

"That's—that's all very well!" he stammered. "But a-suppone I got b-bitten?"

"You said there's no danger!"
"I—I—!"

Johnny Bull grinned.
"Aren't you game?"
Snop shook his head decidedly.

"It's—it's too risky!" he growled.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites laughed. They knew that Snop was plucky enough when someone else was going to take the danger. But Johnny Bull's proposition had silenced the growlers. Skinner & Co. were not game to break the regulation.

The others did not grumble. They realised that the masters had done very pluckily in making sure that the school was safe, and they were willing to abide by the Head's decision.

The juniors trooped down the stairs to Hall. The snake was the discussion on all sides. The majority of the juniors were not actually afraid, but everyone had the uneasy feeling that the reptile might be lurking anywhere at hand waiting to spring at someone.

The more timid fellows—Bunter included—were plainly nervous. They did not go anywhere without someone else, and they talked in rather subdued tones. It was quite evident that the snake was not going to be forgotten yet.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
The Topic of the Hour.

"SOMETHING'S got to be done!"
Harold Skinner voiced the popular feeling in the Common-room.

The juniors all agreed that something had got to be done. They would have been happy, in most cases, if they had been allowed to go out with sticks and hunt for the serpent themselves. It was having to wait until something happened that was getting on the juniors' nerves.

"It's not very jolly," admitted Bob Cherry, putting the feeling into words, "having to wait until the wretched snake chooses to show up! It may still be hiding in the school for all we know, though I don't suppose that that is likely."

"And it's jolly well going to keep us prisoners here for a bit!" added Nugent.
"I'm quite willing to do what Quelch and the Head say. That's only fair,

because they've got to take the responsibility if anything happens to us."

"The truthfulness of that saying is terrific," observed Inky. "The waitfulness for the ludicrous snake is annoyingly great."

Peter Todd scratched his head.
"How do they catch snakes?" he asked. "Isn't it some business with a noose, and bait the other side?"

Inky nodded.
"We might try that scheme in the school," said Peter Todd. "It isn't very promising, but it's something to do."

"It wouldn't work," said Wharton, shaking his head. "The johnnies who catch snakes are experts. We shouldn't do the thing properly."

"I'm afraid we shouldn't," admitted Peter Todd. "But what else is there to do?"

The bell rang for morning school, and the juniors trooped off, leaving the question unanswered. But they were all thinking during the morning of the snake.

Mr. Quelch found the class inattentive, and came down heavily. He was worried himself, and not feeling up to the mark. Lines began to fall with a vengeance.

"Bunter," he said suddenly, "how did the Prince of Orange come to England?"

Bunter, taken unawares, did not pause to think.

"Cause by post in a box, sir—I mean—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The juniors roared. Bunter coloured furiously.

"You will write a hundred lines, Bunter!" snapped the master. "You are not attending."

There was attention after that for about ten minutes. Then, once more, thoughts began to drift from the lesson.

Mr. Quelch noticed that Snop was evidently far away in his thoughts.

"What would have been the best way to kill the rebellion, Snop?" he snapped.

Snop started to his feet.
"Eh? Hit it on the head with a stick, sir!" he blurted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Mr. Quelch frowned more heavily.

"You will write two hundred lines, Snop!" he barked.

"Oh, sir!"
Snop proceeded to rivet his attention on the lesson. But after another quarter of an hour the Form-master noted that Skinner was clearly not attending.

"Skinner!" he snapped. "What was it about the new king that stung the people so?"

"The colour, sir!"
There was another roar of laughter from the class. Mr. Quelch looked more angry than ever.

"Come out here, Skinner!" he snapped.
Skinner came out.

"You are supposed to be at a lesson now," said the master acidly. "I have told you to forget about the snake. If that is the only thing you can think about I will give you another. Hold out your hand!"

Skinner held out his hand reluctantly.
"Swish!"

"Yooooop!" roared the unfortunate junior.

"And the other one!"
"Swish!"

The cane descended again, and Skinner yelped again.

"Now go to your place!" snapped the master.
Skinner, sadder and wiser, returned to his desk rubbing his hands. He had only received two cuts, but that was quite enough from Mr. Quelch in his present frame of mind.

The lesson proceeded without interruption after that. The Removites decided to let the problem of the snake settle itself, or wait till some more favourable opportunity. They foresaw dire consequences to the next one who was not attending.

Dinner-time came, and the conversation was still on the same subject. It was not limited to the Remove. The upper school took things in the same serious way.

"I don't believe there was any snake!" declared Temple obstinately.

"Then what was Prout doing?" demanded Dabney.

"When?"

"This morning," said Dabney. "Didn't you hear that shooting?"

"Was that Prout?"

"Yes. He went out with his gun this morning and filled the field up with lead. He must have used dozens of cartridges."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did he kill the snake?"

Dabney laughed.

"Not that I know of," he said. "He fired at everything that he saw moving. He brought back two dead rabbits and a chicken that got in the way. I think he left the cat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags at the other end of Hall were having an excited discussion on the subject of snakes in general, and the Greyfriars one in particular.

"I tell you," said Dicky Nugent excitedly, "that snakes have got teeth!"

"Rot!"

"They must have," persisted Dicky.

"How do you think they eat their food?"

"Swallow it, of course!"

Dicky Nugent laughed ironically.

"They'd get indigestion if they did that!" he said triumphantly. "How would you feel if you swallowed a lion?"

No answer was given. But there was a laugh. Even the fag minds could not imagine themselves swallowing a lion.

The Removites went on the same old subject of getting rid of the snake.

"We've thought of traps," said Wharton.

"And traps are no good. Now, the snake can't stay in hiding for good, can it?"

"No."

"It will have to come out for food, I suppose," pursued the captain of the Remove.

"That is if it's still in the school," said Peter Todd.

"Well, that's about the only thing that we have to worry about, isn't it?"

"That's all we can do," replied Frank Nugent.

"You've all heard what Prout's been doing all the morning. That's where his gun comes in useful. From the amount of noise he made he ought to have killed fifty snakes."

"Well," pursued Wharton, "if the snake comes out for food, that's our chance!"

"How?"

"We can catch it then. Snakes are fond of sweet things, aren't they?"

"They're supposed to be," said Johnny Bull.

"Then we can put down a saucerful of sugar and wait with a big stick for the snake."

Nugent shook his head.

"It's too dangerous," he said. "Besides, if you were a snake, would you crawl out when there was a chap waiting with a big stick?"

Wharton groaned.

"You're full of obstacles," he said.

"What do you suggest?"

"The snorer idea is all right," said Nugent.

"But it would be a jolly sight better to put down some poison in it."

That would finish the snake off without any sticks being needed."

"Good idea!" said Wharton enthusiastically, clapping Nugent on the back.

"But where are we going to get the poison from?"

Bunter's eyes suddenly glistened. He had forgotten the rat poison in the events of the last few hours, but now it suddenly came back to him.

"I'll sell you the poison," he said.

"That rat poison of mine is guaranteed to kill anything."

"Then that's the stuff we want," said Nugent.

"Shall it out, Bunter?"

Bunter winked. He saw that there was going to be a sudden demand for Ratto after all, and he was not slow to realise his fortune.

"You fellows can buy some, you know," he said with a very business-like air.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Peter Todd on the War-path!

BILLY BUNTER made a bee-line for Study No. 7.

Dinner was just over. Bunter had swallowed his in record time, even for Bunter. And it did not take him long to negotiate his dinner on any occasion.

But before the mind of the Owl of the Remove now loomed the prospect of plenty of money and fat times. He realised that he held in his hand what was going to prove a trump card.

There would be a tremendous demand

for rat poison. That was certain. All the fellows felt the same desire to do something, and with the school plentifully scattered with rat poison the snake—if it was still there, or should choose to return—would have a short life.

Bunter reached the study and nipped inside. He closed the door carefully, and darted to the table. That was where he had left the box of Ratto.

The fat junior stooped and groped under the table. His hand encountered nothing. He dropped to his knees, and as he did so he gave a gasp of dismay.

