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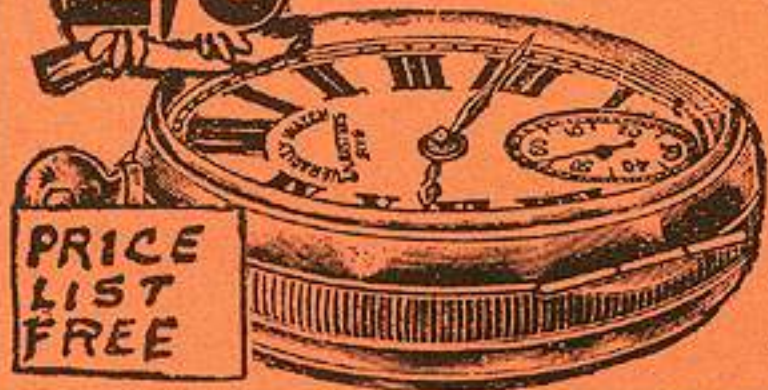


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Harry Wharton & Co.
and Alonzo Todd at
Greyfriars.*

- By -

FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter Does Not Wish to be Hard.

"I DON'T want to be hard on you fellows!" Billy Bunter made that statement, in No. 1 Study in the Remove. The fat junior of Greyfriars was sitting in the armchair—the only armchair in the study. Bunter generally had that when he was there. Why he should always have it, more than anybody else, was a

mystery; unless it was that, as Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Harree Singh had clubbed together to purchase it, Bunter felt that he ought to perform his share of the transaction by sitting in it.

Bunter had one fat leg crossed over the other fat leg, as he leaned back in the armchair. Thus one foot was elevated in the air, and about six inches of a gorgeous sock met the view. Billy Bunter had gorgeous tastes in some things, and

his socks and his neckties and his pyjamas would have made an average rainbow look pale.

The three chums of No. 1 Study were there when Bunter broke the silence with the statement that he did not wish to be hard on them.

Each of the three stared at the Owl of the Remove, who blinked back through his big spectacles with quite a benevolent expression.

"What's that?" said Harry Wharton.

"I don't want to be hard on you."

"Then don't talk," said Nugent bluntly.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The talkfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The shut-upfulness would be the boon and the blessing."

"Look here, Inky—" Billy Bunter blinked at the dusky junior, looking a little less benevolent. "I say, you fellows, I was saying that I didn't want to be hard on you. And I don't!"

"Good!" said Harry Wharton, with a nod. "I don't know what you're talking about, but I don't want to know, so that's all right. If you've finished, dry up! You're bothering me."

"I know you'll drive me to it, among you."

"Eh?"

"I don't want to be hard on you—"

"My hat! Change the record!" exclaimed Nugent. "We've heard that before."

"Look here, you fellows, if it comes about, you'll only have yourselves to thank, that's all," said Bunter, blinking indignantly.

"If what comes about?"

"I've said that I don't want to be hard on you. I've stood a lot in this study—shortage of food, and absolute rudeness when I've wanted a small loan at times. At the same time, I feel that it's my duty to stick to the old firm, in spite of advantageous offers elsewhere."

"What?"

"I suppose you know there's a new study opened in this passage," said Billy Bunter, with a sniff. "The idea is to relieve some of the studies that are crowded now."

"Yes, I know about it."

"Every study that has as many as four fellows in it has a chance. A chap who thinks he's crowded can go to the Form-master and ask for leave to change into the new study," said Billy Bunter.

"Well?"

"Well, as I've said, I don't want to be hard on you fellows—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"But look here!" exclaimed Bunter angrily. "Unless I'm better treated in this study, I shall change into the new one—No. 14. So there!"

It was out now!

Billy Bunter lay back in the armchair, inserted his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and blinked at the chums of the Remove.

They stared at him in return.

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton at last.

"The hatfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"That's how it stands," said Bunter. "I know I'm wanted in this study. I'm the only chap here who can cook—what I call cooking—and I'm useful in lots of ways, as well as being a very entertaining chap. Pretty dull here without me, I think, if I were to go. But you fellows needn't be afraid. I don't want to desert you. As I said before, it's not my wish to be hard on you."

"My word!"

"You've treated me in a beastly way often enough. If I stay here, I shall expect some change in that respect."

"You'll expect some change?"

"Certainly. I think I ought to be trusted with the key of the cupboard, and if I want a small loan now and then, or an advance on one of my postal orders, I think I ought to have it without a lot of grumbling."

"Oh!"

"Then I shall expect to be better fed," said Billy Bunter, warming to his subject. "I'm not what anybody would call a greedy chap, but I can't be starved. I've got a delicate constitution, and in justice to myself I must have enough to eat."

"Go on!"

"Well, that's about all," said Bunter. "The question of the grub, and of the small loan now and then, are the most important. Any other little matters I can mention to you later. Now, I don't want you fellows to be feeling uneasy. I haven't any intention of leaving the study, if you play the game."

"Thanks!"

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"Oh, all right, I mean it! You fellows can rely on me to stick to you while there's a shot in the locker—"

"Or a tart in the cupboard," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Or twopence in any pocket here."

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Sure there's nothing else you have to make conditions about?" asked Harry Wharton, suppressing a laugh.

"Well, there's one thing," said Bunter, "I don't like your rotten jokes in this study, and I tell you plainly, that if I get many more of them, you won't see much of me here in the future. Then there's that way you have of bumping a fellow when you're waxy—I don't like that. It interferes with my digestion—a most important matter. If you fellows ever bump me again, I shall leave this study, never to re-enter it."

Wharton winked at his chums.

"You mean that, Billy?"

"Yes, certainly," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Now, let's have it clear," said Wharton, in a thoughtful sort of way. "If we bump you once more, you'll leave this study."

"Yes!"

"And never enter it again."

"Never!"

"And you mean it?"

"Every word!"

"Then," said Harry, rising to his feet, "I think we can't do better than give you a record bumping, old fellow."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent, jumping up. "Bump him!"

"The bumpfulness is terrific!"

And the three chums of the Lower Fourth rushed at Billy Bunter.

In a moment the fat junior was grasped and whisked out of the armchair.

He gave a wild yell.

"I say, you fellows—oh—ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

Bump!

Down came the fat junior with a bump that made the study shake.

He was too fat to be much hurt by a bumping, but it was a shock, and he gave a terrific roar.

"Yow! Ow! Yaroo! Chuck it! Yah!"

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yaroo! Help! Grooh! Yah! Oh!"

Bunter tore himself away from the grasp of the juniors. He made a bolt for the door, and dashed out into the passage and fled. The chums of the Remove burst into a roar of laughter as he ran, and it followed the Owl of the Remove down the passage as he rolled on his way gasping for breath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Alonzo Obliges.

"HA, ha, ha!" The chums of the Remove were still laughing when a head was put in at the study door, and Nugent reached out for a cushion, thinking it was Bunter returning. But it was only Alonzo.

Alonzo Todd, distinguished at Greyfriars by the title of "The Duffer," looked surprised as he gazed at the three chums, with the tears of merriment rolling down their cheeks.

"Dear me!" he said. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing, Toddy," said Frank Nugent, wiping his eyes. "Have you seen Bunter?"

"Yes, he passed me a few moments since, proceeding with great celerity," said Alonzo Todd, who was an old-fashioned youth, and spoke a variety of English quite his own, and almost as remarkable in its way as Hurree Singh's. "I surmised that he was disturbed considerably in his mind, as he did not reply when I addressed him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I came here to borrow a frying-pan," said Todd, looking round. "Can you oblige me with the loan of such an article?"

"There's one in the cupboard," said Harry Wharton. "What on earth do you want a frying-pan for? Taking up cooking?"

"Not exactly," said Todd confidentially. "You see, my intention is to be obliging. You know I am now in a study with Skinner and Stott and Snoop. I have been on somewhat strained terms with them for some time, owing to a slight accident. It was really not my fault, as I meant to



"Come in!" said Mr. Quelch resignedly, as a tap came on his study door. Alonzo Todd entered with a bundle of books and papers in his arms, several of which he dropped in the doorway. "If you please, sir—" he began. (See page 5.)

be obliging. My Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me to be very obliging. I cleared up the study, you know, just to please them, as they are very untidy, and burnt all the old papers lying about. Of course, I did not know that they had had impositions to do, and that the papers I burnt were their lines. How was I to know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not really a laughing matter, because Skinner and Stott and Snoop were very angry. However, I am going to make the matter up to them."

"Standing them a feed, eh?"

"Well, no, not exactly. I should do so, only I am short of money, having lent what I had to Bunter, in advance upon a postal-order he is expecting. There has been some delay in the postal-order coming. But Skinner and Stott are standing a tea themselves, and having several fellows in, Skinner having had a remittance this morning from his uncle. Now, the things are all in the study ready, and I am going to surprise Skinner by having them all cooked ready when he comes in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, my Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me that the way to please people is to do obliging things," said Todd.

"My hat! Better let them alone," said Harry. "You know how unfortunate you always are when you make yourself useful."

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NEXT WEEK: "THE DUFFER'S DOWNFALL."

Todd shook his head.

"I feel it is my duty to perform this service for Skinner," he said. "So if you will lend me your frying-pan—"

"Oh, you can have the frying-pan!"

"Thank you so much."

And Alonzo Todd departed with the frying-pan in his hand. The three chums grinned at one another. Todd was the most obliging fellow in the world, but all his efforts to oblige turned out in an unfortunate way—generally for the person he wished to benefit. Harry Wharton & Co. did not think Skinner was likely to be pleased by Todd's efforts.

Wharton finished the imposition he had been engaged upon when Bunter had interrupted, and the chums left the study about five minutes after Todd. Bob Cherry was coming down the passage, and he nodded to them.

"Seen the new study?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"Come and look at it. It's next to mine, and partitioned off from the old box-room. It's all right. I don't know who's in it yet."

The juniors walked up the passage to the upper staircase, at the foot of which was the large box-room, at the end of the Remove passage. The new study had been partitioned off with wood, and papered out, and looked very fresh and clean, one of the old box-room windows nearly filling up one wall, and letting in plenty of light. The study was not furnished yet, it being a custom at Greyfriars for the fellows

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton and Alonzo Todd. By FRANK RICHARDS.

to furnish their own studies, even to the carpet. A table was standing in it, and that was all. It looked very fresh and clean.

"Looks all right," said Harry, glancing round. "I fancy Bunter will be in here. We've had too big an allowance of him in No. 1, and I shall be glad to get the length of the passage between us."

"Yes, rather," said Nugent emphatically; and the Nabob of Bhanipur added that the ratherfulness was terrific.

"By Jove! What's that smell?" exclaimed Bob Cherry sniffing.

It was a strong odour of burning, and it was wafted into the room from the passage.

Harry Wharton stepped out of the study and sniffed.

"My hat! Something's burning!"

The chums hurried down the passage.

They soon located the smell as proceeding from Skinner's study. The door was closed, but a smelly smoke was issuing underneath, and through the keyhole.

Harry Wharton threw the door open quickly.

A blinding rush of smell and smoke made him stagger back. The atmosphere in the study was very hazy.

"My hat!" gasped Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "It's Alonzo!"

Alonzo Todd stood at the grate. He had banked up a huge fire, and the study was sweltering in heat. Todd stood at the fire with the frying-pan, which was loaded up to the brim with chops and melted butter. A great wave of grease had rolled over the edge of the pan into the fire, whence the smell and the smoke.

"What on earth are you doing, Todd?" shouted Harry.

The Duffer of Greyfriars looked round.

"I'm cooking," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The handle of the frying-pan became heated," explained Todd. "Catching hold of it suddenly, I burnt my fingers, and upset some of the fat. I— Oh, dear!"

"Great Scott!"

Todd had neglected the frying-pan while he was speaking. It was resting on the hot coals, and the coals had shifted. The frying-pan, laden with half-cooked chops and a sea of grease, plunged sideways into the glowing embers.

There was a rush and a roar of flame.

Todd staggered back.

"Oh, dear!"

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, retreating into the passage.

"Phew!"

"The phewfulness is terrific!"

The study was thick with smoke and blacks. The smell of burning was terrible, the chops frizzling away blackly in the heart of the fire. The chimney was booming with a sullen roar.

"Oh, dear!" said Alonzo, in dismay.

"My hat!" exclaimed Skinner, coming along the passage with Stott, and Snoop, and Trevor, and two or three other fellows he had invited to tea. "What on earth's that?"

Trevor sniffed.

"There's a giddy fire in your study, I think."

"That ass Todd!"

Skinner rushed up to the study.

He choked as he caught the air from it, but he plunged in, and grasped the Duffer of the Remove by the shoulder.

"Todd! You dummy! What do you mean by getting the study into this state when I've got chaps coming to tea?" he roared.

"I'm so sorry—"

"You chump—"

"I'm so—"

"Open the window, you ass! You fathead! Poof! Phew! What the dickens did you want to cook at all for? You could have had tea with us; you knew I was standing a feed!" howled Skinner. "I had chops enough for all."

"I was cooking them."

"What!"

"I'm so sorry, Skinner, but my intention was to oblige. I was cooking the chops ready for you, when this unfortunate accident happened."

Skinner stood petrified.

He stood looking alternately at the frizzling black fragments in the fire, and at the perspiring face of the Duffer of Greyfriars.

"I'm so sorry," repeated Alonzo.

"You—you dangerous ass!"

"You see—"

"My chops!" said Skinner. "You've made the study into this state, and burnt up all my chops—tenpenny chops! Oh, you villain!"

"My dear Skinner—"

"You—you burglar! You dummy! You—you scoundrel!"

"Really—"

Skinner rushed at Todd. Words failed him. He grasped

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the Duffer of the Remove by the shoulders and swung him round.

"Ow!" roared Alonzo. "Yow! Look here—"

He was cut short, as Skinner's boot was planted behind him, and he was hurled to the doorway.

"Get out!" roared Skinner. "And if you ever come into this study again, I'll—I'll squash you!"

"But really—"

"Kick the villain out!"

And the other juniors willingly obeyed. Todd went down the passage, as it seemed to him, with a thousand boots crashing upon him, and he gained the stairs and fled down them at breakneck speed.

Harry Wharton & Co. went on their way weeping with laughter. And Alonzo Todd had only meant to be kind and obliging.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Limit.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Harry Wharton & Co. had made their purchases at the school shop, and were laying them out on the tea-table in the study, when Billy Bunter blinked in at the door. There was an uneasy and ingratiating grin upon the fat countenance of Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Want another bumping?" asked Nugent.

Bunter receded into the passage a little.

"N-n-no," he said. "Of course, you were only joking. I wouldn't think of taking it seriously. As I said, I don't want to be hard on you. I'm not really thinking of changing into another study, you know."

"No?"

"Certainly not. I shouldn't like to leave fellows I feel a sincere friendship for. You needn't be uneasy."

"You fat boulder!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"But you were going to leave the study and never enter it again, if we bumped you," said Wharton.

"That was only a j-j-joke, you know."

"Oh, rats! You can't disappoint us like that. There's a new study at the end of the passage, and if you don't ask Quelch to put you into it, we shall."

"Eh!"

"We're fed up with you," said Harry Wharton. "I think you've reached the limit. Do you think I'm likely to forget that when you thought I was drowned in the cave at Pegg, all you thought of was to get a feed?"

"Oh, really—"

"Shut up!"

"I suppose I'm to come in to tea," said Bunter indignantly.

"Oh, come in if you like!"

Billy Bunter came into the study. He was looking very disquieted. It had not occurred to the Owl of the Remove that the chums might really be glad to get rid of him from the study, and under the persuasion that he was a very valuable fellow, he had ridden the high horse—and had had a fall, as riders of the high horse frequently do.

He was in a rather difficult position now.

He was quite prepared to eat his words, as far as that went—that was nothing to Billy Bunter. But if Wharton really asked Mr. Quelch to change the fat junior into the new study, he might have to go.

And Billy Bunter was far from wishing to live so far from his bankers, as Frank Nugent had put it. He knew he would never get anybody else to put up with him so patiently as Harry Wharton & Co. had done.

He sat down to the tea-table with a grunt.

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If Bunter had mended his ways a little, and tried to make himself more agreeable, the chums might have relented towards him.

But Bunter was always the same Bunter.

He helped himself in his greedy way all the time, apparently regardless of the claims of anybody else, and as soon as tea was over, he stretched his fat figure in the arm-chair, and put the softest cushion in the study under his head.

"You might push that footstool over here, Nugent," he remarked.

Nugent patiently pushed over the footstool.

"I say, Wharton, the fire's going down," Bunter said.

Wharton mended the fire.

"There's a draught from that window," said Bunter.

Hurree Singh pushed the window up.

"You fellows might talk a bit more quietly," said Bunter.

"I like to have a rest after tea, you know. It soothes my nerves."

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances. The same thought was in all their minds; that Bunter was intolerable, and that it would be absurd not to take the opportunity they had now of shifting him out of the study.

"As for my changing my study," Bunter went on, "I don't want to do it. I'll stay here; on the whole, I'll stay here. If you fellows choose to be ungrateful about it, I can't help it."

"Oh, let's get out!" said Nugent. "I shall tip up the chair and pitch him into the coal-scuttle if he talks to me."

The chums of the Remove left the study, taking their books with them. It was not the first time they had left Bunter alone in the study, and taken their preparation into the Form-room, or the common-room, to escape from the infliction of his society. Bunter didn't mind. He liked having the study to himself.

The fat junior settled down comfortably.

A few minutes later Alonzo Todd looked in. The Duffer of Greyfriars wore a very worried expression.

"Ah! Isn't Wharton here?" he said. "I thought he would be doing his prep."

Bunter grunted.

"What do you want to come disturbing a fellow for?" he growled. "No, Wharton's not here. They're doing their prep. downstairs."

"Dear me! I was going to ask if I might do mine here," said Todd. "Skinner is in a very bad temper, and he threatens to brain me with the poker if I enter the study. It is really very unreasonable of Skinner, you know, because it is my study as much as his, and I must really do my prep."

"Groo!"

"He is very annoyed about a slight accident that occurred to-day. I am sure I only meant to be obliging, a thing my Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me. Can I do my prep. here, Bunter?"

Bunter started out of a doze.

"Groo—eh? What?"

"I should like to do my prep. in this study——"

"Oh, get out!"

"My dear Bunter!"

"Can't you see I'm taking a nap?" roared Bunter indignantly. "Wharton and the rest have taken their prep. downstairs so as to leave me in peace. I told Wharton I should have to have some little comforts, if I was to remain in the study."

"Really——"

"You see, I threatened to change into the new study," said Bunter. "I could if I liked. Wharton almost went down on his knees to me."

"Did he really?" exclaimed Todd, in astonishment. The Duffer of Greyfriars believed everything that was told him, but he could hardly imagine the captain of the Remove on his knees to Billy Bunter.

"Certainly he did!" said Bunter. "There were almost tears in his eyes. I'm a popular chap in this study."

"Dear me! I should never have thought it."

"That's not all, of course. It's my cooking, you know—I'm a jolly good cook; and then, I usually provide the things to be cooked," said Bunter, with a fat wink. "I don't talk very much about it, of course, and you needn't mention it, Todd——"

"Oh, certainly!"

"But as a matter of fact, most of the funds in this study come from me. The money I lend Wharton would make you open your eyes, if you knew what it amounted to at the end of the term. That's one thing I dislike in Wharton, he never repays a small loan."

"Doesn't he?"

"No, never. He seems to think that the money is in common, really, just because I share the same study with him. Of course, I am an easy-going chap, and often get advantage taken of me. I should have been able to settle that little matter with you before, Todd, but as a matter of fact, Wharton had the money."

"Dear me!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"I don't suppose he will ever settle up. He hasn't the same ideas about money that I have. You see—— Oh!"

Bunter broke off short.

The short-sighted junior had just become aware of a crimson and enraged face glaring at him in the open study doorway.

It was Harry Wharton's.

Harry had returned to the study for his Latin dictionary, and Bunter's kind and good-natured references to himself fell on his ears as he came up to the study. Wharton knew Bunter, but he did not know him to this extent. He stopped dead in the doorway, too amazed and enraged to speak, and so Bunter had rattled on unconsciously.

Even Bunter paled a little as he saw Wharton.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Is that—that you, Wharton? I—I—I was just telling Todd that—that—that I—I——"

"That you had lent me money, which I wasn't honest enough to repay!" said Harry, his voice trembling with anger.

"I—I didn't put it exactly like that," said Bunter eagerly.

"I—I—what I really meant was, that—that you had lent me money, you know!"

"You lying rascal!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You rotten slanderer!" exclaimed Harry, stamping his foot. "Only Todd would be ass enough to believe that you ever lent anybody any money, or ever repaid a loan you had borrowed. You young cad! And I had made up my mind to put up with you, and stand you in the study, because I hadn't the heart to kick you out."

"Oh, really?" stammered Bunter.

"But that's settled now, you cad! I'll go straight to Mr. Quelch and ask him to change you into the new study."

And Wharton strode away.

"Dear me!" said Alonzo Todd. "You have been telling me untruths, Bunter."

Billy Bunter only grunted discontentedly. He felt that he had put his foot in it this time, and that there was no getting it out again.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Todd Changes.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, laid down his pen as a knock came at his study door, and said "Come in!"

Three juniors entered—the chums of No. 1 Study.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch.

"We—we have a favour to ask of you, sir," said Harry Wharton diffidently.

The Remove-master smiled.

"You do not often do that, Wharton. Go on."

"There is a new study in the Remove passage now, sir, to relieve the overcrowded ones, I understand?"

"Yes."

"Could you change one of the fellows from our study into it, sir?"

Mr. Quelch looked surprised.

"Certainly," he said. "But—I understood that you three lads were quite inseparable. I hope you have not been having any foolish quarrels."

Wharton coloured.

"Oh, no, sir!" he exclaimed. "We never quarrel—or hardly ever, and then it doesn't last. That's all right, sir. It's Bunter we're thinking of."

"Oh, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. If you could put Bunter into the new study, sir, it—it would be a very great favour, sir."

Mr. Quelch coughed slightly.

