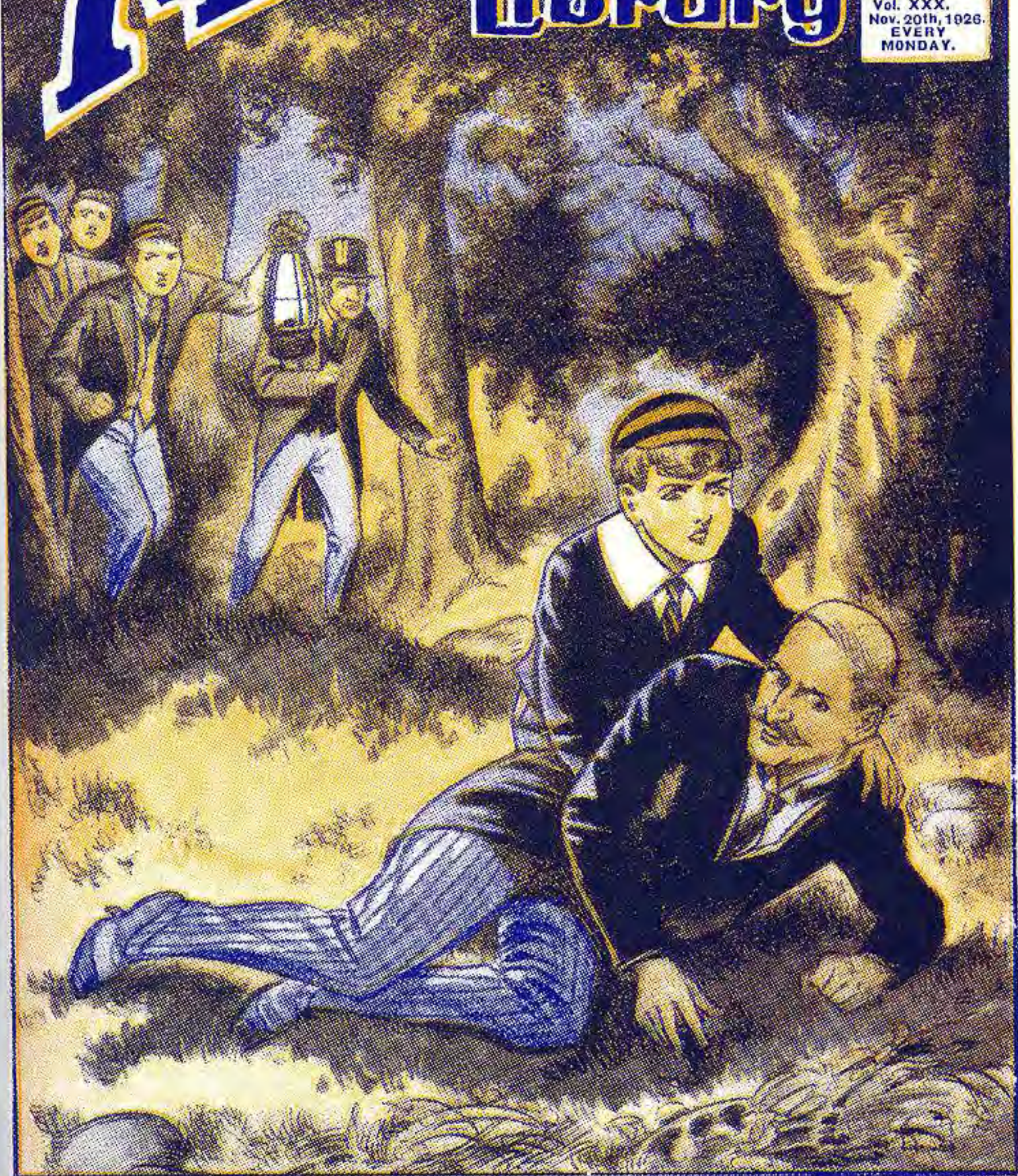


"BOB CHERRY WINS THROUGH!"

This Week's Grand School Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

The Magnet 2^d Library

No. 979.
Vol. XXX.
Nov. 20th, 1926.
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OPINIONS, PLEASE!

NOW that you have the first of the new Dicky Nugent thrillers in front of you I should be greatly obliged if you would give me your candid opinion of it. You will remember that the Football Supplement has been "rested" so that these Dicky Nugent stories of St. Sam's could be revived. Now, I want these yarns to be the best of their kind, and to attain this object candid opinions from my readers would be of great value to me. Just a postcard will do, chums.

"DID YOU KNOW THAT?"

Readers will observe that I have preserved a feature of the Football Supplement giving interesting tit-bits of news concerning the doings of our leading footballers. This is in accordance with the wishes of hundreds of my chums who stated that this feature was the "goods," and could I possibly manage to keep it in our pages? Well, as I have said, you will find it in this week's issue and subsequent ones. How's that, you footer fans?

A NEW SERIAL!

Here's another good piece of news. The present David Goodwin serial will be followed by a topping serial yarn of Wild West detective adventure. Ferrers Locke is the detective, and as he's an old friend of yours his return to our pages will be appreciated, I know. Of course young Jack Drake, his assistant, will be well to the fore. The setting of this coming story is unique, for Locke finds himself in a strange country, amongst strange people, where the chap who is quick on the "draw" gets there every time. And as you know, Locke is pretty handy with his gun. There are plenty of thrills and exciting situations in this yarn, and I feel convinced that you will receive it with enthusiasm. Look out for the first instalment in a fortnight's time, chums!

A CHRISTMAS SERIES!

A request comes from J. Hardwell, of Liverpool, for a Christmas series of Coker yarns. My Liverpool chum will, doubtless, feel elated with himself when I tell him that Mr. Frank Richards has already embarked on a Christmas series featuring the one and only Horace of the Fifth Form. Almost a case of great minds thinking alike!

Next Monday's Programme.

"HEROES OF THE AIR!"

By Frank Richards.

Readers will enjoy this ripping yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. billed for next week, take it from me. You can't imagine Bunter in an aeroplane, can you? Neither can you see our fat Removite taking a leap through space with a parachute tacked on to him. Yet these things happen in next week's story. Mind you read it!

"THE HEAD PLAYS HOCKEY!"

By Dicky Nugent.

This will be the second "shocker" by Dicky Nugent. It's full of sparkling humour. Don't miss it, if you're fond of a long laugh, boys!

"THE BOY WITH THE MILLION-POUND SECRET!"

As this will be the final instalment of our popular David Goodwin serial, it behoves all of you to make certain of reading it. The curtain is an extremely good one. And don't forget, you footer enthusiasts, that there will be a special corner of footer news under the heading of "Did You Know That?" Order your MAGNET early, chums. Chin, Chin.

YOUR EDITOR.

AFTER THE STORM! Just when things are looking their worst; just when Bob Cherry, the Outcast of the Remove, is preparing to say farewell to Greyfriars, the sun peeps through the clouds, and all is well!



By
FRANK RICHARDS.

A Powerful and Dramatic Long Complete Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, featuring the reunion of Harry Wharton & Co., better known as the Famous Five.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Not for Bunter!

"GIMME my letter!"
"Fathead!"
"Look, here, gimme my letter!" exclaimed Billy Bunter excitedly.

Some of the Remove fellows chuckled. It was morning break at Greyfriars, and the juniors had gathered round the letter-rack.

Billy Bunter, of course, was there. Billy Bunter was expecting a postal-order.

How long Billy Bunter had been expecting that postal-order, even the oldest inhabitant could not have said. But hope springs eternal in the human breast. Many disappointments had not shattered Bunter's hope of receiving that celebrated postal-order.

Bunter blinked eagerly over the rack, through his big spectacles. There was a letter out of his reach, which nobody had taken down. Bunter reached for it in vain.

Laterally, there was plenty of Bunter. Vertically, he was not extensive. He was, as Skinner had said, tall sideways. So the letter was as much beyond the reach of his fat fingers as the superscription was beyond the range of his spectacles.

He cast a wrathful and indignant blink at the other fellows. Nobody offered to hand down the letter.

"I say, you fellows, don't be beasts!" exclaimed Bunter. "Gimme my letter! Wharton, you rotter, gimme my letter!"

Harry Wharton laughed.
"Nugent, gimme my letter!" howled Bunter.

"You fat duffer," said Frank Nugent, "there isn't a letter for you!"

"Why, I can see it! Bull, old man, hand down that letter, will you?"

"It isn't yours, ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"The esteemed letter is for the excellent and ludicrous Bob Cherry," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Rubbish! Give it to me and let me see!"

"Bosh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away, leaving the letter in the rack, and Billy Bunter blinking at it.

Bunter continued to blink at the letter.

He was not at all sure that it wasn't for him; he considered that the beasts might be pulling his leg. The fact that the Owl of the Remove saw only a few inches beyond his fat, little nose sometimes made him the victim of little jokes. But whether the letter was for him or not, Bunter was interested in it. He always took a deep interest in any fellow's correspondence. He could not have counted the number of times he had been kicked for looking into other fellows' letters.

"I say, Bolsover——"

"Oh, shut it!" said Bolsover major.

"The letter isn't for you—it's for that outsider Cherry."

"Skinner, old chap——"

"It's in his father's fist," remarked Skinner, glancing at the letter. "Paternal congratulations, I expect, for the way Cherry distinguished himself in the exam for the Head's Latin prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a chortle from all the juniors.

Bob Cherry's lamentable failure in the late examination for the Head's prize was a standing jest in the Remove.

Nobody had expected Bob to capture the prize; but after the tremendous amount of "swotting" he had put in during the last few weeks before the exam, he had been expected to make some sort of a show.

The "show" he had made was absolutely rotten. It was not only that he was at the tail of the list. Of all the other competitors, the lowest was separated from Bob's score by a wide gap. His having entered for the exam at all looked absurd, in view of the ridiculously low number of marks he had scored.

"Fat lot of good his swotting!" said Bolsover major contemptuously. "He rowed with nearly every fellow in the Lower School over it, chucked games, let the Form down in football matches, made himself thoroughly unpleasant to

everybody—all for the sake of making himself look a silly ass!"

"You say his face when the result came out!" grinned Skinner.

"And Quelch's!" chuckled Snoop.

"The Head thought that Mr. Quelch oughtn't to have let such a dud be put in at all. I could see that."

"I say, you fellows——"

"I fancy he won't enjoy reading that letter from his pater," said Skinner.

"I hear that the old gent was ragging him for his bad report last term, and fairly bullied him into going in for this exam. I shouldn't wonder if that letter is jolly eloquent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, hand down that letter. If—if it's for Bob Cherry, I'll take it to him."

"You won't!" grunted Bolsover major. "Bob Cherry's sent to Coventry by the Form, and you won't do anything of the kind. If he wants his letter, he can come here and fetch it."

"Oh, really, Bolsover——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, you fellows, as Cherry came such an awful mucker over the exam, his pater may have sent him a tip, you know," said Bunter. "Some paters would."

"Not the jolly old major!" grinned Skinner.

"More likely a lecture," said Ogilvy.

"Well, some paters would weigh in with a tip," said Bunter. "The fellow's awfully down on his luck, you know. If the old codger thinks he did his best he might squeeze out a tip."

"Well, and suppose he did, it's no business of yours!" growled Bolsover major.

"Well, you see, my postal-order hasn't come——"

"Not really!" exclaimed Skinner, with an air of great astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that isn't my letter, there isn't one for me," said Bunter. "But if there's a tip in it——"

"Sit down!" said Bolsover.

"Yaroooh!"

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Bunter sat down suddenly under Bolsover major's heavy hand.

The juniors dispersed, and Bunter picked himself up again, and shook his fat fist after Bolsover major. Then he blinked up at the letter again.

He was convinced by this time that it was not his letter. But his interest in it remained undiminished. If there happened to be a remittance in it, a loan was at least within the bounds of possibility, and Bunter was in need of a loan, owing to his disappointment about his postal-order. Bob Cherry was an outcast in his own Form—even his oldest and best friends were estranged from him. If a fellow took the trouble to carry a letter to him, surely he could not refuse to be touched for a small loan—to be repaid out of a postal-order that was expected by every post!

It was worth trying, at all events, in Bunter's opinion. So as all the other fellows had gone, Bunter scouted for a chair, and mounted upon it, and helped himself to Bob Cherry's letter.

As soon as the envelope was under his fat little nose, he could read Bob's name on it, and recognise Major Cherry's handwriting. Bunter blinked at it, and slipped it into his pocket, and rolled away in search of Bob.

"Seen Cherry?" he called out, as he passed Vernon-Smith.

"No; and don't want to!" answered the Bounder.

Bunter rolled out into the quad.

Bob was not likely to be found with the other Remove fellows; he was an outcast in these unhappy days, and kept very much to himself. The bell was already ringing for third lesson, so Bunter had not much time to lose. Bob was not to be seen among the Removites in the quadrangle; and the fat junior rolled away to the Form-room passage at last. There he was certain of seeing Bob when he came to the Form-room.

As the bell ceased to ring, the Remove fellows came along to the Form-room, and passed Bunter, as he loitered at the door.

Bob Cherry was the last to arrive.

He came along after all the other fellows had gone in, with a clouded brow—his gloomy face in striking contrast to his sunny looks of old.

Bunter jerked at his sleeve.

"I say, Cherry—"

Bob shook off his fat hand and walked on, without even looking at him.

"Cherry!" bawled Bunter.

Bob went into the Form-room.

Bunter rolled in after him.

"Cherry, you silly ass! Where's that blinking idiot Cherry? Cherry, you ill-tempered, footling, foozling fathead!" roared Bunter.

"Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove jumped. He had not been aware that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was already in the Form-room.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Mr. Quelch looked at him severely.

"Bunter! How dare you bawl in the Form-room—"

"I—I wasn't—sir—"

"What?"

"I—I mean—"

"And how dare you use such expressions, Bunter?"

"I—I didn't, sir—"

"Take a hundred lines, Bunter, and go to your place at once."

"Oh, lor!" gasped Bunter.

"Silence!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally to his place. Bob's letter was in his pocket—but it was still doubtful whether there was a remittance in that letter; still more doubtful whether, if there was a

remittance, any of it would be passed on to Bunter. All that was certain was that Bunter had bagged a hundred lines. Bunter felt bitterly that it was really not worth while to be a kind-hearted and obliging fellow at all.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Opened by Accident!

HARRY WHARTON, the captain of the Remove, glanced at Bob Cherry, as the latter dropped into his place.

Bob did not meet his glance.

Neither did he seem to observe that Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent were looking at him; and he was blind to the amiable smile of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The Remove fellows were so accustomed, by this time, to the division in the Co. that they did not heed it. Bob's breaking away from the happy circle of the Famous Five had caused a sensation to begin with; but it had soon ceased to cause special attention. Since then Bob had become an outsider in his own Form; even rank outsiders like Skinner and Snoop affected to turn him down, even Billy Bunter turned up a fat and scornful nose at him. Bob did not seem to care. Perhaps his hopeless failure in the matter of the prize exam outweighed all other considerations in his mind.

It was unlike Bob, as fellows had once known him, to bear a grudge—he had always been good-natured and forgiving to a fault. It was strange enough that he seemed implacable now. All the Remove knew that his old friends had made advances towards a reconciliation; and that Bob had rejected them without ceremony. It was almost as if he found some kind of gloomy pleasure in his isolation.

During the weeks that he had been working for the Latin exam, Bob had excited the derision of most of the Lower Fourth as a "swot"—and on the other hand, had earned the commendations of his Form-master. Since the examination and his almost ridiculous failure, there had been a change. Skinner had sneered at him as a "model pupil," a "shining example," and a "master's favourite"; but Bob was none of these things now. He seemed to have lost heart, and he went through his school work dully and without interest. His "con" no longer drew eulogies from Mr. Quelch—it generally drew sharp and sarcastic remarks. He was no longer a model of punctuality; he was no longer an eager and attentive pupil. Mr. Quelch's improved opinion of him was rapidly fading away.

On the other hand, he showed no sign of becoming once more the happy, care-free schoolboy he had been. He never joined in a "rag," and he seemed to have given up games.

He kept to himself, and did not seem to want the society of the other fellows. His face was generally impassive; sometimes it was darkly clouded. As he sat in the Remove Form-room now, his rugged face was more overcast than usual. Harry Wharton wondered whether it was the effect of his father's letter. He was not aware that Bob had not yet seen that letter which was reposing in Billy Bunter's pocket.

Billy Bunter, who was some distance from Bob, was feeling uneasy on the subject of that letter.

He was landed with it now till morning classes were over; and Bunter had been kicked so often for meddling with other fellows' correspondence, that he

could not help feeling uncomfortable. Bob was not the easy-going, tolerant fellow of old; and if he discovered that Bunter was carrying his letter about, he was only too likely to cut up rusty. It was quite possible that he might not believe that the Owl of the Remove only intended to be obliging—knowing Bunter as he did.

Bunter thought of getting rid of the letter, by passing it along the desks to the owner; but that meant saying good-bye to a possible "whack" in a possible remittance. So Bunter gave up that idea. He looked out for a chance of speaking to Bob on the subject during class.

His chance came when Mr. Quelch was called out of the Form-room for a few minutes during third lesson, by a message from the Head.

"Wharton, I leave you in charge of the class," said Mr. Quelch, "I shall be absent a few minutes."

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

The Remove-master went out; and Billy Bunter at once rose from his place. Now was his opportunity.

"Sit down, Bunter," said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Sit down, ass! Quelch may be back any minute."

"I want to speak to Cherry."

"You don't!" interjected Bolsover major. "You know that Cherry's in Coventry, you fat bounder. Do you want another bump?"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Shut up!"

"You can speak from where you are, fathead, if you want to wag your silly chin," said Wharton.

But that did not suit Bunter. He did not want to proclaim to all the Remove that he had bagged Bob's letter from home, in the hope of "touching" Bob for a whack in the remittance it possibly contained.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter," said Harry. "keep your place. I shall get lined, if Quelch comes back and finds fellows out of their desks."

"Oh, rats!"

Bunter rolled out of his place—apparently regarding lines for the captain of the Form as a very trivial consideration indeed. He rolled along to Bob Cherry.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Cheese it!" snapped Bob.

"But I say—"

"Don't jaw."

"Look here—" whispered Bunter.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch stepped into the Form-room.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bunter.

"What are you doing out of your place, Bunter?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"You will be detained for half an hour after class," said Mr. Quelch. "Now go back to your desk at once. Wharton, I requested you to keep order here during my brief absence. You will take a hundred lines."

Bunter sat down again in his place, dismally. Wharton gave him a far from pleasant look as he went; but Bunter did not mind that at all. What he minded was the detention.

When third lesson ended, the Remove were dismissed, with the exception of William George Bunter.

That unhappy youth had the pleasure of remaining in the Form-room himself for half an hour.

Mr. Quelch thoughtfully set him a task in Latin verbs, so that he should not waste his time; a thoughtful action which Bunter could easily have dispensed with.



Bob Cherry closed in on Ponsonby and Gadsby and grasped them by their collars. Bang! There was a fiendish yell from the two Highcliffe juniors as their heads came into contact. "Ow! Yow! Let go, you Greyfriars cad!" shrieked Ponsonby. "Yaroooh! Leggo!" roared Gadsby. (See Chapter 6.)

Then he left the Form-room.
"Oh, dear!" mumbled Bunter.

Bob was gone with the rest; there was no chance now of handing him his letter. Bunter began to wish that he had left it in the rack. It was quite possible that Bob would go to the letter-rack to see whether there was anything for him. Really, there seemed to be nothing but trouble for a fellow who went out of his way to be good-natured and obliging.

