

625
A MODEL OF GREYFRIARS! SEE BELOW!

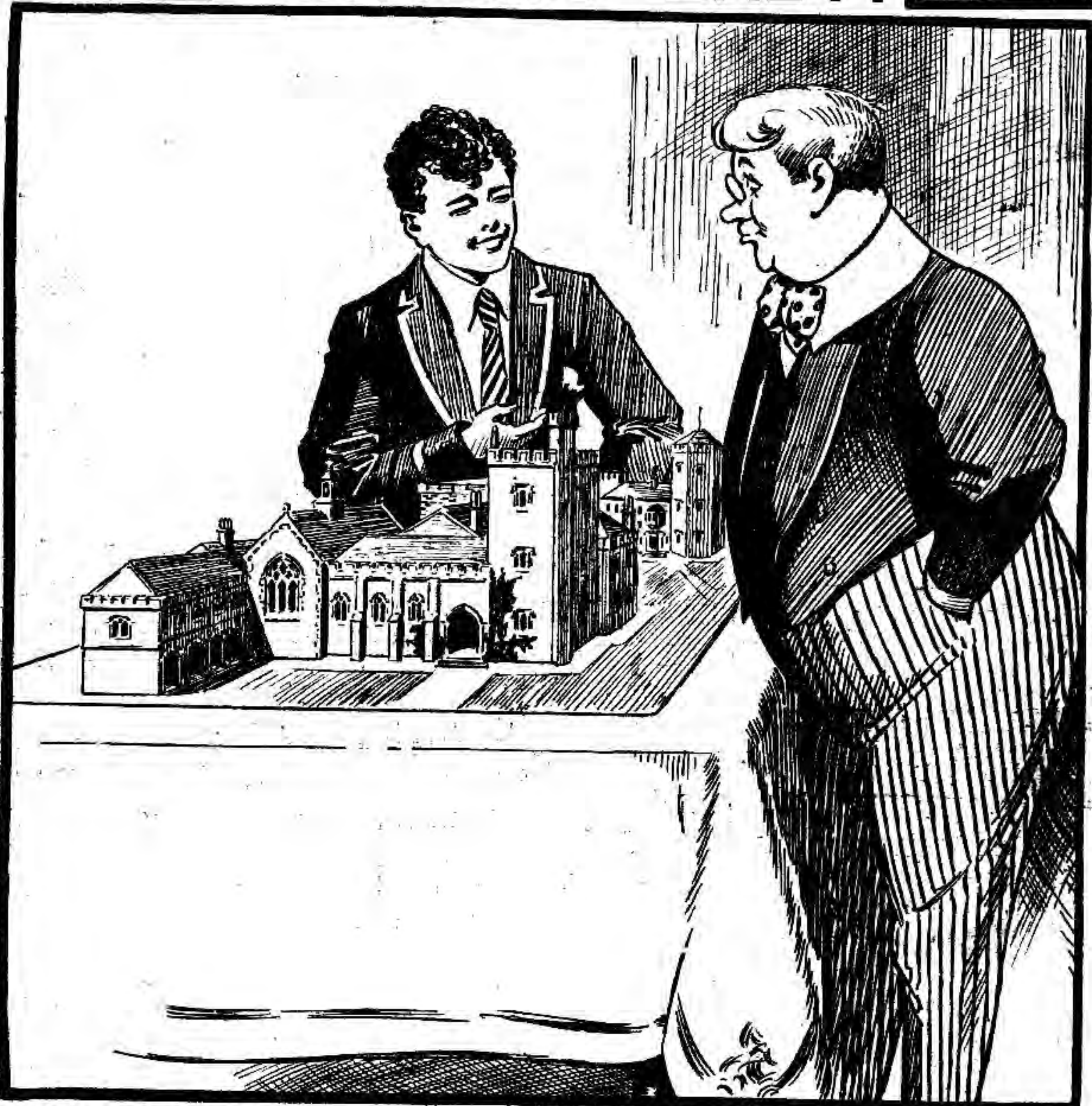


The
Magnet 1¹⁰/₂
Library

No. 852. Vol. XVIII.

August 7th, 1920

BUNTER'S BABY!



HARRY WHARTON: "Here you are, Bunter. Just look at this beautiful coloured Model of Greyfriars School which is being presented to readers in **CHUCKLES!**"

BILLY BUNTER: "Oh, really, Wharton, that's a ripping wheeze. Where have they put the Tuok-shop?"

(Readers of the "Magnet" are advised to order this Friday's "**CHUCKLES!**" To-day if they wish to make up the magnificent model of Greyfriars School.)



For Next Monday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY ARTIST."

By Frank Richards.

Our next story deals with the introduction of a new junior into the ranks of the Greyfriars brotherhood.

His name is Teddie Tenniel, and since the title of the story rather gives the game away, there is no harm done when I tell you that Teddie is the fellow who is a master-craftsman with pencil and paper.

The new-comer's skill is something to wonder at, and very naturally, Teddie sets things humming within the sacred precincts of the old school.

Mr. Richards has certainly excelled himself in this great story, and I cannot urge you too strongly to place an advance order with your newsagent so as to

avoid disappointment when you go to buy

"THE SCHOOLBOY ARTIST."

THE JAMBOREE.

There may be a few readers who live in out-of-the-way places in the United Kingdom who have not yet heard of the great Jamboree at Olympia this week. The Jamboree is a record gathering of Boy Scouts from every quarter of the globe. It is the biggest thing for boys ever organised, and for the occasion, I, as Editor of the famous Companion Papers, have prepared a special Jamboree number of the "Boys' Friend."

This Jamboree number is out to-day, and I do not hesitate to say that it is the finest issue I have ever prepared.

Buy it!

That is all.

KEEPING PACE.

The Red Queen in "Alice in Wonderland" had to keep on running fast, or else she would be left behind. Even then she was only able to keep in the same place! This, of course, is an exaggerated view of matters. Events do move fast, and the older you get the quicker the pace, or so it seems; but there is no need to worry overmuch. If you are doing your own job you will find yourself in the right place—that is just where you ought to be—when wanted.

A NEW ZEALAND READER.

A loyal supporter at Christchurch, New Zealand, says he was at Tinwald, New Zealand, in 1908, and came across the MAGNET.

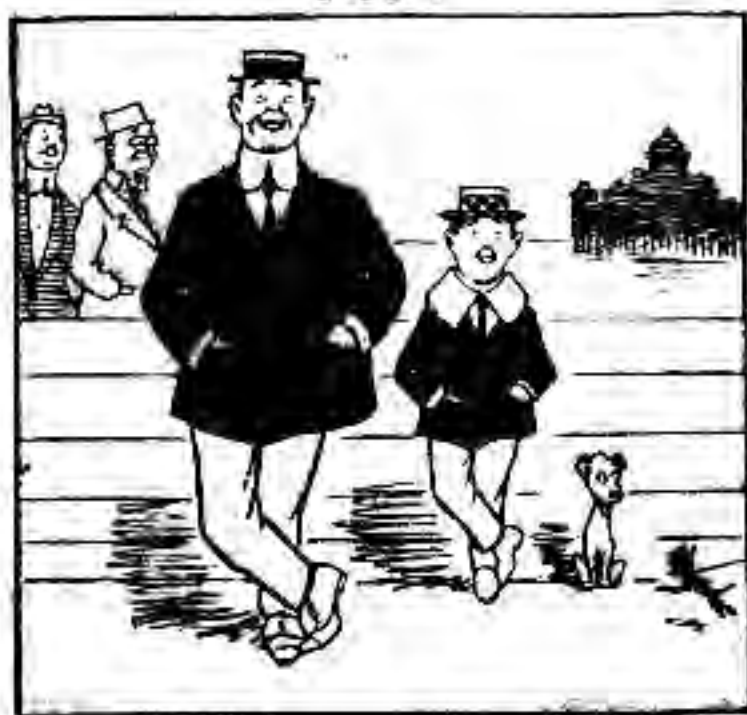
"This," he continues, "was my first glimpse of the pink-covered paper that was very soon to become famous throughout the English-speaking world. The illustration of this particular number portrayed Clara of Cliff House shaping up in pugnacious attitude to a Greyfriars junior, and in the background stood many Greyfriars boys."

My chum tells me he was immensely interested, but it was a long time before he was able to become a constant reader. In the following year he was working for a butcher, and saw the MAGNET more regularly. Later on he took up duties on a farm. The farmer was a queer old fellow, who objected to Bunter, or rather, he pretended that he did. Through all the rebuffs it was clear that the stern old man appreciated the yarns, and he liked my chum.

The writer goes on to tell how he was called up for the war, rejected, and how he took up valuable work. The incident of the old farmer—who hailed from Cornwall—was long past. He saved his MAGNETS, but his comrades borrowed them, and, as is the way with loaned books, many of the copies never found their way back. Still, it was a good service.

My correspondent had now joined the Government service, and was stationed at a place in the back blocks of North Canterbury. Canterbury is a vast plain, which would comfortably cover the South of England. The writer was further off from regular paper deliveries than ever. Still, he seems to know all the stories, and he asks me to return to the old covers, and to resume the former type-setting, etc.; but, of course, certain changes must come, and the old MAGNET is winning fresh popularity every day.

POP!



Pa: "Don't you know, Willie, that punctuation means you must pause?"

Willie: "Yes, dad. A motor-driver punctuated his tyre outside our house, and he paused for two hours!"

COULDN'T STICK IT!



"Mamma, do make Teddy behave."
"What is he doing?"
"Every time I hit him with my stick he bursts out crying!"

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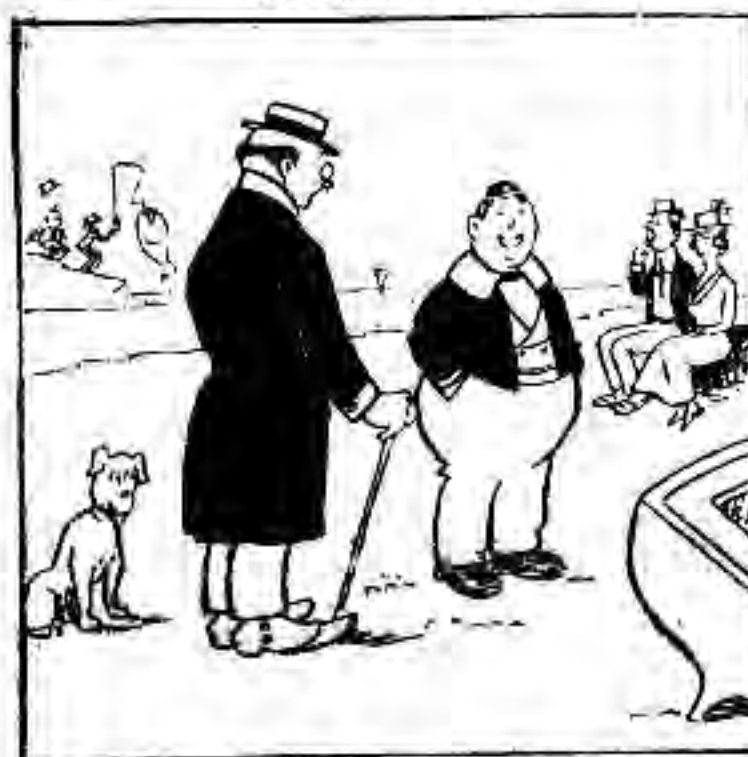
GOING TO PRESS!



Printer: "In what column shall I put the account of the man who fell and broke his backbone?"

Busy Editor: "Spinal column, of course."

THE WAG!

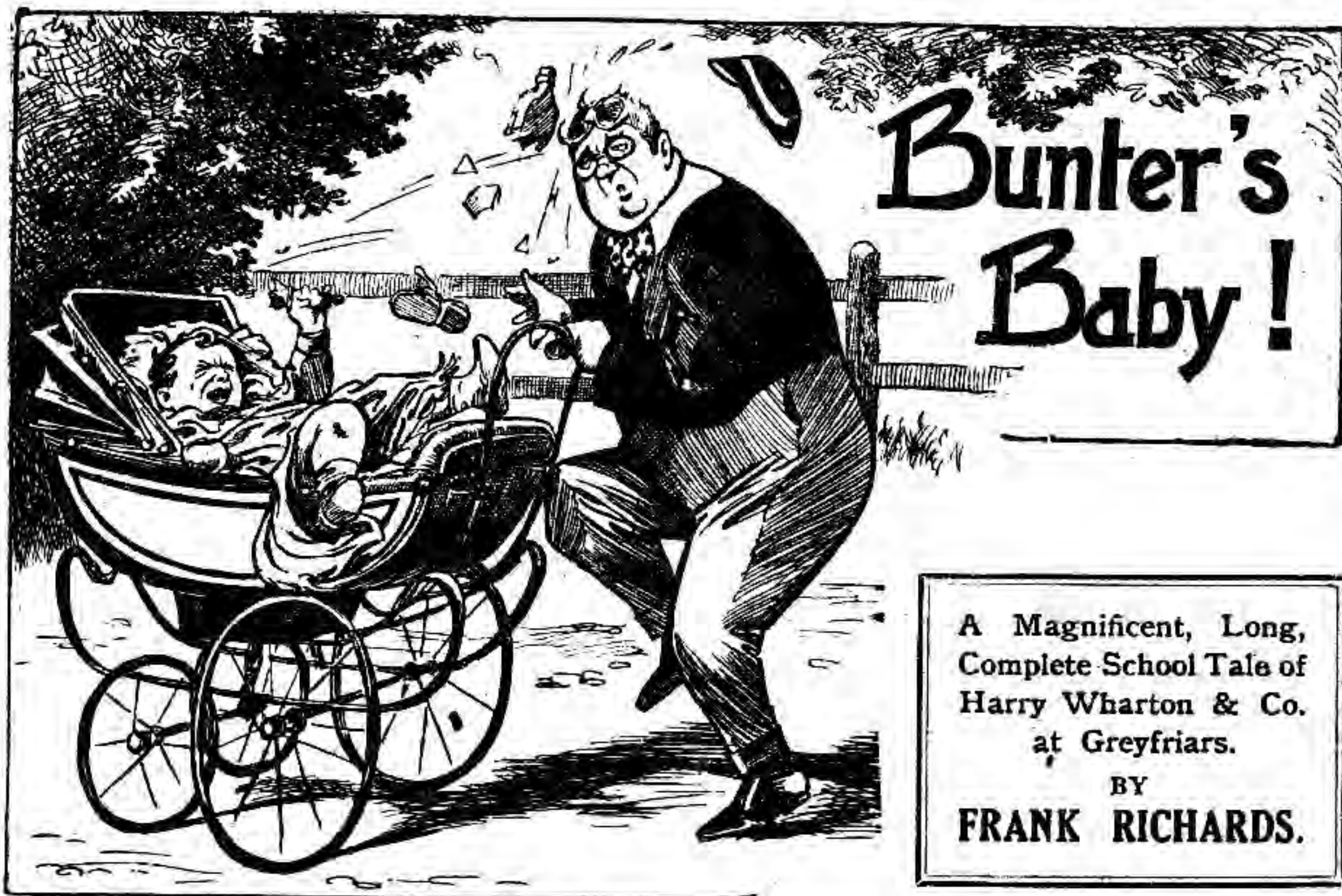


"Yes, it is very unfortunate for your dog to have lost his tail."

"I don't think so. Why?"

"Because every doggie has his day, but Carlo has his weak end."

Your Editor



Bunter's Baby!

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

BY
FRANK RICHARDS.

Billy Bunter was knocked almost senseless by the feeding-bottle, which the squealing Robin sent flying into the air. It caught the fat Removeite full in the forehead, and there was a loud crash as the bottle flew into a dozen pieces.
(See Chapter 2.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Awkward for Bunter!

"H ALLO! Is that you, Bunter? There's a letter addressed to Bunter!"

The fattest junior in the Remove Form at Greyfriars came down the stairs two at a time. Billy Bunter was always expecting a letter, and always expecting to find a postal-order in it. He was usually in sore need of a remittance; all the more so because his remittances were few and far between. Hence his excitement when Bolsover major, who was standing before the letter-rack, called up the stairs to him.

