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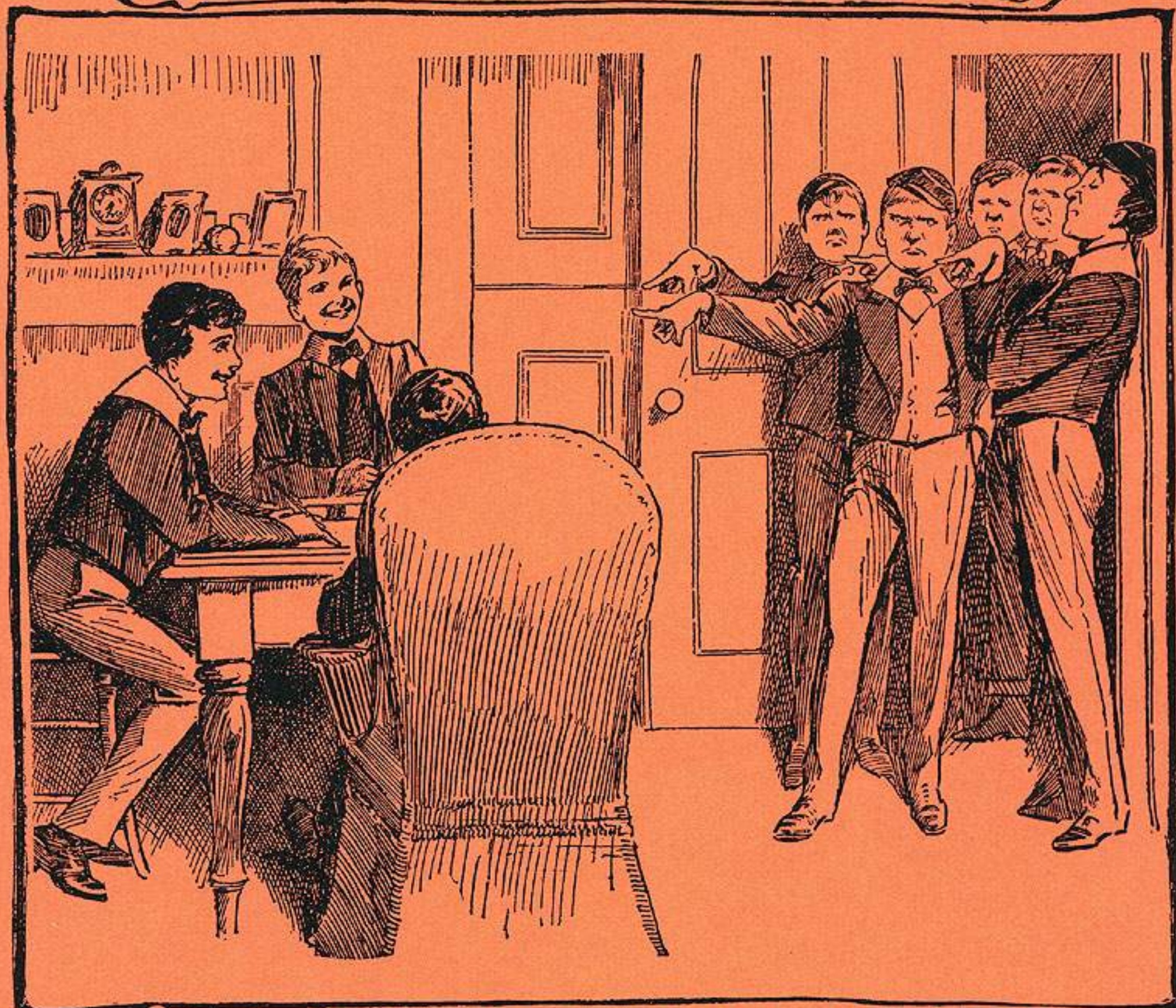
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By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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Billy Bunter's Raid



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Tale of
Harry Wharton
and Co.

By

FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Little Run for the Aliens.

"HALLO. hallo, hallo!"
"Hark!"
"They're playing
footer!" Bob Cherry
grinned gleefully. "Here,
come on; we must have a look
at this!"

And Bob Cherry dragged his two companions off towards the Cloisters. It was a keen November morning, and Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent—the chums of the Greyfriars Remove—were tramping round the Close before breakfast. As they drew near the Cloisters, a series of startling shrieks and yells rang through the wintry air.

On the other side of the wide Cloisters stood the New Academy—the great red-brick building, presided over by Herr Rosenblum, and tenanted by the sons of foreigners resident in England.

The yells, shrieks, and shouts came ringing through the Cloisters from the playground of the New Academy, and the chums of the Greyfriars Remove grinned as they heard them.

"On ze ball!"

"Puck up, there!"

"On te pall! On te pall!"

"Blay up!"

"Zat you pass, you duffair!"

"Ach! Pass te pall, ain't it."

And there was the sound of a scrimmage and of wild shrieking. The three Removites dashed through the Cloisters, eager to see the aliens at the great game. The big gates of the academy grounds were wide open, as was usually the case. The Removites stopped in the gateway,

and looked on at the scene before them, with irrepressible merriment.

The aliens were playing football, having doubtless determined to emulate the Greyfriars fellows. But their knowledge of the great game was limited. They knew that a football was required for the game, but that seemed to be about all they did know.

Two teams had been formed—of French and German juniors—but they were not limited as to number. There were about twenty fellows on each side, so that in point of numbers the match resembled a Rugby game. It bore another resemblance to Rugby, too, inasmuch as the aliens handled the ball as much as they wished to. The soccer portion of the play consisted in kicking wildly at everything and everybody that came within their reach.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "On the ball, my sons! Ha, ha, ha! There's a dozen of them on it now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fritz Hoffmann, the German captain, was on the ball with a vengeance, sprawling across it on the ground, and Adolphe Meunier, the French skipper, was on Hoffmann, sitting on his back, and clawing at his hair. Limburger had seized Meunier by the ears, and was trying to drag him off, and Lasallo had just hurled himself at Limburger with clawing hands.

"My only hat!" murmured Nugent. "I don't think I should care to meet an alien team on the footer ground."

"Ha, ha, ha! Looks as if Meunier's ears will come off."

"On ze ball!"

"Pass tat pall, ain't it!"

Charpentier dragged the ball out from under Fritz Hoffmann, and dashed off towards goal with it under his arm.

The scrum broke up, and the players dashed after Charpentier, and Limburger dragged him down. The ball disappeared amidst a mass of waving arms and legs, and a babel of excited screeches rose.

"Where is zat ball?"

"On te ball, ain't it! Pass!"

"Get off mein neck, you French peeg!"

"Ciel! I am murdair! Sherman beast!"

The ball came out of the press like a pip from an orange. The aliens did not notice it for a moment, and the struggle continued. Bob Cherry grinned.

"I say, kids, we ought to take that ball away before they do themselves any damage," he said. "What do you say to giving them a run round the Close?"

"Ha, ha! Good wheeze!"

Bob Cherry darted in, and was "on the ball" in a moment. He passed to Nugent, who kicked it to Harry Wharton. Wharton dribbled the ball away through the Cloisters, and a terrific screech rose from the aliens.

"Ach! Vere is tat pall?"

"Zey have taken it."

"Ciel! Aftair zem!"

"Tat you follows me, ain't it!"

The aliens, forgetting their mutual rivalry, dashed in pursuit of the Greyfriars chums. The three Removites sped out of the Cloisters, and into the wide, green Close. After them the aliens dashed, breathing vengeance.

"Come on!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Pass!"

Wharton passed, and Bob Cherry ran the ball on, and then let Nugent have it. Passing like clockwork, the three Removites ran the ball swiftly on, with the whole troop of aliens yelling in pursuit.

Two score of shrieking French and Germans were tearing after the three chums, but they had not the slightest chance of catching them.

They were the three fastest forwards in the Greyfriars Remove, and they could have walked away from the aliens if they had chosen.

But just now they were laughing too much to put on their greatest speed.

They easily kept ahead, passing the ball one to another, while the foreigners laboured and shrieked after them in vain.

A crowd of Greyfriars fellows came out of the house, watching the absurd scene with yells of laughter.

"Ach!" panted Fritz Hoffmann. "Ach! I tinks tat I am out of te breath, ain't it."

"I zink so, too," murmured Meunier.

"Ve must gapture dem."

"Ciel! Don't run against me, Limburger, you Sherman ass."

"Keep out of te vay, ten!"

"I zink—"

"I tink—"

"Ach! Come on, and talk not!" panted Hoffmann.

The Removites had slackened down, to encourage their pursuers, and the aliens made a tremendous effort. They gained ground, and came closer and closer, till Meunier's outstretched hand almost touched Nugent's shoulder.

At last it touched, but the touch acted as a spur to Nugent. With hardly an effort, he increased his distance, and the Removites glided away from the baffled aliens.

"Ah, ciel!" gasped Meunier. "I zink zat I can run no more."

"Himmel! I tinks te same, ain't it."

The Removites ran the ball right on, till they had made a circuit of the Close, and reached the Cloisters again. There they halted, panting, and laughing themselves out of breath. The aliens came plodding on.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Of all the howling idiots at football, I think those screaming duffers take the cake! Football! They ought to be playing marbles."

"Or dominoes," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton laughed, and kicked the ball into the Cloisters.

"Well, we've given them a little run," he remarked. "It will do them good, and will count as the first lesson in footer. Let's clear!"

It was time to clear, for the aliens were coming up. The Removites sprinted off towards the School House, and the panting aliens shook impotent fists after them.

"Zey have got avay viz zemselves," said Adolphe Meunier; "but ve make zem zing small for all zat."

"Ach! Tat is right, ain't it?"

"Ve shallenge zem to ze game of ze football, and beat zem at zeir own game," said Meunier. "I zink zat put zem in zeir place."

"Mein gootness! Te idea is ribbing!" exclaimed Fritz Hoffmann. "Ve peats dem at deir own game, ain't it. My beloved friend, Adolphe, you vas a great man."

"I zink it is good idea," said Meunier modestly.

"I tink it is magnificent idea. Ve peats dem at deir own game after. I tink tat ve sends dem te shallenge pefore, ain't it."

And the aliens, somewhat comforted by the prospect of beating the Greyfriars fellows at their own game, trooped off gasping to their own quarters.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Plans a Raid.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter was standing in the doorway, and he intercepted the chums of the Remove as they came in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a playful dig in the ribs which made him gasp for breath. "What's troubling you, Porpoise?"

"I—I say, Cherry, I wish you wouldn't poke me like that; it quite takes my breath away. I'm rather short in the wind, and—"

"Bosh!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You're a jolly sight too long-winded, that's what's the matter with you."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The long-windfulness is terrific," chimed in the Nabob of Bhanipur, joining the chums. "My esteemed comrades, I had the pleasurefulness of watching your exploits with the foreignful football. It was rippingful."

"I say, you fellows!"

"Oh, run away and play, Billy!"

"It's important, Cherry," said Billy Bunter, blinking at the Removites through his big spectacles. "It's very important, indeed. If you fellows don't want to hear about it, I'll get somebody else to back me up."

"Eh? What are you driving at?"

"Come into a quiet place," said Bunter mysteriously. "I don't want the whole Form to get on to the wheeze."

"What has the young ass got into his silly head, now?" grunted Nugent. "The Fifth is gone by, Bunt, and gun-powder plots are out of date."

"It's a jolly good scheme, Nugent, and if you fellows won't take it up, there are others," said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm giving you first chance as you belong to my study."

"After that, we can't refuse to hear it, anyway," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Go ahead, Billy!"

"Come into a quiet spot, then! It's a dead secret."

"Lead on, Macduff," said Bob Cherry; "and if it's some more of your silly rot, mind, you will get a thick ear!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Oh, get on, and don't jaw!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at Bob Cherry, but he led the way to a quiet spot, the Greyfriars chums following him. In a corner, by a deep window, Bunter stopped, and looked cautiously round. Bunter was extremely short-sighted, and the enormous glasses he wore did not assist his vision very much, to judge by the ludicrous blunders he was continually making. On the present occasion, at least a dozen fellows observed his cautious glance round, and some of them strolled up to see what was on. But the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not observe them.

"Well, get on with the washing," said Nugent impatiently.

"I'm getting on with it, Nugent; but I wish you wouldn't interrupt me, and throw my ideas into confusion. I am always confused when people interrupt me."

"Are you going to get on?"

"Ain't I getting on? I was saying that I always get confused when I am interrupted, and so I do. Now, look here, would you fellows care for a big feed?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No, Cherry, it isn't a conundrum. That's the wheeze."

"If you want to stand a feed—"

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"That isn't it, either. I was thinking of doing so, but I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and I am rather short of funds at present. Of course, if any of you fellows cared to advance me something off the prize I am going to get in 'The Gem' Football Competition, I should not refuse—"

"You won't have the chance, I fancy."

"The certainfulness of my honourable chum's statement is terrific," purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The chancefulness will be nix."

"But that wasn't what I was going to speak to you about, you fellows. I know you're too jolly mean to lend me a few shillings. My idea was to raid a feed."

"Raid it! Are you thinking of robbing Mrs. Mimble, at the tuck-shop?"

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"Or is it a raid on the Upper Fourth?"

"No, it isn't. It's a raid on the aliens."

Bob Cherry gave a whistle.

"The aliens! How are we to raid them?"

"That's the idea! If you fellows will back me up, it will come off all right," said Billy Bunter eagerly. "I don't see what there is to cackle at in that suggestion, Bob Cherry. The aliens are going to stand a feed—"

"How do you know?"

"Because the fat chap Hoffmann came over to the school shop here early this morning, just before you had that row over the football, and laid in a big supply of grub. I was in the tuck-shop, and I saw him. He bought up dozens of sausages, and a good many other things, and when I asked him if he would lend me a string of sausages until my postal-order came, he only grinned at me and mumbled something in his lingo. I couldn't understand what it was, but I'm certain it was something disrespectful."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry, laughing. "And is that your great idea—to raid Fritz Hoffmann's sausages?"