The supply of Ratto had disappeared. Bunter scrambled to his feet furiously. His face was crimson with anger and dismay, and his little eyes were glinting with disappointment. He searched the study frantically.

Nothing rewarded the fat junior's search. He forgot to look on the top of the cupboard, but he searched everywhere else. Alonzo Todd's collection of books came out of the cupboard into a haphazard mess on the floor. The remainder of the contents of the shelves followed them quickly.

For five minutes, Bunter dashed round the study like an enraged bull, and he did as much damage as that intellectual animal might have been expected to do in the same time.

The floor was strewn with books and papers. The things out of the corners were cast on to the pile, and then rummaged through again. Bunter spared nothing except his own possessions.

Dutton's handbag was burst open, and the contents emptied into the coal-scuttle. Bunter did not pause to think of such small matters as consequences then.

The Owl of the Remove sacked the study as thoroughly as a Hun. He had just finished his orgy of destruction when Peter Todd came into the room.

Bunter blinked through his round glasses.

"What have you done with my Ratto?" he howled.

Peter Todd did not speak. He was too full for words. He eyed the fat junior, and he eyed the study. His face coloured slightly, and looked very set.

Peter Todd did not often get angry. He tolerated the Owl in the study, and did much for his correction when it was necessary. But it was usually done in good humour.

Peter Todd was really angry now.

Bunter quaked before the look that he got. He found his fury rapidly changing to fear.

He began to feel uncomfortable.

"I say, Toddy," he said in a pained voice, "someone has pinched my Ratto!"

Peter Todd bounced forward and grasped the fat junior by the ear.

"Yow! Leggo, you beast!" roared Bunter.

"What on earth have you been doing in here, Bunter?" rapped Todd.

Bunter squirmed in the other's grip.

"Yow! You're hurting!" he roared.

"I was only looking for the rat poison, Toddy!"

"Y-y-y you were wh-what?" gasped Peter Todd.

Bunter wriggled.

"Yow!" he howled. "Someone pinched it, really, Toddy. I left it under the table!"

"And you've upset all the study for that?" roared Peter Todd.

"I—I couldn't find it!" stammered Bunter.

"You fat Hun!" snapped Peter, catching hold of the fat junior and shaking him until his teeth rattled. "What on earth have you turned out the cupboard for, if you left it under the table?"

Bunter shook like a leaf in the other's grasp.

"Yow! bub-bub-brute!" he chattered.

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Crack, crack, crack! Mr. Prout fired at the stocking in rapid succession, and the walls re-echoed with the noise. Then he picked up the lantern and approached the black shape warily. A moment later he gave an angry growl and picked up—the stocking! (See Chapter 12.)

"I b-r-r-r—th-thought y-you might have bub-been—b-r-r-r—having a juj-juj-joke!"

"Joke!" roared Peter. "You've got a fine idea of a joke, you miserable Junker. Look at all my books! And that bottle of ink over the handbag!"

He gave Bunter another shake, and then dropped him to the floor. Bunter blinked dazedly through his spectacles.

"You've nearly killed me!" he howled. "The snake's more important than your rotten bag, isn't it?"

"What?"

"I—I mean," said Bunter hastily, "the snake's got to be killed. I must find the poison!"

"Poison be hanged!" snapped Peter Todd. "The snake's escaped years ago. Why on earth don't you tell a fellow that it's gone before you wreck the study?"

"I—I thought b-that y-you—" stammered Bunter.

Peter Todd caught hold of him and jerked him to his feet. He caught up a cricket-stump from the corner and brought it smartly across the fat junior.

"Yow!" roared the Owl. "Yaroooh!"

"Now mop up that ink, and put every-thing back!" snapped Peter. "Quick!"

"But I must find—"

Smack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Look here, Toddy—"

Smack!

"Yoooop! I say, you know, I must find—"

Smack!

"Grooooh!" yelled the Owl.

Bunter realised the one-sidedness of the position. There was no escape, and Peter Todd, for some unknown reason, was evidently very angry. The Owl saw that there was only one course open.

He started picking the things up furiously off the floor and restoring them to their proper positions.

It took Bunter considerably longer to put the things back than it had taken him to get them out, and Peter Todd kept guard like a Roman taskmaster. The stump was there if Bunter showed any signs of flagging.

Bunter toiled for five minutes. Then he paused, and turned a red, unhappy face to Peter Todd.

"I say, Toddy—"

"Hallo?"

"I—I'll put the rest of the things back when I come back," said Bunter innocently. "I'm just going to find that rat poison. It's urgent!"

"You're not going, Bunt!" said Peter Todd grimly. "Buck up, I'm in a hurry myself to get down to football practice in the quad."

Bunter brushed the perspiration off his face.

"I'm not going on—I can't, really, Toddy!" he said pathetically.

"You're going on strike—eh?" said Peter Todd, brandishing the cricket-

stump. "I reckon my strike will last longer than yours!"

"Here, I say, Toddy—"

Smack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Think of the snake, Toddy!"

Smack!

"Grooh!" yelled the Owl. "Stop it, you bully! Suppose that snake bit you!"

Peter Todd waved the stump threateningly. Bunter did not doubt that it would descend on him again if he did not carry out orders.

"I hope it does bite you!" snapped Bunter savagely as he picked up a handful of books and stacked them furiously in the cupboard. "I hope it jolly well eats you!"

Peter Todd grinned. But he did not lower the stump. He watched Bunter make good the damage he had done.

The Owl was crimson and winded when he finished. But the study was certainly looking better for his efforts.

He watched until the last thing was put back in the cupboard and the door closed. Then he lowered the stump.

"Now you can go, Bunt!" he said. "Don't let me find you making the study a bear-garden any more."

"Eh?" gasped Bunter.

"If you want to have a good game with yourself," said Peter Todd serenely, "chase your shadow. But don't play 'touch' round the table any more."

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"I was looking for the rat poison!" howled Bunter, as he rolled towards the door. "You've jolly well wasted my time. I expect about a dozen of the fellows have been bitten by now!"

"Shouldn't be at all surprised!" grinned Peter Todd, as the door closed on the Owl, and he heard the footsteps of the fat junior shuffling quickly away.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Lines for Bunter!

BUNTER rolled into the quad still looking flushed and furious. The majority of the fellows were there, walking up and down, for the crest of the school ground was naturally out of bounds.

"When's the poison-shop going to open, Bunt?" asked Wharton as he spotted the Owl.

Bunter blinked. A sudden suspicion struck him that Wharton was the guilty party.

"You'd better hand it over, Wharton!" he snapped.

"Eh?"

"I know jolly well that you've pinched it," pursued Bunter. "It's no use looking so innocent!"

"Many hat!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"If you don't hand it over at once," finished Bunter, "I shall have to report you to Mr. Quelch. The snake will be a danger to the school until my poison kills it. I—Yarough! Whassermarrer?"

Bunter found his ear caught in a sharp,

Bunter wandered round disconsolately at a distance. He made inquiries on all hands. But no one was willing to admit that they had stolen the precious rat poison. The majority threatened to kick Bunter if he did not find it quickly and give them some.

The Owl of the Remove was still following up the fruitless inquiries, and eating his heart out over the opportunity of business which he was missing, when Sammy Bunter, his minor, approached him.

"I say, Billy—" greeted the lag. Bunter frowned on his minor. He did not reply. But Sammy Bunter was not repelled as easily as that.

"I say Billy," said Sammy, in a confidential tone, "about that rat poison. What about going halves?"

"Eh?" snorted the Owl of the Remove. "I'll help you sell it if you like!" said Sammy readily.

Bunter eyed his junior suspiciously. But it was evident that Sammy was innocent of the theft. He would not be asking to go shares if the Ratto was in his possession. His major realised that.

"Clear off, Sammy!" he snapped. "What?" howled the lag. "Are you going to log it yourself?"

Billy Bunter nodded complacently. "Then it's a jolly rotten thing to do," growled the lag. "I'll tell the fellows it's no good!"

The Owl scratched his head thoughtfully. "I tell you what, Sammy," said the

I should make him give it up, and share it out among the others."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. "I wonder if Sammy's hit on the truth!" mused Frank Nugent.