He came down in such haste that he very nearly rolled down, and trotted eagerly over to the rack.

"Thanks, Bolsover!" he exclaimed. "I was coming down to see if there was one for me. Where is it?"

Billy Bunter blinked anxiously over the rack. He was the shortest and shortest-sighted junior in the Lower Fourth, and there were many letters there. His big spectacles did not seem to improve his vision much, either.

"Give it to me, Bolsover, old man. I'm rather anxious about that letter. You see, I'm expecting a postal-order, and there has been some delay about it. Those idiots in Study No. I won't even trust a chap with a few shillings now. I only asked them to loan me two bob, as I'm just off down to Friardale, and do you think they would trust me?"

"Not if they've got a grain of sense!" laughed Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, it's jolly caddish of you to talk like that. Where's that letter?"

Bolsover major, one of the bullies of the

Remove, chuckled. He seemed to find it amusing to watch the short-sighted junior blinking in search of his letter.

"I daresay it's from one of my titled relations, you know," went on Billy Bunter eagerly. "I'm expecting three pounds from the Dowager Lady Bunter. I'm jolly well in need of the money, too, because I haven't had a decent feed for ages. You might give me the letter, Bolsover, old man."

"It's the top one," grinned Bolsover. "Oh, really, Bolsover, I can't reach it. Don't be a rotten cad! Ow! Leggo my ear!"

"What am I?" asked Bolsover pleasantly.

"I—I mean you're a jolly decent fellow," wailed Billy Bunter. "That's really what I meant to say."

"Then you'd better be a little more careful in selecting your words," grinned Bolsover, giving Bunter's ear another twist. "Buzz off!"

"Ow! I want my letter." "Run away and play. There isn't a letter for you."

"There is, you rotter. You said there was."

Bolsover again grinned.

"I didn't say anything of the kind, you fat porpoise!" he said.

"Oh, my word, what a fibber!"

"I said 'there's a letter addressed to Bunter.'"

"Well, ain't I Bunter?" exclaimed the fat junior.

"Yes; but this particular letter isn't for you. If you want to know who it is for, it's addressed to your minor."

Billy Bunter's fat face fell several degrees, and he stood and blinked through his big spectacles at the grinning Bolsover.

"So now you can huzz off!" laughed the practical joker. "You're jolly well not going to have your minor's letters. I'll see to that."

"But—but there might be a remittance in it. Sammy and I always share and share alike, you know."

"I don't think!"

"Hand it over!" howled Bunter. "I'm just off to Friardale, and I might meet Sammy on the way."

"Perhaps!"

"Come on, Bolsover, you cad. Give me that blessed letter."

"I'll give you a jolly good licking if you don't buzz off, Bunter. You're jolly well not going to have your minor's letter."

"I—I'm just going along to Sammy's class-room. In fact, I came down for his letter, so that I could take it along with me. Just hand it down, old man."

"Just hark at the young provaricator!" gasped Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, I—"

"What are you dressed up like that for if you're only going along to the Second Form?"

"I—I'm going there first, and then I'm going to Friardale."

Bolsover major took down the letter from the rack, and he pushed it into the breast-pocket of his Eton jacket.

"Here, give me my letter, you rotter!"

"Buzz off, Bunter! I'll hand this over to your minor. I'm just going along to see my minor in the Third, so I'll kill two birds with one stone."

"Look here—"

"Run away!" said Bolsover.

"But—"

"Buzz off, you fat worm!"

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Bolsover major took Billy Bunter by one fat ear, led him across the hall, and pushed him down the steps. Bunter stared up at the bully of the Remove, with feelings too deep for vocal expression. To be turned out of Greyfriars like this—and to be robbed of a probable postal-order—it was really rough on Bunter!

Slowly and disconsolately the fat junior turned his steps in the direction of the big iron gates by the school lodge. The place seemed quite deserted. It was a Wednesday afternoon, and nearly all the boys were in the playing-fields, taking part in cricket matches; but Bunter was no good at cricket. In fact, he was not good at anything except eating. However, to merely slack about in his study in the Remove-form passage all the afternoon was too tame even for Bunter, so, in desperation, he had put on his cap and had set out with the intention of strolling into Friardale—the little village quite close to Greyfriars School.

Bunter did not quite know what he was going to do when he got there. He had done his best to raise a loan from his long-suffering schoolfellows; but he had not been very successful. In fact, there was absolutely nothing doing.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, in Study No. 1, had reminded Bunter that he was in their debt to a considerable amount. Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Hurree Singh, and Wun Lung, in Study No. 13, had pointed out to the fat junior that thirteen was an unlucky number, and that it was no good coming to their study.

Billy Bunter shared Study No. 7 with Peter and Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton. Peter and Alonzo had been quite rude when a loan had been suggested, and as Tom Dutton was as deaf as an oyster, Bunter gave up his own study as a bad job.

Lord Mauleverer, in Study No. 12, was sound asleep on a sofa when Billy looked in to try his luck; but the aristocrat of the Remove refused to open his eyes, in spite of Bunter's efforts; so in desperation the Owl of Greyfriars had stalked in his study for more than an hour before making up his mind to pay a visit to Friardale in order to kill time.

He blinked through his enormous spectacles at Gosling, the school porter, who was seated outside his lodge. Gosling was dozing, so Billy Bunter's blink was quite wasted upon him.

With his fat hands stuck firmly in his trouser-pockets, Billy Bunter strolled disconsolately down the dusty lane leading to Friardale.

He had not gone far before he was stopped, however. A woman with a pram was standing in the centre of the road, and as Billy Bunter came up she gave a cough.

"Excuse me, young gentleman," she said nervously, "but have you by any chance seen a purse lying in the road as you came along?"

Billy Bunter gave a start.

"No. Where is it?" he exclaimed greedily. "Where did you drop it?"

"This little boy must have thrown it out of the pram as we came along the road."

"Phew! Was there—there any money in it?"

"Yes, there was nearly four pounds. I think I know where Robin might have thrown it out. If you will mind the pram for a few minutes I'll just run along and look."

Billy Bunter frowned.

"I'll go and look for it," he said, "Where do you think it was?"

"I'd sooner look myself, thank you. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 652.

It might be anywhere between here and Pegg; but I think I know the spot."

"Oh, crumbs, I'm jolly well not going all the way to Pegg."

"I'll be able to give you sixpence, if I find it, and you mind the pram."

The promise of reward, small as it was, persuaded the Owl of the Remove. He took hold of the pram handle, and the woman gave him a grateful look.

"Thank you, young gentleman," she said feelingly. "I do not think that I have the strength to push the pram all that way back, and—and I can't afford to lose a shilling, let alone four pounds."

"I'll look after this lot," replied Billy Bunter. "I'm jolly good with kids. What did you say his name is?"

"Robin, sir."

"Right-ho! You go and look for the purse."

Billy Bunter wheeled the pram to the side of the road, and the poor woman walked slowly back along the dusty lane, looking anxiously to left and right as she went.

When she had gone about two hundred yards she stopped suddenly, and held her hand up to her forehead, and swayed dangerously, as though she were about to faint.

Her face was white and emaciated; but she appeared to recover after a few moments, and continued slowly along the road.

Meantime, Billy Bunter was endeavouring to make friends with the healthy-looking individual in the pram. If the woman was the child's mother, Robin was evidently not neglected in any way. A healthier, happier child would not be found in a month's march. But Billy Bunter was not going to find it such an easy job to humour him. Robin sat up in his pram, and gazed along the road at the little figure in the distance. So long as the woman kept in sight all was well; but a turn in the road robbed the boy of his view, and tears suddenly welled up in his eyes.

Billy Bunter gave a start.

"Now then, Robin," he exclaimed, "you mustn't cry!"

But Robin was not to be pacified so easily, and the tears rolled down his rosy cheeks in a steady flow.

Bunter looked round anxiously. The woman was not to be seen. She had evidently gone some distance because the bend in the lane was some hundreds of yards from the school gates.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "I'm

blessed if I know how to keep him quiet!"

Billy Bunter grasped the handle of the pram, and gave Robin a few hefty jolts. To the surprise of the fat Removeite, this appeared to meet with Robin's approval. The flow of tears suddenly ceased, and in a moment or two a look of appreciation spread over the child's face.

"Like that, chappie?" cried Billy Bunter, continuing the manoeuvre. "Up we go! Now down!"

Bump!

The pram jerked on its back wheels, and then on the front, and the rocking pleased Robin mightily. His smiles broke into laughs, and after each jerk he gave a hearty chuckle.

Billy Bunter continued, but after five minutes he looked over his shoulder anxiously.

"Where in the dickens has she got to?" he gasped. "I wish to goodness she would buck up! I'm getting fed up with this. Hi! Don't you start crying again, you young shaver! Here we go again! Up she goes! Now down!"

Billy Bunter resumed his physical jerks with renewed zest, and once more Robin's features were transformed into seraphic smiles.

After what seemed an interminable period Billy was compelled to take a rest. He let go the perambulator and wiped his perspiring face.

"Oh, my word!" he gasped. "Where on earth has she got to?"

He walked into the centre of the road, and gazed anxiously up the dusty lane. There was not a soul to be seen.

"I'm jolly well not going to take this blessed pram past the gates," he growled. "I wish to goodness I had never offered to take the job on!"

There was a whimper from the pram at the side of the road, and Billy Bunter fled across to it, and resumed his tactics.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious!

BILLY BUNTER was looking very concerned.

Two hours had gone by, and still there were no signs of the woman. Robin had dropped into a light sleep, and seemed to be quite happy so long as Bunter stood by the pram. The slightest move from Bunter, and Robin's eyes opened like magic.

"What on earth has happened to her?" groaned Bunter. "Why hasn't she come back?"

As there was nobody present to answer the fat Removeite's remarks Bunter merely reiterated the puzzling question again and again.

He was beginning to feel a decided vacuum in the region of his waistcoat, and as the minutes ticked by he had visions of study tea-parties in full swing.

The cricket matches would be all over by now, and the studies crammed with hungry sportsmen.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter. "What on earth am I going to do! Where's that silly woman?"

He looked furtively up the road.

"Not a sign!" he muttered. "I can't leave this kid here. Perhaps that woman has purposely deserted it. What would happen if—if the pram was out here all night?"

Robin opened his eyes as Billy Bunter muttered his thoughts aloud, and the Owl of the Remove stood and blinked at the child.

Bunter was thoroughly perplexed.

"I'll take the pram and leave it with Gosling!" he decided, at last. "After all, it's more Gosling's job than mine. Hallo!

**GRAND
BOY
SCOUTS'
INTERNATIONAL**



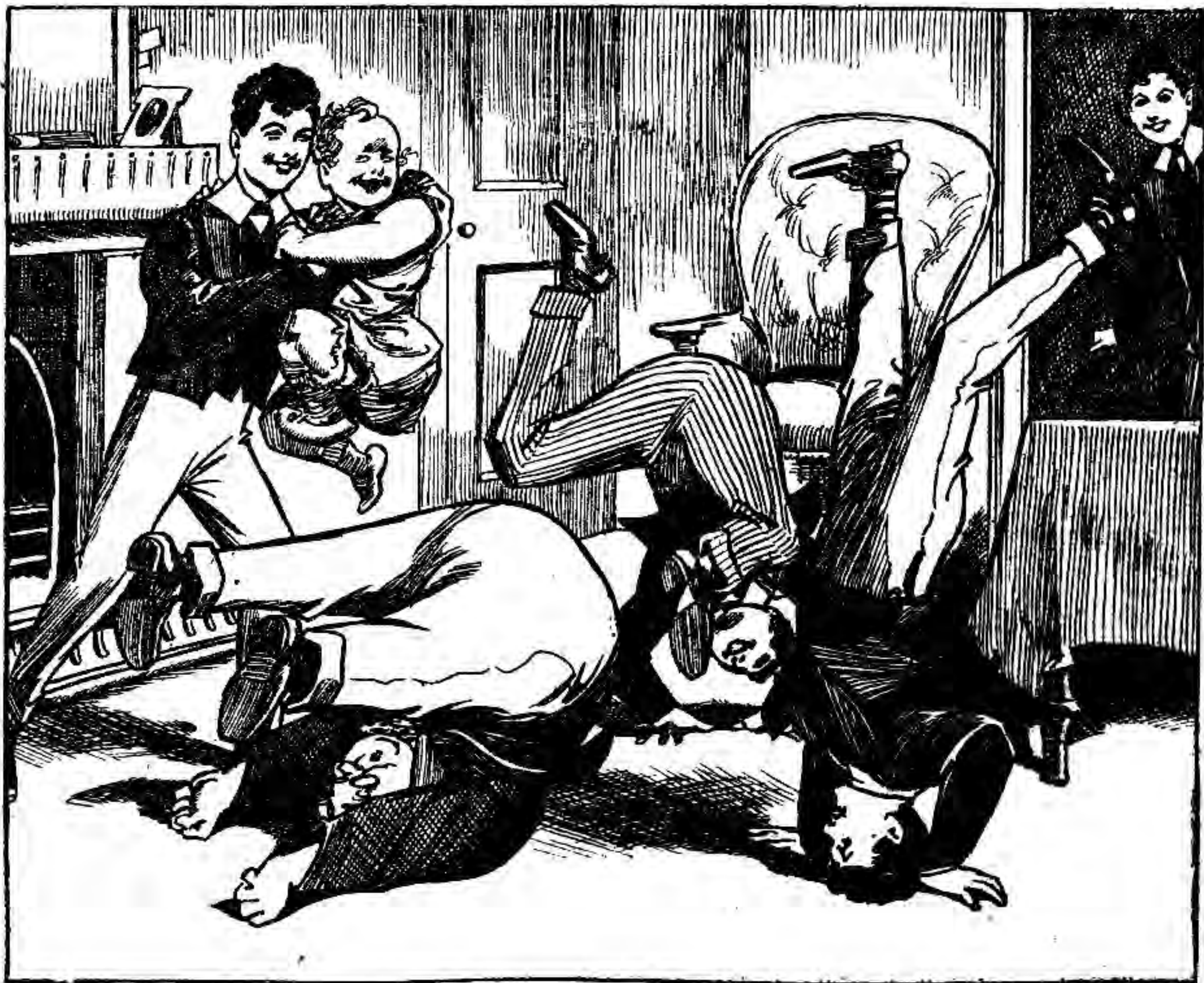
JAMBOREE Number!

Many special star features, including a long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood School, at the Jamboree, and a striking article on the great Boy Scout festival by "Scoutmaster."

Get your copy TO-DAY. Ask for

The Boys' FRIEND

The Story Paper for Every Boy.



"What on earth is happening?" cried Tom Brown. Brown lived in the next study to Harry Wharton's, and the stamping and bumping made him realise it was time he came and found out what was happening. "It's all right!" laughed Harry Wharton. "We're only keeping Robin amused!" (See Chapter 6.)

Started to feed, has he? Lucky little sweep!"

Robin had fished up a large feeding-bottle filled with a milky-looking substance, and he was sucking away contentedly at the rubber tube. This was too much for Bunter. He was feeling desperately hungry, and it was more than Bunter's flesh and blood could stand.

He grasped the pram and swung it round, and the next moment there was a loud howl from Robin.

"Hallo! What's the matter with the kid now?"

Shriek, shriek, shriek!

"Great Scott! What is it?"

Bunter set off at a great pace, and the pram rocked and bumped as it flew along the uneven lane. Robin's shrieks increased in volume as they neared the school, and then, suddenly, Billy Bunter was knocked almost senseless by the feeding-bottle, which the squalling Robin sent flying into the air. It caught the fat Removite full in the forehead, and there was a loud crash as the bottle flew into a dozen pieces.

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter gave a wild howl as the remains of the "feed" ran down his fat face.

"Ow! You beastly little ruffian!" he roared. "That's what comes of trying to be decent to a blessed kid. Ow!"

Robin kicked and yelled, and Billy Bunter rubbed the bump on his forehead.

"What a bad-tempered little bounder!" groaned Bunter. "How in the dickens can I take a howling kid into the school! Oh dear!"

