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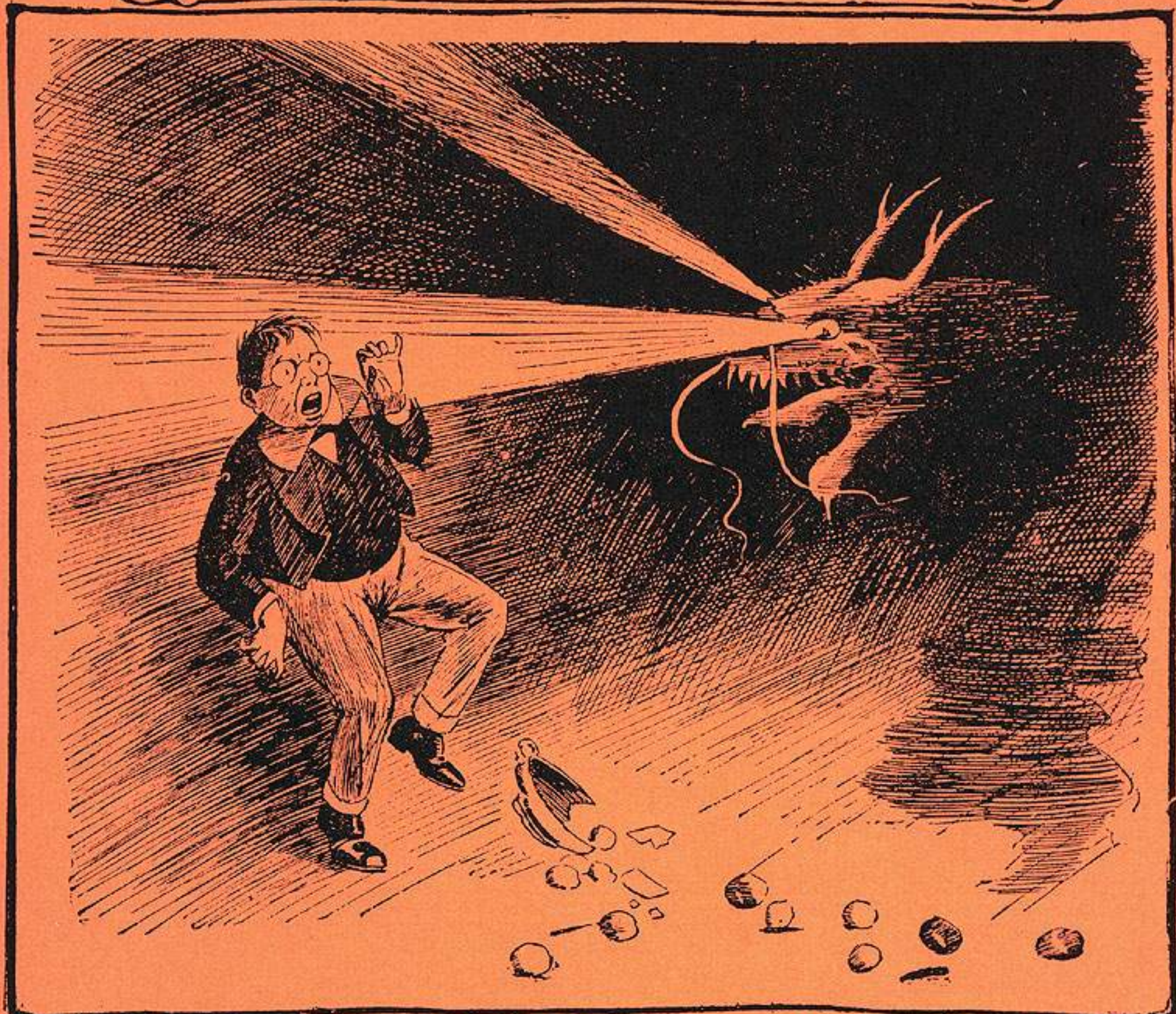
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Vol. 2.

COMPLETE
STORY
FOR ALL

GRAND SCHOOL TALE OF
HARRY WHARTON & CO.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



“HELP!” YELLED BILLY BUNTER, DROPPING THE DISH OF
COLD POTATOES HE WAS CARRYING, “OW, HELP!”



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By

FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Strange Alarm.

"Ow! Help!"
Crash!

It was Billy Bunter who uttered the sudden wild howl that rang through the Remove passage at Greyfriars. And as he did so, the dish full of cold potatoes he was carrying under his arm to No. 1 Study slipped to the floor, and smashed into a hundred pieces.

"Help! Ow! Help!"

It was a dark evening in late October. The Remove passage was not lighted, but Billy Bunter was coming along in the dusk without a thought of danger, when two bright green eyes suddenly glimmered out of the gloom, and behind them loomed faintly a fearsome shape. It was no wonder that Billy Bunter dropped the dish and yelled. The dish smashed, the potatoes rolled far and wide, and Bunter stood petrified for a moment, his knees knocking together, able to do nothing but yell. But the green eyes were advancing—and Billy Bunter turned and bolted.

He bolted along the passage, and skimmed down the stairs. With a white face, and wide staring eyes behind his spectacles, the Owl of the Remove bundled downstairs three at a time: lost his footing half-way down, and rolled to the bottom. He picked himself up on the mat and gasped, and jamming his spectacles on his nose, dashed off to the junior common-room.

He burst into that apartment like a thunderbolt.

"Help! help!"

Harry Wharton and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were playing chess near the door. Bunter rushed right in, collided with the table, and sent it flying. The pieces rolled in all directions, and Wharton sprang to his feet.

"You young ass!" he roared. "Why don't you look where you're going?"

"The assfulness of the young rotter is terrific," growled the Nabob of Bhanipur, who had been within three moves of mate after a trying struggle on the chessboard.

"Help! help!"

"What's the matter?—what——?"

"Ow! Help!"

Bunter staggered towards Wharton, and threw his arms round the neck of the captain of the Remove, and clung to him hysterically. Harry stared at him, and the other Removites gathered round and stared, too. Bunter was gasping with affright, and even the light and the crowd seemed hardly to reassure him. He clung to Harry Wharton as if afraid to let him go.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a playful dig in the ribs. "What's the trouble? Have you been ventriloquising again, and is somebody on your track with a cricket stump?"

"No. I—I——"

"Been raiding somebody's tommy?" asked Nugent.

"N—no. I—I was taking up a dish of potatoes to No. 1 to fry for tea—ow—ow——"

"What's the matter? Was the housekeeper after you with a rolling-pin?" asked Hazeldene.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, she wasn't. Vaseline," said Bunter, recovering himself a little. "She gave me the potatoes, and said I was to be careful with the dish. It's smashed to pieces now——"

"Is that what you call being careful with it?"

"How could I help it, when I was frightened out of my skin?" demanded the fat junior indignantly. "If you had seen a horrible dragon suddenly jumping on you from the darkness I expect you would have bolted, too."

"A what?" demanded a dozen voices at once.

"A fearful-looking animal, with bright-green eyes, gaping jaws, and awful long claws," said Bunter, drawing upon his imagination for details. "It was coming along the Remove passage at a fearful rate, growling like a tiger, and gnashing its teeth like—like anything. It nearly had me——"

"What nearly had you?"

"The wild beast."

"What wild beast?"

"I tell you there's a wild beast in the Remove passage," nearly shrieked Bunter. "Do you think I should drop a dish of potatoes for nothing?"

"Well, no, there must be something wrong when you get careless with grub," admitted Bob Cherry. "But the wild beast is a little too thick."

"It might be a tiger escaped from some menagerie," suggested Hazeldene, with a wink. "It may be coming in the door here at any moment."

Billy Bunter gasped, and squirmed round to get behind Wharton.

"Or it may stop to eat the potatoes," said Bob Cherry. "Are tigers fond of potatoes in your beautiful country, luky?"

The Nabob of Bhanipur shook his head. "They would ratherfully take the big bitfulness from the fatful carcass of the esteemed Bunter," he replied. "If it is a tiger, he is certain to come here and select the excellent Bunter for his honourable supper. Let us say the good-bye-fulness to our Bunterful chum in case——"

"Good," said Bob Cherry. "Get a little nearer to the door, Bunter, so that the tiger won't have to come in. This way——"

"Hold on," shrieked Bunter. "Stop! Beast! I won't go to the door! Ow! Help!"

Bob Cherry released him, giving him an indignant look.

"Do you mean to say that you would refuse to sacrifice yourself to save the rest of us, Bunter? I'm ashamed of you? Besides, there's the tiger to be considered. He's probably hungry, and he would like a fat oyster-like you for his supper. To deprive a hungry tiger of his supper comes under the head of cruelty to animals."

"It's all very well for you to rot, Cherry," said Bunter, "but there's a wild beast in the Remove passage. Very likely he has devoured Wun Lung, who was in No. 1 Study alone. I'm jolly well not going out again till he's captured."

"You'd better make up a party to capture him," said Levison, with a yawn. "Of all the howling idiots, Bunter takes the cake, I think."

"If you don't believe me, Levison——"

"Oh, of course we all believe you. It's so probable that a tiger would be roaming round the junior studies."

"I didn't say it was a tiger. It looked more like a dragon. It might have been a lion. It had green eyes and gnashing jaws. It nearly had me, when with wonderful presence of mind I brought the dish down upon its head, and bolted."

"You said just now you dropped the dish."

"The dish dropped after I had brought it down upon the wild beast's head with wonderful presence of mind. You should have heard it roar, that's all."

"We should have heard it roar, certainly, if it had roared," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "This room isn't so very far away from the Remove passage. If there were a wild beast roaring up there, I fancy all Greyfriars would hear it."

"Perhaps it was more like a growl than a roar. Yes, now I think of it, it was roaring in a suppressed tone. I have no doubt that the terrific blow I gave it partially stunned the creature. I say, you fellows, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to find the chessmen you've scattered," said Wharton, stooping down to look for the pieces on the floor. "I've a jolly good mind to give you a hiding, too."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Better go and collect up the potatoes," said Bob Cherry. "You can wash 'em, and fry 'em for tea, all the same."

Billy Bunter shuddered.

"I wouldn't go up the Remove passage again for a thousand pounds," he gasped. "I say, what are you going to do about it? Some of you ought to go and look for the wild beast, and——"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode. "Don't be a young ass. There isn't any wild beast."

"I tell you I saw it."

"Bosh!"

"I'm sincerely sorry that you should doubt my word, Bulstrode. I crashed the dish down on its head, with wonderful presence of mind, and——"

"Oh, go and eat coke——"

"Better go up to the study and get tea," suggested Nugent. "You can take a candle with you, and you won't see the wild beast in the light, you know. It was only a shadow."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Cut off, and don't be a young ass."

Bunter shook his head.

"I'm not going out into the passage again. If you fellows are afraid to go and see what it is——"

"You young duffer! There's nothing there."

"I tell you I smashed the dish on its head with wonder-ful——"

"Bosh! We may as well go and look along the passage," said Nugent. "This young ass is in a jelly with fright. Who's coming?"

"I will," said Bob Cherry.

Hazeldene, Levison, Desmond, and Russell also volunteered. The party left the common-room, and went upstairs. Bunter called after Nugent to take a light, but Nugent did not trouble to reply. The Removites were firmly convinced that the fat junior had been frightened by a shadow, and that there was nothing to be afraid of in the Remove passage. There should have been a gas-jet alight, but it was out now, and the passage was very dark. Nugent, Cherry, and the rest strode on boldly

towards No. 1 Study, and there was a sudden sound in the silent passage.

It resembled somewhat the trumpeting of an elephant, but it was not exactly like anything the juniors had heard before. The Removites stopped.

"What the dickens is that?" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Sounds like—like—my only summer hat—look there!"

From the end of the passage came a glimmer of green eyes, and the strange noise approached the juniors. Below the eyes could be dimly seen huge jaws, round the faint outlines of a huge misshapen head. For one moment the juniors gazed spell-bound. Then with one accord they turned tail and fled. Down the stairs they went helter-skelter, scudded along the lower passage, and burst into the common-room with pale faces and thumping hearts.

"What is it?" cried Harry Wharton.

Nugent gasped for breath.

"I—I don't know! But it's there!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Danger Ahead.

THERE was a buzz of excited voices in the junior room. Billy Bunter's story had been laughed at; but when Nugent declared that "it" was there, it was clear that there was cause for alarm. Nugent was not the fellow to be alarmed at a shadow, and besides, the other fellows with him were equally scared. Bulstrode went quickly to the door and closed it. If some wild beast were lurking in the upper corridor, he might take a fancy into his head to come downstairs.

