

A SCHOOL TALE & A STORY OF ARMY LIFE

THE Magnet ^{1d} 2

No. 33.

LIBRARY

Vol. 2.

COMPLETE
STORY
FOR ALL.

ALIENS AGAINST GREYFRIARS.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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(An amusing incident in "Aliens Against Greyfriars," the complete tale of school life contained in this number.)

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ONE HALFPENNY



THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Lively Prospect.

THEY'RE coming!"
It was Bob Cherry who made the announcement as he came into Study No. 1 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

Bob uttered the words with a very long face, as though the matter were a very serious one indeed; but his chums in No. 1 Study did not seem much disturbed. Harry Wharton went on with his Latin exercise, Nugent continued to crack walnuts, and Billy Bunter, who was making toast, went on making toast.

"They're coming!" repeated Bob Cherry.

"Are they really?" said Nugent, cracking another walnut.

"Will you have some of these, Bob? They're good!"

"I say, they're coming!"

"Well, let 'em come—let 'em all come!"

"I say, Wharton, they're coming at last!"

"Amicus meus hoc nuntiat," said Wharton.

"Oh, cheese that! I tell you they're coming at last! You fellows take it quietly, but—"

"Well, my dear chap, as we don't know who 'they' are, nor why nor when 'they' are coming, what is there to be disturbed about?"

Billy Bunter looked up quickly from his toast.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"You'll know jolly soon!" said Bob Cherry. "I've just been speaking to Hoffmann—"

"I say, you fellows," repeated Bunter, with emphasis.

ALIENS AGAINST GREYFRIARS.

A Splendid Long Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

"If Cherry means that they, whoever they are, are coming to tea, I object—I strongly object!"

"My dear Billy—"

"It's no good arguing about it, Cherry! You've no right to invite people in this reckless way! I'm hungry, and the supply isn't any too large! I think it very probable that there won't be enough for you fellows as it is! Now, if Cherry is bringing in a fresh lot—"

"Listen to me—"

"Certainly; but I want it understood that if they are coming to tea, there will have to be a fresh supply in from Mrs. Mumble's! I'd be very happy to stand treat myself, but I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and—"

"I tell you, ass, that no one's coming to tea!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, that's all right, then!" said Bunter, the clouds clearing off his fat face. "Of course, I'm a hospitable chap; I like to have fellows in to tea! But when the grub's short, what's the good?"

"You young cormorant! We've got enough for six or seven, anyway!" said Harry Wharton.

"Not at all! I'm hungry! I'm not what anybody could call a greedy chap, but I like a lot!"

"Well, nobody's coming to tea, so you can set your heart at rest!" said Bob Cherry. "Go on making the toast, Billy, and don't jaw!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, who are coming?" demanded Nugent. "You haven't told us that yet!"

"The aliens!"

Bob Cherry made that announcement with due impressiveness, but even yet it seemed to have missed fire somehow, for his chums did not look very much impressed.

"The aliens," repeated Nugent, yawning. "What aliens?"

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"I suppose you haven't forgotten the time when a crowd of foreigners were here in the Greyfriars Remove," he said,

"and the high old times we had—rows from morning to night, and often from night to morning again?"

"Well, but they're gone," said Harry Wharton, "and they're not coming back to Greyfriars. They're going to have their quarters in the new building on the other side of the Cloisters, when they come—"

"Well, they're coming," said Bob Cherry. "You know the new building has been finished some time now, and we've been expecting this. I've just had it from Hoffmann that they're coming."

Harry Wharton looked interested at last.

"They're really coming?" he said.

"Yes; a crowd of giddy aliens, French and German. The same lot who were at Greyfriars, and a lot more—a whole party of them. There's to be a public opening of the new academy to-morrow."

"By Jove!"

"Hoffmann has just told me all about it. He's as pleased as Punch, of course! We put the foreigners down a lot when they were here. He thinks they're going to get their own back when they're here in force!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, that is Hoffmann's little mistake!" he remarked.

"There will be rows," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, we sha'n't be such close neighbours as we were when they were in Greyfriars. But the new academy is only the other side of the Cloisters, and it will be perfectly easy to raid—"

"Good!"

"Hoffmann and Meunier are talking already about the way they are going to put the Greyfriars Remove in its place!"

Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"Let them begin, that's all!"

"And there's another thing—about Inky—"

The study door opened, and a dusky junior came in. It was Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"The catchfulness of the word was accidental," he remarked in the English taught by the most famous native instructors in Bhanipur, "but I heard the honourable Cherry utterfully pronounce my name!"

"The utterfulness was terrific," said Bob Cherry gravely.

"The fact is, Inky, you're a bone."

"A—a—a what?"

"A bone—a bone of contention."

"The esteemed Cherry speaks in honourable riddles."

"They're coming—the aliens, you know. Now, when the foreigners came to Greyfriars, you came with them. When they went, you stayed."

"The honourable school was dearful to my heart," said the Nabob of Bhanipur, in his soft, purring voice. "The stayfulness was great because the lovefulness for my worthy chums was terrific."

"Exactly. But the lovefulness of those foreign chaps for you is equally terrific," grinned Bob Cherry. "They regard you as one of them, and they won't be happy till they get you. Hoffmann says you are going to leave Greyfriars, and go into Herr Rosenblau's academy with them."

The nabob shook his head.

"That is not the correctful casefulness."

"Meunier, the French kid, says the same."

"The worthy ass is mistaken."

"Well, I'm jolly glad you don't mean to go," said Bob Cherry; "but there will be rows over you!"

"The rowfulness may be terrific, but the gofulness will not become the accomplished fact," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "Catch us parting with our Inky! The sorrowfulness would be terrific!"

"He's worth his weight in bananas simply as an expounder of a new and original system of speaking English!" said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"We stick to Inky—rather!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "If the aliens get him, they'll only have him in pieces, that's all! We're going to hold on!"

"I say, you fellows, the toast is finished, and when you've done talking we'll have tea!" said Billy Bunter.

"Make the tea then, ass!"

"I've made it. I've made enough toast for five," said Bunter. "A round each for you chaps, and—"

Bob Cherry stared at the huge pile of buttered toast.

"That will be four rounds," he said. "Are you going to open a bazaar with the rest, then? There's about twenty rounds there!"

"Only eleven, Cherry! I told you I was hungry!"

"The hungerfulness must be terrific," purred the nabob.

"I myself am peckishly ready for the teafull refreshment. While we grubfully refresh the inner man, I have a wheezy good idea to tell you, my esteemed chums."

"Go ahead," said Bob Cherry.

Bunter poured out the tea, and the Removites started on the toast. Hurree Singh was about to speak again, when the door of the study was suddenly opened, and a fat, broad

face was projected into the study. It belonged to Fritz Hoffmann, the German junior. The chums of the Remove all looked up, and Bob Cherry carelessly dropped his hand upon a marmalade-tart.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "What do you want, Hoffy—and where did you pick up that grin?"

"I tinks tat I speaks to you, ain't it?"

"I don't see why you couldn't do your tinkering in the passage, ain't it," remarked Bob Cherry. "What have you been tinkering with?"

The German junior looked puzzled.

"I not comprehends, ain't it?" he said. "I comes to speak mit you. I tinks I tells you vat ve are going to do pefore."

"Oh, go ahead; and while you're about it, let us know what you are going to do after!"

"I tinks tat to-morrow te new school opens mit itself, ain't it? and I goes dere mit my old schoolmates."

"We shall miss you, Hoffy."

The German junior's fat face beamed good-naturedly.

"I tinks I misses you too, ain't it? But ve comes to see you sometimes, and ve gives you lickings, for te sake of vat you Engleesh call te old lang syne," he said. "But I tinks tat Hurree Singh comes mit us too. He vas mit us pefore, and I tinks tat he come also."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "Inky is one of us now, and he's not going to change over!"

"I tinks tat he is vun of us."

"Bosh!" said Nugent. "You're a giddy alien, and Inky is a true-born British subject. He is black but comely, and we're not going to part with him."

"I tinks tat he comes mit us."

"Then you'll have to tink again."

"I should refusefully decline to come," said the nabob.

"As a truefully born and bred subjectful Englishman, I point the finger of scornfulness at foreignful aliens, and stick to the old flag which has bravefully battled the breeze for a thousand years."

"I tinks tat if you not come, ve collars you."

"I tink tat if you don't travel, ve collars you," said Bob Cherry. "I give you one second and a half to get outside."

"I tinks tat—"

"Time's up!"

"I tinks tat—"

Biff!

The marmalade tart flew with unerring aim, and the German junior was bowled first ball. He gave a gasp as he staggered back, with the sticky tart adhering to his broad, plump nose. He put up his hand quickly to wipe it off, and succeeded in smearing it all over his face.

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

"Ach! I tinks tat—"

"Here's another coming!"

"I tinks tat—"

Whiz! But the German junior skipped out of the study in time, and the second tart stuck on the door. The chums of the Remove burst into a roar. The next moment the door reopened, and Fritz Hoffmann looked in.

"Ach! I tinks tat—"

Bob Cherry seized the teapot and sprang to his feet. The door slammed hastily, and Hoffmann's receding footsteps were heard dying away down the corridor. And a yell of laughter from Study No. 1 followed him.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Services are not Required.

GREYFRIARS had seen some lively times but a short while ago, when the foreign pupils had come there for a time. They had been in the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form—and the rivalry between the aliens and the English lads had been truly described by Hurree Singh as terrific.

Now that the Friardale Academy was finished, and the foreign school was retiring to become the near neighbour of Greyfriars, it looked as if the old times would be revived in some ways.

Hoffmann and Meunier, two of the aliens, had remained at Greyfriars, and they made no secret of their intention to go on the war-path as soon as they were in their new quarters, and backed up by their old comrades.

And the Nabob of Bhanipur was likely to be, as Bob Cherry put it, a bone of contention.

He had been one of the alien party on his arrival, but since then he had chummed up with the comrades of Study No. 1.

As he said, his case was different from the rest. He was a British subject, or, at all events, he belonged to a kingdom protected by the British flag, which amounted to the same thing. He intended to stick to Greyfriars; but this intention was certain to cause trouble with the aliens. They knew that Hurree Singh was free to do as he liked in the matter,

and that his guardians would not oppose either course, and Hoffmann and Meunier intended to take him to the rival school with them, or know the reason why.

"As if we could part with our one and only Inky!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "Pass the toast, Bunter. We are going to stick to Inky like Bunter to the grub when it's on his side of the table."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What's the wheeze you were going to tell us when Hoffmann came in?" said Harry Wharton. "The aliens have declared war, and it's up to us to begin it."

The nabob smiled expansively.

"It is a wheezy good idea for making the aliens sing smallfully, and conceal their diminished heads under a bushel," he said. "The new academy is to be opened to-morrow in great statefulness."

"That's so!" said Bob Cherry, with a nod. "The mayor of Friardale is to be there in his robes, and to unlock the great door in state. Then the fellows are to file in, boys and masters and all, to the tune of a speech from the mayor. It will be a function, and no mistake."

"That is correctful. There will be a great assembly of bigwigful persons to help the honourable mayor open the worthy establishment," said Hurree Singh. "I have heard all about it. There is to be a speechfulness on the honourable steps, and then the mayor unlockfully opens the door, and pronouncementfully states that the Friardale Academy is open."

"Something in the style of opening a giddy exhibition," said Nugent. "We had better be there, if possible, to give them a howl."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific. But this is the wheezy plan I have thoughtfully elaborated," said the nabob. "Supposefully imagine that when the honourable mayor inserts the esteemed key into the worthy lock, the august door does not open?"

"Eh? Why shouldn't it?"

"And supposefully consider, furtherfully, that not one of the doors will open, nor one of the windows, and that, in factfulness, there is no gaining an entrance to the esteemed building at all?"

The chums of the Remove stared at the smiling nabob.

"But I suppose nothing is likely to go wrong with all the locks, Inky," said Harry Wharton.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh grinned.

"Not with the honourable locks, my worthy chums; but suppose we entered under the coverfulness of the esteemed night, and fastened up all the doors and windows screwfully."

Bob Cherry jumped up in his excitement.

"My only hat! What a ripping wheeze!"

"The rippingfulness is really terrific," said the nabob. "The surprisefulness of the worthy Herr Rosenblum and the honourable mayor and the respectable bigwigful persons would be very great."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They would not be able to get into the building at all, and the situation would be comically absurd."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By Jove, we'll work that!" said Harry Wharton. "We only need a screwdriver and a few dozen screws to work off the jape of the season."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Keep it awfully dark, though," grinned Bob Cherry. "We can get into the new building easily enough to-night. There's no one there."

"I say, you fellows—"

"It will be easiful to get in at an honourable window," said the nabob, "and the screwfulness will be the work of an hour."

"I say, you fellows, I've thought of an improvement upon Inky's plan."

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"Oh, don't bother, Billy; we don't want any improvements."

"But I say, you fellows, it's a really ripping idea. You know I've been doing a lot of practice lately as a ventriloquist."

"We're not deaf," groaned Bob Cherry. "Your ventriloquism has made me wish that I were, though."

"But, I say, I've improved immensely lately. I can throw my voice anywhere," said Billy Bunter. "I was thinking that it would be a good wheeze to do some voice-throwing on the occasion of opening the new academy. I could make the mayor make a funny speech, you know, or something of that sort."

"You could make the mayor do what?"

"Make a funny speech, you know, by imitating his voice," said Billy Bunter. "I am practising imitating voices. I can imitate Cherry's, for instance. What do you think of this?"