Bunter picked up one of Robin's shoes, which the child had kicked off, and, after recovering his own cap, he recommenced his journey. He reached the big iron gates, and wheeled the pram through, and gave a shout to Gosling.

"Gossy! Gossy! Gosling!"

Gosling came tumbling out of his lodge, and as he caught sight of Bunter and the pram he stopped with a jerk.

"Oh, my hey!" he gasped.

"Come on, Gosling!" cried Benter. "You've got to take charge of this blessed pram. This kid's mother asked me to mind it about two hours ago."

Gosling stared blankly at the baby.

"Well, my heye!" he exclaimed.

"This 'ere beats all!"

"Here you are, Gosling! You're in charge now. I'm off!"

"Wot's that?"

"I'm off!" repeated Bunter. "I—I've got an important appointment with— with the Head. You just mind the pram. The mother will be along shortly. Just keep your eyes on the road."

Gosling gave a snort.

"Wot I says is this 'ere. I ain't 'aving nothing to do with that there pram!"

You just take that baby back to its mother, Master Bunter!"

"I tell you its mother will be along in a few minutes. She's gone to look for a purse she's lost."

"Well, I ain't going to do your mind-
ing for you, I can tell you plain, Master
Bunter!"

And Gosling rolled away in the direction of the bicycle-shed.

Billy Bunter blinked after his disappearing form in amazement.

"The rotter!" he gasped. "The beastly cad! Fancy leaving a poor kid alone like that! I—I shall have to try Mrs. Mimbles."

Bunter caught hold of the pram once more, and wheeled it across in the direction of the school tuckshop. He gained the little doorway, and blinked anxiously at a notice pinned to the oak panel.

"CLOSED FOR THE DAY!"

Mrs. Mumble."

He read the notice again and again, and finally gave a deep groan.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped. "What rotten luck!"

Bunter looked round anxiously. The Close was quite deserted. With the exception of Gosling, he had not been observed. Bunter did not want to have to parade the pram at the head of an

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astonished crowd. He made up his mind quickly. He would get Robin into Study No. 7 at once. He grabbed hold of the startled child and made a wild dash for the School House. He went upstairs quickly, only two or three fellows at the end of the passage observing the baby. Those two or three fellows remained petrified, wondering whether they were dreaming.

Without any ceremony Billy Bunter flung open the door of Study 7, and the next moment there was a cry of astonishment from the three juniors seated at the study table.

"Bunter!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Good gracious me, a baby!" exclaimed Alonzo Todd.

"Oh, my hat!" cried Tom Dutton, the deaf junior.

Billy Bunter collapsed into a chair, and seated Robin on his fat knee.

"What's the game, Bunter?" said Peter Todd. "Where did you get that kid from?"

"Oh dear!"

"Explain, you fat idiot!" cried Peter Todd. "What on earth have you been up to? You haven't taken to kidnapping, have you?"

"Kidnapping?"

"Oh, you fat chump!" howled Peter. "What's the good of sitting and mumbling? Why in the dickens don't you jolly well explain?"

Unfortunately for Bunter's explanations Robin recommenced his concert once more, but between the howls and fits of temper the occupants of Study No. 7 were able to get some idea of what had occurred. Billy Bunter was not very lucid, but Peter Todd, at least, understood, and he stood and gazed in wonderment at the strange spectacle of Bunter and his baby.

"Don't let him make that row!" cried Peter. "We shall have the whole blessed school here in a minute!"

"I'm bothered if I know how to keep him quiet," said Billy Bunter, perplexed.

"Perhaps he wants feeding?" suggested Alonzo. "Babies often do, as I know for a fact!"

"Yes; but—but—but—"

"Perhaps you're not holding him right," said Tom Dutton. "If you were to hold him a little more horizontally he—"

"I was going to suggest a little more perpendicular," said Peter.

"Oh, stuff!" exclaimed Alonzo Todd.

"By holding him horizontal you get a perfectly level and even circulation of the blood."

"How do you know?"

"It stands to reason, my dear Peter."

"Better keep him upright, or the blood may flow into his head, and then he will have a fit. I've seen a dog have a fit, and it's very unpleasant."

"I think the kid wants something to eat," said Billy Bunter. "I jolly well know that I'm famished; and if Robin is feeling anything like me, no wonder he's making a blessed row!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I haven't had a blessed mouthful of grub since dinner," continued Bunter. "We shall have to try and get a feeding-bottle for this kid. He chucked the one he had, and hit me on the head with it."

"Oh crumbs! Just look at the poor kid!" said Peter Todd.

"He'll stop it as soon as he gets something to eat. Hasn't anyone got a bit of toffee, or something like that?"

Alonzo Todd dived into his pocket, and pulled out a chunk of butter-scotch.

"Here you are, my dear Bunter!" he said, presenting it to the baby.

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Master Robin looked at it, and held out a little fat claw. The next moment smiles replaced his tears, and he was sucking the butter-scotch as if for a wager.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Many Visitors I

THE news that Bunter had introduced a baby into the school spread like wildfire. Inquisitive juniors rolled along to Study No. 7 in a steady stream, and Peter Todd's patience at last gave out, and he went along to Study No. 1, and asked Harry Wharton to come to the rescue.

"It's like this," he explained to the captain of the Remove, "Bunter's having his tea now, and when he's finished we've got to think of what we're going to do about the poor little kiddie the fat duffer has brought in."

"Well?"

"We can't jolly well talk over a plan of campaign whilst dozens of silly idiots bang on the door and ask to see Bunter's baby!"

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned.

"If you chaps will have Robin in here for a bit, we can get on with the bizney."

"Good idea!" laughed Bob Cherry. "Bring the merry infant along to his Nunky Harry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton's face was crimson; but he laughingly told Peter Todd that he and his chums would look after the young stranger for a time.

And so Robin had been introduced to Harry Wharton & Co. by Peter. However, when Peter tried to place the youngster in Frank Nugent's armchair the trouble started.

Robin refused to be left, and the more the unhappy Peter endeavoured to push him into the armchair the louder grew Robin's yells.

"Perhaps he will come to me," said Bob Cherry, at last.

"Well, try."

Bob Cherry held out his hands to Robin, who looked at him suspiciously. Bob worked up his most agreeable smile.

"Come to his uncle, den, little chickity-chick!" he said coaxingly.

"Do away!" said Robin.

"What on earth does he mean?" said Bob, puzzled. "He's talking about dough now."

Peter Todd laughed.

"He means go away," he explained.

"Oh!"

"I'd better have a try," said Nugent. "Come to me, kid—come to your Uncle Frank! I'll get you a nice packet of toffee. Come on, kiddy-widdy!"

But the kiddy-widdy refused to leave Peter Todd. He had taken a grip on Peter's tie for safety, and it was clear that he would not be easily dislodged.

"Shall I try with my worthy self?" asked Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You might scare him," said Frank Nugent. "He can't be accustomed to dark gentlemen. We don't want him to start howling."

"Oh, let Inky have a try!"

"I will display the most tenderful agreeableness to the esteemed Robin."

"Go it, then."

"Will you come to the armful embrace of my worthy self, most august and esteemed Robin?" said the Nabob of Bhanipur softly. "Will it please you to reposefully recline in my—"

Robin gave a howl.

Probably the nabob's dark complexion frightened him. He kicked and howled, and Peter Todd did his best to soothe him. Hurree Singh retreated.

"The esteemed Robin does not like me, I am afraid," he remarked. "I am sorry to have restarted him upon the terrific howlfulness."

Robin howled and roared, and Peter Todd nursed and soothed him; but it was a full five minutes before he was quiet again. The chums of Study No. 1 breathed a sigh of relief.

"That's better," said Bob Cherry. "The kid seems in a better temper now. He's evidently fed-up with making a row. The great thing now is to keep him in a good temper. Suppose you stroke him, Toddy?"

"I don't suppose that would do any good."

"It does to dogs and cats."

"He isn't a dog or a cat. You can try, if you like."

Bob Cherry stroked Robin. Robin seemed to be in a lively mood at last. He drove a chubby little fist into Bob Cherry's eye, and Bob gave a gasp and jumped back. He put up his hand to his eye.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors laughed loudly, and Robin laughed, too. He evidently considered that he had performed something of an achievement. He laughed and crowed, and made another attempt to get at Bob Cherry's eye; but Bob took care to keep his distance.

"My hat!" said Bob. "The little bouncer! Bunged me right in the eye!"

Bob wasn't angry at all. He seemed to look upon it as Robin did, as an achievement. He rubbed his eye and chuckled. Robin chuckled, too.

Harry Wharton's brow was wrinkled in thought. A new idea had come into his mind.

"I say, does anybody know what age kids begin to walk?" he asked.

"I walked when I was four, I remember," said Nugent.

"Three, I should think," said Bob Cherry.

"More likely two," said Peter Todd.

"I don't know," said Wharton doubtfully. "This kid ought to be able to walk. Look at his legs; they are strong enough."

"See if he can stand up."

Peter Todd gingerly set Robin upon his feet.

It was pretty clear that the young stranger could stand up.

He stood up, as a matter of fact, and walked about the study, beginning to examine things with a great deal of interest and curiosity.

Frank Nugent was squatting down in front of the study fire. Harry Wharton and Frank had invited the chums of Study No. 13 to a spread, and the introduction of Robin by Peter Todd had interrupted the preparations. However, as Robin seemed to be peacefully inclined for the moment, Frank proceeded with the cooking.

"Get on with the washing, Franky," laughed Harry Wharton, "in case Robin gets hungry suddenly."

Frank Nugent shook the frying-pan, and there was a loud sizzling noise from the sausages.

Then suddenly there was a howl from Robin. He had caught sight of the nabob's dark face again. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh was smiling his most agreeable smile in order to propitiate Robin, but Robin was evidently not to be propitiated. He did not like dark complexions.

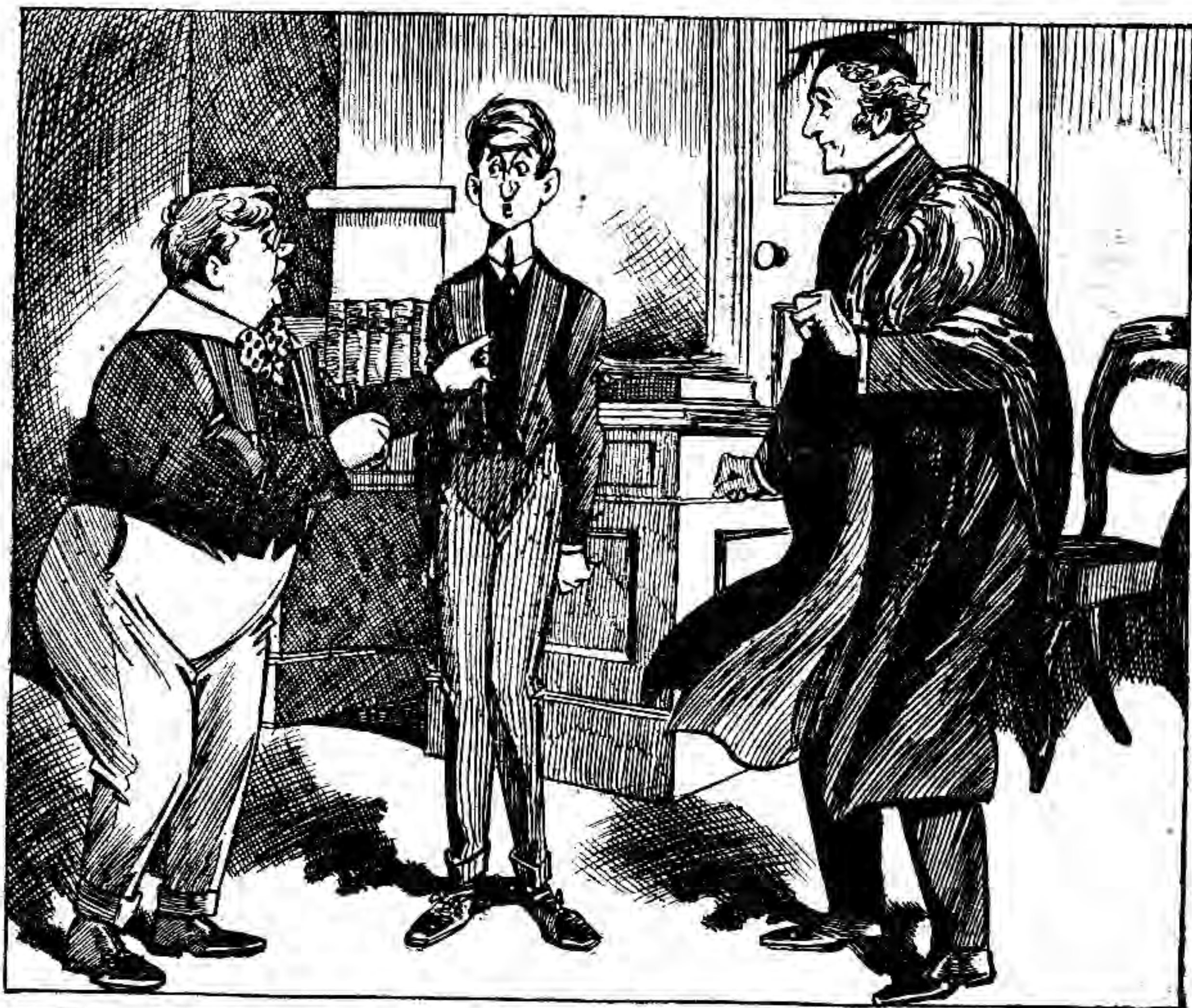
Howl, howl, howl!

Harry Wharton looked alarmed.

"Hang it, this won't do! We shall have a crowd here. Shut up, Robin!"

Shriek, shriek, shriek!

"What's the matter with him?"



"Now, Bunter," said the Head quietly, "kindly explain yourself. What do you mean by talking all this nonsense about the kid?" "It's—it's not nonsense, sir!" spluttered Billy Bunter. "It's absolutely true, isn't it, Toddy?" The fat Removite turned with an appealing gesture towards the perplexed Alonzo. (See chapter 5.)

"I fear that it's my darkful skin that troubles the esteemed Robin," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "My regretfulness is great."

Robin howled and ran to Wharton, and clung to his trousers. He was clearly in great terror of the nabob. Hurree Singh looked greatly distressed. He was the quietest and gentlest of all the fellows in the study, and he would not have hurt a mouse, and he was very fond of children. It was hard that Robin should take exception to him in his emphatic way. But Robin was not to be placated. He clung to Wharton's trousers, and yelled, and would not be comforted.

"My hat!" said Wharton. "What on earth—"

"I will leavefully quit the esteemed study," said Hurree Singh hurriedly. "He will perhapsfully be quiet when I have taken my esteemed departure."

"Well, if you wouldn't mind, Luky, for a bit—"

"I will departfully go at once."

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hastily left the study.

His departure had the desired effect upon Robin.

The shrieks ceased, and the tears dried up like an April shower, and smiles broke out upon the chubby face.

"Little rascal!" said Nugent. "That's all he wanted. Poor old Luky will have

to keep out of the study whilst the kid's Cherry, looking round hurriedly. "I here."

Robin tugged at Harry Wharton.

The captain of the Remove looked down upon him.

"Do you want anything, Robin?"

"Baker!"

"Eh?"

"Baker!" said Robin.

"What on earth does he mean by baker?" said Harry Wharton. "Can anybody guess?"

"Baker!" said Robin insistently.

"Baker! Bupper!"

"My only hat! Baker! Bupper! Bupper sounds like a German word! The kid can't be talking German."

"Baker! Bupper!" shrieked Robin.

Harry Wharton rubbed his forehead. Robin was getting near crying again, and if he once started, there was no telling when he would stop. But what he meant by baker and bupper was more than the clumps of the Remove could guess. Bupper might be a German word, but it certainly wasn't an English one. Nugent dragged out a German dictionary and looked for it; but it wasn't there.

"Baker!" roared Robin. "Bupper!"

"Perhaps he's hungry! Try the butter-schotch! Quick! He's just going to begin yelling again!"

