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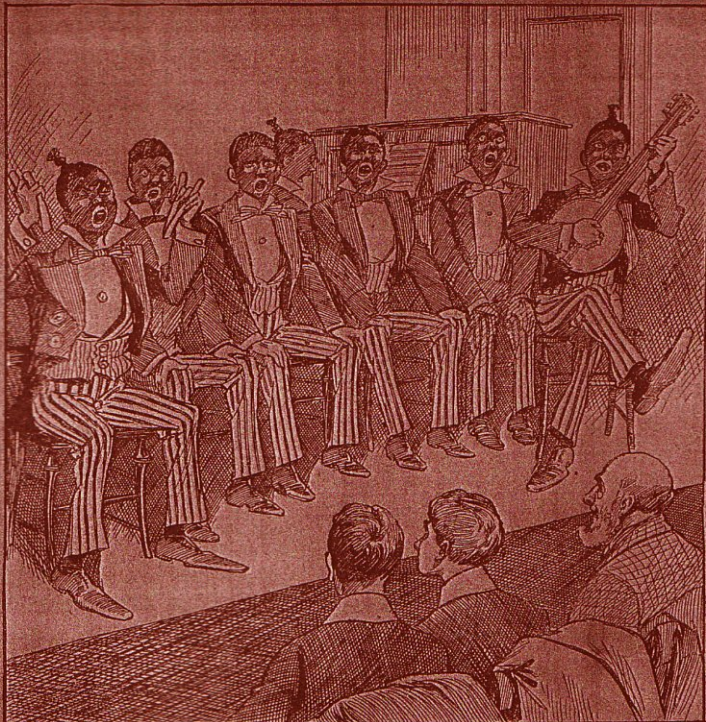
**"THROUGH
TRACKLESS
TIBET!"**

BY
**SIDNEY
DREW.**

No. 209.

The Complete Story-Book for All.

Vol. 6.



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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"The Chuck!"

The Schoolboy Minstrels

A Splendid New, Long Complete School
Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in his stentorian tones. "What's the trouble? Aren't you coming to punt about before dinner? I've got the ball."

Wharton shook his head.

"No time for that," he replied. "Hold on, you fellows! All members of the Remove Dramatic Society to go into the Rag!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Johnny Bull. "You can hold your blessed meetings in the evening, you know. Let's go and have a kick at the footer now."

"Yes, rather!"

"Come on, you fellows!"

Wharton did not move.

"All members of the Dramatic Society to go into the Rag!" he repeated. "It's important. No time to waste."

"But what about the footer?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, blow the footer!"

"That's all very well—" began Bob indignantly.

"Yes, quite so! Get into the Rag!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry resignedly. "I suppose we must let you have your way, kid. But I don't see—"

"And I don't see—" began John Bull.

"And I don't see—" said Nugent.

"Faith, and I don't see!" said Micky Desmond.

"And I don't see, look you!" exclaimed Morgan.

"Quite a lot of you who don't see, apparently," said Harry Wharton sarcastically. "But it's no good telling me your symptoms, I'm not a giddy oculist. Get into the Rag, all members of the Remove Dramatic Society."

And the members of that famous body, grumbling a little,

obeyed, and walked away into the Rag, while the rest of the Form streamed out into the sunshine of the Close.

The Rag—the room where the Greyfriars fellows generally held their meetings—was a large apartment on the ground floor, with windows looking out upon the Close. As a dozen or more Removites crowded into it, Harry Wharton following them in like a shepherd herding in his flock, there was a shout from up the passage in the direction of the Fifth Form-room. Coker, Greene, and Potter of the Fifth were coming along, and they broke into a run as they saw the juniors crowding into the Rag.

"Get out of that!" exclaimed Coker, putting a very red face into the doorway. "We want this room for a rehearsal."

To which the members of the Remove Dramatic Society replied unanimously with the ancient and classic monosyllable—

"Rats!"

"Now, look here!" said Coker, striding into the room. "I don't want to hurt you kids. But we want this room for a rehearsal."

"You can go and rehearse in the wood-shed," suggested Bob Cherry. He was quite keen on having the room, now that it transpired that the Fifth wanted it, for the rivalry between the Remove and the Fifth was very keen. "Or you can rehearse on the stairs, you know, or in the coal-cellar."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or perhaps the cook would let you rehearse in the kitchen," Frank Nugent remarked. "And there are the boiler-rooms, you know, or you could go out on the roof."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker & Co. looked wrathful.

"I give you five minutes to get out of this room!" roared Coker.

Bob Cherry took out his big silver watch. "I'll time it," he remarked pleasantly. "What are you going to do if we don't get out, Coker?"

"Chuck you out one after another!" said Coker truculently.

"Good! Fifty seconds more before the chucking out begins," said Bob Cherry. "Roll up your sleeves, Coker. You've got a big job before you."

"Are you going out now?" roared Coker.

"Oh, no! Forty seconds more!"

The Removites roared with laughter. There were a dozen of them, including the best fighting-men in the Remove, and it was really likely that they could be ejected by one or three fellows of the Fifth. Potter and Greene realised that, and they kept in the doorway. They had no desire to begin such an unequal struggle. But Horace Coker would think before he acted. He was a very big and heavy fellow, and accustomed to being heavy-handed, and he meant every word he said.

"I say, Coker—" began Potter.

"Thirty seconds!" said Bob Cherry solemnly. "I'm beginning to tremble!"

"I guess you're bitter off more than you can chew this time, Coker," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "You had better walk your chalks, I reckon."

"Twenty seconds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker pushed back his cuffs. He meant business. Some of the juniors pushed back their cuffs at the same time. They meant business, too.

"Ten seconds!" chanted Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time!"

Bob Cherry slipped the watch back into his pocket. Coker was crimson by this time with annoyance. The laughter of the Remove annoyed him. He advanced upon Bob Cherry.

"You first!" he exclaimed.

"Well, here I am, as large as life, and twice as natural!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

Coker grasped him.

"Rescue, Remove!" roared Bob Cherry.

And like one man the Remove Dramatic Society fell upon Coker of the Fifth.

They grasped him, and clutched him, and whirled him off his feet in spite of his terrific struggles, and rushed him to the door. Potter and Greene, in spite of their better judgment, were advancing to the rescue. Coker met them half-way. He did not mean to—the Removites decided that. They hurled Coker towards the door, and he crashed into Potter and Greene, sending them spinning.

The three heroes of the Fifth went sprawling into the passage, and rolled over on the hard flags.

A yell of derisive laughter from the Removites followed them.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's got the chuck?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Coker struggled to his feet. Potter and Greene sat up in a dazed state. Coker charged at the doorway of the Rag like an enraged bull. Harry Wharton closed the door, and put his foot against it while Frank Nugent turned the key in the lock. Coker raged at the door in vain.

"Open this door!" he roared.

"Not this evening!" said Bob Cherry softly. "Some other evening, Johnny dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang—bang—bang!

Coker expended his fury upon the stout oaken panels of the door. But he might as well have hammered at the solid stone walls of Greyfriars. He would have had about as much chance of getting through.

Kick! Bang! Thump!

And then Coker & Co. retired, baffled, and the Remove Dramatic Society were left to hold their meeting in peace.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Great Wheeze.

HARRY WHARTON took the chair. The still chuckling Removites gathered round. Their little victory over Coker & Co. had put them into the best of spirits.

For many a term the Remove—the Lower Fourth—had been on fighting terms with the Fifth. The Remove, indeed, were rather a truculent Form, and often on terms of warfare with the Upper Fourth and with the Shell, and sometimes with the First and one another. Things were seldom dull, at all events, in the Greyfriars Remove. But they had special grievances against the Fifth since the time when Horace Coker had been hoisted into that Form. The Fifth had a Dramatic Society of their own, and they regarded the Remove Dramatic Society as "cheek" on the part of the juniors, and many times they had "mucked up" Remove performances. And the Remove had repaid their attentions in kind.

Harry Wharton rapped on the table for order. Wharton was president of the Remove Dramatic Society. Builstrode was captain of the Form, and football skipper, but it was agreed on all hands that Wharton made the best head for the Dramatic Society.

Rap—rap!

"Gentlemen—"

"Shut up! Silence for the chair!" said Builstrode.

"Go ahead, Wharton!"

"On the ball!"

"Gentlemen," said Harry Wharton, rising, "I have called this meeting of the Remove Dramatic Society—"

"Faith, and we know that!" said Mickey Desmond. "Sure, we heard ye!"

"Order!"

"I have called this meeting for an important purpose. You are all aware that ours was the original Dramatic Society, and that the Fifth-Form bouncers founded a rotten gang they call a dramatic society in base imitation."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Of course, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and we shouldn't object to the Fifth playing the giddy ox," said Wharton. "They can't act, but we could afford to look upon their rot with lofty contempt if they didn't try to muck up our show. But they spoiled the dramatic show we tried to give a short time ago—"

"And we spoiled theirs!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, one good turn deserves another, of course," said Wharton. "But the point is, that we can't give a show in Greyfriars without the Fifth raiding us and mucking it up. I regard that as a rotten state of affairs."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, I have thought of a splendid wheeze for the Remove Dramatic Society," went on Wharton, warming to his subject, "and it can be carried out in a way that the Fifth can't interfere with. You know that there is a lot of distress in the village of Friardale this winter?"

"What on earth—"

"What the dickens—"

"My idea is to give a charity performance," said Wharton—"a public show in the village, the proceeds to be devoted to charity. The Remove Dramatic Society will pay all its own expenses, including the hire of the Assembly Rooms, and the whole takings at the door will go to relieve the prevailing distress."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Chaps who are well-off, and better off than other chaps, ought to turn to somehow and lend a hand when people are hard up," Wharton went on. "I think that's a good way of doing it. They hardly ever get any entertainment at



There was a sudden disturbance in the wings, and the next moment a muddy, breathless individual rushed frantically on to the stage. There was a roar from all. "Coker!" (See Chapter 14)

Friardale—only a circus or a nigger minstrel show once in a way—and if we make the prices low we shall get a big crowd in on the night. We might net ten or twelve pounds to pay into the local relief fund in the name of the Greyfriars Remove."

"Hurrah!"

"It would be a decent thing to do, and it would be one in the eye for the Fifth," said Wharton, getting animated. "With all their rotten shows, they've never thought of getting people to pay to see them. Of course, people wouldn't!"

"Of course not!"

"You bet!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"People have got too much sense," went on Harry. "But if we give a really good entertainment I think we shall get a crowd in. And in the village Assembly Room the Fifth can't raid us. That would be out of the question. If they came they'd have to come in by paying at the doors, same as the public, and they would be kept in order by the attendants, and chucked out if they didn't behave themselves."

"Oh, good!"

"Besides that, the Assembly Room is the only place in Friardale where a show can be given," went on Wharton; "so even if the Fifth think of giving a rival show—and they may—there will be nowhere for them to give it. They can't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, what do you fellows think of the idea?" asked Wharton.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

And with one voice the Remove Dramatic Society replied:

"Ripping!"

And little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, chimed in:

"Velly lipping!"

"Good!" said Wharton. "Now, if you're all agreed on it, I'll buzz down to Friardale this evening on my bike and see Mr. Grimes about hiring the Assembly Room. I believe it's booked up in advance sometimes, but we can book it up for the first vacant date. It will have to be on a Wednesday or a Saturday, to give us a half-holiday for a dress-rehearsal before the show."

"That's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "I don't see why we shouldn't give a public performance. I know the Fifth would if they had brains enough to think of it."

"Yes, rather."

"I guess so."

"Grimes lets the Assembly Room very cheap," went on Wharton. "You can book up all the evenings in a week for a guinea and a half, I believe. Of course, this will have to be kept very dark, or Coker will get ahead of us. Coker is rolling in money, and he'd think nothing of planking down a five-pound note to take a rise out of us."

"Rotten!"

"Not a word outside this room until the Assembly Room's booked and paid for," said Harry Wharton impressively.

"Right—ho!"

"And now, about the show," said Harry. "Of course, we should all prefer to give a Shakesperean drama!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But the Friardale folk haven't been educated up to

Shakespeare yet, I think. On the present occasion, I think we shall have to give William the go-by."

"Some good melodramatic play," Bob Cherry suggested thoughtfully. "What about the 'Mysterious Crime; or, The Harbours of Blood'?"

"Ahem!"

"Why not a comedy?" suggested Tom Brown. "I should be very pleased to take the leading part, say, in one of Pinaud's comedies."

"The question is, whether the public would be pleased if you did," Bulstrode remarked.

"Look here—"

"Melodramas and comedies are barred, I think," said Harry Wharton. "We've got to give the people something simple—something to make 'em laugh. Modern comedies are more likely to make 'em cry. For downright fun, you can't beat a good nigger minstrel show."

"A what?"

"A which?"

"Nigger minstrels," said Harry Wharton calmly.

"My hat!"

"Well, that's a come-down for the Remove Dramatic Society, I must say," exclaimed Bulstrode, in disgust.

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"But we've got to please the audience," urged Harry Wharton. "If we advertise a nigger minstrel show, we shall get a crowd; and if we advertise 'Hamlet' or 'Julius Caesar,' they'll leave us to play it to empty benches. You see, we've got to consider the public as they are, not as they ought to be."

"Quite right," said Frank Nugent. "Besides, the cost of the scenery for a drama would be too steep. The scenes we use here wouldn't be any good for the Assembly Room, and it would cost too much to hire a new lot, to say nothing of the trouble. Nigger minstrels want nothing but a row of chairs, and a little lamplack and comic trousers."

"Exactly."

"Oh, it's all right!" said Bulstrode. "So long as it's a success, and the Fifth are wild about it, I'm satisfied."

"Hear, hear!"

"Then it's settled," said Harry Wharton, "and I'll see Grimes this evening about the Assembly Room."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "And now let's go and punt a ball about before dinner."

And the meeting broke up.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Bunter Does His Duty.

"GROO!"

"Oh!"

There was a smell of embrocation in Coker's study in the Fifth-Form passage. Potter and Greene were using it liberally, and accompanying the rubbing of aching bones with a series of grunts and grumbles.

Coker was sitting on the window-frame, with his hands in his trousers-pockets and a frown upon his brow.

"What the dickens are you chaps making that row about?" he exclaimed at last. "How's a fellow to think, with you fellows groaning all the time?"

"I'm hurt!" howled Potter.

"I'm aching!" yelled Greene.

"Well, ache quietly, then!" growled Coker. "One might think that a silly ass has never been bumped over before, by the fuss you make about it."

"Look here, Coker—"

"Oh, rats!" said Coker crossly. "The question is, what little game is the Remove up to now? It's something up against us, you can bet your boots on that."

"Oh, blow the Remove!" said Potter, applying fresh embrocation to his knee, and rubbing the bruise there. "Ow! I feel as if I'd just had a specially rough footer match. I tell you, I've got aches all over."

"Blow your silly aches!"

"Look here, Coker!" roared Potter. "You'll have some aches in your silly head soon if you don't shut up. Yow!"

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat face looked in at Coker's half-open door. A pair of glistening spectacles of large size announced that the face belonged to William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

Coker reached out for a Latin dictionary, and Billy Bunter held the edge of the door, ready to slam it and dodge at a moment's notice. Billy Bunter was never a welcome visitor in any study, and frequently he had to feel his way cautiously, as it were, when he presented himself.

"Get out!" roared Coker.

"Oh, really, Coker—"

Crash!

The dictionary flew through the air, and Bunter dragged the door shut just in time. The volume crashed upon the

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door, and fell to the carpet, its appearance not at all improved by the concussion.

Then the door opened again, and Bunter, not at all abashed, but with increased caution, peered in through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

Coker looked round for another missile, breathing fury.

"Look here," said Bunter, "I've come as a friend, but if you don't want to know what the Remove are up to, I'll go."

"Oh!" ejaculated Potter.

Coker's expression changed.

"What's that?" he asked sharply.

"I felt it my duty to come to you," said Bunter. "But if you don't care to hear—"

"Come in, Bunter, old man," said Coker cordially. "Of course, if those young rotters are getting anything up against the Fifth, it's your—er—duty to tell me, of course. There are some jam-tarts in that bag."

Bunter came into the study. His first attention was turned to the jam-tarts in the bag. They were not likely to delay him long. Bunter could put on great speed in such things.

"Now, what are the Remove getting up to?" demanded Coker.

"I say, these jam-tarts are good," said Bunter, with his mouth full.

"What are the Remove—"

"On reflection, I don't know whether I ought to tell you," said Bunter, jamming a second tart into his capacious mouth.

"I don't want to do anything that would look like sneaking. You know what an honourable chap I am?"

"Yes, I know," said Coker, with a snort. "What are they up to?"

"I don't see why I should consider them, though," said Bunter. "They don't consider me. They won't let me into the meetings of the Dramatic Society."

"Why should they?" asked Greene.

Bunter sniffed.

"I'm kept out from motives of personal jealousy," he explained. "I'm such a good actor that they dare not let me into the caste. I should put all the others into the shade, you see. I've reasoned with Wharton, but it's no good talking to a chap who's eaten up with jealousy of a fellow's powers."

"Not a bit of good," agreed Coker. "What are they up to now?"

"As for nigger minstrels," said Bunter—"now, I put it to you, ain't I exactly the kind of chap to make up as a nigger minstrel?"

The three Fifth-Formers exchanged significant glances. The secret was coming out.

"Nigger minstrels!" said Coker.

"By the way," said Bunter, as if struck by a sudden thought, "I suppose any of you chaps couldn't lend me five bob on a postal-order I'm expecting? It should really have come this morning, but there has been some delay in the post. These delays in the post are very disconcerting."

"They must be," said Coker. "I'll let you have the five bob if your information is worth it. Go ahead!"

"Oh, really, Coker, I hope you don't think I've come here with mercenary motives!" said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "Of course, I should scorn such an action."

Coker laid five shillings on the table. Five shillings made no difference to Coker, who had as much money as he wanted. Some fellows had hinted that it was Coker's liberal supply of pocket-money that made the Fifth stand him as the chief.

"Then you are," said Coker. "Now you've finished the tarts, go ahead!"

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"I'll give a separate matter, of course," said Bunter. "I'll give five shillings into his pocket, as if to make sure he's much obliged to you, Coker. I'll let you know the general order as soon as it comes." "I'll be sweet by-and-by" murmured Potter. "And you speak, Potter?" "Go ahead!" "What are the Remove up to?" demanded Coker. "I was treated very badly," said Bunter. "I should have been willing to take the place of corner-man, and made the whole thing a howling success, but they've left me out. Of course, without me it's not likely to come to much."

"It won't come to much if I get a chance at them!" growled Coker. "What I think is that they ought to be prevented from making fools of themselves," Bunter observed. "Without me, the show will go to pot. I don't want to see the Remove let down. That's why I've come to you." "Of course," said Coker. "But what's the little game? And look here, how do you know anything about it if you weren't admitted to the meeting?" "I happened to be passing the window of the Rag—"

"Oh," said Coker. "Of course, I didn't intend to listen. I hope nobody here thinks me capable of a thing like that," said Bunter, looking round. "But I was used, and I leaned up against the wall under the window, you see, and so I couldn't help hearing what was said. They're going to give a nigger minstrel show in aid of local charities, do you see?" "My hat!"

"Wharton is going down to the village this evening on his bike to engage the Assembly Room from old Grimes for the first evening they are vacant," Bunter explained. "They're going to advertise the show in the local papers, and so forth, and try to get in a crowd. Of course, the whole thing will be a frost. I could have made it go with a bang, but, without any talent, what do you think will become of it?"

"I think it will be mucked up now," said Coker, with a grin. And Potter and Greene chuckled appreciatively. "You see," said Bunter, "I felt it my duty to tell you fellows, so that the Remove could be prevented from making fools of themselves. If they'd let me in—"

"Exactly," said Coker. "We'll prevent them from making fools of themselves—won't we, you chaps?" And Potter and Greene chuckled together. "What ho!" "Of course, you won't mention that I've told you?" said Bunter hastily. "They're all jealous of me, as if a fellow can help being clever and good looking. They would be glad to make out that I've been sneaking, or something of that sort."

"Not a word," said Coker. "Well, I've done my duty," said Bunter. "I've always tried to do my duty. I was brought up to be an honourable chap."

And, his duty being done, and the jam-tarts being finished, Billy Bunter rolled out of Coker's study. As the door closed behind him, Coker burst into a loud and prolonged chuckle. "Well, if this isn't gorgeous!" he exclaimed. "That sneaking little fat beast has put us on to the whole game. He ought to be squashed and boiled in oil, but that's no business of ours. I rather think this information was cheap at five bob and a few jam-tarts."

"Yes, rather," grinned Potter. "What's the game now?" asked Greene. "Lucky I've got plenty of tin in hand," said Coker. "I'm going down to the village now. I fancy that when Wharton goes down this evening to book up the Assembly Room, he'll find all dates booked for weeks ahead."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And I'll give an order to the local paper office while I'm there for the advertisements," said Coker.

"The what?" "The advertisements." "What advertisements?" asked Potter and Greene together, in surprise.

"The advertisements for the Fifth Form nigger minstrel show in aid of the local charities," said Coker coolly. "Potter and Greene gasped."

"My hat! You mean to—"

"Bag the show!" said Coker coolly. "Yes, rather!" And Potter and Greene simply rolled on the carpet in hysterical mirth. Coker, grinning, dashed out of the study. In two minutes he was on his bicycle, pedalling away at top speed towards Friarale.

He came back twenty minutes late for afternoon school, and Mr. Proust, his Form-master, gave him two hundred lines. But little did Horace Coker care for lines at that moment. He chuckled softly as he dropped into his place in the Form next to Potter.

"All serene?" whispered Potter eagerly.

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"THE SCHOOLBOY NINELIST!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Too Late!

DURING afternoon school the members of the Remove Dramatic Society gave a great deal of thought to the new wheeze propounded by Harry Wharton. They thought it a good idea. Of course, every member of the troupe wanted to be corner-man. But that difficulty always arose. If they had played 'Julius Caesar,' everyone would have wanted to be either Brutus or Mark Antony, and if they had played 'Hamlet,' there would have been a rush upon the Prince of Denmark's part. That was only to be expected, and Wharton, the president of the society, had already made up his mind about the places.

The matter required some thinking out, but thinking it out in class did not apparently meet with the approval of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. Mr. Quelch came down rather heavily upon absent-minded juniors who were thinking of minstrel shows instead of the war in Africa and Gaul. But lines were of little moment to the amateur dramatists. They were going to cover themselves with glory, and to score over the rival Form, and they could afford to brave all impositions.

