

OUR GREAT EVENT! SEE INSIDE!



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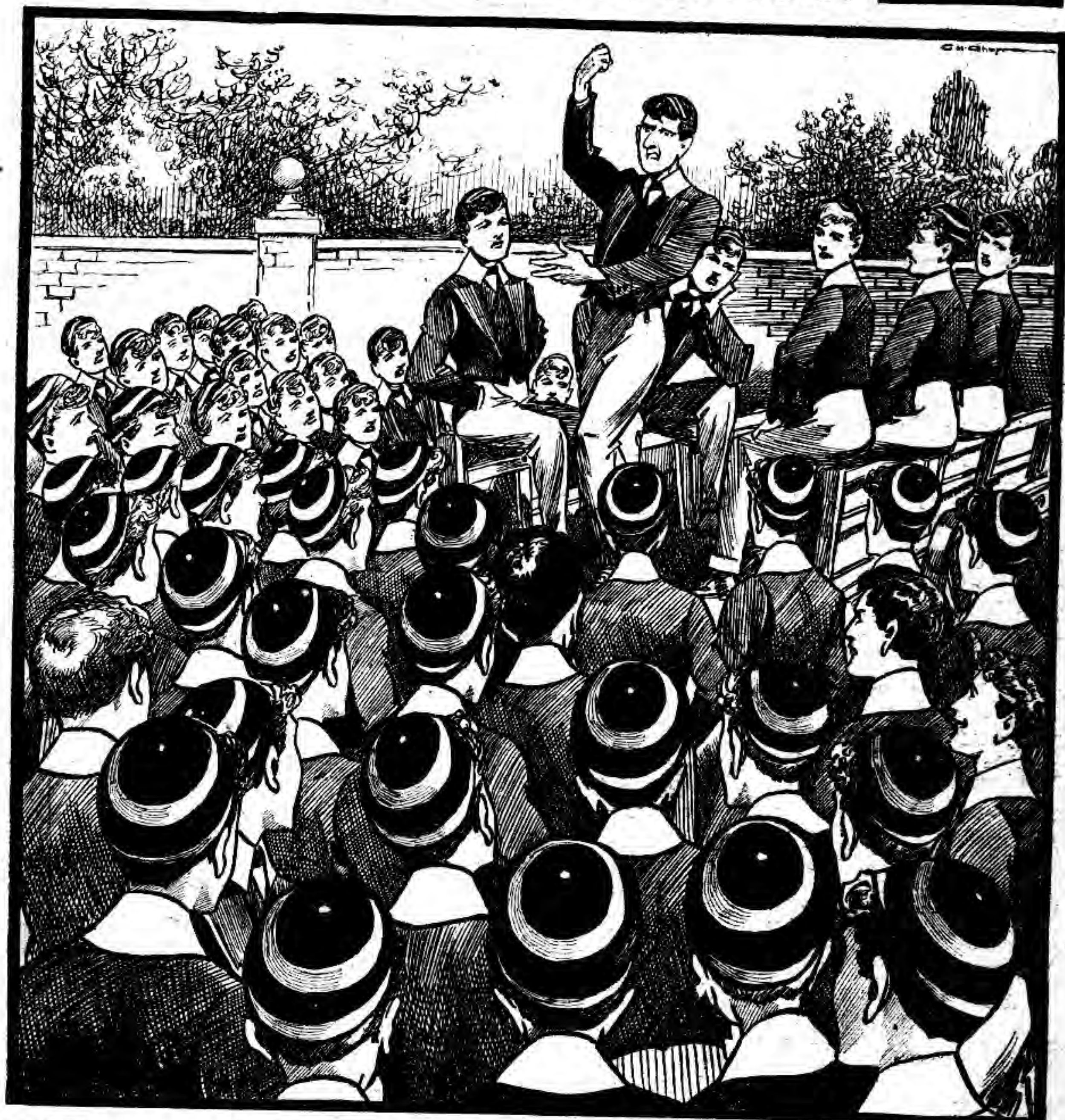
No. 659. Vol. XVIII.

Sept. 25th, 1920.

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THE COUNCIL OF ACTION!



FISHER T. FISH AGITATES FOR A STRIKE OF THE REMOVE

(A stirring scene in the splendid long complete school tale of Greyfriars in this issue.)



OUR GREAT EVENT!

The next issue of THE MAGNET LIBRARY will be the number of the year! A super-edition, in fact. Realising the vast interest taken by my reader friends in anything connected with the cinema, I have devoted a very large sum of money and given a tremendous amount of work in order to present free to every reader of next Monday's MAGNET a superb 32-page photogravure booklet, entitled:

"WHO'S WHO IN FILMLAND?"

The book will be presented in four parts, and the first part will be inset in our next issue. Naturally, such a gift is going to produce an enormous demand from the great British public, and YOU can only make certain of acquiring it by ordering a copy from your newsagent at once.

Now for the brilliant contents of this great bumper number.

"THE SCHOOLBOY CINEMA STARS!"

By Frank Richards,

is the title of the magnificent, long, complete school-tale of Harry Wharton & Co. All your favourites will appear in it. The chums of the Remove, Wingate of the Sixth, the girls from Cliff House, Temple, Dabney & Co., and—the lady and gentlemen actors of a first-class cinema producing company.

The yarn is full of real fun and thrilling adventure, and you simply cannot afford to miss it.

The next star feature is

"MARCUS THE BRAVE!"

By Famous Victor Nelson.

It is the FIRST INSTALMENT of a wonderful new serial story dealing with Nero and his gladiators in the awe-inspiring arenas of ancient Rome. Eunice, the beautiful slave from Britain, takes a leading part in the romance, and I can only tell you that the opening of this astounding story is the very best it has ever been my pleasure to read.

"IF CHARLIE CHAPLIN WAS A FORM-MASTER!"

Under this title that extraordinarily clever artist, Mr. MacWilson, opens up a brilliant new full-page feature in the MAGNET which is certain to make a great hit!

A GRAND MONEY-PRIZE COMPETITION

will start in these pages next week, and those boys and girls who wish to accumulate a nice little sum of money must make a point of entering this simple contest.

The GREAT POINT is to ORDER your copy in ADVANCE.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

J. Stratton, 9, Great Stanhope Street, Mayfair, W. 1, who writes me a most cheery letter about the stories which delight him, asks for correspondents anywhere.—W. H. Braun, 200A, Fawcus Street, Jeppes Extension, Johannesburg, South Africa, would like to hear from readers.—Patrol Leader W. Delaney, Box 259, Springs, Transvaal, South Africa, asks for correspondence about Scouts and from Scouts, and also readers living in Ballybrophy, Queen's County, Ireland, ages 15-18.

REALLY BAD SPELLING!

Every day the poor old English language gets attacked; but, so far, the inner entrenchments are safe. For instance, only yesterday I was turning over the pages of a regimental magazine called the "China Dragon"—there was a dragon on the cover who looked capable of chawing up the meat market—and among the good things the paper contained were the following:

"A stupid young fellow named Payne
Was passing under a krayne,
When a ponderous weight
Dropped down on his peight,
And he never will do it agayne!"

"In Egypt this hieroglyph
Is carved on the face of the klyph,
A fantastic high priest
And a curious beist
Are floating away in a skyph.

"In the distance looms up a small isle,
On the face of the priest is a smisle.
If you think it's a hoax,
Or a newspaper's joax,
Just travel that way for a whisle!"

QUITE AT SEA OVER IT!



Billy: "Some sailors are very small, aren't they, pa?"

"Pa: "Oh, no! Pray, what led you to think they were small?"

Billy: "Because I read yesterday of a sailor sleeping in his watch!"

STOP PRESS!

The printing-machines have been stopped in order to emphasise to all readers of the MAGNET the importance of ordering next Monday's Great Free Gift Number at once. Newsagents' orders are rolling in in an unprecedented manner. It is the biggest printing order ever achieved for any one issue of the MAGNET. Thousands of people may be disappointed. Make certain by ordering.—EDITOR.

WHAT A SELL!



Warder: "Your wife has come to see you."

Convict 99½: "Tell her I'm not at home!"



The Council of Action!

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

BY
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Fishy's Latest Stunt!

HARRY WHARTON, the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School, was looking deeply distressed.

The Remove Form fellows had had their dinner, and turned out of the dining-hall, and most of them were collected in little groups, talking. And, to judge by their excited looks, there was a topic of unusual interest on the tapis.

William George Bunter paused in the hall, polished his enormous spectacles, jammed them over his fat little nose, and then took them off again, and polished them once more. When Billy Bunter was agitated he never could get his eyeglasses to fit comfortably. And at the present moment the fat features of Bunter of the Remove showed signs of the greatest mental distress.

Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Bob Cherry were looking cloudy enough, too. They gathered in the passage gloomily.

Lord Herbert Mauleverer, the aristocratic schoolboy earl, strolled up and joined the three chums.

"Begad, deah boys, this is rotten!" said Mauleverer.

Harry Wharton nodded without speaking.

"Beastly!" said Mauleverer.

"I am jolly sorry for the Remove," Harry Wharton remarked.

"I suppose we ought to be sorry for the whole of the Lower School," said Nugent.

Bolsover of the Remove came up to the group with Skinner.

The two cads of the Remove Form were grinning.

"You've seen the board, of course, you chaps?" asked Bolsover.

"Yes," said Harry Wharton shortly.

"Seen the news on it?"

"Yes."

"Bit startling, isn't it?" said Skinner.

"I should never have thought it of the Head."

Bob Cherry turned on him angrily. "The Head! What has the Head done?"

"Oh, nothing! But it's rotten for a school like this—"

"Dr. Locke has done what he thinks is the best thing as headmaster."

"Rather, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

Bolsover, the cad and bully of the Remove, laughed sneeringly.

"Oh, I suppose you good little Erics will knuckle down to any sort of arrangement," he said. "I suppose when they come here you'll crawl up to them for any favours that are going? You know they've all got jolly bad names at Highcliffe as beastly mean masters."

"Well, it's only for a week."

"That's seven days too long, and I'm blessed if I'm going to stand it, for one. Are you, Skinner?"

"Not me!"

"We'll give the cad an awful time the second he arrives!"

"Rather!"

"And I jolly well think you bounders ought to do the same," said Bolsover.

OUR GREAT EVENT!

A Beautiful Present for
every reader of THE
MAGNET next Monday.
Order YOUR copy at
once.

ONLY THREE-HALFPENCE.

"Fancy the Head pushing four rotten Highcliffe masters on to us just because Quelchy and Capper and the two fag Form-masters are going to Oxford for a week."

"Well, they're going in for a big examination. It's just the time we ought to play up and help old Quelchy. He's always jolly decent to us, you cad!"

"He's only decent to you because you crawl to him!" sneered Bolsover. "Look how Cherry fawned over him when Quelchy said in class this morning that he might be leaving us for a time."

Bob Cherry's face went crimson. Bob was the last fellow in the world to be insincere. Bolsover's remark was entirely unjustified, and, considering against whom it was delivered, exceedingly unwise. Bob Cherry was the fighting man of the Remove, and as Bolsover finished speaking he realized he had made a bad mistake.

"Did you say that I crawled to Quelchy?" hooted Bob.

"Well, it looked jolly like it, and I—"

Smack!

The hand of Bob Cherry came across Bolsover's face with a ringing report like a pistol-shot. Bolsover staggered back against the wall with a gasp. The fighting man of the Remove pushed back his cuffs, and squared up to Bolsover in a most warlike way.

"Put up your hands, you howling rotter!" exclaimed Bob.

"Ow!"

"I'm going to give you a jolly good hiding, you unspeakable bounder!"

"Confound you, I—"

"I am fed up with your beastly insinuations!" interrupted Bob Cherry heatedly. "and I'm not jolly well going to allow anyone to say that I do the crawling act to anybody! Come on! Put up your hands, you rotter!"

"Hear, hear!" said Harry Wharton.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

"Go it, Bob!" cried Frank Nugent.

"Now then, Bolsover—"

Bolsover backed away. Bob Cherry was a happy-go-lucky individual; but he was a great fighting man when his blood was up, and Bolsover did not care for the encounter.

"Come on, you cad!"

"Look here—"

"Come on!" shouted Bob Cherry, prancing up to his enemy, and tapping him on the nose. "I'll jolly well show you whether I crawl up to masters, or anybody else for that matter!"

"Cave!" muttered Frank Nugent.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove Form, came out of his study just then, in time to save Bolsover. Bob Cherry dropped his hands. He gave the bully of the Remove a glare, and walked away with his chums. They went up the stone staircase, and strolled along the Remove passage. Just before they reached the end study—No. 1—which was shared by Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, a long-legged junior dashed up to them in a breathless state. His hair was all tousled, and he had a pale face flushed with excitement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry. "Here's Fishy!"

Fisher Tarleton Fish, the American junior, snatched out a pocket-book and pencil from his Eton jacket as he came up to his Form fellows.

"Here you are, you jays!" he gasped. "I guess I've been trotting around the whole of this hyer place to find you!"

"Oh!"

"Now, have you galoots heard the noos?"

"Yep, we hap, I guess!" laughed Bob Cherry, in a drawl. "We've heard the blessed 'noos,' and we're jolly well fed up with it!"

"Is that so?"

"Yep again."

"Then I guess you're the very jays for my wheeze!"

Fisher T. Fish opened his notebook, and turned to Harry Wharton.

"Full initials, if you please, Wharton. I guess I can just find room for you galoots in my latest stunt. The list is nearly full up."

"What on earth are you talking about, you silly chump? What's the wheeze now?"

"I guess it'll be one up against these new guys that are coming. This hyer place ain't the right one for those masters from Highcliffe. I guess we'll hoof them out in two shakes of a duck's tail!"

"What's that?"

"Waal, I thought you said you had heard the noos?" said Fisher T. Fish. "Ain't you got it that Mr. Quelch and Capper and the two Twiggs are going to Oxford for a week on some examination stunt, and Dr. Locke has got four masters from Highcliffe to take their place?"

"Well?"

"And do you mean to say you want those guys hyer?"

Harry Wharton gave a laugh.

"Of course we don't want them," he said. "Considering that more than half the duffers at Highcliffe loathe us like poison, we could quite easily do without them. But, on the other hand, the Head has made the arrangements, and whether we like it or not we shall have to lump it!"

"That's the idea, Fishy!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Greyfriars isn't a blessed republic, you know, and we have to knuckle down to a lot of things we don't like."

"I guess that's what's wrong with you jays!" exclaimed the American junior.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

"Now, in the States if a headmaster was guy enough to—"

"That'll do, Fishy!" growled Harry Wharton. "If everything is so jolly wonderful on the other side of the herring-pond, why the dickens did you take the trouble to come across here?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher Tarleton Fish glared at the captain of the Remove.

