

BILLY BUNTER, HYPNOTIST.

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Vol. 1.

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A GRAND SCHOOL TALE.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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Billy Bunter, Hypnotist.

A Tale of the
Adventures of the
Chums of Greyfriars.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter Tries It On.

"**B**UNTER!"
Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, made no reply, neither did he look up. The afternoon sun was slanting through the tall windows, and it was nearly time for the Lower Fourth to be dismissed, when Mr. Quelch, the Form master, suddenly rapped out Bunter's name.

"Bunter!"
And still Billy Bunter did not look up.
Several of the fellows craned their necks round to look at Bunter, wondering what could possibly be the matter with the fat junior to make him neglect the note of warning in the Form master's voice.

Bunter frequently had something under his desk that took his attention off the lessons. It usually took the form of something to eat. Time and again tarts and toffee had been confiscated by the inexorable Mr. Quelch. But Billy Bunter was not eating this time. His eyes were fixed upon something he had on his knees. His jaws were motionless, but his eyes were blinking eagerly behind his big spectacles.

"What's the matter with the young ass?" murmured Harry Wharton. "Quelch is getting his wool off."

"He's reading," murmured Nugent.
"Reading! Not the arithmetic book."

"He's got something else there," said Bob Cherry, in an undertone. "Silly ass to start reading the 'Gem' in class—"

"It's not the 'Gem'—it's a big book."
"Bunter!"

A third time Mr. Quelch rapped out that name, and his tones had gradually grown louder and deeper.

The rapt junior heard him at last, and came to himself with a start. He looked up from the book, thrusting the latter under the desk, and looked guiltily at the incensed Form master.

"Yes, sir."
"I have spoken to you three times, Bunter."
"Have you really, sir? I'm sincerely sorry, but I did not hear you."

"You were reading, Bunter."
"Reading, sir?"

"You were reading a book."
"Reading a book, sir?"

"Don't repeat my words," almost shouted Mr. Quelch, still further angered by the irrepressible giggle that ran through the class-room. "Were you reading a book, or were you not reading a book?"

"I were—I mean I was, sir. I'm sincerely sorry—"
"And the book was not, I presume, Pendlebury's Arithmetic?" said Mr. Quelch, with crushing sarcasm—that being the book from which the present lesson was being taken.

"Pendlebury's Arithmetic, sir?"
"If you repeat my words again, Bunter, I shall cane you."

"Cane me, sir? I—I mean I'm sincerely sorry—"
"I spoke to you three times. I was about to ask you—"

"Yes, sir. I'm all attention, sir."
"I was going to ask you," said Mr. Quelch sternly, "how many times can point nought one be subtracted from one point one nought one, but instead of that I will ask you what is that book you were reading?"

"The book, sir?"

"Stand out here, Bunter, and bring the book with you."

Bunter hesitated, but he caught the gleam in the eyes of Mr. Quelch, and he thought that he had better obey. Slowly he drew the offending volume out, and stepped out before the grinning and curious class.

"Give me that book, Bunter."

The fat junior handed it over.

Mr. Quelch glanced at it, and started. It bore the title of "Hypnotism made Easy," by Professor Foozleum, and it was about the last volume Mr. Quelch would have expected to see in the hands of a Removite.

"So this is the nonsense which has taken all your attention from the lesson, Bunter."

"It isn't nonsense, sir. It's a ripping book."

"I shall keep this volume for a week, as a warning to you not to bring books into the class-room——"

"If you please, sir——"

"You may go back to your seat, Bunter."

"If you please, sir, the book doesn't belong to me. A fellow in the Third Form lent it to me, and I've promised to return it after tea."

"Ah, that alters the case. You may take the book, and write out fifty lines of Virgil instead."

"Oh, sir!"

"Go back to your place. I will leave the book on my desk, and you may take it as you go out after the lesson."

"If you please, sir——"

"Another word, and I shall cane you."

Billy Bunter slowly returned to his place. There was a gloomy expression upon his fat, spectacled face. He had taken up the subject of hypnotism with his usual enthusiasm. He had imagined himself to have a gift for it, and Professor Foozleum's book was to impart to him the technical knowledge required. He had been reading the book at every available moment during the day, and he had an assorted mass of more or less sound knowledge mixed up in his brain as a result.

Levison leaned towards him, as he passed. Levison, the most mischievous boy in the Form, and whose mischief was seldom good-natured, saw an opportunity for a joke. Mr. Quelch had turned away to chalk something in decimals on the blackboard, and Levison was unobserved by the master.

"Hold on, Bunter," he whispered. Billy glanced at him. "I say, don't take it like that," muttered Levison. "You were telling me at dinner that you have studied hypnotism——"

"So I have."

"And that you had a great natural gift for it."

"My natural powers in that line are marvellous."

"And that you could hypnotise me if you liked."

"So I could."

"Then why don't you hypnotise Mr. Quelch?"

Bunter started. The idea had not occurred to him. His eyes blinked excitedly behind his big glasses. Levison glanced towards the master. Mr. Quelch was busy chalking, and would probably be so for a few minutes. His back was still turned.

"Why don't you do it, then?" whispered Levison, encouragingly. "You could make him give you your book back and rescind those fifty lines. Then you could make him let you read through the rest of the lesson."

"By Jove! So I could."

"But perhaps you haven't sufficient confidence in yourself?"

"Ye-es, I've lots of confidence, only——only I haven't hypnotised anybody yet, and if I failed I should get a licking."

"But would you fail, when you know all about it?"

"No, that's true; I don't see how I could."

"Go it," muttered Levison. "He'll be turning round in a minute. Look here, you can try on me."

"How do you mean?"

"You can hypnotise me. Then tell me to do something, and if I do it, it will show that I am under the 'fluence.'"

"Good."

"Go ahead, then," whispered Levison.

Billy Bunter, with one eye nervously on the broad back of the Form master across the room, commenced to make some mysterious passes before Levison's face, at the same time fixing a steady glare upon him.

Levison's eyes half-closed. Billy Bunter almost trembled with eagerness. The influence was making itself felt with amazing rapidity. It was no dream! It was no idle fancy! He was a hypnotist—the real thing!

"Levison!" he whispered.

The new boy in the Remove did not reply. The fellows near at hand were almost choking with suppressed mirth, but Bunter had no eyes for that. It was clear to the simplest there that Levison was humbugging—except to Bunter. He was too keen and enthusiastic on the subject to think anything of the kind.

"Levison!" he whispered again. Levison did not move or speak. "Raise your right arm," Billy Bunter whispered eagerly. Levison slowly raised his right arm. "Now put it down again." Levison's right arm slowly descended. Billy Bunter felt a thrill of triumph. He had succeeded. He was a hypnotist. He made some reverse passes, and whispered again.

"Wake up!"

Levison appeared to start out of a dream.

"I—I—— Did you hypnotise me, Bunter?" he murmured.

"Yes, rather."

"Did you really?"

"Rather. You went right off, and I made you move your right arm up and then down."

"Wonderful."

"Marvellous," whispered Bulstrode. "Try it on Quelch, Bunter."

Billy Bunter nodded.

"Rather."

"You're going to try?"

"Yes. Just you wait till he turns round," said Billy Bunter.

As if he had heard, Mr. Quelch turned round at that moment. He fixed his cold grey eyes on Bunter.

"Someone was whispering," he said. "Bunter, why are you not in your place?"

Bunter made no reply. But his actions were more amazing to Form and Form master than any words could have been. Those of the Form who had been near enough to overhear understood; the others concluded that Bunter had suddenly gone mad.

For, instead of speaking, or going to his place, Bunter raised both hands and commenced to make a series of mesmeric passes, his spectacled eyes being at the time fixed intently upon Mr. Quelch. The Remove master was so utterly astounded that he stood as if petrified, gazing at Billy Bunter. The young hypnotist thrilled with excitement. The master did not move or speak. The 'fluence' was evidently 'on.'"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Rough on the Hypnotist!

"BUNTER, you ass!"

Harry Wharton muttered the words in a tone of warning. Every eye in the Remove was fixed upon Billy Bunter now. But the amateur hypnotist did not take any notice. The 'fluence' was on, and Billy Bunter had no time to attend to anything else.

Really, Bunter was justified in his belief that Mr. Quelch was under the mysterious influence of those mesmeric passes. The Form master stood quite still, his eyes wide open, his jaw dropping—staring at Billy Bunter in dumbfounded amazement. But this did not last long.

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the word like a clap of thunder. Bunter was so startled that he stopped making the passes, and stared in dismay at the Form master with his hands still in the air. The 'fluence' evidently was not on, after all!

"Bunter!"

"Ye-e-s, sir."

"Are you mad?"

"Mad, sir?"

"What are you doing?" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Are you mad, boy? How dare you perform those ridiculous antics in the class-room?"

Billy Bunter jumped.

"Ridiculous antics, sir?"

Mr. Quelch did not waste any more time in words. He made a dive for Bunter, seized him by the collar, and jerked him out before the class. Then he fixed a glare upon him that might have withered a basilisk.

"Now, Bunter, explain yourself."

"Explain myself, sir?" stammered Bunter, who had an unfortunate habit of repeating words that were addressed to him when he was scared—a most exasperating habit.

"Yes!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Why were you standing there making those absurd gestures?"

"Absurd gestures, sir?"

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Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath and took a cane from his desk. "Hold out your hand, Bunter."
 "My—my hand, sir?"
 "Yes, and at once!"
 "But, sir, if you please——"
 "Hold out your hand!"
 "I'm sincerely sorry, sir——"
 "Will you hold out your hand, or shall I send you into the Head master's study to be flogged?" thundered the Form master.
 "Flogged, sir?"
 Mr. Quelch lost all patience. He gripped Bunter by the collar and dragged him with a jerk towards the door. Levison, looking rather pale, rose in his place.
 "If you please, Mr. Quelch——"
 "Silence, Levison!"
 "I can explain, sir."
 "Ah, Levison, you can explain Bunter's absurd conduct, do you mean?" said Mr. Quelch, stopping. "Well, you may speak."

"It—it was a joke, sir."
 "A joke of Bunter's?"
 "No, sir."
 "What do you mean, Levison? Explain yourself immediately."

"I—I put him up to it, sir."
 There was a murmur of amazement in the Remove. There was not a fellow in the Form who had ever expected Levison to own up like this.

Mr. Quelch stared at Levison. From his observation of the boy's character he had not expected it either. He knew that Levison was suspicious, mischievous, and not good-natured. That there might be a strong sense of honour along with these faults was possible, but one would not have guessed it.

"Levison! So you have imposed upon Bunter's simplicity, is that it?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."
 "I am glad that you have the frankness to own up, Levison. Go back to your place, Bunter. Levison, you may come out here."

Gladly enough Bunter resumed his place. His first experiment in hypnotism had not ended fortunately, and it was dawning upon him that Levison had been "rotting" in pretending to be under the "fluence."

Levison stepped out before the class. All eyes were upon him. "You have acted in a disrespectful way towards your Form master, in playing this absurd trick," said Mr. Quelch. "I have before had to warn you that the class-room was not the place for jokes. You will take the punishment I intended to give Bunter."

And there and then Levison received four stinging cuts on each hand, and he went back to his place very white, and wriggling like an eel.

The lesson was resumed, and the Remove followed their Form master on a thrilling excursion among decimal fractions; but at last the welcome hour of dismissal arrived. Bunter ventured to take his book from the Form master's desk as he passed, and he immediately proceeded to a quiet corner of the Close, where he could sit under a tree and bury himself in his studies.

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh, the chums of No. 1 Study, came out together, as they usually did. Bob Cherry at once hurried off for the cricket bats, while the others walked slowly down towards the junior ground.

There was a thoughtful shade upon Harry Wharton's handsome face. Frank Nugent tapped him on the arm with a laugh.

"Penny for your thoughts, Harry—if they're worth it."
 "The thoughtfulness is great," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, "and the worthfulness should be terrific."

Harry Wharton laughed.
 "It's nothing; I was only thinking about that chap Levison."
 Nugent nodded approvingly.

"It was decent of him to own up like that, and I for one never expected anything of the sort."

"I thought there was some good in him," said Harry quietly.
 "He isn't a comfortable fellow to get along with, by any means; but he has shown that he has his good points."

"His manner is against him," Nugent remarked drily.
 Wharton coloured slightly.

"There was a time, not so long ago, when I heard that said of me," he said awkwardly. "I believe in giving a chap a chance."

"He's had chances enough, but he's a carping, suspicious rotter!" said Nugent. "No getting out of that."

"Ratherfully," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a nod of full assent.

"Well, you know what we agreed on," said Wharton.

"Yes," smiled Nugent. "You are going to bring him to a sane outlook—make a decent fellow of him—but in my opinion you'll need to get Billy Bunter to hypnotise him to make him play the game."

"There is the esteemed rotter," the nabob remarked, nodding towards Levison, who stood under the elms rubbing his hands. "He seems to be still experiencing the painfulness of the castigation."