After school Harry Wharton went down at once to the bicycle-shed for his machine. No time was to be lost. As yet the matter was a secret in the Dramatic Society, but there was no telling how soon an incautious word might let it out. The first thing was to get the Assembly Room in Friarale booked up. Once that was done, Coker would not be able to interfere, if he wanted to. As for a Fifth Form raid, that was impossible at the Assembly Room, and as for a rival show, there was no other place in Friarale where one could be given.

"Not a word till I get back," said Harry Wharton, as he mounted his machine.

"Not a word!" agreed Bob Cherry. And Wharton pedalled away.

Mr. Grimes, the owner of the building in which the Assembly Room of Friarale was situated, was also a grocer, and Wharton had had dealings with him many times for the supply of comestibles for seeds at Greyfriars. Mr. Grimes greeted him very cheerfully as he entered the shop in the old High Street of Friarale.

"Now, what can I do for you this evening, Master Wharton?" asked Mr. Grimes, rubbing his plump hands together.

"I want to book up the Assembly Room for Saturday evening," said Harry.

Mr. Grimes looked serious.

"I'm sorry," he said; "it's booked!"

"Well, next Wednesday will do," said Harry. "We want it on a Greyfriars half-holiday, you see, as we're going to give a show, and want plenty of time to get ready."

"I'm sorry, Master Wharton—"

"Surely it's not booked for Wednesday, too?" exclaimed Harry, in surprise.

As a rule, there was not a run on the Assembly Room—entertainments at Friarale were not numerous, and the local dances, for which the room was used, did not take place more than once a week.

"Yes, Master Wharton; it's booked up for all this week and next week," said Mr. Grimes. "I'm sorry. If I'd known you wanted it, I'd 'ave tried to keep one night open, as it was only booked up this afternoon."

"Well, that's rotten!" said Harry, disappointed. "When is the first evening you can let us have it?"

"Monday week, Master Wharton."

"I suppose that will have to do, then," said Harry. "It's beastly! We didn't want to put it off so long. I suppose there's no chance of getting one night free from the gentleman who has booked it? I suppose it's some show with a long run?"

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Grimes. "I don't know what Master Coker wants for it; he didn't say—"

Wharton jumped.

"Coker!" he shouted.

"Yes," said Mr. Grimes. "Master Coker, of your school."

"Do you mean to say that Coker, of the Fifth, has booked up the rooms for this week and next?" shouted Wharton.

"Yes; and paid in advance, too," said Mr. Grimes.

"The rotter! He's got on to it somehow, then," said Wharton. "Look here, Mr. Grimes, this is only a wheeze of Coker's! He knows we're going to give a show, and he's booked up the room over our heads on purpose!"

Mr. Grimes smiled. He thought it very probable.

"I'm sorry, Master Wharton, but I can't help that," he replied. "Master Coker has booked the room, and paid down his money, and I've given him the receipt. It can't be undone now. But perhaps if you asked Master Coker—"

"The rotter!"

Wharton left the shop, and remounted his bicycle, and scorching off to Greyfriars at top speed. He was furious. He reached the school in record time, red and panting. A crowd of Removites met him in the Close.

"Is it all right?" asked Bob Cherry.

"All right!" snorted Wharton. "No; it's all wrong!"

"What's the matter?"

"We can't have the room!" shouted Wharton.

"Why not?"

"Because Coker's booked it up for more than a week in advance!"

And the Remove Dramatic Society shouted with one voice:

"Coker!"

"Yes, Coker, of the Fifth. He's got on to the wheeze somehow."

"The cad!"

"The rotter!"

"The rank outsider!"

"I'm going to see him!" said Wharton excitedly. "We're going to have this out! We'll make him give us an evening, or we'll take it out of his hide!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the Removites crowded off excitedly to the Fifth Form passage. Loder, the prefect, met them on the landing, and called to them to stop. Certainly, the Removites looked as if something very unusual was under way.

"Where are you kids going?" demanded Loder.

"To see Coker!"

"Another Form row, I suppose!" snapped the prefect. "Well, you're not going to do anything of the sort! Clear out! Any Lower Fourth boy who goes into the Fifth Form passage will be caned!"

"Look here, Loder—"

"Clear out!"

There was no help for it. The excited Removites cleared out, and vengeance upon Horace Coker had to be postponed.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The First of the Minstrels.

THAT the Remove were enraged, we need not say. The whole Form was soon in the secret of what the Dramatic Society had intended, and the news that Coker, by some mysterious means, had forestalled them, made the whole Form furious.

But there was no help for it.

Coker had done his work too well. The Assembly Room was booked up, and they could not have it. Wharton, indeed, could have booked it for a date after Coker's term had expired. But he rightly judged that Coker's warlike operations did not end in booking up the hall. If Coker knew about Wharton's intention of visiting Mr. Grimes, he probably knew the whole story. He planned something more than that. Wharton was assured upon that point, and he soon had proof of it.

For later in the evening Bob Cherry burst into Study No. 1, where Wharton and Nugent were doing their prep, with news.

"Come and see it!" roared Bob excitedly.

Wharton and Nugent looked up in surprise.

"Come and see what?" asked Wharton.

"The notice!"

"What notice?"

"Coker's!"

"Oh!"

Bob Cherry rushed the two chums downstairs. There was already a considerable crowd gathered before the notice-board in the hall. Wharton and Nugent joined it, and they read the notice, written upon a sheet of foolscap in Coker's sprawling hand, and pinned up in a prominent position on the board:

"NOTICE!"

"The Fifth Form Dramatic Club have engaged a Hall in Friarials for a Splendid Performance of their Nigger Minstrel Troupe.

"The performance will take place on Saturday evening next.

"Admission, 6d. and 3d. All takings at the doors will be devoted to the Friarials Winter Relief Fund. Tickets may be had at Mr. Grimes', High Street, Friarials; at H. Coker's Study, and at the doors and usual agents.

"Greyfriars fellows should roll up in their thousands in THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 209.

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"THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

In this week's "GEM" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

the cause of charity. A splendid entertainment will be given, the company comprising the best talent of the Fifth Form Dramatic Club. For further information, see advertisements in local press.

"(Signed) H. COKER."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Nugent.

"The cheek!"

"It's our minstrel show!"

"They've bagged the whole wheeze!"

"Same as they did our 'Julius Caesar'!" yelled John Bull.

"Look here, we're not standing this; it's too thick!"

"Just what I expected!" growled Wharton. "Someone gave the show away to Coker, and he's bagged the whole scheme!"

"Some silly ass must have chattered about it, outside the Rag!" said Bob Cherry, with a glare round at the juniors.

"I wish I knew who it was!"

"Faith, I'd squash him if I knew, the spalpeen!" growled Micky Desmond.

"Well, we're clean done this time," said Nugent.

The Remove raged. But they raged in vain. All the little plans they had laid against the Fifth had been neatly turned against themselves, and they were powerless. There was no second building in Friarials where a rival show could be given, and it would be impossible to raid the Assembly Room and upset the performance. The Remove were fairly caught.

Humorous youths, who had intended to keep the audience in a roar, thought of the jokes they had been painfully compiling, and which were now useless, and they raged. It was really too bad.

"It's too thick!" said Tom Brown. "This kind of thing passes the limits of a joke, I think. Coker ought to be stopped somehow."

"He can't be stopped, unless we raid the show!" said Bolsover.

"We can't do that any more than they could if we gave it," said Bulstrode. "Of course, we could give another show if we liked later on."

There was a chorus of scornful snorts at the idea.

"Fat lot of good that would be!" exclaimed Russell. "It would look as if we were sneaking behind the Fifth, imitating their ideas. Besides, the second show wouldn't go down like the first. We shouldn't get an audience."

"Especially as the Fifth will sicken everybody of nigger minstrels, with the rotten performance they will give!" said Nugent.

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"We've laid in our lampblack for nothing, to say nothing of the costumes!" said Johnny Bull. "I'm blessed if I see how we're to stop the Fifth!"

"I'll go and see Coker, and point it out to him," said Bulstrode.

"Not much good," replied Wharton. "Besides, it will mean a row with the prefects if we row with Coker in the Fifth Form quarters."

"I didn't mean a row," Bulstrode explained. "I mean just to point things out to Coker, and tell him it isn't cricket."

"Not much good."

"Well, I'm going to try," said Bulstrode.

"All serene! Just as you like!"

Bulstrode stalked away to the Fifth Form passage. As captain of the Remove, he felt that he was called upon to take some step. Bulstrode's position as captain of the Form was a little shaky, and he thought that his prestige would suffer if this success of Coker passed without a check. He strode down the Fifth Form passage and knocked at Coker's door, and opened it, and put a very red face into the study.

There was a sound of chuckling in the study. Coker, and Potter, and Greene had concocted that notice between them, and had retired to their study to chuckle over its exasperating effect upon the Remove. They turned irritating smiles upon Bulstrode as he came in.

"Hullo!" said Coker. "One of the kids—"

"Who are you calling a kid?" demanded Bulstrode belligerently.

"Whom, my dear boy—whom!" corrected Potter gently. "But I suppose in the Remove we must be thankful for what grammar we can get."

Bulstrode turned crimson.

"I've seen your rotten notice on the board!" he exclaimed.

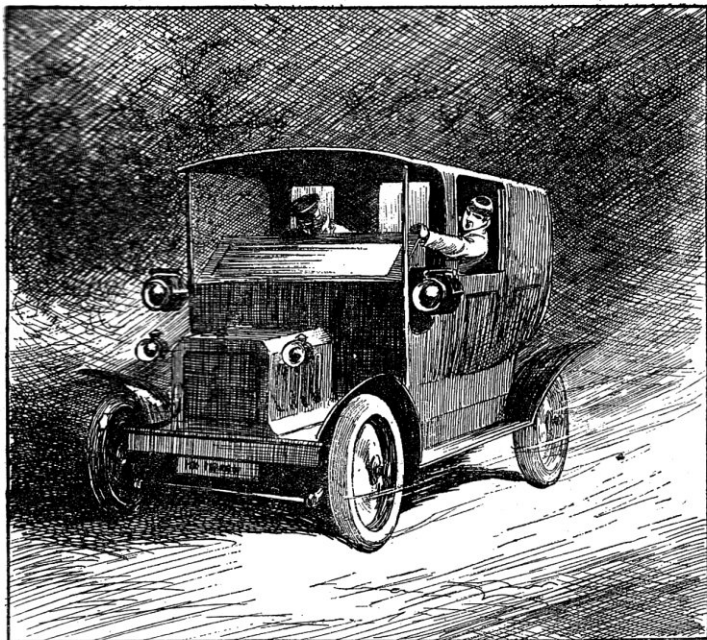
"Good!" said Coker complacently. "What do you think of it?"

"I think it's caddish!"

"Good!"

"Rotten!" roared Bulstrode.

"Hear, hear!"



Coker leaned out of the window and roared furiously to the driver. "Driver! Stop! Chauffeur, hold on! Stop! You're taking us the wrong way!" But the disguised Harry Wharton did not reply! (See Chapter 2.)

"Mean!"
"Hurray!"
"Treacherous!" bellowed Bulstrode.
"Bravo!"

Bulstrode raved. There was no penetrating the complacency of the Fifth-Formers, that was evident. The more he raved, the more they grinned and chuckled. Bulstrode had almost exhausted his vocabulary, and the Fifth-Formers were still undisturbed.

"Look here!" roared Bulstrode. "Do you call it cricket?"

"Certainly not!" said Coker. "We call it nigger minstrels."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's our wheeze!"

"It's ours now," said Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who told you about it?" demanded Bulstrode, breathing fury.

"Guess!"

"Look here—"

"Well, we're looking," said Greene cheerfully. "You're not very pretty to look at, but we're looking. Are you going to do a song-and-dance?"

"You rotters!" roared the exasperated Removite.

"My hat, he's beginning again!" said Coker. "With the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 209.

same record, too! Look here, Bulstrode, if you're wound up, please put on a new record."

Bulstrode could contain himself no longer. He forgot that he had come there for a peaceful explanation, and not for a row. He rushed at Coker, hitting out with both fists.

Coker jumped up, and caught Bulstrode's knuckles full upon the nose and cheek, and fell backwards over his chair with a roar.

"Ow! Yow! Collar him!"

Potter and Greene fastened upon Bulstrode at once. The burly Removite struggled furiously, and it was all they could do to hold him. But Coker scrambled up and seized him, too, and then Bulstrode was helpless.

"Yah! Cowards!" he roared. "Yah! Three to one! Yah!"

"You want to be a nigger minstrel!" gasped Coker. "We'll make him one, you chaps! Scoop some soot out of the chimney, Potty, while I hold him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter and Greene.

Bulstrode struggled fiercely. But Coker and Greene held his arms, and Potter scraped soot out of the chimney with a shovel, and dipped Bulstrode's own handkerchief into it, and rubbed it over his face. Bulstrode was very soon as black as any nigger minstrel could possibly wish to be. He gasped and gurgled as the soot was rubbed into his nose and mouth.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo! Yah! Gro-o-o-o-o-o-o-op!"

NEXT TUESDAY: "BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

"Better keep your mouth shut," advised Potter.

"Groo-ugh-oh!"

"There, I told you to keep it shut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Black as the ace of spades, and with his collar and tie in the same state, Bulstrode was marched out into the Fifth Form passage.

"Now then," said Coker, raising his boot, "when I let him go, all kick together!"

"We're ready!"

Bulstrode broke into a desperate run, and the kicks did not reach him. He rushed blindly out of the Fifth Form passage, and a yell of amazement greeted him from the Remove.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What is it? Who is it?"

"The first of the nigger minstrels!" gasped Wharton.

"It's Bulstrode!"

"Bulstrode! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove yelled. It was their own Form captain, but they couldn't help it. They roared. Bulstrode glowered at them furiously, and his gleaming eyes looked simply weird, gleaming out of his coal-black face.

"What are you cackling at, you fatheads!" he roared.

"What are you sniggering at, you dummies? What are you gurgling at, you silly chumps? Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You-you-you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Words failed Bulstrode. Bursting with indignation, he tramped off to the nearest bath-room, leaving the Remove still yelling with laughter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Not Wanted.

THE next day, and the day following, the Fifth Form were very busy. Although only eight or nine fellows were to take part in the nigger minstrel performance in the Assembly Room at Friarale, the whole Form took much interest in it. It was the view of the Fifth that the Remove were altogether too cheeky, and that they imperatively required being put into their places, and the Fifth were generously willing to be instrumental in putting them there. Coker's idea of bagging the Remove was improving on them, and the idea of the juniors out in the cold, was considered ringing. And the Fifth were ready to back Horace Coker up like one man. Coker, it must be admitted, was generally regarded as a duffer in his own Form; but all the Fifth had to acknowledge that he was far from being a duffer on this occasion. He had shown the most unexpected aptitudes. The Remove raged in vain. The Fifth Form Dramatic Society went on their way with stately solemnity.

Coker had plenty of money, and he spent it freely. He was liberal, not to say lavish, in providing costumes and stage accessories. He had hired a motor-car to convey the performers to the Assembly Room on Saturday evening, and before the audience would be there. And the advertisements in the local papers were on a scale that was regardless of expense. Truly, Coker was doing the thing in style, and even the Remove had to admit that he was doing the thing on a scale they had never dreamed of themselves. The whole show, with the exception of the actual performance, would be greater than they had planned it. But it remained to be seen what the performance itself would be like. The Remove laughed at the idea of the Fifth Form Dramatic Club giving any show that was worth looking at or listening to, but the Fifth were quite satisfied with themselves. And at all events, Coker & Co. would have a good many enthusiastic friends in the audience, for the whole of the Fifth Form of Greyfriars would be there.

But Horace Wharton & Co. were cudgelling their brains for a dodge to defeat the Fifth. The dodge did not come.

It looked as if Coker & Co. would score all along the line. Coker was scoring already. The local vicar had seen the advertisements in the paper, and when he called upon the Head, he told him how pleased he was to see that youths, usually considered so thoughtless, should bestir themselves to help the poor in a time of distress.

The vicar's compliments pleased the Head very much, and before the whole school he complimented Coker upon his scheme.

Coker received the Head's compliments with a smug manner of deprecation, which made the Remove quite wild. Coker spoke quite modestly in reply to the Head. He said that he was very glad the Head approved. He would admit that the first bare suggestion of the idea came from a junior, and he had adopted it, and would carry it out properly, which, of course, the juniors would have been

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unable to do. And he wound up by stating his hope that the school would turn up in force for the entertainment, and help on the cause of charity.

The Remove simply withdrew.

But they could say nothing, and Coker went on his way triumphantly. The juniors knew that rehearsals were incessant in Coker's study. But there was little chance of raiding even a rehearsal. Besides, Coker's idea of aiding the cause of charity had made him so popular that the juniors would have got themselves into everybody's bad books by interrupting the proceedings. It was useless for them to proclaim that the idea was theirs originally. That would only have been advertising their defeat.

"But we've got to down them somehow," Harry Wharton said, as the chums of the Remove sat round the tea-table in Study No. 1 on Thursday evening. "We simply can't let Coker—an ass like Coker—have the laugh of us in this way!"

"That's the worst of it!" grunted Bob Cherry. "It's not so bad to be done in by a chap like Vernon-Smith, or a chap like Levison, who used to be here. They're rotters, but they've got brains. But to be dished by a silly ass like Coker—why, we shall never be able to hold up our heads again!"

"It's too rotten for words!" grunted Nugent.

"I wonder how he got on to it?" Wharton said musingly. "I can't think of one of the fellows who'd have let it out. Of course, if Bunter had been there, we should know that it was he. But Bunter wasn't there."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Talk of angels!" said Bob Cherry.

A fat face looked into the study.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry picked up a loaf. Bunter watched him warily through his big spectacles.

"I haven't come to tea," he said loftily, "and I don't want you to lend me any money. I've come on business."

"My hat! Who is it said the age of miracles was past, then?" exclaimed Frank Nugent, in astonishment.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows won't have any use for your nigger costumes now," said Bunter, glowering at Nugent. "I suppose you don't mind lending me some of them?"

"What on earth for?"

"For Saturday evening," said Bunter loftily. "I'm going to act for the Fifth. You fellows have kept me out of the Dramatic Society from motives of personal jealousy. Very well! My services are in request elsewhere. I've done with the Remove."

"How nice for the Remove."

"Oh, really—"

"Well, you can't have the costumes," said Wharton, "and I don't believe you are telling the truth, anyway. The Fifth are asses, but they wouldn't be such asses as to let you into the show. Do you mean to say that Coker has asked you to perform?"

"Well, not exactly asked me," said Bunter. "I want to show them how splendidly I can do it, you see, and then they will beg me to be corner-man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," grunted Bunter. "Look here! Don't beat about the bush. Can I have the costumes, or not?"

"Not!"

"Look here, you beastly cads—"

"Whiz!"

Billy Bunter dodged out of the study just in time to escape the loaf.

He did not return. He went down the passage, grunting to himself. He was determined to get a place in Coker's minstrel show, and he had no doubt whatever that if he succeeded in showing Coker & Co. how splendidly he could act, they would jump at the chance of having him. After a little reflection, the fat junior made his way to Coker's study. He tapped at the door, and opened it. The study was in darkness, and empty.

Billy Bunter stepped in and lighted the gas.

The Fifth had lately been rehearsing, and the costume Coker had worn was lying on a chair. Bunter closed the door and eyed the costume. It did not take him long to slip it on, and then he began to black his face. The Fifth fellows might return to the study at any moment, and he wanted to be ready, to show them what a splendid nigger

ANSWERS

minuted he was. He blacked away at his face, and surveyed the result in the looking-glass with great satisfaction.

"Why, it's simply ripping!" he murmured. "Coker will have to admit that I shall make a splendid impression upon the audience."

Something else was ripping, besides the make-up. Coker's striped trousers were too long for Bunter, but they were hardly wide enough for his fat little legs. As he moved, there was an ominous sound of rending, and Bunter's own trousers came into view again.

"Oh!" murmured the fat junior. "I— Ah!"
There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Coker and Potter and Greene came in.

They were surprised to see the gas alight, and they were more than surprised when they caught sight of Billy Bunter.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed Coker, staring at the peculiar figure. "Have you been importing animals to present at the Zoo, Potty?"

"My hat! Is it human?" exclaimed Greene.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Pshaw! It's Bunter!"

"I say, too fellows," exclaimed Bunter, blinking at the grinning Fifth-Formers, "I'm willing to render service at the performance on Saturday. I shall not expect any fee, only expenses."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.
"Upon the whole, I'm willing to perform for nothing, as it's a charity affair," said Bunter hastily. "I shall want to be corner-man, of course."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" said Bunter, with some heat.

"My dear chap," said Coker, "I've no doubt you're a funny merchant, but it's not exactly your brand of fun that we want. There won't be any room for you. Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Coker—"

"You've spoiled your trousers," grinned Coker. "You want a larger size sideways."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, they're your trousers, Coker. I put them on to show you—"

Coker seemed petrified for a moment.

"My trousers?" he gasped at last.

"Yes. You see—"

"You—you've had the cheek to put my nigger trousers on, and split them down the back!" roared Coker.

"Well, I couldn't help that," said Bunter. "They're too tight for me. I haven't got spindle shanks like some chaps. But they can't let me out for you, you know."

"My word!" gasped Greene. "Of all the cheek—"

"Here, I say, keep off, you know!" yelled Bunter, as Coker made a rush at him.

Coker did not keep off. He collared the fat junior, and Bunter was bumped over on the floor of the study in the twinkling of an eye.

"Take those trousers off!" bawled Coker.

"Oh, I say—"

"Take them off!"

"I—I c-can't!" gasped Bunter, making an effort.

"They're t-too tight! They won't c-come off!"

"I'll make them c-come off, you cheeky ass!" howled Coker. "Take him by the neck, Potty, and I'll yank the bags off him!"

"Right-ho!" said Potter.

"Ow—ow! Yow! Leggo!"

Potter grasped the fat junior with one arm round his neck from behind. Coker seized the legs of the trousers. He tugged with all his strength, but the trousers were very tight on the fat legs of the junior, and they would not come off.

"Go it!" exclaimed Greene. "Pull devil, pull baker! Put your beef into it!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Pull away, Potty!"

"I'm p-p-pulling!" gasped Potter.

"Ow," howled Bunter—"ow! Yow! Yaroop!"

