

"THE FIRST AT GREYFRIARS."

The  
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Library

NO 112  
VOL. 4.

Grand Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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Harry Wharton & Co.

BY

**FRANK RICHARDS.**



### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Wheezes Not Wanted.

"He, he, he!"  
It was a sudden and unmelodious cackle of laughter, and it proceeded from a fat junior sitting in the armchair in No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

"He, he, he!"  
It was a windy March evening, and the trees in the Close were rustling and groaning. But No. 1 Study looked very cosy. The blind was drawn, and the fire blazing, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh, the chums of the Remove, were at the table, cheerfully working. Billy

Bunter, as usual, occupied the armchair, and he had pulled it round to the front of the fire, and put both his feet on the fender, so that he had most of the fire, too. But that was Billy Bunter's little way. It never seemed to occur to the Owl of the Remove that there was anything beside his personal comfort to be considered.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter had been buried in thought, and he had suddenly started out of a reverie with that irrepressible cackle. The chums of the Remove looked up from their work.

"Anything wrong, Bunter?" asked Nugent.

"Wrong? No!"



"Oh! It sounded as if the machinery was out of order, that's all. I've heard a bike go like that when it wanted oiling."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"It reminds me more of a hen with the croup," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The croupfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the esteemed Bunter was trying to produce the musical sound, he has achieved a terrific failure. The silence of the honourable fat Bunter would be the boonful blessing."

"Look here, Inky—"

"You're interrupting the work," said Nugent. "Why don't you do your prep., Billy, instead of sitting there cackling? You'll hear from Quelch in the morning."

"Plenty of time for prep., Nugent. I'm thinking of something else. Do you fellows know what to-morrow is?"

"To-morrow!"

"Yes. Do you know what it is?"

"It's a day, I suppose, the same as any other," said Harry Wharton, looking puzzled. "What are you driving at?"

"It's not quite the same as any other. It's the First of April."

"Oh!"

"All Fools' Day!" said Billy Bunter.

"Then you and the others ought to celebrate it," said Nugent kindly. "But it doesn't matter so much to us."

"Oh, really, Nugent— I say, you fellows," said Bunter, sitting bolt-upright in the armchair, and blinking at the juniors—"I say, I've thought of a splendid First of April wheeze."

"Oh, rats! We know your wheezes."

"But this is simply ripping. You see, it will be a ripping jape to take the Head in, and—"

"The Head?"

"Yes."

"You ass! Are you thinking of japing the Head?" exclaimed Wharton. "Do you want to be sacked from the school?"

"Well, he will never find out, you know. My idea is to write a letter, making him think that there are a lot of new boys coming to Greyfriars, and make him send to the station to meet them," said Bunter. "How's that?"

"Rotten!"

"Oh, really, you fellows, I think it's ripping!"

"You would be flogged, you ass!"

"I should disguise the writing. Then, there's another wheeze. I was thinking we could work off the April 1st dodge on the girls at Cliff House."

"What!"

That "what" ought to have warned Billy Bunter of danger, but he was too deeply occupied with his brilliant ideas to note the tone in which it was uttered. He went fatuously on:

"You see, it would be awfully good fun to fool Marjorie & Co., and make them look duffers. I've got a little scheme—"

Harry Wharton rose, took the fat junior by the back of the collar, and jerked him out of the armchair.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo! You're chook-chook-chook-choking me!"

Wharton shook him energetically.

"Now, you fat worm—"

"Oh!"

"If you venture to play any of your tricks on the Cliff House girls—"

"Ow!"

"I'll give you the licking of your life."

"Yarrah!"

"You can take this shaking to go on with. You'd better not try to jape the Head. But if you try to jape Marjorie & Co., I'll make you sorry for yourself. Do you understand?"

"Yow!"

"Then mind you keep your giddy sense of humour within bounds, that's all."

"Groo! You're chook-choking me! Leggo!"

Wharton let go.

He did it so suddenly that Bunter was not prepared, and the fat junior sat down with considerable force upon the study floor.

Bump!

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter sat gasping for breath, and blinking at the grinning juniors. Wharton sat down quietly, and went on with his work, as if nothing had happened.

"You—you beasts!" gasped Bunter. "This is rotten jealousy, because I'm the only chap in this study who ever has any clever ideas!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jape the Cliff House girls as much as I like—"

"Better not," said Wharton, with a warning shake of the finger. "I know your japes. Caddish, all of them."

"And I'll jape the Head—"

"That your business—only I advise you not to."

"And—and I'll jape you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The japefulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But I do not think that he could succeed in taking in our esteemed selves upon the firstful day of the esteemed April!"

Bunter staggered to his feet. He was dusty, and he was breathless, and he was wrathful. His fat face was very red.

"You'll see," he exclaimed. "I'll—I'll make you sit up. There's too much rotten jealousy in this study, and I'm not going to stand—"

"Sit down, then."

"I'm not going to stand it."

"Oh, you can stand anything except a feed!" said Nugent. "I've never known you to stand that."

"I'm done with you," said Bunter. "I'm not appreciated in this study. I never have enough to eat here."

"No wonder you're looking so thin," said Nugent sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm done with you rotters!" said Bunter, opening the door. "You're mean beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And beastly rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And howling cads!"

"Good!"

"And rotten outsiders!" roared Bunter, exasperated at not being able to disturb the equanimity of the chums of the Remove.

"Go it!"

"And—and low beasts!"

"Keep it up."

"I decline to associate with you any longer!"

"Hurray!"

Billy Bunter bestowed one last indignant blink on the juniors, and went out, and slammed the door with a noise that rang the whole length of the Remove passage. A shout of laughter from No. 1 Study followed him as he stamped wrathfully away. It was said of old that a prophet is generally without honour in his own country; and the self-satisfied Owl of the Remove was certainly far from being appreciated in No. 1 Study.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Wun Lung Does Not Savvy.

**B**ILLY BUNTER was looking very red and wrathful as he stamped away. After having given the subject of the First of April a great deal of thought, and elaborated a series of brilliant schemes in the depths of his mighty brain, it was very rough to have his first suggestions treated with so much contumely. The fat junior felt injured. He found some consolation in the reflection that great geniuses are never fully understood by commoner spirits. But he could not carry out his schemes without some assistance, and that was a difficulty; for he was certainly not likely to obtain any assistance from No. 1 Study.

Little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was in the passage, and Billy Bunter stopped as he saw him. Wun Lung was gliding away with his noiseless step—he knew of old what Bunter generally wanted when he stopped to speak—but the fat junior caught hold of the Celestial's loose sleeve and detained him.

"Wun Lung, old chap—"

"Old chap" from Billy Bunter meant that he wanted money. Wun Lung put on his most stupidly stolid look. The little Chinese never understood a thing if he did not choose to do so.

"Wun Lung, old chap, I want to speak to you."

"Me velly plenty glad speakee Bunter."

"I wanted to ask you to a feed—"

"Me come."

"But I've been disappointed about a postal order," explained Billy Bunter, "so I sha'n't be able to. It's a great disappointment to me."

"Me solly"

"I've got a big jape on for to-morrow," said Bunter confidentially. "You know it's All Fools' Day, of course?"

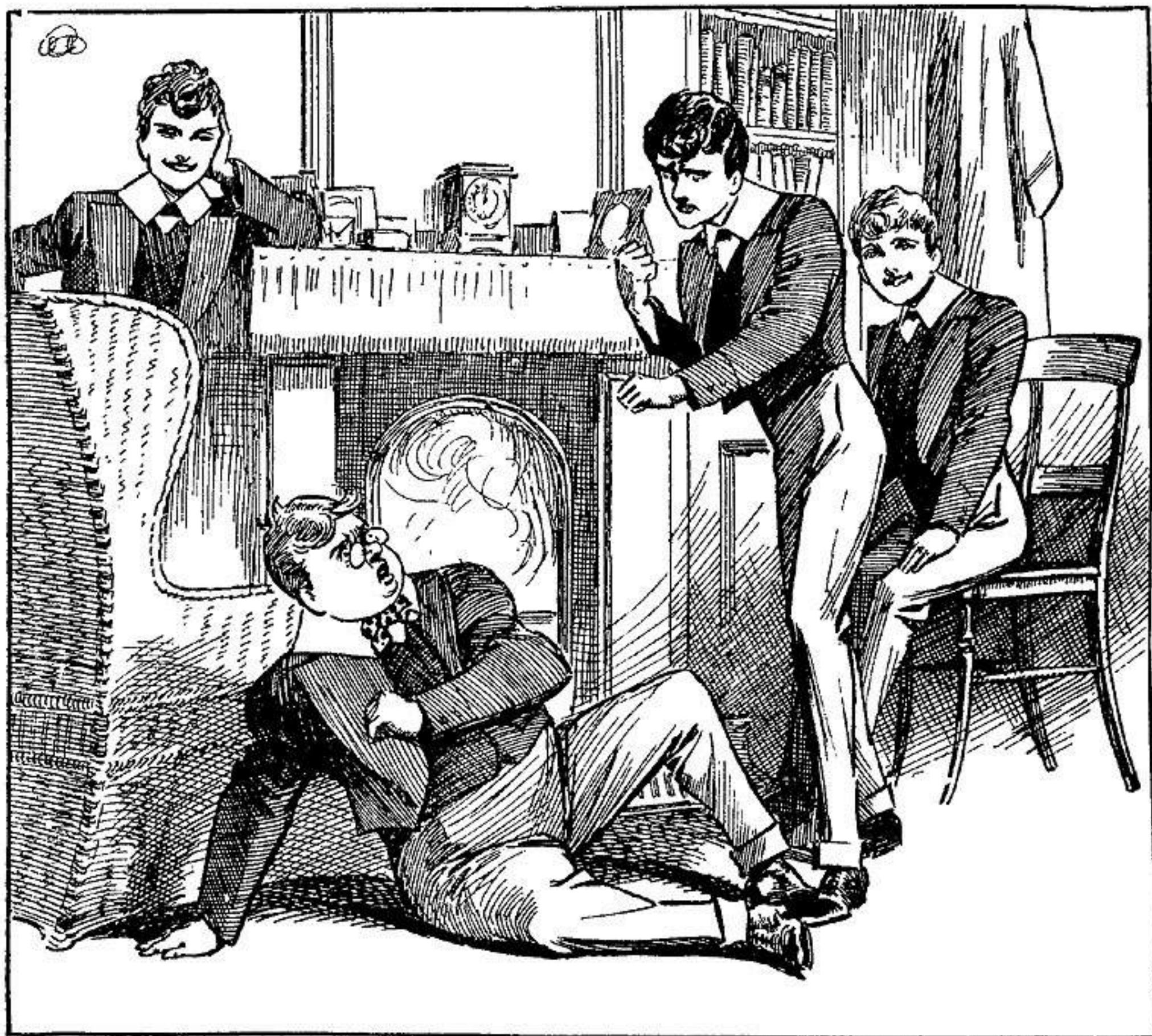
"Me knowee."

"I want a little cash to carry it out—"

"No savvy."

"I'm willing to let you into the thing, if you like."





"Now, you fat worm," said Harry Wharton, letting the fat junior down on the floor with a bump. "If you venture to play any of your tricks on the Cliff House Girls, I'll give you the licking of your life!"

"No savvy."

"If you could stand me ten shillings off my postal order—it's bound to come by the first or second post to-morrow—"

"No savvy."

"Now, look here, Wun Lung—"

"No savvy."

"My postal order is absolutely certain to come to-morrow morning," said Bunter patiently. "You'll see that there's a registered letter for me, you know. If you like to stand me five shillings off it now—"

"No savvy."

"A bob would do—"

"No savvy."

"You heathen beast!" said Billy Bunter. "You know that you savvy perfectly well. You're a rotten Confucian heathen waster! You're not fit to live in a decent school!"

"No savvy," said Wun Lung imperturbably.

"Will you lend me sixpence?"

"No savvy."

"A couple of postage-stamps would do," said Bunter. "I simply must have them."

"No savvy."

Bunter, exasperated, made a swinging blow at the little Chinese's head. Wun Lung dodged quickly, and Bunter's knuckles crashed on the wall against which he had been standing. There was a terrific yell from Billy Bunter.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Wun Lung chuckled softly. He doubled up for a moment

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NEXT  
WEEK:

"FRIENDS OR FOES?"

or two in a silent paroxysm of merriment, and then glided away, leaving Billy Bunter almost dancing, and sucking his damaged knuckles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming along the passage. "What on earth's the matter, Bunter? Are you practising a new breakdown?"

"Ow! I've hurt my knuckles. Ow! I say, Cherry, will you lend me ten bob—"

"Better make it ten pounds," said Bob Cherry genially. "It's a larger amount, you know, and you're just as likely to get it."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry grinned and walked on. Billy Bunter left off sucking his knuckles, and hurried after him.

"I say, Cherry, hold on a minute! There's a jolly good First of April jape I'm going to work off on the Cliff House girls—"

Bob Cherry turned round suddenly.

He did not speak, but his strong arm rose, and Billy Bunter suddenly found himself twisted round, and flattened on the floor with a mighty bump.

Then Bob walked on, leaving the fat junior gasping and breathless.

"Beast!" muttered Bunter, as he staggered up. "Beast! They're all beasts! I've a jolly good mind not to stay in this school! Yah!"

He went on disconsolately. It was really too bad that a fellow, simply bursting with ripping ideas, should be treated

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton  
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



in this way. He looked into No. 2 Study, which was shared by Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and Tom Brown, of New Zealand. All three of them were there, doing their prep.—which Bunter ought to have been doing.

"I suppose I can use some of your postage-stamps, Bulstrode?" said Bunter, blinking at the burly Removite.

Bulstrode looked up.

"I suppose you can't!" he said.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Get out!" said Hazeldene. "You're bothering me!"

"Look here, I've got an idea of working off a splendid jape on the Cliff House girls on the First of April—Yow!"

A cushion, hurled by Tom Brown, caught the fat junior on the chest, and he staggered out of the open doorway and fell in the passage with a bump. Tom Brown kicked the door shut after him.

Bunter sat still for some moments.

"Oh!" he gasped at last. "Ow! I—I won't offer to take anybody else into the scheme! The beasts! It's all mean jealousy!"

And Bunter drifted away, turning over in his mind the difficult problem how to borrow money where none would lend—a problem of which he did not succeed in finding the solution.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### How Bunter Stood Treat.

"MARJORIE!"

"Yes, dear!"

"Stop a minute!"

Three girls stopped outside the window of Uncle Clegg's tuckshop in the village of Friardale. Marjorie Hazeldene and her friend Clara had just been to the village post-office, and Wilhelmina Limburger, the German pupil of Cliff House, had walked there with them. It was Fraulein Limburger who halted outside the shop-window and called to the others to stop.

Miss Limburger was very like William George Bunter of Greyfriars in some respects—she had an eye for anything eatable, and a remarkably healthy appetite. As soon as she stopped Marjorie and Clara knew what was coming, and they looked resigned.

"Look!" said Wilhelmina, pointing a fat finger at the window. "I tink tat those tarts are vat you call ripping."

"Oh, come on!" said Miss Clara.

"But I'm hungry, ain't it?"

"We shall get supper at Cliff House," urged Marjorie.

"Do come! Miss Primrose will be expecting us back."

"But—"

"I say, you fellows—I mean you girls—"

The three girls looked round quickly. Billy Bunter loomed up in the light of the shop-window.

The fat junior blinked at them through his big spectacles, and took off his cap. Billy Bunter was under the impression that he was what he called a terror with the girls. He hadn't the least doubt that Marjorie & Co. had seen him coming, and had stopped and pretended to look into the shop-window for the purpose of giving him an opportunity of joining them.

He grinned affably at the girls.

"Nice evening!" he remarked.

"Very!" said Marjorie coldly.

"I'm going to the post-office," said Bunter. "Perhaps you are going that way?"

"No; we have just come from there."

"And we are going home," said Miss Clara.

"I tink tat—"

"Why not come in and have a bit of a feed first?" said Billy Bunter, in a burst of generosity. "Those tarts look ripping!"

"Thanks, no!"

"Oh, no, thank you!"

"I tink tat I come in," said Miss Limburger. "I tink tat Bunter is goot, and tat it is vat you call a goot idea."

"Oh, come, Wilhelmina—"

"Oh, do come in!" urged Billy Bunter. "I should like you to ever so much! Do come in, you know! I can recommend these tarts."

Marjorie and Clara hesitated. They did not like Billy Bunter, and they did not intend to let the fat junior buy anything for them, but with Wilhelmina it was different. The German girl was determined not to pass the tuckshop without entering, and she was evidently disposed to accept Billy Bunter's offer.

"Oh, come in!" said Bunter, with a princely air.

"I tinks I comes."

"Wilhelmina dear—"

"I tinks you come too, ain't it?"

"But, my dear—"

Wilhelmina cut the discussion short by following Bunter

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into the shop. Marjorie and Clara did not feel inclined to desert her, so they unwillingly entered after her.

Bunter was already at the counter. He rattled a bunch of keys in his pocket, and Uncle Clegg assumed a manner of great civility. The sound certainly indicated that Bunter was flush of money.

"What can I do for you, young ladies?" asked Uncle Clegg hospitably.

"Tarts!" said Miss Limburger briefly.

"Same here!" said Bunter. "And ginger-pop!"

"Certainly."

"What will you have, Miss Marjorie?"

"Nothing, thank you!"

"And you, Miss Clara?"

"Nothing, thank you!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"I tinks I have some more tarts."

"I wish you girls would have something," said Billy Bunter, with a somewhat injured expression. "You like the tarts, don't you, Miss Limburger?"

"Ferry mooch! I tinks I have some more."

"Here you are!"

"You waits for me, Marjorie, and you Clara, ain't it?"

"Oh, yes, we will wait!" said Marjorie.

"Sure you won't have a cake?" asked Bunter.

"Quite sure, thank you!"

"Or an apple?"

"No, thanks!"

"Or a bun?"

"No!"

Billy Bunter gave up the attempt to be hospitable, and looked after himself. There seemed to be a race between the fat junior and the German girl as to which could consume the greater number of tarts.

Billy Bunter won. He managed four to every three of Wilhelmina's. As the tarts disappeared rapidly Uncle Clegg began to look a little concerned. The account was running up, and he knew Bunter's usual state of impecuniosity.

"More ginger-pop, Uncle Clegg."

"Four shillings," said Mr. Clegg.

"Eh?"

"Four shillings."

"Oh, it's no good settling in the middle of a feed," said Billy Bunter. "More ginger-pop, and a dozen more tarts—twopenny ones."

"Four shillings, please."

"Oh, really, Uncle Clegg—"

"You owe me an account already, Master Bunter."

"I am going to settle that up out of my postal-order to-morrow," said the fat junior. "A dozen more tarts, please—"

"Four shillings."

"Oh, really—"

"Vy not pay him, and den have der tarts?" suggested Miss Limburger, her jaws ceasing to work at last as the supply ran short. "I have hunger, ain't it?"

"Oh, very well!"

Billy Bunter ran his hands through his pockets in search of money. He knew perfectly well that there was none there, but he made an elaborate process of searching, and finally uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I'm sincerely sorry, Uncle Clegg, but I've forgotten to bring any money with me. I shall have to settle this to-morrow."

Uncle Clegg looked decidedly unpleasant.

"You had better have another look, Master Bunter."

"Oh, it's no use; I know I haven't any with me," said Bunter. "I'm sincerely sorry, but, of course, an oversight like that cannot be helped."

"Who is going to pay for the tarts?" demanded Mr. Clegg sourly.

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"I will settle to-morrow—"

"Stuff!"

"Oh, really, Uncle Clegg—"

"You will not leave this shop without paying," said Mr. Clegg, coming out from behind the counter, with a very angry look. "I know you, Master Bunter. You are a dishonest boy."

"Mr. Clegg! I hope you don't fancy for a moment that I shall not pay this paltry amount?" said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "It was an oversight not putting any money into my pocket."

"Are you going to pay me?"

"I haven't any money just at present, but—"

"Then you don't leave this shop!"

"But I must get back to Greyfriars!" said Billy Bunter, alarmed by the threatening look of Mr. Clegg. "You see—"

"You should have thought of that before."

Marjorie and Clara looked very uncomfortable and alarmed. Wilhelmina stood quiet and stolid, waiting for the dispute to end. Uncle Clegg crossed over to the door and closed it, and then stood with his back to it.

"Now, then," he said sourly and grimly, "who is going to pay me?"

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter is Not Wanted.

**B**ILLY BUNTER blinked at the irascible old gentleman with a sickly smile. He felt himself cornered, and he could see from Marjorie and Clara's looks just what they thought of him. But that did not affect the fat junior so much as the awkward position he found himself in.

"I—I say, Uncle Clegg, don't be a cad, you know!" he said. "I—I will settle up to-morrow, honour bright!"

"You will settle up now, or you won't leave this shop!" said Mr. Clegg.

