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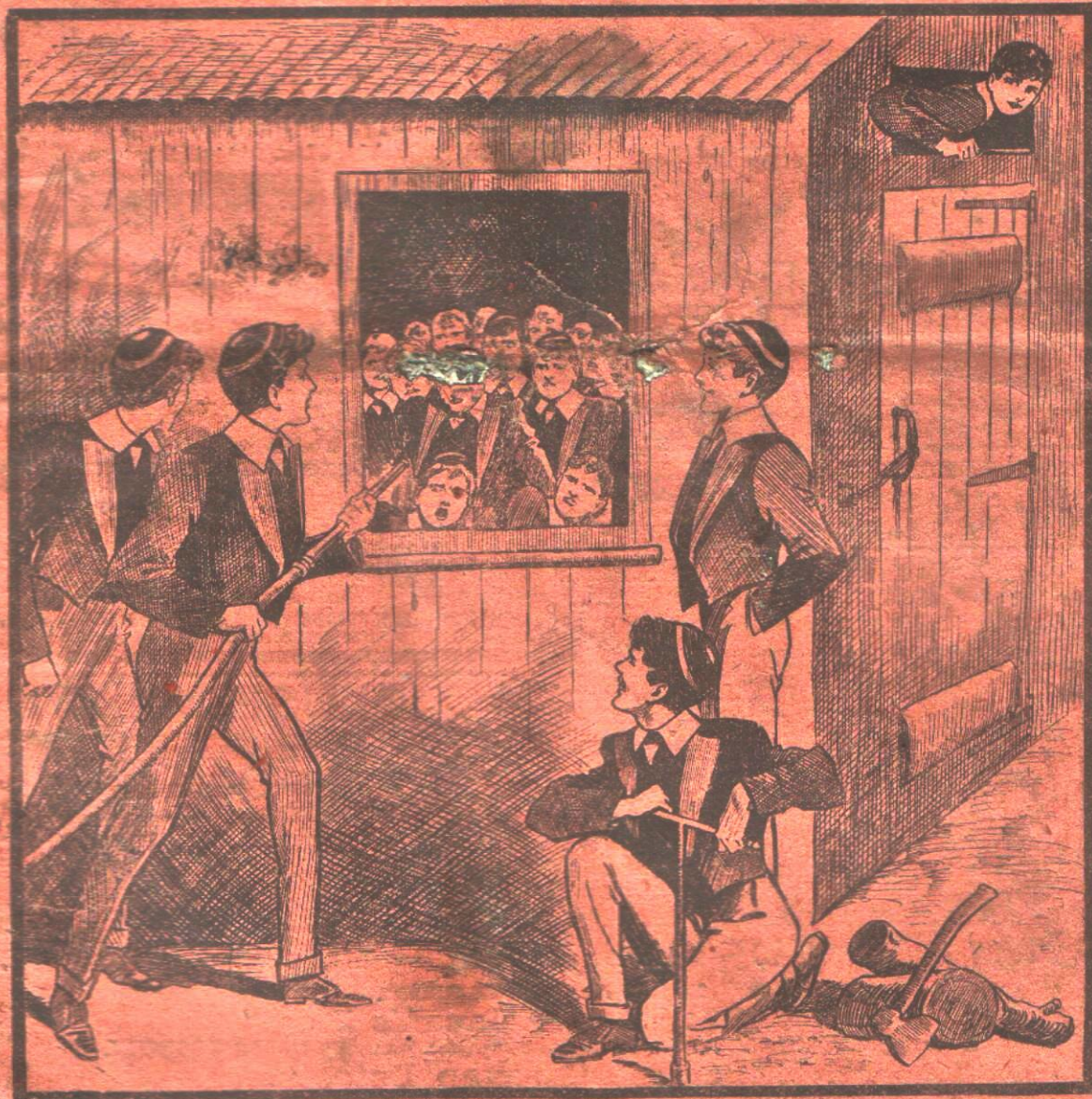
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- - BY - -
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Most Mysterious Meeting.

"THREE!" said Bob Cherry.

"Eh?"

"Four!"

"What?"

"Five!"

Bob Cherry's companions looked at him as if wondering whether he had suddenly, and without warning, gone off his "rocker." There were a group of juniors belonging to the Remove Form at Greyfriars chatting by the window at the end of the Form-room passage. Bob Cherry was seated in the open window, with his long legs dangling inside, and

from where he sat he had a view of one corner of the School House outside.

The Removites had been talking cricket, and Bob Cherry had been looking out into the Close, when he suddenly burst into counting.

"Gone dotty?" asked Frank Nugent, staring at him.

"Six!"

"You fathead!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in amazement. "Is this an idiotic joke, or are you off your silly rocker?"

"Seven!"

"You utter ass——"

"Eight!"

"You giddy chump!" roared Johnny Bull. "What are you jabbering about?"

"Nine!"

The juniors glared at Bob Cherry in utter exasperation. They had been discussing a most important topic—from a Remove point of view—the coming Form match with the Upper Fourth Form. The rivalry between the Remove and the Fourth was very keen, and Harry Wharton & Co. were very much exercised in their minds about the composition of the eleven to meet the Fourth Form on the cricket-field.

To have such an extremely important discussion interrupted in this way was exasperating, and the chums of the Remove were exasperated.

"Shut up, you silly ass!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ten!"

"Are you going to choose it?" shrieked Nugent.

"Eleven!"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Bump some sense into him!"

"Good egg!"

"Twelve!" Bob Cherry was beginning, but he suddenly broke off as the exasperated juniors collared him and dragged him bodily out of the window-seat. "Oh! Owl! Leggo! Chuck it! Yaroo!"

Bump!

Bob Cherry descended upon the floor with a heavy thud, and he roared again.

"Yaroo!"

Bump!

"Yo! Oh! Chuck it! You asses, I'll explain—Oooop!"

Bob Cherry scrambled to his feet and gasped for breath, looking very dusty and ruffled. The Removites glared at him wrathfully, greatly inclined to begin again. But Bob Cherry held up his hands in sign of peace.

"It's all right, you asses!" he gasped. "You couldn't see what I could see. Look out into the Close, and don't play the giddy goat."

"What on earth—"

"There's something on, you fathead! Look and see!"

The amazed juniors looked out of the window and scanned the distant corner of the School House, at which Bob Cherry had been looking when he began to count. Temple, the captain of the Fourth, was sauntering towards the corner, with his hands in his pockets, and an air of exaggerated carelessness about him which seemed to indicate that he was bound upon some secret mission. He reached the corner of the house, stepped round it, and disappeared, and did not come back.

A few moments later Fry of the Fourth came out of the School House, strolled down to the corner with a self-conscious manner, passed the corner, and disappeared. And he did not come back.

And as the Removites looked on in growing surprise, Dabney of the Fourth followed in the same direction, and also disappeared round the corner.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment. "What are they up to?"

Bob Cherry dusted himself and grunted.

"I was counting 'em," he growled. "Before you idiots started on me I had counted twelve of the Fourth. They all went sneaking along to that corner, and buzzed round it and never came back."

"And we've just seen three more," said Johnny Bull.

"And there goes another, by George!"

Scott of the Fourth strolled along to the house, and as he reached the corner made a sudden dart and disappeared, plainly anxious to avoid observation.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Nugent punningly.

The juniors grinned.

"But what on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in perplexity. "What are all the Fourth Form sneaking away like that for one at a time?"

"It's a secret meeting, of course," said Bob Cherry. "I don't know how many went before I looked out of the window, but we've seen nearly half the Form go. Temple, Dabney & Co. are holding a Form meeting."

"Then why don't they hold it in the Form-room?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Because it's a giddy secret meeting, and it means that they're on the warpath. It's something up against the Remove."

"By Jove!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "We've downed the Upper Fourth pretty well lately, and I know they have been laying all sorts of schemes to put us in our place, as Temple calls it. As a matter of fact, our place is at the top, if the Fourth only knew it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There goes Phipps of the Fourth!"

Another Fourth-Former strolled down to the corner of the house and vanished.

Some of the fellows had gone with great caution visible in THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 220.

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their manner, and some of them with assumed carelessness, but it was pretty easy to see that all of them had been anxious to escape being noticed as they went.

There was evidently something "on" in the Fourth—something that was being kept extremely secret and mysterious.

"This is where we come in!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The cricket can stand over for a bit. If Temple, Dabney & Co. are plotting plots, the sooner we get on the scene the better."

Harry Wharton nodded.

The juniors watched from the window for some minutes longer, but no more of the Fourth Form appeared in sight, and it was pretty clear that the meeting, wherever it was, was now complete.

"One of us had better go scouting, and see what's on," Bob Cherry suggested.

"Good! I'll go!"

"Ahem!" said Nugent. "Perhaps I had better go as I'm the best scout—"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "I don't see that there's any question about who had better go. Leave it to me."

"I was going to suggest myself," remarked Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "You see, in a matter like this you want a really sensible chap—"

"Look here, Bull—"

"Look here, ass—"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Let's all go," he said. "The Fourth won't see us if they're holding a meeting, and we shall soon spot what they're up to."

"Good egg!"

"Come on, then!"

And the Famous Four strolled out of the School House. They walked quietly down to the corner of the House as the Fourth-Formers had done, and looked round. There was no one in sight. A stone passage-way led into the regions behind the house, the coach-house and stables, and the woodshed belonging to Gosling, the porter, and further to the left was the old chapel garden. Not a single Fourth-Former was to be seen.

"They must be in the woodshed," murmured Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove stole forward on tiptoe. The woodshed stood in a secluded corner, and the door was closed. It had but one window, and from that window came a sound of buzzing voices as the juniors drew near. The somewhat drawing tones of Temple, the captain of the Fourth, could be heard.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth—"

"Hear, hear!"

The chums of the Remove chuckled silently.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth, I have called this important meeting—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Not too much row," said the voice of Fry. "We don't want the Remove to get on to the wheeze after all the trouble we've taken."

And the four Removites, standing under the window of the woodshed, chuckled again.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not Quite Secret.

TEMPLE, the captain of the Fourth, was standing upon a barrel in the woodshed. The barrel was his rostrum, and Temple had struck the attitude of an orator. Round him were crowded the Fourth-Formers, nearly the whole of the Form being there.

The Fourth Form looked very excited and very pleased with themselves. A secret meeting appealed to their imaginations. The word had been passed in the Form-room during afternoon lessons that a secret meeting was to be held in the woodshed, and that the fellows were to make their way to the rendezvous singly, without exciting attention from anybody, especially from the Remove.

And they had carried out their instructions so carefully that the Remove had spotted the scheme without the slightest difficulty.

But the Fourth-Formers did not know that their meeting had been discovered. Temple had no suspicion of it. He stood upon the barrel in quite an elegant attitude, with his hand raised over the crowd to emphasise his remarks.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"You are aware that there is a fags' Form at this school called the Remove—otherwise known as the Lower Fourth—"

Groans for the Remove interrupted the speaker.



Harry Wharton & Co. walked up to the man on the stile, and took off their caps. The ruffian stared at them in blank amazement, as well he might. He was not accustomed to being saluted so respectfully by half a dozen well-dressed fellows. "Whatcher gittin' at?" he asked savagely. (See Chapter 8.)

"You are aware," continued Temple, when the groaning had subsided—"you all know that the Lower Fourth used to be kept strictly in its place. There was a change when a kid named Harry Wharton came to Greyfriars. Since then the Remove has—"

"Used no other!" said Phipps, who was a humorous youth. But humour—at least, of Phipps's variety—was not wanted at this important meeting. Temple frowned, and the Co., seeing their great leader frown, frowned also.

"If Phipps is going to be funny—" began Temple heatedly.

"Shut up, Phipps!" roared the juniors.

"Order!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Oh, all right!" said the unfortunate Phipps. "I only made a remark—"

"Well, don't make any more."

"Shut up!"

"Order!"

"If Phipps is done being funny," said Temple, with heavy sarcasm, "I will continue."

"Pile in, old son!"

"On the ball!"

"Since Harry Wharton came into the Remove, the kids have got their backs up more and more, till they've fairly got—"

"The hump!" suggested Phipps.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple glared. Phipps's little joke might be funny, but THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 220.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

Temple was the great man at this meeting, and he was prepared to provide all the humour required.

"If Phipps interrupts again with his idiotic jokes, chuck him out, Dab!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"The Remove have got their backs up more and more, till they've fairly got out of hand," went on Temple. "Not only have they had the cheek to challenge us to cricket matches, but they cheek us in every way—and in some matters it's no good denying that they've had the best of it."

"Hem!"

"Ahem!"

"But this was really because we never really took the trouble to come down heavy on them," said Temple loftily. "They were beneath our notice—in fact, they were a set of impertinent small boys whom we could not afford to notice, with a proper consideration for our personal dignity."

"Hear, hear!"

"But this attitude of what I may term Olympian calm—"

"Hear, hear!" roared the Fourth.

Temple was, to them, a greater orator than Demosthenes. "Olympian calm" was splendid.

"Olympian calm!" repeated Temple. "This attitude of Olympian calm has been misunderstood by those wretched fags. They have actually had the cheek to imagine that we couldn't lick them, and to fancy that they could lick us! They've had a row with the Fifth, and beaten the Fifth, and they think they can walk over us! Now, my view is that the Fourth Form is fed up with Remove cheek!"

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

"E... hear!"

"I have called this meeting to suggest a plan for downing them, and putting them in their place once and for all."

"Hurray!"

"Gentlemen of the Fourth Form, I trust you all agree with me—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I say—" began Phipps.

"Order!"

"But I tell you—"

"Chuck him out!"

"Look here, you asses, I tell you—"

"Chuck him out!" roared a score of voices

"Bat—but—Ow—ow—ow—"

Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped the unfortunate junior, without giving him a chance to explain. He was whirled towards the door, struggling.

"Open the door!" roared Fry.

Dabney dragged at the door. But it did not open. Greatly surprised, Dabney dragged at it again. But the door did not budge.

"Open the door!" roared Temple.

"I—I can't!"

"Ass! Why can't you?"

"It's stuck, somehow!"

"Oh, let me try!" said Scott.

He pushed Dabney aside, and yanked at the door. But the door remained fast, much to Scott's astonishment. Certainly it was not fastened on the inside, but it refused to budge.

"I say," gasped Phipps—"I say, you know—"

"Shut up! Open the door!"

"It won't come open!"

"It's fastened, somehow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh came from outside the woodshed. Then the Fourth-Formers understood.

"The Remove!" gasped Dabney.

"They've fastened us in!"

"My hat!"

"That's what I was going to say!" gasped Phipps, making his voice heard at last in the dismayed silence that fell upon the Fourth-Formers. "I was going to say I heard somebody at the door fastening it!"

"You ass! Why didn't you say so before?" howled Fry.

"Did you give me a chance?" yelled Phipps indignantly.

"Oh, shut up! Look here, you chaps! Those Remove cads have got on to the meeting, and they've fastened us in!"

"There's the window!" said Phipps.

Some of the Fourth-Formers ran to the window. But as they did so, the face of Harry Wharton appeared there, looking in upon them with a cheerful grin.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Very Wet.

HARRY WHARTON raised his cricket-cap in cheerful salute.

The faces of Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull looked in over his shoulders. They were all grinning.

"You rotters!" roared Temple. "You've fastened the door!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Exactly!" he assented. "While you've been jabbering, we've fastened the door. There's about a dozen yards of wire on the handle, fastening it to a staple outside, and I think you could pull on the door for weeks without shifting it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotters! We'll snatch you bald-headed when we get at you!" yelled Fry.

"Oh, rather!"

"You haven't got at us yet," said Wharton serenely, "and I don't think you'll find it very easy. You could only get out of this window one at a time."

The Fourth-Formers realised the truth of that statement, and they raged. They were at the mercy of the Removites.

"You have had the enormous cheek to get your backs up against the Remove," Harry Wharton continued, severely. "Now, we can't have anything of that sort! We have to hustle a little to keep the Fifth in their place; but we can't waste time over such small fry as the Fourth!"

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry, with a serious shake of the head.

"Quite impossible!" said Nugent.

The Fourth-Formers roared.

"Yah! Rotters! Yah!"

"Now, we're going to bring you to your giddy knees, to begin with," said Wharton blandly. "You have got to go down on your knees and say 'Please let us off!'"

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Temple laughed angrily.

"Yes; we're likely to do that!" he said. "You can't keep us in here long! We'll burst the giddy walls out—and anyway, you'll have to let us out in time for calling-over!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Hand me the nozzle, Bob."

"Here you are."

The end of a garden-hose, with a dripping nozzle, appeared in the window. The Fourth gazed at it in surprise and dismay. They recognised Gosling's garden-hose, but they had not dreamed of seeing it in the hands of the Removites.

"Gentlemen," said Harry Wharton politely, "you see that it requires only the slightest movement of my thumb to swamp you—"

"You daren't!" shrieked Temple.

"My dear fellow, there is nothing the Remove dare not do!" said Wharton placidly. "This is where you climb down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "This is where you climb down hand over fist, and sharp, or where you get jolly wet!"

"You daren't!"

"Rotters!"

"Yah!"

But the Fourth-Formers knew that the Removites dared well enough, and some of them were already looking round wildly for cover. They had met together there to plot the downfall of the Remove, and they seemed to have brought about their own downfall, and nothing more. Phipps wildly proposed charging through the window, and Temple called him an ass. It was hardly possible to charge through the window one at a time with four Removites standing outside and the garden-hose ready for use.

Some of the Fourth-Formers scrambled among the faggots and the gardening implements that were kept in the woodshed in the hope of escaping the rush of the water when it came, but for the greater part of them there was no cover. They would have to face the stream from the garden-hose unless they could make terms with the enemy.

Temple was crimson with rage, and all the more enraged because his followers were evidently looking to him to do something, and he could think of nothing to do. The Fourth Form were fairly trapped.

Phipps muttered something in Fry's ear, and Fry nodded eagerly, and Phipps sidled away to the rear of the crowd. At the end of the woodshed, where the door was, Phipps had remembered that there was a small, square opening under the eaves for ventilation, and it had occurred to him that he might squeeze through. Phipps was long and thin, and he had heard that wherever the head could go the body could follow. He clambered on the faggots, hidden from the sight of the Removites outside the window at the end of the shed, and tried the ventilator. To his satisfaction his head went through quite easily, and he rapidly pushed his shoulders after it, and squeezed out. The ventilator was a good ten feet from the ground, and if Phipps had fallen out head-first probably the history of Phipps would have been concluded on the spot. But he was active and wiry, and he hung on with his legs till he obtained a grip with his hand outside, and then wiggled his legs out and hung with both hands, and dropped nimbly.

Phipps had not been occupied two minutes, and in the meantime Fry had whispered to Temple, who drew nearer to the window where Harry Wharton stood with the hose, to gain time by parleying with the enemy.

The Famous Four, outside the window, grinned at the cornered Fourth-Formers, quite unaware of what Phipps was doing behind the stack of faggots.

"This is where you sing small, you know," Johnny Bull

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remarked. "We can't have the Fourth-Form meeting in odd corners to plot plots against our noble selves."

"Can't be did!" said Nugent.

Wharton made a movement with the hose, and allowed a thin stream of water to escape, which smote upon the roof of the woodshed inside, and fell in spray upon the Fourth-Formers. There was a yell from Temple, Dabney & Co.

"Stop it!" shrieked Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! I'm wet!"

"I shouldn't wonder!" assented Wharton. "Now, are you coming to terms? You've all got to go down on your knees and ask pardon like good little boys for your misdeeds, or else you are going to get a wash."

"You rotter!" yelled Fry.

"Yes or no?" demanded Wharton.

"We'll smash you for this!"

"Yes or no—sharp's the word."

"Now, look here—" said Temple, to gain time. He drew closer to the window, ready to make a desperate spring through to back up Phipps when that heroic youth attacked the enemy single-handed in the rear.

"No time for talk!" said Harry Wharton crisply. "We've got to get to cricket practice. Now, are you coming to terms?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Look out!"

Phipps had come tearing round the corner of the woodshed.

Phipps hurled himself upon Harry Wharton and dragged him away from the window. There was a burst of water from the hose, and it caught Bob Cherry under the chin, and he staggered back with a wild, spluttering roar.

"Yaroooooooooooooh!"

"Help!" yelled Phipps.

He rolled over on the ground with Wharton, struggling fiercely. Nugent rushed to pick up the hose. As he did so, Temple came bundling headlong through the window, and fell upon him, and grasped him. Johnny Bull sprang to the window to stop the outward rush of the Fourth, and Dabney fell upon him and clasped him round the neck, and they rolled to the ground together.

One after another the Fourth-Formers came scrambling and rolling through the window, bumping on the ground outside recklessly.

"Collar them!"

"Collar the cads!"

"Hurrah!"

The tables were turned now with a vengeance. The hose lay harmless upon the ground, while the four Removites struggled desperately and in vain with the heroes of the Fourth. They had no chance at all, for every moment a new foe came bundling out of the window, and Fry rushed round to the door and unfastened it, and the Fourth came rushing out in a crowd. Harry Wharton & Co. were seized in the grasp of innumerable hands and held helpless prisoners.

"Got 'em!" roared Phipps.

"Hurrah!"

"What price the Remove now?" shrieked Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're done!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Let us go, you bounders!"

"Not till you go on your knees and beg pardon!" yelled Temple, catching up the hose. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fourth.

"Now, then, you Remove kids—"

"Rats! Go and eat coke!" howled Bob Cherry.

"Then we'll wash you! Stand clear, you fellows!"

The Fourth-Formers released the Removites and stood back. The Famous Four made a desperate rush for safety, but the nozzle of the hose was turned upon them, and Temple played the stream of water upon them like a fireman turning the hose upon a burning building.

"Whizzzzz! Splash! Whizzzzz!"

"Oh! Ow!"

"Groo!"

"Yarooooop!"

The four Removites, almost swept off their feet as the powerful stream of water played upon them, staggered and reeled under it. The Fourth-Formers yelled with laughter.

Drenched and dripping, the victims escaped at last, running at top speed, followed by the merciless stream of water until they turned the corner of the building. Behind them the Fourth-Formers were yelling like hyenas.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Little Hasty.

"GROO!"

"Oh! Ow!"

"Yow! This is horrid! I'm wet!"

"Oh! Yow! Hang it! Hang them! Hang every body! Yow!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 229.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

Four drenched and soaking juniors halted at last, with water running down their faces and down their clothes, and squelching in their boots. The Famous Four looked as if they had just emerged from the river. They were still dazed and bewildered with the force of the water as it dashed upon them. Faintly from the distance came to their ears the howls of laughter from the victorious Fourth.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, knocking the water out of his eyes. "This is fearful! We haven't scored this time!"

Bob Cherry gasped for breath.

"No, this isn't what you'd call a giddy victory!" he said. "My word! How those Fourth-Form rotters will howl over this!"

"And we're getting an audience!" groaned Johnny Bull.

The juniors could hardly have expected otherwise. As they came round the School House fellows sighted them from all quarters, and came hurrying up to see what had happened. The sight of the drenched and dripping juniors evoked howls of laughter on all sides.