"Of course I have!" retorted the lag. Wharton's brow furrowed with thought.

It certainly seemed strange that Bunter should have been robbed of the Ratto. The thief would be certain to be found out if he attempted to sell it.

And why had Bunter exchanged Wharton, of all unlikely people? It seemed rather probable to the juniors that Bunter minor had hit on the truth, and Billy Bunter was hoping to make the fellows really clamour for the rat poison before he chose to offer it for sale at inflated prices.

"Let's get hold of Bunter," said Johnny Bull. "We'll soon find out what his game is."

The Famous Five crossed the quad, leaving Sammy Bunter grinning. Sammy did not show much of the brotherly love for his senior which he ought to have shown. If Billy refused to let him share in the profits, it would delight him to see Billy in hot water—the better the better, to Sammy's way of thinking.

Bunter was just waiting for an opportunity of accusing Fisher T. Fish of the theft when the Famous Five swooped upon him. Bunter took a swift backward step to avoid them, and tripped over himself. He sat down heavily.

"Yarough!" he roared. Wharton grinned as the Owl scrambled to his feet.

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violet pinch. He gave a sudden yell of alarm.

"Now say all that again, Bunter," said Harry Wharton grimly.

Bunter wriggled desperately.

"Yah! Leggo my ear!" he roared. "You know what I'm talking about, you beast, Wharton!"

"I'm hanged if I do!" said the captain of the Remove bluntly. "What are you accusing me of pinching?"

"My Ratto!" retorted Bunter. "Yah! Leggo, you bully! I'll tell Quelch about this!"

"You don't mean to say that you've lost it?" demanded Nugent.

Bunter blinked.

"No, I haven't lost it!" he roared. "Somebody's pinched it!"

"And you think I've got it, eh?" demanded Harry Wharton.

Bunter nodded, as far as the hand on his ear would allow him to.

"Then you can go and tell Quelch," said Wharton, with a laugh. "What do you think I want your rotten poison for?"

Bunter backed away as his ear was released. He straightened his glasses, and blinked with the air of an injured martyr.

"If you haven't got it, Wharton," he said, "who has?"

Wharton shrugged.

"You have—" commenced Bunter. "Whassermarrer?"

The Owl of the Remove turned and fled as the Famous Five moved forward as one man. It was evident, even to Bunter, that they intended to bump him.

Owl of the Remove in a more friendly tone, "you can help me find it if you like."

"What? Have you lost it?" demanded Sammy.

Billy Bunter nodded.

"I'll stand you a good feed if you find it," he said.

"Halves!" said Sammy firmly.

"No fear!"

Sammy Bunter blinked angrily. A sudden suspicion struck him.

"I don't believe you've lost it at all," he growled. "You're just saying that to get me out of the way. You know I can't find it while you've got your fat claws on it."

The Owl of the Remove made a threatening grab at his minor. But Sammy was expecting the move, and he backed away.

"No you don't!" he said. "I heard some of the fellows saying that you were pretending you'd lost it. You're only doing it to force the price up. You're a poison cornerer, Yah!"

Sammy dashed away hurriedly as his major dashed at him, and he did not stop until he had placed a good distance between him and his brother. Then he approached the Famous Five.

"I say, Wharton," he said plaintively, "I want to tell you something."

"Oh?"

"Billy hasn't lost the rat poison!" said Sammy confidently.

"He hasn't?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"No fear," said Sammy confidently. "He's only pretending to have lost it so that he can force the price up. See? If I was a big fellow like you, Wharton,

"That's the way," he said. "Always stand up when you're spoken to by gentlemen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked.

"I suppose you're come to confess, Wharton?" he said.

Wharton smiled.

"Not at all!" he said. "We've got an idea that we've found out your pretty little plan. You're trying to corner the Ratto."

"Did Sammy tell you that?" demanded Billy Bunter wrathfully.

The Famous Five exchanged glances.

"His affectionate brother's given him away all right," said Bob Cherry. "Yes, we've had the information all right, Bunt. Now, you'd better shell out the poison!"

"But I haven't got it!" shouted Bunter.

"Rot!"

"I tell you I haven't!" repeated Bunter in a shriller tone.

"Bump him!" said Bob Cherry ruthlessly. "It'll bring him to his senses quicker than anything else!"

Bunter found himself caught up in five pairs of strong hands. He roared for assistance.

"Help!" he shouted. "I tell you I haven't got the stuff at all! I don't—Yarough!"

Bump!

Bunter smote the ground.

"Still going to keep it, Bunt?"

"I don't know anything—Grough!"

Wharton regarded the Owl of the Remove thoughtfully as he lay in the quad groaning. He had been bumped twice,

and he still stuck to the same story. It seemed that for once Bunter might be telling the truth.

"Perhaps he has lost it," said Wharton at length. "Anyway, he's had enough now. But that will repay him for calling me a thief!"

"Ratto!"
Bunter scrambled to his feet and made a dash for the school. He was sore and disappointed. His inquiries had done nothing to bring the Ratto to light.

He hurried towards Study No. 7; but as he came in sight of the door he suddenly paused as though thunderstruck.

Dutton was standing in the doorway with a friendly smile on his face, and a tin of Ratto in his hand, pouring a generous supply into a saucer held by Dabney of the Fourth.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Does a Roaring Trade!

"MUM-MUM-MY hat!"

Billy Bunter gasped.
That Dutton, of all people, should be in possession of his Ratto was a shock for the Owl of the Remove. But that he should be apparently serving it out free to one and all completely took the wind out of his sails.

"Thanks, Dutton!" said Dabney. "I'm much obliged—"

Bunter dashed forward and snatched the saucer out of the Fourth-Former's hand.
"Gimme that!" he gasped. "That's mine!"

"What die—who the—?" commenced Dabney.

"I tell you that's my stuff, and Dutton's stolen it!" howled the Owl. "I bought that Ratto at a tremendous price. I've been looking everywhere for it."

Dabney stared wonderingly at the Owl as he turned to Dutton, who was regarding the scene with an equally perplexed air.

"What are you doing, Bunter?" asked Dutton.

"D-doing!" stammered Bunter, crimson with wrath. "Why, you beastly thief, you've stolen my poison!"

"Thief!" echoed Dutton, catching the most important word of the speech. "Be careful what you're saying, Bunter!"

"You are a thief!" repeated Bunter. Dutton flushed.

"Then take that!" he snapped, and dealt the fat junior a ringing blow in the face.

"Yarooogh!" roared the Owl, springing back.

Dutton, thoroughly roused, was not slow to follow up the advantage. But Dabney stepped between the two Removites.

"Here, what's this all about?" he asked. "What do you mean, Bunter, by saying that it's your rat poison? I certainly heard a yarn this afternoon that you had some stuff like this."

Bunter explained things furiously. Dabney began to see daylight. He turned to Dutton.

"I say, old man," he said, "did you buy this stuff?"

"Who's a muff?" demanded the deaf junior warmly.

"No," said Dabney, shaking his head; "Bunter says that he bought that Ratto!"

"Fought for it?"

Dabney shook his head, and set to work to explain patiently. Dutton did not quite understand in the end, but he saw that by some means or other Bunter had a better claim to the rat poison than he had. He walked away with Dabney at length, wearing a very aggrieved air, but

leaving Bunter in possession of the precious powder that was going to place him in a land of plenty.

The Owl of the Remove feasted his eyes on the tin which he had almost given up for lost, stolen, or strayed. He did not understand the exact effect of the marvellous chemical. Ratto was quite an excitement as far as the poisoning of snakes was concerned. For all Bunter knew, it might increase their venom.

But Bunter was willing to risk little things like that. He saw a land flowing with milk and honey—or, rather, money—stretching away into the distance of his imagination.

It was just then that the bell rang for afternoon school. Bunter hastily hid his precious poison in a corner of the room and made his way down to the class-room.

Bunter was literally bubbling over with excitement. He wanted to tell everyone at once, only, Mr. Quelch was in the room. Bunter sat down with a vacant look on his face which told Mr. Quelch at once that he was not attending.

