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

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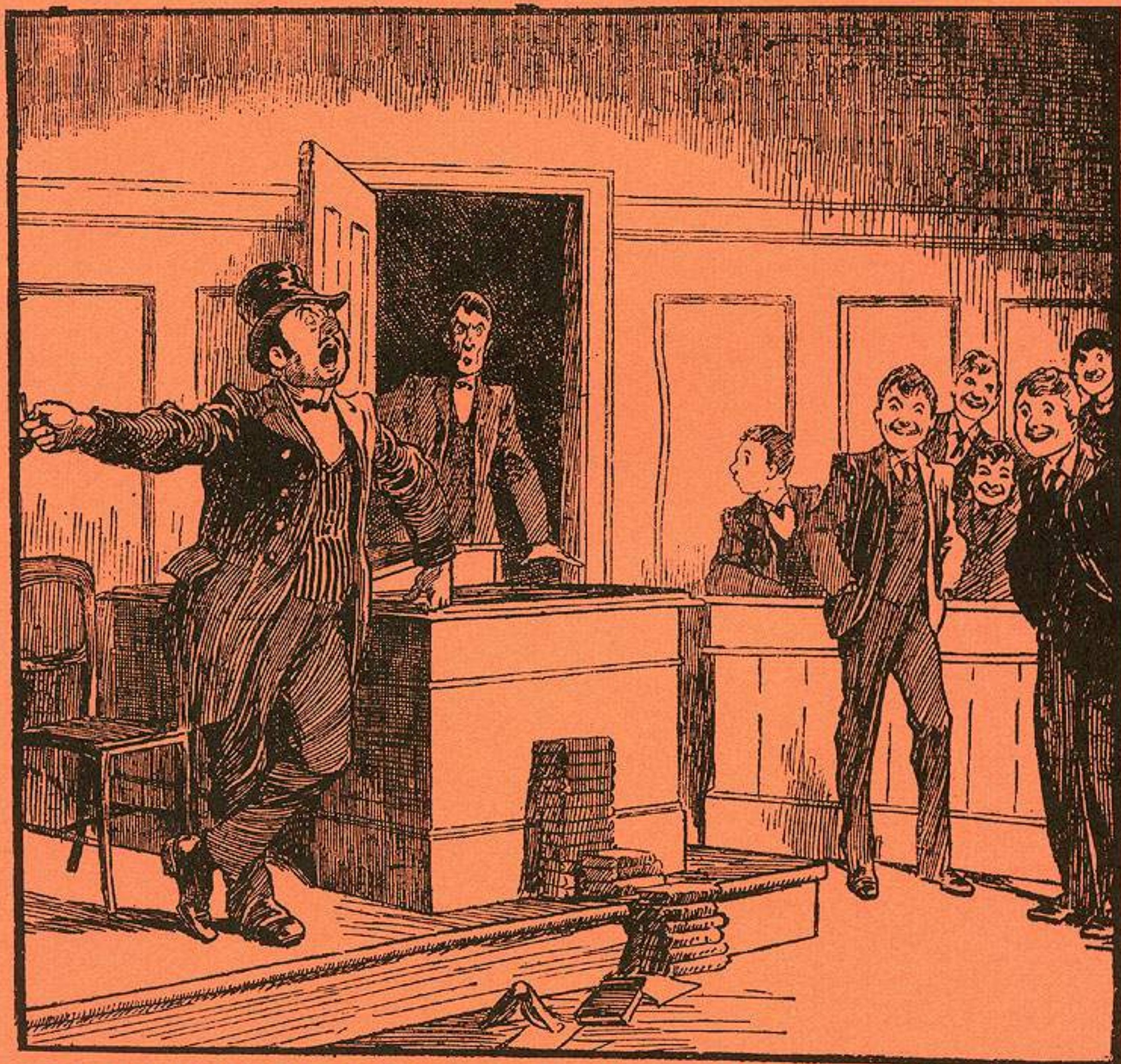
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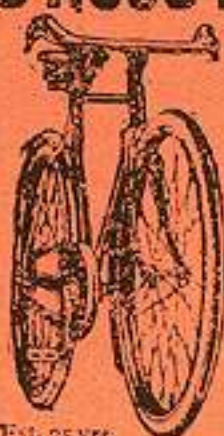
Vol. 6.



AN UNWELCOME VISITOR FOR THE REMOVE FORM-MASTER!

"It's alright, young gents," shouted Mr. Punter. "Henery Quelch will be glad to see me. We're worry old pals, my brother Henery and me. We was boys together!" Mr. Quelch stopped dead in the doorway at the sight of the disreputable Mr. Punter leaning against his desk. "You rascal!" he exclaimed. "Go out of this room at once! Do you hear me?"

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THE FORM-MASTER'S SECRET.



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

BY

FRANK
RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble in the Form-Room.

"MIND your eye!" Bob Cherry whispered the words very cautiously. The Remove were in their Form-room at Greyfriars School. It was a warm afternoon, and the Form-room windows were wide open, to let in the breeze from the shady Close. But there was very little breeze, and, in spite of the open windows, the Form-room seemed close and stuffy.

Perhaps that was the reason why a state of "nerves" seemed to prevail in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form of Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was not in a good temper.

As a rule, Mr. Quelch, although a severe master, was a just one, and his temper could be relied upon. To quote the famous schoolboy's description of his master, he might be a beast, but he was a just beast. But on the present occasion,

while he was, as all the Remove would have agreed, undoubtedly a beast, the justice was wanting.

Hence Bob Cherry's whispered warning.

The warning was hardly necessary. The Removites were keeping a very watchful eye upon their Form-master.

Unless it was the heat, they did not know what was the matter with Mr. Quelch. Certainly something was the matter. The Remove were not a very orderly Form, and they had never been distinguished for devotion to work. The "swots" in the Form could be counted upon the fingers of one hand. They were a numerous Form—quite as many as one master could hope to attend to, and they seldom or never troubled themselves to make their master's work lighter. But they knew very well when it was safe to rag, and when it was unsafe; and this warm afternoon they all knew by instinct, as soon as Mr. Quelch entered the Form-room, that it was most decidedly unsafe.

And they had been as good as gold!

Even Billy Bunter had refrained from eating the bullseyes with which his pocket was bulging, lest a betraying scent should be wafted to the nose of the Remove-master. Lord

Mauleverer, the slacker of the Remove, had refrained from nodding off to sleep. Bolsover major, the bully of the Form, was not sticking pins into anybody, or projecting pellets of rolled paper at distant boys. The Form really was playing up well; there were no grounds for complaint. And yet their Form-master was decidedly ratty.

He even found fault with Wharton's construing. He told Bunter to sit still, when, as a matter of fact, Bunter was sitting glued to his seat, almost afraid to breathe lest Mr. Quelch's eye should single him out.

It was evident that there would be trouble for somebody that afternoon.

And as nobody wanted to be that somebody, everybody was extremely careful, even lazy and slovenly fellows like Snoop and Stott excelling themselves as particularly good boys.

"Mind your eye!" repeated Bob Cherry, taking advantage of the fact that Mr. Quelch had turned his back to trace weird and weary problems on the blackboard. "Quelchy is on the warpath this afternoon!"

"What on earth's the matter with him?" growled Harry Wharton.

"Must be the heat!" said Nugent.

"Hush!"

Mr. Quelch swung round from the blackboard.

"I will not have idle chattering in this Form-room during lessons!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear? Who was speaking?"

Silence.

"The boy who was speaking will stand up!" said Mr. Quelch angrily. "Otherwise, I shall give the whole Form an imposition!"

"Oh!" murmured the Remove.

Nugent stood up.

"Oh, it was you, Nugent?" said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"Yes, sir," said Frank Nugent.

"Take a hundred lines! The next boy speaking in class will be caned!"

Nugent sat down.

"Hard cheese!" murmured Bob Cherry sympathetically.

Bob Cherry could have sworn that it was impossible for his murmur to reach the ears of the Form-master. But Mr. Quelch seemed to be endowed with wonderful powers of hearing that afternoon. He turned his head, and fixed his eyes upon Bob Cherry.

"Ah! You were speaking, Cherry?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Bob Cherry.

"What were you speaking about?"

"I—I—I was speaking about cheese, sir!" said Bob.

There was a faint giggle in the class. It died away immediately as Mr. Quelch's angry eyes roved over the Form.

"Cheese!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir—hard cheese, sir!"

"I suppose this is impertinence, Cherry? Come here!"

"Oh, my only respected Aunt Jemima!" murmured Bob Cherry to himself, as he rose and came out before the class.

Mr. Quelch took a cane from his desk. Bob Cherry held out his hand, and a really terrific expression came over his features as the cane descended. He returned to his place with his hand tucked under his arm, grunting audibly.

There was no more whispering in the class just then. Mr. Quelch seldom caned a boy in the Form-room—never, indeed, for such a small offence—and it was evident that he was in very unusual frame of mind. The Remove sat in a state of great uneasiness, wondering who would catch it next.

That honour fell to Bolsover major, the bully of the Remove. Bolsover seemed to think that it was "up" to him to show that he was not afraid, and he broke the silence of the Form-room by a loud and prolonged sneeze.

The Removites started. Mr. Quelch turned irritably to Bolsover.

"Have you a cold, Bolsover?" he snapped.

"No, sir," said Bolsover.

"Then be quiet!"

"Certainly, sir! I only sneezed, sir!"

"Then do not sneeze again!" said the Form-master irritably.

"No, sir!"

Sneeze!

The sneeze this time was more prolonged, and there was a giggle. Mr. Quelch simply glared at Bolsover. Bolsover finished the sneeze with a little whoop, out of sheer bravado, and some of the juniors laughed outright. To "rag" the Form-master at such a time was a reckless proceeding, even for Bolsover major. But he had reason to regret it.

Mr. Quelch made a rapid stride towards him, grasped him by the shoulder, and jerked him out of his place. Then his cane lashed through the air, coming down upon Bolsover's broad back with a sounding concussion. The surprised junior roared with pain.

"Ow! Oh! Ow! Yow!"

Lash, lash!

"Yarrah! Oh!"

Mr. Quelch threw the bully of the Remove from him. Bolsover fell against his desk, and yelled again. He was very much hurt, and very much surprised by the Remove-master's unusual violence, and disposed to make the most of it. He leaned against the desk, and groaned loudly.

"Go back to your place, Bolsover!" said Mr. Quelch, between his set lips.

"I—I can't, sir!" said Bolsover, leaning heavily on the desk. "I—I think I'm injured, sir!"

The Removites almost held their breath. So well did Bolsover act, that some of the juniors really believed he had been injured by the collision with the desk. Mr. Quelch looked startled for a moment.

"Will you obey me, Bolsover?" he asked, more quietly.

"I can't move, sir!" groaned Bolsover.

Mr. Quelch paused one moment. Then he took a stride forward, and brought down his cane upon Bolsover as he leaned heavily on the desk. Bolsover gave a sudden terrific yell, and proved at once that he could move, by jumping clear of the floor.

"Yar-o-o-o-o-o-op!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "You can move, after all, Bolsover!"

Bolsover squirmed into his place. Mr. Quelch looked at him with eyes scintillating under his set brows. Never had the Remove-master's eyes looked more like gimlets than at that moment, Gimlet Eyes being one of the pet names the Removites had for their master.

"You have spoken falsely, Bolsover!" said Mr. Quelch. "You will take five hundred lines! Not a word! If you make those ridiculous noises again, I will cane you most severely!"

Bolsover ceased to groan.

He remained quite quiet, and scowling blackly, during the remainder of the afternoon's lessons; and Mr. Quelch himself was much more patient. Perhaps he felt that he had allowed his temper to carry him a little too far.

The hour of dismissal came at last, welcome both to master and pupils, and the Remove filed in grim silence out of the Form-room.

"My hat!" Bob Cherry murmured. "Something's very wrong with Quelchy to-day!"

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

"I'll make him sit up for what I've had, somehow!" he muttered.

"Well, that was your own fault!" said Harry Wharton.

"You could see that Quelchy was out of sorts, and you shouldn't have tried ragging him!"

"Oh, you would back him up, of course!" snarled Bolsover. "I've a jolly good mind to go and complain to the Head. He wouldn't allow us to be chucked about and hammered."

"Oh, rats!"

Bolsover strode away, growling. He had five hundred lines to do, and he declared to his friends in the Remove that he had no intention of doing them. And Vernon-Smith and Snoop and Stott and his other cronies backed him up in that determination, partly from a mischievous desire to see what would come of it, and partly, perhaps, with a secret conviction that another licking would do the Remove bully good.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Visitor for Mr. Quelch.

"THIS 'ere Greyfriars?"

Gosling, the school porter, was standing in the gateway, looking out into the road. The question was put to him by a somewhat peculiar-looking individual, who had come along the road from Friardale, and whom Gosling had not condescended to notice.

He was a somewhat stout personage, with attire that was as dirty as it was shabby, and with a battered silk hat cocked at a rakish angle upon his head.

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BOUGHT HONOURS!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by MARTIN CLIFFORD.



There was a rush, and before Mr. Quelch could speak—even if he felt inclined to do so—Mr. Punter was in the grasp of the juniors. He roared and struggled, but they crowded round him like bees and he was rushed to the sea-shore. "Duck him!" the juniors roared. "Ow!" shrieked Mr. Punter. "Elp! Leggo!" (See Chapter 16.)

His face was copper-coloured from the use of strong drink, and his eyes had a heavy and bleared look, and his hair escaped in tousled patches from under the shabby brim of the silk hat.

Gosling took him for a tramp, and he was far too lofty to notice such a person, aristocratic prejudice being a strong point with Gosling. As the man halted and spoke to him, Gosling remained with his eyes fixed upon the distance, apparently unconscious.

"Is this 'ere Greyfriars?" repeated the stranger.

Gosling stared straight past him, apparently deaf. The stranger reached out, and poked the haughty porter in the ribs with his thumb, a proceeding which caused Gosling's dignified attitude to collapse all of a sudden. He gasped.

"Groo!"

"I asked you, is this 'ere Greyfriars?" said the stranger.

"Yes, it is," said Gosling, "and you can pass on your way, if you don't want to be 'anded over to the perlice. We put your sort into the lock-up in Friardale. Wot I says is this 'ere—you clear off!"

"I'm coming in."

"You ain't!" said Gosling, retreating into the gateway. "Your sort ain't allowed 'ere. You low ruffian, get out!"

The stranger marched in.

Gosling took a very scrutinising look at him, and then planted himself in the new-comer's path. The stranger was evidently somewhat under the influence of drink, and Gosling fancied that he could handle him.

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He was mistaken.

The disreputable stranger squared up to the school porter without the slightest hesitation, and let out his left and then his right, and Gosling sat down in the gateway with surprising and painful suddenness.

"Oh!" roared Gosling. "Ow!"

The stranger pranced round the fallen porter in a very warlike way.

"Will you get up and 'ave some more?" he roared.

"Ow!"

"I'm come 'ere to see a friend. Who's going to stop me?"

"Ow!"

"Is Mr. Quelch at 'ome?"

"Mr. Quelch!" gasped Gosling. "You want to see Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes. Where is he?"

"Wot you want to see him for?"

"Mind your own business, my man! Where is he? I want to see my friend Quelch. Where's my old pal Quelch?"

Gosling stared at him dazedly. That such a man should come to Greyfriars, asking to see Mr. Quelch, was amazing. It was quite impossible that the master of the Remove could have any acquaintance of that sort.

"You'd better get hout!" gasped Gosling. "If you don't go, I'll telephone for the perlice."

"Where's my old pal Quelch?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming up with a crowd of other fellows who were attracted by the

disturbance. "What's the row here? Who's your friend, Gossy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and it's very choice ye are in selecting yere friends, Gossy!" said Micky Desmond.

Gosling groaned.

"Wot I say is this 'ere," he exclaimed. "I don't know 'im! He's a tramp! He says he wants to see Mr. Quelch."

"My old pal Quelch," said the new-comer, looking round affably. "I've come a long way to see 'im."

"What rot!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "It's just cheek. Quelch can't know that chap!"

"Of course he can't!" said Nugent. "You'd better get out, my man."

"Hold on!" said Bolsover major. "He says he's a friend of Quelch's—"

"Regler ole pal," said the stranger.

"Let him see him," said Bolsover. "If Quelch has friends of this sort, it's only fair they should see him if they want to. Come on, my man! I'll show you the way."

"Look here, Bolsover—"

"Oh, cheeso it, Wharton! I'm going to take him in."

Bolsover major was grinning gleefully. He felt that the man's claim to acquaintance with the Remove-master must be founded upon some grounds, and if Mr. Quelch really had any connection with such a man it would be great fun, in the amiable Bolsover's opinion, to let all Greyfriars see it.

Bolsover put his arm through the new-comer's, and led him away to the School House.

The other fellows followed in a body.

Bolsover major marched his companion across the Close to the House, and piloted him up the steps, and took him in.

"Bolsover will get a licking if he has the nerve to take the rotter to Quelch's study," said Bob Cherry.

"Quelch can't know him!" said Nugent.

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"It's queer his claiming to know Quelch, if Quelch doesn't know him," he said. "Looks to me as if there was something in it. What was Quelch so awfully ratty about this afternoon? Looks to me as if he knew this friend of his was coming, and didn't like the prospect."

"I guess that's so," said Fisher T. Fish.

Harry Wharton frowned. Whether there was anything in it or not, he was very much against baiting the Remove-master in this way. Mr. Quelch's irritability that afternoon had certainly been a little trying, and Wharton had been made to smart with the rest, but he did not wish for any revenge upon a master who was almost always just and kind. Bolsover & Co., however, wanted to make the most of it; and Bolsover, with a nerve that few other fellows in the Remove would have displayed, piloted the stranger to the door of the Remove-master's study.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, met them in the passage, and he stopped in sheer blank amazement at the sight of Bolsover major's companion.

"Goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "Who is that, Bolsover? Surely that person is no relation of yours?"

Bolsover turned red, and there was a chuckle from the following crowd of juniors.

"No, sir," growled Bolsover.

"Then why are you bringing him into the House?" demanded Mr. Prout.

"He wants to see Mr. Quelch, sir."

"My old pal Quelch!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Prout sharply. "You should not have allowed him to enter the House, Bolsover. The man's claim is sheer impudence. What is your name, my man?"

"You can call me Percy," said the new-comer, with much affability. "My old pal Quelch always calls me Percy."

"Nonsense! Leave the House at once!"

"Not without seeing my old pal," said Percy, shaking his head. "Can't be done! I've come a long way to see him. You jest tell him that Percy Punter has come to see him, and he'll simply rush to meet me."

"Perhaps Mr. Quelch had better be called," said the Fifth Form-master, in amazement and doubt. "He will soon dispose of this man's impudent claim."

Bolsover knocked at Mr. Quelch's door.

"Come in!" called out the Remove-master.

Bolsover opened the door.

"If you please, sir, there's somebody to see you," he said, with half-suppressed insolence. "A gentleman named Punter, sir—Percy Punter."

Mr. Quelch rose from his table, turning quite pale.

The squat form of the stranger was framed in the doorway, and he made a benevolent gesture of friendship towards Mr. Quelch.

The Remove-master seemed petrified.

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BOUGHT HONOURS!

"Ow are you, old pal?" asked the new-comer. "Ow do you do?"

"What—what!" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Shall we chuck him out, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes—no!" stammered Mr. Quelch. "You—you boys may go. Come into the room Punter; I—I will speak to you. Go away, the rest of you!"

The Removites looked at one another.

Mr. Punter entered the study with an unsteady step, and sank down in the Form-master's comfortable easy-chair.

Mr. Quelch crossed over and closed the door upon the crowd in the passage.

Mr. Prout, of the Fifth, seemed stunned for a moment, and he walked away slowly with an expression of utter astonishment frozen upon his face.

The juniors dispersed.

"It—it's a giddy dream!" Bob Cherry exclaimed, rubbing his eyes when they were in the Close again. "It can't be possible, you know. We've dreamed it."

"Blessed if I know what to make of it!" said Wharton.

"I say, you fellows," chimed in Billy Bunter, "that's why Quelch was so ratty this afternoon in class. Let's let the Head know, and he'll be down on Quelch like a load of bricks. I—Ow!"

Bob Cherry gave the Owl of the Remove a shove with his boot, and Billy Bunter sat down in the Close. That was all the reward he received for his valuable suggestion. The chums of the Remove walked away, very much puzzled and perturbed. For, in spite of Mr. Quelch's "rattiness" that afternoon, most of the Form were very much attached to him, and Harry Wharton & Co. knew what a humiliation and trouble this visit must be for the Remove-master. What was this man to him, that Mr. Quelch did not dare to refuse him admission to the school—for that was what it amounted to.

"It's jolly queer!" said Johnny Bull. "It's rough on Quelch! May be a brother or a cousin of his who's gone to the dogs, and won't let him alone."

"I shouldn't wonder. But I don't see why Quelch should let him come here, even if he is," said Wharton. "There will be trouble for Quelch if he comes often."

"My hat! Yes."

The stranger remained shut up in the Remove-master's study with him. Fellows who passed the door heard a murmur of voices. And with every minute that the disreputable visitor remained in the Remove-master's study, the amazement of the Removites deepened.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Little Disappointment.

THE news of Mr. Quelch's strange visitor was not long in spreading through the school. Bolsover made as much of it as he could. He had been planning in his mind some scheme for "getting his own back," as he called it, upon his Form-master, for the severity of the afternoon. And he was not likely to neglect this opportunity.

Ere long nearly all Greyfriars knew of the peculiar visitor who was shut up with the Remove-master in his study.

Fellows of all Forms took a deep interest in the matter.

Quite a crowd gathered in the Close, keeping an eye on the School House door, to see the man as he came out.

Coker of the Fifth planted himself near the door, with Potter and Greene. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth lounged on the School House steps. Crowds of Removites were under the old elms near at hand. Even Tubb and the fags of the Third hovered round to have a look at the stranger when he appeared in public again.

The curiosity was unbounded.

There was a buzz in the crowd when Coker of the Fifth announced that he could see Mr. Quelch at his study window, looking out.

"He's waiting for the coast to be clear, to let his visitor out," chuckled Temple of the Fourth.

"Begad, yaas," said Lord Mauleverer, of the Remove. "It's rather caddish to wait here and see the man, isn't it, if Quelch doesn't like it?"

Temple snorted.

"Cut off, then, if you don't want to see him!" he exclaimed. "You're not bound to stay."

"Yaas, I will!" said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully.

But Mauleverer's scruples were not shared by the other fellows. Their curiosity was too keenly excited.

Mr. Quelch disappeared from the study window, and there was a general movement of interest in the crowd outside.

They felt that the stranger was about to appear.

The minutes passed, however, and there was no sign of him. If Mr. Quelch was waiting for the crowd to disperse, he was unconsciously following the example of the countryman in the story, who sat down upon a bank and waited for the river

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to flow past. For the crowd increased in numbers every minute. The further the news spread of Mr. Quelch's strange visitor, the more fellows came to see what he was like. Even seniors of the Sixth Form strolled about near at hand, in order not to miss a sight of him.

Still he did not come.

"He's making a jolly long stay," growled Russell of the Remove. "I'm going in to have my tea."

"He can't be long now," said Bolsover. "Quelch can't be going to keep him there all the evening."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Here comes Quelch!"

There was a thrill in the crowd as the form of the Remove-master was seen in the doorway of the School House.

Mr. Quelch's face was a little paler than usual, but it was perfectly calm and composed. He came out of the house with his hat and coat on, and the crowd expected to see the disreputable Mr. Punter follow him out.

But no Mr. Punter appeared. Mr. Quelch glanced at the crowd of fellows, seniors and juniors, and some of them backed away. If the Remove-master had asked them what they were collected there for, they would have felt a certain amount of awkwardness in explaining.

But Mr. Quelch addressed no remark to them.

He walked on calmly, and reached the gates, and went out, and disappeared from the sight of the assembled Greyfriars fellows. They looked after him in surprise, and some of them went down to the gates, to see whether he had really gone out. They saw Mr. Quelch's form in the distance. He was walking towards the village of Friardale at his usual quick pace.

"What on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Bolsover, in perplexity. "He's gone out, and left the chap in his study!"

"It's jolly queer!" said Coker.

"What was the man like?" asked Potter.

