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THE Magnet ^{1d} 2

No. 42.

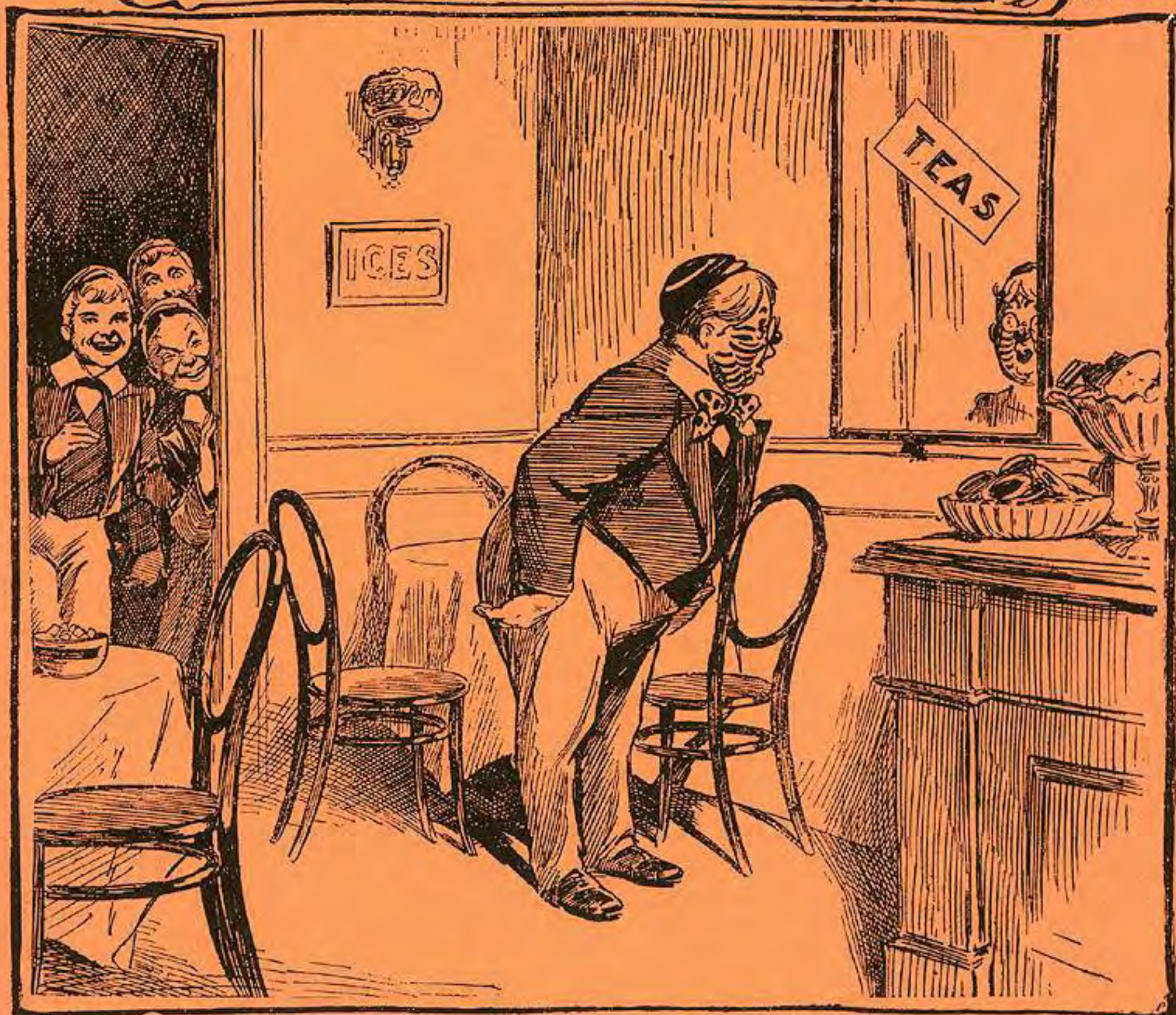
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Vol. 2.

COMPLETE
STORY
FOR ALL

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



"I—I—I— IS THAT MY FACE?" GASPED BILLY BUNTER.



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ONE HALFPENNY



Harry Wharton's Day Out

A Splendid Complete
School Tale.

By

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Sympathy.

"WHARTON!"
"Yes, sir!"
"Dr. Locke wishes to see you
in his study after prayers."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove at Greyfriars, walked on, and Harry Wharton immediately became the centre of commiserating glances from his comrades. If he had been ordered to execution, Cherry and Nugent and Hurree-Singh could hardly have looked more sympathetic.

"Rotter!" said Bob Cherry feelingly.
"What can it be this time?"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "and the cutfulness on the esteemed hand is more hurtful in the cold weather. I look upon my esteemed chum with great sorrowfulness!"

"Same here," grinned Nugent. "What have you been doing, Harry?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I can't call to mind anything in particular," he said, "unless it's the row we had in the box-room over the Christmas rehearsals."

"It's not that. You wouldn't have to go in to the Head about a little thing like that."

"Then I can't think what it is."

"Curious how these little things slip the memory," Bob Cherry remarked, in a thoughtful way. "We never mean any harm, but masters take such a beastly serious view of things. Quelch cuts up rough if you show the least glimpse of a sense of humour in the class-room, and a cracker under his desk makes him quite waxy."

"Curious," said Wharton, laughing. "Hallo, there's the chapel bell!"

"Hold on a tick; hadn't you better get some exercise-books—"



"What for?"

"To stuff under your logs, old chap, in case it's serious."

"Oh, rats! I'm not afraid of a licking; and perhaps it won't be one after all."

"Nothing like being on the safe side," said Bob Cherry. "An exercise-book between you and the cane makes all the difference."

But Harry Wharton was already walking towards the chapel, and his chums followed him, still debating the probable cause of the unexpected summons to the Head's study.

Harry Wharton was thinking it over, too. He was trying to call to mind some delinquency which might be at the bottom of it. He could think of nothing but the row in the box-room. The Wharton Operatic Society had been interrupted in a rehearsal by some practical jokers of the Remove, and the jokers had been ejected neck and crop. Unless that was it, Harry could not imagine what was the matter.

He was thinking of it a good deal during chapel, and when the morning service was over, he came out with a somewhat clouded brow.

"Anything wrong?" asked Levison, passing him on the way to the class-room.

"Oh, no—only—"

"Only a licking," grinned Bulstrode, the leader of the practical jokers who had been ejected from the box-room on the occasion of the rehearsal. "Wharton has to go in to the Head. And the Head knows how to lay it on. I should recommend exercise-books, Wharton."

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton.

"Or rub something on your hands—"

Wharton walked away without replying. The other Removites went on to the class-room, while Harry made his way slowly towards the Head's study.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, Porpoise!"

"I wish you wouldn't call me names, Bulstrode," said

Billy Bunter, blinking at the Remove bully through his big spectacles. "I don't think I'm much like a porpoise, either, when I'm wasting away to a shadow for want of proper nourishment."

"You look it," grinned Bulstrode.

"I know I never get enough to eat," growled the fat junior. "I've had to have my tea in Hall several times lately, and the school tea, of course, is never enough for me."

"And you contribute a lot to the funds of Study No. 1," said Levison sympathetically.

"I don't contribute anything. Wharton and Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh do the contributing, and I do the cooking," explained Billy Bunter. "I suppose a labourer is worthy of his hire, and you know it's wrong to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." And I rather think that the little I eat isn't likely to be missed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't suppose I shall ever get a decent meal again till I get the prize of a pound a week in 'The Gem' football competition," said Billy Bunter. "Of course, that will make a difference. I am thinking of standing an extensive series of feeds, and I should like you two fellows to come to all of them. By the way, could you lend me a couple of bob?"

"I dare say I could," said Bulstrode, "but I'm not going to."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Why don't you ask Wharton?"

"He's made it a rule now never to lend me more than a shilling at a time, and never twice in the same day. Of course, it's horribly mean, but Wharton isn't a fellow you can argue with. I say, you fellows, if you like to advance me a little off 'The Gem' prize—"

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Levison! I've been disappointed about a postal order. By the way, where is Wharton going? Why isn't he coming to the class-room?"

Bulstrode winked at Levison.

"Didn't you know, Billy?"

"Didn't I know what?"

"About Wharton being expelled."

Bunter stared.

"Wharton expelled?"

"Yes. That's what he's going to the Head's study for—to be expelled," said Bulstrode, with perfect gravity. "Better go and condole with him."

"What has he been doing?"

"Ah, that's it!" said Bulstrode, with a shake of the head.

"What has he been doing?"

"I'm sincerely sorry to hear it, but if he's leaving Greyfriars he might stand me a little before he goes," said Bunter. "I know he had a registered letter yesterday, and if he's leaving—" Bunter did not finish, but raced away after Wharton as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

Bulstrode burst into a roar.

"My hat! There's sympathy! Bunter thinks he's expelled, and he's going to take the opportunity to borrow his last bob! Ha, ha!"

"Little beast!" grunted Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton had almost reached the Head's door when he heard the pattering of feet and the panting of breath behind him. He looked round, and Billy Bunter came pounding up.

"I say, Wharton! Stop a minute!"

Wharton stopped.

"What is it, Billy?" he asked good-naturedly. "You'll be late for class."

"I—I say, Wharton—" Bunter gasped, and could not get on. He was very short of breath, and the run had winded him. "I—I say—"

"Oh, take your time," laughed Harry.

"I—I say, Wharton, as you are going—going—"

"I'm going in to the Head."

"Yes, yes; I know. As you are going to be expelled—"

"Eh?"

"As you are going to be expelled, you won't want that remittance you had yesterday, and you might lend me a few bob—"

"What are you talking about, you young ass?" demanded the captain of the Lower Fourth impatiently.

Billy Bunter gasped for breath.

"I—I say, as you are going to be expelled, you might—"

"You utter ass!" said Wharton, laughing in spite of himself. "Who told you I was going to be expelled?"

"Bulstrode. I thought you might lend—"

"He was pulling your leg, ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You'd better cut off, or you'll be late for class."

"But—but—but aren't you going to be expelled—honour bright?" asked Bunter.

"No, of course not."

"Then—then the rotter was only rotting! But I say, Wharton, you—you oughtn't to disappoint me, you know—"

"Well, I'm sorry, Billy, but I'm afraid I can't undertake to be expelled simply to please you," said Wharton gravely.

"I—I don't mean that. But—but if you were expelled, I thought you wouldn't have any use for your remittance, and you might have left me a few bob. I think you might lend me a few bob, all the same."

Harry Wharton looked at his watch.

"You're a minute late for class now, Bunter."

"Oh, dear! Quelch is bound to notice it, and it's all your fault!"

"My fault!"

"Yes, for keeping me talking instead of handing over the few shillings you are going to lend me."

"If you wait till I hand them over, Billy, you will be late for afternoon classes as well," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Cut off you young ass!"

"But aren't you going to give me—"

"I'm going to give you a thick ear if you bother me any more," said Wharton. "I'm glad to know exactly how sympathetic you would feel if I were really expelled. Now you've enlightened me on that point, cut—"

"But really, Wharton—"

"Oh, cut!" And Harry turned and walked away himself. Bunter blinked after him with an expression of aggrieved indignation, and then turned and made his way to the Remove class-room.

The clock over the bookcase indicated nearly twenty minutes past nine as Billy Bunter pushed open the class-room door and entered. The Lower Fourth were all in their places, and Mr. Quelch, the Form master, fixed his eyes on Bunter like—as Billy afterwards described it—a pair of gimlets.

"Bunter!" he rapped out, as the fat junior tried to sneak unseen to his place.

"Ye-es, sir!" said Bunter, with a jump.

"You are four minutes late."

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir."

"I have no doubt you are, Bunter, but that is hardly sufficient. What is the cause of this inexcusable delay in arriving in the class-room?" demanded the Remove master.

"If you please, sir, it wasn't my fault—"

"Then whose fault was it?"

"I—I hardly like to say, sir."

"Answer me at once, Bunter!"

"I mean, Wharton would be waxy, and—"

"Wharton! What do you mean? Did Wharton cause your delay?"

"Well, sir, I—I—"

"Answer me at once!" rapped out Mr. Quelch, in a voice that nearly made Bunter jump clear of the floor.

"Well, sir, Wharton kept me talking, and—"

"You will take twenty lines for being late, Bunter, and I shall speak to Wharton on the subject," said Mr. Quelch severely. "We will now proceed."

And the Remove proceeded.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Good News.

HARRY WHARTON tapped at the door of the Head's study, and the voice of Dr. Locke bade him enter. Dr. Locke nodded pleasantly enough to the junior, and Harry Wharton took courage from his expression.

"Ah, it is you, Wharton," said the Head. He glanced over his desk, and took up a letter that had been already opened.

"Yes, sir," said Wharton. "Mr. Quelch told me you wished to see me here. If you please, sir—" He paused and coloured.

The Head glanced at him.

"Well, Wharton, what is it? Have you something to tell me?"

"I—I should like to explain—"

"Go on, by all means."

"It was all in fun, sir," said Wharton.

"Eh? What do you mean, Wharton?"

"We were holding a rehearsal in the box-room, and those bounders—I mean, the other fellows—hid themselves in the empty boxes to muck it up—I mean, to interrupt the rehearsal—"

The Head looked amazed.

"Indeed, Wharton!"