"I say, you fellows," ejaculated Billy Bunter, "have you been taking a bath with your clothes on? He, he, he!"

"Oh, buzz off, and shut up!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

"I guess they've been looking for trouble, and found it," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

"Been out in the rain?" asked Coker of the Fifth blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Does that water feel wet, you kids?" asked Hobson of the Shell.

And the gathering crowd roared.

"Oh, come on," said Wharton, crimson and exasperated. "Let's get in and get a change, for goodness' sake!"

They rushed into the house, leaving the crowd yelling. They were the leaders of the Remove, but the Removites were as uproarious in their mirth as the rest. Temple, Dabney & Co. came strolling round from the woodshed, and when they explained what had happened the roars of laughter were louder than ever. It was a victory for the Fourth, and they rejoiced in it.

The four unfortunate victims hurried into the house, and as luck would have it met Mr. Quelch, their Form-master, in the hall before they could escape upstairs. Mr. Quelch stared at them in amazement, and signed to them to stop. They halted unwillingly, the water squelching out of their boots and forming pools round them as they stood.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the astounded Form-master. "What has happened? Has there been a sudden shower of rain, Wharton?"

"N-no, sir. I—I haven't noticed one!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Have you fallen into the river?"

"N-no—no, sir."

"Then what has happened? You are quite wet."

"Well, yes, sir, we—we do feel a little damp," murmured Bob Cherry.

The Remove-master frowned.

"How did you get into that state?" he exclaimed.

"It was the—the garden-hose, sir," stammered Wharton.

"You have been playing with the garden-hose?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then you deserve what has happened to you," said Mr. Quelch. "You should not have done so. Go and change your clothes immediately, or you will catch cold; and take fifty lines each for interfering with the hose."

"Ye-es, sir."

And the four Removites crawled upstairs, leaving a trail of water behind them as they went.

They reached the Remove dormitory, and dragged off their soaking clothes, and rubbed themselves down briskly with towels. They were not left uninterrupted as they did so. The dormitory door was thrown open, and a crowd of fellows appeared in the passage to watch them. The whole of the Lower School seemed to have gathered to enjoy the joke. Fellows had come off the cricket-field to enjoy the sight.

"Buzz off, you silly asses!" roared Bob Cherry, in response to a friendly inquiry as to whether he felt damp. "Get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you'd better take your umbrellas next time you go for the Fourth!" cackled Billy Bunter.

And the crowd in the dormitory passage yelled again.

"Buzz off!" shouted Wharton in exasperation.

"Oh, really, Wharton—ow!"

A wet sponge, deftly hurled by Bob Cherry, caught Billy Bunter under the chin, and squelched there, and the fat junior staggered back yelling.

"Ow! Beast! Ow! Groo!"

"Is it damp?" inquired Bob Cherry blandly. "You'd

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Order Early.

better bring an umbrella next time you come to be funny with us, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ow! Groo!"

The drenched juniors rubbed themselves dry, and changed their clothes, under a constant fire of remarks and laughter from the passage. When they were finished at last, they pushed their way through the laughing crowd with crimson faces, and went downstairs. They met Temple, Dabney & Co. in the lower hall.

"Hallo," said Temple affably. "Wet weather we've been having lately, haven't we?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

The Famous Four marched on with flushed faces. Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, was in the doorway, and he grinned at them, and Ogilvy burst into a yell.

"Feeling wet?"

"Oh, rats!"

"These chaps are the giddy leaders of the Form," said Bolsover. "Time the Remove had a new leader, I should say."

"You can try your hand if you like!" growled Harry Wharton. "The Remove can go and eat coke! And so can you!"

Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, met the chums in the Close. He smiled at them in his affable way.

"Begad, I hear you've been getting wet!" he remarked.

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"But begad, you know—oh!"

The Famous Four seized Lord Mauleverer, and marched on, leaving him sitting on the ground, with his silk-hat under him, and his necktie hanging over his shoulder, and looking quite dazed.

Somewhat relieved, they walked on towards the cricket-ground.

"Ow! Begad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

Hazeldene, of the Remove, came running towards the chums as he sighted them. They walked on grimly, quite ready for Hazeldene if he began chipping.

"I say," called out Hazeldene. "Hold on a minute."

"Oh, travel off!" growled Johnny Bull.

"But I've got something to say to you chaps," said Hazeldene, coming up breathless. "If it isn't wet to-morrow—"

Hazeldene got no further. The word wet was quite enough for the chums of the Remove. They whirled round upon Hazeldene, and collared him, and bumped him on the ground before he knew what was happening.

"Yaroorh!" roared Hazeldene. "Yow! What are you up to? Leggo! Oh, are you off your silly rockers? Yarooroop!"

Bump! bump!

"Oh! Yah! Ow!"

"There!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Now perhaps you won't be so funny!"

Hazeldene sat on the ground in a dishevelled state, and glared at them.

"You—your dangerous asses!" he gasped. "Are you potty? Blessed if I give you Marjorie's message now! Ow!"

Wharton started.

"Marjorie's message!" he exclaimed.

"Ow! Yes, you ass! Yow!"

"But—but I didn't catch on," said Wharton. "Have you been over to Cliff House?"

"Yow! Yes! Ow!"

"I—I'm sorry," said Harry. "I—I thought you were chipping us like the other silly asses—I mean, like the silly asses—about being drenched by the Fourth!"

"Ow!" groaned Hazeldene. "You chump! Marjorie says that if it isn't wet weather to-morrow, it will be all right about the picnic. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I mean, I'm sorry!" gasped Bob Cherry, dragging Hazeldene to his feet. "It was a little mistake. It's all right."

"Is it all right?" howled Hazeldene. "I'm hurt! Ow!"

"Sorry, really—ha, ha!—really sorry!"

"Ow! You silly fatheads!"

And Hazeldene, not to be comforted, limped away to the School House in high dudgeon. The chums of the Remove had certainly been a little hasty.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Plotting a Plot.

TEMPLE came into his study in the Fourth Form passage an hour or two later, and laid a bulky parcel upon the table. Dabney was making toast at the fire, and Fry was making tea. Dabney turned a warm face from the fire.

"Got the grub?" he asked.

"Yes, here it is. Where's Phipps?"

"Here's Phipps!" said the owner of that name, coming into the study.

"Good!" said Temple affably. "We want you to have tea."

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with us, Phippy, old man. You played up splendidly to-day."

Phipps blushed modestly.

"Well, I'm jolly glad we downed the Remove," he remarked.

Temple chuckled.

"We've downed them to-day, and we're going to down them again to-morrow," he remarked. "One of you fellows out off and fetch in Hughes."

"What on earth do you want Hughes for?" asked Fry in astonishment.

"He's going to help us."

"What's the good of Hughes? He's an ass!"

"I know he is," said Temple, with a nod.

"Then what do you want him for?"

"Because his Christian name begins with an M."

Dabney, Fry, and Phipps looked at Temple, and edged a little away from him. Fry, as it were, carelessly slid the carving-knife on the table out of the reach of Temple's hand. Temple's reply was so singular that the Fourth-Formers were really justified in their fear that he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"Buzz off and fetch him!" said Temple briskly.

"But why?" faltered Fry.

"Haven't I told you? His Christian name begins with an M."

"But—but any other reason?" stammered Dabney.

"Yes; his surname begins with an H."

"My hat, it's a hopeless case!" said Fry. "Look here, Temple, old man, I've seen signs of this before, but I never liked to remark on it. Is there insanity in your family?"

"No," said Temple cheerfully. "There's a lot in my study, but none in my family."

"Look here—"

"Buzz off and fetch Hughes, and don't jaw!"

"But—but I say—"

"Who's captain of this Form, and leader of this study?" demanded Temple severely. "Do as I tell you."

"Oh, all right!" said Fry weakly. "I'll fetch Hughes. You fellows keep an eye on Temple, and mind he doesn't jump out of window, or anything!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Fry departed from the study, and the other fellows went on preparing tea. Fry returned in a few minutes with Hughes, who seemed as surprised as Fry. Tea in Temple's study was always a luxurious meal, for Temple had plenty of money, and it was an honour that was appreciated by the Fourth-Formers, and Hughes was a fellow who was not supposed to be of much account in the Form, anyway. Temple greeted him most affably.

"Jolly glad you could come, Hughes," he said. "Make yourself at home, old man. We want you to help us in japing the Remove to-morrow."

"I'm on," said Hughes. "I don't see what I can do, but I'm willing."

"Good! It's really owing to your parents having christened you Maurice, you know," Temple explained.

Hughes jumped.

"Owing to—to what?" he ejaculated.

"Didn't I speak plainly?"

"Ye-es! Yes. But—but I don't understand."

"I don't expect you to! But that's how it is, all the same. Hand over the toast, Dab! Jolly lucky that your name is Maurice, old man," said Temple reflectively.

Hughes cast an expressive look at the other fellows in the study which said, as plainly as looks could say, "Is he often taken like this?" But the toast was good, and the tarts looked tempting, and Hughes sat down at the table with considerable satisfaction.

"I don't see what my front name's got to do with it," he remarked. "But I'm on, whatever it is. Three lumps for me, Fry!"

"Here you are!"

"You see," said Temple, after ascertaining that the door was shut, "while you fellows have been wasting time, I've been doing some thinking. The Remove bouncers are going to a picnic to-morrow. Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn are going to picnic with them at the old priory in the wood—I've got it all out of Hazeldene, of the Remove."

Fry whistled.

"I don't see that we can raid the picnic," he said doubtfully. "It would be rather thick; going for them when there are girls in the party."

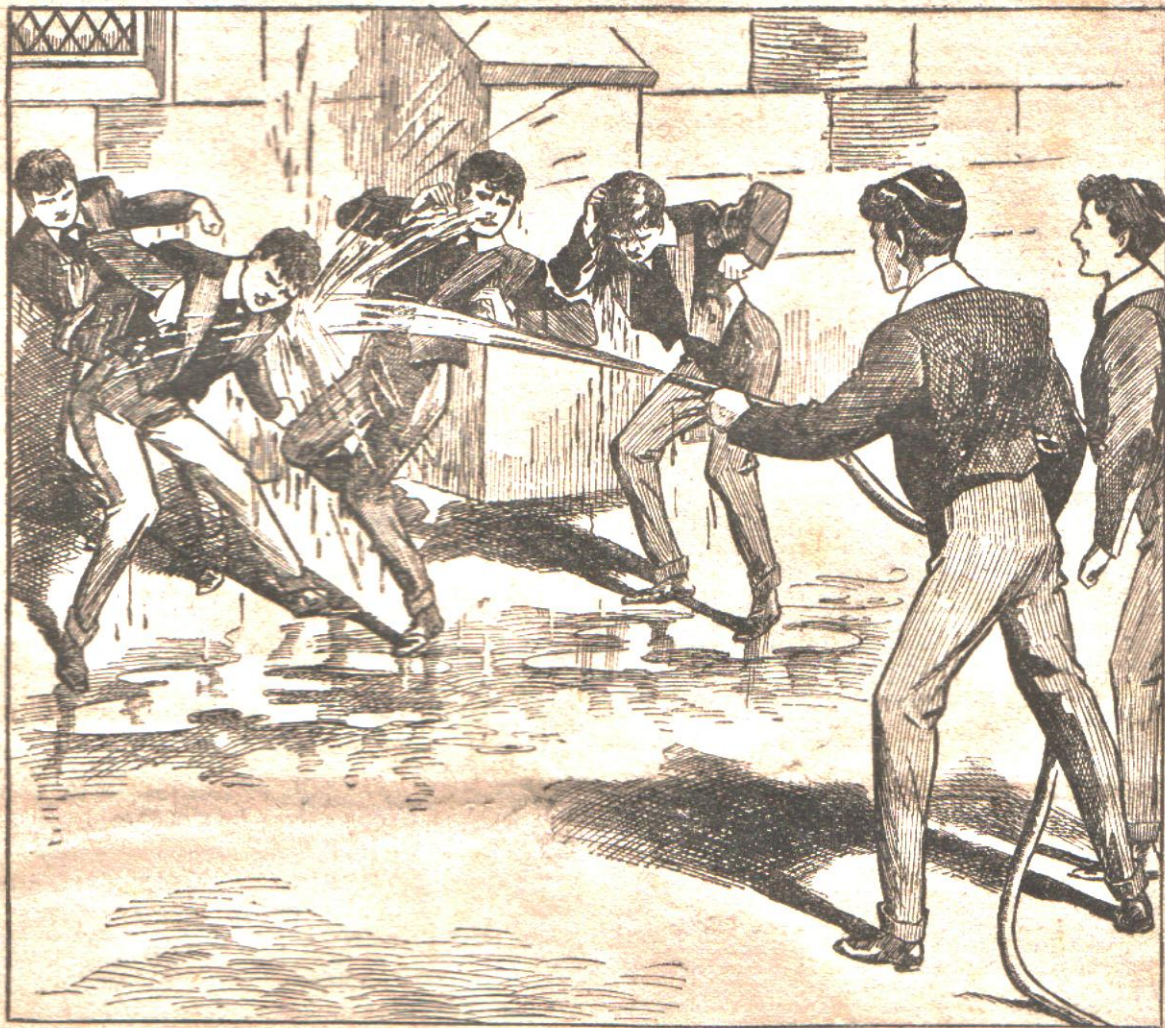
Temple sniffed.

"I'm not thinking of that!" he exclaimed. "You are an ass, Fry!"

"Oh!" said Fry, rather crestfallen. "What are you thinking of, then, if you haven't gone off your chump?"

"I was thinking of picnicking with the girls instead of the Remove kids."

Four pieces of toast were arrested on their way to four



Whizzzzzz! Splash! Whizzzz! The four Removites, almost swept off their feet as the powerful stream of water played on them, staggered and reeled under it, while the Fourth-Formers yelled with laughter. (See Chapter 3.)

mouths, and the Fourth Form fellows stared blankly at Temple.

"Oh, he's fairly off!" said Dabney.

"Listen to me, my children," said Temple loftily. "I tell you I've planned it out from start to finish. It stands to reason that Miss Marjorie and Miss Clara would rather picnic with nice fellows like us than with the Remove kids. If they wouldn't, it's a fault of taste on their part, and we're not responsible for it. But I think we shall get on all right with them. We shall meet them at the old priory quite by accident, with a lunch-basket, and as Harry Wharton & Co. won't turn up—"

"But won't they?" asked Fry, in amazement.

"Certainly not! That would spoil the whole thing."

"But—but how are you going to stop them?"

"Wharton will receive a telegram. Hughes will go down to Pegg and send it from the telegraph-office there. It will say, 'Sorry unable to come picnic to-day.—M. H.'"

"But—but what—"

"You see, it would be impossible for one of us to send that wire, because our initials ain't M. H.," Temple explained airily. "We must be truthful at any cost. But Hughes can send it, because his initials are M. H."

"My hat!"

"Hughes won't be coming to the picnic, so the statement will be quite truthful. And he will be sorry he's not coming, won't you, Hughes?"

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"Yes," grinned Hughes.

"My idea is that when Hughes sends that wire, Wharton will fancy that it comes from Marjorie Hazeldene, as her initials are M. H., and it comes from Pegg telegraph-office, near Cliff House," said Temple. "If Wharton jumps to this conclusion, that's Wharton's look-out, isn't it? We're not called upon to tell him that it's from a chap in the Fourth who's sorry he can't come to the picnic."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And, under the circumstances, Wharton won't go—but we shall," said Temple; "and as the girls will be at the old priory expecting the kids, and they don't turn up, and we shall be there with a lunch-basket, it seems to me that we shall rope in their picnic. How's that for high?"

The Fourth-Formers roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ripping!"

"Gorgeous!"

"That's where Hughes comes in," said Temple. "If his name hadn't been Maurice Hughes, he wouldn't have been any good, and I should have had to get young Matthew Horrocks, of the Second Form, to help."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Fourth yelled with laughter. As a rule, they were downed in their little tussles with the Lower Fourth; but Temple was certainly coming out brilliantly as a leader of late. In the midst of the laughter there came a

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tap at the door. It opened, and a pair of very large spectacles glimmered into the room. Behind the spectacles appeared the fat face of Billy Bunter, of the Remove.

Fry picked up a plate, and made a motion to hurl it. Billy Bunter held up his fat hand in sign of peace.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out, you fat boulder!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bunter. "If you don't want to know—"

"Hold on!" said Temple. "Come in and have some tarts, Bunter. What were you going to say?"

"Thanks, I will!" said Bunter. "Bolsover's a beast, you fellows!"

"We know that!" growled Fry. "Go easy with those tarts, Tubby! This isn't a feeding competition!"

Bunter did not seem to hear.

"He's a rotten beast!" he said. "I just looked into his study to ask him to cash a postal-order for me, and he kicked me out! I happened to hear what he was saying to Ogilvy as I came up to the study—I'll have some of the cream puffs, please!"

"Here you are!" said Temple politely. "What was Bolsover saying to Ogilvy?"

"It was about raiding your dorm. to-night, you know," said Bunter. "Under the circumstances, I should be jolly glad if you gave Bolsover a hiding. It would serve him right. He said he was fed-up with my postal-order! I know I'm fed-up with him!"

The Fourth-Formers exchanged glances. They had their own opinion about Billy Bunter for betraying the plans of the Remove to the enemy, but there was no doubt that the information would be very useful to them.

"When are they coming?" asked Temple.

"Eleven o'clock," said Bunter. "Of course, you chaps won't mention that I said anything. But if you gave Bolsover a licking, I should take it as a personal favour. May I have some of the doughnuts, Temple?"

"As many as you like!" said Temple. "Don't tell them you've told us. I think Bolsover would make it warm for you if he knew."

"No fear!" said Bunter.

And the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the study with a shiny and jammy face, and the Fourth-Formers chuckled in chorus.

"Beastly little sneak!" said Temple. "But it was worth a few tarts and doughnuts to know this. I fancy the Remove will get a surprise in our dorm. to-night."

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled again gleefully.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise that did not Come Off.

WINGATE, the captain of Greyfriars, looked suspiciously at the Removites when he saw "lights out" in the Lower Fourth dormitory that night. There was an air of suppressed excitement about some of the Remove which made the prefect suspicious.

"If there's any row in this dormitory to-night, you'll hear from me, you kids!" he said warningly.

"All serene!" said Bob Cherry. "There won't be a row here, Wingate, old man!"

"Mind that there isn't!" said Wingate, not quite satisfied.

He turned out the light and retired. There was immediately a buzz of voices from the junior beds.

"Seems to have his suspicions!" chuckled Bolsover. "But there won't be a row here, whatever there may be in the Fourth Form dorm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose we're all in it," said Bolsover. "It's my idea to raid the Fourth, and give them a dormitory licking, and I'm leader. That's got to be understood."

"Lead if you like," said Harry Wharton indifferently. "I don't care twopence. I expect you'll make a muck of it!"

"Are you going to back me up?" demanded Bolsover. "It's a matter for the whole Form. You've shown that you can't handle the Fourth, and it's only fair to leave it to a chap who can!"

"Oh, we'll come!"

"Good! Snoop can stay awake, and call us at eleven o'clock," said Bolsover. "The Sixth will all be in bed then, and we-shan't be worried by the prefects."

"Can I?" said Snoop, rather excitedly. "I'm jolly well going to sleep!"

"If you don't call us at eleven, I'll warn you to-morrow!" said Bolsover.

"Rats! Stay awake yourself!"

"Do you want me to come over to you, Snoopy?" asked Bolsover ominously.

Snoop made no reply. He certainly didn't want Bolsover to come over to him. The sneak of the Remove was Bolsover's humble follower, and he sometimes found the

duties of a toady rather troublesome. This was one of the occasions when he found them so. He growled to himself, and propped himself up on pillows to stay awake for the next hour and a half.

For half an hour or so there were voices in the Remove dormitory, but they died away one by one as the juniors dropped off to sleep. Snoop was left to keep his vigil alone. He was sleepy, too, but he did not venture to close his eyes—he did not want to feel the weight of Bolsover's heavy hand in the morning.

Eleven o'clock rang out on the night air at last, and Snoop stirred. He turned out of bed with a dissatisfied grunt, and shook Bolsover.

"Gr-r-r-ro-oh!" said Bolsover sleepily. "Wharrer marrer? Tain't rising-bell!"

"It's eleven o'clock!" muttered Snoop.

"Oh! Groo! Orrright!" mumbled Bolsover.

"Well, I've called you!" grunted Snoop. "If you ain't getting up, I'll get back into bed again!"

Bolsover sat up in bed, and rubbed his eyes.

"Call the others!" he snapped.

The Remove were soon all awakened, with the exception of Billy Bunter. Bunter slept on resolutely. He did not mean to take part in the raid, and as he would have been useless as a fighting-man, he was allowed to remain. But every other member of the Remove was routed out, even to little Wun Lung, the Chinese. It was Bolsover's first essay as leader of the Form, and he intended to marshal all his forces for the invasion of the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Take your pillows with you, and don't make a row," said Bolsover. "Who's that bumping on a chair?"

"Ow!" growled Bob Cherry. "It's me! I've hurt my foot!"

"Blow your foot! Don't make a row!"

"Look here, Bolsover—"

"Shut up!"

"Why, you ass—!" began Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"Dry up! I'm leader now!"

Bolsover spoke in his most bullying tone, and it was very hard to bear; but Bob Cherry armed himself with patience. It was no time for a row with the Remove Bully. The juniors took their pillows, and Bolsover opened the dormitory door, and peered out into the passage. At that hour all lights were turned out in the upper part of the house, and the passage was very dark and silent.

"Come on!" said Bolsover. "Follow me!"

"Follow the man from Cook's!" sang Nugent softly.

"Shut up, Nugent!"

"Pardon, great chief!" said Nugent, with polite sarcasm.

"May I breathe?"

"Shut up, and come on!"

Bolsover led the way to the Fourth Form dormitory, with the Removites crowding at his heels. The leader listened for a few moments outside the Fourth Form door. There was a sound of snoring from within. The snoring sounded suspiciously loud to Harry Wharton's ears, and the suspicion crossed his mind that Temple, Dabney & Co. knew something.

"I say—" he began.

"Shut up!" said Bolsover.

"But I think—"

"Look here, Wharton, I'm leader this time, and I don't want any of your chipping in!" said Bolsover truculently. "If you're not satisfied to follow my lead, you can go back to the dorm. and keep out of the bizny!"

"Oh, go ahead!" said Wharton.

Bolsover opened the door of the Fourth Form dormitory. The sound of snoring was louder now. The dormitory was in complete darkness.

"All asleep!" murmured Bolsover. "Come in! When I say the word, give 'em a yell and go for 'em bald-headed!"

"All serene!" murmured Johnny Bull. "We—"

"Shut up!"

The Remove tiptoed into the dormitory. The last of them was in, when the door swung to and closed with a crash. Bolsover uttered a startled exclamation.

"Who did that? Who—?"

"I did!" said a cheerful voice from the darkness—the voice of Temple, of the Fourth. "Go for 'em, you chaps! They're all in!"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh!"