"Awful-looking bounder—half squiffy," said Bolsover. "He said his name was Punter, and he was a friend of Quelch. And Quelch asked him into his study. You should have seen how old Prout looked."

"Faith, and it's quare," said Micky Desmond. "But I'm not waiting here any longer. I'm going in to tea."

"Let's go to the study and have a look at him," suggested Bolsover boldly. "Quelch isn't there. It will be all right."

The fellows hesitated.

But curiosity was too strong; and a crowd of them followed Bolsover into the house, and into the passage where Mr. Quelch's study was situated.

The study door was closed, and no sound came from within.

Outside the study, Bolsover hesitated.

"It's all right," said Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "I've got some lines for Quelch. I'm entitled to go in and put them on his table, as he's out. You fellows are entitled to be in the passage at the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good!" said Coker. "Go it, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith fetched his lines, and then boldly opened the door of the Remove-master's study.

He walked in, and laid his lines upon the table; and then looked round the study.

It was empty.

The fellows in the passage crowded round the open doorway, looking in.

There were exclamations of amazement on all sides.

The study was empty, save for the Bounder; there was no sign of the disreputable stranger whom the bully of the Remove had brought there to see Mr. Quelch.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Bolsover. "Where is he? Has he hidden himself?"

Two or three of the juniors entered the study. But it was clear that the stranger was not hidden there.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Vernon-Smith, puzzled. "He can't have vanished into thin air, I suppose."

"Better get out of here, in case Quelch comes in," said Snoop nervously.

The juniors got out quickly enough.

"It's a blessed mystery!" said Bolsover.

"Is it?" said Coker of the Fifth unpleasantly. "It looks to me more like a blessed jape. You've been pulling our leg, you young sweep!"

"I haven't!" exclaimed Bolsover, taken aback by this unexpected accusation. "Lots of the fellows saw him—Smithy, and Snoop—and Wharton, if he were here—"

"Well, he isn't here," said Coker; "and I wouldn't believe Snoop or Smithy any more than I believe you. You've been japing us."

"Looks like it to me," said Temple of the Fourth.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"I—I— Hands off!" roared Bolsover.

Coker, Potter, and Greene laid violent hands upon the bully of the Remove. They bumped him down upon the floor of the passage, with a concussion that made him yell.

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ONE
PENNY.

Coker glared down upon him wrathfully.

"You won't play any more of your little games on the Fifth, I think," he remarked.

And Coker, Potter, and Greene walked away.

"You rotters!" roared Bolsover. "I tell you, he was there. I—"

But the Fifth-Formers were gone. Bolsover scrambled up furiously. The chuckles of the other fellows did not tend to calm him.

Trotter, the house-page, was coming downstairs, and Bolsover caught sight of him and called to him.

"Trotter! Come here!"

"Yes, Master Bolsover," said Trotter.

"Have you seen anything of Mr. Quelch's visitor?"

Trotter grinned.

"Yes, sir. He went away nearly an hour ago."

"What!" yelled the juniors.

"But we should have seen him!" exclaimed Tubb of the Third.

"He went out the back way, sir."

"Oh!" gasped Bolsover. "The back way!"

"Yes, sir. I showed him out the back way. Mr. Quelch told me to, sir," said Trotter cheerfully. "About an hour ago, Master Bolsover."

And Trotter walked away, grinning.

Bolsover major snapped his teeth. While the crowd had been waiting in vain for the appearance of Mr. Punter, he had left by the back way, an hour before Mr. Quelch appeared in the Close.

"You ass!" growled Temple of the Fourth, glaring at Bolsover. "Keeping us waiting in the Close an hour after he was gone!"

"You fathead!"

"You duffer!"

"Yah!"

And the juniors dispersed in great ill-humour, most of them with extremely uncomplimentary remarks to Bolsover major.

Bolsover ground his teeth.

"How was I to know, Snoop?" he said, when only Snoop remained with him. "It shows that Quelch dared not let us see the man, smuggling him out the back way like this."

Snoop nodded.

"He won't beat me like this, though," said Bolsover between his teeth. "I've got five hundred lines to do, and I'll make Quelch sorry for every one of them. I'll find that chap again, if he stays in the neighbourhood, and I'll spring him on Quelch some day before the Head. It ought to be enough to get Quelch the sack."

And with that amiable remark Bolsover tramped away angrily.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter has an Idea.

MR. QUELCH was not visible again that evening. Some of the juniors looked about for him, but he was not to be seen, and they went to bed without the Form-master having returned to the school.

Wingate of the Sixth saw the Remove to bed, and when he came into the dormitory to put the lights out he found the room in a buzz. The Removites were discussing the queer visitor of the afternoon, and their curiosity upon the subject was unabated.

"What's all the jaw about?" demanded Wingate, looking round the dormitory.

"Quelch's friend," said Bolsover.

"What do you mean?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, puzzled. Evidently he, at least, knew nothing of the peculiar visit of Mr. Percy Punter.

"Haven't you heard?" exclaimed Bolsover.

"No. What are you talking about?"

"It's a relation of our Form-master's," Bolsover explained; "an awful low bounder, and he came here squiffy to see Quelch. Quelch let him out the back way, to prevent the fellows from seeing him."

Wingate frowned.

"Indeed! You will take fifty lines, for speaking disrespectfully of your Form-master," he said. "Now turn in."

"Why, you asked me!" roared Bolsover indignantly.

"I didn't ask you to slander Mr. Quelch," said Wingate; "and if I hear you doing it again, you'll get something worse than lines."

"Look here—"

"Hold your tongue, and turn in," said Wingate sharply.

And there was nothing for Bolsover to do but to obey.

The next morning Mr. Quelch took his usual place at the head of the breakfast-table when the Remove came into the dining-room.

All the juniors looked at him curiously enough. The Remove-master, of course, must have been conscious of their curiosity, but he showed no sign of it. His manner was perfectly calm, as usual.

"Brazening it out," said Bolsover with a sneer, as the Remove trooped out after breakfast.

"Oh, rats!" said Harry Wharton. "Why can't you let the matter drop, Bolsover? If Quelch has got a connection he's ashamed of, it's not for us to make a lot of talk about it."

"Mind your own business," said Bolsover savagely. "I've got old scores up against Quelch, and this is where I come in."

"It's rotten caddish," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"You'd better mind your eye, too," said Bob Cherry. "Quelch isn't the kind of old sport to be played with. He will be down on you if you try and rot with him."

"We'll jolly well see!" said Bolsover.

A good many fellows in the Remove were eager enough to see Bolsover make some attempt to rag the Form-master. It was a reckless enterprise on the part of the Remove bully, and his followers looked for some fun in it. But it was not likely to be funny for Bolsover himself.

Mr. Quelch called Bolsover out before the class when the Remove took their places in the Form-room.

"Where are your lines, Bolsover?" he asked.

"Lines, sir?" said Bolsover.

"Yes. I gave you five hundred lines yesterday," said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"I haven't done them, sir."

"None of them?"

"No, sir."

"Indeed! And why have you not done them, Bolsover?"

"I haven't had time, sir."

There was a breathless hush in the class. Bolsover did not even say he was sorry. The Remove waited breathlessly to see the result of this piece of pure and unadulterated "cheek" on the part of Bolsover major.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes upon the Remove bully's face. Never had his keen, penetrating eyes reminded the juniors so much of gimlets.

"Indeed!" said the Form-master slowly. "It appears to me, Bolsover, that you are intending to be guilty of deliberate impertinence."

"Oh, no, sir," said Bolsover. "I simply haven't had time to do the lines, sir. I spent some time yesterday on your account, sir."

"On my account?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"In what way, Bolsover?"

"In showing in your friend, sir—Mr. Punter."

The Remove gasped.

Mr. Quelch himself seemed to be taken quite aback by Bolsover's astounding impudence. He turned pink, and for a moment seemed at a loss for words.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Bolsover's going to catch it. The ass, to think that he can cheek Quelch like that! He'll get it in the neck!"

"Serve him right!" growled Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch was silent for some moments. Bolsover, feeling a little nervous himself now, and wondering whether he had gone too far, waited for him to speak. But Mr. Quelch was quite master of himself, and his voice was perfectly calm as he replied.

"I cannot take that as an excuse for not having the lines done, Bolsover. It cannot have occupied much of your time. I shall cane you for not handing in your imposition, and you will bring it to me this evening, instead." He took up a cane from his desk. "Hold out your hand, Bolsover."

Bolsover hesitated.

"Do you hear me, Bolsover?"

Bolsover unwillingly held out his hand. He dared not carry his impertinence so far as actually refusing to obey. Mr. Quelch gave him a very severe cut, and the Remove bully gasped.

"Go back to your place, Bolsover. I shall expect the lines this evening."

"Yes," panted Bolsover.

He went back to his place with a crimson countenance. Some of the fellows gave him sympathetic looks, but most of them were grinning. Bolsover's essay at ragging the Form-master had ended ignominiously for himself. And no one was inclined to make the attempt on his own account.

Bolsover sat with a sullen face through the morning lessons.

"Better do the lines, old man," said Vernon-Smith, as the Remove came out after lessons. "It's no good looking for trouble."

Bolsover ground his teeth.

"I sha'n't do them!" he said.

"You can't stick out against the Form-master."

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"I can jolly well show him up, and make it worth his while to let me alone," growled the Remove bully. "I'm going to get that chap here again, somehow, before all the school. I'll make Quelch sorry for this!"

Vernon-Smith's eyes glistened.

"Good egg!" he said. "It would be a ripping jape on Quelch. But you don't know where to find him."

"I expect he's still in the neighbourhood. It's jolly clear that he's got some hold on Quelch, or he wouldn't come here," said Bolsover. "If we could find out what it was, we should have Quelch under our thumb. I'm going to find out somehow what their connection is."

"Good!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'll back you up. I suppose the man must be getting money out of Quelch; he can't have any other reason for coming here. In that case he's bound to be in the neighbourhood, and we can find him."

"I say, you fellows—"

Bolsover turned furiously upon Billy Bunter.

"You fat rotter! You've been listening!" he exclaimed fiercely.

Billy Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, I—I haven't, you know. I didn't hear a word you said, and I—I won't tell Quelch you're going to look for that man, and—and—"

Bolsover seized the fat Remove by the collar, and shook him furiously.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Yow! I—I—oh! Groo! D-d-don't shake me like that, Bolsover; you'll m-m-make my gi-gig-glasses fall off, you know—"

"You spying cad!"

"And if they get bib-bib-broken you'll have to pip-pip-pay for them, you know!"

Bolsover shook the Owl of the Remove until his arm ached.

"Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "Groo! I'll go and tell Quelch! Yow! I mean I won't tell him! Yah! Look here, I want to help you— Yowp!"

He jerked his collar away from Bolsover's powerful grip, and gasped for breath. The Remove bully scowled savagely at him.

"If you say a word—" he began.

"Groo! Ow! I'll—"

Bolsover clenched his fist. Vernon-Smith caught his arm.

"Hold on!" he said quietly. "Look here, Bunter, what were you going to say?"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"I—I was going to tell you a wheeze for ma-making Quelch sit up," he gasped. "Groo! You know what a splendid ventriloquist I am—"

"Don't you begin any of your ventriloquist dodges on me!" growled Bolsover threateningly.

But Vernon-Smith's eyes gleamed.

"My hat!" he exclaimed, in a suppressed voice. "It's ripping! Bunter isn't a splendid ventriloquist—"

"Oh, really, Smithy!"

"But he can imitate voices a treat," said the Bounder, grinning, "and he can ventriloquise more or less. Could you repeat that awful bounder Punter's voice, Billy, after having only heard him yesterday?"

Bunter sniffed.

"Of course I could!" he said.

"Let's hear you."

Bunter grinned, and cleared his throat.

"I want to see me ole pal Quelch!"

Bolsover swung round in amazement, thinking that Mr. Percy Punter was at his elbow. But there was nobody there.

Bunter cackled.

"Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he! Isn't that good enough?"

"My hat!" gasped Bolsover. "Was that really you, Billy?"

"Yes, it was."

"Good enough!" said Vernon-Smith. "My hat! Bunter, old man, you're worth your weight in gold! Do as I tell you, and I'll stand you the biggest feed you've ever made yourself ill with."

And Bunter replied promptly:

"I'm on!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Little Ventriloquism.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, as a bell rang across the Close. "Lessons again!"

He finished the ginger-beer he was discussing in the school tuckshop, and strolled out into the Close. Bolsover, Vernon-Smith, and Billy Bunter were in Mrs. Mumble's little shop, and Billy Bunter was eating tarts at express speed. Bob Cherry paused to glance at them curiously.

The Bounder was paying for the fat junior's feed, and it was not a common sight to see the Bounder paying for anybody but himself. Vernon-Smith had plenty of money, but he also had the gift of taking care of it. He was the least

likely fellow at Greyfriars to stand a big feed to the voracious Owl of the Remove, and Bob Cherry wondered what was on.

"Time for fourth lesson!" he called out.

"Coming!" said Bolsover.

"I say, you fellows, wait a minute," said Billy Bunter. "I think I'll have another ginger-pop, Smithy, or I shall be thirsty after the jam."

"Buck up, then!" said the Bounder.

"Going in for philanthropy and feeding the poor on a large scale, Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder.

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"I'm feeding Bunter," he said. "It's a bargain. He's going to give us a ventriloquial entertainment."

Bob Cherry stared.

"The young ass is generally willing to bore us to death with his rotten ventriloquism without being fed up for it," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"This is something extra special in the entertainment line," explained Vernon-Smith. "You'll see this afternoon. Come on, Bunt!"

"I think I'd better have another tart—"

"Oh, rats! We shall be late."

"I can always ventriloquise better if I don't feel hungry, Smithy—"

"Well, you can't possibly feel hungry now," said the Bounder. "Come on! We don't want to be late, and give Quelch an excuse for jumping on us."

"One more tart—"

"Take his other arm, Bolsover."

"Oh, really— Oh!"

Bolsover and Vernon-Smith took an arm each of the Owl of the Remove, and marched him out of the tuckshop. They marched him across the Close and into the Remove Form-room. Most of the fellows were in, and Mr. Quelch was at his desk.

The Remove took their places.

Bolsover was sitting on one side of Billy Bunter and Vernon-Smith on the other. The fat junior looked very shiny about the face and sleepy about the eyes. He was not disposed to exertion that afternoon. As it happened, Billy Bunter was one of the first called upon to display knowledge of the geography of the Australian continent. Having confided to Mr. Quelch that Melbourne and Sydney were towns in Canada, Billy Bunter was rewarded with a hundred lines, and a promise of a caning if he made such an answer again.

Bunter growled below his breath.

"Rotten!" he murmured. "What the dickens does it matter where Melbourne and Sydney are? The beast will ask me again soon. Do you know where they are, Smithy?"

"Oh, in Borneo!" said the Bounder.

"Good! I'll remember."

Ten minutes later Mr. Quelch returned to the charge. Bunter could easily have informed himself where Melbourne and Sydney were by a glance at his geography book, but he had not chosen to take the trouble.

"Where is Melbourne, Bunter?" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"In Borneo, sir."

Mr. Quelch almost jumped.

"In—in what?" he shouted.

"Borneo, sir—where the wild men come from, sir," added Billy Bunter in further explanation.

"Come out here, Bunter!"

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:



"I am very pleased with you, Wharton," said the Head, shaking hands cordially with the captain of the Remove, "and I thank you for having acted in a way worthy of the great school you belong to, and for having well upheld the honour of your Form!" Harry Wharton flushed, and faltered, "Oh, sir!" (See Chapter 16.)

"Eh?"

"Stand out at once!"

"But, sir—"

"At once, Bunter!"

The fat junior rose unwillingly in his place. He did not see why he should be caned for stating that Melbourne was in Borneo. He had the Bounder's word for it, though the Bounder's word was rather a rotten reed to lean upon in other matters besides geography.

"Go it, Bunter!" whispered Vernon-Smith. "Now's your chance!"

The fat junior's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles.

As he stood up, and Mr. Quelch selected a cane from his desk, there came a rough and raucous voice seemingly from the direction of the doorway. The Form-room door was left wide open as well as the windows, on account of the heat of the summer afternoon. From where the juniors sat at their desks they had a view of a wide section of the flagged passage without.

"My ole pal 'ere?"

The voice was very clear and very recognisable. A thrill ran through the Remove.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "It's that blackguard again?"

"Phew!"

"Look at Quelch!"

"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

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Mr. Quelch, came in hand, swung round from his desk and fixed his eyes upon the open doorway. There was no one in sight there, but, of course, Mr. Percy Punter might have been further down the passage inquiring for his old pal.

"Where's my ole pal Quelch?"

Mr. Quelch made a rapid stride to the door.

He stepped out into the passage and closed the door quickly behind him, his face crimson. There was a chuckle from Bolsover & Co. Mr. Quelch's action was evidently dictated by his desire to prevent the juniors from hearing what passed between him and his unwelcome visitor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover.

"Poor old Quelch!" said Frank Nugent. "If I were he I'd have the rotter chucked out."

"Rather difficult to chuck him out this time, I fancy," grinned Vernon-Smith. "It's Billy Bunter's voice they'd have to chuck out. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?"

"Was that Bunter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Cave!"

The juniors were silent again at once as the Form-room door opened and Mr. Quelch came in. Mr. Quelch was looking very puzzled. The juniors, now that they were aware that the voice from the passage was a ventriloquial effort on the part of William George Bunter, understood the perplexity of the Remove-master. He had searched along the passage without finding any sign there of the disreputable Mr. Punter.

Mr. Quelch closed the door as he came in, and returned to his desk. He had not forgotten that he had been about to cane Bunter when he was interrupted, however.

"Bunter!" he called out.

"Yes, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"Come here!"

"I—I—I—"

"Come here at once, Bunter! You will find out where Melbourne is, and write it out fifty times, and in addition I shall cane you now."

Bunter breathed more freely. For a moment he had feared that the Remove-master had discovered his ventriloquism.

"Ye-es, sir," he stammered. "But I—"

"Come here at once!"

Billy Bunter came slowly forward. As he did so, Mr. Quelch swung round towards the door with a look of startled anger upon his face. For the voice of Mr. Percy Punter was audible again, seemingly whispering through the keyhole.

"Let an ole pal in, Quelch, old man."

Mr. Quelch strode to the door, and threw it open.

With a white and angry face he dashed out into the passage, and from the Remove there came a loud roar of laughter:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

"H A, ha, ha!"

The Remove simply yelled.

All the Removites knew by this time that Billy Bunter, the ventriloquist, was responsible for the voice from the passage. And even Harry Wharton & Co., though they were against ragging the Remove-master on the subject of his disreputable acquaintance, could hardly blame Bunter for putting obstacles in the way of being caned. It was a really interesting problem whether Bunter would be able to put off his caning altogether by a succession of ventriloquial interruptions when Mr. Quelch was about to cane him.

"Go it, Bunter!" said Bolsover major admiringly. "My hat! You ought to go on the stage, you know; you ought, really."

Bunter chuckled.

"Didn't I tell you I was a jolly good ventriloquist?" he said. "I'm a regular dab at it. Quelch must be waxy by this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave!"

Mr. Quelch's returning footsteps could be heard in the Form-room passage, and they could hear his hard breathing. It was pretty clear that the Form-master was getting worked up into a terrible temper. And he had no just excuse for wreaking it upon his boys. The cause of the trouble was Mr. Percy Punter, whom he imagined to be playing unaccountable tricks upon him. Mr. Punter had been in liquor on the occasion of his first visit to Greyfriars, and, doubtless, the Remove-master attributed the present peculiar incidents to some intoxicated freak.

"'Ere he comes, by gosh!"

Mr. Quelch heard those words as he came back to the Form-room. He quickened his pace, and rushed in, under

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the impression that the disreputable Mr. Punter had slipped into the room during his absence.

Mr. Quelch rushed in, and looked about him. From the direction of one of the open windows there came a chuckle.

"Sold again, cocky!"

Mr. Quelch rushed to the window. His impression was that the visitor had jumped out just as he entered.

He looked out of the window into the Close.

The Close lay sunny and green before his eyes. In the distance Mrs. Mumble's little boy was carrying a parcel into the tuckshop, but there was nobody else to be seen.

Mr. Quelch stepped away from the window with a dazed expression upon his face.

He looked at the Remove. The juniors were not laughing now. They were decidedly grave. Mr. Quelch was very plainly not in a humour to encourage merriment at his expense.

"Have any of you seen anyone enter this room?" asked Mr. Quelch.

There was no reply.

"Has someone entered this room?" demanded the Form-master.

No answer.

"Then it must be a trick of some sort," said Mr. Quelch.

Bolsover drew a deep breath. If Mr. Quelch discovered the ventriloquist, the ventriloquist would certainly give away his confederates. And there would be serious trouble for Bolsover & Co.

"I did, sir," said Bolsover boldly. "I saw him."

Mr. Quelch looked at him fixedly.

"Who was it, Bolsover?"

"Your friend Mr. Punter, sir."

"Where did he go?"

"Jumped out of the window, sir."

Bolsover rolled out falsehood after falsehood with the ease that comes of long practice. The other fellows simply gasped at his coolness.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch. "We will now resume. Bunter—"

The Remove waited breathlessly. Billy Bunter was equal to the occasion.

"Where's old Quelch? Where's my ole pal? I want 'im to lend me a bob."

The voice came distinctly from the passage. Mr. Quelch swung round towards the door, which he had left open this time. There was a sound of footsteps this time, and someone was very evidently in the passage.

Mr. Quelch ran to the door.

"My hat!" murmured Bolsover. "That's wonderful, Bunter. How could you do the footsteps?"

"I—I haven't! There must be someone there."

"Oh!"

There was a sudden uproar in the passage.

Mr. Quelch had rushed furiously out, only thinking of the troublesome and persistent Mr. Punter, and he rushed right into Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth.

The collision sent the Fifth Form-master reeling back, and he fell heavily to the floor.

"You scoundrel!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "How dare you! Oh! Is that Mr. Prout?"

"Ow!"

"My dear Mr. Prout—"

"Yow!"

"I—I certainly did not know it was you, sir," gasped the Remove-master. "Pray allow me to assist you! I am very sorry!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Prout, as the Remove-master helped him up. "Really, Mr. Quelch, this is most extraordinary. You rushed upon me—"

"I am very sorry."

"You called me names!"

"I apologise most sincerely," said the distracted Mr. Quelch. "I—I am the victim of a most absurd trick. Someone is calling into the Form-room from the passage, and as fast as I come out he escapes somewhere, and hides until I have gone in again."

Mr. Prout looked astonished.

"Goodness gracious!" he exclaimed. "How extraordinary! Who is it? It cannot be one of the boys. They are all in the Form-rooms."

"No; it is—someone else."

"It would be wise to call Gosling, and let him search for the person, if it is someone who does not belong to the school," said Mr. Prout, looking hard at the Remove-master's flushed and excited face. "It is extraordinary for a stranger to gain admittance here for the purpose of playing such a ridiculous prank."

"It is—is indeed extraordinary," said Mr. Quelch. "But it is just as I say. But I will not detain you, Mr. Prout."

"Not at all," said Mr. Prout. "I will stay and help you to find the rascal. Have you any idea who it is?"

Mr. Quelch coloured uncomfortably.

"Upon the whole, I think the rascal is gone," he said. "I will not detain you."

And with a nod he went back into the Remove Form-room.

Mr. Prout looked after him in a most peculiar manner. He shook his head significantly as he walked away.

"I have never suspected Mr. Quelch of drinking before," he murmured. "But, really—" And Mr. Prout shook his head again very solemnly.

Mr. Quelch found his class struggling with an attack of hysterics. They had heard all that passed in the passage, and they tried in vain to calm themselves as their Form-master came back into the room. But a freezing glance from Mr. Quelch was sufficient to restore gravity to the Remove.

"Now, Bunter—"

Billy Bunter had gone back to his place, and he was trying to look unconscious as Mr. Quelch came in. But the Remove-master had evidently not forgotten.

"Now then, Quelch, ole pal—"

Mr. Quelch started.

But he did not turn towards the door again as that voice came apparently from the passage.

A sudden suspicion blazed into his eyes.

"Bunter!" he thundered.

Bunter jumped.

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"I think I remember hearing on some previous occasion that you were an amateur ventriloquist!" thundered the Remove-master.