Coker gave a tremendous tug, and the trousers came away—with a rending sound. Coker staggered back, with the torn trousers in his hands. The sudden release was too sudden for Potter, who was tugging away at Bunter. He staggered back, and fell, and Bunter fell upon him. There was an agonised gasp from Potter. Billy Bunter was not a light weight.

"Oh, Ow!" he moaned. "Ow! Draggimoff! Yow!"

Bunter rolled off. He picked himself up with great celerity, and just escaped Coker's boot, as Coker rushed at him. He twisted out of the study, and ran for his life, and Potter sat up and gasped.

"Ow—ow—ow! I'm winded! Yow! You ass, what did you pile that porpoise on me for? Yow! Ow! Oh! Groo!"

"Look at my trousers!"

"Blow your trousers! Look at me! Ow!"

"I shall have to get a new pair of bags!"

"Yow! I shall have to get a new tummy! Ow!"

Potter staggered up, with his hands pressed to his belt, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 209.

NEXT

TUESDAY: "BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!"

EVERY
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and looked out of the study for Billy Bunter. He was not too winded to execute summary vengeance upon the Owl of the Remove, if he had found him. But Bunter had not lingered. He was gone, and his hopes of figuring as corner-man in the Fifth Form nigger minstrel show were gone, too.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Head is Surprised.

"TODD, old man, I suppose you'd like to lend a hand?"

Alonzo Todd, the cheerful waltz who was known as the Duffer of Greyfriars, gave Potter, of the Fifth, a benevolent smile. Alonzo was only too willing to be obliging to anybody. Indeed, his efforts to be obliging had frequently ended in disaster, for himself and for the fellows he tried to oblige.

"Oh, certainly, my dear Potter!" he exclaimed. "It had already occurred to me to offer you my services in connection with your nigger minstrel show, to show that I do not share in the resentment the Remove feel about it. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me never to bear malice or to let the sun go down on my wrath."

"You see, we want a specially good turn," Potter explained, with a wink at the ceiling. "If you would get up in the nigger costume, black your chivvy, and so on, and let the Head see how you can do it, it would be a real favour."

"The Head?" exclaimed Alonzo, in surprise.

"Yes," said Potter innocently. "I suppose you know that the Head is going to decide whether the performers are good enough? The Head is taking a great interest in the show. Each of the troupe has to do a song and dance before the Head before he's allowed to go on."

"Dear me! I am sure it is very kind of the Head."

"Well, it's his duty, you know," explained the humorist of the Fifth airily. "You have to make up as a nigger minstrel, and go into the Head's study and give him a song and dance. Of course, you haven't had much practice, but a natural genius like you will be able to pull it off all right. I'll help you to make up."

"You are very good, Potter. I am sure I shall be delighted! My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to make myself useful to everybody," said Alonzo simply.

Potter suppressed a chuckle.

"Come into my study, then, Toddy, old man!" he said.

"Oh, certainly, my dear Potter!"

And the innocent Alonzo followed Potter into his study.

Greene was there, but Coker was not to be seen. Greene nodded solemnly to Alonzo.

"Won't Toddy make a good corner-man for the troupe, Greene?" said Potter with a wink.

"Rather!" agreed Greene with alacrity.

And it was evident by the way in which Greene hustled about that he fully comprehended what was forward. Before the astonished Alonzo could quite "catch on," he was divested of his collar by Greene, and Potter was reaching up the chimney trap for soot.

"My dear Potter," said Alonzo, in alarm, "what necessity have you for that shovelful of soot? Is it strictly necessary for a trial before the Head—"

Greene appeared to suddenly choke with laughter. He as suddenly suppressed all trace of it.

"We must make you up, you see, Toddy," explained Potter. "But it won't hurt your face, really."

"My face!"

"And it'll wash off as easy as anything, Toddy," Greene hastened to assure the Duffer, as Potter applied the first touch.

"Ow! Oh!"

Potter and Greene roared. They had to. Having turned his head suddenly as Potter came to close quarters with the shovel, Alonzo got the first touch of the soot in his open mouth.

Potter and Greene were lavish in their apologies, not neglecting to make up Alonzo with vigour, however. They had never seen a fellow who made up better for the nigger business. It always hurt a fellow a bit the first time. Really he looked ripping, you know, as they got the stuff unctuously to his breast, and he smiled when the ordeal was over in a way that only he could smile.

"A smile that won't come off—for some time," grinned Potter to Greene, as they rummaged a suit of nigger minstrel clobber out of their cupboard.

"The Head knows I am coming, of course, you fellows?" asked Alonzo, as they built the togs up about him. "I shouldn't like to—"

"Oh, he's always prepared for this sort of thing, Toddy," said Potter facetiously. "You look simply killing! You're sure to be accepted for special honours."

"Rather!" said Greene. "Best I've ever seen, really! You're quite Moore & Burgess, only more—"

"But now I come to think of it, I haven't a song ready, you fellows," said Alonzo.

"Oh, sing any old thing!"

"My dear Potter! Any old thing to the Head!"

"He always likes to have a surprise sprung on him," broke in Greene. "Surely you know some old song or other?"

"But I say, let's put the finishing touches to you, Teddy!" said Potter importantly.

Alonzo Todd, arrayed in a nigger minstrel costume of fearful and wonderful design, was beginning to take a pride in himself. But he took genuine alarm when Potter produced a stick of fiery red grease-paint, and daubed "lips" on his face of such a thickness that the Duffer saw in the glass an apparition that appeared to have a mouth like a letter-box after an accident with a sweep. Greene added to Alonzo's general beauty by making white rings with chalk around his eyes. There remained nothing more to do but fix a gigantic collar with long points that stuck out half a yard past Alonzo's face—or, rather, what remained of that face.

"Simply splendid, Teddy!" said Potter, holding the victim at arm's length to take in the effect thoroughly. "You knock the Head!"

"Someone's sure to, I should say," grinned Greene, under his breath.

"And now, if you're quite satisfied with my appearance, you fellows," said Alonzo, beaming on the two plotters. "I want you to listen to a short selection of songs which my Uncle Benjamin used to sing. You can tell me if you think they would be suitable for this occasion. The first one is called 'The Old Man Ain't What He Used To Be.' Please listen! 'The old man ain't what he—'"

"Help!"

"Assistance!"

"What did you say, my dear fellows?"

"Simply captivating, Teddy!" said Potter. "But you'd better buck up, or you'll miss the Head, and that would be rotten, wouldn't it, after all we've done."

"Yes, indeed, my dear Potter. I'm so sorry. I'll go at once, and thank you so much. You're sure I will do for the Head?"

"A cert!"

Alonzo could not be expected to see the double meaning in Greene's assurance. Throwing the two plotters a smile of almost heavenly content, he went out to conquer.

"By Jove, we forgot the tambourine!" cried Potter; and snatching up one of those favourite instruments with the brethren of the burnt cork, they rushed down the passage after Alonzo.

A few minutes later Dr. Locke was startled to hear a jangling of metal bells, as it were, outside his study door. He was on the point of rising to make an inquiry into the cause, when a knock sounded on the door, accompanied by the rattling of the said bells on the floor of the passage outside. Startled by the strange sound, he was yet much less prepared for the answer to his summons to the unknown to enter.

"Good-evenin', Master Johnson!" said Alonzo Todd, as he put his head round the edge of the door. "Good-evenin', good-evenin'!"

"Great Scott!"

Even Alonzo, in all his glory, as he was, paused to hear such an expression from the Head.

But a moment's thought reassured him. The Head was naturally overcome by his superlative powers in nigger minstrelsy. Having once been taken to a minstrel show by his Uncle Benjamin, Alonzo had always remembered the corner-man's "Good-evenin'!" and he had thought to open his performance before the Head with a little local colour, so to speak. The fact that Doctor Locke pushed back his chair from his desk hastily did not disturb Alonzo's serenity.

"Boy," said Doctor Locke severely, "what is the meaning of this absurdity?"

"My song and dance, sir. You know, sir," answered Alonzo, rattling his tambourine.

"Your what, boy?" almost shouted the Head, scarcely able to believe his ears.

"The song and dance which I understand you are waiting to hear from me, sir," said Alonzo, with what should have been a beaming smile, but now looked like a fiendish grin. "It is one that my Uncle Benjamin used to sing—"

"Silence, sir!" thundered the Head.

"Ah, but I know all about that, sir!" said Alonzo, wagging his head in a droll fashion. "But I understand I am to go whatever you say."

Doctor Locke gasped, and Alonzo broke into a preliminary shuffle towards further delay. In another moment his un-

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melodious voice was filling the room, the Head sitting staring at him, petrified with astonishment.

"The old man ain't what he used to be," warbled Alonzo, with plentiful tambourine, as musically inclined gentlemen speak. "The old spark isn't very young; the old chap ain't what he used to be, toodle-omphatoodle-omph de—"

"Silence, sir!"

But Alonzo had started the dance, pausing at intervals and freeing words that he chanced to remember of Uncle Benjamin's favourite ditty. His gambols were strongly reminiscent of what a deep-sea diver might do with his heaviest boots on. But Alonzo recked not of that.

He was out to win the Head's approbation, and he meant to have it. Round and round the room he capered, returning good for evil, as it were, by grinning hideously into the Head's frowning face. But all things have an end.

"Boy!" almost roared the Head, leaping to his feet. "Enough of this apish nonsense! Explain yourself. What have you to say—"

"The old man ain't what he used to be—"

"Who are you?" roared the Head.

"Toodle-omph, toodle-omph de— Ow!"

In common parlance, the Head suddenly came to the conclusion that he had had enough. A cane flashed in the air. Alonzo felt a stinging pain beneath his braces, and he put in some business that wasn't in the original part, as actors say. Leaping clear of the Head with a fearful whoop, he went on with his song and dance.

"Go on with it whatever he says or does," Potter had said; and Alonzo did.

Doctor Locke paused with uplifted cane, literally bewildered.

The clatter of Alonzo's dancing brought him to a sense of things, however. Alonzo grinned, as it seemed to him that he had caught the "judge's" eye at last, and the noise he made with his feet alone was alarming.

"Cease your hideous din, boy!" commanded Doctor Locke, walking towards the mysterious songster. "Cease it at once, do you hear—"

"The sweet bird singing on the tree," came a line of Alonzo's song, in seeming mockery.

"You impudent young rascal—"

"Yes, they say I ain't what I used to be," sang Alonzo, from the comparative safety of behind the Head's desk.

"Toodle-omph, toodle-omph de—"

"Enough!" exclaimed the Head, in a terrible voice.

And a stern chase round the study began, Alonzo but barely ahead of a cane that swished after him in a terrible fashion. But Potter and Greene had said keep on, and had not his Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon him to see things through? Singing the while, but losing his breath, it began to dawn on Alonzo that terrible things were in store for him when the Head caught him. Dancing was now out of the question; it was all running. Then the Head got one in that made Alonzo howl, throw up his hands, slide a yard or two, and drop with a crash on his tambourine.

"The boy is mad!" panted the Head. "Utterly, hopelessly, and irrevocably mad! I have always considered him peculiar, but I see now that he is mad. Oh, dear!"

"Lash, lash!"

"Ow! Yow!" roared Alonzo.

He was near the door now, and he opened it and flew out into the passage. He ran into the arms of Mr. Quelch, who had heard the uproar, and was coming to see what was the matter.

The Remove-master staggered back in amazement at the sight of the wild figure with black face and striped trousers.

"Good heavens!" he gasped.

"Ow! Oh! Yow!"

"Todd! Is that you, Todd?"

"Oh, dear! Whatever would my Uncle Benjamin say?"

Mr. Quelch caught the Duffer of Greyfriars firmly by the shoulder.

"Todd! Is it possible that you have dared to enter the Head's study in that ridiculous state!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. Potter told me that the Head would be glad to see me do a song and a dance, so I naturally—"

"Goodness gracious! Did you believe such nonsense, boy?"

"Surely, sir, Potter was not deceiving me? Such conduct would be most reprehensible. My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at it—nay, disgusted."

"Go!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Go! Clean yourself at once, and—"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

And Todd went. Mr. Quelch entered the Head's study. He found Dr. Locke sitting in his chair, a picture of distress and exhaustion.

"Mr. Quelch, the boy is mad!" he gasped.

"He is the victim of an absurd joke, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

"He was told that you would be glad to see him perform in your study, sir, and he actually believed it."

"It is possible! Extraordinary!"
 "He is an extraordinary boy, sir."
 "He is indeed!" gasped the Head. "I had made up my mind to sing him in public for this unexampled outrage, but—
 but instead of that, Mr. Quelch, I think I shall send him away from Greyfriars. This is not the place for such a boy."
 "I have thought so several times myself, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

The Head rose to his feet, calming down a little. His mind was made up.
 "I shall not punish him, Mr. Quelch; but he must leave Greyfriars. This is no place for him. He must undoubtedly leave Greyfriars."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Gets It.

"IN legione Romana," said Mr. Quelch, in the Remove Form-room, "erant cohortes decem, manipuli triginta, centuries."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 It was a sudden roar of laughter from Harry Wharton. Mr. Quelch stopped.

Latin, in the junior Form-room, was, as a rule, no laughing matter. If any junior had been inclined to risibility on the subject, Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye would have checked it. Why Harry Wharton should burst into that sudden roar was a mystery. There was certainly nothing funny in Mr. Quelch's statement that in a Roman legion there were ten cohorts, and thirty maniples. The juniors simply jumped, as Wharton's sudden laugh ran through the Form-room, and Mr. Quelch seemed petrified.

The moment he had done it, Wharton realised where he was, and what he had done, and sat with crimson cheeks and burning ears. Mr. Quelch's piercing eye singled him out.

"Wharton!"
 The Remove-master's voice was like the growl of distant thunder.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Wharton, covered with confusion.

"You laughed, Wharton?"
 "Ye-e-es, sir."
 "I did not intend this lesson," said Mr. Quelch crushingly, "to appeal to your sense of humour, Wharton. I do not enter the Form-room in the character of a humorist. I am not at all flattered by your merriment, Wharton."

"I—I—"
 "Will you kindly explain what you find so comic in my words, Wharton?" said Mr. Quelch, in the vein of sarcasm which sometimes made his pupils wish that he would cease them instead of talking to them. "I am quite at a loss myself."

Wharton's face was so red that it seemed as if all the blood in his body had been pumped into it. All the fellows were turning their heads to look at him.

"If—if you please, sir—" stuttered Wharton.

"I am not pleased," said Mr. Quelch. "You must be exceedingly sanguine, Wharton, to expect me to be pleased. I am annoyed and shocked. Kindly explain the cause of your sudden and uproarious merriment in this most inappropriate place."

"I—I—I—"
 "I quite fail to see how my statement can appeal to your sense of the comic," said Mr. Quelch.

"It—it wasn't that, sir."

"Ah! It was not that?"

"N-no, sir."

"Then you were thinking of something else, other than the work in hand, Wharton?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Indeed! You are very frank. May I inquire, with due humility, what you were thinking of, Wharton?"

"I—I—I—"

"Pray have the extreme goodness to explain yourself, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, with deadly quietness.

"I—I—I was thinking—"

"Go on!"

"Of the Fifth Form nigger minstrel show, sir," stammered Harry.

"And you regard the Form-room, during lessons, as the proper place to think of the Fifth Form negro minstrel show?" asked Mr. Quelch, with icy patience.

"Oh—oh, no, sir."

"Very well! Kindly stand in a corner of the class-room, Wharton, where your humorous reflections upon the subject of negro minstrel shows will not interrupt the work of the other boys," said Mr. Quelch.

And the Form-master pointed a long forefinger at the corner of the room. Wharton, wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up, rose from his place, and went into the corner.

The Remove grinned. Such a punishment was more suitable to the fags in the Second Form-room, and it was very

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rough on Wharton, who was supposed to have a somewhat lordly sense of his personal dignity. Wharton stood in the corner of the Form-room with a crimson face, utterly confused.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What was the matter with him? What the dickens did he want to yell out like that for?"

"Off his rocker," said Belosover.

"Must be dotty," said Ogilvy.

"Silence in class!" said Mr. Quelch, frowning.

And the lesson went on, with Wharton standing in the corner. He was glad when the lesson was over, and he was permitted to resume his place. But Mr. Quelch kept a baleful eye upon him for the rest of the afternoon, and if Harry Wharton was inclined to laugh aloud again, he did not venture to indulge the inclination.

Once or twice, however, a faint grin passed over his face. His chums, looking at him, saw that some idea was working in his mind, and they wondered what it was.

When the Form were dismissed at last, and the juniors crowded out into the passage, Bob Cherry clapped Wharton on the shoulder.

"You utter ass," he began, "what did you do it for?"

Wharton grinned.

"I couldn't help it," he said.

"But what—" said Nugent.

"It's a wheeze."

"Better think out wheezes outside the class-room in future," said Bob Cherry sententiously. "What's the wheeze, you fathead?"

"Come up to my study, and I'll tell you."

And Wharton dragged his chums away to his study. They went wondering. In No. 1 Study, Wharton closed the door, and looked round the room cautiously. Nugent and Bob Cherry watched him in amazement.

"What the dickens—" began Bob.

"Can't be too careful," said Harry. "You know how the nigger minstrel wheeze got out. Somebody must have heard us talking in the Rag."

"Yes; but—"

"I've got it!"

"Got what?" demanded Nugent.

"The idea."

"What idea?"

"For dishing the Fifth!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Nugent and Bob Cherry simultaneously.

Wharton chuckled.

"It came into my mind suddenly, and I couldn't help laughing," he explained. "It's simply ripping—and as easy as rolling off a form. Anyway, we can work it. I'm sure of that, and the Fifth will be done—brown! But we shall have to keep it awfully dark."

"But what's the wheeze?" demanded Bob Cherry.

Wharton lowered his voice cautiously.

"Look here! The Fifth give the nigger minstrel show at seven to-morrow evening. Coker has ordered a car from the garage at Courtfield to come over and fetch him and his crowd, at exactly six."

"Yes, he's going to be there in good time," said Bob.

"The car's all swank, of course; they could walk it in a quarter of an hour."

"But it gives us a chance."

"How do you mean?"

"Listen!" said Wharton, and his voice sank still lower, the three juniors putting their heads closer together. "The Fifth, excepting Coker, are going to make up here, before they go—there are no conveniences for that at the Assembly Room, and, of course, they can do it ever so much better here. Coker's idea is for the rest of the troupe to make-up, all get into the car, and arrive at the hall in good time, and—"

"Yes, yes; we know all that."

"Well, then! You know I can drive a car?"

"Yes; you've driven us in your uncle's car, when we were home with you for the holidays," said Bob; "but I'm blessed if I can see what you're getting at."

"I'm coming to the point. Suppose a telegram were sent to the garage at Courtfield, telling them to send the car at half-past six instead of six."

"Oh!"

"And suppose another car turned up at six, instead of that car," said Harry Wharton, in a whisper. "The chauffeur could have a motor-mask and goggles on, and be wrapped up, you know, and Coker wouldn't recognise me."

"You!" howled the two juniors.

"Yes," said Wharton coolly.

"But—but—"

"The Fifth would think it was the car they've ordered from Courtfield, and they'd tumble in, of course," said Wharton. "I'd drive them—"

"To the Assembly Room?"

Wharton chuckled.

"No fear! I'd drive them on the lonely road round the Black Pike, have a breakdown there, and leave them to walk home about ten miles."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the two juniors.

"What do you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Walk home in their nigger rig," sobbed Nugent. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but, I say, that would be a bit rough on the audience at the Assembly Room, when they've paid their money for admission," said Bob Cherry.

"The audience will be all right," said Wharton calmly.

"They will get a show, all the same, and a better one."

"I don't see—"

"I haven't finished yet. When the Fifth are out of the way, the Remove Nigger Minstrel Troupe will turn up at the Assembly Room—"

"What!"

"My word!"

"They'll all be blacked, and in costume," said Harry. "No one will know them from the Fifth. You can't get a more complete disguise than a nigger minstrel outfit. The fellows can be made up all ready, and waiting at the old barn on the road. After I've dumped the Fifth down somewhere, I'll call for them in the car, and take them on to Friarale, and—there you are!"

"My only hat!"

"We shall get our show back again, and Coker & Co. will have a walk, which will be really better for them than trying to give minstrel shows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How does the idea strike you?"

"My hat! If it works—"

"It will work, if we're careful."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove yelled with laughter. In the substance of their spirits, they executed a wild war-dance round the study table. The door opened, and Bulstrode looked in, in amazement.

"What on earth's the row?" he demanded.

Bob Cherry dragged him into the study, and Nugent slammed the door. Wharton explained in hurried whispers to the amazed captain of the Remove. Bulstrode burst into a yell, and in another second he was joining in the war-dance.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Quite Ready.

OUTSIDE No. 1 Study not a word was uttered of the Remove scheme.

Bulstrode and John Bull and Tom Brown were taken into the secret, but for the present the rest of the members of the Remove Dramatic Society were not enlightened.

It was safer for nothing to be said. The secret of the minstrel show had escaped in some unknown manner, once, and Coker had forestalled them. Wharton did not mean to run the risk of anything of the sort happening again.

Not a word was said; and if the youthful plotters discussed the matter at all, they did it in whispers, within locked doors. They did not mean Horace Coker to gain the slightest hint of the bombshell that was being prepared for him.

Meanwhile, the rehearsals of the Remove Dramatic Society went on. But that could not excite suspicion, for they had kept up their rehearsals all the time, in the hope that some dodge would be discovered of wresting their own from the Fifth again. And Coker & Co. were too busy just now to pay much attention to the Remove.

They had plenty of rehearsing to do themselves, for Coker meant to give as good a show as possible, and show that he could do it if he liked. The heroes of the Fifth were compiling jokes, and studying songs, and Coker, who could play the banjo, was almost incessantly practising that terrible instrument, much to the discomfort of the rest of the dwellers in the Fifth Form passage.

If the Fifth Form failed to give a good show, it would not be for want of working at it. They snorted at the nigger minstrelsy as they would never have dreamed of snorting for an examination.

Hoskins, of the Shell, who played the piano, was in much request. At the show he would not be wanted, but he was in great demand now for helping the Fifth with their practice.

In the music-room Hoskins thumped and thumped, and the Fifth fellows yelled and roared, and were quite satisfied with their progress. Indeed, Potter declared that by the time the show came off, even Coker would probably be able to sing in tune.

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NEXT TUESDAY: "BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!" By FRANK RICHARDS. Order Early.

When Saturday morning dawned, there was much excitement in Greyfriars. The Fifth were full of their coming entertainment, and the Remove fellows who were in the secret were brimming with suppressed excitement.