There was a rush of feet in the darkness. The electric light was switched suddenly on, and bright light dazzled the startled eyes of the invaders. The Fourth Form were all out of bed, fully dressed, and armed with pillows and bolsters and stuffed socks. They bore down upon the invaders with a rush; for which the Remove were utterly unprepared. In a moment the invaders were scattered before the charge of the Fourth.

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"Go for 'em!" roared Temple.
"Oh, rather!" yelled Dabney. "Give 'em socks!"
"Biff-biff! Crash!"
"Ow! Oh! Yar-o-o-op! Groo! Oh!"

The Remove were scattered, swiped, swept over, knocked right and left. They had intended to take the Fourth by surprise, but the Fourth had reversed the intended order of things with a vengeance.

The Removeites, who had hardly time to strike a blow, were fairly overwhelmed, and they rolled on the floor under the doughty swipes of the Fourth-Formers.

Harry Wharton & Co. kept together, and turned a bold front to the enemy, but the rest of the Form were hopelessly scattered and licked.

"Go for 'em!"

"Down with the Remove fags!"

"Give 'em socks!"

Bolsover was on the floor, with Fry sitting on his chest. The Removeites, scattered and chased up and down the dormitory by the victorious Fourth, were hopelessly beaten. Snoop dragged the door open again and fled, and three or four more followed him. The Remove, gasping for breath, and wild with rage, retreated for the doorway, and were driven through it under a shower of blows.

"Go for 'em! Give 'em beans!" roared Temple.

And the Remove were given "beans" unstintedly. Half the Form were already in full retreat down the passage, and the others were being chased up and down the dormitory, darting out into the passage one by one as they had the chance. The Famous Four retreated with their faces to the foe, but the rest of the Removeites fled helplessly. Bolsover remained the last in the dormitory, pinned to the floor by Fry's weight. The victorious Fourth-Formers gathered round him, and he was dragged up at last in the grip of many hands.

"Ow!" roared Bolsover. "Leggo! I-I-I—"

"Chuck him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bolsover struggled furiously, but he was whirled to the door in the grasp of a dozen fellows, and sent headlong into the passage.

Bump!

Bolsover yelled as he landed on the linoleum. The dormitory door was closed, and the key turned in the lock. Within the room, the Fourth-Formers were cackling with glee.

Bolsover staggered to his feet.

"Come on!" he roared. "Let's get back, and—"

"The door's locked now!" mumbled Ogilvy breathlessly.

"Cave!" yelled Bob Cherry along the passage.

A door was heard to open below. The noise had evidently reached the ears of a master or a prefect. The Removeites fled for their dormitory at the sound, and tumbled into bed in record time. Bolsover was the last in, but he had the bed-clothes over him when the door opened and a light glimmered in, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked suspiciously into the dormitory.

"Are you boys asleep?" he asked.

Only a sound of steady breathing answered him. The Remove-master frowned suspiciously, and withdrew, closing the door. There was silence in the dormitory until the foot-steps died away down the passage.

Then Bob Cherry sat up in bed.

"This is a nice go!" he gasped. "Bolsover, you idiot!"

"Bolsover, you ass!" said Nugent.

"Bolsover, you fathead!"

"Bolsover, you chump!"

"Bolsover, you dangerous lunatic!"

"Oh, shut up, and let a chap go to sleep!" growled Bolsover.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Chump!"

"If ever Bolsover proposes to lead the Remove again," said Bob Cherry impressively, "I vote that we take him out and duck him in the fountain, and bump him all the way round the Close!"

"Hear, hear!" Carried unanimously!" said Johnny Bull.

Bolsover only grunted. His brief leadership of the Remove was over, and it was not likely that he would ever figure as a leader again. He had led the Remove to the biggest licking they had ever experienced. The juniors were aching all over from their rough handling in the Fourth Form dormitory, and it was a long time before they went to sleep again. And they occupied the waking moments in saying things to Bolsover, and the things they said could not be called polite.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Telegram from M. H.

HARRY WHARTON & CO., came out of the Remove Form-room after morning lessons the next day, looking very cheerful. It was Wednesday, which was always a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and it was a fine, sunny day. The picnic which the juniors had planned for the afternoon, at the old priory, looked like being a great success. The

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PENNY.

chums of the Remove were in funds, and they had already laid in an adequate supply of provisions. Indeed, anyone who had seen the supply might have supposed that it was more than adequate; judging by the great extent of it. But the juniors had schoolboy appetites, and as Bob Cherry remarked, it was safer to have too much than too little. Though, if there had been any difficulty in disposing of the surplus, Billy Bunter was willing to come nobly to their aid. He looked into Study No. 1, where the juniors were packing a lunch-basket of Brobdingnagian dimensions, and blinked at them in a very friendly way.

"Nice afternoon for a picnic, you fellows!" he remarked.

"Oh, ripping!" said Bob Cherry.

"That will be a jolly heavy basket to carry!" said Bunter.

"I'll come along and lend a hand, if you like."

"Thanks; we don't like!" said Harry Wharton. "And if you don't travel, I'll come along and lend you a foot!"

And Bunter travelled. The picnic party consisted of five fellows—Wharton, Nugent, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hazeldene—and the two girls from Cliff House would make seven. They did not intend to make eight of it by the addition of the Owl of the Remove.

The lunch-basket was locked up safely in the study cupboard, secure from raiders, when the juniors went down to dinner. After dinner, they strolled down to the cricket-ground. They were not to meet the Cliff House girls at the old priory until three o'clock, and it was not necessary to start until half-past two. Immediately after dinner, Hughes, of the Fourth, left the school, and walked away quickly in the direction of the fishing village of Pegg; but no one paid particular attention to the fact. Hughes's movements, as a rule, were of no great interest to anyone excepting Hughes himself. Hughes had a telegraph-form in his pocket, with a message written upon it, and he chuckled as he followed the lane round the base of the Black Pike in the direction of Pegg. Before the time came for starting for the priory, the telegram would be delivered at Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. stopped at Mrs. Mimble's little tuck-shop in the corner of the Close for ginger-beer before going to the cricket-ground. They found Temple, Dabney & Co. there, and Temple was making purchases on a lavish scale. Dabney carried a large lunch-basket, and Temple was packing the articles in it as Mrs. Mimble handed them over the counter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "More picnics?"

"Yes, we're going to have a picnic, dear boy," said Temple, with a drawl. "You Remove kids ain't the only picnickers, you know. Lemme see! We shall want things for making tea—the girls are sure to want tea."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Quite a party—eh?" said Nugent, rather puzzled.

"Yes, indeed—two lady friends, you know," said Temple.

"You ain't the only fellows at Greyfriars who have lady friends."

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled.

Harry Wharton & Co. left them still packing; and a little later Temple, Dabney, Fry, and Phipps strolled out of the gates of Greyfriars, carrying the heavily-laden basket.

The chums of the Remove were busy on the cricket-field, and they had no time for watching what Temple, Dabney & Co. might be doing. A fag of the Third Form stood by the ropes, with his hands in his pockets, watching the practice, with a quiet and rather wistful expression upon his face. It was Bolsover minor of the Third—otherwise known as Billy, the junior whose curious history was known to all Greyfriars.

Most of the Remove were at cricket practice, and fellows stood round watching them. Bolsover, who was a good slogging bat, stood at the wickets and faced Harry Wharton's bowling, but not with much success. It was Bolsover major's ambition to figure in the Form eleven, and he had tried to bully his way into the team—quite unsuccessfully. And as he was more than half a slacker, he was not likely to get into the eleven on his merits.

Click!

The ball came down from the bowler, and it lifted Bolsover's middle stump out of the ground, and the Remove bully scowled darkly. He scowled at the wicket and scowled at the bowler, and tramped off the pitch. He tossed his bat into the pavilion, and came off the field, and as he did so he caught sight of his minor. He halted, frowning darkly at the fag of the Third.

ANSWERS

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

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

"N-nothing, Percy!" said the fag timidly.

"Then buzz off!"

"I—I wanted to speak to Wharton."

"Well, I've told you you're not to speak to Wharton! So buzz off!" growled Bolsover. "Now then, sharp's the word!"

"I say, Percy— Oh!"

Bolsover minor gave a little cry of pain as his brother twisted his ear, and he ran off the field, followed by the Remove bully with his heavy tread.

Harry Wharton had seen the incident from the pitch, and he frowned. But he knew that interference between Bolsover and his brother only made the Remove bully rougher on little Billy, and he did not chip in—much as he was inclined to do so.

The half-hour chimed out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and the chums of the Remove came off the field. It was time to get ready for the picnic.

As they entered the School House, Trotter, the page, came up, with a buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

"Telegram for Master Wharton," he said.

"Thanks, kid!"

Harry Wharton took the telegram and opened it. He wondered what it was about—telegrams for juniors were not common at Greyfriars. As he glanced over the message he uttered an exclamation:

"Oh, rotten!"

"Bad news?" asked Bob Cherry, anxiously.

"Yes, jolly bad. It's from Marjorie."

"What does it say?"

"The picnic's off."

"My hat!"

Harry Wharton read out the telegram, glumly enough. It was brief, but to the point.

"Very sorry; unable to come picnic to-day.—M. H."

The chums of the Remove all looked glum enough. They had anticipated a very pleasant picnic that afternoon, and it was distinctly disappointing to have it knocked on the head, as Bob Cherry expressed it, at the last moment like this.

"Doesn't it give any reason," Nugent remarked.

"No," said Harry, "Marjorie would have a good reason, though—she knows we shall be disappointed, and she wouldn't put it off if she could help it."

"Something up at Cliff House, I suppose."

Hazeldene was looking very puzzled.

"I'm blessed if I can guess what's the matter," he exclaimed. "Marjorie said yesterday that they would come for certain, unless the weather was wet. And it's as fine a day as could be."

"Something must have turned up, I suppose, to stop them," said Wharton. "It's rotten. I suppose we'd better get back to the cricket."

"Hold on," said Hazeldene. "I don't know what can be up. I think perhaps Marjorie may be ill or something. I think I'll cut off to Cliff House on my bike, and see what's the matter. I can get there in a quarter of an hour if I put on speed."

"Good egg!" said Wharton.

And Hazeldene wheeled out his machine, and pedalled off towards Cliff House, taking the short cut through the wood. Harry Wharton and Co., with rather glum faces, strolled back towards the cricket ground.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Billy's Trouble.

"If you please, Master Harry—"

It was Bolsover minor who spoke. He caught Harry Wharton by the sleeve as the chums of the Remove reached the cricket ground. Wharton paused. He was always kind to Bolsover minor—partly because his brother was not, and partly because he liked the little fellow. It had been partly through Wharton's means that the fag had come to Greyfriars at all, for Wharton had been, in a way, the cause of his being found, after being lost to his parents for many years, and Wharton had been his protector ever since he had been at Greyfriars.

"Well, what is it, kid?" asked Wharton, good-naturedly.

"I—I want to speak to you, Master 'Arry," said Billy, in his agitation dropping back into the old way of speaking that had been habitual to him when he was a newsboy in the London streets, but which he had gradually learned to disuse since coming to Greyfriars. "I'm in a 'ole, Master 'Arry."

"Your major, I suppose?"

"No, it ain't Percy," said Billy hastily. "But he would be ratty if 'e saw me speakin' to you, Master 'Arry."

"Come into the pavilion," said Harry, abruptly. "You fellows can get on. Now, what is it, Billy? What's gone wrong?"

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Bolsover minor hesitated. He was safe within the cricket pavilion, from the chance view of the bully of the Remove, but he seemed to be at a loss for words. Harry Wharton waited patiently. He could see that there was something wrong with the fag—something in which Billy's chums in the Third Form could not help him. And Billy's brother was the last fellow to whom the fag could go for help. At one time it had seemed as if Bolsover had determined to act a brother's part towards the unfortunate lad who had spent all his earliest and most impressionable years in a London slum, and had been taken very much off his balance by his sudden transference to the new surroundings of Greyfriars, when the discovery was made that he was old Mr. Bolsover's son. But Bolsover's good intentions had not lasted long. The visit of one of Billy's old friends from Angel Alley had made all the difference, and the brothers were on worse terms than ever.

"Well, kid?" said Wharton, at last.

Billy flushed painfully.

"I dunno who to speak to, 'ceptin' you, Master 'Arry," he faltered. "It's no good goin' to Percy. He's 'ard on me now, jest because Tadger paid me that visit—and—and I don't feel quite to 'im as I used to, since he tried to make out that Tadger was a thief, which he wasn't! But that ain't wot I was goin' to say. You remember young Tadger comin' to the school last week, Master 'Arry?"

Harry Wharton smiled. He was not likely to forget how Tadger had come to Greyfriars, and how the chums of the Remove had entertained him, for Billy's sake, and saved him from the ragging Bolsover major intended for him.

"Yes, Billy! What about Tadger?"

"Tadger's alright," said Billy, "but he's been talkin'," I think. Anyway, a cove from Angel Alley has come here—a cove who wasn't a friend of mine in them days. He used to be the terror of Angel Alley; and when he was drunk, the police didn't tackle 'im—they durstn't do it, less there was three or four of 'em. We allers called 'im the Moocher. He has been to quod lately, and he's fresh out, and he's 'eard from Tadger, I think, 'bout me being 'ere at this school, and he's come to find me out."

Harry Wharton's brow grew very stern. He understood now the cause of little Billy's trouble.

"Have you seen him, Billy?"

"I saw 'im yesterday arternoon, sir."

"He wants money, I suppose?"

"Yes, Master 'Arry. I gave him all I had," said Bolsover minor, "but he says that he wants more."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, indignantly. "My dear kid, you've only got to let Mr. Quelch or the Head know. They won't allow you to be worried in this way. A word to the police, and the Moocher, as you call him, will be glad enough to clear out."

But the look of trouble upon Billy's face deepened.

"Yes, Master 'Arry, I know; but—but—"

"But what, Billy. It's easy enough," said Harry. "He can't hurt you."

"I know he can't, Master 'Arry. I wasn't thinking of that," said the fag, in a low voice. "But—but Percy—I—I don't want 'im to know. You know 'ow he carried on about Tadger comin' 'ere. He's ashamed of my havin' been brought up in a slum, though goodness knows I couldn't 'elp it. He's never let me 'ear the end of Tadger. If he knew that the Moocher was 'ere arter me, he—he would—"

Billy paused, and the tears came into his eyes.

Harry Wharton understood. He knew of the ceaseless taunts the fag had had to endure from his brother on the subject of his early connections, and he could guess how the boy shrank from provoking a fresh outburst. If it became known in Greyfriars that a ruffian whom Billy had known in his early days had come to the school with the idea of bullying and blackmailing him, it would become the talk of the place. Bolsover major would be in a fury at the fresh disgrace, at he would regard it, and his minor was likely to suffer in consequence.

"It ain't only his lickin' me," said Billy miserably—"I could stand that; but—but he's ashamed of me, you see, and—and he says sich things—" He broke off.

Wharton nodded gravely.

"You want us to help you?" he asked.

"I—I want you to advise me, Master 'Arry. You—you told me allers to come to you if I was in trouble," said Billy.

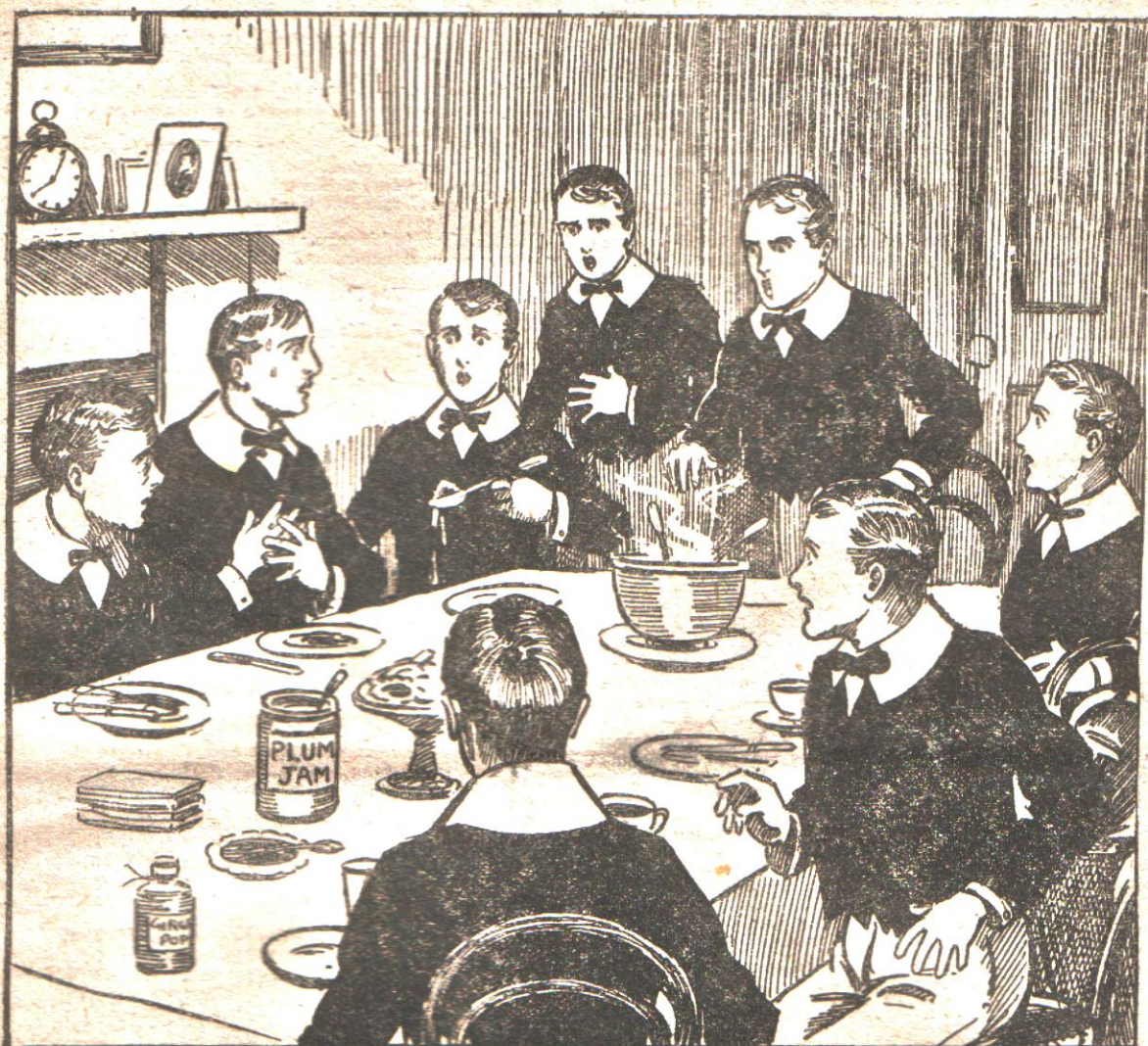
"Quite right, kid. We can help you, too," said Harry, a gleam coming into his eyes. "This ruffian you speak of wants a jolly good hiding. Do you know where he is?"

"E's waiting for me now, Master 'Arry. He said I was to meet 'im at the stile this arternoon, or he'd come up to the school."

"Is he there now?"

"Yea, Master 'Arry, and I've got to go, or else he'll come 'ere."

"You shall go, Billy, and we'll come with you," said Harry



"Poisoned!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes! We—we're as good as dead!" moaned Mellish. "Oh! Help! Fetch a doctor! Get a stomach-pump! Quick!"

"It's no good," said Levison, with a haggard face. "It's too late! We're done for! Oh, you mad fools! You've poisoned us!"

"But what do you mean?" asked Tom Merry, looking perplexed. "I don't feel poisoned. Do you other fellows?"

(An exciting incident in "TOWSER MINOR!" the splendid, long, complete school tale of the famous Chums of St. Jim's contained in this Thursday's issue of our companion paper, "The Gem" Library. Price One Penny. Please order your copy to-day.)

Wharton. "If it comes to the worst, you must tell the doctor, and chance what your major says. But we'll get you out of it if we can. Is he a big chap, this Moocher?"

"Not very tall, Master 'Arry, but powerful strong," said Billy doubtfully. "He can fight two policemen easy."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"Well, I don't think I could fight two policemen," he said, "so I'll take some of the fellows. Let's see—Bob Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Tom Brown and Mark Linley. I think we shall be enough to handle the brute."

"E—e might hurt you, Master 'Arry," faltered Billy.

"We'll risk that. I think we're more likely to hurt him, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 220.

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especially as we'll take a stick apiece with us. A jolly good hiding will show the brute that it isn't safe to hang round Greyfriars bullying kids. Upon the whole, you'd better not come—you can tell us just where to find him, and that will be all right."

"You're jolly good to me, Master 'Arry—"

"Stuff! This will be fun for us, especially as the picnic's off."

Harry Wharton nodded kindly to the fag, and quitted the pavilion. He called to his chums, and explained to them how the matter stood. The five juniors concurred heartily in his plan, and they left the cricket-ground at once. Hurree Jamset

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, was just coming out of the School House, and Wharton called to him to join the party. Seven sturdy juniors were not likely to have much to fear from the redoubtable Moocher, however redoubtable he might be.

As they left the gates of Greyfriars there was a sound of running feet in the lane, and Coker of the Fifth came into sight. Coker was running hard, and he had lost his cap, and his face was flushed crimson. He halted as he saw the juniors, and stood gasping like a stranded grampus.

"You kids going to Friardale?" he exclaimed.

"Going that way," replied Wharton.

"Look out, then! I was stopped in the lane by a beastly tramp," said Coker. "He had the cheek to threaten me when I wouldn't give him any tin, and I dotted him on the nose. He came for me with both hands, and I cut for it."

"Phew! Well, he won't eat the seven of us!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Keep your weather eye open, that's all," said Coker, and he went gasping in at the gates. The juniors tramped away towards the village.

"That must be the chap we're going to look for," said Wharton. "Rather a dangerous customer, it seems."

"I think we shall manage him," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!"

"The rafterfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, in his peculiar English; "and the lickfulness of the esteemed ruffian will be—"

"Terrific!" grinned Nugent.

Ten minutes later the juniors came in sight of the stile near the cross-roads, the place at which Bolsover minor was to have met the Moocher. A man was seated upon the stile smoking a short clay pipe. Ruffian and convict was written all over him. He was dirty and tattered, and his face had a stubble of four days' beard, and his cheeks were reddened and puffed by the habitual use of strong drink. A more unpleasant and disreputable-looking tramp it would have been difficult to discover. Harry Wharton could imagine the sensation that would be caused at Greyfriars if this ruffian arrived there claiming acquaintance with Bolsover minor.

The man raised his eyes for a moment to glance at the juniors—eyes that were deeply sunken in his head, and gleamed with evil as he turned them upon the Greyfriars fellows.

The juniors halted.

"This is our merchant," said Bob Cherry. "Now, then?"

The juniors walked up to the man on the stile, and took off their caps in a row. The ruffian stared at them in blank amazement, as well he might. He was not accustomed to being saluted so respectfully by half a dozen well-dressed persons.

"Whatcher gittin' at?" he asked savagely.

"Mr. Moocher, I believe," said Harry Wharton courteously.

"Look 'ere—"

"Excuse me, I think you are Mr. Moocher?" persisted Wharton. "You are waiting here for a young friend of ours—Billy."