"Oh, sir! Not at all, sir. I—I—I've never even tried it, sir. I don't know how to do it, sir, and I couldn't imitate Percy Punter's voice, sir, if I tried a million times, sir. Quite a mistake, sir. I assure you, sir—"

"I did not accuse you of imitating Mr. Punter's voice," said the Remove-master grimly. "It was your guilty conscience, Bunter."

"Oh, sir! I don't—I didn't—I haven't—I wouldn't—"

"Come here, Bunter!"

"Oh, sir—"

"Come here!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter almost staggered out before the class. He wished sincerely that the floor of the Form-room would open and swallow him up. But the Form-room floor was not likely to do anything of the kind, and the fat junior came out and faced the Remove-master, trembling under his angry gaze. Under Mr. Quelch's accusing eyes all Billy Bunter's nerve, such as it was, left him.

"Bunter," thundered Mr. Quelch, "you have been playing tricks on me!"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Bunter, in dismay. "I wouldn't do such a thing, sir! I couldn't! I—I respect you too much, sir! I—I said to Bolsover that I wouldn't—I couldn't—"

"Bolsover!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply. "Then it was Bolsover who induced you to play this impertinent trick upon your Form-master, Bunter?"

"No, sir! Yes, sir! I—I haven't done it, sir; but if I have, it was Bolsover's fault! I told Smithy I respected you too much, sir, really! I—I—"

"Bolsover and Vernon-Smith, stand out here!" said Mr. Quelch.

Bolsover and the Bouncer came reluctantly forward. They gave Billy Bunter malevolent glances as they did so. But the scared junior was thinking too much about himself to heed them.

"So you induced Bunter to play ventriloquial tricks in the Form-room?" demanded Mr. Quelch, taking a tight grip upon his cane.

"Certainly not, sir!" said Vernon-Smith. "I know nothing about it, sir!"

"Nor I, sir!" said Bolsover.

"Indeed! You informed me a short time ago, Bolsover, that you had seen a stranger in the Form-room! I know that now to be a lie, as it was all done by Bunter's ventriloquism! You are speaking falsely!"

Bolsover gritted his teeth.

"Hold out your hand first, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter backed away.

"I—I haven't done anything, sir!" he stammered. "It was all their fault, sir! You see, I—I was hungry. I—I never really get enough to eat—and they stood me a feed, and—"

"Why did they stand you a feed, Bunter?"

"To make me play that trick, sir!"

"You said just now that you had played no trick!"

"More I haven't, sir! I—I mean, that if I played it, it was their fault! But I—I didn't, really, sir! You see—"

"I see that you are speaking untruthfully, Bunter! Hold out your hand at once!"

And Billy Bunter received a cut upon each of his fat hands, which sent him groaning back to his place.

Bolsover and Vernon-Smith were more severely dealt with. Mr. Quelch gave them three upon each hand, and they went

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back to their places wriggling, and mentally promising all sorts of things to Billy Bunter after lessons. And the voice of Mr. Percy Punter was heard no more in the Remove Form-room that afternoon.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Pie.

"COMING down to the cricket?"

Harry Wharton asked the question. Bolsover shook his head.

"No," he growled; "I've got something else to do!"

"Better come!" said Harry. "We're getting up a twenty-two for practice, and we want you. You generally grumble at being left out!"

Bolsover major sneered.

"What do you want me for?" he asked.

"To bat!"

"Rats! You know what I'm going to do, and you want to stop me!" growled Bolsover. "Well, you won't succeed! Go and eat coke!"

And Bolsover tramped away with Vernon-Smith. The captain of the Remove frowned. He had a strong suspicion of what Bolsover intended to do, but there was no way of interfering, and he had to let the Remove bully have his head, as Bob Cherry expressed it.

Bolsover and Vernon-Smith walked out of the gates of Greyfriars, leaving Wharton frowning. Bob Cherry slipped his arm through his chum's.

"No good bothering your head about those bounders!" he remarked. "Come on!"

"They've got some rotten scheme on against Quelch!" said Wharton.

"Well, Quelch has been rather rough on them," said Bob. "Anyway, it's no bizney of ours. Come and play!"

Wharton nodded, and the chums of the Remove went down to the cricket-field.

But Wharton was thinking a good deal about it as he played. Although he did not wish to emulate good little Georgie in the story-book, he had a great regard for his Form-master, and he did not think that an outburst of irritability on Mr. Quelch's part was sufficient excuse for ragging him as Bolsover intended to do.

When the cricket practice was over, Harry Wharton & Co. strolled round to the school tuckshop in search of liquid refreshment. Bolsover and his companion had not yet come in. The Famous Four discussed ginger-beer in the tuckshop, and talked cricket. Hazeldene, of the Remove, came in with a grin on his face.

He ordered a pie, and turned to the chums of the Remove with a chuckle.

"What's the joke?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Only a little game with Bunter," said Hazeldene. "He's been badgering me to cash a postal-order for him, or to stand him a feed—it doesn't matter which. I'm going to stand him a pie!"

Hazeldene drew a double cracker from his pocket. He cut a hole in the pie-crust, and put the cracker inside the pie, with only the tip of the fuse showing.

The Removites watched him with great interest.

"Bunter can eat almost anything!" Hazeldene explained. "But he won't be able to digest that! It will be quite a surprise to him when it goes off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a footstep in the doorway, and Bolsover came in. He looked dusty from a long walk in the summer afternoon, and tired and ill-tempered.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Have you seen Percy?"

"No, I haven't!" growled Bolsover.

"Had your little walk for your trouble!" grinned Nugent. "Well, serve you jolly well right! Why can't you let the matter alone?"

Bolsover snorted.

"Mind your own business, Nugent! Give me some ginger-beer, Mrs. Mimble! I'm as dry as a limekiln! That looks a good pie, Hazel! Give me one like it, Mrs. Mimble!"

"I'm sorry, Master Bolsover; that's the last in stock!" said Mrs. Mimble.

"Never mind; I'll have that one!"

"That you jolly well won't!" said Hazeldene wrathfully. "That's mine!"

"I'll have it, all the same!" said Bolsover, in his most bullying tone. "If you want a thick ear, Hazel, you've only got to say so! Hand me that pie!"

Bolsover sat upon a high chair by the counter. Hazeldene hesitated. He did not care to provoke a row with Bolsover, the bully of the Lower Fourth; but to be deprived of his pie in this high-handed way was a little too "thick."

"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

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"You can't have it!" he said.
 "If I have to come and fetch it, you'll get hurt!" said Bolsover.
 "Let him have it instead of Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry.
 Hazeldene started, and then chuckled.
 "Oh, good!"
 "Are you going to hand me that pie?" roared Bolsover.
 The bully of the Remove had come back from Friardale in an extremely bad temper, and he was quite ready to wreak his wrath upon Hazeldene or anybody else.
 "Yes," said Hazeldene.
 "Be quick, then!"
 "Here you are!"
 Hazeldene turned his back upon the bully of the Remove for a moment, and scratched a match, and applied it to the tip of the fuse protruding from the hole in the pie-crust.
 Bolsover glared at him.
 "What are you striking matches for?" he demanded.
 "Find out!"
 "Will you hand me that pie?"
 "Haven't I said I will?"
 Hazeldene handed the pie meekly to Bolsover. The bully of the Remove took it in his hands, and bent his head a little to smell it.
 "There's a queer smell about this pie!" he said. "Smells like gunpow— Oh!"
 Bang!
 "Yaroo!"
 Bang!
 "Oh! Help!"
 Fragments of the pie flew in all directions.
 The double cracker, as it exploded twice in quick succession, blew it into pieces, and the juice and fragments of the crust splattered all over Bolsover. The Remove bully lurched back on the stool, and went with a crash to the floor.
 The juniors burst into a yell of laughter.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Hazeldene, choking with merriment, dashed out of the shop. He did not want to remain near Bolsover after what had happened.
 "Ow!" groaned Bolsover. "Yow! Ah!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 The Remove bully sat up on the floor, with the fragments of the pie round him. He blinked dazed at the juniors.
 "W-w-what was it?" he gasped.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It—it exploded!" spluttered Bolsover.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "That—that beast Hazeldene— It was a jape!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You asked for it, you know. He had it ready for Bunter, but you would have it! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ow!"
 The chums of the Remove departed, still laughing. Bolsover picked himself up, and wiped the fragments from his face with his handkerchief.
 "Sixpence, please!" said Mrs. Mible, as the Remove bully turned to leave the tuckshop, to go in search of Hazeldene.
 Bolsover grunted.
 "Do you think I'm going to pay for a pie I haven't eaten?" he demanded.
 "It does not make any difference to me what you do with it, Master Bolsover. I cannot afford to lose my pies."
 "Ask Hazeldene, then."
 "You took the pie away from him, Master Bolsover. If you do not pay for it, I shall complain to Mr. Quelch."
 Bolsover, with a scowl, threw down a sixpence upon the counter, and rushed out of the tuckshop. He looked for Hazeldene high and low, but did not succeed in finding him. Hazeldene was a little too prudent to give him the opportunity; and for the rest of that evening he gave the Remove bully a very wide berth indeed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Mr. Punter Catches It!

"GOOD-MORNIN', young gents!"
 "My hat!" exclaimed Bolsover.
 "What luck!" said Vernon-Smith.
 It was Mr. Percy Punter. The two Removes were standing at the gates of Greyfriars in the early morning, looking out into the road, and discussing the probability of the disreputable acquaintance of Mr. Quelch being still in the neighbourhood. They had had quite a long walk about Friardale and its vicinity the previous afternoon, in the hope of meeting him, and they had been disappointed. And now, as they waited for the bell to ring for chapel, the shabby form and coppery face of Mr. Punter himself loomed up in the morning sunshine.

Mr. Punter raised his battered hat to the juniors. Early

as the hour was, it was evident that he had been drinking. Indeed, it was doubtful if Mr. Punter was ever in a state of complete sobriety, from early morn to dewy eve.

"Jolly glad to see you, Mr. Punter," said Bolsover.

"Same here," said Vernon-Smith. "You went away so suddenly the other day, we hadn't a chance of speaking to you."

Mr. Punter grinned.

"That was my old pal's doing," he remarked.

"You've come to see him again?" asked Bolsover.

"I 'ave, my young friend."

"Good," said Bolsover. "Quelch doesn't seem pleased to see you, but I don't believe in a man turning his back on his friends."

"Cert'nly not," said Mr. Punter indignantly. "I've been a good friend to 'im, too. I'm goin' to see 'im!"

"Relation of his?" asked Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Punter nodded.

"First cousin!" he said.

"Really?" said Bolsover, with a deep breath.

"Ask him! 'E won't deny it."

"My hat! It seems impossible!" said the Bounder. "But what a glorious joke on Quelch! Look here, old son, if you're his cousin, you've got a right to see him. Just you come in whenever you want to, and we'll back you up. Are you rolling in money?"

Mr. Punter looked pathetic.

"Do I look as if I was?" he asked.

The Bounder grinned.

"No, as a matter of fact you don't," he said.

"Henery ain't generous to a relation and an ole pal," said Mr. Punter confidentially. "What's a quid? Asking a man to go out the back way, and giving him a quid? I put it to you, young gents, is that right?"

"Quite wrong," said Bolsover.

"Unfeeling!" said Vernon-Smith.

"That's wot it is," said Mr. Punter, nearly shedding tears. "It breaks my 'art. Besides, a man must live, and the quid's gone. I want another quid. Ain't that right?"

"Quite right."

"Look here," said Vernon-Smith. "I think you've been badly treated, and the best thing you can do is—ahem!"

There was a sharp footstep behind, which Vernon-Smith knew well. Mr. Quelch came down to the gates.

"How dare you talk to that man?" he exclaimed angrily.

"Us, sir!" said Vernon-Smith, in surprise. "Isn't he all right to talk to, sir?"

"Certainly not."

"Henery, old man—" began Mr. Punter.

"But—but we thought him all right, sir, as you talk to him yourself, sir," said the Bounder innocently.

Mr. Quelch turned crimson.

"Go into the school at once!" he exclaimed.

"Very well, sir."

Bolsover and Vernon-Smith turned away reluctantly. But other fellows were coming towards the spot, attracted by the sight of Mr. Percy Punter.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes upon the intruder.

"Leave this place at once!" he said in a low voice, trembling with passion.

"Henery, old man—my old pal Quelch—"

"Gosling!" said Mr. Quelch, turning towards the school porter, who had come to the door of his lodge and was standing surveying the scene in amazement.

"Yessir."

"Set the dog upon this man if he does not go immediately."

"Yessir."

"Henery!" ejaculated Mr. Punter, in surprise and indignation.

Mr. Quelch did not reply. He was dressed for going out, and he walked through the gateway without taking any further notice of Mr. Punter. As Gosling stooped down by the mastiff to release him from the chain, Mr. Percy Punter retreated through the gateway into the country road, very quickly.

The crowd of fellows followed, anxious to see what would happen. Mr. Punter was evidently in his usual state of semi-intoxication, and they looked for trouble.

And trouble was coming. Mr. Quelch was walking away quickly in the direction of Friardale. Mr. Punter started after him.

"Henery!" he shouted.

The Remove-master strode on.

"Henery!"

"My hat!" chuckled Snoop. "This is too rich! Smithy says the man's his cousin! He, he, he!"

"Ha ha ha!"

"Henery!" roared Mr. Punter.

He hurried his footsteps, and overtook Mr. Quelch, and planted himself in the Remove-master's path. Mr. Quelch halted perforce.

"Will you go away?" he muttered.

"Cert'nly not!" said Mr. Punter, with exaggerated dignity. "I'm surprised at you, Henery. I'm surprised at sich conduct from my own brother."

"His brother!" yelled Ogilvy. "My hat!"

"My old pal!" said Mr. Punter. "My old pal turns his back on me! But Percy Punter is not the man to stand that! No, sir! Put up your dukes, sir!"

"What!" Mr. Punter's reply was to tear off his coat and throw it into the road.

Then he doubled his fists, and pranced up to Mr. Quelch.

"Put up yer 'ands!" he roared.

"Man!" "Who yer calling a man?" demanded Mr. Punter indignantly. "I'll teach you to call me a man! Take that!"

He delivered a blow straight at Mr. Quelch's somewhat prominent nose. The Remove-master dodged back just in time.

"Go away!" he shrieked, gripping his umbrella.

"Put up yer 'ands!" "Will you leave me?"

"No, I won't," said Percy Punter. "Cert'nly not! No, sir!"

And he charged at Mr. Quelch. The Remove-master did not recede any further. He looked slim beside the fat Mr. Punter, and no match for him; but he did not recede. He grasped his umbrella and met the tramp with a slashing attack. Mr. Punter lowered his hands and backed away with a yell as the umbrella descended upon him.

"'Eer, fair play!" he roared. "None of your tricks! You fight fair."

Crash!

Mr. Quelch let out his left, and Mr. Punter caught it with his chin, and fell into the road with a heavy bump, and roared.

Before he could rise, Mr. Quelch seized him by the back of the collar, and began to thrash him with the umbrella.

Mr. Punter roared and yelled.

He struggled furiously in the grasp of the Remove-master, but Mr. Quelch's grip seemed like iron, and he was powerless, and all the time he struggled the umbrella descended again and again, with telling force, till a final terrific blow split it into pieces.

The Greyfriars juniors simply shrieked.

They had never seen the Remove-master so excited before, and, as Bob Cherry remarked, they had had no idea that Mr. Quelch was such a fighting-man.

Mr. Quelch tossed the fragments of the umbrella over a fence by the road, and giving the squirming rascal one bitter look, strode away towards the village.

The juniors roared with laughter as Mr. Punter sat up in the dusty road, gasping and wriggling and squirming.

"Ow! Murder! 'Elp!" groaned Mr. Punter. "Ow! 'Elp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate of the Sixth looked out of the gates.

"Do you kids know you're late for chapel?" he shouted.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "Come on, kids. Good-bye, Punter. You'd better give Quelch a wide berth after this. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Greyfriars fellows trooped into the school, leaving the unfortunate Mr. Punter still sitting in the dust and groaning.

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"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

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Harry Wharton was mounted upon a tub, addressing the meeting which he had called behind the chapel. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have called this meeting to discuss an important question concerning our Form-master." (See Chapter 11.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Mr. Punter Looks In.

MR. QUELCH was not present at morning lessons, Mr. Prout taking the Remove in his place, and the Head taking the Fifth. Some of the Removites wondered where Mr. Quelch was. He had gone out at the time of the "row" with Mr. Percy Punter, and had not yet returned; but they learned that he would take the class as usual in the afternoon. Some of the fellows surmised that he was gone to secure police protection against his disreputable relative. That Mr. Punter was a relative of the Remove-master most of the Remove believed by this time. True, he had variously claimed to be his cousin and to be his brother, and he could not very well be both; but that he was a relation was the only explanation of his persecution of the Remove-master. Bolsover & Co. rejoiced. Mr. Percy Punter was a handle they could use with great effect against their Form-master, and they did not intend to spare Mr. Quelch.

Bolsover had not written his five hundred lines, and he had been caned for the omission, and the lines had been doubled. A thousand lines was enough to keep Bolsover busily occupied for a whole half-holiday, but he still declared his intention of not doing them. After third lesson, Bolsover and Vernon-Smith strolled out of the school, in the hope of encountering Mr. Punter.

They were not disappointed.

As they walked down towards Friardale they caught sight of Mr. Punter sitting in the shade of a haystack, and refreshing himself with the contents of a black bottle.

They crossed the fence which separated the field from the road, and greeted the tramp with effusion. Mr. Punter nodded to them affably.

"Afternoon!" he said.

"Good-afternoon!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm sorry you had such a rough time this morning, Mr. Punter."

Mr. Punter sighed.

"Henery was werry wiolent," he remarked—"never knew he had such a temper. It was 'ard on an old pal."

"Not like a cousin!" said Vernon-Smith.

"No, it wasn't," said Mr. Punter. "But he'll be sorry for it."

"Why not make him sorry for it?" said the Bounder. "He hadn't any right to treat a relation like that."

"Quite right, he 'adn't," said Mr. Punter, taking another draught from the black bottle. Then he sighed. "Hempty," he explained.

"If you're hard up, I wouldn't mind standing something, seeing that you're a relation of my Form-master," said Vernon-Smith.

"'Ear, 'ear!" said Mr. Punter. "You're a gentleman, you are!"

"It's too bad for him to treat you like this," the Bounder continued, as he dropped a half-crown into the dirty hand of Percy Punter. "Look here, how would you like a quid?"

"Not 'arf!" said Mr. Punter; by which he evidently meant to imply that he would like it very much indeed.

"I can show you how to earn one," said the Bounder.

Mr. Punter made a hurried gesture of repudiation.

"Never mind—never mind!" he said. "Don't you trouble. I ain't strong enough to work, young gen'elman." The Bounder grinned.

"I don't mean by working," he said. "I only want you to come to Greyfriars again, that's all, and give Quelch a showing up before all the school."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Punter.

"Suppose you get into the Form-room and wait for him there, and talk to him before the whole class?" suggested the Bounder.

"He'll be wiolent again," said Mr. Punter doubtfully.

"He's not there now," explained Vernon-Smith. "He's been out all the morning, and he's not come back yet. If you come in, nobody else will interfere with you, as you're known to be a friend of Mr. Quelch's. You can get into the Form-room quite easily, and if there's a row it will bring the Head on the scene."

Mr. Punter chuckled.

"Where's the quid?" he asked.

"I'll give it to you afterwards; I'll meet you hero this evening and hand it over."

"If I don't get it, there'll be trouble for somebody besides Henery Quelch!" said Mr. Punter warningly.

"You can trust me."

"Orlright. I'm on!"

"I'll wait here a bit, and take you in," said Vernon-Smith.

"If you sneak in when the fellows are at dinner, you can get into the Form-room without being seen."

"Orlright!"

A quarter of an hour later Mr. Punter entered the school gates. Vernon-Smith had calculated well. Greyfriars was at dinner, and the Close and the passages were deserted.

Vernon-Smith showed the rascal into the Remove Form-room, and there left him, and hurried away towards the dining-hall with Bolsover major.

"There'll be a fearful row about this," said Bolsover, with a deep breath.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care. It will make Quelch sit up, anyway."

"My hat, it will! Blessed if I should care to stay at Greyfriars, if I were Quelch, after such an awful showing up!" said Bolsover.

"That's what I'm thinking of," said Vernon-Smith coolly, "especially if the Head's brought into the matter. It would be rather a success to get Quelch the order of the push, wouldn't it?"

"By Jove, yes!"

The two Removites went into the dining-hall. They were late for dinner, and they found that Mr. Quelch had returned, and was in his usual place at the head of the table. Vernon-Smith drew a quick breath as he saw the Remove-master; he realised that he had had a narrow escape of encountering him while conveying the tramp to the Form-room. But Mr. Quelch evidently did not know how he had been engaged.

"You are late!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Sorry, sir!" said Bolsover meekly. "We walked rather too far, sir."

"Do not let it occur again."

"Certainly not, sir!"

And the two young rascals sat down to dinner.

After dinner the two plotters waited impatiently for fourth lesson. Before the time for the afternoon's lessons to begin they made their way to the Form-room. A whisper had gone round among the Removites, and a good many of the Remove followed Bolsover and the Bounder.

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"My hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, as he entered the Remove-room. "Who's that?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Punter!"

"Great Scott!"

"Faith, and he's here intirely!"

Mr. Punter stood against the Form-master's desk, and surveyed the juniors with a benevolent smile.

He was evidently a little hazy from over-refreshment, but he was in a very good temper, and disposed to beam amiably upon all.

He waved his fat dirty hand to the juniors.

"Arternoon, my young friends!" he said.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"What do you want here, you bounder?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I've kim to see my ole pal Henery!"

"You'd better get out before Mr. Quelch comes," said Johnny Bull. "He'll be along here in a minute."

"Buzz off, you rotter!" said Wharton.

"I ain't going," said Mr. Punter, with a look of offended dignity. "'Ard lines if a man can't come and see his ole pal!"

"Rats!"

"Clear out!"

"Buzz off!"

"You jest tell Henery I'm here," said Mr. Punter. "He'll be delighted to see me. I'm one of Henery's oldest pals!"

"Let's chuck him out," said Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" murmured Nugent. "Here's Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch entered the Form-room.

He started, and stopped dead at the sight of the affable Mr. Punter leaning against the desk, and as yet unaware of his coming.

"It's orlright, young gents," said Mr. Punter. "Henery will be glad to see me. We're werry old pals, my brother Henery and me. We was boys together. We——"

"You rascal!"

Mr. Punter started violently.

He turned round and looked at the angry Remove-master. The Removites held their breath. Some of them expected to see the indignant Form-master "go for" the disreputable rascal on the spot. But Mr. Quelch restrained himself. He did not want to let himself go before a crowd of juniors.

"Go out of this room at once," he said, in a low voice, coming towards the unwelcome visitor. "Do you hear me?"

"I 'ear you," said Mr. Punter, with dignity. "But I think that my ears must deceive me, Henery. Are you telling your old pal to go?"

"Go at once!"

"I declines!" said Mr. Punter firmly. "I declines to go. I will not leave the roof of my old pal Henery!"

The Form-master clenched his hand.

"Shall I call the Head, sir?" asked Vernon-Smith, in his silkiest voice.

Mr. Quelch gave him a look.

"No, Smith!"

"We object to this man coming here, sir," said the Bounder, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. "You told us yourself he wasn't a fit man to be talking to. I think it's hard, sir, that such men should be admitted to the Form-room."

The Remove gasped at the colossal impudence of the Bounder.

Mr. Quelch took one step towards him and boxed his ears. The Bounder staggered away with a gasp of amazement. Mr. Quelch had never been known to box a boy's ears before.

The Bounder's hand flew to his ear, and he stared dazedly at the Remove-master. Then he started for the door.

"Come back, Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I'm going to the Head!"

"What!"

"I'm going to the Head!" said the Bounder, with blazing eyes. "You've no right to strike us, and you know it, sir. I'm going to appeal to the Head for protection."

And the Bounder hurried from the Form-room.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Run.

MR. QUELCH stood as if petrified. His anger had certainly carried him beyond proper bounds, and he had, to a certain extent, placed himself in the power of Vernon-Smith.

If the Bounder chose to appeal to the Head he could not be prevented, and all the Remove realised that it meant trouble for their Form-master.

Bolsover, Snoop & Co. grinned with anticipation. They had no pity for the man who, with some faults of temper, perhaps, was, upon the whole, a kind and just master.