"Where's the butter-schotch?"

"I've got some somewhere," said Bob

think I put it down somewhere—on a chair, I think. Yes, that chair Marky's sitting on."

"Get up, Marky!"

"My hat!" exclaimed the Lancashire lad.

"Get up, quick! Yes, there it is, sticking to his trousers."

"By Jove, I had no idea—"

"You jolly well ought to be more careful, Marky. Yank it off him, Bob!"

"Baker!" roared Robin. "Boo-hoo! Bupper!"

"It won't come off! Linley's stuck to it! Try the kid with some grub—quick! There's plenty in the cupboard!"

Frank Nugent tore the cupboard door open hastily.

"There's only bread-and-butter here."

"Butter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, a light breaking in upon him. "Perhaps he means butter when he says bupper. Try him."

"But what can he mean by baker?"

"Why, bread, of course!" exclaimed Harry, pursuing the same line of thought. "See, a baker is the chap who brings bread, and kids get these things mixed. Let's try him with bread-and-butter."

Harry Wharton was right.

Robin seized upon the bread-and-butter with perfect satisfaction, and the threatened storm was averted.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Robin Sets the Pace!

"THAT'S all right so far!" said Harry Wharton. "We're getting on with Bunter's baby. There ought to be a dictionary made up of baby lingo. Illo, he's talking again!"

"Dink!" said Robin.

"Dink! Perhaps that means something to drink."

"I shouldn't wonder. Is there any milk?"

"Yes, there was some——"

"I'm afraid I've used that," said Frank Nugent. "You see, I'm making some scones."

"Oh crumbs! Never mind! There's a tin of condensed milk, I think——"

"No, there isn't," said Nugent, stirring away at a saucepan on the fire. "I've shoved it all into this."

"Oh, you dummy!" cried Bob Cherry. "I've got a jolly good mind to shove you into it as well! How on earth do you think we're going to keep Robin quiet if you use up all the Tommy?"

"Sorry, Bob!" laughed Frank Nugent. "You would jolly soon squeal out if we asked you here and there was nothing to eat!"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Well, it can't be helped. I'll go and see whether I can borrow some milk."

"Dink!" roared Robin.

"Quiet, old chap! You shall have your dink in half a shake!"

"Dink! Robin thirsty!"

"Half a mo'! It's all right! Here, try him with one of those sausages; it may keep him quiet."

"Look here, you fellows—I say, here, hold on——"

Frank Nugent rose from his position at the fire, and held up a fork with a fried sausage on it. He proffered it to Robin, and Robin started on it with avidity. He seemed to be hungry, and he liked sausages. He finished that one in next to no time, and held out a greasy, chubby hand, with a greasy grin on his shiny face.

"Robin want more."

"My hat! Just bark at the greedy little bounder!"

Another sausage was forthcoming without any delay, and Robin finished the second sausage, strewing some of the fragments of it over his clothes and the floor. Then he again announced the fact that he was "dirsty."

Harry Wharton opened the door to look for Bob Cherry. The latter was tearing back along the passage with a jug of milk, spilling it at every step.

"Here you are, kid!"

Wharton took the jug and carried it to Robin. Robin insisted upon taking it in his own little hands to drink, and at the second gulp he, of course, upset it, and for a moment he swam in milk. The jug went to the floor with a crash, and smashed into a dozen pieces.

"Phew!"

"Ow!" roared Robin. "Ow! Boo-hoo!"

The study door was flung open again, and Percy Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, burst in. His face was aflame with rage.

"Where's my milk?" he roared.

Harry Wharton looked round. Bolsover was almost stuttering with fury, and he had his mouth open, and his clenched fists sawing the air.

"Where's my milk?"

"Eh? What milk? What on earth are you talking about?"

"You see——" began Bob Cherry.

"That—that beast," roared Bolsover, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 652.

pointing to Bob—"that beast rushed into my study, where I've got some fellows in to tea, and collared the jug of milk off the table and rushed off with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you see, I hadn't any time to explain to the dummies," said Bob Cherry. "I'm sorry to interrupt any chap's little tea-party; but when a fellow is trying to keep Bunter's baby quiet he's allowed some relaxation of the rules. Robin couldn't wait, you see."

"Oh, my giddy aunt! What—what on earth are you doing with a baby here?" gasped Bolsover major, his fury changing to amazement as he looked at Robin, who was beginning to whimper. "Is this the latest? Where's my milk?"

"You can see it."

"You—you've smashed my jug! You rotters! You'll jolly well have to pay for it, that's all! I'll——"

"Oh, rats! Of course, we'll pay for it! And the milk, too! We wanted some milk for Robin, and we had to have it."

"You're not going to have mine! You silly chumps, what have you brought the baby into the school for? You—you——"

"Oh, dry up! You're frightening Robin!"

"Blow Robin! I say——"

"Boo-hoo!" roared Robin. "Ugly man! Do away!"

"Ha, ha! You hear that, Bolsover? Get out! Robin can't stand ugly faces! He says he can't!"

"Do away! Boo-hoo!"

"I'll jolly well——"

"Out you go, you bounder!" cried Harry Wharton. "We'll pay for the damage, but if you don't clear out, you'll get some damage that can't be paid for! Outside!"

"I won't! I——"

"Buzz off!"

"I—I——"

"Chuck him out!"

The chums of the Remove collared Bolsover, and hustled him through the doorway. He sat down in the passage with some violence. He was up again in a moment, and charging like a mad bull into the study.

But he found Harry Wharton & Co. waiting for him. They collared him again, and carried him out, and he went down the passage with several pairs of active boots behind him to help him on.

The chums of the Remove re-entered Study No. 1; this time Bolsover major did not follow them. Bolsover had had enough just then.

Robin quietened down when Bolsover was gone. Fortunately, the amount of milk he had consumed had satisfied him for the time. He was in a shocking state between milk and butter and sausage-fat and tears, and Harry Wharton & Co. stood round him and surveyed their charge with very serious expressions.

"I think that there will be a row about this kid!" said Wharton, after a long pause.

"Well, there's a jolly good row with it, at any rate," said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What I mean is that the Head or Mr. Quelch would kick up a row if they found we had Robin in here."

"Oh!"

"It's all very well for that fat idiot to say a woman asked him to hold the pram; but supposing she's looking all over the place for it now?"

"By Jove!"

"She's probably gone to the police about it," continued Harry Wharton.

"Jolly good thing if she has!" laughed Bob Cherry. "They might run in

Bunter for kidnapping. It would solve the great Bunter problem then."

"But the Head would be awfully sick with us as well. After all, we're taking part in the kidnapping, if it comes to that."

"Us? Kidnapping?"

"Well, it's not quite as bad as that," laughed Harry Wharton. "But I feel jolly certain that either the Head or Mr. Quelch ought to be told about it in case there's a shindy."

"Hear, hear!" said Mark Linley, the Lancashire lad. "I quite agree with Harry. I think Bunter ought to go and tell the Head all about it."

"Or Mr. Quelch!" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, Bunter ought to have finished his tea by now. I'll go and shake him up, and send him along to old Quelch. If the Head ought to be told, Mr. Quelch is sure to make Bunter go to him."

"That's the wheeze!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Buzz along, Bob, and we'll keep Robin in a good temper!"

Bob Cherry hurried along to Study No. 7, and found Bunter finishing up the last remaining crumbs from the tea table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob. "Just in time to see the porpoise being fed!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I——"

"That's all right, porpoise! Don't stop for me! I've just come in to have a jaw."

"Oh!"

"Look here, Alonzo!" said Bob Cherry, turning to Alonzo Todd, who was keeping Billy Bunter company in the little study. "We've just been talking over this affair of Bunter's baby, and we've come to a decision."

"Is that so, my dear Cherry?" exclaimed Alonzo politely.

"Yes, it is so," replied Bob. "And we've decided that Bunter must tell Mr. Quelch about Robin."

Bunter gave a snort.

"What's it got to do with old Quelch?" he grunted. "I tell you, Cherry, I'm fed-up with Robin! In—in fact, I've made up my mind to let you fellows have him in Study No. 1!"

"What?"

"That's it," said Bunter. "you can have Robin. He's a nice little chap. He'll keep you amused for hours. That's all right. Not a word. You needn't thank me, old man."

Bob Cherry's face was a study.

He stood and glowered at the Owl of the Remove.

"Of course, you'll have to hand the kid over to his mother if she turns up," continued Bunter. "She may not turn up at all, but there's just the risk."

"Oh, you howling, burbling jabber-wock!" hooted Bob Cherry. "Don't you try your silly tricks on me. You're going down to Quelch at once! Do you hear?"

"I—I——"

"If you don't get out of this study in one minute I'll—I'll pulverise you!"

"But I——"

"Ten seconds gone!"

"I think Cherry is quite serious about it, my dear Bunter," said Alonzo Todd meekly. "I consider you will be well advised to go."

"But I don't know what to say to Quelch!" howled Billy Bunter.

"Well, Alonzo will go with you. Get up you fat porpoise!"

"Will you come as well, Toddy?" exclaimed Billy Bunter, turning to Alonzo Todd.

"Very well," replied Alonzo.

Alonzo Todd was quite the most obliging fellow at Greyfriars. He would



Robin hung on tenaciously to Billy Bunter's ear, and the fat Removite gave a howl. "Ow! Leggo!" he cried. "Todd, for goodness' sake hand him over that beastly thing, and stop prancing about!" (See chapter 7.)

put himself to any amount of inconvenience to oblige a fellow-being. In this respect he was as different as is a bean to a potato to his cousin Peter. Although Peter and Alonzo bore a striking resemblance to one another in other respects, their points of view were absolutely dissimilar.

Bob Cherry held open the study door and waited.

"Come on, Alonzo!" he said. "You had better lead the Owl along, and see that he jolly well tells the truth to Mr. Quelch. We'll look after Robin until you come back with the verdict."

Billy Bunter hesitated; but Bob raised his right boot in a very threatening manner, and the sight of it convinced Bunter that he had better go. He rolled along the passage in the wake of the obliging Alonzo, and Bob Cherry watched them turn the corner at the foot of the staircase, and disappear from view.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Dr. Locke!

ALONZO TODD and Billy Bunter found Mr. Quelch's study empty. Mr. Quelch was the Remove Form-master, and was usually to be found about this time busy at work in his study, but, after knocking on the door several times and drawing no reply, Alonzo took the liberty of opening the door, and found the study tenantless.

"We must go along to Dr. Locke, my dear Bunter," said Alonzo. "Come along!"

"B-but I— Here, wait for me, you ass!" exclaimed Bunter, puffing along in the wake of Alonzo.

"Come along, my dear Bunter! Here we are! Now, you must explain to Dr. Locke. I'll just knock on the door for you, and you must do the rest. I will come in just to give you a little moral support, my dear fellow."

Alonzo Todd tapped at Dr. Locke's door, and the headmaster's voice bade them enter. Alonzo pushed Bunter forward, and the Owl of the Remove rolled into the study. The Head was deep in papers; but he looked up patiently as the two Removites came in.

"Yes. What is it?"

Billy Bunter cleared his throat.

"Ahem! I—I—I—I— That is to say, sir, I—I—I—"

"Dear me, Bunter!" said the Head. "You must be a little more lucid. As you can see, I am very busy, and simply have not the time to listen to your—your chanting!"

The Owl of the Remove blinked furiously through his enormous spectacles.

"You see, sir, it's like this," he began. "I—I—I've got a—a kid at Greyfriars."

Dr. Locke looked interested.

"Really, Bunter, that is news to me;

but you ought to have got my consent before you brought it into the school."

The two juniors stared. That Dr. Locke should receive the news about the child in this astounding manner was too remarkable for words.

"Do—do you mind if—if I keep the kid—anyway, for the time being, sir?"

"I do not object, my boys, so long as you have found proper accommodation for the kid," said Dr. Locke. "I suppose it is quiet and tame?"

"W-w-what, sir?"

"I shouldn't advise you to keep it unless it is quiet. Anyway, it would be best for you to keep it on a chain."

"A—a chain, sir?"

"Yes, or it may escape. Of course, if you wish to keep it here you'll be prepared to take proper care of it—to see to feeding it, etc.?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"Good! I like to see my boys fond of pets," said the Head. "If you do not find sufficient time to look after it in the school, you can get someone at Friardale to take care of it."

"Y-yes, sir. I was thinking that if the owner doesn't turn up, we shall have to arrange with someone in Friardale, anyway, as it would be too much trouble in the study."

"In the study!" Dr. Locke laughed. "You could hardly keep it in the study, Bunter."

"Nunno, sir; so I was thinking."
"And you are quite satisfied with the kid?"

"Y-yes, sir—in a way."
"You seem rather doubtful about it. I hope you have not given too much for it, Bunter? What price does a kid fetch nowadays?"

"W-w-what, sir?"
"How much did you pay for it, Bunter?"

"I—I didn't pay anything for it, sir."
"Dear me!" laughed the Head. "You are very lucky, Bunter, to have been presented with a kid!"

Billy Bunter and Alonzo Todd stood and gaped at the worthy Head. It struck the two juniors that Dr. Locke had been suddenly bereft of his senses. He was discussing the affair of Bunter's baby as though such a thing was an everyday occurrence.

"I—I wasn't exactly presented with it, sir!" faltered Bunter. "You—you see, the woman gave it to me to mind. It—it was in a pram!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Head gave a hearty laugh, and Bunter gave a jump of surprise. "Dear—dear me!" chuckled Dr. Locke. "What ever will these country people do next? Who ever would dream of putting a kid into a perambulator?"

"You see, sir, the kid's not very big; it has only just about learned to walk, I should say."

"But they can walk when they're a day or two old!" exclaimed the Head. "I've never heard of such a thing!"

"The woman asked me to mind the pram, and as she never came back I brought the kid into the school, sir!"

"Oh!"
"You see, sir, I didn't know what to do. The kid started to cry, and then it chucked a bottle at me and hit me on the head."

Dr. Locke gave a start, and rose from his chair, and faced the fat Removeite.

"Bunter!"
"The bump's still there, sir," continued the Owl of the Remove. "Of course, the bottle was broken, and if we keep the kid here, we shall have to buy another one for it."

"Bunter!" exclaimed the Head sternly. "Are you being impertinent, or merely talking utter nonsense because you cannot help it?"

"I—I—I—"
"Do you really mean to suggest that a kid could throw a bottle at you?"

"Yes, sir; it did, sir!"
There was a portentous frown upon the Head's face as he stood gazing down at the gesticulating Owl of the Remove.

"Now, Bunter," said the Head quietly, "kindly explain yourself. What do you mean by talking all this nonsense about the kid?"

"It's—it's not nonsense, sir!" spluttered Billy Bunter. "It's absolutely the truth, isn't it, Toddy?"

The fat Removeite turned, with an appealing gesture, towards the perplexed Alonzo.

"Todd," said the Head sternly, "you will explain to me exactly what has happened. I gather from Bunter that he has brought a kid into the Remove Form passage. Let me say at once that that is not allowed. If a junior wishes to keep a pet at the school, he must arrange with Gosling to have it properly chained up outside. I dare say Gosling could find a patch of grass where the kid could graze. I certainly won't allow the pet to be kept in your study!"

Alonzo Todd stared at the Head, and then, as the truth of the absurd mistake burst upon him, he could not restrain a chuckle.

"Oh, sir, I—I—"
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"You will explain yourself immediately!" sniffed the Head.

"Ha, ha! I'm sorry, sir, but—but it is funny! You have misunderstood Bunter the whole time, sir. When he said kid, he meant a human kid, not a young goat."

"That's it, sir!" exclaimed Bunter. "You—you have misunderstood."

Dr. Locke coughed violently and wiped his glasses.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's perfectly clear! A-ha, ha! Excuse me, my boys. A most absurd mistake! I am to blame in misunderstanding you. You should—ahem!—you should never refer to human beings as kids. It is quite wrong, and is bound to lead to misunderstandings."

"I—I'm sorry, sir; but I wish you would advise me what to do. I've got the kid—er—I mean, the baby—that is, Robin, upstairs."

