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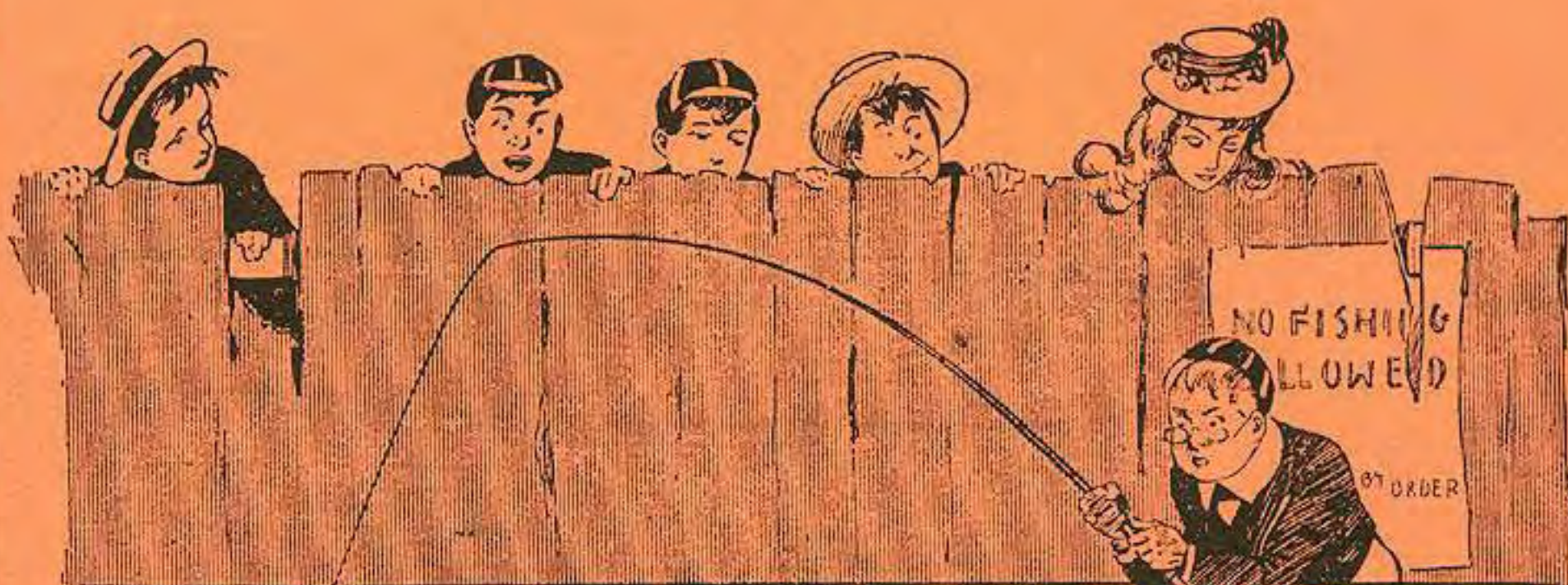
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Vol. 1.

COMPLETE  
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GRAND SCHOOL TALE.

By  
FRANK  
RICHARDS



*Billy's Competition.*



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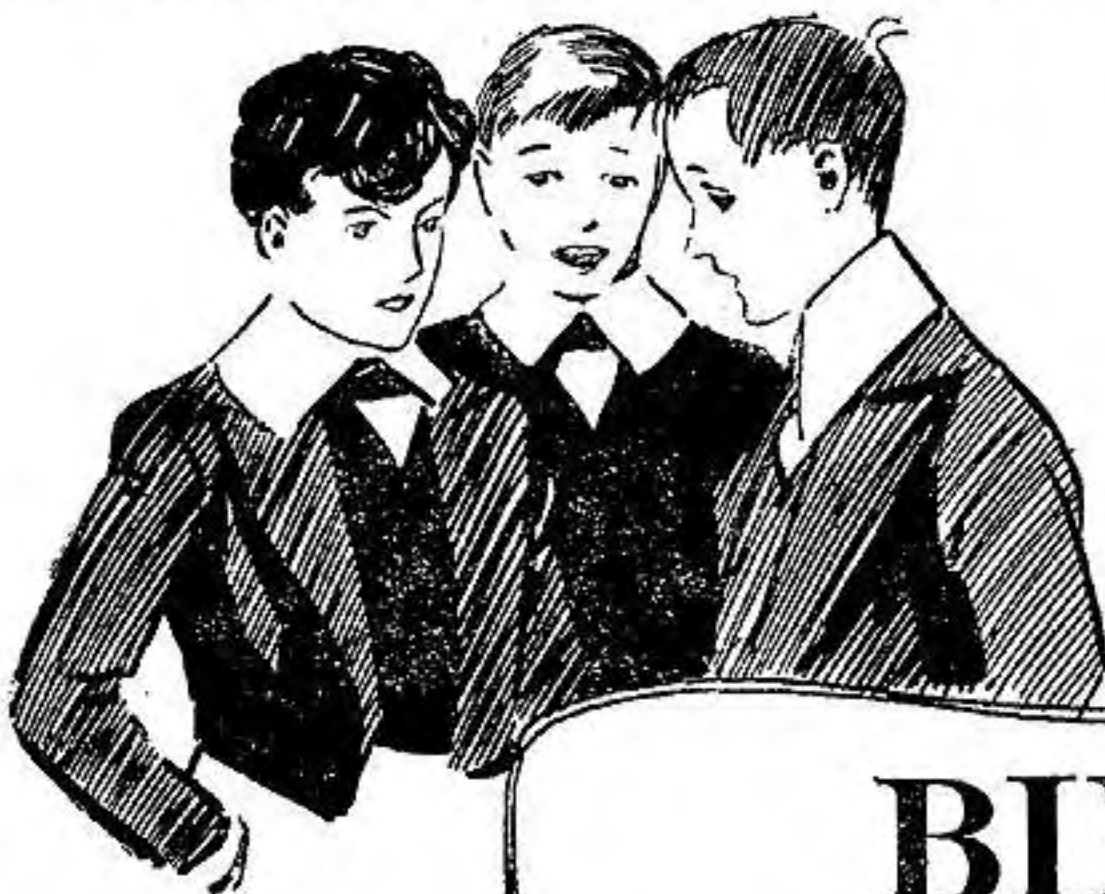
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## BILLY'S COMPETITION

A GRAND SCHOOL TALE, by  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Billy Suggests Fishing!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter made the remark to unheeding ears. Bob Cherry had just come into No. 1 Study at Greyfriars with news, and Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were listening to him, and they had no attention to bestow upon the fat boy of the Remove.

"I say, you fellows——"

"It's a fact," said Bob Cherry. "Skinner told me, and I trotted over myself to see."

"It's curious," said Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows——"

"It's close by the river," went on Bob Cherry. "I saw a lot of workmen on the ground, and I asked one of them, and so there isn't any doubt about it."

"The surprisefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh, in the beautiful English for which he was famous. "A new schoolful establishment so close to the ancient and honourable college of Greyfriars will lead to rowfulness, I expect."

"Very likely," grinned Bob Cherry. "Still, the more rowfulness the merrier. We had some high old times when those foreign fellows were at Greyfriars."

"Jolly exciting times, at all events," said Harry Wharton.

"Still, I should be glad to see some of those German and French chaps again. They were decent fellows."

"The decentfulness was great."

"I say, you fellows——"

"By the way, do you know who is going to keep the new school by the river?" asked Nugent.

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"No, I haven't been able to discover that, nor what sort of a school it is going to be. I don't know whether it's in connection with Greyfriars or not. I know all that land belongs to Greyfriars, of course."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, there is Billy talking. Have you got anything to say, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, looking round.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles with an injured expression.

"Yes, I have, Cherry, and I think you might give me a minute, instead of talking by the yard for hours together."

"Oh, come, I haven't been in the study five minutes, and then you generally talk such rot!" said Bob Cherry. "However, go ahead!"

"I've been thinking of a new idea. You see, I find physical culture rather trying. It's all very well in its way, but it's too much like work."

"Ha, ha!"

"Cricket is rather the same, too, and, besides, there's so much jealousy in cricket. I feel sure I shouldn't be let into the Form eleven——"

"The surefulness is terrific!"

"Upon the whole, I have thought it out that angling is more in my line," said Billy Bunter. "You see, it's a healthy open-air exercise, and you can sit down to it, which is a great advantage."

"I suppose so—to you."

"Then, as you know, I'm short-sighted, and that interferes with cricket, and with physical culture, too, for that matter. You remember how I punched Bulstrode on the face in mistake for the punching-ball."

"Ha, ha! I remember."

"It was unfortunate, and Bulstrode quite lost his temper about it, which was rather unreasonable, considering that it was quite an accident, and I was sincerely sorry."

"Oh, people will lose their tempers over trifles," said Nugent.

"Yes, I know they will. Bob Cherry was quite waxy when I sold his pocket-knife to raise the funds for tea one evening——"

"Oh, never mind that, Billy. Have you finished?"

"Finished what?"

"What you had to say."

"Why, I've hardly started yet. I was saying that, considering all the circumstances of the case, angling is the kind of outdoor sport that will suit me. It's a jolly good thing, not too much like work, and you can sit down and enjoy your sport instead of buzzing about with a bat, or a pair of Indian clubs, and you can have a jolly time without bothering anybody else. In fact, angling is a thing that is agreeable to all parties concerned."

"Especially the fish," remarked Bob Cherry.

"The fish! Oh, I wasn't thinking of the fish."

"No, I suppose you weren't; but I don't suppose you'll be very dangerous to the fish," said Nugent. "Well, Billy if that's all that's troubling you, you can take up angling, and angle for all you're worth, with all the angles you can find in Euclid——"

"That isn't all, you fellows!"

Bob Cherry looked at him.

"Sure, you don't want winding up, Billy?" he asked, with solicitude.

"Oh, don't be funny, Cherry! I've been thinking that a fishing competition in the Remove would be a jolly good idea."

"What sort of a competition?" asked Bob Cherry, with a little more attention.

"Why, you know, we could have a prize for the chap who catches the biggest fish, or the greatest number of trout, or something of that sort," said Billy. "I haven't thought out the details yet. Of course, the other fellows wouldn't really stand much chance against me——"

"Have you had much practice?"

"Well, no, I haven't really gone in for it at all yet," confessed Billy Bunter. "But I'm very keen when I start on a thing, you know. I shall soon be going ahead like wildfire. I've not got a rod yet, but if you fellows felt inclined to club together and buy me one, I shouldn't raise any objection."

"Well, that's generous of you, Billy!" Harry Wharton remarked, with a laugh.

"You'll always find me good-natured," said Bunter, beaming through his big spectacles. "In fact, I should like some of you to get me a rod. Or perhaps I could sell my physical culture apparatus and buy one myself. I will see. It's rather discouraging to an enthusiastic angler to have to content himself with fishing for minnows with a tin-can."

"I suppose so."

"We could get up some ripping prizes for the competitors," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Every fellow who is flush can contribute, that's a simple plan, and any chap who has anything that would do for a prize can put it in. Bicycle lamps, books, rods, cricket-bats, and so on. I could make a selection from the things in this study alone that would make up a very decent prize list."

The chums of the Remove glared at the originator of the great idea.

"If you start selecting any of my property," said Bob Cherry, in measured accents, "I warn you beforehand that there will be a dead Bunter picked up at Greyfriars."

"The deadfulness of the Bunter will be terrific if he lays his honourable fingers on any of my goodful chattels!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, I say——"

"If any of my property figures in a prize list," said Nugent darkly, "I know a fat Owl who will figure at an inquest."

"I think you're very selfish to want to spoil a ripping good idea like that," said Billy Bunter. "Still, I've no doubt I could think of something else for a prize list."

"You'd better."

"The main thing is, what do you think of the idea of a Form competition?"

"Oh, ripping!" said Nugent.

"Do you chaps want to form a committee to run it, then?"

Bob Cherry winked at his chums.

"Well, no, I don't think we'll form a committee just yet," he said. "My view is that, as the originator of the idea, you ought to keep the management entirely in your own hands, Billy."

"Well, I don't want to be selfish——"

"Nothing selfish about that. It's an idea more suitable to your intellect than ours. We should only muck it up."

"The muckfulness would be terrific."

Billy Bunter nodded thoughtfully.

"Well, there's something in that," he agreed. "I suppose that, to tell the candid truth, I have more common sense than any other fellow in this study. Still, I shouldn't mind letting you into the thing if you liked."

"We're not going to take advantage of your generosity, Billy. Just you keep this scheme in your own hands, and run it according to your own ideas. That's the style of a true genius."

"Well, perhaps it is."

"We'll come into the business when the prizes are being distributed," promised Bob Cherry. "We won't be left out of that. Now, you kids, are you coming along to look at the new building with me?"

"Certainly," said Harry Wharton.

"But, I say, you fellows——"

"What, aren't you finished yet?" asked Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"No. I wanted to tell you some more about——"

"How long do you think it will take you to get through with all you have to tell us?" asked Bob Cherry thoughtfully.

"About a quarter of an hour—that's all."

"Well, that's all right. We sha'n't be back for quite half an hour, so you'll have plenty of time," said Bob Cherry, grinning.

"Come on, you chaps."

And the chums of the Remove quitted the study.

"I say, you fellows——"

But the famous four were gone.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Taking the Stranger In!

**H**AZELDENE came out of his study with a letter in his hand, and an extremely pleased expression upon his face, as the chums of the Remove walked down the passage. They stopped to speak to him.

"Come into a fortune?" asked Bob Cherry pleasantly.

Hazeldene laughed.

"No."

"What's the good news, then? Has Bulstrode changed out of your study?"

"No, but——"

"Well, what's the trouble, then?"

"Get it off your chestfulness, my worthy chum," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I've had a letter——"

"Yes, I can see you have."

"From my sister."

"Have you really?"

The chums of the Remove were interested at once. All but Hurree Singh remembered the visit of Marjorie Hazeldene to Greyfriars. The girl had been great friends with the four Removites.

"Yes. And she says she's coming over on Wednesday afternoon."

"Good news!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"Rather," said Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said the nabob, in his purring voice. "I have not had the honourable pleasure of meeting the charming miss, and I am looking to it forwardfully with all my heart."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "Is she coming by train, Hazeldene?"

"No. My people are living only a few miles from Greyfriars now, and Marjorie is going to drive over. It will be jolly. Her visit here before was spoiled by those rotten gipsies kidnapping her. It will be jolly this time."

"If there's anything we can do to help to make it jolly," said Harry Wharton, "you've only got to tell us so."

"Rather!"

"The ratherfulness is great."

