

A Tale of **Harry Wharton:** FOR **School & Home.**

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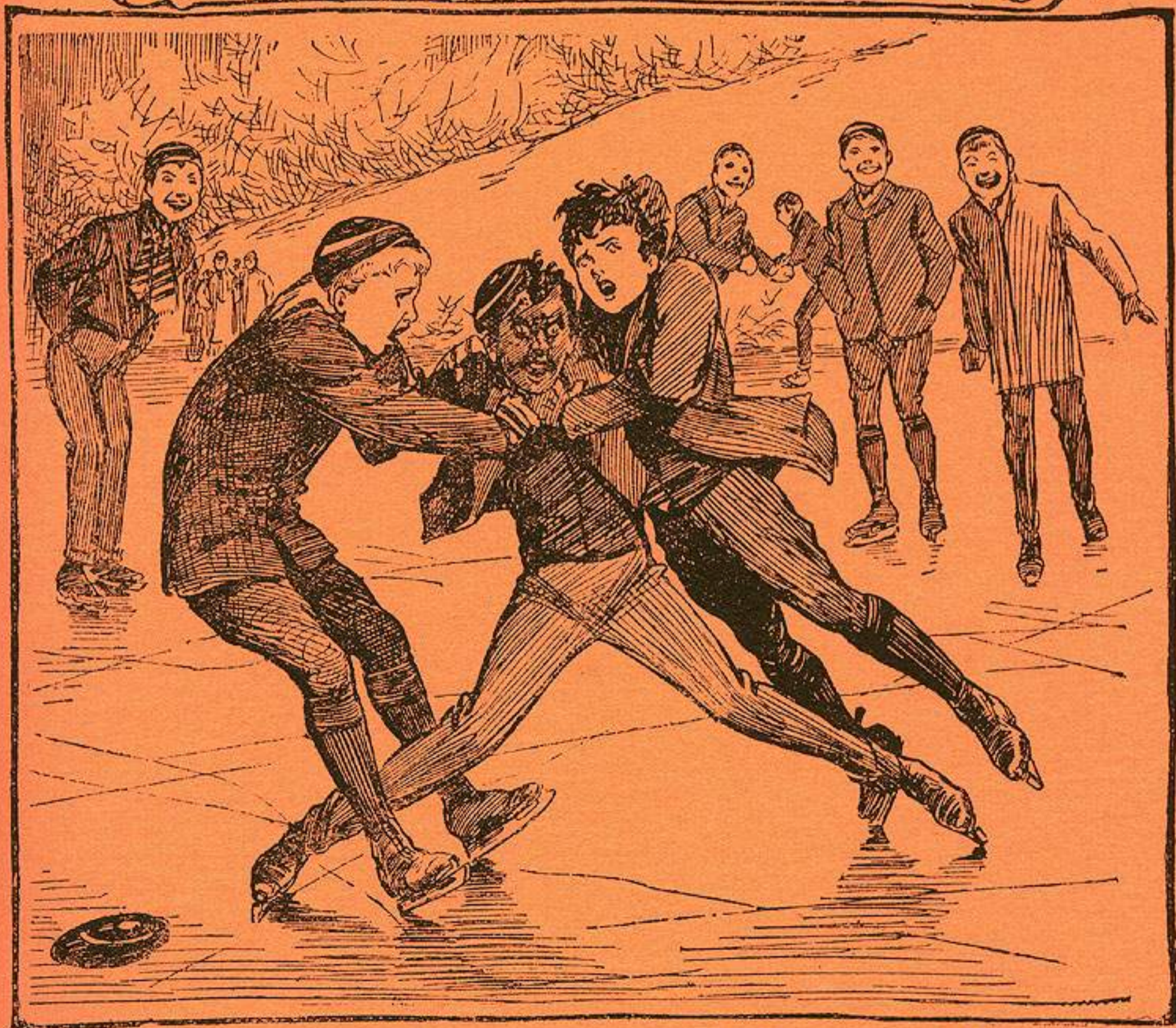
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Vol. 2.

COMPLETE
STORY
FOR ALL

THE AMATEUR COOKS.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



“I—I feel very uncertain on my worthy feet,” murmured Hurree Singh.
“Pray do not let go till I tell you, my august chums!”



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The Amateur Cooks:

A Tale of the Greyfriars Christmas Pudding Competition

A Grand Long, Complete
School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Against Odds on the Ice.

"FREEZING, by jingo!"
Bob Cherry spoke gleefully as he looked out into the Close at Greyfriars in the keen, crisp December morning. Snow had been falling, on and off, for several days, but there was no snow this morning. The air was clear, keen, and seemed to cut like a knife. Frost was hard on the panes, and icicles glistened everywhere in the rays of the wintry sun.

Football had been impossible for some time, but now that freezing had fairly set in there was a good substitute for the good old game. Bob Cherry looked out at the icicles and the frozen puddles in the Close, and then dashed indoors for his skates. Of course, he dashed right into Harry Wharton, who was coming to the door to get his usual airing in the Close before breakfast.

Wharton sat down on the mat, and Bob Cherry staggered and then ran on.

"Sorry!" he gasped, and disappeared up the stairs.

Harry Wharton stared after him blankly.

Bob Cherry went up the stairs three at a time, and met Hurree Janset Ram Singh on the landing. He left the Nabob of Bhanipur in a sitting position, and ran on to Study No 1. There was a sudden exclamation as he entered.

A fat junior in spectacles was standing at the cupboard, just about to open the door. It was Billy Bunter, of the Remove, no doubt looking for what he called a "snack" before breakfast.

Bob Cherry made for the cupboard with outstretched hand, and Bunter snapped the door shut and placed his back against it hastily.



By

FRANK RICHARDS.

"I say, Cherry—"
"Eh? Get out of the way, Buntty."

"Look here—"
"Ass! I want to open the cupboard door."

"Yes, I know you do, but it won't do, Cherry. Just wait a minute."

Bob Cherry stared in amazement at the fat junior. Why Bunter should want to prevent him from getting his skates out of the cupboard he could not imagine.

Billy Bunter stood before the cupboard door in the attitude of Horatius defending the bridge, or Ajax defying the lightning. He blinked through his big glasses at Bob Cherry with growing indignation.

"It won't do, Cherry. I think it's absolutely mean of you—I do really, and I'm sincerely sorry to see you like this."

Bob Cherry could only stare. "Off your rocker?" he exclaimed. "What are you driv-

ing at? Let me get at that cupboard, you duffer, before I put you over on your neck!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! It's mean—absolutely and downright mean, to cut in like this, thinking you would be before me. You know as well as I do that there's only two saveloys left from yesterday, and—"

"Saveloys!"
"Yes, and one cold baked potato. You know that I only keep going, in my delicate state of health, by having a snack every now and then to eke out the school meals, and I really think—"

Bob Cherry burst into a roar. "You utter ass, do you think I'm after your saveloys?" he exclaimed. "My skates are in the back of the cupboard, and I want them. It's freezing, ass! I suppose you

don't want to eat my skates, do you? Even you couldn't digest them."

"Oh, I see!" said Billy Bunter, looking greatly relieved. "It's all right, Cherry, if it's only your skates you want. I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought; open the door."

Bunter opened the cupboard door, and Bob Cherry sorted out his skates. Billy laid a protecting hand over the saveloys, as if his doubts were still lingering. As a matter of fact, the fat junior could not understand how anybody could possibly think of skates when there were saveloys in the cupboard. Bob Cherry ran out of the study with his skates clinking over his arm, and Billy Bunter was easy in his mind at last.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh was standing on the landing, dusting down his trousers. He looked rather expressively at Bob Cherry as the junior came hurrying by again.

"Is this the playful japefulness, my worthy chum?" he asked. "The dustfulness of my esteemed trousers is great, and I incline to think that the punchfulness of your august fat head should be terrific."

"Sorry, Inky," said Bob Cherry genially. "I was in a hurry, you know, and I was bound to upset any silly ass who got in the way. I left somebody on the mat downstairs, I believe. It's freezing."

"I am aware of that feelfully," said the nabob, with a shiver. "The winterful climate of your esteemed country is coldfully uncomfy to a native of India."

"Come out and skate and get warm."

"That is a wheezy good idea, and I shall be honourably pleased to—"

But Bob Cherry was already flying down the stairs. He glanced at Harry Wharton in the doorway.

"Get your skates and come out!" he exclaimed. "The Sark will be frozen as hard as a rock, and we can have a ripping time before breakfast."

"Good idea!"

Bob Cherry went sliding down the path across the Close and disappeared. It was less than five minutes to the Sark—the deep wide river that ran within sight of the school. But closer than Greyfriars to the stream was Herr Rosenblau's Foreign Academy, and a babel of voices in French and German warned Bob Cherry as he approached that Herr Rosenblau's pupils were already out on the ice that fine December morning.

Bob Cherry came out on the bank of the Sark. The stream, that sang merrily through the rushes in the summer-time, was silent now under a crust of ice. The reeds, rotten and frozen, were crushed down by the bank. Across the river stretched a sheet of ice, glistening in the sun, and Bob Cherry's eyes glistened, too, as he looked at it. Whether the ice was thick enough to be quite safe, was a thought that never entered the head of the impulsive Bob.

Besides, some little way down the river, opposite the red-brick walls of the new academy, a crowd of boys were already disporting themselves. Their excited shrieks and gestures showed that they were foreigners. They shrieked in French and German, and performed all sorts of curious evolutions on the ice. Some of them had skates, but most of them were sliding, and both skaters and sliders seemed to think it easier to slide on their backs than on their feet; at all events, that was the position they were most often in.

Bob Cherry looked at them and grinned, and sat down on the bank to jam on his skates. Bob was a good skater, and hitherto he had had few opportunities of indulging in the sport this winter. Now he was revelling in the prospect of a real ripping run on the frozen Sark.

He rose and stepped out on the ice. It was firm and hard, though over on the other side by the willows it did not look so safe. As the Greyfriars lad slid out on the ice there was a shout from the academy crowd. They had sighted him, and the old warfare between the two schools woke at once.

"Ach!" shouted Fritz Hoffman. "Tat ve goes for him, ain't it?"

"Zat is correct!" exclaimed Adolphe Meunier.

Bob Cherry's actions were indeed a little provoking. He came down towards the aliens with a rush, and went right through them like an arrow. In vain the foreign juniors buzzed round the experienced skater. He eluded them with scarcely an effort, and after cutting a figure eight through the crowd, whizzed off again, laughing almost too much to skate. A yell of wrath followed him. Bob Cherry reached the bank again, and found Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent putting on their skates there.

"Come on!" shouted Bob. "This is ripping fun!"

"We're coming!"

In a few seconds the chums of the Greyfriars Remove were on the ice. The aliens had mostly rolled over in their efforts to catch the elusive Bob, and they were getting up again with all sorts of exclamations.

Harry Wharton laughed as he looked at them.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I don't think I ever saw

skaters or sliders exactly like them before. What price clearing the lot off the ice?"

"Good wheeze!" grinned Nugent. "I believe we could do it."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bob. "Lock arms, and rush 'em."

And the three juniors formed up in a row, Harry in the middle with a good grip on both Cherry and Nugent, and they charged in line.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Line up, Greyfriars! Sock it to them!"

Whiz went the three skaters. With excited shrieks the aliens rushed to meet them, many of them slipping and falling over in their haste. Yells and screams rent the air, as the Greyfriars three got to work among the excited crowd.