Bunter turned to Miss Limburger.

"I'm sincerely sorry," he said. "You see the old fellow's determined to be unreasonable. Will you settle with him, and I'll pay you to-morrow?"

Miss Limburger shook her head.

"I tinks tat I cannot."

"But, you see—"

"I tinks tat I have no money, ain't it?"

"Oh, crumbs!" said the unfortunate Bunter. "This is rotten! I—I say, Miss Hazeldene, will you—er—settle up for those tarts, you know, and I'll let you have the money to-morrow?"

Marjorie gave him a scornful look.

"I will pay Mr. Clegg," she said, "because Wilhelmina is concerned in the matter, otherwise I should not. You did not intend to pay at all!"

"Oh, really—"

"You knew you had no money!"

"Oh, really, Marjorie—"

"Don't call me Marjorie!" said the girl, with unusual asperity. "I don't like it! You are a mean and deceitful boy!"

"I tinks tat you are right, Marjorie."

"A little cad," said Miss Clara, who had picked up many boyish expressions from the boys of Greyfriars. "A rank outsider."

"Oh, really, Miss Clara—"

"Don't call me Clara."

Marjorie opened her little purse, and laid four shillings on the counter—very nearly all the money it contained. Uncle Clegg abandoned his position of guard at the door.

"Thank you, Miss Hazeldene."

"Come, Clara—come, Wilhelmina."

"I tinks tere are no more tarts, and I come, ain't it."

The girls left the shop. Billy Bunter followed them. He walked down the street with them, his thick skin impervious to the contempt in their looks.

"You'd like me to see you home, I suppose," he remarked.

"Thank you, no."

"Better," said Bunter. "You may need protection, and—"

Marjorie stopped.

"Don't come with us any further," she said. "We don't like your company. I suppose that is plain enough for you."

Billy Bunter blinked at her.

"I—I suppose you're joking?" he stammered.

"I am quite in earnest."

"Yes, rather," said Miss Clara, with emphasis. "You are a toad, Bunter."

"Oh—oh, really—"

"I tinks tat tat is so, ain't it."

And the girls walked on, leaving Bunter standing still, blinking after them. The fat junior's brows contracted.

"I wonder what that means," he murmured. "Of course, I know they really like me—girls always take to me. I suppose Marjorie and Clara are jealous of my taking so much notice of Wilhelmina—that must be it."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 112.

NEXT

WEEK:

# "FRIENDS OR FOES?"

EVERY  
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"  
LIBRARY.

ONE  
PENNY.

And, satisfied that he had found the true explanation, Billy Bunter trotted off towards the post-office. He stopped outside the building, and took two letters out of his pocket, and looked at them. Neither had a stamp on it, and the fat junior had no money. He hesitated.

"I shall have to risk it," he murmured. "After all, they will be delivered, and the party at the other end will have to pay. Hallo! is that you, Wun Lung?"

The little Chinese came out of the post-office. He had a slip of paper in his hand—it was a post-office receipt for a registered letter. He thrust it hastily into his pocket as he met Bunter.

"I say, Wun Lung, lend me a couple of pence, will you?"

"No savvy."

"I want to stamp these letters, you see, and I've run short of cash. I shall have to post them without stamps."

"No savvy."

"You heathen beast!"

"No savvy."

Wun Lung chuckled and walked away, and Billy Bunter, in despair, slipped the unstamped letters into the box. Then he trotted after Wun Lung in the direction of Greyfriars. The little Chinese was walking much more quickly than the fat junior, however, and Bunter did not overtake him.

Billy Bunter reached the gates of Greyfriars and rang the bell. Gosling, the porter, came and opened the gate, and frowned at the Owl of the Remove.

"Master Wingate wants to see you," he said.

"Oh, really, Gosling."

Gosling clanged the gate. Bunter had been out after hours without a pass, and he took his way to Wingate's study in fear and trembling. Wingate was captain of the school, and head prefect, and it was his business to look after matters of this sort. Bunter did not dare to disobey the summons to his study.

He tapped at Wingate's door and entered, keeping only just within the door. There were two other fellows, Courtney and North of the Sixth, seated in Wingate's armchairs before the fire; but the short-sighted junior did not notice them there. Wingate was sitting on the table, talking athletics with the other two seniors, when he heard Bunter's tap. He looked round as the fat junior came in, and his rugged face assumed a grim expression.

"You weren't in to 'call-over,' Bunter."

"N-n-no."

"You have been out?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Had you a pass?"

"Oh, yes, Wingate," said Bunter confidently. "Of course, I shouldn't go out after dark without a prefect's pass. I have too much respect for the rules of the college."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Wingate. "I really thought that perhaps you had had the cheek to go out without a pass."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Where is the pass?"

"Do you w-w-want to see it?"

"Yes."

Bunter fumbled in his pocket.

"Dear me," he said. "I'm sincerely sorry. I—I must have left it in the post-office. I remember now that something dropped from my pocket."

Wingate's face set grimly.

"Who gave you the pass?" he asked.

"Lemme see, it—it was a prefect."

"Which prefect?"

"Courtney," said Billy Bunter desperately.

"Did you give him a pass, Courtney?"

"No," said the senior.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Billy Bunter, seeing Courtney's head over the back of the armchair for the first time. "Oh, dear! I—I didn't see you, Courtney—I—I mean, I made a mistake; it—it was North who gave me the pass."

"Did you give him a pass, North?"

"No," said North.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Billy Bunter. "I—I didn't know I was walking into a blessed prefects' meeting. Oh, dear!"

Wingate slipped off the table, and picked up a cane.

"You young rascal!" he said. "You've broken bounds, and told a pack of lies about it."

"I—I hope you don't think I would tell lies, Wingate. I'm a very truthful chap. I'm always getting into trouble in my own form because of my strict honesty."

"Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, really—"

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes, but—"

Wingate took the fat junior by the collar, slung him round, and made rapid play with the cane upon his fat person. Billy Bunter squirmed and shrieked.



"Oh! Ow! Help! Yaroo!"  
 "Perhaps you'll hold out your hand next time," grinned Wingate. "Now go!"  
 "Yow!"  
 "Do you want some more?"  
 Billy Bunter did not stop to answer that question. He bolted from the study, and fairly flew down the passage. Wingate laughed and closed the door.  
 At the end of the passage, Bunter stopped to rub his injured person and grunt.  
 "Beast!" he murmured. "They're all beasts! I'll jolly well jape Wingate to-morrow, as well as the Head and the Cliff House girls! I'll jolly well make 'em all fools on the First!"

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The First of April.

**T**HERE were other fellows at Greyfriars as well as Billy Bunter who were looking forward to the dawn of the First, with the intention of "japing" unsuspecting victims on that day. Many of the Remove, as they went to bed that night, were chuckling over secret plans. So were the Upper Fourth fellows—Temple, Dabney & Co. Even Blundell and Bland of the Fifth were suspected of having some scheme on hand. The Sixth, of course, were too serious and lordly to think of anything of the kind. To those grave and reverend seigniors the First of April was as other days.

The night was a windy March night, and the windows of the Remove dormitory rattled and shook in the gusts that swept over the Close.

Perhaps that was why Harry Wharton did not sleep soundly. He was generally a sound sleeper, but this night he woke up several times.

There was a faint, grey streak of dawn stealing in at the windows of the dormitory when Harry suddenly started out of slumber for the second or third time, and lay awake listening to the wind.

It seemed to have fallen a little during the night, though he could still hear the boughs of the old elm-trees groaning with its force.

But as he lay awake, the captain of the Lower Fourth became aware of a sound in the dormitory that was not caused by the wind in the Close or the creaking of the windows.

It was the sound of a stealthy footstep and a whispering voice.

"They're all asleep, Dab."

Wharton started a little, and smiled. It was the voice of Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth Form.

Harry raised his head imperceptibly, and looked through the dusk towards the door.

The dormitory door was open, and three figures stood there staring into the room, and in spite of the gloom he recognised Temple, Dabney, and Fry, of the Upper Fourth.

The three Fourth-Formers were fully dressed, and they were evidently excited.

For a moment Wharton was puzzled. He guessed that there was some "jape" on, but what it was he could not guess. He lay still and waited.

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"Sleeping like logs, in this wind," said Fry, with a sniff.

"Well, they'll be wakened up soon enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush!"

"Who are you telling to hush, Fry?" demanded Temple, somewhat warmly.

"Well, don't make a row."

"Who's making a row?"

"You are," said Fry. "If one of them woke up and heard you cackle, they'd know how much to believe when we yell 'Fire!'"

"Look here, Fry—"

"How much time are you going to waste jawing?" asked Fry, not very respectfully.

"You'll jolly well get a thick ear if—"

"Let's get to business."

"Oh, rather."

"Well, shut up, then, and not so much of your cheek," growled Temple. "Now, then, get ready, and you chaps yell when I do."

"We're ready."

"Oh, rather!"

The three juniors opened their mouths together, and Temple gave the signal. Suddenly a concerted yell rang through the Remove dormitory.

"Fire!"

That shout was loud enough to waken the seven sleepers; and it awakened the whole of the Lower Fourth from end to end of the dormitory.

The Removites started up in bed in alarm and surprise.

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**JUST OUT.**

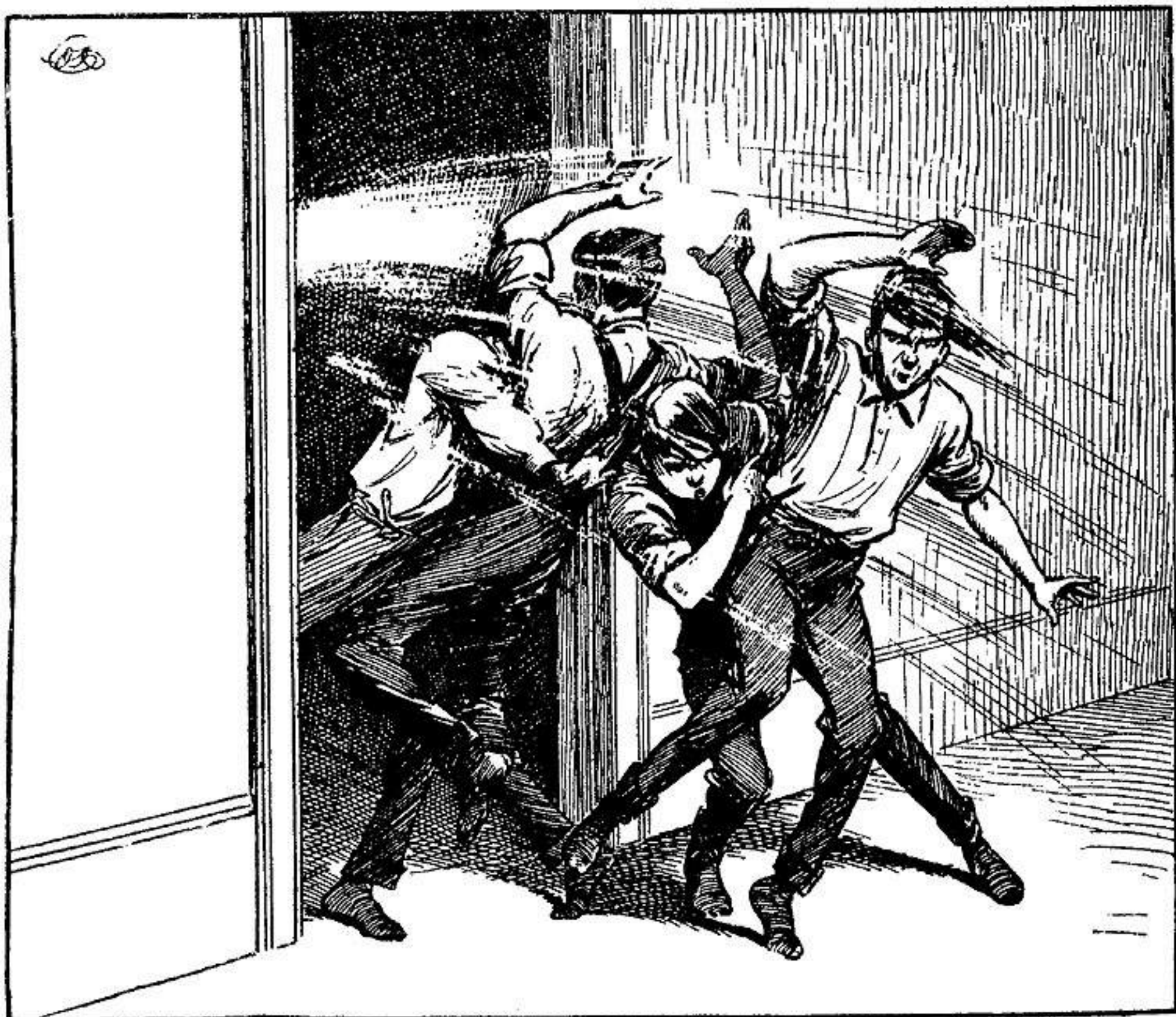
The New Complete  
Story-Book.

**THE "EMPIRE" LIBRARY.**

Read the Tale of Gordon Gay,  
The Schoolboy Actor.

"What's that?" exclaimed Hazeldene.  
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!"  
 "Fire, fire, fire!"  
 "Run for your lives!" yelled Temple excitedly.  
 "Hurry up! Fire! Fire!"  
 And the three Upper Fourth fellows dashed out of the dormitory and slammed the door loudly behind them.  
 The Removites poured out of bed in a twinkling, with excited and alarmed exclamations. Wharton was the first out. What he had heard before the alarm warned him that it was a First of April jape, and he was grinning; but the rest of the Remove were wildly excited.  
 "Up with you!" shouted Bulstrode. "Fire!"  
 "Help!"  
 "I say, you fellows—"  
 "Buck up, you chaps!"  
 "The buckupfulness is terrific."  
 "Fire!"  
 "Run for your lives!"  
 A crowd of undressed and half-dressed Removites streamed doorwards. Harry Wharton tried to make his voice heard in the din.  
 "Hold on!" he roared.  
 "Come on!"  
 "This way, Wharton!"  
 "Stop!"  
 "I'm jolly well not going to stop," said Skinner. "Can't you understand the house is on fire, you giddy ass?"  
 The Remove quarters had been burned to the ground once at Greyfriars, and most of the juniors had a vivid recollection of the fire. They did not want to experience a second one—with themselves inside the house.  
 "Stop!" yelled Wharton. "It's a jape!"  
 "What!"  
 "First of April, you asses!"  
 "Oh!"  
 Hazeldene had opened the door. There was no sign of alarm without, no smell of smoke or roar of flame. But in spite of that, but for Wharton's warning, the whole Remove would have gone pouring downstairs in nightshirts and pyjamas.  
 "What!" gasped Bob Cherry. "A jape!"  
 "Yes, ass! Stay where you are!"  
 The Removites stopped, looking very sheepish. They had forgotten for the moment that it was the First of April.  
 "Who—who gave the alarm?" stammered Bulstrode.  
 "Temple, Dabney & Co.!"  
 "Oh! The Upper Fourth cads!"  
 "Yes. Get into bed, you duffers—don't let them catch you!"  
 "I—I say, Wharton, are you sure it's not a fire?" said Billy Bunter. "I—I don't want to be burnt to death, you know."  
 "Rats!"  
 "Oh, really—"  
 But the other juniors were already returning to bed, with many wrathful exclamations, and Billy Bunter followed their example. Wharton signed to Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, to stay up.  
 "What's the little game?" asked Bob, shivering in his night-clothes. "It's jolly cold, and it won't be rising-bell for more than an hour yet."  
 "Temple & Co. will be coming back," said Wharton, taking the water-jug from his washstand. "Get your jug, and wait inside the door."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "The ha-ha-ha-fulness is terrific!" grinned the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. "It will be a joyful surprise-fulness for the esteemed Temple."  
 "Yes, rather!"  
 "I say, you fellows—"  
 "Shut up, Bunter."  
 The Famous Four took up their stand inside the door, water-jugs in hand. As the Remove had not rushed out, it was pretty certain that the Fourth-Formers would return to renew the alarm. And then—  
 The Remove sat up in bed in the grey dawn, and waited.  
 Footsteps were already heard in the passage, and there was a grasp on the handle of the door. It was thrown open, and Temple, Dabney, and Fry rushed in with an air of great excitement.  
 "Fire! Fire!"  
 "Come out!"  
 "Run for your lives!"  
 "O-o-o-o-och!"  
 The last exclamation was in a sort of chorus from the three of them, as the jugs of water swept out their contents.  
 Temple, Dabney, and Fry staggered and yelled with the cold water swooping and splashing all over them, and there was a roar of laughter from the Remove.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"





Temple and Co. staggered out of the dormitory with the cold water swooping and splashing all over them, followed by a roar of laughter from the Remove.

"Groo-oh!"  
"Ow! You ass—you duffer! I'm soaked! Ow!"  
"It's all right," said Harry Wharton calmly. "We're extinguishing the fire, you know. We thought we'd get the water ready."  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Ow! Yow!"  
"More jugs here, you chaps!"  
"Right-ho!"  
"Let 'em have it."

But the Upper Fourth fellows did not wait for any more jugs. Gasping and drenched, they rushed from the dormitory, followed by a roar of laughter from the Remove. It was the first of the April 1st japes, and it had ended extremely uncomfortably for the japers.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### A Little Joke on the Sixth.

WINGATE, of the Sixth, stopped and looked at the notice-board in the hall as the fellows came out of the dining-room after breakfast. There was a notice on the board that caused the captain of Greyfriars some little surprise.

"The Sixth will be taken for morning lessons by Mr. Capper, in the Upper Fourth class-room."

The notice was not signed, but it was in the somewhat peculiar handwriting of the Head—or a very clever imitation of it.

NEXT  
WEEK:

"FRIENDS OR FOES?"

peculiar handwriting of the Head—or a very clever imitation of it.

Wingate whistled.

"I wonder what that's for?"

"Blessed if I know," said Courtney. "Perhaps the Head's ill, and isn't going to take us this morning."

"He was all right yesterday."

"Well, there it is."

"Lucky I noticed it," said Wingate. "I haven't heard anything about it before."

That notice attracted a great deal of attention, especially from the juniors. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, stopped to read it.

"That's queer," said Blundell.

"Jolly queer," said Bland.

"Shouldn't wonder if it was a jape."

"A jape on the Sixth!" said Bland aghast. "Impossible! Besides, it's in the handwriting of the Head."

Blundell chuckled.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder! Remember what the day is."

"My hat!"

"Don't say anything, though."

"Rather not!" grinned Bland.

"Blessed if I can make that out," said Temple, looking at the notice-board a few minutes later. "Why, what is Capper going to do with the Sixth? He generally has his hands full with us."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton  
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



"There won't be room for them, either," said Scott.  
 "Blessed if we want the Sixth in our class-room," said Fry.

"Oh, rather!"  
 "Can't understand it," said Temple. "But I suppose we've got to put up with it. Hallo, there goes the bell for classes."

And the Upper Fourth streamed into their class-room. They exchanged a great deal of chipping and badinage with the Remove, who were going into the next room. Temple, Dabney & Co. took their places in the Upper Fourth room, filling up very nearly all the desks, and Mr. Capper came in and bade his pupils good-morning.

"Good-morning, sir!"  
 "Excuse me, sir," said Dabney, "hadn't you better wipe that smut off your nose, sir?"

"Dear me," said Mr. Capper, "I was not aware that there was a smut on my nose, Dabney." He took out his handkerchief, and rubbed his nose, which was quite innocent of any kind of stain. "Is it gone now, Dabney?"

"That hasn't made any difference, sir."  
 Mr. Capper rubbed harder.

The Upper Fourth could scarcely suppress their mirth. The coolness of Dabney in japing the Form-master almost took their breath away.

"Is it all right now, Dabney?"  
 "Just the same, sir."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Capper. He rushed to his desk and took out a small pocket mirror, and looked at his face in it. "I—I— Why, there is nothing on my nose, Dabney!"

He glared at Dabney. The unfortunate joker, who did not know till that moment that there was a looking-glass in the room, sat dumb.

Mr. Capper came away from his desk.  
 "Dabney!"

"Ye-e-es, sir."  
 "You stated that there was a smut on my nose."

"Oh, n-n-n-no, sir!"  
 "What! You distinctly said—"

"I—I only suggested that you should rub it off, sir: I—I didn't say there was one there, sir. That—that would have been an untruth."

"And what is the difference?"  
 "Well, you see, sir—"

"Dabney! Is it possible that you have been playing a joke upon me, your Form-master?" demanded Mr. Capper, in his most majestic tone.

"I—I— First of April, sir," pleaded Dabney.  
 "Oh, you ass!" murmured Fry.

Mr. Capper stood petrified for a moment. Then he took a cane from his desk, and asked Dabney politely to step out before the class. The unhappy joker obeyed reluctantly.

