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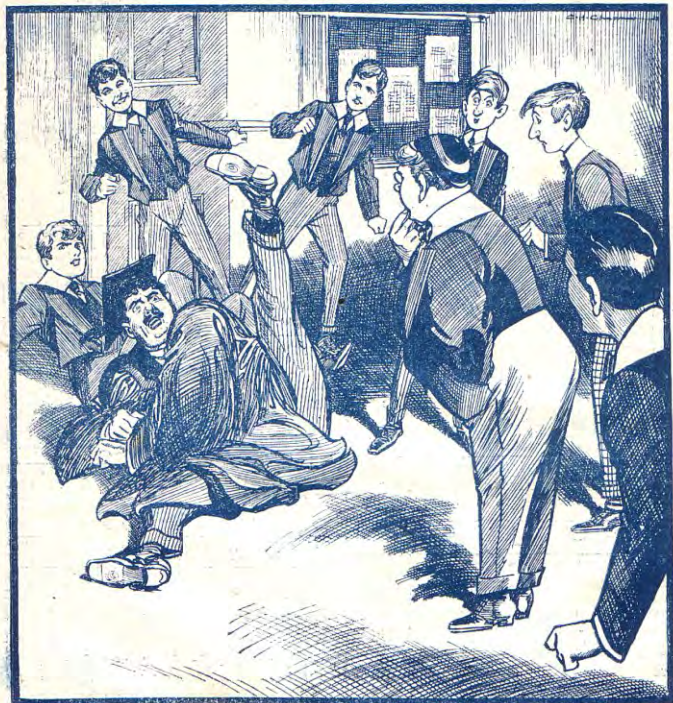
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"UP AGAINST IT!"

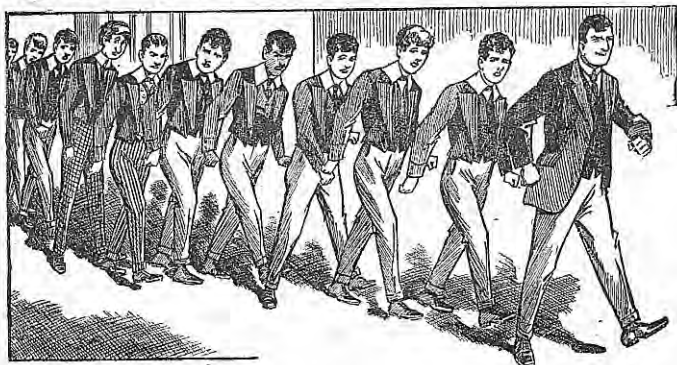
Grand Complete School Story Inside.



THE FALL OF THE MIGHTY! WHAT HAPPENED WHEN BOB CHERRY CRASHED INTO THE NEW MASTER.

(A Breathless Moment in the Complete School Tale inside.)

UP AGAINST IT!



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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

News!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" It was Bob Cherry who exclaimed thus, looking into Study No. 1 on the Remove floor at Greyfriars.

"I've heard you say that before, Bob," said Frank Nugent, with a touch of irritation. "Can't you think of anything fresh? And need you shout like that when a fellow—"

"What's the matter, Frank? Lost a bob and found a threepenny-bit?" broke in Bob, gazing at his clam with undisturbed astonishment. "You don't seem in at all a nice temper, old top. Where's Harry?"

"I don't know, and I don't care!" snapped Nugent. "And, if you must know, I'm not in a very sweet temper. You wouldn't be, either, if—"

"Oh, I'd forgotten about those lines Capper gave you! It wasn't my funeral, you see. Pretty thick, though—five hundred for just—"

"Capper's a beast!" broke out Frank, frowning. "And he's not even a just beast. Quelch's a bit of a beast now and then, but you can't say he isn't just. Capper seems to look over anything Temple and that crowd do, and to take it out of us!"

"I've noticed that. I was sorry about old Quelch's croaking up, anyway. It's rough on the old file. But I never guessed that I was going to be half as sorry as I am."

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had been taken suddenly ill a few days earlier, and no one else being available to take charge of the Form at such short notice, Mr. Capper, of the Upper Fourth,

had consented to combine it with his own Form for the time being.

It is likely that Mr. Capper had not been exactly keen. For it must be admitted that the Greyfriars Remove was not precisely an easy Form to handle, especially for anyone unused to their little ways. Even Mr. Quelch, whom they liked and respected, did not always find them amenable to authority.

But it was grossly unfair for Mr. Capper to visit upon their heads the resentment he might feel at being asked to work double tides, and that was what he seemed to be doing.

"Don't stand there and yawn about it, anyway!" said Nugent. "I want to get on. Five hundred takes a bit of doing, and he says he expects them by midday, Saturday. If they're not done there'll be no footer for me in the afternoon. It's Thursday now—"

"Yes, I thought it was Thursday," said Bob. "Yesterday was a halfer, and to-day's not Sunday, so when you come to think of it to-day must be Thursday—unless they've been fooling round with the days of the week. You can't tell what they'll be doing next three times, but I should think they'll let them alone."

"I wish you'd leave me alone!" snapped Nugent.

"I will, when I've told you what I came to tell. Quelch's got to go away to Torquay, or somewhere, for a week."

"More Capper!" groaned Frank. "If you haven't any more cheerful news than that you can put yourself outside the door, Bob. I've had all the Capper I've any use for, and a bit over."

"That isn't the news. There's a chap coming to take Quelch's place while he's away."

"That's better!" said Frank, brighten-

ing a trifle. "Whatever he may be, he can't be worse than Capper."

"Shouldn't think so, though you never know your luck," replied Bob sagely. "I say, Frank, I'll do a hundred or so of that whack for you!"

Frank Nugent's frown relaxed at that—or partly at that, and partly at the news he had just heard.

"No, thanks, Bob!" he said. "It might only mean wasting your time. Your fist isn't really a bit like mine, and Capper's down frightfully on that sort of thing. It was only to-day that he jumped on Russell with both feet for showing up as his own a couple of hundred that Ogley had helped him with."

"I know. Told poor old Russell that it was wicked deceit, and made him feel no end uncomfortable. That's the worst of having a conscience. Do I really bother you, Frank?"

"It isn't that so much, Bob," answered Nugent, now very neatly restored to his usual good temper. "But I must get on with this rotten impot, you see. Run out and play, like a good little Cherry-Bob! Or cut along and find Wharton. He's with Smithy. I fancy, now I come to think of it."

But Harry Wharton was not to be found in the study which Herbert Vernon-Smith, known to the Remove as "the Bomber," shared with Tom Redwing. In fact, only the studious Redwing was there.

"Yes, Wharton's been here," Tom said. "But Smithy had gone out, and he didn't stay."

Bob wandered out in the quad, seeking Wharton, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, called "Inky" for the sake of brevity, the three who, with himself and Nugent, formed the brotherhood known as the Famous Five.

He found them at last—in the gym, where he might well have looked earlier. "Just the chap I wanted to see, Bob!" said Wharton. "Where have you been hiding since you came back?" "Well, I like that, I hang'd if I don't! When I've been hunting for you these an hour or more! I say, there's news. A fellow from London is coming to take us while Quetchy's away, and I hope he'll enjoy it, that's all!"

"Capper doesn't seem to," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Cherry, that's not news at all!" said Bunter, with a smirk on his fat face. "I told these fellows that ever so long ago!"

"Five minutes, to be precise," Wharton said, with a glance at his watch. "You're weaker on chronology than Bob is, perforce. He's been hunting for us an hour or more, when we've only been twenty-five minutes out of classes! You—"

"Anybody might think you'd never had a watch till yesterday, Harry!" Bob interrupted. "Don't be pedantic! Good word, isn't it? I got it from old Capper. But where did Bunter get the news?"

"As a matter of fact—" began Bunter importantly.

"He means, as a dashed lie!" growled Johnny Bull. "When Bunter says 'as a matter of fact' I always know that there's a whopper coming."

"I seem to take any notice whatever of you, Bull!" sniffed the fat fellow.

"As a matter of fact, Cherry, the Head himself told me!"

"Did he?" returned Bob innocently. "And did he know he was telling you?"

"Of course he did, Cherry! Really, you do ask silly questions! I happened to be passing his study door—"

"When your bootlace came undone!" growled Johnny.

"And you stooped to pick up a pin," added Wharton.

"The stoopfulness of the esteemed and disgusting Bunter is terrific!" put in Inky, with a grin. "The catchfulness on the bendfulness would also be terrific if I had chance to be behind him at the moment of criticism."

"You mean critical moment," Johnny amended.

"Is it not of the sameness, most worthy Bull?" purred Inky.

"And when the Head had called you in, and tied up your bootlace, and wiped your little snub nose for you, and stuck the pin into one of your fat legs to see whether it was real, what did he tell you, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the crowd.

Bunter, believing himself secure behind a rampart formed by Johnny Bull and Belovser major, had put his thumb into his nose and spread his fingers out, after the manner of the little vulgar boy in one of the "Ingolish Legends."

But he had overrated the security. The rampart proved mobile. Johnny and Belovser slipped aside to let Peter Todd through.

Bunter fled.

Peter pursued, but not very far. He stopped when Bunter had reached the door of the gym.

"A little exercise is good for my purpose," he said. "But my dignity will not allow me to chase him across the quad; and what is a breach of good manners in one who never knew what manners mean?"

"Yah!" squeaked Bunter. "My manners are as good as yours, and better, Peter Todd! In fact, I've always been noted for manners. Lots of people have commented on them!"

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"Usually by the words, 'What a young pig!'" said the Bouterer drily.

"Yah, Smithy! My pater may not have as much cash as yours, but he's a good fellow, anyway!"

"It's a pity that it's not hereditary," replied Vernon-Smith.

But that was beyond Bunter's understanding. He gave Bob Cherry his parting shot.

"Yah, Cherry! Think you know a lot, don't you? I know more than you do, though. I know the name of the fellow who's coming to take the Form. It's Hobbinson. And I know that he's a friend of Capper's. Yah!"

Bob Cherry made a dash for the door, and Bunter, with a howl of dismay, fled into the twilight quad. Bob came back, grinning.

"Did you want me for anything particular, Harry?" he asked.

"Yes, I did. I've just got word that there's a hamper coming for me. It ought to be at the station by now. We'd better trot along and fetch it!"

"Getting near tea-time, isn't it?" asked Bob.

"Near time, but no nearer tea," answered Harry. "There isn't a thing in the cupboard, except half a loaf, and to butter. Better a late tea than none at all!"

"The lateness was ever better than the usefulness," murmured Inky.

"Let's go!" said Bob. "But let's fetch Franky first. He's mugging away at the map Capper gave him; but I'll guess he'll come when he hears about the hamper!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Rank Outsider!

JOHNNY BULL and Inky strolled towards the gates, while Harry and Bob went up to the study floor to fetch Frank Nugent.

They found their chum busy with a sheet of exercise paper, and some slightly damped blotting-paper.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob hailed him, for the second time within a quarter of an hour.

"What's the giddy dodge, Franky?"

"Found these old lines," explained Nugent. "They're some I did for Quetchy last term, and he forgot to ask for them!"

"But why are you damping them?" Harry inquired.

"Well, they looked rather faded, and old Capper's such a suspicious beast. I thought I'd better freshen them up."

"It doesn't matter much now," Bob said. "There's another tyrant coming along. Gave to be here by Saturday, I should think. So it's a hundred-to-one Capper will never ask you for those lines at all!"

"Not so sure," Harry said. "If this bounder is a pal of Capper's, as Bunter says, you bet the Capper will pass on his input list to him for collection."

"If Bunter says that, it's most likely a lie," Frank returned. "But I'm not going to run any risks by taking it for granted that Capper's inputs are a dead letter. There's a match on Saturday, don't you forget."

"Harry up, then! We want you to come to the station with us to fetch a hamper."

"Did you say a hamper, Harry? Corn in Egypt! Oh, fabulous day! It's only just come in time, for we're clean out. Even Inky and Johnny won't have any cash for the next day or two. I'll come. Hang the old input, anyway!"

The passage was almost dark, for no lights had yet been turned on, and as the three passed out a fat form quivered like

a jelly as it drew itself up against the wall two yards away. But the three passed on without suspecting Bunter's nearness.

Once they were well away, the Owl of the Remorse stole into Study No. 1.

"Pity they haven't got the hamper yet," he murmured. "But those lines of Nugent's will come in handy, especially as they're to be handed to this new master, not to Capper. Capper might know the difference between my writing and Nugent's, but Hobbinson won't!"

Harry had turned down the gas before leaving the study. Bunter turned it up again. He had heard what was said about freshening up the lines, and it struck him that what was good for Nugent should be good for him.

So he took the blotting-paper, which Frank had left lying on the table, and wetted it yet more in the very Bunterish belief that one could not have too much of a good thing.

The result was hardly satisfactory. The lines were very badly blurred when he lifted the damp pad.

"Silly ass, Nugent is!" said Bunter in high disgust. "He might have known that it wouldn't be any good. Never mind, I dare say it will do all right for this new chap; and if he makes a fuss, I can cook up some yarn for him!"

And Bunter, doubling up the damp sheet, and thrusting it into his pocket, left the study, forgetting all about turning down the gas, and rolled down the passage to his study.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five, realising that time before looking-up was short, had brought out their bicycles, lighted their lamps, and were speeding to Friar-dale Station.