Bunter did not bother much about the task Mr. Quelch had set him. He had never had a weakness for Latin verbs.

He sat and yawned at his desk, and finally drew Bob's letter out of his pocket, and blinked at it.

He felt the envelope carefully between his fat finger and thumb, trying to ascertain whether it contained a remittance by that means. Two or three currency notes would have made it rather bulky—but it was not bulky. If there was a "tip" in it, it was not more than a pound note—Bunter doubted dismally whether there was a remittance in it at all. Bunter was very curious to know what was in the letter. There had been some talk of Bob being taken away from Greyfriars if he failed to make a good show in the Head's examination, and an item of news like that would have been very interesting to Bunter. It was no concern of his; and so his interest in the matter was very deep.

Bunter did not exactly intend to open the letter and read it. But a little later the envelope was somehow open. These little incidents were liable to happen to any fellow's letter that fell into Bunter's hands.

The Owl of the Remove gave a discontented grunt.

"Nothing in it! Might have known that the crusty old codger wouldn't cough up a tip."

The letter was in Bunter's fat fingers, and there was no sign of a currency note.

"Rotten!" growled Bunter. "And that beast will make a fuss about his letter being opened—just like him to make out that a chap opened it on purpose—as if I want to see his silly letters from home."

But as the letter was open, and the "fuss" had to be faced in any case, Bunter decided to look at it, perhaps on the principle that one might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. And on such matters the fat junior was not troubled with any scruples.

The major's letter was brief, but it was very much to the point. Bunter grinned as he read it, though the intended recipient certainly would not have seen anything at which to grin.

"Dear Robert,—I was, as you must know, extremely disappointed by your failure in the prize examination. I did not expect you to head the list, but I expected you to attain an honourable place. You have failed so utterly that it is clear that you made no earnest attempt."

"I have been in communication with your Form master, and I learn that, on the day of the examination, you were suffering from the effects of a quarrel and fight with some boys belonging to Highcliffe School. No doubt this was partly the cause of your wretched failure. It is extraordinary that you could not avoid such a thing at such a time. Such utter thoughtlessness and disregard of my wishes is shocking to me."

"It seems to me that no useful purpose will be served by keeping you any longer at Greyfriars. Obviously you are wasting your time at the school. You must learn somehow that life is not all football and frolic and ragging. I shall come to see you at Greyfriars on Wednesday afternoon."

"Your father,
"R. CHERRY."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter, blinking at the letter. "That's straight from the shoulder! So Cherry's going." Bunter whistled.

"So the old codger's coming to-morrow afternoon!" murmured Bunter. "I shouldn't care to be in Cherry's shoes. I dare say the old blighter thinks he's wasting the school fees. They're poor." Bunter sniffed contemptuously. "I'm sorry he's going, in a way—though he's a beast! Lot of the fellows will be glad to hear it. I wonder—"

Bunter's cogitations were cut short by the step of Mr. Quelch in the passage.

He hurriedly thrust the letter into his pocket and bent over his task, and was apparently deep in Latin verbs when the Remove master looked in.

"You may go, Bunter!"

And Bunter went.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Bunter sighted Harry Wharton & Co. as he rolled out into the quadrangle, and he came up to the Co. at once. Bunter was full of news—and Bunter, who prided himself on being the fellow who knew things, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 979.

never could resist the temptation of imparting exclusive items of news. He was the only fellow who knew that Bob Cherry was leaving Greyfriars—even Bob himself did not yet know it for certain. It was simply impossible for Bunter to keep it to himself. In the present case, considering how he had become possessed of the information, it would have been judicious to say nothing. But Bunter never was judicious; and saying nothing would have been too heavy a strain on him. He was bound to say something.

"I say, you fellows! Cherry's going." Bunter had hoped and expected to cause surprise and interest. He more than succeeded.

The effect on the Co. was startling. "What's that?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Cherry's going!" repeated Johnny Bull.

"How do you know?" demanded Nugent.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Bob is leaving!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The four juniors gathered round Bunter, evidently interested, and eager for further information. For once the tattler of the Remove was making an impression.

Bunter grinned.

"Yes, he's going," he said. "His pater's coming down on Wednesday to take him away."

"Rotten!" said Frank Nugent.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton's brows knitted.

"Poor old Bob!" he said. "So it's come to that! I suppose that was in the letter."

Bunter started a little. The letter—so unfortunately and accidentally opened—was still in his pocket.

"Hold on, though," said Johnny Bull. "How does Bunter know? Bob Cherry wouldn't be likely to tell him."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Well, how do you know?" demanded Johnny. "If it's the fact, how do you know anything about it, Bunter? Did Cherry tell you?"

"Exactly," said Bunter. "He confided it to me, you know—"

"Confided it to you?"

"Just that, as a pal, you know?"

"If he confided it to you, what are you telling us for?"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull. "All the fellows know that old Major Cherry has talked about taking Bob away. That's all Bunter knows."

"Oh, is it?" hooted Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you I know all about it. The old major is ratty about Bob getting into a shindy with the Highcliffe chaps just before the exam. He thinks he went out looking for trouble, and all that, you know, same as Quelch does. He says he's wasting his time at school, and he's got to learn that life isn't all ragging. His very words."

The chums of the Remove stared at Bunter.

"That sounds like the real thing," said Harry. "But I can't understand Bob telling Bunter anything about it."

"Same here," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, he's got nobody to speak to now, you know," said Bunter. "I—I sympathised with him, you know, and he told me, and showed me the letter, too. It's genuine, I can tell you. He's going."

And Bunter rolled away to impart his news in other quarters. For once, he had something to tell that was of interest to all the Remove, and he was going to make the most of it.

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There was no doubt that the news was interesting to most of the Remove fellows.

"Poor beggar!" said Bolsover major, when he heard it. "I suppose he was up against that when he took to swotting for the Head's exam. It's rather hard cheese, come to think of it."

"Beastly hard," said Ogilvy.

"All the same, he let the Remove down over football matches," said Russell. "That's why we were down on him."

"Oh, he's a rank outsider!" said Skinner.

"Cheese it!" snapped Bolsover. "You can let the fellow alone now he's down on his luck, Skinner."

Skinner stared.

"Why, it was you who took the lead against him!" he exclaimed angrily. "You've punched chaps for speaking to him."

"Perhaps I have," admitted Bolsover major. "He let us all down—and he backed up the Fourth against us. Still, if I'd known that he was so much up against it as this—"

"We might have gone a bit easy with the chap," said Russell. "This is a bit of a knock-out for any man."

"I'm sorry he's going," said Squiff.

"Sooner he goes the better," said Skinner sulkily. "You've said a dozen times that he ought to be booted out, Bolsover."

"I've said a hundred times that you ought to be booted out, Skinner," said Bolsover major unpleasantly. "I still think so. After all, what have you got against Cherry? Shut up!"

Evidently it was occurring to Bolsover major, a little late, that he had been rather hasty in his judgment on the outcast of the Remove. It was like Bolsover to salve his conscience by turning on his followers and rending them, so to speak.

Harold Skinner walked away sulkily. Billy Bunter rolled on to spread the news farther, finding interested hearers everywhere. Even Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth condescended to listen.

"Not sorry to hear it," remarked Cecil Reginald Temple. "The fellow was altogether too cheeky."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

"He let us down over the football, same as he did his own Form," said Fry of the Fourth. "I suppose he was up against this, poor blighter. It's a bit hard."

"He was cheeky!" said Temple loftily.

"It's rather thick, though, if his pater is down on him for that rag with the Highcliffe cads," said Wilkinson. "I've heard that they had Hurree Singh tied up in a hedge, and were mopping mud over him, when Cherry weighed in and tackled four of them and knocked them all out. I dare say it settled him for the exam the next day—but what was a Greyfriars man to do, in the cires?"

"Well, he was cheeky," said Temple. "He cheeked me."

"Of course, if he cheeked you, this isn't enough for him—he ought to have something lingering, with boiling oil in it," said Fry.

And Cecil Reginald Temple frowned, while Dabney and Wilkinson grinned. Billy Bunter grinned, too; an unfortunate grin, for him; for Temple was not to be grinned at by a Remove fag. The captain of the Remove promptly kicked Bunter—who departed hastily with a howl.

Skinner joined the Owl of the Remove as the juniors were going to the House to dinner.

"You've got it right, Bunter!" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Official, you know," said Bunter importantly.

"Cherry told you?"

"Oh, yes! Showed me the letter; you know—awfully grateful for my sympathy."

"Can it," said Skinner politely. "Cherry wouldn't touch you with a barge pole."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Look here, how do you know?" demanded Skinner. "Cherry never said a word to you—I know that. Did you bag his letter out of the rack?"

"Nunno! Of—of course not!"

"That was it, of course," said Skinner. "You bagged his letter and opened it. Bit risky, wasn't it?"

"I—I didn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I took it to give it to him, and—and then Quelch detained me, and—and the letter came open by accident, and—and—I—I mean, I never touched the letter."

"Better tell all that to Bob Cherry," said Skinner. "Look out for his left when you're telling him."

Bunter looked alarmed.

In his keen delight at spreading an interesting item of news he had rather forgotten the consequences. Now he remembered them.

"I—I say, Skinner, don't you tell him, you know. I—I say, what would you advise me to do with the letter?"

Skinner chuckled.

"You'll have to give it to Cherry, fathead. It's his, isn't it? Why, he doesn't even know yet that his pater is coming down to-morrow."

"I—I say, do you think he will cut up rusty?" asked Bunter dismally.

"Sure to. He won't like his affairs being talked all over the Remove like this. He wouldn't have said a word himself."

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Not that the cad deserves anything better," said Skinner. "It serves him jolly well right."

"Of course it does, doesn't it?" said Bunter eagerly. "He banged your head on the wall in the Remove passage yesterday, old chap, and you were afraid to punch him, weren't you?"

"You silly owl!" growled Skinner.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"I think you've got yourself into a pretty bad scrape, Bunter," said Skinner. "I'm not going to advise you—I want to have nothing whatever to do with it. If I were in your place, I might chuck the letter into the fire and say nothing about it. Not that I'm going to advise you to do anything of the kind—I prefer not to get mixed up in it."

And Skinner walked on.

A few minutes later Skinner observed Bunter dropping a crumpled paper into the log fire in the hall. He grinned as he went into dinner.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Going!

BOB CHERRY dropped into his seat at the Remove table, and was conscious at once of a change in the atmosphere in the Remove.

He had become quite accustomed, by this time, to the strangely lonely life he was leading in his Form; the more the Remove were "down" on him, the more he retired into his shell, as it were, finding some sort of bitter solace in pride and resentment.

But there was a change now. Bolsover major, who had been in the lead in denouncing him and keeping up the feud against him, passed him the salt. Bob did not want the salt; it was simply a conciliatory overture on the part of the bully of the Remove. Bolsover was an unthinking and obtuse fellow, but now he did understand at last what had been at stake for Bob Cherry, he realised that the unfortunate junior had had hard measure. In his clumsy way he wanted to show that he was sorry the fellow was going.

Some of the other fellows who had sedulously ignored Bob's existence for a long time gave him friendly looks. He gave them no heed.

There was a change—but it had come too late. Bob was in momentary expectation of a letter from his father, announcing that he was to be taken away from Greyfriars. His view was, that in his time of trouble, his friends had let him down, and the rest of the Form had followed suit. There had been faults on his side, no doubt; but fellows might have borne a little with a chap who was so severely up against it. He could neither forget nor forgive; neither could he see any reason why the Removites should make any change now in their treatment of him.

Certainly he was not a fellow like Bunter, to be turned down or taken up at anyone's will and pleasure. That his father's letter had arrived, that its contents had become common knowledge in the Remove, he had not the faintest idea. His estrangement from his Form was so complete that he had not heard a syllable of the news that had excited the interest of the whole Form.

So, in reply to friendly glances, he gave grim looks, or took no notice at all.

He only wondered why fellows were taking the trouble to change their attitude towards him, but he did not wonder much about it—deeper and more troubling matters occupied his glum thoughts.

After dinner, he went out of the House by himself, as usual. But Harry Wharton & Co. followed him quickly.

Bob had scornfully rejected the advances made by his former friends; but they felt bound to break the ice now. The news that their old chum was leaving Greyfriars had given them a painful shock. They were in hopes that something might be done to avert the catastrophe; though what that "something" might be, they could not surmise.

"Hold on a minute, Bob," said Harry Wharton, as the outcast of the Remove made a movement to avoid the Co.

"I'm Bob to my friends," said the "outsider" coolly, "and I haven't any friends at Greyfriars."

Wharton coloured.

His own temper was neither patient nor conciliatory. But he was determined to be both patient and conciliatory now.

"We've heard about it," he said, "and we're sorry."

"About what, and for what?"

"About your leaving."

"Who says I'm leaving?"

"Eh? I thought—"

"The wish was father to the thought, what?" said Bob bitterly. "Well, very likely I'm leaving—that was what I was up against when I took to swotting, and you let me down. But it's not quite certain yet—it depends on my father. Sorry!" he added ironically.

"But we've heard—" began Nugent. "I'm not interested in what you may have heard."

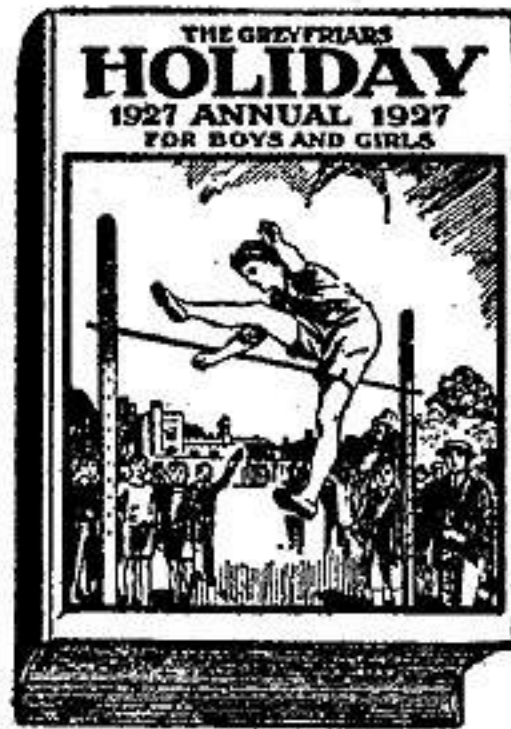
With that, Bob walked away.

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"Is it only Bunter's yarning, after all, then?" exclaimed Harry Wharton savagely.

"I thought it was, all the time," granted Johnny Bull.

"But Bob had a letter from his father this morning," said Nugent. "I know Major Cherry's fist. You all saw the letter in the rack."

"The esteemed major may have decided to temper the wind to the shorn lamb," suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Perhapsfully the excellent and ludicrous Cherry is to stay on, after all."

"That's it, I suppose," said Harry.

"That fat idiot Bunter knew the letter was from Bob's pater, and he jumped to conclusions, I suppose," said Nugent.

"That must be it. His yarns generally have about as much foundation as that!" growled the captain of the Remove. "Well, I'm glad there's nothing in it, though Cherry doesn't make himself very agreeable."

"He's been through it," said Frank.

"Well, that's not our fault, I suppose!" said Wharton rather tartly. "It's not our fault that he played the giddy ox last term, and got a bad report from Quelchy—or that his father was down on him and set him the Head's exam as a test. Not our fault that he made a rotten show in it, either."

"The faultfulness was somewhat mine," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I thinkfully opine that the esteemed Bob would have done better if he had not been knocked about by the rascally Ponsonby and his friends the day before the exam. He still had a dark eye, my esteemed chums. He lost the exam because he came to my rescuefulness."

"Well, he couldn't have done anything else," said Harry. "It was awfully unfortunate; but he couldn't have left a Greyfriars man to be ragged by those Highcliffe cads. Perhaps his father will see that when he explains."

"Perhaps!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"The perhapsfulness is terrific."

"You see, Major Cherry will think it was just a shindy with Highcliffe," said Nugent. "That's what Quelchy thinks. You can see that he's down on Bob for making such a rotten show in the exam. I—I wish he'd be a bit more friendly. I never expected to see old Bob grow bitter and sulky."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, sheer off, Bunter!"

"But, I say—"

"Kick him!" said Johnny Bull.

"He's pulled our leg. I knew he was pulling our leg all the while!"

"I say— Yarroooooh!"

Billy Bunter fled, and the four chums continued their walk in the quad, not in the dispute with their old comrade, had been borne in upon their minds that in the dispute with their old comrades, the blame was more upon their side than upon his, and it was a most discomforting thought. At a time when poor Bob had needed all the help and encouragement his friends could give him they had taken offence, and let him go. Certainly he had given offence. The fellow who had been in constant hot water for carelessness with his lessons, had taken to "swotting" suddenly, and he had swotted not wisely but too well, and everything else had been let slide.

Bob had acted injudiciously, there was no doubt about that, and he had shown an impatience and irritation that were not easy for fellows to bear patiently, especially as they had not realised at first the severe stress under which he laboured. And when the trouble had started there had been malicious fellows ready to make it worse. Bob had put himself in the wrong all along the line, and yet—yet it was borne in upon the minds of his old comrades that they should have backed him up instead of allowing themselves to be turned against him.

And, in spite of the bitter estrangement that had grown up, Bob had gone
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to Hurree Singh's aid the day before the exam; he had tackled four fellows to rescue the nabob from a ragging, forgetful of the fact that he was thereby throwing away his chances. That was just like the old Bob they had always known, and his action had been rather like heaping coals of fire on their heads.

But there was nothing to be done now. If he persisted in nursing his grievances, and rejecting all overtures of friendship, they could do nothing.

It was difficult to understand so implacable a mood in a fellow who had been known as the easiest-tempered fellow at Greyfriars. But there it was.

Bob Cherry, as he left the four and tramped away under the elms, gave them no further thought.

He was thinking about the letter he expected from home, little dreaming that it had been consumed to ashes in the fire that morning.

It was some time since the examination had taken place, and apparently Major Cherry was taking plenty of time to make up his mind. Bob hardly cared what the result might be; but he wanted to know, to be put out of his suspense.

"Hallo, Cherry!"

Bolsover major came up on the path under the elms, with a rather red face.

Bob stared at him.

"What do you want?" he snapped. "Can't you let a fellow alone?"

"I thought I'd say I'm sorry you're going."

"Yes; I fancy you must be sorry," said Bob sarcastically. "You've made it so pleasant for me here lately, haven't you? And what's given you the idea that I'm going?"

"Eh? Bunter said——"

"Bother Bunter, and bother you!"

"Oh, so you're not going, after all?" said Bolsover major. "Well, I can't say I'm glad you're staying. You're a sulky brute, that's what you are, and you can go and eat coke!"

Bob tramped on, and almost ran into Hazeldene of the Remove on the path. Hazel called to him.

"Sorry, Cherry! Hard cheese, old man!"

"You silly ass, what do you mean?" demanded Bob, exasperated. "Have you got hold of the yarn, too?"

Hazeldene stared.

"Aren't you leaving?" he ejaculated.

"I don't know, and it's no business of yours, anyhow."

"Oh, keep your temper," sneered Hazeldene. "Everybody seems to think you're leaving. The sooner the better, in my opinion."

"Keep your opinion till I ask you for it."

Bob tramped savagely away. He kept away from the Removites till it was time for afternoon class. Then, as he came up the Form-room passage, Peter Todd hailed him.

"Cherry, old man——"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Peter.

"Coke!"

Bob went into the Form-room, leaving Toddy staring and frowning.

Two or three other fellows who had intended to express sympathy, decided to keep it to themselves. Certainly, the outsider of the Remove did not seem in a mood to be grateful for sympathy.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Major Has to Wait!

