A Great Man at Greyfriars

A Splendid Story of Harry Wharton and Co. of Greyfriars School, and of the visit of Martin Clifford, the World-famous Author.

BY FRANK RICHARDS

Illustrations by C. H. Chapman

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Bunter's Distinguished Friend!

"MARTIN CLIFFORD!"

"Yes."

Billy Bunter elevated his fat little nose, and blinked at Harry Wharton and Co. through his big spectacles.

The Owl of the Remove evidently regarded himself as a very important personage at that moment.

"Martin Clifford?" repeated Harry Wharton dubiously.

"I've heard that name somewhere," remarked Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"Where were you dug up, Bob Cherry?" he inquired. "If you don't know who Martin Clifford is——"

"Not to know Martin Clifford is to be oneself unknown," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Well, who is it?" asked Bob. "There's no League footballer of that name that I know of——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There are great ones on the earth as well as League footballers!" remarked Frank Nugent sarcastically.

"Of course there are," said Johnny Bull. "There's the cinema stars."

"Is Martin Clifford a cinema star, then?" asked Bob innocently.

Another sniff from Billy Bunter.

"He's the celebrated author, you ass!" snapped Bunter.

"The 'Gem' author, fathead," said Nugent.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Of course," he assented. "So he is—and more power to his elbow. So he's a pal of yours, Bunter, is he?"

"Exactly," said Bunter. "Quite an old friend. We were at school together—I mean we should have been at school together if we'd been the same age. And he's here——"

"Here at Greyfriars!" exclaimed Bob in surprise.

"Near Greyfriars, I mean," said Buntr. "I met him to-day for the first time——"

"You met a lifelong pal for the first time to-day?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"I—I mean, I met him for—for the last time," stammered Bunter. "That's what I really meant to say. He's staying in Kent now, not very far from Greyfriars. I had quite a pleasant chat with him in the bun-shop in Courtfield. How'd you fellows like to be introduced to a real live author?"

Harry Wharton and Co. looked interested.

Certainly they would have been very pleased to make the acquaintance of the famous "Gem" author, and would joyfully have stood him a "spread" in No. 1 Study in the Remove.

But whether William George Bunter was in a position to effect the introduction was a point very much open to doubt.

"Talking to my old pal Martin," went on Bunter airily, "I thought of you fellows. You're trying to write a play for your blessed dramatic society to perform. Now, my pal Martin—I always call him Martin, and he calls me Billy—my pal Martin would write it for you, if I asked him. He wouldn't do it for anybody else; but he would do it for me."

"Bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry.

"Rats!" remarked Johnny Bull.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh observed that the ratsfulness was terrific.

"He would!" said Bunter. "He's on holiday now, so he's got lots of time to spare. And he would do anything for me—anything I asked him——"

"Ask him to cash that postal-order you're expecting!" suggested Bob Cherry. "That would put his friendship to the proof, if anything would."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"I'd like to see the chap, if he's really lying around loose in this neighbourhood," he remarked. "And—and if he'd give us a hand writing our play, it might improve it——"

"Very likely, I think," said Bob with a chuckle.

"Rather a cheek to ask him," observed Johnny Bull.

"Well, if we had him to tea in the study, and made friends with him, you know——"

"Just my idea!" said Billy Bunter. "Shall I ask him here?"

"Gammon!" growled Johnny Bull. "Bunter doesn't know him—it's only his spoof. The 'Gem' author must be a decent chap; and if he is, how could he knowBunter?"

"Why, you cheeky ass——!" howled Bunter indignantly.

"The knowfulness is not great!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Well, ask him, if you know him, and if he's around," said Harry Wharton, "we shall be glad to see him."

"Feed in the study?" asked Bunter, with a business-like air.

"Certainly."

"A really good spread?"

"Of course."

"Martin's very fond of meringues," said Bunter "You'll have meringues?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"And jam tarts? Martin dotes on jam tarts."

"Yes, ass."

"And pineapple? Martin loves them——"

"One word for Martin and two for Billy!" snorted Johnny Bull.

"And, of course, I shall be present at the feed!" added Bunter cautiously. The Owl of the Remove did not believe in leaving anything to chance.

"I don't know anything about that!" said Bob. "If Martin Clifford comes to Greyfriars we'd like to give him a good impression of the place. It would be best for you to keep out of sight."

"Why, you—you—I won't ask him, then!" roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You shall come, if you can bring Martin Clifford," he said. "We'll believe you when we see him."

"I'll bring him to-day, then."

"Go it."

"All I want is my taxi fare to Hawkscliff," said Bunter. "That's where he's staying, with his grandfather. I'll bring him back in the taxi. I can do it on thirty bob."

"Good-bye!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ta-ta, old barrel!"

The Famous Five strolled away across the Greyfriars quadrangle.

Apparently they were not prepared to furnish William George Bunter with the sum of thirty shillings for his taxi fare to Hawkscliff and back.

Billy Bunter blinked after them in great indignation.

"I say, you fellows——!" he roared.

Harry Wharton and Co. walked on. Bunter rolled in pursuit.

"I say, Wharton——"

"Shut up, ass!" said Bob Cherry impatiently. "Nothing doing."

"I might do it on a quid——"

"You'll do it on nothing, if you do it at all," said Harry Wharton. "Go and gammon somebody else, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Can't you see we don't believe a word of it?" demanded Johnny Bull. "Dry up, or what you'll get won't be thirty bob, but a boot."

"But I—I say, if—if I get him here, the feed comes off?" asked Bunter.

"That's a go."

"Then I—I'll telephone for him," said the Owl of the Remove.

"Rats!"

"Yah!" snorted Bunter. "You can come and hear me phone, if you like."

"Still keeping it up?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Look here, we'll come, and if you don't telephone to Martin Clifford we'll jolly well bump you."

And the Famous Five went into the schoolhouse with Billy Bunter—whose fat face was now wearing a rather worried look.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Not Quite Pally!

"SMITHY!"

"Hallo," said the Bounder, stopping as Harry Wharton and Co. hailed him in the doorway.

"Is Mr. Quelch out?"

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"No, he's in his study."

"Then we can't use his telephone," said Bob Cherry. "Anybody know where the Head is?"

Wibley of the Remove came along the passage, rubbing his hands, in time to hear the question.

"I do!" he grunted.

"Where is he, then?"

"In his study. Ow!"

"Sure?" asked Wharton.

"Quite! He's just licked me there."

"Oh, then the Head's telephone is off the list," said Bob Cherry. "I wonder whether there's anybody in the prefects' room?"

"Scout along and see," suggested Nugent.

Bob Cherry scouted along the corridor, and returned shaking his head.

"Wingate, Gwynne, and North chin-wagging there," he said. "Looks as if Bunter won't be able to speak to his old pal, Martin Clifford, after all."

"Martin Clifford!" exclaimed Wibley.

"Yes, Bunter's old pal——"

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Gammon!"

"You'd jolly well see, if there was a telephone available," said Billy Bunter.

"Let's try the masters' room!" said Harry Wharton. "Everybody can't be at home all at once just because we want to borrow a telephone."

Fortunately, the masters' room was found unoccupied. Harry Wharton and Co. walked into it, followed by Wibley and Vernon-Smith and Billy Bunter. Two or three other juniors who had caught the name of Martin Clifford, followed them in, too. If any master had dropped in just then he would have supposed that a Lower Fourth meeting was being held in that apartment, which was, according to rule, forbidden to juniors.

"Here's the telephone, Bunter," said Wharton. "Buck up, before Quelchy or Hacker blows in."

Bunter rolled over to the telephone, and took the receiver off the hooks. There was a second receiver to the instrument, and Bob Cherry picked it up and put it to his ear.

He was going to make sure that that little talk on the telephone was a genuine one. If it proved otherwise, William George Bunter was going to have a bumping.

"Go ahead, my fat pippin!" said Bob Cherry. "Ring up your old pal, Martin Clifford. If you're trying to spoof us, you know what to expect!" (See Chapter 2)

"Hawkscliff One!" said Bunter to the Exchange.

"Is that his number?" asked Squiff, who was one of the interested party gathering round.

"That's it."

"And you're going to ask Martin Clifford here?" inquired the Australian junior.

"Certainly."

"Go ahead, my fat pippin," said Bob Cherry. "If you're trying to spoof us, you know what to expect."

"Put that receiver down, Cherry," said Bunter, uneasily. "No need for you to listen to my conversation with my old pal Martin."

"We can hear a chap asked to tea, if we're standing the tea," answered Bob coolly. "Go ahead! Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's a toot on the 'phone."

A voice came through.

"Hallo?"

"Hawkscliff One?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"This is Greyfriars—Bunter speaking."

"Who the thump is Bunter?"

Bob Cherry grinned. If the gentleman at the other end was Martin Clifford, it really did not look as if he were an old pal of William George.

"Ahem! Is that Martin Clifford?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" murmured Bob.

"The 'Gem' author?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, yes."

"Good. Will you come over to tea?"

"Eh?"

"Come over to tea."

"Delighted, I'm sure——"

"Oh, good!"

"If I happened to know you," went on the voice. "Are you some ass trying to pull my leg?"

"Oh, really, you know—I say, Mr. Clifford, don't ring off. I'm Bunter——"

"You've said that before. Did you say Bunter or Grunter?"

"Bunter! I met you in Courtfield this afternoon——"

"Your memory is better than mine, Mr. Bunter."

"At the bun-shop, you know——"

"I had tea at the Bun-shop in Courtfield this afternoon," assented the rather pleasant voice on the wires. "I don't remember being introduced to any person of the name of Bunter."

"We—we weren't exactly introduced," said Bunter. "I—I was sitting at the next table."

Bob Cherry grinned. He was hearing every word, and was learning the exact extent of Bunter's ancient friendship with the famous "Gem" author.

"Oh! Were you the fat fellow——"

"Ahem!"

"Who bagged the cake from my table while I was talking to Owen Conquest——"

"I—I——"

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

"Shut up, Bob Cherry, you beast!" howled Bunter. "Put that receiver down! This conversation is private."

"Ha, ha!" roared Bob. "He bagged Martin Clifford's cake in the bun-shop! That's the extent of his acquaintance with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up while I'm talking to Martin!" snapped Bunter. "I say, Mr. Clifford, are you still there?"

No reply.

"He's rung off," said Bunter angrily. "All through your interrupting me, Bob Cherry. Now, very likely, he won't come over at all."

"Very likely, I should think," said Harry Wharton, laughing, "if you bagged his cake——"

"I—I didn't exactly. I—I was rather absent-minded, and took the cake from his table—it was quite close—a little thing like that doesn't matter between such old friends," said Bunter.

"Oh, cheese it," said Bob Cherry. "Mr. Clifford doesn't even know your name. I suppose you heard his mentioned by the chap he was talking to—he says he was speaking to Owen Conquest. I knew you were spoofing all along, you fat bounder. You've asked a man you don't know to tea—on the sole ground that you bagged his cake when he wasn't looking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"The bumpfulness is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter has been pulling our honourable legs——"

"I—I haven't. I——"

"Bump him!"

"Spoofer! Give him a dozen!"

"Collar him!"

Billy Bunter dropped the telephone receiver as if it had become red-hot, and dodged round the long table at which the masters sat when they were in session. There was a rush of the juniors after him.

Fortunately for Bunter the door opened at that moment, and Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, came in. Mr. Hacker stared blankly at the sight of a crowd of the Lower Fourth chasing round the table in the masters' room.

"What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Hacker.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh! Ah!"

"We—we—we——"

"Leave this apartment at once!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker. "I shall report this to your form-master! Go!"

