

CUPTIE CHAMPIONS IS THE TITLE OF THE SPLENDID LONG
STORY OF GREYFRIARS IN THIS NUMBER

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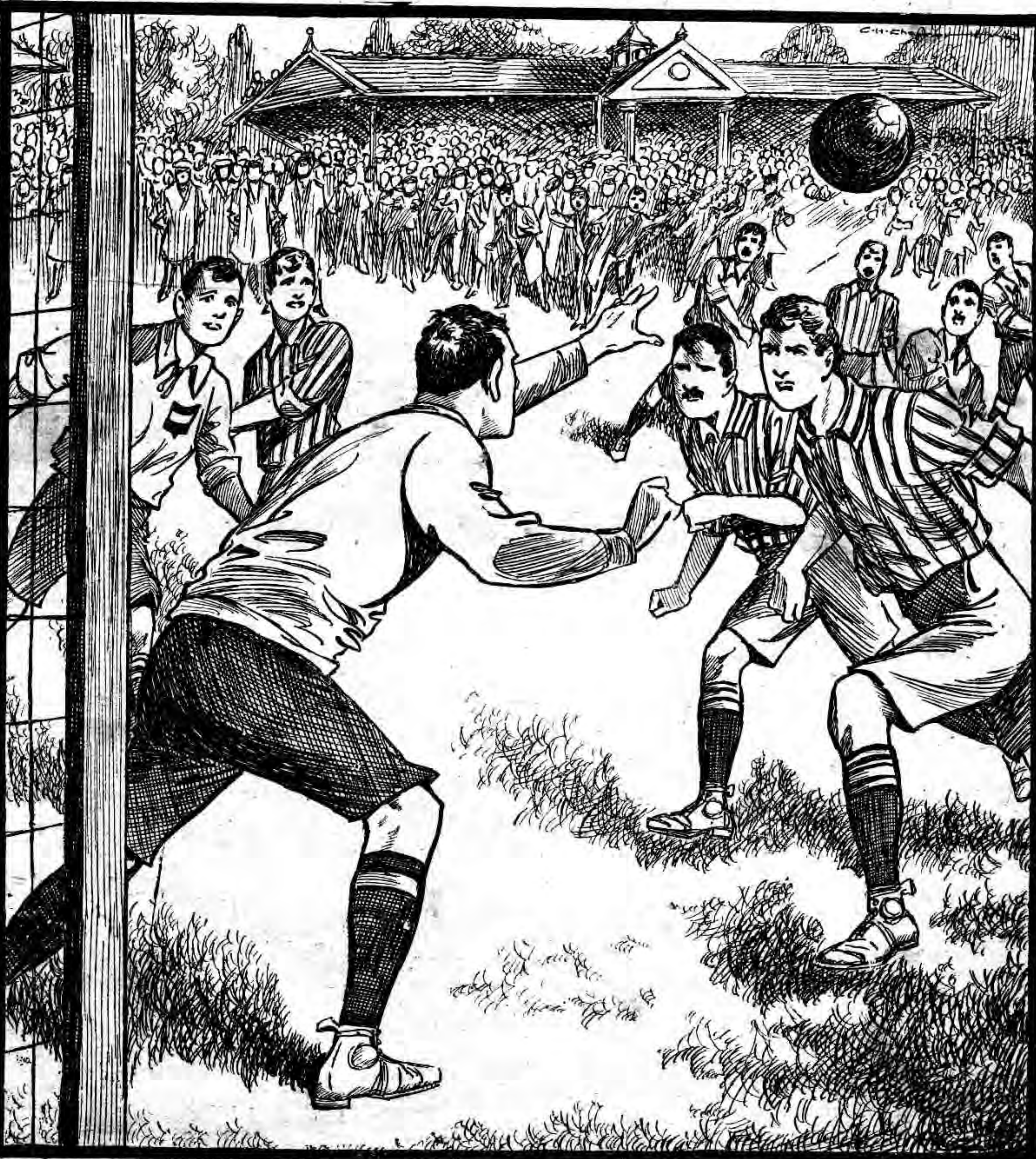
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LARRY LASCELLES MAKES A BRILLIANT SAVE!

(An Exciting Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



For Next Monday.

"THE PREFECT'S PREDICAMENT!"

By Frank Richards.

This grand, long, complete story of Greyfriars tells in thrilling fashion of the way in which Gerald Loder, the most unpopular prefect in the school, endeavours to gain authority over the Remove Form. For a short spell he does have a certain amount of authority, but Harry Wharton & Co. deal with him in a manner that makes him wish he had had nothing to do with them.

Billy Bunter also plays an important part in the story, but he comes off very badly in the end, through being led astray by the wily Skinner.

"THE PREFECT'S PREDICAMENT!"

will give you heaps of fun and entertainment, so be sure not to miss it. Order a copy of next Monday's MAGNET at once.

THE SIXTH FORM.

There is much dignity about the Sixth at Greyfriars. Questions concerning who's who in this Form pour in, but really there is not much to say except that all the members of the august Form are extremely important. They all know a lot, and they have a proper sense of their own position. Reggie Coker—Coker minor—makes up in studiousness what he lacks in physique and stature. This representative of the illustrious house of Coker stands in a singular position as regards his elder brother, Horace. Horace is seventeen, and once went in for shaving. He has had many near shaves since of a different kind.

Reggie Coker is sixteen, and the bright star of learning of the family, though he has not achieved the celebrity of the hefty Horace. The outstanding feature of the relationship is the splendid attitude of Horace towards his junior. Horace brings his double muscles into action in defence of his young kinsman. I have been asked who is the best scholar of the Sixth. It would be hard to say. The stories deal for the most part with those characters who figure in sport. The world always hears less of the wise than the ordinary fellows.

Tremaine took the place of Arthur Courtney as prefect. Courtney, it will be remembered, lost his life in the fire from which he saved Rupert Valence, as described in "A Very Gallant Gentleman." We are likely to hear more of Tremaine, who depicts many of the finest characteristics of a prefect. The Sixth Form upholds the grandest traditions of Greyfriars, and there is no possibility of exaggerating the influence for good of a strong-minded, good fellow who realises that a host of juniors look up to him.

Hammersley is, I think, the eldest fellow in the Sixth. He is over eighteen, as are Loder, Carne, and Walker. I

have been asked whether there is any chance of Loder reforming. I am afraid not. Loder remains a black sheep, a sort of shocking example. In that he has his uses. Why he belongs to the First Eleven is not clear. He is not much good there. Luckily for him, his colleagues are in the dark as to some of his misdeeds. The average height of the Sixth Form fellows is six feet.

A LONG MEMORY.

There was a straight talk waiting for me to-day from my staunch supporter Mr. J. Parr, of Adelaide Street, Platt Bridge. This writer remembers all about the publications that have had their day and ceased to be, but he does not seem to have got all the facts quite right as regards a publishing house which printed stories about giants in the year dot. They were good stories, too—yarns about Uncle Big Feet, and Brother Two Heads; and the portraits of these gigantic worthies were not things to forget in a hurry. But, of course, the fiction that suits one generation fails to attract the next. The world wants any amount of change.

A CHEERY WORD FROM QUEBEC.

A supporter in Kensington sends me a very interesting letter from a young relative in Canada who likes the MAGNET. This is the communication:

"Jack was telling me that you would appreciate very much if I wrote and thanked you for the MAGNET. I must say it is one of the best papers for boys, and a lad that used to work with me got them every week, and I enjoyed them very much. I left school in 1918, and got a job right away at the Dominion Bridge Co., at Lachine, in the offices. I come home to dinner, as it is only a mile from home, and it takes me about twenty minutes. I am about five feet and a half, and am just passed my fifteenth birthday on February 12th. I will close now, as I have some mathematics to do."

It was good to have this tribute to the old paper from a sterling fellow of this sort.

AMATEUR MAGAZINES.

Mr. J. Arthur Phillips requests me to publish the following:

"Will all readers who edit amateur magazines kindly send a copy of the current issues of their periodicals (gratis) to J. Arthur Phillips, President of the British and International Correspondence League, 10, West Terrace, Boldon Colliery Co., Durham, with particulars of advertisement rates, as it may prove beneficial to them? All letters will be answered. Will all presidents of amateur clubs, etc., also communicate with the above, with a view to forming a department where full information could

be obtained about any club whatsoever?"

MAPS.

There is a lot of interest in map-drawing. A chum of mine, Ed. King, 21, Whitehall Lane, Slade's Green, near Erith, sends me a first-class little plan "of our little mud island called Slade's Green."

I cannot publish it as he requests, but I consider his draughtsmanship excellent, and I quite see the attraction of drawing maps of this sort. It fixes places in the mind, and naturally a map-drawer, when he gets a bit ambitious, will sketch countries and big towns as well as "little mud islands," though this is being a bit hard on cheery old Slade's Green.

THAT WONDERFUL FAMILY.

Ben Bolton is just one of those fellows who push the world on and do the job well. On his own showing—and though he is modest enough, you see what it all means—he has been his mother's right-hand man for years. With such a son a home is secure enough. Ben could make anything if he tried—I am sure of that.

It is just such young men as he who have gone colonising out in the Great North-West, and established comfortable and prosperous homesteads in the wilderness. He has no time for lounging about. Most of his time he is hard at it, helping to run the laundry business or assisting Mr. Collyer, the scientist, for which he earns fifteen shillings a week.

It all shows grand grit. I am proud to think the Companion Papers have such a supporter. The world will always be an easy and a delightful place to Ben, for he knows what's what, and he is continually learning something fresh and interesting. Moreover, he does not keep all his eggs in one basket. If there were a sudden slump in one department Ben would go ahead like a house afire in another direction.

Of course, he winds up with a glowing word or two of additional praise for the famous weeklies. He thinks the stories are all A 1. He does not take sides with Bella in what she says. He prefers a tale that makes him laugh, as a matter of fact, but if Bella likes something different at times he is quite agreeable. Personally, I much enjoyed this peep into a British home, and Ben's eulogy of Chat and the other features of the Companion P's.

Your Editor



Cup-Tie Champions!

A Magnificent Long
Complete Story of
Harry Wharton & Co. at
Greyfriars School
BY
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

"MIND your eye, you fellows!" Harry Wharton whispered that injunction to his chums as Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, swept into the Form-room to conduct morning lessons.

It was very essential that the Famous Five should be on their best behaviour that morning, for they intended to make an excursion to Courtfield in the afternoon—a half-holiday—in order to see an important football match. And if any or all of the juniors were awarded detention the excursion would be knocked on the head.

"We shall have to be careful!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Awfully, fearfully careful!" muttered Frank Nugent.

As he came into the Form-room, Mr. Quelch was looking pale and worn. He was also looking irritable. The juniors realised that it would not take much to ruffle him, and they resolved to sit as still as statues all the morning, and to give their undivided attention to the lessons.

Unfortunately, they broke their resolve within a minute.

Mr. Quelch was in the act of moving the blackboard and easel closer to the class when one of the pegs gave way, causing the blackboard to topple over and descend with a crash on to the Form-master's head.

Mr. Quelch uttered a yelp of anguish, and the fellows tried hard to repress their grins, but they were not very successful.

Morgan and Micky Desmond, who were seated in the front row, rushed to Mr. Quelch's assistance, and replaced the blackboard on the easel. As they did so an irrepressible ripple of laughter ran round the class.

The blackboard had flattened Mr. Quelch's mortarboard in such a manner that it was bashed down over his eyes.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"What a picture!"

"Another guy!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch wrenched off his mortarboard, restored it to its normal shape, and replaced it on his head. Then he frowned at his hilarious pupils.

"How dare you!" he rumbled.

"How dare you snigger at my misfortune? I incline to the opinion that a practical joke has been played—that some young rascal deliberately made the pegs of the easel insecure!"

"Go hon!" murmured Skinner.

Mr. Quelch's frown deepened.

"Take a hundred lines, Skinner!"

"What for, sir?" asked Skinner, with an air of injured innocence.

"For talking in class!"

"Excuse me, sir, but—"

"I distinctly heard you make an ejaculation, Skinner! If you say another word, I shall cane you!"

The cad of the Remove promptly relapsed into silence.

"I call upon the boy who tampered with the pegs of the easel to stand forward!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Nobody budged.

"I am convinced that one of you came into the Form-room before lessons and loosened the easel-pegs," said Mr. Quelch.

"It was a very foolish and dangerous thing to do, and it might have resulted in serious injury. When I discover the identity of the offender—and I am determined to do so—I shall punish him severely. Once again, I call upon the culprit to stand forward!"

But the culprit, for reasons of his own, continued to lay low.

After a moment's pause, Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Very well," he said, "since the offender will not voluntarily come forward, I will proceed to question the members of the class in turn. Wharton, do you know anything of this affair?"

"No, sir."

"Cherry?"

"No, sir."

"Nugent?"

"No, sir."

"Dutton?"

There was no reply.

Tom Dutton was very deaf, and he had not heard the Form-master's interrogation.

"Dutton," repeated Mr. Quelch, in a voice of thunder.

"Eh? Yessir?"

"Do you know who is responsible for playing this absurd joke?"

"Of course not, sir!" said Tom Dutton promptly. "If I wanted to choke, I should ask permission to go outside."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch rapped sharply on the desk with his pointer, enjoining silence.

"You misunderstand my question, Dutton," he said. "Do you know which boy tampered with the easel?"

"Sorry sir," said the deaf junior, "but I don't quite understand. Why should I want to scamper like a weasel?"

Mr. Quelch grew so red in the face that the juniors thought he was about to have an apoplectic fit. Striding towards the deaf junior, he thundered:

"Do you know who loosened the pegs of the easel?"

Dutton could not fail to hear this time.

"No, sir!" he said.

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter?"

"I didn't, sir!" exclaimed the fat junior indignantly.

Mr. Quelch stared.

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"I did not suggest that you did, Bunter!" he said. "Your prompt denial, however, leads me to believe that you know something about the matter."

"Nunno, sir," said Bunter, looking very uneasy and confused, "I assure you, sir, that when Skinner loosened the pegs of the easel I wasn't looking in at the door at the time."

"Shurrup, you ass!" muttered Skinner, treading heavily on the fat junior's foot.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. "Keep your beastly boots to yourself, you clumsy idiot!"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Did you tread on Bunter's foot, Skinner?"

"Yes, sir; it was a pure accident."

"I am sorry I cannot believe you. It is quite obvious that you wished to silence Bunter. Am I right in affirming that you are the author of this outrage?"

"No, sir!" said Skinner promptly.

"Yes, you are, sir!" chimed in Billy Bunter. "It was Skinner, right enough. I'm not a sneak, but I feel it my duty to acquaint you with the facts. I saw Skinner loosen the pegs of the easel just before the bell rang for lessons."

"Did he do anything else?"

"Yes, sir; he hid the chalk in the fender."

Mr. Quelch strode towards the fireplace, and after some research he discovered the chalk.

"I require no further evidence of Skinner's guilt," he said. "Stand out before the class, you despicable boy!"

Skinner realised that further denial would be worse than useless. He darted a look of deadly animosity at Bunter, and stepped out from his place.

Mr. Quelch picked up the pointer with a business-like air.

"Hold out your hand, Skinner!"

Reluctantly the cad of the Remove obeyed.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The dose was repeated on the other hand, and Skinner was sent squirming to his place.

"Now, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Me, sir?" said the fat junior, in surprise.

"Yes, you! You have behaved abominably! It was your duty to warn me of the trap which Skinner had prepared for me."

"How could I, sir, when I knew nothing at all about it? You see, I was in the Close at the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's prevarication had come a trifle too late.

"Your conduct is no less contemptible than that of Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch. "Come out here at once, and hold out your hand!"

During the next two minutes wild yells floated through the Form-room. Billy Bunter was not one of England's silent heroes.

"Now go to your place!" panted Mr. Quelch. "And do not dare to transgress again!"

The Owl of the Remove rolled to his place, and the lesson commenced.

Mr. Quelch was in a very uncomplimentary mood that morning, and the Famous Five had to be very careful.

In spite of all their caution, however, one of them fell a victim to the Form-master's wrath.

Bob Cherry was the unlucky one.

At a moment when Mr. Quelch's back was turned Bolsover major had thrown a paper pellet at Bob, who promptly retaliated by pulling out his pea-shooter.

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and taking aim at the bully of the Remove.

Bob Cherry was usually a sure shot with a pea-shooter, but on this occasion he missed his objective, Bolsover major he ducked his head."