"Waal, if you jays don't want to come into this hyer stunt I guess the Council of Action will be able to ramp along without you!"

"The Council of Action?"

"Yep; that's the motion, I guess."

"What on earth is the Council of Action, you chump?"

"I guess that's my idea," said Fisher T. Fish. "I'm president of the council. When these jays arrive the council is going to watch the interests of all the galoots in the Lower School."

"My hat!"

"Any high-falutin' interference from Mr. Quelch's deputy will be squashed right away by the Council of Action. Every sensible jay in the Lower School will come into the council. The subscription will be half-a-dollar a head."

"Phew!"

"The half-dollars will go into the strike-fund, and if the Council of Action calls a strike, or anything in the nature of a lock-out, the council's funds will be given out in doles."

"You spoofing rotter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I suppose it's the money you want?"

"The dollars are necessary, you jay. Without funds we can't agitate, I guess."

"Oh, you chump!" exclaimed Harry. "How much money have you raised so far?"

"I guess I ain't had any muggets yet—that's coming!"

"But—but I thought you said you had got nearly everyone in the Lower School down on your list?"

"So I have."

"Well, that represents about a hundred half-dollars. In real money that's over twelve pounds."

"I guess the silly jays won't brass up yet!" snapped the American junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you lopsided galoots ain't got the laugh on me yet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This Council of Action is going to spread like wild-fire, and you jays will be going down on your hands and knees to come in before long, you take my word!"

"Oh, dry up, Fishy!" laughed Bob Cherry. "Your blessed council will be in the Punishment-room if you start that sort of political rot at Greyfriars. I suppose you'll be starting a school trade union before long?"

"That's the idea!"

"A pound a day for schoolboys and free beer, I suppose?"

"I guess we'll draw the line at free beer," said Fish. "It'll be a dry school; but any jays from other schools like these Highcliffe jays will be absolutely taboo."

"I advise you to go jolly carefully," said Harry Wharton. "After all, the Head has got the Highcliffe masters to come in to take the place of Quelch & Co., and if you start playing the giddy goat you'll be coming up against Dr. Locke."

"Waal, are you guys coming into the Council of Action?"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another and grinned.

"Half-a-dollar per head," said Fish. "Surely you ain't going to let half-a-

dollar frighten you out of the stunt? You'll get the money back ten times over if there's a strike!"

"How on earth are you going to manage that, you chump?"

Fisher T. Fish cocked his head on one side and looked thoughtful.

"Waal, I guess there's such a thing as compound interest on invested capital," he said, after a moment's silence. "The interest will be paid out as doles to the strikers."

Harry Wharton gave a hearty laugh.

"But the deputy masters are only coming for one week, Fishy, you howling duffer!" he exclaimed. "What sort of compound interest do you think you're going to get in one week?"

"Waal, are you coming into the council?"

"No, you idiot!"

"Then you're a silly, lopsided crowd of jays!" snapped Fisher T. Fish, shutting up his note-book. "I guess you'll be sorry you've refused. I guess I'm not wasting any more time on you guys. We've got our first meeting arranged in Study No. 14 in ten minutes!"

And the American junior dashed away down the Remove-Form passage.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Noisy Meeting!

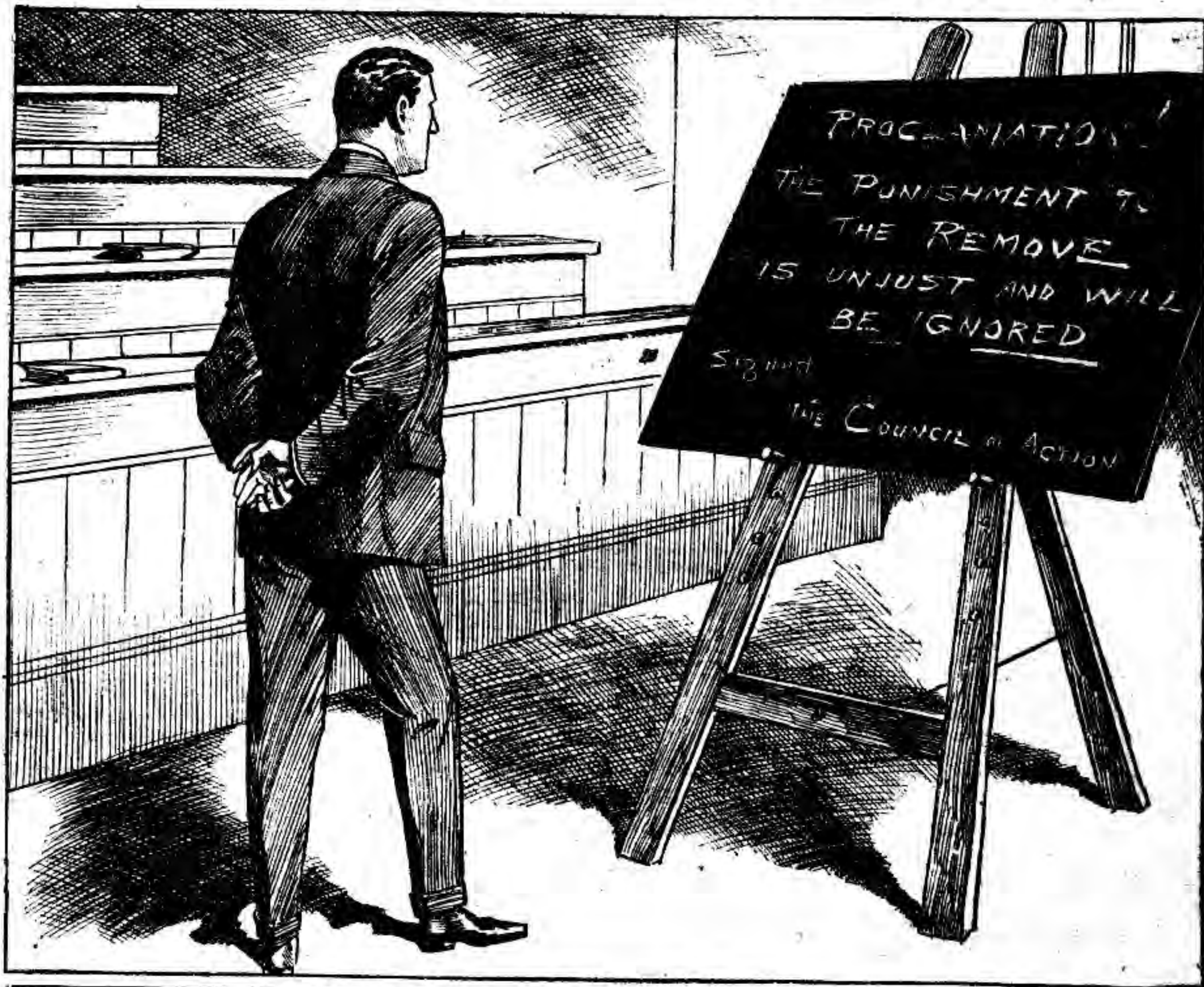
STUDY No. 14 was in a buzz. Fisher T. Fish had finished his canvassing for the Council of Action, and in response to his fiery appeal members from the Remove and the Third and Second Forms had gathered together in the little study which Fisher T. Fish shared with Johnny Bull and Field. The juniors and fags had turned up in force for the meeting which was to decide the tactics and general strategy of the Council of Action.

Needless to say, Johnny Bull was not there. He had told the American junior what he thought of his council and all its works. Bull had expressed his sentiments with a certain amount of violence, and had then gone along to Study No. 1 and joined Harry Wharton & Co.

Bolsover and Skinner and their cronies had come. Bolsover didn't care very much what the American junior suggested. The bully of the Remove was ready to disagree with anyone, just for the fun of the thing, and he knew that an opposition conducted on these lines was certain to find plenty to do. Billy Bunter, Field, Rake, Redwing, and Russell were there. Treluce and Trevor had come along from Study No. 9, and Wibley and Desmond represented No. 6. Snoop and Stott were there to back up Skinner. Wingate minor and Tubb and Paget held a watching brief for the Third Form, and Bunter minor, Nugent minor, and Gatty and Castle had come to air the views of the Second Form.

The little study was so crammed now that there was hardly room to swing a cat. There was a buzz when Fisher T. Fish closed the door. The American junior's action meant that the meeting was about to come to business, and attention was turned upon him from all sides.

Sampson Quincy Iflley Field, nicknamed by the Remove as "Squiff" Field, on the strength of being the American junior's study-mate, had appointed himself informal chairman, and in lieu of a bell to clang for order—and something of the kind was likely to be wanted—he had armed himself with a mallet, which could not fail to be heard in every corner of the room—and of Greyfriars as well.



The deputy form-master gave a gasp of surprise as he saw what was written in large capital letters in chalk. "The young rebels!" he muttered. "The desperate young scoundrels, they fancy they will defy me!" (See Chapter 9.)

"Well, we're ready for business," said Dick Rake. "Mr. Chairman!"

Bang, bang!

"What's that ghastly row about?" demanded Bolsover.

"That's the signal for order!"

"There'll be some disorder if you keep up that awful row!"

Bang, bang!

"Now, then, you guys," said Fisher T. Fish, "this meeting is called—"

"We know that already, Fishy! Get to the stunt!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"I guess I can't get to the stunt unless you lopsided gents keep silence," said Fish, with unusual mildness. "Waal, this meeting is called—"

"Hear, hear!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"To discuss what action the galoots in the Lower Forms in this hyer school take if the mugwumps from Highcliffe get their monkeys out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Before proceeding," said Bolsover, standing on a chair and looking round, "I should like to point out that it is usual for the English language to be spoken in a British school. As we haven't been told what foreign language is being spoken by the speaker, I should like to ask the chairman what is meant by 'jays' and 'galoots' and 'mugwumps.'"

"I guess—"

"It's no good guessing. What we

want to know is the actual translation!"

Fisher T. Fish bit his thin lips.

"Look here, Bolsover, you guy, I guess—"

"I don't want to listen to you until the chairman has answered my questions!"

Bang, bang, bang!

The chairman's mallet came into play on the study-table, and there was a roar of laughter from the members of the meeting.

"That's not answering my question!" cried Bolsover, with a grin. "As the speaker can't speak King's English, I should like to point out that there is no reason why he should continue to control the meeting. I move that we vote forthwith for another representative!"

Fisher T. Fish glared across the room at Bolsover.

"I guess I leave that matter in the hands of Mr. Chairman, as I shall be a candidate!"

"Oh, rot!" said Wibley. "Fishy has got up the idea, and he should see it through, of course!"

"Rats! I say, Bolsover!" said Skinner.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, ring off, Bunter! Hands up!"

"Look here! I'm going to speak! I'm a candidate!"

"What?"

Bunter looked defiantly at the amazed Removites and fags.

"I'm a candidate!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Chairman, I insist upon a show of hands for me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I don't gas so much as Fishy, perhaps, but I'm not such a braggart as he is, and I'm not a beastly bully like Bolsover!"

"What's that, you fat idiot?" howled Bolsover. "I'll jolly well pulverise you if you say I'm a bully!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Who proposes Bunter?" demanded Squiff Field, in a businesslike tone.

There was no reply. Nobody seemed anxious to propose the Owl of the Remove as president of the Council of Action. Bunter blinked round him indignantly.

"I propose myself!" he exclaimed. "I insist that that's in order."

"Oh, very well!" said the chairman, grinning. "Bunter proposes himself. Any seconder?"

Another chilling silence.

"I second myself," said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well," grinned Field. "Bunter seconds himself. Hands up for Bunter!"

A fat hand went up, and then another. The first belonged to Billy Bunter, and so did the second. The fat junior stood with both hands in the air; but no other hand went up, not even his minor's.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

Sammy Bunter was looking on with absolute unconcern.

"How's that?" grinned Field.

"Out!"

"I say, you fellows, you don't know what you're missing, you know. As president of the Council of Action I should stand a ripping feed out of the funds Fishy's going to collect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, you're at liberty to make silly asses of yourselves if you like!"

"Ring off, Bunter! You're dead in this act. Gentlemen, I propose my friend Fisher Tarleton Fish, from the States, to be president of the Council of Action," said Field.

"I'll back that," said Trevor. "Fishy thought of the idea, and he ought to be president, unless you vote for me."

"Hands up for Fishy!" shouted Field.

A forest of hands went up. Bolsover looked round with a scowling brow. The majority for Fish was even greater than he had looked for.

"Good!" said Field. "Now, hands up for Bolsover."

Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were the only ones who put up their hands.

"Do you demand a count, Bolsover?" asked Field, with a grin.

"No!" growled Bolsover.

"Any more candidates?"

There were no more, and Bolsover climbed down from the chair as Fisher T. Fish cleared his throat, preparatory to continuing with his speech.

"Gentlemen," said the chairman, "our respected president—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Will now address the meeting on an important subject."

"Go ahead!"

"On the ball, Fishy!"

Bang, bang!

"Stop that ghastly row, Squiffy!"

"Order!" Bang, bang! "Order!"

"Chuck him out!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Now, then, you mugwumps!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess you all know something about this hyer Council of Action. Some time to-day four jays from Highcliffe will be installed in this institution for the purpose of taking the places of Mr. Quelch and Mr. Capper and the Messrs. Twiggs."

"Shame!"

"The Head tells us that, owing to an outbreak of measles among the galoots at Highcliffe, he has been able to avail himself of the offer of four masters from the headmaster of Highcliffe. Now, I guess when these jays arrive here there's going to be ructions."

"Rather!"

"Highcliffe ain't no good. It ain't no class, and its masters ain't no class!"

"That's it, Fishy!"

"The reputation of these galoots has come before them. They've squashed those jays at Highcliffe, and there ain't a scrap of freedom for them to freeze on to."

"Hurrah!"

"I guess my country on the other side of the herring-pond fought for liberty in the Civil War between North and South, and that's where my stunt comes in hyer."

"Hear, hear!"

"Waal, the Council of Action has been formed to watch the interests of every jay in the Lower School whilst these mugwumps are with us. Now, you galoots, I guess liberty is a sure good thing, but it comes expensive at times."

The meeting looked graver.

"I guess, as president of this hyer council, I might call a strike, and a strike costs money."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

"Good!" exclaimed Bolsover. "Fishy's going to finance the wheeze. Bravo, Fishy!"

"Bravo!" roared the meeting.

Fisher Tarleton Fish glared across at the Remove Form bully.

"I guess that lopsided mugwump is talking through his tall hat!" he cried.

