

"WOLVES OF THE SPANISH MAIN!"

Grand Old-time Yarn of Romance and Adventure—Starts To-day!

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The Magnet

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EVERY SATURDAY.



PUTTING PAID TO PONSONBY!

A powerful incident from this week's grand school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.

Our Special Football Feature!



STARS AND THEIR METHODS!



This week "Referee" holds the microscope over Syd. Puddefoot, the famous English International inside-right of Blackburn Rovers, who did a big share towards helping the Rovers win the F.A. Cup.

IN chatting to "Magnetites" last week about Jimmy Ruffell, the outside-left of West Ham, I had something to say about the 'cute' way in which the Hammers find the youngsters who are trained on into tip-toppers. It is just pure coincidence that for this week's subject I should have chosen another of the players found, developed, and trained into a top-notcher by West Ham—Sydney Charles Puddefoot.

The fact that Puddefoot is to-day one of the recognised masters of the game merely emphasises what I said last week about the way the schoolmasters of the East End of London teach the youngsters, and of how West Ham bring them on.

Of course, Puddefoot doesn't play for West Ham now. His club is Blackburn Rovers, and Blackburn Rovers, as you are doubtless aware, at the present time claim the title of Cup-holders. Syd Puddefoot, occupying the inside-right position, did his share towards gaining for the Rovers the distinction of being holders of the Cup.

A Quaint Story!

This surefooted player of Blackburn Rovers has many claims for recognition by the followers of football, and he holds at least one unique distinction. He is the only English player for whom a Scottish club has paid a transfer fee of five thousand pounds. Usually, of course, the boot is on the other foot; it is the English clubs who pay big cheques for Scottish players.

Some six years ago, however, Falkirk bought Puddefoot from West Ham, and there was no question about the fee paid, because the original of the cheque paid by the Falkirk club can be seen framed, and hanging on the wall of the offices of the West Ham club.

I can tell you a true and rather quaint story connected with that transfer of Puddefoot from West Ham to Falkirk. Syd, who was then a centre-forward, was stationed in Scotland at one period during the War, and he greatly impressed the officials of Falkirk when they saw him play. Later on, Falkirk were in need of a centre-forward, and they asked West Ham whether they would transfer Puddefoot, and if so what would be the price.

Now Falkirk was not regarded as a rich team, and the officials of West Ham did not dream that Falkirk would pay a really big sum for Puddefoot. So they asked what they thought—from Falkirk's point of view—would be a ridiculous price—five thousand pounds. To the great surprise of the West Ham people, the Falkirk officials said: "It's a deal!" And so, as Puddefoot himself had an idea that he would like to

play in Scottish football, he was duly transferred to Falkirk.

A Valuable Hint!

"There is nothing like variety of experience for making a complete footballer," Puddefoot said to me a little time ago. And he went on to add that, in his own opinion, he was a better inside-right because during his career he has played both at centre-forward and at outside-right. "It is only when you have played at centre-forward that you really know the sort of passes a centre-forward likes to get, and the same remark applies to the outside-right." To-day, there is probably no player in the game who can push up more perfect passes to the centre-forward, or make greater use of the outside wing man, than Syd Puddefoot.



SYD. PUDDEFOOT,
the sure-footed inside-right of Blackburn Rovers, who has many claims to recognition by the followers of football.

From the experience of the Blackburn Rovers inside-right I believe there is a most valuable hint which might be taken to heart by my young football readers. The hint is this: Change your position occasionally. If you are a centre-forward, try your hand at inside-right for a bit, or inside-left, not necessarily in serious games, but in practice matches. You won't be any worse a centre-forward for taking a turn in some other position; you may come to learn the game more thoroughly, and the requirements of each position.

The Originator of the "W" Formation!

The man we now have under the microscope came back from Scotland to England as a Blackburn Rovers player in 1925. And though the Rovers naturally had to pay a big price for him, he has been worth every penny. When the offside rule was changed, somebody at Blackburn decided that more than ever it was necessary to have men with the real football skill, as well as the football brains, in the inside-wing positions. So Puddefoot was moved to inside-right from centre-forward, and as showing that he has the brains, it may be added that he was the first to persuade a football side to adopt the "W" formation in attack.

He was much criticised at the time, and the people of Blackburn thought it was all wrong for an inside-wing man to play behind the other forwards. But that Puddefoot was right, and the Blackburn people wrong, has been proved by good results which have attended the Rovers with this method, and partly by the fact that practically all the other clubs have copied Puddefoot's tactical methods.

The Secrets of Success!

I do not think I can do better, in a summary of the big points of Puddefoot's play which give him the right to be included among the masters, than to quote his own words. "Scientific football," he says, "with every move planned out, is at the root of success. Never mind the biff and bang stuff which merely relies in quick sprinting. The real footballer is the man who can flatten out a high ball with a touch of one foot, and find a colleague, perhaps at the other side of the field, with an accurate pass, and who can see at least three kicks ahead."

And, as a last word to young readers, Puddefoot added, when I asked him for a message, he gave me this: "Keep a cool head and a stout heart. When you get the ball, keep it until you see an opening or a colleague better placed."

THANKS TO BUNTER! That Christopher Clarence Carboy was expelled from his last school Billy Bunter is convinced—he knows everything, and always will, so long as they make keyholes to doors! But his inquisitive interest in the new boy's affairs proves unexpectedly beneficial to the junior whose character he is out to blacken!

ALL THROUGH BUNTER!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Letter from Oldcroft!

"**N**ONE for Carboy!" remarked Bob Cherry.

It was morning break at Greyfriars, and some of the Remove fellows had gathered round the rack, to look for letters.

Billy Bunter was there, blinking anxiously over the rack through his big spectacles. Bunter was expecting a postal-order. He had been expecting it quite a long time, and had met with many disappointments; but hope, as the poet has remarked, springs eternal in the human breast.

There was no letter for Bunter. Once more his titled relations and wealthy connections had overlooked the Owl of the Remove. But there was a letter for Christopher Clarence Carboy, the new fellow, and he was not there to take it. Carboy had been kept in the Form-room after second lesson for what the juniors called a "jaw" from the Form master.

Billy Bunter blinked at that letter in great curiosity.

It was addressed to "C. C. Carboy," in a boyish hand. The postmark—which, unlike most postmarks, was quite clear and legible—was "Oldcroft."

"I say, you fellows, that's a letter from Carboy's old school!" said Billy Bunter.

"How the thump do you know that?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I've got eyes—"

"Four!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Beast! That letter's post-marked Oldcroft, and Oldcroft is the name of the school where Carboy was before he came here this term. So it's from his old school, see?"

"Sherlock Holmes the Second!" said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Well, I notice things," said Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, Carboy won't get

that letter till after class, as Quelch's kept him in to jaw."

"I dare say it will keep," remarked Harry Wharton. "None for us, you fellows! Let's get out."

The Famous Five went out into the quad. Other fellows followed them, with or without letters, and Billy Bunter was left blinking alone at the letter-rack.

Carboy's letter seemed to interest him deeply.

Carboy himself interested all the Remove fellows a good deal. There was a rumour abroad that he had been "sacked" from his last school. That rumour had come to the knowledge of Henry Samuel Quelch, the Remove master, and the juniors were assured that Mr. Quelch was looking into the matter. There was much curiosity all through the Remove to know what would come of it. Bunter was the most curious of all. Curiosity was Bunter's besetting sin. His own business was often neglected, but to the business of other fellows Bunter always gave his best attention. Moreover, Bunter disliked Carboy. Carboy, an incorrigible practical joker, had pulled his fat leg—many times. Bunter was strongly tempted to take down that letter and see what was inside.

He hesitated.

It is well said that he who hesitates is lost. Having hesitated a few moments Bunter stretched out a fat hand to the letter.

"Postal-order come at last?" inquired a sarcastic voice over Bunter's shoulder.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He spun round, with Carboy's letter in his hand. Harold Skinner grinned at him. He had arrived, with Snoop, to look for letters, in time to see William George Bunter annex the missive for Carboy, of the Remove.

"That letter's not for you, Bunter!" remarked Snoop.

A rousing extra-long complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co., dealing with Carboy's last few days at Greyfriars.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"I can see Carboy's name on it, fat-head!"

"I—I say, you fellows, I wasn't going to open this letter," exclaimed Billy Bunter, in alarm.

"Of course not!" agreed Skinner. "Quite incapable of such a thing, aren't you, old fat bean?"

"Exactly! I—I took it down—"

"Because you weren't going to look into it?" asked Skinner, in the same sarcastic vein.

And Snoop giggled.

"The—the fact is—"

"The fact is that you're caught in the giddy act!" grinned Skinner.

"Nothing of the sort!" gasped Bunter. "The—the fact is, I—I was going to take this letter to Carboy. You know old Quelch has kept him in to jaw, and he won't get it till after class. I'm going to give it to him in the Form-room in third lesson, see?"

"I don't think!" said Skinner.

"Some fellows can be good-natured and obliging," said Bunter. "You've got a rotten suspicious mind, Skinner. Carboy will be jolly glad to get this letter without waiting till after class."

And Bunter slipped the letter into his pocket and strolled away. Sidney James Snoop stared after him.

"Is that fat idiot really ass enough to bag another fellow's letter and open it?" he ejaculated.

"He's ass enough for anything," answered Skinner. "Let him, if he likes. That fellow, Carboy, came here under false pretences, and if there's anything in that letter to show him up, more power to Bunter's elbow."

"He will bag a flogging if Carboy makes a row about it."

"Well, a flogging will do him good; he doesn't get half enough lickings," said Skinner cheerfully. "Besides, he may be only taking it to give to Carboy, as he says. I'm not butting in, anyway."

Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad with the letter in his pocket. He sat down on a bench under the old elms and took it out and looked at the envelope.

The postmark—that of the town near Carboy's old school—was perfectly clear. The address was written in a school-boy hand, and it was easy to deduce that the letter came from one of Carboy's former schoolfellows.

Billy Bunter blinked longingly at the letter. He would have given the postal-order he was expecting to see what was inside it. Every man in the Remove believed that Carboy had been expelled

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from his old school, and that the headmaster of Greyfriars had somehow been kept in the dark on the subject. Very likely there was something in that letter to prove it. Bunter tried to feel that, in the circumstances, he would be justified in opening that letter and showing the fellow up. But he could not quite convince himself.

Billy Bunter had a conscience, though it was a most accommodating one. He would read without scruple a letter that he found open. But actually opening a letter was a much more serious matter, and Bunter was not a rascal. He blinked longingly at the letter; he crumpled it in his hand in the hope that the envelope would come open by accident. But the envelope did not come open, and Bunter, with a deep sigh, slipped it into his pocket again.

At least he would watch Carboy's face when he took the letter and learn what he could therefrom. When the bell rang for third lesson Bunter rolled away to the House with the letter still in his pocket, unopened. He fully intended to slip it to Carboy in third lesson, when the Form master's back was turned. But good intentions are not always carried out, and any fellow who knew Bunter would have been extremely doubtful about the ultimate fate of that letter from Oldcroft.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Undelivered!

CHRISTOPHER CLARENCE CARBOY stood before his Form master's desk, under his Form master's gimlet eye, and looked as meek as he could.

For a steady five minutes Mr. Quelch had been talking to Carboy. It had been a "royal jaw."

Carboy did not like it. In the first place, he was expecting a letter that morning, and wanted to get out of the Form-room to see whether it had arrived. In the second place, he found Mr. Quelch a bore. But in such matters a Form master had to be given his head, so Carboy looked his meekest and listened, with the patience of Job.

"Bear in mind what I have told you, Carboy!" Mr. Quelch wound up. "Restrain this absurd propensity to practical joking. Some day it may be your undoing."

"Yes, sir," murmured Carboy.

"It has already, I think, made you very unpopular in your Form."

"I—I hope not, sir."

"It is useless to hope not, Carboy, when such is obviously the case!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"The absurd trick you played on Skinner in class this morning was not in the least humorous," resumed Mr. Quelch. "It was simply childish."

"Oh, sir!"

Carboy looked penitent. Perhaps he felt penitent. He often did, when it was too late.

"Absolutely childish," said Mr. Quelch severely. "To place a jam-tart on a form for another boy to sit upon is merely ridiculous. I cannot imagine why the boys laughed. There is no humour in such a proceeding."

Carboy grinned; but the glitter in his Form master's eyes made him instantly serious again.

"As I have caned you for what you did, Carboy, I will say no more about the matter," said the Remove master. "I have only to warn you that it will

be for your good to restrain this ridiculous propensity. I may add that, if you should be guilty of such conduct again during class, I shall report you to your headmaster for a flogging."

"Oh, sir!"

"You may go now, Carboy!"

That was good news, at least. Morning break was half over by that time; and it was brief enough anyway. As Carboy had been caned already, he considered that the matter might very well have ended there. But Mr. Quelch, a very dutiful Form master, had been talking to him for his own good. Carboy felt that he could have got on better with a less dutiful Form master.

He hurried away from the Form-room, and went immediately to the letter-rack. There was no letter for him there.

"Oh, blow!" said Carboy.

Naturally, it did not occur to him that a letter had been there, and that it had been taken down by another fellow.

He went out into the quad to join a crowd who were punting a footer; and it is to be feared that by that time he had quite forgotten Mr. Quelch's homily. For when Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth, strolled by within easy distance, Carboy landed the football, with a deft kick, fairly on Cecil Reginald's beautiful, well-creased, and expensive trousers. The mob of Removites rushed after the ball, leaving Temple of the Fourth staring down at his trousers with horror-stricken eyes. There had been a good deal of mud on the footer which had gone through several puddles. There was less mud on it now—but a good deal on Temple's trousers. Temple was the glass of fashion and the mould of form in his own particular set; and his trousers were a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. And now—

Temple walked back to the House to get the mud off, with feelings that could have been expressed in no known language. Mr. Capper, his Form master, met him at the doorway, with a frown.

"Temple!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Cecil Reginald.

"Go in and brush your trousers at once! I will not have boys of my Form in such a slovenly condition!"

"Oh! I—I—I—"

"At once!" said Mr. Capper sharply.

Temple went in. If his feelings had been inexpressible before, they were doubly inexpressible now.

When the bell rang, Christopher Clarence Carboy came in with the rest of the Form, looking quite merry and bright. In the passage, Temple of the Fourth gave him a homicidal look.

"What were you sacked from Oldcroft for?" hooted Temple. All the Lower School, as well as the Remove, had heard the rumours about Carboy.

"What did they kick you out for?"

"Oh, shut up, Temple!" said Bob Cherry.

"We wouldn't have a fellow in the Fourth who had been kicked out of another school!" said Temple loftily. "That sort of thing may do for the Remove."

Carboy walked on to the Remove Form-room, apparently deaf. Billy Bunter rolled after him.

"I say, Carboy—"

"Oh, rats!" Carboy went into the Form-room.

"I was going to say—"

"Say it to somebody else, fatty." Perhaps Temple's gibe had irritated the new junior; or perhaps he was fed-up with Bunter. Fellows often did get fed-up with Bunter, for no

reason that the Owl of the Remove could see. Carboy went to his place, and Bunter blinked after him in great indignation.

"Beast! He can jolly well wait for his letter now!" murmured Bunter. "If he can't be civil to a chap he can't expect chaps to bring him his letters."

And the letter remained in Bunter's pocket during third lesson. Before class was over, Bunter had forgotten all about it. Third lesson dealt with geography; a subject on which Bunter's ideas were extremely vague. That would not have mattered, for Bunter was totally uninterested in geography, and did not care a straw whether the Canary Islands were in the Atlantic Ocean, or whether the Atlantic Ocean was in the Canary Islands. But Mr. Quelch took quite a different view; and when Bunter told him that the Ganges flowed through the Bramapootra Mountains, Henry Samuel Quelch devoted a lot of attention to Bunter; and by the time the Remove was dismissed, the fat junior was in a gasping and perspiring state; and the letter in his pocket had utterly disappeared from his recollection.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wot!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

The Famous Five walked on regardless.

"Beasts!"

It was tea-time.

Tea-time was always a time for serious reflection, with William George Bunter. Breakfast and dinner, of course, were of equal importance. But those meals were ordered by the school authorities, and Bunter had to chance his luck with them. Tea-time was different. A fellow could tea in Hall, or he could tea in his own study, or he could tea with a friend.

Tea in Hall was the last resource of the stony. Tea in the study presented difficulties when a fellow was short of cash—which was Bunter's almost perpetual state. Tea with a friend presented still greater difficulties; for in spite of Bunter's undoubted fascinations, no Remove fellow ever appeared keen on asking him to tea.

Bunter had no irksome pride or false modesty in the matter. He was willing to ask himself to tea with anybody. Sometimes his luck was good. Sometimes it was not. On the present occasion it was not.

Bunter had looked into the Bunder's study, and barely escaped an inkpot as he hastily retired from it. He had looked in on Ogilvy and Russell; and Ogilvy had picked up a fives bat; and Bunter retired without inquiring what he intended to do with it. He had called on Lord Mauleverer, and found that his lordship was sporting his oak. In his own study, Peter Todd was absent; Peter was teeing out; and when Peter was teeing out, there was nothing for Bunter in Study No. 7. Before it was too late, Bunter had tea'd in Hall, in case of accidents. But tea in Hall was a mere trifle to Bunter—he was ready for another tea—several teas, in fact.

An advance in cash, on the postal-order he had been long expecting, would have seen him through nicely. But no cash was forthcoming from any Remove man. Harry Wharton & Co., when he hailed them in the quad, simply accelerated, and left him there,



Bunter pushed open the study door and entered. The next moment a fearful yell rang the length of the Remove passage. Swish! Swoosh! Splash! "Yarooogh!" Water swamped the fat Removite from head to foot. Where it came from was a mystery to him. But it was there! "Yoop!" he roared, tottering in a pool of water. "Grooogh! Hoooch! Wooooch! Gug-gug-gug!" (See Chapter 3.)

without even stopping to inquire what he wanted. Perhaps they knew.

"Beasts!" muttered Bunter. "They're going over to Highcliffe to tea—and they could take a pal if they liked. Beasts!"

Tea at Highcliffe had many attractions for Bunter. But obviously the Famous Five were not disposed to take a pal.

Bunter rolled away towards the school shop. It was something, at least, to contemplate the good things he would have liked to devour; like a fat Peri at the gates of Paradise. Moreover, there was a faint chance—a very faint one—that Mrs. Mimble might stretch a point for once, and allow him "tick" till his celebrated postal-order came. Generally Mrs. Mimble was deaf to the fat junior's eloquence. Still, you never could tell.

Carboy was coming out of the tuck-shop with a bundle under his arm. Bunter did not need telling that there was a cake in that bundle. He knew that by the size and shape. He blinked

hungrily at the bundle. This beast was going to tea in his own study, with a cake—and he was not going to ask Bunter. Carboy grinned as he passed him, evidently understanding the expression on Bunter's speaking countenance. But he walked on to the House, and Bunter blinked after him, and finally followed.

It was true that he was not on good terms with the new fellow. It was true that it was he, William George Bunter, who had first started the story that Carboy had been expelled from his last school. It was true that he quite disliked the japer of the Remove. Still, there were times when ill-feeling might be set aside—when personal dislikes and antipathies might be forgotten. There were such times, and tea-time was one of them. Bunter rolled into the House, and went up to the Remove passage. If he butted into Study No. 1, he could only be kicked out, and being kicked out, after all, was no new experience for William George Bunter. In fact, he was quite used to it.

To his surprise, as he came up to the Remove landing he saw Carboy come out of the study—without his bundle.

Bunter blinked at him.

Apparently Carboy had deposited the cake in the study and left it there, and did not intend to tea yet. Perhaps he was going to call some other fellow to whack it out with him.

If so, the other fellow was not Bunter, for Carboy passed him and went downstairs, apparently oblivious of his presence.

The sight of Carboy might have recalled to Bunter's mind the letter that still reposed, unopened, in his pocket. But more important matters filled Bunter's mind. The problem of tea occupied his whole thoughts.

He blinked after Carboy as the latter went down the Remove staircase, and grinned as he disappeared.

Then he rolled on to Study No. 1.

Wharton and Nugent, he knew, had gone out. Carboy was downstairs. There would be nobody in the study.

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Carboy might return soon—probably he would. But a few minutes would be enough for Bunter. As a grub-raider and a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles he had had much experience. The study door had been left ajar—Bunter had only to push it open, nip into the study, and the thing was done.

He stopped outside the door of No. 1, and looked this way and that way, like Moses of old.

The passage was deserted. A good many fellows were in their studies at tea, but there was nobody in the Remove passage. The coast was quite clear. If Carboy inquired for the missing cake there would be nobody to say that Bunter had been seen near the study. True, he might be suspected, all the same—when tuck was missing fellows did suspect Bunter, for some reason. But Bunter was accustomed to injustice and carping criticism.

He made up his fat mind at last. One more cautious blink towards the staircase, and then Bunter pushed open the study door and hurriedly entered.

The next moment a fearful yell rang the length of the Remove passage.

Swish! Swoosh! Splash!

"Yarooogh!"