"No wonder," grinned Nugent. "Quelch laid it on as if he meant it."

"Keep on, you chaps," said Wharton abruptly. "I want to speak to him."

"Oh, all right."
 Nugent and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh strolled on, and Harry Wharton crossed to Levison. The latter looked up at him with an extremely sour expression.

"I say, Levison, it was ripping of you to own up like that!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impulsively. "I——"

"Was it?" said Levison sourly. "What else could I do?"

"Well, nothing. But——"
 "But you didn't think I would," said Levison with a sneer.

"Some fellows wouldn't have done it."
 "And you thought I was one of the some."

"Well, I——"
 "You were surprised, of course. You thought I was cad enough to let that young ass, Bunter, take the licking. Thank you for your opinion of me, Harry Wharton."

Wharton bit his lip. He had spoken to Levison in his candid way, on a frank impulse. But he realised the next moment that he had made a mistake. There was one thing one could always be sure of about Levison, that he would never attribute a word or an action to the right motive.

"I didn't think you would take it like that, Levison."
 "Haven't I stated the facts correctly?"

"Well, yes; but——"
 "That's enough."

"I only meant to say that it was decent of you, and——"
 "I don't want your commendation, thank you."

"You are enough to try any fellow's patience I think, Levison," said Harry, with a burst of anger. "It's very hard to keep civil to you."

"Don't try then. I don't want you to speak to me; in fact, I'd much rather you didn't."

"Very well," said Wharton abruptly. And he strode away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Cash.

"I SAY, you fellows——"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Tea ready, Billy?"

The chums of the Remove had finished their cricket practice. Billy Bunter, who shared No. 1 Study with them, was waiting for them to come off the ground. The summer evening was deepening into dusk.

"No, Cherry, tea isn't ready. I was so interested in my book that I forgot all about tea."

"You young villain!"
 "Well, you fellows forgot it, too."

"That's different. We were playing cricket."
 "The differentness is terrific."

"Well, I was studying Professor Fozzeum's book on hypnotism. I've had to give it back now, but I've made notes, and fortunately I have the whole thing at my finger-tips now."

"That's all very well," Nugent remarked. "But we want tea."

"You've forgotten something else—there isn't anything for tea," explained Bunter. "That's what I've come down to speak to you about. What do you want me to get at Mrs. Mimble's shop?"

"Nothing, as far as I'm concerned," said Bob Cherry promptly.

"I'm stony, and I owe Mrs. Mimble two bob already against my Saturday's pocket-money."

"'Twas ever thus on a Friday night," sighed Nugent. "I'm down to my last twopence."

"The wantfulness of the cash is terrific. My honourable pockets are cramful of emptiness," remarked the nabob.

"What about you, Wharton?"

"I'm afraid I'm in the same state, Billy."

"Well, fortunately your credit is good with Mrs. Mimble," said Billy Bunter. "You can run up to any tune you like."

Harry Wharton laughed.
 "I can't run up to a higher tune than I can pay," he said.

"Oh, that's all right. You have your allowance to-morrow."

"It's booked. I owe Mrs. Mimble three shillings, and two in the village, and there are my subscriptions due. I shall be stony after I get it."

"Look here, Wharton, that's all rot, you know. You have a larger allowance than most of us."

"It's booked, I tell you."

"Well, you can run up an account with Mrs. Mimble, and pay any time."

Harry Wharton shook his head.
 "Can't be done, Billy. It's all right; we can have tea in Hall for once."

"Of course we can," said Nugent, "and let's get along before it's over. I'm jolly hungry."

"I say, you fellows, wait a minute. We can't have tea in Hall."

"Why not?"
 Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove indignantly through his big glasses.

"Because I can't feed on bread and scrape and weak tea"

after what I've been accustomed to," he said. "I'm surprised at your thinking of such a thing."

"Seems to me to be no choice in the matter."

"Wharton can run up an account."

"Don't be an ass, Billy. I couldn't run up an account I couldn't pay."

"You could pay it some time."

"Perhaps—perhaps not."

"Well, suppose it ran up, Colonel Wharton would pay it rather than have Mrs. Mimble complain to the Head and get you into a row."

"Do you want me to knock your head against the wall, Billy?"

"Certainly not."

"Then don't propose anything of that kind again."

"I don't see anything wrong in my proposition. I'm not the fellow to propose anything dishonest, I hope. I heard your uncle say to you that you were always to let him know if you wanted anything."

"Ass! That's because he can rely on me to keep a decent limit."

"H'm! Rather rotten to have an uncle offer to let you have anything so long as you don't ask for it."

"You young ass, it isn't like that—"

"Still, we can fix it up all right," said Bunter eagerly. "You can run up a few shillings with Mrs. Mimble this evening, and pay her in full to-morrow morning—"

"But I tell you I sha'n't have any money."

"That's all right. I'll lend you some."

"You! You haven't any."

"That's all you know."

"You young Shylock!" exclaimed Nugent indignantly.

"If you have any tin, why can't you stand a feed for once?"

"I didn't say I had any tin. I shall have some to-morrow morning, though. I'm expecting a postal order—"

"Oh!"

"You needn't say 'Oh' in that sceptical way, Bob Cherry, as if you doubted a fellow's word. I'm expecting a postal order by the first post in the morning, and then I will hand Wharton the money to pay Mrs. Mimble."

"Not good enough," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We know your postal order, Billy!"

"I assure you it's coming in the morning—I am absolutely certain of it."

"How so?"

"Because it hasn't come to-night. I was expecting it by the evening post, but it hasn't come, so it's bound to be here at breakfast. Then you can cash it yourself, and pay Mrs. Mimble."

"Better get in before tea's cleared off," said Bob Cherry.

"I say, aren't you going—"

"Yes, we're going," said Bob Cherry, walking away; and the others followed him, laughing. Bunter blinked after them indignantly.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, go and eat coke, Billy."

"What am I to do for my tea?"

"Come in with us," said Nugent.

"Or go and hypnotisefully influence the honourable Mrs. Mimble," suggested Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a grin. "Perhaps you may be able to runfully extend the account if you influence the charming Mrs. Mimble hypnotically."

Bunter started.

"My hat! I never thought of that."

He watched the chums of the Remove disappear in the dusk. Then, with an expression of great determination on his face, he turned his steps in the direction of the school-shop.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Hypnotises Mrs. Mimble.

MRS. MIMBLE, the gardener's wife, had the privilege of keeping a tuck-shop within the precincts of Greyfriars, and she drove a thriving trade with the boys, especially the juniors. Billy Bunter, when in funds, was her best customer, but Billy seldom was in funds. He owed Mrs. Mimble an account, which had been standing for more than a term, and the good dame was resolute not to allow it to be added to. All Billy's blandishments were in vain. Mrs. Mimble was as firm as a rock, and the account had remained quite stationary for a long time. Billy never paid anything off it, but the dame had cut her losses in that direction.

Mrs. Mimble came into the little shop as Bunter entered, and did not look pleased. Billy had been twice in the shop that day, trying to obtain supplies on the strength of a postal order which was coming—or was not coming—on the following morning.

"You again, Master Bunter?" said Mrs. Mimble disparagingly.

"Yes, ma'am," said Billy Bunter. "I want—"

"I can't let you have anything unless you pay for it."

"I will settle to-morrow morning."

"Oh, run away."

"You can run it up to five bob, and take it out of my postal order to-morrow."

"Oh, I have no patience with you, Master Bunter. I don't believe that you ever will have a postal order."

Billy Bunter looked hurt.

"That is a great deal like doubting a fellow's word, Mrs. Mimble," he said, with dignity. "I hope you have always found me an honourable chap."

"Then why don't you pay your account?"

"So I will, when my postal order comes. I'll have a rabbit pie—"

"No, you won't."

"Yes, I will!" said Bunter, beginning to make passes with his hands before Mrs. Mimble's face, at the same time fixing her with a stony glare.

Mrs. Mimble stood petrified.

Billy Bunter was hypnotising her, but the good dame had never heard of Professor Foozleum or his wonderful book, and she could only think that the fat junior had taken leave of his senses.

It was evidently not a joke, for Bunter's face was deadly serious.

His eyes blinked and blinked behind his big glasses with the intensity of his stare, and his hands never ceased their motion.

"My goodness!" gasped Mrs. Mimble.

"Close your eyes," said Billy Bunter in a deep, sepulchral voice.

"Goodness gracious!"

"Hold up your right hand."

"Gracious me!"

"Obey me, minion."

"He's mad!"

"Obey your master, slave of my will."

Bunter, in his intense earnestness, leaned over the little counter. Mrs. Mimble cast a frightened glance towards her little back room. But she had to pass along the counter to reach it, and Bunter was leaning over the counter, with glaring eyes and waving hands. She dared not go within reach of him.

"Woman, obey!"

Mrs. Mimble gasped faintly and staggered back against the wall, and sent a pile of stale buns clattering to the floor.

Her dazed expression was a sufficient proof to Bunter that the "fluence" was on. His eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"Woman!"

"Dear me!"

"Obey my commands, slave of my will," said Bunter in a deep voice, and in the best style of Professor Foozleum.

"Help!"

"Silence!"

Mrs. Mimble quavered into silence. Her eyes were fixed on Bunter in terror. She feared every moment that he would leap over the counter, seize the ham knife, and attack her with maniacal fury.

"Ah, the 'fluence' is fairly on this time," murmured Billy Bunter. "It didn't work well with Queleh, but I wasn't in practice then. You only have to get your hand in. Woman!" he went on aloud. "Do you acknowledge your master?"

"Deary me!"

"Are you the slave of my will?"

"Good gracious!"

"Dare you disobey my commands?" thundered Bunter.

Mrs. Mimble thought of the narrow counter and the ham knife, and sank upon her knees.

"Mercy, mercy! Don't injure a poor woman, Master Bunter! Please don't murder me!"

"Who wants to murder you?" said Billy, chuckling at his success, and his chuckle seemed to the frightened woman like that of a murderous maniac gloating over a helpless victim.

"Arise, woman!"

Mrs. Mimble staggered up. She dared not disobey.

"Hold up your right hand."

If anything had been wanting to convince Mrs. Mimble that Billy Bunter was really mad, this would have been enough. But she obeyed, and humbly elevated her right hand in the air, trembling in every limb the while.

"Now put it down again."

Mrs. Mimble lowered her hand.

"Now close your eyes."

Mrs. Mimble closed her eyes.

"Now open them again."

The amazed and terrified dame obeyed.

Bunter felt a thrill of triumph. It was the real thing at last, and no mistake about it. He was a thorough-going hypnotist. Mrs. Mimble could not be suspected of "rotting" like Levison.

"Very good," said Bunter. "Listen, slave of my will! Will you obey me?"

"Ye-e-es," stammered the dame.

"Will you trust me with grub?"

"Ye-e-es—oh, please, yes."

"To the tune of ten shillings?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Give me that basket."

Mrs. Mimble placed the basket on the counter.

"Now fill it with the things I point out."

The trembling dame, utterly unnerved by the proximity of a dangerous maniac and a sharp ham knife, obeyed unquestioningly.

Billy Bunter did not stint himself.

There was nothing dishonest about running up an account which he was going to pay in the morning—at least, from Bunter's point of view.

As he had been put to the trouble of hypnotising the good dame, he meant to have a good feed while he was about it.

Ham and tongue, cold beef and pickles, went into the basket, with a new loaf and a pat of fresh butter.

Then marmalade, and jam, and cake, and biscuits, and various kinds of fruits—as many varieties as Mrs. Mimble's little shop could supply.

Then Billy Bunter, like Alexander, looked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

"I'll have some of the cream puffs," he said, "and also some of the candied fruits. They're nice."

"Ye-e-es, M-M-Master B-B-Bunter."

"And some bottles of ginger pop."

"Ye-e-es."

"And some lemonade."

"Ye-e-es."

"Can you recommend anything else?"

"N-n-n-n-no."

"I think that will do. Just shove in some nuts. You can make up the account afterwards; I'm in a hurry."

"Ye-e-e-es."

"I think that's about all."

Billy Bunter took the basket; it weighed a good deal, but it was a welcome load. Then he made some backward passes before Mrs. Mimble's face, in the fashion indicated by Professor Fozzleum, the famous—more or less—hypnotist.

"Awake!" he said. "Awake in five minutes, and be silent."

"Ye-e-es."

It seemed rather extraordinary to Mrs. Mimble for even a madman to tell her to wake up in five minutes when she was broad awake already.

Bunter made a final pass, slung the basket over his arm, and walked out of the shop with a grin of triumph on his fat face.

Mrs. Mimble staggered into her little parlour and sank down into the nearest chair, all of a tremble, as she afterwards described it to the cook.

She felt that she had had a terribly narrow escape. Billy Bunter's glimmering spectacles, his waving hands, and the shining ham-knife, seemed to be still dancing before her terrified eyes.

