

ALL BOYS SAY IT'S THE BEST!



The
Magnet ¹⁰/₂
Library

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June 12th, 1920.

BUNTER, THE FARMER!



BILLY BUNTER TRIES HIS HAND AT FARMING!

(An Amusing Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Number.)



For Next Monday :

There will be another splendid long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greffriars, of the kind which is so masterly penned by Frank Richards, entitled:

"THE GREYFRIARS MINSTRELS!"

I should regard it as a great favour if every one of my chums would show the old paper to any non-reader, and get him to become one of the "Regulars." In this you will be doing him a good turn, by introducing him to the stories; and your Editor one, by increasing the circulation of the MAGNET, and securing him more chums.

Another instalment of:

"THE SECRET OF THE SILENT CITY!"

By Dagney Hayward,

is included in the next week's programme. It is full of thrilling and daring incidents. It tells of how Mr. Sherwell and his staff make a gallant bid for freedom again. How they fall in with the rival party, and what ensues from this.

THE CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

I am reluctantly compelled to discontinue the Correspondence Column in all the Companion Papers. It has been greatly abused, and I am receiving numerous complaints of fraud on the part of advertisers who take back numbers of the weeklies and omit to send the money agreed upon. This sort of thing calls for the attention of the police. Now, it is not in any way acceptable that a feature of the Companion Papers should be utilised by unscrupulous people for obtaining goods by false pretences, and after much consideration I have come to the conclusion that the only way to prevent my loyal supporters being tricked is to cease inserting notices at all.

SCRIPT WRITING.

There is a lot of what is called script writing these days. It has the merit of being legible, even if it is not swift. Each letter is clearly formed, not as with running or cursive writing, slurred over. I see a great many of my chums are taking to the new method, and though a number of critics say the system is bad, as it takes all the character out of calligraphy, there is the signal advantage of such writing being readable. Besides, when the script writer gets accustomed to the new style, his individuality will show itself, not a doubt of it.

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I know script writers who can get up a very fair speed, too. For the rest, the prime use of handwriting is to convey intelligence to someone else. Fellows do not write just for the sake of showing character! It seems to me script writing has ever so much in its favour.

CANADA AND GIBRALTAR.

My chum, S. D. Rooke, of 947, McMillan Avenue, Winnipeg, Canada, is extremely anxious to hear from some reader of the Companion Papers who lives at Gibraltar, and who can tell him something concerning the celebrated fortress.

FUNNY FINDS AT COVENT GARDEN.

According to a well-informed investigator, who has been up early and round the markets, there are quaint discoveries at Covent Garden Market when the fruit-crates are unpacked. Along with the bananas and other fruit consignments from Jamaica and the rest of the sunny lands come unwanted passengers. The dealers find tortoises tucked away in the boxes, likewise snakes and lizards. These interesting travellers creep in apparently when nobody is looking, and reach London free of charge. The snakes are sometimes killed straight away, but there is a dealer here and there who keeps the specimens in a little museum on the roof of the market, and here the naturalist has a chance of seeing some various interesting representatives from overseas.

A NEW CLUB.

Many thanks to John Taylor, 18, Carnegie Street, Edinburgh, who asks me to draw the attention of readers to his club. He wants new members. The club has been formed for the purpose of facilitating correspondence between readers at home and abroad. It is a good scheme, and I wish the International Correspondence Club every success.

THE ORIGIN OF BLINDMAN'S BUFF.

An anonymous reader tells me that the famous game has a very serious meaning. He says it started in the very old days when human sacrifices were made. The men of the tribe assembled, all dressed alike and wearing masks. They sat in a square, and the priest spun a round disc. The unlucky member of the party, who was indicated as the victim by the fall of the disc, had his eyes bandaged. Then, after being made to turn round several times so that he had lost all sense of location, he was required to catch one

of his fellows. If he succeeded, things were all right for him, but if he did not catch anybody—and it was long odds, of course—then he had to die. One would rather the good old game had a cheerier significance, anyway.

THE BIG THREE!

W. G. W. writes from Brixton: "Just a few lines in praise of the Big Three, viz.—MAGNET, 'Gem,' and the 'P. P.' I have followed your papers from the day they were born, and I must say it is a marvel to me how you keep the standard up. I have listened to your critics, and have been amused by suggestions for improvements. Well, my suggestion is—keep the papers as they are. They can't be beat! I shall be pleased to see the old covers again, but that will come in time. My wife reads the Companion Papers, and I think I should be in the soup if I gave my copies away before she had read them. I read your books while on active service in the Navy, and a lot of my messmates enjoyed the reading also. As I go to work I generally see a big array of the C. P.'s on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Accept best wishes."

THE BRITISH MAGNET AND GEM CLUB.

I am asked to draw the attention of readers to the good work being done by this club. The secretary is J. W. Penn, 125, Dartmouth Park Hill, N.19. A large number of readers of the Companion Papers are finding the club of great service to them. For West of England readers the district secretary is Basil F. Barber, 11, Ashgrove Road, Redland, Bristol.

"PYRATS!"

This is how a humorous correspondent referred to the bold rovers of the main of ancient times. I see Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island" is about to be filmed. Some of the strongest picture-plays ever given have shown the deeds of the old-time pirates; how they seized peaceful merchant-ships, made the crew and passengers walk the plank, and then, after disguising the captured ship, put a fresh crew aboard and sailed on after new conquests.

Your Editor

BUNTER, THE FARMER!



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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Something Worth Celebrating!

"GENTLEMEN—" "Hear, hear!" "Gentlemen of the Remove, I—"

"Hear, hear!" "Gentlemen of the Greyfriars Remove, I rise to address you upon this important occasion—"

"Hear, hear!" "Upon this important occasion, which—"

"Bravo!" The cheer that rang through the Remove-room at Greyfriars was deafening, and it was quite impossible for Harry Wharton to proceed.

It was a Form meeting, before school hours, in the Form-room, and every member of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—was present, and the enthusiasm was immense.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Form, was on his feet, standing on a chair to address the meeting. His chums were grouped round him to loyally support him—Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Lord Mauleverer, Johnny Bull, Mark Linley, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bulstrode and Vernon-Smith were closely supporting him, and Billy Bunter was sitting in Mr. Quelch's chair, and, though he was eating a jam-tart, he joined in the cheering.

"Bravo!" "Buck up, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton waited patiently. There was no chance for him to "buck up" till the enthusiasm had subsided, and the juniors were greatly excited. They had met together upon what Wharton correctly described as an important occasion, and they seemed bent upon letting the rest of Greyfriars know it.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurrah!"

"If you will allow me to proceed—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Go it, Wharton!"

"On the ball, old chap!"

The cheers died down at last, and there was a partial silence, and the captain of the Greyfriars Remove proceeded.

"Gentlemen of the Remove, I rise to address you upon this important occasion! We shall get to business all the quicker if you don't interrupt."

"Hear, hear!"

"You all know the cause of this meeting. You know we are on the point of losing a valued and trusty comrade and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The trustfulness is great," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head, "and the valueness to the esteemed Remove has been terrific!" "We have now met together," continued the captain of the Remove, "to show some little recognition of our appreciation and so on."

"Hear, hear!"

"For some days now we have been quietly discussing the matter, and trying to come to some understanding as to how we might show this appreciation."

"Bravo!"

"If this is quietly discussing the matter," murmured Frank Nugent, "I only hope the Remove won't decide to make a row about it."

"You all know," pursued Harry Wharton, warming up to his subject, and growing more and more eloquent as he proceeded—"you all know that we have had to put up with a lot in the past at the hands of our fat friend, the late lamented Bunter—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, Wharton!" interrupted Billy Bunter, gulping down the last crumbs of his jam-tart. "You can't say I'm late lamented, you know! I'm not off the school roll. I'm only going away for a time."

"I know that, you fat porpoise!"

"Then what do you call me late lamented for?"

"Because we want to have a chance to show our good feeling," replied the orator. "You are late lamented as far as we are concerned, so don't be hypercritical, Bunter. Now, then, you fellows, I will continue. The late lamented Bunter—our revered and respected Form-fellow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Our revered and respected Form-fellow, is leaving us for an indefinite period—he is retiring for a time from the scenes of his labours and scholastic triumphs—"

"Good!"

"And in the interim—"

"In the what?"

"In the meantime, I think it is up to us to show Bunter how glad we are he is going—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Wharton," granted Billy Bunter, "I think you are making a rotten sort of speech. It's a pretty bad thing for Greyfriars, and you—you won't realise what I mean to the old school until I've gone!"

"Dry up, porpoise!" cried Bob Cherry. "You must take a back seat in this meeting. We've got to decide what sort of testimonial we're going to make."

"That's the idea," continued Harry Wharton. "It's not every day that a chap leaves the home circle, and even if it's Bunter who is going I think it's up to us to show our esteem of his valued and varied virtues."

"Oh, my hat! Just hark at him!"

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murmured Frank Nugent. "Who ever heard of Bunter having any virtues?"

"I guess it's about time the fat galoot vamoosed the ranch altogether!" cried Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Wibley. "We've had too much Bunter, and instead of giving the fat bounder a testimonial we ought to make the rotter pay up his blessed debts before he goes!"

Billy Bunter scowled through his big spectacles; but a little thing like a scowl was not likely to affect Wibley.

"Silence for the chairman!" cried Harry Wharton. "We don't want to spoil the harmony of this important meeting by regrettable observations of that sort. As I have said before—"

"Well, get on with the washing, you dummy!"

"As I have said before, the late lamented Bunter is leaving us. The why and the wherefore of this business is a secret and a mystery at present, and our worthy Form-fellow refuses to enlighten us. But whether he is going into Parliament or going to be potman at the Bunter Arms, it does not matter—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say it is up to us to present a testimonial as a token of our good will and—pleasure at losing him!"

"Oh crumbs!" laughed Bob Cherry. "I call that a regrettable observation, if you like!"

There was a roar of laughter from the Removites, and Billy Bunter shuffled uncomfortably in his chair.

"Perhaps I should have put it differently," continued Harry Wharton. "With Bunter being present it makes it rather difficult to frame a speech decently. But I know you chaps understand what I mean, and as our worthy Form-master will blow in at any moment I must ask for a show of hands on the point in question. Now, then, is it passed that a subscription should be raised in order to present Bunter with a testimonial worthy of the occasion? Those in agreement will raise their right hands."

That Harry Wharton had successfully carried the meeting by his eloquence was proved the next moment, when a forest of hands were shot upwards.

"Shove 'em up, Fishy!" laughed Bob Cherry.

"I guess I'm not voting," replied the American junior. "I agree with Wib that the silly galoot should pay back all the dollars he owes, first of all."

"That's all right!" cried Harry Wharton. "The whole blessed Form is in favour of the testimonial, with the exception of Fishy and Wib. Now, then, Bob, old man, you just take the cap round and collect the cash. We'll decide what to give Bunter when we get some idea of the amount we can raise."

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry pulled out a cap from his pocket and pushed his way into the middle of the crowd of Removites.

"Brass up! Brass up!" he shouted. "Come along, all donations thankfully received!"

"Here you are, Bob!" cried Harry Wharton. "Catch! That'll start the ball rolling!"

The captain of the Remove threw down half-a-crown, and Bob Cherry cleverly caught the glittering coin in his cap.

"Thanks, Harry, old man!" laughed Bob Cherry. "Now then, you dummies, follow your leader! Pay up! Pay up!"

The collector's rousing appeal seemed to fall on deaf ears. One by one the grinning Removites melted away, and

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fell into their places in the rows of desks which adorned the Form-room.

"Come on, you bounders!" cried Bob Cherry. "Here, Bolsover, you worm, you voted for the testimonial just now! I saw you shove both your hands up!"

Bolsover major grinned.

"I know that," he replied. "I didn't say I'd give anything towards it, though. I jolly well think it is time that fatrotter did leave Greyfriars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry held out his cap and shook the solitary half-a-crown about. He was beginning to look somewhat perplexed. Not a single junior seemed at all anxious to contribute.

Bob put the cap right under Peter Todd's nose, and waited.

"Come on, Toddy, old man!" he said. "Here you are!"

Peter Todd gazed at the half-a-crown in the cap, and then slowly brought up his hand and took the coin out and put it into his trouser-pocket.

"Thanks, old man!" he said. "Jolly good of you! Thanks again!"

"Wh-what?"

Bob Cherry was rendered almost speechless at Todd's action, and there was a roar of laughter from the rest of the Removites.

"I call that very decent of you," continued Peter Todd solemnly. "Of course, half-a-crown doesn't go far in these hard times, but I'll toast your health in ginger-beer after class."

"I—I—"

"Don't mention it, old chap! Look here, if you would care to come along I'll stand you some tommy out of it!"

"You burbling jabberwock!" roared Bob Cherry. "Hand over that half-a-crown, or I will spiculate you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a shriek of laughter from the Removites as Bob Cherry caught Peter Todd by the collar and shook him violently.

"Here, hands off!" cried Todd. "What are you up to, you dummy?"

"Stand and deliver!" snapped Bob Cherry.

"I'm bothered if I can understand you!" replied Peter Todd. "You offer me half-a-crown one minute, and then the next second you want it back!"

"Come on!" growled Bob Cherry. "Hand it over! That half-a-crown is for Bunter's testimonial!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be a cad, Todd!" grunted Billy Bunter, rolling forward. "Hand over my half-dollar! Here, keep hold of him, Cherry, old man, and I'll get it out of his pocket!"

"Go on, then!"

The Owl of the Remove forced his fat hand into Peter Todd's pocket, and the next moment drew out the confiscated coin of the realm. Bob Cherry grinned as he relinquished his grasp of Peter Todd's collar.

"That's that!" chuckled Bob. "Hand it over, we're going to get enough financial support for your blessed testimonial!"

Billy Bunter coughed.

"Come on!" said Bob Cherry. "Hand that money over! You've got it away from Todd, haven't you?"