"Well, there were other things in his basket, too—ham, and cold beef, and cheese, and several tins of salmon. I shouldn't wonder if he were going to stand a feed to the whole giddy academy. Don't you think it's a jolly good chance for a raid?"

"My hat!" chuckled Nugent. "Fancy Billy Bunter wanting to turn burglar!"

"Well, they have raided us, why shouldn't we raid them?"

"Good idea! But how?"

"Oh, you can rely on me! I shall lead you—"

"Yes, I can see you leading us—I don't think," said Bob Cherry, with a sniff. "It might be possible to raid the academy after dark, but I expect all that grub will be scoffed by tea-time."

"Oh, we can't leave it so late as that!" exclaimed Billy Bunter. "They may eat it if we let the grass grow under our feet. My idea was to raid the academy during the morning recess."

"In the broad daylight?"

"Nothing venture, nothing win, you know."

"You young ass! It's not quite good enough."

"I don't think you ought to hang back where I'm willing to lead, Cherry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton!"

"Not good enough, Billy—not at any price," said Harry, laughing. "You will have to think of something better if you are anxious for a free feed."

"But I say—I say, you fellows—"

But the chums of Study No. 1 were walking away. Billy Bunter blinked after them indignantly. The idea seemed to him simply ripping. He was not a venturesome youth by nature, but he would have run many risks to raid a good feed. It was too bad to have to give up a really ripping idea for want of proper backing up. He turned round as he felt a tap on his shoulder.

"Hallo, Russell!"

"It isn't Russell," said the voice of Ernest Levison. "I heard what you said to Wharton, Billy—"

"Oh, did you!" said Billy. "Just like you to listen—"

"Ow! Leggo my ear! You'll make my glasses fall off if you shake me like that, Levison, and if they break, you'll have to pay for them! Ow! What I really meant to say was that I'm jolly glad you heard me speaking to Wharton."

"That's better," said Levison, releasing the fat ear, which Billy Bunter proceeded to rub ruefully. "Wharton won't help you in this scheme."

"It's a case of jealousy," said Billy Bunter. "Wharton is always touchy when he thinks I am likely to eclipse him in any way. I don't see what there is to cackle at in that, Levison."

"Certainly not," said Levison, cackling all the same. "A fellow of your abilities, Bunt, must expect to meet with jealousy."

"Well, I do, of course; but it's annoying, all the same," said the fat junior. "It seems a sin to lose that feed, because—"

"Well, you can get somebody else to back you up."

"H'm, yes; perhaps—"

"No 'perhaps' about it," said Levison heartily. "I'm one, and I'll soon get some of the other fellows to join in—Skinner and Bulstrode and Stott."

Billy Bunter brightened up wonderfully.

"Ripping!" he exclaimed. "With four fellows to help, I could manage all right. You see, I should remain in—the background, directing operations. Good generals always do that, you know. A good general never goes under fire."

"Of course not!" agreed Levison. "And we should go ahead, and leave you behind directing operations, of course—I don't think," he added, under his breath.

"Good. You're a sensible chap, Levison. Now, my idea was for me to stand in the gate, you know, t'other side of the Cloisters, and direct you. You fellows will go into the academy grounds, and enter the building at different points, and look for the grub. It's bound to be hidden in the dormitory or in one of the studies. I will remain on the watch—in the gateway, and—direct operations. You can rely on me to do that."

"Yes, I am sure we can rely on you to remain in the gateway, Billy. I'll speak to Skinner, and Stott, and Bulstrode, and we'll try after first lessons."

"Good—jolly good!" said Billy Bunter, with great satisfaction.

And he went in to breakfast with a beaming smile upon his fat face. Levison did speak to Bulstrode, Stott, and Skinner, and the way they laughed when he explained to them, showed that they considered the wheeze to be an excellent one; but whether Levison's intentions were just the same as Billy Bunter's was another matter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Leads.

BILLY BUNTER looked extremely pleased with himself that morning. The prospect of shining as a party leader, and of capturing a substantial feed, and eating it afterwards, was a very attractive one to the fat junior. He was a little absentminded in class, and brought down Mr. Quelch's wrath upon himself by random replies. When the Remove master wished to know the chief product of Lancashire, Billy Bunter absently replied "German sausages," much to the amazement of the master and the Form. An imposition of fifty lines brought him to himself. He was very glad when the class was dismissed after first lessons for the usual recess at eleven o'clock. Bulstrode, Levison, Stott, and Skinner followed the fat junior out into the Close.

Bunter blinked round at his followers.

"You fellows ready?" he asked.

"Here we are," said Levison. "Large as life."

"Good! Back me up, and we'll have the feed all right. Come on."

And Billy Bunter, with a very important air, led the way across the Close. Levison & Co. winked at one another solemnly, and followed him.

Bob Cherry glanced after them from the doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "Billy has raised an army after all! Look there!"

Harry Wharton frowned a little.

"I suppose they are rotting," he said. "Bunter is ass enough to be taken in, though he ought to know Levison and Skinner by this time."

"Ha, ha! It will do him good. Perhaps he won't be so anxious to shine as a leader after this experiment."

Billy Bunter, however, had no misgivings. He marched on, with his head held very high, and his nose in the air. The raiders disappeared into the Cloisters. They reached the gate that gave access to the academy grounds, and found it shut.

"H'm! That's because of the row this morning," said Levison. "It's fastened, too. The aliens don't seem to be in sight. Are you going to get over the gate, Bunt?"

"Oh, no!" said Bunter. "It is my place, as leader, to direct operations. You fellows will climb over the gate, and I shall direct operations from here. I can see through the bars, you know, so it is really just as good as if I came over the gate."

Levison shook his head solemnly.

"I think you ought to climb over the gate, Bunter. It would give us more confidence if you were with us."

"Oh, really, Levison—"

"Much more confidence," said Skinner. "Of course, we don't want our leader to enter the house; but he ought to be inside the gate."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Certainly," said Bulstrode. "Bunter climbs the gate first of all, and directs operations standing inside. Then we carry out his instructions."

Bunter hesitated. He didn't want to get on the dangerous side of the gate. But his followers had evidently made up

their minds, and he reflected that if they came scuttling back with the aliens after them, he could climb the gate and escape first.

"Well, if it will give you fellows more confidence," he said reluctantly, "I don't mind. Are there any of the aliens in sight, Levison?"

As a matter of fact, Fritz Hoffmann and Limburger were standing near a corner of the red brick academy, staring at the group of juniors through the gate. But the Owl of the Remove was far too short-sighted to see them. Levison shut his eyes tight, and turned his face towards the academy.

"I can't see any," he said.

"That's all right, then! Give me a bunk up!"

"Right you are!"

The Removites gave Bunter the required bunk. He clambered to the top of the gate, and succeeded in putting one fat leg across it. Hoffmann and Limburger watched the proceeding in absolute astonishment. For one of the Greyfriars juniors to invade their quarters under their very eyes seemed to them the very pinnacle of cheek.

"Mein gootness!" murmured Hoffmann. "I tinks tat ve collars tat sheeky rotter, ain't it?"

"I tinks so," said Limburger.

Bunter rested on top of the gates, gasping for breath.

"I—I think I'll stop here, you fellows!" he exclaimed.

"I—I can see better from the top of the gate, and can direct operations from here much better than from the ground inside."

The Removites had climbed the gate, and were sitting astride of the top. Bulstrode grasped Bunter by the shoulder.

"Better get down inside, Billy. It will give us more confidence."

"I—I— Hold on, Bulstrode! Don't shake me like that! I—I shall fall!" howled Billy Bunter, as the Remove bully, under pretence of helping him, forced him over on to the inner side of the gate. "I—I—I shall fall! I— Ow! Oh!"

Bunter swung over the gate, clinging on by his hands, and kicking wildly against the bars. He held on for a few seconds, and then dropped. His spectacles fell off, and he stooped and groped for them.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm quite out of breath! Come over, if you're coming! There's no time to waste! Where are those beastly spectacles?"

"There they are, just by your hoof," grinned Stott.

"Dear me, so they are!" Bunter jammed his spectacles on his little, fat nose. "Come on, you fellows! I suppose you're not going to hold back now I've led the way? Ow! Who is that? Is that you, Bulstrode?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

He was still on the top of the gate, and so were the others. It was Fritz Hoffmann who had hold of Billy Bunter.

"Ach! I have got him, pefore!"

"Soh! Ve captures him!" grinned Limburger.

Bunter nearly fainted when he found himself in the grasp of the aliens. He yelled frantically to the practical jokers on the gate.

"Help! Rescue! Ow! Help!"

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

"Rescue!"

"Ve capture him after, ain't it?" chuckled Hoffmann.

"Pring him away."

"Sehr goot!"

The two Germans dragged away the unfortunate Bunter. The yelling of the dismayed captive brought a horde of aliens racing round the corner of the building from the playground beyond. There was a yell of delight as the prisoner was seen.

"Ciel! It is ze prisoner of var!" exclaimed Meunier.

"Goot!"

"Pravo!"

"Leggo! Lemme alone! I'll get out if you like. I'm sincerely sorry I came over the gate!" howled Billy Bunter. "It was that beast Bulstrode's fault! Hellup! I'll get out! Don't pull me about like that! Rescue! Beasts! Ow! Oh!"

"Ach! Ve have got him!"

"Ciel! Ve catches him, and ve makes ze example of him!"

"Duck him in ze fountain!"

"Pravo!"

"Goot! Duck him in te fountain pefore!"

"Hellup—hellup! Oh!"

A dozen pair of hands were grasping the fat junior. He was yanked along with a speed that took his breath away, and there was a sudden terrific splash as he was plumped into the fountain. He gave a strangled gasp as the water closed over him, and he was dragged out again as limp as a rag.

"Ow! Hellup! Murder! Help!"

"Is it zat you are sorrowful zat you entair our quarters?" demanded Adolphe Meunier.

"Help! Fire!"

"Duck him in ze fountain vun ozzer time!"

"Himmel! Duck him in!"

"Mercy!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm sorry; I'm anything you like! I'm wet all over! I—I—I'll get out if you'll only let me go! It's that beast Levison's fault! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ze fat peeg cry for ze mercy!"

"It is vun glorious victory, mein friends!"

"You vas right, my dear Fritz!"

"I am fery bleased mit your goot opinion, my dear Adolphe!"

"Help! Ow! I'm dripping all over! Groo! Lemme go!"

"Keeck him out!"

"Shuck him out!"

Hoffmann released the wriggling Bunter. He pointed to the gate.

"Fat you runs for it," he said. "Ve giffs you vun second start, ain't it?"

Billy Bunter understood. It was not much of a start, but he darted off, and the running he put up under those trying circumstances would have done him credit on the cinder-path. The aliens, with a shrieking whoop, swarmed on his track; but Bunter reached the gate. He clambered blindly up, and Levison lent him a hand, and he was dragged over.

He dropped on the safe side panting and palpitating like a frightened rabbit. The jokers of the Remove shrieked with laughter. The aliens were shrieking also through the bars of the gate.

"The game seems to be up," said Bulstrode. "No good trying to raid the aliens if our leader turns tail like this."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, I'm off!" said Bulstrode, and he walked away with Levison, Skinner, and Stott, the four of them roaring with laughter. Billy Bunter picked himself up, water squelching out of his clothes and his boots. He wiped his dimmed spectacles, and jammed them furiously on his nose.

Meunier was rattling at the fastening of the gate, and Bunter, terrified at the idea of falling into hostile hands again, bolted through the Cloisters.

A hand grasped him by the shoulder in the Close, and stopped him.

"Leggo!" shrieked Bunter. "Leggo, Bulstrode, you ead! They're after me!"

"It's not Bulstrode, ass!"

"Oh, is that you, Cherry? They're after me!"

"They're not," said Harry Wharton, with a glance in the direction of the Cloisters. "It's all right, Bunty. How did you get in that shocking state?"

"The—the beasts ducked me in the fountain!" gasped Bunter.

"Phew! Have you been over the gate?"

"Yes, and the rotters wouldn't back me up! They were only fooling all the time. Beasts, I call them! Ow! I know I shall catch a cold!"

"You certainly will, if you don't be quick and change your things," said Wharton. "Cut off, and get a good rub down."

Billy Bunter cut off. But the damage was done, and when he came down after changing his things he was sniffing and snuffing. There had a short time before been an epidemic of colds in the Remove, and Bunter's cold seemed to have come back now in a more malignant form; and Bulstrode & Co., instead of showing the sympathy which the fat junior naturally expected, seemed to regard his cold as really the cream of the joke.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Deputation from the Allens

"ORDAIR!"

"Tat is right. Order dere, ain't it?"

"Sehr goot! Order, and do not crowd!"

"I zink zat ve impressed zem," said Adolphe Meunier, "zat ve keeps in good order; and mind, mes enfants, I speak to ze rotters ovair zere."

"I tink tat I do te speaking petter, Adolphe Meunier."

"I know zat I do him better, Fritz Hoffmann."

"I tink—"

"I zink—"

"Interrupt me nod, you French ass!"

"I interrupts you as often as I like, you Sherman peeg!"

"French peast!"

"Sherman rottair!"

And then there was a scramble. The aliens were mustering in the Cloisters after school hours, in the dusk of the dim November evening. They had decided to send a deputation over to the Greyfriars Remove with a challenge to a football match—or, as they called it, feetball—and they intended to make the deputation an imposing one.

Half a dozen aliens had been selected as deputies, and most of the others had come to the Cloisters to see them off. Unfortunately, the old dispute between French and Germans had restarted, and bade fair to nip the scheme in the bud. Limburger pushed his way forward as Hoffmann and Meunier staggered against a stone pillar in frantic combat.

