

A NEW "GREYFRIARS" PORTRAIT GALLERY STARTING THIS WEEK!

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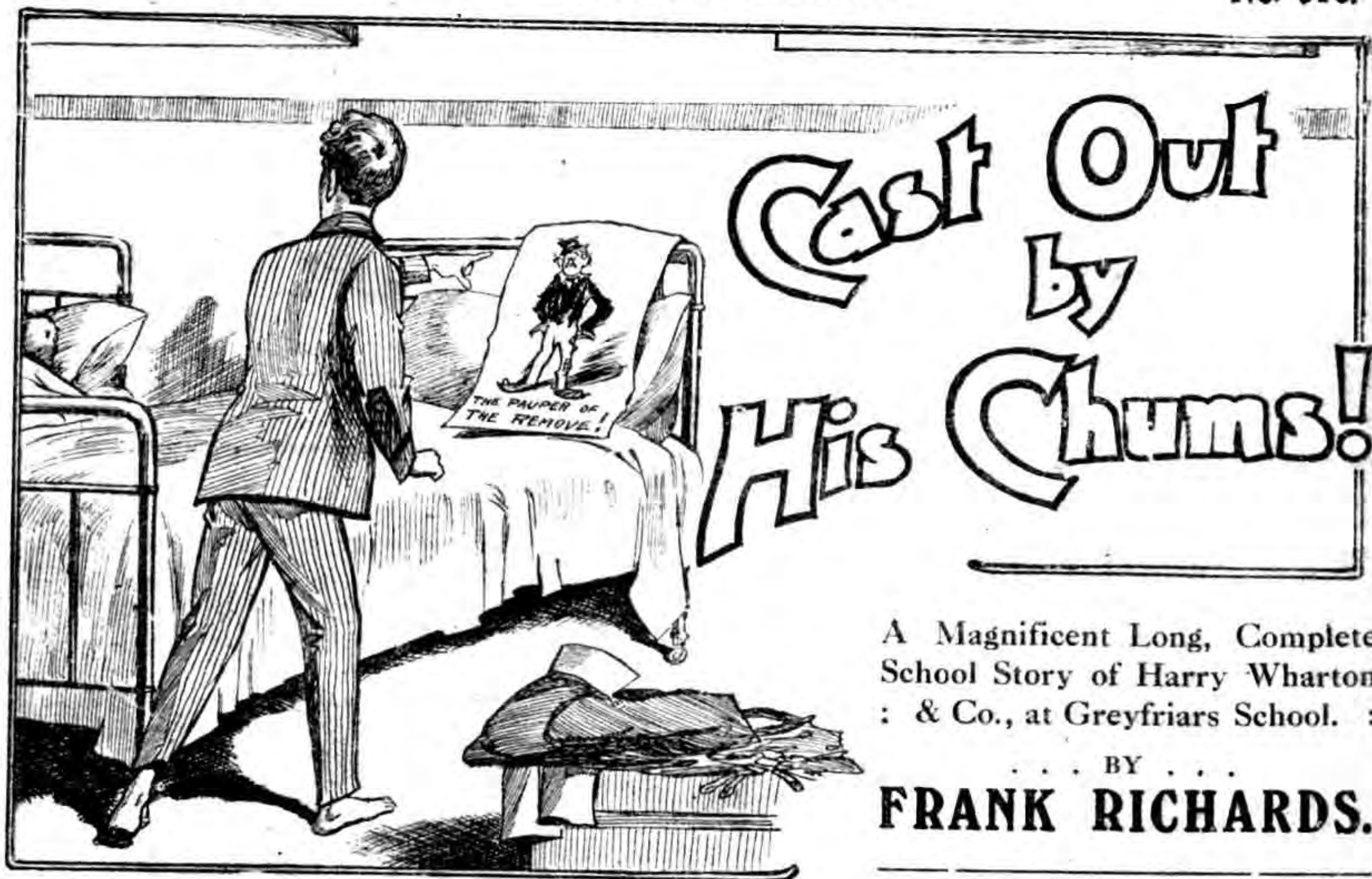


VENTRILOQUISM IN A MONTH. (See Page 17.)



CAST OUT BY HIS CHUMS!

(A Dramatic Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



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

... BY ...
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble in the Family!

"PILE in, Franky!"

Bob Cherry's tone was cheery and inviting. It was seldom otherwise.

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were at tea in Study No. 1.

It was an extra special tea, for Johnny Bull happened to be in funds.

Johnny had made purchases on a lavish scale from Mrs. Mimble's little shop under the elms; and the table groaned beneath the weight of the goodly viands, as a novelist might say.

Frank Nugent's plate, however, remained empty—hence Bob Cherry's admonition.

"Pile in!" repeated Bob.

Nugent made no movement to obey. He scarcely seemed to hear Bob Cherry's injunction. He sat staring straight in front of him, and his chums noticed, for the first time, that his face was paler than usual—that it was "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

Harry Wharton tapped his chum on the shoulder, and awakened Nugent from his day-dream.

"What's the matter, Franky?"

"Matter?" echoed Nugent dully.

"Yes!" almost shouted Johnny Bull. "I go to all the trouble of laying in a ripping spread, and you sit there and mope, as if the grub wasn't good enough for you!"

"I—I'm sorry——"

"Bless your sorrow! Stop being a moony ass, and help yourself to the plum-cake!"

The plum-cake was the most tempting thing on the table, but it seemed to leave Nugent cold.

"The—the fact is, I'm not hungry!" he said.

"My only aunt!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You've been playing footer all the afternoon, and you say you're not hungry! Is this a leg-pulling stunt, or what?"

"Grub doesn't tempt me—at the

moment," said Nugent. "I—I've had bad news from home!"

"Oh!"

"Sorry I slanged you just now," said Johnny Bull. "But I didn't know you were in trouble of any sort."

"You had a letter by the afternoon post," said Wharton. "Was that anything to do with it?"

Frank Nugent nodded.

"I trustfully hope," murmured Hurree Singh, "that your esteemed maternal or paternal relative has not been seedfully taken queer?"

Nugent smiled faintly at Hurree Singh's quaint English.

"It isn't that," he said.

"Then what's wrong?" exclaimed Wharton.

"You can speak quite freely before your kind uncles!" said Bob Cherry.

There was an awkward pause.

Nugent knew that his trouble was beyond the reach of his chums—that they could do nothing to help him in the domestic crisis which had just arisen. And he seemed to doubt whether it would be worth while to explain what was amiss.

"I'm not sure that you'd be interested in——" he began.

"Why, of course we should!" said Bob Cherry. "Aren't you one of ourselves? Isn't it up to us to back you up when troubles come?"

"I suppose so, but——"

"Don't start 'butting' like a blessed Billy-goat! Tell us all about it! Get the affair off your chest, and we'll see what we can do to help."

Nugent still hesitated.

"I'm afraid you fellows won't be able to help me——"

"Of course we won't, if we don't know what it's all about!" said Wharton.

"Buck up and enlighten us!"

"There's nothing to be gained by nursing your own troubles, anyway!" said Johnny Bull.

Nugent's hesitation was at an end. He drew out the letter which had come for him by the afternoon post.

"It's from the pater," he said. "I'll read it out to you."

Nugent's chums listened attentively. The letter ran as follows:

"My dear Frank,—I scarcely know how to write this letter. Indeed, your mother suggested that it had better not be written at all; but I feel that it would be very wrong of me to withhold from you the facts.

"I have, as you know, been in the habit of speculating on the Stock Exchange, and up till now my investments have met with a fair measure of success. During the recent 'boom' I invested the greater part of my capital in oil shares, and now I find that the shares are practically worthless—so much wastepaper. It is impossible for me to sell out, much as I should like to do so, and the result is that I am confronted with a grave financial crisis.

"Precisely what effect this will have upon you I cannot at the moment say; but it seems probable that either you or Dicky—or both—will have to be withdrawn from Greyfriars.

"I am indeed sorry that matters should have come to this pass. The fault is entirely my own. Had I been less rash, and displayed more foresight, this would not have happened.

"My present resources are sufficient to keep things going for some little time. Meanwhile, I must consider what is best to be done in the matter of you and Dicky. Your supply of pocket-money will have to be considerably curtailed, but I trust you will bear the inconvenience with fortitude, and that you will not think too hardly of

"Your affectionate father,

"HENRY NUGENT."

When he had finished reading the letter, Frank Nugent thrust it back into his pocket.

"Now you can understand why I can't muster an appetite," he said.

"Poor old Franky!" said Bob Cherry, looking genuinely distressed. "This is an awful blow!"

"It's not the first I've had," said Nugent, "and I don't suppose it will be the last. No sooner do I get comfortably settled, and imagine that everything in the garden is lovely, than there's an eruption of some sort at home. Either there's illness or some legal trouble, or it's a financial crash—like this. It makes a fellow feel fed up with life!"

"You mustn't get downhearted, old chap," said Wharton. "This is the time when you've got to keep a stiff upper lip. I know it's easy to talk, but—"

"Looks as if I've got to say good-bye to Greyfriars!" said Nugent wretchedly. "It's no use jawing to Dicky about it. He's too young to understand these things. And if it's a question of one being taken and the other left, you can bet it's I who'll have to go!"

Frank Nugent spoke bitterly. He knew only too well that Dicky was the pampered favourite of his mother—that Mrs. Nugent would do all in her power to keep the younger boy at Greyfriars. Frank would not be studied in the matter at all.

"It's rotten!" said Johnny Bull, echoing the sentiments of the company.

"And it's thrown quite a damper over the tea-party," said Bob Cherry. "Why did your pater want to rush blindly into speculation, Franky? Why couldn't he leave the bulls and bears and things alone?"

Frank sighed.

"The pater always had the speculating fever," he said. "I'm putting it rather mildly. Some people would call it the gambling fever. After all, speculation and gambling are practically one and the same."

"Pity your pater couldn't have left oil shares alone," said Wharton. "He might have known that a boom's often followed by a slump."

Frank Nugent shrugged his shoulders.

"You can never convince the pater that he's running a big risk," he said. "Because he's been lucky in the past he imagines his luck will always hold good."

"And now there's a rude awakening for him!" said Johnny Bull.

For a long time there was silence in Study No. 1.

The juniors were not doing full justice to Johnny Bull's handsome spread. The calamity which had befallen the Nugent family affected not only Frank Nugent himself, but the whole of the Famous Five. It had always been their way to share each other's misfortunes as well as joys, and each of Nugent's chums would gladly have helped him.

But how could they?

The sum involved probably ran into several thousand pounds. And although Johnny Bull had a rich uncle, and Harry Wharton's father was a man of means, they could not possibly assist the Nugents, who had lost their capital, but not their pride.

The meal finished in silence. Then Frank Nugent looked up. His face was haggard.

"I think I'll ask the Head if I can go home this week-end," he said.

"But you can do nothing," said Wharton.

"I can find out exactly how matters stand. There must be several things the pater's got to tell me, things that he could hardly mention in a letter. Anyway, I shall feel easier in my mind if I go."

"Will you take your minor?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No; that would be only adding fuel to the fire. Besides, I don't want Dicky to know how bad things really are."

"The situation might have improved a

bit by the time you get home," said Wharton.

But Frank Nugent, remembering the hopeless tone of his father's letter, shook his head.

"I'm afraid we're fairly in the soup this time!" he said.

"Cheer up, Franky!" said Bob Cherry. "Every cloud has a silver lining, you know. And you can rely on us to back you up—"

"Through thick and thin!" said Johnny Bull.

The conversation ended here. And had the Famous Five peeped into the passage they would have seen the fat form of Billy Bunter in retreat.

Bunter had been eavesdropping at the keyhole of Study No. 1, and he knew everything there was to be known concerning the trouble in the Nugent family.

"So they're paupers, are they?" he muttered. "Haven't got a penny to call their own! My hat! The other fellows will be interested to know this!"

And Billy Bunter quickened his pace, and proceeded to Skinner's study in the Remove passage, chuckling to himself as he went.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

A new Greyfriars Gallery commences in this issue on somewhat different lines to the original one. Four portraits will be published in each number of the MAGNET; Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh being the first quartette. Their portraits appear on pages 8, 9, 12, and 13 respectively.

I should advise you to cut out the portraits each week, and paste them in a book, for this new Greyfriars Gallery is going to be the most complete one ever compiled.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Raggers!

FRANK NUGENT'S request was readily granted by the Head, who felt for the junior in his trouble.

On the Friday evening Nugent left Greyfriars. His minor encountered him before he went, and asked him what it was all about. Frank replied that the Head had granted him permission to go home for the week-end, but he did not add that there was anything wrong.

"Can't I come, too?" Dicky asked.

"Not this time, kid!"

"I reckon it's a jolly shame!" said the fag indignantly. "Why should I have to cool my heels at Greyfriars while you go off for an enjoyable week-end?"

Frank reflected that the week-end would prove anything but enjoyable. He pacified his minor as well as he was able, and set off on his journey.

It was a house of gloom that the junior entered on reaching his destination.

Frank's mother was in tears; his father affected to be brave and stoical. But neither had anything cheering to say.

The financial crash had come suddenly and unexpectedly, and Mr. Nugent repeated that his oil shares were so much wastepaper.

"However, this emergency must be met in the proper spirit," he said. "Rigid economy must be the order of the day in this household. The servants have

already been given notice, and the house-keeping expenditure has been reduced to a minimum. It was rather foolish of you, Frank, to come home in these days of expensive travelling. You will need to economise your pocket-money, for it is not likely to be supplemented."

Frank Nugent's troubled gaze met that of his father.

"Are things really as bad as that, dad?"

"I am not in the habit of exaggerating," said Mr. Nugent, rather testily. "True, I am not penniless. The wolf is at a convenient distance from the door at the moment, though he will creep closer as the weeks go by. We must look facts in the face, my boy. It is quite possible that a few months hence we may be paupers."

"Oh, dad!"

Mrs. Nugent was sobbing quietly, and Frank himself found it difficult to keep back his tears.

It was indeed a critical situation. The grim spectre of poverty menaced the Nugent family, the head of which—the man who was responsible for the catastrophe—held out no hope.

Frank Nugent spent the most wretched week-end he had ever known.

His father spent most of the time in his study, thinking out new details of his economy crusade.

As for Mrs. Nugent, she would not be comforted. The presence of her favourite son might have consoled her, but nothing that Frank said or did would cheer her up.

Frank started back to Greyfriars on the Monday, feeling that his week-end visit had been futile.

His father's letter had been confirmed, and the junior could not see a ray of hope anywhere. A tedious railway journey did not improve his spirits, and it was with a heavy heart that he alighted from the train at Friardale and walked up to the school.

The winter dusk had fallen long since, and the gates were locked.

Nugent rang the bell, and Gosling, the porter, shuffled out of his lodge.

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" growled Gosling. "You're late, Master Nugent, an' I consider it my dooty to report yer!"

"Report, and be hanged!" snapped Frank, passing through into the Close.

It was past locking-up time. In fact, it was the juniors' bed-time.

Nugent reported himself to Mr. Quelch, and explained that the train had been delayed. Then, tired and dispirited, he mounted the stairs to the Remove dormitory.

He met with a startling and unexpected reception.

"Here he is!"