Harry Wharton and Co. went. They stood not upon the order of their going but went at once. And Billy Bunter, dodging rapidly round the first corner, escaped—for the present at least—the punishment of his sins.

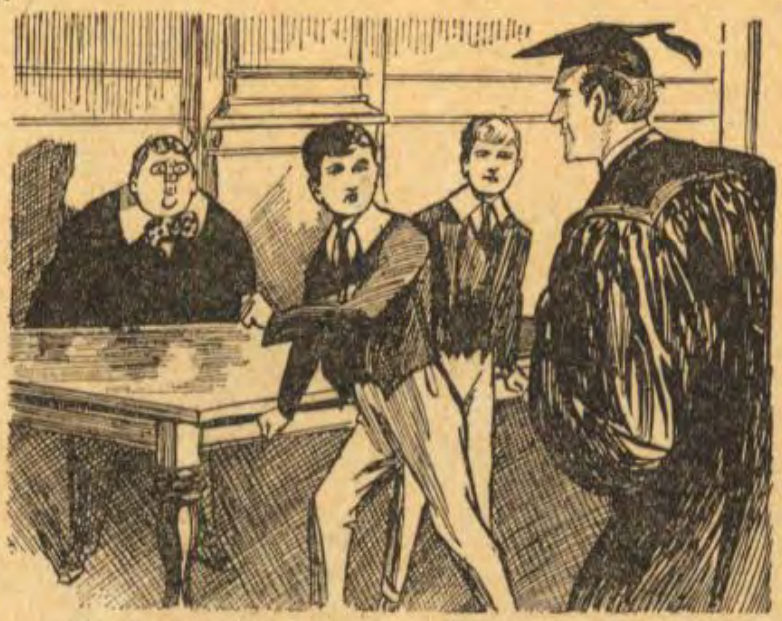
THE THIRD CHAPTER

Wibley Knows What To Do!

WILLIAM WIBLEY, of the Remove, dropped into No. 1 Study after prep. that evening. There was a serious and thoughtful expression upon Wibley's face, which showed that his active brain was working. Wharton and Nugent did not need to be told the subject it was working upon; they could guess that.

Wibley, of the Remove, lived, moved, and had his being, so to speak, in amateur theatricals. He was the life and soul of the Remove Dramatic Society, as he had said himself; or, as Jack Drake had said, he was the head and foot of its offending!

But really Wibley was a wonderful amateur actor, and what he did not know about theatricals was hardly worth knowing. Most of his pocket-money went in 'props"; he was quite a benefactor to the Dramatic Society. Generally he wrote the plays the society performed, and he never omitted to give himself a decidedly "fat" part. In fact, his plays were generally written round one leading character, and that leading character was William Wibley.



Mr. Hacker stared blankly at the sight of the juniors chasing round the table in the masters' room. "What does this mean?" (See Chapter 2)

He would take a Shakespeare play and rewrite it, putting in all sorts of good things that Shakespeare never thought of. In dealing with the great bard he would allow himself more liberties than even a London actor-manager ever ventured upon. He produced great comic effects that had never occurred to the inferior intellect of Shakespeare; as, for instance, in the Wibley edition of Richard the Third, where Richard exclaims, "My kingdom for a horse!" Wibley had a clothes-horse wheeled in. He had, as he often told the Remove fellows, a comic genius; tragedy was not in his line. But there was no mistake about the genius, comic or not; Wibley was quite sure about that.

"You fellows finished prep.?" he asked as he drifted into No. 1 Study with his hands in his pockets and a wrinkle in his brow.

"Yes. What's on now?"

"I've been thinking about that chap Clifford——"

"Bunter's old pal?" said Nugent, laughing.

"Bother Bunter! It seems to be the fact that this man Clifford is at Hawkscliff—not many miles from here," said Wibley. "We can get at him. We don't know him yet, but we can know him——"

"How?"

"By going to see him and introducing ourselves."

"Oh!"

"That's my idea. I've read a lot of his stuff," said Wibley. "There's no doubt that chap is clever. The way he strings a story together shows the dramatic gift. Some men write a story as if it were a furniture catalogue, or an almanac. This man Clifford has an eye to a situation—he makes his characters explain themselves—before you've got a dozen lines into the story you know the fellows as if you'd met them. He ought to be writing plays really, but I suppose a man has to live! Well, Martin Clifford is just the man we want to give us a leg up with our new play."

Harry Wharton looked doubtful.

"But a stranger," he said.

"He won't be a stranger when we know him," said Wibley calmly. "He's bound to take an interest in our play, as a fellow-artist."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I know he can act."

"How do you know that?"

"By the way he writes. My idea is to get him here and get him to knock our play into shape, and take part in it."

"The leading part, of course."

"Well, no; that's booked. The second part," said Wibley. "We're going to do something rather ambitious this time. You fellows ever heard of Ibsen?"

"Gibson?" asked Nugent. "Chap who draws——"

"Ibsen, ass! Ibsen was a Norwegian, and wrote plays—the greatest unconscious humorist ever born. His tragedies need only a touch here and there to turn them into ripping comedies. He wrote a play called 'The Dolls House,' which made no end of a sensation in our grandfathers' time. I've been sketching out a comic version, called 'Why Nora Left Home!'"

"Oh!"

"If we could get Martin Clifford into it, it would go with a tremendous bang," said Wibley. "We could put his name on the bills, you know, and charge for admission; proceeds to go to the Dramatic Society for new props and costumes. We're in want of a lot of new things for an historical play I've got at the back of my head. The question is, how to bag this man Clifford. We'll butter him a little."

"Oh, will we?" said Nugent.

"Yes, all artistic people have to be buttered—they like it, and it keeps 'em in good humour. You can do anything with an artist if you pull his leg sufficiently. When he comes along, for instance, he's going to spot fellow after fellow reading the 'Gem'—quite by accident, of course. I'm going to buy a dozen Gems on purpose, see?"

"But——"

"We'll borrow Quelchy's typer for him to work on, stick him in the Rag with a good fire, and set him writing the play. I shall go over it afterwards making little improvements."

"My hat!"

"Now, about bagging the man. If he's staying at Hawkscliff, he can run over here easily enough in a car—I suppose he's got a car."

"But if he hasn't—"

"He's on the 'phone—he can 'phone for a taxi, then."

"Wouldn't that run him into a lot of money?"

"Very likely," said Wibley. "Still, we'll assume that he has a car, and he'll try to live up to it, see? That's his business."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"My idea is to drop in on him at Hawkscliff and bring him over," said Wibley. "We'll go in a car—Vernon-Smith has agreed to stand it; he's got lots of dibs. We raid Hawkscliff, rush in on Martin Clifford, and bag him without allowing him to say no."

"But—suppose he's busy——"

"He isn't! He's on a holiday."

"But he may have something on."

"He can put it off. Now, who's coming?" asked Wibley. "To-morrow afternoon's a half-holiday, and Smithy's getting a car from Courtfield garage. You ought to come, as captain of the Remove, Wharton. Nugent can come, too. That will make four of us. Four's enough. And the sooner, the quicker, you know. If Temple of the Fourth got this idea he would jump at the chance of bagging a man like Clifford to act in his silly Fourth-form play. So would Coker of the Fifth. This is a chance for the Remove to score."

"Something in that!" agreed Wharton, "but——"

"It's a go then! Two o'clock to-morrow afternoon," said Wibley. "Lay in something for a stunning tea—we can afford to stand him a good spread, considering what he's going to do for us."

"But perhaps he isn't."

"We'll make him. It's settled, then."

And Wibley left the study, evidently considering the matter settled. Harry Wharton looked at Nugent, and Nugent looked at him. Both laughed.

"Mr. Clifford will think it an awful nerve——" began Nugent.

"And he will be about right," said Harry. "Still, it would be no end of a catch to get him into our play."

"No doubt about that. If he's jolly good-natured, he may come. After all, he may pick up some tips for his books here."

"Hem! He may."

"Let's try it on, anyhow," said Nugent. "It will make Temple green with envy, and Coker black with rage, if we bag a big gun like Martin Clifford."

"Well, it's worth some trouble to make Temple green and Coker black!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "It's a go! If we get sat upon, we shall survive it somehow."

And so it was settled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Bagging a Great Man

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Scoot!"

At two o'clock on the following afternoon a big car halted on the drive. It was the automobile ordered by Herbert Vernon-Smith for the run over to Hawkscliff. Harry Wharton, Nugent, Wibley, and the Bounder were going in it; and Billy Bunter rolled up as a matter of course. But there was no admission for the Owl of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows, you can't leave me behind," exclaimed Bunter warmly. "You can't call on my old friend without me to introduce you."

"Rats!"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Look here!" roared Bunter. "I'm coming!"

He put a foot into the car. Johnny Bull, who was standing by to see his chums off, took Bunter by the back of the collar.

"Kim off!" he said.

"Yarooooh!"

"Go it, chauffeur!" said Vernon-Smith.

The car moved down the drive, leaving Billy Bunter wriggling in the sturdy grasp of Johnny Bull. It was a fine afternoon, and the chums of the Remove enjoyed the run along the cliff road by the sea.

"Anybody know exactly where this man Clifford lives?" asked the Bounder, when the car had covered half the distance to Hawkscliff.

"His telephone number is Hawkscliff One," said Nugent.

"We can't call on his telephone number."

"Nunno! But Hawkscliff is a small place," said Nugent. "We can ask at the post-office. There must be a post-office if there's a telephone, I should think. We ought to have brought old Redwing—he was born at Hawkscliff. I believe there isn't a road for a car into the village."

"Look here, I'm coming!" roared Bunter. But the car moved down the drive, leaving Billy Bunter wriggling in the sturdy grasp of Johnny Bull. (See Chapter 4.)

"There's the upper village, where there's a road," said Wharton. "The post-office is there, I think. Let's try that."

The car ran on, and stopped at last at a little building, which was a post-office, a village store, and several other things. There were two buildings near it, one a vicarage, and the other the village school. Further along the road was a group of cottages. Farmhouses dotted the green distance, and beyond them the cliffs and the blue sea. The Bounder jumped down, and disappeared into the post-office. He came out in a few minutes with a satisfied smile.

"Got it?" asked Wibley eagerly.

The Bounder nodded.

"Yes. The name's well known here—chap named Clifford comes in often and sends down letters to be registered," said the Bounder. "That must be his copy for the Press, I suppose."

"Looks like our man!" said Nugent.

"But where does he live?" asked Wibley.

"About a mile from here, with an old gent named Cameron—his maternal grandfather," said the Bounder. "I've got all the news, you see. He's staying there on a holiday, I gather, and doing flying stunts at the aerodrome on the hill over yonder."

"What an ass—when he might be doing theatricals!" said Wibley. "We'll give him a chance to employ his time better, anyhow."

The Bounder gave the chauffeur his instructions and entered the car. The automobile moved on, climbing a hilly road towards the sea. In the distance the red tiles and chimneys of a house backed against a cliff glimmered in the sun.

"That's the show!" said the Bounder. "At least, I think so. It seems to be the only house in this quarter."

"Better ask somebody."

"There's a chap yonder—ask him."

A young man in tweeds, followed by a couple of dogs, was strolling along the road ahead in a leisurely way. The car stopped a few yards ahead of him, and the Bounder leaned from the window as the young man came by.

"Excuse me, sir——" began the Bounder politely.

The young man stopped.

He turned a pleasant face towards the juniors in the car.

"We're looking for Cameron Lodge!" said the Bounder. "Perhaps you can tell us if that house yonder is it?"