"Tat you hold on!" he exclaimed. "I tells you—"
 "French peastly pounder!"
 "Fat Sherman rottair!"
 "I giffs you licking!"
 "I trashes you fearfully!"
 "Peeg!"
 "Beast!"
 "Tat you shuts up!" roared Limburger. "Hold on, and stop, ain't it? Is tat how you sends te deputation, fat-heads?"

"It is te fault of tat French peast—"
 "It is all due to zat Sherman rottair—"
 "Stop, I say! Let it be tat you make friends and embrace, for te good of te cause," said Limburger persuasively.

"Ciel! Zat is ze good idea," exclaimed Charpentier, "zat you embrace for ze good of ze cause!"
 And they dragged the combatants apart. Hoffmann and Meunier had both received some severe knocks and scratches, and they were not unwilling to cease fighting.

"I tinks I makes friends if Meunier vish it!" gasped Hoffmann.
 "I zink I make ze friend viz my dear Fritz of ze good heart."

"I embrace my lofed Adolphe!"
 "I kees my dear Fritz!"
 And they forthwith embraced and kissed. This being amicably settled, amidst the plaudits and tears of the rest of the emotional aliens, the discussion of the order of the deputation was resumed, the rivalry of Hoffmann and Meunier being now replaced by an overpowering politeness.

"Ze post of ze speaker of ze deputation I leaves to my dear Fritz," said Meunier. "I backs him up."

Hoffmann shook his head.
 "Nein, nein, mein friend! Te post of te speaker I leafs to you, and I packs you up."

"I backs you up, my lofed Fritz!"
 "I packs you up, my dear Adolphe!"
 "You speak ze bettair of ze two."

"Nein, nein! You speaks te petter of te two."
 "Let it be tat you both speaks," said Limburger. "You both speaks and packs one anoder up, ain't it?"

"I tink tat is a goot idea."
 "I agrees to zat viz ze good heart."
 "Zen let us go!" exclaimed Lasalle.
 "Ve are retty pefore, ain't it?"

The deputation formed up again. The six chosen juniors marched off two and two into the Greyfriars ground, and the aliens in the Cloisters sent a cheer after them. Hoffmann and Meunier went first, then Charpentier and Limburger, and then Lasalle and Sachs. They marched across the Close with an air of great dignity, and reached the house without hindrance, as most of the Greyfriars fellows were indoors in the raw November evening. But as soon as they entered, and looked into the junior common-room, there was a yell.

"Hallo, aliens!"
 "Cheek, coming here!" grunted Billy Bunter. "Bedder dug them in the fountain, and give the beasts a gold, same as they've given me."

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze!" said Bulstrode.
 Meunier waved his hands in sign of peace.

"Ve are a deputation," he announced. "Ve come in amity. Ve vishes to see Vharton."

The aliens were looking into the junior common-room. They did not enter, not liking exactly the looks of the Greyfriars juniors.

"Collar them!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Let's duck the rotters in the fountain!"

"Serve them right!" grunted Bunter. "Give the beasts a gold each!"

"I say zat ve are a deputation, and ve come viz shallenge."

"Tat is righd; ve come mit challenge."
 "Where is Vharton?"

"Tat is it—where is Vharton?"

"Wharton's in his study," grinned Bulstrode, "so are his friends. But you can deal with us. We're here."

"Rather!" said Skinner. "And the fountain's just outside!"

"Dug them! Dug the rodders!"
 "I say zat ve are a deputation! Zat you keep off!" exclaimed Adolphe Meunier. "Ve come in peace viz you."

"Rush them!" shouted Bulstrode.

Some of the juniors made a rush. The deputation scattered back along the passage, and tore upstairs. Bulstrode & Co. dashed after them, but the aliens were quicker. They reached No. 1 Study safely.

Meunier flung the door open. Bulstrode stopped on the stairs. He did not care to pursue them into Harry Wharton's quarters. The aliens breathlessly rushed into the study. The Famous Four were at their preparation, and they started up in surprise at the sudden invasion of the foreign youths.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Aliens!"
 "Cheek!" ejaculated Nugent, picking up the fire shovel.

"Raiding our own quarters! Go for them!"
 "The cheekfulness is terrific!"

"Beace! Ve come in beace!"
 "Zat is correct. Ve come in peace, mes enfants. Let zere be peace!"

"Easy with the shovel, Nugent!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "What do you chaps want here? Don't jabber all at once."

"Ve are a deputation."
 "You're a—a what?"

"A deputation. Ve comes to pring te challenge."
 "Zat is correct. Ve comes to bring ze shallenge."

Harry Wharton stared at them.
 "What challenge? What are you going to challenge us to?"

"You explain to ze rottair, my dear Fritz."
 "Nein, nein! You explain to te pounder, my dear Adolphe."

"You vill put ze mattair moosh bettair zan I could."
 "Not at all, my dear Adolphe. You puts him petter tan I."

"My dear Fritz —"
 "My dear Adolphe —"

"If you chaps are ever coming to the point, come," said Harry Wharton. "We've got our work to do, and we can't stand here all the evening watching you bow to one another."

"The impossiblefulness is terrific!"
 "C'est vrai. Zey are peeegs, my dear Fritz, and not comprehend ze Continental politeness!"

"Tat is ferry true, mein lofed Adolphe."
 "Zen, if you insist, I explains, and you backs me up."

"I do insist, and I packs you up after!"
 "You pack him up?" said Bob Cherry. "What on earth are you going to pack him up for? Is he going on a journey?"

"You not understands pefore."
 "Blessed if I do! Are you going to label him when you pack him up?"

"I packs him up —"
 "Zat is correct. I speak ze speech, and my beloved Fritz pack me up viz himself. Ve are ze deputation from ze academy, and ve shallenges you."

"Good! What's the challenge?"
 "To ze game of football."

"What?" roared the Removites, with one voice.
 Meunier grinned with delight at the impression his challenge had created.

"Ze game of football," he repeated. "Ve shallenges you to meet us at ze game, and ve vill giff you vun fearful licking viz yourselves!"

"Tat is right—a fearful licking, mein friends; and ve puts you in your place after."

The Famous Four stared at the deputation. The aliens, pleased with the impression they had made, raised their noses a little higher in the air, and shrugged up their shoulders.

Amazement held the chums of the Remove silent for one moment. Then they surprised the deputation by bursting into an uncontrollable roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Declined with Thanks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The aliens stared at the Removites in astonishment.

At first they thought that the laughter was a pretence to cover up fear and uneasiness at the challenge, but they soon saw that it was genuine. As a matter of fact, the Famous Four were simply convulsed with merriment. The idea of the aliens playing football at all was amusing, after what they had seen that morning; but to think of playing the Remove—the Greyfriars Remove—was really too funny.

The four chums yelled with laughter, and the tears ran down their cheeks as they vainly tried to control their mirth.

Amazement gave place to indignation in the looks of the aliens. They exchanged glances, and they shrugged their shoulders, and elevated their noses still higher in the air. And the Famous Four roared again.

"Football?" sobbed Bob Cherry. "I beg pardon—football! They are going to play ze football?"

"Good old football!" gurgled Nugent. "They are going to play football—with feet, and hands, and teeth, and finger-nails?"

"My hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "They—they are too funny to live!"

"The funniffulness is terrific!"

"Football! Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!"

"Ze football," said Nugent. "Yes; I can see them playing the Remove. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hoffmann, Meunier & Co. glared at the convulsed Removites. They began to see that they had not impressed the Famous Four very much after all.

"Ach! I tinks——"

"I zink——"

"Sorry!" gasped Harry Wharton. "You must excuse us; we couldn't help it. You see, your challenge struck us as funny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We—we never expected a challenge to play football——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We call it football ourselves; but, of course, that's a detail——"

"Ze game is played viz both feet, I zink?" said Meunier.

"Yes; but——"

"Zen I zink zat ze proper name is football. If it is ze football, you play viz only vun of ze feet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tink tat my lofed Adolphe is quite right, ain't it?"

"Oh, football if you like!" said Wharton. "Of course, you would know. You play the game so splendidly. But——"

"You takes our challenge?"

"Well, you see, we haven't any convenient dates just now——"

"If you refuse our challenge, Wharton, ve tinks you are afraid, ain't it? Ve denounces you as te coward."

"That will be rather rough, of course," grinned Wharton; "but I think we'll risk even that rather than play football with such a ripping team as you are!"

"Rather!" murmured Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"I tinks tat you are afraid. You make mooch show of te football, and ven you get a challenge you dodges out of him. Yah!"

"Yah!" said the deputation in chorus.

"I points te finger of scorn at you!" And Hoffmann suited the action to the word. "Ach! Ve despises you—do ve not, my dear Adolphe?"

"Ve do, my lofed Fritz—ve does! I also point de fingair of ze scorn."

And Meunier did so. The whole deputation followed suit, and six fingers of scorn were solemnly pointed at the chums of the Remove. Strange to say, instead of being crushed thereby, they went off into a fresh yell of laughter.

"Tat is to hide deir mortification," murmured Fritz Hoffmann. "I tink tat in deir heart dey feel ferry schmall."

"Zat is correct, my dear Fritz."

"Oh, my word!" said Wharton, wiping the tears from his eyes. "We—we can't accept your challenge, you know, because——"

"Because you fears te licking!" said Fritz Hoffmann majestically.

"No. But, you see, there are difficulties in the way. What kind of football—I mean football—do you play?"

"Ve have not play mooch so far, but ve are taking up te game."

"Zat is correct."

"And when do you want the match to come off?"

"On Saturday afternoon ve plays you and peats you hollow. Ve have been learning te football for several days, and ve plays up vell."

"They've been learning football for several days," murmured Bob Cherry faintly. "Oh, carry me away to die somewhere!"

"It vill be te first match ve have played mit an outside team," said Fritz Hoffmann. "I have no doubt tat ve licks you hollow pefore."

"I zink zat is certain."

And the deputation all solemnly nodded their heads. What they did not know about football would have filled large volumes, but they had a sublime confidence in themselves.

Wharton hardly knew what to say. The aliens had come over with the challenge in deadly earnest, and he did not want to hurt their feelings, but the idea of meeting them on the football-field was too funny to be seriously entertained.

"What kind of game do you play?" he said, trying to be serious. "You see——"

"Ve plays ze game of football."

"Do you play Rugby?"

"Ve have not play any outside matches yet. Ve want to play Greyfriars first, and after zat ve plays ozzer public schools."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I mean, do you play the Rugby game? I should think that was what you were aiming at when I saw you playing this morning."

"Ve plays football."

It was evident that Meunier had never heard of the Rugby code, and probably he was quite unaware that there were two varieties of the national game.

"But there are two kinds of football," Wharton explained patiently. "Rugby is one——"

"Generally called Rugger," interposed Bob Cherry, "on account of the ructions which often arise in the game."

"And Association is the other."

"Usually called Soccer," went on the voracious Bob, "because, when you play it, you're supposed to give them socks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it, Bob!" said Harry, laughing. "You see, Meunier, there are two varieties of the game, and you don't know——"

"T'other from which," said Bob Cherry.

"And so it will be impossible——"

"I zink zat you seek to evade ze shallenge because you are afraid."

"I tink te same as my dear friend Adolphe."

"My dear chaps, we'd play a match with you with pleasure, but you don't know as much about football as you do about the Chinese alphabet!"

"I zink zat you dodges because you are afraid."

"I tink so, too."

"Oh, it's no good arguing with you!" said Wharton, laughing. "It's a custom in England to learn football for more than a few days before you start challenging teams to play matches with you."

"Zat is all right for ze stupid English. Ze Frenchmen learn ze game quick——"

"And te Sherman learn him ferry quick, ain't it?"

"Ve brands you as a coward if you not play."

"Goot! Ve prands him as a goward!"

"Oh, go ahead with the branding, then!" said Wharton. "Go and get it done while we're finishing our prep. Good-night!"

Meunier waved his hand dramatically.

"Ciel! I despises you, and points ze finger of ze scorn at you! Adieu!"

And the deputation solemnly pointed six fingers of scorn at the Removites once more, and then shrugged up their shoulders, and marched out of the study.

Harry Wharton sank into a chair, and gasped with merriment.

"My only hat!" he murmured. "Those fellows are too funny to live! I can see the Remove team playing a match with them. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that fearful row?"

There was a sound of bumping on the stairs. The chums rushed to the door. The alien deputation was being rolled down the stairs by Bulstrode & Co., who had been waiting for them to come out.

Wharton ran downstairs with knitted brows.

"Let them alone; they're a deputation!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode.

Harry slung him aside, and he sat down with violence on the stairs.

The other Removites crowded back at the Form captain's voice, and the breathless aliens took to their heels, and vanished in the dusk of the Close.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Disappointment for Bunter.

THE chums of the Remove were still chuckling over the visit of the aliens and the absurd challenge, when Billy Bunter came into the study.

Bunter's face was very glum. His nose was red, and his eyes were watering, and he kept up a sniffling and a snuffling that were almost incessant. He certainly had a cold, but his sufferings were probably not quite so great as he wished the Removites to believe.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in apparent surprise. "Billy's got a cold!"

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"You knew I'd got a cold!" he grunted.

"Did I? Yes, now I think of it, so I did!" assented Bob

Cherry. "I suppose it's the same cold you had this afternoon?"

Bunter did not deign to reply to that frivolous question. He turned to Harry Wharton. The captain of the Lower Fourth had finished his prep., and had opened the latest number of "The Gem," to look at the football pictures.

"I say, Whartod, you can see I've got a gold?" he remarked.

"Yes, you look like it, Billy," assented Wharton. "Have you seen this week's pictures yet?"

"I'm too ill to think about football competitions!" grunted Bunter. "You know what I need for a cold."