Three better skaters than Wharton, Nugent, and Bob Cherry were not to be found in any Form at Greyfriars. The heroes of the Remove were quite up to their work. They kept their footing and their speed, and "biffed" alien after alien with shoulder or elbow, or in full tilt. The ice was covered with fallen forms, and the uproar was incessant and deafening.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry at last, nearly doubled up with laughter. "I can't stand this. My ribs will go! Let's cut!"

Harry Wharton looked round, laughing.

There was hardly an alien standing, and the victory of the Greyfriars trio was pretty complete.

"Come on, then," he said. "I fancy Hoffmann & Co. have had nearly enough."

And the laughing trio skated back to their own landing-place. Fritz Hoffmann sat up on the ice and stared after them ruefully.

"Ach!" he murmured. "I tink tat it vas an earthquake tat strike me, and den I tink tat it vas dem pounders, ain't it. Ach! Mein pones!"

"Ciel!" groaned Adolphe Meunier. "It is zat ze rottairs are practice viz ze skates, and zat ve are not, mes amis. Ozzervise, ve lick zem hollow."

And the aliens crawled off the ice.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Nabob Takes a Lesson in Skating.

HARRY WHARTON and his chums came in glowing from their run on the ice. The freezing of the Sark was an event at Greyfriars, of more importance to the juniors than even the great concert lately given by the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society. Most of the youngsters were skaters, and at all events they could all slide. Billy Bunter was almost the only fellow in the Remove who did not hail the freezing of the Sark with delight. He had other things to think of. That morning there was a shade of deep thought on his plump countenance, which his study-mates in No. 1 were not slow to notice.

"Some new wheeze, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry, as Billy Bunter came towards them in the Close after breakfast. "Lucky I'm stony."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Billy! You want to come skating with us?"

"No, I don't, Cherry. The exercise is too violent for me, and, besides, I haven't any skates. Of course, if one of you fellows could lend me the tin to get a pair, that would be different."

"Yes, and you'd blue it in the tuckshop," said Nugent. "You see, we know you, Billy."

Bunter blinked at Nugent in an extremely dignified way.

"If you think I'm not to be trusted with a little money, Nugent, the matter may as well drop. But what I was

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"A LAD FROM LANCASHIRE."

Another School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

going to say is, I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

Bob Cherry looked very thoughtful.

"I fancy I've heard something like that before," he said. "Have you ever heard Bunter make that remark before now, Nugent?"

"Yes, I think so—about a million times."

"Oh, really, Nugent! You see, I sha'n't be getting the first prize in the Gem Football Competition for some time, and—"

"And perhaps you won't be getting it at all."

"Oh, no, there's no danger of that, because with my splendid ability in guessing the right answers, I am bound to rope in the prize! And a prize of a pound a week for thirteen weeks isn't to be sneezed at in these hard times! But as I was saying, if you fellows would like to come into the competition—"

"We're in it, Billy; at least, I am," said Harry Wharton; "and I really think I shall come before you with the pound a week!"

"I'm not speaking of the Gem Competition now; I am referring to the Christmas-pudding Competition."

"The which?"

"Of course, you don't know anything about it yet! I suppose you know that competitions in making Christmas-puddings are common enough—it's a good old wheeze, and there's lots of fun in it? A lot of fellows, you know, make Christmas-puddings, and the best one takes the cake—the prize, you know."

"The wheezy idea is good," said Hurree Singh, "and the prooffulness of the eating lies in the esteemed pudding, as your English proverb says."

"You mean the proof of the pudding lies in the eating," grinned Bob Cherry.

The nabob shook his head gently.

"I think not, my worthy chum. I learned that honourable proverb from the master who instructfully taught me your esteemed language—the best native master in Bhanipur."

"Well, he must have been a ripper! There are absolutely no masters in England who could teach English as he did!"

"I say, you fellows, what do you think of the idea? As a matter of fact, Levison and Desmond are both in the idea, and they'd like us to come into it—"

"Then it isn't your wheeze at all?"

"Well, it's my wheeze as far as No. 1 Study is concerned. You see, the beauty of a competition like this is that there's the puddings to eat at the finish. A fretwork, or poker-work competition hasn't that advantage—"

"Well, no, even you would not want to eat pipe-racks or bookcases," assented Bob Cherry. "What kind of a prize is there?"

"Well, I was thinking of your pocket-knife; you know—the one with the three blades and the corkscrew and file and screwdriver—"

"Eh?"

"Or else Nugent's acetylene bicycle-lamp. Lots of fellows have admired that, and it would be a popular prize."

"What!"

"Or if you wish to do the thing in decent style, there's Wharton's bicycle. I dare say his uncle will be getting him a new one in the spring, and, anyway, it would make a valuable prize."

Wharton glared at the generous Bunter.

"Let me catch you putting up my bicycle as a prize, that's all!" he said.

"Well, if you fellows are going to be mean about it, all I can think of is Inky's set of ivory chess. I know they're valuable enough."

"The knowfulness of our Bunterful chum is great, but if he meddles with my chess the thick-earfulness will be terrific."

"Well, I dare say some other prize can be thought of," said Bunter. "I forgot for the moment how selfish you chaps are at times. Perhaps all the competitors can club together to make up a prize. But the great point to be remembered is, that the more fellows who enter the competition the more puddings there will be to eat at the finish. Even the puddings that don't get the prize will be all right to eat, you know."

"Well, we might think of it," said Bob Cherry. "I'm going skating now."

"But I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows were gone. Bunter blinked after them disconsolately. He was startled the next moment by a slap on the shoulder that made him jump.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"It's not Bulstrode!" chuckled Levison. "I say, Bunter, are you feeling at all hungry?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter. "We get next to nothing to eat for breakfast here! I'm simply ravenous!"

"Could you do with a good feed—say saveloys and bacon, and a rabbit-pie?"

Bunter's eyes glistened.

"Yes, rather, Levison! This is ripping of you!"

"With tarts and jam-puffs and cake to follow—"

"My word—rather!"

"And jam-pudding and lemon-pudding and Christmas-pudding?"

"Glorious! Come on!"

"Eh? Come on where?" said Levison.

"To the tuckshop, of course!"

"What am I to come to the tuckshop for?"

"Oh, is it in your study? All right, come on!"

"Is what in my study?" asked Levison, looking amazed.

"The feed!" said Bunter, a little indignantly.

"My dear chap, there isn't any feed! I was only asking you what you could eat. I was curious to know the amount you could put away just after breakfast if you tried, that's all!"

And Levison strolled away. Billy Bunter looked after him with an expression that would have been instantly fatal if looks could kill.

Levison joined the chums of the Remove on the bank of the river. There was time for a good run on the ice before morning chapel. Desmond, Russell, Skinner, Bulstrode, and a good many more of the Remove were there, besides Temple, Dabney & Co., and others of the Upper Fourth. Hurree Janset Ram Singh was putting on his skates with Bob Cherry's assistance. The Hindoo junior was not a skater, having, of course, had few, if any, opportunities for practising in his native home in Bhanipur.

"Sit tight!" grunted Bob Cherry, as the nabob lurched on the skate that was already fastened on.

The Nabob of Bhanipur looked puzzled. He was standing up, supported on one side by Harry Wharton and on the other by Frank Nugent, and he did not understand. Still, he wanted to be obliging, so he sat down on Bob Cherry, who was kneeling to fasten his other skate.

"Ow!" grunted Cherry. "What is the young villain sitting on me for? Drag him off, somebody!"

"The unreasonableness of the worthy Cherry is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, a little indignantly. "He told me to sit tightly, and as soon as I sitfully repose he grumbles too."

"You utter duffer, I told you to sit tight! I mean, don't spread your legs all over the landscape!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, I understandfully comprehend!"

"Keep your giddy legs still!"

"The giddiffulness of the legs is terrific," purred the nabob distressfully. "The skates seem to wishfully desire to walk away by themselves."

"Keep your feet close!"

The nabob dragged his straying feet close, and jammed Bob Cherry's hand between them. The Remove gave a roar.

"Put your feet apart, you villain!"

"The unreasonableness of the worthy Cherry is—"

"Terrific," grinned Nugent. "Never mind, Bob; go on!"

"He's smashed my fingers!"

"Never mind; don't worry over a trifle! Ain't you finished yet?"

"Yes," grunted Bob Cherry, rising; "and the next time I put the skates on Inky you can use my head for a football!"

"The woodenness of the football would be hurtful to the worthy toes," murmured the nabob.

"Why, you inky ass—"

"Hold on!" roared Nugent. "Wait till we get you on the ice, Inky! You can't skate in two directions at once, either!"

"It is my worthy feet that seek to skatefully depart in different directions."

"Then sit tight—I mean, keep your hoofs under control."

"They refuse to be controlfully restrained."

"Never mind, we'll hold you!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Don't let go till I give the word, Frank! Feel better now, Inky?"

"Ye-ees," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, doubtfully.

His right leg plunged across the ice, and his left leg plunged off to one side. His whole weight fell upon his supporters, who exerted themselves manfully to the task of holding him up.

"Don't take such giddy big steps!" gasped Nugent, panting with his exertions.

"The feet themselves take the giddiful steps," said the nabob. "It was not of my own wilfulness."

"Keep your hoofs close!"

"I—I—I—I will try."

The nabob tried, but his feet seemed to insist upon going on their travels. Harry and Nugent manfully upheld him

as he staggered and sprawled in their arms. There was a yell of laughter from the bank.

Most of the skaters had turned their attention to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and the sight was certainly comical. The nabob was clinging round Harry's neck with one arm, and to Nugent's shoulder with the other, and kicking about with his skates in a frantic manner.

"Here, keep that maniac out of the way!" called out Carberry of the Sixth, who was putting on his skates. "Keep the course clear, you whelps!"

Wharton and Nugent took no notice of the bully of the Sixth. Carberry was a good skater, and it was for him to keep out of the way of a beginner.

"I—I feel very uncertain on my worthy feet," murmured Hurree Singh. "Pray do not let go till I tell you, my august chums!"

"Right-ho, Inky!"

And Wharton and Nugent supported their dusky chum, and piloted him on the slippery ice. It was probably the thought that he was taking up his comrades' time, and preventing them from getting a run before breakfast, that made the nabob finally decide to make a trial alone. Wharton looked doubtful as the dusky junior bade him let go.

"Feel safe?" he asked.

"Well, no, my worthy chum, I cannot truly say that I feel safe; but the way to learn is to risk the hard knock-fulness."

"Something in that," said Nugent. "I'd rather hold you till you feel all right, though; we don't mind."

"Not a bit!" said Wharton.

"I think I shall be all-rightfully safe now, my friends," said Hurree Singh, cautiously feeling the ice with his skates. "I will not take longful steps, nor allow my honourable feet to float away from one another if I can helpfully prevent it."

"Buck up, then!"

And Wharton and Nugent, with some doubt still in their mind, released the nabob, and Hurree Singh tried his luck alone.

His right leg went on its travels immediately, and fortunately his left leg decided to go in the same direction. Hurree Singh went off down the ice at top speed, his arms waving in the air.

"My hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "He seems safe enough."

Wharton looked anxious.

"That's a case of skates running away," he said. "He can't control himself. I—I hope he won't get too hard a biff. He's bound to go over."