"Does Bunter want to be exchanged?" he asked.

The chums exchanged glances.

"Well, not exactly," said Harry cautiously. "I can't say he does, sir. But—but we think he'd really be better in the new study, sir."

The Form-master pursed his lips.

"I should be glad to oblige you, Wharton," he said. "It would be better, however, if Bunter himself asked to be changed. Perhaps if you put it to him——"

Wharton's face fell.

"Oh, very well, sir!"

"It would be more satisfactory."

"I suppose you're right, sir."

And the chums of the Lower Fourth retired. Mr. Quelch sat looking thoughtful, till another tap came at his door.

"Come in!" he said resignedly.

Alonzo Todd entered. He had a bundle of books and papers under his arm, several of which he dropped in the doorway. He stopped and groped for them. Mr. Quelch's eyes on him all the time, and his face growing red. He found them all, and came into the study, and a couple more books slipped from under his arm and crashed on the floor close to the

Form-master's table. Alonzo stooped for them, recovered them and knocked his head against the table in so doing. He gave a sharp yelp, and then at last stood upright, looking very crimson and confused.

Mr. Quelch smiled slightly.

"Well, Todd, are you now ready to tell me why you have come to my study?" he asked, with an air of exaggerated patience.

"Oh, certainly, sir! I——" An unlucky book slipped away again, and in picking it up Todd let two or three more drop.

"H'm! Suppose you leave them on the floor for the present," suggested Mr. Quelch, as the Duffer began to grope. "What do you want, Todd?"

The Duffer straightened up again. He looked as if nearly all the blood in his body had been pumped into his face.

"If you please, sir——"

"Well?"

"You see, sir——" Another book went down, and this disconcerted Alonzo so much that he broke off, and stood gasping like a newly-landed fish.

"Well, Todd?"

"I—I— came to ask you, sir, if—if——"

"Please come to the point!"

"Oh, certainly, sir! You see, sir—certainly," said Alonzo, in great confusion.

The master of the Remove frowned.

"You are wasting my time, Todd."

"Wa-a-asting your time, sir!" stammered Alonzo, beginning to repeat what was said to him—a curious way he had when he was confused.

"Yes, Todd. Come to the point at once."

"The point at once, sir."

"Come, Todd. What do you want with me?"

"Want, sir."

"Yes, I suppose you had some business in coming here!"

"B-b-business, sir."

Mr. Quelch repressed an impatient exclamation. Alonzo Todd was terrible when he was diffident and self-conscious, and he frequently was.

"If—if you please, sir," said Todd, while a sheaf of papers slipped from under his arm and scattered themselves over the floor. "If you pip-pi-pip-please, sir——"

"Well?"

"I should like to be changed, sir!"

Mr. Quelch looked puzzled.

"You'd like to be what, Todd?"

"Changed, sir!"

"A change would certainly be an improvement, in many respects," said Mr. Quelch, with a touch of sarcasm. "But I am not a magician, Todd. You are quite mistaken in supposing anything of the sort. I have no magic wand here. I cannot change you. So perhaps this interview had better close."

"I—I mean, sir——"

"If you mean anything, I shall be glad to hear what it is, Todd. But you must make haste," said Mr. Quelch, taking up his pen.

"Yes, sir. Oh, certainly, sir. I'm so sorry. I should like to be changed, sir, if you please!"

"Todd!"

"Yes, sir. I understood that I was to come and ask you, sir, if I could be changed. I should very much like it, sir. I do not get on very well with Skinner, especially since his chops were burnt. It was an unfortunate accident, and I regretted it very much; my sole intention was to be obliging. But under the circumstances, sir, if you have no objection, I should like to be changed."

"Oh! Do you mean that you would like to be changed into the new study?" asked Mr. Quelch, comprehending.

"Yes, sir. There are four of us now, and if I might be changed into the new study I should like it exceedingly. Skinner is very unreasonable over those chops. He thinks I burnt them on purpose, sir, whereas really I only wanted to make myself useful. My Uncle Benjamin——"

"Very well, Todd."

"My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to make myself useful and obliging to all persons, sir. I am sure that is very right and proper. But Skinner does not understand. And I cannot do my prep. in the common-room—there is so much talk there. I should very much like the new study, sir."

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"You may go into the new study, and I will put your name down for it, Todd. Now pray go."

"Thank you so much, sir."

And Todd blundered to the door.

"You are forgetting your books, Todd."

"Dear me, so I am, sir! I'm so sorry!"

And Todd started collecting up his books. He piled them under his arm, and then grasped after the papers, and in

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doing so, of course, let the books tumble all over the carpet again.

It would really have been very interesting to watch his gambols over the carpet in search of elusive books and papers if Mr. Quelch had not been a busy man. Todd was a genius of clumsiness. The Form-master rose at last from his chair, and helped him collect the books, and saw him out of the study, laden with them.

"A most peculiar boy," said Mr. Quelch, as he closed the door of the study—"a very peculiar boy, indeed!"

There was a crash in the passage, and the Form-master smiled involuntarily as he sat down. He knew that the Duffer's books were scattered once more.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Is Ejected.

"O H!"

"Wh-w-what is it?"

"My hat!"

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley had come down the Remove passage together towards their study, No. 13, the last but one now that the new study had been opened further on. There was no light shining under the door, which rather surprised Bob Cherry, as he had expected to find Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, there.

Bob opened the door. The study was in darkness, but through the darkness came a lurid gleam of phosphorescent light.

No wonder Bob and Mark started back in amazement and alarm.

A hideous face, with red, gleaming eyes, glimmered at them from the darkness, with a pale greenish, phosphorescent light playing over it.

"Oh!"

"Wh-a-a-at!"

The two juniors backed out of the study in a great hurry. There was a sharp exclamation behind them, and a pile of books went thundering to the floor amid rustling papers, and Alonzo Todd danced on one leg, and clasped the toe of his boot in both hands.

"Ow!" he roared. "Yow! You've sq-sq-squashed my t-t-toe!"

"Hang your toe!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What the——"

The light disappeared in the study.

The juniors stared into blank, black darkness.

"What the dickens——" said Bob Cherry.

Mark Linley uttered a sudden exclamation.

"It's that young rascal, Wun Lung, of course!"

"Wun Lung?"

"One of his blessed practical jokes, the young boulder!"

"By Jove!"

Bob Cherry rushed into the study. He lighted the gas and glared round the room. A diminutive Chinese lay curled up in the armchair, apparently asleep.

There was no one else in the study.

"Ow!" groaned Alonzo Todd, from the passage. "Ow! My t-t-toe!"

"Never mind your toe!" said Bob Cherry. "What the dickens did you want to be standing just behind me for?"

"I was going into my study——"

"Your study hasn't moved along the passage, I suppose, has it?"

"I'm in the new study."

"Oh, I see. Well, if you're in the new study, go in there, and do your groaning in there," said Bob. "Only, don't do it too loud, or I shall come in with a cricket-stump."

Bob was rather cross. He had been the victim of a practical joke, and he felt that he had shown a state of nerves that was rather absurd. It ought to have occurred to him at once that the ghastly face in Study No. 13 was a trick of the Chinese junior. Wun Lung was always playing weird tricks of some sort, and this was nothing new.

The little Chinese looked as innocent as a dove as he lay curled up in the armchair, breathing peacefully. But Bob knew of old how much appearances were worth in the case of Wun Lung.

He shook the Chinese junior by the shoulder.

"Wake up, you young rascal!"

Snore!

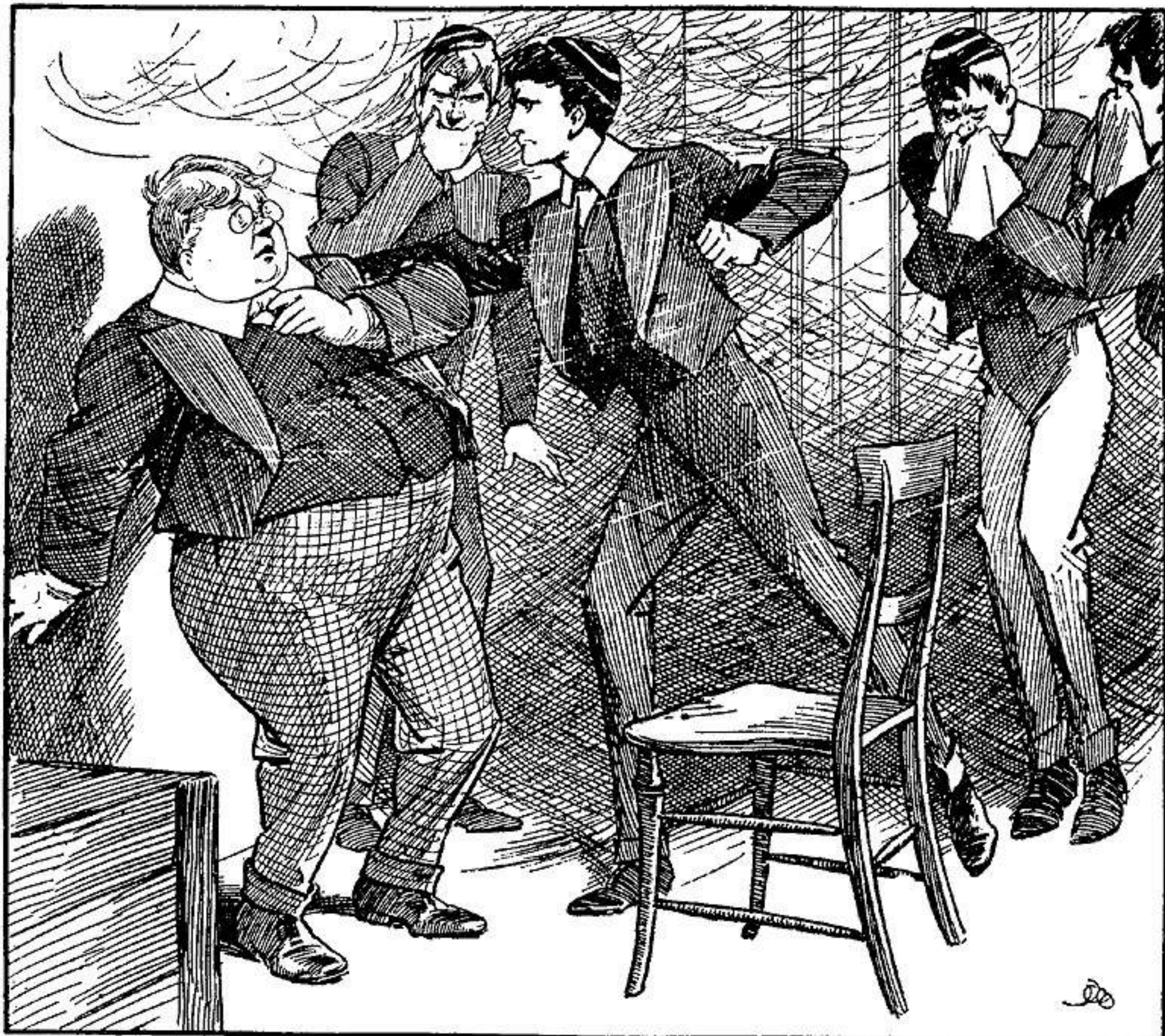
"Wake up!"

Snor-r-re!

"The young boulder's spoofing," said Bob Cherry; "I know that! I'll jolly well stick a pin in him!"

"That ought to settle it," said Mark Linley, laughing.

Bob Cherry put the point of a pin on Wun Lung's arm, and barely penetrated the skin. If Wun Lung was awake he must have felt the prick of it, but he made no movement. But Bob Cherry remembered the little Celestial's Oriental indifference to pain.



"Hang it all, I can't stand this!" roared Bulstrode, as the fumes from the fire got thicker. "What does this mean, Bunter, you——" "I—I don't know anything about it! It must be one of Wun Lung's rotten Chinese jokes!" stammered the fat junior. (See page 10.)

He replaced the pin, and took hold of Wun Lung's chair by the back, and tilted it up. The little Chinese shot out in a heap upon the hearthrug.

Even Wun Lung could not pretend to be asleep after that. He sat up on the rug and blinked sleepily at Bob Cherry.

"Now, then!" said Bob, glaring at him. "What do you mean by playing a trick on me?"

"No savvy."

"You savvy well enough, you young rotter! You were making a hideous face—one of your blessed Chinese masks, I suppose, with phosphorus on it."

"No savvy."

Bob Cherry snorted.

Wun Lung was a good little fellow in many respects, but he had the true Oriental indifference to the truth, and he would lie with an ease and utter facility that might have put Billy Bunter to the blush. Nor could the little Chinese ever be brought to understand that it was wrong to lie. A regard for the truth he looked upon as a peculiar English custom, which he could not be expected to sympathise with as a stranger in the land. He was such a nice little fellow in other respects that he was quite popular, but nobody ever dreamed of believing a word that he said.

"No savvy," repeated Wun Lung. "Me sleepee."

"Now, don't tell beastly lies, Wun Lung! I'm not going to lick you, only you might keep your rotten tricks for other chaps, not your own chums."

"Yes, rather!" said Mark.

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The little Chinese rolled his eyes.

"Me no playee tlickee," he said. "Me sleepee allee 'lone in almchail, you savvy. Me tellee tluth."

"You couldn't if you tried!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust.

"Blessed if I understand how a chap can be such a liar."

"Me no lie."

"You had a rotten Chinese mask on to scare us, you young bounder!"

"No maskee. No have maskee in study."

"Why, what's this?"

Bob Cherry dragged out a huge, grotesque Chinese mask from under the table, where it had evidently been hastily thrust. As it did not belong to either Mark or Bob, it was clear that it belonged to Wun Lung, but the impassive little Oriental did not turn a hair.

"No savvy," he said.

"What! I say, what's this?"

"No savvy."

"You—you don't savvy?" said Bob Cherry dazedly.

"Why, it belongs to you!"

"No belongee Wun Lung."

"You—you awful fibber! Look here, I'm about fed up with your lies!" said Bob Cherry heatedly. "Now, own up! Did you play that trick on us?"

"No playee tlickee."

"But we know you did!" roared Bob.

"No knowee."

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton and Alonzo Todd. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Bob Cherry reached at Wun Lung, and grasped him by the ear. The little Chinese did not make a movement to escape.

"Now, will you own up?" demanded Bob.

"No savvy."

"You played that trick!"

"No savvy."

"Will you tell the truth?"

"No savvy."

"Then out you go!" said Bob Cherry. "No blessed Ananias was wanted in this study! There's room for you next door!"

And he marched Wun Lung out of the study, with a vice-like grip on his ear, and kicked open the door of Study No. 14, and marched him in. Alonzo Todd was arranging his books on the table, having finished nursing his injured toe.

"Here's a present for you!" said Bob Cherry, as Todd looked up in surprise.

"My dear Cherry—"

"You won't come back into Study No. 13 till you've learned to tell the truth, you young rascal!" said Bob Cherry.

"No savvy."

Bob went out and slammed the door, leaving the little Oriental alone with the Duffer of Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

New Chums.

ALONZO TODD looked in surprise at Wun Lung. The little Chinese grinned. He did not seem to mind his abrupt dismissal from Bob Cherry's study, or to have felt the grip on his ear very much.

"Dear me!" said Todd. "Are you really going to share this study, Wun Lung?"

"Me tinkee."

"Was Bob Cherry serious?"

"Me tinkee."

"You should learn to tell the truth, Wun Lung. It would do you good to have a talk with my Uncle Benjamin," said Todd, with a shake of the head. "My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to tell the truth. But I suppose a heathen like you doesn't understand. You are quite welcome to share this study with me if Mr. Quelch gives his permission. In fact, I shall be glad of it, as I think that my conversation may have an improving effect upon you, and I may be able to do as much for you as my Uncle Benjamin has done for me."

"No savvy."

"You would like to learn to tell the truth, and be honest, I suppose, and a decent fellow, and an entertaining talker—in short, to become like myself?" urged Todd.

"No savvy."

"My dear Wun Lung! Listen to me. I will devote an hour every evening to talking to you, and improving your mind," said Todd beamingly. "My Uncle Benjamin always told me to do my best to help the ignorant and stupid to a conception of a higher life. I have tried it several times, with somewhat unfortunate results, but in your case—"

"No savvy."

"Ahem! I will explain—"

"No had tea," said Wun Lung.

"Eh?"

"No had tea," repeated the little Chinese. "What you tinkee? Me have cashee." He drew a handful of money from one of his voluminous pockets, several pieces of gold glittering among the silver. Wun Lung had more money than any other fellow at Greyfriars, excepting Ionides, of the Sixth. "We havee feedee, you savvy."

"I am afraid I could not pay my share, as I have lent my money to Bunter," said Todd. "However, I will ask Bunter if he can repay the loan, if you like, and we will certainly have a feed. Now I come to think of it, I am hungry. We might ask some of the fellows, and have a study warming, you know."

"Velly good!"

And Wun Lung and Todd left the new study, and went along to No. 1. They found Billy Bunter there. The fat junior was sitting over the fire and glowering with indignation. He blinked at the two.

"What do you think?" he exclaimed. "Wharton and the rest have been to Quelch and asked him to change me out of this study into the new one. What do you think of that in chaps I've befriended ever since they've been at Greyfriars?"

"Dear me!" said Todd.

"No spliseo," murmured Wun Lung.

"Oh, you're not surprised, you Chinese bounder. Look here—"

"Have you had your postal-order yet, Bunter?" asked

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Alonzo mildly. "Wun Lung and I are going to share the new study, and we're giving a feed."

Billy Bunter pricked up his ears at once.

"A feed?" he repeated.

"Yes. I want to stand my share, so if you can repay that loan—"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Todd, but I lent the money to Wharton—I—I mean to Bulstrode," said Bunter. "Until he repays me—"

"What's that?" roared a voice at the door.

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, looked in. It was unfortunate for Billy that he should have been passing at that moment.

"I—I— Glad to see you, Bulstrode!" said Bunter feebly. "Come in, will you? Sit down—take the armchair, old fellow. I—I was just saying that I had lent my money to Skinner—"

"You said Bulstrode!"

"Did I?" exclaimed Bunter, with an air of great astonishment. "A slip of the tongue, you know. I meant Skinner. I—I suppose you're coming to the feed, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode stopped his hand on its way to Bunter's ear at the mention of a feed.

"What feed?" he asked.

"Wun Lung's standing a feed in the new study," said Bunter, quite willing to make his peace with the bully of the Remove by planting an unwelcome guest upon the Chinese.

"Oh, I see! I'll come, Wun Lung."

"No savvy!"

Wun Lung drew back a pace, his almond eyes glimmering with dislike. The Remove bully had always been very hard upon the little Chinese, and there was no love lost between them. As Bulstrode had done most of the injuries, he was willing to let bygones be bygones on the occasion of a feed; but, naturally, the little Chinese took a very different view of the matter.

Bulstrode scowled.

"You don't savvy—eh? Look here, am I coming or not?"

"No savvy."

Bulstrode grasped the little Chinese by the shoulder.

"Now, then, hand me that cricket-stump, Bunter."

"Certainly!"

"Ow!" roared Wun Lung. "Me wantee you come—me velly glad. Me no likee feed without Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode grinned. He released the little Chinese quite amicably.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "As you're so pressing, I'll come. What time?"

Wun Lung eyed him with glittering orbs.

"Eight o'clock," he said.

"Good! I'll be there!"

And Bulstrode lounged out. Billy Bunter looked at Wun Lung with his most ingratiating smile.

"I'll come, too," he remarked.

"Buntree fattee cadee!"

"Oh, really, you know, I couldn't prevent Bulstrode inviting himself!" the fat junior remonstrated. "Hang it, it's not my fault he's a beastly bully. Look here, Wun Lung, am I coming, or am I not?"

"No comee."

And Wun Lung walked out with Todd. Billy Bunter blinked after him angrily. He knew how wealthy the Chinese junior was, and on the occasion of a study warming, there was certain to be a splendid feed. Wun Lung, inclined to Oriental magnificence, and he spent his money royally in entertaining fellows he liked. He was certain to excel himself on this occasion, and the thought of being excluded from such a feed made Billy Bunter bristle with indignation.

"I'm jolly well going, all the same!" he muttered. "If they chuck me out— My hat, I've got it! They can't chuck a fellow out of his own study!"

And Billy Bunter, beaming with satisfaction over the new scheme that had come into his mind, dashed out of No. 1, and hurried downstairs and presented himself at Mr. Quelch's study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's New Quarters.

"**C**OME in!"

Mr. Quelch did not look pleased as Billy Bunter came in. He had had too many interruptions that evening. But he was patient, and he asked the Owl of the Remove calmly what he wanted.

"If you please, sir," said Bunter, "I should like to be changed out of my study, sir."

"Oh, is that it?"

"Yes, sir. I hear that a fellow can be changed into the new study if he likes, from one of the crowded ones."

"That is correct."

"Then I should like to change, sir."

Mr. Quelch eyed Bunter curiously. He knew all the boys in his Form—he made a point of that, and he often knew the juniors better than they knew themselves. He thought he knew Billy Bunter the best of all. For slothfulness, idleness, and selfishness, and a peculiar thick-skinned obtuseness which prevented him from ever seeing anything as others saw it, Billy Bunter had no equal. Mr. Quelch had long wondered whether there was any trait of any sort of delicacy in Bunter's nature. He had never seen any signs of it so far. And so he was surprised by the fat junior's request.

"What is your reason for wishing to make this change, Bunter?" he asked.

"M-m-my reason, sir!"

"Yes. Are you not comfortable in your present study?"

"I'm treated with a great deal of jealousy and envy there, sir."

"Oh!"

"But that isn't it, sir. I hear that Wharton and the others want me to change out," said Bunter. "They have asked you to change me, sir."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, I hope I've got too much pride to stay where I'm not wanted," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "They want to part with me. If I can possibly oblige them, by leaving the study, I want to do so."

Mr. Quelch looked at him very keenly.

"That is a very proper view for you to take, Bunter."

"I am glad you think so, sir. I trust I shall never be without a proper pride and independence, sir."