"Exercise is a good thing," said Bob Cherry. "If you like, I'll chase you up and down the corridor with a knotted towel. I'd willingly do any little thing I could to cure you. You might give us the cold if you're not cured."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Or you could give up eating for a time," suggested Nugent. "You feed a fever and starve a cold, you know."

"A lot you know about it!" grunted Billy Bunter. "You feed a gold and starve a fever. I should think everybody knows that. I was going to suggest, as there's danger of you fellows catching my cold—"

"You were going to suggest staying out of the study till you're well?"

"Nothing of the sort, Nugent. I—"

"You could put up in the box-room, you know."

"Oh, really, Nugent! I was going to suggest that you fellows should club together and help me get rid of the gold by feeding it."

"The cheekfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific."

"I don't see it!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "We had an epidemic of golds here a short time ago. I suppose you don't want all that over again—the whole Remove going about coughing and sneezing and snuffing. And I'm jolly dangerous when I've got a gold. People always catch it. You fellows are bound to have it."

"You'll get slain if you give it to me," said Bob Cherry. "I sha'n't kiss you good-night till you're quite well again, so there!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I wish you wouldn't make fun of a serious subject. It would be no joke for me to expire in agony in this study some evening when you're doing your prep.—"

"You'll jolly well get a thick ear if you start doing anything of the sort!"

"I've got a delicate constitution, and I can only keep going by having plenty of nourishing food. The proper thing to do with a gold is to feed it. I shall have to raise funds somehow to feed it. It's important. I have been disappointed about a postal order, or I wouldn't think of troubling you selfish bounders on the subject."

"Which postal order have you been disappointed about?" asked Bob Cherry innocently. "The one that was coming this morning, the one that was coming last week, or the one that was coming the week before?"

"As a matter of fact, I've had several disappointments lately. People are so selfish, and the post is so unreliable. I was going down to the post-office to inquire about a postal order, only this beastly gold has come on and stopped me. I'm pretty sure there's a letter for me there, and the idiots haven't delivered it. But apart from the postal order, you know jolly well I shall be in funds in a few weeks, when I have roped in 'The Gem' prize of a pound a week for thirteen weeks. I'm willing to pay ten per cent. for the use of a loan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Whartod, how much can you advance me off that pound a week?"

"Sixpence!" said Harry, laughing.

"Oh, really, Whartod!"

"The fact is, the Fifth of November has run away with most of the cash," said Harry. "We're short of tin. Besides that, I don't believe in gorging as a cure for a cold. It would be better for you to lead the simple life for a bit."

"You ought to know that the proper thing is feeding a gold—"

"Well, feed it in moderation, then. We're not starved here. You get enough meals for any ordinary hippopotamus—"

"Oh, really, Whartod—"

"And you ought to slacken down when you're ill. If you didn't overeat yourself, you wouldn't be so liable to catch colds."

"I suppose a fellow can't help catching a gold when he's dugged in a fountain," said Billy Bunter. "If you fellows had bagged me up, as I wanted you to, those rodders couldn't have played that rodden trick on me."

"The fact is, Bunt, you're not cut out for a leader, and raiding is quite out of your line," said Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, I know my abilities have caused a lot of jealousy in this study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, the question is, what am I to do about feeding my gold? I don't want to give it to all the Remove. I should be sincerely sorry to see you fellows catch it; but that's bound to happen if I don't get cured."

"Ask Mr. Quelch to send you into the sanatorium."

Billy Bunter shuddered. "I was put in the sanatorium last time, Whartod. They give you hardly anything to eat, and I was a mere ghost when I came out."

"A jolly substantial ghost!" said Bob Cherry.

"I felt that I had been wastig away. Of course, I don't expect sympathy in this study," said Billy Bunter. "I thig you might raise a fund for curing my gold, though—if only for your own sakes."

"My hat! It would be cheap to shut him up for a couple of bob!" said Bob Cherry. "There's my only tanner to the good cause!"

"And there's another!" said Wharton.

"And there's threepence," said Nugent. "That leaves me a French penny."

The Nabob of Bhanipur added a half-crown to the little heap of coins.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"Well, that's not so bad!" he remarked, gathering up the coins. "I regard this as a loan, of course."

"Oh, of course," said Nugent; "you always do."

"Oh, really, Nugent! I want that to be distinctly understood. I know there are fellows in some quarters who regard me in the light of a cadger, but I don't think anybody here can say that I ever received any tin as a gift."

"The correctfulness of the honourable dummy's statement is terrific."

"I regard this as a loan, to be repaid out of the prize in 'The Gem' football competition. Let me see—sixpence to Whartod, sixpence to Cherry, threepence to Nugent, and two-and-six to Inky. That's three-and-ninepence. If you like to stand another threepence, it will make a level four bob."

The nabob silently drew three pennies from his pocket, and passed them to Bunter.

Billy Bunter jingled them into his pocket.

"I'll enter it all up on the account," he said. "I owe you fellows some liddle accounts already—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to gackle at in that, Cherry. I owe you fellows some liddle accounts already, and I'll put these on. I'd bedder be getting along now before Mrs. Mible gloses the dugshop."

And Billy Bunter hurried off to the school shop.

Bulstrode was lounging in the doorway, and he grinned at the sight of Billy's red and puffy face.

"Got a cold?" he asked, with an air of surprise.

"You know jolly well I've got a gold," said Bunter. "It was all your fault, too!"

"Well, if a reckless fellow will go dashing into danger, without thinking of the odds—"

Bunter looked pleased. He rather fancied the picture of himself as a reckless fellow rushing into danger.

"Well, I suppose it can't be helped," he said. "I was always rather reckless when my blood was up, you know. Fellows often thig I'm a peaceful chap, but I'm nod, you know. When my blood's up, I go ahead like anything. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you're gackling at," said Bunter, dimly realising that Bulstrode had been joking. "I thig you're a rodder, anyway. The least you can do under the circumstances is to help me feed my gold."

"Is that what you've come here for?" grinned Skinner, coming up.

"Yes, rather! The fellows in No. 1 have raised four bob for me to feed my gold, and—"

Bulstrode shook his head solemnly.

"It won't do, Bunter."

"What won't do?"

"Feeding a cold. You ought to feed a fever and starve a cold."

"No, you've got it wrong, Bulstrode. You feed a gold, and starve a fever."

"I suppose I ought to know," said Bulstrode. "If you're going to contradict me, Bunter, you'd better—"

"I—I don'd want to contradict you, Bulstrode!" gasped Bunter, as the Remove bully's look had grown threatening.

"I— It's all right. Have it which way you like, but I'm going to feed my gold. I suppose I can do as I like with my own gold?"

"That's just where you make the mistake," said Bulstrode. "You say you've got four bob?"

"Yes; they subscribed it in Study No. 1—"

"Show it me!"

Bunter drew out the handful of assorted coins. Bulstrode gripped his wrist, and calmly extracted the coins from his palm. Bunter watched this proceeding in utter dismay.

"Wh-wh-whad are you doig, Bulstrode?" he gasped.

"You owe me this tin," said Bulstrode. "I'll have it off the old account."

"But—but—I—I say, Bulstrode——"

"Don't you owe me the money?" exclaimed Bulstrode threateningly.

"Ye-e-e-es, I owe you some tin—you used to lend me money when you were in Study No. 1, before Cherry came——"

"Well, then, isn't it about time you squared?"

"I—I—I've been disappointed about a postal order."

"I'll take this on account, and you can square up the rest when the postal order comes," said Bulstrode, with a grin. "Fact is, money is tight just now. I blued all my tin on the Fifth. This will come in useful."

"But—but—but really——"

"It's all right. Come and have a feed, Skinner, old chap?"

"Certainly!" grinned Skinner.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I—— You're not goig to rob me like that, Bulstrode!"

"What's that?" roared Bulstrode. "Rob you! Don't you owe me the money, and ten times as much, you young sweep?"

"Ye-e-e-es, but—but——"

"Then what have you got to complain about? Here, come in, and you can have a few tarts if you like. There's nothing mean about me."

The bully of the Remove went into the tuckshop with Skinner. Bunter stood gazing after him in dismay. But one thing was certain—there was no getting the money back from Bulstrode. And it was useless to complain to anybody, for, as a matter of fact, his indebtedness to Bulstrode amounted to several pounds in all. Bulstrode was good-natured sometimes, and he was often in funds; and Billy Bunter had a way of extracting money from the most unlikely individuals. It occurred to Billy that he might as well have the tarts, at all events, so he followed Bulstrode and Skinner into the shop. The two practical jokers of the Remove were chuckling over their feed, enjoying Bunter's discomfiture as much as Mrs. Mible's good things. And Billy had the pleasure of seeing them dispose of a really good feast, while he had to content himself with half a dozen tarts, and penny ones at that.

Billy Bunter left the tuckshop with feelings too deep for words. He left Bulstrode and Skinner still eating cream-puffs and roaring with laughter.

The fat junior had cleared out Study No. 1 for the purpose of feeding his cold, and this was the result. His cold, like the sea, in Kipling's poem, cried to him still unfed.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Deceivers.

TEMPLE, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth at Greyfriars were chatting in the junior common-room, when Billy Bunter came in with a handkerchief to his nose, sniffing. The Upper Fourth fellows glanced at him, and sniffed, too.

"Young grampus!" said Temple. "You never see that chap but what he's sniffing and snorting."

"Ought to be muzzled," said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

"I've got a gold, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at the trio. "I don't subbose it will be gured until I'm able to feed it properly."

"You've always got a cold," grunted Temple.

"It's only the second one I've had this term."

"Well, why don't you keep in your own study when you've got a beastly cold, or go into the sanatorium? You might give it to us."

"I thig that's very likely," said Bunter. "I'm an awfully dangerous fellow to have a gold, as I always give it to people."

"Here, get farther off!"

"I say, you fellows, I've had lots of golds, and I've always gured them in the same way. They only want feeding. It has occurred to me that fellows who don't want to gatch my gold might raise some tin for me to feed it and guro it, for their own sakes. If you fellows like to raise ten bob or so for that purpose, you can have it back out of the pound a week prize in 'The Gem.'"

"Yes, I can see us doing it," remarked Temple.

"Oh, rather!" grinned Dabney.

"I say, you fellows, I could do with five bob, you know. I shouldn't have gaught this gold if Whartod had bagged me up properly this mornig. You know, I wish I had spoken to you fellows now instead, and——"

"Keep farther off, you puffing grampus!"

"Cerdainly, but I say, Temple, if you can stand five bob——"

"Well, he ought to have his cold cured," said Temple, with a wink at his companions. "I suppose that, as heads of the juniors, we are called upon to do something."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Just what I was thinking," Fry remarked, with a nod.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened. He knew that Temple had plenty of money, as a rule, and the sudden, obliging humour of the Upper Fourth trio made his hopes rise.

"I say, that's very decent of you, you fellows," he said eagerly. "Come to thig of it, it would be bedder to give the gold a really good feed, and a pound would be all right——"

"A pound of what?" asked Fry.

"I mean a pound—a sovereign, you know——"

"Oh, I see! Do you think a pound would be enough to give it a regular good feed, you know?" said Temple seriously.

"Well, of course, it would be done bedder on thirty bob," said Bunter, with beating heart. "I know you have lots of cash, Temple, and I wish I'd spoken to you before about it. You can have it all back out of 'The Gem' football prize."

"You're quite certain of getting that?"

"Oh, absolutely! You see, I'm the only fellow in the college who can really guess what the pictures mean. They represent the names of footballers, you know, and I guess them straight off every time, and the other fellows in Study No. 1 never have the same solutions that I get. I'm pretty certain of the first prize, and that's a pound a week for thirteen weeks—a jolly good prize. I'm goig to stand a series of big feeds when I get it, and I should be glad for you fellows to come. Yes, cerdainly, thirty shilligs would be enough for me now, Temple."

"Don't stint yourself, Bunter, you know. Make it as much as you like."

"Well, I must say that that's generous of you, Temple. Upon the whole, I suppose I may as well make it two pounds. That will cover everythig."

"But will two pounds be enough?"

"Yes, I thig so—unless you'd like to make it more——"

"It's not a question of what I like, but of what you need," said Temple solemnly.

"Your cold has to be cured at any price. No false modesty, you know. If two pounds wouldn't be enough, say so."

"Oh, rather!"

"Well, really, Temple, I must say this is ripping of you. Of course, though you can get a good feed for two pounds, you can get a bedder one for three. That stands to reason."

"Something in that, Dab?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Then you think three pounds would be about the mark?" said Temple.

"It would be ribbig!"

"Think it over once more, Bunt. Don't err on the side of being too moderate. In my opinion, a fiver would meet the case moré completely. Of course, I don't want to override your opinion," said Temple modestly. "Still, I can't help thinking that a fiver is what you really want to give your cold a thorough feeding."

"You—you're a prince," said Bunter, almost gasping. "A fiver would do me down ribbigly. If you can stand a fiver, Temple——"

"My dear Bunter, I can lend you a fiver quite as easily as I can lend you five bob."

"Good! Hand it over, then."

"Hand over what?"

"The fiver."

"What fiver?"

"The—the fiver you are goig to lend me."

"You're making a little mistake, Bunter," said Temple blandly. "I'm not going to lend you a fiver. What put that idea into your head?"

"I—I—you—you said——"

"My dear chap, I was simply trying to help you arrive at an exact estimate of what you really require for your cold."