Billy Bunter put his throat into the ventriloquial attitude, and emitted a deep croak, followed by a painful squeak.

Bob Cherry glared at him.

"You young blackguard! Do you mean to say that that is anything like my voice?" he demanded indignantly.

"I say, you fellows, I put it to you—isn't that like Cherry's voice?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Nugent. "Bob's voice isn't what one would call a beauty, but it isn't like the last croak of an expiring frog."

"I can imitate Nugent's voice, too."

"Don't you do anything of the sort. By Jove, are you ill, Billy? What are you making that funny row for?"

"It isn't a funny row," said Bunter indignantly; "I'm imitating your voice."

"My—my voice! You—"

"I suppose it's no good expecting you to admit the truth, when you're all jealous of my wonderful powers as a ventriloquist," said the fat junior, blinking wrathfully through his big spectacles. "Still, I think you ought to own up."

"Own up to a horrid squeak like that?"

"Well, it's not my fault if your voice isn't musical. I can only imitate it as it is, of course, not as it ought to be."

"If you're looking for a prize thick ear—" began Nugent.

"I can imitate Wharton's voice, too."

"No, you don't!" said Wharton, laughing. "If you start imitating my voice, you'll get this loaf slung at you."

"Really, Wharton—"

"I mean it. You can do all your gasping and croaking in the box-room, without adding insult to injury by pretending that you're imitating human voices."

"I'm working against great difficulties in trying to develop my wonderful powers in this study," growled Billy Bunter. "It's enough to discourage a chap, and no mistake. I could give you a selection of imitations of a steam whistle or a cock crowing."

Bob Cherry picked up the poker.

"There'll be a dead ventriloquist picked up in this study if you start," he said.

"I say, you fellows, do you really mean that you don't want me to make the mayor make a funny speech to-morrow?"

"Yes, we do mean it, ass. If you start anything of the sort, we'll gag you with a pillow, or, rather, a bolster."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's the French kid!"

Adolphe Meunier looked into the study, with a beaming smile upon his sallow, Gallic face. He bowed with great politeness to each of the Removites in turn, looking like a nodding mandarin as he worked through five successive nods.

"Mes amis, zero is great news. I zink zat I tell you him."

"We've heard him," grinned Bob Cherry. "We know the giddy aliens are coming down to-morrow in force, and that there's to be a state opening of the new school, and a lot of rot and speechifying generally."

"Zat is good! Ve are going to rejoin our old comrades, and zen ve make it varm for you rottairs."

"We can stand all the warmth you can give us," said Nugent, "and perhaps a little over."

"Ciel! I have somezing else to say also as well. Zat niggair—"

"That what?"

"Zat niggair, he vas viz us, and he come to us again, or else ve makes row."

"You'll have to make a row, then," said Bob Cherry.

"The rowfulness will be terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I shall not returnfully join the esteemed rotten aliens, but shall stayfully remain with my honourable and chumful friends. And I must explainfully point out to the worthy, rotten Meunier that I am not a nigger, and that I

usually black the honourable eye of the worthy person who applies that term to my esteemed self."

"Zat niggair—"

Adolphe Meunier got no further. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh reached forward, and seized the rather prominent nose of the French junior, and compressed it hard between finger and thumb.

Meunier gave a muffled yell.

"Ciel! Zat you let go—let go my nose!"

But the nabob did not let go. He held the French junior at arm's length, with a forceful grip upon his nose, and marched him slowly out of the study.

The chums of the Remove roared with laughter.

"Ciel! Diable! Zat you let me go!" wailed Adolphe Meunier.

"The noseful pull is the replyfulness to the niggerful appellation!" purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, still gripping the French junior's nose, and keeping him at arm's length. "The apologise should be terrific!"

"Ciel! I apologise. Parbleu, I apologise ver' much!"

The nabob released his hold.

"I accept the esteemed rotten apology!" he said gracefully. "If I have damaged the esteemed proboscis of the rotten alien, I am smitten with the great sorrowfulness!"

"Mon bleu! I give you ze licking—"

"My honourable idiotic friend—"

Adolphe Meunier rushed straight at the nabob; but Bob Cherry and Nugent caught him, and turned him round in the passage.

"Travel!" said Bob Cherry. "Here, stand together, all of you, and kick at the same time, and— Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's travelling!"

It did not take Meunier long to travel, either. He turned back at the head of the stairs for a moment.

"I make you sit up for zat latair!" he exclaimed. "You vait till—"

The chums of the Remove made a feint of dashing towards him, and Meunier vanished down the stairs, and the sound of a distant bump told that he had gone a little too quickly for comfort.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Franco-German Feud.

"WE shall have to keep that wheeze awfully dark," grinned Bob Cherry. "If either Hoffmann or Meunier got a hint of it, the game would be up."

"I say, you fellows—"

"We can borrow a screw-driver of Gosling," went on Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "I suppose he will let us have some screws, too, at double price? But the wheeze is worth it."

"I say, you fellows, if you like, I'll put Hoffmann and Meunier off the track, and—"

"No, you won't!" exclaimed Nugent, seizing the fat junior by the shoulder and shaking him. "You'll keep quite quiet, or you'll get scalped! The aliens don't suspect anything at present, but if you start putting them off the track, it won't be long before they know the whole wheeze."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Not a word! Not a syllable!"

"Not even a ventriloquial drone!" said Bob Cherry severely.

"Oh, very well! I'll leave it entirely in the hands of you fellows, to be mucked up, as usual," said Billy Bunter. "But, I say, have you finished tea? If you have, I'll clear the table."

"Yes; we've finished," said Harry Wharton. "Come on, you chaps, and we'll get the things we want from Gosling."

The chums of the Remove went down the passage, and Billy Bunter re-entered the study. He had said that he would clear the table, and he proceeded to do so by filling up his plate with fresh helpings of everything within reach. He was too busily engaged to observe, some minutes later, that two faces were looking in at the open door. The faces belonged to Meunier and Hoffmann, who had watched the chums of the Remove depart, and then returned to No. 1 Study.

"Ciel! Zat peeg Buntair is still feeding viz himself!" murmured Meunier.

"Ach! Ve stops him, ain't it?"

"See zat he not makes a row and fetches zem back."

"Ve vill take goot care of tat."

Hoffmann entered the study on tiptoe, and came up behind Billy Bunter's chair. Billy had taken the last tart upon his plate, and was regarding it with an affectionate eye before he commenced operations upon it.

"These tarts are jolly nice," he murmured; "but there's one drawback—a fellow never gets enough of them. What's the good of five or six tarts to a chap like me? And I shouldn't wonder if somebody grumbles at my finishing up the lot. There are some fellows who wouldn't care if I fell

down dead from want of sufficient sustenance. What I really need is— O-o-o-och!"

Bunter broke off with a gasp as a fat hand was clapped over his mouth from behind. He jumped up, struggling; but in a moment he was in the grasp of the two foreign juniors.

"G-r-r-r-r-r!" gurgled Billy Bunter, under Fritz Hoffmann's hand, as the aliens pinioned him. "Gro-o-o-o-o!"

"Ach! Is tat a new ventriloquial exercise, mein poy?" asked Hoffmann.

"Ger-r-r-rooh!"

"Zat you holds ze row," said Meunier. "Make ze noise, and ve shoves your head in ze grate, in ze cindairs! You understand?"

"Groo-groo!"

"He understand, Hoffmann. Let him go."

"Ferry goot."

Hoffmann released Bunter's mouth, and the fat junior gasped for breath.

"I—I say, you rotters, you might have suff-suff-suffocated me!" he gasped. "What do you want in this study?"

The two aliens grinned.

"Ve comes to wreck it!" explained Hoffmann. "Ve turns him inside-out, ain't it, and makes te muck of te place before!"

"Zat is correct."

"Look here, you'll get scalped if you do!" said Bunter. "There's a jolly time coming for you bounders to-morrow, anyway. I'm not going to let out the secret; but just you look out for squalls when the new building is opened, that's all."

Hoffmann and Meunier exchanged glances. The latter crossed quickly to the door, and closed it.

"So zere is surprise for us to-morrow?" said Meunier.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"Yes; rather. Just you wait."

"And vat is zat surprise?"

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you! Wharton would be awfully waxy if I let it out; and, besides, that would spoil all the fun."

"I tink tat you tell us, Punter, or else ve rubs your head in te cinders!"

"I zink zat is correct."

"Look here, I'm not going to tell you," said Bunter, looking alarmed. "I tell you Wharton would be waxy; and, besides, it's a great surprise. When you start opening the new school, you'll look a jolly lot of guys, because—"

"Because vat?"

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you!"

"I tinks tat you tell me, or—"

"I zink zat you tell me, or—"

"Ach! Don't interrupt me, Meunier!"

"I interrupts you if I zink I vill, Fritz Hoffmann."

"You French peast—"

"You Sherman peeg—"

"I am te leader of te barty—"

"I am ze chief of ze—"

"Peastly pounder!"

"Sherman rottair!"

"I tinks tat I leecks you if you call me Sherman rottair!"

"I zink zat Sherman peeg nefer lick ze Frenchman!"

"I gif you Sedan ofer again, ain't it?"

"I gifs you Jena!" shrieked Meunier.

"Ach! Peeg—"

"Rottair!"

The two aliens wasted no more time in words. They flew at one another, and went reeling round the study in a breathless embrace.

Billy Bunter dodged towards the door.

"I may as well cut," he murmured. "No good waiting for those rotters to fight it out. I'll get the fellows here, and—"

He scuttled out of the study. Hoffmann and Meunier bumped against the table, and sent it flying, and there was a crash of crockery-ware. But the two excitable aliens never heeded that. Meunier trod on a butter-dish and slipped over, and sat down on the last tart which Bunter had not had time to devour. Hoffmann fell with him, and they rolled together in the wreck of the tea-things.

"Sherman peeg!" gasped Meunier.

"French peastly pounder!"

"Rottair!"

"Peast!"

The noise from the study was what Hurree Singh would have called terrific. Billy Bunter scuttled away down the stairs, and found half the Remove gathered before the notice-board in the hall, and the famous four among them. He caught hold of Harry Wharton's sleeve.

"I—I say, Wharton—"

"Don't bother, Billy. I'm reading the notice—"

"They're wrecking the study!"

"Eh?"

"They're wrecking the study!"

"Who are?"

"Hoffmann and Meunier."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

He dashed up the stairs. Wharton, Nugent, and the nabob were not a second after him. They tore open the door of No. 1 Study and rushed in, and fell over the two aliens, who were rolling on the floor in breathless combat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "They're fighting one another!"

"They're not going to fight in our study, on our teacups!" exclaimed Nugent. "Yank them apart. Here, you rotters—"

"The brokenfulness of the esteemed crockery is terrific!"

"Hold them, kids!" exclaimed Wharton, gripping Hoffmann, and dragging him away from his adversary. "Now then, quiet!"

"I not keeps quiet, ain't it, pefore."

"Ciel! I zink I licks zat Sherman!"

"French peast—"

"Sherman rottair—"

"You've busted our tea-things!" said Harry Wharton. "What do you mean by fighting in our study, you utter idiots?"

"Ve came here to wreck te study, but Meunier vas sheeky—"

"Hoffmann vas sheeky—"

"So I licks him instead."

"I licks him instead."

"You pair of duffers!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll teach you to wreck our study. Yank them along the passage, and we'll lock them up somewhere to get cool."

"I not gets cool pefore, ain't it?"

"I zink zat I—"

"Oh, come along!"

The two aliens were bundled along the passage. The door of Bulstrode's study was open. Bulstrode was the bully of the Remove, and on very bad terms with the famous four, and that, doubtless, was why Bob Cherry stopped at the open doorway, and sent Hoffmann spinning in.

"I say, that's Bulstrode's study!" exclaimed Nugent.

"I know it is," said Bob coolly, as he changed the key to the outside of the lock. "Shove the other shrieking lunatic in!"

"Ciel! I insist zat I not go in!"

"In with him!"

"All togetherfully!" said the nabob.

And the chums gave the alien a swing, and sent him into the room. He collided with Hoffmann, who was rising, and bowled him over. They rolled on the carpet together, and immediately began to fight. Bob Cherry slammed the door, and locked it on the outside.

"That's a little surprise packet for Bulstrode when he comes in," he remarked. "I'll leave the key in the lock for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The laughfulness is terrific!"

"Now, let's get down again, and see what the Head's notice is about."

And the chums of the Remove descended into the hall, and hurried towards the notice-board.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Keeping the Secret.

THERE was still a crowd before the notice-board, reading the latest paper pinned up there, or commenting upon it. Harry Wharton and his chums pushed their way towards the board and read the notice, which was in the handwriting of, and signed by, Dr. Locke, the Head of Greyfriars.

It was a brief notice, but very interesting to the boys of Greyfriars, and to Harry Wharton & Co. in particular.

"Classes will not be held between the hours of 10 and 11 a.m. to-morrow, Tuesday, in order to allow all the Forms to be present at the public opening of the Friardale Academy."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "We shall be there!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We shall be there, and we shall see the fun. We will give them a cheer, especially when his honour tries to open the door and it won't come open."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The funfulness will be terrific."

"I say, you fellows, you'll have to be jolly careful about it, though," said Billy Bunter. "If you're as careful as I am, it's all right, but Meunier and Hoffmann will nose out the secret if they can."

"They don't know there is a secret," said Nugent.

"Don't they?"

"Unless you have told them, you young ass. By Jove, if you let out the secret we'll boil you in oil."