"Here comes the pauper!"

"Been selling papers over the week-end, Nugent, to raise the wind?"

These three remarks emanated respectively from Skinner, Stott, and Bolsover major.

"Dry up, you cads!" growled Bob Cherry.

With burning cheeks and hands tightly clenched Frank Nugent crossed over to his bed and started to undress.

The cads of the Remove did not remain silent long.

"Just think of it—not a penny to his name!" said Skinner.

"And he's often sneered at Bunter, and said that Bunter's pater kept a pub or a coffee-stall!" said Bolsover major.

"Beastly pauper!" growled Stott. "He deserves to be kicked out of Greyfriars!"

Frank Nugent made no reply to these taunts, but there were others who took up the cudgels on his behalf.

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"If you rotters say another word," said Johnny Bull, "I'll get out of bed and slaughter you!"

"Hear, hear!" echoed at least a dozen voices, including those of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh.

Skinner & Co. knew what to expect if they launched another verbal attack upon Frank Nugent, and they discreetly held their peace.

"Franky!"

Harry Wharton called to his chum as the latter was in the act of turning in.

Nugent made no reply.

"Franky!" repeated Wharton, thinking Frank had not heard. "I wanted to ask you if you had any news—"

"I don't want to speak to you!" said Nugent curtly.

"My hat!"

Harry Wharton was flabbergasted. He simply couldn't understand his chum's attitude.

"My dear chap—" he began.

"There's certainly one question I should like to ask you," said Nugent, "but it will keep till to-morrow."

"Look here—"

But Harry Wharton could not get another word out of Nugent. Neither could Bob Cherry. Neither, for that matter, could Johnny Bull or Hurree Singh.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Peter Todd. "There's trouble in the Famous Five—what?"

"It's none of my making," said Wharton, in tones of exasperation. "Blest if I can make Nugent out to-night!"

"Nor I," said Bob Cherry. "He must be potty!"

"The pottyness of the esteemed Nugent is terrific!"

Frank Nugent turned a deaf ear to these remarks. He was in the act of clambering into bed when he saw, for the first time, a placard which had been affixed to the bedrail.

One of the amateur artists in the Remove had been at work. He had drawn a pathetic picture of a youth in torn and tattered attire, with a dented topper on his head, and boots which showed a conspicuous absence of sole and heel. The youth's pockets were turned out, to show that he hadn't a penny in the world, and underneath the sketch was inscribed, in printed capitals:

"THE PAUPER OF THE REMOVE!"

Frank Nugent did not need to glance at the picture twice to see whom it was intended to represent. The very fact that the insulting sketch was hung on his bedrail was proof that it was intended for him.

An angry light blazed in Nugent's eyes as he tore down the offending placard.

"What cad did this?" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's the matter now?"

Frank Nugent displayed the placard to view. Most of the fellows sat up in bed, straining their eyes to get a glimpse of it.

"Some beastly cad has tried to be funny at my expense," said Nugent. "I want to know who is responsible for this so-called sketch!"

"I guess it wasn't me!" observed Fisher T. Fish.

"Nor me!" said Billy Bunter hastily.

"I—I can't draw for toffee!"

"The caricature in question," murmured Alonzo Todd, "was not executed by me, my dear Nugent!"

Frank Nugent gave a snort.

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"I'm not asking who didn't do it!" he said. "I want to know who did!"

"Don't all speak at once!" chuckled Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no rush on the part of the Removites to claim responsibility for the sketch. The culprit—whoever he was—had probably caught sight of Frank Nugent's clenched fists and wrathful expression, and had decided that this was an occasion when silence was golden.

Nugent's gaze roved round the dormitory, and his eyes finally rested on Billy Bunter.

"Do you know anything about this, Bunter?" he demanded.

"Nunno!" said the fat junior promptly. "Haven't I already told you that I can't sketch for toffee?"

Bunter's uneasiness under cross-examination made Nugent suspicious.

"I'm convinced that you know something about this!" he said.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Nugent advanced grimly towards the fat junior's bed.

"Out with it!" he said. "I'm not suggesting that you drew the sketch your-

WILL YOU BE A WINNER?

The "Greyfriars Herald" is now going full swing, and enthusiastic and grateful letters are reaching me from readers all over the world.

Everyone has words of praise in regard to the TUCK HAMPER Competition, which is the most popular one that has ever been run.

Have you entered for it yet? If not, get a copy of the "Greyfriars Herald" now on sale. You may be a winner of one of those coveted prizes.

self. If you had, you'd have spelt pauper p-a-w-p-e-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I feel certain that you know who did it," continued Nugent, "and I mean to get at the truth!"

Billy Bunter clutched the bedclothes in great apprehension.

"Ow! I wasn't looking through the doorway of Skinner's study when he drew that sketch of you, Nugent—honour bright!"

"Then it was Skinner?"

"Nunno! That is to say—why don't you own up, Skinney, you rotter? You can see he's trying to worm the truth out of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter followed Bunter's incriminating statement.

Frank Nugent, having found out what he wished to know, left Bunter's bedside, and made a bee-line for Skinner's.

The cad of the Remove started up in alarm.

"Keep off!" he muttered.

"Out you get!" said Nugent fiercely.

"Look here—"

"Buck up! I mean to give you a hiding!"

Skinner tried hard to hang out time. He knew that at any moment Wingate of the Sixth would arrive in the dormitory to see lights out, and he hoped to escape Nugent's vengeance.

This hope, however, did not materialise.

Seeing that Skinner did not budge, Frank Nugent gave him a helping hand. He threw back the bedclothes, and heaved the cad of the Remove out of bed and on to the floor.

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Skinner, as he hit the hard boards with an impact which shook every bone in his body.

"Come on, you cad!" said Nugent grimly. "Put up your hands!"

"Yow! Rescue, Remove!" whined Skinner.

But the majority of the fellows were on Frank Nugent's side, and Skinner's cronies did not seem anxious to leave their snug beds.

Very reluctantly, Skinner rose to his feet. Scarcely had he done so when he went down again like a ninepin.

Frank Nugent had shot out his left with terrific force, catching Skinner on the point of the jaw.

"Faith, an' that was a knock-out entirely!" chuckled Micky Desmond.

"Talk about a Jack Johnson punch!" said Ogilvy. "Can you tell us if the stars are out to-night, Skinney?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Nugent stood waiting for the victim to rise. He had a long time to wait, for Skinner found it difficult to sort himself out. At last, however, he tottered to his feet, and his fists wildly sawed the air.

Nugent easily avoided Skinner's feeble attack, and, sailing in, he got another blow home—between Skinner's eyes this time.

The cad of the Remove fell back against his own bed, moaning "Pax!"

"Apologise, then!" rapped out Nugent.

Skinner mumbled out a few words of apology, but there was no sincerity in them. He had been made an example of before the whole dormitory, and he mentally resolved to be revenged on Frank Nugent before many days had passed.

The unfortunate artist crawled into bed, groaning and gasping. But he got no sympathy from his schoolfellows.

Frank Nugent tore up the placard, and threw the fragments into the fireplace. Then he, too, got into bed, just as Wingate arrived to see lights out, and to say good-night.

The captain of Greyfriars saw that everything was normal, and with a cheery "Good-night, kids!" he went on his way.

Most of the juniors promptly settled down to slumber. But it was a long time before sleep visited the eyes of Frank Nugent.

Frank lay awake, staring into the darkness, with bitterness in his heart, and with a feeling that the world was upside down.

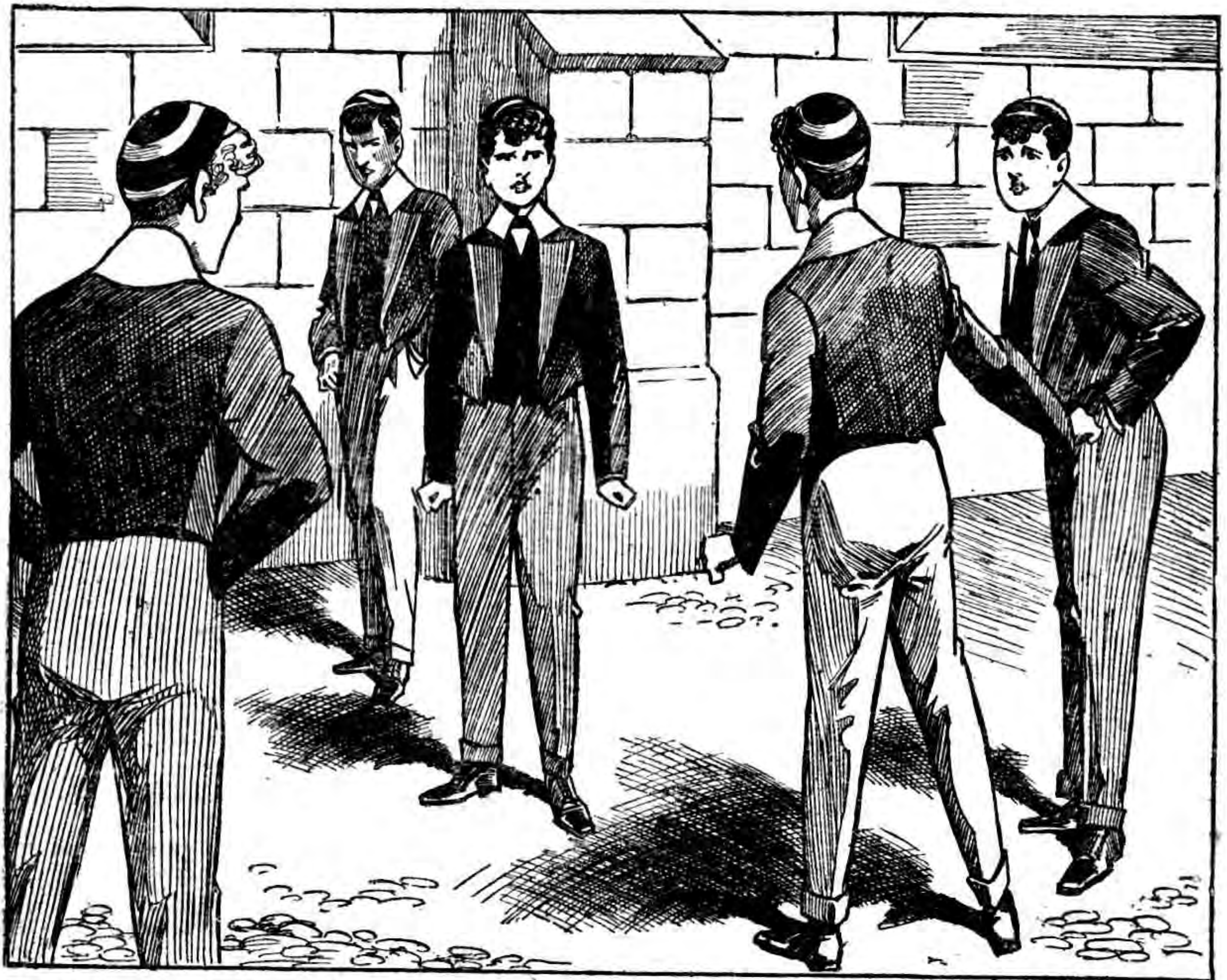
It was not of Skinner's insult that he was thinking. It was of the way his chums had betrayed him—for Nugent felt sure such was the case. He had read to them his father's letter, and they, apparently, had communicated the contents of it to the Remove in general—hence the reception he had received on entering the dormitory.

For hour after hour Frank Nugent remained awake, reflecting on the bitterness of it all.

Boom!

It was the first stroke of midnight, sounding from the old clock-tower.

Nugent was now the only fellow awake in the dormitory, and it was close on one o'clock when, from sheer exhaustion, he sank into troubled slumber.



"You're a thundering cad, Wharton, and I want nothing more to do with you!" said Nugent hotly. Wharton's temper got completely out of control. Forgetful of the deep-seated friendship which had existed between him and Nugent from the early days, the captain of the Remove hit out. (See Chapter 3.)

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Rift in the Lute!

"**T**HERE he is!"
 "There's the silly duffer!"
 "Let's ask him what he means by it!"

Frank Nugent was pacing moodily to and fro in the Close next morning when the other members of the Famous Five bore down upon him.

Bob Cherry slapped his chum on the back in his usual boisterous manner, and Nugent came to a halt, and spun round.

"Now, you chump," said Bob, "what do you mean by cutting us dead in the dorm last night?"

Nugent glared.

"I had every reason to!" he said.

"W-w-what!" stammered Bob faintly.

"You're a cad, Bob Cherry—and the same remark applies to all of you!"

Bob Cherry rubbed his eyes, as if to make certain he was not dreaming.

As for Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, they stared at Frank Nugent in a dazed sort of way.

"Franky!" gasped Wharton at length. "What do you mean? Is this your idea of a joke?"

"I'm dead serious," said Nugent, "and in case you're getting deaf I'll repeat what I said. You're a set of cads!"

"Here, steady on!" protested Johnny Bull. "That's a bit thick! We're not

going to be called names like that—even by you, Nugent!"

"Well, you are cads, and you can't deny it!" said Frank.

Harry Wharton regarded the speaker in some anxiety. He began to think that Nugent was unwell—that recent events had so weighed upon his mind that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

"Are you feeling all right, Franky?" asked the captain of the Remove, in concern.

"No, I'm not!" retorted Nugent. "And neither would you be, if your so-called friends served you such a shabby trick!"

"He's talking in riddles!" growled Bob Cherry, the usual sunny smile missing from his countenance.

Wharton's face clouded over, too.

"Are you suggesting, Nugent, that we've played you a shabby trick?"

"Of course you have! And you needn't pretend otherwise." Nugent's tone was hard and bitter. "I took you into my confidence. I read my pater's letter to you, showing how he had speculated and lost his money, and the moment my back's turned you go and publish the news through the Remove!"

"That's not true!" said Bob Cherry in ringing tones.

Nugent's lip curled contemptuously.

"I wonder you've got the cheek to deny it," he said. "Who else could it have been? You were the only fellows who knew. Not even my minor

was aware that things were in a bad way at home. I didn't tell a soul outside Study No. 1, and yet all the Form knows now that I'm a pauper!"

The last word was uttered with bitter emphasis.

"Look here, Nugent," said Wharton—the familiar "Franky" had disappeared by this time—"you're talking through your hat! We haven't betrayed your confidence at all, and we shouldn't dream of it. When you read your pater's letter to us, it was an understood thing that we should keep our mouths shut."

"Pity you didn't, then!" said Nugent. Johnny Bull fairly bristled with anger.

"Don't let him talk to you like that, Harry. He's the cad—not us! He's brought a rotten accusation against us, and he knows jolly well it's untrue!"

Harry Wharton made a big effort to keep his temper under control.

"You're making a mistake, Nugent," he said. "I give you my word of honour that not one of us had breathed a word about your circumstances to the other fellows. It's a puzzle to me how they found out, but they didn't find out through us!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

And Hurree Singh remarked that the hear-hearfulness was terrific.

Frank Nugent was not at all convinced.

"I wouldn't give a fig for your word

of honour after this!" he said. "You're a thundering cad, Wharton, and I want nothing more to do with you!"

The words were hotly spoken, and in a calmer moment they would not have been spoken at all.