But most of the Remove felt for Mr. Quelch, and there

were some of them who were ready to back him up to any extent. Harry Wharton stepped forward.

"Shall we show that man out, sir?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Quelch, with a deep breath. "Thank you, Wharton, but, no. I—I hardly know what to do under the circumstances."

It was a strange confession of weakness from Mr. Quelch, whom the Removites had always looked upon as a man of iron determination and firmness. It went straight to Harry Wharton's heart.

"We'll deal with him if you like, sir," he said. "We could carry him out quite easily. Only give the word, sir."

"Begad, yaas!" said Mauleverer. "We'll all help, sir."

"Let's kick him out, sir."

Mr. Quelch shook his head.

There was a step in the passage, and the awe-inspiring figure of Dr. Locke appeared in the doorway. Behind him was Vernon-Smith. The Bouncer had intercepted the Head on his way to the Sixth Form-room.

"What is all this?" the Head exclaimed. "Who is this man, Mr. Quelch?"

Mr. Punter nodded affably.

"I'm Henery's old pal!" he said.

"What!"

"I'm his old pal—his brother, in fact," said Mr. Punter. "Ain't I, Henery?"

He grinned at the pale-faced Form-master.

"Do you know this man, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head.

Mr. Quelch bit his lip.

"Yes, sir," he said, in a low voice.

"Did he come here with your permission?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"You will kindly go," said the Head, frowning upon the unabashed Mr. Punter. "If you do not immediately take your departure I shall ring for my porter to put you out by force."

"Henery won't let him," said Mr. Punter cheerfully. "You wouldn't let an old pal be put out, would you, Henery, 'cause I should go to the perlice-station fust thing, and that would be rather 'ard on you, Henery, wouldn't it?"

A flush came into Mr. Quelch's pale cheeks.

"Let me deal with this man, sir," he said.

The Head nodded coldly.

"Certainly," he said, "so long as you get him away from Greyfriars at once. I shall be glad if you will come into my study immediately afterwards, Mr. Quelch."

"Yes, sir," faltered the Form-master.

And the Head strode majestically from the room.

Mr. Quelch fastened an iron grip upon the arm of the disreputable visitor, and turned him by sheer force towards the door. Mr. Punter did not resist. Perhaps the lesson he had had in the lane that morning was enough for him. He nodded his head affably to the juniors, and allowed himself to be led out of the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch guided him out of the house, into the Close, and then piloted him across to the gates. Mr. Punter was in need of piloting, for his footsteps were by no means steady.

At the gates Mr. Quelch released him, and pointed down the road.

"Go!" he said, in a concentrated voice.

Mr. Punter blinked at him.

"Go away from my ole pal?" he said pathetically.

"You have disgraced me here," said Mr. Quelch. "You have done me all the harm you can. Now go!"

Mr. Punter chuckled.

"Not all the 'arm I can," he remarked—"not quite all, Henery. I could go to the perlice-station in Friardale, you know, and tell 'em—"

"Hold your tongue!"

"Certainly, Henery, but don't be 'ard on an old pal, then," said Mr. Punter agreeably. "I'm thirsty. Is it right to let me go thirsty on a 'ot afternoon, arter I've done you a lot of favours?"

Mr. Quelch's hand went into his pocket.

"Five bob!" said Mr. Punter, as his dirty fingers closed on the coins. "I was expecting a sovereign, Henery."

"You will get nothing more from me," said Mr. Quelch. "Now go!"

There was a cough, and he turned his head, to see Gosling. He flushed; it was only too clear that the school-porter had seen him hand money to the ruffian.

"Gosling!" he rapped out.

"Yessir," said Gosling, with a visible diminution of respect in his manner towards the Remove-master. But Mr. Quelch did not seem to notice it.

"Bring the mastiff here."

"Yessir."

"Take his chain off first."

"Yessir."

"You ain't going to set that dorg on to an ole pal?" said Mr. Punter pathetically. "And you dursn't, neither! If I go to the perlice—"

"You will not do that for your own interests," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "If you do you will get no further money."

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ONE
PENNY.

from me, and you know it. But I will not suffer you to come near this school. Gosling, set the dog upon that man."

"Yessir."

"Old on!" roared Mr. Punter, in dismay. "I'll go! I'll—Yaroo!"

He started down the road at top speed.

"Fetch 'im, Jim—fetch 'im!" said Gosling.

The mastiff bounded out into the road.

Fear lent Mr. Punter wings, and he tore away at top speed, with the big dog racing after him open-mouthed.

Mr. Quelch stood watching the chaso with a grim brow.

There was a wild yell from the distance. Jim, the mastiff, was seen hanging on to the tails of Mr. Punter's ragged coat as the rascal disappeared at racing speed round a bend in the lane.

Mr. Quelch smiled grimly.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Gosling. "He's got him! Wot I says is this 'ere—Jim'll make rags of his bags, sir. Haw, haw, haw!"

"If that man comes back here at any time set the dog upon him at once, Gosling," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yessir."

Mr. Quelch strode back to the School House.

But he did not return to the Remove Form-room at once. He made his way to the Head's study.

In the Remove-room the juniors waited in tense anxiety. They knew that their Form-master was with the Head, and they wondered what would come of it. There were many surmises among the juniors as they waited.

"It means the boot!" said Vernon-Smith. "He'll jolly well find out that he's not allowed to punch the fellows' heads."

"Yes, rather!" said Bolsover.

Bob Cherry snorted.

"If ever there was a fellow who wanted his head punched it's you, Smithy," he said; "and for two pins I'd punch it myself."

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, it's rotten to be down on poor ould Quelchy simply because he's down on his luck."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Look here, I'm standing up for Quelch, whether that rotter's his relation or not. It's time we put our foot down on this rotten japing. I know it was one of those cads who brought the man in here. He couldn't have found his way to this Form-room without a guide."

"That's why Smith was late for dinner," said Bulstrode, "and Bolsover, too."

"Begad, yaas!"

"I don't deny it," said the Bouncer coolly. "I'm going to make the school too hot to hold Quelchy, and I don't make a secret of it."

"Rats!"

"Cad!"

"Rotter!"

"Bump him!"

And bumped the Bouncer certainly would have been if Mr. Quelch had not entered the Form-room at that moment. The uproar died away at once.

"Go to your places, boys!" said Mr. Quelch very quietly.

The Removites obeyed in silence.

What had passed in the Head's study they did not know; but it was quite clear that it had not meant, after all, the "order of the sack" for the Remove-master. Mr. Quelch was perfectly calm and composed; but there was a gleam in his eyes that warned the cads of the Remove that it would be wise to be very careful. And even the Bouncer was extremely circumspect that afternoon.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Back Up.

"GENTLEMEN, and chaps generally—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I've called this meeting—"

"Hear, hear!"

The Remove cheered the speaker, without waiting to hear what he had to say. The speaker was Harry Wharton, and he was mounted upon a tub. After last lesson, the captain of the Remove had called a meeting of the Form behind the chapel, and most of the Remove had turned up.

"Gentlemen," resumed Wharton, waving his hand, "I've called this meeting for a most important purpose."

"Hurrah!"

"Our respected Form-master—"

"Bravo!"

"Is down on his luck—"

"Serve him jolly well right!" came from Bolsover.

"Order!"

"Shut up, Bolsover!"

"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

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"Kick him out!"

Harry Wharton's eyes flashed as he glanced at the bully of the Remove.

"Hold your tongue, Bolsover!" he exclaimed. "This is a meeting of sympathy with Mr. Quelch. If you don't shut up, you'll jolly soon get shut up."

"Oh, rats!"

"Order!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Pile in!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove——"

"Hear, hear!"

"I want to address just a few words to the Form. We've been ragged a bit lately by our Form-master, but we don't owe him a grudge for that. Quelch is a jolly good sort, and if he gets a bit ratty when he's worried, we don't want to be hard on him."

"No fear!"

"Good old Quelch!"

"Bravo!"

It was evident that the feeling of the Form meeting was with Harry Wharton. There were only a few of the Remove who were inclined to "back up" against the Form-master. Mr. Quelch was very popular with almost the whole of his Form.

"And Quelch has been bothered lately, as you all know," said Wharton. "An awful rascal has been badgering him—calling himself a relation of Quelch's——"

"So he is a relation," said Vernon-Smith.

"Quelch doesn't say so."

"But Punter says so, and Quelch hasn't denied it," said the Bounder.

"Perhaps he doesn't feel called upon to explain things to you, Smithy," Frank Nugent suggested sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Relation or not, he's got some hold over Quelch," said Bolsover major. "Quelch gives him money; I know that."

"How do you know it?" demanded Wharton.

"He says so."

"Rats! What's that worth?"

"I had it from Gosling, too," said Snoop. "Gosling saw Quelch give him money to go away to-day. He told me so himself."

"It's plain enough," said Ogilvy. "He's some rotten relation of Quelch's, and I dare say Quelch has been paying him to keep away up till now. I don't see that it's poor old Quelch's fault, though."

"Of course it isn't!"

"Faith, and ye're right! I'm sorry for Quelch intirely."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove, my point is that Quelch is a good old sort, and we're bound to back him up!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Hurrah!"

"I therefore put it to the meeting, that this Form backs up Quelch, and is down on everybody who doesn't stand by him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hands up for the motion!" shouted Bob Cherry.

A forest of hands went up. It was pretty certain that the Remove agreed with Harry Wharton. Not half a dozen fellows kept their hands down.

"Good!" said Wharton, with much satisfaction. "Now, hands up against the motion."

Bolsover, Vernon-Smith, and Snoop put their hands up, and last of all came the fat hand of Billy Bunter. There were no more.

"Four!" said Nugent—"four against the rest of the Form. The motion is carried."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, gentlemen," went on Harry Wharton, "having agreed on backing up Quelch through thick and thin, to the last shot in the giddy locker——"

"Hear, hear!"

"The next question is ways and means. I suggest that we shall all keep an eye open for that awful rotter Punter, and if he comes near the school, we collar him and duck him in the river, and bump him hard."

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"Hurrah!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Bravo!"

"And any member of this Form found helping the rotter in any way, or trying to bring him to Greyfriars to bother Quelch, is to be given a Form licking."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!" roared Bolsover.

"That's all," said Harry Wharton. "The man was brought here to-day. Somebody who knew the place must have brought him into the Remove room. I suggest that Bolsover and Smithy did it, as they were late for dinner, and as it's exactly the rotten caddish kind of thing they would do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I call upon them to answer the accusation, before the whole Form."

"Hear, hear!"

All eyes were turned at once upon Bolsover and the Bounder. The latter made a motion to walk away; but Bob Cherry and Bulstrode interposed.

"No, you don't," said Bob Cherry. "You've got to answer up for your sins before you buzz off, Smithy, my infant."

"Let me pass!" said the Bounder fiercely.

"Bosh!"

Bob Cherry and Bulstrode seized the Bounder by the arms, and forced him back into the midst of the crowd before the Form-captain on the tub.

Vernon-Smith scowled round savagely at them all, but he made no further resistance. As for Bolsover, he did not attempt to retreat. He had too much bulldog courage to think of giving way.

"Now, answer up!" said Harry Wharton. "Was it you two rotters who brought that blackguard Punter into the Form-room?"

Vernon-Smith did not reply; but Bolsover burst out savagely:

"Yes, it was!"

"What did you do it for?"

"To show Quelch up before the school and the Head," was the answer.

"And what did you want to damage old Quelch for?"

"Because he's a beast, and he's been ragging us!"

"That won't do! We don't allow that! Gentlemen, the prisoners at the bar have pleaded guilty, and I for one can't see any extenuating circumstances. But I propose that we let them off, on condition that they promise not to do it again."

"Hear, hear!"

"You hear, you rotters?" continued Harry Wharton. "Give your word, honour bright, that you won't play up against old Quelch any more, and you can buzz off at once."

"I won't!" roared Bolsover.

"You had better!"

"Rats! I won't!"

"Then you'll get a Form licking," said Harry Wharton determinedly. "We're not going to stand any rot from you, Bolsover. You'll give your word, honour bright, not to play that rotten game again, or you'll be made to feel sorry for yourself."

Bolsover put his hands up at once, and hit out as the juniors rushed upon him, Frank Nugent staggered back with a spurt of red from his nose. But the next moment Bolsover was rolling on the ground, with Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Tom Brown sprawling over him.

"Yow! Lemme gerrup!" roared the bully. "I'll smash you!"

"Sit on him!" commanded Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"We've got him!"

"Now, Smithy," said Harry Wharton grimly, "we'll deal with you first. Will you give your word to stop all your rotten tricks against Mr. Quelch?"

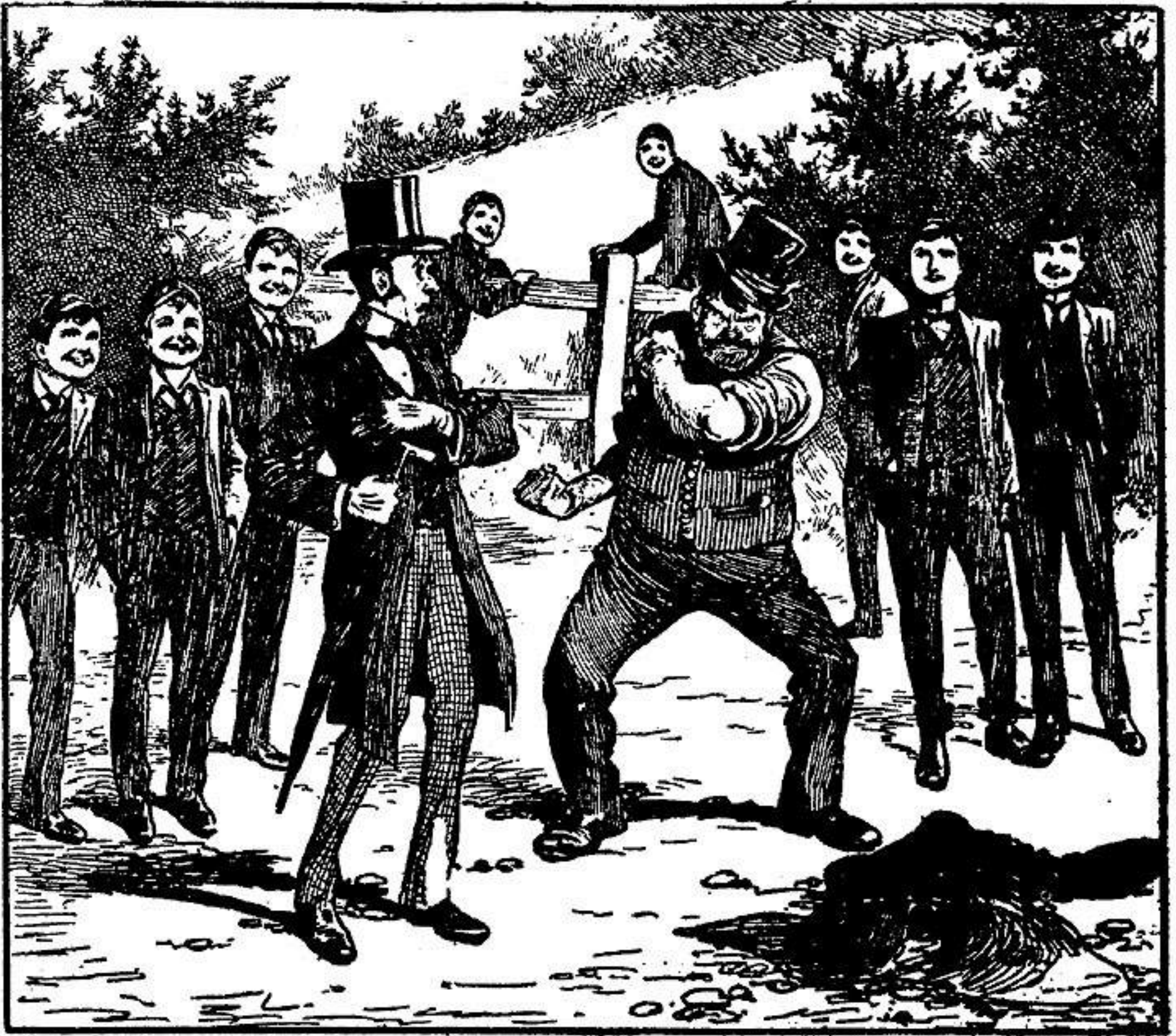
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Mr. Punter tore off his coat and threw it in the road. Then he doubled up his fists and pranced up to Mr. Quelch. "Go away!" shrieked the Remove Form-master, gripping his umbrella. "Certain'y not," replied Mr. Punter. "I am surprised at you Henery! I'm surprised at sich conduct from my brother!" (See Chapter 7.)

The Bounder bit his lip. He had courage enough in his own way, but he did not intend to defy a crowd of angry juniors as Bolsover was doing.

"I will, if the Form wishes it," he said sullenly. "I think that this is a jolly good chance for getting our own back on Quelch, but I don't want to set myself up against the rest. I'm willing to follow the Form."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes; honour bright."

"You're all witnesses," said Harry Wharton. "You can buzz off, Smithy. Bolsover's got to make the same promise, or we'll know the reason why!"

The Bounder walked away, glad enough to get off without further trouble. Bolsover was still on the ground, with Bob Cherry and Bull and Tom Brown sitting on him to keep him there. Wharton waved his hand.

"Stand him up," he said.

Bolsover was dragged to his feet. The burly Removite stood panting and breathless, and red with rage, with the grasp of the three juniors still upon him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

By Order of the Form.

HARRY WHARTON fixed his eyes grimly upon the bully of the Remove.

Bolsover stood panting, and not struggling as yet, but it was evident that he was only waiting to get his breath back. The bully of the Form, accustomed to carrying matters with a high hand, was not likely to yield without a struggle. He glared furiously at the captain of the Remove.

"I'll make you sorry for this!" he hissed.

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Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I fancy you're going to be made pretty sorry for yourself," he said, "unless you make up your mind to do what's decent."

"Let me go!" roared Bolsover.

"Rats!"

"I'll—I'll smash you!"

"Smash away!" said Tom Brown coolly. "We'll see who gets the best of the smashing, my son. As soon as you begin, we'll bump you."

But the New Zealand junior's warning was wasted on the furious bully of the Remove. He made a sudden effort to break loose, and so great was his strength that he almost succeeded in tearing himself away from the grasp of the three Removites who were holding him.

But that was only for a moment. They dragged at him again, and he was whirled over. Harry Wharton jumped down from the tub and lent a hand.

One fellow seized an arm and another a leg, and Bolsover was raised above the ground, and bumped down again with a considerable concussion.

He roared.

"Yaroo!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yowp! Oh!"

"Now stand him on his feet again," said Wharton grimly. The Remove bully was placed upright once more. He was trembling with rage and breathlessness.

"Now, then," said Harry Wharton, "you can see that we mean business. You can see that the whole Remove has

made up its mind. Whether Quelch has been ratty with us or not, he's a good sort, and we're going to stand by him. We're not going to have any cad in the Form backing up against him."

"Hear, hear!"

"Smithy has given his word, and you're going to do the same, Bolsover. You're not going to back up against Quelch in any way."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Will you promise?"

"No!"

"For the last time?"

"No!" roared Bolsover.

"Then we shall have to persuade you," said Harry Wharton. "Any chap refusing to obey the order of the Form gets a Form licking—that's a rule as old as Greyfriars. You know what you've got to expect."

"Hang you!"

"I leave it to the fellows," said Harry Wharton, looking round. "Bolsover refuses to obey the order of the Form. What's the sentence?"

"A Form licking!" said Bob Cherry promptly.

"Hurray!"

"The verdict is unanimous," said Frank Nugent. "But we'll make sure. Hands up for the sentence of a Form licking on Bolsover."

Every hand went up. Vernon-Smith was gone, and Snoop and Stott had followed him, and every other fellow there was heart and hand with Harry Wharton & Co.

"You see that, Bolsover?"

"Hang you!"

"Will you obey the order of the Form?"

"No!" yelled Bolsover.

"Then you get the licking! One of you fellows go and get a cricket-stump."

"Right-ho!"

Penfold fetched a cricket-stump. Meanwhile, Bolsover major was spread-eagled on the grass, face downwards, struggling furiously in the grasp of his enemies, but in vain. A junior grasped each wrist and each ankle, and he was held there spread-eagled without the possibility of escaping. Had the Remove been in their dormitory the bully would have been tied down upon a bed, but as it was the grip of four sturdy juniors was just as effective.

Dick Penfold came back with the stump, which he handed to Harry Wharton. Bolsover twisted his head to glare at him.

"Don't you dare to touch me!" he gasped in a choking voice.

"Will you obey the order of the Form?"

"No! No! No!"

"That settles it. Gentlemen of the Remove, you know the rules—every member of the Form gives the mutineer one welt with a cricket-stump. As captain of the Form, I give the first one."

Wharton raised the stump.

"Let me alone!" roared Bolsover. "I'll fight any fellow here—or any two!"

"Rats!"

"You can fight anybody you like afterwards," said Wharton cheerfully. "But this isn't a fight—this is a Form licking."

"I tell you—Yowp!"

Whack!

The cricket-stump came lashing down, and Bolsover howled furiously. He struggled, but the grasp of the quartette who were holding him kept him a prisoner. Harry Wharton handed the stump to the next fellow, who happened to be Bulstrode.

Whack!

"Yarrah!"

Bulstrode handed the stump to Russell, and retired. Russell measured his distance carefully, and brought down the stump with a sharp lash upon the burly Remove.

There was another wild yell from Bolsover major.

The stump was passed from hand to hand and each of the juniors took his turn with it, each doughty lash eliciting a fiendish yell from the bully of the Remove.

When a dozen lashes had been administered, Wharton stopped the punishment.

"Will you toe the line now, Bolsover?"

"No!" yelled Bolsover.

"Go ahead, then."

Whack!

Whack!

Whack!

Again and again the cricket-stump lashed down upon the bully of the Remove, and the lashes were not light ones. Bolsover was squirming with pain and rage, and his struggles were simply terrific.

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"BOUGHT HONOURS!"

Every fellow present contributed his lash, and then the Form captain addressed the wriggling, gasping bully.

"Will you obey the order of the Form, Bolsover?"

"No!"

"Very well; you'll take your gruel until you do," said Wharton. "Give me the stump, Inky. We'll begin again at the beginning."

Then Bolsover faltered. He had stood the punishment with a nerve and strength that surprised the Remove, but at the thought of going through the infliction again he failed.

"Hold on!" he gasped.

Harry Wharton paused.

"Well, Bolsover?"

"I—I give in! I can't stand it!"

"Good!"

Bolsover was released. He staggered to his feet, white with rage, and aching from his punishment. His eyes were burning with rage.

"You promise not to back up against Quelch any more—by order of the Form?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.

"Yes."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes!" hissed Bolsover.

"Good! Gentlemen, the meeting is over."

"I'll make you smart for this!" said Bolsover between his teeth, as the Remove dispersed, grinning.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Any fellow you feel dissatisfied with is quite willing to meet you in the gym., with or without gloves," he said.

Bolsover did not reply.

He was not feeling exactly in a mood for fighting anybody just then. He strode away with a black scowl upon his face, still gasping.

The Bouncer met him as he entered the School House. Vernon-Smith looked over the breathless, scowling bully with a cynical grin.

"You've been through it?" he asked.

"Yes," snarled Bolsover.

"Better have given in at first. You had to do it. A fellow can't stand up against the whole Form," said the Bouncer.

"Oh, rats! You're a funk!"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"Well, I suppose you toed the line in the long run, didn't you?" he demanded.

"I had to. I've had a Form licking," said Bolsover, between his teeth. "But I'll make some of them smart for it. We've got to let Quelch alone now."

"Poof!"

"I've promised, honour bright!" growled Bolsover.

The Bouncer grinned.

"So have I!" he replied.

"Do you mean to say you're going back on your word, when you've said honour bright?" demanded Bolsover, staring at him.

"I'm going to do as I please."

"Then you're a rotten cad!" growled Bolsover. "I'm going to keep my word!"

"Look here!"

"Oh, don't talk to me!"

"But I say—"

"Bah!"

Bolsover pushed the Bouncer roughly aside, and strode past him. He went up to his study, where he shut himself in, and for a long time he remained there, full of aches from his punishment, and fury against his enemies. But, furious as he was, he had given his word to obey the order of the Form, and he meant to keep it.