"Y-yes."

"Well?"

"I—I'll take care of it," said Bunter. "It'll be quite safe with me. You—you might lose it, you know."

Bob Cherry glared angrily at the fat Removite.

"Hand that over!" he roared.

"I—I—I—"

"Come on!" cried Bob Cherry. "If you don't hand that blessed money over to me in one second I'll bump you!"

"Really, Cherry, it'll be quite all right with me, you know."

Bob Cherry gave a snort of disgust, and then threw himself on to the Owl of the Remove. The next moment the two Removites crashed to the floor, and there was a roar of laughter from the juniors.

"Ow!" shrieked Billy Bunter. "Ow! Leggo!"

"Hand that money over!"

"Cave!" shouted Harry Wharton, jumping off the chair he had been addressing the meeting from. "Here's Quelch!"

As the captain of the Remove landed on the class-room floor the door opened, and Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, came hurriedly in.

Mr. Quelch started back in surprise as Bob Cherry and Billy Bunter scrambled up.

The remainder of the Removites bolted for their places.

"Go to your place, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" said Billy Bunter, with a jump.

"What explanation have you to give for being in that dusty and dishevelled condition at this hour of the morning?"

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir."

"I have no doubt you are, Bunter; but that is hardly sufficient. Why do you find it necessary to grovel about on the class-room floor?" demanded the Remove master.

"If you please, sir, it wasn't my fault!"

"Then whose fault was it?"

"I—I hardly like to say, sir!"

"Answer me at once, Bunter!"

"I mean, Cherry would be waxy, and—"

"Cherry! What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, I—I—"

"Answer me at once!" rapped out Mr. Quelch, in a voice that nearly made Bunter jump clear of the floor.

"Well, sir, it—it was a little misunderstanding with Cherry."

"You will take twenty-five lines for misunderstanding, Bunter, and I will deal with Cherry later on. Meantime, you will go along to the headmaster. Dr. Locke wishes to see you in his study."

"W-what, sir?" gasped Bunter, shaking all over.

"You will do as I tell you!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Go at once! We will now proceed."

And the Remove proceeded as Billy Bunter rolled out of the class-room door.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Head's Permission!

BILLY BUNTER tapped at the door of the Head's study, and the voice of Dr. Locke bade him enter. Dr. Locke nodded pleasantly enough to the fat junior, and Billy Bunter regained a little courage from his expression.

"Ah, it is you, Bunter!" said the Head. He glanced over his desk, and took up a letter that had been already opened.

"Y-yes, sir!" said Billy Bunter. "Mr. Quelch told me you wished to see me here. If—if you p-please, sir—"

He paused and coloured.

The Head glared at him.

"Well, Bunter, what is it? Have you something to tell me?"

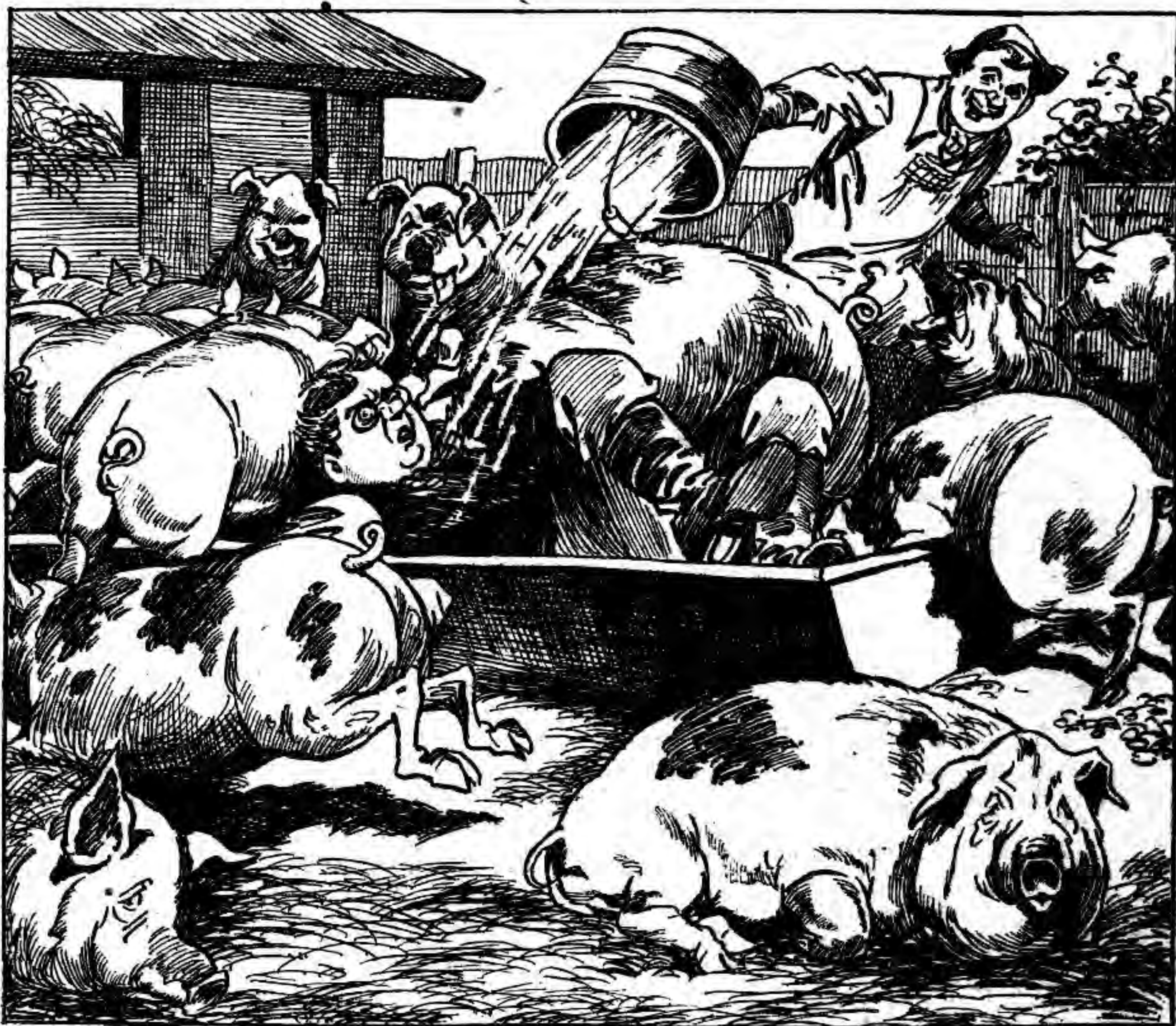
"I—I—I should like to explain—"

"Go on, by all means!"

"It was all in fun, sir," said Billy Bunter.

"Eh? What do you mean, Bunter?"

"We were holding a meeting in the



Bunter sank back with a wild yell, as the pig-wash caught him full in the chest. "Haw, haw, haw!" roared Sloggett. "That's got you!" (See Chapter 8.)

class-room, and—and they're going to raise a subscription for—for their late lamented comrade—I mean, it's a testimonial—"

The Head looked amazed.

"Indeed, Bunter!"

"Y-yes, sir. And when the money started to roll in—that is, the testimonial subscription, Todd thought he would be funny. But Cherry went for him, and I got the money back. But, of course, it was all fun. Todd knew that if he tried to stick to it, he would have got it in the neck—er, I mean, of course, I shall hand back the half-crown to old Wharton."

"Really, Bunter, I have not the faintest idea of what you are talking about," said Dr. Locke. "You are a very foolish boy. I have not heard anything if this fracas in the class-room."

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles, and his colour deepened.

"Oh, I thought—"

The Head smiled.

"I see there has been a little mistake."

"I—I thought I was sent for to—"

Billy Bunter paused. He could see now the mistake he had fallen into. The Head looked as if he very much wanted to laugh.

"Well, well, it was quite a mistake!" said Dr. Locke. "It is not a question of

punishment this time, but quite another matter. I have had a letter from Mr. Percival, who owns the big farm near Friardale."

Billy Bunter gave a fat smile.

"Y-yes, sir."

"It appears, Bunter," resumed the headmaster, "that you have seen Mr. Percival recently, and told him that you are very fond of farming."

"Y-yes, sir."

"He tells me that you have suggested you might lend him a hand on the farm during the week-ends, when you have finished your lessons here."

"Y-yes, sir," replied Billy Bunter nervously. "I—I know a lot about animals and all that sort of thing, and my father has often said I ought to do some hard work on a farm, and—and I was going to ask your permission, sir."

Dr. Locke smiled.

"I have spoken to Mr. Quelch about the matter, Bunter, and we have agreed that there is no reason why you shouldn't do a little work on Mr. Percival's farm."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"You have not to thank me, Bunter, but your own ambition to try to do useful work," said the Head. "There is another point Mr. Percival mentions. He thinks that it will be advisable if you go alone, as the idea is by way of being

a novelty. If your work proves satisfactory, he says he thinks other juniors may like to spend a few days on the farm from time to time."

"Ahem!"

"So, you see, Bunter, a good deal depends upon your own efforts. I have no doubt at all that quite a number of the pupils in this school would like to avail themselves of Mr. Percival's kind offer, and if your work is satisfactory, I dare say I could see my way clear to send a few of your Form-fellows from time to time."

"Y-yes, sir."

"Mr. Percival says you can start to-morrow afternoon, Saturday, and he will find accommodation for you until Monday morning. You will, of course, attend classes as usual on Monday. You understand that, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir, of course, sir. Thank you, sir."

"Very well, then, Bunter. I will write to Mr. Percival at once, and tell him that you will be given the necessary permission. You may go, Bunter, and rejoin your class."

"Thank you, sir."

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the Head's study, walking on air. A week-end on a farm was, of course, welcome

to any schoolboy, and the prospect of food galore thrown in appealed very strongly to the greedy Removeite.

Billy Bunter entered the Remove class-room, and a good many fellows glanced at him curiously, expecting to see him twisting his hands, or twisting his fat features—a common result of a visit to the Head's study.

The genuine pleasure in Billy Bunter's face puzzled the Removeites considerably.

"The thrashfulness has not come off," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The congratulateness to our esteemed and ludicrous fat friend is terrific!"

"So, it wasn't a licking, Porpoise?" muttered Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"You can dry up, Cherry! I shall only get into trouble if I talk now."

"Why? Quelch isn't looking."

"I want to keep out of trouble."

"Anything on?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Explain, then, you fat dummy!"

"Dry up, Cherry! I'm not going to get jumped on for you."

And Bob Cherry had to control his curiosity. Mr. Quelch glanced in their direction, and, as a matter of fact, it was not safe to say more. At the end of the first lesson the Form-master signed to Bunter to come out of his desk.

The Remove Form gave a snigger.

"Now the fat fraud's going to get it!" muttered Skinner, the sneak of the Remove. "The Head has let him off, and Quelch is going to lather him instead."

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed upon Skinner.

"Skinner, I have cautioned you before about talking in class. You will take fifty lines!"

And Skinner scowled and was silent.

"Bunter, I know that the Head has given you the permission you wanted," said Mr. Quelch. "I am very pleased you are interested in the work, and I have a very good technical book on the subject. I have placed it on my study table. You may go up and fetch it, and study it in your own study until 'break' at eleven o'clock."

"T-thank you, sir!"

Billy Bunter gave a satisfied grin at his Form-fellows as he rolled out of the class-room. The curiosity of the Remove was now greater than ever.

"What the dickens does it mean?" muttered Bob Cherry to Frank Nugent.

"Where is he going?"

"It's very funny!"

"I know that, duffer! I want to know what the Porpoise is up to."

"Ask Quelch!"

"Oh, rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows," murmured Skinner, "what's that fat rotter up to? It looks to me as though he's been expelled. That's what it is, I bet!"

"Fathead!" said Bob Cherry.

"Bunter's expelled, of course, and that—Ow!"

Harold Skinner broke off with a wail of anguish as Frank Nugent jabbed a pin into the sneak's leg. Mr. Quelch looked round.

"What's the matter with you, Skinner?"

"I—I had a sudden pain, sir."

"You will have another sudden pain if you disturb the class again," said Mr. Quelch, "and a more severe one, Skinner. Take care!"

And Harold Skinner understudied the oyster for the rest of the lesson, and was mum.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Improves the Shining Hour!

"O H crumbs!"

Thus spoke Billy Bunter.

The fat Removeite seemed quite flabbergasted when he arrived outside the class-room door. To think that Mr. Quelch, his own Form-master, had excused him an hour's lessons! It seemed too good to be true. Mr. Quelch was one of the strictest masters at Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter was quite his worst pupil. And now Bunter had been told to go up to his study and read a book in his own time! It took quite a minute for the fact to soak into Bunter's fat head as he paused in the Remove passage.

"Fancy old Quelch being so decent!" muttered the Owl. "I can't make out what's up yet. I—I think I had better run down to Mrs. Mimble's and have a snack."

Mrs. Mimble had the privilege of keeping a tuckshop within the precincts of Greyfriars, and she did a thriving trade with the boys, especially the juniors. Billy Bunter, when in funds, was her best customer; but for terms and terms now Billy had not been in funds. He owed Mrs. Mimble an account which had been standing for more than a term, and the good dame was resolute not to allow it to be added to.

All Billy Bunter's blandishments were in vain. Mrs. Mimble was as firm as a rock, and the account had remained quite stationary for a long time.

But the Owl of the Remove felt himself in clover for the moment. He fondly handled the half-a-crown belonging to the Testimonial Subscription Fund, and he felt that he could draw on that in the event of Mrs. Mimble again refusing to allow him credit. Anyway, he would try it on.

Mrs. Mimble came into the little shop as Billy Bunter entered, and did not look pleased. Billy had been once in the shop that day—just after breakfast, in fact—and he had then tried to obtain supplies on the strength of a postal-order which was coming—or was not coming—on the following morning.

"You again, Master Bunter!" said Mrs. Mimble disparagingly.