They reached it just as a train steamed out, and were on the platform before the passengers had cleared.

The station dog, partly fox-terrier and partly very mischievous dog, was sniffing around as usual. The station-dog was named Herbert, and was quite a nice dog, though possibly a stranger to his little ways might not take to him at once.

Among the passengers was a man of forty or so, with a hulk neck, and a square face that was not exactly pleasant. He was rather shabbily attired, with a bowler hat that had seen better days, or that at least should have been retired from service before it saw much worse ones, a shapeless overcoat, and frayed trousers.

Herbert sniffed at his legs in an inquiring manner.

The stranger looked down, and his dark face took on a nasty scowl.

"Get away, you confounded cur!" he snarled.

Herbert had learned that, however much he might dislike any of the people he met at the station, it was not the thing to bite them. He was, therefore, getting away when another passenger, failing to see him, kicked him in the ribs. It was quite accidental, and not really very painful; but it made Herbert yelp and dodge aside.

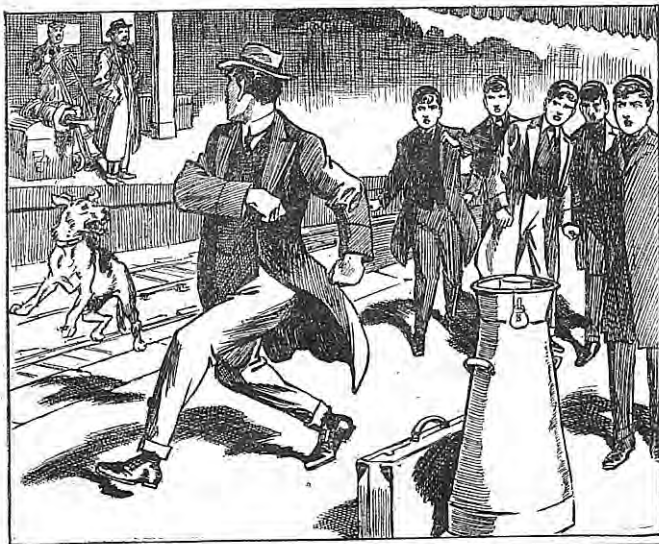
The dodge aside brought him almost under the feet of the man at whom he had sniffed. Next moment he was sent flying off the platform, to land in the six-foot way, yelping pitifully.

"You cowardly brute!" cried Harry Wharton, aflame with indignation.

The man turned upon him with upraised fist, and the Famous Five lined up at once by their comrade, or, rather, three of the other four did so. Frank Nugent jumped down from the platform and picked up the dog.

"Be careful!" hissed the dark man.

"I should say it's for you to be more careful!" replied Johnny Bull. "That



The man gave the dog such a kick that it was sent flying off the platform, to land six feet away, yelping pitifully. "You cowardly brute!" cried Harry Wharton, aflame with indignation. (See Chapter 2.)

dog hadn't done anything to you, and you backed him as if you meant to kill him!"

"I did mean to kill him!" the man answered. "The brute was coming for me!"

"Rot!" snapped Bob Cherry. "We know Herbert. He never goes for anybody, and this was quite an accident. Bring him up, Frank. I'll give you a hand!"

Bob helped Frank and the dog on to the platform, and the stationmaster came up.

"What's the matter, young gentleman?" he asked.

"This fellow kicked your dog off the platform," explained Wharton, with a glance of mingled rage and contempt at the stranger.

"Really, sir—"

"The cur made a wanton and unprovoked attack upon me! You surely do not suppose that I am going to put up with that?"

"It doesn't sound a bit like Herbert," said the stationmaster, shaking his head. "He's a most good-tempered dog, though he is rather curious about people!"

"This will be a lesson to him to restrain his curiosity, perhaps," the dark man said, with a cruel grin.

"I believe you have broken one of his ribs!" cried Frank Nugent. "He's moaning with pain!"

A frown gathered on the stationmaster's brow. But he was in a difficult

position. It would not do at all for him to quarrel with a passenger. He looked somewhat helplessly at the five juniors.

"What does it matter if the cur is hurt?" sneered the stranger. "He is only a worthless mongrel, anyway!"

"That shows you've never had a dog," answered Harry Wharton hotly. "It isn't the breed that matters. Herbert's a pup, isn't he, Mr. Smith?"

"He is, Master Wharton, and a good one," the stationmaster replied.

The stranger laughed harshly. "I've heard that sort of twaddle before," he said. "But I never had any sympathy with dog-worshippers. To my mind, dogs are to be classed as noxious vermin. Here, I'll give you five shillings for that animal—and that's four-and-twenty more than he's worth. Then I'll wring his neck, and there will be one cur the less in the world, so that everything will be for the best."

And as he spoke he seized Herbert by the collar, and tried to drag him from Frank's grasp.

Herbert yelped. The stationmaster moved forward, though hesitatingly.

"You stand out of the way, Mr. Smith!" cried Bob Cherry. "We'll attend to this!"

And the five closed with the dark stranger.

He kept his grip on the dog with one hand, and with the other struck Frank Nugent hard upon the cheek.

"Don't try on that game!" shouted

Wharton. "You'll get the worst of it if you do! Better leave go of the dog, for we're not going to let you kill him!"

"You're not going to let me, you cuds? We'll see about that!"

His right hand was clenched now, while the left clung to the dog's collar, almost throttling him. The stranger punched twice, and Johnny Bull staggered back with a screaming nose, and lanky stumbled and almost fell.

Then the dark man went down under their combined attack, and Herbert was dragged from him, and found a safe refuge in his master's arms.

"It's all right now," said Harry, getting up breathless. "You needn't sit on him, Bob. Mr. Smith's got Herbert."

Bob, who with Harry had gone down when their enemy fell, got to his feet. None of them extended a hand to the man who had been the cause of all the trouble.

He rose without help, and glared at them dominantly.

"You will hear more of this!" he snarled viciously. "Greyfriars boys, I believe? Oh, you will certainly hear more of this!"

And he stalked away. Farther down the platform he stopped a porter, and they heard him asking whether he could get a fly to the school.

The five looked at one another. Johnny Bull, mopping his streaming nose, said:

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"My hat! To the school! Suppose that's Quechey's locum-tenens?"

"It hardly seems likely," said Harry.

"Why, the fellow looked like—oh, anything but a public schoolmaster. He was awfully shabby."

"He's a rank outsider, whoever he may be," Bob answered. "But that doesn't prove, and his shabbiness doesn't prove, that he isn't Hobbinson. I hope he isn't, but I rather fancy he is."

And he was!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Enemy I

THEY found out that as soon as they got back.

Wharton's hamper had turned up by the same train that had brought the dog-bater; but potting it along the bike took some little time, and though they travelled much faster along the road from Friarale than the antiquated fly which carried Mr. Hobbinson, they only reached the gates just as it drove away, after depositing its freight.

"Which you young gents ain't got more'n a minute an' a half to spare an' I'd have locked of you out," said Gosling, the rather cross-grained porter and lodge-keeper.

"There's no difference between a minute and a half and an hour and a half in that way!" growled Johnny Ball.

"Ninety minutes, there is," returned Gosling ill-temperedly.

"Eighty-five and a half, to be precise," amended Frank Nugent.

"And the esteemed and venerated Gosling is of the utmost preciseness in matters relating to the timefulness," pursued Inky.

"Which what I says is this 'ere," answered Gosling gruffly. "You hys wait a 'order and over you nor what Mr. Quechey's never want. An' you're a-goin' to get it, too! I know—I've seed 'im!"

"Seen whom?" asked Harry.

"Jim! 'Im want's come to look arter you young hings!"

"And don't you think he's a truly nice gentleman, Gossy?" queried Frank.

"You ain't seed 'im yer, or you wouldn't be askin' that," he said. "E don't look much, in a sense, for you might call 'im a shabby bloke, an' not be far out of it. But that's neither 'ere nor there when it comes to dealin' with the likes of you. It's the glitter in 'is hys I goes by—"

"Which eye, Gossy?" asked Bob innocently.

"Both of 'em, of course! Ain't you got no sense, Master Cherry, that you should ask sich fool questions? It's the glitter in 'is hys—"

"That's better, old top! He's not Polyphemus, you know."

"Oh, come on, Bob! Don't stand yarning with that old donkey! We ain't here to sample the hamper before we're in," said Harry.

"E ain't Polly Anybody. Don't you go a-makin' the mistake of thinkin' as there's anything ladylike about Mr. Hobbinson!" Gosling screeled. "E—well, what I says is this 'ere. It ain't no ways good manners to break away when a man's in the middle of— Drat the young hings, any'ow!"

"I think I ought to go back and explain to Gossy that Polyphemus was a one-eyed gent, and not a lady at all, Harry," said Bob.

"Rot! What's the use? I say, though, he was on to that rotter's shabbiness, and there wasn't much light to see it by, either."

"And to the nasty look of him, too," added Frank.

"We're in for a warm time with Hobbinson, if you ask me," Johnny remarked, wiping his nose with a blood-stained handkerchief. "It's the same outsider—there's no possible mistake about that. Well, I know one thing. Next time he taps me on the sniffer I shall have a jolly good try to reach his! I'm not going to put up with that!"

They saw no more of the temporary master that night; but Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth, dropped into No. 1 after prep to say that he had seen him with Mr. Capper.

"An' I'm surprised that Capper should have such a pal," said the lordly Temple. "We think fairly well of old Capper in our Form—"

"More than we do!" put in Frank.

"Ah, Capper never did like kids, an' I don't suppose that he would mind about your little opinions. But I am surprised that he should be pally with a shabby bouncer like this fellow Hobbinson, or whatever his giddy name is. You wouldn't call Capper exactly drosy; but I've never seen him about with a fringe to his bags or frayed shirt-cuffs. Indecent, I call it—dashed indecent! I'm glad it isn't we who will have to put up with the specimen!"

And the lordly Cecil Reginald lounged out.

Next morning a notice to the effect that the Remove would return to their own Form-room, and that Mr. Alured Hobbinson, M.A., would take charge of the Form during the absence of Mr. Quechey, was posted on the board.

There had been some uncomfortable crowding in the Upper Fourth Form-room, and no one had found Mr. Capper exactly congenial; but the Famous Five discovered that an impression that they would be no better off under the new regime had already got abroad.

"He looks a perfect beast," said Dick Russell, standing in front of the notice-board.

"Well, I fancy we can make it warm for him if he gets trying any of his perfect beastliness on us," remarked Bolsover major, with a grin.

"I'm not sure that that kind of thing pays in the long run, do you know, Bobs?" Snoop said nervously.

"I think we'd better see what he's like before we make up our minds about him," Squiff put in.

On the subject of Mr. Hobbinson's rather unusual name, Peter Todd made an execrably bad pun.

"He may be 'Alured,'" said Peter.

"But he's certainly not 'Alluring.'"

"But, my dear cousin Peter, I am under the impression that the name is pronounced 'Ala-red,' not 'Allured,' Alonzo said mildly.

"When Peter does horrible things like that, Louzy," said Bob Cherry, "you should kick him good and hard, not talk about impressions."

"But, my dear Cherry, I really should not dream of kicking my cousin Peter," replied Alonzo, looking shocked. "I do not think Peter would like to be kicked."

"And I'm jolly sure you wouldn't like what would happen to you if you tried it, as!" grinned Peter. "Don't go putting silly notions into Louzy's head, Cherry. It's empty enough, goodness knows, but that's no way to fill it. Do your own kicking if you want it done!"

"Right-ho, Toddy!" Bob returned cheerily. "Turn round, will you?"

Peter Todd naturally declined that invitation. Bob tried to get behind him. Peter dodged round the Bouncer, and Bob followed.

Bolsover major stuck out a big foot.

That kind of thing was Bolsover major's notion of a joke.

Bob stumbled over the big foot, shot forward, and cannoned right into the waistcoat of Mr. Alured Hobbinson, M.A., who had appeared upon the scene unperceived.

Mr. Hobbinson took a sudden seat upon the floor. Bob sprawled by his side.

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter.

But the rest did not laugh. Even Bolsover felt just a little dissatisfied with the outcome of his screaming joke. For the expression on the face of Mr. Hobbinson was positively ferocious, and they could all guess that Bob would catch it hot.

Vernon-Smith held out a hand to help up the master. But Mr. Hobbinson got up without assistance, and did not even thank the Bouncer.

"Sassy, sassy, really!" gasped Bob, scrambling to his feet.

"I do not believe it!" snarled the master. "You did that on purpose!"

"He didn't, sir," said Bolsover, who had a curious little way of showing decency spasmodically, and sometimes when it was least expected of him. "I tripped him!"

"That is a mere subterfuge to get him off punishment!" fumed Hobbinson.

"It was partly my fault, too, sir," explained Peter Todd meekly. "I wouldn't stand still to be kicked, you see!"

"And that is sheer impertinence!" Hobbinson snorted.

"I'm not a liar, sir!" roared Bolsover.

"You are an insolent fool!" returned Hobbinson. "To what Form do you belong?"

"Remove," answered the big junior solemnly.

