"THINK OF A NUMBER!" *SEE PAGE 2.*

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A FALSE HERO!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Steady, you fellows!" grunted Billy Bunter. "Ow! Mind my legs!" But the Removites paid no heed to the fat junior. They continued their procession to a chorus of cheers and cries of "See, the conquering hero comes!"
(See Chapter 5.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bedlam in Study No. 1.

HARRY WHARTON, Frank Nugent, and Bob Cherry were sitting in Study No. 1 in the Remove Form passage at Greyfriars, writing impositions at express speed. Save for the scratch of their pens and the occasional mutter of a Latin or a French word by a harassed translator, silence reigned in the famous study.

Suddenly Harry Wharton threw down his pen with a whoop of satisfaction.

"Hurrah! I've done my blessed impot! Three cheers!"

Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry gave a simultaneous yell.

"Chuck it, you ass! We haven't!"

"But I have, my sons!" grinned the captain of the Remove Form. "And I'm jolly glad——"

The opening of the study door interrupted Harry Wharton. It was opened by the simple method of planting a sufficiently hard kick against the panels. It flew back with a jerk and a crash, and Johnny Bull, Vernon-Smith, and George Bulstrode came in. Harry Wharton nodded a welcome.

Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry looked up with a glare. The three visitors came into the study, and Johnny Bull closed the door in the same gentle way. Harry Wharton looked at them curiously. Johnny Bull, a typical British schoolboy, Vernon-Smith and George Bulstrode, both one-time "bounders," but now two of the best, looked a little excited. Though the two latter sometimes failed to see eye to eye with the leadership of Harry Wharton, they liked him, and held him in high esteem.

"We've come to talk——" began Johnny Bull.

"You haven't!" said Bob Cherry aggressively. "Do you think I can jolly well construe Virgil while you are talking, Johnny, you ass?"

"Do you think I can write out Voltaire by the yard while you are talking, Bull?" asked Frank Nugent. "Don't, old fellow!"

"It's an important matter."

"Rats! Come again another time! Scoot!"

"Can't be did!" said Johnny Bull. "It's an important matter, and it's got to be settled. The fact is, I've thought of an idea——"

"That's tommy-rot, Bull!" said Bulstrode. "You know jolly well the idea was mine——"

"Rats!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith warmly. "It was mine! Didn't I say to you both in the Common-room first of all——"

"Look here, Smithy, you're not going to claim——"

"I'm going to have the——"

"I tell you plainly——"

Bob Cherry clutched his French dictionary, and turned a desperate eye upon the three disputants. Harry Wharton was laughing like a hyena.

"Are you going to shut up?" bawled Bob. "Go and settle the question in the blessed passage. Or if you like you can go and use my study, No. 13. What ever you do, get out!"

"Travel!" growled Frank Nugent. "How on earth can I——"

"I tell you it's an important matter!" exclaimed Bull. "As Harry Wharton is captain of the Form I appeal to him. Do leave off laughing, Wharton, and attend to me. Am I or am I not to explain my idea——"

"My idea!" interjected Vernon-Smith.

"My idea!" hooted George Bulstrode.

"Oh, my fat aunt!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I'm not going to stand this! Will you fellows clear out or shut up? Dans les premieres annees du siecle on nous sommes, le vulgaire ne connaissait dans le nord de heros que——" he went on aloud, as he wrote.

"Dry up!" howled Frank Nugent. "Namque, sub ingenti lustrat dum singula templo, Regimam opperiens, dum quæ——"

"Charles XII. Sa valeur personnelle, qui tenait blaucoup plus d'un soldat que d'un roi——" shouted Bob Cherry, his pen travelling away.

"Fortuna sit urbi artificumque manus inter se operumque——" hissed Frank Nugent.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton, the tears of laughter running down his cheeks. "Shut up, some of you, or the fellows will think that we've got Bedlam here on a visit."

"Done!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, flinging down his pen. "That's the last of the fifty. I don't mind if you three idiots chatter now!"

"But I do!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "I'm not done. I——"

"Now, don't you be unreasonable, Franky," said Bob Cherry. "You ought to have finished by this time. If Johnny has got anything to say, let us hear it."

"I tell you——"

"I appeal to the majority!" said Bob Cherry, with a broad grin. "Harry, old bean, isn't Franky to shove that piffle away for a bit?"

"Yes, certainly!" said Harry Wharton. "You're in a minority, Frank. Shove it away!"

Frank Nugent growled. But he realised there wasn't much chance of

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getting on with his work under the present circumstances, and he put it away.

"That's right!" said Bull. "Virgil is all very well in his way, but it's no good sticking to that sort of thing when there's something serious on the carpet. This idea I've got is a really ripping, A1, first-class——"

"It just occurred to me," Vernon-Smith explained. "A crowd of us in the Common-room just now were talking about the Highcliffe School fellows, and it——"

"We were talking about the Highcliffe School fellows," said Bulstrode, "and it occurred to me that it would be a good idea——"

"Shut up, both of you!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, in an exasperated tone of voice. "How can you come into another fellow's study and show off your egotism in this way, I can't imagine! I shall never get my idea explained at this rate."

"You mean my idea——"

"I never saw such cheek!" Bulstrode observed, addressing himself indignantly to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. "Of course it was my idea from start to finish."

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull, with great warmth. "Didn't I say to Smithy——"

"Didn't I say that if the Highcliffe fellows——"

"But when you were saying——"

"I've heard something like this before," Bob Cherry remarked, in a thoughtful sort of way. "It was in a phonograph shop, and two or three phonographs were going at once. Keep it up, Johnny! You're awfully funny!"

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "I'll cut off and fetch Inky and Mauly and Linley and Bunter to see them doing it!"

"Here, stay where you are!" said Johnny Bull, and the other two Removites realised that they were cutting a ridiculous figure in the eyes of their Form fellows. "I want to explain my—our idea," he amended.

"That's it!" said Vernon-Smith. "It really belongs to all of us. It sort of came to us all at once when we were talking over the matter."

"Never mind whose the idea is," suggested Harry Wharton. "You can fight over that behind the chapel, if you like. Let's hear the idea!"

"Well, you see——" began Johnny Bull.

"It's like this——" said Bulstrode.

"I'll explain!" said Vernon-Smith.

Johnny Bull gave the two Removites a withering glance.

"Will you two silly asses shut up?" he exclaimed. "If I'm jolly well interrupted again there will be a blessed row, I can tell you!"

"There has been a pretty good row already," Bob Cherry remarked. "Don't mind us, you know. We like to see you in your funny act. It's as good as a play, and——"

"Oh, ring off!" said Johnny Bull. "Now, this is my——"

"Our!" corrected the other two Removites, with one voice.

"Our idea," went on Johnny Bull. "Now, you know we've always been up against the Highcliffe fellows, don't you?"

The chums of Study No. 1 assented with a nod.

"Well, we've always given these bounders all they wanted—properly kept them in their place, in fact."

"Under my able leadership," said Harry Wharton, with a grin.

"Ahem!" coughed the Removites.

"Well, that hasn't got anything to do with it," continued Johnny Bull. "What ever sort of a licking the Highcliffe fellows got, they've evidently recovered, and they're bucking up again. On Saturday week they're going to try their luck against us in the football-field, and when we three were coming back from Courtfield this afternoon we met a gang of them, and they talked very big, didn't they, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode nodded his head.

"What did they say?" said Harry Wharton.

"Well, they were too full of brag, for one thing. They seem to think they're going to give us a licking at footer, and then they seemed to hint of a rag against us, and last week, you know, they ragged Coker. They captured him outside the Courtfield Cinema, and marched him up and down the main street with a donkey's collar round his neck, and a bunch of carrots tied on his hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all very well to laugh, you know, but it's one in the eye for Greyfriars, and we ought to put the rotters in their place, that's what I say."

"Right enough," said Vernon-Smith and Bulstrode. "We ought."

"Then you want me to arrange something?" said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "It's a good idea. I've been thinking of it myself lately. I've noticed that the Highcliffe fellows seem to be getting up on their hind-legs, and putting-on airs again. It's certainly no good leaving it to that ass Coker in the Fifth."

"Rather not," assented the others.

"And if you fellows will back me up properly, I'll think of a wheeze, and lead you to the attack. I don't mind leading you a bit."

"Perhaps you don't," said Johnny Bull. "But we do if the wheeze isn't a good one."

"Oh, I see! You've thought of a new leader, have you? Now, that subject has been thrashed out ages ago, and——"

"That's not the question at all," said Bulstrode. "You—you see, we've all three thought of good wheezes where we might score against those bounders at Highcliffe."

"Might score, did you say?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Well, you know, the best laid schemes don't always work out properly. But my idea is that——"

"Oh, dry up, Bulstrode, old man!" said Johnny Bull. "You know what we think of your wheeze. Now, my idea is——"

"Listen to my idea first!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I think——"

"I suggest——"

"My idea is——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake dry up!" laughed Harry Wharton. "What on earth is the use of going through all that again? I don't know whether you are dissatisfied with my leadership; but I can assure you you won't do any good against Highcliffe by a lot of gas!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"We—we're not dissatisfied with you, Wharton!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "That's not the trouble at all."

"When you howling duffers pounce in and chatter like monkeys, it looks very much like it, anyway!" said Bob Cherry. "You did your best to spoil my impot."

"Oh, dry up about that rotten impot now!"

"Well, it's like this," continued Vernon-Smith. "We've each got an idea by which we think we can score one up against those bounders at Highcliffe."

"Right!" said Harry Wharton crisply. "Now push on with your suggestion."

Vernon-Smith hesitated and shuffled about on his feet nervously.

"Well?"

"Oh, hang it then! I may as well tell you the wheeze we've thought of," said Vernon-Smith. "As we've been to the trouble of thinking our wheezes out, we think it would be a good idea if we don't have any special leader for the three wheezes, but——"

"Take it in turns," said Johnny Bull.

"The old Athenian method," said George Bulstrode. "Why should one chap be leader more than any other? It's all very well to say that Harry Wharton leads us to victory in nearly everything we take up; but I must say he's not troubling very much about the Highcliffe cads."

"We're playing them at footer," said Harry Wharton. "We've got a match against them this month, in fact."

"And we shall slaughter them," added Frank Nugent.

"Twenty goals to nil!" laughed Bob Cherry.

"I know all about that; but I think we ought to put them in their place before that. And when you come to think of it, beating them at footer isn't anything extraordinary."

"Not at all!" said Bull. "Far from that!"

"Very ordinary!" said Bulstrode, shaking his head. "Extraordinarily ordinary! I mean——"

"Oh, rats!" said Harry Wharton. "I think Johnny's idea—or Smithy's idea—or Bulstrode's idea—which ever it is, simply rot! If there is to be a leader of the Remove he is voted for from time to time, and as I've been voted captain I'm jolly well going to stand by the Form and see that it isn't let down by some howling duffer who happens to come along and thinks he's—he's going to lead the Remove into the jaws of death!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry. "That's the stuff to give 'em, Harry!"

"What awful rot!" cried Johnny Bull. "Who on earth talked about leading the blessed Form into the jaws of death?"

"That's Harry's poetic license," explained Bob. "You must give a captain a little rope now and again, you know."

Vernon-Smith had a thoughtful frown on his face.

"Well, when you come to think of it, Bull, old man," he began, "perhaps Wharton's right!"

"What?"

"I've been thinking it over, and perhaps Wharton is right. We've voted for him and shoved him into the captaincy, so if we've got a wheeze we ought to jaw it over with him."

"Well, you howling ass!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Eh?"

"Weren't you the very one who suggested coming along to Study No. 1?"