But the mischief was done now.

Wharton's temper, which had always been his chief weakness, got completely out of control.

Forgetful for the moment of the deep-seated friendship which had existed between him and Nugent from the early days, forgetful of everything save the insult which Nugent had just uttered, the captain of the Remove hit out.

Wharton's fist was not clenched, but his open palm found a billet on Nugent's cheek, leaving a livid mark.

Harry Wharton was not the only one whose self-control was in rags.

Nugent's eyes were blazing, and he at once clenched his fists and rushed at Wharton.

"Come on, you cad!" he muttered.

A battle royal would have been raging the next moment had not Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull taken prompt action. The former seized Wharton by the shoulders, and swung him back, and the latter did the same with Nugent.

"Let me go, Bob!" muttered Wharton fiercely.

But Bob hung on grimly.

"You can't start scrapping here," he said. "Dash it all, we're underneath the Head's window!"

"I don't care. I——"

"But I do. I'm not going to let you make a champion ass of yourself. The Famous Five's object in life is to stand together when fighting other people; not to have civil war among ourselves!"

"That's so," said Johnny Bull, who was finding Frank Nugent a hot handful. "Matters have gone far enough!"

"Let me get at him!" panted Nugent, struggling furiously.

"Lend me a hand, Inky!" gasped Johnny. "I can't hold the mad duffer!"

"With pleasure, my esteemed chum!" said Hurree Singh.

But his services were not required, for at that moment the breakfast-gong sounded.

Bob Cherry whisked Wharton away in the direction of the Hall, and the others followed.

It was easy to see during breakfast

that there was trouble in that select circle known as the Famous Five.

Wharton sat glaring at Nugent, and Nugent, in turn, glared at Wharton.

Neither attempted to eat his breakfast.

"Our paupered friend looks rather down in the mouth!" murmured Bols-over major.

"Looks as if he's been trying to borrow a tanner from Wharton, and there's nothing doing," said Stott.

"He'll be pawning his things next," said Skinner. "His bike, and his eighteen-carat brass watch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch, at the head of the table, frowned.

"I will not tolerate this unseemly merriment at the breakfast-table," he rapped out. "Nugent, why are you eating no breakfast?"

"I'm not hungry!" growled Nugent.

The Form-master's frown deepened.

"It is customary, Nugent, to address me as 'sir!'" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Frank. "I, sir, am not hungry, sir, and am therefore, sir, eating no breakfast, sir!"

The Remove gasped. Such an amazing piece of cheek had not been heard for a long time.

Frank Nugent had not meant to be funny. He was feeling exasperated and reckless, and he was no longer a respecter of persons.

For a moment Mr. Quelch remained petrified.

There was a titter of laughter from the juniors, but it soon died away when the Remove-master spoke.

"Nugent, you are impertinent, sir! You will visit me in my study after breakfast, and I shall cane you severely!"

Frank Nugent did not seem to mind very much. He was reflecting that it didn't matter what happened now. His father was on the verge of bankruptcy, his chums had betrayed his confidence, he had quarrelled bitterly with Harry Wharton. Therefore, what did a caning matter?

Twenty minutes later, when Nugent presented himself at the Form-master's study, Mr. Quelch's anger had died down.

"I understand, Nugent," he said, "that you are passing through a period of grave trouble. You are not your-

self, and I am willing to make allowances for your peculiar conduct. On this occasion, therefore, I shall not punish you."

"Very well, sir," said Nugent.

And he quitted the Remove-master's study.

During morning lessons Frank proved a very inattentive pupil. His mind was not in the musty Form-room at all. He was thinking of his father and mother—of the burden of poverty they would shortly be called upon to bear.

He thought, too, of Dicky, and wondered whether the latter would remain at Greyfriars, or whether both of them would have to go.

In the ordinary way, the prospect of leaving Greyfriars was terrible to contemplate, but it was not so terrible now.

Nugent had quarrelled with his chums, and the cads of the Remove would continue to persecute him on account of his fallen fortunes.

This being so, it would be a relief, rather than an ordeal, to get away from Greyfriars.

What would be the use of staying on at the school without friends and without happiness—without any of the pleasures that made life worth living?

Such were the thoughts which passed through Frank Nugent's mind when he ought to have been thinking of the works of Horace.

But Mr. Quelch was very lenient with Nugent, and he intended to continue his leniency until the clouds had rolled by.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Weak Spot.

FRANK NUGENT was rather surprised to see that his name was down to play against Highcliffe.

He had imagined that Harry Wharton, in his anger, would leave him out.

Nugent's first impulse was to refuse to play. But he realised that he would be putting himself hopelessly in the wrong by sulking.

"I'll turn out," he told Wharton, "but you mustn't expect miracles from me. I'm not feeling like footer just now."

"You'll do your best, of course?" said the captain of the Remove.

"Of course!"

Earlier in the season the Remove had played several matches against the Highcliffe juniors, and on nearly every occasion Harry Wharton & Co. had won after a close tussle.

This time Highcliffe were bringing over their strongest team, and Ponsonby & Co., the "nuts" of the rival school, had expressed their intention of coming over to cheer—in other words, jeer.

Time was when Ponsonby himself had figured in the Highcliffe Eleven, but that time was now past.

Frank Courtenay, the Highcliffe skipper, had no use for fellows who impaired their football ability by consuming cheap cigarettes, and he had promptly banished Pon from the team.

Ponsonby felt the humiliation keenly. But he hated Harry Wharton & Co., and he wanted to see them lose.

The Highcliffe players arrived on foot early in the afternoon. They were followed by Ponsonby & Co., who kept close together as they entered the precincts of Greyfriars, as if fearing an attack. There had been bad blood between Harry Wharton & Co. and the "nuts" of Highcliffe from the beginning.

Frank Courtenay nodded cheerily to Harry Wharton, and tossed with him for choice of ends.

Wharton won, and the Friars, with the

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Bob Cherry had dismounted, and the others followed suit. "What is it, Bob?" asked Johnny Bull. "Look!" said Bob Cherry. And he pointed to a rope which was suspended across the roadway. (See Chapter 5.)

wind in their favour, ought to have found the net several times in the first half.

Instead of which they failed lamentably.

Their failure was directly due to a weak spot in the forward line, and the weak spot was Frank Nugent.

Never had Nugent played such a wretched game. His passing was woefully weak, and he never once essayed a shot at goal. Harry Wharton repeatedly shouted to him to buck up—a proceeding which didn't improve Nugent's temper. If there was one thing he could not stand it was being ordered about on the field of play.

The more Wharton shouted the worse Nugent's play became. He could do nothing right. And Ponsonby & Co., standing together in a corner of the field, at a safe distance from the crowd, yelled their derision at the Greyfriars players:

"Call that football?"

"Why not try marbles?"

"Or rabbit-keeping?"

"Where have you left your shootin'-boots, Wharton?"

"Highcliffe are all over you!"

"Yah!"

This—and much more—from Ponsonby & Co.

"The cads!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll make it warm for them afterwards!"

"Yes, rather!"

Frank Courtenay apologised to

Wharton on behalf of his caddish schoolfellows.

"If I had known they were going to put you off your game I should have stopped them from coming," he said.

"That's all right," said Wharton. "It's not your fault."

Shortly afterwards the whistle went for half-time.

The score-sheet was blank. Greyfriars had had more of the game than their opponents, but the glaring weakness in the forward line had prevented them from scoring.

The crowd was very disappointed at Frank Nugent's display, and they told him so. They did not mince their words.

"I vote we deal with Ponsonby & Co. now!" growled Peter Todd.

"Hear, hear!"

"If they remain on the ground they'll only muck up the second half!" said Wharton. "Come on!"

And the Remove players, with the exception of Nugent, strode across to the corner of the field where the Highcliffe "nuts" had congregated.

Ponsonby looked up in some alarm as they approached.

"What d'you want?" he demanded.

"You don't seem to know how to behave yourselves when watching a match," said Wharton, "so we've come to give you marching orders!"

Ponsonby began to bluster.

"You've no right—" he began, Bob Cherry sprang forward.

"Out with them!" he exclaimed.

The footballers laid violent hands on Ponsonby & Co., who were frogs-marched towards the exit. They were bundled through, and a number of heavy football boots facilitated their departure.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came in a dismal chorus from the "nuts."

"Now you're out you can stay out!" panted Harry Wharton. "If you show up on the ground again we'll pulverise you!"

Ponsonby & Co. limped away in the direction of Highcliffe, and the Removees watched them go.

"We've not heard the last of this," said Johnny Bull. "Ponsonby will think out a wheeze for getting even with us, you bet!"

"Let him!" said Wharton contemptuously. "Come on! They're lining up again!"

The second half started at a rare pace.

Highcliffe attacked strongly, and Bulstrode had an anxious time in the Greyfriars' goal.

Johnny Bull and Tom Redwing defended stoutly at back; but presently the agile Caterpillar beat Bull for pace, and, having beaten him, smashed the ball into the net.

"Goal!"

"Highcliffe on top!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Oh, my hat!"

The spectators echoed Bob's groan.

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They were not accustomed to seeing the Remove team being outplayed on their native heath.

For ten minutes or so play was confined to midfield, and then Highcliffe came again, and they were not to be denied.

Frank Courtenay was the chief aggressor this time. He snapped up a pass from the Caterpillar, and scored with a fast, rising shot which Bulstrode could not see, much less save.

"Goal number two!" said Peter Todd ruefully.

"Buck up, you fellows, for goodness' sake!" said Wharton irritably.

And the Remove bucked up with a will. They told themselves that this sort of thing wouldn't do at all. They were not in the habit of being trounced by Highcliffe, and they didn't mean to be trounced now. They were hopeful of forcing a draw, if nothing else.

The Remove half-backs—Bob Cherry, Peter Todd, and Mark Linley—rendered yeoman service during the next quarter of an hour. They fed their forwards assiduously, and at length Vernon-Smith broke through on his own and scored with a great shot.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Smithy!"

The crowd began to sit up and take notice.

The tide was beginning to turn, and Harry Wharton & Co. were doing all the attacking now.

Hurree Singh gained possession on the wing, and passed the ball to Nugent.

He could not have done worse.

Frank Nugent dallied with the ball, and before he could shoot one of the Highcliffe backs took the ball from his toes, and sent it soaring up the field.

"Oh!"

"Rotten!"

"You had the chance of a lifetime, Nugent!"

The spectators were exasperated with Frank, and their exasperation grew when, a few moments later, Nugent muffed an open goal.

"The fellow oughtn't to be in the team at all!" growled Bolsover major.

"A kid of five could put up a better show than that!"

Bolsover's opinion was shared by Nugent's fellow-players.

Harry Wharton spoke his mind.

"Looks as if you're deliberately trying to let us down, Nugent!" he said.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Frank.

"Look here——"

"That's enough, there!" said Wingate, who was referee. "Stop squabbling, and get on with the game!"

The end was very near now.

Wingate was actually consulting his watch. And the Remove were a goal behind.

"We've simply got to equalise!" said Wharton desperately.

The Remove launched a last-minute attack—one of those final spurts that so often decide the issue.

Wharton shot hard, but the ball cannoned against the cross-bar, and rebounded at the feet of Frank Nugent.

"Now, Nugent!"

The crowd would cheerfully have overlooked all Nugent's past blunders if he had made good on this occasion.

But Frank, unfit through worry and loss of sleep—with the shadow of disaster overhanging his home and his prospects—had no heart for football. He certainly made an effort, but he seemed to have no idea of the locality of the net.

The ball sailed high over the cross-bar, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 616.

and the Highcliffe players drew deep breaths of relief.

"Saved!" muttered Frank Courtenay. And then the final whistle rang out.

With feelings too deep for words, Harry Wharton & Co. walked off the field. They had been defeated in front of their own supporters.

Highcliffe had won the match—not because they had played better football, but because Frank Nugent had missed several gilt-edged opportunities of scoring for his side.

The Greyfriars juniors said nothing, but the looks which they directed at Nugent were black and bitter.

Had they been in the mood to make allowances, they would have realised that Frank Nugent was not in a fit state to play football, and that Wharton was really to blame for including a man in the side who was off-colour.

But the Removes were not in a forgiving mood just then. They told them-

quarrel, and the rift was growing rapidly wider.

"I'm fed up with this sort of thing!" said Bob Cherry, after lessons next day. "The study gets on my nerves! What price a bike-spin this afternoon?"

"Good wheeze!" said Johnny Bull. "We won't go right away, though. Let's get late passes from Wingate, and bike over to the Courtfield cinema this evening."

"That's the ticket!" said Wharton. "Meanwhile, we'll amuse ourselves by punting a footer about."

Nugent had taken no part in this conversation, although he stood near at the time. The others did not intend that he should accompany them, and he knew it. And the knowledge was not pleasant.

Somebody else had overheard Johnny Bull's suggestion about the cinema. Harold Skinner had done so, and he was looking very thoughtful as he went along to his own study.

A wheeze was taking shape in Skinner's crafty mind—a wheeze for getting his revenge on Frank Nugent.

Frank, with a heavy tread, went along to the library, to solace himself with a book; though he was not likely to find much consolation in reading, in his present unhappy frame of mind.

The other members of the Famous Five played football for an hour, and then, having washed and changed, they presented themselves demurely at Wingate's study and requested late passes.

"Where are you going?" inquired the captain of Greyfriars.

"To beholdfully survey the antics of the ludicrous Charlie Chaplin," said Hurree Singh.

Wingate laughed.

"Well, mind you're back at a respectable hour, that's all."

The passes were duly handed over, and the juniors procured their bicycles and set off in the gathering winter dusk.

"Mind you've all got oil in your lamps!" cautioned Bob Cherry. "Our old friend Tozer would love to report us for riding without lights."

"I filled all the lamps myself," said Wharton.

"Good!"

The juniors cycled slowly out of gates, and quickened their speed as they emerged into the roadway.

Courtfield was reached without mishap, and the juniors left their machines at a neighbouring garage and passed into the cinema.

The show was a good one—remarkably good for a provincial picture-house.

Hurree Singh had an opportunity of "beholdfully surveying" the antics of Charlie Chaplin, and the juniors thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The programme was so attractive that they would cheerfully have seen it over again, but time did not permit.

"We shall have to buck up," said Johnny Bull. "It's getting late."

"It won't take us long to whiz back to Greyfriars," said Wharton. "We'll have a race if you like."

The night air was sharp and keen, and Wharton's suggestion was hailed with enthusiasm.

The four juniors recovered their machines from the garage, and mounted simultaneously. They soon left Courtfield behind, and were skimming along the country road.

Bob Cherry, pedalling vigorously, established a good lead, and the other three followed behind him in a cluster.

At the most lonely part of the road, when he might have been expected to scorch faster than ever, Bob Cherry suddenly jammed on his brake. At the same instant he raised a shout of alarm.

No. 1.—HARRY WHARTON.



Harry Wharton, Captain of the Remove, and leader of the Famous Five. Brave, chivalrous, tender-hearted, and never vindictive. Captain of the Remove football and cricket elevens, a splendid all-round athlete, a fine scholar; in fact, a fellow in a thousand. Also the ruling figure in the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society. Shares Study No. 1 with Frank Nugent.

selves that Nugent, as a result of his recent quarrel with Wharton, had deliberately let the team down.