"Yes, ma'am," said Billy Bunter. "I want—"

"I can't let you have anything unless you pay for it."

"I will settle to-morrow morning."

"Oh, run away!"

"You can run it up to two shillings and sixpence, and take it out of my postal-order to-morrow."

"Oh, I have no patience with you, Master Bunter! I don't believe that you ever will have a postal-order!"

Billy Bunter looked hurt.

"That is a great deal like doubting a fellow's word, Mrs. Mimble," he said, with dignity. "I hope you have always found me an honourable chap."

"Then why don't you pay me your account?"

"So I will, when my postal-order comes. I'll have a rabbit-pie—"

"No, you won't!" said Mrs. Mimble pertly. "And I should like to know why you aren't in class, doing your lessons like the rest of the boys?"

"Mr. Quelch has excused me. Come on, Mrs. Mimble, I want a rabbit-pie, if you please."

"You shall have nothing, Master Bunter, unless you pay for it."

The Owl of the Remove fondled the half-a-crown in his pocket, and blinked hard across the little counter.

"All right!" he grunted, after a pause.

"I'll pay for what I have."

"Show me the money, Master Bunter."

The silver coin rattled on to the counter, and Mrs. Mimble picked it up and closely examined it.

"Very well, Master Bunter, I am always quite willing to serve you when ever you pay for the goods. What do you want now?"

"A rabbit-pie, please."

Mrs. Mimble placed a very savoury-looking pie on to a plate, and set it before Billy Bunter, with a knife and fork.

"There you are, Master Bunter. These pies are ninepence each now. I will give you one-and-ninepence change, unless you want to pay off something on your outstanding account while you have a little money to spare."

Billy Bunter gave a jump.

"Here, I say, hand over that change at once!" he said. "I—I am going to settle up the old bill with my postal-order when it comes to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Mimble gave a sniff, and handed over the one-and-ninepence.

"All I can say is that by rights I could take what is owing to me. If—"

"Pass me a piece of bread."

"If—"

"And the mustard."

"If—"

"And another plate."

"Really, Master Bunter, if—"

"I think I'll have some roast beef when I've finished this pie. I must congratulate you, Mrs. Mimble, on your ripping cooking."

Mrs. Mimble was looking very cross. She could not get a word in edgeways when once Billy Bunter got going, and she realised she must give it up as a bad job. At any rate, something in the way of a distraction came the next moment, when Temple, Dabney, and Fry of the Upper Fourth, rushed into the shop, breathless and excited.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Temple. "Here's this fat rotter feeding away!"

Billy Bunter gulped down an extra large portion of rabbit, and turned in his seat and scowled at the newcomers.

"I hear you weren't in class, Bunter?"

"Quelch let me off."

"Eh?"

"Quelch excused me. I can tell you I'm in his good books now. He is beginning to appreciate my qualities."

"Fathead!"

"Really, Temple, it's no good you trying to contradict me like that. All the fellows in the Remove are beginning to realise what Greyfriars is going to be like without me."

Temple, Dabney, and Fry looked interested.

"What's that, Bunter, old man?" said Temple. "Are—are you leaving Greyfriars?"

"Not exactly leaving it, but I'm going away on a stunt, you know. And all those rotters—er, I mean, the fellows—in the Remove are raising a big subscription to hand over to me as a testimonial."

"What sort of testimonial, Bunter, old man?" said Temple. "Buck up and explain! We've only got time for a glass of ginger-pop. Been sent out to fetch our drawing-books."

"My stunt is a secret for the time," explained Bunter mysteriously. "But I can tell you that I've fixed it all up with old Locke and Quelch, and I'm going off to-morrow. That rotter Wharton has promised to raise a fund. I think I shall suggest that the money is spent in a big farewell feed. I shall make it a big affair, and invite all my friends."

Temple, Dabney, and Fry pricked up their ears, and winked knowingly at one another. The members of the Upper Fourth considered themselves very superior to those of the Lower Fourth, or



There was a tap on the study door, and the next moment the handle turned. "M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, as Bunter crawled into the study covered with pig-wash. (See Chapter 9.)

Remove Form, as it was generally referred to; but anything in the nature of a feed allowed Messrs. Temple & Co. to forget quite a lot. And now they saw a chance of a good time ahead.

"Of course, I'm awfully sick to hear that we're losing our old pal, Bunter!" said Temple, with a serious countenance. "I don't quite know how things will turn out without him."

"Rather not!" agreed Dabney and Fry in the same breath.

"I should like to give you a jolly good send-off, old man," said Temple, putting his hand on Billy Bunter's fat shoulder. "I know you won't forget your best pals when you have the—the farewell supper."

Billy Bunter sat up in his chair.

"No; I shall include you fellows, you know. Of course, that rotter Wharton may try to back out of his obligations—that's the only trouble."

"Has he promised?"

"Yes, he's promised," replied Billy Bunter. "They held a meeting in the class-room before old Quelchy came in, and the whole Form voted by a show of hands to give me a jolly good testimonial."

"Oh!"

"They're an awful lot of rotters, though, when it comes to the paying up! Cherry only raised half-a-crown."

"What?"

"A measly half-a-crown; but I dare say they'll pay up later."

Temple, Dabney and Fry gulped down their ginger-beer. They were looking rather disappointed.

"Did Wharton promise to stand the feed?" said Temple, after a pause.

"Of course he did!" grunted Billy Bunter. "Absolutely promised me a testimonial."

"Then I should jolly well hold him to it!" said Temple. "Look here, after classes this morning you come along to our study, and we'll back you up. If Wharton has promised you, we'll jolly well see that he keeps to his word!"

"Will you really, Temple, old man?"

"We will! It's time that kid Wharton was taken down a peg! We'll come along with you, and tax him with the promise in front of the other fellows. Of course, it's understood that you invite us to the feed?"

"Rather!" replied Billy Bunter. "Now, haven't you got time to buy me one of these rabbit-pies? I can tell you they're tip-top!"

"Not now, Bunter, old man!"

"They're really the——"

"Nothing doing now," said Temple.

"See you after classes."

"But——"

"Dry up, Bunter, old man!" laughed Temple. "Come on, you chaps!" And the nuts of the Upper Fourth hurried out of the little tuckshop.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"WHARTON!"

"Where's the silly ass?"

"Where is the chump?"

"You're wanted, Harry!"

said Frank Nugent, with a grin.

Morning lessons were over, and Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Common-room. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were playing chess, and Frank Nugent was looking on, kindly giving impartial advice to the players. It was proof of the strong bond of friendship among the chums of the Remove, that neither Harry Wharton nor Bob Cherry told Nugent what they thought of that kind advice.

A crowd of Removites were present as Temple, Dabney, Fry, and Billy Bunter poured into the Common-room in search of Harry Wharton, and the chess-table was surrounded.

The captain of the Remove looked up from his game.

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"Don't interrupt," he said mildly, waving off the excited juniors. "I've got Bob mate in three—"

Sniff, from Bob Cherry.

"Can't you see you're mate in two, Harry?" he inquired.

"No; I jolly well can't!"

"And some fellows think they can play chess!" remarked Bob Cherry, in a tone of patient wonder.

"Look here, Bob, you ass—"

"You look here, Harry Wharton!" roared Billy Bunter, blinking hard through his spectacles.

"Mind the table, you fat idiot!"

"I don't care a hang about the table!" replied Bunter. "What about that testimonial you promised?"

"Eh?"

"My testimonial!" roared Billy Bunter. "You know you've promised it, and I'm relying upon it now. I've decided to spend all the money you raise on a big farewell supper. I shall easily be able to get leave to hold it from old Locke!"

"What?"

"Temple, and Dabney, and Fry have come along to see that I get justice out of you. You know you've promised the feed!"

"You burbling fat porpoise, I never promised a feed at all, and now you're here, hand over that half-a-crown you took from Toddy!"

"I want to know about this testimonial you've promised Bunter," said Temple.

"What have you got to say, Wharton?"

"Mind the table, fathead—"

"Blow the table! What about that testimonial?"

"Bother the testimonial! I'm playing chess!"

"But look here—" exclaimed Fry of the Upper Fourth.

"I'm quite willing to explain to you chaps," said Harry Wharton. "I've told Mauly, and Bull, and—"

"Then tell Bunter what form of testimonial you're going to give him!" exclaimed Temple. "What do you want to promise a poor chap a big feed for, if you're jolly well not going to carry out your promise?"

"You see—"

"I don't see!" grunted Billy Bunter. "You had a meeting, and you voted a testimonial, and—"

"Quite right! Now, run away and let me get on with my game!" said the captain of the Remove patiently. "I'm putting in the knight, Bob!"

And Harry Wharton interposed a knight between his king and Bob Cherry's threatening bishop.

"Better have put in the rook!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"Ass! That would have left the king in check under the queen!"

"Hum! So it would! Why not have tried a pawn?"

"Bosh!"

"It all comes to the same thing," said Bob Cherry blandly. "It's mate in two anyway."

"Mate in three, you mean," said Harry Wharton warmly.

"No; I've got you fixed in two!"

"Ass! I mean I've got you fixed in three!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Hang your rotten chess!" cried Billy Bunter impatiently. "I want to know about my testimonial, Wharton."

"What are you going to do about it?" demanded Temple.

"Stick to your word!" added Dabney.

"And don't be a cad!" said Fry.

"Oh crumbs! How's a fellow to play chess with a crowd of silly jabberwocks burbling round his head?" exclaimed

Harry Wharton. "The testimonial to Bunter is off. Absolutely off for lack of support—that is, financial support. Billy can stick to my half-a-crown, if he likes, but otherwise the fund is off! See? You bounders of the Upper Fourth?"

"Oh!" said Bunter.

"That's all very well," said Temple. "But I don't see how you can back out of it like that, Wharton. If you've made a promise, I should have thought you would have stuck to it!"

"Rats!"

"That's not good enough!" roared Billy Bunter. "I want my farewell supper!"

"Nothing doing!" said Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your move, Bob, old man!"

"Like to go on?" asked Bob Cherry blandly. "You can resign if you like, and save time, as it's mate in two."

"You can resign, if you like, old chap, as it's practically fixed. You can't wriggle out of it!"

"I tell you," roared Bunter, "this idea of my testimonial ought to be carried out. If you raise the money, I'll—I'll order the feed, and we can have a jolly good farewell supper!"

"Bosh!"

"There you are," said Bob Cherry, putting up a pawn with a nonchalant air. "Up to you, Harry, old man!"

"Oh!" said Harry Wharton, knitting his brows over the board.

But Billy Bunter was not interested in chess. He was interested in his precious testimonial; and the fact that that interest was shared by no one else in the Remove, made no difference to William George Bunter.

"Look here!" shouted the fat junior, and he brought down his fist on the table to emphasise his remarks. "What I say is—"

"You fat rascal!" yelled Harry Wharton, as the pawns and pieces danced.

Billy Bunter's fist was a heavy one, and the chess-table was rocking under his mighty smite.

Harry Wharton clutched at it too late!

There was a showering of pawns and pieces to the floor as the table danced.

"Mate in one!" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" spluttered Harry Wharton, in great exasperation.

"Oh, blow your silly chess!" grunted Billy Bunter.

"It's all right. I had you mate, you know," said Bob Cherry soothingly.

"You hadn't, you ass!"

"Oh, yes! My bishop was going—"

"Your bishop was pinned!"

"My dear chap, you're dreaming! My bishop wasn't pinned."

"If you think you could have moved your bishop, Cherry—"

"You know I could."

"Then you're an ass!"

"What I like about chess," said Frank Nugent reflectively, "is the way it improves fellows' tempers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now what about my blessed testimonial?" resumed Billy Bunter. "What I say is—"

What William George Bunter was going to say never transpired. Harry Wharton jumped up and collared the obstreperous William George, and Bunter descended on the floor with a bump; and loud sounds of wrath and woe were heard as his fat features were ground into the pieces and pawns on the carpet.

Whether Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry had been "mate" in one, two,

or three, was never satisfactorily settled; but it was quite certain that William George Bunter was sorry that he had caused the matter to be left in doubt.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Off at Last!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was standing in the doorway, and he intercepted the chums of the Remove as they came along the passage with their cricket-bats. It was Saturday, and Harry Wharton's eleven were playing the Grammar School at two o'clock.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a playful dig in the ribs which made him gasp for breath. "What's troubling you, Porpoise?"

"I—I say, Cherry, I wish you wouldn't poke me with your cricket-bat like that! It quite takes my breath away. I'm rather short in the wind, and—"

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You're a jolly sight too long-winded, that's what's the matter with you. Now, then, any remarks in connection with that blessed testimonial are barred! That's a wash-out completely!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I just wanted to ask you—"

"Run away and play, Billy!"

"It's important, Cherry," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the Removites through his big spectacles. "It's very important indeed. If you fellows don't want to hear about it, I'll get somebody else to back me up."

"Eh? What are you driving at?"

"Come into a quiet place," said Bunter mysteriously. "I don't want the whole blessed school to get on to the wheeze."

"What has the fat dummy got into his silly head now?" grunted Frank Nugent. "November is a long way off, Bunter, and gunpowder plots are out of date."

"It's a jolly good scheme, Nugent, and if you fellows don't want to take it up, there are others," said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I'm giving you first chance, as you belong to the Remove."

"After that, we can't refuse to hear it, anyway," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Go ahead, Bunter!"

"Come into a quiet spot then. It's a dead secret!"

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Bob Cherry.

"And if you say a word about that blessed testimonial, mind, you will get a thick ear!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Get on, and don't jaw! We want to get down to the pavilion."

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at Bob Cherry, but he led the way to a quiet spot, the Removites following him. In a corner, by a deep window, Billy Bunter stopped and looked cautiously round. The fat junior was extremely short-sighted, and the enormous glasses he wore did not assist his vision very much, to judge by the ludicrous blunders he was continually making. On the present occasion at least a dozen fellows observed his cautious glance round, and some of them strolled up to see what was on. But the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe them.