Coker, of the Fifth, met Harry Wharton when the juniors came down that morning. Coker was in a wonderfully good temper, and inclined to be generous.

"Hallo, young 'un!" he said. "I suppose you kids have made up your minds to it now."

Wharton nodded with a cheerful smile.

"Quite!" he replied.

"I'm glad! Of course, you will admit that you couldn't have done the thing, you know. It was better for wiser heads to take it up," said Coker patronisingly.

Wharton laughed.

"And I'll tell you what I'll do," said Coker generously, "The tickets have been going like hot cakes, and, in fact, there's quite a run on them; but I'll let you Remove kids in at half-price, if you like."

"That's jolly decent of you, Coker."

"Well, the fact is, I intend to be decent," said Coker. "I want you kids to see the show, and enjoy yourselves, you know; and you will be able to pick up some hints how to give shows yourselves, by watching us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, do you accept my offer or not?" demanded Coker huffily.

"Not!" said Harry cheerfully.

"I suppose you're going to keep away, and sulk—eh?" asked Coker.

"Oh, no; I think we shall be there!"

"You can have admission at half-price, if you like, as children," said Coker.

"Thank you for nothing."

"Well, please yourself," said Coker. "If you're thinking of making any disturbance in the hall, you'll get into trouble. The Fifth will all be there, and the Head has asked a couple of prefects to attend the show, to see that order is kept. Wingate and Courtney are coming."

"Good!" said Harry.

"So if you're thinking of kicking up a row—"

"We're not thinking of kicking up a row, Coker."

Coker looked at him suspiciously.

"So you're going to take it quietly?"

"Quite quietly."

"If there's any row—"

"Don't you intend to make a row?" asked Wharton innocently.

"I?" said Coker, in astonishment. "Certainly not. What do you mean?"

"Oh, I thought you were going to sing!" said Wharton.

And he took a hurried departure before Coker had had time to realise the full force of his remark.

After morning school that day, Coker & Co. did not think of football. They held a final rehearsal in the Rag, and went through all their songs and patter, and Greene did a clog dance, and the result was pronounced eminently satisfactory.

Coker declared that the show would "knock them," and the rest of the Dramatic Society agreed enthusiastically that it undoubtedly would.

And the audience who were to be "knocked" was likely to be a numerous one. Two-thirds of the Greyfriars fellows had booked seats in advance, and there had been a considerable number of tickets taken in the village. Without counting the crowd who were expected to pay at the doors, half the hall was already disposed of.

Coker was elated.

So were Harry Wharton & Co. All their preparations were made, and they spent the afternoon playing a football-match with the Fourth, and beat them hollow. After the match, the chums of the Remove held a consultation in Harry Wharton's study, to arrange the last points in the programme.

That wire's got to be sent pretty soon," Wharton remarked. "I don't like the idea of sending it in Coker's name. Of course, after the way he's bagged our show and swanked around in borrowed plumes, we're justified in doing it, I think; but I'd rather not, if it can be helped."

"I don't see how we're to manage it, then," said Nugent.

"It's all right. I find that Coker, Potter, and Greene went over to Courtfield to arrange for the car. A telegram signed Greene would do the business, just as easily as one signed Coker."

"I don't see much difference—"

"Only there happens to be a Greene in the Remove," said Wharton, "and another in the Third Form, for that matter. I'll get young Greene Secundus to send the wire; he will keep the secret."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's settled," said Harry. "I've arranged about my

car. I'm to call at the garage for it at five, and bring it round. I've shown the people there that I can drive, and they are going to lend me the chauffeur's things."

"Good!"
"I'll buzz off at half-past four, as quietly as possible," went on Wharton. "At six sharp I bring the Daimler round. I take Coker & Co. off for a little trip—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You fellows take your make-up and costumes to the old barn in the lane, and make up there, and wait for me. Take my things with you. I shall have to change afterwards, after I've driven you to the Assembly Room. The car will be put up in the stable of the Red Cow, and I can change there. After getting out at the Assembly Room, you will simply have to leave my bag in the car."

"Simple as A B C," said Nugent.
"I don't think there's anything more to be arranged," said Wharton. "Don't let the other fellows into the secret till you get to the barn. And it can be let out to the Remove chaps in the audience, on pledge of secrecy, as soon as the hall is full. You see, we don't want the Remove hissing us, and they might the Fifth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I think Coker & Co. will come a cropper this time, my sons," said Harry Wharton, with great satisfaction.

"What-ho!" said the Co., with one voice.
All was going well, and Wharton felt little anxiety. Coker & Co. had no time to waste in thinking of what the Remove might possibly be doing. The utmost they expected was that the juniors might hiss or make a disturbance in the hall when the performance came off, and they had taken precautions against that.

Harry Wharton put on his hat and coat, and sauntered carelessly out of the School House. No one specially noticed him go. The Fifth, above all, were too busy to know or care whether Wharton was about the place or not.

Coker & Co. were by this time making up for the show. They were using the Rag as a dressing-room. Nearly all the Fifth were there, helping as dressers.

Eight members of the Dramatic Club were taking part in the show, and they were blacked, and clothed in striped suits, and really looked their part very well as nigger minstrels. Coker tinkled on the banjo.

"Perhaps I'd better give you my song, while we're waiting for the car," he remarked.

"Oh, never mind that!" said Greene. "I'll just go through my clog-dance!"

"Blow your clog-dance!"

"Look here, Coker—"

Coker strummed upon the banjo.

"Once dere libbed in de sunny south," he commenced,

"Where de sun am burnin' in de bright blue sky—"

"You ass! That's the wrong song," said Bland. "You're

going to sing 'Come and Kiss Me, Honey.'"

"I forgot—"

"You'll forget when the show's on, I expect," said Greene.

"Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do. If you break down,

I'll give an extra dance turn, and you can keep out."

Coker glared.

"You silly ass!" he said.

"Well, I'm only thinking of the good of the show," said

Greene. "I want to make the thing a success, of course."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Years ago by de Mississippi,

Two little darkey coons were born;

And under de burnin' southern sun

De played in de golden corn!"

Thus Coker!

"That's all right," said Greene. "I don't see that you

need to go through it. I'll just give my dance—"

Hoot—hoot!

It was the blast of a motor-horn from the Close.

"Hallo! Here's the car!" exclaimed Potter.

And the Fifth crowded out of the Rag.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Coker's Motor-Car.

QUITE a crowd of fellows had gathered to see the heroes of the Fifth started upon their journey.

The early dusk had fallen thickly upon the old Close.

Outside the doors, on the gravel drive, the big Daimler

car loomed up, her acetylene lamps gleaming through the

gloom. The figure of the chauffeur stood beside the car—

somewhat a short, thick-set figure, muffled up in a thick

coat, with a muffer round the neck, a cap pulled down over

the ears, and with big goggles that glimmered in the light

of the lamps.

The hall was crowded. Fellows of all forms were there,

and there was a cheer as the minstrels came forth from the

Rag, with their war-paint on.

Coker and Co. certainly looked a striking company, in

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striped check trousers, and black faces, and Coker with his banjo under his arm.

"Hurrah!" shouted the juniors.

"Not much difference in Coker, is there?" said Nugent

minor, of the Second. "Just a shade darker than usual.

When did you wash last, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker glared round at the fags. But Bland caught him by

the arm. The whole impressiveness of the proceedings would

be spoiled by a row with the fags just then.

"Come on, Coker," said Bland.

"I'm coming, ain't I?" said Coker.

"Well, come."

"Bravo, Coker!" shouted the Removees. "If your face

doesn't give 'em fits, old man, nothing will."

"No need for Coker to make up, if he was going as a

funny man," remarked Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker snorted.

"You fags shut up," said Blundell, the captain of the

Fifth. "Coker's all right. This is going to be a ripping

show!"

"Yes, Coker's all right," said Bob Cherry. "He's not so

black as he's painted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Behold, he is black but comely," said Bulstrode.

Coker strode through the grinning crowd to the door. The

rest of the troupe followed him.

There was another cheer, mingled with laughter, as the

black gentlemen filed down the steps to where the motor

car was waiting.

"You're in good time, my man," said Coker to the

chauffeur. "It's barely six."

"Ja wohl," said the chauffeur, in a deep, guttural voice.

"My hat! They've sent us a German chauffeur," growled

Potter. "Does the image speak English?"

"They've got a lot of foreigners employed at the motor-

garage in Courtfield," said Coker. "I asked for a specially

reliable man. Do you speak English, my man?"

"Ja wohl!"

"What does he mean with his blessed yow-wow?" asked

Greene.

"Speak English!" bawled Coker.

"Ja, ja, mein herr. English a little small I speak."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, your English is simply ripping!" said Coker sar-

castically. "Do you know the road to Friardale?"

"Ja, wohl!"

"That means very well," said Coker. "You know the

Assembly Room in Friardale, I suppose, my man?"

"Ja wohl!" granted the chauffeur.

"How long will it take you to get there?" asked Potter.

"Wanzig minuten."

"Eh?"

"Twenty minutes."

"What!" roared Potter. "Seventy minutes!"

"He means twenty," said Coker pacifically. "It's only

his beautiful German accent. I don't see why they couldn't

have sent an English chauffeur. Why didn't they send an

English chauffeur, my man?"

"I come to dake you."

"Yes, we know that, but why? Well, it doesn't matter

now. I suppose he can drive a car all right, or they wouldn't

have sent him."

"Ja wohl."

"Oh, blow your yow-wow!" said Potter crossly.

"Shut up, Potter! Get into the car!"

"In you go," said Greene. "Well, it's roomy and comfy,

anyway. There's room enough for the lot of us."

"I arranged specially for a good-sized car, of course," said

Coker. "You can always trust to my management.

Nothing's likely to go wrong when I have the management

in my hands. Hallo, you chauffeur chap! Have you got a

cold?"

The chauffeur had suddenly been taken with a violent fit

of coughing.

"Noin, noin!" he gasped.

"What are you barking for, then?"

"Ja wohl."

The car started.

"Let's be off," said Potter.

"You're off already," said Bob Cherry, from the steps.

"Off your giddy rockers. If old Todd were here, he would

beg and implore you to pause in time, before you inflict this

grievous wrong upon an unoffending public. His Uncle

Benjamin would be shocked at you—nay, disgusted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Potter.

"That's what the audience will soon be telling you to do," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Don't talk to those kids," said Coker loftily.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Stand back, Bunter. You'll be run over."

"Yes, but I say, I'm quite willing to come and lend a hand, if you like, to make the show a success," said Billy Bunter.

"I'll lend you a hand instead," said Coker; and he lent Bunter one—on his chest. And Bunter sat down on the cold stone steps and gasped.

"Yow! Oh!"

"Start," said Coker to the chauffeur.

"Ja, ja!"

"Look here, don't you start saying 'Yah, yah' to us!" exclaimed Greene, considerably indignant at such a reply.

"You ass!" said Coker. "That's German for 'Yes.' German often sounds as if a chap's swearing at you, when he's only saying it's a nice day. Drive on, chauffeur!"

"Ja, wohl!"

The car started.

There was a cheer and a yell from the juniors in the lighted doorway, and the car glided away down the drive.

In spite of the roominess of the big Daimler, the Fifth-Formers were pretty well crowded together. There were several complaints of treading on feet and shoving, and unamiable replies, and Coker's voice was heard promising Bland a thick ear. However, they settled down to make the best of it. Gosling, the porter, stood by the open gates, and he blinked at the car as it passed. It was what Gosling would have characterised as "nice goings hon" for the Fifth-Formers to hire a motor-car to take them to the village, and his face expressed disapproval, especially as he had to come out of his lodge to open the gates.

The big Daimler slackened down.

"Borter!" grunted the chauffeur.

"Allo!" said Gosling.

"Gum here!"

The school porter approached.

"Open dem gates wider!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere," growled Gosling. "They're open wide enough, and you can take the car through, Mister German Sausage. Nice goings hon!"

"I thinks dat you—"

"Talking English!" said Gosling pleasantly.

The chauffeur reached out his hand, and battered Gosling's hat over his eyes, and the car glided on. Gosling staggered back in amazement. He clutched off his hat, and set it right upon his head, and rushed after the car. Gosling was not a proud man, but to have his hat flattened over his eyes by a mere foreigner was, as he would have said, too thick.

"Stop!" he roared. "Stop that blessed car! I'll—"

But the car was whizzing down the road at great speed, its acetylene lamps glaring out into the darkness like two great eyes.

Gosling halted in the road, saying things. The big Daimler disappeared in the direction of Friardale.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the Fifth!

COKER chuckled to himself as he sat in the car among his crowded companions, and the wind whistled by.

Coker had reason to be pleased. Everything was going swimmingly. At all events, Coker thought it was. The Remove plan had been borrowed and improved upon, according to Coker's ideas, and the Remove were quite out in the cold. A large audience had been secured, and Coker & Co. were off to the Assembly Room in a whizzing, hooting motor-car. It was a big thing for the Fifth. They had vindicated their superior dignity as a senior Form. They had put the Remove into their place. They had triumphed all along the line. No wonder Coker was pleased, and burst into occasional chuckles.

"I rather think we've scored, and put those cheeky kids into their place," he remarked. "What do you chaps think?"

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"What-ho!" said the minstrels.

"Might have a song to live up the way," Coker suggested.

"Would you care to hear me go through 'Come and Kiss Me, Honey,' once more?"

"No time," said Bland hastily. "We shall be there in a minute or two at this rate."

"Might as well do the first verse," said Coker. "Can you find my banjo-case, Potty?"

"I—I think it's under a seat," said Potter. "No need to trouble to dig it out until we get there."

"Look here, Potter—"

"Well, you see—"

"I say, that chauffeur doesn't know the road!" exclaimed Greene anxiously. "He's turning off. We're at the cross-roads here."

"My hat!"

Coker looked round for the speaking-tube. But that item seemed to have been left out of the outfit of that special car.

"You must stop him!" exclaimed Potter.

The car had turned the corner now, and was whizzing away towards the village of Pegg. The lights of Friardale, which had glimmered for a moment in the distance, were lost to view again. The Fifth-Formers were astonished and uneasy. The chauffeur was taking them at right angles from their right course.

Coker leaned out of the window, and roared to the driver.

"Driver! Chauffeur! Hold on! Stop!"

The chauffeur did not reply.

"Stop!" roared Coker. "You're taking the wrong road."

"Ja wohl!"

"This isn't the way to Friardale. This is the road to Pegg and the bay."

"Ja wohl!"

"Stop, I tell you!"

The chauffeur did not reply, and he did not stop. The lane was lonely in the evening, and there was no danger of meeting any traffic. With the great lamps blazing out ahead, and the horn sounding at every corner, the car raced on at an increasing speed.

The Fifth-Formers were quite alarmed now.

"The road may be up," said Potter, but very dubiously.

"He may be going round. He may have to, you know."

Coker snorted.

"The road's not up."

"Then what's he going round for?"

"He doesn't know the road, I suppose, or else he's off his silly Dutch rocker!" said Coker savagely. "Blessed if I can understand it!"

"Make him stop!" said Potter.

"That's easier said than done."

"Ain't there a speaking-tube?"

"It seems to have been taken away," said Coker.

"Taken away! What for?"

"How should I know? Some silly, careless ass in the garage, I suppose."

"But you can signal to him on the indicator," said Bland.

"Signal stop!"

"I've done so, ass!"

"Then why doesn't he stop?"

"Better ask him," growled Coker. "It's no good asking me."

"My hat!"

"He must be mad!"

"Mad as a hatter!"

"We shall be piled up in a minute."

"Or chucked into a ditch!"

"Oh, crums!"

The Fifth-Form minstrels burst into exclamations of angry dismay. They could not get at the chauffeur, but they could get at Coker, and they gave him their frank opinion of things. Coker snorted with rage.

"You ass!" said Potter.

"It was all your idea having a motor-car at all!"

"Just swank!" said Rice.

"That was it—Coker's swank! And he couldn't even pick out a good one. I don't believe he knows a good one from a rotter!"

"Look here!" roared Coker. "My father keeps two cars."

"I wish the owner had kept



"Good ebenin', Massa Johnson!" said Alonzo Todd to the Head of Greyfriars, as he put his head round the edge of the study door. "Good ebenin', good ebenin'!" "Good heavens!" gasped the Head, in amazement, as he gazed at the Duffer of Greyfriars. (See Chapter 7.)

this. Where are we going? Why didn't you stipulate for an English chauffeur, or a sane one, at least?"

"How should I know that they'd plant this German beast on us?" yelled Coker. "Don't be a blithering ass! I'm paying a good price for hiring this car, and I thought that they were reliable people."

"Rats!"

"You ought to have had more sense, Coker. A brake would have done as well."

"Then you'd have pitched into me if the horses had run away, and said why didn't I have a car!" howled Coker.

"Nothing ever goes wrong if Coker manages things," mimicked Potter. "Oh, my only chapeau! What's going to be the end of this?"

"Stop him somehow, Coker!"

Coker leaned out of the window again. The wind dashed

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and whistled by his face, the car was travelling at a great speed. He yelled to the driver, but the wind blew his voice and his breath away as he yelled. It was doubtful if the driver heard. At all events, he did not heed.

Right onward dashed the car.

The minstrels had supposed that the car was going to Pegg, a place sufficiently far from their destination. But at Pegg they might have found some conveyance to carry them back to Friardale in time. They would not have trusted themselves to the car again if they had once got safely out of it. But it was soon clear that they had no chance of seeing the village of Pegg. They caught a glimpse of the lights of Cliff House School, and then the car turned into a lane where the ruts made it bump and shake.

Coker drew his head in.

"My hat! We shall be smashed up soon at this rate!" gasped Potter. "Can't anything be done, Coker!"

"What can I do?"

"You ought to do something. You're the leader of this party, and you've got us into this rotten scrape."

"Think of some way out, you fathead!" said Bland.

"There's the door!" said Coker ferociously. "You can jump out if you like."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Well, it's no good blaming me!" said Coker. "I couldn't foresee that the chauffeur was going to turn out a madman. You can't foresee things like that. I wonder—"

"Well, got an idea?"

"I wonder whether he's been put up to this!" exclaimed Coker, a sudden thought striking him.

"Put up to what?"

"Those Remove beasts may have got at him, bribed him or something, to get us out of the way, and muck up the concert."

"My word!"

"You've hit it, Coker!"

"That's the explanation. He couldn't be mad," said Bland. "We've been done by the Remove, after all! This is why they were taking it so quietly."

Coker ground his teeth in his watch. "My hat! What

"And the audience coming in at another half hour," growled Potter, looking at his watch. "My hat! What frightful fools we shall look."

"What frightful fools we are!" said Rice. "This is what comes of trusting to Coker's management. He couldn't think of a wheeze without borrowing it from the fags, and then he lets them get back on us like that. Yah!"

"Was it my fault, you idiot?" roared Coker.

"Yes, of course it was. My hat! Where are we now?"

The car was speeding along a lonely road. At distant intervals lonely lamps glimmered up. On the left a great black mass glimmered through the gloom of night. Coker recognised it. It was the Black Pike.

"The Pike!" he gasped.

"My hat! We're miles from Friardale."

"And he's taking us on the road round it," said Potter. "Oh, this is a go! What will the fellows say at Greyfriars?"

"Bless the fellows at Greyfriars!" said Rice, holding on with both hands. "I don't care what they say, so long as we get back alive. I'm expecting a smash up every minute."

"My hat! What a bump!"

"Help!"

"Stop, you villain!"

"Stop, you scoundrel!"

The car sped on.

Once or twice it passed another vehicle on the road, but it never slackened down sufficiently for the occupants to think of jumping out. It was impossible to jump out, and equally impossible to stop the driver. The Fifth-Form minstrels were in the hands of Fate, and Fate was very hard upon them.

What the man near stop?

The car stopped at last in a lonely spot, where big trees shadowed the road, and hardly a star was to be seen above. The stop was so sudden that the Fifth-Formers were pitched over one another in a struggling heap.

The voice of the chauffeur was heard shouting:

"Ged oud! Ged oud! For your lifes! Ged oud!"

"Something's wrong!" gasped Bland.

"Take your elbow out of my eye!" came a muffled voice.

"Oh! Help!"

"Jump out!" yelled Coker. "Jump out! It's an accident!"

The voice of the chauffeur was rising shrilly.

"Mein Gott! Get oud! Get oud! For your lifes!"

Coker opened the door, and the Fifth-Formers jumped and rolled and tumbled out. In a few seconds the car was empty.

"What's the matter, chauffeur?"

"You scoundrel!"

Zip!

The car plunged forward suddenly. It had restarted.

"Stand clear!" gasped Coker. "There's something wrong with the engine! That man will be killed! Stop the car, you idiot!"

But the man did not stop the car.

It shot forward from the sight of the Fifth-Formers, and a voice floated back on the wind, a voice without a trace of German accent now.

"Ha, ha, ha! What price the Remove?"

Coker staggered.

"Harry Wharton!"

"Oh!"

The car raced on, and the great gleaming lights disappeared into the darkness. The group of deserted minstrels stood on the lonely road gazing at one another speechlessly.

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Greyfriars Minstrels.

HARRY WHARTON chuckled as he drove the car onwards.

The race had been completely successful.

Nine Fifth-Formers, in nigger minstrel garb, were abandoned on a lonely road, ten miles from home, and Wharton was off in the motor-car. The Fifth-Formers were likely to regret having borrowed the Remove's latest wheeze.

Wharton, sitting tight, in greatcoat and cap and goggles, unrecognisable as a Removite of Greyfriars, drove the car steadily onwards. He knew every wind and turn of the roads about the countryside, from his experience as a cyclist. He took a cut into the public road that led back to Greyfriars, and then let the car go.

At a ripping speed the great car hummed on, and it passed the gates of Greyfriars. Near the gates of the school it passed another car of the same size going in the direction of Courtfield.

Wharton chuckled as he passed it. He guessed that it was the car that had come too late for Coker & Co., in response to the telegram sent by Greene of the Remove. The name of Greene secundus had been as potent as that of Greene primus, and the people at the Courtfield garage had had no suspicion.

Wharton drove on the car, and turned at a slackened speed into the little lane that led up to the old barn. As the acetylene lights came gleaming over the dark fields there was a shout from the barn:

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry's voice.

"Hallo!" shouted back Wharton, as he brought the car to a stop. "Are you fellows ready?"

"Ready to the last nail!" said Frank Nugent. "Where have you left those chaps?"