"I'm not going to let it out, Nugent. I told Hoffmann and Meunier distinctly that I wasn't going to tell them anything about it."

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"What?"

"I told them distinctly that—"

"You—you young villain, then you've been jawing to them!"

"I haven't told them anything. They wanted me to tell them how you were going to give them a surprise at the opening of the school to-morrow, but I said I wouldn't at any price, and—"

The famous four looked at one another, and then they seized Bunter and marched him away to a quiet spot in the corridor. Bunter wiggled a little, evidently viewing this proceeding with alarm.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Anybody got a knife?" asked Bob Cherry ferociously.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I've got an honourable penknife," said the nabob, "but it is too smallful to kill the honourable idiotic Bunter with."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"That's all right; hand it over. I can give him a jab in the right place, and—"

"Here is the knifeful weapon, my worthy chum."

"Hold him tight, Nugent."

"I've got him."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter, as Bob Cherry made a jab at him with a pocket-pencil. "Help! Murder! I'm sincerely sorry! Ow!"

"Now, you young villain, if you don't want me to drive this pencil to your guilty heart—"

"Pencil!" gasped Billy Bunter. "You—you beast! I didn't know it was a pencil."

"You know what you deserve. You have been giving an important secret away."

"I haven't! I told them I wouldn't—"

"You ought to be scragged! You ought to be boiled in oil! You ought to be—to be kept without food for a quarter of an hour!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

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"I suppose it's no good talking to him," said Bob Cherry. "Bump him against the wall."

"Ow, ow, ow! Ow!"

"We can't kill him; it would make such a muck in the passage."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We can't gag him, either; and I'm blessed if I know what's to be done. If we allow him to run loose again he'll give us away."

"I won't! I told Hoffmann—"

"He's already told them that we've got a wheeze on. They will only have to jaw to him for two minutes to get the whole story."

"Then we may as well give up the idea," said Nugent savagely.

"Not at all!" said Harry Wharton. "Bunter has got to be watched, that's all. We'll take it in turns to keep by him, and see that he doesn't give the thing away."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You can take first turn, Bob, and I'll relieve you in an hour's time."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze. I don't see how I'm going to stand Bunter's society for a whole hour, but I suppose there's nothing else to be done."

"Look here, you fellows—"

"We'll be off to see Gosling," said Harry; and leaving the disconsolate Bob in charge of the fat junior, the Removites walked away.

"Now," said Bob Cherry, taking hold of Bunter's arm and leading him into the junior common-room—"now, you sit there!"

He pushed Bunter into a seat in a corner, and sat down beside him. Then he took out the latest number of the "Gem" and commenced reading. Bunter gave a grunt.

"I say, Cherry, I can't sit here all the evening doing nothing."

"It isn't for all the evening; it's only for an hour."

"Well, lend me your book to read."

"I want it myself."

"Look here—"

"It's your own fault, for being a confounded chatterbox," said Bob Cherry. "You're trouble enough as it is, so shut up and don't worry me. I'm getting interested in this chap Figgins, too."

"Yes, but I say—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Yes, but I want—"

"You can look at the pictures over my shoulder, if you like."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, do ring off! How am I to read if you will keep on jawing?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, exasperated. "I never saw such a chap for worrying."

"But I haven't anything to read."

"Great Scott, this chap will never be done grumbling!"

"Well, let me read the book with you, then."

"Oh, very well; anything for a quiet life!" said Bob Cherry resignedly. And the two heads were bent over the "Gem," and Billy Bunter was silent at last.

Meanwhile, Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had paid a visit to the porter's lodge. Gosling, the porter, was not on good terms, as a rule, with the chums of the Remove, but he was always amenable to a tip. He did not look amiable when Wharton and his friends presented themselves, but a glimmer of silver in Harry's hand modified his expression wonderfully.

"Good-evening, Gosling! Fine evening for the time of year, isn't it?" said Nugent affably. "Nice shower after the rain, too."

"Wot I says is this 'ere—" began Gosling.

"We want you to do us a favour, Gosling," said Harry Wharton pleasantly.

The porter looked at the glimmering piece of silver out of the corner of his eye, and debated in his mind whether it was intended for him or not. He decided that Harry Wharton was not the fellow to tantalise him, and so he assumed his most civil manner.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," he remarked. "I'm always willin' to do anything for you young gentlemen which is young gentlemen. That's wot I says."

"You can be a gentleman, in Gosling's estimation, for the low price of one shilling," murmured Nugent.

"Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"We want you to lend us a screwdriver, Gossy."

Gosling stared.

"A what, Master Wharton?"

"A screwdriver."

"Which I've got one you can 'ave, with pleasure," said Gosling. "But I can't see what you want with my screwdriver, when you've got one in some of your tool-chests."

"We want a big strong one, bigger than the one in Nugent's tool-chest," explained Harry Wharton. "It's to drive big screws into hard wood."

"I see," said Gosling, looking very curious.

"And we want some big screws, too—very big ones, and strong—about four or five inches long."

Gosling grinned.

"Which I suppose you are screwing up somebody's door, Master Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Don't you bother about that, Gossy. We're not going to screw your door up, though we might nail it up if you didn't lend us the screwdriver."

"Very likely we might," said Nugent.

"The likelihood is terrific."

"Oh, you can have the screwdriver," said Gosling; "like-wise the screws. Of course, I don't know nothin' about wot you want them for, and it's my dooty to oblige any of you young gentlemen, if it's not agin the rules. I've got some big screws that were left over from the building of the new academy. I thought I might as well have 'em. How many do you want?"

"Oh, say fifty."

"Fifty screws?"

"Yes."

"My word! You are goin' to make a safe job of it."

"Never mind that, Gossy. You won't know anything about the matter when it happens. If you give us away, we shall screw up your door and windows one night, and pour petroleum down your chimney and set light to it."

Gosling shivered. The Remove at Greyfriars was a reckless Form, and there was really no telling what they might or might not do.

"You can 'ave the things and welcome, Master Wharton, and of course I sha'n't know nothin' about the matter."

"That's right, Gossy. You're a man of business, I see. By the way, do you find yourself get thirsty as the nights draw in?"

"Which I does, Master Wharton."

"Then perhaps you'll do me the favour to accept this bob," said Wharton. "Of course, you will spend it in ginger-beer."

"Of course!" assented Gosling.

"And now, where are those screws?"

"'Ere you are!"

The screws and screwdriver were handed over. The shilling had made Gosling very obliging, and he produced

a couple more screwdrivers at a hint from Nugent, and handed them over. Wharton promised that they should be placed under the bench at his door when finished with, and the chums of the Remove left the lodge. Gosling looked after them with a curious grin.

"Which they are young himps," he murmured. "Wot I says is this 'ere. Boys will be boys, and all boys ought to be drowned. Them's my sentiments."

And Gosling closed his door and tucked the shilling into his waistcoat pocket, to remain there till it could be exchanged for ale at the bar of the Red Cow.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Watched.

HARRY WHARTON entered the junior room and looked round for Bob Cherry. Two heads were bent over a "Gem" in a corner. Harry crossed over and tapped Bob on the shoulder, and the Remove looked up.

"Just finished," he remarked. "Is my time up? I'll hand this fat villain over to another keeper with pleasure."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Yes, you've had your hour," said Wharton. "Who's next. We're going to take it in turns, and it doesn't matter which."

"I shall have great pleasurefulness in taking the esteemed charge of the honourable, rotten Bunter."

"Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to be watched about as if I were a mad dog."

"Yes you are. Watch him, Inky."

"The watchfulness will be terrific."

"If the aliens come near him, yell, and we'll soon be on the spot. If he tries to talk to anybody, don't hesitate. Knock him down instantly."

"The instantfulness will only be equalled by the hardfulness of the knockdown."

"Good! We can trust Inky."

"I say, you fellows—"

But Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent were strolling away. Billy Bunter looked aggressively at the Indian junior, who was smiling benignly.

"I say, Inky, this is all rot, you know!" he began.

"The rotfulness is terrific, my worthy fat chum."

"I don't want to stick here!"

"The stickfulness is the result of the great jawfulness."

"I'm going to take jolly good care of that little secret—"

"Yes, we shall watchfully see to that."

"I'm going for a little stroll now—"

"The strollfulness is impossible, my honourable idiotic friend."

"Look here, I'm going—"

A dusky hand was laid upon Billy Bunter's shoulder, and he was gently but firmly restrained from rising. The nabob's face was still smiling, but very determined.

"Ach! Here is Punter, ain't it?" Hoffmann came up.

"Punter, I wishes to speak to you mit yourself before ain't it?"

"The speakfulness is forbidden, my worthy chum."

"I say, Inky, I'm going to speak to Hoffmann if I like!"

"The knockdownfulness will be the immediate result."

"Ach; I tinks Punter speak if he likes!" said Hoffmann.

"I tinks tat you are rotters! I have te pain in te nose from te punch of Bulstrode's fist ven he find me in his study! He keeck me out, ain't it? And Levison keeck out Meunier, and Hazeldene keeck us both after! I tinks tat I warms you for tat!"

"The kickfulness was the good wheeze."

"I tinks tat Punter—"

"Look here, Inky—"

"The honourable silence must be observed by the esteemed Bunter, or my lowly fist will smite him on his worthy and august nose."

"I say, Hoffmann—ooch!"

The nabob was as good as his word. His fist smote Bunter on the nose, and stopped his remarks to Hoffmann quite suddenly. Bunter adjusted his spectacles and glared indignantly at the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Wh—what did you do that for, you inky beast?"

"To preserve the honourable silence."

"Punter speaks mit me if he likes!"

"No, he doesn't," said Harry Wharton, coming up quickly. "This is where you march, Hoffy! Take a little run!"

"I not takes te little run."

"Then you will take a little shove," said Wharton. "Billy Bunter is not allowed to talk this evening. It wouldn't be good for his health."

"My health is all right, Wharton."

"Yes, but it wouldn't be after we had finished with you, if you gave away our little secret to this Dutch bounder!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Are you going to take that little run, Hoffy?"
 "I tinks tat I not do so."
 "Collar him, chaps! We'll give him the frog's march, and—"
 "I tinks tat I go pefore!"
 "Good! Second tinkings are best!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Off with you, Hoffy! Keep an eye on Billy, Inky! Don't hesitate to dot him on the nose if he needs it! You can wipe up the floor with him, jump on his neck, or pulverise him with the poker, or anything like that to keep him quiet!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
 "I shall preserve the quietness of the esteemed idiotic Bunter."

Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Bob Cherry followed Hoffmann out of the junior-room to see him well off the spot. The German junior did not venture to tackle such odds, and he gave the three Removites a wide berth.

"Is it all right?" asked Bob Cherry. "Did you get what you wanted from Gossy?"

"Yes, rather! The screws and three screwdrivers are in the study. We're going to smuggle them into the dormitory; it will be easy enough!"

"And get out after lights out, I suppose?"
 "That's it. If we were to go now, there would be danger of Hoffmann or Meunier spotting us and following."

"True. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Meunier; and he looks as if he had been trying to knock down a steam-roller with his nose!"

Adolphe Meunier came up with a far from amiable look. His nose was decidedly red and swollen, and at intervals he put up his handkerchief to it to mop away the little stream of claret that oozed over his lip.

"Ciel; I find you, zen!" he said. "Vere have you been? Parblou; I zink zat perhaps you go for to carry out ze vheeze! I finds him out!"

"You haven't found him out yet," grinned Bob Cherry. "I zink zat I soon finds him! I find him before if Hoffmann not interrupt me like ze Sherman idiot zat he is!"

"Where did you get that nose?"
 "It vas zat Levison and zat Bulstrode and zat Hazeldeno, who pounch my nose viz zemselves ven I vas let out of ze study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "It is no mattair for ze to laugh! I zink zat I soon finds out ze vheeze, and ve makes you sit up viz yourselves!"

And Meunier shook his head in a very determined way and walked off. The chums of the Remove were laughing; not so much at his threat, as at his way of expressing it.

"We shall be sitting up with ourselves shortly, if we don't look out," grinned Bob Cherry. "It's all right, so long as we watch Bunter."

And Billy Bunter was watched with a vengeance for the rest of the evening, and at bedtime he had not had an opportunity of exchanging a word with a soul.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Lights Out—The Aliens on the Track.

"MEIN friend—"
 "Ciel! I am not your friend! It is zat I am your enemy!"

"I tinks tat—"
 "I zinks zat—"

"Listen to me, Adolphe Meunier. Ve unites to kybosh to Engleese. I know tat dere is some move going on—someting up against us and te Foreign Academy."

"Zat is correct. Ve learn as mooch from Beelly Buntair. Ve learn it all if you not such a Sherman fool!"
 "You mean if you vas not such a French peeg, idiot!"

"Sherman rottair! I despises you!"
 "French peast! I contempts you!"
 "Rottair!"

"I tink—"
 "I zink—"
 "Listen, Adolphe, and let us pe friends," said Hoffmann.

"Tey are getting up some vheeze to spoil te opening of te school to-morrow morning, ain't it?"
 "Zat is correct."

"I tinks tat ve must stop tem."
 "I zinks ze same."
 "Ten let us unite for tat purpose. Ven te school is opened, I shall be leader of te party, of course—"

"I sall be ze leader of ze party!"
 "Ve vill settles tat at te time, ten. Now ve settles how to stop tose Engleese peastly pounders from mucking up te opening ceremony."

"Zat is correct."
 "Ve stand by each oder like te true chum."
 "I stands by you like ze brave Frenchman."