"We'll do anything," said Bob Cherry. "We are yours to command, Vaseline, and don't you forget it."

Hazeldene laughed.

"I won't forget it." He put the letter in his pocket. "By the way, have you chaps heard of the new building that's being put up by the river?"

"Yes, we're just going down to have a look at it. Coming along?"

"Yes," said Hazeldene, and he walked on beside Harry Wharton. "I've heard a curious thing about that, too."

"What is it?"

"You remember those foreign chaps who used to be at Greyfriars—they came at the same time as Hurree Singh—"

"I remember."

"Well, I hear that they're coming to the new place near Greyfriars, and that the two schools are to be run in connection. You remember what fearful rows there were when they were in the Remove Form here. The Head found it wouldn't do. Now the idea is to run a sort of branch establishment with the aliens in it."

"There may be something in it," said Harry Wharton, thoughtfully. "I shouldn't be sorry to see them again, either. Some of them were very decent, especially Fritz Hoffmann and Adolphe Meunier. Things will be lively if they come down again."

"I fancy they will. It's only a rumour; but I think there's something in it."

The chums of the Remove crossed a corner of the ancient Close, and passed through the Cloisters. Beyond was a gate in the old stone wall, and on the other side of this the plantation which grew down to the banks of the Sark. The sounds of workmen at busy labour could be heard, and there was the crash of a falling tree. The little gate in the wall was fastened with rusty bolts, and was never used. It did not take the chums of the Remove long to climb over it.

A curious sight met their gaze.

A large number of trees had been felled, and a glimpse of the winding river could now be had from the school wall. Workmen were busy under the direction of a shouting foreman. It was evident that the ground was being cleared for a new building.

"They will be jolly close neighbours," Bob Cherry remarked. "When the building is up there will be only the Cloisters between us."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"They will be some time putting it up, though,"

Hurree Singh uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Look, my worthy chums."

The nabob's dusky finger pointed to a figure in Etons standing beside a cart, with hands in pockets, gazing at the work of demolition.

The youth from Bhanipur slid off the gate.

"It is the esteemed rotter, Hoffmann."

"By jove," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "so it is! It's Fritz Hoffmann, who was here with the German chaps, and who wrecked our study."

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh was running at top speed towards his old acquaintance.

Hoffmann, the burly, good-tempered German lad who had been well liked during his stay at Greyfriars, in spite of the rows in the Remove, did not see him. He was standing looking on with great interest at the felling of a tree, and was not aware of the proximity of the Greyfriars juniors.

Hurree Singh, in the exuberance of his joy at seeing a familiar form again, rushed up to the German and hugged him round the neck. Hoffmann gave a startled cry.

"Mein gootness, vat vas tat after?" he ejaculated.

He staggered under the shock of the sudden embrace.

"My worthy chum—"

But Hoffmann had caught his foot in a root as he staggered, and went down in a heap, with the excited Nabob of Bhanipur sprawling over him.

"Ow! Mein Himmel! Mein pack is proke! Ow!"

"My worthy friend," gasped Hurree Singh, "I am joyfully glad to—"

"You villain tat trow me ofer! I gif you trashing!"

"The thrashfulness to a chumful friend—"

"I gif you peans!"

The German, who could hardly be expected to guess that he had been bumped over with the friendliest motives in the world, gripped Hurree Singh round the neck, and rolled over on the ground with him.

"Now I gif you peans."

"My worthy chum—"

"I gif you chum! You pump me ofer and preak my packs mit yourself, ain't it. I gif you peastly peans, you peast."

"Ow! My esteemed friend, please do not inflict the smitefulness of the fist on my honourable nose! Ow! My worthy nose is full of great painfulness—ow! Rescue, my worthy chums, rescue!"

"I gif you peastly peans!"

"Rescuefulness, my esteemed friends!" howled the unlucky nabob.

Harry Wharton and his companions, laughing too much to be able to run very fast, arrived on the scene, and Harry jerked Hoffmann off the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hold on, kid—"

"I hold on to dat nigger—"

"Cheese it," said Bob Cherry. "What the dickens have you got to fight about, you sausage devourer?"

"I fights him mit fist for pumping me on croud!"

"It was an unfortunate accident," wailed the nabob, sitting up and nursing his swollen nose tenderly. "I rushed to you, hearty glad to bestow the greetfulness, and then you hammered my worthy nose with your esteemed fist."

The German lad grinned.

"Den I vas mistaken mit myself after," he remarked.

"That is the carefulness."  
"You gif me friendly greeting, and I poonch your nose. I vas sorry."

The nabob staggered to his feet.

"The sorrowfulness of my esteemed acquaintance is very gratifying; but it does not remove the painfulness from the smitten nose."

"You nearly preak my peastly pack mit yourself."

"The regretfulness is terrific."

"Oh, you can call it a draw," said Harry Wharton. "Your nose matches Hoffmann's back, Inky. But what are you doing down here, Hoffmann?"

"I? I haf come."

"Yes; I can see you have come; but what have you come for?"

"To stay."

"To stay at Greyfriars?"

"Yes," beamed Hoffmann. "I stay at Greyfriars until de new school was retty."

"Then it's really true?"

"Vat is really true?"

"You chaps are coming back?"

"Ja, ja! Ve come to stay in tat building ven it is puilt," said Hoffmann. "I come to stay at Greyfriars until dea. You see?"

"Yes; I see."

"I look at tat place before I come to te school after," said Hoffmann. "I joost arrive mit de train at Friardale, ain't it?"

"And you're coming back into the Remove?" said Nugent.

"Ja, ja."

"Any more of your fellows coming?"

"Tat I know not. But I know tat I vas hungry after my journey before, and I vas glad to have something to eat mit myself after."

"Oh, come along," said Harry Wharton. "We'll stand a feed on this joyful occasion. Can you get over the gate?"

The German sniffed.

"Ach! I could joomp over te gate if I like mit myself."

It was a small gate set in the wall, and certainly a good athlete could have jumped it; but the chums of the Remove knew what Hoffmann did not—that a late fall of rain had made a huge puddle on the inner side of the gate.

Bob Cherry shook his head solemnly.

"You think you could jump that gate, Hoffy?" he asked, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the gate, and then at the German.

"Ach! I say tat I easily joomp it."

"Bet you you don't do it."

"I do not make pets; but I—"

"You don't make pets? What has that got to do with it?"

"I say I vas not make pets!"

"Pets! I wasn't talking about pets. I said—"

"I say I make no pets!"

"Don't you keep white rabbits?" asked Nugent. "You used to when you were at Greyfriars, I remember."

Hoffmann grew red in the face.

"I say I make not pets!"

"He means the betfulness," purred Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "It is the excellent Germanfulness of his esteemed accent."

"Oh, bets," said Bob Cherry, comprehending at last. "You won't make bets. Well, I don't want you to; that was only a figure of speech. Bet you you don't jump that gate."

"I vill joomp it easily after."

"But what about the waterfulness—" began the nabob.

Nugent stamped on his toe.

"Ow! My toeful extremity is crushed! Ow!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"The stampfulness was brutal. I—"

"Cheese it. Are you going to jump it, Hoffy?"

"Ja, ja! I easy joomp it before!"

"Then do it, kid, and don't talk so much about it. You can take a run, and we'll get on the wall to watch you," said Nugent.

"Tat is all right after."

"Come on, kids, and let's see the wonderful performance," said Bob Cherry. "I'll wager anybody's money that Hoffy is sorry he tried it."

"Rather."

"But the waterfulness—"

Nugent seized Hurree Singh by the arm, and dragged him away. The chums of the remove climbed on the wall on either side of the little gate, and sat straddled there to watch the German's jump.

They had a view of both sides of the gate now—Hoffmann on one side, and the deep, wide puddle on the other. The gate, being a solid structure, Hoffmann could not see what was waiting for him. He was retreating to take a good run for the jump. It looked an easy one for an athletic fellow, but he meant to make sure, and to well clear the gate in order to show the unbelieving Greyfriars fellows what he really could do in the jumping line.

"But, my esteemed friends, you have forgotten the waterfulness of the puddle on the inner side of the gate," said Hurree

Singh. "Our Germanful chum will land in the water, and make himself covered with wetfulness."

"You inky ass, that's the joke."

The nabob comprehended, at last, and his dusky face beamed.

"Ah, I perceive. I did not observe the great jokefulness before, my worthy chums. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle, or you'll give the game away."

"The cacklefulness will be terrific when Hoffmann has made the honourable jump."

"Yes, rather."

"Here he comes."

"Now look out for the jumpfulness."

Fritz Hoffmann was taking his run.

He came towards the gate in great style, and rose to the leap, clearing the top of the gate by a good six inches.

Then he landed on the other side!

There was a terrific splash, and muddy water spurted up on all sides, and Hoffmann gave a roar.

"Ach! Himmel!"

The surprise was a startling one. Hoffmann was simply smothered in mud, and the Removites on the wall shrieked.

"Ach!"

The German boy stumbled in the pool, and sat down, and there was another splash.

"Ach! I am vet! Ach!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You peastly peasts! You know tat te vatter tere, and you make this a great choke mit yourselves pefore," roared Hoffmann.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The jumpfulness was great, but the jokefulness was terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You peastly pounders——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fritz Hoffmann crawled out of the puddle. He was splashed and muddy all over, and looked rather limp. The boastfulness seemed to be quite gone.

"Ach! Tat is vat you call rotten!" he grunted. "Ven I gets mein barty to tat place, I makes you all sit up mit yourselves after."

Harry Wharton slid off the wall.

"Well, you said you could jump it," he remarked. "'Look before you leap' is an old proverb, and a good one. But come along, and we'll clean you and feed you."

"And he needs it," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The needfulness is only equalled by the mudfulness of our worthy friend."

And Fritz Hoffmann was marched off into the school by the chums of the Remove. And a good "feed" in No. 1 Study was all that was required to fully restore his good-humour.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Bulstrode Contributes!

THE chums of the Remove had of late been in a state which Bob Cherry described as "broke to the wide," but that was altered, now. Fresh supplies of pocket-money had come in, and the famine in cash was over. The result was seen in the study feed given in honour of the return of Fritz Hoffmann to the fold.

On the occasion of a feed, Billy Bunter was generally very ruck to the fore. He would feed with anybody, friend or foe, only making one condition on any occasion—that there was "grub," and plenty of it. There was plenty now; but strange to say, Billy Bunter for once did not show so keen and intense an interest in a feed as he was wont to do.

He cooked the eggs and bacon and sausages, but in a perfunctory manner. He ate enough for any three juniors; but his brow was thoughtful all the time, and he evidently was not bestowing his whole attention upon the meal.

Fritz Hoffmann, who knew him of old, looked at him curiously once or twice.

"Vat vas te matter mit Bunter?" he asked at last.

Billy started out of a reverie.

"I'm thinking out a new idea," he said.

"Billy is getting up a fishing competition," explained Harry Wharton. "He's going to offer prizes for the largest number of angles found in Euclid——"

"Nothing of the sort, Wharton! The idea is to give prizes to the best anglers for the biggest fish caught, and the greatest number of fish. The prizes will be supplied by—by—I don't quite know who yet; but any fellow who has anything to give away will be allowed to contribute without paying anything."

"That's liberal of you, Billy," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, I'm rather a liberal chap," said Bunter. "Hoffmann can enter the competition if he likes. We don't bar anybody, even measly aliens."

"Vat is tat?" exclaimed Hoffmann, starting to his feet so suddenly that Billy Bunter jumped and knocked over his cup of tea with his elbow into Bob Cherry's lap. Bob jumped up with a howl.

"Ow! You've scalded me!"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry; but it was all Hoffmann's fault for making me jump like that."

"You young Owl——"

"It's no good blaming me. I've already explained that it was Hoffmann's fault. He made me jump so suddenly."

"You call me——"

"I didn't call you. I was just saying——"

"You call me measly alien!"

"No, I didn't. I said we don't bar measly aliens. That wasn't calling you one, was it? You've no business to jump up like a jack-in-the-box, and make me spill my tea over Bob Cherry's trousers. It's the last cup there was in the pot, and now I shall have to go without."

"What about my trousers?" roared Bob Cherry, mopping himself down with a handkerchief.

"I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry."

"I shall have to go and change them!" growled Bob. "I've a good mind to knock your two silly heads together!"

"You will not knock mein head together!"

Bob Cherry stamped out of the study. Billy Bunter looked into his empty teacup with an injured expression, and then into the teapot. But the leaves had been drained dry.

"I think it's very hard I should have to go without my last cup of tea," he said. "Never mind; I see Cherry has not started on his yet, so I can have it——"

"What about Bob?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Well, it would very likely be cold when he came back, anyway," said Billy Bunter, gulping down the tea. "This is all right, so I excuse you, Hoffmann. But please don't make me jump like that again. I might have spilt the tea over myself! As I was saying, we don't bar anybody in the fishing competition, and all you chaps can come in. I'm going to make up the prize list soon, and I think it will be a really imposing one."

"Vere vill te prizes come from after?"

"They will have to be contributed, as I said. There are lots of things that would do. I am thinking of putting up my dumb-bells as a prize. They cost fifteen shillings—you remember lending me the money, Inky?—and they will make a ripping first prize. If the other fellows won't contribute, I shall buy the rest of the prizes myself."

Hoffmann stared at him.

"Vere vill you get te money? I remember mit mineself tat you neffer had te money ven I vas at Greyfriars pefore after."

"Yes, I think I was rather short of money at that time; but I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow, and that will set me upon my feet again financially," explained Billy Bunter. "There has been some delay in that postal-order coming, but it is pretty certain to turn up to-morrow morning; so that will be all right."

"The all-rightfulness will be great if the postal-order turns up trumpfully," said Hurree Singh. "Then everything will be gardenfully lovely. But if it does not come——"

"Oh, it's no good discussing a remote contingency like that!" said Bunter. "It's pretty sure to come. But if I offer a really first-class pair of dumb-bells, some of you chaps ought to contribute something. Wharton's new bat, for instance——"

"Not much," said Harry, laughing.

"Well, I'll draw up the prize list, and we'll get the things later," said Billy Bunter. "Bulstrode has promised to come into the competition. He has offered to contribute a prize, and he says he will send it into the study. I am rather curious to know what it is going to be. Bulstrode's people have lots of money, and so I think it is bound to be something rather decent."

The chums of the Remove grinned. They thought it very probable that Bulstrode was imposing upon the simplicity of the fat boy of the Form, but they did not say so. Harry Wharton rose. Tea was over, and it was time for prep. to be done. Hoffmann took his leave, and went to visit other acquaintances at Greyfriars. The chums of the Remove cleared the table. Bob Cherry came in, and they settled down to work.