"I observe that you are humorous this morning, Dabney," said Mr. Capper. "Humour is somewhat out of place in a class-room, especially when coupled with impertinence to your Form-master. Kindly hold out your hand."

And Dabney received two cuts on either hand, and went back to his seat fervently wishing that he had not been so extremely funny that morning.

Dabney had just sat down, when the class-room door opened, and Wingate came in. Mr. Capper glanced towards him.

"Wingate! Do you want anything?"  
 Then he stared in astonishment. Wingate came in, and the Sixth marched in after him, in solemn array. Mr. Capper could scarcely believe his eyes.

"Wingate! What does this mean?"  
 "We've come, sir."

"You—you have come?"  
 "Yes, sir."

"I—I see that you have come," gasped Mr. Capper.  
 "But—but what I should like to know is, what have you come for?"

Wingate stared in his turn.  
 "Don't you know, sir?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Capper, with some asperity.  
 "I do not understand this at all, Wingate. Why are you here?"

"Hasn't the Head told you, sir?"  
 "The Head!"

"Yes," said Wingate, looking bewildered. "There's a notice on the board in the Head's writing, sir, saying that you're taking us in this room this morning."

"I—I have heard nothing of it," said Mr. Capper dazedly.  
 "Surely, if such was Dr. Locke's intention, he would have acquainted me with it. There is no accommodation for you here, and no preparation has been made—and no one else is taking my Form. Surely there must be some mistake."

"The notice is there, sir."  
 "Dear me! This is most extraordinary!"

"I thought the Head might be ill, sir."  
 THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 112.

"I thought the Head might be ill, sir."

"I thought the Head might be ill, sir."

"I thought the Head might be ill, sir."

"I thought the Head might be ill, sir."

"I thought the Head might be ill, sir."

"Dear me! I—I must see the Head! Kindly remain here, Wingate, till I have seen Dr. Locke!" exclaimed Mr. Capper, hastily leaving the room.

The Fourth Form-master hurried away to the Head's study, but he found it vacant. The Head usually took the Sixth Form in the morning, and Mr. Capper hastened off to the Sixth Form-room.

There he found Dr. Locke sitting at his desk, and deep in a volume of *Æschylus*. Dr. Locke was editing a new edition of the plays of that great Greek tragedian, and he gave the Sixth, incidentally, many an overdose of *Æschylus*. The seniors, who did not take the same interest in the subject that the Head did, often expressed to one another—in private, of course—the fact that they had had enough of the *Furies*, and that they wished the *Seven* had been boiled in oil before they went up against *Thebes*.

Dr. Locke, deep in his favourite volume, had not even noticed the fact that the Sixth Form were already ten minutes late, and had not yet put in an appearance. He glanced up as the master of the Upper Fourth rustled excitedly in.

"Dear me!" said the Head, glancing at the class-room clock. "Where are the boys? They are late, Mr. Capper!"

"You—you were expecting them, sir?"  
 The Head stared at him.

"What a very curious question, Mr. Capper! I was naturally expecting them, as I am taking the Sixth, as usual, this morning."

"Extraordinary!"  
 "I fail to see anything extraordinary in that circumstance, Mr. Capper," said Dr. Locke, a little tartly. "May I ask if you know why the Sixth have not come?"

"They are in the Upper Fourth class-room, sir."  
 "What!"

"Wingate tells me that there is a notice on the board, in your hand, sir, to the effect that I am taking the Sixth this morning in the Upper Fourth-room," said Mr. Capper.

"Impossible!"  
 The two masters stared at one another. Then a flush of colour came into the doctor's cheeks.

"I did not put up the notice, at all events, Mr. Capper. It must be some impertinent joke."

A light dawned upon Mr. Capper. He uttered an exclamation.

"Ah! The First of April!"  
 "Eh?"

"It is a First of April joke, sir."  
 The doctor's brows contracted.

"Bless my soul! I suppose you are right. I shall make a very strict inquiry into this, and the joker shall learn that his head-master is not a proper subject for his absurd tricks! Pray send the Sixth here, Mr. Capper!"

And Mr. Capper hurried back to his own class-room to explain to Wingate. The Upper Fourth heard the explanation, and they could not repress a chuckle. Not so with Wingate and the rest of the seniors. That anybody should dare to play such a joke upon them was almost inconceivable to the grandees of the Sixth.

"By Jove," said Wingate, "I'll find out that joker after lessons, and—"

He did not finish the sentence. But his look boded no good to the humorous individual when the captain of Greyfriars discovered him.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Not a Success.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, wore a grim look as the Lower Fourth came in. The Remove-master was there first, and he replied very curtly to the cheery good-morning which Bob Cherry bestowed upon him. Something had evidently happened to disturb the equanimity of the Form-master.

The Remove took their places, in a somewhat uneasy mood. When Mr. Quelch was on the warpath the Remove generally had to look out for squalls. The juniors wondered what had been done, and who had done it.

"Before we commence work this morning," said Mr. Quelch, in a stern voice, "I wish to deal with a matter which Dr. Locke has left in my hands, as it concerns a member of this Form."

The Remove waited in anxious suspense while the Form-master groped in his pocket, and took out a letter.

"This letter was delivered by post to Dr. Locke this morning," he went on. "It was sent here unstamped, and the sum of twopence was paid to the postman. The letter is so utterly absurd that it is difficult to imagine that the writer hoped to impose upon Dr. Locke by it, and the only explanation is that he must be a remarkably stupid boy. Listen!"

Mr. Quelch read out the letter, the Lower Fourth listening with all their ears.



"Dear Dr. Locke,—Will you kindly send a conveyance for six new boys who are to arrive at Friardale for Greyfriars to-morrow morning, April 1st. They will arrive by the nine o'clock train.—Yours sincerely,

"J. JOHNSON."

The class gasped.

"Of course, the writer of this letter supposed that the doctor would be deceived, and that a conveyance would be sent," said Mr. Quelch, "the whole thing being, of course, a hoax. But only an extraordinarily stupid boy could possibly have imagined that Dr. Locke would take this childish letter seriously."

Billy Bunter shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"The letter was written by a boy in this Form," said Mr. Quelch. "I call upon that boy to step out."

No one stirred.

"The writing is disguised, or, rather, an attempt has been made to disguise it," said Mr. Quelch. "The identity of the writer is, however, perfectly obvious. I know the writing very well—the largest number of impositions given for carelessness and slovenliness in this class are written in this hand!"

All eyes turned involuntarily on Bunter.

"Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch.

The fat junior started.

"Did you speak to me, sir?"

"Yes. Step out!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Step out here at once!"

Billy Bunter reluctantly left his place.

"Did you write this letter, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, fixing a severe glance upon the fat junior, as Bunter came wriggling out before him.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"What! You did not?"

"Certainly not, sir! I wouldn't do such a thing! I respect the Head much too highly, sir! I hope you don't think that I would be untruthful, sir. I am very unpopular in my study because I am so truthful and candid!"

"Be careful what you say, Bunter! This letter is in your handwriting!"

"Oh, no, sir! I disguised it—I mean, I never wrote it, sir! I've never seen the letter before, sir, and haven't the faintest idea what's in it! Besides, I wouldn't write such a letter!"

"You disguised your handwriting?"

"Yes, sir—that is to say, no, sir!"

"You stated just now that you disguised your handwriting!"

"That—that was only a figure of speech, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked fixedly at the unhappy Bunter. Billy Bunter was the most inveterate and the most clumsy of dealers in falsehood. He always thought that a falsehood was the easiest way out of a difficulty, and he very seldom contrived to get his falsehoods believed.

"Bunter!"

"Ye-es, sir?"

"You wrote this letter! If you tell me another untruth, I will cane you upon the spot!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Did you write this letter?"

"Well, sir—"

"Why did you write it?"

"It was a First of April joke, sir—I—I mean, I didn't write it!"

"You have dared to play a First of April joke upon your head-master!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Oh, no, sir! I wouldn't do such a thing for worlds, sir! I respect the Head much too highly, sir!"

"You are the most foolish and untruthful boy I have ever come across," said Mr. Quelch. "I cannot express the contempt I feel for you, Bunter, when I hear you lying in this shameless way!"

"Oh, really, sir! I hope you don't think I am at all untruthful!"

"Dear me! The boy's state of intellect must be extraordinary! Bunter, I shall cane you, as a warning not to play impertinent jests upon your masters, and as a punishment for prevaricating in this barefaced manner!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Hold out your hand!"

Billy Bunter obeyed in a gingerly fashion.

He was caned more soundly than Mr. Quelch had ever caned him before, and he was simply doubled up with pain.

"Ow!" he bellowed, tucking his hands under his armpits when the infliction was over. "Ow! Yow! Yaroo!"

"Bunter!"

"Yaroo!"

"Go back to your place!"

"Yow! Yaroo!"

"If you make that ridiculous noise again, Bunter, I shall repeat your caning!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

The fat junior subsided into silence, and went slowly back to his place. There he sat, rubbing his hands and blinking.

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EVERY  
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"  
LIBRARY.

ONE  
PENNY.

"You ass!" whispered Nugent. "We warned you not to play such a silly trick! You ought to have known that you would be bowled out!"

"Yow!"

Mr. Quelch threw the offending letter into the fire, and then lessons began. Billy Bunter sat disconsolate. Mr. Quelch was very easy with him at first, and allowed the Owl of the Remove time to get over his punishment.

But Bunter was disconsolate. His absurd attempt to jape the Head had been foredoomed to failure, and the whole Form grinned over the absurdity of it. Bunter sat in gloom, and did not cheer up till the class left the Form-room at eleven o'clock for the morning recess. Then some words he caught from Skinner in the passage brought sunshine through the clouds upon his fat face.

"I left them on my table, Stott; they'll be safe there, unless Bunter happens to smell them out!"

Bunter paused. Skinner apparently did not see the fat junior close at hand, blinking at him and drinking in his words.

"How many of them?" asked Stott carelessly.

"Twelve twopenny ones! Come for a sprint round the Close, and then we'll go in and have a feed!"

"Are they jam or marmalade?"

"Jam—and fresh made."

"Good!"

Skinner and Stott strolled out into the Close. Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles.

He waited till Skinner and Stott were out of sight, and then rushed for the staircase. He was up in the Remove passage as fast as his little fat legs could carry him. He fairly dashed into Skinner's study.

He blinked at the study table, expecting to find a bag of luscious jam tarts there. There was no bag of tarts, but a sheet of notepaper with the simple inscription:

"APRIL FIRST!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the notice, and grunted. He realised that he had been done by the humorous Skinner, and he went out of the study and slammed the door with a terrific slam.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### A Registered Letter for Bunter.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. went out into the Close in the bright April sunshine, glad enough of the brief respite from morning classes. The sun was blazing, and the Close was very green and fresh. The chums of the Remove were playing leap-frog when Billy Bunter came out of the house, with a very discontented brow. Skinner and Stott, who were standing near the door, greeted him with a roar of laughter.

"Did you find the tarts?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at them angrily.

"Oh, really, you beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, Skinner, I'm awfully hungry. I say, can you lend me a half-crown off my postal-order?"

"Off your what?" asked Skinner, with a grin.

"My postal-order."

"Where is it?"

"It hasn't come yet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right, you know," said Bunter confidently. "It will come by the second post. You know, registered letters generally come by the second post."

"Yours don't—or by any other post," said Stott.

"Here comes the postman," said Snoop. "Let's see if he's got a letter for Bunter."

Billy Bunter blinked round eagerly. The Friardale postman was coming from the direction of the gates. Billy Bunter waited for him to come up.

"My hat!" said Skinner. "He really looks as if he thought that there might be a registered letter for him, you know."

"I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anything for me?" said Billy Bunter, as the postman came up. "I'm expecting a registered letter."

"Yes, Master Bunter."

Bunter started. He always hoped; but he was as surprised as anyone to find that his hope was not without foundation.

"There is a registered letter for me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Hand it over."



The postman handed it over. It was a real registered letter right enough. Skinner and Stott and Snoop looked at one another in surprise.

Had the celebrated postal-order come at last?

Bunter signed for the letter, and the postman went on, and the fat junior blinked at the registered envelope in great satisfaction.

"What do you fellows say now?" he exclaimed.

"Looks like business," said Snoop, his manner growing very respectful and almost affectionate. "Of course, I was only joking just now, Billy."

"Same here," said Stott, in a very frank way. "But Bunter doesn't mind a joke. Come over to the tuckshop, Bunt. Mrs. Mimble will change it for you."

Billy Bunter's face assumed a patronising smile, and he was already swelling with importance. The three juniors were paying court to him on the strength of the registered letter. But Bunter did not care for that; it made him feel important to have court paid to him at all.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Come along."

"Mrs. Mimble has some new jam-tarts in," said Snoop. "I shouldn't mind trying them; I'm hungry. Bunter is such a generous chap."

"That's what I've always said," said Skinner solemnly. "I've often wanted Bunter to change into my study, because he's such a liberal and generous chap."

"I've thought of the same thing," remarked Stott. "I don't know how it is that we all like Bunter so much. Some fellows are born to be popular."

Billy Bunter purred. He led the way towards the tuckshop, with his three courtiers accompanying him, with an air of deference that was very gratifying to the fat junior. He was too shortsighted to see them winking at one another in addition.

He tried to open the envelope with his fat thumb, but the envelope was very tough. They entered the tuckshop, and Bunter picked up the ham-knife and slit the envelope.

The other juniors looked on eagerly. Mrs. Mimble, behind the counter, assumed her pleasantest smile at the sight of a registered letter.

"My postal-order's come, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter, as he opened the envelope. "I suppose you will cash it for me?"

"Certainly, Master Bunter. With pleasure!"

Bunter drew the letter out of the envelope. He spread it out on the counter, and blinked at it.

It was a single sheet of paper, folded in half. He unfolded it; there was no sign of a postal-order.

On the paper, in large letters, were scrawled the words:

"APRIL FIRST!"

"M-m-m-my only aunt!" gasped Billy Bunter.

There was a roar from Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a jape!"

"A j-j-j-jape!"

"Ha, ha! Somebody's sent that registered letter to take a rise out of you, Bunt. Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the letter. Mrs. Mimble sniffed, and her hospitable smile quite faded away.

"Beasts!" gasped Bunter. "Rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you send this rotten letter, Skinner?"

"Ha, ha! No. Ha, ha!"

Skinner, Stott, and Snoop went laughing out of the tuckshop. They were disappointed about the feed, but the joke up against Bunter was a compensation. Billy Bunter, who had fully counted upon unlimited tarts, blinked dubiously at Mrs. Mimble.

"I—I say, Mrs. Mimble, this isn't really a jape—they've forgotten to put the postal order in, that's all. I suppose you're willing to let me have a few things, to be settled for when it really comes."

Mrs. Mimble did not reply in words. She sniffed, or rather snorted, and retired into her little parlour. Billy Bunter sighed, and drifted out into the Close.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Mr. Prout Does not Know what to Make of It.

"WELL, what a bit of luck!"

It was Blundell of the Fifth who exclaimed. The brief recess of the morning was over, and the Greyfriars boys were returning to the class-rooms. The Fifth had arrived at their room, and upon the door they found a written notice staring them in the face:

"Owing to the indisposition of Mr. Prout, the Fifth are excused from further attendance this morning."

"Jolly good!" said Bland. "I noticed Prouty had a cold this morning."

"Yes, he was doing a lot of sniffing."

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"Well, this is luck," said Carter. "Let's get out into the Close; it's a ripping morning, and we can get some footer."

"Hurrah!"

And the Fifth-Formers, as the good news spread, retired from the passage, and poured out into the Close once more.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form, was generally at his post earlier than his pupils. The Fifth had expected to find him in the Form-room. But after reading that notice on the door, they did not trouble to open it.

Blundell and Bland led the way to the Middle School footer ground. They were glad to get some extra footer, especially as the season was almost at its finish, and King Cricket's reign was about to commence.

Some of the Fifth strolled about, but most of them went on the footer ground to punt a ball about, and they were soon enjoying themselves.

The thought that they had time off while the rest of Greyfriars slogged at lessons in the class-rooms was very gratifying. They had the whole place to themselves now.

Meantime, while the Fifth were disporting themselves in unusual liberty, Mr. Prout, the Form-master, was sitting in the Form-room, waiting for them to appear.

He rose from his desk, and glanced at the clock, and an expression of amazement came over his face as he saw that his class was five minutes late.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "This is very unusual."

He went to the door and looked out into the passage. It did not occur to him to look at the outside of the door, or the notice there would have enlightened him. As to the date being the First of April, Mr. Prout had no leisure to think of such frivolous matters. It never even occurred to him that there was a jape in progress.

The passage was deserted.

From the Upper Fourth-room came a hum of voices, but that was all. Mr. Prout looked decidedly mystified.

Where were the Fifth?

The Fifth Form-master went down the passage, opened the Upper Fourth door, and looked in. Mr. Capper glanced round at him; so did the Fourth-Formers.

"Excuse me, Mr. Capper," said the Fifth Form-master. "Have you seen anything of my boys?"

"Eh? What?"

"My class have not come in."

"How curious!" said Mr. Capper.

"Yes, indeed. Have you seen them?"

"Not at all."

"It is very strange."

Mr. Prout closed the door, and then gave the Remove a look-in. Mr. Quelch met his glance inquiringly.

"Have you seen my boys, Mr. Quelch?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Quelch greatly surprised. "Are they not in their Form-room?"

"They have not come in."

"Dear me!"

"It is very curious."

Mr. Prout went to the big door, and glanced out into the Close. On the distant footer ground a number of active figures were running to and fro, and a sound of joyous shouting was borne towards his ears.

Mr. Prout gazed, and gazed again, in blank amazement.

The bell had rung for classes ten minutes ago, and the clock had struck the hour; the Fifth Form could not fail to be aware that it was high time they were in the class-room. Yet there they were, playing football.

It was astounding.

Pink with indignation, Mr. Prout hurried away towards the footer ground. The wind caught his gown, and it fluttered out behind him as he plunged on.

Carter was the first to see him coming.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "Here comes Prout!"

"Prout!"

"Look!"

"But he's ill!" exclaimed Bland.

"Well, he's coming."

"He's got well, I suppose, and he wants us to come in to classes," said Blundell, with a disappointed look. "I must say, it's inconsiderate of a Form-master to get well suddenly in this way."

"Yes, rather!"

"He might as well not have been ill at all," grumbled Bland.

"Look here, don't see him," said Blundell abruptly. "He ought to make up his mind whether he's going to be ill or well. Keep on with the game."

"But—"

"Oh, play up!"

"On the ball!"

And the Fifth-Formers were playing away busily when the indignant Form-master arrived at the ropes. Mr. Prout stopped, gasping for breath, and waved his hand at the Fifth-Formers.





"Don't come with us any farther. We don't like your company!" said Marjorie Hazeldene, coldly. Billy Bunter blinked after the three girls in perplexity. "I wonder what that means," he murmured.

"Boys!"

"Don't hear him!" muttered Blundell.

"Rather not!"

"On the ball!" roared the Fifth-Formers lustily. "Play up! Pass, there! On the ball!"

"Boys!"

"Hurrah!"

"Boys!"

"Bravo! On the ball! Kick, you duffer!"

Mr. Prout gasped. The Fifth-Formers apparently did not hear him, intent on their game as they were. He gathered up his gown and stepped over the ropes, and came hastily upon the footer field.

"Boys! I call upon you—"

"On the ball!"

Mr. Prout rushed at the surging crowd of footballers. The ball flew from Blundell's foot, and then there was a wild yell from Mr. Prout.

The footer plumped upon his chin, and he flew backwards as if a cannon-ball had caught him.

"Oh!"

"My hat!" gasped Bland. "You've done it now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout lay flat upon his back, staring up at the blue April sky. He was dimly wondering whether an earthquake

had occurred, or whether, perhaps, the tail of Halley's comet had struck the earth, after all.

"I—I—I'm awfully sorry, sir!" stammered Blundell.

"We didn't know you were coming to play footer, sir."

"My aunt!" murmured Bland. "Draw it mild, you ass!"

"I think a little practice would do your cold good, sir," went on the audacious Blundell. "Will you play forward or back, sir?"

"Blundell!" Mr. Prout staggered to his feet. "I have received a violent shock," he said. "I am willing to believe that it was by accident. But why are you boys not in your class-room?"

The Fifth-Formers stared at him.

"Because you're ill, sir."

"Ill! What do you mean? I am not ill."

"But you said so, sir."

"Blundell!"

"You did, sir. You said we were excused from morning lessons, sir," said Blundell, as bewildered now as Mr. Prout.

"Yes, sir, you did, sir," chorused the Fifth.

"I—I—either you are dreaming or I am!" gasped the astounded Forin-master. "When did I say so, Blundell?"

"You said so in the notice, sir."

"The notice! What notice?"

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"On the Form-room door, sir."

"I did not put any notice on the Form-room door."

"Oh, sir!"

"Is it possible, Blundell, that you are venturing to play a joke on your Form-master?" asked Mr. Prout majestically.