Mr. Quelch's mind was still full of the morning's lessons. There had been too much inattention already that day, and he was resolved to check it at once. The lesson had not been in progress for more than five minutes before he pounced on Bunter.

"Bunter," he rapped, "who was it discovered America?"

"Dutton, sir!" said Bunter promptly.

"Er—I mean—er—"

"You will write one hundred lines, Bunter, for inattention!" snapped the Form-master.

Bunter followed the lesson moodily for a few minutes. But he could not forget the discovery of his poison. His thoughts had turned to it again when the master sprang another question on him.

"Bunter," he snapped, "where did I say these unfortunate emigrants were pouring out?"

"Eh! Oh, into a saucer, sir!" said Bunter, flushing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The class roared with laughter. The Form-master's face set.

"Bunter!" he mapped.

"Ye-es, sir!" muttered the Owl, standing up.

"You will not have to write those lines!"

"Thank you, sir!" said the Owl, with a fat smile. "I am afraid that I was not thinking—"

"But you will come out here instead!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter, his face falling.

"At once, Bunter!"

Bunter went out to the front of the class reluctantly. Mr. Quelch picked up a cane, and eyed the fat junior grimly.

"Hold our your hand!"

Bunter extended a dirty paw.

Swish, swish!

"Yarooogh!" roared the Owl.

"Cease that ridiculous noise, Bunter!" rapped the master, as the class tittered.

"The other one now!"

Bunter carried out the order with more reluctance. The cane descended again in two smart cuts.

"Yooogh! Oooogh! Groooogh!"

Bunter roared like a Redskin on the trail. He went back to his seat wringing his hands and looking the picture of misery. Mr. Quelch had given him four of the best, and that was sufficient warning to anyone—Bunter included—that no nonsense would be tolerated.

There was attention for the rest of the

afternoon. When tea-time came Bunter's hands were still sore and smarting, but he made a gallant effort at tea in Hall, and then went up to Study No. 7 to help Peter Todd out with his tea.

"So you've found the poison, Bunty?" greeted Peter, as the Owl came in and closed the door.

Bunter nodded.

"You can buy some if you like!" growled the Owl.

Peter laughed.

"I don't like!" he said. "You're in this study. We shall rely on you putting a saucerful outside the door. It's as much in your interests as ours."

Bunter blinked.

"Just for someone to pinch—eh?" he said peevishly.

"Well, that wouldn't matter, would it?" asked Peter innocently. "You've got plenty more. Suppose I put some down, and they pinched mine?"

"I'd always sell you another supply, Toddy," said Bunter, with a friendly smile.

"Ha, ha, ha! You wouldn't, Bunty!"

Bunter did not press the point. He knew that there was little prospect of doing business with Peter Todd. He ate his tea in silence. He was certain that there would be customers later.

The Owl of the Remove was not wrong there. After tea the fellows began to turn up for supplies of Ratto. They brought saucers with them, knowing that Bunter would not be likely to part with a whole tin of the precious poison.

After a considerable amount of bargaining, Bunter reduced the price of Ratto from 2s. a saucer to 8d. That was absolute profiteering, considering the price which Bunter had paid in the first place. But it could not be helped under the circumstances.

Bunter's eyes gleamed as the sixpences began to jingle in his pockets. Fellows from all the Forms came to purchase a supply of the snake exterminator, considering that, by spreading it all over the school, they were bound to finish the menacing career of the snake.

Fisher T. Fish was the only one who attempted to do business.

"I guess I want a tin of Ratto, Bunter," he said.

"Ten bob!" said Bunter promptly.

"I kinder calculate I'm not a jay like that," said Fisher Tarleton Fish with a wink. "I'm mighty keen on exterminatin' this pest. I want a large supply to make sure."

"Ten bob!" repeated Bunter.

"I guess half-a-dollar is a good price," said Fish. They always give a discount on a quantity."

Bunter blinked.

"And you'd sell it and make about ten bob—eh?" he sniffed.

Fisher T. Fish smiled.

"Waal, it's a business proposition," he drawled. "You may not sell any more. I guess you can take it or leave it."

"Leave it!" said Bunter promptly.

Fisher T. Fish scowled and walked away, leaving the fat junior grinning. Bunter had made enough to be independent for a bit.

There was nearly ten shillings in coin of the realm in his pocket, and Mrs. Mimble had just received a new supply of foodstuffs. The thought of it suggested to Bunter that he might close the shop for a few minutes before the good lady's stock was sold out.

He hid the Ratto in the corner again, and, closing the study door, made a bee-line for the larkshop.

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER:

Sammy Bunter's Revenge.

SAMMY BUNTER lurked in the darkened quad.

Sammy was not easy in his mind. He had a wholesome respect for snakes in glass cases, and a more wholesome one for snakes that were not caged at all. But Sammy was desperately hungry, and the thought of his brother's wealth had led him to take great risks.

The fat gag clutched something dark and long in his hand as he crouched out of sight.

This black thing was a stocking, suitably padded to represent a snake.

He waited until a familiar figure appeared in the lighted doorway. It was Billy Bunter, and Billy Bunter was loaded with the good things that Mrs. Mumble could provide for ready money. Sammy watched as his major came nearer. He waited his time and then threw the stocking right in Bunter's path.

"Snake!" he yelled.

Bunter saw the black object land almost at his feet and turn over. He gave a piercing yell, and, dropping his purchases, bolted for the school.

"Help!" he roared. "Yooooooh! Snakes! I'm bitten! Yaroooooooh!"

Sammy Bunter grinned and made a dash. In the space of a few seconds he had grabbed up his brother's food supply and hurried for the wood-shed.

Billy Bunter dashed into the school, roaring as though he had been bitten. There was an alarm on all sides at once.

Fellows who had been out in the quad dashed indoors quickly and made their way to the studies.

A couple of minutes passed, and then Mr. Prout appeared on the scene. He carried a lantern in one hand and his rifle in the other.

He held the lantern high, and by its dim light discerned a long, black shape. His hand trembled slightly with excitement as he lowered the lamp and sighted his rifle.

Crack! Mr. Prout fired.

Crack, crack, crack!

Mr. Prout fired at the stocking in rapid succession, and the walls re-echoed with the noise. But the master was determined to make a good job of it. Not until he had fired half a dozen cartridges did he stop. Then he picked up the lantern and approached the black shape warily.

A moment later he gave an angry growl and picked up—the stocking. He eyed it for a moment in amazement, and then strode angrily back to the school.

The news of the success of Mr. Prout's hunting spread quickly. The fellows roared with laughter.

Mr. Prout, however, took a different view. He sought Bunter out, and, with the stocking in one hand and the rifle in the other, led the way to the Head's study.

The Head's face set grimly.

"This is very serious, Mr. Prout," he said, as the Fifth Form master finished. "You say that this is the object from which Bunter fed?"

"Yes, sir, I must say that it looked very much like a snake in the dark," explained the master. "I was taken in myself. In fact, I fired several rounds at it."

The Head stroked his chin.

"Exactly—exactly!" he said. "Is there any name on the stocking?"

Mr. Prout looked.

"S. Bunter," he read.

Bunter stared. He flushed crimson.

"Mum-mum my mum-mum-minor!" he gasped.

"Exactly!" said the Head. "Bunter, I am sorry that you have been alarmed in this manner. You are the victim of a very foolish joke, the perpetrator of which I shall punish severely. You may go now."

The fat junior paused.

"Can—I can I be compensated for the grub—food, sir, which I have lost, sir?" he asked plaintively.

"Your brother will be made to give it up, Bunter."

"But he'll have scoff—eaten it all by now, sir," explained Bunter.

"Then that cannot be helped," said the Head. "Mr. Prout, will you send Bunter minor to me, please?"

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Prout left the study and commenced a search for Bunter minor. He called all the prefects to help him. But it was not until nearly an hour later that Sammy Bunter was found. He was still in the wood-shed, and he was just polishing off the last crumbs of Bunter's delicacies when the stern hand of Wingate fell on him.

"Bunter!"

"Yes, Wingate?" gasped the fat, jumping up.

"The Head wants you at once."

"Oh crumbs!" mumbled Sammy.