The juniors could work hard as well as play hard, and the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars was not a Form in which work could be shirked. Nothing was heard in the study for the next half-hour but steady breathing and the scratching of pens. Harry Wharton, having finished his work, helped Billy Bunter. Bunter was not a bright youth in the scholastic line, and he usually obtained Harry's help in difficulties; and Wharton was always willing to give it.

"Finished," said Bob Cherry, with a yawn. "I feel like a run in the Close now, for a little fresh air. Any of you fellows coming along?"

"I shall be pleased to bestow the alongfulness upon my esteemed chum," said the Nabob of Bhanipur cheerfully.

There was a tap at the door, and Hazeldene looked in. He had a small parcel in his hand, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string.

"Bunter here!" he asked, looking round.

"Yes, I'm here," said Billy, blinking. "What do you want, Vaseline? Have you come to pay me that ten shillings?"

Hazeldene coloured.

"Bulstrode asked me to look in and bring you this," he said, without replying to Billy Bunter's question.

"Oh, I see! It's Bulstrode's contribution to the prize list," said Billy Bunter, looking extremely pleased. "I am glad he hasn't forgotten. I half thought he was joking, really, when he made the offer."

"Well, here it is," said Hazeldene.

He put the parcel on the table, and left the study. Billy Bunter looked at the parcel, and opened his penknife and cut the string. His fat face was beaming with satisfaction.

"I say, you fellows, it's jolly good of Bulstrode to turn up trumps like that, isn't it?" he said. "I dare say he means it as an example to you."

"It is extremely gratifying for the esteemed rotter to turn up triumphfully, my worthy chum! But what is in the parcel?"

"I don't know yet; but it is bound to be something pretty good, as Bulstrode has plenty of money. He used to lend me money when he was in this study, before Cherry came to Greyfriars. I'll be bound this is something really good."

Bunter opened the brown paper in which the contribution to the prize list was carefully wrapped. A small wooden box was revealed. Billy Bunter tried to open the lid, but he could not. There was no lock, but the lid was fast to the box.

"That's curious," said Harry Wharton; "the lid has been glued down."

"I suppose there's something very valuable in that box," said Bunter. "There isn't a lock, you see; and I dare say Bulstrode knew he couldn't trust Vaseline."

"Oh, cheese that!"

"Well, you know Vaseline isn't over honest. You know——"

"I know you're an ass! Why don't you open the box?"

"I'm just going to. The lid will have to be prised up, you see: Will you lend me your knife, Nugent?"

"Why don't you use your own?"

"It might break the blade."

"Why, you young villain! Suppose you broke the blade of mine!" exclaimed Nugent wrathfully.

"Well, you see——"

"Well, I'm not going to lend you my knife."

"I think you're very selfish, Nugent. Still, I suppose I must open the box somehow," said Bunter. And he inserted the blade of his knife under the lid of the box, and tried to prise it up. Snap! The box did not open, but the blade snapped off the knife. Billy Bunter cast a glance of deep reproach at Nugent.

"Perhaps you'll lend me your knife now, Nugent."

"Perhaps I won't!" said Nugent.

"Will you lend me yours, Cherry?"

"Not half!"

"Wharton——"

"Why don't you try a chisel?" said Harry, laughing.

"There's one in the cupboard."

"I think you might have thought of that before I broke my knife, Wharton. Give me out the chisel, will you, Inky?"

"Certainly, my worthy chum."

The nabob handed over the chisel, and Billy Bunter jammed the sharp edge under the lid of the box and wrenched. Snap! This time it was the box that gave way.

The lid flew up, and so did a cloud of cayenne pepper, and the next moment Billy Bunter was coughing and sneezing like a maniac.

For a moment the chums of the Remove stared at him in amazement, and then they burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Grrrr! Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

Billy Bunter clasped his head in both hands, and sneezed as if by steam. His spectacles fell off, and his face streamed with tears as he sneezed and sneezed. The grinning juniors crowded back from the box. They were beginning to sneeze too.

"Atchoo—what a beastly—atchoo—beastly trick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's a surprise packet, Billy. But I don't know how a prize-winner would feel when he got that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The contribution from Bulstrode was really a clever contrivance. A spring was arranged inside, something on the system of a "Jack-in-the-box," and was depressed by the lid. When the lid was removed, it sprang up, naturally, and scattered the pepper in the face of the person who opened the box.

"Atchoo! Atchoo!"

"It's rather a mean trick," said Harry Wharton; but he was laughing, too. "But it's just like Bulstrode."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo! I shall never forgive Bulstrode for this beastly trick. I shall never—atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"My hat! Mind your nose doesn't come off, Billy!"

"Atchoo! Yooroo!—grrrr-r-r-rooh! Atchoo! Did you over—choo—choo—atchoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go and stick your head in a bath of water," said Nugent sympathetically. "I'm really getting rather alarmed for your nose, Billy."

"The bathfulness would be a wheezy good idea," said the

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Nabob of Bhanipur; "but the runfulness into anybody in the passage might lead to ructions."

"Choo-choo-atchoo! Ow!"

Billy Bunter rushed from the study, sneezing away, and the yells of laughter followed him.

"It's really a bit too rough on Billy," said Harry, wiping the tears from his eyes. "I'm sorry, but—— Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove shouted again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Mainly About Pepper.

BILLY BUNTER had left his spectacles in the study, but his eyes were too full of water for him to have seen through them, anyway. He rushed along the passage in the direction of the bath-rooms, and dashed right into a stalwart Sixth-Former who was coming towards him.

It was Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars. Wingate had seen Bunter coming, but he did not step aside, naturally expecting the junior to do so. But Bunter did not see him, and he rushed right into him, and clasped him about the waist to save himself from falling.

"Ow, you fathead!" exclaimed Bunter. "What do you want to get in the way, for?"

"You young rascal——"

"Dear me, is that you, Wingate? I'm sincerely sorry. I didn't know it was you. I should never have called you a fathead if I thought you could hear me——"

"What have you been doing——"

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"Have you got a cold?"

"I—atchoo—I—atchoo—choo——"

"What do you mean by dashing into me like that?"

"I didn't see you. I really didn't—choo—choo—atchoo!"

Wingate began to sneeze himself. Bunter's waistcoat and jacket were thick with cayenne pepper, and his hair was full of it. He had scattered a considerable amount over the captain of Greyfriars in the shock of the collision.

"You young rotter! You're—schoo-schoo-atchoo—you're smothered in pepper—atchoo, atchoo—you're——"

"It wasn't my fault, Wingate. I didn't mean to choo-choo—atchoo!"

"You—you—get out of my sight!"

Billy Bunter was only too glad to obey. He blundered along the passage, and Wingate went on his way sneezing and wrathful.

"Bunter!"

It was Mr. Quelch's voice. The master of the Remove was looking sternly at the unfortunate Billy. Billy could not see him, but he knew the voice, and he came to a stop, rubbing his dripping eyes with his knuckles.

"Bunter, how dare you—what is the matter?"

"Choo-choo-atchoo!"

"Have you a cold in your head?"

"Choo-choo—it's pep-pep-per—choo, atchoo!"

"The boy seems to be demented. Come here, Bunter!" The Remove-master caught the junior by the shoulder, and shook him. "Now, Bunter—dear me, he is smothered with pepper—atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"I—choo—I can't help—choo-atchoo!"

"Atchoo—atchoo," sneezed Mr. Quelch. "You bad boy—you young rascal—I—get away! Go at once! Go!"

"Certainly, I—choo—atchoo!"

"Will you go?" roared the Remove-master.

Billy Bunter scuttled along the passage. He left the master of the Remove sneezing away at express speed.

"Ach! Vat is te matter mit Punter after?"

It was the voice of Fritz Hoffmann.

"Get out of the way!" yelled Billy desperately. "Get out——"

"Ach! I get not out of te vay for any Engleesh poy tat is in te school pefore!" said the German junior. "I tiak——"

"You ass! I—atchoo!"

"Who you call ass, hein?"

Biff! Billy Bunter ran right into the obstinate German and clasped him round the neck.

"Now, you asked for it!" growled Billy, rubbing his peppery head into Hoffmann's face. "Now, I hope you like it?"

"Ach, Himmel! Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"How do you like it?"

"Ach! I vill—atchoo—atchoo!"

Hoffmann reeled against the wall, sneezing as if his head would come off, and Billy Bunter scuttled off, and reached the bath-room and shut himself in. To put his burning face under the tap was the work of a moment. The gush of cold water relieved him somewhat, but he sneezed and sneezed and sneezed.

A minute more, and Fritz Hoffmann was hammering at the door.

"Open tat door after!"

"Atchoo—atchoo!" replied Billy.

"I vill duck you mit yourself in te path, aint it. I vill vipe up te floors mit you after. I vill pulverise you pefore!"

"Go and eat coke!" yelled Billy, safe behind a bolted door.

"I vill——"

"Hallo, Hoffmann! Anything wrong?"

The chums of the Remove had followed Billy, thinking he might come to some harm in his blind career. Hoffmann's hammering at the door drew them to the spot.

The German glared round.

"Ja! I—atchoo—I have been made to sneeze mit meinselb by fat poy Punter. I have sneezes as if I plow mein Kopf off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I vipes up to floors mit Punter after!"

"It wasn't his fault," said Harry Wharton laughing. "He's had a trick played on him. He isn't doing it for fun, you know."

"I care not! I vipes up to floors mit Punter!"

"That you don't!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunter's been through it quite enough, without having a fat German on his neck."

"Who you call fat Sherman?"

"You, my pippin!"

"I vipes up to floors mit you after I vipe up to floors mit Punter pafore."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You're not going to wipe up any floors with Billy Bunter."

"I vipe up to floors——"

"The wipefulness will be a boot on the other foot," said Hurree Singh, shaking his head. "Our worthy and esteemed Germanful chum will have the honourable march of the frog if he does not what you call sinmer downfully."

"You inky peast——"

"The inkfulness is only equalled by the punchfulness of the fist!" said the Nabob. "I shall bestow the thrashfulness upon the esteemed Hoffmann."

He pushed back the white cuffs from his dusky wrists, and squared up to the German junior.

"The esteemfulness I entertain for our worthy Germanful chum will not allow me to grant him the permitfulness to insult a Nabob of Bhanipur. Will the august rotter put himself up fistfully?"

"I vipe up to floors mit you and Punter and Sherry!"

"Then make the commencefulness with me," said the nabob.

"I vipe——"

"What is this disputing here?"

Mr. Quelch was bearing down upon the juniors, and there was a gleam in the eye of the Remove-master.

"If you please, sir," said Hurree Singh, "we were having the little argumentfulness, and have terrific regretfulness that it should have disturbed the serenity of our honoured and revered instructor sahib."

The instructor sahib frowned.

"You know you must not dispute in the passages. Go away at once, all of you, and don't let me hear any more of this."

"The hearfulness of the honoured sahib is the obeyfulness——"

"You may go."

And the juniors went. But it was a quarter of an hour before Billy Bunter ventured out of the bath-room, and then he kept a wary eye open for Fritz Hoffmann.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Prize List—Marjorie Arrives.

**F**IRST prize, a splendid pair of dumb-bells, cost fifteen shillings——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you mumbling about, Billy?"

Billy Bunter looked up, and stopped chewing his pencil for a moment. He was sitting on a bench under the elms, with a paper on his knee, and was evidently in the throes of some sort of composition.

"Hallo, Cherry!"

"What are you muttering about?"

"I'm making up the prize-list for the fishing competition."

"Good! How are the prizes going on?" said Bob Cherry with a grin. "I suppose you are going to put Bulstrode's surprise packet at the top of the list?"

"I am not going to do anything of the sort. The first prize is a pair of first-class dumb-bells, cost fifteen shillings——"

"Yes, they cost Hurree Singh that."

"I am going to cash up when my postal order comes."

Bob Cherry laughed. It was the day after the pepper incident, and a half-holiday, a glorious May afternoon. Bob Cherry was dressed with unusual care. His cap was straight on his curly hair for once, his collar quite clean, and his necktie neatly tied.

"Didn't the postal-order come this morning?" he asked.

Billy Bunter shook his head with a puzzled look.

"No; there was some delay in the post, I suppose. It hasn't come to hand yet. I have several little accounts to settle when it turns up. I'm making up the prize-list now, but I'm not putting down the prizes I am going to buy myself in case there is any further delay about the postal-order."

"Well, that's thoughtful of you. Let's hear what the prizes are, and I'll see if I'll go in for the fishing competition."

"First prize, a splendid pair of dumb-bells, cost fifteen shillings. Second prize, a pocket-knife with three blades, a corkscrew, tin-opener, file, and scissors."

"That's worth having," said Bob Cherry. "It wouldn't be any good to me, though, as I've got one exactly like that."

Billy Bunter coloured a little for some reason, and went on hastily:

"Third prize, a magnificent new cricket bat——"

"That would just suit me, and the pocket-knife would suit Wharton. He doesn't want a bat, as he's just had a ripping new one from his uncle."

"Fourth prize, a 'Golden Queen' bicycle lamp, almost new——"

"One like Nugent's, I suppose?"

"Fifth prize, a set of ivory chess, carved in India, beautiful workmanship——"

"My hat! Has Hurree Singh given you his chess as a prize——"

"Sixth prize——"

"Wait a minute," said Bob Cherry suspiciously. "Where are you getting all these prizes from?"

"Oh, they will be contributed!"

"By whom?"

"Oh, various fellows!" said Billy Bunter evasively.

Bob Cherry's hand dropped heavily upon the Owl's shoulder.

"Look here, Billy——"

"Please don't shake me, Cherry. You'll very likely make my glasses fall off, and if you break them you will have to pay for them."

"Whose set of chess are you offering as a prize?"

"Oh, of course, they belong to Hurree Singh——"

"Has he given them to you?"

"Well, not exactly——"

"Whose new bat is it? Wharton's?"

"Well, of course, Wharton wouldn't be mean about a thing like that——"

"Whose bicycle lamp? Nugent's?"

"Nugent couldn't object to making a contribution to a scheme that will bring a lot of kudos to the study——"

"And whose pocket-knife?" howled Bob Cherry. "Whose pocket-knife, you young brigand? Mine, I suppose!"

"If you are going to make a fuss about a pocket-knife, Cherry——"

"Then it is mine——?"

"If you like to offer it as a prize——"

"But I don't like, you blithering young ass."

"Oh, very well, I will cross that off!" said Billy Bunter resignedly. "It's a great pity to have a good idea spoiled through a little meanness on the part of one's friend, I think."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"You'd better cross the rest off," he said. "The best thing you can do with that prize-list is to burn it."