"Quite right—it is," answered the young man. "You'll find a gate on the other side of that fir plantation."

"Thank you." The Bounder eyed the young man rather keenly. "You know the Lodge, sir?"

"Quite well."

"Perhaps you could tell us whether Mr. Clifford is at home, then?"

The young man smiled.

"I can tell you that he is not at home at present," he answered.

"Oh, rotten!"

"This dashed journey for nothing, then, said Wibley. "What a rotten sell."

"Never say die," said the Bounder. "He mayn't be far away. If he's at the aerodrome we can run over for him. Excuse my bothering you like this, sir, but we want to see Mr. Clifford very specially. Perhaps you know whether he's gone over to the aerodrome?"

"He left it an hour ago," was the reply.

"Floored again!" said Wibley.

"Perhaps you could tell us where he is now!" suggested the Bounder.

The young man smiled again.

"Certainly, if you wish."

"Please do," said Harry Wharton. "We've come nearly ten miles to see him."

The young man eyed him curiously.

"Is he far away?" asked Nugent.

"No; quite near."

"Then where——"

"Here, talking to you," said the young man, laughing. "I happen to be Martin Clifford! What can I do for you?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"You—you—you're Martin Clifford!" exclaimed Wibley.

"Guilty, my lord!" answered the young man humorously. "If you have come to see me, here I am. Very pleased to meet you, I am sure, though I believe this is the first time I have had the pleasure."

Wharton and Nugent coloured a little, and the Bounder was rather taken aback. But William Wibley was at no loss.

"Jolly glad to make your acquaintance, sir!" he exclaimed. "The fact is—the—the fact is, we're all enthusiastic readers of the 'Gem'——"

"I had already guessed as much!" said Mr. Clifford.

"Oh, you'd guessed——"

"Certainly. A glance was sufficient to reveal that you were unusually intelligent members of the rising generation," explained Mr. Clifford, with great gravity. "That you were, therefore, enthusiastic readers of the 'Gem' was a foregone conclusion."

"Ah! Oh! Yes!" stammered Wibley.

He wondered whether Mr. Clifford had realised that his leg was being gently pulled. He need not have wondered!

"We—we thought——" stammered Nugent.

"That's it," murmured the Bounder. "We—we thought——"

"We—we thought you'd care, perhaps, to drop in and have a look at Greyfriars," said Wharton. "We should be honoured——"

"And pleased——" said Wibley.

"And delighted——" murmured Smithy.

"As soon as we heard you were in the neighbourhood, Mr. Clifford," said Wibley, "we thought of it. All the fellows would be no end pleased if you'd give us a look-in. And—and if you'd look over our play——"

"If you're not engaged at the present moment," said the Bounder, encouraged by Mr. Clifford's kind smile, "jump in! We'll run you back to Greyfriars in good time for tea—that's what we we're going to ask you, sir."

"You are very good——" began Martin Clifford.

"Say you'll come, sir."

Martin Clifford laughed.

"Really, I don't know how I can say no!" he remarked.

"You're not busy just now?" asked Wibley anxiously.

"Not at all. The typewriter does not claim me again till next week."

"Oh, good! Jump in!"

"Do jump in, Mr. Clifford!"

"On your heads be it!" said Martin Clifford gravely.

And he took his seat in the car; and the chauffeur, at a word from Vernon-Smith, backed and turned and sped away for Greyfriars.

"Perhaps you can tell us if Mr. Clifford is at home?" asked Vernon-Smith. The young man smiled pleasantly. "He is not," he said. "I happen to be Martin Clifford!" (See Chapter 4)

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

A Flattering Reception!

HARRY WHARTON AND CO. were smiling with satisfaction when the car drew up at the gates of Greyfriars School.

On the way back they had had quite a pleasant chat with Mr. Martin Clifford, and they had found him a most agreeable young man.

They found him a well-informed young man, too. Wharton had drawn him on the subject of football, and found that he was "all there." Wibley tackled him on theatricals, and found his knowledge great. Wib had drawn from him the admission that he had acted and that he had also sung, and that he had written plays. Wib was delighted. His estimate of Mr. Martin Clifford evidently was not a mistaken one. That young man was going to be very useful to the Remove Dramatic Society, and was going to help that society put the "kybosh" on their rivals in the Fourth and Fifth.

They alighted at the gates, Smithy telling the chauffeur to "hang on" to take Mr. Clifford home presently, money being no object with the well-supplied Bounder. The four juniors walked in with Mr. Clifford with great pride. They had captured a prize, and they knew it, and they were anxious for all Greyfriars to see their prize.

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came up at once, and were presented to Mr. Clifford, and Squiff and

Ogilvy and Russell followed suit, and Drake and Rodney and several other fellows. Mr. Clifford was cheery and affable with all, and was evidently quite at home in youthful society. Quite a little army of gratified youths gathered round Mr. Clifford to escort him across the quadrangle. It was then that the eye of Coker of the Fifth fell upon them. Coker was punting a footer about to keep himself warm, and it entered Coker's powerful brain that it would be no end of a joke to punt the footer at the handsome young man who was coming along with a crowd of Removites.

Coker of the Fifth did not know who the young man was, neither did he care. Coker's ideas on the subject of humour were a little rough-and-ready. He executed a drop-kick, and the footer flew fairly at the young man in grey tweeds.

Up to that moment Mr. Clifford had been chatting amicably with his escort, and had seemed unaware of the existence of Coker of the Fifth. But the sequel proved that he was a very wideawake young man.

The muddy footer would certainly have bumped on his waistcoat, but at the psychological moment Mr. Clifford's neat tan boot came up and stopped the ball, which dropped at his feet. The next second he had kicked it.

The ball came back to Coker suddenly and unexpectedly, and with an aim that was unerring.

Crash!

It was Coker's nose that caught the ball.

Coker sat down quite suddenly.

"Groooooch!" he spluttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Well saved!"

"Yooooggghh!" spluttered Coker. "What the thump—oooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Coker!" chuckled Squiff. "Always putting his foot in it! What do you mean by punting a ball at Mr. Clifford, you howling ass?"

"Groooooogh!"

"Roll him over!"

"My dear boys!" ejaculated Mr. Clifford as the Removites rushed at Coker of the Fifth.

But for the moment the dear boys did not heed the celebrated "Gem" author. They swarmed on Coker.

They were justly indignant at Horace Coker's unmannerly reception of their distinguished guest. They felt that Coker wanted a lesson. So they gave him one.

Horace Coker roared and raved as he was rolled over in the grasp of a dozen pair of hands, bumped on the ground, and finally deposited in a puddle in a state of wild mental confusion.

Coker was still sorting himself out of the puddle when the juniors walked on with Mr. Clifford, who was smiling genially.

During the delay Wibley had cut off from the escort and whispered hurried words to several fellows. Wibley had prepared a flattering little reception for the "Gem" author, and he did not want it to miss fire. As the party approached the schoolhouse they almost walked into Stott of the Remove, who was deeply interested in a paper.

"Sorry!" said Stott. "Didn't see you fellows—I was so interested in this 'Gem'!"

A few paces further on Bulstrode, leaning against an elm, with a paper in his hands, burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! You fellows seen this week's 'Gem'! It's spiffing."

Mr. Clifford smiled.

On the balustrade of the schoolhouse steps there were five Removites seated in a row—Tom Brown, Hazeldene, Lord Mauleverer, Vivian, and Redwing. Each had a "Gem" in his hands, and was deep in it.

They looked up at the approaching party.

"Reading the 'Gem,' you fellows?" asked Wibley, closing one eye.

"Yes, rather," said Tom Brown.

"Wouldn't miss it for worlds!" said Redwing solemnly.

"Isn't it a corker this week—what?"

"Beats even last week, I think."

"Every story a gem, in fact!"

Mr. Clifford smiled again and progressed into the schoolhouse with his young friends. In the doorway stood Bolsover major, and he shouted to the new arrivals:

"You fellows borrowed my 'Gem'?"

"Eh! No."

"Well, somebody's had it," said Bolsover major. "Not that I blame him, it's so jolly good."

Harry Wharton glanced quickly at Mr. Clifford, and felt inclined to kick William Wibley. He felt that this was laying it on too thick. But Martin Clifford's face was smiling and serene. In the hall, inside, Billy Bunter hove in sight. He was also one of Wibley's buttering recruits.

"I say, you fellows, I've lost my 'Gem,'" he said. "Anybody seen my 'Gem'? I wouldn't lose it for untold gold."

"Ah! My fat young friend of the bun-shop!" said Mr. Clifford. "The young gentleman who bagged my cake."

Billy Bunter grinned feebly.

"That was a—a—a mistake, sir!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows, I simply must have my 'Gem.' I haven't finishedreading the story, and it was no end of a ripper."

The ball came back to Coker suddenly and unexpectedly, and with an aim that was unerring. Crash! "Oooch!" spluttered Coker. (See Chapter 5)

"Which one was it?" asked Mr. Clifford innocently.

"This week's, sir."

"And you liked the story?"

"No end, sir."

"What was it called?"

"Eh?"

"I should like to know which of my little efforts has pleased you so much," said Mr. Clifford gravely. "What was the story called?"

"I—I—I——" stammered Bunter.

As a matter of fact, William George Bunter had not seen the "Gem" that week at all, so he was in rather a difficulty.

Harry Wharton felt more inclined than ever to kick Wibley.

He had felt all along that the diplomatic Wib was over-doing it.

"The—the fact is——" stuttered Bunter.

Fortunately, Bob Cherry stamped on Bunter's foot at that moment, and the Owl of the Remove gave a yell of anguish, and explanations were cut short.

"Yaroooooh! Wharrer you treading on my feet for, you silly ass?" roared Bunter. "I wasn't going to tell Mr. Clifford anything."

"Shurrup!" hissed Wibley.

"Yow-ow! My foot's squashed!" howled Bunter.

"You ass, Bob Cherry—you're more likely to give the game away than me, you dummy. Keep your elbow out of my ribs, Wibley, you beast, or I'll jolly well tell Mr. Clifford about your buying twenty 'Gems,' and —yaroooooh!" Harry Wharton and Co hurried Mr. Clifford onward. They felt that he had heard enough—if not too much.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER
Nice for Martin Clifford

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, came out of his study, and glanced at the Removites and their distinguished visitor. He had seen the young man's progress across the quad in the midst of the Removites, and he naturally wanted to know who the visitor was. Harry Wharton made haste to present him.

"Mr. Clifford, sir!" he said. "Mr. Clifford, this is our form-master, Mr. Quelch."

The two gentlemen bowed gravely.

"A relative of yours, Wharton?" asked the Remove master.

"Nunno, sir! It's the celebrated author, sir."

"The 'Gem' author, sir," said Wibley.

"The great Martin Clifford, sir," said Vernon-Smith.

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. He came towards Martin Clifford, and held out his hand very cordially. "I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Clifford. I am, of course, well acquainted with your name."

Martin Clifford shook hands with the form-master.

"Welcome to Greyfriars, sir," continued Mr. Quelch. "It is always a pleasure to meet a distinguished literary gentleman."

"You are too kind, sir," murmured Martin Clifford.

"The boys, I suppose, are claiming you at present?" said Mr. Quelch, with a smile. "But if you find the time, I should be glad if you would drop into my study for a smoke and a chat."

"Delighted, my dear sir."

"I should like you to glance at my 'History of Greyfriars,' if you are interested in such things," said Mr. Quelch. "At present I have reached only the two hundred and thirty-seventh chapter, but I hope to complete the work in a few years' time. If you cared to read the manuscript, I should be delighted to place it at your disposal."