"Well, get on with the washing!" said Harry Wharton impatiently.

"I'm getting on with it, Wharton; but I wish you wouldn't interrupt me, and throw me into confusion. I'm always confused when people interrupt me."

"Are you going to get on?"

"Ain't I getting on? I was saying that I always get confused when I'm interrupted, and so I do. Now, look

here! Would you fellows care for a real tip-top free holiday?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No, Cherry, it isn't a conundrum. That's the wheeze."

"If you want to stand us all a free holiday—"

"That isn't it, either. I was thinking of doing so; but I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and I'm rather short of funds at present. Of course, if any of you fellows cared to go ahead with that testimonial, I—"

"Now then!" snapped Bob Cherry. "If you say testimonial once more you will be bumped!"

"The correctfulness of my honourable chum's statement is terrific!" purred Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The bumpfulness will be terrific also!"

"Very well!" said Billy Bunter, with a sniff. "I won't say another word about that blessed—"

"Steady!" cried Bob Cherry warningly. "You were just going to say it!"

"I—I won't say another word about it then; but you fellows haven't answered my question yet. Do you or do you not want a ripping free holiday?"

"Can a duck swim?" growled Harry Wharton. "What's the little game, Bunter?"

The fat Removeite lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper.

"I've wheedled a holiday out of old Locke, and you chaps can do the same."

"Eh?"

"I'm just off for a week-end on old Percival's farm. Everything free. Gorgeous grub! Pocket-money for satisfactory work rendered. I can tell you, I'm on a good thing!"

"Oh?"

The chums of the Remove looked very interested. Billy Bunter's news was puzzling; but there was evidently something in it.

"Explain yourself, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "What's the use of talking in puzzles? What's your game this time?"

"That's what I'm doing," replied Billy Bunter. "Old Percival, at Friardale, has given me a week-end job at farming. He's going to teach me all he can, and if I'm any good he's going to offer the Head to have some of you fellows."

"Oh, so that's it, is it?"

"Ripping, ain't it?"

Harry Wharton & Co. stood and gazed in silence at the fat Removeite.

"Ain't you jealous, Wharton?"

"Don't be an ass, Bunter!" laughed Harry Wharton. "I must say I'm surprised to hear that the Head has given you leave. If it had been anybody else I should have understood; but you! Oh, crumbs!"

"Really, Wharton—"

"Fancy, our free holiday's depending upon Bunter's satisfactory work!" cried Bob Cherry. "My hat! If you go and make a mess of things, we'll—we'll slaughter you when you come back!"

"I sha'n't make a mess of anything," said Billy Bunter. "I know all about farming. Most of my titled relations have got farms at their country places, you know."

"Oh, dry up!"

"Well, I must be getting along," said Billy Bunter, with much importance. "I told old Percival I might be there for lunch."

"You've just had lunch, you fat dummy!"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I know that; but I bet I shall be able to get another one out of my friend Percival. Well, good-bye, you fellows; I shall see you Monday!"

"Not so fast, Bunter!" cried Harry

Wharton. "Are we to understand that if you prove satisfactory to Mr. Percival he may ask Dr. Locke to let some of us go there?"

"That's the idea," replied Bunter. "Don't let the whole blessed school know it! Keep it mum, you know."

"I should say the whole of Greyfriars knows it by now," laughed Harry Wharton. "I've never known you to keep a secret for long."

"Really, Wharton—"

"But that doesn't matter a jot. What does matter, though, is your good behaviour. If you go and spoil the chances for anybody else, there's going to be trouble when you come back!"

"Wh-what?"

JUST OUT!

"On the War-Path!"

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"Trouble!" repeated Harry Wharton. "Spelt with a capital T!"

"We'll rag you so much that you'll be a bag of bones instead of a nice fat greasy porpoise!" added Bob Cherry.

"You can rely upon me, you fellows," said Billy Bunter. "Of course, I shall advise my friend Percival who to invite next."

"Oh?"

"I'll just make out a rough list now."

Billy Bunter took a pencil from his pocket, and tore a sheet of paper from his pocket-book.

"I suppose I may as well put your name down, Cherry?"

"What for—a subscription?"

"He, he! No! For a free holiday on the farm."

"Eh?"

"Plenty of free grub, that includes

cream and fresh butter, and all that sort of thing, you know!"

"What?"

"And pocket-money for work rendered if satisfactory."

"Oh, go on!" cried Bob Cherry. "Put my name down! If you don't get on in the world it won't be for want of cheek!"

"I believe there's a lot of gammon about this," laughed Harry Wharton.

"But, anyway, you can put us all down on the list, Bunter, and I warn you that if you let Greyfriars down, the Remove will see that you get it in the neck with interest!"

"And compound interest into the bargain," added Bob Cherry.

"You're jealous beasts, that's what you are!"

"Dry up, Bunter!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Come along, you fellows! We ought to go down to meet the Grammarians. Time is nearly up!"

Harry Wharton & Co. trooped away, and Billy Bunter gazed after them.

"They're jealous, that's what it is!" he growled. "Fat lot of good trying to raise anything out of those rotters! I'm fed up with them!"

The Owl of the Remove looked at his watch, and gave a start of surprise.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped. "I must get away! I shall be jolly late for lunch, as it is! Pshaw! Fancy wasting time on those jealous rotters!"

And Billy Bunter plodded his way towards Friardale, grumbling at every step at having to walk.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Arrives!

"PHEW!"

That was what Billy Bunter said as he plodded along the dusty road leading to Friardale.

It was a bright, sunny June afternoon; but the fat Removeite's face was not looking at all bright and sunny. Quite the reverse, in fact. But Bunter's afternoon walk was nearly over now. In the distance he could catch a glimpse every now and again, through the trees, of Mr. Percival's farm buildings. They stood some way back from the road. A pleasant, typically English lane led up to the farmhouse, and a few minutes later Billy Bunter turned up this lane, and eventually opened the gate leading into the charming old garden in front of the house.

"My word!" grunted Billy Bunter. "Thank goodness, that rotten walk is all over! Oh, good! I believe I can smell cooking!"

The Greyfriars junior rolled along, and rang the bell at the front door. The next moment Mr. Percival stumped across the hall, and shook hands heartily with his visitor.

"How d'you do, Master Bunter?" he said cordially. "I am very pleased to meet you again, and I trust you will enjoy your visit, and learn something useful."

"Thank you, Mr. Percival!"

"I wrote a letter to your headmaster, and I received a reply last night."

"That's right," said Bunter. "I told Dr. Locke to write."

"What?"

Mr. Percival was a fine old farmer, big and burly, with a rosy complexion, which told of much exposure in all sorts and conditions of weather, and his voice was loud and gruff.

Billy Bunter gave a jump.

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"What did you say, my boy?" shouted Mr. Percival.

"I—I meant to say that Dr. Locke had told me he was writing to you," stammered the Owl of the Remove nervously.

Mr. Percival's gruff voice was a little startling, not to say the least of it. Billy Bunter had noticed that in his previous visits; but he felt that he could get used to that in time.

"Well, well, we have to make hay whilst the sun shines!" cried Mr. Percival. "If you're going to be a farmer, you'll soon learn that it's the early bird that catches the worm. We'll get out to work."

Billy Bunter blinked hard through his spectacles.

"Have you had lunch yet, Mr. Percival?" he said.

"Lunch! I suppose you mean dinner, my boy?" bawled the farmer.

"Yessir; that's it."

"I should think we have!" laughed Mr. Percival. "Nothing now before tea. We have a high tea at six o'clock o' night-time. Few times, but well; that's my motto for eating."

Billy Bunter gave a deep sigh.

"Can I have a little snack before starting off?" he asked. "It—it seems a long time between meals, you know, sir."

Mr. Percival gave a snort.

"Six o'clock is the next meal!" he cried. "We can't have food on the table at all hours of the day. Now, look here, Master Bunter, you ain't got long, you know, so you just run down to the stables, and ask Sloggett to let you have a horse so as you can have a ride round the farm. By the time you get back I shall be out. And here you are, on your way down to the stables, just chuck a few handfuls o' corn to the birds."

Mr. Percival picked up a large basin of corn from the hall floor, and pushed it into Billy Bunter's fat arms. The Owl of the Remove took it. He was not feeling very pleasant for the moment. He was disappointed to hear about the feeding arrangements. The meals seemed few and far between; but he could see that Mr. Percival was a man of his word, and was not likely to stand any nonsense.

"There's the yard," said Mr. Percival. "You'll find Sloggett about, and he'll give you a horse. Leave your coat here, and put these boots on. They'll go over the ones you are wearing. You don't want to spoil them."

"All right, sir," replied Bunter, as he complied with Mr. Percival's orders; and the next minute he was rolling along in the direction of the farmyard.

The moment the Owl of the Remove lifted the latch of the gate leading into the farmyard pandemonium seemed to be let loose.

Chickens, geese, pigs, and an old cow made a wild rush in his direction.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He hung on to the basin of food, and the farmyard stock, squeaking and grunting wildly, scrambled around him.

"Hi! Get away!" bawled the fat junior.

An enormous fat sow rubbed its snout in a friendly fashion against the newcomer's leg, and Billy Bunter gave a yelp. A pigeon fluttered down, and settled upon his shoulder, and its fluttering wings nearly knocked Bunter's spectacles from off his nose.

"Brrrrh!" roared Billy Bunter. "Gerraway!"

Grunt, grunt, grunt!

The pigs pressed him on all sides, and the poultry dashed around in a wild state of excitement. Billy Bunter snatched a handful of corn out of the basin, and threw it as far as he could.

His action saved the situation. The

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chickens and the geese, and the ducks and the pigeons, charged down on the corn, and Billy Bunter was able to extricate himself from the attentions of the pigs. He rolled away towards the middle of the farmyard, and threw out handful after handful of the corn. This was sufficient to pacify the inhabitants of the yard, and they concentrated their attention on the food.

Billy Bunter gave a sickly grin as he scattered the food around him.

"It's a jolly good thing I'm a cool sort of chap!" he grunted. "I bet most of the fellows would have lost their wits."

He left the farmyard stock busy at work, and rolled across to the stables at the far end of the yard.

Mr. Sloggett could be heard whistling in one of the stalls, and Billy Bunter looked in.

"Are you Sloggett?" he inquired, as a farmhand in a yellow smock looked round and grinned at him.

"Sure, I am!" replied the man.

"Well, I'm Bunter—Mr. Bunter," said the Owl of the Remove. "Mr. Percival has sent me down to get a horse, so that I can ride round the farm, and have a look at it. Of course, I want a decent horse. He needn't be fast, but he must be strong and steady."

"I've got just the 'orse you want," said Sloggett, chewing a straw. "'Ave a look at this, and see if you don't think 'e's a beauty."

Billy Bunter gazed into the stall. An ancient horse blinked sleepily at him.

"I said a horse!" explained Bunter.

Sloggett nearly swallowed the straw he was chewing.

"Well, ain't that a 'orse?" he demanded.

Billy Bunter looked at the animal as he might have looked at some curiosity in a zoological show, and shook his head.

"It may have been a horse once!" he grunted. "I can tell you I'm a jolly good horseman, and I don't want to cast reflections on that horse's past; but what I want is a horse!"

Mr. Sloggett grinned feebly.

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



JUNE.

7th Monday	- - -	9.41 p.m.
8th Tuesday	- - -	9.42 "
9th Wednesday	- - -	9.42 "
10th Thursday	- - -	9.43 "
11th Friday	- - -	9.44 "
12th Saturday	- - -	9.45 "
13th Sunday	- - -	9.45 "

"All right," he said. "Come and 'ave a look at this critter."

In another stall was another steed, a little better than the ancient specimen Billy Bunter had first seen. The Owl of the Remove knew nothing whatever about horses, and he certainly wasn't a jockey; but he felt it was up to him to try and impress the yokel.

He gave a fat grin as he looked into the stall.

"Is that a horse, too?" he asked.

Mr. Sloggett turned red.

"Look 'ere!" he said. "That's a good 'orse! That 'orse ain't more than four years' old, and he's in lovely condition."

"He isn't up to my weight," grunted Billy Bunter. "I can tell you, my man, I want something pretty good."

Mr. Sloggett chuckled.

"Very well, young gent," he said; "come this way."

He crossed the cobblestoned yard, and showed Billy Bunter into another door, and a horse that was feeding at a rack turned its head to look at them.

It was a powerful animal this time, and it looked full of mischief. Sloggett grinned to himself as Billy Bunter looked the animal up and down. After a moment's inspection the fat Removito nodded.

"This one will suit me," he said. "Just about my weight, I should say."

"You can take him," said Mr. Sloggett. "It ain't everybody as can ride that 'orse. He's a brute, 'e is. He's got a playful temper of 'is own; but 'e ain't vicious—not 'e. Nothin' like it. You can ride 'im."

"Good! You—you needn't trouble to put a saddle on," replied Billy Bunter.

"I'm—I'm such a good horseman, you know, you needn't trouble about a saddle. Just put a bridle on him; never mind a saddle."

In a few moments Billy Bunter was leading the horse out into the yard. Bunter's pride was too much to allow him to warn Mr. Sloggett that he couldn't ride a horse. The fat junior thought it would be quite easy, and very much easier if he didn't have a saddle. The horse walked quietly with him, but there was a latent gleam in his eyes which bore out Mr. Sloggett's statement that he had a playful temper.

"Here you are, man," said Bunter. "Hold him a minute while I mount."

"You oughter 'ave a saddle," said Mr. Sloggett dubiously.

"Rats! I don't want a saddle. He's got a back big enough for anybody to sit on, I suppose?"

"Sure, sir; but he may jib when somebody's on his back. We generally use this one in the trap."

"Oh, give us a hand on! I'm a jolly good rider!"