It certainly seemed as though Wharton was right. Hurree Singh was off on a slant, which was carrying him towards the opposite bank, and it was only a matter of seconds before he dashed into the frozen rushes and went down, unless a miracle happened.

"Look out!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Carberry Loses His Temper.

"LOOK out!"

A dozen voices yelled out the words, but the warning was quite useless to the amateur skater. His skates were running away with him, and he could no more have controlled them than he could have flown. But as he drew near the rugged bank, and the biff seemed inevitable, a kind of instinctive wriggle sent the nabob whirling on a new course. He shot off at a tangent, and went upstream.

Harry Wharton breathed again.

"My hat," gasped Nugent, "what's going to happen now?"

Right up the stream went the nabob at a frantic speed. He was half-sitting now, and skating in that posture, his legs refusing to remain perpendicular. It seemed a miracle that he did not roll over; but he did not. On he went at a dizzy speed, and suddenly—for no cause that the onlookers could assign—took a twist in his course, whirled round in a half-circle, and came shooting back.

Wharton and Nugent and some of the juniors knew that he was a victim of the skates, and indeed his terrified face was sufficient to show as much. But, as a matter of fact, his performance looked so much like a very clever bit of real skating, that the majority on the bank were deceived, and there were loud shouts of encouragement to the Hindu junior.

"Go it, Inky! Buck up!"

"My word! I never thought Inky could skate like that!"

"Marvellous how he keeps it up!"

Poor Inky did not hear the shouts. He did not hear or see anything. His tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth as he whizzed on. The grey sky seemed floating round him.

There was an angry roar from Carberry, of the Sixth. Carberry was doing some figure skating, and the unfortunate Hindu was making directly for him. The senior stopped in the middle of a figure and yelled fiercely to the junior.

"Keep off the grass, you silly lunatic!"

The nabob came straight on like an arrow.

Carberry had just time to dodge, or he would have been bowled over. The ill-tempered prefect ground his teeth. He could not see that Hurree Singh could not help himself, and he regarded it as a piece of unheard-of cheek on the part of a junior.

He whirled round, and yelled after Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and the next moment simply gasped with rage. The nabob had whirled round, too, and was making for him again.

Hurree Singh was not responsible; it was those terrible skates. He made straight for Carberry, and the senior dodged. There was a roar of laughter from the bank. As if the Sixth-Former had some magnetic attraction for the dusky junior, Hurree Singh was following his every movement. Every dodge of Carberry was followed by a dodge from Hurree Singh, the dusky Removeite hanging on his movements like a bloodhound. The prefect, panting with rage, dodged to and fro, and to and fro dodged Hurree Singh after him, till Carberry finally made for the bank, amid yells of laughter from the onlooking crowd.

"My only hat," gasped Temple, "what a nerve! Carberry will skin him."

"He can't help it," said Wharton, choking with merriment; "it's the skates. Inky can't skate for toffee."

Temple winked knowingly.

"You can tell that to the marines," he remarked. "It won't be much use telling it to Carberry when he gets Inky ashore."

Carberry was making for the bank. The curious thing was that the terrified Hindu, as if still attracted by the senior, was following him fast. He travelled faster than Carberry, and overtook him at the frozen rushes on the edge of the river. An offer of a thousand pounds could not have saved Hurree Singh from the collision. He rushed into Carberry's back like a steam-engine, and the prefect, with a fearful yell, went down on his face in the reeds, and Hurree Singh sprawled across his legs.

The juniors flung themselves down on the bank and screamed. Even Wharton, anxious as he was for Hurree Singh, was shrieking with laughter.

Carberry scrambled out from under the dusky junior, his face pale with rage. He was wet and muddy from the reeds, the knees of his trousers and his hands clogged with mud, and his face smothered with it. Hurree Singh tried to rise, and rolled over on his back. Wharton and Nugent dashed forward and dragged him away.

Carberry paused for a few moments to gasp for breath, for he was pretty well winded. Then he made a rush at the dusky junior for vengeance.

Harry Wharton sprang into the way, and in a moment Bob Cherry and Nugent were at his side. After a moment Levison joined him, too. The prefect glared at them, almost petrified with astonishment and anger.

"Get out of the way, you brats!" he roared.

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton calmly. "Easy does it! Inky couldn't help it; it was an accident."

"You lying young hound!" roared the prefect, beside himself with rage. "You know it wasn't an accident."

Harry Wharton's lips set tight.

"I am not a liar," he said quietly, "and you shall not touch Inky—not without walking over me first."

Carberry was almost stuttering with rage. The juniors round gasped. They had never heard a Lower Fourth-Former talk to a prefect like that before.

"Well, I'll jolly soon walk over you," said Carberry. And he fairly flung himself upon the hero of the Remove.

Wharton did not flinch from the attack. He was no match for the burly Sixth-Former, of course, but he was game to the backbone, and trained as hard as iron.

Carberry, much to his astonishment, did not sweep the Removeite from his path like a straw. Harry closed with his burly antagonist, and his foot flashed round Carberry's ankle in a trick he had learned from his Chinese chum, and the prefect went over backwards with a crash.

"My only aunt," yelled Temple, "Carberry's down!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Hurrah!"

Carberry was indeed down, with a bump that shook every ounce of breath out of him.

Bob Cherry gave Harry an enthusiastic thump on the back that nearly sent him sprawling across the Sixth-Former.

"Here, hold on, Bob!" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry. "Hip, pip!"

Carberry sat up. The expression of dazed bewilderment

on his face made the juniors yell again. But the Famous Four were looking serious enough. They were committed to a row that might turn out very seriously for them. Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, came pushing through the crowd.

"What's the matter, Carberry?" he asked, staring at the prefect in amazement.

"I—I—I—"

Carberry was trembling with rage, but he hardly cared to confess that he had been floored by a junior. But there were plenty of others there to supply the information.

"He's sitting down for a rest," explained Temple, of the Upper Fourth. "He's been wrestling with Wharton, and thought he'd sit down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's damp in the grass, Carberry," remarked Blundell, of the Fifth, solemnly. "You will catch cold if you sit there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll—I'll half kill him!" hissed Carberry, scrambling to his feet. "He took me by surprise, and—"

"I should think a prefect might find something better to do than wrestling with a junior," said Wingate.

"I wasn't wrestling with him," yelled Carberry. "He got in my way when I was going to give that confounded nigger a hiding."

"The niggerful appellation is a proof of the extreme ignorance of the worthy Carberry. The inhabitants of the Indian Empire are not niggerful individuals."

Wingate grinned.

"Well, you can keep your paws off Hurree Singh, Carberry," he said. "I saw the whole matter, and the youngster couldn't help himself."

"That is truefully correct. I am not a practised skater, and the esteemed skates carried me away at their own pleasure and wilfulness."

"It's a lie!" yelled Carberry.

"Oh, shut up!" said Wingate, in disgust. "Don't be a hooligan, if you can help it. Why can't you take an accident in a good temper, like a decent fellow?"

"Mind your own business, Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars gave him a grim look.

"I fancy this is my business. And since you want plain English, Carberry, I tell you that if you touch Hurree Singh I'll jolly soon stop you."

Carberry glared at the stalwart captain of the school; but he only glared. He would as soon have tackled a wild bull as Wingate when his temper was up. He ground his teeth and turned away, giving Hurree Singh a glance that showed very plainly what he would have done had he dared, and what he still would do when his chance came.

A hiss followed the prefect as he strode savagely away; but a glance from Wingate stopped that. But the Remove chuckled gleefully over the affair as they went in to morning lessons. Carberry was the best-hated prefect at Greyfriars, and any discomfiture inflicted upon him was "one up" for the Remove.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Russell's Raisins.

THE Removites came into the class-room with a healthy flush in their cheeks. Hurree Singh had a bruise or two, but in spite of his gentle ways, he was not at all "soft," and he did not mind. Billy Bunter had something bulging out of his inner pocket, upon which the Form master's eye casually fell. Mr. Quelch made no remark, but he kept an eye on Bunter. First lesson was not half over when the fat junior found himself in trouble.

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter gave a jump as Mr. Quelch rapped out his name. His hand had just gone into his inner pocket, and it came out again in a hurry, and there was a scattering of raisins over the boys nearest to him. Mr. Quelch smiled grimly.

"I think I have told you before, Bunter, that the class-room is not a place to eat surreptitiously," he said.

"I—I wasn't, sir," stammered Bunter.

The Form master's brow grew very severe.

"Bunter, how dare you, sir! I saw you with my own eyes, and yet you have the impudence to assert that you were not eating surreptitiously."

"I—I wasn't, sir; I was eating raisins."

The Remove shrieked, and even Mr. Quelch's face relaxed into a smile.

"Bunter, I hardly thought that even you were so dense. I mean you were eating secretly because you thought you were unobserved."

"Oh, I see, sir. Of course, I can't tell what you mean if you don't say what you mean, can I, sir?"

"Ahem! You were eating raisins in the class-room."

"Well, not exactly eating them, sir," said the fat junior cautiously. "I—I was just putting them into my mouth, sir, to—to taste, and—and I chewed them, and—and I think I must have swallowed some."

And the class shrieked again.
"I cannot see much difference between that and eating them, Bunter. You will turn out all the raisins into the fire, and take twenty lines of Virgil."

"Into the fire, sir?"

"Yes; and at once."

"But—but—but they're jolly good raisins, sir," said Bunter, in dismay, "and you know, sir, 'waste not, want not.'"

"If you do not obey me instantly I shall cane you!"

Billy Bunter reluctantly crossed to the fire and emptied his pocket into it almost in tears. It seemed terrible to him to allow good food to be consumed in that way. The twenty lines were nothing, but to waste the raisins gave him pain. The lessons proceeded, but Mr. Quelch kept the corner of his eye on Bunter. Presently the pointer came down on the desk with a rap that made the Remove jump.

"Bunter!"

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m!" said Billy Bunter, with his mouth full of raisins.

"Bunter! You are eating again!"

"M-m-m-m-m-m!"

"You did not obey me!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You did not put all the raisins in the fire, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter bolted the mouthful, and nearly choked himself. He began to cough and choke and Bulstrode slapped him on the back, with such unnecessary force that he choked and coughed worse than ever.

"Leave off, Bulstrode!" said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"I was trying to help him, sir."

"Do as I tell you, Bunter!"

"M-m-m-m-m—yes, sir!"

"You did not throw all the raisins into the fire."

"Yes, I did, sir. I hope you don't think I should disregard the order of a master I respect as much as I do you, sir," said Bunter.

"Why, you are eating raisins now!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"M-m-m-m—y-y-yes, sir, but these are different ones!"

"Then someone has given them to you," said Mr. Quelch.

"Someone else has brought food into the class-room. I can forgive much to your stupidity, Bunter—"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"But the other boy is probably not so stupid as mischievous. Who gave you the raisins?"

"If you please, sir, I'd rather not sneak, and it would be sneaking to tell you that Wun Lung—"

"Shut up!" whispered Harry Wharton fiercely.

"All right, Wharton, I'm not going to give him away."

"Silence, Wharton and Bunter! Wun Lung, stand up!"

The Chinese junior in the Remove stood up in his place. His quaint, little, Mongolian face wore the smile that was child-like and bland, which the Remove fellows were beginning to know so well. Mr. Quelch looked at him severely. He came into less close contact with the Chinese than Wun Lung's Form-fellows, and though the Remove were beginning to know him, he was still a puzzle to the Form master.