Bunter entered the house, and paused at the open door of the dining-room. The chums of the Remove were taking their places at the Form table.

"I say, you fellows!"

Harry Wharton looked round.

Bunter beckoned to him, and pointed to the basket he was carrying. It was enough. As he went upstairs to the study he was followed by the famous four.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Feast.

HARRY WHARTON had never been more amazed in his life than when he saw the basket slung on Bunter's arm, and learned from Billy's expression what it contained. The others were equally amazed. They had not dreamed for a moment that Mrs. Mimble would listen to the voice of the charmer. But the basket was heavy, and Billy Bunter's triumph was evidently genuine.

Billy Bunter frequently felt that he was a fellow born to command, but he had never yet been able to get his claims to leadership acknowledged. But just now, as he marched upstairs followed by the famous four, he felt that he was in his proper place at last. He swelled visibly with triumph.

His walk—his waddle, as Bob Cherry called it—had become a regular strut by the time he reached the study, and his nose was high in the air as he entered that famous apartment. He set the basket down with a clump, and there was a musical clink of ginger-beer bottles knocking together.

The famous four followed him in; they had not spoken a word. They looked at each other, and they looked at Billy Bunter. Bunter, with an air of conscious superiority, inserted his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and looked at them.

"Well?" he said.

"Well," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "What have you got in that basket?"

"What do you think?"

"Old clothes," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Really, Cherry—"

"Grub, I suppose," said Nugent.

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet." ONE HALFPENNY.

"Right!"

"Where did you get it?"

"At the school shop."

"Anybody there at the time?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at Bob Cherry through his big spectacles.

"Really, Cherry, I hope you don't mean to insinuate that I—"

"Well, I know jolly well that Mrs. Mimble wouldn't trust you," said Bob bluntly. "Nobody would who knows you, you know."

"The proof of the pudding's in the eating," said Billy Bunter disdainfully. "Look in the basket."

He opened the basket, and displayed to view the good things packed therein.

There was no doubt about it!

Billy Bunter had secured a really first-class feed, and the mouths of the hungry Removites watered as they looked at the pile.

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry.

"Spiffing!" said Nugent.

"The rippingfulness is great," said the Nabob of Bhanipur; "and the spiffingfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton dropped his hand lightly on Billy Bunter's shoulder.

"I say, Billy, this is all right, isn't it?"

"All right? I should think you could rely upon my taste in choosing grub," said Billy Bunter, with great dignity.

"I don't mean that. But you were stony—"

"What about that?"

"And these things must come to five or six shillings."

"Nearer ten, dear boy," said Billy, with a fat smile.

"Well, Mrs. Mimble wouldn't trust you for two bob let alone ten. Before we start on the grub, Billy, you had better explain."

"I don't see that there's anything to explain."

"Yes there is, my son. Was Mrs. Mimble in the shop when you had these things?"

"Yes, she was."

"Did she give them to you?"

"Yes."

"Then she has trusted you?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Then how did she come to do so?"

"I hypnotised her," said Billy Bunter calmly.

There were four separate jumps in the study. Four amazed exclamations followed.

"Hypnotised her!"

"Yes."

"You young ass—"

"You can call me names if you like, Cherry; but I think my having the grub is pretty plain proof that I hypnotised her."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another blankly. There certainly seemed to be something in Bunter's contention. Mrs. Mimble was known never to give credit to Bunter. She must certainly have been under some strange influence to trust him to the extent of ten shillings, which there was not the slightest prospect of his ever paying, as she could not fail to know.

"Blessed if I understand this," said Bob Cherry. "This hypnotism is all rot!"

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"Looks as if it was genuine, doesn't it?" said Billy Bunter, with the calmness of one who knew that his position was invincible.

"There's something I don't understand about it," said Harry Wharton. "I don't half like this, either."

"The grub's all right," said Nugent. "And I'm jolly hungry."

"I'll jolly soon have the sausages cooked," said Bunter, who was already greasing the frying-pan. "It's my treat, my sons. There's enough this time. You fellows can lay the table."

Further remarks addressed to Bunter were unheard and unanswered. He was busy cooking, and when Bunter was cooking he had no attention to spare for anything else, except for taking "snacks" from the cookery. Wharton's brow was thoughtful and rather worried.

"I don't understand this," he said.

"What does it matter?" grinned Bob Cherry. "The grub's all right. Mrs. Mimble must have chosen to trust Billy."

"I suppose so, but it's very strange."

"The hypnotism's all rot, of course."

"Of course."

"But it's curious she should trust Bunter, and to such a tune too."

"I can't understand it."

"Perhaps that postal order is really coming at last," grinned Nugent. "Somebody said that the age of miracles was past, but it might happen."

"The miraclefulness would be great."

"Well, I suppose Mrs. Mimble knows her own business best," said Harry Wharton. "Anyway, this feed is like corn in Egypt, and it will last some time. As we're scoffing it, we can make it up to Mrs. Mimble if there's any mistake, and take our time about it."

"That's right."

"The cashfulness will soon be great," the nabob remarked.

"The stonyness is temporaryful."

"Anyway, here's the feed," said Bob Cherry. "How long are those sausages going to be, young Bunter?"

"They'll be done by the time you've got the kettle boiling."

"Jolly hot in here with that fire."

"If you can think of a way of cooking sausages without a fire, Bob Cherry, I'll retire and you can take my place as cook."

"I wouldn't take your place near that fire just now for all the sausages that ever sossed," said Bob Cherry. "I'll go and fill the kettle."

The smell of sausages and bacon was very appetising to hungry, healthy lads. Billy's treat looked like being a success. A corner of the fire was spared for the tin kettle, and it was soon boiling. Nugent made the tea, and Wharton cut the bread. Bob Cherry spread the assorted delicacies on the table, and there was an array that would have made the Remove's many mouths water if they had been there.

"Done," said Bunter.

"Good! Now we sha'n't be long."

Bunter had cooked sausages and bacon to a turn. The juniors fell to with keen appetites, and the provender disappeared at an amazing rate.

Bunter came out strong!

He usually did at feeding time, but on this occasion he excelled himself, doubtless feeling that he was called upon to do extra justice to his own treat, won by his own wonderful hypnotic powers.

"How do you like it, kids?" asked Bunter, beaming round with his glistening glasses in a brief interval, when he was obliged to rest for a moment before attacking a new dish.

"Ripping!" said Wharton.

"Jolly!" said Nugent.

"Rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Glad you like it. I dare say you will admit now that there is something in hypnotism, and that my wonderful powers—"

"My dear chap, you've shown wonderful powers, and no mistake," said Bob Cherry.

"Ah, you admit—"

"Yes, I've been watching you."

"Watching me?"

"Yes, watching your wonderful powers. A fellow who can put away eight sausages and four rashers of bacon, and then start on rabbit-pies, can lay claim to wonderful powers, I should think."

"I wasn't speaking of that—"

"Oh, weren't you? I was."

"I was speaking of my wonderful powers as a hypnotist."

"Pass the ham."

"My wonderful powers—"

"And the cold beef."

"My wonderful—"

"And the mustard."

"Really, Cherry—"

"And another plate."

"You can tell that hypnotism yarn to the narines," said Nugent. "But you can cook, I'll say that for you."

"I think I've proved—"

"You've proved that Mrs. Mimble suffers from temporary attacks of aberration, I think," said Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, really—"

"Pass the jam tarts."

"I'm going to develop my wonderful powers in this direction," said Bunter. "Mrs. Mimble is the slave of my will—"

"The what of your what?"

"The slave of my will. I don't see why I shouldn't make her stand a feed like this every day, by a daily exercise of my wonderful powers."

"Who's going to pay the bill?"

"The bill!"

"Yes, the bill. Can you raise the wind with your wonderful powers to pay ten bob a day for supplies?"

"I hadn't thought about that. The chief thing is to get the grub, of course. The account need not be paid—"

"Is that the Bunter variety of honesty?"

"I hope you do not mean to hint that I could possibly be dishonest, Cherry. I do not mean that the account should never be paid. That would be dishonest—extremely dishonest—and I am surprised at your proposing such a thing."

"What?"

"I am surprised at your proposing that Mrs. Mimble should never be paid."

"But I didn't, you young villain—you did!"

"It's no good shouting at me, Cherry; and I don't see what you want to begin to prevaricate for. There are only friends here, and we sha'n't tell about you."

"You young—"

"The passfulness of the muscatels would be an obliging service to my worthy self."

"Here you are, Inky."

"I say, you fellows, I hope you don't think for a moment that I could adopt Cherry's suggestion of leaving Mrs. Mimble's bill unpaid indefinitely. It need not be paid at once, though. The account can run up—"

"For a few years, I suppose," grinned Nugent.

"Well, since you suggest a few years—"

"But I don't!"

"Nugent suggests a few years," said Billy Bunter, who could be deaf as well as short-sighted when he liked, "and really I don't see why the account shouldn't run up till I am grown up, and then I shall have lots of money, and can settle it with interest."

"Where will you get the money from?"

"Oh, a fellow of my intellect is bound to get on. When I get into my father's business, I shall make things hum. I've offered him advice several times, when I've been home for the holidays, in spite of the ungrateful way he receives it in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But as I was saying, when Cherry interrupted me with that rather questionable suggestion about not paying Mrs. Mimble—as I was saying, there are new directions on all sides in which I can develop my wonderful powers as a hypnotist."

"Better try Quelch again."

"I shall certainly try him again, but I think I shall leave him till the last, in case of—of accidents. I shall try on Carberry next. He's the prefect who puts the light out to-night, you know, and if I hypnotise him, we can take it out of him for being such a beastly bully. It would be great fun to make him duck himself with a jug of water, or go and start fighting, for instance with that other beast Cleek."

There was a tap, and a junior looked in at the door of the study. Billy Bunter looked round.

"You can travel along, Skinner!"

"It's not Skinner, it's Hazeldene," grinned the Remove, coming into the study.

"Oh, it's you, Vaseline. Did you smell the sausages cooking?"

"No, I didn't," said Hazeldene indignantly.

"Ah, it was the bacon, then?"

"No, it wasn't, you young ass! I've come here—"

"You can have a feed if you like," said Billy Bunter, waving a fat hand magnanimously. "There's lots, and there's practically no limit to the supply I can get in the future. I am thinking of standing a series of extensive feeds to the whole Form, and I think the fellows will probably give Wharton the push and elect me captain of the Remove. After all, a captain's business is to look after the commissariat first of all, and I'm the fellow for—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at, Vaseline."

"There will be something to weep about soon, I think," said Hazeldene. "Mrs. Mimble has been to Quelch."

"Eh?"

"I know jolly well you're not really mad—"

"Mad?"

"Yes, mad. You're not."

"Of course I'm not!"

"Of course, you couldn't keep it up."

"Keep it up?" exclaimed the bewildered Bunter. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, come off; you know!"

"What are you driving at, Hazeldene?" said Harry Wharton, who saw that the junior had news of some sort. "What has Mrs. Mimble been to Mr. Quelch about?"

"About Bunter searing her in the tuck-shop."

"Searing her!"

"Yes. She's complaining far and wide."

"I didn't scare her!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly.

"I hypnotised her!"

"You whatted her?" howled Hazeldene.

"I hypnotised her."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Hazeldene. "My only summer hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter."

"Not for you, my fat youth," gurgled Hazeldene. "Mrs. Mimble has stated distinctly that you were mad, and threatened to murder her with the ham knife."

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

"What a shocking story-teller!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "I tell you I hypnotised her, and there's nothing against that in the college rules, so Quelch ought not to interfere."

"Well, there's nothing in the college rules against murdering old ladies with a ham knife," said Hazeldene. "But it wouldn't be allowed, all the same."

"I say, you fellows——"

"The long and the short of it is, that Quelch has sent for you, and you're to go to his study," said Hazeldene. "I've come to tell you."

And he departed, shouting with laughter. The chums of the Remove were laughing too. The true explanation of the hypnotist's success seemed excruciatingly funny. Billy Bunter blinked round indignantly.

"Of course, this is all rot," he remarked. "Mrs. Mimble has changed her mind about trusting me, and has made up this yarn. It's preposterous on the face of it. How could she possibly have thought I was mad?"

"She may have judged by appearances."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Anyway, you'd better go to Quelch's study," said Nugent. "Don't worry about the feed; we'll finish it while you're gone."

"I suppose I'd better go."

"I suppose you had, or Quelch may come here and yank you along. And let it be a lesson to you never to hypnotise harmless and necessary old ladies."

"If you hypnotise anybody," said Bob Cherry, "let it be Quelch. But in that case you ought to give us the tip, and let us come along to see the fun; and it would be a good idea to put some old exercise books in the seat of your——"

But Billy Bunter waited to hear no more. The master of the Remove was not to be trifled with, and the fat junior hurried away to interview the Form master in his study, with the feeling he might have had if he had been going to interview a lion in his den.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Hypnotist in a Fix!