BILLY BUNTER felt a twinge of uneasiness when, after classes that day, he saw Bob Cherry staring up at the letter-rack, and turning away from it with a gloomy and disappointed face.

Bunter thought of the letter that had long ago been reduced to ashes, and quaked inwardly.

He had taken Skinner's insidious advice, and regretted it. After reflecting upon the matter, Bunter had realised that it would have been wiser to have handed Bob his letter, even at the cost of capturing a kicking for having opened and read it. It dawned upon his fat brain that destroying a letter belonging to somebody else was a very serious matter.

But it was too late to consider that now, and the Owl of the Remove could only hope that the matter would be forgotten. He was prepared to roll out any number of untruths that might be required to conceal his own share in the transaction. But in the letter Major Cherry had stated that he was coming down to the school on the morrow to see his son.

Not having seen the letter, Bob was not aware of that circumstance, so his father's visit would no doubt take him by surprise. It was probable enough that something would come out, and that probability made Bunter extremely uneasy. Still, so far as he could see, there was nothing to be done; he did not even think of owning up to Bob what had happened.

That evening Bob was not seen in his study, No. 13 in the Remove.

His "swotting" days were over.

In taking to swotting, Bob had gone from one extreme to another. In giving it up he did the same thing, for now he was neglecting even his preparation, and he had grown both careless and inattentive in class. That evening his prep remained untouched. He had no heart to put into work of any sort—the suspense of waiting to hear from his father was getting too much on his nerves.

The next morning, as was only to be expected, he found trouble in the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch called on him to construe, and Bob's "con" was hardly worthy of Billy Bunter.

"You may leave off, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch acidly. "It is clear that you have not prepared this lesson. Is not that the case?"

"Yes, sir," said Bob.

"It is only a short time, Cherry, since you showed a desire to make up for lost time, and even asked me to give you extra tuition," said the Remove master. "I am sorry to see that this new spirit, on your part, has not lasted long."

Bob's face set sullenly.

"I am bound to warn you, Cherry, that this will not do," said Mr. Quelch severely. "You will take two hundred lines for neglecting your preparation. If it occurs again I shall cane you."

Bob made no reply.

Mr. Quelch's reprimand did not affect him very much. The probability was that he would not remain in Mr. Quelch's Form much longer.

That afternoon was a holiday at Greyfriars, and a football match was fixed between the Remove and the Shell.

It was some time since Bob Cherry had played for the Remove, and a good many things had happened since. But after dinner Harry Wharton looked for

Bob, to make one more attempt to bury the hatchet.

"Care for a game this afternoon?" he asked rather abruptly, discouraged by the expression on Bob's face.

"Thanks, no."

"We're playing the Shell——"

"Are you," said Bob indifferently.

"You haven't forgotten the Remove fixtures, have you?" asked Harry amicably.

"I've something else to think about."

"We'd be glad if you'd play."

"What, a rank outsider—a fellow sent to Coventry by the whole Form?" said Bob bitterly. "You'd get resignations from your team, I think, if you put me into it."

"I think not. I'd chance it, anyway."

"You needn't."

"Better play football than mope about," said Harry.

Bob flushed.

"A few weeks ago you told me that I should never play for the Form again as long as you were captain of the Remove."

"I know," said Wharton quietly, "and I think I was right then. I admit that I didn't fully understand what you were up against, but you had no right to turn down a match in which you were booked to play, and in which you were needed. I still think that."

Bob's lips opened for an angry reply, but he checked the hot words. He was silent for a moment or two.

"Perhaps you're right," he said wearily. "I don't care much either way. I dare say I've played the fool a good deal—I must have been a fool, anyhow, to swot for weeks, and chuck it all away at the last minute. I might as well have played footer as got myself crooked in a shindy with those Highcliffe rotters."

"Play now," said Harry.

Bob shook his head.

"Thanks, no. I'm going out this afternoon."

"Well, as you like," said Harry, and he left it at that. He was sorry, but at the same time a little relieved, perhaps, for certainly he would have found trouble in the Remove if he had played the fellow whom the Lower Fourth still "barred."

When the Remove footballers went down to Little Side to meet the Shell, Bob Cherry walked down to the gates. He was going to spend his half-holiday in a long, solitary ramble, as he generally did now. Billy Bunter rolled up to him as he was going out.

"I say, Cherry——"

"Hook it!" said Bob irritably.

"Not going out, are you?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"But suppose——"

"Suppose what, fathead?" snapped Bob.

"Well, suppose your pater came along?" suggested Bunter.

Bob stared at him.

"Why should I suppose anything of the kind, ass, when he's not written to say so?" he grunted.

"But——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Bob swung out of gates and tramped away, leaving the Owl of the Remove blinking after him through his big spectacles.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bunter.

Major Cherry was coming that afternoon to see his son—Bunter knew that, although Bob did not. When he came Bob would not be there—the old gentleman would have had his journey for nothing unless he waited till his son



Bob Cherry opened the door of the visitors' room and entered the apartment. Major Cherry swung round and faced him. "Father!" The major's brows were contracted, and his eyes glinted under them. His bronzed cheeks were flushed. "So you have come back at last!" Major Cherry rapped out the words like pistol-shots. (See Chapter 7.)

came in, probably late, just before lock-up. Bunter had not foreseen such a contingency, though really he might have done so, had he ever foreseen anything.

"Well, it isn't my fault," murmured Bunter. "I warned him to stay in—couldn't do more than that. Bother him, and bother his silly letter, and bother his pater!"

And with that, William George Bunter dismissed the matter from his fat mind, and turned his attention to a much more important subject—that of seeking some fellow from whom he could raise a slight loan that afternoon. Bunter's postal-order was still in an unarrived state.

Probably Bunter succeeded in extracting the required slight loan; for about an hour later he rolled out of the school shop in a shiny and sticky state in time to see a bronze-complexioned gentleman crossing from the gates.

"Old Cherry!" murmured Bunter, after one blink at the bronzed gentleman.

He was quite unwilling to meet "old Cherry," and would have retreated; but Major Cherry had sighted him, and he beckoned to the fat junior. Bunter rolled up reluctantly.

"You're Bunter, hey?" asked Major Cherry.

"Yes, sir," said the Owl of the Remove.

"I thought I remembered you."

"So kind of you, sir," murmured Bunter, inwardly quaking.

It was absolutely impossible for Major Cherry to know anything about

the fate of his letter to his son; but Bunter almost wriggled under the keen glance of his clear grey eyes.

"Where is my son?" asked the major.

"Gone out of gates, I—I think," stammered Bunter.

"What?"

Bunter jumped as the major rattled out that word like a pistol-shot.

"Gone out?" repeated Major Cherry.

"I—I think so."

"Oh! Do you know when he is coming back?"

"Nunno."

"After all, he did not know what time I should get here," said the major, as if ruminating. "No doubt he will be back soon. If you see him, Bunter, tell him I am here, please."

"Certainly, sir."

The major walked on towards the house, Bunter blinking after him. Skinner tapped him on the shoulder and grinned.

"That's Cherry's pater," he remarked.

"Yes; and—and Bob Cherry's gone out."

"Well, he always mooches off on a half-holiday by himself," said Skinner.

"Nothing surprising in that."

"I—I never thought—"

"Did you ever think?" smiled Skinner.

"Why, you—you beast!" ejaculated Bunter. "That's why you made me burn the letter—so that Cherry would be gone out when his pater came, to get him into another row."

Skinner rubbed his head remissly.

"Cherry shouldn't be so handy at banging a fellow's head on a wall," he remarked. "He can't expect a fellow to be pleased. One good turn deserves another, what?"

"I—I say, that old codger will wait for him; and Cherry mayn't be back till lock-up!" said Bunter in dismay.

"Quite so. The old merchant will be at a white heat by that time," assented Skinner. "Cherry will find him quite pleasant and agreeable—at least, I hope so. Quite a pleasant meeting when he comes in."

"Oh dear!" murmured Bunter.

"But about making you burn the letter—what do you mean?" asked Skinner agreeably. "I don't know anything about it. And if you've burned a letter belonging to another chap, I recommend you to keep it jolly dark. That means a flogging, old man, or the sack. The less you say about it the better, if you want a tip from me."

And Skinner strolled away, whistling cheerily, leaving William George Bunter in a state of great dismay.

Meanwhile, Major Cherry had an interview with the Head, and, after that, an interview with Mr. Quelch. After that, he repaired to Bob's study in the Remove passage, but did not find his son there. Mark Linley was there, working at Greek, and he rose politely as the major came in.

"Isn't my son here?" asked the major.

"No, sir; I haven't seen him since dinner," said Mark.

The major grunted.

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"Good gad! Hasn't he come in yet? If you see him, tell him I'm waiting in the visitors' room, will you?"

"Certainly, sir."

And the major tramped heavily downstairs again.

In the visitors' room he comforted himself with a cigar and a newspaper.

The cigar was finished, and the newspaper exhausted, and still Bob Cherry had not returned.

Twice the major stepped out to inquire for him; each time it transpired that he was not in the school.

Major Cherry began to pace the visitors' room deeply irritated, and his irritation growing every moment.

He had written to his son that he was coming to Greyfriars that afternoon. Certainly, he had not specified the time of his arrival. But Bob ought to have stayed within gates—at the very least, he ought to have returned before this, if he had gone out at all.

The footballers trooped in from Little Side; the Remove fellows went to tea in their studies or in Hall; the winter dusk began to fall. The major's eyes were gleaming by that time. His son was deliberately avoiding the meeting—that was the only explanation that could occur to his mind. And Skinner had been quite correct in predicting that Bob Cherry's pater would be in a white heat by the time the hapless Bob returned to find him at Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Takes a Hand!

"PON!" muttered Bob Cherry.

Bob's eyes glinted.

The sight of Ponsonby and Gadsby, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School, was more than enough to arouse his ire. More than anybody or anything else, it was Ponsonby who had caused him to fail so disastrously in the examination. But for that "shindy" with the Highcliffians, the day before the exam, Bob would not have gone in to his ordeal with a swollen, half-closed eye, and an aching head. And Bob—though both his Form master and his father failed to see it—had not been to blame. He had tried to avoid trouble with Ponsonby & Co. But he could not leave Hurree Singh in the hands of the Highcliffe raggers; he had rescued the nabob, at the cost of a terrific scrap with four fellows, and had thrown away his own chances of winning what he had worked so hard for. That was over and done with now, and could not be helped; but Bob's feelings towards the cad of Highcliffe were naturally not pleasant in the circumstances.

Now he came on the young rascal of Highcliffe again—engaged in mischief, as Pon generally was on a half-holiday. Bob had gone for a ramble, finding refreshment and solace for his many troubles in the keen air and the exercise. He was following a lonely path now, through Friardale Wood. Ahead of him was a plank bridge, across a little woodland stream, a "feeder" of the River Sark.

The channel was deep; the stream ran a good twelve feet or more below the level of the footpath, with chalky sides, rough and precipitous. Across the rift lay a plank, the only means by which it could be crossed. It was an old weather-worn plank, and a passenger needed to walk carefully to cross it in safety. A fall of twelve feet, into

shallow water that ran over a rough bed of chalk would have been a rather serious matter.

The footpath was a short cut between Greyfriars and the village of Friardale, and all the Greyfriars fellows knew it and the plank bridge well. Bob came along with his vigorous strides, thinking of anything but the Highcliffe fellows, when he caught sight of Ponsonby and Gadsby.

Bob's eyes glinted; but he stopped. He was strongly disposed to collar the two Highcliffe fellows, and thump their heads together, as a reward for the ill-turn they had served him a week or so before.

It would not have been a difficult task for him; the sturdy Greyfriars fellow had defeated Pon & Co. when there were four of them to tackle—and now there were only two.

But Bob decided not to hunt for trouble; and he was about to turn from the footpath into the wood, and take another route, when he observed how Pon and Gadsby were occupied.

They were on the near side of the chalk rift through which the stream flowed towards the Sark. The yapping of a frightened dog came to Bob's ears, and he stood still, staring at the Highcliffians. Pon and Gaddy, armed with sticks broken from a thicket, were driving a dog out on the plank bridge—a wretched little fat spaniel, which had apparently wandered into the wood and lost itself.

Ponsonby and Gadsby were no doubt short of funds, which was the reason why they were not spending their half-holiday in a billiards-room, or some other shady resort. Mischief of any ill-natured kind was welcome to Pon by way of entertainment. The fat little spaniel yapped and howled as the two young rascals poked at it to drive it across the narrow bridge, which it was obviously afraid to cross.

Bob Cherry stood looking at the precious pair, who had their backs to him, and did not see him approaching. He set his teeth; but still he hesitated, wondering bitterly whether his father and Mr. Quelch would consider him a quarrelsome fellow, always looking for trouble, if he went to the rescue of the wretched little dog. But a frightened howl from the animal, as it nearly pitched off the plank under a thrust of Ponsonby's stick, decided him. He broke into a run and came up rapidly.

Ponsonby and Gadsby turned round quickly at the sound of his rapid footsteps. They found their own peculiar kind of amusement in tormenting an animal, but they did not expect to find the matter amusing if the dog's owner came on the scene and caught them in the act. They were relieved to see that it was only a Greyfriars junior hurrying up.

"Only a Greyfriars cad!" said Pon.

"All serene."

"He's still got an eye!" grinned Gadsby.

Bob Cherry's black eye was now a rather startling colour, a mixture of blue and green—mending slowly. Certainly it did not add to his good looks. It was a relic of his scrap with the Highcliffians a week or more ago, and Pon and Gaddy were quite amused to see it.

"Let that dog alone, you rotters!" said Bob gruffly.

"Mind your own bizney!" suggested Ponsonby.

"Or do you want another eye to match that one?" grinned Gadsby.

Bob did not answer.

He closed in on the two Highcliffe juniors, with a grim face; and Pon and

Gaddy put up their hands in defence. But the two nuts of Highcliffe went reeling under Bob Cherry's vigorous attack, and in a few seconds both of them were in the grass.

Bob grasped them by their collars.

Bang!

There was a fiendish yell from the two as their heads came into contact.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Let go, you Greyfriars cad!" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Yaroo! Leggo!" roared Gadsby.

Bang!

"Whooooop!"

"Owp!"

Bob Cherry rolled the two of them away contemptuously into the grass. They sat up, rubbing their heads and glaring at him.

Bob looked at them grimly.

"Do you want any more?" he asked savagely. "I'll take the two of you together if you do!"

"Ow! Get away, you rotter!" groaned Gadsby.

Ponsonby did not answer; he rubbed his head and looked daggers. Bob turned scornfully away.

The little spaniel had taken advantage of the interruption to scuttle off the plank and scurry away into the wood. Bob waited till it was out of sight; and then, taking no further notice of the Highcliffians, he tramped across the plank and pursued his way by the footpath on the other side, disappearing into the wood in a few minutes.

Ponsonby picked himself up, still rubbing his head, his face crimson with rage.

"Let's go after him!" he muttered.

"After all, we're two to one, Gaddy."

"Oh, chuck it!" groaned Gaddy.

"My head's singing! The beast is too hefty for me!"

"Funk!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Oh, chuck it!" repeated Gadsby.

"You weren't in a hurry to tackle him when he was here. And if you go after him you'll take jolly good care not to catch him up. Don't give me any of that gas. Ow! My head!"

Ponsonby gritted his teeth.

As a matter of fact, he was not at all keen to "go after" that hefty Greyfriars junior. He wanted vengeance—and he wanted it badly—but he did not want to face Bob Cherry's punches.

Gadsby sat and moaned and rubbed his head. He was hurt, and he had had enough—more than enough!

"After all, there's other ways," said Ponsonby between his teeth, his eyes glittering. "I say, Gaddy, he's gone to Friardale."

"What the thump does it matter where he's gone?" groaned Gaddy. "We don't want to find him. If he's gone to Friardale I'm goin' somewhere else, I know that. And so are you, with all your swank."

"Don't be an ass!" said Ponsonby impatiently. "I mean he's gone to the village; this footpath is a short cut that leads nowhere else. The chances are he will come back the same way."

"Are you goin' to wait for him?" jeered Gadsby. "If you are, I'm not. I'm not a hog; I know when I've had enough."

"He will come back this way, for a cert!" went on Ponsonby. "Stop mumbling for a minute, Gaddy, and think. He's gone to the village for somethin'; and when a fellow takes a short cut it means that he's savin' time. Ten to one he will take the short cut back."

"Ow! Wow!"

"Anyhow, it's jolly likely!" said Ponsonby. "Don't you think so?"

"What does it matter, you chump?" snapped Gadsby. "I tell you I don't care a rap which way he goes. I think very likely he will come back this way; and I'm goin' to be gone before he does." And Gadsby detached himself from the grass, still rubbing his head and mumbling.

Ponsonby was on his knees at the end of the plank bridge.

"What the dooce are you at?" exclaimed Gadsby, starting, as he noticed his comrade's occupation.

"Loosenin' the plank this end."

"You silly ass! You'll make somebody take a header into the stream."

"That's what I want."

"You—you—you dangerous idiot!" exclaimed Gadsby, forgetting to groan for the moment in his alarm. "Stop it! Do you hear? Stop it!"

Ponsonby did not heed.

"Most likely he will come back this way," he said. "If he does he will come a cropper. That plank will slip down now as soon as a foot lands on it."

"Do you want to drown the chap, you potty ass?"

"Rot! The water isn't deep enough to drown a rabbit!"

"Then it's not deep enough to break a fall, and he might get a jolly serious damage on the chalk!"

"Might he?" smiled Ponsonby. "Well, if he did, old bean, who's to know that we had anythin' to do with it?"

Gadsby gasped.

"Pon, you'll go to chokey some day," he muttered. "Stop it, I tell you! It—it's dangerous!"

"Not for us!" smiled Pon.

"There's a limit!"

"Quite so—and the limit is knockin' my napper against your bullet-head, Gaddy! Come on; time we were off!"

"You can't go an' leave that plank unsafe, Pon. I tell you there's a limit. Somebody else might come along first and get the tumble."

"People have to take their chances in this wicked world," sighed Ponsonby. "I've given up philanthropy."

"Look here, Pon—"

"Come on, I tell you!"

"I'm not goin' to leave the plank like that," muttered Gadsby. "There might be a real accident—"

"You're comin' with me—and you're comin' now—and you're leavin' the plank like that!" said Ponsonby, in his most bullying tone. "I can't lick Bob Cherry, Gaddy, but I can lick you easy enough! Is that what you want?"

Gadsby made no reply; he tramped away with his comrade, with a sullen and dismayed face. Ponsonby smiled as he went. If Bob Cherry came back the way he had gone he was booked for a very unpleasant tumble, unless some chance passenger happened along that way before him. Pon did not mind taking that chance; all Pon's concern was concentrated upon one individual—Cecil Ponsonby of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe.

The two Highcliffians were soon at a safe distance. Pon would have liked to linger, to see Bob take his tumble; but he realised that it would not be prudent; and with Pon, discretion was always the better part of valour.

As a matter of fact, Pon's supposition that Bob would return to Greyfriars by the same path was quite a mistake. Bob had not, as he supposed, gone to the village on some special errand. He had merely taken the short cut, to pass Friardale and get to the cliffs. He came out in sight of the sea, and tramped

away in the direction of Hawkscliff; and when, after a long ramble, he turned for the tramp back to Greyfriars, he followed quite a different route.

Quite unaware of the treacherous trap Ponsonby had laid for him, and indeed forgetful by that time of the existence of the cad of Highcliffe, Bob Cherry arrived at Greyfriars by a path through the meadows, and reached the gates of the old school in the falling dusk, just in time for lock-up.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Vials of Wrath!