"Ten ve are friends?"
 "Ve are friends!"
 "Ach; I embrace my friend!"
 "Ciel; I embraces my shum!"

And the two juniors embraced ecstatically. When Hoffmann and Meunier were not fighting, they were always friends in the same way, with Continental effusiveness, embraces, and even kisses. But the friendliness usually ended in a fight sooner or later. The Removites could not quite decide whether they were funnier as friends or as enemies.

"Ve are friends now!" said Hoffmann, beaming. "Ve stands togedder and frustrates te rotten pounders!"
 "Ve stands togezzer, my shum!"

And the two foreign youths appeared in the common-room with linked arms, and sweet, chummy smiles on their somewhat battered faces. Some of the juniors stared at them.

"Hallo, they've made it pax again!" said Levison. "We found 'em fighting in our study, and kicked them out, not long ago!"

"Ve soon gives you all ze kicks!" said Meunier. "Vait till ze new school is opened, zat is all, you rottairs! You sall see vat you sall see!"

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Levison, with a show of interest.

"Ve makes you sit up!" said Hoffmann. "I tinks tat ve licks you, ain't it? Te academy vas put Greyfriars in to shade after!"

"Bedtime!" said Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, looking into the room. "Now, then, be off with you. Meunier, what have you been doing with your nose?"

"I found him scrapping in my study," said Bulstrode; "he ran it against my fist!"
 Wingate laughed.

"Well, get off to bed!"
 The Remove went up to bed. Hoffmann was whispering to Meunier on the way up. An idea had come into his head.

"Mein lofed friend, I tinks tat ve not go to sleep to-night," he whispered.
 Meunier stared at the German.

"Vy not, my shum?"
 "I tinks tat perhaps tose pounders talks ofer plans mit demselves, and if ve stays avake ve hears it, ain't it?"

"Ciel! I zinks zat is ferry good vheeze!"
 "Ten ve stays avake, my friend?"
 "Ve stays avake, my shum!"

And when the Remove turned in the two foreigners made an elaborate pretence of snoring, but did not close their eyes. The chums of the Remove waited for half an hour after lights out before they made a move. By that time most of the dormitory was fast asleep, only one of the Famous Four being still awake. That one was Harry Wharton.

When the school clock chimed out the hour of ten he sat up in bed.

"Are you awake, you chaps?"
 "I am awake," came in a low, purring voice from the nabob's bed. Hurree Janset Ram Singh slept very lightly, and Wharton's low voice had awakened him.

"Good! Cherry—Nugent!"
 Hoffmann and Meunier thrilled and lay very quiet. Hoffmann had evidently hit the right nail on the head. The two aliens were about to learn all.

Nugent sat up and yawned.
 "Hallo! Is it time?"
 "Yes, high time."

"Better leave it for another half-hour perhaps—"
 "Do you want this sponge squeezed over you?"
 "Gr—r—r! I'm getting up."

"Out with you, Cherry!"
 "Ya-a-a-aw!" said Bob Cherry. "I'm jolly sleepy! Never mind, I'll get up to please you. Anything for a quiet life!"

The chums of the Remove dressed quietly and quickly in the gloom of the dormitory. Hoffmann and Meunier hardly breathed. They listened with all their ears, but they caught nothing to let in light upon the matter to them.

"Are you ready?"
 "Yes, come on."
 "Got the things?"
 "I've got them."
 "The gotfulness is great."

"Have you got all three of the—"
 "Whist! No jaw, in case anybody should be awake, Bob!"

"Right-ho, my mistake. Still, have you got all three?"
 "Yes, I've got them."
 "Then let's get out!"

The Famous Four crossed quietly to the door, and passed into the passage. The moment the door had closed, Hoffmann and Meunier were sitting up in bed, trembling with excitement.

"Hoffmann, my dear shum!"
 "Adolphe, my lofed friend!"
 "I zink zat ve follow zese rottairs."

"I tinks tat ve do, Adolphe."

The two aliens jumped out of bed, and dressed themselves with excited haste. Fritz Hoffmann opened the door of the dormitory and peeped out. The starlight glimmered through the window at the end of the passage. There was no sign of the chums of the Remove to be seen.

"Ciel! Zey are gone!"

"Hark! I tinks tat I hear te noise!"

It was a faint creak from the other end of the passage, where there was a bend, leading to the box-room stairs. The aliens understood at once. The Removites were leaving the house by means of the window at the foot of the box-room stairs. With a knotted rope it was easy to slide to the ground there under the dark shade of the trees.

Hoffmann pressed Meunier's arm.

"I tinks tat tey goes on rope out of window, mein dear Adolphe."

"I zinks zat is correct, my lofed Fritz."

"Tey leafs te rope to come in by."

"I zink zat so."

"Ten ve uses it to follow tem."

"Ciel! Zat is ze programme."

"Ve finds out te secret, I tink."

"I zink so."

The two aliens crept silently towards the bend in the passage. They caught the glimmer of starlight from the window. The sash was up, and a dark figure was disappearing over the sill. It vanished; and Hoffmann looked over the sill. The chums of the Remove were visible for a moment below, and then they disappeared in the darkness.

Hoffmann chuckled.

"Dey not tink ve here," he whispered. "I goes first after tem—"

"I takes ze place of danger, my dear shum."

"I tinks tat I goes first—"

"I zink zat I—"

"I refuses noddings to my dear Adolphe. He shall go first."

"Ciel! I deny nozzings to my shum Fritz. He goes first."

"My dear Adolphe—"

"My lofed Fritz—"

"I goes first, if you vishes it, my Adolphe."

"I helps you out of ze window, my dear Fritz."

Hoffmann slid down the rope. Meunier speedily followed, and they ran to the corner of the building behind which the chums of the Remove had disappeared. A faint noise sounded from the direction of the doctor's garden.

"Goot!" muttered Hoffmann. "Tey are gone into te doctor's garden to talk apout te plot mit demselves alone before."

"I zink zat is correct."

"Ve follows tem and learns te whole plot."

"Zat is so."

They reached the little gate which gave admittance from the Close into the Head's private garden. It was locked; but it was easy enough to climb.

Hoffmann stood politely aside for his dear friend Meunier to pass over first, and held out a helping hand. But Meunier was not to be outdone in politeness. He also stood aside to assist his dear friend Fritz over the gate.

"My dear Adolphe, I assists you."

"My dear Fritz, I assists you."

"I insist—"

"I insist—"

"Zen ve both goes togezzer," said Meunier, with a beaming smile.

"Goot! Ve both goes togedder."

And the two aliens climbed the gate. They dropped on the inner side of it, and at the same moment unseen hands reached out of the darkness, and they were grasped, and dragged to the ground.

"Don't make a row," said a well-known voice. "Now, you silly asses, what are you up to? Have you been following us?"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Allens in Durance!

"**A**CH! It is tat Vharton!"

"Ciel! It is zat Vharton!"

"Yes," you asses!" growled Harry Wharton. "We heard you jabbering at the gate, and so we stopped to wait for you."

"Ach, you have giffen te show away, my dear Adolphe!"

"It is you zat have giffen ze show away, my dear Fritz."

"I tinks not."

"I zinks so."

"I tinks tat it vas you, my dear Adolphe."

"I zinks zat it vas you, my beloved Fritz."

"Shut up with your 'tinking' and 'zinking'!" growled Bob Cherry. "The question is, what are you doing here?"

"Ve follows you fat ve learns te secret, ain't it?"

"Zat is correct."

"I thought so," said Harry. "And now we've collared you—"

"I tinks tat you lets us go, or I trashes you after."

"I zink so."

"What are we to do with them, kids? We could hold their heads under the water in the fountain, but—"

"But their bodies would be found in the morning, and there would be an inquest and a lot of bother."

"How can we shut them up without drowning them, then? We can't have them following us about all night."

"I tinks tat—"

"I zinks zat—"

"You vas interrupting me, my dear Adolphe—"

"I not cares ze vun rap, my beloved Fritz."

"Ach! I tink you are French peeg!"

"I zink zat you are Sherman pounder!"

"Peast!"

"Rottair!"

"Shut up! Do you want to wake the whole house, and get a flogging for being out of bounds at night?" growled Nugent.

"Tat French peast—"

"Zat Sherman pounder—"

"Shut up, I tell you! What are we going to do with them, Harry?"

Wharton's brows were wrinkled in thought. The Removites had fortunately discovered the pursuit in time. In five minutes more the aliens would have tracked them to the Cloisters, and then could not have failed to guess that their destination was the new academy of Herr Rosenblum.

But how was further pursuit to be stopped? That was the question, and a difficult one to answer. Both the aliens were obstinate, and persuasion would be simply wasted upon them.

"Give 'em a kick, and send 'em back," suggested Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head.

"That won't do, Bob."

"Why not?"

"We thought they were asleep when we left. But they're on the scent. If they went back now they'd wake up Billy Bunter and worm the secret out of him."

"By Jove, so they might!"

"Ve are villing to go pack," said Fritz Hoffmann.

"Zat is correct."

"I daresay you are," growled Wharton. "But we are not willing. The only thing I can think of, chaps, is to lock them up in the gardener's shed here."

"Well, that's a good wheeze."

"I vill not be locked up!"

"Ciel! I also refuse to be locked up zere!"

"Bring them along!"

The two aliens were dragged to their feet. They struggled, but each was in the grasp of two pairs of hands, and their resistance was of little avail. They were bundled along the path to the shed at the bottom of the garden. The shed was at such a distance from the house that there was little likelihood of their cries being heard, even if they tried to give the alarm.

But that they were not likely to do. They had been long enough at Greyfriars to learn the manners and customs, so to speak, of British boys. They were excitable and unreliable in many ways, but they played the game!

The door of the gardener's shed was not locked. As a matter of fact, there was no lock to it, but simply a latch.

Harry Wharton opened it, and the two aliens were bundled into the doorway. There they began to struggle again.

"Ach! I not goes in, ain't it?"

"I zink I not goes in, you rottairs!"

"Shove them in!"

They were shoved in. Hoffmann went whirling into the shed, and there was a crash as he bumped against the wall and fell to the ground amid a clatter of falling spades and rakes and other gardening implements.

"Ach himmel! I vas hurt!"

Meunier shot in after him, and rolled over him. There were gasps and exclamations from the two aliens, and Harry Wharton shut the door on them.

"How are you going to fasten it?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"That's easy enough! We'll put in a screw; it opens outwards."

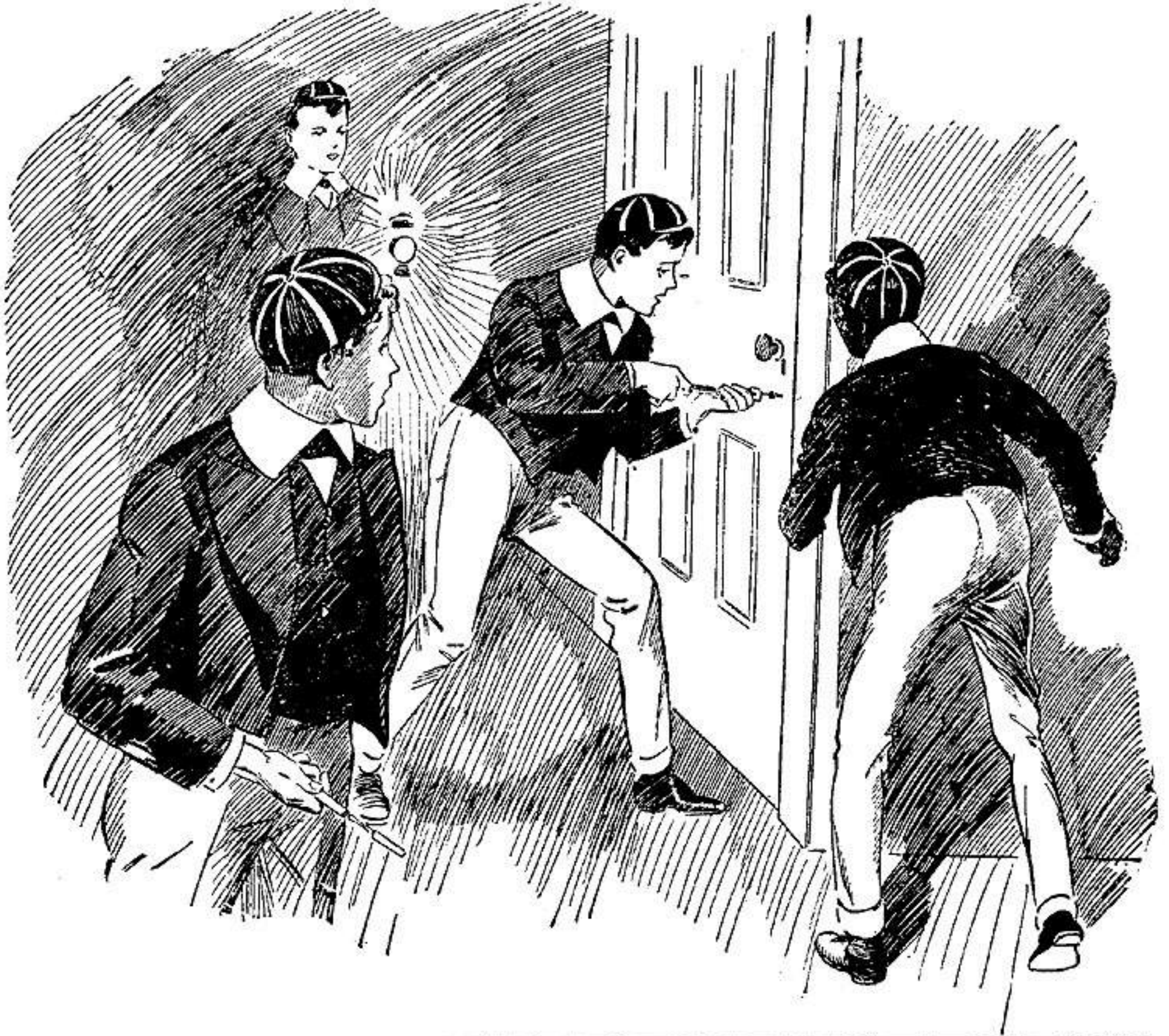
"Good! We can spare them a screw."