The door re-opened the next moment, however, and Temple, Dabney and Co., of the Upper Fourth came in. They stared at the startled Removites.

"Hallo, what's the matter here?" exclaimed Temple.

"What the dickens did you slam the door in a chap's face for?"

"Looking for a thick ear apiece, perhaps," suggested Fry

"Mighty near getting it, anyway."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"There's something wrong upstairs," said Harry Wharton.

"The fellows think there's a wild beast or something in the Remove passage."

"Ha ha, ha!"

Temple and Co. laughed in chorus. The Remove glared at them.

"I say, you fellows, it's quite correct, you know. I found the wild beast there, and I smashed a dish over its head with wonderful presence of mind——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you think it's so funny," exclaimed Nugent, indignantly

"you'd better go up and see what it is."

"Not worth the trouble," said Temple airily. "Can't go about looking for the shadows that frighten you kids."

"Not much!" said Fry.

"Well, then, if you funk going up stop your silly cackling."

Temple turned red.

"Who funks going up, Frank Nugent?"

"You do!"

"If you want a licking——"

"Rats! If you don't funk it, go up and show that you don't, that's all."

"It's not worth——"

"Bosh!"

"No good going up for nothing——"

"Piffle!"

Temple made a stride towards the irreverent Nugent. Wharton pushed him back, and met calmly the glare of the captain of the Upper Fourth.

"Cheese it!" he said quietly. "If you are looking for something to do, go up and look in the Remove passage and see what has scared the chaps."

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"It's all rot!"
 "Oh, rather!"
 "Very well, if you don't like the job, I'll go," said Wharton.
 "Funk!" hooted a dozen voices. "Stop your cackling, Temple, if you funk it!"
 "You confounded young asses," growled Temple. "Of course I'll go, if you think I funk it. Come on, you chaps. Give me a candle."
 "I went up without a light," said Nugent.
 "Oh, very well. I'll go up without one, too—hang you! Come on."

Temple's companions hesitated for a moment. They knew that the Removites were not easily scared, and they felt that something might be wrong. But to funk it now was to expose themselves to endless ridicule. Temple led the way boldly enough, and Fry and Dabney and Scott followed.

The Removites watched them go, and stood round the doorway waiting for them to come back. Temple & Co. went along the passage and went boldly upstairs.

The Removites waited and listened anxiously. The silence was broken by a sudden yell in the distance, followed by a helter-skelter on the stairs.

Wild and hurried footsteps came crashing down the stairs, and the heroes of the Upper Fourth came back towards the common room, running as if they were on the cinder-path.

They burst into the room, knocking the waiting Removites right and left, and Fry slammed the door hard and locked it. Then they stood panting and palpitating.

"My only hat!" gasped Temple.
 Nugent looked at him sarcastically.
 "Only a shadow, wasn't it?" he asked.
 "My—my aunt!"

But it was no time for chipping. The explorers were too thoroughly scared for any fun on the subject. Harry Wharton's face was grave and anxious. He was thinking of the new boy alone in No. 1 Study. The juniors could not have been scared by a shadow. It was not impossible that some wild beast might have escaped from a travelling menagerie, and found its way into Greyfriars.

The captain of the Lower Fourth made a movement towards the door, and Nugent caught him by the arm.

"Where are you going, Harry?"
 "We must look into this."
 "But—"
 "Wun Lung is in No. 1 Study," said Harry quietly. "If there is any danger—"

Nugent turned pale.
 "I had forgotten that."
 Wun Lung, the Chinese boy, was new in the Remove. He did not belong to No. 1 Study, but he had a way of taking up his quarters there, and on this particular occasion he had settled himself down in the study to manufacture a Chinese kite. The chums had seen him there an hour before, surrounded by bamboo, canvas, paper and paint, and quite happy and busy. He was doubtless still there—and, if there was in truth some escaped wild beast in the passage, Wun Lung was in danger.

"But—but you can't go up," said Hazeldene. "Hang it, it might really be a tiger!"
 "It looked more like a lion," stammered Temple. "I caught two greenish eyes—"

"I say, you fellows, I told you so, you know."
 "The head was very large, and I think it had a mane," said Dabney. "It was more like a lion than a tiger."
 "I should have taken it for a dragon," said Fry, "only we know jolly well that there isn't such a thing as a dragon. It was an enormous beast, too—I couldn't see its body, but its head was on a level with ours."

"I don't understand it," said Wharton. "It might be some rotter playing a practical joke."

"Impossible!" said Billy Bunter. "The fearful blow I gave him would have killed him. You remember that I crashed the dish on his head with wonderful presence of—"

"Rats! I daresay you imagined all that," said Bob Cherry.
 "Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Anyway, we can't stay here all night," said Harry Wharton. "We've got to go up and see what's the matter. If there's really any danger, we must look after little Wun Lung. Get any weapons you can find, and come on. No good hanging about."

There was a bicycle lantern on the table, and Bob Cherry lighted it. Wharton took the poker from the grate, and Nugent and Hurreo Singh took the shovel and tongs. Several other fellows found cricket stumps or walking-canes, and some opened their pocket-knives. The wild beast in the Remove passage was likely to have a lively time if the varied weapons once got to work on him. Billy Bunter did not join the explorers, and most of the Form remained with him. If, by any possibility, an escaped tiger was in the upper corridor, discretion was certainly the better part of valour in their case.

Harry Wharton was quite alive to the possibility of real and terrible danger, but his face was calm, his nerves firm, as he ascended the stairs. He held the poker firmly in his hand, and Bob Cherry held the lantern above his shoulder, to throw a steady light in advance. After them came a dozen or fifteen

of the Remove and the Upper Fourth, variously armed, shaking with excitement, and ready to bolt at a moment's notice. They reached the head of the stairs, but nothing of a suspicious nature was seen. No. 1 Study was at the farther end of the passage, where another passage branched off towards the box-room stairs. Greyfriars was a very old building, rambling with passages connecting portions of the structure which had been put up at different times. The explorers advanced slowly but steadily along the passage, till a low, strange sound fell upon their ears.

"That's it!" muttered Bob Cherry.
 Wharton halted, the poker held ready for use, his eyes searching into the gloom ahead.

The noise was a strange one, and seemed to be made by some animal, but what the animal was the junior had not the faintest idea. But it was certain that it was not the growl of a lion or a tiger. It was only for a moment that Wharton stopped. Then he advanced again grimly, and the others, with beating hearts, followed. There was a sudden gasp from Nugent.

"Look!"
 Two greenish eyes glimmered from the darkness. Harry stopped, his heart beating hard. The light of the lantern fell upon the green eyes, and upon a fearful head, upon red jaws and glistening teeth.

A single movement of alarm from Wharton was all that was required to send his followers flying helter-skelter. But in that trying moment the young captain of the Remove showed that he was worthy to lead. For a moment, indeed, his heart beat hard, thumping against his ribs, and his breath came thick and fast. Then, setting his teeth, he rushed forward.

"Harry!" shouted Bob Cherry.
 Harry Wharton did not heed. He dashed forward, the poker in the air. Another moment, and the weapon would have crashed down upon the formidable head. But in that moment came a sudden glare, and with the blaze in his eyes Harry stopped short, blindly. The next instant it was pitchy dark again, and his dazzled eyes saw nothing. Bob Cherry ran forward, lantern in hand. Nothing was to be seen in the corridor. A faint sound was heard from the direction of No. 1 Study. Then dead silence!

Harry rubbed his eyes. The juniors looked up and down the passage. Nothing was in sight—nothing was to be seen save their own scared faces. All had seen the terrible vision—what had become of it? Harry Wharton pointed towards the study door.

"It is in No. 1," he said in a low voice.
 There could be no doubt upon the point. The wild beast, or spectre, or whatever it was, had escaped into No. 1 Study, and was there now, behind the closed door. The Removites pressed on, and halted outside the study door; but, for the moment, even Harry Wharton hesitated to open it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Wun Lung's Little Joke.

HARRY WHARTON did not hesitate more than a moment. Within the study was Wun Lung, the Chinese boy, and if the strange beast was there too, Wun Lung was in terrible danger. In spite of what he had seen with his own eyes, Harry had a lurking feeling that there was some deception about the matter—that it would turn out to be some "jape," due to some practical joker of an original turn of mind—how, he did not know. But he felt his heart beat as he grasped the handle of the door and turned it.

He threw the door open, and then stepped back for a moment. The interior of the study was dark; the gas had been turned down to a mere pin-point. From the blackness came the green glimmer of the eyes. Bob Cherry brought the lantern to bear, and the terrible head came into view again, but only for a second. Something whizzed in the air and struck the lantern from Cherry's hand, and it crashed on the floor and the light went out. There was a stampede of the Removites. The crash was enough to make them imagine that the strange beast was springing upon them.

"Run for it!" gasped Hazeldene.
 Harry Wharton did not move. He stood, with beating heart, watching the green, glimmering eyes. Bob Cherry put a hand on his shoulder.

"Harry—cut!"
 "Nonsense! It's some trick, Bob."
 "But—"
 "I'll give him one with the poker, and—"
 A quick, sharp voice came from the blackness.
 "No hittee!"

Bob Cherry burst into a roar.
 "It's Wun Lung!"
 Harry Wharton laughed, and stepped into the study, and in a moment turned the gas on full. In the flood of light the terrible beast was fully exposed.

A huge dragon's head had been artistically made of bamboo, cardboard, and paper, and painted with great skill. The eyes were formed of green glass, and behind each was fastened a tiny electric glow. The effect in the dark was startling enough, but in the light it was comic. The huge jaws of the dragon, painted red, and the cardboard teeth, were very realistic in the dusk.

The dragon's head was mounted upon the shoulders of a diminutive Chinese boy.

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh as the flood of gaslight showed him the cardboard terror, and the yellow face of Wun Lung grinning through the open jaws.

"You young rascal!"

The Removites came crowding back round the doorway. Wun Lung stepped from under the dragon's head and laid it on the table. The whole secret was laid bare now, and the juniors knew that they had been the victims of something rather new in "japes," and the startling flash in the passage, which some of them had taken for the dragon breathing fire, had, of course, been produced by magnesium powder.

The Chinese junior faced the Removites with a bland and deprecating smile.

"Wun Lung solly!"

"I think we'd better make you sorrier," grunted Bob Cherry, taking the Celestial by the ear. "What do you mean by right-startling us like that?"

"Me tly kitee."

"Kite! What kite?"

Wun Lung indicated the dragon's head.

"Chinee kitee," he explained. "Me tinkee tly it—frighten Bunter for jokee!"

"Well, it's all very well to frighten Bunter," said Nugent severely. "But you've—startled us too, and that's a serious business. Don't you know better than to startle grave and reverend seigneurs, the heads of the Remove?"

"Wun Lung solly."

"That's all very well, but I think you had better have a hiding."

"No savvy."

"Better smash up the dragon," said Hazeldene. "He deserves it for his check. Of course, I knew it was a little game, all along."

"Yes, you looked as if you did," said Bob Cherry. "But it's a good idea to jump on this horrible-looking thing."

"No jumpee—no jumpee."

"Rats! The sooner it's busted the better—"

"No bustee. Me makee kitee."

"Well, this horrid object isn't a kite."

"Yes, kitee—Chinese kitee."

"You can't fly a kite that shape."

"Me flyee to-morrow," said Wun Lung. "Me show. Lookee! Wind blowee through holee, and makee noise—so."

The Chinee blew into an orifice in the dragon's head, and produced the sound which had so alarmed the Removites. The juniors were laughing now. The bold explorers returned to the common room to report their success, only the chums of No. 1 remaining in the study. Billy Bunter came upstairs with a very doubtful expression upon his face. But his last fears were relieved as he saw the cardboard dragon's head on the table.

"It was only a joke, you young ass!" said Nugent.

"Well, you were more scared than I was," said Bunter. "I brought the dish down on the dragon's head with wonderful presence of—"

"Ha, ha, ha! The cardboard must be jolly strong to have stood it, and it doesn't show a sign of the whack," grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter looked a little confused. He never told deliberate untruths, but he never stopped to think whether what he was going to say was true or not. And after he had once uttered an exaggeration, however wild, he firmly believed that it was true, and would repeat it with every confidence.

"It's no good arguing with a chap like you, Cherry," he said. "If you doubt my word, this discussion had better cease. Sling that Chinese imp out of the room."