HARRY WHARTON was waiting at the school gates.

Bob glanced at him, and was passing in, when Wharton called out his name.

"Bob! Hold on."

Bob walked on without answering. But Wharton hurried to him, and joined him on the way to the House.

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"Your father's here," he said.

Bob Cherry started.

"My father! As late as this! What do you mean?"

"He's been here a long time," said Harry. "He came while we were playing football, though I did not know till after the match. He's been waiting in the visitors' room a jolly long time."

Bob's face was amazed.

"I can't understand it," he muttered.

"To come down without a word of notice—he must know a fellow might be out of gates on a half-holiday—"

He had forgotten, for the moment, that he was on bad terms with Wharton.

"I can't understand it. It's not like the dad."

"But surely he mentioned in his letter that he was coming," said the captain of the Remove.

"I haven't had a letter."

"I mean his letter yesterday."

"I never had a letter yesterday. I haven't heard from him for a week."

Wharton stared.

"But that letter—" he exclaimed. "Mean to say you've left your letter in the rack since yesterday morning."

"I don't know what you mean. I looked for a letter yesterday and to-day as well, but there was no letter for me."

"Great pip!"

Bob tramped on towards the House, his face dark and troubled. He had had no idea that his father was coming that afternoon—it had never crossed his mind even that the major might come to the school without notifying him. And certainly Major Cherry would not have done so; but Bunter's wretched trick with the letter had left Bob in the dark.

"But there was a letter, Bob," said Wharton, greatly perplexed. "You had a letter—"

"I tell you I hadn't," snapped Bob. "I suppose I ought to know. My father's in the visitors' room?"

"Yes, he's been waiting there a long time. But—hold on a minute, Bob—"

"I can't keep my father waiting," said Bob, gruffly, and he hurried away from the captain of the Remove.

Wharton stared after him blankly. Apparently Bob had not received the letter which the juniors had seen in the rack the previous day. That was incomprehensible to Wharton, for he knew that the letter had been taken down; it was no longer there. Heedless of the captain of the Remove, Bob Cherry hurried to the visitors' room, tired and dusty as he was from his long ramble.

There was a sound of pacing in the room. It ceased as Bob opened the door; and Major Cherry swung round and faced his son.

"Father!"

Seldom had Bob seen his father looking so angry. The major's brows were contracted, and his eyes glinted under them. His bronzed cheeks were flushed.

"So you have come back."

The major rapped out the words like pistol-shots.

"Yes, father," said Bob, dully. He saw that he was booked for more trouble, and it gave him a hopeless feeling.

What had he done this time? So far as he knew, he was not in fault in any way? Had he been expected to guess that his father would visit the school that afternoon?

"I have waited here for hours," said the major.

"I'm sorry, father. I—"

"You are sorry?" exclaimed the major. "Then why did you keep me waiting?"

"You didn't tell me—"

"I did not tell you what time I should arrive. You knew, I suppose, that I should arrive before this hour, if I came at all?"

"Yes, but—"

"Yet you have chosen to remain out of gates all the afternoon, and leave me here to cool my heels," fumed the major. "This is of a piece with your conduct for a long time past, Robert. Insolence!"

"Father," muttered Bob.

"Last term you Form-master's report was that you were idle, careless, inattentive, making no progress although you were quite capable of doing so if you chose."

"I know," said Bob, miserably. "I—"

"I determined to give you a chance before taking you away from the school. I entered your name for the Head's special Latin prize. I should not have complained if you failed to win the prize. That is nothing. I only asked you to attain an honourable place in the list—which you could easily have done."

"I tried hard—I—"

"And the result was so ridiculous, that your Form master was blamed by your Headmaster for allowing you to enter at all."

"It wasn't my fault," said Bob, bitterly. "I gave up everything to swot."

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for the examination—I've lost all my friends—I'm hated all through the Lower School. I couldn't do more. Only—only—"

"Only," rapped out the major, "whatever chance you may have had, you threw away by indulging in a hooligan row and fight the day before the examination, as Mr. Quelch tells me."

"I—I did not. I—"

"Your face is still marked—disgracefully marked," boomed the major, glaring at Bob's discoloured eye. "You need not tell me that you were not to blame for the quarrel with these Highcliffe boys—you could at least have avoided them. You should have done so, when you were going through an examination the next day. But I presume that the attraction of a rag and a scuffle was too strong for you to resist."

Bob was miserably silent. His father was intensely angry; and it was not of much use arguing with an angry man.

"Your conscience is not clear, Robert," said Major Cherry, sternly. "Your deliberate avoidance of me to-day is proof of that. No doubt you supposed that I should be gone before this."

"I—I—"

"Do not interrupt me. I have not time to waste," exclaimed the angry old gentleman. "I have barely time to catch the last train—had you been ten minutes later, you would have effected your object, and avoided this meeting. It would not have benefited you, sir."

"I never meant—"

"I was determined to see you before I went, if possible," resumed the major, waving the attempted interruption aside. "For that reason, I have waited hours—hours, sir. You have had the pleasure of keeping your father kicking his heels about the place for hours—laughed at, sir, laughed at for his pains. It is quite a joke among some of the boys of your Form, who have been peering in at the windows—a joke that you will enjoy, no doubt."

"Father! I—"

"Silence! I have little to say to you—and that little may be said very quickly. I am disappointed in you—I am surprised and shocked by your conduct, and I shall allow you to waste no more time at this school, Robert. You will leave at the end of the present term. You need say nothing—my mind is made up."

Bob said nothing.

It was useless to say anything.

Major Cherry grabbed up his hat and gloves.

"That is all," he said. "I have no more to say to an impertinent and disrespectful son. That is all. You are free now to join your friends and enjoy the joke among them—no doubt it is very amusing to keep your father waiting for hours till it pleased you to return. Very amusing, by Jove! Waiting like a dashed khitmutghar!" fumed the major. "Very entertaining indeed for you and your friends. Now I have barely time to walk to the station! I doubt whether I shall catch my train, even by the short cut. Pah!"

"Father! I—"

"Enough!"

Heedless of the beseeching look on poor Bob's face, the major tramped out of the room.

A minute more, and he was gone.

Bob ran to the door, and, in the falling dusk, he saw the sturdy figure of the major striding away to the gates.

Two or three other Remove fellows were looking after him and grinning. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 979.

The major's long wait in the visitors' room had, in point of fact, afforded entertainment for some of the juniors—especially Skinner and his friends. Skinner had passed the windows several times and peered in, and told his friends that the old scout was getting madder and madder. It was quite an entertainment to Skinner.

"He's gone!" grinned Snoop. "Did you get it hot, Cherry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry gave Skinner & Co. a fierce look.

But he was feeling too downhearted even to find solace in shaking Skinner, or tapping his head on the wall. He shoved his hands deep into his pockets and tramped back into the House—as miserable a fellow as had ever been found within the walls of Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

"BOB!"

"Oh, let me alone!" muttered Bob Cherry.

Wharton did not heed.

He was waiting for Bob to come up to the Remove passage, after seeing his father; and from the passage window he had seen the major striding away to the gates in the dusk.

Wharton had, perhaps, lacked patience and tolerance in dealing with his chum when first the unhappy dispute in the Co. had arisen. He was trying to make up for it now.

"I must speak to you, Bob," he said. "For goodness' sake keep your temper, man! I must tell you about the letter."

"What letter?" growled Bob.

"Your father's waxy with you—"

"No bizney of yours!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You make it pretty hard for a chap," he said, "but I'm bound to tell you. Your father's waxy with you for keeping him kicking his heels here all the afternoon. He can't know that you never had his letter. And you can't have had it, or you wouldn't have gone out and left him to wait. There's something in this that wants looking into."

"I don't know what you're talking about, and I wish you'd leave me alone," exclaimed Bob Cherry impatiently. "I tell you there wasn't any letter."

"There was," said Harry.

"Oh, rubbish!"

"I tell you there was a letter for you in the rack yesterday morning, and it was addressed in your father's hand," said Harry. "I saw it when I went for mine, and so did a dozen other fellows, for that matter. If you hadn't a letter from your father yesterday, something's happened to it—for it was there right enough."

Bob stopped dead.

"A letter for me—from my father?"

"Yes."

"You saw it—yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Then what's become of it? I went to look after third lesson, and there was no letter for me."

"It was before third lesson that I saw it there—in morning break," said Harry. "Some fellow may have taken it down intending to give it to you, and shoved it into his pocket and forgotten it. That's the only way I can account for it."

Bob's lips curled.

"Fellows are so keen on obliging me these days," he said bitterly.

"Well, it was there," said Harry. "I supposed as a matter of course that you'd had it."

"I never had it!" Bob gritted his teeth. "That's why the pater was so wild—he must have told me in that letter that he was coming to-day. And some cad has pinched the letter."

Wharton started. That was rather a new idea to him, but he shook his head.

"All the fellows are up against me," said Bob savagely. "Some cad has pinched the letter for a rotten trick on me."

"I can't think so," said Harry. "Even Skinner would draw the line at that, I should think. Besides—well, it beats me. I—I suppose you couldn't have had the letter and forgotten it—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Well, some fellows seem to know what was in the letter, if you don't!" said Wharton tartly. "It was all over the Remove yesterday that you were to leave Greyfriars—"

"I know that. Blessed if I know why!"

"And there was some talk about your father coming down to-day to take you away. Why, I remember Bunter said that you had shown him the letter—"

"Bunter!"

A light broke on Wharton. His own mention of Bunter's name cleared up the mystery, to his mind.

"It was Bunter who was spreading the yarn about that you were to leave Greyfriars," he said. "When I spoke to you about it, I set it down as one of Bunter's yarns. But—is it possible that that inquisitive idiot bagged the letter and—"

"Oh!" muttered Bob.

All was clear to him now.

The major's towering wrath had surprised him, but it was easily explained if Major Cherry had written to him that he was coming that afternoon. His father must have been under the impression that Bob knew he was coming, and had still gone out of gates for the afternoon, and left him intentionally to wait as long as he chose. Bob's face burned as he thought of it. No wonder the old gentleman was deeply angry, if that was his view of the matter.

"Where's Bunter?" muttered Bob, in a choking voice. "The fat villain—if he's got the letter—"

He ran on to Study No. 7.

Peter Todd and Tom Dutton and William George Bunter were at tea in that study when the door was hurled open with a crash and Bob Cherry's crimson face appeared in the doorway.

Bunter blinked round through his big spectacles.

"You fat cad—" gasped Bob.

The Owl of the Remove leaped out of his chair as if it had suddenly become red-hot, and dodged round the table.

"Keep him off!" he roared.

"Hands off, dear man!" said Peter Todd coolly, interposing as Bob was rushing after the fat junior. "No ragging in this study—excepting by little me when so disposed."

"Stand aside!"

"Rats!"

Peter Todd was a hefty fighting-man in his way, and he was quite prepared to tackle the outcast of the Remove, if Bob had come to Study No. 7 looking for trouble. But he had the surprise of his life the next moment. He was swept away as if he had been an infant instead of a hefty fighting-man, and he rolled into a corner of the study in quite a dizzy state. Then Bob's grasp

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Peter Todd, Tom Dutton and William George Bunter were at tea in the study when the door was hurled open with a crash, and Bob Cherry's crimson face appeared in the doorway. "You fat cad——" The Owl of the Remove leaped out of his chair. "Keep him off!" he roared. "Hands off, dear man," said Peter Todd, interposing. "No ragging in this study—except by little me when so disposed." (See Chapter 8.)

closed on Bunter, who howled with alarm.

"Give me my letter!" roared Bob.

"Yaroooh!"

"You fat rascal! My letter——"

Peter Todd leaped to his feet. Fortunately, Harry Wharton had followed Bob into the study, and he rushed between, as Peter was hurling himself on the invader.

"Hold on, Toddy!"

"Help!" yelled Bunter. "Back up, Toddy! Rescue!"

"I'll make a jelly of you, if you don't hand me that letter at once!" shouted Bob. "Now, then, before I bang your head on the table!"

"Yow! Rescue!"

Bang!

"Yoooooooooop!" bellowed Bunter.

"Give me the letter! I'll bang it harder next time!" shouted Bob.

"I can't!" howled Bunter. "I haven't got it. There wasn't a remittance in it! Do you think I'd steal your remittance, you rotter? Help!"

"You fat fool, I want the letter!"

"Yaroooh!"

"By gad, if you don't hand it over at once, Bunter, I'll burst you!" said Bob, between his teeth. "Can't you understand it's important, you fat idiot? Where is the letter?"

Bang!

"Yaroooh! I burned it!" shrieked Bunter. "Help! There was nothing in it—only silly burbling from the old codger. It—it came open by accident, and—and Skinner said you'd never believe it was an accident, so—so I chucked it in the fire. It wasn't any good. I keep on telling you there wasn't any remittance in it."

Evidently Bunter was convinced that that was the only possible importance.

"You burned my letter?" breathed Bob.

"It wasn't any good——"

"You read it first? Tell me what was in it?"

"I didn't! I wouldn't read a fellow's letter. I took it to oblige you, only that beast Quelchey detained me, and then it came open by accident, and Skinner said——"

"Tell me what was in the letter, you fat fool, before I bang your head again!" said Bob, in concentrated tones of rage. "Did my father say that he was coming to see me this afternoon?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"That's enough!"

Bob Cherry threw the Owl of the Remove aside, and Bunter rolled on the floor of the study with a dismal howl. Bob knew now what he had wanted to know.

He strode out of Study No. 7, eyed in a rather warlike way by Peter Todd as he went. But he gave Peter no heed. A dozen fellows had gathered round Study No. 7, drawn there by Bunter's frantic yells.

"Bullying—what?" said Skinner.

Bob gave him a look.

"So you advised Bunter to burn my letter, after stealing it from the rack?" he said, between his teeth.

Skinner started; but he was cool again at once.

"I don't know what you mean!" he answered. "Did Bunter take your letter? I know nothing about it."

"You knew Bunter had my letter—I've just had that from Bunter. He is only a silly fool; but you are a rotten rascal, Skinner!" said Bob savagely. "I've a jolly good mind——"

Harold Skinner backed away hastily behind the other fellows.

"I never knew——" he stammered.

"Look here, Cherry——" began Bolver major.

"Oh, shut up!"

Bob tramped on savagely. Ho

hurried down the Remove staircase, leaving the Remove passage in a buzz behind him.

Fellows were coming in from the quad in the thickening dusk. Bob Cherry hurried through them, and ran down to the gates, many of them staring after him in surprise. It was lock-up now; but Bob was evidently intending to go out.

Gosling had gone down to the gates, key in hand, and was closing up, when Bob arrived there.

"'Ere, Master Cherry!" exclaimed Gosling, in indignant astonishment, as Bob shoved by him.

Bob did not heed the old porter.

He knew the way his father had gone—he remembered the major's words. His only thought was to overtake him and explain, before Major Cherry arrived at the station.

The major had a good start, but Bob was quite sure of overtaking him before he reached Friardale, by running hard. To let his father go, believing that Bob had deliberately treated him with neglect and disrespect, was impossible. Matters were bad enough without that.

"'Ere, you come in!" shouted Gosling. "You 'ear me, Master Cherry! Wot I says is this 'ere, I'll report yer!"

Bob Cherry was gone.

Gosling stared after the running figure vanishing in the dusk.

"Well, my heyc!" he murmured.

And the Greyfriars porter proceeded to lock the gates, and duly to report Bob to his Form master.

Bob, heedless of Gosling, heedless of all consequences, was running hard by the footpath through the wood, thinking only of overtaking his father before the major was out of reach.

(Continued on page 17.)

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"UNDER FALSE CULLERS!"

(Continued from previous page.)

Head, who told Nuggett he could drop in to dinner whenever he liked.

But the new boot-boy was not destined to stay at St. Sam's much longer.

Jack Jolly & Co. were convinced that there was some mystery about Nuggett—that he had no business to be filling the shoes of a boots. And they resolved to keep their eyes open, to see if they could fathom the mystery.

On the third day after Nuggett's arrival at the school Jack Jolly happened to get hold of a newspaper, in which appeared a photograph of a boy who had run away from home. The boy's name was not given as Nuggett. It was the Honourable Percival Popinjay, the only son of Lord Throgmorton, a big magnet in the City.

But—and this was what rivetted Jack Jolly's attention—the photograph clearly showed a big carbunkle on the tip of the missing boy's nose. And his features bore a striking, startling resemblance to the features of Nuggett, the boot-boy!

Underneath the photograph appeared the following message:

"The Honourable Percival Popinjay disappeared from his father's country seat, Coxcomb Court, three days ago.

Should this paragraph catch his eye, he is informed that all is freely forgiven and urged to return immediately to his grief-stricken parents."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Jack Jolly. "I knew all along that this fellow Nuggett was sailing under false cullers. He's not a common menial at all, you fellows. He's the son of a pier!"

"My hat!" mermered Merry. "And he's run away from home?"

"Yes."

"But why?"

"We'd better ask him," said Jack Jolly.

And the three chums went in search of Nuggett. They found him in the servants' quarters, blacking the Head's brown boots.

When Jack Jolly showed him the newspaper photograph, Nuggett's face went red, white, and blue by turns. It was clear, from his confusion, that he was the young aristocrat who had run away from home and come to St. Sam's under a false name. And the next moment Nuggett admitted it.

"Why did you run away from the ancestral halls?" asked Jack Jolly.

"It was this way," eggsplained Nuggett—or, to give him his real sobriquet, the Honourable Percival Popinjay. "The other afternoon I went out in my pater's motor-boat without permission, and smashed it up on the rocks. I was afraid to go home and face the musick, so I changed my name and came here in the roll of boot-boy."

"But you'll go home now—now that

all is freely forgiven?" asked Bright.

Nuggett nodded. His face was very bright. Without stopping to finish blacking the Head's brown boots, or to start browning his black ones, he drew a time-table from his pocket and insulted it. Then he bade a hasty fare, well to Jack Jolly & Co., and shook the dust of St. Sam's from his feet.

On returning to Coxcomb Court, he was given a grate reception by his father.

"My dear, dear boy!" mermered the grate financial magnet, clasping the Honourable Percival to his breast. "I have been on tender hooks about you. I am rejoiced that my lost lamb has returned to the fold!"

"But—but you seem to forget, pater, that I smashed up your motor-boat!"

"The best day's work you ever did!" said Lord Throgmorton, with a sly wink. "I simply hated that boat. Every time I went out in it I suffered severely from mal-demar. But her ladyship—your mother—insisted on my taking daily trips with her. Now that you have busted up the beastly barge, I can live in peace. You have done me a grate serviss, my dear boy! But listen! I can smell the fried fish and chipped potatoes. Dinner is being served."

And his lordship, beaming all over his dial, led the way to the oke-pannelled dining-room.

THE END

(Look out for: "The Head Plays Hockey!" next week's special humorous story, chums.)



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(Continued from page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Father and Son!

"HELP!"

Bob Cherry stopped suddenly.

Where the chalky rift traversed the wood, with the shallow stream flowing at the bottom of it, the dusk was thick under the great trees. Bob had been running hard, but he slowed down as he neared the woodland stream—it was not a place for hurrying in the deep dusk. A false step might have sent him over the precipitous edge. He was peering for the plank bridge when the faint cry came up through the gloom.

At the same moment he perceived that the plank was gone.

"Help!"

In a dazed way he realised that it was his father's voice. The plank bridge had given way, and Major Cherry had fallen into the chalk rift.

"Good heavens!" breathed Bob.