MR. QUELCH was waiting for Bunter in his study, and his brow was knitted, a sign of a thunderstorm to come. Bunter entered the study with an inward quake, and quaked still more as he saw the Form master's face.

"Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch, in a voice that made the fat junior jump.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"I have heard a most serious complaint about you."

"I am sincerely sorry, sir, but——"

"You do not, I presume, intend to keep up the imposture with me, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You are one of the most stupid boys in my Form, but you will not venture to pretend to me that you are insane?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"You have affected insanity for the purpose of frightening Mrs. Mimble."

"Nothing of the sort, sir."

"You deny it?"

"Certainly."

Mr. Quelch looked at Bunter with a very keen expression. Mrs. Mimble had been to him in a state of great excitement with her complaint. She had evidently believed that the fat junior was really mad. But Bunter's denial was explicit.

"Now, Bunter, we must get to the truth in this matter," said the Remove master, more mildly. "Mrs. Mimble has complained to me that you entered her shop in a state of dangerous lunacy, and threatened her life with a ham knife. She was almost in hysterics, and claimed protection, and also ten shillings for goods which she alleges she supplied to you under bodily fear."

"Mrs. Mimble is quite mistaken, sir. I don't remember even seeing a ham knife. I certainly did not pretend to be insane," said Bunter indignantly.

"You went into Mrs. Mimble's shop?"

"Yes, but——"

"And you acted in a way that caused the dame to believe that you were mad."

"Oh, no, sir."

"Is it true that she supplied you with ten shillings' worth of goods?"

"Yes, that part is quite true."

"Had she previously refused to give you credit?"

"Mrs. Mimble was always rather unreasonable in matters of that kind, sir."

"Had she previously refused to give you credit?" repeated the Form master.

"I have a postal order coming to-morrow morning, sir, and I thought there would be no harm in——"

"Had she previously refused to give you credit?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter, jumping.

"Then why did she give you credit for such a large amount, for a junior, after previously refusing to do so?"

"She changed her mind, I suppose, sir."

"Why?"

"I—I—the fact is——"

"Explain yourself!"

"I—I—you see, sir, as I have a postal order for ten shillings

coming to-morrow morning, I thought she ought to trust me——"

"Be brief."

"So I—I—I hypnotised her, sir," stammered Billy Bunter.

Mr. Quelch had taken up a cane. He dropped it with a thwack on the table in his blank amazement.

"You did what?" he gasped.

"Hypnotised her, sir."

"You utter—you—— But there, I cannot express to the full my opinion of your stupidity, Bunter."

"There is nothing stupid in hypnotism, sir. I hypnotised her, and made her give me credit; but I've got a postal order coming to-morrow morning, and of course I shall settle up to the full."

"Bunter, is it possible that you really believe that you hypnotised Mrs. Mimble?"

"I am quite certain about it, sir," said Bunter, recovering his confidence a little. "You see, sir, she trusted me with the stuff."

"And is it possible that you are too stupid to know her motive for doing so?"

"She was hypnotised, sir. It is only lately that I have discovered my wonderful powers as a hypnotist, and——"

"Absurd!"

"Not at all, sir. Mrs. Mimble is utterly unreasonable in the matter of trusting a chap with a little account, but directly I put the 'fluence' on she relented."

"She supposed from your absurd antics that you were mad?"

"Impossible, sir."

"I believe now that you did not purposely assume the part of a maniac——"

"Oh, Mr. Quelch!"

"And I suppose the ham knife part of the story is due to Mrs. Mimble's terrified imagination. But the dame certainly believed that you were insane, and she gave you the goods under that impression!"

"Impossible, sir."

"It is not impossible, it is quite true. Now, you must cease playing these absurd antics, Bunter. Mrs. Mimble must be paid, in the first place."

"I have a postal order coming to-morrow morning——"

"Very well, you will pay Mrs. Mimble to-morrow morning, and report the matter to me when you have her receipt."

Bunter's face fell a little.

"I—I—it is possible there may be some slight delay in the post, sir."

"Indeed," said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"The postal order may not come until night, sir. There is frequently some delay in the arrival of my postal orders. I have thought of writing to the Postmaster-General about it."

"Very well, you will be allowed until Monday to pay Mrs. Mimble——"

"It is barely possible, sir, that the postal order may not arrive till next week."

"I thought so," said Mr. Quelch. "What is the amount of your weekly pocket-money?"

"A shilling, sir."

"Then it would take your pocket-money for nearly the whole of a term to pay for the goods you obtained to-day from Mrs. Mimble?"

"If my postal order comes——"

"Yes; if it comes you will pay Mrs. Mimble, and if it does not come by Monday, Bunter, I shall write to your father and enclose Mrs. Mimble's account."

Bunter's jaw dropped.

"M-m-m-m-my father, sir!"

"Yes; your father!"

"I—I—I'm afraid he would be waxy, sir. You see, a fellow's parents never understand these matters——"

"No, I suppose they would not understand a boy frightening an old woman into giving him credit——"

"I didn't frighten her, sir. I hypnotised her."

"Even if your absurd statement were correct, your conduct would be absolutely dishonest, Bunter. You have allowed Mrs. Mimble to supply you with goods you know you cannot pay for."

"If my postal order comes, sir, I——"

"But if it does not come?"

"Oh, it is bound to come sooner or later."

"Suppose it does not, and your father refuses to pay Mrs. Mimble, where will she get her money from?" said Mr. Quelch, trying to be patient.

"I haven't thought about that part of the matter, sir. You see, a fellow can't think of everything at once. But Mrs. Mimble will be paid all right. I don't think you ought to call me dishonest, sir. If I can't pay her, I can borrow the money of the fellows, or they will pay her. Wharton often pays things for me."

"Ah, I see. You think that in the last resource you can extract the money from your study-mates."

"That's a rather unpleasant way of putting it, sir. I should borrow the money."

"With no prospect of ever returning it?"

"Of course I should pay up sooner or later. Besides, they'd rather cash up than have a fellow in their study set down as a—a—a—"

"A defaulter, I suppose you mean," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Now, Bunter, does it not occur to you that your conduct very closely resembles a kind of blackmail?"

"Oh, sir."

"Listen to me. I cannot allow Mrs. Mimble to be swindled—"

"Oh, sir!"

"But I forbid you to borrow the money of your study-mates to pay her."

"But, sir—"

"But if she is not paid on Monday, the account will be forwarded to your father, to deal with as he thinks fit."

"But I say, sir—"

"You may go now, Bunter."

"I say, sir—"

"One word more. If I hear anything further of this hypnotism nonsense, I shall cane you very severely."

"But, sir—"

"You may go."

"I wanted to point out—"

"Leave my study, sir!" thundered the Form master, losing patience. And Billy Bunter skipped out like a frightened rabbit.

He met the chums of the Remove in the passage. They were coming out, looking very contented with the feed they had enjoyed in No. 1 Study. They stopped and surrounded the lugubrious-looking Billy.

"Licked?" asked Bob Cherry cheerfully.

Bunter shook his head.

"Then what are you looking so down in the mouth for?"

"Quelch says Mrs. Mimble is to be paid on Monday, and if my postal order doesn't come, I don't know what's to be done."

"But you said it was certain to come when you wanted to borrow something on the strength of it?"

"Yes, but there's always a doubt, you know."

"The doubtfulness of the honourable Bunter's postal orders is terrific."

"I'm in a beastly fix. You see, Quelch forbids me to borrow the tin of any of you fellows."

"Good old Quelch!"

"He suggested that I should blackmail you for the money, but—"

"Ho did what?"

"You heard what I said."

"Yes, you ass, and if Quelch heard you you'd get licked! What silly chump's idea have you got into your wooden head now?"

"Well, I forget his exact words, but it was something about blackmailing you fellows for the money. The question is, what am I to do?"

"Better take to honesty for a change!" suggested Nugent.

"Really, Nugent!"

"Why didn't you hypnotise Mr. Quelch—"

"Well, you see, he's a chap who doesn't believe in hypnotism, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at in that. There are difficult subjects and easy subjects, and Quelch is a difficult one. Mrs. Mimble is an easy one, and she is the slave of my will."

"Your slave has got you into a fix, though!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The fixfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, you might be sympathetic at least. I've stood you a good feed. What are you going to do Wharton?"

"I'm going to the gym," said Harry, laughing.

"I mean, what are you going to do to help me out. You've helped me before when I've been in a fix, and you got Vaseline out of the grip of that moneylender chap, and—"

"Cheese it!"

"Well, you see, if you bring up people to depend upon you, you can't go back on them," said Billy Bunter. "I look to you to get me out of this fix."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'll do my best," he said.

"What are you going to do?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I'm going to speak to Quelch. You fellows go on, and I'll join you in the gym."

And Harry Wharton walked away towards the Form master's study. Billy Bunter, his face clearing now that he felt that he had shifted off his burden upon other shoulders, returned to No. 1 Study, and was soon busy upon the remains of the feast.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Levison Knows All About It.

"IS that you, Wharton?"

It was Levison's voice, and the new boy in the Remove came out of the dusk of the passage as he spoke. Harry Wharton stopped.

"Yes. Did you want to see me?"

"Not particularly," replied Levison, in his sour way. "I have something to say to you, though."

"Well, you couldn't speak to me without seeing me, could you?" said Harry, determined to be good-humoured. "What is it?"

"You were good enough to speak to me some time back and give me your lordly approval for owning up in class this morning."

"Yes, I thought you had acted decently, and I said so."

"I don't exactly see what concern it was of yours, and I think it was like your cheek to imagine for a moment that I should act otherwise," said Levison. "But one good turn deserves another. I have something of the same sort to say to you."

"What do you mean?"

"About Billy Bunter. I put him up to a jape in the classroom, and owned up and took the licking when Quelch got into a wax. Are you going to do the same?"

"I don't understand you," said Harry Wharton impatiently. "I may be very dense, but I don't follow."

"It's easy to be dense when one chooses," said Levison, with an irritating shrug of the shoulders. "I shouldn't think of interfering with you in the matter, only you have chosen to bother your head about me in a similar case—"

"Will you come to the point?"

"Certainly. Are you going to own up?"

"Own up to what?"

"Over Billy Bunter's affair. You put him up to scaring Mrs. Mimble to get you a feed, and now he's in a row again over it."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"In the first place," he said quietly, "Bunter did not intend to scare Mrs. Mimble. He thought he was hypnotising her."

"Mrs. Mimble thought he was a dangerous lunatic."

"Bunter did not know that. In the second place, I had not the faintest idea that Bunter was doing anything of the kind."

Levison closed one eye.

"Bob Cherry or Nugent, I forget which, suggested in a joking way that Bunter should hypnotise Mrs. Mimble," went on Harry, "but none of us thought for a moment that he would be idiot enough to attempt anything of the sort, and certainly we never imagined that the affair could possibly turn out as it did."

"You had the feed."

"That is no affair of yours."

"Bunter is in a row for it. It's all very well for you to say that you didn't put him up to the dodge—"

"I am not on my defence to you, Levison."

"You will be on your defence to the whole Form, I expect, if you don't do the right thing!" sneered Levison. "What it looks like to us is that you had a good feed, and gave Bunter the job of getting the stuff, knowing that his silly tricks would frighten an old woman into handing it over."

"Do you think that yourself?"

Levison shifted uneasily at the direct question.

"It doesn't matter what I think myself," he said, after a moment. "I only say what the thing looks like. You ought to get Bunter out of this fix. You were very much concerned about me in a similar case."

Harry Wharton bit his lip.

"I'm afraid the fellows are right, Levison," he said quietly. "I am beginning to think that you are a hopeless cad, and that you'll never be anything else."

"Really?" said Levison, with irritating coolness. "Much obliged for your opinion. Are you going to own up to Quelch?"

"I have explained the matter to you, though you are not entitled to an explanation."

"Yes. And now are you going to own up?"

"Once more, I have nothing to own up to."