"No slingee. Me stayee."

"Look here, you yellow gnome, this isn't your study!" exclaimed Bunter. "You dig down the passage with Russell. Travel along."

"No savvy."

"Get outside."

"No savvy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You can't possibly make him understand plain English when he doesn't want to, Billy. You'll have to tell him in Chinese."

"I can't speak his disgusting language."

"Then Inky had better tell him in Hindustanee."

The nabob grinned, and tapped Wun Lung on the shoulder.

"Ghar se niklo," he said.

"No savvy."

"It's no good," said Wharton, laughing. "He doesn't mean to savvy. I say, Wun Lung, will you stop to tea?"

Wun Lung's eyes glistened.

"Me savvy. Me velly pleasee stoppee."

"You see, he can savvy some things."

"That's all very well," growled Bunter. "But what about the potatoes? I was going to fry them for tea, and now they've been trampled on by nearly every hoof in the Remove. The maid will make a row to-morrow about cleaning up that linoleum, too."

"Well, we can't have them for tea if they've been trampled on," said Bob Cherry. "Think you could get a fresh lot from the housekeeper?"

"If I go back to the housekeeper she will ask me for the dish."

"We shall have to get her a new one. Meanwhile, what are we to have for tea? Anybody got any tin? I don't mind doing some shopping."

"I say, you fellows, I think it's about time that Chinee stood a feed—"

"Shut up, Billy!"

"I'm not going to shut up. I say it's time Wun Lung stood a feed. He's been here more than a week, and I really consider—"

"Me tinkee samee."

"Oh, you think the same, do you?" blinked Billy Bunter. "Then the sooner the feed comes along, Mister Wun Lung, the better I shall like it."

"Me standee feed to-morrow—me cookee nicee dishee. Suppose you lettee me cookee in this loomee, me cookee good feedee."

"You can cook in this room if you like, if you're going to stand us a feed. But I think you'd better leave the cooking to me. I'm an old hand."

"Chinee cookee nicee-nicee feed."

"H'm! Well, it's a bargain. Mind, to-morrow's the feed, I shall remind you. Speaking of feeds, I was going to stand one myself, but I've had a disappointment about a postal order. If you fellows like to stand the tin, I'll go and do some shopping for you."

"That's what I call kind, Buntie."

"I mean to be kind, Nugent. You fellows have stood me a lot of things, and I like to return obligations. As a matter of fact, I am planning a series of extensive feeds ready for when I am in funds."

"When?" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, it won't be for some little time but it's a dead cert. You see, I am going to win a pound a week for thirteen weeks in the 'Gem' Football Competition. There isn't the slightest chance of my not getting the prize you see, because my answers to the puzzle pictures are absolutely correct, and are certain to be better than any others sent in. When I get that pound a week—"

"When you do, Buntie, you can tell us about it. But do give us a rest now."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Cut down to the tuck-shop and get some grub for tea" said Harry laying a half-crown on the table, "and buck up. Something cold—I'm hungry."

"Certainly. If you like to wait half an hour, though, I could cook up a ripping spread. I could have a snack myself to keep up my strength till—"

"Bosh! Cut along."

And the fat junior cut along; and Wun Lung, with a beaming and innocent smile upon his face, sat down to resume his work upon the Chinese kite.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Jabberwock.

WUN LUNG had tea with the chums of the Remove; a habit he was falling into. Since Harry Wharton had protected him from a Remove ragging, the little Chinee had been very much attached to the captain of the Lower Fourth, and he showed it by spending most of his spare time in No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter regarded the invasion with a somewhat unfriendly eye; but the Famous Four looked upon Wun Lung with good-humoured toleration. He was such a smiling, good-tempered, amiable fellow that one could not dislike him. He had such an engaging simplicity that few suspected him of being "deep"; but it was already borne in upon the mind of Harry Wharton that there was more in the Chinese chum than met the eye. He had a curious turn of humour, and only Harry was safe from his practical jokes. His "japes" were so carefully planned that they were seldom traced to their source; and when he was discovered as he sometimes was, his disarming smile generally saved him from punishment.

After tea, the Removites settled down to their preparation, but Wun Lung appeared to have no work to do. He was remarkably quick with his lessons, but he neglected prep. in a way that had already brought down upon him the wrath of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. But the Form Master hesitated to cane the little Celestial, and Wun Lung looked so contrite when called to account that so far he had

escaped with lectures, which had about as much effect upon him as water on a duck's back.

The chums looked at the Chinese several times while he was at work on the kite. It was a kite of a kind common enough in China, but unknown to the chums of the Greyfriars' Remove. With considerable artistic skill, Wun Lung was shaping the form of a dragon, to which he affixed the head which had so scared Billy Bunter, and the result was a really fearsome-looking beast.

"You won't be able to get that in the air," Bob Cherry remarked as he finished his prep., and signalled that fact by hurling his books right and left.

"Me tinkee so," said the Celestial mildly.

"What sort of a tail are you going to give it?"

"No tailee."

"A kite without a tail!"

"Chinee kitee no tailee."

"And you can make the thing keep up in the air?" asked Bob incredulously.

"Me tinkee so."

"Well, I'd like to see you do it, that's all," said Bob Cherry, "I'm thinking of making a kite myself, and I'll sail it against that funny jabberwock any day."

"Nottee jabberwock—dtagon."

"Looks to me like a jabberwock," said Bob obstinately. "I prefer the other kind, and we'll have a kiting competition in the Close to-morrow."

"Me savvy."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Why not sail it to-night?" said Nugent with a grin. "That object would look ripping in the dark, you know, sailing round the Close with its eyes lighted up and that buzzing noise coming out of it. We might scare the Fifth and Sixth, too, with the jabberwock."

"Ha, ha, ha! And the masters too."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Me savvy," grinned the Celestial. "Good windee—kitee fly."

"Is it finished?"

"Allee cept little paintee."

"I say, you fellows, listen to me a minute. I've been thinking that I shall take up aerostatics, and give ventriloquism a rest for a little while. It has occurred to me that an aeroplane—"

"A what?"

"An aeroplane—a big kite, you know, for raising things. It has occurred to me that an aeroplane might be constructed, with a hanging seat upon which a fellow could take up his stand—"

"What's the good of standing on a seat?"

"I was speaking figuratively. Upon which a fellow could sit, and take a voyage round the Close, and perhaps over the roofs of Greyfriars."

"Good wheeze! I'd like to see you taking the flight."

"You shall, Cherry, if I succeed in constructing the aeroplane. I shall want some cash, and unfortunately I am rather short at present. I expected a postal order this morning, but there has been a delay in the post. However, I shall be making a great deal of money shortly out of the 'Gem' Football Competition, and I suppose some of you fellows will be willing to lend me a little on the strength of that pound a week for thirteen weeks. The competition is absolutely genuine, so your money will be as safe as if it were in the Bank of England."

"I've no doubts about the genuineness of the competition, Billy" grinned Bob Cherry; "but I've got some big doubts about a silly chump like you pulling off the prize."

"Oh, really Cherry—"

"Still, if you're raising funds on your expectations, you can put me down for a lucky halfpenny."

"Oh, really—"

"But that's the limit, mind. I want to be generous, but not extravagant."

"Look here, Cherry, I am speaking seriously. I could construct an aeroplane—"

"The kite is leady," said Wun Lung.

"Don't interrupt me, you Chinese. I was saying—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Nugent. "If the kite's ready, we're ready, too, so come along, young Cheerful."

Wun Lung grinned anticipatively. He picked up the curious-looking kite—very curious-looking to English eyes—and bore it out of the study. The chums of the Remove followed him. Billy Bunter glanced after them, and then glanced at the bright fire—and sat down in the armchair. The cosy study was preferable to the dark and windy Close in the opinion of the Owl of the Remove.

Several Removites met the juniors in the passage, and gazed in astonishment at the fearful and wonderful kite, which Bob Cherry had christened the "Jabberwock."

"What on earth are you going to do?" asked Levison.

"Going to fly the kite."

"Ha, ha! I'll come."

And several other fellows came too. The party left the house without being observed, and found themselves in the Close—wide, and dark, and alive with fluttering leaves, rustling down in

the wind from the old trees. The moon was peeping over the clock tower, but the light was not yet strong.

Wun Lung unwound the cord from his arm. Contrary to the expectations of the Removites, it proved a simple matter to get the dragon kite afloat.

In a few minutes it was sailing on the wind, Wun Lung with the taut cord in his hand governing its movements. It was a curious-looking object in the air. The green glass eyes were brilliantly lighted by the electric glow in the dragon's head, and the wind made a curious humming and buzzing noise in the hollows of the body. Had not the juniors seen it at close quarters, the sight of it in the air would have sent them helter-skelter into the house.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "It's ripping! I never believed it would fly."

"Cave!" muttered Wharton. "Here comes Capper!"

Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth, was coming from the direction of the gates. He had his hands behind him, and was walking along with an expression of deep thought. A peculiar humming noise in the air caught his attention, and he glanced up, rather startled. The next moment he stood petrified at the sight of the dim and horrible form in the air, with its two gloaming, green eyes.

For one moment the Form master gazed at the dragon in open-mouthed horror. Then he bolted!

The juniors, who had crouched back into the shadows out of sight, broke into a chuckle as Mr. Capper rushed past, his gown fluttering in the wind.

The Form master's figure disappeared in a moment in at the great door of Greyfriars.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only panama hat!" muttered Nugent. "I never saw Cappy in such a funk before! I wonder what he thinks of it. Where is that young imp going now?"

Harry Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"Wun Lung! Stop! He's taking it past the Head's window."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Chinese did not stop. He was guiding the kite with a skilful hand, and there was no limit to his nerve. The juniors hurried after him. Meanwhile, Mr. Capper had burst into the house with fluttering gown, and minus his cap. The Remove master met him in the hall with a blank stare of amazement.

"What is the matter?" Mr. Quelch asked quickly.

"I—I hardly know!" gasped the Upper Fourth master. "It—it cannot have been a—a vision."

"A—a what?"

"I do not know what it is. A fearful-looking object was floating in the air!"

"In the air!" said Mr. Quelch dubiously.

"Yes! Some huge bird, with bright eyes of a greenish colour. It made a peculiar noise, which first drew my attention to it. It is not the shape of any bird with which I am acquainted—in fact, if I were credulous, I should imagine it to be some survivor of the pterodactyls of prehistoric times."

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"You—er—amaze me, Mr. Capper."

"I am amazed myself. It is absolutely amazing. I had better acquaint the doctor with the matter. I do not know what to make of it. I confess I ran for my life."

"Excuse me, Mr. Capper; but to toll the Head so strange a tale—" Mr. Quelch hesitated.

Mr. Capper turned red.

"I see what you think," he said acidly. "But I have not been drinking."

"Oh, no—er—but—"

"I shall immediately acquaint the Head with what I have seen," said Mr. Capper. "It may be a matter of the first importance in natural history. It was undoubtedly a bird, but it was certainly not a bird of British origin."

And he hurried away to the Head's study, leaving Mr. Quelch firmly convinced that he had been indulging "not wisely, but too well" in something stronger than water. Mr. Capper knocked at the Head's door, and entered so hurriedly that Dr. Locke started and dropped a blot upon the page he was writing.

"Really, Mr. Capper—" said the Head, in a tone of vexation.

"Pray excuse me, sir; but a remarkable happening—a most alarming occurrence—"

The Head laid down his pen.

"What is the matter, Mr. Capper?"

"I have seen a strange thing in the Close—a huge bird, sir, of a shape unknown to British ornithology!" exclaimed the Upper Fourth master, in an agitated tone. "It was swooping down upon me with extended talons when I darted into the house and narrowly escaped its attack."

The Head looked at the Form master, the same suspicion arising in his mind that had arisen in the Remove master's.

"Mr. Capper! I—I really—"

"You shall see for yourself, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Capper

excitedly. "The moon is rising, and you will undoubtedly be able to see the fearful thing from your window."

"Really—er—really—"

But Mr. Capper was not listening. He rushed to the window, and let the spring blind fly up, with a crack like a pistol-shot. The window was bare, and the glimmer of faint moonlight from the Close was visible to the two masters in the study. Mr. Capper gazed out of the window, and uttered a loud cry.

"Look, sir!—look!"

The Head advanced to the window—and then staggered back, his face as white and startled as Mr. Capper's own!

For there, close to the window, apparently staring in upon them with its green, gleaming eyes, was the terrible creature Mr. Capper had so narrowly escaped in the Close!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Slaying of the Jabberwock.