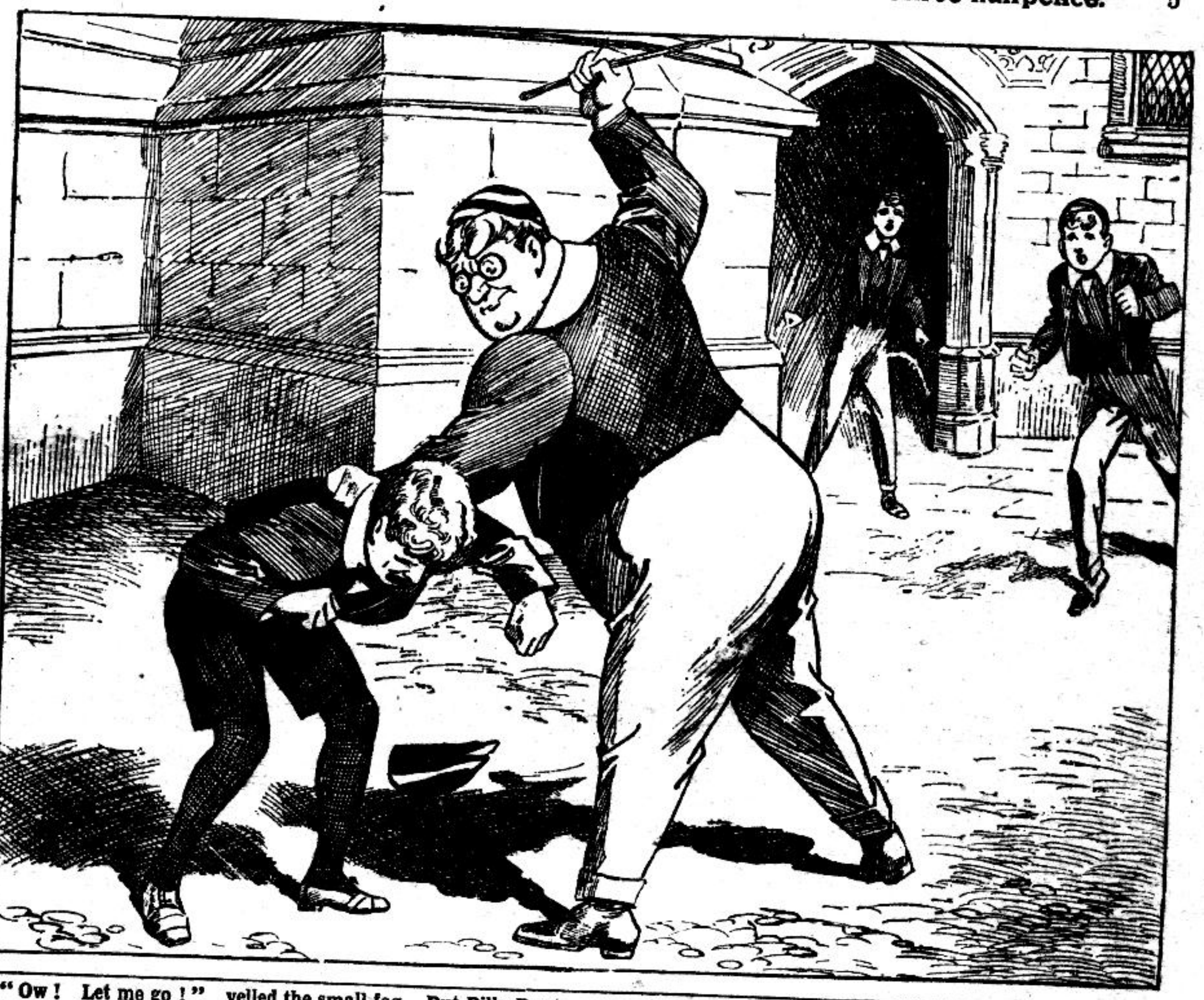
"Yes."

"And now you want to climb down? Oh, you silly chump! Oh, you stupid jabberwock! Oh crumbs! Have you ever heard of such a chump?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Isn't he nice and personal?" laughed Bob Cherry.

"Well, never mind about personalities," said Harry Wharton. "Now you chaps are here we may as well talk about the footer team. Of course, if you really want to work a new scheme with the captaincy of the Remove, I don't mind in the least, really. If you like to try the idea of swopping leaders, we'll try it, and I'll make as good a follower as I make a leader, at all events."

"Well said!" exclaimed Johnny Bull



"Ow! Let me go!" yelled the small fag. But Billy Bunter was not feeling mercifully inclined. He raised the stick and brought it down across the fag's back with a resounding crack. Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton dashed across to the rescue.
(*See Chapter 4.*)

heartily. "That's just what we should have expected you to say, Harry. It's agreed upon, then?"

"Certainly not!" snapped Bob Cherry. "Who ever heard such tommy-rot! Fancy giving up Wharton as a captain for a rotten, one-eyed, silly ass of a leader like Johnny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" howled Bull. "I'd make a jolly good leader, wouldn't I, Bulstrode, old man?"

"Well, I shouldn't like to say that——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, if you chumps aren't going to back me up," growled Johnny Bull, "there's—there's nothing more to be said!"

"Not a word!" laughed Bob Cherry. "I wish you had made up your mind like that at first, instead of spoiling my blessed impot!"

"Well, take a pew, Johnny," said Harry Wharton. "You seem to be in a majority and minority at the same time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Johnny Bull hesitated for a moment, and glared at Vernon-Smith and Bulstrode major, who were both grinning at him across the study table, and then, with a snort, the late-lamented wheeze merchant sat down.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Something Like a Wheeze!

IT was a strange coincidence that at the very same time that Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing the Highcliffe fellows, the Highcliffe fellows had met in solemn conclave, and had discussed their rivals of Greyfriars.

The Highcliffe rivalry was of a different order, however. Unlike those 'Friars who came under Harry Wharton's captaincy, the Highcliffe fellows were led, at any rate for the moment, by the nuttiest of nuts—to wit, Cecil Ponsonby. There were some splendid fellows at Highcliffe; but there were also some very bad ones.

A meeting had been called by Ponsonby for the purpose of forming a plan of campaign against Greyfriars School. The meeting had not been a success. In fact, it had been quite a failure. It had left no results save those traceable on the features of the juniors who had taken part in the meeting. But Ponsonby & Co. were still thinking about it. Unless the 'Friars were "put in their place," it was quite clear—to the 'Cliffites, at least—that everything was going to "pot."

True, the wasters were apparently unconscious that anything was amiss in their school, and the seniors of Highcliffe went on their way as if nothing out of the common ever transpired.

But, to the nuts of Highcliffe, it was very clear that the Greyfriars fellows must be downed in some way or the other, or else Highcliffe, as Ponsonby put it, might as well go out of business.

They had certainly scored when they met Coker, of the Greyfriars Fifth, and had made him parade Courtfield with a bunch of carrots round his hat. But that was not enough. In a few weeks there would be the football-match, and the nuts of Highcliffe felt defeat in their very bones, as far as that match was concerned.

Before the match they must "down" the 'Friars somehow or other.

They gave the idea a great deal of thought during the morning lessons—somewhat to the detriment of the lessons—and they were thinking of it at dinner-time; and after dinner they turned it over in their minds very seriously.

It was a fine September afternoon, and the ground was in an excellent state for football; but the Highcliffe Fourth-Formers did not give even a thought to the great game. The pressing necessity for the moment was downing the 'Friars, and the great question was, how was it to be done?

The Coker-carrot episode was of recent occurrence; but it was not enough. One or two attempts on members of the Remove Form at Greyfriars had been

tried during the last few weeks, but the 'Friars, with their peculiar obstinacy, had refused to be downed, and in one or two cases had even had the cheek to get the best of it. All the nuts in the Fourth Form at Highcliffe were agreed that it would not do.

But nobody seemed to have a plan. A raid on Greyfriars School in great force was the idea of some of the nuts; but it was very doubtful if it would be a success, and they did not want to add to the triumphs of the 'Friars by giving them another victory. Harry Wharton & Co. were certain to be on the look-out, and it was as easy to catch a weasel asleep as to take Harry Wharton by surprise.

The Highcliffe fellows were standing outside the school-building in an earnest group, discussing pros and cons, when a station cab rolled up, and a fat boy with a very fat face adorned with a pair of large spectacles stepped out.

"Oh, my hat! What on earth is it?" gasped Derwent.

"It's alive, anyway," said Courtenay, as the new arrival stood blinking towards the group of interested juniors. "Look out! It's going to talk!"

Courtenay's remarks were quite audible to the fat form standing by the cab door, and a crimson hue spread gradually over his fat cheeks as he became conscious of the interest he was enjoying.

"Hexcuse me, gents," he said, touching his straw-hat, "but I'm Kippers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a loud roar of laughter from the group of Fourth-Formers, and Kippers looked round anxiously at the old cab-driver, who was sitting on the box-seat, with an expansive grin on his red face.

"Look 'ere, cabby," said the fat boy, "'ave you brought me to a bloomin' asylum in mistake, or is this 'Ighcliffe School for young gents?"

"Yus, of course, it's 'Ighcliffe!" growled the cabby. "These young gents will 'ave their fun, and hif I was you I should take it gamely. Hif you don't, they'll pretty soon make you, or I don't know what's 'appened!"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Kippers, with a grin. "Well, I ain't goin' to quarrel with that advice, you bet. I can do my whack with a bit of fun any time yer like!"

"I say, boy!" shouted Vavasour, the nuttiest nut in the Fourth Form at Highcliffe.

"Wot do'yer want, mister?"

"I was just about to ask you that question," replied Vavasour. "You've come to the wrong place, you know. We don't sell fish here!"

There was a giggle from the Highcliffe juniors.

"Fish?" said the fat boy, looking puzzled. "Wot's the game, mister?"

"I say we don't sell fish here," replied Adolphus Vavasour. "A kipper's a fish, isn't it, my lad? You said you're a kipper, so you've come to the wrong shop. You evidently want Tutts, the fishmonger in Courtfield."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Highcliffe juniors.

"Look 'ere," shouted Kippers, dragging a big black box out of the cab, "you're talking through your 'at, mister! I'm Kippers, and I ought to know my hown name. Hi'm going to work 'ere!"

"Work?"

"Yus, work, mister!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Courtenay. "Fancy a bounder like that coming into the school! He must be the son of somebody who made a fortune out of the war!"

"You're wrong there, mister," said Kippers, going quite pale. "My poor old dad was killed in Flanders, in 1914!"

"Oh!" said Courtenay. "I'm—I'm beastly sorry, kid! I didn't mean that!"

"All right, mister; don't you worry—I sha'n't!"

"Well spoken, kid!" said De Courcy. "We'll put you on the right track. Lug that box away from the growler!"

"Wot about my fare?" growled the driver. "I don't want to stop 'ere all day, yer know! It's three bob from the station!"

Vavasour plunged his hand into his trousers-pocket, and brought out a handful of money. He extracted four shillings, and handed it up quickly to the impatient driver.

"Here you are!" he said. "I'll pay the kid's fare. Three bob for the drive, and a bob for yourself."

"Thank yer, sir!" growled the driver. He took the money in his horny hands, and dropped the coins into his capacious waistcoat pocket. The old horse ambled forward as De Courcy slammed the door to, and the old cab rattled down the drive.

"Now then, Kippers," said Derwent, "what Form are you going into? And why are you so fat? And what school have you been to? And why didn't they teach you King's English, if they taught you any at all? And have you got any tommy in that box, and if not, why not?"

There was a snigger from the Highcliffe juniors as Phil Derwent rattled off his questions at express speed.

"Oh lor! What did you say, mister?" gasped Kippers, blinking through his big spectacles.

"What Form are you going into?" drawled Vavasour. "Surely the Head wrote to your—your guardian, or your mater, and said what Form he was going to put you in."

"Hi ain't got no mater. What is a mater?"

"Mother, you ass!"

"Well, I thought that wos wot you meant, blessed hif I didn't. I ain't got no mother."

The Highcliffe juniors looked stumped for the next question.

"Then who on earth is paying your expenses here?" said Ponsonby. "You can't come to a school like this for nothing, you know."

"Hi know that, mister, and I jolly well wouldn't come 'ere for nothing, not hif I knows it. I want my quid a week. I ain't going to work for nothing!"

"I should think you want a good bit of pocket-money to keep up your—your avoirdupois—what?" drawled Vavasour.

"Havoirdupois?" gasped Kippers. "Wot's that?"

"Fat, you ignorant bounder!" laughed Derwent. "Oh, my hat, you don't seem to know a blessed thing. What can you do?"

"Why, I can clean fifty pair of boots quicker than wot you can. I bet a stiver!"

There was a gasp of surprise from the Highcliffe nuts.

"Clean boots?" exclaimed Derwent. "Do you think I'd clean fifty pairs of boots for a penny bet?"

"Well, I would, and that's my job 'ere."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" cried Derwent. "That's it, is it? Blessed if we're not introducing ourselves to the new 'boots'!"

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kippers sat down on the black box, and stared indignantly through his big spectacles.

"Funny, ain't it?" he growled. "Blooming funny! I suppose hit strikes you as queer for a bloke to 'ave to work for 'is living. I bet I'd sooner do that than learn a lot of rot out o' books!"

"Oh, just hark at the fat rotter!" howled Ponsonby. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha! Fancy thinking he was a new fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I ain't goin' to listen to this bloomin' cackling no longer!" snorted Kippers, rising from his seat. "Where's the servants' 'all, young gent?"

Ponsonby gave a sudden start as he stared at the fat little boot-boy. He stared and stared, and then suddenly a broad grin spread over his face.

"By Jove!"

Ponsonby gave a whistle, and the Highcliffe juniors turned and gazed at him.

"What is it, Pon, dear boy?" said Vavasour.

"Why, Kippers! I've got a wheeze to down the bounders at Greyfriars!"

"Oh!"

"Kippers will do it! He can be made to look a double of the fat bounder! Oh, my giddy aunt! It'll work like greased lightning!"

"What's that, dear boy?"

"Kippers! Bunter!" said Ponsonby.

"What on earth is the idiot talking about?"

"Why, listen to this!" explained Ponsonby. "Why not send Kippers to Greyfriars!"

"Send Kippers?"

"Yes; send him as that fat bounder Bunter. He could sneak in somehow and rag those bounders' studies, and goodness knows what!"

"My hat!"

"He's just about Bunter's size. Nobody would notice the difference, even if there is one. His face would look something like if he wore a Greyfriars cap."

"Rather!"

"What do you think?"

"It's a tip-top, A1, first-class wheeze," said Derwent enthusiastically. "Of course, he's going to be found out in two twos if he opens his mouth. Bunter's a terrible creature, but the fat animal does speak King's English."

"M'yes!"

"Look 'ere, what's yer gime?" said Kippers. "I'm getting fed hup with this. Who do hi sees—the 'ead porter, or the cook, or the 'eadmaster, or who?"