What had happened Bunter did not know for the moment. It seemed to him that the floodgates of the firmament had opened suddenly.

Water swamped him from head to foot. Water drenched his head, and his clothes, and ran down his neck. Where it came from was a mystery. But it was there! There was no doubt that it was there. That, indeed, was only too painfully clear.

"Yooop!" roared Bunter. "Grooogh! Hoooch! Wooooch! Gug-gug-gug!"

He tottered in a pool of water. A shallow tin pan clanged to the floor. It had been perched on the top of the door, brimming with water, and had naturally been dislodged when Bunter pushed the door open and entered. Naturally, it had fallen on Bunter. Once dislodged

from the top of the door, it had obeyed the well-known law of gravitation, like the celebrated apple which excited the scientific interest of Sir Isaac Newton, and started to descend towards the centre of the earth. Bunter stopped it.

Three or four study doors along the Remove passage opened, and fellows stared out. Bunter's wild roars were heard far and wide.

"What the thump—" exclaimed the Bounder.

"What the dickens—"

"My hat! Look at Bunter!" roared Bolsover major. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"He looks wet!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter staggered out of the study doorway. Water dripped and squelched from him as he moved. Water ran down his fat face in streams.

"I say, you fellows—grooogh! I say, I'm drenched! That beast Carboy—Oh, crikey! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Feel a bit damp?" chortled Skinner.

"Yow-ow-ow! That beast—" gasped Bunter. "Oh dear! Ow! The awful rotter—ow!—he knew I was after the cake—ow!—that's why he left it in the study—ooch! He rigged up a booby-trap for me—Woooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

"'Tain't a laughing matter!" roared Bunter. "I'm soaked to the skin! Look at my clothes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm drenched. I shall catch cold—very likely pneumonia and plumbago—ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" chuckled Vernon-Smith. "You were grub-raiding again, you fat bounder—"

"Ow! I wasn't—I never knew there was a cake in the study! Ow-ow-wow! That beast fixed it up for me—wow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Billy Bunter tramped away in great

wrath. There was a plentiful lack of sympathy among the Removites; a roar of laughter followed him. Carboy's japes were not always popular in the Remove, by any means; but a booby-trap rigged up for a grub-raider quite won their approval. In the general opinion, William George Bunter had got exactly what he deserved. The juniors went back to their studies, chuckling, what time the Owl of the Remove crawled dismally away to the dormitory to dry himself and change his clothes.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Quite an Accident!

"H!" ejaculated Bunter.

He blinked at the letter.

In the Remove dormitory the drenched Owl had stripped and rubbed himself dry and changed his clothes. His Etens wanted a good deal of drying before he could put them on again. He proceeded to feel in the pockets of the clothes he had cast off. Among other things, Carboy's letter came to light. Until that moment Bunter had forgotten its existence.

The letter, like everything else that Bunter had had about him, was drenched with water. It was soaked through and through, and as a natural result the flap of the envelope was unstuck.

Bunter sat on a bed with the letter in his hands.

Exactly what Bunter would have done with that letter when he remembered that it was in his pocket might have been doubtful. What he was going to do now was not doubtful. Probably he never would have disregarded the twinges of his fat conscience to the extent of opening the letter. But it was open now—practically open. The wet flap came apart in his fat fingers. Christopher Clarence Carboy, quite unknowingly and unintentionally, had solved a problem for Bunter.

Once the envelope was open Bunter did not hesitate. He drew out the letter from inside.

It was wet through, and had to be handled carefully. Bunter handled it carefully. He spread it out on the bed. Only the first page was written on, so the whole letter was now exposed to the Owl's curious eyes. It ran:

"Dear Chris,—I've got leave for Wednesday, and I shall come over to Courtfield and meet you in the same place as before, the bunshop in the High Street. Say about four o'clock. I shall be jolly glad to see you again, old chap, and hear how you're getting on at your new school. I wish you could come back to Oldcroft, Chris. I've mentioned your name once or twice to the pater, but he's as ratty as ever. It's a rotten shame, and I feel a beast about it.—Yours always, "DICK HOLROYD."

Bunter stared at the letter. It was interesting enough in its way, but it was not what he had expected. There was nothing about Carboy being sacked, and apparently he had left at least one attached pal behind him at his old school. The name of Holroyd was familiar. Skinner had looked out Oldcroft in a work of reference at the public library in Courtfield, and told his friends what he had learned; among other things, that Oldcroft was in Sussex, and that the headmaster's name was Dr. Holroyd. The writer of this letter, apparently, was the headmaster's son; the "pater" to whom he had mentioned to "Chris" was the Head of Oldcroft. So the Head of Oldcroft was as



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"ratty" as ever. That might mean that Carboy had been sacked.

"He was sacked all right," mused Bunter. "I'm jolly certain of it! He's an absolute rotter. A fellow who would fix up a booby-trap for a chap just because he had a nasty suspicion that a chap was after his cake would do anything. I know he jolly well ought to be sacked from Greyfriars, and I jolly well wish he was."

But why did Dick Holroyd say that he felt a beast about it? That was rather mysterious. Possibly he had been concerned in whatever it was that had earned Carboy the sack, and had been let off more lightly because he was the Headmaster's son. Bunter considered that probable.

And the fellow was coming to see Carboy on Wednesday—that was tomorrow. Not for the first time. Bunter remembered the time Carboy had cut games practice, with consequent trouble with Harry Wharton, because he had a very particular appointment in Courtfield. No doubt he had gone to see this fellow Holroyd then. In fact, it was certain that he had. Why couldn't he let the chap come to Greyfriars to see him, if it wasn't fishy? Because the Oldcroft man might let out the truth about him was Bunter's conclusion.

Having assimilated the letter Bunter blinked at it doubtfully, at a loss to know what to do with it.

That letter had come open by accident—practically by accident. In fact, it was that japing ass Carboy's fault that it had come open at all. If he hadn't soaked Bunter with water the letter in Bunter's pocket would never have been soaked, and in consequence would not have come unstuck. It was all Carboy's own doing—that was quite clear to Bunter. But it was scarcely possible to conceal the fact that the envelope had been open. The writing of the letter was wet and blotched, and in several places it had smeared under Bunter's fat fingers as he handled it. As soon as Carboy saw that letter—if ever he did—he would know at once that it had been out of the envelope since its arrival at Greyfriars.

If Bunter handed it to him, therefore, he would know that Bunter had read it. In which case a severe kicking was the least that Bunter could expect. And Carboy might even cut up rusty to the extent of placing the matter in the hands of authority. Certainly any fellow whose letter was opened by another fellow was absolutely certain to make a terrific shindy about it. And it would be just like that beast, and other beasts, too, to make out that Bunter had opened the letter, when, as a matter of fact, he had only taken it from the rack to oblige Carboy, and Carboy had "practically" opened it himself.

There was no doubt that Bunter deserved to be kicked; but he hated the idea all the same. Give every man his deserts, says the sage, and who shall escape whipping? Bunter, at all events, did not want his deserts. He had a strong objection to getting what he deserved for purloining and reading Carboy's letter. To give the letter to Carboy now was to ask for it. Bunter did not mean to ask for it. When he left the dormitory the letter was crumpled in his pocket, and he had no longer any intention whatever of handing it over to Christopher Clarence Carboy. A fellow could not be expected to ask to be kicked.

When Bunter came down to the Remove passage he glanced in at the open doorway of No. 1 Study. Carboy was

there, and Kipps of the Remove was with him, and they were finishing the cake. Carboy grinned at the sight of the wrathful fat face outside the study.

"Wet afternoon—what?" he called out.

"Beast!"

Carboy chuckled.

"After all, you wanted a wash," he remarked. "You've wanted one for weeks."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter.

"In fact, I hardly know you now," said Carboy. "Your face is almost clean, old chap. Honest injun!"

Bunter rolled on in deep wrath. If he had had any scruples concerning Carboy's letter they were gone now—now that the japer of the Remove had added insult to injury. A few minutes later the crumpled letter was squeezed into a damp chunk, and dropped out of the landing window into the thick, old ivy. Bunter's only regret was that he couldn't venture to tell Carboy what he had done with it. But that meant kicking, and evidently this was an occasion when a still tongue showed a wise head. And whether speech might be silver or not, silence was undoubtedly golden.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Strategy!

BILLY BUNTER grinned the next morning when he saw Carboy scanning the rack in break, evidently for a letter. Carboy was expecting a letter, and had no suspicion that that letter had come and gone. Carboy walked away with a thoughtful frown on his face. That day was Wednesday and a half-holiday, and had Carboy received his letter he would have gone down to Courtfield that afternoon to meet his former school-fellow at the bunshop. Now it was not likely that he would go, as he knew nothing of the appointment Holroyd had made.

Dick Holroyd, after a long journey, would find nobody at the bunshop to meet him—rather an unpleasant experience for the Oldcroft fellow. But Bunter did not mind that. He was not given to worrying over other people's troubles. In fact, he grinned at the idea of the headmaster's son from Oldcroft sitting in the bunshop waiting for the fellow who would not come. That beast, Carboy, deserved it all. And probably his friend from Oldcroft was another beast who deserved it, too.

Bunter was thinking that morning. His inquisitiveness regarding Carboy's "past" was as keen as ever. And since the incident of the booby-trap in No. 1 Study Bunter felt more strongly than ever that a fellow who had come to Greyfriars under false pretences ought to be shown up. Carboy, obviously, would not keep the appointment at the bunshop now; but the brilliant idea had occurred to Bunter of keeping it himself. A clever, sagacious, intelligent fellow like Bunter would be able to draw the facts out of the Oldcroft fellow, and place the matter beyond doubt. Whatever it was that had happened to Carboy at his old school, it was certain that Dick Holroyd knew all about it. Bunter had only to pump the fellow, and pass on the result to all Greyfriars. That, no doubt, would make Christopher Clarence Carboy properly sorry that he had drenched a fellow with water, on a nasty suspicion that the fellow was after his cake.

After dinner that day Bunter thought it over further, and made up his fat mind. Holroyd was to be at the bunshop at four; Bunter was going to be

there at four also. That Carboy would not be on the spot he soon ascertained. Harry Wharton & Co. were playing the Fourth at football that afternoon, and the captain of the Remove offered Carboy a place in the team. The Form match with the Fourth was a trifling matter to the Remove, who were accustomed to walking all over Temple & Co. at games. And on such occasions the mighty men of the Remove eleven stood out to give the smaller fry a chance. At three o'clock Billy Bunter saw Carboy line up with the Remove footballers, and grinned as he saw him. Christopher Clarence Carboy was safe for the afternoon now.

Having seen the ball kicked off Billy Bunter rolled away from Little Side, and started for Courtfield. It was rather a long walk to the town for Bunter, and he was puffing and perspiring by the time he arrived at the bunshop. It was well past four o'clock when he arrived there; but he had no doubt that the Oldcroft fellow would be waiting.

Bunter rolled into the bunshop, and blinked over the customers at the little tables in search of Holroyd. At a table near the door a schoolboy sat with his eyes on the people coming in, evidently expecting somebody. Bunter could guess easily enough that this was the fellow he sought, and he blinked at him very curiously. Dick Holroyd, if it was he, was a good-looking, pleasant-faced fellow, with a rather weak chin and irresolute mouth—not a fellow of strong character, as even Bunter could see, but very pleasant and agreeable to look at. It was past four, and Bunter noted that the schoolboy was looking a little anxious and worried occasionally as he watched the people who came in at the door, and hardly touched the cake and ginger-pop that stood on the table before him. No doubt he was wondering why his friend did not come. Bunter rolled up to the table at last, and the schoolboy glanced at him inquiringly.

"You're Holroyd?" asked Bunter.

"That's my name."

"Waiting for Carboy?"

"Eh? Yes."

"I've come instead."

"Oh!"

Bunter sat down at the little table opposite the Oldcroft fellow. He was feeling very satisfied. So far his task had been easy enough.

"Carboy's awfully sorry he can't come," continued Bunter. "The fact is he was wanted for footer this afternoon."

"Oh!" said Holroyd, plainly disappointed and disconcerted.

"So I came along to tell you," explained Bunter. "Carboy's—ahem!—a great friend of mine. We're great pals, in fact."

"Oh!" repeated Holroyd.

"Makes a fellow jolly thirsty, walking here all the way from Greyfriars," remarked Bunter, with an eye on Holroyd's glass of ginger-beer.

"Does it?"

"It does! I'm frightfully dry!"

Bunter picked up the glass.

As Holroyd raised no objection, he emptied it. He sighed with satisfaction as he set down the glass.

"That's good!" he said. "I could do with another."

"Plenty here, if you want it!" said Holroyd. "There's the waitress."

Bunter did not call the waitress. He remembered his experience a few weeks earlier, in that same bunshop, with Carboy, when he had given reck-

less orders, with the intention of landing the bill on the new fellow. It had led to disaster. Bunter was not keen on repeating that experience. This fellow, he concluded, was just such another beast as Carboy. After Bunter had walked all the way from Greyfriars to oblige him, he couldn't stand a fellow a ginger-pop.

"Did Carboy send me any message?" asked Holroyd.

"Only that he couldn't come."

"Oh!"

"Awfully sorry, and all that," added Bunter. "You see, he couldn't get out of playing in that football match. The fellows wanted him."

"So he's going in for football at Greyfriars?" said Holroyd. "He never told me so." The Oldcroft fellow was disappointed and worried. "Why didn't he answer my letter and tell me? It's no joke to come here all the way from Oldcroft for nothing."

"Didn't he answer your letter?" smiled Bunter.

"No. As I had no answer, I took it for granted that he would be here. It's rather rotten."

"Must be," agreed Bunter. "Of course, you can't go on to Greyfriars to see him, can you?"

Holroyd looked at the Owl rather quickly.

"It might lead to things coming out, mightn't it?" pursued Bunter.

"Has Carboy told you—" Dick Holroyd paused.

"Everything," said Bunter genially. "I'm his dearest pal, you know—bosom-chums, and all that. I'm standing by him against practically the whole Form. See?"

"I don't see," answered Holroyd, with a stare. "Do you mean that fellows are down on him at his new school?"

"Didn't you know?" fenced Bunter.

"Of course not. Why should they be?"

"It's come out, you know."

"What's come out?" asked Holroyd irritably.

"About why he left Oldcroft."

"Oh, my hat!"

Holroyd sat and stared at Bunter across the table. Evidently the Owl's statement had surprised and disturbed him.

Bunter's heart beat faster. He was getting on famously with the "pumping" operation.

"You see, a fellow happened to see a letter from Carboy's pater that mentioned about his having to leave Oldcroft," he said.

"My hat! Do fellows spy into one another's letters at Greyfriars?" asked Holroyd, with a curl of the lip.

"It was by chance, of course. I—"

"You?" said Holroyd.

"I mean, I—I— The fellow saw the letter by chance—quite an accident. Anyhow, it all came out; and a fellow gave it away to the Form master."

"Oh!"

"That's Quelchy—a dry old stick," said Bunter. "Quelchy hasn't said anything, so far; but the fellows all know that he's got his teeth into it, and is going to worry it all out."

"Oh!" said Holroyd blankly.

His face was full of dismay now. Bunter, feeling that he was close on the track of the secret, was almost trembling with eagerness.

"You see, that man Carboy has set a lot of fellows against him, with his rotten japing and practical jokes," said Bunter. "Only yesterday he fixed up a booby-trap and drenched a fellow with water from head to foot."

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Holroyd grinned.

"That's like him," he said. "He was like that at Oldcroft. Look here—by the way, you haven't told me your name."

Bunter hesitated a moment. Sooner or later, Holroyd would see Carboy; and when that happened Bunter certainly did not want it to transpire that he, William George Bunter, had kept the appointment in the bunshop; it would be only too plain an indication of what had become of the lost letter.

"Wharton!" he said, after that brief moment's hesitation. "I'm Wharton, you know."

Holroyd stared at him, evidently surprised.

"Carboy's mentioned your name to me," he said. "He told me that Wharton was captain of his Form at Greyfriars."

"Oh! Yes; exactly."

"Last time I saw him he was on rather scrapping terms with Wharton, from what he told me."

"Oh! Yes. We—we've made it up!" stammered Bunter.

Holroyd was still staring at the fat Remove. Obviously, Bunter did not tally with the description Carboy had given him of the captain of the Remove. He certainly had not expected Wharton to be a fat, unwieldy fellow in glasses. Bunter realized that he was treading on thin ice, and wished that he had given some other name. But it was too late to think of that now.

"Carboy was sent to Coventry by most of the Form," Bunter went on hastily. "Then he made the fellows believe that he was a millionaire, with one of his stunts, and a lot of them came round."

Holroyd laughed.

"Nice lot!" he said.

"Now they're more down on him than ever," went on Bunter. "One of them gave him away to Quelchy. Skinner, I fancy—but, of course, nobody knows. He won't be much longer at Greyfriars."

"Eh! Why not?"

"Quelchy saw the Head about it at once," said Bunter. "All the fellows know they chewed it over. Nothing's been done, so far—but something's going on behind the scenes—we all know that. The chopper may come down any minute now. Of course, a fellow who's been turned out of another school can't come to Greyfriars. He must have taken the Head in somehow. Old Locke's rather an old donkey; but, of course, he will be wild and waxy when he finds out that the wool was pulled over his eyes, and that he let a man into Greyfriars who was turned out of another school. As soon as he knows for certain how the matter stands, Carboy will be bunked."

"Oh!" ejaculated Holroyd.

"He jolly well knows it himself, with all his cheek and swank," said Bunter. "He makes out that he doesn't care a rap, but he jolly well knows he will have to go, now that it's come out that he was sacked from Oldcroft."

Holroyd stared at him hard.

"You've told me that you were Carboy's friend. Is that how you speak of a friend?"

"Oh! I—I mean—"

"You've told me that Carboy has told you all about it. If he had, you would know that he wasn't sacked from Oldcroft."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He was getting information; but not precisely the sort he was in quest of.

"He had to leave, as you seem to know," said Holroyd. "But he wasn't

sacked or anything like it. You'd jolly well know that if he'd told you as much as you make out. You're spoofing!"

"I—I mean—" stammered Bunter.

"But it comes to the same thing, so far as Greyfriars is concerned, I suppose," said Holroyd moodily.

"Of course it does," said Bunter. "There ain't a fat lot of difference between being sacked, and having to leave—"

"There's a big difference; but if the headmaster of Greyfriars wasn't told he will be bound to get his back up. And I suppose he wasn't—he might not have let Carboy in if he'd known." Holroyd, evidently deeply worried and disturbed, gnawed his lip restlessly. "Carboy must have been an ass to get the thing talked about at his new school—still, I suppose he couldn't help it, if some spying cad got hold of a letter and read it—"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Well, all the fat's in the fire now!" growled Holroyd. "If Carboy's going to be turned out of Greyfriars, there's only one thing for me to do."

Bunter blinked at him, utterly mystified by that remark.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "I don't see—"

"Mind your own business!" said Holroyd savagely. "You're no friend of Carboy's from the way you talk; and you're spoofing in making out that he's told you the whole story. That's clear enough. If you came here to bring me a message from him, I'm obliged; but I'm jolly certain that you came more than anything else to pry into what doesn't concern you! You look that sort!"

"Why, you cheeky beast—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Dick Holroyd rose from the table, picked up his bill, and walked to the door. Bunter blinked after him. Holroyd paid his bill, and walked out of the bunshop, leaving Bunter staring.

The interview had come to a sudden end.

William George Bunter, as he rolled back to Greyfriars, felt extremely dissatisfied. Instead of gaining complete information on the mystery of Carboy, he was more mystified than ever. Really, it had not been worth the long walk home. It was a tired and discontented Owl that rolled wearily in at the gates of Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Visitor for Carboy!

CHRISTOPHER CLARENCE CARBOY came off the junior football ground in a cheery mood, and walked to the changing-room with the other footballers. Vernon-Smith had captained the Remove side in the football match, and had led the Remove to victory, beating the Fourth by three goals to nil. Of the Famous Five, only Nugent had figured in the game, the other four members of the Co. having stood out to make room for lesser lights.

Carboy had done fairly well in the match, and was responsible for one of the goals. He had enjoyed the game, and went into the changing-room in cheery spirits—not at all downcast, apparently, by the fact that many of the fellows there gave him the cold shoulder. All the Remove had regarded him with dubious eyes since the rumour had spread that he had been expelled from his previous school; the general feeling being that a fellow who was not good enough for Oldcroft was not good enough for Greyfriars.



"Don't come the high horse with me!" said Carboy contemptuously. "You're found out!" "Found out!" roared Wharton. "Yes," exclaimed Carboy savagely, "you opened my letter and read it, and went to see the chap who'd written it, to spy into my personal affairs!" Wharton's fists clenched, his face crimsoned, and his eyes glinted. (See Chapter 7.)

For a time he had been sent to Coventry by some of the Form; but that had come to an end. But he was under a cloud, and a good many fellows in the Remove preferred him to keep his distance. That, however, did not seem to disturb Carboy's equanimity to any great extent—to all appearance, at least.

Trotter, the House page, looked into the changing-room doorway, after the footballers had come in.

"Master Carboy 'ere?" asked Trotter.