"I—I—you—you—you——"

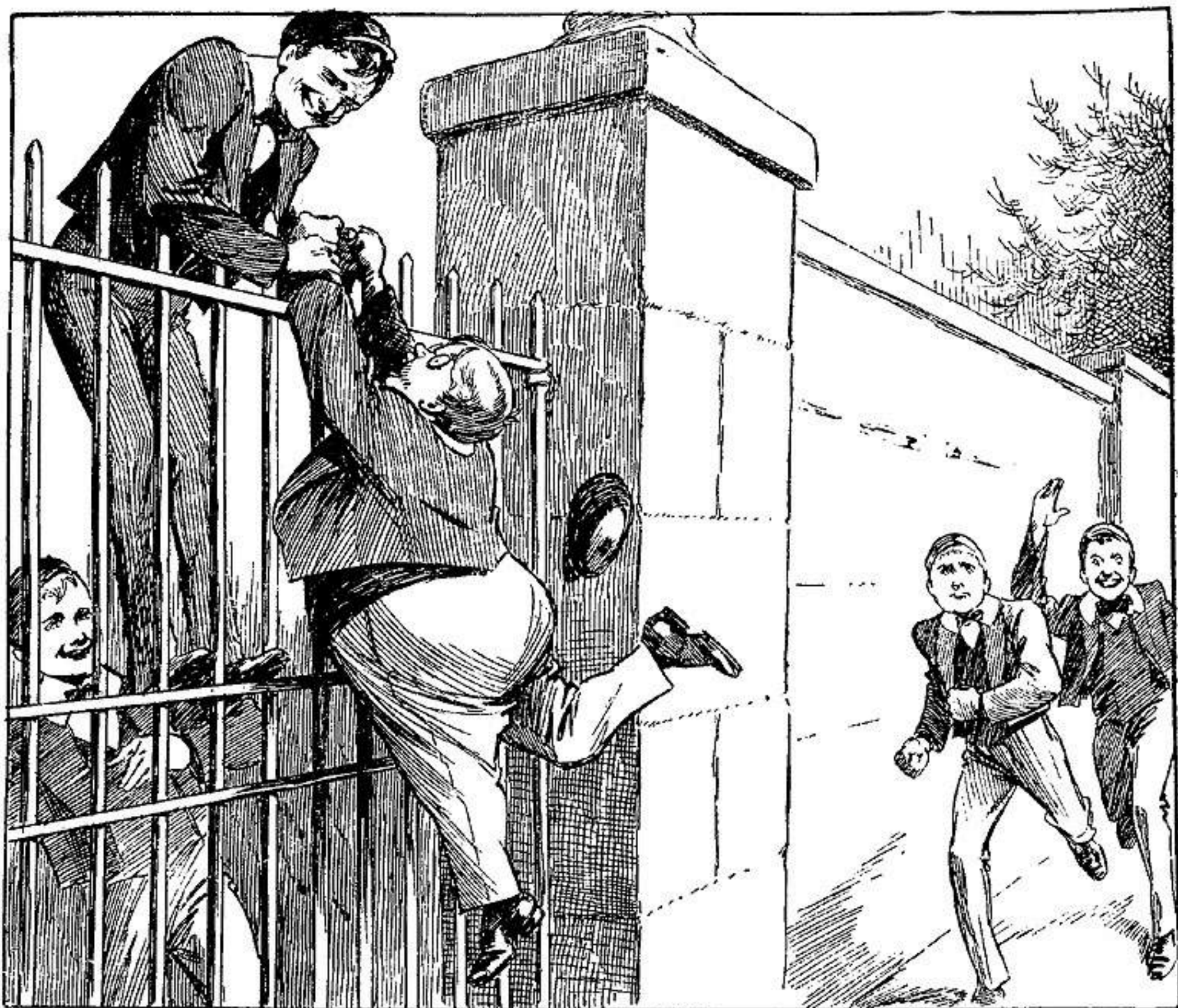
"I felt that I ought to do something for you," said Temple seriously. "I couldn't lend you any money, but I've helped you work it out, now, and you know exactly what you want. All you have to do now is to get somebody to lend you a fiver."

"Oh, rather!"

"I've no doubt somebody will jump at the chance. Anyway, I've done the best I can for you. You don't look grateful."

"You—you—you beast!"

"Such is life!" said Temple, looking pathetically at his chums. "You take a lot of trouble to help a chap because



Bunter clambered blindly up the gate, with the whooping aliens swarming on his track.

he's ill, and so far from feeling decently grateful, he calls you names. It reminds me of something in Shakespeare—or was it Milton—"

"Blessed if I know," said Fry.

"I forget now, but it was something that just meets the case—something about a thankless serpent, or something—or an ungrateful tooth—"

"It's from King Lear," grunted Fry. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

"Yes, that's it. I knew it was something about a serpent, or a tooth, or something. How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless Bunter."

"You beasts!" said Bunter.

"Oh, come away!" said Temple. "I can't stand ingratitude. There are a lot of things I can stand, but I can't stand ingratitude. There's something else in Shakespeare that touches on the case, but I can't recall it now; something about wintry wind—"

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind," said Fry, "'thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude.'"

"Good! Is that Shakespeare, or Tennyson?"

"Shakespeare, ass!"

"Oh, all right! Blow, blow, thou winter wind, thou art not so unkind as Bunter's ingratitude. How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is—"

"You rodders!"

"Oh, come away! The sight of ingratitude always affects me painfully," said Temple. "I've worked out the whole problem for him, and now he's only got to borrow a fiver of somebody, and still he is sharper than a serpent's tooth. Come away!"

And Temple, Dabney & Co. shook their heads solemnly and walked off, leaving Bunter gazing after them with an

absolutely ferocious expression upon his fat face. He had almost felt the crisp fiver rustling in his fingers, and it was too bad to be done like this.

"The rodders!" muttered Bunter. "They were only roddig all the time! I suppose I'd bedder go and try the Chineo, and if he fails me, I'll ask Mr. Quelch for an advance on my bogged money. I don't see why a Form-master shouldn't make a fellow an advance on his bogged money. I know he has advanced cash to Whartod before now, and I don't believe in favouritism."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Still Unfed.

THERE was a sweet smell proceeding from the study occupied by Wun Lung, the Chinese member of the Remove, as Billy Bunter drew near it—a very sweet smell to Bunter, for it was the fragrant odour of a stew. Wun Lung, the Chinese, was a great hand at cooking, though the materials he used were not always to the taste of English boys. Dogs and cats being common articles of diet in China, Wun Lung saw no harm in a dog soup or a cat stew, but the other fellows in the Remove quaked at the mere thought of them. The Remove had not forgotten a celebrated feed given by the Chinese junior, when they had discovered—too late—that the solid portion of the appetising stew he provided had been supplied by the housekeeper's Fido. And Bunter, after the first joyful sniff of the scent from the study, remembered Fido and shuddered.

He peeped in at the half-open door. There was a good fire in the grate, and a saucepan was bubbling on it. Wun Lung, with his loose sleeves pushed back, was attending to

the stew. He looked round as Bunter pushed the door open, and beamed upon the fat junior.

"Hallo!" said Bunter.

"Allee light," murmured the Celestial. "Comee in! Me pleasee if Buntel stayee to glub with me."

"Well, what kind of grub is it?" said Bunter suspiciously. "I'm jolly hungry, and I want to feed my gold, but I don't want any dog stews."

"No doggee."

Bunter looked relieved.

"Oh, that's all right, then! It certainly smells ribbing. What is it made of?"

"Cattée."

Bunter shuddered.

"You—you horrid youg gannibal! A cat's as bad as a dog!"

Wun Lung's almond eyes opened wide.

"Nicee cattée—nicee-nicee! Better than labbit."

"Rads! If it were a rabbit, now— You yug ass, why couldn't you make a rabbit stew?" said Bunter regretfully.

"Cattée better."

"Rads! You're a horrid Chinese pig," muttered Bunter. "Are you really goig to eat that filthy stuff?"

"No filthy—nicee-nicee—me eatee with chopstick."

"Well, I'd stay to supper with you, Wun Lung, if you'd have somethig to eat like a decent Christian," said Bunter, in disgust. "But there, you're a rodden heathen, and you don'd know any bedder. I say, Wun Lung, old chap, can you lend me five bob?"

"No londée cashee."

"Rads! You've got plenty of money, I know."

"Me spendee cashee on firewolks."

Billy Bunter grunted discontentedly.

"Blessed if every silly ass in the school hasn't wasted all his tin on fireworks!" he growled. "I thig the Fifth of November ought to be abolished. It's a sinful waste to spend money on fireworks that ought to go in good grub. How the diggens am I goig to feed my beastly gold?"

"No savvy!"

"Look here, can you make it half-a-crown?"

"No cashee."

"A bob would be bedder thad nothig."

"No cashee. Stayee eatee stew if hungly: nicee-nicee."

"Gr-r-r!" said Bunter. "I'm fearfully famished, but I draw a line at cats, you rodden horrid heathen. Go and ead goko!"

And he walked out of the study discontentedly. Wun Lung grinned, and served up his stew, and started work with his chop sticks. Bunter drifted back to Study No. 1, but he found it dark and empty. The chums of the Remove were downstairs. Bunter went down, and discovered Wharton and his friends in the common-room, puzzling over the pictures in the football competition.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Had that feed?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Feel any better?"

"No, I don't," grunted Bunter. "I haven't had the feed. Bulstrode stole the cash!"

"Eh?"

"Well, he took id away from me."

"What's that?" said Harry Wharton, looking up quickly.

"Are you telling the truth, Billy?"

"If you doubt my word, Whartod, I—"

"Don't be an ass! Do you say Bulstrode took the money from you?"

"He pretended I owed it to him."

"And didn't you?"

"Well, I owe him some money, I suppose, but that was an old account." Billy Bunter evidently considered it very unjust that he should be called upon to pay an old account.

"It was frightfully mean of him to dake the money I was goig to feed my gold with."

"I suppose he did it for a lark," said Wharton. "It was mean enough, too! But if you owe him the money you can't grumble."

"Can't he?" grinned Bob Cherry. "You don't know Billy if you think he can't grumble. He could grumble the hind leg off a mule!"

"I thig you fellows ought to do somethig for me"

"We've done all we can, Billy, and we're stony. Better try the simple life for a change. It will bring down your fat."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Don't bother now, anyway; we're busy with these pictures."

"It seems rodden that I've a pound a week comig in a few weeks, and I can't raise a few shillings to feed my gold. If Wharton wrote to his uncle for some tin—"

"That's a jolly big if!" said Wharton. "Take your cold away somewhere else, Billy, there's a good chap, and be quiet."

It was not of much use telling Billy Bunter to be quiet.

He grumbled for the rest of the evening, so everyone who would listen to him—and to many who wouldn't. When Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Grayfriars, looked into the common-room to tell the juniors to be off to bed, Billy Bunter sidled up to him.

"I say, Wingate, I've got a fearful gold."

"Sorry!" said Wingate. "Don't come near me. I don't want to catch it."

"I was thiggig—"

"Eh?" said Wingate.

"I was thiggig—"

"What the deuce do you mean by thiggig?"

"I was thiggig that you might be willig—"

"Oh, you were thinking! Why don't you speak plainly?"

"How gan I speak blainly when I've got a fearful gold? I was thiggig that you might be willig to help me gure this gold—"

"Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, rather! You see, the proper thig is to feed a gold and starve a fever. I want to feed this gold, but I haven't any tin"

"Don't you get any meals at meal-times?"

"I never ged enough, Wingate; and, besides, I want to feed up this gold extra well, to get the beastly thig gured. If you could lend me ten bob, you could have it back out of the prize I shall be gettig shortly in 'The Gem' football competition—"

"You young ass! Get off to bed!"

"Won't you lend me the ten bob, to gure my gold?"

"I'll lend you a thick ear, to cure your confounded cheek, if you don't shut up!" said the captain of Greyfriars. "Buzz off, you youngsters!"

Billy Bunter discontentedly went up to bed with the Form. He looked very sulky when he tumbled into bed. He was so accustomed to raising little sums from the chums of Study No. 1 that he felt deeply injured when the horn of plenty ceased to flow. He was firmly convinced that it was imperatively necessary to feed his gold. He grunted and sniffed pathetically as he drew the bedclothes about him.

"My hat, we can't stand that row in the dormitory!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Bunter, if you don't shut up, I'll come and pour a jug of water over you!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Might as well be in a pigsty. Do you think I'm going to stay awake all night listening to your grunting?" demanded Bulstrode.

"It was your fault I gaught a gold."

"Well, it will be your own fault if I drench you with cold water," said Bulstrode, "and I'll jolly soon do it if you don't shut up."

And Bunter shut up. The pathetic sniffs and snuffles were stilled, and Bunter soon fell asleep and forgot all about his gold.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Challenge Accepted.

"PEEGS!"

"Gowards!"

"Poltroons!"

"Yah!"

The uncomplimentary epithets were shrieked at the chums of the Remove as they came out early the following morning, for a little football practice before breakfast.

The aliens were ready for them!

Hoffmann & Co. were waiting, and they shrieked at the Removites the moment they made their appearance. Harry Wharton and his chums stared at the foreign youths, who were all shrugging up their shoulders and pointing the finger of scorn at them.

"Peegs!"

"Gowards!"

"Dey are afraid to play us in te football!"

"Yah! Zey are terrify of to meet us."

"Zat is correct."

"Mein gootness! I despises tem!"

"Ciel! I feels zo crushing contempt!"

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with our foreign friends? They seem excited this morning."

"The excitefulness is terrific."

"Ha ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "They're pointing the giddy finger of scorn at us because we won't meet them at footer."

"Peegs! Gowards! Yah! Poltroons! Yah!"

"I tink zat ve shows our fearful gontempt, ain't it?"

"I zink zat ve crushes zem viz ze despision."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Other fellows were crowding out, and they all stared at

the foreigners in amazement. The excitable aliens shrieked and yelled and pointed the finger of scorn, and shrugged up their shoulders till it seemed as if they must go out of joint. The Removites yelled with laughter. Their laughter only excited the aliens more, and they shrieked and gesticulated frantically.

"My hat!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "We can't stand this row. It's worse than a heap of monkeys! Let's clear 'em out."