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THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith on the Track.

DURING the next two or three days nothing was seen at Greyfriars of the strange visitor who had caused so much surprise there. But the Removites knew that he remained in the village. He had taken up his quarters at the Cross Keys, a disreputable public-house near the river, and was not infrequently to be seen in Friardale, generally in a state of intoxication. As he did not work, it was evident that he received money from somewhere to live upon, and most of the Removites guessed where it came from. Mr. Quelch had not said a word upon the subject. During the past week he had become more cold and reserved in his manner than ever, and Harry Wharton & Co. could guess how he felt the humiliation that his late experience had brought upon him. They were pretty certain, too, that Punter was receiving money from him, and yet the man's claim to be a relation of the Remove-master did not convince them. It was evident, however, that the man had some hold upon Mr. Quelch, and that he was determined not to quit the neighbourhood. His reception at Greyfriars kept him away from school, and Bolsover, at least, had given up the scheme of bringing him there again, and the Bounder, so far, lay low, like Brer Fox, and said nothing.

But the Bounder was not idle, all the same. As much from a spirit of pure ill-natured mischief, as from dislike of the Form-master, Vernon-Smith had determined to make the most of the matter. That the Form-master had a secret, and that Punter might be the means of making it known at the school, the Bounder was certain. And it certainly seemed that the Remove-master could have no creditable reasons for allowing the disreputable ruffian to keep a hold upon him. He had succeeded, apparently, in satisfying the Head. But Vernon-Smith was not satisfied.

Bolsover had dropped the matter. He had even done his five hundred lines, and Mr. Quelch had overlooked the rest, on Bolsover making submission. The bully of the Remove knew when he had gone far enough; and he did not want any more Form raggings. But Vernon-Smith, to whose peculiar nature treachery was a pastime, had not changed his plans in the least, though he did not confide them any longer to Bolsover.

To discover the Form-master's secret, and to show it up to the whole school, was the Bounder's object; and after that it seemed to him that there could be nothing less than the "order of the sack" for Mr. Quelch. And the mere idea of succeeding in sacking a Form-master appealed to the Bounder's arrogant nature. He would probably have entered into the scheme with zest, even if he had not lately felt the heavy hand of Mr. Quelch.

On Wednesday afternoon, when the rest of the Form were at cricket, Vernon-Smith strolled out of the school gates and sauntered down the road to Friardale. He had reached the Cross Keys, and was glancing up and down the road to make sure that he was not observed before entering, when Billy Bunter hailed him.

Vernon-Smith's brows contracted with anger at the sight of the fat junior. Billy Bunter came up breathlessly.

"I say, Smithy, old man—" he began.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"You fat cad!" he muttered. "You've followed me!"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

The Bounder made a step towards him. Bunter backed away in alarm.

"I say, Smithy, hands off, you know!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I suppose I can walk down the road if I like, can't I? Have you bought up the blessed highway?"

"What are you spying on me for?"

"Oh, really—"

Vernon-Smith strode towards him with clenched hands. The fat junior backed further away, not noticing, in his alarm, that he was backing towards the deep ditch at the side of the lane.

"I say, Smithy, I—I— Yow!"

Splash!

Billy Bunter had backed away a step too far.

With a mighty splash he fell backwards into the deep, wide ditch.

Vernon-Smith burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Groo! Oh! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter went right under the muddy, slimy water, and came up again with festoons of green ooze over his head and shoulders, and clinging to his spectacles. He puffed and blew wildly, trying to keep a footing in the ditch. The water came up to his fat shoulders, and the bottom of the ditch was soft mud, in which his feet clung. The water ran swiftly, for the ditch communicated with the Sark close at hand. Bunter waved his hands wildly above the water, and yelled:

"Ow! Help me out! Smithy! Groo!"

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"BOUGHT HONOURS!"

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ONE
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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I'm drowning! Yow! Help!"

The Bounder watched him from the bank, grinning with enjoyment. He did not make the least motion to help the Owl of the Remove.

"Help!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Ow!"

"You can help yourself," said the Bounder coolly. "Only don't come out on this side of the ditch, or I shall pitch you in again!"

Bunter spluttered.

"Ow! Oh! Help! Beast! Pull me out! Yowp!"

"You shouldn't spy on me!" said Vernon-Smith. "You've followed me all the way from Greyfriars, you fat cad!"

"Ow! I haven't! Yow! I only wanted to see where you were going! I won't tell anybody you were going to the Cross Keys! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter plunged towards the side of the ditch, and strove to pull himself out into the road. But his boots were deeply embedded in the thick mud at the bottom, and as fast as he dragged one foot out, the other sank deeper. He succeeded at last in detaching both of them, and scrambled up the bank, and planted both knees in the herbage, preparatory to crawling out into the road.

Vernon-Smith raised his boot, and pushed it against Bunter's chest. The unfortunate Owl of the Remove rolled back, with a yell.

"Oh! Groooooooop!"

Splash!

The muddy waters of the ditch received the fat junior once more.

Vernon-Smith yelled with laughter.

"Better crawl out on the other side, Bunt!" he suggested. "You're not coming out into the road! Perhaps you won't follow me again!"

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Bounder.

Bunter succeeded at last in forcing a way through the hedge. There was a thick and thorny hedge, with no opening in it, and the fat junior yelled and gasped as he strove to force a passage through it. On the other side of the hedge was the garden belonging to the Cross Keys, which extended down to the river.

"Go it!" said Vernon-Smith encouragingly.

"Ow! Beast! Yow!"

Bunter succeeded at last in forcing a way through the hedge. He sank down in the grass on the other side, completely exhausted, and exuding mud and green ooze on all sides. His puffing and gasping could be heard at quite a distance.

Vernon-Smith chuckled, and went on his way. Billy Bunter could not see him through the hedge, and the fat junior was in no state just now to spy upon him. The Bounder turned into the narrow lane beside the inn, and went along the building to the garden at the back, where there were benches facing the river for patrons of the Cross Keys under the shade of the trees.

On one of the benches Mr. Percy Punter was seated. He had a pipe in his mouth and a mug of beer upon the little round table beside him. He looked up, and nodded affably, as the Bounder came up. Mr. Punter was in his usual state of exhilaration, a proof that he was being kept in funds from some source.

"'Aternoon!" he said cheerfully.

Vernon-Smith dropped into the seat beside him.

"How are you getting on?" he asked.

"Stony!" said Mr. Punter pathetically. "My old pal Quelch is 'ard—wery 'ard, he is, on a hold pal!"

"What about the quid I gave you the other day?"

"Gorn!" said Mr. Punter. "It's s'prisin' how money goes—most s'prisin'! Feller gets wery thirsty this 'ot weather!"

The Bounder nodded.

"I suppose you're hard up, and Quelch isn't keeping you any too flush?" he remarked.

"Jest so, my young friend!" said Mr. Punter.

"Why don't you come up to the school, and make him shell out?"

Mr. Punter shook his head.

"They set the dorg on me," he said. "I was tore—tore something cruel! I ain't coming to the school again—not me! Ho, no!"

"Not for a quid!"

"Not for nothing!" said Mr. Punter ungrammatically but emphatically. "It ain't good enough, young gentleman! No fear!"

"Look here," said Vernon-Smith, sinking his voice, "I've

got plenty of money! My pater's a millionaire, and I have as much money as I like."

Mr. Punter's eyes glistened.

"All right for you!" he remarked. "Mebbe you could spare a 'arf-quid for an ole pal—"

"I could spare a fiver, if I liked!"

"Ho!" said Mr. Punter, half-closing his eyes in ravished contemplation of the amount of strong drink that could be obtained for five pounds. "Ho!"

"I could, and would," said the Bounder, "if—"

Mr. Punter shook his head again disconsolately.

"I can't come up to the school," he said. "Henery is too 'ard! That dorg—"

"I don't want you to come to the school," said the Bounder coolly. "I want the secret!"

Mr. Punter blinked at him blearily.

"The secret?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Wot secret?" demanded Mr. Punter.

"I want to know what you've got against Quelch," said the Bounder, in a low, determined voice. "You're black-mailing him—"

"'Old on! That's a narsty word!" said Mr. Punter.

"It's the right word!" said the Bounder. "You're black-mailing Quelch! I don't believe for a moment that you're a relation of his, or an old friend—it's impossible! Some of the fellows think so, but you can't pull the wool over my eyes! I know that's all gas!"

Mr. Punter looked at him in a very peculiar way.

"You're wery sharp, young gentleman," he said—"wery sharp indeed! P'r'aps too sharp!"

"I'm no fool!" said the Bounder coolly. "You've got some hold on Quelch, and the only possible explanation is that he has done something, and you know it—something disgraceful—and it's in your power to give him away! Isn't that it?"

Mr. Punter grinned.

"Wot if it is?" he asked.

"I want to know what it is," said the Bounder, "and I'll give you a five-pound note for telling me. That's fair and square!"

Mr. Punter hesitated.

"Money talks!" he said at last.

Vernon-Smith took out his pocket-book, jerked a crisp and rustling banknote from it, and laid it upon the beer-stained wooden table. Mr. Punter's eyes gleamed, and he made a motion to take the banknote. Vernon-Smith placed his hand upon it.

"Not till you've kept your part of the bargain!" he said.

"Orlright!" said Mr. Punter. "You kep' your bargain afore—you paid the quid. I'll trust you. It's a go!"

"Go ahead, then!" said the Bounder, unable to conceal his eagerness. "I'm waiting!"

"I don't see why I shouldn't," said Mr. Punter thoughtfully. He seemed to be seeking some salve to apply to his conscience, much to the surprise of the Bounder, who had not suspected him of having one. "Why shouldn't I—hey?"

"No reason why you shouldn't," said the Bounder impatiently. "Go ahead!"

"Henery doesn't treat me well," said Mr. Punter pathetically. "Wot's a pound a week to a feller like me—born thirsty?"

"Oh! He gives you a pound a week, does he?" said Vernon-Smith.

"'Tain't much," said Mr. Punter, "and he won't make it more. If I says I'll go to the perlice, he says I won't get even the quid if I do, and he's right. And I dursn't come up to the school and give him a doing, 'cause he sets the dorg on me! He's a 'ard man, is Henery Quelch!"

The Bounder grinned. Even under the thumb of the blackmailer, it was evident that Mr. Quelch was a very tough customer.

"'Sides, it'll be hover soon—mebbe afore five weeks is up, and then I sha'n't tetch five quid, and you offers me five now," said Mr. Punter. "As a business man, I'm bound to take your hoffer—ain't I?"

"Of course you are!" said the Bounder. "Go ahead, for goodness' sake, and don't keep me all the afternoon!"

"Wery well!" said Mr. Punter. "It's all my eye about my bein' his cousin or his brother! I put it like that because—because—"

"Because you had to say something, and you couldn't explain that you were only his blackmailer?" suggested the Bounder.

"You can put it like that," said Mr. Punter. "Well, this is 'ow it is. I'm a pal of Mr. Quelch's brother 'Erbert, and 'Erbert's got into trouble—"

"Not surprising, with a friend like you!" murmured the Bounder.

"Eh, wot did you say?" said Mr. Punter suspiciously.

"I said get on with the washing!"

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"BOUGHT HONOURS!"

Mr. Punter drained his mug.

"'Erbert's in trouble," he said. "It was a matter of a cheque. He was in a bank, you know; and 'Erbert not 'aving an over and above good reputation, got scared and bolted. I know where he is."

"Oh!" said the Bounder.

"I should have stood by him, and looked arter him, like an old pal," said Mr. Punter, "only he's got no money! He ain't no use to me. But would I give him away to the perlice? No! That ain't my sort. Same time, a man must live. So why shouldn't Henery hand out a little to keep his brother's old pal from starving—eh? Why should I go hungry?"

"Or thirsty?" said the Bounder.

Mr. Punter chuckled.

"Yes, or thirsty," he said. "Well, that's the whole yarn."

"Not at all!" said the Bounder. "Where is Quelch's brother hiding?"

Mr. Punter shook his head.

"Matter of fact, he's give me the slip," he said. "I did know, but last time I went to see him he had gone, and I found him not, as they say in the novels. Looks to me as if he didn't trust his old pal Percy," said Mr. Punter, with a sorrowful shake of the head.

The Bounder looked at him keenly. He was inclined to think that Mr. Punter had told him the truth, or something near it. He was disappointed that the story turned out to be nothing against the Remove-master—nothing, at all events, but a very deep concern for his brother, who had done wrong, or was suspected of wrong-doing.

"Then if you don't know where Herbert Quelch is, you are screwing money out of old Quelch on false pretences?" said the Bounder.

Mr. Punter closed one eye.

"Feller must live!" he said. "I ain't bound to tell him overything. He's wery 'ard on an old pal—his brother's old pal, I mean! Let him go and eat coke!"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I don't want you to let Quelch alone," he said. "Stick to him like a leech, and get all you can out of him, my man. There's your fiver; you've earned it. But if I find that you've told me any lies, I'll make you squirm. If I claim that fiver, and put the police on your track for picking it out of my pocket, you'll go to prison! You understand?"

Mr. Punter stared blankly at Vernon-Smith. He was a pretty thorough rascal himself, but he had never experienced before such duplicity as he saw now in the Bounder of Greyfriars. His jaw dropped.

"My word!" he gasped.

"It's all serene, if you've told me the truth!" said the Bounder.

"I 'ave!" asserted Mr. Punter. "I 'ave! Not a word but the truth, except that young 'Erbert says that he's innocent of the charge agin him, and Henery he says so, too. That's why he's standing by him."

"And is he innocent?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Blest if I know!" said Mr. Punter. "Don't care, neither!"

Vernon-Smith rose. Mr. Punter lounged into the inn, to change the fiver and proceed immediately to expend a considerable portion of it in liquid refreshment.

The Bounder walked back to Greyfriars with a gleam of triumph in his eyes. He felt that he held the trump card at last—the Remove-master's fate was in the hollow of his hand!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Knew.

"MY hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loud exclamations and a wild yell of laughter greeted the Owl of the Remove, as he rolled in at the gates of Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter was in a sorry plight.

He was wet through, smothered with mud and slime and ooze, and gasping with fatigue. He blinked indignantly at the juniors as they crowded round him, laughing. Billy Bunter could see nothing whatever to laugh at.

"I say you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," growled the fat junior. "I'm wet—"

ANSWERS

"You look wet!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha! And muddy!"

"And slimy" grinned Tom Brown.

"And oozy!" chuckled Morgan.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and it's a dirty object ye are," said Micky Desmond. "Is it scraping out a ditch wid yerself ye've been?"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got something to tell you chaps. It was Smithy—he pitched me into the ditch," gasped Bunter. "He was going into the Cross Keys——"

"Just like Smithy," said Nugent, with a sniff. "That's one of his favourite places on a half-holiday!"

"What did he pitch you into the ditch for, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, who had just come from the cricket-field, with his bat under his arm.

"Because I—I tried to stop him," said Bunter. "I knew he was going in to see that man Punter, and I regarded it as my duty to stop him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked angrily at the laughing Removites. The idea of the fat junior attempting to stop the muscular Bounder seemed funny to the Removites. They knew very well that Bunter would as soon have tackled Wingate of the Sixth as the Bounder of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, draw it mild," said Johnny Bull. "Don't pile it on so thick, Bunter."

"The thickfulness of Bunter's esteemed whoppers is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'm telling you the exact truth," said Bunter, with dignity. "I stopped him, and gave him a thrashing——"

"And left him for dead?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When he suddenly took me from behind, and pitched me backwards into the ditch," said Billy Bunter.

The juniors shrieked.

"How could he pitch you backwards into the ditch, if he was behind you?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I'm not explaining how he did it—I'm only stating the fact!" said Bunter.

"The fact! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right, I won't tell you any more," said Bunter angrily. "Smithy's been getting up to his tricks again, and I know all about it. But I jolly well won't tell you a word."

And Billy Bunter rolled on his way indignantly, and went up to the Remove dormitory, where he began to scrape off the mud and slime. Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances.

"Think there's anything in it?" asked Johnny Bull.

"I shouldn't wonder; very likely the Bounder pitched him into the ditch because he'd found out something," Harry Wharton remarked thoughtfully.

"Let's go and ask him."

"He says he won't tell us!" said Johnny Bull.

"I'll take him some jam-tarts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Four followed Billy Bunter up to the Remove dormitory. They found the Owl of the Remove cleaning himself, and grunting very much over the process. He scowled at the chums as they entered.

"Billy, old man——" began Harry Wharton affably.

"You can go and eat coke," growled Billy Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going to tell you anything. Yah!"

"We've brought you some tarts!"

"Eh!"

"Look?"

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened at the sight of the bag of tarts. He grabbed them suddenly, as if afraid that Wharton might change his mind, and sat down on the bed, half-dressed and wet as he was, to make sure of them by stowing them away immediately.

"Now, what's that about Smithy?" asked Nugent.

"He pitched me into the ditch," said Bunter, with his mouth full. "He's plotting against Quelch. Of course, I don't care twopence about that. But I think you fellows ought to rag him for spoiling my clothes."

"If he's plotting against Quelch, we'll rag him for spoiling your clothes," promised Harry Wharton.

"After I got out of the ditch, I crawled up to the garden," Bunter explained, starting on the second tart. "I knew he was going to see Punter, and I'd seen Punter in the garden, boozing. I lay low behind the hedge, and heard every word they said."

"Rotter!"

"Eh?"

"I mean go on!"

"I know the whole story, now," said Billy Bunter. "I don't mind telling you fellows. Smithy gave the villain five

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ONE
PENNY.

quid to tell him all about it. Quelch's got a brother, who's been robbing a bank or something, and he's bunked. The police are looking for him, and Punter is getting money out of Quelch, by pretending to know where he is, and to be able to give him up to the bobbies. What do you think of that?"

"The cad!"

"I don't know what Smithy is going to do, but he gave the man a five-pound note; I saw him," said Bunter. "He's an awful rotter, you know; my clothes are spoiled——"

"We'll see Smithy as soon as he comes in," said Harry Wharton abruptly. "I don't know what use he thinks of making of this; but we'll jolly well muzzle him."

"Yes, rather!"

And the Famous Four quitted the dormitory, and Billy Bunter was left alone to finish the tarts, and then to finish the process of cleaning himself and his clothes. It was a long and troublesome process; and Billy Bunter derived much satisfaction from the reflection that, at all events, he had succeeded in preparing a very warm reception for the Bounder when he came back.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tar and Feathers.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were waiting at the school gates when Vernon-Smith came home. The Bounder glanced at them, and was not very long in observing the look of the Famous Four. He paused as they closed up to meet him.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Yes," said Harry Wharton grimly.

"What's the matter?"

"We've just seen Bunter."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Did he tell you I pushed him into the ditch? Well, the spying cad was following me, and I wasn't having any."

"He told us more than that!" said Frank Nugent.

The Bounder looked puzzled.

"I don't see anything more he could have told you," he said, retreating a step. "What do you mean?"

"Bunter heard all you said to that scoundrel at the Cross Keys!"

Vernon-Smith started back. He was utterly taken by surprise, and the colour wavered in his cheeks.

"Bunter—heard!" he ejaculated.

"Yes."

"And—he's—told you?"

"Every word."

"Well," said the Bounder, recovering his coolness. "I was going to tell the fellows, anyway; you've only got it from Bunter a little sooner. I know about Quelch now—all about him. His brother's a thief, and the police are hunting for him. Quelch is conniving at keeping him out of their hands. That's a punishable offence. He's breaking the law."

"You cad!"

"You rotter!"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"You can slang me as much as you like," he said. "But you can't make me hold my tongue. I'm going to show Quelch up to all Greyfriars. That must be where he went the other day, when he was gone all the morning—to see his brother. He's helping him to keep out of the policemen's hands, and he ought to be shown up."

"You paid Punter to tell you all that!" said Harry Wharton.

"That's my business."

"It's our business, too," said Harry Wharton. "You promised honour bright to do nothing against Quelch, by order of the Form."

"Circumstances alter cases. I'm not bound to stand up for Quelch when I know that he's helping a thief to escape from the authorities."

"You don't know that; you've only got the word of a drunken blackguard for it," said Harry Wharton. "You've broken your word of honour."

"Oh, rats!"

"Well, if a promise won't bind you, there's nothing for it but to make it worth your while to keep your word," said Harry Wharton, "and the only way to do that is to make it too painful for you to break your word. Mind, you're going to say nothing against Quelch in the school—not a syllable."

"Who's going to stop me?"

"We are!"

"Bosh!"

"Collar him!" said Harry Wharton.

Vernon-Smith sprang back; but the Famous Four were upon him with a sudden rush. He was grasped in their strong hands and whirled off his feet.

"Hands off!" he yelled. "Let me alone! Help!"
 "Bring him along!" said Harry Wharton.
 And the squirming, struggling, twisting Bounder was rushed along the lane and across the plank bridge over the ditch, into the wood. There he was bumped down in the grass.

He was still struggling furiously, in dire apprehension of what was to happen to him. And he had reason to be apprehensive.

The Famous Four were all ready for his punishment. Nugent produced a whipcord from his pocket, and tied the Bounder's wrists securely behind his back. Then the rascal of the Remove was allowed to rise to his feet.

He staggered up, his brows dark and his eyes scintillating with rage.

"I'll make you suffer for this!" he muttered.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I fancy you're going to do all the suffering at present," he remarked. "Now, I'll hold the cad while you fellows pile in."

"Right-ho!"

The Bounder watched the juniors with apprehensive eyes. Nugent produced a bag from under his jacket, and opened it, and the Bounder saw with surprise that it contained a quantity of feathers, evidently taken from a mattress. Wharton produced a tin can, and, on being opened, a quantity of tar was revealed. Johnny Bull carefully unwrapped a paper parcel he took from his pocket, and disclosed a large brush.

"You—you're not going to put that stuff on me!" panted the Bounder.

"That's exactly what we're going to do," said Wharton coolly. "Tar and feathers is the proper punishment for a fellow who breaks his word."

"Hear, hear!"

The Bounder trembled with rage and indignation.

"You—you dare not!" he shrieked.

"You'll soon see!"

Wharton dipped the brush into the can of tar and advanced towards the Bounder. Vernon-Smith strove to back away, but the strong grasp of Bob Cherry held him fast. Wharton dabbed the tar-brush upon his face, and he uttered a fiendish yell.

"Yow! Groo!"

"Better keep your mouth shut!" said Wharton warningly.

"Help! Ow! Gr-r-r-r-r-rugh!"

"There! I warned you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

Vernon-Smith did not open his mouth again. The taste of the tar was not pleasant. The brush dabbed over his face and hair till he was a mass of tar and stickiness.

"Now the feathers!" said Harry Wharton.

"Here you are!"

Nugent emptied the bag of feathers over the Bounder's tarry head.

They stuck to him in tufts and clumps, giving him the strange appearance of a hen after a fight in a barnyard. Nugent and Johnny Bull picked up the feathers that fell to the ground, and stuck them on.

"Gro-o-o-o-o-o-oh!" came in a muffled murmur from the Bounder.

The Removites grinned.

Vernon-Smith's features had wholly disappeared under the mass of tar and feathers, and his hair was a sticky, fluffy mass.

He was breathing stertorously under the sticky infliction. But the chums of the Remove were not finished yet. Harry Wharton drew a card from his pocket and pinned it upon the Bounder's breast. The card bore the inscription in large letters:

"PUNISHED FOR BREAKING HIS WORD OF HONOUR.

"By Order of the Form."

"That's done!" said Harry Wharton. "Leave his hands

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tied, or he'll get that card off. All the fellows have got to know what he's punished for. Take him back!"

The Bouncer panted.

"You—you're not going to take me to the school like this?"

"We are. All Greyfriars has got to see how a cad's punished in the Remove for breaking his word of honour."

"I—I'll complain to the Head!"

"All serene! If you like to tell him about your dealings with a man like Punter, at a place like the Cross Keys, you're at liberty to do it."

The Bouncer ground his teeth with rage. He was caught at every point. The Cross Keys public-house was most strictly out of bounds, and with good reason. The Bouncer could not tell part of the story without the whole coming out; and he knew that he would be expelled from Greyfriars if the Head came to know of his proceedings that afternoon.

"March!" said Harry Wharton.