"Adsum!" said Carboy humorously.

"Gentleman waiting to see you in the visitors'-room, sir!" said Trotter.

"Oh, all right!"

Carboy finished changing rather hurriedly. He made his way to the visitors'-room, with a puzzled expression on his face. He had had no expectation of receiving a visit from anyone that afternoon.

"Dick!"

He uttered that name in astonishment as he entered the room, and Dick Holroyd rose from a chair.

"You here, Dick?"

Carboy closed the door, and turned again to the Oldcroft fellow. His look showed that he was surprised to see the Oldcroft fellow, and did not indicate that he was pleased.

"Yes, I came on," said Holroyd.

"I'm glad to see you, of course," said Carboy. "Always glad to see you. But we agreed that it was better for you not to come here, Dick. I don't want

fellows here to get talking to an Oldcroft man, in the circumstances. Least said soonest mended."

"I know all that. But I had to see you after what Wharton told me—"

"You've seen Wharton?"

"Didn't you send him to the bunshop to tell me you couldn't come because you were playing football this afternoon, you ass?"

Carboy jumped.

"What the thump! Nothing of the sort! What do you mean? Have you been at Courtfield?"

It was Holroyd's turn to jump.

"Of course I have. I told you in my letter I was coming this afternoon."

"What letter?"

"You had my letter, I suppose?"

"I've had no letter."

"You're dreaming," said Holroyd.

"Wharton said you'd sent him, and even if you hadn't, he knew I was there. How could he have known if you hadn't told him, and how could you have known if you hadn't had my letter? Are you wandering in your mind, or what?"

Carboy's face set hard.

"I've had no letter," he repeated, "and if Wharton met you in Courtfield and told you I sent him, he was telling lies. If he knew you were there, he must have had your letter, if you wrote one—"

"Oh crumbs!" said Holroyd.

"I can't make this out," said Carboy. "I've been on scrapping terms with Wharton—he was frightfully rusty over

a jape or two—but we've got on pretty good terms since then. He never seemed to me the fellow to do a mean thing—only a bit stuck-up, perhaps, but not a dishonourable fellow in any way. But if he got my letter instead of me, he—"

"Well, he must have if you didn't get it, for he was there, and he said you'd sent him."

"The rotter!" said Carboy, between his teeth.

"From what he said it seems it's all out now, over all the school, that you had to leave Oldcroft. Never mind Wharton, he doesn't matter," added Holroyd impatiently, as Carboy was about to interrupt him. "Is it true what he says, that all Greyfriars knows that you had to leave Oldcroft?"

"Well, yes."

"You never let me know."

"What was the good?"

"Well, I ought to have known," said Holroyd. "I'm told that your Form master knows, and that he's seen the headmaster about it."

"It can't be helped."

"But it means trouble. Your father never told the headmaster here that you had to leave Oldcroft."

"I suppose not! I dare say he thought that the least said the soonest mended," answered Carboy. "It wasn't as if I'd been sacked, or anything of that kind. There was really nothing to hide. But it would have been rather difficult about my getting in here, I

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suppose, if Dr. Locke had been told everything. No harm was done."

"I know that. But now the Head knows, what will he do?"

Carboy shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know! I dare say he's written to my pater." He grinned. "If he asks my pater whether I was expelled from Oldcroft, he'll get his answer. I wasn't."

"Suppose he gets in touch with my father, the headmaster of Oldcroft?"

Carboy did not answer.

"If he does, he will get the whole story," said Holroyd. "What will that mean for you here?"

No answer.

"For goodness' sake speak!" grunted Holroyd. "Can't you see how this is worrying me?"

"Well, I suppose if it comes to that, I shall have to go," said Carboy. "It can't be helped, if it does mean that. I'm not whining about it."

"It's a rotten position for me."

"I know."

"I shall have to set it right somehow," said Holroyd miserably. "Goodness knows how I shall face the pater. I ought to have done it before—at the time. But—"

"Oh, wash it out!" said Carboy. "I stood by you then, and I'm standing by you now. It's not your fault that I've been given away here. Just shove it out of your mind, and let things rip."

"I can't!"

"Besides, it may not come to that. Dr. Holroyd made my father take me away. But my headmaster here isn't such a grumpy old stick—excuse me—as your pater. He may take a milder view. He's a good sort. I shouldn't wonder if it turns out all right."

"But if it doesn't?"

"Well, if it doesn't, I can stand it. Don't worry."

The door opened, and Skinner of the Remove came in, with Bolsover major and Snoop. They were grinning.

"I hear there's a chap from your old school here, Carboy," said Skinner. "Any objection to a fellow making his acquaintance?"

Carboy's eyes gleamed.

"Lots!" he answered. "It depends on the fellow, you see! Get out!"

"Oh, let's have a word or two with the man," grinned Snoop. "He can tell us why you were sacked."

"Get out!" snapped Carboy.

"Rats!" retorted Bolsover major. "I'm jolly glad to see an Oldcroft man. What's your name, young un?"

"Find out!" snapped Holroyd.

"Look here—"

"Let's get out of this!" said Carboy, and he left the room with the Oldcroft fellow, leaving Skinner & Co. grinning.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Trouble:

"HAD a good game?"

Harry Wharton asked that question when Carboy came into Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Wharton had been out of gates that afternoon, with Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh. The chums of the Remove had returned rather late for tea, and Wharton and Frank Nugent were in the study when Carboy came in.

Carboy did not answer the question of the captain of the Remove. His face was dark and set, and his eyes gleaming.

Wharton gave him a second glance.

Something, evidently, was wrong with Christopher Clarence Carboy.

"Jolly good game," interposed Nugent, anxious to pour oil on waters that were obviously troubled. "Carboy put up quite a good game. He got one of the goals."

"Good!" said Harry, his eyes still on Carboy's angry face.

Hitherto, when there had been trouble in Study No. 1, it was Wharton's temper that had failed. Since the time when Carboy had saved him from a flogging, however, Wharton had been very circumspect. He liked practical jokes and practical jokers no more than before, and he was not anxious for the friendship of a fellow who, according to all probability, had disgraced himself at another school. But he was mindful of that good turn, and he was always very civil to Carboy, and he had set his face very inflexibly against sending the new fellow to Coventry.

If there was to be more trouble in the study Wharton was resolved that it should not be his fault, and Carboy was so easy-going and tolerant, as a rule, that it seemed very unlikely that trouble would come from his side. Now the position of affairs seemed to be reversed. Carboy had come hunting for trouble. That was plain from his looks.

"A letter came here for me yesterday," said Carboy abruptly.

Wharton raised his eyebrows.

"I know that," he answered.

"Oh! You admit it?"

"Why shouldn't I? I happened to

I · SEE · ALL

see it in the rack yesterday morning. What about it?"

"Is that all you happened to do?" sneered Carboy.

"I don't understand you."

"I'll make it plain. You didn't happen to take the letter—"

"What?"

"And open it and read it."

"What!" roared Wharton.

He leaped to his feet, his eyes blazing.

"Oh, don't come the high horse with me!" said Carboy contemptuously. "You can't carry it off like that. You're found out."

"Found out?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes, and I'm going to tell you what I think of you. I'll tell all the Remove, if you like!" exclaimed Carboy savagely. "You opened my letter and read it, and went to see the chap who'd written it, to spy into my personal affairs. Now give me the letter!"

Wharton stared at him. His face was crimson and his eyes glinting. But angry as he was, he was more surprised than angry.

"You think I'm a fellow to read another fellow's letter?" he exclaimed.

"I know you are."

"You accuse me—"

"I've done so. I tell you you're found out," said Carboy. "Do you want me to say it all over again? You took my letter and read it."

"You frabjous idiot!" exclaimed Nugent. "You must be off your rocker to suppose such a thing."

"I happen to know it's a fact," said Carboy bitterly. "There's been a lot of curiosity here to find out why I left Oldcroft. Wharton's taken his own way of finding out—by reading that letter that came to me yesterday from

an Oldcroft man. Much good may it do him."

"You utter ass!"

"He doesn't deny it!" sneered Carboy.

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Deny it!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I should take the trouble to deny a rotten lie like that? If you believe what you're saying, you're a fool! You dare to accuse me of reading your letter—"

"Oh, chuck up the heroics! I tell you you're found out. If you didn't read my letter, how did you know that Holroyd was coming over from Oldcroft to see me to-day?"

"This is the first I've heard of it that he was."

"Oh, pile it on! You'll tell me next that you haven't been to Courtfield to-day!" sneered Carboy.

"Quite so; I haven't."

"Well, I've run into a few liars since I came to Greyfriars, but you beat Bunter and Skinner hollow," said Carboy. "I suppose you must have thought that it wouldn't come out. But it's come out all right. I've seen Holroyd."

"I don't know who Holroyd is, and don't care. You've accused me of taking your letter and reading it," said Harry. "I suppose you know that you've got to answer for it."

Carboy laughed contemptuously.

"You've got to answer for what you've done. It would serve you right if I went to Quelch and reported it."

"You can go to Quelch as soon as you like, and I'll come with you!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Well, I'm not going to do that, but I'm going to give you the hiding of your life, if I've got it in me to do it!" said Carboy, between his teeth. "Last time we scrapped in this study you forced it on me. Now—now you'll find me ready enough. A fellow who would read another fellow's letter—"

Wharton controlled his anger with an effort.

"Is it any use telling you that I never touched your letter?" he asked.

"None at all, as I know you did."

"That does it!" said Wharton. "I won't say any more to you, Carboy. I'm ready at any time and place you like, and you can fix it with Nugent."

With that the captain of the Remove left the study.

Three or four fellows in the Remove passage looked at him curiously. The captain of the Remove was almost white.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anything up?" called out Bob Cherry.

Wharton nodded; but he was too angry to speak. He went on down the Remove staircase, leaving the fellows staring.

"His Magnificent Highness has got his magnificent back up!" chuckled Skinner. "Who's the happy victim, I wonder?"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!" growled Bob, and he followed the captain of the Remove, with a worried brow.

Nugent came out of Study No. 1, and was immediately surrounded by a crowd of curious fellows who wanted to know.

"Fight on with Carboy!" Nugent explained.

"Oh, rot!" said Johnny Bull. "Is Wharton scrapping with him again over some fatheaded jape?"

"No. Carboy accuses him of taking his letter and reading it." Nugent's eyes were gleaming. "I hope Wharton will give the cad the thrashing of his life."

"Oh, my hat!"
"Great Scott! The fellow must be off his rocker!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "He must be absolutely potty!"
"The pottyfulness must be terrific!" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh in amazement.

"Well, that's what he said!" growled Nugent. "And it's fixed to take place in the Rag after prep. Wharton will lick him, that's one comfort."

"If he doesn't, I jolly well will!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "But what put such a fool idea into his silly head?"

"Goodness knows!"

"How are the mighty fallen!" sighed Skinner. "Fancy Wharton, the model of the Form, coming down to Bunter's tricks! Yarooogh!"

Skinner wound up with a fiendish yell as Johnny Bull grabbed his collar and banged his head against the passage wall.

"Any more to say?" roared Johnny Bull ferociously.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" Skinner rubbed his head and yelled. "You rotter! Yow-ow-ow! Oh, my napper! Yooooop!"

"Look here, you jolly well let Skinner alone!" exclaimed Bolsover major in his most bullying tone. "If Wharton's been bagging another fellow's letter—why, what—Hands off! Oh, my hat!"

Bolsover major roared as he was grasped on either side by Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent. He went down on the floor of the Remove passage with a resounding crash.

"Look here—" began Snoop.

"Are you going to say the same?" roared Johnny Bull, turning on Sidney James Snoop, with a look that made Sidney James jump back in alarm.

"Oh! Nunnol! I—"

"Shut up, then!"

"Look here," roared Bolsover major, struggling to a sitting posture and glaring at the chums of the Remove—"look here, I'll jolly well—"

"Shut up!"

"I tell you I'll jolly well—"

"You want some more, do you?" asked Frank Nugent savagely, and three pairs of hands grasped Bolsover major, and his head came against the floor with a mighty smite.

"Whoop!"

"If any other absurd ass has any preposterous remark to make—" said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, glancing round.

No one had. The chums of the Remove went downstairs to seek Wharton, leaving an excited and buzzing crowd behind them.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Worried!

"O H, crikey!"
Billy Bunter uttered that ejaculation.

His fat face was full of dismay.

Bunter had rolled into the Remove passage, after his walk back from Courtfield, which had taken Bunter a very long time, being punctured with long rests by the wayside. However, he had arrived at last, tired and hungry—especially hungry. He rolled into Study No. 7 in the hope of finding provender there; but Peter Todd and Tom Dutton had finished their tea long since, and gone. Bunter rolled out again, prepared to visit every study in the Remove passage in turn, hoping to find some fellows still at tea, or at least that

some fellows had left something over from tea—in which case the hungry Owl would promptly have annexed the "something." But, famished as he was, Bunter could not help noticing the excitement that reigned in the Remove passage.

More than a dozen fellows were in the passage, talking and discussing; and from several of the studies came the buzz of voices. Something, evidently, was "on" in the Remove, which Bunter had missed through being out of gates. And, postponing even the search for provender in his curiosity, the Owl of the Remove inquired what it was, and fairly gasped when he learned.

"Oh, crikey!" he repeated. "Oh, crumbs! Oh, jiminy!"

Skinner, who had given him the information, stared at him. Skinner was feeling pleased about it. He did not, of course, believe for a moment the accusation that Carboy had made against the captain of the Form. He disliked Wharton keenly enough, but his dislike did not blind his judgment, and he knew quite well that there must be a mistake somewhere. But he was very pleased that the accusation had been made, all the same. It would bring down Wharton's swank a peg or two, he considered, which, in Skinner's valuable opinion, was a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Likewise, it was quite possible that Carboy might lick him—and Skinner would have given a week's pocket-money to see Wharton licked. If not, he would lick Carboy, which was quite as much to the good—Skinner longed to see the japer of the Form thoroughly licked. Probably they would do each other a very considerable amount of damage, and that, in the amiable Skinner's opinion, was best of all. He was looking forward to a treat in the Rag after prep that evening.

Bunter's obvious dismay puzzled him. What it had to do with Bunter was quite a mystery to Skinner.

"The man's a silly ass!" gasped Bunter. "Wharton never did—" He broke off. This was the outcome of his use of Wharton's name in the interview with the Oldcroft man at Courtfield. It was an outcome that he might have foreseen, had Bunter ever foreseen anything.

But he had not even dreamed of it. He had thought only of saving himself from a licking. The news took him quite by surprise.

"How did you know Wharton didn't?" chuckled Skinner. "You don't know anything about it, Bunter."

"I jolly well do! I—" Bunter broke off again.

"Well, if you come down to brass tacks, I dare say you do!" grinned Skinner. "I remember seeing you hook down Carboy's letter yesterday morning."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Carboy never got that letter," continued Skinner. "What makes him think Wharton got it beats me hollow! He must be a fool!"

"Oh dear!" said Bunter.

"You should have seen Wharton's face!" chortled Skinner. "The Great Panjandrum thinks he's above being suspected of anything like a common mortal, you know. It took all the wind out of his sails. He was quite pale—eyes flashing like a chap on the films. His pals are as wild as you like about it. Carboy's booked for a high old time."

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Bunter. "He drenched me with water yesterday, making out that I was after

his measly cake! It shows he's got a low, suspicious mind!"

"They had a scrap before," said Snoop, with a grin. "Wharton got the best of it, but he was awfully knocked up and marked. Carboy's got plenty of go in him: He will give Wharton something to remember him by."

"Might even lick him," said Skinner hopefully. "You never can tell—there's a lot of luck in these things. It will take him down a peg if he's thrashed. What a game!"

"I—I say, you fellows, that idiot Carboy's making a silly mistake!" stammered Bunter.

Skinner eyed him narrowly.

"You're mixed up in it somehow, Bunter," he said. "You've been up to something, I know that."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"If you want to stop the fight, you can own up," grinned Skinner. "You'll get what Carboy's got in store for Wharton if you tell him that you had his letter."

"I—I never had it!" gasped Bunter. "I'm prepared to swear that I never even saw it in the letter-rack! You can bear me out, Skinner—you were there at the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Besides, I only took it to give it to Carboy in the Form-room, as I told you. And I'd have given it to him, only he was such a beast, and then Quelchly ragged me and I forgot. It was Carboy's fault the letter came open, too."

"Oh! It came open, did it?" chortled Skinner.

"No! Of course not! Nothing of the kind! You see, I never had it!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Bunter rolled away in a worried frame of mind. Skinner grinned after him, and winked at Snoop.

"Bunter had that letter, of course," he said. "He's somehow made Carboy believe that Wharton had it. How on earth did he wangle that?"

"Goodness knows!" said Snoop.

"The fat freak's got more brains than I ever believed," said Skinner. "He's wangled this somehow, and I can't guess how. We needn't say anything, Snoop—no bizney of ours."

"No fear!" agreed Snoop.

Billy Bunter rolled into his study in a dismayed and worried state. Bunter was not a very particular youth, or a very conscientious youth. But his faults, whose name was legion, were chiefly due to obtuseness. He did many things for which he deserved to be kicked, but quite without realising that he deserved to be kicked for them. On the present occasion Bunter realised quite clearly that if he let the fight take place between Carboy and the captain of the Remove, as a result of his deception, he would be acting in an extremely shabby way. Other fellows would have used a stronger word; but even Bunter could see that his conduct would be very shabby. Consciously, the Owl of the Remove never did shabby things. Unconsciously, he did a large number. But he could not be unconscious this time of the shabbiness of his conduct, and it worried him deeply.

But to own up was impracticable. Carboy would kick him for purloining the letter; Wharton would kick him for using his name. It was rotten all round, and it worried Bunter. He had not really meant any harm in borrowing Wharton's name. He had borrowed it because it had been the first that came

into his head, and it was necessary to conceal his own. He had not had the remotest idea that there would be all this fuss about it. That beast, Carboy, must have seen that other beast, Holroyd, since the meeting at the bunshop; and the other beast had told him. A fellow could not be expected to foresee that—Bunter, indeed, could not be expected to foresee anything.

"Oh dear!" mumbled Bunter.

Peter Todd came into the study, and found the Owl of the Remove sitting in the armchair, with a deep wrinkle in his fat brow. Bunter was plunged in troubled thought—to such an extent that he had actually forgotten that he was hungry.

"Hallo! What's the jolly old trouble, fatty?" asked Peter. "Been butting into booby-traps again?"

"I say, Peter—" Bunter hesitated. "I say, I hear that Carboy's going to fight Wharton over that letter he lost—"

"Did he lose a letter?" asked Peter. "He's going to fight Wharton, that's a cert; and he's going to get the licking of his life, I hope!"

"He's making a mistake, you know," ventured Bunter.

"I know that, and all the Remove knows it! Mistake or not, he deserves a thundering good hiding for making such an accusation!"

"Yes, that's so," said Bunter, rather comforted. "He's a suspicious beast, Peter. He suspected that I was after his cake yesterday—"

"Fathead!"

"A jolly good hiding would do him good!" said Bunter. "I don't see that I'm called on to interfere."

Peter stared at him.

"You! What have you got to do with it?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter hastily.

"Do you know anything about it?" asked Toddy suspiciously. "It seems that a letter for Carboy was taken by somebody. You're the only man in the Form who would do a thing like that!"

"Why, you beast—"

Bunter rolled out of the study, Peter's glance following him doubtfully. He rolled along to Study No. 1, and found Wharton and Nugent there. The expression on Wharton's face banished any idea Bunter may have had of owning up to the truth.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, get out, Bunter!" said Nugent crossly. "Don't bother now!"

"I say, Harry, old chap—"

"Don't worry!"

"If that's what you call civil, Wharton—"

"For goodness' sake, don't bother, Bunter!" said the captain of the Remove irritably.

"I hear you're going to fight Carboy—"

"Yes; dry up!"

"About that letter—" persisted Bunter. "My opinion is, old chap, that Carboy is making a silly mistake. I'd let him off, if I were you!"

Wharton stared at the Owl of the Remove.

"Would you mind keeping your advice till I ask you for it?" he inquired.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut the door after you."

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled away. He found Carboy in the Rag, reading—or affecting to read—a book. He was quite alone. There were plenty of fellows in the Rag, but they kept away from Carboy.

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He had not been popular before, but now his unpopularity was complete.

His accusation against Wharton was the last straw.

With the exception of a few fellows like Skinner and his friends, every man in the Remove regarded that accusation with contempt and derision, and they made their opinion quite plain. There was quite a wide space round Christopher Clarence Carboy when Bunter rolled over to him.

"I say—" began Bunter.

Carboy looked up from his book.

"Hook it!" he said briefly.

"I was going to say—"

"Well, don't!"

"Look here, Carboy, you're making a silly mistake about Wharton—"

"What do you know about it?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Then shut up!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him and rolled away again. He had done his best, in the role of peacemaker, short of owning up to the facts. That was a length to which Bunter was not prepared to go.