Billy Bunter, with many groans, after a long struggle, sat astride of the horse, and grasped the reins in his fat hands. The animal stood stock-still and refused to budge. Billy Bunter urged him with voice and heels, but he did not move. Mr. Sloggett chuckled.

"Come on, old hoss!" said Billy Bunter persuasively. "Go ahead! Get on! You horrid beast, why don't you start! Get on, old hoss! Go it, beauty! You rotter! Get a move on, or I'll larrup you!"

And still the horse stood like a statue. Mr. Sloggett stood by and grinned, sucking a big straw. Billy Bunter grew scarlet with annoyance, and he gave the horse at last a sharp spank with the palm of his fat hand.

That moved the steed!

He shot forward like an arrow from a bow, so suddenly that Billy Bunter nearly rolled off his back. He reeled



There was a wild roar of rage as the bull came charging along. With a shriek Billy Bunter flung himself upon the farmer.
 "Ow!" he roared. "Save me! Save me!" (See Chapter 8.)

back, and then reeled forward, and found himself clutching at the horse's mane for dear life.

The horse needed no urging now. He went across the farmyard with a terrific clatter. He just missed an old sow by a hair's-breadth.

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Sloggett anxiously. "Hold on!"

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The horse dashed on, with Billy Bunter clinging frantically to his neck.

There was a sudden wild chattering from the middle of a heap of straw, and two ganders dashed out in complete panic.

The noise of the poultry stopped the horse; but he didn't remain still. He started a series of "cavortings" worthy of a half-tamed mustang on a Texan prairie. He reared and he clattered, and he twisted and turned, sometimes on his forelegs, sometimes trying, as far as Billy Bunter could judge, to execute a sort of hornpipe on his hind-legs. The fat junior clung desperately to his neck.

Mr. Sloggett, on the other side of the yard, grinned delightedly.

"Ha, ha, ha! Hang on, young gent—hang on!" he roared.

The horse whisked round and dashed through an open gate. Sloggett looked after the flying horseman in dismay.

Right on towards the farmhouse

dashed the unfortunate Billy Bunter, and he disappeared in the distance.

Billy Bunter was having an exciting time.

His mount, finding himself in more open ground, soon gathered speed.

"I—I—I ought to get off!" stammered the unfortunate Bunter; but he did not see a chance. He could see no other way of getting off the horse than by letting go his hold and rolling in a heap on the ground—and that was too dangerous and too painful for him to adopt. So he sat tight.

At least, Bunter sat as tight as he could; but the horse was close to the farmhouse now, and it swerved violently as it endeavoured to avoid a flower-bed.

The fat Removite gave a yell, but he managed to clutch hold of the steed's mane, and he recovered his seat just as Mr. Percival came out of the house.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the farmer, in amazement. "What's that young rascal doing? Get off that horse at once, Bunter!"

"I—I—I can't!"

"Keep off those flower-beds!" roared Mr. Percival angrily. "Pull on the reins, you young idiot!"

"I—I—I c-c-can't!"

The horse's hoofs thudded over the flower-bed.

"Phew!" went Billy Bunter.

He would have given whole worlds and solar systems to stop the exasperating beast then, but he could not. And the animal was not in the least awed by Mr. Percival. He pranced about gaily.

"Boy!" roared the farmer. "Boy!"

Mr. Percival dashed towards the horse. He was an active man, in spite of his bulk, and he succeeded in grasping the rein, and brought the horse to a standstill. Billy Bunter, gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration, and as red as a poppy, slid to the ground.

"Th-thank you, sir!" he gasped.

"What does this mean, Mr. Bunter?" said the farmer angrily. "How dare you—"

"I—I couldn't help it, sir! You—you surely don't think I was doing it for fun?" gasped Billy Bunter.

Mr. Percival unfroze. He smiled slightly.

"Did the horse run away with you?"

"Yes, sir, the—the horrid beast!"

"You should not have brought him out of the yard until he had been saddled up."

"I—I didn't sir. He brought me!"

"Look at my flower-beds!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir. I'll dig them up for you if you like, sir, and put some new seeds in, and set it all right again. I'm very sorry!"

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Mr. Percival gave a grin. He was beginning to realise that it was a pretty risky thing to offer to take in a boy like Billy Bunter to assist in farm-work over the week-ends. If Bunter's gardening was anything like his riding, he was not likely to improve his well-kept garden.

"I think you had better leave the flower-bed alone," he cried. "Come along, now, we will take the horse back."

Still holding the rein, Mr. Percival led the horse back towards the farmyard. Billy Bunter rolled along in the rear, and mopped his perspiring brow with his handkerchief.

The fat junior was feeling very relieved now that the horse was no longer in his charge. The idea of farming as a hobby was on the wane, and he was beginning to wish that he was back at Greyfriars.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Ventriloquism!

"SLOGGETT!"

Mr. Percival led the horse into the farmyard and raised his voice in a gruff shout.

"Sloggett! Sloggett!"

"Comin', sir!"

Mr. Sloggett came running out of one of the stables, with a large pitchfork in his hand, and hurried across the yard in the direction of the farmer and Billy Bunter.

He had a long straw in his mouth, and there was a sheepish-looking grin on his face as he came up and touched his cap to his master.

"Sloggett!" roared Mr. Percival. "What in the blazes do you mean by sending out this horse for? You know he's a bad-tempered rascal!"

"A bit playful, zur—only a bit playful with the young gent."

"Playful be hanged!" replied Mr. Percival. "You will see how playful he is when you see my flower-beds in front of the house!"

Sloggett thought it would be wise to drop the subject. The farmer's face was red with wrath. The farm-hand thought he had scored well enough against the fat schoolboy. After all, Bunter had asked for trouble. If he had taken the first horse offered to him he could have had a quiet ride round the farm, and there would have been no trouble; but as Bunter had put on side, Sloggett had seized the opportunity of having a bit of quiet fun.

"Don't you let me catch you out at these games!" said Mr. Percival, after a pause. "I ain't running this farm for fun, I can tell you! And anybody who stays here stays for work, not to knock my flower-beds to smithereens!"

Billy Bunter had been looking on in glowering silence; but as he caught sight of a lurking grin in Sloggett's face, a gleam came into his eyes. The amateur ventriloquist of Greyfriars always had a way of "getting his own back" when he was among strangers who did not know his little ways.

Mr. Sloggett, having received his "telling off," was just about to start work again, when Billy Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles, thought it was time that he commenced work, too.

He licked his lips in preparation.

"Sloggett's a fool!"

The farmer and the stableman started back in amazement. The strange voice had apparently come from the horse, who was blinking away in the direction of Sloggett.

"Sloggett's a fool, I say! Haw, haw, haw! He's enough to make a horse laugh!"

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"Wh-wh-what's that?" gasped Mr. Percival.

"Ooooo-er!" groaned Mr. Sloggett.

"Ooooo-er yourself, you silly yokel! I've a good mind to kick you across the yard!"

Sloggett's eyes nearly fell out of their sockets; and Mr. Percival gazed at the horse as if it were a ghost.

"Oo-er! Whatisit, zur?" gasped Sloggett.

"Haw, haw, haw!" came the voice. "Don't you move, Sloggett!"

The stable-boy's knees knocked together, and he licked his dry lips feverishly.

"It him, zur!" he groaned. "It 'im across the head with your stick! He ain't a real 'orse!"

Mr. Percival was carrying a heavy stick in his hand, and he grasped it firmly as Sloggett jerked out the words.

Unfortunately for the two startled men, the horse turned his head at that moment in the direction of Mr. Percival, and Billy Bunter was able to turn the action to good account.

"Drop that stick, red face!" came the mysterious voice. "Haw, haw, haw! Don't you think you can come it over me like that! Haw, haw, haw!"

Mr. Percival's face went redder and redder; but he dropped the stick, and it clattered on to the cobbled yard. The noise of the fall made the horse swerve suddenly; and, with a startled shriek, Sloggett dropped down on his knees.

"Ow! Mercy!" he shrieked. "It—it—it wasn't me!"

The horse blinked down on the squirming man. The situation seemed to be causing the nervous animal considerable surprise. But Billy Bunter was in his best form now, and he did not feel like dropping the joke yet awhile.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the horse.

"I'll eat your head off now!"

"Ow! Mercy!"

"No, I'll change my mind; you're too ugly to eat!"

Mr. Percival had backed away a few yards now, and as he listened to the conversation he gave a chuckle of amusement.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "I don't know what's happening, but I think that's very funny! Sloggett's too ugly to eat, is he? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take 'im away, zur!" shrieked Sloggett.

"Haden't better try!" said the mysterious voice again. "I'm not standing any more nonsense from either of you!"

Mr. Percival stooped down, with a grunt, and recovered the stick which he had dropped.

"This is going to stop!" he roared. "There's some trickery in this! I ain't going to keep horses that speak. Now then, Sloggett, you dunderhead, get up!"

"Rats!"

Sloggett's lips had certainly not moved, but the voice appeared to come from him, and Mr. Percival gave a start of surprise. Sloggett was not in the habit of answering him back like that. In fact, Sloggett had never been rude to the farmer in his life.

"What's that, Sloggett?" roared Mr. Percival.

"Rats—and many of 'em!"

"Huh!"

The worthy farmer gave an expressive grunt, and the next moment he leapt forward and brought his stick across the shoulders of the kneeling Sloggett.

Thwack!

"Ow!"

Sloggett leapt to his feet, with a shriek, and the frightened horse swerved aside and ambled into the centre of the farmyard.

"So you've turned Bolshie, have you, Sloggett?" roared Mr. Percival. "You're

going to insult me! Then you can take that, and that, and that!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The stick came down again, and again, on Sloggett's back, and each time he gave a roar of anguish.

"He, he, he!" laughed Billy Bunter. "That'll pay the rotter out!"

"What's that?" panted Mr. Percival.

"That'll teach him, sir!" said Bunter.

"I've got my own back all right now!"

"What d'you mean, boy?"

"That will teach the rotter to put me on to a rotten horse! I thought my ventriloquism would put the wind up him!"

"Wh-what?"

Billy Bunter gave a smirk.

"Did you say ventriloquism, boy?" gasped Mr. Percival. "Have you been making that horse talk?"

"Yes, rather!"

Mr. Percival and Sloggett gazed stupidly at the fat Removite.

"And you made Sloggett say 'rats' to me?"

"He, he, he! Yes, rather! Jolly funny, wasn't it?"

"F-funny?"

"Well, it was funny whilst it lasted," explained Bunter. "Here, hands off!"

Sloggett had suddenly advanced on the fat junior, and there was a grim, awkward-looking expression in the farm boy's eyes.

"I be going to larn you!" said Sloggett. "You won't forget this, my—"

"Stop!"

Mr. Percival's gruff voice had a tone of authority in it, and Sloggett stopped suddenly. The farmer placed his bulky figure between his man and Billy Bunter.

"I'll have none of that!" he cried. "This—this boy reckoned it as a joke. Perhaps it was, and perhaps it wasn't; but, anyway, he's a guest o' mine for the present, and you ain't going to touch him, Sloggett—leastwise, not now."

The enraged Sloggett hesitated for a moment, and then he lowered his fists.

"All right, zur!" he said slowly. "I'll bide my time, and if I can pay him back, I will!"

"Meantime, you'll take the bridle off that horse and put him in his stable again," said Mr. Percival. "And as for you, you fat young rascal, any more trouble of that sort and off you go to your school again! D'you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lock, stock, and barrel, you'll go!" added Mr. Percival.

"It—it was only a joke, sir."

"Well, we will let it drop now, Mr. Bunter. I don't want to hear any more about talking horses, or anything like it. I'll show you round the farm now, and we'll take the long meadow first, as I want to see a bull I've bought to-day."

Mr. Percival strode across the yard, and Billy Bunter rolled after him.

"I'll pay 'im out!" muttered Sloggett, as he watched the two disappear round the corner of a waggon-shed. "I'll just bide my time."

From which remark it might be gathered that Mr. Sloggett, usually docile by nature, intended to severely chastise the ventriloquist of Greyfriars as soon as an opportunity offered itself.

The cloud was to descend upon William George Bunter sooner than Mr. Sloggett imagined.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Modern Toreador!

ON the way to the long meadow, as Mr. Percival termed it, they passed through a small field of growing corn. The farmer stopped suddenly and faced Billy Bunter.

"You told me you had a big farm on your father's estate," he said. "I take it you know something, although you certainly can't ride a horse."

"Oh, yes, rather!" grunted Billy Bunter. "I can tell you I'm jolly well up in these things. You've got a good crop of potatoes growing here, sir."

Mr. Percival gave a gasp.

"A crop of what?" he roared.

Billy Bunter gave a start, and he blinked through his big spectacles at the waving corn.

"D-did I say p-p-potatoes?" he stammered. "Of course, that was silly of me! I meant spring onions! I can smell them quite well. Splendid crop! Worth a lot of money in these times, ain't it, sir?"

The worthy farmer looked as though he was on the verge of an apoplectic fit. He stood and gazed at the fat Removeite.

"That's corn!" he roared. "C-O-R-N! And any idiot ought to know that!"

Billy Bunter gave a sickly grin.

"He, he, he!" he giggled. "Of course it's corn! Just a little joke of mine, sir! I—I've got a name at Greyfriars for making jokes. Anybody could tell that this is wheat!"

"What?" roared Mr. Percival. "D'you call that wheat? Don't you know oats when you see them, boy?"

"I—I— Oh, crumbs, what's that? Sounds like a blessed lion!"

There was a loud, bellowing roar on the other side of the hedge surrounding the field, and Mr. Percival started.

"What is it?"

There was another deep roar, and excited voices could be heard shouting to one another.

"It's the bull!" cried Mr. Percival. "Come, boy!"

The old farmer hurried along, and pushed his way through the hedge, and Billy Bunter followed him through the gap. The two scrambled up the ditch lining the hedge.

"This is the long meadow!" gasped Mr. Percival.