Sammy made his way to the Head's study reluctantly. He had called the tune, and now he had to pay the piper.

The Head was unusually severe. Sammy had played a very foolish trick, and the consequences might have been more serious than they were if the Owl of the Remove had happened to suffer from a weak heart. Sammy received a severe lecture, and then the coming of his life.

He left the Head's study sore in body and weeping copiously. But there was no sympathy for him. His major met

him in the corridor and helped him on his way with a brotherly foot.

As Bunter major reached the end of the passage, with the object of administering further chastisement to his brother, he paused to watch Gosling. The porter was groping behind a pipe that ran along the wall near the floor.

"What's up?" asked Bunter curiously.

Gosling grunted.

"I found something rather hinterest—ing," he observed. "Look 'ere!"

He clutched at something, and drew out the long, sinuous form of a snake. Bunter gave a roar of alarm, and prepared to fly; but Gosling turned quickly.

"Don't you start a-hollerin'!" he growled. "It's as dead as mutton now, and as 'bin for some time!"

Bunter approached timidly to view the body of the dreaded snake.

"Then my poison had killed it!" he exclaimed.

"No fear!" growled Gosling. "I knewed as 'ow we'd find it 'idden some-where in the school. If you wants my opinion, it just crawled out'er its box and died there."

Gosling's discovery set everyone's mind at ease again. The danger of the snake had actually been a myth, for, as Gosling opined, the reptile died within a few minutes of regaining its liberty. But, of course, no one had known that, and the Head and all the masters had certainly taken risks valiantly when first faced with the hidden peril.

The Famous Five held a little tea to celebrate the event the following day. They were just in the middle of it when Trotter, the page, came in with a brilliant-coloured envelope in his hand.

"Telegram for Master Singh!" he announced.

"The thankfulness is terrific," said Inky, rising and taking the envelope.

He slit open the flap and read the slip of paper inside. As he did so, he smiled, and threw the wire to Wharton. The captain of the Remove read it aloud:

"Hurree Singh, Greyfriars School, England," he said. "Madman has sent poisonous snake in box. Do not open. Has confessed crime."

Frank Nugent laughed.

"It's too late, Inky, to do much good," he said, "but I suppose it has taken a weight off your mind?"

"The littleness of the esteemed weight is certainly—"

"Terrific!"

THE END.

(Don't miss next Monday's Grand Long Complete Story of Greyfriars School, entitled THE "HERALD'S" RIVAL! By FRANK RICHARDS.)



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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Harry Rhodes, a miner and amateur boxer, of Lezbrough, a mining village, meets Joshua Martin, the manager and principal backer, of Anthony Hanna—Cast-Iron Tony—a wonderful Scottish light-weight boxer, who has come to Lezbrough to train. Harry lives with an uncle, James Rhodes, who has trained him, and who had himself been a boxer years before. He had left the ring through some tragedy of which Joshua Martin knows the facts, much to James Rhodes' alarm.

Harry Rhodes wins a competition at a small local gymnasium one night, and issues a challenge to anyone in the place to fight three rounds.

The challenge is accepted by a stranger, who climbs into the ring.
(Note read on.)

A Startling Discovery.

ALERT, smiling, confident, the man stepped close to Harry.
"Get yer gloves on, kid, an' bring a pair for me," he said.

He was a stranger—a fellow whom Harry Rhodes had never seen before; but he carried a left ear of the variety known in boxing parlance as a "cauliflower," and his wide grin showed a couple of gaps in his yellow teeth. About him there was something definitely suggestive of the professional boxer.

"Right you are," returned Harry, after a long glance at the fellow. And again he pushed his way towards the dressing-room.

He had the feeling that he was going to experience some boxing very different from that he had already gone through that night.

And as he hurried into his fighting-toga he could hear the thundering shouts of delight from the crowd, who, too, had got hold of the idea that they were about to witness something out of the ordinary, something that was going to make up for the excitement they believed they had lost.

Harry was holding out his hands for an acquaintance to tie the tapes of his gloves, when Ben Moseley came hurriedly into the little room. The Yorkshireman's face was serious.

"Does' the know who your feller is who's took yer challenge, Rhodes?" he whispered.

"No; never seen him before!"

"Well," said Ben weightily, "'tis Tony Hanna—Cast-Iron Tony 'they call him. He's a Scottish champion, an' he's come down 'ere trainin' for a big fight—soon day afore yesterday. He's got the drink

in him a bit, an' they do say as he's a holy terror when he's like that!"

Harry whistled.

"Ay, the weel may!" commented Ben. "He'll kill tha!"

And just then another man came quickly up to Harry. It was his uncle.

"Do you know who this man is, Harry, who's going to fight you?" he cried.

"Ben's just told me it's Hanna, who's to fight for the championship, uncle!"

"That's so, and you musn't do it, Harry!"

Harry looked his relative squarely in the face.

"But I offered the challenge, and he took it up," he said quietly.

"All the same, you are not to go on. It'd be murder!" cried James Rhodes.

"I don't think so, uncle. And, anyway, you must look now."

"You must! You shall not!" began Rhodes excitedly. "He'll kill you! He—"

"Uncle"—there was a look in Harry's eyes his relative had never before seen—"uncle, I must go on. Do you want me to prove myself a coward? Come, I shall be all right. I must go. Hear them shouting! Cheer up!"

Alone, James Rhodes stood trembling, his face covered with his hands, and their trembling indicated the fierceness of the agitation that gripped him. The man had an imagination, and he was seeing things that brought fear—ghastly fear into his heart, despite the proof that he had given in his younger days, many a time and oft, that he was one who knew not what fear meant.

But now it was different. He had heard of Tony Hanna before this. His knowledge of the game was not limited to teaching Harry, and he knew what manner of man was the Scot, especially when, as Ben Moseley had said, "he had the drink in him." And he was afraid.

Presently a sob broke from him. Down came his hands, and his eye looked forth, wide and haggard.

"My punishment—my real punishment!" he whispered, horror in his voice. "It has come at last, as I knew it would!"

Through the open doorway came a thunderous outburst of excited applause, the mad cheering of lusty-throated men wild with excitement; the noisy clapping of hard palms beating together; the furious stamping of heavy-shod feet that could not be kept still.

Within the twelve-foot ring—ring far too small for Harry Rhodes to have the faintest chance of escaping the merciless punishment that such as Cast-Iron Tony,

in his present condition, would assuredly mete out to any opponent though there was nothing at stake—assuredly things were happening that chilled James Rhodes' blood.

A shudder ran through his sturdy frame.

"On him—it's on him it's fallen," he whispered. "And I have prayed that it might not be so—that he might be spared!"

He seemed to have become suddenly an old and broken man.

Outside the clamour had died away, followed by a stillness the listening man found even more harrowing to his nerves than the noise. But the stillness was not complete, for now upon his dull ears sounded the heavy thudding of padded gloves, the light, quick slap of rubber-soled shoes on the rough floor.

Abruptly the shouting broke out again. And amid it, above it, a single voice arose, a voice that Rhodes recognised as belonging to Tom Boughen, Harry's first victim of the night.

"Oh, well done, Harry!"

James Rhodes crept softly into the gymnasium.

Making an Enemy.

AS a boxer Tony Hanna had one fault, and it was not a trivial fault, either; although, up to the present stage of his career, it had not materially affected him to his disadvantage.

It was that he refused to take his training seriously enough.

Other boxers trained hard and conscientiously for their fights; Tony Hanna seemed to think that the same necessity did not apply to him.

So far, events had seemed to show that he was right. He took liberties that no other man would have dreamed of taking; but he could point to the long series of uninterrupted victories in his record, and frequently did so when his manager attempted to remonstrate with him, as though his success were the proof that his contention was right—that he didn't need the stern system of self-denial under which other men placed themselves when preparing for a contest.

Not that he refused to work. Far from it. On some days he was a perfect glutton, and then his sparring partners were in for a bad time. Road work he did not care for, nor greatly for the ball-punching and shadow-boxing, in which most boxers indulge. He had no use,

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likewise, for the special strengthening exercises others go through.