The man scowled.

"I'm waiting 'ere for Billy," he said. "So 'e's told you about me, has he?"

"Yes, and we are very pleased to have the honour of making your estimable acquaintance," said Wharton politely. "We have come to say that Billy can't come—we've come instead. Will we do?"

"The young 'ound—"

"All hands!" said Wharton.

And the juniors, replacing their caps gravely upon their heads, laid violent hands upon the Moocher, and dragged him off the stile with a bump into the road.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Major and Minor.

"CRIKEY!" gasped the Moocher.

He lay in the dust, struggling with seven strong pairs of hands grasping him. He had no chance whatever, which was very fortunate for the Greyfriars juniors, for the look of the Moocher was simply murderous. His cudgel had flown from his hand as he bumped down, and he wriggled helplessly under the grasp of the juniors.

"Hold the brute tight!" said Harry Wharton. "Now, Mr. Moocher—"

"You young 'ound!" snarled the Moocher. "Lemme go, or it'll be the worse for yer. I'll smash yer in pieces!"

"You'll shut up and listen to me!" said Wharton cheerfully. "I do all the talking in this act. You have come down here to bully young Bolsover and frighten money out of him. We are young Bolsover's friends, and we're not

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going to allow anything of the sort. We are going to stop you. Do you understand?"

"I'll—I'll—"

"You'll go away at once without seeing young Bolsover again," said Harry. "That's what you'll do. Do you catch on?"

"I'll smash him, and you, too!" roared the enraged ruffian. "I'll go up to the school and show him up before the lot of them! I'll—"

"I see it's no good putting it to you gently," said Wharton. "Actions speak louder than words sometimes, and this is one of the times. Bump the cad!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

Bump!

The Moocher, to his rage and amazement, was lifted bodily in seven pairs of hands, and bumped down upon the hard road.

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Now another for his uncle!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"And now one for luck!"

Bump!

"There!" said Wharton a little breathlessly. "That's a sample—a free sample—of what you've got to expect if you hang round Greyfriars. Savvy?"

"I—I'll—"

"Are you going?"

"No!" yelled the Moocher.

"He hasn't had enough," said Johnny Bull. "Blessed if I like handling him, but we can wash our hands afterwards. Give him another!"

Bump—bump!

"Yow! Ow! Yow!"

"Now, then, are you going?" asked Wharton.

"Yow! Yes!" groaned the ruffian. "I'll go! Oh! Ow! Yow! I'll go! Oh!"

"Good! Let the brute go!"

The juniors released the Moocher, and stood back. The ruffian scrambled to his feet. He stood shaking with rage, and regarding the Greyfriars juniors with eyes that scintillated with rage. For a moment it seemed as if the Moocher would hurt himself upon the juniors regardless of the consequences, but the odds were too great, and in spite of his fury he thought better of it.

"Now," said Wharton coolly, "you see what you'll get if you come round worrying young Bolsover again. Hook it!"

"Let 'im wait till I see 'im, that's all!" snarled the Moocher. "I—I'll—"

"Oh, you haven't had enough—eh?" said Wharton sweetly. "Collar the brute, and give him some more!"

The Moocher did not wait for any more. He flung himself over the stile, and fled into the wood, leaving nothing behind but an odour of tobacco and rum. The juniors burst into a roar of laughter.

"I think he's had enough, after all," said Bob Cherry, chuckling. "If he comes round the school again, we'll drop it on him heavy. But I fancy he'll think twice about it."

And the juniors strolled back to Greyfriars in high good humour. Bolsover minor met them at the gates. The face of the Third-Former was very anxious. Harry Wharton clapped him on the shoulder cheerily.

"It's all right, kid," he said.

"You've seen him?" said Billy eagerly.

"Yes, and seen the last of him," said Harry.

"What did you do?"

"Bumped him hard, and he bolted."

Billy gasped.

"Bumped the Moocher!" he ejaculated, almost incredulously. "My eye! Why, it always took two policemen to get him away from the alley when he was on a tear!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, he got away by himself this time," said Harry Wharton. "You'd better keep within gates this afternoon, Billy, in case he shouldn't be gone. And if you see anything more of him, mind you tell us."

"Never fear. I will," said Billy gratefully. "You're verry good to me, Master 'Arry."

"Hubert!"

It was Bolsover's major's unpleasant voice calling. Billy started and looked round.

"Keep with us, kid," said Bob Cherry.

Billy shook his head.

"It's alright, Master Cherry," he said hastily. "Percy won't hurt me. It's only his way."

And he hurried off towards his brother. Bob Cherry snorted.

"Queer how that little beggar stands by that brute of a brother of his!" he exclaimed. "If Bolsover were my major, there would be a fight on every day."

"I suppose it's better not to interfere, if Billy doesn't want

us to," said Wharton, rather restlessly. "Bolsover bullies him partly to exasperate us, I think. Let's get out of sight of the brute."

They walked on to the School House. Bolsover minor joined his major, looking rather apprehensive as he did so. His brother greeted him with an angry scowl.

"Didn't I tell you not to have anything to say to those fellows?" he demanded.

"Ye-es, Percy," said Billy meekly.

"Don't Percy me!" growled Bolsover. "You'll do as I tell you, or you'll get a thick ear, you young cad! What were you talking to Wharton about?"

Bolsover minor was silent.

"Out with it, you guttersnipe!" said Bolsover roughly.

"Some more news from your friends in the slums, I suppose. Is the respectable Tadger coming to Greyfriars again?"

"No, ho ain't!" said Billy.

"You can't say 'he isn't,' I suppose?" snarled his brother. "Will you ever learn to drop your ain'ts instead of your H's?"

Billy flushed.

"I does my best," he said. "I should get on better, I des say, if you was to 'elp me, 'stead of sneering and gittin' at a pore chap."

"Oh, shut up, your blessed cockney lingo gets on my nerves!" growled Bolsover. "I've tried to help you, and you've turned your back on me for the sake of a slum brat, and got me into a row with the prefects, too, for trying to rid you of your disreputable friends."

"You tried to make out that Tadger was a thief," said Billy. "It was mean. You couldn't expect me to stand it."

"Don't argue with me, you cad! I suppose you've had some more news from your old slum, and that's what you've been jawing over with those cads. Is that it?"

"Yes, it is!" said Billy desperately.

"I thought so!" said Bolsover savagely. "You're not satisfied with disgracing me here with your slum manners and your slum language, you must bring your old slum friends to Greyfriars as well. I'm not going to stand it, do you hear?"

"I ain't!"

"If talking's no good, I'll try licking you," said Bolsover, and I'll begin now!"

"Look 'ere, Percy—"

Bolsover minor backed away as his major reached out for him. There was a buzz of a bicycle bell on the gravel path, but Bolsover, in his rage, did not hear or heed. He rushed at Billy, and rushed right into the cyclist, who did not stop in time. Hazeldene and his machine and Bolsover major rolled on the gravel together.

"Ow!" roared Hazeldene. "You silly ass! You fat-head! What did you run into me for? You awful chump!"

"Oh! Ow!" groaned Bolsover. He had been knocked flying by the machine, and he was hurt. "It's all that young cad's fault! I'll smash him!"

He scrambled furiously to his feet, and glared round for his minor; but Billy had prudently retired while he had the opportunity. Hazeldene grunted painfully, and picked up his machine. The front wheel was jammed, and he could not wheel it along.

"You frightful chump!" he growled. "You've busted my machine now."

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Bolsover, rubbing his aching slums. "It's not allowed to ride a bike inside the gates. Ow!"

"I was in a hurry, ass!"

Hazeldene leaned his machine against the nearest wall, and ran into the School House. He had caught sight of Harry Wharton at the window of No. 1 Study. The chums of the Remove were in the study getting tea, and Nugent was opening the basket which had been so carefully packed for the picnic. Hazeldene burst breathlessly into his study.

"We've been done, you chaps!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's the row? Who's done us, and how?"

"I don't know, but I've been over to Cliff House, and I saw Wilhelmna," said Hazeldene breathlessly. "She says that Marjorie and Clara left to go to the Priory. Marjorie couldn't have sent the telegram!"

"What!" roared all the juniors together.

"We've been spoofed!" gasped Hazeldene.

"Spoofed! My only Aunt Sempronia!"

"Don't you see?" shouted Hazeldene. "Somebody else sent the telegram and signed it M. H. It might have been some chap with those initials, or just a game. Anyway, it's jolly certain that Marjorie didn't send it, as she's gone to the priory to keep the appointment."

"Temple!" roared Harry Wharton.

"I shouldn't wonder. But—"

"Temple! That was what they were laying in provisions for!" yelled Bob Cherry. "The Fourth Form bounders have done this, and they've gone to meet Marjorie and Clara at the priory to have the picnic instead of us."

"Great Scott!"

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"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

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PENNY.

"Done again!" groaned Johnny Bull. "The Fourth will cackle over this!"

"We'll stop their cackling," said Harry Wharton. "They can't have finished the picnic yet. We shall have to explain to Marjorie how it was, anyway. Come on!"

Harry Wharton caught up his cap and rushed from the study. The other fellows dashed after him, in their excitement leaving the kettle to boil over on the fire. They did not even pause to put the provisions away. They streaked across the Close as if they were on the cinder-path, and dashed out of the gates. Five minutes after they had left the study, the fat face of Billy Bunter peered into it.

"I say, you fellows—"
Bunter paused as he saw that the study was deserted. His little round eyes almost bulged out of his head as he caught sight of the plentiful array of provisions on the table.

"M-m-my hat!" he gasped.

In one second more Billy Bunter was at the table, and the provisions laid in for the picnic were disappearing at a rate which equalled that at which the chums of the Remove were speeding towards the old priory.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Temple's Little Party.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE stepped in through the shattered doorway of the ruined priory in Friardale Wood, and glanced round the ruins. Miss Clara followed her in, lowering her parasol. The sun was shining brightly on the old ruins, and it was a change from the shade of the wood. Birds twittered on the old fragments of mossy masonry. Miss Clara uttered an ejaculation, which she had doubtless learnt from the juniors of Greyfriars.

"My hat!"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"My only bonnet!" said Miss Clara firmly. "We're ten minutes late, and they're not here. They were late last time."

"Something has delayed them."

"Oh, rats!" said Miss Clara. "I've a good mind to walk straight back!"

"Here they come."

Four Greyfriars juniors with a lunch-basket entered the ruins. They had been watching from the thicket for the arrival of the girls, and they followed them in. But at the second glance the girls saw that they were not Harry Wharton & Co. In great surprise, Marjorie and Clara recognised Temple, Dabney, Fry, and Phipps, of the Upper Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

The four juniors took their caps off very politely and bowed. The girls nodded in response. They knew Temple, Dabney & Co. very well, though they were not on the same intimate terms with them as with the chums of the Remove.

"Good-afternoon," said Temple solemnly.

"Good-afternoon," said Miss Clara.

"How jolly lucky meeting you here," went on Temple. "We came here to have a picnic. I wonder if we might ask you to join us?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"We should be honoured," said Temple.

"Delighted!" said Fry.

"And it's such a ripping afternoon for a picnic," Temple observed.

"You are very kind," said Marjorie, with a smile, and without a suspicion, "but we have arranged to picnic here with Harry Wharton and his friends."

"Ah, that's our bad luck!" said Temple. "Sorry! I suppose you young ladies don't mind our picnicking here as well, as we've come all the way from Greyfriars?"

"Of course not!" said Marjorie, smiling. "The priory is big enough for a dozen picnic-parties, I should think. Don't mind us at all."

"Thank you very much!" said Temple, raising his cap again.

Temple prided himself upon being a lady's man, and certainly he had very nice manners.

The Fourth-Formers camped in a nice shady spot, where a big tree overhung the ruins, and shaded them from the sun. A little brook gurgled through the wood, and flowed past the old shattered wall of the priory at this point. The Fourth-Formers proceeded to make their preparations, while Marjorie and Clara waited for the Removites to arrive.

The minutes passed, and there was no sign of Harry Wharton & Co. When half-past three rang out in chimes from the village, Miss Clara sniffed.

"Nice boys!" she murmured.

Marjorie looked quite distressed.

"Something must have happened," she said.

Miss Clara sniffed again.

"Perhaps Hazel forgot to give the message," Marjorie

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By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

suggested. "He is a very careless boy sometimes, and he might have gone out with Vernon-Smith instead of coming to the picnic, and forgotten all about it."

"I shouldn't wonder! He's an ass!" agreed Miss Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"A fathead, then, if you like that better!" said Miss Clara crossly. "Anyway, it seems pretty clear that they're not coming, and we've had our walk for nothing! And there are those horrid Fourth Form boys looking at us, and thinking how silly we look!"

"It is very unfortunate, I know."

"It's beastly!" said Miss Clara. "We look idiots!"

Marjorie smiled.

"I don't see that we look idiots, Clara," she said.

"Well, I do! And those wretched boys are grinning at us!"

"I can't see them grinning."

"Well, they're pretending not to, then," said Miss Clara, apparently determined to find fault. "I could box their ears!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Well, I could eat some of their things, anyway!" said Miss Clara. "I'm awfully hungry!"

The Fourth-Formers' preparations were completed. They had a spirit-stove going, and a kettle was boiling, and an array of teacups and saucers had been set out. A second spirit-stove was used for boiling eggs, and there was ham, and jam, and tarts, and cake, and many other delicacies.

Temple exchanged a solemn wink with his comrades, and came over towards the girls, who were sitting upon a fragment of an old wall, and feeling very self-conscious and uncomfortable. Temple raised his cap gracefully.

"Your friends don't seem to be coming," he remarked. "Might I ask you once more to join our little party till they come? Now I think of it, Wharton had a telegram this afternoon, and that may have something to do with it."

The girls hesitated.

"It would be a real favour if you would make the tea for us," urged Temple. "You know that boys can't make tea."

That settled it. Miss Clara jumped up at once, and Marjorie followed suit more slowly.

"Yes, rather!" said Miss Clara. "We'll make the tea with pleasure. And I'm hungry!"

"So am I!" said Marjorie, laughing.

"Oh, good! This way!" said Temple, delighted. "We've got a couple of camp-stools, if you would like them. We shall be very comfy here."

They were!

Temple, Dabney & Co. exerted themselves to make the Cliff House girls comfortable, and certainly they succeeded. Marjorie made the tea, and it was made very nicely, and the scent of newly-made tea cheered up the girls wonderfully. The good things were handed round, and soon the party were eating and drinking and laughing and chatting in the most cheerful way.

There was still no sign of Harry Wharton & Co., and Temple was quite satisfied that Hughes' telegram from Pegg post-office had done its work. The girls had no suspicion of the telegram, or that a trick had been played, and they were naturally inclined to resent being left waiting at the old priory for nothing. Whatever had happened at

Greyfriars, one of the juniors might have come to tell them. And so they dismissed Harry Wharton & Co. from their minds, and were as nice as they could be to the Fourth-Formers.

Temple & Co. were in high feather. They had never enjoyed a picnic so much, and they were anticipating, too, their triumph over the Remove when they told about it at Greyfriars. But that enjoyable picnic was destined to be interrupted.

There was a sound of a heavy footstep in the old shattered doorway of the priory, and the juniors looked round quickly, in sudden uneasiness, thinking that the Removites might have arrived.

But it was not a junior who looked in upon the picnic—it was a thick-set, tattered, dirty tramp, with an evil, whisky-discoloured face, and little glinting eyes that were full of malice.

It was the Mocher, fresh from his encounter with the Removites at the stile, though, of course, the picnickers knew nothing of that.

Temple knitted his brows. The thick-set, powerful tramp, with his knobby stick under his arm, was a dangerous-looking customer, and the old priory was a very lonesome place.

There was mischief in the man's looks as he came shambling into the ruins, his little evil eyes fixed upon the picnic-party. The juniors rose instinctively to their feet, and the merry voices died away. Temple knew that there was going to be trouble.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Mocher's Picnic.

"GOOD-ARTERNOON!" said the Mocher. Temple looked him up and down, hoping to strike awe into his soul by a dignified demeanour. But, alas! nothing short of three policemen would have awed the Mocher.

"What do you want here?" asked Temple haughtily.

"Better cut, my man!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Dabney.

The Mocher frowned.

"Perlite, ain't you?" he sneered. "Well, I ain't going to cut! I'm goin' to jine this 'ere little party! Ain't I welcome—hey?"

"No, you're not!" said Temple, with a boldness he was not quite feeling. "You'd better get along!"

"And the sooner the quicker!" said Phipps.

The Mocher took a firm grasp upon his cudgel.

"We'll 'ave this out!" he said. "I'm goin' to jine this 'ere little picnic! You kids are going to wait on me and feed me! You 'ear?"

"We're not, you rotten cad!"

"You are!" said the Mocher. "You're going to get 'urt if you don't! You savvy? Mind, don't try and get away—I'll brain the fust that runs!"

The juniors exchanged helpless glances. There were four of them, certainly, but it was extremely doubtful if they were a match for the Mocher. And the man looked utterly unscrupulous and desperate. If he used the heavy cudgel, as apparently he would not scruple to do, the juniors might be seriously injured in a struggle, and certainly the tramp would get the best of it. Not unnaturally, the Fourth-

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The Moocher sat with the cudgel across his knees, ready for use, as the Fourth-Formers ministered to him. They fed him upon ham and eggs, and cold beef and tea. He devoured all that was set before him, and demanded more. (See Chapter II.)

Formers shrank from such a tussle. But to have this frowsy, disreputable tramp at the feast, and to wait upon him—under the eyes of the Cliff House girls, too—that was scarcely to be endured.

The Moocher watched them with his little, bright, beady eyes, and a mocking grin upon his coarse, bloated face. He knew that he was master of the situation.

"Look here," said Temple desperately, "if you're in want of money, I'll give you half-a-crown to clear out!"

"I'll 'ave the 'arf-crown!" said the Moocher. "But I'm going to feed with you fust! I've been on tramp, and I'm hungry! Savvy?"

"You can't feed here!"

A very ugly look came over the Moocher's face.

"You 'ark to me!" he said. "I've 'andled two perlice-men at once in my time, and their hown mothers wouldn't 'ave known those bobbies when I'd finished with 'em! If you want me to start on you, you've only got to say so, but I reckon there'll be some orspital cases arter! You kin 'ave it which way you like!"

"Don't—don't fight that dreadful man!" exclaimed Marjorie, catching Temple by the arm. "You cannot—you must not! He might kill you!"

"I think that's werry likely, miss," said the Moocher.

"Well, we don't want any violence before you girls,"

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said Temple, glad of a way of escape from the dilemma. "Perhaps we'd better give him something to eat."

"You'll feed me with the best, and wait on me 'and and foot!" said the Moocher.

"Look here, you cad!" exclaimed Phipps hotly.

The Moocher turned upon Phipps, and struck him. Phipps fell heavily, and lay half-stunned by the heavy blow. The other juniors sprang forward, and the Moocher's cudgel circled in the air. They drew hurriedly back.

"Come on!" said the Moocher. "I'll brain yer as soon as look at yer! Come on!"

They did not come on. The ruffian was evidently in earnest, and a crack from the cudgel would have stunned, if it had done no greater harm.

Phipps struggled up.

"Let him alone!" he muttered. "We can't tackle the brute! Better let him alone!"

Phipps's mouth was bleeding, and he dabbed it with a handkerchief.

The Moocher grinned with savage mockery. He was enjoying his day in the country.

"You mind your p's and q's," he said. "I ain't a bad sort, if you treat me well. But you're going to wait on me 'and and foot, you are! Now then, begin!"

He sat down upon one of the camp-stools.

The two girls drew away from the vicinity. They were greatly inclined to run out of the priory, but they did not care to desert their unfortunate entertainers at such a moment.

Inwardly, Temple was feeling inclined to kick himself for his great cleverness in bagging the Remove picnic. He would have given a great deal for Harry Wharton to be in that unpleasant situation instead of himself.

The Moocher had seated himself so that he could watch all the juniors, not giving one of them a chance to dart away for help. He put his cudgel across his knees, ready for instant use, as the Fourth-Formers ministered to him.

They did it—they had no choice about the matter. They fed the Moocher upon ham and eggs, and cold beef, and tea, and the Moocher had a terrific appetite. He devoured all that was set before him, and demanded more. The more solid portion of the feed was demolished, and then the tarts and cakes followed the ham and eggs.

The Moocher was evidently enjoying himself. The impotent anger and humiliation of the Greyfriars juniors amused the Moocher very much, and added to his enjoyment of his unusually luxurious feed.

"Got anything better than this to drink?" he demanded presently, when the first edge was taken off his appetite.

"There's ginger-beer," said Temple sullenly.

"You ain't got anything stronger?"

"No."

The Moocher grunted discontentedly.

"Course, you didn't know you was 'aving a visitor," he said grimly, "or, of course, you'd 'ave laid in the whisky."

Temple sniffed.

"Wouldn't you?" roared the Moocher.

"Oh—oh, yes, of course!" stammered Temple, in alarm.

"Yes, certainly. I'm sorry there is no whisky."

"That's better!" grinned the Moocher. "You be civil to me, young man, and don't sniff at me. I've wrung the necks of finer birds than you!"

"Great Scott! How shall we get rid of the brute?" murmured Dabney.

Temple shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"I suppose he'll go when he's had enough to eat," he whispered.

"I wish we had a dozen chaps here—"

"Wot's that you're saying?" demanded the Moocher.

"Would you like one of us to cut off to the village and fetch some whisky?" asked Temple.

The Moocher chuckled.

"Fetch the perlice, you mean," he said. "No, you'll stay where you are, young feikler-me-lad. Gimme some more of the ginger-beer, and some more 'am!"

"You've finished the ham!"

"Do you call this a feed?" said the Moocher indignantly.

"Next time I come to picnic with you, you get some more 'am! You 'ear?"

"Yes," said Temple meekly.

"I'll 'ave them tarts now."

The remains of the feed disappeared at a record rate. The Moocher's appetite would have done credit to an inhabitant of the wonderful country of Brobdingnag. The Moocher was of a playful turn of mind, too. After using a plate, it amused him to smash it, and the same with cups and saucers and glasses. Quite a little mound of broken crockery grew up beside the playful Moocher; while the juniors raged inwardly, and said nothing.

"I ain't finished yet," said the Moocher.

"You've eaten every blessed thing we had!" said Temple bitterly. "You'll have to chuck it now."

"All gone?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"I don't call this a feed!" said the Moocher, with a grunt.

"Still, it's better'n nothing. Got any terbacker about yer?"

"No, we haven't!"

The Moocher turned his evil eyes upon the two pale and silent girls. He made a sign to them to approach, of which they took no notice.

"Come 'ere," said the Moocher.

Temple & Co. stirred restlessly. They had allowed themselves to be bullied out of their picnic. But if the Moocher sought to molest the girls, they were ready for a struggle, whatever the consequences.

"You 'ear me!" said the Moocher sharply. "Come and kiss your uncle!"

Perhaps the Moocher intended to be humorous, but his hideous looks terrified the two girls. They drew further away from him, holding each other by the hand, and trembling. An angry light gleamed in the Moocher's eyes.

"Come 'ere," he roared, "or I'll come and fetch yer!" He rose to his feet.