"You don't see anyone for an hour or two, Kippers, if you want to earn an extra quid this week," said Ponsonby. "We want you to do a little job away."

"Oh!"

"There's a school near here called Greyfriars. There—you can see the grey tower from here." And Ponsonby pointed his hand in the direction of the old tower which could be seen over the green tree-tops. "Well, we're going to dress you up into some decent clothes, and you're going to pay a visit."

"Oh lor!"

"It doesn't matter who you visit, so long as you can get into the school. There's a fat merchant there who's your double. His name is Bunter—Billy Bunter. You look into a few doors, and the first room you find empty turn the blessed place upside down!"

"Pour ink over the table."

"And smash the pictures!"

"And pull the curtains down from the poles!"

"And push the bookcase over!"

There was a regular chorus of sug-

"But, my dear boy," said Dr. Locke. "Surely it must strike you as being remarkable to have come through such an affair without a scar!" "Oh-h-h! I've—I've got a scar, sir," stuttered the Owl of the Remove. "It's—it's on my back, sir."
(See Chapter 6.)

gestions from the grinning Highcliffe juniors, and Kippers blinked through his big spectacles in amazement as he listened to his remarkable orders.

"'Ere, wot d'you take me for?" he exclaimed angrily. "I ain't a blessed Bolshie!"

"That's all right, Kippers," said Ponsonby. "You come along with me up to my study. Come on, Vavasour, and Courtenay and De Courcy. I shall want somebody to give me a hand when it comes to rigging the bounder out. We shall have to borrow a pair of trousers from the Sixth dorm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ponsonby led the bewildered Kippers up the stone steps, and a few of the juniors followed them in, as soon as they had heaved the black box into the hall.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Temporary Gentleman!

"RIPPING!"

"Great!"

"Marvellous!"

Such were the comments of the Highcliffe juniors as the process of "making-up" Kippers was completed, and the new boots stood up for inspection.

The transformation was really wonderful.

Ponsonby had certainly shown considerable skill in his task. A pair of trousers, large size, had been borrowed (?) from the Sixth-Formers' room, which happened to be empty. Derwent produced a Greyfriars cap from the cupboard. The cap was an old relic of a bygone scrap between Friars and Cliffites. An Eton jacket and waistcoat to match was produced from the Fourth Form Dramatic Society store-basket, and the result was that Kippers was no longer Kippers. Billy Bunter of Greyfriars stood blinking at the grinning Fourth-Formers.

The new "boots" had had the plan of campaign drummed into him the whole time. First Ponsonby instructed him, then Vavasour drawled out words of advice, then Derwent and De Courcy rehearsed the scheme to him. All he had to do was to enter Greyfriars with perfect boldness, and, if questioned, to assume the name of Bunter, and to speak as little as possible.

"I don't see how the wheeze can be found out, unless you have the misfortune to run right into Bunter—the real Bunter!"

"Oh lor!" muttered Kippers, placing finger and thumb between his collar and neck, and making an effort to enlarge the collar so that he could breathe more freely.

"Don't go and bust your collar, you young ass!" said Ponsonby. "You look the part down to the ground. It's as safe as houses!"

"Rather!" said Vavasour. "If I came into the study now, I shouldn't know you from Bunter."

"And I—— Hallo, Langley!"

The head prefect of Highcliffe opened the door of the study.

"I want you, Ponsonby—— Hallo!" He broke off as he saw the fat junior. "If you're entertaining a Greyfriars fellow, never mind. I suppose it's about the season's footer fixtures?"

"Ha, ha! Er—I mean, yes, of course! It's the footer."

"Well, I'll see you later," said Langley.

And he withdrew his head, and slammed the door to with a crash.

"My hat! That proves it, if you like! Langley is as sharp as a ferret!"

"Who's Langley?" said Kippers.

"He's head prefect. Come along, now! You had better get off, and see that you don't make a mess of the job. Come on!"

Ponsonby led the way, and the rest of the Fourth-Formers escorted Kippers down to the gates. There were quite a lot of the Highcliffe fellows standing about, and a good many glances were cast at the disguised "boots"; but nobody recognised him. Ponsonby & Co. walked a few yards down the lane, and pointed out the road to the blinking Kippers, and gave him final instructions, and then left him to his fate.

Kippers turned round, and blinked through his big spectacles at the Highcliffe fellows as they turned in at the school gates.

"They're a blessed fine bunch, I don't think!" muttered Kippers aloud. "Fancy dressin' me up in this 'ere clobber! Oh lor', I wish I 'adn't got to wear this collar!"

The fat youth faced about, and strolled along in the direction of Greyfriars. In appearance, now that he was dressed up for the occasion, he certainly did resemble William George Bunter to a marked degree; but in his stride he certainly did not. Bunter—the genuine Bunter—was quite the worst walker within miles of Greyfriars. He had a unique sort of roll. In fact, Bob Cherry had once likened Bunter's walk to a badly-constructed ship in a choppy sea. The same thing could not be said of Kippers' walk. Kippers was fat. He was as fat as Bunter, but it was not flabby adipose, but firm fat. The difference between the two was that Kippers had always worked for his living, and Bunter had only overeaten for his existence.

Kippers was a true son of the slum—honest as the day and quite fearless, always a youth anxious to please, and satisfied when he felt he had satisfied someone else.

He had certainly been press-ganged into this latest venture, but now that he had gone so far he felt he must see it through. He plunged his hands in his pockets, and strode along, whistling merrily.

He had gone about a quarter of a mile, and was in the leafy lane leading direct to Greyfriars School, when he gave a sudden start.

"'Allo!" he murmured. "That's a funny noise, blowed if it ain't! That ain't going to do the 'orse's legs much good."

The sound of a horse galloping along the road, apparently out of control, struck Kippers as curious, and the next moment he hopped across the road as a loud cry for help rang out. The cry was in a man's voice—somebody evidently thoroughly apprehensive. And now the sounds of carriage-wheels could be heard above the thudding of the horse's hoofs.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Kippers, blinking harder than ever through his spectacles. "That sounds like trouble! Oh lor'! 'Ere it comes!"

Round a bend in the lane a galloping horse suddenly came into view. The horse was drawing a light trap, and seated right back in the driver's seat was the tense form of a man, his pallid face showing ivory-white against the black hair on his head.

"Help, help!"

Kippers sprang into the middle of the lane. He could see that the reins were flying loosely round the horse's flanks, and the lashing of the leather and the cries of the driver seemed to give the maddened brute more pace.

"'Old tight, sir!" roared Kippers. "I'll 'ave 'im hif 'e kills me!"

"Help, Bunter! Get out of the way, my boy!" shrieked the man in the trap, which was swaying dangerously, and looked as though any moment it would overturn and send the helpless passenger to almost certain death.

"'Old on, you old fool!" shrieked Kippers.

The runaway was almost up to him now. With a sudden bracing of his broad shoulders, Kippers leapt into the road. He turned quickly to the side as he reached it, and the next instant he flung out his arms and clutched hold grimly. His grasp fastened on the reins quite near to the maddened brute's mouth.

With a deep grunt, Kippers went down under the weight of the collision, but still he held on to the reins. The horse's head came down, and the frightened animal gave a maddened squeal. He went down on one knee for the fraction of a moment; then he recovered, and tried to shake off the bruised and bleeding Kippers.

But that grim hold on the rein still held, and, snorting and kicking and shaking its steaming head about, it at last came to a standstill.

Kippers dragged himself up, and stood, panting and blinking, at the horse's head.

"Are you hurt, Bunter?"

There was a ring of anxious solicitude in the voice. Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form-master, rose from his seat, and leapt out into the road.

A cold sweat was across his forehead, and he wiped his handkerchief over his face, with a murmured word of thanksgiving for his wonderful escape. He hastened to the horse's head, and caught his rescuer by the arm.

"Bunter," he gasped—"Bunter, my boy, are you hurt?"

Kippers gave a start as he realised he was being addressed as Bunter. His head was buzzing, and his arms felt as though they had been seared with a red-hot poker. He looked down at his knees, and saw that his trousers were irretrievably ruined. The cloth had entirely disappeared just under the kneecap, and there was an ominous red stain, which told of broken skin and slight loss of blood.

"Hi'm halright, sir! Don't you worry your 'ead about me!"

Mr. Quelch, highly strung as he was, gave a jump.

"Bunter, my boy, the shock! It has affected your power of speech!"

"Oh, go on, sir! I've 'ad worser than that! I'm glad you're hall right! Just before I jumped at the 'orse's 'ead I thought you wos a goner! I sed to myself, 'Hoever that bloke is, he won't be much longer!'"

Mr. Quelch wiped his perspiring forehead again.

"Bunter," he gasped, "this is remarkable! Did you receive a blow on the head? It is very strange that your speech is affected to such a marked degree!"

"I shall be halright when I've squatted down a bit."

"Yes, my dear Bunter; do, pray, sit down!" said Mr. Quelch. "Let me help you, my dear boy! I should regard it as a privilege, as an honour, my brave lad!"

"Wot?"

"I shall see that your bravery is properly recognised by all at Greyfriars," continued the thankful Mr. Quelch. "It is wonderful—simply wonderful! If you had not used initiative and tremendous courage I should not be here! Is it not wonderful, my dear Bunter?"

"Well, I stopped 'im, didn't I, sir?"

"Yes, of course you stopped him, my dear Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch. "I can't help thinking that the concussion has affected you somewhat. Your—your speech, Bunter. Just try to improve. It may be only a momentary result of the shock."

"Yes; that's hall hit his, sir!"

"Oh dear, just hark at the brave boy!"

"Well, that 'orse is quite quiet now, sir," said Kippers, anxious to shake off the effusive Form-master. Kippers fully realised that he had rescued one of the Greyfriars masters, and he was doing his best now to shake off Mr. Quelch before anything arose which might reveal his identity.

"Shall I give you a lift to Courtfield, my dear Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch. "We could get you properly examined by a doctor."

"Oh, no, sir! I don't want to see no blessed quack!"

"But——"

"You push off in that trap. The 'orse is all right."

"Well, I have a most important appointment in Courtfield. It will only take me a few minutes. I may be late now. The accident was due to my haste really. I jumped into the trap, and before I could grasp the reins the horse was off, and the reins went over the driving-board. Only a miracle saved my life, and that was you, my dear Bunter."

"I'll get back hall right, sir. I ain't 'urt."

"Are you sure you can manage, my dear boy?"

"Rather!"

"You must report to the matron when you get back, and as soon as I return,

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which will be very soon, I shall see that your wonderful bravery is recognised in a suitable way."

"You push horf, sir!"

"Ahem! What is that, Bunter?"

"Take the trap. If you're in a 'urry you don't want to waste hall this time gassing."

"Really, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, stroking his chin thoughtfully, "I can't understand this at all. Your speech seems to be very badly affected by the accident."

"That'll be quite O.K. later on."

Mr. Quelch scrambled into the trap whilst Kippers held the horse's head. The Greyfriars Form-master was taking no risks. He clutched the reins hard, and the pony started off at a rare pace. But Mr. Quelch had the brute in hand this time, and as Kippers stood in the middle of the road he gave a sigh of relief as the trap containing Mr. Quelch bowled along out of sight.

"Oh, my 'ead and my knees and my foot and my 'ands!" groaned Kippers. "I ain't going on now. I'm going back to 'Ighcliffe. It ain't good enough to get chawed up in a bad show and then get it in the neck in somebody else's school. Me go to Greyfriars? I don't think!"

And Kippers faced about once more, and dragged his weary body back to Highcliffe School. He had done a deed he would be proud of, and it remained to be seen what sort of reception he would receive from the disgusted members of the Fourth Form.

— —

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Wharton!

"COME in, Bob, old chap!"

Bob Cherry looked into Study No. 1. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, the owners of No. 1, were there, and the captain of the Remove looked up and gave Bob a hearty invitation to join them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you two slacking about for?" cried Bob Cherry. "This isn't the way to keep fit, you know. What about a kick at the footer, Harry, old man?"

"I'm quite game," laughed Wharton. "Come in and wait for a few minutes. I've just sent down young Conrad to fag for me."

"Oh!"

"I find we haven't got anything in the cupboard for tea, and as Conrad of the Second Form looked in to see whether Franky's minor was here I bagged him, and have sent him down to Mrs. Mimbles to lay in some cakes."

"Good egg!"

"We'll just wait a minute. That kid's pretty slippy, and he'll be back in a jiffy."

Bob Cherry threw himself into an armchair, and the next five minutes the Removites spent in discussing the prospects of the footer season. The minutes slipped by quickly, and Harry Wharton gave a cry of surprise when he looked at his watch, and found that Conrad of the Second had been away for nearly fifteen minutes.

"Oh, my hat! Where's the kid got to?"

"Probably blown the cash on himself."

"Oh, no! Young Conrad's all right. I'll just see whether I can spot him from the window."

The captain of the Remove strolled across to the study window, and looked down into the Close.

"Hallo, there he is!" cried Harry Wharton. "Blessed if he isn't in the hands of the worthy Bunter! My hat! There's Bunter trying to twist the kid's arm."

"The fat cad!"

"Let's stroll down. Come on, Franky!"

The three Removites went leisurely down the stone staircase, and as Frank Nugent stopped to read the notice-board Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry halted about ten yards from the door, leading out into the Close.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That's Bunter!"