"A—a baby?"
Dr. Locke gave a gasp of astonishment.

"You see, sir, it was like this. I met a woman in the Friardale Road, and she asked me to mind her pram whilst she went back and looked for a purse she had dropped. I—I minded the pram with the kid—er—that is, the baby in it, and I waited for over two hours, and she didn't come back."

"Bunter!"
"I—I was famished, sir, so—so I brought the kid in here. I couldn't very well leave it out of doors all night, could I, sir?"

"Your story amazes me, Bunter!" muttered the Head. "It is almost unbelievable!"

"I think it is quite true, sir," said Alonzo Todd bravely. "Bunter is not a very truthful boy, as a rule, but I think that on this occasion he is telling the truth."

Billy Bunter glared at Alonzo.
"And do you mean to tell me that this poor child is in your study now?" said Dr. Locke.

"Wharton has got him now, sir."

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



AUGUST.

2nd Monday	- - -	9.15 p.m.
3rd Tuesday	- - -	9.13 "
4th Wednesday	- - -	9.12 "
5th Thursday	- - -	9.10 "
6th Friday	- - -	9.8 "
7th Saturday	- - -	9.6 "
8th Sunday	- - -	9.4 "

"I am amazed! You are a very foolish boy, Bunter. I am at a loss to know what to do. In a short time Mr. Quelch will return. He has gone to Courtfield. I must discuss the affair with him. Meantime, you will return to your study, and you must look after the child."

"Y-yes, sir."
"You must see that it is fed and kept warm. I will send for you when I have seen Mr. Quelch. You may go."

And Billy Bunter and Alonzo Todd went.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Keeping Bunter's Baby Amused!

BILLY BUNTER and Alonzo Todd hurried up to the Remove-Form passage.

"You had better tell Wharton the news," said Alonzo. "I want to arrange something with Fish, so I cannot come along for a few moments."

The Owl of the Remove gave a grunt and left Alonzo Todd at the head of the stairs. Bunter made a bee-line for Study No. 1, and flung the door open and walked in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"
Bob Cherry hailed the new-comer with much more than his usual warmth, and Harry Wharton turned his head in the direction of the door with a sigh of relief.

"Come in, porpoise!" he cried. "You can help to keep the ball rolling."

"Eh?"
"Keep doing something, for goodness' sake!" gasped Harry Wharton, who was holding Robin in his arms. "The moment there's no excitement this young rascal brings down the house!"

"I say, you fellows—"
"Dry up, Bunter!" laughed Bob Cherry. "We know you're going to suggest a feed first and amusement after, but there's nothing doing. Franky spoiled most of the things with his beastly cooking. Robin knocked the tray off the table about five minutes ago. I can tell you things are fairly humming. Have you been down to see old Quelch?"

"No."
"Then you're jolly well going now!" roared Bob Cherry. "I told Alonzo to see you went."

"Oh, really, Cherry, I—"
"Oh, scat!" exclaimed Bob. "You're going down to see Mr. Quelch and tell him that you've got a baby!"

"It's not my baby!"
"It is! You brought Robin here, so now you've jolly well got to look after him! I can tell you it will cost you a small fortune to keep him, especially when it comes to educating him!"

"It's not my baby, I tell you! I refuse to have anything more to do with it!"

"You're going down to tell Quelch, I say!"

"I'm not! It's nothing to do with Mr. Quelch. I've placed the matter in the hands of the Head."

"What!"
"Dr. Locke knows all about it. I—I explained the whole thing to him, and he—he quite understands everything! He said: 'Bunter, you did the right thing!' or words to that effect."

"Oh, you Ananias!" said Bob Cherry. "You can tell that yarn to the Marines. I—Hallo, hallo! There goes Robin again! Keep him quiet for a tick, Harry, old man."

The captain of the Remove was doing his utmost to stop the flow of tears, but it seemed as though Robin was not to be comforted.

"Go on, you fellows!" gasped Harry. "You'll have to start the games going again. Bunter can help."



Robin did not seem to mind the transfer. He gave Billy Bunter a playful punch on the nose, and there was a shriek from the Owl of the Remove as his spectacles went flying as a result of the blow. (See chapter 6.)

Robin's shrieks were deafening. He evidently wanted something, or else his own noise pleased him. Harry Wharton jerked him up and down, but still the shrieks continued.

Bob Cherry skipped up and down the little study, waving his arms above his head. His antics were evidently observed through the rain of tears which were running down Robin's cheeks.

The shrieks suddenly subsided, and he gazed in wonderment at the fighting man of the Remove as he skipped up and down, puffing and blowing from the exertion of his efforts.

"That's the wheeze!" shouted Harry Wharton. "Keep it up, Bob! Ha, ha, ha! Look at the funny man, Robin!"

Robin's features showed evident pleasure. His face became wreathed in smiles, and in a few moments he was gurgling and cooing, as though he had never even learned to cry.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "I can't do this all day! For goodness' sake start on some new wheeze, Franky!"

"Ha, ha! Right-ho!" laughed Frank Nugent.

He suddenly went down on hands and knees, and the next instant he kicked his feet into the air, and he was standing on his head in the middle of the study.

Robin gave a shriek of merriment, and Bob Cherry stopped in his stride and gave a hearty roar of laughter.

"Hallo, that's the new wheeze, is it? That's easier than prancing about, anyway. Come on, Bunter, you fat porpoise! Follow your uncle's lead."

Bob Cherry went head-over-heels on the study carpet, and Robin gurgled his appreciation.

"Go it!" cried Harry Wharton. "We've made the little scamp laugh. Ha, ha, ha! That's the idea, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter decided to enter into the

spirit of the thing. He went down with a bump that shook the study to its foundations, and for a moment Robin looked thoroughly startled.

Harry Wharton instantly swung him up and down, and pointed towards the acrobatic Removites. Billy Bunter went rolling over and over in his efforts to stand upon his fat head.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton. "Keep it up, you fellows!"

Robin was enjoying himself mightily. He was gurgling and cooing with great zest, when the study door was flung open and an excited Removite looked in.

"What on earth is happening?" cried Tom Brown. Brown lived in Study No. 2, the next study to Harry Wharton's, and the stamping and bumping had nearly brought his bookcase over. He thought it was time he came and found out what was happening.

"It's all right, Brownie!" laughed Harry Wharton, as Billy Bunter went over with an extra loud crash. "We're only keeping Robin amused!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt! What's Cherry standing on his head for?"

"That's amusing Robin," explained Wharton. "We have to do this to stop the young bounder from shrieking the place down."

"My word!"

"Gerraway!" spluttered Bob Cherry, with his face on the dusty carpet. "If you don't clear off you can come and relieve one of us!"

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter gave a shriek as he toppled head-over-heels and banged his head against Frank Nugent's heel. Frank had collapsed from his upside-down position, and he felt quite a jolt on his leg as Bunter's head came into contact with him.

"Yow!" roared Bunter. "Oh dear! I've busted my cranium! Ow! Help!"

Robin's chuckles increased in volume as Bunter's shrieks rang out, and there was a roar of laughter from Tom Brown.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed the New Zealand junior. "I'll leave you to it, but for goodness' sake don't shake the whole building down! Think of the next-door study!"

Tom Brown withdrew his head and slammed the door to with a bang.

"Gain, 'gain, 'gain!" cried Robin, kicking his chubby legs about excitedly. "Robin want more. 'Gain!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob, wiping his perspiring forehead with his handkerchief. "Just hark at him! He wants some more!"

Billy Bunter gave a loud groan.

"I—I believe I've fractured my skull, you chaps!" he moaned.

"That's all right, Bunter!" laughed Bob Cherry. "There's nothing dangerous in that. You're quite safe."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Gain, 'gain!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This is getting a bit too thick. After all, the kid belongs to Bunter, and it's up to Bunter to keep it amused. I'm hanged if I'm going to spend the rest of the day standing on my head!"

"Hear, hear!" said Frank Nugent.

"If Bunter wants a baby let him have it!" continued Bob. "We've done our duty so far, and—and I must say I've taken a fancy to the poor little kid, but I'm hanged if I'm going to take over all Bunter's responsibilities!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You see, Robin probably regards you in the light of a father, Bunter," said Bob. "You—you ought to feel jolly proud to have a nice chubby baby like that. There, look at the young scamp, he's trying to grab your specs now!"

Robin was making frantic efforts to claw hold of Bunter's spectacles, and Harry Wharton, who was beginning to get rather fed-up with holding him any longer, seized the opportunity, and placed Robin into Bunter's arms.

The young scamp did not seem to mind the transfer. He gave Billy Bunter a playful punch on the nose, and there was a shriek from the Owl of the Remove as his glasses went flying as a result of the blow.

"Ow!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! The spiteful little bounder! For goodness' sake hand me up my glasses. I can't see a yard. Oh, where are they?"

"Here they are, you dummy!"

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laughed Harry Wharton, handing the spectacles up to Bunter.

The short-sighted junior grasped Robin to his breast, and put the glasses on his fat little nose.

"You're all right, now, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "I suppose you'll be taking your baby back to your study now. Time's getting on, you know, and you'll soon have to think of bathing him and putting him to bed."

Bunter gave a start.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped. "I—I don't know anything about babies! How in the dickens do you bath 'em?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Alonzo will tell you!" laughed Bob Cherry. "Dear old Alonzo knows nearly everything, and he's sure to know about babies."

"That's it," said Wharton. "Buzz off, now, Bunter, there's a good fellow!"

"Robin's nice and quiet for the moment. Now's your opportunity," said Bob Cherry persuasively. "Good-bye, Bunter, old man. We don't want to lose you; but we think you ought to go, you know!"

"But I——"

"Cheerio-oh!" said Frank Nugent. "Look out; Robin is going to start again in half-a-mo!"

The chums gently pushed the fat Remove towards the door.

Robin looked as though he were on the verge of another outburst, and Bob Cherry hastily flung open the study-door in order to hasten Bunter's exit.

The Owl of the Remove made an effort to remonstrate; but he was too late now.

With a last gentle heave, Bunter and his baby were pushed into the passage, and the next instant the door of Study No. 1 was shut, and there was a click from the lock as the key was hastily turned.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Ructions in Study No. 7!

"THE rotters!"

Billy Bunter tried to relieve his feelings as he stood in the Remove Form passage.

"The cads! Fancy turning a chap out like that! Brrr-r-r!"

"Ooo go back!" said Robin. "Robin want more games. Ooo go in there!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the child in his arms. It looked as though Robin were about to shriek again, and Bunter was very anxious to avoid that. He looked hastily up and down the corridor, and then suddenly made a wild dash for Study No. 7.

He flung open the door and entered, and slammed the door to again, just as Robin gave his first howl.

"Oh, you two chaps are here, are you?" growled Bunter. "Well, you'll jolly well have to help to keep Robin quiet."

Peter Todd and Wun Lung, the little Chinese junior, had risen from their chairs at Bunter's sudden entry.

"Dis chile velly clever with babies" said Wun Lung. "Me tickle feet an' make baby laugh."

"No, you don't, you beastly little Chink!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "We're not going to have any of your Chinese wheezes in this study. I can tell you. Blessed if I know why Peter asked you here."

"Buntel gettee the chop-chop in the neck soon!" said Wun Lung.

"What's that?"

"Oh, dry up, you fat chump!" said Peter Todd. "Wung Lung has been

invited here by me, and you had better be careful how you speak to my visitors."

"Buntel in nasty tempel," answered the Chinese junior. "Buntel not likee having a baby."

Billy Bunter rescued his fat ear from the grasp of Robin's clawing hands.

"How would you like to have a baby?" grunted the fat Remove. "I wish to goodness I had never taken on this rotten job! I'm jolly well fed up with it!"

"It'll be all right when Robin grows up," said Peter Todd. "Think how nice it will be when he goes to work and hands over all the money he earns. Look at the tommy you will be able to buy!"

"Oh, really, Todd, I——"

"You never know your luck. Perhaps Robin will be a Prime Minister, or something like that. I can tell you I think you're jolly lucky to have a boy."

Billy Bunter gave a deep sigh.

"Well, look here, Toddy," he said. "I—I don't mind giving Robin to you. After all, he's a nice little chap, and as you say, you never know your luck. I think you're just the sort of fellow to look after Robin."

"It's awfully decent of you to say so; but there's nothing doing, old chap. I simply haven't got the heart to take Robin off your hands."

"But—but I don't mind, Toddy," said Bunter. "You take him over here you are."

Peter Todd stepped back in alarm as Billy Bunter rolled towards him, and made as though he was about to hand Robin over to his charge.

"Hands off! Stop it!" roared Peter. "Give the kid to Wun Lung."

"Not wantee Lobin," said Wun Lung anxiously. "Me vely bad with lil babies."

"Oh, just hark at the beastly heathen!" grunted Billy Bunter. "On a minute ago you said you were jolly good with kids!"

"Me makee mistake. Me vely bad."

"Rot!" growled Bunter. "You said you were good, so now you can jolly well have him. Here you are!"

"Me notee have Lobin!" squealed the Chinese junior anxiously.

"Yes, you are, you rotter! There, he's beginning to cry for you."

"Look out!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "You'll have the kid bringing the house down in a minute! There he goes!"

Robin had been taking a mild interest in the conversation between the three juniors, but he was evidently tired with it now. He held his head back, and opened his mouth wide and let out a screech like a stuck pig.

Peter Todd and Wun Lung put their open hands up to their ears; but Billy Bunter's hands were too full. He got the full benefit of Robin's yell.

"Shut up!" he roared. "Oh, just bark at him! Where's that beastly comforter I brought up with him?"

Peter Todd leaped towards the mantelpiece, and grabbed hold of a little rubber comforter, which had been a part of Master Robin's equipment when Bunter had first of all brought him into the study.

"Attract his attention!" howled Bunter. "Anything to make him stop this awful—— Ow! Leggo my ear! Dance about, Todd! It's the only thing that stopped him from crying in Wharton's study."

Peter Todd was anxious to stop the noise. He commenced a sort of Zulu war-dance in front of Bunter, and for the space of about two seconds it looked

as though Robin was going to cancel his concert. But, unhappily, he changed his mind. There was a flood of tears, and a kicking and wriggling, and then he made another grab at Bunter's left ear.

Robin caught hold of it almost ferociously. It was easy to hold, being big and fat, and the unhappy Bunter was unable to rescue it. Robin hung on tenaciously, and the fat Remove gave a despairing howl.

"Oh, leggo!" he roared. "Todd, for goodness' sake hand him over that beastly comforter, and stop prancing about!"

"But you told me!" puffed Peter Todd, persevering in his efforts, but failing hopelessly to pacify the recalcitrant Robin.

"I know I did; but for goodness' sake chuck it now, or my blessed ear will come off!"

Peter Todd stopped, just as he was getting thoroughly warmed to his work. He leaned forward, and handed the rubber comforter to Robin.

"Not wantee!" shrieked Robin. "Me not wantee!"

Shriek, shriek, shriek!

"Oh, my hat! Just hark at him! I know what we'll have to do."

"What's that?"

"Give him a bath and make him think it's bed-time. Perhaps if we draw the blinds down and give him a wash, he might go to sleep. There's plenty of water in the kettle, and you can bathe him in Alonzo's basin."

Billy Bunter gave a grunt.

"Perhaps that'll do it," he said, a doubtful tone in his voice. "Shove the water in that basin, and I'll undress the kid."

The preparations were soon complete. The door was locked, and Billy Bunter removed Robin's upper garments.

"We may as well wash the young scamp all over whilst we're about it," said Bunter.

"Oh, yes, rather! It'll save time to-morrow."

"He may stop howling when I put him in the water."

"Shove him in all of a sudden. The shock might make him stop."

"Right-ho!"

Billy Bunter stripped off the rest of Robin's garments, and the boy was plumped into the bath. The shock of the immersion did the trick. Robin's yells stopped like magic, and for the moment there was peace in Study No. 7.

Puffing and blowing, Billy Bunter began to wash Robin. Robin resisted tooth and nail, and the uproar started again. Whether he disliked washing, as was probable, or disliked Bunter's methods, as was still more likely, it was certain that he had suddenly made up his mind not to have that bath if he could possibly help it.