But he was worried. It was seldom that his fat conscience troubled him; but it was troubling him now sorely. At prep in Study No. 7 that evening Bunter was buried in thought, and he was not thinking of the lesson he was preparing. He really rather wished that he wasn't such an honourable, manly, straightforward fellow. Then he wouldn't have worried so much. As it was, William George Bunter worried very much indeed.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Diplomatic!

THERE was an icy silence in Study No. 1.

Wharton, Nugent, and Carboy were at prep there.

There had been trouble in that study before, owing to Carboy's irrepressible japing proclivities; and at times the juniors had been on very distant terms. But there had never been anything like the grim bitterness that reigned now.

Wharton's face was hard and set, and he took no notice whatever of Carboy's presence in the study. The fight was booked to take place after prep, and Wharton was bitterly resolved to give his calumniator the thrashing of his life. But for the present he took no notice of him, utterly ignoring him; and Carboy took the same line.

The silence in the study was broken only by the scratching of pens, the rustling of books and papers, and an occasional word between Wharton and Nugent.

Frank Nugent's usually kind and good-natured face was grim, too. Carboy's face had lost its usual expression of careless good-humour. He was angry, and, like the prophet of old, he felt that he did well to be angry. There was no doubt that, when the fight came off in the Rag, there would be fierce determination on both sides, and a great deal of damage done, whichever might prove the victor.

The door opened, and a fat face and a pair of large spectacles glimmered in. Bunter blinked into the study.

"I say, you fellows—"

No answer.

"Finished prep?"

"No!" said Nugent shortly.

"I'll wait, old chap!"

"You needn't trouble," said Wharton.

"No trouble at all, old fellow!"

Bunter came in and closed the door.

None of the three juniors took any further heed of him. Bunter sat down and blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"The fact is, Wharton, I've got something to say to you."

"Keep it!"

"It's rather important!"

"Rubbish!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Dry up!"

There was silence in the study again. Harry Wharton pushed away his books at last, and rose from the table. For once, Wharton had "scamped" prep. The presence of Carboy in the study was an oppression to him. Sitting at the same table with the fellow he was going to fight, and whom he intended to thrash to the utmost of his ability, was altogether too unpleasant.

"Coming down, Franky?"

"Yes; I'll chuck it now."

Carboy pushed his books away. He was not thinking much of preparation, as a matter of fact.

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Bunter.

Wharton crossed to the door.

"I'm going down to the Rag now, Carboy," he said, speaking to his study-mate for the first time. "I'm ready when you come down."

"I'm coming now."

"Good!"

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter desperately. "Look here, it's all a mistake—"

"Shut up, ass!" said Nugent.

"I know all about it!" urged Bunter. "I—I've found it out! I—I know why Carboy fancies that you had his letter, Wharton!"

Wharton, with his hand on the door paused, and looked round.

"What the thump do you mean, you fat ass?" he asked brusquely.

"I'm going to tell you, old chap, if you'll give a fellow a chance to speak," said Bunter. "I—I can explain the whole thing!"

"What rot!"

"A fellow used your name—"

"What?"

"I'm not going to tell you who it was," said Bunter cautiously. "But I suppose you can take my word."

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Carboy's eyes were fixed on Bunter.

"What do you mean by that, Bunter?" he asked, very quietly. "What do you mean by saying that a fellow used Wharton's name?"

"Come on, Frank!" said Wharton.

But Nugent hesitated.

"Hold on a minute," he said. "If Bunter knows anything about the matter we may as well hear it."

"What can he know about it?" said Harry impatiently. "What does it matter, anyhow?"

"Well, Bunter generally knows everything, and always will, so long as they make keyholes to doors."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"I've asked you what you mean, Bunter," said Carboy. "Do you mean that the fellow who met that Oldcroft man in Courtfield to-day and pretended that I had sent him, was only using Wharton's name, and wasn't Wharton at all?"

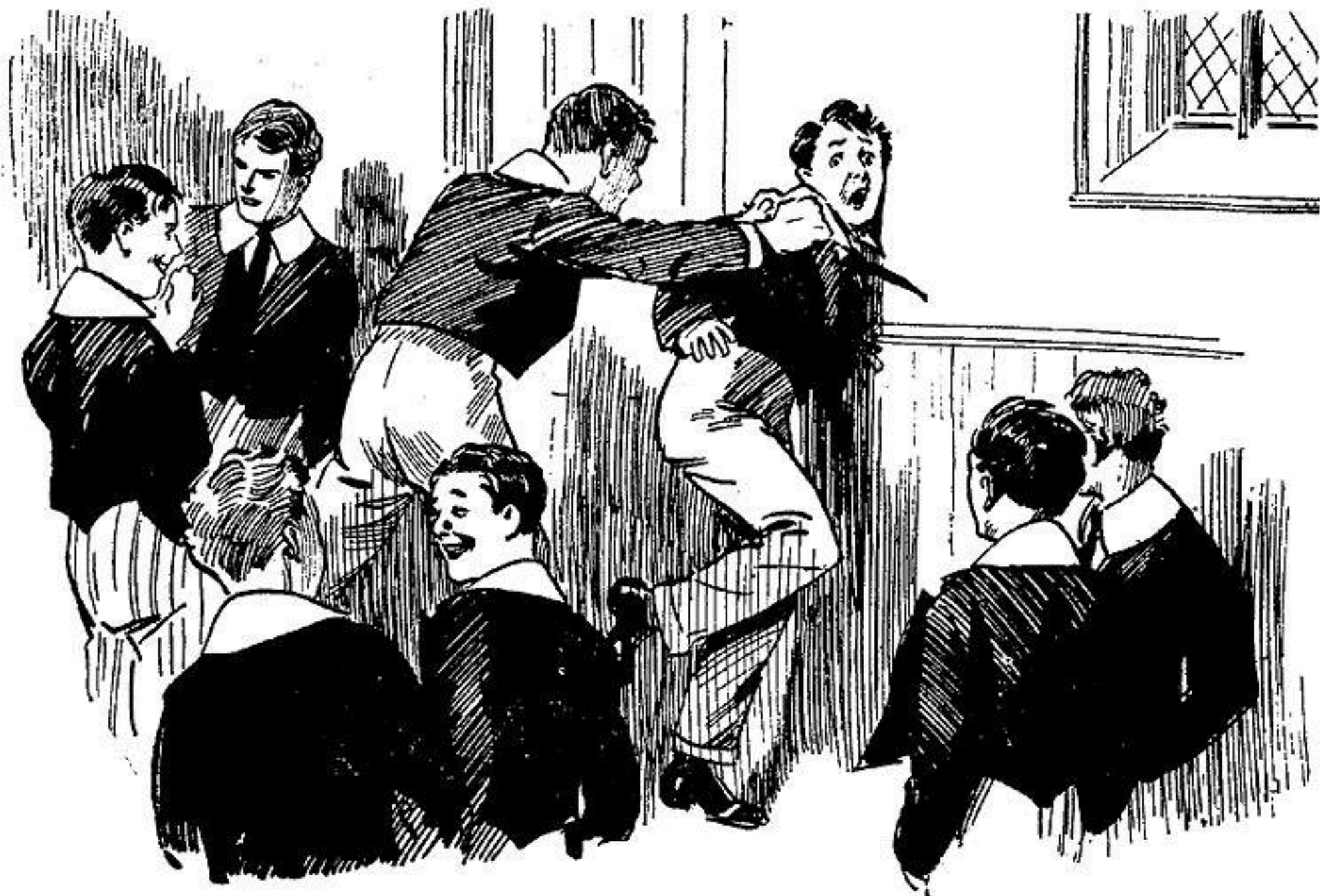
A light was dawning on Carboy's mind.

"Just that," said Bunter.

"And how do you know?"

"I—I was there, old chap. I—I saw it all!" stammered Bunter.

"You saw the Greyfriars man who met Holroyd?"



"How are the mighty fallen!" sighed Skinner. "Fancy Wharton, the model of the Form, coming down to Bunter's tricks—Yarooogh!" Skinner wound up with a fiendish yell, as Johnny Bull grabbed his collar and banged his head against the passage wall. "Any more to say?" roared Johnny Bull ferociously. "Yow-ow-ow-ow!" yelled Skinner. (See Chapter 7.)

"As plain as I see you now."
"And it was not Wharton?"
"Nothing like him."

"Oh!" said Carboy, with a deep breath.

He looked at Wharton. The cold and contemptuous glance that he received in return brought a flush to his cheeks.

"If I've been taken in I'm sorry," said Carboy awkwardly. "I can't understand it now. You see"—he hesitated. "Will you tell me where you went this afternoon, Wharton, while I was playing in the footer?"

"No," answered Wharton icily.

"Some fellow, who had got hold of my letter and read it, went to see my pal from Oldcroft," said Carboy. "I should never have known anything about it—not for a long time, anyhow—only Holroyd came on to Greyfriars to see me, on account of what the fellow let out to him. That fellow gave Holroyd his name as Wharton."

The captain of the Remove started.

"Naturally, I thought it was you," said Carboy. "What was I to think?"

"Anything, except that I had acted in the way you supposed," answered the captain of the Remove scornfully.

"Wharton was out of gates this afternoon with three fellows," said Nugent. "Bob Cherry, or Johnny Bull, or Hurree Singh could have told you if you'd asked them."

"I can't make it out," said Carboy. "The fellow gave Wharton's name, and Holroyd came here and told me what he'd heard from the chap, and that it was Wharton. He'd never seen Wharton, of course. I can't understand why the fellow, whoever he was, should have given Wharton's name—"

"To keep his own dark, I should imagine," said Nugent.

"I—I suppose so. But"—Carboy

turned to Bunter again. "You say you saw the fellow who met Holroyd?"

"I saw him all right!"

"Was it a Remove man?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, who was it?"

There was no reply to that question. Harry Wharton had turned away from the door now, quite as interested as Carboy in getting to the bottom of the strange affair.

"If the fellow was a Remove man you know who it was, Bunter," he said quietly.

"Of—of course!"

"You saw him with the Oldcroft man and heard him give my name?"

"Quite plain."

"Whoever he was, must have been the same chap who bagged Carboy's letter," said Nugent. "Otherwise, he couldn't have known that a man was coming from Carboy's old school this afternoon."

"That's plain enough," said Carboy, and I thought—"

"Never mind your thoughts; they don't do you any credit," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "Bunter, if you're telling the truth I want to know who it was used my name."

"And I want to know who bagged my letter," said Carboy.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Out with it! Why can't you tell us?" demanded the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"I—I'm afraid!" stammered Bunter.

"What are you afraid of, you silly owl? If you tell me who it was I'll take jolly good care that he doesn't touch you."

"The—the fact is—"

"Oh, cough it up!" snapped Carboy. "I suppose it was Skinner. It's like one of his rotten tricks!"

"You needn't talk about tricks," said Bunter. "You're as full of tricks as a monkey."

"Was it Skinner, you fat ass?"

"You've got to give us his name, Bunter," said Wharton quietly, "and you've got to give proof, too. Nobody would be ass enough to take your word against even Skinner."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Who was it?" demanded the captain of the Remove angrily.

"By gum, if you don't cough it up I'll jolly well bang your head on the table," snapped Carboy.

"I—I'm going to tell you, old fellow," stammered Bunter. "I—I can prove it, too. But—"

"But what, fathead?"

"You see, I don't want to get into a shindy about it," explained Bunter. "I want both you fellows to promise, honour bright, that nothing shall happen to me if I tell you the whole thing. I'm jolly well not going to be set on and hammered, you know. You can't expect it. I'm only chipping in out of good nature, because you two asses were going to fight about nothing. I could have held my tongue."

"Well, that's so," said Nugent. "If Bunter's telling the truth it's rather decent of him to chip in like this."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I agree. Of course, we shall see that you don't suffer, Bunter—I shall, at least."

"Well, then, let's have it plain," said the astute Owl. "You and Carboy both promise, honour bright, that nothing shall happen to me, and that I shan't be touched by any chap in the Remove?"

"Yes," said Harry.

(Continued on page 16.)

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ALL THROUGH BUNTER!



(Continued from page 13.)

"Of course!" said Carboy.
 "Honour bright?" persisted Bunter.
 "Honour bright!" said Wharton and Carboy together. "Now, who was the fellow?"
 "Me!" said Bunter.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. A Wash-out!

"YOU!"
 "You!"
 Wharton and Carboy gasped out that pronoun simultaneously.
 "You!" repeated Nugent, like an echo.
 "Me," assented Bunter.
 "You!" said Wharton blankly. "You—you met that Oldcroft man and used my name?"
 "That's it, old chap!"
 "You bagged my letter?" roared Carboy.
 "Yes, old fellow."
 "My only hat!" said Nugent, staring blankly at the Owl of the Remove. Bunter had almost taken his breath away.
 "You—you—you fat villain!" gasped Wharton. "Why, I'll pulverise you into little pieces!"
 "I'll burst you!" yelled Carboy.
 The two juniors made a simultaneous movement towards Bunter. With a yelp of affright the fat junior dodged round the study table.
 "I say, you fellows, hold on! You promised—"
 "What?"
 "Honour bright!" gasped Bunter. "You know you did. Keep off, you beasts! Is this what you call gratitude? Yarooogh! Keep off!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.
 "Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Wharton.
 "You jolly well promised!" hooted Bunter. "If you're going to break your word—"
 "You—you—" gasped Carboy.
 "I'm surprised at you!" said Bunter, blinking at them across the table. "I thought you were fellows of your word, otherwise I shouldn't have told you."
 Wharton and Carboy stared at him, or, rather, glared. They realised that they had been caught by the astute Owl of the Remove. A promise was a promise.
 "You fat villain!" exclaimed Wharton.
 "Oh, really, you know—"
 "You podgy rascal!" hooted Carboy.
 "Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter. "If I hadn't come here and told you about it in a manly, straightforward way, you two silly asses would be hammering one
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another this very minute! I think you might thank a chap for his kindness and generosity and straightforwardness."
 Nugent chuckled.

"It's a fair catch," he said. "As a matter of fact, we might have guessed that it was Bunter. Spying and prying are in his line."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Wharton breathed hard and deep.

"I'll keep my word, you fat villain, though you tricked me into it," he said. "If I'd guessed—"

"I was thinking of Skinner," said Carboy. "If I'd guessed—"

Bunter grinned. He was safe now, and the matter was off his fat mind.

"You had the neck to bag my letter and read it!" said Carboy.

"Nothing of the sort! I took it to bring to you in the Form-room. It was you that opened it—"

"I?" ejaculated Carboy.

"It came open when you drenched me with water in that rotten booby-trap," explained Bunter. "Otherwise it never would have been opened. I'd forgotten it was in my pocket, and it might have stayed there till the end of the term. It was your fault entirely. Perhaps that will teach you not to suspect a fellow of being after your tuck. It shows a low, suspicious mind—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! It was Carboy's fault the letter got opened. And I went to Courtfield, out of sheer kindness of heart, to tell that Oldcroft man that Carboy wasn't coming. It was a jolly long walk, and this is the thanks I get!" added Bunter indignantly.

"And why did you give him my name, you fat rascal?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Well, of course, I wasn't going to give him my own," said Bunter. "I happened to think of yours. I might have given him Nugent's."

"Mine!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes, old chap, if I'd happened to think of it instead of Wharton's. You see," explained Bunter, "the important point was not to give him my own. So I had to use some other, and it didn't matter whose, so far as I can see."

"You frabjous fathead!"

"You fat scallywag!"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"It's all very well to call a fellow names," said Bunter, with dignity. "I've done the right thing, like an honourable chap, and this is the gratitude I get. I'm accustomed to ingratitude, but I must say this is rather thick!"

Wharton threw open the study door.

"Get out!" he said briefly.

Bunter got out. No doubt he considered that he was entitled to grateful thanks. But, in the circumstances, it was not judicious to stop for them. A promise was a promise; but two juniors in the study were yearning to kick him hard. On the whole, it was wiser to retreat. And Bunter retreated.

Wharton shut the door after him. Then he looked at Carboy rather uncertainly. Bunter's confession had put a very different complexion on the matter. Carboy's face was red with discomfort.

"I'm sorry," he said awkwardly—"awfully sorry! I suppose I might have known you wouldn't do such a thing, Wharton."

"I think you might," said Harry dryly.

"But what was I to think? I never dreamed that some other chap had used your name. But I'm sorry."

There was a pause.

"Well, what about the scrap?" asked the captain of the Remove at last. "If you take back what you said—"

"Of course I do, every word, and apologise."

"Well, then—"

"The scrap's off," said Frank Nugent. "There's nothing to scrap about. Bunter's the man to be licked; and you can't lick him because you've promised not to. Wash it all out."

There was another long pause. The accusation still rankled in Harry Wharton's mind, though it had been withdrawn, and Carboy was evidently sorry for having made it. But the "casus belli" had disappeared now, and it would have been rather absurd to proceed with a fight for which there was no longer any cause.

"Call it off," said Carboy. "I've said I'm sorry, and I can't say more than that."

Wharton nodded.

"Let it go at that," he said shortly.

There was a thump on the door, and Bob Cherry looked in.

"All ready," he announced. "I suppose you men have finished prep by this time? The Rag's full of fellows, waiting."

"The scrap's off," said Nugent.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've found out that I was mistaken and apologised for it," said Carboy.

Bob looked at him.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "But you ought to be jolly well licked for making such a mistake!"

"You see—"

"I don't see," interrupted Bob gruffly. "If you accused me of reading your dashed letters, you wouldn't get off by saying that you'd made a mistake afterwards."

Carboy coloured.

"If Wharton's keen on it, I'm not backing out," he said.

"Oh, wash it out!" said Harry. "No good making fools of ourselves. It was Bunter who had the letter, Bob, and he's owned up to it. Let it drop."

And the matter dropped, rather to the disappointment of the crowd that had gathered in the Rag, and especially of Skinner & Co. Skinner & Co. had looked forward joyfully to the entertainment, and they made sarcastic remarks about cold feet. They were careful, however, not to make those remarks in the hearing of Carboy or the captain of the Remove.

Billy Bunter's worry was off his mind now, and, thanks to his astuteness, he had escaped unlicked. He did not get any thanks; but, as he had said, he was accustomed to ingratitude. And Carboy, who with great difficulty restrained his yearning to give the Owl of the Remove the kicking of his life, was far from guessing that Bunter's obtuse intervention in his affairs was destined to prove remarkably and unexpectedly to his benefit. But so it was to be.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Marble Eye!

"WHARTON!"

"Yes, sir."

"Please send Carboy to my study."

Wharton's face set for a moment.

"Very well, sir."

His momentary expression was not lost on Mr. Quelch. The Remove master looked at him very keenly as he turned away.

It was Saturday afternoon. Several days had elapsed since the day of the fight that had not come off; and since that day the captain of the Remove had

not spoken a word to his study-mate. All his old dislike of Christopher Clarence Carboy had revived in full force, and he made no secret of it. The fight had been called off by mutual consent, and Wharton certainly had no desire to scrap with Carboy. But he could not forget his offence, and he kept the new fellow at more than arm's length. Now that his Form master had sent him with a message to Carboy, however, speaking to him could not be avoided, and Wharton went out into the quad to look for him.

He found Carboy strolling under the elms by himself. Carboy looked up cheerily enough as Wharton came.

"Quelch wants you in his study," said Harry abruptly, and he was turning away with that.

"Right-ho! Hold on a minute," said Carboy.

"That's all."

"Let a fellow speak, all the same,"

Wharton stopped impatiently.

"Well, what is it?"

"You've got your back up," said Carboy.

"We needn't discuss that."

"I admit that you've a right to feel sore," said Carboy. "I'm more sorry than I can say that I misjudged you."

"No need to talk about it."

"Not if you don't want to. But I wish we could be better friends," said Carboy. "All the more because I don't think I shall be at this school much longer."

Wharton looked at him.

"You mean—"

"That rotten yarn that Bunter spread. Something was bound to come of it, and now I fancy it's coming."

"Nothing could come of it if it wasn't true," said Harry.

"Well, it wasn't true—I never was sacked from Oldcroft. But there's enough in it to dish me here," said Carboy. "I'd tell you how it was if you'd care to listen."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You've withdrawn what you said of me, and the matter's ended," he said.

"But you can't expect me to forget it, Carboy, and the less we have to say to one another the better."

"But—"

"I can't stop, anyhow; I'm going over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay about the footer."

And with the briefest of nods the captain of the Remove walked away. Carboy's face flushed as he went. It was a direct rebuff; but it was not quite unexpected. Carboy's face was thoughtful as he walked to the House and went to his Form master's study.

"You sent for me, sir?"

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on him.

"Yes, Carboy. I have to speak to you upon a matter of some seriousness."

Carboy breathed rather quickly. Ever since the strange story concerning him had been brought to his Form master's knowledge he had been expecting trouble. Now he could easily guess that the trouble was at hand.

"Since it came to my notice, Carboy, that a general impression was abroad that you had been expelled from your previous school, I have given the matter a great deal of thought," said Mr. Quelch. "You have denied that you were expelled from Oldcroft?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I have consulted Dr. Locke on the subject, and he was very much surprised by the suggestion. Since that time, I have been observant, and I find that instead of the story having died away, it has spread more and more. Dr. Locke is of opinion that the matter must be placed beyond possible doubt."