"There they are, sir!" cried Billy Bunter, pointing towards a corner of the field. "They are trying to catch it."

Four of the farm hands were manoeuvring towards a big, ferocious-looking bull. As they drew nearer and nearer the beast in an encircling movement, the animal let forth roar upon roar.

"I don't care for this!" muttered Mr. Percival. "Those men will get hurt if they aren't careful!"

Billy Bunter was beginning to shake.

"I—I think I had better be getting back to Greyfriars," he said. "I—I've forgotten something. I don't suppose you would mind, would you, sir?"

"Come along!" cried Mr. Percival. "We shall have to lend those men a hand. There's old Feltham there, nearly eighty years of age. It won't do for him to get knocked about by that brute!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Billy Bunter.

The owl of the Remove did not reckon upon an adventure of this sort, and he was shaking all over with fright.

"You look out for yourself, Mr. Bunter!" cried the Farmer. "No silly schoolboy risks, you know! I know what you young fellows are! You dash in where angels fear to tread!"

As Billy Bunter felt like dashing out of the long field altogether, he refrained from answering Mr. Percival.

"Has it gone mad, d'you think?" he mumbled, after a pause.

"The brute's not mad," replied the farmer. "I was warned about him when I bought him. He's got a bad name. He mauled the last owner properly."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"We'll get him through and tie him

up in a stall for a week. That'll quieten him down. Come on, my lad!"

Billy Bunter kept close to the farmer as he strode up the field. There was a slight rise in the ground, and by the time they had got half-way up, the fat Removeite was puffing and blowing.

"Steady there!" cried Mr. Percival, as he saw the bull lower its head, when one of the four men advanced too quickly. "Gently does it! Coax the brute!"

The four farm hands paused for a moment, and Mr. Percival and Billy Bunter drew gradually nearer. It now looked as though the encircling movement might prove successful; but unfortunately for the party, a goose took the opportunity at this critical time to burst through the hedge, and rush wildly across the field between the bull and the men.

There was a wild roar of rage from the huge animal, and, lowering its head, and excitedly kicking up its hind legs, it charged down upon the party.

Hawkins, one of the cowmen, had the misfortune to be nearest the maddened brute, and although he missed the bull's horns by a hairsbreadth, he went flying through the air in a beautiful somersault.

With a wild shriek Billy Bunter flung himself upon the farmer. Mr. Percival's hat fell to the ground, and the weight of the Greyfriars junior nearly brought its owner on top of it.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Save me! Save me!"

Billy Bunter's piercing scream seemed to unnerve the other men. Uttering wild yells, they fled down the incline, and the bull, snorting with rage, and bellowing excitedly, bore down in close pursuit.

"Let go! Let go, you young scoundrel!" roared Mr. Percival, endeavouring to raise his stick.

"Save me! Save me!" shrieked Billy Bunter, hanging on tenaciously to the infuriated farmer.

Mr. Percival, purple with rage, shook the terrified junior off, and Bunter crashed to the ground, yelling.

The next moment the bull turned his attention on the two. He stopped in his charge with a jerk, and snorted with rage.

"Run for it, you young idiot!" roared Mr. Percival. "You've got the chance!"

Billy Bunter scrambled up from the ground with a yell, and the next instant he set off with a speed which had never been equalled by the fat junior. He literally flew along the ground, not giving a second thought to the brave farmer, who was standing up bravely to the bull.

"Oooo-er!" roared Bunter, as he neared the hedge. "Save me!"

Without decreasing his speed in the slightest, he lowered his head, and blindly charged into the hawthorn hedge.

Crash!

His weight did the trick. His fat body tore right through the bush, leaving an enormous gap, and he rolled over and over, as he landed on the other side of the field.

"Oh dear!" he moaned. "I'm killed!"

Billy Bunter lay on his back and panted for breath.

"No more blessed farming for me!" he groaned. "It's a dog's life! That's what it is! Oh dear! I've broken my back at least!"

He sat up and blinked around him, as he heard the bull roaring again.

"I'm—I'm going!" groaned Billy Bunter. "That mad brute will be through the hedge in a minute! Oh dear!"

He dragged himself up, and limped away in the direction of the farm once more. The groaning junior had got

about half-way when he heard Mr. Percival's voice calling him.

"Bunter! Bunter, you young rascal!"

The fat Removeite increased his speed, and at last limped into the farmyard. Just as he shut the gate he caught sight of the enraged farmer hurrying towards him.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter. "He's going for me, the rotter! I can't hardly move! Oh dear!"

In the middle of the yard was a large deep trough. Billy Bunter staggered towards it, and collapsed weakly into it.

"Oh dear!" he groaned. "I think I'm going to die!"

But Billy Bunter was not going to quit this mortal coil just yet. Unfortunately for him, he had collapsed into the trough which Sloggett deposited his pail of pig-wash about this time each afternoon.

Sloggett was on his way at that moment, and he had seen Bunter crawl into it; but this little detail was not going to prevent Mr. Sloggett from carrying out his daily task.

The worthy farm-hand gave a chuckle of satisfaction, and with a broad grin on his face he clattered across the yard. The pigs were expecting him. They invariably did at this hour. And with loud grunts and much squealing they converged on the trough.

Mr. Sloggett raised his bucket just as Billy Bunter peered over the edge to see what the commotion was about.

Swish!

The upturned bucket emptied its contents with a rush upon the recumbent junior, and the pigs scrambled forward in a wild stampede.

"Ow!"

Bunter sank back with a wild yell, as the pig-wash caught him full in the chest.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Sloggett.

"That's got you!"

"Ow! Help!"

Billy Bunter squirmed madly in the trough; but, nothing daunted, the pigs, squealing and grunting, persevered with their meal. And the Greyfriars junior was lost sight of as the animals pressed down upon him.

Bunter was in a dreadful state. His clothes were saturated with the messy wash. He spluttered and squirmed as it ran down his neck and matted his hair.

"Murder! Help!" he shrieked. "Gerr-away! Ow!"

He kicked out furiously with his heavy boots, and the pigs were scattered for a moment. Billy Bunter seized the opportunity, and scrambled out, just as Mr. Percival, livid with rage and disgust, arrived upon the scene.

"You young scoundrel!" he roared.

"So there you are! Huh!"

Billy Bunter scrambled out of the trough, and the pig-wash rolled over him in a steady stream.

"Off you go!" roared Mr. Percival.

"Not another minute on my farm! If I see your face again, I'll—I'll—"

The infuriated farmer could hardly finish.

"I—I—I can't go back like this!" spluttered Billy Bunter. "I must have a bath first."

"You'll go now!" exclaimed Mr. Percival. "If you're not out of my farm in three minutes I'll set the dogs on to you!"

"B-but—"

"Go up to the house and get your coat, and leave those boots behind! Go!"

Billy Bunter stood and blinked at the infuriated farmer, and then he turned and blinked at Sloggett, who was standing by with a satisfied grin on his face.

Mr. Sloggett felt that he had got his own back—with compound interest.

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"Sloggett!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Sloggett," said the farmer, "in two minutes you'll loose the yard dogs, and set them on this—this young scoundrel! They know how to deal with cowards!"

"Very well, sir," replied Sloggett.

"Now, you clear off back to school!" snapped Mr. Percival. "You've got two minutes!"

Billy Bunter realised his time was up. He turned on his heels and rolled across the yard, squelching pig-wash at every step. He hurried up to the house, and kicked off the heavy pair of boots that had been lent to him, and he snatched up his Eton jacket and pulled it on, and then dashed out of the garden in front of the house.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Farm-boys' Return!

"WELL, we licked the bounders, and that's good enough! It wouldn't do for the Grammarians to put it across us at cricket. Of course, five runs isn't much of a margin, but it's a win, and that's that!"

Thus spake Bob Cherry.

The cricket match with the Grammar School had resulted in a win for the Greyfriars Junior Eleven by five runs. It had been a close thing; but, as Bob Cherry had said, they had won the match, and that was good enough.

To celebrate the victory, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent had invited some of the members of the eleven into a study spread.

The Removites had changed out of their flannels, and now a scent of frying eggs pervaded the study, and there was a sound of crackling wood. Harry Wharton was cooking for tea over a fire of sticks in the grate, and the rest of the juniors were discussing the result of the afternoon's play.

However, the match had been won, and there was not much interest taken in the discussion of the various members' play.

"I wonder how that fathead Bunter has been getting on?" said Johnny Bull, after a long pause.

There was a grunt from the fireplace, but no other acknowledgment of his remark. Harry Wharton, however, looked up for a moment from the frying-pan.

"I think we ought to deal very stringently with the Porpoise if he lets Greyfriars down," he said. "After all, it's a decent idea, getting a week-end holiday on a ripping farm like old Percival's."

"Bunter is sure to make a mess of it somehow or other," said Bull. "He'll eat all the grub, or do something idiotic."

"Rather!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Whoever would credit Bunter with usefulness as a farmer?"

There was a ripple of laughter from the little party gathered together in Harry Wharton's study.

"Well, shall I start shoving the things on the table?" said Bob Cherry. "How long will you be, Harry?"

"A good time, yet!" growled Harry Wharton. "I—Hullo! Who's that?"

Tap, tap!

There was a feeble sort of tap on the study door, and the next moment the handle turned.

"M-m-m-my only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"What is it?"

"Davy Jones, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter crawled into the study, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 644.

feeling as though life were not worth living. He had at last reached Greyfriars. He was thoroughly soaked, and he was still simply running pig-wash. As he entered the study, his boots squelched dismally, and he blinked wrathfully through his damp spectacles.

"My hat!" cried Bob Cherry. "He's been having a bath in whitewash with his clothes on!"

Johnny Bull shook his head.

"Oh, no! Bunter's not been having a bath. He never does. It must have been an accident. It's always an accident if Bunter gets wet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was that beast Percival! I'm jolly well going to prosecute him! I'm absolutely messed up!"

"You look it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to laugh at! Here, you, Nugent!"

"What do you want?"

"Come and help me change! I shall want my things washed out. Come up to the dorm!"

"You fat worm!" roared Frank Nugent. "Do you think I'm jolly well going to do that for you? What have you been up to? Do you know you've spoilt our chances of getting on the farm?"

"I—I know that!" groaned Bunter. "If any of you chaps go near Percival, I—I believe he would kill you!"

"What!"

"You take my warning! He's mad, and so is Sloggett! They're all mad!"

"You rotter!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've evidently been through it at the farm, and now you're going through it here!"

Billy Bunter blinked and quaked, and quaked and blinked. He knew he was in a bad corner.

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances, and it was for Harry Wharton to break the silence.

"Bunter!" he said, in measured tones.

"Ye-es!"

"You worm!"

"You crawling apology for a worm!" said Frank Nugent.

"The wormfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a shake of his dusky head.

"I—I say, you fellows!"

"You've jolly well let us down at the farm," went on Wharton, indignantly. "You own up to that?"

"Y-y-yes!"

"You know what we promised you?"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"What shall we do with him?" asked Harry Wharton, in disgust. "We can't lick a beastly worm when he's in that state."

"I suggestfully propose that he is extended face downwardfully upon the table, and that a cricket-bat is applied with forcefulness to the uppermost regions of the honourable Bunter's esteemed carcase," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Good egg!" said Nugent.

"I—I—I say, you fellow, don't be cads, you know! I didn't know old Percival was such a rotter, and I didn't know Sloggett was such a cad. He chucked the pig-wash over me, and I was nearly killed by a mad bull."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We had better fully apply the cricket-batful ragging, in my worthy opinion," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"What are you making that row for?" demanded Harry Wharton. "You're not touched yet."

"I—I—I—"

"Phew!" muttered Bob Cherry. "We

can't touch the fat rotter yet. He's absolutely alive!"

The odour from Bunter's clothes was now beginning to pervade the little study, and quite a little pool had gathered round the fat junior's feet in the doorway.

His Eton jacket was absolutely saturated by now. Billy Bunter had dragged it on when the pig-wash was at least an inch thick, and after his hurried walk back to Greyfriars it had perforated through, and it was not pleasant to get within yards of him.

"I have an amendment!" cried Bob Cherry. "I vote we leave the Porpoise alone until he has been scientifically treated."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boiled, washed, and shoved through the mangle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, get out, Bunter!" laughed Harry Wharton. "You're a worm! You always were a worm, and you always will be a worm!"

"I—I—I—"

"And you'll never be a blessed farmer!" added Bob Cherry. "Go on, Bunter! Buzz off!"

"Really, Cherry, I—"

"Scat!"

"If you—"

"Bunk!" roared Bob Cherry, picking up a cricket-bat. "I'll give you one second!"

Billy Bunter looked wildly round, and then suddenly turned on his heels and slammed the study door to with a bang.

There was a shriek of laughter from Harry Wharton & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fancy the fat Porpoise thinking he could be a farmer! Just think of it!"

And Harry Wharton just thought of it, and the mere idea of it sent them into shrieks of merriment.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week by Frank Richards. Make a point of ordering your copy of MAGNET LIBRARY early.)

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THE SECRET OF THE SILENT CITY.

A Magnificent New Serial Story of Thrilling Adventure.

By DAGNEY HAYWARD.



The rope was secured to the ring in the stone, and one after another the three boys descended into the darkness below. (See page 17.)

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.

It is soon discovered that a rival party is also in search of the mysterious city.

Mr. Sherwell's staff includes Dr. Harland, 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, the elephant, Wonga, the chimpanzee, and Boris, the boarhound.

Mr. Sherwell's chart is incomplete, but, after many adventures, the Silent City is sighted.

The camp is left in responsible hands, and the party enter the city. They are met by a priest of the Temple. They are surrounded by a party of armed guards and taken prisoners. In the prison they meet Mr. Smick, the leader of the rival party, who has also been captured. The captives are led along the underground tunnels to a great fall of molten lava.

(Now read on.)

In the Clutch of the Idol!