Frank Nugent had always been well esteemed, even by fellows who professed to dislike him. But on this particular afternoon he was the most unpopular fellow in the Remove—more unpopular even than Skinner. And that was saying a good deal.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Against Odds.

DURING the next twenty-four hours Frank Nugent exchanged no word with his chums.

Tea in Study No. 1 had been consumed in stony silence. But the looks which the other members of the Famous Five directed at Frank Nugent spoke volumes.

Prep, too, had been undertaken without a word. Nugent sat apart from the others, moody and miserable.

No effort was made to patch up the

"Look out, you fellows! Don't come any further!"

"What the thump—" began Wharton, in astonishment.

Bob Cherry had dismounted, and the others followed suit.

"What is it, Bob?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Look!" said Bob Cherry.

And he pointed to a rope which was suspended across the roadway.

"My only aunt!" gasped Wharton.

There was a gate on each side of the road, and to these gates the ends of the rope had been made fast.

The rope was suspended about a foot from the roadway, and had the cyclists dashed into it, they could not have escaped serious injury.

"What a cowardly trick!"

Harry Wharton's tone quivered with indignation.

"We might have broken our necks!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "At the rate we were going we'd have come a terrific cropper! Jolly lucky I happened to spot the rope!"

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull.

"Wonder what cad did this?"

The question was soon answered.

Through a gap in the hedge swarmed a dozen fellows, led by Cecil Ponsonby.

The Highcliffe "nuts" had turned out in full force. Besides Ponsonby, there were Gadsby and Monson, Vavasour and Merton and Drury, and half a dozen less notorious characters.

These cheerful youths were responsible for the trap which had been set for the Greyfriars juniors. Ponsonby admitted as much.

"Things didn't pan out quite so well as I expected," said Pon, advancing towards Harry Wharton & Co. "I was hopin' that some of you would turn somersaults over your handle-bars, but—"

"You cad!" panted Wharton. "Run your bikes into the hedge, kids, and go for them!"

Outnumbered though they were, the Greyfriars fellows did not hesitate. They hastily disposed of their machines, and then rushed to the attack.

Ponsonby's precious "rope trick" had not worked, but the leader of the "nuts" did not seem at all dismayed. If he could not inflict injury in one way he would inflict it in another, he told himself. The odds were three to one against Harry Wharton & Co., and they would have to go through the mill.

"Pile in!" said Ponsonby. "Wipe up the ground with 'em, begad!"

But this was a task difficult of accomplishment.

The Greyfriars juniors fought like tigers. They knew that they would get no quarter, and they asked for none. They stood shoulder to shoulder in the middle of the roadway, and hit out fiercely.

A smashing blow between the eyes sent Ponsonby sprawling; and before he could regain his feet, Gadsby and Monson were sprawling on top of him.

"Keep it up!" panted Wharton.

But numbers began to tell, and the plucky Greyfriars fellows found themselves beaten back. Their ranks were broken at length, Hurree Singh being felled by no less than three opponents.

Shortly afterwards Johnny Bull was put out of action. And then Harry Wharton was tripped up from behind, and he joined his two chums in the roadway.

Bob Cherry continued to stand and smite, but even Bob was conquered at last. He could not be expected to withstand such terrific odds for long.

"Sit on their chests!" snarled Ponsonby, who had not yet fully recovered

from that smashing blow between the eyes.

The Highcliffe cads rushed to obey.

"Might as well make use of this rope," said Gadsby. "Pity to waste it. Why not string them together by their legs, and make them do the three-legged race back to Greyfriars?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Haven't you gone far enough, you cads" muttered Wharton.

"Not quite!" said Pon. "Buck up with that rope!"

The rope was removed from the gates, and fastened round the legs of the victims.

When this was done, Ponsonby allowed the Greyfriars fellows to rise.

"Pretty set of pictures, aren't they?" chuckled Monson.

"Absolutely!" said the grinning Vavasour.

"Untie us, you rotters!" spluttered Johnny Bull. "How can we get back to Greyfriars, trussed together like this?"

No. 2.—BOB CHERRY.



Robert Cherry, the sunniest-tempered and most lovable member of the Famous Five of the Remove. Loyal and cheerful at all times; never shirks dangers or difficulties. One of the most popular characters of the Form. Good at all games, and the champion fighting-man of the Remove. Shares Study No. 13 with Mark Linley, Wun Lung, and Hurree Singh.

"I'm no good at conundrums," drawled Ponsonby. "You'll have to do the best you can. Will you excuse us now, dear boys? We've got an appointment."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffe juniors.

Ponsonby made a mocking bow, and set off in the direction of his own school. His cronies followed, chuckling as they went.

"Here's a pretty go!" grunted Bob Cherry. "They've tied these confounded knots so tight that we can't possibly undo them without a knife, and I've left mine at Greyfriars!"

"Same here!" said Johnny Bull.

Harry Wharton groped in his pockets.

"I haven't a knife, either," he said.

"What about you, Inky?"

Hurree Singh shook his head.

"The beastful Pon confiscated mine when I was on the ground," he said.

"Oh crumbs!"

"We shall have to manage as best we can," said Wharton.

"What about our bikes?" said Bob Cherry.

"We must leave them where they are. There's no help for it."

The juniors stumbled away towards Greyfriars. They had scarcely proceeded a couple of yards when Harry Wharton stopped short. The suddenness of the action nearly caused a general collapse.

"Buck up!" growled Johnny Bull. "What are you stopping for?"

"Here's a letter or something in the roadway."

"Let it rot!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"But it might be important. You never know."

Wharton stooped, and picked up the letter. He had an electric-torch in his pocket, and he flashed it upon the missive.

The next moment a low cry of astonishment escaped him.

"Great pip!"

"Anything wrong?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"I should jolly well say so! Just look at this!"

The other three perused the letter by the light of the torch, and their astonishment was as great as Wharton's.

This was the message which the captain of the Remove had accidentally found:

"Dear Ponsonby,—I am sending you this note by one of the fags to say that Wharton, Cherry, Bull, and Hurree Singh, who helped to chuck you off the footer-ground yesterday, will be visiting the Courtyard Cinema this evening. I know you are eager to get your own back, and I suggest that you lie in wait for the fellows I have mentioned and teach them a sharp lesson. They will be on their bikes, so perhaps you could rig up a rope across the road so that they all come a cropper? Anyway, you will be doing me a good turn, as well as yourself, by taking a rise out of them. I have fallen out with Wharton, and I now know him for what he is—a beastly prig. I sha'n't be sorry to see him taken down a peg or two.

"You know what time the cinema closes, and I leave it to you to act accordingly.—Yours sincerely,

"F. NUGENT."

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

That was all that Bob Cherry could say at the moment. The letter had knocked him all of a heap.

"This is the last straw!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Nugent betrayed us to Ponsonby! Just think of it! Nugent, of all people! Nugent!"

And Johnny Bull kept repeating the name, like a parrot.

In the ordinary way the juniors would never have suspected Frank Nugent of such a base and dishonourable action. It seemed incredible that Nugent, who had always been as straight as a die, should become a traitor, and betray his chums into the hands of the enemy.

Yet there was no room for doubt. The letter afforded overwhelming proof of Frank Nugent's guilt. Frank's familiar handwriting was known to each of his chums, and it was his handwriting that confronted them now!

"Dashed if I can get over this!" said Wharton. "It—it sort of turns me dizzy! To think that Nugent should play a rotten, low-down trick of this sort!"

It was indeed a blow!

Had their betrayer been Skinner or Stott, or one of the black sheep, the juniors would not have been surprised.

But Nugent—

Harry Wharton & Co. were angry, but they were hurt, too—hurt to think that Frank Nugent—a fellow whom they had always regarded as true blue—had deceived them utterly.

They could make no allowances. Nothing could excuse Nugent's conduct.

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Even if he had written that letter to Ponsonby in the heat of the moment, without stopping to consider the baseness of his action, it was impossible for the fellows he had betrayed to forgive him. No reparation, no atonement, could ever wipe out the stain of that dishonourable, disloyal act.

"No use jawing about it here," said Bob Cherry at last. "Better get a move on. It's going to take us all our time to get back to the school."

"Let's have another shot at untying this confounded rope!" growled Johnny Bull.

The juniors stooped down and tugged at their bonds. But Ponsonby & Co. had done their work thoroughly. The knots refused to budge.

"No go!" said Wharton. "Come on—and keep in step, or we shall all go head-over-heels!"

The journey back to the school was like a nightmare.

Progress was painfully slow, for the juniors stumbled at every few yards, and they were in a state of utter exhaustion when the gates of Greyfriars were eventually reached.

The gates were closed, for it was past locking-up time. It was, in fact, the juniors' bed-time.

Harry Wharton rang the bell, and after a long delay Gosling came out to unlock the gates.

"Young rips!" he said, peering through the gloom at Harry Wharton & Co. "Which I'll report yer, walkin' in in the middle of the night! Wot I says is this 'ere—all boys oughter be drowned at birth!"

"Cut the cackle, and get a knife!" said Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"

"Can't you see that we're trussed up like a bunch of Christmas turkeys? Get a knife—quick, and cut this rope!"

"My heye!" muttered Gosling. "Which I've never 'eard of sich goings hon. Master Cherry—"

"Don't stand goggling, like a moon-struck, silly idiot!" roared Bob. "Get a knife!"

Gosling obeyed. But he took his own time about it, and ten minutes had elapsed before the juniors were released. Then they stretched their cramped and aching limbs, and trudged into the building.

Wingate of the Sixth met them in the passage.

"You kids are jolly late!" he said sternly.

"Sorry, Wingate!" said Wharton. "We were detained on the way back."

Wingate grunted.

"Well, you needn't come to me for any more late passes for a fortnight!" he said. "Now cut off to bed!"

Feeling decidedly sore, mentally and physically, the four juniors obeyed.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Expelled from the Famous Five!

"NUGENT!"

Frank Nugent looked up with a start from the armchair in Study No. 1. He was surprised to find himself addressed, for his study-mates had not been on speaking terms with him for a long time.

"Well?" said Frank, meeting Harry Wharton's angry, accusing gaze.

Wharton tried to keep his voice steady. His hands were tightly clenched, his face was very white.

"I want to know—or, rather, we want to know—what you meant by betraying us to that cad Ponsonby," he said.

Nugent stared.

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"Betraying you to Ponsonby!" he echoed.

"You needn't pretend to be surprised. You know jolly well what you did! You wrote a note to Ponsonby—"

"My hat!" said Nugent. "I've never written to Ponsonby in my life, that I can remember!"

"You wrote to Ponsonby," repeated Wharton firmly, "and suggested that he should serve us a shabby trick!"

Nugent's face flushed with indignation. "I did nothing of the sort!" he said hotly.

"Oh, come off!" growled Bob Cherry. "What's the use of denying it? If you had a single spark of decency left you'd admit that what Wharton said is true."

Nugent jumped up from the armchair. "You silly asses!" he shouted.

"What do you take me for?"

"A traitor and a cad!" said Johnny Bull.

It was a point-blank answer to a point-blank question. Johnny Bull was one of the most outspoken fellows in the Remove. He never beat about the bush. Frank Nugent fairly exploded.

"I'm not going to be spoken to like that!" he said angrily. "I'm just about fed up with you fellows! First you go and shout the odds about my pater hav-

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ing lost his money, and now you trump up an idiotic charge against me. You must be off your rockers!"

"I've got proof that you betrayed us to Ponsonby," said Wharton.

"Produce it, then."

Wharton did so. He unfolded the letter which he had found in the roadway the previous evening, and displayed it to Nugent's gaze.

"Perhaps you'll deny that this is your handwriting?" said Wharton scornfully. There was a pause, during which Nugent read the letter.

"I do deny it!" he said emphatically. "I admit there's a resemblance between this writing and my own, but this isn't mine!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry.

"I don't believe you!" said Wharton.

"Very well," said Nugent bitterly.

"But if you think the matter ends at that you're mistaken. I'm not going to take this lying down, Wharton. You can step along to the gym as soon as you like!"

"No need for that," said Wharton. "We'll have it out here and now."

The others made no attempt to interfere this time. They saw that a fight was inevitable. Wild horses could not have prevented Nugent from coming to grips with Wharton, and vice versa.

A space was cleared in Study No. 1, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, whose long-standing friendship now seemed to be shattered for ever, removed their jackets and faced each other.

"Pile in!" said Bob Cherry.

Bob was anything but pleased at the prospect of two old chums hammering each other; but he wanted them to get it over quickly.

Nugent opened the attack, and the next moment the combatants were tramping round and round the study, hitting out right and left—hitting out as if they were sworn foes.

The commotion did not pass unheeded.

Study doors were thrown open up and down the Remove passage, and a crowd of fellows swarmed into the doorway of No. 1.

Peter Todd and Mark Linley and Dick Penfold, Bulstrode and Russell and Ogilvy, Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major, and half a dozen others, appeared on the scene.

"I say, you fellows, what's going on?" asked Billy Bunter, trying in vain to look over the shoulders of the throng in the doorway.

"A fight, by Jove!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Wharton against Nugent!" gasped Ogilvy. "This is something new, and no mistake!"

The crowd gaped at the scene in wonder.

The occasions on which Wharton and Nugent had come to blows in the past were very few and far between. It was, as Ogilvy remarked, something new for two such old chums to be engaged in such a furious melee.

"Three to one on Wharton!" said Vernon-Smith.

"No takers!" chuckled Bolsover. "Any ass can see that Nugent hasn't a dog's chance!"

Within the study the fight raged fast and furious.

Harry Wharton usually fought with coolness and science, but he displayed neither of these qualities now. He was going in for sledge-hammer punching, and if only Nugent had kept his head he would have stood a good chance of overcoming his man.

But Nugent did not keep his head. He fought even more recklessly than Wharton, and he was already in trouble. One of his eyes was blinking uncertainly, and his nose had a decidedly bulbous appearance.

"Go it, Bob Cherry!" sang out Billy Bunter from the passage.

"It isn't Cherry, you duffer!" said Peter Todd. "It's Wharton and Nugent."

"Oh! Who's winning?"

"Wharton."

"Then I'm backing him. Pile in Harry, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton was fast wearing down his opponent.

Frank Nugent was beaten in everything but spirit. A powerful punch from Wharton caused him to measure his length on the floor of the study; but he scrambled to his feet again, and refused to acknowledge defeat.