Temple & Co. exchanged a look, and lined up between the

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girls and the ruffian. They were very white now, but very determined.

"Stand back, you horrible cad!" said Temple.

The Moocher grasped his cudgel.

"Git out of the way!" he said, in a low, savage voice, and the blaze in his evil eyes was perfectly murderous.

"Look here, I tell you—"

The Moocher made a forward movement.

"Cut for it, Miss Hazeldene!" exclaimed Temple. "We'll stop the brute!"

There was a sudden shout from the entrance to the priory, and six or seven juniors came dashing in.

"There they are!" roared Bob Cherry. "There's our picnic!"

The Removites had arrived.

If the Moocher had not been there, Temple, Dabney & Co. would have been very unpleasantly surprised by the coming of the Removites. As it was, however, they could have hugged them with joy.

"Help!" yelled Temple. "Help! Rescue, Greyfriars!"

"My only hat!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he recognised the Moocher, and took in the state of affairs. "File in, you fellows!"

The Moocher swung round to face the new enemy. But his savage looks and his brandished cudgel did not daunt the Removites. They came on without a pause, and flung themselves upon the ruffian like hounds upon a wolf.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Remove to the Rescue.

THE Moocher was taken at a disadvantage. As he faced the Removites, his cudgel swinging up for a murderous blow, Phipps leaped at him from behind, and caught his arm and dragged upon it, and he could not strike. He had wrenched his right arm free in another moment—but his chance of using the cudgel was gone—the juniors were upon him, piling on him fiercely. Under their rush the Moocher staggered backwards, and he fell with a crash, with the Greyfriars fellows scrambling over him like cats.

The Moocher struggled madly; but the juniors had him down, and they kept him there.

Temple & Co. added their weight, and the Moocher was crushed to the earth, gasping and panting under the juniors.

"Got him!" said Bob Cherry.

"The gotfulness is terrific!" panted the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, thank goodness you came!" panted Marjorie, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, I am so glad you came!"

Harry Wharton rose breathlessly. The Moocher was held by so many hands that he could not stir more than a finger. He lay gasping, and a stream of horrid language poured from his lips. Bob Cherry soon put a stop to that. He caught up a handful of moss, and jammed it, roots and earth and all, into the mouth of the Moocher, and rammed it well home with his fist. And the Moocher spluttered into choked silence.

"I'm glad we came!" said Wharton. "We seem to have been wanted."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Temple.

"So you came to the picnic after all, Marjorie!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "It wasn't you that sent the telegram to Wharton."

Marjorie looked astonished.

"I? I certainly didn't send any telegram," she replied.

"Show it to her, Harry!"

Wharton drew the telegram from his pocket, and held it out. Marjorie looked at it in astonishment, and shook her head.

"I know nothing about it," she said. "They are my initials, of course; but I did not send the telegram!"

"It's a jape!" said Miss Clara, and her eyes turned severely and accusingly upon Temple, who turned very red.

"Did you send this, Temple?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Well, you see—"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"A jape's a jape!" he said. "But signing a telegram with somebody's else's initials is jolly near forgery, Temple."

"I didn't!" said Temple warmly. "That telegram is signed with the initials of the person who sent it."

"You've heard Miss Hazeldene say—"

"Miss Hazeldene isn't the only person whose initials are 'M. H.,'" said Temple, with a grin. "There is Hughes of our Form—Maurice Hughes!"

"Why, you awful spoofer—"

Temple turned to Marjorie with a penitent look.

"We're awfully sorry, Miss Hazeldene!" he said. "Only—only we meant to raid the Remove picnic, you know, and

so we got Hughes to wire to Wharton. If he chose to think that M. H. stood for Marjorie Hazeldene, instead of for Maurice Hughes, that was his own bizney!"

"You spoofing boulder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. Marjorie laughed.

"We thought it had come from you, Marjorie, of course!" said Harry wrathfully. "It wasn't till Hazel cycled over to Cliff House, and came back, that we guessed. Then we came here. Jolly lucky for these boulders that we came, too, as it turns out. They raided our picnic, and a jolly muck they made of it."

"Well, I don't think even Temple will call it a howling success!" grinned Nugent. "It would serve 'em right to leave 'em here to settle with the Moocher by themselves."

"You won't do that!" exclaimed Marjorie, in alarm. Nugent chuckled.

"Look here—" "Of course not; but it would serve 'em right. The best thing you Fourth-Form-boulders can do is to clear out."

"Oh, buzz off—or we'll bump you before you go!" As there were seven Removites to four of the Fourth, that would have been easy; and Temple, Dabney & Co. felt that they could only retreat.

"Never mind!" grinned Fry. "We've had the picnic, anyway!"

"It seems to me that the Moocher's had the picnic," chuckled Johnny Bull. "You've been done all along the line. Did he make you wait on him?"

Temple did not answer that question. The heroes of the Fourth picked up their lunch-basket and what was left of their crockery, and departed, rather crestfallen. The japo on the Remove had certainly been successful, but it had ended in a way that was not at all to the credit of the Fourth. Temple, Dabney & Co. had scored a very doubtful victory.

"Now, what are we going to do with the Moocher?" said Mark Linley.

"You'd better lemme go!" mumbled the Moocher, through the mouthful of moss and grit. "I'll out some of yer for this 'ere!"

"Shut up!" said Wharton. "Look here, the fellow ought to be in prison! We bumped him, and warned him to scoot, and he wouldn't go! He ought to be locked up!"

The Moocher looked alarmed. There were enough of the juniors to take him to the station if they chose to do it, and the Moocher was on the worst possible terms with the police. Little misunderstandings with regard to the ownership of watches and purses had caused strained relations between the Moocher and the Force for many years.

"He can be charged with assault," said Nugent thoughtfully.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Seems to me that we've done most of the assaulting, and the battering as well," he remarked.

"But he ought to be locked up!" said Wharton. "He's a dangerous ruffian, and I expect there are lots of things against him that would come out if he were once locked up. Look here, he's not safe to let go! We'll tie him up to this tree, and send word to the police at Courtfield to fetch him."

"Good egg!"

"We shall have to go over to the police-court at Courtfield to charge him; but that will be a holiday for us!" Johnny Bull remarked. "Better than grinding Latin in the Form-room, you fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good! That's settled, then!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll fasten him up, and telephone to Courtfield from Pegg."

The suggestion was unanimously approved with the exception, of course, of the Moocher. He did not like the idea at all; but he was not consulted. There was no cord to be had, but the deficiency was supplied by the Moocher's coat being torn into strips for the purpose. He was bound hand and foot, and then he was placed in a sitting-position against the tree-trunk, and tied there.

The Moocher's face was black with rage. But a fresh chunk of moss jammed into his mouth cut short his expostulations and his bad language at the same moment.

Marjorie and Clara were smiling now. The once terrible Moocher was quite helpless, and powerless to do harm.

"The picnic's off, owing to those Fourth Form boulders," said Harry Wharton ruefully. "But we can see you home to Cliff House."

And the Removites and the two girls quitted the old priory together, and walked through the wood to Pegg Bay. At the gate of Cliff House they parted, Marjorie and Clara promising that another picnic should take the place of the one that had been spoiled by the plotters of the Greyfriars Fourth.

After leaving Marjorie and Clara, Harry Wharton & Co. hurried to the post-office, and there rang up the police-station at Courtfield, and gave particulars of the Moocher's position. Then, satisfied that the ruffian would be well looked after, they walked back to Greyfriars.

When they entered the School House, in the dusk of even-

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ing, they found that the story of the picnic had already been told. Temple, Dabney & Co. had given their account of the affair, and they had judiciously left out all mention of the Moocher.

"Done again!" said Bolsover, with a sneer, as the juniors came in. "I should think that you were getting tired of being licked by the Fourth."

"They wouldn't have taken me in like that," said Billy Bunter, with a shake of the head.

The chums of the Remove did not stop to reply. They had remembered the provisions left upon the study table, and they hurried up to Study No. 1 to see if they were still there, not with much hope of seeing them. They found the table quite bare.

"Bunter, of course!" growled Nugent. "Well, it serves us right for being such asses! We have been done, and there's no getting out of that. Temple has had first whack, and it's not much good our trotting out the Moocher now. Whatever the Moocher did to them, it doesn't alter the fact that they bagged our giddy picnic."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"But we'll make them sit up for it," he said.

"Looks to me as if we're doing all the sitting up!"

growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, it's some satisfaction for the Moocher to go to chokey," Bob Cherry remarked.

And the juniors agreed that it was. But even that satisfaction was to be denied to the Removites. For the next morning they learned that the police had visited the priory to look for the Moocher, but they had not found him. The ruffian had succeeded in freeing himself from his bonds, and he was gone, and three constables returned empty-handed to Courtfield.

The chums of the Remove wondered whether they had seen the last of the Moocher—and Bolsover minor wondered, too. Harry Wharton did his best to reassure the fag, but Billy could not help feeling that the Moocher was not gone for good—and Billy was right!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Done Brown!

TEMPLE, Dabney & Co. had triumphed. There was no doubt about that. Only themselves had witnessed the ridiculous scene at the old priory, where they had waited upon the Moocher and fed him at his order; and they were very careful not to describe that scene in the account of the affair which they gave at Greyfriars. All the Greyfriars fellows heard about it, was that they had bagged the Remove-picnic, and had entertained the Cliff House girls instead of Harry Wharton & Co., and the Greyfriars fellows laughed and chuckled over the story. The Removites were furious, and they laid many schemes for getting even with the Fourth; but a really good scheme was still wanting. The Fourth-Formers smiled superior at the Remove, and Coker, of the Fifth, was heard to say that it was really time those cheeky fags were put in their place.

"Cheeky fags!" growled Bob Cherry, in Study No. 1. "It was the cheeky fags who tackled the Moocher, anyway. Coker ran away from him, and the Fourth Form boulders couldn't touch him! I'd like to know what would have happened to them if we hadn't come on the scene! Phipps still has a fose like a prize beetroot!"

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"We've got to stop the Fourth Form crowing, somehow," he said. "I'm getting fed up with their cackling over bagging the picnic."

"Well, they did us brown!" said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, rot! Anybody could send a spoof telegram!"

"We oughtn't to have been taken in," said Nugent, with a shake of the head. "I jolly well wish the Moocher would turn up again, and drop on them. We'd leave them to get out of the scrape by themselves next time."

"And he actually made them wait on him, you know, and serve him with grub!" said Bob Cherry. "I heard it all from Clara. The asses! And they've got the nerve to crow over us after that!"

"Oh, blow the Fourth and their crowing!" said Johnny Bull. "Let's get to bizney!"

The juniors had met in Study No. 1 for a rehearsal of the Remove Dramatic Society; but the talk had turned upon their dispute with the Fourth—as it generally did when two or three of the Remove were gathered together. Harry Wharton nodded, and opened the locker in which the costumes were kept. The Remove dramatists were planning to give a representation of "Othello" at an early date, and the chums had assigned themselves the chief parts. Harry Wharton was to be Othello, and he had industriously learned up the lines, and had laid in a special supply of paint for the part. In the Venetian costume, and with his face tinted to

a blackish-brown, he made a very convincing Moor of Venice. Bob Cherry was Cassio, and Johnny Bull was the villainous Iago, and Frank Nugent had been cast for the part of Desdemona—his smooth, handsome face and fair hair enabling him to make up as a feminine character very successfully.

Harry Wharton uttered an exclamation as he opened the locker.

"Hallo! What's the matter here?"

"Nothing wrong with the props., is there?" asked Bob Cherry anxiously.

"Somebody's been at the locker!" said Wharton wrathfully. "The lock's busted! Look here—it's been prised open!"

Exclamations of wrath came from the juniors. They scented the Fourth-Formers in everything that went wrong now, and they had no doubt that Temple, Dabney & Co. had been at the costumes.

"Let's see what the bounders have done to them!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

Wharton turned the costumes and the grease-paints out. The juniors examined them anxiously, but nothing seemed to be wrong, and they were greatly relieved.

"The bounders!" said Wharton. "I remember, now, seeing Temple in the Remove passage just before dinner, and he bolted when he caught sight of me. I suppose he came here to bag the costumes, and he didn't have time."

"Well, it's all right, as he didn't have time," said Bob Cherry, in great relief. "The things seem to be all right."

"Yes; there's nothing wrong that I can see. Tumble into them. We've got nearly an hour before afternoon school, and we can have a good rehearsal."

And the juniors lost no time. Harry Wharton arrayed himself in the garb of Othello, and coloured up his face before the glass. That was quick work. He simply had to reduce his complexion to a very dark brown. He looked rather puzzled, however.

"This stuff seems jolly sticky!" he said.

"Well, it's always sticky, isn't it?"

"Yes; but it seems different from usual. Still, it's all right."

"You look a jolly good Othello!" said Bob Cherry admiringly. "The complexion goes on a treat! Now, then, where do we begin?"

"Scene before the Duke. The bookcase is the Duke of Venice."

"Good! And the chairs are the courtiers. Buck up, Desdemona!"

"I'm ready!" said Nugent, coming forward with a rustle of skirts. "You get off the scene, Bob! You're dead in this act!"

"All serene!"

The enthusiastic dramatists of the Remove forgot about the Fourth Form, and everything else, as the rehearsal proceeded. Their voices rolled through the study, and fellows came along the Remove passage to listen. Wharton delivered his lines splendidly, and with great effect.

The juniors went right through that great scene, leaving out the Duke's lines, as the study bookcase was not endowed with the gift of speech. They were going over it again, and Wharton's voice was rolling out Othello's famous lines, when the bell rang for lessons.

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed,

And I loved her that she did pity them!"

"Ting-ting-ting-ting!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there goes the giddy bell!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, interrupting Othello. "Chuck it, you chaps!"

The dramatists divested themselves of their costumes at record speed. As frequently happened when they were rehearsing, they had lost count of time and space. The costumes were ripped off in next to no time.

"Buzz off, you fellows!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I shall have to get into the bath-room to wash this stuff off. I'll be after you in a jiffy."

"Right you are!"

The juniors hurried out of the study, and Wharton ran into the nearest bath-room, while the other fellows ran downstairs to the Form-room. As a rule, Wharton did not need more than a few minutes to clean his face of the grease-paint. He turned on the hot-water tap in the bath, and washed and sponged at his face industriously with a thick lather of soap, and in his hurry he hardly noticed that the water seemed less coloured than usual with the paint.

He dabbed at his face with a towel, and as no paint came off on the towel, he concluded that his face was clean. He hurriedly adjusted his collar and tie, and tore downstairs after his chums.

Quick as he was, the first lesson had already commenced in the Remove Form-room when he entered it. Mr. Quelch was at his desk, turning over some papers, and Wharton entered quickly, and tried to slip into his place in the Form without

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attracting attention. But a sudden astonished buzz rose from the Remove as Wharton came in, and Mr. Quelch glanced round.

"Wharton, you are late—good heavens!"

Wharton stopped.

He had not been able to escape Mr. Quelch's eagle eye, and he stood waiting for the fifty lines he expected for being late.

But Mr. Quelch did not rap out—"Fifty lines; go to your place," as the captain of the Remove expected.

He stood gazing at Wharton with an amazement in his face that astounded the junior. His mouth was open, but he seemed unable to speak.

Wharton stared at him, not understanding. He was late, certainly; but it was not an uncommon thing for a junior to be late for class, and an imposition generally settled the matter. Surely it was no reason for the Form-master to stare at him as if he were a spectre.

"Wharton!" gasped Mr. Quelch at last.

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"What—what does this mean?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean to be late, but——"

"Wharton!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Wharton, more and more amazed. Mr. Quelch was growing purple with anger, apparently without cause.

"How dare you!" shrieked the Remove-master.

"I couldn't help it, sir."

"Boy! How dare you! Wharton——" Mr. Quelch's voice failed him.

"I—I've been late before, sir," stammered Wharton. "I'm sorry, sir."

"Wharton! This insolence——"

"Oh, sir!"

"This—this unexampled insolence!"

"Insolence, sir!" said Wharton, astounded. "I'm sure I didn't mean it, sir. I was detained for a few minutes getting ready to come in to class, sir."

The words seemed only to add fuel to the flame of Mr. Quelch's anger.

"Getting ready, Wharton!" he shouted.

"Yes, sir."

"You—you mean to tell me, sir, that you deliberately got ready to come into class like this!" raved Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir. I hurried as much as I could, but I had to stop and give my face a rub."

"Wharton! How dare you! I am amazed! I think you must have taken leave of your senses!" gasped the Form-master. "I can only conclude, Wharton, that this is a piece of the most deliberate insolence."

Wharton felt as if his head were turning round. He could see no reason whatever for Mr. Quelch's excitement. The whole Form, too, seemed strangely unquiet. Some of them were staring, and some chuckling, and some looked scared.

"Wharton!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir!"

"Come here—come here at once."

"Certainly, sir."

Harry Wharton advanced towards the Form-master's desk rather reluctantly. Mr. Quelch had taken up his cane, and his looks showed that he intended to use it.

"I am amazed at this, Wharton; you are generally an orderly boy. But I shall show you, sir, that you cannot make fun of your Form-master with impunity. Hold out your hand!"

Wharton almost staggered.

"Make fun of you, sir," he stuttered.

"That must have been your intention. You can have had no other. I have a mind, sir, to take you in to the Head, and show you to him in your present state!" roared Mr. Quelch. "You deserve to be expelled from Greyfriars for this!"

"I, sir! What have I done?" gasped Wharton, in utter dismay.

Mr. Quelch seemed about to explode.

"I—I—I— Hold out your hand!"

Frank Nugent jumped up.

"If—if you please, sir, there's some trick about this!" he exclaimed hastily. "Wharton didn't mean it, sir. I'm sure of that. There's something wrong with the paint."

"Paint!" gasped Harry.

Mr. Quelch paused.

"Is it possible, Wharton, that you do not know the state your face is in?" he exclaimed.

"M-m-my face, sir!" ejaculated the unfortunate junior.

"Yes!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Your face!"

"W-w-w-what's the matter with my face, sir?"

"Matter, boy! If you do not know, look in a glass—if there is a glass here."

"I have a pocket mirror, sir," said Lord Mauleverer, the

dandy of the Remove. "It's quite at your service, Wharton, my dear fellow, begad!"

He handed the mirror to Wharton. The latter took it with a dazed expression. It seemed to him as if Mr. Quelch and the whole Remove had gone crazy.

"Now, look at your face, and tell me what you mean by coming into the Form-room in that state!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Wharton raised the mirror, and looked at his reflection in it. He uttered a startled cry as he saw, instead of his own familiar features, the brown face of Othello staring at him from the glass. The mirror dropped from his hand, and was shattered into a score of fragments upon the floor.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Complexion that Didn't Come Off!

"**B**EGAD," ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, "that's my mirror, you know!"

Wharton stood dazed.

"Well, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch ominously, "what have you to say?"

"I—I—I—"

"If you did not deliberately black your face before coming here, how did it come to be in that state? Explain yourself, if this is not an utterly stupid and idiotic joke!"

"I—I—I—"

"You will not say, I presume, that your face was blacked without your knowledge!" said Mr. Quelch, growing heavily sarcastic.

"N-n-no, sir!" stammered Wharton.

"You blacked it yourself?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then hold out your hand."

"I—I—I—I don't understand it, sir," stammered Wharton.

"There must have been something wrong with the paint. I washed my face in hot water before I came down. I was in a hurry to get into class, and didn't stop to look in a glass. I thought it was all right. The paint usually comes off quite easily."

"You mean to tell me you did not know it was black?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch laid down his cane. He knew that Harry Wharton never told an untruth.

"But what did you black your face in the first place for?" he demanded.

"We've been rehearsing, sir. I was Othello," Wharton explained breathlessly. "I—I don't know how the paint comes to stick on like this. I suppose it's a jape—somebody's been meddling with my paint."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove, forgetting that they were in the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch tried to frown, but he could not; he smiled instead, in spite of himself, and the smile broadened into a laugh.

"This is utterly ridiculous!" he exclaimed. "If you did not know that your face was in that state, Wharton, I pardon you, of course. But you should certainly be more careful in using paint on your face. Go at once and scrub it off."

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

Wharton rushed away to the bath-room, and turned on the hot-water tap again, and rubbed furiously at his face. He understood now what had happened, and why the locker in his study had been opened. It was another little joke of the Fourth-Formers.

That was why Temple, of the Fourth, had paid his visit to the Remove quarters. He had not touched the costumes, but he had removed the harmless grease-paint, and replaced it with something else of an indelible nature.

Wharton scrubbed at his face till the skin seemed to be coming off, and then rushed away for a glass. A face still of a brownish tint looked back at him from the glass.

"Oh, the rotters!" gasped Wharton, in dismay. "It won't come off!"

He returned to the bath-room, and scrubbed. He desisted at last from sheer fatigue, with a feeling all-over his face as if it had been recently skinned. But his complexion was still of a yellowish-brown, and he realised that he would have to give it up, and leave his complexion to wear off with time. He put on his collar, and returned to the Form-room, in a very heated frame of mind.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him as he came in.

"You have not cleaned your face, Wharton!"

"I've done all I could, sir!" gasped Wharton. "It—it won't come off!"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"This is serious!" he exclaimed. "Do you know who played this trick with the paint, Wharton?"

"I—I couldn't say for certain, sir."

Wharton was furious, but he had no intention of giving Temple away. He had had a very unpleasant experience, but he did not mean to sneak.

"Very well, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch; "I understand. You may go to your place, and pray be more careful in such matters in future."

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"Yes, sir."

Wharton sat down at his desk, breathing hard. He expected sympathy from the other fellows, but they appeared to regard the matter in a comic light—at all events, they only grinned.

"It was Temple, of course!" Wharton muttered to Nugent as he sat down. "He must have changed the paint. That was what he went to the locker for!"

"Quite so! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Wharton warmly.

"Oh, nothing! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Quelch.

He did not speak very sharply; he was smiling himself. He could not help it when he glanced at Wharton's yellowish complexion. Hitherto only one yellow face had been seen in the Remove Form-room, that of Wun Lung, the Chinese. Now there were two, and Wharton's was the yellower of the two.

Wharton did not enjoy that afternoon. Whenever any fellow looked at him, he seemed unable to help chuckling, and by the time classes were dismissed, Wharton was in a state of mind bordering on frenzy.

Matters were no better—in fact, rather worse—when the Form were dismissed.

When they came out of the Form-room, they found the Fourth already out, and a crowd of the Fourth-Formers were waiting for them. A yell of laughter went up from Temple, Dabney & Co. as they caught sight of Harry Wharton.

"Good old Othello!" roared Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not the smile that won't come off, it's the complexion that won't come off!" yelled Phipps.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it Othello, or is it Li Hung Chang?" asked Fry.

"Looks like a Guy Fawkes mask!"

"Or a Chinese mandarin!"

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Coker, of the Fifth, coming along the passage with Greene and Potter. "What on earth have you been doing to your chivvy, Wharton?"

"It's yellow fever!" said Potter, in affected alarm.

"Keep away from him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton glared at his tormentors.

"You silly asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The exasperated Removite made a furious rush at Temple.