"Got rid of them all right!" asked Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I dropped them on the road round the Black Pike, a good ten miles away. It will be a long tramp for them to get back, and I don't think they'll feel much like giving a concert when they get in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll crawl into Greyfriars, dead-beat, about ten, I suppose!" grinned Johnny Bull. "My hat, the Fifth have been dished this time!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile into the car!" said Wharton. "We've not too much time to spare, and we'd better buzz on to the Assembly Room."

"Right-ho!"

The Remove minstrels were quite ready. They had made up in the old barn by the light of bicycle lanterns. Their faces were blacked, and they were in full nigger minstrel costume, and, excepting for size, nobody would have imagined that they were not the fellows who had started out in the car with Wharton. Some of them were as tall as the fellows in the Fifth, but the average size was, of course, smaller. But that was a point that could not be helped. Upon the whole, Wharton considered that they would pass muster, and, whatever happened, the Fifth were hopelessly out of the show. There was no doubt whatever upon that point.

The Removites crowded into the car, and Wharton tooted it out into the road again, and took the way to the village.

He made the car whiz, for there was, indeed, no time to waste now. It wanted but a quarter to seven, and at seven the performance was booked to begin. The audience must have been arriving for some time already.

The car entered the village street, and Wharton stopped it at the side door of the building, which answered as a stage-door when the place was used for entertainments. The doorkeeper came and opened the car door, and the blacked juniors tumbled out.

Bob Cherry turned to the chauffeur.

"Take the car round to the Red Cow, driver!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!"

"Put it up safely, and you can have a drink for yourself; and mind you bring the car round after the performance in time—sharp, mind!"

"Yes, sir! Thank you kindly, sir!"

The Removites, grinning under their black, entered the building; and Wharton turned the car and drove to the Red Cow, where he had made arrangements for the big Daimler to be left. He intended to drive the Remove home after the performance, and he had previously arranged for a man to be at Greyfriars to take the car back to Courtfield that night.

He reached the Red Cow, and put up the car with the assistance of a stableman; and then he astonished the stable-

man and made him wonder whether he was dreaming, by directing himself of the chauffeur's garb and disclosing the handsome person of a Greyfriars junior.

Wharton pressed a half-crown into the man's hand. "Hold your lantern for me to dress," he said, "there's a good fellow."

"My boys," said the Red Cow man. "It's a little joke, you know. I drove the car myself, instead of having a chauffeur. Now I'm going to dress for the performance."

"Yes!" said the Red Cow man. Wharton, with the aid of a hand-mirror and the stableman's lantern, made up in record time. Then, putting on an ulster over his make-up, and shading his blackened face as well as he could with his cap, he hurried away towards the Assembly Room.

The building was only a couple of minutes from the Red Cow, but Wharton was spotted by some of the audience as they arrived, and there was a shout.

"Ere's one of 'em!"

"Ere's one of the niggers!"

"Hooray!"

And an interested crowd of urchins followed the disguised junior to the side door.

Wharton slipped inside, somewhat to the surprise of the doorkeeper.

"I thought you was hall in," he remarked.

"Where are the others?" asked Wharton. "Show me the way, please."

"This way, sir!"

From the auditorium came a sound of buzzing voices mingling with stamps upon the floor. It was already past the time for the show to begin, and the audience were beginning to show signs of impatience. "Glad you've come, Harry, old man!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Harry Wharton burst into the room. "They're starting stamping."

"It's ten past seven," said Nugent.

"Can't be helped," said Harry. "I'm ready now."

"Good! Come on!"

"This way to the stage," said Nugent. "I've looked at the people in front; there's a jolly good audience. Nearly every fellow in the Fifth is in the house."

"Excepting Coker & Co.," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha! Yes, excepting them, of course!"

"The Remove have all turned up, too!" grinned Bulstrode.

"I've let it out to some of them what's going on, and they're going to whisper it to the others—all who can be trusted. The Fifth are not to know, of course, till after the show, or they'd try and muck it up somehow. As it is—"

"As it is they'll cheer us like mad, thinking we're Coker & Co.," said Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Case of obtaining cheers under false pretences!" grinned Nugent.

The juniors, chuckling, made their way upon the stage. The curtain was not up yet, and the sounds of an impatient audience could be clearly heard through it. Big and heavy feet were stamping on the floor, and voices could be heard.

"When are you goin' to start?"

"Ring up the curtain!"

"Play up!"

"Now then, when's the show going to begin?"

"Urry up!"

"Up with the curtain!" said Harry Wharton.

The Greyfriars minstrels had taken their seats on the semi-circle of chairs facing the auditorium. Wharton had the banjo, and Nugent was armed with the bones. In striped trousers and comic collars and amazing tail-coats, with their faces blacked and their eyes whitened and their lips painted to increase their size, the Removites were certainly not recognisable, and they looked a very finished set of nigger minstrels.

As the curtain rose and disclosed them there was a cheer from the Fifth. All the Fifth Form at Greyfriars had come to cheer. The Remove were very strongly represented, too; and as they were now in the secret they were prepared to cheer as heartily as anybody.

Wingate and Courtney, the prefects, sat among the Greyfriars crowd to keep order if necessary, and there were a good many more seniors present. And the village folk and country people packed the hall. There were no vacant seats, and there were rows of people standing at the back already, and more arriving.

Entertainments were few and far between in the village of Friardale; and the prices of admission had been made very low; and these circumstances, combined with the fact that the whole proceeds, without deduction for expenses, were to be devoted to a local charity, had made the affair very popular.

Friardale had risen as one man to support it; and the audience, at all events, was very satisfactory. Whatever the performance was like; it would be given to a crowded house.

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"Hurrah!" shouted the Fifth. "Splendid! Go it! On the ball!"

"Bravo!" roared the Remove. Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, who was in the audience, sitting next to Wingate, looked round in some surprise. He had expected hisses and groans—or, at the most, silence—from the Removites. But the Removites were cheering away even more enthusiastically than the Fifth.

"Well, I must say they're taking this jolly decently!" said Blundell.

Wingate smiled.

"Curious how a costume of that kind alters a chap, ain't it?" said Blundell, looking at the stage. "Blessed if I can tell which is Coker!"

"He's in the middle, I think," said Wingate. "That chap in the middle is the only one who's tall enough for Coker."

"He was going to be corner-man," said Blundell, puzzled.

"Modesty, perhaps," Wingate suggested. "He may have decided that somebody else was better, and given it up to him."

Blundell looked still more surprised at the idea.

"That's not like Coker," he said, with conviction. "He's never been troubled with much modesty all the time I've known him."

"Queer!" said Courtney. "That disguise seems to make the chaps look smaller. You'd hardly take them for a set of Fifth Form fellows."

"Yes, it's odd," said Wingate.

"Silence!" bawled the audience.

The show was beginning.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Run for Coker!

"D ONE!" "Done brown!"

"Foiled, diddled, dished, and done!" said Potter, with an attempt at humour.

"My hat!"

"It's all Coker's fault, of course!"

Coker did not seem to hear. He stood in the road staring in the direction in which the big Daimler had disappeared. He seemed to be quite overcome.

Greene took him by the arm and shook him.

"What's to be done now?" he demanded.

Coker gasped.

"It was Wharton!" he said.

"It was Wharton's voice, anyway; so I suppose it was Wharton!" snorted Greene. "We've been splendidly dished, I must say!"

"He must have got rid of the chauffeur somehow, and taken his place," said Coker, still in a state of great astonishment.

"Go on!" said Potter sarcastically. "Has that only just occurred to you?"

"I never dreamed that a junior in the Remove would be able to drive a car like that," said Coker. "Of course, I never suspected anything of the sort."

"Of course you didn't!" jeered Potter. "You never expected anything. You never do! We've been done brown, and made the laughing-stock of Greyfriars! Poof! Catch me following your lead again, Horace Coker!"

"How are we going to get home?" demanded Rice.

"Blessed if I know!" said Coker. "Walk, I suppose."

"We're a good ten miles from Friardale."

"We could get to the Assembly Room, dead-beat, by about the time the performance is booked to finish!" jeered Potter. "Is that your idea?"

"The show will have to be dropped now, of course," said Bland.

"Not much choice about that," said Coker. "We'll make those Remove kids sit up for this, though!"

"Yes, you've said before that you'd make 'em sit up, and this is how you've done it," said Potter. "It seems to me that we're doing the sitting up. Have you got any suggestion to make, you dummy? Or are you going to stand there all night like a calf?"

"I'm thinking," said Coker.

"What with?" asked Potter, his tone plainly implying that he doubted whether Coker's skull was furnished with the necessary apparatus.

"I'm thinking what have the Remove kids done this for?" said Coker.

Potter sniffed.

"I should think that was plain enough," he replied. "They've done it to muck up the entertainment, because you boned their wheeze, and stuck to it!"

Coker shook his head.

"But that would muck up the whole thing, and they wouldn't want to prevent the money coming in for the

distress fund," he said. "The people would demand the money back on their tickets if there wasn't a show!"

"Well, there won't be one!" said Potter.

"I don't know," said Coker slowly. "I shouldn't be surprised if those young villains have some wheeze for giving a show themselves, now that we're out of the way!"

"My hat!"

"They couldn't have the nerve!" exclaimed Bland.

Coker grunted.

"My experience of the young rotters is that they've got nerve enough for anything!" he replied. "It would be exactly like their rotten cheek!"

"Well, you have got us into a hole, I must say!" remarked Greene. "How the whole school will howl, if the Remove give our show while we're tramping home to Greyfriars!"

"We shall be yelled at by the whole rotten place!" said Rice.

"We've got to stop it, somehow," said Coker.

"Rats! How can we stop it? We're ten miles from home, and that villain Wharton's brought us to the steepest road round the Pike. It's nearly all uphill going back," said Potter, with a groan. "My word! My legs feel tired at the idea of it!"

"Let's get on," said Coker.

"We've certainly wasted enough time!" agreed Potter.

Coker started tramping off. The disconsolate Fifth-Formers followed him. Potter paused, with a sudden dismayed ejaculation.

"My hat! I forgot this rig! How can we tramp across country coloured up like niggers! Why, we might be arrested!"

"Can't be helped!" said Coker.

"Look here," bellowed Potter; "I'm not going to tramp ten miles coloured up as a nigger. Why, the blessed dogs will bark at us!"

"It's impossible!" said Greene.

"I don't see any alternative," said Coker, with unusual patience. "You might be able to get a wash in a ditch, but it would be jolly cold, and you wouldn't get much of the black off without soap, either. Besides, there are the clothes."

"We could make for the nearest place where we could get a wash, and get a train back to Friarale or Courtfield," said Potter reflectively. "I believe Abbotsford is not very far from here, right on, and the trains to Courtfield stop there as usual. We could get a clean-up at the inn at Abbotsford, and borrow some coats to cover up this rig, and perhaps hire a trap to drive home."

"What about the entertainment?"

"About the entertainment!"

"Look here," said Coker. "If we run all the way—"

"Run ten miles!" yelled Potter.

"Yes. If we run hard, we may get to Friarale in time to make a band in the proceedings. Anyway—"

"Well, off all the asses—"

"Look here, Potter—"

"Off all the fatheads—"

"I tell you—"

"Off all the blithering chumps—"

Biff!

Coker's patience was exhausted. He let out his right, and Potter caught it on the point of the chin, and sat down in a puddle in the road. There was a splash, and a howl from the unfortunate Potter.

"Oh! Yarchoo!"

"Now shut up!" said Coker, glowering down at Potter.

"Don't complain about things like a blessed girl! Dry up, you silly ass!"

"Yarchoo!"

"I'm going to take a straight line across country, and get to Friarale somehow!" said Coker. "You fellows had better come with me!"

"I'll dot you in the eye before you go!" roared Potter, struggling to his feet, and rushing at Coker with brandished fists.

Bland and Greene caught him and held him back.

"Hold on, Potter!" said Greene. "There's trouble enough without that!"

"I tell you—"

"Cheese it, old man! Look here, Coker, we can't cut across country after dark—we should lose our way fifty times. And we can't go in this rig. We've got to get to the nearest possible place and get cleaned!" said Greene.

"Suit yourselves," snorted Coker. "I'm going! If those young scoundrels are giving my entertainment, I'll—"

"Well, it's their own entertainment, if you come to that!"

"Oh, don't talk piffle," said Coker. "I'm going to stop them! I believe they mean to give my entertainment at the

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Assembly Room, and I'll lick the whole blessed Remove before they shall do it. That's flat!"

"There's no time!"

"Rats!"

"It's all rot!" roared Potter.

"Oh, you're a funk!" said Coker contemptuously.

"Then we're all funks," said Greene; "I'm jolly well not going. Even if we didn't lose our way—if we got there at all—we should only arrive after it was all over!"

"I'm going to chance it!"

"Funks—eh?" roared Potter. "That's good, after you've got us into this. Look here, you chaps, I'll tell you what we ought to do—we ought to bump that blithering ass for having got us into this scrape, and then kick ourselves all round for being such blithering asses as to follow his lead."

"Oh, shut up!" said Coker. "You're a lot of funky duffers—"

"Collar him!" yelled Potter.

"Bump him!"

"Bump the silly ass!"

And five or six of the Fifth-Formers seized Coker. He roared and struggled, but the tempers of the amateur minstrels were very excited just at that moment. They had trusted their leader, and he had led them into this. If ever an unsuccessful leader deserved to be bumped by his misguided followers, surely Horace Coker was the man.

"Bump him!" yelled Potter, dancing round excitedly, as the leader of the minstrel troupe struggled furiously in the grasp of the rebellious minstrels.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Yarchoo! Oh! Yow!"

Horace Coker sat dazedly in the same puddle that had received Potter. The Fifth-Formers, somewhat relieved in their feelings, went streaming off towards Abbotsford, in search of a wash and a change of raiment, and a possible vehicle to Greyfriars, or at least a train to Courtfield. Horace Coker remained sitting in the puddle, gasping for breath.

They had disappeared by the time Coker staggered to his feet, breathless, panting, and dripping with muddy water.

"Ow!" gasped Coker. "Precious funks! Ow! My hat!"

Coker was inclined to pursue his rebellious followers for instant vengeance. But he thought of the crowded Assembly Room in Friarale, of the audience gathered to hear the Fifth-Form entertainment, and of his well-grounded fear that the Remove minstrels meant somehow to give the show that the Fifth had been prevented from giving. Coker might not be over-endowed with brains or with perspicacity, but he had a bulldog determination. He meant to get to Friarale somehow.

He started at a run. He knew the country pretty well, and he made short cuts—but the short cuts, like many short cuts taken in country places after dark, sometimes cost more than they were worth. Sometimes he missed his way—sometimes he wasted time in retracing his steps—and only on one occasion did he venture to ask a passer-by for a direction. When the stranger caught sight of the black face peering at him from the shadows, he set up a startled yell and took to his heels, leaving Coker without the desired information.

Coker did not seek any more information from strangers after that. He carefully avoided passers-by. By road and lane, and footpath and field, he plunged on towards Friarale, muddy, and stained, and wet and weary.

But nine o'clock was sounding from the village church as he entered the old High Street. There was a yell from a frightened urchin as he came panting into the street, and the boy pelted off to the nearest doorway. Coker realised that he could not go up the village street in the state he was in, and he rushed into the Red Cow to get a wash, nearly frightening the stableman out of his wits as he came into the yard.

"Come back for your clothes, sir?" asked the stableman, recovering himself, and thinking for the moment that it was Harry Wharton returning.

"What?" said Coker.

"Oh! You ain't Master Wharton—"

"Yes; I've come back for my clothes," said Coker grimly.

"Did Wharton leave the car here, Jimmy?"

"Yes, Master Coker!"

"And his clothes?"

"Yes, Master Coker; when he made up as a nigger 'ere!"

Coker tossed him a shilling.

"Give me the clothes, Jimmy!"

"But—Master Wharton—"

"I'm going to the place to see him!" explained Coker, without explaining with what intentions, however.

"Oh, very well, sir!" said the man.

Coker laved his face in a pail of water, roughly towelled it, and then crammed himself into Wharton's jacket and

troumen. He was in great danger of splitting them; but he was not likely to care for that.

Then he ran in the direction of the Assembly Room. He reached the building, and even from the street he could hear the roar of applause from within.

He dashed into the vestibule. Mr. Grimes was there, in evening-dress, which showed off his portly figure and purple face to great advantage. He stared at Coker in amazement.

"Why, Master Coker!" he ejaculated. "Ain't you on the stage?"

"Do I look as if I was!" yelled Coker.

"Law!" said Mr. Grimes. "I thought the corner-man was too small for you—young gent about the size of Master Wharton, I thought, but then stage clothes is so deceiving. A real good show it is, Master Coker!"

"Then they've given the show!" said Coker, between his teeth.

Mr. Grimes looked surprised.

"Given it?" he repeated. "Why, of course! It's going without a hitch—now, though! I never seed a better one by hamasoo—"
But Coker was not listening. He was dashing away down the passage that led to the wings, breathing fury and vengeance.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

Quite a Success.

M R. GRIMES was quite right when he declared that the show was going well.

It went, as Bob Cherry described it, with a bang! The packed hall simply rose to it. The semicircle of black gentlemen were more popular than any other similar troupe that had visited Friardale for a very long time.

The show was really good. The juniors did songs and dances, and their jokes, though not new, were new enough to the unsophisticated inhabitants of Friardale.

Besides, enthusiasm is always catching. The Fifth-Form fellows in the audience would have applauded if the show had been as flat as decanted champagne. They were there to cheer the Fifth, as they imagined, and they did their duty nobly. The Removites, for their part, would have cheered, too, if the show had been as dull as ditch-water. They were there to cheer the Remove, and they did it.

And the enthusiasm of the Remove and the Fifth were infectious. The whole audience caught their humour of appreciativeness.

Never had applause been so hearty and so sustained in the Assembly Room of Friardale, which had seen many entertainments of various kinds.

Harry Wharton, who knew Coker's special coon song a great deal better than Coker did, sang "Come and Kiss Me, Honey," and was encored thunderously, and had to render the whole of that cheerful melody a second time. And the Remove in the audience helped him out with the catchy chorus, and the whole auditorium rang with it.

"Come and kiss me, honey, come and kiss me, do!

Honey, dear, I love but you;

Of all the coons, there'll be none as true,

As I will be to you, Lulu!

So kiss me, honey, kiss me, do, do, do!

Oh, kiss me, honey, kiss me, do!"

The Remove simply roared it. They had heard Harry Wharton trying it over often enough, and they knew most of the words, and where they didn't know the words they were quite willing to yell simply the tune. The Removites were very obliging in little matters like that.

The Fifth-Formers in the audience were pleased. The enthusiasm of the Removites was so evidently genuine, that they could not possibly doubt it. And it was really pleasant to see the juniors rallying round the Fifth-Form Dramatic Club in this way. Blundell said as much to Mark Linley, who was in the row behind him.

"I'm glad to see you kids take it like this, Linley," the captain of the Fifth remarked condescendingly, as the applause over Wharton's song died away.

Mark Linley grinned.

"We like the show!" he explained.

"Yes, it's a jolly good show," agreed Blundell. "But I hardly expected you Remove kids to admit it, you know, considering everything."

"Oh, we're bound to encourage talent, you know, wherever we find it," remarked Hazeldene.

"I guess so!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I've done better songs and dances myself over there, but I guess this is as good as anything I've seen on this side of the pond. Yep!"

"Glad you like it," said Blundell. "But I was really thinking you fags would get up on your hind legs and hiss or

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groan, you know, or something of that sort. I'm very glad to see you take it like this."

"Oh, you will do the groaning presently," said Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you mean, Hazeldene?" asked the captain of the Fifth, in surprise.

"Oh, nothing!"

"But you said—"

But Hazeldene became suddenly interested in the little jokes the nigger minstrels were cracking, and did not seem to hear.

"They're introducing a lot of new stuff into it—new gags, you know," Blundell remarked. "I was at most of the rehearsals, and I don't remember to have heard half the whizzes they have been springing on us."

"Rather improved, I suppose?" suggested Mark.

"Well, yes," agreed Blundell unconsciously. "The whole thing seems to be going better than one would have expected from the rehearsals, though, of course, we were looking for something good. Isn't it curious, too, how deceptive that stage costume is? I couldn't possibly pick out Coker among that lot, though I knew which was Coker all the time at the rehearsals. I suppose the footlights make a lot of difference."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, Linley?"

"Well, I can't pick out Coker, either, among that lot,"

Linley exclaimed.

"Nothing to cackle at in that, is there?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps there is—but listen!"

And Mark, afraid that he had said too much, turned all his attention to the stage, and did not hear any more of Blundell's observations.

Wingate had heard them, and there was a peculiar smile upon Wingate's face. Wingate was very keen, and he had looked round the audience, and observed that Harry Wharton & Co. were missing. He wondered at first why they were not there—and then the apparent diminution in size of the fellows on the stage struck him very forcibly; and then, when Wharton sang "Come and Kiss Me, Honey," he thought he detected a familiar voice he had sometimes heard practising in the music-room.

He was amazed at the idea that came into his mind, then he laughed. But he said nothing. He might be mistaken, and in any case he did not want a row. And if the Fifth-Formers discovered what he thought he had discovered, there would infallibly be a row in the Assembly Room, in spite of attendants and prefects, too.

And the corner-man of the Schoolboy Minstrel Company was certainly venturing very near to the wind, so to speak, in the jokes he was making now. As the entertainment drew towards its close, the young rascals on the stage seemed to grow more reckless. As a matter of fact, they were brimming over with glee at their successful impersonation of Coker & Co., and their triumph over the heroes of the Fifth.

The corner-man twanged his banjo, and addressed the coloured gentleman opposite to him in a squeaky voice.

"Brother Johnson!"

"Yes, Brer Adolphus!"

"Can I ask you a conundrum, Brer Johnson?"

"How should I know, Brer Adolphus? You ought to know de capacities of your vocal organs better dan I do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the audience.

"What's the difference between a drove of asses and the Fifth-Form at Greyfriars, Brother Johnson?"

"I dunno, Brother Adolphus!"

"Do you gib it up, Brother Johnson?"

"I guess I do, Brother Adolphus!"

"Are ain't any, Brother Johnson!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The Removites roared. Blundell scratched his nose in perplexity.

"He must have meant to say the Remove, not the Fifth!"

he murmured. And Mark Linley gave a chuckle.

"Brother Johnson! Brother Johnson!"

"Me here, Brother 'Dolphus!"