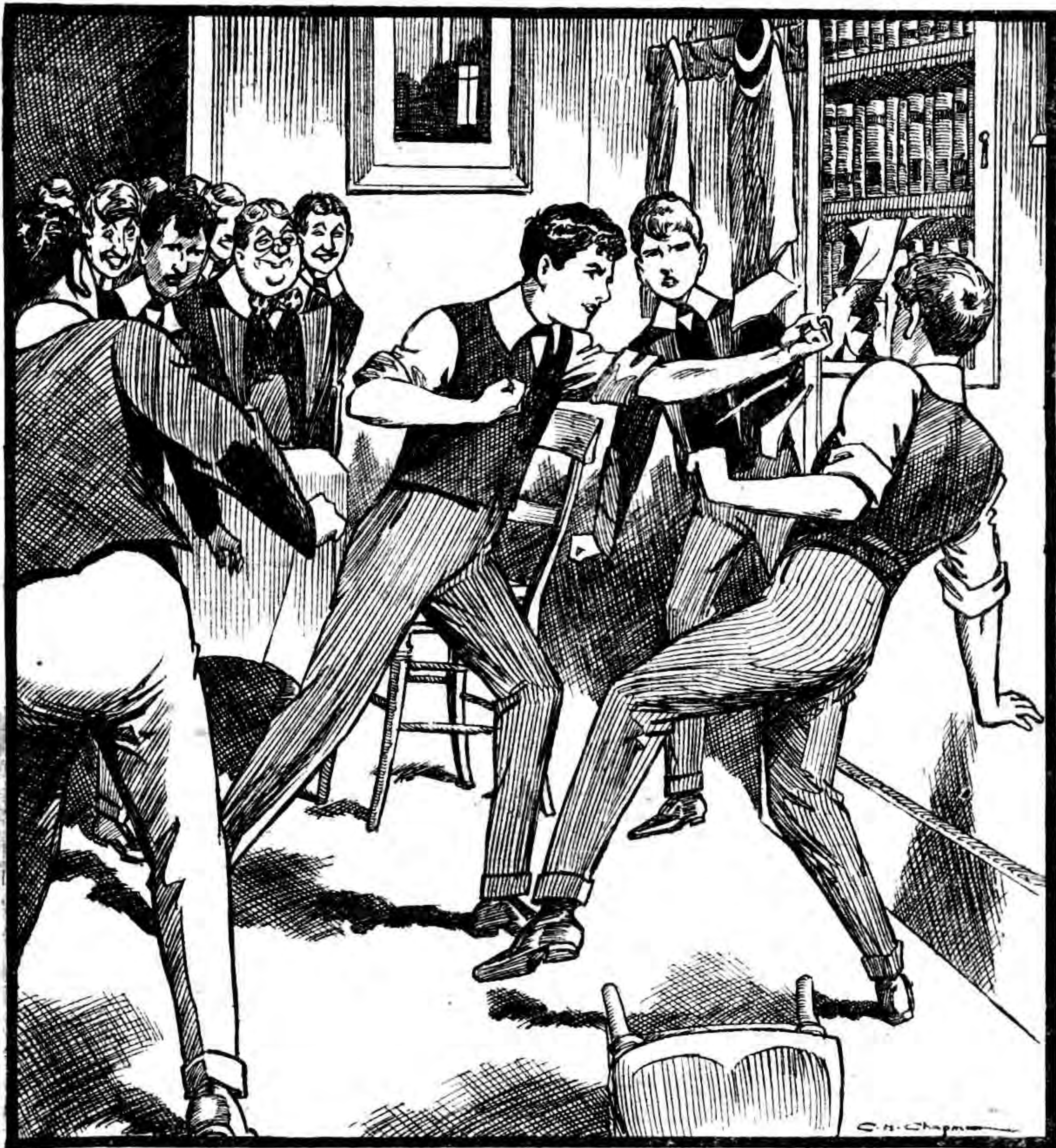
"Get it over, Harry!" urged Johnny Bull. "We shall have the prefects here in a jiffy!"

Harry Wharton did his best to oblige. He forced Nugent round the study, and finally clinched with him against the bookcase.

Biff! Crash!

Wharton's left shot out, straight from the shoulder, and Nugent dodged instinctively, with the result that his opponent's fist crashed into the glass panel of the bookcase.

There was a splintering of glass, and



Biff! Crash! Wharton's left shot out straight from the shoulder, and Nugent dodged instinctively, with the result that his opponent's fist crashed into the glass panel of the bookcase. There was a splintering of glass, and a roar of laughter from the spectators in the doorway. (See Chapter 6.)

a roar of laughter from the spectators in the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the style, Wharton!"

"Smash up the happy home!"

Wharton's knuckles were cut and bleeding, and he could use his left no longer. But he put in some hurricane work with his right, and presently the knock-out came. It was a blow which lifted Frank Nugent off his feet, and caused him to go to the floor with a crash.

Harry Wharton was about to cross over to his opponent, but Bob Cherry held him back.

"It's all right, Harry," he said quietly. "You've licked him."

And so it proved.

Frank Nugent made a desperate effort to rise; but his head fell back, and it was

obvious that all the fight had been knocked out of him.

Wharton put on his jacket, and turned to the crowd in the doorway.

"Buzz off, there's good fellows," he said. "We don't want this to go any further."

The spectators took the hint, and went back to their own studies, marvelling greatly at what they had seen.

"Fancy Wharton and Nugent scrapping!" gasped Peter Todd. "You could have knocked me down with a feather! We shall have the Head and Queelby having a set-to next!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that's how old pals treat each other," said Dick Russell, "let's hope I never made an enemy!"

And there was a general laugh.

Meanwhile, Frank Nugent had risen to his feet. He would have refused to accept the knock-out, but he knew, by his throbbing head and his unsteady gait, that he was not fit to resume.

Nugent tottered towards the mantelpiece, and stood leaning against it for a moment.

Then he became aware that Wharton was speaking to him. The voice sounded far-away and indistinct.

"Now that we've settled that part of the business, Nugent, you can get out!"

Nugent turned, and blinked at the speaker.

"What was that?" he asked.

"Get out!" said Wharton curtly.

"We've done with you!"

"Absolutely!" said Bob Cherry.

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Frank Nugent was about to speak, when Johnny Bull chimed in.

"We don't want you in the Famous Five any longer! We'll call ourselves the Famous Four, like it used to be."

"And I don't want you in this study any longer, either," said Harry Wharton. "You can clear out, and take your belongings with you!"

Frank Nugent pulled himself together. His tone was fierce and defiant as he retorted:

"I've as much right to this study as you, Wharton, and I'm not going to budge!"

Harry Wharton looked grim.

"I'll give you five minutes to get out," he said.

"That's fair enough," said Johnny Bull. "Take my tip, Nugent, and go now. Don't wait to be chucked out."

Frank Nugent doggedly stood his ground, and he made no movement to evacuate the study.

Silence fell upon the juniors—a silence which was broken at length by Wharton's voice.

"You've got another minute, Nugent," he said.

The seconds ticked by relentlessly.

When the time limit was up, Nugent was still standing by the mantelpiece.

"Out with him!" said Harry Wharton.

Nugent's one-time chums closed in upon him. He offered a feeble resistance, but it was of no avail.

The ejection of Nugent from the study was not a pleasant task, but Harry Wharton and the others tackled it thoroughly.

Frank Nugent was whirled through the open doorway, and he collapsed in a sprawling heap in the passage.

Before he could rise to his feet the door of Study No. 1 was slammed in his face.

The junior staggered against the wall, his head in a whirl, his senses reeling.

For a moment he did not fully realise the import of what had happened. And then the truth came to him with stunning force.

He was cut off from the Famous Five—banished from his study—cast out by his chums!

He was something more than a pauper now. He was an outcast.

The door of Study No. 1 opened again, and Nugent wondered vaguely if the occupants had relented—if they were beginning to regret their harsh treatment of him.

But this hope was soon dispelled.

A cricket-bat and a number of books were thrown out into the passage. They were followed by some unfinished sketches which Frank Nugent had been executing for the "Greyfriars Herald."

Soon there was quite a pile of articles in the passage. They represented Nugent's personal belongings.

Then the study door was slammed for the second time.

A curious sense of weakness and helplessness came over Frank Nugent. He was anything but a weakling as a rule, but this split with his chums, following on the heels of his father's misfortune, seemed to bow him over completely.

Nugent sank down on his pile of treasured belongings and buried his face in his hands.

And there he remained, in the dimly-lighted passage, sobbing as if his heart would break.

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THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Shunned by the Form!

"WHAT'S wrong?"

It was Mark Linley who asked the question.

The Lancashire lad was coming along the passage with his books under his arm, and he was startled to see Frank Nugent seated outside the door of Study No. 1 looking utterly down and out.

Mark Linley had often been in a similar predicament in the old days, when the cads of the Remove had persecuted him on account of his lowly station.

Mark remembered that in those dark days Frank Nugent had been on his side. He had always been grateful to Nugent, and now that the situation was reversed he wondered if he could be of any assistance to the unhappy junior.

Frank Nugent brushed away his

No. 3.—FRANK NUGENT.



Frank Nugent, the only other occupant of Study No. 1, and Harry Wharton's closest chum. Like Wharton in many ways, though lacking his strength of character. A prominent and popular member of the Famous Five. A good sportsman, and, within the limits of his strength, an able opponent with the gloves. Has a minor who is a leading light in the Second Form.

tears, as if ashamed to have been caught "blubbing," and rose to his feet.

"What ever has happened?" asked Mark Linley, glancing first at Nugent and then at the little pyramid of Nugent's belongings.

"I've been kicked out," said Frank in a low tone.

"Kicked out?" echoed Mark Linley in astonishment. "Kicked out of where?"

Nugent pointed to the door of Study No. 1.

Mark Linley's astonishment grew. He knew, of course, that there had been trouble in the ranks of the Famous Five, but he was amazed to know that matters had come to a climax of this sort.

"You—you mean to say they won't have you in the study?" he exclaimed. Nugent nodded wearily.

"But why have they chucked you out?"

"They think that I arranged with Ponsonby to play a shabby trick on them."

Mark Linley stared.

"But that's all rot!" he said. "You're not the sort of fellow to join

forces with Ponsonby. The silly asses have made a mistake!"

"I—I suppose I can hardly blame them for thinking as they do," said Nugent. "You see, they got hold of a letter which was supposed to have been sent by me to Ponsonby, and the handwriting and the signature are remarkably like mine. I can't convince them that I didn't write the beastly letter!"

"But I will!" said Mark Linley warmly.

And he was about to open the door of Study No. 1, when Frank Nugent caught him by the arm.

"You can't do anything, Linley," he said. "It's jolly decent of you to want to put things right, but you'll never convince them that I didn't write that letter."

Mark Linley paused.

"Who on earth could have written it?" he exclaimed.

"Give it up!" said Nugent helplessly.

"Has someone forged your handwriting, do you think?"

"Someone must have done."

"And you can't suggest who did?"

Nugent shook his head.

"I can't think of anyone who would play such a rotten trick on me!" he said. "I've got a few enemies in the Form. I know, but I shouldn't like to think that any one of them had carried his enmity to that length."

Mark nodded.

"Did you assure Wharton that you had nothing to do with the writing of that letter?" he asked.

"Of course!"

"And he didn't believe you?"

"No. You see, the handwriting makes it look awfully black against me. If you were to see the letter you'd probably take the same view as Wharton and the others."

"I shouldn't!" said Mark emphatically. "I know you better than that, Nugent. You detest Ponsonby—every decent fellow detests him—and I'm sure you'd never be in league with him. You'd cut off your right hand first."

"Thanks, Linley!" said Nugent quietly.

There was a pause.

"So they've chucked you out, have they?" said Mark presently. "Well, I shouldn't take it too much to heart if I were you. They'll soon come to their senses. Meanwhile, what are you going to do with all this property of yours?"

"I haven't thought about it," confessed Frank.

"Then you'd better find a home for it in my study."

"That's very decent of you! But Bob Cherry's in your study, and he wouldn't allow my things to be there. He'd shy them out again. And it would only cause friction between you and Bob—and there's been enough friction already, goodness knows!"

"But where else can you keep your things?"

"I'll take them up to the dorm," said Nugent. "They'll be in nobody's way there."

"And what about yourself? You'll have to find fresh quarters until those silly duffers come round!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Nugent bitterly. "I can hang out in the Common-room, and have all my grub in Hall. I don't suppose I shall be here much longer, anyway!"

"You're leaving Greyfriars?"

"Unless my pater's circumstances improve—and miracles don't happen nowadays!"

"I'm sorry to hear that!" said Mark Linley. "This must be a rotten time of suspense for you. I've been in the same boat myself, and I know what it's like. But you mustn't throw up the

sponge so easily, you know. Keep a stiff upper lip, and everything will come right in the end."

"I wish I could think so," said Frank, with a sigh.

And he gathered up his belongings and set off for the Remove dormitory.

Mark Linley went on his way with a clouded brow. He felt genuinely concerned for Frank Nugent, who seemed to be submerged in a whole sea of troubles.

The Lancashire lad was convinced, in his own mind, that Nugent was innocent of the charge made against him, and he would have given anything to get a clue as to the identity of the real culprit—the rascal who had forged Nugent's handwriting.

By bed-time, Nugent's expulsion from Study No. 1 was common knowledge. The why and wherefore of his expulsion was also common knowledge—thanks to Billy Bunter, who had again been busy at the keyhole.

Frank Nugent was the last fellow to come into the dormitory, and there was a hiss—a loud and prolonged hiss—as the junior entered.

"Cad!"

"Traitor!"

"Snake in the grass!"

These were only a few of the epithets which stung Nugent as he started to undress.

"He's been kicked out of Study No. 1!" said Bolsover major. "But that's not good enough! He ought to be made to run the gauntlet!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll make him, too!" said Skinner.

"Get your pillows and things ready, you fellows!"

But at this point Harry Wharton put his foot down.

"Nugent's been punished enough," he said.

"Rats!"

"He ought to be lynched!"

"He's hand in glove with that cad Ponsonby!"

Feeling ran very high in the Remove, and Wharton had all his work cut out to preserve order. But he exerted his authority, and eventually the fellows calmed down.

Frank Nugent said no word. Mechanically he got into bed, but he knew that sleep would be impossible. Troubles had come upon him thick and fast, and his mind was too active to admit of slumber.

After lights out he could hear the other fellows talking about him, and his cheeks burned. They spoke of him as a cad and a rank outsider. They fully believed—with the exception of Mark Linley—that he had indeed betrayed his chums into the hands of Ponsonby & Co.

Somebody suggested sending Frank to Coventry, but that would not have mattered much. He was practically in Coventry already, for no one, save Mark Linley, had a friendly word for him.

Frank Nugent was well-nigh in despair as he lay there, staring into the darkness.

What was the use of going on?

Life at Greyfriars, once so bright and pleasant, was becoming one long nightmare.

What did the future hold in store for the unhappy junior? Nothing but black looks and persecution. He was an out-cast—a pariah. He was shunned by the Form!

Frank Nugent felt that he could stand it no longer.

He would have to leave Greyfriars sooner or later, he reflected, on account of his father's altered circumstances. Why not fake Time by the forelock, and leave now?

In short, why not run away?

The idea, vague and uncertain at first,

gradually took definite shape in the junior's mind.

"I'll do it!" he murmured at length.

And then a whole host of difficulties presented themselves.

Where could he go? What could he do?

By going home he would be a burden to his parents, who were striving to make ends meet. That was impossible.

Nugent's thoughts turned to London—to the mighty city into which thousands had drifted as penniless boys, and aspired to fame and fortune.

Nugent overlooked the fact that there had been thousands of failures, also.

Yes, he would go to London. He would leave Greyfriars this very night.

The next twenty-four hours would see a startling transformation. He would cease to be a schoolboy, and would become one of the world's workers.

Boom!

It was the first stroke of eleven, sounding from the old clock-tower.