"A boy of your size? I thought the Remove were more youngsters! You are evidently one of those backward specimens, who are little better than congenital idiots! What is your name?"

"Bolsover major," said Bolsover sullenly. "And I'm not an idiot, either!"

"Go slow, Bobs!" counselled Wharton, in a whisper.

"Who spoke then?" demanded Mr. Hobbinson.

"I did, sir," replied Wharton.

The locum-tenens had evidently sharp ears.

"What is your name?"

"Wharton."

"Form?"

"Remove. Everyone here belongs to the Remove."

"Answer the questions I ask you, and do not volunteer unsolicited information! What is your name, boy?"

"Cherry, sir," Bob replied.

The master's eyes searched the small crowd. They fell upon the good-looking, rather girlish face of Frank Nugent.

"And yours?" snapped the tyrant.

"Nugent, sir."

Then Inky was singled out.

"Your name, you boy with the dusky face, a Hindu, are you not?"

"I am Hurreo Janset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhamper, sir," answered Inky, speaking with the pride that was always aroused in him when a slight to his race was suggested, but bowing politely.

"I do not want any Oriental servility! You, your name?"

It was Johnny Ball this time. The Friarale Station platform had not been exactly a blaze of illumination the afternoon before, but it was plain that the man they had crossed then had remembered them all.

It was also plain that he did not mean to say a word about that previous meeting, but only to hold it against them.

He could cloak his intentions, too, for



As Wharton bent over the waste-paper basket Mr. Hobbinson brought the cane down upon his back. Harry straightened up with a flushed and angry face. "What was that for?" he demanded hotly. (See Chapter 4.)

he proceeded to ask of each fellow there what his name was.

"I shall not forget any of you," he said, when he had dealt with them all thus. "Now be good enough to understand this. I cannot fail to see that the discipline of the Form is regrettably slack. Possibly I may not be long among you—"

"S' hope not!" murmured Squiff.

"Who was that?"

"I spoke to myself, sir," replied the Australian junior.

"And I heard what you said to yourself, Field. But I will deal with you later. Let me continue. While in charge of this Form I intend to be obeyed, in the letter and in the spirit. I am not a weakling, as you will soon discover, and unless you want to be hurt you will avoid bringing upon yourselves corporal punishment. You will now form up in single file, and make your way to the Form-room, where you will stay until the breakfast-bell rings. The sooner you learn that I will not tolerate proceedings of the bear-garden type the better it will be for you! You, Bolsover, will lead the way, as the biggest and most stupid boy in the Form!"

Bolsover's major's countenance was the colour of a peony, and most of the others looked at one another with something very like mutiny in their faces.

Only Bunter sniggered. Bunter was not at all jealous of Bolsover's being assigned the distinction of being the

most stupid fellow in the Remore, though that was Bunter's undeniable right.

They gave in. It was too early yet to think of mutiny seriously, and too near breakfast-time for the detention to matter very much.

Bolsover led, stamping his big feet. Behind him lined up the Famous Five, the Bomber, Peter Todd, Squiff, Russell, Ogilvy, Alfonso, Todd, Skinner, Stott, Snoots, and Fisher T. Fish, with Bunter bringing up the rear.

"Yooop!" ejaculated the guileless Alfonso, leaping half his height into the air.

"What do you mean by that, boy?" roared Mr. Hobbinson.

"I—I had a sudden pain, sir," faltered Loney.

And he looked reproachfully at Skinner, who had thrust a long pin into him.

"You will, in less than a minute, experience a pain which you cannot excusably term sudden, since I warn you that you will be caned as soon as we reach the Form-room!"

The whole file had huffed. Now Peter Todd spoke from his glare.

"That isn't fair, sir! He wouldn't have jumped if he hadn't been hurt."

"March on! And you, Bolsover, march less noisily. Your understanding may be wholly concentrated in your pedal extremities, but I cannot accept that as an excuse for the noise you have been making."

That was meant as a joke, though the joker's face was grim enough. But only four there smiled at it—Skinner, Stott, Fish, and Bunter—and of the four only Bunter cracked outright.

Bunter did more.

"Oh, jolly good, sir!" he exclaimed, with his most ingratiating smile. "He, he, he!"

"Right-oh, Bunter! I'll see you later on!" growled Bolsover. "You won't think my feet so giddy funny when they kick you all round the quad, you sucking-up oyster!"

"What did you say, Bolsover?" snapped the master.

But Bolsover was marching on, and apparently he did not hear.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Lines—and Hard Lines!

THE Form-room was reached, and the file broke up. Each of the juniors went to his accustomed desk.

Mr. Robinson took his stand on the master's rostrum, watching them with a frown on his forehead. When all were seated he opened the desk and took out a couple of canes.

"Bolsover!" he thundered.

"I don't see what I'm to be caned for," mumbled the burly junior, as he came forward.

"I cannot believe that even your stupidity is so great as that!" the master snapped.

"Look here, sir! I've had enough of that sort of thing! Mr. Quelch never kept telling me I was stupid. I'm not—no more than other fellows, anyway, and I don't see why—"

"Hold out your hand, Bolsover!"

Bolsover never hesitated. He did not lack bodily courage. He was almost ready to hurl himself at the tyrant—almost, but not quite.

He held out his hand.
Swish, swish, swish!

Bolsover did not even wince at the first three blows. He had screwed himself up to take them unflinchingly.

Swish, swish, swish!

The last three were too much for his resolution. He did not break down, but there came from him a sound like the moan of an animal in pain.

Then he marched back to his place with his head up, and no one could deny that he had taken his gruel pretty manfully.

"Cherry!"

Bob came forward jauntily, and took half a dozen without a sign. But that was no more than was expected of Bob Cherry.

"Field!"

The average Australian is hard-bitten; not easily can he be made to squelch. Sniff took his whack even as Bob Cherry had taken his.

"You, Todd—Todd minor, I believe?"

The cane pointed to Peter. Peter was Todd minor, for Alonzo had been at Greyfriars before him, and was a month or so older than he. Peter walked up, hoping that the tyrant would forget all about Alonzo.

At the first stroke the cane split. Mr. Hobbinson threw it from him, and snatched up the other.

Swish, swish, swish!

Peter bit his underlip, but that was all. Swish, swish, swish!

The last stroke smote only the air. Peter had withdrawn his hand.

"A mistake in counting, I think, sir," he said coolly and politely, though his voice trembled.

He had had nearly all he could stand.

"Hold out your hand!" roared Hobbinson.

A low hum of protest came from the desks. But Peter held out his hand again. It was not false that the first stroke should not be counted; the cane had hurt horribly, in spite of the splitting. But Peter had the legal mind, and he was the winner of his own position. Because the others had been given only six each, it did not follow that his punishment was limited to that number.

Swish, swish, swish!

Mr. Quelch could wield the cane in a manner that was no joke. But this man smote as he had never smitten. It was plain that he enjoyed giving pain.

There was blood on Peter's under lip when he marched back, and his face worked. But above the pain he felt was the hope that Lonzy would be forgotten.

A hum sounded again—a hum that was somehow like a suppressed cheer. Peter had many friends there, and they all felt that Peter had come through the ordeal with credit. But Skinner's face wore a smothering smile, and Bunter shot out a big pink tongue derisively at the head of his study.

Claug, claug!

It was the breakfast-bell.

"Keep your seats!" snarled the master.

"Todd major!"

Poor old Alonzo! He was to get it, after all. Peter swung round, and his mouth opened to protest. But Alonzo,

on his feet already, laid a hand on his comin's, as it rested on the desk.

"It's no use, Cousin Peter!" whispered the Duffer appealingly.

Peter, in spite of all he had had, Bob Cherry, Harry Wharton—any one of those three would willingly have taken Lonzy's dose for him. Perhaps there were others who would have done so. Nearly all liked the guileless Duffer, though they did clip and jape him. And all knew that what those others had gone through without breaking down would infallibly be too much for the sensitive Alonzo.

Looks of disgust were cast at Harold Skinner. That he had been responsible for Lonzy's leap and exclamation most knew; and, according to their code, he should have owned up now.

But for anyone else, even Lonzy, to explain, would have been a transgression of the code, and the Duffer's best friends were bound that he would not tell.

Skinner had a face of brass. From his demeanour, no one could have guessed that he was concerned.

"I am really unaware, sir, if you will allow me to say so, that I have committed any offence that justifies your punishing me," faltered Alonzo, always ready to argue a case, in his mild way, with anyone.

"Hold out your hand!"

Lonzy extended his right hand gingerly, and received one cut, which caused him to double up with agony.

Then the door opened, and Dr. Locke himself looked in.

The Head master have seen what was going on, but he did not show that he saw.

"Ah, Mr. Hobbinson, I perceive that you have been prompt to start on your duties!" he said. "But the breakfast-bell has sounded. You can go, boys!"

And he stood by the door and watched them hurry out.

Whether he said anything to their tyrant when they had gone they could not tell, of course. But there was no sign of his having received a rebuke in the face of Mr. Hobbinson when he took his place at the masters' table a few minutes later, and he decorated eggs and bacon and mince in huge quantities and voraciously. It was evident that his appetite had not been affected.

"Big a pig as Bunter!" remarked Bob Cherry disgustedly.

Bunter heard that.

"Oh, really, Cherry?" he said. "I am not sure that it will not be my duty to tell Mr. Hobbinson what you've said about him. You can't insult a master like that, you know."

"It's an awful insult to compare him with you, Bunter. Isn't it?" queried Frank Nugent, with a wink at his chums.

"I don't care! You fellows may say what you like about Mr. Hobbinson; but I think he's all right."

"You think you're going to like Hobbinson, oyster?" asked Bob.

"Oh, don't argue with the fat ass, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "It's no use. And don't say things about Hobbinson. Bunter's quite capable of telling him, and adding a bit to make it blacker."

"I shall tell him that you said he was as big a pig as I am—that's black enough, anyway!" retorted Bunter.

The laughter that followed that ingenious speech brought a glare in the direction of the Famous Five from Mr. Hobbinson.

Before an hour of morning classes had passed many of the Remove found themselves regretting Mr. Capper. The master of the Upper Fourth had put up their backs by discriminating between them and his own Form. But Mr.

Capper had been mild, and almost fair, compared with this fellow; and as for Mr. Quelch—well, as Peter Todd remarked, there would be nothing really surprising in it. Mr. Quelch came back with a hat instead of a hat.

When twelve o'clock came, the Remove did not get the usual order to dismiss. Instead of that, Mr. Hobbinson flourished a black-covered book, with which he had been busy while they were at algebra, and said:

"Mr. Capper has handed over to me his list of impositions owing by boys in this Form, and I will now proceed to deal with them. You had better understand from the outset that I will brook no delay in the completion of tasks set by me, either as lessons or as punishments. When a boy has an imposition to do, he must get on with it, not trifle away his time at football or leap-frog or marbles. How dare you laugh, Rake?"

"Couldn't help it, sir," replied Dick Rake. "We don't play marbles at Greyfriars."

"Two hundred lines for laughing in class."

"But we're not in class, sir. It's gone twelve."

"Four hundred lines!"

Dick Rake gasped and subsided.

"Wharton, I require two hundred lines from you," said the master.

"Excuse me, sir, but I'm not owing any," answered Harry.

"You are! There was an entry by Mr. Capper against your name, and it was not struck through."

"Mr. Capper never does strike them through, sir. He puts a tick against them when they have been handed in."

Everyone knew this to be correct. The master of the Upper Fourth was great on Greek, and he had the precise neatness often seen in the writing of those who have done much of the difficult Greek script. It would have been offensive to his notions of orderliness to dash through a line, and it was easier to put a tick against a name than to use a ruler.

"I have copied Mr. Capper's entries into this book of my own. I noticed no such mark in any case—certainly not in yours, Wharton."

Harry laid come forward. Now he stooped over the wastepaper-basket, in which he saw torn scraps of Mr. Capper's imposition list.

A cane descended forcibly upon him. He straightened himself up, with a flushed and angry face.

"What was that for?" he demanded hotly.

"For prying into my wastepaper-basket! You will do me a thousand lines, Wharton, for addressing me in that tone! Not a word, or your imposition will be doubled!"

It was all Harry knew how to do to keep silence. Some of the rest did not keep silence. But no words could be distinguished in the buzz that came from the desks, and the tyrant merely glared.

"Nugent, five hundred!" he snapped.

"I have them done, sir, but they are in my study."

"Oh, don't do not claim that you have shown them up?" sneered the master.

"You had better go and fetch them at once, Bull!"

"I had only a hundred, sir. They were shown up to Mr. Capper." Johnny paused before he added: "As he will no doubt tell you if you will be so good as to ask him."

And Johnny Bull looked the tyrant very straightly indeed in the face.

"Cherry, two hundred!" snapped Hobbinson.

"Shown up, sir!" replied Bob cheerily.

"You seem to be all in a story!" was the retort.

It was grossly unfair, for Nugent was an exception, and the proof that the others were telling the truth was not two yards from the master's nose. And now came another exception.

"Sing!—I suppose you do not expect me to address you as Nabob of Buzenashville, or whatever the name of the obscure corner of the earth from which you hail may be!"

Inky came forward. Inky bowed. Inky said, in a cool, level voice, but with the pride his comrades knew:

"I am not so foolish as to expect politeness from you, sir. Here are my lines—two hundred."