Carboy did not speak.

"The simplest method is to communicate with your former headmaster, Dr. Holroyd, of Oldcroft," said Mr. Quelch. "I have sent for you before doing so, Carboy, to ask you whether you have anything to tell me. Dr. Locke has left the matter in my hands, as you are in my Form. Have you anything to tell me, Carboy?"

There was a moment's pause.

"Nothing, sir," said Carboy.

"You repeat that you were not expelled from your former school?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"If such was the case, it has been kept from your present headmaster's knowledge, Carboy. I cannot think that that is so. Dr. Locke feels a natural delicacy in communicating with your father on the subject—it might seem to imply a doubt of Mr. Carboy's good faith. But a question to your former headmaster concerning the circumstances in which you left Oldcroft can do no harm."

Carboy's face was grim for a moment.

"Having received Dr. Holroyd's reply, I shall communicate it officially to my Form, if it is in your favour," said Mr. Quelch. "That will put an end, definitely, to the unpleasant story that is making you, as it appears to me, an outcast in your Form. You will see that I am acting chiefly for your own sake."

"Oh, quite so, sir!" said Carboy.

"Then I shall communicate with Dr. Holroyd, and you will hear the result in due course."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Quelch made a sign of dismissal, and Carboy left the study. His face was grim as he went down the corridor.

"That's torn it!" he murmured.

Carboy went out into the quad again. It was a clear, cold afternoon, and games practice was going on on the football ground.

Carboy strolled down to Little Side. Four

members of the

Famous Five were

there, and all of

them made it a

point not to observe

that Carboy had

come along. Skinner,

who was loafing

about, gave him a

jeering grin, which

did not disturb

Carboy in the least.

But the atmosphere of

the football ground was

not congenial, and

he walked a way

again, his hands in

his pockets and a

moody frown on his

face. He passed

Bunter in the quad,

and with difficulty

resisted the desire

to kick that fat and

fatuous youth. Harry

Wharton & Co. had

definitely turned

him down now, and

it was through Bunter's

fatuous folly that

that last blow had

fallen on him.

Carboy's hasty ac-

cusation against the

captain of the Re-

move might be

withdrawn, and it

might be forgiven,

but it was not for-

gotten. The new

fellow in the Re-

move was beginning to think that if his days at Greyfriars came to an end he would not be wholly sorry.

In the quad he passed Peter Todd and Squiff, both of whom looked another way. He knitted his brows and walked out of the gates. His exclusion in his Form was beginning to damp even Carboy's exuberant spirits, and he could not find solace, as usual, in planning a jape on the fellows who turned him down.

It was in a pensive mood that Christopher Clarence Carboy walked across the green expanse of Courtfield Common. On the footpath ahead of him he sighted a figure. He remembered that Wharton had told him that he was going over to Highcliffe.

Carboy quickened his pace for a moment, and then slowed down again. He was feeling the need of company, but it was useless to overtake a fellow who did not want to speak to him and thus made that fact unmistakably clear. Harry Wharton disappeared from view beyond a clump of hawthorns, and Carboy, with a dissatisfied grunt, strolled slowly on.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Philistines!

CECIL PONSONBY, of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe School, threw away a half-smoked cigarette and whistled softly.

"It's Wharton!" he said.

Four Highcliffe fellows were loafing on the common, smoking cigarettes—safe out of the view of masters and prefects. Ponsonby & Co. were killing time that afternoon, as they generally were on a half-holiday. Games practice was

(Continued on next page.)

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going on on the football ground at Highcliffe, but the slackers of the Fourth had dodged it. They were loafing about the footpath over the common, with nothing particular to do, yawning over their cigarettes, when the captain of the Greyfriars Remove came in sight from a belt of leafless bushes, through which the path ran.

"Oh, Wharton!" yawned Gadsby. "Blow Wharton! I don't want anything to do with a Greyfriars cad."

"Same here," said Monson. "If you're thinkin' of a rag, Pon—" "I am, old bean."

"May be some of the brutes hangin' about," said Gadsby.

"Absolutely," said Vavasour.

"You can see that he's alone," said Ponsonby. "He's going over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay, of course—they're as thick as thieves. I've never been able to put a spoke in their wheel somehow."

"Let 'em rip!" yawned Vavasour. "What's the good of raggin'?"

"Are you sufferin' from cold feet, old bean, when we're four to one?" asked Ponsonby unpleasantly. "Those Greyfriars rotters generally go about in a gang, and we don't often get a chance of gettin' one of them alone. We're not missin' this."

Pon's comrades did not look enthusiastic. But Pon was in a mood to hunt for trouble, and his word was generally law in his set at Highcliffe. And it was, as Pon pointed out, a rare chance of paying off old scores. The Highcliffians were four to one, and they were quite untroubled by any considerations of fair play. So they closed up in the path and waited for Harry Wharton to come up.

Wharton sighted them as he came on, and was seen to pause for a moment. But the pause was brief. He came directly on.

Pon grinned.

"Too jolly lofty to dodge us," he remarked sarcastically. "He knows he's buttin' into trouble, but he wouldn't turn back for giddy worlds. Pride goeth before destruction, my beloved 'earers, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

And Pon's comrades chuckled.

Harry Wharton came on and found the four Highcliffians grouped in the footpath, evidently intending to dispute his further passage. He moved off the path into the grass to go round them; and Pon & Co. moved at the same time, blocking his way again. Wharton came to a halt.

"Will you let me pass?" he asked quietly.

Pon winked at his chums.

"Will we?" he asked.

"I don't think!" observed Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"The fact is we're yearnin' for your company, old thing," said Ponsonby. "We're out of sight of our kind masters now, so we needn't be so particular as usual about avoidin' low company."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"Of course, we'd hardly care to be seen speakin' to you," continued Pon. "But in a lonely place like this, why not? Nobody can see us here, and we can have a little friendly chat without lettin' ourselves down."

The Highcliffians grinned cheerily. There was no doubt, in Pon's select circle, that Pon had a retty wit.

"Last time you came to Highcliffe to play footer you brought a black eye with you," went on Pon. "I'm glad to see it's cured. Even a Greyfriars man ought to have some regard for appearances. Still, I'm thinkin' of

givin' you another to match the one you've lost."

Wharton's lip curled.

"You're welcome to try," he answered.

"I'm goin' to," agreed Pon. "These fellows will stand round an' see fair play."

"Rather a new experience for them if they do," said Harry.

"Sarc!" said Ponsonby. "He's bein' sarcastic, you men. I'm goin' to give him somethin' to cure all that."

"Look here, don't play the goat!" said Harry impatiently. "I've got to get over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay. Why can't you chuck this silly ragging, Ponsonby? I don't want any trouble with you."

"Naturally—in the giddy circumstances," agreed Pon. "I dare say you'd be quite keen on it if you had the other ruffians with you. You men, stand round in a ring and see fair play."

"What-ho!" said Monson.

"Absolutely!"

Wharton set his lips.

"I'm going on," he said. "If you don't get out of the way, Ponsonby, you'll get shoved out of it!"

"Shove away!" said Pon.

Wharton was as good as his word. He came striding on; and as Ponsonby did not stir, he came into immediate collision with that elegant youth. Ponsonby struck out at once, and Wharton hit out in return, and the next moment the two were fighting furiously.

Possibly Pon nourished a faint hope that he might be able to deal with the captain of the Greyfriars Remove on his own—in which case Pon would have wanted only a fair field and no favour. But that hope, if he nourished it, deserted him as the Greyfriars junior knocked him right and left. For two or three minutes Ponsonby stood up to it, and then he went down heavily into the grass, panting and gasping.

"Pile on him!" he yelled.

Monson and Gadsby and Vavasour rushed on at once. Wharton sprang back, his hands up and his eyes gleaming over them.

He met the attack of the three Highcliffians dauntlessly; but the odds were too heavy, and he was driven back. Ponsonby scrambled to his feet and joined in again, and then the Greyfriars fellow was hard pressed.

"You rotters!" he panted. "What about fair play?"

"Scrag him!" was Ponsonby's answer.

With a rush the four Highcliffians closed on Wharton, and, in spite of his strenuous resistance, he was borne to the ground. Gadsby promptly sat on his chest, pinning him there.

"That's better!" grinned Ponsonby. He dabbed a stream of red from his nose. "Sit on the brute!"

"Ow! Wow!" mumbled Vavasour. He clasped one eye, nursing it tenderly. A dark shade was forming round that eye.

Ponsonby looked down at the struggling Greyfriars junior, with a glitter in his eyes.

"There's a pond a bit farther on," he said. "Hook him along, and we'll give him a duckin'. Then he can trot on to Highcliffe if he likes."

"Good egg!"

Four pairs of hands grasped the captain of the Greyfriars Remove. He resisted fiercely, but four to one were too many for him. Struggling every step of the way, he was dragged along through the grass towards the pond.

"Rescue!" shouted Wharton, in the faint hope that some Greyfriars fellow

might be in hearing. "Rescue, Greyfriars!"

"Yell away!" chuckled Ponsonby. "We'll be givin' you somethin' more to yell for soon!"

"Absolutely!" gasped Vavasour. "Ow! My eye! Yank the brute along!"

And with a scrambling rush the Highcliffians dragged their prisoner to the edge of the muddy pond.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Back Up!

RESCUE!"

Christopher Clarence Carboy started as that shout fell on his ears.

"That's Wharton!" he murmured.

He stared about him across the common. The fringe of hawthorn-bushes hid what was passing from his sight. Little more than an hour ago Harry Wharton had rebuffed him severely, and Carboy was certainly feeling sore. But he it said to his credit that when that breathless shout reached his ears he did not hesitate for a moment.

He broke into a run and dashed swiftly along the path through the bushes.

A few moments more and he had a full view of what was happening. The captain of the Remove, on the margin of the muddy pond, was struggling desperately in the grasp of four fellows—strangers to Carboy.

Christopher Clarence did not halt. He ran straight on at the top of his speed, heading for the scene of action.

Ponsonby & Co. were too busily occupied to observe him till he was very close at hand. Wharton was putting up a desperate resistance, and the four fellows together did not find it easy to toss him into the shallow, muddy pond. But into it he certainly would have gone but for the arrival of Carboy.

"Look out!" gasped Vavasour. "Here comes another of the beasts!"

"Ware Greyfriars cads!" ejaculated Gadsby.

"Hands off!" exclaimed Carboy, coming up with a breathless rush. "Hands off, you rotters!"

Ponsonby released the captain of the Remove and turned to face the newcomer.

"Back up, Vav!" he gasped.

"Absolutely!"

Carboy found himself hotly engaged with two of the Highcliffians. Wharton made a fierce effort to free himself; but he was exhausted by his hard struggle, and Gadsby and Monson easily pinned him down. He lay gasping in the grass, struggling in vain, while Pon and Vavasour attacked Carboy hotly.

Carboy was a sturdy fellow, but he was not a match for two. He gave ground, fighting hard all the time. Ponsonby and Vavasour followed him up.

"Clear off, you meddlin' rotter!" snapped Ponsonby.

"Rats!"

Carboy, evidently, was game. He had to give ground; but when Pon and Vavasour, tired by their efforts, paused he immediately took the offensive. And the Highcliffians were not by any means game. A lucky drive right upon Vavasour's nose sent him spinning, and he collapsed in the grass; and when he sat up, it was only to clasp his nose and groan. Vavasour was hors de combat, for a time at least.

Taking advantage of that fact, Christopher Clarence Carboy pressed



"If you don't get out of the way, Ponsonby," said Wharton, "you'll get shoved out of it!" "Shove away, then!" said Pon. Wharton was as good as his word, and as the Highcliffian did not stir, he came into collision with the elegant youth. Pon struck out at once, and Wharton hit back. The next moment the two were fighting furiously. (See Chapter 12.)

Pon harder and harder; and the dandy of Highcliffe gave ground fast.

"Back up, Vav!" he yelled.

"Owl! Owl! My nose! Owl!" was Vav's dolorous reply.

"Back up, you funk!"

"Oh dear! Owl!"

Vavasour struggled to his feet and approached Carboy very gingerly. Carboy made an effort and drove Pon hard. Ponsonby was on the margin of the pond now, and he could retreat no farther without going in. His boots were already squelching the mud of the margin. As he felt—rather than saw—Vavasour coming up behind him, Carboy made a desperate spring at Ponsonby, crashing through his defence, and struck him spinning backwards.

Splash!

"Ooooch!"

There was a mighty splash as the dandy of Highcliffe landed backwards in a foot and a half of water, with six inches of mud under it. For the moment he disappeared entirely. He came up again gasping and spluttering and gurgling horribly.

But Carboy had no time to look at him. Vavasour had grasped him round the neck from behind, and was dragging him backwards, punching wildly the while.

Carboy turned on him breathlessly. Vavasour was not of much use as a fighting-man: and he crumpled up under the fierce attack. Under a rain of blows, Carboy drove him to the edge of the pond, and then charged him over and hurled him in.

There was another splash, and a gurgling howl from Vavasour.

Carboy, breathless, with crimson streaming from his nose, turned towards

Wharton, who was still seeking in vain to throw off Gadsby and Monson.

Those two youths jumped up promptly as Carboy came towards them at a breathless rush.

"Hook it!" murmured Monson.

Wharton scrambled up. Gadsby and Monson backed warily away, turned, and ran for it.

"Owl! Help!" came in a wail from Vavasour, struggling with mud.

Ponsonby scrambled and splashed out of the pond. He was covered with mud from head to foot. Harry Wharton looked at him and burst into a laugh. Vavasour followed him out, moaning.

"My hat! You look a pair of beauties!" grinned Carboy.

"Owl! Owl! Grooogh!"

"Owl! Wow! Ooooch!"

Vavasour trailed dismally away. Ponsonby gave the Greyfriars fellows a fierce and muddy glare, and trailed after him. Gadsby and Monson were already at a safe distance: and the fight was over.

Wharton stood silent for a few minutes, getting back his breath. Christopher Clarence Carboy mopped his nose. It was streaming, and one of his eyes was blinking painfully.

"Oh, my only hat and umbrella!" ejaculated Carboy. "I'm glad they're gone! Who were they, and what was the row about?"

"Highcliffe cads!" said Wharton. He looked rather oddly at Christopher Clarence. "You're damaged a bit."

"More than a bit, I think," answered Carboy cheerfully. "I shall have a prize nose! Wow!"

"It was jolly decent of you to chip in like that."

"What rot."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I should have gone into the pond, instead of Ponsonby, if you hadn't come up and lent a hand."

"Lucky I came, then," said Carboy. "Lucky for you, at any rate—not for my boko!"

"I'm awfully obliged."

"That's all right," said Carboy. "I suppose you would have done as much for me."

"Certainly, I would."

"Then there's nothing to talk about. Going on to Highcliffe?"

"Yes; when I've put myself to rights a little."

"Like me to walk with you, in case those rotters turn up again?"

"I'd be glad—but—"

"All serene—we can give each other the marble eye afterwards, and pretend not to notice one another in the study," said Carboy. "I'll walk to Highcliffe with you, without prejudice, as the lawyers say."

Wharton laughed again.

"No more marble eye, so far as I'm concerned," he said. "I don't care whether you were sacked from Oldcroft, or not: you're a plucky kid, and you've done me a good turn, for the second time. You made an ass of yourself over that affair of that letter, but—"

"Well, I've owned up to that."

"Let's forget all about it, then," said Harry.

"Jolly glad to."

And having removed, as far as possible, the signs of the rough-and-tumble combat, the two Greyfriars juniors walked on over the common together.

They sighted Ponsonby & Co. again at a distance—and chuckled. Pon and Vavasour were making frantic attempts

to scrub themselves clean with handfuls of grass—without much success. The Highcliffians gave the Greyfriars fellows savage glares, but did not make any movement to approach them. Evidently Pon & Co. had had enough for the day.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Slight Misapprehension!

"THEY'VE been at it!"

Skinner made that remark, with a grin, as Christopher Clarence Carboy came into the House.

It was plain that Carboy had been in the wars. His nose rather resembled a cauliflower in shape, and a tomato in hue. Undoubtedly Carboy had collected a prize nose from somewhere that afternoon.

"Eh! Who've been at it?" asked Snoop.

"Wharton and that new cad! Look at his nose."

Snoop looked at Carboy's nose, and chuckled.

"Some boko!" he remarked.

"I noticed him clear off out of gates soon after Wharton," smiled Skinner. "It was bound to come, you know—and I can't say I'm sorry. A good licking each is exactly what they wanted. I hope he's given Wharton a nose to match that."

Carboy stopped at the tap at the end of the passage to bathe his nose, which certainly needed attention. Bathing it did not seem to do it much good, however. It was likely to remain a prize nose for some time.

"Who got the best of it?" Skinner asked. Skinner was not on speaking terms with Carboy, but he omitted to remember that, in his keenness to know what had happened out of gates.

"Thanks for asking; I did," answered Carboy.

"My hat! You licked him?"

"Quite."

"Gratters!" grinned Skinner. "Where did you leave him?"

"On the common."

"You really licked him—honour bright?"

"Knocked him into the pond, at any rate," said Carboy cheerfully. "And after he crawled out, he didn't want any more. I suppose that's what you'd call licking him, isn't it?"

"In that muddy pond on Courtfield common?" exclaimed Snoop.

"Yes—it was muddy enough."

"He must have looked a sight when he got out."

"He jolly well did."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "And he was going to Highcliffe to see that man Courtenay. Did he go on to Highcliffe?"

"Well, the last I saw of him, he was scrubbing himself down with grass," answered Carboy. "I dare say he went on to Highcliffe afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner felt that he almost liked Christopher Clarence Carboy at that moment. He walked away to spread the glad news: and Carboy went on dabbing his nose, grinning as he did so. Skinner obviously had concluded from his remarks that he had knocked Harry Wharton into the pond on the common, and left the captain of the Remove scrubbing himself down with grass. Carboy, certainly, had not said so! He had only described his affray with Ponsonby. Skinner was welcome to draw any conclusions he liked.

"I say, you fellows." Billy Bunter

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blinked into the changing-room, where the Remove footballers had come in after games practice. "I say, they've been going it."

"Who, which, and what?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Wharton and Carboy," announced Bunter. "All the fellows are talking about it. They had a fight on Courtfield common, and Wharton was knocked into the pond and nearly drowned—"

"Fathead!"

"He was!" hooted Bunter. "Carboy's bragging about it up and down the Remove passage. Making out that he's nearly killed him."

Bunter liked to be the bearer of news—especially startling news. There was no doubt that this news was interesting to the Remove fellows. It had, in fact, grown more exciting since Bunter had heard it from Skinner. News never deteriorated in Bunter's keeping. Quite a small and trifling item was likely, in Bunter's hands, to develop into a thrilling episode.

"But Wharton's gone over to Highcliffe," said Nugent.

"Carboy went after him," explained Bunter. "I noticed him going out of gates soon after Wharton, and I remember now that he looked jolly fierce. Grinding his teeth, in fact."

"Fathead!"

"Well, gritting them," said Bunter. "Knitting his brows, and all that. He's been up before Quelch this afternoon, and I suppose it made him waxy. I knew he was going after Wharton—I could see it in his eye. He looked as savage as—as a cannibal."

"Carboy couldn't lick Wharton," said Bob. "It's all rot!"

"Well, he makes out he did," said Bunter. "Smothered him with mud, and left him scraping himself down on the common. He, he, he!"

"Gammon!"

"And when Wharton crawled out of the pond, he said he'd had enough," went on Bunter. "Begged for mercy, in fact."

"Pile it on!" grinned the Bounder.

"On his knees!" roared Bunter. "Begged to be let off—on his knees. He, he, he! I say, you fellows, Carboy's got a nose on him like a beetroot. But, from what he says, he left Wharton nearly dead. Some of you fellows ought to go out and look for him. If he can't get home—"

"Oh, cheese it!" grunted Bob.

There was a general move in the Remove passage to question Carboy. That youth was found in Study No. 1, rather ruefully examining his nose before the looking-glass.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry.

Carboy glanced round.

"I hear you've been fighting with Wharton," said Bob. "According to Bunter, you've licked him."

Carboy grinned.

"You bagged a beautiful boko, doing it, at any rate," said Johnny Bull. "Did you go out after Wharton?"

"Yes. As Wharton started first, and I went in the same direction, I naturally went after him."

"I mean did you go after him for a scrap, you ass?"

"The scrap was quite unforeseen," said Carboy blandly. "These things happen, you know."

"You didn't go after him for a fight?" asked Bob.

"Not at all."

"You met him on the common?"

"Just so."

"And then what happened?" demanded Nugent.

"Why, then the fight happened," said Carboy cheerfully.

"And you won?" asked Peter Todd sceptically.

"Quite!"

"I'll believe that when Wharton comes in, and tells us!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I've no doubt he will tell you so," answered Carboy. "I certainly had the best of the scrap."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" remarked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"I'm simply stating the facts, because you asked me. When a fellow knocks another fellow out, and the other fellow clears off because he's had enough, I suppose a fellow is entitled to say he had the best of the scrap."