"Yes, sir. And when they began to interrupt, we buzzed them out in no time. I mean we chucked them out of the

box-room. But, of course, it was all fun. They knew that if we discovered them they'd go out on their necks—"

"Really, Wharton, I have not the faintest idea of what you are talking about," said Dr. Locke. "You appear to be under a slight misapprehension. I have not heard anything of this fracas in the box-room."

Harry Wharton started, and his colour deepened.

"Oh, I thought—"

The Head smiled.

"I see, there has been a little mistake."

"I—I thought I was sent for to—to—"

Wharton paused. He could see now the mistake he had fallen into. The Head looked as if he very much wanted to laugh.

"Well—well, it was quite a mistake," said Dr. Locke. "It is not a question of punishment this time, but quite another matter. I have had a letter from your uncle, Colonel Wharton."

Harry Wharton looked interested. He could not help wondering what his uncle should have written to the doctor about him for, instead of writing to him direct.

"Yes, sir."

"It appears," resumed the Head, "that the colonel's old regiment is playing in a football match this afternoon—I mean that the regimental team is playing—at Aldershot. The colonel is going down for the match, and he particularly wishes to take you with him, if it can be permitted."

Harry Wharton flushed with pleasure.

"It is very kind of him, sir, to think of me, and there is nothing I should like better, if—if you will be kind enough to give your permission."

Dr. Locke smiled.

"I have spoken to Mr. Quelch about it, Wharton, and we have agreed that there is no reason why the colonel's wishes should not be complied with."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"You have not to thank me, Wharton, but your own good conduct for some time past," said the Head. "There is another point the colonel mentions. He thinks that you will like, if possible, to take some of your friends with you—"

Harry Wharton's eyes danced.

"Oh, sir!"

"And he wishes me to give permission, if possible. Now, I do not see any objection, if you are careful in selecting your companions. There are some boys in the Remove to whom I should certainly not give permission to leave the school for a whole day, but boys of this kind, I think, are not among your personal friends. At all events, you may send in the names of three or four lads whom you would like to take, and I will discuss the matter with Mr. Quelch."

"Thank you, sir!"

"If you go you will meet the colonel at Reading, as the nearest point to Aldershot, where you can meet, and you will start early from here. I shall send a wire to Colonel Wharton to inform him that you are coming. You may go, Wharton, and you are excused classes to-day, after first lesson."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Harry Wharton left the Head's study, walking on air. A day's holiday was of course welcome to any school-boy, but a run down to the great Hampshire camp, and the sight of an exciting football-match thrown in, would be delightful. And if he obtained permission to take along his chums, the day out would be a success in every way.

Harry Wharton entered the Remove class-room, and a good many fellows glanced at him curiously, expecting to see him twisting his hands, or twisting his features—a common result of a visit to the Head's study.

The genuine pleasure in Harry's face puzzled the Removites, his own chums as much as anybody else.

"The thrashfulness has not come off," murmured Hurrea Jamset Ram Singh. "The congratulateness is terrific."

"So it wasn't a licking?" muttered Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head.

"No. Don't talk now."

"Why not? Quelch isn't looking."

"Best behaviour, to-day."

"Anything on?"

"Yes, rather."

"Explain, then, fathead."

"Best behaviour, I tell you; no talking in class."

And Bob Cherry had to control his curiosity. Mr. Quelch glanced in their direction, and, as a matter of fact, it was not safe to say more. At the end of the first lesson the Form master signed to Wharton to come out to his desk.

Bulstrode's face lighted up.

"Now he's going to get it," he muttered. "The Head has let him off, and Quelch is going to lather him instead."

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed upon Bulstrode.

"Bulstrode, I have cautioned you before about talking in class. You will take fifty lines."

And Bulstrode scowled and was silent.

"Wharton, you are excused further lessons to-day," said Mr. Quelch, "as you will doubtless have some little preparations to make for your journey."

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"Yes, sir. Thank you!"

"Let me know whom you wish to take with you, at eleven o'clock, and I will speak to the Head about it."

"Yes, sir."

And Wharton left the class-room. The curiosity of the Remove was great, and that of Harry Wharton's own chums was excited almost to fever heat.

"What the dickens does it mean?" muttered Bob Cherry to Nugent. "Where is he going?"

"On a journey, Quelch said."

"I know that, duffer! I want to know where."

"Ask Quelch."

"Oh, rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows," murmured Billy Bunter, "Wharton must have been cramming when he told me he wasn't going to be expelled. That's where he's going."

"What's that, you young ass?" said Bob Cherry.

"Wharton is expelled, of course, and that—Ow!"

Bunter broke off with a wail of anguish, as Nugent jabbed a pin into his fat leg. Mr. Quelch looked round.

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?"

"I—I had a sudden pain, sir."

"You will have another sudden pain if you disturb the class again," said Mr. Quelch, "and a more severe one, Bunter. Take care!"

And Billy Bunter understudied the oyster for the rest of the lesson, and was mum.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Holiday for Five.

THE moment the Remove were released from the class-room for the morning recess, Harry Wharton's chums rushed off in search of him. They were suffering from a burning curiosity to know what was "up." Wharton was not in the Close, and they looked for him in Study No. 1, and ran him to earth there. The captain of the Remove was dividing his attention between a heap of articles piled on the table, and a bag on the floor, which could have contained about a quarter of them when crammed to its full capacity.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he rushed into the study. "What is the meaning of it, anyway?"

"What's up?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Why the bagfulness and the journeyfulness?" demanded the Nabob of Bhanipur. "What is the honourable upfulness?"

"Hallo, you chaps! Is it eleven o'clock?"

"Yes, rather."

"Then I ought to have the list ready for Mr. Quelch."

Wharton took a pencil from his pocket, and tore a sheet of paper from a pocket-book. "I suppose I can put your name down, Bob?"

"What for—a football subscription?"

"Ha, ha! No. For a little run down into Hampshire."

"Eh?"

"And a football-match at Aldershot."

"What?"

"And a whole holiday."

"What are you talking about?" shrieked Bob Cherry. "If you're trying to pull my leg—"

"Nothing of the sort."

"The pullfulness of the esteemed and august leg would be the bad formfulness under the honourable circumstances," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But I should be glad for our worthy chum to explain what he dickensfully means."

"That's it," said Nugent. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"You see, my uncle has written to the Head, and asked him to give me a day off," Harry explained. "His old regiment is sending a team to Aldershot to-day for a football-match, and Colonel Wharton wants me to go down with him to see it."

"Good idea! And he wants you to take us?"

"That's it."

"Ripping! How fortunate that we made such an excellent impression upon the colonel!" grinned Bob Cherry. "On the present occasion, chaps, I think it can be passed unanimously that the respected colonel has played up well, and deserved well of his country."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I'm to let Mr. Quelch know what fellows I want to take, and he'll see about it," said Wharton. "Your name to go down, Cherry?"

"Well, I should say so."

"Yours, Frank?"

"I suppose I'd better be there to look after you and the colonel," said Nugent. "Put my name down."

"And yours, Inky?"

"The gladfulness on my honourable part will be terrific."

"Good! Now, we shall make a pleasant party of four."

"Will you?" said Billy Bunter, coming into the study.

"I'm really surprised at you, Wharton."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with the Owl?"

"I'm surprised at Wharton. I'm not referring now to his meanness."

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Billy?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I mean your meanness in not lending me a few bob, when you know the state of health I'm in through not properly feeding my recent cold. I've heard all you fellows have been saying."

"You generally do hear a lot of what fellows have been saying," Nugent remarked.

"Oh, really, Nugent! As I was saying, I think you might remember me when it comes to planning an excursion. You will have to take some grub to eat in the train, and you will want me to get it ready."

"I think we could manage, Billy."

"I couldn't leave such a thing in your charge," said Bunter loftily. "I have a sense of duty. Besides, I think that a run down to Aldershot would probably do me good after my recent illness."

"It wouldn't do us good to have a fat porpoise to roll about," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, I'll put Bunter's name down," said Wharton, after a moment's hesitation. "I don't know whether Mr. Quelch will allow you to come, Billy."

"Oh, yes, he will, if you beg it as a special favour."

"I'm blessed if I know why I should do anything of the sort," said Wharton, "especially after your sympathy when you thought I was going to be expelled, you young grampus. I'll do my best, though. If you don't get on in the world, it won't be for want of cheek."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I'll go and ask Mr. Quelch about this list, now."

And Wharton left the study. He found the master of the Remove in his room, and Mr. Quelch took the list.

"You have four names here, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

"Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Bunter. I do not know about Bunter; he is too backward with his work, I am afraid, to be given an extra holiday."

"I—I should be glad if you could let him come, sir," said Wharton, flushing. The Form master looked at him keenly.

"I don't see how your pleasure will be enhanced by having that troublesome and selfish boy with you, Wharton. I am afraid you have allowed your good-nature to make you put his name down here. However, I will see."

"Yes, sir," said Harry uncomfortably.

He returned to No. 1 Study. Bunter was changing his shoes for a pair of thick boots, and he already had his scarf on. Wharton glanced at him. Billy was making his preparations for the journey, evidently assured that he was going.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I think it's all right for you three fellows, but about Bunter I'm not so sure," said Harry, beginning to pack the bag. Bunter looked up quickly.

"What's that, Wharton? Of course I am coming."

"It all depends on Quelch, Bunter. The fact is, you're too lazy and careless with your lessons to be let off."

"I suppose, as a matter of fact, you'd rather leave me behind. I think it's very selfish of you, when I'm so much in need of a change after my recent illness," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "Nobody ever feels any sympathy for me."

"Oh, cheese it, Billy; I've done my best."

Bunter grunted, and went on lacing his boots. Harry Wharton packed the little bag, putting in the things the chums would be likely to want on a day's run, and not forgetting a big packet of sandwiches he had obtained from the housekeeper.

"What train are we catching?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The twelve o'clock from Friardale. We shall have to walk down to the station."

"Oh, I say, Wharton, it's a jolly long walk. Couldn't you have some sort of conveyance?" said Billy Bunter. "I get tired walking."

"Part of the way's downhill, and you could roll it," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I'm to go to Quelch's study for the answer, and you chaps had better get your coats on."

"Good!"

Harry Wharton went down the passage. A youth came out of Russell's study—a gentle-looking youth, with almond eyes and a pigtail, and a smile that was childlike and bland.

It was Wun Lung, the Chinese junior in the Greyfriars Remove.

"Gooe out?" he asked, as he glanced at Wharton's coat and cap.

"Yes," said Wharton; "going on a little run, kid."

"Me comee?"

Wharton looked a little uncomfortable. Wun Lung, the Chinese, had shown a great attachment to him since coming to Greyfriars, and Wharton was very kind to the little Oriental. He would willingly have taken Wun Lung along, but he felt that he could hardly ask Mr. Quelch for more.

"Can't be did, kid," he replied. "I'm going on leave, you see, and I can't take you. I'd be glad to if it could be fixed."

"No savvy."

"Can't take you."

"No savvy."

"You could jolly well savvy if you liked," murmured Wharton.

"Wharton say, me comee?" asked Wun Lung.

"No, I didn't. I'm sorry, you can't come. I'm going a long way."

"Chinee likee gooe long way."

"It can't be done."

"No savvy."

"Well, I'll ask Mr. Quelch, if you like."

Wun Lung grinned with delight.

"Me savvy."

"Yes, I thought you'd savvy that," said Wharton, laughing in spite of himself. "But, mind, I don't promise you. I'm afraid it can't be done. Wait here a bit!"

"Me waitee."

Wharton tapped at Mr. Quelch's door and entered. The Form master gave him a genial nod.

"You have the Head's permission to take these companions, Wharton," he said. "I hope you will have a pleasant day."

"Thank you very much, sir," Wharton coloured. "I—I— Might I ask you, sir, if I could take one more fellow with me?"

Mr. Quelch shook his head.

"Come, Wharton, you must be reasonable. The Head has stretched a point very much in your favour by allowing you to take four companions. You don't want to take the whole Remove, I suppose?"

"It is Wun Lung, sir. He—"

"I should not care to take the matter to the Head again."

"Thank you, sir. I—I am sorry I asked; but I told Wun Lung I would, and—"

"I quite understand; but I do not think it would do."

"Very well, sir."

Wharton quitted the Form master's study. The Chinese junior was waiting for him in the passage. He looked at the captain of the Remove eagerly.

"Me comee?" he asked.

"Sorry, Wun Lung; I can't get permission."

"No savvy."

"I'm sorry you can't come, old chap. Can't be helped."

And Wharton walked away. He left the Chinese youth with a curious grin upon his quaint, little face. Five minutes later, the Famous Four, in caps and overcoats, were leaving the gates of Greyfriars, with Billy Bunter plodding on behind, and grumbling at every step at having to walk to the station.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Train.

"TRAIN'S in!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Greyfriars juniors came in sight of the station.

The Removites broke into a run, and dashed into the station. Billy Bunter came panting in after them.

"I say, Wharton, you can take my ticket," he said, "I'll return you the amount out of my postal order on Saturday."

Harry Wharton did not reply. He took the tickets, and the juniors hurried upon the platform. The train was preparing to start. A carriage door was wide open, and the juniors bundled into it.

"Urry up there!"

Billy Bunter was the last to enter. He was breathless from the run. The guard gave him a shove behind that sent him sprawling over the feet of the Removites, and slammed the door. Bunter sat up gasping.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "I say, you fellows, you might have given me a hand in. Which of you was it shoved me like that?"