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"I trust so, Bunter. This is a—er—a surprise to me. I am glad—er—to see you show this—this spirit. You may certainly change into No. 14. I will put down your name."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Bunter left. Mr. Quelch looked decidedly perplexed, and it was some minutes before he turned to his work again. Finally he took up his pen.

"I do not understand it," he murmured. "If this is genuine, I have done Bunter some injustice, and—and I do not think I have done so."

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter hurried away to No. 14 Study. He found Alonzo Todd there alone. The Duffer of Greyfriars was doing his prep. on the bare table, sitting on a bench. The study was not furnished at all yet, save for the table, and the bench had been borrowed from the passage for the time being.

"I say, you fellows— Halle, Todd! Where's Wun Lung?"

"Me here!" said Wun Lung, entering the study with a bundle of wood and a scuttle of coal, borrowed from somewhere down the passage. "No wantee Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wun Lung—"

"Bunter getee out—"

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to get out of my own study, Wun Lung!"

"Whatee?"

"This is my study."

"Lats!"

"You can say rats if you like, but Mr. Quelch has ordered me to come into this study, and I'm here to stay," said Bunter.

"Oh, dear!" said Todd. "It will be most unpleasant having Bunter here. He is such an untruthful boy, and so talkative—"

"Oh, cheese it, Todd! Look here, Wun Lung, I belong to this study now, and you'd better be civil about it," said Bunter, adopting a threatening manner. "I'm a jolly sight bigger than you are, and I'm not going to stand any of your nonsense."

Wun Lung looked at Billy Bunter dubiously. He certainly was no match physically for even the fat, unwieldy Owl of the Remove; but he knew enough of ju-jitsu to throw Bunter on his back any number of times. But he only acquiesced.

"Velly well, if Bunter comee in studeo, Bunter comee feed."

Bunter's face cleared.

"That's all right, then," he said. "I'm willing to do any cooking, and that sort of thing. It had better be understood, first and last, that I'm the head of this study."

"My dear Bunter—"

"Oh, shut up, Todd!" said Bunter rudely. "I tell you I'm the head of this study."

"I am sure I have no objection to your being the head of the study!" said Alonzo mildly. "I was going to say—"

"Never mind what you were going to say," said Bunter.

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ONE
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"I'm head of No. 14 Study, and that's enough. Are you getting the things ready for the feed, Wun Lung?"

"Me gettee leady."

"Good! Now, set to work and get a fire going, Todd. Look alive!"

"I haven't finished my prep."

"Well, I haven't touched mine, as far as that goes," said Bunter. "Prep. will have to stand over on important occasions. Get the fire going. Now, young pigtail, see about the things for the feed, and look sharp!"

"Me see!"

"We shall have to have some furniture in the study," said Bunter. "We'd better make some purchases to-morrow. We'll stand equal whacks in the cost of the things, you know. I—I'll put my share towards the general expense when my postal-order comes. I am expecting a large postal-order shortly. Just now, we shall have to borrow some chairs and crockery. As Bulstrode is coming to the feed, I don't see why he shouldn't lend us some things."

"Good idea!" said Todd.

"Come and help me carry them. You got the grub in, Wun Lung."

"Allee lightee!"

Bunter and Todd went down the Remove passage to Bulstrode's study. The Remove bully was in high good-humour, and quite willing to lend his "crockery." Cups and saucers and plates and cutlery, and so forth, were carried off in great quantities by the two juniors. Bulstrode also lent a couple of chairs, which he condescended to carry to No. 14 himself. Then Billy Bunter looked in at No. 1 Study. The ohums of the Remove were at prep., and they looked grimly enough at the fat junior as he came in.

Bunter sniffed.

"I don't want to be hard on you fellows—" he began.

"Oh, cheese it, Bunter!"

"All right. You've driven me to it, and it's too late now to say you're sorry."

"What do you mean?"

"I've changed out of this study."

The chums stared.

"You've changed out?" demanded Nugent.

"Yes, I have."

"You've asked Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes, and he's given permission."

"Then you're going into the new study?"

"Yes, with Todd and Wun Lung. I'm the head of that study. We're just going to have a house-warming there. I'm sincerely sorry I can't ask you fellows, but on an occasion like this I feel as if I ought to be surrounded only by true friends," said Bunter, with dignity. "You've said that you don't want me in this study."

"We don't!"

"The don't-fulness is terrific!"

"Then I retire," said Bunter, in a stately manner. "If you ask me, in a properly humble way, to come back again, I may consider it."

"No fear!" said Nugent. "If we once get rid of you, you won't get into this study again, I promise you!"

"Oh, really—"

"You've come to say good-bye, I suppose?" said Nugent, looking round with a grin at his chums. "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now, as Brutus so justly remarks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've come to take away my things," said Bunter. "I suppose you've got no objection to that?"

"Not at all."

"The new study isn't furnished, and I want my things there," said Bunter; "otherwise, I wouldn't bother you."

Harry Wharton looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I see how your things will furnish a study," he said. "What things are you talking about?"

"My furniture."

"You are welcome to all that belongs to you, of course, but I'm blessed if I can see anything."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I'm surprised at you speaking in this way. You remember perfectly well, when we re-furnished the study after the fire, that we clubbed together to pay for the things."

"We did," said Wharton, with the accent on the "we," "but you didn't pay anything towards it, that I remember."

"Oh, really—"

"Did you?"

"Well, perhaps I—I was a little behind," said Bunter. "I remember I had just been disappointed about a postal-order at the time—"

"Good old postal-order!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! You will remember, Wharton, that I said it was impossible for me to share the study with you unless we were upon a footing of perfect equality, and that

ANSWERS

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I should insist upon paying my full share towards the cost of the furnishing."

"I dare say you said some rot of the kind," said Wharton carelessly; "but I know jolly well that you paid nothing!"

"I told you at the time I should put it down to the account—"

"Rats!"

"And so I did. I calculated the proper share of the cost, and added it to the old account. I still owe you the money."

"More rats!"

"I hope to settle up the whole of that account shortly. I decline to remain under obligations to fellows who have treated me as you have done," said Bunter loftily. "But I hope you are not going to keep back my furniture."

"Keep back?" said Harry.

"Yes, that's what you want to do."

"You young ass—or young swindler, rather!" said Harry indignantly. "How can it be yours when we paid for it, and you never contributed a penny?"

"It's down on the account—"

"Oh, blow the account!"

"Look here, Wharton, you can't have it both ways. If I owe you the money, a quarter of the furniture belongs to me."

"You don't owe me the money."

"You've agreed all along—"

"I've let you babble your rot about owing an account, you mean," said Harry angrily. "You know it's all rot, and even if you knew how much you owed me, which you don't, you'd never pay it. Look here, I've had enough of your spoofing! Get out of this study!"

"I'm going to have my things!"

Wharton jumped up.

"I'll give you two seconds—"

Bunter did not need them. One second was enough—and the door slammed behind him as he scuttled down the passage.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Uninvited Guests.

BULSTRODE came along the Remove passage with a group of fellows, his own special friends. He had invited them to the study-warming in No. 14. Bulstrode was not in the habit of being delicate in matters of that sort. He had bullied Wun Lung into giving him an invitation, and he had later informed the little Chinese that he should bring a few friends with him, to which the diminutive youth from the Flowery Land replied with a nod and a grin. There was a glimmer in his slits of eyes that might have warned Bulstrode of mischief if Bulstrode had taken the trouble to observe it. But Bulstrode was far too high and mighty to take much notice of the little heathen.

Skinner and Snoop and Stott were with Bulstrode, all grinning at the idea of spoiling the Egyptians, for in this light they regarded the visit to Wun Lung's study. The four juniors were joined by Vernon-Smith, the fellow who was known as the Bounder of Greyfriars, and by Hazeldene, who was more and more under the Bounder's influence in these days. The six of them presented themselves at the door of Study No. 14, where they found Billy Bunter installed in state.

Chairs and forms had been borrowed to seat the guests, and the tea-table was well laid with a white cloth belonging to Skinner, and crockery which was Bulstrode's property. The fire glimmered ruddily in the grate, and the study, in spite of the bare floor, looked rather cosy.

Billy Bunter stood on the unfendered hearth, with his back to the fire and his hands in his pockets.

There was an almost indescribable importance in Bunter's aspect.

The fat junior felt that he was coming into his inheritance, as it were, at last. He was head of a study—that was as it should be. He was giving a feed—for the unimportant circumstance that Wun Lung was paying for it was almost forgotten by the lordly Bunter.

And Bunter swelled visibly as he presided in the study. He bestowed a nod upon Bulstrode that was not without hauteur, even to the burly bully of the Remove.

"Come in, you fellows," he said grandly. "Glad to see you to my little house-warming. Make yourselves at home."

"I see you've done it already," remarked Skinner.

"Give the fellows chairs, Todd. Make yourself useful, old man."

"Oh, certainly," said Alonzo.

"But where's the feed?" said Bulstrode, eyeing the table, which was bare of everything eatable. "Where's Wun Lung?"

"He's going to bring in the grub."

"He said eight o'clock, and it's eight now," said Vernon Smith.

"He'll be here in a minute."

Bunter did not know in the least, but, as it happened, he

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was right. Wun Lung appeared, but he appeared empty-handed. He bowed low with Oriental humility to his guests.

"Bulstrode comee," he remarked.

"Yes, I've come."

"Me gladdee see Bulstrode and othel fellows not invited," said Wun Lung. "Me hopee all havee goodee time."

"But where's the feed?"

"Allee light. Toddee, old fellee, you gooe down to tuck-shop and ask Mrs. Mimble fol baggee, what you tinkce."

"Oh, certainly," said the obliging Todd.

And he left the study.

Wun Lung closed the door. The key was on the outside of the lock, but that was a little circumstance the visitors did not notice till afterwards.

Wun Lung smiled beamingly upon them.

"So gladdee see you all," he murmured. "Gleat honoul to pool Chinee boy."

"Quite right," said Bulstrode. "I don't know whether you're lying or not—you usually are—but it's true enough. You ought to feel proud."

"Just so," remarked Hazeldene. "I'm hungry."

"Same here," grinned Snoop.

"Mind, none of your filthy Chinese dishes," said Bulstrode. "No roast dog or stewed cat; clean grub for us."

"Yes, rather!" said the rest, in chorus.

"Mo savvy."

"Mind, if you play any of your rotten Chinese tricks on us we'll scalp you," said Bulstrode threateningly.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in the chorus.

"I say, you fellows, it's all right," said Bunter. "I'm head of this study, and Wun Lung takes his orders from me, I assure you. The grub will be first-rate. I've given my instructions to Wun Lung about it."

Wun Lung's narrow eyes glimmered.

"Allee light," he said.

"Oh, all right," said Bulstrode; "and the sooner the quicker, you know. What are you doing, Wun Lung?"

The Chinese junior was pouring a powder into the fire from a packet he held in his hand. A faint, aromatic odour filled the study.

Wun Lung smiled innocently at the bully of the Remove.

"Chinee custom," he said. "Always buln incense fol distinguished gleat visitols. You savvy? Bulstrode gleat man. Me bulnee incense."

Bulstrode grinned. He certainly regarded himself as a great man, and he was so strong and burly, and ready to fight at any time, that he had compelled a number of his Form-fellows to affect to regard him in the same light. But he had never expected Wun Lung to burn incense in his honour, and he was distinctly gratified.

"Oh, all right," he said. "It smells rather nice. My hat, though, it's getting strong!"

Wun Lung poured the remainder of the powder into the fire. It sparkled as it fell in the flames. The odour was certainly intensifying, and there was a bitterness behind the aromatic smell.

Wun Lung stepped towards the door.

"Mo see if Toddee comee," he remarked.

He left the room, and closed the door behind him. There was a faintly perceptible click, but the juniors in the study did not notice it for the moment.

Bulstrode sniffed, and sniffed, and snorted. The odour from the burning incense—if incense it was—was growing stronger and more bitter, though to all appearance the powder had now all been consumed in the fire.

"Hang it all, I can't stand this!" said Bulstrode. "Open the blessed window!"

Skinner stepped to the window to open it. He found that it would not open. Bulstrode glared at him angrily.

"Why don't you open it?" he exclaimed.

"The blessed thing's fastened somehow!"

"What does that mean, Bunter?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered Bunter, who was coughing and sneezing in the strong, bitter scent from the fire. "Wun Lung was fooling about with it a little while ago—"

"It's screwed up!" exclaimed Skinner, in surprise.

"Bunter—"

"I—I don't know anything about it. It must be one of Wun Lung's rotten Chinese jokes," stammered the fat junior.

"Open the door, Hazel!"

Hazeldene was already dragging at the door. But the door, like the window, refused to open.

"Why don't you open it, you fathead?"

"Can't."

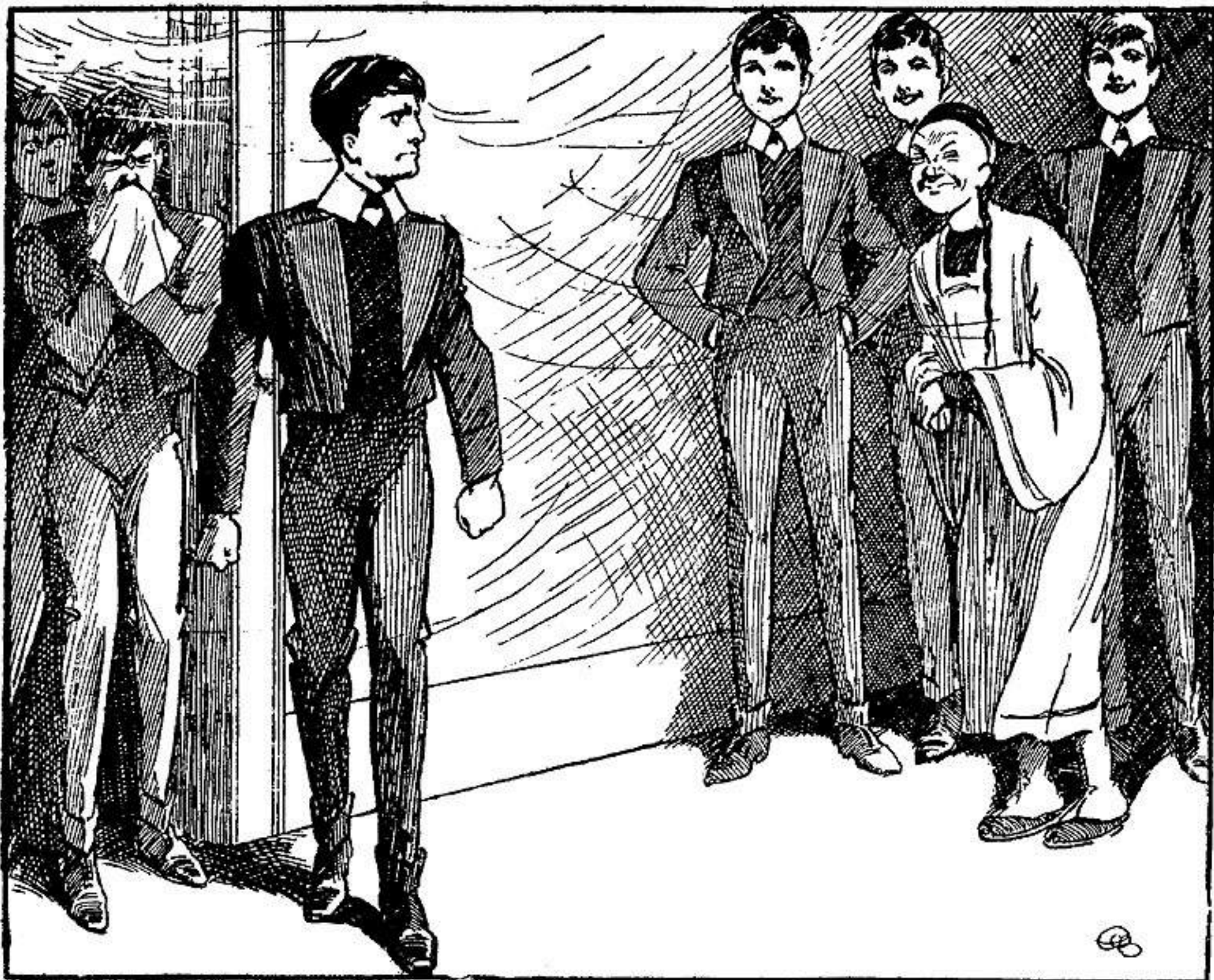
"Can't! Why not?"

"It's locked."

"Locked!"

"Yes, on the outside."

Bulstrode dashed at the door and dragged at it. But it refused to budge an inch. It was clear that the key had been turned in the passage.



As Wun Lung opened the door of the new study, Bulstrode, red and flustered, came striding out, followed by the uninvited guests. The bully gave Wun Lung a look like a dagger, to which the little Celestial responded with a sweet and beaming smile. (See Page 13.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Prisoners of War.

"GROO!"

"Yow!"

"Yah!"

"Yaroo!"

"Atchoo-choo-choo!"

The fellows crowded in No. 14 Study were coughing, and sneezing, and gasping, and shouting. The dense odour from the powder burning in the fire was thickening instead of melting away. There was a thin, bluish haze in the room, and the juniors' eyelids and noses were smarting from it.

Some of the fellows were really alarmed. Wun Lung was such a curious fellow with his odd Oriental ideas, that they would hardly have been surprised if he had laid a scheme to shut his uninvited guests up in the study and suffocate them.

"Smash the window, then!" said Stott.

Bulstrode hesitated a moment. But only a moment. Then he seized the poker, and crashed it through a pane of the window.

There was a rush of cool clear air, which revived the juniors somewhat. But the odour was thickening from the fire.

"Break the rest of them!" said Hazeldene desperately. "We shall suffocate in this atmosphere. That Chinese is mad."

Crash, crash, crash!

The other panes flew out in fragments under the poker in Bulstrode's hand. The bits of glass rattled down into the Close.

From the broken window a haze poured out, and round

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the window the juniors clustered, trying to breathe the pure air from without.

Thicker and thicker swelled the haze in the study, till the unfortunate prisoners in No. 14 could hardly see one another.

"Stamp the fire out!" suggested Skinner.

"Pour the water over it!"

"Good egg!" said Bulstrode.

It was rather a thoughtless thing to do, but Bulstrode was not cool. He seized the kettle and emptied it into the fire. There was instantly the acrid smell of burnt ashes, added to the fumes already in the study, and the atmosphere was now positively choking.

Bulstrode shoved his way roughly to the window, and put his head out. The rest followed his example the best they could. Bunter, pushed aside in the scuffle for air, fell into a corner, where he lay gasping and groaning.

There was a hammering at the door.

"Dear me! Open the door, you know."

It was the voice of Alonzo Todd.

"It's locked!" shouted Bulstrode.

"Dear me! Unlock it, then, please."

"Idiot! It's locked on the outside."

"My dear Bulstrode—"

"Unlock the door, Todd, there's a good fellow," said Bulstrode, as civilly as he could.

"I would gladly do so, Bulstrode, but there is no key here."

"No key!" gasped the unhappy bully of the Remove.

"I am sorry to say, none. I should be very pleased to oblige you by opening the door, Bulstrode, if I could, as my Uncle Benjamin always—"

"Find that Chinese thief!" yelled Bulstrode. "Make him

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come and open the door. He's locked us in here for a jape."

"Ah! That accounts perhaps for my curious experience at Mrs. Mimble's. When I asked for the things Wun Lung had ordered, she said he had not ordered any. I was very much surprised."

"Don't stand jabbering there. Go and find Wun Lung and get the key."

"My dear—"

"I'll pulverise you when I get out if you don't buck up."

"Really, Bulstrode—"

Bulstrode kicked furiously on the inside of the door. But the fumes drove him to the window again, and he had to desist.

"I will seek Wun Lung at once," said Todd, through the keyhole. "I am so sorry you fellows should be incommoded in this way."

"Oh, cut off!"

Alonzo Todd's footsteps were heard dying away down the passage. But Bulstrode had slight hope that he would succeed in getting the key from Wun Lung. The prisoners would be let out of the study when it pleased the Chinese junior, and not a moment before. And when would it please him?

The fellows gasped and choked.

The haze was clearing off a little, but the atmosphere was still charged with bitter smell, though it was now growing tolerable.

With red faces, streaming eyes, and husky throats, the juniors clustered at the window.

"It's Bunter's fault," said Bulstrode suddenly. "He's in this plot with Wun Lung. He got us all here."

Bunter gave a groan.

"Do you think I'd get into this myself on purpose?" he grunted. "Ow! I feel that I shall never recover."

"Jolly good thing if you didn't."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bulstrode, bestowing a kick upon the fat junior, which rolled him under the table.

"Yow!"

"Do you want another?"

"Yah! Yow! N-no!"

"Then shut up. Hang it!" said Bulstrode, grinding his teeth. "How are we to get out of this confounded room? That Chinese beast doesn't mean to let us out."

"It's rotten!" said Hazeldene. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, we oughtn't to have invited ourselves here."

"Oh, don't talk rot! I'll make that Chinese sit up for this. He can't keep up this game after bedtime, anyway, and then we shall have him in the dormitory."

"Yes, rather!" said Skinner, grinding his teeth too. "And we'll rag him till he can't stand."

There was a knock at the door, and Todd's voice was heard.

"Bulstrode!"

"Hallo! Got the key?"

"No. I'm so sorry. I asked Wun Lung, and he said I could go and eat coke. I considered his reply rude and really unreasonable, as I was not speaking on the subject of eating at all—especially such an impossible article of diet as coke. I—"

"Make him give you the key."

"I fear that I cannot."

"Look here, Todd, I'll stand you a big feed at Mrs. Mimble's if you get the key away from Wun Lung."

"I am sorry you should think of bribing me, Bulstrode. Under the circumstances, I think my Uncle Benjamin would advise me to have nothing more to say to you."

"Todd! Todd!"

But Alonzo was walking away down the passage. Bulstrode shouted after him in vain. He stamped and kicked at the door, but he knew that it was useless. No one was likely to hear the noise from the extreme upper end of the Remove passage, excepting the Remove fellows themselves, of course, and they could not open the door for Bulstrode without a key.