"Wun Lung, you gave some raisins to Bunter?"

"No savvy," said the Chinese junior, in a voice as soft and gentle as the coo of a dove.

"You gave raisins to Bunter!"

"No savvy."

"Come, Wun Lung, I am sure you understand plain English. I do not wish to be hard on a foreign pupil in my Form, but I cannot allow anything of this kind. You will take fifty lines of Virgil, Wun Lung."

"Me no savvy."

Mr. Quelch looked harassed.

"I am sure you do understand, Wun Lung. I hope that no boy in my class would be guilty of prevarication."

"No savvy."

"I shall expect those lines this evening, Wun Lung. You may sit down."

Wun Lung sat down.

Mr. Quelch looked at him more than once during the morning, but the Chinese's bland air of innocence disarmed him. Lessons were over at last, and the Remove left the class-room. Bob Cherry dropped his hand heavily upon Bunter's shoulder.

"Got anything to say before I biff your head against the wall?" he asked.

Billy Bunter looked alarmed.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What do you mean by giving Wun Lung away and getting him an impot?"

"I'm sincerely sorry that Mr. Quelch guessed that it was Wun Lung—"

"Why, you told him, you young rascal!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I don't think you ought to say that, you know. Mr. Quelch certainly guessed very quickly, but that wasn't my fault. I wish you wouldn't shake me, Cherry. You disturb my nerves, and you might make my glasses fall off, and if they were to get broken, I should expect you to pay for them."

Bob Cherry laughed, and let him go. It was no use talking to Bunter. As the chums of the Remove went up to Study No. 1 for their skates, Russell came out of his room, looking worried.

"I say, anybody know what's become of my raisins?" he asked. "I had three pounds of them here to shove into my Christmas-pudding, and they're gone."

Half a dozen pairs of eyes turned upon Billy Bunter at once.

"You fat young burglar!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "You've been burgling Russell's raisins!"

"I—I haven't! I—Ow! Keep him off!"

"My aunt!" roared Russell. "They were my raisins you were scoffing in the class-room! I'll—I'll smash you!"

"Ow! Drag him off! I didn't! I wasn't! I wouldn't! I never ate any raisins except those Wun Lung gave me."

"Wun Lung!" Russell released the fat junior, who staggered against the wall, gasping. "That young Chinese rotter is in my study. I wonder— Here, you heathen, did you take my raisins?"

Wun Lung nodded coolly.

"Me takeo laisin!" he murmured.

"You—you—you giddy heathen! You took my raisins, and you dare to tell me so!" yelled Russell.

"You askee me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Bob Cherry. "That's a good reason."

"I say, you fellows—"

"I'll—I'll have your pigtail for them!" cried Russell.

"I'd laid in those raisins for my Christmas-pudding, and now you've scoffed them. Don't you know you've no right to take other people's prog, you heathen Chinese?"

"No savvy."

"I'll jolly soon make you savvy!" yelled Russell; and he rushed at the Chinese junior.

Wun Lung skipped out of the way, and went along the passage like a frightened hare, with the infuriated Removee in hot pursuit. They both vanished round a corner, leaving the juniors yelling with laughter. Micky Desmond came out of his study with a grin on his cheerful Irish face. He had watched the scene from his door.

"Faith, and that haythen's a coughdrop for a fellow to have in his study," he remarked. "Sure, it's hard cheese on Russell's Christmas-pudding. But sure, and are you fellows coming into the Christmas-pudding competition? Russell and Levison and meself are in it. Levison and I are making one between us, and Russell is doing it on his lonesome. The more the merrier, you know."

"Well, I rather fancy the way I make puddings," Nugent remarked. "Bunter can cook sausages and chips, but when it comes to making a pudding, I think I can keep my end up. I rather like the idea."

"Well, so do I," said Bob Cherry. "To make a Christmas-pudding really rich, you have to put in plenty of butter."

"I don't know about butter," said Wharton doubtfully. "It gets a good colouring if you put some brandy in. I believe they always put brandy in."

"My idea is to have lots of peel," said Nugent. "Still, we can talk that over. I think we might as well go into the thing, and club together for the funds."

"I say, you fellows, that's a ripping idea. Will you be making the pudding before to-morrow?" asked Bunter.

"I don't suppose so. Why?"

"Why, I was thinking that you might hand the funds to me, and—you see, I have a postal order coming to-morrow, and I could have the use of the money to-day, and get the stuff out of my postal order—"

"Oh, get off the postal order, Billy!" said Wharton, laughing. "Why don't you ask us to wait till you've won the prize in the 'Gem' competition, while you're about it?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We're in the competition," said Harry, with a nod. "We'll lay in the materials at once, and all start fair. What about the prize?"

"Sure, Levison has a good idea for that. He suggests everybody putting threepenny-pieces and things into the puddings, and all the tin at the finish forms the prize. Everybody can put up a little, you know. Most of the Form will come to the feed when the puddings are eaten."

"Good wheeze!"

Russell came back along the passage looking warm and flushed. The Removees grinned at him inquiringly.

"Did you catch him?"

"How's anybody to catch a blessed eel?" grunted Russell; and he went into his study and slammed the door.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Laying in Supplies.

THE idea of a Christmas-pudding competition caught on in the Remove. The prospect of eating the puddings at the end of the competition was attractive to others beside Billy Bunter. Several other fellows, beside the original entries into the contest, took up the idea, and for some time hardly anything was talked of in the Remove but Christmas-puddings.

The Remove was an impulsive Form, and did everything in deadly earnest—they played football and cricket, they skated and boxed and wrestled, hard—and when they went into a competition, they went in to win. Christmas-puddings were the topic now, and the Removees took the matter seriously.

Some of the fellows—in fact, most of them—could not afford the necessary ingredients. As Skinner remarked, the materials for a Christmas-pudding did not grow on every bush. But this difficulty was overcome by fellows clubbing together, and making up funds for the purchase of the articles required.

Then fellows were seen hunting out old cookery-books, and entering into long talks with the cook or the house-keeper in search of information, and for a few days the Remove was in a buzz with the new wheeze. Fellows wrote home to their people for cookery-books and recipes, and contributions to the expense. Others depended upon their own knowledge, and not a few had original ideas to work out in the making of Christmas-puddings.

The chums of Study No. 1, of course, had clubbed together for their pudding. Bob Cherry pointed out that there wasn't room in a Remove study to mix up five puddings, let alone boil them. Besides, by making a single pudding in common, labour and expense would be saved. As for the prize, if the study won it, that would be all right—they were all for one, and one for all. These propositions being agreed to, the Famous Four commenced the purchase of ingredients.

Billy Bunter offered his services. He promised to supply all that was wanted at a really reasonable figure, if the cash was only placed in his hands. But as Bunter was somewhat unreliable in matters of cash, his kind offers were declined.

"Well, you can please yourselves, of course," he said, with a sniff. "You'll be done by all the tradespeople, that's all. They're all looking out for mugs. Ow! Let my ear alone, Bob Cherry, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's Nugent!"

"Oh, really, Nugent, you beast!"

"We'll accept Bunter's offer in part," grinned Nugent, as the junior rubbed his plump ear. "He shall come with us to do the shopping, and we'll carry the cash. He can carry the parcels."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"I shall decline to do anything of the sort," he said. "If you cannot trust money into my hands, this discussion had better cease."

"My dear Bunter, we can't trust anything but parcels into your hands, and not then unless we watch you all the time; and if you don't lend a hand, you sha'n't have any of the Christmas-pudding."

"Oh, of course, I'm willing enough to help, and to do anything I can, Nugent."

"Of course you are, if there's a feed at the end of it. Come along, then."

And the chums of No. 1 adjourned to Mrs. Mible's tuck-shop. Mrs. Mible was the wife of the Head's gardener, and she kept the school shop, and supplied the needs of the Greyfriars juniors at a more or less reasonable figure.

To boys who criticised the prices, she explained that things could not be bought for nothing, even wholesale, which was certainly true, and added that she had a number of bad debts to make up for, which was equally undeniable. Billy Bunter was her best customer and her worst. Nothing could exceed the generosity with which Billy would give his orders, except the difficulty with which payment was extracted from him afterwards. And Mrs. Mible had another good-and-bad customer in her own son, Herbert Henry George, who had an appetite for all eatables nearly equalling that of Bunter, and never pretended to pay for anything. As son and heir of the house of Mible, he considered himself entitled to take what he liked, and he frequently took

applications of the good lady's slipper, externally, which he did not like.

Mrs. Mimble beamed upon the juniors as they came in. She had heard of the Christmas-pudding scheme, and she had already laid in some supplies to meet it. Goods of the finest quality and the lowest price were to be had at the school shop, according to a little card that was displayed on the counter, the work of her hopeful son.

Master Herbert Henry Mimble was sitting on the counter, swinging his legs, and waiting for his mother's back to be turned before he bolted a jam-tart, when the chums of Study No. 1 came in.

"What can I do for you, young gentlemen?" asked Mrs. Mimble hospitably. "Herbert Henry, if you touch the tarts I shall box your ears!"

"Give your orders, Billy," said Bob Cherry.

Mrs. Mimble's face fell.

"Ahem! If Bunter is making the purchases, I am afraid that I must see the cash on the counter," she said. "Bunter owes me a very long account."

Bunter blinked indignantly at the good dame.

"If that's what you call gratitude to me for bringing you a lot of good customers, Mrs. Mimble, I can only say—"

"Shut up, Bunter! You see, Mrs. Mimble—"

"I say, you fellows, I'm not going to shut up! I consider that Mrs. Mimble has as good as implied a doubt of my honesty. I think you ought all to come away to the village shop, now, to punish this aspersion on my character."

"Cheese it, Billy! We're buying these things, Mrs. Mimble," Harry Wharton explained. "Bunter is only giving us expert advice."

"Oh, that makes it all right, Master Wharton!" said the good lady, much relieved.

Bunter snorted, and began to give his orders. As he was not helping to foot the bill, he was very lavish with the orders. But the Famous Four kept a tight rein, cancelling all superfluous orders as fast as he issued them. At last a goodly pile of materials for the pudding rose on the counter.

"Better have a little more butter," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "I believe in putting a good deal of butter into a Christmas-pudding. It's no good being mean with the butter when you're making a pudding."

"So long as there's plenty of brandy in it, it will be all right," said Wharton. "I really don't know so much about the butter, Bob."

"Better have another pound of peel," said Nugent. "Nothing like peel to give the pudding a flavour."

"The richness is imparted by the goldenful syrup," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "It would be a wheezy good idea to improve it treaclefully."

"Scat! Who ever heard of treacle in a Christmas-pudding?"

"I think it is a wheezy good idea. We will purchase the treacle, anywayfully, and talk it over togetherfully, my worthy chums."

"I rather agree with Inky," said Bunter. "Treacle will make it richer, anyway. Besides, if we don't use the treacle I can eat it, so it won't be wasted."

And a tin of syrup was added to the pile. Harry Wharton settled for the total purchases, and they were carried off by the chums, the eye of Herbert Henry Mimble following them enviously.

"We've got about all we want," Harry Wharton remarked, as they left the shop. "No need to go down to the village for anything, except the brandy."

Nugent gave a doubtful whistle.

"I say, Harry, brandy is rather a curious thing for a kid to buy," he remarked. "It might lead to—to misconstruction."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I suppose no one could suspect us of drinking brandy in Study No. 1," he exclaimed.