"I can tell you jays that I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I guess I haven't the dollars, for one thing, and I guess I ain't out to destroy the independence of this hyer Council of Action."

"I guess you jays will be called upon to foot it to the extent of half-a-dollar per head. In the event of a strike, I guarantee you get it back, with interest."

"Well, I oppose the whole proposition, root and branch!" exclaimed Bolsover.

"If I was president of the Council of Action, I shouldn't try to cadge half-dollars, or even pennies, off the members. I'd get out a jolly strong line of attack, in case of any tommy-rot from

"Who's Who in Film-Land."

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the new masters, and that's all that would be wanted, in my opinion."

"Quite right, Bolsover!"

"So if Fishy, as president, is out to suck money from the pockets of the downtrodden Remove and Third and Second Forms, I suggest he stands down, and leaves the way clear for me to carry on as president of the Council of Action."

There was a roar of laughter, and the general looks showed that the meeting regarded Bolsover's offer as a sound one, and were willing to accept it. If Fish had not suggested a collection of half-dollars he would have carried the meeting almost to a man, but the idea of a subscription changed the whole idea of the thing.

"Look here, you jays!" shouted Fish. "Don't you listen to this lopsided mugwump! I guess, if Bolsover thinks he's going—"

"Suppose you let the meeting decide for themselves," said Bolsover.

"I guess they've elected me president, and will have to stand by it!"

"Oh, look here, Fishy—"

"Fishy's right!"

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here—"

"What I say is—"

Bang, bang, bang!

There was a hubbub of voices, and the vigorous use of the chairman's mallet was unheeded. Every fellow had an opinion to express, and expressed it, in most cases, at the top of his voice.

"Order!" roared Field. "Order!"

Bang, bang, bang!

The mallet thumped the table merrily, the sound of it penetrating to the further corner of the school buildings. The door of the study was suddenly flung open, and an angry, stern-looking face looked in.

"Good gracious me!" snapped the visitor. "What does this mean?"

A pin could have been heard to drop as the members of the Council of Action looked at one another and then at the face at the door.

"Will you answer me?" snapped the newcomer, a short little man, with an unpleasant face. "Boy, what is your name? You, boy, with the long nose!"

Fisher T. Fish put his fingers up to his nose instinctively, although his name had not been mentioned. The American junior certainly had a somewhat prominent nasal organ. Bob Cherry had once suggested that its abnormal size was due to Fishy talking through it so much. But the worthy Bob had a way of exaggerating things, and it was not quite fair of the newcomer to refer to it in the manner he did.

There was a snigger from the members of the Council of Action as Fisher T. Fish put his hand up to his face.

"Now, then, boy, answer my question at once! Are you deaf?"

"Nope, I ain't deaf—are you?" said Fish.

The newcomer looked as though he was going to have a fit on the study carpet, and the rest of the juniors gave a gasp of astonishment at the American junior's effrontery.

"You young scoundrel!" said the man. "You dare to be insolent to me—me, Mr. Hicks!"

"Waal, you've got me guessing this time," replied Fish coolly. "I've never heard of a jay with that name before."

"You—you— Don't you know that I have come to take charge of the Remove Form in Mr. Quelch's absence!" said the man, shaking with anger.

"W-w-what? I—I—"

"I come to look over the Remove section of the building, and I come across a study disturbing the whole building, and when I come to inquire I—I am insulted by a mere slip of a boy!"

There was such suppressed rage in the master's voice that he could barely deliver the sentence. There was a gasp of surprise from the boys as he finished.

"Mr. Hicks from Highcliffe!" muttered Field. "Oh, my hat!"

"To think we're going to have a bad-tempered rotter like that for a week," murmured Wibley.

"Oh, my aunt!" said Tom Redwing sotto voce.

"Well, you scamps shall pay for your bad manners!" snapped Mr. Hicks, after a moment's pause. "If you each do five hundred lines by to-morrow morning it will teach you not to behave like bears in a tea-garden. Ha! That will mend your manners! Ha, ha!" And the master gave a curious sort of chuckle which grated on the ears of the astonished Council of Action.

"F-five hundred lines, sir?" gasped Bolsover.

"Ha! You are disappointed, you noisy ragamuffin; then you shall do six hundred!"

Mr. Hicks snatched out a pocket-book from his jacket-pocket. There was a pencil stuck into the elastic band round

the book, and he made preparations to write.

"You will leave this—this bear-garden immediately!" he snapped. "As you go through the doorway you will each give me your name. Now, then, that fat individual, March out! Name?"

Billy Bunter rolled towards the door, and blinked up at the new master's angry-looking face.

"Well, idiot?" snapped Mr. Hicks.

"What is your name?"

"B-B-B-Bunter, s-s-sir!"

"Right! Next!"

"Field!"

"Next!"

"Fish!"

One by one the members of the Council of Action filed out of the study, and as each junior or fag came opposite the new deputy master he gave out his name, and Mr. Hicks licked the point of his pencil and wrote the name down in a niggardly hand.

Bolsover arranged to come last, and he purposely knocked against the master as he reached the door. The notebook went flying from the writer's hand, and there was an angry snort of annoyance as he stooped down to recover the book.

"You clumsy idiot!" snapped Mr. Hicks.

"Thank you, sir," replied Bolsover, as he gained the Remove passage. "Thank you very much!"

And Mr. Hicks glared after his retreating figure.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rough on the Remove!

"I SAY, Bolsover, have you done your lines?" giggled Billy Bunter.

The Remove Form were seated at their desks in the class-room waiting for the arrival of the deputy Form-master. Mr. Hicks of Highcliffe was late. It was Wednesday, so there would be only the morning's lessons to put up with, and the Removites thought that they could face that, although news of the previous day's episode had spread like wildfire through the studies in the Remove Form passage.

"Have you done the lines, Bolsover, old man?" repeated Bunter.

The Remove Form bully scowled.

"Of course I haven't, you fat idiot!" he snapped. "Hasn't the Council of Action decided that no notice shall be taken of yesterday's impot?"

"I haven't done mine," said Bunter, blinking through his enormous spectacles.

"Sure, the rotter isn't in a hurry to take the Remove," said Micky Desmond. "Perhaps he thinks we are not going to be good bhoys intoinely!"

"And he won't be far wrong, if he starts his yesterday's methods," said Harry Wharton, with a determined setting of the mouth. "Of course, that Council of Action is all rot, and they were making an awful row at the meeting; but six hundred lines directly he arrives is a bit too thick for words. He won't find it all lavender if he begins bullying the whole Form. And from all accounts he's pretty certain to."

"The certainfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, in his own extraordinary English. "The esteemed and ludicrous sahib Hicks is a rotter chapfully—Ow, ow, ow!"

A finger and thumb had fastened upon Hurree Singh's ear, and he danced in anguish and twisted round, to find himself looking into the harsh face of Mr. Hicks, the new master, who had overheard his remark.

"You think what?" asked Mr. Hicks grimly.



One by one the imprisoned rebels left the Common Room and climbed the rope. As soon as each junior arrived on a level with Coker's study window-sill the rescue party hauled them into safety! (See Chapter 7.)

"I think the worthy and esteemed sahib is a rotter!" gasped the nabob.

"Oh, you do, do you, you young nigger. Take that, then!"

Mr. Quelch's deputy boxed Inky's ears right and left, and sent him staggering into his seat. The dusky Nabob of Bhanipur reeled into his seat, and Mr. Hicks closed the class-room door, and glared round at the Removites.

"Ah, Bolsover, you are there, are you?"

Bring up your lines and put them on my desk."

Bolsover stood up.

"Come along, boy!" snapped Mr. Hicks, referring to his notebook. "Bunter, Skinner, Snoop, Stott, Field, Fish, Rake, Redwing, Treluce, Russell, Trevor, Wibley, and Desmond. You will all bring up your lines. I have amused myself by making a little mathematical

calculation. Between you you have done eight thousand four hundred lines."

There was a gasp of astonishment from the Form, and an unpleasant sort of chuckle from the Form-master.

"If you please, sir," cried Bolsover suddenly. "I haven't done the lines, and I shall not do them unless our real Form-master, Mr. Quelch, confirms your punishment when he returns."

"I guess that's how the matter stands with me, too," said Fisher T. Fish, rising in his place.

"And me!"

There was a regular chorus as the remainder of the Council of Action leapt to their feet and announced their decision.

Mr. Hicks gripped hold of the table, and shook with rage. For a moment, it was obvious to the Removites, that he could not trust himself to speak. He recovered after a moment, and with a tremor in his voice he spoke.

"I—I can see that there is an organised conspiracy here to defy my authority. Let me tell you at once that I have never allowed that sort of thing at Highcliffe, and I'm not likely to allow it here. The lines will be written this afternoon. It is a half-holiday, and it will be spent by those boys whose names I have read out in this class-room. Get your books out! I do not intend to be bothered with a set of lazy young scoundrels—"

"You're not, sir," said Harry Wharton quietly. "My name is Wharton, and I am captain of this Form!"

"Eh? What's that, Wharton?"

"We're not a set of lazy young scoundrels, and you have no right to call us anything of the kind!"

"Are you asking for a caning, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

"Then you had better refrain from insolent talk. I have got Mr. Quelch's cane here, and I shall use it on you if I have any more of your impertinence! Now, then, where are you, Bunter?"

"I'm on this form," said Billy Bunter.

"I mean, where are you in the book, and what book is it?"

"I'm at chapter two in this week's bumper number of the 'Gem,' if that's what you mean, sir!"

Mr. Hicks scowled.

"I don't mean anything of the sort, Bunter, and you know it. What book are you doing under Mr. Quelch?"

"First book of the 'Æneid'!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Where are you in it?"

"Æneas' speech to Dido."

"You go on from there, Wharton—construe!"

Harry Wharton rose in his place. Wharton, although he gave up a great deal of time to athletics, was by no means behind with his school-work. His Latin was the best in the Remove, with the possible exception of Mark Linley's, the Lancashire scholarship lad, and Mr. Quelch had often highly commended it. But Mr. Hicks was not satisfied.

"Do you call that construing?" he demanded, rudely interrupting Wharton at the third line.

Harry Wharton coloured.

"Yes, I do, sir!" he said.

"Then I can only say that your master must have been easily satisfied," said Mr. Hicks. "A slovenly class and a slovenly master, I suppose?"

"Do you mean to call Mr. Quelch's methods slovenly?" said Harry Wharton. "If you do, you are telling an untruth, and you know it!"

Mr. Hicks almost staggered.

To be told by a junior that he was telling an untruth was a new experience for Mr. Hicks of Highcliffe School.

"What—what is that, Wharton?" he almost gasped.

"I say that you are telling an untruth if you are referring in those terms to Mr. Quelch," said Harry Wharton quietly and determinedly.

Mr. Hicks drew a quick, deep breath.

He picked up the cane from the desk and made a step towards Wharton. The junior did not flinch. For a moment it seemed that the deputy master would lash out with the cane.

But he restrained himself. If he came to blows with the captain of the Remove, he felt that it had better be upon some other question. If it came out that he had referred disparagingly to Mr. Quelch, it would not be well for him.

"I shall remember that, Wharton!" he said. "I will not interrupt the work of the class by punishing you, but I shall not forget."

"Remember it as long as you like!" said Harry Wharton, with a contempt he did not take the trouble to conceal.

"Is that the way juniors at Greyfriars speak to their masters?"

"Yes, to masters who don't know how

to make themselves respected!" was the unexpected reply. And the Remove giggled.

Mr. Hicks clicked his teeth.

"You will go on," he said. "Continue, Bolsover!"

Percy Bolsover construed, and now there were real blunders for Mr. Hicks to take hold of if he wished. But he passed most of them unnoticed. It did not take fellows like Wharton and Linley and Nugent and Alonzo Todd very long to discover that the master from Highcliffe was extremely weak in his Latin. He was, as a matter of fact, not capable of taking the Remove in the Classics at all; and that discovery added the final touch to the Form's contempt for him.

"You can go on, Bunter!"

"Certainly, Mr. Hicks, sir! I will go on with pleasure—"

"Don't answer me! Go on!"

"Certainly, sir! Where is the place?"

"Don't you know the place?" roared Mr. Hicks.

"Yes; but—but I'm sincerely sorry, sir, but I've lost the place."

"You haven't been attending to the lesson."

"Yes, I have been attending to it very carefully, sir—I have really; but I have just lost the place. I'm sincerely sorry that—"

"Come out here, Bunter!" said Mr. Hicks, feeling that in the Owl of the Remove he had a victim upon whom he could safely wreak his savage temper.

Billy Bunter eyed Mr. Quelch's deputy with uneasiness and dismay. He did not like the gleam in Mr. Hicks' eye at all.

"If you please, sir—"

"Stand out here!"

"But if you don't mind—"

"Do you want me to fetch you?" roared Mr. Hicks.

"Oh, no, certainly not! But—"

Mr. Hicks rushed towards the desk, and the hapless Owl skipped out before the class just in time to escape being dragged out. Mr. Hicks gave him a savage look.

"You young rascal, how dare you disobey me!"

"I—I didn't exactly disobey you, sir. I'm sincerely sorry, but—Ow! Please don't pull my ear, sir—it hurts! Ow—wow! You beast! You rotter! Leggo!"

"Oh, a beast and a rotter, am I?"

"No, I really didn't mean to say that! I respect you very much, sir, and I think you're a much nicer Form-master than Mr. Quelch—Ow, you beast! I like you awfully, but—Leggo! You rotten beast!"

Mr. Hicks, red with rage as the Remove burst into a roar of laughter, seized Billy Bunter by the collar, and lashed him with the cane. Bunter howled and yelled.

"Ow! Stop it! I say, you fellows, stop him, you know!"

The appeal was not made in vain. Harry Wharton's brow had darkened at the sight of the wanton bullying, and as Bunter called out he rose in his place. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent rose, too, and then Hurree Singh and Bulstrode and Mark Linley.

"Stop that!"

Harry Wharton's voice rang out like the note of a clarion. Mr. Hicks stopped in sheer surprise, and stared at the juniors.

"Wharton! You? What—"

"Stop that!"

"What?" yelled the Highcliffe master.

"You're not going to use Bunter like that. Stop it, I say, or we'll jolly soon make you, master or no master!"

Mr. Hicks could scarcely believe his ears. He raised the cane again and lashed out, and the unfortunate Billy Bunter gave a howl of anguish. It was

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too much for Harry Wharton. With a bound he was over the desk; with another he was upon the Highcliffe master, and wrenching the cane from the man's hand.

Mr. Hicks staggered back. Wharton faced him with flashing eyes. The deputy master and the Removite each had a grip on the cane. Mr. Hicks strove to wrench it away, but Harry Wharton held it tightly.