No. 4.—HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH.



Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—Nabob of Bhanipur. The descendant of a line of Indian princes, and the ruler of a territory. At the same time just a simple, fun-loving, companionable schoolboy. Talks a weird and wonderful kind of English. Asplendid bowler, a speedy forward, and, if necessary, a fine goalkeeper. A member of the Famous Five. (Study No. 13).

Quietly Frank slipped out of bed. With equal caution he donned his clothes, and then proceeded to pack the most cherished of his belongings into a large Gladstone bag.

Nugent's Form-fellows were fast asleep. The sonorous snore of Billy Bunter reverberated through the dormitory.

How strange it all seemed, that he should be making such preparations. A week before he would have roared with laughter at the bare thought of running away from Greyfriars. Had anyone fore-shadowed what was to come, Nugent would have dubbed him a false prophet.

Of course, he would miss the old place. He had come to love the familiar sights and sounds, and he would not be able to sever himself from all the old associations without a pang.

But it was for the best. Wharton and the others were against him; practically everyone was against him. He was a modern Ishmael, with his hand against every man's, and with every man's hand against him.

Having packed his bag, Frank Nugent tiptoed to the door.

Harry Wharton stirred restlessly in his bed, and for a moment Nugent stood stock still, with his heart beating fast.

There were no developments, however, and the junior continued on his way.

Down the dark staircase, along the passage, through the box-room window; and then the chilly breeze of the winter night fanned his face, as he stood out in the open under the stars.

A light was still burning in the Head's study, and also in that occupied by Mr. Queleh. A faint clicking sound showed that the Remove-master was working his typewriter.

Nugent glanced at his luminous watch.

"Plenty of time to catch the midnight mail-train," he murmured.

He crossed the Close, and stopped short beside the school wall.

A voice—it was the voice of conscience—seemed to be speaking to him.

"Coward!"

Frank Nugent started.

"To run away from school is the height of cowardice!" continued the voice.

"Go back to your dormitory, and abandon the idea at once. Square your shoulders, and stand up to your troubles like a man. Don't run away from them!"

The voice of conscience might have been a still, small voice, but it was also a very insistent one.

Frank Nugent began to waver. He could not decide whether to go on or to go back.

His conscience addressed him again.

"Only a coward runs away from school. It's taking the line of least resistance. I know there are a good many men whose boast it is that they ran away from school when they were boys, but it's nothing to boast about, really. It's a thing to be ashamed of. Go back, like a sensible fellow!"

Nugent hesitated no longer.

He knew that his conscience was not playing him false. He knew that by running away from Greyfriars he would be guilty of rank cowardice. It was "up to" him to carry on—to hold his head erect, not to collapse like a pricked bladder when things looked black.

Frank Nugent turned, and went slowly back into the building.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Little Way!

"WHAT about tea?"

Stott of the Remove asked the question in a disgruntled tone.

William Stott was Skinner's chief crony and hanger-on, and in return for his support he expected Skinner to entertain him in the way of study feeds.

It was a nippy winter afternoon, and Stott happened to be hungry. He was disappointed, therefore, on entering Skinner's study, to find that the cupboard was bare.

Skinner himself was lolling in the arm-chair, and he had made no attempt to prepare tea. No kettle was singing on the hob; no tablecloth was spread.

"Getting deaf in your old age, Skinner?" inquired Stott sarcastically. "I said what about tea?"

"Blow tea!" growled Skinner.

A rather ugly expression came over Stott's face. He was servile to Skinner as a rule, and was very careful what he said to him. But his present attitude was one of defiance, almost of patronage.

"I'm hungry!" hinted Stott.

"Go and eat coke, then!"

"I don't fancy coke, at the moment."

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It doesn't melt in the mouth like Mrs. Mumble's jam-tarts."

"You're getting as bad as Bunter!"

"Rats!" said Stott. "I don't see why I shouldn't have a good feed when I feel in the mood for it. Half a dozen jam-tarts and a plum-cake will suit me down to the ground. Get a move on, Skinney!"

Skinner flared up at this. He did not relish being ordered about by the weedy Stott.

"Look here," he said, "I'm fed up with you and your wants! You're nothing more nor less than a beastly sponger! You've been having top-hole grub at my expense for days, and there's a limit to all things. You can go without this afternoon, for a change!"

Stott scowled.

"Go easy!" he said. "If you're going to cut up rusty, you'll find that two can play at that game. I should advise you to study my wishes. A word from me, remember, would be enough to get you kicked out of Greyfriars on your neck!"

Skinner turned quite pale.

"You wouldn't dare—" he began.

"Wouldn't I, by Jove? Wharton and the others would be very interested to know that you forged a letter in Nugent's fist!"

"Shut up!" said Skinner in alarm.

"I'll shut up," said Stott calmly, "on condition that you give me a good feed, and stop being nasty!"

"Look here—"

"I've got you in a cleft stick, Skinney, and if you don't want me to give you away you'd better be decent!"

Skinner groped in his pocket, and produced half-a-crown.

"Take it," he growled, "and fetch what you like from the tuckshop! It's all I've got."

Stott took his departure. In the passage he collided with Billy Bunter, and a duet of groans followed.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"You've punctured me!" gasped Stott. "Why can't you look where you're going, you clumsy porpoise?"

"Oh, really, Stott—"

"Br-r-r!"

Stott gave the Owl of the Remove a savage push, and went on his way.

"Beast!" muttered Bunter.

And he turned the handle of Skinner's study door and rolled in.

"Clear out!" said Skinner promptly.

The fat junior closed the door behind him, and blinked at Skinner through his big spectacles.

"I knew you were an awfully deep bounder, Skinney!" he said. "But it's news to me that you're a forger!"

Skinner jumped up from the armchair. His face was livid.

"You spying toad—" he began.

"Oh, really—"

"You've been listening at the key-hole!"

"I haven't!" said Bunter indignantly.

"I merely happened to be passing, and Stott was raising his voice so much that I simply couldn't help hearing what he said. I say, it was an awfully deep dodge of yours to forge that letter to Ponsonby! It was in revenge for the licking Nugent gave you in the dorm, I suppose?"

"Dry up!" hissed Skinner.

The cad of the Remove was furious to think that he was in Bunter's power. He—Skinner—had cunningly engineered the plot which had brought about Frank Nugent's expulsion from the Famous Five; and Stott had been the only person who knew.

The secret had been fairly safe; but now that Bunter knew the facts it was

safe no longer. Bunter would not hesitate to tell the other fellows, unless Skinner paid him to keep his mouth shut.

The fat junior was master of the situation, and he knew it. He was fairly gloating as he stood blinking at Skinner.

"I suppose you mean to try and black-mail me, you fat worm?" growled Skinner, at length.

"Oh, really, Skinney!" said Bunter, in tones of pious indignation. "I shouldn't dream of such a thing! I'm a fellow of high principles, as you know. I merely want to ask you if you'll be good enough to cash a postal-order for me in advance?"

"I've got no money," said Skinner.

"But you gave Stott half-a-crown—"

"That was all I had."

"Look here," said Bunter, "you can't pull the wool over my eyes! I want that postal-order cashed at once, or—"

"I tell you I'm broke!" said Skinner desperately.

"All right!" said Bunter, turning to the door. "I'm going to have a chat with Wharton."

"Stop!" cried Skinner, in great alarm. "I can't give you anything at the moment, but you shall have your confounded hush-money to-morrow. How much do you want?"

"Lemme see," said Bunter thoughtfully. "My postal-order will be for a quid."

GOOD ADVICE!

If you want to read a story in every way as good as this magnificent yarn of the chums of Greyfriars, get this week's issue of the "Gem" and read the story of Tom Merry & Co. which appears therein, and I do not hesitate to say that you will enjoy every line of it.

Don't miss a good thing, but order your copy of the "Gem" now.

"Very well! You shall have a quid to-morrow."

Skinner had no idea how he was going to raise the money. His one object was to gain time.

"A quid to-morrow," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Can I count on that?"

"Of course!"

"All serene! I'll give you till six o'clock to-morrow night. If the quid isn't handed over by then you can look out for squalls!"

With this dire threat, which he emphasised by wagging a fat forefinger at Skinner, Billy Bunter rolled out of the study.

Skinner would have dearly loved to speed the parting guest with a boot, but he ruefully realised that Bunter held all the cards. It was a maddening thought that he was in the fat junior's power; but anything—anything was better than exposure. Harry Wharton & Co. would show him no mercy if they discovered the caddish trick he had played.

Stott came in a moment later laden with half-a-crown's worth of tuck. He found Skinner looking very ill-at-ease.

"Hallo! Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Yes. When we were jawing just now, that worm Bunter was listening at the keyhole!"

"My hat!" said Stott. "I bumped into him in the passage; but I didn't know he'd been eavesdropping."

"He's threatened to give me away, unless I cash an imaginary postal-order

for him by to-morrow night," growled Skinner.

"How much does he want?"

"A quid!"

"Phew! How are you going to raise it?"

"Don't ask me!" said Skinner helplessly.

The cad of the Remove was beginning to regret that forgery was one of his accomplishments. He wished he had never concocted the letter to Ponsonby.

But it was too late for vain regrets. The mischief was done, and Skinner's mind was in an agony of doubt and dread.

Nemesis was overtaking him fast!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

FRANK NUGENT was still under a cloud.

Never in all his school career had he felt so utterly wretched.

Not a single ray of hope brightened the junior's existence. There was no news from home—and no news in this case did not mean good news. It meant that matters were still the same—that the Nugent family was on the brink of poverty. And unless a miracle happened they would soon be over the brink!

The Famous Four—it was the Famous Five no longer—pursued the even tenor of their way; and whenever they chanced to meet Frank Nugent, their one-time chum, they seemed to look right through him.

This sort of persecution—scorn without speech—was far harder to endure than the noisy taunts of fellows like Bolsover major.

Frank Nugent spent most of his leisure in the library, the junior Common-room being too hot to hold him. He played no games, for his name had been expunged from the Remove Eleven, and he had all his meals in Hall.

Nugent felt that another week of this sort of thing would drive him mad. He was a sociable fellow, and it was maddening to be exiled in this way.

To make his cup of humiliation complete, Frank had to endure the taunts of fellows like Bunter—fellows who were not fit to black his boots.

The unhappy junior began to wonder whether it had been worth while to obey the dictates of conscience—whether it would not have been wiser to shake the dust of Greyfriars from his feet.

But Nugent was not the only fellow in the Remove who was finding life anything but a bed of roses.

Harold Skinner was in dire straits. He had made frantic efforts to raise a pound—the price of Bunter's silence. He had tapped Bolsover major, and Vernon-Smith, and several others; and in each case he had drawn blank. Bolsover curtly told him there was nothing doing, and Vernon-Smith said that he didn't lend money to fellows who would never be in a position to pay it back.

Skinner tried Lord Mauleverer, but the schoolboy earl, although rolling in money, said he didn't see why he should turn himself into a charity organisation society for Skinner's benefit.

When the time-limit had expired, Billy Bunter rolled into Skinner's study. He extended a fat palm, and Skinner groaned.

"One quid, please!" said Bunter, in business-like tones.

"Look here—" began Skinner, in desperation.

"No humming and hawing!" said Bunter. "Pay up!"

"I—I can't!"

"Right! Then I know what to do!"

"Don't be a mad idiot!" said Skinner. "You'll get no satisfaction by telling tales to Wharton. Let it stand over till to-morrow, and you shall have your quid."

"Won't wash!" said Bunter promptly. "When to-morrow comes, you'll ask me to let it stand over till the next day, and so on. And I'm not having any!"

"I simply haven't got the cash at the moment," said Skinner; "but it won't take me long to raise it."

Billy Bunter blinked at the cad of the Remove.

"The time-limit's up," he said, "and you've failed to come up to the scratch. Therefore, I'm going along to see Wharton!"

Losing all control of himself, Skinner sprang to his feet.

"If you breathe so much as a whisper to Wharton," he said, "I'll smash you!"

Skinner looked so dangerous that Billy Bunter promptly turned and fled.

Thinking that the fat junior was going to carry out his threat Skinner gave chase.

Billy Bunter was not an athlete, but he raced along the Remove passage like a champion of the cinder-path. His fat little legs were going like clockwork.

Unfortunately, the Owl of the Remove paused to look over his shoulder, and his pursuer gained on him considerably.

"Ow!" panted Bunter. "Rescue, Remove! Keep him off! He's dangerous!"

Harry Wharton & Co. came into view at that moment, and Bunter promptly sought sanctuary in their arms.

"Keep him off!" he repeated shrilly. "He's off his rocker! Help! Fire! Murder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat duffer!" said Harry Wharton. "What's Skinner chasing you for?"

Skinner halted, pumping in breath.

"You mind your own business, Wharton!" he panted.

Wharton ignored the cad of the Remove, and resumed his cross-examination of Bunter.

"Have you been scoffing Skinner's grub?" he demanded.

"Nunno!"

"Then why is he after your blood?"

"He—he's accused me of listening at keyholes!" said Billy Bunter indignantly.

"As if I should ever do a mean thing like that! I never listen at keyholes—"

"Make it 'hardly ever'!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm above that sort of thing!" said Bunter. "I wasn't listening at the keyhole of Study No. 1 the other day when Nugent read that letter from his pater telling him—"

"What?"

"My hat!"

Harry Wharton & Co. saw daylight now. They no longer wondered how the whole Form had got to know about the trouble in the Nugent family.

"You—you prying worm!" said Johnny Bull, in disgust. "You blabbed to all the fellows about the change in Nugent's circumstances, and Nugent thought it was us!"

"Ow! I—I didn't! I wasn't—" wailed Bunter.

The fat junior had been letting his tongue run away with him, as usual. He was flustered and bewildered, and when he was in that state he invariably gave himself away.

"Have you been listening at Skinner's keyhole as well?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Nunno! I merely happened to be passing Skinner's study, and he and Stott were jawing. Stott was raising his voice so much that I simply couldn't help hearing him say—"

Billy Bunter stopped short as he caught sight of the expression on Skinner's face. It was a homicidal expression, and it terrified the fat junior.

"It—it's all right, Skinny!" he said. "I'm not going to give you away. You can rely on me, you know. I shouldn't dream of telling these fellows that you were a forger—"

Harry Wharton & Co. stood rooted to the ground in astonishment.

As for Skinner, all the colour had ebbed from his cheeks, and he was deathly pale.

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

Harry Wharton's voice was stern and insistent.

"Of course, he's talking out of his hat, as usual!" said Skinner.

Still ignoring Skinner, Wharton grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar.

"Ow! Leggo!" gasped Bunter.

"You said that Skinner was a forger," began Wharton.

"I didn't! Skinner's a jolly decent chap, aren't you, Skinny? It must have been somebody else who forged Nugent's handwriting and sent that letter to Ponsonby!"

Again Harry Wharton & Co. stood spellbound.

What did this mean? Was it possible that they had misjudged Frank Nugent, that they had done him a grave wrong? Was it possible that he was not their betrayer at all; that the letter purporting to be his had been forged by one of his enemies?

The silence was broken by Skinner's voice.

"Of course, you fellows will take no notice of what Bunter says? He's never been known to speak the truth, except by accident."