The pea whizzed overhead and struck Mr. Quelch, who had just turned round from the blackboard, on the chin.

The Remove-master uttered a sharp exclamation and picked up the pea, which had dropped on to his desk.

"What boy has had the effrontery to attack me with a pea-shooter?" he demanded.

"If you please, sir—" began Bob Cherry.

"Was it you, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir. But I didn't aim at you. I was taking a pot-shot at Bolsover, but he ducked his head."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"I will endeavour to teach you, Cherry, that the Form-room is not the place to indulge in 'pot-shots,' as you call them. You will write out five hundred lines, 'Horseplay is not permitted during lessons,' and I shall expect to see the imposition finished by six o'clock this evening."

Bob Cherry groaned, and so did his chums.

"This puts the kybosh on your coming over to Courtfield, old man!" murmured Frank Nugent.

Bob nodded gloomily. He did not relish the prospect of grinding out lines on a half-holiday.

Mr. Quelch continued to be impatient and irritable, and no one was sorry when the word of dismissal came.

"Bob, you silly chump!" said Harry Wharton, as the juniors streamed out into the passage. "What did you want to go and get into Quelch's black books for?"

"I couldn't help it," growled Bob. "It was Bolsover's fault. If he hadn't shied that beastly pellet at me, I shouldn't have had occasion to use my pea-shooter."

"We sha'n't be able to see the cup-tie at Courtfield now!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You fellows can go," said Bob Cherry. "I'll stay behind and tackle the impot."

"Rats!" said Wharton. "We're going to give you a hand. If five of us set to work on the lines, that will be only a hundred each. We'll get the job done in next to no time!"

"But Quelch will twig the different handwriting—"

"No, he won't. He'll only look at the top sheets, and they'll be your own."

The Famous Five adjourned to Study No. 1 and set to work with a will.

Five pens travelled swiftly over five sheets of impot paper, and when the bell rang for dinner half the lines had been written.

After dinner the juniors returned to the attack, and a thrilling race against time ensued. The match at Courtfield was timed to start at three o'clock, and the imposition would have to be handed in by half-past two.

The Famous Five scribbled furiously, and just as the school clock chimed the half-hour the imposition was finished.

Bob Cherry pinned the sheets of paper together, with his own on top, and hurried away to Mr. Quelch's study.

"Guess Quelch will be awfully surprised to see the job done so soon," he muttered. "Hope he won't smell a rat."

The junior rapped on the door of Mr. Quelch's study.

There was no response.

Bob Cherry rapped again, louder this time, but still there was no response.

"That's curious!" murmured Bob. "I'm positive Quelch went to his study directly after dinner. He had some exam papers to correct."

Bob opened the door, and as he did so his heart gave a jump.

Mr. Quelch was certainly within, but he was not seated at his desk, as usual. He lay in a huddled heap on the floor, unconscious!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, aghast at the discovery.

His first thought was that there had been foul play. But he dismissed the idea almost as quickly as it came.

Mr. Quelch was not entirely without enemies, but no one would have ventured to attack him in his own study.

Bob Cherry dropped on one knee beside the prostrate Form-master and unfastened his collar. Then he obtained some water from a tumbler on the mantelpiece and dashed it into Mr. Quelch's face.

The Remove-master revived almost immediately. He endeavoured to rise to his feet, but the effort proved too much for him, and he sank back again with a gasp.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked Bob Cherry anxiously.

"No, my boy," said Mr. Quelch, passing his hand over his forehead. "I fear I must have fainted."

The speaker's face was very pale, and Bob Cherry looked genuinely distressed. He was wondering what to do next, when Wingate of the Sixth stepped into the study.

"My hat!" ejaculated the captain of Greyfriars, stopping short. "What's happened?"

"Mr. Quelch has fainted, Wingate," said Bob Cherry.

"I—I am all right again now," said the Remove-master.

But his looks belied the assertion.

"Give me a hand, Cherry!" said Wingate briskly.

And senior and junior assisted Mr. Quelch to the sofa.

"Now cut off to the village and fetch the doctor!" said the captain of Greyfriars.

"No, no!" interposed Mr. Quelch.

But Bob Cherry had already departed on his mission.

Bob's chums were waiting for him in the passage.

"Is it all right?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No; it's all wrong! Quelch's ill, and I'm going to fetch Dr. Short!"

"My hat!"

"Sha'n't be long, you fellows!" said Bob.

And he hurried away to the cycle-shed. A moment later he was speeding away towards the village.

Dr. Short came at once. He examined Mr. Quelch, and immediately prescribed a complete rest and change.

"You have been overdoing it, Mr. Quelch," he said. "That 'History of Greyfriars' upon which you have been engaged is responsible for this sudden collapse. You have been working late at night, I take it?"

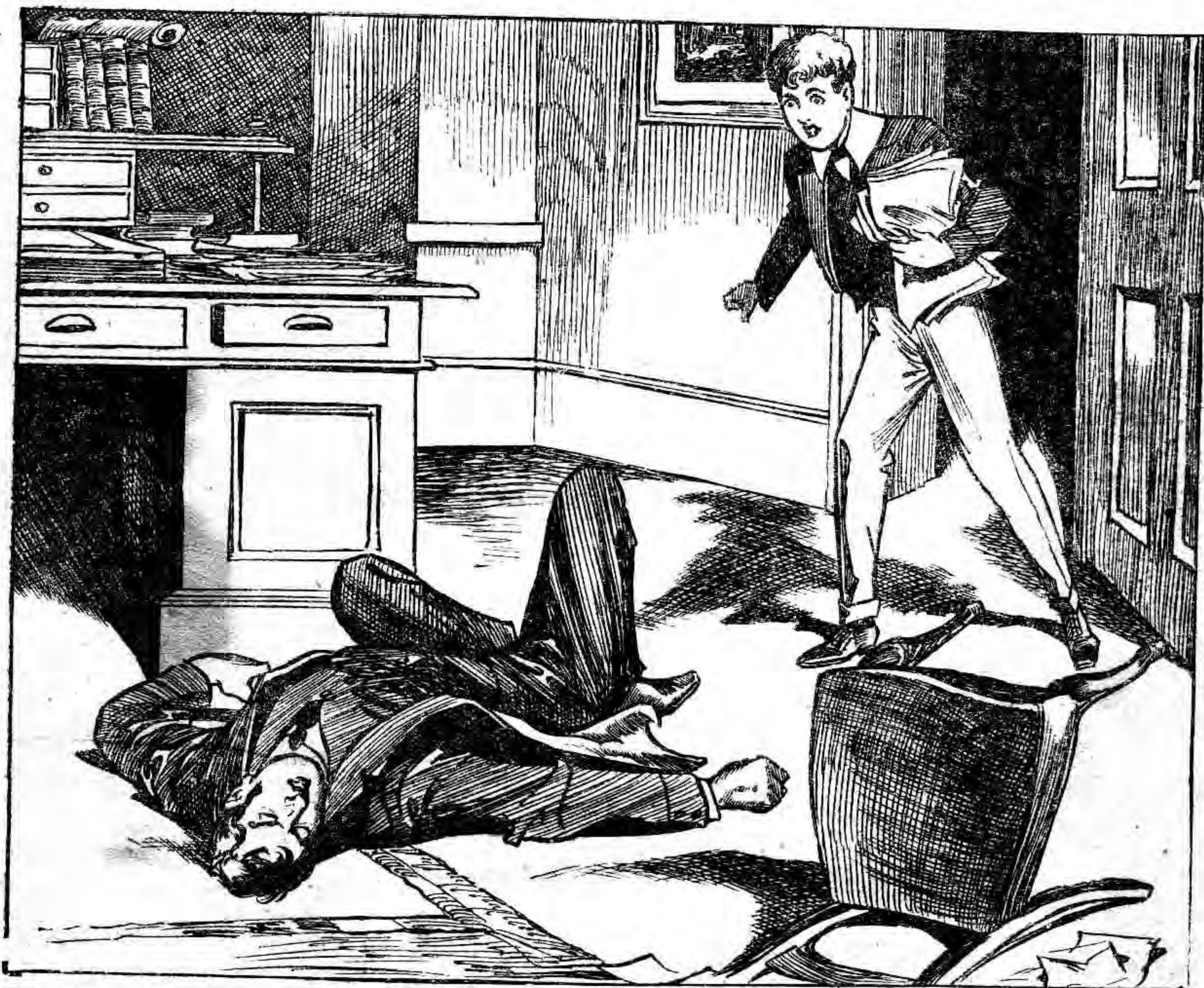
"Rather late," admitted Mr. Quelch.

"H'm! Well, for the next week or two you must have absolute quiet."

"But my duties—"

"Someone will have to deputise for you. You are overtaxed, and unless my orders are complied with to the letter you will be in great danger of a nervous breakdown."

Mr. Quelch shivered a little. He had experienced a nervous breakdown



Bob Cherry opened the door, and as he did so his heart gave a jump. Mr. Quelch lay in a huddled heap on the floor, unconscious! "Great Scott!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, aghast at the discovery. (See Chapter 1.)

before, and he didn't want a repetition of it.

"I will acquaint Dr. Locke with the facts of the case," said the medical man.

And he did so, with the result that Mr. Quelch was urged to leave Greyfriars for a week or two.

"Poor old Quelch!" said Bob Cherry when he heard the news. "I guess he'd crock up sooner or later. He's been burning too much midnight oil on that confounded 'History of Greyfriars'!"

"Will that history ever be finished?" asked Nugent.

"Not in our lifetime, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's three o'clock!" said Harry Wharton, consulting his watch. "We shall miss quite a big slice of the footer match!"

"Can't be helped," said Johnny Bull. "Let's go along now. We shall see the second half of the game, anyway."

A few moments later the Famous Five were speeding away on their bicycles in the direction of Courtfield.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Larry Lascelles in the Limelight!

COURTFIELD recreation-ground presented a very animated appearance.

The whole town seemed to have turned out to witness the match, for it was a highly-important fixture.

Courtfield Crusaders were meeting Burchester in the semi-final for the County Cup.

On paper the match looked a good thing for Burchester, who possessed one of the most formidable teams in the county.

Courtfield Crusaders, on the other hand, were a plucky but not a great side, and it was a puzzle to most people how they managed to reach the semi-final.

The reason why Harry Wharton & Co. were so keen on seeing the match was that Mr. Larry Lascelles, the mathematics master at Greyfriars, was keeping goal for the Crusaders. "Larry," as the juniors affectionately termed him, was a general favourite, and the Famous Five were anxious to see what sort of an exhibition he would put up.

"Here we are!" said Bob Cherry, as the juniors, having left their bicycles at a garage close by, entered the ground.

"No chance of a seat in the stand," said Johnny Bull. "It's packed out!"

"Never mind," said Nugent. "Standing-up seats will suit us all right. We're not decrepit old jossers of ninety!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look!" exclaimed Hurree Singh excitedly. "Look at the esteemed Larry! He is fistfully stopping all sorts of shots!"

Larry Lascelles was in great form in the Crusaders' goal. The Burchester

forwards swarmed round him like bees, and they rained in shots from all angles. But Larry was always on the spot. He seemed to possess the eyes of a hawk and the activity of a squirrel.

"Good old Larry!" said Wharton heartily. "Saved, sir! Well saved!"

Again and again Larry Lascelles fisted out the ball, and he richly deserved the plaudits of the crowd.

The bombardment ceased at length, and one of the Crusaders' backs brought relief by punting the ball well up the field.

"It must be nearly half-time," said Frank Nugent. "Wonder what the score is?"

"One to nil, sir," said a working-man who was watching the game.

"Thanks!" said Nugent. "It's one to nil for Burchester, of course?"

"No, sir. For the Crusaders."

"My hat!"

"They scored from a breakaway in the first five minutes of the game," said Nugent's informant. "Burchester have been attacking ever since, but they can't get past the Crusaders' goalie."

The Greyfriars fellows were delighted at the news, and they cheered enthusiastically every time Larry Lascelles brought off a save.

The mathematics master was holding the fort in fine style, and he was still

unbeaten when the whistle sounded for half-time.

"Well played, sir!" sang out Bob Cherry, as Larry Lascelles made his way to the dressing-room.

The Crusaders' goalie looked up, recognised the Greyfriars juniors, and smiled.

"Larry's worth his weight in whipped-cream walnuts!" declared Johnny Bull. "If it wasn't for him the Crusaders would be nowhere."

"Nowhere at all!" said Wharton.

"I say, you fellows!"

The Famous Five spun round as that familiar voice hailed them. They were about to say something uncomplimentary to Billy Bunter, who was the owner of that voice, when they saw that the fat junior was accompanied by his sister Bessie, of Cliff House.

Harry Wharton & Co. lifted their caps. "Good-afternoon, Miss Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "I didn't know you were a football enthusiast."

"I'm not!" said Bessie. "I can't understand why those men should want to chase a muddy ball from one end of the field to the other. But Billy insisted on dragging me over here to see the match. He said he wanted to see his pal Larry performing in goal."

The Famous Five grinned. They reflected that Mr. Lascelles would scarcely feel honoured to hear himself referred to as Bunter's pal.

"I'm sick and tired of watching this silly game," said Bessie. "I'm hungry, too. The open air always gives me a good appetite. I suppose you haven't a piece of cold pudding in your pocket, Bob Cherry?"

"I'm not in the habit of carting cold pudding about with me," said Bob, laughing. "But I've got some toffee."

"Then why couldn't you have said so before? Can't you see that I'm simply ravenous?"

Bob Cherry produced a bulky paper bag from his pocket, and handed it to Bessie.

"Thanks!" said the Cliff House girl. "This will keep me going for a bit, anyway. How long will the second innings last?"

"Ha, ha! You mean, the second half," said Wharton. "That will be forty-five minutes."

"Oh dear! I don't think I can wait all that time. Won't you take me into the town for tea, Billy?"

Billy Bunter blinked appealingly at the Famous Five.

The fat junior was out of funds, as usual, but he hadn't the courage to tell his sister so.

"I—I say, you fellows," said Bunter, in a hoarse whisper. "I'm expecting a postal-order, and if you could advance me five bob on the strength of it, I should be ever so grateful!"

The Famous Five pretended not to hear. They were watching the players line up for the resumption.

"Just five bob!" pleaded Bunter.

"What are you mumbling about, Billy?" demanded Bessie impatiently. "Buck up and take me to tea!"

"After the match," said Bunter, with a groan.

"Oh, very well! But I shall expect an extra-special feed after waiting all that time."

Meanwhile, the game had restarted.

The second half was a repetition of the first. Burchester did the lion's share of the attacking, but the Crusaders' defence was founded on a rock. The backs tackled well, and volleyed a good length, and Larry Lascelles, in goal, was invincible.

Nothing was seen of the Crusaders' forwards. They were hopelessly out of the picture, and after a time they fell back to assist the defence.

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back to assist the defence.

"Wonder if they can hold out?" said Wharton.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Burchester are simply bound to score sooner or later," he said.

But Bob was wrong.

Again and again the Burchester forwards swept down upon the Crusaders' goal. Again and again they rained in shots; but Larry Lascelles was equal to every occasion. His display of goal-keeping was one of the finest ever seen on that ground.

Towards the close Burchester made desperate efforts to get on terms. But the opposing defence prevailed, and the final whistle sounded with the Crusaders victorious by a goal to nothing.

The result came as a tremendous surprise for the crowd, who had expected Burchester to run out easy winners. And undoubtedly they would have done but for the masterly display of Larry Lascelles.

"Three cheers for Larry!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Hip, hip, hip—"

"Hurrah!"

The Famous Five cheered until they were husky.

The crowd cheered, too; and the Press reporters, as they compiled their notes on the game, had glowing things to say about Larry Lascelles.

"The Crusaders will have to meet West Kent Rovers in the final," said Harry Wharton.

"Think they'll win?" asked Nugent.

"My dear chap, they haven't the ghost of a chance! The West Kents are far and away the best team in the county. All the same, the final will be well worth seeing."

"Yes, rather!"

"All Greyfriars will turn out to see Larry Lascelles," said Johnny Bull. "When and where is the final coming off?"

"On Saturday, at Wapshot."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "We sha'n't have far to go. I was afraid it might be at the Crystal Palace or Blackheath."

The final for the County Cup would certainly arouse tremendous interest, and the juniors eagerly looked forward to seeing yet another brilliant display of goal-keeping on the part of popular Larry Lascelles.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Terrible Ordeal!

THE Famous Five were about to leave the ground when Billy Bunter rushed up and dodged behind them.