"I should be—be—very happy—very obliged," said Martin Clifford without turning a hair. "You are indeed kind."

"Not at all," said Mr. Quelch, much gratified. "I will look out the manuscript now; I am at leisure all this afternoon, and shall be delighted if you will come in any time."

And Mr. Quelch retreated into his study to sort out the tremendous manuscript which had been growing on his typewriter for years, and was still running.

Martin Clifford was escorted up to the Remove passage by a growing army of juniors. No. 1 Study was ready for his reception—and its appearance must have given Mr. Clifford the impression that Greyfriars juniors were remarkably neat and tidy youths. For the study was newly swept and garnished. Half a dozen fellows had laboured on it to make it worthy of the occasion. Lord Mauleverer's new Turkey carpet had been borrowed, and all the best "crocks" in the Remove passage had been gathered. In the grate glowed bright brass fireirons, borrowed from the master's room—rather a risky proceeding, but justifiable in the circumstances. Flowers were tastefully arranged all round the study in jam jars.

A gorgeous armchair—wheeled in specially from the Bounder's luxurious study—was all ready for Martin Clifford.

"By Jove," remarked Mr. Clifford, as he sank into the comfortable chair before the blaze of the fire, "this is awfully jolly, you fellows!"

"Make yourself at home, won't you, Mr. Clifford?" said Wharton.

"I'm doing so, dear boy."

"I dare say you'd like to smoke——"

"Not here! I must not set a bad example to youth," said Mr. Clifford, shaking his head with a smile.

"We've got a cigar specially for you," said Bob Cherry eagerly.

"Oh! That is—is kind."

It was indeed kind, and Mr. Clifford felt that it was. But he seemed to be suffering from a pang of uneasiness; perhaps he feared Bob Cherry's cigar even more than Mr. Quelch's manuscript.

Bob unwrapped the cigar.

He had bought it specially in Courtfield, and had given eightpence for it, so he was quite satisfied as to its quality.

Certainly it was a big one. What it was made of Bob did not know; he supposed tobacco. With rather an air of doing things well, Bob presented it to the distinguished guest.

Mr. Clifford accepted it gracefully.

"Perhaps you'd rather smoke after tea though," remarked Bob.

Mr. Clifford jumped at the suggestion with great alacrity.

"Exactly!" he said. "After tea—much better. Put the cigar in a very safe place."

"On the mantelpiece," said Bob.

Tea was the next item in the programme.

But while some of the eager hosts were preparing tea in the study, Mr. Clifford was not left to his own devices. One or two or three of the juniors kept the guest in conversation, so that he should not be bored. The talk was interrupted by a step in the doorway, and Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell, glanced in.

"Pray excuse me," he said, with a bow to Martin Clifford, who rose politely and bowed in return, "I hear that Mr. Clifford—the celebrated Martin Clifford—is here——"

"At your service, sir!" said Mr. Clifford.

"Mr. Hacker, the master of the Shell—Mr. Clifford," said Wharton.

"I am sure you will excuse this intrusion," said Mr. Hacker, with his best smile. "The penalty of fame, you know, Mr. Clifford."

"You flatter me, sir."

"Not at all." Wharton politely placed a chair for Mr. Hacker, as the Shell master seemed inclined to stay, though the juniors wished him anywhere else just then. They could not argue with a master; but they felt it was rather hard lines to have their visitor bagged in this way. "I have often heard your name, Mr. Clifford," continued the master of the Shell. "It is a very great pleasure to make your acquaintance. Run away for a few minutes, my boys, while I speak to Mr. Clifford."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Hacker was a form-master; but this was rather cool. In the midst of preparations for tea, the juniors were turned out of their own study, leaving their distinguished visitor to the tender mercies of Mr. Hacker. But there was no help for it. They went.

Mr. Quelch held out his hand very cordially. "I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Clifford. It is always a pleasure to meet a distinguished literary gentleman!" (See Chapter 6)

Then Mr. Hacker became confidential.

He talked on the subject of Martin Clifford's works, but evidently with some other thought at the back of his mind. He was, so to speak, sparring for an opening.

Martin Clifford knew the signs. He had been there before, as it were. Often and often had polite persons drawn him on the subject of his works, with the deadly intention of turning as quickly as possible to the topic of their own. Mr. Hacker was not long in turning.

"I have often thought," he remarked, after about three minutes devoted to rather vague remarks on the subject of Martin Clifford's lucubrations, "that the life of an author must be a very attractive one."

"In many respects," assented Mr. Clifford.

"I have thought also, many times, that I should write myself, if I could only find the time," said Mr. Hacker.

"Is it only the time that is wanting?" asked Mr. Clifford sympathetically. If there was a faint inflection of sarcasm in his voice Mr. Hacker did not observe it.

"Exactly," said Mr. Hacker. "I have turned my thoughts to this subject many times. In fact, I have dashed off a few things."

"Ah!"

"Of a—er—more serious nature, perhaps, than your own writings, Mr. Clifford."

"No doubt much more serious," murmured Mr. Clifford.

"I might say that I aim higher," said Mr. Hacker agreeably.

"Perfectly so."

"Somehow, I have achieved no success yet, so far as mere publication goes," said Mr. Hacker.

"Mere publication is not everything," remarked Mr. Clifford blandly.

"Quite so, quite so. Publishers are often stupid——"

"Undoubtedly."

"They fail to see the quality of work that is far above the average——"

"There have been many such cases," said Mr. Clifford, with a shake of the head.

"But your work, I believe, has been always appreciated."

"I have been fortunate."

"You write a great deal for a paper called the—the 'Jewel'——"

"The 'Gem,'" said Martin Clifford mildly.

"Ah, yes, yes, the 'Gem,'" assented Mr. Hacker, with a nod. "I have seen the paper—a very nice little paper, Mr. Clifford. But a more serious strain would—ahem—improve it, do you not think? Now that I have met you, I feel that I should place the idea before you. A couple or three pages every week devoted to the subject of fossils——"

"F-f-fossils!"

"Exactly. It would form a very excellent contrast to the lighter character of your story."

"Undoubtedly it would."

"If you cared to place the suggestion before your editor, Mr. Clifford, I should be prepared to furnish a series of papers dealing with the interesting and instructive subject——"

"You are too good, sir," said Mr. Clifford gratefully. "I shall certainly mention it to my editor at our first meeting."

Mr. Hacker beamed.

"I have a few papers in hand now," he said. "I will submit them to your judgment——"

"I—I fear that my judgment is worth little on such——"

"You under-value yourself, my dear sir," interrupted Mr. Hacker genially. "I will send you the papers, and you may take them away with you. Of course, you will take the greatest care of them—but I need not mention that. Perhaps you will find my handwriting a little difficult to read. Some people have called it indecipherable. But——"

"A mere nothing, I assure you," said Mr. Clifford.

Mr. Hacker rose. There was a determined murmur of voices outside the study. To Harry Wharton and Co's relief, the master of the Shell took his leave. Martin Clifford was left in rather a thoughtful mood. With two hundred and thirty-seven typewritten chapters of Mr. Quelch's, and a series of papers in an indecipherable hand on the fascinating subject of fossils, he was likely to find himself rather busy for some days—if he read them. Possibly he would not read them.

But the celebrated author was smiling cheerfully over tea in No. 1 Study, and the chums of the Remove had the gratification of seeing that he certainly was enjoying his visit to Greyfriars. It was not, in fact, so very many years since Martin Clifford had been a schoolboy himself, and certainly he had not forgotten his schooldays.

"This is quite like old times!" he remarked as Bob Cherry filled his third cup of tea. "Now for the cigar."

Bob Cherry stepped to the mantelpiece for the precious weed. It had vanished!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, where's that cigar?" exclaimed Bob in dismay.

"My hat! Some ass must have knocked it down," said Nugent.

"Look in the fender."

"'Tain't there!"

"It's too bad!" said Bob. "It really is——"

"Not at all," said Mr. Clifford, with a smile. "If you young fellows don't object to a pipe——"

"Please put it on, sir."

"But it was such a jolly good cigar!" said Bob Cherry regretfully.

The mystery of the missing cigar remained a mystery. Only the Bounder suspected that Mr. Clifford had popped it into the fire while the juniors were out of the study. And even he was not sure.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER
Martin Clifford Obliges!

AFTER tea William Wibley came to business. He liked Mr. Clifford—he was, in fact, charmed with him, as all the juniors were. But he did not forget that he had, primarily, sought Martin Clifford's company

with an eye to business. So business came on the *tapis* at last.

The Removites found Martin Clifford very kind and accommodating. He took a keen interest in the Remove play, which was to break all dramatic records at Greyfriars. He gave his consent to taking a part in the play, agreed to turn up for rehearsals and to help in coaching the amateur actors. As for the calls upon his time, he waved that consideration aside—he was on a holiday, and he enjoyed a holiday most when it was spent with young society. So kind and obliging was he that Wibley fetched in the rather sketchy manuscript he had started, and the study table was cleared, pens and ink provided, and Mr. Clifford set to work at once. The juniors gathered round the table with much delight. It was the first time they had seen a famous author actually at work.

"A little more serious strain would—ahem—improve 'The Gem,'" said Mr. Hacker. "A couple or three pages every week devoted to fossils——" "F-f-fossils!" gasped Martin Clifford. (See Chapter 6)

Wibley was delighted at first, but his delight gradually wore off. The play grew rapidly under Martin Clifford's pen, and the juniors hailed every line with satisfaction. But Wibley began to wonder whose play it was going to be, and somehow there didn't seem room for all the good things Wibley had planned. Perhaps those good things weren't quite so good as Wibley supposed. But Wib, of course, could not be expected to see that. He was rather in the position of the ancient king who called in a too-powerful ally, who swallowed up his kingdom.

The play grew and grew, and characters were assigned, with a full chorus of approval for all of Mr. Clifford's suggestions, and Wibley found himself reduced to murmuring feeble objections.

Then Mr. Clifford suddenly remembered his appointment with Mr. Quelch.

Harry Wharton and Co. marched him down to the Remove master's study, and remained to escort him to the waiting car when he was finished with Mr. Quelch.

They had some time to wait; and when Martin Clifford emerged from Mr. Quelch's study he had a bulky bundle of manuscript under one arm. At the doorway Mr. Hacker joined him with another bundle. Both bundles accompanied Mr. Clifford to the car.

From the car Martin Clifford waved adieu to the Greyfriars crowd, and sped away into the dusk.

Harry Wharton and Co. returned to No. 1 Study.

They were highly delighted; but William Wibley was wearing a very thoughtful and somewhat worried look.

"Isn't he a tip-top chap?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He's taken no end of trouble with our play."

"The tip-topfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh.

"And all the stuff he's written for us is worth money, too," remarked Johnny Bull, "if he'd written it in the form of a story."

"Jolly good fellow!" said Frank Nugent.

"No end of a topping idea of yours, Wib!"

said Harry Wharton heartily. "You were really a genius to think of getting him here."

"Hum!" said Wib.

"Look how he's improved the play," said Vernon-Smith. "It wasn't much of a thing when you brought it along, Wib."

"Oh, wasn't it?" said Wibley rather warmly.

"No—awfully scratchy."

"Piffle in fact," said Johnny Bull. "Jolly weak, anyhow."

"Look here——"

"That chap's given it the professional touch," said Wharton. "Some of the stuff he's put in is a real shriek, and it will make the audience howl. It's as funny, in places, as anything in the 'Gem.'"

"I meant this play to be a bit above the 'Gem'!" said Wibley tartly.