Indeed, those who were attracted by the noise seemed to regard the affair as a joke they weren't entitled to spoil.

"Faith, and what's all the row about in there?" Micky Desmond called in through the keyhole of No. 14.

"We're locked in by Wun Lung, Micky, and nearly choked by something he's burnt in the fire," said Bulstrode. "Get the key from him, will you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling Irish ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Micky Desmond went away laughing. Russell, and Lacy, and Ogilvy, and Morgan, and several more fellows in turn came to ask questions through the keyhole, but each of them went away laughing instead of offering aid.

Bulstrode was by this time in a state of towering fury. The other fellows in the study hardly dared to speak to him,

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and Billy Bunter kept out of sight under the table. The Remove bully stamped up and down the study like a caged wild animal. The other fellows were not feeling pleasant. Those of them who had not done their preparation were alarmed about that, for it was getting near the juniors' bedtime. Wun Lung would have to let them out to go to the dormitory, of course; but it would then be too late for prep.

Nine boomed out from the clock tower.

Then there was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and Bulstrode, simmering with fury, approached the door again.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Pax!

"YOU come?"

Wun Lung twitched Harry Wharton's sleeve as he spoke. Wharton was chatting with Nugent and Bob Cherry in the common-room, when a twitching of his sleeve made him look down, and he saw Wun Lung.

"Come!" he repeated. "Come where?"

"You come with me."

"What for?"

"You come. Witness."

Wharton looked perplexed.

"Witness! You want me to witness something?"

The little Celestial nodded and grinned.

"You come," he repeated.

"Oh, all right!"

"Nugent come too, and Bob Chelly."

"Something on, I suppose," said Bob Cherry, in surprise. "All right! Lead on, Macduff."

Wun Lung led the way, and the three juniors followed. Several more fellows who had heard the talk strolled after them, wondering what was up.

They followed Wun Lung up to the Remove passage, and to the end of it, to the door of the new study. Wharton had heard all about the prisoners there, but it was no business of his to interfere.

"Are you going to let them out now, Wun Lung?" he asked.

The little Chinese chuckled.

"Me lettee out, plenty soon."

"Well, I dare say they've been there long enough," said Harry, laughing. "But you'd better look out for Bulstrode when he's loose again."

"Me lookie out."

"Open this door!" came a roar from within. "I can hear you there, hang you! I know your voice, Wharton; you're in this."

"I'm not in it," said Harry. "But it's no business of mine, and you can stay there all night for all I care."

"Shouldn't have gone in," added Ogilvy. "You went in there to bully the heathen out of a feed, and you've got it in the neck. Serve you right."

"Open this door, Wun Lung."

"Me opee."

"Quick, then, you yellow lump of impudence!" yelled Bulstrode. "Only wait till I get hold of you, that's all."

"Me waitie."

"Well, open the door."

"Bulstrode makee pax."

"What!"

"Bulstrode makee pax with Wun Lung."

"Pax! Catch me! I'll break every bone in your body! I'll smash you. I'll twist your heathen neck. Open this door!"

"No opee!"

Bulstrode hammered at the door furiously.

"Me opee if you makee pax," said Wun Lung, through the keyhole. "No makee pax, me lose key!"

"You heathen pig!"

"Allee light; me waitie."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "He's got you there, Bulstrode!"

"I'll smash him!"

"Looks to me as if you can't. You'll have to smash the door first, and it's pretty strong," chuckled Bob Cherry.

The Remove bully stamped and fumed inside the study. Wun Lung certainly had him there. If he made it "pax" with the little Chinese, the commonest sense of honour prevented him from "going for" Wun Lung when the door was opened. Harry Wharton understood now why the little Celestial wanted the witnesses. Bulstrode could hardly break his word if it was given before witnesses. Otherwise it was quite possible that he would throw his promise to the winds as soon as he was outside the locked door.

Bulstrode kicked on the door.

"Some of you take the key away from him, and open the door," he shouted.

To which the general reply was:

"Rats!"

"I know this is your doing, Wharton!" hissed Bulstrode.

"Bosh!"

"I'll make some of you suffer for it."

"Rubbish!"

"Makee pax."

"I won't!"

"You stayee thelo, then."

"You'll have to let us out at bed-time, you Chinese cad," snarled Bulstrode. "You can't keep us here after half-past nine."

The little Chinese chuckled.

"Me losee key!"

"You haven't lost it."

"Me losee!"

Bulstrode and his comrades stared at one another blankly. The door of the study was of strong oak, and not easily to be forced. The lock was unlike the rest in the passage, and there was not likely to be a key in Greyfriars to fit it. To send for a locksmith to Friardale at that time of the night was impossible.

"My only hat!" said Hazeldene. "We shall have to camp out in this study all night."

There was a groan from Billy Bunter.

"Ow! Look here, you fellows, you ought to get the door open somehow. I shall be ill if I have to sleep on the floor!"

"Shut up, you fat toad!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode— Oh! O-ow!"

Bulstrode cut the fat junior short by kicking him. Finding some solace in it, he proceeded to kick the Owl of the Remove round the study. Billy Bunter howled and yelled and dodged, and finally sank down in a corner shrieking murder.

There Bulstrode, breathless from his efforts, left him alone at last.

"That hasn't got the door open," said Skinner.

Bulstrode scowled, and kicked at the door.

"Will you open this, Wun Lung?"

"Bulstrode makee pax?"

"No!" roared Bulstrode.

"No open, then."

"Look here," said Skinner, "we can't stay here. Make it pax with the young rotter, Bulstrode; you can take it out of him another time!"

"Make it pax, old man," urged two or three.

Bulstrode snapped his teeth.

"I won't!"

"Oh, don't play the giddy goat!" said Hazeldene impatiently. "There goes the quarter-past nine. My prep. isn't done—and won't be done now."

"Open this door, Wun Lung!"

"Lats!"

"I'll squash you—"

"Lats!"

"I'll break every blessed bone in your heathen carcase!"

"Lats!"

Bulstrode raged and hammered again. But his companions imprisoned in the study were losing patience with him now. Bulstrode was beginning to realise himself that it would not do.

"Make it pax," said Vernon-Smith. "There's nothing else to be done."

"I'll take it out of him later, then," said Bulstrode.

"No objection to that."

"You can make it pax with a mental reservation," said Skinner. "Anyway, get the young rotter to open the door. That's the main point."

"Wun Lung!"

"Lats!"

"You young hound! I'll make it pax."

"You promise?"

"Yes," hissed Bulstrode.

"All the othols—they promise?"

"Yes!" came a chorus.

Wun Lung grinned at the grinning juniors in the passage.

"Allee light?" he said.

"Yes; I don't see how they can very well get out of that," remarked Harry Wharton. "I say, Bulstrode, we're all witnesses, remember."

"Mind your own business!"

"It will be our business to see that you keep your word, and we shall jolly well do it," retorted Harry Wharton; and Bob Cherry chimed in with "Hear, hear!"

"Open this door, then, you heathen beast!"

Wun Lung produced a key from the depths of his voluminous garments, and it clicked in the lock of the study. The door swung open.

Bulstrode, red and flustered, came striding out. He gave Wun Lung a look like a dagger, to which the little Celestial responded with a sweet and beaming smile.

Bulstrode clenched his hands hard.

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ONE
PENNY.

Harry Wharton, as if unconsciously, did the same. But Bulstrode did not break the "pax." He strode away, and his companions, looking very sheepish, followed him, and the laughter of Harry Wharton & Co. followed them. It could not be said that Bulstrode and his set had distinguished themselves this time.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Declines to Come Back.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were still grinning over the incident in the new study when they went up to bed with the Remove. Bulstrode was not grinning; he was looking decidedly unpleasant. There was a sleepy smile upon Wun Lung's face. Billy Bunter was groaning.

The fat junior chose to assume that he had been very much hurt by the suffocating odour in No. 14 Study, and by the kicking Bulstrode had given him, and he limped along in a way he considered very touching, but the Remove were not given to pathos. They only laughed, much to the indignation of William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, blinking at the chins of No. 1 Study as he took off his boots—"I say, you know, I hope you didn't mind that little joke of mine."

"Joke!" said Harry Wharton.

"Joke!" repeated Nugent, tugging at an obstinate boot, which refused to come off. "What joke, my fat tulip?"

"About changing studies."

"What?"

"Of course, I suppose you knew I was only joking all the time," said Bunter, with a sickly grin.

"No, I don't think I knew it," said Wharton quietly.

"We've taken that joke, if it was a joke, quite seriously, Bunter, and we don't mean to do anything else, either."

"The seriousness of the honourable joke is terrific."

"Oh, I say, you fellows, of course—"

"'Nuff said!"

"It was really a little joke on Quelch, asking him his permission to change," Billy Bunter explained. "And a—a joke on you fellows. You couldn't think I really wanted to change studies and dig with a rotten heathen, you know."

"But you've done it."

"It was only a—a lark. Wun Lung's a beast, and—and —"

"And there wasn't any feed!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha! That's why Fatty wants to change back!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, he's jolly well not changing back into our study," said Harry Wharton. "As he's made his bed, he can lie on it!"

"Oh, he can lie anywhere! When it comes to lying, Bunter's the first in the field. He could beat a whole eleven of Ananiases, Munchausens, Rougemonts, and special correspondents!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fellows—"

"Oh!" gasped Nugent. The obstinate boot had come off at last, and it flew from his hand, direct at Bunter. "Look out, Tubby!"

"Yow!" roared Bunter, who received this warning too late.

The boot caught him under the chin, and he rolled backwards on his bed, his fat little legs in the air. There was a shout of laughter from the dormitory.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oh, really—"

Loder, the prefect, put his head in at the door.

"Get to bed," he grunted. "Bunter, stop playing those ridiculous tricks. The gym. is the proper place for all that. Go to bed."

"Oh, really, Loder—"

Loder slammed the door. Loder was not a sweet-tempered youth. He liked to be a prefect, but he did not like the task of seeing lights out for the juniors.

Bunter grunted and proceeded to undress himself. The juniors turned in, Bulstrode not once looking at Wun Lung.

Loder came in in a couple of minutes and turned out the lights. Then he went to the door without a word.

"Good-night, Loder!" said Nugent sweetly.

The prefect grunted.

"Good-night, Loder, old man! We sha'n't be able to sleep if you don't say good-night," said Bob Cherry. "You haven't kissed me on my baby brow yet!"

Loder went out and slammed the door, with a slam that was certainly not conducive to slumber.

As soon as the prefect was gone, Bulstrode sat up in bed.

"Now we'll settle with that Chinese beast!" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton sat up, too.

"Now you'll do nothing of the sort," he said. "You made it pax with him, and you won't touch him! We were all witnesses."

"That was only for the time. It's all over now, of course."

"Nothing of the sort?"

"Might I suggest to you to mind your own bizney, Wharton?" asked Skinner, in his silkiest tones.

"Yes; that's a good idea. Mind your own business, Wharton," said two or three voices.

"I don't intend to argue with you," said Harry scornfully.

"I only say that you sha'n't touch Wun Lung. If you're cads enough to break your words, I can't help that; but I can prevent your touching the Chinese, and I will!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry, in his deep bass.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, hang!" said Snoop. "Some other time will do. After all, it's not worth turning out of bed for on a cold night."

Bulstrode did not reply. But as he did not get out of bed, it was to be presumed that he agreed with Snoop, and had given up the idea.

The next morning Wun Lung was still unpunished, and Bulstrode appeared to take no notice of him, but it was very probable that the Remove bully was only saving up his vengeance till a favourable opportunity should occur.

Bunter made an attempt to approach the question of the study again while the juniors were dressing, but the chums of No. 1 Study did not appear to hear.

They went down, and Bunter had no further opportunity of tackling the subject until breakfast, when he broached it in a confidential whisper across the table.

"I say, Wharton, I suppose it's all right about the study?"

Wharton nodded.

"Quite all right," he agreed; "in fact, better than it has ever been before. We shall have more room now."

"I—I didn't mean that; I meant——"

"I hope you'll be comfortable in No. 14—or, rather, that Wun Lung and Todd will be comfortable," said Harry.

"That's more doubtful!"

"Oh, really——"

"Subject's settled!" said Nugent. "Pass the doorsteps!"

Bunter passed the bread-and-butter, which Frank thus alluded to, and blinked at Nugent in his most engaging manner.

"You'll miss me in the study, Nugent."

"Yes; jolly good miss, too!"

"What about the cooking?"

"We sha'n't need half so much."

"Oh, really——"

"Chuck it, Bunter! I tell you it's settled!"

"Oh, very well!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I won't come back! I want you to understand that clearly. I won't come back!"

Nugent grinned.

"We'll take jolly good care you don't!" he said.

"I'm sorry to leave you to pig in, as I know you will when I'm gone," said Bunter. "But I've settled to go into No. 14. I shall be the head of that study, and Todd and Wun Lung expect it of me. I'm sincerely sorry for you fellows."

"Better be sorry for Todd and Wun Lung—they'll need it!"

"I decline to discuss the question any further. I only want it to be understood, once and for all, that I utterly decline to come back into No. 1 Study."

And the chums chuckled. Bunter stuck to that position. There was no readmittance into the precincts of No. 1, and so Bunter announced in public that he really couldn't stand those fellows any longer, and that in justice to himself he had to accept the pressing invitations of Todd and Wun Lung to share the new study with them.

It was true that Wun Lung and Todd, when asked on the subject, said that they had never heard of the pressing invitations. But that made no difference to Bunter.

During morning school, Bunter, to judge by the corrugations of his fat brow, was thinking it out. He jerked Wharton by the arm as they left the class-room.

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"I've decided not to come back into your study, Wharton——" he began.

"Good! That's settled! Let it drop!" said Harry crisply.

"But there's the question of the furniture——"

"The what?"

"Furniture! One quarter of it belongs to me, you know. It's all down in the account."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"I'm not going to be done out of my rights, if that's what you mean!" said Bunter firmly. "You know as well as I do——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Look here, Wharton——"

Wharton walked away. The fat junior glowered after him through his spectacles. He jumped as someone clapped him on the shoulder.

"Oh, really, Lacy——"

"What's the row?" demanded Bulstrode's voice. "What's that about Wharton not letting you have your furniture, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter proceeded to explain. He had found a sympathiser.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Moving Job.

BULSTRODE had kicked Billy Bunter round the new study the previous evening. But it suited the fat junior to forget that now, and Bunter could forget things with great facility when he chose. And Bulstrode was quite friendly now. Bulstrode had an axe to grind.

If there was anything going on against Harry Wharton just now, Bulstrode was only too glad to have a hand in it, and he saw possibilities in this claim of Billy Bunter's against the belongings of No. 1 Study.

Bulstrode knew Bunter quite well enough to know exactly what his claim was worth, and what his word was worth; but it suited Bulstrode to take Bunter's word just then as if it were gospel.

"It's rotten," he said—"rotten mean of Wharton, I must say!"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going to put up with it!"

"I should advise you not."

"You see, we haven't a thing in the new study," said Bunter. "I've been forced to declare that I won't return to No. 1 Study on account of their ungentlemanly behaviour. That's the reason why they won't let me have my things."

"Oh, it's caddish!"

"I'm jolly well going to have all that belongs to me!"

"And I'll help you!" said Bulstrode. "Hang it all. I want to see justice done! So do the other fellows. We'll see about it."

Harry Wharton and his immediate friends had gone down to the football-field for practice. They were quite unconscious of the fact that Bulstrode had taken up Billy Bunter's cause, and was backing him up.

Bulstrode's friends, all of them feeling sore and irritated at Wharton's interference of the previous night, backed up Bunter's claim just as heartily as their leader.

"The question is, are we going to see justice done?" said Bulstrode.

"Of course, we are," said Vernon-Smith, with his usual sneering smile. "And it is the infallible Wharton who's doing the spoofing this time. I think he ought to be shown up before the whole school!"

"Yes, rather!" said Skinner.

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "You know jolly well——"

He broke off as he found Bulstrode's eyes fixed upon him.

"Well?" said the Remove bully, pushing back his cuffs a little. "What is it that we know jolly well, Hazeldene?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Hazeldene hastily.

And he walked away.

"I say, you fellows, we ought to get the things sorted out and moved while Wharton's out," Bunter suggested. "It will save trouble."

"Good idea!"

NEXT WEEK!

THE DUFFER'S DOWNFALL.

A Most Laughable Story.



"We're fed up with you," said Harry Wharton. "I think you've reached the limit."
"Oh, really, you know!" said Billy Bunter.

(See page 4.)

And the juniors proceeded at once to the Remove passage. They found Alonzo Todd there, talking to Wun Lung outside No. 14. The two juniors were discussing the question of furnishing the new study. Bunter called to them:

"I say, you fellows, come and lend a hand!"

They came up, rather puzzled. Bulstrode and his friends crowded into No. 1 Study.

Wun Lung, as soon as he saw that the Remove bully was in the party, quietly scuttled away. He did not know what was on, but he did not want to remain in the neighbourhood of Bulstrode.

"Lend a hand here, Todd!" said Bunter.

"In what way, my dear Bunter? I am always willing to be obliging, of course, as my Uncle Benjamin—"

"I want to move my things into the new study."

"Oh, I see! I was just discussing with Wun Lung about the furnishing. As you and I have no money, Wun Lung was thinking of paying the whole expense himself."

Bunter snorted.

"I should decline to have the study furnished on those terms. I should enter it in a perfectly independent position, or not at all! I shall insist upon paying my fair share of the expense!"

"That is very right of you, Bunter, but who will you borrow the money of?" asked Todd innocently.

Bunter turned pink.

"You utter ass!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"I've got plenty of things here," said Bunter. "I paid a quarter share towards furnishing this study after the fire—at least, it's down in the account, which is the same thing. Bob Cherry took his personal belongings away when he

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moved from this study into No. 13, and, of course, I'm going to do the same."

"Of course," said Alonzo simply; "that is only fair."

"Of course, it is," said Bulstrode. "If Wharton raises any objection, I should advise Bunter to take no notice of it."

"Oh, I am sure Wharton will not object!" said Todd. "Wharton is very honourable."

Bulstrode chuckled.

"Well, let's get on!" he said.

"I will help you with pleasure," said Alonzo. "I shall be very glad to see the new study furnished, and I only regret that I cannot make a contribution towards the purchases, owing to my having lent Bunter all my money! I suppose your postal-order has not come yet, Bunter?"

"No," growled Bunter. "It—it will be here to-night, I expect. Let's get these things moved before those fellows come in!"

"I don't see—" began Alonzo.

"Never mind that!" said Bulstrode briskly. "Let's get to work!"

"Oh, certainly! I shall be very pleased to make myself useful!"

The juniors set to work industriously.

Skinner and Stott carried the chairs away, and Snoop rolled up the hearthrug, and bore it along the passage. Bunter blinked round the study.

"I think we'd better have the armchair," he remarked.

"I've always used that, and they can't pretend that that belongs to them. I should think."

"Lend us a hand, Snoopey," said Bulstrode.

"Right you are!"

And the armchair was run out of the study, and shrieked along the passage on its castors.

"I think I ought to have the fender and fireirons," Bunter went on, "and the curtains, and the clock."

"Good!"

"Dear me!" said Todd. "You are sure that you are not taking more than your fair share, I suppose, Bunter?"

"Of course. If I should take a little more than my exact due, I shall be perfectly willing to settle for it with Wharton for cash."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"What about the carpet?" said Snoop. "You haven't a carpet in the new study, and I'm sure this belongs to you, Bunter. I feel that it does."

"Well, I suppose it does," assented Bunter.

"Let's have it up, then."

"Go ahead!" said Bulstrode.

The carpet was ripped up in clouds of dust. They dragged it out of the study, and along the passage, and dumped it down in No. 14.

"What about the bookcase, Bunter?"

"Well, perhaps we had better leave that," said Bunter considerably.

It was time to be considerate. Nearly everything movable in the study had been taken, and if Bunter was really entitled to a quarter share of the property, he had certainly taken three times his due.

"You'll need a coal-scuttle, and a kettle," Bulstrode remarked.

"Well, you may as well take them, Todd."

"Oh, certainly!"

Todd picked up the scuttle, which was crammed with coals, in one hand, and the kettle in the other. A stream of coal shot from the scuttle, and Todd uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, dear me!"

"You ass!" roared Bunter. "Don't waste the coal! That belongs to me."

Todd grasped the scuttle under his arm. The handle was broken, and would not carry the weight. Bunter stooped down to collect up the lumps of coal to put them back in the scuttle.

"I'm so sorry—" said Todd. "Oh, dear!"

A fresh stream of coal shot from the unfortunate scuttle, and caught Bunter on the back of the head and in the neck as he was stooping.

The fat junior gave a wild roar, and jumped up. He collided with Todd, and the scuttle went with a crash to the floor, and the remaining coals in it scattered in all directions.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bulstrode. "You've been caught bending! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

Bunter rubbed coal dust from his face, but he could not get it out of his collar. He blinked furiously at Alonzo.

"You—you dummy!"

"I'm so sorry—"

"Ow! Yow! You fathead!"

"I'm so—"

"Well, this moving job's finished," said Bulstrode, laughing. "I'm off! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bulstrode & Co. took their departure.

"Dear me!" said Todd, "the study looks very desolate, Bunter. I really—"

"Yow! Go and get the things straight in No. 14, fat-head, while I get this coal cleaned off, you dangerous chump!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

And Bunter rolled away in a bad temper, and Alonzo hied him to No. 14 Study, to begin to get that new apartment into order with the moved furniture.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Wields the Hammer.

WUN LUNG and Billy Bunter looked in at the new study a little later, and found Alonzo Todd busy. The Duffer of Greyfriars had placed most of the furniture in the passage, or in the fireplace, or round the edges of the room, while he laid down the carpet. The square of carpet left a foot or so uncovered on all sides, and Todd had an idea of staining it with some kind of stain, when the carpet was down. The carpet, a little worn in places, was still in pretty good condition, and it certainly made the study look more homely and comfortable.

Todd looked up at the juniors as they came in.

"I'm making myself useful, you see," he remarked. "My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to—"

"Good!" said Bunter. "Better tack it down."