There was a terrified expression on the fat junior's face.

"Ow! Save me, you fellows!" he panted.

"Who's after you?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in surprise. "Have you pinched the gate-money, or what?"

"It—it's Bessie!" faltered the Owl of the Remove.

"My hat!"

Bessie Bunter appeared on the scene at that moment.

The plump Cliff House pupil was evidently on the war-path, for she was brandishing her parasol.

"Where's Billy?" she demanded breathlessly. "Have you boys seen anything of him? I— Ah, there he is!"

And Bessie Bunter darted towards her brother.

The Owl of the Remove caught sight of his sister's wrathful countenance and

her upraised parasol, and he promptly took to his heels.

Bessie gave chase, but Bunter disappeared into the crowd, and thus avoided capture.

"Wonder what all the merry rumpus is about?" said Bob Cherry.

"Here's Bessie," said Nugent. "P'r'aps she'll explain."

Panting from her exertions, Bessie Bunter joined the Famous Five.

"It's no go!" she said dubiously. "He's mixed himself up with the crowd, and I can't find him. Which is a jolly lucky thing for Billy!"

"What's he been doing?" asked Wharton.

"He let me down horribly!"

"Pushed you over, do you mean?"

"No, no! He made a promise, and he hasn't kept it. He promised faithfully that he'd take me into the town for tea, and I've been looking forward to it ever so much. And a few minutes ago he had the impudence to tell me that he hadn't any money!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at!" said Bessie indignantly. "I feel very hurt about it! I regard Billy as a snare and a delusion. He arranges to entertain me for the afternoon, and he starts off by bringing me to see a stupid game of football. Then, just as I'm looking forward to a ripping feed, he calmly turns round and says, 'Sorry, Bessie, but I'm on the rocks!' I think it's a shame!"

"It's certainly unbrotherly," said Frank Nugent, with a grin. "But I'm not surprised at Billy being on the rocks. He generally is, you know."

"I wish I could have caught him!" said Bessie ruefully. "I'd have made him feel heartily sorry for himself!"

Then she suddenly brightened up.

"Never mind!" she said. "Billy's played me false, but I'm sure you boys would like to take me to tea—wouldn't you, now?"

The Famous Five groaned in chorus.

Taking Bessie Bunter to tea was a terrible ordeal. The juniors would have been only too willing to perform such a service for Marjorie Hazeldene, or Clara Trevlyn, or Phyllis Howell. But Bessie Bunter was a vastly different proposition. Her appetite was without limit, and as for her society—well, the Famous Five would rather have entertained a tame boa-constrictor.

Yet what could they do?

Bessie had practically insisted upon being taken into the town for tea, and it would be churlish and unchivalrous to refuse.

The juniors realised that they had better make the best of a bad job.

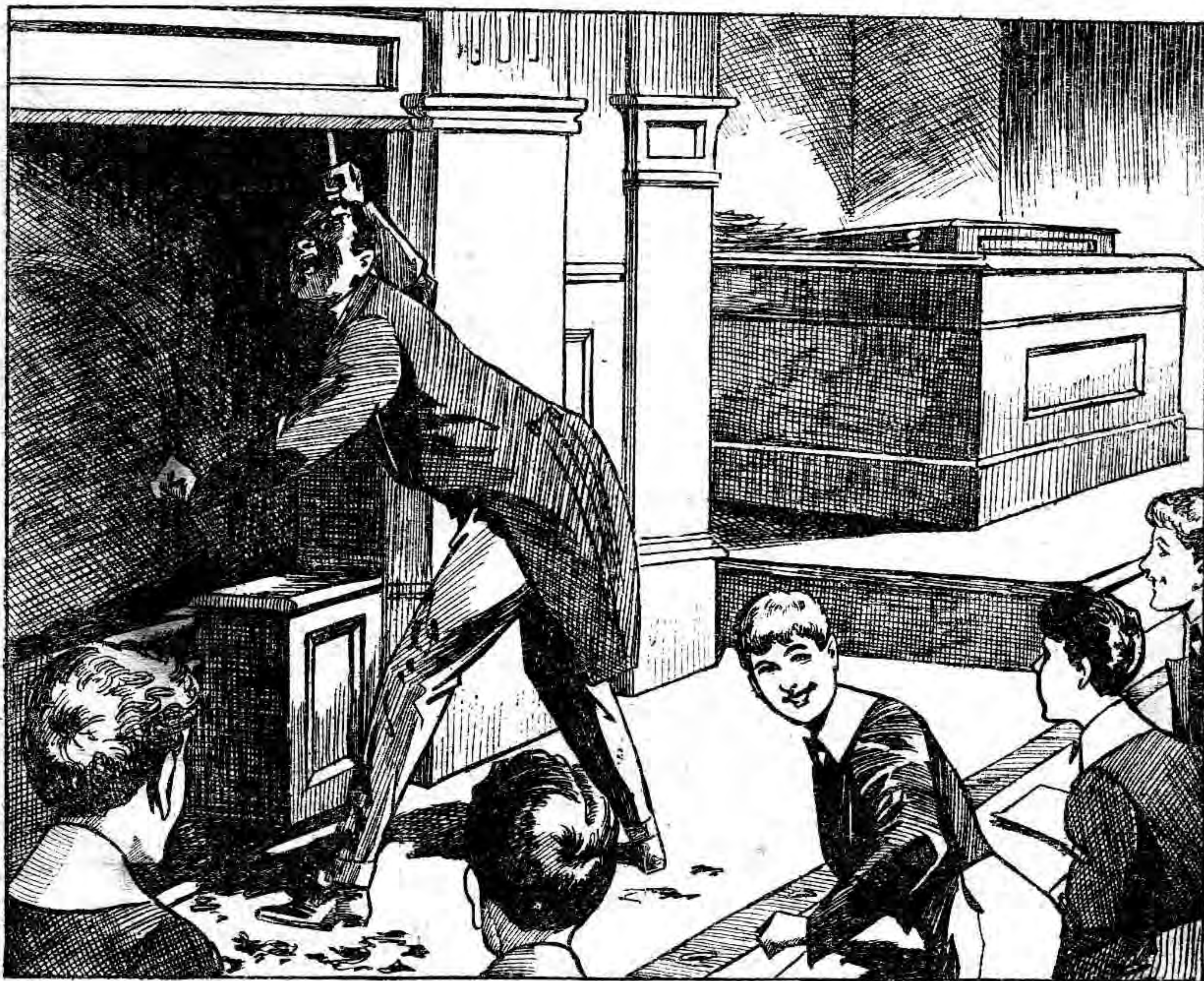
"You are nice boys!" said Bessie coaxingly. "I like you very much, and I'm sure you won't leave me to starve. There's quite a nice bunshop in the High Street. You'll take me there, won't you?"

"With—with the greatest of pleasure!" stammered Harry Wharton; though the expression on his face seemed to suggest that he found it the greatest of agony.

"We shall be simply delighted, Miss Bunter!" said Bob Cherry, adding, under his breath, "I don't think!"

Bessie Bunter's countenance was beaming like a full moon as she left the ground in the company of the Greyfriars juniors.

The Famous Five, however, were feeling very worried and uneasy. They knew that when Bessie Bunter sat down to tea she stopped at nothing. She ate everything that was put before her, serenely conscious of the fact that somebody else would have to foot the bill. Her appetite was prodigious—inexhaustible!



Loder picked up the poker and thrust it up the chimney. Then he drew back hastily, but not in time to avoid the avalanche of soot. ((See Chapter 4.))

"I—I feel like turning tail!" muttered Johnny Bull in Wharton's ear.

"So do I, old chap," said the captain of the Remove. "But we shall have to see it through."

"What's the state of your exchequer?" asked Johnny.

"I've got about two bob."

"You're better off than I am. I've got fourpence-ha'penny."

"How much cash have you got, Bob?" whispered Wharton.

"Nix!"

"Oh, help! What about you, Franky?"

"My sole revenue," murmured Nugent, "consists of a book of postage-stamps."

Wharton groaned.

"Then Inky's our only hope," he muttered. "Are you in funds, Inky?"

"I have the quidful Bradbury—I mean, Fisher!" said Hurree Singh.

"Good! We ought to be able to manage with that."

"There are six of us, don't forget!" warned Johnny Bull.

"Never mind! We'll hope for the best!"

"What do you boys keep whispering about?" said Bessie Bunter peevishly.

"I hate people to whisper. If you're admiring my hat, or my new shoes, why can't you do it openly?"

"I—I think your hat's simply priceless, Miss Bunter!" said Nugent.

"And your shoes are topping!" added Bob Cherry. "Nobody would believe they were a second-hand pair!"

A flush mounted to Bessie Bunter's cheeks.

"You are very rude!" she said indignantly. "I paid thirty shillings for these shoes. If you make any more rude remarks, I shall refuse to come to tea with you!"

The juniors fervently hoped that Bessie would carry out her threat. But she didn't. She accompanied the Famous Five into the bunshop.

"Tea for six, please!" said Harry Wharton, as the waitress hovered into view.

"No, no!" interposed Bessie Bunter. "Tea for five, and a good square meal for one!"

The waitress smiled. She had seen Bessie Bunter before, and she could not help feeling sorry for the Greyfriars juniors.

Harry Wharton & Co. contented themselves with tea and toasted scones. Bessie Bunter, however, was far more ambitious. She kicked off, so to speak, with poached eggs on toast, then she switched on to bread-and-butter and strawberry jam; and, whilst the juniors were still munching their scones, she made rapid inroads into a large dish of assorted pastries.

"This is prime!" murmured Bessie,

unconsciously quoting her brother Billy's favourite expression.

"I should advise you to go easy, Miss Bunter," said Johnny Bull, "or you won't be able to do justice to your supper when you get back to Cliff House."

"Oh, yes, I shall!" said Bessie, with a cheerful grin. "The walk back will make me hungry again."

"My hat!"

The Famous Five finished their tea; but their guest had not finished by any means. She confided to the juniors that she had not yet got into her stride.

"Bring me some more doughnuts, waitress!" said Bessie imperiously. "And see that they've got plenty of jam inside!"

The juniors watched the activities of Billy Bunter's plump sister with growing anxiety. They possessed, at the most, twenty-three shillings, and that sum had already been expended.

"This is awful!" groaned Bob Cherry.

"Awful isn't the word for it!" muttered Wharton. "I don't know how we're going to face the proprietor afterwards!"

"Would you mind passing the macaroons, Frank Nugent?" asked Bessie Bunter.

Nugent looked grim.

"I rather think," he began, "that this has gone far enough—"

"Oh, give her her head!" muttered

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Harry Wharton. "A dish of pastries more or less won't make any difference."

How they were going to get out of their awkward predicament the Famous Five scarcely dared to conjecture. They assumed an attitude of forced gaiety; but in their hearts they felt anything but gay.

"Quite a merry little tea-party—what?"

The juniors looked round on hearing that familiar voice, and Mr. Larry Lascelles seated himself at the table.

"I saw you all at the match," said the mathematics master. "Did you enjoy it?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"You were simply stunning!" said Bob Cherry.

"We mean to turn up at the final on Saturday, sir," said Wharton.

"Good!" said Mr. Lascelles, with a smile. "Bring me some toast and marmalade, will you, waitress—and some tea?"

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Lascelles was in high spirits, and he chatted cheerfully to the juniors and to Bessie Bunter. Of all the Greyfriars masters, Larry was the most "chummy" and the least officious. He was still a boy at heart, and he took a keen interest in the doings of Harry Wharton & Co., whom he liked.

Larry Lascelles was also a man of discernment, and he could see that something was wrong. It did not take him long to put two and two together. He surmised—correctly, as it happened—that Bessie Bunter had forced her company upon the Famous Five, and had consumed a meal of such magnitude that the juniors were unable to pay the bill.

Bessie's orgy came to an end at last. She leaned back in her chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet, and his chums followed his example.

"We—we must be going now," said the captain of the Remove awkwardly.

"You'll see me as far as Cliff House, of course?" said Bessie.

"Of—of course!"

The waitress had made out the bill, and she placed it on the table.

Larry Lascelles darted a quick glance at the bill, and he saw that it considerably exceeded a pound. He saw, also, that the Famous Five were at their wits' end.

Whilst Bessie Bunter was adjusting her hat in the looking-glass, the mathematics master beckoned to Wharton.

"Leave the bill to me, my boy," he said.

Wharton demurred.

"No, no, sir!" he said. "That's not fair—"

"Leave it to me!" repeated Mr. Lascelles, almost sternly.

"I—I say, this is awfully good of you, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

Unobserved by Bessie Bunter, Mr. Lascelles paid the bill.

The Famous Five then quitted the bunshop with Bessie, and they darted grateful glances at the mathematics master as they went.

Bessie Bunter was escorted to Cliff House, and confided to the juniors that she found walking distasteful after her tremendous feed.

"Thanks very much!" said Bessie, as she parted company from the juniors in the gateway of Cliff House. "You are nice boys, and I shall get you to take me out to tea again in the near future."

"You jolly well won't!" muttered Bob Cherry under his breath.

The Famous Five raised their caps to

Bessie, and set off in the direction of Greyfriars.

"Thank goodness it's all over!" said Wharton, with a sigh of relief. "If it hadn't been for Larry—"

"We should have been in the soup!" said Johnny Bull.

"Absolutely!"

"Larry's one of the best," said Bob Cherry. "I believe he knew what a fix we were in. That's why he insisted on footing the bill. It was ever so decent of him, and we shall have to make it up to him somehow."

"Yes, rather!"

And the Famous Five passed a hearty vote of thanks to the young master who had rescued them from their terrible ordeal.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Champion of the Oppressed!

NEXT morning the Remove were like sheep without a shepherd.

Mr. Quelch was absent from the Form-room, and it seemed as if the Head had forgotten to arrange for a deputy. The seat at the master's desk was vacant, and the fellows were left—for the time being, at any rate—to their own devices.

Skinner, who was afflicted with a peculiar sense of humour, left his place, and calmly perched himself at Mr. Quelch's desk.

"Now, boys," he said, in a perfect imitation of Mr. Quelch's voice, "we will proceed with the lesson."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter, you have not washed your neck this morning!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"And you also appear to have violent toothache—or is that a lump of toffee which is distorting your cheek?"

"Shurrup, fathead!"

Skinner appeared to be thoroughly enjoying himself. With an air of bravado, he lighted a cigarette.

"Stow that, Skinner!" said Harry Wharton sharply.

"A Form-master can do what he jolly well chooses!" retorted the cad of the Remove, blowing out a cloud of smoke.

"Chuck that cigarette away!"

"Sha'n't!"

Harry Wharton left his place and made a rush at Skinner.

Unfortunately for that bright youth, half a dozen others made a rush at him at the same time, with disastrous results.

Skinner's seat toppled backwards, and the cad of the Remove went to the floor with a crash.

"Yaroooooh!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out!" yelled Peter Todd suddenly.

All eyes were turned towards the door. The fellows expected to see a master or a prefect standing there.

"Toddy, you ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"What did you want to shout 'Look out!' for?"

"The wastepaper-basket's on fire!" exclaimed Peter.

"My hat! So it is!"

Skinner's lighted cigarette had fallen into the wastepaper-basket and ignited the contents.

The basket was in flames, and the Form-master's desk, which stood close by, was in danger.

"Forward, the fire brigade!" sang out Vernon-Smith.

There were a couple of fire-extinguishers hanging on the wall. Vernon-Smith seized one, and Bob Cherry the other, and between them they did great execution.

The fire was speedily extinguished, and the credit for putting it out belonged to Vernon-Smith.

Bob Cherry's aim was most erratic. The jet of water from his extinguisher splashed full into the face of Bolsover major.

"Gerooooooh! Chuck it, you ass!" spluttered Bolsover. And he dodged hither and thither, but the stream of water followed him. Try as he would, he could not escape.

Although the fire was out, Bob Cherry continued to make free play with the extinguisher.

Bolsover major, down whose face water was streaming, made a sudden rush at his assailant. He managed to divert the fire-extinguisher, and Harry Wharton caught the full benefit of it this time.

The captain of the Remove spluttered frantically as he gouged the water from his eyes; and the onlookers simply yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Bolsover!"

A tug-of-war followed between Bolsover and Bob Cherry for possession of the fire-extinguisher. In the course of the struggle both juniors were badly swamped.

The Form-room was in a state of wild disorder.