"Ha, ha! It was the guard."

"Like his cheek. And all of you stand there grinning like a lot of Cheshire cats, and don't give a fellow a hand up."

Harry Wharton jerked the fat junior to his feet. Billy Bunter sat down in his seat, and panted.

"No need to yank me about like that, Wharton," he said. "You might have made my spectacles fall off, and if they had got broken I should have expected you to pay for them. Ow!"

"What's the matter now?"

"Somebody stuck a pin into my leg."

"Stuff! You're dreaming."

"I tell you I felt it," yelled Bunter. "Was it you, Cherry?"

"No, ass! You're dreaming."

"Well, I felt it jab, anyway," grunted Bunter. "I say, Wharton, is there anything to eat in that bag?"

"Yes, some sandwiches."

"I suppose you're not going to take them all the way to Aldershot?"

"No; but I'm going to take them most of the way to Reading," said Harry Wharton grimly.

"Oh, really, Wharton, considering that I'm practically famishing—"

"Cheese it! You can have some presently. I—What on earth's the matter, Bob?"

Bob Cherry was sitting next to Bunter. He had suddenly leaped to his feet with a fiendish yell, clasping his leg. Then he turned on Bunter, grasped him round the neck, and yanked him off the seat.

"Hold on!" yelled Billy. "I mean let go! What's the matter now? Are you off your rocker?"

"You young villain, I'll teach you to stick pins into me."

"Pins? I—I didn't."

"Then who did?"

"How should I know? You're dreaming!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Don't shake me like that! You might make my glasses fall off, and then you will have to—"

"If you do it again I'll sling you out of the window!" growled Bob Cherry. "So look out, you funny merchant."

"I tell you I didn't—"

"Oh, cheese it! If you didn't, who did?"

This was unanswerable, and Billy Bunter's protests were unheeded. The Famous Four, by way of passing the time, commenced to sing a quartette they were practising for the Christmas entertainment of the Wharton Operatic Society, and Billy Bunter kept his eyes fastened upon the bag.

"I say, Wharton," he said, at last.

The juniors did not stop singing. Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"I say, you fellows, I don't mind your making that row, you know, but really I think you might let me have some of the sandwiches—"

"Shut up!"

"But really, Cherry—"

"Unless the shutupfulness is immediate, the whackfulness will be terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Ow!" roared Nugent.

"What the dickens is the matter now, Nugent?"

"It's that fat young villain! I'll teach him to play off his practical jokes on me!" howled Nugent; and he hurled himself upon the astounded Bunter.

Billy was bumped down on his back on the seat, and Nugent bumped his head on the cushions. Bunter yelled and squirmed.

"Hold on! Stop him, you fellows! He's mad!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"The young villain stuck a pin in my leg!"

"I—I—I did—did—"

"Yes, I know you did."

"I—I—I did—"

"Well, if you did, you ought to be licked," said Bob Cherry. "I warned you once not to be funny. Bump him!"

"I—I—I did—did—"

"Yes, yes, yes. Don't keep on telling us you did; we know you did! Bump him hard, Nugent, only mind he doesn't burst."

"I—I did—did—didn't!" yelled the unfortunate Bunter.

"Now, don't prevaricate, Billy," said Bob Cherry reprovingly, while the incensed Nugent still industriously bumped Billy Bunter on the cushions. "First you said you did, and now you say you didn't. It won't do."

"I—I—I did—didn't—I didn't!"

"Then who did?" roared Nugent.

"B-b-blessed if I know. Perhaps Bob Cherry did."

"What's that?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Give him another bump for his cheek, Frank. We have enough to put up with from Bunt without his starting as a funny merchant."

"I should rather think so."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"I—I—I think you might stop them, Wharton!" gasped Bunter, as Nugent finished bumping him on the seat. "I—I—I—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

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ONE
PENNY.

"You shouldn't start in the funny line, Billy. Fellows don't like pins stuck in their legs. You're getting off lightly."

"But I didn't do it."

"Oh, don't cram!" said Nugent. "You've had your medicine, now be quiet. If you are funny again, I shall sling you out at the next station, so I warn you!"

"But I tell you—"

"Shut up!"

And Billy Bunter relapsed into indignant silence, and the Famous Four resumed the practice of the quartette. Four merry voices rang from the carriage as the train rushed on through the keen November air.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Ventriloquism Extraordinary.

HARRY WHARTON opened the bag at last, and Billy Bunter's eyes glistened. The hero of the Remove took out the substantial packet of sandwiches, and the juniors began an early lunch. Billy Bunter started on the sandwiches at express speed, and the whole supply would quickly have disappeared had not Bob Cherry, as he expressed it, put the brake on.

"Hold on," he remarked pleasantly, as the fat junior reached out for his sixth sandwich. "I'm afraid you will damage your works, old chap, if you give them so much to deal with all of a sudden."

"I've been famishing all the morning, Cherry."

"Now, you know after a long famine, it's dangerous to eat large quantities of food," said Bob Cherry. "You ought to know that well enough, Bunter. As you have been famishing for a whole morning, it won't be good for you to eat any more now."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Quite right," said Nugent, grinning. "We must look after Bunter's health. As he is in our charge, we must see that he doesn't expire of repletion."

"Look here, Nugent—"

"The repleteness is already terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "It is only equalled by the greedfulness of the honourable Bunter."

"Utter rot!" said Billy Bunter. "You fellows don't understand me. I'm not greedy, but I like a lot. If you've done singing, I'll do a little ventriloquial practice."

"That you won't!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "If you start the ventriloquial groan here, I'll give you something to groan for."

"It isn't the ventriloquial groan; it's the ventriloquial drone."

"I don't care whether it's a groan or a drone, we've had enough of it in Study No. 1, at Greyfriars," said Bob Cherry. "Besides, it's forbidden by the bylaws of the railway company."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Look there—it's printed plain enough. You mustn't do anything to the detriment of the railway or the discomfort of the passengers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a matter of fact, I wasn't thinking of practising the ventriloquial drone," said Bunter. "Of course, with the time I've spent on ventriloquism, I've got far beyond that now. I can throw my voice—"

"Could you throw it out of the window, so that it wouldn't keep on jawing all this journey?" asked Nugent politely.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, we'll give you a chance," said Wharton. "Mind, only one chance, and if you can't throw your voice you're to shut up."

"I am quite willing to agree to that, Wharton, as there are few who can equal my wonderful abilities in voice-throwing on the famous Balmicrumpett principles," said Bunter. "I will first make my voice proceed from under the seat. I will speak to a person supposed to be under the seat, and he will reply—'Ere!' As you know, the aspirate cannot be produced with the ventriloquial voice."

"Go ahead! If you make your voice proceed from under the seat, you shall have another sandwich."

"Very well. I'm just going to begin," said Bunter, clearing his throat. "Now, then, you fellows, just watch me!"

"We're watching you, Owl."

"I'm going to ask the supposed person under the seat if he's there, and he's going to reply—'Ere!'"

"Well, do it then, and don't jaw."

"Are you there?" rapped out Billy Bunter. And he was just about to squeak, in his ventriloquial voice, a reply, when an answer came from under the seat.

"'Ere!'"

The Famous Four gazed at one another in amazement.

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"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Well, I must say that's all right," Nugent remarked. "I didn't see his lips move even."

"He looks pretty well astonished himself," laughed Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter did indeed look astonished. The voice from under the seat astounded him. He knew he had not made the reply, and yet it seemed that he must unconsciously have done it. At all events, Bunter, was not the person to disclaim any credit. He blinked triumphantly at the Removites.

"Where's that sandwich?" he demanded.

"Well, you've earned it," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are! Blessed if I thought you'd ever be able to ventriloquise, though!"

"A fellow of my wonderful abilities is often misunderstood by common chaps."

"The modestfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific."

"I'll give you another specimen, if you like," said Bunter, when the sandwich had disappeared—which was in the space of half a minute. "I'll make my voice come from the luggage-rack."

"Go ahead!"

"Are you there?" rapped Bunter; and then he squeaked, "Ere!"

But the reply did not seem to proceed from the luggage-rack; it was only too evident that it proceeded from Billy Bunter himself. The Removites grinned.

"There, what do you think of that?" asked the fat junior.

"Rotten!" came the reply, with singular unanimity.

"Oh, really, you fellows, you oughtn't to allow jealousy of my abilities to bias you like this!" expostulated Billy Bunter. "Still, I admit that I'm more successful in throwing my voice downwards. I'll hold a short dialogue with a supposed person under the seat. Now, then, are you there?"

"Ere!" came from under the seat.

Bunter grinned slightly. He knew perfectly well this time that he had not made that ventriloquial reply, but he did not mean to give himself away.

"Go ahead!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "I admit that you're getting on."

"How long have you been under the seat?" went on Bunter.

"Long time."

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "One would almost think that there was somebody under the seat. Go on, Bunt, this is getting interesting!"

Harry Wharton looked puzzled, and so did Bob Cherry. They had not seen Bunter's lips move in the slightest when he was ventriloquising, and they did not know what to make of it. The nabob was watching the fat junior intently.

"Don't you find it stuffy under there?" went on Bunter.

"Yes."

"Would you like something to eat?"

"Yes."

"What would you like?"

"A sandwich."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Ah, that wasn't quiet up to the mark!" he observed.

"That word 'sandwich' gave it away, Billy. It didn't sound as if it came from under the seat."

Billy Bunter grinned.

"I thought it did," remarked Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"I admit that it was pretty good, but it wouldn't have deceived me," he said. "Go on, Billy, let's see if you can keep it up."

"I think I ought to have another sandwich first."

"Here you are."

Bunter devoured the sandwich, and then another. Then he resumed the extraordinary ventriloquism.

"Are you getting tired?"

"Yes," came from under the seat.

"Why don't you come out?"

"Me allee light."

Bunter gave a gasp of dismay. He knew that there must be somebody under the seat, who was entering into the joke of the Removites. But he did not know who it was, nor did he expect to be given away by a reply in "pidgin-English."

The Removites jumped up in amazement.

"Wun Lung!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"He's under the seat!"

"It's a little game!"

"Billy, you fat impostor!"

Bob Cherry reached under the seat and caught hold of a pigtail. He gave it a jerk, and with a loud howl the Chinese junior rolled out on the floor of the carriage.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Encounter.

WUN LUNG!"

"You young rascal!"

"Then—then it was you all the time!"

The Chinese junior grinned. Billy Bunter took advantage of the fact that the general attention was drawn to Wun Lung to make a fresh attack upon the sandwiches.

"So you were talking under the seat, and it wasn't Bunter's ventriloquism at all!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Me talkee for jokee," explained Wun Lung.

"You young duffer! And I suppose it was you that was sticking those pins into us, and not Bunter at all?" said Nugent, laughing.

Wun Lung grinned expansively.

"But did you have leave to come away from the school, Wun Lung?" asked Harry Wharton, seriously.

"No savvy."

"Did you ask Mr. Quelch if you could leave Greyfriars?"

"No savvy."

"You have bolted, then?"

"No savvy."

Harry Wharton gave it up. It was plain enough that the Chinese junior had taken French leave. When Wun Lung had an idea in his head, it was not easy to get it out again, and the idea of accompanying the Greyfriars' chums to Aldershot had evidently taken possession of his mind. The Celestial must have left Greyfriars before the Removites, reached the station first, and hidden himself in the train. By not showing himself until the train was near Reading, he made return impossible.

"There will be a row about this when the young rascal gets back to Greyfriars," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.

"The rowfulness with the esteemed Quelch sahib will be terrific."

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Harry, half-vexed and half-amused. "We shall have to take the young boulder along, and look after him for the rest of the day."

Wun Lung beamed.

"Me comee. Allee light."

"It won't be all right when you get back, unless you can manage to soap over the Quelch-bird," grinned Bob Cherry. "But now you're here, you'd better have some sandwiches. You must be peckish."

"Me hungry."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't say anything, you fat humbug! Catch me believing in your giddy ventriloquism again! No wonder you couldn't make the voice proceed from the luggage-rack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, and hand over the sandwiches!"

"That's what I was going to say. There aren't any."

"Why, there were a dozen left! Blessed if the young cormorant hasn't scoffed the lot!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in disgust.

"After exerting myself to entertain you as I have done, I suppose I am entitled to a snack to keep up my strength?" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Nothing left for you, Wun Lung, unless you take a bite out of Bunter. Do you like pork?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hallo, here we are!" exclaimed Nugent. "This will be Reading."

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"By George, I think I can smell the biscuits already!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you fellows are going to stop here for some lunch?"

"Hungry again?" asked Nugent sarcastically. "I suppose you must be: it's nearly five minutes since you scoffed the last sandwich!"

"Well, I could do with a snack. But you know Reading is the place where the best biscuits in the world come from, and we ought to sample them while we're here. It would be a good idea, if you fellows like, to give up going to Aldershot to-day, and have a look over the biscuit factories, and try some samples of the stuff. It would be much more fun. Anyway, I think we ought to take a few pounds of biscuits to eat in the train."

"Better say a few tons, and they would keep you quiet for an hour or so."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

The train stopped, and the juniors poured out. A tall, soldierly figure was standing on the platform, and Harry Wharton sighted it at once. Colonel Wharton caught sight of the boys, and came towards them with a genial smile upon his bronzed face. He shook hands with them, his glance lingering curiously upon Wun Lung. He knew the

others, but it was the first time he had seen the cheerful youth from China.