But Billy Bunter was determined. He was going to wash Robin, or know the reason why, and, in spite of yelling and kicking and splashing, washed Robin was!

The Owl of the Remove was in a far from enviable state by that time. He was splashed from head to foot, and so were Peter Todd and Wun Lung, who loyally tried to help him. So was nearly everything in the little study.

Soap having been liberally plastered all over Robin, the next thing was to wash it off, and that having been done, Billy Bunter lifted the boy out of the bath, and wrapped towels round him. Robin was still fighting valiantly.

"My hat!" gasped Peter Todd. "If

it's as much trouble as this to wash him every time, I'm not surprised he was left to your tender mercies, porpoise!"

"I—I wish I could palm him off on to someone else," said Billy Bunter. "Keep still, you little rotter! I'm not going to hurt you!"

"Yah!" roared Robin. "Yow! Groo! Boo-hoo! Yow!"

"Lil baby havee vely good lung!" said Wun Lung.

"Boo-hoo! Yow!"

There was a sharp knock at the door, and an authoritative voice was heard:

"Wingate!" muttered Billy Bunter.

"Open the door!"

There was no resisting the authority of Wingate, head-prefect and captain of the school. Wun Lung unlocked the door, and Wingate strode in with a very angry face.

"What's all this row about here? Why—what—who—how—"

"It's—it's all right—"

"What's that—a baby?"

"Do you think it looks like a white rabbit?" grunted Billy Bunter, too worried and excited to be respectful to the captain of the school.

From a Reader! BUNTER'S BANK- HOLIDAY.



Billy Bunter invests his money in a donkey-ride; but it proves to be a study in still-life, as the wily donk refuses to move!

"Bunter! What are you doing with a baby in this study?"

"Drying it!"

"I mean, what have you been doing?"

"Washing it."

"Take care, Bunter. I must know about this. Where did you get that baby from?"

"I—I—I'm taking care of it," said Billy Bunter. "You needn't be rough about it. I ain't enjoying it, I can tell you. If you like, you can have him!"

"But—but—but—"

"It was deserted in a pram in Friardale Lane. I was minding the pram for a woman, and she scooted and left me," exclaimed Billy Bunter, as he towelled away at the yelling Robin.

"But—but how dare you bring a baby into a junior study?" roared Wingate. "Are you mad?"

"I think Bunter must have been," said Peter Todd meekly. "I believe his hair's gone grey already. Robin's a nice little chap in some ways, but in others he—"

"You—you've brought a baby here, Bunter," said Wingate, seemingly dazed.

"You must be mad! What do you expect the masters to say?"

"I—I've had Dr. Locke's permission."

"You—you had the Head's permission? Bunter, I won't have you prevaricating to me, I can tell you!"

"Oh, really, Wingate. I'm speaking the truth, ain't I, Todd?"

Peter Todd nodded his head.

"I believe so," he said. "Alonzo told me that you had seen the Head about Robin."

"Very well, Bunter," said Wingate, "I'm sorry I've doubted your word, although, as a rule, you have given me plenty of justification. But there must be some mistake about this. Dr. Locke could never have given his permission knowingly for such a hair-brained, idiotic thing."

"Oh, really, Wingate—"

"Well, I shall go and see your Form-master. Do you know whether Mr. Quelch is in, Todd?"

"I don't!"

"I will go and look for him," said Wingate. "I simply can't understand it. As for that kid—"

"It's—it's all right," replied Billy Bunter. "He'll be quiet presently."

"For goodness' sake get him quiet as soon as you can!"

And the captain of Greyfriars hurriedly left the study and closed the door.

Peter Todd gave a chuckle.

"Oh, Bunter, you fat chump!" he murmured. "You've taken on a handful, and no mistake!"

He had! All the time Bunter was towelling him Robin was shrieking and struggling. But it was all over at last, and he was dressed again. Then, doubtless, he felt all the better for his bath, for the shrieks died away and a grin appeared on the wet face.

"Thank goodness!" said Peter Todd, with a gasp of relief. "I've heard people say that silence is golden, but I never realised how golden it was before!"

"See if you can get him to sleep, Wun Lung," said Billy Bunter.

"Me vely soon get Lobin quitee," said Wun Lung. And he took the now quiet Robin from Billy Bunter, and rocked him in his arms.

"Mind his head!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "You nearly banged it against the chair that time!"

"Lil Lobin hush-a-bye!" cooed the Chinese junior. "Goce sleep, my lil piccaniny. Me wantee sing lil lhyne."

Peter Todd gave a chuckle as he listened to Wun Lung.

"I—I think I'll go and change my clothes," said Billy Bunter. "I'm jolly well famished after all that as well. I haven't had anything to eat since tea, and then I only had ten slices of bread-and-butter, a plum cake, and about half a dozen doughnuts."

"Oh, you greedy cormorant!" growled Peter Todd. "That's the only blessed thing you think of—eating—and—and babies!"

"Oh, really, Peter, I—"

"Come on!" laughed Peter Todd. "We'll leave Wun Lung to it. He seems to be getting on jolly well."

Billy Bunter was soaked from head to foot. He and Peter Todd carried the bath of water away—and managed to slop a lot of it along the Remove-Forn passage—and then Bunter changed his things. Meanwhile, Wun Lung essayed the difficult task of getting Robin to sleep.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Looking for Bunter!

"HALLO! What's this merchant want?"

Horace Coker of the Fifth made the remark.

Coker major was standing at the gates of Greyfriars. Potter and Greene were with him. They usually were, because those two worthies found the great Horace very useful to them. Coker was always in a good state of funds, and he was not by any means ungenerous. He was a bore, that was recognised by everybody at Greyfriars, excepting by Coker himself; but there were plenty of fellows at Greyfriars who found they could put up with Coker for the sake of participating in the repasts and outings for which Coker was renowned for providing.

Potter and Greene looked round as Coker spoke.

"By Jove!" gasped Potter. "A blessed police-inspector!"

Coker & Co. had been keeping the great stone wall up with their mighty backs, but as the police-inspector alighted from his bicycle right in front of the gates the Fifth-Formers straightened themselves up.

"What's your name, young fellow?" said the man, wheeling his machine up to Coker and staring at the great man of the Fifth.

Coker's face assumed a pinkish hue. He resented being spoken to like this. It was treating him like the merest fog instead of the great Coker.

"Well?" said the police-inspector. "Where's your tongue?"

"Where's yours?" exclaimed Coker; and there was a giggle from Potter and Greene.

The myrmidon of the law gave a start. "Now, then, my fine young fellow!" he snapped. "None of that! I want to know your name!"

"And—and I want to know yours."

The police-inspector looked as though he could have eaten Coker. He took out a notebook from his tunic pocket.

"Now, then," he growled. "In the name of the law—your name!"

Potter and Greene gave a violent start. The inspector's tone thoroughly impressed them, as it was intended to; but Potter and Greene were not of the stuff from which nerves are made. Horace Coker could not be called a hero by any stretch of the imagination, but Coker could seldom be squashed.

"What authority have you in asking?" he said.

"I say I've got the authority of the law, my fine young fellow. According to the description I've had given me, I suspect you are the person I'm after."

Coker gave a start.

"Eh? What's that?" he gasped.

"Come along!" snapped the man. "It won't pay you to play any hanky-panky with me. Where's the baby?"

There was a gasp from the three Fifth-Formers.

"T-t-t-the b-b-b-baby?" stuttered Coker.

"That's what I said. I suspect you of having kidnapped a baby. A woman from Pegg has given a description. She lodged the information to the police-constable at Friarsdale, and he telephoned to Courtfield, and I cycled over to get on to the case at once."

"B-b-but I—I—"

"It's no use," snapped the inspector. "Your little game's up, my sweet young friend. Now, where's the baby?"

Coker looked at Potter and Potter looked at Greene, and then the three stared stupidly at the man of law.

He studied a page in the notebook he was holding.

"Fat schoolboy," he said solemnly.

"Wearing a Greyfriars' cap. That seems to suit you, young man. I should call you fat—especially about the head!"

There was a wild sort of snigger from Potter and Greene.

The inspector was staring towards the school buildings, and he suddenly gave a whistle of astonishment.

"Phew! My word! So that's the pram, is it?"

Coker & Co. turned and followed the direction in which the inspector was staring. In the distance, between the tuckshop door and the main entrance steps, they caught sight of a perambulator.

To say that the Fifth-Formers were surprised was to put it mildly.

"Hallo!" cried Potter. "Somebody's left a blessed pram there!"

The inspector smiled grimly.

"That sort of bluff won't go down with me!" he snapped. "I thought I wasn't far wrong."

"What are you talking about?"

"Me? Why, I'm talking about you, my lad," said the inspector, touching Horace Coker on the arm. "It will pay you to tell me the whole story. It isn't any good trying to bluff an old hand like myself. Now, then, where's that baby?"

The great Coker's face was a study?

"Baby?" he spluttered angrily.

"Baby? It jolly well strikes me that you've gone off your rocker! Do you know who you're talking to? I'm Coker, I am! C-O-K-E-R—Coker!"

"Do you want me to put the bracelets on, my lad?" said the inspector.

"I've got them here!"

He tapped his pocket, and there was a jingle of chain as the handcuffs rattled.

"My hat!" gasped Coker. "D-d-don't you dare put those things on me!"

"Well, are you coming quietly?"

"Look here, Coker, old man," said Potter, "you had better get this fellow to go along to the Head with you. He's talking through his hat, and Dr. Locke will soon put him right."

"I don't want any insolence from you, my lad!" exclaimed the pompous inspector. "But I'm certainly going to the headmaster of the school, Dr. Locke's his name, is it? Come on, Coker. Perhaps you'll tell your headmaster what you have done with the baby."

"You're a silly ass!" growled Coker of the Fifth. "But I can tell you this, you'll jolly soon find out your mistake!"

"Shall I, indeed?" laughed the inspector. "You lead the way, young man; and don't you try to get away!"

Coker turned on his heels and strode towards the school, with the pompous man of law a yard behind him. Potter and Greene exchanged glances, and followed closely. The little party walked up the steps, and tramped along the corridor leading to Dr. Locke's study.

Coker paused outside the door and looked round.

"You chaps wait for me," he said. "We'll soon finish with this idiot!"

He gave a sharp rap on the door, and the Head's voice called out:

"Come in!"

Coker turned the handle and stamped into the room.

"Look here, sir," he exclaimed, "there's a man here who is potty, and wants—"

"Coker!"

The Head rose in his chair, and looked grimly across the table at the angry Fifth-Former.

"I—I—I beg your pardon, sir," said Coker. "I—I'm upset, sir. This—this man says he's an inspector from the Courtfield Police, and he accuses me of kidnapping a baby!"

"What's this?" exclaimed the Head, turning to the pompous police official.

"Will you kindly explain at once?"

The inspector cleared his throat.

"The explanation is this," he said. "I have had a description of one of your pupils given to me on the telephone. A woman states that a pram with a baby boy was left in his charge, and when she returned to the spot the boy had disappeared. This boy here, who states his name is Coker, tallies with the description, and I regret to say that I must arrest him; and anything he says now may be given as evidence against him."

"The whole thing is absurd!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "What you say is nonsense from beginning to end!"

"What?"

"Utter nonsense!" repeated the Head. "I think you have been exceedingly stupid; and you have no business to act as you appear to have done."

The inspector looked as though he were on the point of exploding. His face went crimson, and he gave a deep grunt.

"I warn you that you are talking to a police-officer!" he snapped. "I—I—"

"I do not mind who or what you are!" interrupted the Head. "If you had come to me in the first instance I could

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have told you the whole story. It is a very simple one, and I think it is a pity you have not brought the owner of the child with you."

"She will be here any minute."

"Good!" said the Head. "If that is the case, she will have the child handed over to her."

"Oh-h!"

"I might tell you that the missing child is in this school, and is, I have no doubt, perfectly happy and contented. He is in the charge of one of my pupils."

"R-really, sir?" said Coker of the Fifth.

Dr. Locke smiled.

"So you see, inspector, a very absurd mistake has been made. The boy who was left in charge of the perambulator and child was a boy named Bunter. He reported the matter to me some time ago, and I was only waiting for one of my assistant masters to return before I telephoned the whole matter to the police."

The pompous inspector was beginning to look rather foolish.

"Coker," said the Head, "you will go up to the Remove Form passage, and tell Bunter to come down at once, and he is to bring the child with him."

"Y-yes, sir."

Coker of the Fifth gave an icy glare at the police-inspector and left the study.

The inspector was struggling with his

usual for us to have a child of that age in the school."

Bunter appeared to be having a grim struggle with Robin. The howling child was kicking and punching, and it looked as though he would slip through Bunter's arms, fat as they were.

"Dear me!" murmured the Head.

"The little fellow seems to be very annoyed about something. Have you given it anything to eat, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And drink?"

"Yes, sir. He's finished up everybody's milk, and there's been an awful row about it."

Dr. Locke gave a smile.

"We gave him a bath to keep him quiet, but he started again directly Coker came in. I don't think Robin liked Coker's face, sir!"

"Nonsense, Bunter!" said the Head.

"I won't have you talking like that. I consider it very impertinent. If you were not suffering a certain amount of inconvenience with that child I should deal with you most severely."

Fortunately for Bunter, a tap at the door prevented him from making a tactless reply to the Head. Billy Bunter was famous for "putting his foot in it," and the interruption undoubtedly saved him.

The study-door opened, and a poorly-

"I did not feel well enough to look all over Friardale. I—I thought it best to go and tell the police-constable."

"You were quite right," said Dr. Locke. "And I do not consider that Bunter here is in any way to blame for his action. What do you think, inspector?"

"Quite right, sir!"

"Well, well," laughed the Head, "everything has turned out all right in the end. I am sorry you feel so unwell, madam. If you will go across to my house I will see that you have a good meal before you continue your journey. I will arrange to get you a cab. By the way, where is the perambulator?"

"Outside, sir," said Billy Bunter. "I left it there."

"It is still there," added the inspector. "I saw it when I arrived."

"Excellent! Then when the cab arrives the perambulator can be tied on top. I'll see to the payment of the driver."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Robin's mother. "You are indeed kind!"

Robin appeared to be fast asleep in his mother's arms. Bunter blinked at him through his enormous spectacles. He could not understand how such a miracle could be performed after his experience with Master Robin.

"Well, I will not trouble you any further," said the inspector, turning to

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Splendid Competition.

SCOUT,

explanation and apology to the Head when there was a loud rap on the study door, and Billy Bunter rolled in, with Robin in his arms, howling and kicking.

"D-d-do you want this?" cried Bunter, turning to the inspector. "I can tell you I'm jolly well fed-up! I haven't had a minute's peace since he's been here. Here you are. Take him!"

The police-inspector staggered back in alarm as Billy Bunter tried to push the howling Robin into his arms.

"Keep away, boy!" he roared. "It—it is not part of my duty to—to nurse that child."

"Well, if it comes to that," cried Bunter, "it isn't mine! He's broken one pair of my spectacles, and he knocked a tray off the table, and Dutton says I've got to pay him because the things belonged to him. He's nearly pulled my ears off, and I'm jolly well fed-up!"

"Bunter," exclaimed the Head, "you will nurse that child until the woman arrives, and please do your best to keep it quiet."

Shriek, shriek, shriek!

Robin was howling louder than ever. Dr. Locke's study was fairly echoing to the uproar.

"W-when will the mother arrive?" asked the Head anxiously, turning to the police-inspector. "I understood you to say she would be here any minute!"

"That is so, sir!"

The Head gave a sigh of relief.

"I can only say that I shall be very glad when she arrives. It is very un-

dressed woman was shown into the room.

"Come in!" cried the Head. "We have been waiting for you."

"My child!"

The woman gave a faint cry, and rushed across to Bunter.

"Give me my boy!" exclaimed the woman. "Robin! I am here! Don't cry!"

Robin ceased his howling in an instant, and he flung his chubby arms round his mother's neck as she took him from Bunter's charge. There was a deep silence in the room as the mother fondled her lost child.