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Fathead!"

The juniors stared at Wibley.

"There's a lot of my good things cut out," said Wibley.

"They weren't good, old chap."

"Not at all, old fellow."

"Mere rot, in fact."

Wibley gave a sort of wriggle. The Greyfriars Removites were very frank in speech among themselves. Frankness, Wibley felt, might be carried to excess on some topics.

"Then there's the parts," said Wibley. "You fellows insisted on Martin Clifford taking the leading part——"

"We jumped at the chance, of course," said Harry.

"Yes, rather."

"I'd booked that for myself," said Wibley.

"What rot!"

"I suppose I can act!" exclaimed Wibley, showing some signs of excitement.

"Of course you can act, old scout," said Bob Cherry soothingly. "But you're not a patch on Martin Clifford, of course."

"Of course not."

"No fear!"

"The no fearfulness is terrific."

Wibley looked morose.

"The fact is," he said, "this chap can write stories, but I don't think much of his play writing."

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"The whole dashed thing seems to be Martin Clifford from end to end," said Wibley.

"Well, what could be better?" demanded Bob Cherry.

Wibley snorted.

"Lots of things could be better. I intended it to be William Wibley from end to end."

"My dear chap," said Harry Wharton, "we can't afford to miss a chance like this. It's a real play now——"

"Can't I write a real play?"

"Ahem—not like this one."

"Look here, Wharton——"

"Mr. Clifford's promised to run over for an hour to-morrow for the first rehearsal," said Nugent. "Jolly good of him. I fancy he will knock us into shape in next to no time."

"I'm coach," remarked Wibley.

"Don't be an ass, old chap."

"Talk sense, old fellow."

"Oh, rats!" said Wibley.

And he left the study not at all satisfied. He felt more than ever like the monarch whose kingdom was swallowed up by his powerful ally.

But Harry Wharton and Co. did not heed.

They had an eye to business as well as William Wibley. Wibley was head of the Dramatic Society on his merits; but if a better man was found, Wib had to stand down as a matter of course. It was the same as in footer, as Bob Cherry remarked. A team had to be played to win, not to gratify this or that person. The Remove play was going to be a tremendous success, with the assistance of Mr. Martin Clifford, and Wibley ought to be pleased. If he wasn't pleased, that was his look-out.

The juniors did not make full allowance for the artistic temperament which Wibley possessed in a state of advanced development.

Wib had called in Martin Clifford as a "brilliant second," but it had not worked out like that. Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, Wibley had fallen from his high estate, and he was worried.

The next day, after lessons, a car from Hawkscliff buzzed up to the gates of Greyfriars.

The table was cleared, pens and ink provided, and Mr. Clifford set to work at once on the play. The juniors gathered round the table with much delight. (See Chapter 7)

Martin Clifford descended from it.

He received a warm welcome from a crowd of Removites, and was escorted into the Rag, where the first rehearsal was to take place.

Martin Clifford soon showed that he knew his business. Even Wibley had to admire the skill with which he pulled the crowd together, and hammered into their minds a realisation of their parts. Mr. Clifford's face wore a cheery smile the whole time, and he did not observe the thoughtfulness in Wibley's expressive features. To his eyes, William Wibley was one of the crowd of schoolboys, and he was quite unarware of the greatness of Wibley in his own particular line.

Harry Wharton and Co. were delighted with their coach.

Lines delivered by Mr. Clifford seemed to acquire a new value and meaning, and he had no end of patience, and would go over the same thing a dozen times, if necessary. Even Bob Cherry began to deliver his lines with effect, under Mr. Clifford's skilful guidance. The crowd in the Rag were still busy when there was a tap at the door, and a youth presented himself with a letter. It was Trotter, the house page.

"Mr. Clifford 'ere?" asked Trotter.

"Here he is."

"This 'ere letter, sir, jest brought over from Cameron Lodge," said Trotter.

Martin Clifford took the letter.

"Excuse me, you fellows," he said.

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Clifford opened the letter, and glanced through it, then a little wrinkle appeared on his rather boyish brow.

"Blow!" he was heard to mutter.

The Remove Dramatic Society waited.

"Can I use a telephone here?" asked Mr. Clifford, glancing round.

"Mr. Quelch would be glad," said Harry. "I—I hope it's no bad news, sir."

"But it is rotten."

"Oh!"

"Nothing less than a demand for copy by Monday," said Martin Clifford.

"Oh!"

"I shall have to telephone that I am dead or dying," said Martin Clifford thoughtfully. "I'll come back when I've telephoned."

And the celebrated author left the Rag.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Rescuing Martin Clifford!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter put a grinning face into the Rag.

The juniors were going on with the rehearsal of "Why Nora Left Home," but in a rather desultory way in the absence of Mr. Clifford. They missed that gentleman very much.

True, Wibley was there to take his place, and William Wibley was quite prepared to take it. Wibley had a secret conviction that he could "do the trick" much better than Mr. Clifford. But the other fellows did not agree with Wibley.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Tubby!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Seen anything of Martin Clifford? He can't be 'phoning all this time."

Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

"Quelch's got him," he replied.

"Quelchy!"

"I just passed the study," grinned Bunter. "Martin's been using the telephone, and now Quelchy's got him into a chat."

"Oh, dear!"

"They're on the subject of Quelchy's historical works," said Bunter, "I looked in. Quelchy is going nineteen to the dozen, and Martin is smiling politely with one side of his face—the side Quelchy can see. But you should see the expression on the other side."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't suppose Clifford will get away again before bedtime," said Bunter agreeably. "You fellows had better chuck it."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Let's get on," said Wibley. "I want you to make a bit of a change in your part Wharton. I'll explain——"

"Rats!"

"I'm not satisfied with the speech in the first act——"

"Martin Clifford's satisfied."

"Martin Clifford's an ass," said Wibley. "I tell you I don't think nearly so much of Martin Clifford as I did. Some of his ideas are simply asinine. Quite opposed to mine."

"Bow-wow!"

"Look at the way he does the part of Helmar," said Wibley. "Not at all as I was planning the part."

"Naturally," said Bob Cherry. "Improved out of all recognition, ain't it, Wib?"

"Fathead!"

Wibley looked quite cross.

But the Dramatic Society were not worrying about Wib; they wanted their theatrical manager, who had been bagged by Mr. Quelch. It really was hard lines on the youthful actors to have their leading gentleman bagged in this way.

"Cut along and see if they're still chinning, Bob," said Harry Wharton at last. "We can't keep on waiting. We shall have to rescue Martin Clifford somehow."

"Righto!" said Bob Cherry.

He left the Rag, and scouted along to Mr. Quelch's study.

The door was open—giving a view of the interior from the passage. Mr. Martin Clifford and Mr. Henry Quelch were engaged in a deep but one-sided conversation. Mr. Quelch was doing the talking and Mr. Clifford was doing the listening.

The Remove Master was on the subject of his historical work, of which Martin Clifford had taken away the manuscript the previous day. Doubtless the famous author was well aware that his young friends were impatiently awaiting him in the Rag; but politeness held him chained to the armchair in Mr. Quelch's study.

When Mr. Quelch was on the subject of his

"History of Greyfriars," he was lost to all considerations of time and space, and he had no doubt whatever that Mr. Clifford was equally interested.

He did not see Bob Cherry glance in at the doorway, though Martin Clifford did.

Bob returned to the Rag.

"Going strong," he announced. "Mr. Clifford's bagged—fairly muzzled. How are we going to get him out?"

"No need——" began Wibley.

"Shut up, Wibley!" roared a dozen voices.

"I tell you——" snorted Wibley.

"Dry up!"

"Somebody sit on him!"

"Don't jaw, Wib, for goodness' sake!"

"The jawfulness is terrific, my esteemed Wibley."

Wibley contented himself with snorting again. Harry Wharton and Co. held a consultation.

"That chap Clifford is a bit of an ass," remarked Johnny Bull. "Why can't he shut Quelchy up and clear? I would."

Martin Clifford saw Bob Cherry glance in at the doorway of Mr. Quelch's study—and suddenly disappear! (See Chapter 8)

"The politefulness, my esteemed Johnny ——"

"Oh, bother his politeness!" grunted Johnny Bull. "What about our play?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I was going to make a suggestion to help you out," said Bunter, blinking seriously at the captain of the Remove. "If you like I'll take my friend Martin's place at the rehearsal!"

"Dry up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"I've got an idea," said Squiff. "Quelchy has got to be called off. If there's nobody in the prefects' room, I'll ring him up on his telephone, and get him away."

"But how——"

"Come on and see," answered Squiff.

The juniors left the Rag, and fortunately found the prefects' room unoccupied. Squiff was soon busy on the telephone there.

Five minutes later the interesting conversation in Mr. Quelch's study was interrupted by the buzz of the telephone bell.

Mr. Quelch suddenly stopped short in his remarks.

"Excuse me a moment, Mr. Clifford," he said as he rose.

He took up the receiver.

"Yes?"

"Is that Mr. Quelch at Greyfriars?"

"Yes. Mr. Quelch speaking."

"Could you possibly come down to the vicarage at once?"

"Bless my soul! I could, certainly. But what——"

"I am sorry to disturb you, Mr. Quelch, but the matter is extremely important. I should take it as a very great favour if you could make it convenient to come immediately."

"Certainly. But——"

"Thank you so much."

The interlocutor at the other end of the wire rang off. Mr. Quelch put up the receiver with a puzzled expression.

"Very odd," he said, "very odd indeed! It was not Mr. Lambe speaking, though the voice certainly seemed very familiar to me. Will you excuse me, Mr. Clifford?"

"My dear sir, I shall be pleased—I mean——"

"A sudden call," said Mr. Quelch. "I do not know whether you are acquainted with Mr. Lambe, our vicar. I play chess with him one evening a week, but this is not the evening. Something must have happened, I hope

nothing serious. If you will excuse me I will hurry."

And Mr. Quelch, quite concerned about what might have happened at the vicarage, almost skipped out of the study.

Martin Clifford drew a deep, deep breath.

He did not know the vicar of Friardale, but his feelings towards that gentleman at that moment were of the most cordial kind. He was feeling, in fact, very grateful.

Mr. Quelch had disappeared, and Martin Clifford was about to leave the study, when Bob Cherry's ruddy and smiling face looked in.

"We're waiting, sir," said Bob. "Come on."

"Righto!" said Mr. Clifford.

And he followed Bob Cherry down the corridor. But before they reached the Rag, the portly form of Mr. Hacker loomed up. The master of the Shell greeted Mr. Clifford very heartily, and shook hands with him most cordially. Bob Cherry suppressed a groan. Martin Clifford has been rescued from Mr. Quelch only to fall into the hands of Mr. Hacker—after escaping the perils of Scylla, he came to grief on Charybdis, as it were.

"A great pleasure to see you again, Mr. Clifford," said the master of the Shell. "Step into my study for a few minutes. I should like a chat with you—you are not going just yet?"

"Nunno! But——"

"You have looked over my manuscript?" asked Mr. Hacker, slipping his arm through Martin Clifford's and leading him away, without waiting for the unhappy author to finish.

"I—I——" murmured Martin Clifford.

"Very good! You did not find my handwriting too formidable?" asked Mr. Hacker, with a smile.

"I did not find it formidable at all, sir," said Martin Clifford, with perfect truth. He could scarcely have found the handwriting formidable, without looking at the manuscript.

"And what do you think of my papers?"

"I—I——"

"Come into my study, my dear sir. I can offer you a good cigar," said Mr. Hacker genially.

"The fact is——"

"This way, Mr. Clifford."