"Oh, I shall be able to work up the prizes!" said Bunter confidently. "Even if you fellows are so horribly mean as to refuse to contribute a few things, my postal-order will very likely come in time, and even if it doesn't, there's the entrance fees——"

"Oh, are you going to charge entrance fees?"

"I didn't intend to at first, but upon the whole I think it will be imperative, to cover the expenses of the competition."

"What expenses will there be?"

"Well, I shall have to expend a certain proportion of the entrance fees in purchasing prizes," said Bunter. "And then there are, of course, my time and trouble to be paid for."

"Oh, of course!"

"I give the idea itself for nothing, without making any charge whatever. But I think ten bob for the trouble of getting up the competition wouldn't be out of the way."

"Not a bit of it."

"Then I shall want a bit of a feed before adjudging the prizes to keep me up, and I put that down at half-a-crown. It's best to be moderate, as fellows are so unreasonable, and they cavil at the slightest thing when it's a question of money."

"Yes, it's rough on a genius," said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"You're right, Cherry; it is rough," assented Billy Bunter.

Then I shall want to expend a pound at least in prizes. That will make thirty-five bob. Well, if thirty-five fellows enter, and pay a shilling entrance fee, that will cover it. If there are more than thirty-five entrants, the residue goes towards expenses."

"If there are more than thirty five fellows enter at a bob a time!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "I think it's really hardly likely that there will be more than thirty-five, so you needn't bother. How many are in as yet?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, no one has entered yet——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't snigger, Cherry; the idea hasn't had time to work yet. I expect a big rush of entrants when I get the prize-list posted up on the notice-board."



"You'd better put a footnote on it, 'Come early to avoid the crush,'" said Bob Cherry, grinning. "Billy, my boy, I don't think there will be any necks broken over it. Hallo, Nugent, I see you've got a new necktie on!"

Nugent joined them under the elms. He coloured slightly at Bob Cherry's remark. He certainly had a new necktie on, and he was wearing his silk hat instead of a cap, and his clothes were nicely brushed.

"What's the row, Nugent? You look as neat as a new pin." "Well, you're looking rather tidy yourself," said Nugent, glancing at Bob. "Your cap is on straight, and your boots are not muddy."

"Well, you see——"

Nugent chuckled.

"Same here. I don't want Hazeldene's sister to see me looking a rowdy."

"That's it. She'll be here soon."

"May as well get down to the gates. Of course, we don't want to be too forward about the matter, but there's no harm in being on the spot to take your hat off, is there?"

"Not at all. I was just thinking the same."

"Come on, then."

"I say, you fellows——"

But Billy Bunter was left talking to the desert air. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent strolled down to the great gates of Greyfriars.

"What do you think about my cap?" asked Bob, a little doubtfully. "Think I had better run in and change it for a topper?"

Nugent hesitated.

"Say what you think, old chap," said Bob Cherry. "It won't take me many minutes. I was rather doubtful about it when I put the cap on, only a fellow feels so much more comfy in a cap."

"Well, Bob, old man, a topper does look a little more—more attentive," said Nugent. "A fellow looks better raising a topper than snatching a rag off his head."

"Well, if you look at it like that——"

"That's how I do look at it; but please yourself."

"I think—— Hallo, here's Wharton! He's got a straw on."

Harry Wharton joined them. Harry was always remarkably clean and tidy in his person, and his clothes were always in good order; but he also showed a little improvement on the present occasion.

His collar had evidently just been taken out of the box, his necktie was correct as a die, and a gold pin glimmered in it.

"I say, Wharton, what do you think about changing my cap for a topper?" asked Bob Cherry anxiously. "I see you've got a straw."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"You look all right, Bob."

"A topper would look a little more as if we were making a festive occasion of it," Nugent remarked. "Girls like a chap in a topper, too. I knew a chap whose sister wouldn't go to church with him unless he wore a topper."

"Marjorie Hazeldene wouldn't notice, I expect," said Harry. "Besides, Bob looks best in a cap. A topper always makes him look like Sunday morning chapel."

"I feel more comfy," admitted Bob Cherry. "But, of course, I want to do the right thing."

"Here's Hurree Singh! Let's have his opinion."

"My hat!" murmured Nugent. "What a giddy toff!"

Hurree Singh was indeed arrayed in a really striking manner. As Bob Cherry remarked aside, "Solomon in all his glory wasn't in it with Hurree Jampot just then."

The nabob's clothes fitted like a glove all over, his top hat was shining in the May sun, but not more brightly than his nicely polished boots. He had a high white collar, and a pair of gloves in his hand, and a diamond gleamed in his necktie. His coat was adorned by a big rose. The nabob's dusky face glowed with pleasant anticipation.

"I see you are waiting at the gateful entrance for the beautiful miss," he remarked. "Do I look nicely resplendent, my chums?"

"You do," said Nugent. "You look nicely resplendent and resplendently nice. I never saw such a black-and-white picture before."

"It shows the respectfulness to the charming miss to be dressed in the style of swiffling elegance."

"You take the cake, Inky, and no mistake."

"I have not yet experienced the pleasurefulness of meeting the English miss in the familiarity of personal acquaintance," said the nabob. "I am looking to it forwardfully with the thrill of anticipativeness."

"What do you think about my changing my cap for a topper?" asked Bob Cherry. "Nugent thinks it would look a bit better."

The nabob looked thoughtful.

"The topperfulness would probably be regarded as more attentiveful, as making the unusually fussfulness on the great occasion," he remarked. "Thusly it might have the gratifying effect of pleasing the charming miss."

Then I think I'll—— Hallo, Hazeldene."

Hazeldene joined them. He grinned at the sight of the resplendent nabob, and nodded to the chums of the Remove.

"I'm expecting my sister every minute," he said, stepping

out of the hot May sun into the shadow of the great stone gateway. "What are all you fellows waiting here for?"

"Well, we thought we'd get out of the sun," said Nugent. "No harm in just raising a chap's hat as Miss Hazeldene comes in, is there?"

Miss Hazeldene's brother laughed.

"Not at all. Marjorie will take it as a compliment."

"What do you think about changing my cap for a topper, Vas—Hazeldene?" asked Bob Cherry. "Do you think your sister would notice?"

"No, I don't suppose so," said Hazeldene gravely. "Marjorie never notices a detail like that. She'll be pleased to see your chivvy."

"Will she?" said Nugent, looking at Bob Cherry's features. But Bob gave him a dig in the ribs before he could get further.

"I think I'll stick to the cap," he remarked. "It feels more comfy, anyway; and Hurree Jampot is splendid enough for two."

"I am glad to hear my worthy chum's tribute to my appearance. I have spent half an hour in arraying myself in the dressful gorgeousness."

"And you've turned yourself out really stunning," said Hazeldene. "Hallo, I can hear wheels on the road!"

Several of the juniors made a quick forward movement to meet the coming vehicle outside the gates. Hazeldene touched Harry Wharton on the arm. Harry looked at him, and was surprised to see a troubled look on Hazeldene's face.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"No, no, only——only——"

Hazeldene broke off, the colour deepening in his cheeks.

"Only what?"

"Only I know it's not necessary to say it: but—but don't let Marjorie have a hint of——of that moneylender business, you know——"

Harry Wharton coloured.

"You surely don't think I should allow a word to pass my lips in connection with your dealings with Isaacs!" he exclaimed.

"Don't be ratty, I know you wouldn't; but——"

"It's all right; I'll be careful, if that's what you mean."

"You got me out of a fearful hole, and I am grateful. But if a word came to Marjorie's ears——"

"No word will ever come to your sister's ears from me."

"I know; I know I can rely upon you. But—but there are others——"

"If the other fellows know anything, they wouldn't breathe a word."

"There's Billy Bunter."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful. Harry had made a great sacrifice to save Hazeldene from the clutches of Ikey Isaacs, the money-lender of Dale, and he had succeeded in his object; and the one-time cad of the Remove had certainly turned over a new leaf. But in spite of Harry's efforts to keep the whole matter a secret, there was not much doubt that Billy Bunter, who minded everybody's affairs, had an inkling of the business.

"I don't know that Bunter knows anything," said Wharton, after a pause.

"I am sure he does."

"Then we must see that he does not talk to your sister."

"He is sure to talk to her a bit, I suppose, and your young chatterbox is always saying the wrong thing. Do you think it would be any good your speaking to him?"

"I don't know; I will if you like."

"I wish you would," said Hazeldene nervously. "He takes more notice of what you say than of anything anybody else says. Tell him you'll lick him if he says a word; make him promise to be careful."

"Good; I'll do that with pleasure."

"Here's the trap."

A vehicle halted in the road, and a slim girlish figure came into view—a sunny, charming face, shaded by a wide hat. And Bob Cherry assisted Marjorie Hazeldene to alight.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Billy Bunter Fishes for Pike.

"ACH, mein Punter!"

Billy Bunter looked up with an expression of alarm as he heard the voice of Fritz Hoffmann. He had not come into contact with the German junior since the pepper incident the previous day, having carefully avoided him. But there was no avoiding him now. The sturdy young German stood looking down at him as he sat on the bench under the elm trees.

But a glance at the German's good-natured face was sufficient to reassure Billy Bunter. Fritz Hoffmann had evidently forgotten or forgiven the pepper episode, for he was grinning genially.

"Ach, Punter. You vas pizzy mit yourself."

"Yes, I'm rather busy," said Bunter, with an air of some

importance. "I'm arranging the details of my great fishing competition."

"Vat is tat, ten?"

"I'm getting up a fishing competition. There's a prize for the greatest number of fish caught in a certain time, and another prize for the biggest fish, and so on. Six good prizes. First prize a pair of splendid dumb-bells, cost fifteen shillings. I haven't settled about the others yet."

"I tink I enter tat competition, ain't it?"

"Entrance fee, one shilling, paid in advance."

"Oh!"

"If you like to enter now I can put your name down at the head of the list, Hoffmann."

The German junior shook his head.

"Better take the chance while you can," said Bunter. "It's only a shilling. I give you a receipt for it, and you head the list of entrants."

"I tink I look at mein shilling twice pefore, ain't it?"

"Well, you're losing a good thing, that's all I can say. I suppose you don't go in for fishing much. I'm a demon at it."

"You vas fish a great much?"

"Well, not so far; you see, I haven't a rod, and it's difficult to fish without a rod, though I've made catches with a can on the end of a string on a stick, you know. I could tell you about a big trout I caught that way, but I know you wouldn't believe me; none of the fellows believes that."

"Ach! I do not vonder! But if you are fond of fishing——"

"It's my hobby, you see. As a matter of fact, I expect to walk off the first prize in the competition myself. I'm expecting a postal order every day now, and when it comes I am going to buy a really ripping fishing-rod."

"Vas you like to fish for pike——"

"Oh, I can fish for anything."

"Dere is pig pike in pond——"

"Pig pike! What is pig pike?"

"Ein fery pig pike——"

"Oh, you mean a big pike," said Bunter, interested at once.

"How did the pike get in the pond, then?"

"Ach! I know tat it is dere, tat is enough."

"But I say, there aren't any pike in the pond, you know,"

said Billy Bunter.

"I see it dere mit mein own eyes pefore."

"Well, if you really saw it, Hoffmann——"

"I did see it, I tells you."

"Of course, a fellow may have caught one and let it go in the pond. Blessed if I know how it could have got there any other way. Do you know whether it was put into the pond, Hoffmann?"

"I tink so, in fact, I tink I see it put in."

"Good. That accounts."

"But I suppose you not able to catch pike——"

"My dear chap, I'm a demon at fishing. I could catch the biggest pike in the Sark, I can promise you that. A pike in a pond is nothing to me. Unfortunately I haven't a fishing-rod——"

"Ach! you cannot fish mitout rod."

"Can't I?" said Bunter, with a superior smile. "I'll jolly soon show you. I've fished with a tin can before now——"

"Have you efer caught pike in a tin can?"

"Well, no, I can't say exactly I've caught pike," admitted Billy Bunter. "I've caught lots of sticklebacks, though."

"Dere is a difference——"

"Oh, that's nothing. Of course you amateur fishermen give way at the first difficulty, but an old hand can manage all right. I'll jolly soon have that pike out of the pond, I promise you."

"I tink I like to see you fish for it."

"Then come along, old fellow, and you shall watch me, and it will put you up to a wrinkle in fishing for pike."

"Mit a tin can," murmured Fritz Hoffmann, as he followed Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was in great earnest. The chums of the Remove had seemed inclined to scoff at his powers as a fisherman, and Bunter wanted to show them what he could do in that line. If he landed a big pike under such difficulties, they could hardly laugh at his fishing competition any more.

It was really a difficulty, having no fishing-rod. But, as Bunter himself remarked, genius could always overcome difficulties. A stick and a string and a tin can supplied the de-

ficiency, and Billy Bunter, planting himself on the plank bridge, commenced to fish for pike.

Fritz Hoffmann watched him, with his broad German face wreathed in smiles.

Other fellows gradually drew round, and when it became known that Bunter was fishing for pike, the smiles became general.

Little did Bunter care for that.

As a matter of fact, he was used to having his enterprises grinned at by the mocking crowd, and it was no new experience to him.

When he landed a pike in the tin can the grins would be on the other side.

So he fished away patiently.

"My hat! What's Billy up to now?"

It was Bob Cherry who asked the question.

The chums of the Remove had come in sight of the bold fisherman, and they stared at him in amazement. Marjorie was with them, of course, and the girl looked on at Billy Bunter's curious angling with great interest.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "What are you doing there with that can, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter looked round.

"I'm fishing for pike, Cherry."

Bob Cherry gave a roar.

"You're whatting—for what?"

"Fishing for pike."

"Pike—in this pond!"

"Yes, certainly."

"With a tin can!"

"You see, I haven't a fishing-rod."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Please don't laugh like that, Cherry, you will very likely scare the fish away, and I shan't get the pike."

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Nugent, wiping his eyes.

"I think Bunter gets richer every day. What gave you the idea there were pike in this pond, Bunter?"

"Hoffmann told me."

"Well, of all the——"

"It vas true," said Hoffmann, "I meinselt mit mein own eyes did see der pike put in der pond pefore."

"Oh, a pike has been put in the pond, eh? Who put it in?"

"I did meinselt."

"What for?"

"So as to gif te fisherman a chance to distinguish himself pefore, ain't it?"

"But where did you get the pike from?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Ach! I found him."

The chums of the Remove looked at Hoffmann. They did not believe that he would tell an untruth, but this story did seem a little steep.

"You found him?" said Nugent.