Not a thought of such an accident had crossed his mind. Major Cherry, an old Greyfriars man himself, knew the ways about the school as well as any Removite. Probably he had taken that footpath a dozen times on various occasions when he had walked from the station to visit his son at Greyfriars, or walked back to take his train home. He knew the path and the plank bridge as well as Bob knew them. He was not likely to miss his footing and fall there; but it was not a case of that.

The plank itself was gone; evidently it had become somewhat shifted from its secure resting-place in the rugged chalk, and it must have fallen with the man who had started to cross it. A fall into the stream below meant little danger of drowning—the water was too shallow for that. But it meant a very unpleasant shock, and to a man of Major Cherry's age it might easily mean much more than that.

Bob, as he realised that his father was at the bottom of the rift, hidden from his eyes by the darkness there, felt his heart contract with anxiety and dread.

He dropped on his knees on the very verge, heedless of his own danger—and there was always danger of the rugged edges breaking away in the chalk-rifts. Bob was not likely to be thinking of himself at that moment. He peered down into the darkness, with straining eyes, and shouted:

"Father!"

The major's voice came faintly back.

"Gad! Is that you, Bob?"

It was not "Robert" now.

"Yes, father! Are you hurt?"

"A little."

"Oh, father!" panted Bob.

"The plank slipped under me, and dropped me here." Major Cherry's voice was faint, but clear. "I've hurt my ankle—a twist—I can't get up. I'm in a foot of water. Nothing serious, Bob. But thank goodness you're here, lad—I was thinking I was booked for a night of it."

"Father!" breathed Bob.

His heart throbbed.

But for his unexpected coming, there was little doubt that the major would have been booked for the night. Darkness was fast closing in, and the lonely footpath was seldom or never used after dark. And the spot was far out of sound or sight of any habitation. But for his son's coming, Major Cherry might have lain there helpless all through the winter night, and perhaps many hours of the following day.

"Thank Heaven I came!" panted Bob.

"Thank Heaven you did!" said the major rather grimly. For although the old soldier was disposed to make as light as possible of his accident, he knew very well what a night's exposure would have meant for him. At the very least, a long and serious illness—and perhaps something very much worse than that. Ponsonby, in his reckless malice, had not thought of the possible consequences of his action.

Bob strained his eyes to stare into the deep rift, but he could see nothing but a faint glimmer of the water below. The darkness, which was growing thicker in the wood, was almost as black as pitch at the bottom of the rift.

"Bob!"

"Yes, father!"

"You must go for help, my boy—ladders, ropes—"

"I can't leave you there, father. I'm coming down."

"Nothing of the kind, Bob. You can't climb down here in the dark—you will fall, too—"

Bob did not answer.

He was already clambering down.

He had moved a little along the rift to make sure that if he fell he would not fall upon the helpless man below.

With the activity almost of a cat Bob swung himself over the rugged verge and clambered down, finding foothold and hand-hold on the rough chalk somehow—anyhow. It was a descent he would have hesitated to undertake, in ordinary circumstances, in broad daylight; now he undertook it in dense darkness without a moment's hesitation.

Fortune favoured him.

For seven or eight feet he clambered down without losing his hold—and then he slipped and fell. But it was only a fall of six feet.

He splashed into shallow water, and his head struck against a projection of the chalk, and he gave a sharp exclamation. For a moment or two he was dazed, and he lay unable to move, with the icy water flowing and lapping round him.

"Bob!" shouted the major. He had heard the fall.

Bob scrambled dizzily up.

"It's all right, father!"

He put his hand to his head for a moment—there was a bruise formed there. But he hardly heeded it. He picked his way along the rift, knee-deep in flowing water, to the spot where the major lay.

He could dimly make out the fallen man now, in the deep gloom.

Major Cherry lay at the side of the chalk rift, his legs partly in the lapping water. Bob could see, even in the gloom, that the bronzed face was deathly pale. He knew instinctively that the major was more severely hurt than he had admitted.

"Father!" he breathed.

"Here I am." The major made an effort to move, and sank back again with a gasp of pain. "I've never been so glad to see you, my boy," he went on, in a tone of resolute cheerfulness. "I won't ask you how you came here because—"

"I followed you," said Bob. "There was something I had to explain—never mind now. I'm going to help you out of this."

He bent over his father.

"We're a mile from everywhere," he muttered. "You couldn't stay here—like this—till help came, if I went for it. I've got to get you out. We can't climb out here—but some distance down the stream there's a way to climb out and—"

"I know!" said the major faintly. "At least, I knew it forty years ago, Bob. But—my right leg's hurt—I fell on it. But I think I could stand on the other, if you could take my weight. But—can you?"

"I'm pretty strong," said Bob. "Let me try, at least."

The major, setting his teeth hard to keep back a cry of pain as he moved, made a great effort. With Bob's help, and holding on to the rough projections of the chalk, he stood on his sound leg and leaned heavily on his son's shoulder. Bob braced himself to bear the weight—it was not light. But he bore it. Bob was sturdy and strong, and fit all through, and he used every ounce of his strength now.

"Lean on me, dad," he said. "It's all right—I can stand it. I—I could carry you, I think."

"Gad! I believe you could," said the major. "But that isn't needed. Help me along, and I can manage."

They moved down the bed of the stream, Bob half-leading, half-carrying the major. The strain on him was hard and heavy, but he bore it manfully. Perhaps it came into the major's mind then, that what Bob had learned on the playing-fields of Greyfriars was at least as useful as what he might have learned in the Form-rooms. Certainly, in those moments of hard strain and struggle, physical fitness counted for much more than the most finished skill in Latin hexameters.

"Here we are," Bob muttered at last. "It's quite an easy slope up from here, father—if you can crawl, I can help you—"

"Right!"

It was twenty yards below the place where the bridge had spanned the rift. Here the chalk rift widened and the rugged side was sloping. Major Cherry crawled up the rough slope with his son's help, and slowly but surely won his way up. At last—it seemed a century to Bob, and doubtless to his father, also—they reached the upper level, and the major sank into the grass. In spite of his courage and his self-control a groan escaped him as he sank down there.

"Leave me here, Bob! Get help as quickly as you can," he said faintly. "I can wait here."

"I hate leaving you, father—"

"You could not help me all the way, Bob, and I don't think I could stand the strain, if you could. I shall be all right here till you get back with help. You'd better get to the school—it's the nearest place, and Dr. Locke will put me up for the night. Hurry, my boy."

"Yes, father."

It went sorely against the grain to leave his disabled father there, alone in the darkness. But there was nothing else to be done; and Bob left him, and set off for Greyfriars at a speed that he had never equalled on the cinder-path.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

At Last!

"CHERRY!"

Mr. Quelch was taking call-over in the Big Hall.

"Cherry!"

He repeated the name, frowning.

But there was no answer, and Cherry of the Remove was marked down as absent.

As the Greyfriars fellows went out after call-over, Mr. Quelch beckoned to Harry Wharton.

"Cherry does not appear to have returned," he said. "He went out at lock-up, Gosling informs me; Gosling called to him, and he did not heed. Have you any knowledge of where the boy has gone, Wharton?"

"I—I think he went after his father, sir," said the captain of the Remove.

"I am aware that Major Cherry spent a considerable time this afternoon waiting for his son to come in," said Mr. Quelch. "Cherry's conduct is really shocking."

"He did not know his father was here, sir," said the captain of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"Major Cherry informed me that he had written to his son, Wharton, informing him that he would be at the school to-day."

"The—the letter was lost, sir."

"Impossible! I myself handed it out to be placed in the rack," said the Remove master.

"Cherry never had it, sir."

"That is very extraordinary, if correct, Wharton," said the Remove master, with a sharp glance at the captain of the Remove. "At all events, it does not excuse Cherry for breaking bounds in this manner immediately before roll-call. You will see that he comes to my study immediately he returns, Wharton."

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wharton followed the other fellows from Hall.

As head boy of the Remove, duties were sometimes assigned to him that were not wholly pleasant. Certainly he did not like the task of waiting for Bob to come in and sending him to the Form master's study to be caned. However, there was no choice in the matter, so Harry went out into the quad, and walked down to the gates.

The gates were locked, and Gosling was in his lodge. Harry Wharton paced to and fro, waiting for Bob's arrival. Suddenly there was a sound of running feet on the road, and a breathless figure arrived at the locked gates.

"Is that you, Bob?"

Clang! Bob was clanging loudly at the bell.

"Yes. Call Gosling—quick! I'm in a hurry!" panted Bob.

"Gosling!" shouted Harry.

But the ancient porter of Greyfriars was in no hurry to stir himself. Gosling had reached a time of life when slow and leisurely motions were more agreeable to his constitution.

"Gosling," roared Bob, "buck up!" He clanged the bell again, and shook the bars of the gate.

The porter's door opened, and Gosling emerged, still leisurely.

"Buck up!" yelled Bob savagely.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," grumbled Gosling. "You wait till a man gets that gate hopen. Don't you think you can hurry a man!"

"You old fool, hurry!"

"Bob!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Take the keys from the old idiot and open the gate!" panted Bob. "My

father's had an accident. He's lying injured, waiting for help—"

"Good heavens! Gosling—"

Gosling unlocked the gates at last. Bob Cherry shoved the gate open fiercely, very nearly knocking down the old porter in his haste. Then he rushed in.

"Look 'ere," gasped Gosling, in great wrath—"look 'ere, Master Cherry, wot I says is this 'ere—"

But Bob did not wait to hear what Gosling had to say. He was running for the House as if his life depended on it. Harry Wharton followed him fast.

Bob burst into the House, crimson with exertion, streaming with perspiration, panting for breath. His clothes were soaked with water and smothered with chalk and mud. A score of fellows stared at the startling figure in amazement as it flew into the House.

Mr. Quelch came quickly out of his study.

"Cherry! You—"

"My father, sir!" panted Bob, interrupting the Remove master without ceremony. "An accident, sir—"

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Quelch icily. "Am I to understand that Major Cherry has met with an accident?"

"He is lying in the wood now, sir, unable to move!" gasped Bob. "His leg's hurt. He fell into the stream where the plank bridge was—"

"Bless my soul!"

"He will have to be carried, sir," panted Bob. "Nothing on wheels can get to the place—"

"I know the place," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "I will make arrangements at once. Wingate—Gwynne—Loder—Walker—"

The Remove master was a scholar, but he was a man of action also. Not a second was lost. Five minutes after Bob had reached Greyfriars half a dozen of the Sixth were heading for the spot where the major lay, taking with them a stretcher from the school hospital, and accompanied by Mr. Quelch, guided by Bob Cherry.

Once out of the school, Bob Cherry shot ahead of the party. He was breathing in great gasps, and the bruise on his head was throbbing; but he seemed unconscious of fatigue. He ran hard by the dusky woodland path, stumbling and falling once or twice, but picking himself up and dashing on again.

"Father!"

"Here, Bob!" said the major's quiet voice.

"Help's coming, dad."

"Good! You have been quick!"

"I—I wasn't likely to lose time, dad!" muttered Bob, sinking into the grass beside his father and supporting him, as he panted and panted for breath.

He stared back along the dusky footpath. A gleaming lantern showed where the rescue-party were coming.

"They won't be a few minutes, dad. I ran on ahead."

"My dear boy," said the major.

Bob was silent for a minute or two, almost choked by exhaustion. But he found his voice again.

"Dad, you don't know why I came after you?"

"No; but thank goodness you did, Bob!"

"It—it was because—because I found out—Dad, I never had your letter. I only found out after you left that there had been a letter. I never knew you were coming to-day. Dad, you can't think I'd have gone out if I'd known you were coming. I never had your

letter—I never knew that there had been a letter! You believe me, dad?"

"Of course, I believe you, my boy! But how—"

"A fool—a silly fool—played a silly trick with the letter," said Bob. "I should never have known that there had been a letter at all, only Wharton told me he'd seen it in the rack, and then I inquired."

"My dear boy, I misjudged you," said his father gently. "But, of course, how was I to guess that you had not had my letter?"

"Of course you couldn't, dad; but I couldn't guess that you were coming, could I, when I hadn't heard from you?"

"You could not, of course, my boy. I am afraid I misjudged you in that—perhaps in other things, too, my dear lad," said Major Cherry. "We will speak of this again, Bob. Here are our friends."

Mr. Quelch and the Sixth-Formers arrived. As the major was carried back to the school by the stalwart seniors Bob Cherry trailed on behind—conscious of fatigue now, and so weary that he could hardly place one foot before another. He was almost tottering before the school was reached, and once he almost fell, his head swimming from sheer exhaustion. He was surprised to find a friendly grasp on his arm, which remained there to help him along to the school gates. He looked up at the face of Mr. Quelch—kindly and concerned.

"Let me help you, my boy," said the Remove master.

"Thank you, sir!" muttered Bob.

But for the Remove master's helping hand, Bob could hardly have reached the school at all. He did not know that all who saw him could see, from the state of his clothes, that he had gone down into the chalk-rift for his father. He hardly knew how he reached the school; his head was swimming as he came into the lighted House.

There, four juniors of the Remove gathered round him—Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. Not a word was spoken. Bob gave them a dizzy look, and submitted quietly as they bore him away to the dormitory. Words were not needed. All the members of the Famous Five knew, without a word, in that moment, that the long trouble had ended—that the reconciliation, unlooked-for, unexpected, had come at last, and the knowledge of it brought peace and solace to the lonely junior who had so long been the "outsider" of the Remove.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Re-United!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bunter grunted.

Four Remove fellows grinned in sheer delight at hearing Bob Cherry's cheery voice in its old cheery tones, in his old cheery greeting.

It was morning at Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry was walking in the quadrangle, after breakfast, with the members of the Co.—so long estranged, so happily reunited.

It was a little strange to the Famous Five to find themselves together again on the old chummy terms; a little strange, but very pleasant and agreeable. All of them were, perhaps, a little uneasy and self-conscious, afraid of saying a word that might have the effect of reviving the old trouble. There had been faults on both sides—now, at last, there was tolerance on both sides—and both sides made it quite plain that the

reconciliation gave satisfaction all round. And that, after all, was the chief point.

Perhaps other Remove fellows were not so satisfied. True, there had already been a change of feeling towards Bob, owing to the news that he was to be taken away from Greyfriars, owing to his failure in the Head's exam. The Remove fellows had understood, at long last, what poor Bob had been up against, and most of them had realised that there was, at least, excuse for his many shortcomings during that trying period.

Fellows who had always liked him, fellows like Peter Todd, and Squiff, and Tom Brown, and Mark Linley, and Penfold, and others, were only too ready to follow the example of Harry Wharton & Co., and let bygones be bygones. Even Bolsover major and his friends did not want to keep up the feud. Skinner & Co. sneered, Skinner remarking sarcastically that now Wharton had changed his mind, his Magnificence seemed to expect all the Remove to change their minds also, a case, according to Skinner, of "when father says turn, we all turn." But Skinner's sneering observations fell on unheeding ears.

"You can shut up, Skinner!" Peter Todd told him. "There's been trouble enough, and you've made a lot of it. Now cheese it!"

"You were down on him as much as anybody," jeered Skinner.

"And I'm down on you as much as ever," said Todd. "I never see your nose without wanting to punch it, Skinner. Mind I don't yield to the temptation."

"Do you think we're all going to take that outsider up again, because you're going to?" demanded Skinner angrily.

"You're not wanted to," grinned Toddy. "Cherry never was able to stand you, and I don't suppose he can stand you now any more than he ever could."

"You cheeky cad!" roared Skinner.

He sat down the next moment, as Peter yielded to the temptation of punching his nose.

It was a warning to Skinner that the day of mischief-making was over.

He was not satisfied, but fortunately it did not matter whether Skinner was satisfied or not. Neither was Billy Bunter satisfied, which did not matter any more than in the case of Skinner, though Bunter was as yet in ignorance upon that point. Seeing the Famous Five walking together in the quad that morning, William George Bunter rolled up to them to express his opinion—his valuable opinion. Bunter was indignant, and he was still more indignant when he was greeted with Bob's cheery "Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

He raised a fat paw and shook a podgy forefinger at Bob Cherry in severe admonition.

"Did you speak to me, Cherry?" he demanded.

"Yes, old fat man. Waste of breath, but I did," admitted Bob.

"Well, don't! You're in Coventry!"

"You silly fathead!" exclaimed Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Johnny Bull.

"Sha'n't!" said Bunter. "I'm jolly well going to tell you what I think. Cherry came into my study yesterday and ragged me, making out that I'd pinched his letter. I scorn to argue with a fellow who's sent to Coventry by the whole Form. I warn you fellows that if you speak to him you'll be sent to Coventry, too."

"Is that all?" asked Wharton.

"Mind, I mean it," said Bunter. "I bar that fellow, and if you speak to him, I bar you!"

"You silly Owl—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Wait a minute," said Bob with his old cheery grin, "let's have this clear. If these chaps speak to me, Bunter, you won't ever speak to them—is that the state of the case?"

"That's it!" said Bunter firmly.

"You mean it?"

"I mean it, every word."

"Then the best thing you chaps can do," said Bob, "is to speak to me quick, and speak to me often, and speak all at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Done!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Mind, we hold you to that, Bunter; you're not going to speak to us any more."

"The no-morefulness will be a boonful blessing," chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The obligefulness is terrific, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter."

"Look here, you fellows—"

"Chuck it!" grinned Nugent. "You're not speaking to us, you know. You've turned us down."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You bar us, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Anyhow, we bar

you, which comes to the same thing. Travel!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The kickfulness is the proper caper," said Hurree Singh. "This fat person who does not know us persists in speaking morefully. Another word, and the kickfulness will be terrific."

"Oh, really, Inky— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

William George Bunter, more indignant than ever, fled before a lunging boot.

It was borne in upon his fat mind that his opinion, important as it undoubtedly was, was regarded by the Famous Five as a trifle light as air.

Harry Wharton & Co. continued their stroll with smiling faces.

Bob Cherry's face became grave, however.

He was silent for some minutes, and then he spoke abruptly.

"I'm jolly glad to be friends again, you fellows," he said, with the colour deepening in his cheeks.

"Same here," said Johnny Bull.

"The samefulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous chum," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I was a lot to blame, I can see that now," went on Bob with a red face.

"I never used to be touchy, and irritable, and—and exacting—you fellows



Realising that his father was at the bottom of the rift, Bob Cherry peered down into the darkness, with straining eyes, and shouted. "Father!" The major's voice came faintly back. "Gad! Is that you, Bob?" It was not "Robert" now! "Yes, father! Are you hurt?" "A little." "Oh, father!" panted Bob. (See Chapter 9.)

know that. I—I suppose it was the swotting, and one thing and another. I—I'm afraid I acted rather badly in some ways."

"I'm afraid we did," said Harry Wharton. "The fact is, there was a lot of misunderstanding, and a lot of mischief. Thank goodness it's all over, and let's agree to whack out the blame all round."

"Jolly good idea," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Well, I think the fault was mainly mine," he said. "I promised my father to work hard, and I let everything else go; it was right in a way, but—I couldn't expect fellows to understand such a sudden change. And—and I got my back up with precious little cause sometimes. I can see that now. I let myself be influenced by Skinner's rotten tricks. It was fatheaded enough. I'm sorry!"

"My dear chap, let's bury it all," said Harry. "We were wrong in the first place, anyhow."

"Yes, but you owned up to it, and I wouldn't listen," said Bob remorsefully. "I—I think the swotting got on my nerves a bit, you know; and it all went for nothing, as it turned out," he added with a sigh.