"Ahem!" said the Head, at last. "I am delighted to be the means of uniting you to your lost boy, madam. I do not think that Bunter is really to blame. I understand you asked him to mind your perambulator."

"Yes, sir!"

"And I did mind it, too," said Billy Bunter. "I waited there for hours, and you never came back. You didn't expect me to stay there all night, I suppose?"

The woman gave a wan smile.

"Of course, I didn't," she said. "I went to look for my purse, and I was feeling so ill. After I had found it I think I must have fainted. I do not remember."

"Oh!"

"I looked everywhere, but I could not find you. As you were on your way to Friardale when I stopped you, I thought you might have taken Robin there."

"Naturally," said the Head.

Dr. Locke. "I—I am sorry that I made a mistake."

The Head gave a hearty laugh.

"That is quite all right," he said. "We will say no more about it. I will wish you a good-evening."

"Thank you, sir!" replied the inspector meekly, and he turned on his heels and left the room.

"Bunter," said the Head, "you will take this lady across to my house, and I will follow you in a moment. Pray follow this boy, madam."

And Bunter led Robin and his mother out of the study.

Billy Bunter's baby was not soon forgotten in the Remove Form. In fact, Greyfriars as a whole discussed the story for many days, and the Owl of the Remove was most unmercifully ragged about it.

However, Bunter has a happy knack of wearing down ridicule. It was forgotten eventually. But Billy Bunter vows he will never again accept the responsibility of a foster-father, not even for a few hours!

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School next Monday, entitled "The Schoolboy Artist!" By Frank Richards. Order your copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY in advance.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 652.



"THE SILENCE!"

OUR
AMAZING NEW SERIAL STORY.

A Wonderful Tale of the Future,
By EDMUND BURTON.

INTRODUCTION.

A.D. 1924.

Tom Hope, the son of Admiral Sir Headley Hope, a midshipman in the Navy, and Dick Elliott, a keen young inventor in the Flying Force, are great friends, and Dick is very fond of Madge Hope, Tom's sister.

When our story opens there is tremendous excitement in Great Britain, owing to the fact that the country—in fact, the whole of Europe—is completely out of touch with the rest of the world.

No wireless will work. All cables are out of action. No ships sail into our ports, or are even seen.

Then suddenly a huge airship force arrives over the South of England. The invaders are almost invisible from the ground, and by some secret magnetic power they are able to affect all machinery.

The ships of the Navy are rendered useless in their harbours. Telegraph circuits are made silent, and all machinery and guns are immovable.

Then, to the amazement of the admiral of the British fleet, a Chinaman lands from one of the airships, and announces that the airships are Chinese, and that they have come for nothing less than the handing over of the British fleet.

Tom Hope and Dick Elliott make a mad dash for London, where Dick has been working for some time on a great invention, known as the Wilton Ray. The two boys gain the Admiralty as the invading airships arrive over the capital.

A scheme of defence is rapidly organised, and the Wilton Ray invention is made use of with extraordinary success. The Chinese airships fall victims to the amazing Ray in scores. One of the ships comes down undamaged in Hyde Park. The crew are all dead, with one exception, and that is a Chinaman named Wing Lo, who turns traitor, and later on Tom and Dick, with Wing Lo and a mechanic named Simmonds, sail off in the airship in the hope of saving the British Navy. They succeed beyond their wildest expectations. The invaders were heavily defeated, and the remnants of the air fleet are thoroughly routed.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Daring Venture!

UPON the cessation of fighting, Tom Hope commenced turning things rapidly over in his mind. It was imperative to make their presence known to the commander-in-chief of the Home Fleet without delay, yet to descend into visibility would probably be rewarded by a deluge of shells which would finish the story so far as they

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were concerned. Wing Lo, on being consulted, quickly settled matters.

He spent a few minutes regulating the scout's wireless apparatus, and under his direction Dick Elliott sent the brief message, receiving the answer without any difficulty. Then, all fear of ill-consequences being swept aside, they dropped down until the airship's keel almost brushed the tops of the Mammoth's tripod-masts. The magnetic force was, of course, turned off—indeed, there had been no necessity to employ it at all since her capture.

Tom boarded the flagship amid a chorus of cheering that bade fair to split the very skies he had come from, and followed Sir Stanford to the latter's cabin, where he quickly told the whole story, omitting nothing.

"Splendid work!" commented his chief, as the middy finished. "You may rest assured, Hope, that your invaluable services to Britain shall not be forgotten, nor shall those of your companions. And London was holding out well, you say, when you left?"

"Yes, sir. My father—Sir Headley—seemed confident of keeping the enemy in check once the first successes had been achieved, but I don't know what may have happened since—" He paused meaningly. "These Chinese are not to be despised, after what we have seen."

Sir Stanford was silent for a moment. Then he took up a speaking-tube, ordering that the Admiralty was to be communicated with by wireless, if possible, or, failing that, any other station, no matter where.

But so far as the metropolis was concerned, no answer was received, though a couple of other towns nearer Seahaven replied. Beyond these, nothing was forthcoming, which showed that, though Seahaven was free, other enemy forces were still operating elsewhere with evident success.

"That's all we can gather now, Hope," said the admiral, "so perhaps it's best that you should return at once to London. The city is certainly the hub of the whole business, and Sir Headley may have further commissions for you, now that you have been so signally successful. We shall remain here, pending any orders which may eventually get through; but in your case I give you unlimited leave of absence." He held his hand. "Au revoir, my lad! I trust we shall not require your services in similar circumstances again; but one never knows!"

Tom withdrew, and returned aboard the scout, where he gave Dick and Simmonds an outline of the interview. Then, with the cheers of the whole Fleet still ringing in their ears and a borrowed white ensign fluttering from the air-

ship's stern, they swiftly left Seahaven behind them.

Travelling at an immense altitude, where there was little risk of discovery, they finally reached the metropolis. A great cluster of aircraft still hovered some hundreds of feet below them, quite visible to the crew of the scout, though she was hidden from them.

"Now, what's the programme?" said Tom, as the wings stopped and the buzz of the fans increased, bringing the vessel to a halt and holding her stationary. "We can't descend here, and the blessed Rays—even the fourth one—are practically exhausted by all they've been asked to do; so we needn't try any wiping out! What d'you say, old chap?"

"To keep on," replied Dick at once. "We'll drop somewhere beyond the City where we're not likely to be spotted. It's growing dark now, and in an hour everything should be simple. That's the best we can do, I think."

Tom agreed, and the plan was accordingly carried out. The scout went ahead, and, after hovering for some time at the same altitude till the dusk deepened, came down in a field just beyond an outlying suburb, where, leaving her in charge of Simmonds and Wing Lo, the two young fellows set out to procure horses.

It was scarcely possible, with that cloud of airships still hovering about, that such a thing as a motor-car or a bicycle would be workable, so they hastily put those methods of travelling out of their reckoning.

Turning the Tables!

A COUPLE of wiry mounts were soon bearing the pair into the City, where they found a very considerable amount of damage had been done. On arriving at the Admiralty, Sir Headley told them all that had passed since they left on their momentous journey, informing them that, though no hostile craft had descended sufficiently low to become visible, they had kept up an intermittent bombardment, dropping bombs on chance, and had succeeded in keeping the nerves of the populace on the stretch, as well as causing much destruction. Fires had broken out at several points, which gave the brigades plenty to do, particularly as only hand-power could be employed, the magnetic force still holding the metropolis in a tight grip.

Despite all this, however, the Rays had put in some good work. The sky had been swept without cessation, and some of the invaders were struck by the shafts of light as they found them by chance. Four more had been totally destroyed, and possibly others disabled,

though that was a point which must remain in doubt. The four, however, had fallen, and were nothing but masses of partially molten metal when discovered.

Sir Headley was overjoyed at the success of the Seahaven exploit, but looked grave when he was told that the Rays in the scout were practically exhausted, and could not be used until replenished.

"That's bad," he said, "for we're in a similar fix here. The largest factory where the necessary chemicals were stored was destroyed early in the day, and we are now dependent upon the remaining two, which are smaller, as you know. Our own Rays needed replenishing three hours ago, and as I have dispatched every available apparatus to various points, the chemicals are running low. We can't manufacture more, for all machinery is gripped. Oh, that we had had another month's grace! It would have been so different!"

"But surely there's enough stuff left for our machines, sir?" gasped Dick.

"Oh, yes! We can supply those all right; but what are we going to do when the new charges run out?"

"We daren't wait for that, dad!" said Tom. "We must fill our Rays at once, and attack those devils from above. That machinery must be set going again, or we can chuck up the sponge!"

The Sea Lord nodded.

"Yes, that's the only plan. You'd best load up, and hurry back. Stay! What's this?"

A message had just been handed in, and Sir Headley blanched slightly as he read it.

"No; we must change our tactics!" he said hoarsely. "The land forces of the enemy are advancing on London, and those that are trying to stay them have no Rays. I distributed the supply as well as I could, but there were not enough, and this must be a fresh crowd which landed since. Our own defences are magnetised by an accompanying convoy of aircraft, and cannot stop their troops. If they reach here it will be disastrous! You will engage that convoy, and you must destroy every ship of it!"

"How many, sir, does it say? Is the fleet as large—"

"As that above? Oh, no—not nearly so! About twenty vessels were seen, and they are hovering low to grip our military forces completely. If you replenish your Rays and set off at once, you ought to be able to do a good deal after that Seahaven affair. Should your craft be destroyed, London will fall! As it is, we can hang on here for six hours at the outside!"

"We'll mind ourselves, pater!" rejoined Tom grimly. "We fully realise the position, and if we don't return you'll know it was no fault of ours!"

Hurriedly the necessary supply of chemicals was packed in saddle-bags, and the scout reached in record time. The message had given the position of the contesting forces, and, with Wing Lo watching his beloved engines, the airship shot upwards into the starry sky.

The distance was not very formidable to such a speedy craft, and in a short time the peculiar greenish rays of the invaders' searchlights twinkled far below. Looking through a pair of powerful glasses, Tom beheld a mighty cluster of black dots moving across the ground beneath, whilst another cluster showed up a little distance to the left. It was as though a great host of beetles were following another, for one was backing gradually as the second advanced, the twain being accompanied by a score or so of airships, which kept regular pace

above them. No firing was heard—not a sound save the musical hum of fans and beat of wings.

"It would be almost funny were it not so terribly serious," muttered Tom, as he watched. "Fancy a lump of the British Army forced to walk away from the enemy without firing a shot, although they must have plenty of ammunition! Why, they've left their guns for the others! Great Scotland, they must have got them into position, and couldn't move 'em afterwards! What tricksters those yellow devils are! They let them do it, I'll swear, and then magnetised the weapons as soon as their own crowd were conveniently ready. Well, my pretty Chinks, we'll see what we can do!"

The Rays darted out, each selecting a victim, and ere the enemy rightly knew what had happened, three of the ships hurtled down. Up came the searchlights, but could pick out nothing against that star-spangled curtain—nothing but the trio of flickering, violet shafts which darted and twisted like ribbons of light.

The armies below ceased operations by mutual consent, the black clusters turning to a myriad of white faces as friend and foe stared upward in surprise.

Boom! Cra-ah!

Their own guns being non-magnetic, the Chinese troops suddenly opened fire on the British. So far, there had been little necessity to do so, for the defenders were as impotent—as though they had been merely armed with umbrellas or walking-sticks; and, to give them their due, the invaders were seemingly inclined to avoid ruthless slaughter so long as other methods would serve their purpose equally well. They aspired to conquer the world, but not to destroy its people or cities, if that could be prevented.

All along it had been a steady advance on the part of the enemy, the khaki-clad host reluctantly falling back towards the outskirts of the city, where their resistance, unfortunately, would have been equally useless. There, the magnetic influence of the great fleet hovering above would be added to that of the convoy, and the triumph of the invader would be complete. The defending rays would gradually be exhausted, and little or no help could be expected.

Other enemy forces were operating elsewhere, if Kwong Ho's edict could be believed; and there was no reason to discredit it, for the foe had shown himself thoroughly able to accomplish most of what he boasted.

Now, however, the coming of the scout, and the effective start made by her three Rays, had completely changed the face of matters. With the fall of the first vessels, the commander of the enemy troops realised that he must resort to the severest measures in order to remove all possibility of interference, should he be called upon to deal with anything above him; for he had already seen something of the dogged retreat of those British, impotent though their resistance was, and knew perfectly well that such a force of men, if the convoy were destroyed, might foil his plans when once freed from the magnetism and able to use their weapons. By Confucius! They were obstinate, those khaki-clad fellows, and had already given him a deal of trouble, considering their huge handicap.

One after another the airships fell, whilst the guns spread death and destruction amongst the British forces. It was a race against time, Tom almost

turning sick as he saw the fearful carnage caused by the yellow men's weapons. It was not a battle—only a hideous farce!

Yet he could not help just at that moment. All his Rays' energies were required to destroy the convoy, and all the alertness of the scout's crew called upon to dodge some of the enemy craft which continually strove to get above their unseen attacker, while the others kept their influence on the British troops below.

But the ever-triumphant Ray proved its worth in the end. Fully two-thirds of the convoy were down and out by now, the remainder joining them in rapid succession. The air was filled by clouds of smoke from the blazing hulks as the melting metal fired other portions of the ships, explosion following explosion as the bomb-stores became affected and completed the destruction.

"And now for you, you yellow fiends!" muttered Tom. "Your little game is over, if I know anything!"

The British, at last unhampered, opened fire as the scout dropped lower; but she did not descend far enough to become a mark for the Chinese gunners. Then the Rays swept the ground, picking out weapon after weapon, sweeping the yellow ranks, and melting rifles and bayonets like butter. It was difficult work, for the abandoned British guns were there also, and several were unavoidably destroyed in the process; but their loss was unimportant when compared with the triumph gained.

The Chinese were proof against their own magnetic force, but not against this new wonder which had been put down as non-successful by those who were supposed to be well-informed. Presently the great host broke and fled headlong—a scattered rabble, scared and demoralised.

The British lost no time in recovering their remaining artillery, and following up the victory already won by the Rays. Maxims drummed their rallying note, shrapnel burst over the head of the flying army, and in less time than it takes to tell the pursuit had moved away to eastward, as the scout descended to terra firma.

Here Tom conferred with the British commander, and suggested that it would be wiser to remain away from the City until such steps could be taken as would free the metropolis from the grip. The troops could be of no use whatsoever in London until that was accomplished, while their services would be invaluable in keeping the enemy land-forces from readvancing—that is, unless some other airships arrived and enabled the routed Chinese to rally and repeat what they had already done.

This being agreed upon, the scout rose again, turning Citywards. There was still some hours' supply left in each apparatus; but would it be sufficient to do enough good work to free the metropolis? And was London still holding out?

"It's our biggest problem, old man!" commented Dick gravely. "And it's this craft's toughest job. Please Heaven no hitch occurs!"

Against Terrible Odds!

WHEN about half the return journey had been accomplished the scout's signalling-apparatus began to quiver imperatively, and Wing Lo interpreted the message with his usual conciseness.

"Flom Kwong Ho, Mistel Hope," he said. "THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 652."

said. "He callee convoy, an' askee if all lightee. Dey to hully tloops as muchee possible."

"Ah! So he's evidently getting impatient, and the City must still be holding out," remarked Tom. "Hallo! Here's another message! What's it say, old chap?"

Wing glanced at the indicator.

"It not for us," he replied, "but for ships somewhere else. Kwong Ho wantee all sparea. Dey comee to London."

Hope whistled, for the second message the scout had intercepted meant much. It signified—so Tom surmised; and he was not very wide of the mark, as it happened—that the Chinese commander-in-chief had at last been forced to realise that the Ray was no temporary obstacle, and that it was vitally necessary to take the capital with as little further delay as possible.