"Ja, ja."

"Where did you find him?" Bob Cherry demanded.

"In te placo vere toy put up new building," said Hoffmann, waving his hand towards the spot where the ground was being cleared and excavated for the erection of the new school.

The chums looked in that direction.

"You're rotting, I suppose," Bob Cherry remarked. "How could you possibly find a pike there, Dutchy?"

"I founds him."

"Oh, I suppose he was walking out of the river on his tail, coming to see what the workmen were doing there?" Nugent suggested.

Marjorie Hazeldene laughed.

"What sort of a pike was it?" she said.

Fritz Hoffmann grinned broadly.

"Ach! tat is telling."

"Hallo, I felt something then!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, who had been groping about in the pond with his slung can.

"I suppose it was the pike."

He jerked the can to the surface. The water ran out of it, but the bold fisherman had collected nothing but mud.

"No bite this time," said Bob Cherry.

"The bitfulness is postponed," said Hurree Singh. "When it arrives, the bitfulness of the fish will be only equalled by the gladfulness of the fisherman."

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"The cackleness will be terrific when Hoffmann has made the honourable jump!" cried Hurree Singh.

"You see, it's not easy to fish for pike with a can," said Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! I fancy not."

"But of course an old hand is a match for a pike."

"Of course. Go it Billy."

"I'm going it, I assure you. How do you do, Miss Hazeldene? If you like to watch me, I'll show you how to catch a pike."

"I fancy it will take rather too long," grinned Hazeldene. "We'll come along in about a couple of hours, Billy, and see if you've had a bite."

"I'm expecting to land the fish every moment, really."

"We'll have it stuffed and put up in the study if you do," said Harry Wharton. "We can't stop just now. Let's get along."

And the chums of the Remove and their fair companion walked on, leaving the amateur fisherman still fishing, and the grinning crowd round him still grinning.

### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. An Invitation Wanted.

"HALLO, Vaseline!"

It was Bulstrode of the Remove who spoke. He raised his cap to Marjorie Hazeldene, as the girl and her companions stopped. They had little choice but to stop, as the bully of the Remove planted himself directly in their path.

"Hallo, Bulstrode," said Hazeldene uneasily, with a flush in his cheeks.

He did not like his nickname at Greyfriars spoken before his sister, and he knew that Bulstrode had used it on purpose.

"I didn't know that Miss Hazeldene was coming down this

afternoon," went on Bulstrode, looking at the girl. "You didn't tell me, Vaseline."

"I didn't think of doing so."

"You might have known I should be interested."

"I don't see why. But we must be getting on. Come on, you fellows."

Bulstrode did not move.

"I think some sort of a little celebration should be got up to honour Miss Marjorie's arrival," he remarked. "Don't you think so, Miss Hazeldene?"

Marjorie smiled.

"Not at all," she replied. "It is very kind of you, but I have only come over to Greyfriars for a couple of hours to see my brother and Mrs. Locke, and really——"

"It is an honour to the school," said Bulstrode, "and something ought really to be done. Your brother is a great friend of mine, you know; we share the same study, and we're great chums; aren't we, Vaseline?"

His glance dared Hazeldene to deny it; and Marjorie's brother had excellent reasons for not wanting to quarrel with the bully of the Remove.

"Ye-es, of course," he said weakly.

"I think a feed in the study would be a good idea," went on Bulstrode, "if Miss Hazeldene would honour us."

The girl looked at her brother. Hazeldene looked red and uncomfortable. He was determined that Bulstrode should not become anything like intimate with Marjorie, but he was to a great extent in the power of the Remove bully.

Bulstrode knew all about the incident of the moneylender, Isaacs, and Hazeldene was extremely anxious to keep all knowledge of that disgraceful episode from Marjorie.

"Come, what do you say, Vaseline?" said Bulstrode, with a smile on his lips.

"Well, the fact is Bulstrode, that we were thinking of a feed in No. 1 Study," said Hazeldene awkwardly. "Wharton has arranged it—"

A black look came over Bulstrode's brow. Ever since Harry Wharton had come to Greyfriars he had been a thorn in the side of the bully of the Remove.

"Oh, very well, in that case—"

"Thank you very much all the same, Bulstrode," said Marjorie sweetly. "I think I had better go and speak to Mrs. Locke now," she added; and she entered the house. Perhaps, with keen feminine instinct, she had seen that discord was rife, and knew that she was better away from the juniors just then.

Bulstrode had controlled his temper with difficulty so far, and now that Marjorie was gone it broke out.

"So your sister will not come to tea in our study, Vaseline?" he said.

"She is coming to No. 1 study," said Harry Wharton. "Hazeldene has already told you so."

"That's all very well, but it would be much more natural for her to come to her brother's study. You had better put it out plain, Vaseline. You won't have her in No. 9 because I am there."

Hazeldene set his lips.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Bulstrode, I've told you before that you're not the sort of fellow I like to see Marjorie with," he said. "You've asked for plain English, and now you have got it."

Bulstrode clenched his fist.

"So you are looking for trouble?"

"None of that, please," said Harry Wharton quietly, but with a glint in his eyes. "There's going to be no fighting while Miss Hazeldene is here."

"Who's going to prevent it?"

"I am, if necessary."

Bulstrode's eyes met Harry's, and his clenched fist dropped to his side again. He knew that he was no match for Wharton, though he could have knocked Hazeldene into a "cocked hat" in a few minutes. He scowled savagely.

"You will interfere in my affairs once too often, one of these times, Wharton," he said between his teeth.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't feel very much alarmed," he replied disdainfully.

"I want to speak to you, Vaseline," said Bulstrode, turning to him and affecting to take no more notice of the others. "I want to speak to you alone."

Hazeldene hesitated.

"You'd better," said Bulstrode, threateningly.

"Go on a bit, will you, you chaps," said Hazeldene, colouring awkwardly. "I suppose Bulstrode can jaw if he wants to."

The chums of the Remove walked on. Hazeldene looking very uncomfortable, remained alone with the bully of the Remove.

"Well, what is it, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"Are you going to invite me to tea in No. 1 Study?"

"It's Wharton's business, not mine."

"I suppose you are head of the matter, as it is your sister who is being feted?" said the Remove bully savagely.

"Not at all. It's Wharton."

"Well, he doesn't intend to ask me. You are having the tea in Wharton's study so that Marjorie will not meet me, and you don't intend to ask me there."

Hazeldene was silent. Bulstrode had, in fact, stated the case exactly as it stood.

"Well," said Bulstrode, "that won't suit me."

"I don't see what you want to come for, Bulstrode."

"Don't you? Well, I do. Perhaps it's just because I won't be passed over—won't be left out in the cold by a fellow who has sponged on me ever since he came to Greyfriars," said Bulstrode, with a sneer.

Hazeldene changed colour.

"You can't say I have sponged on you lately, Bulstrode."

"What's that got to do with it? You owe me more than a pound or two. I haven't kept count because I knew you would never pay."

"I'll pay you every penny," exclaimed Hazeldene passionately.

"Will you? Now?" sneered Bulstrode.

"I can't now; but—"

"Then shut up about it. I don't want the money, and you know it. But you're not going to use me for your banker as long as it suits you, and then throw me over as soon as that suits you, too. I'm not exactly the kind of fellow to put up with that sort of treatment."

"I don't want to throw you over. But—"

"What do you call it, then? You know I like your sister, and when she comes down you keep her with you and those rotters in No. 1 Study, and don't want me to speak to her. Do you think a few words from me will hurt her, eh?"

"You know you're not the sort of chap—"

"Oh, rats! Well, to come to the point, I'm coming to tea in No. 1 this afternoon, or else your sister will get to know all about that moneylending business."

Hazeldene gritted his teeth.

"You cad! You will tell her?"

"Why not?"

"I—I'll speak to Wharton," said Hazeldene weakly. "It rests with him. There isn't much room in the study, you know, Bulstrode, and there are seven of us already, including Marjorie."

"Wharton has had a dozen fellows in there before now, to jaw over the cricket. He can manage a tea-party of eight this time, I imagine. He will have to, anyway."

"It rests with him to say yes or no—"

"Not if you ask him properly. It's natural you should want to have a friend of your own in the party. After all, they're not your friends. You know they despise you."

Hazeldene winced.

"I'll speak to Wharton," he said, in a low voice.

"Do! Only remember this: if I don't get the invitation, Marjorie will know all about the Ikey Isaacs affair before she leaves Greyfriars."

Hazeldene nodded without speaking, and walked away. There was a dark cloud upon his brow, but the Remove bully wore a satisfied expression. He was pretty certain now that he would gain his point.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Hoffmann Explains.

"LET'S go and see how Billy is getting on with his fishing," said Bob Cherry, as the chums of the Remove left Hazeldene with Bulstrode. "I shall be glad to see that pike when he catches it."

Nugent grinned.

"Hoffmann has some jape on there, but I'm blessed if I quite see it," he remarked.

"The japefulness is inexplicable," said the nabob. "I do not think that our Hoffmannful chum would tell the untruthfulness, but I do not see how he found a pike in the building-place, and conveyed it to the pondful water."

"Well, let's go and see."

Bunter was still on the plank fishing when the chums returned to the spot. There were fellows watching him with joyous grins, and the broadest grin was on the face of Fritz Hoffmann. Some signs of impatience were growing visible in the face of Billy Bunter, and they seemed to afford some additional amusement to the spectators.

"Got any pike, yet, Bunt? called out Bob Cherry.

Bunter shook his head without looking round.

"No, Cherry. I'm beginning to think that Hoffmann made a mistake, and there isn't any pike in this pond."

"Oh, stick it out," said Nugent encouragingly. "Izaak Walton wouldn't give in, you know, and you ought to emulate him."

"Well, I've stuck it out for about a blessed hour," said Bunter. "It gets a bit tiring in the long run, you know. If one of you fellows would get me a rod—"

"Better stick to the can."

"Well, it's not easy to catch pike with a tin can."

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"A really experienced fisherman can do anything!"  
 "Yes; but as a matter of fact I'm not so experienced as all that," said Billy Bunter, pulling his primitive fishing implement out of the water again and swinging it landward. "I don't think I shall try any longer. Hallo, what's that? My can knocked against something, I believe."

"Ow, you young villain!"  
 The muddy can had certainly knocked against something, and that "something" was the chin of Frank Nugent. The short-sighted angler had swung it ashore without seeing where it was going.  
 "Ow!" roared Nugent, as the muddy water splashed over his face.

"What's the matter there?"  
 "Matter, you—you rascal! You've smothered me with mud," roared Nugent.  
 "I'm sincerely sorry, Nugent. I did not see you. It's a great affliction to be so extremely short-sighted."

"The afflictfulness falls mostly upon your worthy friends, I think," remarked Hurree Singh. "The duckfulness of our worthy Bunter in the pondful water would be about the proper caperfulness now, Nugent."

"I'll wring his beastly neck!"  
 "Here, keep your wool on," exclaimed Bunter in alarm. "I say, you fellows, hold him, you know. It was an unfortunate accident, and I'm sincerely sorry."

"I'll make you sorrier!"  
 "You shouldn't get too near me when I'm fishing."  
 "By jove, he's right there," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Here, take my handkerchief, Frank, and mop it off. Billy can't help being a silly ass, you know."

Nugent mopped off the mud. But he was never in an angry mood for long, and Billy Bunter knew that he was quite safe as he came off the plank. The amateur fisherman was looking very disappointed with the result of his fishing.

"I say, Hoffmann," he said, "are you absolutely sure about that pike?"

Hoffmann grinned expansively.  
 "Mein young friend, I am quite sure," he said. "I put the pike into the water mit mein own hands. I trow it in, I should say, and I saw it sink."

"Where did you get it?"  
 Hoffmann pointed over to the spot where the clearing operations were going on. Bunter looked puzzled, as well he might.

"But how could you find a pike there? Was it in the river?"  
 "Nein, mein Punter!"

"Then where was it?"  
 "In te ground. Te workmen turned it up in digging dere. Tey turned up several of tem, and I took vun."

Bunter looked amazed. He did not know much about the habits of fish, but even he was amazed at hearing of pike being turned up by workmen in excavating.

"Was it alive?" he shouted.  
 "Ach, nein," said Hoffmann innocently. "Nein! I tid not tell you dat it vas alive, did I, mein friend Punter."

Bunter gave a howl of wrath.  
 "You—you Dutch villain! Have you let me go fishing there for an hour for a dead fish?"

"It vas not a tead fish!"  
 "Eh? Are you off your rocker? If it wasn't a live fish it must have been a dead one, mustn't it?" howled Bunter.

"Ach, you make vun mistake," said Hoffmann blandly. "I did not tell you tat it vas a fish, mein friend Panter."

"Eh? You said it was a pike."  
 "Tat is true."

"Well, isn't a pike a fish?"  
 "Ach, some kind of pike is fish, and some kind is not fish. Te kind of pike tat is turned oop out of foundation of old puilding is not likely to be vun fish, Punter. It vas te kind of pike te seldier use in olden time."

Billy Bunter glared at the youthful German through his glasses, incapable of speech for the moment.

He remembered now to have heard that the workmen had come upon the site of an old building and that some weapons of the Middle Ages had been found there.

But that he had been fishing with a tin can for an hour for a wooden pike such as the pikemen of the Middle Ages used in warfare was a discovery that came as a shock to the young angler. The chums of the Remove burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Billy Bunter glared at them, and at the grinning Hoffmann.

"You—you—you Dutch fraud."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was an old wooden pike you chucked into the pond?"  
 "Ach, yes. I did not say tat it vas fishy pike. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beast! Here I've wasted an hour—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I wish you'd duck that German fraud in the water," said Billy Bunter. "I wish you—"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

The amateur fisherman glared round him wrathfully, and strode away. A yell of laughter followed him.  
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fancy Billy Bunter fishing for an hour for a wooden pike! It's too funny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "It vas ferry funny pefore."

"Yes, Huffy, it was as funny as your face," said Bob Cherry, "and that's saying really a great deal, you know."  
 "Quite correctful," purred Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "the funniffulness of the jape was only equalled by the funniffulness of the august countenance of our worthy Germanful chum."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Billy Bunter was stalking away wrathfully when Harry Wharton overtook him. Harry had not forgotten Hazeldene's words at the gate, and this was an opportunity of speaking to Bunter alone which might not recur again before they met Marjorie in the study at tea. He tapped the young angler on the shoulder.

"Hallo," said Billy, looking round, "I think you're a beastly, rotten cad, if you want to know, and I think—"

"It's I, Billy," said Harry, laughing.