IT was only for a few moments that the terrible vision was seen at the window. Then it passed on, and the peculiar humming noise it made was quite audible in the study. The Head gazed at Mr. Capper, and Mr. Capper gazed at the Head, in dead silence, in horror and amazement.

The strange noise died away into the night. The thing was gone. Dr. Locke moved slowly to the window and placed his hand upon the sash.

"Pray be prudent, sir!" cried Mr. Capper. "Remember, the creature may be ferocious! Pray, sir, be prudent!"

Dr. Locke nodded, and threw open the window. He put out his head and looked into the Close. The moon was higher over the tower now, but the light was very dim. He caught a glimpse of a dark object afloat, sometimes high, and sometimes low. Had it been a kite, he would have guessed that it was alternately obeying the wind and the cord in the hand of the kites. But there was no resemblance between the strange object and anything the Head had ever seen in the shape of a kite.

"Amazing!" murmured the Head—"amazing!"

"One of the strangest facts in natural history ever recorded," said Mr. Capper. "There is not the slightest doubt as to the existence of this creature, since we have both seen it at close quarters. You will add your testimony, will you not, sir, to a paper I shall draw up to read before the Royal Society? This discovery will burst like a thunderclap upon the scientific world."

"Dear me—dear me!"

Mr. Capper was exultant now. He was a gentleman of a scientific turn of mind, and the greatest "bug-hunter" at Greyfriars. But what butterfly or moth, beetle or caterpillar, could compare in importance with this amazing creature—this fabulous monster, who was evidently a hitherto unknown survival of a prehistoric species?

"Dear me!" murmured the Head, again.

Mr. Capper took a pocket-book out of his pocket. He wetted the end of his pencil and jotted down details.

"Dimensions of the hitherto unknown creature first seen by Soptimus Capper, M.A., at Greyfriars College, on October 29th, 1908. Length—H'm! what would you take the length of the creature to be, sir?"

"I really did not observe."

"Unfortunately, I did not observe, either. Width—"

"Dear me!"

"I think I had better go out into the Close and observe the bird at closer quarters," said Mr. Capper, shutting up his pocket-book. "I must have the particulars for my paper for the Royal Society."

"There may be danger—"

"H'm! I shall be ready to fly if it should attack me; or, better still, I will take a gun. It would be splendid to shoot the creature and be able to present it to the British Museum."

The Head was looking utterly perplexed. He was not so enthusiastic a naturalist as Mr. Capper, and he did not know what to think. He could not disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes, and he was blankly amazed. Mr. Capper hurried from the study in search of a firearm. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth was something of a sportsman, and he had a couple of guns in his study. He was supposed to be a good shot, and Mr. Capper immediately thought of Mr. Prout and his guns. He hurried into the Fifth Form master's study, and found him cleaning a rook rifle. Mr. Prout looked up in amazement as his excited colleague burst in upon him.

"Good gracious! What's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Will you lend me a gun? Quick—quick!"

"A—gun!"

"Yes. You might load it for me, as I am not used to firearms, and I doubt if I could load it successfully."

The Fifth Form master grinned.

"If you are not accustomed to firearms, the less you have to do with a loaded gun the better," he said. "What on earth is the matter?"

"There is a strange creature in the Close," panted Mr. Capper. "A monstrous bird, with green eyes and a curiously shaped body—a remarkable creature, unknown to the natural history

of any European country. The Head has seen it as well as I. I want to shoot it to present to the British Museum."

Mr. Prout jumped up and took down a gun from the wall, and rapidly loaded it. All his sporting instincts were aroused, and though he was a little incredulous as to the description Mr. Capper had given, he had no doubt that there was something or other to be killed, and, like a true sportsman, he was always ready to kill.

"Right!" he exclaimed. "Lead the way."

"Will you come with me? Good! You will no doubt aim better than I should, as I have never handled a firearm in my life."

"I think it quite possible," assented Mr. Prout drily. "I have loaded both barrels. Lead the way. Whatever it is I'll soon bring it down; I promise you that."

Mr. Capper led the way from the study. They went quickly to the door, and two or three fellows in the hall looked at them in amazement, astounded by the excited face of Mr. Capper, and the gun in the hands of his colleague.

"Anything the matter, sir?" called out Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars.

But Mr. Capper was too excited to reply. He rushed into the Close, followed by Mr. Prout. Wingate and several other seniors followed to see what the matter was, and a considerable number of juniors followed their example.

"There it is!" cried Mr. Capper.

A gleam came from a distant corner of the Close, and he knew it was the green eye of the monster. The two masters rushed in pursuit. Half a dozen Removites had scattered into the shadows to avoid them, and they gazed after the excited gentlemen in amazement.

"My only hat!" gasped Levison. "They're going to shoot it!"

"Shoot it! By Jove, so they are!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I hope they won't shoot Wun Lung by mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The funniness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was useless for the juniors to interfere—or, rather, impossible, as the two eager hunters were already far away in the dim Close. They were rushing in eager pursuit of the fabulous monster, which rose and sank in the air in a curious way, and still emitted that curious humming noise.

"There he is! Can you get a good aim now?"

"Just a moment!" said Mr. Prout. "I have no more ammunition with me, so I must be careful. I will get a sure aim."

The moon was higher now, and the light growing stronger Mr. Prout stalked the floating monster till he obtained an excellent sight of it in the moonlight. Then he knelt and took a deadly aim.

Bang!

The report of the gun echoed through Greyfriars, and startled everybody in the school. Mr. Capper watched the creature with wild anxiety. He was equally afraid that it would fly over the walls of Greyfriars and disappear, and that it would rush at him to vent its dying fury upon the hunters. It did neither; it gave a slight flutter, and then floated on tranquilly as before. But Mr. Prout was taking aim again.

Bang!

The second shot did it!

The object was seen to start convulsively, and then to sink slowly, as if reluctantly, to the ground. It sank down to the earth in a flower-bed—but flower-beds were nothing to the enthusiastic hunters at that moment. Mr. Prout, overjoyed at his success, clubbed his gun and rushed forward to deal the finishing blow.

There was a cry from the distance—a cry from Wun Lung, which passed unheeded. Mr. Capper caught his foot in a cord and went headlong to the ground. But Mr. Prout rushed on with clubbed gun; and there was a dismal crunch as the jabberwock crumpled under the descending butt. Mr. Prout, like the hero of the terrible combat related by Lewis Carroll, had "slain the Jabberwock."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Does Not Savy.

THERE was a wail of anguish from Wun Lung.

"My kitee! My kitee!"

The Chinese junior ran up in dismay. But Mr. Prout did not hear or heed. The butt of his gun had crashed through the bamboo and cardboard of the dragon, and now it crashed through again. Mr. Prout meant to finish the jabberwock while he was about it. The electric glow-lamp in the hollow head was extinguished, and so the creature's eyes were dark now. The humming noise, of course, had ceased. The Fifth Form master had slain the jabberwock!

Mr. Capper disentangled himself from the cord and staggered to his feet.

"Have you shot it?"

"Yes—yes, and finished it with the butt of my gun."

"Good! Don't damage it more than you can help. I want to have it stuffed for the British Museum."

"My kitee! My kitee!"

The fellows were crowding up. Some of them were striking matches. Half Greyfriars had been brought out into the Close by the reports of Mr. Prout's gun.

"Bring a light!" shouted Mr. Capper

A lantern was quickly on the scene. It glimmered on the slain jabberwock, and there was a ripple of laughter among the Removites.

Bob Cherry seized Nugent and hugged him ecstatically.

"And hast thou slain the jabberwock?" he sobbed. "Come to my arms, my beamish boy! Oh, frabjous day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My kitee! My kitee!"

"What on earth is it?" said Wingate, bending over the crumpled object and showing the light of the lantern upon it.

"A strange bird," said Mr. Capper—"a bird of a species utterly unknown to British ornithology."

Wingate chuckled.

"Or to the ornithology of any other country, I think, sir," he said.

"What do you mean, Wingate?"

"It is made of cardboard, sir."

"What!" roared Mr. Capper.

"It is cardboard, and bamboo, and paper. It's a kind of kite."

"A-a-a—kind of—k-k-kite!"

"Yes, sir. Look for yourself."

"My kitee! My kitee!"

Mr. Capper looked at the wrecked dragon in the light of the lantern, with feelings too deep for words. Mr. Prout, who had been leaning upon the barrel of his gun with the air of a great sportsman who knew that he deserved admiration, quietly slipped away, and put his gun out of sight as quickly as possible. Both his shots had gone through the strange creature, and if it had been alive would certainly have killed it. But it was rather a come-down for the great sportsman to find that he had slain nothing but a curiously-shaped kite.

Mr. Capper looked at the dragon kite; and the boys looked at Mr. Capper. The Upper Fourth master's face was a study. A ripple of laughter ran through the crowd, and the Form master started and turned crimson.

"It is a—a kite," he murmured. "I have never seen a kite like that before, but it is undoubtedly a kite."

"It's a Chinese kite, sir, I think," said Wingate.

"Ah! To whom does this kite belong?"

"My kitee! My kitee!"

"Wun Lung, is this kite your property?" demanded Mr. Capper, fixing his eyes, with a portentous frown, upon the celestial.

"My kitee!"

"You have been flying it in the Close?"

"Me fly kitee."

"How dare you fly a kite in the Close after dark," exclaimed Mr. Capper—"especially one of such a—a strange form? You led me to suppose—" The Form master checked himself. His absurd mistake made him colour deeply as he thought of it. "You—you might have done damage with this absurd thing."

"My kitee—bloken!"

"Yes, it is broken; and it is just as well, as I should certainly have ordered you to destroy it," said Mr. Capper. "You have been guilty of a most reprehensible act, Wun Lung."

"No savvy."

"You ought not to have flown this kite in the Close after dark. I firmly believe that you did it with the deliberate intention of fri—of startling people."

"No savvy."

"Answer me, Wun Lung! Were you not perfectly well aware that you were being guilty of an infraction of the rules of the college?"

"No savvy."

The Form master was baffled. He believed that the Chinese junior "savvied" well enough, but Wun Lung's face was perfectly innocent and bland.

"You must not use that ridiculous expression Wun Lung," he said angrily. "If you do not understand, say that you do not understand."

"No savvy."

Mr. Capper gave it up. He walked away with a heightened colour; and then the merriment of the boys could be no longer restrained. They burst into a roar, which Mr. Capper had the pleasure of hearing as he entered the house.

"My word!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Did you ever strike against anything quite so funny as this, people?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Never!"

"My kitee bloken!" said Wun Lung, bending over his precious dragon. "But it all lightee. Me pullee leggee of Mistel Cappel—ow!"

A finger and thumb closed on the ear of the Chinese chum. He squirmed round and looked up into Wingate's grim face.

"So you were pulling your master's leg, were you?" said the captain of Greyfriars grimly.

"No savvy."

"You were working off a little jape at Mr. Capper's expense?"

"No savvy."

Wingate could not help laughing. He released Wun Lung's ear and walked away. The youthful celestial gathered up his broken kite, and carried it off towards the house.

Bob Cherry gave him a thump on the back.

"You'll do, you young rascal!" he said. "It was worth busting a kite to see those two naturalists bagging such an unique specimen. This bird, gentlemen, belongs to a species utterly unknown to British ornithologists."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is probably a survival of prehistoric times," went on Bob Cherry, as they entered the house. "Examine it closely, and you will detect a resemblance to the pterodactyls of ante-diluvian days—to the strange birds that lived along with the mastodon, the ichthyosaurus, the plesiosaurus, and the other cheerful inhabitants of the earth in its sprightly infancy, the chief differences being that the pterodactyl was not made of cardboard—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nor were its eyes manufactured of green glass. In other respects the resemblance is remarkable; and when the stuffed jabberwock is presented to the British Museum—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Extremely comic," said a dry voice. And Bob swung round in dismay, to see Mr. Quelch standing at his study door. "You have a wonderful gift of humour, Cherry, have you not?"

"I—I—" stammered Bob Cherry, in confusion.

"Unfortunately," proceeded Mr. Quelch, "it is combined with an equally wonderful gift of impertinence, and so it will be necessary, Cherry, for you to keep your wonderful gift of humour within bounds. To assist you to do so, I will give you an exercise which will impress the lesson on your mind. You will write out a hundred times 'Impertinence leads to punishment.' I shall want to see the lines before bed-time."

And Mr. Quelch turned into his study. Bob Cherry made a grimace; but he made no more jokes just then.