"Because you chipped in to help old Inky when the Highcliffe cads were ragging him," said Harry. "That's why you made a muck of the exam, and if your father knew—"

"I daresay I should have made a muck of it, anyhow. But if I'm going to leave, I'm jolly glad that we shall part friends," said Bob. "That's jolly good, at any rate."

"You jolly well sha'n't leave!" said Harry warmly. "I'm sorry, of course, that your father had that accident yesterday, but at least it's keeping him here for a few days; and before he goes we'll all jolly well talk to him and bring him round somehow."

Bob shook his head, with a smile.

"I shall be sorry to go," he said. "But I'm afraid that's fixed. The pater isn't waxy with me now; but, you see, he set me the Head's prize exam as a test, and I failed rottenly. It can't be helped. Anyhow, we'll meet in the hols."

The breakfast bell rang, and the chums of the Remove walked back to

the House. A good many of the Remove fellows grinned and nodded to Bob as he came in with his old friends. Skinner scowled, and Snoop sneered, and Billy Bunter frowned portentously—but Bob did not even observe that. He had little hope that he would remain at Greyfriars; but, at least, he was on his old terms with his old friends; that was enough to make his heart light.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Enlightening the Major!

MAJOR CHERRY looked round from the window as a tap came at his door.

"Come in!" he said.

The major was staying at Greyfriars School for a few days, as a guest of Dr. Locke. He had little choice in the matter, as he was unable to travel at present. The injury to his leg was not serious; but it confined him to his room, and he was receiving regular visits from the school doctor. He was sitting at his window, with his damaged leg resting on a stool, looking out into the quad, with a thoughtful brow, when the tap came at his door.

It was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face that appeared as the door opened.

"Come in, my boy!" said the major kindly.

The Nabob of Bhanipur stepped into the room.

"If the disturbfulness is inconvenient, the excuse is terrific," he said apologetically.

The major smiled.

"Not at all. What is it?"

"The desirousness of my honourable self is to speak heart-to-heartfully with the esteemed sahib," explained the dusky junior.

"Sit down, my boy."

The major was evidently in a good temper that morning, in spite of the damage to his leg. Perhaps Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's extraordinary variety of the English language had an enlivening effect upon him.

The nabob sat down. His dusky face was very earnest.

"The regretfulness for the sahib's lamentable and ridiculous accident is great," he said. "But the satisfaction of the opportunity of talking heart-to-heartfully is also immense. The explainfulness is the proper caper."

"You have something to explain to me?" asked Major Cherry, making a mental effort to disentangle the nabob's English.

"Exactly."

"Well, I am listening," said Bob's father.

"It concerns the excellent and ludicrous Bob," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Also, the important and ridiculous examination for the Head's esteemed prize. The esteemed sahib is not perhapsfully aware that Bob swotted for the exam so longfully and hardfully that it is wonderful that it did not turn his excellent hair grey."

"I should not have supposed so, by the result," said Major Cherry dryly.

"The esteemed sahib does not know all the circumstances. That is why I am here to explain," said Hurree Singh. "On the day before the exam the excellent Bob was mixed up in an esteemed shindy with some young rascally ruffians belonging to Highcliffe School—"

"I am aware of that," said the major, with a touch of impatience. "Mr. Quelch has told me so."

"The esteemed Bob was punchfully

knocked out, and was quite unfit for honourable exam next day."

"Probably," said the major. "You need say no more, Hurree Singh. It was my son's business to keep himself fit for the examination, when there was so much at stake."

"Quitefully so," assented the nabob. "But—"

Major Cherry glanced towards the door.

The Nabob of Bhanipur did not take the hint, however. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had thought the matter out, and he had come there to explain to the major; and he was going to explain. The accident which had detained Bob's father at Greyfriars gave him an unexpected and welcome opportunity.

"There were four of the esteemed and rascally Highcliffe rotters," went on the nabob. "They collared me forcefully—"

"You! Were you mixed up in the shindy?" grunted the major.

"Quitefully so. I—"

"Then you should have known better. You need tell me no more, Hurree Singh. I am well acquainted with what occurred, and I have formed my own opinion."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled a dusky smile. Evidently the major expected him to depart. But the nabob had no intention of departing yet.

"The esteemed sahib will soon see that Bob was a victim of circumstances, and could not help himself," said Hurree Singh. "I was seized forcefully by the Highcliffe rotters, and as they were four to one, they downed me and tied me in the hedge. Then the esteemed rascals filled my hat with excellent and disgusting mud, and smothered me. It was in shocking and revolting condition. It was then that the ludicrous Bob came walking along, and discerned me in such unenviable and admirable plight."

"Oh!" grunted the major.

"Although at that time I was on the distant and unspeakable terms with Bob, he rushed in to the honourable rescue, and tackled the four of them," said the nabob. "I can assure the sahib, that had Bob left me helpless to be ragged and muddled by the wretched Highcliffians, he would have been regarded as rotter and funk by all Greyfriars. I myself should have looked on him with terrific scorn, had he left me lurchfully."

Grant from the major; but his grim, bronzed face was relaxing a little, and he looked very curiously at the nabob's earnest countenance.

"There was a terrific scrapfulness," went on the nabob. "Four to one is longful odds, and Bob had his excellent hands full. But he beat the four of them at last, and they ran for it."

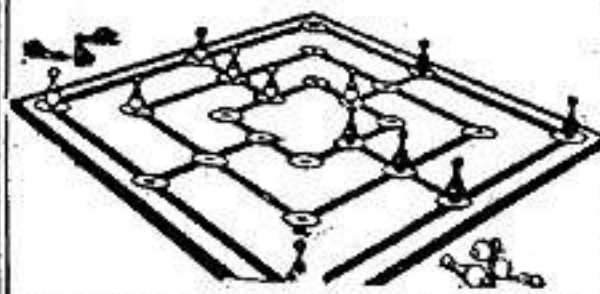
"Good gad!" said the major. "Bob beat the four of them, did he?"

"The beatfulness was hollow, and they fled to their esteemed jiggers and rode away fastfully," said Hurree Singh. "But poor Bob was badly knocked about—his handsome nose was swollen, and his excellent eye bunged up. It was a terrific scrap, one fellow against four."

"It must have been," said the major, with quite an interested look on his face. "And Bob beat the lot of them!"

"And then he released me from ludicrous and uncomfortable position," said the nabob. "But the next day, alas! Bob had the extended nose and the colourful eye, and he was extremely

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"You took my son's letter, opened it and read it, and then destroyed it rather than confess what you had done!" boomed Major Cherry. "I—I—I—" "You are a young rascal, Bunter!" "I—I—I, sir!" ejaculated Bunter. "A dishonourable young scoundrel, sir!" roared the major. "Oh, lor!" Bunter backed to the door. (See Chapter 12.)

seedy. That is the reason why he made so lamentable a muck of the Head's exam, sir, and it is to his credit—for otherwise he must have left a Greyfriars man lurchfully, which would have been dishonourable and funky.

"It is not for me to instruct, honourable sahib, grey with years of wisdom," said the nabob modestly. "But to my humble mind, it seems that it is better to be brave and honourable, than to bag innumerable prizes offered by ludicrous Head for Latin papers."

"Oh!"

"But what I wish to make absolutely clear is, that Bob had worked very hardfully for honourable exam, and would have done quitefully well, but for rescuing humble and unimportant self," said the nabob.

He rose from the chair.

"That is what I wished to explain," he said. "I leave you, sahib, to chew the cud of meditation, as excellent Shakespeare says, and to put it in your pipe smokefully."

And with that the dusky schoolboy took his leave.

Major Cherry stared after him, as the door closed, and then turned his glance upon the quadrangle again. On the path by the old elms the chums of the Remove were walking and talking; and as the major's glance fell upon them, he saw Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh cross over from the house and join his friends. The Famous Five sauntered on, unconscious of the gaze fixed upon them from the major's window.

The major's brow was very thoughtful.

His impression had been that his son had, whether from carelessness, thoughtlessness, or from whatever reason, failed

to "play up." The shindy with the Higheliffians, so far from being an excuse in the major's eyes, had seemed a new offence; a fellow booked for a trying exam should have avoided shindies. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh's explanation let in a good deal of new light on the matter. Certainly the old soldier would not have approved of his son passing on his way, and leaving a schoolfellow in the lurch in the hands of enemies. No success in examinations would have atoned for such a desertion, in the major's eyes. And yet—

Tap!

"Oh, come in!" grunted the major impatiently.

This time it was Billy Bunter who presented himself.

The Owl of the Remove blinked uneasily into the room through his big spectacles. Bunter seemed in a very unquiet mood.

"I—I say, sir—" he stammered.

"Well?" rapped out the major sharply. He did not think much of the fat and famous Bunter, and he was not pleased to see him.

Bunter rolled in nervously.

"I—I say, sir, about—about that letter—" he stammered.

"What letter?"

"I—I want to explain that I don't know anything about it," said Bunter. "I'm innocent, sir—perfectly innocent. Mr. Quelch is inquiring about it, sir, so—so I thought I'd tell you, sir, that—that it wasn't me, sir, in—in case any of the fellows mentioned that I took it, sir."

"Eh?"

"I never even knew there was a letter for Bob, sir," said Bunter. "Besides, I took it down from the rack to carry it to him—simply my kind,

obliging nature, sir! It's rather hard that a fellow should be misjudged for being kinder and more obliging than other fellows. Don't you think so, sir?"

Major Cherry looked at him.

"I have asked Mr. Quelch to inquire concerning my letter to my son, which never reached him," he said. "Is it that letter that you allude to, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Quelch has started inquiring," groaned Bunter. "I—I feel sure he will pick on me, sir. I'm often picked on. Innocent fellows often are, sir. I—I thought I'd come and tell you how it was, and—and perhaps you'd mention to Mr. Quelch, sir, that it—it doesn't matter after all, sir."

"You took the letter?"

"Oh, no! Not at all. I never knew there was a letter," gasped Bunter. "I didn't go to the rack that morning, sir, and I didn't think the letter was for me, sir, and ask the fellows to hand it down. Nothing of the sort."

"Good gad!" said the major, staring at Bunter.

"You see, sir, nobody else would take the letter to Bob," said Bunter. "Bob being a rank outsider, and cut by the whole Form—"

"What?"

"You see, sir, he was barred all round," said Bunter. "I was the only fellow who'd take the letter to him. Then Quelch detained me, and I couldn't give it to him, and then—it came open by accident, sir. And—and after that, I thought Bob wouldn't believe it came open by accident—he's rather suspicious on some things, and—and then Skinner said it would be safer to put it in the fire, and so—so—" Billy Bunter's voice trailed away under the stern glare of the major.

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"You took my son's letter, opened it and read it, and then destroyed it rather than confess what you had done!" boomed the major.

"I—I—I—"

"You are a young rascal, Bunter."

"I, sir!" ejaculated Bunter.

"A dishonourable young scoundrel, sir!" roared the major.

"Oh, lor—"

Bunter backed to the door. He had hoped to make matters better by explaining to the major how innocent he was in the transaction. Matters did not seem to be improving, however.

"Stay!" rapped out the major.

"I—I—I—"

"You have said that my son was barred, as you call it, by his Form-fellows. What do you mean by that?"

"We—we all turned him down, sir," said Bunter. "Not I, of course—I was kind to him all along—kind and obliging. I mean all the other fellows barred him and turned up their noses at him."

"And why?" asked Major Cherry, very quietly.

"It was that filthy swotting, sir—"

"That what?"

"Filthy swotting, sir," said Bunter. "He rowed with everybody in the Remove over it. He let us down in the football, and kept in his study when the Fourth raided our passage, and—and—"

"Do you mean to say that my son became unpopular in his Form because

he was working hard for an examination?" asked the major, with a very singular look at Bunter.

"Well, we call it swotting," said the Owl of the Remove, with a curl of his fat lip. "Fellow isn't supposed to stick in his study mugging up Latin, and letting fellows down all along the line. Why, he let us down in the St. Jim's match, doing extra toot with old Quelch. I—I mean with Mr. Quelch. We don't like swots and masters' favourites in the Remove," said Bunter loftily. "We don't think much of prize-hunters, either. I can jolly well tell you that I've never bagged a prize."

"I can quite believe it," said the major.

"But about the letter, sir—"

"About the letter, Bunter, you are a young rascal, and I hope your Form master will punish you severely."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bunter. "But now I've explained that I was innocent in the matter, sir—perfectly innocent—and—"

"You may go!" grunted the major.

"If—if you'd speak to Mr. Quelch, sir," urged the Owl of the Remove. "Only a word from you, sir, and he would drop the subject."

"I shall speak to Mr. Quelch, Bunter."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Do not be in a hurry to thank me," said Major Cherry grimly. "I shall ask Mr. Quelch to cane you severely."

"Oh, dear!"

"If I were your Form master, I would flog you. Now leave my room!" rapped out the major.

"Ow!"

Bunter rolled dismally to the door, followed by the major's glare. But as he reached the door, the major spoke again.

"On second thoughts, Bunter—"

The Owl of the Remove blinked round hopefully.

"On second thoughts, I will speak to Mr. Quelch and ask him to drop the matter."

"Oh, good!" gasped Bunter.

William George Bunter had heard that second thoughts are best. Now he felt sure of it.

"You have—unintentionally—given me some very important information," said Major Cherry. "For that reason, I shall excuse your rascality, and will ask Mr. Quelch to excuse it also. Go!"

And Bunter went, greatly relieved. His visit to the major had been a success, after all.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

MAJOR CHERRY'S glance turned again on the juniors strolling under the elms in the quad. It dwelt affectionately on Bob.

"My poor boy!" he murmured.

He had judged his son a slacker—careless in the performance of his promise to make up for lost time, and
(Continued on the next page.)

Do You Know That?

Interesting Tit-Bits for the Footer Fan!

FOR the 21 matches since the War England has actually called upon 99 players? The list is: Eleven goalkeepers, 9 right-backs, 11 left-backs, 10 right-half-backs, 9 centre-half-backs, 8 left-half-backs, 12 outside-rights, 8 inside-rights, 17 centre-forwards, 6 inside-lefts, 9 outside-lefts.

A study of the leading teams this season reveals that the centre-half is nearly always the biggest man on the side?

At the time Spence played at outside-right for England recently he was occupying the centre-forward berth for his club—Manchester United—in their League games?

Broadbent, the Clapton Orient forward, played Rugby before he became a Soccer professional? He appeared as a stand-off half for his school team, and also did so well that the Oldham Rugby League club offered to engage him.

In the opinion of Tom Parker, the Arsenal full-back, the outside wing forwards have the easiest place because they have rests and have mates who fetch and carry for them?

In the course of their history the Sunderland club has supplied goalkeepers for England, Scotland, and Wales?

Jock Hutton, who recently joined Blackburn Rovers from Aberdeen, is

the heaviest defender in first-class football? He weighs fourteen and a half stone.

It is only fourteen years since it was decided to form the first big Soccer club in Swansea?

In one match recently Matthewson, the South Shields outside-right, scored two goals from corner-kicks without any other player touching the ball? There was a strong wind blowing.

Till, the Luton back, was formerly a blacksmith's striker, and that he is almost unique among professional footballers because he has a moustache.

Walter Holmes, the Middlesbrough player, preaches quite regularly in the local church?

In the first two months of the season fifty-six of the eighty-eight clubs in the Football League made changes in their centre-forward?

At Southampton's ground the building containing the secretary's office and the players' dressing-quarters stand together in one corner, and the gable end of the building goes to within a yard of a corner flag on the pitch? The bottom of the wall is padded to minimise the risk of injury to men playing near it.

In American football each team is allowed two substitutes up to within fifteen minutes of the end of the game,

but none is permitted in the place of a player sent off for misconduct?

Bob Archibald, Stoke City's outside-left, has fitted up a number of wireless sets for his fellow-players, as well as a two-valve set for the club manager?

The English League give the ball used in an Inter-League match to the captain of the winning side?

Twenty odd years ago "Jockie" Wright was one of the cleverest close-dribbling forwards in the land? And now his son seems to be following in father's footsteps, playing for the same club (Bolton Wanderers) and in the same position (inside-left).

The players of one football club have been told that they are to refrain from either driving motor-cycles or riding pillion? The officials of the club think the risk of injury is too great.

In the Huddersfield Town team there are usually eight men who have been chosen for International matches?

Millwall boast of a unique record for length of service of several people on the staff? Mr. G. A. Saunders has been director practically since the club was formed in 1885. Mr. Tom Thorne, the chairman, and Mr. F. Wedon have been with the club more than twenty years, and Mr. John Beveridge more than thirty years. Mr. Bob Hunter, now manager, has served for thirty years, and Elijah Moore, the groundsman, for thirty-four years.

M'Cluggage, the Burnley back, was formerly in the Special Constabulary in Northern Ireland?

Referees of first-class matches get three guineas plus their out-of-pocket expenses, and that linesmen get a guinea and a half?

BUNTER, THE PARACHUTIST!

❖ ❖ ❖

According to Bunter :

"Someone had to jump out of the blessed aeroplane to get help, so I volunteered. Umpteen thousands of feet I dropped through space, with death staring me in the face. But I never flinched. And then the beastly parachute got entangled in a tree, and I was suspended in mid-air until Toddy and those other grinning beasts came to my rescue"

Read for yourselves the true account of Bunter's parachute descent, in :

"HEROES OF THE AIR!"

Next week's fine long complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co.

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to work his hardest to prove that he meant it. And now he had learned that, so far from slacking, Bob had "swotted" to the extent of making himself so unpopular that he had been "barred" by his Form. Obviously he must have set to work injudiciously—hastily. Plainly enough, he had overdone it—overdone it to the extent of irritating and exasperating his Form-fellows. But that was an indubitable proof that he had, at least, done it. The major had believed that he had not tried—when the actual fact, as he now knew, was that poor Bob had sacrificed everything else in trying too hard.

"My poor boy!" repeated the major softly.

The Famous Five, strolling towards the House as the dinner bell rang, sighted the major at the window and "capped" him respectfully. Major Cherry smiled down at them and beckoned to his son.

Bob came up to his father's room—more than half expecting to hear that he was to leave Greyfriars with his father. But what he heard was very different from that.

When Bob Cherry rejoined his chums, going into dinner, his face was beaming with satisfaction—even his discoloured eye beamed. Harry Wharton & Co. were waiting for him at the door of the dining-hall.

"Good news?" asked Harry eagerly.

Bob chuckled.

"The jolly old best!" he said.

"You're not going?"

"No fear!"

"Hurrah!"

"The hurrafulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

The chums of the Remove marched

Bob in to dinner, with beaming faces. The clouds had rolled by at last.

"Cherry?"

"Of course!"

"Well, after all, he's a good man," said Bolsover major. "The only time the Fourth beat us was when Cherry played for them."

"What rot!" sneered Skinner.

"Oh, you shut up, Skinner!" said Bolsover major in disgust. "You've always got something rotten to say. I say that Wharton's done quite right in putting Cherry into the team for the Rookwood match."

"You've changed your mind a lot, haven't you?" jeered Skinner.

"Yes—and I'll change your features a lot if you say any more," growled Bolsover major.

And Skinner decided to say no more.

Undoubtedly there had been a great change of feeling in the Remove with regard to Bob Cherry.

With the exception of Skinner's, hardly a dissentient voice was heard when it was learned that Bob was back in his old place in the Remove eleven, and was down to play Rookwood.

The trouble had rolled by, and nobody wanted to hear Skinner's malicious attempts to revive it. Bygones were bygones, and the least said was the soonest mended, in the opinion of all the other fellows.

Major Cherry, his damaged leg almost mended now, was going that day; but he was staying to see the football match before he went to his train. He limped only a little as he went down to Little Side, and Bob placed a deck chair for him and put a rug round him. The major's old bronzed face was very cheery. The misunderstanding between father and son was wholly a thing of the past now, and Bob Cherry was

"Bob" again now, and hoped never to be "Robert" any more.

Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round the major's chair and chatted till Jimmy Silver and his men arrived from Rookwood.

Then came the game, with Bob Cherry, so long excluded from Remove football, back in his old place in the team. And he soon showed that he had lost none of his old form.

It was a great game; Jimmy Silver & Co. putting all their beef into it, but finding that Greyfriars went one better every time. Only one goal fell to the Rookwooders—and three piled up for the home team. And the old major's deep voice was heard booming in the roars of cheering from the Greyfriars crowd.

After the game there was tea in Study No. 1, with Major Cherry as the guest of honour. And when the major went, the Famous Five all went down to the station with him to see him off; and Bob's face was very bright as he waved his hand after the disappearing train.

Bob had been through a hard time, but he had won through. His face was a little thoughtful as the chums of the Remove walked back to Greyfriars.

"I'm done with swotting," he said. "But—I've had a bit of a lesson, too. The pater's been jolly decent, and I'm going to work a bit harder in class than I used. I'm jolly well going to get a good report from Quelch this term. It's up to me."

"Never likely to be a brilliant scholar, but attentive and persevering," suggested Nugent, with a grin.

Bob chuckled.

"That's about it," he said.

And that, as a matter of fact, was it, when Mr. Quelch's next report was perused by the major. And he seemed to find it satisfactory.

THE END.

'A SLIPPERY CUSTOMER!' The police can arrest Dr. O'Hara, but they can't hold him for long. Yet young Tommy Comber sets out to score where the police have failed. How does he get on?

The Boy with the Million-Pound Secret!

DAVID GOODWIN'S
SERIAL MASTERPIECE!



The Fugitive!

"GONE!" said Carfax's companion, rising from beside the dead man. "It's rather a pity, Jack, as you say; but it was Haynes' life or yours. He played a big game, anyway. And that's the end of one of the greatest scoundrels we've ever had to deal with!"

Carfax picked up the dead man's automatic pistol; one cartridge of it had been fired.

"It was a pretty good shot he made, and a quick one," he said, and put his hand up to his ear, which was bleeding slightly. Haynes' bullet had grazed it before plugging into the wall behind. "He didn't miss much. Still, it isn't as much damaged as your nose, Tommy. What the dickens have you been doing to yourself?"

"I wouldn't call it a nose at all!" said Dan, looking at Tommy's face with consternation. "Does it hurt, old chap?"

"Not a bit," said Tommy. "It feels uncomfortable and cock-eyed, that's all. It ain't really my nose that's busted; it's the nose O'Hara made for me. It was a bit of an over-size, and mine's underneath the ruins somewhere, and still doing well. But what's become of O'Hara? Haven't they got him?"

He had been too excited and overwrought to notice that a tremendous storm of rain was pouring down; it beat upon the roof and walls of the cottage with a roaring noise, and with it came a great rush of wind. Just as he was speaking the door opened and in came a large policeman in uniform, his cape and helmet dripping with wet.

At the sight of the big police-sergeant Tommy turned pale, and looked round him swiftly for somewhere to hide. For the first time he felt absolutely panic-stricken. But he glanced for a moment at Carfax, who gave him a swift wink.

"Hallo, sergeant!" said Carfax. "Where have you blown in from? What's the trouble?"

"I'm from Shoeburyness," said the sergeant, wringing the water out of his eyes. "And I'm after— Lor' bless us, what's all this?"

He stared blankly at the dead man on the floor and the handcuffed figure of Karkoff.

"What's up?" he exclaimed. "Murder?"

"Not quite," replied Carfax calmly. **THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 979.**

"I shot this man in self-defence, sergeant. The other one, who is wearing the bracelets, I will hand over to you. There is a warrant out for the arrest of both of them."

The sergeant looked as astonished as a policeman ever can. Then he turned to Carfax, whom he evidently knew quite well. The sergeant stood to attention and saluted.

"Very good, sir!" he said. "If he's dead, he's dead—that's all about it! Anyway, I've got orders to take my instructions entirely from you." Then he suddenly lugged a notebook out of the tail of his coat. "But there's something else, sir," he said excitedly, "which the police up at Leigh have telephoned to us at Shoebury about!" He consulted his notebook. "It seems that when this gang was in their launch up at Curlew Island they cut down a party of coastguards who'd just caught the missing boy Comber, that's wanted on the Bellerophon. As it happened, we'd seen the launch passing down just before. So we borrowed the Artillery motor-boat and came along after her quick to get hold of Comber. I've just landed with a couple of constables, an' they're waiting on the beach."

"Thank you, sergeant! That was very smart of you!" said Carfax pleasantly. "This is Tom Comber, of the Bellerophon, the runaway prisoner. I won't trouble you with him. I will be responsible for his safe keeping."

The police-sergeant seemed staggered. He stared at Tommy and his broken nose with keen interest. Then he seemed to remember himself, and turning to Carfax, saluted again.

"Very well, sir," he said. "Whatever you say, of course. And what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to bring your constables here and take this dead man and the prisoner—whose name is Karkoff—to Southend Police Station in your boat. I will leave one of my men in charge here, and I'm going to take Comber to London. By the way, there's another of the gang on the island somewhere, but he can't get away. Did you see anything of him?"

"Yes, sir. I saw two of your chaps chasin' him away up yonder, and they'd just got hold of him, I think; it was raining so hard, I couldn't see much."

"That's all right, then," said Carfax. "You needn't wait for that fellow. I'll

look after him myself. Carry on, sergeant, and clear these two away."

The sergeant went to the window and blew his whistle. Two constables came hurrying towards the cottage, and, as they entered, Karkoff suddenly roused himself from the grim silence into which he had fallen since the handcuffs had been snapped on his wrists and faced the company.

"Ach, you English swine!" he snarled. "If we had been but an hour earlier I would have had this young cub away with me, and in the end I and my comrades would have put paid to this accursed England of yours! Yes, and those who come after me will do it yet!" He broke off and began to storm at them in snarling, spitting Russian; but the police-sergeant took him by the collar and shook him briskly.

"Here, none o' that, my lad!" said the sergeant, shaking him into silence. "Don't you use none o' that language here or you'll be sorry for it! You're going where you'll be taught to behave yourself!"

"I see I'm leaving the case in good hands, sergeant," said Carfax, with a chuckle; and the sergeant marched Karkoff out. The two constables removed Haynes, much to the relief of Tommy. And as soon as the room was clear, Dan and Carfax shook hands with him amid a chorus of congratulations.

"Jupiter, but it's good to see you safe, Tommy!" cried Dan, slapping his chum on the back. "I was in a ghastly funk about you. When you didn't turn up at nine o'clock, I knew there was something mighty wrong!"

"But what's this about the row at Curlew Island and the coastguards?" said Carfax. "I don't understand it."

"It was a close shave, sir!" said Tommy; and he told them all that had occurred, including the ramming of Chuffer's boat.

Carfax whistled. "That's the closest thing yet," he said. "You shouldn't have gone near the island. We were lucky not to lose you."

"I was a moke to do it," confessed Tommy, "but I wanted to make sure of the powder. How did you get ashore here so quick, sir, just in the nick of time?"

"We didn't," said Carfax. "We were here when you arrived."

"What!" cried Tommy. "We never saw you. There wasn't a sign of you!"

"Very likely. We had no intention of being spotted," replied Carfax. "It was not so difficult. When you didn't turn up at Sheerness we couldn't wait for you. We were laying a trap for Haynes & Co. I borrowed a naval picket-boat and came across here with three of my men. We ran the boat in among the saltings here where she couldn't be seen, and hid ourselves among the rushes; we reckoned the gang would turn up sooner or later."

"We saw them land from the launch and bring you with them. As soon as you were into the cottage we nipped out of our hiding-place and surrounded it. Of course, I never knew they'd got you, till we saw them land. We were very lucky, for once they'd got hold of you, it was odds they wouldn't come here at all. They knew it was getting too hot for them, and I should have thought they'd have cleared right out across the North Sea."

"So they would have," said Tommy; "they had to come in here for petrol. And I'm owing you my life, sir!"

"I owed you mine," laughed Carfax, "so we're quits. Lives don't count for much on a big job in the Secret Service. And when we're after men with such a black record as Haynes and his gang, we can't do the job in kid gloves."

"I'm afraid I've got a pretty black record, too, sir," said Tommy doubtfully, "and I don't know what I shall cop for it. Let alone being a runaway convict, I've tripped up two petty officers, been O'Hara's partner, and finished up by shoving an oar into a detective's tummy, and made him sit down in three feet of water. Do you think there's any chance of the law courts overlookin' all that?"

Carfax laughed again.

"My dear Tommy," he said, "in return for all the services you've done us, you could mop up half a dozen policemen if you wanted to!" He suddenly became more serious. "And you're the owner of Comberite, and can make what terms you like with the British Government! Didn't I tell you you could do more for England if you chose, than any fellow living? Don't you worry?"

"But what do you get out of it, sir?" exclaimed Dan.

"Me? Why I shall get promotion out of it, and a decoration—though it's little I care for that," said Carfax. "I've cleaned up this gang, with your help, and it's the biggest triumph of my life! Good thing I was in time. For, anyway, they'd never have crossed the North Sea in that motor-launch in the gale that's blowing now. Listen to

it howling! They'd have gone to the bottom, all the lot of them."

"And Tommy along with them!" said Dan. "And that would have been the end of Comberite! Hallo! What now?"

Carfax's companion, who had gone out, came hurrying into the cottage again.

"I say, Jack," he cried, "O'Hara has slipped us! He's got clear away!"

"What!" cried Carfax, and dashed out through the doorway like a shot.

O'Hara at Bay!

DAN and Tommy followed out close on the heels of Carfax, amazed at the news. The rain had stopped, but a dark, thick scud from the sea was driving over the marshes before the gale, blotting out the embankments, and the air was full of flying yellow balls of foam.

"Got away?" cried Carfax. "It's impossible! The sergeant said our chaps had got him!"

"One of them did get hold of him—but O'Hara knocked him out with a knuckle-duster and bolted. They lost sight of him in the haze, and now they're searching for him, and can't find a sign of the beggar."

"He can't get off the island!" said Carfax, hurrying towards the shore. "Surely the fools haven't let him get at the boats!"

"No; our boat's under guard, and the launch is scuppered and useless. Come on, Jack, we've got to get O'Hara at any price!"

"Sure thing we have!" muttered Carfax, as he ran, "Though I'm not so keen on O'Hara as I am on the others."

"But we are!" exclaimed Dan. "I always said that chap was the biggest sweep of the lot."

"You watch out, you boys—have a care!" said Carfax's mate. "If I know anything of the fellow he'll be a dangerous beast when he's at bay!"

Tommy said nothing. Somehow, he had had almost a feeling of relief on hearing that O'Hara had escaped. It was very queer; he did not know why he felt like that about the ruffian. Still, there was no chance for O'Hara to get away with it. All the odds were against him, and they were bound to catch him.

The boys joined in the hunt. They searched the whole island from end to end; there was not much of it, and it didn't take long. They were astonished to find there was no sign of the fugitive. They could not have missed him if he had been there. Carfax's men were busy on the search; one of

them had a bruised jaw, for he had been knocked out. He didn't get any sympathy from Carfax, who was furious with him for letting O'Hara get clear.

"Rummy thing O'Hara didn't shoot him, instead of plugging him in the jaw!" said Dan. "He'd a pistol!"

They hurried into the boat and crossed the narrow channel to the smaller island of New England, as it is called, that lay next to Havengore, in case O'Hara had managed to get across. But they drew a blank there also.

"He must have got on to Rushley or Potton Island!" said Carfax. "Away in the boat, and after him! He can't go far either way."

"I bet he's over on Foulness!" cried Tommy. "That's where I'd make for."

"Nonsense!" said Carfax. "That's the far side beyond New England, and deep water nearly all round it; he wouldn't be fool enough to go there, even if he could reach it!"

"Why not, sir? It's next the sea, and there are boats there."

But Carfax would not listen; he had got a pretty good idea which way O'Hara had gone, and there were tracks by the waterside in the mud by the channel leading to the two islands northward. So the party crossed over and searched the island of Rushley, and finding nothing there, went on and hunted all over Potton Island, where there were plenty of hiding-places. Several local boatmen and fishermen presently turned up, and hearing what was afoot, joined in the search. Tommy and Dan accompanied the expedition. But it took up most of the afternoon and they found no trace of O'Hara.

Tommy thought from the first that they were engaged in a fruitless search; he knew the islands well, and guessed that Carfax, for once, had made a mistake. Feeling tired and having had enough of it, Tommy left the party, having missed Dan, and, borrowing a punt, made his way back to Havengore.

There he decided to have a last look round, and rowed over beyond New England creek to the little channel that separated it from Foulness. The tide was coming in again, but some of the mud along the margin was bare, and Tommy caught sight of fresh boot-tracks in it, leading ashore.

"Ha! I bet that's O'Hara's trail!" said Tommy. "Why shouldn't he have swum both creeks? Wouldn't take him long. He's got across on to Foulness. It's what I told Carfax, and he wouldn't listen."

Tommy went ashore at once on Foulness. But what to do when he got there, he hardly knew. The island was an immense one, a windswept stretch of marshes and reeds and fields. But there were one or two small farms on it, and,

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

TOMMY COMBER, sentenced to three years' detention aboard the reformatory ship *Bellerophon* for being concerned in the murder of his uncle, **JOSEPH COMBER**, a clever chemist, inventor of a powerful high explosive named *Comberite*, and owner of *Curlew Island*.
CHUFFER FOSS, Tommy's cousin, a ne'er-do-well, whose false evidence at the trial did much to prejudice the innocent Tommy's chances of acquittal.

Dr. SOLTOFF, alias *O'Hara*, a Russian Soviet agent and a skilful surgeon, who shelters the fugitive from the *Bellerophon* and makes his features to resemble those of *Pat Roche*, his servant, so that Tommy's own pal,

DAN BENNETT, doesn't recognise him until Tommy makes known his identity.

MERTON HAYNES, **KARKOFF** and **BALDY**, satellites of *O'Hara*.

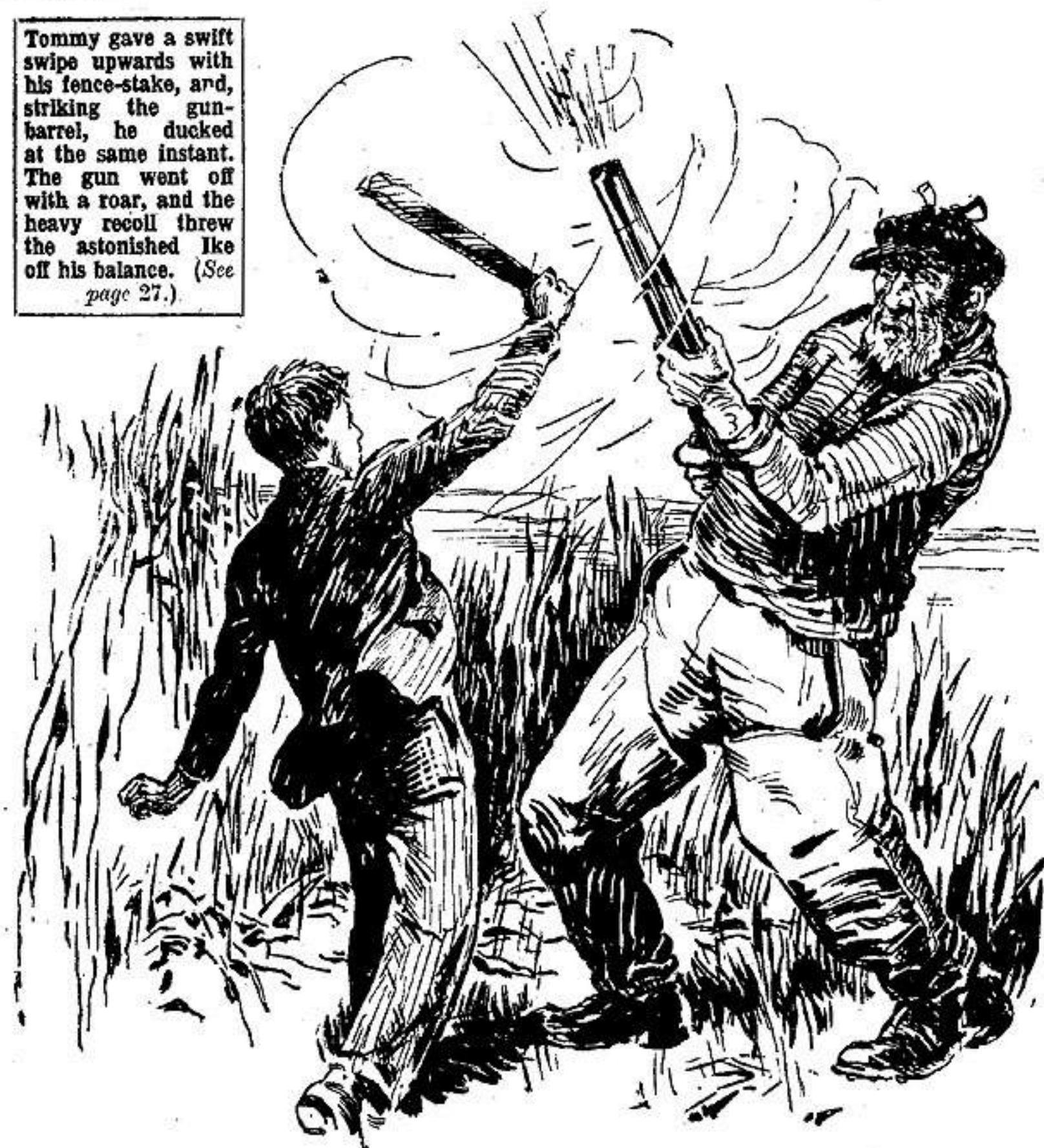
JOHN CARFAX, an official in the Secret Service.

In return for the service *O'Hara* has rendered him, Tommy—who knows the secret of *Comberite*—is asked to make the explosive, he himself to take a third share in the partnership. Tommy agrees to the proposal and, privately, asks Dan to join him on *Curlew Island* where the stuff is to be made.

Tommy's second attempt at *Comberite* proves successful, and in accordance with his promise he wires *O'Hara* to that effect. Immediately afterwards, however, he meets Carfax who, to Tommy's amazement, not only knows his identity, but puts him wise to the motives of the mysterious *O'Hara & Co.* Then after informing Tommy of his efforts to bring the Russian gang to book and warning him to keep out of the way for a time, he takes his departure with Dan. Chuffer, however, who has pierced Tommy's disguise, betrays him to the police. But thanks to *O'Hara & Co.*, the police are foiled in their attempts to capture the young fugitive. Fearful of what might follow, the gang decide to take Tommy back to Russia with them. They are making the necessary preparations for their flight, when they are interrupted by the sudden appearance of Carfax. A fierce scuffle ensues, in which *O'Hara* and *Karkoff* are made prisoners, whilst *Haynes* receives a bullet wound which proves fatal.

(Now Read On.)

Tommy gave a swift swipe upwards with his fence-stake, and, striking the gun-barrel, he ducked at the same instant. The gun went off with a roar, and the heavy recoil threw the astonished Ike off his balance. (See page 27.)



Remembering the caution the cottager had given him, Tommy took cover for a minute or two and watched it before approaching. There was no sign of life about it, except a wisp of smoke that was blowing away from the stove-pipe, in the strong wind.