Evidently Kwong Ho's air-fleet was just barely able to keep out of sight and still hold the City, but he wanted reinforcements to make sure of that hold continuing until the land forces arrived. As a matter of fact, the Chinese almost regretted now that he had not originally landed a large body within the limits of the metropolis itself, instead of choosing a lonelier district from which they should advance. Indeed he had thought of doing so at first; but even to him—and even though the most exhaustive tests had proved satisfactory—the strange power of his fleet was a big thing to handle. So, fearing that any force he might land would be annihilated before he could protect it, or some other unforeseen hitch occur, he had changed his tactics and chosen the other plan.

The same explanation applies to all other bodies of troops which had arrived in the country. Each one had been set down in a lonely locality where there would be ample time for its accompanying convoy to fully control it ere a sudden attack could be made by any defenders they would encounter, while the air-fleets had been distributed so that they influenced the principal military centres, naval-bases, and aerodromes. But now, reluctant though Kwong Ho was to alter his carefully-laid arrangements by recalling aircraft from elsewhere, pressure of circumstances compelled him to do so.

"He no wantee convoy, though?" asked Tom presently. "It's only other ships he callee up?"

"Dat allee!" answered Wing. "Convoy no to leave tloops, only hully them; but othels to comee quick."

"Has the second message passed on?" inquired the middy. "Or did we stopee it, like way sea an' land messages were stopee?"

Wing shook his head.

"No; Chinese ships diffeent—message tings diffeent—can't stopee own words—only read dem. Able stopee white debbils talkee-talkee, but not own."

"Den dat message pickee up?"

"By de othel ships, wherebber dey are—yes. Dey comee hela quick timee!"

"Then we'll be one of the now extinct convoy to suit the occasion," said Tom, and nodded again to the instrument. "Signal Kwong Ho dat all lightee! Say message fion convoy, an' tloops hullyng to London."

The Chinaman grinned as he sent out the fabrication. It was an astute move to prepare the way for a surprise on the

scout's part. Kwong Ho could not have known of the captured airship, for, if she had been nussed at all, she would probably have been counted as one of those destroyed by the first Rays. Since then the invaders had not seen her—or, rather, any who had come close had been utterly annihilated.

Immediately on rising from Hyde Park she had travelled to Seahaven, only returning after dark to London, from which she again set out to turn the advancing tide rolling on the City. Now, by replying, as it were, from the scene of that advance, saying all was well, it would lull the fleet above the metropolis into false hope; whilst if the scout could arrive and destroy a good portion of the remainder before the reinforcements came or the land-Rays gave out, there was every chance of securing a decisive victory in that quarter.

Flying very high, she at length picked out a number of violet ribbons sweeping far below, and, knowing the danger of being struck by their own weapon, Tom dared descend no farther. Between the scout and the shafts the hostile fleet still turned and twisted as its units cleverly avoided any chance beam which came close to them, meanwhile having resumed their bombardment of the City beneath.

Unlike the convoy, they were employing no searchlights, so that their actual position would not be revealed; only their forms were silhouetted now and again against a Ray or some other illumination from the ground, and this made the scout's task increasingly severe. She had several handicaps to contend with now—to keep herself as well hidden as possible, so that no craft could rise above her; to avoid encountering one of those violent shafts, which might reach her and destroy all hope of performing her work; to pick out her victims in the uncertain light; and to annihilate them ere the others could arrive, and, by weight of numbers, make the job even more difficult.

"It's the worst problem we've struck yet!" muttered Tom Hope, taking up the tube. "There, Dick? Look here, don't waste an ounce of power if you can help it, and tell Simmonds likewise. Keep the Rays covered till you know you can't miss. If we sweep the place, and use up the stuff, there'll not be enough. Just pick your mark as it appears."

This was accordingly done. When ever a dark form flashed between the scout and the ground Rays, a shaft shot downwards, flashing on the hostile hull with uncanny aim, and sending it hurtling through space. In this way not only was the scout's locality kept obscure, but the store was husbanded to cope with the coming reinforcements which might arrive at any minute.

Kwong Ho's surprise and stupefaction must have been intense when he found himself attacked by the Rays from above as well as below, but he could do little to oppose this new mysterious foe. His fleet was now barely sufficient to hold the City in a grip which, did it but relax, would allow of the defences below being manned to resist the entry of the yellow troops when they came up. The magnetism of the convoy would not be capable of controlling the army it was at present driving back—or, we should say, the convoy the Chinese supposed was doing so—and the outer defences of the capital, without his undivided aid. Yet, as vessel after vessel fell, the power weakened gradually, and no promised

convoy, or land forces came to assist him; nor did, as yet, the reinforcements he had called upon from elsewhere.

Kwong Ho was in a fix, and he knew it. Whatever had occurred, he could not tell, for the messages he sent had both been answered; the troops were making all speed for London, and the other ships would hurry as fast as possible. But the mysterious craft above which his magnetic power refused to hinder was taking far too rapid toll of his fleet. How this could be—what she was—he had no means of guessing. All he knew was that he hovered between two sections of a force which, he had been told, was non-existent—one section overhead, the other below. He dared not rise for fear of releasing the town—not a single ship could be spared—yet it would be equally fatal to descend into visibility, because of the Rays beneath. And all the time he halted midway that devilish craft above was picking off his vessels—loosening his hold, in any event. What was he to do? Where were the other ships he had summoned?

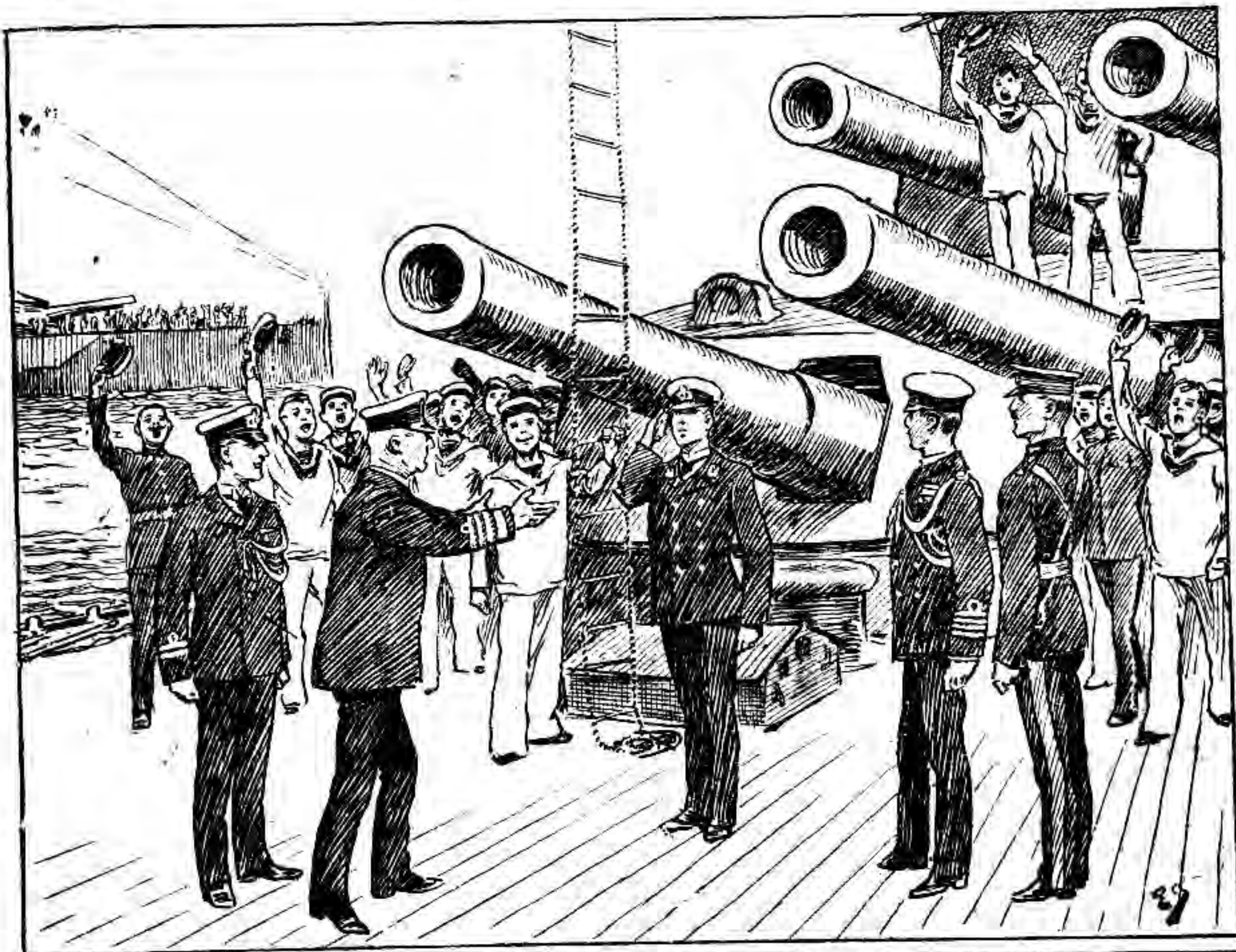
The minutes passed—minutes that seemed like years to Kwong Ho. Of what use was this chance bombardment he still kept up? It did not help him—only damaged the city he had been instructed to preserve intact, unless driven to extreme measures. It did not improve his position, for the ground Rays were still untouched—still taking an odd ship from his forces as they chanced to strike one, whilst the efforts of those overhead were uncannily successful.

By now the great air-fleet which had gripped London that early morning was reduced by more than a third, and the remainder was being deducted from still more rapidly. Kwong Ho did not know that there was less than an hour's supply left in the Rays operating below, nor was he aware that scarcely twice that quantity was available for those above. If so, he might have endeavoured to hold on.

Tom and the others, however, did know all this, and redoubled their efforts in consequence. It was a race against time now, and the Rays sought out victim after victim. By twos and threes they dropped, until at length the brilliant glare of a score of searchlights, shooting upwards, told the crew of the scout that London was partly free. The grip had been loosed at last!

Kwong Ho knew it, too—knew that he had failed—and did the only thing possible from his point of view—tried to withdraw and await a better opportunity. But this was easier said than done. Followed by the three shafts from above, and threatened by those from below, he lost yet more ships in the manoeuvre. Up through the greying sky soared the scout, still invisible to the enemy, though they were growing increasingly distinct to her with the coming dawn. Backwards and forwards shot the Rays, picking off airship after airship, until scarcely forty were left. Some of these swerved upwards, but failed to trap the alert little craft, which kept ever above them, and the others fled at dizzy speed, disappearing in the morning mist.

By now the Rays in the City had nearly all ceased, their supplies having run out, whilst but two of the four possessed by the scout were in working order—and that badly. Then a fresh hum broke upon the air: the long-delayed reinforcements were approaching, but could they be attacked with two apparatus only—especially as the latter were almost exhausted? The newcomers



Tom Hope boarded the flagship amid a chorus of cheering that bade fair to split the very skies he had come from. (See page 16.)

were, however, rather too late to help Kwong Ho, unless the fresh fleet was powerful enough to take his place; and if that were so London would be in the grip again—this time without a likelihood of escape. The chemicals were run out, and could not be manufactured, while the plants were magnetised; so the City would be defenceless, and the Ray apparatus as useless so far as retaliation was concerned.

Tom took all this in rapidly, and inquired what supply was still left in Dick's Ray and Simmonds', for his own was one of those exhausted.

"Fifteen minutes!" was the reply.

"Then we must climb higher still, and engage these new beggars!" replied Tom grimly. "It's the only thing to do. Not a Ray is working below now, so they can't resist further down there. If it's a big fleet, we can only do our best."

The scout shot higher, presently passing above the forms of about a dozen airships, and Tom's heart bounded as he failed to see any more. But fifteen minutes' supply—or less—only two apparatus available, and fully twelve enemies to dispose of! Could it be done? It was feasible, if great care were taken, but it would be touch-and-go.

"Get 'em going!" he called through the speaking-tube. "Let Simmonds watch one side, and you the other. Kwong Ho's remaining ships may come back should they learn of this, and if they do, our job will be well nigh impossible."

The two shafts flashed out, and two airships dropped, their wings and fans

shorn off, as though by a giant sickle. The others halted, and then scattered—some rising, others spreading out—but the rays still followed them, picking off several more. Then, just as the last of the chemical supply gave out, something struck the scout's bows, bursting with an appalling roar, and she heeled over like a stricken cruiser. It was as Tom had half expected. Kwong Ho's remnants—or some other vessels—had arrived, flying even higher than they, and had been able to take them at a disadvantage. Too busy with those below, and the newcomers being quite invisible above, the little crew could not well have avoided the calamity. It was easy enough to watch a craft trying to rise over you, and comparatively simple to dodge her; but when they came from a distance, where they had already reached the desired altitude, it was a different matter altogether.

The scout wobbled and dropped towards the earth, Wing Lo striving to keep her from capsizing. By now the survivors of the reinforcements had joined with Kwong Ho's, and all their combined energies were directed against the little craft, which was one of theirs, yet which flew the British naval ensign. It was only then that the Chinese commander-in-chief grasped the explanation fully, and formed the story for himself—a stunning surprise for him, yet he did not hesitate, and bombs dropped like hail round the swiftly descending scout.

The very swiftness and unsteadiness of the vessel's descent proved her salvation from much additional damage. Fearing to follow her too far, lest the Rays below

might suddenly become active again, the fleet above contented itself by casting a shower of bombs at their wobbly target. Only one other missile actually touched her, though the rest came perilously close, and presently she was swaying within a hundred feet of the earth—dropping still lower each second—where the broad ribbon of the Thames glittered in the morning light.

Anxious to ascertain the full amount of destruction done, Dick Elliott crept along the slanting, reeling deck, holding on by the wire breastwork, until he reached the bows. Here he found that the explosions had destroyed the forward fan and wrecked the apparatus which controlled the rising and falling movements of the craft. One of the wings had also been damaged, but a supreme effort on the part of the Chinese had managed to arrest her headlong descent, by applying all available power to the three remaining fans, which were now literally screaming, so rapid were their revolutions.

This much Dick had time to see ere the deck beneath his feet gave an extra severe jolt, and, unable to save himself, he pitched forward upon the curving plates of the bow through a gap in the partially smashed network. The only thing the others heard was a single sharp cry above the roar of the fans—a cry which was cut off almost in its infancy—and Tom, watching from the conning-tower above, was horrified to see his friend vanish from sight.

(Another splendid long instalment of this great serial in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET. Order in advance.)

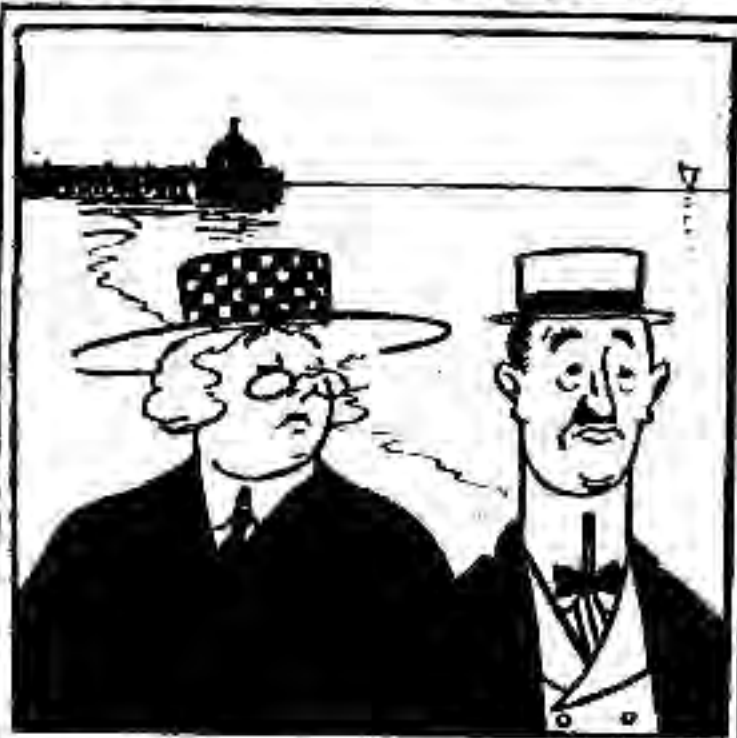
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