"No, you don't!"

The Highcliffe master did not speak. He dropped the cane suddenly, and stood glaring at the captain of the Remove as though he would kill him with a look. Harry Wharton threw the cane to the back of the class-room, and it fell to the floor with a clatter.

So silent was the room at the moment that the noise of the falling cane seemed like thunder to the pent-up juniors.

Mr. Hicks breathed fiercely through his hard lips.

"Wharton," he said tremulously, "go back to your seat this instant! If you disobey me I will not be responsible for what I do to you! Go!"

Harry Wharton was beginning to tremble now; the reaction had set in.

He turned about, his face marble-white, and went back to his desk.

For a full minute a pin could have been heard to drop, then Mr. Hicks opened his mouth to speak.

"For this—this outrageous behaviour," he said, with suppressed rage, "the whole of the class will be kept in from two till six! It is Wednesday, and you will lose your holiday. We will now continue!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Hicks!

"I'VE seen some masters in my time," Frank Nugent said reflectively, "but I don't think I ever came across a specimen like Hicks before!"

The whole of the Remove were gathered together in the Common-room in the Remove-Form passage. Lessons were over for the morning. The bell for dismissal had gone at last, and Mr. Hicks had released the Remove for dinner after repeating his order for an afternoon detention of the whole Form.

The indignant juniors had flocked up to the Common-room to talk matters over, and as Frank Nugent spoke the Removites nodded their assent. The morning's lessons had been an experience for the Greyfriars Remove. The deputy Form-master had left them almost breathless. There were, as Bob Cherry remarked, masters and masters, but a master like Mr. Hicks was a new wheeze!

"I've heard of madmen getting out of asylums before," said Bulstrode; "but this rotter takes the cake!"

"He prances off with the giddy Peck, Frean, and collars the Huntley and Palmer, and no mistake!" said Bob Cherry. "He nearly half-killed Bunter!"

"Now what have you jays got to say for yourselves?" cried Fisher T. Fish. "I guess you'll be ready to change your minds about the Council of Action now!"

Harry Wharton gave a laugh.

"Well, I may have changed my mind, Fishy," he said; "but I must say I wasn't very impressed by what the president of the council had to say this morning!"

"I guess——"

"Oh, dry up, Fishy!" growled Bob Cherry. "You're always guessing and gaasing! If I were you I would give 'em both up for a bit. If this blessed Council of Action is going to be any good it'll have to be properly run!"

"Hear, hear!" cried the Removites.

"The Hicks bird has got a vile temper, and if we've got to put up with him for a whole week we've got to tame him at once. I'm blessed if I'm going to stay in all the afternoon! Why, we've got a footer-match all fixed up, and we can't miss it!"

"Rather not!"

"Waal, you silly, lopsided jays, didn't I tell you that the Council of Action stunt would be a way of putting the kybosh on these hyer Highcliffe johnnies?"

"It looks to me as though Hicks is trying to get something back for Highcliffe against Greyfriars," said Harry Wharton. "We've always beaten them at footer, and they never stand an earthly against us in a tussle!"

"It certainly looks like it," agreed Mark Linley. "The fellow must be an awful cad if he's going to carry his dislikes as far as that!"

"Well, you know what Highcliffe is. When Highcliffe is on the war-path you never know what sort of tricks they will get up to. But this fellow is carrying things too far."

"The new master is fatfully off his honourable dot," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The question is, shall we let him continue his fatful career, or shall we remonstrate with him ragfully?"

"That's the idea, Inky!" laughed Bob Cherry. "It's no good wasting time on a lot of gas. We've got to decide one way or the other!"

"I guess you jays can leave it to the Council of Action!"

"Hear, hear!" cried the Removites.

"Don't you galoots worry your brain-boxes about it. As president, I guess I'll take whatever action I think best," continued Fisher Tarleton Fish. "It wants a smart feller to get his shooters on to this Hicks bird, and I guess you mugwumps have got that feller right here! Yep!"

"Just hark at the chump blowing his own beastly trumpet!" snorted Bob Cherry. "What's the use of leaving it to an ass like Fishy? I put it to the meeting that Wharton is hereby made president of the Council of Action, and that Fishy drops out of it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Waal, have you ever?" gasped the American junior.

"The answer to that is in the negative!" laughed Bob. "Now, Franky, you second my proposal, and if Inky and Marky vote we'll consider the resolution passed, carried, and done with!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you lopsided mugwumps, I guess I ain't resigning the presidency of this hyer stunt like that! It's my wheeze, and if you jays think you're going to grease me out like this I'm done with it!"

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you chaps hear that? Fishy's resigned the presidency of the council, and Wharton has kindly offered to fill the vacancy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that seconded and carried?"

"Rather!"

"That's all right, Harry, old bean!" laughed Bob, turning to the captain of the Remove. "You're president of the Council of Action now, owing to the patriotic sacrifice by Fishy and——"

"Look hyer, you jays!"

"And now it's up to you, Harry, old scout," continued Bob, "to put the kybosh on the Hicks bird!"

"I guess you mugwumps are——"

"Dry up, Fishy! Now you've resigned you have no further interests in the council!"

"Look here, Cherry, I guess——"

"Dry up!"

"I guess——"

"Bosh!"

Fisher Tarleton Fish glared angrily at the fighting-man of the Remove; but his glare was quite lost upon the worthy Bob, who turned to Harry Wharton, and pushed him up on to a chair.

"Silence for the president!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

The Remove gave a cheer as Harry Wharton mounted the chair and cleared his throat to address the meeting of indignant juniors.

"Look here, you fellows!" cried the new president. "If you'll leave it to me, I will be responsible for the necessary action to be taken against our new Form-master."

"Bravo!"

"Fishy's idea of the Council of Action is not a bad one for once; but it's no good leaving it to a chump like him. He will let the Remove down as sure as eggs are eggs!"

Fisher T. Fish gave a snort.

"I suggest we all go down to dinner now," continued Harry Wharton, "and directly we've finished, everybody will adjourn to the footer-field. We've got a match on against Courtfield this afternoon, and the match will not be scratched for a rotter like Hicks!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Whilst the dinner is on I will slip out and put up a notice in the Form-room, so that the boulder can see that we're in earnest and don't intend to be detained on a half-holiday. It is up to us to assert our rights, gentlemen!"

"Hurrah!"

"There goes the bell!" cried Bob Cherry. "Come along, you fellows! If we hang together we shall be all right, and the kybosh will be put on the Hicks bird!"

Laughing, and full of enthusiasm, the members of the Council of Action trooped out of the Common-room, and trooped down to Hall. Mr. Hicks was there, and he presided at the Remove table in the accustomed place of Mr. Quelch. His hard, bad-tempered face was set more sternly than ever. His small eyes roved from face to face as the Removites took their places. Harry Wharton came in nearly five minutes late; but Mr. Hicks said nothing, and the dinner proceeded. Fellows of other Forms, from the other tables, were glancing curiously towards the Remove. A hint had got abroad of the peculiar ways of the new Remove-master, and the fellows were interested—especially Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth. They were the rivals of the Remove, and always on the look-out for a chance of chipping them.

However, it seemed that Mr. Hicks was not prepared to interfere with the juniors' dinner.

"May I have another helping, sir?" said Bunter, pushing up his plate.

"Certainly, Bunter!" said Mr. Hicks. And Billy Bunter started operations on another helping.

The Remove watched him curiously.

Billy Bunter was well known for what he could do in the gastronomic line, and what he could do in that line was amazing.

Mr. Hicks was very slack at the table, and it seemed as though Bunter would have an opportunity of going ahead and distinguishing himself in a way that Mr. Quelch had never allowed.

Billy Bunter was a quick eater. He never finished a meal till last, but that was because he ate much, not because he ate slowly. The extra helping disappeared, and he pushed up his plate again with an insinuating smile.

"If you please, sir?"

Mr. Hicks gave him a glare.
 "Are you still hungry, Bunter?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "You are quite sure?"
 "Oh, quite sure, sir!"
 "You have eaten six slices of meat, seven potatoes, eight slices of bread-and-butter, and two helpings of pudding!" snapped Mr. Hicks, referring to a pencilled note on his shirt-cuff.

Bunter looked dismayed, and the Remove chuckled. There was evidently a "chiel among them takin' notes."

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Bunter.
 "You are evidently a regular pig with your food, and I shall watch you carefully."

"Yes, sir; but mayn't I have another helping now?"

"No!"
 "Just a small slice of pudding."
 "Silence!"

"I am awfully hungry, sir."
 "You'll be hungrier by tea-time!" said Mr. Hicks grimly. "An afternoon spent pleasantly in the class-room will sharpen your appetite. You'll all be hungry by tea-time."

"Oh dear! Pass the bread-and-butter, Wharton, will you?"

"You hadn't better, Wharton!" snapped Mr. Hicks. "Bunter has had enough."

"But just a little bread-and-butter, sir."

"Nothing more at all, Bunter! I will see you in the class-room in half an hour's time!"

Mr. Hicks rose from the table, a signal for the boys to do likewise. The Remove filed out of the dining-hall. Billy Bunter was looking a little disconsolate. He gave a jump as Bob Cherry slapped him on the shoulder.

"Really, Cherry, you startled me!"

"The Hicks bird has got a down on you, porpoise," grinned Bob. "But, considering everything, you didn't do so badly. Come along now! Don't hang about here, or he'll nab you as sure as fate. We're all going to rally on the pavilion. The teams are going to change at once, and the non-players are going to keep together so that Hicks can't get hold of them one by one."

The Remove Form fellows disappeared from the school building like smoke. In ones and twos and groups of four they trooped away towards the Lower School pavilion, and kept out of view whilst Harry Wharton's eleven changed into footer clothes, in preparation for the afternoon's match.

Meantime, Mr. Hicks and the other three Highcliffe masters were gathered together in the room set apart for them during their stay at Greyfriars. The four deputies were chatting over their morning's work, and Mr. Hicks rubbed his hands together and gloated as he announced his programme for the afternoon.

"This will teach these young scoundrels," he said. "During the whole time that I have been in this district Greyfriars have been the upper dogs, and have treated Highcliffe as though it was dirt. Now we are getting a little of our own back. Ha, ha!"

There was a chuckle from the four masters.

"It will certainly tame them a bit," said Mr. Crimp, who had also had a lively morning in the Third Form. "Are you starting them to work at two, did you say, Hicks?"

"Yes, at two, and the young scoundrels shall be there till six. It is five minutes to two now. I will go, and woe betide the boy who comes in late!"

Mr. Hicks left the room, and strolled

jauntily along to the Remove Form class-room. The door was closed, and there was no sign of the juniors in the long passage. In fact, the place had a strange, deserted appearance, which gave Mr. Hicks a feeling that something was afoot.

He turned the class-room door-handle, and walked in. Facing him was the blackboard. The easel upon which it stood had been dragged out, and was in such a position that it could not miss being seen.

Mr. Hicks saw it all right.

He gave a start back, and a savage gasp of surprise as he saw what was written in large capital letters in chalk:

"PROCLAMATION! THE PUNISHMENT TO THE REMOVE IS UNJUST AND WILL BE IGNORED! SIGNED—THE COUNCIL OF ACTION."

Mr. Hicks, his face pale with rage, breathed hard as he read the announcement. He looked from the blackboard to the empty desks, and passed his hand across his forehead as though bewildered.

"The young hounds!" he gasped. "The desperate young scoundrels! Good heavens! They fancy they will defy me!"

The deputy master could barely restrain himself. His authority was set at naught. He could guess where the revolting juniors were at this moment. They would be outside in the playing-fields. If he went out and ordered the boys to return to the class-room he knew that they would not obey. He would call upon the Head or the other regular Greyfriars masters and the prefects for assistance. That would be effective, but what a humiliating confession to make that a Highcliffe master could not keep his Form in order unassisted.

But the fact that the Remove were out of doors instead of in the class-room could not remain long unknown to the rest of Greyfriars. The situation required to be dealt with instantly, but how?

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



SEPTEMBER.

20th Monday	- - - -	7.32 p.m.
21st Tuesday	- - - -	7.30 "
22nd Wednesday	- - - -	7.28 "
23rd Thursday	- - - -	7.25 "
24th Friday	- - - -	7.23 "
25th Saturday	- - - -	7.21 "
26th Sunday	- - - -	7.18 "

One weakness naturally led to another. Muttering angrily, Mr. Hicks rubbed out the insolent message on the blackboard. He would return to his three confreres from Highcliffe, and discuss the matter with them. For the time being he would not put the matter before the Greyfriars people, but he would make the Remove Form pay dearly for their revolt!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Pincers at Work!

HARRY WHARTON of the Remove was sitting on the stone balustrade at the front entrance, chatting with Bob Cherry and Mark Linley. The juniors' faces were flushed from the effects of a hard game of footer. The Remove had played and won their game against Courtfield, and the visiting team had been sent away in their brake to the accompaniment of ringing cheers from the Greyfriars fellows, more particularly by the members of the Remove Form.

Courtfield had put up a hard game, and the 'Friars had had to fight like trojans to maintain the lead they had obtained at half-time. Bulstrode had scored a goal in the first half, and the Courtfield eleven were unable to equalise. They had invaded the 'Friars goal area time after time in the second half, and the Remove had fought tooth and nail to defend the net. They succeeded, thanks to the backs, and the result was a win by one to nil.

After their hard-won fight Harry Wharton & Co. had changed into their Eton clothes, and seen the Courtfield fellows away. Then they had to discuss the future.

"I can't understand why the Hicks bird didn't come and stop the game," said Harry Wharton. "He must have seen the proclamation. Goodness knows I wrote it large enough!"

"It's funny!" replied Bob Cherry. "I expected to see him rush on to the field every moment. I wonder why he didn't come?"

"He'll have to take some sort of action. After all, we couldn't have cheeked him more than by chalking up the message."

"Rather not?"

"I don't think we had better go in to tea. The postman will be here in a few minutes. I'm expecting a remittance. In fact, nearly all the fellows are expecting something. It'll come like corn in Egypt, too, because I haven't been able to raise a sou out of anybody."