"Oh, sir! No, sir!"

"Follow me!" said Mr. Prout.

The Fifth-Formers, with looks of dismay, marched after the Fifth Form-master as he walked back to the schoolhouse. Mr. Prout stopped at the Fifth Form door and saw the notice. He read it through, and frowned heavily.

"Did you imagine that I wrote this, Blundell?"

"Didn't you, sir?"

"Certainly not!"

"We—we thought you did, sir."

"It is an impertinent joke," said Mr. Prout. "I shall certainly do my best to discover the author of it. Meanwhile, we will resume lessons."

And the Fifth Form went in. Mr. Prout took down the notice, and at intervals in the lessons he examined it carefully, trying to obtain a clue to the author.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Bob Cherry is Very Clever.

**M**R. QUELCH was busy with the Remove when Mr. Prout came in once more. The Remove-master looked round inquiringly. It seemed to him that the Fifth Form-master was very restless that morning.

"You have not found your boys yet, Mr. Prout?"

"Oh, yes!" said Mr. Prout. "They are in the classroom now, at work. I came here to bring this paper to your attention, Mr. Quelch."

And he laid the famous notice on Mr. Quelch's desk. The Lower Fourth-master read it through, and looked puzzled.

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"It was pinned on my door," explained Mr. Prout. "It led my boys to imagine that there were no more lessons this morning; hence their absence."

"Oh, I see!"

"It was a joke—a First of April joke, sir," said Mr. Prout, looking very pink. "I have reason to suppose that it was played by a member of your Form, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have examined the handwriting. Look at it yourself."

Mr. Quelch scanned the notice once more, and then raised his head.

"Wun Lung!" he said quietly.

The Chinese junior did not seem to hear.

"Wun Lung!" said Mr. Quelch, more loudly.

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"Step out here, please."

"Me steppee, sir."

The little Celestial, with a bland and innocent expression upon his face, stepped out before the class. Mr. Quelch held up the paper.

"You wrote this, Wun Lung?"

"No savvy, Massa Quelch."

"This paper is written with some imitation of Mr. Prout's hand, but there are traces in it which are unmistakable," said Mr. Quelch. "Your writing is not exactly like that of the other juniors, Wun Lung."

"No savvy."

"It is as clear to me that you wrote this paper as that the letter to the Head this morning was written by Banter."

"No savvy, sir."

"Did you perpetrate this joke?" asked the Remove-master impatiently. "Answer me truthfully, Wun Lung."

Wun Lung shook his head.

"No savvy, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. Wun Lung did not understand the plainest English unless he chose to do so. And his smile was so childlike and bland that it required a very doubting mind to suspect him of departing from the truth.

"Now, Wun Lung, answer me!"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you write this absurd notice?"

"No savvy."

"You understand me well enough, Wun Lung."

"No savvy, sir."

"I know perfectly well that you wrote this"

"No savvy."

"My impression is that Wun Lung wrote it," said Mr. Prout. "I should not, however, like anyone to be punished without proof. Now, Wun Lung, be frank for once. Did you or did you not write this notice?"

"No savvy, sir."

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The two masters looked at one another. If Wun Lung did not choose to savvy, nothing on earth could make him savvy, that was certain. Mr. Quelch picked up a cane from his desk. The little Chinese eyed him warily.

"Now, Wun Lung," said Mr. Quelch, "I am certain that you wrote this notice. The proof of the handwriting is unmistakable. But I think it is very probable that you wrote it at the dictation of another boy. Is this the case?"

"No savvy," faltered Wun Lung.

"Yes or no, sir!"

"No savvy."

"Very well. Hold out your hand."

Bob Cherry rose up in his place at once.

"If you please, sir—"

Mr. Quelch looked at him.

"Can you throw any light on this matter, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir, if you'll allow me."

"Go on, by all means."

"Wun Lung did write it at the dictation of another chap, sir," said Bob Cherry. "It was really the other chap's idea, but his fist—ahem! I mean his writing—was so well known, that he thought he'd better get Wun Lung to scribble it out."

"So I suspected, Cherry."

"I—I don't want to tell tales, sir," said Bob Cherry, looking very embarrassed. "Perhaps—perhaps, sir, you'd be kind enough to let the chap off, if I tell you his name."

Mr. Quelch hesitated for a moment.

"You may go back to your place, Wun Lung."

"Tankee, tankee, sir!"

And Wun Lung glided away.

"Very well, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch, in his severest tone. "I will not punish the boy you mention, if you tell me his name. I will only express my profound contempt for him—for this boy, who could sit silent and allow that foreign lad to be punished in his place, as would certainly have happened if you had not spoken, Cherry."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"The boy must be very cowardly and very mean," said Mr. Quelch. "I trust that Wun Lung will be too wise to allow himself to come under that boy's influence again."

Bob Cherry's face was crimson.

"If you please, sir—"

"And now, Cherry, who was the boy?"

"It—it was I, sir."

Mr. Quelch stood quite still for a moment, looking dazed, his eyes fixed on Bob Cherry. Mr. Prout smiled slightly.

From the whole Remove came an irresistible giggle. The juniors had wondered at Bob's undertaking to give the name of Wun Lung's confederate, for Bob was anything but a sneak. But his statement came like a bombshell.

"You!" gasped Mr. Quelch at last.

"Yes, sir," said Bob meekly.

"Cherry! I—I fail to quite understand you. Do you mean to say that it was at your dictation that Wun Lung wrote this absurd paper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Stand out here, Cherry!"

"You—you said, sir—"

"Come here at once!"

Bob Cherry obeyed. Mr. Quelch grasped his cane in a business-like way. His look was very grim and business-like too.

"I dare say you regard this matter as extremely comic, Cherry," he remarked. "I see by your Form-fellows' looks that they regard it in that light. I fail to see the comic side myself, however, and I trust that you will soon view the matter seriously. Hold out your hand."

"But, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bob Cherry obeyed in dismay. The cane came down with a mighty swipe, and the junior fairly jumped.

"Ow!"

"The other hand, Cherry!"

"Ow!" gasped Bob. "You—you said, sir—"

"The other hand—at once!"

Bob held out the other hand, and received a second swipe.

"Now the other!"

"Oh! Ow! You—you said that I shouldn't be licked, sir!" gasped Bob Cherry indignantly. "I—I think you ought to keep your word, sir!"

Mr. Quelch started.

"What did you say, Cherry?"

"Ow! You—you promised not to punish the chap if I told you his name!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Ow! Ow! Then I told you, and—Ow!"

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"Dear me! I quite forgot! I must admit that I allowed the circumstance to entirely slip my memory, Cherry. I must remark, however, that your confession was in the nature of a trick."



"Ow!"

"However, as I gave you my word that you should not be punished, I will keep it," said Mr. Quelch magnanimously. "You should have reminded me earlier."

"Ow! You didn't give me time."

"It is certainly unfortunate," said Mr. Quelch. "However, you may consider that the whole matter is wiped out, and you may look upon yourself as not caned. Go to your place."

And Bob Cherry grunted and went. He might look upon himself as not having been caned, no doubt, but that did not remove the smart from his palms. Mr. Prout smiled, and left the room; and the morning's work proceeded—interrupted now and then by a painful gasp from Bob Cherry.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Blundell is a Little Hasty.

**M**ORNING lessons were over at last, and the Remove poured out. Bob Cherry and Billy Bunter were both rubbing their hands painfully as they came out. Bob was still feeling the smart of the cane. Billy Bunter was quite all right in that respect; but he wanted to gain sympathy. He drew the longest of long faces, and groaned audibly in Harry Wharton's ear. Harry stopped and looked at him.

"What's the matter with you, Bunter?" he asked.

"I'm in fearful pain," groaned Bunter. "Quelch laid it on so hard, you know."

"That was hours ago," said Harry. "You're all right now."

Bunter blinked at him.

"I suppose I ought to know whether I'm all right or not?" he said peevishly. "I tell you I'm not all right. I'm suffering fearful pain, not to say agony. It's thrown me into a very low state. You know I'm a delicate chap, anyway, and can only keep my strength up by taking constant nourishment. If you could lend me a couple of bob—I say, Wharton, don't walk away while I'm speaking."

But Harry Wharton had walked away.

"Cherry! Nugent! I say, you fellows——"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't bother!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the retreating forms of the juniors, and grunted. He left off rubbing his fat hands; there was evidently no sympathy to be had. A sturdy junior passed him in the passage, and Billy Bunter grabbed at his sleeve.

"I say, Linley——"

"Well?" said Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, looking down at him cheerfully. "What do you want, Bunter?"

"I—I'm expecting a postal-order," said Bunter. "If——"

Linley shook his head.

"Rats!" he said tersely.

"Oh, really, Linley——"

But Linley was gone, too. Billy Bunter drifted disconsolately out into the Close. He glanced at the gates, and a faint grin came over his fat face.

"Wharton! I say, Wharton——"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Harry. "Let's go down to the footer, Frank. We sha'n't have much more of it. Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Very well. If the girls come——"

Harry stared at him.

"Eh? What are you talking about?"

"I—I was only saying that the girls might come," stammered Bunter.

"Do you mean the Cliff House girls?"

"Of course."

"They're not coming here to-day," said Harry, in wonder. "What are you talking about? Are you off your rocker?"

"Well, I—I thought they might come, you know," said Bunter, stammering. "You never know, do you? What I was thinking, is, that if they thought they were invited to a feed, and came over, it would be a disappointment to find there wasn't anything, you know. My idea is that we ought to get up a decent feed of some sort."

Harry stared at him blankly.

"Well, of all the dodges you've ever thought of for getting a feed, Billy, I think this is about the rottenest," he said. "There's not the faintest reason to suppose that the Cliff House girls will come over."

"Well, you see——"

"They can't come over," said Nugent. "They'd have to miss dinner at Cliff House if they came over here to feed, and they'd have to ask special permission of Miss Primrose."

"Well, they may have done that, you know."

"Why should they?"

"Well, you see——"

"Oh, you're soft," said Tom Brown. "It's a dodge to

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get a feed, of course. Run away and play. You fellows coming to the footer."

"Yes, rather! Buzz off, Bunter."

"I—I say, you fellows, I think it's quite likely they'll come, you know," exclaimed Bunter, trotting after the juniors. "I've reason to think so. You just see if I'm not right. If you like, I'll make all the arrangements for the feed. I'll get in the stuff——"

"And eat it?"

"Oh, really, Brown——"

"Buzz off!"

"You've only got to place the money in my hands, and——"

"And never see it again," grinned Nugent. "Do get off! You're too numerous. There's too much of you. Slide out!"

"But, really——"

Nugent exchanged a glance with Tom Brown, and they seized the fat junior and sat him down upon the ground. Then they walked on, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after them. He did not attempt to follow them any further, however.

Harry Wharton & Co. were soon busy on the footer field. It was a fine April day, warm, but not too warm for footer. The juniors enjoyed the game exceedingly, and they soon forgot all about Billy Bunter and his curious idea that the Cliff House girls might be coming over to lunch.

Temple, Dabney & Co. came down to watch the game. They were grinning, as if they had some comic idea in their minds. Temple turned towards Blundell and Bland, who were strolling by, and called to them.

"Blundell! I say, Blundell!"

The captain of the Fifth stopped and looked at him. It did not exactly comport with his dignity to be hailed like this in the Close by a junior, and he gave the Fourth-Former a very majestic glance.

"Did you call me, Temple?"

"Yes, I did."

"Then it's like your beastly cheek!" said Blundell. "What do you mean by yelling at me as if I were a Fourth-Form fag, you young sweep?"

"Oh, all right!" said Temple. "If you don't mind the fags playing with your new footer, I'm sure I don't care."

Blundell jumped. A fellow who had expended fifteen-and-six on a football might be excused for feeling a little excitement on hearing that it was being used by fags in a practice game. He came over towards the Fourth-Formers quickly.

"What's that, Temple? What are you talking about?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Temple loftily. "I don't see that it's my business, anyway. You can argue it out with the Remove."

Blundell stared at the Removites, who were pursuing the ball with great energy. It was of course impossible to see much of the ball.

"Do you mean to say they've got my ball?" demanded Blundell furiously.

Temple shrugged his shoulders.

"It's not my business," he said. "Don't ask me."

Blundell jumped on to the footer ground, and ran towards the players.

"Stop that!" he roared. "Hand over that ball."

Some of the juniors stared at him.

"Mad!" said Nugent cheerfully. "Don't take any notice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hand over that ball!" yelled Blundell. "I'll—I'll skin you, you cheeky young rascals! Stop kicking that ball about!"

He rushed right into the mob of players. Wharton stared at him for a second, and then made a sign to his followers, which they understood at once.

The Removites made a charge, and piled over the big Fifth-Former like so many cats. Blundell gasped, and went down with a heavy bump, with innumerable juniors swarming all over him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Temple. "First of April!"

And Temple, Dabney & Co. walked off, not wishing to interview Blundell again when he escaped from the Removites.

Blundell struggled and gasped under the sprawling mass of juniors.

"Lemme gerrup!" he mumbled. "I'm squ-squ-squashed! Yow! Lemme gerrup! I'll brain you! Yaroooh! Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerroff!"

"Now then," said Bob Cherry, sitting on Blundell's chest, "just explain yourself, you boulder! What do you mean by poking yourself in here and interrupting your betters?"

"You've got my footer."

"Eh?"

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"That's my footer!" gasped Blundell. "I—I— Lemme gerrup!"

"Your footer!" said Nugent, picking it up and thrusting it close to Blundell's face. "Look at it! Have a good look!"

"Grrrorororoooh!"

"Oh, have a good look!"

Nugent was fairly rubbing the footer in Blundell's face, and as it was smothered with mud, it wasn't nice for Blundell. He gasped and choked.

"Grooh! Yow! Grooh!"

"Is it your footer?"

"Yow! No! Yah!"

"Ha, ha! He's an April fool!" exclaimed Linley. "Temple was pulling his leg! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! Kick him out!"

Blundell staggered to his feet as the juniors released him. He realised that Temple had been making a fool of him. He staggered off the footer ground, and looked round for Temple. But the Fourth-Former had wisely disappeared, and Blundell sought him in vain.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Unexpected Visitors.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"On the ball!"

"Hold on!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look!"

Bob Cherry had suddenly stopped himself in a run up the field, and Wharton had bumped into him with considerable force. But Bob did not seem to mind. He was staring away blankly towards the gates of Greyfriars.

Harry followed his glance, and then he echoed Bob's exclamation of astonishment.

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "What is the causefulness of this?"

The juniors had reason to be astonished.

In at the gates of Greyfriars came three well-known figures. They were Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Wilhelmina Limburger, from Cliff House.

In view of Bunter's mysterious words, the appearance of the Cliff House girls was certainly surprising. It was really as if Bunter were entitled to a place among the prophets.

The juniors stopped footer at once. They ran off the field, and towards the new arrivals, to meet them, but they were feeling puzzled.

"I don't quite make it out," Hazeldene remarked. "Marjorie saw me yesterday, and she never said anything about coming over."

And Hazeldene, who perhaps was not quite so keen to see his sister as the other fellows were, went on punting the footer about, with a few of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. hurried down to the gates.

"Marjorie!"

The girl nodded, with a bright smile.

"Well, we've come," she said sweetly.

"How jolly good!" said Bob Cherry.

"We couldn't all come."

"Eh?"

"But Miss Primrose gave us three permission," said Miss Clara. "We had to beg ever so hard, though."

"D-d-did you?"

"Yes; and she gave in at last," said Marjorie. "Of course, she felt how disappointed you would be if we didn't come."

"Ye-es," stammered Wharton, wondering whether he was awake.

"Especially after preparing such a beautiful lunch," said Miss Clara.

"Yes, certainly," murmured Harry.

"I tinks tat te lunch is goot, ain't it?" said Miss Limburger. "I tinks tat I am ferry glad to come, after."

"How—how good of you!"

"It was very good of you to invite us," said Marjorie.

"Oh, not at all!" stammered Wharton.

"Yes, it was; but why to-day?" asked Marjorie. "Tomorrow is Saturday—a half-holiday—and we should have thought you would have selected that."

"Just so!" said Miss Clara.

"I tinks tat te sooner we have te feed, te petter," said Miss Limburger. "To-day is effer as much petter as tomorrow, before."

"You—you see—" stammered Harry.

"Still, it's all right," said Miss Clara. "We were very pleased to come."

"Very pleased indeed," said Marjorie.

"We—we're awfully pleased," said Harry. "It—it was so kind of you to come."

"Well, after your kind letter, we couldn't think of refusing," said Marjorie. "It only depended upon whether Miss Primrose gave us leave."

"My—my letter!"

"Yes. But how careless of you to post it without a stamp!"

"With—without a stamp!"

"Yes. Miss Primrose had to pay twopence upon it."

Harry Wharton remembered the letter to the Head, unstamped, which he had heard of that morning in the Remove-room, and he thought at once of Billy Bunter. This, then, was the intended jape of the fat junior upon Cliff House. This, then, was how Bunter guessed that the girls were coming over to lunch.

Wharton's eyes gleamed for a moment. He would have given a term's pocket-money to be in a quiet corner with Billy Bunter at that moment. The fat junior had got the Greyfriars chums into an extremely awkward position.

It was not only that they were not prepared in the least for a visit—it was not only that there was nothing ready in the study for anything in the shape of a lunch—but the Greyfriars chums were short of money, too.

How they were to get out of the difficulty was a mystery. Wharton did not care to tell the visitors, naturally, that they had not been invited at all, but were the victims of a First of April joke.

"That's too bad," said Bob Cherry. "You must have been careless, Harry."

"Ye-es," stammered Harry.

"Awfully careless," said Nugent.

"Oh, it's nothing!" said Marjorie. "We received the letter, that's the chief thing."

"Ye-es," said Harry, "that's the chief thing."

"Is your hand any better?" asked Miss Hazeldene, with solicitude.

Wharton started.

"My hand!"

"Yes."

"My—my hand!"

"Yes," said Marjorie wonderingly. "You hurt it playing leapfrog, you know, and so you had to ask Bunter to write the letter for you."

"D-d-d-d-did I?"

"Well, you said so in the letter."

"Ye-es; of course," said Harry, recognising at once another trick of the fat junior, a trick, of course, to account to the girls for the letter being in his handwriting. "I—I had forgotten for the moment."

"Then your hand isn't very much hurt?"

"Oh, no! Not at all—I—I mean not very much!"

"I tinks tat te lunch—" began Miss Limburger, who evidently had an eye to business, and had not walked over from Cliff House merely for exercise or for the purpose of holding a conversation in the Close of Greyfriars.

"J-j-just so," said Wharton readily. "The lunch—"

"In the open air, perhaps," said Miss Clara, looking round. "The weather is getting so mild now that it is really warm enough for picnicking."

"Yes, certainly, in the open air," said Harry.

"Good!" said Miss Clara. "Where shall we have lunch, then?"

"In—in the study."

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There was a terrific yell from Billy Bunter, as his knuckles bluffed against the wall instead of against Wun Lung's head. "Ow! Oh! Yow!" yelled the fat junior wildly; while the little Chinese doubled up in a paroxysm of silent mirth.

"Eh?"

"In the study, you know."

"I thought you said in the open air," said Miss Clara, looking very curiously at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

Harry turned red.

"Yes, ye-e-es, of course," he agreed at once. "In the open air. I—I mean you might come and wait in the study while—while it's getting ready."

"Then you're late?"

"Late?"

"Yes. You said exactly half-past twelve in your letter, and now look at the clock," said Miss Clara, triumphantly pointing with her parasol at the Greyfriars clock-tower. "It's five minutes past the half-hour."

"S-s-s-so it is!"

"Of course, it doesn't matter," said Marjorie. "We will wait in the study, with pleasure."

"Good!" said Harry. "There's a jolly good fire there, and it's awfully cold to-day, isn't it?"

"I was just saying that it was warm," said Miss Clara.

"Ye-e-es, that's what I mean—awfully warm."

Miss Clara did not deign any reply to that remark. She thought that Harry Wharton was very strange indeed. As a matter of fact, Wharton was so confused and dismayed by the result of Bunter's trickery, that he hardly knew what he was saying or doing. He did not speak again as he led the way to No. 1 Study in the Remove passage.

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## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Hot Chase.

**M**ARJORIE & CO. came into the study. They could not help glancing at the grate. Wharton had said, in the hurry of the moment, that there was a good fire there; but, as a matter of fact, the grate was cold and black. The girls did not quite understand Wharton, and neither did his chums, for that matter. Bob Cherry and Nugent were both glancing at him very curiously.

"You'll—you'll sit by the fire, won't you?" said Harry, pulling out the armchair. "You see—"

"There isn't any blessed fire," said Bob Cherry. "But we'll jolly soon have one going."

"Oh, don't trouble," said Marjorie.

"No trouble at all."