Three pairs of hands held the door jammed shut, while Harry Wharton drove the screw into the door. It fastened the door as securely as a bolt. There was a bump on the door from the inside. But it did not budge.

"Zat you opens ze door, you rottairs!"

"Ach! Tat door sall be open, ain't it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"



Every screw was driven well home, flush with the wood; and at the end of half-an-hour every door in the building had been securely screwed up.

"Ze door he quite tight, and he not open. You ass, Hoffmann! Zis is all your fault, you fat Sherman donkey!"

"Tat is all your fault, you French peeg!"

"Sherman rottair!"

"French peast!"

Then there was the sound of a struggle, and the clattering of garden implements knocked over in the dark.

The chums of the Remove chuckled softly.

"They're safe," said Harry. "Come on!"

The famous four hurried on their way. Even if the two aliens left off quarrelling—which was not likely to be for some time—they could never get the door open. The long screw, fast in door and doorpost, was safer than a bolt.

From the doctor's garden the Removites climbed the little gate into the Cloisters.

Dark and eerie seemed the gloomy Cloisters at that hour of the night. The old stones, worn by the feet of the monks for centuries, were seldom trodden now. In the dark shadows under the arches an imaginative mind might have pictured a ghostly form in monastic habit silently gliding.

But the chums of the Remove were not thinking of the old monks of Greyfriars. They hurried on through the Cloisters, and crossed the low wall into the grounds of the academy.

"Here we are again!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Now for a giddy burglary!" said Nugent, with a grin.

"How are we going to get in, Harry?"

"Through a window."

"They're pretty certain to be all fastened."

"Well, what's the good of being a burglar if you can't burgle?"

"The burglefulness is difficult," said Hurree Singh, as the

chums stopped, and looked up at the dark building; "but the get-infulness is necessary before we can proceed with the screwfulness."

"Exactly," said Bob Cherry; "and our determination is terrific."

"My worthy idiotic chum—"

"Come on," said Harry, "let's go round the building, and look for a window we can tackle."

The Removites proceeded upon their exploration. The great building was dark and silent and wholly untenanted. On the morrow it would be swarming with boys, and echoing with the chatter of many tongues. Now, not a sound broke the stillness of the night.

"Here's the place!" said Harry Wharton abruptly.

He stopped at a little window in the back of the house. It looked like a pantry window, and was easy of access. Harry opened the biggest blade of his pocket-knife.

"Give me a back, Bob!"

"Here you are, old son!"

Harry mounted upon Bob Cherry's shoulders, and in a moment the window was open.

"Ripping!" said Nugent. "Jolly good profession for you when you grow up, Harry! In choosing a profession for a boy, I was reading somewhere, any early taste or predilection should be carefully noted—"

"Oh, cheese it," said Harry, laughing, "and let me get in!"

One by one the chums of the Remove climbed in at the window. To pass through into the passage beyond the little room was easy. A few moment more, and the Famous Four stood in the gloomy hall.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Screwed Up!

"LIGHT the lantern, Frank."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent; and he struck a match. The bicycle lantern brought by Nugent was lighted, and its rays glimmered round the dark hall. The effect was curiously eerie, and seemed to make the great building more lonely than it was in the dark. Hurree Singh shivered a little as he glanced round.

"By Jove, it does make a chap feel like a giddy burglar!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The next step really is to break into the safe, you know."

"Or knock somebody on the head with a jemmy."

"Ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry's laugh sounded very hollow in the empty house. He stopped it as the echoes rolled back from the desolate class-rooms and passages.

"Let's get to work!" said Nugent abruptly. "Blessed if I like this place! It's too much like a giddy churchyard for me."

"The loneliness is great, and the uncanniness is terrific!" murmured the nabob.

"Buck up, then," said Harry. "Got the gimlet?"

"Here it is!"

"Lucky we didn't forget that. This wood is as hard as a rock, almost. I'll soon have a hole ready for the screw."

"Go ahead, then!"

Harry selected a spot where a screw would securely fasten the great door to the post, and started with the gimlet.

The wood was very hard, but his steady turns drove the gimlet in, and at last he untwisted it again and inserted the screw.

The screw, of course, was thicker than the gimlet, but the hole facilitated its entrance, and it did not take long to drive it home.

"We can't test it, as the door's locked," said Harry; "but I fancy that screw will hold the door shut against anything but a battering ram."

"Ha, ha! I fancy so!"

"Now for the other doors. That little lot has taken ten minutes nearly, and—"

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "At ten minutes a time we shall be finished the job about noon to-morrow, I suppose, and we shall have to keep it up while the opening ceremony is going on."

"Oh, don't be funny! That was the first. I'll go round with the gimlet, making the holes, and you fellows can follow with the screws. You've got a driver each, and I can make the gimlet holes fast enough to keep you all going. We shall get through the work pretty quick, at that rate."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton led the way with the gimlet. The others followed with screws and screw-drivers. The work, as Harry said, proceeded at a good rate, especially as the juniors warmed up to it.

And it was thoroughly done. It was an extensive job, but there was no scamping. Every screw was driven well home, flush with the wood; and at the end of half an hour every door in the building had been securely screwed up.

"That job's jobbed!" said Bob Cherry, breathing rather hard. "I've got a blister coming on my hand."

"The blisterfulness of my hands is terrific."

"Never mind," said Wharton; "it's all in the day's work, you know."

"My worthy chum means the nightful work!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, the night's work, Inky. Now for the windows. We've got to fasten up all of them that could possibly be climbed into."

"Right-ho! Buckle to!"

They buckled to. It was an hour's work, and not light work, to screw up the windows; but they did it. Half-past eleven rang from the tower of Greyfriars, as Harry Wharton drove in the last screw.

"Half-past," said Bob Cherry. "We're making a night of it, and no mistake. We shall be pretty sleepy at rising-bell to-morrow morning."

"Can't be helped. We're finished now."

"Right-ho! Let's get out."

"My—my hat!"

"What's the matter now?"

Harry Wharton burst into a ringing laugh. It echoed weirdly through the empty building, and his chums stared at him in the lantern light.

"What on earth are you laughing at?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, we're prisoners, that's all."

"Prisoners!"

"Yes, we're screwed in!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was true enough. The juniors had done their work thoroughly, and every window near the ground was screwed up. They had left themselves no retreat.

The situation was so absurd that they could not help laughing.

"We shall have to take out one of the screws, and shove it in again on the outside!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, that won't take long. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The funniness is terrific."

The juniors had had enough screwing, but there was no help for it. Wharton laboriously unscrewed one of the screws, and took it out, and the window was opened.

The Removitos jumped out one by one, and Wharton knelt on the sill and closed the window. It was a small one at the back of the house, and he drove in the screw in an obscure corner on the outside, where it was not likely to be discovered.

"That's done," he said, jumping to the ground.

"Good! And now let's be off!"

The chums hurried back to the Cloisters. In a few minutes they were once more at the gardener's shed in the Head's garden. Wharton listened at the door, but all was silent within.

"They've gone to sleep," he murmured. "I'll get the screw out, and then one of you can cut back to Gosling's lodge with the screwdrivers. If they saw them, they might smell a rat."

The screw was silently withdrawn. Bob Cherry took the three screwdrivers, and hurried away with them. Wharton opened the door of the shed.

"Hallo, there!"

"Ach! I tinks tat I haf been asleep, ain't it?"

"I zink zat I have been asleep, auss!"

"Well, if you want to stay here for the rest of the night we'll shut you in again," said Harry Wharton. "What do you think?"

"I tinks tat I goes pack to ped, ain't it?"

"I zink so, too."

"Then buck up!"

The quarter chimed out from the clock tower. Fritz Hoffmann rubbed his eyes as he came out of the shed.

"Ach! Is tat a quarter to eleven?"

"The quarterfulness is to twelve, my worthy Dutchful friend."

"Himmel! Ten you have been down to te village, ain't it, to stay out of school all tat time, you peastly pounders?"

"Ciel! Zat is certain. Vat have you to do at ze village, cochons?"

"Ask no questions, and you'll hear no whoppers," said Nugent. "Come along, if you want to use our rope to get in with."

"I tink tat I comes mit you."

"I zink so also."

The juniors hurried back to the house. They were all anxious to get to bed. Bob Cherry was already waiting for them under the window. He had placed the screwdrivers under the bench outside Gosling's lodge, as had been arranged.

"Oh, here you are," he said sleepily. "I'm ready for bed. I'll go up first, and you can send these alien animals up next."

He climbed the rope. It was an easy task for the athletic junior. He was in the window in less than a minute, and looking out at the juniors below.

"Now, then," said Harry Wharton, "up you go!"

Hoffmann and Meunier, whose friendship was off again, made simultaneous steps towards the rope. They both clutched it, and glared at one another.

"Leave go, you French pounder! Te Sherman always goes before te Frenchman."

"Ze Frenchman goes before ze rotten Sherman!"

"Ach, ja, te Frenchman vent before te Sherman at Sedan, ven te Sherman vas running after him!" grinned Fritz Hoffmann.

"Ciel! I zink zat I—"

"Will you go up that rope, you utter asses?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I tinks tat—"

"I zinks zat—"

"Well, stay where you are, then. We're going to pull up the rope when we get in. Up with you, Inky!"

"The upfulness is immediate."

Hurree Singh climbed the rope. Frank Nugent followed, and then Harry Wharton swung himself up, and into the window. He leaned out, and looked down on the two foreigners, who were still fiercely disputing.

"Are you coming up?"

"Oui, oui! I zink zat I orders you to go first, Hoffmann." Hoffmann stepped back from the rope.

"Te Sherman cannot go if te Frenchman orders him."
"You silly asses!" said Harry. "The rope's coming up now."

"Stop ze minute. I come!"
And Adolphe Meunier swung himself up. Fritz Hoffmann followed, and Harry drew in the rope and unfastened it, and closed the window. The Removites hurried silently back to their dormitory and tumbled into bed.

"Well, I feel rather inclined for a nap!" Nugent remarked, as he pulled up the sheet about his ears.

"The napfulness will be very welcome."

"French peeg!"

"Sherman peast!"

"Peastly pounder!"

"Rottair!"

"Shut up, you two! Will you be quiet?"

"I tink tat I not shuts up!"

"I zink so too!"

"I tinks—"

Biff! Bob Cherry's pillow came with a whizz through the air, and caught Hoffmann on the side of the head, and he did shut up.

"Ach! Vat vas tat pefore?"

"That was my pillow pefore!" grinned Bob Cherry, getting out of bed again. "And now I'm up, you may as well have a swipe or two!"

"Ach, Himmel! Stop you! Leave off pefore!"

Biff! Biff! Biff!

"Himmel! Mein Gott! I am hurt!"

"There!" said Bob Cherry. "Now perhaps you'll shut up! If you or Meunier makes a sound again to-night, we'll all turn out and give you a wallop!"

And for the rest of that night there was peace in the Remove dormitory.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Opening Day.

"YAW-AW-AW-AW-W!"

That was Bob Cherry's remark when the bell clanged the signal for rising the following morning.

And the others who had taken part in the previous night's excursion felt inclined to yawn also and go to sleep again. But Harry Wharton set the example of jumping out of bed.

"Up you get, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "No good hanging it out, you know! Quelch will be ratty if we're late for breakfast!"

"I suppose so!" yawned Nugent. "Here goes! Yaw-aw-aw-w-w-w!"

"Yaw-w-w-w-w!" answered Bob Cherry.

But the chums of the Remove dressed actively enough, and went down in time with the rest of the Form. Some of the Remove were looking curiously at them, the signs of sleepiness in their faces being very apparent.

"I heard somebody moving about in the night," Hazeldene remarked. "I suppose it was you chaps going out somewhere?"

"The supposefulness is correct," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Where were you off to?"

"That's a little secret," said Bob Cherry blandly. "You'll guess a little later, but for the present mum's the word!"

Hazeldene laughed.

"Oh, keep the secret! Is it something up against Temple & Co., of the Upper Fourth, though?"

"No; it's up against the aliens."

"Faith, and ye might tell us phwat it is intirely!" said Micky Desmond.

"Faith, and you'll know soon enough intirely!" said Bob Cherry.

"Sure, and if it's mimicking me beautiful accent you are—"

"Silence there!" said Mr Quelch.

"Faith, sir, and I—"

"Silence!"

And there was silence at the Remove table. But the news spread through the Remove, all the same, that there was something afoot "up against" the aliens, and when the Form went out after breakfast there were many inquiries addressed to the chums of the Remove. But the Famous Four maintained a discreet silence.

"Sure, and you can thrust me intirely!" urged Micky Desmond.

"Sure, and we could trust you to spread it all over the school," agreed Bob Cherry.