The wrecked dragon was carried up to No. 1 study, where the Chinese chum proceeded to patch it up. It had suffered severely from Mr. Prout's doughty blows, but it was not past repair. Meanwhile, Mr. Capper had reluctantly reported the facts of the matter to the anxious Head. Dr. Locke looked at him anxiously as he re-entered the study.

"Has the creature been shot, Mr. Capper?" he asked quickly.

"Ye-es," said Mr. Capper, blushing. "But—it—er—turns out to be a—a species of kite—"

"Indeed! There is no species of kite in England, or the known world, of such a size!" the doctor exclaimed eagerly. "This must be a unique specimen. The length of the object I saw certainly was considerably over the length of the largest kite known—more than treble the length, in fact."

"I—I do not mean the kite of ornithology," stammered Mr. Capper. "In point of fact, it—it was not a bird at all."

The Head stared.

"Not a bird—but you said it was a species of kite?"

"Yes. But—but I meant a schoolboy's kite."

"Oh!"

"It—it was a kite made by the Chinese boy in the Remove, in the shape of a dragon," said Mr. Capper. "He was flying it after dark, and I—I made a mistake. Of course, I could not—could not know—"

"Of course not," assented the Head, taking pity upon the Form master's confusion. "The thing startled me as much as it did you. Really, the boy should be punished for causing so much trouble; but he is such an innocent little fellow that I am sure he was unconscious of doing harm. Perhaps it would be better to pass the matter over."

And passed over it was.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Lends a Hand.

THE slaying of the Jabberwock furnished the Remove with an inexhaustible topic for fun and laughter for some time to come. Wun Lung suddenly found himself quite a famous personage in the Lower Fourth. A fellow who could succeed so completely in pulling the leg of a Form master, and escape scot free, was a fellow to be respected. The Celestial, somewhat to his surprise, was the hero of the hour.

The jabberwock, as all the juniors called the dragon-kite, was patched and repaired, and, after morning lessons the next day, Wun Lung flew it in the Close. It was curious, but not in the least terrifying, in the daylight. Several more of the Remove, following Wun Lung's example, were manufacturing kites, though they did not attempt to give them the artistic form of the jabberwock.

Billy Bunter was as busy as anybody. The fat junior, who was perfectly convinced that he was an inventive genius, was busy upon his aeroplane. He was hampered, as usual, by want of cash, and he made efforts in all directions to obtain

capital. But lenders were scarce. It was in vain that Bunter explained that with a pound a week for thirteen weeks he would be able to discharge all debts. The juniors declined to believe that he would ever possess that valuable prize.

"The thing's a dead cert.," Bunter explained, almost with tears in his eyes. "Blessed if I know how to convince you obstinate duffers. Don't you see that the best answers sent in are bound to get the prize?"

"The boundfulness is great," agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur, "but the bestfulness of the honourable Bunter's answers is terrifically problematic."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"I believe that the prizefulness will arrive for the honourable Bunter along with his esteemed postal order."

"As a matter of fact, I'm expecting a postal order this evening," said Bunter. "I'd let you have that on account, and pay up the rest out of the pound a week, if you could let me have a pound or two now."

"Well, of all the nerve!" said Bob Cherry. "Why don't you ask for a fiver?"

"A couple of pounds would be enough. Besides, I shall make money. When the aeroplane is completed I can give the fellows rides on it, and charge a tanner a time. The novelty will make them patronise the aeroplane. If eighty fellows take a ride at sixpence each, there's the two pounds back again."

"Oh, give us a rest, Billy!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I must have a little capital to work with, you know. How can you expect me to make an aeroplane when I haven't any tin?"

"We don't expect you to make one."

"I'm sincerely sorry to see a chap like you actuated by petty jealousy, Cherry. You can't help being a bit dense, but this envy of another fellow——"

"What?" said Bob, taking Bunter by a fat ear. "Eh?"

"I—I mean, I know you are incapable of feeling jealous of another fellow, Cherry. That's what I really meant to say. Ow—don't shake me, it disturbs my nerves, and if you make my spectacles fall off they may break, and then you will have to pay for them. Where am I to get a couple of pounds from?"

"Ask the Head," grinned Bob, as he left the study.

Bunter grunted discontentedly. He was left alone in the study with Wun Lung, the Chinese junior being busy giving some finishing touches to the dragon-kite. Wun Lung looked up.

"How muchee?" he asked.

The fat junior stared at him.

"What are you jabbering about, you silly Chinese ass?" he growled.

"How muchee cashee?"

Billy Bunter brightened up wonderfully. He knew that the Chinese junior had plenty of money, and that he was very careless with it.

"A couple of pounds would do," he said, eagerly.

"Lats!" said Wun Lung, turning to his work again.

"Well, perhaps thirty bob——"

"Lats!"

"Say a pound, then. I could get the bare materials for that."

Wun Lung groped in a pocket, and tossed a sovereign over to Bunter. The fat junior could scarcely believe his eyes. He caught the sovereign.

"Now shuttee up," said Wun Lung.

"Oh, really Wun Lung——"

"No talkee."

Apparently the Celestial regarded the shutting up of the fat junior as cheap at a sovereign. But Bunter was quite contented, and he left the study before Wun Lung could change his mind.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and Bunter had plenty of time to carry out his scheme. When Harry Wharton looked into the study a couple of hours later the fat junior was very busy. He was sitting on the floor in the midst of piles of all sorts and conditions of materials, sewing away at canvas with a huge needle, and muttering things whenever he jabbed the point into his finger.

Wharton stared at him in amazement. The study was in utter confusion—the table, the floor, the chairs, and even the fender littered with materials for Billy's aeroplane.

"What on earth are you doing, Billy?"

The fat junior blinked up at him.

"I'm making my aeroplane, Wharton."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. People have made aeroplanes before."

"Not people like you, Billy," laughed Wharton. "But where on earth did you get all this stuff from?"

"A friend lent me a pound," said Bunter, with dignity. "Some fellows can trust me."

"They must be perfect strangers, then."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"And you'd better get some of this muck cleared up before

we come into tea. You've turned the study into a giddy bear-garden."

"One must be prepared to make small sacrifices in the cause of science. If you like to wire in and help me, I'll let you have the first ride on the aeroplane when it's finished," said Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Thank you, I've only got one neck," he replied. "Besides, I'm due on the footer ground."

And Wharton picked up his football and left the study. Bunter sewed and cut, and slashed and jabbed and pinned and stuck valiantly, and the aeroplane grew. Whether it would ever fly was a question—which anyone but Billy Bunter would have answered immediately in the negative. But the faith of the fat junior in himself was absolute. Aeroplanes made by common persons had flown before, an aeroplane touched by the masterhand of Bunter was therefore certain of success. That was the way Billy Bunter reasoned it out.

Several fellows, hearing that Bunter was manufacturing an aeroplane, came to look at him during the progress of the work. They gave him plenty of friendly advice, but no assistance. Skinner recommended lining it with felt to keep the rain off, and Levison suggested a framework of wrought iron for strength. Billy Bunter worked on and took no heed of these frivolous suggestions. The only offer of help he received came from Wun Lung. The Chinese looked into the study towards tea-time, and found Billy Bunter up to his ears in work. The fat junior was perspiring, but slaving away industriously. The fire had gone out, but exertion kept Bunter warm.

"Fattee Buntel wolkee muchee," said the cheerful Chinese sympathetically. "S'pose Wun Lung help?"

"Well, I'd be glad of a little help," said Bunter. "The fellows will be in to tea soon, and Cherry will make a row if the study is in this state. The aeroplane is getting on, but this canvas wants sewing up. Could you manage that?"

The Chinese's almond eyes twinkled.

"Me sewee nicee-nicee."

"There's a needle. Mind you don't prick your fingers. I keep on doing it. I'm a little bit shortsighted, you know."

Wun Lung grinned. He had noticed it. He threaded the needle, and set to work. Bunter was busy, and the Chinese sat down partly behind him, and Billy did not keep an eye on him. The Celestial sewed away industriously, and a quarter of an hour later there was a trampling of feet in the Remove passage, and the Famous Four burst into the study, glowing with the exercise of the football field, and as hungry as hunters.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's all this?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he caught his foot in a coil of cord and nearly fell. "You young ass!"

"Don't tread on my materials, Cherry. I'm making an aeroplane."

"You ought to be making the tea. Fire's out! You young villain! I'm hungry!"

"I think you fellows could have tea in Hall this time. Wun Lung is standing a feed this evening, so you don't want much. I wish you'd be quiet and not interrupt the work."

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"I'm practically finished now."

"Don't you want any tea yourself?"

"No; I sha'n't want any."

"What duffer was it said the age of miracles was past?" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"If the esteemed Bunter does not want any tea, the miraclefulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky! You see, you fellows, I've eaten all there was in the cupboard. I had to have a snack from time to time to keep up my strength while I made the aeroplane. You can go and have tea in Hall. On second thoughts, I will come with you, and I can put the finishing touches to the aeroplane afterwards."

Bunter rose to his feet—or rather, attempted to do so. He got halfway up, and then sat down again with a jarring thud. His spectacles slid down his nose, and he gave a gasp of blank amazement.

"Wh-wh-what's the matter?"

He struggled to rise, but he could not. Wun Lung had risen, and was looking at the struggling Bunter with an expression of mild surprise.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Blessed if I know! I say, you fellows, lend me a hand, will you? I—I—I'm stuck to the floor somehow. I can't have sat in the glue! No, there it is. What on earth——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "The tail of your jacket's sewn to the carpet!"

"What!" yelled Bunter.

Wun Lung quietly disappeared from the study. The Famous Four stood round the fat junior, laughing helplessly. The look on Bunter's face was too funny for words. He squirmed round to get a look behind him, and jammed his spectacles tighter on



The two hunters rushed in eager pursuit of the fabulous monster, which rose and sank in the air in a curious way.

his fat little nose. It was true enough. There was a gash in the study carpet, and to one of the edges of it the tail of Bunter's jacket had been sewn carefully, and the fat junior was a prisoner. He made an effort to rise, and fell over on his back with a gasp.

"My—my—my word!" panted Bunter. "How—why—who—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave a yell as a light dawned on his mind. He remembered the kind assistance he had received from Wun Lung.

"Where's that Chinese?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help, help! You grinning idiots! Get this loose, will you! I say, you fellows, you might lend a hand, you know. I'm going to pulverise that Chinese. I'll have his pigtail off for this. The young villain! Why don't you help a chap, instead of standing cackling there like a lot of silly old hens—eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter gave a desperate wrench, and the jacket came up, with a fragment of torn carpet adhering to it. The fat junior panted for breath.

"I'll—I'll massacre that Chinese villain!" he panted.

"I—I—I—"

Wun Lung looked innocently into the study.

"Tea is leady," he said, with a bland smile.

Bunter made a wild dash at him, and the Chinese junior fled. Bunter pursued him down the stairs at top speed, and the Famous Four followed, laughing almost hysterically. A little fat poodle belonging to the housekeeper ran across the passage under Bunter's feet, and he went sprawling headlong. The poodle ran away yelping, and Bunter sat up and gasped.

"Ow! Where's my glasses? Ow! Where's that Chinese beast? Ow!"

Harry Wharton picked up the fallen glasses and handed them to the fat junior. The poodle had vanished. Bunter had fallen on him, and Bunter was not a light weight. Fido had gone to seek comfort from his mistress.

"Thank you, Cherry!" gasped Billy Bunter, as he received the spectacles from Wharton. "I'll—I'll be the death of that Chinese. I—I'm quite out of breath!"

It was some minutes before Billy Bunter recovered his wind. Then he went into the dining-hall, and found Wun Lung sitting at the Remove table with the blandest of smiles upon his amiable face.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Files.

BUNTER'S wrath had evaporated by the time tea was over, several considerations helping it. One was that Wun Lung had lent him the sovereign in the afternoon. Not that Billy had a good memory for favours received; but he had a very keen anticipation of more favours to come. Another and more important consideration was the feed Wun Lung had promised to stand that evening. The fat junior did not want to be left out of that.

Besides, Bunter was busy with his aeroplane. It was finished now, and there was plenty of time before dark for the first flight, and he needed assistance. The Famous Four were, of course, called upon, and they consented to lend a hand in the Close.

The aeroplane—which was, in point of fact, nothing but a very large and very clumsily-constructed kite—was carried out into the Close, half the Lower School coming to look and see the result. Opinions were freely expressed that it would never rise in the air, unless Bunter went up a ladder and carried it.