The Fourth-Formers fled into the Close, yelling.

"Keep away from him!"

"It's yellow fever!"

"Or smallpox!"

"Mind you don't get infected!"

Wharton paused in the passage, looking as crimson as he could look through his yellow-brown complexion. Even the Removites were yelling with laughter; they could not help it.

"Done brown this time!" grinned Hoskins, of the Shell.

"Done yellow, you mean!" chuckled Bolsover.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton stalked away to his study in a furious temper.

In his present state he did not care to show himself to the school, and he wondered furiously how long his present complexion would cling to him.

Frank Nugent looked into the study a few minutes later, trying hard not to grin—hard, but not very successfully.

"You're coming down to the cricket, Harry?" he asked.

"No!" roared Wharton.

"But I say—"

"Oh, get out, you grinning ass!"

"I—I'm not grinning—really! Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean—"

"Buzz off, you silly fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a rotten shame, but— Ha, ha! Oh!"

Nugent dodged out of the study just in time to escape a Latin dictionary that came hurtling through the air.

Wharton remained alone, yellow and furious. Bob Cherry opened the door, and closed it again as an inkpot whizzed towards him. After that, Wharton was left alone in his glory. But from below he could still hear the sound of irrepressible laughter.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Encore the Mocher.

FOR two days Harry Wharton's complexion retained an original and most striking tone. It faded gradually to a very pale yellow, and on the third day it was almost imperceptible. For those days his temper was not at its best. His look was so comic that his own chums,

with the best intentions in the world, could not help smiling when they saw him. Anyone who had made Harry Wharton's acquaintance for the first time during those days would have set him down as a most irritable fellow. There were even smiles in chapel on Sunday when he appeared there with the Remove. There were always broad grins in the Form-room.

Temple, Dabney & Co. enjoyed it. Temple had done his work quite thoroughly with the paint. It had been more effective than he had intended; he had not dreamed that the traces of it would remain so long. But he took all the credit to himself, and the Fourth Form chuckled loud and long over Wharton's peculiar complexion.

To questions as to whether he had an attack of jaundice, or whether he was making up as a Chinaman for a fancy-dress ball, Wharton returned very snappish answers, and sometimes a punch on the nose of the questioner.

But as the days passed on the complexion passed off, and the captain of the Remove was himself again.

One thing was quite clear to Wharton's mind—the Fourth Form had to be downed, and downed promptly, if he was to have any peace in the Remove.

When his complexion approached once more to its natural tone, and he could talk to his chums without seeing them grinning at him, they discussed the subject earnestly.

And, as was usually the case when Harry Wharton set his mind to a thing, he hit upon a plan at last—a plan that made him chuckle aloud as he thought of it. He called Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull into his study to tea, and broached the subject over that cheerful meal.

"I've got a wheeze—" he began.

"Good!" said Bob Cherry, helping himself to a fourth egg. "I hope it's a good one. I'm getting fed-up with the cackling of the Fourth!"

"Same here," remarked Nugent.

"The Moocher hasn't turned up," said Harry Wharton. "It's four days since we've seen him, and he seems to have cleared out of the neighbourhood."

"He'll turn up again, like the bad penny," said Nugent sagely. "You don't get rid of a chap like that very easily, when he's after the cash. He thinks he can get some out of Bolsover minor, and he'll come for it."

"I shouldn't wonder. What do you think of starting him on the Fourth again? You know how he did Temple & Co. in the old priory. Suppose he walked into Temple's study here, when those rotters are at tea?"

"Phew! I should like to see Temple's face, if he did!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"It would be worth seeing!" grinned Nugent. "But it's impossible. We couldn't make any terms with such a scoundrel; and, if we did, he couldn't come here. He'd never get into the House, if he even got in past the gates."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"It's impossible, old man!" he said.

"I'm not thinking of that Moocher. Any old Moocher would do," said Harry Wharton coolly. "What's the good of being an amateur dramatic society if we can't make-up?"

"Make-up!" ejaculated the three juniors together.

"Exactly!"

"My word!"

"We've got all the stuff," said Harry. "It would be easier to make-up as an old ragbag like the Moocher than as Hamlet or King Lear, and we've done that. The Moocher has a very prominent red nose, and a complexion like brandy, and anybody could make-up like that. We can buy the clothes in Courtfield."

"Great Scott!"

"You remember the time you fellows made me up as the actor chap who was coming down to help Coker & Co. in a performance? Well, you could make me up as the Moocher, and it would be much easier."

The Removites burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Rippling!"

"His voice was like sawing wood," went on Wharton. "I could imitate it easily enough. What do you fellows say?"

"Splendid!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I could make up in this study—and it's only a few steps to the Fourth-Form passage," said Harry. "When the coast was clear, I could slip through, and enter their study suddenly, while they're at tea. If I had a big cudgel under my arm, and they believed I was really the Moocher, they would take it as quietly as lambs. I'd lock the door as soon as I got inside, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll make them feed me and wait on me, just as the real Moocher did," grinned Wharton. "What price that for a wheeze?"

The Removites yelled. Bob Cherry, in his exuberant

delight, jumped up and executed a wild cakewalk round the study table.

"If it works!" he trilled. "If it only works!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, it will work!" said Wharton confidently. "Anyway, we can but try. And if Temple & Co. are shown up like that with a crowd in the passage ready to yell at them as soon as the game is given away, I fancy they can be considered done and downed!"

"What-ho! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Four chuckled over the scheme all through tea-time. Outside the study not a word was said. Not even to their most intimate friends did they breathe a word of the intended jape upon the Fourth. They laid all the plans that evening, and the next day they proceeded to carry them out. Wharton cycled over to Courtfield to the costumier's, and spent an hour or more selecting the necessary rags and tatters, as closely resembling those worn by the Moocher at the old priory as possible. He brought them back to the school in a bag, and they were tried on before afternoon lessons.

"You'll want a little padding out," grinned Nugent. "You're jolly near as tall as the Moocher, only he's wider! You can have hobnailed boots on to make you a bit longer, and padding all over you. The padding may come in useful, too, if the Fourth should show fight, and lay into you with cricket-stumps or the study poker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They won't do that," said Harry, laughing. "Besides, you fellows can be close at hand, ready to come to the rescue if I want help."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurreo Jamset Ram Singh.

And the juniors went in to afternoon lessons in the greatest of spirits. Meanwhile, Temple, Dabney & Co. were still enjoying their triumph. Temple's opinion was that the Remove were downed for good. Harry Wharton was the most resourceful of the Lower Fourth, and he seemed to be taking his punishment lying down. And the Fourth Former triumphed—a little too soon, as a matter of fact.

Immediately after afternoon lessons that day, Harry Wharton & Co. retired to No. 1 Study, and the bag containing the disguise to be worn by the new Moocher was taken out of its hiding-place. They locked the door, and set to work.

"Temple's having tea at six," said Nugent. "He's asked Phipps and Hughes into the study to tea—I heard him. There will be five of them there!"

"Wouldn't make any difference if there were fifty," said Wharton confidently. "They wouldn't tackle a dangerous ruffian like the Moocher."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton did not remove his own clothes. He required a good deal of padding to assume the thick-set proportions of the Moocher, and the clothes helped. The juniors padded him out, inside the tattered garments, and he donned the heavy hobnailed boots. He already looked a savage ruffian, with the exception of his handsome laughing face.

"Now for the chivvy!" said Nugent.

The face required more careful handling. Wharton stood before the glass for nearly half an hour making himself up. The thick stubble of beard was fastened on, with the ragged, unkempt moustache, the nose was enlarged by a stage attachment, and coloured up to the required hue. False hair was mingled with his own, and the whole brought to the reddish dirty-tinge belonging to the hirsute adornments of the true Moocher. The teeth were blackened, the skin stained, and lines traced upon it. Wharton stuck out his chin in the aggressive manner of the Moocher, and put a clay pipe in the corner of his mouth. The effect was marvellous.

"Great Christopher Columbus!" gasped Nugent. "If I hadn't had a hand in it myself, I should think it was the giddy Moocher!"

"My hat! Oh, rather!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Whatcher gittin' at?" demanded Wharton, in an imitation of the Moocher's dulcet tones, that made the juniors shriek. "Ain't I as good as you are? That's wot I wanten know? Who are you gittin' at, you scum—ch? Crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think I shall do?" asked Harry, in his natural voice, laughing.

"Great Scott! Rather! It's a picture—the Moocher's own portrait!"

"Voice and all!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Oh! To see Temple's face when you walk in!" sighed Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Six o'clock rang out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars.

Wharton started.

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"They'll be in their study now!" he said.
"Better do some scouting," Nugent remarked.
"Good! Buck up!"

Frank Nugent quitted No. 1 Study. He returned in a few minutes, grinning.

"All serene!" he said. "They're in their study—Phipps was the last in, and I watched them from the passage. Temple called out to me—ahem!"

"What did he say?"

"Oh, nothing in particular!"

"You ass!" said Wharton. "Why can't you tell us what he said?"

"Well—ahem—"

"Well, what?"

"Ahem! He asked how your complexion was getting on, that's all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton turned red, though it did not show through the make-up on his face.

"Oh, rats!" he said. "Look here, I'm ready! You fellows watch in the passage, and tell me when the coast is clear—and I'll slip round. We don't want any of the Fourth to spot me coming into the passage."

"Right you are!"

"Better take the other chaps into it now," Nugent suggested.

"Good egg!"

Nugent ran along the Remove passage. In five minutes Tom Brown and Bulstrode, and Mark Linley, and Penfold, and Mauleverer, and Ogilvy, and Leigh, and Morgan, and Micky Desmond, and half a dozen more fellows, were crowding in the study, almost suffocating with suppressed laughter as they looked at the new Moocher.

"You fellows line the passages and pick a row with any Fourth-Former who comes along, to keep him off the grass," said Wharton.

"What-ho!"

And as soon as the coast was quite clear the junior Moocher slipped out of No. 1 Study, and hurried to the Fourth Form passage.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Jape.

TEMPLE sat at his table in his study, smiling serenely. Temple was in high good humour. His admiring followers were sitting round the table, smiling cheerfully like their leader. They had reason for their cheerful smiles. The table was spread with good things. Temple, who always had plenty of money, was standing a handsome feed in the most lavish way. Temple liked admiration from his followers, and his followers would have admired him to any extent for feeds like that. And their triumph over the Remove still shed its lustre upon the study.

"We've downed 'em!" said Fry, for the tenth time. "We turned their giddy hosepipe jape against 'em! We licked 'em in the dorm. tussle. We bagged their picnic. We gave their giddy leader a complexion that wouldn't come off. I think we might give the poor little beasts a rest now!"

"Yes, certainly!" said Temple loftily. "So long as they know their place, you know. Only so long as they know their place."

"Oh, of course! We must never allow the Remove to get their ears up again," said Temple. "Now, we've got the cheeky fags under we'll keep 'em there!"

"What-ho!" said Hughes. "Keep 'em under—that's the ticket!"

"Pass the toast!" said Phipps. "My hat! I think we've made it pretty clear that we're the top Form, and that the Remove had better mind their p's and q's."

"What-ho! Ha, ha, ha!"

The handle of the door turned. Temple looked round.

"Who the dickens is that coming in without knocking? Look here— Oh, my hat!"

Temple jumped up in blank amazement. It was no wonder that he was surprised.

The dirty, disreputable figure that entered was enough to surprise anybody.

"Oh!" murmured Fry. "The Moocher!"

"Oh, rather!" gasped Dabney.

"The Moocher—here!"

"The cheeky scoundrel!"

The five juniors were upon their feet now. The Moocher snapped the door shut behind him, and felt in the lock for the key. The key was not there. He stood with his back to the door, and regarded the Fourth-Formers grimly.

"Appy to meet you again, young gents!" he said.

"Look here!" blustered Temple. "You get out! How dare you come here! The police are looking for you! Blessed if I know how you managed to sneak into the school—but you'd better sneak out again as fast as you can, if you know what's good for you!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "We've only got to call

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out, and you'll have fifty chaps on you. You'd better go while you have the chance."

The Moocher showed his blackened teeth in an unpleasant grin, and swung his heavy bludgeon in the air.

"If any of you young gents calls out," he said hoarsely, "I reckon it will be the last time you'll ever call. You savvy?"

The Fourth-Formers exchanged glances. They had had experience of the desperate nature of the ruffian. They knew that the Moocher—the ruffian they had met at the old priory—would have no scruple whatever in rushing upon them and battering them with his bludgeon.

And the bronze-red face and the bleary eyes seemed to show that the Moocher had been drinking, and was therefore more reckless and dangerous than ever.

"I—I say," muttered Temple, with a longing glance towards the door, and becoming much more civil in his mode of address to the terrible Moocher—"I say, you can't come here, you know. It's not allowed, you know."

"Not at all," said Phipps, feeling his nose, which had not quite lost the big swelling caused by the Moocher's heavy fist. "You'd better cut, you know. You had really."

"Plh cut when I choose, and not afore!" said the ruffian. "I was 'aving tea nice and comfy with you young gents when I was stopped afore. I'm goin' to 'ave tea with you again now. You catch on?"

"But you—you can't, you know," said Fry feebly.

"Who says I can't?" roared the Moocher.

"I—I didn't mean exactly that!" gasped Fry, dodging round the table. "What—what I really meant to say was—that we should be very pleased."

"That's better!" said the ruffian. "Where's the key of this 'ere door?"

"I—I—I think it's lost!"

"You'd better find it!" said the Moocher. "If that there key ain't found I shall get rorty. I ain't nice when I'm rorty. I warn yer!"

"The—the key's on the mantelpiece, I think," muttered Temple.

If the Moocher had crossed from the door to the mantelpiece the Fourth-Formers would have made a desperate rush to escape from the study. But the Moocher evidently knew a trick worth two or three of that. He grinned unpleasantly.

"And me the key," he said. "You with the nose, 'and me that key. Sharp!"

Phipps, not over-pleased at being thus described, sullenly took the key from the mantelpiece and handed it to the Moocher. The ruffian inserted it in the lock, without turning his back on the restive juniors, locked the door securely, and then placed the key in one of his ragged pockets.

"Ere we are, all alone and comfy," he said. "Now, I'm goin' to 'ave tea with you young gents. Any objections?"

"N-n-no!" panted Temple. "Not at all! We—we're honoured!"

"You're goin' to wait on me 'and and foot," said the Moocher. "You're not goin' to call out to anybody that I'm 'ere. You savvy?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"If anybody comes to the door, you tell 'em what you like, only don't let on about me bein' here. You'll get 'urt if there's a row."

The Moocher drew a chair to the fire, and sat down so that he would have his face to the juniors all the time. If he had turned his back, Temple, Dabney & Co. might have tried a desperate rush. But they did not think of facing that murderous bludgeon. One doughty blow from that weapon would have stunned, if it had not fractured the skull of the recipient. The juniors could hardly be expected to face that. It was easier to feed the Moocher, as the ruffian demanded, and to trust to luck to get rid of him, and perhaps to punish him later.

"I'll 'ave tea," said the Moocher. "I don't want any of that old tea neither; you'll make me some nice fresh tea."

"All right!" said Phipps, with assumed cheerfulness. "I shall have to go down the passage and fill the kettle—"

"You'll 'ave to stay 'ere!" said the Moocher. "You don't go hout of this room."

"But—but if we haven't enough water here—"

"You'd better find enough, young feller-me-lad!"

"I—I think there's some in the jug, after all," said Temple faintly.

The Moocher chuckled—an ugly, murderous sort of chuckle, that almost made the blood of the Fourth-Formers run cold.

"I thort so!" he remarked. "I thort so! You're a nice deep young gent, ain't you—you with the smeller! You wasn't going to get 'elp to fire me out! Ho, no!"

"No—er—certainly not!" stammered Phipps, very much alarmed at the expression upon the Moocher's stubbly face.

"The—the idea never—er—entered my head!"

NEXT TUESDAY:

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early

"Don't tell lies!" said the Moocher.

"Ahem! You—you see—"

"Make that there tea—and look sharp, or you'll be in Queer Street!" said the Moocher. "I ain't come 'ere to talk. I've come 'ere to 'ave tea with you young gents. Wot 'ave you got 'ere to eat?"

"There's—there's ham and poached eggs and pickles," said Temple, in dismay. "You—you are very welcome to all of them, I assure you!"

"Course I am!" sneered the ruffian. "You ain't goin' to feed me becuz you're afraid to say no! Course not! Ho, ho!"

"We—we regard you as a guest," said Fry. "We—we want to make you comfortable in every possible way!"

"You'd better!" said the Moocher ominously.

"We—we want to. Shall I carve you some ham?"

"Yes—and liberal, too! You may as well 'and me the whole lot," said the Moocher. "I reckon I can shift that lot!"

"Ahem! Here you are!" said Temple, with heroic politeness. "I—I'm very glad that you have such a good appetite."

"Oh, come on!" said the Moocher. "And me the mustard, and shut up!"

Temple handed him the mustard, and shut up.

It all seemed like a nightmare to the Fourth-Formers. It was almost incredible that the Moocher should have forced his way into their study, in the school in this way; but here he was, master of the situation, and monarch of all he surveyed. Without risk of being chained by the formidable cudgel, the Fourth-Formers could not resist him; and the locked door cut off all chance of escape. To yell for help was to bring down upon themselves the instant murderous wrath of the Moocher.

Temple & Co. were helpless. Temple could not help wondering what Harry Wharton & Co. would have done under similar circumstances. He could not help thinking that Wharton would have found some less humiliating way out of the scrape. But Temple could not find one; all he could do was to take orders from the Moocher, and try to pacify the ruffian and keep him from reckless violence.

The Moocher, in spite of his statements, seemed to have lost most of the enormous appetite he had displayed at the picnic. He ate a good meal, but not more than a junior might have been expected to eat. And his efforts at that line soon slackened down.

He was nearly finished when a tap came at the door, and the handle was tried. The Moocher scowled ferociously, and made a gesture with his bludgeon.

"You know wotter expect if you gives me away!" he muttered threateningly.

"We—we shan't do that!" muttered Temple nervously.

"Of—of course, we wouldn't do anything of the sort."

"Mind you don't—that's all!"

The knock was repeated at the door, and the voice of Scott of the Fourth called in surprise through the keyhole:

"Hallo, in there! What have you got the door locked for?"

The Moocher made a threatening gesture to Temple; and the Fourth Form captain's voice shook a little as he answered the junior outside.

"It's all right, Scott! We're having tea."

"Well, can't you let a fellow in?" exclaimed Scott indignantly. "Do you think I want to scoff your jam-tarts, you silly ass?"

"You—you can't come in!"

"Why not?"

"Because you can't! We've—we've got a guest here. Buzz off!"

"Who's your guest?"

"Mind your own bizness! Clear out!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Scott. "Blessed if I don't think you're gone off your idiotic rockers!" And the Fourth-Formers bestowed a tremendous kick on the lower panels of the door, and departed in high dudgeon.

Temple breathed more freely when he was gone. At every moment he had expected to see the terrible Moocher take the alarm and jump up and lay about him savagely with his bludgeon. A struggle with the armed and powerful ruffian, with the door locked against help, would have been terrible.

"I'll 'ave some more 'am," said the Moocher.

"Here you are!" said Temple, glad enough that upon this occasion the supply was equal to the demand. "Heaps here!"

The Moocher sniffed at it, and tossed ham and plate and knife and fork into the fender. There was a crash, and the juniors started nervously. The Moocher grinned.

"Only my little way!" he remarked. "It's a little game I'm fond of. You young gents don't mind me smashin' a few crocks, I'm sure?"

"Oh—oh, no!" gasped Temple.

"And me the rest of 'em, then."

"Eh?"

"And me them crocks!" roared the Moocher.

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"Yes, yes! Certainly! Yes!"

In great haste Temple & Co. obeyed. They handed plates and teacups and saucers and other articles to the Moocher, and he piled them in the grate with successive crashes.

The juniors stood looking on in utter dismay. They could only hope in silent fervour that the Moocher's playfulness would stop at that, and that he would not pitch them after the crockeryware.

The crashing of the crockery rang out of the study, and was heard all along the Fourth Form passage. Fellows came along and thumped at the door and demanded what was the matter. The voices of Fifth Form fellows and Removites could be heard as well as of the Fourth. All the fellows whose quarters were near the Fourth Form passage could hear the terrific smashing in Temple's study, and were wondering and alarmed.

"What's the matter in there?" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Are you breaking up the happy home? All gone dotty, or what?"

"It's—it's all right!" panted Temple.

"Yes, it's all right!" roared the Moocher. "You keep off the grass, or you'll git a fat nose! You 'ear me?"

Temple & Co. stared in astonishment. The Moocher had given away his presence in the study now, with a vengeance. There was a roar of astonishment from the fellows crowding in the passage outside.

"Who's that?"

"What have you got in there, Temple?"

"I know that voice!" gasped Coker. "It's the man who stopped me in the lane the other day! I'd know that saw-mill voice anywhere."

"The Moocher!" yelled the voice of Frank Nugent. "Are you having another picnic, Temple?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass!" ejaculated Temple. "You've given it away now! You'll never be able to get out of the school now that you've brought a crowd round."

The Moocher grinned.

"I don't want'er git out," he said. "I ain't gittin' out. I'm goin' to stay in this 'ere school. It suits me."

"Oh, you're potty!" said Fry. "You know you can't stay here. You—"

"I'm what?" roared the Moocher.

"I—I mean, you are—are mistaken! You see—"

"Shut up!"

"Ahem!"

The Moocher rose to his feet and twirled the terrible bludgeon in his grimy hand. He gave the table a smashing blow, and that article of furniture rolled over into a corner of the room. The Fourth-Formers jumped out of the way, and crowded into another corner, pale with alarm. They did know what the Moocher would do next.

"I—I say!" stuttered Temple. "D-d-don't be a cad, you know. We've done our best to entertain you. We—we'll hand you some money if you like. Only go quietly."

"Quietly!" roared the Moocher. "No fear! I never go quietly! Fetch along yer police, and see me smash their nappers!"

"Oh, please, please, be quiet!" groaned Temple, at his wit's end.

Outside the study there was a roar. Half Greyfriars seemed to be there. There was a sharp knock at the door, and the voice of Wingate, the captain of the school, was heard.

"Temple!"

"Ye-es, Wingate!" jerked out Temple.

"Open this door at once!"

"I—I can't!"

"Why can't you?" demanded Wingate angrily.

"He's got the key!"

"Who's got the key? Who have you got in there?"

"A—a—a ruf—a gentleman!" corrected Temple hastily. "A visitor. He is a—a little excited. He's got the key, and he's locked the door."

"Make him open it."

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another. Gladly enough they would have obeyed that order, but how to make the Moocher open the door was a problem past their powers of solution. The Moocher burst into a chuckle.

"Make me open the door!" he mimicked. "Go ahead! Make me!"

"Of—of course we wouldn't think of such a thing!" said Dabney.

"You better hadn't!" said the Moocher.

Wingate rapped angrily on the door again.

"How dare you have such a person in the school, Temple? You will get into trouble for this, I can tell you!"