"I believe this is one of the accidents!" said Bob Cherry grimly.

"What! You think I faked that letter to Ponsonby?" Skinner's voice rose almost to a scream. "I tell you I didn't! I know nothing about it. I'm not half clever enough to forge another fellow's handwriting, even if I were cad enough!"

"Oh, really, Skinny!" said Billy Bunter protestingly. "It's no use trying to brazen it out, you know. You forged that letter right enough, and you know it, and so does Stott!"

"Let's hear what Stott has to say about it," suggested Johnny Bull.

"All serene!" said Wharton. "Come on, and see that Skinner doesn't escape!"

Just as the juniors were about to set off in search of Stott, Mark Linley came up.

The Lancashire lad was looking very excited. There was a sheet of paper in his hand, and Skinner nearly collapsed when he recognised what paper it was.

"What's up, Marky?" asked Bob Cherry.

Skinner suddenly darted forward and attempted to snatch the document from Mark Linley's hand. But Mark thrust it swiftly behind his back, and Hurree Singh's grasp descended upon Skinner's shoulder.

"As you fellows know," said Mark Linley, "I've believed in Nugent's innocence from the first. I felt convinced that he would never have written that caddish letter to Ponsonby. And I've been trying hard ever since to find out who did, to discover the cad who forged Nugent's handwriting."

The juniors nodded eagerly.

"And what have you discovered?" asked Wharton.

"This!"

Mark Linley displayed the sheet of paper to full view. At first the juniors scarcely realised the import of it. And then, as in a flash, the truth dawned upon them.

On the sheet of paper the name "F. Nugent" had been written about a dozen times.

The top signature was in Skinner's handwriting, but the subsequent ones became more and more like Nugent's, until, at last, one was actually identical with Nugent's own.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "This is how Skinner practised his forgery!"

"There's no longer any doubt about it," said Harry Wharton. "Nugent will never forgive us for this! We've kicked him out of the study, we've given him a dog's life, and all the time he was innocent, and this low-down cad was the culprit!"

Skinner was trembling from head to foot in the grasp of Hurree Singh.

"Let him go, Inky!" said Wharton quietly. "We'll deal with him later. Meanwhile, we'll go and look for Nugent."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Clouds Roll By.

FRANK NUGENT was run to earth in the school library.

He was reading "Treasure Island," but even that delightful narrative failed to lighten his gloom.

Nugent had the "blues" very badly, and he was just telling himself that he was at the end of his tether, when five juniors came in. One—Mark Linley—was looking flushed and triumphant, the other four looked ashamed and crestfallen.

Frank Nugent's heart beat quickly.

What did this mean? Had his chums at last relented of their treatment of him? Had they come to invite him back to the fold?

Or—happy thought!—had his innocence been established?

A reassuring signal from Mark Linley told Frank all that he wished to know. And then he became aware that Bob Cherry was speaking to him.

"Frank—Franky, old man, we've been a set of cads! We want you to knock our heads together first of all, and then kick us round the room!"

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull.

Frank Nugent laughed—for the first time in many days.

"What's happened?" he asked.

"We've made a discovery," explained Wharton. "Two discoveries, in fact. You remember when you read your pater's letter aloud to us in the study?"

Nugent nodded.

"Well, Bunter had his ear glued to the keyhole at the time; and that was how the news about your pater leaked out."

"My hat! And I was idiot enough to blame you fellows!"

Nugent's tone was remorseful.

"You needn't reproach yourself," said Wharton. "Perhaps it wasn't surprising under the circumstances, that you should think we had betrayed your confidence. Even if you were a bit unjust, you didn't wrong us to the extent that we've wronged you. We've just discovered that the letter to Ponsonby, which we accused you of writing, was forged."

"Forged?" echoed Nugent.

"Yes—by Skinner!"

"Great Scott!"

"Now you can understand why we want you to knock our heads together and dribble us round the room!" said

Bob Cherry. "We've been beasts to you, Franky—"

"Downright cads!" said Johnny Bull.

"And we are wondering if you can ever pardonfully overlook our rotten and ludicrous conduct!" added Hurree Singh.

Frank Nugent was on his feet now. His eyes were shining.

"My dear old duffers!" he exclaimed. "Of course, you ought to have known me better than to think I'd play such a low-down trick on you. But, after all, Skinner's forgery was jolly clever, and you could hardly help being deceived."

"Marky wasn't deceived," said Bob Cherry. "He vowed you were innocent from the beginning. But then, Marky's a sensible fellow, and we're a set of prize asses! Will you shake, Franky?"

"Of course!"

And Nugent's hand met that of Bob Cherry's in a tight grip.

"We don't deserve to be let down so lightly," said Harry Wharton, shaking hands in turn. "You'd be quite justified, Franky, in refusing to have any truck with us again."

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent.

The old happy flush had returned to his cheeks. He shook hands warmly with Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh, and last of all with Mark Linley, who had never doubted him—who had counselled him to keep a stiff upper lip, assuring him that all would come right in the end.

Mark Linley's prophecy was amply fulfilled.

That evening, Frank Nugent's cup of happiness was filled to overflowing. A letter arrived for him from his father—a cheery, almost a boisterous epistle, stating that the slump in oils was over, and that Mr. Nugent had been able to dispose of his shares to advantage.

Frank knew little enough about Stock Exchange matters; but he only cared to know one thing—that the wolf had been driven from the door, and that the spectre of poverty no longer haunted the Nugent family.

When he had been duly reinstated in Study No. 1, Frank communicated the good tidings to his chums, and there was great rejoicing.

Harry Wharton organised a big spread that evening, and Frank Nugent, of course, was the central figure at the repast.

The clouds had rolled away at last, and Nugent was very happy.

It is only when we have lived in the shadows that we fully appreciate the sunshine. And Frank Nugent appreciated it now. He was back amongst his old chums—back in his familiar surroundings; and, as Bob Cherry tritely expressed it, everything in the garden was lovely!

Harold Skinner was not allowed to go scot-free. Far from it!

Harry Wharton had decided at first to report the matter to the school authorities, since forgery was a very serious offence. But at Nugent's instigation

this step was not taken, and the Remove Form took the law into its own hands, and dealt with the offender.

After lights-out, Skinner was made to run the gauntlet—probably the most severe form of punishment inflicted by boys on boys.

There were no half-measures. Skinner had to run from end to end of two rows of juniors armed with knotted towels and pillows; and by the time the ordeal was over, he was grovelling and whimpering on the floor of the dormitory.

Billy Bunter, who had also offended on a minor scale, was not forgotten. He received a liberal application of Harry Wharton's slipper, and he, too, grovelled and whimpered when the well merited chastisement was over.

But the Remove had no sympathy to waste on Skinner and Bunter. The fellows surged round Frank Nugent's bed, asking his pardon for their past treatment of him.

And, needless to add, full and frank forgiveness was readily and cheerfully granted by the junior who, but a short time since, had been Cast Out by His Chums!

THE END.

Another Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "THE RISE AND FALL OF WILLIAM GOSLING." By FRANK RICHARDS. Order your copy in advance!

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

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

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

"THE RISE AND FALL OF WILLIAM GOSLING."

By Frank Richards.

The famous author of the Greyfriars stories considers this yarn one of the finest he has ever written, and I must say that I absolutely agree with him.

Gosling, the school porter, is the most prominent character in the story, as the title implies. It tells how, with the assistance of Harry Wharton, he replies to a matrimonial advertisement, and what came of it.

There are many complications as a result of Gosling's independence when he thinks he is likely to leave the school, and they are most amusingly described in the story.

"THE RISE AND FALL OF WILLIAM GOSLING"

is a yarn which you must not fail to read, for I know you will enjoy it from beginning to end. Order your copy of next week's MAGNET at once.

A SPLENDID STORY.

I want to draw your attention this week to a grand book just published by Messrs. Sampson Low. The story is entitled "Sunny Ducrow," and is the work of that prince of romanticists, Mr. Henry St. John Cooper, whose tales have been read in every corner of the world.

I doubt if any author has written more

stories than the ever versatile Mr. Cooper, and the more he writes the better they are. I have read "Sunny Ducrow" myself, and can honestly recommend it.

It is the stirring life-story of a brave girl of London Town, who fights through a thousand difficulties, and rises from being a poorly-paid hand in a pickle-factory to the position of a leading actress whose talents are ever in demand.

Every boy should tell his mother and sisters of this excellent story.

THE GALLERY..

At last I am able to satisfy readers who have been asking for a continuous gallery, with a constant succession of portraits of the characters.

As you will see, I am now giving four Greyfriars portraits in a week, with a brief biographical sketch of each character. That should meet the case.

Either it will or it won't. The answer has to be one or the other—just as in the query about the moon being made of green cheese. Either it is, or it isn't. We know it isn't—therefore it is!

That is one way of conducting an argument, but I do not think much of it. As to the popularity of the new feature I have no doubt at all.

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

I know you will not forget the newcomer among the Companion Papers, which has started active operations again under such splendid conditions. The Editor and staff are putting in magnifi-

cent work, and are piling in the fresh and fascinating features in a style which redounds much to the credit of all concerned.

SEND IN YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS.

As you have no doubt noticed, I have started in the "Greyfriars Herald" again an old time feature; The Portrait Gallery of Readers.

Already I have a large number waiting to go through our process department, but in order to keep up this feature regularly week by week, it will be necessary for me to receive hundreds of photographs. The latter can in no circumstances be returned, owing to the treatment they have to undergo before being published, but, of course, readers will be able to buy several copies of their portraits, and much more cheaply, too, than in the case of the photographer's.

So, when sending, will you please write clearly the name or nom-de-plume you desire to be inserted under your portrait.

Buck up, readers, one and all, of both sexes, and send in your photographs right away. First come will be first published. Although, don't expect to see them directly, in the issue after they are sent, because you must know we go to press a month ahead.

JOHN PEEL.

Thanks to a friend in Cumberland, a Londoner born, who has sent me a truly delightful letter about his part of the country, and other things, including something about the old legend of John Peel, and his coat so grey, the hero of the grand song.

My correspondent touches on subjects of great splendour, and he says things about the Companion Papers which are pleasing in the extreme.

Your Editor



VENTRILOQUISM IN A MONTH.

A GRAND ARTICLE EXPLAINING
HOW YOU MAY BECOME A
VENTRILOQUIST.



THE OLD WOMAN'S VOICE.

Known as the "theek" or "rush" voice, it partakes of the nature of the squeaky, shrill sound produced by a reed instrument. Most people are gifted with the power of singing "falsetto," and the "theek" voice simply consists of falsetto tones somewhat exaggerated. Either the words "queek" or "theek" may be used for the preliminary practice, the latter, perhaps, being preferable.

As it is not intended in these chapters to enter into a practical discourse on the anatomy of the throat and vocal chords, technical terms relating to such will be avoided as far as possible. However, the larynx must now be mentioned. This is the part of the throat often spoken of as "Adam's apple," and is the convex portion of the first cartilage of the larynx. It is, then, this part of the larynx that has to be compressed by muscular contraction in order to give

better still, get a chemist to make up a gargle for you.

Curiously enough, the mere effort of gargling is in itself a valuable aid to the production of ventriloquism; inasmuch as the subject is forced to emit sounds while the water is in the throat, and these will be found to possess quite a "distant" effect.

Having mastered the "grunt" and "theek" voices, use words consisting of vowels, changing the words into sentences as progress is made.

At this point the young ventriloquist is sufficiently well equipped to undertake a public exhibition of his powers, and this being so, it is perhaps better to make mention of ventriloquial figures before the remaining "near" voices are dealt with.

As a matter of fact, the practice of ventriloquism in its earlier stages is not the most interesting of occupations, and not until the beginner awakens to the full realisation of his powers—as he does only when he is working with automata—is the real fascination of the art felt.

VENTRILOQUIAL FIGURES.

Perhaps it is hardly right to assume that everyone has seen a ventriloquial figure; certainly many will be unacquainted with its peculiarities and modes of working.

The dummy is usually a representation of some grotesque character—an old man with strongly accentuated peculiarities, such as a red nose, wrinkled skin, and big jaws; an old woman, with thin, pointed nose, sharp eyes, and scanty locks; a little boy, grinning saucily, and having the appearance of possessing the wisdom of all the ages; the little "miss" of perky manner; the good-natured, rollicking black man; and the coster, square-jawed and cheeky.

The one essential about the ventriloquial figure is that it shall have a moving mouth. In reality the chin is cut away from the face, and the movable portion,

There are many different forms of ventriloquial figures, but for the amateur the kind which possesses only a moving mouth is quite suitable.

By means of a little ingenuity and the expenditure of a few pence a movable tuft of hair may be added to the wig; but as the working of this is liable at first somewhat to hamper the manipulation of the automaton, it should perhaps be left until proficiency is more assured. The hole in the back of the head or body permits of the hand



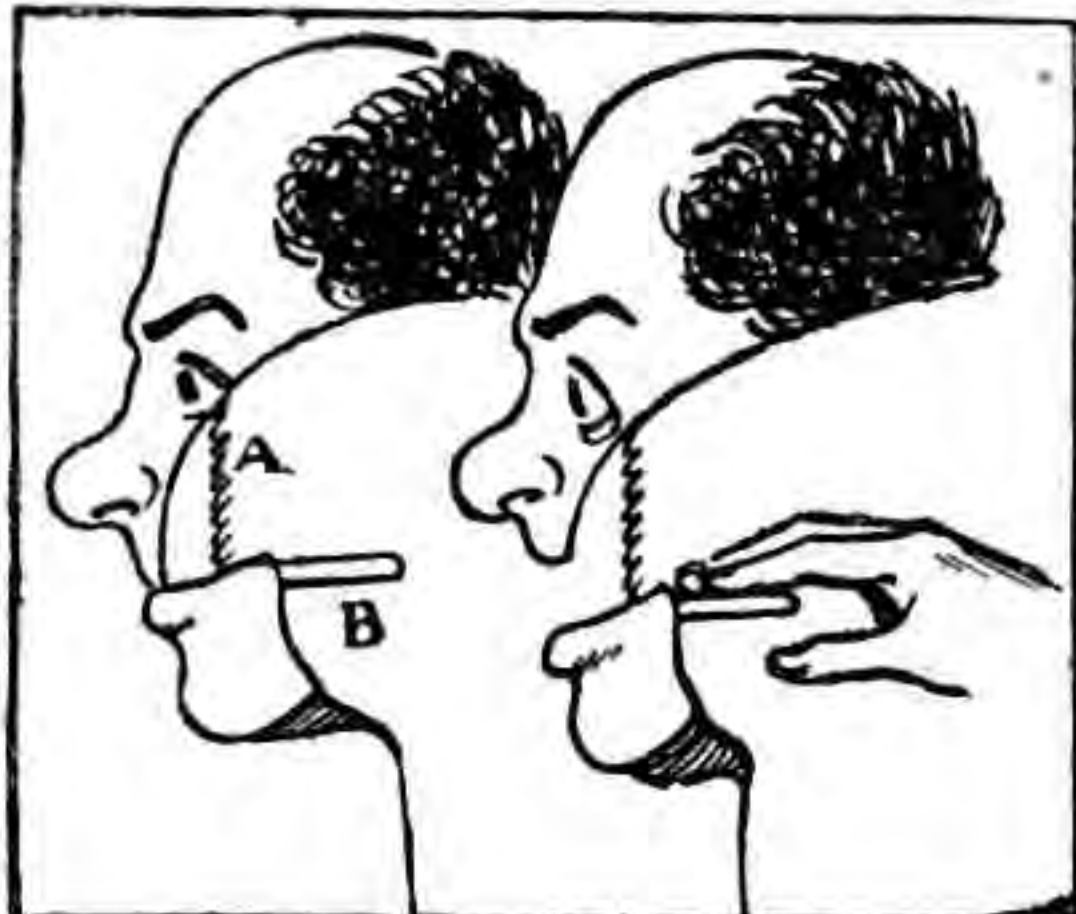
Fig. 3.—Principle of ventriloquial figure manipulation.

of the performer pressing either upon a plate or upon a circle of wire, which in turn moves down the movable mouth, closing automatically by means of a spring. Figs. 1, 2, and 3 respectively show the construction of ventriloquial figure heads, and another principle of ventriloquial figure manipulation.