The tarry and feathery Bouncer was marched out into the road, and marched along to the school gates. He halted there, but an application from a pin in Bob Cherry's hand drove him forward with a yell.

He dashed across towards the School House, to escape from the open quadrangle and the glare of the sunlight as quickly as he could.

But his strange aspect caused the fellows to flock round from all sides.

A yell of laughter greeted him.

The appearance of Bunter after his ducking had hardly been so ridiculous, and certainly not so humiliating for the sufferer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me loose!" shrieked the Bouncer.

"Rats!" said Bolsover. "You've broken your word, honour bright! Serve you right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Four left Vernon-Smith to struggle through the yelling crowd, and strolled out into the lane again.

"I think that will be a lesson to Smithy!" said Harry Wharton grimly. "And if he says a word against Quelch, we'll give him a second dose."

"What-ho!"

From the Close came a roar of voices.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The End of the Secret.

HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What's the matter now?"

"Our friend Punter. I wish we had some more tar and feathers."

The chums of the Remove had sauntered down to the bay. They were walking along the sands of Pegg when they caught sight of the ubiquitous Mr. Punter. Apparently he had expended a great part of Vernon-Smith's bribe in a liquid form, for he was walking very unsteadily. Mr. Quelch was coming from the direction of the village of Pegg, walking with his eyes on the ground, and he had not yet seen the ruffian. Mr. Punter caught sight of him, and waited for him to come up.

The juniors halted. There were a good many Remove fellows on the beach, and they gathered round. The Remove had solemnly agreed to stand by Mr. Quelch and back him up, and they meant to keep their compact. If the blackmailer molested the Remove-master, Harry Wharton & Co. were ready for him.

"Hallo, ole pal, Henery!"

Mr. Quelch started, and raised his eyes.

Punter stood in his path, with a grin on his coppery face, and his battered hat cocked on one side of his head.

"Ain't going to speak to an ole pal, hey?" he demanded threateningly.

The Remove-master looked at him steadily.

"Listen to me!" he said. "I have something to say to you, you scoundrel!" The Remove-master turned to the juniors. "Wharton, Nugent—all of you, come here!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I want you all to hear!"

The Removites gathered round curiously.

"A week or two ago," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "there was a robbery at the bank where my younger brother held a responsible post. Suspicion seemed to fall upon him, and he very foolishly ran away, instead of facing it out, and thus caused the police to believe that he was guilty. He had previously been guilty of reckless conduct, chiefly

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through knowing rascals like this man and others of his sort."

"Ho!" said Mr. Punter indignantly.

"This man knew, or pretended to know, where Herbert was," went on the Remove-master, in the same quiet tone. "He therefore came to me and threatened me with betraying my brother, unless I gave him money. On the day he came to Greyfriars I had first heard of my brother's misfortune, and I was very much upset. If, in my worried state of mind, I was unduly sharp with any of you boys, I am sorry for it."

"Oh, that's all right, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "We didn't mind it a bit, sir. You've always been a jolly good master to us, sir."

"Hear, hear!" said Mark Linley.

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Thank you!" said Mr. Quelch, his face softening a little. "I am glad to hear you say so. Well, I was quite assured that Herbert was innocent, and had only acted foolishly in drawing suspicion upon himself, and I consented to pay this scoundrel for a time, while the matter was being investigated. I employed a detective you have seen at Greyfriars—Dalton Hawke, the schoolboy detective—and he has succeeded in placing the guilt upon the right shoulders. The cashier of the bank has confessed, and my brother is cleared from all suspicion. He has returned to his home."

Mr. Punter's face fell.

"My 'at!" he murmured.

"I have explained this to you, in order that you may know the circumstances under which I submitted to the visits of this wretch," continued Mr. Quelch. "After the scene in the Form-room the other day, I explained to the Head. Now I have explained to you. The matter is cleared up, and my brother is reinstated, and this man's power is gone. If he does not immediately leave the neighbourhood I shall have him arrested upon a charge of blackmail."

"Oh, lor!" groaned Mr. Punter.

"That is all!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Not quite all, sir!" said Bob Cherry. "This fellow is a dirty rascal, sir, and we think he ought to have a wash—and the sea is quite handy—and—"

"Hear, hear!" roared the juniors.

There was a rush, and before Mr. Quelch could speak—even if he felt inclined to do so—Mr. Punter was in the grasp of the juniors.

He roared and struggled; but they crowded round him like bees, and he was rushed away bodily towards the sea-shore.

Mr. Quelch smiled grimly. Turning his back upon the unhappy blackmailer, he walked away in the direction of Greyfriars.

"Ow!" roared Mr. Punter. "'Elp! Leggo!"

"Duck him!"

"Hurray!"

Down to the water's edge the juniors rushed their prisoner. There was a mighty splash as Mr. Punter was hurled into the water.

"Yaroop! Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Punter struggled wildly in the shallow water. He crawled out of the sea, wet all over, and gasping. He did not like water, salt or fresh, outside or inside. The juniors made another rush at him, as he crawled out; and Mr. Punter, with a gasp of affright, took to his heels and fled.

"After him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

More to scare the rascal than with the intention of ducking him again, the Removites dashed in pursuit.

But fear lent Mr. Punter wings.

He tore away at top speed, and vanished along the cliffs, and the juniors, laughing heartily, ceased the pursuit.

"I don't think we shall see any more of Punter," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Not likely!"

And Bob Cherry was right. Mr. Punter disappeared forthwith from the neighbourhood of Greyfriars, and was not seen there again.

Harry Wharton and Co. returned to Greyfriars in a very cheerful mood. The Form-master's secret was a secret no

(Continued on page 26.)

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OUR THRILLING NEW SERIAL STORY. START THIS WEEK!

TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!

THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
BY SIDNEY DREWFerrers Lord, millionaire, and owner
of the Lord of the Deep.Prince Ching-Lung, adventurer, conjurer and
Ventriloquist.Nathan Gore, jewel collector
and multi-millionaire,
Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started specially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," was to be put up for auction. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and, as he listened, his face came over deathly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"THE WORLD'S WONDER."

In the magnificent drawing-room of Ferrers Lord's house in Park Lane was assembled a varied collection of individuals. First of all there was the celebrated millionaire himself, and close to him sat Ching-Lung, a Chinaman, busily engaged in making paper butterflies. Hal Honour, the great engineer, was sipping tea, and Rupert Thurston yawned in a chair. "How much did you pay for that great diamond?" presently asked the latter. The millionaire smiled. "Money and fair words, Rupert," he replied. "By the way, you have not seen it yet?"

The priceless gem passed from hand to hand. A thousand fires burned in its crystal heart; a thousand colours, ever changing, leaped from every facet. "I guess it would have been more money and less fair words if old Gore had turned up," remarked Ching-Lung sagely.

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

The millionaire's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came in a hoarse voice. Ching opened the drawer which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine.—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and win back my diamond." He begins the chase after the diamond thief, and rushes across Germany into Russia in a special train, taking with him a number of the crew of the Lord of the Deep, which vessel has been destroyed by Nathan Gore.

They are not able to overtake Gore, however, and when they reach the estate of Prince Miguel Ollenorff, the prince invites them to stay at the mansion. Ferrers Lord, thinking that Nathan Gore is in hiding there, accepts. Thomas Prout & Co. go out for the afternoon on the lake in the park, and Prout ties Ching-Lung by his pigtail to a tree, so that he hangs into the water. Ching-Lung is freed by Gan Waga, and, after throwing the bathers' clothes into a bed of nettles, he dresses up as an elderly lady and returns as they are looking for their clothes. Prout & Co. go through a very bad quarter of an hour before they discover that they have been hoaxed again.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Traitor's Offer—The Sweet and Gentle Crew—Prout Becomes Absent-minded for a Short Time, takes a Long Bath, and Gives two other Baths away for Nothing.

Perhaps the pocket-book found by Ching-Lung made Ferrers Lord alter his decision to push on. Word was passed that the journey would not be resumed that day. After their experience in the forest and in the lake, Prout and Company were not very sorry. Prince Miguel was the very soul of politeness and hospitality. Though he had discovered the loss of the notes, and had fifty men searching the forest, he was affable, quiet, and wholly attentive to his guests.

Just before dinner he suggested a stroll in the great underground palmhouse, built by his extraordinary uncle, Michael Scaroff. Scaroff had used it as a laboratory and workshop, where he could labour securely. Miguel had roofed it with glass, and filled it with palms and exotic plants.

"Excellency," said the Russian, as they descended the steps, "you will find the place rather neglected. I am

unable to keep up my estates as well as I could wish. I have not the means.

"And you have squeezed your tenants dry, I presume?"

"Well," said the prince, "I cannot deny it. Your tone seems to suggest that to you the squeezing of a tenant is the blackest of crimes. Of course, you are an Englishman. Your habits of life are different, your ideas are different. The fathers of these people have been the slaves of my fathers for hundreds of years. We look upon them as our property, and rank them with our cattle. Surely a man may do what he chooses with his own?"

Ferrers Lord picked an orange from a tree laden with the golden fruit.

"The bull sometimes kills the bull-fighters, prince," he answered. "Even Russia is awakening—even the poor peasant is learning that liberty is sweet. Take care that they do not pull down this castle about your ears, and tear you to pieces."

"Come with me, Excellency."

He turned aside, between rows of lime-trees. There was an arbour at the end, clad with vines covered with dangling

bunches of luscious grapes. The prince sat down at a rustic table, and the millionaire sank lazily into another seat.

"Excellency," began the Russian, "you deny that you killed my uncle?"

"Emphatically, prince!"

"But you do not deny that, in a fashion, you were the cause of his death?"

"I will not refute that," said Ferrers Lord coldly.

Prince Miguel hesitated, and looked thoughtful.

"I am aware that you are not satisfied with me," he went on, "and I do not insist that I have any claim upon you. Your present gave me an idea that I had a claim. You can understand how much I lost by my uncle's death. The submarine which he invented, and you destroyed, was worth a vast sum. I came into a poor estate, instead of a rich one. The secret should have been mine. You have taken that from me. Put it to yourself. Do you not owe me something for that?"

Thurston and Hal Honour were sauntering up and down. A smile crossed the millionaire's face.

"Prince," he said lazily, "let me put my argument. The French Government, for instance, possesses the secret of a gun of tremendous power. The secret belongs to the nation. I know that the gun is intended to be used against my country. I seize that gun. According to your argument, if the secret is worth a million pounds, and there are fifty million people in France, I owe every one of them about fivepence. It is absurd!"

"I fail to follow you," said the Russian, biting his lip. "This was not a national affair—it was between man and man."

"You are mistaken, prince. Your uncle was using his boat, and intended to use it, against my country. I happened to have a submarine of my own, which he several times attempted to destroy. I was the stronger. It was a duel, and I won—a fair fight, and no favour. I would have helped, but your own conduct has made it impossible. Let me see a change in you, and I may reconsider my verdict."

Again there was a pause. The prince rapped the table with his knuckles. Ferrers Lord guessed what was coming.

"Do you think," said Prince Miguel, "that it dishonours a nobleman to earn money?"

"To earn money honestly would honour an emperor."

"But ideas of honesty are so varied, Excellency."

"Prince," said Ferrers Lord, "I wish to admire your palms. Tell me no more, for I know what you are going to say. I will not purchase Nathan Gore from you."

The Russian's jaw dropped, and he stared at the millionaire with glassy eyes.

"I—I—what madness are you talking?" he spluttered.

"Common-sense," laughed the millionaire. "We will not discuss the matter further."

He rose, and joined his comrades, leaving the Russian to curse and glower.

"Hal," said Ferrers Lord, "I do not think we are quite as welcome here as the flowers in May. I should advise you to be on your guard."

"You don't fear treachery, old chap?" asked Rupert.

"Treachery seems impossible, Rupert; there are too many of us. I told you about the pocket-book. I shall keep my eye on the prince. I think he will do something to warn Gore. The blackguard actually hinted at selling the Yankee to me!"

"Paid by both sides, the brute!" said Rupert, with contempt. "The dirty cad! Where is he?"

"In the harbour there, no doubt feeling very proud of himself."

They did not wait for their host, but left the palmhouse and strolled up and down the terrace.

"We shall go by the midday train to Moscow, unless we hear news," said Ferrers Lord.

"News of Gore?"

"Yes."

"But how can we get news, old chap?"

"Have you forgotten our gipsy friends?" said the millionaire, smiling. "They have sharp eyes, and are watching the roads. Depend upon it, we shall hear something."

"I expect you will, my sweet sons, unless you all go deaf!" cried the voice of Ching-Lung from a window above. "And you'll see something, too. Here it is! Yo-heave-ho! Gently, Gan."

Two huge feet appeared over the marble edge of the balcony, followed by a shapeless form. They guessed, rather than knew, that it was Gan-Waga. He slowly descended by means of a rope-ladder. A fencing-helmet covered his head, and he wore a pair of boxing-gloves. His body and legs were so padded that he bore a remarkable resemblance to a sack of flour. There was a hatchet in his belt, and a blunderbuss strapped over his shoulder. Two labels were attached to his chest and back. The first read:

"Stuffed with dynamite. Do not touch."

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"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

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EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

The second imparted the cheerful knowledge:

"This is lyddite. Keep off."

Ching-Lung slid down after the Eskimo, and rolled a cigarette.

"What's this extraordinary idea, Ching?" asked Thurston.

"Well, my boy," grinned his Highness, "Gan has got into trouble. He has foes who fiercely thirst for his blood. His life was not safe until I rigged him up in that patent lightning-proof suit. I borrowed the blunderbuss from a keeper. In a land swarming with foes it is as well to go armed. The savage Prout, the remorseless Maddock, the fiery Joe, and the reckless O'Rooney are on the prowl, with murderous intent. How liketh thou the Gan-Waga?"

"I think you are getting a bigger idiot than ever, Ching!"

"An insult, by my halibut! Hal, you call yourself my friend, and yet stand by without striking him low. I defy you to strike him any lower than he is by nature. What thinkest thou of yon doughty Eskimo?"

"I think you make an excellent pair!" answered the engineer.

"Dey nots montlekempary, Chingy, hunk?" growled Gan-Waga.

"Complimentary? They are rude! Out with your chopper, and smite!"

"Really, old chaps," said Rupert, "it's not quite the thing to play the game in another fellow's house. You ought to be more dignified."

"Oh, pip! Listen to that!" cried Ching-Lung, standing on his head. "Dignified! Gan, tell me, are my boots on straight? We've got to be dignified. I'll come out in a tall hat, white choker, and black-kid gloves to-morrow. This company is too aristocratic for us. Let us hide ourselves. Let us find a rat-hole and crawl down it. Give me your arm, my undignified Gan, and we will go."

Gan chuckled, and put his arm round Ching-Lung's left knee. They walked away together in that fashion, the prince upside down. Hal and Rupert laughed.

"Quite mad, both of them," said Thurston.

"Leave them alone," said Ferrers Lord. "It is quite useless to attempt to keep them out of mischief. Sometimes I wish Ching-Lung would steady and sober down, but he would not be the old Ching-Lung if he did."

"Why doesn't he marry the fat princess in China?" said Rupert. "That would sober him."

"Or make him take to drink," put in the engineer.

It was close upon dinner-time, and they went to their rooms to make themselves as presentable as they could under the circumstances. The men were already at their evening meal, but it was not quite such a riotous feast as lunch. They did not speak to each other, except when they wanted a dish passed, and then they snapped out the request rudely.

They were finding it hard to digest the adventure of the lady and the umbrella. It was one of their greatest defeats. And a crushing defeat, when it follows a glorious victory, is doubly hard to bear.

However, when a bowl of steaming punch was brought they began to cheer up a little.

"Gentlemen," said Barry, "lit the dead past pay for uts own coffins and bury uts own dead. We have suffered; but like the phoenix—which same was a koind of birrd—lit us roise agin from our own ashes. Lit us dhrame of rivinge, and think how best we can accomplish ut. Yer very good healths!"

The gloomy faces brightened somewhat.

"By hokey," growled Prout gloomily, "it was a smack in the eye!"

"I'll smack Julius in both eyes!" said Joe.

"And I'll be there with both boots," added Maddock.

There was another gloomy silence, and then they lighted their pipes.

"Oi wondher where that Eskimo is, bad luck to him!" said Barry.

"You bet he won't come along for a bit," said Joe. "He know's what's waitin' for him. Ching just twists him round his little finger. I don't berlieve he could 'elp lettin' the prince out o' the rat-trap. Still, he's goin' to get it warm—mighty torrid, that's what!"

"Blazin' 'ot," added Maddock. "Look 'ow ho turned round hon us! Spiteful wasn't the word!"

They drained the bowl.

"By hokey!" suggested Maddock, "what about 'untin' him up?"

"I was going to say that, Tom," said Joe.

"Come on, then."

The sun was sinking in a furnace of gold. Upstairs dinner had only just commenced. Prout took out his knife to cut a switch.

"Oi think we'd better lave the timber alone in front of the winders," said Barry. "They moight not loike ut."

"All right," growled Maddock, who had also opened his knife, "we go to the back!"

Someone shouted as they passed behind the stables, but they took no notice. They came to a fence of hurdles, and looked across the meadow. In the centre was a circular pond, and on the edge of the pond grew a willow.

"A willow switch will do," said Prout.

"Olly's tougher, and stings 'arder," remarked Joe, "only I don't see none."

There was a solitary cow in the meadow, and the animal kept up an incessant lowing. Crossing the fence, they gained the pond and willow.

"Give me a leg-up," said Barry, "and, bedad, Oi'll cut four ticklers for Mither Gan that he won't forgit the taste of for a month of Saturrday afternoons. Raise me gintly, Thomas, until I git howld of that bough. That's noice, and, troth, there's enough switches here to supply foive hundred schools for as many years!"

Barry got his leg over a branch.

"Cut 'em thick," advised Joe.

"As thick as glue, me bhoys."

"And choose 'em with knobs on," said Maddock.

"As nobby as broken bricks, me frind. Bedad, Oi'll watch that. Here's firrst cut at Joolius!"

The Irishman began to hack at a branch.

"Wot a funny row that old cow makes!" said Joe.

"Kinder weary of life," said Maddock.

"By hokey!" said Maddock, "she seems to be singin' the song the old cow died of."

"Oi don't wondher it doied," remarked Barry from the tree. "Catch, Tom; that's number wan!"

He tossed down a stick, and Prout began to trim the branches from it.

"Look!" said Maddock.

A figure was sitting on the distant fence. They recognised Gan-Waga, and they also recognised the fact that he was putting his fingers to his snub nose.

"Wot cheek!" snapped Joe. "Oh, wot cheek!"

"Wait a bit. Take no notice. Eveythin' comes to him what waits."

"Even the brokers!" sighed Barry.

Barry happened to look towards the cow. It was fulfilling Prout's wise remark, and coming while they waited. It was the cow whose calf Prince Miguel had shot, and it came with its horns down and its tail in the air. Barry shrieked out a warning, and they saw their danger. It would have been the height of folly to have run for the fence. The distance was too great.

"Go away! Shoo! Shoo! Go away!" they screamed, waving their arms.

The cow, maddened by the loss of its calf, flung up the turf with its hoofs, uttered a ferocious bellow, and dashed on.

"By hokey, I'm leaving at once!" gasped Prout.

He fled round the pond, and Maddock followed him. Joe took refuge behind the trunk of the willow. The cow, unable to check itself, went headlong into the ooze, floundered out, stood for a moment glaring, and then started to run madly along the bank.

Prout and Maddock darted away, and the cow came after them. It gave them no time for breath. Barry shrieked, advice that they did not hear. They did not even know that they were gaining on the cow; until, at the tenth lap, Prout almost ran into the animal's tail.

Of course he stopped. Maddock did not expect him to put on the brakes so suddenly, and Maddock was on the same line. His front buffer—his head, that is—collided with the small of Prout's back. In such a case it has often been noticed that the stationary engine receives the most damage. The collision completely derailed Prout, and flung him down the embankment.

There was a pond at the bottom. Prout found that!

It was a green, smelly, and muddy pond.

Prout also found out that it possessed these peculiarities. He rose upon his hands and knees, his classic brow wearing a wreath of delicate green duckweed, and his beard beautifully dyed with black mud. A frog was burrowing cheerfully down the back of his neck, and a few others were trying to get into his pockets.

The cow walked away quite satisfied, and the astounded Maddock sat down and felt his head. Prout wore hard braces, and they hurt.

"Did—did it butt me?" murmured Maddock.

Prout still knelt in the ooze, gazing vacantly at the sky. A watersnail crawled down his nose. Barry descended from the tree, and took a seat on the bank. He was joined by Joe,

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and both men looked extremely solemn and thoughtful. They shook their heads sadly, and stared at Prout.

"Did—did it butt me?" said Maddock wearily. "Did—did it?"

"Wud yez think, now," asked Barry, "that ut sthays there on purpose?"

"I would," said Joe. "I think he's a natcherlist arter specimens."

"Bedad, isn't ut wondherful what a man'll do out of luv for scoience!" said Barry. "Faith, ut's amazin'!"

"He's experimentin' to find out if snails bite," said Joe. "See that one on his nose?"

"And whether duckweed'll cure headache," added Barry. "Twig the decorations on his larned brow?"

"And if wet mud gives rheumatism. Pouf! Doesn't that pond hum, eh?"

"Did—did it butt me?" lisped the weary tones of Maddock.

"Faith, but isn't ut a handsome, larned face he's got intoirely!" said Barry. "Luk at the janius there!"

"You mean the black stuff on his whiskers? Is that genius or sludge?"

"Let's ax him," suggested Barry. "Plaze, sor—Jupiter, how ut smells!"

Prout took the snail off his nose, examined it, and threw it away.

"Plaze, purfessor," cried Barry, in a louder tone, "Oi wish to inquire—"

"Did—did it butt me?" moaned Maddock.

"Oi wish to inquire, at the requist of my frind," went on Barry, "av the stuff on yer whiskers is janius or mud?"

There was no reply. Prout removed the frog from his collar, held up the wriggling reptile by one leg, looked at it with vacant eyes, and threw it after the snail.

"He's goin' to write a book about 'em," said Joe. "Did you ever smell anything like it?"

Prout scooped off the duckweed, held it in his open palm for a moment, and replaced it over his left eye.

"Did—did it butt me?" asked Maddock again, still mournfully rubbing his head. "Tell me, did it butt me?"

At last Prout crawled up the bank. He took off his coat, waistcoat, and finally his mudstained shirt. Then he felt his back cautiously with two great miry hands. After that he looked at his breastbone.

"Joe!"

His voice was weak and far away. He might have been speaking through a drain-pipe.

"Tom! Oh, go away! You smell! What is it?"

"How big are the holes?"

"Faith, which holes is thim?" asked Barry.

"The holes where his horns went in."

"Only about two inches," said Joe.

"D'ye think I'll die?" said the steersman, pulling on his wet shirt.

"Sartin, av yez lives long enough," grinned Barry. "But go away, and wash the niff out, for marcy's sake!"

Prout picked up his coat and waistcoat, and made sullenly for the castle, leaving a wet wake behind him. They managed to shake some sense into Maddock after a time. They told him that they had never seen such a violent case of butting in their lives, but they fancied he would live if he recovered. If he did not recover, there was little hope for him.

Then Barry cut the rest of the sticks, and, with Benjamin between them, they set out in Prout's wake. It was growing dark. The door of the coachyard was closed, but it was not locked. They could have followed Prout with their eyes shut, so strong was the odour he left behind.

"There'll be a thunderin' row if Tom goes in like that," remarked Joe. "He'd lift the roof off."

Barry sniffed the perfumed air.

"Troth, violets ain't in ut, Joe!"

"I wish they was!" said Joe. "How I wish they was!"

Prout was not on the terrace. They could not imagine him mad enough to enter the castle in his highly-scented condition. It was barely twilight, and the twilight lasted long. They looked for him among the carved yew, and found him not.

"He went down here," said Barry, sniffing the air again.

"A dead man could have told that," said Joe. "We'd better go after him."

The path was lined with junipers and statues, and smoothly gravelled. There was a summer-house at the end, with a tall ornamental basin before it. Suddenly the smell became extremely powerful.

"Say, Tom, where are you?"

"'Ere," said a weary voice.

The hapless Prout was huddled in a seat.

"What are you doing here?" asked Joe, holding his nose.

"Dyin'!" sobbed Prout.