"I don't know. I know for a fact that Carberry of the Sixth has a bottle of whisky in the locker in his study. I've fagged for him."

"Carberry is a blackguard."

"And if a prefect found a bottle of brandy in our study, he might think we were blackguards too, you know."

"Well, we must have the brandy for the pudding."

"I don't know. If we put in plenty of butter I think it will be all right," said Bob Cherry.

"I was thinking that a pound of extra peel would make up for the brandy, if we left it out," Nugent remarked.

"Oh, rats! We must have the brandy," said Wharton warmly. "You can't make a Christmas-pudding without mixing up brandy in it. I don't know exactly how much we shall want, but if I get a bottle I dare say that will be enough."

"It's close on locking-up," Bob Cherry remarked. "You can't get down to the village to-night, Harry, and we're mixing the pudding this evening."

"I'll ask Wingate for a pass."

"A pass to go down to the Red Cow!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"A pass to fetch something for the Christmas-pudding," said Wharton. "I don't see why anybody should find fault with our getting in a necessary ingredient for the pudding; but I don't want to drag Wingate into it, anyway. I expect he'll give me the pass right enough."

"Oh, all right, if you've made up your mind; but to my mind butter—"

"Oh, blow your butter! Get the things to the study, and see that Bunter doesn't scoff the raisins or peel—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I'll cut off, and ask Wingate for the pass."

The captain of Greyfriars gave the pass willingly enough. He knew that Wharton could be trusted out of bounds. Harry rejoined his chums, and showed the pass triumphantly.

"It's made out for two," he remarked. "One of you chaps can walk down with me. It's a lonely walk after dark."

"Right you are," said Bob Cherry. "I'll come!"

And tea being over in Study No. 1, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry set out in the dusk to walk down to Friardale.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Carberry, the Prefect Discovers a Mare's Nest.

THE evening was dark and cold. It was still freezing. A few flakes of snow came down as the two juniors turned up their coat collars, and stepped out briskly from the gates of Greyfriars.

The snow was on the ground, frozen there, and the Greyfriars chums slid most of the way to Friardale, thus keeping themselves warm, and getting over the ground quickly. It was not long ere they came in sight of the Red Cow, an old-fashioned hostelry standing at the entrance of the sleepy village. There were other inns in Friardale, but the Red Cow was the nearest to the school. There was a rumour at Greyfriars that more than one fellow in the Fifth and Sixth paid nocturnal visits to the Red Cow—a rumour very nearly a known fact, though it never seemed to come to the knowledge of the masters.

The juniors halted in the glare of light thrown from the windows of the Red Cow upon the great tree standing before the inn, and the patch of grass round it. Now that they had reached their destination a sudden hesitation seized upon them.

"Blessed if I like the idea of going in!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"I don't either, as a matter of fact," admitted Harry. "We're doing nothing wrong, though, and I don't see why we should feel ashamed. You wait here for me, Bob."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Rats! I'm coming in with you; I'm not afraid!"

"No, but it's better for one to go. It will attract less attention. You stay here, and I'll join you in a few minutes."

"Oh, all right, if you'd rather. Buck up, then!"

Harry Wharton disappeared into the Red Cow, and Bob Cherry waited in the shadow of the big tree. He was feeling very uneasy. Although there was no harm at all in what the juniors were doing, Bob felt that appearances were against them if the matter should happen to come to light. He was anxious for Harry to come out with his purchase, so that they could get out of the suspicious neighbourhood of the Red Cow.

There was a footstep close at hand, and Bob Cherry turned quickly. Carberry, the prefect, loomed into view in the light of the alehouse.

Carberry was coming straight towards the place, as if he meant to enter it—as doubtless he did. Carberry was one of the "black sheep" of the Sixth at Greyfriars. He stopped suddenly, and changed colour, as he caught sight of Bob Cherry. There was no time for the junior to dodge. As a matter of fact, the prefect almost ran into him.

"Cherry!" exclaimed Carberry, with a quick, gasping breath.

Bob Cherry nodded, his coolness returning at once. After all, he had a pass from the captain of the school, and nothing to fear from Carberry.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Fancy meeting you!"

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed the prefect angrily. "Have you taken to pub-haunting? Is that your latest?"

Bob Cherry turned red.

"When it comes to pub-haunting, there are chaps in the Sixth who can teach things to the Remove," he replied.

"I—I was coming here to—in fact, I was informed that Greyfriars boys had been seen here, and I came as a prefect to look into the matter," said Carberry harshly.

Bob Cherry winked at space.

"So I have caught you, hanging round an alehouse," said Carberry. "You were going in—don't deny it. I sha'n't believe you."

"I don't care whether you believe me or not. I wasn't going in."

"Then what were you waiting here for?"

Bob Cherry was silent.

"You are waiting for someone who has gone in?" exclaimed Carberry, divining the truth suddenly. "I dare say it's Wharton. Is it?"

"Find out!"

But at that moment Harry Wharton came out of the Red Cow, his pocket sagging under the weight of a large bottle. Carberry looked at him with unholy satisfaction. He had caught Wharton at last! The boy he detested—the lad whose open and honourable nature had always seemed like a reproach to him—he had caught him at last—caught him in one of the most serious offences known at Greyfriars—pub-haunting!

"Wharton! So it is you?"

Harry Wharton started a little, but he met the prefect's triumphant gaze calmly.

"Yes, it is I," he said quietly.

"What have you got in your pocket?"

"That is my business."

"Is it something you have just bought in the Red Cow?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Show it me. I order you as a prefect."

Harry Wharton hesitated for a moment. He did not like taking orders from anyone, especially orders given in such a tone. But Carberry was quite within his rights so far, and after a moment the captain of the Remove obeyed.

Carberry could scarcely contain his glee when the bottle of brandy was brought to light. He looked at it, and read the label in the light from the alehouse windows, with scintillating eyes.

"Wharton, so I have caught you fairly! I always suspected this. I never knew a fellow set up to be better than his neighbours without finding him out in the long run. And you're the brat who refused to fetch cigarettes for me—you couldn't break the rules of the college! Ha! What were you going to do with that bottle of brandy?"

"Take it to Greyfriars."

"What for?"

"Because I wanted it there."

"I mean, it was for yourself—you were not fetching it for anybody else?" asked Carberry, with a dim misgiving lest he might be about to get another Sixth Form black sheep into trouble.

"It was for all of us in Study No. 1."

"My word! You were going to guzzle brandy?" said Carberry, as much amazed as pleased.

Harry Wharton turned crimson.

"No, we were not. We—"

"You were going to use that bottle for an ornament on the mantelpiece, I suppose," said the prefect, with a sarcastic grin. "You can tell that yarn to the doctor. Put the bottle back in your pocket, and come along."

"I had a pass from Wingate—"

"Did you tell Wingate you were going to the Red Cow?" sneered Carberry.

"No, I did not!"

"I should imagine not. But I am not going to take you to Wingate. This is too serious a business for the head prefect to deal with. You are coming to the doctor."

Harry Wharton set his teeth.

"Very well, I am quite ready."

"I expect your cheek will peter out before you get there. But come along." And Carberry turned back towards Greyfriars.

"I say, Carberry, won't your friends in the Red Cow be disappointed?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

The prefect made a cut at him, which Bob dodged; and then the three set out for Greyfriars. Carberry walked ahead, and occasionally a chuckle was audible from him. He was gloating over his coming triumph. The matter could hardly end in anything less than the expulsion of Harry Wharton, he thought. Harry's face was pale and angry. The coarse suspicions of the prefect had stung him to the quick, and he was in no mood to explain to Carberry. However the interview with the Head might end, Harry was quite prepared for it.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Brought Before the Doctor.

DR. LOCKE was surprised. A tap at his study door had caused him to lay down his pen, and in response to his "come in!" Carberry, the prefect, marched in, followed by Wharton and Cherry, of the Remove.

The doctor adjusted his pince-nez and looked at them.

"If you please, sir," said Carberry, in a tone of great humility, "I am very sorry to disturb you, but I thought it my duty to bring a matter of the greatest importance before you at once."

"You may go on, Carberry."

"Hearing that Greyfriars boys had been seen in the vicinity of the Red Cow—a very common alehouse in the village—I paid the place a visit to see whether there was any truth in it, and found Cherry waiting outside. He was waiting for Wharton, who had gone into the place."

The doctor raised his eyebrows.

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, sir. Wharton came out in a few minutes, and he had a bottle of brandy in his pocket."

"A-a-a-a what?" gasped the doctor.

"A bottle of brandy, sir."

"Is it possible?" said the doctor again.

"He has it in his pocket still, sir. I thought I ought to bring the matter to your knowledge at once."

"You did quite right, Carberry. It is certainly a most serious matter. Wharton is the last boy at Greyfriars I should suspect of such conduct."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry quietly. "I hope you will never have reason to change your opinion, sir."

"I must change it if what Carberry states is correct. I hope there is some mistake, however. Was Cherry waiting for you outside the alehouse?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you came out while Carberry was there?"

"Yes, sir."

"With a bottle of brandy? Place it on the table!"

Harry Wharton quietly did so. The doctor seemed hardly able to believe his eyes as he gazed at the bottle.

Carberry grinned in his spiteful way.

"I may add, sir," he said, "that I have long suspected Wharton of this. He has covered up his tracks with great cunning, because he is an accomplished hypocrite. But I always thought I should unmask him at last."

"You must not speak like that, Carberry—not yet, at all events. I still hope that Wharton may be able to make some explanation. There was a case once at Greyfriars of a Sixth Form prefect sending a fag for liquor."

Carberry winced. The doctor little knew how near his remark went to Carberry himself.

Dr. Locke looked earnestly at Wharton.

"Were you sent for this by a boy in a higher Form, Wharton?" he asked.

"No, sir."

The doctor's brow grew very stern.

"Am I to understand, then, that as Carberry suspects, you fetched this liquor for your own purposes—for the sake of a vile orgy?" he demanded.

Harry Wharton smiled slightly. There seemed something comic in the idea of a vile orgy in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

"I certainly fetched it for our own purposes, sir," he said. "But we certainly did not contemplate any orgies. I have never tasted intoxicating liquor, except as a flavouring to Christmas pudding, and I never shall, I think—at all events, not till I am a man. Carberry is quite mistaken, and if you asked my Form master, he would tell you that I am not the kind of fellow to play the black-guard."

The doctor's face relaxed.

"I have always thought well of you, Wharton, and I know Mr. Quelch entertains a high opinion of you. But how can you explain this circumstance—how can you explain having fetched a bottle of brandy from the public-house?"

"It is very simple, sir. I would have explained to Carberry, but he jumped to the conclusion that I was acting in a blackguardly way, and probably he would not have believed my explanation if I had made it. We are having a Christmas pudding competition in the Remove—"

The doctor stared at the junior.