It looked a desolate, sinister sort of spot; far more so than Curlew Island. There was somehow a threatening ugliness about it. Anything might happen in a lonely hut like that.

Suddenly Tommy saw a man emerge from the reeds, and slink cautiously into the hut, as if he knew his way in. It was only a glimpse, but quite enough for Tommy. The man was O'Hara.

"Run you to earth, have I, you cunning fox?" thought Tommy. "All right then."

He approached the hut cautiously. He was not afraid of O'Hara, for he had faced worse risks in his time, and he had armed himself with a fence-stake which he had found on the marsh. But while he was still a good way off the hut, he heard a sudden rustle, and a huge figure rose out of the reeds and confronted him. Tommy stopped dead.

"What d'ye want here?" snarled the man.

He was a giant of a fellow, with a shaggy red beard and a fur cap; he wore a jersey and jean trousers, and great leather thigh-boots. In

the hollow of his arm was an immense old muzzle-loading double duck-gun, a formidable weapon that looked big enough to shoot elephants. His face was evil and ferocious.

"Hallo!" said Tommy. "You're Ike the Marshman, I take it?"

"Ay!" said the man. "And who are you, ye broken-nosed varmint?"

"I'm looking for a chap with a beard," said Tommy, "but it's not such a pretty one as yours. And as you don't seem pleased to see me, I'll tell you just how it is. The police are after him, and he's wanted. Do you mind if I have a squint inside your hut?"

Ike the Marshman swung his great fowling-piece round and levelled it at Tommy.

"If you don't sheer off quick," he snarled, "I'll blow your ugly young head off! You hear me? I mean it. There ain't no one in my hut, an' I'd shoot six like you before I'd let 'em come snoopin' round my place!"

"I see," said Tommy. "That means he's paid you to keep the place clear for him, eh? He's always got plenty of money. I wish you'd take your finger off that trigger. If you shoot me you'll swing for it, and what the dickens good will that do you? They're bound to cop that man anyway, so you may as well let me come past."

making for one of them, Tommy found a cottager carrying a scythe over his shoulder and a bundle of reeds.

"Hi, mate!" called Tommy. "Have you seen a stranger anywhere about? A chap with a pointed beard, an' he'd most likely be wet and muddy."

"Whoy yes, I see a chap summat like that a while back, I think," said the man, scratching his head. "Sort of seafarin' feller, like. I didn't take particular notice of him. Where'd he go? I fancy he went somewhere's up towards the Fleet Wick, where Ike the Marshman's hut is. That's up yonder, where you see them reed-beds."

"Thanks. I'll go and ask Ike, whoever he is," said Tommy, hurrying off. But the man called after him.

"D'ye know Ike the Marshman, lad?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, you take my tip an' don't go anigh him!" said the man. "Ike's dangerous, an' he don't like strangers round his place, specially boys. I reckon he'd as soon pepper a boy with his owd gun, as he'd shoot a wild duck. We believe he killed a man once that came poachin' round his way, but they never found the body, so they couldn't bring it home to him."

"Sounds a jolly sort of customer," said Tommy. "I'll bear it in mind."

And without more words he went on his way, heading for the Wick.

"If this chap don't like strangers, all the better," thought Tommy. "But O'Hara's a pretty tough proposition himself, and he may have got the right side of Ike."

It occurred to Tommy that a lonely hut like Ike's was a good hiding-place. And it was more than likely Ike owned a sailing-boat somewhere on the shore. If so, anybody who wanted to get afloat would have to wait till the tide was up, for it was very flat and shallow on the seaward side of Foulness, and there would not be water to float a boat yet on the upper beach. Though that did not worry Tommy much, for he guessed no small boat could live in the gale that was blowing now, even if anybody could launch her. If O'Hara were here at all he couldn't get off the island except over the narrow creeks towards the land, and then Carfax's man would nab him.

It was a good way to the reed-beds around Fleet Wick, and when Tommy neared them he saw what was evidently Ike the Marshman's hut. It was really an old black vessel, turned keel-upwards, with a stove-pipe sticking out of it, and a window and door cut in its side. It stood half-hidden in an alley between two beds of rushes.

"If you ain't to the right-about and gone before I count six," cried the Marshman hoarsely, his eyes red with rage, "I'll blow you in two halves!"

"All right," sighed Tommy, "then I suppose I'd better go."

"An' quick about it!"

"As quick as this?"

Tommy gave a sudden swift swipe upwards with his fence-stake, striking up the gun-barrel and ducking at the same instant. The gun went off with a roar like a young cannon, and the heavy recoil of it threw the astonished Ike off his balance for a moment.

The fence-stake came down whack on his fur cap as he staggered, and knocked it off. At the same time Tommy hurled himself bodily on the man before he could recover himself, and they came down together, Tommy on top.

He had hoped to bound up again and get clear before Ike could get a grip on him, for strong as he was he would have been like an infant in the big Marshman's clutches. He did clear, and made a jump for the gun; but to his surprise Ike lay like a log where he had fallen.

Large and clumsy people like Ike fall heavily. And Ike had fallen very heavily indeed, his head striking one of the lumps of bog-timber, as hard as iron, with which the marsh was strewn. He had a thick skull, but he was most thoroughly stunned for the time being.

"I'll fix you quick!" thought Tommy, and whipping off his necktie he bound Ike's thick wrists with a couple of rapid turns and a reef-knot. Then he snatched the thick muffler from Ike's neck and twisted it round the Marshman's knees over his thigh-boots with a clove-bitch. He knew that would hold him. As he did so Tommy noticed what looked like a banknote sticking out from the neck of Ike's jersey. He guessed it was the price O'Hara had paid Ike to keep intruders away from his hiding-place. Ike had not made much of a job of it.

Tommy snatched up the gun; the left barrel was still undischarged. Somebody had just darted out of the hut and was running towards him. It was O'Hara himself, and his hand gripped an automatic pistol.

"Halt, there!" shouted Tommy, levelling the duck-gun.

O'Hara stopped.

"Why, Tommy Comber?" he said quietly. "It's you, is it? I did not recognise you for the moment. But I might have guessed it."

"Drop that pistol!" said Tommy. "You can't get me with it at that range. But I can get you with five ounces of shot—this gun's loaded for geese. You don't want to lose your eyes, do you? Drop it quick!"

O'Hara did not drop the pistol. Instead, he lowered it to his side, pointing it at the ground.

"What do you think you are going to do?" he asked.

"You're my prisoner!" said Tommy. "Let that thing fall, and then walk up to me."

Instead of obeying, O'Hara turned coolly round and walked back into the hut, disappearing through the doorway.

For a moment Tommy was stupefied. He had not expected that O'Hara would disobey him, with the gun's muzzle covering him, for the man's life was in his hands. But there were only two things Tommy could do—shoot, or not shoot. And his finger did not press the trigger. What right had he to take the man's life?

O'Hara was now out of sight, and suspecting treachery or a new attack, Tommy made one swift run to the door of the hut, thrusting the muzzle of his gun in before he showed himself, ready to fire.

"You think you're going to play the fool, do you?" he cried. "It's your funeral, if you do."

"No, I'm not going to play the fool, Tommy," replied O'Hara. "I'm too badly up against it for that."

Tommy looked at him along the gun-barrel, which he kept levelled. O'Hara was alone in the hut; he had thrown himself into a broken chair, right at the back, and sat-facing his captor. The only other furniture in the place was a barrel, standing up on end in the middle of the hut. On the top of the barrel lay O'Hara's pistol, which he had thrown there before he seated himself.

"There's my weapon," he said, nodding towards it. "The only one I've got."

Tommy looked at the pistol. Then, keeping O'Hara covered, he moved forward, snatched up the little weapon, and thrust it into his pocket.

"You surrender, do you?" he said. "Sound idea, Dr. O'Hara!"

"No," he said listlessly. "I have not said that I surrender. But I don't know that shooting is going to help me now. I could have shot that fool who got hold of me on Haven-gore, but I got away from him well enough without it. It seems you've got me, Tommy, anyway."

"I have, and don't you forget it!" said Tommy. "I'll shoot quick enough, if you play any of your precious tricks!"

(Continued on page 28.)



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THE BOY WITH THE MILLION- POUND SECRET!

(Continued from page 27.)

And if I were one of your crew of Russian sweeps I expect I'd have shot you right away, outside the hut just now, to make sure of you."

"I should say you would have, in that case," replied O'Hara. "I wonder why you didn't do it?"

"Because I'm a fool, I suppose."

"Because you're English," said O'Hara, with a shrug; "the English are rather foolish about such things. They don't care much about using bullets or knives, when a shut fist is handy."

"Maybe that's the reason. I didn't think of it."

"Well, I'm half English myself," re-

plied O'Hara, "and therefore perhaps half a fool."

"I think you're less of a fool than any one I ever knew," retorted Tommy; "but you're a thundering scoundrel, there's no mistake about that! And don't you make any error about this gun that's pointing at you."

"I see the gun," replied O'Hara wearily. "You've got me. I'm all in."

Tommy looked at him. O'Hara was a pitiable sight. His beard was dotted with mud; he was wet through, his clothes were torn, there was a cut on his cheek from which the blood trickled. Tommy felt a sudden, extraordinary pity for O'Hara. He could not help it. He had known what it was, himself, to be hunted like a wild beast; hungry, wet, desperate, and defeated, with the hand of all the world against him and no friend.

"I wish you'd been a little later," said O'Hara huskily. "In half an hour the tide would be up; I've bought Ike's boat from him, and we could have launched her."

"She'd never live at sea to-night," said Tommy. "You'd have been drowned to a certainty. So that's that."

"I don't care if I am! My job has failed, my work is all washed out, and I'm a back number! It's nothing to me whether I live or die. I feel half dead already. Well—what now?"

"You'll have to come with me," said Tommy. "No need for you to die at all. I'm going to take you to Carfax. Get up, and walk in front of me!"

(Look out for the conclusion of this grand yarn in next week's MAGNET, chums.)

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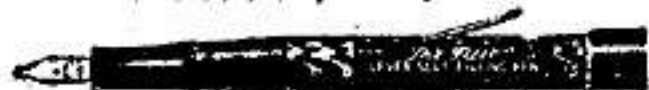
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I.

"O.K. out, you chaps!" Jack Jolly whispered the warning with a thunderous bellow.

Merry and Bright, his two chums in the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, ducked their heads instinctively. The famous trio were passing down the village street, where the snow lay as thick as a Persian carpet. Suddenly a number of beery youths dived out from a side-alley, and the air became thick with flying snowballs. The louts of the village had seen Jack Jolly & Co. coming, and they meant to make things hot—or, rather, cold—for them by pelting them with snowballs.

"Duck your nappers!" panted Jack Jolly. And the first bombardment sailed harmlessly overhead. But the village louts were not to be denied. As soon as Jack Jolly & Co. strained themselves, they opened fire again, with painful results to our heroes.

A snowball crashed and smashed on the tip of Jack Jolly's nose, another took Merry on the point of the chin, and a third hit Bright squarely between the eyes, turning his "viewfinders" into "shutters," so to speak. "Yaroooooh!" yelled the three chums in chorus. And from the brootal boodies of the village came a hoarse shout of triumph. The village louts were six in number, and the schoolboys only three; so if you are any good at arithmetic you will see



The newcomer rushed full-pelt at the village louts, hitting out right and left.

that the odds against Jack Jolly & Co. were nine to nothing.

Our heroes were hard up against it, but did they turn, tale and flee? Did they lose their courage, and run shrieking down the village street? Not a bit of it! Jack Jolly produced a peace of string from his pocket, and with the aid of this they pulled themselves together.

"Return their fire!" bellowed Jack Jolly, sotto voce. "Go for the rotters baldheaded—or, rather, Eton-cropped!" Merry and Bright rallied round their leader in grave stile. They dropped on their hands and knees in the snow, and gathered ammunition as fast as they could. Then they stood up to their beery opponents and pelted them for all they were worth.

Whizz! Crash! Bash! Smash! The Magnet Library—No. 979.

It was now the turn of the village louts to yell with anguish. And their yells were so loud and penetrating that they would have awakened the Seven Sleepers, or a Guvernment official at his desk.

After this spirited reply on the part of Jack Jolly & Co., the battle raged fast and furious.

The air was thick with flying missiles and the battle-cries of the rival forces. Jack Jolly & Co. held their own for some time, but presently the superior numbers of the village louts began to tell. When you come to think of it, odds of nine to nil are pretty hopeless for the nil!

Jack Jolly went sprawling in the snow, and Merry rolled over on top of him. Bright stood on bay for a few minutes, only to go down under an avalanche of snowballs.

"We—we're done, you fellows!" he gasped, as he landed in the snow with a sickening thud.

But help was at hand. It arrived suddenly and speedily, from a totally unexpected quarter.

A youth came pelting down the village street from the direction of the railway station. He was a well-dressed youth, and strikingly handsome. There was a large carbunkle on his nose, but this merely served to give him a more distinguished appearance.

It was quite clear that the youth had just arrived by train, for he carried a portmanteau in one hand, a satchel in the other, and a large cabin-trunk in the other.

On reaching the scene of the snow-fight, he promptly dropped his luggage and dashed into the fray.

Jack Jolly & Co., sprawling in the snow, watched the newcomer in amazement. He did not bother about making snowballs. He simply clenched his fists and rushed full-pelt at the village louts, hitting out right and left.

"Take that—and that—and that!" he panted.

And before his fierce onslaught the booying louts went down like ninepins. His punch was truly terrific. It would have felled an oak.

Jack Jolly & Co. were on their feet now, ready to assist their benefactor if he needed assistance. But he never flinched, who scrambled to their feet and fled howling down the street.

"Oh, good man!" said Jack Jolly, his face beaming with gratitude. "You turned up in the nick of time!"

"It was smart work!" said Merry approvingly.

"Rather!" chimed in Bright. "Who taught you how to use your fists like that, kid?"

Serene, smiling, without having turned a hair—though some fellows would have been as frightened as rabbits—the stranger turned to Jack Jolly & Co.

"It was nothing," he said modestly.



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Tell your pals about these topping yarns, chums—Thanks!

"I'm a natcheral fighting-man. I've never actually been taught how to use my fists, but I picked up a few useful hints from a paper called 'Punch'."

You should advise you fellows to take it in. You seem a feeble set of duffers with your fists."

Jack Jolly frowned. As the leader of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, he was not used to being spoken to like that. But his frown quickly vanished when he realised how much he owed to this bland, swart, smiling stranger.

"What's your name, kid?" he inquired.

"Er—Nuggett!" said the stranger, after some hesitation.

"Well, you are a nugget, and no mistake!" grinned Merry. "Are you coming to St. Sam's, by any chance?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll all toddle up to the school together," said Bright. "After the curridge and stick ability he has shown, you chaps, I think we ought to stand Nuggett a first-rate spread!"

"Hear, hear!"

Nuggett looked very uncomfortable. "I don't want to make any capital out of this, you fellows," he said. "It's awfully decent of you, but I'd rather not feed with you, if you don't mind."

"Rats!" said Jack Jolly.

And Nuggett was piloted away in the direction of St. Sam's. Jack Jolly escorted him, and Merry and Bright carried his luggage.

The three chums soon found themselves taking a great interest in Nuggett. He was a cut above the usual type of fellow who came to St. Sam's.

The grating thing about Nuggett was his polish. He simply oozed refinement; he was a model of good breeding. When he passed the Head in the quadrangle, he did not fail to say, "Cheerio, old bean!" Whereas a fellow without manners would simply have raised his cap.

effect could not have been more startling. "The new boot-boy!" gasped Jack Jolly. "Fancy a fellow with such polish being a boot-boy!"

Nuggett grinned. "Polish is very necessary to a boot-boy," he said. "I suppose you fellows will kick me out now that you know the truth?"

"Not at all!" said Merry. "We're not snobs. We despise everybody beneath us, but after the way you came to our rescue in the village, we don't look upon you as an inferior. We regard you as one of ourselves, and we hope you'll often drop in to tea."

"Yes, rather!" said Bright heartily. Having polished off the sardines, and wolfed the last piece of plum-cake, Nuggett rose to his feet, looking a bit bulky about the waistcoat.

"So long, my pippins!" he drawled, in that dignified way of his. "I must go and report to the House-dame."

"Orry vore!" said Jack Jolly, airily his French.

"Chin-chin!" replied the boot-boy, in perfect English.

And the study door closed behind him.

II.

ST. SAM'S took a great interest in Nuggett, the new boot-boy.

He was quite unlike any of his predececessors. The average boot-boy was beneath contempt. His predecessor was a grubby, undersized urchin who dropped his attitudes when they ought to be sounded, and put them in where they weren't wanted.

Nuggett belonged to a far superior type. He was intelligent and brainy, and could talk on any topic. He even had a dispute with Mr. Lickham, the master of the Fourth, as to whether Gray's Elegy was written by Shakespeare or Tennyson. Mr. Lickham was certain it was by Shakespeare; young Nuggett was equally certain it was by Tennyson. The Head was called in to arbitrate, and his verdict was in Nuggett's favor. "Why, of course Gray's Elegy was written by Tennyson!" he said. "Any fool knows that."

The fact that Nuggett had got the better of a Form master in an argument was soon common knowledge, and the new boot-boy was the centre of great admiration and curiosity. While he was cleaning the boots, fellows would come to him for advice on natty problems. Butleigh of the Sixth, stumped over a passage in Virgil, went to Nuggett, who translated the passage into perfect modern English. And Jack Jolly & Co. persuaded the boot-boy to give them a helping hand with their evening prep.

Even the Head could not help being struck by Nuggett's cleverness and by his sound common-sense. He actually invited the boot-boy to dine with him one evening, and Nuggett put on his

best bib and tucker and went cheerfully into the grate man's presence.

"My dear boy," said the Head, pawing in the act of blowing his snout, "I am in something of a quandary, and I am wondering if you could give me some advice. It would save me a lawyer's fee of six-and-eightpence."

"Trot out your troubles, sir!" said Nuggett, in that refined way of speaking which made him such a popular idol. "What's biling you?"

The Head swallowed a brimming spoonful of soup, mopped his chin with a Soviet, and explained.

"I will be quite frank with you, Nuggett," he said. "As Headmaster of this ancient and historic seat of learning, I am in receipt of a salary of eighty pounds a year. To my mind, it is not enough."

"No jolly fear!" agreed Nuggett. "Eighty pounds a year! Why, it's less than a dustman's salary!"

"Excusey!" said the Head. "I have approached the Guvernors on several occasions for a rise, but they won't hear of it. They are a mean, niggardly set of skinflints! They point out that the wage-bills of the school staff comes to five hundred pounds a year, and they flatly refuse to let it exceed that figure. What would you advise me to do, Nuggett, in the circumstances?"

Nuggett lifted as he put his spoon-plate to his lips to drain it.

"Your problem is quite a simple one, sir," he said. "All you need do is to sack one of the masters—Lickham for choice, as he's such an ignominious block-



Nuggett picked up his sardines with his fingers, and dipped them into the salt-sauce before popping them into his mouth whole.

head. Then you can take his salary and tack in on to your own. In this way you will be getting more money without increasing the wage-bill. The Guvernors needn't know nothing about it."

The Head jumped to his feet, his eyes shining.

"But me, if you're not the most brainy boy I've ever met!" he exclaimed. "I should never have thought of that! I will sack Lickham and annex his salary. Splendid, splendid! And if I should ever want a further increase of money, I will sack another master!"

"That's the idea, sir!" said Nuggett. "In fact, I should be inclined to sack the whole staff if I were you. You are quite capable of running this school single-handed."

This sort of flattery delighted the

The Magnet Library—No. 979.