"I am glad you were able to come, Harry," he said. "I am glad to see you and your friends. The doctor wired me that you were coming by this train. The train we are taking for Aldershot does not leave for half an hour, and I suppose you lads could manage a little lunch?"

"Yes, sir, rather!" said Billy Bunter.

"We had some sandwiches in the train," said Harry, "but lunch would be welcome, all the same."

"Come along, then."

The colonel led the way. Twice or thrice as they went Hurree Janset Ram Singh looked back over his shoulder, with a curious expression upon his dusky face. Harry Wharton noticed it at last.

"What is it, Inky?" he asked.

"I was observing the honourable rotter standing yonder with the esteemed scowl upon his august countenance," said the nabob. "He seems to be specially interested in you, my worthy chum."

"Where is he?"

"Standing behind the honourable automatic machine."

Wharton looked in that direction and gave a start. The man, whose black, glinting eyes were fixed upon him, was no stranger to the hero of the Greyfriars' Remove.

He was a powerful fellow, with dusky skin and white teeth, evidently of gipsy blood. A fur cap was drawn low over his brows, and he had a muffler round his neck, a shabby cardigan-jacket on, and his lower limbs were encased in ragged gaiters.

"Melchior!" exclaimed Harry, involuntarily.

It was the gipsy who had been the kidnapper of Marjorie Hazeldene, shortly after Harry Wharton had come to Greyfriars, and who was now supposed to be in prison.

Colonel Wharton heard the boy's exclamation, and looked round.

"What is it, Harry?"

"Melchior, the gipsy!"

"Where?"

"There; he is going!"

The gipsy, finding himself observed, had glided away, and mingled with the crowd on the platform. Harry Wharton made a movement, as though to dash in pursuit, and then paused.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy and the Biscuits.

"LET him go," said Bob Cherry, catching Harry's eye; "we haven't any time to bother with him now!"

"Melchior!" said Colonel Wharton. "Is that the gipsy?"

"The rascal who kidnapped Hazeldene's sister," said Harry. "You remember my telling you about it, sir. He was sent to prison, but he must have escaped."

"Then he ought to be arrested!" exclaimed the colonel.

"He is gone now."

The colonel pulled at his grey moustache doubtfully. The gipsy had disappeared, and, after all, he had been punished, even if he had escaped a part of his punishment.

"Well, let him go," he said. "After all, I dare say we shall never see him again. I should think he would give us a wide berth."

And they walked on. Wun Lung was looking unusually thoughtful. He pulled at Harry's sleeve, and the captain of the Remove looked down at him with a smile.

"Bad man your enemy?" murmured the Celestial.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"He lookee like it. Plaps he tly to do you harm—to-day, velly likely."

Wharton shook his head.

"I don't think he's likely to come near us again, Wun Lung. I should only have to point him out to a policeman to have him arrested and sent back to prison."

"If he catchee you in lonely placee?"

"I'll take care that he doesn't!" said Harry, laughing. "I admit that I shouldn't care to meet Melchior on a lonely road on a dark night!"

"Here we are!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I say, Wharton, I suppose your uncle understands that—that we—"

"That we what, Billy?"

"That we shall want something a bit more solid than buns and milk," said Bunter in a low tone, anxiously. "I could do with roast beef and yorkshire to start with, and something substantial to follow, as far as I'm concerned."

"Oh, dry up, Piggy!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Come in," said the colonel. "I suppose you youngsters are pretty sharp set; I know I am!"

And as the boys sat down round the white cloth, the colonel gave his orders to the waiter.

Billy Bunter listened anxiously, but a smile of contentment soon overspread his fat visage. The colonel under-

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ONE
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stood that boys were hungry on a cold day. The feed was to be ad lib., and a prospect of enjoyment unfolded itself before the fat junior.

The table was soon laden with good things.

Time was limited, but the feed was not, and so Billy Bunter ate against time, and performed feats in the gastronomic line that astonished his comrades, well as they knew his powers in that direction.

"This is something like!" murmured Billy ecstatically.

"I say, you fellows, I will have a little more beef. Yes, and some more potatoes. And some more of—of everything. I think I can do with another helping—yes, and a big one—I'm rather peckish!"

"The peckishfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific."

"Well, I'm not a greedy chap, you know, Inky, but I do like a lot!"

Wun Lung was also "doing himself down" pretty well, and all the juniors made good meals. The colonel was an ideal host. The grim, bronze face knew how to relax, and he could tell many a crisp story of battle and siege. The veteran evidently took a deep interest in the football exploits of his old regiment, and he spoke of them with a sparkle in his eyes.

"It will be the first time you have seen the Loamshires play, Harry," he said. "You know they are my regiment, as they were your father's. They put a really good team into the field, and they have a good record in the A.F.C. I think we shall see them at their best to-day!"

"Who are they playing, sir?"

"An artillery team—and a fine team too! The Artillery take to football splendidly! The kick-off is at three, so we shall have ample time. You will see something of my old friends of the Loamshires, I hope. As I dare say you know, it is the second round for the Army Cup."

"And in the first round—"

"The Loamshires pulled off the match, as I hope they will pull off this one."

Harry Wharton's eyes sparkled. He naturally felt a deep interest in the football fortunes of his father's old regiment, and he was very keen to see the match.

The colonel glanced at his watch.

"Time we were moving!" he remarked cheerily.

The juniors rose, feeling all the better for their lunch. Billy Bunter showed a strong desire to go to sleep. He had placed himself on the outside of the biggest lunch he had had for some time, and it was an old joke in the Greyfriars Remove that Billy resembled a boa-constrictor, and always wanted to fall into a state of inertia after a gorge.

But there was no sleep for Billy Bunter just then. The train was in the station, and they had to go to the platform. Bob Cherry kindly lent the fat junior a hand, taking a grip on his collar, and propelling him out of the refreshment-rooms.

"Hold on, Cherry! Don't shake me like that! You might make my glasses fall off," expostulated Billy, "and if they get broken you will have to pay for the blessed things. I say, you fellows—"

"Hurry up there!"

"I say, you fellows, we haven't had any biscuits."

"Biscuits!" said the colonel, looking round.

"Yes, sir. Everybody who comes to Reading ought to sample the biscuits. It's famous for them."

"Dear me, I never thought of it!"

"It's all right," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "I'll get Billy a tin of Huntley & Palmer's when we get back to Friarale."

"But they ought to be tested on the spot, you know."

"You won't be able to come to Aldershot if you burst in the train," said Bob Cherry warningly.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"There is still time," said the colonel, pressing a coin into Bunter's hand. "Cut back and get a bag of biscuits to take in the train."

"Certainly, sir! Anything to oblige."

And Bunter cut off as fast as his fat legs would go.

"Buck up!" shouted Bob Cherry after him. "They're getting steam up."

Billy Bunter dashed through the swing doors, and disappeared. Colonel Wharton and his young companions entered a carriage, and the engine shrieked. Harry Wharton looked anxiously along the platform.

"That young duffer will be left behind!" he exclaimed.

"Billy! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Buck up!"

Bunter was in sight again. He had a big tin of biscuits under each arm, and his pockets were bulging with packages. He came sprinting along, and as he did so a rough figure crossed the platform, and Harry Wharton recognised the savage features and glinting eyes of Melchior, the gipsy.

"Look out, Billy!"

But the short-sighted Owl of the Remove was in too great

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a hurry to look out. Right into the gipsy he rushed, and there was a yell from Melchior, and a gasping yell from Billy Bunter.

Both of them went reeling, and Melchior sat down violently upon a seat, and Billy Bunter on the platform, shedding biscuits on all sides.

The two big tins rolled to right and left, and the lids coming off, cascades of biscuits poured out over the platform, while streams of good things ran from Bunter's pockets and from under his jacket.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Oh!"

"Buck up!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The train was beginning to move. Harry Wharton had jumped out. Bunter began to frantically collect up the spilt biscuits.

"Come on, you young duffer!"

"I say—"

Harry Wharton grasped the fat junior, and hurled him bodily into the carriage, and scrambled in after him. The guard slammed the door. Bunter sat up gasping.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, those biscuits have been left behind!"

"You were jolly nearly left behind, you young ass!" growled Wharton. "So was I."

"Yes, but the biscuits—"

"I'm afraid you will never see them again," said the colonel, laughing.

"Well, it's hard lines," said Bunter. "I spent some time in selecting them, too, you know. I've only got a few pounds of them left in my pockets, so I'm sorry there won't be enough for you fellows to have any."

Colonel Wharton looked at him rather curiously, but made no rejoinder. There was a cheery chatter of voices in the carriage as the train rushed on, to the accompaniment of an incessant crunching of biscuits from the corner where Billy Bunter sat.

The biscuits were finished at last, and the fat junior composed himself to slumber. The eyes of the Chinese junior twinkled as he looked at the slumbering Billy.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was looking at him, too, with a twinkle in his eyes, and the two Orientals glanced at one another, and their eyes met. Upon each dusky face was an expression of great meaning.

"The opportunefulness is great," purred Hurree Singh. "Has my honourable pigtailed chum any colours or crayons in his esteemed pockets?"

Wun Lung shook his head regretfully.

"No crayons," he remarked, "no colours."

"The wastefulness of the golden opportunity is great."

"Plaps another time," murmured Wun Lung. "Plaps Bunter feed again, sleep again, and we take opportunity, plaps."

"My worthy chum is correctful."

And the two Asiatics muttered gleefully over their intended jape on the unconscious Bunter, while the fat junior slept on unsuspectingly.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. At Aldershot.

ALDERSHOT!

The Greyfriars juniors looked about them with keen and eager interest as they walked down Wellington Street.

There seemed to be soldiers everywhere. Harry Wharton was the son of a soldier, and he had always liked to be among them. The juniors asked many questions of the bronzed veteran who was their guide, to all of which the colonel replied cheerily. They learned much about the famous camp on the borders of Hampshire and Surrey, and of its history, as they walked and looked about them.

How during the latter half of the nineteenth century so much of a wild and unpeopled heath had been reclaimed, how a town had grown up about the great camp, where now thirty thousand troops were always quartered, the colonel told them, and many another item of interest, as they walked to Eggar's Hill Ground.

As they had some time to spare before the commencement of the military match, the colonel showed them the chief sights of the town that could be seen within the radius of a walk—all of great interest to the juniors, though the sight of a restaurant was more welcome than anything else to Billy Bunter.

But he had no chance of entering it. He was ready for another lunch, but, as Bob Cherry politely pointed out to him, the party had not come to Aldershot for the special purpose of seeing him lunch.

"I don't know about being able to sit out a football match," said Bunter doubtfully. "You see, Cherry, it lasts an hour and a half, and I don't see—"

"You can devour the biscuits."

"What biscuits?"

"Those you brought from Reading. You have pounds of them in your pockets."

"Of course, I ate those in the train."

"Then you can't possibly be hungry again before bedtime."

"I really wish you wouldn't joke on a serious subject, Cherry! What do you think the colonel would say if I suggested my staying in a restaurant while you fellows looked round the town?"

"He'd probably think you a pig."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The pigfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific."

"You see, Inky, I have to think of my constitution. If I don't have a snack when I feel that I need one, the result may be serious."

"If you have many more snacks to-day, the result may be serious!" said Bob Cherry. "I warn you that we're not going to roll you home!"

"Perhaps it would be better to miss the footer match, and have a feed instead," Bunter murmured, with an air of reflection. "In justice to my constitution, I couldn't consent to pass an hour and a half on a cold footer ground without a meal first."

"Well, dodge in somewhere, and we'll make your excuses to the colonel if he misses you, which I don't suppose he will."

"I think that's rather a good idea, Cherry. Lend me a few bob, will you?"

"Rats!"

"Lend me a few bob, will you, Wun Lung?"

"Lats!"

"Lend me a few bob, Inky—"

"The rarifulness is terrific."

The fat junior glowered at them wrathfully.

"How am I to get a feed when I'm stony?" he demanded.

"If you think that's a good joke, Bob Cherry, there's something wrong with your sense of humour!"

"My dear cormorant—"

"A couple of bob would do, and I'll let you have half-a-sovereign back for it out of the prize in 'The Gem' football competition. I've been disappointed about a postal order, or I wouldn't ask you."

"More rats!"

"Then what am I to do?"

"Wait for the next meal, you boa-constrictor!"

"In justice to my constitution—"

"Blow your constitution!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"More rats!"

Bunter relapsed into silence. Colonel Wharton had stopped, and was in talk with an officer who had met him at the street corner. The juniors looked about them. The colonel's friend glanced at his watch and departed, and Colonel Wharton turned to the juniors.

"Come on, my lads! We have no time to lose now."

Wun Lung had disappeared into a shop, but he came out immediately, with one of his loose pockets swelling visibly. The juniors walked swiftly to keep pace with the military stride of the colonel. Billy Bunter nudged the Chinese junior.

"What's that you've been buying, kid?" he asked.

The Chinese junior grinned.

"Glub!" he replied concisely.

Bunter's eyes glimmered.

"Grub, eh? For me?"

"Yes, Bunter; in case you should expire on the football ground."

"Really, that's very thoughtful of you, Wun Lung. I think I'll have a little of it now, to go on with."

Wun Lung shook his head.

"I say, Wun Lung—"

"Lats! Waitee!"