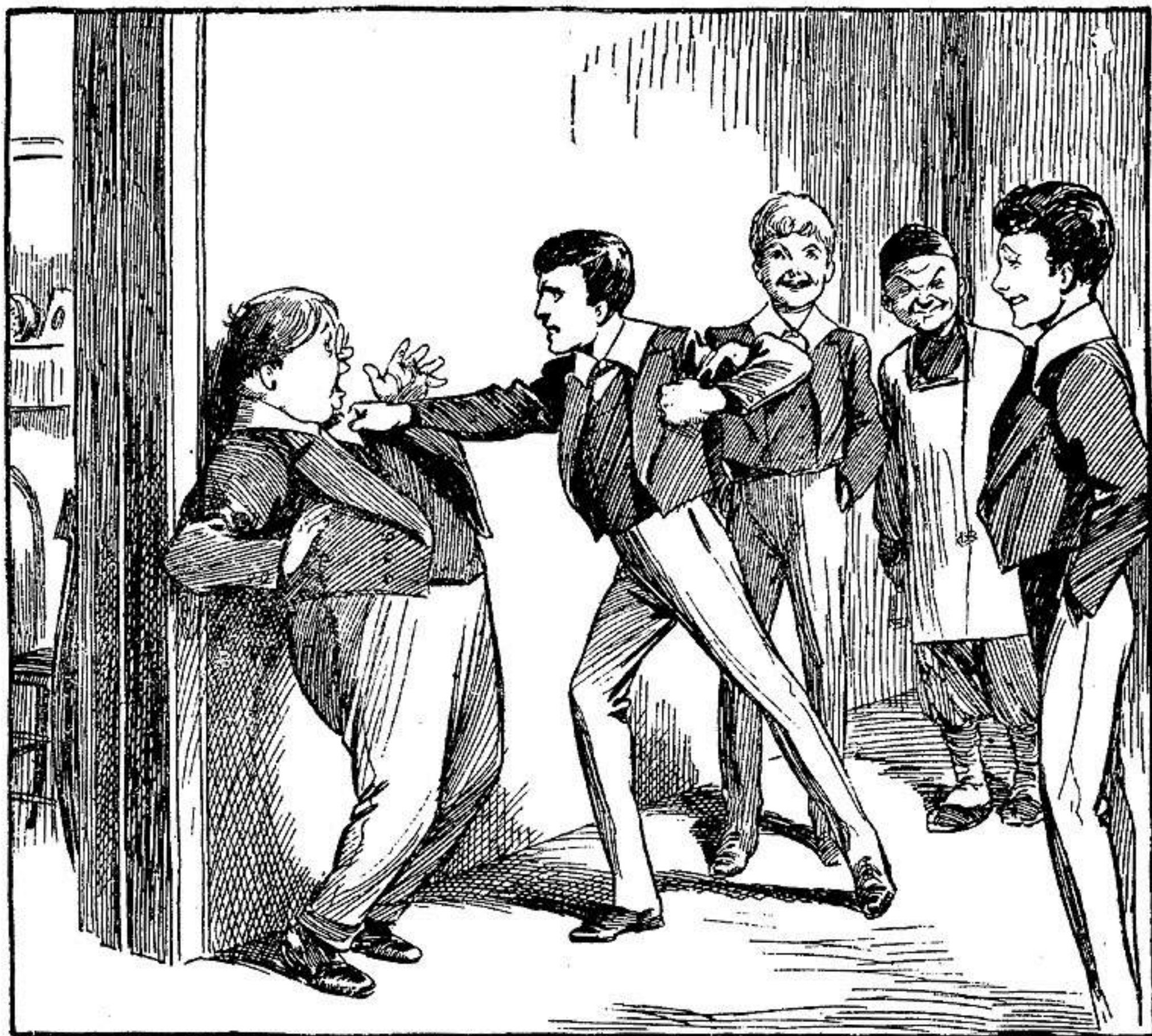
"What can that possibly have to do with the matter in hand, Wharton?"

"Everything, sir. We purchased most of the ingredients for Study No. 1's pudding at Mrs. Mumble's, but, of course, she does not sell brandy. You are aware that brandy is used as a flavouring to Christmas pudding, sir. I volunteered to fetch some from the village, while Nugent and Inky—Hurree Singh—stoned the raisins and mixed the flour. Bob came with me, and waited outside the Red Cow while I fetched the brandy."

"Do you mean to say, Wharton, that you intended to put a whole bottle of brandy into a Christmas pudding?"

"Well, I don't know about putting in the whole bottle, sir," said the junior cautiously; "I believe in putting in plenty of brandy to give it a rich flavour—"

"I should have kept him within bounds, though, sir,"



"My Aunt!" roared Russell, "They were my raisins you were scoffing in the class-room! I'll smash you, you fat young burglar!"

said Bob Cherry. "Butter is the stuff you really want a lot of in a Christmas pudding."

"Of course, this yarn is lies from beginning to end, sir," said Carberry.

"I don't think anything of the sort, Carberry," said Dr. Locke acidly; "and you have no right to speak in such a way. Did anyone else know that you were going to fetch this brandy for the Christmas pudding, Wharton?"

"The fellows in Study No. 1, sir."

"Carberry, kindly fetch the other occupants of Study No. 1 here at once."

The prefect quitted the room. A painful wait ensued—the doctor looking into the fire, and the juniors staring at the carpet. Carberry returned in a few minutes with Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Billy Bunter. The first two were looking curious, and the latter scared. The doctor fixed his eyes upon them.

"Nugent, did you know that Wharton was gone to Friar-dale to fetch a bottle of brandy?" he asked.

Nugent turned a rather scared look at Harry. The latter smiled.

"Don't keep anything back, Frank," he said. "Dr. Locke only wants to know the truth, and there's no harm in it."

"Yes, sir," said Nugent.

"What was he fetching it for?"

"As a flavouring for the Christmas pudding we are making, sir."

"Were you all aware of that?"

"Oh, yes, sir; though for my part I would rather have put in an extra pound of mixed peel, and kept down the brandy."

"I say, you fellows, I told you some harm would come of it," said Billy Bunter, blinking nervously. "It would have been much better to spend the money in treacle. Treacle is the thing to make a Christmas pudding rich, and I know all along that if Carberry got hold of the brandy we should never see it again. I know he drinks whisky as a rule, but a fellow who drinks whisky will drink brandy, and—"

Harry Wharton trod on the toe of the incautious Billy, and the fat junior yelped with pain. Carberry had turned white. Dr. Locke gave him a very curious glance.

"Oh, really, Wharton, you've hurt my toe, and—"

"Silence, Bunter! Boys, this matter is at an end. I am quite certain that Wharton fetched the brandy for the purpose he has stated, and I acquit him of any bad intentions; but I must say that he has acted in a very foolish and reckless manner, open to a very serious misconception. I have no objection to a Christmas pudding being made in Study No. 1, or to its being flavoured with brandy, but I certainly cannot allow a bottle of brandy to be in the possession of a junior. I think the housekeeper had better take charge of it, and allow you as much as she thinks necessary for the purpose, Wharton."

I am quite agreeable to that, sir. I—I wish I hadn't

gone to the Red Cow now; but I never meant any harm, sir."

"I am sure of that; but I hope you will be wiser in future. If you had been a little more patient, Carberry, and a little less suspicious, I think you might have avoided troubling me with this matter at all. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said the juniors together. They left the doctor's study. Carberry followed them with a face like a demon. In the passage, when the door was closed, he turned upon them with a snarl.

"You young whelps!" he growled. "You have lied yourselves out of that—"

"We have not lied, and you know it!" said Harry Wharton, with flashing eyes. "It is you who have made a fool of yourself, and all through being a rotten, suspicious cad!"

"So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!" said Bob Cherry.

And the chums of the Remove marched off, leaving Carberry gritting his teeth with rage.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Making of the Pudding.

THE heroes of the Remove grinned as they made their way to Study No. 1. Carberry certainly had made a fool of himself, and he stood lower in the doctor's eyes than before his attempt to blacken the Removites. Harry Wharton had come safe through the ordeal, but he felt that he had had a narrow escape. A headmaster of a more suspicious or less sympathetic nature might easily have given more credit to the prefect's view of the matter.

"The Head's a brick!" Harry Wharton remarked, as they entered Study No. 1. "And, as a matter of fact, we were playing the giddy ox in going to the Red Cow, Bob."

"You were, you mean," grinned Bob. "I only came with you."

"Well, I was then; and I mean to be a bit more careful. But the trouble is that we have lost the brandy now, and—"

"Mrs. Kebble will allowance us to the proper amount."

"H'm! Yes, only I believe in putting in plenty to give the stuff a flavour. Still, it can't be helped. I know Mrs. Kebble can make ripping puddings, so I dare say she knows. If the allowance she gives us is small, we must keep down the other ingredients in proportion."

"Well, I don't know about that. I believe in putting in plenty of butter."

"I say, you fellows, we don't want the pudding a lump of grease, you know. Treacle's the thing to give it richness."

"Plenty of peel—"

"The differentfulness of the honourable opinions is great," observed Hurree Singh. "It will be necessary to reach the honourable compromisefulness."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows in thought.

"Something in that," he remarked. "We can't all carry out our own views, and it will be necessary to be reasonable. Better allow Inky, as an independent and disinterested party, to allowance the stuff."

"I shall have terrific pleasurefulness in doing so, my worthy chums."

"Keep off those raisins, you young cormorant!" exclaimed Nugent, giving Billy Bunter a cuff. "That's about the tenth time I've caught you scoffing them!"

"Well, so long as you have plenty of treacle, a few raisins more or less don't matter, Nugent."

"Oh, do ring off the treacle! You make me tired."

"Well, if you put in plenty of treacle—"

"Shut up! Let's get to work, chaps, or we sha'n't have the mixing done before bedtime!"

During Harry's absence his chums had commenced the work of mixing the famous pudding, and had got it well in hand.

A huge basin had been borrowed from below stairs, and the ingredients had been shot into it—flour and bread-crumbs, and sugar, spices, and currants, with a liberal allowance of water, and the whole was being industriously stirred up with a cricket-stump.

Nugent had declared that his mother always put in some cold tea, and the teapot had been emptied into the pudding accordingly. Billy Bunter had expressed a doubt about the tea-leaves that went in by accident, but Nugent remarked that a few tea-leaves wouldn't be noticed in a rich pudding.

And the pudding certainly was going to be a rich one. Although the mixed peel, the butter, and the treacle were kept within bounds by Inky's watchful eye, the quantities of the ingredients were pretty large.

The basin was nearly full of pudding, and it became rather hard work to keep the cricket-stump going in the sticky mass.

The juniors took it in turns, and slaved away industriously.

Nugent began to pour in the raisins, which made the mass thicker than ever.

"We shall have to have a little more water in," Nugent remarked doubtfully, looking at the mass.

"Better thin it with treacle," said Billy Bunter.

"I was thinking of butter," remarked Bob Cherry. "In a case like this, about half a pound of butter is the best thing."

The juniors, after an argument, compromised on cold tea, and cold tea was accordingly added with a liberal hand. It thinned down the pudding, and they had to agree that it gave it a richer colouring.

"The brandy would have done that," Harry Wharton remarked. "Still, I think it's going to be a success, and I rather fancy we shall get the prize in the competition."

To which his chums concurred heartily. As a matter of fact, each of them had a secret idea for improving the pudding, but said nothing about it so far.

A good many fellows looked into the study in the course of the operations, and inquired after the progress of the pudding. They looked in great admiration at the sticky mass.

They were all cordially invited to the feed which was to be the wind-up of the competition, and it was explained to them that everybody who came to the feed was supposed to put something into the pudding. Skinner said he had an old football-boot he had done with, and Stott generously offered a broken inflater.

Both offers were refused, as were likewise offers of cycle-oil, used-up carbide of calcium, and brilliantine, from other humorous young gentlemen.