The Remove had long had the reputation of being the most unruly Form at Greyfriars, and they were living up to that reputation now. Some of the fellows were playing leap-frog, others were taking pot-shots with their pea-shooters.

Forms were overturned in the commotion, and the blackboard and easel went to the floor with a crash.

Into this scene of chaos and confusion stepped Wingate of the Sixth.

"Stop it, you young monkeys!" roared the captain of Greyfriars. "Have you suddenly taken leave of your senses? Stop it, I say!"

The uproar ceased as if by magic. The juniors, with the exception of Harry Wharton, resumed their seats. As for the captain of the Remove, he stood blinking sheepishly at Wingate.

"I hold you responsible for this, Wharton!" said the Sixth Former sternly. "What have you been doing to your face?"

"I got in the way of the fire-extinguisher, Wingate."

"Do you mean to say that there's been a fire?"

"Yes; nothing serious, though. The wastepaper-basket caught alight—"

"How?"

"I'd rather not say," said the captain of the Remove, who had no intention of giving Skinner away.

Fortunately, Wingate did not press for details.

"You will take five hundred lines, Wharton," he said. "The Head has instructed me to take the Remove for an hour, and if there is any further trouble I shall take strong action!"

"We'll be as good as gold, Wingate!" promised Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Bolsover major were given permission to go and dry themselves, and when they returned the lesson was in full swing.

The juniors liked and respected Wingate, and they gave him no trouble whatever. Indeed, their behaviour was more exemplary than when Mr. Quelch conducted the class.

At the end of an hour Loder of the Sixth poked his unwelcome face in at the doorway.

"Oh, help!" groaned Nugent. "Hope Loder isn't going to take us!"

Nugent's hope was not realised. "The Head sent me along to relieve you, Wingate," said Loder. "Hope these young cubs haven't been giving you much trouble!"

"They've given no trouble whatever!" answered Wingate curtly.

Loder glanced at the heap of ashes which was all that remained of the waste-paper-basket, and grinned.

"Somebody seems to think it's Guy Fawkes Day!" he observed.

"Oh, no," said Bob Cherry, sweetly. "If we thought that, Loder, the first thing we'd do would be to burn an effigy of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder scowled.

"That's enough, Cherry!" he said sharply. "Are you going to stand by and see me insulted, Wingate?"

The captain of Greyfriars shrugged his shoulders.

"You fairly asked for it that time!" he said.

And he strode out of the Form-room.

Loder seated himself at the master's desk, and glared at the Removites.

"I'm not going to stand any nonsense!" he exclaimed. "Wingate may be soft and easy-going, but you'll find that I'm made of different material."

The juniors felt inclined to answer back, but they restrained themselves, and the lesson proceeded.

Loder was a hard taskmaster. He made matters as unpleasant as possible for his charges, and impositions were handed out liberally.

Half an hour passed, and the Removites writhed and chafed under Loder's rule. As Bob Cherry remarked in an undertone to Harry Wharton, they would rather have had a Hun in charge of them.

"Miaou!"

With startling suddenness, that sound became audible. It seemed to come from the interior of the master's desk.

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

"Miaou!"

The prefect started back.

"There is a cat concealed in this desk!" he exclaimed. "Somebody has been bringing animals into the Form-room!"

"I don't think so, Loder," said Peter Todd meekly. "There's been no animal in here since you came in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take a thousand lines, Todd, for impertinence!"

"Oh, make it a billion!" said Peter carelessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder gritted his teeth, and unlocked the desk. He lifted the lid, and fully expected to see a cat leap out.

But there was no cat there.

Loder's face was a study.

"This is extraordinary!" he ejaculated. "I could swear—"

"Shush! You mustn't do that sort of thing here!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder shut down the lid of the desk with a slam. As he did so, the mewing of a cat again became audible—from the direction of the fireplace this time.

"There is a cat in this room!" said Loder, with conviction. "One of you young rascals smuggled it in for the purpose of annoying me. I—"

"Miaou!"

The vocal efforts of the unseen cat had reached a high pitch by this time. It was impossible to proceed with the lesson whilst that noise continued.

With a scowling brow, Loder strode towards the fireplace.

"The beastly thing's up the chimney!"

he muttered. "I'll half-kill it if I get hold of it!"

So saying, the Sixth-Former picked up the poker and thrust it up the chimney.

A shower of soot came down, and Loder's head happened to be in the danger-zone. He drew back hastily, but he was not in time to avoid the avalanche of soot. When he turned his face to the class the juniors roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Christy Minstrel!"

"Ho thinks he's a corner-man!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"A chimney-corner-man, you mean!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder's soot-begrimed face was working convulsively.

"This is a trick!" he shouted.

"That's so," said Skinner. "It's a

No. 67.—THOMAS NORTH.



A prefect and Sixth-Former. Not particularly distinguished, but a thoroughly decent fellow, and a chum of Wingate, the captain, whom he supports to his utmost. At any rate, it is a sufficient guarantee of his character that he is a chum of the popular skipper.

card trick, and you are the ace of spades."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The infuriated prefect brandished the poker in the air, as if he intended to commit assault and battery.

At that moment a voice—apparently the voice of Mr. Prout—hailed Loder from the passage.

"Loder! How dare you! Replace that implement in the fender immediately!"

Loder dropped the poker as if it had been red-hot. Then, covered with soot and confusion, he turned to the door.

"Sir," he began. "I—I—"

"Follow me to the Fifth Form-room at once, Loder!"

With a muttered exclamation, Loder strode to the door. He was somewhat surprised to find that the passage was deserted. Mr. Prout had lost no time in getting back to his Form-room.

"Wonder what the silly old buffer wants?" growled Loder.

And he went along to the Fifth Form-room.

The Fifth had been hard at work, but on Loder's entry they laid down their pens, and a ripple of laughter ran round the class.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here comes the sweep!"

"You've left your broom behind, Loder!"

As for Mr. Prout, he frowned darkly at the dusky-complexioned prefect.

"Loder!" he exclaimed sternly.

"How dare you enter these precincts in such a disgraceful state! If you desire to hold converse with me, pray go and cleanse yourself first! Your present appearance is revolting!"

Loder stood spluttering on the threshold.

"You—you told me to come along to the Fifth Form-room, sir—"

Mr. Prout stared.

"Most certainly I did not!" he snapped.

"But—but I distinctly heard you, sir—"

"I can only conclude," said the master of the Fifth, "that you are subject to hallucinations, Loder. Go away—go away immediately! Do not laugh at this wretched boy, Coker! His present appearance is a subject for tears rather than merriment!"

"It's not my fault that I'm in this state!" shouted Loder, who was infuriated at being held up to ridicule in the eyes of the Fifth. "There was a cat up the chimney, and—"

Mr. Prout made an impatient gesture.

"I am astonished, Loder, that a boy of your age and position in the school should talk such utter rubbish! My knowledge of cats is not very extensive, but I am aware that they do not inhabit chimneys! Leave my presence at once!"

With a savage scowl on his far from beautiful face, Loder quitted the Fifth Form-room, to the accompaniment of explosive chuckles from Coker & Co.

The Removites were smiling broadly when Loder reappeared.

Scarcely had the prefect resumed his seat at Mr. Quelch's desk when he was again hailed from the passage.

On this occasion the voice appeared to be the Head's.

"Loder! I am far from satisfied with the manner in which you have conducted the Remove Form this morning. I will trouble you to follow me to my study!"

Loder turned on his heel, and was about to quit the room, when he heard Billy Bunter give a triumphant giggle.

In a flash it dawned upon Loder that he had been the victim of Bunter's ventriloquism!

The fat junior had not given an exhibition of ventriloquism for such a long time that Loder had been caught napping.

The cad of the Sixth looked almost homicidal.

"Bunter!" he snarled. "Come out here!"

"W-w-what for?" stammered the Owl of the Remove uneasily.

"You know jolly well what for! You've been up to your old games again, and I'm going to give you the licking of your life!"

"Sit tight, Bunt!" muttered Skinner.

The fat junior obeyed, but Loder was not to be denied. He snatched up the pointer, and advanced towards the youthful ventriloquist.

There was a dangerous gleam in Loder's eyes, and his self-control was in rags. Swinging the pointer above his head, he brought it down with a resounding thwack across Billy Bunter's shoulders.

"Yaroooooh!"

It was a savage blow, and Harry Wharton & Co. were on their feet in an instant.

"Stow that, Loder!"

"Chuck it, you beastly cad!"

"Shame!"

These exclamations only succeeded in rousing Loder to greater fury. Before the juniors could interfere, he continued to belabour Billy Bunter with the pointer.

The Owl of the Remove yelled and struggled, and he tried to break away from the lashing pointer, but in vain.

Help was at hand, however.

Harry Wharton and his chums were about to hurl themselves upon the bullying prefect, when the door of the Form-room was thrown open and Larry Lascelles strode in.

The mathematics master took in the scene at a glance. He wasted no time in words, but took direct action. Striding towards Loder, he wrenched the pointer from his grasp.

Loder spun round, furious at the intervention, but he cowered a little when he saw who the intruder was.

"You despicable cur!" said Mr. Lascelles angrily. "How dare you attack a junior boy in that brutal manner?"

"He—he fooled me with his confounded ventriloquism—"

"I don't care what he did! Nothing can justify or exonerate such brutality! You are not fit to be placed in charge of a Form! Leave this room at once!"

Loder began to bluster.

"I don't see why—"

"Obey me!" thundered Mr. Lascelles. "Do you wish me to thrash you in the presence of these juniors? I can scarcely keep my hands off you as it is!"

Loder had sufficient sense to see that the speaker was in deadly earnest. He slunk sullenly to the door, and when Bob Cherry called out "Good riddance!" Mr. Lascelles made no attempt to rebuke him.

The remainder of morning lessons passed uneventfully. Mr. Lascelles remained in charge, and his task was rendered an easy one by the irreproachable behaviour of the juniors.

As for Loder of the Sixth, he was furious at having been humiliated in the eyes of the Remove, and he resolved to leave no stone unturned to "get his own back" on the master who had frustrated his knavish tricks.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Opportunity!

LODER went over to Courtfield that evening for the purpose of having what he was pleased to call "a little flutter."

The rascally prefect's usual resort was the Cross Keys, in Friardale, but the doors of that disreputable hostelry were closed against him at present, owing to the fact that he owed the landlord money, and was not in a position to pay.

It was to an inn on the outskirts of Courtfield that Loder wended his way. He was hoping to spend an enjoyable evening, but his hopes were soon dashed.

"Good-evening, sir!" said the landlord, as Loder entered the bar-parlour.

Loder gruffly returned the salutation.

"Anything doing to-night?" he asked.

"In what way, sir?"

"I should like a hand at nap."

The landlord—he was quite a respectable-looking landlord—shook his head.

"Sorry, sir," he said, "but I don't allow card-playing on my premises."

This was an eye-opener to Loder, who had imagined that every inn in the county was more or less of a gambling-den.

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"You don't allow a harmless game of cards?" exclaimed the prefect incredulously.

"I can't agree with you, sir," said the landlord, "that playing for money is harmless. I've seen many a man ruined in my time, and—"

"Oh, cut it out!" said Loder impatiently. "Haven't you any amusements to offer?"

"There's a ring-board and a dart-board hanging up on the wall—"

"Who wants to play rings or darts?"

"I do," said a man, who was seated in the corner. "I'll play you a game of five hundred up at darts for a small stake."

Loder's first impulse was to decline without thanks, but he reflected that a game of darts would be better than nothing.

The stake was fixed at five shillings, and the game was commenced.

It was a long and tedious affair, and it was closing-time before Loder's opponent reached five hundred.

Loder, whose aim had been most erratic, was beaten by over a hundred points. He happened to have a couple of half-crowns in his pocket, and he handed them over with a very ill grace.

Bidding his victor and the landlord a curt good-night, the prefect strode out of the little parlour and along the dimly-lighted High Street.

As he was passing the George and Dragon he saw a number of men grouped in the doorway, and he heard someone say:

"Good-night, Mr. Lascelles! See you here to-morrow night at the same time."

Quick as thought, Loder dodged into an adjoining doorway. He heard Mr. Lascelles say: "I'll be along at nine o'clock to-morrow evening." And then the athletic figure of the mathematics master passed so closely to him that Loder held his breath, anticipating detection.

Mr. Lascelles, however, strode on without seeing the prefect in the doorway.

"My hat!" muttered Loder, venturing forth from his retreat after an interval of five minutes. "I'm jolly glad I came out to-night, after all! I've made a most interesting discovery!"

Loder was chuckling triumphantly as he made his way back to the school. Here was a splendid opportunity, he reflected, for getting Larry Lascelles into trouble. The mathematics master was in the habit apparently of paying nightly visits to the George and Dragon, and the headmaster of Greyfriars would not be likely to approve of those visits. Indeed, Dr. Locke, if he knew—and Loder intended that he should know—would probably ask Mr. Lascelles to hand in his resignation. It was an unwritten law of the school that masters should not frequent public-houses.

Instead of going straight to bed when he returned to Greyfriars, Loder went to his study, where he wrote the following message on a half-sheet of note-paper, being careful to disguise his handwriting:

"Sir,—If you wait outside the front entrance of the George and Dragon, Courtfield, at closing-time to-morrow evening, you will make an important discovery."

This terse message was unsigned, and Loder took it along to Mr. Prout's study, and slipped it under the door.

"If that doesn't put an effective stopper on Lascelles' little game," he muttered, "I'm a Dutchman!"

And, having completed his plans to bring about the downfall of the young mathematics master, Loder went to bed.

Mr. Prout had already retired for the night, and it was not until after breakfast next morning that he discovered the anonymous note.

The master of the Fifth frowned as he perused it. He disliked anonymous letters intensely, and his first impulse was to disregard the epistle which had been pushed under his door. Mr. Prout's curiosity, however, got the better of him.

What did the note mean? What important discovery would he make by visiting the George and Dragon at closing-time?

"This is extraordinary!" murmured Mr. Prout. "It may be merely a practical joke on the part of one of the boys. On the other hand, it may prove to be something serious. Much as I dislike anonymous letters, I think I had better act upon the injunction contained in this one."

Accordingly, the master of the Fifth set out that evening for Courtfield.

It was a boisterous night. The wind was blowing great guns, and the walk was not a pleasant one. Mr. Prout had bellows to mend by the time he reached Courtfield.

The Fifth Form-master stationed himself outside the front entrance of the George and Dragon, as directed, and waited.

There was nothing unusual to be seen. A light gleamed in the window of the bar-parlour, and another light was visible in the room overhead.

Sounds of revelry proceeded from the parlour, but that was only to be expected.

Boom!

A neighbouring clock commenced to strike ten. Simultaneously a brisk voice could be heard within the bar-parlour, saying:

"Time, gentlemen, please!"

After a brief interval a number of men emerged into the street. They were decidedly merry, and one of them clapped Mr. Prout on the back, with the exclamation:

"Cheerio, old buffer!"

Mr. Prout nearly fell down. He was not accustomed to being addressed as an "old buffer."

"Really, my man—" he began.

But the individual who was responsible for that boisterous greeting had vanished.

At the end of a further brief interval, Mr. Prout was startled to hear a voice exclaim:

"Good-night, Mr. Lascelles!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured the master of the Fifth. "Can it be possible that Mr. Lascelles is a devotee of this undesirable resort?"

The question was answered almost immediately.

Larry Lascelles stepped out on to the pavement. His gait was steady, but his face was flushed in the light from the street-lamp.

Mr. Prout stepped forward.

"Lascelles!" he exclaimed. "I am shocked—horrified! To think that you, sir, a Greyfriars master, should be merry-making in this low-down tavern!"

Mr. Lascelles gave a start, but he speedily recovered himself.

"Don't talk nonsense, Mr. Prout!" he said curtly.

"I am not talking nonsense!" declared Mr. Prout warmly. "I am stating a fact—a deplorable fact! I have been deceived in you, Lascelles! I have always regarded you as an honourable, straight-living young man—"

"I fail to see that I have done anything to forfeit that opinion!" retorted Mr. Lascelles.

"You have been wallowing in this den of vice and infamy—"



The mathematics master tried to dodge the enthusiastic throng, but in vain. He was seized by willing hands, and borne shoulder high into the building. "Hurrah!" "Good old Larry!" (See Chapter 8.)

"Don't be melodramatic, sir! You seem scarcely to know what you are saying! Were you a younger man, I should not permit you to address me in that way! I strongly resent your imputations, Mr. Prout!"