"You see, it will have to get some impetus first," said Bunter. "The proper way to start an aeroplane is to run it along for a short distance, and then it rises in the air of its own accord and floats, and you can carry up big weights with it that way. I ought really to have a line of rail to run it on, and I am working under disadvantages. You hold it, Wharton, as you've got most sense."

"Eh?" said Bob Cherry.

"I mean, I'd like Wharton to hold it. Start it when I give you the word. I'll keep the cord, and it will be up in a jiffy."

And Bunter marched off with the cord. The wind was favourable, and there was ample room to run in the Close. But somehow the kite would not rise. Wharton held up the huge construction manfully, with the long tail fluttering on the ground. Whenever Bunter gave the word he started it, but each time it fluttered to the ground. It was possible that Bunter had not constructed the aeroplane on really scientific principles, but it was of no use telling him so. As a matter of fact the weight of the materials was very unevenly distributed, and the whole thing was very truly if not elegantly described by Levison as cack-handed and cock-eyed.

"I say, you fellows, I think you might help me a bit," said Bunter indignantly, to the grinning Removites. "You said you'd help, Wharton."

"I'm doing my best, kid."

"It keeps on falling to the ground."

"That's not my fault, ass."

"Well, the kite is all right, so I don't see why it shouldn't fly. Will you hold it for me, Cherry? Wharton can't manage it."

Bob Cherry obligingly held the kite. The result was the same. Then Wun Lung volunteered to hold it. But Bunter had had enough of the Chinese's assistance, and he curtly declined. He asked Hazeldene, who took the kite with a grin.

Hazeldene was in a humorous mood. He did not let go the kite, and Bunter tugged at the cord in vain. After some minutes he came up red and gasping.

"No good," he said. "You fellows can't handle a kite for toffee. Besides, what it really wants is a good start from high up somewhere. Would you mind climbing up on the roof, Wharton, and starting it there for me?"

"Well, rather, I think I should mind."

"I don't see why you shouldn't take a little risk in the cause of science. When it's fairly going I will let you have first ride."

Harry Wharton laughed and shook his head.

"Don't be an ass, Billy. You know very well we're not allowed on the roof."

"It's a special occasion. Will you go up for me, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Well, I don't know about going on the roof, Billy; but I wouldn't mind trying from the top of the gym."

"Good! The gym's hardly high enough for the purpose, but it is better than the level. You can pull up the aeroplane with a cord, after you are on the roof."

"Good! Get the rope out of our study, Inky."

"With great pleasurefulness, my worthy chum."

"You get the ladder, Nugent, to get up on the gym."

"Certainly."

Billy Bunter, satisfied at last, led the way towards the gymnasium. The Removites followed, most of them grinning. It was apparent to everybody but Bunter that Bob Cherry had some joke up his sleeve.

The ladder was planted against the side of the gym., and Hurree Singh returned with the coil of rope. Bob Cherry fastened one end of it to the bamboo centre of Bunter's kite to pull it up by, and then he cut off a length and tied it directly underneath.

"What's that for?" asked Bunter, blinking at it through his spectacles.

"For you to hang on to."

"I've got the cord."

"Suppose the kite carries you up into the air," said Bob; "that cord would snap."

"Quite right. I didn't think of that. Of course, the aeroplane will in all probability lift me off the ground," agreed Bunter. "Perhaps I had better put a turn of the rope round under my arms, in case I should let go."

"Good wheeze!"

Bob Cherry took his rope in his hand and ascended the ladder. He signed to Nugent and Hurree Singh to follow him, and they did so with solemn faces. The Removites waited expectantly. Bob Cherry pulled up the kite over the roof of the gym., and all was ready.

"Are you ready, Bunter?"

"Yes. Lot go."

"It's going!" roared Bob Cherry. "Hold on!"

"Has the wind caught it?" gasped Bunter, as he felt a steady pull on the rope.

"Hold on!"

"Is it going up?"

"Hold on like anything!"

The kite was, of course, invisible, as it had passed over the

roof of the high building. Whether it was rising in the sky or lying idle on the roof of the gym., could not be seen by anyone standing close to the gym. in the Close. But there was certainly a sharp pull on the rope.

Bunter clung to it desperately, and in a few seconds he was whisked off his feet, and came with a bump against the wall of the gym.

"Oh!" he gasped.

But he held on. Higher and higher he was pulled, till he was half-way to the roof of the building. He was turning round like a joint on a spit, his little fat legs sticking out at almost right angles with his little fat body; sometimes jamming against the wall, sometimes sawing the air. The Removites below were almost in convulsions. They knew how much of Bunter's ascent was due to the aeroplane. But Bunter had no doubts.

"Hold on, Cherry!" he gasped. "Don't let it go too high!"

"Can't be stopped now!" called back Bob Cherry from the roof.

"I say, hold on—hold on!"

The ascent stopped. Bunter was half-way to the roof, and there was a sudden crash of glass as his foot went through a window.

"Dear me!" gasped Bunter.

The Removites on the roof came down the ladder. They joined the crowd of juniors below, and at the same time Wingate came wrathfully out of the gym.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wung Lung at Work.

WINGATE stared in blank amazement at the fat junior, half-way up the wall of the gym., with one leg through the window and the other wagging in the air.

"What on earth are you doing, Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, Wingate—can't help it!"

"Come down immediately."

"I can't."

"You young ass!" shouted Wingate. "Come down, or I'll warm you!"

"I—I can't. It's the aeroplane, you know!"

"The what?" howled the captain of Greyfriars.

"The aeroplane. It is carrying me up, and I can't come down. If you could hang on to my feet it might bring me down. I hope for goodness' sake it won't rise any higher. I—I—I'm getting n-n-nervous!"

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

"I say, you fellows, it's very unfeeling of you to laugh. I wish I could get down. Somebody will have to pay for this window."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How is the young idiot fixed up there?" asked Wingate.

"What is the rope fastened to?"

"The aeroplane," grinned Levison.

Wingate muttered something, and stepped to the ladder and ascended. He could not help grinning as he stepped on the roof. The great kite, which Bunter supposed to be soaring in the air, lay on the leads. The rope which was holding Bunter was fastened on the roof. Bob Cherry and Nugent had, of course, pulled him up by main force and fastened the end of the rope, while Bunter imagined that the aeroplane was dragging him up from the earth.

Wingate loosened the rope, and lowered Bunter to the ground. The fat junior came down with a sharp run, and bumped on the ground with a jar that took his breath away. He sat up and blinked, and as he sat up his kite came over the edge of the roof and fell upon him, and Bunter's head biffed through the canvas. The expression of the junior was almost idiotically bewildered as he sat with the kite round his neck. The Removites roared.

Wingate came down the ladder. He surveyed the fat junior with a grim smile.

"You young ass!" he said. "If you hadn't been an utter idiot you would have known that that clumsy contraption wasn't lifting you!"

"But it was, Wingate. It's a first-class aeroplane."

"Mind, no more tricks on the roof of the gym.," said Wingate; "and the charge for mending that window will be sent to your people, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Wingate—"

The captain of Greyfriars went back into the gymnasium. Bunter staggered to his feet. He blinked indignantly at the Removites.

"Blessed if I see what you want to keep on cackling at," he growled. "Wingate must be an ass! Fancy his not believing that the aeroplane raised me from the ground, when he had the evidence of his own eyes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bob Cherry, didn't the aeroplane raise me from the ground?"

"Well no; I rather think it was a chap about my size who pulled you up," roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors shrieked at the expression on Bunter's face.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter indignantly gathered up his kite.

"I shall try my next experiment without assistance from you," he said. "You are jealous of my superior powers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter stalked away. The aeroplane disappeared, and was not seen again. Bunter was not very sensitive to ridicule, but he could not help feeling that his experiment had been a failure, and he did not care to face it a second time.

"Any more aeroplanes, Billy?" asked Bob Cherry, when he came in with Wharton, and met the fat junior in the hall. Bunter blinked at him reproachfully.

"No, Cherry. I am thinking of giving up aerostatics and sticking to ventriloquism after all. I am learning to throw my voice wonderfully. I will give you a specimen if you like."

"Not at all; I'd rather take your word for it."

"Oh, really, Cherry! But while we're on the subject, there's the paying for that window in the gym., you know. Wingate said the bill would be sent to my people; he will report it to Mr. Quelch, of course. Now, that's not fair."

"We shall see to it," said Harry Wharton.

"Good. If you could give me the money now, Wharton I'll manage it without any trouble to you. Slade in the village charges two shillings for a pane like that. I'd rather have it put in at once and not let the matter go before the beak. You can tell Wingate that I've arranged it with Slade."

"Very well."

And Bunter walked away with the two shillings jingling in his pocket. The chums of the Remove went upstairs to No. 1 Study to do their preparation, but they found the room occupied. Wun Lung was there, and he was evidently deep in the preparations for the feed. His sleeves were rolled up, and he had a white apron on and looked extremely professional.

A huge fire was banked up in the grate, and a variety of utensils occupied the fender and the hob. It was already dusk, and the gas was lighted in the study. It shone on the round, contented face of the Chinese junior, and his twinkling almond eyes. He ducked his head to the chums as they looked in.

"Get leadee," he remarked.

"Oh, you're getting ready, are you," said Bob Cherry. "But what about our prep.?"

"No plep."

"But we've got to do it, you know. We can't get over the Form master in the morning with soft sawder, as you do."

Wun Lung grinned.

"No plep., allee samee. Me makee nicee-nicee feed."

There certainly wasn't much room for doing preparation in the study. The table was piled with crockery and utensils. Wun Lung seemed to have borrowed things on all sides for his cookery, for half of them did not belong to No. 1 Study.

"What are you going to cook?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Nicee stew—Chinee stew."

A savoury smell was proceeding from a huge saucepan on the fire, to which Wun Lung was adding at intervals various ingredients. Bob Cherry sniffed.

"That sniffs all right," he remarked. "I'm getting hungry."

"Leadee soon."

"Yes, but what about our prep.?"

"No plep."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We'd better take our books down into the common-room," he said.

"Oh, all right! It looks like being a decent feed. We had a rotten, poor tea in hall, and I'm getting jolly peckish," Bob Cherry remarked. "Will the feed be ready in an hour, young Cheerful?"

"All leadee."

"Good! Then you can have the room to yourself. Mind there's enough, and mind it's good; I'm not particular on other points."

Wun Lung grinned and nodded, and the Removites went down again. They met Hurree Singh and Nugent on the stairs, and explained matters to them.

"Well, if it's going to be a good feed, I don't mind," Nugent remarked. "That young Chinese can cook, too. He did us some sausages and chips the other day in first-rate style, quite up to Billy Bunter's mark. I shall be quite ready for the stew in an hour's time."

And the Famous Four went into the junior common-room to do their preparation. It was not easy to do it there, with a buzz of talk going on round them. Bunter came into the room, and seeing Wharton, came over to him.

"I say, Wharton."

"Don't bother now, Billy, I'm busy. Why don't you do your prep.?"

"Lots of time for that. Besides, I want to tell you—I—its about that window."

"That's all right, if you've arranged with the man."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I haven't. You see——"

"Very well, I'll see to it."

"Oh, that's all right then," said Bunter. "If you see to it, it's all right. I don't want Mr. Quelch to be bothered about

the matter, and of course it wouldn't do for the bill to go in to my father."

And the fat junior walked away. Harry called after him.

"You've forgotten the tin."

Bunter turned his head.

"No, I haven't, Wharton."

"Well, if I'm to see about it, leave the tin here," said Harry.

"You see—that's really what I came to speak to you about," said Bunter hesitatingly. "I—I thought I had better have a snack, as we're waiting so long for Wun Lung's little feed, you know. I suppose to-morrow morning will do for the two bob, Wharton."

"What do you mean?"

"I—I had to have a snack to keep up my strength. You know I'm in delicate health, and I can only keep going by having plenty of nourishing food. I've got a postal order coming by the first post to-morrow morning, so I thought, if it was all the same to you, I'd let you have the tin back then, and spend the two shillings with Mrs. Mimble."

"But it isn't all the same to me."

"Now, don't be mean, Wharton. You won't arrange with Slade about the pane till to-morrow. What possible difference can it make to you if I give you the two bob now, or if you have it out of my postal order to-morrow morning?"

"None, if I have it then, you young humbug! But it's all my own fault for trusting money into your hands."