"But really—"

"Oh, that's all right! Brown, old chap, buzz off and get some coal. There's none in the locker."

"Really—"

Tom Brown buzzed off. He buzzed to his own study, and brought a supply of his own coal. The New Zealand junior was prepared to make sacrifices in the common cause. Bob Cherry raked out the grate with a cricket-stump, sending up a cloud of dust and ashes that made the girls scurry back in great haste.

"Oh!" said Miss Clara.



"I tink——"

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Anything up?"

"Only dust," said Nugent. "You'd better let me do that, Bob. You'll be making the room into a muck."

"Oh, bosh!"

"Look here——"

"You buzz off and get some wood."

"But——"

"Look here, if you don't get some wood, how am I to light the fire?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Go off and get some, and don't talk. If you can't find any wood, get a chair out of one of the studies and chop it up."

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry raked away industriously. The cloud of dust and blacks floated about the study, and the girls exchanged glances of dismay. They were thinking of their nice bright spring frocks, but politeness forbade them to say anything.

Tom Brown came in with the coal, and Nugent with the wood. Harry Wharton had placed chairs for the girls, and they sat down in a row. Marjorie and Clara looked very politely prim, but there was a certain amount of impatience visible in the plump face of Miss Wilhelmina Limburger. She was thinking of the lunch, and wondering when it was to arrive.

Bob Cherry soon had a fire going. It roared up the chimney, and Bob piled on more wood and more coal with a liberal hand.

"You will have the chimney on fire," said Miss Clara.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bob confidently. "It's a jolly good chimney. It's only been on fire twice this term."

"I—I'll go and see how the lunch is getting on," said Harry, at last.

"You must not hurry," said Marjorie.

"Oh, no, not at all—I mean yes, certainly."

Harry reddened, and hurried out of the study. Nugent and Tom Brown followed him. Bob Cherry rose from the grate.

"Now, that's all right," he remarked. "That fire will burn. I think I'll go and wash some of the black off my hands."

And he left the study, too. Marjorie and Clara exchanged glances.

"There is something the matter, Marjorie," whispered Miss Clara.

Marjorie nodded.

"They must have expected us."

"Oh, yes, Clara!"

"Yet they seem to be taken by surprise."

"It is very strange."

"Harry is talking at random all the time. If he were a man, I should suspect that he had been drinking," said Miss Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"I should, really! Marjorie, they must have forgotten that we were coming, and never thought of it till they saw us at the gates."

"Oh, impossible!"

"I jolly well think so!" declared Miss Clara, in her boyish way. "It would be a good idea to walk away now, and not stay for lunch."

"We couldn't, Clara."

"Well, I suppose not; but it would serve them right. I am certain that they had forgotten that we were coming. It was awfully rude of them. What do you think, Wilhelmina?"

"I tink tat I am retty for tat lunch, ain't it?"

Miss Clara laughed. Wilhelmina Limburger had no thoughts to spare for anything but the lunch. She was a good rival to Billy Bunter in that respect.

Meanwhile, the Greyfriars chums had followed Harry Wharton down the passage, and as soon as they were out of hearing of No. 1 Study, they had commenced to make remarks. They surrounded the unfortunate captain of the Remove, and spoke their minds in painfully plain English.

"You burbling ass!" said Nugent. "Why didn't you tell us you had invited Marjorie & Co. over to lunch?"

"Fancy never even referring to it!" said Bob Cherry. "Had you forgotten?"

"I——"

"The frabjous lunatic!" said Tom Brown. "I think he must be off his rocker."

"I tell you——"

"The off-fulness of his esteemed rocker is terrific."

"Of all the burbling duffers, I think he takes the cake," Bob Cherry went on. "If there was time we'd bump him."

"Let's bump him, anyway."

"I tell you——"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on, you duffers!" exclaimed Harry. "I tell

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you I didn't know anything about the matter, any more than you do. I hadn't the faintest idea they were coming."

"You wrote the letter."

"I didn't!"

"What!"

"I never wrote it. I hadn't the faintest idea that it was written," said Harry savagely. "Can't you see what it is? It's a First of April joke."

"Pheh!"

"My hat!"

"By gum!" said Tom Brown.

"The gumfulness is terrific!"

"It's a joke of that silly young ass Bunter. Don't you see? That was the jape he mentioned yesterday—to fool the Cliff House girls," said Wharton. "He's sent them a spoof invitation to lunch here."

"The—the young rotter!"

"He wrote the letter in my name, and put in a yarn about writing it for me because I had hurt my hand. Marjorie never had a suspicion."

"The deep beast!" said Bob Cherry. "That fat duffer will finish his career in prison if he's not jolly careful."

"We can't tell the girls it's a jape," said Tom Brown thoughtfully. "They'd never forgive us. It would be too rotten."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Impossible. We must play up now, and keep up appearances. We shall have to turn to and raise a jolly good lunch somehow."

"Pheh! Where's the tin?"

"That's the question. We've got to——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was coming up. There was a curious expression upon the fat junior's face—a combination of nervous uneasiness and an ingratiating smirk. He evidently did not know what kind of a reception he would get from Harry Wharton & Co.

"I—I say, you fellows," he said nervously, "I—I see the Cliff House girls have come. I—I rather thought they would, you know."

"You young rotter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I suppose this is your idea of a jape," said Wharton angrily. "I told you you were not to play off any of your silly tricks on the girls."

"I—I—it was a jape, you know. Awfully funny, don't you think so? He, he, he!"

"You—you——"

"Besides, we can stand them a lunch now they're here," went on Bunter hurriedly. "I'm willing to do all the shopping and cooking, and anything in that line. I'm really willing to be obliging in every way. I can't say fairer than that."

"Collar him!"

"Oh—oh, really, I—I——"

Billy Bunter dodged along the passage as the juniors rushed upon him. However they got out of the present difficulty, or failed to get out of it, there would be some satisfaction in inflicting condign punishment upon the Owl of the Remove for getting them into it.

Billy Bunter dodged and ran. He knew that the girls were in No. 1 Study, and he ran desperately for that apartment.

The juniors rushed after him like a pack in full cry, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that Marjorie & Co. were in the study, and that the door was open.

The crash of footsteps in the passage could hardly fail to reach the ears of the girls.

Billy Bunter had almost reached the door of the study, when Bob Cherry overtook him and grasped his shoulder. Bunter gave a terrified whimper, and rolled on the floor, and Bob Cherry fell over him and sprawled upon the linoleum.

At the same moment Marjorie and Clara appeared in the doorway, and looked out upon the scene in great surprise.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter the Invalid.

**B**OB CHERRY sat up, gasping, and looked dazedly at Marjorie. Billy Bunter groaned and gasped for breath. The rest of the juniors came to a sudden halt, looking decidedly sheepish.

Marjorie and Clara looked at them, and they looked at Marjorie and Clara, and their faces grew very red.

Marjorie was looking amazed, but a gleam of fun was dancing in Clara's eyes. She saw more than Marjorie did.

"You are having a foot-race?" she asked innocently.

Harry Wharton jumped at the explanation with great relief.



"Ye-e-es," he exclaimed. "We—we were racing along the passage, you know. B-b-bob Cherry won."

"Ye-e-es," said Bob, staggering up; "I—I fell over Bunter."

"Ow!"

"Get up, Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"We—we've got to see about lunch," said Nugent.

"Come on, Bunter; we shall need you to help us."

"Ow!"

"He is hurt!" said Marjorie, with a look of concern.

"You must have fallen on him very heavily, Bob."

Bob Cherry glared at the fat junior. He knew perfectly well that the fat junior was only malingering, and pretending to be hurt, for the sake of extorting sympathy from the girls.

If Marjorie and Clara had not been there, Bob Cherry would have brought his boots into play, and Bunter would have jumped up with record celerity. But such a course was obviously impossible under the circumstances.

"He—he's all right!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"I—I'm not all right," said Bunter, with a moan. "My spinal column is twisted, and I've got a sprain in my—my vocal chords."

"You ass!"

"Two of my ribs are broken, too, I think."

"Oh, get up!" said Harry contemptuously.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We shall want you to help with the lunch, Billy," said Nugent, thinking that such an appeal was certain to restore the fat junior at once.

But Billy Bunter was not to be caught. He did not intend to trust himself with the juniors again, unless Marjorie was present; and he knew that there must be a feed now, and that he would get his share of it without exerting himself.

"I—I can't move," he said faintly. "Perhaps if you were to help me into the study I—I might be able to lie in the armchair, and eat a little."

"Oh, do help him!" said Marjorie.

Marjorie evidently believed that the fat junior was hurt, though of course not so badly as he stated. And as for Clara, she did not allow her face to show what she thought. But perhaps she was quite willing to enter into a little joke against the juniors, for their supposed forgetfulness of their own invitation.

Wharton exchanged a look with Bob Cherry, and Bob grunted. They stooped and picked Bunter up, and carried him into the study. They placed him in the armchair, and as they did so Billy Bunter uttered a most tremendous yell.

"Yar-r-o-o-o-oh!"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Marjorie, in alarm.

"What—what is the matter?"

"Ow!"

"Have you a pain?"

"Ow! Somebody pinched me. Ow! It was Bob Cherry."

"Ow!"

Bob's face was crimson.

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" he muttered.

"Ow! I've been pinched! I'm hurt! Ow!"

Bob rushed from the study, not daring to meet Marjorie's accusing eyes. He had not been able to avoid giving the malingering that pinch, on the spur of the moment. But Bunter was not the fellow to take an attention of that sort in silence. He made his woes known at the top of his voice.

He lay in the chair and moaned.

"Do you feel much pain now?" asked Miss Clara sympathetically.

"Ow! Yes. Ow!"

"Where is it?"

"It's—it's everywhere," said Bunter feebly. "I—I have a general feeling all over of being hurt, you see. Perhaps something to eat would revive me."

"I'll bet it would!" growled Nugent, as he hurried from the study. "If I keep near that fat boulder any longer I shall jump on him!"

"The jumpfulness would be terrific in my esteemed case also," murmured the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

Wharton breathed hard through his nose as they went down the passage.

"It's all humbug, of course!" he said. "He's not hurt. But he's imposing on the girls. He means to be petted and made much of, and fed. Pah!"

"It's just one of Bunter's tricks," said Nugent. "Never mind, after the girls have gone—"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry, with great emphasis. And that "What-ho!" meant troublous times in store for the Owl of the Remove.

"Now, about the blessed feed!" said Harry Wharton, with a contracted brow. "How are we going to manage it? I'm stony."

"And I," said Nugent.

"I've got a bob," said Bob Cherry, turning that coin out with a grimy finger. "I contribute it to the funds with pleasure. How much have you got, Brown?"

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"As much as I generally have on a Friday," grinned Tom Brown. "Twopence."

"Phew!"

"What's your little lot, Inky?"

"I have the honour of possessing the esteemed sixpence," said the Nabob of Bhanipur ruefully.

Wharton gathered the contributions in his palm, and looked at them with extreme dissatisfaction.

"One-and-eightpence!" he said. "My hat!"

"It's no good."

"The no-goodfulness is terrific!"

"We shall have to raise the wind somehow," said Wharton desperately. "Let's get round and borrow of the fellows. The worst of it is, that the time's passing, and the girls will be wondering why the lunch doesn't arrive."

"Especially Wilhelmina."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no blessed laughing matter, though," said Harry, with a worried look. "You see, the girls have obtained permission from Miss Penelope Primrose to miss their lunch at Cliff House, to lunch with us over here. We shall have to provide something—and something decent, too. And they mustn't be allowed to have any suspicion that they've been done, either."

"Great Scott—no!"

"Then it's jolly well not safe to leave Bunter with them," said Nugent.

Wharton nodded.

"I'll go and tell them lunch is coming," he remarked. "You fellows raise all the tin you can, and I'll come back here in a few minutes."

"Right you are!"

The juniors scattered, in quest of lenders, and Harry Wharton returned to No. 1 Study.

Billy Bunter's voice could be heard.

"I never get enough to eat in this study, you know. The fellows keep me awfully short. They're so selfish. Now—Hullo! Is that you, Bob Cherry?"

"It is I," said Harry, entering.

"Oh, is lunch nearly ready?"

"It's coming along," said Wharton, smiling at the girls with one side of his face, and trying to frown at Billy Bunter with the other—an attempt which caused his features to assume a most remarkable expression.

"Good!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm feeling very bad, but I've no doubt a good feed will set me up a bit. You are going to have cold chicken?"

"Ye-e-e-s."

"And ham patties, I think you said?"

"Yes," said Wharton, with one-sided glare, which had no effect whatever upon the Owl of the Remove.

"And jam roll and tarts?"

"Ye-es."

"I tinks tat tat is nice," said Wilhelmina Limburger. "I tinks tat I am retty too, ain't it. I tinks tat I have hunger."

"The lunch won't be long," said Wharton. "The fellows are—are bucking up, you know, like anything."

"I suppose I can have some cream puffs," said Bunter, in a faint voice. "Cream puffs always seem to strengthen me when I'm feeling very low."

Wharton did not seem to hear.

"You girls like cream-puffs?" said Bunter.

"Ja, ja," said Miss Limburger. "Ve likes dem mooch, tey are ferry goot. Ach, ja!"

"You said cream puffs, I think, Wharton?"

"Yes," murmured Wharton.

"I say, you know, you ought to hurry up with the lunch," said Bunter. "The girls are feeling awfully peckish!"

"Nonsense!" said Marjorie.

"I have hunger," said Wilhelmina simply.

"It—it won't be a few minutes now," said Harry desperately.

And he left the study, giving Billy Bunter a look out of the corner of his eye as he went, which ought to have annihilated the fat junior on the spot. But Billy Bunter was in the seventh heaven, contemplating the coming feed in his mind's eye, and Harry could have glared and glared without bothering him a bit then.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Only Way.

"WHAT luck?"

Harry Wharton asked the question eagerly as he met his chums at the end of the Remove passage. Their expressions did not look very hopeful.

As most of the Greyfriars juniors received their pocket-money on a Saturday, Friday was not a good day for

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton  
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



borrowing. Money was generally "tight" by the middle of the week, and in a state of great scarcity by Friday. And so it was now.

Bob Cherry opened two empty hands to show that he had nothing. Frank Nugent held out a shilling. Mark Linley had a sixpence. Tom Brown had a collection of pennies and halfpennies. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh showed two shillings. Harry Wharton looked at the collection in dismay.

The juniors might have stood a little feed on that sum, but a really ripping lunch was required; a first-class feed, of course. Marjorie and Clara had been led to expect that there was something out of the common to come, and Billy Bunter had seen to it that details were not neglected.

Where was the feed to come from?

The worst of it was, that minutes were precious. There was not much time to think, and not much time to act. What was to be done?

To tell the girls that they had been made April fools was impossible—harder than ever now. If they had to be undeceived, it ought to have been done at first; delay only made matters worse.

The juniors looked at one another in dismay. They all longed to be within hitting distance of Billy Bunter, who had caused all the trouble. It was particularly galling to think that the fat junior was quite at his ease, lolling in the armchair, playing the invalid, in serene anticipation of a good feed.

"Well, what on earth are we going to do?" said Nugent at last.

"The whatfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"We can't raise the wind," he said. "We can't tell the girls that they've been taken in, and there's no lunch. Besides, they've missed lunch at Cliff House; they wouldn't get any when they went in, anyway. It would be rather rough—"

"My hat! I should say so!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then we've got to manage it somehow. There's only one thing to do."

"We'll do it, whatever it is," said Bob Cherry. "But what is it? Blessed if I can see any way out."

"Well, it's the only way I can think of," said Wharton.

"It will be risky, but it's the only thing to be done."

"Never mind the risk. What is it?"

"We shall have to raid the grub."

"Raid it!"

Wharton nodded coolly.

"Yes. We shall have to raid it—we can make it up afterwards to the owners—but it's the only thing to be done. In times of stress, you know, you have to commandeer things. We've been raided often enough, if you come to that."

"Good! But who are we to raid?" said Nugent. "All the Remove studies are like ours on a Friday—as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard."

"I wasn't thinking of the Remove."

"Well, the Upper Fourth are not much better off," said Mark Linley, with a shake of the head. "Temple might have something, but most of the chaps are at low water, the same as we are."

"I wasn't thinking of the Upper Fourth."

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"The Fifth! Well, it would be risky, but a good joke—on the First of April, too!"

"I wasn't thinking of the Fifth."

"Eh!"

"What price the Sixth?" said Wharton coolly. "May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. The Sixth are living in clover, while we're down to our uppers—speaking grubfully, as Inky would put it. We could raise enough provender in the Sixth Form passage to stand a dozen feeds—all first-class stuff, too."

The juniors stared silently at their leader.

Study raids were common enough at Greyfriars, and nobody ever felt quite sure that his provisions were his own till he had eaten them; but for fellows in the Lower Fourth to raid the Sixth, that was a little out of the common.

If they were caught, they knew what the punishment would be—especially if they were caught by such fellows as Loder and Carno and Ionides. But even good-natured fellows like Wingate and Courtney would cut up rough at finding fags raiding their studies.

It was a risky business, there was no mistake about that.

But it was the only way.

"Well, it's the First of April, and we might as well distinguish ourselves on such a date," grinned Bob Cherry. "If we're caught, we shall look the fools, but if it comes off all right, it will be a big joke on the Sixth."

"Yes, rather!"

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"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"It's the only way," said Wharton resolutely. "In case of trouble, we won't have the feed in No. 1 Study, though. They would track us there too easily."

"What-ho! But where?"

"Well, it's warm enough out of doors. Suppose we say in the old tower?"

"Good!"

"Now, get to business; every chap collar all he can, and bunk with it to the old tower," said Wharton. "If anybody's caught, he must take his medicine without making a row, or giving the others away."

"Right-ho!"

"I'll take the girls to the tower," said Wharton. "May as well get them out of hearing of any shindy. I'll fill up as much time as I possibly can in getting them there, so as to allow you chaps time to get the grub in. Mind, when you get to the tower, you're to look as calm as if nothing had happened. Don't come bolting in with your collars torn out, or anything of that sort. It might make the girls suspicious."

"Ha, ha! So it might."

"Then I'll buzz off. Don't lose any time."

Wharton returned to the study. Billy Bunter was looking very impatient. He groaned as the captain of the Remove came in.

"Oh! Is lunch ready, Wharton?"

"Just on."

"I'm feeling very faint."

"Perhaps you'd better go down to the school dinner," suggested Wharton. "It will be ready soon."

"Yah! Boiled beef, as tough as hide, and precious little of it," said Bunter, with a sniff. "Not much. I'm lunching with you."

"We're going—"

"I hope you're going to have it soon," said Bunter. "The girls are feeling quite faint."

"Why don't you cut off and get a snack at the tuck-shop?" suggested Wharton.

"I—I can't move."

"Why not?"

"I'm too weak; I've been severely hurt."

"We shall lunch in the old tower," said Wharton, looking at Marjorie. "It's such jolly nice weather, you know. There will be more room there, as we've arranged for a rather large party. Do you like the idea?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Marjorie, with a bright smile.

"Ripping!" said Miss Clara.

"Te lunch is te ting," remarked Miss Wilhelmina. "Te place does not madder. I tinks tat I am retty for te lunch, ain't it?"

"Then please come," said Wharton.

"I—I say, Wharton—"

"We may as well go at once. Come on."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I—I can't move—"

"Stay where you are, old chap," said Harry kindly. "You'd better take a bit of a rest, if you're hurt. Don't move, for goodness' sake, in case you might make matters worse."

Bunter blinked at him wrathfully.

"If you think you're going to leave me out of the feed, Wharton—"

"Well, if you can't move, you know—"

"I—I think perhaps I could get up," said Bunter, with a groan. "Perhaps Miss Marjorie would like to give me her arm as far as the tower."

Miss Marjorie did not appear to hear the remark.

"Did you say you would like to help me, Miss Clara?" went on Bunter, who was quite incapable of being snubbed.

Miss Clara was following Marjorie from the study, and she, too, seemed to be afflicted with a sudden deafness.

"I—I say, Wilhelmina, you might lend me a hand."

"I tinks tat I vill do so," said Miss Limburger.

And she gave her arm to Bunter. The fat junior leaned upon it heavily as they left the study.

A good many of the Remove gathered round when they emerged into the Close. Hazeldene came up, and greeted Marjorie with a brotherly kiss on the cheek. It was a marvel to the other fellows how uninterestedly Hazeldene went through that performance.

"Hallo, kid!" said Hazeldene. "I—"

Wharton gave him a look which Hazeldene did not understand, but he realised that it was a warning to be cautious, and he broke off and stared blankly at Harry.

"Marjorie has come over to the lunch," said Harry.

"The—the lunch!"

"Yes; the lunch we've arranged in the old tower, you know. It's a bit late. Will you buzz off and help the chaps to get it ready?"

"What-ho!" said Hazeldene. "How about dinner in Hall, though. It's just on ready."