"I'm in trouble enough already!" groaned the captain of the Fourth. "I tell you he won't give me the key!"

"Take it away from him, then!"

"I—I can't!"

(Continued on page 27.)

**CHING-LUNG
IN THE
FORBIDDEN
LAND.**

A Wonderful Story
of Ferrers Lord,
Millionaire,
Rupert Thurston,
and Gan-Waga.

OUR GRAND SERIAL STORY I

**THROUGH
TRACKLESS
TIBET!**

BY
**SIDNEY
DREW.**



(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-Hal, 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, on reaching a Tibetan village ruled by an Irishman named Barry O'Rooney, they are attacked by the notorious pirate and outlaw, Storland Sahib, and a band of his ruffianly followers. Things are looking serious for the party when they are rescued by Ferrers Lord's wonderful aeroplane, the Lord of the Skies. They are flying over the crater of an extinct volcano, when the engines suddenly stop working, and they are sent hurtling down through the crater into an underground lake. The damage caused is so great that Ferrers Lord gives up hope of ever getting the aeroplane out of the cavern. Hal Honour, the engineer, however, makes a strange promise, and says that within two months he will rescue the whole crew. Funnishly to the hour, Honour fulfils his promise, and the miniature aeroplane he has constructed rises from the black crater into the sunshine above with the first load of passengers, consisting of Ching-Lung, Gan-Waga, and O'Rooney. The aeronaut rescues the remaining members of the crew, and goes back once more for Ferrers Lord and the stores. He fails to return, and Ching-Lung is just making up a search party, when he receives a message, saying that the aeroplane is delayed, but all is well. By chance, Ching-Lung learns of a plan conceived by Storland Sahib for wiping the entire party out. The pirates come up the river at night in a large sampan, and, leaving the boat in charge of half a dozen men, land to attack Ching-Lung's party. The latter capture the sampan, but are, after a time, forced to take refuge on an island. The river surrounding it suddenly rises, and the party climb into the trees. Gan-Waga captures and nurses two young crocodiles, challenging Tom Prout to do the same.

(Now go on with the story.)

**The Lost Fire-Balloon—Into the Trap—A Leap for
Freedom.**

The little brute Gan-Waga held in his hand seemed tame enough. Gan-Waga tickled it, but it did not even open its mouth.

"Well, that's a caution!" said Prout, "but just as spiteful as a sack of cats. They're rum critters, ain't they? Poor little—Ow!"

He yelled. He had been gently touching the creature's nose. Quick as lightning the jaws opened, and closed upon his fingers, and the teeth were like so many needles. The men all laughed.

"The warmint!" growled the steersman. "That was a mean trick to play."

"It was only his way of welkimming yez," said O'Rooney. "Oi bet he'll not thry ut wi' me. There's never a thing alive I can't tame. Throw him to me, Mr. Eskimo. The power of me oie has often made a roaring lion quail, and a tiger wag his tail. The wild buffalo of the West hangs out its horns for me to hang me coat on, and Oi have worn cobras and vipers for neckties! Chuck!"

"Don't drop him!"

"Why should Oi drop the darlint?" asked Barry. "Oi'll catch him tunderly, and in ten minutes he'll be standing on his hoind legs beggin' for biscuits! 'Tis meself that wance owned a menagerie, and to see the floying fish playing the tin whistle was a sight for weary oies! Chuck!"

Gan-Waga threw the infant alligator, and Barry caught it lightly.

"Firrst of all," he said, "Oi mesmerise loike this."

He glared hideously at the reptile, which took no notice at all.

"Yez all see, gentlemen," he went on, "that Oi have already subdued the ferocious monster. In his toime he has torn men to death, and drunk their gore. Notice the horrid luk in his fiery oies. We have red-hot bars always waitin', in case he should spring on the performer. The last man he killed is dead. Now watch me. Oi'm brave and fearless in face of danger."

The men were amused. Barry put his fingers in the creature's mouth, but it did not bite him. It crawled up his arm to his shoulder.

"There!" said the showman triumphantly. "What d'yez think of that?"

"Just great!" laughed Ching-Lung.

"Thin give me his brother, Gan."

"Catch!"

The second reptile was rather more frisky and snappish.

"Mind he doesn't get you down and worry," said Rupert.

"Sor, that remark is an insult to the greatest lion-tamer on earth! Oi have even taught the savage flea to pull a cart! Get me down and worrit me, indade! Why, Oi could teach him to smoke a cigar, and take snuff. Come along wid yez now. Oi bet foive shillings Oi can make him

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NEXT
TUESDAY!**"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"**By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order Early.

walk up me left arm, and squat on me shoulder loike his pal. Is the bet taken?"

"I take you, Barry."

"Thin the money's mine. Luk at that—just luk at ut!"

Barry was as good as his word. With a crocodile squatting one of Barry's ears, and a mighty yell of pain and woe branch above him, and bent down. What he did was never known to Barry, but possibly he pinched the reptiles' tails.

That roused them. At the same instant they each seized one of Barry's ears, and a mighty yell of pain and woe rang across the river. Barry fell back, but cleverly kept himself from falling into the water by hooking his legs round the branch.

He hung head downwards, with a crocodile dangling from each ear, his yells for help almost drowned by the yells of laughter.

And then he dropped into the mud.

"He's lost his lovely ear-rings!" grinned Ching-Lung.

Barry rose, wet, wrathful, dirty, and in pain.

"Did yo' do it on purpose?" asked Gan-Waga sweetly.

"Did I what, yez yaller haythint?"

"Did yo' get wet?"

"Did Oi get wet?" roared Barry. "Harrk at the ould Dutch clock! No, yez lump of lunacy! Oi came in here to get dhroy. Oi came in ter find out if the mud was sthicky. Have yez got any more questions to ax?"

"Only one."

"And what's that?"

"Does yo' face hurt you as much as it hurts us?"

Barry deliberately rolled a mass of mud into a ball. Gan-Waga dodged the shot, and growling under his breath, O'Rooney crawled back to the tree.

It was delightfully warm, and not a breath of air stirred the trees. There was a good deal of flotsam in the river. Trees and drowned cattle often drifted past, and once they caught sight of a human body. Still, the aeroplane did not appear.

"Balloon, sir!" sang out Maddock.

Every eye turned towards the peak. It was some time before they made out the little speck of black.

"That looks bad for us, Ru," said Ching-Lung.

"Why bad, Ching?"

"Because it means that they haven't finished repairing the aeroplane. They'd hardly bother about sending another balloon if they were coming out themselves. It's a message for us."

"I don't think we shall get it. There's no breeze."

The air round them was quite still, but the balloon perceptibly increased in size. There was evidently a breeze high up where it floated. Very slowly it came nearer. Then it vanished in a tiny patch of smoke.

"It's dhropped a letter!" said O'Rooney. "But bedad, it's left it at the wrong number!"

"A nuisance!" said Ching-Lung.

"Me fetch him, Chingy?"

Was it safe to let Gan-Waga go? Ching-Lung was not afraid he would come to grief in crossing the river, for Gan-Waga could have swum the English Channel in a storm. He was afraid that some of Storland Sahib's cut-throats might be lurking in the wood.

"No, Gan," he said. "I'll go myself; though it is good of you to offer. I think I can manage to look after my little self. Good-bye, boys!"

"Good luck, sir!"

With a laugh, he dropped into the water, plunged through the shallows, and entered the current. It whirled him down swiftly, but he made good speed. At last the anxious eyes saw him clamber up the bank. He waved his hand, and was lost among the trees.

Ching-Lung had only one weapon—a hunting-knife. He meant to take as few risks as possible. There is nothing fair in a struggle between rifle and knife. The rifle has too much of its own way. It was quite possible that Storland Sahib's spies were on the watch, but Ching-Lung intended to obtain the message for his imprisoned comrades.

He was as clever as a Red Indian. Slipping from tree to tree, he took a zig-zag course through the wood. The undergrowth was unpleasantly damp, and the swarms of insects were unpleasantly attentive. Here the tall trees met overhead in a gloomy archway, that shut out the sunlight. Thicker and denser the foliage grew as he advanced, and mighty creepers, thicker than his waist, hung like snakes from trunk to trunk.

Ching-Lung fought his way for another hundred yards, and then paused in dismay on the edge of a vast expanse of spiked cactus.

"This is the point where I stop," he muttered. "I want a suit of armour and a gang of navvies with ball-hooks to get through that. If I got in I should leave myself behind in little bits."

As far as he could see in the subdued light, the cactus stretched across the wood like a wall. It's million spikes, several inches long and sharp as fish-hooks, defied him. He turned back towards the bank of the river. The cactus ran down to the edge of the water.

"A swim," thought Ching-Lung. "How can I manage it?"

The jutting bank above the cactus flung the current out to mid-stream, but left a seething, boiling whirlpool. Ching-Lung looked at it rather doubtfully. It needed both courage and strength to leap into the boiling cauldron; but he had both, and unlimited confidence in himself. He could see the island, and his comrades perched in the trees like a pack of monkeys.

A second later he was fighting his way across the whirlpool. The force of the undertow was tremendous. It dragged him down again and again; but he managed his breathing so well that his lungs were never empty. Still, he receded instead of advancing. He was swept on the extreme edge of the pool, and then spun round and round with great velocity.

And he was in strange company. A dead pig, several drowned birds, twigs, sticks, and wicker-baskets, and other flotsam floating about. The yellow water sloped inwards towards the centre of the moving circle, and the centre itself was a black hole, that gurgled and roared.

Then something black threw a shadow, and Ching-Lung saw a mass of timber just ahead of him.

"By jove!" he said. "The stern of the sampan!"

He watched it with a sudden, anxious thrill. It was out-distancing him swiftly in the circular race. It was half round the circle before he had moved a third of the distance. Would it overtake him?

Still it gained on him. Ching-Lung had a sudden vision of seeing himself floating round, helpless, with a pair of broken legs and a few shattered ribs. He made a mad effort to get out of the path of the wreckage. He shuddered as it turned over, displaying the jagged edges of beams and a sharp iron plate that would have cut him in half.

He had been letting himself drift, but now he began to swim. The pig was far down the slope now, and nearing the gaping hole of the whirlpool. With a sigh of relief Ching-Lung saw that he was gaining on the wreckage. But he could not swim for ever. In vain he tried to break through the glassy edge of the circle. The undertow wrenched him back. Little by little he was being sucked down the slope.

Again he looked back. The stern of the sampan was spinning in pursuit, like some fierce beast of prey. It must overtake him!

His position was utterly desperate now.

He could, perhaps, avoid the wreckage by striking down the slope; but that would only bring him closer to the gurgling heart of the whirlpool, which was waiting to suck him down. The pig had already vanished into its greedy

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maw. The horror every man feels at the dread of mutilation urged Ching-Lung to take the chance. He made two or three vigorous strokes.

The next instant he was spinning neck and neck with the last of the sampan, which still rode on the outer edge of the pool.

It drew ahead a little, and Ching-Lung saw something that looked like a snake trailing and writhing behind it. It was a broken anchor-chain. He seized it, and pulled himself hand over hand up the slope.

Then he had time to think as he was towed along. The whirlpool was about fifty yards in diameter. So long as the wreckage did not turn over, he was safe. The hole in the centre of the death-trap appeared to be about four feet across. It was powerful enough to suck down a man, but was it powerful enough to submerge the wreck?

The remains of the sampan were floating steadily, but they were steadily descending the slope. Ching-Lung clambered up, with some wild idea of signalling to his comrades. But the jutting bank was too lofty. He could see the extreme tops of the trees on the island, and nothing more.

"It's a case of good-bye if this turns over!" he muttered. "I have had about enough of this roundabout. It's something like taking a ride on a big spinning-top. Lucky for me I've got a strong head, or I'd be as giddy as a drunken man! Oh, goodness, here we go again!"

The wreckage slid a dozen yards nearer the swirling pit. Ching-Lung set his teeth and clung like grim death to the ring-bolt.

The wreckage gave a lurch, and another downward glide. And then they were sucked down.

Landscape and river became a misty blur as the wreckage madly rotated. Ching-Lung was dizzy and sick. They whirled round with hideous, stupefying speed. Ching-Lung closed his eyes. There was a dreadful shock, and he felt himself flung into the air. He fell with a splash, and the cold of the water brought him to himself. A branch of a tree brushed his cheek.

He caught it, pulled himself ashore, and then, utterly faint and breathless, lay down.

After a moment he felt better, and looked to find out how he had escaped.

Fragments of timber were still tossing in the whirlpool. Driven into the muddy bank, like a javelin hurled from the hand of a giant, was a large beam.

He began to understand the miracle. The wreckage, spinning at a great pace, had been sucked down until its submerged end had struck the bottom. It was like applying powerful brakes to a train running at eighty miles an hour. The wreckage had flown to pieces, hurling him into the quiet water, and driving the ponderous beam into the bank.

And then he uttered a whistle of surprise.

Some bright object gleamed and glistened through the bushes in the hollow in the bank.

Ching-Lung peered over the edge. A box lay there, its sides gaping.

"Treasure!" gasped Ching-Lung.

Golden coins had poured through the rents, and the light shone yellow on more gold coins within. The sampan had yielded up Storland Sahib's secret.

"By Jove!" chuckled Ching-Lung. "This is honest loot. I must get it out of sight, in case some of the Sahib's gentlemen come along. It's not a great haul, but there are some thousands, I'll wager! Ah, here's a spade ready to hand!"

Owing to the rain the soil was quite soft, and a piece of flat board made a passable spade. Ching-Lung bundled the coins back into the box, and proceeded to inter it. It was the work of an hour. He carefully spread brambles over the spot, and took the bearings.

He had a cut on the calf of his leg and a few bruises that made him limp as they stiffened. He tried to signal to his comrades, but the signal was not answered. He was beginning to feel desperately hungry, and he shied at the thought of being compelled to swim the river again. His terrible experience had made him detest the water. He cut himself a stick, and, turning his back to the cactus hedge, which had caused him all his misery, limped away.

But he did not limp far, but, with a soft grunt of disgust, sank behind a bush. A lithe, tawny beast slunk out of the wood, and bent to drink.

"A tiger!" muttered Ching-Lung. "My luck is out again!"

Ching-Lung had made a mistake in his natural history, and he quickly corrected himself. The beautiful animal he saw so close to himself was not a tiger, but an ounce, or snow-leopard—an animal very similar to the cheetah. Shortness of food had no doubt brought it down from the hills.

Its presence was unfortunate for Ching-Lung. The ounce is no coward, and it is more than a match for an unarmed man. It raised its head after drinking, and its splendid skin and ringed tail shone in the bright sunshine. Then,

crawling out on to a jutting tree-trunk, it stretched itself out, and lowered one ready paw.

"The brute means to wait for a fish," groaned Ching-Lung. "What am I to do? If I move he may skedaddle or he may take it into his head to carve me up! Oh, go away home and die!"

All the same, he could not help grinning at the awkwardness of his situation. Tigers and leopards are the most patient anglers on earth. They think nothing of waiting all day for a fish to come within reach of their claws. Woo betide the luckless fish that does.

"If I thought the brute couldn't climb a tree, I'd heave a brick at him," Ching-Lung pondered ruefully; "but they can. Oh, do come and bite, fish! I don't want to live here! Ah-h!"

A festive ant gave Ching-Lung a bite on the ankle that was like a prod from a red-hot needle. He just managed to keep from yelling. Then a hornet came to see whether he had any honey in his pigtail, and a lizard ran over his neck.

Hornets, lizards, and biting ants are all right when they aren't so familiar, Ching-Lung thought. The ant liked him, and took another bite, and the hornet buzzed round to see whether he had any honey in his pigtail, and buzzed round to look whether his left ear was not a rare kind of flower. He saw the lizard, and as lizards of some kinds think nothing of gobbling hornets, stings and all, he sheered off.

Then a parrot came along, peered at Ching-Lung and the leopard, and laughed, as if he considered the whole affair a rich joke. Then a crocodile waddled down the bank, exchanged a few remarks with the ounce about the scarcity of fish, and dropped lazily into the stream.

Ching-Lung was getting very tired of it all. The ounce had apparently taken a ninety-nine years' lease of the fishing-ground.

Ching-Lung fervently hoped that he would miss paying his rent, and get the bailiffs in. He could imagine himself being kept there until his pigtail turned white with age and he had grown side-whiskers a yard long. As a matter of fact, he had only been a prisoner for twenty minutes, but it seemed like a century.

"I shall get desperate!" he thought. "I can't help it!" And then a bright idea struck him. He pitched his voice with all his skill.

"You ugly brute!" he roared. "Go home!"

The leopard nearly fell off the log in its astonishment. The noise rang close to its ear. But it was only astonished, and not startled. It looked at the sky and at the water, snarled, and lashed its tail, and crouched down again.

"You lump of spotted dog!" said Ching-Lung. "Drop in and drown yourself!"

Again the ounce examined the water and sky, and snarled.

At that moment the crocodile thrust out its black snout, and said, or Ching-Lung said for it:

"You bewhiskered idiot, go home and wash your spots off!"

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

The remark made the ounce angry. Reaching forward, it gave the croc. a wipe across the eye that made it dive in a hurry, and Ching-Lung began to enjoy it.

"Ba-aa, ba-aa-aa!"

A lamb bleated, and the leopard pricked up its ears, and sprang in the direction of the sound, which came from the very heart of a dense cactus.

The ounce hesitated. The cactus is ticklish stuff for even an ounce to tackle.

"Ba-aa, ba-aa-aa!"

There was a nice fat sheep inside—at least, the ounce thought so. Giving its lips a mighty lick, it hurled itself into the thorns, biting, snarling, and scratching.

But where was the sheep?

The snow-leopard came out on the other side, torn and bleeding, and with an expression of baffled wonder on his face that would have made a Hindu idol laugh itself into hysterics.

"Ba-aa, ba-aa-aa!"

The ounce's blood was up, and so it seemed was the sheep's, for the bleating sounded from the top of a high tree. The snow-leopard meant to make a meal of that sheep, or swallow its own tail. It never stopped to consider that sheep do not, as a rule, sleep on branches.

"Ba-aa-a, ba-aa-a-a!" said the sheep.

The ounce went up the tree like a cat. Then it found it had made another mistake, for the sheep commenced to bleat in the next tree. The animal made one of the most superb springs Ching-Lung had even witnessed, but sprang short by inches, and fell forty feet into the very centre of the cactus.

When it wriggled out it was a wreck, but it was not daunted. Up the tree it went again. The mysterious sheep, however, was somewhere under the bank. The leopard hurried down. At last it had run its prey really to earth. The sheep was in a rat-hole.

"Ba-aa, ba-aa-aa!"

He tried to sniff a sheep in a four-inch hole, but failed. Still the sheep was down the hole, and making a fine fuss about it. The ounce did not pause to inquire in what miraculous fashion it had got there, but commenced to dig like a whole gang of navvies.

It sent the soil flying in an avalanche. The more it dug the further in the sheep seemed to be. The head and shoulders of the brute vanished, then its hind quarters, and, lastly, its tail. Stones and earth continued to shoot out.

Ching-Lung was having a glorious time. He had never enjoyed himself more. The little breeze there was came in his direction, and prevented the beast from winding him. The imprisoned sheep kept on "Ba-aa-ing!" plaintively, and the hungry ounce kept on digging and snarling.

THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY PUZZLE CORNER.

NEW FEATURE!

Sketch No. 1.



No. 1.—In Puzzle No. 7 last week you were asked to challenge your friends to make a bridge with three table knives from three inverted tumblers placed on the table in the form of a triangle. The accompanying sketch shows at a glance how this can be done.

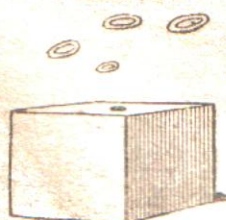
No. 2.—MAGIC WRITING.—Great interest and amusement can be got out of this ingenious trick. Take a piece of thin paper, and with a solution of saltpetre trace upon it the name of your favourite paper, for instance, or of your best friend. Dry the paper thoroughly, and then apply the end of a red-hot wire to the beginning of the writing. The fire will do the rest.

Sketch No. 2.



No. 3.—MAGIC SMOKE RINGS.—This trick is simple and very effective, and is especially appreciated by any small children who may be present. Prepare a light box of cardboard about six inches square, and in the centre of one end make a circular hole nearly an inch in diameter. Fill the box with smoke from your friend's pipe or cigarette. Then, upon making a series of gentle but rapid taps upon the end opposite the hole, a succession of perfect smoke-rings will float from the hole in the box, and ascend, curling into the air.

Sketch No. 3.



SO SIMPLE!

The answer to Puzzle No. 8 given last week—how a boy could divide half-a-crown equally between two fathers and their two sons, giving no person a coin of less value than a penny—is as follows: The boy gave pence each to a grandfather, and his son, and his grandson, two fathers, and two sons, though but three persons in all!

No. 4. A BLOWING TRICK.—The accompanying diagram illustrates an experiment which gives one an excellent idea of the power of human lungs. Lay a long narrow airtight bag of thin tough paper near the edge of a table, the mouth of the bag before the operator. Then place upon the bag two or more books. To upset these by blowing in the bag will be found very easy. The weights may be increased until the performance presents a wonderful appearance to the uninitiated.

Sketch No. 4.



At last it backed out of the hole—a mass of mud, clay, and disgust. Ching-Lung tried in vain to entice it back. It pawed the dirt out of its eyes, uttered a weird howl of despair, and fled like a ghost. Ching-Lung held his sides, and laughed till the tears stood in his eyes.

"I don't imagine that brute will return to its mutton," he thought. "The mention of lamb outlets, sheep's head, or mutton chops ought to make him sick for a month. He's gone right home to call a doctor to inquire into the state of his brain! Perhaps he'll have the river analysed to see if anyone's been putting whisky in it!"

Though stiff, it did not take him very long to reach the edge of the trees. He could see the village, but there was not a soul in sight. Perhaps one of the natives had picked up the message dropped from the balloon.

It was with a feeling of uneasiness that he stepped out from the shelter into the bright sunlight. The natives, all loyal to the Terror of the Hills from fear he inspired, might take it into their heads to kill a solitary unarmed man. Ching-Lung decided to make a dash for it.

His limbs were so sore that even a trot was painful. No figures appeared in the sun-bathed street. That in itself seemed rather ominous. In the heat even the birds were silent. A dazzling glare rose from the white dust.

He gained O'Rooney's yard.

"By Jove, there it is, safe and sound!" he muttered delightedly.

"You are my prisoner, your highness!" cried a deep voice.

Ching-Lung staggered back. A revolver flashed before his eyes, and he was face to face with Storland Sahib.

"Hands up!"

Ching-Lung laughed feebly as he raised his arms. Two or three grinning Mongols leered at him from the doorway and played with their rifles. Then they fell into line, and their rifles went up.

"You don't mean to shoot me on sight?" answered Ching-Lung hoarsely.

"I want no prisoners," answered Storland Sahib.

Ching-Lung turned white. The earless man watched him closely.

"You are afraid, prince."

"I admit it," said Ching-Lung. "I am afraid."

The rifles covered his heart. Storland Sahib began to pace up and down in the dust. Ching-Lung clasped his hands behind his back. He took a swift glance at the dark wood, the sky, the flashing peaks beyond.