"Why dod't yez go add wash?" said Barry, also holding his nose.

"I can't find no water."

"Oh, cub away, cub away!" moaned the bo'sun. "By sbeller nebbber sbelled such ad sbobidable sbell!"

"Ged into the founted," said Joe. "There's sure do be wader id dhad."

Prout sighed, and stepped up to the basin, poisoning the air as he moved. It stood on a pedestal, and was about eight feet high. At each corner was a carved dragon with up-raised wings. The luckless steersman tested one of the dragons cautiously with his weight. The head bore, and so did the wings. He clutched the rim, and pulled himself up.

"Is there any wader?"

"It's full."

"Thed ged id add wash," said Joe.

Prout put one leg over the side.

"Whisht!" muttered Barry.

There was a sound of footsteps and voices. They fell back into the shadow. A footman struck a match and began to light the lamps on the verandah of the summer-house. Another followed him, carrying a tray with coffee-cups. The light streamed full on the fountain. Prout had disappeared inside, and was sitting neck deep in the water. More footsteps crunched on the gravel.

"Tare and 'ounds," grinned Barry, "ut's the chief. Tom's in for ut!"

It was not only Ferrers Lord. He was walking ahead chatting with Prince Miguel. Behind came Rupert and Hal Honour. They sat down at the table, and the footman handed round coffee, cigars, and liqueurs. Prout raised his eyes over the edge of the basin, and groaned. There was a hissing, squirting sound, and Prout choked back a sob of misery.

The footman had turned on the water, which rose in a handsome column. It also fell, most of it, on Prout's bald head. Prout was an admirer of fountains, but he did not like this one. He hated it, loathed it, cursed it, abhorred it. Yet he dare not betray himself. He squatted with his hands clasped over his hairless brow, and glared horribly through the spray.

"Bedad," said Barry, "Oi think that ought to wash the perfume out of him!"

"It 'ud wash the inside out of a hiron bar," said Joe, "or a granite boulder wi' hemstitched corners."

"Coolin', too, Oi fancy," remarked Barry; "soothin' to the brain."

"Rayther damp, though," added Maddock thoughtfully.

"Inclined to rust anythin'!"

"Whisht!"

Rupert was leaning over the rail of the pretty summer-house.

"These lights have a pretty effect on the water, Hal."

"Very pretty," answered the engineer.

"Troth, Oi'd give a dollar," chuckled Barry, "to know what koind of an effect they're havin on Mither Prout this very minute. A dollar! Whoy, Oi'd give me linded estates and the patint trouser-stritchers me uncle Phelim Moriarty intinds to lave me in his will. Arrah, but he'll be sweeter nor lavender afther this!"

"Clean enough to kiss," added Maddock. "Pity he hadn't some soap."

Prout bore it gamely for a time, but it was too horrible. By manœuvring round the basin he managed to avoid the full weight of the falling torrent, but it was wet and weary work. If it had been only Honour or Rupert, or both of them together, he would have faced them. But the chief, the Russian noble, and the gorgeous footman—he could not face them; he could not explain. The prince would hardly like a man washing himself in a basin that was a gem of carving, and had cost hundreds of pounds.

"Oi give him foive minutes longer," said Barry.

"Make it six for a shilling."

"Oi take ut. Can yez see yer watch?"

The pressure of water was not constant, and the falling water varied considerably in its descent. Prout had lost his cap, and, feeling round for it, his hand came in contact with a heavy, round stone. That gave Prout a glorious idea. Cold as it was—oh, how cold!—he could have borne the immersion. It was the water falling on his head that drove him to despair. If he could only check it even a little, it would be a glorious relief.

The pipe came up through the pillar, and passed through the basin into the air. And it was a lead pipe, with a brass or copper nozzle. Lead is a soft metal, and Prout decided to hammer up the pipe a little. Clutching the stone, he began to hammer the pipe just below the nozzle.

He found it slow and unpleasant work. Pausing for a moment, he heard the millionaire say:

"Come and have a stroll, Rupert."

"By hokey, they're going!" muttered Prout thankfully.

The four men left the summer-house, but the two footmen remained. Prout was still afraid to stir. He groaned again as they sat down, helped themselves to liqueurs and cigars, and began to talk volubly in Russian.

"By hokey, I'll be a corpse if I don't do something!" wailed Prout. "They might stop hours! Where's that brick?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 238.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

EVERY
TUESDAY.

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

He had dropped the stone. As he fumbled for it, he slipped, and, to save his nose from being flattened against the rim of the basin, he made a clutch at the pipe just below the nozzle.

Prout did not remember that lead piping bends easily, and that he was not a light weight. He remembered both these facts later on.

Anyhow, that pipe bent until the nozzle was pointing straight at the table. The next instant a magnificent jet was playing on the summer-house, and two howling and gasping footmen had been washed away by the deluge amid the wreckage of the table, chairs, cups, saucers, decanters, and cigars.

The fountain continued to squirt with fiendish joy. Tom did not remain to watch the beautiful display. He rolled out of the basin like a man who had sat down on a packet of pins, and made a bee-line for Paris across the park.

"Be jabers," gasped Barry, "Oi think wo'd betther go! Ut luks very much loike bein' a wet avenin.' Let's toddle."

They did.

The Pursuit—No Rest—Bound for Constantinople—Hal Honour Obeys Orders.

"Good-bye, prince, and thanks for your hospitality!"

Prince Miguel stood up in his four-horse carriage, lifting his hat. There was no hand-shaking. Barry and the others, who did not know the nobleman's real character, raised a cheer. Joy and grief had been pretty well mingled during their brief visit; but they had been well treated. Even Prout, who had had a double share of grief, was not behind-hand with his lusty "hurrah!"

They crowded into the little wooden station.

"Oh, Pip!" said Ching-Lung, surveying the interior of a compartment, "just peep! This is a first-class!"

"For pigs, Oi reckon!" sniffed Barry. "A bastely ould cattle-truck!"

"In you get, then, Barry!" cried Maddock, Prout, and Joe.

Ferrers Lord was the last to leave the platform. He had learned that Gore had left, presumably, for Moscow the previous night. There was a smile on the millionaire's lips. He knew he was playing the game fairly in retaining the pocket-book picked up by Ching-Lung—the pocket-book whose loss had maddened the prince. It was an odd state of affairs. Nathan Gore, while paying for his flight, was also paying for the pursuit.

The train was a slow one. They reached Moscow in the early hours of the following morning, after a miserable and tiresome journey. Evidently the millionaire had his spies in the old capital of Holy Russia, for he had further news. Nathan Gore had booked for the junction at Tula. His destination was evidently Slavonoo—the very edge of the Urals.

"Great Scott!" said Rupert. "Can he mean to cross Siberia?"

"I hardly think he will turn back now," answered Ferrers Lord.

"But if he crosses the Urals there," said Hal Honour, "how will he get across? He is far from the new railway."

"Of what use would the railway be to him? The trains are so infrequent, slow, and unreliable, and the officials are so suspicious. I would not say for certain that he will risk such a journey. My idea is that he will sail down the Caspian to Baku, cross again into the Black Sea, reach Constantinople, and go to Egypt. He can pick up a ship at Suez, and dash for Australia or 'Frisko."

"Pouf!" said Ching-Lung. "What a round!"

They were weary and miserable when they reached the wretched Tula Junction; but there was no rest. Gore had gone that way. They had nearly nine hundred miles to cover—a journey of forty-two hours. At Samara they found that Nathan Gore had turned south-east to Orenburg. And Orenburg is a river-port on the Ural.

Ferrers Lord was right. The fugitive was making for the Caspian.

They arrived at last, jaded and bad-tempered. They found the town sweltering in heat, and thronged with hungry mosquitoes. The old paddle-wheel steamer had sailed on the previous day, and there was not another until Saturday.

"Thank goodness for that!" sighed Barry. "Niver show me the soight av a thrain agen, espeshlly a Russian wan! Oi'd prefer a thrain o' gunpowdher, wid a barrel o' that same at the ind! Rayther than thavel behoind an injine Oi'd sit on the barrel and be blowed up!"

They had had their fill of railway-travelling, and even the dirty hotel seemed a paradise after the cramped and jolting compartments. They strolled out to look at the river. It was a glorious stream; but they were not in a mood to com-

pliment it. There were a good many fishing-boats and fishermen, and Barry described the latter as the "Ugliest lot of thramps he'd ever seen—barrin', in corse, Prout and Maddock!"

They went back to the apology for an hotel, made a good meal, and in five minutes they were all asleep. Even Ching-Lung yielded to the temptation.

They were roughly roused. Ferrers Lord seemed to need no rest. They had not seen him since the train came in.

It was from the landlord that Ching-Lung had heard about the boat. There were two droskies at the door, and the millionaire was seated in one of them.

Prout, Maddock, Gan, and Joe yawned and groaned. They gathered up their belongings, and clambered into the vehicles. There was still no peace for the weary.

The boat was anchored in the stream—an old single-mast tub, of no build in particular. It was decked fore and aft.

They rowed out to her. She had a crew of four, and they were not handsome men, by any means. The luggage was tossed on board. Barry, Joe, and Prout were quickly asleep again; but even in the land of dreams they could feel the attentions of the numerous mosquitoes, and kept slapping their faces.

Ferrers Lord looked at his tired followers, and then at Honour and Rupert, who were blinking like owls. It puzzled them to know why the millionaire was in such feverish haste. A day or two before he had not seemed in any hurry; now he was straining every nerve in the pursuit.

The sails were spread, and amid a pandemonium of shouts from the shore the ugly boat began to move down stream.

It was a monotonous voyage through a monotonous country. The food was bad, and progress was slow. Even Ching-Lung seemed to be downhearted and subdued. For the first time on record he did not attempt to play any tricks. The steamer completed the journey in sixty hours. It took the old boat just one hundred and sixty.

Onward still!

At Gurziev they had a stroke of luck. A small steamer was leaving for Baku, some three hundred and eighty miles. It was dead calm on the treacherous Caspian. The steamer made a good passage, and brought them into port in thirteen hours. They took train—a horrible train!—to Polio, and at dawn they saw the shimmering waters of the Black Sea.

The boat for Sinope and Constantinople had left on the previous evening. There would be another in a fortnight. Ferrers Lord laughed, and left them to sleep. His energy was wonderful. At seven o'clock a man was hammering at their doors.

The unconquerable millionaire had procured another vessel.

The pace was getting killing. Rubbing their eyes, they dressed, and snatched a hasty meal. Gan-Waga was quite thin and woebegone. The vessel was a small tramp-steamer, dirty, and almost paintless. All the same, slow as she looked, she had every chance of reaching Constantinople first, for the packet touched at Sinope, and then made a diagonal line for the City of the Golden Horn.

"Honour," said Lord, "we are pretty short of coal."

"And heavy laden," answered Honour. "What is the cargo?"

"Hides and caviare. It is like this: We have just a chance—well, a good chance—of reaching Constantinople first. Gore is on the packet. If we get there first, our chase will be over. I shall be ready to board the vessel."

"Then we must burn the hides and caviare."

"Precisely," said the millionaire.

The engineer took the pipe from his mouth and felt his bristly chin. He had been unable to shave for days.

"Hides give a good heat, Lord."

"Yes?"

The millionaire looked at him quickly. He knew by Honour's tone that something was wrong.

"The boilers are like tissue-paper, and the engines are scrap-iron."

"Put on every ounce!" said Ferrers Lord.

"Orders are orders," laughed Hal Honour.

The engines, and especially the boilers, reminded Honour of a patchwork quilt. They had been repaired again and again, until hardly any of the original material remained. It struck him that if he attempted to travel a yard over eight knots the rods would tie themselves into knots, and the flywheels splinter to fragments. In spite of doubts, he kept the stokers busy, and used plenty of oil, and all went well.

Dawn gave place to dark, and dark to dawn. A long sleep worked wonders. Prout and Maddock rolled up as fresh as paint, and Barry, Joe, and Gan quickly followed. A sharp breeze was blowing over the sunlit waters, but it died away towards mid-day.

(To be continued next week.)

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

THE FORM-MASTER'S SECRET.

Continued from page 21.

longer; but the mystery had been cleared up without any discredit to Mr. Quelch. Their faith in their Form-master was justified, and Vernon-Smith's power of doing harm was at an end.

When the Remove went up to bed, Vernon-Smith was with them, showing very plain traces of the tarring and feathering. The feathers, certainly, were gone, but the tar was clinging in patches, lovingly round his ears and hair. Much washing and scrubbing had failed to remove it all. The Bounder scowled savagely at the Famous Four, but he did not speak. His claws, as Bob Cherry had expressed it, had been cut. He had extracted the story from Mr. Punter too late to be of any use against his Form-master; and the punishment he received, too, was enough to cow the Bounder.

"The Head knows about the tarring and feathering," Mark Linley remarked. "I heard Wingate say that he wants to see you chaps."

"We're ready to see him," said Harry Wharton. "Smithy deserved all he got—it was by order of the Form."

"I hope the Head will see it in that light!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Here he comes!" murmured Nugent.

The dormitory door opened, and Dr. Locke appeared. There was a hush in the dormitory, and the Bounder's eyes gleamed. Harry Wharton faced the Head. If punishment was coming he could stand it, and he did not falter.

"Wharton!" said the Head.

Harry Wharton came forward.

"Yes, sir!"

"I have a few words to say to you, and I wish all the Remove to hear them," said the Head gently. "There have been some unhappy happenings lately, which have caused much distress to your Form-master, Mr. Quelch. Some of the boys in his Form, as I am given to understand, have taken advantage of these circumstances to cause Mr. Quelch trouble, and to spread unpleasant reports about him."

There was dead silence in the dormitory. Vernon-Smith turned his eyes away, and Snoop made himself as small as possible. Bolsover major turned crimson.

"There were other boys who have acted in a more manly and generous way," went on the Head. "When they knew that there was some trouble upon their Form-master's mind, instead of taking advantage of it to relax discipline, they did their best to show that they respected their master as much as ever. Those boys I wish to thank for their exemplary conduct."

"Oh, sir!"

"And you were the leader in that, Wharton," said the Head. "I am very pleased with you, and I thank you for having acted in a way worthy of the great school you belong to, and for having well upheld the honour of your Form!"

And with those words, the Doctor held out his hand, and shook hands cordially with the captain of the Remove.

Harry Wharton flushed and faltered.

"We'll always back up Mr. Quelch, sir," he stammered.

"Hear, hear!"

"You will always do your duty," said the Head, "I am sure of that! Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And the Head quitted the Remove dormitory.

"Sure, and it's a brick he is, intirely!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Three cheers for the Head!"

And they were given with a will.

"Hurray! Hip, hip, hurray!"

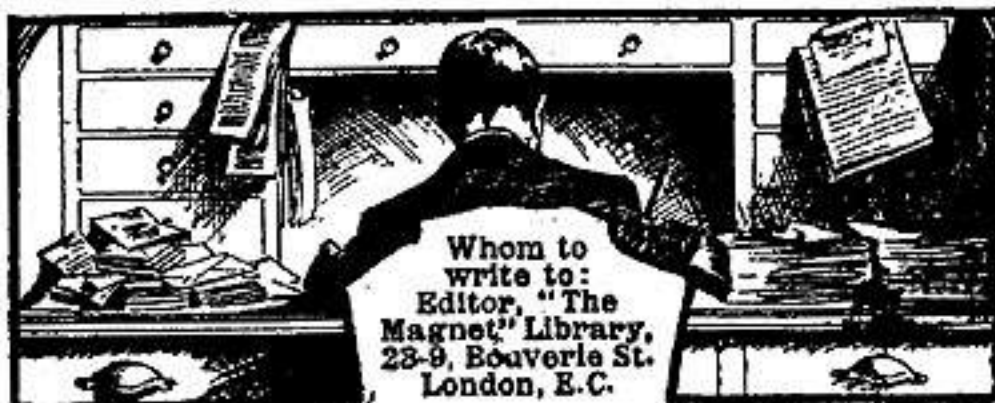
And the Head and Mr. Quelch, in the passage below, heard the ringing cheer. And when Wingate came to put lights out, he found the juniors still cheering.

THE END.

(Next Tuesday's splendid, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars, is entitled "THE HIDDEN HORROR!" by Frank Richards. Order a copy in advance, price 1d.)

Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.

My Readers' Page.



**OUR GRAND NEW
WEEKLY FEATURE
ON PAGE 28 AND
PAGES III. AND IV.
OF THE COVER.
SHOW YOUR FRIENDS
THIS COPY.**

FOR NEXT WEEK.

"THE HIDDEN HORROR."

by Frank Richards. This story is, without exception, the most powerful and thrilling piece of writing that Frank Richards' gifted pen has ever produced. Harry Wharton & Co. come across a mysterious derelict steamer, evidently but recently deserted for no apparent reason. To make good their claim to the salvage, the juniors board the mysterious craft and spend a night there—a night of horror and deadly peril! The mystery of that uncanny derelict which harbours

"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

is maintained all through the story, and the reader feels the thrill of breathless excitement from the first line to the last.

TWO MESSAGES FROM THE WEST COUNTRY

This week I am granting space for two more girl readers of "The Magnet" Library to air their opinions. "Pansy," of Swindon, writes as follows:

"Dear Sir,—As you have told us to write and let you know how we like the new three-page comic supplement to 'The Magnet' Library, I thought I would write to let you know that I think it is a very good idea, for it seems to finish it off, for, after reading such interesting tales as Mr. Frank Richards gives us week by week—for which I thank him; it seems to give us a sense of humour to finish the book with, and I trust that you will find your new enterprise successful.

"I think that Miss 'Molly Malone's' letter is very interesting, for I for one would much rather read a good boys' paper than all the nonsense put into girls' papers; in fact, I very often take my brother's books before he has a chance of looking for them, especially 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem.' Do you know if there is a 'Magnet League' in Swindon, as I have not heard of one, and I thought that if there was I should very much like to join, and several of my friends, both male and female, have expressed a desire to join, for we are all interested in the welfare of our favourite papers. Perhaps you will let me know through the column of the Reader's Page in 'The Magnet.' Wishing your papers every success, and Mr. Frank Richards a long life to write us some more interesting yarns. Tell him not to forget the little Chinese boy. We have not heard of him this week.

"I am one of your oldest readers, for I have taken it in ever since it started. "PANSY."

Many thanks for your appreciative letter, "Pansy." I do not know of a "Magnet League" in existence in Swindon as yet, but I have a large number of readers in that famous city, who, I have no doubt, have no intention of being outdone by fellow-readers in any part of the country. How would you like to take the first step in forming a "Swindon Magnet League" yourself, "Pansy"?

A very lively letter comes from a young lady living in another great Western town.

"Bristol.

"Dear Editor,—Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here we are again! Forward, 'Bristol Magnet League!' It's starting, Editor—it's starting!

"I believe our campaign against 'The Anti-Magnet League' will be successful, if we all keep to business.

"All our members, who number a good many already, have been readers for some years, and we are not going to have our papers run down without taking up the cudgels, so to speak. And so say all of us!

"Well, Editor, I thought you might like to know that old Bristol is not going to remain mum—oh, dear, no!

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday:

"THE HIDDEN HORROR!"

"I'll say good-bye now, Editor, wishing all the other 'Magnet Leagues' the success we hope to gain ourselves.—I remain, your staunch reader, "JOSEPHINE W."

Good for you, Miss Josephine W.! That's the way to do it. I feel sure your "Magnet League" will be one of the most successful in the country, seeing the kind of enthusiastic spirit that animates it.

TRAINING FOR THE AUTUMN SPORTS.

Part III.—High Jump.

To successfully perform the high jump practically all that is needed is natural agility and lightness on the feet. Every young person has these natural qualifications more or less, but few know how to use them to the best advantage when jumping.

The most common style of clearing the bar, known as the "scissors" style consists in running at it from the one side, and throwing first one leg over, and then following it with the other. Big heights cannot be jumped in this style, and it is seldom, if ever, used by expert jumpers.

The kind of jump practised by experts may seem, at first sight, rather complicated, but it may be fairly easily mastered if the following directions are carefully carried out.

First, the bar must be approached from the front. Then a slight turn is made before the jump, and, the heel being dug hard into the ground, the leap is taken. At the same time the whole rising motion must be aided by swinging up the right arm. Then the body must be turned while on its upward journey, so that the right-hand side is nearest the crossbar. When the greatest height in the jump is reached the right leg must be thrown over the other side of the bar. At the same time as this is done the left leg has to be raised. The swinging of this leg is aided in the same manner as the right—i.e., by raising the left arm. Now, however, further help may be given by swinging the body backwards. Of course, the turn that is given to the body in the first place will naturally continue, so that when the jumper alights on the other side it will be with his face towards the bar he has just cleared.

It will be as well for the beginner to commit the following directions to memory. When rising for the jump make a half-turn with the body so as to bring the right-hand side facing the bar. Swing right arm and leg upwards over the bar, and then downwards. At the same time as the right leg is swung down, bring the left up, and throw the body backwards. These directions are for jumpers who take-off with the right foot. With the exception that the left foot and arm are swung first they are the same for left-footed people, who will, naturally, when they turn have their left-hand side facing the bar.

By adopting this style of jumping all the muscles of the leg are used in the take-off and the preliminary running, thus obtaining a much higher jump; whereas, in the old "scissors" style, this was not possible. The parts for the beginner to practise frequently are first the turn just before the jump, starting with the bar low, until it is mastered, and then the swinging motions of the legs and arms and body, for in the actions of these parts of the body the height is increased. When they have been thoroughly learnt, the pupil will find that the height of his jump is far greater than any he reached while using the old style.

The high jump at sports' meetings usually takes place upon the grass, and the starting height is mutually agreed upon by the competitors. Each competitor is allowed three tries at a jump, if it should be needed. The measurements are made from the centre of the bar to the ground. Lastly, neither diving nor somersaulting over the bar is allowed. This rule was introduced in consequence of the peculiar method adopted by some jumpers who used to dive over the bar, alighting on the other side on their hands.

THE EDITOR.

Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance.

OUR SPLENDID NEW 3-PAGE FEATURE!

SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

THE BUNSEY BOYS CAUSE A CAT-ASTROPHE!



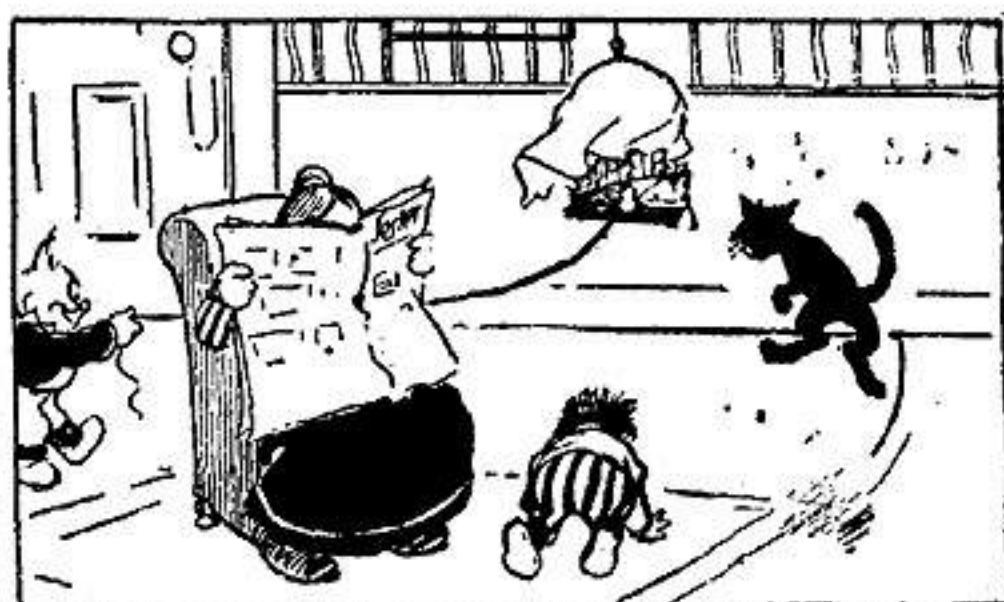
1. Ma's got a cross-patch fit on, 'cos we have the birdlet and cat in the best parlour at the same time.