"Do you deny," said the master of the Fifth, "that you have been keeping company with a party of roysterers? That you have been imbibing strong liquor? That you are on the verge, if not over the brink, of intoxication?"

"Most emphatically I deny it!" said Mr. Lascelles, who was finding it extremely difficult to control his temper. "As I implied before, if you were a younger man I should not address you with my tongue, but in a more forcible manner!"

"Ha! You would strike me?"

"I certainly should!"

Mr. Prout placed his arm through that of the younger master.

"You are over-excited Lascelles, which is only to be expected, in the unfortunate circumstances. Allow me to assist you back to the school."

"I require no assistance!" almost shouted Mr. Lascelles. "Release my arm at once, sir!"

But Mr. Prout hung on grimly. He was quite convinced that his companion was—to put it mildly—not normal.

"Come!" he said. "Do not make

your conduct more heinous by creating a scene in the street!"

Mr. Lascelles deemed it advisable to humour the master of the Fifth.

"I assure you, Mr. Prout," he said, "that you are making a great mistake in assuming that I am under the influence of drink. If that were the case, I should be unable to converse rationally with you, as I am now doing."

Mr. Prout gave a snort, and half-dragged his companion along the street.

"Really, sir, your antics are most annoying!" protested Mr. Lascelles. "I am quite capable of walking without assistance!"

But Mr. Prout was evidently resolved that his colleague should not try the experiment. He hung on tenaciously to Mr. Lascelles.

The mathematics master was very angry; but even so, he could not fail to see a certain humour in the situation. He suffered himself to be assisted back to the school.

No word was spoken until the two masters entered the Close.

It was Mr. Prout who broke the silence.

"I very much regret, Lascelles," he said, "that I must report this disgraceful episode to Dr. Locke."

"As you will," said Mr. Lascelles. "I will accompany you."

"You have no choice in the matter!" panted Mr. Prout, dragging the unfortunate Larry along in the direction of the Head's study.

It transpired that Dr. Locke had retired for the night.

"The matter will have to stand over until the morning," said Mr. Prout. "I will make my report to Dr. Locke in your presence immediately after breakfast. Meanwhile, I will assist you to your bed-room."

"This has gone far enough!" said Mr. Lascelles. "I have humoured you to the extent of allowing you to drag me thus far, but I refuse to be treated like an errant schoolboy any longer! I will trouble you to release my arm!"

"I will not release it!" snapped Mr. Prout. "You are not capable—"

Mr. Lascelles gave instant proof of his capability. He wrenched himself away from Mr. Prout's grasp, and betook himself to his own quarters.

Loder of the Sixth, who had watched the proceedings from behind one of the elms in the Close, gave a triumphant chuckle.

"I rather think," he murmured, "that I've put paid to your account, friend Lascelles!"

And it certainly seemed as if Loder's precious scheme had succeeded up to the hilt.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Morning After!

DR. LOCKE received two visitors after breakfast next morning.

Both of them—Mr. Prout and Mr. Lascelles—looked rather ruffled.

The Head saw at a glance that something was amiss.

"Well, Prout?" he ejaculated.

"No, sir, I am far from well!" said the master of the Fifth. "The regrettable events of last evening so distracted my mind that I was unable to sleep all night!"

"Regrettable events?" echoed the Head, puzzled.

"Yes, sir—most regrettable! I made a most unpleasant discovery, and I deem it my duty to bring the facts of the case to your notice."

"Bless my soul! Has Lascelles anything to do with the matter?"

"He is the person most intimately concerned," said Mr. Prout. "My faith in Lascelles has been rudely shattered, sir! Prior to last evening I had always held him in the highest esteem and regard. But now—"

"Would you be good enough to come to the point!" said the Head.

"Certainly! I will relate the facts from the beginning. From information received—"

"You are not a policeman, Mr. Prout!" interjected Mr. Lascelles.

"No, sir!" snapped the master of the Fifth. "Fortunately for you, I am not! Had I been a representative of the law, you would have spent the night in the local lock-up!"

The Head frowned.

"That is not a very pleasant statement to make, Mr. Prout."

"No, sir; nor is this a pleasant business. As I was saying when Lascelles rudely interrupted me, acting from information received, I went last evening to Courtfield, and took up my position outside a disreputable hostelry known as the George and Dragon. There was a party of roysterers within, making night hideous with their revelry. I regret—I deeply regret to inform you that Lascelles was one of the party."

"I was not!" flashed the mathematics master.

Mr. Prout frowned.

"Do not attempt to deny my asseveration, sir! Shortly after ten o'clock, I saw you emerge from the place in question. You were in a flushed and excitable condition, and it was necessary for me to assist you back to the school."

The Head looked very grave.

"Is that correct, Lascelles?"

"It is not correct, sir. It is correct in so far as Mr. Prout saw me coming out of the George and Dragon, but it is a gross exaggeration to say that my condition, at the same time, was flushed and excitable. It was also totally unnecessary for Mr. Prout to assist me back to the school. I needed no assistance whatsoever."

"You were helpless!" said Mr. Prout. "Doubtless you had been drinking heavily—"

Mr. Lascelles appealed to the Head.

"I protest most strongly against Mr. Prout's unfounded accusation, sir! I think he should be asked to offer me an apology."

"I have nothing to apologise for!" said Mr. Prout warmly. "It is you who should apologise, for having brought discredit upon the school!"

The Head turned to Mr. Lascelles.

"If it is true, Lascelles, that you

visited that undesirable resort, and that Mr. Prout found it necessary to assist you back to the school, then your conduct merits the strongest condemnation!"

"But it is not true, sir!" said the mathematics master. "I do not suggest that Mr. Prout is deliberately telling falsehoods, but he has jumped to conclusions. I had not been drinking—I give you my word of honour on that point, sir!"

The Head looked unconvinced.

"I am sorry I cannot accept your word, Lascelles. For what purpose does a man visit a public-house, if not to drink?"

"The sounds of revelry proceeding from the bar-parlour, sir," interposed Mr. Prout, "might have been heard the whole length of the High Street!"

"Pardon me," said Mr. Lascelles, "but I was not in the bar-parlour. If you would care to question the landlord, Dr. Locke, he will bear out my statement."

"Of course he will!" snapped Mr. Prout. "You doubtless made an arrangement with him beforehand to protect you, if the need arose."

"What utter nonsense! You appear to be doing your level best to blacken my character, Mr. Prout. And I shall be very surprised and hurt if Dr. Locke gives credence to everything you have said."

There was a long pause in the study. It was broken, at length, by the Head, whose tone was very stern.

"I am bound to accept Mr. Prout's statements, Lascelles. He has been with me many years, and I know that he would never attempt to ruin another master by stating anything which was not, in substance, true. On your own admission, you paid a visit last night to the hostelry known as the George and Dragon; and I am satisfied that you acted in a manner calculated to bring the school into disrepute. It is impossible for me—much as I appreciate the good work you have done here—to take a lenient view of your conduct. I must ask you to submit to me your resignation in writing, and to leave Greyfriars within a month!"

Mr. Lascelles was very pale.

"You have done me a great injustice, Dr. Locke," he said in a low tone.

"On the contrary," said the Head. "I have acted in the best interests of justice."

"Once again, sir, I give you my assurance—"

Dr. Locke raised his hand, to signify that the interview was at an end.

Mr. Lascelles stepped out into the passage, and at the same moment Billy Bunter of the Remove scuttled away from the door. But the mathematics master was feeling too sick to call Bunter back.

Mr. Prout followed his colleague into the passage.

"It is a great pity, Lascelles," he said, not unkindly, "that you did not make a clean breast of everything to Dr. Locke, and throw yourself on his mercy. You did yourself no good by attempting to brazen things out—"

"Be silent, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles, clenching his hands. "If you say another word I shall not be answerable for what may follow!"

Mr. Prout shrugged his shoulders and walked away. To do him justice, he had acted strictly in accordance with his sense of duty. He genuinely believed that Mr. Lascelles had been keeping revel on the previous night, and his belief that the young master had been in a state of insobriety was no less genuine,

As for Mr. Lascelles, it was with bitterness in his heart that he made his way to his own study.

Until recently he had always liked the master of the Fifth—but now it seemed as if Mr. Prout had deliberately gone out of his way to bring about his downfall.

Having written out his resignation, Mr. Lascelles started to pack his belongings. He intended to shake the dust of Greyfriars from his feet with all speed. There was nothing to be gained by staying on at the school, now that he was under notice to quit.

From the Close sounded the thudding of a football. Harry Wharton & Co. were indulging in a scratch game prior to morning lessons.

"Go it, Inky!"

"Shoot, man!"

"Goal!"

Glancing from his study window, Mr. Lascelles saw that Hurree Singh had just scored—the "goal" being the door of the tuckshop.

The sight of the game recalled to Larry's mind the fact that he was down to play for Courtfield Crusaders in the Cup Final on Saturday.

"I'd better drop a line to the secretary and tell him I can't turn out," he murmured. Then, after a pause, he added: "No; I can't leave the team in the lurch. They'll be counting on me, and I won't disappoint them. I'll stay on at Greyfriars until after the match."

With this resolve Larry Lascelles turned away from the window.

Shortly afterwards Billy Bunter rolled up to the crowd of footballers. The fat junior was bursting with importance—and news.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Travel!" said Bob Cherry. "Spectators aren't allowed on the playing-pitch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was unable to keep his tidings pent up for long.

"Larry's got to go!" he exclaimed.

"Eh?"

"What?"

The juniors ceased playing, and stared at the Owl of the Remove in astonishment.

"The Head's fired him out of Greyfriars!" continued Bunter breathlessly. "He's been given marching orders, and serve him jolly well right!"

There was a chorus of indignation.

"Another of Bunter's fairy tales!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I wonder he doesn't get tired of inventing 'em!" said Squiff.

"Oh, really, Field! I'm stating a fact—"

"The first time you ever state a fact," said Vernon-Smith, "the world will come to an end!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter ignored that shaft of satire.

"I was passing the Head's study, you fellows," he said, "when my coat got caught in the door-handle—"

"It wasn't his bootlace this time!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "He's thought of something quite new!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"While I was getting out of the tangle," Bunter went on, "I heard the Head slating Lascelles. I simply couldn't help hearing him. He was bellowing at the top of his voice. He gave Larry the sack—"

"What on earth for?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"For being the worse for drink!"

"My only aunt!"

"It appears that Larry went to the George and Dragon in Courtfield last night, and had a high old time. Prout

happened to see him coming out, and he helped him back to the school."

"What rot!" said Nugent.

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Peter Todd.

"Bump the fat worm!" growled Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Oh, really, you fellows—" he said feebly.

Bump!

Many hands grasped the Owl of the Remove, and he was deposited with great violence on to the flagstones.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Once again!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Bump!

"And one for luck!" said Dick Penfold.

For the third time Billy Bunter descended to the flagstones with a terrific concussion.

"If you breathe another word against Larry," said Harry Wharton, "we'll give you a Form-licking!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"We simply don't believe a word you say!" added Nugent.

But when Larry Lascelles came into the Remove Form-room to conduct lessons, in the continued absence of Mr. Quelch, the juniors were bound to believe Bunter's statements. For Larry's pale face and unusual manner betrayed the fact that there was something seriously amiss.

"It's the sack right enough!" murmured Bob Cherry. "But I'm willing to wager a term's pocket-money that Larry's done nothing to deserve it!"

"Same here!"

Whatever opinions the Head might entertain on the subject, Harry Wharton & Co. were convinced that Larry Lascelles had acted in no way dishonourably, and their faith in him never wavered.

They said no word to Larry on the subject, of course. But the young master could tell, by a hundred and one little things that happened in the Form-room that morning, that the juniors were on his side. And the knowledge filled him with gratitude, and strengthened his courage to face whatever the future might hold in store.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Cup Final!

SATURDAY dawned bright and clear.

The weather conditions were more suitable for cricket than for football, but the interest taken in the County Cup Final was extraordinary.

All roads led to Wapshot, where the match was to be played.

The Greyfriars fellows turned out in full force. Some went by train, others by cycle, and a few brave spirits, who possessed neither bicycles nor the cash to pay railway-fares, resorted to Shanks' ponies.

Harry Wharton & Co. were among the cyclists, and they took care to make an early departure from Greyfriars. They had heard in advance that the accommodation on the Wapshot ground was limited, and they did not intend to risk being turned away.

"It ought to be a great game," remarked Bob Cherry, as he whizzed along. "But the result's a foregone conclusion."

"Afraid so," said Wharton. "The Crusaders will find the West Kent Rovers a bit too good for them."

Although the juniors arrived at the ground in good time, they found quite a crowd already assembled. From all parts

of the county football enthusiasts had come to see the Final.

"I vote we bag seats in the stand," said Frank Nugent. "We shall get the best view of the game from there."

"Good wheeze!"

The Famous Five were fortunate enough to get a good position in front of the stand, and they waited eagerly for the teams to line up.

"Programme, sir?" inquired a small boy.

"Thanks!" said Wharton.

And he scanned the names of the players.

"Hallo! I see the Crusaders have got a new centre-forward!" he exclaimed.

"They can do with one!" growled Johnny Bull. "When they played Burchester their attack was awfully feeble."

"Who's the new centre?" asked Bob Cherry.

No. 68.—CECIL REGINALD TEMPLE.



Captain of the Upper Fourth Form. A good fellow, but not as good a skipper as he thinks himself. A would-be autocrat, something of a nut. Often up against Wharton & Co., but does not as a rule get much change out of it. No duffer at games. Shares Study No. 2 with Dabney and Fry.

"A fellow called Belton."

"Belton! I seem to have heard of him before."

"He's the skipper of the Courtfield Cricket Club. Don't you remember that century he scored last summer against Greyfriars?"

"By Jove, yes! Cricketer and footballer, too—eh? Wonder how he'll shape?"

"I think he'll liven the attack up no end," said Nugent.

"We shall soon see."

Ten minutes passed, and during that period the crowd swelled considerably.

"They'll have to close the gates soon," remarked Johnny Bull.

Then a great shout went up as the West Kent Rovers sprinted on to the field. Their colours were green-and-white.

"Hurrah!"

"Play up, Rovers!"

"They're a fine, strapping set of fellows!" said Bob Cherry, in admira-

tion. "If size counts for anything they'll make shavings of the Crusaders!"

"Get ready to cheer, you fellows!" said Wharton. "Larry will be out in a jiffy."

"Come along the Crusaders!" said a voice impatiently.

Out of the dressing-room they came, in their red jerseys and white knickers, and again a great shout went up, mingled with cries of:

"Good old Larry!"

"Play up, sir!"

Mr. Lascelles looked back over his shoulder, and smiled at the Greyfriars juniors seated in the front of the stand.

The mathematics master was determined to forget—for the space of ninety minutes, at any rate—the trouble which had befallen him. It was his fixed intention, as he went on to the field, to play the game of his life. He might soon have to say good-bye to football, and, since this would probably be his last match, he meant to make the most of it.

The rival captains came together in the centre of the field. They shook hands, and tossed for choice of ends.

The Crusaders' captain won, but there was very little advantage to be gained, for there was hardly a breath of wind, and the ground was dead level.

The rival elevens lined up, the whistle sounded, and away when the West Kent Rovers with rare dash. Their forwards swept down the field in line, and it looked as if an early goal would be registered.

Whiz!

In came the leather from the foot of the outside-right. But Larry Lascelles was ready for it. He stooped quickly and gathered it up, and, although hampered by a couple of opposing forwards, he punted the ball well up the field.

"Hurrah!"

"Larry's given a taste of his quality already!" said Bob Cherry delightedly.

As the game went on there was no disputing the superiority of the Rovers. They played the close-passing game, and they played it well.

Again and again the Rovers attacked, and each time they were beaten back by a dour defence. The Crusaders' backs played a masterly game, and Larry Lascelles, in goal, was indomitable.

"There's no doubt that the Crusaders have got a stunning defence," remarked Harry Wharton. "But where are their forwards?"

"Echo answers 'Where?'" said Bob Cherry. "The great Belton seems to be completely bottled up. As for the others, they'd never bag a goal if the game lasted till Doomsday!"

All through the first half the West Kent Rovers applied heavy pressure.

Had the Crusaders possessed a common or garden goalkeeper he must have been beaten on at least six occasions.

Larry Lascelles, however, was not a common or garden goalie. Time and again he saved with marvellous dexterity. High shots, ground shots, cross shots, none of them seemed to worry him. But what pleased the crowd most was the daring manner in which he dived and took the ball from an opponent's toe.