"Oh, is it you, Wharton? I thought I was speaking to Hoffmann," said Bunter, wiping his spectacles. "Wasn't it a beastly mean trick?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I want to speak to you, Billy."

"Come into the tuck-shop," said Billy, "we can talk more comfortably there, Wharton."

Harry laughed.  
 "I think I can speak here very well, Billy. Besides, I don't want you to gorge just now, as we're standing a really ripping tea in the study to Miss Hazeldene, and I want you to do it justice."

Bunter's eyes glistened.  
 "You can rely on me to do that, Wharton."

"Yes, I think I can, Billy. But I want to speak to you about—"

"About the shopping? You can leave that entirely to me, Wharton. Just ladle out the cash, and I'll do the rest. You can trust me to get the best in both quality and quantity for the cash."

"It wasn't that I was—"

"Oh, you mean the cooking. Of course, I'm only too ready to do anything in that line. If it's sausages and bacon, I'll turn them out absolutely perfect—"

"No, it's not the cooking—its about Hazeldene."

"What about him?" asked Billy, with a visible decrease of interest in the matter.

"Why, you remember about that moneylender business—you found Hazeldene and that Sheeny Isaacs in my study the other day, and—"

"Oh, yes, I know all about it. I happened to hear—"

"Yes, you usually happen to hear a fellow's private affairs," said Harry, with a touch of scorn in his voice.

"Never mind that now, though. I want you to be careful not to say a word on the subject before Miss Hazeldene."

"Doesn't Vaseline's sister know?"

"Of course she doesn't! I want you to be very careful not to let a hint escape you about the matter. Don't mention it."

"Why, of course I shan't, Wharton! I think you might trust my discretion in a delicate matter like that," said Bunter reproachfully.

"Well, I suppose I shall have to," said Harry, not very satisfied. "Only please do be careful, Billy."

"Of course. By the way, does Marjorie know about your paying the Sheeny and getting Hazeldene out of the fix?"

"No, of course not!"

"Why don't you tell her, then?"

"Tell her!" said Harry, staring. "Why should I tell her?"

"Well, you like her, you know, and that would make her think a lot of you," said Bunter. "I don't understand why you don't tell her."

"I daresay you don't, Billy; I don't expect you to. But you'll remember what I've said, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly, Wharton. I should be sincerely sorry to do anything you didn't like, especially as you're bigger than I am.

If you like I'll get up a yarn to tell Miss Hazeldene, to turn her thoughts from the subject altogether, so that she couldn't possibly suspect anything. I'll tell her what a fine chap Vaseline is, and that he has never dreamed of borrowing money from a moneylender, and that he doesn't know any man named Isaacs—"

"You young idiot!" exclaimed Harry, shaking him. "You'll give the whole thing away at the start, and—"

"Don't shake me like that, please, Wharton. It disturbs my nervous system, and you may make my spectacles fall off, and if you break them, you'll have to pay for them."

"You're not to say a word on the subject at all! You understand?"

"Oh, certainly. I'll do exactly as you like; but I think my plan was a good one, all the same," said Billy, with an injured air. "I am an awfully deep chap when I like. But I'll do just as you say."

"Mind you do," said Harry, not very confidently. And he left Billy Bunter, feeling far from assured in his mind that the secret was safe in the keeping of the fat boy of the Remove.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.  
So Much for Bulstrode!

"ANYTHING the matter, Hazeldene?"

Harry Wharton asked the question as he rejoined Marjorie's brother. Hazeldene was certainly looking as if something was the matter. There was a dark shade of trouble on his brow, and an uneasy, shifty look in his eyes.

"No, not exactly," said Hazeldene. "But——" He stopped and a wave of colour came into his cheeks. Harry looked at him curiously.

"What is it, Hazeldene?"

"Do you mind if Bulstrode comes to tea with us in No. 1?" asked Hazeldene, abruptly.

"Bulstrode? You don't want him."

"He has asked me."

"That's no reason why he should come."

"Well, he wants to come, and—and if you don't mind, Wharton, I should like you to ask him," said Hazeldene, in a low voice. Harry looked at him straight in the eyes.

"I will ask him if you really want me to," he said; "but I'd rather you spoke out plainly. You don't want him, and I know you don't want Marjorie to have too much to say to him. Why do you want me to ask him? Has he threatened you?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of a licking!" said Hazeldene, with a faint smile. "It's not that."

"You had better tell me what it is, then."

"Well, if we don't let him come, he's going to tell Marjorie about that—that rotten business with Isaacs, the money-lender."

Harry Wharton's brow darkened.

"The rotten cad!"

"He says he won't be left out," said Hazeldene. "Of course, he can tell her if he likes. There's no stopping him; and you know he's an obstinate brute."

"I don't know. If we give way to him on this point, he may grow worse instead of better. We can't have him bossing the show in our study. If I would put up with it, the others wouldn't. Bob Cherry would sling him out, and there would be a row."

"I—I suppose so."

"Giving way to him would only make him cocky about it, and he would come into the study to domineer, and there would be trouble."

"But if we don't——"

"There may be another way of dealing with the matter. The trap is going to call for your sister at half-past seven?"

"Yes; but before then?"

"We may be able to keep Bulstrode quiet till then," said Harry. "Come along to the study, and let's talk it over, anyway. The others are there."

Bob Cherry, Nugent and Hurree Singh were in No. 1, making busy preparations for the coming celebration. Marjorie was to come to tea at six, and there was not much time to spare. A junior's study, especially one in which five youngsters shared quarters, was not usually a tidy place, and there was enough to do.

"Hallo! Have you come to lend a hand?" said Bob Cherry.

"Where's Bunter?"

"I left him in the Close."

"That's all very well. That fender is jolly dirty, and he ought to be polishing it. We can't be disgraced by a filthy fender while Bunter goes strolling about in the Close," said Bob Cherry indignantly.

"I'll tackle it," said Hazeldene.

"Well, that's a good fellow. It's not exactly the thing to set a guest polishing fenders, I know; but it's all for the good of the cause. What are you looking like a boiled owl about, Harry?"

"I wasn't aware that I was looking like a boiled owl, Bob," said Harry mildly.

"Well, you've got something on your mind. Get it off quick, and then get on with the washing," said Bob Cherry.

"It's about Bulstrode."

"I say, you fellows"—Bunter looked into the study—"would you like me to do any shopping for you?"

"Yes, you Owl. I've been wanting you," said Bob. "Take this half-sovereign, and expend it with Mrs. Mumble; and if you don't get good value for the money, we'll skin you."

"You know I do shopping better than any of you chaps, Cherry," said Bunter. "I like to be obliging, and I'll go at once. I'll put off finishing that prize list for a bit, for your sakes."

"And for the sake of the feed," grinned Bob Cherry. "Mind, if you eat anything on the way back, we'll pulverise you!"

"I think you can rely on me, Cherry. I——"

"All right. Scoot!"

"Yes, but——"

"Be off!" roared Bob Cherry, picking up a cricket stump. And Bunter fled down the passage and disappeared.

"Now then, Wharton, what's that about Bulstrode?"

"He's going to make trouble unless we ask him to tea."

"Is he?" said Bob Cherry, with a warlike look. "Let him come into the study, that's all! He'll go out of it again jolly quick."

"It isn't that. He knows about—about a scrape Hazeldene was in with the Shoony Isaacs, and he says he'll tell. You understand?"

Bob Cherry became grave at once.

"I savvy. The beast!"

"He is a beast. Now, Miss Marjorie isn't going until half-past seven. It's going on for six now. How are we going to shut Bulstrode up for an hour and a half?"

"Suppose we shall have to let him come to tea," said Nugent, looking at Harry.

The latter shook his head decidedly.

"If we do, he will want to boss the study, and we shall have a row before the feed is over. You know Bulstrode."

"What's to be done, then?"

"Can't stop him jawing for an hour and a half," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head. "I don't see how we're to fix it, Wharton."

"The fixfulness is difficult," said the nabob thoughtfully. "Perhaps if we are niceful to the esteemed rotter, he will hold the tonguefulness."

"We can't trust him, and we're not going to knuckle under to the brute," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I've thought of another way; but there isn't much time. Will you go and find the rotter, Inky, and bring him here? Say we want him."

"Certainly."

"When you come back, and he comes in, get behind him, in case he tries to bolt."

"You wish to take the rotter trapfully by an esteemed stratagem."

"Exactly."

The nabob beamed.

"You may trustfully rely upon my discreetfulness," he said. "The honourable rotter shall fall into the trapful snare with the blindfulness of the owl."

And the Nabob of Bhanipur left the study. The chums of the Remove looked inquiringly and rather dubious. They did not yet see the drift of Harry's plan.

"What are you going to do with him?" asked Bob Cherry. "You can't tie him up with a tablecloth and shove him into the coal-locker, you know. He's too big."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I am not thinking of disposing of him like that. I was thinking of the unused garret over the box-room."

"The room where young Barker got shut up, and wasn't found for hours?"

"That's it. We know that a fellow might make a fearful row there without anybody hearing a sound. If we could get Bulstrode into the garret and turn the key, we need not let him out till after Miss Hazeldene was gone——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He could stamp and yell as much as he liked, but nobody would hear him."

"He would cut up fearfully rusty afterwards."

"Let him! I suppose we're not afraid of him?"

"Oh, no! He couldn't do anything. But do you think he's likely to fall into the trap so easily?" said Nugent doubtfully.

"Why not? He expects to be asked here, as he thinks he's got Hazeldene under his thumb. He is bound to come with Hurree Singh."

"Well, that's true."

"When he comes, we—— Hallo, here he is!"

There were steps in the passage, and Bulstrode looked into the study. The dusky face of Hurree Singh was grinning over his shoulder. Bulstrode's face wore a sneering expression.

"Hallo!" he said. "I hear you want to see me."

"Quite a mistake," said Bob Cherry. "Look in the glass, old chap, and then ask yourself the question: Could anybody possibly want to see you?"

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"Look here, you sent for me—"

"I want to speak to you," said Harry Wharton. "You have been bullying Hazeldene, and you want to force yourself upon Miss Hazeldene."

Bulstrode gave a shrug.

"I'm not the kind of chap you can safely leave out in the cold."

"I understand you. Now understand me. We are not going to be threatened into asking you here, and we don't want you to come to tea. Is that plain enough?"

Bulstrode bit his lip savagely.

"Yes, that's plain enough, Wharton."

"And now, what are you going to do?"

"Do!" said Bulstrode, with an evil grin. "Why, since Miss Hazeldene's friends must be looked over so carefully to see whether they're quite up to the mark, I think it's my duty to enlighten her as to her brother's character. A swindling fellow who owes money to a Sheeny usurer—"

"You mean that you will tell Miss Hazeldene about the scrape her brother got into?"

"Yes, I will."

"That's enough. We shall take jolly good care you don't have a chance. Collar the cad!"

The Removites were only waiting for the word. They rushed forward; and Bulstrode, realising his danger, made a spring to get out of the study. But he ran right into Hurree Janset Ram Singh, who closed his arms about the bully of the Remove and whirled him into the study again.

"Let me go, you beasts!"

"Collar him!"

Bulstrode was collared. In a twinkling he was on the floor, with the Removites sprawling over him. The bully of the Remove struggled desperately. He was strong and muscular, and it was no easy task to secure him. But secured he was at last.

"Give me the cord out of the drawer!" panted Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry dragged out the cord. It was knotted round Bulstrode's ankles and wrists, and then the chums rose and left the bully writhing on the carpet.

"My hat!" panted Nugent. "The rotter is a strong beast! I came very near banging his head on the floor. Hold your row, Bulstrode!"

"Help!" roared Bulstrode.

Bob Cherry thrust a cake of soap into his mouth, and he spluttered into silence. Harry Wharton glanced round the study.

"We shall have to wrap him in something," he remarked. "We can't carry him up as he is. A sack would be about the thing."

"I'll get one of the old sacks out of the box-room," said Nugent.

"Good! Cut off, then!"

Nugent darted away, and in a few moments returned with the sack. It was drawn over Bulstrode's feet, and the bully of the Remove was thrust fairly into it.

"We won't suffocate you," said Harry Wharton reassuringly. "You'll be let out in a few minutes. Not that it would matter much."

"Br-r-r-gr-r-r-r."

"The tonguefulness of our worthy chum seems to be tied by the soapfulness," said Hurree Singh. "I will fasten the sack. Now take it up, my worthy friends!"

Wharton and Nugent took Bulstrode's shoulders, and Bob Cherry and Hazeldene his feet. They carried him out of the study.

"Dear me! What is that?"

It was a sweet voice, but it nearly startled the Removites into dropping the sack. Marjorie Hazeldene was just coming along the passage, and she stopped and looked in amazement at the sack carried between the juniors.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Tea in No. 1 Study.

FOR a moment, the chums of the Remove were confused, and in that moment of confusion they came near giving themselves away. Harry Wharton was the first to recover himself.

"Oh, it's only some rubbish we are carting away," he said. "Will you excuse us for a few minutes, Miss Hazeldene?"

The girl smiled.

"Certainly."

"Come on, kids!" said Harry Wharton hastily. He was afraid that some sound or movement might come from the sack.

The Removites rushed it along the passage.

Marjorie looked after them with a somewhat puzzled expression. She guessed that the Removites would probably tidy up their quarters in honour of her visit. But she could not imagine where so much rubbish could come from as to fill a sack.

But the sack was out of her sight in a few moments.

"My hat! That was a narrow shave!" gasped Nugent, as they reached the stairs which led up past the box-room to the disused garret.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"It was, rather. But I am sure she never suspected. What do you think, Vaseline?"

"Well, Marjorie naturally wouldn't expect to see us carrying a fellow about in a sack," said Hazeldene, grinning. "I don't see how she could possibly suspect."

"That's all right, then."

"Bring him up," said Harry Wharton, mounting the stairs. "We don't want anybody else to meet us. We mayn't get off so safely next time."

"Right you are!"

The four chums bore Bulstrode up the stairs. It was a heavy task, but they accomplished it, and Bulstrode was bumped down at last in the remote garret.

There, the sack was taken off. The key was in the outside of the lock. Harry Wharton untied the wrists of the scowling bully of the Remove.

"What does all this foolery mean?" snarled Bulstrode, spitting out the soap.

"It's not foolery; we're in deadly earnest," said Harry quietly. "You're not going to have an opportunity of giving Hazeldene away."

"I—I didn't really mean it—"

"We can't trust him," said Hazeldene quickly.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I wasn't thinking of trusting him. You are going to remain locked up here, Bulstrode, till Miss Hazeldene is gone. Then we'll come and let you out."

Bulstrode spat out the last of the soap from his mouth.