"Good idea!" said Bob Cherry. "Come on!"

And the Remove charged. The aliens shrieked in real earnest now. They had no chance of stopping that charge, which sent them careering away. The pursuit of the Remove was hot, and many of the unlucky aliens were rolled over in the Close, and given better reason to yell than they had had before.

The discomfited aliens disappeared into the Cloisters, and the clang of the iron gate showed that they had reached their own quarters.

The chums of the Remove laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.

"They mean to shame us into accepting their challenge," grinned Bob Cherry. "That's the idea. Nothing will get it out of their heads that we've refused because we're afraid of getting licked on the field."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton's brows were wrinkled a little.

"It's a lot of nonsense, of course," he remarked. "But suppose we did meet them! It's not pleasant, upon the whole, to have the duffers think we're afraid."

"It would be too funny for anything. They haven't an idea of the game, and we should look a lot of silly asses playing them," said Nugent.

"The silly-assfulness would be terrific."

"Well, there's something in that. All the same, we don't want them shrieking at us that we're afraid, and they'll never get the idea out of their heads till we lick them," said Harry. "Saturday afternoon is free, as it happens, as we've scratched with Redelyffe. It would be fun, if it wasn't footer."

"Ha, ha! It would be funny enough! But what will the fellows say?"

"Well, it would be more in the nature of a huge joke than anything else," said Harry. "Of course, the duffers can't play footer. But I think that this will get round the school, and we shall have the Upper Fourth chipping us if we don't accept the challenge."

Harry Wharton was right on that point. Temple, Dabney & Co. were not likely to let slip such an opportunity of chipping the rival Form. They made the most of it, as was to be expected.

"I hear you've been challenged," Temple remarked, as Wharton came in to go to morning lessons—"challenged by a team above your weight. I should have thought that even you Remove kids could lick those aliens!"

"Oh, they couldn't lick a team of six-year-olds!" said Fry. "But it's rather a come down for Greyfriars, to have a junior team refusing a challenge from such a scratch lot as those aliens."

"Oh, rather!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Harry Wharton. He walked away with a heightened colour, followed by a giggle from the Upper Fourth fellows.

"We shall have to accept, Bob," said Harry, as they entered the class-room. "We'll send a message over to the aliens after lessons."

"Good! Shall we make it a giddy deputation?"

"Ha, ha! No. A messenger will do."

Bob broke into a chuckle at the thought of what the coming football match would be like. But Mr. Quelch's severe eye on him froze the chuckle.

After morning lessons, the matter was arranged. Harry Wharton decided to take the message himself, and he walked over to the Cloisters, a number of the Remove accompanying him in case of hostilities. The gate was fastened, and Wharton rattled it and drew the attention of Hoffmann, Meunier & Co., who soon came crowding up.

"Peegs! Gowards! Poltroons! Yah!"

"Hold your row!" bawled Bob Cherry. "We've come to answer—"

"Peegs! Pounders! Yah!"

"We accept your challenge," said Harry Wharton. "Do you hear? We accept your challenge, and we'll meet you in a football match to-morrow afternoon."

"Ach! Ve have conquered!"

"Ciel! Zat is correct."

"Ve have shame tem into tat!"

"I zink you are right, my dear Fritz."

"We'll meet you to-morrow afternoon," said Harry, "on our ground. You haven't any of the fixtures. What time shall we fix for the kick-off?"

"Ve plays feefball vis you in ze afterncon?"

"Will you be ready at half-past two?"

"Ja, ja! Ve vill be retty after, ain't it?"

"Oui, oui! Zat is goot! Ve vill be zere!"
"Good; then that's settled!" And Harry Wharton walked away.

The foreigners sent a prolonged shriek after the Removites, who were laughing like hyenas as they departed. The whole of the Remove team entered into the spirit of the thing. The game might not be football, but it would be funny.

During the day the Greyfriars fellows who were curious enough to look through the bars of the gate could see the aliens at practice with a football. They were evidently preparing themselves for the morrow's match. But the keenest observer on the Greyfriars' side could not determine whether they were playing Association or Rugby. They certainly handled the ball to any extent, but they did not limit themselves as to the direction in which they passed it. While they were at practice, there was a group of fellows watching them through the gate, shrieking with merriment—which the aliens put down to jealousy.

Interest at Greyfriars centred in the coming match with the aliens. Even fellows in the Fifth and the Sixth asked Wharton when it was coming off, and announced their intention of being present to witness it.

"It will be worth watching!" Wingate remarked, with a laugh. "I don't know how much like footer it will be!"

"We declined the challenge at first, Wingate; but they shrieked at us so, we thought we'd better lick them and have done with it."

"Quite right!" laughed the captain of Greyfriars. "I expect you'll have a good audience. I shall certainly be there!"

"By Jove," remarked Bob Cherry, as the Greyfriars' captain walked away, "it's a pity we didn't think of making a show of this, and charging for admission! We shall have a bigger audience than we usually get for a Remove match!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"They're all coming to see the fun," remarked Wharton. "I expect it will be a sight to make an archbishop giggle!"

"I say, you fellows, that's nod a bad idea about chargig for admission! If you fellows don't want the money, you could hand it over to me, and I could expend it in feedig my gold!" said Billy Bunter.

"Oh, dear, isn't your cold cured yet?" said Bob Cherry. "I'm getting fed up with you and your colds! Don't come near me!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! It might have been quite well by now if I had been able to feed it properly at the start! You have to take these things in time, you know! Still, it's nod too late now, if you fellows— I say, Wharton—Cherry! Dear me, I wish they wouldn't walk away while I'm talkig!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Bunter's Last Resource.

SATURDAY morning dawned bright and cold. The Remove, now that they had grown accustomed to the idea, were looking forward to the match of the afternoon. The only member of the Form who was not thinking of the afternoon's match was Billy Bunter. He was still thinking of his cold, which had grown worse instead of better. He snuffled pathetically in the class-room that morning, and Mr. Quelch's eyes were on him more than once.

"I say, Wharton," said Bunter, when the Remove came out after morning school, "I want to ask your advice."

"Go ahead, Owl!" said Wharton tersely.

"If I were to explain the circumstances to Mr. Quelch, do you think he would give me an advance on my pocket-money?"

"What circumstances?"

"Why, the circumstances that I have a fearful gold, and that I may succumb unless I am kept up by good feedig. I should think that would touch his heart."

"He might not believe in the remedy."

"I should explain it to him fully. As a man of sense, he must know that it's the proper thig to feed a gold and starve a fever."

"He will want a lot of convincing before he advances you any cash, I expect," said Harry, laughing. "But there's no

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reason why you shouldn't try, if you like. He won't eat you, anyway."

Billy Bunter nodded thoughtfully.

"It's about the only thig I can think of," he said. "I subbose you wouldn't care to wire to your uncle to telegraph you some money for an important purpose?"

"Quite right; I shouldn't."

"Well, I shall have to speak to Mr. Quelch, then. I'm at the end of my resources. I shall have to risk beig sent into the sanatorium. If I get sent there, Wharton, I shall regard it as entirely your fault."

"Well, I've no objection to that, Billy, if it's any comfort to you."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But if you want my advice, I should advise you not to bother Mr. Quelch with any nonsense," said Harry Wharton.

"I don'd see that there is anythig else I can do under the circumstances," replied Bunter. "My friends have all deserted me in the hour of need. Quelchy hasn't come out of the Form-room yet. I shall just catch him."

"The catchfulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter went back into the Form-room. Mr. Quelch was putting away some papers in his desk, and he did not look up. Bunter coughed. Then the Remove master looked round and saw him.

"What do you want, Bunter? Do you wish to speak to me?"

"Ye-e-es, if you please, sir."

"Very well. Make haste."

"I've got a gold, sir—I may say a fearful gold—you can hear it in my voice that I'm rather thick, sir, gan't you?"

"Yes, you certainly seem to have a cold, Bunter."

"I have always been advised to feed a gold, sir, and starve a fever. I've had lots of golds, and I've always fed 'em, and they've been gured, sir, all of them."

"Well, they would hardly be permanent, I suppose, in any case," remarked Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, I don't know, sir! You never know what is goig to happen when you have a gold, if you don't feed it. The great thig is to geep up your strength on plenty of good, nourishig food, sir. Don't you thig it's a good idea, sir?"

"Probably."

"Unfortunately, sir, at this crisis in my life, I am short of ready cash. My friends have all deserted me in the hour of need, and a postal-order I am expecting has been delayed in the post. I wanted to—to ask you, sir, if—if—"

"You may go on," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "There is no harm in asking, at all events."

Billy Bunter's heart sank. The Form master's tone was far from promising. But there was nothing for it but to go on.

"I—I thought you might advance me somethig on my pocket-money, sir."

"Your pocket-money, I believe, is a shilling a week, Bunter?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Do you find it more than sufficient to pay your expenses?"

"Oh, no, sir! I never have enough."

"Then if you spend several weeks' pocket-money in advance this week, what are you going to do for money later? If you never have enough now, how will you be able to manage with none at all?"

"Well, that's lookig forward a long way, sir, isn't it?" said Bunter. "Ecsides, I have other resources. I am expectig a postal-order—"

"Ahem! I am afraid—"

"And there's another thig, sir," said Billy Bunter eagerly. "I expect to be in possession of considerable funds when the football competition in the "Gem" is finished."

"What difference can a competition in a periodical make to you, Bunter?"

"I expect to win fifty pounds or so in prizes, sir."

"Bunter—"

"Yes, sir. With my wonderful ability in guessing the correct answers, sir, I'm pretty certain to rope in nearly all the prizes. I may not collar the whole of the fifty pounds, but I shall certainly get a great deal of it, and then—"

"I am afraid I cannot grant your request, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Mr. Quelch—"

"But if your cold is really bad—"

"Id's simply frightful, sir!"

"If you have attacks of sneezing—"

"The attacks are almost incessant, sir."

"If you cough—"

"I geep on goughing all day and night, sir."

"Very well. You are certainly, in that case, in no fit condition to attend classes. You will take this note to the matron."

Mr. Quelch scribbled upon a sheet of paper, folded it, and handed it to the fat junior.

"Yes, sir. Is it an order for a good meal?"

"No; it directs that you enter the sanatorium."

"The—the sanatorium?"

"You may go, Bunter."

"But—but my gold isn't so bad as all that, sir," stammered Bunter, utterly dismayed at the prospect of being cut off from every possible chance of a surreptitious feed.

"As a matter of fact, sir, I feel bedder already."

"If your sneezing is as bad as you have described to me—"

"It has very much improved, sir."

"If you cough day and night—"

"My gough is almost gone, sir."

"Have you been attempting to deceive me, then, Bunter?" thundered the Form master.

Bunter jumped almost clear of the floor.

"N-n-no, sir! I wouldn't do such a thig for worlds."

"Then you are in a fit state to go into the sanatorium. Take that note to the matron at once. Another word, and I will cane you!"

Bunter left the Form-room. His face was the picture of woe. Bulstrode slapped him on the shoulder in the passage with a laugh.

"Hallo, Piggy! You're looking rotten."

"I'm feeling rotten," said Bunter. "I wish somebody would suffocate Quelch. He's been master of the Remove too long."

"Never mind," said Bulstrode. "Look here, Piggy, I'm giving a feed in my study this evening, to celebrate my being in funds again. You can come."

Billy Bunter groaned in the bitterness of his spirit.

"Just my luck! Oh, dear—oh, dear! Just my rodden luck!"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Bulstrode, in astonishment. "Don't you want to come?"

"I should say so—but I can't! I've got to go into sanatorium for my cold."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothig to laugh at. I've got to go into sanatorium. I wish somebody would suffocate Quelch. He's too funny to live."

And Bunter took himself disconsolately off. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh tapped him on the shoulder, a beaming smile upon his dusky face.

"Wherefore the downcastfulness of the worthy brow?" he asked. "My worthy self has had a remittance in the letterful communication from my honourable guardians, and if the esteemed rotten Bunter will come to the tuckshop, I will stand him the grub treatfully to feed his esteemed cold."

"Oh, great pip!" yelled the exasperated Billy. "If this isn't enough to make a chap kick somebody, I don't know what is! I can't come; I've got to go into sanatorium."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You inky beast! Why couldn't you get your rotten remittance before I spoke to Quelchy? I'd like to punch somebody's head! Oh, dear! Just my luck!"

And Bunter passed on with reluctant feet and heavy heart. There was no neglecting an order of Mr. Quelch's. He delivered the note to the matron, and ten minutes later he was in the sanatorium.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Greyfriars v. the Aliens.

WHILE Billy Bunter was disconsolately taking up his quarters in the school sanatorium once more, the Remove footballers were preparing for the match with the alien team. The kick-off was fixed for two-thirty, and before that time the team was all ready on the ground, and the spectators had thronged up to see the fun.

Wingate and a number of the Sixth were there, and the Fifth was well represented, and the Upper Fourth had turned up in force. The Remove, needless to say, was on the ground to a man—with the solitary exception of Billy Bunter, nursing his cold in solitary state in the sanatorium. Bob Cherry even thought that he could see the face of Mr. Quelch at the Remove master's study window, which commanded a view of the junior ground. The interest taken in the coming match was great. The fellows came down expecting to see something interesting, and they were not disappointed.

As the big hand of the clock in the tower crept towards the half-hour, many glances were cast towards the Cloisters, through which the aliens would come from the red-brick academy. Hoffmann and his team evidently did not understand the importance of punctuality in football matters.

But as the half-hour chimed out, there was a buzz from the crowd. The aliens were seen issuing from the Cloisters, and making for the football-ground.

Hoffmann and Meunier led the way, arm-in-arm, evidently being on good terms now, and firmly united for the purpose of beating the Britishers at their own game. They were followed by about twenty aliens. German and French, in football costume, with startling shirts of red and black stripes. Other aliens in ordinary attire followed, all of them chattering excitedly.