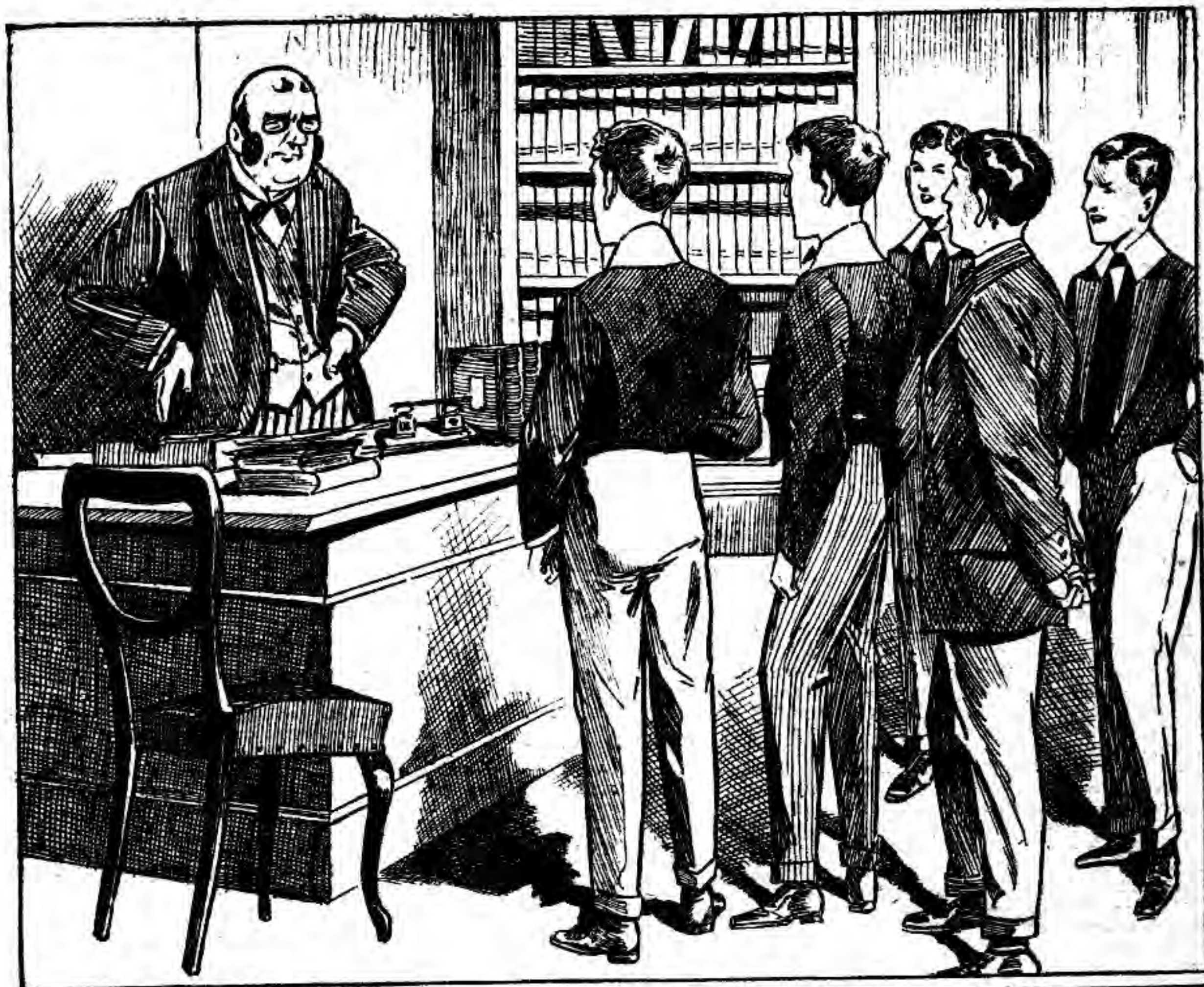
"Even Mauly is on the rocks until something turns up."

Every member of the Council of Action—that meant every Removeite—was standing about in the vicinity of the school entrance. They were all there for the same purpose. The post was due, and the postman was expected to bring nimble postal-orders and currency notes from fond fathers and mothers or generous uncles and aunts. It didn't matter from whom it came so long as it arrived.

All the juniors seemed to realise that unity meant strength. There was not a single Removeite who was anxious to go into the Remove Form passage on his own. A lead was required, and a leader was not forthcoming until the Royal Mail arrived.

"The post is late," said Harry Wharton, looking at his watch. "Jolly late, in fact. Bother it! I'm getting rather hungry. Hope to goodness my remittance does come!"

"Well, if it doesn't, it'll be a simple



"We have come to you sir," said Harry Wharton, fearlessly facing the Fifth-form master, "because we know that you are just, and will help us!" (See Chapter 7.)

matter to borrow from someone who isn't disappointed."

"That's so. Hallo, here's Gossy!"

Gosling, the school porter, was seen coming up the drive.

Bob Cherry gave him a friendly smack across his shoulders as he came up to them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Gossy, old bean! Have you seen your sister lately?"

"You stoppit, Master Cherry!" growled the surly old porter. "Wot I ses is this 'ere, brats like you should be drowned!"

"Oh, Gossy!"

"And I don't want to 'ear another blinkin' word about my sister! To think as she came all the way from 'Stralia to give me a thousand pounds, and then changed her mind!"

"Never mind, Gossy, old bean!" laughed Bob Cherry. "When my ship comes in I'll buy you a bottle of gin all to yourself! Now, where's the rotten postman to-day?"

"Postman? 'E's been!"

"What?"

"Wot I ses is this 'ere. The post 'as been and gorn! Mr. 'Icks from 'Ighcliffe 'as taken all your letters. He 'ad the whole blessed lot 'alf-hour ago."

"My hat! They aren't on the board. I've looked."

"Of course, they ain't on the board. Mr. 'Icks ses to me, ses 'e, 'Gosling, my man, until I ses so otherwise, hall letters

to the boys in the Remove was to be 'anded to me.' He means 'im, on course, Master Cherry."

"My hat!"

"'E ses 'that'll teach the young rips to disobey me,' and I ses 'Why, Mr. 'Icks, ain't them boys to 'ave 'em at all?"

"Good egg, Gossy!"

"And 'e ses, 'No; they've defied my tauthority, and they shall suffer. Them boys will have no letter 'anded to them afore Mister Quelch arrives.' That's nice goings on, ain't it?"

Harry Wharton jumped off the stone balustrade as the Removites began to crowd up to hear what the discussion was about.

"My hat!" he gasped. "I—I think I can see through this all right. I believe Mr. Hicks has taken our letters on purpose so that we don't have any pocket-money."

"Phew!"

"It's just the sort of thing a mean, spiteful, vindictive beast like Hicks would do. You see, if we don't have any pocket-money to buy our own tuck, he can soon punish the Council of Action members by refusing to give us any grub!"

"Oh, my fat aunt!"

"You see if I'm not right," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, it doesn't matter if you are," exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Mrs. Mimble will give us tick at the tuckshop for

any price you like to name. She knows we shall pay up later."

"By Jove! I forgot Mrs. Mimble. Just cut along, Bob, and ask her whether she will chalk up credit to the Remove until the wind goes down; in other words, until the Hicks bird flies away."

Bob Cherry set off at a double, and in less than a minute he returned, with a serious, bewildered expression on his face.

"What's wrong, Bob?"

"It's closed!" roared Bob Cherry angrily. "Blessed if there isn't a notice posted up on the shutter."

"Oh! Anything wrong with Mrs. Mimble?"

"It's the Hicks bird!" said Bob. "The tuckshop is closed until further orders."

"What!"

There was a cry of astonishment from the Removites as they pressed round the two speakers at the foot of the steps. Gosling, the porter, gave a grunt of disapproval as he struggled away from the crush of indignant juniors.

"The shutters are drawn and the door's locked!" cried Bob Cherry. "And there's a notice stuck up on the shutter in Hicks' fist!"

"What's it say?"

"Notice! This shop is closed until further notice as a punishment to the Remove Form.—Signed, R. C. Hicks."

"Great Scott!"

"What cheek!"

There was a regular howl from the

angry juniors as Bob Cherry finished his news.

"The rotter is having his own back at the Council of Action!" cried Harry Wharton. "It's quite easy to see his game. He's a blessed spoil-sport, and I don't believe the Head has sanctioned it for a moment."

"Fancy stopping our letters!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I shall kick up a blessed row about that. I know there was a letter from one of my titled relations. It had a postal-order for a fiver in it, too!"

"Dry up, Bunter!" growled Bob Cherry. "We've heard about that blessed postal-order before!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, it ain't any joke to lose a fiver, you know. I've been expecting that postal-order all day, too. It's from an old aunt of mine—Lady de Bunter, you know."

"Bother your old aunt!"

"I shall go to the Head about it! it ain't any joke losing money like that. Look here, you chaps, if you'll lend me a few bob to go on with, I'll just trot down to Friardale and buy some cakes. You can have your money back when Hicks hands over the letters."

"Rats!"

"I say, Fishy, you lend me a few bob, will you? You can have it back out of the fiver."

The American junior gave Bunter a glare. Bunter's postal orders were too well-known at Greyfriars. There was always a postal-order expected. It never seemed to turn up. The fat junior had talked about this mythical postal-order so often that the story never went down at all, unless it was with a new boy at the beginning of a term.

"I guess you can dry up, Bunter, you jay!" snapped Fisher Tarleton Fish. "You ain't the only one who is disappointed, you galoot. Now, then, Wharton, you had better hand over the presidency of the Council of Action to me. The Highcliffe mugwump has got to be handled, I guess."

"Well, we must talk it over, you fellows," said Harry Wharton. "Fishy is quite right when he says Hicks must be handled. He's scored one up on us at present. We're all out of funds, and he's boned all the letters containing remittances, and now he's closed the tuck-shop so that we sha'n't have credit from Mrs. Mimble!"

"The rotter!"

"The outsider!"

"The best thing is for us to go to Hall and have tea, and then we'll go into the ways and means of tackling the Hicks bird. Up to now the Council of Action has panned out pretty well; but the wily enemy is a cunning bounder, and we've got to watch the step."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm jolly hungry. We'll have tea and then rally in the Common-room in the Remove passage."

"Rather!"

Harry Wharton led the way into Hall. Tea in Hall was not compulsory, and, as a rule, only the hard-hearted and hard-up visited Hall for this meal. The principal reason for this restraint on the part of the Greyfriars juniors was because tea in Hall was always particularly dull. Large slices of bread-and-butter without jam and a mug of tea was the only course. There were never any cakes or pastries, and in consequence tea was generally partaken in the studies where the juniors were allowed to satisfy their weaknesses by having buttered toast and scones and cakes and pastries to their hearts' content, and to the utmost limits of their private purses.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

The chums of the Remove were complete strangers in Hall. However, Mr. Hicks' counter-attack had driven them to it, and they trooped in now in full strength, grumbling at their fate.

"Tea ready?" cried Harry Wharton, calling across the long table to a maid who was standing by the kitchen lift.

"Yes, sir. It's on the table."

The captain of the Remove stared down at the large plates of slices of bread, and noticed that the mugs were filled to the brim with water. He looked from the mug before him, and then to the next, and then to the one on his left.

"Why, it's water!" he gasped. "What on earth does this mean?"

"Oh, I say, you fellows!" cried Billy Bunter suddenly, holding up one of the plates of bread. "Just look at this! It's dry bread! They've forgotten the butter!"

Harry Wharton looked across at the maid, who was looking on with a pronounced smile on her face.

"There's some mistake here, Mary," exclaimed Wharton. "You've forgotten the butter and tea!"

"No, sir! That's quite right. Just plain bread and water!"

"W-what?"

"No butter or tea to-day, sir!"

"B-b-but—"

"Mr. Hicks came in and gave strict orders to the housekeeper this afternoon, sir. He said that only dry bread and water was to be served. Ah, here he is, sir!"

The Highcliffe master came striding into the Hall. His face was stern, and he looked pale and anxious. The juniors gave him a contemptuous stare as he stopped and faced Wharton. Mr. Hicks had put his foot down heavily, and he felt that trouble was brewing.

"Wharton!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir?"

"Why were you not in the Form-room this afternoon? Why did not the whole of the Remove parade as I instructed it to?"

"We didn't come, sir, because we thought the punishment was unjust and undeserved. Besides that, we had a football fixture arranged, and it is not usual for Greyfriars to shirk fulfilling their engagements, although Highcliffe has got a name for doing so."

"You—you impertinent scoundrel! I have—"

"It was not intended to be impertinent, sir; but considering you have only just taken Mr. Quelch's place, it is very unfair and unreasonable to try and keep us in for a half-holiday. That sort of thing never occurs with Mr. Quelch!"

"Then Mr. Quelch has obviously failed in his duties!" snapped the Highcliffe master. "I take it now that you are hungry, and have been compelled to attend Hall because you cannot get tea elsewhere. Well, let me tell you that as a punishment you will have only bread and water here, and next Saturday you will carry out to-day's programme. That is, you will be detained for the whole afternoon. Every young scoundrel in the Remove!"

"W-what, sir?"

"You have had the audacity to pit yourselves against me. This precious Council of Action—whatever that might mean—will now discover their mistake. Mr. Hicks knows how to deal with the matter, and you shall all pay for it dearly. I trust you will enjoy the dry bread and water!"

"Cad!"

A voice at the end of the table rang out like a clarion, and the Highcliffe master swung round on his heels. The moment his back was turned a slice of

dry bread whizzed through the air and struck him on the crown of his head. A shower of crumbs fell about his shoulders.

"Down with Highcliffe!"

"Rotter!"

"Cad!"

The hungry and outraged juniors were ready for anything. Mr. Hicks bit his lips hard as the threatening cries ran out, and more missiles commenced to whiz through the air. He dodged this way and that, and there was a shriek of laughter as an extra large chunk of bread caught him on the top of the nose, and for an instant it stuck there.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar him!" shouted Johnny Bull. "Let's take him out and duck him in the fountain. He's only here to take it out of us."

"Rotter!"

"Catch him, there! Look out!"

Mr. Hicks dodged, and crashed into Bunter. There was a yell from the fat Removeite as he collapsed against the table. The next moment half a dozen mugs of water rolled on to the floor with a crash, and pieces of crockery went flying in every direction.

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Hicks, now thoroughly frightened by the look of things. "Help!"

"Collar him!"

"There he goes!"

"Help! Help!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "There'll be the very dickens of a row over this! Just hark at the coward yelling at the top of his voice!"

"It'll be all right if the Head doesn't hear. Give him a chance to escape, Bob."

The two chums had no chance whatever of quietening down their Form-fellows at present. The whole of the Remove were out for vengeance. Mr. Hicks had certainly asked for it. His treatment of the Remove from the first moment of his arrival had been foolish and unfair, and a thing that Mr. Hicks did not understand was the fact that there was a vast difference between the Greyfriars fellows and the Highcliffe fellows. The Highcliffe boys would have submitted to anything—not through lack of courage, but by lacking the right spirit. Harry Wharton & Co. would go through fire and water rather than submit to a bully and a tyrant.