Billy Bunter's voice could be heard from the Close.

"You young rat! You cheeky little bounder!"

"Hark at him!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton's brow puckered in a frown.

"That sounds as if Bunter is up to his bullying game still. We shall have to take the Owl in hand if he's going to take to those games."

Harry Wharton tiptoed along the passage, and halted by the wide open door. He looked out into the Close, and a surprising scene burst upon his gaze.

Young Conrad was writhing in the grasp of the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter, his fat face inflamed with anger and excitement, was shaking the Second-Former savagely.

"You young bounder!" he roared. "Give me the money!"

"Ow!"

"Hand it over, I say!"

"Yarooh! I—I won't! It's not mine! It belongs to Wharton. Ow! Yah! Help!"

Neither Billy Bunter nor the squealing fag noticed yet the two newcomers in the doorway. Harry Wharton was frowning furiously.

Certainly Bunter was showing up in an unfavourable light.

He had grasped the diminutive fag in a fat grasp, and, having shaken him until his head was spinning, proceeded to turn out his pockets.

Arthur Conrad was resisting feebly.

"Where is it, you young rascal?" said Bunter. "I know you've got some cash on you if you're shopping for that ass Wharton!"

"Ow! Help!"

"Hand it over, I tell you!"

"Yarooh! Help!"

"Come on, or I'll put this stick across you!"

"I—I sha'n't give you any money!"

"Lend! I said lend from the first!" growled Billy Bunter.

"Well, I'm not lending!"

"Very well, then, I shall give you a larruping!"

"Ow! Let me go!" yelled the small fag. But Billy Bunter was not feeling mercifully inclined. He raised the stick and brought it down across the fag's back with a resounding crack.

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry from the doorway. "Just look at the fat cad! Come on, Harry!"

The two Removites dashed across to the rescue of Conrad, who was squealing and crying in Bunter's fat grip.

"Bunter!" thundered Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Bunter!"

"H-hallo, Wharton!"

Bunter released Conrad. The small fag reeled away, gasping for breath, but clutching at the money at the same time.

Bunter stood flashing and panting before Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent strolled on the scene at that moment.

"So this is the game to-day!" cried Harry Wharton. "Bullying a Second Form boy, and trying to rob him of his money!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You fat rotter!" said Wharton.

"I—I——"

"Help!" gasped Conrad. "He's nearly throttled me! He tried to make me hand over half of that money you gave me. Ow!"

"You fat cur, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "That's about the most rotten thing you could have done. If you want to be a beastly bully, surely you can stop at stealing money off these kids?"

Billy Bunter blinked through his big spectacles.

"I—I was only going to borrow a bob!"

Harry Wharton snorted. When the captain of the Remove was angry he had a snort like a horse.

"But how in the blazes can you say you were going to borrow when you were half murdering the poor kid?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I——"

"Answer me, you fat toad!"

"I—I—I——"

"Did he ask you to lend him the money, Conrad?"

"No, he didn't. The fat cad said if I didn't loan him half what I'd got he would give me a jolly good hiding, and he did, too Ow!"

"Did you know that the money belonged to me?" snapped Harry Wharton, turning on the Owl of the Remove. "Answer me that, you fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I wish you wouldn't bully a chap like this! It's got nothing to do with you. It—it was just a little transaction between Conrad and myself. I wish you would go away and not be such a blessed interfering rotter!"

"Oh, my hat! Just hark at the fat bounder!" said Bob Cherry. "Anyone would think we had been doing the highway robbery trick and not Bunter!"

"What shall we do with him, Harry?" said Frank Nugent. "It's a pretty serious offence. Fancy trying to sneak cash off a tiny kid like Conrad!"

"The fat toad!"

Billy Bunter stood blinking at the three Removites through his enormous spectacles. He could see that Harry Wharton meant business this time, and he was racking his fat brain for a scheme as to how he could escape the coming storm!

He gave a nervous cough.

"Ahem! I—I—I say, Wharton, old man, I wish you would let me go. I've just suddenly realised that I've got an appointment!"

"You prevaricator!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I've got to go and see the Head. It's about—about a letter I've had from my pater. Let me pass! I must take it. It's jolly urgent."

"Bosh!"

"There will be an awful row if you detain me. Fancy making such a blessed fuss just because a chap wants to borrow a few measly bobs! I don't want your rotten money! I'm expecting a postal-order to-day. It'll be a jolly big one, too. It's from one of my titled relations."

"Dry up, you fat toad!"

"But——"

"We're going to give you a jolly good bumping for your caddish ways, Bunter."

"Here, you had better be jolly careful! You hadn't better touch me, or I'll—— Here—— Yow! Hands off, you rotters! Ow! Leggo!"

Harry Wharton & Co. dashed forward and caught the Owl of the Remove in a grip of iron.

"Got the rotter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What's it going to be, Harry, old man? Three of the best, or a jolly good slogging with that stick he was hitting young Conrad with?"

"A bumping first!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Are you ready?"

"Ow! Leggo! Help! Rescue!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Help! Rescue!"

"Yank him up, you fellows! Are you ready? Now—up!"

Billy Bunter was jerked up into the air, and, despite his bulk and weight, he hung suspended several feet from the hard ground.

"Now, when I say 'Three,' you chaps," gasped Harry Wharton, "let him down! A jolly good shaking up will make him remember in future not to be such a beastly rotter! Are you ready? One—two——"

"Stop!"

A ringing command rang out. It was Mr. Quelch's voice. Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Bob Cherry looked round in amazement, still holding up Bunter.

"Stop! Wharton! Cherry! Nugent!"

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Leave that brave boy alone this instant! Do you hear me?"

Mr. Quelch's tone was like a file. He came round the corner of the building now, followed by a couple of dozen juniors.

Harry Wharton's face went crimson, and Bunter was allowed to stand up.

"Wharton, how dare you illtreat that brave, that gallant, that heroic boy! I can only conclude that Bunter's modesty has prevented him from relating the story to you. If you were conversant with the facts of the case, I know you would not debase yourself by attacking him in that way."

The little crowd of juniors looked puzzled; but no one looked more puzzled than Billy Bunter himself.

Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form-master, strode forward.

"Bunter," he said, "I can only admire you all the more for evidently keeping the story to yourself; but that cannot remain a secret any longer. Your friends must know the facts, and when they have heard them I know that they will accord you a proper and fitting reception."

Billy Bunter blinked in astonishment at the Remove Form-master.

"I—I—I haven't done anything, sir!" he said. "I—I—I——"

"Nonsense, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Now, then, my boys, I have a story to tell you which affords me a very, very great pleasure. Just pay attention for a few moments."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
A False Hero!

"MY boys, this afternoon, when I was driving a trap into Courtfield, the horse ran away with me. It was a pure accident. I stumbled as I was getting into the trap, and the horse, being a little fresh, started off before I had recovered from my fall."

There was a deep silence as the gathering listened.

"When I clambered up into the driver's seat I found, to my horror, that the reins had fallen down, and the horse, finding that nobody was checking him, broke into a furious gallop as soon as we got on to the road.

"In less time—much less time than it takes to relate, the gallop had become a mad race in the direction of Courtfield. One moment the trap was swinging a corner on the off-wheel, and then another on the on-wheel, and any second I expected the horse to dash itself to certain death."

"My hat!" muttered Harry Wharton.

"I raised my voice in a despairing cry for help," continued Mr. Quelch. "Not that I thought it would do me any good; but my cries were involuntary. And now I come to the most exciting part of my story. Bunter!"

Billy Bunter gave a start.

"Y-yes, sir? It—it wasn't me, sir! I never spoke, did I, Wharton?"

Mr. Quelch gave a kind smile as he looked down at the fat junior's face.

"Really, Bunter, you are alarming yourself quite unnecessarily. I was merely going to ask you whether you minded if I proceed with the story."

"I mind, sir?"

"Yes, my dear boy. There are such strange varieties of heroes in this world. Some hide their light under a bushel, and the particulars of their heroism never see the light of day. Personally, I believe that to be wrong—entirely wrong. A gallant action—an unselfish effort—an outstanding display by a single individual does the rest of the world good when it hears it, and when I have told you boys here of Bunter's supreme effort to-day I trust that you will always remember it, and all endeavour to live up to that fine principle—it is a glorious thing to help those in distress."

"What on earth has the fat bounder been up to?" gasped Bob Cherry. "I can't quite see through this gas yet, can you, Harry?"

Harry Wharton looked decidedly puzzled.

"Well, to continue with my story," said Mr. Quelch. "When everything seemed hopeless, and only a violent death faced me and the horse, a figure sprang out into the road. In a flash the runaway had reached the figure. And the next instant the figure—Bunter—that brave, heroic figure—had gripped the reins in a grasp of steel."

"My hat!"

"Bunter?"

"The Owl?"

"William George B.?"

There was a chorus of incredulity from the crowd of juniors, and even Bunter himself looked surprised.

"The danger was over," continued Mr. Quelch. "It was over for me, and to some extent the horse; but that brave boy was dragged for nearly fifty yards before the horse was brought to a standstill. And then, to my intense relief, the damage and hurt to my gallant rescuer was practically insignificant. In fact, I think you will all agree with me that Bunter looks none the worse."

"Good old Bunter!"

"How do you feel, my dear boy?" said Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter could hardly stand up from the shock of listening to Mr. Quelch's effort.

He, a hero? Bunter stopped a runaway horse? Bunter? William George Bunter? Why, he'd never stopped a runaway in his life, and hoped he never would have to. But how could the mistake have occurred? Surely Mr. Quelch should know the members of his own Form—especially Bunter? Even that struck Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove blinked all around him, but he did not see Mr. Quelch whispering in a very excited way into Harry Wharton's ear.

Harry Wharton hurried in and out amongst the crowd, and then suddenly, with a wild whoop, the excited gathering swooped down upon the bewildered Billy Bunter.

"Up with him!" cried Harry Wharton. "Shove him on to the tallest shoulders, and give him a march round the old school. We don't have a hero every day."

Juniors, fags, and seniors came hurrying up from all directions, and Harry Wharton led a round of cheering as the fat Removite settled himself down more or less.

"Steady, you fellows!" he grunted. "Ow! Mind my legs!" But the juniors paid no heed to the fat junior.

They continued their procession to a chorus of wild cheers and cries of, "Here the conquering hero comes!"

Mr. Quelch stood regarding the scene for some minutes. He could not resist a smile as he watched the carrying-party stagger first one way and then another under the huge weight of the great hero.

"Here, you had better let me get down!" said Bunter, after some minutes. "It ain't very comfortable. Of course, it's—it's awfully decent of you chaps to do all this. I didn't do very much, you know."

"Rot!"

"It's not much, when you come to think of it."

"Not much to stop a runaway, you ass?"

"Well, not for a chap like me," said Bunter. "It comes easy after a time, you know."

"Do you mean to say you make a hobby of it, you dark horse?" gasped Frank Nugent.

"Yes; but don't let on to the other fellows, you know."

"Blessed if I can understand that at all!" muttered Frank Nugent. "I suppose there's no doubt that Bunter did stop the runaway. He is such an awful prevaricator in the ordinary way; but Mr. Quelch wouldn't be taken in by him."

The crowd had swelled considerably now, and the cheering procession marched up and down the quadrangle, and round the Close and back again, during which time Bunter sat in all his glory on the shoulders of the merry carrying-party. A benign smirk spread

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"You'll try to show me up like that, will you?" hooted Billy Bunter. "Then take that—and that!" Fisher T. Fish gave a yelp as he staggered back under the rain of blows from the fat Removite. *(See Chapter 7.)*

over his fat features, and it seemed to have become a picture.

Bunter was evidently enjoying himself, if his smile meant anything. As a matter of fact, Bunter was enjoying himself, so long as he did not worry things out. The whole thing was beyond him. He knew there was a mistake. How on earth Mr. Quelch made such an error he couldn't imagine. It was too remarkable for words; but still Bunter's smile did not come off.

William George Bunter was nothing if not an opportunist, and he intended to make hay whilst the sun shone. He could not quite see this going on indefinitely. Bunter had had so many queer ups and downs in his career at Greyfriars; but he always came up smiling.

The procession came to a halt at last mainly through want of breath, and Bunter was allowed to slide to the ground. Unfortunately for Bunter, Frank Nugent, who was holding one of his legs, forgot to let go when everybody else had released the fat junior. In consequence, Bunter lost his balance, and collapsed on the gravel with a bump which made the ground shake.

Bump!

"Ow!"

He gave a roar of pain as he sat down on a sharp stone, and the crowd gave a hearty cheer of laughter.

"Oh, you clumsy idiot, Nugent!" roared Bunter. "I believe you tried to do that on purpose! Ow! I'm severely injured. I believe it's affected my spine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really! Ow! I'm hurt! You chaps will have to carry me into the tuck-shop. I must say I'm beginning to feel like a snack. It's such a long time ago since I had a snack, I hardly remember what it was."

"Get up, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "You're wanted!"

"Wanted?" grunted Bunter. "Who wants me? It's been nothing to do with me, you know. Old Quelch started it, otherwise we should not have heard anything about it."

"Why, what do you mean?" said Harry Wharton. "Would you have kept mum?"

"Y-yes, I think so. I'm a jolly modest fellow, you know."