"Why is Coker of the Fifth like a man with a wooden leg?"

"Gib it up, Brer Adolphus."

"Because he's not all there, Brother Johnson."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

And the row of niggers gave the nigger minstrel laugh, and the audience joined in. And Blundell simply stared.

"Fancy a chap getting at himself like that!" he ejaculated.

And Mark Linley yelled.

The corner gentleman twanged his banjo again, and the niggers kept time with big white-gloved hands in the air, and Brother Johnson moved his jaws in time to the music,

much to the amusement of the audience. And the corner gentleman burst into a song, to the tune of "Sally in our Alley."

"Of all the mokes that ever smoked,
We know the greatest mokes, ah!
He is the asinest as,
And his name is Horace Coker!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Well, my hat!" said Blundell. "I'm done! I dare say it's funny, but I never heard of a chap making up digs at himself. Of course, it's true, but I never expected to hear Coker say it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I catch on to it at all," said Blundell. "Coker can't have been drinking behind the scenes, I suppose. It beats me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The entertainment was drawing to an end. The corner gentleman had risen to deliver his final witticisms, when there was a sudden disturbance in the wings. A hatless, muddy, breathless individual rushed frantically upon the stage.

There was a roar from the audience, or that part of it composed of Greyfriars fellows, at least.

"Coker!"

"Coker!" murmured Blundell dazedly. "I suppose I'm dreaming! I thought Coker was there all the time. What the dickens—"

"Coker! Ha, ha, ha! You're too late!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton was taken aback for one moment. Then, as Coker stood raving and wildly gesticulating, he waved his hand to the audience.

"Gentlemen—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does it mean?" roared a dozen Fifth-Formers, springing up. "Who are you? Is it a jape? What the dickens—"

"Order!" shouted Wingate. "Ha, ha, ha! Order!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen!" bawled Wharton. "Ladies and gentlemen, we will finish our entertainment with a scene from real life—an example of how obstreperous and cheeky chaps are bumped in a public school! Collar him, you chaps!"

In a second the schoolboy minstrels were out of their place, and Horace Coker was grasped by many pairs of white-gloved hands.

He struggled and roared.

"Yow! Leggo! Rescue. Fifth! We've been done! Bump up the show! Yah—oh!"

"Bump him!"

Coker's cries were very imperfectly heard as he struggled in the overpowering grasp of the Remove minstrels. The audience, amazed at first, concluded that it was a part of the show, and delighted as audiences always are to see rough-and-tumble play on the stage, they cheered and applauded. Even the Fifth did not know what to think. Blundell, their Form-captain, sat amazed. Some of the Fifth thought that Coker had planned this, to give the show an exciting wind-up. Some of them thought that Coker had stayed out of the actual entertainment of his own accord, realising that there was a better man for the place. The fellows who thought this were those who were not closely acquainted with Horace Coker.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yaroop—yaroop! Yaroocooow!"

Bump, bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites, delighted, jumped on the seats, and yelled and clapped their hands. The audience cheered wildly. There was certainly not a man present who did not think that he had got his money's worth that evening.

Bump, bump!

"Yaroocooow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it! Bump him! Ha, ha, ha!"

Blundell jumped up and made a movement towards the stage. But at that moment the curtain was rung down, the show was over. Blundell found his voice.

"What does it mean—what—"

"Order!" said Wingate. "Go out quietly!"

Wingate himself had been laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. The audience crowded out of the hall, some of them amazed, and all of the Fifth in a state of excitement and wonder. As for the Removites, they were very nearly in hysterics.

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THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Triumph of the Remove.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. went off the stage, nearly choking with laughter, and dragging the breathless and exhausted Coker with them.

Coker had hardly a kick left. He was helpless in the hands of the Remove minstrels, and they did not mean to let him get away.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, with the tears of merriment making furrows in the black on his cheeks. "Oh, carry me home to die! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and it was ripping intirely!" gasped Micky Desmond. "And fancy Coker, the darling, turning up at the right moment like that!"

And the minstrels yelled.

"It's been a jolly good show!" grinned Wharton.

"Coker, old man, you must have done wonders to get here in the time! Where are the others?"

"Ow!" gasped Coker.

"Must have been a cross-country run, and jolly quick work at that," said Bulstrode. "You ought to get big prizes on the cinder-path, Coker, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" groaned Coker. "Leggo! Oh! Ow!"

"We didn't expect you quite so soon," said Bob Cherry.

"But you came in the nick of time to give the thing a really good dramatic finish. It couldn't have been better—for us."

"He deserves a ride home in the car, I think," Harry Wharton remarked, "and we don't want the Fifth to tumble till we get back to Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—groo!" groaned Coker.

"The car will be outside," said Harry. "Jimmy is bringing it round from the Red Cow, ready for us. See if it's there, Frank."

Nugent looked out of a window that commanded the street. Two great lights were gleaming in the road, and the boot of a motor-horn could be heard. The car was there, and the crowd were pouring out of the hall upon the pavement. Some of them were stopping to look at the car, especially the Fifth Formers, who were naturally interested in Coker's motor-car. Even yet they did not know what had happened.

"It's there all right," said Nugent.

"Good! Come along, Coker."

Coker staggered up, in the grasp of many white-gloved hands. He was gasping for breath, but all his struggles were over.

"Groo! Groo! Oh!"

"I say, there are a lot of the Fifth out there, hanging about," said Johnny Bull, looking from the window. "If Coker yells to them, they'll make a rush—"

"He shan't yell," said Harry, with a laugh. "Take his arms, Bob and Frank, and hold him so that he can't wriggle. You other fellows gather round. Open your mouth, Coker."

"Groo!"

Wharton stuffed a handkerchief into Coker's mouth, and tied it there with a piece of twine round the back of his head. Coker gurgled.

"Now shove this muffer on him, well over his mouth, and the gag won't be seen," said Harry. "Sorry if it inconveniences you, Coker, old son, but I didn't ask you to turn up at the show. You came uninvited, and uninvited guests must chance their luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! G-r-roo!"

And the Remove minstrels marched their prisoner out. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent grasped his arms firmly, and the other fellows packed themselves round him. The whole crowd of them passed out on the pavement, and there was a shout from the crowd.

"Here they are!"

"Quick—into the car!" muttered Wharton. "Coker first!"

Blundell pushed forward.

"I say, is Coker there? Which is Potter? What's the matter with Coker? I—"

"Coker can't speak! He couldn't take part in the performance," said Wharton hurriedly.

The compact band of Removites had reached the car in a couple of seconds, and Coker was hoisted in. "Now, then—"

"Is he ill?" demanded Blundell.

"Not exactly ill. Stand back, there."

Wharton jumped into the driver's seat. Jimmy, the stableman, stood back, grinning. The crowd surged forward.

"Let's see Coker!"

"Look here—"

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"I don't understand this!"

"I'm going to—"

"Stop!"

"Stand clear!" yelled Wharton.

The car gave a jump, and the crowd surged back. The big Daimler glided away, and the crowd swayed and yelled after it.

"Stop!"

"Look here—"

But only the hoot of the motor-horn answered. The Daimler was speeding down the old High Street, and, late as the hour was for the quiet village, needless to say it attracted some attention, with a coloured gentleman in striped trousers and absurd collar at the steering-wheel.

The Removites in the crowd pouring out of the Assembly Room rocked with laughter.

Blundell, wondering whether he was on his heels or his head, rushed up to Mark Linley, and seized him by the shoulder and shook him.

"Look here, what does this mean?" he roared. "I can see there is some Remove jape on. What does it all mean, anyway?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Linley.

"You cackling ass! What does it mean?" shrieked Blundell.

"It means that you've been done!" gasped Linley. There was no need to keep the secret any longer. "It means that the Remove have given the entertainment, after all! It means that you're beaten all along the line! Ha, ha, ha!"

Blundell staggered.

"The Remove!" he gasped. "Given the entertainment! It's not possible!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass! Where was Coker, then?"

"Tramping here from goodness knows where!" gurgled Hazledene. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!"

Blundell tore off in the direction of Greyfriars, after the Daimler car. The rest of the Greyfriars crowd followed fast. They were anxious to be in at the death. From the remarks of the Removites, the Fifth soon gathered an account of what had happened, and they knew that Coker must be a prisoner in the Daimler car. As for the Co., no one could guess what had become of them.

The car, of course, reached Greyfriars first. The hoot of the horn at the gates brought Gosling out of his lodge. He glared in amazement at the driver of the car as he opened the gates. Gosling had had some curious experiences with the festive juniors of Greyfriars School, but he had never seen a crowded motor-car driven by a nigger minstrel before.

"My heyl!" gasped Gosling. "What is it?"

"Get out of the way, Gossy," said Harry Wharton. "I don't want to run over you—it might damage the car."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from within the big Daimler.

"Master Wharton!"

"Yes, as large as life," said Harry cheerfully. "Buzz aside, Gussy!"

"What I say is this 'ere—" began Gosling, but the car buzzed on, and what the school porter had to say was lost on the night air.

The hoot of the motor-car on the drive was a signal to a crowd of fellows in the house. Potter, and Greene, and the rest of the Fifth Form minstrel party, had reached Greyfriars by a train to Courtfield and a weary tramp from Courtfield Station. They had changed by this time, and they were tired, and hungry, and furious. At the sound of the motor-car on the drive they rushed out. All the fellows who had remained behind at Greyfriars crowded out, too, and Mr. Quelch, who had heard some of the excited ejaculations of Potter & Co., also came out. It sounded to the Remove-master as though war was in the air, and he thought his presence might be wanted.

The great lights of the Daimler gleamed on the drive, and the big car stopped in front of the house. There was a yell from the angry Fifth Formers.

"There they are! Who are you? Who's that driving?"

Harry Wharton jumped down.

"Wharton, of the Remove, please your noble lordships," he replied cheerfully.

"You rotter! And the others—"

"The Remove Minstrels."

"Then you've given the show?"

"What do you think?" said Wharton sweetly. And there was a yell of laughter from the minstrels tumbling out of the car.

"Where's Coker?" howled Potter.

"Here he is!"

"My hat!"

In the car Coker had been relieved of the gag, of course, but he had been jammed in among the Removites, so that he could not struggle. His remarks had been incessant, and discourteous all the way home, but they had only excited merriment. The Removites had scored so heavily that they could afford to let Coker slang them as much as he liked.

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Coker was a little breathless with his efforts in this direction, and he tumbled out of the car with the merry minstrels.

"Coker!" roared Greene. "So you're there! Didn't you stop the show?"

"Goo!" gasped Coker. "How could I? It was over when I got there, and when I ran on the stage they—"

We collared him, my noble duke," explained Bob Cherry, "and made him part of the show. We finished with an exhibition of bumping. We were the bumpers, and Coker was the bumped. The audience liked it. Did you like it, Coker? I forgot to ask you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'll smash you!" roared Coker. "I'll—I'll—"

"Stop that, Coker," said a quiet voice, and the hero of the Fifth simmered down as Mr. Quelch came into view in the lighted doorway of the School House. "Will you kindly explain what all this means, Wharton? I understood that Coker and the Fifth were giving this entertainment at Friarsdale."

"So did they, sir," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, sir," explained Wharton, "it was our idea to give that show, and the Fifth borrowed the wheeze, and booked up the hall, so that we couldn't have it. So we got them to go on a motor drive instead, and we gave the show."

"Oh! Were they willing to go on the motor drive?" asked Mr. Quelch, in amazement.

"Well, no, sir. I—I didn't ask them," said Wharton meekly. "I thought they'd very likely refuse, sir. You see, sir, they didn't know I was chauffeur, and I ran them out without telling them till afterwards. I thought it would save bother."

"And the result is, sir, that we've given a jolly good show, instead of letting Coker give a jolly bad one, sir," said Nugent. "The audience have had their money's worth, which they wouldn't have had otherwise, and everybody's satisfied, except Coker. I don't know whether Coker's satisfied."

Mr. Quelch could not help laughing. Horace Coker was snorting with rage, and certainly he did not look as if he were satisfied.

"Are you satisfied, Coker?" asked the Remove-master.

"I haven't anything to complain of, if you mean that, sir," said Coker. "It's all right. We've been done, but we're not complaining."

"Oh, yes, quite so; we don't want to complain," said Potter hastily. Exasperated as the Fifth were, they had no idea of bringing the masters into their private quarrels with the Remove.

"Bravo, Coker!" chorused the minstrels, all together.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, with a smile. "It seems to me that you have really nothing to complain of, Coker, as you seem to have started the contest in the first place. It is a very ridiculous affair, and I am glad the entertainment has not been spoiled. You boys had better get that absurd attire off at once."

And Mr. Quelch went on. Coker gave Harry Wharton a very grim look.

"I'll make you kids sit up for this, all the same," he said.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You're welcome to try," he replied cheerfully, "but I really think we have scored this time. You had better think twice before you try to bag our show another time, Coker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd from the Assembly Room were arriving now, and Blundell and most of the Fifth came in, in a wrathful spirit. But they found the Remove minstrels entrenched in their dormitory, and vengeance had to be postponed. The whole Remove was chortling over the victory, and the Fifth had no choice but to grin and bear it. There was only one relief for their exasperated feelings—they bumped Coker in his study for having led them into this with his brilliant ideas. Coker had several separate aches when the exasperated Fifth had done with him, and he remained alone in his study, rubbing his bruises with embrocation, and perhaps reflecting, like Napoleon at St. Helena, on the vicissitudes of human fortune. Coker had fallen from his high estate, and, as Bob Cherry remarked, he had come a cropper.

And long after lights-out that night, sounds of laughter could be heard from the Remove dormitory. The only fellows who did not laugh over the affair were the Fifth; the rest of Greyfriars chuckled without end over the exploit of the Greyfriars Minstrels.

THE END.

(Next week's grand, long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, by Frank Richards, is entitled "BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!") Also next week, another thrilling instalment or "THROUGH TRACKLESS TIBET!" by Sidney Drew. Order in advance. Price 1d.)

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(READ THIS FIRST.)

Wishing to explore the practically unknown land of Tibet, Ferrers Lord, millionaire, makes up a party, including Prince Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, to travel with him across Tibet to Kwal-Hai, the capital of Ching-Lung's province in China.

The party, conducted by an Afghan guide named Argal-Dinjat, have just crossed the Himalayas into The Forbidden Land, when they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his rufianly followers. These are, after a stern fight, beaten off, and the party, with the exception of Ferrers Lord, who acts as rear-guard, continue their journey. Water becomes scarce as they are crossing a barren track of land, and they almost give up hope. They manage to reach a mysterious well—the waters of which disappear suddenly—and save sufficient for their purpose. While they are lounging round the empty pit, a huge column of water, rising from the pit, drenches them as it falls. A few moments later Ferrers Lord rides up to the surface.

(Now read on from here.)

The First Village—A Warm Reception.

"Didn't you nearly die of thirst, Lord?" asked Thurston. "No; and I am not very thirsty now."

"How on earth did you manage? You were forty minutes behind us, and we were nearly corpses."

"That is the fault of sipping your water," answered Ferrers Lord. "It is a great mistake. One drink every four hours is enough. My flask is half full yet, and you each had plenty to last you out. In the future, if we have to cross any waterless tracks, I shall allow none of you to drink except at stated times."

Again the caravan began to move down the winding path. Sometimes they crept along the top of towering cliffs with a sheer abyss of a thousand feet yawning beneath them; sometimes they cantered down a gentle slope, carpeted with grass and flowers.

"We shall camp in two hours," said the millionaire, "rest until night, and then go on again. I hardly think that Storland Sahib will follow us now. There is a village about twenty miles ahead on the banks of the Sang-po. We ought to reach it without tiring ourselves."

"But will it be safe? Can we trust the people?"

"Oh, yes, we are too strong for them to try any treachery. As a rule, the people are quiet until roused by the priests, who desert foreigners."

"And the Grand Lama is the head of the priests, isn't he?"

"He is the head man of all, and his power is immense. He lives in Lhasa, the capital of the country. We may pay them a visit later on. Tibet is an odd country, and almost half its inhabitants are priests. And a fine pack of thieving, dirty rascals they are, too. The religion is a sort of Buddhism. They are too religious in Tibet."

"So I have heard. They go in for praying-wheels, don't they?"

"Praying-wheels, idols, sacred flags, garments that are supposed to keep the evil spirit from the wearer—anything the cunning Lamas, or the priests, can sell to the ignorant to make money. The peasantry, as a rule, have plenty to eat, and, like Gan-Waga, they like butter. They even take butter in their tea. But they are not an overclean race, and they are as superstitious as they are dirty. We shall stumble against some of them presently."

The words were hardly uttered when a bend in the road brought a second caravan into view. It was following a track at right angles to their own, and it consisted of twenty or thirty loaded yaks burdened with merchandise, and a large flock of goats driven by a dozen men.

"They are well-armed," said Ferrers Lord. "People need to be well-armed when Storland Sahib is near."

"I don't think they have seen us yet," cut in Ching-Lung. "But they have now, sir," said Prout, "and they don't like our looks."

There was a sudden commotion below. The caravan evidently thought that Storland Sahib's hill-pirates were upon them. Shouts sounded faintly, and whips cracked, and the yak broke into a lumbering trot.

"Headed down!" cried Ching-Lung. "They're going to pot at us!"

A puff of smoke broke from the muzzle of a rifle, and a bullet whizzed overhead.

Ching-Lung whipped out a handkerchief, and was about to gallop ahead when the millionaire's voice restrained him.

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"Let them go," he said. "There's no need to stop them, and they might shoot you."

"Oh, let's have a palaver with them! I ought to be able to talk their lingo, for it's a good deal like my own native language. And perhaps they've got some butter. Wouldn't Gan like a pound or two?"

"As you wish," said Ferrers Lord.

Ching-Lung waved the handkerchief and urged the horse on. He could travel much faster than the heavily-loaded yaks, and none of the men were mounted. They heard the solitary pursuer, and gained confidence. Then two of the men halted with rifles levelled. "They were a couple of yellow-faced, greasy-looking Mongols, dressed in dirty woollen surtouts and unclean turbans.

"Hail, brothers!" cried Ching-Lung. "May your shadow never grow less!"

"Hail!" came the answer.

The rifles were lowered as he reined in his pony. One of them saluted him gravely but mistrustfully.

"Why do you run from us?" asked Ching-Lung. "We are honest men."

"It is a wise merchant who rides fast," answered one of the Mongols. "We know you not. Whence come you?"

"From over the mountains. We would barter with you for food, and pay you in good money."

The two men muttered with their two ugly heads close together. They spoke a mixed dialect of Tartar and Chinese, which Ching-Lung found difficult to understand. Looks are not everything; but Ching-Lung thought them a pair of villainous cutthroats, and had never seen any men dirtier. One of them uttered a long penetrating shout, which ran along the hillsides.

"Hala-la! Hala!"

The yaks and goats were stopped.

"Keep back your people, and we will speak with you."

Ching-Lung waved his handkerchief, and Ferrers Lord said "Halt!" Then three more men came up, and looked at the prince curiously. They were, if anything, dirtier than their comrades. They examined Ching-Lung's rifle, revolver, and trappings with greedy eyes.

"I shouldn't like to meet any of you on a lonely road at night," thought Ching-Lung. "If your sweet face don't belie you, you'd knife a man for the sake of a bad sixpence, and rob a scarecrow of his boots!"

And he smiled sweetly and bowed low.

The headman, a flat-nosed, one-eyed scoundrel, grinned at the prince, who repeated his request.

"My brother may come and look in our packs," was the answer; "but he must leave his horse, for my yaks and goats are shy, and do not like horses. I am Khan Sharar, of Lhasa."

"A trap!" thought Ching-Lung, in a flash. "Now, what's their game? They can't do much under the very eyes of our lads, so I'll go."

He sprang down, and prodded the pony with his rifle. It trotted away to where the members of the expedition were watching the scene.

Khan Sharar's one eye surveyed Ching-Lung. That splendid rifle was worth many gold pieces, and there was a tempting jewel on the stranger's hand. Doubtless, the stranger's pockets were well-lined also. Oh, that his comrades were a score of miles away! He blinked his solitary eye meaningly, and Ching-Lung did not fail to see.

"Ye will pay like honest men?"

"Yes," said Ching-Lung.

He displayed an English sovereign temptingly. There is no coin like it. All the world over that little golden disc acts as a talisman. French, German, Russian money may be exchanged at a loss, but not the English sovereign. And Khan Shara's eye gleamed again, and his dirty fingers itched.

Ching-Lung walked beside him, and the others brought up the rear. One of them stumbled up against a stone—by accident, of course—and jostled the prince. A silk handkerchief and a hand full of silver left Ching-Lung's pocket on one side, and while the headman was cursing the offender for his clumsiness, Ching-Lung's revolver and gold were abstracted on the other side.

But Ching-Lung knew it. It was done with astonishing skill, for the Mongol is a worn genius at picking pockets. They had a Mongol to deal with, however, and one who could beat them easily at their own game. Ching-Lung chuckled below his breath.

They had to pass between two boulders in single file. The khan went in front. As he had been robbed so boldly, Ching-Lung thought it was no breach of honesty to turn the tables.

In a trice his quick hands were at work; the booty was recovered, and, in addition, a fat goatskin purse. The Mongol felt nothing and suspected nothing. Ching-Lung paused to adjust the strap of his legging, and that brought the man who had stolen his silver and silk handkerchief opposite him.

It was a tight fit for two, and Ching-Lung took the lighted cigar from his mouth. The burning end touched the fellow's hand. He yelled, jumped, swore, and began to suck his wound, glaring murderously at the prince.

"Clumsy fool," he roared. "What have you done?"

Ching-Lung apologised sweetly and penitently, his voice like honey. He declared that not for the wealth of the Great Lama would he have burnt one hair off his illustrious friend's head.

"Come," he said, "and let thy slave see the wound he has afflicted. Alas!"

The ruffian was somewhat mollified as Ching-Lung, his face full of sorrow and contrition, looked at the wound. And while he examined it and lamented, the little hypocrite's hand was emptying the robber's pockets.

Then, after much haggling, he purchased a supply of butter, a skin of fresh goat's milk, shook hands all round, and walked away grinning triumphantly.

"I guess I got my own back there," he muttered, "out of the blackguard thieves. I'll give the spoils to the first honest native I meet in Tibet."

Gan-Waga was in high fettle when he received his gift of butter. Ching-Lung only told the facts to Prout and Maddock. He did not exactly know what Ferrers Lord or Thurston would think of his methods; but the steersman and the bos'un grinned at each other for an hour afterwards, swearing it was the best joke they had ever heard.