And Billy Bunter had to wait. The party reached the entrance to the football ground, and they were about to enter, when Hurree Jamset Ram Singh pulled Harry Wharton by the sleeve. Harry looked round.

"Look!" muttered the nabob.

"What is it?"

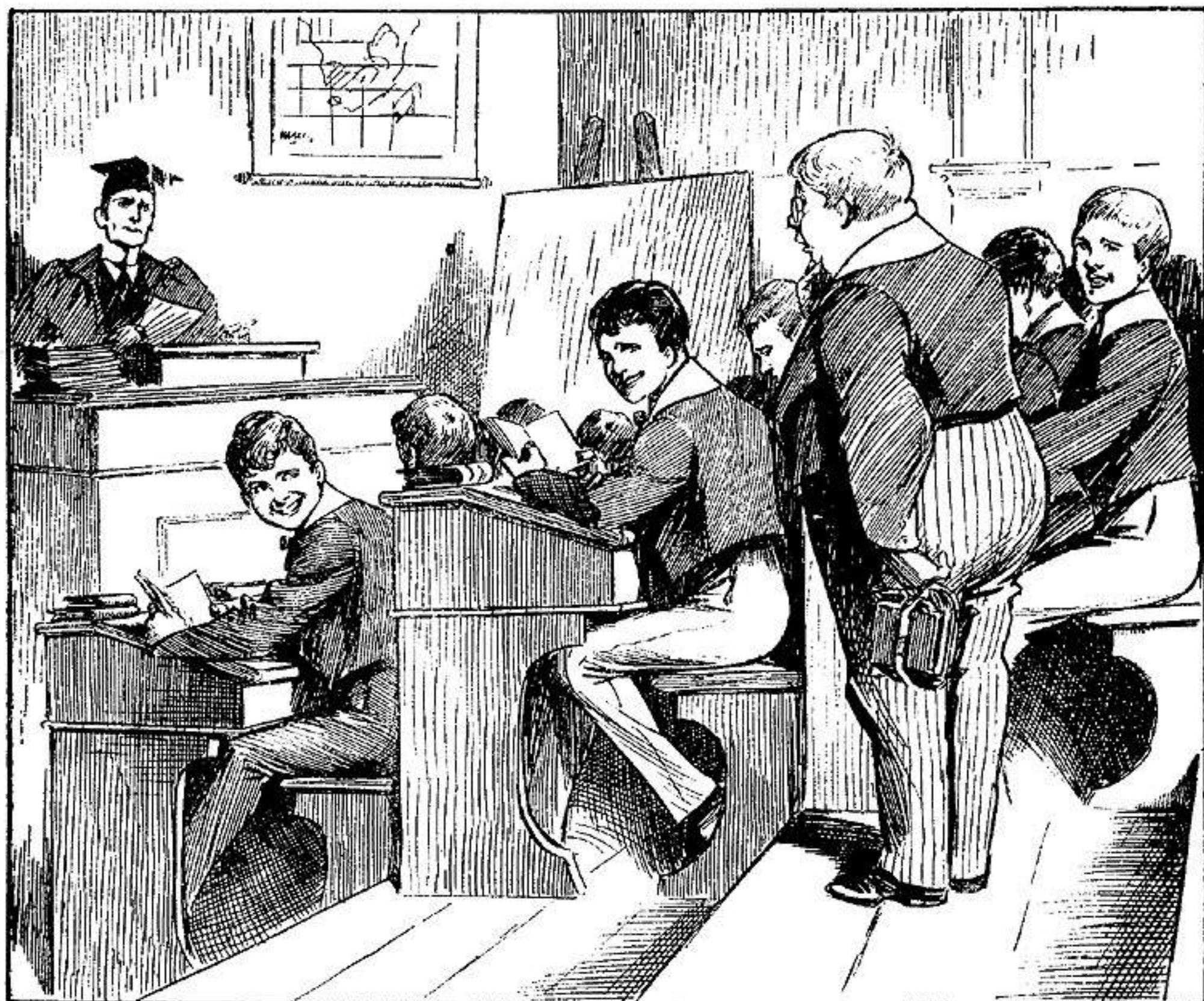
"The gipsyful rotter!"

Harry Wharton started.

For a moment he caught a glimpse of Melchior's dusky face, and then it disappeared. He nodded to the nabob, and his brow was very thoughtful as he entered the ground with the colonel.

The gipsy had evidently followed them from Reading. Of course, the outcast Romany might have intended to come to Aldershot on affairs of his own; but Harry Wharton could not help feeling that the ruffian had followed him, and the glint in the black eyes seemed to tell him of intended mischief.

He resolved to be on his guard. He knew what he had



"I hardly like to tell you who has made me late, sir," said Billy Bunter. "I think Wharton would be waxy, and—"

to expect if Melchior, the gipsy, the outcast of a Romany tribe, should ever have an opportunity to wreak his revenge.

But there was no time to think about that now.

The colonel, unconscious of the reappearance of the gipsy, led the way, and the boys followed him to their seats.

The old soldier was very keen on the match, and Harry did not feel inclined to speak to him of the outcast gipsy then.

The colonel looked at his nephew, with a genial grin on his bronzed features.

"You will soon see how the Loamshires play, Harry," he remarked. "You will see them put up a good game. The regiments are very keen on the Army matches—in fact, there is a good deal more keenness, in my opinion, in Army matches than in League matches, even. You will see."

It was near time for the kick-off. The juniors were eager enough, though hardly as eager as the old soldier who had been through fire and flood with the regiment which was now about to show its prowess on the football field.

Billy Bunter was eager, too, but not about football. He was thinking of the recent purchases of the Chinese junior. He nudged Wun Lung to remind him.

"What have you there, Wun Lung?" he murmured. "It's all right, you know. I'm sitting behind the colonel, and he won't notice."

Wun Lung grinned.

"Like saveloy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Wharton will be waxy if he see you gorgee here."

"It's all right; I'll manage it on the quiet."

"Volly good."

All eyes were on the ground as the footballers came into

sight, and no one cared what Billy Bunter was doing. The fat junior negotiated the saveloy and followed it up with a slice of cake, and was content. But Wun Lung had not brought to light all his purchases in the Aldershot shops. There were others, which he did not intend to show to Billy Bunter just then.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Soldiers' Football Match.

COLONEL WHARTON'S bronzed face lighted up as he looked at the footballers.

"There are the Loamshires, Harry," he said. And Harry looked with keen interest.

A fine, upstanding set of men the Loamshire regiment's team certainly were. The colonel glanced with an eye of pride over eleven as sturdy fellows as ever wore football colours, or rushed an Association ball up a football field.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "They look a fine set of men!"

"The finefulness of the honourable footballers is terrific," purred Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "I have seen them play before."

"You have!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes, my worthy chum, at Bhanipur, when I was a nipperful kid, and the Loamshires were in India."

The colonel nodded.

"I remember the match at Bhanipur, Hurrec Singh. It wasn't the same team, of course, but they were a fine set of Loamshire lads."

"And the artillerymen look pretty fit, too," remarked Harry Wharton.

"They do, indeed."

The referee came on to the field. The juniors recognised the officer they had seen speaking with the colonel in Alder-shot.

Loamshire won the toss. There was a somewhat keen wind blowing, and the artillerymen had it in their faces for the first half.

The artillerymen kicked off, and the game commenced, watched with eager interest by a keen throng of spectators.

Colonel Wharton watched the match with as much interest as any schoolboy watching his college team. His eye followed the movements of the players, and no phase of the game escaped him.

The captain and centre-forward of the Loamshire eleven was a splendidly built non-com., with whom the colonel exchanged a genial glance when he came near the ropes on that side.

"It is Sergeant Price," explained the colonel. "He was with me in India as a young soldier, and is one of the best men in the battalion."

"By Jove, his football is all right!" exclaimed Harry.

He was right. The sergeant was the life of the Loamshire attack, and the Loamshire men were attacking most of the time. It was Sergeant Price who first broke through the artillery defence, and put the ball into the net.

The Greyfriars juniors cheered for Loamshire with as much expenditure of lung power as they had ever shown on the ground at home at Greyfriars.

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"

"Good old Loamshire!"

Bob Cherry gave Billy Bunter a sounding slap on the back.

"Why don't you cheer, you fat young porpoise?" he demanded.

"Eh? What? I—I think I was dozing off," said Bunter.

"I really wish you wouldn't thump me in that rough way, Cherry. You might make my spectacles fall off, and then they might get broken, and—"

"Rats! Why didn't you cheer?"

"I don't feel quite strong enough for cheering; and besides, what is there to cheer for?" asked Bunter.

"Didn't you see that goal?"

"What goal? Do you mean the goal-posts?"

"Do I mean the goal-posts?" repeated Bob Cherry, in utter disgust. "Nice sort of a tame lunatic you are to bring to a football match, and no mistake."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The Loamshires have just broken their duck, fathead."

"I dare say they have, Cherry, but I'm sleepy. I suppose there's no harm in a fellow going to sleep when he's sleepy?"

"Oh, you can go to sleep, or go to Jericho!" said Bob Cherry. And he turned to watch the game again. Billy Bunter took advantage of his permission. He did not go to Jericho, but he went to sleep, leaning against the obliging Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

The Nabob of Bhanipur exchanged glances with the cheerful youth from China. Wun Lung winked expressively.

"My worthy chum has the honourable crayons?" asked the nabob, in a whisper.

"Me gottee, allea light."

"It is goodful. Wait till the esteemed rotter Bunter is fast asleep in the arms of Murphy."

Hurree Janset Ram Singh probably meant Morpheus, but Wun Lung only nodded. The fat junior was already slumbering, and he was not likely to open his eyes again for the match.

The play was growing exciting, however. After the Loamshire goal, the artillerymen had "bucked up" wonderfully, and were now doing most of the attacking, and Loamshire were hard put to it to hold their own.

They did hold it for some time, but the artillery gradually forced their way goalwards, and a mass of players concentrated in front of the Loamshire goal.

The struggle was keen, and was watched keenly by hundreds of eyes. Soldiers and civilians were almost equally interested in the result of the sharp struggle.

Harry Wharton realised the truth of his uncle's remark respecting the keenness of the inter-regimental contests on the soccer ground. He had seen League matches in the holidays, but nothing that came up to this soldiers' match for absolute keenness and "go."

If the fate of the Empire had depended upon the result of the match, the men on either side could hardly have shown greater determination.

The juniors watched in breathless excitement.

The artillerymen were pressing harder and harder, and now shots rained in upon the Loamshire goalie. He was a handsome, well-set-up young corporal, in the pink of condition, and alert as a cat.

Shot after shot came in on him, but he fisted or footed them out again, and at length gave one of the Loamshire backs a chance to clear.

The ball went to midfield, with a rush of players after it, and the goalkeeper had a respite.

But it was only a respite. In a couple of minutes the artillerymen were back again, forcing the game goalward, in spite of the splendid defence of the Loamshire infantry.

The ball came in again with a fast shot that would have baffled most goalies, and the Loamshire man was at last found wanting. He made a clutch at the ball, and missed it by a hair's breadth, and it plumped into the net.

There was a roar from the friends of the artillery eleven. "Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The players on both sides were panting now. The game had been hard and fast, harder and faster than any game Harry Wharton had ever seen before.

It was goal to goal now, and the first half was nearly over. The players walked back to the centre of the field, and lined up to renew the struggle.

Loamshire fought hard to get ahead once more during the remainder of the first half, but the artillerymen defended their citadel too well.

The whistle rang out, and the half ended, and the score remained level.

The players, pretty well pumped by a slogging game, went off the field for their brief rest, which they needed.

Harry Wharton glanced at his uncle. The colonel's expression was just a little grim. Loamshire, with the wind in their favour, had scored only goal for goal. In the second half, with the wind against them, their luck might be worse.

"Never mind," said the colonel, answering his own unspoken thoughts. "It's a good game, and may the best team win."

"Loamshire, I hope," said Harry. "And I don't think our men are quite so pumped as the other side, uncle."

The colonel nodded with a smile.

"No; they are certainly in the pink of condition. We shall see."

The five minutes ticked away, and the teams re-entered the field. Brief as the rest had been, they looked all the better for it, and lined up for the second half with almost as much keenness as at the kick-off.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Loamshire Wins!

THE whistle blew, and the ball flew from the foot of Sergeant Price. The change of ends had brought the wind against the Loamshires, and it was blowing keenly now. But the disadvantage seemed to act rather as a spur to the infantrymen than otherwise. They put their "beef" into it, and from the blast of the whistle the attacking was mostly done by the Loamshires, in spite of the keen November wind that blew in their faces.

And in the first quarter of an hour of the second half the ball went into the net from a Loamshire boot, amid a hurricane of cheers.

One up for Loamshire! Colonel Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"That's more like business, Harry!" he remarked.

"What a ripping goal, too!"

"Ripping, and no mistake!"

"The rippingfulness was terrific."

The teams lined up again, and the artillery kicked off. Every spectator on the ground was keen and eager with one exception—Billy Bunter was sleeping soundly. He had eaten enough since leaving Greyfriars to keep even him quiet, and now he was having what Bob Cherry described as his boa-constrictor snooze.

Some desultory play in midfield followed the artillery kick-off, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh and Wun Lung turned their attention from the field to the slumbering junior.

"The eyefulness is not upon us," murmured Hurree Singh. "The opportunefulness is great, my worthy, pig-tailed chum."

"Me savvy."