"Oh, we shall have permission to cut that! Nugent's going to ask Quelch."

"Good!"

And Hazeldene "buzzed" off.

"Faith, and I'll be willing to help, too, if ye like!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, and I'm always willing to lend a friendly hand at a feed."

"Do," said Harry. "Nugent wants more help. You'll find him indoors. You buzz off, too, Ogilvy—and you, Morgan. All of you come to the feed."

"Right you are!"

And Harry Wharton walked on to the old tower of Greyfriars with his fair companions, Billy Bunter following. The sight of the fat junior leaning on the arm of the plump German girl attracted a good many grinning glances, but Bunter did not notice them. He was thinking only of the lunch. How it was to be provided was a matter of small moment to Billy Bunter, so long as it was provided.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Raiders.

"LOOK out!"

"What-ho!"

"Careful!"

"The carefulness is terrific!"

With the caution of scouts on the prairie, or Red Indians on the warpath, the Removites crept into the Sixth-Form passage. There were eight or nine of them in the party now, for Hazeldene and the rest had learned, as soon as they joined Nugent, what "helping to get the lunch ready" meant.

The dinner-bell had gone, and it was a particularly safe moment for the juniors to raid the Sixth-Form studies, as all, or nearly all, the seniors would naturally be in the dining-room.

The juniors, of course, ought to have been there, too, but Nugent had obtained permission from Mr. Quelch to "cut" midday dinner. The Remove-master was very good-natured, and he saw no harm in allowing the juniors to feed themselves for once in a way, as Nugent had explained that it was a sort of celebration.

If Mr. Quelch had known what were the intended preliminaries to that "celebration," he would probably not have given his permission so readily; but Nugent was, of course, very careful to keep the intended raid quite dark. As soon as the rest of the fellows had streamed into the dining-room, the raiders took their way to the Sixth-Form passage.

The passage was deserted.

"Careful, now!" repeated Nugent. "Some of the fellows may be hanging about here, you know. Ionides is generally late for dinner, and I didn't see him downstairs."

"Keep your eyes open, then."

"Come on, and don't make a row!"

"Who's making a row?"

"I mean, shut up!"

"Suppose you set the example," suggested Bob Cherry.

"It seems to me that you're doing most of the jawing."

"If you're going to begin to argue now, Bob Cherry——"

"Who's arguing?"

"Look here, just ring off, and——"

"Oh, don't jaw, old chap! I really believe you'd jaw the hind leg off a mule, or a wheel off a motor-car! You see——"

"Will you dry up?"

"Look here——"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

"Couldn't you chaps leave this till afterwards?" suggested Tom Brown gently. "It's awfully interesting to listen to, of course, but it strikes me as a waste of time."

Both Nugent and Bob Cherry glared at the New Zealander. They might have their little differences of opinion, but they were quite agreed that they weren't going to be called to order by a new boy.

"Well, of all the cheeky young sweeps!" said Bob.

"Of all the impertinent worms——" began Nugent.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom. "Can't you get to business?"

"Why, you——"

"Brown's right," said Ogilvy. "We didn't come here to listen to a Nugent-Cherry duet. Chuck it, both of you!"

"Look here, Ogilvy——"

"Faith, and Ogilvy's right! If they're going to jaw, let's get on without them," said Micky Desmond.

"Oh, come on!" said Bob gruffly.

And he led the way down the passage. The juniors followed on tiptoe, with bated breath. Although all the fellows ought to have been at dinner downstairs, it was quite possible that some belated senior might be lingering in his study, and if so, they didn't want to run into that particular senior.

Wingate's study was the first they entered. The door was

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ONE  
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ajar, and they could see that it was empty; and, besides, they had seen the captain of Greyfriars go in to dinner.

"This way!" grinned Bob Cherry, opening the cupboard door. "Stand ready to take the things, Nugent, and don't forget the I O U."

"Right you are."

Bob handed the provisions out of the cupboard. The I O U was an idea of Harry Wharton's. Although a raid on such fellows as Ionides or Loder was quite all right, as they were the natural enemies of the juniors, the Removites had to admit that a raid on Wingate was a little "thick." But the I O U set all matters right. By leaving the I O U, they showed that they regarded the raided provisions simply as a loan, and that they intended to make the loss good afterwards. It was a really good idea, though whether it would satisfy the seniors was another question.

"One pot of strawberry-jam, half gone," said Bob Cherry, handing out the article to Morgan, who put it under his arm.

"One pot of strawberry-jam, half gone," repeated Nugent, jotting it down on a blank leaf of his pocket-book in pencil.

"Next?"

"One loaf, with half the top off."

"One loaf, with half the top off. Good!"

"Half a pound or so of ham, best quality."

"Half a pound of ham, best quality. Good."

"One tin pineapple."

"One tin pineapple. Next?"

"Two pats of butter."

"Two pats butter. Next?"

"Tin condensed milk."

"One tin condensed milk. Next?"

"One packet cocoa."

"What on earth do we want cocoa for?" said Ogilvy.

"Blessed if I've ever heard of having cocoa at lunch!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Oh, we may as well make a clean sweep!" said Bob cheerfully. "It will come in at tea-time, anyway. One tin of bloater-paste."

"My hat!"

"One tin of bloater-paste. Next?"

"That's the lot," said Bob Cherry. "Now, shove I O U

at the top, and sign it."

"I've shoved I O U at the top," said Nugent thought-

fully. "But what had I better sign it?"

"Your initials, of course."

"Thanks; I think I'll keep my own initials off these

blessed I O U's!" said Nugent, with some emphasis.

"There's no telling how the Sixth will take them. We

ought to sign something for the whole Form."

"That's so."

"Sign 'R.' then, for the Remove," suggested Mark

Linley.

"Good! That will do first-rate."

And Frank Nugent signed the paper "R." for the Remove, and tore the leaf out of his book. It was pinned to the inside of the cupboard door, where Wingate could not fail to see it when he opened the cupboard. It would account for the disappearance of his provisions—satisfactorily in one sense, but perhaps not satisfactorily in another.

"Carry this blessed lot off to the old tower, Morgan, old son!" said Bob. "Tell them that the rest are coming."

"Good!" said Morgan.

And he walked away with the first consignment. The juniors, cheered by the success of the first attempt, left Wingate's study, and went along to the next room, which belonged to Wingate's chum Courtney.

Bob Cherry tapped on the door, to make sure that the study was unoccupied. There was no reply, and Bob opened the door. The study was empty, and the juniors streamed in.

Bob Cherry opened the cupboard door, and Nugent stood with pencil and paper, making the inventory, as Bob handed out article after article into the waiting hands of the juniors.

Then the leaf from the pocket-book was pinned up inside the cupboard door, and the following statement was ready to greet Courtney's eyes when he returned:

"I O U.—One loaf, a pat of butter, a chunk of cheese, one pound of sugar, part of a ham, a bag of tarts, a chunk of seed cake.—R."

And the raiders went cheerfully on their way.

# ANSWERS

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## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

## A Present for Ionides.

**S**TUDY after study was visited, and each time a cupboard was cleared an I O U was left, and one of the raiders carried off the plunder to the old tower. The passages were deserted, and it was quite easy for them to escape undetected. The party was reduced to three in number by the time they came to Ionides's study—Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Tom Brown.

Bob was perhaps getting a little careless by this time, after so much success. At all events, he opened Ionides's door without tapping first to make sure that the Greek senior wasn't there. And, as it happened, he was there.

The juniors came quickly in as Bob opened the door, and then they stopped dead. Ionides rose from his chair, and glared at them. He was on the worst of terms with the chums of No. 1 Study, and this unceremonious entrance into his study was not likely to gratify him. He scowled at the juniors.

"What do you want here?" he exclaimed harshly.

"Ahem! We——"

"How dare you enter my room without knocking?"

"I—I forgot!" said Bob Cherry. "I would certainly have knocked if I had known that you were here, Ionides!"

Which was true enough.

"What do you want?"

"Well, you see——"

"Dinner's ready!" said Nugent, coming to the rescue. "You'll be awfully late for dinner, Ionides. It must be more than half over by this time."

"I do not care!"

"Well, they mayn't save any for you," said Tom Brown. "The best thing you can do is to cut off at once before it's all gone!"

"That is no business of yours!"

"Oh, yes, it is; I feel very much concerned about it!"

"Fool!"

"Thanks!"

"Get out of my study!"

"But it's dinner-time——"

"Go!"

"You'll miss your dinner——"

"Will you go?" howled the Greek.

He would have hurled himself upon the three juniors, but the three of them looked rather an awkward handful to tackle. The Remove fellows had a way of cutting up very rusty if a senior laid hands upon them, as a rule.

"Certainly!" said Bob Cherry. "As you don't ask us to sit down, we'll go—with pleasure! But you'll really miss your dinner!"

"Get out of my study!"

"It's boiled beef and carrots," said Nugent. "Are you fond of boiled beef and carrots, Ionides?"

"Leave the room!"

"Carrots! Rather!" said Bob. "Ionides dotes on them. He prefers them to anything else, unless he can get thistles, which are his natural food, of course!"

Ionides gritted his teeth, and made a dive for the grate. He snatched up the long brass shovel, and rushed at the Removes.

They were out of the study in a twinkling.

Ionides slammed the door furiously behind them, with a slam that rang half through Greyfriars, and hurled the shovel into the grate again. The next moment the door reopened, and Bob Cherry looked in, with a cheerful grin.

"Mind you don't miss dinner, Ionides!"

Then he closed the door quickly, in time to save himself being struck by a heavy inkpot, hurled with all the force of the Greek's arm. The inkpot crashed upon the door, and smashed there, and a stream of ink splashed over Ionides's carpet.

Bob whistled softly as he retreated.

"What a blessed wild beast!" he murmured. "He might have brained me with that inkpot!"

"Impossible!" said Nugent.

"Eh? It's a jolly heavy inkpot, and if it had biffed me on the napper it might have knocked my brains out!" said Bob warmly.

"Impossible!" repeated Nugent solemnly.

"Look here——"

"You can't get something out of nothing!" said Nugent argumentatively. "You see——"

"You ass——"

"Are you two beginning again?" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Do shut up till we've finished the raid! The other fellows will be beginning without us!"

"Phew! Come on!"

"Here's Loder's study! There's bound to be something here!"

"I hope it won't be Loder, then!"

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"Ha, ha! Well, he's not here!" said Nugent, looking into the study.

The cad of the Sixth was absent. The juniors were soon at work upon the cupboard. They found a box of cigarettes there, a pretty plain proof of Loder's sort of amusement in his leisure hours; but they did not raid that.

Loder had a good supply of provisions. Bob had heard that Loder was giving a tea that afternoon in his study to two or three fellows in the Sixth, and Loder had evidently made the preparations for it already.

Nugent's pencil was busy with the items.

"One tin pineapple, a bag jam tarts, one dozen cream puffs—jolly good!—a large plum cake, half-pound fresh butter, and two pounds ham, a whole tongue, pot of jam, pot of marmalade, bunch of muscatels——"

"Ripping!"

"Jolly good!" said Bob Cherry. "Loder couldn't have done better, if he had known that we were standing a feed to Cliff House to-day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pin the I O U on the door, Nugent!"

"That's done!"

"I think this will be enough," said Bob. "We shall be meeting the fellows coming out from dinner if we don't buck up!"

"Let's get out, then!"

It was indeed high time to be moving. Bob Cherry eyed a bag of eggs doubtfully. Loder had evidently laid them in to be fried or poached for tea when his guests came; but in the old tower were no facilities for cooking. The lunch was to be what Bunter would have called a cold collation.

Yet Bob was loth to leave them behind. They were nice large eggs, evidently new laid, and there were a dozen of them.

"Better have 'em!" he said. "We can work 'em up in the shape of egg-and-milk, or cook 'em on a spirit-stove. I told Linley to take his little stove to warm the coffee."

"Good! Come along!"

Nugent added eggs to the list on the door of Loder's cupboard. Then the juniors, carrying the loot between them, left the study.

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation of dismay as they went down the passage towards the stairs. The juniors had cut the time a little too fine. Dinner was over, and the fellows were streaming out of the dining-room, and one of the Sixth was coming upstairs. As luck would have it, it was Loder.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"He mustn't see us!"

"Can't be helped now!"

"Dodge in here! Quick!"

There was not a moment to be lost. Nugent caught the handle of the nearest study door to open it.

"Stop!" gasped Tom Brown. "That's Ionides's study!"

But it was too late. The door was open, and Ionides glared at the juniors as they came in. Nugent closed the door. Bob Cherry held out the bunch of muscatels with an ingratiating smile.

"I say, Ionides, would you like some of these?" he said pleasantly. "They're awfully nice, and I know you're fond of them. Will you have the bunch?"

As he spoke he was listening intently for Loder's footsteps in the passage.

Ionides simply stared at Bob.

That the junior should come in with such a gift was astounding. The muscatels looked very nice, and the bunch was large, and must have cost at least two shillings. The Greek was nonplussed for the moment.

"Yes," he said; "I will have them, but——"

"You're very kind," said Bob, laying the bunch on the table. "You're such a nice chap that it's quite a pleasure to show you any little attention."

The footsteps passed the study door and died away. Loder was gone; the coast was clear.

"Come on, you chaps!" said Nugent.

And the three juniors left the study, leaving Ionides in a state of the most profound astonishment. They scuttled away down the passage, anxious to get clear before there was a chance of Loder discovering his loss.

Ionides stood looking at the bunch of muscatels. He could only imagine that Bob Cherry had been very much frightened by his anger, and that he had brought the bunch as a peace-offering.

The door opened, and Carne, of the Sixth, came in. Carne had been the chum of Carberry, the prefect, who had been lately expelled from Greyfriars, and since Carberry had gone Carne had chummed up very much with Ionides, who was a fellow of much the same stamp.

"You weren't in to dinner," he said. "Anything wrong?"

The Greek shook his head.

"No; I am all right! I have lunched in my study. Boiled beef and carrots are not much to my taste," he said, in his arrogant way. Ionides could never forget that he was





"You young ass, Wootton! What are you doing, striding off like a blessed ostrich?" came the wrathful whisper from the disguised Monk. "Anybody can tell you aren't a girl, a mile off!"  
(A laughable incident from the tale of "Goron Gay, the Schoolboy Actor," in "The Empire Library." Out to-day. Price One Halfpenny.)

the son of a very rich man, and that his home was luxurious. "I am not accustomed to diet of that sort at home."

Carne laughed.

"The Head's very easy with you," he said. "Hallo! I see you've got a decent dessert, anyway. I'll help you get rid of it."

And he reached out his hand towards the bunch on the table. Then the door was thrown open, and an excited face was thrust in. It belonged to Loder.

"Have you seen anybody in my study?" howled Loder.

"Eh?"

"My study's been raided!"

"What!"

"All the grub I had laid in for tea!" yelled Loder. "It's all gone! Somebody's been and collared the whole shoot!"

"My hat!"

"You weren't down to dinner, Ionides. Did you see anybody in the passage, or hear— Great Scott!"

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Loder broke off as he saw the bunch of muscatels on the table. His eyes seemed to be about to start from his head.

"Great Scott! My muscatels!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Carne. "What do you mean?"

"My muscatels!" roared Loder.

"What!" exclaimed Ionides. "You—"

"My muscatels! There's the ticket still on them!" roared Loder. "No wonder you missed dinner downstairs, you blessed foreign thief! Where's my grub?"

"Eh? What! I—"

"Where's my grub?"

"I—"

"Hand it over!" roared Loder. "Hand it over at once, you alien rotter, or I'll wipe up the study with you!"

"I tell you—"

But Loder did not wait for Ionides to tell him anything

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He rushed at the Greek, and got his head into chancery. Ionides struggled desperately, kicking and scratching; but Loder was too strong for him.

"I'll teach you to raid my study!" roared Loder, pounding away. "You thief! Where's my grub?"

"Oh! Ow! Help!"

"Take that, that, and that!"

"Oh!"

"And that!"

"Oh! Fury! Ow!"

"And that—and that!"

## THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Parthian Flight.

**B**OB CHERRY and his comrades hurried downstairs with their loot; but they were not destined to escape so easily. Half-way down the stairs Walker met them, and Walker, of the Sixth, at once signed to them to stop. Walker noted how they were laden—he could hardly help noticing it—and Walker was one of those seniors who regarded themselves as having a natural right to any of the possessions of the juniors, if they could lay hands on them. Walker was a humorous fellow, though his humour was not of the kind that was likely to be appreciated by the lower school.

"Good!" exclaimed Walker, as he met the three. "This is very lucky! I suppose you guessed that I hadn't had enough dinner, and were bringing these things to offer me."

The juniors exchanged a desperate glance. They knew that this was Walker's pleasant little preliminary to depriving them of their treasures.

"Nothing of the sort," said Bob bluntly. "We're going to have a feed—"

"Quite a mistake on your part," said Walker genially. "I'm going to have a feed. Right about face, and walk back to my study!"

"But—"

"If you like, I will guide you with a finger on your ear. I don't mind. Perhaps my boot might assist you, too. I like to be obliging."

"Look here, Walker—"

Walker took hold of Bob Cherry's ear between his finger and thumb. Bob Cherry gave a wild gasp as the senior compressed the grip like a vice.

"Ow! Ow! Leggo!"

"Are you going to my study?"

"Ow! You beast!" gasped Bob Cherry.

He could not very well offer resistance, for he had two jam-pots under one arm, and a bag of eggs under the other. The other juniors were equally heavily laden.

"Look here, Walker, just chuck it!" said Tom hotly. "This isn't your grub, and you're jolly well not going to have it."

"Quite a mistake," said Walker, taking hold of the New Zealander's ear with his disengaged hand, and giving it an agonising twist. "Kindly get along to my study."

The three juniors, with gasps of helpless rage, obeyed. Walker followed them with a sweet smile. He had no doubt that he had quelled all resistance, and that he was about to enjoy a really ripping little feed, with something left over for tea.

Never was a senior more mistaken. The juniors were going quietly, but it was the calm before the hurricane.

Bob Cherry passed his jam-jars to Tom Brown and Nugent, who took them quietly. Without a word being said, it was understood that they were to scuttle off, and that Bob Cherry was to cover their retreat. Bob kept hold of the bag of eggs. It occurred to him that they might come in useful in a tussle with Walker.

The juniors reached Walker's study. There were wild sounds of strife proceeding from Ionides' room, but they did not pay that any attention.

Walker opened the door of his study, with a grin.

"Kindly step in," he remarked.

He was standing to cut off a retreat to the stairs, but the juniors did not attempt that. They suddenly quickened their pace, and ran up the Sixth-Form passage. A roundabout way from the other end offered them a chance of escape—if they could shake off Walker's pursuit. But that was just what Walker did not mean them to do. Laden as they were, he had only to quicken his stride to overtake them.

"Come back!" he shouted.

"Run for it!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You chaps dodge through the Remove passage, and get away. I'll keep this giddy bargee off!"

"Come back! Very well, I'll fetch you!"

Walker broke into a run. Bob Cherry turned round desperately, snatching an egg from the bag. It flew from his hand as true as a cricket-ball to the wicket, and smashed on Walker's chest.

Squash!

Walker gave a wild gasp, and stopped and staggered back. He wasn't hurt, but he was very startled, and very splashed. Bob turned and ran after his chums. At the further end of the passage a narrow staircase led up to the box-rooms, and thence access could be gained to the Remove passage. Nugent and Brown were already up the stairs.

Walker staggered for a moment; then, with an exclamation of rage, he broke into a run and dashed after the Removites.

Bob heard him close behind as he reached the stairs. He turned, and another egg flew, this time smashing on Walker's nose. The contents of the egg streamed over his face, and Walker stopped, half-blinded.

"Oh! Ooch!"

Bob dashed desperately up the stairs. Walker came plunging after him. If he once overtook the junior, Bob knew very well what would follow. Bob was not afraid of a licking, but he shivered at the idea of the licking Walker would give him in his present mood. He stopped at the top of the stairs, determined that Walker should never reach the top. The Sixth-Former was already a third of the way up.

"Get back!" yelled Bob.

"You young cub!"

"I warn you—"

"I'll— Oo-oo-ock!"

There was no time to argue. Bob Cherry had recourse to the eggs. One after another he hurled them with deadly aim.

Crash! Smash! Splash!

"Oooch!"

Walker staggered backwards, fairly dazed and bewildered, by the volleying of eggs from above. His eyes and nose and mouth were streaming with the broken yolks, and his collar and waistcoat were in a shocking state.

Bob was past caring now. He could never be licked worse than Walker would lick him now, if he caught him, so he had nothing to be afraid of. He pelted egg after egg with deadly aim, and not one missed its mark.

Half choked, and wholly blinded, Walker lost his footing on the stairs, and rolled to the bottom, and sat there, gasping and spluttering.