Just before half-time the Rovers forced a corner.

The ball was beautifully placed, and the centre-forward got his head to it, with Larry Lascelles beaten.

Fortunately, however, the ball struck the cross-bar. It rebounded into play, and was easily cleared.

Half-time arrived with a blank score-sheet.

On the run of the play the Rovers had proved themselves several goals better

than their opponents, but Larry Lascelles had been a great stumbling-block.

Frank Nugent, who had been busily engaged in keeping count, declared that Larry had saved over forty shots in the first half, and his statistics were quite correct.

The mathematics master was loudly cheered as he came off at the interval.

"I'm willing to wager he'll save the game for the Crusaders!" said Johnny Bull.

"Hope so!" said Wharton.

By the time the game was resumed a strong wind blew lengthwise along the ground.

The Crusaders had the advantage of this wind, and their forwards got going at last. Away they went, with the cheers of their supporters ringing in their ears. Away and away, successfully baulking all opposition, until Belton drove in the leather with a fine, first-time shot.

It was the first time during the match that the Rovers' goalie had been tested, and he proved equal to the occasion. He gathered up the ball, and threw it out to one of his backs, who had the misfortune to handle it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "It's a penalty, by Jove!"

The Rovers' back had handled in the penalty area, and the referee had no hesitation in awarding the kick. It was taken by Belton, who sent the ball crashing into a corner of the net.

"Goal!"

"The Crusaders are one up!" said Nugent incredulously.

"Hurrah!"

That unexpected reverse stung the Rovers to the quick. They attacked fiercely, and Larry Lascelles had his hands full. He was for ever fisting out shots, and presently he saved what appeared to be a certain goal by flinging himself full-length in front of the opposing centre-forward. He pushed the ball clear with his hand, and then, to the consternation of the crowd, he rolled over, and lay still.

"Larry's hurt!" muttered Harry Wharton.

The referee held up the game, whilst a group of players congregated round the prostrate goalie.

Larry Lascelles had been kicked in the shoulder—accidentally, of course—and the pain was intense. But the trainer ran on to the field and ministered to him, and in a few moments Larry rose to his feet.

"Will you go off for a while, sir?" suggested Belton.

"No, no," answered Larry; "I'll stick it out!"

A rousing cheer greeted the young master as he resumed.

"There's pluck for you!" said Bob Cherry. "He's going to carry on. Bravo, sir!"

Larry Lascelles was soon busy again.

The opposing forwards kept up a powerful and prolonged bombardment, but they could not get through. Larry was, in truth, playing the game of his life.

The crowd looked on breathlessly, expecting at any moment to witness the downfall of the Crusaders' goal. But it never came.

Larry Lascelles held on and held out. And then, ten minutes from the close, the Crusaders' forwards broke away.

The Rovers' defence was caught napping, and Belton sent in a hot shot.

The ball struck the upright, and was deflected into the net.

"Goal!"

"That's number two!" chortled THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 637.

Johnny Bull delightedly. "The Rovers will never be able to make up the leeway now!"

Johnny was right. But, to do the Rovers justice, they certainly put up a brilliant display in the closing stages of the game.

Despite his injured shoulder, however, Larry Lascelles preserved his citadel intact. He remained unbeaten to the finish. And when the final whistle rang out, and the perspiring players came off the field, Larry was cheered to the echo.

Contrary to expectations, Courtfield Crusaders had won the County Cup.

"It was Larry who pulled them through!" said Bob Cherry.

"Larry and Belton," said Harry Wharton. "Belton scored both the goals, remember."

"And he looks as pleased as Punch!" said Nugent. "Let's go and have a jaw with him."

And the Famous Five intercepted Belton of the Crusaders just as he was about to enter the dressing-room.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

"WELL played, Belton!" said Bob Cherry, clapping the Crusader on the back. "That last goal of yours was a corker!"

"You were the best man on the field!" added Frank Nugent.

Belton laughed breathlessly.

"Not by long chalks!" he said. It was that master of yours who won the match for us. The Rovers' skipper confessed to me just now that he'd never seen a finer display of goal-keeping—and he's been playing football for more years than he cares to remember. Larry Lascelles was great! And when he turns up at the George and Dragon this evening, he'll get the reception of his life!"

Harry Wharton stepped forward quickly.

"At the George and Dragon!" he exclaimed. "Is Larry in the habit of going to that place?"

"Not to the pub itself, of course," answered Belton, "but to the club-room. The room over the bar-parlour is the headquarters of the Crusaders Football Club."

"My hat!"

"Was Larry there the other evening?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"He comes every evening," replied Belton. "Why?"

"Because there was a bit of a shindy the other night. One of the other masters saw Larry coming out of the George and Dragon, and he reported him to the Head. He thought Larry had been making merry in the bar-parlour, I suppose."

Belton looked surprised.

"Didn't Larry explain?" he asked.

"I don't suppose he was given a chance. Anyway, the Head asked for his resignation."

"What!"

"It's a fact," said Harry Wharton. "Larry has got to go."

Belton squared his shoulders.

"Not while I'm able to prevent it!" he said grimly. "I'll go along and see that headmaster of yours, and if I can't convince him that Larry Lascelles is as straight as a die, I'll never kick a football again!"

Belton didn't believe in letting the grass grow under his feet. Without stopping to change his clothes, he mounted his bicycle, and rode away in the direction of Greyfriars.

The Famous Five smiled cheerfully as they watched him go.

"He'll put things right with the Head!" said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!"

And Belton did. His interview with Dr. Locke lasted five minutes only; but in that time he managed to convince the Head that Larry Lascelles was a true sportsman in every sense of the term.

Larry himself, quite unconscious of the fact that Belton had gone to the school to plead his cause, returned by train to Greyfriars.

On the platform at Wapshot he purchased a copy of the "Football News."

Although the Cup Final had ended only half-an-hour since, a brief report of the game appeared in the Stop Press column.

"FINAL—COUNTY CUP.

COURTFIELD CRUSADERS 2
WEST KENT ROVERS 0

"The Rovers attacked for the greater part of the game, but their efforts were nullified by the brilliant goal-keeping of Lawrence Lascelles, the young Greyfriars master. The score-sheet was blank at half-time, but in the second half Belton scored from a penalty for the Crusaders, and the same player netted again just before the close. The Rovers were the better side throughout, but the Crusaders' goal-keeper was unbeatable."

Larry Lascelles smiled when he read that report. It was rather a sad smile.

"I'm afraid it's my last football match," he murmured, as he leaned back in the corner-seat of the railway-carriage. "On Monday I must pack up my traps, and clear."

The prospects of saying good-bye to Greyfriars was not a pleasant one. Larry had grown very much attached to the old place, and he would be unable to adapt himself readily or cheerfully to a new environment.

But the fiat had gone forth, and Larry Lascelles had too much pride to appeal to the Head for a reprieve.

All the way back to the school he was thinking moodily of the future; and he was still absorbed in melancholy reflection as he passed through the Close.

"Mr. Lascelles!"

Wingate of the Sixth confronted the mathematics master.

"Well, Wingate?" said Larry, coming out of his reverie.

"The Head would like to speak to you, sir."

"Thank you!"

Larry Lascelles went along to the Head's study, vaguely wondering why he was wanted.

Dr. Locke was within, and so was Mr. Prout.

"Ah, Lascelles!" said the Head, looking up. "Come in! I have just received a visitor—a young fellow named Belton."

Larry's heart gave a bound. He could guess what was coming.

"Belton assures me—and I see no reason to doubt his assurance—that your visits to the George and Dragon Inn at Courtfield have been of a perfectly innocent nature. I understand that you went to the place for the purpose of discussing matters appertaining to football."

"That is so, sir."

"Then why did you not explain, at the time Mr. Prout made his report?"

"I was on the point of doing so, sir, but I thought you wouldn't believe me. When I told Mr. Prout that the landlord would vouch for me, he hinted that I had squared the landlord beforehand."

"I did you a great injustice, Lascelles," said Mr. Prout, in a low tone.

"I made attacks upon your character—

(Continued on page 19.)



INTERESTING EXPERIMENTS.

AMUSING TRICKS WITH SIMPLE APPARATUS.



ELECTRIFIED PAPER.

Very few people realise that paper can be electrified at a moment's notice, no special apparatus for the purpose being required.

Take a piece of light paper, which should have been well dried, and rub it briskly with a clothes brush, a silk handkerchief, or even the open hand.

After a little time the paper, becoming electrified, will adhere to your face, your hands, or your clothes as easily as if it were attached by means of gum.

Nor is this property confined to thin paper. Thick paper, when dried, will act in the same manner. For instance, take a postcard, dry it, and rub it, and you will notice that, as is the case with sealing-wax, glass, sulphur, etc., the card has the power of attracting light bodies, such as small pieces of cork.

The following interesting experiment may be carried out with an electrified postcard and a walking-stick:

Balance the walking-stick over the

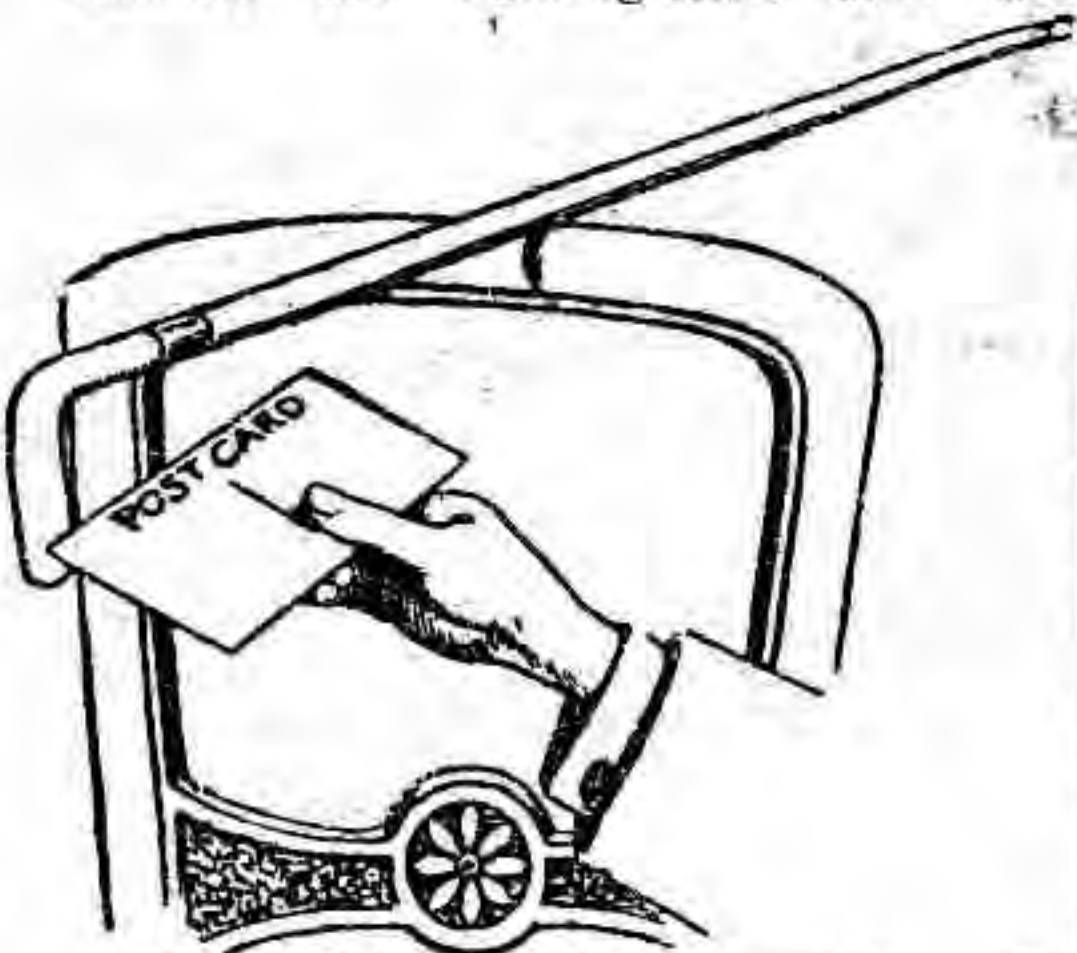


Fig. 1.—The Electrified Postcard.

back of a chair, and announce that you can make the stick fall without touching it, without blowing it, or without interfering with the chair. This is easily possible by utilising the electrified postcard.

First rub it on the sleeve of your coat. Now hold it near one end of the stick, and you will notice that the latter follows it as iron follows a magnet (Fig. 1), until the moment when, the equilibrium being destroyed, the stick falls to the ground.

Of course, the experiment may be varied by using any other suitable article in place of the stick, as, for instance, a fishing-rod or cricket-stump.

ELECTRIFIED BALLOONS.

If toy balloons be filled with air, and then stroked for a short time with a piece of fur, they will act in the same way as the electrified paper.

It is rather amusing to see these balloons, after being treated thus, placed against the wall or ceiling, where they will stick as if they were glued there.

Having entertained your friends in this manner, you may, by way of a little change, take two of these toy balloons, and, after having electrified them, sus-

pend them from the same point by means of two silken threads.

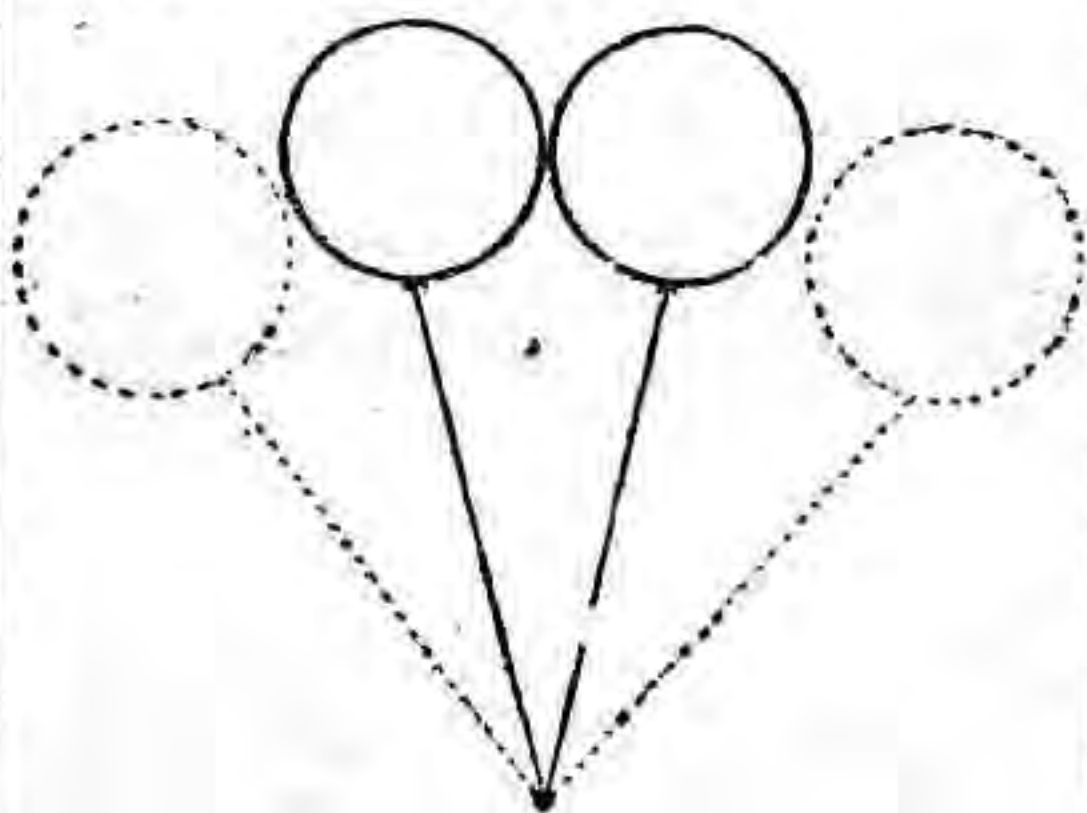


Fig. 2.—The Electrified Balloons.

You will be surprised to find that the balloons now repel each other in the same manner as pith-balls do (Fig. 2).

EXPLODING FLOUR.

Flour will create an explosion!

Take a large handful of flour, and have it for some time near the fire, in order that every trace of dampness may be expelled.

Whilst the flour is drying, take a large tin box—a biscuit-tin will do admirably—and near the bottom make a small hole.

Through this hole pass the end of a piece of indiarubber tubing, and place the handful of dry flour in front of it.