He took the imposition from his pocket-book. Mr. Hobbinson vented some of his wrath by tearing it savagely across.

"Bunter!" he said, after having made it plain to the Famous Five that he was giving them no quarter.

Bunter lurched forward. At that moment Frank Nugent returned.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not a Judgment of Solomon!

"HERE are my two hundred, sir," said Billy Bunter, with his most engaging smirk. And he handed up the lines he had stolen from Study No. 1.

Mr. Hobbinson glanced at them. Had Inky's imposition been so blurted as was this, he would certainly have got it back, or, at any rate, have been told to do it again. But at present the tyrant had nothing against the Owl of the Remove.

"Well, Nugent?" he snapped. "I'm sorry, sir; but I can only find three hundred of them."

Harry Wharton was making signs to Frank. He had seen the lines shown up by Bunter, and knew at a glance, in spite of the manner in which they were blurted, that they were in the handwriting of his chum.

Frank did not understand. He stared at Harry.

Mr. Hobbinson whipped round. As he did so, the sheets fell from his hand.

"Why, these are my other two hundred!" cried Frank, hurrying to pick them up.

"Wharton, you put Nugent up to this most abominable lie!" snorted the master.

"Yes, sir—really, sir, it is a most abominable lie!" bleated Bunter, almost beside himself with fear, but ready to swear to anything rather than confess what he had done. "It's just like Wharton, sir! I don't think Nugent would have thought of it himself—I'm not sure, but I don't think so! But Wharton—"

"Shut up, you wretched, lying cad!" cried Harry.

"I wrote those lines, sir," said Frank steadily. "I give you my word of honour that I wrote them."

"And I give you my word of honour, sir, that he never did!" burred the Owl. "How could he, when I did? And if he did, how do I come to have them? I should think even Wharton and Nugent would draw the line at calling me a thief, sir! I hope I'm above that sort of thing!"

"I don't draw the line at that, Bunter!" flashed Harry. "You are a thief, though I don't believe you generally recognize what you are doing when you bone things!"

"And there are a lot more of us who don't draw the line at that, Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"And are not so dashed sure that you don't know what you're doing!" added the Bounder. "We haven't all Wharton's charity!"

"If those are your lines, Nugent, be good enough to explain how they come to be in that condition," said Mr. Hobbinson, with an angry wave of his hand at the interrupters.

Frank hesitated. He would not lie about the matter, and he felt sure that the truth would only incense this tyrant further.

But there was no hesitation about Billy Bunter.

"I can explain, sir," he said. "Nugent can't. How can he when he doesn't know anything about it? I'm surprised at you, Nugent, really, I am! I upset the kettle in our study, sir, and some of the water went over those lines. I dried them as well as I could, sir, and I thought you when explained. Because, you see, I'd done the lines, and a fellow can help accidents, can he, sir? You must know that yourself, sir, I'm sure!"

Bunter's sycophancy was beyond all limits. If looks could have killed, the fat rascal would have expired on the spot. Even Skinner and Stott glared at him—perhaps because they felt that they could not hope to rival him at the game. Both had made up their minds to get on the right side of the tyrant if they could.

"The boy or boys with whom Bunter shares a study will stand up," said the master.

Peter and Alonzo Todd rose at once, Tom Dutton, who really knew nothing about what was going on, had to be pushed and prodded before he got to his feet.

Mr. Hobbinson ignored the cousins, and addressed Tom.

"Will you tell me whether Bunter has had an accident with a kettle during the last day or two within your knowledge, Dutton?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir; Bunter always was a glut-ton," replied Tom, seeing that the master was looking at him, catching Bunter's name, and mishearing his own.

"Is this boy sane?" snorted Mr. Hobbinson.

"Dutton's very deaf, sir," explained Peter Todd.

"I did not address you, Todd!"

"Beg pardon, sir! I took it for a general observation, and, as I know Dutton better than most fellows do, I thought I might be allowed to say that, though he's deaf, he's as sane as anyone else," answered Peter.

"Be silent!" Bunter—"the master's voice was a positive roar!"—did Bunter have an accident with a kettle in your study?"

"Muddy, sir? I don't think so," said Tom, looking down at his clothes. "I did get barged over in the quad yesterday, but the mud's dried, and I've brushed it all off."

Mr. Hobbinson thrust his fingers through his coarse black hair, and tugged at it in frenzied fashion.

"If I may speak, sir," piped up Alonzo, "Bunter did have an accident with the kettle. He is very clumsy. But I did not see any lines, and—"

Alonzo was about to add that the accident had occurred more than a week earlier. But he did not get the chance. Mr. Hobbinson broke in roughly and rudely upon his mild speech.

"That settles the matter," he said. "Bunter's story is corroborated, while Nugent can give no explanation whatever."

"But what about the writing?" It was the Bounder who asked that. Hobbinson had his answer ready.

"This imposition is so blurted that it is quite impossible to say in whose handwriting it is," he said. "I have therefore to decide on the evidence available, and that is all in favour of Bunter. Nugent, you will have to do these two hundred lines again—that is to say, you will have to complete your imposition by this time to-morrow."

This was no Solomon!—no Daniel come to judgment! They were all sure of that. Even Bunter blinked, and doubted whether Hobbinson really believed him. But only the Famous Five knew what lay at the root of this deliberate and calculated unfairness.

Hobbinson was taking revenge upon them for the trouble at the station. And he would go on, they were sure. As long as he was at Grayfriars he would do all he knew how to make their lives miserable.

But they could hit back. They were not certain yet in what way they could get home on the tyrant; but surely, in some way or other, it could be done.

And meanwhile, Billy Bunter positively shuddered at attention.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Changing Fortunes!

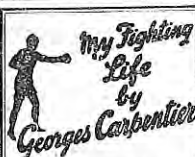
IT was never one than twelve when the Remove got the order to dismiss, and there was not a lot of change in it when they did get it, for quite a considerable proportion of the Form had impositions to set about at once.

What added to the sense of injustice under which most of them smarted was the fact that many of these tasks had already been completed and shown up to Mr. Capper. The tyrant, having refused to let Wharton search for evidence of that in his wastepaper-basket, could not consistently let anyone else do so, of course.

But few of those affected started on their targets immediately on leaving the Form-room.

Bunter had to be attended to first. The offence of which the fat rascal had been guilty was felt to be an offence against the Form generally, not merely a wrong done to Nugent.

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No one believed Bunter's yarn, and only a few left considerations of prudence keep them from sharing in his informal trial.

"I—I—I— Oh, let me alone, Field, or I—I'll tell Mr. Hobbs!" bumbled Bunter, on Sampson Quincey. Field, called Squiff because of the brevity of life, scolded him outside the Form-room.

"No, you won't, you fat clam! It would be more than your depraved life is worth to try that game on! You just come along, and take in a proper spirit of resignation what's coming to you," answered the Australian.

"Oh, really, Squiff, it's no business of yours if I did bag Nugent's lines—I mean, I never did anything of the sort. I couldn't do a thing like that! My well-known high principles!"

"We know them!" snapped Bulstrode. "They're so high that they fairly burn! Bring him along, Squiff. He's gone even beyond his limit to-day."

"I'll yell out!" gasped Bunter. "I'll tell— Yoooooo! Grooooo!"

The Bouncer's hand had been clapped in front of his mouth when he tried to yell out, and after that he could do no more than growl mumbly.

"An' don't you try lyin'!" spoke the Bouncer in his ear. "It would be very distressin' for the dear Hobbs to find his fat pet lyin' dead, though he'll soon get used to findin' him lyin' alive. Gee-oo!"

Bulstrode stuck his knee into the small of Bunter's back. Squiff on one side, Bob Cherry on the other, had him by the arms, and helped to force him forward; while the Bouncer, from behind, kept a hand firmly over his mouth.

Thus he was propelled along the passages and to Study No. 1.

There was not room in that celebrated apartment for the whole Form. But the whole Form was not attending this judicial function. Those who did come knew that they were risking the wrath of Hobbs, and ran that risk cheerfully.

The door was shut, with the study parked almost to suffocation. Then Vernon-Smith said:

"It's no good wastin' any time on tryin' the rotter. There's not a fellow present, I'm certain, who has the least doubt that when Bunter says one thing an' Nugent the direct opposite, it's Bunter who's lyin'. You'd better own up at once, you fat miscreant!"

"I don't see any use in wastin' time in that, either!" growled Johnny Ball. "It's no satisfaction to us, and it won't be any novelty to any of you fellows to hear him confessing that he's a liar, a fraud, and bloated crawler!"

"Does anybody doubt that Nugent told the truth?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"Not likely!"

"Of course we don't!"

"Don't we know Bunter?"

The chorus was unanimous, in spite of variety of expression.

"Then," said Wharton, "I vote we send the fat rotter to Coventry."

"Oh, rot!"

"My hat! That's too tame for anything!"

"He won't care. No one who matters has anything to do with him now, beyond what they can't help."

"Think of something stronger."

"Something with boiling oil in it!"

Bunter quailed before the general indignation.

"I—I—I— Oh, I say, you fellows, I may have made a mistake about those lines," he squeaked. "I—I—I really thought they were mine, and I did have

an accident with the kettle. Bub-bub-but perhaps they were Nugent's. I don't mind owing that they may have been. Franky wouldn't tell a lie, I'm sure, now that I've had time to consider the matter. We were always good pals, weren't we, Franky?"

"Never in this world!" snapped Nugent. "And if you call me Franky again I'll—I'll massacre you!"

"What do you think should be done with him, Wharton?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"I don't want anything done. He's not worth it," answered Harry.

"What do you think, Cherry?"

"Slit the worm alive!" replied Bob cheerily.

"That sounds more like sense. Wharton's an ass—sense me, old top, for my candour. Bull, what's your opinion?"

"He's got to be made to smart for it in some way," returned Nugent.

"Cricket-stump!" suggested Peter Todd. "I keep one in No. 7 specially for him. It's generally used in the way of kindness, and in the hope of making a man of the fat bouncer some day. But I'm willing to fetch it, even though everyone isn't feeling quite kind to him."

"Make him sit on the fire!" said Bulstrode ferociously.

"Here, I say, you ain't savages, you know! You can't do things like that!" Bunter squeaked.

But something had to be done. Harry Wharton alone stood for mercy, and his motive was rather utter contempt than any desire to save Bunter pain.

He stood by and watched without a quiver while Bunter was laid face-downwards upon the table, and a stump was applied to his fat person with all the force of which the good right arms of Bob Cherry, Bulstrode, and Johnny Ball were capable. Squiff and the Bouncer saw to it that Bunter did not make noise enough to reach the ears of the tyrant.

"I'll tell him! I'll tell him! See if I

don't!" yelled Bunter, as soon as the whacking was over and he was upon his feet again. "Ow! Yarrooh!"

"Shove him back!" snapped the Bouncer.

"Yarrooh! Oh, really, you fellows, don't! Oh, please, don't! You've nearly killed me now! Yow!"

"Fit to spoil so good a job as that for the want of a little more," said Delaney. "Give me that stump, Bull, will you? I'd like to finish!"

"If you tell, you'll get another of the same sort!" said Bob Cherry. "Not because we care a rap whether you tell or not, but on principle."

"Ow! Holy!" yelled Bunter. "I shouldn't think of telling, of course! Beasts!"

And he scuttled discursively out of the study.

Five minutes later his fat, little nose was glued to the tuckshop window. The whacking had not affected his appetite—unless, indeed, it had rendered the ravening beast within him more eager than ever.

A hand was laid on his shoulder, and he turned to see Mr. Hobbs.

Bunter smirked. The master tried to look pleasant. The best he could manage in this direction was about as agreeable as Bunter's smirk, which most of the Remove considered positively loathsome.

"Ah, Bunter!" said Mr. Hobbs.

"You seem interested."

"I'm nearly starving, sir!" answered Bunter pathetically. "You see, sir, there's such a lot of me to keep going, with my fine, well-proportioned figure. And the meals here ain't what they ought to be, by a long way! I shall be as hungry after dinner as before, I know!"

"A temporary deficiency in the exchequer, Bunter?"

"That's just it, sir!" Bunter said eagerly, though for the moment he was not quite so sure whether Mr. Hobbs was talking of that portion of his anatomy which was covered by his waistcoat or of his pocket. A brief space of thought brought certainty, and he added:

"I've a postal-order coming tomorrow, but that don't help me much to-day, does it, sir? I suppose you wouldn't care to—"

"Come in here with me, Bunter," said Mr. Hobbs, taking the Owl playfully by the right ear.

Bunter would have sung out in pain had any of the Remove seized him thus, for the master was unable to be gentle even when he did not mean to hurt. But high expectation dulled the pain to Bunter.

Mr. Hobbs must mean to treat him! Here were changing fortunes with a vengeance. But a short time ago, and he was being maltreated by his Form-fellows. Now he was going to be treated by a master!

Bunter's chest swelled, in high hope of a swelling farther down to follow. Bunter's mouth watered.

Mrs. Mimble stared in surprise. Her eyes almost bulged out of her head when Mr. Hobbs said:

"Let this young gentleman have what he likes; I will settle!"

"Oh, sir!" breathed Bunter, nearly delicious with great joy.