"The crayonfulness of the honourable fat face of the esteemed rotter Bunter would be the wheezy good joke."

"Me savvy," said the Celestial again.

He drew a cardboard box of crayons from his pocket, and commenced operations upon the esteemed fat face, as the nabob called it, of the sleeping Owl. Bunter was too fast asleep to be awakened by the gentle touch of the Celestial's artistic hand. Hurree Singh watched the work with a critical eye and a series of silent chuckles.

"The improvefulness is terrific," he murmured, as two red circles appeared round the eyes of the slumbering Bunter, giving his large spectacles a larger and more owl-like appearance than ever. "A black spotfulness on his august nose would be very effective. The honourable Bunter begins to resemble the sleeping beauty in the fairy tale."

A black spot on Bunter's nose was followed by a black moustache, artistically done, on his upper lip. Then a series of green spots over both cheeks added to the artistic effect of his appearance.

Wun Lung looked at his handiwork and grinned, and returned the box of crayons to his pocket. Hurree Singh pulled Bunter's cap a little over his face, to conceal the artistic improvements that had been made upon his countenance.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

The shout was ringing again over the football-ground. The artillerymen this time were the scorers. Backed up by the November wind, ever growing keener, they had brought the ball to the Loamshire goal, and, after several attempts, had succeeded in fairly driving it in; the Loamshire goalie slipping at the critical moment, and landing on the ground at the same time that the leather landed in the net.

"Goal! Hurrah!"

The score was level again!

There were still twenty minutes more to play, however; time for the Loamshire infantrymen to make another big effort.

The colonel's face was growing anxious now. If Loamshire lost this match, the result would be that the battalion would be struck out of the competition for the Army Cup—a result that would be a keen disappointment to the veteran.

But the Loamshire men knew what was at stake, and they played up hard and harder; only, of course, the artillerymen were equally determined to be left in the competition, and so it was, as Nugent observed, the old story of an irresistible force being brought to bear upon an immovable object.

The minutes ticked away, and the score was still level.

"Looks like being a draw," muttered Bob Cherry.

Colonel Wharton glanced anxiously at the sky.

"It will be light enough to finish," he remarked. "In case of a draw, the teams play another half-hour, if the light permits."

"And if not?" asked Harry.

"Then the match is replayed on the same ground."

"That is compulsory?"

"In Army Cup competitions, certainly."

Nugent pulled out his watch. Five minutes more to play, and the score still level. It looked as if the extra half-hour would be wanted.

But now, all of a sudden, the Loamshires were making a tremendous effort. Sergeant Price broke through the enemy with the ball at his feet, and the infantrymen backed him up splendidly. With a rush, the Loamshire men brought the ball goalward, and shots were rained in upon the goalie. One shot, from the foot of the sergeant, nearly went in, but owing to the wind it struck a goalpost and rebounded into the field of play.

There was a buzz of quick-drawn breath in the crowd. It had been a narrow escape for the artillerymen, and there remained only two minutes for Loamshire to try their luck again.

But two minutes, as it proved, were enough. The ball was lost amid a press of players, and all of a sudden it came out like a champagne-cork. The goalie was hardly prepared for it, and he made a swift clutch at the elusive leather—a second too late.

The ball was in the net. There was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Loamshire wins!"

"Hurrah!"

The whistle rang out. Loamshire had won the match, with about half a minute to spare!

The spectators were cheering, and the Greyfriars' juniors loudest of all. There was a cheer even from the bronzed old colonel, and Harry Wharton and his chums were waving their caps wildly, and shouting their loudest.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The players, pretty well spent with their efforts at the grand old game, moved off the field; the faces of the Loamshire battalion were extremely gleeful. They had won the match, and were still in the running for the Army Cup; a source of great satisfaction to the stalwarts of the Loamshire Regiment.

Harry Wharton's eyes were sparkling as he waved his cap and shouted. He was as gleeful as any at the victory of his father's old regiment.

The colonel slapped him on the shoulder.

"Loamshire wins, Harry! We shall have the Cup after all, I hope!"

"I hope so," said Harry, ceasing to cheer from sheer want of breath. "It was a ripping match, and the artillery were unlucky to lose."

The colonel glanced at his watch.

"I dare say you lads would like a run about the town by yourselves for an hour or two," he observed, with a smile.

"I can trust you not to get into mischief?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"THE GREYFRIARS VICTORY."

NEXT
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ONE
PENNY.

"Then suppose you join me again at the hotel," said the colonel. "We will dine at seven—quite late enough for boys of your age to be out—and then I can see you off in good time in the train for Friardale."

"That will be ripping, sir!"

"Then good-bye, for the present! I shall come back with you as far as Reading, and I shall be glad to look up some old friends during my stay in Aldershot."

And the colonel parted with his young friends. Although the juniors liked him well, and were very grateful for his kindness, he knew that a run "on their own" would be very acceptable to them.

"Sensible old gentleman, your governor!" Bob Cherry remarked, as the colonel walked away. "Knows boys! Wake that porpoise up, Inky, and come along!"

"Very goodful, my worthy chum."

Harry Wharton strolled off with Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent. The nabob grinned at Wun Lung, and shook Billy Bunter by the shoulder. The fat junior started out of a blissful dream, in which a feed upon pork-pies in the study at Greyfriars had figured.

"Here—hallo—what's up? 'Tain't rising-bell!" he ejaculated sleepily.

The nabob grinned.

"The worthy rotten Bunter's statement is correctful," he exclaimed; "it is not rising-bell! But the honourable football match is over, and it is time to move!"

"Oh—ah—yes! I forgot!" Bunter took off his spectacles and rubbed his eyes, with rather curious effect upon the crayoned circles. "Is the match over?"

"Yes. Loamshire won."

"Did they?" said Bunter, without much interest. "Are we going to have tea somewhere?"

"We are going to join the esteemed colonel at seven o'clock for dinner at his estimable hotel."

"If you think I can go till seven o'clock without even a snack—"

"Oh, come along, my Bunterful chum, or you will be left behind!"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Bunter.

And he rose to his feet and followed the chums of the Remove from the football-field, rather puzzled by the curious stares and audible chuckles that greeted him from everyone he passed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter is Astonished—A Sudden Attack.

"A, HA, HA!"

Billy Bunter blinked round him in amazement. The crowd was melting away outside the football ground, and as Billy came out, he immediately became an object of general attention.

A roar of laughter greeted his appearance, and it amazed the fat junior. He blinked at the laughers, and then blinked inquiringly at Hurree Singh.

"What's the row, Inky?"

"It is useless to questionfully ask me, my worthy chum. The excellent Aldershotful persons seem gayfully amused by your esteemed phiz."

"Nothing wrong with my chivvy, is there?"

"It was always a curiousful chivvy."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't understand it," murmured Billy Bunter.

"What's the row, Wun Lung?"

"No savvy."

Bob Cherry looked back.

"Come on, you kids! Why—what— Ha, ha, ha!" And Bob went off into a formidable roar. Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"What are you cackling at, Cherry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling ass, what's the joke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is it?" asked Harry Wharton, looking back.

"What the— Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his chums in wrathful astonishment. They were convulsed with laughter, so were the others round him. Everyone who looked in Billy Bunter's direction immediately went off into a roar.

"I believe everybody's gone off his blessed chump!" grunted Bunter, stalking on with great dignity. "Shut up, some of you, do!"

Loud laughter continued to greet the fat junior as he stalked on, the convulsed Removites following him.

Billy Bunter looked back savagely.

"Look here, you chaps, I suppose we are going to have some tea, aren't we? I shall be glad to get out of this cackling lot, too! Blessed if I know what they are cackling about!"

"If the honourable Bunter could see his esteemed chivvy—"

"Are we going to have some tea?"

"Certainly," laughed Harry; "lead the way!"

Bunter was not long in finding a teashop. He marched into it, and the damsel who attended to the wants of the customers gave one look at him, and shrieked.

Billy Bunter glared at her.

"My word! They're all mad in here, too!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is the matter, Wharton?"

"Look in that glass!"

Billy Bunter rushed to a mirror, and glared at his reflection in it. Then he stood petrified.

"I—I—I— Is that my face?" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What—who—which—how—you villain, Inky! You rotter, Wun Lung! This is your doing!"

The Removites shrieked.

Billy Bunter made a vengeful rush at the Chinese, but Bob Cherry caught him and held him back, though laughing too much to exert himself without a great effort.

"Hold on Billy! No homicide allowed, you know!"

"I'm going to squash that Chinese!"

"No squashee," murmured the Celestial. "Good jokee. Me standee feedee allee light."

Billy Bunter changed his tone at once.

"Now you're talking," he said. "I don't mind a joke, if a fellow is ready to stand a feed to make up for it. I'll get this washed off, and I'll join you. Mind, I'm jolly hungry, and I shall expect enough to eat."

"Allee light."

And Billy Bunter, having had a wash, and cleared his face of the artistic touches of Wun Lung's crayons, sat down at a table with an air of businesslike determination. He meant to compensate himself with that feed, and he did.

The Removites all made a good tea, but Billy Bunter distinguished himself. When the others had all finished, and were ready to go out and see the town, Bunter declared that he was only just beginning.

"Not going yet, are you?" he exclaimed. "Don't buzz off when we're just starting."

"If that's a start, what will the ending be?" murmured Bob Cherry, who had been watching the fat junior's performances with curiosity and amazement.

"You see, I'm hungry, you fellows."

"Well, we can't stay here all night," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Suppose you stay here and feed, and you can go when you've done to the hotel to meet my uncle."

"Well, that's a good idea. You'd better settle with the waitress, and leave me another half-sov. to go on with, Wun Lung. I dare say I can manage on that."

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"The cheekfulness is terrific!"

"Allee light," murmured Wun Lung. "Me tleatee piggee."

And Bunter's suggestion was carried out.

Leaving the fat junior sitting alone at a well-stocked table, with a smile of seraphic contentment on his face, the Removites left the place.

It was already dark in the streets of Aldershot.

"Now, we haven't much time, and we've got to make the best of it," Harry remarked. "We shall be able to walk quicker without the porpoise. Follow your leader."

"Right-ho!" said three voices; and Wun Lung chimed in "Light-ho!"

And the juniors lost no time.

As much as was to be seen of the soldier town in the short space at their disposal they saw, winding up with a look at Caesar's Camp.

Then Harry Wharton looked at his watch and announced that it was time to think of rejoining the colonel.

It was very dark on the common as they strolled townwards again, and a dim November mist was hanging over the landscape, rendering the night more impenetrable.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, stopping to look about him at a cross-roads. "This would be a cheerful place to get lost in!"

"The cheerfulness would be terrific!"

"No losee way. Sign-postee!"

"But how are we to read it?" said Harry Wharton ruefully, glancing up at the sign-post. "Looks to me as if we have missed the road."

It was too dark to read the sign-post, and the sign was too high up to be read by the aid of matches.

"I'll get on Bob's shoulders," suggested Nugent, "then I can strike matches and read it."

"Good! Up with you!"

"Lookie out!" suddenly yelled Wun Lung.

The juniors swung round in alarm.

A dusky figure came looming through the mist, a hand was raised with a heavy bludgeon in it. A savage blow was aimed at the head of Harry Wharton.

Wun Lung's warning cry had made him turn—he recognised, glinting through the mist, the savage eyes of Melchior, the gipsy.

Wharton had no time to elude the dastard blow.

In a moment more the bludgeon would have crashed upon his unprotected head. But Wun Lung, with the nimble spring of a panther, had hurled himself upon the ruffian, and even as the blow fell, Melchior was borne backwards by the spring of the Chinese. The bludgeon swept down, but it missed its object.

"Helpee! Helpee!"

The juniors, amazed and startled as they were by the sudden attack, rushed to the aid of the Chinese.

But Melchior, with a savage curse, had hurled the little Celestial to the ground, and dashed away into the mist.

Harry sprang to the fallen Chinese.

"Wun Lung! Are you hurt?"

The Chinese sat up with his aid, gasping for breath.

"No hurtee," he panted, with a breathless grin. "Allee light."

"You have saved my life, I believe," said Harry Wharton quietly, gripping the hand of the little Chinese. "That blow would have killed me."

"Allee light."

"Look out!" yelled Bob Cherry. "They're coming!"

Harry Wharton leaped to his feet.

Melchior had some of his associates at hand, and he was indeed returning. Four burly figures loomed up in the November mist.

"Burn me! There they are!"

It was the savage voice of Melchior.

And the ruffians rushed to the attack, as the Greyfriars chums, though with pale faces, stood shoulder to shoulder to receive them.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Loamshires to the Rescue—The Return to Greyfriars.

HARRY WHARTON faced Melchior, and he was on his guard this time. As the gipsy rushed at him, striking savagely with his bludgeon, the junior dodged the savage blow, and came to close grips with the ruffian.

"Burn me! My turn at last!" muttered Melchior.

And his hot breath was on the boy's cheek as he grasped him and strove to bear him to the earth.

"Keep off the others—this is my game!" he cried.

And the other three ruffians contented themselves with keeping the juniors from aiding their comrade.

"Come on," muttered Bob Cherry desperately.

And the boys, in their turn, attacked. But three burly ruffians were more than able to keep the boys at bay. Meanwhile, Harry Wharton was struggling desperately in the grip of the outcast Romany.