"Well, get up now, Bunter; you're wanted."

"Who wants me?"

"The Head's just sent somebody up to say that he wants to see you in his study as soon as possible; but you're not to leave the procession until it's finished."

"Well, has the procession finished?"

"Of course it has. Do you think you're going to find a crowd to carry your fat carcase round by the hour?"

"No, of course I don't; but can't we process into the tuckshop for a bit. Old Locke won't know where we are."

"Of course he will. He wants to see you at once. You'd better go, Bunter. You're on the top wave now. Don't spoil your chances."

"B-but I'm so jolly hungry, you know."

"That's all right, Bunter," laughed Frank Nugent. "You trot along now and see old Locke. You might say a week's holiday out of him—for everybody, I mean."

Harry Wharton gave a cheery laugh.

"What hopes!" he exclaimed. "Go on, Bunter, you needn't worry about your feed. I'm making proper arrangements about a first-class feed, so you can depart on this journey as soon as you like. We'll see that you're properly fed when you've finished with old Locke."

"Well, try and have it ready when I come out."

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"But I'm famished!" said the Owl. Bunter was particularly anxious to work off the "feed" at once. It was not quite good enough to put that off indefinitely, in case the mystery became cleared up.

"We will do our best, Bunter. Cheerio!"

And Billy Bunter rolled across the quad in the direction of Dr. Locke's study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Dr. Locke is Puzzled.

BILLY BUNTER tapped at the headmaster's door, and in response to a pleasant "Come in!" Billy Bunter rolled into the little study.

Dr. Locke, the Head, rose to his feet.

"Ah, it is you, Bunter, is it? Come along in!"

"Y-yes, sir—t-thank you, sir!"

Dr. Locke pulled his chair away from the roll-top desk, and sat down and faced Bunter.

"Now then, Bunter, I must first of all congratulate you most heartily on the magnificent courage you displayed in the lane this afternoon!"

"T-thank you, sir!"

"You showed most — er — surprising gallantry, if I may put it like that."

"Oh, yes!" said Billy Bunter. "Put it how you like, sir. It is very kind of you, sir. Thank you very much!"

"Mr. Quelch has already seen me, but he will be down again in a few minutes. Meantime, my boy, I should like you to give me an account of the accident."

Billy Bunter gave a jump.

The fat junior had feared this. The investigation had come sooner than he had expected, though. If only he could have made some inquiries himself, he might have been more sure of his ground. However, William George Bunter was blessed with an imaginative brain, and he realised he was running a grave risk by saying nothing.

He gave a cough, and blinked at Dr. Locke, who was sitting back in his armchair, regarding the quaking Removite with a steely look.

"Well, Bunter, you are not going to refuse me a description of the accident, are you?"

"Oh, no, sir—er—I mean, just so, sir!" faltered Bunter, shaking at the knees. "You see, sir, it has shaken me up rather."

"Of course it has, Bunter," replied the Head kindly. "I do not wish to bother you, if you are not feeling up to the mark. I suppose you have several cuts? Mr. Quelch told me you looked very bruised, and that you lost a certain amount of blood."

"D-did he, sir?"

"Yes, Bunter. I suppose you have been bandaged up by the matron in the sanatorium?"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I didn't want to make a fuss, you know."

"What!"

"In fact, it would have been a waste of time, sir. The cart hardly touched me!"

"The cart, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir—it was a cart, wasn't it?"

"I understood it was a trap, Bunter. You surprise me!"

"D-do I, sir?"

"Of course you surprise me, Bunter!" said Dr. Locke. "Surely it must strike you as being remarkable to have come through such an affair without a scar?"

"Oh-h, I've—I've got a scar, sir!" stammered the Owl of the Remove. "It's—it's on my back!"

"That is very strange!" remarked the Head. "I quite understood from Mr. Quelch that you had a very badly-torn pair of knees, and the skin was off your hands."

Billy Bunter held out his fat hands.

"I didn't get a scratch on my hands, sir!" he said. "I--I think Mr. Quelch was shaken up, like me, sir, and he must have fancied things!"

"Really, Bunter!"

"It wasn't anything to make a fuss about, sir. I'd do the same again any day. You see, sir, I'm very fond of horses, and know a lot about them."

The Head gave a grim smile.

"I should think it is very necessary to know a lot about them when they have broken away into a mad gallop!" he said, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. This was quite lost upon Bunter, though. The Owl of the Remove was too thick-skinned to notice it.

The Head's cross-examination was interrupted at this juncture by the entry of Mr. Quelch, who tapped on the door, and came in quickly. He had changed into his cap and gown, and he gave a pleasant smile as he faced Bunter.

"Ah, Quelch!" said Dr. Locke, rising from his seat. "I trust you feel better now that you have groomed yourself down. I have just been having a few words with your rescuer. Bunter is very modest, not to say the least of it!"

"Dear me, is that so?" laughed Mr. Quelch. "If Bunter does not like to blow his own trumpet, there is surely no harm done if I blow it for him? I shall indeed feel a churlish man if I did not circulate the facts of the case."

"Quite so, my dear Quelch!"

"Bunter's behaviour, sir, was equal to that of a hero on the battlefield!" continued Mr. Quelch. "I cannot fully express my gratitude to the brave boy!"

The Head and the Remove-Form master were standing over the fat Removite, and Mr. Quelch put so much fervour into his words that Billy Bunter was beginning to feel that he really had actually stopped the runaway. He gave a smirk of satisfaction as the two masters gazed at him.

"I only pray that the brave boy will not suffer any evil consequences from the shock," said Mr. Quelch. "At first I feared it had affected his power of speech. He was certainly very queer."

"Oh!"

The Head gave a surprised murmur.

"Yes," continued Mr. Quelch, "as soon as I had alighted from the trap I found Bunter in a very sad state, and his remarkable utterances—or, rather, the peculiar phraseology astounded me. To say that it astounded me, is to say the least of it!"

"Really, my dear Quelch!"

"Bunter could not sound a single aspirate, or, if he did, he placed it at the beginning of a wrong word. In fact, the extraordinary construction of his remarks are hardly believable!"

"Oh, really, sir——" began Bunter.

"I'm not blaming you, my dear boy," interrupted Mr. Quelch. "I am merely mentioning the matter to Dr. Locke. It only shows what a dreadful thing a shock can be to a human being."

"I suppose it is the same thing with shell-shock."

"That is just what I thought when I continued my drive," said Mr. Quelch. "There were so many sad cases during the war. An incident like this afternoon helps me to realise the terrors of modern armaments."

Mr. Quelch's somewhat weighty conversation was beginning to bore the fat Removite. He fidgeted about on his legs, and coughed, and breathed hard through his nose; but the two masters seemed too interested in the discussion to take any notice of him.

"I remember hearing of a case many years ago," continued the Head. "An old friend of mine was out hunting, when his horse stumbled, and struck its head against an oak-tree. For some moments it was quite stunned; but its rider got the horse upon its legs again, and mounted. That horse carried its rider for three hours in splendid condition, and then suddenly fell down, stone dead."

"Good gracious me!" said Mr. Quelch. "That is very remarkable. I——"

"Ahem!"

Billy Bunter gave a loud cough; but it had no effect.

"I remember a similar case," continued the Remove-Form master. "It was an old story my father used to relate when I was a boy at home. It——"

"Ahem!"

"It was in——"

"Ahem!"

Mr. Quelch turned towards Bunter and frowned.

"It was in connection——"

"Ahem! Ahem!"

"I say, it was in connection with a ——"

"Ahem!"

"In connection with——"

"Ahem!"

"Really, Bunter," snapped Mr. Quelch, "I wish you would not make that irritating noise! I can hardly hear myself speak. As I was saying, it was in connection with——"

"Ahem! Atishoo!"

Billy Bunter gave forth a terrific sneeze, and once more the Remove-Form master was compelled to break off his conversation.

"Well, Quelch, you were saying that it was in connection with——"

"Yes, yes; I am sorry. But the boy interrupted me. It was in connection with——"

"Ahem! Ahem!"

Mr. Quelch turned on Bunter, and fixed the fat Removite with a gimlet-like stare. Mr. Quelch's eyes had often been referred to by the members of the Remove Form as resembling gimlets. He glared down at Bunter angrily.

"I will not be interrupted in this manner, Bunter!" he cried. "That is nearly a dozen times you have compelled me to stop owing to your irritating cough. I wish you would endeavour to show some manners when you are in the headmaster's study. If it occurs again I shall deal with you very severely. I was saying, sir, that it was in connection with——"

"Oh-h-h-h!"

There was a deep and prolonged groan from Bunter, and the Head and Mr. Quelch turned round in amazement.

"Oh d-dear, I—I do feel so f-f-funny!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I——"

"My dear boy," exclaimed Mr. Quelch, in alarm, "you are ill. It is the reaction of this afternoon's affair. You must sit down, Bunter."

Bunter seemed to be doubled up with pain, and he emitted groan upon groan as the Remove-Form master led him gently to one of the Head's chairs.

"Shall I telephone to the doctor, my dear Quelch?" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Perhaps we should have the boy examined. He may have broken a bone or suffered some internal injury."

Billy Bunter suddenly sat up in the chair.

"Don't get a doctor, sir!" he gasped. "I don't want a doctor."

"But I consider it right that you should have one, my dear Bunter."

"Oh, no, sir! Don't get a doctor on any account. I don't—don't like doctors. They aren't any good. I think I came over faint. I want some fresh air."

"I will open the windows wider."

"No, sir, not that sort of fresh air," grunted Bunter. "I want some exercise with it."

"Let me lead you round the table a few times, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir; that won't do me any good! I feel I must get out into the fresh air. I will take a walk round the football-ground, sir."

Mr. Quelch turned an inquiring glance at Dr. Locke.

"Perhaps it was only a temporary fainting fit, sir," he said. "It's no doubt due to the affair this afternoon, and if Bunter feels he can do without medical advice, I think, perhaps, we should grant him the wish, under the circumstances."

"Very well then."

"You may go, Bunter, my boy," said Mr. Quelch. "I trust you not to do anything rash or foolish. Just take a quiet walk round the grounds, and then return to your study. You will be excused roll-call this evening, on condition that you take things quietly."

"Thank you, sir!"

Billy Bunter seemed to make a very rapid recovery, indeed. He rolled out of the Head's armchair, and made a bee-line to the door.

"Not so fast, Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "It is imperative for you to take things quietly. If you hurry like that I shall certainly forbid you to go out of the school buildings."

Billy Bunter stood meekly on the inside of the door.

"I trust you understand me, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes, sir! I'll take things very quietly. It's only the fresh air I want, sir."

"Very well, then; you may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

Billy Bunter turned the handle and flung open the door and rolled out into the passage as slowly and as sedately as he could. As he closed the door again Mr. Quelch and Dr. Locke looked at one another.

"He is a very surprising youth, sir," said Mr. Quelch.

"Very," said the Head. "I must admit, my dear Quelch, that I cannot understand him. He is the very last boy in the school whom I should have suspected of having any courage."

And Mr. Quelch nodded his head very slowly.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bad for the Yankee!

BILLY BUNTER blinked up and down the passage as he came out of the Head's study.

"Fancy the idiots thinking I wanted a doctor!" he growled. "Blessed if I should ever have got out of that if I hadn't come over faint!"

And the Owl of the Remove gave a fat grin.

He saw that the passage was empty. All the fellows would be out in the fields now. Football reigned supreme at Greyfriars, and there was tremendous keenness shown in the practice games, which were now in full swing.

Bunter sauntered out into the quadrangle, and rolled across towards the football-ground.

"Hallo! Here's Bunter!"

The Owl turned quickly as he heard his name, and Bolsover major and Fisher T. Fish, the American junior, strolled up to him.

"Ah, I guess that's the galoot!" drawled Fisher T. Fish. "You're the very jay we're looking for, Bunter."

"Good!"

"I guess you won't think that when you answer my questions!"

"I'm jolly sure he won't!" snapped Bolsover. Bolsover major was the biggest bully in the Remove Form at Greyfriars, and it was very seldom that he wasn't surly and unpleasant.

"Oh, really, Bolsover, I thought you were going to suggest a visit to Mrs. Mimbles. I'm feeling jolly hungry, you know."

"Oh!"

"Perhaps you two chaps would like to have the first honour, you know. Come on! If you're quick I've got time!"

"What are you talking about, you fat chump? What do you mean by 'the first honour'?"

"I suppose you've heard the news, haven't you?"

"Do you mean that rotten lie about you saving Quelch?"

"Oh, really, Bolsover, I——"

"Dry up, you fat cad!" snapped Bolsover. "You know jolly well it's a lie! You haven't got the pluck to stop a fly let alone a runaway horse."

"I guess that's true!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Look here, you rotten Yankee!" roared Bunter. "If you think you can insult me you're making a jolly big mistake. I'm blowed if I'll put up with it!"

Bolsover gave a guffaw.

"Waal, just hark at the fat galoot!" cried Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I've been waiting for you, Bunter, you jay! Now, you can't get round a smart cove like this." And the American junior pointed a finger in his own direction.

"What?"

"I say I guess I've got you roped in, you jabberwock!" continued Fisher T. Fish. "Since Mr. Quelch made his speech I've been buzzing round some."

Billy Bunter gave a grunt.