"And that's what happened, is it?"

"Exactly."

"Gammon!" said Bob.

"Rubbish!" said Nugent.

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull.

"The gammonfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and execrable Carboy is pulling the long bow."

Carboy shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not a betting man, or I'd make a bet on it," he said. "But, look here—Wharton will be back for tea, I think. Well, if he doesn't own up, fair and square, that I got the best of the fight on the common, I'll stand you fellows a study spread, up to ten bob, at the tuckshop. If he does own up, you stand me a study spread at the same figure. Can't say fairer than that."

"A fair catch!" grinned Skinner.

"It's up to you fellows!"

The Co. regarded Christopher Clarence Carboy rather doubtfully. But they were not fellows to refuse a challenge.

"It's a go!" said Bob.

"The go-fulness is terrific!"

"Done!" said Carboy cheerfully.

"Leave it till Wharton comes in, then. By the way, I like cake and jam-roll for tea. Whichever of you does the shopping, bear that in mind."

"It's all gammon," grunted Johnny Bull. "You're trying to pull our leg somehow. We'll jolly well hold you to it, and you can get ready to stand that study spread."

"Leave it at that!" yawned Carboy.

And it was left at that; and in the Remove there was intense curiosity to hear what Harry Wharton would have to say when he came back from Highcliffe.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Carboy Explains!

HARRY WHARTON came in at the school gates, and looked a little surprised. A dozen Remove fellows were gathered there, evidently waiting for him to come in. All eyes were fixed on the captain of the Remove as soon as he appeared. There were a good many signs about Wharton of his struggle with Ponsonby & Co., though he was not so severely marked as Carboy. But the juniors could see at a glance that he had been in a scrap.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here you are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You don't look so damaged as Carboy."

"No. He got rather a rougher handling than I did," said Harry. "Has he told you about it?"

"Yes—and he's made out that it was you who got the rougher handling," said Frank. "I knew it was gammon." Wharton looked puzzled.

"Well, I dare say he thought so," he

answered. "As a matter of fact, I had a high old time, and, I dare say, Carboy thought I was rather hurt. There's no gammon about it, that I can see. What do you mean, Franky?"

"Carboy says he got the best of the scrap on the common."

"He certainly did."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's a jolly good fighting-man," said Harry. "Better than I ever thought. Plenty of pluck."

"You seem to admire him for what he's done," said Johnny Bull, with a stare.

"Well, why not? It makes me think better of him than I did, naturally," answered Wharton.

"Great pip!"

"Well, we're done," said Bob Cherry. "We've undertaken to stand Carboy a study spread if it turned out that he got the best of it. If you say he did, I suppose he did, though I'm blest if I understand it."

"What the thump did you mean by letting him get the best of it?" demanded Johnny Bull gruffly. "You are a better man than Carboy, any day. You could have stopped him."

Wharton stared.

"Stopped him! I wasn't likely to stop him, or want to."

"My only hat! Do you like being licked?" roared Peter Todd.

"Not at all, but I should have had a licking, or something worse, if Carboy hadn't chipped in as he did."

The juniors gazed blankly at the captain of the Remove.

"I can't make this out," said Bob. "Look here, Wharton, put it plain—did you lick Carboy, or did Carboy lick you?"

"Neither, you ass!" Wharton stared, and then burst into a laugh. "Have you got the idea into your heads that I've been scrapping with Carboy?"

"Haven't you?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Of course not, fathead. I got into a shindy with the Highcliffe cads on the common—they were four to one, and they were going to duck me in the pond when Carboy came up and chipped in."

"Oh, my hat! But—but he says—"

Bob Cherry stared round in search of Carboy. That cheery youth was leaning on a buttress close at hand. "Carboy, you silly owl, come here. You told us you'd been scrapping with Wharton on Courtfield Common—"

"I told you nothing of the sort."

"What?" yelled five or six voices.

"I told you I'd got the best of the fight on the common," said Carboy.

"So I did. That Highcliffe man had enough, and a little over."

"But—but Bunter said—"

"My dear man, I'm not responsible for what Bunter said."

"I say, you fellows, Skinner told me—"

"Skinner rather jumped to conclusions," yawned Carboy. "The wish was father to the thought, as jolly old Shakespeare puts it. I never even mentioned Wharton's name. He asked me if I'd got the best of the fight, and I said I had. It was a Highcliffe man I was fighting."

"You spoofing idiot!" snarled Skinner.

"Fellows shouldn't jump to conclusions," said Carboy, shaking his head. "But to come down to business, you men, it's up to you to stand me a study spread if Wharton bears out my statement that I got the best of the fight. I leave it to Wharton to say."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You certainly did," he answered. "Ponsonby was knocked into a cocked hat, and Vavasour was nearly slaughtered. They hadn't turned up at High-

cliffe when I left. I dare say they're still scraping off mud."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry gave Carboy an expressive look.

"So you were pulling our leg?" he grunted.

"You were pulling it yourselves, old beans," answered Carboy amiably.

"What about that spread?"

Bob Cherry looked for a moment as if he contemplated further damage to Carboy's nose. Then he burst into a laugh.

"You spoofing ass!" he said.

"You've caught us out, I suppose. It's up to us, you men! Come along, and roll out your cash!"

Harry Wharton walked on to the House, and Carboy walked with him. Skinner's glance followed them in utter disgust. Once more the amiable Skinner had been sorely disappointed. Carboy's face was very cheerful.

.....



You've read about Wharton, the captain of the Remove, the leader of the Famous Five, and one of the most popular members of the Form?

Of course!

Next week, boys, you'll read about a different Wharton—a Wharton whose pride and sensitive nature combine to place him in a tangle of circumstances that lead him down the hill. Gone is his popularity, his power; even his own chums have little to say in his favour.

This amazing state of affairs is the outcome of Billy Bunter's propensity for "lifting" other people's tuck, coupled with Harold Skinner's cunning and intense dislike of the captain of the Remove.

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.....

"May I ask you to the spread?" he inquired. "There's going to be rather a decent spread in No. 1 Study this afternoon, Wharton."

Wharton chuckled.

"Thanks! I'll be pleased!"

"Then you haven't got your jolly old back up now?" said Carboy. "Good! Let's try to be friends for the time I've got left here. After what Quelch said to me to-day, it's not likely to be long."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Harry.

His feelings towards the japer of the Remove had changed very considerably since the tussle on Courtfield Common.

"Can't be helped. But—" Carboy

paused a moment. "As it seems pretty clear that I shall have to go, I'd like to explain a little. I don't want to leave you fellows thinking worse of me than needful. I can't say I'm worried much over the opinion of fellows like Bunter and Skinner, but I'd like to leave you and your friends knowing how the matter really stands. That is if you feel able to take my word about it. I've got no proof to offer, of course."

"Your word's quite good enough for us," said Harry.

Four members of the Co. came into No. 1 Study with parcels from the tuckshop. They found Wharton and Carboy there on quite amicable terms, and the Co. were more than willing to follow their leader in that matter. Now that they knew the true story of what had happened on Courtfield Common, they were more than ready to bury the hatchet.

It was quite a cheery tea in No. 1 Study. And between Christopher Charence Carboy and the Famous Five all the clouds had rolled by. Somewhat to their own surprise the chums of the Remove realised that they were rather sorry to hear that Carboy expected to leave.

After tea Carboy came rather abruptly to the subject.

"This is most likely my last week here," he said. "Next week will wind it up—that's pretty certain. Quelch has written to-day to my old headmaster, asking him why I left Oldcroft. That settles it."

The Co. regarded him rather curiously.

"Does that mean that you really were sacked from your last school?" asked Bob.

"No. My father was asked to take me away."

"Then you'd been up to something."

"No, again. The fact is that another fellow had been up to something," said Carboy. "Mind, I'm telling you this in confidence, of course. I shouldn't say a word, only I'm going, and I don't want to leave you believing that I must have done something rotten at my last school. It wasn't a matter for sacking; only Dr. Holroyd was fed-up, and I had to go."

"One of your fatheaded japes?" asked Bob.

"That's what the beak thought. As a matter of fact he got the wrong pig by the ear. You see, at Oldcroft my best chum was the headmaster's son, who was in my Form. As you don't know the chap, and are never likely to meet him, there's no harm in telling you. Anyhow, you'll keep it dark."

"Of course," said Harry.

"But what on earth—" asked Bob.

"Dick Holroyd is a jolly good fellow, but rather an ass," said Carboy. "It's not all lavender being a headmaster's son. You got the schoolmaster and the Roman parent combined. And the Beak at Oldcroft is a regular old Brutus. Quite a nice man in his way, but stiff as a ramrod, and hard as nails. Poor old Dick was scared out of his wits of him. Otherwise, he would have owned up; but the Beak being his father he simply hadn't the nerve."

"But what—"

"You fellows may have noticed that I've rather a way of japing—"

"Just a trifle," grinned Bob.

"It's only my way, you know. But it got me into trouble sometimes at my old school, the same as here. The Beak jawed me a good deal, and warned me to be careful. Well, I saw serious trouble ahead, and was careful—awfully careful. Then a jape was played on our Form master. His chimney was stuffed up with a sack, and his door locked, and he was half-suffocated before he got out of his study. He wasn't a good-tempered man, and he was frightfully ratty."

"I think a good-tempered man might have been ratty, in those circumstances," remarked Nugent.

"Well, if he hadn't been a bad-tempered man, it would never have happened," said Carboy. "He had been

ragging Holroyd in class a lot. But when he went raging to the Beak the Beak got on the warpath, and declared that the fellow who had done it would have to leave. That put the wind up poor old Dick to a frightful extent. But that was where my jolly old reputation came in. The Beak jumped to the conclusion that I had done it. I'd done such things——"

"You've done such things here, you ass!"

"Quite! A leopard can't change his spots, or a giddy old Ethiopian his skin," sighed Carboy. "But as it happened I never did it that time, and, instead of explaining, I let it go at that. When I was up before the Beak I never said a word. It was settled that I had done it. I warned Dick to keep mum, and that did it. He was so scared of his jolly old pater that he was willing to take any chance. If you'd even seen the Oldcroft Beak jawing a chap, you'd understand. The long and the short of was that my father was asked to take me away at once—and I left."

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were silent. They believed Carboy's story, and did not feel called upon to state what they thought of his Oldcroft chum.

"That was the trouble," said Carboy. "I never was sacked. But if Dr. Locke had known that I had to leave my old school, it's very doubtful whether I could have got in at Greyfriars."

"Very."

"So nothing was said," went on Carboy. "You see, it wasn't as if the matter had been a serious one. Nothing had happened by a silly practical joke, and there was no expulsion. There was no need to talk. It was simply understood that my father had taken me away from the school, which was the fact. Only when Dr. Locke knows that I had to leave the place, he's fairly certain to be rusty about it—especially at not being told." He paused. "Now you know why I didn't want the matter to come before Quelch. As soon as he knew the Head was bound to know, and then the fat would be in the fire. Now it's happened."

"I'm afraid it will mean the end for you here," said Harry Wharton. "Dr. Locke is sure to get his back up. He will be waxy at not being told, and it will very likely make him think the matter worse than it was."

"I know. I shall have to clear. And the pater has told me that he won't send me to another school if I have to leave Greyfriars." Carboy made a grimace. "He's rather fed-up. He wrote to me warning me to be careful, and that fat rotter Bunter got hold of the letter—and that tore it! I'll kick Bunter before I go!"

With a nod to the Famous Five Christopher Clarence Carboy strolled out of the study. He was whistling cheerily as he went down the Remove passage. His exuberant spirits bore up even against the certain knowledge that the chopper was to come down in a few days.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another.

"Hard cheese!" said Bob. "He's a jolly decent chap to stand by a pal to that extent. But that man Holroyd must be a frightful worm to let him do it."

"The wormfulness is terrific."

"After all, they seem to have picked on him because he was well known to be a japing ass!" said Johnny Bull. "He really asked for it. But I'm sorry he's going to get the chopper! Not much doubt about it now."

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"It's rotten!" said Harry Wharton.

The chums of the Remove agreed that it was rotten. But they had no doubt that the days of Christopher Clarence Carboy at Greyfriars were numbered.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Through Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Rats!"

"But I say——"

"More rats!"

"Carboy——"

"Oh! What about Carboy?"

"He's getting it in the neck to-day!" said Bunter. He had made an impression at last. "Sorry, and so on; but he is!"

"How do you know, you fat oyster?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Because I heard Quelch say so!" grinned Bunter triumphantly. "He said so to Carboy, five minutes ago, in the passage."

"Quelch told Carboy that he was getting it in the neck!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Not exactly those words——"

"I fancy not!" chuckled Nugent.

"What he actually said was that he'd had an answer to his letter to the Head of Oldcroft," said Bunter. "He said he would refer to it in the Form-room."

"Oh!" said Wharton.

"That means that he's coming to show the fellow up before the lot of us," said Bunter. "The chopper's coming down, what? He, he, he!"

"Oh, kick him!" said Bob.

Bunter dodged a boot, and went to spread his exciting news further. That morning the Remove turned up in their Form-room in a state of great expectancy. Many of the fellows knew, or surmised, that Quelch had been in communication with the headmaster of Oldcroft. His words, overheard by Bunter, showed that the matter had come to a climax at last.

Most eyes were turned on Carboy. He was quite cool, and looked unconcerned.

If the "chopper" was coming down, Christopher Clarence Carboy had the nerve to endure the ordeal without turning a hair.

Mr. Quelch's face was grave. But his expression was hardly that of a Form master who had a serious delinquency to deal with. Skinner wondered whether he was booked for another disappointment.

"Carboy!" said the Remove master.

"Yes, sir."

"I have told you that I have had a reply to my communication to your former headmaster. I am referring to the matter here, before the whole Form, because it has had so much publicity already, and I desire no one to be left in doubt as to the facts."

There was a pause. The Remove thrilled with interest from end to end. Mr. Quelch unfolded a letter. This, apparently, was the letter he had received from Dr. Holroyd, headmaster of the Sussex school.

"I shall read a passage from this letter," said Mr. Quelch. "It clears up the matter entirely, and will put an end, I hope, to the talk on the subject."

"Oh!" murmured the Remove blankly.

Mr. Quelch gave a little cough and read:

"A foolish and practical joke was played on a Form master here, and Mr. Carboy was asked to remove his son from the school in consequence. It

has since transpired, however, that Carboy was not the guilty party. As he made no denial, no doubt was entertained in the matter; but I learn now, to my great surprise, that the foolish boy was actually making a quixotic sacrifice for the sake of a friend. My son has confessed to me that it was he who was guilty of the deplorable trick for which Carboy had to leave Oldcroft. In these circumstances, I have written to Mr. Carboy, offering to take back his son, with regrets for the unfortunate error that was made."

The Remove master paused.

"That is all that I need read," he said. "I trust it is now clear to all the Form that there is nothing whatever against Carboy's character—and that though he was compelled to leave his former school, it was, on his headmaster's own statement, under a misapprehension. The matter is now closed."

"Oh, my only hat and umbrella!" ejaculated Carboy.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Silence!"

Class began; the matter being, as Mr. Quelch said, now closed. But the Remove fellows were not keenly interested in lessons that morning. They were thinking much more of the strange outcome of the Carboy affair than of the invaluable instruction they were receiving from Henry Samuel Quelch.

When the Remove were dismissed for morning break, a crowd gathered round Christopher Clarence Carboy in the passage. Carboy had a very thoughtful expression on his face.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry thumped him on the shoulder. "All serene now, old bean! What's the worry?"

Carboy grinned faintly.

"All serene for me," he said. "But poor old Dick! What on earth made him speak out, after all? He must have got it fairly in the neck; the Beak will have taken it out of him no end. That idiot Bunter——"

"Oh, really, Carboy——"

"You fat dummy!" said Carboy. "It was your chattering to Holroyd that put him wise to what was going on here; and I suppose he went back to Oldcroft to own up. The Beak will have made an example of him!"

"My only hat! Fancy Bunter coming in useful like that!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I don't see that that chap Holroyd could have done anything else—when he found out from Bunter that you were going to get the push here."

Carboy nodded; but he was evidently thinking of the hectic time the headmaster's son at Oldcroft must have had when he owned up to his stern parent.

"All's well that ends well!" said Harry Wharton. "It's turned out jolly lucky for you, Carboy."

"That's so. I can go back to Oldcroft now," said Carboy, brightening up. "That's ripping!"

"Well, you must be an ass if you want to go back to Oldcroft, when you can stay on at Greyfriars if you like," said Johnny Bull.

Carboy laughed.

"Well, you see, my best pal's there. I'm jolly well going back now the Beak's come round. It's turned out all right."

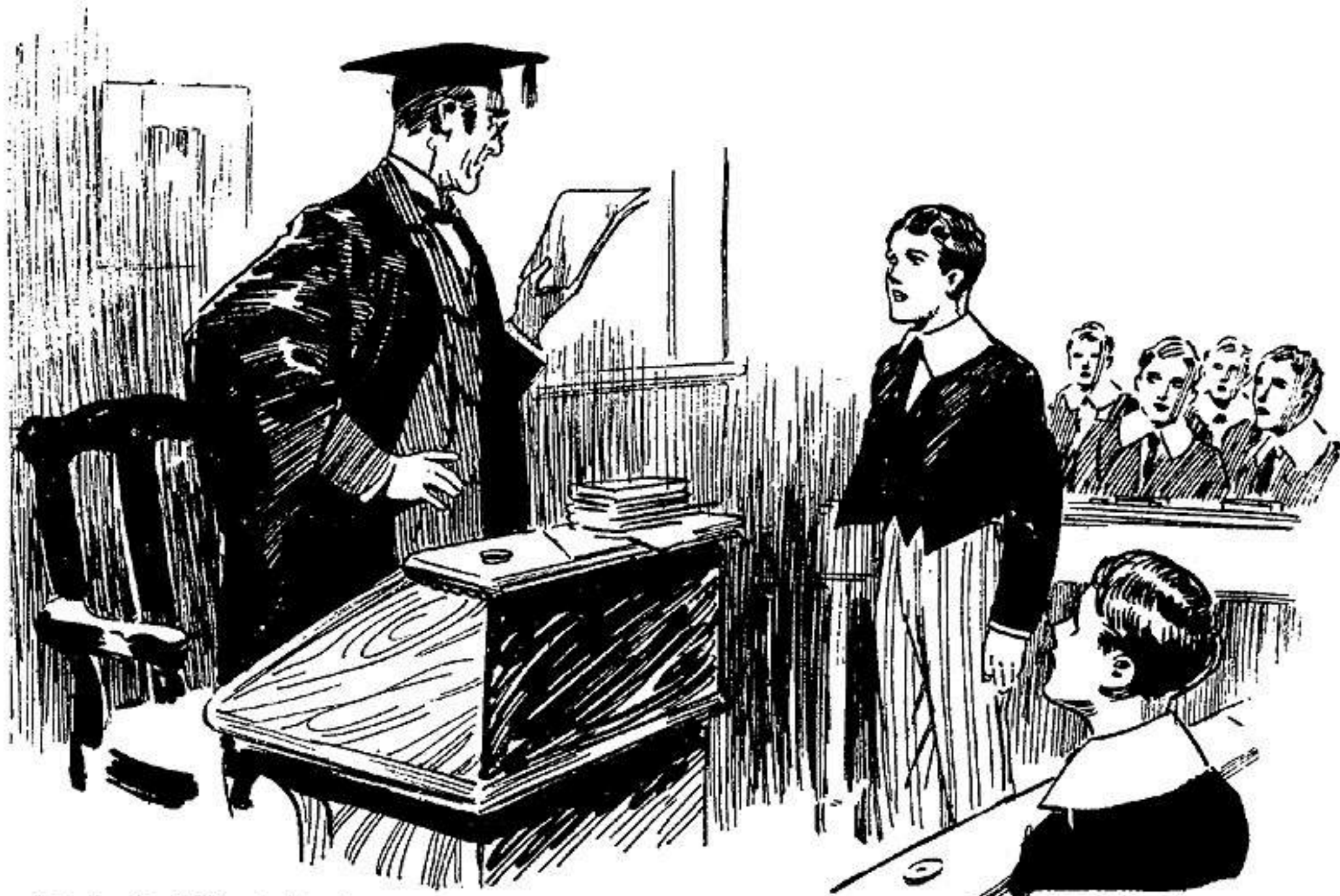
"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you know! I'm waiting for Carboy to thank me," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Eh?"

"If I hadn't told that chap Holroyd what was going on what would have



"Carboy," said Mr. Queleh, "I have had a reply to my communication to your former headmaster, and I desire no one in this Form to be left in doubt as to why you left Oldcroft. The Remove thrill with interest from end to end. 'I shall read a passage from this letter,'" continued the Form-master. "It clears up the matter entirely, and puts an end to the rumour that you were expelled from your last school!" (See Chapter 16.)

happened?" demanded Bunter. "Carboy would have been pushed out of here. He's got me to thank for the whole thing as it's turned out. I think he might say he's grateful."

"Oh, my hat and umbrella!"

"The least you can do is to stand a study spread before you leave, Carboy. I'm not the fellow to want any reward for a kind and generous action. Still, I should not refuse a study spread. I think that's the least you can do."