"You dare not! You—"

"You will soon see as to that," said Harry disdainfully. "We are going to lock you up now. We have untied your hands so that you can set yourself free, but you won't be able to get out of the room till we choose. Come on, chaps!"

"I'll shout! I'll bring the masters up—"

"You can't! Shout as much as you like. Young Barker got shut up here once, and he shouted himself hoarse, and nobody heard. You can do the same if you like. Come on, kids!"

"Wharton. I—I—"

The chums of the Remove left the garret, and the key turned in the lock outside.

Bulstrode yelled after them furiously, but his yells died away by the time they were as far down as the box-room. Down the lower stair not a sound followed them. They went along the passage to the study.

Marjorie greeted them with a sweet smile.

Billy Bunter had just come in with the provisions, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh was laying the cloth. Nugent jammed the kettle on the fire, and Bunter produced the teapot. The array of good things on the table was really attractive, and Bunter's eyes wandered to them every moment.

It was not long before tea was made, and the juniors and their fair guest sat down to a well-spread table.

Marjorie poured out the tea, and—for a wonder—there were sufficient tea-cups to go round. Bob Cherry had raided two or three studies to make up the number. The dusk of the May evening was falling, and Harry drew the blind, while Bob Cherry lighted the gas. The fire sent a ruddy glow into the study, and the light gleamed on the white cloth and the shining crockery. The scene was a very cosy one, and it was no wonder that the juniors' faces were beaming, and that Marjorie Hazeldene was all smiles. Her smiles were equally divided, too; and even little Bunter came in for a share of them, though it must be confessed that he paid more attention to the ham and eggs than to the guest of the evening.

"And did you catch the pike, after all?" Marjorie asked, as she filled Bunter's cup for the second time.

Bunter turned red.

"No, I didn't catch it exactly," he said. "Of course, I should have had it if I had gone on long enough."

Bob Cherry chuckled, but Bunter's imploring look kept the chums of the Remove silent as to the real nature of the pike for which the amateur angler had fished. They would not give the budding Izaak Walton away to Marjorie.

"Ah, I am sorry you did not catch it," said Marjorie. "I hear you are getting up a great fishing competition in the school—"

"Yes, I was," said Bunter, pausing between two mouthfuls of sardines to speak. "I was, Miss Marjorie—but I'm afraid I shall have to put it off indefinitely now."

"Oh, don't do that," said Bob Cherry. "It will be an awful disappointment for the Remove."

Bunter shook his head.

"No, you're wrong, Cherry. I don't believe they will be disappointed at all. There's no room for big ideas in the Greyfriars Remove—that's what it really is. I can't get a single fellow to enter. They have the cheek to say that they want to see the prizes, as well as the prize-list, before they pay over the entrance fees."

"Well, that's rather unreasonable," said Hazeldene.

"The unreasonableness is only equalled by their knowledgefulness of our esteemed Bunterful chum," said Hurree Singh.

"He, ha, ha!"

"Well, I think it's unreasonable," said Billy Bunter. "I can't buy the prizes till I've collected the entrance fees. I think that ought to be plain to the dullest intellect. But chaps are so keen about money. I think it mean. Some of them raised objections to my having my expenses out of the fees. As if a chap could be expected to get up a big fishing competition for nothing."

"Too bad," said Harry Wharton. "So it's going to be postponed?"

"Yes, I shall have to leave it a bit—only temporarily, you know. In fact, I shall leave it till my postal order comes. Then I shall have some capital to work with, and can get up the prizes for the fellows to see before I begin to collect the entrance fees. I suppose they'll be satisfied then?" said Billy Bunter, with an exceedingly injured look.

"Let's hope so," said Bob Cherry. "But perhaps they felt that they wouldn't have much chance against you, after your exploits at pike fishing?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"By the way, where is your friend Bulstrode?" asked Marjorie, turning to her brother. "I thought he was coming to tea?"

Hazeldene coloured.

"He was here just before you came in, Miss Marjorie," said Bob Cherry quickly. "But he had to go. He would have stayed if he could possibly have managed it, but he really had no choice in the matter."

The girl nodded.

"I didn't know Bulstrode was a friend of yours, Vaseline," said Bunter, looking up. "You usually seemed on rotten bad terms, to me, especially since that affair with the Sheeny."

Harry Wharton looked daggers at Bunter across the table, but the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to see it. Bob Cherry stamped on his foot under the table, and Billy Bunter gave a howl.

"Ow! Who trod on my foot?"

"Sorry!" said Bob Cherry, with a withering look. "Sorry, Bunter!"

"That's all very well, Cherry, but you've hurt my foot. I wasn't going to say anything about Hazeldene's affair with the Sheeny, either—ow!"

"Sorry, again," said Bob Cherry.

Marjorie gave Bob a curious glance, and rose from the table. "I think it is about time I said 'good-bye,'" she remarked. "It has just chimed a quarter past seven, and I have to say good-bye to Mrs. Locke and old Nadesha."

"We're going to see you off at the gates," said Hazeldene.

"Thank you very much for this nice tea," said the girl, with a bright smile. "It is very jolly to have tea in a study. I wish I lived at Greyfriars."

"By Jove, that would be ripping!" said Bob Cherry so heartily, that Marjorie coloured and laughed.

"Well, I will run away now. I shall say good-bye at the gate, then."

The chums of the Remove gathered round Hazeldene and bestowed a series of hearty smacks upon his back. Hazeldene staggered.

"What the dickens—"

"Don't be alarmed," said Bob Cherry reassuringly. "My dear chap, a fellow who has a sister like that ought to be encouraged. That's what it means."

"Well, you can encourage me without busting my spinal column next time," said Hazeldene, rubbing his shoulder.

"I think Bunter ought to be suffocated," said Nugent thoughtfully. "He nearly gave the show away, after all."

"I say, you fellows, did you ever hear such rot?" said Bunter indignantly. "I was awfully careful not to mention anything that might—"

"You young villain!" said Harry Wharton. "I believe Marjorie suspected something, and rose from the table so suddenly so as not to place us in a difficulty. It would be like her. If you get within speaking distance again, Billy, we'll send you into the pond head first, to look for your pike."

"But really, Wharton—"

"Oh, seat! Travel, or—"

Bunter travelled. The chums of the Remove went down to the gates of Greyfriars, and a few minutes later Marjorie came down in the trap. She shook hands all round with the chums, and kissed her brother affectionately, the other fellows looking on with envious eyes.

"Good-bye, my dear friends," said the girl, waving her hand as the trap moved.

"Good-bye, Marjorie!"

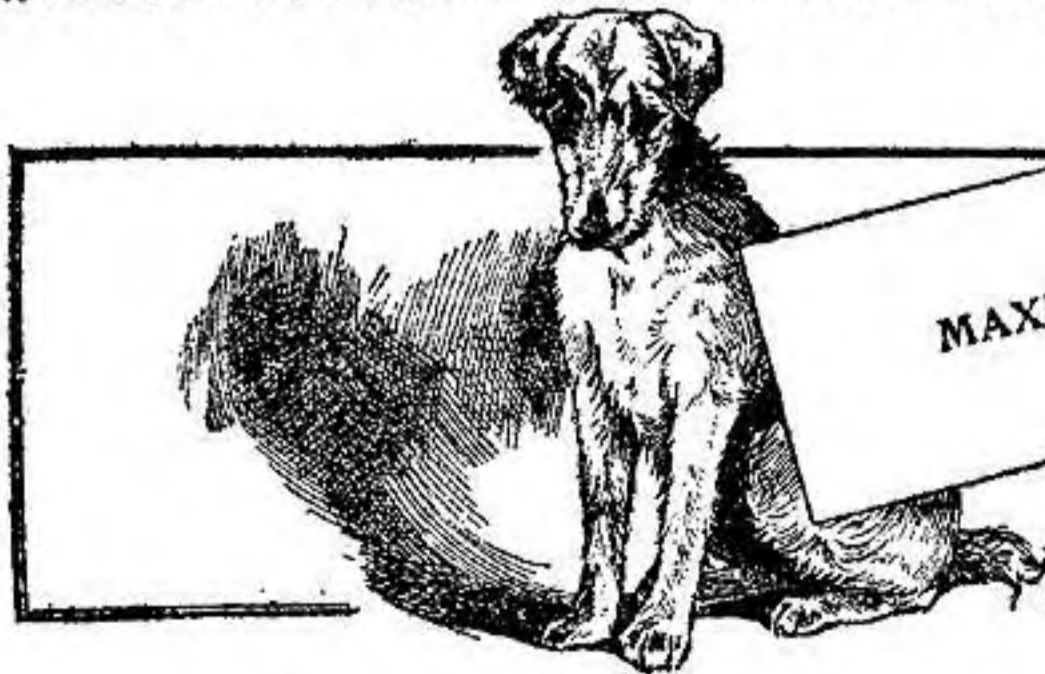
The juniors took off their caps, and Bob Cherry, in the exuberance of his spirits, waved his round his head. The trap drove off, and the dusk hid Marjorie. The juniors returned towards the house.

"About time we let out Bulstrode, I think," said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "It's been a jolly afternoon, hasn't it?"

"It has," said Bob Cherry, with a half sigh. "I say, Hazeldene, when is your sister coming down again?"

THE END.

(Another tale of Harry Wharton and his chums next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)



#### GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Frank Dennis and Bob Lomax, two City clerks, are thrown out of employment. Having no prospects they decide to make the detective business their profession, and assume the name of "Maxennis."

Grip, their dog, in a strange manner is instrumental in getting their first client—a Mrs. Brewer—who is continually receiving threatening picture post cards from Leigh-on-Sea from a man evidently aware that his victim is coming into a legacy. Lomax visits Leigh, and pursues his investigations among the regular senders of picture post cards in the district. Meanwhile, Dennis by chance acquires a post card addressed to their client, which is picked up by Grip, after having fallen from the pocket of one "Sleeping" McDonald, a pugilist lodging with Mrs. Brewer. When Lomax returns from Leigh, Dennis shows his chum the post card. McDonald is enticed into calling upon them, but refuses to explain matters to "Maxennis," so Dennis goes to Wonderland, where he sees the pugilist beaten.

## NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS BECOME DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

#### Dennis has an Ally.

Someone followed Dennis out after the contest, but this he did not notice. On the pavement he waited outside. He wished to see McDonald leave, and, under the circumstances, he believed the beaten man would not be long before he did.

He was not disappointed. Within ten minutes a little knot issued from the entrance, McDonald in the centre. The others appeared to be speaking angrily to him, half a dozen men, fairly well-dressed, two unmistakably of the Hebrew race, but he was giving no attention. It was to the other men that Dennis turned his eyes.

Suddenly McDonald turned his head. He caught sight of the waiting figure of Dennis, and his damaged face became a fiery red. He uttered a fierce oath, a cry full of anger and passion. With a mad rush he crossed the intervening space, his right fist clenched, his lips working.

"It was you made me get beat!" he snarled.

Simultaneously his fist was jerked forward, and the knuckles came into collision with Dennis's chin, who staggered back, half-dazed by the blow, the ground reeling beneath his feet, his senses suddenly clouded.

"WHARTON'S OPERATIC COMPANY."

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,  
by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT  
TUESDAY.



Dennis felt as if he were awakening from a long sleep when his eyes opened; there was a singing in his ears, and he had a general impression that he was in some unfamiliar place. He knew that he had been struck, but that seemed hours ago. Someone was holding him by the shoulders.

As a matter of fact it was not hours, but only a few seconds, and Dennis was still outside the entrance to Wonderland. A crowd of people had gathered, and a good deal of shouting was going on. The someone supporting Dennis was a policeman.

A long-drawn-out, exceedingly shrill sound pierced the young man's ears. It was a call on his whistle that the constable supporting him had just blown, and Frank's temporary stupor passed away. He stood upright and looked around him.

A few feet away he saw McDonald, his arms tightly held, making violent efforts to break away from the detaining grasp of his friends and finish the work he had so well begun. The pugilist was shouting loudly, and his observations were of a peculiarly bloodthirsty character.

"Where—What has happened?" Dennis exclaimed. "That's what I'd like to know, young man!" the policeman replied. "Feeling better, eh?"

"Yes, I'm all right." Behind him Frank became aware of further scuffling, and, turning round, he was surprised to see, also held fast by his arms, the sallow-faced youth to whom he had paid the blackmail.

It doesn't take long for a police-call to be answered in the Whitechapel Road; officers are fairly close together; and in a very few seconds three constables arrived on the scene, scattering the increasing crowd, and sternly commanding an immediate dispersal. One was a sergeant, and he turned immediately to the officer who had given the call and who was standing close by Dennis with an expression that plainly told that young man that he would not be permitted to go away.

"Now, then, what is it?" the sergeant demanded. "Don't know yet what it's all about," was the answer. "I saw the crowd and I come up here to find him and him"—he pointed first to McDonald and then to the sallow-faced youth—"fighting. This young man"—Dennis—"was lying on the pavement."

"Yus, an' I wish I'd killed him!" shouted McDonald violently.

His friends still held him tightly, and one of the newly-arrived policemen was by him; the other had taken up his position by the sallow-faced lad.

"And so I would if it hadn't been for that chap!" went on McDonald, giving no attention to his friends' adjurations to shut his mouth and glaring ferociously at his recent opponent. "An' I will kill him," he added, "if I 'ave to swing for it!"

"'E went up an' 'it the gentleman on the jaw!" volunteered one of the members of the crowd, who seemed much disinclined to depart. "'E's McDonald!"

"I know him," the sergeant said grimly.

"Yeth; an' that young rathcal went an' hit Mr. McDonald without any provocation wathsoever," interpolated one of McDonald's friends nervously. "We'll charge him with athault. It'h him you've got to lock up, thergeant. He came an' hit Thandy when he wathn't lookin'!"

"Yus; becos 'e 'it 'im!" the youth in question shouted.

"Hit who?" asked one of the constables.

"'Im!" pointing to Dennis.

"And what had you got to do with it?" the Israelite demanded hotly. "He didn't hit you!"

The sergeant looked at the constable.

"Know him?" he said, jerking his head at the sallow-faced youth.

"Yes," was the succinct reply; "one assault, two pocket-picking."

"That'll do. Take all three of 'em along to the station," the sergeant said peremptorily; "we'll learn all about it there."

Neither McDonald nor the lad whose interest in Dennis was presumably so great that he had intervened to protect him from McDonald's savage assault, seemed at all charmed by the prospect of the visit; they expressed their disagreement with the suggestion in no measured terms, and both made desperate attempts to evade the call. Protesting, both were, however, led away, Dennis following them side by side with the sergeant; while behind came McDonald's friends, conversing together in low, excited tones.