There was no one else in the shop at the moment; but Mr. Hobbs asked whether they could not go into some more private room, and Mrs. Mimble, greeting a heavy bill—she knew her Bunter—at once acceded.

Bunter ordered steak-and-kidney pies as a starter. The eyes of the master widened as he watched his guest eat pie. If not exactly edifying, the exposition given by Bunter of that proverbially easy

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



DECEMBER.

6th Monday	- - -	4.20 p.m.
7th Tuesday	- - -	4.20 "
8th Wednesday	- - -	4.20 "
9th Thursday	- - -	4.19 "
10th Friday	- - -	4.19 "
11th Saturday	- - -	4.19 "
12th Sunday	- - -	4.19 "



Bunter patted his waistcoat, looked happy, and ordered another dish of raspberry tarts. "Get on, my boy," said Mr. Hobbinson. "Will you have something to drink, too?" "Yes, if you will join me with it!" said Bunter, beaming on the Form-master. (See Chapter C.)

ari, left nothing to be desired in the way of effectiveness.

A sausage-roll or two—six, perhaps—followed the pies. Bunter patted his waistcoat, looked happy, gained confidence, and ordered a dish of raspberry-tarts.

"You're not eating anything yourself, sir," he said.

"No, Bunter. But don't let that interfere with your enjoyment. Get on, my boy—get on! Will you have something to drink?"

"If you'll join me in that, sir."

So Mr. Hobbinson had a lemonade, and Bunter had several lemonades, and, having dealt faithfully with the tarts, toyed with half a dozen cream-buns, and ordered dough-nuts. He wondered when Mr. Hobbinson would cry a halt. But the master let him go on.

"Bunter," said the newcomer to Greg-friars, when the Owl began to show some slight signs of repletion, "you can be of use to me."

"I'm sure I shall be very glad, sir," replied Bunter. "The fellows sometimes say I've no gratitude; but I don't see what they've ever done for me that I should be grateful to them. It's different when anyone treats me in the princely manner you're done, sir."

"There are some things about the Form which I wish to learn, and I am sure that a thoughtful, acute fellow like yourself could help me," the tyrant said slowly, watching the effect of his speech as revealed by the Owl's jammy and greasy countenance.

He saw nothing there to give him pause. The Owl was quite willing to play spy and informer at a price.

"This boy Wharton and his friends now—"

"They're rotters, sir!" said Bunter. "I have just as little to do with them as I can help. Bob Cherry's a bully, and Wharton swanks no end, and Bull's worse than Cherry, and Inky's a mean beast. I asked him only yesterday to cash a postal order for me, and he simply jeered. And you've seen for yourself what Nugent is. Low, I call it, trying to steal my lines!"

And Bunter, striving to wash down his honest indignation with lemonade, spluttered into the glass in a manner not at all charming.

"I anticipate trouble with those five," the master said. "Already I perceive that they are ripe for rebellion. But forewarned is forearmed. I trust you to THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 670.

give me notice of anything they meditate against me, Hunter. In fact, I shall be glad to hear anything you can tell me about them."

And Hunter proceeded to tell a great deal, including the story of the barring-out against the temporary Head and the dealings of the Famous Five, and their chums with him and with other tyrants.

There was a good deal in those stories which was far from being to the discredit of the boys.

Mr. Hobbsdon perceived that. But he was rancid with spite against the protectors of Herbert, and he had resolved that they should suffer for their championship through all his stay at Greyfriars, short or long.

A man of evil temper, without the least sense of fair play, he was also. Least unfit to be a schoolmaster; and if Mr. Capper had known that he had been dismissed from two posts within six months for sheer brutality, he would certainly not have recommended him to Dr. Locke.

Mr. Hobbsdon had a good appetite for the boiled beef at dinner. Hunter had not. He gobbled at it as unfit for human consumption, but ate it, nevertheless. Not that there was anything really inconsistent in that, for, as Delaney caustically remarked, Hunter was hardly human at best.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Terrible Plot!

"PAIS all!" said Bob Cherry solemnly, "something has got to be done to stop this!"

"Stop what?" asked Frank Nugent, looking up from an imposition.

Frank's face was weary-looking and drawn. So was Harry Wharton's. The cheery Bob, the dusky Inky, and the starchy Johnny Bull showed less than those two the effects of the past week of persecution. It had been—there was no other word that fitted it.

Mr. Alured Hobbsdon, who was a brute to the whole Remove, with the exception of a few bad eggs who had managed to get on the right side of him, had been a Grand Inquisitor to his special enemies, the Famous Five.

Bunter had played his part. What the five did, what they said, almost what they thought, had been reported to Mr. Hobbsdon; and Bunter had fairly wallowed in such. And Bunter found the wages of his treachery sweet. There was no repentance, no compunction, in Billy Bunter.

Day after day the five smarted under the cane, under the lash of Hobbsdon's enforcers, under the innumerable impositions dealt out to them.

They had been fetched off the field in the match on Saturday by their tyrant, and the fixture had been rendered a complete fiasco. Luckily, it was with a team of no great account. If the thing had happened in the course of a game with such old rivals as Highcliffe or St. Jude's, sensitive fellows like Wharton and Nugent would have felt ready to die with mortification. Even as it was, their chagrin had been great.

Harry's hamper, which had been reckoned upon to provide teas for the best part of a week, had gone west on the day after Hobbsdon's arrival. On the sort of pretext that any master who chooses to be grossly unfair can always find, it had been confiscated.

And thereafter Billy Bunter had rolled about, looking grumpy and replete, and had let out things which led to the conclusion that the contents of the hamper had been handed over to him.

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It was not only the Famous Five who had suffered at the hands of the tyrant.

Bolover major was a marked man from the outset, and had been reduced by Hobbsdon's methods to such a condition of savage resentment that those who saw most of him were afraid he might be driven to violence.

Somehow, the Boulder held his own with the oppressor of the rest. Perhaps that may have been because he was the son of a millionaire. Anyway, so it was.

But Peter Todd and Squiff, Delaney and Rake, were also among those whom the enemy delighted to drop upon. He lost no chance of getting at Tom Dutton, though Tom escaped some of his malice by reason of the fact that he lost half of what was going on. He did not always know when he had been given an impel, and sneers mattered little to him.

It was otherwise with the mild Alton, whose life was a positive burden to him.

In all the Form there were only four fellows who did not long for the return of Mr. Quelch. These four fellows were Hunter, who lived in a paradise of gorging, Skinner, Stott, and Fisher T. Fish.

"Stop what?" echoed Bob now. "Stop Hobby, of course! Stop Bunter's nasty low games! Stop being treated like dirt under the feet of—"

"Oh, don't rave, Bob!" put in Harry Wharton snappishly. "What can we do? The sweep has always some excuse for dropping on to us. Suppose we went to the Head and complained? What could we prove? We know that the brute isn't fair or decent; but when he's had his say the Head would think we were behaving badly just because we didn't like the fellow. He's never said a single word about that affair at the station. We know that it's on that account he's got his knife into us; but he's capable of denying that he so much as recognized us again."

"That's all very well, Harry; but if you're going to sit down calmly under it, I'm not," said Johnny Bull, with even more than his customary decision.

The whole five were in Study No. I, and no one else was present.

"Am I sitting down calmly?" demanded Wharton. "It's jolly near deadly, I can tell you that!"

"Me, too!" Frank Nugent said lugubriously.

"It is wrong, O esteemed and venerated pals, to allow the beastliness of such a bulldash as the Indecorous and disgusting Hobbsdon to effect the promiscuousness of so grave a frame of mind!" said Inky. "It would be of the betterfulness to treat the Indecorous and disgusting one to the bashfulness upon the cop, and so—"

"Don't talk rot, Inky!" Johnny Bull interrupted him. "We can't do things like that, and you know it! If there was much chance that the sweep would be here much longer half the Form would be ripe for mutiny; but we keep hearing that Quelch's belt and sure to be back before long, and they think they can grin and bear it till he waltzes in!"

"I suppose it really is true that Bunter's playing falsebeaver to that sweep?" said Harry.

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry looked at one another. Inky smiled his inscrutable Oriental smile. Frank went on scribbling away as if for dear life, but said while he still scribbled:

"My hat, Harry, I think there's no limit to your giddy charity, and I think you're a silly ass to have so much! If an archangel came down from heaven and told me that Bunter wasn't playing

the sneak, I should tell him that he was wrong. Why, there's no other way that brute could have known some of the things he's found out!"

"It might not be Bunter," objected Harry, rather weakly.

"No," said Bob. "It might be Skinner. 'I don't think Stott or Fishy would do it, though they'd do a good many dirty things. But it isn't Skinner who's bustling with fat and gorging in the tuckshop at all hours! It isn't Skinner, who's been seen a dozen times coming from Hobby's den. I don't say Skinner wouldn't do it; but I do say that there's no evidence against him, and that there's heaps against the Owl."

"That's true enough," Harry admitted. "But what do you propose to do about it? We could wale Bunter, of course; but, though Hobbsdon might jump on us for it, it's not to be supposed that he would really mind. He's only using the silly Owl for his dirty work; he doesn't really love the fat rotter!"

"There's one thing we can do," Bob said, "and that's to play up to Bunter in such a way that he'll do Hobby down by taking him false information."

Wharton looked rather doubtful.

"Is that quite straight, do you think, Bob?" he asked.

"Of course it's straight, duffer!" chimed in Johnny Bull. "What's off the level is the game those two are playing between them. If we can only work it so that Hobby comes an awful cropper through trusting what that fat worm tells him, we may choke him off having any more to do with the Owl. Bunter's been fairly wallowing in luck this last week or more, and I'm dead sick of seeing the sweep snorting about with all his buttons bulging."

Inky got up and went softly to the door. He opened it with a suddenness that would have meant a fall for Bunter had that bloated cavedropper been outside. But Bunter was not there.

"Let's fix it up now," Frank Nugent said.

"Does Wharton agree?" asked Johnny Bull sharply.

"Oh, I agree, as you all seem to think it's all right!" Harry said. "Of course, there's no harm in taking Bunter in, and it's no use for us to know that he carries everything straight to Hobbsdon."

"It's got to be something really lurid," said Bob. "Something that will make Bunter's flesh creep and Hobby's eyes start out of his head when it's passed on to him. Let's see. Could we key for Hobby in the cloisters, finish him off—details to be thought out later, but not too much gone in it—put him in a sack, and drop the sack into the vaults?"

"Everybody searching for Hobby," Frank said eagerly, "and—"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Nugent!" growled Johnny. "As if anyone would search!"

"It's you that are the ass, Bull. We are not really going to do that or anything. We're only going to make them think that there's a terrible plot—see? The more lurid it is the better."

"For Bunter's consumption, perhaps," replied Harry. "But not for Hobbsdon. The man's no fool, and he would know any scheme like that was all skittles. It's got to be something he might be expected to believe, not silly rot out of a blood-and-thunder yarn!"

"All the same, Bob's near enough right," Johnny said. "We'll cut out the finishing him off; though I'm not so dead sure he wouldn't believe that of us. Have another squint outside the door, Inky, old top!"

Inky took another look.

"I beg to report the abscission of the absurd and disgusting Owl," he said.

"Right ho!" said Johnny. "Then he lowered his voice. "This is about what we want. Hobbsdon does walk in the cloisters after dusk comes on. I've seen him once or twice myself, and I've heard other fellows speak about it. The plan will be for the whole crowd of us to come on him suddenly from behind, get him down, blindfold, gag, and bind him, and put him to cool down in the vaults."

"What we could do it!" exclaimed Bob fervently.

"We could," Johnny Bull replied coolly. "It would be as easy as falling off a horse. But the result might be about as pleasant for us in the long run."

"Now how are we to make sure that Bunter shall hear us planning it?" inquired Harry.

"Nothing very difficult about that," answered Frank. "The fat worm is continually listening at our keyhole. We know that, though we haven't actually caught him in the act yet. We'll put someone to watch for him just round the corner, and signal to us from the quad when he's at it."

"Better be one of us on the watch. We don't want anyone else in this," Johnny Bull said.

"Can't ask Toddy or the Bounder without letting them in," said Bob.

"As far as that goes, what does it matter about letting another fellow or two into the secret?" Frank asked. "It isn't as though we were going to jump on Henry, is it? It's only a fake."

So it was agreed that Peter Todd, who had a better chance of getting on the track of Bunter than anyone else, should be made acquainted with the scheme, and be asked to watch for Bunter in the act of listening.

Then the five, with their heads close together and their voices lowered, settled details, so that they might talk concerning the egregious Owl.

And that very day Bunter fell in the trap. He listened outside the door of Study No. 1, with goggling eyes and bated breath, while the Famous Five plotted their dreadful plot. It did not occur to Bunter that they were hardly have talked so loudly if they had been in earnest. That sort of thing was not in the least likely to occur in the obtuse mind of the Owl. He took it all in, and went off to tell Mr. Hobbsdon.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Working of the Plot!

"THEY'LL do it, sir!" said Bunter. "They're desperate—absolutely desperate! They say life isn't worth living like this, and unless you're taught a lesson pretty soon—"

"Oh, they think they're going to teach me a lesson, do they?" snipped the master. "It will be to they who will get the lesson. Nothing short of expulsion will pay for such an outrage as this!"