Carboy stared at him. Then he chuckled.

"I think Bunter deserves something," he remarked.

"I should jolly well think so!" said Bunter emphatically.

"And I'm going to give you what you deserve."

"Good! I think— Here, I say— Yaroooh! Hands off! Oh, my hat! Yoop!" roared Bunter, as Carboy grasped him by the collar, whirled him round, and planted a boot on his tight trousers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

The yell that rang through the corridor indicated that Billy Bunter, though he had got what he deserved, was not pleased thereby.

"Ow! Wow! Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "Why, you fearful beast, after all I've done for you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Had enough?" inquired Carboy genially.

"Yow! Ow! Yes. Wow!"

"I don't want to leave in your debt, you know," said Carboy. "If I haven't given you as much as you deserve, you've only to say so."

"Whooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fled, roaring. No doubt William George had received his deserts, but this was not what he had expected. Fortunately, Bunter was accustomed to ingratitude.

The face of Christopher Clarence Carboy that day was very bright and cheery. It was the unexpected that had happened, as it so often does. The reply from Oldcroft had completely cleared him in the minds of his Form master and headmaster, as well as in the Remove, and although Bunter undoubtedly deserved kicking for his part in the affair, it was undeniable that that fortunate outcome was all through Bunter. Instead of the "chopper" coming down on Christopher Clarence, it was open to him now to remain at Greyfriars or return to his old school, which certainly would not have been the case but for Bunter's meeting with Dick Holroyd at the Courtfield bunshop, and the information he had given him, which had led to the Oldcroft "beak's" son owning up to his Roman parent. All was clear now, and the whole affair having turned out to Carboy's credit, there was a considerable change in the feelings of the Removites towards him. For his last few days at Greyfriars Christopher Clarence Carboy was one of the most popular fellows in the Form.

But he was not staying.

Mr. Carboy had accepted the offer of the Oldcroft Beak, and in a few days more Christopher Clarence said farewell to the Remove fellows. And a good many of the Removites were sorry that he was going.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked down to the station to see him off, and they parted on the best of terms.

A few days later a parcel arrived

for William George Bunter. It was addressed in Carboy's hand, and the postmark was Oldcroft. Bunter opened it in the Rag, with a beaming fat face. A large cardboard box was disclosed with the inscription "BEST SULTANA CAKE!"

Bunter beamed.

"After all, the chap's not such a rotter!" he said. "He knows it was all through me that he got through so jolly well. I say, you fellows, this shows that some chaps can be grateful. You fellows might take a tip from Carboy."

Bunter untied the string and opened the confectioner's box.

Inside was a smaller box, wrapped in paper and tied with string. The Owl of the Remove opened it with joyous anticipation.

Then he gasped.

"Oh crumbs!"

Bunter gazed at the present from Carboy blankly. The box was a confectioner's box. But the contents certainly had never come from a confectioner's.

"Beast!" gasped Bunter, as he gazed at the contents. Bunter could eat almost anything. But the contents of that box were beyond even Bunter. He stared blankly at a half brick.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

Christopher Clarence Carboy, back in his old haunts, was evidently still a practical joker.

THE END.

(There will be another grand school story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "SHUNNED BY THE FORM!" It's a great yarn this, chums, and you'll regret it if you miss it!)

STIRRING OLD-TIME PIRATE
ROMANCE STARTS BELOW!

ALL ABOARD, BOYS, FOR THE SPANISH
MAIN AND GOLD, HIDDEN GOLD!



*Where the dead man lies, his staring eyes
Look out to the Westward—ho!
And none can tell where the dead men dwell
With their treasure down below—
With a ho, and a heave—yo-ho!*

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Roger Bartlett's Adventure!

BESHREW me, but 'tis plaguey cold, an', as I see it, 'twill take me hours yet 'ere I set foot in Fotheringham town!"

Roger Bartlett, cold, wet, and miserable, drew his tattered cloak closer around his drenched and shivering form, as though he would seek to cheat the cold that was eating into his very bones. Full thirty miles had he travelled through the storm, and yet another ten lay before him 'ere shelter, other than that now afforded him by the mighty oak under which he cowered, could be reached.

It was the call of the sea that had spurred him on; that had made him desert the farm upon which he had been reared, and to make for Fotheringham, where, 'twas said, were many galleons but recently returned from the Spanish Main—galleons laden with the treasure that was to be had for the taking!

Roger could hear the creaking and groaning of the gibbet which stood at the crossways; now, as the pale, waning moon showed itself for a moment unobscured by the scudding clouds, he saw, swinging in its chains, the thing that had once been a man—and Roger fell to speculating what manner of man it was who had thus come to his untimely end upon the lonely gibbet.

A smuggler, perhaps—one of those whom men dubbed "free-trader"! Or, belike, a pirate, who had thus come to the end of his last cruise! Roger shivered. The spot was lonely and desolate. The wind roared across the cliff-tops which cut off from his view the lights of Fotheringham.

"An' I only knew how far 'twas to Fotheringham I would push on through the storm," Roger muttered to himself. "By my truth I am so wet that e'en this rain could make me no worse! An' 'tis plaguey bad being here alone with but yon skeleton for company."

His eyes strove vainly to pierce the darkness, but the moon had once more slid behind the heavy clouds, and the

night was black with the blackness of velvet. Suddenly Roger started. The swaying trees had parted for an instant, revealing through them a light that twinkled like an eye. Only for a moment was it visible, and then it was hidden again. But Roger had seen enough to tell him that here was shelter and warmth. Surely none would deny that to a fellow-creature on a wild night such as this!

"I can but try," he murmured to himself. "Perhaps there are stables there, with sweet, warm hay, where I can rest myself until dawn."

He pulled his cloak closely around him, and, bending his head to the storm, made forward into it, the wind singing in his ears, the rain beating against his face like a thousand needle-points, stinging him with the pain of it. He plunged in amongst the trees, striving to keep a course in the direction whence had come the light.

Then he stopped as another sound came to his ears—a sound that was not of the night. It was the sound of a voice—a harsh, cracked voice, thick and heavy. It was near at hand, and Roger, as he heard it, strained his ears to catch the words which the wind almost whipped from his hearing.

*"Where the dead man lies, his staring eyes
Look out to the Westward—ho!
And none can tell where the dead men dwell
With their treasure down below!
With a ho, and a heave—yo-ho!"*

The voice rose almost to a yell at the last "yo-ho!" and Roger could not tell why, but it sent a shiver running through him. There was something vile and evil about the voice which chanted the sailor song. A short pause, and it began again:

*"Some sent to rot by the pistol shot,
And some by the dagger's blow,
But the dead man's eyes they tell no lies
Of the secret they do know!
With a ho, and a heave—"*

The voice stopped abruptly. It seemed as though a hand had been clapped over the lips of the singer, choking the words in his throat.

Roger listened intently.

"A thousand curses on ye, ye fool! Do'st want to rouse the neighbourhood and ha' the catchpools at our heels? Quiet, man—else will I quieten ye so that your chattering tongue shall never wag again!"

The voice was full of malice—and Roger knew now that it came from a little copse not far away to his right. Who were these men who walked abroad on such a night? What was their reason? Whither went they? Of one thing Roger was certain—they could be abroad for no good purpose!

Dropping on his hands and knees, he pushed slowly forward through the dripping bushes, intent on discovering who these midnight marauders were. The branches of the bushes scraped his face and tore at his clothes, but the wind drowned what little noise he made as he progressed. And then, after what seemed an eternity, he saw ahead of him a small clearing in a coppice, and two men seated on the ground. A lantern burned fitfully on the ground beside them, and sent its flickering light playing across their faces.

Roger thought he had never seen such evil-countenanced villains in all his life. One—the singer, Roger surmised—was a giant ruffian with a face gashed and scarred. One eye alone did he possess. The other—or the place where the other had been—was hidden by a dirty, black shade. The other man was as different as well could have been from his companion. He was a thin, rat of a man, with beady eyes set close to the sides of his nose—eyes that glittered like the eyes of a serpent. He, too, was scarred about the face, and had a look of indescribable evil stamped upon his face.

"Gallows-birds, an' that I warrant!" muttered Roger to himself, glad that he had not revealed himself to the men before he had discovered who they were.

Both were dressed sailor-fashion, and wore heavy sea-boots. The rat-faced man carried pistols at his hips. The

other had no pistols, but a knife, a long, gleaming weapon devoid of sheath, glittered in his belt. The rat-faced man began to speak in a voice that was low and crafty, and as he spoke, his eyes gleamed with greed and cruelty.

"He broods by himself in the lower room of the house," he whispered—yet, on account of the wailing wind he had yet to whisper loud enough for the listening Roger to hear. "To-night, One-eye, the deed shall be done. That knife of yours shall drink deep of his heart's blood, sink me else."

"And the plan?" queried One-eye. "What of that, Slim?"

"Shall be ours," was the reply. "A thousand curses on him and his house. 'Twas he who sentenced me to death—ay, but I shall chortle when I see him writhing in mine clutches; his eyes growing wider with terror as your knife goes nearer—nearer to his heart. Ye shall cut it out, One-eye—cut it out, so that it shall be nailed to the mast of the Swordfish to serve as a warning to all who would cross the path of Slim!"

A shiver ran through Roger. These men, who spoke of death so glibly—who were they? Whose heart was it that was to be cut out from his body?

"Hist!" It was Slim who was speaking again. "Crouch by the window One-eye, and when I give the signal, leap in through the lattice. I shall not be far away, and then—then—" He broke off and chuckled viciously.

Roger crawled slowly backwards. He had heard enough to warn him that the keen, cruel knife might find a refuge in his own heart did he so much as by a breath proclaim the fact that he had overheard their scheming. Yet, young though he might be, he realised that it was his duty to warn a fellow-creature of his impending doom.

He—the man whose death they had been so glibly discussing—was in the lower room of the house, Slim had said. The house! That could only mean the place from which the light had shone.

Crawling on his stomach like a snake, Roger wormed his way through the undergrowth, his keen eyes striving to pierce the blackness that shrouded him.



ROGER,
whose spirit craves for adventure.

He came at last to a break in the bushes, and, crawling through, beheld before him a house of the kind that betokened a wealthy owner. Its gables jutted out darker against the body of the house. Its windows were latticed, but from only one of them came a light—and it was towards this window that Roger went.

Cautiously he raised himself till his eyes were on a level with the bottom of

the lattice-work. Inside the oak-panelled room he could see a man, seated at a table, writing by the light of a lantern. An old, old man, he seemed, with hair that was as white as driven snow, and a face that was lined deeply with sorrow. But the eyes that followed the sentences he traced with his quill were kindly eyes. Here, Roger knew, was a man who had done no harm in all his long life, but who had suffered, only himself knew how much.

Roger raised a hand and tapped lightly on the lattice. He saw the man start, saw the quill fall from the nerveless fingers, and the next moment the casement opened and a hand seized Roger by the throat. So astounded was the lad that he had no time to struggle. There came a mighty heave, and Roger found himself hauled through the window by sheer force of arm.

"Now, knave, what do ye spying here outside my casement?"

The grip on Roger's throat relaxed, and the elderly one stepped back as he saw that here was no gallows cheat, but only a lad whose face was evidence of his peaceful intentions.

"Sir, I am no spy!" gasped Roger. "I came but to warn you. Your life is in danger. 'Twas but a few moments ago I did hear two seamen discussing your despatch."

"Seamen!" It seemed as though a blow had struck the man. "How—what manner of men were they?"

"Mighty scurvy knaves an' I make no mistake, your honour," said Roger. "One there was with but one eye, and a chant upon his lips that told of dead men's eyes, and—"

A ghastly pallor came over the face of the man, and he held on to the carved oaken table lest he should crash to the floor.

"A chant of dead men's eyes!" he gasped. "Then—then they have followed me—dogged me to this place, and now—"

He broke off quickly. Through the open window, above the howling of the gale, had come words, borne upon the wind. Roger, too, stiffened as he heard them, for this was the second time he had heard them.

"Where the dead man lies, his staring eyes

Look out to the Westward—ho!
And none can tell—"

"'Tis Abednigo One-Eye!" gasped the man. "'Tis he who has dogged me as he swore to do! Quick, lad! Art a fighter?"

"Something of one, so they that would have crossed me have said, your honour," was Roger's reply.

"Then take this and defend yourself!"

Roger found a rapier thrust into his grasp. The man picked up another from a corner and whipped the air with it.

"Come, ye gallows-rats!" he muttered. "Come and feel the steel that yet can be handled by the hand which ye know full well!"

A whistle rang out upon the night air outside, and then Roger stiffened as, with a flying leap, a man came through the casement, sending the latticed windows hurtling back with a crash. It was Abednigo One-Eye, his gleaming dagger held high, his eye glittering with the cruelty that was within his very soul!

And at the same moment the door of the room crashed open, and Slim stood there, his ever-ready pistols in his hands, an evil leer upon his face.

Roger and the man whom he would have helped were between two fires—hemmed in by crafty scoundrels whose

souls knew naught of mercy. A rapier flashed, there was a crash, the lantern tottered and fell to the floor, and the next moment Slim's pistols spoke, and the flash of them darted through the darkened room. There came a scream of agony, the sound of a falling body, the room was filled with the acrid smoke from the discharged pistols, and Roger felt his arm seized in a grip of iron.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Roger Learns a Secret!

"**R**AT me, man, ye've done for me!"

It was the voice of the one-eyed man, and Roger's heart leaped with renewed hope as he heard it, for he had feared that it was One-



ABEDNIGO ONE-EYE,
as fearsome a scoundrel as ever sailed
beneath the Skull and Crossbones.

Eye who had thus seized him. It could not have been Slim, for that crafty scoundrel had been too far distant. It must, then, be the stranger—and this, indeed, proved to be the case, for Roger heard his voice, close to his ear, whispering to him.

"Stand close to me, lad! Go not from my side!"

Followed a tense moment of waiting, and then the clash of steel. Slim, though Roger could see it not, must have drawn a knife and had leaped forward, to find his knife engaged upon the rapier of his intended victim.

"Rot ye! I'll carve out that heart of thine!"

It was Slim's voice, but it was a voice of baffled rage. The rapier scraped against the dagger, and a spark came through the darkness. It was but a spark, but in that deep darkness it shone with the glare of a meteor. For one brief fraction of a moment Roger saw something stir, and he cried out:

"Beware, sir! One-Eye scrambles to his feet!"

"Come, ye cut-throat scum!" cried the man who held Roger by the arm. "Taste this steel that is too good to plunge into your cursed vitals!"

They came on, Roger dared not use his rapier, for he was feared lest he should, by mischance, plunge it into the man who fought by his side. He felt the grip on his arm tighten as the scrape of steel against steel rang out with renewed vigour. Back and back they stepped until Roger was against the oak-panelled wall of that room of death.

A volley of oaths rapped out. They came from the lips of Slim, who, afeared that his prey would escape him,

had dashed forward in an attempt to end for ever this brawl. Suddenly there came a sob from the man beside Roger, and the next moment Roger found himself tumbling backwards and falling into nothingness. A grating, grinding noise, a thud of wood striking wood—'twas this that Roger heard in those few moments before he felt himself crashing on the wooden floor. And then—silence!

Roger picked himself up. He heard a gasp beside him, but naught else broke the stillness.

"Where be you all?" he cried. "What is this?"

"Sh!" came back a whisper, that was changed in a flash to laboured breathing. "We are safe, lad—safe from the gallows-scum. Feel you in my pocket, quick! There is flint and tinder there."

Roger put out his hands and groped in the darkness. He felt the body of the man beside him on the floor. He searched the pockets, found the tinder-box, and struck and ignited the tinder.

"Light you the lanthorn that is there!" came the next instruction, and Roger, gazing around, found a horn lanthorn on the floor. In a moment or two its flickering light was showing him as grim a scene as he could well have imagined.

He was in a room with no window. It was a musty, fusty place, and his heart bounded as he realised what had happened. The man had dragged him backwards, dragged him through some secret panel that had opened behind them. They were in a secret room—Roger and the man of the rapier!

"Thank ye, boy! Od's rats, but the scum have made worm's meat o' me!"

The man's hand went to his heart, and Roger saw blood oozing through his shirt, dripping through his fingers, and falling slowly to the floor.

"But they ha' not got what they sought, lad!" He spoke now with great difficulty. "Nay—an' if you but prove the lad I take ye to be, they will rue this night's work 'ere the gibbet claims them for its own!"

His hand went weakly to the inner pocket of his coat, and he drew therefrom a sealed packet, which he thrust into the grasp of Roger.

"Take this, lad!" he said. "Seek you one who is known as 'The Chevalier.' Ye will find him—in Fotheringham, at the sign of Ye Three Jolly Mariners. Tell him—tell him a dying man's thoughts go with him. Tell him that—"

He broke off, a tremendous fit of coughing shaking him and making him tremble like to a tree that has been struck by winter's chilly blast. Roger leaned over him, and the dying man—for that he was dying Roger could not doubt—caught hold of Roger's arms and held him tight. The long, curved knife of One-Eye had done its treacherous work only too well. Roger, as he gazed into the fast glazing eyes of him who lay there, knew that but a few moments would pass ere death paid his grisly visit to that secret room behind the panels of the old house.

"Boy, list carefully," the man went on, his voice sunk low now to little more than a whisper. "Seek you the Chevalier, as I have said. Tell him what has befallen me, and—"

Again he could go no further. He coughed, and tried to rise, choking for the breath that was denied him. Then, so suddenly that Roger was taken full

aback, he dropped with a thud on the floor, and lay there, his eyes glazing and staring unseeing above him.

"Dead!" gasped Roger. "And foully murdered by the gallows-birds!"

He rose to his feet and gazed around. The predicament in which he found himself was none to his liking. He was alone—with a dead man—in a secret room, the exit of which he knew not. The lanthorn cast its ghastly light flickering around the stained panels. A rat scuttled somewhere in the wainscoting; it seemed that death and destruction lurked on every hand. The silence was grim and foreboding. Roger listened intently, but, for a while, no sound came to his waiting ears. He was alone—and the terror which solitude breeds came to him.

He still held, in one hand, the rapier which the man had thrust upon him. In the other the sealed packet was firmly clutched, and he thrust it now in his inner pocket for safety.

"I must not tarry!" he muttered. "There must be escape from this rat-hole."

He sounded the walls, tapping them with the hilt of his rapier. Soon, however, did he desist from this, for a vague, scuffling noise had come to him—the noise of someone moving. He cast a glance around. The dead man lay as he had fallen, and Roger covered his face and his staring eyes with the man's cloak. The scuffling continued.

"'Tis the gallows-rats in the room we have but just quitted!" he decided. "I must not make a sound, lest they discover the entrance to this secret chamber."

He continued his search, and then gave a hiss of intaken breath as his eyes alighted upon a curious carving. It was a replica of a death's head, its grinning jaws twisted into a fantastic leer; its eyeless sockets seeming to gaze deep into the very soul of him with a look of demoniacal fury. Roger was examining this carving when further sounds came through the panel. There were foot-steps; the noise of the window casement banging, and then the muffled voice of Abednigo One-Eye, singing his grisly chant:

"Where the dead man lies, his staring eyes

Look out to the westward—ho——"

"'Tis One-Eye, and he has gone, taking his rat wi' him!" said Roger softly. "What was't he sang—'the dead man's eyes.' 'Tis a strange coincidence that mine hands should be on this carving as he sang his chant."

Moved by an impulse he could not fathom, Roger let his fingers seek the eye-holes of the grinning death's head, and he pressed upon them.

Came a sound of grinding and sliding, and to his amazement, part of the oak-panelled wall moved back, revealing beyond an aperture that was dark as the grave. Roger picked up the guttering lanthorn and peered into the blackness. A long corridor, dank and dark, was revealed to his gaze.

"A way of escape, belike!" he murmured, and, taking with him the lanthorn, and gripping his rapier tightly, he stepped through the open panel and felt his way cautiously along the secret corridor.

How long he walked he knew not, nor yet in what direction he travelled. The place was silent as the tomb, and the corridor dropped and rose, turned and twisted, like to the coils of a serpent.

Presently there came to his face a breeze of air, sweet and cool, and Roger knew that his journey was approaching its end. Cautiously he proceeded, and almost before he realised it, he saw his further progress impeded by a vast screen of creeping undergrowth. He pushed his way cautiously through it—to find himself emerging into a copse, dimly lighted by the waning moon.

He stopped awhile, his ears keyed to pick up sounds that might be heard above the roaring of the wind, and the rustle of the trees and bushes. The breaking of the billows in the distance told him that he was upon the cliff-tops. The road must be somewhere near then—and Fotheringham lay along the road. With this in mind, he set out, stumbling across the uneven ground.

After but a short walk he emerged upon the road, which was shrouded by the trees which grew by its side. Now, far ahead, he could see the twinkling lights that betokened the habitation of men. This, then, must be Fotheringham, and with this in mind Roger walked rapidly along the road, intent only upon reaching the town and seeking out Ye Three Jolly Mariners.