"I hope I'm a fellow that can be trusted with money," said Bunter, with dignity. "I had to spend that two bob at the tuck shop; but I suppose you give me credit for common honesty, and knowing that I shouldn't have spent it if my postal order hadn't been coming for certain to-morrow morning."

"You'll be telling yarns like that to a judge some day," said Bob Cherry; "but you won't get off as easily as you do with Wharton."

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"It was my own fault," said Harry. "I ought to have known Bunter better. Don't talk any more rot about your postal order, Billy."

"Well, it is barely possible that there may be a delay in the post, Wharton, and if you are not in an immediate hurry for the money, I would rather you left it till I get the prize in the 'Gem' football competition."

"Oh, cheese it! Let me get on with my work."

"Certainly; but is it understood that the amount stands over?"

"I make you a present of it."

"Thank you very much, Wharton, but I cannot accept a money present at your hands," said Bunter firmly. "I know I'm poor, but I have my pride. A loan I have no objection to, but a gift of money isn't possible between friends on an equal footing. You can either have it back out of my postal order when it comes, or out of the 'Gem' prize."

"Will you get away and stop bothering?"

"I think this point ought to be settled. As I am to return you the money, you can, if you like, make it an even five bob, or perhaps it would be better to make it up to ten, and take the whole of my postal order to-morrow morning. That will be simply cashing the postal order in advance."

Bob Cherry rose, took Bunter by the ear, and led him to the door. A drive of his foot sent the fat junior along the passage hurriedly. Bunter caught up against the wall, and blinked at the wrathful Removite. Bob shook a warning finger at him.

"If you come in here again till our prep. is finished, I'll jump on you!" he said.

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Scat!"

And Bob Cherry looked so dangerous that Billy Bunter promptly "scatted."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Eighteenpence.

THE news had spread that a feed was preparing in No. 1 Study, and that the Chinese junior was standing it; and a good many fellows looked in while the preparations were going on.

The smell from the huge saucepan boiling on the fire was most appetising. Wun Lung was undoubtedly a good cook. Skinner declared that the mere scent of that stew made him hungry, and he asked Wun Lung when it would be finished. Bulstrode was equally impressed, and he demanded a spoonful to try, which the obliging Wun Lung politely accorded him. Bulstrode pronounced it ripping, and regretted that he was not on the best of terms with Harry Wharton & Co. He would have liked very much to be asked to that feed in No. 1.

After finishing their prep., the Famous Four looked into the study. Wun Lung was still busy, but his labours were approaching an end. He had laid the cloth and disposed of the

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THE WRITING ON THE WALL.

crockery to the best advantage. Bob Cherry sniffed appreciatively.

"Ripping!" he said. "I'm getting jolly peckish, too. I hope you've got a good supply of that stew, young Cheerful. I should like to ask some fellows in."

Wun Lung nodded.

"Muchee plenty."

"Good! Where did you get that saucepan?"

"Me bollow it of nicee fat housekeeper."

"Ha, ha! I wonder how Mrs. Kebble would like to hear herself described as a nice fat housekeeper," grinned Nugent. "It was very decent of her to lend you the saucepan. What are you making the stew of?"

"Nicee moatee, nicee tato, beanee, potherb, callots, and ungyungs, muchee plenty."

Bob Cherry smacked his lips.

"Good! The scent is ripping, and if it's anything like it smells, it will be prime. Now there will be six here to the feed."

"Five, my worthy chum," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Come, Inky, you're not going to stand out of a feed like this," said Bob warmly. "There's nothing in it for you to be fastidious about."

The nabob shook his head.

"The excellentness of the esteemed stew is great, but the keep-off-the-grassfulness is terrific."

"Blessed if I know how you live," said Bob Cherry. "Well, we'll get in some bananas for you, as you can't eat good grub. Five of us, then—we can have two or three of the fellows in. They are all anxious to come."

"Muchee good."

"How long will it be, Wun Lung?"

"Lingee bell when leade."

"Good. Buzz that bicycle bell at the door, and we'll come along. The guests will have to bring their own plates and spoons and forks, though; must remember that."

The Removites, feeling very cheerful at the prospect of the feed, strolled along the passage. Billy Bunter met them on the stairs.

"Isn't it ready yet?" he asked.

"Not quite; wait for the bell to ring."

"All right. I say, Wharton, what's going to be done about

that dish that was broken last night? The housekeeper has asked me about it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I suppose you don't hold me responsible for that, Billy?"

"Well, somebody will have to pay for it. It was Wun Lung's fault it was broken, over his rotten jape with that dragon, and he ought to pay for it. Mrs. Kebble says she will complain if the loss isn't made good, and as she was giving a dish of potatoes to No. 1 Study, I think the least you fellows can do is to pay for damage done. Still, I'll go and ask Wun Lung."

"No, you won't," said Wharton. "How much does Mrs. Kebble want for the broken dish?"

"One and six."

"I will go and see her then."

"You needn't trouble, Wharton. I'll take it to her."

"You are too obliging, Billy," said Bob Cherry sarcastically. "Perhaps the one-and-six might follow the two bob to Mrs. Mimble's tuck-shop."

"Oh, really, Cherry—where are you going, Wharton?"

"I am going to the housekeeper's room."

"Better not. I could manage the affair ever so much better—"

Harry Wharton walked away. He knocked at the housekeeper's door, and Mrs. Kebble received him with a smile. Bunter followed Wharton in, looking very red, and plucking at his sleeve.

"I say, Wharton, it's all right—better leave it to me."

"Shut up, Billy."

"But—I say—really, Wharton—"

"I've come to see you about the dish, Mrs. Kebble," said Harry, coming to the point at once. "We're very sorry it was broken, and Bunter says it will be one-and-six to replace it, so I—"

The housekeeper gave Bunter a withering look.

"Nothing of the sort, Master Wharton. Master Bunter explained how the dish was broken, and insisted upon knowing how much it cost. I said it did not matter, but he insisted upon paying. As it will be charged in the breakages—and so I told him—"

"Billy, you young rascal!"

"Well, I thought the dish ought to be paid for," said Bunter.

"You always spoil things by this bull-at-a-gate way of yours, Wharton. I was going to pay for the dish out of my postal-order to-morrow morning, and have the use of the eighteen-pence for the evening. I am in need of some nourishing food——"

Wharton's brow darkened.

"I am sorry to have troubled you, Mrs. Kebble."

"It is nothing," said the housekeeper, "and I shall not allow you to pay for the dish. I was surprised at Bunter's insisting, and did not guess his reason. I consider him a dishonest boy."

"Oh, really, ma'am——"

"And you are quite right, Mrs. Kebble," said Wharton; "only Bunter is too stupid to know what is honest and what is not."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Harry took hold of Bunter's collar to march him away. Billy squirmed.

"I say, while we're here we might as well ask Mrs. Kebble if we can have another dish of potatoes, to eat with Wun Lung's stew, as that lot last night was wasted."

"Come along, Billy."

"But really——"

"Yes, go along, you bad boy," said Mrs. Kebble severely. "I think Wharton would only be doing right if he were to box your ears. It is your fault that I have lost my poor, dear, sweet little Fido."

"Is Fido lost, ma'am?" asked Harry.

"He's dead," said Bunter. "It wasn't my fault. How could I help falling on him when he ran under my feet? Besides, I've fallen on dogs before, and they never died. It was because Mrs. Kebble over-fed the poodle. He was so fat that he could hardly crawl about, and of course a shock to his system was bound to finish him off. There's nothing so bad for the health, or so likely to lower the tone of the whole system, as over-feeding."

"Well, you ought to know," said Wharton. "I am very sorry about Fido, Mrs. Kebble. He must have been seedy for a shock like that to cause his death."

"I had the veterinary surgeon," said Mrs. Kebble, with tears in her eyes. "He made the same ridiculous assertion that Bunter has just made, that the poor, dear, sweet little pet was over-fed. Of course he was nothing of the kind. He died so peacefully—you could hardly see when he had ceased to breathe. My little pet! It was all Master Bunter's fault. If I were the Head I would expel him."

"Oh, really, ma'am——"

Wharton dragged the fat junior away, leaving the housekeeper to mourn over her departed Fido. Bunter blinked rather uneasily at the young captain of the Remove, not liking the expression upon his face.

"It's all rot about Fido, you know," he remarked. "The little beast was so fat he could hardly breathe, and there wasn't more than a gasp left in him. After I fell on him he could hardly crawl away, as you noticed for yourself. It was all due to over-feeding."

Wharton had not much doubt on the point. Even without Bunter's heavy weight falling on him, the poodle had not, in all probability, a very long lease of life. But Wharton was not thinking about the poodle now. His grip tightened on Bunter's shoulder.

"Look here, Billy," he said seriously, "you were telling lies when you said that Mrs. Kebble wanted to charge one-and-six for the broken dish."

"I didn't say she wanted to."

"You said that she told you it would be one-and-six," said Wharton sternly.

"So she did! Why, you heard her say so yourself."

"Yes, but you gave me to understand that the dish had to be paid for."

"Well, I thought that under the circumstances we couldn't do better than pay for it, Wharton. I suppose I've a finer sense of honour in these matters than most fellows."

"You young rascal!"

"I don't think you ought to call me names because I have a finer sense of honour than you have, Wharton. I really—I wish you wouldn't shake me like that. You might make my spectacles fall off, and if they get broken, you——"

"Listen to me."

"I'm listening, but I wish you wouldn't shake me. It disturbs my nerves and ruins my digestion, and as I was saying, if my glasses get broken——"

"Listen to me! You pretended that the one-and-six had been paid, so as to get hold of it, not intending to give it to the housekeeper at all."

"I was going to give it to her out of my postal-order to-morrow morning."

"And suppose it did not come?"

"Well, it's bound to come, so it's no good supposing that. Besides, there's the pound a week for thirteen weeks I shall be getting from the 'Gem' soon, and——"

"Do you know that keeping the one-and-six back, after I had given it to you to give to Mrs. Kebble, would have amounted to embezzlement?"

"But you didn't give it to me," said Bunter, changing his tack.

"How can you say anything of the sort when you didn't give it to me?"

"Yes, but if I had——"

"It's no good supposing what would have been the case if you had done something you didn't do. I prefer a fellow to stick to the facts in an argument. But that's what you will never do. Any amount of 'ifs' don't count. Stick to the facts."

"You utter young ass!"

"Calling a fellow names isn't argument, either. You've acted very stupidly and rather selfishly in this matter, Wharton, but I'm quite willing to overlook it, but I don't think you ought to call me names."

Harry Wharton gave it up. He released the fat junior and turned away. Bunter hurried after him and caught his sleeve.

"I say—I say, Wharton!"

"Well, what is it?" said Harry impatiently.

"As the dish hasn't to be paid for, I suppose you're going to let me have the eighteen-pence?" said Bunter. "I think you ought—don't go yet, Wharton, I haven't finished what I was going to say—really, Wharton——"

But Wharton was gone, and the Owl of the Remove was left with an extremely dissatisfied expression upon his fat face.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Feast—and After.

BUZ-Z-Z!

"Time!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Wun Lung was buzzing the bicycle bell at the door of No. 1 Study, to announce to all whom it should concern that the feast was ready.

Harry Wharton, who was chatting with Nugent in the common room, turned towards the door. Temple of the Upper Fourth tapped him on the shoulder. Temple was looking exceedingly amiable.

"I hear you've got a feed going," he remarked. "Chinese cookery, and so on. I don't mind if I come."

Harry Wharton smiled.

"You're quite welcome."

"Good. I passed your study," explained Temple, "and the riff was so ripping that I couldn't resist it. I'll be glad to come."

"Come on, then. You will have to bring your own plate and other things, that's all. The supply is short, but there's plenty of grub."

"That's the chief thing. I can manage the rest."

Billy Bunter nudged Wharton as he left the common-room. The captain of the Remove glanced down at him.

"I say, Wharton, can I bring in a friend?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, one," said Wharton. "Who is it?"

"Bulstrode."

"Oh, very well," said Harry, not very cordially. Bunter scudded off, and found the bully of the Remove waiting for him in the passage.

"It's all right," he announced. "I've got the invitation for you, Bulstrode. Can you let me have a couple of bob off my postal-order to-morrow morning?"

"Yes; to-morrow morning," said Bulstrode grimly.

"I'd rather have it now, because——"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode, as he walked off towards No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter stared after him with an expression of utter disgust.

"Well, of all the ungrateful brutes," he muttered. And he slowly and discontentedly followed in the Remove bully's footsteps.