Wharton gave a whistle of surprise.

"What do you make of that, Bob?" he asked. "Are they going to look on in football rig, or doesn't Hoffmann know how many fellows go to a football team?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I fancy he doesn't know. They used to play twenty in Rugby once, and that may be the latest information Hoffy has on the subject of football."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, I say, we can't play twenty of the howling asses!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The too-muchfulness is terrific."

The aliens were greeted with curious stares as they arrived. Hoffmann and Meunier bowed politely to Harry Wharton. Hoffmann had a ball under his arm.

"Ve are come," said Hoffmann. "Are you retty pefore?"

"Yes, we're ready," said Wharton. "How many of you are going to play?"

Hoffmann waved his hand towards his merry men.

"Dey are all retty pefore."

"You are playing twenty a side?"

"Ja, ja!"

"We only play eleven in soccer."

"You blay as many as ve do," said Hoffmann. "Dey all blay jolly well mit football, and I not insults dem by leaving dem out, ain't it?"

"Oh, very well! I dare say we can tackle twenty of you," said Wharton. "Anything for a quiet life?"

"Ve lets you have twenty, too, ain't it?"

"We don't want twenty-two," grunted Bob Cherry. "That would give us the odds."

"I nod means twenty-two; I means twenty—too."

"Well, that's lucid, at all events."

"I tinks tat—"

"I zink zat—"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Wharton. "We've arranged our team, and eleven is all right for us. Are you fellows ready? We'll toss for goal."

"Ve lets you take choice of goal," said Hoffmann. "Tat is only polite."

"Ciel! Zat is correct! Ve leave ze choice of goal to you, mes amis."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We'd rather go by the rule, if you don't mind."

"Zat is as you like, my dear friend."

"Tat is gorrect."

Wharton lost the toss. It did not make much difference, as there was hardly any wind, and the game was not likely to be a hard one for the Remove, anyway.

"Are you going to kick off, or choose your goal?" he asked.

"I tinks tat ve kicks off, ain't it?"

"I zink so, too."

"Good! Line up, you chaps."

The Remove eleven lined up. So did the alien twenty. They lined up anyhow, very few of them having any clear idea of the different duties of forwards, halves, and backs. Limburger and Lasalle both went into goal, a proceeding that was viewed with considerable astonishment by the Removeites.

"Here, I say," shouted Bob Cherry, "How many goal-keepers are you going to have?"

"Tat is all right," said Hoffmann. "Ve tinks it only fair to share te duties between te French and te Sherman. Tat is all right!"

"My only hat! Still, I fancy Levison in our goal will be a bit more useful than both those chumps over there," Bob Cherry remarked.

"I fancy so," laughed Wharton.

The aliens had chosen to kick off. The leadership seemed to be divided between Hoffmann and Meunier, and their excessive politeness to one another caused as much delay as their rivalry could have caused.

"It is zat you kick off, my dear Fritz," said Meunier, bowing to his old adversary. Hoffmann bowed in return with equal politeness.

"Nein, nein! It is tat you kick off, my lofed Adolphe."

"Non, non, my dear Fritz—"

"Mein dear Adolphe—"

"Zen ve both kicks off togezzer."

"Tat is goot. Togedder be it, den, mein dear Adolphe."

And the two aliens kicked off together. Neither kicked the ball, as a matter of fact, their aim being rather bad.

Hoffmann kicked the air, and Meunier kicked Hoffmann's ankle. The German gave a fearful yell, and danced on his undamaged leg, clasping his ankle with both hands.

"Ach! I am hurt! You silly pounder!"

"Ciel! I am sorrowful for ze accident to my beloved Fritz."

"Himmel! It is noting! It is all right."

"I have hurt my dear Fritz—"

"It is noting, my dear Adolphe—"

"Are you ever going to kick off, you funny beggars?" bawled Bob Cherry.

The crowd round the ropes were screaming with laughter already, and the ball was not even kicked off yet. The aliens essayed to kick off again. Hoffmann kicked very hard, and missed the ball again, spun round, and sat down on the turf, looking bewildered. But Meunier knocked the ball forward.

"Hold! Ve vill have zat ball placed again so zat my friend Fritz try vunce more—"

"Oh, rather!" growled Bob Cherry. "I don't think!"

The Removeites were on the ball.

The Remove forwards rushed it through the aliens without an effort, the foreigners scattering in bewilderment before them.

Laughing almost too much to run, Wharton and his comrades brought the ball up to the goal, and Harry kicked it in.

There was a yell round the field:

"Goal!"

A goal had been scored in the first thirty seconds of the match. Hoffmann regained his feet by the time the teams were lining up again.

"Is it tat te game has started?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "We've taken a goal, dummy!"

"Ach! I nod see him."

"Keep your eyes open, then."

The aliens kicked off again. They were more on their mettle now, and they followed up the kick off with a furious rush, and a scrimmage was soon raging.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

A Wonderful Football Match.

"HURRAH!" yelled the crowd of Greyfriars fellows, in ecstasy.

They had expected fun, but not fun quite so rich as they now beheld. The aliens' idea of the great game of football was very vague. The soccer and ruggor



Read the thrilling War Story in this week's "Gem" Library.

codes seemed to be mixed up in their minds with jiu-jitsu and gymnastic exercises of all sorts.

They handled the ball without compunction. They passed in any and every direction. Off-side rules did not exist for them. When the ball went into touch, they went after it and clawed it back again.

The Remove were playing under disadvantages. They were fewer in number, the aliens being nearly two to one. Then they used only heads or feet for the ball, while their opponents were ready to use feet, hands, bodies, shoulders, teeth, or anything else, either on the leather or on the Removites, they were not particular which. And some of the Remove players were so exhausted with laughing, that they could not run, which was a drawback to their game.

In spite of these disadvantages, however, the Remove continued to score.

Wharton had taken three goals in five minutes, and Bob Cherry added a couple to the score, and Nugent put in one, and the nabob one.

Seven goals to nil was the score at the end of a quarter of an hour.

Seven goals had never been taken in a Remove match before, but the scoring in this wonderful match was only starting.

"Ach! Tat ve puck up!" gasped Hoffmann, as the sides lined up again after the seventh goal. "Meunier, mein friend, you packs me up."

"Mon dieu! I packs you up like anyzing, my dear Fritz!"

"It is tat Vharton tat take most goals! I collars him next, and you runs on mit te football, ain't it?"

"Ciel! Zat is ze good plan!" Hoffmann kicked off. The Remove were away with the ball in no time, and Hoffmann, springing upon Wharton from behind, bore him with a crash to the ground.

"Here, hold on!" yelled Wharton. "Get off!"

"I gots him!" roared Hoffmann. "On to ball!"

"Pravo!"

"On ze ball!"

Bob Cherry rushed up to help his unfortunate captain. But the aliens rallied round, and Bob Cherry was dragged down, too, and after him Nugent. The referee was blowing his whistle frantically, but a trifle like that was nothing to the aliens. Half of them clawed hold of the Remove players, while the rest captured the ball and ran it up towards goal.

Levison was between the posts. He had been leaning against a goal-post and whistling so far, having had nothing to do. Now he was on the alert.

Meunier kicked in the ball, and Levison fisted it out easily enough. Sachs caught it in his hands, and rushed into the goal with it.

It was useless to argue with the German junior. There was no time to explain to him that goals couldn't be scored like that, nor would he probably have believed it.

Levison wasted no time in words. He hit out straight from the shoulder, and Sachs went over backwards, and the ball flew over him and disappeared.

"Hurrah!" yelled the delighted spectators.

"Bravo, goalic! Splendid save! Hurrah!"

"My word!" said Wingate, with the tears running down his cheeks. "This match ought to be taken on the cinematograph, and no mistake!"

Wharton and his forwards had struggled out of the grip of the aliens now. Expostulation proving useless, they had hit out right and left, and that method proved effective. They dashed into the fray again, scattering the aliens, and securing the ball.

"On the ball!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha! Mind your back hair, Wharton!"

The Removites had rushed the ball up to the aliens' goal. Limburger and Lasalle stood on the watch. The spectacle of two goalkeepers in one goal made the spectators shriek, but the alien goalies were in deadly earnest.

"Ach! Look out Lasalle!" muttered Limburger.

"Ciel! Zat you looks out," said Lasalle.

The ball came whizzing in from a kick from Harry Wharton's foot. The two aliens sprang to stop it, and their heads bumped together with what a novelist would call "a sickening thud."

There were two simultaneous yells from the unfortunate aliens, and they sat down together in the goal, and the ball rolled behind them.

"Goal!" yelled all Greyfriars. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry staggered against a goal-post.

"Oh, hold me up!" he sobbed. "I—I believe I shall bust my jersey if this keeps on."

It was the eighth goal to nil. They went back to the centre of the field, and the two goal-keepers got up, rubbing their heads ruefully. They glared at one another as they rubbed the bruises.

"Ach!" muttered Limburger. "Ach! Stupid French peast!"

"Ciel! Silly Sherman chump!"

"Fatheaded pounder!"

"Sherman peeg!"

"Ach! I tink I trashes you, you peastly French pounder!"

"I zink you not able to trash me, you Sherman rottair!"

"Ach! I soon shows you."

And Limburger seized Lasalle, and Lasalle seized Limburger, and they were soon rolling over in the goal area, fighting like wild cats.

The Remove forwards brought the ball rushing up to the goal again. As the goalkeepers were rolling on the ground outside the goal, pommelling one another, it was not very difficult to put the ball into the net.

"Nine goals!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Ha, ha, ha! I say, Hoffmann, come and separate your goalkeepers! This is what comes of having two of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hoffmann and Meunier came panting up. The game was a farcical one, but it was an exhausting one, too, to the aliens, who were not accustomed to it. Meunier held on to a goal-post, and gasped for breath, and Hoffmann stood panting.

"Tat you stop it," he roared. "Lasalle, let go! Lasalle, you French peast, let go of mine friend, Limburger!"

"Zat is so!" gasped Meunier. "Limburger, you Sherman rottair, let go of my friend Lasalle!"

"French peast!"

"Sherman rottair!"

"Is it tat you speaks to me, Adolphe Meunier?"

"I not speak to you, Fritz Hoffmann; but ze same vords apply to all Sherman rottairs," said Meunier disdainfully.

"Is it tat you look for te tick ear?"

"I zink zat you are more likely to get ze zick ear."

"French peastly pounder!"

"Sherman rotten peeg!"

The brief friendship was over. Hoffmann and Meunier fairly flew at one another, and soon joined Limburger and Lasalle on the ground. The Remove players shrieked with laughter, while the aliens crowded round shrieking encouragement. The fight soon spread from the leaders to the rank and file. Yells and shrieks of defiance were followed by blows and scratches and clawing, and ere long the whole of the alien football team, oblivious of the Remove eleven, were fighting furiously, and the Franco-German war was fairly on the go again.

The Remove players looked on in amazement and merriment.

"Well, of all the funny merchants," gasped Bob Cherry, "I really think these freaks take the giddy Peek Frean."

"Rather! Of all the dummies——"

"The dummifulness is terrific."

"They won't be fit for much more footer when they've done clawing one another," Hazeldene remarked. "I vote that we clear off."

"Right you are."

And the Remove eleven went into the pavilion to change. It was some time before the aliens had had enough of fighting among themselves. When at last the scrimmage ended, and they looked round for the rival footballers, they found that they had the field all to themselves.

"Ciel!" exclaimed Meunier. "Zey are gone! Zey have all run away while we vas not looking after zem."

"Ve are victorious! Hoch! Ve are victorious!"

In the exultation of victory, the aliens could afford to forget their little differences. They had evidently beaten the Greyfriars Remove, for the Removites had abandoned the ground. Any little trifle of nine goals to nil did not enter into the alien's calculations. They were victorious, and they rejoiced. Meunier and Hoffman, with one accord, rushed into one another's arms and embraced.

"Mein dear friend, Adolphe, ve have peaten dem!"

"My dear friend, Fritz, ve have beaten zem!"

"Ve are victorious! Hurrah, ain't it!"

"Pravo!"

And the aliens marched off the field with exultant shrieks. The dispersing crowd shrieked, too, with uncontrollable laughter. And the Remove footballers, hearing the alien yells of victory, as they changed their clothes, simply yelled.

That football match is not likely to be soon forgotten at Greyfriars; and nothing will ever convince Hoffmann, Meunier & Co. that they did not win a glorious victory.

(Another splendid long, complete tale of the Chums of the Greyfriars Remove next Tuesday, entitled "The Rival Entertainers." Please order your copy of THE MAGNET LIBRARY in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, 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, and he then hears that he has been transferred to the Ploughshires—an infantry regiment. Jack is soon reinstated favourite, and becomes once more full corporal. 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" by the rebels, and Tom has many exciting adventures, in one of which he becomes possessed of a ring. Sligo is bribed by Dashwood to drug Tom Howard one night while the young corporal is on picket duty. Tom falls asleep at his post and is carried off by the enemy during a skirmish in which Sligo is wounded. Sergeant Clavering finds the missing corporal's "canteen," and gives the whining Sligo a drink from it and then sends him to the regimental surgeon. Looking into the hospital tent later on, Clavering is told that Sligo has been drugged. The sergeant becomes suspicious, and shows Howard's "canteen" to the doctor. "Has this man had any of this fluid?" said the surgeon sharply.

(Now go on with the story.)

In the Hands of the Enemy—An Extraordinary Development.

"Yes; he took a long pull about half an hour ago," replied Sergeant Clavering.

The doctor placed his ear to Sligo's chest, and then listened attentively to his breathing.

"He has certainly been drugged," he said.

Clavering felt as though he had received an electric shock, and his mind was in a whirl.