"The fact is, the juniors are expecting me——"

"Ah, I understand that you are interesting yourself in their little amusements," said Mr. Hacker indulgently. "Very kind of you, Mr. Clifford—very kind indeed. This is my study—pray step in."

"But the juniors——"

"Take that armchair; you will find it a comfortable one, Mr. Clifford. Try these cigars. Now, I want to know your candid opinion—your absolutely candid opinion—on the subject of your editor devoting three pages a week in the 'Gem' to my papers on the subject of fossilised remains——"

"But I—I——"

"I want you to speak with perfect frankness."

Martin Clifford resigned himself to his fate.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

From the Frying-Pan into the Fire

"WHERE is he?"

Half a dozen voices asked that question as Bob Cherry came into the Rag, with a frowning brow. Bob Cherry sparred into the air.

"Hacker's got him!" he said.

"Hacker!" yelled Wharton.

"Bagged him in the passage, and fairly kidnapped him!" howled Bob. "The poor chap tried to escape, but you know Hacker! Get on the telephone again, Squiff—we're not going to have our guest bored to death in this way. And the rehearsal——"

"You can leave that to me!" suggested Wibley. "I——"

"Shut up, Wibley!"

"For goodness' sake, give us a rest, Wib," said Harry Wharton. "We shall never get going at this rate. Go and 'phone to Hacker, Squiff—it's the only way."

"Right you are!" said Squiff, with a chuckle. And he cut off.

The telephone bell rang in Mr. Hacker's study—rescuing Martin Clifford from a long disquisition on the entrancing subject of fossilised remains. Mr. Hacker impatiently took up the receiver—keeping one eye on his

guest, as if fearing that Martin Clifford might escape while he was occupied.

"What is it? What is wanted?" snapped Mr. Hacker into the transmitter.

"Is that Mr. Hacker?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Will you come down to the vicarage immediately——"

"The vicarage? Is that Mr. Lambe speaking?"

"It is very important—a most serious matter. For goodness' sake, Mr. Hacker, do not delay a moment. I rely upon you."

"But—but what has happened?"

No answer.

Mr. Hacker hung up the receiver with an irritable gesture.

"Really, some people are most unreasonable, Mr. Clifford!" he exclaimed. "I am called away suddenly to the vicarage——"

"The vicarage!" repeated Martin Clifford, with a slight start.

"Yes, Mr. Lambe is an old friend, and I cannot very well decline, as he is so urgent. You will excuse my sudden departure, I am sure."

"Certainly." Martin Clifford did not add with how much pleasure he excused Mr. Hacker.

He quitted the study with the master of the Shell, and Mr. Hacker hurried away for his hat and coat.

"Mr. Clifford, I believe?"

A stout, red-faced gentleman dawned upon Martin Clifford from the doorway of the next study.

"Pray allow me to introduce myself," said the stout gentleman cordially—"Paul Pontifex Prout, the master of the Fifth Form here. I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Clifford. I have often wished to meet you. Will you honour me by stepping into my study?"

"I——"

"Pray come in—I shall enjoy a chat with you," said Mr. Prout, "Since I heard that you were here, too, an idea had come into my mind, which I am really anxious to communicate to you."

Bob Cherry, coming along the corridor, was just in time to see Martin Clifford led into the Fourth Form master's study.

Bob retreated again with feelings too deep to be expressed in words.

Mr. Prout beamed on his visitor.

"A chat with a gentleman of your literary abilities is always a pleasure," he remarked, "pray sit down. Now, the idea that came into my mind is this, Mr. Clifford——"

"I——"

"I was not always a schoolmaster," said Mr. Prout. He waved his hand to the walls, which were plentifully decorated with souvenirs of Mr. Prout's earlier and more strenuous days, the days when he had been a mighty hunter. "I have trodden the wild places of the earth, Mr. Clifford—many a ferocious grizzly has fallen before my deadly rifle. You see the rifle hanging there——"

"I——"

"With that rifle, sir," said Mr. Prout, impressively, "I shot the largest grizzly ever seen in the Rocky Mountains."

"Really——"

"Figure to yourself, sir," said Mr. Prout, warming to his subject. "Imagine the scene—my Indian guides were far off—I was alone, sir, on the mighty mountains, when that gigantic grizzly emerged suddenly from the thicket, within six paces of me."

"A dangerous situation," said Mr. Clifford, shaking his head. "A most disconcerting thing to be tackled by any beast at an inopportune moment."

"Exactly, sir. But did I lose my nerve?" asked Mr. Prout. He went on without waiting for Martin Clifford to reply, "No, sir! Not Paul Prout! My rifle sprang to my shoulder—flash! bang!! The grizzly gave one fearful roar, sir, and lay dead at my feet!"

"A lucky shot!" said Mr. Clifford, "but——"

"But for that, sir," said Mr. Prout, "I should not be here talking to you at the present moment."

Martin Clifford wondered whether the shot had been so lucky after all.

"Now, sir," continued Mr. Prout. "I believe I may be of use to you. My life has been one of adventure—until the last twenty years. I have often thought of putting my experiences into a book. But I have little time for

literary work. What would you say, sir ? " said Mr. Prout, with a beaming smile, " if I offered to place the history of my adventurous life at your disposal, to be used in your writings ? "

Mr. Prout paused, doubtless expecting a burst of fervent gratitude.

Martin Clifford suppressed a groan.

As in a dreadful vision, he saw himself chained to Mr. Prout's study, listening to long, long stories of that redoubtable nimrod's adventurous youth, and grappling with the problem of suppressing his yawns unseen !

Fortunately, at that moment the telephone bell rang.

Mr. Prout gracefully excused himself and took up the receiver. Martin Clifford glanced at him, curiously. He was beginning to think these successive telephone calls rather odd ; and he was hardly surprised when Mr. Prout turned from the instrument with a puzzled expression, and said——

" Most extraordinary ! I am requested to proceed to the vicarage without a moment's delay—something must have happened, but Mr. Lambe has given me no particulars. We must postpone our little chat, Mr. Clifford—another time I shall be happy——"

" Pray lose no time," said Mr. Clifford courteously.

Mr. Prout lost no time. Martin Clifford was able to return to the Rag at last, where he was received with open arms.

He noticed there were smiling faces among the juniors. Billy Bunter emitted a fat chuckle.

" He, he, he ! I wonder what they'll all do when they get to the vicarage—yaroooh ! wharrer you stamping on my foot for, Cherry, you beast ? "

" We're quite ready to go on, Mr. Clifford," said Harry Wharton hastily.

And they went on.

If Mr. Clifford had any suspicion with regard to those mysterious telephone calls, he kept it to himself. And the first rehearsal of " Why Nora left Home " proceeded, amid general satisfaction—unshared only by William Wibley, who somehow did not seem to be enjoying himself. And when Mr. Martin Clifford took his leave, he left an enthusiastic Dramatic Society behind him—and William Wibley was the only one unenthusiastic !

THE TENTH CHAPTER

A Surprise for Mr. Lambe!

" MR. QUELCH ! "

Mr. Lambe was in his study at the vicarage, at work on his sermon for the following Sunday, when the Remove master of Greyfriars was shown in.

He rose politely to greet his visitor, though his plump and placid countenance expressed surprise.

" Come in, my dear Quelch ! " said the vicar, " to what do I owe—"

" What has happened ? "

" Eh ? "

" If I can be of any help, I shall, of course, be delighted," said Mr. Quelch. " I hope it is no misfortune——"

" Misfortune——"

" Not a case of serious illness——".

" Illness ? " said the vicar dazedly.

" I came at once," said Mr. Quelch, " I was engaged in a most interesting conversation with Mr. Martin Clifford when I received your call—I fear he may think my departure rather abrupt. But, of course, when I heard that it was important, I came immediately."

Mr. Lambe blinked at him.

" I do not understand you in the least," he remarked. " I quite fail to follow you, Mr. Quelch."

Then it was Mr. Quelch's turn to blink.

" Really, Mr. Lambe, I presume that something of an unusual and untoward nature has happened here——"

" Not in the least."

" Then may I ask why I was so suddenly summoned by telephone ? " asked Mr. Quelch, tartly.

" By—by telephone ! You are not under the impression that I telephoned to you, surely ? "

" Someone from the vicarage, at least. Did you give——"

" You have certainly not been telephoned from here, Mr. Quelch. The fact is that my telephone is out of order—a natural outcome of Government control of the service. So you see that it is impossible."

"You see that rifle hanging there?" said Mr. Prout proudly. "With that rifle, sir, I shot the largest grizzly ever seen in the Rocky Mountains!" (Chapter 9)

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch.

He stared blankly at the vicar.

"Is—is—is it possible that a trick has been played upon me—a foolish practical joke!" he exclaimed, at last.

"I fear so—indeed, it must certainly be so, if you supposed——"

There was a tap on the door, and it opened.

"Mr. Hacker!"

The Shell master of Greyfriars came hurriedly in.

"My dear Lambe——"

"My dear Hacker——"

"Nothing serious, I hope? Of course, I came at once—I had to leave Mr. Clifford, with whom I was engaged at the moment, very hurriedly—pray tell me what has occurred. Any aid or advice I can render——"

"Nothing has occurred, Mr. Hacker," said the vicar. "Only I have just learned from Mr. Quelch that he has been summoned here by a false telephone call——"

"Is it possible? Did you not telephone to me——"

"Certainly I did not."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Hacker.

The three gentlemen looked at one another. Mr. Quelch's jaw closed a good deal like a vice.

"Apparently, we have both been victims of the same practical joker," he said. "It must have been some person belonging to Greyfriars—some mischievious junior, I presume—"

Mr. Hacker breathed hard through his nose.

"I—I—I will find that junior!" he gasped. "I—I—I will make an example of him! Really—really——"

"It was very kind of you to come so immediately, in the belief that I needed your presence, gentlemen," said Mr. Lambe graciously, "but——"

He glanced at his unfinished sermon.

He was quite grateful to the two gentlemen for having turned up so promptly; but, possibly, he would have been still more grateful for their immediate departure. For the sermon had to be finished in time for a meeting of the Dorcas Society—which could not be put off, because the committee of the Blanket Fund had to be seen afterwards. Mr. Lambe was a very busy gentleman. But he was not to be relieved of his visitors so soon as he hoped. A ring was heard at the door-bell.

Tap! The study door opened, and the trim maid announced:

"Mr. Prout!"

The Fifth-form master bustled in.

He was crimson with hurrying, having trodden almost upon Mr. Hacker's tracks on his way to the vicarage.

He glanced at the vicar and at his two colleagues.

"My dear Lambe——"

"Mr. Prout—really——"

"So you are here, Mr. Quelch—and you, Mr. Hacker," exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Good! We will put our heads together over this affair—rely upon us, my dear Lambe. I do not know yet what the difficulty is, but I understand that it is a very important matter. You have three friends here who will not hesitate to——"

"But—but——"

"Will not hesitate, sir, to render any—any advice in their power," said Mr. Prout. "Pray state the circumstances."

"There are no——"

"Be frank, sir, you are among friends," said Mr. Prout. "I hurried off at once, very much to the disappointment of a gentleman I was engaged with at the moment. I am delighted to find Quelch and Hacker here. In times of trouble, all a man's true friends should rally round him. Any counsel I can give you——"

"But—my dear sir——"

"A friend's advice, sir—a friend's advice!" said Mr. Prout. "We three shall straighten out the difficulty, I am sure of that. If it is a question of the anti-Ritualists——"

"Nothing of the kind. I——"

"The fact is, Prout——" began Mr. Quelch.