"I'm sure I don't mind, sir," replied Bunter meekly. "They deserve to be expelled, don't they? And everyone ought to get his deserts, don't you think? Mrs. Mumble's got new steak-pies in the window, I see, sir. I could do with a few of them."

Mr. Hobbsdon looked hard at Bunter. A suspicion that the Owl might have invented that terrible plot in order to forest upon steak-pies may have crossed his mind. But he dismissed it if it did.

He handed over half-a-crown, but he did not let Bunter go at once.

"Wait!" he said. "I want to know more about this. What is the plan of

these atrocious young scoundrels to lure me into the Cloisters?"

Bunter grinned. "They're not going to lure you, sir. They thought of that, but it struck them that it might be evidence against them afterwards if they sent you a note, or anything like that. They know you often do walk up and down there about dusk, and they mean to wait till you're there, and then go for you."

"Ah! They will find me there this evening—I can promise them that! Not a word to anyone, Bunter!"

"Oh, sir! As if I would, sir! You can surely trust me!"

"I hope so. It will be bad for you if I find that I cannot. By the way, will you look in at Bolsover's study—or find him if he is not there—and tell him I want to see him at once?"

Bunter went, grinning. He guessed that this meant new trouble for Bolsover major, whom he disliked. He took some pains to find the burly junior, and was rewarded by a slap of the head that staggered him.

"Yah! I hope he'll give you twenty on each hand!" he howled, as soon as he had put a safe distance between himself and Bolsover.

"He won't, for I won't stand any more of it!" muttered Bolsover to himself. "I'm fed up—right up to the neck! I shall shoot the brute next time he tries to go, and chance the consequences!"

But Bolsover found that he had not yet reached the extreme limit of his endurance, or it may be that his courage failed him at the critical moment. Any way, he came out of Mr. Hobbsdon's room a little later, gritting his teeth and pressing his hands under his armpits, but without leaving a dead, or even a badly bruised, Hobbsdon behind him.

It was significant of his state of mind, however, that he did not seek out anyone to relate the tale of his wrongs. He had brooded alone of late, and he brooded over this latest injustice alone.

At tea-time Billy Bunter looked into Study No. 1. He opened the door softly, and the first the Famous Five knew of his presence was when Bull sighted his glimmering glasses in the flickering fire-light.

"Get out!" snipped Johnny. "Oh, really, Bull! You ought to be glad to see me! It's days and days since I gave you fellows a look-in."

"Been living in the Land of Goshen, haven't you, porpoise?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I don't understand you, Cherry. I've been living at Greyfriars, as usual, but my time has been rather fully occupied. I haven't any other engagement at the moment, however, and if I'm asked to tea here I shan't say no."

"As you're not going to be asked—"

"I wasn't speaking to you, Bull. I am under the impression that this study belongs to Wharton and Nugent."

"Quite right," said Bob solemnly. "But the grub we're putting away happens to belong to Johnny, fatty."

"We always were good pals, weren't we, Johnny?" said the fatuous Owl, in great haste.

"We were not!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"I say, you know, I think Hobbsdon's rather rough on you fellows!" said Bunter, trying a fresh tack at once, while behind his big glasses his eyes glared greedily at the sight of the spread.

"Ever told him so?" queried Wharton, without looking up.

"Yes, I have. I've often remarked to him that you really weren't bad sorts when a chap got to know you. But he's a queer beggar. He means about the

Cloisters in the 'lock for an hour or more some nights. He's there now. I saw him not five minutes ago."

The Famous Five glanced at one another when they heard that. They felt sure that Hobbsdon had heard Bunter's astonishing yarn, and was waiting for them, guarding against being taken by surprise.

Well, let him wait! Let him wait to-night, and to-morrow night, and for as many nights as he chose to wait!

Probably two or three such nights would be enough for him—enough to make him doubtful of Bunter's complete veracity. And when his vigilance had relaxed somewhat, it might be feasible to work off some spoof to make him look particularly silly. Bob and Inky had talked over the first notion of a plan to that end.

Because of the bright fire, the gas had not been lighted in Study No. 1, and Bunter did not observe those glances. He hurred on.

"There's one fellow he's rougher on than you five. That's Boley. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Boley went for him one day—not a bit! In fact, I shouldn't blame anyone who did; he's too thick for anything!"

"Thought he was rather a pal of yours, Bunter," said Frank.

"What, Hobbsdon? Not likely! I bar him as much as anyone though not on my own account. I must say he's fairer to me than over Quelch was. But I'm not selfish, and I can't stand the way he treats you chaps."

"You'd better get out, Bunty, before anything happens to you," said Bob, in disgust. "We can stand a lot, but we can't stand you. Are you going?"

Bob got up. So did Johnny Bull. Bunter backed towards the door.

Bob took a pace or two forward. Johnny did likewise. The Owl went.

They heard him rolling down the passage. Then came silence for a moment.

The silence was broken by Bolsover major. He burst into Study No. 1 with his heavy face working hard, and dropped into the armchair like one who has run for miles and is quite exhausted.

His breath came and went in great gasps. His eyes were wild.

They all stared at him. Bolsover had never been a pal of theirs, but they did not bar him as they barred Skimmer, and they could see that something serious was wrong, with him now.

"What's the row, Boley?" asked Bob.

"Oh, oh! I—I believe I've killed Hobbsdon!"

Then Bolsover broke down completely. He put his hands in front of his face, and his big shoulders shook with sobs.

"But stop a moment!" said Johnny Bull.

"What do you mean? Have you been scrapping with him? If that's so, I'm surprised that he hasn't killed you. But I don't think you can have done for him."

"He's lying there in the Cloisters—he doesn't move. I shook him hard, but he showed no sign of life. I say, they'll hang me for this, you know! I ought, I wish I'd never been born!"

"Tell us what happened, and hurry up about it," said Wharton. "He can't be left there. But we're bound to know what really did happen before we go to him."

Bolsover might not understand that; but Harry's chums did. Bolsover had put them into quite a nasty position. He alone could prove that it was not they who had attacked the master, unless Mr. Hobbsdon had recognised him.

And they were by no means sure that when it came to the pinch, the fellow who had come to them in his trouble would clear them at his own expense.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Last of Mr. Hobbsion!

"The fellow's been a brute to me, you know," faltered Bolsover. "We know," said Harry encouragingly. "He's been a brute to us, too!"

"It pretty nearly drove me mad!" Bolsover went on. "It wasn't quite as bad for you, chaps; you always hang together. There wasn't anybody who cared about the way the rotter got on to me. Well, it's no use going over all that, is it? He earned me agin to-day, for nothing at all; and I nearly went for him then!"

"You'd better have gone for him face to face than have done what you seem to have done," said Johnny Bull gravely.

"Don't I know that? I didn't plan to do it. I saw him pacing up and down in the cloisters, and I knew that I could creep up behind him in the gloom and sniff him out! But I don't think I'd have done it if I hadn't kicked something that seemed male for the job. I picked it up. It was a cricket-bat that some silly ass had broken and chucked away! Then I felt that I must. I'd got an old racket on. There wasn't anything to show that it belonged to me—I remember I thought of that. I'd been mooching about the quad and the cloisters for an hour or more, you know."

The wild eyes that looked at them from out of the heavy, haggard face compelled their sympathy, in spite of the blackguardly thing Bolsover had done. The fault was not entirely his; he had been driven to it.

"Go on!" said Frank gently.

"I took the racket off and stole up behind him on tiptoe. Then I flung it over his head, and, as he swung round, I hit him—hit him hard! He went down like anyone else. I haven't drag the coat away. I haven't look at his face. But I shook him, and he didn't even groan. Then I did a bunk! And I came to you fellows—oh, I don't know why, only I was sure that you wouldn't give me away!"

"That's all very well," said Bob. "We don't want to give you away, Bolsover; but the Head might to know about this at once."

"Don't tell the Head! I shall be sacked, for a dead cert, if you do!"

"Suppose you have killed Hobbsion?" asked Johnny Bull.

"It won't matter, then. Sacking will be nothing if I've done that. But go and see—do go and see—there's good chaps! He can't be dead—he can't! And if he isn't, I should think it might be kept dark who did it, shouldn't you?"

"We'll go and see," said Harry. "But we can't promise anything about keeping it dark. You must see that for yourself, Bolsover. Stay here, and we'll come back—or one of us will, anyway."

"It would have been better if one of us had stayed with him," said Johnny as the five went downstairs.

"Perhaps it would," admitted Harry.

"Will you go back, old man?"

"No need," answered Johnny.

"Look!"

Coming up the staircase towards them was Mr. Hobbsion. His face was pale, and there was a swelling on his forehead which had already begun to change colour. He carried an old racket over his arm, and in his right hand was a broken bat.

Into his eyes, as he saw them, came the gleam of hatred and of vengeance. They stopped. It was an awkward situation, for after the trap they had set for him they could hardly blame him for suspecting them of the assault.

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"Now you have gone too far!" he snarled. "This means expulsion for all of you! I was aware of your base plot! I heard you steal up behind me. But I did not expect that even you, young miscreants as you are, would go so far as to commit a murderous assault upon me! Which of you struck that blow?"

"None of us. We had nothing to do with it," replied Harry.

But he could not keep his voice quite steady. They were in a very unfortunate plight, he saw.

"Lies—lies!" snorted the master. "But I did not expect the truth from you. And it does not matter whose hand struck me. You were all in it. There is no reason for making any distinction among you."

A heavy, haggard face looked over the banisters; but neither the man nor any of the five boys saw it. He was staring malevolently into their faces, and they were trying to meet his eyes without faltering.

Bolsover major scuttled off to his own study. He had made up his mind what to do.

"You will come with me to Dr. Locke at once," said the tyrant.

"Look here, sir," said Johnny Bull. "We didn't do it. We haven't been out of doors for over an hour."

"If you can prove that you may clear yourselves. But I am sure that you cannot prove it. I am absolutely certain that it was the hand of one of you which struck me down. You were heard plotting—"

"Yes. We did that to kid Bunter and to take you in," said Bob, in sheer desperation.

"That story will hardly be good enough for Dr. Locke, I think. Oh, Wiley, tell Bunter to come at once to the Head's study—at once, mind you!"

Wiley dashed off. He saw that something was seriously wrong. At the end of the Remove passage he met Bolsover major.

"I say, Bolsy, what's happened to Hobbsy?" he asked. "There's a jolly row on, and he's taking Wharton and those fellows to the Head; but I can't make out what's happened."

"I don't know—how should I?" muttered Bolsover, brushing past him.

Bolsover was running away. He could see no other path out of the trouble he had brought upon himself. The Famous Five must give him away now, he thought. But he had not the moral courage to stay and face the master.

Before the shocked and amazed Head had begun to understand what had happened the guilty junior had scaled the wall and was running along the road to the station.

Mr. Hobbsion was very reluctant to let the alleged culprits speak at all. He poured out his story in vitriolic words. He called upon the terrified and quaking Bunter to support it. But he snapped at the five if they tried to put in so much as a word.

The Head was not the man to condemn anyone without giving him a chance to speak for himself, however.

"That is enough, Mr. Hobbsion!" he said, with a touch of acidity. "I understand your feelings; but I cannot help believing that you are taking too much for granted. And there is something in Bunter's part in all this which puzzles me. Bunter, you say you heard Wharton and these other boys plotting to attack Mr. Hobbsion in the cloisters and incarcerate him in the results?"

"I—I— Oh, really, sir, they did talk about something of the sort. But, of course, it—it was only a joke."

"Believing it to be only a joke, you yet reported it to Mr. Hobbsion, Bunter?"

"I thought it my duty, sir. I always try to do my duty, sir!"

"You had better not say too much, Bunter! Remember that I know you for a deceitful and most untruthful boy! Your career staidly!"

"Oh, really, sir! I'm sure I acted all for the best, and I don't think you ought to talk to me like that! Now that I come to think of it, I'm not sure that I really said anything to Mr. Hobbsion at all—at least, I merely mentioned it in a chatty way. I wasn't telling tales, sir, really!"

"Mr. Hobbsion, have you made a practice of employing Bunter as a spy?" demanded Dr. Locke, with frowning forehead.

"I refuse to answer as insulting a question!" snipped the tyrant.

"Your refusal is in itself an answer. Such methods do not appeal to me. I will not have them employed at Greyfriars as long as I am at its head! Of one thing I am certain—that these boys are telling the truth. Individually and collectively they are incapable of the baseness alleged against them. They are very much to blame for the foolish plot to deceive Bunter and yourself. That was all it amounted to. It was a joke, as Bunter, speaking the truth for once, says! But that they did not assault you is certain. The question is, who did?"

"It was one of them! I swear it was one of them!" shouted Hobbsion.

"Wharton, have you any idea who is guilty?"

Harry looked at his chums. He read in their faces that they were resolved, as he was, not to give away Bolsover if it could in any wise be avoided.

Bolsover's chance with the Head would be far greater if he confessed—they all knew that.

"You have—I see it! If you will not speak, I must ask Cherry."

"Nothing doing, sir! I really can't tell you, sir," said Bob.

"They will not tell! It was one of their own number!" cried the master wildly.

"Bull!" snipped the Head.