"Will you be good enough to keep this, sir, for the present? I have to make a report to Colonel Greville about another matter, and this canteen may be wanted."

"Certainly, Clavering!"

And then the medico busied himself with lint and bandages, and a sponge and a basin of water, and Sergeant Clavering left the tent.

"I'd give a good deal," he muttered, as he made his way to the colonel's quarters; "I'd give a good deal to know why Sligo put his fingers down his throat when he knew that was Tom Howard's canteen, and I'll have it out of him before I'm many days older!"

Meanwhile a ragged mob of chattering tribesmen was making its way up into the hills—a mob of dark-skinned men, in dirty linen garments, with loose trousers fitting tightly to their ankles, and turbans of many shades and colours upon their heads. And in their midst, on a ragged kybere pony, supported on either side by one of their number, sat Corporal Tom Howard, his arms hanging limp and nerveless, his bare head sunk forward in a profound slumber, from which even the jolting of the stony road failed to wake him.

Many miles did those wild mountaineers travel before the moon sank and the sun rose over the black hills. When Tom awoke, he was in a dark place. One little ray of light

from a chink in the stone wall revealed a figure kneeling beside him and pouring water, drop by drop, on his aching head.

Never before had water seemed so cool and delicious, and, seizing the earthenware jar in both hands, he put it to his lips, and drank like a thirsty horse.

"Where am I?" he said, his voice sounding strange and weak in the close stillness of this prison chamber.

"Hush, sahib," muttered the crouching man beside him; "there's yet time for us to talk! But at the first sound, those without will come in! You are a prisoner in the hands of Jamra Khan, and also I, Sundar Singh, who am a sepoy in the 45th Regiment of Sikhs. We have little time to live, for they will kill us to-day!"

The man spoke in a soft, musical voice, and spoke in English; and all the time his fingers were busy with the water pitcher, moistening the corporal's aching head as tenderly as a woman.

"I know their language," whispered the sepoy, "though they do not think it, and I have listened to their talk all the way from the plains down there."

Tom sat bolt upright, almost upsetting the water-pitcher, and then he felt that his ankles were securely tied by a length of rope.

"We must escape, Sundar Singh," he said. "What is this place they have put us in?"

"We are in the house of the chief, and the walls are thicker than the length of a man's arm. Moreover, the village is in arms, and it is not possible for two men without weapons to do much against a hundred."

"You speak wisely, oh, Sundar Singh!" said Tom, putting his hand to his head, which throbbed like a steam-engine. "Still, if we have to die, they shall pay a good price for our lives!"

He was trying vainly to think how he came to be in this place. He could remember bathing his head in the stream, and then all was blank.

Sligo had, all unknowingly, poured sufficient of the drug into his canteen to have killed half a dozen men, and Tom owed his life to the fact that the canteen was more than three-parts full of cold tea, on which our troops march when in India.

"Tell me how long I have been here?" he whispered.

"You came about the sinking of the moon, and I saw from your dress that you were a soldier of the Great Emperor, and I too am a soldier of the Great Emperor, and was captured when we made a sortie from the Fort of Shakardara."

Tom put his hand out in the darkness, and the two comrades in misfortune—the black man and the white—exchanged a strong grip.

"What thing you will be the manner of our death?" said Tom, after a pause.

"I know not," said the Sikh, "but it will be a cruel one. Listen! Do you not hear them?"

A confused clamour of voices, muffled by the thickness of the walls, fell on Tom's ears. It was like the murmur of a stage crowd heard from the wings, and he half-expected a door to open and some dramatic figure to enter and complete the tragedy.

He got up with some difficulty, and hobbled to a chink at the end of the room, and, looking out, saw that they were in a valley in which were several stone houses, and not many yards away sat a ring of tribesmen, armed with

circular shields and long matchlocks, sitting cross-legged on the ground. Someone had just spoken words that evidently met with their approval, for they brandished their shields and shouted in discordant chorus.

Tom placed his hand upon the wall, and its stern solidity struck a chill into his heart. The Sikh, seeing the gesture, smiled in the darkness.

"Escape is impossible, sahib!" he said. "I have already examined the place carefully, and there is no hole through which a cobra could pass!"

Tom looked quickly through the narrow slit again, for another and a louder outburst rose from the tribesmen, and, speaking over his shoulder, he said:

"They are coming!"

They rose like a flock of startled geese, and soon there was the grate of a key in the heavy lock. The door was pushed open, and a flood of bright light fell into the room. Through the doorway, they saw a sea of dark-bearded faces, and the gleam of merciless eyes thirsting for their blood.

"Come forth, unbelievers," said one, who seemed to be the head man of the tribe; "come forth!"

His words were lost on the corporal, but Sundar Singh translated them in a whisper. And Tom Howard clenched his fists, longing for a weapon, that he might give a good account of himself before he was massacred in that lonely spot.

One glance at the cunning, low-browed faces convinced him that he could expect no mercy, and he found his thoughts flashing back to the old home, and the oaks in the avenue, and Redminster Grammar School and all the fellows

"Bring them forth!" said the chief. And three or four men rushed in, and, laying hands upon them, dragged them into the sunshine.

Sundar Singh accepted the position with all the philosophy of his race, though he, too, longed to feel his hands tighten on a Martini. He took refuge in abuse, and relieved his feelings by anathematising every mother's son of the dogs before him—which he did with Oriental volubility that produced something like admiration from the wild Pathans. One or two of them replied in kind, until the head man raised his head and motioned them to silence.

"Curb your tongue, dog of a Sikh!" said the chief. "You we shall presently crucify, and burn with fire. The flames of Gehenna shall be as nothing to those that shall shrivel your miserable carcass! And now, my brethren, let us to our work, for it is time to return to the valley yonder!"

But bound as he was, Tom was not going to give in without a struggle. The rope to which his ankles were tied suddenly fell away, and, though half a dozen of his captors fell upon him, he swayed them backwards and forwards until their shields clashed one against another.

The chief, his eyes blazing under his frowning brow, strode forward and grasped the corporal's wrist.

"Would you, too, share the fire that shall be the Sikh's portion?" he said.

And then he stooped and fixed his keen gaze on Tom's clenched fist. Tom still wore the bronze ring he had taken from the finger of the dead man in the mountain pass, and it was that which attracted the eye of Jamra Khan.

"Ask him, you who speak his tongue," he exclaimed, "how he came by this trinkot!" And, beckoning to the others, they crowded round, and all looked at Tom's finger.

"Tell him," said Tom, when Sundar Singh had translated the chief's words; "tell him that I took it from the hand of the man I slew, back in the mountains yonder, even as I would slay him, were I not unarmed and defenceless."

To Tom's astonishment, the men who held him relaxed their grasp at a word from the chief, and Jamra Khan really grew into a very imposing figure, in spite of the dirty robe girt about his middle.

"Then you are my brother, and a brother of all the tribe!" said Jamra Khan, stretching out his arms. And taking Tom's hand in one of his own, he raised the other skyward and said, with deep, guttural impressiveness: "Not a hair of your head shall be harmed! You shall eat of my salt, and sit at my board, and be honoured among my people for all time!"

Tom looked at the Sikh, whose face betrayed blank astonishment. And then our hero found himself seated upon a mat within a circle of tribesmen, who all salaamed profoundly and presented the hilts of their swords towards him. He touched each one lightly, as he had seen done in India when the native officers presented themselves before the colonel; and Sundar Singh being brought up, still guarded by a couple of the tribesmen, Tom learned the reason of this sudden change in his fortunes.

"This ring," said Jamra Khan—the Sikh translating—"belonged to the greatest enemy of my people. For more than a century—long before the foot of a Feringhee trod the plains of Ind—the Barki and my people have been at war.

"It was a blood-feud—never to be quenched, save by the extermination of one tribe or the other. But this man was as cunning as a serpent, and ten years I have sought him in vain. The hand from which you took this trinket slew my father and three of my brothers, and burned our village during my absence. But the coward was afraid to meet me, and fled ever further and further away.

"It was in the hope that I should meet him that I am now in arms against your people. I have no quarrel with them, and have lived ever at peace. And now my enemy is dead. Allah is great, and it was not written that I should kill him; but you, oh, my brother, have avenged us, and you are dearer to me than my own son!"

Then food was brought, and curds-and-whey and goat's-milk in bowls, and Tom was very much inclined to think that the feast was the best part of the whole performance, for he had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. He noticed, however, that nothing was offered to the Sikh soldier, and when he pointed towards him, Jamra Khan assumed a terrible frown.

"What does he say?" said Tom to the Sikh.

Sundar Singh smiled contemptuously.

"He says that I am a dog, a vulture, and a kite; that there is no mercy for me, and that I must die the death!"

Tom gathered his legs under him, and placed the bowl from which he had just been eating upon the ground, and then, with a swiftness which astonished nobody more than himself, he snatched a long, razor-edged knife, almost as long as a small sword, from the chief's girdle, and at one bound was standing in the centre of the ring.

Jamra Khan raised his big, black eyes, and looked at him with surprise.

"Tell him," said Tom, pointing to the chief, "that I do not take my life on these terms. Say that I demand your release as part of his gratitude. You may add, also, that I am now armed, and unless he accepts the terms I shall fight him as man to man, and kill him as I killed his enemy, even at the risk of being cut to pieces a moment later."

Jamra Khan's hooked nose seemed to grow more like the beak of an eagle as the Sikh translated these words—no doubt adding many embellishments of his own. Then the brow of the chief cleared, and he raised his hand.

"Release him," he said. "It is beneath my dignity to haggle over the life of such a wretched dog as that." Then, in a dialect which the Sikh did not understand, he added: "The kites will pick his bones ere he finds his way out of these valleys, and the Feringhee fool will be none the wiser!"

A murmur of admiration had gone round the circle as Tom Howard stood erect, with the chief's weapon in his hand.

(Another long instalment of this story next Tuesday.)

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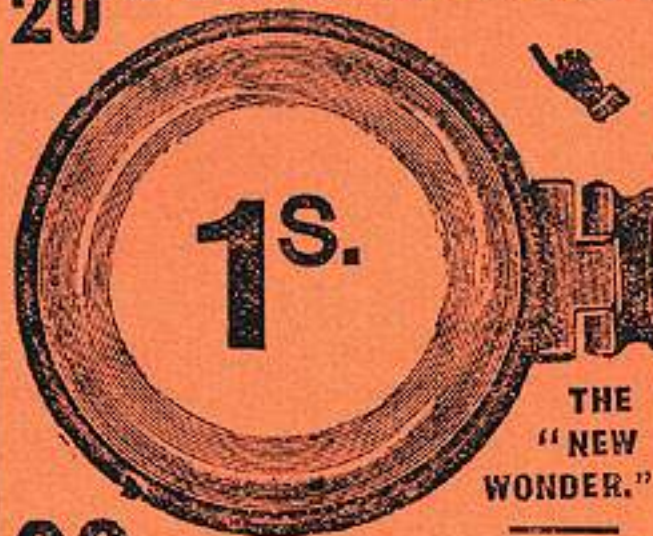
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THE EDITOR.

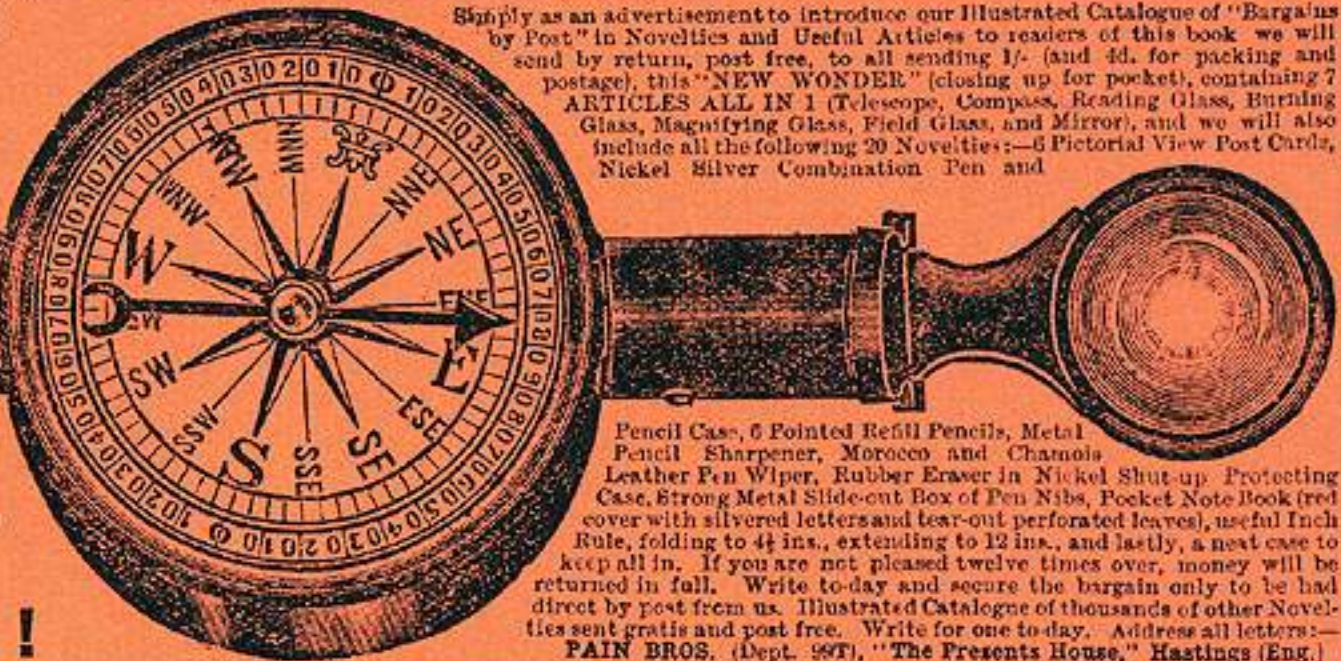
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