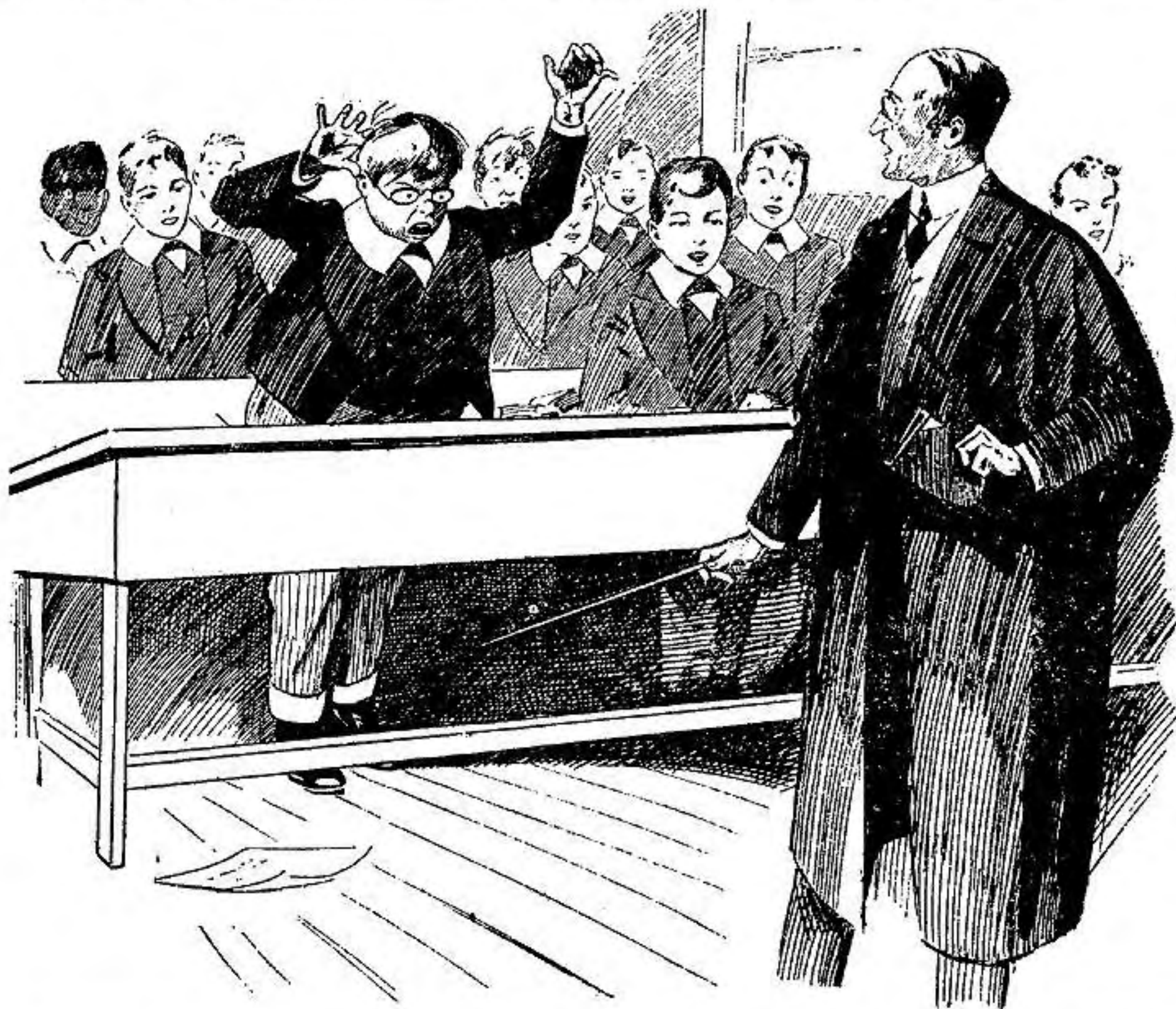
"Then you are going to make a scapegoat of that ass Bunter?"

"Oh, hold your confounded tongue!" broke out Wharton angrily. "You will tempt me to knock you flying soon."

"Really? Because you licked me the other day I suppose you think you can bully me as much as you like," said Levison unpleasantly. "You will find out your mistake if you start."

Harry Wharton controlled his temper with difficulty. He had made up his mind that he would not quarrel with this fellow, whatever the provocation. And Harry, in spite of a naturally quick and passionate temper, had an iron resolution when his mind was made up.

"I don't want to argue with you," he said. "Let the



Instead of speaking or going to his place, Bunter raised both hands and commenced to make a series of mesmeric passes, his spectacles being at the same time fixed intently upon Mr. Quelch. The Remove master was so utterly astounded that he stood as if petrified, gazing at Billy Bunter. The young hypnotist thrilled with excitement. The master did not move or speak. The 'fluence' was evidently 'on.'

matter drop. I shall do as I think fit without consulting you."

"Are you going to own up?"

Levison probably knew that the repetition of the question in exactly the same form, as if all Wharton's replies amounted to a mere nothing, was the most irritating rejoinder he could make. But he had to deal with one who was determined not to be provoked.

"I have nothing to say to you, Levison. Let me pass."

"First let me tell you—"

"You have said enough."

Levison did not stand aside, and Harry pushed roughly past him and strode on. Levison gritted his teeth, and his eyes flamed; then a sardonic smile crept over his lips, and he strolled slowly away.

Harry walked on to Mr. Quelch's study and knocked. The Form master's deep voice bade him come in, and Mr. Quelch looked slightly surprised at the sight of the young captain of the Remove.

"May I speak to you, sir, about Bunter?" said Harry, in his direct way.

"Certainly, Wharton."

"I don't know whether he has quite explained to you, sir. The young ass—I mean, Bunter thinks he is a hypnotist," said Harry, colouring, "and he thought he had hypnotised Mrs. Mimble. He didn't mean to frighten her at all."

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Yes, I understand that. But he did frighten her, and led her to trust him with goods he cannot pay for."

"He stood the feed in the study, sir, and of course we don't mean to let Mrs. Mimble lose the money," said Harry.

"We shall pay the bill, and if you will let me see Mrs. Mimble and make the arrangements, I will arrange to pay it off a bit each week till it is clear. She will agree to that."

"I have no doubt she would, Wharton; but I don't think you ought to be victimised in this way."

"Well, Bunter stood us a treat."

"As a matter of fact, Wharton, I think the difference between meun and tuun ought to be made more distinct to Bunter. He does not mean to do anything dishonest, but he is the kind of boy to slide into dishonesty out of sheer stupidity and want of thought. I think he requires a lesson."

"I dare say you are right, sir, but—"

"But you would rather see him through," smiled the Form master. "If you get into the habit of shouldering other people's burdens, Wharton, you will never be at a loss for a load to carry."

Harry Wharton coloured.

"He is such a helpless little duffer, sir."

"All the more need of a lesson in time. I have forbidden him to obtain the money from his study mates, with the intention of making him realise that he must learn to think and act for himself, and not shift his troubles to other boys' shoulders in this careless and selfish way. He must pay Mrs. Mimble, or else the matter will be placed before his father. It is the only way to treat him with effect. I have not acted hastily in this matter, Wharton, and I have given you this explanation because I respect your opinion."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry.

There was nothing more to be said, and he quitted the Form master's study. Mr. Quelch's decision seemed hard, but he was probably quite right, and in any case he was not to be argued with. Harry looked a little dejected as he went towards the gym, till a slap on the shoulder from Bob Cherry startled him out of his reverie. After an hour in the gymnasium, the chums of the Remove returned to No. 1 Study, and found Billy Bunter reclining in the only easy-chair, with his head on a cushion and his feet on the fender, a fat smile of contentment on his face.

"I say, you fellows, don't make a row," he said. "I'm very comfy. I should have been dozing in another minute if you hadn't come in."

"Been feeding again, Falstaff?"

"I thought I had better have a snack. Some of the grub mightn't have kept over the night in this hot weather, and I thought I'd make sure of it. I haven't really had much to eat. I had finished some minutes ago."

"We've been out an hour or more, and you've been at it all the time. What you want now is a good shake-up."

Billy Bunter shuddered.

"Please don't touch me, Cherry. Don't be a beast! I should feel very uncomfortable if I were moved suddenly just now."

"You've got to move, Owl. We've got to use the table, and you're sprawled all over the room."

"I don't see how I can move very well. I'm too fatigued. It's exhausting work hypnotising an obstinate old lady—"

"Shift!"

"Oh, don't disturb me. It's bad for the digestion to move about after eating. Couldn't you fellows go back to the gym for another hour or two?"

"Scarcely."

"The scarcelyfulness is terrific."

"I say, Wharton, what have you done about that affair? Is it all right?"

Harry Wharton laughed shortly.

"No, Billy, it isn't all right; it's all wrong."

Bunter sat upright.

"You don't mean to say that you haven't managed it?"

"Quelch wouldn't have it."

"That's all very well, Wharton, but I can't have you letting me down like this, after urging me to place the matter in your hands."

"You young ass—"

"And you won't improve matters by calling me names. You practically compelled me to trust the matter to you, and now I look to you to see me through. I had faith in you, and I rely upon you now."

"Quelch won't allow me—"

"Bother Quelch! You took charge of the matter."

"I said I would do what I could."

"Well, I left it to you. It's no good coming to me at this time of the day to say that you can't do anything. I expect you— Stop jerking this chair, Bob Cherry."

"Shift, then!"

"I can't shift. It's impossible for me to move, and I shall— ow-wowow—wow!"

Bob Cherry tilted the chair forward, and Billy Bunter shot out of it upon the hearthrug. He rolled across the study with the impetus given him by the chair, and brought up against the bookcase. There he sat up and stared blankly.

"Wh-wh-what was that? You beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've given me a fearful shock."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I shall very likely have indigestion to-night!"

"The probableness is great, considering that the amountfulness of the esteemed beastly Bunter's gorging is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, start on the jam-tarts, Billy, and give us a rest."

"Well, that's not a bad idea, come to think of it," said Billy Bunter thoughtfully. "I could eat a few tarts. I may as well take the bag."

And he took it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The "Fluence" Falls.

"BED-TIME, you young whelps!"

That was Carberry's pleasant way. He looked into the junior common-room and grunted out the words. And there was a stir among the Removites. Especially the smaller boys in the Form showed great activity in getting ready for bed. Carberry, the prefect, was a bully, and it was usually the smaller Removites who received his growls and cuffs. Harry Wharton and Co., and other stalwarts of the Form, as a rule escaped the prefect's kind attentions. They were too troublesome to be lightly tackled. They had a way of getting "their own back" which was not conducive to the comfort even of a Sixth Form prefect.

"Don't keep me waiting," said Carberry.

Nobody was keeping him waiting, but that was his way. The Remove went quietly up to their dormitory, and Carberry shut the door with a slam, after announcing that he would be back in five minutes to extinguish the light, and that he would bring a cane with him.

"Nice sort of a pig, isn't he?" said Bob Cherry, as he began to undress. "It has occurred to me several times lately that it's the duty of the Remove to educate Carberry."

"We might give our attention to it," assented Nugent. "He's a pig, and he allows himself great freedom in addressing our honourable selves. A prefect ought to bend the knee in talking to the Greyfriars Remove."

"It's all right," said Billy Bunter. "I've got a surprise in store for the rotter. I say, you fellows, you just watch."

"What are you going to do, Billy? Roll on him and squash him?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Of course, I'm going to hypnotise him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hypnotised Mrs. Mimble, and she's a very obstinate and unreasonable old lady. I shall make short work of Carberry."

"He'll make short work of you if you start any nonsense," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Better wait for a safer subject."

"Well, I've promised Levison and Skinner and some of the fellows that I'll make an example of Carberry," said Bunter, with great importance. "Don't you trouble to undress, you fellows. There's nothing to be afraid of. I am going to hypnotise Carberry, and make him the slave of my will."

"You young ass—"

"I wish you wouldn't call me names, Nugent. I'm sincerely sorry if I'm putting you fellows in the shade by exhibiting my wonderful powers, but you know you can't expect to keep your end up against a really clever chap—I may say genius."

"You may say anything you like, Billy, only don't try to hypnotise Carberry, unless you can chloroform him first."

"I suppose I must expect you chaps to detract from my wonderful powers?"

"Oh, go ahead and get a licking, if you like!"

"I don't see how Carberry can lick me when I have hypnotised him and made him the slave of my will. Are you going to bed, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, rather," grunted Bulstrode.

"There's no necessity. I am going to hypnotise Carberry, and we can go to bed what time we like. I am going to make Carberry stand on his head, and stick his napper in a basin of water."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes; it will be very funny."

"Very funny, I expect," said Bulstrode, grinning. "Very funny, indeed. But I think I'd rather see the fun from my bed."

Bulstrode's opinion seemed to be shared by the others. All were in bed by the time the ill-tempered prefect returned, with the exception of Billy Bunter. The latter was sitting on his bed, fully clad.

Carberry came in and stared at the fat junior.

"Why aren't you in bed, Bunter?"

Bunter's reply was startling. It consisted in actions, not in words. He rose to his feet, faced Carberry, and began to make mysterious passes with his hands. The prefect stared at him in boundless amazement.

Like former victims of Bunter's wonderful powers, he was too amazed to move or speak for a moment, and Billy took this as a sign that the "fluence" was on.

"Hold up your right arm," he commanded.

There was a giggle from the beds, and a gasp of absolute amazement from Carberry.

"What! Bunter!—Eh?"

"Hold up your right arm."

"Are you dotty?"

"Obey me; slave of my will!"

"Eh? What?"

"Obey me!"

"I suppose," said Carberry slowly, "that this is a little joke. You have been scaring Mrs. Mimble by pretending to be mad, but you ought to know better than to work off a whooze like that on me."

"Hold up your right arm!"

Billy Bunter repeated the order in a faltering voice now. Carberry certainly did not look as if the "fluence" were working. He came towards Billy Bunter with long, quick strides.