Most of the Remove played up well, however. There was quite a crop of threepenny-pieces and sixpences, all of which were carefully washed in boiling water before being added to the pudding.

The mixing being pretty well advanced, Harry Wharton went along to the housekeeper's-room to ask for the allowance of brandy, and was considerably disappointed by the smallness of it. As he remarked when it was poured in, it hardly added a niff to the compound.

But that could not be helped, and certainly there were enough other ingredients to make up for any deficiency of spirituous liquor.

"I think that will about do for to-night," said Nugent at last. "We'll give it a last mix to-morrow, and get it boiled. Russell and Desmond are boiling theirs to-morrow. The cook is doing it for them in the kitchen."

"She'll do it for us, too," said Bob Cherry. "We should have to borrow a saucepan, and I don't see how we could get it on this grate; and besides, we couldn't keep the fire in all day. You have to boil a Christmas pudding a whole day, you know."

"I thought about four hours," said Wharton.

"I was thinking about twelve hours myself," said Nugent.

"Fat lot you chaps know about it!" said Bunter. "A Christmas pudding has to be boiled over a moderate fire for exactly nine hours."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, we certainly don't agree," he said. "Suppose we leave it to the cook. She's pretty certain to know how long to boil a Christmas pudding."

"Good! Now let's go and get a sniff of air after this fearfully hard work."

"I'll stay and give the pudding a bit more mixing, if you like," said Bunter.

"H'm! Don't get taking any of the fruit out of it, you fat young villain!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I wouldn't trust you with it if it were cooked, but I suppose even you can be relied on not to eat a raw pudding," said Nugent. "You can give it another mix if you like."

"I'll lock the cupboard, or he'll scoff all the materials we've got left over," Bob Cherry remarked.

"If you think I can't be trusted with a few pounds of peel and raisins, Bob Cherry, you had better say so, and—"

"Well, I have said so, haven't I?"

Bob Cherry locked the cupboard, and the Removites quitted the study. Billy Bunter blinked indignantly, and went on stirring the pudding. It was a labour of love with him. He did not like work, but mixing a pudding was more like a pleasant recreation than work to the fat junior.

He had been at work some time, when he became aware of a face looking in at the door. He blinked round at the face.

"Is that you, Levison? What do you mean by startling a fellow?"

"It's me, Master Bunter," said Herbert Henry, the hopeful son of Mrs. Mimble, coming into the study. "No offence, Master Bunter."

"What do you want?"

"I was thinking you—you might like a little help in

mixing the pudding," said Herbert Henry, with a greedy eye roving round the study.

"Well, you can take a turn if you like," said Bunter. "Don't get scoffing any of the fruit. I can't stand a fellow who's always eating, and you're a greedy young pig!"

"I'm always willing to help you, Master Bunter, because you're the nicest and finest fellow at Greyfriars," said Herbert Henry.

"Well, that's all right. Mix it round steadily, and don't make any bubbles, you young fathead! And when any threepenny-pieces or sixpences come to the top, mix 'em down again."

Herbert Henry's eyes glimmered.

"Threepenny-pieces and sixpences, Master Bunter?"

"Yes. Everybody who comes to the study is supposed to shove in a threepenny-bit or a tanner," Billy Bunter explained. "I don't see why you shouldn't, like the rest."

"Only I haven't any, Master Bunter."

"Well, mix it up, and don't jaw!" said Bunter, who rather liked the idea of having somebody under his orders. "I'll have a look over 'The Gem,' and work out the answers to the last set of football pictures."

And Billy Bunter sat down in the armchair. Herbert Henry grinned, and waited till Bunter was buried in the football pictures. Then he grabbed up a fistful of the pudding, and chewed it in search of threepenny-pieces and sixpences.

Herbert Henry was not a cleanly young gentleman. He was not an honest one. He was a young rascal, and Bunter's simplicity gave him a chance. He had come to the study in the hope of cadging or purloining some of the materials of the Christmas pudding, but he preferred cash. Money was tight with the heir of the house of Mimbles, and threepenny-pieces and sixpences were very welcome to him.

Bunter looked round once or twice. Each time Herbert Henry was solemnly mixing up the pudding, and Bunter suspected nothing.

But each time that Bunter's look was turned away again, Herbert Henry carried on his work of investigation after the immersed coins.

His prospecting for silver was highly successful. He had, in fact, struck "ile." Coin after coin came to light as he chewed in search of it, to be transferred to his trousers-pocket. Bunter suspected nothing.

About a quarter of an hour passed thus, till Herbert Henry began to think that he had realised most of the cash in the pudding. But Nemesis was on the track of the young rascal.

He was so busy watching the back of Bunter's head, to ascertain when he should look round, that he had no eyes for the door of the study.

The door was pushed open, and Bob Cherry looked in, and he gave a gasp as he saw Herbert Henry clawing up a handful of pudding and jamming it into his mouth. Bob Cherry stared, and gasped, and then he gave a roar, and bounded into the study.

"You horrid little beast!"

Herbert Henry jumped, dropped the cricket-stump, and bolted for the door. Bob caught him by the neck, and sent him sprawling on the carpet with a swing of his arm. The terrified young rascal squirmed past the indignant junior like an eel, and squirmed out of the doorway, and picked himself up to run. But Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh were behind. The nabob's dusky hand closed on Herbert Henry's collar.

"Stop him!" roared Bob Cherry

"I have caught him stopfully," purred the nabob. "The resistfulness is vainful, my worthy young rotten friend—ow!"

Herbert Henry, in his terror, had kicked out savagely, and the nabob caught it on the shin. The unfortunate Inky staggered against the wall with a gasp of pain, and Herbert Henry bolted.

But there was no escape for him. Harry Wharton swung him round with a grasp on the shoulder, and swung him into the study. He knocked against Bob Cherry, who slung him into a corner, where he sat gasping. The chums of the Remove came in, and Bob Cherry closed the door.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Herbert Henry Catches It.

HARRY WHARTON looked at the terrified Herbert Henry crouching in the corner, and then at Bob Cherry inquiringly. Billy Bunter was on his feet now, the paper in his hand, looking on in amazement. Bob Cherry's eyes were blazing.

"What's the matter, Bob?" asked Harry. "What has young Mimbles been doing?"

"I say, you fellows, it's all right. He's been mixing the pudding, and I've been keeping an eye on him, you know. It's all right."

"You young owl!" growled Bob Cherry. "He was chawing up the pudding to find the coins mixed in it."

"Oh, really, Cherry, I didn't see him!"

"I saw him, though."

"The horrible young pig!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in utter disgust. "He ought to be skinned for such a dirty trick."

"And he's going to be!" growled Bob Cherry.

"The skinfulness should be terrific," murmured the nabob, caressing his injured shin. "The beastliness of the young rotter is great!"

"Got anything to say for yourself?" demanded Bob Cherry, jerking Herbert Henry to his feet. "My hat, he's shedding threepenny-bits!"

The coins were clinking round Herbert Henry. His rough usage had tumbled many of them out of his pockets.

Proof of his guilt was not wanted further. The coins were all sticky, just as they had been extracted from the pudding.

"The young mongrel," said Nugent. "Search his pockets and get the tin back, before we sling him out."

"If—if you please—" gasped Herbert Henry.

"Yes, we look pleased, don't we?" said Bob Cherry. "Give us the rest of the money, you young thief!"

"If you please, I—I—I—"

"Shut up, and hand over the tin!"

Herbert Henry sullenly handed it over. To make sure, they searched him, and discovered a good many coins he had overlooked. The money was piled on the table, and made the respectable total of nearly five shillings. The brows of the Removites were very dark. It was not so much the theft—though that was base enough—but the utter detestableness of the trick. They looked at the pudding—a short time ago the pride of their hearts—with great aversion.

"The young thief!" said Wharton. "We'd better take him to the doctor. What he wants is to be sent to a reformatory."

Herbert Henry dropped on his knees in sheer terror.

"Ow!" he roared. "Don't tell anybody! Don't! Ow-wow!"

The juniors eyed him in disgust.

"Get up, you cowardly little beast!" said Bob Cherry.

"If you were a Greyfriars chap, you'd be expelled for this, and, as it is, you will get off with a hiding."

"Ow! Ow! Don't tell! Ow!"

"The pudding's wasted," said Bob Cherry. "He's eaten half of it, and we couldn't touch the rest after this. Lucky we laid in plenty of materials, enough to make another one."

"We'll let him have this one, instead of taking him to the Head," said Nugent, with a grin. "What do you think?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Bob heartily. "Hold the young beast, while I crown him!"

Bob Cherry lifted up the pudding-basin. It was more than large enough to fit over Herbert Henry's head.

The culprit squirmed and wriggled with horror.

"Oh! Don't! Don't!" he roared.

He made a frantic attempt to escape. But three strong pairs of arms grasped him. Bob Cherry inverted the huge basin, and brought it down like a bonnet on the horrified head of Herbert Henry.

Squelch!

There was a gasping cry from the culprit under the squelching pudding.

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

Bob Cherry jerked off the basin.

Herbert Henry's hair and face had disappeared under a sticky, clinging mass of sloppy Christmas pudding.

"Ow—wow—m-m-m-m-m-m!" he moaned.

"Outside!" said Bob Cherry. "You can't slop that stuff about this study. Get out, will you?"

"Ow-w-w-w-w-wow!"

"Outside!"

Herbert Henry was gently assisted to the door by the application of four boots. He staggered blindly into the passage, and blundered along to the stairs.

"Great Scott, what's that?"

It was Wingate, of the Sixth, who uttered the exclamation. Herbert Henry dodged by, and the captain of Greyfriars made a grab at him. His hand slid through a sticky mass of pudding, and Herbert Henry dodged and escaped.

He blundered on down the stairs.

"Stop him!" shouted Wingate

Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, were at the foot of the stairs. They saw the strange object coming down, and heard Wingate's shout from the landing, and they closed up to stop the flight of Herbert Henry.

The latter, almost beside himself with alarm, ran right at them. Blundell grasped him, and his hand slipped, as Wingate's had done, and Herbert Henry drove his head full against Bland's waistcoat.

Bland sat down on the lowest step, and gasped. Blundell made another grasp at Herbert Henry, but the desperate fugitive eluded him, and darted out of the open door into the quad.

"Stop him!" yelled Bland. "The villain's spoiled my waistcoat! Stop him!"

"After him!" shouted Blundell.

Bulstrode, Levison, Skinner, and several other Removites who were in the hall ran out in pursuit of the fugitive. Bland contemplated his waistcoat in despair. Bland was rather particular about his waistcoats, and this was certainly ruined.

"What on earth is it?" exclaimed Blundell. "My hand's as sticky as anything!"

"It's pudding of some kind."

"My aunt, so it is—Christmas pudding! What on earth is that rat going about with Christmas pudding on his napper for?"

"Blessed if I know! But if I catch him, I'll teach him to keep his filthy pudding off my best waistcoat!" groaned Bland.

"Ha, ha, ha! It does look a sight, too, old chap! Hallo, you kids, have you caught him?"

"No," growled Bulstrode. "I made a grab at his top-knot, but he's got it greased, or something—my fingers slipped off him."

"Ha, ha! It's Christmas pudding. Anybody know who he was?"

Nobody knew. The sticky pudding had masked the features of Herbert Henry. The search had to be given up, and Bland went away to clean his waistcoat, though, as he pathetically said, it would never be the same waistcoat again. Herbert Henry was cleaning his head about the same time, under the pump at the gardener's lodge, and feeling extremely sorry that he had ever entered Study No. 1, or departed from the paths of honesty.