"DID you notice," whispered Tom Rackett, "that that pathway was carved by human hands? It was no mere freak. Someone must have worked in that awful heat to make a path."

"Yes, I saw that," answered the doctor. "And I saw something which you did not see."

"What was that?"

"That the pathway was littered with ashes, which, as a doctor, I recognised to be those of human beings. I even saw a bone or two, half-charred."

At this dreadful news, Tom was silent, and for another ten minutes or so, the whole party stumbled on in silence. The heat was still terrible, and Tubby Bouncer had quite made up his mind that if ever he did emerge, it would be as a thinner, and possibly a wiser man. The perspiration was pouring from him in a continual stream, and even if it had been daylight he could hardly have seen for the trickle which made his eyes smart.

Not that any of the others were cool or comfortable. Far from it; but they did not feel it quite so much as Tubby.

But the end of the passage came at last. With a final twist and turn, it suddenly opened into a large subterranean chamber, where their guide motioned them to remain still and silent. The chamber was lit with a dull, bluish light which came from the roof, and was strong enough to enable them to make each other out and to see their guide.

With a final gesture of warning, he left them standing against the wall, and advanced into the middle of the chamber where stood a huge stone table. As their eyes followed him, and fell upon this table, an involuntary exclamation of horror broke from them.

At the end of the table was a gigantic stone figure of a seated man. The face was roughly carved, and in the uncertain blue light, looked truly dreadful. An enormous mouth gaped wide in a hideous yawn or grin, and above it were two glittering eyes, which seemed almost real, so brilliant was their gleam.

In front of this yawning mouth, was a huge stone hand, the fingers open, but holding something which seemed like food the huge stone image was about to put into the gaping mouth.

But the something in the fingers was alive. As they looked upon it, they saw it move, saw it struggle as though trying to escape the dreadful fingers. Dick made a step forward, and then uttered a cry of amazement.

"It is Mr. Smick!" he gasped.

True enough. Imprisoned in those merciless stone fingers, and threatened with a hideous death, was the American picture man who had been taken from them when they entered the cavern.

He had seen them.

"Say," he moaned, "I guess I am up against it, you fellows, can't you let me go from this man of stone?"

"How did you get there?" asked Mr. Sherwell.

"As soon as I was separated from you, I got caught, a rag was stuffed into my mouth, and I was put here. They have tied my hands and feet so I can't move a muscle. Do you know what they are going to do with me?"

"No."

"They are going to leave me here to starve. They pulled a man's bones out of this stone hand to make room for me. I guess this is some queer stunt."

Mr. Sherwell was about to start forward to help the man, when he was arrested by the sudden appearance of a troupe of priests, who, uttering a mysterious and solemn chant, the first sound he had heard from any lips but their own in the fastnesses of the city. They advanced slowly and steadily towards the white party, and, to his horror, Mr. Sherwell saw that each man was armed with a gleaming knife.

"Harland," he whispered to the doctor who had come to his side, "I suppose this really is the end!"

The doctor grunted.

"I think you are about right," he muttered. "Anyhow, it is better than starvation!"

But there was one member of the party who did not view matters with such resignation. That person was Tung Wu.

He had seen the priests, and he had noticed their knives, and he had a shrewd guess what trouble was in store for them all. Moreover, in his own way, he had firmly made up his mind that his bones should find a resting-place in his own Celestial land, and not in the heart of South America.

As the chanting procession came ever nearer, Tung Wu's little slit eyes seemed to grow smaller and smaller until presently you would have thought he had closed them altogether.

The leading priest was about a dozen feet away, and the cruel knife was gleaming very bright in the blue light, when suddenly Tung Wu uttered an unearthly yell, such as only a Chinaman can utter, screwed his face into a grimace of perfectly fiendish nature, and leaped at the approaching man as though he were some fiend incarnate.

The man who could stand the heat and terror of a lava waterfall, who could live in surroundings so full of horror, was not proof against the hideousness of a Chinaman when he tries to make a grimace. The man simply dropped his knife, uttered a shrill cry, and fairly took to his heels.

At this moment Tung Wu found a valuable ally in Wonga. Wrenching himself free from Dick, the chimpanzee dashed after the Chinaman, his monkey-face scarcely less terrible in the curious light, and uttered screams which made

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 644.

even Tung Wu's attempts pale into insignificance.

The combination of a Chinaman and a monkey was too much for the stately priests. With one scared look, with a final glance at the party before them, they turned about, and fled into the darkness.

"Say, I guess that was just fine!" said Smick, from his dreadful captivity. "Now, one of you young fellows, just climb up here and set me free!"

In a few moments, Larry had clambered on to the table, scrambled round the huge figure of the giant, hoisted himself to the mighty hand, and had liberated the American, who, stiff from his long imprisonment in ropes, fell heavily to the ground. But he was up in a moment, and shook himself like a dog.

"I guess you folk arrived just in time," he said. "The question now is, how we are going to get clear of this place. My pals are not here; I suppose they are having a little do of their own somewhere about."

"Yes," said Mr. Sherwell. "That is indeed the difficulty. How are we to get at them? I don't know the way, and I do not fancy going by that lava fall again."

"Let us explore," said Dick. "Maybe we shall find there is another way. There must be, for those priests did not come by our path."

"I dare say not; but we don't want to run into them," said Dr. Harland. "And all the same, we ought to be getting away from here as soon as we can. They will recover their pluck before long, and then the fat will fairly be in the fire."

"I think it has been already," said Larry, with a smile, pointing to Tubby Bouncer. "Are you warm, Tubby?"

"I shall never survive it!" moaned the fat man, who looked like a man just come from a bath. "But do let us get going!"

"Yes, it is all very well to say that," said Smick, "but which way, you son of a sweet-pudding?"

Tubby was about to reply indignantly, when the same sound they had heard before broke on their ears.

"That is Augustus!" cried Mr. Sherwell. "He must be somewhere near!"

"Let's go and look for him," suggested Dick.

"I think we're all safer in here," put in Tubby, who had not quite recovered from his recent teasing.

"Of course, you'll be on the safe side," suggested Larry. "I only hope poor old Augustus will look as sleek and well-fed as you when they've finished with him at this place."

"Me go searchee for Augustus," put in Tung Wu, with alacrity, and with his bland, Oriental smile.

"You will have to have all your wits about you, Tung Wu," said Dr. Harland. "The game is a very dangerous one."

"I wish I could go with him!" sighed Dick.

"So do I!" chimed in Larry and Mike.

"I'm not sure that anyone is going yet," answered Mr. Sherwell. "I don't quite like Tung Wu taking any risks."

"Me takee no risk," replied the Chinaman. "Me only takee life of native if nothing else left."

"Well, Tung Wu," replied Mr. Sherwell, after a moment's thoughtful pause, "you can go, and good luck to you; but, mind you, you are to run no undue risk, and must return here as soon as ever you can."

The Chinaman was delighted, looked to his revolver and knife, waved his hand to everyone, and then slowly crept towards

the opening of the cave which led to the corridor without.

"Good luck, Tung Wu!" cried everyone. And then the brave Chinaman disappeared.

Whilst he was absent on his dangerous mission, the prisoners held a conclave. How were they going to make their escape?

"We've got to get out of this somehow," said Mr. Sherwell, "and the longer we delay, the worse it will be. The worst of the position is that we are all separated from the faithful Quambo and Augustus, and, for the time being, from Tung Wu."

During a discussion between Rackett, Tubby and Dr. Harland, the three boys crept round the walls of their prison to see if they could discover any other outlet than that by which they had entered.

Wonga was held by Dick, and Mike and Larry were busy feeling the walls, for they remembered their last imprisonment when they had discovered the shaft of air blowing through the chink in the rock when they were captives in a similar prison.

All of a sudden Wonga threw himself on his hands and knees and began to scrape up some loose sand and soil.

"Whatever's the little beggar up to?" cried Dick.

"He's found something that doesn't exist," put in Mike.

"He's scented something beyond our power to smell," answered Larry. "Let's see what'll happen."

As the monkey tore at the loose sand and soil, the boys received in their eyes a shower of dust which flew around owing to the monkey's frantic efforts.

Presently an exclamation of delight and wonder escaped the boys. Wonga had removed about an inch of the soil and revealed to their astonished gaze was a large square stone with an iron ring in it.

Their exclamation of surprise was heard by the others, who came hurrying to the spot.

"Who discovered this?" asked Mr. Sherwell excitedly.

"Wonga," answered Dick. "He really is some lad."

"It looks as if there is a chamber below this," remarked Dr. Harland. "If so, there may yet be a means of escape."

"Rackett, Bouncer, and Mike," he said, turning towards them, "guard the entrance to this cave at all costs. No one but Tung Wu must enter."



By FRANK RICHARDS

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The leader's word was law. The three addressed instantly whipped out their revolvers and stationed themselves round the entrance. Then the others began to pull at the iron ring in the stone.

It was hard work. The stone was deeply embedded in the earth. They cut round the edge of the stone into the earth to loosen it, then Dr. Harland, who was very strong, pulled at the ring with all his might.

It began to give. Then the others took a turn, and presently the stone was wrenched from its socket. They raised it up, and, as they did so, they saw an aperture about two feet square—a black void, the bottom of which could not be seen.

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Mr. Sherwell. "This may lead to freedom!"

Just as he spoke, Rackett gave a warning cry as he plunged forward towards the opening he and the two others were guarding. There was a hoarse, gurgling, half-stifled cry as a tall, dark figure, clad in the native costume of the Silent City, came stumbling in, carrying an apparently lifeless form in his arms.

"No shoot, massa, no shoot!" came the whisper.

It was Quambo! In his arms was the Chinaman, and slung on his back was Rackett's camera and boxes of films.

Everyone came crowding round, in utter amazement.

Very quickly the faithful negro, after depositing Tung Wu, who was quite conscious, but suffering considerable pain from a wound in his leg, on the ground, told what had happened.

The Chinaman had succeeded in tracing the negro's and Augustus' whereabouts. Just as Tung Wu had reached the elephant's side, one of the guards had rushed at him, hurling his spear at his leg, causing a nasty wound. Quambo then rushed up to the native and knifed him. The man fell without a groan. There were no other guards within hail.

Quambo then divested himself of his clothes and donned those of the dead native, thinking that in the semi-darkness he would pass for an inhabitant of the Silent City.

Tung Wu, who was helpless, guided him back to their prison as the great negro carried him, telling him which way to go and the turns to take. The Chinaman had despatched two natives on his way to Augustus. As the negro was returning to Mr. Sherwell's party, two guards a short distance away mistook him for one of their own tribe, and he passed on with his precious burden to safety and to friends, though he had very nearly been run through by Tom Rackett in mistake. Augustus was quite safe, and feeding on quantities of bread.

It was a splendid performance of Quambo's, and every one of the party made a tremendous fuss of him.

Tung Wu's leg was then looked at by Dr. Harland, and was pronounced to be not dangerous; but it might incapacitate him for a day or so. It was an ugly wound in the ankle. Dr. Harland very soon had torn up strips of shirt and handkerchiefs, and, after laying the wound in water, bound it up as best he could.

It was quite evident to all that poor old Augustus would have to be left to his fate. There was no possible way of freeing him from his present prison without certain risk of death. Human lives were at stake, and they had to be considered first.

The elephant had inspired the natives with terror and awe. Quambo himself had seen the great beast crush four of the guard against the wall of the cave. Augustus would no doubt use his keen intelligence, and escape.

And now the whole party devoted their energies to getting away down the newly-discovered hole. There was no time to be lost. The guards might at any moment re-enter to take away the food and water. Without, the corridors were full of terror, for certain death lurked in the dark corners and passages in the shape of stalwart guards, armed to the teeth.

In case of a sudden entry, the stone was replaced for the time being, and plans were made about descending into the gloomy depths of the hole.

As they talked in a group, carefully concealing the wounded Chinaman and Rackett's camera and films, the guard entered and cleared away the remains of the feast.

Dick followed them to the exit, then stood watching. They turned for a moment and held up their spears threateningly, but as Dick did not move they passed into the semi-darkness without, and were soon out of sight.

After an anxious pause and consultation the moment came for making a descent into the hole.

Everything seemed deathly still. Had they not known that guards were in the corridors they would not have believed there was a human being within hail but themselves.

Wonga had still a good coil of his rope, and the monkey was let down into the hole first. They had their electric-torches, but their rays failed to pierce the darkness below. Presently Wonga gave a jerk at the rope, and all knew he had reached the bottom.

"It can't be more than about twenty feet," said Mr. Sherwell. "Harland, make the rope as secure as you can to the ring in the stone. It's quite heavy enough to stand the strain of our weight without tipping up."

The rope was quickly secured, and the three boys were then told to climb down one after the other.

"We'll send down Tung Wu after you," said the leader.

An answering jerk soon told those above that the boys had reached the bottom. Then came the business of gently lowering the wounded Chinaman. He was securely tied under his arms, and with Rackett, Mr. Sherwell, and the great Quambo hanging on to the rope, he was safely lowered to the bottom. Then came Gilead Smick, Tubby, Dr. Harland, and, lastly, Mr. Sherwell, carrying Boris.

Quambo took up the Chinaman in his strong arms and prepared to carry him.

They were standing in a narrow, rocky corridor, with a very hard floor. It was evidently some extinct subterranean lava-stream, hollowed out by Nature's hand.

As rapidly and as quietly as possible the party went blindly on, following the zig-zag course of the narrow passage.

The atmosphere was close and oppressive. Every now and again ominous subterranean mutterings and rumbles broke upon their startled ears, and more than once the ground beneath them, and the very walls of the passage, quivered and shook.

It was a terrible experience. Everyone knew that the rocking and quivering was a slight earthquake. And here they were in the bowels of the earth which seemed to be threatened with some mighty convulsion.

"I don't like the look of it at all!" muttered Dr. Harland, as they stumbled on over the rocky, uneven surface of the cave. "All these sounds and earthquakes point to a convulsion, and I can only pray that we can find an exit."