"The finest and only training for boxing that a boxer wants is boxing itself," he used to declare, and he was apt to model his training chiefly along that line.

In a way, he was right. But he was only partly right, but did not know it.

Again, he was not methodical or constant in his preparation work. When the fit took him he worked like a demon. Those were the days when the men who boxed with him were perfectly convinced they earned a bigger salary than Joshua Martin paid them, and talked of finding a softer job. But there were days when he elected to do little or no work, when no persuasion could move him, when he would take a rod and line and go to the nearest river and fish for hours on end, or else get on his motor-bike and go careering about the country at a gait that brought him the close attention of the local police force.

But he was a hard man to train, self-willed, impulsive, and obstinate as a mule, deaf to all reason and argument.

In his veins there was ripe blood, which accounted for the dark hue of his skin, and along with the courage that strain brings with it was also the Roman's utter recklessness and defiance of all attempt at authority.

But his greatest weakness was that from which suffered that wonderful fighter of the olden time—Dutch Sam—who once boasted that "he could train on three glasses of gin three times a day."

Not that Hanna did so, but there were times when he certainly permitted himself an indulgence which resulted in a loss of self-control and foolish behaviour.

Hearing of the competition to be held at Ben Moreley's, he had told his manager that he intended going to see it. There was no harm in that. But Joshua Martin was more than alarmed when he saw Tony step into the ring and accept the challenge given by Harry Rhodes.

He made his way to Tony while Harry had gone to change.

"You surely don't mean it, Tony," he expostulated. "You ain't goin' to fight."

"I'm not," grinned Tony Hanna. "But this bloke ups me his challenge, an' I'm going to take it up—see? Good as asked for a hiding, he did, an' I'm going to see as he gets it."

"But suppose—"

Martin stopped hurriedly, catching the look in Hanna's eyes. They flashed wickedly.

"Suppose he gives me a licking, you was going to say," he sneered. "That's what you mean—eh?"

And that settled it. Martin realised his mistake. No power on earth now would keep Tony Hanna out of the ring.

"Been a long time gettin' them gloves, kid?" jeered Tony, when Harry appeared in the ring. "Know who I am now—eh?"

"I've just heard. But that—"

"Well," Hanna laughed—"well, maybe when you wakes up agin' it'll mean you feel better to know who's given ye th' sleep-punch I got waiting for ye!"

To which Harry made no reply.

To be sure, his heart was beating somewhat faster than it had when he prepared to square up to Tom Boughen. He was more excited, but it would have been a lie to say that the lad was feeling scared at having so terribly formidable an opponent as Cat-Iron Tony. What, ever was coming to him, he was going to take it like a man!

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He had little time to think. A self-constituted holder of the watch called "Time!" and then Harry was walking across the ring, gloved hands outstretched. He felt something against the end of his gloves—the merest touch—and then a blow like a stone from a catapult took him on the right cheek—a blow that he had not made the faintest attempt to guard.

That was generally the way in which Tony Hanna began his glove fights.

For the next twenty seconds Harry Rhodes had but the vaguest notion of what he was doing. He hadn't been given a chance to do anything by intention. The raising of his hands to try to guard the perfect avalanche of blows that descended upon him was purely mechanical. It was simply the boxer's instinct asserting itself.

As he staggered back from the initial unlooked-for blow, Tony leaped after him, slamming in blows right and left without cessation and with terrifying force. If Harry had any impression at

touch of the spur upon a mettled horse, and he responded to it with the readiness of the blood animal.

Escape from the ropes he must, or be pounded into insensibility. Abruptly he side-stepped, shooting out his left glove automatically as his right foot touched the ground. It was a low shot, and it connected. He felt the hard impact of the glove, the give of his opponent's body that followed it. He heard Hanna grunt.

That was the blow observed by Tom Boughen, which called forth the young miner's cheer for Harry and drew James Rhodes, his uncle, from the outer room. It did more than that. It halted Tony Hanna for two seconds, long enough for Harry to draw a deep breath and prepare himself to carry on.

When Tony leaped in again he found an opponent ready for him, on guard alert, and a trifle nettled. Harry hadn't lost his temper—that fatal mistake of the boxer—but he was angry. The Scot's vicious first blow, whizzed in without a pretence of making the customary preliminary handshake; the ferocity with which he had attacked, had awaked in Harry that touch of "devil" a fighter must own if he is to do any good in the ring.

Instead of being a man whose reputation was known all over the country, a boxer of championship class, Tony Hanna meant no more to Harry at that moment than any local lad with whom he was accustomed to put on the gloves.

So that when Tony jumped in with a wicked swinging right, he was coolly met by a straight left, swift and forceful, and, as the straight-arm blow will get in every time before the round-arm swing, it was Harry's fist that landed first.

"Timing" had been one of the precepts James Rhodes had most carefully impressed upon his pupil, and Harry judged his counter to a nicety. Also, he knew how to put the whole weight of his body behind his blows. Stepping in a couple of inches as he hit, he inclined his head forward, and his glove landed squarely in the professional's face. Tony's wicked swing just passed over the other's ducked head.

It was a glorious counter, and James Rhodes, on tiptoe, just able to see over the heads of those packed in front of him, felt a thrill of joy run through him. For Hanna was not only stopped dead, but his head was driven back, and he staggered most obviously.

A yell made the rafters ring again. Harry Rhodes might not be a general favourite; the feeling of the spectators was certainly not in his favour; but the Tykes are good sportsmen—the best—and they appreciated fully the cleverness of that counter.

Generalship counts for much in the ring, but it is not given even to some good boxers to know when or how to make the best use of a sudden advantage. But James Rhodes had been a sound teacher.

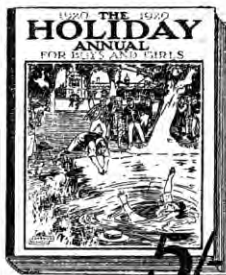
"Go in, Harry!" he yelled involuntarily.

But the advice was unnecessary. Even as he shouted, though Harry did not catch the words, he was doing what he was told to do. Up came his right foot, and straight as a piston-rod his right arm shot forward, and a smashing drive to the body, which Hanna made no attempt to guard, sent him back four feet.

"Go it! Go it!" came a tornado of shouts.

And Harry did. He was after Hanna like a flash, piling in blows, and sending his opponent still further back, until the ropes prevented further retreat. And

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all, it was that he was being attacked simultaneously by half a dozen antagonists.

His head was singing like a kettle. He was partly blinded and half-dazed. He had no chance of trying to hit back. Before that cyclonic rush he went back, pounded back simply by the weight and fury of the attack.

Then he felt the flump and scrape of the rope against his back, and he realised dimly that further retreat was impossible. But the whirlwind of blows did not let up. If anything they seemed to be coming even faster, always aimed at his head. But none as yet had squarely landed.

It was then that had broken from the onlookers that storm of mad cheering which had brought such terror to James Rhodes. It was deafening. The noise seemed to reach the low roof of the room and recoil, drowning the incessant thudding of Hanna's gloves.

And then Harry Rhodes became conscious of another sound.

His opponent was laughing, softly yet viciously.

The sound acted upon him as does a



Harry felt something at the end of his glove—the merest touch—and then a blow like a stone from a catapult took him on the right cheek, a blow that he made not the faintest attempt to guard.

then he lowered his chin and stood in close for half-arm hitting at the body.

Never surely had a champion found the tables so completely turned on him.

Battling desperately, Hanna was surely getting the worst of it. But he did not content himself with covering up. More than once he got in a shrewd blow; but the worst of these Harry contrived to take on his elbows. Until he suddenly felt his left wrist unmistakably seized and dragged down, and almost simultaneously he felt a sudden shock in the back and, an instant later, a feeling of sickness came upon him.

It was a trick, one that a strict referee would not have permitted, but it served Hanna's purpose. As he landed his kidney-punch Hanna twisted away from the ropes, and escaped into the middle of the ring.

A sinister object he presented. There was blood on his nose and lips, his dark skin was suffused with a dusky red, and his eyes were like those of some wild animal. Small wonder that it was said of him that, when roused, he terrified his opponent.