"Faith, and I—"

"I say, does Bunter know?" asked Levison.

"Yes, he knows."

"Then you'd better watch him!" grinned Levison. "Somebody will have the secret out of him before you can say ginger-pop!"

"We're watching him!" said Harry Wharton, with a laugh. "He's been under watch ever since we hit on the wheeze!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Still, you can trust the Remove with the wheeze!" said Bulstrode.

"My dear fellow, mum's the word! You'll all see the thing out between the hours of ten and eleven this morning, and it's not long to wait!"

"Then it's something to do with the opening of the new academy?"

"Yes, I'll tell you that much."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here, Billy, this is where you shut up!"

"I say, Nugent won't let go my arm!"

"Of course he won't; he's got his orders."

"Yes, that's all very well—"

"Then what are you grumbling at?"

"Look here, you fellows, I'm not going to stand this! I want to practise the ventriloquial drone for a while before morning classes, and Nugent won't let me go. I don't mind if he holds me while I'm practising, but he says he won't let me practise while he's holding me, and he won't let go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter!" said Billy Bunter indignantly. "Here's an opportunity for practising and developing my wonderful powers as a ventriloquist, and Nugent stands in the way! I don't want to walk about arm-in-arm with Nugent!"

"And I don't want it either," grinned Nugent, "but needs must, you know! This is where you suffer for being a confounded little fat chatterbox!"

"Well, I'm going to practise the ventriloquial drone!"

"If you start any ventriloquial groaning—"

"Droning, not groaning!"

"I don't care whether it's droning or groaning, you're not going to do it where I can hear you, or I'll give you something to groan for!"

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Oh, ring off!"

And Nugent marched away arm-in-arm with the indignant Bunter, and Billy's expostulations were lost in the distance. The Removites roared.

"It's the only way," said Levison, laughing. "Bunty can't talk now! I say, I'm anxious for that opening ceremony to start!"

All the Remove were anxious, as a matter of fact. The whole Form was on the alert. The Upper Fourth were not long in learning of the unusual excitement, and it at once aroused the suspicions of Temple, Dabney & Co. They came round to inquire.

"What's the little game, Wharton?" said Temple. "I hear there's something specially ripping on. What are you up to?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "What are you up to, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing up against you this time," he replied. "If you want to see something really funny, don't fail to turn up for the opening ceremony of the new academy."

"Oho! It's up against the aliens, then?"

"Exactly."

"The exactfulness is terrific."

"Then it's all right," grinned Temple. "We'll be there, never fear!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"But what's the wheeze?" asked Fry.

"You'll see when the time comes."

"Couldn't you tell us now?"

"Well, I could, certainly; but I'm not going to."

And the Upper Fourth Formers could learn nothing more than that. Just before morning lessons commenced, Hoffmann and Meunier came out of the house, dressed very nicely and wearing top hats.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Where are you off to, my pippins?"

"I tinks tat ve goes to te station to meet our comrades, ain't it?" said Hoffmann.

"Zat is correct."

"Then you're leaving Greyfriars?" said Wharton.

"Ve are leafing you, but ve returns to give you lots of te licking ven ve are backed up by our prave comrades."

"Zat is certainly so. My dear Fritz—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You were punching your dear Fritz's napper last night!"

"Ve are goot friends now, for te important occasion," explained Fritz Hoffmann. "Adolphe is my beloved chum."

"Fritz is my dear shum also."

"Well, give us your fists!" said Bob Cherry. "We'll see you to the gates. We're glad you are going to be our neighbours, and we can promise you some high old times!"

"We promise you te high old times after, ain't it?"

"Zat is correct."

The two aliens shook hands all round, and were escorted to the gates, and the Remove gave them a cheer as they walked out. They turned round in the road and lifted their silk hats and bowed, with hand on heart, in approved Parisian style. Then they marched down the road towards Friardale, and disappeared.

The clang of the bell called the juniors to chapel, and they went in. The aliens were gone from Greyfriars, but they were to return in force and become the close neighbours of their late schoolfellows, and, as Bob Cherry said, there would be high old times. But that prospect did not dismay the Greyfriars Remove. In troublous times they thrived.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Opening that Didn't Come off.

THE big hand of the clock in the Remove-room had completed its circuit, and ten rolled out from the old tower at the same moment. Mr. Quelch laid down his book.

"The class is dismissed for one hour," he said. "All the boys of Greyfriars are expected to attend the opening ceremony of the new academy, and to do honour to the arrival of our neighbours."

The Removites grinned. There was not much likelihood of any member of the Form missing the opening ceremony at Herr Rosenblum's academy.

The Remove filed out. There was a general movement towards the new building, and all the other Forms were going in the same direction. Bunter found himself unwatched at last. The aliens being gone, it did not matter if the Owl of the Remove allowed his tongue to wag; and, as a matter of fact, it was not five minutes after the class was dismissed that Billy Bunter confided the whole secret to Skinner under a promise of profound secrecy, and Skinner confided it to about half a dozen other fellows, also under a promise of profound secrecy.

The Remove were consequently apprised of what to expect, and they awaited the moment of the opening ceremony with joyous anticipation.

The big bronze gates of the new school were wide open, and the boys of Greyfriars entered the grounds, and ranged themselves in a double row on either side of the approach to the great granite steps leading up to the door.

It was upon the steps that the Mayor of Friardale was to make his little speech, and then he was to insert a specially-made golden key into the lock and open the door, and announce that Friardale Academy was open. The golden key rather took the fancy of the spectators; but, as a matter of fact, Herr Rosenblum, who was of an economical turn of mind, had had the key made in Germany, and it was not so valuable as it looked.

There was no one in sight when the boys of Greyfriars crowded round the granite steps. But as the minutes passed, people from the village of Friardale came up in twos and threes, as well as countryfolk from the districts round about. By half-past ten, there was a very considerable crowd, three or four deep, on either side of the gravel drive up to the granite steps.

"Now we sha'n't be long," murmured Bob Cherry, as the half-hour chimed out from the tower of Greyfriars. "I can hear wheels."

Bob Cherry was right.

There was the sound of a carriage on the road, and a general craning of necks to see it, and those it contained.

"It's the mayor's coach," said Nugent.

And it was. The heavy, old-fashioned, but resplendent vehicle in which the Mayor of Friardale took his drives abroad rolled into view.

The mayor could be seen, sitting up very stiffly in his mayoral robes, and beside him was the plump figure and full-moon face of Herr Rosenblum, the Head of the new academy. Herr Rosenblum was in high good humour, as could be seen by the cheerful smile upon his plump face.

Since starting his foreign academy in England, he had had many ups and downs, but in the new Friardale school, he hoped that he had found a permanent haven at last.

There were several other important local personages in the carriage, and the carriage following, and the crowd gave a cheer as they came up.

Mr. Bootle, the mayor, bowed condescendingly to right and left, like a great man fully conscious of his greatness, as, indeed, he was.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Hurrah for old Bootle!"

"Cherry!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Yes, Wingate," said Bob innocently.

"More respectful, you young ass, unless you want a thick ear."

"Well, I can't call him young Bootle!"

"The oldfulness of the worthy rotten Bootle is terrific."

"Order, there!"

"Hurrah!"

The carriages stopped, and the great man alighted and mounted the steps. On the wide granite slab at the top, the mayor stopped, a splendid figure in his sweeping robes. He glanced over the crowd, and the crowd cheered again.

"Now watch for the fun," murmured Nugent.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Dry up, Billy, he's just going to begin."

"But, I say, you fellows—"

"Silence, there!" called out Mr. Queich.

"But, I say, you fellows," whispered Billy Bunter, "I could work in some ventriloquism here a treat."

"I'll stick this pin into you if you make a sound!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Cheese it!"

Bunter cheered it, as Cherry elegantly expressed it, at last. The mayor was clearing his throat. Mr. Bootle had written out his speech over night, and conned over it that morning, but he had forgotten most of it, all the same, and was clearing his throat to gain time.

"Ah!" said Mr. Bootle. "Ah! H'm! Ahem! Ah!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry.

And the crowd, thinking it was time to cheer, followed his lead, and a hip, hip, hurrah rolled like thunder through the morning air. Mr. Bootle looked gratified, but a little surprised. He put down that hearty cheer to his popularity, and cleared his throat again.

"H'm! Ahem! Ah-h-h-h! H'm!"

"Hurrah!"

Wingate's heavy hand fell upon Bob Cherry's shoulder. The junior looked up innocently.

"Anything the matter, Wingate?"

"Yes, you young rascal! If you make another sound, I'll wring your neck!" said the captain of Greyfriars grimly.

And Bob Cherry's cheering was over for the present. The mayor cleared his throat, and cleared it again. Then he commenced.

"Gentlemen! It is with great—with great—with great gratifi—with great pleasure that I stand here upon this occasion."

"I'd rather have sat down myself," murmured Skinner, and there was a giggle in the Remove. Mr. Quelch looked round, and the giggle died away.

"It is an auspicious occasion! We welcome the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood. And why, gentlemen, do we welcome the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood?"

The mayor paused for breath, not for a reply.

"Is that a conundrum?" murmured Nugent.

"We welcome the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood, gentlemen," resumed the mayor, "because—er—because the opening of this new collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood will—will—in short, I am sure you perfectly understand me. The Head of this new collegiate establishment will be Herr Powderblum—"

"Rosenblum," murmured the little German.

"Herr Poseybroom," said Mr. Bootle, imperfectly catching the name. "The Head of this new collegiate establishment will be Herr Prosygloom. We all extend a hearty welcome to Herr Noseybloom. We have the greatest respect for Herr—Herr—Herr Cosyroom, and we extend to him a hearty welcome, and the same to the new collegiate establishment which he is opening in our neighbourhood."

The mayor paused, and there was a cheer.

"There is already one collegiate establishment in our neighbourhood," said the mayor. "I need not mention it by name—"

"Good old Greyfriars!"

"Quite right, good old Greyfriars," said the mayor. "Greyfriars is very old, indeed—much older than the new collegiate establishment which is being opened in our neighbourhood, the new collegiate establishment being, in fact, only a couple of months old. Greyfriars has brought much custom to our tradespeople—"

"Especially at the tuck-shop," said a voice.

"Ahem! Greyfriars has brought much custom to our tradespeople, and I am sure that the new collegiate establishment will confer similar benefits upon the neighbourhood. For this reason and for many others, we welcome the opening of the new collegiate establishment. I have accepted, with great gratification, the honourable duty of first opening this door with a golden key, and pronouncing

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the new Friardale Foreign Academy open. You, I think, Herr Cosygroom, have the key—"

Herr Rosenblaum produced the key, and handed it to his worship, and there was a cheer as the glimmer of the gold was seen in the sunshine. And Herr Rosenblaum smiled sweetly. He knew how much that gold was worth.

"I shall now proceed," said Mr. Bootle, "to open the door, and to announce that this new collegiate establishment is—is—is—in short, is open. When I have opened the door, it will be—er—open."

"That's worth knowing, too," murmured Nugent.

"The new scholars of this collegiate establishment," said Mr. Bootle, "will march in under our observation, and—and—in short, they will march in. They are, I believe, all ready?"

"They vas all retty," assured Herr Rosenblaum.

The aliens were, in fact, all ready. There were fifty or more of them—French, and Germans, with a sprinkling of other nationalities, sons of foreigners resident in England. At their head were the two old members of the Greyfriars Remove—Adolphe Meunier, and Fritz Hoffmann. They grinned cheerfully at the Removites.

"I shall now proceed to the—the—in short, to open the door," said Mr. Bootle. "The—the door will then be—in short, open."

"Bravo!"

Mr. Bootle inserted the key in the lock, and turned it. The lock acted easily enough, but the door did not open.

The mayor gave it a push. But it did not budge. The Removites grinned at one another, and watched for developments.

Mr. Bootle gave the door another push. Then he turned with a somewhat heightened colour to Herr Rosenblaum.

"The door will not open, Herr Prosybone."

"Ach! Tat is ferry strange mit itself," said Herr Rosenblaum. "I vill giff it a push mit te hand, and I tink tat it open."

He pushed the door hard. It did not budge. He bumped it harder, but the door held obstinately fast.

Some of the crowd were beginning to grin now. The mayor was very red, and Herr Rosenblaum was perspiring. A ripple of laughter went up and down the crowd, as the mayor and the Herr bumped together on the door. But still the door did not move.

"Himmel! Tat is ferry strange!"

The mayor frowned.

"The door is unlocked," he said. "Someone must have bolted it on the inside."

"Ach! I gave strict orders tat te door was to be left simply locked alretty, and, in fact, I vas te last person in te building, and I locked it meinself."

"Someone must have been in since and bolted it."

"It is ferry strange."

"I suppose someone can get in at a back door and open it?" said the mayor tartly.

The German master looked troubled.

"Nein! All te oder doors are locked, too, and I tink I have not te keys."

"H'm! That is very unfortunate."

"Stay. I have vun key. Meunier, mein poy, take dis key, and open te pack door under te porch mit it, and go trough te house and unfasten te front door."

"Certainement, monsieur," said Adolphe Meunier.

He took the key, and hurried round the house. The crowd were all grinning now, with the exception of the aliens, who looked annoyed. The state opening of the new academy was likely to be a frost, and under the very eyes of the rival school!

Meunier returned in a minute or less. Herr Rosenblaum frowned at him.

"Vy you not go in, mein poy?"

"I cannot open ze door, monsieur."

"Ze lock—is it not all right?"