Then he reeled and almost fell to the ground as something dropped upon him from the branch of a tree above him. Strong arms wound around him, and as a cloud scudded from the face of the moon, he saw that he was in the grip of Abednigo One-Eye! The scoundrel had been lying full length upon the branch of a tree that overhung the road—and had dropped, like a bolt from the blue, upon the unsuspecting Roger!

"So-ho, my little strutting turkey cock! Ho, my fine whelp! An' ye thought to escape Abednigo One-Eye! Rat me, but ye shall pay for your interference! Hi, Slim! Come quickly! I ha' the whelp in my grip—ay, an' my long, keen knife shall rip him up an' he tells us not what has become o' the papers!"

There was a rustling in the bushes, and Slim, moving like a cunning serpent, and chuckling mightily to himself, came into the moonlight.

"Hold the strutting whelp, Slim—hold him!" cried One-Eye, and Slim, slipping behind Roger, wound his arms about him.

One-Eye stood back, and whipped out his knife from his belt. His solitary eye glittered as he advanced upon Roger, and the cruel blade shone in the moonlight.

"Rot him, I'll carve his heart out!"

Roger shrank back as the point of the blade pricked him just below his heart, and he could but stare, fascinated, at the gleaming blade as One-Eye pressed it slowly nearer to him!

— — —

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Of what Befell Roger at Fotheringham!

SO intent had both One-Eye and Slim been upon awaiting the approach of Roger, that neither of them had heard the rumbling of wheels coming along the wind-swept road. They had believed that the place was deserted—and they were not undeceived until the sudden glare of a post-chaise's lanthorns swept upon them.

"Ha! What villainy ha' we here?" The post-chaise had come to a sudden stop, but even before its wheels had ceased to turn a figure had leaped from the interior of the chaise, rapier in



Roger stiffened as, with a flying leap, a man came through the casement, sending the latticed windows hurtling back with a crash. It was Abednigo One-Eye, his gleaming dagger held high, his single eye glittering with ferocity. At the same moment the door crashed open and Slim appeared upon the threshold, his ever ready pistols in his hands. (See page 25.)

hand, and had struck up the point of the dagger which One-Eye held.

"Gentry o' the road, belike!" the newcomer went on, and, as Slim's grip slackened, Roger tore himself free and wheeled around, to see a tall gallant, his dress of the most fashionable, with ruffles at the neck and wrists. "Try your steel against this, sirrahs! Here is more fitting foeman than a helpless lad!"

"Od's rat ye!" One-Eye's single optic glittered, and he braced himself for a spring.

The next moment he had leaped through the air, his dagger making a vicious, downward slash. But it met naught but the empty air, for the newcomer had dodged nimbly out of the way.

"So-ho!" cried the gallant. "Murdering rogues ye be, and as murdering rogues ye shall be treated. Have at ye!"

He lunged in the direction of One-Eye, turning aside that scoundrel's dagger. But, while it seemed that his rapier would find its sheath in the black heart of Abednigo One-Eye, the rogue tripped and fell. With an agility that was unexpected in one so heavy-built as he, One-Eye twisted and leaped again to his feet. But he did not want to try further conclusions with the gallant. He took to his heels and vanished into the undergrowth, the snapping twigs and rustling grass beneath his feet, bearing evidence of his haste.

Nor did the rat-faced Slim delay! In

an instant he was after his comrade in crime.

The gallant sheathed his blade, and his laugh rang out strong and lustily as he threw back his head. Now, for the first time, could Roger see him fairly. He was a tall, slim man, dressed elegantly, with well-trimmed wig set above a face that was handsome, and yet could be stern and forbidding, as Roger had no doubt. He was youthful-looking, and there was something of foreign blood in his veins. He was like a court dandy, and yet Roger made no mistake when he set down this man as one who had travelled, and who had more than once used that swift rapier of his in mortal combat.

"'Tis the end o' those rogues, lad," he said. "Scurvy lags they must be, indeed, to seek to rob one like ye. Why, ye look as though you ha' naught worth the taking."

"Nor have I, sir," was Roger's answer. "Lest it be a message that I carry to Fotheringham."

"To Fotheringham?" repeated the gallant. "Then, indeed, are we well met, for my post-chaise drives to Fotheringham, to the sign of Ye Three Jolly Mariners. Ye are welcome to a scat, lad, an' ye care for 't."

"Right readily will I be pleased to avail myself of your hospitality, sir," said Roger, thankful that the post-chaise was bound for Ye Three Jolly Mariners. Belike the place was a coaching inn, where post-chaises stopped.

He clambered into the chaise, and the gallant followed him. Then, with the

outriders upon their horses, the chaise was driven on into the teeth of the gale, which raged more violently around them as they came from the shelter of the trees, and emerged upon the wind-swept coast road.

'Twas a wild night, and the wind was ever increasing. So loudly howled it around the chaise that conversation was difficult, and it was not until the chaise rumbled over the cobbled streets of Fotheringham, and came to a halt outside the tavern of Ye Three Jolly Mariners, that the gallant spoke again to Roger.

"What do ye here in Fotheringham, lad?" he asked. "To whom bear ye a message?"

"To one who is called by the name of 'The Chevalier,' sir," Roger answered. "I bring a message from one who has but this very night quitted this life, and who now lies dead—sent to his doom by those gallows-rats from whom your blade delivered me."

"The Chevalier! 'Tis I, lad!" The man's hand gripped Roger firmly by the shoulder. "I await a message from Sir Richard Greator. But silence, lad! We must not talk where prying ears may hear your tale! Come!"

Roger followed in his wake into the tavern. The Chevalier, who was evidently no stranger to the people of the tavern, spoke in commanding tones to mine host, and ere long the two found themselves shown into a low-ceilinged, oak-panelled room, whose casemented and latticed windows over-

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looked the wind-lashed waters of the harbour in which several trim craft rode to their anchors. Mine host set down a candelabra upon the table and withdrew.

"Now, lad," said the Chevalier, pulling forward a chair, and seating himself upon it, "what is this message ye bring to me? And what is this of Sir Richard being dead?"

"'Tis true that he is no more, sir," answered Roger. "And wif his dying breath he begged me to seek ye out and give this into your possession."

As he spoke he brought the sealed packet from his inner pocket and handed it across. The Chevalier, tight-lipped, surveyed the packet, and slit it open. For a while he sat in silence, examining the contents. Then he turned to Roger.

"Tell me the manner o' Sir Richard's death, lad," he said. "And tell me, too, what brings you here to Fothering-ham?"

He listened in silence while Roger told his tale—told of the call of the sea that had fired his blood with the ambition to sail the Spanish Main; told of his encounter with One-Eye and Slim, and how he had sought to aid the man in the lonely house, with the results that have been described.

"An' ye would sail the Spanish Main, eh, lad?" asked the Chevalier, when Roger's tale was told. "And so you shall, then, for this night ha' ye proved your worth. To-morrow ye shall sail wif me aboard my craft for there is no instant to be lost now that these rogues are after this." He tapped the packet which lay on the table before

them. "Boy, here we have the clue to a treasure that is worth the finding—a chart o' the island on which it lies buried. But there is one thing lacking, and that one thing must be found ere we can hope for success."

"And that?" asked Roger.

"Is the latitude and longitude o' the island," was the reply. "That, Sir Richard tells me, is scratched on the back o' a locket that was lost many years ago. With that locket, and this plan, and—"

He got no further.

An angry gust of wind swept into the room. The candles flickered and went out, and the room was in darkness, save for the scanty light which shone in through the open latticed window. And Roger, as he turned quickly in that direction, gave a sudden cry.

For a shadow, darker than the night beyond, had been silhouetted for a moment against the background of the sky—a shadow that had leaped, lithely and quickly, into the room.

There was a scuffle. Something brushed past Roger in the dark, yet when his hands went out to grip it they met naught but the empty air! Came the sound of a blow, and the scrape of the table-legs across the floor as someone lurched against the table.

"The chart!"

The words broke involuntarily from the lips of Roger. Instantly he dashed forward, and his hands went to where the chart and the papers had been upon the table. Yet, even as he would have grasped them, it seemed that they slipped from between his very fingers,

and he heard them rustle in the darkness.

A shadow flitted across the window. There came a noise as of a body striking the sodden earth beyond the windows, and then pattering footsteps which retreated rapidly into the distance.

The wind howled and roared; the breakers beat on the shore with a noise that was almost deafening in its intensity. And yet, above the wild noises of the night, came a lusty voice, bawling forth a song that was already too well-known to Roger:

"And none can tell where the dead men dwell

With their treasure down below!
With a yo! and a heave-yo-ho!"

"Abednigo One-Eye!" Roger gasped. "And he—'tis he has taken the chart!"

Quickly he snatched up his rapier where he had laid it, and then, like an arrow from a bow, he dashed to the window and leaped through the open casement. The wind tore at him, the merciless rain beat down on him, and it seemed that the elements were mocking him. But he heard naught more of the footsteps of Abednigo One-Eye, nor of his grizzly chant of dead men.

One-Eye had vanished, and with him had gone the chart!

(Young Roger Bartlett's quest for adventure has had an amazing beginning, hasn't it, chums? But this is only a foretaste of the thrills to come. Make sure of reading next week's gripping instalment by ordering your copy well in advance.)



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I.

OOM!

Dawn broke over the old grey buildings of St. Sam's. It was a hopeless dawn, for Dr. Birchmell, the revered and majestic headmaster, chained to a wall in a dark vault beneath the school, he bitterly bewailed his fate.

Only a few hours before, he had been a happy and care-free schoolmaster, light-heartedly descending the cellar steps with the intention of catching Jack Jolly & Co. in the act of raiding his fireworks. Now, amazing as it may sound, he was a prisoner in the hands of Guy Forks, and was doomed to be blown to bits by gunpowder before breakfast time.

"When is me!" moaned the Head hoarsely, as he covered in the inky blackness of the vault. "Oh, to think that I should have come down here to meet such a ghastly fate! I might have saved my life if only I had fallen down the steps and got killed before that scoundrel, Guy Forks, seized me."

The Head's pite plaint seemed to be despair. Every minute he expected to see the sinister finger of Guy Forks reappear with a flaming torch and set light to a train of gunpowder leading to his hidden store of explosives. Naturally, Dr. Birchmell had no idea that Guy Forks was in reality Algy Actwell of the Fourth. Actwell's disguise was perfect, and the Head had been completely taken in on that point.

Bang! Crash! Wallop!

Silently the door at the head of the stone cellar steps opened, to reveal the sinister finger of Guy Forks. Beads of perspiration stood out on Dr. Birchmell's dilated eyes as he watched his mischievous enemy descend the steps with a stealthy snake-like movement.

"So you are still here, Birchmell?" It was the mocking voice of Guy Forks, addressing the Head. Algy Actwell certainly knew how to disguise his voice, and any listener might have been egged on for supposing he was as despatch a scoundrel as ever blew up a school.

At the sound of those harsh, metallic, sinister tones, Dr. Birchmell's security lax fairly stood up on end, and he trembled until the heavy chains that bound him filled the air with their noisy rattling.

"Spare me!" he cried, in a frightful panic at the thought of being blown to little pieces.

Guy Forks merely laughed—a sneering, malicious laugh that chilled Dr. Birchmell to the marrow.

"Rats!" he cried. "Guy Forks spares no man. Up you must go with the rest of the school, Birchmell. Take your last look round, for in five minutes, St. Sam's will be no more!"

"Have mercy, Guy Forks!" moaned the Head. "Mister Forks to you!" broke in the cloaked visitor sternly.

"Mister Forks, I mean!" corrected the Head hoarsely. "Have mercy, Mister Forks! Take pity on my youth and innocence. Look at my shivering fingers, and ask yourself whether it is right for a fellow like me to be blown to smithereens."

Such eloquence might have moved a heart of stone, and the Head felt quite hopeful for a minute that it would induce Guy Forks to abandon his despatch project.

His hopes were dashed to the ground, however, as Guy Forks proceeded to sprinkle some powder out of a tea-caddy along the floor.

"Cease your idle prattle!" cried the Gunpowder Plotter. "My mind is made up. As soon as I have laid this train, I will put a light to it, and sneak out of the tradesman's entrance, leaving St. Sam's to its fate."

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"Yell away! No-

thing will save you now from your impending doom!"

moaned Guy Forks, as he finished sprinkling his powder, and struck a vesta on the Head's bald pate.

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Dr. Birchmell, clapping a mangled hand to the spot that had been degraded; then he redoubled his efforts to attract assistance, lapsing into French in case some passing forner might be attracted to the scene. "Ah moi! Ah moi! Ah moi! Help! Help! Assistance!"

"Too late!" said Guy Forks, chuckling feebly as he applied the match to a torch, causing it to burst into flame unmercifully. "With this flaming torch, I will light the train leading to the kegs of gunpowder I have consigned round the corner. St. Sam's will soon be blown sky-high now!"

"Help!" shrieked the Head, frantic with terror. "Rescue, St. Sam's!"

Was that an answering cry he heard, or were his eyes deceiving him? The Head made a megaphone of his mangled hands, and howled for all he was worth.

"Birchemall calling!" he yelled.

"Save me, quick!"

"I, sir!" came an unmistakable answer from the regions above. "We're coming!"

"Thank Heaven!" sobbed Dr. Birchmell. "Jack Jolly's voice, or I'm a Dutchman! He'll save me, I'm sure."

After that, the eggplant for a few minutes was terrific. First, the door at the top of the steps opened, revealing Jack Jolly, the captain of the Fourth, and his pals, Merry and Bright. Then, with a loud cry of "To the rescue!" the heroes of the Fourth dashed down the steps and into the fray.

"Grate pup!" A Gunpowder Plotter! egged on Jack Jolly in tones of horror. "It's Guy Forks up to his old tricks again! Go for him baldheaded, you claps, while I save the old school!"

Merry and Bright threw themselves at Guy Forks, while Jack stamped out the lighted train.

"It's all right, sir!" said Jack reassuringly. "We've saved you now!"

"You were just in the nick of time!" gasped Dr. Birchmell.

"Don't let that rotter escape, boys! Biff him on the napper, before he gets away!"

"I, I, sir!" said Merry and Bright.

Nevertheless, they didn't do as the Head suggested, and if Dr. Birchmell had known that the whole thing was a hoax, he probably wouldn't have expected them to. So Guy Forks made his getaway, much to the Head's chagrin.

Jack Jolly & Co. then released Dr. Birchmell from the cool manacles which had kept him chained to the wall all night.

Naturally, they pretended to be full of sympathy, though behind his back they were dubbed up with

fact.

GUY FORKS NIGHT

at St. Sam's!

DICKY NUGENT

"Thank you, my boys," gasped the Head, as he stood up at last, a free man once more. "My gratitude is more than I can express in words. I will see that it takes a practical form, but of that, more anon."

For the present, let's get upstairs again, and have some breakfast. "Same here!" cursed the juniors.

II.

AFTER breakfast, Dr. Birchmell invited Jack Jolly & Co. round to his study and insisted on their having a convivial glass of ginger pop, and some tiffin out of a somewhat sticky bag that was consigned in the folds of his schoolastic gown. Such homages rarely fell to the lot of mere juniors at St. Sam's. Occasionally a senior would be invited to partake of the Head's licentious all-sorts, and one memorable night, Dr. Birchmell had shared a decent with Buntlepp, the captain of the school. As a rule, however, favours of that kind were bestowed only on masters and distinguished visitors, so the present incident was quite unprecedented.

Of course, there was every excuse for the innovation. The Head believed that Jack Jolly & Co. had saved St. Sam's from being blown sky-high, and—what was more important—had risked their lives for him from certain death. Consequentially, he was full of gratitude to the heroes of

the Fourth, and he fairly beamed on them as they sipped their ginger-pop and chewed their

toffee with evident relish.

"Tuck in, my boys!" he cried jocularly. "It does my heart good to see you enjoying yourselves, and after your magnificent curried goat this morning, who would say that you don't deserve a chunk of toffee each?"

Jack Jolly & Co. quite agreed with Dr. Birchmell, so they held their respective pieces.

"Now about the reward I promised you," continued the Head. "Since breaker, I have been thinking it over, and what I've decided is this here—"

Crash!

There came a gentle tap on the study door at that moment, interrupting the Head's chin-wag.

"Trot in, father!" bawled Dr. Birchmell, with a severe frown.

The door opened, and a cheeky-looking fellow entered. It was none other than Bangs of the Third, whose sneaking habits had led

"Always remember the Fifth of November—"

And, jingo, boys, Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's, have caused to remember Dr. Birchmell, their wily headmaster!

Bangs started in utter astonishment at the sight of the Fourth-Formers feeding their faces. Knowing nothing of the events of the previous few hours, he had fully expected to find them being flogged black and blue.

"Well, what do you want?" thundered the Head, his brows contracting as he remembered that it was Bangs whose tittle-tattle had led to his going down into the vaults in the first place.

"Nothing, sir!" stuttered Bangs. "Then you've come to the wrong place for it!" retorted the Head, with a sinister intonation in his voice, which was not lost on the sneak of the Third. "In a minute you're going to get something!"

"Oh, er, yes!" murmured Bangs, fairly dismayed by the Head's tones. "What you're going to get, Bangs, is not ginger-pop and toffee, but a whopping piece of wallop such as you'll remember till your dying day."

"You-ow!" howled Bangs, already anticipating his coming treat. "What have I done, sir? Haven't I been your informer and tattle-in-chief for months, now? Didn't I tell you how these claps plotted to make a raid on your fireworks last night?"

"You did!" said the Head, savagely. "And a lot of tooth there was in your allegations, too!"

What Dr. Birchmell really meant, of course, was allegations, but in his egotistical, his tongue was getting a bit twisted. "Then you didn't catch them?" cried Bangs, recoiling like a startled fawn. "I did not—for the simple reason that these licentious boys never made no raid on the giddy fireworks at all," answered the Head grimly. "It is obvious to me now that with the object of discrediting Jolly and his pals, you told a whopping great whopper—or, as the vulgar would say, the whole story was a fabrication on your part."

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bangs. "In consequence of your misleading me," continued the Head. "I spent a night of horror chained to a wall in the vaults below St. Sam's, and but for the carriage of the chaps you so grossly libelled, I should at present be floating in little pieces up among the clouds."

"Many hats!" ejaculated Bangs, his face clouding, and looking completely mistified.

"If that's what comes of your smoking, then all I can say is, you'd better give it up for the future, finished Dr. Birchmell. "A repetition of this will surely tempt me to sack you from the school. For the

firstly to the Head collaring the juniors' fireworks, and secondly, to the daring Guy Forks' stunt by which the juniors hoped to recover them."

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"What-fo!" grimed Jack Jolly & Co., only too pleased to see the double-edged decoy who had sneaked on them take his grool.

"Stretch him across the table!" commanded the Head sternly, as he selected his stoutest birch.

Jack Jolly & Co. gladly obeyed and the Head laid it on well and truly.

"Yaroooooh! Woooooop! Drooooooh!" yelled Bangs, in agony.

By the time the Head had finished with Bangs, his trousers were torn to ribbons, and he was but a shamble of his former self. The flogging certainly gave him a lesson, for when at last he was released, a new light of honesty and earnestness was shining in his eyes. Bangs was a changed man, and it is pleasing to add that after that morning he steadfastly refused to be a tattle-tale and a cad, and simply scorned to sneak.

"Well, that's that!" remarked the Head, when he at last flung away the birch and mopped the perspiration off his brow. "And now, Jolly, to finish what I was saying of when Bangs entered. Seeing that to-night is Guy Forks' Nite, I have decided to give you back the fireworks I took from you and to grant leave out-of-doors to all juniors whose leave I previously cancelled."

"Hooley!" yelled Jack Jolly & Co., in delight. Their daring wilecoz had triumphed and they had gained egessactly what they had set out to gain!

"You will realise that I am making a great sacrifice," said the Head, shaking his head rather sadly. "The Masters' Firework Club is bankrupt, and this puts the keyhole on our running a show to-night. However, perhaps we can come and look on at yours."

"With pleasure, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly. "Of course, in the circumstances, we can't very well make you our guy, can we? Whom do you suggest as a substitute?"

Dr. Birchmell pondered for a minute or two, then a grin broke over his face. "What about the Chairman of the Board of Governors—Sir Frederick Frimings?" he suggested. "An old traitor like that ought to be grieved. The school has suffered a lot under his yolk."

"Good egg!" cried Jack Jolly. And so it was arranged. It remains only to be said that Guy Forks' Nite at St. Sam's turned out to be a brilliant success. For once in a way the Masters' and the juniors' firework Clinics battled the hatchet and worked for the common weal.

Of course, accidents did happen. Some of the juniors set fire to Mr. Lockman, under the impression that he was the guy; Mr. Justus was blown up by a canon cracker, and most of the masters sustained minor injuries. But such trivial matters were soon forgotten, and at the end of the evening, masters and boys alike voted that it had been the happiest Guy Forks' Nite of their lives.

"I don't think old Birchmell will ever consecrate our fireworks again, do you, chaps?" said Jack Jolly, in the Fourth Form dormitory that night.

"Rather not!" cursed his cunts, friend Algy Actwell again.

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