Bunter made the passes specified by Professor Fozzleum, but they seemed absolutely without effect upon the angry prefect. He reached Billy Bunter, who skipped over the bed just in time to escape.

"I say, Carberry—"

"Come here, you young scoundrel!"

"If you please, I'll go to bed."

"So you will, after you've had a licking for your cheek," said Carberry, pursuing Bunter round the bed.

Billy made a desperate clamber over it again, showing remarkable agility considering his circumference and the supper he had eaten. Carberry sprawled over the bed just too late to catch him.

"I say, Carberry—"

"Will you stop, you young whelp!"

"I'll—I'll go to bed."

Carberry jumped over the bed and rushed at him. Bunter scrambled over the next which happened to be Nugent's. Nugent gave him a helping hand, and shoved him over, and the next moment Carberry was on the spot. Bunter had dragged most of the clothes off Nugent, and Carberry gave the latter a sounding slap in passing.

"Oh!" roared Nugent.

He lunged out with one leg, and his foot caught Carberry in the ribs as he crossed over the bed, and sent him rolling on the floor.

Bunter plunged under Harry Wharton's bed, as the safest place, and lay there palpitating; but the prefect's attention was turned to Nugent now. He had been hurt in his tumble, and he wanted vengeance. He rushed straight at Nugent, pinned him down, and began slapping his bare limbs, leaving a great red mark wherever his slaps fell.

That was more than the chums of the Remove were likely to stand. Nugent was yelling and squirming, and Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh scrambled out of bed in a twinkling, and rushed to the rescue. Hazeldene and Micky Desmond were only a moment behind.

Carberry was seized and pulled off his victim, and dragged over on the floor with the juniors sprawling over him.

"You—you young villains!" he gasped. "Let me go; I'll teach you to lay hands on a prefect! ow! oh!"

He was sent rolling along the floor, and then the chums of the Remove stood waiting for him to come on—half a dozen sturdy juniors shoulder to shoulder. Others were getting out of bed, too, and evidently meant to take part in the fray. They were willing to follow Harry Wharton's lead, even to the extent of throwing a prefect out of the dormitory.

Carberry scrambled to his feet, white with rage. He glared at the juniors, but even in his fury he hesitated to attack the group of determined youngsters. If the fear of a prefect did not move them, physical force could not do it—one against six.

"You—you young scoundrels!" gasped the prefect. "I'll have you all flogged for this. Lay your hands on a prefect, will you?"

"You can go to the Head if you like," said Harry Wharton; "and when you make your complaint, tell him how you treated Nugent. If you don't, I will."

"Rather!" said Bob Cherry.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

Carberry gritted his teeth. Serious matter as it was for juniors to resist a prefect, he had placed himself quite in the wrong by his brutality. His authority would only be upheld by the masters as long as it was not abused. And he had abused it, as the marks upon Nugent would show if put to the test.

Billy Bunter crawled out from under the bed, and took up his position behind Harry Wharton and Co. He rubbed his spectacles and replaced them on his little fat nose, and gasped for breath.

"Keep him off, you chaps!" he panted. "If you'll keep him off for a bit, I'll stand behind you and make the passes, and hypnotise the beast."

"Come here, Bunter!" rapped out the prefect.

"I'll hypnotise him and make him stand on his head."

"Get aside, you young rascals. Bunter is going to have a licking."

Harry Wharton did not stir.

"Nothing of the sort," he said coolly. "If you had licked Bunter for being such an ass—"

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"Shut up, Billy. If you had licked Bunter for being such an ass, it would have served him right; but you shouldn't have started bullying."

"Are you teaching me a prefect's duties, Wharton?"

"Well, you ought to learn them, you know. You've done quite enough in this dormitory, and you'd better get out."

"I am going to thrash Bunter!"

"You are going to do nothing of the sort."

For a moment their eyes met steadily, and then the bully gave way to the strong, self-reliant nature of the younger lad.

Carberry snapped his teeth.

"I shall report this to your Form master, Wharton."

"Report what you like."

Carberry extinguished the light and quitted the dormitory. The juniors scrambled into bed in the dark.

"I say, you fellows, I wish he hadn't gone away so suddenly," said Billy Bunter. "I was just making the passes over Wharton's shoulder, and—"

"You young duffer!"

"The 'fluenee' would have been on in another minute."

"Oh, go to bed! I don't think upon the whole Carberry will say anything about this to Quelch. He's afraid to face the music."

And Harry Wharton was right. Nothing further was heard about the Remove's defiance of the prefect.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Last Resource!

BILLY BUNTER looked for the postman the following morning with unusual anxiety. The fat junior had a touching faith in his postal order, but he admitted that there might be delay in its coming. If it did not come he was certainly in a fix.

He had troubled the chums of No. 1 Study often enough to get him out of difficulties. He would have troubled them again, and, as we know, Harry Wharton would have seen him through; but that was impossible now. Mr. Quelch had forbidden it; and Billy was left to his own resources. Outside No. 1 Study he did not know of anyone who would be likely to take the trouble to help him.

The postman came, and there was a delivery of letters, but not one for Bunter. The fat junior looked dismayed.

"Faith, and what's the matter wid ye?" exclaimed Micky Desmond, slapping him on the shoulder.

"My postal order hasn't come."

The Irish junior chuckled.

"Sure, and it never does come, Bunter darling."

"Can you lend me ten bob, Desmond?"

"Faith, and I could lend you ten pounds as aisyly, Bunty."

"I say, Bulstrode!"

"Hallo, Porpoise!"

"Can you lend me ten bob, Bulstrode?"

"Go and eat coke," said Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter looked out for Harry Wharton. He found him talking to Hurree Janset Ram Singh, and tapped him on the arm.

"I say, you fellows—"

"The honourable Bunter wears the distressful expression upon his benign countenance," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I feel pretty rotten."

"Indigestion last night?" asked Harry.

"No. It's about Quelch. He says I'm to pay Mrs. Mumble. Of course, I intended to do so; but there's been some delay in the post, and my postal order hasn't arrived."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"It's all very well for you to grin, but what am I to do?" exclaimed Billy Bunter, getting exasperated. "Nice sort of a chap you are to go and leave a fellow in the lurch, when he relies upon you."

"Quelch has forbidden me to interfere, Billy."

"Well, you needn't tell him. You fellows can raise the tin, and I'll tell him it was sent me in a postal order."

"You won't tell him any lies with my concurrence," said Harry Wharton, drily.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Who's talking about telling lies?"

"You are, I imagine."

"Nothing of the sort. If I pay you chaps back when my postal order comes, that amounts to paying Mrs. Mumble with the postal order, doesn't it? Its exactly the same thing in the long run. I'm surprised at you, Wharton, hinting that I could tell lies to Mr. Quelch. I don't like to say so, but I'm really surprised."

"You can't work it that way," said Wharton. "I don't see exactly what's to be done, but I'm turning it over in my mind. You've got till Monday."

"Yes, I know; but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter here?"

"We're talking about that bill to Mrs. Mumble, Cherry. Wharton suggests that I should tell Mr. Quelch lies—"

"Eh?"

"Well, he suggested that I might tell Mr. Quelch lies, which amounts to the same thing. I don't like the idea."

"You utter young duffer!" said Harry Wharton, half-laughing and half-vexed. "It's not safe to say a word to you. Anyway, leave it over till Monday, and we will see what can be done."

Billy Bunter's face cleared.

"Very well, I'll leave it entirely in your hands, Wharton."

"I didn't suggest that."

"That's all right. I'll leave it entirely to you, and you can raise the tin in any way you think fit. If there's any left over after you've paid Mrs. Mumble, you can hand it over to me."

And Billy Bunter, having thus got rid of his responsibilities, walked away with a more cheerful expression upon his fat face. The chums of the Remove looked at one another, and burst into a laugh.

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Bob Cherry.

"The cheekfulness of the esteemed rotten Bunter is great," the dusky nabob remarked, "and his nervefulness is terrific."

"I suppose we shall have to get him out of it somehow," Harry Wharton remarked: "but how it's to be managed I really don't see yet. Well, we have a couple more days to think it over."

"And there's the breakfast bell," said Bob Cherry.

The Remove went in to breakfast. Bunter's gastronomic feats overnight had not impaired his appetite in any way, and he did full justice to the breakfast. Mr. Quelch looked at him curiously once or twice, somewhat puzzled by Bunter's light and cheerful way. When the boys went out of the dining-room the Form master tapped the fat junior on the shoulder. Billy Bunter blinked round at him.

"I wish you wouldn't jab me in that sudden way, Bulstrode you ass!" he said. "It disturbs my nerves, and——"

"It is I!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I'm sincerely sorry, sir. I'm a little short-sighted, sir, and I thought it was Bulstrode. I'd never call you an ass, sir, if I thought you could hear me, and——"

"You seem to have quite got over your little trouble, Bunter."

"Oh, yes, sir, thank you."

"Has the postal-order arrived?"

"The postal-order, sir?"

"Yes; the postal-order you were telling me about yesterday."

"Well, no, sir; it hasn't exactly arrived," said Bunter doubtfully. "I can't say it has arrived. There has been some delay in the post."

"I imagined so. You will not forget that you are to pay Mrs. Mimble on Monday at the latest."

"That is all right, sir."

"I hope it is all right, Bunter, for your sake," said Mr. Quelch, significantly. And he passed on. Billy Bunter shook himself uncomfortably.

"I wish he wouldn't bother me," he murmured. "I can rely on Wharton, after his taking the matter out of my hands as he has. Hallo, Russell!"

"It's not Russell," said the voice of Levison.

"Oh, is that you, Levison? Can you lend me ten bob?"

"Will you have it in gold or notes?" asked Levison, sarcastically.

"You needn't make fun of me. I've got to raise ten bob. I've placed the matter in Wharton's hands, really, but I feel that something may go wrong, though he has persuaded me to leave it to him. If you can lend me the ten bob, you can have my postal-order which is coming this afternoon."

Levison laughed.

"Not good enough."

"Well, I don't see how I am to raise the money."

"Why not hypnotise one of the seniors; and make him lend it to you?" asked Levison, with a grin.

"Well, that's not a bad idea. Wingate is bound to have a half-sovereign, and as my postal-order is coming soon, it would be all right to make him lend it to me. I'll try after morning lessons."

"It's a ripping idea," said Levison. "What do you think, Skinny?"

"What's the wheeze?" asked Skinner.

"Bunter's thinking of hypnotising Wingate to make him lend him ten bob to pay Mrs. Mimble."

Skinner chuckled.

"Spiffing!"

"Do you think I could do it?" asked Billy Bunter, anxiously.

"I couldn't manage it with Carberry, you know."

"But you achieved a howling success with Mrs. Mimble," said Skinner.

"Yes; that's true enough. She couldn't resist my wonderful powers as a hypnotist."

"Wingate would knuckle under like anything."

"You'd be able to hypnotise him quite as much as you did me," declared Levison.

"Do you really think so?"

"I'm certain of it."

"Then I'll jolly well try. I may as well make him lend me a pound while I am about it, as I can set aside my next two postal-orders to repay him, and then I shall have some cash in hand."

"Good wheeze."

Billy Bunter walked away quite satisfied in his mind. He left Levison and Skinner roaring with laughter, as they pictured to themselves what would happen when Bunter started hypnotising the captain of the school.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Provocation.

"HAVE you seen Wingate, Wharton?"

Bunter asked the question soon after the Remove had come out after morning lessons. Saturday was a half-holiday, and the boys had the rest of the day to themselves till evening call-over. Harry Wharton and Co. were going out, and were making their preparations for the same, when Bunter looked into the study.

"No," said Harry, looking up; "I think he went to his study awhile ago. He's playing in the Sixth Form match this afternoon, so he won't be gone out."

"Good."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry, as Bunter was turning away. "What's on, Billy? I can see you've got some fatheaded idea in your noddle."

"You'll see soon, Cherry," said Bunter mysteriously. And he vanished down the corridor.

Levison met him in the passage, with Skinner. The two practical jokers of the Remove looked as if they anticipated fun.

"Have you found Wingate?" asked Levison.

"Wharton says he's in his study. I'm going there."

"Good. Catch him before he goes out."

The door of the captain's study was half-open when Bunter reached it, and the athletic form of the captain of Greyfriars could be seen within. Wingate was examining a cricket-bat, and he was too busily occupied to notice Bunter enter.

Billy Bunter did not give warning of his entrance. He thought that under the circumstances it might be just as well to get in a few passes before the captain of Greyfriars was aware of his presence. That would give him a start, as it were, if the senior were inclined to resist the "fluence."

Levison and Skinner, in the passage, watched the amateur hypnotist with great interest. It was some moments before the captain of Greyfriars looked round, and Bunter was busily making hypnotic passes all the time.

Wingate looked round with a start.

"Blessed if I didn't think there was somebody here!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens do you mean by coming in without knocking, Bunter? And what in the name of all that's idiotic are you performing those antics for?"

Billy Bunter did not reply.