"Have you anything to say?"

"Nothing," said Ching-Lung, "except that this will be wanton murder. Whatever I have done to you has been done in self-defence. You have always been the aggressor."

"The friends of a man's foe is always that man's foe," said Storland Sahib. "Give me that paper," he added, in the vernacular.

Ching-Lung could not repress a start as the renegade took a paper from the hands of one of his wolves. A seal dangled from it—the seal of the Imperial Court of China. Storland Sahib began to read the strange characters.

"The bait is tempting," he muttered. "What shall I do?"

His bushy eyebrows knitted for a moment. He waved his hand, and the Mongols grounded their rifles.

"What ransom can you pay?"

"None, sahib."

"None? Why, Kwai-Hal is one of the richest provinces."

"That may be," said Ching-Lung, "but I am proscribed. There is a price on my head."

Storland Sahib glanced at the paper again, and calmly lighted his pipe. He half raised his hand as if to give the grim order, but let it fall again. He still watched Ching-Lung grimly.

"Come into the house. I want to talk to you."

Ching-Lung followed him in, and the men closed up behind. A rough bench had been erected, and on a board were cigars and native wine.

"Will you drink and smoke, prince?"

"Certainly!" said Ching-Lung.

He felt that the man was tempting to test his nerve and pluck. Ching-Lung had an extraordinary share of both. He lighted a cigar and filled a pannikin with wine.

"Sit down, prince. I wish you prosperity."

"That is a toast I can hardly drink to you, sahib," answered Ching-Lung, "but I wish you a tough rope and a strong gallows."

The earless man laughed. The remark did not offend him in the least.

"Look here, prince," he said quietly, "I live my own life and amuse myself in my own way. If I really admire anything it is bravery. You have that quality to perfection. It seems a pity to shoot a really brave man, for they are scarce. Why did you come to Tibet?"

"Why does a man play football—an amateur, I mean?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 220.

Read the grand new story of the Juniors of St. Jim's, entitled:

"THE SHADOW OF SHAME!"

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

He does so because he finds the game amusing and exciting. I came here for the same reason."

Storland Sahib's eyes flashed.

"But what brought Ferrers Lord?"

"You must ask him that yourself."

"There is no need to ask it. I know the reason."

Ching-Lung shrugged his shoulders, and helped himself to more wine.

"If you know it, why ask?"

"Oh, that is my affair," said Storland Sahib, with a laugh. "You admit that you came here out of pure love of adventure. Well, you are getting plenty of adventure. It is a thing I love myself, but I also have a sneaking respect for wealth and power. I have made myself king of the hills, and my name is the Terror of Tibet. Tibet, too, is a fine country in its way. True, like all other inland countries, it cannot become tremendously rich like a country with sea-ports, but a clever man might turn it into a powerful kingdom. You agree with that?"

Ching-Lung nodded.

"Well, prince," went on the earless freebooter, "I have designs on Tibet."

"I have heard that before."

"And you can be useful to me."

Ching-Lung controlled a start. His coolness was amazing. He did not speak.

"You can be most useful to me," repeated Storland Sahib;

"and, what is more, I can be useful to you. Only this morning a relay of mounted messengers from Lhasa placed a message in my hands. It came from Pekin. It is known that his Imperial Highness Prince Ching-Lung is in Tibet, and the prince is hated in Pekin. The message offers me a large reward for your capture."

Once more Ching-Lung nodded.

"Then you have earned the reward."

"I have, prince, but I do not want the money. The reward will be paid directly I hand you over to the emissaries of the Chinese Court, or give absolute proof of your death. I repeat, I do not wish either to kill you or hand you over. I am so confident of success that I am not afraid of telling you the truth. I want your help."

Ching-Lung began to understand, but he was silent. Storland Sahib bent nearer.

"In a way," he said, "Tibet is China's slave. I mean to be King of Tibet. When I give the word the people will rise. I shall pounce down on Lhasa and declare a monarchy. The Chinese will certainly invade. All Kwai-Hal will follow you if you only raise your hand. You can keep the imperial army at bay until I am ready to come to the rescue. Then, when I am King of Tibet, you can throw off your allegiance, and declare Kwai-Hal independent, with yourself as monarch. More than that, I will make a solemn agreement with you to uphold your sovereignty against the Chinese Court."

"It is tempting," said Ching-Lung; "but how am I to enter Kwai-Hal?"

"I will give you a thousand picked men. The Government spies are thick on the border, but they will melt away before you."

Ching-Lung sipped the weak native wine thoughtfully. He did not love the Chinese Court, but he loved China. He was a friend of the British Government, and he fancied the British Government would welcome him as monarch of Kwai-Hal.

"But how would this suit France, Germany, America, and, above all, Russia? Great Britain would receive all the plums of trade of a huge, rich, and populous district; Japan, as Britain's ally, would demand her share, while the other nations would stand gnashing their teeth."

"It could only result in a war, and a long and dreadful war. China would be rent asunder."

"Do you want my answer, Sahib?"

"I am waiting for it."

"Then you must give me time. I cannot answer this all in a moment."

"I will give you an hour."

"And if I should be fool enough to refuse?"

Storland Sahib stood up with a smile.

"Under those circumstances I shall be compelled to shoot you, and send you up to Pekin in a mummified condition. You may have your hour. If you need anything to eat you know the language sufficiently well enough to ask for it."

He bowed. Behind him the rifle-barrels shone in the doorway. A hide had been stretched over the window to shut out the glare.

The moment had come. Storland Sahib was in front of the rifles. Ching-Lung sprang, tearing the hide away, rolled over in the dust, darted up, and ran along the street as only a man can run when death is close behind.

Maddened yelling came from the hut, and, uttering a string of oaths, Storland Sahib leaned over the sill and emptied his revolver after Ching-Lung.

Gan-Waga Takes a Prisoner.

Meanwhile, the men on the island began to feel anxious at Ching-Lung's protracted absence. Even Barry O'Rooney wore a deep look of settled gloom. He had a sincere respect, as well as a sincere hatred, for Storland Sahib. The renegade had as many tricks as an old fox. Barry could think of nothing that would make the hill pirate abandon the attack for good. As he sat in the tree, he began to compose a sad and dreary poem about lonely graves and broken hearts.

Still Ching-Lung did not return. They scanned the stream and the bank vainly. In vain, too, they watched the peak for the aeroplane.

"This is getting on my nerves, Tom," said Rupert, in a low voice. "What can have become of him?"

"Dunno, sir."

"I hope they've not nailed him," muttered Thurston.

"Trust his 'tghness," answered Prout. "He's as smart as a new suit! I don't think they'll get 'im in a 'urry. Somethin' has turned up to keep 'im. Only, I don't think it's that."

The men began to whisper their fears to each other. Gan-Waga alone sat in silence, leaning his back against the trunk of a tree. His yellow face was the picture of woe and misery. Life without Chingy would be a dreary thing. The suspense made his heart ache till he could bear it no longer.

"I goin'," he said suddenly.

"Going where, Gan?"

"Goin' find my Chingy."

Gan-Waga slid down the tree. Prout made a clutch at him, but he was not speedy enough. Gan-Waga's round head went racing down the current, and Gan-Waga's right arm rose and fell again and again as he churned himself through the torrent with the wonderful stroke which amazed all beholders.

How he swam! At first he was swept away, but he turned his head half to the stream and defied the current. Then, almost in a straight line, he began to move across. A huge uprooted tree came flying down, and a hoarse shout of warning came from the watchers.

The black head vanished, the tree whirled over the spot, and the head emerged again. At last the dauntless swimmer reached the bank, shook himself, and bounded into the wood.

It was then that the faint report of firearms drove the blood from the cheeks of the men on the island. The shots came from Storland Sahib's revolver.

At that very instant Ching-Lung was making a dash for liberty.

Gan-Waga heard them, and his terrified heart sprang into his mouth. Those sounds meant no good to Ching-Lung. The Eskimo was terrified, but not for himself. He never thought of himself, or the danger he might incur by leaving the shelter of the wood. He ran at full speed through the trees, and out into the sunlight beyond.

Faint cries swept through the hot air, and then something that whistled past his ear made him jump from the ground. Plink-punk! came the spiteful voice of a Mauser.

Gan-Waga fell, and lay still. He had too much sense to invite any more bullets. He lay with his face in the dust, pretending to be dead. Then he took a cautious peep through his fingers in the direction of the village. A fat, short-legged mongrel, in a greasy sheepskin coat, climbed the wall, and came lazily forward to examine his victim.

Gan-Waga noticed, with a shiver, that he carefully reloaded his rifle as he advanced.

The Eskimo's heart was thumping in a way that pained. He lay as still as death. The man was alone, and he whistled as merrily as a sportsman might do when walking through the grass to pick up a dead rabbit.

He grunted, and kicked Gan-Waga. Then he wedged his rifle under the Eskimo's ribs to lever him over. Gan-Waga seized the barrel of the rifle with a grip that told that he was very much alive. A howl of terror broke from the Mongol, but he still clung to the weapon. There was a momentary struggle, and then a kick in the stomach doubled up the foe, and Gan-Waga was master of the situation.

Gan was a good deal frightened, but the fat man was absolutely green with dread. He fell on his knees when he saw the deadly tube levelled at him.

"Yo' fat, ugly pig!" said Gan-Waga. "Why yo' shoot at me bang?"

The Mongol grunted something in the vernacular which was Dutch to Gan-Waga. His actions, however, showed that he was praying for his life. The careless way Gan held the rifle was enough to terrify anyone. It was absolutely courting death to be anywhere near him.

"What you bang me for?" said Gan-Waga.

The man grunted again, and jabbered in the vernacular. Gan-Waga grew confident.

(To be continued.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 220.

NEXT
TUESDAY!

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

FOES OF THE FOURTH.

(Continued from page 22.)

"Ask him nicely!" chirruped the voice of Bob Cherry. Say "Please, Mr. Moocher, give me the key, and I'll be a good little boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you kids!" said Wingate. "This is a serious matter. You scoundrel in there, open the door at once, or I'll telephone for the police!"

"Orl right!" said the Moocher. "But don't you git rorty! I've 'ad tea with these young gents, and they're satisfied with me. Ain't you satisfied with me?" he roared, turning to the scared Fourth-Formers.

"Yes," stammered Temple.

"Orl right, then! Tell 'im as 'ow you're quite satisfied with me, and then I'll open the door," said the Moocher.

"We're quite satisfied with him, Wingate. It's all right."

"That'll do," said the Moocher, taking out the key. "You can come in now, you fellers. It's orl right, I tell yer."

He unlocked the study door and threw it wide open. Wingate, with knitted brows, strode into the room. Courtney of the Sixth followed him, and Coker and a crowd of juniors of all Forms were behind. Needless to say, Bob Cherry and Nugent and Johnny Bull were well to the fore, and the other Removeites were in strong force in the passage.

Wingate stared in amazement at the ruffian in the study.

"You villain!" he exclaimed. "How dare you come here!"

"Why shouldn't I come 'ere!" said the Moocher truculently. "I belong to this 'ere school, don't I?"

"What—what? What do you mean? Who are you?" shouted Wingate.

"Wharton of the Remove!" said the Moocher, in a changed voice, and with a polite bow; and with a jerk of the hand he removed the stubby beard and whiskers and the ragged moustache, and then, in spite of the make-up upon his face, the captain of the Remove could be recognised.

"It's all right, Wingate. Only a little jape on the Fourth!"

Wingate staggered back in his amazement.

"Wharton!" he yelled.

"Yes!"

"Wharton! Oh, my hat!" groaned Fry. "We've been done! It's not the Moocher at all!"

There was a wild roar of laughter from the passage. Fourth-Formers as well as the rest joined in it hysterically. The idea of Temple & Co. being scared out of their wits, in their own study, by a junior made-up as the Moocher, simply made them shriek.

"It's orl right!" grinned Wharton, assuming the dulcet tones of the Moocher again. "It's reely orl right! The young gents are quite satisfied—they've said so!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate burst into a roar of laughter.

"You—you young rascal!" he exclaimed. "I—I never heard of such a thing! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the rotter!" shrieked Temple. "Go for him!"

"Stop that!" exclaimed Wingate, as the Co. lined up to lend Harry Wharton their aid in the threatened scrimmage. "You've got nothing to complain of, Temple. You have japed the Remove enough lately, I think. Besides, you said you were satisfied."

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton bowed to the enraged Fourth-Formers.

"Thanks very much for the tea," he said. "It was—ahem!—orl right. You chaps would make splendid waiters, and when you leave Greyfriars I should advise you to take up that profession, and I wouldn't mind giving you a written testimonial. I've had a really pleasant feed, and I'm glad you're satisfied—I am!"

And the Remove Moocher quitted the study with his chums, and walked away through the hysterical crowd. Wingate and Courtney departed, roaring with laughter. The whole school was soon roaring, too. Even Mr. Quelch and the Head were heard to laugh over the story when it came to their ears.

Temple, Dabney & Co. remained in their study—they simply dared not face the school after being so utterly and thoroughly done. It was the last round, and all Greyfriars acknowledged the fact that the victory was with the Remove over their Foes of the Fourth.

THE END.

(Next week's grand, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, is entitled: "HONOUR BEFORE ALL!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy well in advance. Price One Penny.)

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
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My Readers' Page.



GRAND,
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WEEKLY
FEATURE.

Next Tuesday's splendid complete tale of Greyfriars is entitled:

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS,

and is an interesting, amusing, and exciting story of school-boy life, in which the author more than does himself justice. Bolsover major, the burly Removite, and Valance, the weak prefect, play a leading part; and, of course, Harry Wharton & Co. are also to the fore.

"HONOUR BEFORE ALL!"

is a story you must read, and it is, therefore, advisable to ORDER NEXT WEEK'S "MAGNET" LIBRARY IN ADVANCE.

THIS WEEK'S IMPORTANT INNOVATION.

In response to the earnest request of thousands of my readers, I have decided to increase the popular "Readers' Column" to a full "Readers' Page," which will, I am sure, be still more popular. Our splendid companion paper, "The Gem" Library, has had a full page devoted to the Chat for some time now, and many keen "Magnetites" have evidently felt very strongly that this favourite paper should not be a whit behind any publication in the space it devotes to such a very important feature as "Readers' Chat." I have, therefore, yielded to the persuasion that my readers have thought to bear on me, and this page will in future be devoted wholly to the "Chat"—which term will include short, helpful articles on popular subjects, readers' letters, brief replies to queries, interesting announcements and disquisitions, etc., etc. Having made this change in accordance with my readers' expressed wishes, I can now only leave it to my friends to show their approval of the innovation in the usual way, namely, by doing their best to popularise the good old MAGNET Library wherever they go.

HOW I FIRST CAME TO READ "THE MAGNET."

In the interesting letter printed below, one of my girl readers describes how she first became introduced to what is now her favourite paper.

"Muswell Hill, N."

"Dear Editor,—I now take the greatest pleasure in writing and telling you how much I enjoy reading THE MAGNET and 'The Gem'."

"I have been reading both papers for close on four years, and how I became a reader I will tell you."

"Well, I was going to business one morning, but when I got to the station I found the train had gone, and I had to walk to the next station, and as I was going along the road, I saw a page out of a book on the road. As I am a very great reader, I picked it up, and found it was a page out of THE MAGNET. I read it, and voted it awfully ripping. I went and bought a copy at the first paper shop I passed, and as I could not read it in business hours I took it home with me."

"My mother wanted to know what I was reading as I had to keep on smiling, so I told her it was a ripping schoolboy story, and, with her consent, I was going to take it in every week. But she didn't say I could, so when dad came home I gave it to him to read, and he thought the same as I did, and said he would like to read it every week. I was delighted, and went to order it at once, as well as 'The Gem.' I have taken them in ever since. I introduced them to my boy and girl chums, and most of them followed my example, and ever since then I have been called by all my chums, 'Miss Magnet,' and very proud of that name I am."

"Wishing you every success, I remain,

"Your constant reader,

"MISS MAGNET."

Thank you, "Miss Magnet," for your good wishes and very interesting letter. I am always pleased to hear how my readers first became "Magnetites."

A WORLD'S CYCLING RECORD.

During the past four weeks there has been on view in different parts of London a bicycle in which cyclists have been showing the deepest interest. The machine is the seven-year-old, all steel, gold medal Mead, on which, after cycling 75,000 miles, Mr. M. Planes recently defeated 650 competitors, and broke the world's long-distance cycling record, covering 34,366 miles in 365 days—109,366 miles in all. To commemorate this wonderful record ride, the Mead Cycle Co., of Liverpool, have issued a very handsome souvenir, which they will send free of charge to any of my readers on application.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"Harry Wharton" (Dublin).—Wun Lung is still at Greyfriars, but Alonzo Todd has left.

"Curious."—Yes, "Jack Harkaway's Schooldays" was by the author you mention. THE MAGNET illustrations you admire so much are by Arthur Clarke.

"Boy Reader" (Dunmow).—If your lungs are really weak, you will find plenty of fresh air and deep breathing beneficial. Perhaps you are not in that hard, physical condition which is necessary for all who wish to indulge in vigorous exercise without fatigue, and which can only be acquired by careful training. The regular use of dumbbells should certainly help you.

George, S. (Waterloo).—Thanks for your letter. I will bear the points you mention in mind. I am afraid the competition you mention is hardly the sort that would commend itself to the great majority of MAGNET readers.

"Magnetic Gem" (Birmingham).—Thanks for all your suggestions. As for your two questions, the answer to both is the same—I don't know yet.

Donald, J. S. (Newcastle, N.S.W.).—Thanks for your interesting letter. I do not think Londoners are so ignorant of things Australian as you have been led to believe. I have certainly never come across anyone in England holding the extraordinary beliefs you mention.

E. P. K. (Stockport).—No doubt Sidney Drew intends the two characters you mention to be the same two that appeared in his previous work.

Harold, P. (Tipton).—Since writing your letter asking for information about dramatic societies, including the obtaining of grease paints, stage properties, etc., you will no doubt have seen the article dealing with this very subject which has lately appeared in "The Gem" Library (No. 215).

"Constant Reader" (Leeds).—Your question requires too comprehensive an answer to be dealt with here, but you will find all the information you want in an excellent book, entitled "The Sea," to be obtained from the publishers, Messrs. Spottiswoode & Co., Ltd., 5, New Street Square, London, E.C. The price of the book is one shilling.

A BIRMINGHAM READER'S PROPOSAL.

A Birmingham reader writes to me to draw my attention to a certain matter which has been occupying the attention of the readers of "The Gem" Library for some time, and which, so my Birmingham reader thinks, is quite worthy of discussion in "My Readers' Page." The matter in question was first mooted in the "Chat Page" of our companion paper by a certain Scotch reader, who proposed that back numbers of the fine series of school stories which have been the principal feature of "The Gem" Library for many years, should be reprinted by the Editor, as there were thousands—so this Scotch reader asserted—who would be glad of the chance to read the early adventures of their old favourites over again. My Birmingham reader thinks the idea a fine one, and urges me to put before my readers the suggestion that it should be applied to THE MAGNET Library. Well, to oblige my Birmingham reader, and also because I think there is something in the idea myself, I have done so. So what do my readers think?

THE EDITOR.

This week's issue of our popular companion paper, "The Gem" Library, the cover of which appears below, contains

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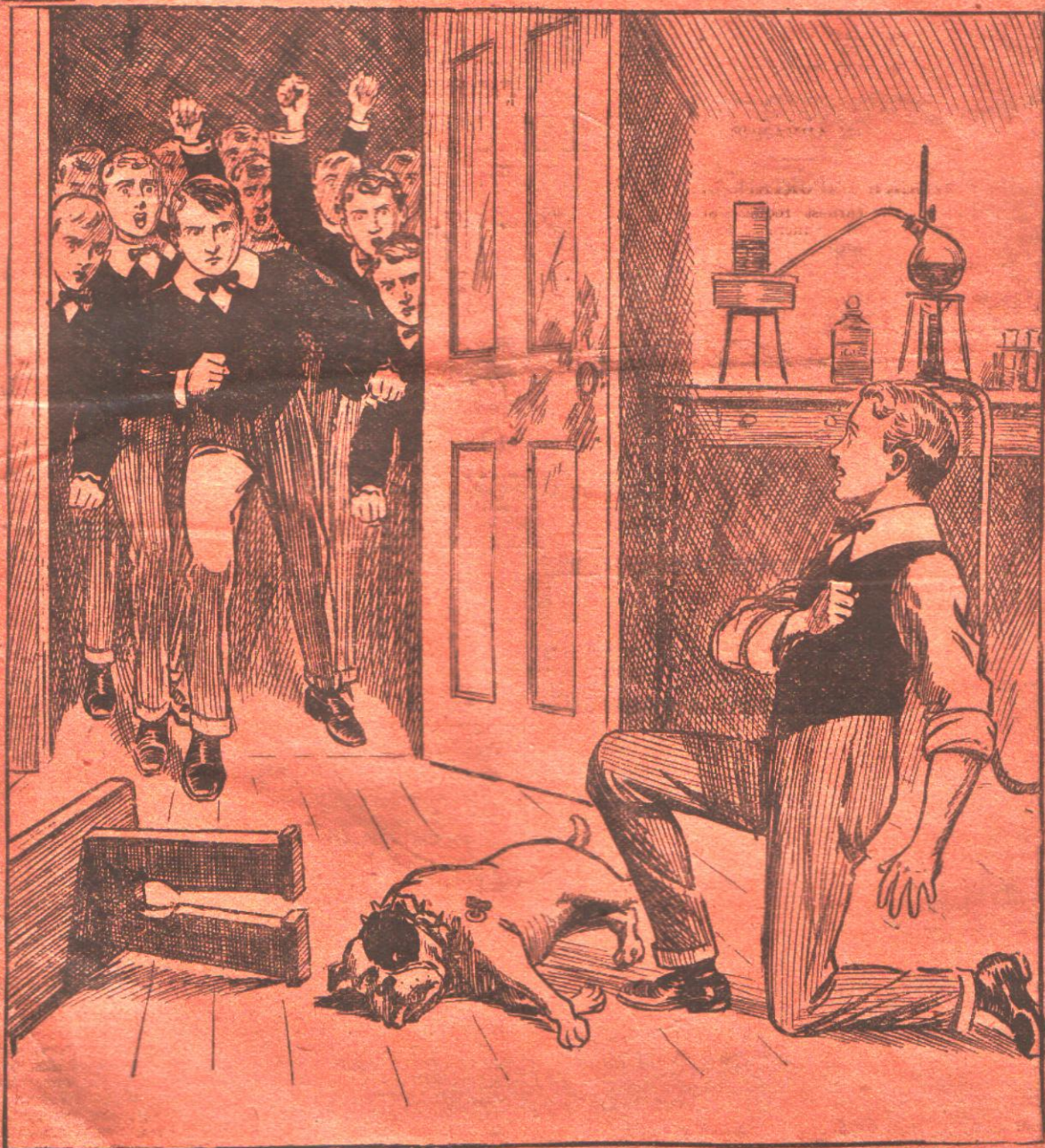
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