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"Well, a few tacks will keep it in place," said Todd. "I don't know about putting many in. My Uncle Benjamin told me never to put in too many nails, tacks, or screws in anything."

"This is different. If it's fixed down pretty tight, there'll be no getting it up again."

"We shall want to take it up if we ever change studies again, Bunter!"

"We'll risk that."

Wun Lung was looking at the collection of furniture in great astonishment. The little Chinese had plenty of money, and he was prepared to stand the whole cost of furnishing the study, as soon as his next remittance arrived. He knew there was nothing to be expected from Bunter, at least.

"Whose things?" he asked.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Mine!" he replied.

"You! fulnitee," said Wun Lung. "Carpet youls—chairs youls—clock youls, Buntsee? Me no savvy."

"What don't you savvy, you blessed heathen?"

"How comee youls."

"I bought them."

This statement was so surprising that Wun Lung simply opened his mouth like a fish and gasped.

"You boughtee?" he exclaimed, at last.

"Certainly."

"No payee?"

"Pay! I suppose I couldn't get the things without paying for them, could I?"

"Buntsee nevel payee."

"Look here, Wun Lung, I don't want any of your cheek," said Bunter loftily, "I'm the head of this study. You're not to forget that."

"No savvy."

"You'd better savvy that I'm head of the study, or you'll get a cricket-stump laid about you," exclaimed Bunter sharply.

"Me no tinkee."

"Look here, get to work, and don't jaw," said Bunter. "You'll want a hammer and tacks for that job, Toddy."

"I have them," said Todd. "I have borrowed a hammer from Tom Brown, and a packet of tacks from the house-keeper."

"Good. You hold the carpet that end, Wun Lung, and keep it stretched, and I'll hold it this end, and Todd can tack it down."

"Velly good."

Wun Lung was still looking perplexed, but he did as he was told. Bunter held the rim of the carpet, stretching it for the tacks to be driven in along the edge.

Alonzo Todd took a businesslike grip on the hammer.

"Hold it tight, Bunter."

"I'm holding it."

"Pull it there, Wun Lung."

"Me pullee."

"That's right."

Todd put the tack in the carpet close to Bunter's pressing thumbs.

Then he aimed the hammer at the tack.

Down it came!

The next moment there was a fiendish yell from Billy Bunter, and he leaped up, and pranced on the carpet, with one fat thumb in his mouth.

"Ow! Oh! Groo! Yaroo!"

"Dear me!"

"Yaroo! Yaroo!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"Gerrooh!"

"You have let go the carpet—"

"Yarooooop!"

"Dear me! Is there something the matter, Bunter?"

"Yah! Yaroo! You mad idiot, you've hampered my thumb!" yelled Bunter.

"I'm so sorry—"

"Yah! Yarooooop! Yow!"

Bunter pranced and sucked his thumb, while little Wun Lung doubled up in a paroxysm of silent laughter.

Todd looked very much concerned.

"I'm so sorry, Bunter," he said, "I certainly meant to hit the tack. It was very unfortunate that your thumb happened to be in the way—very unfortunate indeed. Does it hurt?"

Considering the antics Bunter was performing at that moment, the question seemed superfluous. Bunter gave a snort, and rushed at Alonzo Todd, and smote him. The Duffer of Greyfriars gave a gasp of surprise, and sat down on the carpet.

He sat down on something else, too. The carpet was smothered with tacks in all directions, mostly, of course, with the business ends uppermost.

"Yow!"

Todd remained gracefully reclining on the carpet for something like the millionth part of a second.

Then he sprang up like a jack-in-the-box.

His prancing was fully equal to Bunter's.

Wun Lung sat and gurgled. Todd and Bunter looked for the moment as if they were engaged in a country dance.

"Oh, you chump!" groaned Bunter, at last, disengaging his damaged thumb from his mouth.

"Ow! That tack!" grunted Todd. "Yow! I sat on it!"

"Ow!"

"Serve you right!"

"Ow!"

"I wish it had been a mile long," said Bunter.

"Yow!"

"You—you dangerous ass! Give me the hammer. I'll do the hammering now."

Bunter sucked his thumb viciously. Alonzo Todd rubbed his wound. Neither was feeling very happy.

However, the tacking of the carpet was proceeded with. It was difficult to get any of the three to hold it, and the consequence was that it was tacked down in a rather loose and loopy condition. But there certainly was no want of tacks. Bunter drove in tacks with the greatest liberality.

In fact, when the carpet was finally finished, there was a gleaming border of tack heads round it, as if designed for ornamental purposes.

"There!" said Bunter, with a grunt. "They won't get that up in a hurry, if they try. Now get the furniture in."

The furniture was dragged in, and arranged in the room. The study looked pretty well furnished; for, as a matter of fact nearly everything had been stripped from No. 1 Study. Bunter surveyed the result with a blink of satisfaction.

"Looks jolly," he said.

"Velly jollie, Bunter."

"It is certainly extremely gratifying," said Todd.

"Oh, get off the dictionary! Look here, we'll keep this study locked up while we're out of it, and I'll keep the key."

"My dear Bunter, why?"

"Because I'm the head of the study," said Bunter, in a bullying tone. "I suppose you're not going to begin to argue about that, Todd."

"Oh, certainly not, but—"

"Nor you, Wun Lung, eh?"

"No argue," said the little Chinese meekly. "Bunter gleeat man. Me kow-tow to gleeat, handsome Bunter."

The fat junior swelled visibly.

"Well, that's all right!" he exclaimed. "You stick to that, Wun Lung. Always respect your betters, and do as I tell you. I say, you fellows, it must be jolly near dinner-time."

The bell rang as he spoke. The New Firm went down to dinner, and the head of the Firm grinned cheerfully, as if fully satisfied with the work done.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rather Hasty.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. remained in blissful unconsciousness of the dismantling of their study. As it happened, they had no occasion to go there before afternoon school, and so they turned up in the Form-room without knowing what had happened. The New Firm, as Bunter called the three occupants of No. 14, knew all about it, and they had told others, but no one took the trouble to tell Wharton. He would find out for himself soon enough.

Bunter's claim to a right in the furniture of the study did not find many believers. Without knowing exactly how matters stood the Removites knew very well that Bunter never paid for anything if he could help it, and his claim was all moonshine. But they fully enjoyed the joke, and waited with some curiosity to see what the chums of Study No. 1 would say when they discovered that the Goths and Vandals had been there.

During afternoon school, there were some whispers on the subject, and grins and winks in the direction of the chums, and Harry Wharton & Co. were not long in discerning that something was "on"—something to do with themselves.

But what it was they had no idea.

When the class was dismissed, Bunter strutted out into the passage with a new strut. He was beginning to be satisfied, after all, with the change of studies. Wun Lung had shown no disposition to resist his authority; the ways of the little Chinese were always quiet and sly, and not at all violent, and he submitted to Bunter's domination without a murmur. Perhaps he had his own reasons for it, and his own views. As for Todd, he was so peaceable and good-natured that Bunter had no opposition to fear from him.

Billy Bunter was undisputed head of the study; and Billy Bunter was beginning to entertain ambitions. Bunter had always felt that he did not possess his due weight in Form matters. He felt that he had always been overborne by the other fellows in his study. Now he would have a chance to assert himself. As for money matters, he would have to give

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up draining Wharton and Nugent and Inky; but Wun Lung had as much money as the three of them put together, and so Bunter considered that upon the whole he would be probably no worse off.

He blinked at Todd as they came out, and condescended to link his arm in Alonzo's.

As Alonzo was inclined to be lanky, and Bunter was the shortest and fattest fellow in the Lower School, they looked an oddly-assorted pair enough.

"We're going to make things hum," said Bunter.

"My dear Bunter—"

"There's been enough rot about No. 1 Study being the head of the Remove," Bunter explained. "I've been thinking it out. While I was in No. 1 it was all right and serene, of course; but now I'm out, I think that study ought to be made to take its proper place in the school."

"But—"

"Then there's No. 13—Bob Cherry and Mark Linley. We've got to put them in their place, Toddy!"

"Yes, but—"

"No. 14 is going to be head study," said Bunter, with emphasis. "I'm going to make it head study, or I'll know the reason why. What?"

"I'm sure I'm perfectly willing," said Alonzo Todd. "If I can do anything, I shall be happy to oblige, as my Uncle Benjamin always said—"

"We're going to show the Remove that there's a New Firm going," said Billy Bunter, "and I'm going to show them that I'm head of the firm. See?"

Todd admitted that he saw.

"I've stood enough from those chaps," Bunter remarked. "How I stood them in the same study for so long, I don't know. I've stood enough."

"My dear Bunter—"

"By the way, Todd, that postal-order hasn't come yet. There's been a very odd delay in the post. I suppose you could manage another two bob till to-morrow."

"I'm sure I should be very willing to oblige you, Bunter, but I have no money left."

"Oh, rats! Where's Wun Lung?"

And Billy Bunter, dropping Todd's arm without ceremony, went off in search of the other fortunate partner in the New Firm.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton had been growing more and more surprised by the sly looks and chuckles of the juniors. He did not know in the least what was amiss, and he tackled Micky Desmond on the subject at last, taking hold of the Irish junior's ear to stop him as he walked by chuckling with Lacy.

"What's the joke, Micky?" he asked.

"Ow! Yow! Leggo!"

"But what's the joke?"

"Better ask Bunter. Faith, and if ye want information, darling, ye've got the wrong pig by the ear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Faith, and it's a nate description of ye'self intirely, yez gossoon!"

Micky glared.

"Sure if ye call me a pig, Bob Cherry—"

"I didn't! You did!"

"What I mane is—"

"Never mind what you mean," said Harry Wharton, releasing the junior's ear. "What I want to know is, what do you all mean? There's some joke on, up against us. What is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling ass—"

"Faith, and look in ye' own study, then!"

"In my study?"

"Yes, intirely!"

"I don't see—"

"Sure, ye'll see when you get there!"

"Exactly!" grinned Lacy. "You can't expect to see into your study from here, up a flight of stairs, along a passage, through a wall and a door, unless you've got eyes like Sam Weller—or like he hadn't—"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Harry abruptly. "There's some jape been played in our quarters!"

Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh hurried upstairs. They looked into No. 1 Study and jumped. The table and the bookcase and a shelf remained. Nothing else, or scarcely anything else, was there to show that the room had once been furnished.

"My hat!" ejaculated Wharton, in amazement and rage.

"So that's the joke!"

"The jokefulness is terrific!"

"It's a little too terrific for my taste," said Nugent angrily.

"Where have they taken our things—and who's done it?"

"We'll jolly soon find out!"

"A blessed clearance, and no mistake," said Frank. "I

Don't see the fun in a jape of this sort—ripping up the carpet and all. I suppose it's Bulstrode."

"Let's go and see!"

The chums went down the passage to the door of No. 2—Bulstrode's study. The door was locked, and a sharp rap on it brought no reply.

"Bulstrode's out," said Nugent. "I saw him in the Close."

"What has he locked his door for, then?"

"Because our things are in his study, I suppose."

"The becausefulness is terrific."

"Yes, rather! We're going to have that door open."

"Good!"

"Let's get the form from the end of the passage, and bash it in."

"Good again!"

There was a heavy oaken form under the window at the end of the passage. The chums soon dragged it along the passage to Bulstrode's door, and then grasped it together, swung it round, and brought the end with a crash on the lock.

The crash rang the length of the passage, and made the window shake.

"Go it!" said Harry. "The lock won't stand much of that."

"The gofulness is terrific."

Crash, crash!

Bang!

The lock was smashed, and the door flew open with a crash on the wall. The chums almost fell over with the form as the door yielded.

"Done it!" gasped Nugent. "Hurrah!"

There was a roar from the direction of the stairs. Bulstrode was coming up with Tom Brown and Hazeldene, who shared the study with him. The three of them stared almost in stupefaction at the assailants of the study.

"What are you doing with my door?" yelled Bulstrode.

"Busting it in," said Frank coolly.

"You—you—you—"

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom Brown, in amazement.

"What's the game? Are you taking up Second Form japes in your old age, Wharton?"

"You hounds!" shouted Bulstrode furiously. "What do you mean? What—"

"We want our things back!"

"Your things! What things?"

"The things from our study that you've raided!" said Harry.

"My hat!" said Hazeldene. "They're not in here."

"Not here."

"Ha, ha! No!"

Wharton looked into the study. It presented its usual appearance, and certainly there was no raided furniture piled in it.

"Oh!" said Wharton, rather taken aback.

Bulstrode gave an angry growl, a great deal like a savage dog.

"Do you think I want your rotten sticks?" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean by smashing the lock on my door? You'll have to make it good!"

"The things are not here!" said Tom Brown, laughing.

"You'll have to look further for them, Wharton."

"Well, I'm sorry!" said Wharton. "I thought it was a jape of Bulstrode's, because of what happened yesterday, and when I found the door locked—"

"I locked it," said Bulstrode. "I've got a pie in the cupboard, and I didn't want Bunter to come smelling it out."

"Oh, I see!"

"You'll jolly well pay for that lock!" said Bulstrode.

"I'll pay for it—when I'm certain that you didn't have a hand in clearing out my study," said Harry. "I can see the things are not here, but I'm not at all sure that you had nothing to do with the raid."

"I don't see why I shouldn't help a chap to move his own furniture if he wanted me to," said Bulstrode truculently.

Wharton started.

"Own furniture! Whose?"

"Bunter's, of course!"

"Bunter's!" shouted Nugent.

"Yes, Bunter's. He asked my help in moving his things, and there was no reason, I suppose, why I shouldn't lend him a hand."

Wharton looked steadily at the bully of the Remove.

"You knew jolly well the things weren't Bunter's," he said.

"I don't know anything of the sort. He said they were, and pointed out all the things that belonged to him. The rest were left."

"Oh, don't talk rot! You know not a thing belonged to

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him, as well as I know it," said Wharton angrily. "It was an excuse for a jape, and I'm not sorry you've got your door busted over it. You can get the lock mended yourself."

And the chums of No. 1 left the study, leaving Bulstrode scowling, and Tom Brown laughing, and hurried along the Remove passage to No. 14.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Raid.

"WINGATE! I say, Wingate!"

Wingate, the stalwart captain of Greyfriars, stopped and looked down at Billy Bunter. The fat junior was breaking into a run to keep pace with the big Sixth-Former's stride.

"Well?" said Wingate, in his crisp way.

"I—I want to speak to you, Wingate. It's rather important."

The captain of Greyfriars paused. He knew Billy Bunter, and he took out his watch.

"Go ahead," he said. "I give you two minutes."

"Oh, really, Wingate—"

"Time's going."

"Perhaps I had better explain," said Alonzo Todd, who had followed Bunter. "You see, Wingate, Bunter is anxious—"

"Shut up, Todd, and let the head of the study speak!" said the fat junior.

"My dear Bunter—"

"Shut up! I suppose you know, Wingate, that I've changed into No. 14 Study in the Remove?" said Billy Bunter, as if that was a fact that ought to be known to all Greyfriars, if not to all the wide world outside the school gates as well.

"How should I know?" said the senior.

"Oh, really—"

"You might all change your studies, or go and live in the wood-shed, without my being any the wiser," said Wingate. "If you've got anything to say to me, Bunter, you'd better say it."

"I say, you know, I'm in Study No. 14 now, and Todd is with me—"

"I've changed out of Skinner's study," said Todd. "I had a slight accident there, and Skinner cut up very rough about it."

Wingate laughed.

"Yes, I know all about you," he remarked, "and I dare say Skinner had plenty of reason to cut up rough."

"Oh, no! It was really nothing, and I think Skinner was unreasonable to be angry just because I burnt his chops—"

"What!"

"Because I burnt his chops."

"You burnt his what?"

"Chops."

"Well, I must say you have choice language in the Remove," said Wingate. "I should like your Form-master to hear you use that expression."

"But it is quite a correct expression, I believe," said Todd, looking very much puzzled. "What should I say, Wingate?"

"Well, it would be a little more elegant to say that you burnt his face."

"His face!"

"Yes, certainly."

Todd looked astounded.

"But why should I say that I burnt his face?" he exclaimed.

"It would be telling an untruth, Wingate, and for no purpose whatever."

"But you just said—"

"I said I had burnt his chops."

"What do you mean by his chops, then?" roared Wingate.

"Chops."

"Chops?"

"Yes, chops."

"He, he, he!" giggled Billy Bunter. "Todd means chops, you know. He was cooking chops for Skinner, and he burnt them."

"Exactly!" said Todd.

"Oh!" said Wingate. "I—I see! I didn't catch on. So you cooked chops for him and burnt them, did you?"

"Yes, but it was a pure accident. My intention was to be most obliging."

"I don't doubt that in the least," said Wingate drily. "But I'm not surprised at Skinner not feeling obliged. Now, I must go—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "I haven't told you—"

"Time's up!"

"But Todd's been talking all the time. That fellow is always talking. I haven't had a chance to get in a word, and it's very important."

"Well, what is it—sharp!"

"I've just finished furnishing my study, you know. I've done it at my own expence, with things I used to have in my

old study. Now, I believe the chaps in No. 1 mean to jape me by raiding the study, and I don't want a row with them, for the sake of old times. I thought you might speak a word to them, and tell them there is to be no raiding of that sort. You see—"

"Oh, all right!" said Wingate. "Where's Wharton?"

"I believe he's in the Remove passage," said Bunter. "They all went up there, and I believe they've got a wheezo for breaking into my study."

"I'll see to it."

Wingate went on into the House, and up the stairs, and stopped at the top to look along the Remove passage. Sure enough, there were the three chums, outside the door of the new study at the end of the passage, and they had a heavy oaken form in their grasp. They were evidently about to use it as a battering-ram to crash upon the lock of Study No. 14.

Wingate called along the passage angrily.

"Wharton! Nugent!"

The juniors dropped the form with a crash.

"Hallo!" said Harry, looking round.

"Drop that!"

"We have dropped it, Wingate," ventured Nugent.

"I mean drop that game, you young rascals! There's to be no study raiding here. Let that door alone."

"But—"

"Keep out of that study. Mind, Wharton, you're captain of the Remove, and I hold you responsible if there's any raiding there," said the school captain.

"But I say, Wingate—"

"That's enough. You juniors have got to learn to keep order in this passage."

And Wingate strode down the stairs. He knew well enough that his orders would be obeyed. Wingate, though a good-natured and good-tempered fellow, knew how to make himself respected and obeyed by the Lower School.

Harry Wharton and his chums looked at one another in dismay.

"Well, I must say that's ripping!" said Harry. "Wingate can't know the facts of the case, of course!"

"And he won't let us tell him."

"Apparently not."

"The notfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "We shall have to leave the esteemed furniture in the study of the honourable and rotten Bunter, my worthy chums."

"Looks like it."

Wharton uttered an abrupt exclamation.

"Bunter! Of course! He's been talking to Wingate, and, of course, he's pitched him a yarn. Wingate doesn't know the things belong to us. But—"

"But we shall have to leave them where they are," Nugent said, with a grin. "It looks to me as if Bunter has done us this time."

"Yes, I think he has. But—"

Wharton frowned, and did not finish the sentence. The astute Owl of the Remove had certainly scored over No. 1 Study.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Lays Down the Law!

"ABOUT that house-warming?" said Billy Bunter.

The fat junior strutted into the new study, with his fat hands in the pockets of his trousers, and his little nose in the air. Billy Bunter fancied himself more than ever as head of the new study, and the amount of swank he was assuming was equally ludicrous and exasperating. His tone to his study-mates was growing more and more dictatorial. But Todd did not seem to take offence, and Wun Lung treated the fat junior with an exaggerated respect which would never have imposed upon anyone else. But Bunter received it as his due.

"About that house-warming?" repeated Bunter, as no notice seemed to be taken of his remark.

Todd looked up from his preparation. Wun Lung blinked at Bunter from the depths of the armchair. Wun Lung had generally taken the armchair to curl up in when he was in Bob Cherry's study. He adopted the same manners in Study No. 14. But he found that Billy Bunter was not so easily to be dispossessed as other fellows might be.

Bunter rolled over to the armchair, jerked it forward, and deposited the little Chinese on the hearthrug.

"I thought I told you I was always to have this chair!" he remarked.

Wun Lung sat on the rug, and blinked at him meekly.

"Me no lemembel," he said.

"Then you'd better remember," said Bunter. "Hang it all, it's my own property, ain't it—bought and paid for with my own money—ahem!—at all events, it's down in the account! Who's head of this study?"

"Buntel headee."

"I should say so! I've furnished the place at my own expense throughout," said Bunter. "You fellows haven't contributed anything."

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Todd looked up again.

"I have heard the fellows saying that the things really belong to Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh," he said.

Bunter sniffed.

"Stuff! They belong to me."

"But—"

"Look here, Wingate himself interfered to stop Wharton from raiding this study after I had moved my things," said Billy Bunter aggressively. "I should think that that would have settled it."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, don't argue with me! Look here, I don't like it," said Bunter, in his most dictatorial tone. "Chuck it, Todd!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"I'm head of this study. I'm not going to be argued with."

"Me tinkee—"

"You shut up, too, Wun Lung!"

"Me tinkee tings b'longee Wharton."

Bunter had sprawled his fat limbs in the armchair. He now sat bolt upright, and stared at the little Chinese through his spectacles.

"Look here, Wun Lung, I don't want any more of your cheek than I want of Todd's! Do you want me to give you a hiding?"

"No wantee."

"Do you want me to wipe up the study with you?"

"No."

"Or to bash you with a cricket-stump, and twist your silly pigtail, and make you feel generally that life isn't worth living?"

"No wantee."

"Then you'd better be careful. I'm the head of this study, and that's a thing you've got to remember, both of you. Now, about that house-warming?"

"No savvy."

"It's only decent to stand a house-warming on moving into a new study."

"Bunttee standee?"

"Hang it all," said Bunter irritably, "I've stood the whole expense of the furnishing, and I think you fellows might stand the house-warming. Be fair!"

"I'm so sorry," said Todd. "I have no money. Unless you can repay the loan—"

"Oh, get off that subject! That's an old account."