He made pass after pass in the most approved fashion of Professor Foozleum, and if there had been anything in Professor Foozleum's methods, Wingate ought certainly to have yielded to the "fluence."

But he did not. He sat with the cricket-bat across his knees, staring at Bunter with blank amazement written on his face. All of a sudden comprehension seemed to dawn upon him, and he burst into a laugh.

"Oh, you're the amateur hypnotist, are you?"

"Hold up your right arm," said Bunter, in a deep voice.

"My hat! I've heard of you, you young rascal, and——"

"Hold up your right arm!"

Wingate rose to his feet, and obediently held up his right arm, with a curious twinkle in his eyes.

Bunter's fat face glowed with triumph. The "fluence" was on at last!

"Now put it down again—oh!"

Wingate put his right arm down—and it came down with a clump upon the amateur hypnotist and sent him staggering.

The captain of Greyfriars burst into a roar.

"Wasn't that right?" he demanded.

"No! Ow! No!"

"Try again," said Wingate. "I'll put up my right arm again, and you can stand close to me and——"

Bunter backed promptly away.

"No, no, n-no; I don't think I——"

Wingate stepped towards him quickly and grasped him by the shoulder, and gave him a shake that made his head swim.

"Now, you young ass, I've been going to speak to you about this foolery before," he said. "You're to stop it. No more of your precious hypnotism. You've made Mrs. Mimble ill with your funny antics. You ought to have a licking for your confounded cheek in trying to work this off on your captain."

"Oh, really, Wingate——"

"But I am going to let you off because you are a young ass, and don't know any better."

"But, really——"

"I'm not going to lick you, but I will if I hear anything more of this rot. I'll just sling you out of my study for the present."

"I—I can walk if you like, Wingate."

Wingate laughed.

"Out you go!"

He gave Bunter a swing that sent him tumbling out of the study, helped him from behind with a hearty drive of his boot, and flung the door shut after him.

Billy Bunter staggered along the passage and collapsed in a heap at the feet of Skinner and Levison. Those two worthies were yelling with laughter.

Bunter sat up rather dazedly.

"It didn't work," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not very good form to cackle at a fellow like that, Levison. It didn't work, but I did my best to put the 'fluence' on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Bunter, scrambling up, "if you don't shut up, I'll jolly well hypnotise you again, Levison, and make you stand on your head in the Close!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You young ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did it once——"

"You duffer!" said Levison, choking. "You couldn't hypnotise a dead cat!"

"I jolly well hypnotised you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The truth dawned on Billy Bunter as he saw the two juniors in convulsions of mirth. He blinked indignantly through his big spectacles.

"Do you mean to say that you were only rotting, Levison?"

"Ha, ha! Of course I was."

"You weren't under the 'fluence?"

"Of course not, you ass!"

"Well, that was a mean trick. Wharton says you are a hopeless cad, and I rather think he's right."

"What does Wharton say?" exclaimed Levison, suddenly ceasing his laughter, and a gleam coming into his eyes.

"He said you would never be anything but a hopeless cad," said Bunter, defiantly. "And don't you start pitching into me, Levison, or I'll howl out to Wharton, and he'll come and give you another licking as he did the other day, so there!"

Levison gritted his teeth. Skinner looked at him curiously, and walked away. There was trouble coming, and Skinner did not wish to be mixed up in it.

"Wharton was quite right," said Bunter, emphatically. "You've got me into more than one row with your rotten lies. You're a cad!"

And as Levison made a gesture towards him, Bunter scudded along the passage, and took refuge in No. 1 Study. The chums of the Remove were just about to leave the room, when Bunter ran in and collided with Bob Cherry.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob, seizing him by the collar. "Can't you see where you're going, you young duffer?"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry!"

"Oh, all right! You chaps ready?"

"If you're going on a picnic, I'll come with you, if you like," said Bunter.

"We're going to walk over to the Friar's Pike," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "You can come if you like, Billy."

"Thank you, I'll stay here," said Bunter, promptly. "I'm not going to climb any hills in this weather. I say, you fellows—"

"I want to speak to you, Wharton."

It was Levison's voice at the door.

"I'm just going out," said Harry Wharton. "You can see me when I come back."

"I want to speak to you now."

"It will keep, I suppose," said Nugent, impatiently. "Come on, Harry."

"It won't keep."

"You fellows go on," said Wharton. "I'll sprint and catch you up at the gates. Blessed if I can see why to-night won't do for Levison, though."

"Well, don't be many minutes," said Nugent.

The Removites went out of the study, and Levison came in. There was an extremely unpleasant look on his face. He fronted Harry Wharton with a glitter in his eyes.

"Well, what is it?" said Harry, with a touch of impatience in his manner. "I can't spare many minutes."

"One minute will be enough. I only want to speak a few words—to tell you what I think of you."

"If you've come here to quarrel—"

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"I haven't. I don't want to quarrel with a fellow who says behind a chap's back what he doesn't care to say to his face."

Wharton flushed crimson.

"And is that your opinion of me?"

"Yes."

"And what grounds have you for holding that opinion?" asked Harry, keeping his temper.

"Only what I have just heard. You were good enough to express the opinion that I should never be anything but a hopeless cad."

Wharton started, and Levison's eyes glinted as he noted it.

"You see, I know all about it," he observed. "You might as well have said it to my face, you see."

"I don't want to quarrel with you," said Wharton, as quietly as he could, "and I don't intend to be called over the coals for any words I may have uttered—"

"Any words you have uttered, you mean."

"In any case, I don't feel inclined to answer to you. I have only this to say—if you want fellows to have a good opinion of you, you're not going the right way to work. That's all."

"Don't go yet; I've not finished."

"But I am, and I refuse to bandy words with you any longer. My friends are waiting for me."

"Very well," said Levison, stepping aside. "Go and join them; and tell them I told you you were a liar and a back-biter!"

Harry Wharton's blood boiled at the words, but he kept his clenched hands down at his sides. He had made up his mind that he would carry out the task he had laid upon himself—that he would not quarrel with this fellow.

"Very well," he said quietly; "that is enough."

He passed Levison. His quietness, the scorn in his quiet tones, stung the other to the quick. As Wharton passed, he raised his hand and struck. The blow fell upon Harry's cheek, and he staggered.

He turned upon Levison like a tiger. The red mark of the blow burned on his suddenly white cheek; it seemed like the scorching mark of a hot iron. His eyes were flaming, and Levison, half-repentant, shrank from his glance.

But Harry Wharton did not touch him. It was only for a moment that Levison was in danger. Then Harry Wharton turned away and strode from the study.

Levison stood silent, amazed. But there was a flush in his cheeks now—a flush of shame!

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete school tale, dealing with the chums of Greyfriars, next Tuesday, entitled "Harry Wharton's Task," by Frank Richards. Please order your MAGNET in advance. Price ½d.)

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GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST!

The story opens with a review of the Redminster Cadet Corps, led by young Lieutenant Jack Dashwood. The proceedings are interrupted when the Headmaster receives a telegram asking him to send Jack home at once, as his father—Colonel Sir Harry Dashwood—is dangerously ill. Dick Vivian goes with his chum, and soon after their arrival at the house the Colonel passes away. Finding he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard, Jack enlists in the 25th Hussars under the name of Howard, and is soon promoted to corporal. He fights Bill Sloggett, a recruit, and defeats him. Through this act he incurs the hatred of Alf Sligo, who swears to champion Sloggett. Jack has a shock when he hears that his cousin, Leonard, is attached to the 25th, as second lieutenant. Before long the latter succeeds in getting Jack deprived of his corporal's stripes. Soon after, the regiment is ordered abroad, and Jack is surprised to hear, just as they are about to sail, that Leonard Dashwood will not come with them, as his father has died suddenly. The troopship Himalaya starts away, and Jack experiences that travelling on a troopship is not "all honey." Lieutenant Dashwood, after clearing legal matters up at home, journeys to Port Said by the overland route to join the Himalaya there. He has had time to concoct a little plot with a Greek gambler, named Constantinidi, and sends Trooper Howard ashore on a false errand. Our hero is attacked and made a prisoner. (Now go on with the story.)

Strange Reflections.

Lieutenant Dashwood opened his cabin door, and, seeing Sligo still on his senseless sentry-go, called to him.

"Pass the word for Trooper Howard, will you, there?" said the lieutenant.

Sligo winked knowingly, and came forward to the cabin door. There was no one about, and this was a good opportunity to renew his relations with Mr. Dashwood; but, to his surprise, Leonard waved him back authoritatively, and repeated his command:

"Pass the word for Trooper Howard, will you? Why the dickens doesn't he come?"

Sligo looked surprised, and, swallowing his annoyance, did as he was bid, and man after man repeated Tom Howard's name until it passed round the deck and down the companion-way and into the stifling quarters below, where it stopped, and returned by the same process back to Leonard's door:

"Trooper Howard's not here, sir!"

Leonard was obliged to look out of the porthole again to hide the uncontrollable joy that blazed out in his face, and then, with that tremendous assumption of swagger which he had put on when he joined the regiment, he swung out of his cabin, and went forward to the companion-way.

"I have had the word passed for Trooper Howard, Sergeant Clavering," he said. "Will you be good enough to send him to me?"

Sergeant Clavering saluted, and made search for his companion, but without success. Trooper Howard could not be found. This was getting serious, and Leonard Dashwood straightway sought the colonel and laid these facts of the case before him:

"Trooper Howard carried my kit-bag from the side, sir, to my cabin. The key was in the lock, and I fancy he must have dropped it. I have passed the word through the ship, but he cannot be found."

The colonel was disposed at first to treat the matter lightly.

"Nonsense, Dashwood! He must be somewhere about. There's Middleton yonder. Ask him to hunt him up!"

Leonard, with a glow of secret satisfaction, enlisted the services of the regimental sergeant-major, whose search, as we know, also proved fruitless.

Sergeant-major Middleton felt in duty bound to report the matter to the colonel, who immediately ordered the bugler to sound the "Fall in!" and every man of the 25th Hussars who was not sick paraded.

It was then discovered beyond all doubt that Trooper Thomas Howard, 3842, was missing. Three or four men were forthcoming who had seen him leave the ship, and for a moment Leonard Dashwood experienced a most uncomfortable feeling.

Had anyone seen him speak to his cousin? He waited anxiously. There was a dead silence, as no one volunteered any information, and Leonard Dashwood breathed again with ease.

In vain did Colonel Greville beg the captain of the ship to slow down and let him send back a search-party. The captain of the ship was not in the best of tempers, and the vessel, moreover, was in the hands of the pilot, whom everyone knows is the dominant authority in the great canal.

Nothing could be done until they anchored for the night, which, as they carried no searchlight, they were bound to do according to the rules of the canal company.

Consequently, about six o'clock, when they came abreast Kantara, about twenty-five miles from Port Said, the troopship slowed down, and, having been duly secured to the Arabian shore by a chain, the colonel was at liberty to wire back to Port Said that search should be made for his missing man.

The British authorities did everything in their power, but the search proved fruitless; and though messages flashed backwards and forwards across the wire, when at daybreak the Himalaya got under way once more, Trooper Howard was still missing!

"There is not the slightest doubt in my mind," said Leonard Dashwood, "that the beggar's deserted."

"Very decent fellow, Howard," said Blennerhasset, lighting a cigar.

"Can't say I found him so," was Leonard's rejoinder. "Too much of the worst form of gentleman-ranker about him for my taste. Of course you know I had to 'pull him' once, and the beggar got broke?"

"So I believe," said Mr. Blennerhasset drily. And he strolled away, leaving Leonard to his own reflections.

And very strange reflections they were. Leonard Dashwood at one stroke had removed the only obstacle that remained to the enjoyment of his ill-gotten inheritance. Very carefully had he laid his plans during those few days that he had waited at Port Said for the arrival of the Himalaya. Having provided himself very amply with money before he left England, he had seen everything there was to be seen in that sink of iniquity at the canal's mouth, and had scraped acquaintanceship with the Greek keeper of a gambling-den. Little by little the idea had come into his mind that if his cousin could be got ashore, the rest would be simple, and by a lavish distribution of money to the Greek and several of his disreputable associates, Leonard Dashwood had paved the way.

As sometimes happens to villains, both in stories and real life, everything came about as precisely as he could have wished it; and now Mr. Leonard Dashwood, second lieutenant in His Majesty's 25th Regiment of Hussars, breathed more freely than he had done since that eventful afternoon when the telegram came to Redminster Grammar School.

When Jack came to his senses he opened his eyes and saw nothing. It was pitch dark, and his head ached intolerably. For a few moments his ideas were confused, but little by little he pieced the story together from the moment of his leaving the Himalaya, to the time when the cowardly blow laid him at the mercy of his unknown assailants.

He put his hand to his closely-cropped head, and found it stiff with congealed blood. As he was about to draw his legs under him and struggle to his feet, he heard a distant sound, as of a key placed in a lock, and suddenly a bright light streamed in upon his dazed senses, and he lay back again, perfectly still.