"I don't think it would be the straight thing to tell, sir," replied Johnny. "I think the fellow should own up himself."

"The matter is so very serious that I cannot agree with you at all. Schoolboy honour can be carried too far. Sing!"

"I regret, honoured sir, that I must say as my comrades say," answered Huky.

"Nugent?"

Frank was the weakest of the five, though he held honour as high as any of them. He winced under the Head's stern gaze; but he did not give in. He could not get out a refusal to tell, so nervous was he; but he could keep silence, and he did.

"This is a mere farce, Dr. Locke!" said the temporary master in fury. "They and none other are guilty. I distinctly recognised Cherry and Wharton!"

The Famous Five stared at him aghast. They had not thought that even Hobbsion would let his spite carry him so far as that direct lie.

"You did not say that before, Mr. Hobbsion!"

"But I say it now!"

The Head could not give him the lie direct. But he could not believe. He read the faces of the five, and in them was no guilt, only wonder and disgust.

"Will you retire for a while, Mr. Hobbsion?" he said. "The damage you have sustained needs attention. Bunter, I shall want to see you again. I take a very grave view of the part you have played in this affair. But I do not need you for the present."

"Oh, really, sir! I hope you will—" (Continued on page 18.)

A PAGE THAT WILL INTEREST ALL SPORTSMEN!

SPORT TOPICS.

A Splendid Series of Interesting and Chatty Articles, dealing with every kind of Sport. - - - By SPECTATOR.

FOOTBALL:

A third of the football season has now run its course, and the competition is as keen as ever it was. No individual club in either of the three divisions of the League can claim much of an advantage as to position, for in most cases only one point separates them from each other. Nevertheless, it is possible to pick out the clubs who will probably be there or thereabouts at the end of the season, and gain the distinction of promotion. I, myself, pick out Newcastle United to finish champions of Division I, whilst at the other end I expect to see Bradford and Sheffield United forced to play in Division II, during 1921-22. The two clubs who will replace the two vacant positions in Division I, I pick as Cardiff City and South Shields—Coventry City to join Division III, being replaced by Millwall, and Norwich City finishing at the bottom of Division III.

There seems little doubt whatever that the Glasgow Rangers will again hold the championship of the Scottish League, with Celtic as runners-up. The Rangers are drawing away slowly but surely, and at the present time are five points clear of Celtic and Airdrieonians. Select for yourself, as I have done, the clubs you think will earn promotion, and those which will be forced down the ladder, and see how near your prediction is at the end of the season.

Witnessing the Second Division match between Leicester City and Cardiff City on the former's ground, I was extremely delighted with the play of the home side. I had expected to see the Welsh men successful in their fight for points, which they are all out for in their bid for promotion to Division I.

The ultimate result of 2-0 in favour of Leicester was without a doubt a big surprise to the majority of followers of football. Nevertheless, the Millwall club deserved their victory every bit, and certainly they played up with much more vigour, science, and skill than did their opponents.

For the winners, every department did their work well. Bown, the goalkeeper, was so ably covered by the backs that he had very little to do. Black, the right back, was the superior of both sets of backs: the halves were splendid, and held the opposing forwards well off the forwards, who all worked as if of the piece of some well-managed machine, perhaps Paterson was the best, but, on the whole, there was not much to choose between them—they all played up magnificently.

Cardiff were much below their usual form, and I was greatly disappointed with them. That they will recover, I am sure, and I think I am safe in saying they will reverse this result at the return encounter.

Kneeshaw kept goal well for the losers, and certainly could not be blamed for the two splendid shots that found their way into his charge. Evans, at outside-right, was most disappointing, and hence

seemed to me to be the only forward up to the usual standard of the Cardiff attack.

Scottish readers may be interested to know that Celtic have won the Scottish League championship on fifteen occasions, whilst Glasgow Rangers can claim the title ten times. It will not be very long ere the Rangers will be challenging the Irishmen for the honours, and so in this competition the struggle should always keep its interest and wax warm.

I took the opportunity of witnessing a junior cup match a few weeks back, and although the home team finished the victors by seven clear goals, on the run of the play, if honours had been even at the end, it would not have flattered the visitors one jot. The success of the home team is easily accounted for; they shot hard and often, and that is a point that all forwards should remember throughout their matches.

After this match I sought out the secretary of the winning club, and discovered a few facts which were very interesting about them. It appears that a local football enthusiast, in the early days of 1914, with several clumps made up a cricket team, and, through the aid of the MAGNET, fixed up quite a good programme for the season. Now they can boast of a private ground, a good following of spectators, two cups, and a good league and cup record to date. They are top, at the moment, of the league they belong to, and their record is as follows: Played Won Lost Drawn Goals Points

6 0 — — 29 3 12

Quite an excellent one, is it not?

CRICKET.

The M.C.C. had a brilliant start against South Australia at Adelaide, and got the "Anzies" out for a mere song—118. Parkin was responsible for eight wickets for fifty-five, bowling unchanged throughout the innings with Woolley of Kent. Parkin kept a good length, and with his many varieties had the batsmen guessing on many occasions. Douglas declared the M.C.C.'s innings closed for five wickets for 512. Going in again, South Australia put up a good up-hill fight, but in the end were beaten by an innings and fifty-five runs. A. Richardson, after being missed in the hour field when thirty-six, batted on brightly and made a century. Both Russell and Heame obtained centuries, the former proving how wise the Selection Committee were in choosing him for the tour. Although the first two matches which the M.C.C. have played have been against the weakest states of Australia, I have no doubt that that they will prove their worth throughout the tour.

BOXING.

There is still a great deal of talk going on over the Dempsey-Carpenter fight for the World's championship, and not

a few of the best judges of boxing are plumping for the Frenchman to gain the title. When and where the fight will take place is not settled as yet, and I think it will certainly be some time before it comes about. Dempsey does not seem in a great hurry for this battle of battles, but when they do meet, he will be made to fight hard, and I, myself, think that I shall side against him.

Do American boxers fight shy of fights? That is a question which has been circulated throughout boxing circles a great deal of late, and there certainly seems a lot of truth in it. Jimmy Wilde is due to meet Pete Herman on January 14th at the White City, and then Jack Sharkey, but the date of the latter fight is not fixed. The boxing public are eager for these matches, and, like the boy who wanted Pears' soap, "Won't be happy till they get them."

Ted (Kid) Lewis is still anxious to meet the redoubtable Georges Carpentier, and he firmly believes that he would succeed where Bombardier Billy Wells and Joe Beckett failed. Although I have a great admiration for the "Kid," I cannot think of him gaining the verdict if the match did come to take place. Carpentier would add another victim to his roll!

ATHLETICS.

Things have quietened down in this branch of sport of late, but an event which was full of interest proved what a fine runner J. Hutton, of the Surrey A.C. is. Hutton won the ten miles running championship of the Northern Counties A.A. on the Manchester Athletic Ground, Fallowfield, by 156 yards in fifty-three minutes fifty-seven and one-fifth seconds. His running and judgment throughout were excellent, his style beyond all praise.

I understand that Albert Hill, winner of many running events in the past, intends to attempt the mile record next year, and also make a light to win the "Studd" trophy for the third time in succession. That Hill will succeed in his quest, I sincerely hope, for he has proved himself a splendid man on the track, and has done much to uphold this country in the athletic world.

NOTE.

Readers who are keen sportsmen are advised to cut out this page and paste it in an exercise book. If the events described are indexed, readers will find they have a useful book to which they can refer for records at all times.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 670.

GRAND SERIAL OF ROMANCE, MYSTERY, AND ADVENTURE!



MARCUS.

MARCUS THE BRAVE

A THRILLING STORY
DEALING WITH NERO AND HIS GLADIATORS.
BY FAMOUS VICTOR NELSON.

THREADS OF THE STORY.

MARCUS, a gladiator of Ancient Rome, returns from a voyage, during which he captures Strongbow, a notorious pirate. As his reward from Nero, the emperor, Marcus claims this band of Bunice, a Christian slavegirl. Nero, however, spurns him, the girl having been condemned to death in the arena, with many other Christians. Marcus, in his rage, denounces the emperor, who has him thrown into prison. Leo, after having escaped from the clutches of Nero, falls in with a troupe of acrobats, whose valuable assistance leads to the rescue of Marcus and Bunice. Strongbow is on the point of being burnt at the stake, when Nero appears in the arena, and orders the torch-bearer to stand aside whilst he speaks to the condemned pirate.

(Not read on.)



EUNICE.

Strongbow's Chance!

THE emperor smiled cynically. He had seen the savage before, that a few moments before had blazed in the man's dark eyes, and was well aware that to make a show of reverence and respect cost Strongbow no little effort.

"Many months ago," Nero said, "I would that a certain gladiator smiled in search of you, and brought you and your crew back to Rome."

"Marcus! The dog I have heard called Marcus, the Brave, O Divinity!" Strongbow exclaimed. "Ah, I would cut off my right hand to see him dead!"

Nero laughed softly, as he toyed with his emerald.

"I fancied, O Strongbow, that you would not love him," he said harshly. His eyes smouldered with an angry light. "Since he brought you back to Rome, he and a friend of his, named Leo, have caused my most serious displeasure."

Strongbow waited for him to continue. He had not forgotten what had taken place in the prison at Antium, and had guessed that he would be doing right not to hide his vengeful feelings against the young gladiator.

"Just what these cut-throats did to offend me need not be gone into," Nero went on quickly. "It will suffice to say that I condemned both they and the slave-maiden, named Eunice, to death. They all three escaped, with the aid of a troupe of acrobats, and with these six men, who have thus gone against law and order and made themselves criminals, are at large somewhere in Rome. Now, O Strongbow, Marcus went forth and caught you and your men, and I have a whim to give you the opportunity of being revenged by—"

"Catching Marcus and his friends?" Strongbow could not help interrupting in his eagerness and excitement.

Nero gave a gesture of assent.

"Precisely," he said. "Agree, and I will grant you and one hundred of your men temporary freedom!"

"Temporary freedom, O mighty one?" Strongbow repeated, his eyes narrowing.

"Yes. For failure will mean that you will be brought back by my soldiers, and meet the death that you have so narrowly escaped to-day!" Nero told him coldly.

"But if my men and I succeed, and deliver into your hands the two gladiators and the maiden Eunice, sire?"

"Then you will have earned my gratitude, for I hate them bitterly," the

emperor returned, an ugly scowl upon his heavy and blotchy face. "And for past misdeeds you will receive a free pardon—you, and the hundred of you men who take part in the search. Yes, you shall have pardon and freedom by my grace and command, and, moreover, I will see that you are rewarded with a purse of gold apiece."

"You hesitancy and kindness confound store of your mercy I have heard from many in the past, O Divinity!" Strongbow lied unblushingly; and he could have shouted in his mingled relief and triumph at being spared and given a chance of having vengeance upon Marcus and Leo. "All I ask is that you soldiers cut me loose, that I may begin my search for the dogs without an hour's delay!"

Nero indulged in a cruel little smile, as he signed to a pretorian to release the rover chief. He had neither forgotten nor forgiven Marcus and Leo for the manner in which they had tricked him, and, when he had watched Strongbow and his crew of cut-throats being marched into the arena, he had suddenly seen in them the surest means of recapturing the two young Romans and the girl whom Marcus loved.

In the majority of cases, the men who formed the pirate's followers would, in the first place, come from Rome, and were of a class to know every by-way and possible hiding-place in the city's suburbs.

Turned loose there, they would scatter and invade every part, and be at even in their search for a pack of bounds upon a scent—known for two reasons; firstly, because they would know that failure would mean being relentlessly hunted down and dragged back to a terrible and agonising death; secondly, because they would be urged on by a desire for vengeance against their old enemies.

The idea had appealed to Nero's distorted sense of humour into the bargain.

He had no sooner thought of it than he wanted to laugh. He would be amused, he told himself, to turn Marcus and Leo's captives against them, and see them dragged to Rome in the hands of this pirate rabble. Thus, he had lost no time in making his way down to the great cauled space below him, and in putting his scheme into execution.

The thousands of people who looked down from the tier upon tier of seats had not, of course, been able to hear what had passed between the emperor and the pirate chiefs, and had sat silent, expectant, puzzled.

But as they saw Strongbow freed, and man after man of his crew also being

cut loose, there arose a restless murmur amongst their mighty ranks.

True, they had grown tired of witnessing scenes of cruelty and bloodshed, but they were here to be amused, and the delay and seemingly purposeless doing down in the arena made them dissatisfied and impatient.

Nero, realising this, as he heard the ever-growing hum of protest from the auditorium, whispered to a pretorian officer.

"The people must be kept interested and entertained. Let all the pirates above the hundred be needed to turn loose in search of Marcus and his friends be executed as arranged."

This was the gist of his instructions, and no sooner had the required number of rovers been counted and freed from their stakes, than the remainder were approached by soldiers with flaming torches.

Their screams and moanings rent the air for a few moments as they suffered, then were silenced as one by one they sank into unconsciousness and died.

Strongbow and his fellow-prisoners who had been chosen for the great man-hunt, were marshalled into some semblance of order by the soldiers, and marched from the arena. Then, by the orders of Nero, who followed them from view through the great gates that led to the corridor and cells in the amphitheatre's basement, where Christians were herded into view of the spectators.