"It's prime!" chuckled Prout. "Won't they kick themselves and 'owl when they find out?"

With late afternoon the air grew deliciously cool, and the millionaire decided to push on while the light lasted. The country was barren and bleak, and more than once they heard the howl of hungry wolves. They were nearing the river, with its reed-grown banks. The sun sank lower and lower, throwing long shadows.

"Hallo!" said that.

It was a dull scream that made the mules prick up their ears. Thurston had asked the question.

"A tiger," said the millionaire.

"I did not know there were tigers in Tibet. I thought the climate was too cold for them."

"My friend, there are tigers in Siberia," said Ching-Lung, "and I, mighty hunter that I am, have slain one of them. I suppose these are the same kind. They're not lordly giants like the Bengal tigers, but more like a puma or a cheetah, and about the nastiest, spitefullest beasts I've met, so far. The one I shot—"

A chorus of shrill, wolfish barks interrupted Ching-Lung. The chorus swelled higher and higher. Ponies and mules began to snort and tremble. Gan-Waga knew the sound.

"Wolves, Ching," he said, "and in full cry!"

"By Jove, then," cried Ching-Lung, "they're after the tiger! We must see the fun! Whip up! They're down in the reeds!"

The excitement was catching. The wolves were certainly in full cry, and they gave tongue like a pack of hounds close upon the heels of a flagging fox. Mingled with their yelping.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY, No. 209.

NEXT TUESDAY: "BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!"

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ONE PENNY.

came the maddened roars of the tiger. The moon was up although the twilight had not faded yet, and the snow-capped heights were bathed as in blood by the setting sun behind.

There was a wide strip of level ground between them and the reeds. The reeds were swaying and crashing. Nearer and nearer came the noise of the chase; for the hill-wolves, when hungry, will hunt even the lord of the jungle.

"Look! There the brute goes!"

A tawny shape sprang from the mass of reeds, and two eyes gleamed like coals. The tiger paused as if uncertain which way to go, and four of his assailants leapt upon him. Two of them he hurled back, gashed and mangled, kicking and foaming in agony. The third's white teeth closed upon its flank. He rolled over gripping the fourth in his great jaws, shaking it like a rat, and crushing its ribs.

Then, filling the air with their snarls, the whole pack burst from the thicket and surrounded him. He was at bay, all the odds against him, and he fought valiantly. In their excitement they had not seen the human onlookers. The tiger strewn the ground with dead and wounded.

"Bravo!" cried Ching-Lung. "Bravo again, tiger! Hang it! You're too plucky to be killed!"

The tiger was down, with a seething heap of shaggy wolves surrounding him. Ching-Lung's sense of fair play rebelled at the odds. Drawing his revolver, he whipped up his trembling pony, and bore down on the scene of battle. Bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang, bang! rang out six shots, as fire poured from the muzzle of the revolver. It was impossible to miss. The savage brutes abandoned their prey, and a hundred glowing eyes glared in fear and wonder at the fresh foe.

The pony spun round with a snort of terror. At once the wolves were round it.

"Charge!" shouted Ferrers Lord.

Hoofs clattered loudly, and revolvers barked. Right and left the wolves rolled over, and the rest turned tail and fled. Ching-Lung looked at the tiger, and sighed, as he slipped more cartridges into the revolver. The skin of its flanks was torn to ribbons. He put a bullet through its head.

"Ching," said the millionaire sternly, "I am not pleased with you. Don't you know it's a very foolhardy thing to do to ride into a pack of wolves?"

"Is it? I never thought."

"Then please try to think in future. If they had dragged the pony down you would have been dead to a certainty."

"Sorry, old chap," sighed Ching-Lung, "but I couldn't help it. It reminded me of a plucky fellow being attacked by a gang of roughs. I was bound to go to the rescue. Good old tiger! He knocked over at least a dozen of them, before he got knocked over the ropes. I'll have his tail for a keepsake. Cut it off, Gan!"

Gan-Waga secured the trophy, while Argal-Dinjat extracted the brute's eye-teeth as a charm against snake-bites. When they rode on they had left a noble feast behind them for the vultures. Travelling was easier now, and the Afghan hurried ahead to find the village.

He was waiting for them, perched on a boulder, in his favourite watchful attitude. Beside him, fastened to a pole, was a praying-wheel that revolved slowly in the wind. Every Tibetan village has one of these, worked by wind, water, or even a patient goat. It grated round and round, grating out prayers to Buddha for the protection of its people.

"Well, Argal!"

"The village is yonder, sahib!" said the Afghan.

"Good! We'll pay it visit!"

Another mile brought a collection of stone-built hovels into view. The windows were unglazed, and holes in the roofs sufficed for chimneys. Dogs began to bark, and at the summons the dirty streets suddenly swarmed with dirty men, women, and children, like rats pouring out of a flooded sewer.

Yelling and gesticulating, they gathered round the strangers.

"Pouf!" said Ching-Lung, holding his nose. "Squid de eau-de-Cologne over be, subbody! It does hub!"

The odour of the place was certainly not that of violets.

"I wonder which is the best hotel," Thurston remarked, with a smile.

"Keep your eyes open for a policeman."

"Might as well inquire for a soap factory and Turkish-baths, sir," suggested Maddock. "I don't think I'd

23.

By FRANK RICHARDS, Order Early.

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like to spend me holidays here, though the air is certainly bracing. You could cut it into chunks and build a wall with it."

"But aren't the people good-looking? And don't they do their hair nicely?" chuckled the prince. "Twig the lady in the blue gown—that stout lady. There's beauty for you! It would be a lovely face for a kite or a door-knocker. Oh, saucy! She's winking at Gan-Waga, I do believe! Make room, there!"

The crowd had packed the narrow street. Tibet does not want strangers. Voices began to jabber and mutter, and the ugly faces grew uglier still. Here and there a naked knife gleamed, as-if intended to try its keenness on a white man's ribs.

"See how they love us!" said Ching-Lung. "See how pleased they are! They'll put up a triumphal arch soon, present us with an address of welcome, and invite us to a banquet. I'm sure that stout fairy is mashed on Gan-Waga. See how she smileth!"

The old hag was showing her toothless gums fiendishly at Gan-Waga, whose pony was near her. Ferraers Lord raised his hands, and called clearly that they were friends, and wished to see the headman of the village.

"We need no white dogs here!" yelled the old crone. "Beyone, ye cursed infidels!"

"Spit on the dogs! Stone them! Down with the Christian devil!"

"Rifles, lads!" said Ferraers Lord. "We mean no mischief; but we'll show them that we'll stand no nonsense."

They unsling their rifles, and carried them in a business-like fashion, the butts resting on their right knees, and the muzzles pointing slantingly at the sky. The movement had its effect, for the noisy cries ceased.

"Send the headman!" said Ferraers Lord.

There was more shouting in the distance, and the crowd formed a lane. Prout guffawed, and the others grinned, as a kind of barrow, in which a great dignitary himself squatted, was wheeled down the street. Beside it ran a ragged body-guard of ten men.

"Oh, look at the pretty sodgers, mother!" squeaked Ching-Lung. "Why don't they play the music?"

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!" roared Gan-Waga. "Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter interrupted when the gentleman who was wheeling the barrow tripped, and the great man of the village shot out into a heap of garbage.

He bounded up, looking as if he had been dipped into a mixture of treacle and ink, scraped his eyes clean, spat the mud out of his mouth, and, seizing his sword, rushed madly at the luckless barrow-pusher. That gentleman adroitly dived under Ching-Lung's pony, and fled into the night. Life is unclear in Tibet; but he wanted to keep his little longer.

"Don't laugh, lads!" said Ferraers Lord warningly.

Gan-Waga, however, could not check himself, and the mad-dogged dignitary caught sight of his open mouth and his heaving shoulders. Bristling with fury, he yelled something so his rag-tag bodyguard—an order to arrest the cursed barrow-pusher.

"Kill them—kill them!" squeaked the old hag.

"She seized a handful of garbage, and flung it with fatal aim. It plastered Gan-Waga to the eyes, and a stone contained in the flint struck his forehead. Gan-Waga reeled from his pony to the ground."

"Kill them—kill them—kill them!"

The shrieking crowd surged forward, hurling stones, waving sticks, and brandishing knives. Rifles were levelled like a barrier of death, and they came no farther. A stone hit Ferraers Lord on the arm. His horse plunged into the mob, and then backed out, dragging with it the terrified ruffian who had hurled the missile, his neck firmly grasped by the millionaire's hand.

Ching-Lung Teaches Khan Barry O'Rooney Something about the Transmigration of Souls—The Soul of Hector of Troy—A Nasty Cooler.

Ferraers Lord usually carried his riding-whip thrust between his legging and right calf. He dragged it out, and it fell again and again across the shoulders of the Mongol. At each stinging stroke the man writhed in agony and shrieked for mercy. He writhed in vain, and screamed in vain. The millionaire was pitiless. His grasp was like iron, and he wielded the whip mercilessly, for it was necessary to teach him a lesson. At last his spurred boot shot out, and the Mongol went flying back into the arms of his comrades.

"Ride on!" cried Ferraers Lord.

The crowd melted before them. They drew rein before the most pretentious house in the village. Its windows, to show the wealth of the owner, were covered with oiled paper, and a bottomless zinc bucket formed quite a luxurious

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chimney. For a moment the men gazed at the door in astonishment, and then there was a burst of laughter.

For on the rickety door was painted a vivid green sham-rock, and below it was printed:

Barry O'Rooney,
Khan of this Rookery,
General Merchant,
And Ireland's His Country.

Below that something was written in Chinese characters, and a pig, made of paper, floated on a pole.

"Good old Ireland!" said Ferraers Lord, with a smile. "You know the old saying that when the North Pole was found there would be a Scotsman sitting on top of it. I think the same applies to Ireland. Wherever you go you'll find a Paddy, and I've never found a bad one yet."

"Hear, hear, sir!" cried Joe. "What a lovely pig! It reminds me of the one we had when I was a boy."

Joe came from the Emerald Isle himself, and he was proud of his country. Twenty years in England had made him lose his brogue, but he was an Irishman to the backbone.

The moment the little cavalcade halted the crowd collected again, and the turmoil recommenced. They satisfied themselves, however, by hurling insults, and not stones, at the foreign devils and infidels. Joe was just about to knock at Mr. O'Rooney's door, when that door was jerked inwards with astonishing violence, and Joe received a rap over the head that made him yell.

"Arrah!" yelled a voice. "Get home, wid yez, yez unwashed villains! Oh, St. Patrick!"

The owner of the voice and cudgel stopped and stared—a little, clean-shaven, pink-complexioned Irishman.

Joe grabbed the shillelagh, and gave Mr. O'Rooney something to make matters even.

"You murderin' rascal!" he thundered. "Here's something for yez, bedad! Och!"

Mr. O'Rooney luckily had a real Irish head, and he only winked, though most men would have gone to bed for a week, under the circumstances. Joe danced round waving the blackthorn, and inquiring if the gentleman wanted any more. Mr. O'Rooney grinned from ear to ear as if he had found a shilling in the pocket of an old waistcoat; and then, rushing forward with outstretched arms, hugged Joe to his heart.

"Faith," he bellowed, "yez are an Oirishman! I could tell it by the way yez finger the stick. Arrah! I cud squeeze yez to dith! Only an Oirishman cud paste me like that! Hurroo! Hurroo!"

"Get off wid yez!" chuckled Joe, appeared at once. "Can't yez see it's me nice clane collar yez are spoilin' it?"

St. Patrick, I cud eat yez!"

"Pass the gentleman a knife and fork, Ben!" chuckled Prout.

"As it's pork, he'd like some mustard. I reckon," put in Maddock. "Waiter, mustard for the gentleman!"

"Try a pickled onion with it, Mr. O'Rooney," suggested Ching-Lung.

Mr. O'Rooney was the most energetic person they had ever seen. He did everything at express speed. He released Joe, and jumping at each of the others in turn, wrung their hands until they squirmed.

"Fancy meetin' you!" he grinned. "Arrah, now, yez cud knock me down with a fever as it was hard and heavy enough. Bedad," he said, gazing at Gan-Waga, "has the gentleman been cleanin' the gutter up with his face?"

"Oh, no," answered Thurston, "one of those brutes throw something at him."

"Did they?" grunted Mr. O'Rooney, spitting on his right palm. "They did, did they? Have at yez, spalpeens! Whoosh!"

With an ear-splitting yell, Mr. O'Rooney hurled himself into the crowd. Down came his blackthorn on heads and shoulders.

"Erin go bragh! Avaunt, yez dithy scoundrels!" he howled. "Kennel, dogs!—(swoosh, swash!) Ould Oirland for ever, and more power to me elbow! Kennel, yer yellow-faced, soapless scallywags!—(swat!)—hurroo! Go home and get washed! They're—(swat!)—hanging—(swat!)—men and—(swat, swat!)—women—(swat!)—for the wearin' o' the green! Oi'll have the blood of all of yez! Kennel! Kennel!"

The members of Ferraers Lord's expedition had hard work to sit their ponies on account of their laughter as the terrible little Irishman slaughtered the enemy. Any luckless head that came within reach of his blackthorn must have regretted its folly for years afterwards. They scrambled through windows, climbed on to roofs, lay flat on the ground, or fled, shrieking for mercy from the warlike Khan.

In less than two minutes the foe had been put to flight, and O'Rooney tucked his cudgel under his arm, and returned, smiling and victorious.

"There's nothing loike a little gindle persuasion," he remarked, mopping his heated brow. "Yez see, Oi'm a kind of mayor and police force knocked into one, and, bedad, when Oi read the Book Act, Oi kape me hand in wid the black-thorn on their thick skulls! It's a lovely weapon, that same. Arrah, would yez insult me?"

A plump cockerel that had been dozing, perched on the bottomless bucket which did duty for a chimneypot, interrupted Mr. O'Rooney with a loud:

"Cock-a-doodle-do-co-co!"

Mr. O'Rooney turned an angry gaze upon it, and shouted:

"Come down!"

Then his blackthorn whizzed from his hand, and the cockerel, as dead as a stone, obeyed him.

"He'll do nicely roasted," went on the khan, ignoring the applause and cries of "good shot," "and there's plenty more of his relations. As the gentlemen will honour the humble cabin, the rest'll find an elegant shed and lots of clean straw at the back, wid every comfort for man and baste. Moight Oi ax, sir, av yez wear yez locks down loike that?"

This inquiry, addressed to Ching-Lung, evoked some laughter.

"Always, occasionally, usually, once or twice, now and then," said Ching-Lung.

"Oi shud think a fringe would become yez more," said O'Rooney thoughtfully. "Do yez ever part it in the middle?"

Mr. O'Rooney winked to himself, and Ching-Lung endeavoured, mentally, to sum their new acquaintance up. He dismounted, and followed Ferrers Lord and Thurston into the khan's mansion.

It was not exactly a palace, but it was comfortable and scrupulously clean. The walls were limewashed and covered with pictures taken from old illustrated papers. One whole end of the room was taken up by an enormous fireplace, and a pile of logs burned brightly on the hearth. From the ceiling hung plump brown hams and sides of bacon. Altogether, the place was cheery and snug.

"Av Oi'd knowed what the row was about," said Mr. O'Rooney, "Oi'd 've come before, but I was milking the Oirish cow at the time. There she is."

"A whisky-still—eh?" said Ferrers Lord, smiling.

"No other," grinned O'Rooney.

A copper vessel, to which strangely-twisted pipes were attached, was heating over the fire. This was the "Oirish cow" to which the khan alluded, and O'Rooney speedily produced a keg of the "milk," and a number of thick glasses. The stuff was raw, and very strong in flavour. Ching-Lung asked for water after one sip.

"Wather, is it? Sartinly," said the khan. "Oi'll soon get that."

He seized the bucket, tied a rope to the handle, and removed a stone in the floor and disclosed a deep well. They gathered round the fire. Ferrers Lord explained his plans, and then O'Rooney told his story.

He had come to Tibet six years ago as manservant to the head of the Roman Catholic mission at Lhasa. After that he had commenced business as a merchant, trading in wool and tea, and learned the language. Then he began to manufacture "milk."

"And, bedad," grinned Mr. O'Rooney, "they liked it so well, and bought it so quick, that Oi soon began to put the bits away in me stockin'! And here Oi am now, Khan of Akhmar, and chief magistrate."

"Then who was the fellow we saw to-day in the wheelbarrow?"

"Oh, he's only the dirty captain of the dirtiest, raggedest army in the world!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Faith, it's a lovely army, that same! They haven't got a whole shirt to their backs, and av yez went for 'em wid a meat-skewer, they'd never stop running for a month. But, gentlemen, Oi'm afraid I'll take yez all yez time to get to Lhasa. This is a treacherous, evil country, and they hate strangers. Yez are playing a dangerous game. They'd knife me to-morrow, only Oi'm in favour wid the sounderly prastes. Arrah! Be careful—be careful! It's a wicked place entirely!"

Mr. O'Rooney paused to baste the fowls that were roasting before the fire.

They spluttered gallantly, and began to fill the room with an aroma that was appetising, delicious to keen appetites.

Ching-Lung went out to see how the men were faring. Two or three lurking figures fled into the darkness as he opened the door.

He found a huge fire blazing in the open space behind the house, and more fowls cooking before it.

The cattle were snugly stabled, and the hospitable Irishman had presented Prout with a keg of whisky for distribution.

Several villagers were watching the unusual scene over the rough wall.

"Well, Tom," asked Ching-Lung, "how are you getting on?"

"Finely, sir," answered Prout. "There's a rattling shed to sleep in—barring the rats, which just swarm."

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NEXT TUESDAY: "BOLSOVER MINOR'S LAST SACRIFICE!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

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"Oh, they won't hurt you! Where's Gan?"

"Rubbin' down your pony, sir," answered Prout.

"Tell him to come into the house when he's finished. I don't suppose I shall see you again to-night. You must put someone on guard as usual when you're asleep. Be very careful, for it would be a terrible thing to lose our rifles."

"I'll take care, sir," said Prout.

"Good-night, lads,"

"Good-night, sir."

Ching-Lung re-entered the house, and asked O'Rooney if Gan-Waga might share the meal with them. The good-natured Irishman consented, and Gan-Waga appeared, loaded with blankets.

The table was small, very small, and it was given up to Thurston and Ferrers Lord, while O'Rooney, Ching-Lung, and Gan-Waga contented themselves with the floor.

They turned the stone slab covering the well into a table, and on this O'Rooney placed two of the fowls, black bread, whisky, tin plates, and knives and forks.

"Look here," whispered Ching-Lung, "you mustn't mind Gan-Waga's manners. He's only an ignorant Eskimo, you know, and he's horribly greedy. If he gets hold of one of these fowls, it's all up."

"Oi'll watch it!" said Barry O'Rooney, with a knowing wink. "Oh, Oi'll watch it!"

"Then carve away, old chap."

O'Rooney whetted his knife, and dug it into the fowl.

"Bit o' breast?" he inquired.

"Please," said Ching-Lung.

The Irishman laid down the knife to turn the dish round. With the quickness of lightning, Ching-Lung replaced the knife with another with an edge on it like that of a wooden sword.

O'Rooney attempted to make a swift cut; the knife bent double so suddenly that Mr. O'Rooney, who was kneeling, overbalanced, and buried his face in the gravy.

"Good gracious!" gasped Ching-Lung. "What has happened?"

O'Rooney sat down, wiped his face, and gazed first at the knife and then at his guest in utter bewilderment. Then he picked up the bird, and examined it critically.

"I believe that birrd has been atin' tin-tacks!" he muttered. "Arrah, did yez ever see the loike ov that?"

"All the shots that were fired at the battle of Waterloo," hummed Ching-Lung. "couldn't penetrate or dislocate that iron-chested, double-breasted, leather-jointed, copper-pointed cock-a-doodle-do-o-o!" I say, Mr. O'Rooney, that chap isn't a very young one. Let me look at that knife! Here, try another! No; let me have a try!"

He seized the dish.

Splash!

The rooster flew as if it had regained its wings the moment the knife touched it, and as it flew it uttered an unearthly croak.

It smote Gan-Waga on the nose, leaving a trade mark of gravy behind it, swooped round, dashed into O'Rooney's face, fled between Thurston and Ferrers Lord, and, with another croak of triumph, vanished up the chimney.

The momentary hush was broken by an exultant crow which came apparently from the roof.

"Cock-a-doodle-do-o!"

"Murder!" panted O'Rooney. "Oh, murder—murder!"

Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga got up, their knees trembling together with terror, but the Irishman remained on the floor, his eyeballs rolling, his hands pressed to his temples.

"Oh!" he moaned. "Oi thought it was all tommy-rot, but—but, bejabers, it's all true!"

"W-what's true?" stammered Ching-Lung.

"W-what those Buddhist prastes tache—the transfiguration of souls! They say when yez doie, yez goes into some baste! Bejabers, there was a sow in that rooster! Didn't yez hear him squeak? Oi'll never touch a fowl again! Didn't yez hear him yell, 'Don't stick that knife inter me sow!'"

"Y-yes! I—I heard something. Listen!"

Ching-Lung held up a trembling hand.

Thurston and Ching-Lung struggled with themselves to keep grave.

"What is it? Oh, murder—murder!"

O'Rooney staggered back against the wall as a sepulchral voice bellowed down the chimney:

"You villain, you've spoiled me soul! You've cut a hole in it! I'll haunt you for ever!"

(Another splendid instalment of this grand new serial will appear next week in "The Magnet" Library. Order your copy in advance.)

Beyond the Eternal Ice!

The Concluding Chapters of
an Amazing Adventure Story.

BY

SIDNEY DREW.

Ching-Lung's Punishment—The Fight with the Dwarfs.

"Take his Highness below!" said Ferrers Lord.

Ching-Lung giggled.

"Please, yer washup, won't yer let me off wiv a fine?"

"When you apologise," said the millionaire, smiling. "If not I'll keep you locked up until the fight is over. Prout, pass the word that his Highness is not to be saluted for three days!"

All the men grinned, but Ching-Lung's grin was broader than any of them.

"I was only joking," he said. "I didn't intend to go."

"Your grog is stopp'd for a week," said the millionaire, "and you will have your meals in the forecabin. Take off his iron!"

Ching-Lung began to feel that he was getting the worst of it. Although Ferrers Lord looked amused, he was quite in earnest. Joe hugged himself, and Prout and Maddock giggled, as the millionaire turned away to hide a smile.