Looking through his lashes he saw four men descending a flight of stairs and approaching him. Their leader held a flaring oil-lamp in one hand, and in the other a drawn sword. The poor fellow felt a wish that he had five minutes' start of their entrance, for as yet all was confused, and the approaching light swam in a sort of mist. There was nothing for it but to lie motionless and await developments.

He saw that two of the figures were the dragoman and the Nubian in the blue tabooch, and that the third was a tall Arab. The fourth he had not seen before. From his face he was evidently a Greek, and he was dressed in a tightly-fitting black frock-coat, with a scarlet fez on the back of his head, and his complexion was rendered all the darker by the fact that he had not shaved for two days.

Jack's first idea was that he was about to be murdered; but, to his surprise, the Nubian laid a brass bowl on the floor beside him, and the Greek, placing his lamp on the ground, examined the wounded head carefully—with not unskilled fingers.

"He does not stir," said the dragoman, in a low tone. "Is it possible, after all, that the dog is dead?"

"I hope not," said the Greek, "for all our plans will be in vain." And leaning down, he laid his ear to the chest of the prostrate man, and listened for a moment. "His heart is beating, but he has lost a quantity of blood," he said.

And then, turning Jack over on his side, he took a sponge from the bowl, and began to wash the wound; Jack all the while laying perfectly still.

They spoke in French—which our hero understood—and he realised his only chance was to feign insensibility until he could learn where he was, and into whose hands he had fallen. But for all his listening he learnt little, though the obvious reference to his cousin, whom they called the young English officer, made his heart beat violently.

"Mustapha," said the Greek, turning to the Arab, and lighting a cigarette at the lamp, "he will live—at any rate, long enough for our purpose. But we must carry him hence, and into safe keeping, too. If he recovers and proves to be the man I think him, there is much gold in it, Mustapha—very much gold. And whether he lives or not, the young Englishman who has paid us so handsomely to take his life will yield us much gold, also."

And a cunning leer spread over the swarthy features of the Greek.

"If you will listen to me, Constantinidi, you will keep him here. There is no place so safe that I know of."

The Greek smiled.

"You forget, my friend," said he. "If this young man recovers we must earn his gratitude for our kind treatment, for there are such people in the world as British Consuls, and to the British Consul he will most assuredly go."

The Arab shrugged his shoulders, and made a movement with his fingers as though he was washing his hands of the whole matter. Then, having rolled up a cloth, and placed it under Jack's aching head, the Greek and his companions rose from their knees and took up the light.

"Between this and the coming of the darkness we will mature our plans," said he. "Nothing can be done until then. Come with me, my friends, and we will talk matters over with the help of a bottle of wine."

Jack lay perfectly motionless, and did not open his eyes until he heard their footsteps die away, and the grating of the key in the lock told him he was alone again. Then he sat up and made a wry face, for his head was opening and shutting—or felt as though it were.

"Well, I'm hanged! Here's a pretty situation!" thought Trooper Thomas Howard. "I believed Leonard capable of almost anything, but hardly of such treachery as this, and I will not only live, but I will get free, and the hound shall answer for it. The first question is: Where am I?"

He had noticed by the light of the lamp that the walls of his prison-chamber were stone, with arches overhead, and he felt he must be in a vault of some ancient Egyptian building—some underground remains of immense antiquity, probably used as cellars to a more modern house. He found the steps, and groped with his hands all over them, realising that the door was too strong for him to make any attempt upon it. The air was close and foul, and not a ray of light showed anywhere.

Putting his hand into his serge, he felt that his watch had gone, and then he realised how they had discovered his

supposed identity, for the watch had been his father's, and bore his name and title engraved within it. He saw it all in a moment.

His cousin, waiting at Port Said for the arrival of the Himalaya—Leonard having come by the overland route—had formed a clever scheme by which he should be got rid of for ever. But Trooper Tom's first feelings of triumph very quickly passed when he realised that his freedom could only be purchased with money, and of that he had not sufficient to satisfy the greed of the scoundrels whom his cousin had paid so well.

As Mr. Ionides Constantinidi had said, "there were such people as British Consuls," and to communicate with that important functionary was clearly Jack's first step towards deliverance. But that being quite impossible, there was nothing for it but to wait and watch, and to sham continued insensibility to throw his captors off their guard.

They were bound to feed him, he argued to himself, and he might learn many things.

He had not resumed his position on the ground many minutes when the key again grated in the lock, and the Greek came into the cellar, this time alone. He brought wine and broth, and, kneeling beside the apparently unconscious man, forced some of it between his teeth with a spoon—for which Jack was not a little grateful. He had no clear idea whether it was morning, noon, or night, outside, and the time dragged heavily, so much so that he slept and awoke ever and anon in fits and starts, to find himself still wrapped in gloom, and alone.

Presently, after many hours had gone, the trio returned once more, bringing with them a mattress, upon which they laid the wounded man, and the dragoman and the Nubian lifting him up, the Greek, Constantinidi, lighted them with his lamp, and they carried our hero up the steps and into a courtyard, where the moon was shining.

It was nectar to feel the fresh night wind upon his cheeks once more, though his head still ached woefully. And, still peeping through his eyelashes, saw that they carried him across the courtyard, and into a house painted brilliantly white.

Then the Greek opened the door, looked out for a moment, assured himself that all was quiet, and motioning to the two others to pick up their burden, Jack was jolted down the alley, which he recognised again, and so into a large house standing by itself. There they laid him on a divan, the Greek listening once more at his heart.

When they had gone Jack slipped from the divan on which they had laid him, and looked out of each of the windows in turn. One of them commanded an excellent view of the water and desert beyond. The masthead lights of a large vessel went slowly by at some little distance.

"The plot thickens," thought Trooper Thomas Howard. "By daylight I shall be able to ascertain exactly where I am detained."

But, alas! when daylight dawned, he having fallen asleep meanwhile, he found that two strong shutters had been drawn across the windows, allowing nothing but a few streaks of light to filter through into the room. Jack searched in vain for pencil and paper. He sat on the edge of his bed, so absorbed in thought, and so staggered by the whole situation, that the door was opened before he was aware, and the greasy face of Mr. Constantinidi peered in upon him.

"Oh, you are awake?" said that gentleman, entering, and locking the door carefully behind him. "I want to have a little chat with you." And the scoundrel offered his prisoner a cigarette. "You are better after your accident, sir?" said he.

"I am better, sir, thank you," said our hero, careful not to let the Greek know that he had overheard anything.

"I suppose you know that your compatriots are by now far down the canal, and that you are alone—"

"In your clutches," interposed Jack.

"If you like to put it so—in my clutches, sir," said the Greek, with a grimace. And Mr. Constantinidi smiled politely, and made a low bow. "Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me if your name is the same as that which we found engraved in your timepiece?"

"That is my name," said Jack, blushing.

"And yet you are a common soldier," persisted the Greek. "Truly you British are a very strange race."

"Perhaps you will answer me a question in your turn?" said Jack, his fingers longing to get at the Greek's throat, but discretion restraining him. "How did I come here? And by what right do you keep yonder door locked?"

"My dear young friend," said Mr. Constantinidi, lighting the cigarette which Jack had refused at the stump of the other, "how you came here does not matter for the moment; but here you must remain, as you are far too ill to be removed at present."

The cool effrontery of the man was so astounding that Jack laughed aloud.

"You are the most amazing scoundrel I have ever met," he said.

And the look that Jack turned upon him was so keen that the Greek let his eyes fall to the floor.

"I think you speak a little harshly, sir," said the Greek, putting on an injured look. "It is a small return for my hospitality—I, who found you set upon by robbers in the street outside, and brought you into my own dwelling, where you shall be carefully nursed until you are quite well. You would like me, possibly, to communicate with your friends?"

"That is not at all necessary," said Jack.

"But surely you would like me to send a little line to your people? All you British have people; and yours, I take it, are not ordinary people—eh, Sir Henry Dashwood?"

"I understand you," said Jack, again laughing outright. "You are truly a good Samaritan. Not satisfied with relieving me of my necessities, you have relieved me also of my watch; and you now desire to make capital out of the affair."

The Greek's good-humour vanished in a moment, and he took a couple of strides up and down the room.

"Look here, young gentleman," he said, and he spoke in excellent English, "we had better understand each other. Your watch tells me that you are a gentleman of good family. Now what are we going to do?"

"We have a saying in England," said Jack, "that one cannot be buyer and seller at the same time. I think it is rather for you to say what we are to do, Mr.—"

He paused; but the Greek waved his hand, and showed all his white teeth as he smiled.

"For the present we will leave names out of the question," he said.

He had learned what he wished to know—namely, that his prisoner was a bird worth plucking. Whether they should eventually murder him, to stop all further inquiries, was a matter of very little moment to Constantinidi the Greek. Then the scoundrel moved to the door.

The next moment Jack was alone!

An Unexpected Visitor.

When Jack Dashwood, disinherited, left the home of his ancestors, with his father's sword in his hand, and his father's watch in his pocket, he little thought how important a part that gold repeater was destined to play in his future career.

To begin with, it had revealed his identity to the band of scoundrels into whose clutches he had fallen at Port Said; and now it was going to bring about still further developments, for the Greek Constantinidi, the Arab Mustapha, and the Nubian Selim, each in his turn, coveted its possession, and promptly proceeded to fall out about it.

It lay on an octagonal table in the kiosque in the garden, and round the table sat the three villains.

The Greek and Mustapha were in two minds about the whole business.

Constantinidi used every argument he could suggest for keeping Jack Dashwood under lock and key and bleeding his relatives for a large sum of money. Mustapha listened stolidly, shaking his head every now and then, and saying, with peculiar emphasis:

"Kill him! Kill him!"

The more voluble the Greek became, the more obdurate grew the Arab.

"I tell you, my friends," said Constantinidi, his dark eyes blazing with anger, "we can make five thousand pounds over this deal."

"You can make fifty thousand pounds if you like," said Mustapha. "I say: Kill him! Kill him!"

The wall of Mr. Constantinidi's house, which was a substantial building, built of brick, with green painted shutters, threw a dark shadow across the

garden, and through the shadow came a graceful figure on tiptoe, unobserved by the three conspirators.

Irene Constantinidi, the Greek's daughter, was an exceedingly beautiful girl, with a complexion of ivory, and great luminous black eyes that seemed to glow out of the marble whiteness of her face.

Like the majority of her sex, Irene was full of curiosity, and, having chanced to peep from a curtain when Trooper Thomas Howard was brought so unceremoniously into the house, she had seen his face, and the great eyes had grown larger.

It was not like the faces that usually came to the house, and the girl was consumed with a great desire to know more of what was going on.

That was why she stole silently to the back of the kiosque, and, opening a little peephole in its painted wall—the Greek's house was full of peepholes, by the way—she put her eye and her ear to it, and listened intently.

"I tell you, Mustapha," said the Greek, "you are the greatest fool that ever was born! Yonder fine gentleman, who is now sailing away merrily down the canal, gave you fifty pounds to put this lad out of the way, and here we discover that he is an English nobleman"—Mr. Constantinidi was a little mixed in his notions of the peerage—"and there's money in him."

"English noblemen do not serve as common soldiers," said the Arab, curling his lip. "The lad is my prisoner, and I have a right to do what I like with him. I will wait one week, and if you cannot at the end of that time, show me better cause to stay my hand, he dies!"

"Be it so!" said Constantinidi, with a gay laugh. "I promise you much may happen in a week."

"That is the truest thing you have said this morning," said the Arab, in his deep, guttural voice. "And now, what about this trinket?"

And he pointed to the watch.

The Greek's eyes glittered.

"I will keep it for the present," he said.

And he pushed it aside, and poured out some wine.

Then they fell to talking of ways and means, and other matters; the Nubian smoking himself into a blissful state of unconsciousness.

Irene, her eyes dilating, and a curious little tremor coming into her mouth, watched her opportunity, and, passing her hand through a crevice of the wall of the kiosque, took possession of the watch without the three being any the wiser.

When she had secured it, she concealed it in the sleeve of her gown, and, gliding noiselessly back into the house, went to her own room and examined the prize.

In the meantime, our hero, still a little dizzy from the terrific blow that Selim the Nubian had dealt him, was examining his prison-chamber.

It was evidently not the first time the chamber had been used to contain a captive, for the shutters, while apparently like all the others of the house, he found were made of iron.

His eyes roved round the room in search of something that he might convert into a weapon, but the place was nearly bare; when, in one corner, he saw an object that struck like a note of home to him.

An ordinary windsor chair stood there; and, smiling for the first time, Jack rose from the divan, and went over to it.

He lifted the chair and tried its weight, and then depositing it beside the divan, sat down again with his eyes upon the door.

He was up again in a moment. An Eastern lamp, evidently overlooked, had been left close to the skirting board, and to his great delight he found there was oil and wick in it. He felt in the pocket of his waist-band, and found a box of wax matches.

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