Mr. Prout waved a plump hand.

"Let Mr. Lambe explain," he said. "Whatever the trouble is, we shall exert our very best endeavours upon it. Now, in a word, Lambe, what is the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter!" said Mr. Lambe, with a touch of tartness. "If you would allow me to speak, Mr. Prout——"

"Really, sir, then why——"

"You have been called here by some practical joker——"

"What!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"I did not telephone——"

"The telephone call came from here, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "Of that I am convinced."

"My telephone is not in working order."

"Eh!"

"And has not been used for days——"

"Oh!"

"So you see, sir, that the telephone call cannot have come from this house," said Mr. Lambe with acerbity. "No doubt some boy in your school has been playing a trick."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"Let us go!" he said. "We shall—er—pursue our inquiries better at Greyfriars."

"A trick!" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "A—a—a trick! I—the victim of a trick! Why, I—I will—will—will——" Words failed Paul Pontifex Prout. "Let us go," he gasped. "Let us discover——"

The three masters went, much to Mr. Lambe's relief. They walked back to Greyfriars more slowly than they had walked to the vicarage—and in a much worse humour.

Gosling, the porter, noted their expressions as they came in, and Gosling smiled. He read in their faces that there was severe trouble in store for somebody. And Gosling charitably hoped that it was for "them young limbs" of the Remove.

Three angry gentlemen were soon making wrathful inquiries in the School House. Harry Wharton and Co. were at tea in No. 1 Study

—a rather late tea—when Billy Bunter rolled in, grinning.

"You fellows are in for it!" announced Bunter.

"Chuck the loaf at him," said Bob Cherry.

"Of course, I'm not going to give you away," said Bunter. "It would serve you right, after the way you've turned down my services in the play. But I won't! Besides, there's no need. He, he, he! Quelchy's on the track!"

"How?" demanded Wharton.

Bunter chuckled.

"I've just heard him on his 'phone," he explained. "He's asking them at the exchange to tell him the number that called up this afternoon—the three calls that came to Greyfriars."

"Oh, my hat!"

"They—they don't tell 'em those things at the exchange," said Bob Cherry, in dismay.

"I'll bet you they'll tell Quelchy," said Bunter. "As it was a Greyfriars number that rung up, they've no reason not to. They'll give him the number of the telephone, and he'll know——"

"Great Scott!"

"The great-scottfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Quelchy will discover that he was called up on a Greyfriars telephone——"

"Phew!"

"Lucky Martin Clifford's gone—we don't want him to see us called over the coals," said Nugent dismally. "I—I fancy he suspected there was something fishy about those telephone calls."

"We—we had to rescue him," said Bob.

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Better tell Quelchy that! Tell him you had to rescue Martin from his terrific jawfulness! He, he, he!"

"It was their own fault, you know," said Harry Wharton, looking round. "They shouldn't have bagged our celebrated author."

"Certainly they shouldn't!" said Johnny Bull. "But——"

"Like their confounded cheek," said Nugent. "But——"

"The butfulness is terrific, my esteemed chums."

Wibley looked into the study. There was a peculiar grin on William Wibley's face.

"You fellows have done it now!" he said.

"Well, what is it now?" asked Bob Cherry, in a tone of patient resignation.

"They've found out that those telephone calls came from Greyfriars, and Quelchy's ordered all the Remove to be questioned."

"Oh!"

"Why couldn't you leave Martin Clifford where he was?" said Wibley. "You can't deny that I advised you to. Didn't I keep on telling you that I could conduct the rehearsal ever so much better——"

"Oh, go and eat coke."

"Well, you've done it now," said Wibley. "I'm sorry for you, but I must say I think it serves you right. When you call in an ass like Martin Clifford——"

"Oh, bump him!" said Bob Cherry.

"Here, I say—leggo, you silly asses—oh!"

The chums of the Remove were worried, and they had a strong inclination to "take it out" of somebody. So they took it out of Wibley. He was irritating; and he came in handy. William Wibley smote the study floor, and yelled.

"Come on, you chaps," called out Vernon-Smith from the passage. "Never mind that idiot now—we're wanted downstairs. Keep it dark if you can."

"If!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I wonder how the thump Quelchy guesses it was us!" said Squiff. "Might have been anybody at Greyfriars who rang up——"

"He knows us, I suppose!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Come on, my infants, like giddy lambs to the slaughter."

And Harry Wharton and Co. proceeded dismally to the Remove form-room, and filed in under the gimlet-eye of their form master.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER

Bunter Breaks the News!

"HI!"

Martin Clifford glanced at the fat junior standing in the road, and slowed down the little two-seater he was driving on the way to Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter waved a fat hand at him.

"Give me a lift?" he called out.

"Oh, certainly!"

Mr. Clifford stopped the little car, and William George Bunter rolled into the vacant seat. The Owl of the Remove had met Mr. Clifford a mile from Greyfriars, and he settled down comfortably for a run back to the school. The young man set the car in motion again.

"Not so fast, please!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I don't like going so fast," said Bunter, agreeably. "I like to take my motor-drives easy."

"Oh!" said Mr. Clifford.

He slowed down. He was in no hurry, if it came to that; but he cast a rather curious glance at his fat companion. Billy Bunter gave him a genial grin.

"Besides, I can't talk when you're racing along," he explained.

"Is there any very strict necessity for conversation in this instance?" inquired Mr. Clifford mildly.

"This is a jolly little car," said Bunter, without heeding the question. "How much did you give for it?"

"The price, naturally," replied Mr. Clifford.

"But how much was that?" asked Bunter inquisitively.

"It was the amount asked by the maker."

"But what amount did he ask?"

"The sum he named."

"What sum did he name, then?"

"The price of the car," answered Mr. Clifford blandly.

Bunter grunted. By this time he had realised that Mr. Clifford was gently pulling his leg, and did not mean to satisfy his inquisitiveness.

"I—I suppose you don't have any accidents?" he said, as the little car dodged round a motor-lorry from Wapshot Camp.

"Seldom," said Mr. Clifford. "The last time I killed my passenger——"

"Eh?"

"What is the matter, Master Bunter?"

"I—I think you'd better go more slowly," said Bunter. "Much more slowly. There's no hurry, you know. There won't be any rehearsal to-day."

Martin Clifford looked at him.

"No rehearsal?" he asked. "I understood that the second rehearsal took place to-day; that is what I am going to Greyfriars for."

"He, he, he! It's all off!" chuckled Bunter. "You see, it came out yesterday about the telephone calls from the prefects' room."

"What?"

"The whole lot of them were called up before Quelchy," explained Bunter. "It came out that Squiff had telephoned, and made those three old donkeys march down to the vicarage. Old Lambe must have been surprised to see them. He, he, he!"

Martin Clifford frowned a little. Probably he had had his suspicions.

"Quelchy was no end ratty!" rattled on Bunter. "Every chap concerned in it has five hundred lines——"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Clifford.

"And the Remove Dramatic Society is forbidden to give any performances this term."

"Oh!"

"Quelchy thinks that's making the punishment fit the crime," said Bunter. "He put it before the head, and the Head gave the verdict. So the play's dished. I don't think Wibley minds much."

"Oh, Wibley does not mind?" asked Mr. Clifford.

"No. You see, he was awfully ratty at having the play taken out of his hands," explained Bunter.

Mr. Clifford gave a start.

"The other fellows are no end wild," said Bunter. "They're going to give the play all the same, so they say—and they're going to get you to back them up all the same."

"My hat!" said Martin Clifford.

"Are you going to do it, old top?" asked Bunter. "I—I say, don't go so fast!"

But Mr. Clifford did not seem to hear this time. He drove on the car at a spanking rate, which deprived him of the further pleasures of Billy Bunter's conversation.

They arrived at Greyfriars very quickly. In the gateway Harry Wharton and Co. could be seen, evidently awaiting the arrival of the celebrated author. They were all looking grim and thoughtful. Like the course of true love, the course of the Remove play was not running smooth. The heroic measures adopted to rescue Martin Clifford the previous

Tap! The study door opened, and the trim maid announced: "Mr. Prout!" The Fifth Form Master bustled in, crimson with hurrying, and glanced at his two colleagues. "Rely on us, my dear Lambe!" said Mr. Prout. "Pray state the circumstances!" (See Chapter 10)

day from the tender mercies of Mr. Quelch, Mr. Hacker, and Mr. Prout had had disastrous consequences. The three masters had naturally been "wrathy." The Head had been called into the matter, after the examination in the form-room. And the fiat had gone forth. For the remainder of that term the Remove Dramatic Society were condemned to a masterly inactivity.

"Here he is!"

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Clifford!"

Mr. Clifford was very warmly welcomed. There was no doubt that the heroes of the Remove were very glad to see him. But Martin Clifford's feelings were mingled. He deeply sympathised with the disappointed dramatists. But he realised that the situation was awkward.

The car was put up, and Mr. Clifford walked in with the crowd of juniors. They marched him into No. 1 Study, where all the members of the dramatic society foregathered. Only one face wore a smile. It was William Wibley's. Wibley was not feeling disappointed. It was unpleasant, of course, to have the play postponed till the next term, when Martin Clifford would no longer be available. But then it would be entirely in the hands of Wibley, and William regarded that as a great improvement on previous arrangements. The too-powerful ally was to render back the kingdom he had inadvertently swallowed,

"Has Bunter told you, sir——" began Harry Wharton.

"Yes."

"The play's prohibited," said Vernon Smith. "But we're not taking it lying down."

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific."

"We're jolly well going to stand up for our rights!" said Bob Cherry.

"You bet!" said Squiff emphatically.

Martin Clifford looked rather dismayed.

"But——" he said.

"Mr. Quelch isn't really a bad sort," said Wharton. "But you know what form-masters are, Mr. Clifford!"

"Ah!"

"He thinks we were awfully cheeky in ringing him up to get you out of his clutches," said Nugent. "What else could we have done?"

"The only way, what?" smiled Mr. Clifford.

"Exactly."

"Of course, it must have been rather awkward when they all met at the vicarage," said Wharton. "But Quelchy shouldn't have bagged our author."

"And Hacker shouldn't!" said Vernon-Smith.

"And Prout shouldn't!" said Bob Cherry.

"Quelchy doesn't understand, you know," continued Wharton. "He actually thinks we've bored you and bothered you, Mr. Clifford, in getting you into our play, and he says your time is too valuable to be taken up with such stuff. He called it stuff!"

"Stuff!" said Bob Cherry, in tones of deep and thrilling indignation. "Our play! Stuff!"

"But—but the word of the Head is law, I suppose," said Martin Clifford, glancing round at the determined faces that surrounded him.

"Well, that depends," said Wharton cautiously.

"The dependfulness is terrific."

"We're not going to stand it," explained Wharton. "Having justice on our side, we're going to give the play all the same. Greyfriars fellows never shall be slaves."

"We're standing up against it," said Johnny Bull, "and we want you to be our leader, Mr. Clifford."

Mr. Clifford jumped.

He liked the Greyfriars juniors immensely, and he was prepared to put himself at their service, even to the extent of postponing the despatch of "copy" to his editor in London. But to find himself selected as the leader of a rebellion at Greyfriars was rather disconcerting.

Evidently the thing was impossible. The excited and exasperated juniors did not see the impossibility. But Martin Clifford did—clearly.

"Now the question is one of ways and means!" said Harry Wharton. "I vote that we turn this meeting into a council of war, with Mr. Clifford in the chair."

"Hear, hear!"

"But——" gasped Martin Clifford.

"If necessary, we shall have a barring-out," said Bob Cherry.