"I did not wish it to become old," said the Duffer of Greyfriars mildly. "I should have been very glad if you had paid it up while it was new."

Bunter did not seem to hear that remark.

"Blessed if I care to have a chap who's always stony broke chumming up with me in this study," he exclaimed. "I suppose it can't be helped. Look here, Wun Lung, you're the man!"

"No, savvy!"

"I've stood the expense of the furnishing, and you'll have to stand the study-warming. It's only fair!"

"No, savvy!"

"I'll jolly soon make you savvy, if I have to take a cricket-stump to you," said Billy Bunter. "You can't come it over me in that way."

"Me no savvy!"

"I'll just draw up a list of the grub we shall want, and a list of the fellows I'm going to invite," said Bunter. "We'll have the feed this evening!"

"Bunttee payee?"

"You'll pay!"

"No, savvy!"

"You blessed mean neathen, you'd better savvy. After all the trouble and expense I've been to in furnishing this study, I think you might be willing to stand the feed. Now, let me think!" Billy Bunter drew a blunt pencil from his pocket, and wetted the point, and tore a leaf from Todd's Latin grammar to make his calculations upon. "Lemme see! Three dozen tarts—twopenny ones—one large seed-cake, one large currant ditto—two cold chickens, tin corned beef, one dozen cream puffs—ahem! How do you fellows like that?"

"No savvy!"

"Three pounds strawberry jam, ditto raspberry, ditto apricot. Preserved fruits, say, three jars, assorted. Bread, butter, biscuits, eggs, of course."

"No savvy!"

Bunter was busy with the list. He put down all the things he had mentioned, and a good many more.

Then he tossed the paper to Wun Lung. The little Chinese allowed it to fall upon the hearthrug.

"Pick that up, Wun Lung!"

Wun Lung picked it up.

"Now read it through!"

Wun Lung read it through.

"You'll lay in those things for the feed," said Billy Bunter.

"Me no savvy!"

"You'll go down to the tuck-shop now, and get them in, and bring them here in a basket," said Bunter. "I'll make up the list of chaps I'm going to invite to the house-warming. Put that key on the inside of the lock, while I think of it, Todd! We shall have to keep the door locked during the feed, or there may be a raid!"

Bunter rose and stirred the fire.

"You're not gone yet, Wun Lung?"

"No goee!"

"What!"

"No goee!" said Wun Lung, with a smile that was child-like and bland.

Bunter frowned.

"I'll give you till I've finished making my list of guests," he said. "Now, I'm not going to have Wharton and his lot. I'm going to cut that crew. Nor Cherry, either, and Linley. I'm jolly well not going to associate with factory chaps. I sha'n't have Bulstrode, either, the beast! Lemme see—there's Skinner, he can come, and Russell, and Snoop and Lacy—"

"Me tinkee—"

"Shut up. I'll ask the fellows myself, while you're gone for the grub!" said Bunter. "Now, are you going?"

"No goee!"

Bunter went to the cupboard and took out a cricket-stump. Wun Lung eyed him with wary almond eyes.

"Dear me!" said Todd. "This will never do! We must not have bullying of this sort in this study, Bunter!"

"Mind your own bizney, Todd!"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I'm sure my Uncle Benjamin—"

"Blow your Uncle Benjamin!"

"My dear Bunter," said Todd, much shocked. "I really—"

"Stuff! Cheese it! Now, then, Wun Lung, are you going, or shall I lay this cricket-stump about you?" said Bunter threateningly.

Wun Lung blinked doubtfully at the fat junior. Then a peculiar smile glided over his odd little Oriental face.

"Me goee."

Bunter grinned.

"I thought you would," he said. "Mind, you'll get all the things I've written down there, or you'll get a larruping!"

"Me gettee!"

"Good! Hurry up! I'll go round and ask in some of the fellows!"

Wun Lung bowed his head humbly, and left the study. But there was a glimmer in his almond eyes that meant mischief.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Invitation from Wun Lung.

BOB CHERRY and Mark Linley were at prep. in No. 13, when three juniors presented themselves at the door. They were Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and the Nabob of Bhanipur. They were all looking distinctly annoyed, and they all had books under their arms.

"Come in!" said Bob Cherry, cheerily. "Haven't come to tea, I hope? Because we've finished, and there's nothing left."

"One sardine!" said Mark Linley, with a smile.

"Oh, one sardine! You're welcome to that, though!" added Bob Cherry, dubiously. "It wouldn't go very far among three, perhaps!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We haven't come to tea," he said. "We had tea in Hall. But if you can give us room to do our prep. here, we shall be obliged!"

"Ha, ha! I hear your study's been cleaned out!"

"It's that young rotter Bunter!" said Harry, half-laughing and half-vexed. "He pretends that some of the things belong to him, and he's taken the lot, excepting the table and bookcase. We've nothing, not even a carpet or a fender or a coal-scuttle. We can't take 'em back, because he's appealed to Wingate about it."

"You can explain to Wingate!"

"I suppose we shall have to, but—well, we haven't yet. Of course, we can't afford to furnish the study again, and let him keep the things. But at present we want chairs to sit on to do our prep., and a fire. If you can put us up for an hour—"

"Of course."

"Yes, rather!" said Mark Linley. "We're only two

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here now, you know. We could make room for you, anyway!"

"Thanks! It's rotten trying to do prep. in the common room, with a buzz going on all the time, and it's jolly cold in the Form-room!"

"Plenty of room here, and a good fire," said Bob cheerily. And the five juniors sat down round the table. It was a squeeze, but they had been as crowded before on many an occasion. They had been some time at work, when Billy Bunter passed the door and looked in.

"I say, you fellows, I want to borrow a couple of chairs," he said. "I'm giving a house-warming in my study, you know. I'm sincerely sorry I can't ask you, because I'm rather particular about my company, and—oh, I didn't see you, Wharton!"

The Owl of the Remove had just caught sight of the visitors in the study. Without stopping to say any more, he retreated, and rolled away down the passage. Wharton burst into a laugh.

"So Bunter's giving another house-warming," he remarked. "I hope it will be more successful than the first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is he getting the tin, I wonder?" Nugent remarked. "He hasn't borrowed anything of us since he left our study."

"Perhaps he's got his postal-order," Bob Cherry suggested, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's simple enough," said Wharton. "Wun Lung has had the honour of becoming his banker, I expect!"

"I suppose so. He'll have that honour very frequently!"

"The frequentfulness will be terrific!"

"I don't know," Bob Cherry remarked, thoughtfully.

"Wun Lung is fooling Bunter—just spoofing him. He's not afraid of Tubby, and he only pretends to be. My idea is that Bunter will get the worst of it if they come into collision!"

"And a jolly good thing, too!"

The chums went on with their preparation. The door was presently opened, and a little grinning face looked in. Wun Lung, with his finger to his lips, stepped into the study. In his other hand he held a large basket.

The juniors looked at him. The finger on his lips kept them silent; there was something very mysterious in Wun Lung's manner.

"No talkee," he murmured.

"What do you mean?"

Wun Lung closed the door cautiously.

"Buntsee hear!"

"What does it matter if Bunter hears?"

Wun Lung chuckled his silent chuckle.

"Allee light. Me givee house warming!"

"Oh! You are giving it!"

"Me givee!"

"Bunter told us he was giving it!"

"Bunter tinkee givee; no givee. Me givee. You fellows come to house-warming, what you tinkee. Me gottsee glub hele. You comee."

"But—"

"Me askee you comee. Me payee for glub—payee all. Buntsee payee nothing. Allee glub mine. You comee!"

"Well, I don't see why we shouldn't come," said Harry, glancing at the others. "We had a measly tea in Hall."

"The measles were terrific!"

"Ha, ha! Come on, we can finish prep. afterwards," said Bob Cherry.

"Come plenty quick!"

"We're coming!"

The juniors followed Wun Lung out of the study and into the next room. Alonzo Todd was there, still at his prep. He nodded a welcome to the new-comers. Wun Lung closed the door and locked it.

"Where's Bunter?" asked Bob, looking round.

"Buntsee goee askee fiends to feed!"

"But you've locked the door!"

"Allee light!"

The truth burst upon Bob Cherry. He gave a tremendous roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Aren't you going to let Bunter in?"

Wun Lung grinned.

"No lettee in."

"Or his friends?"

"No lettee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said Alonzo Todd. "Bunter will be very disappointed. Yet, upon the whole, I do not approve of the manner he adopted. He certainly had no right to expend your money on a feed against your will, Wun Lung. I am sure that my Uncle Benjamin would not have approved of it!"

"That settles it," said Bob Cherry gravely. "Whatever

Ben says goes. Ben is a great authority. I hope every gentleman present agrees with me in my remarks upon Ben."

"Hear, hear!" said all the gentlemen present.

Alonzo beamed.

"I am very pleased to hear you express this opinion, Cherry," he said, "I should like to introduce you to my Uncle Benjamin. I hope to induce him to pay me a visit at Greyfriars, you know, and—"

"Oh, won't it be joyful!" said Nugent.

"My dear Nugent—"

"The joyfulness will be terrific! The grubfulness of the esteemed Wun Lung is also terrific. We shall enjoy this feed—"

"Terrifically!" said Frank.

Wun Lung was indeed making a wonderful show on the table. He had pushed the Duffer's books off while Todd was talking, and laid the cloth. The contents of the basket, turned out on the table, were wonderful to behold. There were not quite so many things, perhaps, as Bunter had specified in his list, but the quantity was great, and the quality all that could be desired.

"My hat!" said Wharton. "I suppose you've spent a small fortune on that lot. Well, we'll do it justice."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific. I shall have great joy in drinkfully proposing the honourable health of the founder of the feastfulness."

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors gathered round the table. It was some time since tea, and tea in Hall was not of the most substantial character. The juniors were quite hungry enough to do full justice to the house-warming.

Chairs enough were found, eked out with boxes, to sit upon, and the table was laid—or, rather, laden—and the feast commenced. The hospitable board, as a novelist would say, groaned under the viands.

"Well, this is ripping!" said Bob Cherry. "You're a giddy prince, Wun Lung!"

"Allee light."

The feast commenced, amid laughter and good humour. Billy Bunter had not yet returned, but just as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was about to propose the health of the founder of the feast, in ginger-beer, there was a rattle at the handle of the door. The head of the study had returned.

Now was the time for Wun Lung to tremble. But he didn't. He only chuckled, and the feed went on quite unconcernedly, while Billy Bunter rattled at the handle of the door, and shouted angrily through the keyhole.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The House-Warming.

BILLY BUNTER was about as unpopular in the Remove as it was possible for a fellow to be, and the Upper Forms knew him not. But it had been easy for him to gather quite a little crowd of guests by the magic word "house-warming." Juniors, as a rule, have healthy appetites, and most of the Remove were willing to admit that even Bunter had his good points—when he asked them to a feed. Snoop and Hazeldene and Lacy and Trevor had come with Bunter, and a couple of the Fifth, seeing the procession, had asked what was on, and had come, too. Bunter didn't want Blundell and Bland of the Fifth, but he couldn't very well say no, and he was not insensible, too, to the honour of having members of the Fifth at his study-warming. So they came, and the party arrived together at the door of Study No. 14, and found it locked.

"Here we are," said Bunter cheerfully, as he turned the handle. "I think you fellows will like this feed. We mean to do things in style in Study No. 14, I assure you."

"House-warming?" said Bulstrode, coming along the passage. "You forgot to look in at my study, Bunter."

"Look here, Bulstrode—"

"You want me, of course."

Billy Bunter felt glad that Blundell and Bland were with him, after all.

"No, I don't!" he said flatly.

Bulstrode assumed a threatening look. But Blundell laid a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"Cut!" said Blundell softly.

Bulstrode gave him one look. He was a burly fellow for a Remove junior, and he had things very much his own way in the Lower School, but he knew better than to enter upon a tussle with the big Fifth-Former.

"I'll remember this, Bunter!" he said, and he turned and walked away.

Bunter, who never looked ahead, and seldom bothered his mind about anything except in the passing moment, did not give Bulstrode a thought. He tried the handle of the door again, it dawning upon him by this time that the lock would not yield.

"The door's locked," he said, in surprise.

"Locked?"

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"Well, it won't open." Bunter rattled the door. "Open this door, Todd, please."

"No opee."

"Oh, you're there, are you, Wun Lung? Open the door."

"No opee."

"Have you locked it?"

"No lockee."

"What for?"

"Keepee you out," said Wun Lung cheerfully.

Bunter gasped.

"The cheeky young heathen! I'll larrup him for this!"

"You'll have to get the door open first," said Blundell.

"Hark! There's somebody in there, and feeding, too. I can hear the knives and forks."

Bunter kicked at the door.

"Wun Lung, what does this mean? Open the door! Who have you got in there?"

"Me standee feed. Invitee fiends," said Wun Lung through the keyhole. "No askee Buntee. Buntee fat cad. No wantee."

"You—you—heathen rotter—"

"Go away, Buntee. No wolly me."

"I'll—I'll worry you, you—you pigtailed bounder!" roared Bunter. "I'm the head of this study. Ain't I the head of the New Firm, you heathen? Open the door at once!"

"Lats!"

"I'll pulverise you presently!"

"Lats!"

"Looks to me as if the house-warming is all on the other side," said Blundell disagreeably. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, the grub belongs to that Chinese?"

"Oh, really, you know! It's—it's my house-warming, you fellows. I really want you to come. Look here, Blundell, you tell 'em to open the door. They'll have to do it if a senior tells them, you know."

"Well, there's something in that," Blundell stooped to the keyhole. "I say, in there! You know me—I'm Blundell. Open this door at once!"

"Go and eat coke!"

It was Bob Cherry's voice that replied in the most cheerful of tones. The captain of the Fifth gave quite a jump.

"What's that?" he roared.

"Go and masticate coke!"

"You cheeky young scoundrel—!"

"Oh, go and chop chips!"

"Why, I'll—I'll—I'll—!" Words failed Blundell. Such language from a Remove fellow was a new thing in his experience.

"Oh, buzz off, Blandy! You're a bore!"

"A—a—a what?"

"A bore—a giddy bore! You make me tired! Run away and play!"

Blundell could scarcely believe his ears. He drew a crimson face away from the door. He glared at the fellows in the passage. Even Bland was grinning.

"I've had enough of this!" said Blundell, with dignity. "Serves me right for coming to a junior feed! If you dare to ask me again, Bunter—"

"Oh, I say, I didn't ask you," said Bunter. "You—Ow! Yow?"

Bunter's remarks were terminated by a twist upon his ear from Blundell's angry fingers that quite removed any desire on his part to argue the matter out further. Blundell stalked off very loftily with Bland.

"Well, let 'em go!" said Bunter, rubbing his scarlet ear. "We can manage the feed very well without them, you fellows."

"I don't see how we're to manage it," said Snoop. "We're in the passage and the feed's in the study."

"I'll make that Chinese rotter let us in."

"How are you going to do it?"

Bunter kicked at the door.

"Wun Lung, let me in, you young scoundrel!"

"No opee dool."

"I'll smash you!"

"Lats!"

"Ain't I the head of this study?"

"Lats!"

Bunter rattled the door again. Snoop and Hazeldene sniffed, and walked away down the passage. The others followed. It was pretty clear to them that the feed would not come off as far as they were concerned.

Bunter was left alone, rattling the door. He realised, too, that he had no chance, and he gave up threats in favour of expostulations.

"I say, you fellows," he said, through the keyhole, "the chaps are gone. I'm alone here. You'll let me in now, won't you?"

"Lats!"

"I'm awfully hungry, Wun Lung."

"Lats!"

"Look here, I'll agree to anything, only do open the door," said Bunter, in his most wheedling tones. "Be a decent chap, Wun Lung."

"Lats!"

Wun Lung's reply was invariable. And the sounds from within the study—the cheery rattle of knives and forks on plates, and the popping of corks, and the merry laughter—showed that the feed was proceeding unchecked.

Bunter rose from the keyhole, breathing fury.

He gave the door a savage kick, that rang along the passage, not so much in the hope of opening it as to relieve his angry feelings.

"You rotters!" he roared. "You beasts! Cads! Yah!"

"Stop that row!" roared Bulstrode, along the passage, putting his head out of his door. "How's a chap to do his prep.—Hallo!"

He saw that Bunter was alone, and he came quickly along the passage. Billy Bunter blinked at him uneasily.

"I say, Bulstrode, I'm locked out," he said. "They won't let me in to my own house-warming, you know."

"Serve you jolly well right, you fat oyster! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you know, you can come to the feed if you'll help me to get the door open somehow," said Bunter.

"I don't want to come to your rotten feed!" said Bulstrode, grasping the fat junior by the shoulder. "But you haven't got any seniors with you now, you fat bounder, and—"

"Ow! Leggo!"

Bulstrode swung Billy Bunter round and planted a foot behind him. Bunter went tottering along the passage, and Bulstrode followed him with kick on kick, till the Owl of the Remove broke into a wild run and fled for his life.

Bulstrode returned, laughing, to his study, and Billy Bunter did not venture into the Remove passage again. Meanwhile, the house-warming went on merrily enough in Study No. 14. The party there was very jolly.

There was plenty to eat and plenty to drink, and the feed was a great success. Everyone was in the best of humour. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's speech, when he proposed the health of Wun Lung, was a masterpiece, and hailed with cheers.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rose with a glass charged with ginger-beer in his hand, and a sweet smile upon his dusky face, and Harry Wharton rapped the table for silence.

"Gentlemen and worthy chums—"

"Hear, hear!"

"It affords me particular pleasure to propose the worthy health of our esteemed and venerable chum, the excellent and august Wun Lung. The many grand qualities of our worthy chum are knowfully aware to you all."

"Hear, hear!"

"In every department of his honourable nature the worthy Wun Lung is redounded," said Hurree Singh, his English getting a little mixed as he grew excited and eloquent. "Shall I point to his sincere friendliness to his august chums, or to his worthy manfulness in every particular that should grace the humane nature? Is it not certain that if the votefulness should be taken unanimously, all those who agreed that our friend is a truly great and sincere august person would be a large and working majority? Is it not certainly established that, as your poet Shakespeare so honourably remarks, 'Take him for all in all, we shall never look upon his like which is rounded with a sleep'? It is, therefore, that I proposefully suggest the worthy health of our sincere and disgusting friend—"

"Hear, hear!"

"May he live a thousand years, and may his shadow never grow—"

"Whiskers," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Never grow less," said Hurree Singh. "May he flourish like the green bay tree beside the runful waters, and may he long survive to stand the honourable feeds and esteemed house-warmfulness to his august chums, who look in his face on this auspicious occasion, and declare from their hearts outward that it is samefully this to declare, and that it is not otherwise at any time, and to repeat declarefully, 'If not, why not?'"

And with this brilliant peroration Hurree Singh sat down.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Keeps Order.

LIKE a disconsolate ghost hovering round the scene of its earthly pleasures, Billy Bunter hung about the Remove passage, making a sudden dive for the stairs whenever he heard a sound in Bulstrode's study. It was a long time before the door of No. 14 opened, and then Harry Wharton & Co. came out, and went into Bob Cherry's study with him to finish their preparation, which they had just time to do before bed.

Billy Bunter then made a dive past Bulstrode's study, and

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ran down the passage to No. 14. He ran in, and found Alonzo Todd clearing away the traces of the feed, and Wun Lung curled up in the armchair, his almond eyes glimmering by the firelight.

Bunter stopped in front of the little Chinese, glowering.

"You worm!" he gasped out.

"Buntree angly?" asked Wun Lung, with an air of the most innocent surprise.

"Angry!" roared Bunter. "You young scoundrel!"

"Why Buntree angly?"

"Why—why!" The question almost took Bunter's breath away. "You—you Chinese heathen. Where's my feed?"

"No feedee fol Buntree."

"I'm the head of this study, and I've been shut out of my own house-warming," said Billy Bunter. "I'm going to make you smart for it."

"Wun Lung no likee smaltree."

Bunter snorted.

"I dare say you don't; but you're going to smart all the same, you heathen rotter. I'm going to keep order in this study, or I'll know the reason why."

And he took out the cricket-stump.

Wun Lung eyed him warily.

"Buntree no beatee pool Chinee," said the little Celestial, in a wheedling voice.

"I'll lick you till you can't crawl," said Bunter. There is never a greater bully than a poltroon who finds power in his hands. "Get up!"

"No liekee!"

"Get out of that chair!"

"No savvy!"

"Well, I'll jolly soon have you out."

Bunter grasped the little Chinese by the shoulder, and dragged him out of the chair. Then he raised the stump to smite. Todd caught his arm.

"My dear Bunter—"

"Let go, Todd!"

"But you must really not strike Wun Lung in that brutal manner," said Alonzo, looking distressed. "I really cannot allow it, Bunter. My Uncle Benjamin would not approve of anything of the sort, and—"

"Hang your Uncle Benjamin!" roared Bunter. "Let go my arm, or I'll give you some, too."

"My dear Bunter—"

"Lettee go, Toddee," said Wun Lung softly, with a sweet smile on his odd little face. "Lettee go! All lightee!"

"Oh, very well!" said Alonzo. "If you choose—"

"Allee light!"

"He'd better have it now," said Bunter. "He's got to have it some time. I'm going to keep order in this study, I tell you."

"No hittee Wun Lung!"

"You'll see, you heathen cad!"

Bunter swung up the stump again. At the same moment Wun Lung's foot curled in a curious manner round his ankle, and Bunter reeled back.

"Oh!" he roared.

The cricket-stump crashed into the grate, and Bunter crashed into the armchair. The impetus of his fall into it sent it rolling along on its castors, till it brought up against the wall.

Wun Lung stood sleepily smiling, as if quite unconscious of the cause of Bunter's disaster. Alonzo Todd stared open-mouthed.

"M-m-m-m-my hat!" gasped Bunter.

He lay for several minutes in the armchair, wondering what had happened to him. Wun Lung watched him. The sleepy smile never left his face.

The Owl of the Remove staggered up at last.

"You tripped me up!" he panted.

"No savvy!"

"I'll make you savvy!"