At the other end of the box place a short piece of candle, and, after lighting it, cover the box with the lid, taking care that it is not too firmly fixed.

If you now blow down the tube with your mouth, or, better still, with a pair

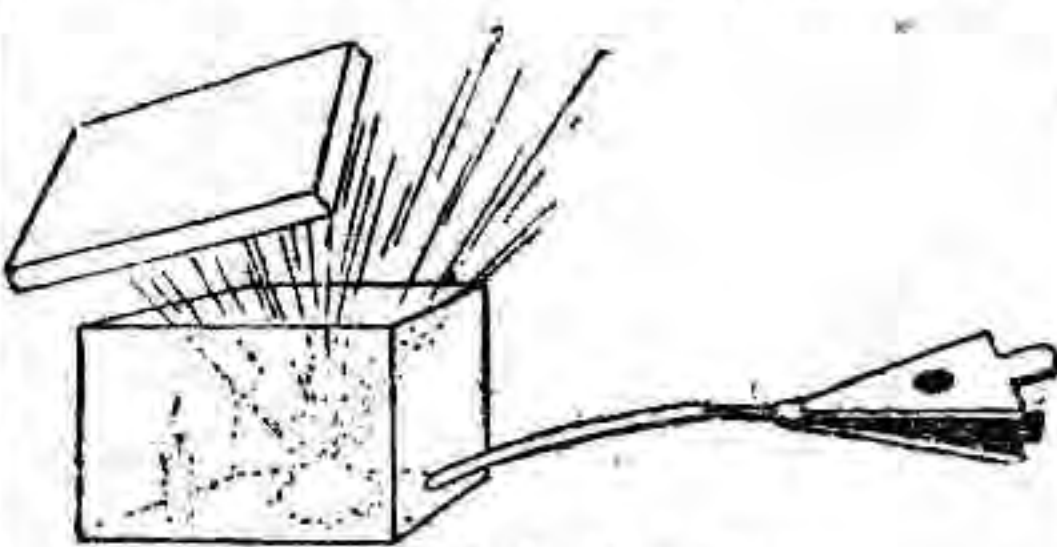


Fig. 3.—Exploding Flour.

of bellows, an explosion at once takes place, as a result of which the lid will be blown off (Fig. 3).

THE APPARENTLY IMPOSSIBLE.

Why is it that a cup of tea made on a mountain-top is much inferior to one made at a lower level? If the fault lay in the tea, the defect could be easily remedied. But such is not the case, for it depends upon the fact that water on the top of a mountain boils at a lower temperature than water at the sea-level.

Why is it, then, that water boils at different temperatures at different altitudes? It is because, as the altitude is increased, so the atmospheric pressure becomes less.

At sea-level, atmospheric pressure is equal to about fifteen pounds to the

square inch, but at the top of a mountain it is much less. The greater the atmospheric pressure the more heat is required before the bubbles of vapour formed within the water can break at the surface.

After this explanation, perhaps the subjoined experiment will be attempted with additional interest.

Take a flask, to which should be fitted a good cork or indiarubber stopper, and in it boil some water, taking care, of course, to remove the stopper beforehand.

After some minutes the steam from the boiling water will have expelled all

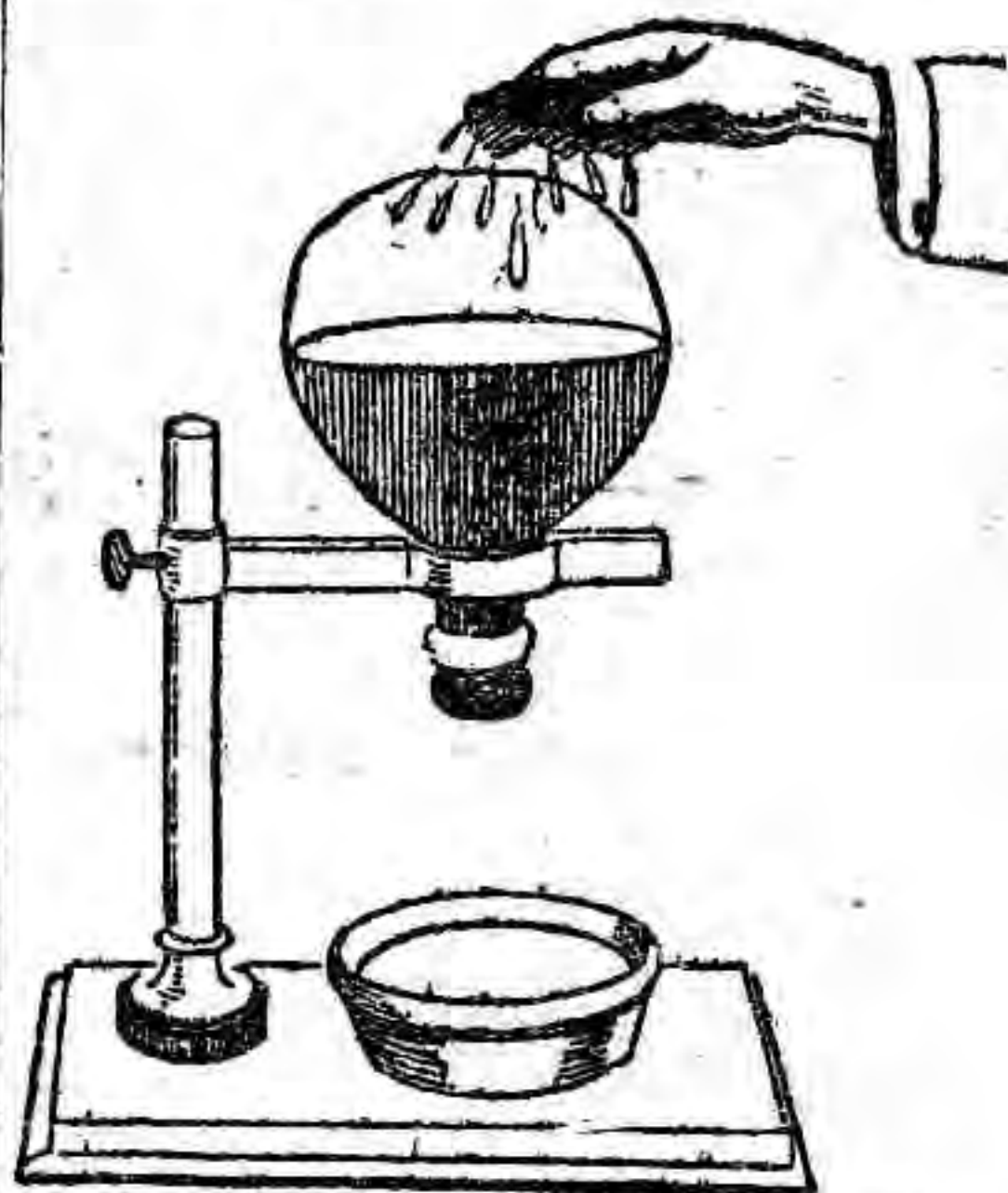


Fig. 4.—A Curious Boiling Experiment.

the air from the flask. Now remove the source of heat, at the same time quickly inserting the stopper.

If the flask is allowed to stand for a minute or two, the temperature of the water will fall considerably below one hundred degrees cent.

Next inform your friends that, without applying any extra heat, you will cause the water in the flask to boil vigorously again. This seems to them impossible, especially when you tell them that you are going to do it by means of cold water. Quickly turn the glass upside-down, and squeeze a sponge soaked in cold water on its upturned under-surface. Immediately the liquid inside will begin to boil, as if extra heat had been applied (Fig. 4).

But how are you to explain this apparently extraordinary phenomenon?

Well, directly the cold water comes in contact with the flask it causes the steam contained therein to condense, and, as no air can enter, thanks to the well-fitting cork, the pressure on the surface of the warm water is now considerably less than it was before.

Directly the pressure is lessened the vapour bubbles contained within the warm water are able to rise to the surface, and the water boils merrily.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 637.

THE SECRET OF THE SILENT CITY.

Our Grand Adventure Serial.

By DAGNEY HAYWARD.



Suddenly, without a moment's warning, Wonga took a flying leap, and landed right on top of the chief, who had turned aside for an instant to pick up another spear. (See page 19.)

A Surprise for the Natives!

PRESENTLY the dwarf chief, with the two others, rose. The former, addressing his tribe, began a long harangue. Every now and then he pointed to Mr. Sherwell's party, and that was always the signal for loud grunts of approval.

It was evident that the dwarf chief meant to be friendly.

"Whatever happens," said Mr. Sherwell to Rackett, who was aching to "snap" the tattooed man, "we must not let that dwarf with the tattoo escape your camera."

"If it's possible, consider it done," replied the imperturbable man.

At last the dwarf chief ended his speech, and every native, at his word of command, raised his spear and saluted the whites.

"Now is the time to impress them," said Mr. Sherwell, and he gave his well-known signal for Augustus, Quambo, Tung Wu, Wonga, and Boris to approach, for they were some little distance behind, concealed by a huge rock temple.

Presently Augustus appeared, with Quambo and Wonga sitting on his head, with Boris and Dr. Harland leading.

Directly the dwarfs saw the huge elephant they gave vent to cries of awe and surprise. Some of them even ran away, but they returned at a signal from their chief.

Wonga instantly joined Dick and linked arms with him.

The natives showed signs of amusement. Wonga, indeed, must have cut a strange figure in their eyes. The mon-

key was wearing a large slouch hat and an old coat of Dick's, and almost looked as if he might have belonged to the dwarf tribe.

Augustus stood stock-still when ordered, and swung his trunk to and fro with the regularity of a pendulum.

Shouts of awe and astonishment came from the natives. They were evidently impressed by his enormous bulk, for they had certainly never seen anything like him before.

READ THIS FIRST.

Mr. Sherwell, producer of the Southern Film Company, accompanied by his staff, set out in search of the Silent City, which is situated in the wilds of South America.

The staff includes Tom Rackett, the operator; Tubby Bouncer, a comedian; Dick Grainger, Mike Rafferty, and Larry, three boy chums; two servants, Tung Wu, a Chinaman, and Quambo, a nigger; also three animals, Augustus, an elephant, Wonga, a chimpanzee, and Boris, a bearhound.

Mr. Sherwell's chart is incomplete, and he has only a vague idea as to the position of the Silent City.

Tom Rackett obtains many wonderful and interesting films en route. Later it is discovered through Wonga, the chimpanzee, that a rival film company is making for the Silent City.

Later Dr. Harland, an Englishman, who has been masquerading among a savage tribe as a "magic-man," joins the party. Later the party arrive at a walled town occupied by dwarfs, one of whom has a chart tattooed on his back.

(Now read on.)

"Harland," whispered Mr. Sherwell, when the doctor was by his side, "if we should get separated, I want you to be in charge of the rest of the expedition. Remain near this spot, and if it comes to fighting I know you and the others will give a good account of yourselves."

"If we have the misfortune to separate," replied Dr. Harland, "I have Boris with me, and if necessary he'll be able to track you by scent. Of course, if it comes to a scrap you can rely on us to fight to the last cartridge."

"I can't quite tell what these dwarfs are up to," went on the chief. "Anyway, Harland, one of them has a map tattooed on his back, and Rackett's going to get a photo of it."

"If it's the map we want," returned Harland, "I'm sure Rackett will 'snap' it somehow."

At that moment Tubby Bouncer, who had been concealed among the big stacks of luggage on the elephant's back, appeared standing on the head of Augustus.

The great beast, through custom, and knowing what was usually required of him, suddenly raised his trunk, caught the fat man by the waist, and slowly lowered him to the ground.

At the sight of his enormous bulk the dwarfs broke out into something more approaching a laugh than anything yet heard.

The chief and the tattooed man stared at him in utter amazement, and rubbed their stomachs.

Tubby, thinking that this meant being eaten and roasted alive, prostrated himself on the ground.

"I knew I'd be eaten alive and killed," groaned the fat dumpling. "I always said I'd live to die!"

"Get up, you ass!" whispered Larry. "Why, even the dwarfs are laughing at you!"

Then Tung Wu took it into his head to give Tubby a kick in the ribs, and with such good purpose that the corpulent Bouncer bounced up in the air, owing to the celerity with which he rose.

Loud cries of satisfaction came from the dwarfs, who were highly amused.

One of them had the temerity to come quite close and inspect Tubby and the Chinaman.

Tubby thereupon sneaked round behind Dick.

"I'm not going to be made into a cannibal stew!" he groaned.

"Sure and bedad," said Mike, "you're in a stew now, Tubby, me bhoys!"

Tung Wu Brings Trouble!

THE native then turned his attention to Tung Wu.

The Chinaman stood looking at him, blinking his little Oriental eyes.

"Me plenty strongee to eatee you up. Savvy?" said Tung Wu, in his blandest tones.

The dwarf smiled. Then, before anyone had time to realise what the little man was doing, he had crept round behind the Chinaman and deliberately pulled Tung Wu's priceless pigtail.

That was an indignity that no Chinaman with any self-respect could stand.

In a flash Tung Wu's fist lunged out and sent the dwarf sprawling.

There was a tense silence of some seconds. No one spoke or moved.

Then there broke out a low, sullen murmur from the dwarfs and the chief.

"You've done it, Tung Wu!" whispered Mr. Sherwell. "Why, in the name of the MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 637.

of pigtails, couldn't you leave the man alone?"

The dwarf chief signalled to the natives. Every spear was raised. Then he beckoned to Mr. Sherwell, Rackett, Tung Wu, and the boys to approach. As they did so they were surrounded by a guard of natives.

"Take care of the things, Harland!" shouted Mr. Sherwell. "I don't know what is going to happen to us, but if you don't hear anything soon you must try and find out where we are. So-long!"

"I suppose we are prisoners," said Dick to Tom Rackett, as they went off surrounded by the spearsmen. "What are they going to do with us?"

"Don't you get alarmed," interrupted Mr. Sherwell. "I am going to follow this chief wherever he goes. I would not have come so quietly unless it had suited our purpose."

All the same, it was a depressed party which advanced into the deserted town whither the chief was leading the way. Tung Wu, who felt that he was responsible for the disaster, was particularly downhearted.

"Me vellee sollee," he whimpered. "Me no likee have my pigtail touched. Vellee sollee, boss!"

"Yes, you must be more careful," said Mr. Sherwell. "We were getting on fine with them until you started your mad tricks. But never mind now; just remember to do as you are told in future."

And so this curious party passed through the ancient city of Yrique. First of all there was the chief, surrounded by his own bodyguard of natives. Then came Mr. Sherwell, Tom Rackett, and Larry. Close at their heels were Dick and Wonga, arm-in-arm, Mike, and Tung Wu.

Instead of going to the huge temple they had already seen, they swung off to the right down a narrow lane surrounded by massive buildings, once alive with people, but now deserted save for the lizards which lay basking in the sun. The walls of these houses were adorned with strange carvings, pictures of furious battles and wonderful deeds wrought by men dead and forgotten these many centuries. Before some of the houses were statues, perhaps of unknown gods, perhaps of the men who dwelt in them. Over all was the spirit of desolation and decay.

At last the chief halted, and the Englishmen found that they had reached an enormous rock which rose sheer from the ground some thirty feet. Each side of it were large carved pillars of stone, once painted in gaudy colours, but now dull with the passage of time.

"What is this place?" asked Tom Rackett. "I should like to get a picture of it."

"I suppose it is some temple," said Mr. Sherwell. "Get your hand camera ready, Tom. Perhaps you will be able to get a snap or two worth the having."

"Bejabers, what is the ugly ould fossil going to do now?" said Mike, as the chief raised his spear in the air and gave utterance to a loud cry, not unlike the hoot of an owl.

"It is some signal," said Larry. "Look! What ever is going to happen?"

As the chief's cry died down about thirty dwarfs sprang from behind the pillars and came rushing towards the party, brandishing their spears and shrieking like maniacs. Everyone grasped their revolvers tightly, except Tom Rackett, who took a photo of them, and imperturbably wound up his film for

the next number. Wonga clung tightly to Dick, and bared his teeth in an ugly snarl.

Wonga Makes an Attack!

BUT at a sign from the chief the ferocious little men lowered their spears and threw themselves upon the ground, striking their heads three times in the dust, evidently as a sign of deep reverence.

As they did so some strange spirit of mischief seemed to attack Wonga. Slipping his arm from Dick's, and tossing his hat to one side, he broke away from the group of his friends and ran amongst the prostrate natives. Before anyone could stop him he had seized the spear of one of the men and stood over him in a threatening attitude.