"I guess I've made a few fairly smart inquiries, haven't I, Bolsover?"

The Remove Form bully nodded his head.

"Look here, you get out of my way, Fish, you cad!" said Bunter. "If you think you're going to interfere with me you're making a mistake."

"Not so fast, you jay. You'll answer these questions first!"

"Eh?"

"You'll just say 'yep' or 'nope,' as the case may be. Now, then, you jay, what was the time when you did your rescue stunt with the runaway?"

Billy Bunter gave a start. So this was it! The story of the gallant rescue was not believed by the American junior. Something had aroused his suspicions, and he had been making inquiries. Billy Bunter gave a nervous tremor. Things had gone too far now. He had allowed Mr. Quelch to suppose that it was he to whom he should shower praise and gratitude upon. Dr. Locke, the headmaster himself, had given Bunter an opportunity for denying the story; and Bunter had not. He had allowed the whole of the Remove to applaud him for something he had not done. He could have disclaimed all credit; but he had not. Perhaps it was not Bunter's fault altogether. He had been a victim of strange circumstance. But Bunter was the only fellow in Greyfriars who would have allowed the matter to get this far.

And now, as Bunter saw signs of being shown up, he dreaded the idea. Praise from his masters and from his schoolfellows had allowed him to taste the sweetness of popularity, and it alarmed Bunter to think that his time was up.

He snatched off his Eton jacket, and hurriedly rolled up his sleeves.

"Here, what's this?" hooted Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I ain't standing any nonsense from you, you jay. Bolsover, I guess you ain't allowing this mad jay to use his fists on me. I calculate that it takes you to deal with this part of the business!"

Bolsover gave a whistle.

"You ain't frightened of the fat rotter, are you?" he gasped.

"Nope. I guess I ain't afraid of no one on this side of the pond."

"Then you had better deal with Bunter, you idiot. You could knock the fat toad down with a feather, if you've got the pluck."

"I guess I'll knock the jay into the middle of next week!"

"Come on, then, you interfering rotter!" roared Bunter, advancing on the excited American junior.

"Here! Hands off!" cried Fisher T. Fish. "It's a foul if you touch me before I'm ready, I guess. Let me take my coat off, and then I'll show you how to fight, some!"

Fish pulled off his Eton jacket and rolled his sleeves up. He stood in front of Bunter, and put his hands up in pugilistic attitude. The American junior's idea of defence, however, was as feeble as a babe's. Billy Bunter sprang forward, with a deep grunt, and he shot out his left like a flash.

"So you'll try to show me up like that, will you?" howled the fat Removite. "Then take that, and that!"

Fisher T. Fish gave a yelp as he staggered back under the rain of blows. And Bolsover gave an exclamation of surprise as he leaned forward and saw the American junior take a brisk blow on the tip of the nose.

Fish went down with a bump.

He landed on the hard ground, and gave a yell.

"Oh, my stars and stripes! What was that?"

"Come on, you rotter!"

"Groo!"

"You'll try to show me up, you jealous beast! Just because you didn't happen to stop the runaway horse and rescue old Quelchy!"

"Ow!"

"Think a Britisher is going to allow a Yankee to cross-examine him, do you? Come on, you rotter!"

"Gerooh!"

"Oh, shut up making that row, Fish!" cried Bolsover major. "Why on earth don't you get up and have a smack at Bunter?"

"Wr-r-r-r!"

"Get up, you ass! Here comes Wharton and his pals!"

Billy Bunter looked round, and hastily snatched up his coat as he saw Harry Wharton and about a dozen other Removites flocking off the football ground and hurrying in their direction.

"That'll teach you a lesson, you rotter!" growled Bunter, blinking down at the groaning Fish, who had not made any effort to get up. The American junior was dabbing a handkerchief up to his nose, and the Owl of the Remove gave a smirk of satisfaction as he noted the signs of claret on the white cambric.

"Don't you try that on again, that's all. I'll——"

"Oh, you fat jay, I'm hurt!"

"Serves you jolly well right!" snapped the exasperated Bolsover. "I'm blessed if I thought Bunter had it in him! But you asked for it, and got it! I'm off!"

"Here, you scallywag!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "Come here, you galoot! I guess I want you!"

But Bolsover did not stop to listen. He hurried away as Harry Wharton & Co. came towards the Owl of the Remove, who rolled towards them, with a ferocious expression on his fat face.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry. "What the tame conquering hero been up to?"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I'm not a tame conquering hero, you know! I've just been teaching that Yankee rotter a lesson."

"Oh!"

"He tried to cheek me, and I put my foot down. I let him have it properly."

"That's the way, porpoise!" laughed Harry Wharton. "Wonders will never

cease. You're looking up and taking notice, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Removites.

"It looks as though the honourable and ludicrous Fish has had a thump on his face nosefully!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Grooh!" went the American junior, dabbing at his long nose.

"Don't take any notice of that cad, you chaps!" said Billy Bunter. "I've taught him a jolly good lesson, and now he can be left alone."

"Hear, hear!" laughed Bob Cherry. "Just hark at the valiant conqueror!"

"Well, come on, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "We said we would stand you a study feed in honour of the show you put up with the runaway."

Billy Bunter's face brightened up considerably. He blinked through his big spectacles at the captain of the Remove.

"That's jolly decent of you, Wharton!" he said. "I can tell you I'm just about famished! Have you bought the grub yet?"

"Yes; we've got plenty in Study No. 1, porpoise."

"We shall want it when Bunter sets to work," said Frank Nugent.

"Come on!" cried Bunter. "It's giving me an awful appetite to even think of it!"

There was a snigger from the Removites. Billy Bunter's appeal had such a ring of anxiety about it.

Harry Wharton led the way, and the little party tramped into the School House, and made its way along the Remove Form passage as far as Study No. 1.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
A Bombshell for the Remove!

"GET some more chairs, Bob!"

"Right, Harry! Look out, here's another plate! What's it doing in the bookcase?"

"Oh, my hat!" laughed Harry Wharton. "That must have been there a long time. Look out, you ass!"

Crash!

Bob Cherry gave a yell as the plate dropped to the study floor, and broke into a dozen pieces.

"Never mind!" said Wharton. "It can't be helped. I didn't know you expected me to catch hold of it!"

"Of course I did, you ass! I—— Here! Look out! Where are you coming to, Inky?"

"I am regretfully sorry, my worthy chum!" said Hurree Singh. "I am shifting this box removefully!"

"Oh!"

Preparations for the great feed were in full swing in the little study. The table was crammed with good things, and the only trouble seemed to be in connection with the seating accommodation. Chairs were being borrowed from studies right and left, and there was no room now to swing a cat. A wood fire was crackling away in the little grate, and a kettle was boiling away at full blast.

Frank Nugent was attending to the frying of sausages and kidneys, and there was a lovely smoky haze suspended across the study.

"Well, are we all ready now?" cried Harry Wharton. "Bunter's seat is at the end here—the seat of honour, you know!"

"Hooray!"

"Sausages will be another three minutes, kidneys another five!" bawled Frank Nugent from the grate.

"Right-ho, Franky! We'll wait a minute! Here, hands off the grub, Bunter, you greedy cormorant!"

Billy Bunter gave a jump as Bob Cherry pulled him away from the table.

"I—I was only trying the almonds, Cherry," said Bunter. "I'm so jolly hungry, I can hardly wait! Look here, let's——"

"Hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry. "Who is this? No more visitors allowed!"

There was a tap on the door, and the Removites looked at one another.

"Better see who it is, Bob," said Harry Wharton. "No harm in that."

"Right-ho, old bean!"

Bob Cherry forced back the door, and there was silence whilst he poked his head out into the passage.

"Hallo, hallo!" came Bob's cheery voice. "Blessed if it isn't a stranger within the gates! Come in, Derwent, you bounder!"

"Derwent!" cried the Removites. "A Highcliffe merchant!"

Bob Cherry pulled the visitor in, and Derwent gave an exclamation of surprise as he saw the crowded state of the study and the sumptuous repast on the table.

"Come in, Derwent!" said Harry Wharton cordially. "We don't often see you Highcliffe bounders here. What's up?"

"I've come to fix up a match—footer match."

"Good egg!"

"Sorry I've come at this time. I'll clear off, if you like, and call later. What's the celebration?"

"Bunter!"

"What! The fat Bunter?"

"Ha, ha! That's the merchant. Here he is. Awful chap for hiding his light under a bushel. He's been doing the heroic stunt, and we're celebrating the occasion."

"Oh-h!"

"Mr. Quelch, our Form-master, was driving in a trap, and the beastly horse ran away. Bunter behaved himself for once, and saved Quelchy's life."

"W-what?"

"Bunter threw himself at the horse and brought him to a standstill."

"Well I'm blessed!"

"So were we, old bean! Bunter's looking up."

"Oh, but there's something queer about this!" said Derwent.

"What?"

"Why, I may as well tell you the whole story. A new boots has arrived at Highcliffe. He's almost a double of Bunter in size and build, and he wears specs, too."

"Oh!"

"He—he arrived to-day, and Pon thought it would be a good wheeze to dress the bounder up like your Bunter, and send him here to rag a study if he could get in."

"My hat! The nerve!"

"Well, to cut a long story short, the merchant arrived back an hour later. He was frightfully knocked about. Trousers were all torn, and he was badly bruised. He said he had stopped a runaway horse with one of your masters in the trap. Said he had an awful job to get away."

There was a loud gasp from the crowded study.

"My hat!" cried Harry Wharton. "Bunter!"

"Y-yes, Wharton? Oh, really, you chaps, you aren't going to believe that yarn, are you?"

"Bunter!"

"The frightful spoofer!"

"The rotter!"

"The fat rascal! He's spoofed us!"

"Oh, really, you chaps, I—I——"

Harry Wharton turned on the trembling Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter, you rotter! You've been lying!"

"I—I—I——"

"You've had the cheek to spoof old Quelch?"

"And the Head!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"And us!" howled the rest of the gathering.

"I—I—I——"

"He looks a hero!" laughed Derwent of Highcliffe. Sorry I've spoilt the little show. It's hard luck on the bounder. Another half-hour and he would have wolfed up a good spread."

"Oh, my hat!" roared Harry Wharton. "Scrag him!"

"Jump on him!"

Billy Bunter made an effort to push his way to the study door. But he was too late. With a howl of execration the Removites, as one man, jumped on the Owl of the Remove.

With a wild yelp he went down under the avalanche, and for a full five minutes his piercing cries for help rang out. Then one by one the outraged Removites staggered up, and Bunter was jerked to his feet.

His Eton jacket was split up the back, his collar had gone, his trousers were a mass of tears, his hair was tousled, his spectacles had disappeared completely.

"Now, out with him!" roared Harry Wharton.

"Here—— I—— Ow! Leggo!"

But the Removites were not in a mood for mercy. Bunter went flying into the passage, and there was a crash as he bumped on to the hard linoleum. The next moment the study door was shut with a bang, and the key turned in the lock.

. . . . . .

There is little more to add. Needless to say, Derwent remained to the feed. He filled Bunter's place more or less, and the discussion at the table was all about Bunter and his evil works. No one mentioned it to Mr. Quelch; but, somehow or other, the Remove-Form master seemed to know. He said never a word to Bunter. But Harry Wharton & Co. had a very good suspicion that somehow or other their highly respected Form-master was aware that in Bunter the Remove had "A False Hero!"

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday. Order early.)

"Bunter's behaviour, sir, was equal to the gallantry of a hero on the battlefield," continued Mr. Quelch; "I cannot fully express my gratitude to the brave boy." *(See Chapter 6.)*

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INTRODUCTION.

Marcus, an upright, honest gladiator, is chosen to wrestle with Nabis, a famous Greek champion of Nero's court.

The contest takes place at a huge feast in Nero's palace.

Among the slaves waiting at table is one Eunice, a young and beautiful Briton, who is loved by Marcus. Eunice incurs Nero's displeasure, and he turns angrily to the soldiers about him.

"Take this careless chit and give her three hundred lashes!" he thunders. "Not one less—you understand! By the white knees of the Graces, you shall be taught a lesson, girl!"

"Have mercy, sire!" the girl pleads.

Nero, however, turns away; and, moaning, Eunice is hurried from the great room.

Marcus hears the dreadful command, and rushes to the room where the punishment is being carried out. He flings himself upon the brutal soldiers, and fights a grim hand-to-hand contest. The odds against him look like telling when there comes a startled interruption.

"Hold!" a terrible voice cries.

Nero stands before them, and for a moment the young gladiator's life hangs by a thread.

Then the great despot tells Marcus that he will forgive him and allow him to marry Eunice if he is successful in catching a pirate called Strongbow, the Rover—a man who has waylaid a large number of Nero's ships at sea. If he is unsuccessful, then Eunice is to be thrown to the lions in the arena. Marcus sets off with a company of splendid men, and is instrumental in ambushing Strongbow's fleet, and capturing the outlaw. At the conclusion of the fight, Strongbow declares that Marcus is his long-lost son; but although the boy does not quite believe him he allows him his parole. A party is formed to search the island for Strongbow's treasure. Marcus and his men are in a large cave when they discover an old man bound to the rocks. To the consternation of Marcus, he finds that he has at last discovered his father, and that Strongbow has deceived him. Meantime, whilst the landing-party are away, Strongbow contrives to escape ashore, and, finding Marcus and his men in the cave, he rolls a gigantic rock against the mouth.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Human Ladder—At Grips with Strongbow—The Plank!