Mr. Hicks was fighting grimly now. He threw off the Removeites one by one, and dashed for the door. Bolsover saw his intentions, and cut off his retreat for a moment. Bob Cherry, who was standing near the bully of the Remove, caught him by the collar and whisked him out of the way. With the look of a hunted tiger, Mr. Hicks continued his flight to the door, and, to the accompaniment of a howl of derision, he went flying out into the passage.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rounding Up the Ringleaders!

"GOOD heavens! Hicks, what ever has occurred?"

Mr. Hicks, his collar torn away from the front stud, his tie hanging down over his waistcoat, his coatsleeve nearly torn off at the shoulder, and his face damp from a cold perspiration of fear and anger, staggered into the Highcliffe masters' study.

His three confreres were sitting in arm-chairs, reading; but they leapt to their feet in amazement as Mr. Hicks flung open the door, and almost fell into the room.

Mr. Mobbs, a quiet little M.A., who

had been taking the Upper Fourth during the morning, switched off his spectacles, and hastily wiped the glasses and put them over his fat little nose again, and blinked across at Mr. Hicks.

"My dear good sir," he gasped, "has—has there been an explosion?"

"Quick—lock the door!" cried Mr. Hicks. "Those young hooligans are after me! They are intent upon wreaking their vengeance!"

Mr. Mobbs, looking very startled, dashed to the door and turned the key.

"Mr. Hicks, my dear fellow," he said, "do be good enough to explain to us what has occurred. Only ten minutes ago you were sitting here quite quietly, and now you—er—appear to have been violently assaulted."

"It's those abandoned young hooligans in Quelch's Form!" snapped Mr. Hicks. "They are beyond all hope of training. There is not a spark of discipline amongst the whole lot."

"The young fiends!" growled Mr. Crimp. "It is just as bad in the Third Form here. I have never before in the whole of my career had such an unruly Form."

"It cannot be worse than the Second Form," said Mr. Bolton. "Thank heavens, we have not the same trouble at Highcliffe!"

"I consider it very strange!" exclaimed Mr. Mobbs pleasantly. "The Upper Fourth gave me little, if any, trouble this morning. I was certainly under the impression that Dr. Locke, as headmaster of Greyfriars, had instilled discipline—even a mild form of it—into all the Forms here."

Mr. Hicks gave a grunt of disapproval.

"Discipline!" he snapped. "Discipline! Good gracious me! I have never in the whole course of my life come across such a collection of undisciplined hooligans as there is in the Remove!"

"Really?"

"I detained the whole Form for the afternoon, and—"

"The afternoon?" interrupted Mr. Mobbs quietly. "Were you not aware that the school here has a half-holiday, in the same way that we do on a Wednesday?"

"Of course I knew!" snapped Mr. Hicks. "But half-holidays are a mistake very often, and an afternoon's detention makes a Form understand quicker than anything that a Form-master is earnest in exacting discipline."

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Bolton and Mr. Crimp in chorus.

"If I had my own way, I would detain the Remove Form every afternoon for the remainder of the term."

Mr. Mobbs gave a nervous sob of cough, and sat down again. He realised that Mr. Hicks was utterly unsuited for a schoolmaster, and it made the worthy Mr. Mobbs understand now why Mr. Hicks' own Form at Highcliffe hated and despised him. It was no secret. Mr. Hicks was a bad-tempered, unreasonable, vindictive man, and had no more right to be in authority over high-spirited school-boys than a dog.

Mr. Hicks was standing in front of the mirror over the mantelpiece, endeavouring to adjust his collar and tie. Just as he finished his temporary toilet there was a knock at the door. Mr. Hicks went across the room and turned the key.

"Who is that?" he cried.

"It is I, sir—Loder of the Sixth. May I come in, sir?"

"Yes."

Loder, prefect and bully, looked in.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but I have just come down to tell you what an infernal row the boys in your Form are

making. They are holding a meeting in the Common-room, and I wish you would support me in putting a stop to it."

Mr. Hicks gave a grim look at the Sixth-Former.

"I will support you to the utmost extent in my power!" he hissed. "The young hooligans have just assaulted me—me—their own Form-master! Look at this!"

Mr. Hicks held out his arm, and the sleeve fell away to the side.

Loder looked incredulous.

"Do you mean to say that the Remove did that?"

"They did worse than that. I put them on bread and water as a punishment. They pelted me with the bread. They—they—"

"You have notified Dr. Locke, of course, sir?"

"I have not. It would be an admission of weakness on my part, and I most flatly refuse to do so. My own headmaster particularly requested us to refrain from bothering Dr. Locke, though why I completely fail to understand."

"But—but it is unheard of, sir!" gasped Loder of the Sixth. "I know something about the Remove. If I had my own way I would expel most of them. I—"

"I insist upon punishing the ringleaders very severely," interrupted Mr. Hicks. "A number of these are conducting a Council of Action. It appears to be an organised effort against discipline, and in my opinion the ringleaders of the society, or whatever it is, should be detained, and locked up in one of the class-rooms until they have completely done at least a thousand lines."

Loder of the Sixth gave a satanic smile. Nothing would delight him more than to punish the ringleaders of the Remove to that extent.

Detention and a thousand lines! It made Loder's heart glad to think of it. Wharton and his chums were old and bitter enemies of his, and if he could persuade a master to give him the authority, nothing would please him more than to burden the juniors of the Remove with such a stupendous punishment.

"If you would like me to punish the ringleaders, sir," said Loder, after a pause, "I will see that they comply."

"It will be no easy task, Loder."

"It will be simple, sir," replied the Sixth-Former, with a grin. "The whole of the Remove are at present in the Common-room in the Remove-Form passage. I know the leading lights in that unruly Form, and I will see that they are made secure at once."

"Good!"

"I suggest that I leave them in the Common-room, so that you can decide at your leisure what shall be done with them. Of course, we could arrange to give them a flogging."

"Yes."

"I will leave it for you to decide, sir," said the Sixth-Form bully. "Now that I have your authority to go ahead, I do not anticipate very much trouble."

"I trust you will prove right. But never in the whole course of my career as a schoolmaster have I ever come across such a strong-willed, impertinent Form."

"They're the limit, sir."

"How Mr. Quelch puts up with it I cannot imagine. It is not surprising he was anxious to get away to Oxford in order to participate in the Classics examination."

"He is far too lenient, sir," said Loder. "He works on a certain principle, and, in my opinion, it is a wrong one. If I had the Remove I would put a cricket-stump across them every day

in the week. That would soon tame the hooligan spirit."

Mr. Hicks gave an unpleasant chuckle.

"Get the ringleaders, Loder," he said, in a whisper. "When you have made them secure, come down here to me again, and we will discuss the future. They will be sorry that they set out to defy my authority very soon."

"It is time something drastic was done, sir."

"Well, the time has arrived now, Loder. I am a kindly-disposed person in the ordinary way, but woe betide anyone who crosses my path! And, naturally, I have heard from time to time how the Council of Action behave whenever any Highcliffe lads get into their clutches. I have more than a few scores to work off on that account. I can assure you."

Loder looked at the cruel face of Mr. Hicks.

Even Loder was surprised to hear a man of Mr. Hicks' age and learning descending to such a mean and vindictive spirit; but the Sixth-Former could see a chance of getting his own back on a good many scores against the Removites, and he closed the study door and made his way along to the meeting of the Council of Action in the Common-room in the Remove passage.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Council of Action at Work!

SUCH a scene had never been known in the whole history of Greyfriars School.

The quadrangle was packed with fellows in a fever of excitement.

Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, was standing in a cart, excelling himself in an oratorical effort. The cart belonged to the Courtfield Laundry, and as the driver had just taken his last basket to the housekeeper, leaving his horse unattended, the rebellious Removites felt justified in taking possession of the cart in order to make use of it as a platform.

Seated round the low sides were Bulstrode, Nugent, Vernon Smith, Lord Mauleverer, and a few other supporters of the Council of Action, and they listened to the American junior with serious faces.

"Fish ought to be in the House of Commons, begad!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

And Vernon-Smith nodded his head in agreement.

That something serious was on the tapis was evident from the tone of the American junior's impassioned appeal to the vast crowd of Greyfriars fellows gathered together around the temporary platform.

"Members of this great Council of Action," roared Fisher Tarleton Fish. "I guess you all know the cause of this hyper meeting. You all know the grievances we labour under, and the wrongs we have suffered—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The great crime which has just been enacted must be wiped out, you galoots!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Six of the jays who are in the council have been outrageously handled by Loder and the Highcliffe stranger."

"Shame!"

"Wharton and Cherry and Hufree Singh, Peter Todd and John Bull, have been incarcerated in the Common-room by these two outlaws of the great scholastic institution in which we live and learn."

"It's a crime!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

"Hurrah!"

"I guess something has got to be done by you jays! Brother Bulstrode will now address you."

"Bravo!"

Fisher Tarleton Fish sat down at the side of the cart, and Bulstrode leapt to his feet, with a grim expression on his rugged face. He warmed to his subject at once, and grew more and more eloquent as he proceeded.

"Fellows of the Remove and the Lower Forms," cried Bulstrode, "as you know, we have lost Mr. Quelch, our honoured and respected Form-master. A new master has taken his place temporarily. Now, we have no objection to a new master on principle, so long as he behaves himself—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But the new master, known among us as the Hicks ass, has not behaved himself. I put it to you. Has he played up in a manner worthy of a master of this great Form?"

"No!" roared the Remove.

"Can he be considered to have played the game?"

"No!"

"For the sake of upholding the honour and glory of our great Form we instituted the Council of Action; but up to now the council has been led by a duffer of inferior intellect, and—"

"Here, you guy," howled Fisher Tarleton Fish, "I guess I ain't—"

"Sit down, Fishy!"

Vernon-Smith hauled the indignant American junior down again, and Bulstrode, with a grin on his face, proceeded:

"I say it is time the Council of Action made up its mind to act, and to act with promptitude and precision!"

"Good!" said the crowd.

"It is no good being kind and considerate to the Hicks ass. It does nothing but encourage him in his ways. With all respect due to a Form-master, I must say that he is a chump!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And a silly ass!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And a shrieking idiot!"

"Bravo!"

"I don't want to run him down unduly, but I must say that more sensible chaps have been shut up in lunatic asylums many—"

"Ha, ha!"

"And, without wishing to detract in any way, I am forced to say that the sooner he is put into Colney Hatch, the sooner he will get into his proper sphere."

"Hear, hear!"

"We have put up with his funny ways with exemplary—"

"Go it!"

"With exemplary patience," went on Bulstrode, unheeding; "but now that he has imprisoned our chums in the Common-room whilst he thinks out a scheme of punishment, I say that it is time the Council of Action is led into the attack by someone worthy of his salt!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I am ready to lead you, gentlemen!"

"Hurrah!"

"As a great statesman once remarked, there is a limit to human endurance. Besides, the Remove has a reputation to keep up. We have stuck it out up to this point, knowing that Quelch will be returning to us in a week's time; but we cannot sit here quietly—"

"Do you call this quietly?" yelled a voice from the crowd.

"I say we cannot sit here quietly whilst our comrades are languishing as prisoners in the Common-room."

"No!"

"Then are you willing to follow my lead?"

"Rather!"

"I'm willing to lead, if you're willing to follow. Only understand it will mean trouble!"

"Good!" exclaimed fifty lusty voices.

"We must act at once. Immediately over the Common-room is Coker's study. Fortunately, Coker of the Fifth is out. I saw him leave here on his motor-bicycle."

"What has that got to do with it, ass?"

"It has got everything to do with it!" shouted Bulstrode. "I am now going to take the few members supporting me on this—this platform up to the great Coker's study, and from there we will drop a rope down to the Common-room, and the incarcerated members of the Council of Action will climb up, and be released. It will be one up to the Remove, and one down to Loder and the Hicks ass!"

"Good idea!"

"Bravo!"

"Now, I do not consider it wise to attack the Common-room in mass formation like the Huns used to carry out their attacks. I have been thinking out the plan of campaign, and, since Coker has gone out, I do not think we can better my suggestion."

"Hear, hear!"

"I will take the members supporting me on the platform, and we will release the unhappy captives in the Common-room first of all. When Harry Wharton is once more with us I have no doubt but that we shall be able to think of a wheeze whereby the Hicks bird is done in as far as the Remove is concerned. We will not waste any more time now. We will proceed, and get on with the good work."

"What about the rope?"

Bulstrode grinned down at his questioner.

"Don't you worry about that," he cried. "I got that at once out of the gym as soon as I thought of the wheeze of going up to Coker's study."

"Good egg!"

"You fellows can carry on with the meeting whilst we go and rescue the prisoners."

The supporters on the cart commenced to stand up, and as Bulstrode turned away from the excited gathering he saw that they were all ready to follow his lead.

He leapt down from the cart, and his

chums followed him, and, to the accompaniment of ringing cheers, the rescue-party pushed their way through the crowd and made their way up to Coker's study.

Meantime, Harry Wharton and his fellow-prisoners in the Common-room were discussing their unfortunate position. The action of Mr. Hicks and Loder of the Sixth had taken them thoroughly by surprise. The Highcliffe master gave Loder full powers, and although, if Harry Wharton & Co. had been given more time, the chums would have contested their rights, they had been made prisoners before they realised their predicament, and they soon realised that their chances of escape were practically nil.

The door was strongly made, and the great lock would have stood any amount of battering. The captain of the Remove had flung open the window and looked down; but the distance to the ground below was too great, and it would have been terribly risky to have attempted escape that way.

Material for climbing purposes was non-existent, and the unfortunate prisoners soon realised that they could only wait and see what would happen.

After a time conversation slackened down, and the Removites were lying about in various sprawling positions, when Harry Wharton leapt to his feet with a cry of astonishment.

"Look!"

His fellow-prisoners scrambled up and stared at their chum curiously.

"What's up, ass?" said Bob Cherry. "Are you beginning to imagine you can see things?"

"Look! A rope! Look at the window!"

"My hat!"

The prisoners fairly flew across the Common-room. Harry Wharton lunged up the window, and caught hold of a thick rope which was dangling down from above. He craned his neck and looked upwards, and he gave an exclamation of astonishment.

"Bulstrode!" he cried. "It's Bulstrode at the window above this. It's a rescue-party."

"By Jove!" said Johnny Bull. "That's good business if you liked! Don't waste any time, Harry, old man! Get out on to the sill!"

The captain of the Remove crawled cautiously out, and stood balanced on the sill.

"Will it hold?" he cried to the rescue-party above.

"Rather!" came Bulstrode's voice. "We've got the blessed rope fast. It can't give, and it's as strong as a house. You come up first, Wharton, in case the other chaps don't like the idea. It'll show 'em it's quite all right."