Bob had expended his last egg. He dropped the bag, and ran, exploding with laughter. Brown and Nugent were long clear of the place. Bob ran into the Remove passage, and as he passed No. 1 Study, a brilliant thought occurred to him. He took the key out, locked the door on the outside, and slipped the key into his pocket.

Then he ran on, and in a minute more he was out of the School House, and sprinting towards the old tower.

## THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

### Lunch at Last.

**T**HE feast had commenced.

Bob Cherry slackened pace as he neared the old tower, and walked in at the ancient doorway with a calm and unconcerned air.

The lowest apartment of the ruined tower of Greyfriars was very large, and lighted by large windows—with iron bars across them, set in the stone, in place of glass. It was a very shady and cool place in the summer months, and quite pleasant now, in the warm spring afternoon.

The lunch-party was very merry. Girls and boys were seated upon benches or upon blocks of stone or camp-stools, and a cloth was spread upon the ground for the lunch.

That there was a time of reckoning coming was certain, but the Removites did not allow it to trouble them. Sufficient for the hour is the evil thereof. And there was no doubt that the lunch was a success, after all the trouble it had cost.

So far, neither Marjorie nor Clara had a suspicion that it was a "spoof" invitation that had reached them at Cliff House. Appearances had been wonderfully well kept up. Certainly the lunch had been somewhat delayed. But it was so good and plentiful when it came, that the delay was quite excusable.

The juniors had not waited for Bob Cherry. Lunch was already too late. The feast was proceeding merrily. Harry Wharton looked up as Bob Cherry came in, and made room for him on a wooden bench.

"You're late, Bob," he said casually.

"Sorry," said Bob, equally casually. "I had to stop and settle something with Walker—he couldn't wait."

"Is it all right now?"

"Oh, quite all right!"

"Good. Sit down and wire in."

And Bob did. He had missed dinner, as the others had, and it was well past dinner-time. He was quite ready for lunch, therefore.



Marjorie and Clara were hungry, too. As for Miss Limburger, she was only to be compared with Billy Bunter.

She was sitting beside the fat junior, and she was a noble second in the efforts he made to get the hospitable board cleared in the shortest possible space of time. Billy Bunter had forgotten that he was an invalid. The way he travelled through that cold collation was marvellous. But Fraulein Limburger quite upheld the honour of Germany in the contest. She was hardly anything behind Bunter in the race.

But there was plenty for all, and plenty of variety. As Nugent remarked, many individual tastes had had play in the selection of the eatables.

It was the first picnic of the season, and it had to be voted a great success. Tom Brown made coffee on the spirit-stove, and the coffee was superb. It washed down a meal that offered every variety to the palate.

The juniors were in high spirits.

They had got out of the difficult position created by Bunter's trick, and got out of it well. The girls would have to leave immediately after lunch, for afternoon school at Cliff House, and the inevitable trouble with the Sixth would come later.

So long as Marjorie & Co. had a good time, and departed without being made aware of the trick that had been played upon them, Harry Wharton & Co. would be satisfied.

And there seemed to be little to fear now.

"Another slice of ham, Clara?"

"No, thank you."

"Try the jam-puffs," said Bunter, looking up. "They're prime. Did you get the jam-puffs at Mrs. Mimble's, Harry?"

"They came from there," said Harry.

"They're jolly good. Where did you get the marmalade-tarts?"

"Same place."

"Good! Mrs. Mimble can make these things," said Billy Bunter. "She's an awfully intelligent woman in cooking, you know, only she's very stupid in business. She can't understand that the whole modern commercial system is built up on credit. Except for that, she's a most intelligent woman."

"Another scone, Marjorie?"

"No, thank you."

"I vill den," said Miss Limburger. "I likes tem, ain't it?"

"Another cup of coffee?"

"I think not, thanks."

"I tinks tat I vill, after."

Marjorie and Clara smiled. They had finished, but Miss Limburger was likely to keep on as long as Billy Bunter. Marjorie looked at her little watch.

"We shall have to leave in ten minutes," she said.

"Oh, come, it won't be time then!" exclaimed Bob Cherry warmly.

"Oh, yes, we shall have just time to walk home to Cliff House for afternoon school, that's all," said Marjorie, with a smile.

"By Jove! How the time flies!"

Marjorie laughed.

"Yes, doesn't it? We must thank you for a very pleasant lunch. It was such a good idea of yours to celebrate the First of April in this way; so different from the usual way of celebrating it."

Harry turned red.

"Yes; it—it wasn't a bad idea, was it?" he said.

"Jolly good," said Miss Clara. "Do you know, when the note first came, and I saw it was in Bunter's writing, I half-suspected for a moment that it might be a joke."

"Oh, really—"

"Did you?" said Harry, with a sickly smile.

"Yes, indeed; but when I found Bunter had simply written it for you, because you had hurt your hand, of course I knew it was all right."

"Of—of course."

Bunter finished the last tart, and chuckled.

"That was awfully funny," he remarked. "Do you know—"

Harry turned upon him in alarm. He saw that the fat junior, in his fatuous way, was about to blurt out the facts.

"Have another cream puff, Bunt?" he asked hastily.

"Thank you, I will, Wharton," said Bunter blinking at him. "I didn't know there were any left."

"There—there aren't," said Harry, glancing round.

"I'm sorry."

"Well, you are an ass! I say, Miss Marjorie—"

"Have a tart, Bunter?"

"Oh, all right! Where is it?"

"I—I haven't any. But—"

"Look here, Wharton, if this is your idea of a First of April joke, you're keeping it up too long," said Bunter.

"Think of something new. I say, Miss Clara—"

"There's some ham left," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are, Bunter."

"I don't want any more ham."

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NEXT WEEK:

**"FRIENDS OR FOES?"**

EVERY  
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"  
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ONE  
PENNY.

"What!"

"I don't want any more."

"Oh, you're wandering," said Bob. "You always want some more, so long as there's any left. Eat it, and shut up."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"There you are!"

"Oh, all right, if you insist!"

Billy Bunter bolted the ham. It occupied him about ten seconds. Then he blinked at the girls, and started again. Billy Bunter felt that he was a successful joker, and did not intend to be deprived of the credit of his success.

He had succeeded in utterly taking in the Cliff House girls, and making April fools of them; and the joke would be nothing if they went away unconscious of the fact that they had been "spoofed."

The chums could all see Bunter's intention by this time, and they shared Harry Wharton's alarm. If Bunter blurted out the truth now, the game was up. The girls would be naturally hurt and offended, after being kept in the dark so long.

But how to keep Bunter quiet, without giving the whole matter away to Marjorie & Co? That was a difficult problem.

"That ham's all right," said Bunter. "I say, Miss Marjorie—"

"Yes," said Marjorie.

"He, he, he! What would you think if I told you—"

Ow!" Bunter broke off with a yell of anguish as Bob Cherry stamped on his foot. Bob put, perhaps, unnecessary force into that stamp. Bunter jumped up, and danced on one foot, nursing the other in his hands, and yelling.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Yow!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Marjorie. "What's the matter?"

"Ow! Yaroo!"

"Is it the pain again?"

"Yow! Bob Cherry's stamped on my foot! Yah!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Bob, turning red. "I—I wanted to see whether I could make you jump up, you know."

"Ow! You ass! Yow!"

"Never mind—"

"But I do mind!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm hurt!"

"Oh, dry up," said Ogilvy. "We hear nothing but of you and your blessed damages, Bunter! Why don't you take a back seat?"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

Marjorie and Clara looked curiously at Bob Cherry, as Bunter sat down groaning. They wondered why he had stamped on the fat junior's foot. Bunter was silent for a few minutes, but as the pain abated he started again.

"I say, you fellows! I think we ought to tell them—"

"Oh, sorry!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

There was a wild yell from Bunter. Tom had been reaching across a cup of coffee, and he had dropped it fairly upon Bunter's head. The fat junior leaped up, startled almost out of his wits, and streaming with coffee.

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Te Is.

"Ow!" yelled Bunter. "Yah! Groo! Ooch!"

"Sorry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! I'm wet! You ass! Ow!"

"Never mind," said Tom Brown consolingly. "Lucky for you the coffee's cool. It might have been scalding hot, you know."

"Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You clumsy ass! Ow! Lend me your handkerchief, Wharton! I'm wet! Oh!"

"Bosh!" said Harry. "Go in and get a towel!"

"I—I'm too tired to walk to the School House—"

"Rats!"

"You know I'm ill—"

"Stuff!"

"Oh, really, Wharton? You might lend me a handkerchief, Bob Cherry."

"No fear!" said Bob promptly.

Bunter mopped away at the coffee with his own handkerchief. That handkerchief was speedily reduced to a limp brown rag. Bunter grunted wrathfully as he mopped off the coffee. The other juniors grinned unsympathetically, and even the girls could not help smiling. But while they smiled, they were looking very curious, too. The efforts the juniors were making to keep Bunter quiet could not escape their notice. They realised that the fat junior had something to tell them, which the others wished to keep secret. They could not help wondering what it was.



Bunter mopped and mopped. Harry Wharton inwardly longed for the last minutes to pass quickly. When Marjorie paid the juniors a visit at Greyfriars, they were always glad for her to stay as long as possible. But on the present occasion, they would have felt a great sense of relief in saying good-bye. What Bunter might say if the girls remained much longer was too great a danger.

Bunter mopped, and grunted. When he had mopped away the coffee, as well as he could, he crammed the soaking handkerchief into his pocket.

"I'm still wet," he growled. "Will you lend me your handkerchief, Nugent?"

"There's one of mine in the study that you can have," said Nugent. "You'll find it—"

"I jolly well sha'n't find it. I'm not going to the study."

"Then go without, my son."

"I say, Marjorie—"

"We may as well stroll down to the gate," said Wharton hurriedly. "You'd better stay here, Bunter; you're tired."

Bunter stood up.

"I'm not so tired now, Wharton; and, anyway, I want to see Marjorie and Clara off at the gates. Besides, I've got something to tell them."

"Would you like some toffee, Bunter?" asked Mark Linley.

"Yes, rather!"

"Here you are."

Bunter took the toffee. He selected a chunk, and crammed it into his mouth. Marjorie, Clara, and Wilhelmina rose to their feet. It was time to go; and the three girls walked out of the tower with the Removites, Wilhelmina casting a last regretful glance at the few remnants of the feed.

Billy Bunter poked the toffee into one side of his mouth, where it made his cheek bulge out in a lump, and hurried out with Marjorie and Clara. In the presence of the girls the juniors could not use any violence, and the fat junior had to be given "his head," as Bob Cherry would have put it.

There was plenty of time for an easy stroll to the gate, and Wharton could not quicken his pace without being guilty of the discourtesy of appearing to be eager to get rid of his visitors. And so there was no dodging Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—I mean you girls, it was awfully funny," he began. "Ow! Stop shoving me, Bob Cherry! I'm going to tell Marjorie if I like."

Marjorie looked round, and Bob turned the colour of a beetroot, and dropped behind. He felt that it was all up now.

"It was a jolly good jape, anyway," said Bunter, with his fat chuckle. "He, he, he!"

"What was a good jape?" asked Miss Clara.

"First of April, you know. He, he, he!"

"I don't understand."

"He, he, he! You see—"

"Well, here we are at the gate," said Wharton hurriedly. "We'll walk a little way down the road with you, if you don't mind. Bunter had better not come, as he's not well."

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"Come on!"

"Look here, Wharton, I'm going to tell them," said Bunter. "It was a good jape, and I took them in, too! He, he, he!"

"Oh, shut up, Billy!"

"I'm not going to shut up. We've done them brown! He, he, he! Of course—"

"I don't quite understand," said Marjorie, looking from Bunter to Wharton, and back again to the fat junior, and a very cold look came over her face. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

"He, he, he! You see—"

"It's nothing," said Harry quickly. "Bunter is always talking rot, as you know. Don't take any notice of him. I—"

"Oh, really—"

"Come on, Bunter, old man," said Nugent, in a hearty tone, slipping his arm in Bunter's. "I've got something to show you."

"Ow! Leggo! I won't go!" roared Bunter.

"But—but—"

"Leggo!"

Nugent turned very red, and let go. It was impossible to drag the fat junior away by main force. Marjorie and Clara were looking very cold and quiet. The juniors were at a loss. They felt that they could do nothing more.

"You lemme alone!" said Bunter wrathfully. "I say, Marjorie—"

"Well?"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"He, he, he! First of April, you know. It was a jolly good jape inviting you over here to lunch, you know. He, he, he!"

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"I do not see the joke," said Marjorie.

"It's only Bunter's fancy," began Wharton desperately.

"He, he, he! I wrote the letter, you see, to take you in. Wharton doesn't want me to tell you, but I'm not going to let him spoil a good joke. It was a spoof invitation, you see, and you were taken in. He, he, he!"

"Oh!" said Marjorie.

The colour flushed into the girl's cheek. She looked directly at Harry, and his glance fell before hers.

"Jolly good joke, wasn't it," went on Bunter fatuously.

"I did it, you know. You can't deny that you were taken in. And when Wharton saw you coming over—he, he, he!"

Wharton was crimson and dumb.

"And you never told me, Harry?" said Marjorie, her cheeks and her ears burning, and her eyes fastened upon Wharton's face.

"Well, you see—"

"It—it was cruel," murmured Marjorie. "It was mean and cowardly of Bunter, but you, Harry, you might have told us."

"I—I'm sorry—"

"We—we're all sorry," stammered Bob Cherry.

"Good-bye," said Marjorie quietly.

The girls walked down the road. Harry Wharton & Co. did not dare to offer to accompany them. They only stood in dismayed silence, while the graceful forms disappeared down the lane, and were lost to sight.

The silence was broken by the fat chuckle of Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

Then the juniors turned upon him. A crowd of red and wrathful faces glared upon the self-satisfied Owl of the Remove.

"You worm!" said Wharton, between his closed lips.

"You cad!"

"You rotter!"

"You waster!"

"You crawling apology for a worm!"

Bunter stared and blinked at the angry juniors in astonishment. Apparently he was not aware that he had done anything to excite wrathful feelings.

"Oh, I say, you fellows," he remonstrated. "Draw it mild, you know. I— Oh!"

They did not waste any more time in words.

They laid hands upon the great joker of the Remove. There was a deep ditch flowing on the other side of the road. Wharton made a gesture towards it, and the others understood.

Billy Bunter, struggling vainly, was whisked across the road in a twinkling. He yelled and roared at the sight of the ditch, as he realised the intention of the avengers.

"Oh! Ow! Stop! I didn't do it! I won't do it again! Hold on! Leggo! Oh! Ow! Oooh!"

Splash!

Right into the muddy ditch went Billy Bunter.

The water closed over him, and he came up the next second soaked, and gasping, and sputtering and spluttering.

Wrathful faces watched him from the bank. He struggled to get out of the water, but not a hand was extended to help him.

"Ow! Help! Rescue! I'm drowning! I'm wet! Ow!"

He scrambled painfully ashore. His feet were stuck deep in the mud of the bottom of the ditch, and for some time he could not drag them out. When he crawled out at last through the grass and weeds and reeds, he was a pitiable-looking object.

He was soaked from head to foot, and caked with mud. His trousers were in a terrible state, and his boots were quite hidden.

He stood gasping in the road, with a pool of water and liquid mud forming round him, and his face adorned with tangled trails of green ooze.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You beasts! Ow! Oh! I—"

The juniors turned and walked away, leaving him standing there. They did not give him a word. Bunter blinked after them furiously through his dimmed glasses.

"Beasts!" he said, once more.

And then he crawled in at the gates of Greyfriars, feeling as if life were not worth living.

## THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

The Sixth are Sold.

**K**NOCK!  
Bump!  
Crash!

Wingate of the Sixth came along to the Remove passage with a puzzled expression on his face. He held a slip of paper in his hand, evidently a leaf torn from a pocket-book, and scribbled on in pencil.

In the Remove passage there were no juniors to be seen,



but plenty of seniors. Walker, of the Sixth—washed, but still of a decidedly eggy flavour—Ionides, Carne, Loder, and several other fellows were there.

They were engaged in saying things, and in hammering upon the door of No. 1 Study in the Remove—Harry Wharton's study.

Ionides and Loder both bore very plain traces of their fistful encounter. They had done one another considerable damage, before Carne had succeeded in separating them, and with a black eye and a swollen nose apiece, they had come to understand how matters stood. When mutual explanation revealed the fact that Loder's study had been raided by the Remove, and not by Ionides, their wrath was transferred to a new quarter. The discovery of an I O U in Loder's study removed all doubt. Then they set out to look for vengeance. Several more of the Sixth, who had discovered those precious I O U's joined them, and quite a little crowd gathered outside Harry Wharton's door.

Bob Cherry's simple device in locking the door on the outside and taking away the key had proved very effective. The seniors did not doubt for a moment that the Removites had locked themselves in, and were even then enjoying the feed in the security of the study.

And they hammered on the study door instead of looking further for the marauders, which was precisely what Bob Cherry had intended they should do.

"Open this door, you sweeps!" shouted Carne, rattling the handle furiously.

Bang!

Kick! Crash!

"Here, hold that row!" exclaimed Wingate. "You've been making noise enough to raise the dead for the last quarter of an hour. Mr. Quelch has spoken to me about it."

"Blow Quelch!"

"But what's the matter?"

"The young rotters won't open the door!" roared Loder.

"Well, why should they?" said Wingate. "If I found a crowd like you outside my study, I shouldn't be in a hurry to open the door."

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Walker. "I've been pelted with eggs."

"My study's been raided."

"And mine too!"

"And mine!"

"Same here," said Wingate, holding up the I O U. "What do you think of this?" He read the precious paper aloud. "Does anybody know who 'R' stands for?"

"Remove, of course," said Ionides. "All the Sixth Form studies seem to have been raided, and the Remove certainly raided Loder's study. Bob Cherry brought some of the plunder into my study, and led Loder to suppose that I had taken it."

"Hence, fireworks, I suppose," said Wingate, with a glance at Ionides's damaged countenance. "You look as if you had been butting against a lawn-mower. Then you think it was the young rascals in this study?"

"I know it was."

"What are they locked in for?" demanded Walker. "Besides, I found some of them carrying off the things, and tried to stop them, and they pelted me with eggs."

"Well, I don't mind a joke on All Fools' Day," said Wingate; "but this is going a little too far. They will have to be licked."

Ionides ground his teeth in his savage, Oriental way.

"Ah, I will beat them!" he exclaimed. "I will thrash them. I will break every bone in their wretched bodies!"

"No you won't," said Wingate coolly. "You'll leave them alone. I will take charge of the matter, and give them sufficient licking."

"I shall do as I please. I—"

"You'll mind your own business," said Wingate curtly. "And you can shut up, now, for a start. I'll make those young scamps open the door."

He rapped on the upper panels with his knuckles.

"Wharton! Nugent! Open this door!"

There was no reply. That was not surprising, as the juniors were not in the study at all, although the Sixth did not suspect that fact, so far. They imagined that Harry Wharton & Co. were lying very low.

Wingate rapped again sharply.

"Wharton! You hear me?"

No reply.

"They cannot be here," said Wingate, looking puzzled.

Ionides sneered.

"They care as little for you as for us!" he exclaimed. "They are there, but they will not open the door."

"Nothing of the sort. The juniors would not venture to disobey me," said the captain of Greyfriars, with a frown. "I'll try once more, though." He rapped sharply. "Whoever is in here, open the door."

But there was no voice from within, and the door was not opened. Wingate stepped back.

"They are not there," he said.

"Nonsense!" snarled the Greek. "I say that they are there."

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NEXT  
WEEK:

"FRIENDS OR FOES?"

EVERY  
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"  
LIBRARY.

ONE  
PENNY.

Wingate's eye gleamed. He stepped up to Ionides.

"You said nonsense," he remarked.

"Yes, I did."

"I'm not in the habit of having my remarks called nonsense," said the Greyfriars captain quietly. "I'll trouble you to take it back."

Ionides looked at him savagely; but his fierce, black eyes quailed before the steady look of the English lad.

"Oh, I did not mean to offend you!" he exclaimed. "I spoke hastily. But—"

"That will do," said Wingate, with a curl of the lip. "You'd better pick your words a bit more carefully, Ionides. Leave off making that ghastly row, you fellows. Quelch has complained of the noise; and, besides, the kids are not there."

And Wingate walked away. The other fellows looked at one another, and North and another followed Wingate. Ionides and Loder, Carne and Walker, remained.

"The rats are in the study right enough," said Walker. "They're only keeping quiet to induce us to clear off and leave the coast clear for them."

"Yes, rather."

"We'll jolly well wait."

"I do not see why we should not knock on the door!" exclaimed Ionides, bolder now that the Greyfriars captain was gone.

Loder shook his head.

"It wouldn't do. But we can wait."

And the seniors waited.

They waited with dogged patience. They knew that when the bell rang for afternoon classes, the juniors must go to the Remove room, and if they were in the study, they could not avoid coming out. And when they came out—

And so the avengers of the Sixth waited. The bell began to ring at last, and there was a sound of hurrying feet in the passages of the schoolhouse.