FOR a long moment the sailors and Marcus, who was still supporting his father, stared at the mighty boulder that had cut off their escape, not realising how it had happened.

Then the men moved hastily forward and joined Leo, who had fallen back, his hands cut and bleeding.

"It was Strongbow. He must have escaped and swum ashore!" he said bitterly. "By Hercules, we are in a pretty mess, men!"

"Didst see the knave, master?" one of the sailors asked.

"Yes," Leo answered. "I glimpsed the dog for a moment, and, guessing what he might do, I did run to try to get out before the rock fell. Ah, how I wish I had been in time! I would have made him regret the day that he was born! Come, all of you! See if we canst shift it!"

In a combined rush the gladiator and the six seamen made an assault upon the huge rock. They pushed at it with their hands, then got their shoulders to it, and heaved with all their strength. But it was all to no avail.

Powerful men though they were, they could not budge the imprisoning rock as much as an inch, and when Marcus gently assisted his father to sit on the floor of the cavern, and the whole eight strained and thrust at it, it was with no more hopeful result.

The mass of stone was immovable!

Marcus turned towards his friend, as, panting and perspiring, the men desisted in their efforts, and picked up their torches, which they had left burning when they tossed them down. The eyes of the two young gladiators met, and the same thought was in the minds of both.

Unless rescue came from without they were doomed to remain here until they died of slow starvation!

And the possibility of rescue coming was doubtful, terribly so. True, the men on the Conqueror would be certain to grow alarmed at their prolonged absence, and seek them. But, taking it that a search-party came in this direction and reached the spot, would their voices be audible to them from the cave? And, if not, would the searchers have any means of telling that a cavern lay behind the gigantic mass of rock, and guess that they had become imprisoned in it?

Marcus held up his hand for silence, and for a few seconds stood intently listening.

His face grew very grave. The bulging side of the boulder fitted into the mouth of the cavern as a stopper fits into a jar, and, although when they had entered here a stiffish breeze had been rustling the leaves of the palms, and the sea beating noisily on some breakers near the beach, no sound whatever penetrated to him.

It was useless not to look facts in the face, ugly though they were, and Marcus communicated his fears to his companions.

"If sound cannot come in to us, it is reasonable to question whether our combined voices would reach anyone outside," he said. "But we must not miss the most slender chance of bringing aid to us, and we must keep up a continuous shouting."

This the men commenced to do, Leo joining them. Strongbow's escape from the Conqueror could not have occurred without many pairs of eyes witnessing it, and already a body of men from the great ship would surely be upon the island, seeking for him.

The sailors might arrive in the vicinity soon and hear their cries for help, if it were possible for them to be heard.

For a moment Marcus seated himself beside his father as the old man beckoned him.

Anthony, of Antium, took the young gladiator's hand in his.

"I wonder," he said sadly, "if the gods are to remain cruel to me, after all, if we are to be reunited, only to perish together, my son?"

Marcus pressed his wasted fingers.

"Have courage, father," he answered, as cheerfully as he could. "We shall not succumb for days, at all events, and always whilst life remains to us there is hope!"

He rose and joined the others, adding his voice to theirs as they sent up hail after hail. But an hour, two, three passed, and there came neither sound nor sign that they had been heard.

Marcus tried to keep up his spirits, and, so as not to dishearten his comrades, was outwardly cheerful. But his heart

was heavy, and a gnawing anxiety was in his breast.

Supposing they were lost for all time, supposing their comrades from the vessel failed to discover their whereabouts, what would happen?

Would the men of the Conqueror recapture Strongbow, and take him back to Rome and, in that case, would Nero adhere to his promise and give Eunice her freedom?

He shuddered to think of the pirate not being laid by the heels and delivered over to the Emperor. If Strongbow stole their boat or had one of his own hidden away on the island, he would put off and avoid the sailors who must be searching for him, and with the commencement of the summer games Eunice's fate would be sealed.

Nero would show no mercy. She would be thrust into the arena to face the lions.

Their voices grew hoarse with the continued shouting. Marcus turned again to his father.

"Tell me, father," he asked, "hast penetrated at any time into the heart of the cavern?"

The old man shook his head.

"At times my chains were struck off, and I was allowed to roam about the island, my son," he answered. "Otherwise, I should surely have died long since. But never have I gone farther into this accursed cavern than the spot where you found me chained. Why should I? Did I not have cause to loathe and hate it? I had no wish to explore deeper into its depths."

Marcus silenced the others, and took up one of the torches which, to husband them, had been extinguished and laid aside.

"I am going to walk to the far end of the cavern," he announced, as he lighted the torch from the single one that had been left flaring. "Who knowest? It might by chance extend right through the hills, and there be another exit. It is, I fear me, very unlikely; but any chance is worth taking. Remain here whilst I am gone and keep up your cries."

As murmurs of assent came from the others he turned upon his heels, and they looked after him until the light of his torch was hidden by a curve in the rocky walls.

Marcus reached the pirates' hoard and the spot where his unfortunate father had spent so much time chained in the darkness. He pushed on, his torch held above his head.

The cave twisted and turned in its course through the hills, and in places grew so narrow that the gladiator was obliged to turn sideways to squeeze his body between its walls. He was beginning to hope that it did extend right through to the farther side of the range of rocks, and that he would find a second means of leaving it, when, suddenly, he arrived at its termination.

The cavern widened a trifle, and ended in a wall of solid rock. Marcus stared at it for a moment blankly, then he chanced to glance upwards, and uttered a low, excited cry.

Above him he could glimpse the blessed light of day!

It was through but a small cavity in the roof of the cave, a jagged hole that a man might squeeze through, and it was fully twenty feet above his head. But already a means of reaching it had flashed into his brain, and he turned swiftly and as quickly as possible made his way back to his friends.

The sight of his flushed face and the eager look in his eyes silenced their cries, and they regarded him with hope, making their hearts leap high in their breasts.

"You have found another exit, Marcus?" Leo cried.

"Yes, of a kind, Leo," the gladiator answered. And he told them of his discovery.

"But if the hole is in the roof of the cavern, how are we to reach it?" Leo demanded, his face falling. "If the walls there are as perpendicular as here——"

"They are, good friend," Marcus interrupted, smiling, "and if they were not, the hole is in the centre of the cavern-roof and could not be reached from them. But at least two of us can get out and bring back help to the others."

"But how?"

"Wait!" Marcus urged. "Come with me, all of you. I will show you the way out of our difficulties."

He whispered some encouraging words to his father, who was left where he was, half lying, half sitting on the ground. Then, with Marcus and Leo leading, the rest of the party hastened into the depths of the cavern.

When they reached its end Marcus pointed up at the gleam of daylight above their heads, and quickly explained his plan, starting to unbuckle his heavy breastplate as he spoke.

"One man will stand by and hold a torch to enable us to see," he said; "then two more will place themselves beneath the hole, and, standing firm, clasp their arms about each other. The fourth man will mount to their shoulders, the fifth to his shoulders, and the sixth, in turn, to his. With a spring, the last man will be able to clasp the edge of the aperture and draw himself through. That will leave one man over. He will climb up in his turn, and can be helped through by the other man who is above.

"It will be as well for two to go through, as one might encounter Strongbow and receive the worst of it in an encounter. If the caitiff has not stolen our boat, the men who are free will row to the Conqueror and bring back others and a long length of rope. My father and those of us who remain below can then be hauled out. Even if the boat is gone, it should not take long to attract the attention of those aboard the Conqueror by signalling. Again, some of the sailors ought to have come ashore after Strongbow, and there should be one boat or more down on the beach."

A hoarse cheer came from the sailors as he concluded, and no time was lost in putting his scheme into execution.

The men insisted that he himself and Leo should be the two to leave and fetch help, and as it appeared to Marcus just then to make little difference who went and who stayed behind, he agreed to this arrangement.

Two of the burliest of the seamen stood directly beneath the aperture above. Placing a foot on one of their crooked knees, a third man climbed agilely to their shoulders.

Like Marcus, Leo had divested himself of his armour, leaving only his sword hanging at his belt. He stood by, eagerly watching, and ready to break the fall of his chum should there be any accident when he made his ascent.

The training Marcus had received as a gladiator had made him a perfect athlete and as nimble as any acrobat. As the fourth seaman hoisted himself to the shoulders of the third, Marcus advanced to scale the human ladder.

A foot in the hand of one of the bottom men, a hand-clasp from the next, a grip from the fingers of the next, and Marcus stood clinging for a moment to the latter. Then, though it caused them all to sway dizzily, they contrived to keep erect as the gladiator climbed to his shoulders, and knelt upon them for a second or two while he obtained his balance.

Clinging to the man's head, Marcus got one foot, then the other, upon his shoulders, and slowly raised himself.

He crouched, as those beneath him rocked to and fro. They steadied themselves, and Marcus carefully straightened up. Then, with a neat, clean spring, he grasped the jagged, crumbling rock forming the side of the hole above, drew up his body, and clambered through.

Now it was Leo's turn. He was a trifle heavier than his friend, and came even nearer to bringing the sailors down with a run. But Marcus was leaning through the aperture, and clasped his hands in an iron grip, steadying him and those beneath him.

As he was helped through the hole by Marcus he caught the topmost sailor a frightful crack over the head with one of his swinging feet; but that was the worst mishap that occurred.

"Now to get down to the shore," Marcus began, as they stood together on the summit of the hill, "and——"

He broke off sharply, and his fingers gripped hard upon his chum's arm.

"Look!" he said quickly.

Leo swung about and glanced in the direction in which he found his friend pointing, and it was only by an effort that he stifled a loud cry of surprise.

Fifty yards away, right at the end of the range of hills and at their very brink, stood a man, who had divested himself of his robe, and was slowly waving it to and fro above his head.

His back was turned towards the two lads, but they had no difficulty in recognising him. He was Strongbow!

"He looks as though he is signalling to some vessel!" Leo exclaimed. "What's it mean?"

"We are going to find out, Leo!" Marcus answered grimly, beginning to steal forward on tiptoe.

Cautiously and silently, Leo followed his chum, slipping his sword from its scabbard as he did so.

"Leave him to me!" Marcus whispered. "I have a score to settle with him for his inhuman treatment of my father, and, by Hercules, I mean to settle it, given a chance!"

Nearer and nearer to the unsuspecting pirate the two gladiators crept, Marcus pressing ahead of his friend.

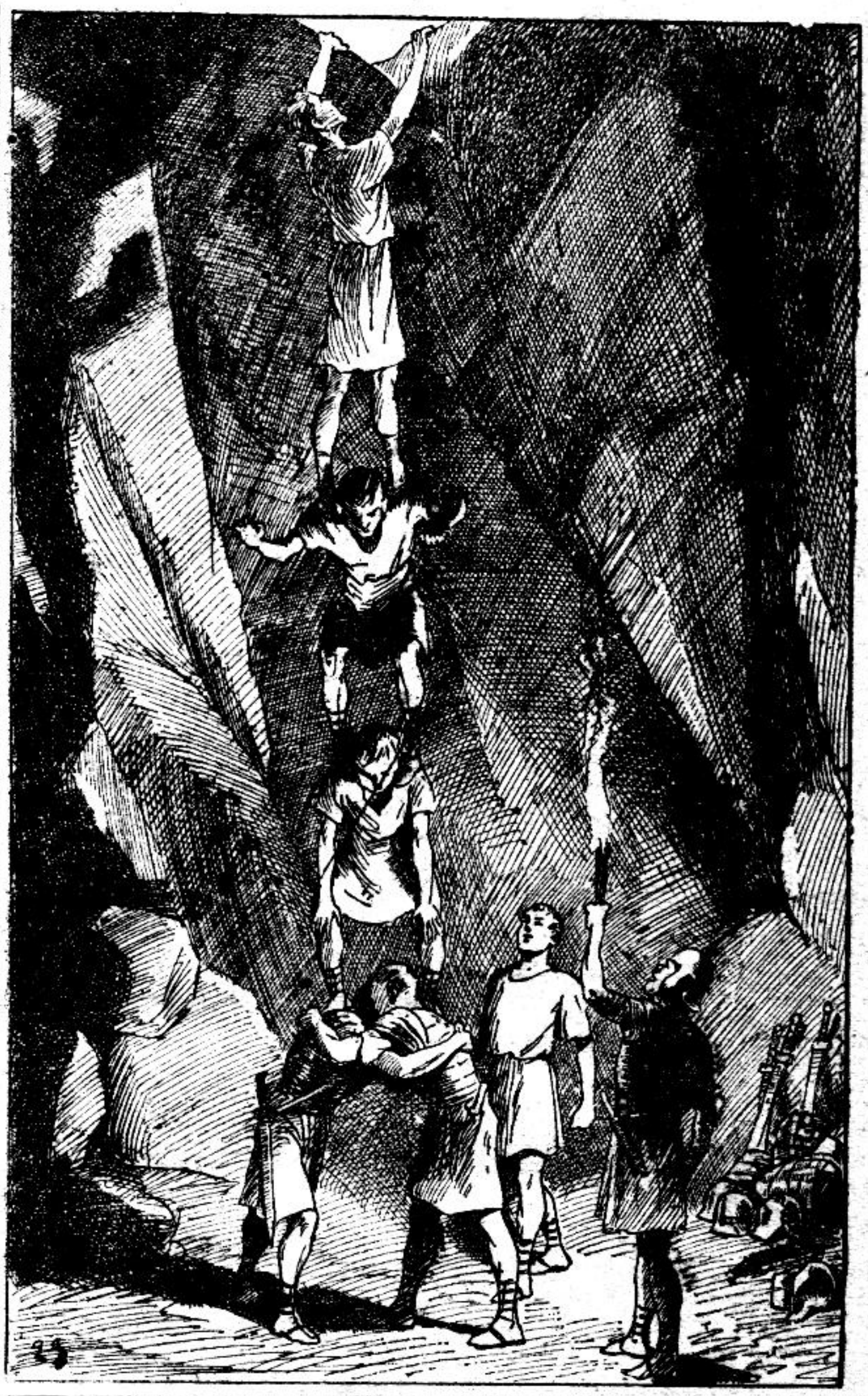
As he looked about him, and took his bearings, Leo realised that they were facing the sea on the opposite side of the island to which the Conqueror lay, and this accounted for Strongbow so openly standing upon the hills. He had no fear of being glimpsed by his enemies on the great vessel from Rome, which was far out of sight beyond the palms fringing the further shore.