Melchior had no such easy task as he had imagined in overcoming the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

It was boy against man, but Harry was the best athlete in the Lower Forms at Greyfriars—agile, athletic, with boundless pluck. He fought hard, for he felt that he was fighting for his life.

The gipsy had dropped his bludgeon, to leave his hands freer for the struggle, and he had now succeeded in getting the junior down upon the earth.

But Harry was grasping him hard, and still struggling.

The fierce eyes of the outcast glared down upon him, and the hard, sinewy fingers were seeking his throat.

"Burn me! It is my turn now!"

The words seemed to throb in Harry's ears.

Despair was creeping into his brave heart. His chums could not aid him—they were overmatched already!

"Help!"

He cried out that one word, in little hope that it would be heard.

The gipsy grinned savagely.

He did not think for a moment that Harry's cry would be answered in that lonely place. But he was disappointed.

There was a shout from the mist, and a pattering of feet.

"Help! Help!" roared Bob Cherry.

A shout answered from the darkness.

The next minute three soldiers in the uniform of the

ANSWERS

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GRAND CHRISTMAS

DOUBLE NUMBER.

Order
in advance.

Loamshire Regiment, came running up. They had evidently been returning to Aldershot by road, when they heard the cries of the juniors.

They did not stop to ask questions. They rushed into the conflict without even stopping to take breath, hitting out right and left.

The gipsies reeled away from the fierce blows, and without stopping to try the matter further, they vanished into the mist as fast as they could go, with the exception of Melchior, whose grasp only tightened on his victim.

But a soldier's strong hand grasped the ruffian, and he was wrenched away, and Harry, relieved of his assailant, gasped for breath.

The outcast Romany fought like a tiger in the grasp of the soldiers, and tore himself loose. He made a desperate spring to escape, and eluded the hands outstretched to seize him. A yell of defiance rang back from the mist as he disappeared.

Harry Wharton staggered to his feet. Bob Cherry caught him by the shoulder.

"Harry! You're all right!" There was almost a sob in Bob's voice. "I—I thought you were a goner."

Harry gasped for breath.

"So I was, nearly, Bob. I believe the villain meant to— to—" He broke off, and turned to the soldiers. "I don't know how to thank you fellows; you have saved my life. You belong to the Loamshires?"

"Yes, sir," said one of the soldiers, looking at him curiously. "And I think I have seen you before to-day. You were at the football match."

"And you were in the team!"

The soldier nodded.

"Yes; and you were there with our old colonel."

"He is my uncle," said Harry. "My father was in the Loamshires, and he was killed on the Indian frontier. You are going to Aldershot?" he added.

"Yes, sir, and you had better come with us. Those scoundrels may not have gone far."

"Thank you; we shall be glad to."

And the juniors walked back to the town with the soldiers.

Harry Wharton chatted with them on the way, glad enough to hear any news of his father's old regiment, and to talk with men who had known Captain Wharton when he was in the Army; and it was plain from the way the soldiers spoke, that the captain had been a popular officer. They walked with the boys as far as the colonel's hotel, and there found the old soldier standing on the steps, evidently waiting for the juniors, and a little anxious about them.

"Ah, here you are at last!" exclaimed the colonel. "Bunter has just arrived, and I was getting anxious about you."

"It's all right, sir," said Harry cheerily. "But it mightn't have been but for these brave fellows. We met Melchior, the gipsy, on a lonely road—"

The colonel started.

"I had forgotten him. Did he—"

"He attacked us, with his friends, and we should have been in a bad way if help had not come."

And Harry Wharton explained.

"I will have the police set on the scoundrel's track immediately!" the colonel exclaimed, his eyes gleaming. "Go in now, and get ready for dinner."

And the juniors went into the hotel, leaving the colonel with the soldiers. Ten minutes later he joined them in the dining-room.

In spite of the perilous adventure they had been through, the juniors made a hearty dinner, and enjoyed it. Billy Bunter had done pretty well at tea-time, but he seemed to be quite ready for dinner, and he distinguished himself in his usual way.

He had a large helping of every course, and he privately confided to Bob Cherry that he could easily have done with two of each.

But even Billy Bunter was satisfied by the time the dinner was over, and he looked contented when they rose from the table.

"And now to catch our train," said the colonel briskly.

And the juniors, in coat and cap and scarf, set out for the railway-station with the kind-hearted veteran. They had had a pleasant day out, and they were getting fatigued, and the prospect of Greyfriars and bed was a welcome one.

The train was in the station, and they were soon buzzing off over the metals on the twenty-one miles run to Reading.

"You will not see anything more of Melchior," the colonel assured them. "Before we left Aldershot the police were close upon his track, and there is no doubt that he will be arrested before morning."

"I shall feel safer with him in prison again," Harry remarked, with a smile.

"Yes, and I shall feel more secure about you, too, Harry. But you need have no doubts; I am assured that he cannot escape."

The train arrived at Reading, and they alighted. Here

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ONE
PENNY.

their ways separated. The colonel saw them into the train for Friardale before he went off to catch his own. He shook hands all round with the juniors in his hearty way.

"Thank you very much, uncle!" said Harry. "We have had a ripping day—one of the rippingest I can remember!"

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "And we owe it all to you, sir."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Me tinkee samee."

"Well, I'm glad you've had a good time," said the colonel. "Good-bye, Harry! Good-bye, my lads!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

And the train started. The colonel waved his hand from the platform, and the juniors waved their caps from the window, as the train buzzed out of the station.

It rushed on through the dim November night towards Greyfriars. Bob Cherry sat down with a grunt of satisfaction.

"Well, we've had a ripping day, you chaps!" he said.

"The rippingfulness is great. Wherefore the worthy cloud upon the honourable brow of the excellent Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I was thinking of Wun Lung," he said. "You haven't forgotten that he took French leave? He has to reckon with Mr. Quelch yet."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"And the Quelch-bird isn't likely to be in a reasonable temper, either," he remarked. "He doesn't like fellows taking French leave."

The train arrived at Friardale, and the juniors walked to Greyfriars. Billy Bunter was disposed to grumble at having no vehicle from the station, but nobody took any heed of Bunter's grumbles.

They reached the school, and Gosling's look was very significant when he let them in.

"Which be's with you, is he?" said the porter.

"Who—Wun Lung? Yes, here he is."

"Which there's been inquiring for him."

"Dear me!" said Bob Cherry. "No wonder you look sad and distressed, Gosling. It has been weighing on your mind."

The porter snorted.

"Which there's a licking for 'im," he said, "and which it serves 'im right, in my hopinion."

The juniors presented themselves at Mr. Quelch's door with some misgivings. The Remove master was about the last man in the school to excuse truancy. His face was very grim as they entered.

"Ah, you have returned, Wharton! I hope you have had a pleasant day."

"Very pleasant indeed, sir, thank you!"

"Was Wun Lung with you?"

"Yes, sir. He—"

"I guessed as much. He left the school without permission." Mr. Quelch selected a cane. "You others may go. Remain here, Wun Lung!"

"No savvy—"

"If you please, sir," said Wharton diffidently, "I don't think Wun Lung quite understands the full importance of—"

"Then he must learn—"

"I might mention, sir, that while in Aldershot we were attacked by a gang of gipsy footpads, and Wun Lung saved me from serious injury, if not worse. If he had not been with us I should have been felled by a bludgeon in Melchior's hand."

Mr. Quelch knitted his brows.

"Of course, in that case, I am glad that Wun Lung was with you, Wharton. But that can make no difference to his breach of discipline in leaving the school without permission."

"I—I suppose not, sir."

"You understand, Wun Lung, that you have committed a serious offence?" said the Form master, turning a severe gaze upon the Celestial.

Wun Lung met his glance with a bland smile.

"Well, well, you may go, boys. But mind, Wun Lung, nothing of this kind must occur again. Good-night, boys!"

"Me savvy. Allee light!"

"Good-night, sir!" said the Removites in grateful chorus, and they marched the Chinese away unpunished.

And so, satisfactorily for all concerned, ended Harry Wharton's day out.

THE END.

(Grand Christmas Double Number of The "Magnet" Library next week, containing a splendid double-length tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "The Greyfriars Victory," and a fine instalment of "In the Ranks" Please order your copy in advance. Price One Penny.)

A Double-length School Tale.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Unfortunately for Jack, however, his Cousin Leonard is attached to the 25th as second lieutenant, and, with the aid of a bullying trooper named Sligo, succeeds in getting Jack deprived of his stripes. By the death of his father (Dominic), Lieutenant Dashwood is at first prevented from accompanying the 25th to India; but he subsequently joins the troopship at Port Said, and he then hears that he has been transferred to the Ploughshares—an infantry regiment. Jack is soon reinstated favourite, and becomes once more full corporal. A frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. On their way to the scene of war the 25th are continually "sniped" by the rebels, and Tom has many exciting adventures, in one of which he becomes possessed of a ring. Sligo is bribed by Dashwood to drug Tom Howard one night while the young corporal is on picket duty. Tom falls asleep at his post and is carried off by the enemy during a skirmish. His life is spared owing to the chief, Jamra Khan's, recognition of Tom's ring, and the next night, with a fellow-captive, Sundar Singh, of the Sikhs, Tom escapes. The two are pursued, and, coming to a steep and narrow gorge, turn to face their pursuers. The Sikh sends Jamra Khan rolling down the declivity, but before he can recover his balance, four tribesmen slip past him with a chorus of loud yells.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Strange Race for Life.

One tribesman was armed with a Snider rifle, which he fired, and the bullet passing between our two friends, whistled away in the valley behind them, after tearing a shred from the corporal's upper garment.

Then it was thrust and prod and parry; and the Sikh, suddenly clubbing his matchlock, brought it down with terrific force on the shaven head of a muscular Pathan. But, alas! the flimsy stock shattered and broke, and Sundar Singh had only the barrel to defend himself with.

The chief, after several vain attempts to squeeze past his excited followers and get into the forefront of the battle, cried out something to the men behind him, which Sundar Singh translated for our hero's benefit.

"He has told his men to fire," said the Sikh. "The moment you see a gun-barrel raised, sahib, fling yourself down on your knees. It is your only chance."

It was all very well, however, keeping off the slashing cuts of the three tribesmen below him, and watching those still further in the rear; but, fortunately, at the very moment when Tom had cut one of the Pathans very severely over the face, Sundar Singh fell flat upon the rocks, and Tom instinctively bent down also. Martini and Snider rang out in the grey morning, and Tom's turban was pierced by one of the bullets.

"Now," cried Sundar Singh, "before they have time to reload! Death to the dogs!"

And springing forward, he dealt a shower of blows upon the enemy that took them completely off their guard; and Tom following with his long knife, the onslaught was so unexpected and so irresistible, that the Pathans turned and fled down the steep track, carrying Jamra Khan with them.

It was their intention to gain the shelter of the angle in the path, and then to shoot the infidels, whose position gave them such an advantage. But alas for the schemes of the wily tribesmen!

As the last of them reached the angle, he had got such a tremendous pace on him, thanks to the steepness of the path, that he clutched at the black rock to check himself, and a huge fragment of it, loosened no doubt by the frequent rains, came away in his arms, and the man's yell of terror rang out far over the valley.

The tribesmen saw their danger. Round the angle the path led straight as an arrow, and well nigh as steep as the side of a house, for about two hundred yards down the mountain. Its sides were so precipitous that they afforded no foothold, and the mass of rock, thus unexpectedly loosened, rolled on their heels, gathering speed and impetus at every yard.

There was nothing for it but a mad flight to gain the next turning in the path; and the corporal and the Sikh, springing over the bodies of the Pathans they had killed, reached the angle, and saw a strange sight.

A frantic mob of screaming men, in flowing white garments, tore for their lives down the precipitous track, and after them the huge rock went rolling and leaping, and rebounding from side to side, gaining on them rapidly. A slip of the foot meant instant death; but the mountaineers were as agile as cats, and headed by Jamra Khan, who had managed to start a good first, they fled as surely men had never fled before, imploring the help of Allah with agonising yells.

Sundar Singh broke into a peal of laughter, but only for a moment.

"Quick, sahib!" he said. "We, too, must follow, for the rock will stay at the next turning in the path, and we must be there to wrench it on its way."

Recognising that everything depended on their accomplishing this, Tom sped after the Sikh, praying that the next turn in the way might be as steep as the one they were now descending.

The rock met the side of the track with a terrific crash, fragments of it splintering and showering down among the stunted pines that grew there; and the next moment, with a wild cry of delight, Sundar Singh seized one side of its ragged corners, and, bracing himself, plunged it again upon its way.

Round the angle the path went down almost steeper than before, and as they halted, breathless, to watch, they saw the rock gain on the fugitives. The terrified Pathans were overtaken one after another, and still the rock leaped and bounded on its death-dealing course.

"This way, sahib!" said Sundar Singh, springing up where the side of the path afforded a foothold.

A clump of pine-trees clung to the edge of the mountains there, and flinging themselves on their faces in the welcome shelter, they heaved a sigh of relief, as the yells of the enemy sounded farther and farther away.

For some moments the dull crashing of the rock reverberated in the still air after it had vanished from view over the shoulder of the hill, and the corporal and Sikh looked at each other, and each silently thanked Providence in his own particular fashion. But they did not linger long.

"Sahib," said the Sikh, "we must find some place of concealment. It is useless to descend into the valley now, they will wait for us below. Besides, look yonder!"

And he pointed to another ridge of hills, where the glitter of steel in the rising sun revealed another band of the enemy.