2. We try to please her by taking out the little canary birdlet instead, to teach it to like cats.



3. We bring it back later on, with a bit of string tied to the cage. "Canary likes cats now," says we!



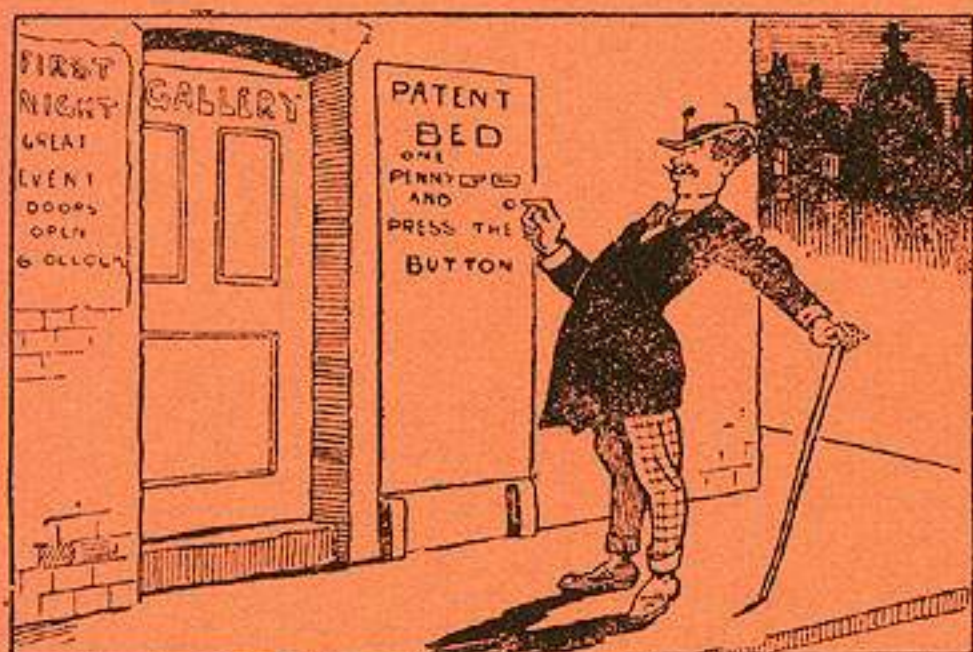
4. Ma is reading the old paper, when we pull the string, and the bottom of the cage falls out!



5. And out jumps old Rough-on-Cats, the pet bull-terrier from next door.



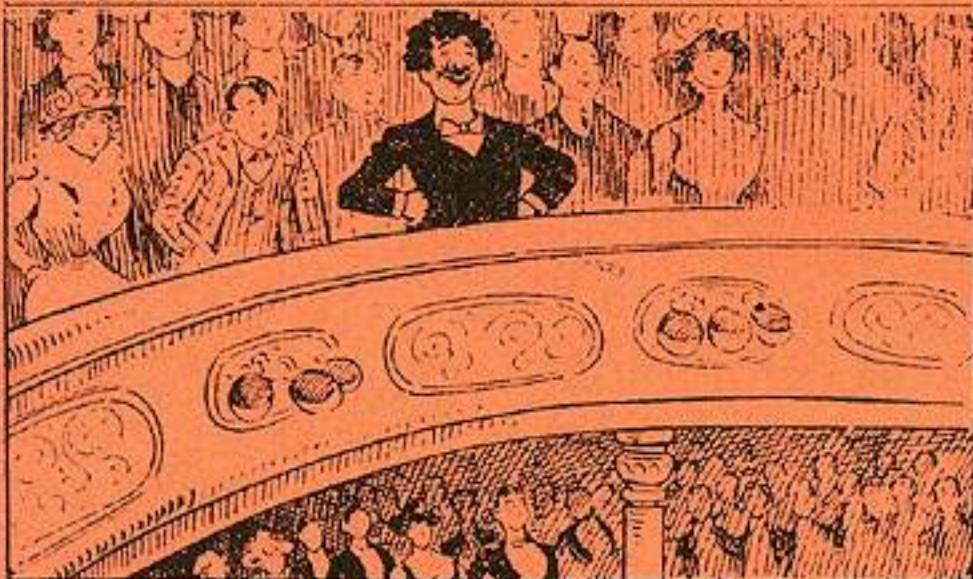
6. "Gee-up, ma! Last Lap! No stop till next week! The bull-terrier is gaining on us hand-over-hand. Throw the cat overboard!"



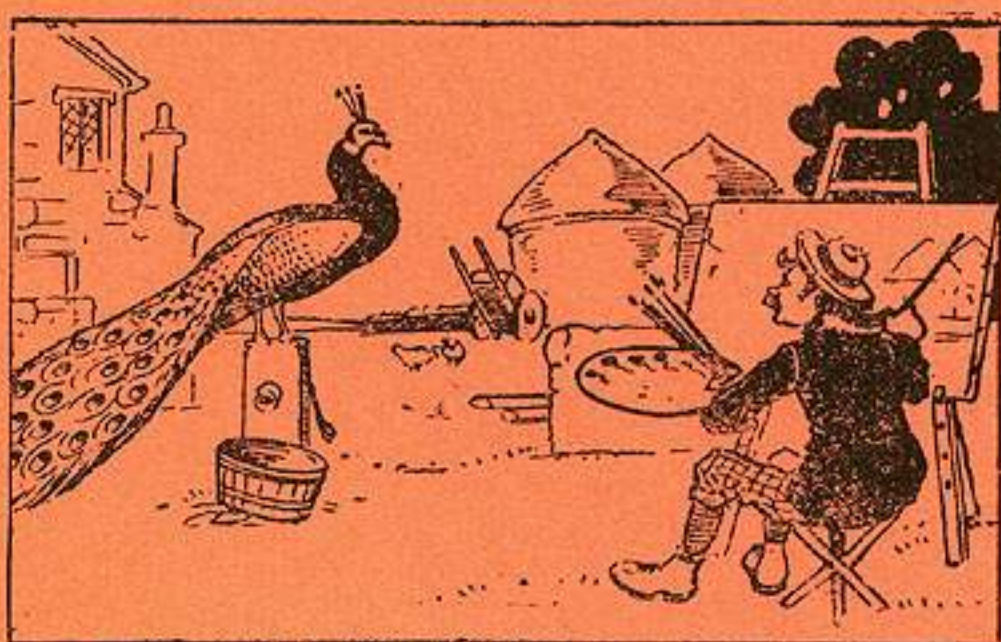
1. Here's a good idea, if you like. When a new play is to be produced, you can make sure of getting a good place by patronising the penny-in-the-slot bedstead—



2. Where you simply slumber peacefully all night, thus making sure of being there when the doors are opened.



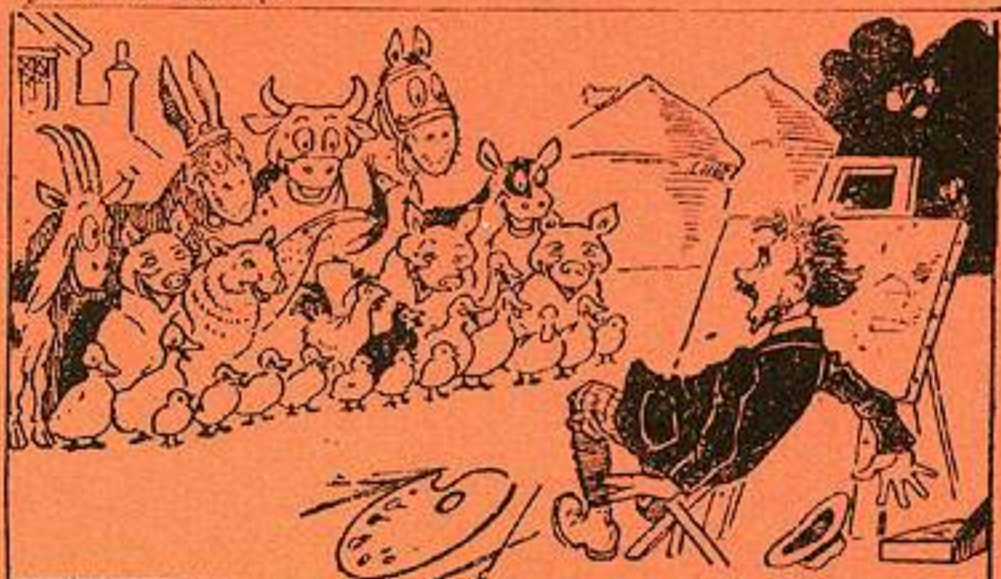
3. And—well, there you are! Best place in the gallery without any particular trouble. This idea is free to theatrical managers, absolutely!



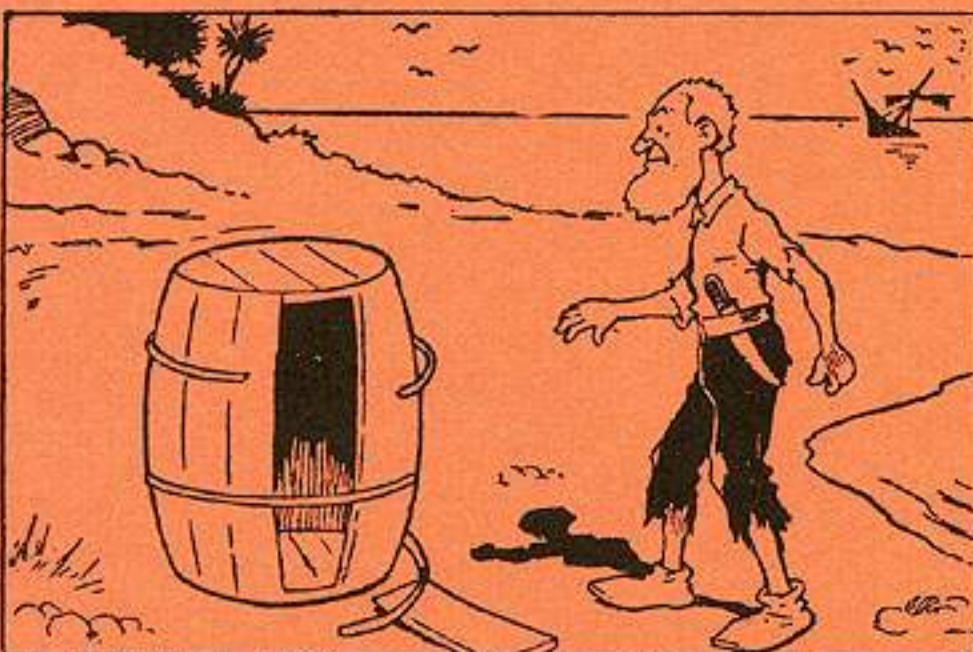
1. The artist was making a study of some haystacks, and the conceited peacock thought he was painting his portrait. "Tut, tut!" it gurgled. "Won't the others be jealous?"



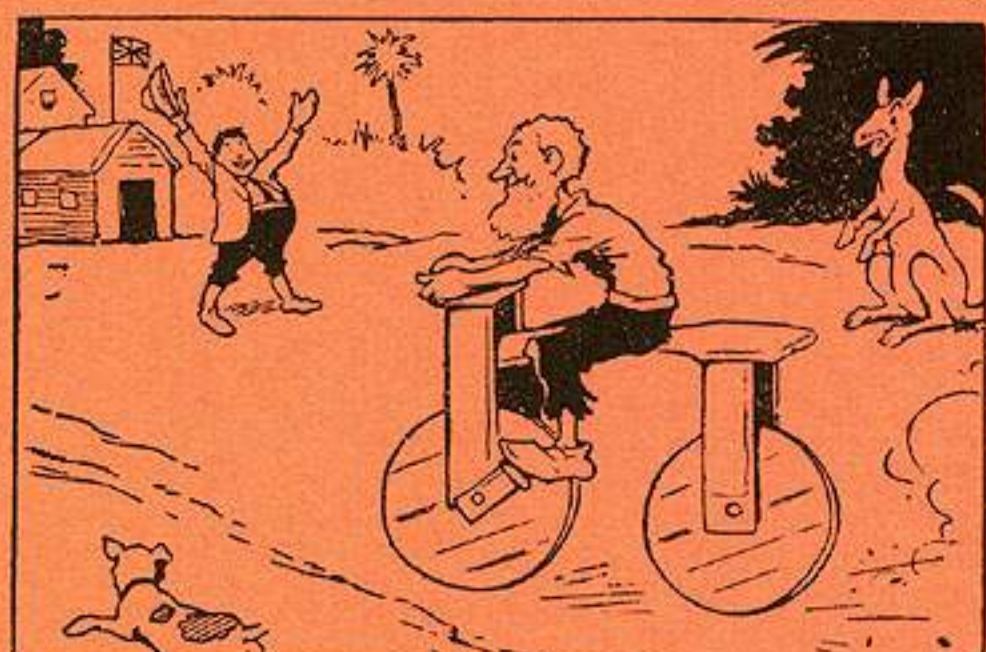
2. Well, when the artist turned his back for a moment to reach some more paint, all the other inhabitants of the farmyard turned up.



3. "Why shouldn't we have our portraits painted too," they thought, so they posed themselves as above. And the artist did get a surprise, that's a fact.



1. "Well, well!" remarked the shipwrecked mariner. "If it wasn't for this here barrel I should be in a nice hole, that I should! But with me trusty carving-knife and a little brain exercise—"

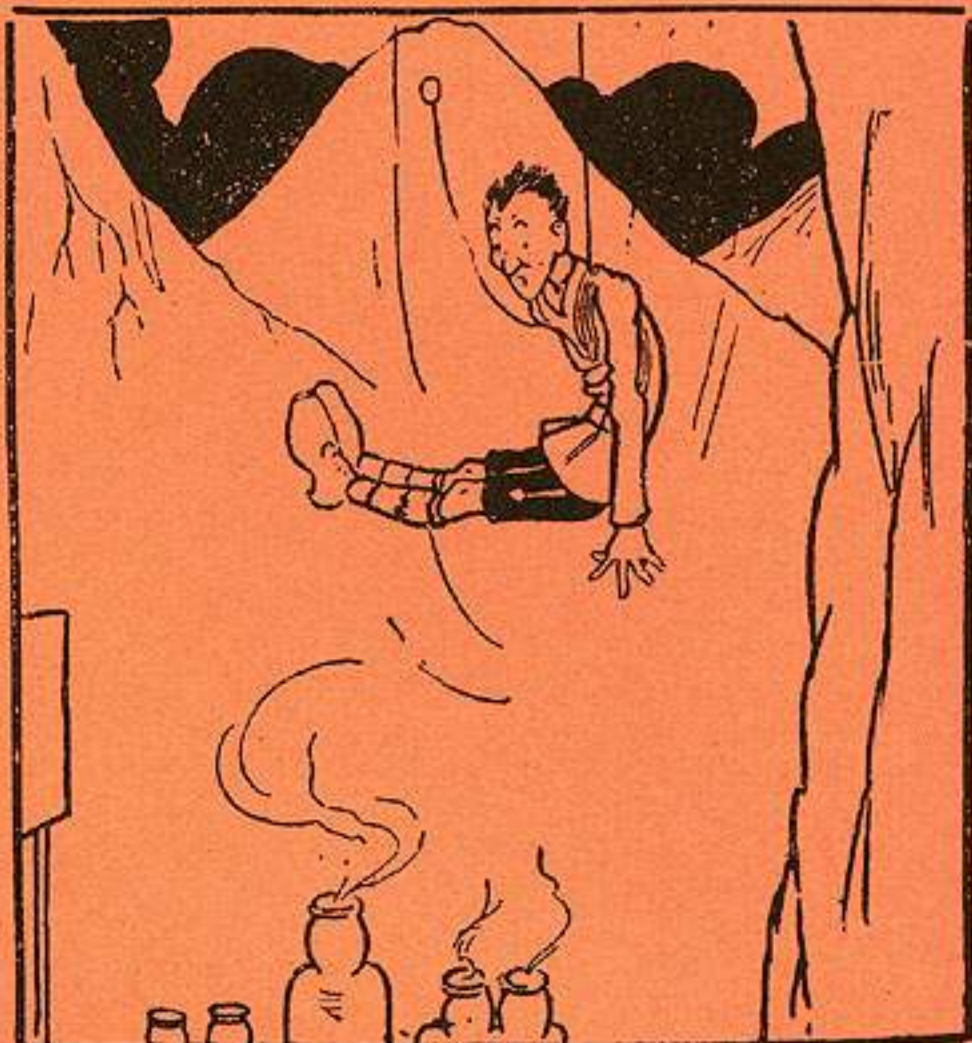


2. "I can fix meself up with a fine bicycle—like so!" And the brainy old merchant scorched back to civilisation in fine style.

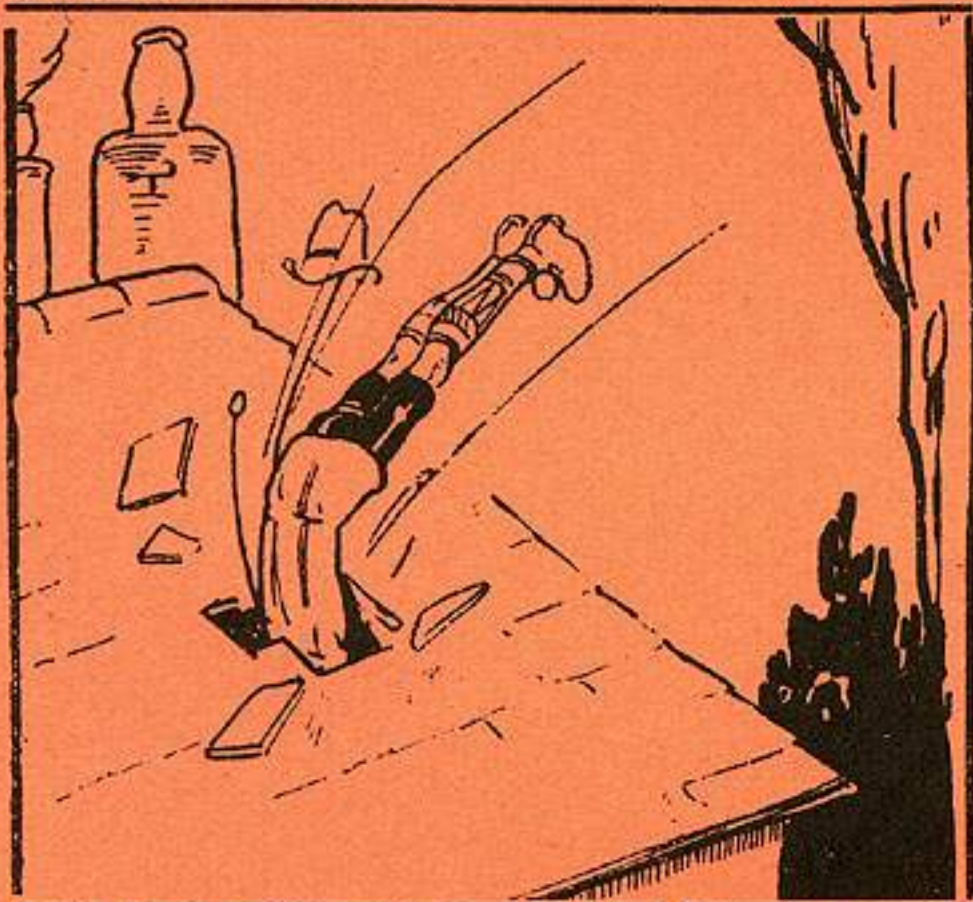
(More Comic Pictures on the next page.)



1. "By Jove! I can smell dinner. If I'm not quick I shall be late," cried the tourist.



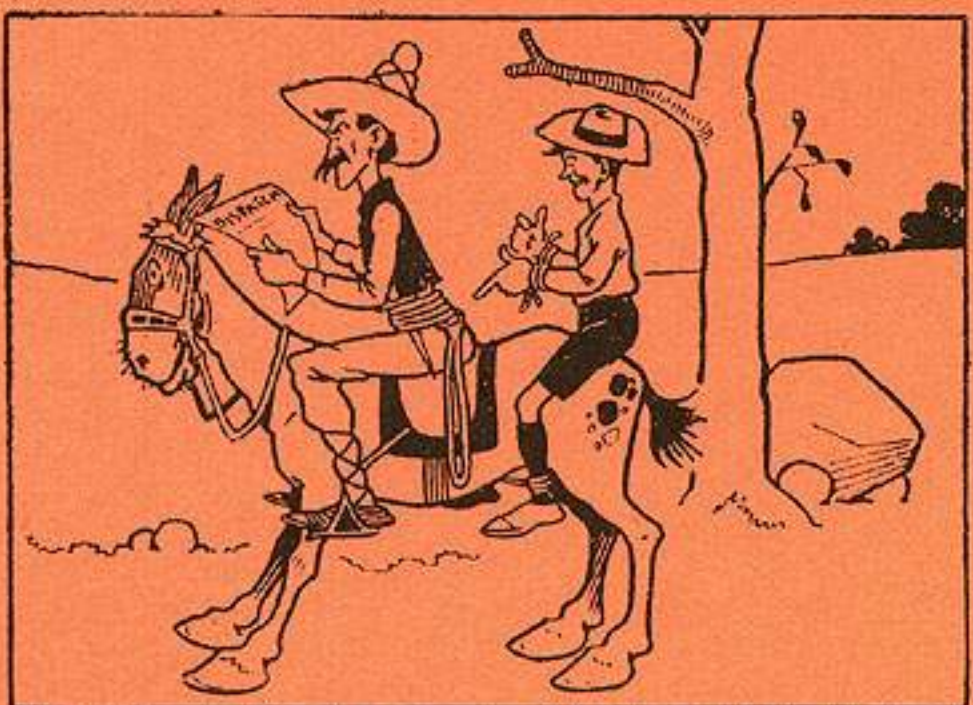
2. But just then he had a slight side-slip, and was very quick indeed.



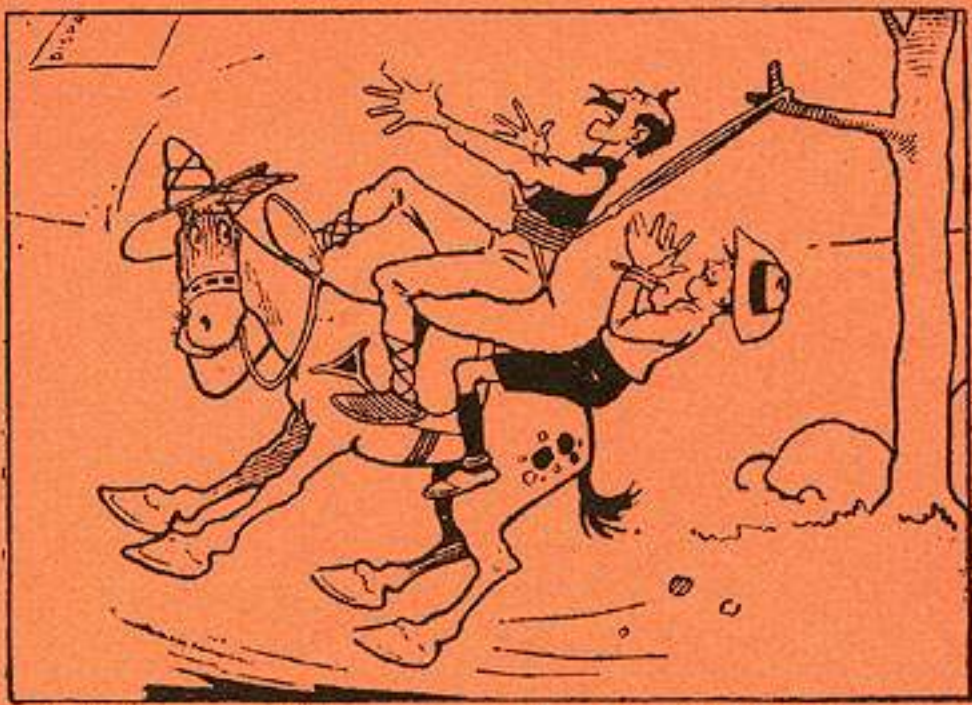
3. In fact, he broke all records, to say nothing of the roof and a collar-stud.



4. And was a little before time, if anything. Anyhow, people were awfully surprised to see him drop in, doncherknow.



1. Sidney the Scout was captured by the Bold Bad Brigand all right, but was he downhearted? No. He just slipped the end of the B. B. B.'s lasso over the bough of the tree—thusly—



2. And when the gee-gee moved on, the Bold Bad one got left badly. And it was young Sidney's turn to smile!