"A—a—a barring-out!"

"Yes, rather! I've heard that you were mixed up in a barring-out when you were a schoolboy, Mr. Clifford."

"Ye-es," said Mr. Clifford, with a faint smile. "But—I—I was very young at the time——"

"You're not exactly a Methuselah now," said Bob. "You'd enjoy it."

"I—I——"

Martin Clifford paused. His dismay was great.

"One moment," he said. "I—I remember that I must telephone—if I may use the telephone——"

"Don't use Quelchy's—he will bag you again——"

"Or Hacker's!"

"Or Prout's!"

"I'll take you to the prefects' room, sir," said Bob Cherry. "Wingate will be glad to see you, and he won't bag you like those bores."

"Thank you very much."

And Martin Clifford followed Bob Cherry down the stairs, while the meeting in No. 1 Study proceeded to pass excited resolutions. Upon one point they were all agreed. They weren't going to stand Mr. Quelch's nonsense, and Martin Clifford was going to be their leader in a revolt which should break all previous records at Greyfriars!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Exit Martin Clifford!

WINGATE of the Sixth greeted the celebrated author cordially when Bob Cherry showed him into the prefects' room. The telephone was placed immediately at the service of Mr. Martin Clifford. Bob Cherry left him there—Mr. Clifford knew his way back to No. 1 Study when he was finished.

The "Gem" author took up the receiver, and asked for his number.

"Fleetway House!" came a voice on the wires.

"Put me through to the editor of the 'Gem,' please."

"Hallo!" came a deep voice a minute later.

"Martin Clifford speaking. Do you still want that copy for Monday?"

"Yes, rather!" said the "Gem" editor emphatically. "Shall be pleased to get it."

"Righto! It's coming along. I'm making one jump from here to the typewriter."

"Good man!"

Martin Clifford had a cautious expression on his face as he looked out of the prefects' room.

The coast was clear.

He walked quietly away; and his steps did not lead him in the direction of No.1 Study.

In that study, the prospective rebels were engaged in warm discussion, while they waited for the return of their prospective leader.

Martin Clifford strolled quietly into the quadrangle.

"I say, Mr. Clifford——"

It was Billy Bunter.

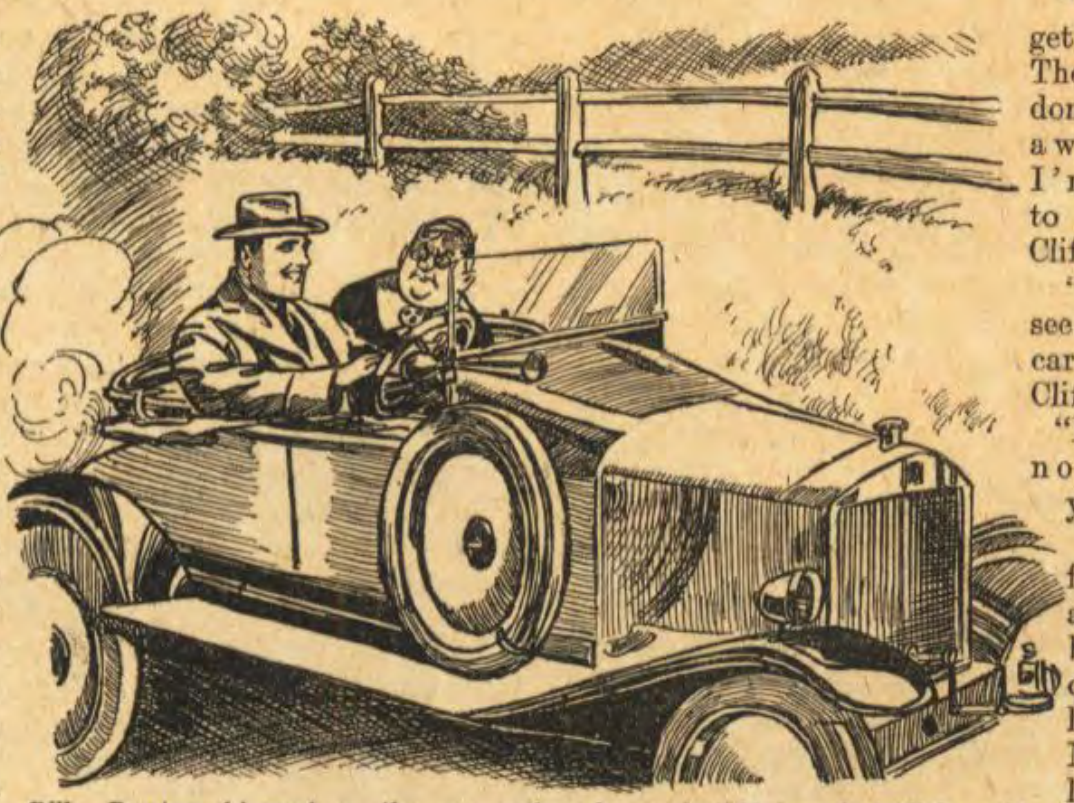
Martin Clifford smothered an exclamation. The fat junior blinked at him curiously through his big spectacles.

"Not going already?" he asked.

"Hem!"

"I had something rather important to say to you, Mr. Clifford," continued Bunter, "I was going to say it in the car, only you were talking all the time——"

"Oh!" Mr. Clifford turned away.



Billy Bunter shivered as the car gathered speed. "Not so fast!" he said. "I like to take my motor-drives easy!" (See Chapter 11)

"I couldn't get a word in. The fact is—don't walk away while I'm talking to you, Mr. Clifford."

"I have to see to my car," said Mr. Clifford.

"But you're not going yet?"

Mr. Clifford did not answer, but he quickened his pace. Much as he liked the heroes of the Remove, he felt that it would be judicious to leave Greyfriars without another meeting—explanations were awkward. Awkward explanations were much better made by post.

Bunter trotted along by his side. He had something very important to say, and he meant to say it.

"The fact is, Mr. Clifford," he resumed, "I was expecting a postal order to-day——"

"Eh!"

"From one of my titled relations," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"It hasn't come!" said Bunter. "You know what it means when the Post Office is run by the Government—chap never gets a postal-order he's expecting. It leaves me in a rather unpleasant position. At the present moment, Mr. Clifford, I am actually stony."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Clifford.

He turned into the garage, and gave his attention to the little two-seater. Bunter blinked at him anxiously.

"We've become jolly good friends, haven't we, Mr. Clifford?"

"My dear boy," said Mr. Clifford, "I have never had of any other person such an opinion as I have of you."

Bunter smiled with satisfaction.

"Good!" he said. "That's right! You wouldn't mind lending me——"

"Perhaps you had better stand aside, while I am starting the car," suggested Mr. Clifford. "If you are not insured, Bunter, it would be judicious, to say the least."

Bunter hopped out of the way very quickly.

"Don't start for a minute, Mr. Clifford. Ten shillings——"

Buzzzzzzz!

"Which I would return by registered post immediately my postal-order arrived——"

Buzzzzz!

"Look here, Mr. Clifford——"

"Stand clear!"

"Yah!" roared Bunter, in great wrath, as the car glided away. "Look here—yah! Beast!"

That was Bunter's parting valediction to the celebrated "Gem" author as the car glided away.

Bunter stood and blinked after it for a few moments, with an enraged blink that bade fair to crack his spectacles.

Then, with a snort, he rolled away to the schoolhouse.

By the time he reached No. 1 Study, Martin Clifford's car was far in the distance.

Billy Bunter put a grinning face into No. 1 Study. He had been disappointed in his expectation of "raising the wind" with Mr. Clifford. But there was a greater disappointment in store for Harry Wharton and Co.

(*Continued on page* 81).

Visit of Queen Elizabeth to Greyfriars.

A Landmark in the History of the Old School.

In the Year of Grace, 1564, Greyfriars School was favoured with a Royal visit.

It was in the sixth year of her thrilling and prosperous reign that "Good Queen Bess," as she was popularly called, decided to pay a visit to the famous Kentish school, where many gallants of her Court had received their education.

The arrival of the Queen on horseback, accompanied by Sir Walter Raleigh and two attendants of less note, caused a profound sensation at the old school. There was, of course, a whole day's holiday to mark the event, and Greyfriars made high festival for Queen Bess was beloved by the boys of Britain.

That period was a remarkable one, because of the number of truly great men that adorned it. William Shakespeare, the greatest writer of all time; Sir Philip Sidney, the flower of perfect knighthood; Francis Drake, Martin Frobisher, and other gallant "sea-dogs"—all flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

An ancient scribe thus records the memorable visit of the Queen:

"Her Majestie did arrive late in ye forenoon, attended by Sir Walter Raleigh and others of her train. When her noble steed cantered into ye quadrangle, 'twas the signal for a mighty cheer from ye goodly assemblie of scholars. Ye venerable headmaster, having made humble obeisance to her Majestie, did assist the Queen to alight from her steed, and did forthwith conduct Her Gracious Majestie around ye stately building.

"The Queen, having dined at Greyfriars and expressed great satisfaction withal, did take her departure; whereupon her Majestie was followed from ye precincts by a cheering throng, whose plaudits the Queen graciously acknowledged.

"'Twas in sooth a memorable occasion, which will endure for all time in ye school's annals."

To face page 80

GOOD QUEEN BESS AT GREYFRIARS

(*Continued from column* 1, *previous page.*)
That was a solace to W. G. Bunter. So he grinned.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Scat!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't you come bothering now, Bunter—we're expecting Mr. Clifford any minute——"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "Martin Clifford's gone!"

"What?"

"Gone!"

"Rats!"

"Kick him, somebody."

Bunter chortled.

"He's gone! I've just seen him off in his car! I was the only fellow he said good-bye to. He said he couldn't leave without saying good-bye to me, as I was the only fellow here he thought anything of. He—yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter broke off as half-a-dozen pairs of hands seized him, and he sat down in the doorway.

Harry Wharton and Co. rushed out of the study. Most of them trod on Bunter in passing, and they left the Owl of the Remove in a breathless state, gasping like a newly landed fish.

They sped downstairs in an excited crowd. Martin Clifford gone! What was to become of the revolt of the Remove, which he was to have led?

Harry Wharton ran into the Head's garage, and looked round.

"The car's gone!" he said.

"Come on!" panted Bob Cherry.

They rushed down to the gates.

In the distance, there was a rapidly moving speck in a cloud of dust. They stared at it, and it vanished as they stared.

Martin Clifford was gone!

. . . .

The next day there was a letter from Martin Clifford, which a crowd of Greyfriars juniors read eagerly.

It expressed the great author's deep regrets, as well as his thanks for a really jolly time at Greyfriars.

Important affairs claimed him; but he hoped to renew his agreeable acquaintance with the Greyfriars fellows at a later date.

It was a very pleasant and polite letter; in fact, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh justly remarked that the politefulness was terrific.

But—Martin Clifford was gone!

"After all, it doesn't matter," remarked William Wibley thoughtfully. "In fact, I may say that it's all for the best."

"What?" howled Bob Cherry.

"I shall take the play in hand," explained Wibley. "I shall re-write it, and I shall play the leading part when it comes off. So you fellows will see, surely, that things couldn't really have happened better——"

"Oh, bump him!" grunted Johnny Bull.

The Remove Dramatic Society bumped Wibley, with energy and satisfaction. It was the only solace left to them, and they made the most of it.

The rebellion of the Remove never came off; and Mr. Quelch never knew what a narrow escape he had had.

He, as well as Harry Wharton and Co., retained very pleasant recollections of Martin Clifford at Greyfriars.

THE END.