Bending down and crawling cautiously along the precipitous side of the mountain, they at length reached a crevice,

into which they crept; and from their hiding-place all day long they saw the hills and valley beneath them alive with fierce tribesmen, bent on the destruction of the British.

The Mad Mullah, who had been working all manner of mysterious miracles until the time was ripe for the revolt, had declared that an army was coming down from heaven to help the true believers.

The only army, however, that came into that region was the army in khaki, and the results were not altogether what the Mullah of Hadda could have desired.

All day long the fierce sun blazed down on the mountain sides, and the two fugitives were consumed with a fearful thirst; but it was not until evening that they ventured forth, and after an adventurous climb that lasted for more than an hour, they at last reached the plain below, and proceeding with extreme caution, the Sikh struck out into the darkness.

Tom's hands were torn and bleeding, and Sundar Singh's bare foot, which he bandaged from time to time, compelled him to limp painfully; but about the time of the second relief, when the moon was pouring down with great brightness, Sundar Singh stopped.

"We are close to our picquets now," he said, "but there is yet some ground in front where the enemy may be lurking. We must keep to our disguise for a little time, and then we shall have to be very wary, if we do not wish to be shot by our own men."

Lieutenant Dashwood, of the Ploughshires, had just visited the picquet posts, and found everything quiet.

Without any particular feeling for the beautiful, he could not help looking at the great silvery moon, which lit up the valley like the light of day. He had a half smile on his face, but there was a grimace in the curl of his lip.

"I wonder whether that moon is shining on his bones?" he thought to himself. "I have got rid of him at last!"

Dashwood stood looking across the green rice fields like a man in a dream. Money, position, and social rank were his. He would see the campaign through, and then, with his undoubted ability and clever brain, he would try for a staff appointment; for the Ploughshires were not at all to his fancy, thanks to Dick Vivian, and the unenviable reputation Leonard had earned during the short time he was with the 25th Hussars.

"Beg pardon, sir," said a voice behind him, "but I think there's somebody moving on the other side of that field."

One of his sentries had come up behind him, and now pointed to a dip in the plain. Dashwood was on the alert in a moment.

"Where do you mean, Johnson?" he said, following the direction of the man's finger.

"If you look a moment, sir, where that rock throws a shadow, you will see something white."

"That means the enemy."

"Yes, sir. Do you see it now?"

"By Jove, I do!"

And, straining his eyes, he watched two little specks in the moonlight that crept out of the shadow into the standing crop.

"Don't give the alarm yet," said Leonard. "There are only two of them, probably a couple of snipers. We will see if we cannot bag them."

Officer and private lay down on their faces and watched, seeing the turbaned heads pop up every now and then, always a few yards nearer.

"It looks as though they were stalking us, Johnson," said Dashwood, drawing his revolver. "They are making for that heap of grey stones there on the ridge directly in front of us. Sight for that, and let go when I tell you to, but not before."

Private Johnson, with a gleam in his eyes, settled himself comfortably on his elbows, and did as he was told. The two figures in the rice-field were taking whispered council together as to how they could approach the outpost without drawing their fire.

"We are not near enough yet, Sundar Singh, to try a shot. Let's get on that ridge first, and then I'll try them with the King's English."

The fugitives wormed their way through the rustling rice-blades, and drew nearer and nearer to the spot which Leonard Dashwood had indicated to the man at his side. Their progress was so cautious and so slow that Dashwood became impatient, and believed that they had gone back. He stood up, clearly outlined against the sky, a figure distinctly British in his khaki campaign kit and helmet.

"That's an officer yonder," said the corporal suddenly, as they crept behind the shoulder of the heap of grey stones. "I am going to chance it now, Sundar Singh. Take your turban off and lift your hands while I shout. We will try another half a dozen yards first."

And, worming his way along, Tom lessened the distance between himself and the one man in the world he had most to fear.

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On a sudden two figures sprang up on the little ridge, flinging their turbans off as they did so, and raising their arms high above their heads.

"Don't fire, sir!" cried an unmistakably English voice. "We have escaped from the enemy."

With the rapidity of a lightning flash Leonard Dashwood recognised the voice and realised the position, and as the private in the grass beside him drew his hand back from his rifle, Dashwood raised his revolver and fired.

"Hold on, sir, he's one of our chaps!" said Private Johnson, springing up.

And Leonard, not daring to go further, lowered his weapon; but the bullet had sped and found its billet—not in the heart Dashwood had wished to pierce, but in the faithful breast of Sundar Singh, of the Sikhs, and Sundar Singh fell forward with a low groan.

"Hold hard, hang you!" roared Corporal Tom Howard hoarsely. "Don't you know English when you hear it?" And, springing back, he lifted the Sikh in his arms and supported him against his knee.

For a moment Dashwood hesitated; but Johnson had already run forward in the moonlight, and there was nothing for it but for Leonard to follow him. When he reached the group his face was deathly white, and there was no mistaking the swift glance that Tom Howard flung at him. Then, as Johnson, very much mystified, laid his rifle down and produced his canteen, Sundar Singh looked up into our hero's face and smiled faintly.

"It is destiny, sahib," he whispered. "We have fought together, and—and—"

Sundar Singh shivered a little, and coughed twice, and all his earthly troubles were over.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Leonard Dashwood, in a sudden attempt to carry the position with a high hand.

Tom laid the dead man back on the grass, and, rising to his feet, approached his cousin.

"The meaning of this," he said, in a low, stern voice, which did not reach the ears of Private Johnson—"the meaning of it all is that the shot you intended for me has killed the man that saved my life, and so you have added murder to the rest of your crimes, you cowardly scoundrel!"

"It was an accident," faltered Leonard Dashwood, his hand trembling as he replaced the revolver in its case.

"It was no accident," said Tom, turning away from the man in disgust, as the private rose from his knees and reslung his canteen.

"I thought I 'eard an English voice, sir," he said regretfully, "but you pressed the trigger as I cried out."

Dashwood went forward and looked at the man he had shot more as a matter of necessity than because he wanted to look at him.

"Poor beggar!" he said; and then he turned on his heel. "We have roused the camp, anyway."

And they met Captain Vincent, who had turned out when the shot was fired. Leonard made haste to explain his supposed error, and Tom stood by, saying nothing. It was not his business to expose his cousin, and for the sake of the family name he kept his mouth shut.

"I am glad to see you, Howard," said Captain Vincent, making a motion as though he would put out his hand, and then withdrawing it. "We thought you were killed. I am afraid I must ask you to go over to the main guard and consider yourself under arrest, for there's an ugly rumour that you were asleep at your post when you were taken. I sincerely hope that you will be able to clear yourself."

Tom saw the smile that lit up his cousin's face; but he paid no heed, and saying simply, "Very well, sir!" went off and gave himself up.

"You seem to have as many lives as a cat, old man," said Jim Clavering, who was in charge of the guard. "I suppose there'll be a court-martial as soon as things have quietened down a bit, but you needn't look so down in the mouth. I've got a bit of evidence up my sleeve that will astonish some people, although I don't know who."

And then he told him of Sligo's extraordinary behaviour, and the report of the doctor that Tom's canteen had been drugged.

"By thunder, if I had thought that," muttered the corporal, "I don't think I should let him off so easily for this night's work!"

And then the careless, unthinking fellows helped him to take off his disguise, laughing heartily the while.

The shadow of the regimental sergeant-major fell across the doorway, and though he shook hands with Tom, there was a gravity in his manner which impressed all uncomfortably.

"Glad to see you back, my boy," said Sergeant-Major Middleton. "You must come with me to the colonel, who has sent me for you."

Colonel Greville had taken up his quarters in a stone hut, where Tom found him, smoking a long cheroot, in his shirt-sleeves.

"I want to question Corporal Howard alone, sergeant-major. Will you be good enough to withdraw?" said the colonel. And Middleton saluted and went out into the moonlight.

The colonel opened a kit-bag, which contained almost the whole of Tom's modest campaigning outfit, and looking up suddenly at Tom, who stood at attention in the doorway, said:

"How long have you been in the habit of taking laudanum, Howard, and what do you do it for?"

"Laudanum, sir?"

"I said laudanum," said the colonel.

"I never tasted it in my life to my knowledge," said Tom, very much astonished at the question.

"Then how comes this to be found in your saddle wallet?" And the colonel, who had been fishing among his things, held up a small bottle.

Tom looked at it curiously and shook his head.

"I never placed it there, sir. I never saw it before."

The colonel knew that he was speaking the truth, and pulled his grizzled moustache freely.

"To be quite honest with you, Howard," he said, "if your cousin Dashwood had been still in the regiment, I should have had very strong suspicions that he was at the bottom of this matter; but I do not see how that can be."

And then the colonel plied him with many questions about the country and the natives that he had seen, and listened attentively to the story of Tom's escape.

"Strange!" he muttered. "Anyway, there'll have to be an inquiry into the matter, and until then you had better return to your duties. The whole thing is very mysterious. I have my suspicions, but I have no proof. If the man I am thinking of has done this thing, he would deserve to be hanged, for it was deliberately jeopardizing the safety of the whole force. However, say nothing to anyone. We must bide our time. We are going to force the gate of the Swat Valley. Personally, I exonerate you from all blame, for you are the last man in the world to sleep at your post. Still, you will have to face the music."

"Meantime, go back to your duties, and keep your eye on a certain person, who shall be nameless. You have an enemy, and a most unscrupulous one. You know whom I mean. But one of these days he will go too far, and be hoist with his own petard. We make a reconnaissance to-morrow, and you shall go with us. I am sure that the confidence I have in you is not misplaced, and all will come right in the end. You may go now."

And after the lad had taken his departure, the colonel sat smoking in silence for a long while, weighing the pros and cons of one of the knottiest problems that had ever exercised him.

"I shall never rest," he muttered, "until that precious cousin of his is out of the Service. I am confident that he is somewhere at the bottom of this business, for the beggar is as cunning as a fox."

Tom resumed his duties as though nothing had happened, but he was conscious that the men looked at him askance, Sligo having taken good care to spread the report that he had slept on outpost. As for Sligo, he had gone sick, and been sent down to the base hospital, a fact which he had hailed with delight, as it rid him for the time being of all necessity to answer awkward questions.

A few days later the 11th Bengal Lancers and the 25th Hussars went out to reconnoitre the enemy's position, and found that the spur of Landakai was

strongly held by them. The squadrons retired with this intelligence, and it was decided to attack next day at day-break. The Hussars moved off at half-past six in the morning, and shots were so fired from the Buddhist ruins near the village of Jalala.

The enemy had constructed strongholds of stone along the mountains, and their standards and sword-blades were clearly seen in the sunlight. Their number was estimated at something over five thousand, and the position was very strong. On the left, as the British troops advanced, there was an unfordable river, and on the right mountains rising with precipitous steepness. The road lay along the causeway, between the ridge which the enemy hold and the water, and before going any further it was absolutely necessary to dislodge them.

The weather was very broken, and heavy rains had been falling, so heavy, in fact, that the forward movement was postponed until the 16th of August. The tents and heavy baggage was sent to Khor; the camels, escorted by a squadron of the blue-coated 11th Bengal Lancers, and the rest of the stores, were placed in camp until the road should be clear in front.

The road from Tehanna to Jalala is a stone causeway, winding along the valley, round cliffs and spurs. Across the valley runs the Landakai Spur, on which the enemy were entrenched so strongly. The weak point in their position was soon detected.

Behind them lay low marshy ground, covered with rice-fields, and their only line of retreat would be up into the mountains. As they expected the advance to be along the road, the great bulk of their force was massed near the extremity of the spur where it overhung the causeway, and an attempt was to be made to cut them off by turning their left.

Tom was standing beside his mare, waiting for the order to mount, when Dick Vivian came up to him.

"Got my chance at last, old chap," said Dick excitedly. "Our chaps and the niggers are going to take that ridge, and mine is the leading company. If I come across your friend Jamra Khan, I will give him your compliments."

Dick had already had an interview with his old friend, and heard all the details of Tom's adventure. He had heard also the details of the shooting of Sundar Singh, and cut Leonard Dashwood dead on parade in consequence.

His own mother would not have known him, for Master Dick was burned as black as coal. Upon his head was a huge khaki-covered helmet, with a quilted flap at the back to protect his neck from the fierce sun. For the rest, he was all pockets and buttons and belts and marching boots, with soles like a ploughman's, as he ran off to take his position with his company.

Then the cavalry mounted and advanced towards Jalala, to engage the enemy and keep them busy; and with them went two companies of the Royal West Kent to help them;

while Meiklejohn, with the Ploughshires and the 24th and 31st Punjab Infantry, and the 45th Sikhs, climbed the hill, to cut off the tribesmen from their only possible line of retreat.

Turning in his saddle, Tom watched his friend as long as he could see him, until shots in their front turned all eyes in the direction of the ancient Buddhist ruins, from whence the enemy opened fire. At the same time the 10th Field and 7th Mounted Battery opened fire on the tribesmen, and instantly swarms of white figures were seen rushing out of the fort and retiring under cover, their wild yells floating down on the light wind.

They had broken up the causeway in several places, and rolled rocks upon it; and when our squadrons pushed round the end of the spur, they had to debouch slowly by twos and threes.

(An extra-long instalment of this splendid tale of Army life in next Tuesday's Grand Christmas Double Number of "The Magnet" Library. Price 1d.)

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THE EDITOR.

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