"We must simply push on," replied Mr. Sherwell, "and trust to Providence to help us."

All this time the passage had been descending, and the air was getting more and more stifling. But presently, to everyone's relief, it began to ascend.

Mr. Sherwell was leading, then came the boys, with Boris and Wonga; then Dr. Harland, with Quambo and Tung Wu near him; while Rackett, Smick, and Tubby Bouncer brought up the rear.

They continued to ascend for some time, and presently the passage widened, and they suddenly found themselves in a large chamber.

Their torches were quickly flashing into the gloom.

A loud cry of amazement from Dick and Larry, who had leapt forward, brought the rest quickly to their side.

Well might the two boys have uttered their surprise. The light from the torches revealed a sight that surely no eye of a white man had ever seen before.

The chamber was a vast treasure-house of untold wealth. Great stone coffers were filled with solid gold ornaments, cups, vessels, and plates of every description. Gems of priceless value glittered in heaped piles along the walls. Gold and silver ornaments, of barbaric but exquisite workmanship, lay in tangled masses near the jewels. Wonderful carved images in gold, with eyes of precious stones, were ranged on little shelves. Small ingots of gold and rough lumps of precious metal lay in little heaps.

Everyone gasped at these treasures in sheer amazement.

"The secret!" cried Dick. "This is the secret of the Silent City!"

"We've found the treasure!" shouted Larry.

"Hooroo!" yelled Mike. "There's enough wealth here to make us rich for life if we don't die before we can get away with it!"

"It's marvellous!" gasped Mr. Sherwell, looking round on the heaped-up riches. "What do you make of it, Harland?"

"I should think it's some lost or hidden treasure of the Incas or ancient Mexicans and Aztecs. We've undoubtedly struck their treasure-house, but I should think it most probable that the inhabitants of the Silent City know of it. One of these days, when we can manage it, we must try and carry some of it off."

"I votes we fill our pockets now," suggested Dick, and, suiting the action to the word, he began to fill all his pockets with priceless gems, while the

others did the same. It was too good an opportunity to miss.

"If we are confronted with any natives we shall have to get rid of the jewels somehow," declared Mr. Sherwell. "If they found we had been robbing them it would be all up with us."

When everyone had collected as many jewels and as much gold as they could conveniently carry in their clothes they once more proceeded on their way.

The passage seemed almost interminable. It began to get narrower and narrower, and soon there was only just enough room for the party to move in single file. Quambo found it a difficult task to carry Tung Wu so that his wounded leg did not scrape against the walls. But if the brave Chinaman felt any pain he gave no hint of it in his stoical countenance.

At last a current of fresh air was felt coming down the passage, everyone knew that it meant life and freedom, for there must be an exit for such an air-current to blow down the corridor.

A hoarse cry of delight broke from Dick, who was now leading, as he suddenly saw little gleams of light through a small opening, which he rightly judged were stars.

Soon they were all breathing the pure fresh air at the mouth of the tunnel.

They hung crowded together, not daring to speak or to move. What were they going to see when they emerged? Where were they? What cruel, merciless guards might not be without?

At last it was decided to let the faithful Boris out of the tunnel and investigate. His canine instinct would be unerring, and he would return quickly.

The leader gave him a pat, pointed to the aperture, and Boris quickly disappeared, with his nose to the ground.

It was a relief to all to know they had not been pursued, but pursuit might still come at any moment. No native had evidently visited their prison, or he would have raised the alarm on seeing the stone out of place.

They listened intently for any bark or growl from Boris, but they heard nothing.

Presently the dog reappeared, evidently very pleased with himself, for he seemed to have a word for everyone, sniffing and rubbing his cold nose into the hands of each as he greeted them. The coast was clear, so they very cautiously crawled one by one out of the passage, and when outside peered round them. They were,

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apparently, on a kind of ledge cut into the side of the crater in which the Silent City stood.

Beneath them was a huge burning lake of lava, glowing every now and again as the breeze ruffled its molten surface, and fanned its livid streams into a red glow. Dense clouds of smoke arose every few moments and obscured the view, but even these heavy fumes were unable to hide the horrors of the pit below.

Above them, and barely distinguishable, lay the Silent City, still as ever, and apparently uninhabited and deserted—a city of the dead!

The path led to the right and left, and as they stood gazing at the terrible lava lake below, Dr. Harland and Mr. Sherwell held a rapid consultation as to which way they should turn now.

"I think we will go to the right," said Mr. Sherwell, after a while. "It seems the most likely way to allow us to avoid the city, and reach some spot in the open from which we can make our way to safety."

"Yes, I think you are right," was the answer.

"Say," interrupted Smick at this moment, "I don't pretend to be a saint, and I confess I value my own skin a sight more than anyone else's, but I guess I don't like to leave this place without a try to get the rest of my party."

"You are right," said Dr. Harland gravely. "All the same, I don't quite see how it is to be done. Have you no idea where they are?"

"Not the slightest. There were four white men and a whole crowd of niggers. I guess the niggers will look after themselves, but I must say I should like to have a look at old Jimmy White again. He was my special pal, and I don't like leaving a pal in this city."

"The wisest thing to do," said Mr. Sherwell, "would be to get the whole of our party safe and sound out of this place—that is, if this path leads to safety—and then for volunteers to come back with you to the city, and do their best to find your friends. Are you content?"

"I guess so," was the answer. "I reckon old man White would have got clear of the place by now, if he could. Let us get a move on, anyhow, and save our own skins."

Preceded by Dick, who carried Wonga—for Mr. Sherwell had a great opinion of the chimpanzee's sagacity, and trusted him to scent danger, or nose out the solutions to difficulties, the little party started forward, Dr. Harland and Larry bringing up the rear.

It was a long path, and fully half an hour had elapsed before it led them to open ground. Luckily for them, the spot was hidden in dense undergrowth—so dense, indeed, that it was with difficulty they were able to push ahead. As soon as the whole party was gathered around him, Mr. Sherwell detailed his plan for going to the rescue of the Americans.

"First of all," he said, "everyone but Mr. Smick must empty their pockets of any of the jewels they may have taken and put them in the common fund. We are all in the same boat, and we will go shares when the trouble is over. Mr. Smick can do what he likes; but, in any case, I should advise him to leave his wealth with us, as it will be well taken care of, and it will go hardly with him if he should happen to be captured in the Silent City with his pockets full of jewellery."

The American saw the wisdom of Mr. Sherwell's words, and handed over his wealth to the producer, who tied it up in his handkerchief.

"You will take my word for it that I will give it you back intact?" he said.

"I guess you are a white man," was the simple answer.

Much against his will, Mr. Sherwell consented to the three boys accompanying Smick back to the Silent City. Wonga also was of the party, and Rackett was anxious to make a fifth; but Mr. Sherwell refused to spare him.

"After all," he said, "You must look after your films; and it is out of the question for you to take a camera back with you on an expedition like this."

"I suppose you are right."

"Well, so-long, you fellows!" said Smick jauntily, as his little party were about to start. "We shall be back to tea—in other words, expect us when you see us."

"Take care!" warned Dr. Harland. "Don't go doing anything foolish. I—"

He was interrupted at this moment by a terrific screaming yell, followed by the crash of something heavy forcing its way through the undergrowth.

"Augustus!" yelled Quambo. "Dat clobber elifant hab escaped. Oh, Massa Sherwell—Augustus!"

It was true. The next moment the bushes were crushed aside, and the huge elephant burst upon them, his trunk lifted high in the air, bearing the writhing form of a man. What is more, three or four figures were clinging to his back and ears, barely able to keep their positions.

"Gustus, 'Gustus!" shrieked Quambo, and at the well-known voice of his friend the elephant stopped dead, so suddenly that one of the men on his back lost his hold, and fell to the earth with a thud.

Instantly three revolvers were covering him, and Dr. Harland shouted in a native dialect for him to remain still.

"Don't try any of that lingo on me," came the reply, in an unmistakable twang. "I guess this moving trolley-car has broken about every bone in my body!"

"Why, it is Ed White!" cried Smick.

"Say, Ed, old man, is it really you?"

"I don't rightly know," was the reply. "It was a week ago before we came to this city. There ain't much left of me now, though."

At this moment Augustus lowered his trunk gently to the ground, and, to their surprise, instead of a native, another white man was released. He shook himself, gazed about him in dazed fashion, then went to White and shook him by the hand.

"Say, brother," he said, "I guess that was a fair getaway. We have burned our boats now, though. If that priest takes us again it will be all up."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Sherwell, "I am glad any member, human or otherwise, of my party has been the means of saving you. We managed to get away ourselves, and were just going to send a search-party after you."

By this time Phineas Smick had joined his friends, and they were all chattering together. But Dr. Harland interrupted them before very long.

"This place is none too safe," he said. "We must be getting on our way. We can talk all about our adventures when we have reached a place of safety, and are less likely to meet with more. Let us be going."

So they all started off, the boys and Wonga leading the way, followed by Augustus, to whom Quambo was whispering long and excitedly, as though he were asking and hearing from the elephant all his adventures.

At first they advanced but slowly, for the way was very dark, what with the extraordinary denseness of the undergrowth and lack of light from the moon. But presently it became easier, and they were able to put more speed on.

They had not gone very far when any faint idea of lingering they may have entertained was dispelled by hearing distant shouts and whistles.

"They have discovered our escape!" said Dick. "We have no time to lose!"

"Come along, let us hurry! Are you men armed?" Mr. Sherwell inquired, turning to the Americans.

"Narry a stick," said White. "They took everything away from us, and pretty well cut our finger-nails off for fear we should scratch."

Without another word they pushed forward, the terrible sound of cries and shouts spurring them on to extra effort. Happily, the path was less encumbered with obstacles, and they could make good headway.

Mr. Sherwell was making so far as he was able for the spot where they had left their native carriers. Luckily for them all, he was a good pathfinder, and before very long they caught a glimpse of their camp, and the next moment were loudly welcomed by the carriers, who had learned to love their employers.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry!" shouted Sherwell. "Leave everything that is too heavy to carry quickly. This is a question of life and death. Hurry, all of you!"

His excitement was infectious, and the carriers were in motion almost before he had finished speaking. Luckily, few of their effects had been unpacked. All Rackett's films were still in their boxes, and Augustus, who seldom needed to be told anything, whisked them up on to his back, where Wonga was already waiting to receive them and stow them away. Never was there so well-organised an expedition as that of Mr. Sherwell's. The Americans stood round in amazement.

"Say," said White, "I guess if we had had a few intelligent beasts like that in our outfit we should have done better than we have done. That is a real, smart monkey of yours."

Dick was too busy to make any reply, but he pointed to Boris, who was running up hurriedly with a large coil of rope in his mouth, doing his bit in the way of packing.

Before dawn they were away in time. Frequently they heard the shouts growing nearer, but luck was on their side, and when night fell again they were in a place of comparative safety, although still so near the Silent City that they could see it.

Though they did not dare light a fire, they all gathered together, whilst Smick extracted their story from the Americans. None of our friends were in the least interested in their adventures, but they all wanted to hear how it came about that Augustus was able to save himself and them.

(There will be another instalment of this grand adventure serial next week. Order your copy EARLY.)



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Witty!

Aunt Emily: "Hallo, Willie! Why have you got your throat wrapped up?"

Willie: "It's sore."

Aunt Emily: "How did you manage to catch a sore throat?"

Willie: "I expect I've been drinking something damp!"

Mistaken Kindness

Mrs. Jones came running to the door in answer to the knock. Could she believe her own ears? Was that her son crying? She opened the door, expecting to hear of something serious having happened. Johnnie rushed in, with eyes flaming and a very flushed face.

"Yow-how!" he roared. "I'm goin' to stop bein' kind to people!"

"Why, Johnnie, that's a very unmanly resolve!" remonstrated his mother. "I'm sure you don't mean it. What's the matter?"

"Yes; I do mean it!" screamed Johnnie. "To-day at school I saw Tommie Jacobs putting a pin on master's chair; so just as the master sat down I pulled away the chair. The

master at down on the floor; and when he get up he licked me for pulling away the chair, and then Tommie Jacobs licked me for interferin'! So—yow-yow-how!—I'm never goin' to help anybody no more!"

Upset Him!

A man rushed excitedly into the smoking-compartment of the train.

"A lady has fainted in the next car," he said. "Has anybody got a drop of whisky handy?"

Instantly half a dozen bottles were thrust out to him. Taking the nearest one, he turned the bottle up and partook of a good drink.

"Thanks!" he said, handing the flask back. "It always did make me feel bad to see a lady faint!"

The Teacher's Theory Shattered!

"Children," said the teacher to the pupils, "you should be able to do anything equally well with either hand. With a little practice, you will find it as easy to do anything with one hand as it is with the other."

"Go it!" cried the urchin at the front of the class. "Let's see you put your left hand in the right-hand pocket of your trousers!"

Why Tommy Was Whacked!

Schoolmaster (pointing to the first letter of the alphabet): "What's that letter, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Dunno, sir."

Schoolmaster: "Yes—yes, you must do. What does Farmer Giles feed his horses on?"

Tommy: "Straw, sir."

Schoolmaster (trying letter B): "No, Tommy. Well, what is this letter?"

Tommy: "Dunno, sir."

Schoolmaster: "But surely you must, boy. What's that dear little insect that buzzes about the flowers?"

Tommy: "Wasp."

Schoolmaster (tries letter C): "Now, Tommy, brighten yourself up, and try this letter."

Tommy: "Don't know it, sir."

Schoolmaster: "Well, now, what do I do with my eyes?"

Tommy: "Oh, you mean squint!"

Helping Father!

A preacher, raising his eyes from his pulpit in the midst of his sermon, was paralysed with amazement to see his son in the gallery pelting the congregation with "conkers." But while the good man was preparing a frown of reproof, the young hopeful cried out:

"You 'tend to your preaching, daddy! I'll keep 'em awake!"

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