Dabney of the Upper Fourth was in the passage as Wharton came out with Temple. Harry invited him along with his chum, and Dabney gladly accepted. The two Upper Fourth fellows fetched the required utensils from their studies, and came along to No. 1. Bob Cherry brought in Levison, and Hazeldene came in with Nugent. Micky Desmond chummed up with Hurree Janset Ram Singh, and strolled in with his arm linked in that of the Nabob of Bhanipur. Six guests found themselves in No. 1 Study, along with Wun Lung and the five owners of the room. It was a pretty large crowd for the study, though it was one of the largest of the Remove rooms. But the juniors were accustomed to close quarters.

The table was laid for seven, with squeezing. A chess table was brought up from the common-room, to accommodate a couple more. A box was laid for two. Hurree Janset Ram Singh, as he was not sharing in the feed, was content to take his bananas on his knees. Anticipation and contentment were in every face. Seats had been formed by borrowing extra chairs, and by laying several boards along them. Space was limited, but the feast was not, and that was the more important point.

Wun Lung was beaming. He grinned cordially at each new guest, affording a polite welcome even to Bulstrode, who had been the leader in the ragging to which the Chinese junior had been subjected on first coming to Greyfriars.

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 Constantini 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. However, with the help of a party of officers from the troopship Ganges, Jack makes his escape and continues his journey to India, and eventually rejoins the 25th Hussars. Jack is soon reinstated favourite, and becomes once more full corporal. Just as the irksomeness of Indian service in peace time is setting somewhat heavily on the men a frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. On their way to the scene of war the 25th are continually "sniped" at by rebels, and Tom with Lieutenant Armstrong has a desperate scuffle in the dark with the Pathans. Tom defends the wounded lieutenant till help comes. The latter is subsequently, to his disgust, sent back to the base hospital. (Now go on with the story.)

A Black Plot and a Tiny Bottle.

The first glimmer of dawn broke over the hilltops, and the word was given to march.

Sir Bindon Blood, having seen that everything was ready, had gone to the top of Castle Rock Hill to superintend the operations generally. A party of Sikhs and Gurkhas, supported by two guns of the Bengal Mountain Battery, the whole under Colonel Gedney, advanced silently towards the enemy to clear the way, rushed the position, the enemy bolting in all directions. Then Meiklejohn's force advanced, the Guides Infantry and the 45th Sikhs doing some smart bayonet work where the Graded Road and the North Camp Road joined.

There was a good deal of bayonet exercise as the light increased, and, driven from hill to hill, the enemy could be seen scurrying about like ants, panic-stricken and disorganised. Farther ahead was the Khar Plain, into which many of the foe descended, and the word was now given for the cavalry to advance and fall upon them. The Guides and the 11th Bengal Lancers, followed by the 25th Hussars, now sped down into the rice-fields, spearing and sabreing in all directions, and reaping hot vengeance upon the fleeing tribesmen. There was a strong position at Amandarra, which the cavalry seized, and over the level country between that point and the Shakardara they heard heavy firing.

"You had better push on, colonel," said General Meiklejohn to Adams of the Guides, "and see what is going forward."

And, swinging away at a hard gallop, the cavalry jingled through the rice-fields, along the Chitral Road, and soon came in sight of the beleaguered position.

Above the broad Swat River rose a conical hill, crowned by a fort, against a background of mountains, covered by mighty deodars. From the top of the fort the British flag was still flying bravely, but the little garrison was hard pressed, and the defence of Shakardara is one that will always be remembered for its pluck and gallantry. The

garrison consisted of two companies of the 45th Sikhs and twenty-five Sowars of the 11th Bengal Lancers, with two hundred and twenty men of all ranks. They had been besieged for seven days. Captain Wright of the 11th Bengal Lancers had made a fine dash with forty of his men from Malakand, cutting his way through the Amandarra Pass, on the 27th of July, and taking command of the fort. Night and day they were attacked, always under heavy fire, and the isolated signal-tower was without water for a long time.

They sent the two words, "Help us!" by heliograph to the camp at Malakand, and it was in response to that message that our cavalry was now reconnoitering the approach to the position.

The bridge across the broad river was fortunately uninjured, and, sending back a message to General Meiklejohn, Colonel Adams led his men over and entered the fort. The infantry were now pushed on with much rapidity.

Lieutenant Rattray, of the 45th Sikhs, made a dashing sortie for the fort, during which he was wounded in the neck, and the word was passed for the cavalry to go out in pursuit.

Then the blue-coated Bengal Lancers and the drab Guides, with their gay scarlet sashes; and the kharki-clad 25th put in their spur and thundered away in the bright sunlight.

Sabres flashed, red-and-blue pennons fluttered, and turbaned sowars and helmeted Hussars reaped heavy vengeance among the tribesmen. The swift march from Malakand had told on the horses, and it was soon necessary to draw rein and return, though not before the hillsides and the depths of the gloomy valleys had been littered with the dead bodies of the enemy.

The relieving cavalry bivouacked that night at Shakardara, where they had much to hear of sorties and the repulsing of night attacks and the gallantry of the signallers, who had stuck to their posts for eighteen hours without water in a blazing sun, and how Sepoy Prem Singh, of the 45th Sikhs, had clambered out several times under a hot fire to heliograph to the Malakand. All this may be read in the general's despatches, and very fine reading it is, except for its long list of killed and wounded.

The next morning the troops filed over the long bridge again, and returned through the rice-fields to the Amandarra Pass, where they met the general riding up from the Malakand, and Sir Ponsonby Smithers with the infantry of his brigade. The 25th halted close to a company of the Ploughshires, who had as yet borne no share in the fighting, and Tom's keen eye was not long in detecting his friend Dick Vivian, and his bitter foe, Leonard Dashwood.

"Tell you what, 'Oward," said Bill Sloggett, leaning out of his saddle and whispering to the corporal, "next time you 'it that bloke Dashwood, 'it 'im 'arder. 'E's as fresh as paint with that saucy new kit of 'is!"

What reply Tom was about to make is not known, for word was suddenly passed down the line for Corporal Howard, and, turning his mare out of the squadron, he rode forward to where Sir Bindon Blood and his staff were listening to the report of Colonel Greville. Beside Sir Bindon sat Sir Ponsonby Smithers, the point of his helmet down well over his nose. Tom reined in a couple of horses' lengths from the general, saluted smartly, and sat at attention.

"Colonel Greville has given me such an excellent account of you, corporal, that I wished to see you with my own eyes. I understand that you performed prodigies of valour

the other night when the enemy attacked the outpost. You saved the life of your officer under circumstances of particular bravery, and I am going to put your name in the despatch that I am going to send home."

Tom saluted again, and the eyes of the staff were upon him. He was also conscious that Sir Ponsonby Smithers scanned him very hard, and Tom began to feel uncomfortable.

"Your face is very familiar to me, corporal," said Sir Ponsonby. "Where have I seen you before?"

This was a direct question, to which Tom found great difficulty in replying.

"I have seen you several times in England, sir," he said, with a slight tremor in his voice which was not lost upon Sir Ponsonby.

"I would not press him too hard if I were you," whispered the general. "Greville knows who he is, and says he's a remarkably smart young chap."

"I shall make it my special business to keep an eye on him," said Sir Ponsonby. "Would you like to ride with me as my orderly, corporal, or would you rather stick to your regiment?"

Tom flushed.

"Thank you very much, sir, but, if you wouldn't mind, I would rather keep with my regiment."

"Just as you please, corporal."

And Tom knew from Sir Ponsonby's voice that he had chosen the right thing. He could not help his eye wandering to the company of the Ploughshires, drawn up there within easy earshot, and he saw Dick Vivian's face radiant with delight, and marked also the contrast between Dick and his cousin. Leonard Dashwood had turned a sickly yellow, and was biting his lips. The words of praise which brought joy to Dick's heart, were gall and wormwood to him. And it was well that no one could see into his heart, and fathom the treachery which was forming itself there. Once Leonard's hand went instinctively to his breast pocket, and his fingers pressed on a little hard substance, his eyes gleamed malevolently the while. And so intense was his hatred, that it glowed in a red spot on each cheek, fanned into molten heat by the general's praise.

"You can return to your squadron, Corporal Howard," said the general.

And, very thankful to withdraw himself from this unexpected publicity, Tom rode back, exciting further comment from the staff by the manner in which he rode his mare.

Shakardara having been relieved, the general proceeded with the commands of Brigadier-General Meiklejohn and Colonel Reed, to the villages of Aladand and Thanna, which were thoroughly searched. A few women and children were the sole inhabitants remaining there, all the men having gone off with their guns into the hills with the insurgents.

Dismounting at a well to water his mare, Tom heard a scream from a mud-walled house a few yards off, and seeing one of the horses of his own squadron standing riderless at the door, he strode over and entered the dwelling.

As his shadow fell across the threshold, he saw a black-haired, brown-skinned woman struggling in the grasp of Alf Sligo, who had been attracted by the gold bangles on her arm, which he was endeavouring to appropriate.

"Get back to your horse," said Tom, rushing forward and raising his arm, his eyes gleaming—"get back to your horse, you miserable thief, and don't let me catch you at this game again!"

Sligo scowled and slunk away. He had too great a respect for Tom's right arm to desire any closer acquaintance with it: and, throwing the woman a coin, Tom followed him, and touched him on the shoulder as he was placing his toe in the stirrup.

"I have had my eye on you for some time, Sligo," Tom said. "Just try and remember that you are a British soldier—if you can. You're the slackest man in

the 25th, and you will be wise if you take this warning. I don't want to have you up on the carpet when the regiment is on service, and if there is any more nonsense I may be tempted to settle the matter in my own way. You know what I mean."

Sligo knew perfectly well what he meant, and made no reply; and as Tom returned to the well to mount, a party of the Ploughshires, who had been rummaging among the houses with their bayonets fixed, under the command of Leonard Dashwood, passed by in time for their leader to catch the purport of the corporal's remark. Leonard Dashwood fell back a pace and let his men pass on, making a sign to Sligo, who had again placed his toe in the stirrup.

Leonard glanced round. There was no one within fifty yards of them, and for the second time that morning his hand went to the square packet in the breast of his pocket.

Leonard Dashwood turned a searching glance on Alf Sligo. His sallow face had never struck him as so singularly unprepossessing before, and he hesitated a moment, doubting the wisdom of committing himself for all time into the hands of that yellow-faced trooper of Hussars. But the sight of Tom Howard cantering away across the plain roused all the old hatred in his breast, and he drew out a tiny bottle and glanced furtively around him.

"Take this," he said. "I want you to use it the next time Howard is on outpost."

And he whispered some words in Sligo's ear.

An evil grin spread over Sligo's features, and, holding the bottle in the hollow of his hand, he looked at it gloatingly. It contained a thick, brown-coloured fluid, and, marking the look, Leonard Dashwood tapped him sharply on the shoulder.

"Mind," he said, "ten drops—not a fraction more. And when you've done it pitch the bottle away. If that should be found in your possession there'll be trouble."

"Leave that to me, sir!" Sligo said. "D'yer think I'm fool enough to put 'is light out? D'yer think I wants to kill the goose that lays the golden hegg, Mr. Dashwood?"

And Leonard's heart quailed at all the future possibilities that sentence betrayed.

"No, no," he said quickly. "Of course not. And you don't suppose I want to kill him, either, do you?"

Alf Sligo looked straight into Leonard Dashwood's eyes.

"I don't say nothin' about that," he replied, with a leer. "All I say is ten drops, and 'e shall 'ave 'em. And when it's done I'll pass the word some'ow!"

Then he hid the little bottle away in a safe pocket, and Leonard Dashwood, slipping some coins into his hand, strode away to rejoin his men.

It was night. The sky overhead was gemmed with a myriad of bright stars, but the moon had not yet risen.

At the base of some low foot hills lay a picquet of Hussars, under a corporal. The corporal was Tom Howard.

He had been specially chosen by Colonel Greville for the post, as an attack was expected in that quarter, and the colonel wished to have a smart man, on whom he could thoroughly rely.

They lay in the grass among the boulders which were strewn about, and looked down into the valley, shrouded in impenetrable gloom.

The silence struck a species of awe into their hearts; it was all so big and lonely and solemn. No sound but an occasional neigh from the horses far behind them, and sometimes the rolling of a stone from the hillside.

A jackal barked away in the distance, and the laughter from the hyenas told where the beasts were already busy among the dead tribesmen.

(To be continued next Tuesday.)

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