The number of mouth movements made by the figure should, of course, coincide as nearly as possible with the number made by the mouth in ordinary speech; thus a natural effect will be gained.

Placing a "dummy" on each knee, the ventriloquist opens up an amusing conversation. The aim of the figures is to destroy the effect of the performer's remarks by the interpolation of absurd interruptions. The whole matter resolves itself into a witty dialogue between three or four people, of whom the entertainer is the central character. Such a dialogue should be brisk and sparkling with humour, all vulgarity being carefully eliminated. It is as well to write the dialogue out and learn it by heart.

(This clever article, explaining how you may become a ventriloquist, will be continued in next Wednesday's issue of the MAGNET.)



A.—Spring.

B.—Plate for working mouth.

Fig. 1.—Showing construction of ventriloquist head.

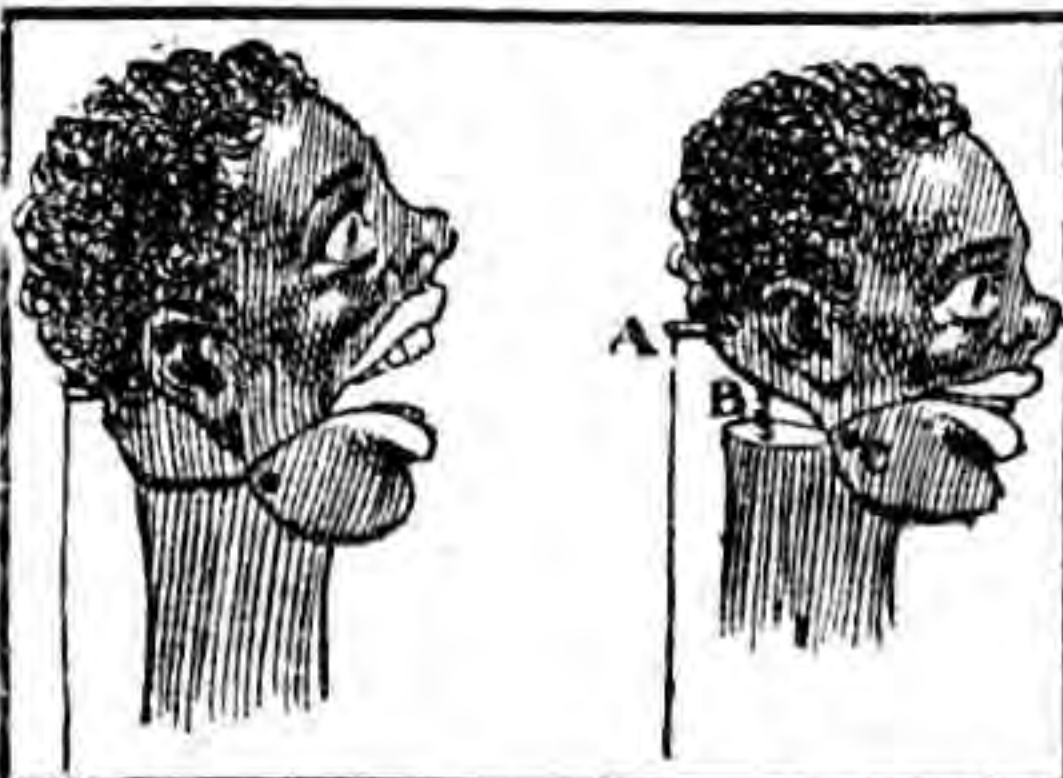
the "theek" voice its proper quality. By a slight pressure with the hand on the "apple" you will realise the position which this part of the throat should occupy when muscular contraction takes place.

Now, taking in a deep breath and contracting the larynx, it will naturally curl up the tongue until the tip presses tightly against the roof of the mouth. Open the lips fairly wide and say the word "theek" in a high-pitched falsetto tone, sustaining the vowel sound as long as you can.

Your first efforts will probably end in dismal failure, but after a few attempts the full sound settles down to the long-drawn-out sound of full roundness and tone.

Now you have acquired the "theek" voice, which is also the basis of the voices used with the figures of little boys and little girls.

Very possibly your practice in the elementary stage of ventriloquism will result in a slight soreness of the throat. To alleviate this, and at the same time to strengthen the vocal chords, gargle with a weak solution of salt-and-water, or,



A.—Pull.

B.—Spring.

C.—Pin.

Fig. 2.—Construction of the laughing nigger's head.

working on a pivot or string, gives the same effect as when a person is speaking.



THE MINERS' CHAMPION

A Stirring New Tale of the Ring.
By **PERCY LONGHURST.**

SYNOPSIS.

Harry Rhodes, a miner and amateur boxer, of Lexborough, 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 Lexborough 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.

At a small gymnasium one night Harry Rhodes issues a challenge to anyone in the place to three rounds. The challenge is accepted by a stranger, who proves to be Tony Hanna.

After a thrilling contest the famous Scottish boxer is defeated by Harry.

Hanna hates Harry Rhodes for this, and makes an attempt upon the life of the amateur boxer. It is unsuccessful, however, and Harry gives Hanna a severe thrashing.

Later, a meeting is held between the miners and the mine-owner, to settle a strike which has lasted for some time at the pit where Harry works. After some time no settlement has been reached, when Harry suggests a fight for it—Mr. Durham, the mine-owner, to put up a man, and the miners to choose one from their number to meet him.

Mr. Durham puts up his son, and Harry is elected for the miners. Harry triumphs, and the strike is settled.

Hanna returns to Lexborough that night.

(Now read on.)

A Narrow Escape.

The gathering at the Crown—a trifle noisy towards the end—had finished shortly after midnight, and Hanna had lain in the straw of the empty horse-stall, listening to the muffled sounds of the hearty merriment above, scowling,

bitter of heart, muttering to himself, hugging to himself thoughts of the revenge he was going to take upon the lad who had brought him to his present condition of misery and hopelessness.

To Hanna it did not occur that he was himself in any way responsible for his downfall. But for the bout he had thrust upon Harry Rhodes in Ben Moseley's gym, the probability was that the lad would never have crossed his path. But Hanna did not argue to himself that way.

Harry had soundly thrashed him. Harry had caused him to lose the championship battle. For that he was determined Harry should pay dearly.

When all was quiet and still Hanna slipped out of the stable, climbed over the yard gate into the street, and went stealthily in the direction of James Rhodes' cottage.

He had formed the plan of his revenge. It should be terrible, and it should be conclusive.

He meant setting fire to the cottage.

One pocket was crammed with dry straw, another held newspaper. He reckoned on being able to find some bits of wood to start a blaze.

The likelihood of the adjoining houses being set on fire, the possibility that others besides Harry and his uncle might be burned to death, had not occurred to him.

But for himself the street was wholly deserted. Not a gleam of light showed in any of the windows he passed; yet he moved as though fearful of being observed, hugging the wall.

Crossing the lane at the corner of which was the shoemaker's shop, he began to count his steps. Fifty-one

paces would take him to the Rhodes' door. Reaching it, he halted for a few seconds, staring at the front of the dwelling, then passed on.

But not far. A narrow alley gave admittance to a footpath by which the back gardens of the houses in the row might be reached, and into this Hanna turned, creeping on tiptoe. He found the path, turned to his right, went a number of steps, and then looked about him. No sight or sound of life caught his senses, and, taking out a pocket-torch, he flashed it for an instant upon the back of the houses.

He had made no mistake. He was outside the Rhodes' cottage, distinguishable by its being smaller than those on either side. Putting his legs over the low open fence, he stood in the garden.

That afternoon, when nearly all Lexboro' had been at the fight, he had been along the footpath, and, without attracting attention of women or children, had examined the back of the house. He knew where stood a number of boards and odds and ends of dry wood. To these he went direct.

Already he had decided that the shed Harry had erected should be his point of attack. In a very few minutes he had collected several small and some larger pieces of wood, arranged them about the straw and paper he had brought with him, and poured over all the contents of a small can of paraffin he had found at the Crown.

And then, when there was nothing more to do than to strike a match and complete his dastardly work, he changed his mind.

No; firing the cottage was not sure
(Continued on page 19.)

*Just
me!*
by
*Pearl
White*



A most wonderful life story, the simple, straightforward tale of the childhood, early struggles and ultimate success of the great film star told in her own words. Do not miss the long opening instalment in TO-DAY'S "Picture Show," which contains ever so many good things, including a fascinating new competition called "Peeping Stars," in which cash prizes of £100 are offered

Her remarkable meeting with Lord Kitchener—her strange correspondence with her long lost brother—her travels and thrilling adventures make this the most interesting book ever written.

Begin it TO-DAY in the

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A yell of terror rang through the bed-room. It was accompanied by a violent thud, as the hammer, slipping from Hanna's fingers, fell to the floor. A clutch, strong as though claws of steel had suddenly taken grip, had fallen upon Hanna's wrist.

enough. The sleepers might awaken and escape before the fire had taken good hold. They might spring from the windows—an easy jump. That would not do. Unless his attempt was completely successful, it was so much sheer waste of time.

For a while he stood thinking, hastily revolving plan after plan.

"Got it!" he said suddenly, and for the moment the sound of his own voice gave him a bad scare.

The flash of the torch had revealed that one of the upper windows was wide open at the bottom. Doubtless that was the room where Harry slept. A cautious use of the torch showed that by climbing on to the roof of the shed he could easily reach the window and climb into the room.

At once he essayed to clamber on to the shed-roof.

It was easy. The roof had only a gentle slope, and, standing erect, making no more noise than a cat, he found the window-ledge within easy reach.

He felt in his coat pocket, where he had placed a hammer, found lying on the ground by the lengths of wood. With knee on the ledge, he drew himself upon it, sat down, and thrust his legs within the room. Nothing stood in front of the window, and with the aid of

his hands he lowered his feet until they rested upon the floor.

There he stood for what seemed a long time, listening to the violent thumping of his own heart. The fear of detection came to him suddenly, and he wished himself out of the room. Then the handle of the hammer caught in his sleeve, and fear gave place to revenge.

He made a step forward. Something rolled from under his foot, and his heel came down sharply on the floor. With great difficulty he prevented himself from calling out.

Trembling, still he waited, hardly daring to breathe. His eyes, accustomed to the darkness, could make out the shape of the bed on the far side of the room, and every second he expected to see a movement telling of Harry's awakening. But no movement came. Tired out by the heavy exertions of the day before, Harry Rhodes was sleeping more soundly than usual.

Pulling himself together, hammer in hand, Hanna began to move to the side of the bed. Reassurance came back to him. His resolution to do that which he had come to do again became strong. Hatred and jealousy were working within him, overcoming fear.

But he was a long time covering the

ten feet between the window and the head of the bed.

There he stood, at last, listening to the deep, regular breathing of the sleeper, whose face the darkness hid from him. Judging the point at which to deliver his blow, Tony Hanna slowly lifted and poised his murderous weapon.

The next instant a yell of terror rang shrilly through the bed-room. It was accompanied by a violent thud, as the hammer, slipping from Hanna's fingers, fell to the floor. Then followed another yell.

A clutch, strong as though claws of steel had suddenly taken grip, had fallen upon Hanna's wrist, and he knew that the one in the bed had sat up, escaping death by a hair's-breadth.

Deadly fear will sometimes lend to a man more than common strength. It did so at that moment to Tony Hanna. With a tremendous wrench he loosened the grip on his arm, and, with a twist and a wriggle, had slipped clean out of his jacket. Two bounds carried him to the window, through which he hurled himself. Down in a heap he fell upon the roof of the shed, and, without waiting to discover if he were hurt, leaped off and raced across the garden. Harry, stopping by the window in his intention to

passed, heard the splintering of wood as the fugitive broke through the fence, and the sound of his thudding feet as he scurried along the footpath.

"It isn't worth it," was Harry's conclusion, after a second's mental debate whether he should go in pursuit of his nocturnal assailant.

He was tired and sore from the battle of the afternoon before, and the prospect of a midnight chase in his nightshirt was not particularly alluring. Turning from the window, he groped for candle and matches, and struck a light. Seeing the jacket on the floor by his bed, he picked it up.

"To whom did it belong?"

Naturally, that was his first thought, and a possible answer to the question might be found in the pockets. He made a thorough examination, bringing to light the electric torch, a dirty handkerchief, and a half-full packet of cheap cigarettes. There were also a box of matches, some short bits of straw, and a much-used knife—an ugly-looking tool, with a blade nearly six inches in length.

But papers, or other means whereby the identity of the owner of the jacket might be learned, or even guessed, there were none, until Harry came to the inner

breast pocket, and took from it a new fragment of letter-paper, the top part, seemingly, of the second sheet of a letter, torn carelessly across.

Three complete lines, and two with the last word or so missing, met his eyes as he held it up in curious examination. The first three words brought to him a shock of surprise; those that followed amazed and a sensation akin to horror.

"... that Harry Rhodes," ran the writing, small and cramped, "is the son of a murderer, who ought to be doing time, and I can find all the proof I want at any time I like. It's only by some accident that he can have escaped. But if I find it's your w— to rake the matter up again, I reckon we'll—"

Twice did Harry read this torn scrap, and then the door of his bed-room opened, and his uncle came into the room, carrying a candle.

"What's the matter, Harry?" he cried. "I thought I heard a noise—like some one calling out."

"Somebody broke in," explained Harry, curiously devoid of all excitement. "He came in by the window. I fancy. I woke up to find him standing by the bed. He had a hammer. He got away before—"

"Who was it?" asked James Rhodes quickly.

"It was too dark to see him," answered Harry. "He left his coat behind him. I found this in one of the pockets."

And he held out the bit of torn paper for his uncle to take.

Taking it, Rhodes read it slowly through. He looked up, to meet Harry's direct gaze.

"Uncle," said the lad slowly, after a long pause, "who was my father? And what was the crime he committed?"

It was a long while before James Rhodes could answer the questions put to him. It was a confession he had to make, and the fear of making it showed plainly in his miserable eyes and drawn face, greyish yellow in the light of the candle. Again and again he moistened his lips.

At last the words came out.

"I am, Harry!"

"You?"

The lad's face was a study in amazement.

"You, uncle?" he repeated.

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