"Do you hear that, you fellows?" laughed Harry Wharton. "Would you like me to go ahead? I'll go, but don't you fellows waste any time in case the Hicks ass and that beastly bully Loder come in. It would be very awkward if they caught us now."

"Go on, Harry," said Bob Cherry. "Don't gas so much! Get along!"

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton commenced to climb upward. The rope stretched and swayed dangerously at first; but Bob Cherry clambered out on to the sill quickly and caught the rope and steadied it, and then as soon as the captain of the Remove reached the window above, the others clambered up in rapid succession.

The rescue-party gave a ringing cheer as each junior arrived on the level of Coker's study window, and strong arms were thrust out in order to assist the climbers into safety.

(Continued on page 18, col. 3.)

Houdini's Schooldays

A Thrilling Tale of the "Master of Mystery."



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The Finest Story of a
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By
FAMOUS
VICTOR NELSON.

INTRODUCTION.

Marcus, an upright, honest gladiator, is chosen to wrestle with Nabis, a famous Greek champion of Nero's Court.

The contest takes place at a huge feast in Nero's palace.

Among the slaves waiting at table is one Eunice, a young and beautiful Briton, who is loved by Marcus. Eunice incurs Nero's displeasure, and he turns angrily to the soldiers about him.

"Take this careless chit and give her three hundred lashes!" he thunders. "Not one less—you understand!"

"Have mercy, sire!" the girl pleads.

Marcus hears the dreadful command, and rushes to the room where the punishment is being carried out. He flings himself upon the brutal soldiers, and fights a grim hand-to-hand contest. The odds against him look like telling, when there comes a startled interruption.

"Hold!" a terrible voice cries.

Nero stands before them, and for a moment the young gladiator's life hangs by a thread.

Then the great despot tells Marcus that he will forgive him, and allow him to marry Eunice, if he is successful in catching a man called Strongbow the Rover—a man who has waylaid a large number of Nero's ships at sea. Marcus sets off with a company of splendid men, and after many thrilling encounters with Strongbow and his outlaws, is successful in capturing the rover, at the same time releasing a prisoner, whom Marcus discovers is his father, Anthony of Antium.

The old man is left behind in Alexandria, as it is not deemed wise to take him to Rome, and then the conqueror makes a triumphal return to Antium. At this city Marcus learns that Rome is on fire, and, fearing for the safety of Eunice, he mounts a horse and makes for the city at full speed. Reaching Aricium, half-way to Rome, he mounts a hill, and, gazing ahead, is horrified to see that for miles around the lower ground is enveloped in a pall of black, choking smoke, which blotted out towns, aqueducts, trees, and villas. Beyond lay one huge, lurid glare, a veritable sea of fire that lit up the sky with blinding radiance. Reeling in his saddle, Marcus spurs on his horse, his brain numbed and with fear in his heart.

(Now go on with the story.)

Through the Inferno!

ON down the hill rode Marcus, urging forward his tired horse with hands and heels.

The moon waned, and in the rear the first grey light of dawn began to steal over the sky. Ahead, it was lighted by one huge glare, which mingled weirdly with the glow of the sunrise when it came.

Soon Marcus was riding through dense, suffocating clouds of smoke, which the wind was sweeping in great billows from the burning city. The smell of burning—burning things of all kinds—stung his nostrils.

As he pressed on daylight came. The sun kissed the tops of the surrounding hills; but its golden light looked insignificant, sickly, in the lurid red haze from the fire.

Reaching the next town, Albanum, he had to slacken his panting, foam-flecked horse. The streets were crowded with frightened inhabitants, whose figures looked like so many ghosts in the blinding, never-ceasing smoke.

Through the town at last! He rode on, on, his eyes smarting and running with water, and his throat parched and tingling from the fumes.

Ostranum! The forum and the columns of the temple loomed up before him, and again he was compelled to draw rein and, to his chagrin and impatience, proceed at a mere walking pace.

The streets were congested with fugitives from doomed Rome. There were men, women, and children on foot, many laden with household goods and treasured possessions. There were horses, mules, and chariots bearing more, and litters in which the wealthy were carried along by slaves.

One and all were panic-stricken. Horror, in some cases fury, was graven upon the faces of these refugees. In the general din and hubbub Marcus heard cries that amazed him and set him wondering.

"'Twas by Nero's command! Woe to him! Rome is perishing, fired by his orders!"

"Could it be true?" he asked himself. "Could Nero's madness have reached a pitch that he had deliberately issued commands that had set Rome blazing. It seemed almost unbelievable, and yet—"

Completely stopped for the time being

by a surging mass of humanity that absolutely blocked the street he was traversing, he tried to obtain some reliable account of what was really happening in the city.

An aged citizen, who had become parted from his family in the rush for safety, and who was plainly bitterly indignant and angry, supplied him with information which Marcus somehow felt to be true and unexaggerated. It confirmed, too, the rumours he had caught that the conflagration had not been the result of an accident.

With his hands clenched, and his face working with rage, the old citizen declared that men had rushed through the streets, flinging blazing torches into the shops and houses, and that others had prevented the numerous fires they caused being put out.

Nero had long declared that he would, by hook or by crook, put an end to the unpleasant odours that came from the alleys and byways of Rome's suburbs, he went on to explain. Probably this was his method of destroying them.

Marcus pushed his way through the throng as it thinned temporarily, his mind busy with what he had heard. A wild rage seized him, a fierce anger against the tyrannical emperor. If the fire had been started by Nero's command, as the elderly citizen appeared to think, then the ruler's crimes had reached their zenith, and surely would no longer be tolerated by his people.

And if the fire was his work, and Eunice perished in its greedy maw, Nero was her murderer!

Marcus' handsome face grew stern and hard. Only give him proof, if his beloved one were dead, and he would somehow deal out retribution to Nero, caring nothing for the consequences to himself.

He rode onwards. The city lay before him now, looking to be enveloped in one mighty sheet of flame. The smoke made him gasp and choke. The hissing and roaring of the huge conflagration was sometimes drowned by the terrified screams and clamour of the flying people who passed him, jostling against his horse.

Marcus reached the Appian Gate, where the Temple of Mars was situated. Its doors had been broken down, and a mass of humanity was sheltering there.

On into the city itself the gladiator went, and immediately began witnessing
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 659.

such scenes of disorder, plunder, and bloodshed as he had not dreamed to be possible.

All rank, all authority, was blotted out. Slaves had broken into the wine-shops, and, fired with liquor, to which they were unaccustomed, were running amok.

Some sang, others laughed hysterically, blessing the tragedy that had given them their freedom after years of bondage and suffering. They attacked and killed their one-time masters and robbed them, broke into the shops and stores, and took just what they fancied, cudgelling those who tried to stop them.

Here and there pretorian soldiers, the glare of the fire glinting redly on their metal helmets, fought fierce hand-to-hand fights in an endeavour to protect the lives, limbs, and property of the citizens.

And away on the hilltops of the once grand city blazed the fire, scorching all with its fierce breath, blinding them with its fumes and shutting out the blue of the heavens.

One heard all the languages of the earth. The scum and rabble from the alleys—Greeks, Africans, Germans, and Thracians—whose countries were conquered, but who meant to bow down to the Romans no longer, pilfered, insulted, and killed to their hearts' content.

Marcus drew his sword as a giant black, who was maddened with wine, clutched at his horse's bridle. The man fell, pierced through the shoulder, and as some of his companions saw they made for the gladiator with wild howls and sought vengeance.

In another second the young man was laying about him left and right. His horse was wounded from a savage knife-thrust, and reared and neighed in pain; but the injury was a blessing in disguise.

It was not too serious to prevent the animal keeping its legs, and it bolted in its terror and agony, whirling Marcus through his enemies and losing him in the crowds that scattered before it as it raced amongst them.

A wonderful luck had attended him, and he himself was untouched, save for one or two heavy blows about the body from sticks and cudgels.

Presently he managed to quieten the horse, and had hardly done so ere he glimpsed a familiar face among the throng. It belonged to a gladiator who had been trained in the same school as himself, and, riding up to the man, he leant from the saddle.

"Porcius!" he said sharply.

The gladiator looked up. He was young, like Marcus, and had many victorious fights in the arena to his credit.

"Marcus!" he cried, in delight, holding out his hand. "Then you are back from your mission! Tell me—you caught the pirate Strongbow, and have brought him back to Rome—or what is left of it?"

Marcus nodded quickly.

"Yes," he said. "But I have not the time to tell you of my adventures now, Porcius. I am in sore trouble. I seek a slave whom I love, and who was in bondage in Nero's palace on the Palatine. Canst give me news of what has happened there?"

"The palace is no more—it is razed to the ground," the gladiator answered; and Marcus gave a low, horrified cry.

"But those who were within its walls?" he asked huskily. "All could not have perished."

"Nay, though many, I have heard, succumbed to the heat and smoke before they could escape," Porcius returned.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 669.

"The fire started in that vicinity. Then, if rumour does not lie, the slaves rioted, and a number of them were slain by Nero's pretorians."

Marcus was silent for a moment, his face bloodless.

"But those who did get away—what of them?" he asked at length, when he could force the words from his trembling lips.

"Those who broke loose from their guards made for the trans-Tiber, I believe. If"—he hesitated awkwardly—"if the maiden you seek is not—is amongst the survivors, you would be likely, perchance, to find her there."

Marcus thanked him, and with a quick handshake pushed on his horse; but further inquiries elicited, to his dismay, that it was impossible to cross the Tiber by the Sublucius Bridge. He could not reach it, as the portion of the city lying between was a mass of flame.

The only thing to do was to turn his steed, and go back to the Appian Way, and cross the river below the city. Because of the surging crowds this was a long and terribly slow task. But he accomplished it at last, and found himself in the Via Portuensis, which led directly to the trans-Tiber.

He was somewhat relieved as he discovered that it was only here and there as yet that the flames had crossed the river. The trans-Tiber was choked with smoke and thick with fleeing, terrified people, however, and there were worse scenes than those Marcus had already witnessed.

The streets were narrower, and as in their panic the refugees fought with each other to flee from the creeping red death, they were often hopelessly jammed in struggling masses, out of which only the strongest came.

Women and children were thrown down and trampled under feet. Babies were torn from their mothers' arms in the maddened rushes for safety, and lost in the swaying mobs.

The wind grew stronger, and great billows of smoke and an almost unbearable heat began to sweep across the water. At times the fumes were so dense and black that the daylight was completely blotted from the streets.

Marcus rode through the wild confusion, his eyes scanning the sea of faces about him for that of Eunice, when the smoke was too thick to prevent him seeing. His heart was heavy with despair, however. If she had not been killed by the pretorians when the slaves at the palace rebelled and had reached here, what chance would she, a fragile slip of a girl, have of keeping up amongst this insane, fighting, panic-stricken rabble?

Here, as it had been across the river, was the same suspicion that Nero had had the fire started to gratify his whim. Cries of "Death to Nero and his murders and incendiaries!" "Woe to the actor and matricide!" filled the air, and on all sides the despotic monarch was cursed and reviled.

Marcus asked himself where was Nero now, and what was he doing; and he would have had no doubt left in his mind as to the emperor's guilt could he have known and seen him.

At that moment Nero, who had been at Antium when the Conqueror had put in there, was now hurrying to a point whence he could view the great blaze.

He was rubbing his hands and smiling in almost childish satisfaction, and eagerly discussing the fire with Pretorius and other courtiers who were with him.

"At last I shall have the material for the poem I have dreamed of writing!" he was exclaiming. "I shall see a real

burning city! It will enable me to give a great work—my masterpiece—to mankind, and, further, will make the stretchers of the narrow streets and alleys no more! Though thousands may perish, it will bring much that is good!"

In the trans-Tiber matters were growing even more terrible. The wind brought gusts of red, greedy sparks with the all-consuming heat and smoke, and, to crown all, the menagerie on the island near the Temple of Æsculapius was reached by the flames, and the maddened animals began to break loose and swim ashore.

The horror of it all is better imagined than described. Lions and tigers roared in mad fear and fury, elephants trumpeted their terror, and bisons reared their great heads and bellowed as they cast themselves into the water. Apes and monkeys chattered and screamed, and blended their voices with the cries of a hundred other different animals.

Soon Marcus found it impossible to recognise the streets. The showers of sparks from across the water were doing their deadly work, and shops and houses caught and began to blaze.

The gladiator's horse was exhausted, but at times was so terrified that it found strength to rear and plunge and almost hurl him from its back. The heat was stifling him and making his senses reel. He tore a strip from his robe and wound it about his mouth and nostrils; but it did little towards saving him from the effects of the blinding smoke and terrible heat, and soon his throat felt as though it was red-hot and every breath was an agony.

It was an inferno—an orgy of fire and destruction! And somewhere in the midst of it all was Eunice! Inwardly he groaned as he rode blindly through the smoke, the devouring sparks, and the wailing crowd.

His heart was like lead. "Eunice is dead—dead!" a still voice persisted in whispering. "Your mission—the perils you have faced have been all for naught!"

Loud cries of terror from men and frantic screams from women and children floated to him out of the blood-red fumes that choked the air. Then, as they cleared away for a moment before an unusually powerful gust of wind, Marcus found himself gazing upon a sight that might well have frozen the blood in the veins of the bravest man.