"Disorderly conduct," reported the sergeant to the inspector-in-charge, and that official proceeded to interrogate the culprits.

Once inside the station, McDonald had become palpably nervous. He glared at Dennis like an angry tiger, but he kept his temper in check, and replied to the questions quietly, if not with overpowering civility. He admitted striking Dennis. He had lost an important fight; Dennis was the cause of his defeat; and his temper had got the better of him. What Dennis had to do with him losing, he couldn't or wouldn't say.

He admitted striking "Punch"—that was the name by which he knew the other prisoner—but, then, Punch had struck him first, and he had only returned the blow. He knew Punch, he sometimes did a bit of boxing—in fact, he had once fought against him, McDonald, and had been licked; ever since, he had been ill-disposed towards him.

Punch was briefly questioned. Evidently he considered that the less he said the better it would be for him, and most of his answers were in monosyllables.

Dennis, so far as he was able, corroborated the statements of the other two. He had seen McDonald's battle, but why the latter should consider himself as responsible for his defeat he was quite at a loss to understand. He gave some particulars of himself, and when asked if he desired to enter a charge for assault against McDonald, replied in the negative. Although surprised, the inspector made no comment, and, there being nothing else to be done, both McDonald and Punch were severely cautioned and allowed to leave the station; of which permission neither were slow to take advantage.

Indifferent to the scowling glances of McDonald, who was immediately joined by his friends waiting outside, and with them at once turned eastward, Frank Dennis, giving Punch no chance of getting away, promptly engaged him in conversation.

"Why did you go for McDonald directly you saw him strike me?" he demanded, going straight to the point at once.

The lad hesitated, looked away, and then said: "Yer'd paid me that bob, guv'nor."

"And you're no great friends with McDonald, eh?" pursued the detective. He had the idea that this fellow might be made of some use to him.

"No, guv'nor." And Punch's sallow cheeks flushed. "'E took my gal away from me, an' then 'e—'e— Well, mister, 'e licked me. I was a blessed fool, for 'e's a good 'alf-stone over my weight, an'—an' I wants to git even with 'im. An' I will, too, if I goes to quod for it!" he added viciously.

"H'm; I see! Well, let us go on walking; I don't want to lose sight of McDonald!"

"They'll be goin' into the Prince of Wales, sir," Punch said eagerly; "that's where he allus goes after a fight! My stars, but I'm glad 'e was licked to-night, though 'ow it was beats me!"

Dennis could have told him had he chosen. He knew well enough that the interview McDonald had had with Maxennis that morning had unsettled the boxer's mind; had made him fearful of the consequences that possibly might result from his participation—whatever such might be—in the matter of Mrs. Brewer's postcards. However, and to what extent, he might be implicated—and this it was Dennis's endeavour to find out—that interview had obviously scared him. Lomax had not said a great deal, but sufficient to cause him apprehension. With a possibility of being locked up—for a guilty conscience will always imagine the worst—and not knowing how much was known to Maxennis, he had gone into the ring that night a very different man from his usual self. But for that interview, he would have tackled the South African boxer in his usual style, and a further victory would have been placed to his credit.

As it was, he had been beaten, and badly, too! He had lost the prize-money, and he would get into trouble with his backers, whose money he had been the means of losing for them; and, worst of all, for even such men as McDonald have a certain kind of pride, his reputation had suffered. The sporting papers would be full, next morning, of his crushing defeat; his fame was tarnished—his glory had declined. Small wonder that when he recognised Frank Dennis outside the hall his temper had got the better of him, and he attempted such revenge on the person whom he considered responsible for his own inglorious defeat.

As for Punch, reprobate and wastrel, he could make nothing of Dennis. But the suspicion with which such as he would naturally regard Dennis, was swept aside by the comprehension that, in some way or other, he was antagonistic to his—Punch's—enemy. In accordance with this conclusion, he had jumped forward to Dennis's defence when the infuriated boxer struck at him.

"Them's 'is backers," he volunteered, as he walked alongside Dennis at a pace sufficiently fast to keep McDonald and his companions in sight.

"Oh!" the detective answered absently. He was worrying his brains, trying to evolve some plan whereby he might again have the chance of persuading or coercing McDonald into revealing what he knew of the forged postcards.

"Yus," Punch continued confidentially; "I knows 'em! That one in the trilby 'at's Bill Roker, keeps a public-house in Shoreditch; t'other one's his brother Ned; an' the little one—'im with the overcoat an' bowler—is the one wot finds nearly all the money. Shooney, 'e is; 'as put up the oof for all McDonald's big fights; brought 'im out, 'e did, an' 'as

got 'im under 'is thumb. 'E makes picture postcards; got a place in 'Oundsditch."

"Eh?" Dennis was suddenly awakened from his fit of abstraction. He had listened but vaguely to what his companion was saying, but the word postcards had entered his ears and jolted his brains. "What's that?"

"I says as the Jew chap wi' McDonald is Solly Abrahams. Know 'im?" asked Punch. "'E's rollin' in money! Makes picture postcards in 'Oundsditch, an' is McDonald's backer. Does yer know 'im, guv'nor?"

"I've heard of him," Dennis answered carelessly.

But his heart was beating fast with excitement; here was a revelation indeed! That the shrewd Hebrew, whom Robert Lomax had accidentally stumbled upon when travelling down to Leigh, should be also the friend and manager of the pugilist, who, beyond all doubt, was intimately connected with the queer mystery he and his partner had undertaken to solve, was something more than extraordinary. What would Lomax say when he became aware of the fact? To what ideas and suggestions did this curiously-acquired bit of information give rise!

Dennis began to congratulate himself; it was not for nothing that he had paid the visit to Wonderland that evening. More might come of it than he had imagined. It was true, he might be flattering himself unduly; there might be no connection whatever between the various facts, but their coincidence led him to believe that some connection did exist, even though not immediately apparent.

"They've gone into the pub, guv'nor."

Punch's voice brought Dennis back to the immediate present. What was it he should do? He found himself at a loss—not for the first time since his assumption of the detective's part. He felt a trifle helpless. A detective's work was not a stereotyped, cut-and-dried business, where one knew a day or a week in advance what was to be done. His mind had to be made up in a moment, and then he did not know that the course of action decided upon was likely to be successful. And he—Dennis—had had no training in the work.

They had halted within a few yards of the public-house whereinto McDonald and his companions had disappeared, and the East End youth was staring at his acquaintance with curious interest.

"S'y, guv'nor, what's yer game?" he suddenly demanded. "Who are yer? What've you got against McDonald? And why are yer pallin' on to me like this 'ere?"

"Because I think you may be of some use to me," Dennis replied frankly. "And at present I'm greatly interested in Mr. McDonald. I'm a detective—"

An expression of fear and suspicion shot into Punch's dark eyes, his jaw dropped.

"My stars!" he muttered; and he made a sudden movement, as if to bolt, but Dennis caught him by the arm and fixed him.

"Leggo—leggo!" panted Punch, and he made violent efforts to break away. "Will yer—"

"Don't be such a fool, you stupid fellow!" Dennis cried sharply. "What if I am a detective? I'm not going to hurt you!"

"Tecs is—" began the fellow.

"I'm a private, not a police detective. I've got nothing to do with them," went on Dennis. "I want to find out something about McDonald, and I want you to help me, if you will. Nothing's going to happen to you. And I thought, as you have such a grudge against McDonald, you'd be useful for me. I shall pay you."

But Punch still remained frightened and incredulous. He had come within the hands of the law more than once; of three convictions against him the policeman at the station had spoken. Circumstances had been too much for him, and he had dropped into crime, like many another such youth, largely for the want of a helping hand, and because it was easier to succumb to the influence of his surroundings than to fight against them. His moral

fibre had weakened, but he was not a born criminal. Under different circumstances, he would have been a respectable, hard-working young fellow, but he had won two or three boxing contests, and had given up his work to enjoy the gains so easily won. He had drifted into bad company; had degenerated into a loafer—a pickpocket when necessity or circumstances drove him. But he was not as yet so used to the police but that anything connected with them scared him badly.

He listened to Dennis with sullen fear, and at last he looked up.

"Honour bright, guv'nor; yer ain't meanin' to nab me?" he said. And the truly plaintive note in his voice saddened Dennis.

"Of course not; haven't I said so?" the young detective answered heartily. "Here, here's five shillings"—he took out an old envelope and scribbled a few lines on it—"and here's my address. Come there to-morrow evening, and I'll find something for you to do. Mind, I'm trusting you!"

Dennis went back to "Máxennis's" office feeling very pleased with himself. It was late when he let himself in, and he was so tired and slept so heavily that he did not awake until long past ten o'clock, and the first thing that his eyes fell upon was the tall figure of Lomax standing beside him, a queer, satisfied smile on his strong face as he looked down at his partner, a toasting-fork in his hands, bearing a half-cooked round of toast.

"You!" Dennis cried, and started upon his elbow, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"Yes," Bob said coolly. "I've solved the mystery, so I thought I might as well come back."

To say that Frank Dennis was surprised by the unlooked-for appearance of his chum is to do an injustice to the younger man's feelings; but Lomax's cool reply to his question left him speechless, absolutely flabbergasted—which is an expressive word, the meaning whereof is better understood than capable of description.

He dropped on his back again, staring at his chum, as if unable to feel quite certain that he was awake, and that he was looking at a being of flesh and blood, and not one created by his own fancy.

"What's the matter?" inquired Lomax. He had gone back to the fireplace, where a fire was burning cheerfully, and was assiduously completing the cooking of his breakfast.

"How did you get in?" Dennis's curiosity gave back to him the power of speech, though his blue eyes, fixed upon Lomax's broad back, had not yet regained their normal expression.

"How did I get in? With my key, of course! Came in to find you sound asleep and snoring—so sound that you never even stirred when I entered; nor have you moved all the time I've been moving about. Looks to me as if you'd been going it, young man, if you're not ready to get up until here—twenty minutes to eleven. You want me back to look after you and keep you in order. You're getting dissipated."

"What time did you come in, Bob?"

"Time? Oh, about nine-thirty! Little before, perhaps. Caught the first train up from Leigh, and came on to get some breakfast. Wouldn't wait there to have some; wanted to tell you the good news. Ugh! You lazy, rascal! Here, I've beer' out since five o'clock this morning! That's the way to get an appetite."

"And what's the good news, Bob? What was that you said? You've solved the mystery?" asked Dennis, sitting up in his camp-bedstead, and almost yawning the top of his head off.

"Tell you later," was Lomax's abrupt answer. "Got something better to do now. I want some grub! I haven't been gallivanting the streets all night, and not waking up until half a morning's work has been done, and, consequently, wanting no breakfast."

(Another long instalment of this story again next Tuesday. Please order your copy of THE MAGNET Library in advance.)

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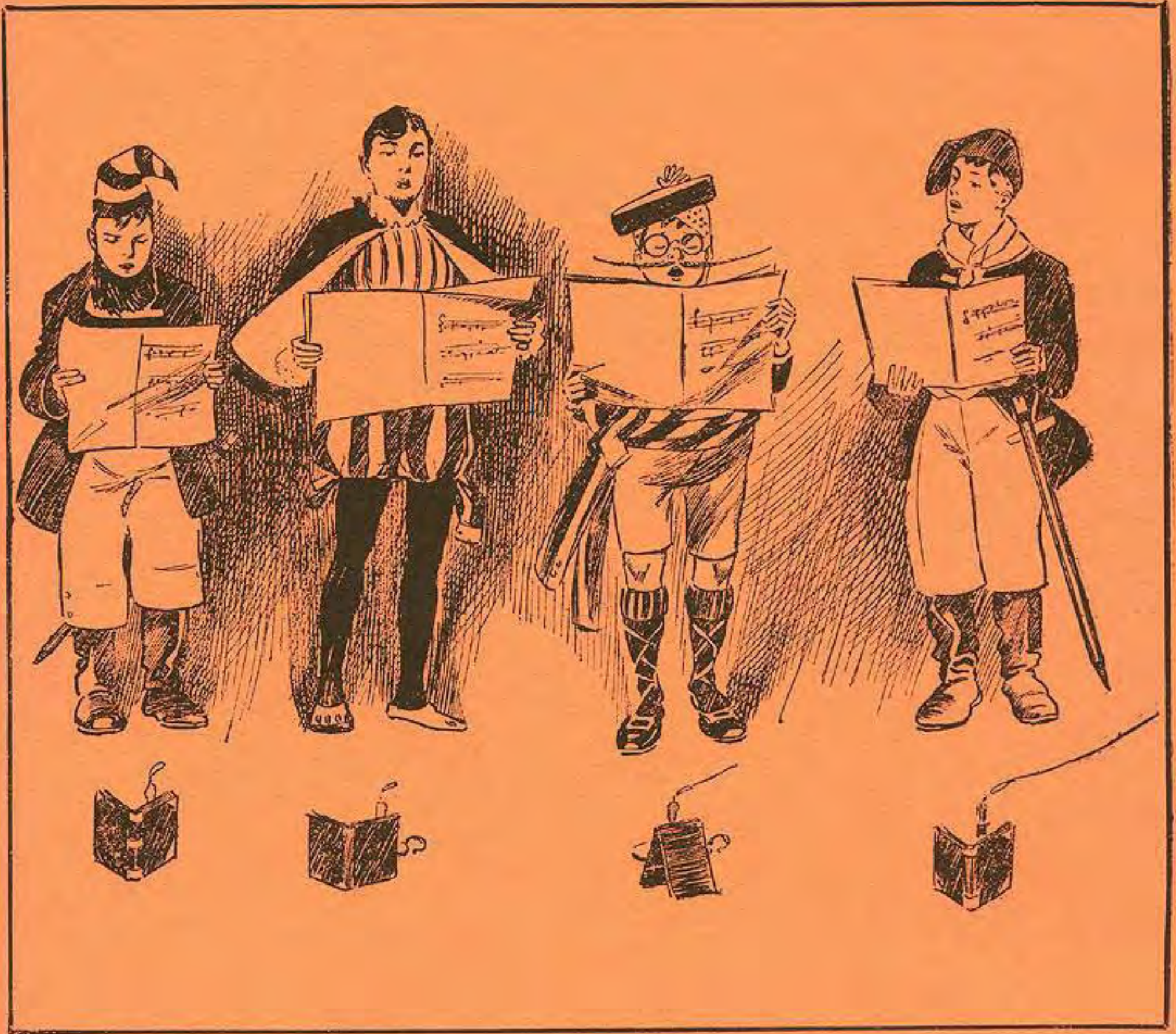
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