Marcus had not drawn his sword. Strongbow was unarmed, and he meant that the combat that was impending between them should be fought out on equal terms—with muscles and bare fists.

The pirate continued to wave his robe, and Marcus stole to within a few yards of his back without Strongbow having the least idea of his presence. Then, as luck would have it, the gladiator's foot kicked against a loose stone, which flew from his toe and struck sharply against another, and, with a startled exclamation, Strongbow wheeled about.

He caught in his breath, and stared at Marcus and Leo in blank amazement. But he was given little time to speculate as to how they had escaped.

With a panther-like spring Marcus



The training Marcus had received as a gladiator had made him a perfect athlete, and as nimble as an acrobat. As the fourth seaman hoisted himself to the shoulders of the third, Marcus advanced to scale the human ladder.
(*See page* 16.)

leapt for him, his hands outstretched to grip at his throat.

The pirate tried to dodge to one side, but he was not quite quick enough. Marcus' powerful fingers fastened themselves about his windpipe, and the gladiator shook him until his teeth rattled.

"You cur!" he said, his eyes blazing into the terrified ones of his enemy. "I know the truth, and you shall pay bitterly, both for your inhuman cruelty towards my father and your crimes on the seas!"

Like lightning, Marcus shifted his grip from the man's throat to about his body. Strongbow felt his ribs cracking beneath the pressure of the gladiator's muscular arms, and expected every moment to feel one or more of them break under the awful strain.

He gasped for mercy, but Marcus was not in the mood to show him any just then. Before the eye of his brain was the pitiful, wasted figure of his unfortunate father, and all the anger of which he was capable was roused.

Soon Strongbow's lips were gaping, and he was sobbing for breath. His eyes started from his head in agony, and he struck viciously at Marcus' face, as he tried vainly to shake off his grip. But the gladiator only smiled at his blows—smiled and tightened his terrible hold upon him.

In desperation Strongbow kicked at the gladiator's shins. The attack was unexpected, and Marcus was knocked off his feet. But he clung to Strongbow and brought him down on top of him, and never for a moment did his hold loosen.

They rolled over and over, the pirate still striking savagely at his enemy's face. Leo, who, in accordance with his chum's wish, had been standing by looking on, uttered a yell of warning, and started forward, as he saw their bodies poised on the very brink of the hill; but he was too late.

Even as he flung himself to his knees and tried to clutch at Marcus' shoulders a huge piece of rock and earth on the edge of the drop crumbled and gave way. Marcus and Strongbow, still locked in deadly embrace, disappeared with it, and, as Leo jerked his head and shoulders over the fall, he saw them go rolling down the sloping side of the hill to the beach, which lay some thirty feet below.

His first sensation was relief, as he saw both Strongbow and Marcus stagger up and the latter spring again at the rover. But that quickly changed to the worst kind of dismay at the second sight that met his gaze.

Lying at no great distance from the beach was a ship similar to those the Conqueror had captured from the pirates, and actually landing upon the shore was a boatload of nondescript men, who were evidently a portion of Strongbow's gang which remained uncaptured. Even worse, two more boats, filled with a similar ugly crew, were rapidly pulling towards the beach.

It did not take Leo long to reason what it meant. The ship was another of the pirate vessels controlled by Strongbow, and at the time of the fight with the Conqueror must have been away from the island on some smaller piratical mission.

Strongbow, after escaping from the Conqueror and shutting them in the cave, must have climbed to the hills to watch for it and signal it, knowing that it was due to return to the island, and would make for it from the opposite side to that on which lay the Conqueror and his captured fleet.

The first small boat had evidently been put off in response to his signals. The others had followed as his desperate encounter with Marcus was sighted from the vessel.

Five men were in the first boat, and were already rushing up the beach towards the struggling figures. There were at least eight in each of the other two craft, which would be running ashore in little more than seconds. The position was desperate—almost helpless—and for a moment Leo stood hesitating how to act.

Common-sense urged him to think of those left in the cavern, hope that the pirates would content themselves with making Marcus a prisoner, and make off at top speed, and bring help from the Conqueror; but loyalty to his friend forbade his leaving him, and Leo flung caution to the winds. Gripping his sword, he swung his body over the brink of the hill, and went, half-scrambling, half-falling down to the beach.

As he reached it he saw Marcus hurl the exhausted and crumpled form of Strongbow from him, and turn to run, but a well-aimed stone from a sling carried by one of the five foremost pirates struck the gladiator's head, and, dazed and momentarily stunned, he fell flat upon his face on the sand.

He quickly recovered his wits, and reeled up. By this time, however, the onrushing five from the boat were upon him, and in a flash he was in the midst of them, hitting out right and left with his fists. He had no time to draw his sword, until Leo raced up, and, laying about him with his blade, gave him a short respite.

Two men went down, and remained,

spreadeagled upon the sand. Leo felt that it was a matter of life and death for himself and his friend, and had run them through. A third man lay where Marcus had sent him with a stunning blow between the eyes, and, as Strongbow was also stretched out upon the sand and incapable of rising, for the moment the two lads had only an opponent each to deal with.

But the men from the other two boats had hurled themselves into the shallow water as they neared the beach, and, leaving their boats to take care of themselves, were now rushing towards the scene of the fight.

Like the rest of Strongbow's gang, they were a formidable, cut-throat lot, only two of their number being white men, and the rest made up of half-castes and negroes. They carried swords, javalins, and clubs, and yelled with the lust of conflict as they ran.

Before Leo and Marcus could beat off the attack of the two men they were left to contend with the rest were bearing down upon them. Marcus ran his opponent through the shoulder, and turned to face the newcomers. Simultaneously Leo disposed of his—a gigantic black who had been attacking him with a club—and did likewise; and the next instant saw them being slowly forced back towards the hillside, fighting for their lives.

Strongbow struggled to a sitting posture.

"Do not kill the dogs!" he ordered sharply. "Make them prisoners, men! They shall not die quickly!"

The ominous words caused Leo and Marcus to fight even more desperately, and four of the pirates fell beneath their blades. But the odds against them were too great to allow of the combat lasting long.

A man whom Leo slightly wounded and hurled to his knees, wound his arms about the gladiator's legs, and, jerking them from under him, brought him crashing to the sand, whilst a blow from a club descended upon Marcus' knuckles and sent his sword spinning from his numbed fingers.

He commenced striking out with his fists; but his legs were kicked from under him, and he joined Leo on the ground. A dozen hands clawed at them, they were beaten about the head and body with clenched fists, and, half-senseless, were forced over upon their faces, and their wrists lashed behind their backs.

As they were hauled to their feet and held by the burliest of their captors, Strongbow staggered up and came towards them.

He raised his clenched fist, and drove it into the face of the helpless Marcus.

"So I laugh last, you dog!" he snarled triumphantly. "To the ship with them, men! We'll teach them that it is policy not to interfere in matters that do not concern them!"

Marcus and Leo were forced across the beach. They were hurled into the boat that had been dragged up on the sand. It was pushed into the water, and three men sprang into it, and commenced to row towards the vessel. Other of the pirates waded and swam out to the other boats, which had been left tossing upon the waves.

They were brought in, and Strongbow took his place in the first. In its turn it was pulled towards the ship, leaving the men who were with the other boat to follow with the wounded.

"A plank!" Strongbow ordered, as soon as Marcus and Leo had been hauled aboard the ship and he had followed.

And a chorus of approving laughs went up as his men heard and understood what was in his mind.

Strongbow, obviously fearing the Conqueror might sail round the island and sight them, next gave orders for the vessel to be got under way, and as certain of its crew darted to their places and plied their oars, it began to run swiftly with the wind, making away from the shore.

Three men ran a long, stout plank from where it had been lain under the bulwarks, and it was hoisted over the side of the ship with its end resting on the deck.

"That one first!" Strongbow said, with a fiendish smile, pointing to Marcus; and, whilst the gladiator was held between two others, a pirate hastened forward and blindfolded him. Then the lad was forced towards the plank, and his feet set upon it.

Understanding what was to happen, Leo began to struggle desperately between the men who held him and to wrench at his bonds. A shower of blows descended upon him, and, apparently, he was quietened, though he still strained with all his strength at the cords about his wrists.

"A pleasant journey to the next world, O Captor of Pirates!" Strongbow sneered. And he prodded Marcus viciously in the back with a sword, causing him to start with the unexpected pain.

The lad held back, anxious to cling to life until the last possible moment, in the hope that rescue might come from his comrades on the Conqueror or on shore. But half-dozen swords pricked and prodded at his flesh, and he was forced to advance along the plank.

A powerful pair of hands pushed at him, and he staggered blindly forward. The end of the plank left the deck, and it was too late that Marcus tried to regain its balance.

A sensation that he was plunging into a black, bottomless pit seized him, and he felt it dipping forward. Then it left his feet altogether, and, blindfolded, bound, and helpless, as he was, he plunged with it into the sea.

(There will be another long instalment of this grand serial next week. Order your copy of the MAGNET *EARLY.)*

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

BEFORE NEXT MONDAY.

Of course, next week's MAGNET will contain another splendid story of the chums of Greyfriars; but before then I want all my chums to get the "Gem," which is coming out this Wednesday.

This great bumper number of the "Gem" will contain some wonderful stories, and also there will be inset a wonderful "Pictorial Football Annual." This gift is naturally free, gratis, and for nothing, and on no account must you miss it. Order the "Gem" now, and after that wait patiently for next Monday's issue of the MAGNET.

THE BOOK.

I am honoured by news from Jimmy. You don't know Jimmy—of course, you would not, for poor old Jimmy Chadder has not yet risen to fame. He is a fellow who has been writing a book, and on this work he has been engaged for long years. He has made notes on his cuff, on old envelopes, and margins of newspapers; and ideas have been pouring in for the best part of his life. It is impossible to think of Jimmy and not be interested. His home is littered with notes, old MSS.—accumulations of ages. Now, it appears, the great book is coming out. Some fellows say they are going to write a book, and they just pop out of the room, sit down and write it—no fuss, no ostentation. It has been very different with Jimmy Chadder. His book, apparently, will contain something about everything. I am sure that whatever he writes will be interesting. I should wish him well in any case, but I feel a deeper interest since Jimmy has read the Companion Papers for long—in fact, since the time when Wharton to the public fancy caught on.

A HONG KONG READER.

Hong Kong is famed for any number of things, too numerous to mention. Say, silk and tea lead. That was the impression. But they do not. Compliments form a noted export. Just listen to this from Miss Agnes H. Ismail, 41, Wong Nei, Chung Road, or c.o. P. O. 522, Hong Kong. Miss Ismail hopes to hear from some girl readers of the Companion Papers. She tells me she would be lonely but for the stories. "I almost invariably turn to your Chat first, for it's so cheery that it has a cheery effect on me. Dear Mr. Editor, you seem to be a mystery, and I really confess that I am among those who are eager to know what our Editor is like: but, though I don't know at present, I am sure you're all that is kind and witty." There is really no comment to make. China is the flowery land. YOUR EDITOR.

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4. Free "Hair-Drill" Manual, containing full instructions for carrying out the two minutes a day "Harlene Hair-Drill."

After a free trial you will be able to obtain further supplies of "Harlene" at 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 9d. per bottle; "Uzon" Brilliantine at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle; and "Cremex" Shampoo Powders at 1s. 1½d. per box of seven (single packets 2d. each), from all Chemists and Stores, or will be sent direct on receipt of 6d. extra for postage from Edwards' Harlene, Ltd., 20, 22, 24, and 26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C. 1.

FREE "HARLENE" COUPON.

Detach and post to EDWARDS' HARLENE, Ltd., 20, 22, 24, & 26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C. 1.

Dear Sirs,—Please send me your **Free** "Harlene" Four-Fold Hair-Growing Outfit as described above. I enclose **4d.** in stamps for postage and packing of **parcel.**

Magnet, 11/9/20.

NOTE TO READERS.

Write your FULL name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin this coupon to it, and post as directed above (Mark envelope "Sample Dept.")

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11-9-20