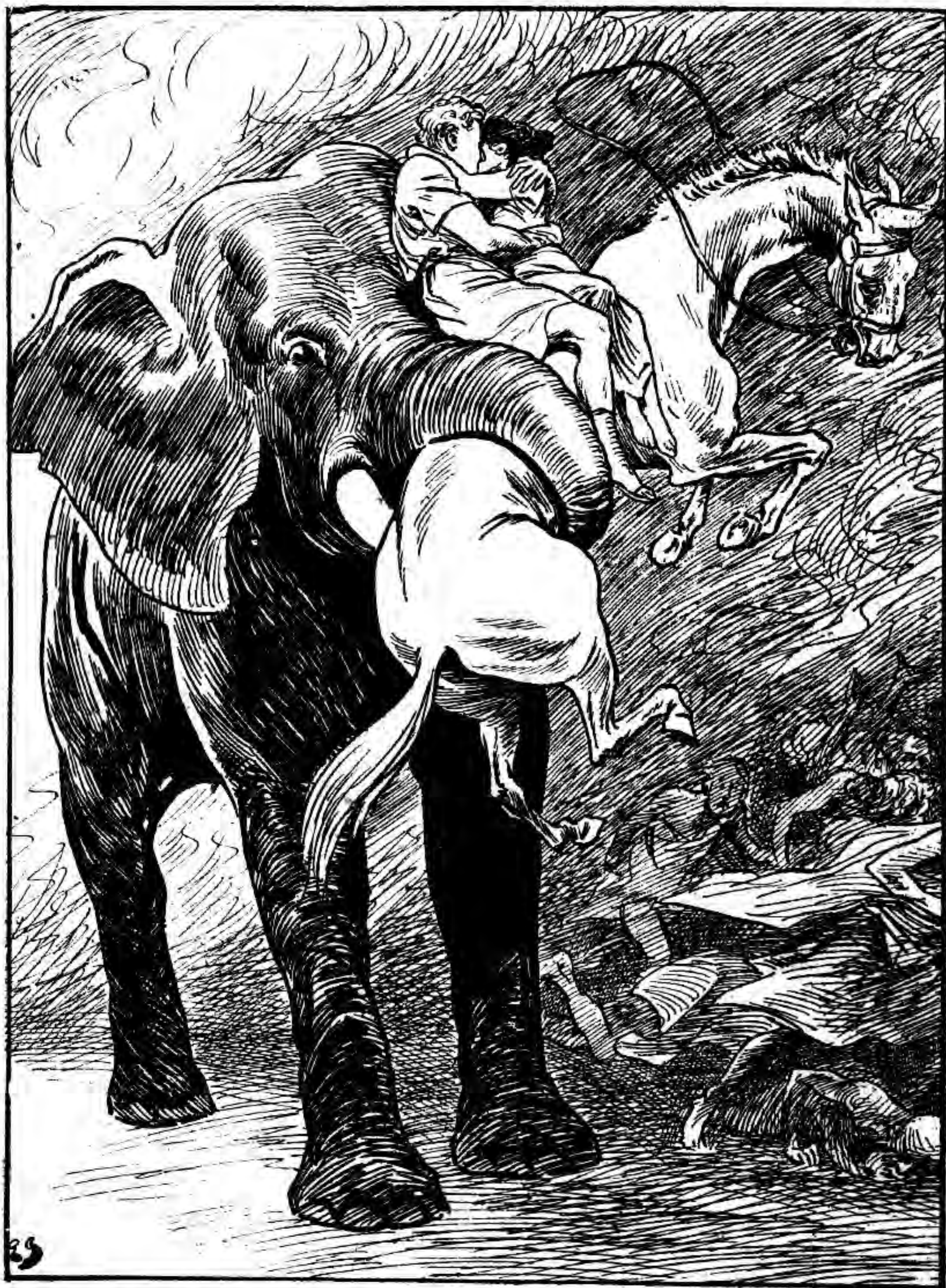
Coming towards him along the road was one of the elephants from the menagerie, which had floundered ashore, and, crazed with pain and fear, was beating its way through the throng with its trunk and tusks.

Simultaneously with the smoke lifting and the terrifying spectacle being disclosed to him, a house some twenty yards in front of the maddened brute burst into flame, and its door swinging open, a crowd of men and women, who had been sheltering there, came struggling out.

The elephant trumpeted, and, with a vicious sweep of its trunk, struck down a dozen panic-stricken people who had not found time to get out of its way; and as those who had poured from the blazing house saw it, they shrieked with terror, and fought with each other to dash from its path.

For a brief moment they were mixed up in a confused, struggling mass. Then from their midst was violently thrust a slim figure—a girl whose terrified face was turned for the merest second towards Marcus ere she stumbled and fell, striking her forehead heavily upon the cobblestones of the road.

Marcus had been about to swing round his horse and seek safety in a near-



The elephant gave vent to a bellow of rage at finding the trembling steed and its double burden barring its progress. Quick as thought it darted out its trunk, and, curling it about the horse's flanks, tossed it and the man and the girl high over its head. (See page 18.)

by side-street; but now he uttered a strangled, horrified cry, and, instead of fleeing, put his frightened steed straight towards the spot where the monster from the wilds was sweeping ruthlessly through the congested mass of human beings.

For he had recognised the girl, though her face was blackened with smoke and wild with fear. She was Eunice, and now, being stunned and unable to make the least effort to save herself, she lay full in the path of the onrushing brute.

The people scattered before the elephant like chaff before the wind; those who were not fortunate enough to avoid it were either swept to destruction by the creature's savagely-swinging trunk or trampled and crushed under its formidable feet.

With the road suddenly left clear, save for the motionless figure of Eunice, the brute trumpeted again and quickened its pace, and, although his horse was quaking with terror, Marcus forced it forward in a sudden, desperate rush.

In another moment the elephant would have been upon the unconscious girl. Marcus reached her, flung himself almost from the horse's back as he leaned quickly sideways, and, gripping her clothing, jerked her from under the creature's pounding forefeet only in the very nick of time.

His fine strength stood him in good stead, enabling him to straighten up and hoist her limp figure across the saddle before him with the one hand. But they were not to escape unscathed.

As he saw the great bulk of the elephant towering above him, Marcus tried to swing his horse clear. The animal, however, was petrified with terror, and did not respond to the swiftly-jerked rein.

The elephant gave vent to a bellow of rage at finding the trembling steed and its double burden barring its progress. Quick as thought it darted out its trunk, and, curling it about the horse's flanks, tossed it and the man and the girl high over its head, ere it continued its mad career, and was swallowed up by the smoke.

Instinctively Marcus clutched at Eunice, hoping to be able to break her fall. He experienced a strange sensation that the road was rushing up through the smoke to meet him, then it struck his head, and he remembered no more.

Re-united!

FOR how long he had remained unconscious Marcus had no means as yet of telling.

To his surprise, he had awakened to find himself on a humble but comfortable couch, with soft coverings over him. He was undressed, and his hands and arms were no longer blackened with soot and smoke. His head was swathed in bandages, and a severe burn upon his leg had been dressed.

"Thank Heaven! Then you have come back to life at last, O dearest one!"

The sweet girlish voice revived Marcus as nothing else could have done. He struggled up again, seeming not to feel the throbbing of his head or the agony the movement caused him. It was Eunice who had spoken, and now she was by his side, holding a gourd of wine to his parched lips.

He drank a little of the refreshing and invigorating liquid, then, slipping his arms about her, drew her to him, and held her close, with a sigh of relief and thankfulness.

With a great love in her eyes, the girl sank to her knees beside the couch, and, in her turn, put her arms about his neck.

"You came to look for me, to rescue me from the fire, Marcus?" she whispered softly.

"Yes," he answered, and was astonished and impatient at the feebleness of his voice. "I heard as soon as I reached Antium that Rome was in flames, and rode all speed to reach you, beloved. I thank the God you worship that, though it was not my hands that carried you safely out of the inferno, I was in time to save you from another peril. Tell me all that happened to you, Eunice."

She complied with his request. Her story was not a long one.

When the Palatine Palace had caught and rapidly become enveloped in the flames, there had been a panic-stricken rush by its ten thousand inhabitants for safety.

All had been confusion, and many slaves had rebelled when their guards had attempted to check their escape. Whilst a fierce hand-to-hand fight had gone on between male slaves and pretorians, she and other women and elderly men, who had been held by Nero in bondage, had slipped from the palace by a side door.

People had been rushing through the streets, crying out that the trans-Tiber would offer safety, and she and her com-

panions had gone there, where she had sought out a certain house which she had heard of as being used as a meeting-place for people of her faith—Christianity.

She, as well as many others from the streets, had been given refuge there until it had burst into flame. There had been a rush to leave it, and they had found themselves in the path of the terror-maddened elephant from the menagerie.

"I remembered nothing after I fell and struck my head," she went on, "until I found myself being brought here with you. Some of my new-found friends—Christians from the house where I was given shelter in the trans-Tiber—had picked us up after the elephant seized the horse and hurled it above its head."

"The horse was killed?" Marcus suggested.

"Yes. Poor creature, its flanks were terribly crushed, and the fall broke its back," the girl answered, with a shiver. She kissed him. "They told me how you saved my life, Marcus," she said. "I cannot not find properly words to thank you, but—"

"To know that you are safe is thanks enough," he interrupted tenderly. "But where are we now? From the window I can see fields, and there is no smoke here, though Rome must surely blaze for many days."

"We are far from Rome, Marcus," Eunice replied. "This is the home of a good Christian, Cato by name, and we were brought here through many miles of country by waggon."

Her hands sought his.

"Your mission?" she asked. "It was successful?"

Forgetting his weakness and pain, Marcus kissed her, and laughed joyously.

"It was quite successful, beloved," he answered. "We captured the pirate Strongbow, and he is now on the Conqueror, which is lying at Antium. As soon as I am able to return there I shall arrange for him to be handed over to justice, go to Nero, and claim my reward—you!"

He went on to tell her of how he had solved the mystery of his birth, and found his father, and how he hoped to gain for him a free pardon.

The future seemed bright, and Eunice's blue eyes were like stars as she listened to an account of his adventures.

"You faced all these dangers, did all this for me!" she breathed, regarding him half-shyly, half-proudly. "And"—her voice was low—"you have saved me from going to a terrible death, to make sport for Nero and his people."

Marcus shuddered, his arms tightening about her slender shoulders.

"Don't let us think of what might have been, dear one!" he protested quickly. "It is what is to be that matters."

As the shades of approaching night stole into the room, and presently the soft moonlight, they held each other's hands in a silence both understood, dreaming of the great happiness they believed to be coming to them.

THE END.

[A grand sequel to this wonderful story will appear in next Monday's great bumper number of the MAGNET. The title of the new serial will be "Marcus the Brave," and will deal with the adventures of the heroic gladiator and the beautiful slave from Britain in their struggles against the despotism of the mountebank Emperor of Rome—Nero. Do not on any account miss this amazing story by famous Victor Nelson.]

THE COUNCIL OF ACTION.

(Continued from page 14.)

"Thanks, you fellows!" laughed Harry Wharton, brushing his clothes down, and sending up a cloud of brick-dust into the great Cohen's study. "This is good business. Old Hicks will understand now what the Council of Action means."

"Rather!"

Bob Cherry was hauled in, his face flushed from the exertion of climbing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he cried. "Here we are again! This is one in the merry optic for that cad Loder! Inky is coming up now! I believe I put my foot into his face once. The silly ass was too close to me. Ah, here he is!"

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh was the next to arrive. He was puffing and blowing, but his dusky features were wreathed in smiles as he bowed to the members of the rescue-party.

"My esteemed and ludicrous chums have rescued me ropefully, and—"

"All right, Inky!" laughed Bulstrode. "Reserve the thanks until afterwards, especially if you are going to talk your own wonderful English language."

There was certainly too much to be done for the chums to listen to the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. It took some time for the rescue to be completed, and when at last the final prisoner arrived, Harry Wharton and Bulstrode had decided on the next move.

As soon as the rope had been hauled up and neatly coiled for return to the gym, the captain of the Remove announced his intentions.

"Look here, you fellows," he said, "this Council of Action is all very well in its way, but we can't go on indefinitely fighting these idiots from Highcliffe. If the Head heard about it there would be a horrible row. There's no doubt about that. I think the best thing for us to do, is to go in a deputation to Mr. Prout. Although he's the Fifth-Form master, he's not such a bad duffer, and if we ask him to get the Head to hoof out the Hicks ass, he may be able to do it."

"And it'll put a spoke into that cad Loder's wheel, too. If old Prouty can wangle a swop round before Loder and Hicks find we've escaped, they'll be properly dished, diddled, and done," said Bulstrode.

"We'll all go," laughed Bob Cherry. "Some can go in and some can wait outside in case there's any trouble. I know what Prouty is when he gets excited. He may want to shoot someone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites representing the Council of Action trooped down to the Fifth-Form master's room, and Harry Wharton tapped at the door.

Mr. Prout's lusty voice bade the deputation enter. At least, Mr. Prout was not aware that the knocker was the first of a long string of juniors to stream into his room. By the time half a dozen members of the Council of Action had ranged themselves before his desk, he gave a gasp of surprise.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed, adjusting his pince-nez, and

(Continued on page 19.)

standing up, facing the deputation. "Wharton, I presume you have come here as spokesman. Answer me, boy."

Harry Wharton stepped forward.

"We are very sorry to trouble you, sir," he said, "but we have come to you as you are renowned for your sporting spirit."

The chums of the Remove gave a gasp; but Mr. Prout looked very pleasant.

"You are famous for the initiative you have always shown, sir," continued Wharton. "Your fame as a big game hunter and fearless sportsman is legion."

Mr. Prout smacked his lips with pleasure.

"In fact, sir, it is because of your fine nature and fearlessness that we have come to you for help."

"Indeed, Wharton?"

"In the ordinary we should have enlisted Mr. Quelch's sympathy and help; but as he is not here, we have come to you, because we feel we can rely upon you, sir."

"I'm always pleased to help, Wharton. What is it?"

"Well, sir, I regret to say that none of the Lower Forms are getting on with the temporary masters from Highcliffe."

"Oh?"

"We are all anxious to please, but we

cannot succeed. I suppose, sir, it is incompatibility of temper, sir. But things have become so bad that we do not receive even justice. And as you are a just master, Mr. Prout, we have come to you as a deputation to ask you whether you will persuade Dr. Locke to make some other arrangement."

"But what can I suggest, Wharton?"

"Well, sir, we would like you to take the Remove, and perhaps all the Highcliffe masters could take the Upper School for the rest of the time, and the Upper School masters could come down to the Lower School."

Mr. Prout looked very serious.

"Of course, my dear lads, I am glad you think that in me you have a master to whom you can come when in trouble or distress," he said. "As a matter of fact, I have an appointment with the headmaster now. I will put the suggestion forward with my recommendation."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"If you would care to wait here until I return with the verdict, you may."

And Mr. Prout bustled out of his study and left the deputation in a dazed state of surprise at the way their appeal had been received.

Mr. Prout evidently spoke up bravely to the Head.

To the amazement of the Council of Action, the Fifth-Form master returned with the gladful news that the Lower Forms would no longer be under the jurisdiction of the Highcliffe masters, but that the four deputy masters would take over the duties in the Upper School, and Mr. Prout would conduct the Remove, and three other Upper School masters would come down with him until the absentee masters returned.

To say that Harry Wharton & Co. were surprised at the success of their campaign was to put it mildly. That evening there were wild scenes of celebration both in the studies and in the dormitory. The Council of Action had not been in being many hours, but Fish's great "stunt" had certainly developed and succeeded in a most unaccountable fashion.

Nobody recognised this fact more than did the Removites when they toasted the success of the Council of Action!

THE END.

(Next Monday's great Bumper and Free Gift Number of the MAGNET will contain a special long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled, "The Schoolboy Cinema Stars." Order your copy in advance at once! Same price, 1½d.)



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