"Is there no justice?" cried Ching-Lung tragically. "Oh, pip! Gan, this is a weary world!"

Prout did not waste time. He obtained a piece of cardboard, and hung it above the standing orders. It stated in big red letters:

SPECIAL NOTICE.

HIS HIGHNESS CHING-LUNG

Must NOT be Saluted.

Insubordination and Mutiny must be put down.

BY ORDER.

Ching-Lung wrote "See over" at the bottom, and got to work on the other side with a piece of charcoal. He made a splendid caricature of Tom Prout being chased by a fierce-looking female, armed with a rolling-pin. He scrawled below it:—What is home without a mother-in-law?"

A lunch before dawn the men trooped below for a hasty meal. A double allowance of grog was served, and there was great laughter when Ching-Lung joined them in disgrace. Maddock presided at the rum-keg, and politely told Ching-Lung the way to the water-tank. Of course, had he wished it, Ching-Lung could have ignored the statement, and gone to the state-room; but the thought never entered his head. The men were delighted to have him there. Ferrers Lord had amused Van Witter, Thurston, and Sir Clement with the story, and they chuckled as they heard the peals of laughter that rose from the forecabin.

"I guess he'll soon tire of hard tack and no grog, and come back," said the Yankee. "Of course, you were joking, Lord."

"Not a bit. I was amused. But I'm certain we shall not see him until the week is over."

"He's a queer youngster," said the baronet. "I can't make head or tail of him."

"Well, there's tail enough, anyhow!" laughed Thurston, rising. "Gentlemen, I have to break the news to you. In an hour or so I expect we shall be helping our honoured host—King Vathmoor—to drive back the invading dwarfs. Our leader—Mr. Ferrers Lord—has decided to turn our gallant little boat southward ho! almost at once. We have won, and there is nothing else to do. I have been asked to do a pleasant thing to-night. Mr. Van Witter is more to us than a guest and an umpire in the race. He is a true friend, a brave man, and a gallant American. No, hang it all, the two nations are brothers! A gallant British gentleman! Good health to him!"

Their hands met across the table, and then the glasses were drained. Both Rupert and the millionaire respected and liked the genial American. Van Witter was as brave as a lion, and he always made the best of everything. Sir Clement Morwith, however, had been with them too short a time for them to get to know him properly.

Van Witter stood up.

"I'm not going to yarn long," he drawled. "All I've got to say is, give me your hands, and shake. If I live tea

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Read the grand new story of the "THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled:

thousand years I'll never forget the time I've spent with you. You're all true grit and real gold. Shake!"

Again hand met hand across the table. Ferrers Lord lighted a cigar lazily.

"I suppose you must go back home, Van Witter!"

"Bound to," said the Yankee. "I've got two or three big businesses that want looking after."

"That's a pity for we would have liked your company. I am going to give the Lord of the Deep a holiday, and myself a change of air. The idea is Ching-Lung's, and I know Thurston will join us. It is curious when one looks at the map of the world how little we know about that world. I have travelled perhaps more than any living man, but I do not travel, like most people, to write a book about what I've seen. Our intention is to explore the Forbidden Land."

"What!" cried Van Witter. "Are you going to explore Tibet?"

"Yes; Tibet, the Forbidden Land, the land of mystery. That is what I have decided to do."

Van Witter sighed. He longed to join them, but he could not neglect his business.

"It will be a risky job, I guess," he drawled. "It's a country that has always fascinated me. Don't I wish I could trek along with you. But I can't! If you'd put it off for twelve months I'd do it."

"We shall go as soon as possible, and I intend to take my time and explore it thoroughly. I suppose it is useless to invite you, Sir Clement?"

"Quite!" answered the baronet, with a slight shiver.

He had not yet shaken off the dreadful horror of the voyage in the Cloud King.

Well, went on the millionaire, "we must make the best of it. Our party will consist of about ten men. It was my wish to send Gan-Waga back to Alaska, but Ching-Lung would not hear of it. All the men are eager to go, so they must draw lots."

"Except Prout and Maddock," put in Rupert.

"Except Prout and Maddock. They will have to go certainly. His Highness wants the carpenter also. That will be seven. We have to choose three more."

They discussed the expedition, its risks and prospects, for some time. All felt that the scheme was a hazardous one. Tibet is a forbidden land, a land of giant mountains, of strange peoples.

The four suns rose over the peaks, making the electric light look yellow and dim.

Bang!

It was the report of a revolver from the deck. They sprang up at the signal, and the men poured out of the forecabin. All wore rubber gloves and boots with rubber soles, for, with the dynamo working, the whole ship was charged with electricity.

The day had come swiftly as it always came at Shazana. A soft breeze curled the blue surface of the sea. There was a sweet scent of flowers and spice trees in the air. Two flocks of galleys, each three hundred strong, were flying in opposite directions.

Behind the wire fence on the yellow beach stood a thousand picked warriors with their bows slung. Long trenches had been dug, and each man had two or three spare bow-strings wound round their waists. The sun flashed like silver on helmets and armour alike, and the banners of Shazana fluttered in the breeze.

"There they come!"

Eager eyes were strained seaward. A mighty flotilla of canoes was sweeping towards the island. From a thousand throats rang the cry:

"Lotari! Lotari!" (The dwarfs! The dwarfs!)

Ferrers Lord raised his glass, and pointed it at the fleet of canoes. Most of them held six or seven of the little yellow fiends. The spear and bow seemed to be the favourite weapon. But many of them carried a more deadly weapon still—a long, smooth tube, which discharged horrible little poisoned darts.

"Helmets and oilskins!" said the millionaire.

Joe and the sailmaker had been busy most of the night making helmets for the men. The stout oilskins were tough enough to turn the darts.

Ferrers Lord had forbidden the use of rifles, unless they were absolutely needed in self-defence, in warding off an attack. Prout longed to fling a shell into the midst of the oncoming canoes. The gun in the vessel's prow had not been uncovered. The millionaire did not want bloodshed. He was relying on his first plan to utterly demoralise the dwarfs.

On came the canoes, packed with fearless cave-imps.

"This looks creation!" said Van Witter excitedly. "It's what we call a double-barrelled, gilt-edged knock-out on our side of the herring-gordon. By your leave, Thurston!"

The Yankee had rigged up his camera in readiness for the

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Any, and the next moment the mechanism was clicking away, making "living" pictures of the scene. The dwarfs were shrieking their wild battle cries, which the Shazanites answered with their own: "Vathmoor! Vathmoor!"

"There they go! What price the Battle of Trafalgar?" shouted Ching-Lung.

Two fleets of canoes separated from the main flotilla to attack the galleys. The paddles flashed, arrows were fitted to the strings, bows were bent. The galleys sped to meet the canoes. Showers of arrows went hissing through the air. Men fell on both sides, the galleys and canoes were mingled in wild confusion. Spear clashed against spear, and axe against axe. Canoes were overturned, and sank; sweeps were hacked through, and dwarfs and Shazanites were at each other's throats.

"Vathmoor! Vathmoor!"

"And how do you laugh?" Ching-Lung could see him on deck of the largest and swiftest galley. It had outdistanced the others, and was soon surrounded by canoes. The dwarfs had gained a footing. Towering like a giant above friend and foe, his armour gleaming like silver, his great two-edged sword slashing right and left, the gallant king piled the yellow bodies round him.

A dozen times Ching-Lung thought the end had come. The king was beaten to the knees, but he was up again swiftly. And then two others swept to the rescue, and Ching-Lung turned to watch the general attack.

"Hot work, sir," said Prout. "I—"

"Get out of the way!" roared Van Witter. "You've got your great ugly head right in front of the lens!"

Prout jumped back with a grin and an apology. Then with a rattle the steel torpedo-nets were drawn over the deck, forming a screen both arrow proof and spear proof.

"It's like being in a cage," grinned Ching-Lung. "If we gave Gan a perch and a little canary seed, he'd sing like a dicky-bird. Here they come, the plucky little demons! Get ready and let 'em have it!"

"All hands below!" said Ferrers Lord.

They looked at each other in blank dismay, and then scuttled into the wheelhouse. Van Witter bundled up his camera. A hundred canoes were close to the vessel, and then deadly darts came showering through the meshes of the nets. Ferrers Lord closed the door, and the water roared into the tanks. The bright daylight faded into a glassy green, and the Lord of the Deep came to rest with four fathoms of water above her.

"You're a beauty, old chap!" growled Ching-Lung. "I thought we were going to see all the fun."

"And so you are," answered the millionaire, smiling. "In staying above we are merely prolonging the battle. Now that we have descended, the canoes that would have otherwise attacked us will join in the attack on the shore. Be patient, and you will see everything."

"Then we are going up again?"

"A short distance only. Wait for two minutes. Stand round in a circle."

As he touched a lever, the boat began to rise. The millionaire placed a white sheet on the floor. The boat rose higher still.

"Look!"

"A camera-obscure!" cried Thurston. "What a spanking idea!"

A picture had formed on the sheet—the bright sea, the line of wires, the shore, with its warriors, the canoes of the invaders.

"Vathmoor wins!" said the millionaire. "The canoes are retreating. He must have sunk a hundred of them."

"And the other galleys are getting the best of it, too," put in the Yankee.

They gazed enthusiastically at the stirring scene of warfare.

"How did you manage it, old chap?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Easy enough. The lens is just outside the water, and it reflects the picture on a mirror in a hollow funnel. The mirror throws the pictures on the sheet. Now to see how our work."

The canoes were close to the barricade, and clouds of arrows from Vathmoor's warriors failed to check their advance. Ferrers stretched out his hand in the darkness, charging the wires heavily with electricity.

"Look!"

The canoes dashed towards the flimsy wires. Eager hands were stretched out to tear them down, and spears were brandished to hack them through. And then a deafening cheer broke from the warriors as they saw theimps dashed back by some invisible force. Canoes were overturned, and the water was black with the heads of swimmers. Again they tried to rush the barrier; again they were flung back, stunned and terrified by that awful, terrible something which seemed to wither them like a flame.

Again and still again, for they were full of pluck. Of course, the dwarfs could not hear the terrible cries. Hundreds of empty canoes floated about in the surf, and Vathmoor's warriors poured in a ceaseless storm of arrows into them. Then a shout was raised:

"Witchcraft! Witchcraft!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 209.

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

They turned and paddled for their lives. A great panic had seized them. The attacks on the galleys had failed, and the galleys were driving the canoes seaward. Ferrers Lord set the pumps going; the picture vanished, and again the bright sun poured in. A slash of an axe cut the Lord of the Deep free of the wires, and she joined in the pursuit.

"Why not give them a few volleys of rockets?" suggested Ching-Lung.

"A good idea!" drawled Ferrers Lord, as he lighted a cigar.

The men entered into the fun of the thing delightedly. As there was not enough apparatus for all, they rigged up batteries of bottles, breaking the rocket-stick off short, and commenced the bombardment.

Sometimes as many as fifty of the fiery things went-hissing over the water at the same moment, bursting with dull roar, and scattering sparks, stars, and smoke about the ears of the terrified dwarfs. Ching-Lung's battery twisted off half a dozen champagne bottles tied to a rail, and, aided by the faithful Gan-Waga, he did terrible execution. In his joy Gan-Waga howled and danced like a maniac. The rest was complete.

"Keep the pot boiling, Gan," chuckled the prince, "and I'll show you a better game than that."

Leaving the Eskimo to work the battery, he rushed away. He returned with two pieces of rubber almost as thick as his wrists, each being about four feet long. Then he produced a small carpet bag, and a heap of Chinese crackers.

A couple of sticks kept the bag open. He fastened the pieces of indiarubber to the rail, and then the handles of the bag. Several of the men abandoned their rocket-firing to see what was going to do. Ching-Lung twisted the fast of the enormous crackers together in bundles of twenty, and placed them in the bag. It held about a hundred. Then he lighted them.

"Look out!" he shouted.

The fuses spluttered and hissed. The vessel was barely twenty yards behind the flying canoes. Ching-Lung dragged back the bag until the rubber was stretched to its furthest limit; and then, judging both time and distance to a nicety, let go.

It was a glorious catapult, and the shower of fizzing crackers banged and squibbed like a battery of twelve-pounders.

The galleys took up the chase, and Ferrers Lord turned the vessel about, and slowed down. Vathmoor's stately galley came alongside, and Ching-Lung started a lusty cheer as Vathmoor himself, his armour hacked and dented and smeared with blood, sprang aboard.

He clasped hands with the millionaire.

"To-day and always we are brothers, chief of the strangers," he said. "The victory is ours, but the fight was hot for a time. After the fight let us rest until the feast is prepared. All Shazana shall honour thee, for thou hast saved us."

"Yes, we are brothers, Vathmoor," said the millionaire, smiling, "and we will feast with you to-night."

Farewells—Marooned and Abandoned—On the Way to Trackless Tibet—Conclusion.

The dreary journey back to the tunnel was safely accomplished by the Lord of the Deep. Yalleroo, the boy, was set ashore in the cavern of fire to return to his people, who watched the vessel sullenly from their rocky terraces. And at last the welcome sunlight flashed out, and they turned to gaze at the eternal ice that guards the mystic Pole.

It was southward, but now as swiftly as the vessel could cut through the water. Van Witter looked sorrowful at the thought of parting with his friends. It was arranged to run down to the North Sea, and put him and Sir Clement Morwith on board the first vessel they met bound for an English port.

A vessel was sighted and signalled. She turned out to be his Majesty's ship Centurion, and she was making for Sheerness. The signals went up:

"Lord of the Deep, from North Pole. Want to speak to you."

There was a burst of laughter as the battleship signalled back:

"Tell North Pole yarn to the marines. Can't swallow it."

"It's a bit too tall for them," laughed Ching-Lung. "Tell them we've got both empires on board to prove it. That will make them change their tune."

The vessels approached each other. Prout's signal had a magical effect. They could see the sailors rushing about the Centurion's deck. Then came cheer after cheer from lusty British throats, and lusty British hands clapped the big ship with bunting. And above the cheers came the strain of the band playing "Rule, Britannia!"

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! Bravo, bravo!"
The little submarine and the leviathan were side by side. It was a scene of wild enthusiasm. Ferrers Lord mounted the ladder. The officers crowded round him; the bluejackets swarmed down like cats to thump the backs of the crew of the Lord of the Deep. Another vessel was sighted, and signalled the news. The whole world knew it before nightfall. Then came the parting between the friends.

"Good-bye, Van, old chap!"
"Good-bye, Ching! Good-bye, Thurston! Good-bye, Lord! Mind you don't go into consumption, Gan-Waga! Rah-rah-rah-rah!"

The distance between the vessels increased, amid cheering and waving of caps. The figures of Van Witter and the baronet grew smaller and smaller. At the submarine's truck the flags of Britain and America fluttered side by side. Then the vessel sank, and raced away for the South.

"So that is the place!" said Ching-Lung. "It looks like a paradise!"
The boat floated in a blue sunlight bay, with a shore of coral sand. It was a charming island, infringed with palms, and rich in every gift of nature.

"I should not mind living there myself," put in Thurston. "Just look at those shoals of fish, too, simply asking to be caught! And oysters, too! Are they real pearl oysters?"

"Luckily they are not," answered the millionaire, "or the pearl-fishers have been here long ago. All the same, this is a pleasant place. A few natives used to live here, but I shipped them away. There are plenty of wild pigs and goats, fish of every kind, wild fruit, plantain and other bread fruit. A man need do little work here to live well, and the climate is magnificent."

"Any snakes?"
"No harmful ones."
"Well, it's just a paradise!" said Rupert. "Get your gun, Ching, and we'll find some of those pigs."

They had a pleasant afternoon, and good sport. The crew were given a holiday, and indulged in a football match on the beach. As Gan-Waga knew nothing about the game, except where it had been roughly explained, he was made referee, and the chief aim of the players was to kick the ball at him, hustle him, and fall on him at every possible opportunity.

Gan-Waga emerged from the fray in rags, but very pleased with himself. He was a very useful referee to have, for they purposely kicked the ball into the water every five minutes, and then made him fetch it out.

The stars came out at last, and they returned to the ship, laughing and shouting like schoolboys. They were up with the dawn and ashore again for parade. They looked smart and business-like in the neat uniforms, and Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung felt a thrill of pride as they slowly walked down each rank.

"Attention!"
The sullen prisoners were brought forward, still in irons. "Prisoners," said the millionaire, "instead of hanging you or delivering you over to justice, I am going to maroon you here. You may succeed in escaping, but you will be arrested in any civilised country. I will leave you tools, seeds, and guns. To live you must do some honest work. Three years from to-day I shall return, and see what you have done. If you behave yourselves, I may liberate you. Strike off their irons. Right about turn! March!"

Not a man looked back. The prisoners stood beside the pile of stores cursing madly. The submarine churned out of the bay, sank, and was gone.

Six weeks later, Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, and Thurston stood on the deck of an outward bound P. and O. steamer, laughing and chatting. Gan-Waga squatted beside them.

"Then you've settled about the million you've won, old chap?" asked Thurston.

"Yes," answered the millionaire. "What do you think I've done with it?"

"Given it away, I'll bet."
"You're right, Ching. I have divided it equally between British and American charities. Well, lads, there goes the last glimpse of old England. We managed to get across the eternal ice, and now we're going to cross the Himalayas into trackless Tibet."

"And we'll get there!" grinned Ching-Lung.
THE END.

READ

"WINGS OF GOLD!" by Sidney Drew, in

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My Readers' Column



For Next Week.

Next Tuesday's long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars is one of the most powerful tales that Frank Richards has ever penned, and I can confidently bid my readers look forward to a special treat.

"Bolsover Minor's Last Sacrifice"

is the title of this splendid story, and I would urge all Magnetites to make sure of getting next Tuesday's MAGNET Library at the earliest possible moment by

ORDERING IN ADVANCE.

Two Readers' Letters—A Contrast.

Below is a pleasant letter from one of my London readers, which expresses in simple terms the enjoyment which two weekly school-story papers bring him:

"Hackney Road, London, N.E.

"Dear Sir,—I have been a constant subscriber to THE MAGNET and 'The Gem' for about a year and a half, and I think to myself that I was a fool not to have got them before. I think they are about the best school-tale books out."

"Although I have been forbidden from reading the penny 'blood-and-thunders,' I have not been debarred from my 'Gem' and MAGNET. Directly THE MAGNET comes out on Tuesday morning and 'The Gem' on Thursday morning I get them, and thoroughly enjoy the good, honest fun which I read about. There are eight children in our family, and five of them read 'The Gem' and THE MAGNET after I have done with them."

"I like to read about the rivalry between Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co., and Wally's 'cheek,' and Monty Lowther's jokes and puns. Gussy and Tom Merry are my favourites in 'The Gem' and Mark Linley and Bob Cherry in THE MAGNET. I must now conclude, wishing luck to the dear old 'Gem' and MAGNET.—Yours truly, S. W. G."

Many thanks, S. W. G. Your parents or guardians are evidently commonsense people who have not the slightest difficulty in discriminating between the wholesome reading provided in "The Gem" and THE MAGNET Libraries and the pernicious literature of the American "blood-and-thunder" type, which is, unfortunately, so prevalent.

In contrast to the above letter, the following note from a reader is of a kind which I happily seldom receive, now that "The Gem" and MAGNET Libraries have almost beaten down the natural prejudice against them which was caused by the low-class literature hitherto published for the benefit (?) of boys and girls alike:

"Middlebrough.

"Dear Sir,—I am an ardent reader of both 'The Gem' and THE MAGNET. However, every time my mother catches me reading them she threatens to throw them in the fire if I do not give up reading 'Deadwood Dick,' as she calls them. I like your books too much to give up reading them, so would you advise me what to do?—I remain, yours truly,

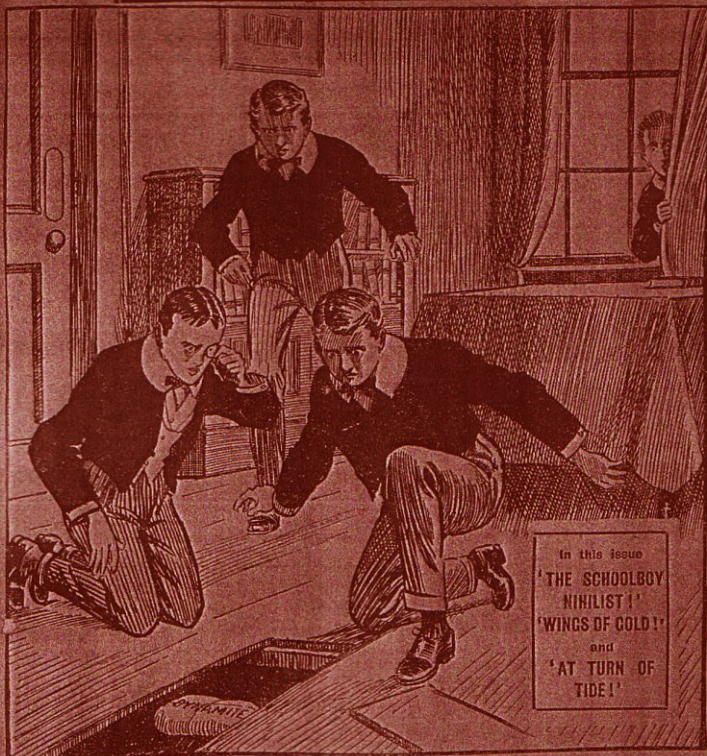
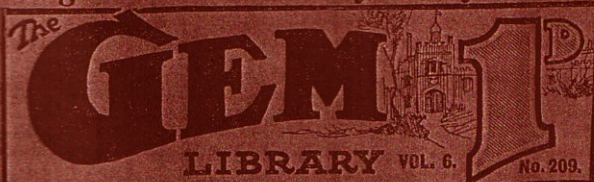
"AN ARDENT READER."

The best advice I can give you, my dear reader, is the same advice as I have given in similar cases to yours—advice which has almost invariably proved successful. Ask your mother to read a copy of THE MAGNET or "The Gem" carefully through for herself, and see if she does not then revise her opinion of them, and confess that they are not, after all, of the "Deadwood Dick" type. In almost all cases where my papers have been condemned in this way I have found that it has been due to ignorance of their real contents—which is, to say the least of it, unfair. If your mother declines to be convinced, or refuses to comply with your request to read the papers herself, then let me impress upon you, my dear "Ardent Reader," that there is only one course open to you. You must give up reading your favourite papers, since obedience to your parent is a consideration which should come before all others. THE EDITOR.

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