Bunter rushed on the Chinese. Bunter was so fat and heavy that his weight alone would have been sufficient to crush Wun Lung, if he had got fairly at him. But he did not have a chance of doing that.

Wun Lung curled round him in some mysterious manner, and Bunter was grasped by a hand—thin and small, but with a grip like steel—and his heels spun into the air, and he came down with a crash that shook the study.

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo Todd.

Bunter sat gasping.

Wun Lung, showing no sign of even having made an effort, stood looking at the Owl of the Remove with the same sleepy smile.

It was some time before Billy Bunter recovered himself sufficiently to rise. He was breathless and gasping, and he did not know what to make of it. He glared at the little Celestial through his big spectacles.

"You—you heathen cad!" he gasped. "I—I don't know how you do those rotten tricks. I'll lather you!"

He caught up the cricket-stump again, and ran at Wun Lung, lashing out with it. The little Chinese dodged round the table, and dodged round Alonzo. Alonzo caught a lash of the stump, and gave a wild roar.

"Oh, dear! Mind what you're doing, Bunter! Oh!"

"Sorry—I meant it for that beast," panted Bunter, pounding on round the table after the elusive Chinese. "Hold him for me!"

"My dear Bunter——"

"Stop him when he passes you!"

"I don't think my Uncle Benjamin would approve——"

Bunter rushed at the Chinese again, and again Alonzo Todd caught a swipe. He gave a yell, and scuttled to the doorway. Wun Lung dodged round the table again. Bunter was close upon his track, and he would really have done some damage with that cricket-stump, if he had been given an opportunity, for he was now too furious almost to know what he was doing. But Wun Lung suddenly stopped, and twisted round Bunter like an eel, under his upraised arm, and clasped the fat junior in quite an affectionate embrace.

A twist of his fat wrist forced Bunter to drop the stump, and then he found himself looking into the face of Wun Lung, with the little countenance grinning at him, and a pair of arms, thin and bony, but strong as steel, thrown round him.

Bunter struggled desperately.

But he could not throw off that vicelike grip. It was tightening like the coil of a boa-constrictor, and crushing him, driving all the breath and the resistance out of his fat body.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter at last. "Leggo!"

Wun Lung chuckled softly.

"No leggo!"

"Chuck it!"

"No chuckee!"

"You're sq-sq-squashing me!"

"Me squashee," said Wun Lung cheerfully.

"Ow! Ow! Help!"

"Me clushee Buntsee to death," said Wun Lung, with a sweet smile. "Clushee Buntsee allee samee boa-constrictor. Buntsee soon diee."

"Ow! Help! Murder!"

Bunter's wild outcries brought the chums of the Remove out of the next study. They crowded at the doorway, staring in.

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

"Oh, dear!" said Todd. "Bunter is keeping order in the study, you know, and—and I am afraid he is getting hurt."

"Help!"

"Allee light," said Wun Lung softly. "Me killee Buntsee."

"What!"

"Me killee Buntsee. Allee light."

"You—you young ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Allee light. Me killee soon."

"Help!" moaned Bunter. "Murder! I'm being squashed! Three of my ribs are broken already, and my backbone is broken in two places. Ow! Help! I'm dying!"

"Killee soon," said Wun Lung, with an air of ferocious satisfaction that made the fat junior's blood run cold.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton. "It's all right, Bunter; he's only rotting!"

"Me killee——"

"Ow! Help! Mercy!"

"Let him go, Wun Lung!"

The little Chinese released his victim suddenly. Bunter dropped in a heap on the floor, and sat there groaning and pumping in breath. It was five minutes at least before he rose; and then he said nothing more about keeping order in the study.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Another Moving Job.

WUN LUNG curled himself up in the armchair again, and watched Billy Bunter with a sleepy smile. There was not a hint of triumph in his manner, though he had most completely and successfully vanquished the Owl of the Remove. Bunter, for the present at least, was not likely to try conclusions with the little Celestial again. Exactly how it was that the diminutive Wun Lung had handled him so easily Bunter did not know; but he knew enough to let the heathen severely alone. Alonzo Todd, glad in his peaceful way that peace was restored in the study, went on with his preparation.

"Buntsee hunglee?" asked Wun Lung presently.

The fat junior started.

"Famished!" he said.

"Buntsee likee talt?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. He cast a hopeful glance towards the cupboard, which was locked up. The key was in one of Wun Lung's many pockets. "I'm fearfully hungry. In fact, I think I shall very likely be ill if I don't have some grub. You see, I've got a delicate constitution, and I can really only keep it up by taking plenty of nourishment."

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"Buntsee takee glub at tuckshop."

"I'll have some of what you've got here," said Bunter. "It's a long way to the school shop, and I'm hungry, you know. I don't bear any malice for that—that little row, you know. I know you only meant it as a—a joke."

"No jokee."

Bunter smiled a sickly smile.

"I—I mean, I know you didn't mean to hurt."

"Buntsee long. Me meanee hurt."

"Ahem! I—I mean it's all right. Give me the key of the cupboard, Wun Lung, there's a good chap."

The Chinese junior shook his head.

"No givee key. Buntsee no feedee hele."

"Why not?" demanded Bunter, with a touch of his old truculence.

"Me no likee," said Wun Lung calmly.

Billy Bunter swallowed his wrath with an effort. After all, the great thing was to get the feed.

"I'll have the grub where you like, Wun Lung," he said submissively. "I suppose you'll stand something decent. I know you're a generous chap."

"Buntsee gleat lial."

"H'm! Look here, shall I go now? I could get something decent at Mrs. Mimbles for five bob."

Wun Lung tossed a two-shilling piece on the table. It was very little to the Chinese junior, but it was a great deal to the Owl of the Remove at that moment.

Bunter blinked at the coin.

"I say, Wun Lung, if you like to make this five, you know, you can have it back out of my postal-order to-morrow."

"Lats!"

"I shouldn't object to paying you a shilling extra, as interest, when the postal-order comes, old chap."

"Lats!"

Bunter coughed, and picked up the money. He left the study with the coin tightly clasped in his fat palm. It was his last chance of a feed that night—excepting the school supper of bread and cheese—and Bunter felt that he could do justice to that very well, too, after he had expended the two shillings in a "snack."

Wun Lung turned his sleepy smile upon Alonzo. The Duffer of Greyfriars had finished his work, and risen to stretch himself.

"Toddee!"

"Yes, Wun Lung?" said Alonzo amicably. "I must say, you know, that I quite approve of the way you treated Bunter. He was becoming most unpleasant. I think my Uncle Benjamin would have approved of it too."

Wun Lung grinned.

"Buntsee fulnitule?" he remarked.

"Ah, yes: I am afraid that the furniture really belongs to Wharton and his friends, Wun Lung, and we have no right to keep it," said Todd, with an anxious look.

"Me tinkee too."

Alonzo looked relieved.

"I am glad to hear it, Wun Lung. Bunter has really swindled those fellows, you know, though I suppose he doesn't see it in that light. Shall we talk to him and explain that the furniture ought to be taken back? Wingate has forbidden Wharton to raid the study, and I don't see how those fellows are to get the things back."

"No talkee to Buntsee. We takee."

"But——"

"We takee tings back," said Wun Lung, rising from the chair. "Buntsee feedee; we takee tings. No trouble from Buntsee."

"But——" said Todd dubiously.

"You helpee me."

"But as Bunter is head of the study——"

"Lats! Me headee studee."

Alonzo Todd laughed. Quiet and meek as he was, he was not afraid of anybody, least of all of Bunter, though he had certainly given Bunter the impression that he was. Billy Bunter could not understand peacefulness and kind temper in a fellow who wasn't afraid.

Todd felt that the things ought to be taken back, and finding Wun Lung of the same mind, he was quite ready to help.

The active little Chinese lost no time. Having planted Billy Bunter out of the way at the school tuckshop for some time, he had no interference to fear. Harry Wharton & Co. were still busy in Bob Cherry's study, and they did not even know what was going on.

Wun Lung and Todd carried the things down the passage one or two at a time, and planted them in the study. The carpet was jerked up, leaving a fearsome array of tacks where the edges had been, and Wun Lung laid it down in its original place in No. 1 Study, contenting himself with half a dozen tacks to fasten it.

Bulstrode looked in while they were arranging the furniture. He stared in surprise at what was going on.

"Hallo, what's the game?" he asked.

"We puttee tings back," said Wun Lung cheerfully. "Allee light."

"But what are you going to do in your own study?"

"Allee samee light. Me wolk in Bob Cholly's studee till No. 14 fulnished, and Todd wolkee in his old study fol a bit. Allee light. Soon get new tings."

"But what's Bunter going to do?"

Wun Lung closed one eye.

"Buntee head of Studee No. 14. Buntee wolkee thele, if Buntee like, or in the cellat, ol on the loof. Wun Lung no cale."

"Ha, ha! Perhaps Wharton will take him back into No. 1 for a time?"

"Me no tinkee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode went away laughing, and soon the story of the restitution, and the probable stranding of Bunter in an empty, dismantled study, was known to all the Remove. A crowd collected to see the little Chinese at work, and the voices soon brought Harry Wharton & Co. out of No. 13.

The Famous Four stared in amazement at the metamorphosis in No. 1 Study.

"My hat!" said Nugent. "It's a giddy moving job again. What on earth are you chaps up to, you know?"

"The moving jobfulness is terrific."

"We've brought your things back, you know," said Alonzo Todd. "They did not belong to us, and I am sure my Uncle Benjamin would not have approved of my keeping them."

"Good old Benny!"

"I think they are all here now, but I will go and see if anything is left in No. 14. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me that one cannot be too careful."

And Todd went back to the new study. Wun Lung looked up with a grin from tacking the carpet. The furniture was all in the study now, and it presented its old appearance.

"Allee light!" said Wun Lung. "Allee samee befole, what you tinkee?"

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "The things belong to us, of course, and we were in a jolly fix without them."

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

Billy Bunter came along the passage. He had expended the two shillings, and looked a little fatter and shinier and more contented. He quickened his pace as he saw the crowd of fellows outside No. 1 Study.

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter broke off as he saw the state of the study. A roar of laughter greeted the look on his fat face.

He gave one bewildered stare into the study, and then dashed along to No. 14. It was too true; Study No. 14 was quite bare, and Todd was about to leave.

"What—what have you been up to?" roared Bunter.

"My dear Bunter—"

"You've cleared out the study—"

"Pray listen to me calmly, Bunter. One should always be calm, as my Uncle Benjamin has told me many times. Now, as the property did not belong to us, but to Wharton, it was impossible for us to retain it, and—"

"You—you idiot!" roared Bunter.

"Really—"

"You dummy!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"And how dare you move the things without my permission?" roared Bunter truculently. He had had a lesson from Wun Lung, it is true, but he wasn't afraid of Alonzo Todd. In fact, he thought that Alonzo Todd was afraid of him. "How dare you? Ain't I the head of this study? What?"

"My dear— Ow!"

Bunter's fist crashed on Todd's nose, and interrupted him. Bunter felt that he could take it out of the Duffer of Greyfriars, at least. But never was a fat youth more mistaken.

Alonzo Todd staggered back, with his hand to his nose, but only for a moment. The blood of all the Todds was up at that insult. As Bunter followed up his attack, Todd hit out, carefully and considerably aiming his blow at Bunter's chin, to be assured of not touching his spectacles.

Bunter gave a gasp, and sat down, with a shock that jarred every bone in his body. His glasses slid down his fat little nose, and he sat blinking wildly at Todd.

Alonzo, quite warlike now that the blow had been struck, danced round him, brandishing his fists.

"Get up!" he roared. "Will you have some more? Come on! Come on!"

"Ow!"

"Are you going to come on?"

"Ow! No! Oh! Ow!"

And Bunter being evidently determined to remain in a sitting posture till Alonzo left the study, Alonzo sniffed and went out, leaving him sitting there. And for quite a long time Billy Bunter sat there blinking and gasping, and wondering whether he was on his head or his heels—a most humiliating position for the head of the study and the chief of the New Firm.

THE END.

Another splendid, long, complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next week by Frank Richards, entitled "THE DUFFER'S DOWNFALL." Order your copy of the "Magnet" in advance. Price One Penny.)



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

(The history of numerous adventures of the Boy Detective on sea and land, has been related in previous issues of this paper.)

The Runaway Motor-Car—A Scrap of Paper—The Empty House near Barnes Common.

The lamps of a motor-car, coming along the road at high speed, gleamed brightly in the darkness, and wavering reflections were flashed back from the wet pavement close to which it was running.

Someone gave a warning shout: "The car is empty! Keep clear!" and startled pedestrians rushed hurriedly to places of safety.

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"THE BLUE CRUSADERS" is the most popular football team of the day.

A tricycle, standing unoccupied against the kerb, was caught by the flying car, flung over and over, and, in the space of about thirty seconds, reduced to a bent, broken, and shapeless mass of rubber, leather, and metal.

"Hi, there! Keep clear! Look out! A runaway car!"

There were yells and shouts and dire confusion; men and women flying in all directions; some rolling over on the ground in their haste to get out of the way of what might at any moment become a death-dealing machine, at the terrific speed which it was going.

But its race was nearly run. There was a bend in the road, but the car, having no one to guide it, kept straight on, made a sort of leap across the pavement as the front wheel

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struck the kerb, and dashed with fearful violence against a brick wall that bordered a garden.

The wall was partially demolished in an instant, and the car at the same time became a total wreck. As the danger was now past, a small crowd began to collect around the ruins.

"Precious lucky there was no one in it!" said one of the onlookers.

A policeman pushed his way through the crowd, telling the people to stand back. At the same instant a tall, good-looking, keen-eyed young fellow, about eighteen years of age, pushed through from the opposite side, and began to examine the wrecked vehicle curiously.

The constable turned to him sharply, and was about to order him back; but his demeanour changed on seeing his face. He touched his helmet and said:

"Mr. Stanley Dare, I think?"

The boy-detective nodded.

"I ought to remember you, sir," pursued the constable; "I was with you for a bit on the Sillwood diamond case. Ah, that was a queer business if you like, but I don't think there's anything in your line here."

"I don't know, Fletcher," replied Stanley Dare. "What has become of the occupant of the car? Someone must have started it, you know, and then either have jumped out, or fallen out, or been dragged out. A car doesn't start off on its own accord."

"That's true, sir," admitted Fletcher. "So we will just leave this smashed-up car in charge of my mate, who is on point-duty—he is crossing the road now—and then go back along the road and see if we can find out what has happened to the owner."

Stanley Dare did not reply. He scarcely heard the words which had been addressed to him, for he was hunting about amid the wreckage of the car like a terrier looking for a rat. Suddenly, with a low cry of satisfaction, he picked up a scrap of paper, and, opening it out, glanced at the writing on it. Here is a reproduction of it:

"Still obsti
resort to stronger me
meet 11.15 at Cran"

The paper was ordinary note, and the letter, of which Dare held a fragment, was written in violet ink with a stylographic pen.

"This may possibly be of importance," said Dare to Fletcher, who, having handed over charge to his brother constable, was ready to pursue his investigations along the road. "It is a fragment of a letter, which I shall hand over to you after I have taken an exact copy of it. Of course, I may not have anything to do with the case—"

"The case?" repeated the constable, shaking his head and smiling. "Oh, I don't think there'll be one, unless it is an accident, which may end in a coroner's inquest. Come along, sir, if you want to see the end of it."

"The end may be farther off than you suppose, Fletcher," replied Stanley Dare.

The smash-up had taken place on the outskirts of Putney, in the Upper Richmond Road. The runaway car had come from the direction of Barnes Common, so the young detective, with the constable, hurried along the road towards that quarter, keeping a sharp look-out for any traces which would help them to discover either what had happened to, or what had become of, the late occupant of the car.

They also made inquiries from various persons whom they met, but no one had heard of any accident, nor had anybody seen anything of the runaway motor-car. All those who had seen it now formed part of the crowd that stood staring at the remains of it.

"Curious," muttered the constable. "It can't have come along empty for any great distance, or else some of these people must have noticed it. Then what has become of the owner or the driver? If he is injured, he must surely want to find out something about his car."

They had come about a mile from the scene of the accident, and had arrived at the part of the road where it skirts Barnes Common. It was here that they at last gained some information from a man who was lounging against a post, smoking a short clay pipe.

"Seen an empty motor-car? Yes," he replied, when they had put the usual question to him. "But it warn't running away when I seed it."

"Standing still, was it?" asked the constable.

"Standin' still, it was," returned the man. "You see that house there, standin' alone, close agin the common?"

He pointed to a large, old-fashioned house standing in its own grounds, right away from the main road.

"Yes, I see it," replied Fletcher. "Empty house; not had a tenant in it for over a year, to my certain knowledge."

"Empty it is," admitted the man, in his hoarse, gin-and-fog voice. "Well, there was a car such as you describe standing about fifty yards up that narrow turning that goes

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past the side of the house, and the car hadn't got nobody in it."

"How long ago was that?" asked Dare.

"Why, a matter o' three-quarters of an hour, I should say," was the answer. "I appened to be passing, and noticed it. It was gone when I come back 'ere, about ten minutes ago."

"What are you doing here?" asked the constable suspiciously.

"Waiting for a pal," replied the man. "No 'arm in that, I s'pose?"

Stanley Dare had crossed the road when he found there was no more information to be obtained from the man, and Fletcher presently joined him.

"The fellow has told the truth," said the young detective. "See, here are the wheel-tracks of the car as it turned sharply out of this narrow byroad, so it must have been standing up there. It is equally certain that somebody must have been driving it then, for a motor-car can't steer itself round a corner. I should like to look over that empty house. There must have been some reason for the car stopping here."

"The most probable one is, that there was a temporary breakdown in the machinery, and the driver turned off the main road to repair it," said Fletcher. "The empty house hasn't got anything to do with the matter. Well, I must return now, and make my report to the inspector, and likely as not we shall learn something fresh on our way back."

"I am going to continue my investigation round this spot," answered Dare. "The problem interests me."

Fletcher looked at him in some surprise.

"Please yourself about that, sir," he said; "but I can't stop. Your investigations here won't lead to much, I'm afraid. Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night!" Dare gazed after the receding form of the constable. "A good enough fellow in his way," he murmured; "and with plenty of pluck, but without an atom of aspiration. I'm afraid there is no inspectorship waiting for Fletcher, though he may become a sergeant in time."

A short examination of the ground put Dare in possession of one important fact. There were distinct traces of a man's footsteps between the spot where the car had been standing and a side-gate in the garden wall of the house. There were also some blurred marks and depressions on the soft ground at the corner where the car had turned into the main road, which might have been made by a man falling heavily down, but the rain had partially obliterated them.

Moreover, as there had certainly been some pedestrians passing the corner within the last hour, it would not do to attach any importance to these marks at present.

"I shall take the liberty of looking into this empty house," Dare said to himself. "According to Fletcher, it has been unoccupied for over a year, and yet there is no notice up stating that it is either to be let or sold. That in itself is curious, unless the property is in Chancery."

As luck would have it, he had his bunch of skeleton keys with him, and he soon had the outer gate open, which had been locked and not bolted. Traversing the garden path, now all overgrown with weeds, Dare ascended a flight of stone steps at the back of the house, and, to his surprise, found the door at the top open.

The house was in profound darkness, and as silent as the grave. He entered, moving forward cautiously, with one hand upon the wall. Unfortunately, he had not his portable electric lamp with him, but he had some wax matches. With these he would be able, at least, to take a brief survey of the lower room.

He lit three at a time, in order to obtain a fairly good light. Black shadows, which seemed to move about as though they were disembodied spirits, wavered beyond the circle of illumination in which he stood. He was in a wide hall. Dimly, on his right, he saw a staircase which led to the upper part of the house. On his left was a door. He opened it and entered a room.

The matches flickered out, and at that instant he fancied he heard a curious moaning sound, though whence it came he could not decide. He paused, and listened intently, but it was not repeated.

"Must have been my imagination," Dare told himself, as he lit some more matches. "The place is uncanny. I wish I had—Hullo!"

His eyes had been fixed on the floor, which was thick with dust. The sudden exclamation had been caused by the sight which met his gaze—a spot of blood, scarcely dry; traces of a struggle, in the manner in which the dust was disturbed by footprints that were distributed irregularly here and there about the floor; and an overcoat button, with a piece of brown cloth adhering to it that had evidently been torn

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton and Alonzo Todd. By FRANK RICHARDS.

away during the struggle which he was now as certain had taken place as though he had witnessed it.

He picked up the button and put it in his pocket. Then he was about to resume his search, when he heard a cry for help out in the garden. There could be no mistake this time; it was loud and distinct.

Dashing out of the room, he rushed along the passage and out through the back door, which he had left open as he found it. There was no one visible in the garden, and the cry was not repeated; nor was there the sound of anyone moving.

The call for help had come from the back garden, just beyond the open door. Of that he had no doubt; and yet the search that he made in that part of the grounds did not reveal a trace of the recent presence of any living person.

Troubled and perplexed, Dare made his way back to the house. The door which he had left open was now closed and fastened.

A strange, unaccountable feeling that he was being watched prompted him to look up to one of the first-floor windows. The blind was pulled to one side; and there, sure enough, he saw a most horrible, masklike face—such a face as he might have dreamed about in a nightmare. It was only for about a second that he saw it, for even as he gazed the blind dropped back into its place, and the face disappeared.

Dare wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

"The best thing I can do is to get away from here now," he muttered. "There is a mystery about this house that I must have more preparation to tackle if I follow up the case. At present I am handicapped in every way, and until something is heard of the missing driver or owner of the motor-car, I am not warranted in interfering. All I can do now is to let the police know what I have discovered."

As he turned to retrace his steps to the outer gate, he fancied he heard the sound of a mocking laugh coming from the house that was supposed to be untenanted.

Stanley Dare's Fresh Client—Taking Up the Threads—The Brown Overcoat—The Man in the Mask Again—The Passage Without Doors.

At six o'clock on the following evening, Stanley Dare was seated in his office in Essex Street, glancing through some letters which had just arrived by the post, when the house-keeper knocked at the door, handed him a visiting-card, and ushered in a middle-aged, sunburnt man, who had the air and appearance of a traveller and explorer.