The waiting seniors in the Remove passage exchanged looks. They could not have many minutes to wait now. Harry Wharton & Co. would hardly venture to be late for class.

But still the door of No. 1 Study did not open. The bell ceased to ring, but there was no sound of a movement from within the study. The seniors looked puzzled. It was borne in upon their minds that the locking of the door was a trick; that Wingate had been right, and that the study was unoccupied.

"Sold," said Walker, with a feeble grin.

Ionides gritted his teeth.

"I suppose they are not there," he said. "We may be in time to catch them going to the class-room, after all."

"Good. Hurry up!"

The four seniors hurried to the stairs, and descended quickly. The junior Forms were in the class-rooms now, however, and they were evidently too late. As a matter of fact, they were already late for class themselves.

But Ionides could not resist looking into the Remove classroom as he went towards the Sixth Form-room. The Remove door was open, and the Greek put his head in and glanced round. Harry Wharton & Co. were sitting in their places with the rest of the Form; even Billy Bunter was there, newly washed after his ducking. Bunter had spent the last quarter of an hour cleaning himself in a bath-room, and he was looking red and wrathful. Harry Wharton glanced up as Ionides looked in. He could not help grinning at the furious face of the bully of the Sixth.

Bob Cherry caught Ionides's glance, and half closed one eye in a perceptible wink. The Greek, almost choking with rage, withdrew.

"They are there!" he said.

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

"We're too late!"

"But afterwards!" said the Greek, between his teeth. "It is only postponed. We shall meet the Remove after school, and then—"

And that was just what the Removites, too, were thinking at that moment, and the thought was not a comfortable one.

## THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER

### After the Feast—the Reckoning.

THE April afternoon wore away. There was sunshine in the Close, and a soft breeze rustled the branches of the old elms, growing green now under the genial influence of spring. The lengthening of the days made outdoor games after school once more possible. As a rule, an afternoon breathing with the new energy of spring would have made the Remove long to escape from the dusky classroom and pour out into the sunshine, and lessons would have seemed endless.

But to-day it was different. Harry Wharton & Co.—for



once, at least—weren't at all anxious for classes to be dismissed.

True, they felt no more interested than usual in the exploits of Julius Caesar in Gaul, and they felt annoyed with that great Roman for going to war with tribes that had such difficult names. Mathematics had no unusual charm for them. Latin hexameters were still Latin hexameters—merely that, and nothing more. But all the same, they did not want the class to be dismissed in a hurry.

They had their reasons.

After the feast comes the reckoning. Nemesis, in the form of a crowd of angry Sixth-Formers, waited for the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. had raided the senior studies with their eyes open. They had left I O U's announcing their honourable intention of replacing or paying for all that they raided. But the Sixth were wrathful.

It was very doubtful if even Wingate's good temper could be relied upon to stand such a strain as the Remove had put upon it. As for the others—

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite ready to face the music. They had called the tune, and they did not shrink from paying the piper, but they were not eager for it.

The worst of it was that, owing to Bunter's fatuous folly, all the trouble had been taken for nothing. They might as well have told Marjorie and Clara the truth at once when they arrived at Greyfriars. They could scarcely have been more offended than they were now. Now they were certainly offended, and how to make it up with them was a puzzle. Wharton had no doubt that it would blow over in time—that he would be able to make his peace; but meanwhile he felt very uncomfortable about it. And it was too bad to have to pay the piper with the Sixth as well.

And the Removites who had been concerned in that famous lunch in the old tower did not, therefore, look forward to the hour of dismissal with the usual eagerness.

Mr. Quelch, ignorant of the feelings of his pupils on this subject, closed the afternoon's attendance at the usual hour. As the school clock chimed out the half-hour after four, the Form-master closed his book.

As Mr. Quelch had other matters to attend to, he did not linger in the class-room, but left almost immediately, while the Remove were still filing out.

Some of them did not file out. Harry Wharton and the rest of the raiders remained in the Form-room to discuss the situation. Billy Bunter blinked at them, and went to the door. He put his head out, and popped back quickly into the class-room.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't talk to us!" said Harry, frowning. "We've had enough of you! Keep your head shut, or you'll get it punched!"

"But I say—"

"I've warned you!"

"Yes, but I say—"

Bob Cherry swung a large hand round and caught Billy Bunter a smack on the ear. The fat junior gave a yell.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Shut up!" said Bob. "You've got us into the worst fix of the whole blessed term, and we're not going to have you worrying us in addition. Shut up!"

"Ow! I was only going to say that the Sixth—"

"Dry up!" roared Bob.

And Billy Bunter dried up at last. Ogilvy went to the door and looked out into the passage, and popped back as quickly as Billy Bunter had done.

"Phew!" he said.

"What's the row?"

"We're in for it! The Sixth are on the warpath!" said the Scottish junior, with a dismayed look. "There's a chap watching each end of the passage—Loder at one end and Carne at the other!"

"My hat!"

"They don't mean to let us get away," said Harry, forcing a laugh. "We're in for it, and we shall have to face the music."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!" roared half a dozen voices.

"We've got to go through the mill," said Morgan. "I suppose it's no good thinking of putting up a fight?"

"It's really according to how many there are of them—"

"We can't fight if Wingate's among them," said Harry quietly, "or Courtney; but if there are only seniors who are not prefects we'll do our little best."

"Right-ho!"

"As for Ionides and Loder and Carne, we're up against them all the time, and if they lay a finger on us we'll give the best we can in exchange."

"Hear, hear!"

"I can hear 'em coming!" said Ogilvy.

"Line up," said Harry. "If Wingate's there we'll try argument; if he isn't, we'll fight, and try to get through."

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"What-ho!"

There was a tramp of feet in the passage. The Removites, feeling ludicrously like rats in a trap with a dog about to be let loose on them, waited in painful anxiety. They had raided the Sixth, and they were ready to face the music, but the nearer it came the less pleasant it seemed to face.

"Here they are!"

It was Loder's voice. He looked into the Form-room, and then entered. Ionides and Carne followed him, and then Walker and North and Courtney. There were six of the seniors, and the odds, at least, were on the side of the Remove. But a moment later Wingate entered. The hardest of the juniors never dreamed of resisting the captain of Greyfriars, who was not only armed with authority by the Head, but was the most popular fellow in the school.

Wingate had a cane in his hand, and the juniors looked at that cane with painful interest. He glanced grimly at the silent group.

"So you're here!" he said.

"Yes, we're here!" said Wharton cheerfully—as cheerfully as he could. "Glad to see you, Wingate."

"You'll be gladder to see the last of me, I expect," said Wingate. "It seems that you have been raiding the Sixth-Form studies."

"Well, not exactly raiding," said Harry cautiously. "You see, we were hard up—in particularly hard circumstances—and we wanted a loan of some grub. It was a raid in one sense, as we forgot to ask permission to borrow the grub, but we really regarded it as a borrowing expedition. We left I O U's in every study, with a list of the grub taken, and, of course, we intend to make the loss good."

"Cheeky young sweep!" said Loder.

"Cub!" said Ionides.

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"I'm not speaking to you!" he exclaimed. "I'm speaking to Wingate! As for you, I don't care what you think, and I'm not afraid of you!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry, in his stentorian tones.

"You young hound—" began Ionides furiously, but Wingate cut him short.

"Enough of that!" he said. "We didn't come here for a slanging match. Now, you kids, I don't object to a little fun, especially on the First of April, but you know as well as I do that raiding the Sixth is overstepping the line. It would serve you right to report you to the Head, and get you a flogging all round. I'm not going to do that, but I'm jolly well going to give you the licking you deserve."

"Oh, all right!" said Harry resignedly. "You're a decent chap, Wingate, and I dare say you're right. Anyway, if you think we ought to be licked we're ready to take our medicine."

"Quite ready," said Hazeldene; "only do lay it on gently, there's a good chap."

"But don't forget the I O U's," said Nugent quickly. "If you accept the I O U's, and we make the loss good, that's agreeing to the loan, you know, and you've no right to lick us. If you lick us, it's a raid, and the I O U's become void."

"Hear, hear!"

"You ought to be a lawyer," said Wingate, with a grin. "What do you fellows say? It wouldn't be playing the game to have it both ways. So shall they be licked for their cheek or allowed to make up the loss?"

"Licked!" said the Sixth-Formers with one voice.

The Removites exchanged a feeble grin.

"Of course, it's just as you like," said Wharton. "But as business chaps, you know, you'd find it better to let us make up the loss."

"This way, Wharton," said Wingate, taking a business-like grip on the cane. "Your turn first."

"You see—"

"I'm waiting!"

Harry Wharton said no more. Argument was evidently useless. He stepped up to take his "gruel" first, and held out his hand.

Wingate could generally be relied upon to lay it on lightly. As captain of the school, he frequently had to lick the juniors, but he usually tempered justice with mercy. But Wingate was very much in earnest on the present occasion. The dignity of the Sixth Form had been outraged. As Bob Cherry remarked afterwards, the giddy palladium of the school had been touched with profane hands. All the seniors were indignant, and Wingate felt that the insult to the top Form could only be wiped out in canings.

And so Wingate put into the punishment a great deal of the muscular force he had gained on the parallel-bars and with the Indian-clubs.

He took the juniors in turn, giving them six cuts—three on each hand—and each cut was hard enough to make the recipient gasp and wriggle.

The Remove went through it bravely. Round the door were clustered a crowd of their Form-fellows, looking in,



some of them grinning, but most sympathetic. They had no reason to be ashamed of the way the leaders of the Form took their punishment. All of them took it with grim fortitude, and if they could not avoid expressing their feelings in occasional gasps and grunts, that was all.

Billy Bunter was trying to keep out of sight behind the master's desk. The fat junior watched the punishment with a sort of fascinated stare through his big spectacles. Like Ulysses in the Cyclops' cave, he was reserved till the last.

But when Wingate had finished with Harry Wharton & Co., he showed that the fat junior had not succeeded in escaping his sight. He beckoned to Bunter.

"Come here!"

The Owl of the Remove tried to efface himself behind the desk. Wingate raised his voice.

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-es?"

"Come here!"

"Oh, I say, Wingate—"

"Do you want me to come and fetch you?"

Billy Bunter came out from behind the desk reluctantly. He blinked nervously at Wingate and at the cane as he approached.

Harry Wharton looked on grimly. They were not sorry to see the Owl of the Remove share the punishment. He had been the cause of all the trouble. He had made the raid necessary, and had rendered it useless afterwards by betraying the facts of the case to the Cliff House girls. He had caused that severe punishment, and he had caused the added galling consciousness that it was all for nothing. It was only fair that Bunter should taste the same medicine.

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!" said the Greyfriars captain.

"Oh, I say, you know—"

"Quick!"

"I—I say, I wasn't in the raid!" gasped Bunter, backing away again. "I—ask any of the fellows; they'll say I wasn't with them."

Wingate glanced at the juniors.

"Is that true?"

"Oh, really, Wingate, I hope you don't doubt my word!"

"Shut up, Bunter! Is he telling the truth, you kids?"

"He wasn't in the raid," said Wharton. "I wasn't myself, for that matter, if that makes any difference. It was only my idea, and Bunter was the cause of the whole affair."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The fat worm!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "After

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causing the whole trouble, to try and sneak out of the licking! You fat porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

"I—I wasn't in the raid!"

"Did you eat any of the grub?" demanded Wingate.

"I—I—I—"

"Yes or no?"

"Well, I—I—perhaps I had a snack," stammered Bunter. "I—I couldn't very well refuse when they pressed me so hard."

"Yes, I can guess how much pressing you needed," said Wingate. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, you scoffed about half the lot. Hold out your hand. Everybody who was in the feed is entitled to a licking, and I'm not going to deprive you of your due."

"Oh, really—"

Wingate made a threatening gesture, and Bunter held out his hand. He received exactly the same punishment as the others, but he made more noise about it than all the rest put together. He wriggled and squirmed, and roared and howled.

"Oh, stop that row, you cowardly worm!" said Wingate, putting the cane under his arm. "Now, you kids, I hope that will be a lesson to you. I won't say it has hurt me as much as it has hurt you, like the good teacher in the story-book, because it hasn't. But I don't like the trouble of licking you, so I hope you'll keep off the grass a little more carefully in future."

"Thanks!" said Harry, with a faint grin. "We'll try."

And Wingate and the other seniors went out, most of them grinning. The heroes of the Remove looked at one another with ghastly smiles.

"Well, this is a jolly ending to All Fools' Day!" said Bob Cherry, grinning at last. "I rather think the happenings of to-day have been quite appropriate to the date, and we can consider ourselves all fools."

And the smarting juniors agreed that they could.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

## The First Chapters of a New Serial.



# STANLEY DARE

## The Boy Detective

### INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, having rescued a lad named Tom Winfield from the Thames, into which he had been flung by would-be assassins, becomes interested in the case. He journeys from London to Launceston, Tasmania, where Tom Winfield lives, and there meets his old friend, Professor MacAndrew, who offers to assist him to trace young Winfield's unknown assailants. The three are travelling in the bush together when Tom Winfield is kidnapped, and Stanley Dare traces him and his four captors to a hut in a clearing. Leaving a black fellow to watch the hut, the young detective makes his way to where Professor MacAndrew is awaiting him.

### A Sinister Message—Watoonga's Report—In Search of Silas Warner.

"What is the meaning of that smoke?"

Stanley Dare gripped the professor's arm and pointed over the tops of the giant gum-trees to where thick wreaths of smoke were curling upwards. They were within half a mile of Bastable's camp, and the dense smoke appeared to be ascending from the clearing.

Watoonga had been left to watch the quartette of miscreants—perhaps Jim the Tracker did not deserve the epithet—who had Winfield in their clutches, while Stanley Dare made his way to the place where the native told him MacAndrew was awaiting him. It was daybreak when he reached the professor's halting-place, and, after a wash and

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WEEK:

"FRIENDS OR FOES?"

a hasty breakfast, they started back for Whirlpool Reach. More than twenty-four hours had passed since the young detective had had a wink of sleep, and even then it was only the uneasy and fitful slumber that he had obtained when he was bound and helpless. But he showed no sign of giving in notwithstanding all he had undergone since that eventful night at the International Hotel.

"A bush fire, mebbe," said MacAndrew in answer to Dare's query.

"No, no!" exclaimed Dare. "It is all coming up from the one spot. A bush fire is not stationary."

"I can hear the crackling of wood," pursued MacAndrew.

They hurried on, a grim foreboding at Dare's heart. Presently they came in sight of the clearing. The hut was in flames. Stanley Dare made a dash forward, getting as near



to it as possible, and peered with straining eyes into the burning mass. He knew full well the cruel nature of Luke Bastable, and he feared the worst.

That evil-souled miscreant would not have hesitated to set fire to the hut, leaving Tom Winfield to a dreadful fate, bound and helpless within it. It is true that Jim the Tracker, from interested motives, was doing all he could to prevent Tom Winfield's life being taken; but he was only one against three, and would not be likely to risk his own life on the young Tasmanian's account.

But, to Stanley Dare's relief, he could distinguish no sign of that which he had dreaded to see. Moreover, the fact that Watoonga was nowhere about was an indication that Winfield was still alive. The black fellow had evidently followed on the trail of the kidnappers, which he would hardly have done had Tom Winfield been killed.

An exclamation from Professor MacAndrew caused Dare to turn away from the hut and cross over to the side of the clearing at which he was standing. He had a half sheet of note paper in his hand, and there was a look of fierce indignation in his eyes as he read what was written upon it.

"I found this bit paper nailed tae a tree," he said as Dare joined him. "Read what the scoundril has written."

The words scrawled upon the paper bore no signature, but they did not need any. They ran as follows:

"Whirlpool Reach Camp.

"If you attempt to follow, or to again interfere in a matter that does not concern you, the worst that can possibly happen will happen to your 'friend.' But there will be no proof that anything has happened to him, except from the fact that he will disappear, without leaving a trace behind him."

Dare folded the paper up and placed it carefully in his pocket-book.

"The most astute criminals make mistakes sometimes," he said. "This note is in Silas Warner's handwriting, indifferently disguised. He has been instructed to write it by Luke Bastable, but it is a bit surprising that he should have risked putting a pen to paper. If Tom Winfield mysteriously disappears, Silas Warner will have to explain the meaning of the words he has written in a court of justice. And he is not the sort of man to suffer for others."

"He would betray his associates," said MacAndrew.

"To a certainty," replied Dare. "I am glad he wrote this note; it will give me a hold upon him that I will not relax. And if any harm comes to Tom Winfield, I'll not rest until I have hunted down those scoundrels and the hangman's rope is ready for them!"

"Ye said that Jim the Tracker had a knowledge of some transaction which gave him a hold over the lawyer. Mebbe he'd sell the secret to us—"

"I'm not at all sure about that," said Dare; "and I don't altogether care about doing business on those lines. It is foolish, I dare say, for a detective to have scruples; but I suppose it is the sporting instinct ingrained in me. As for the 'Tracker'—well, I must confess I've taken almost a liking to that easy-going scoundrel, and I have great hopes that he may be persuaded in due course to give up his present mode of life, and try to earn his living by honest means as an agreeable change."

"I'm glad tae hear ye talk like that, laddie," said the professor; "for, after all, it's a pair thing tae hae tae be beholden to an informer."

As Watoonga had evidently gone after Bastable and his associates, they decided to camp down somewhere in the neighbourhood until his return, which would probably be some time that evening.

A suitable spot was found near the river bank—for neither of them fancied the clearing where the hut was by this time reduced to a heap of charred and glowing embers—and here Stanley Dare laid himself down on the grass, and in a few minutes was soundly asleep.

At sunset they had the meal which in the bush is generally

called "supper," and which is simply a meat tea, as townsfolk understand it. At its conclusion the professor stuffed a huge briar pipe with strong "Navy-cut" tobacco, and puffed away contentedly. Dare was not a smoker.

Night had fallen when MacAndrew caught sight of a ramshackle old boat being paddled across the river. It was run into the bank under the shadow of some overhanging bushes. Three minutes later Watoonga was standing by the camp-fire.

"What news?" asked Dare.

"This black fellow," said Watoonga, as he helped himself to food on the professor's invitation, "followed the bad men's tracks for twenty miles, when they had to camp, for the man with the devil's eyes could go no further." In this simile Watoonga was thinking of the Tasmanian devil, a peculiarly vicious and untamable animal. "The man with the pale face, shaped like a rat's, left them before they camped."

MacAndrew smiled grimly at the description.

"He'll mean Silas Warner," he said. "A face shaped like a rat's! Ma conscience, it's a guid description!"

"What about my friend?" asked Dare. "You know who I mean—the one they were carrying away a captive."

"This black fellow is a good tracker," pursued Watoonga. "They had a pony across the river, and put your friend on his back. That I saw with my eyes. After that I followed the tracks only, and did not see them until they camped. There were three men and the pony. No more. Your friend had gone."

"But he must have left a trail—"

"A man who cannot walk does not leave a trail unless he crawls," said Watoonga. "No one had crawled. There was the one trail only."

This was startling news indeed—startling and incomprehensible. Dare was utterly at a loss to know what to make of it. He did not doubt that Watoonga had brought a correct report, for Australian natives are unrivalled trackers. But what could have become of Tom Winfield?

The sinister words in the note recurred to his mind:

"There will be no proof that anything has happened to him, except that he will disappear without leaving a trace behind him."

He had disappeared, and no trace was left!

Far into the night they sat discussing the situation. In the end it was decided that MacAndrew and Dare should return to Launceston, whither they believed Silas Warner had gone, and wring the truth from that crafty lawyer. Watoonga was again to follow on the trail of the three men and report in two days' time.

"They will be making for some hiding-place," said Dare. "Find out everything you can, Watoonga, and when the work is finished you shall have fifty of these."

He held up a sovereign. Watoonga's eyes glistened. Fifty pounds would be a fortune to him.

"This black fellow," he said, "will earn the money."

Then picking up the only weapon he carried—a waddy, or sort of club made of hard, heavy wood—he glided away as noiselessly as a shadow, and was soon lost to view. Apparently he was capable of going without sleep for a great length of time.

The professor and Stanley Dare arrived back in Launceston about midday on the following day, but they did not go to the hotel at once.

A quiet inn on the outskirts of the town served their purpose for the time being, as if Silas Warner had returned it was possible he would be on the look-out for them.

Dare wanted first of all to find out where the villainous old lawyer's offices were situated, but he was not able to learn anything about them. If he had an office in the town, as Jim the Tracker had stated, it was evident that he did not practise openly at his business there.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling detective story next Tuesday. Please order your "Magnet" in advance. Price One Penny.)

# For Next Week



## "FRIENDS OR FOES."

The Chums of Greyfriars are thrown into a state of excitement, and the difficulty of settling a vexed question is not made easier by the intrusion of Billy Bunter.

The Editor



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