And roused he was with a vengeance. Without expecting it, he had caught a regular Tarlar in this country lad whom he had expected to demolish within a

minute. Gritting his teeth, he sailed in to carry out his intention.

But Harry Rhodes would have none of it. The kidney blow had weakened him; the nausea was still with him. He contented himself with fighting on the defence, retreating, blocking, ducking, and slipping, careful to prevent being again pinned upon the ropes, evading Hanna's damaging blows, and now and then getting his own left glove home, even though without a great deal of power behind it. It was a defence that the professional found himself unable to pierce, and the inability lent fuel to the fire of his anger.

"Time!" suddenly yelled the holder of the watch; and the two boxers went to their corners.

As they crossed Hanna spoke to his opponent.

"You jus' wait until th' nex' round, kid!" he hissed savagely.

Tom Boughen was ready with a sponge and towel as Harry dropped into a chair, but he found the second article switched out of his hand by James Rhodes, who had succeeded in forcing a path to the ringside. Boughen looked up with a grin.

"On the back of the neck, top of the head," commanded Rhodes; and Boughen fell to with alacrity as directed.

"Feeling bad?" demanded Rhodes. Harry shook his head.

"Sick?" he panted.

"That'll go off. Take a mouthful. Don't swallow it."

And his uncle held a water-bottle to his lips.

"You're doing well—better than I expected," the man went on. "Don't get rattled. Keep in the open, and don't drop your left hand. Prevent him from mixing it."

More advice he gave, scrappily, cutly, trying hard to keep the excitement and agitation within him from the lad. Could he have stopped the battle then and there he would have done so, but he knew the wish was futile. That there could be but one termination he felt assured.

Harry had done well, wonderfully well, far better than the most sanguine teacher could have expected, but from out of his experience James Rhodes could draw but one termination.

The fight was too unequal. Between the hard, seasoned professional and the boy was too great a difference for there to be a chance of any result other than Harry's ultimate and painful defeat. And it was something worse than a mere beating that Rhodes feared.

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"Time!"

A last piece of advice as he withdrew the chair.

"Give in when you feel you've had enough," said Rhodes. "It's no disgrace to you."

He could not keep the anxious appeal out of his voice, but Harry was oblivious to it, and the glance with which he replied to his relative brought a groan to the latter's lips.

This time Tony Hanna did not rush. With hands barely raised he stood looking at Harry, his already swollen mouth further contorted by a wicked, contemptuous grin. Harry, alert, watchful, faced him without movement. So they stood for some seconds; then:

"Well, kid, ain't ye going to make a start?" queried Tony; but the lad was not to be drawn.

"Come on. What are ye waitin' for?" the Scot continued his baiting. "Think I'm going to hurt ye? Wake up, boy! Everyone's lookin' at ye. Put that left glove on yours where ya did before—or try to," he added. "Surely ye ain't afraid of me?"

And all at once Harry led, sending out his left. It was a light lead, and Cast-Iron Tony showed his contempt for it by making no effort to guard. Bending back slightly, he merely withdrew his head, raising a laugh from somewhere in the crowd. But the laugh wasn't finished when Hanna's head went still further back, and this time not by his own intention.

Left arm at its limit, Harry had just slid his left foot forward three inches, his glove advanced, and dropped smartly upon Tony's lips. Immediately his right started to follow, when Hanna quickly broke ground, jumped to his right, and swung in his glove, catching his opponent on the side of the head. Harry went reeling.

Before he could recover Tony was at him like a cat, showering in blows, and a furious rally took place. From it one boxer emerged. With a loud thump the other went to the floor, caught his head with a resounding smack against a post, and lay quite still.

The Proposition

So unexpected, so abrupt, this dramatic termination, that the crowd was taken wholly by surprise.

What had actually happened no one could clearly state, though many thought they knew, and afterwards exclaimed at much length. The timekeeper was so flabbergasted that three or four seconds had actually elapsed before he recollected his duties, and began to tell off the passing seconds—

"One—two—three—"

In his agitation the watch-holder was going too fast.

But no one noticed. Open-eyed, open-mouthed, they stared blankly at the inert figure on the floor, with chin doubled into his breast and arms outstretched.

"Four—five—"

The man was doing his counting correctly now. The man was soundless but for his voice.

"Six—seven—eight—nine!"

To the waiting boxer on his feet the interval between each word seemed like an hour.

"Out!" broke with a sudden yell from almost every man in the gym.

And then pandemonium broke loose.

With a sigh Harry Rhodes dropped his hands and moved slowly towards his own corner.

He could hardly believe that the scene was real—that it was his antagonist lying on the floor unable to move—that it was not a dream in which he was figuring.

He was the winner!

And then he felt a smashing slap on the back that sent him staggering, convincing proof that he was still awake. There was a rush of feet, a mad surge upon the ropes, which gave way under the strain, and Harry found himself so tightly packed into a dense crush of men and lads, all shouting, that he could not move an inch.

"Three cheers for t' winner!" someone bellowed.

"My boy, you're wonderful!" cried James Rhodes, when, a little later, and with Ben Mosley's help, he had succeeded in getting Harry into the dressing-room. "But I never even hoped as much of you."

"Neither did I, uncle," returned the lad. "It's to you I owe it that I wasn't down and out long before the first round was over. It was your teaching, the trouble you've taken over me."

"And all that wouldn't have been worth twopenny without the courage you have, my boy," said James Rhodes, his face alight with pride. "Teaching won't put that into a boxer; it has to be there. How did you come to put him out, Harry?"

The lad looked up quickly.

"I don't know, uncle. I can't tell, and that's a fact," he said frankly. "Let us call it an accident. We were close together, and Hanna was hitting like a demon. I remembered what you said, and I stepped back, meaning to get out of it. As I did so his head seemed to come forward, and I just put out my glove, hoping to keep him away. I hadn't any intention of hitting—just to keep him off. I felt my glove meet him, and suddenly he went all limp and toppled over sideways. No one was more surprised than myself."

"Except Hanna," chuckled James Rhodes. "And now, my boy, let me get you out of here as quickly as we can. A hot bath's the best thing for you. I had the copper fire lighted before we left. Come along!"

Easier said than done. There was a big crowd circled round where Tony Hanna, his senses just beginning to return, was lying on the floor, a coat over him, and his manager, with an anxious face, kneeling by his side; but there were enough of the spectators left over to make Harry's exit from the room a slow business. Everyone had something to say; most were noisy in their congratulations. A few chaffingly inquired when Harry was going to send out his challenge for the championship.

At last Harry and his uncle got clear, and made haste to their home.

Tony Hanna was more deliberate. The blow that had put him out had not been a hard one, and when he sat up he was feeling little the worse. Catching Martin's anxious eyes, he grinned.

"Lively, ain't it?" he observed.

Joshua Martin said it was something very different, and said it very emphatically. He wanted to know why on earth such an idiotic contest had ever been entered upon. And Tony Hanna told him it was because he chose.

"And a pretty mess you made of things," rejoined the manager angrily. "Don't know how much harm you done. What'd you think—"

"I think that I'll be going," Hanna interrupted, pulling himself upright. "Give me my clobber, someone!"

Martin suggested a conveyance to take him back to the White Rose, but the boxer sturdily refused.

"Think that kid hurt me so? I can't walk?" he demanded. "Who is that kid, Martin? You got to find out."

"Can tell you now if it'll do you any good. Name's Harry Rhodes, an' he's nephew of Jimmy Rhodes, who's livin' 'ere. I met him this mornin'."

"And who's Jimmy Rhodes when he's at home?" growled Hanna, as they made their way along the almost pitch-dark road.

"Jimmy Rhodes! Ah, he was before yer time, Tony," replied Martin. "I knew 'im when 'e was the best man at his weight in England; hadn't nothing in the States within miles of him, neither. A fair wonder Jimmy Rhodes was when 'e was at 'is best."

"Never heard of him!"

"No; but you all of a sudden. That's over fifteen years ago," Martin explained. "There was trouble over one of 'is contests—feller he met died a bit after—an' I s'pose Jimmy got it into 'is head 'e was the cause. As I say, he quit—bolted. No one ever knew where 'e'd gone—couldn't find 'im. I reckon everybody thought 'e was dead long ago. No one ever heard nothing of 'im. But it was a surprise when I see 'im this mornin'."