"I am glad that I found you in, Mr. Dare," said the visitor, whose name, as inscribed on the card which the young detective held in his hand, was Harcourt Merivale. "If you are at liberty, I wish to enlist your services on behalf of my brother, who disappeared in a very mysterious manner last night. You already know the circumstances—what there is to know—as well, or better, than I do."

"Did the runaway motor-car belong to your brother?" asked Dare, motioning his visitor to a seat.

"Yes," replied Harcourt Merivale. "Douglas—that is, my brother—was fond of motoring. He had been spending the day with me at my place in Richmond, and was on his way back to London when this strange and unaccountable accident happened. I only heard of it this morning, and went at once to the police-station at Putney. They had not discovered anything; but have gone so far as to suggest that my brother Douglas has disappeared voluntarily, for reasons best known to himself."

"Such cases are not uncommon," said Dare.

"Possibly," replied his visitor. "But if you knew my brother, you would agree with me that he is one of the last men in the world to do such a thing. I learnt from the police, Mr. Dare, that you had assisted in the investigations to some slight extent"—Stanley Dare smiled at this—"and, having heard before of your skill, I have come up especially to ask you to take up the case, and solve the mystery of my brother's disappearance. I am not a rich man, but I would spend every penny I possess to have it cleared."

"When your brother left you yesterday, did he tell you that he was going to have a look at Greymere House?" asked Dare.

"Greymere House!" echoed Mr. Merivale. "I have never heard of it."

"It is at present untenanted, or supposed to be untenanted," pursued Dare. "Outwardly, it is in a very neglected state, and stands in its own grounds, at the edge of Barnes Common—"

"But what should my brother want at an empty house?" interrupted Mr. Merivale.

"That is one of the things that we have to find out," replied Dare. "That he was there last night—presuming

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that he was the occupant of the motor-car up to the time it turned into the byroad—I am perfectly convinced. I had a strange experience in the house myself, but I can tell you of that afterwards. Did the police show you the scrap of paper which I found amid the wreckage of the car?"

"Yes. The writing on it was not in my brother's hand, and I cannot make anything of it. The police, by the way, attach no importance to it."

"So I understand," said Dare. "They also, I hear"—he tapped an open letter on his desk—"searched through the house to which I referred, but did not discover anything unusual. In a measure, I am glad of it, as it leaves me a free hand."

"You will take up the case, then?" exclaimed Mr. Merivale delightedly.

"Yes," replied Dare. "And, as in these cases it is always advisable to act as promptly as possible, I shall go down to Barnes at once."

"Shall I accompany you?" asked Merivale.

Stanley Dare shook his head. He had found, by experience, that when a client knew less of a case than he did himself, his presence, in the majority of instances, tended rather to hamper his work than otherwise.

"I should prefer to be alone to-night," he said. "If I have anything of importance to communicate, or if I should require your assistance, I will send a wire to the address on your visiting-card. By the way, you don't spend much of your time in England, do you, Mr. Merivale?"

"No, I don't," admitted his client, glancing with surprise at the young detective. "How did you know that?"

"By a number of signs," answered Dare. "The suit of clothes you are wearing, for instance, was made by a Chinese tailor. It is easy to tell a Chinaman's work, no matter what it is he has put his hand to. But we need not pursue that subject further. As you don't spend much time in England, you can't tell me much of your brother's movements during the past six months, I suppose?"

"I cannot. We seldom correspond, and sometimes three or four years pass without our seeing anything of each other."

"Did he ever live either at Cranleigh, in Surrey, or Cranbourne, in Hampshire?"

"Not to my knowledge. But, speaking of Cranbourne, reminds me that a very remarkable disappearance took place there about six months ago."

"I read of the case," said Dare. "A boy of about fifteen years of age, named Treherne, vanished in a particularly mysterious manner, and not the smallest trace has been found of him since."

"Yes. And, curiously enough, my brother was a friend of the boy's father, who, by the way, died, I believe, before the event."

Stanley Dare had picked up a time-table during this conversation to see how frequently the trains ran to Barnes. He flung it down, and turned suddenly to Mr. Merivale, with the curious glitter in his eyes which was always there when he was keen on the scent in a case.

"That is important!" he exclaimed. "Very important! It is a clue which I must follow up."

"I really don't see what connection there is between the disappearance of young Treherne and that of my brother," said Merivale.

"You read that fragment of a letter which I picked up from the wrecked car?" replied Dare.

"Yes."

"I have an exact copy of it here," pursued the young detective, "and I commend the written words very carefully to your attention. Listen! 'Still obsti' we may put down as 'still obstinate.' 'Resort to stronger me' can only be 'resort to stronger measures.' And on the last line, 'meet 11.15 at Cran,' obviously refers to the 11.15 train which some person is to meet at Cranbourne. This business goes deeper than we at first suspected. There is, without a doubt, a connection between your brother's disappearance last night and that of young Treherne six months ago. In fact, I will go so far as to say that the one is the outcome of the other. We are on the threshold of a dark and terrible mystery, and I only hope that when we cross it we shall be able to save one life, if not two."

A stern look came over Harcourt Merivale's sunburnt face.

"I am no hand at unravelling the tangled skein of a plot," he said, "but at straightforward fighting I am very much at home. If there is anything of that going on, mind you send for me."

"We are pitted against some dangerous and exceptionally clever man, that is certain," replied Dare; "but it is not so certain that there will be any straightforward fighting. But you can help me materially, Mr. Merivale, by going down to Cranbourne, and in a quiet, unobtrusive way learning all that is possible about young Treherne's late father. Whether he was a rich man, for instance; whether he left

a will, and, if so, whether his son inherited his property. Write to me here. And now I must be off, as I have a long night's work before me."

He went into his bed-room, and presently emerged wearing an overcoat and soft hat, and carrying a gladstone bag. In the office he took a revolver from a drawer, and dropped it into his pocket. Mr. Merivale had gone. He switched off the light, locked the door, and three minutes later was being driven in a hansom to Waterloo Station.

There was plenty of room in the first-class carriage of the train by which he travelled, and a tip to the guard secured him a compartment to himself.

When he alighted at Barnes Station, he bore no resemblance to the well-dressed young fellow who had entered the train.

Now he had on the greasy working clothes of a mechanic, with a scrubby beard, and a face so altered by skilful "make-up" that he looked ten years older than his real age.

The collector looked at him with mingled surprise and suspicion when he gave up a first-class ticket; but Dare went calmly on his way, after leaving his gladstone bag in the cloak-room, laughing to himself as he heard the official telling a mate that "blessed mechanics must be earning good wages nowadays to be able to travel first-class."

A sharp walk of a quarter of an hour brought him once more in sight of Greymere House. Gloomy and forbidding enough it looked, without a sign of life about it; but within its grim walls a strange and dark mystery was hidden, a darker crime had been, or was being, enacted.

To-night he did not attempt to enter by the gate, but, finding a suitable spot, scaled the high garden wall. Then, creeping along under cover of the bushes and rank grass, he gained the side of the house, against which the ivy grew thickly.

About ten feet above him there was a small window. The ivy, he knew, was strong enough to bear his weight, so, making sure that he was not being watched, he commenced to ascend. It was ticklish work, for climbing up ivy which is growing against a wall is by no means so easy as might be supposed.

His feet slipped once, and he hung by his hands, trying in vain for about a minute to regain his foothold. It was

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for his brother said he was wearing a coat with a fur collar. It follows, then, that it belongs to, or was worn by, Merivale's opponent, if the latter took part in the struggle. Ha, here is something that may throw some light!"

He had taken an envelope from the breast-pocket. It was addressed to "Sherard Garth, Courtland Mansions, Bloomsbury, London." The enclosure was merely a torn fragment of a letter, but no sooner had Dare's eyes fallen on the writing than an exclamation of satisfaction escaped his lips. It was in the same hand as the fragment which he had handed over to the police, and was evidently part of the same letter.

"This is the first link in the long chain of evidence," muttered Dare. "It is as I expected; there was a struggle for the possession of this letter, which is evidently a document of some importance. I shall read this fragment when I get back to the office."

He recrossed the room towards the door, but as he was in the act of passing out into the hall he became suddenly aware that he was not alone in the room. He had not seen, nor even heard, anybody, but the curious instinctive knowledge came to him, as it does sometimes under such circumstances.

Instantly he turned sharply round, with his portable light full on. The brilliant ray fell on the figure of a man, with the same horrible mask-like face that he had seen at the window on the previous evening. The features were contorted to such an extent as to be almost grotesque in their ugliness. But they were perfectly rigid, with the exception of the eyes, which blazed like coals of fire.

"What is your business here?" demanded the masked man, in a curiously hollow voice.

"Before I answer, I must know by what right you put the question," said Dare. "This house is supposed to be untenanted."

"Supposed! But you see now, Mr. Stanley Dare, that it has an occupant, consequently you are a trespasser. I am

NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE DUFFER'S DOWNFALL."

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

not the fall that he feared, as the distance was not sufficiently great to hurt him; but the noise might put the mysterious tenants of the house, if they were still there, on their guard, or give them the opportunity to set a trap for him.

At last he reached the window-ledge, and drew himself up upon it. There were no shutters to the window, and it was only fastened with the ordinary old-fashioned catch. With the blade of his knife, which he inserted between the upper and lower frames, he moved the catch back. Then he raised the sash quietly and climbed into the room.

It was only a small chamber, with a door facing the window. The door was locked, but a locked door was a very small obstacle to contend with from Dare's point of view. He had skeleton-keys that would fit any lock, and in thirty seconds the door was open.

He stepped out of the room into a passage, and here he paused in a listening attitude. Not a sound broke the silence. Switching on his portable electric lamp, which he had taken care to bring with him to-night, he made his way along the passage, examining each room that opened on to it as he went. Dust and cobwebs everywhere, but no sign of the presence of human beings, except the footprints very obviously left by the police when they searched the place during the day. There was no mistaking the prints of the regulation boots.

In the lower room, which he had visited the previous night, all those traces of the struggle that he had noticed had been removed.

There was a high wardrobe cupboard in a corner of the room, and on opening the door of it he saw a brown overcoat hanging from a peg inside.

"Someone must have been here since the police left," thought Dare. "They could not have overlooked that."

He caught up the side on which the buttons were fastened, and a quick exclamation of satisfaction broke from his lips. One of the buttons was missing, and a small piece of the cloth had been torn away. He had the button which he had picked up on the previous night with him. It matched the others, and the fragment of cloth fitted exactly.

"The owner of that coat took part in the struggle," said Dare to himself. "It does not belong to Douglas Merivale, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 141.

NEXT WEEK "THE DUFFER'S DOWNFALL."

afraid you have placed yourself in a very awkward position."

The young detective made no reply, but his keen eyes were searching the room for the place where this masked man had made his entrance. He had not come in by the door, and he was not in the room when Dare first entered it. Heavy shutters were across the window, barred and bolted, and there was only the one door to the room. The walls were papered, like the majority of modern houses, so there was no question of sliding panels or secret doors.

By what means, then, had the man entered the room? It was only another mystery added to those which already permeated this mysterious house. But this troubled Dare less than the fact that his disguise had been penetrated and his name was known by the masked man. This would seem to show that he had been shadowed ever since he quitted the house on the previous night.

"I must repeat my question," continued the masked man, after a pause. "What is your business here?"

Stanley Dare's eyes had been fixed on the old-fashioned fireplace, with its carved oak mantelpiece and supports, and when he raised his head there was a gleam of triumph in them. His answer to the man's question was a strange one.

"What have you done with young Treherne?"

The masked man started violently when he heard it, and crushed out an oath between his teeth. He raised his hand, and a shrill whistle sounded through the empty house. Then Stanley Dare was struck down by a heavy blow from behind, and as he dropped to the floor everything that was substantial seemed to be slipping away from him, and he became unconscious.

He could not have been insensible for more than five minutes; but when he came to himself, he found that he was lying on a stone floor, in the most intense darkness that it was possible to imagine.

Feeling weak and dazed, he rose to his feet and stretched out his hands in front of him. His fingers touched a stone wall. He felt in his pockets. Revolver and portable electric lamp were gone, but the fragment of the letter, a box of wax matches, his watch, and money were left.

"It is fortunate they have left the letter and the matches,"

A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton and Alonzo Todd. By FRANK RICHARDS.

thought Dare. "I wonder where I am? My opponents must have been in a hurry, or they would have stopped to search my pockets. The matches are my most valuable asset at present."

He took a couple from the box, and lighted them. Then he proceeded to examine the room in which he was confined. It was long and narrow, and had at one time formed part of a passage, but now both ends were bricked up. The ceiling was a trifle over six feet from the ground, and was composed of slabs of stone, exactly similar to the sides and floor.

There was neither door nor window to the place, no aperture, so far as he could see, to provide ventilation. Indeed, the stagnant, musty smell of the atmosphere went to prove that fresh air seldom gained admittance to this chamber.

What puzzled Dare considerably was to know how he had been got into the place. Sides and ends, roof and floor, were as solid as masonry could make them. It is true, the ends were of brick, but the brickwork had not been interfered with lately. Moreover, sufficient time had not elapsed since he was struck down to have allowed for the removal and replacing of brick or stones.

"Where there is a way in, there is a way out," muttered Dare; "but it will not be easy to find here. It is possible that one of these stone slabs works on a pivot; but there are at least a hundred and fifty, and which of these is it? And if I discovered the right one, it is doubtful whether there would be any means of moving it from this chamber. It would be worked from outside. I am in about as tight a place—Hullo! What's that?"

A faint hissing noise fell upon his ears. It came from one end of the bricked-up passage. An odour of ordinary gas began to pervade the place.

"So that is the game?" he muttered. "A gas-chamber, where a victim—or a dozen, for the matter of that—can be quietly suffocated, and no one any the wiser! This is one of the difficult problems which I have set myself to solve in my spare time. It is not too late to put solution number one to the test."

The matches which he had held had burnt out, and he was in darkness when he first heard the hiss of the escaping gas. And now he did what an ordinary person might have considered an act of mad folly. He lit half a dozen more matches all at once, and deliberately walked to the spot whence the sound proceeded.

Suddenly there was a faint explosion, a bright flash, and then a jet of flame about a foot in length shot out from the wall about eight inches below the ceiling.

The gas, having only been escaping for a few seconds, had not accumulated in a sufficient quantity for there to be any risk of a dangerous explosion. Once ignited as it flowed from the pipe—an ordinary iron gaspipe, with the end flush with the wall, which he had not noticed before—the danger of being suffocated by the poisonous fumes was removed.

There was another danger, certainly—that all the oxygen of the atmosphere would be consumed by the flame in that confined space, in which case death would also ensue. But he had some breathing space yet; and, examining the chamber again by the brilliant light, his eyes fell on a tin pail full of water which stood in one corner.

He had not noticed it before, but as the water was foul and undrinkable, he did not interfere with it. But the thought had suddenly flashed through his mind that there was a use to which he could put it presently.

"I may find a way out of this place, after all," he cried. "And, if so, it will be my would-be murderers who have placed the means within my reach."

Dare stood watching the flaring gas-jet licking against the stone-work of the ceiling just above it, and reckoned that in a very short space of time the slab of stone would be heated right through to the upper side.

"We have trapped him more easily than I thought we should. By good luck, I recognised him just as he was

leaving the house the night before last, and shadowed him myself. But for the fact that I saw him get into a first-class compartment at Waterloo, and saw an ordinary-looking mechanic getting out of the same compartment at Barnes, his disguise would have put me off the scent. It was decidedly good."

Having thus delivered himself, Sherard Garth, the reputed agent and traveller for an American syndicate of corn-merchants, a syndicate which had no existence but really the chief of a trio of the most unscrupulous scoundrels in Europe, selected a cigar from the box at his elbow, lit it, and puffed out the blue smoke rings with an air of great enjoyment.

"But this Stanley Dare is only a young fellow," said his companion, a dark-haired, sallow-complexioned man, with a peculiarly evil expression on his face. "The 'boy detective' they call him, don't they. We, who have baffled some of the smartest detectives in Europe, have nothing to fear from him."

"There I beg to differ from you, my dear Sebastian," replied Sherard Garth, who always prided himself on his gentlemanly manners, even when he was committing some crime which, if discovered, would have brought his neck within reach of the hangman's rope. "Stanley Dare has proved himself more than a match for two of the cleverest criminals of the year, to my knowledge. However, his career has come to a premature end. It is a pity; but, as his ill-luck caused him to pit himself against us, there was no help for it."

Luigi Sebastian shrugged his shoulders callously, and, pouring out some brandy into a wineglass, drank it at a draught—neat. He was the son of Italian parents, and was born in a squalid court in the East End of London, where his associates, from the time he could first walk, had been criminals of all sorts and conditions. He had been brought up in poverty and crime, but, by his superior cunning, had shaken himself clear of the lower ranks of criminals, and was now one of the masters of his craft, with plenty of money at his command when his "speculations," as he termed them, turned out successful.

"You put him in the gas-chamber—eh?" he said.

Sherard Garth nodded.

"That was at ten o'clock last night," pursued Sebastian. "He has been dead many hours, then? You did not wait to see—"

"There was no need," interrupted Garth. "Paul Vance knows his work. I saw that the gas was turned on, and then came away."

"It is time Vance was here," said Sebastian. "Nothing wrong, I hope? It is past three."

"What should there be wrong?" answered Garth. "He may think it advisable not to come here until after dark."

"What is going to be done about Merivale?" asked Sebastian. "We can't let him go again, that is certain. He is too dangerous, and knows too much."

"There is always the gas-chamber," said Garth, in the polished, easy tones of a man who was suggesting some harmless and pleasant method of relieving himself of the society of an acquaintance instead of a cold-blooded and atrocious murder. "It is really quite a humane way of getting rid of a troublesome person; and, as we do not see anything, we feel quite a pleasant freedom from moral responsibility. There are other ways, of course, but I prefer the gas."

He tapped the ash from the end of his cigar and leaned back luxuriously in his easy chair. Sebastian made an impatient gesture with his hands.

"There is no need for all that sort of talk!" he snarled. "You overdo it, Garth. Merivale must be the next for the chamber. And now that the boy has been brought up to Graymore House, we ought to be able to force him to tell us what we want to know. I advocated stronger measures when he was at Cranbourne, but there was always a risk in that place. Here—"

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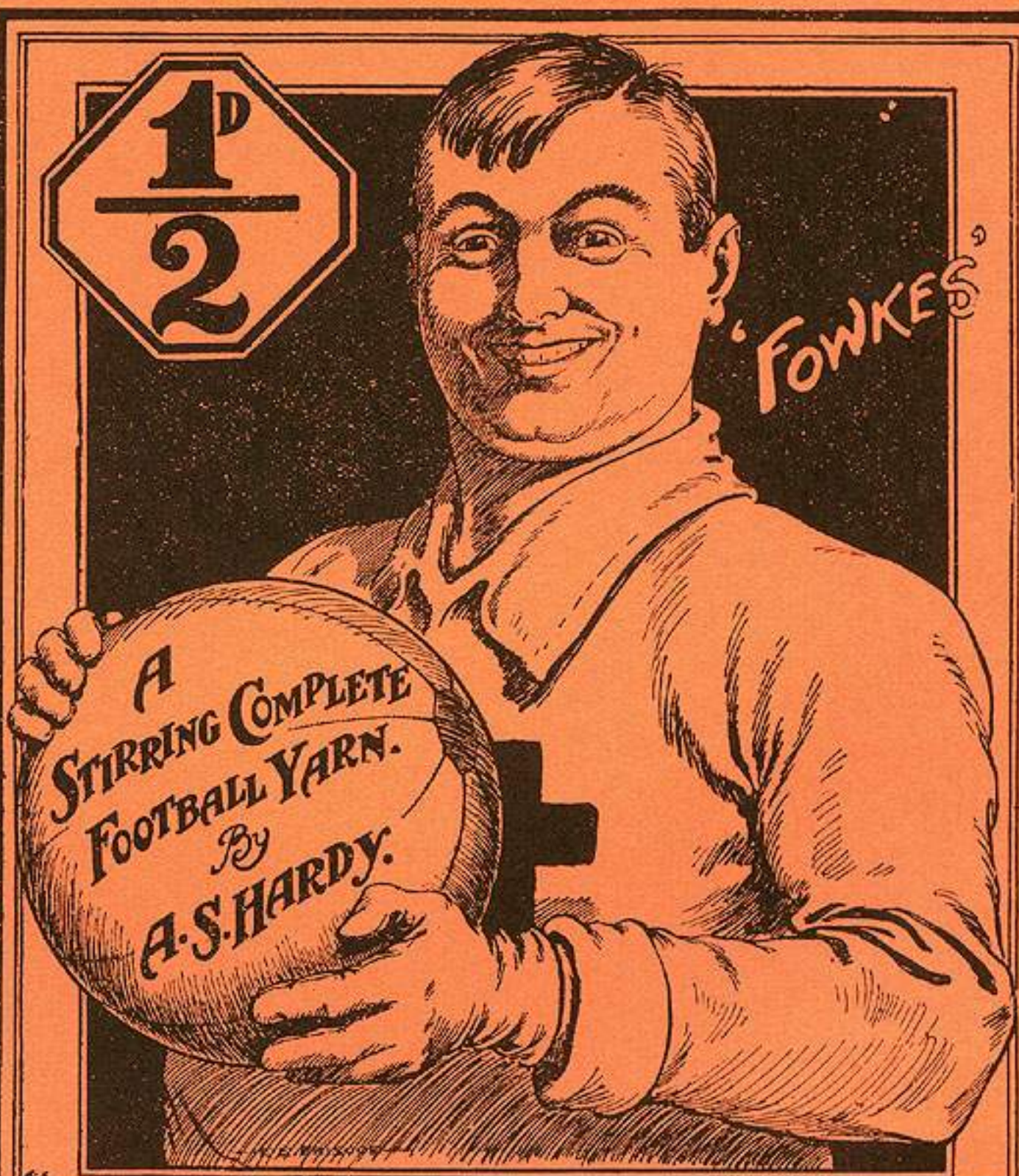
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