Such scenes followed, that, as no pen could find the power adequately to describe it was Nero's crowning infamy.

Old men who were so infirm that they had to be almost carried into the arena by soldiers, and women with ring bones in their arms, were among the unfortunate victims, and, in all, the poor doomed creatures must have totalled fully four hundred.

All kinds of savage animals were sent into the arena in their wake—tigers from the banks of Euphrates, and panthers from Numidia, wild bulls from Germany, hippopotami and crocodiles from the Nile.

Wolves, bears, lions, wild dogs, and some score of wild elephants followed, to join in the spectacle of disorder, destruction, and chaos.

For it was that. Whilst the Christians knelt and prayed, the animals turned upon one another, almost entirely ignoring at first the human beings intended for their prey.

Wolves flung themselves at the dogs and bulls, a gigantic tiger flew at a

leer, and the two beasts were quickly locked together in a deadly combat, whilst, terrified out of its wits, as two other famished tigers sprang upon its back and tore at it with teeth and claws, an elephant trumpeted and commenced a mad stampede across the great expanse of sand, in which its fellows joined.

Animals and humans were trampled down and crushed before the brutes' mad onrush, and, in panic, smaller beasts of all kinds scuttled from beneath their thundering feet, and dashed themselves against the arena walls in a wild but fruitless attempt to escape.

The people were deafened by the

Even they had blanched faces, and muttered darkly against the fiend who had planned and made possible such wanton crime, horror, and devilry.

That night Strongbow's men spread themselves out, and penetrated every nook and cranny of the Subura. They frequented the public places and the wine-shops, making guarded inquiries, and keeping their ears open for some hint or clue that would lead to the hiding-place of Marcus, Leo, and Eunice.

That the gladiators and the girl were still concealed somewhere in Rome, Nero assured them. Every outgoing ship had been searched before it was allowed

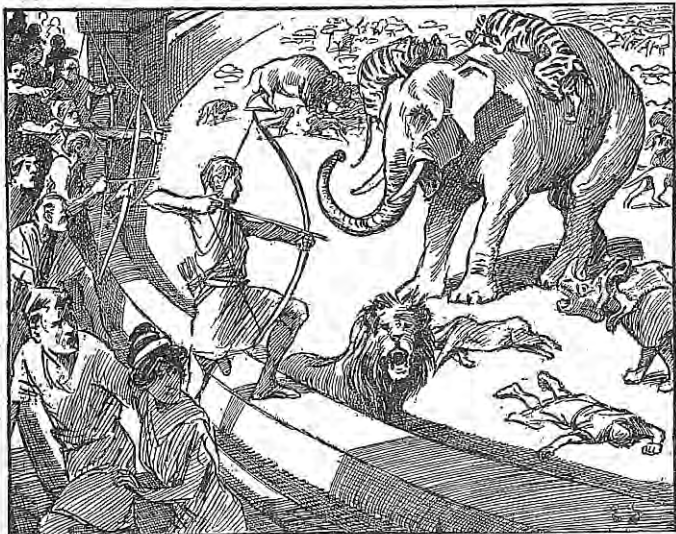
(his looks as though they are shortly intending to make a bid to escape from their present hiding-place, and, perchance, they plan to get free of Rome altogether.)

In his excitement he clutched his comrade by the shoulders.

"Tallest me!" he said. "You are quite sure it was the acrobat, Furius, whom you saw? The description we have been given of him and his brothers is but vague!"

The man laughed confidently.

"True, O chief," he agreed, "but it chances that I know this performer well by sight! Before circumstances caused



People jumped from their seats and fought madly to leave the auditorium, and the archers were summoned to clear the arena of the wild animals. It was hours before all of them had either been driven from view or killed. (See this page.)

trumpeting, roaring, and howling of the various brutes, and the cries from the human beings who fell before them. But above even this rose hysterical cries from women amongst the audience whose nerves could no longer stand the strain placed upon them by the awful spectacle, and in disgust and anger arose cries that developed into one reverberating roar: "Enough!"

Nero had at last gone too far!

People jumped from their seats, and fought madly to leave the auditorium—fought so desperately to rush away from the scene of terror going on beneath them that many were thrown down and trampled to death.

Again the archers were summoned to clear the arena; but it was hours before all the animals had either been driven from view or killed, and long before then the mighty building was empty, save for the women and soldiers and attendants.

to leave port, he had declared, so that they could not have taken to the sea.

It was late ere the labours of the temporarily fired pirates bore fruit, but success seemed to be at hand when Strongbow and his followers met by appointment to compare notes and, if necessary, discuss some new counsel of war.

They congregated in one of the largest squares of which the Subura could boast, and one of the latest to arrive hurried up to the pirate chief with flushed and eager face.

"I have found them, O Strongbow!" the man, who was a half-caste, cried exultantly. "Disguised in a flowing beard, which I could not at first see was false, the acrobat, Furius, was abroad to-night to purchase dark cloaks with hoofs."

"Cloaks with hoofs!" Strongbow exclaimed. "By the shade of my mother,

me to flee to Egypt and I fell in with you. I was employed at the theatre in Rome, and saw him at close quarters again and again. I will stake my life on the man I saw being he! I could not mistake his eyes, his forehead and nose, which are like those of the statues of Apollo—for he is handsome. His beard could not hide those from me!"

"You followed him, when he had made his purchase?" Strongbow asked.

"Chief, do you take me for an imbecile? Of course I followed him. Come! I will lead you to the house into which I saw him go!"

Word of the half-caste's discovery was passed from lip to lip, travelling through the ranks of the pirates with lightning-like rapidity and bringing from them a hoarse cheer of triumph.

With Strongbow at their head, the whole nondescript crew streamed from THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 570.

the square, bent on saving their own skins by dragging their old enemies and their comrades once again into the power of Nero.

And, as they went upon their mission, news reached the emperor that might well have alarmed one less obsessed with personal pride and vanity, and an exaggerated impression of his own power.

Under the leadership of one Vindex, a revolt had broken out among the Gallic Legions, which threatened to be serious.

Claudia only smiled, and immediately went back to a poem he was composing upon the mighty fire of Rome and the agony and suffering it had caused.

Had not reverses occurred before? he pointed out. Had they not occurred and been put down? What of Drusus, who in the time of Tiberius had quelled the uprising of the Pannonians? What of Germanicus, who had dealt with and crushed the legions upon the Rhine?

There was nothing to fear. Nothing, at all events, could affect him or snatch from him his role. Just as fire and plague came and passed, so would this war.

He little thought, then, that it was the beginning of the end; that the shadow of Death was looming darkly over his swollen, laurel-wreathed head.

Surrounded by Foes!

IN the house of the Christian who had given them refuge, Marcus, Emile, Leo, and their friends were, as Strongbow had reasoned, planning a complete escape from the country that had grown so hateful to them.

The two gladiators and the beautiful British girl who had been a slave, as well as Furnius and his five loyal and fearless brothers, were gathered in the living-room, taking farewell of old Lucius, their benefactor, and thanking him for his kindness and the risks he had run on their behalf.

Emile, that she might have more freedom of movement and be less conspicuous in case they encountered spies who might be still searching for them, was in male attire, and, with her wealth of golden hair cut close to her shaven head, looked

more like a handsome youth than a girl.

She, like the others, wore a dark cloak, attached to which was a hood that would throw a shadow over her features; and out in the extensive garden that surrounded the house, in the gloom cast by some express trees, waited horses.

Tacon, the third-in-command of the Conqueror, had not deserted them. He had secured a small vessel, which would be just large enough to carry them to Alexandria, where Marcus would join his exiled father, and Tacón waited with the ship at a deserted part of the coast past Antium.

The last "good-bye" uttered, and Furnius strode to a passage leading to the door at the rear of the house.

"It is high time we departed, friends," he said. "If the coast is clear, we must mount our horses and ride hard for the vessel."

Murmurs of assent answered him from the others, and they heard him softly unbar the door. But, it seemed that he had scarcely done so than there was the sound of the bar being hurriedly thrust again into place, and the next moment Furnius rushed back into the room.

As they saw the startled expression in his eyes, and the harsh, drawn look of his face, their hearts sank, and simultaneously Leo and Marcus whipped out their swords and moved towards him.

"Speak! What is wrong?" Marcus asked sharply; although already he felt he knew what the answer would be.

"The garden is thick with men! Our hiding-place must have been discovered at the eleventh hour!" Furnius said hoarsely. "We are surrounded by foes!"

The words had hardly left his lips when a heavy blow was struck at the door at the end of the passage—a heavy blow that was repeated again and again with a force that shook the house to its foundations.

Some unobtrusive object was being used as a battering-ram, and any moment might find their enemies pouring into the room.

(Another installment of this grand serial of Ancient Rome in next week's issue of the MAGNET. Order your copy well in advance.)

"UP AGAINST IT!"

(Continued from page 14.)

"Go!" snapped the Head.

Bunter went sulkily, but not more sulkily than did his patron.

Then, for fully half an hour, the Head argued and even pleaded with the five, while they stole every minute or two glances at the door, hoping that it would open and let in Bolsover, screwed up to confession. The fellow was not an utter coward, and he had courage. Surely he would come, sooner or later?

Tap!

"Come in!" spoke the Head.

The door opened, and Mr. Quelch appeared, in a greatcoat, and with hat in hand. Behind him was someone else, but the famous Five could not see who it was.

"Mr. Quelch!" exclaimed the Head, in joyful surprise.

"I have returned without giving notice in advance, Dr. Locke," and the Remove master gravely. "I felt so much better that I could not stay away longer, and there was upon me a curious presentiment that I was needed here. It has been justified, Bolsover!"

"Then from behind Mr. Quelch appeared the form of Bolsover major."

He was muddy and dishevelled, and his face was bleeding. But there was a change for the better in that heavy face. Bolsover meant to confess now.

"This miserable boy was running away," said Mr. Quelch sternly, yet not unkindly. "He was in such a state of nervous fear that he ran right into the horse that drew my fly, and was rolled over in the road. He has confessed to me why he took to flight, and has also told me things that make me feel very glad that I acted upon my impulse to return at once."

"Then it was you, Bolsover!"

"Yes, sir—I went for Mr. Hobbinson. I told these fellows all about it, and I've told Mr. Quelch. I—I don't feel fit to go over it all again. I—I—"

Bolsover needed, and would have fallen had not the master's arm saved him.

"You boys can go," said the Head. "I must deal with you later. The offence you have committed is no slight one. But there is some extenuation for you, if not for Bolsover."

And they went gladly.

They never saw Mr. Hobbinson again. Their few vanished out of their lives as completely as though he had never been.

Bolsover major was in the sanatorium for the next few days. Perhaps that fact helped to save him from expulsion. Bunter had a very narrow squeak of getting sacked, too; but he just saved his skin.

No one ever knew what the Head said to the tyrant of the Remove. But it was easy to guess some of it. Mr. Hobbinson, with a cheque in his pocket-book and a big bump on his forehead, took an early train to town next morning; and nothing annoys Mr. Capper more now than any mention of the man who came to Greyfriars through his recommendation. Such as Mr. Capper dislikes being bothered with the Remove, he would take that Form for a whole term again before he would risk recommending anyone else to act as locum-tenens for Mr. Quelch!

THE END.

* (Full particulars of next week's story will be found in the Editor's Chat on page 2.)

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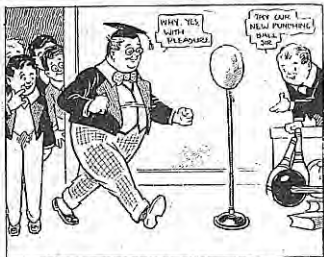
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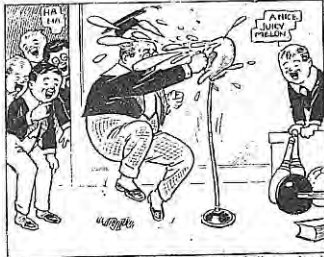
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1. As Form-master Bunter strolled into the gym the other morning, Willie Wagg invited him to have a smack at the new punching-ball. "With pleasure!" replied the great W. G. B. "When I was at Greyfriars I used to be able to knock out the Famous Five with five well-directed hits to square-leg. Oh, indeed I could!"



2. Then—biff! Billy gave that punching-ball one for its nob in fine style! And—whoosh! "We know you're fond of nice juicy fruit, sir," wuffed Willie, "so we substituted a big ripe melon for the ball!" "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the heartless little fags. "That joke went with a bang, if you like!"



3. "You young scamps!" bawled Bunter, as he gave chase. "I'll—!" But just then he spotted the table groaning beneath the weight of luscious grub. "I must investigate this!" he gurgled.



4. You see, all that delicious tuck belonged to the jocular jimmers, and Billy started on the task of putting himself outside it with great promptitude and zest. "What a lovely revenge!" he murmured.



5. Then all the naughty little nippers trooped in again and found their dinner gone. "Our Sunday toppers!" they groaned. "That wretched little spotted tripehound must have wolfed the lot!"



6. And Percy Pie brought his stick down on the dog with crashing effect! Then in rolled Bunter. "Tee-hee! Now you're in for it, my hearty young haricots!" he chortled. "That's the Head's prize plaster pop!"



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