"Ze lock is all right viz itself, sir, but I zink zat ze door is bolted, for it vill not open."

"Ach! Giff me te key, and I vill try." Herr Rosenblaum snatched the key. "I ask you to excuse me, Herr Peotle, for vun minutes."

"Oh, certainly, Herr Frowsygroom."

The fat German hurried away. The mayor and the two or three other local important personages stood on the granite steps with very red faces. The impressiveness of the state opening was all gone now. The crowd were laughing, and the aliens were scowling, and everybody present who was concerned in the official proceedings wished that he was somewhere else.

Herr Rosenblaum returned, with a face so crimson that it seemed to have had all the blood in his body pumped into it.

"Ach! Te door not open mit itself," he said. "Someone has been in and fastened it."

"Ah! It must have been bolted!"

"Nein, nein, mein Herr, dere is no bolt on tat door. I not understand it. I tink tat somevun here had petter climb into the vindow, ain't it."

The mayor frowned.

"A very ridiculous proceeding, Herr Frowsybloom."

"I tink tat it cannot be helped. I begin to tink tat tis is a shoke."

"A what?"

"A shoke—vat you Engleesh call a bractical shoke."

"Oh, a practical joke!"

"Tat is him."

"I presume," said Mr. Bootle, with all the chilling dignity of a mayor in full official robes—"I presume, Herr Noseybone, that no one would venture to play a practical joke upon—upon—in short, upon me, Herr Roseygroam."

"I tink tat a poy petter climb in te vindow," said Herr Rosenblaum, dropping the topic. "Hoffmann, mein poy, climb into a vindow and open te door."

"I think that we had better send for a locksmith," said the mayor.

"Ach! Certainly, if you tink so. Meunier, run mit yourself all te vay, and pring vun locksmit."

"Oui, monsieur."

Adolphe Meunier hurried off. Hoffmann willingly climbed upon one of the window-sills, and there he announced that the window was fastened on the inside.

"I know tat," said Herr Rosenblaum. "Preak vun of te panes, and unfasten te catch mit itself, ain't it?"

"Ferry goot, sir."

Hoffmann drove his elbow through a pane, and the crowd thrilled at the sound of breaking glass. The excitement was growing great. Hoffmann put his hand through the aperture and pushed back the catch, and strove to open the window.

But the window was as immovable as the door.

Hoffmann pushed savagely at it. Two or three aliens clambered on the window-sill to help him. But their united efforts amounted to nothing, as far as the sash was concerned. It did not budge.

"Ach! Vy you not open it?" shouted Herr Rosenblaum, getting excited.

"It vill not open mit itself, sir."

"Nonsense! Get down and I vill try."

Herr Rosenblaum clambered on the sill. There was a roar of laughter as the little fat gentleman missed his hold and rolled to the ground. But he was not to be beaten, and he clambered gallantly up again. His elbow went through one pane, and his foot through another. But his efforts to raise the sash were in vain. He jumped down at last, scarlet with anger and excitement.

"It is vun trick!" he yelled.

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

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the crowd.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes the locksmith!"

Meunier came panting up with a locksmith. The man immediately tried the key in the lock, and pronounced that it worked perfectly.

"Den vy te door not open?" shrieked Herr Rosenblaum.

"It's fastened inside, o' course."

"Den you preak more glass and get into vindow and open it after."

"Very good, sir."

The locksmith smashed a large pane and disappeared into the house. Now the crowd waited eagerly for the door to open. The man was heard fumbling inside, but the door did not move. Herr Rosenblaum rapped upon it.

"Vy you not open?" he called out.

"I can't, sir."

"Vy not?"

"The blessed door's stuck somehow."

"Ach! Himmel! Unfasten it!"

"It's not fastened."

"Den you open it."

"It won't come open."

"Sir," exclaimed Mr. Bootle, "I—"

"Say noting now; I must get tat door open."

"I must decline to remain here in an—in short, in an absurd position, while you get that door open," said Mr. Bootle, with great dignity. "I consider that the—the—in short, the dignity of my official position has been trifled with. I have been, I think I may say—in short, I have been treated with want of respect. I shall now retire from the scene."

"It is not my fault tat te peastly door not open mit itself, ain't it, pefore."

"The matter should certainly have been better managed. In any case, the only course consistent with my—in short, with my official dignity, is to retire."

And the mayor forthwith retired. The important official and his important supporters rolled off in their carriages. There was a sudden shout from the locksmith on the inside of the great door.

"I've found it!"

"Ach! You haf found vat?"
 "What's the matter. There's a big screw in here; the door has been screwed up."
 "Screwed up! Ach, himmell! Get te screw out!"
 "I haven't a screwdriver with me."
 "Ach! Idiot! Dummy! Somevun has been playing bractical shoke! Ach! Vy for are you laughing, hein? Tat is vun serious matter peforo."

But everyone was laughing. Even Mr. Quelch's severe face had relaxed. Most of the aliens were laughing, too, now. The idea of the doors being screwed up on the occasion of the state opening struck most of the spectators as funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites; and everyone joined in.

Mr. Quelch tapped the excited little German on the arm. "It is evidently a practical joke," he said, "doubtless played by some mischievous lad from the village."

"Doubtless," murmured Bob Cherry.
 "You had better let your boys come into Greyfriars, and come in yourself, while workmen can be sent to undo this piece of mischief."

"Ach! I tink so, ain't it."
 And Herr Rosenblum walked away with Mr. Quelch. Meunier and Hoffmann rushed up to Harry Wharton & Co.

"Ach! I tinks vat you vas screw up te doors, ain't it."
 "I zink zat is correct."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Tat is vere you go last night."
 "Zat is certain."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I should have caught you but for tat French pounder."
 "I catches you but for zat Sherman idiot."
 "French peast!"
 "Sherman peeg!"

The two excited aliens rushed at one another, and in a moment were fighting furiously. The Removites roared with laughter. Harry Wharton and his chums strolled away. They laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"Well, it has been ripping fun!" said Bob Cherry, at last. "I think we've scored in the first round, anyway."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent.

And the Nabob of Bhanipur chimed in:

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

And the chums of the Remove agreed that it was terrific.

THE END.

(Another grand tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next week. Order your copy of the "Magnet" Library in advance. One Halfpenny.)

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father (Colonel Sir Harry Dashwood), Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Unfortunately for Jack, however, his Cousin Leonard is attached to the 25th as second lieutenant, and, with the aid of a bullying trooper named Sligo, succeeds in getting Jack deprived of his stripes. By the death of his father (Dominic), Lieutenant Dashwood is at first prevented from accompanying the 25th to India; but he subsequently joins the troopship at Port Said, having travelled there overland. While at Port Said he bribes a Greek gambler named Constantinidi to kidnap Trooper Howard, whom he sends ashore on a false errand. Our hero is attacked and stunned, and wakes to find himself a prisoner. Irene, the beautiful daughter of his captor, however, procures for him a disguise, and Jack, by means of a rope, lowers himself down into the garden, wherein, seated round a table in a kiosque, Constantinidi and a party of British officers from the troopship Ganges are gambling. Irene, with a glitter of sequins in her hair, had glided to the door, and stood there looking on, and the three subalterns had risen and bowed to her. (Now go on with the story.)

Jack Dashwood's Escape.

In reality Irene hardly saw the figures before her, for she was listening intently and wondering how it had fared with the escaped prisoner.

The beautiful Greek in the doorway turned her head in the direction of the house. She had heard something—one hoarse shout like the bellow of a bull—and her interlaced fingers tightened until the knuckles stood out quite white.

Her father heard it also, and cast a swift glance through the doorway. And the Hon. Algy led off with an ace. He could not help but win, although he played clumsily. The first card was played. It was a king. Montgomery played, the two others played, and Constantinidi's turn came last.

He held his hand below the table, and he had his finger on a card, when a sudden tumult broke out in the house,

and a figure came bounding down the garden path, followed by a knot of serving-boys. Everyone turned involuntarily, and for once in his life Ionides Constantinidi made a fatal mistake.

The greed of the professional gambler overcame his caution for a moment. Besides, he knew Mustapha's voice, and his soul quailed within him, and, clumsily substituting another card for the one he had intended to play, he laid the ace of trumps on the table.

One of the subalterns, flushed in the face, and very handsome in his boyish way in his scarlet mess-jacket, sprang to his feet and seized the Greek's last card. Captain Montgomery's hand had stretched forth at the same moment, and the ace of trumps was torn in two as each seized it by a corner.

"You scoundrel!" they exclaimed in a breath.

And Constantinidi, more on his mind than they were aware of, started back on the divan, and placed his hand in the breast of his coat.

"Leave it to me, Dick!" said Captain Montgomery. "I have been watching him for some time. The fellow is a rank scoundrel, and we will have every penny of our money back before we leave this place!"

What the Greek would have said will never be known, for the handsome figure of the Arab Mustapha suddenly appeared in the doorway, and cried in guttural Arabic:

"The Englishman has escaped!"

Constantinidi's face was a study, and the whole party sprang to its feet.

"Put your hands up!" cried the subaltern, whom Montgomery had addressed as Dick; and, whipping out a revolver, he levelled it at Constantinidi. "Look to that Arab chap, Montgomery!" he said, his voice ringing high. "It's a jolly good job we came armed!"

Mustapha folded his arms, and an evil smile came over his magnificent, bearded face.

"Put your weapons down, gentlemen!" he said, in French. "You shall have your losings—every piastre of them—and the door is open for you to go as soon as you like."

He exchanged a quick glance of intelligence with his partner in iniquity, and the Greek placed his hands straight out upon the table.

"There is some treachery here!" said Montgomery. "These fellows do not disgorge like this without a reason. Keep your eye on that Haroun Alraschid fellow, Algy, and if he moves an eyebrow, shoot him like a dog! Here come the rest of the gang!"

And sure enough, twenty or thirty men of all colours ran down the path and clustered round Mustapha, waiting the signal to fall on.

"By gad, Dick," whispered the Hon. Algy, "I begin to wish we were out of this!"

"Yes, they're pretty long odds," said his companion, still covering the Greek. "There are only four of us to face half a company of the rascals!"

"Five, old chap!" said a voice out of the darkness behind him.

And through one of the arches of the kiosque a figure in a grey shirt and a pair of tightly-fitting blue overalls with yellow stripes down the sides sprang into the lamplight, holding a jewelled dagger in his hand.

"Great Scott!" cried Dick Vivian. "You here!"

And for a moment he turned his astonished gaze on Jack Dashwood.

"Will tell you all about it afterwards, old chap, if we get out of this!" cried our hero.

And there certainly did seem to be some grave doubt what the outcome would be, for as Dick Vivian, stupefied with astonishment, turned his eyes upon his old school chum, the Greek's hand returned to the breast of his coat with incredible swiftness, and the crack of a revolver rang out as he fired point-blank at our hero.

The bullet whistled past Jack's ear, and sped into the darkness through the open archway. Its report mingled with the simultaneous crack of four revolvers, as the officers of the Ploughshares fired at the same moment.

It was the noise of the volley that drowned a faint cry in the shrubs in the garden. Every bullet has its billet, and the mischief done by the Greek gambler they were to discover later on.

A knife flashed in the hand of Mustapha the Arab, and he gave a hoarse command in Arabic to the mob of ruffians behind him. They had drawn back a few paces involuntarily, for the Hon. Algy's shot had toppled Selim, the Nubian, backwards down the steps, where he lay, grinding his white teeth.

At such a moment there is always one strong head that takes command, and Captain Montgomery stepped into the breach.

"Into the garden!" he cried. "We are cooped up here, and they take us on all sides."

And as he spoke his left hand grasped Constantinidi's wrist, and he dragged the Greek across the table among the cards and the money lying upon it, and pinned him down.

"Loose your revolver, or you die!" said Captain Montgomery.

And Constantinidi, realising if he did not obey his last moment had come, slackened his hold on his pistol, which the captain immediately appropriated.

"Now, back, you scum of the earth!" he said sternly, making for the door with a revolver in each hand, followed by the rest; and Mustapha, leaping back, stumbled over the prostrate Selim, and nearly fell.

Jack seized a lamp from the hall of the kiosque, and, holding it above his head, he was the last to leave; and as the cowardly mob of Oriental scum fell back before the onslaught of the scarlet-coated officers, Mustapha crouched for a moment behind a tall oleander, and then leapt like a wolf upon our hero, raising his weapon in his hand.

"Hold on, you fellows!" cried Dick Vivian. "Come back!"

And, turning round, they saw the Hussar in his shirt-sleeves and the white-robed Arab grappling in a fearful embrace.

Jack had managed to grip Mustapha's right arm; but the Arab was immensely powerful, and though our hero braced himself, Mustapha swayed him to and fro like a reed in the wind, glaring upon him with eyes of intense hatred.

Mustapha had a firm belief in that ancient adage, "Dead men tell no tales," and, cursing Constantinidi for the turn things had taken, he determined that their prisoner should never leave the garden alive.

But, leaving the Hon. Algy to overawe the mob with his shining revolver, Captain Montgomery and Dick instantly came to the rescue, and, placing the barrel of his weapon next Mustapha's temple, Dick fired.

Mustapha gave a weird howl, and Jack got to his feet.

"Thanks, old chap!" he said. "You have done me a good turn."

But before Dick Vivian could reply, a terrible scream of anguish rang from the bushes on the other side of the kiosque.

Constantinidi, the Greek, drawing a second revolver from his coat, had crept out through one of the arched windows,

intending to steal out and shoot our hero in the back; and then it was that Constantinidi paid the penalty for his many misdeeds.