"Hi, Wonga, come here!" cried Dick. "Come here, you little wretch!" shouted Mr. Sherwell. "What with monkeys and Chinamen, we don't seem able to keep out of trouble. Come here, Wonga!"

But Wonga would not come. The natives, who had never seen such a creature before, were terrified of him, especially the man who lay on the ground expecting the ape to bury the spear in him at any moment.

Dick made a start as though to run after his monkey friend and bring him back, but one of the dwarf guards pushed him back savagely, and the next moment he saw the chief level his spear to hurl at the chimpanzee.

But Wonga was up to all their tricks. He chattered and laughed, and began to dodge about too quickly for the chief to aim surely. At last, as the spear came hurtling through the air, Wonga ducked neatly, gave the nearest dwarf a prodigious kick, and the next moment was swarming up one of the pillars which flanked the rock.

"I've got three more films," said Tom. "But I reckon that is certainly worth one of them." And he snapped Wonga, who hung from a crevice in the pillar and made faces at the indignant dwarfs below.

"Yes, it is funny enough," said Dick. "But I don't see how we are going to get out of this mess."

"We are not going to try until I have got a photo of that nigger's back," said Tom. "Don't you worry, my lads; it'll all come out all right."

Wonga, meanwhile, was amusing himself immensely. He had found some loose stones, and was taking pot-shots at the chief. At last he caught him fair and square on the head. It made a good, loud crack, and would have hurt anyone but a native. As it was, it only hurt the chief's dignity, for he saw one or two of his followers laugh, whilst Tung Wu cackled aloud with delight.

"Vellee clebber monkee," he said, with glee. "Almost clebber as Chinaman."

The spears began to whistle uncomfortably near Wonga, for the chief was aroused, and ordered his men to kill the monkey at all costs. But Wonga had no intention of being killed. In fact, he had a much better plan.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, he took a flying leap, and landed right on top of the chief, who had turned aside for an instant to pick up another spear. The next moment they were rolling together on the ground, the dwarf chief and the chimpanzee, in such inextricable confusion that for the time no one could tell which was man or which was monkey.

The dwarfs clustered round, their spears raised to strike home the instant they could do so with safety, but Wonga

was too quick for them. He saw his chance, suddenly sprang clear of the chief, and, breaking through the circle of natives, made a dash for his friends. The next moment he was hanging on to Dick and chattering with glee at his escapade.

With a very ugly face the dwarf chief picked himself up and motioned the Englishmen to advance. They could not help themselves, for they were pushed forward by their captors, who made up in numbers what they lacked in size.

They all advanced to the great rock, which presented a smooth, unbroken face to them. Tom Rackett had worked his way to the tattooed native's back, but even yet he could get no chance of taking a photo, as there were always one or two dwarfs between them. But he held his camera ready for the critical moment, whenever it should come.

"What is he doing?" asked Larry suddenly. The dwarfs had ceased their chattering, and a dead silence had fallen on the party.

"It seems to me he is going to knock his head against the rock," answered Dick.

"I don't care what he is doing: I shall be getting a picture of him in a minute," said Tom.

"Hush!" commanded Mr. Sherwell. "Something is going to happen; he is chanting a magic charm or the like. Look—look, boys!"

After a few monotonous chants the chief put his hands against the solid rock, and passed them up and down as though feeling for something. Suddenly he gave a grunt of satisfaction. He raised his clenched fist and gave the rock a sharp blow with it, and as he did so the part he struck yielded, and a doorway appeared in the face of the rock.

"This is very wonderful!" said Mr. Sherwell. "Some secret passage leading to a temple, I suppose. I hope he does not want us to go there after him!"

"We have all got our torches," said Dick. "We are armed, too, so they can't do us much harm."

"It won't be the spalpeen's fault if they don't," said Mike. "He is looking sour enough at us."

Trapped!

TURNING to the whole party, the dwarf chief now raised his spear, and uttered a few harsh commands. Immediately all the spearsmen turned back and retired a few paces, leaving only the chief and his tattooed native with the Englishmen. Still facing them, and with anger gleaming from his fiery little eyes, the chief began a long tirade of which they understood nothing except that he was talking about Tung Wu and about Wonga, for he pointed at them continually, and seemed to grow very angry when he mentioned them. At last he finished his harangue. He gave one or two more orders, and then turned to the passage with the tattooed native.

For the first time the latter was standing with his back plain to Tom Rackett's gaze. In an instant there was a click! Tom bent over his camera. Another click, and another photo had been taken. The next moment they were following the chief into the darkness.

Directly they were inside they became aware of a stifling heat. It was so dark after the blinding light outside that none of them were able to distinguish anything at all. But it was evident that they were in some kind of a large rock-chamber.

Suddenly the chief gave a strange cry and prostrated himself on the ground with his back to the entrance, at the same time chanting some weird prayer or refrain. Then he rose and faced the party, at the same time waving his arm towards the inner recesses of the cavern. Mr. Sherwell told the boys to go still further into the gloomy depths.

Unexpectedly the chief uttered a loud cry, and prostrated himself on the ground and saw a great crowd of dwarfs without standing in a hostile attitude, with spears uplifted.

The dwarf chief turned, stepped quickly back, and sped towards the opening. Dick and Mike ran forward, for they foresaw what was going to happen.

Immediately they sprang forward a howl of derision and recrimination burst from the native dwarfs, who all poised their spears in the direction of the prisoners.

"Back, back, back, you boys," cried Mr. Sherwell, "or they'll spear you!"

Mike and Dick obeyed their chief instantly. But the next moment a cry of horror and despair broke from the throats of the prisoners.

They saw the chief outside groping for the secret spring. The next instant the great stone rolled slowly across the opening. In another moment they were in utter darkness.

"Treachery—cowardly treachery!" muttered Mr. Sherwell.

"They've trapped us all right!" muttered Tom Rackett.

"But—Phew!" he broke off. "It's mighty warm and close in here!"

"If I'm not very much mistaken," began Mr. Sherwell, "there's a distinct sulphurous smell. My hat, the heat's stifling! What on earth's their cruel game this time?"

"You could boil an egg in this heat!" murmured Dick.

"If Tubby Bouncer were here it would reduce his weight," remarked Larry.

"Be jabbers," cried Mike, "next time I want to keep cool I'll not get into a warm corner!"

"None of you boys move!" commanded Mr. Sherwell. "We don't know what traps are waiting for us. I don't like this frightful heat at all! There's something more in this than we imagine."

Dick switched on his electric torch. The light dazzled them all at first. But they soon grew accustomed to the kindly rays. Presently all had their torches going.

Larry, walking forward cautiously, suddenly cried out in astonishment.

"Look! Look! Look!" he shouted, pointing downwards. Everyone came to a dead halt, and all turned their torches in the direction in which Larry indicated.

Great clouds of steam were rolling upwards from a dark, long hole in the ground. These puffs of steam and sulphurous smoke were intermittent, and every now and again the party could see beyond the steam clouds, which seemed only an interminable vista of inky darkness.

"Be careful how you go, boys!" cried Mr. Sherwell.

They advanced with great caution. Wonga, who clung on to Dick, was evidently frightened. His cute animal instinct scented a danger to which he was quite unaccustomed.

Again they all moved on very warily, holding their torches well in front, so as to see as much of the dark beyond as possible.

"I don't like the look of things at all!" muttered Mr. Sherwell to Tom Rackett. "It seems to me as if we were in some wicked boiling-pot of Nature into which these cunning little dwarfs of evil wish to fling us alive."

Larry, Dick, Wonga, and Mike were now in front, walking gingerly. The faithful Tung Wu remained near Mr. Sherwell and Rackett.

"Look out! Take care!" shouted Larry suddenly, who was a yard or two in advance of Mike and Dick. "Stop, everyone!" he shouted.

"What is it?" queried Mr. Sherwell, hurrying up, with Rackett and Tung Wu.

"Look!" said Larry, pointing significantly downwards.

A cry of incredulous amazement and horror broke from that brave white party at what they saw.

— — —

A Terrible Situation.

ABOUT three feet away from them, and not three feet below the ground level, illuminated by their torches, they saw a dark, muddy, oozy liquid bubbling and boiling and smoking. It was like a subterranean river of hot, liquid mud. The heat near it was intense. The fumes and smoke were stifling, and set everyone coughing and spluttering.

"Back, boys, back, everyone of us!" shouted Mr. Sherwell, "or we shall be suffocated. It's an underground river of molten lava!"

"By jimmy!" said Rackett. "I've read about such things, but I've never seen anything like it before. Great snakes!" he muttered, in a low tone to Mr. Sherwell. "I believe those treacherous little dwarfs mean to keep us here till the fumes overtake us. Phew!"

By this time the whole party had backed well away from the molten river, which Mr. Sherwell guessed was some fifteen feet wide. Even Mr. Sherwell shuddered when he thought to what abysmal depths it might descend.

They were indeed prisoners. In front of them was a molten river of lava impossible to cross. Behind and at their sides the solid walls of rock hemmed them in.

As they once more turned in the direction in which they had come, their torches were switched from side to side so that they might see what perhaps had escaped their notice when they were advancing. The heat was getting frightful, and the poisonous fumes from the lava river were making them splutter and cough.

Mr. Sherwell's brave heart had never quailed him. But he knew that this time he was up against something that was beyond all human control. He was glad to see that the boys had not yet, so far as he could judge, realised the grave danger they were all in.

"We've got to get out of it somehow, Rackett," he said, "or we shall be asphyxiated!"

"Hallo, hallo!" came Dick's voice, interrupting Mr. Sherwell. "What's this?"

He turned his torch on something which he had but caught a glimpse of, and which had escaped the eyes of the party before.

Dick was pointing to a niche in the wall, into which was built a large square stone, richly carved, and embellished with gold and precious stones. Near it lay a human skull and some bones.

Mr. Sherwell and Rackett gazed at it in fascinated consternation. They knew only too well what it meant.

"It's an altar," murmured Mr. Sherwell—"an altar, boys, where these evil dwarfs make human sacrifices!"

The boys shuddered.

"Then why aren't there more skeletons?" asked Larry, looking grimly at the skull and bones that lay at his feet.

Mr. Sherwell knew, but he felt he dared not tell the boys, brave lads though they were. He shrugged his shoulders, and looked at Rackett.

"Velly wicked men throwee live people into lava pooler," said Tung Wu, who had been singularly quiet and subdued.

And then it flashed across them all that a horrible fate indeed might be in store for them.

Suddenly Wonga, who had been very quiet, began to choke and to breathe in a very alarming way. Presently the poor animal seemed to crumple up altogether, and he lost consciousness in Dick's arms.

"The brutes! The dwarf brutes!" murmured Mr. Sherwell.

The heat was now getting so fierce, and the fumes so thick, that everyone started choking. There was hardly a vestige of air in that noisome dungeon.

"Boys! Everyone!" said Mr. Sherwell, trying to stifle a cough. "Cover up your mouths with your handkerchiefs!"

The command was obeyed instantly.

Then, choking with the fumes and smoke, they lay down and waited. What would happen next?

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attacks which, in the light of what Belton has just told us, had no foundation whatever. I jumped to absurd conclusions concerning you, and I desire to apologise most sincerely."

"I, too, Lascelles," murmured the Head. "Had I considered the matter more carefully, I might have known that you were not the sort of man who would bring discredit upon yourself and upon the school. I wish to express my deep regret at what has occurred."

"That's all right, sir!" said Larry Lascelles cheerfully; and his reassuring smile made both the Head and Mr. Prout feel more comfortable. "I'll own that my movements looked very suspicious, and it was not altogether surprising that your faith in me should have

wavered. I propose that we say nothing more about the matter."

And, having shaken hands cordially with the Head and Mr. Prout, Larry Lascelles withdrew.

A tremendous cheer greeted him as he emerged into the Close.

Harry Wharton & Co. could tell that the young master's honour had been vindicated, and they were not slow to show their appreciation of the fact.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Larry!"

"Let's carry him in!"

The mathematics master tried to dodge the enthusiastic throng, but in vain. He was seized by willing hands, and borne shoulder high into the building.

The Head and Mr. Prout surveyed the scene from the former's window, and they made no attempt to check the demonstration.

There was only one person who did not approve of the proceedings.

Loder of the Sixth looked on with a

scowling brow. His little plot to bring about the downfall of Larry Lascelles had not materialised; and the cheering which rent the air seemed to mock the unpopular prefect.

But nobody was thinking of Loder just then. The person most prominent in the public eye was popular Larry Lascelles—the man who, although under a cloud at the time, had rendered yeoman service to the Cuptie Champions!

THE END.

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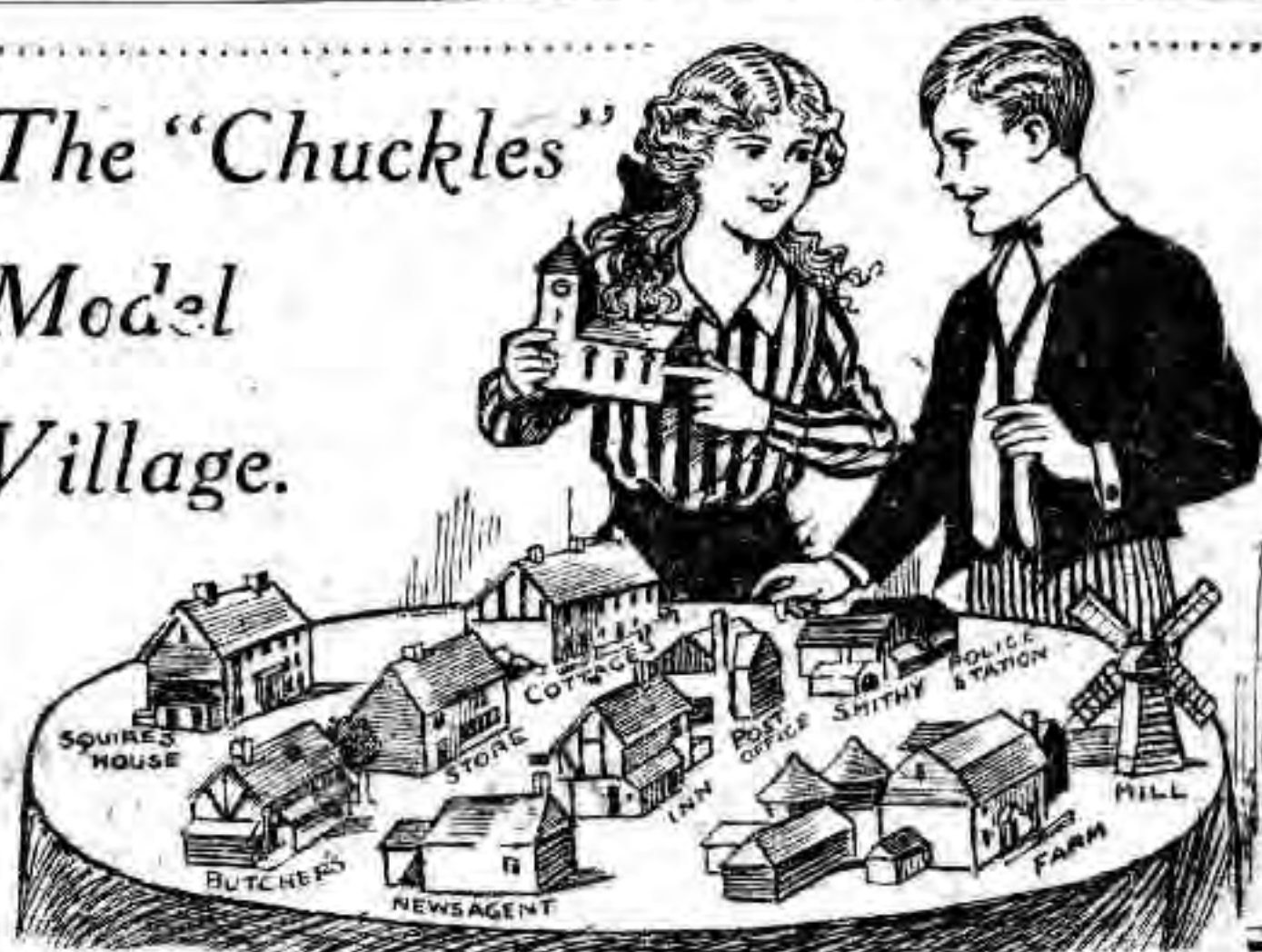
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