"Think a lot of Jimmy Rhodes, don't ye?" Hanna sneered.

"I thought of you, Tony. When I see that kid an' heard Jimmy had been teaching him to use 'is 'ands, it occurred to me we might get him to lend a hand at your training. We ain't too well supplied with fellers for you to box with. You uses 'em up too fast, Tony."

Hanna laughed.

"That's t' fact," he said. "Well, Josh, I'm thinking."

"What?"

"That you'd better go on tryin' to get that kid to come in."

"Eb? Think 'e'd be any use to you, Tony?"

The darkness hid Hanna's face from his companion, so that he did not see the expression of concentrated evil that flashed into the dark-skinned face and flamed from the black eyes.

"Use 'O! yes, Josh. I could find a use for 'im," Hanna replied softly.

And again he laughed.

"You go ahead an' get that kid," he went on. "After what he's done to-night I reckon he'll be so pleased with himself he'll jump at it. And if he don't—"

"Well, what, Tony?"

"I'll get square with him some other way, or I'll know why!"

The words came out with a rush. He might affect to take the untoward knock-out lightly, as a matter of no consequence, but the meaning in his voice told Martin otherwise.

Somehow, sometime, but quickly, Tony Hanna meant having his revenge upon the lad who had contrived to get the better of him, and Joshua Martin knew the manner of temper of Tony Hanna well enough to feel sure that the revenge would be no light one.

"You'll be careful, Tony?" he said anxiously. "We don't want to make no trouble."

Something in Hanna's voice made him feel apprehensive.

"Oh, yes, I'll be careful. Don't you worry!" Hanna rejoined.

(There will be another splendid pastime in this grand new boxing story in next Monday's issue of the *BARRY*. Order your copy in advance.)



THE GREAT EVENTS.

The events are the things that cast their shadows before, and their example is generally followed, not that the arrival of the "Holiday Annual" can be considered as anything else than a very great event. It has gone with a bang, and there will be more bangs yet! Moreover, the "Greyfriars Herald" is coming along hot-foot, and stands to receive a welcome second to none. I am not going to say much this time concerning the two new-comers, for they can speak for themselves. Come to think of it, most folks can, for just listen to what a man says when he comes down on a fascinating bit of banana-skin, and is introduced to the real old British mud of a street in town! The "Holiday Annual" marks an epoch. It concentrates in itself many of the leading features of the Companion Papers, and one can let it go at that.

BUCKING UP!

This is what we all have to do. The pecking-up spirit has helped a fellow along all the time. If he has not got it in him he is to be sincerely pitied, but more often than not, he has. There is never any need to fear such a determination to make the best of facts will not be wanted. When a youngster sees his last penny roll down a grating and get lost he needs to buck up. After all, it might have been a shilling, and perhaps one day somebody will find the coin and be glad of it! Cold comfort, but the best in the circumstances. Rudyard Kipling has touched the whole business off very neatly in his lines called "If." It takes no end of ingredients to make a man—that is, a man worth serious consideration, and the fellow who lets discouragement get the better of him for, say, more than five seconds ticked off the clock, should take himself severely to task and mend his ways.

Come to think of it, the gallant barber in the old recitation wants a lot of beating. The refrain was, "And the barber went on shaving." The house began to fall down, there was an earthquake or something, and it was raining, and cash was short, but the barber went on shaving! That was his job, and he was not going to be put off by anything nor by anybody, like the old fellow whose duty it was to light up at the Escorial, the palace of the old Kings of Spain. There were murders and revolutions happening, all kinds of unexpected and horrible incidents, but the lamps were to be lit all the same—and they were lit!

KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

That's the ticket, and the whole subject is rather neatly ticked off in the following lines, which come to hand!

If the day looks kinder gloomy,
An' yer chances kinder slim;
If the situation's puzzlin',
An' perplexities keep pressin',
Till all hope is nearly gone,
Just bristle up an' grit yer teeth,
An' keep on keepin' on!

GIRLS.

There are myriads of girls who read the Companion Papers, and some of them are still hammering away at the supposed weakness of many of the girl characters who come into the stories in the "Gem" and MAGNET. I have referred to this matter before, but I venture to deal with it again because of a letter that comes to me from Bedford.

"I am a tomboy," writes this correspondent, "but that doesn't prevent me admiring the other sort of girl. We all have our uses, and the world would be a very dull place if all the girls were the same." That remark fits the case exactly.

There are the numberless types to be reckoned with, and all the changes of the years, the differences in condition and education do not, and cannot, materially alter the fact. And what an amazing variety there is in the world to be sure, with Dame Nature seeing to it that everybody has a face distinct from others! Talk about originality! Why, nothing that the biggest thinker could imagine would come anywhere near the results of the Big Scheme.

NOTICES.

Football.

Horn Lane F.C.—away matches—7 miles radius—16.—Write H. J. Crowe, 14, Shalimar Road, Acton, W. 3.
King's Hall F.C.—home and away—17-19.—Write J. A. Hyslop, 145, Oswald Road, Southall, Middlesex.

S. Lundy, 38, Byron Street, Leeds, wants to exchange pair of football boots, size 5, for size 6. Write first.

Matches wanted—16-17.—Apply L. G. A., 45, Sussex Road, Holloway, N. 7.

North-Western Rovers F.C.—away matches—also players—16-17.—Write J. Hart, 47, Camden Park Road, London, N.W.

Thorpe Athletic F.C.—home and away—15.—Write R. E. Kew, 57, Willow Vale, Shepherd's Bush, London, W. 12.

The Western F.C.—away—5 miles radius—Angel, Islington—13.—Write T. Ward, 35, Mallory Buildings, St. John's Street, E. C. 1.

Brownwood F.C.—home and away—6 miles radius—17.—Write L. E. Maynard, 56, Mildmay Road, London, N. 1.

Kennington Invicta F.C.—home and away—17.—Write J. Fordham, 10, Wesley Place, Newington Butts, London, S.E.

Wanted.—Players to join F.C.—16. Entrance fee 1s. Call any evening after seven o'clock to B. Assau, 60, Brondesbury Road, Kilburn, N.W. 6.

The Romsey F.C. (second eleven)—home and away—6 miles radius—15-16.—Write R. Fields Southampton Road, Romsey, Hants.

North Road Old Boys' F.C.—home and away—5 miles—15-16.—Write E. Hudson, 7, Alexandra Avenue, Southall, Middlesex.

St. Patrick's Junior A.F.C.—home and away—10 miles radius—15-15.—Write F. Edwards, 4, North Clive Street, Cardiff.

IN PLACE OF COURTNEY!

A friend wants Mr. Frank Richards to introduce a new boy to Greyfriars in place of Arthur Courtney. In one sense the place of a fellow can never be filled. New conditions have to be created. You may remember how Arthur Courtney died—as a very gallant gentleman—but was the name of the tale describing the scene—in saying the life of Rupert Valence. Courtney has taken a place in the list of the heroes of Greyfriars. It is a welcome sign enough in a story series to find that reality plays so conspicuous a part. Personally, I do not see that good service would be done by adopting the suggestion of the reader who was good enough to make it. Greyfriars is not short of fellows. The place of Courtney belongs to Courtney, and his memory.

THE HALFWAY HOUSE!

We are close to the period when the gleam of Christmas is seen across the intervening weeks. Sunny holidays are intervening at the remote past. But the good times spent in the sunny days of last summer are not by any means forgotten.

Speaking of holidays reminds me of what a man said to me the other day. He is not a dour party at all, merely a philosopher. He told me that he had pretty well given up going away for his holidays. He preferred the comfort of home.

"Why," he said, "the last time I went down to one of the so-called resorts I could not get a bath except by wandering out of the house in the early morning, and then the place had not been used for months, for it was all over rust! Perhaps he was a thought too particular, or, anyway, he was not really brave, though a bath coated with rust does not offer great possibilities. But in the old days folks managed to get along. There was not a palace in Europe which had a bath!

Your Editor