Someone, moaning softly, lay among the oleanders—someone who whispered "Father!" so faintly that the man would not have heard it had he not been crouching almost level with the ground.

It was the beautiful Greek girl, shot by her father's own hand; and, flinging himself on his knees, the scoundrel raised an appalling cry that rang above the tumult in the scented garden.

"Gentlemen, I beg of you," he cried, in an anguished voice, "come here! Abdul, fly for the nearest doctor! My daughter is dying!"

"Be careful," said Dick; "there may be treachery!" as Jack Dashwood seized another lamp, and ran in the direction of the cry.

"There is no treachery in that voice," he said.

And the next moment the officers were standing round the form of the dying girl and the distracted parent, a curious group in their scarlet mess-jackets and the glitter of gold braid, and behind them the motley crowd that a moment before had been intent on slaying them.

The man they had called Abdul had already sped into the house, and, opening the front door that led into the lane, found himself seized by the throat and hurled back, and the well-known uniform of the military mounted police filled the doorway.

"What is going on here, you imp of sin?" cried a stern voice.

And, with a heavy tread and a clank of spurs, half a dozen troopers came into the garden.

At the sight of the scarlet mess-jackets, the sergeant saluted.

"Beg pardon, sir, but we heard shots, and thought there was dirty work. Hallo! A woman, wounded; and hanged if it isn't Miss Irene, too!"

Even as he spoke, the Greek girl, with her eyes turned on her father, gave a little shiver and was gone.

"It's all over," said Captain Montgomery, in a low voice. "I don't want to add to your misery"—and he looked sternly at the Greek—"but you had better secure that man, sergeant. We have been robbed and very nearly murdered here."

"I am not surprised, sir," said the sergeant, stepping forward in a business-like way. "We have had our eye on this fellow for long enough."

Constantinidi made a wild gesture with his arms. His face was as white as marble, and he seemed dazed by the terrible happening.

"Come along," said Captain Montgomery. "I think we will go. We don't want to be mixed up in this business, and the sergeant will see to everything."

Looking over his shoulder, Jack saw the keeper of the gambling-den shrink as the stern hand of the law settled on his shoulder.

What happened to him Jack never knew, for Dick, taking him by the arm, hurried him in the wake of his brother-officers, and in a few minutes they were out in the lane. It was not until they had reached the end of the lane that our hero opened his lips, as Captain Montgomery fell back a pace, and the little group halted under a lamp.

"Well, talk about the Arabian Nights!" said Dick Vivian. "I never expected to go through an adventure of this sort; and the most astonishing part about it is to find you here, Jack!"

Jack raised a warning finger.

"No names, old boy, if you please," he said, in a whisper. And Dick Vivian nodded.

Jack had insensibly drawn himself up to attention now that the excitement was over, and he was in the presence of his superiors in rank; but Dick was not going to have any of that nonsense.

"Look here, you fellows, I don't know how my friend comes here, but this is a very old chum of mine. He is doing penance for other people's sins in the ranks of the 25th Hussars. His real name is in Debrett, but at present he is Trooper Thomas Howard."

And then Dick formally introduced Jack to his three brother-officers, who waived all etiquette for the moment and shook hands.

"But I say," said the Hon. Algy, "what the dickens are you doing here? You fellows sailed on the Himalaya before us. How do you come to be left behind?"

"If you don't mind, Mr. Armstrong," said Jack, "I would rather not say."

"Oh, but look here, that's ridiculous! You will have to tell your colonel," said Montgomery; "unless"—he looked at Jack keenly—"unless you have deserted."

Jack laughed—a little bitterly, it is true.

"I have not deserted, sir," he replied. "I was sent on shore on a mission, got knocked on the head, and got carried into that place where you found me. There is more behind it, but the story is for another time and place. You must really excuse me if I prefer to hold my tongue."

"You may take it from me," chimed in Dick Vivian, "that whatever Tom Howard says is the truth, and nothing but the truth. But now, old chap, what are you going to do? The Himalaya has gone days ago. I tell you what—you will have to come with us."

Before he had finished his sentence the siren of the Ganges was heard hooting furiously, as a signal for those on shore to get aboard immediately, the troopship being about to steam ahead; and the next moment the officers of the Ploughshires and their newly-found companion were running as hard as they could for the quay.

"You've got to tell me, old man," said Dick, as they pelted along, side by side.

"I shall tell you everything. And, by Jove, you will find it a strange story!" said Jack Dashwood, as they sprang into a native boat, and were pulled across the basin to the troopship.

The colonel of the infantry battalion, who was playing whist when they came on board, was more persistent in his inquiries than his captain had been; but Jack Dashwood resolutely declined to say more than he had done already.

In vain the colonel fumed and frowned, and even threatened to put him ashore and hand him over to the military police; but by degrees his brow cleared, and it was arranged that the young Hussar should proceed with the Ganges, and be duly delivered to the staff of the 25th when they should reach India; for, by a strange coincidence, the Ploughshires were also going to Secunderabad.

When Jack sat at last in Dick's cabin, where that young gentleman had conveyed him to, the two boys took each other by the shoulders, and declared in a breath that it was just worth everything in the world to be together again.

Then they sat side by side in the light of the electric lamp, and Jack told his story as the Ganges glided through the narrow canal towards the Bitter Lakes.

"By gad!" said Dick. "There's only one interpretation to be put upon it—Leonard meant to murder you!"

Although he took his turn at guard, and willingly did his share of the work, Jack's voyage on the Ganges was a very pleasant one.

He saw a great deal of Dick and Captain Montgomery and the Hon. Algernon. Although they were bound to recognise that great gulf which in our Service divides the officer from the man, they went out of their way to have many a chat with the lad, and to do him little acts of kindness, which went a great way to enliven the monotony.

"So this is India," said Jack to himself, as the troopship entered the harbour of Bombay.

It was hardly the gorgeous Oriental scene that he had anticipated, save for the native boatmen, in white clothes and turbans, who were kept sternly away from the troopship by the police-boat.

A great number of masts showed ahead in the moonlight, tall chimneys smoked away on the left, and here and there a palm-tree, showing above a house-top, looked almost out of place. A few privileged natives came on board; among them a Parsee money-changer, who stood near the gangway, giving rupees and annas for English money.

The red-coated Ploughshires had been served out with white Indian helmets, and when the horses of the field-officers had been lowered into a launch, the Tommies filed down the side of the troopship pretty much as they had filed up from the English quay, 6,300 miles away. Then they fell in in a huge shed at the docks, waiting for the train which was to carry them on a long journey.

"I don't suppose I shall see much more of you, old man, for some time, except at odd moments," said

Dick, coming up to his chum. "Of course, you know what I think about it, but I am bound to observe the nice distinction between officer and man on account of the other fellows."

"My dear, ridiculous old Dick," said Jack, laughing and shaking hands surreptitiously with Mr. Vivian, "do you think I want to be reminded of those things? Now, here's the train. Just you get along, and I will see you up yonder, soon. Never fear, I will let you know how things go on; but, to tell you the truth, I don't look forward to presenting myself at headquarters."

The train which was to convey the first battalion of the Ploughshires to Secunderabad—or, at any rate, part of the way—now steamed up alongside the shed, and the men climbed into their compartments. Then they went away over the metals of the Great India Peninsular Railway, passed Sholapore, through the impressive Ghauts to a station, where they changed on to a narrow gauge of the Nizam's railway, and landed, after a journey of two days and a night, at Secunderabad, which is the British military cantonment of the Hyderabad State.

The chief of the Ploughshires had come to look kindly on Trooper Thomas Howard, of the 25th Hussars, during the voyage across the Indian Ocean, and, passing him on the platform when the men were detraining, he stopped.

"You will find your regiment in the cavalry lines," said the colonel. "You will, of course, report yourself at once to Colonel Greville, and I hope that you will get over your difficulty all right. If I can put in a word for you, you are at liberty to mention my name."

"Thank you, sir!" said Trooper Thomas Howard. And, saluting, he watched the red-coated battalion, among whom he had many friends, march off across the level plain, and then turned his own steps in the direction of the cavalry lines.

"Crumbs!" said Trooper William Sloggett, as the familiar figure came up to the verandah of the guard-house. "Hallo, Clavering there, turn out! Old Tom 'Oward's come back!"

Jim Clavering, immaculately dressed in the finest white Indian clothing, sprang out of a wicker chair and reached the verandah in two bounds. He saw before him a sun-bronzed individual in a strange costume, composed of red serge jumper, which the Ploughshires had found him, blue Hussar overalls, and a nondescript fatigue-cap; but there was no mistaking the bright smile and the strong hand that reached out and grasped Clavering's.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said the sergeant.

"And if everybody had their rights," said William Sloggett, under his breath, "someone else I knows of ought to be 'anged, too; but that ain't my business."

And as the wanderer disappeared into the guard-room, which was kept reasonably cool by a curious revolving arrangement of little water-buckets that drenched the tatta, Trooper Sloggett screwed his face into a peculiar and comical expression, and gazed away over the glaring dust-plain before him, across which a sowar of native cavalry was riding, flinging a shade in front of him half a mile long.

"You may come and see the old man at once," said Clavering, when Tom had explained just as much as he deemed necessary. "He passed by not five minutes ago, and we shall find him at the officer's mess."

The news spread with remarkable rapidity as Tom and Sergeant Clavering went across to the mess-bungalow. Men who had been asleep in their cots turned out, and something very like a cheer rolled along the lines. The colonel, whose horse was being led away by a groom, heard the murmur, and came out on to the verandah. He stared as he recognised his absent trooper, bit his grey moustache, and awaited developments.

(Another long instalment of this splendid story next week. Please order your copy of the "Magnet" Library in advance.)

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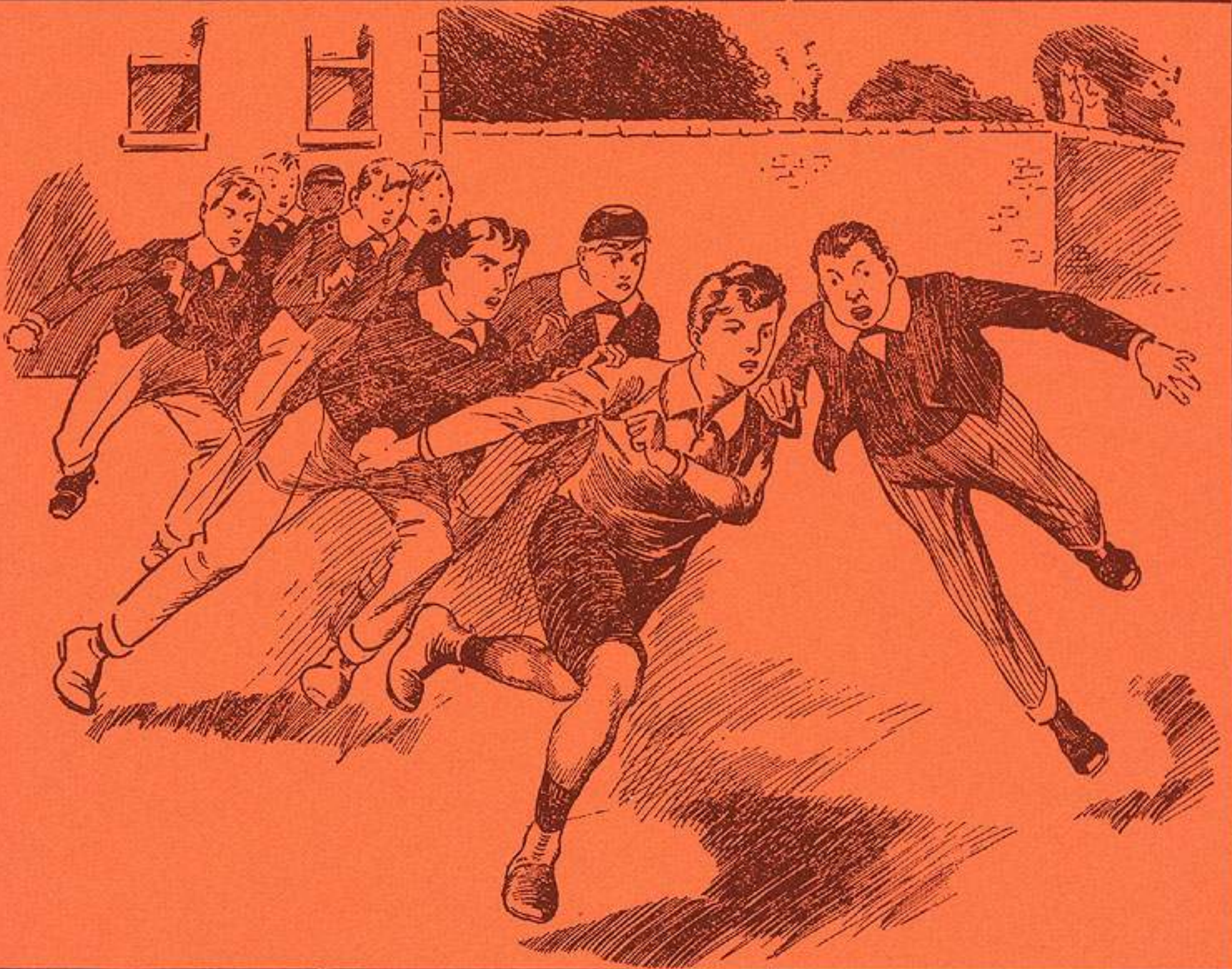
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