Meanwhile, the chums of the Remove had cleaned out the basin, and started mixing a fresh pudding. And, though they were not quite able to make up for lost time, the new pudding was well advanced by the time they had to retire to bed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Surreptitious Improvements.

THE hour of eleven boomed out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and Bob Cherry sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory.

"You fellows asleep?" he said, in a low voice.

There was no reply, save an unmusical snore from Billy Bunter's bed. The deep breathing round him showed that the Remove were asleep. Bob Cherry put one leg out of bed, and shivered, and then the other, and shivered again.

But he was resolute. He stepped right out, and cautiously and silently drew on his clothes and a pair of rubber shoes. He glanced up and down the dormitory. All was still and silent, and the Removite crossed to the door.

A few moments more, and he was stealing downstairs to the passage on which the Remove studies opened, on the first floor of the old building.

The place was very cold, and very eerie at that late hour. But Bob Cherry went on firmly, reached Study No. 1, and pushed open the door. All was dark within. He went in, closed the door, and lighted the gas.

Then he grinned at his reflection in the glass.

"I can't let a good pudding be ruined for the sake of a little trouble," he murmured. "What a Christmas-pudding really wants to give it richness, is plenty of butter, and if the other fellows don't see reason now, they will when the time comes to eat the pudding. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and I can tell them afterwards, and they'll own up that I was right."

And Bob Cherry unlocked the cupboard, took out a couple of pounds of butter he had in readiness there, and deposited the mass into the Christmas-pudding.

Then he plunged in the cricket-stump, and began to stir. The butter gradually dissolved, and was mixed up with the rest of the pudding, and the whole mass assumed a decidedly greasy appearance.

But that did not trouble Bob Cherry. He was the slave of a theory, and in that state of mind no one is inclined to listen to reason. The greasiness of the pudding only made it look more excellent in his eyes. He stirred it up with growing satisfaction.

"It works a great deal more easily," he murmured, "and it will go down a lot more easily, too. Curious how obstinate chaps are when they don't know anything about the matter."

And, giving the pudding a final stir, Bob Cherry extracted the stump, and put it away. He turned out the gas, and left the study. No one awoke when he re-entered the dormitory, and he snuggled back into bed with a consciousness of having deserved well of his chums in spite of themselves. He was asleep in about three seconds, and he did not wake again until the rising-bell was clanging.

When he rubbed his eyes, in the dim light of the

December morning, while the clang-clang of the bell rang from the direction of the chapel, he noticed that Frank Nugent was already out of bed and half-dressed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry staring at his chum. "Were you up before the bell started, Frank?"

Nugent coloured a little.

"Yes, I'm up early this morning."

And he finished lacing his boots, and left the dormitory, while the rest of the Remove were getting out of bed.

"Skating, I suppose," said Harry Wharton. "It's freezing again this morning."

But Nugent was not gone out skating at that early hour. He went downstairs, and slipped quietly into Study No. 1. He grinned as he closed the door and pulled up the blind.

"Those innocent kids haven't an idea," he murmured. "I'll tell them after they've eaten the pudding, when they will admit that it was an improvement."

And Nugent emptied a huge packet of mixed peel into the Christmas-pudding, plunged the stump in, and stirred away energetically. He noticed that the pudding worked very easily, but he was too busy working in all the chopped peel to think about anything else. He had finished his important task, and slipped out of the study, before the Remove came down.

Both Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were looking rather mysterious at breakfast. After breakfast, the Remove went out into the crisp air of the Close. It was still freezing, and a slide had been made in the snow almost the length of the Close in the direction of the Cloisters. While the heroes of the Lower Fourth were disporting themselves upon the slide, Billy Bunter was otherwise occupied. The fat junior blinked round to make sure that he was not observed, and then stole quietly into No. 1 Study.

To take the jar of treacle out of the cupboard, uncover the pudding, and empty the treacle in, was the work of a moment.

Then, with a grin of satisfaction, the fat junior thrust in the cricket-stump and stirred away.

"I'm sincerely sorry those fellows wouldn't listen to reason," he murmured. "It's no good arguing with obstinate people. I'll tell them about it afterwards, and they'll have to admit that I was quite right."

And Billy Bunter industriously worked the treacle into the pudding till it was all absorbed.

The contents of the basin was beginning to assume a somewhat peculiar appearance now, as, perhaps, was not surprising under the circumstances.

Among the chunks of orange, lemon, and citron peel were floating lumps of treacle and butter, and where the ingredients had mixed the compound was not what could be called exactly inviting.

But Billy Bunter was blind to that. He worked on till he heard footsteps in the passage, and then he hastily put



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DOUBLE NO.

Ready Friday, December 11th.

away the cricket-stump, and covered up the pudding. He felt that he had done his duty to the study.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton came in. Billy Bunter was groping in the cupboard, and as he brought out his hand with a cake in it, the juniors had no suspicion of the work he had been engaged in.

"Hungry again, Billy?" grinned Bob. "It's nearly a quarter of an hour since breakfast, I think."

"Well, I felt that I could do with a snack," said Bunter, and he hastily left the study with the cake under his arm.

Wharton uncovered the pudding, and Bob Cherry spread a newspaper on the table, and then a pudding-cloth over it.

The cook had told the juniors that if they gave her the puddings before morning school, she would put them on the fire, and have them done some time that day, and so there was no time to lose.

Bob Cherry had borrowed a pudding-cloth of the good-natured dame, and it only remained to get the famous pudding tied up and delivered into her hands.

"Plop it down in the middle of the cloth!" said Bob. "Then you draw up the four corners round it, you know. Like so."

"Right you are!"

Wharton "plopped" the pudding upon the cloth, by inverting the basin over it. It was a rather flabby-looking mess, and the captain of the Remove looked at it suspiciously.

"Looks thinner than it did last night," he remarked.

"Oh, it works thinner, I expect."

"It seems rather greasy."

"All the better for the digestion, you know."

"Seems to niff of treacle, too."

"Oh, that's sheer fancy."

And Bob Cherry hastily gathered gathered up the corners of the pudding-cloth round the valuable pudding, and tied them across, and then gathered up more corners, and yet more, and tied and pinned them together.

Harry Wharton was still looking at it doubtfully. He didn't know exactly what it was, but he felt that there was something wrong with that pudding.

"A bit sloppy, isn't it, Bob?" he remarked.

"Oh, that will be changed in the boiling."

"Do they boil harder, then?"

"I think so. Anyway, this will be all right. You can't expect to see a pudding firm and consistent before it's boiled, you know."

"H'm! I suppose not. How greasy the cloth is."

"That will prevent it from sticking to the saucepan."

Harry laughed. Bob Cherry certainly had an answer for everything. The pudding was tied up safely at last, and Bob Cherry carried it out of the study, and down to the lower regions presided over by the cook.

The cook looked at the pudding with a curious expression, but she made no remark. She may have been surprised by the squelchy state of it, but she would not wound the amateur pudding-makers.

Bob Cherry went upstairs again, and met Russell of the Remove coming down with a pudding in his hand.

"Got it ready, you see," said Russell, with a grin. "Have you taken cooky yours?"

"Yes; and I thought she looked pleased with it," said Bob Cherry, in the innocence of his heart.

"She's bound to be pleased with this," said Russell. "Perhaps it doesn't feel so firm as it might, but that will be made up in the boiling. That young villain Wun Lung wanted to help me make it, and suggested putting Worcester sauce into it to give it a flavour. I took him by the pigtail and slung him out, you know. Blessed if I know what they wanted to shove that heathen into my study for."

And Russell went down with his pudding. A few moments later, Bob Cherry passed Levison, also bound for the regions below, with a huge pudding.

"I rather think this will be a success," Levison remarked. "Better hold the trial this afternoon, I suppose, as it's a half-holiday?"

"Yes, rather. We shall be pretty keen after a run on the skates, and able to do the puddings justice," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Faith, and I hear Mrs. Mible is making some ripping Christmas puddings," Micky Desmond remarked. "She's selling them at two shillings each, a great dale cheaper than it costs us to make them."

"Oh, it's the fun of the competition, you know. Of course, you can't make these things as cheaply as you can buy them, but look at the extra quality!"

"Faith, ye're right intirely. There's something in that," agreed Micky.

And the three puddings went on to boil. They were the only three that reached the stage of completion. Many Removeites had taken up the idea, but most of them had finished up by eating the raisins, currants, peel, etc., in a raw state. Others had had to give up the idea through the failure of funds. Some had visited the tuck shop to purchase materials, and had weakly squandered the cash in tarts and lemonade and hot drinks instead.

But, as Skinner pointed out, three puddings would be enough for a feed all round for the Remove. They were big enough, though there were a few doubting Thomases who hinted that they might not be good enough. But upon these, of course, the amateur pudding-makers cast only the glance of scorn.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Trial.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were thinking more about Christmas puddings than about lessons during morning school that day. As for Billy Bunter, he was revelling in anticipation. He had some doubts about the No. 1 Study pudding at first; but since he had succeeded in adding plenty of his favourite ingredient, he was satisfied in his mind. He was looking forward to the trial of the puddings with great anxiety. After the trial, was to come the feast.

Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Bunter had each his little secret to keep, and there was, at times, a curious grin upon the face of Wun Lung, too, as if he had thoughts in his mind that were somewhat amusing.

Immediately after morning school, the Famous Four presented themselves at the kitchen, to inquire after the progress of the pudding.

They were followed by Levison and Desmond and Russell, all equally anxious to learn how their puddings were getting on.

The smiling cook assured them that they were making satisfactory progress. They had not been boiling all the time, but they were being looked after, and she would see that they were boiled enough. And they would be ready about half-past three.

"I say you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "that's all right. I can hold out from dinner-time till half-past three, with an effort."

"Right-ho!" said Harry Wharton. "We're much obliged to you, cook, for taking all this trouble about our puddings."

"Not at all, Master Wharton," said the cook. "The puddings have had all that cooking can do for them, so if you're satisfied with the way you've made them, they will be all right."

And as the juniors were quite satisfied on that point, of course everything was bound to be all right!

After dinner, they skated, and exchanged catcalls with the aliens on the frozen river, while they were waiting for the puddings to come up. It was a half-holiday, and it was agreed that the puddings should be tested as soon as they were brought upstairs.

Billy Bunter did not take part in the skating. He watched the head of the kitchen stairs like a detective watching a suspected dwelling, or a cat watching a mouse. He was anxious about those puddings.

The school clock was ringing out the half-hour when the skaters, hungry and flushed with exercise, came pouring into the house.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, slapping Bunter on the shoulder. "Are the puddings up yet?"

"No, Cherry, and I wish you wouldn't biff me like that. You might make my spectacles fall off, and if they— Here they come!"

"What, the spectacles?"

"No, ass, the puddings."

The puddings were, indeed, coming. They were carried into No. 1 Study, where the trial was to take place. Three huge puddings, set on three huge dishes, and a number of plates, knives, and forks lent by the cook for the occasion.

The chums of the Remove crowded round the table. The pudding-makers were all there, as well as a number of fellows who had constituted themselves tasters and judges for the contest.

"I say, you fellows, which is which?" asked Bunter, blinking at the steaming puddings, from which the cloths had been removed.

"That's all right," said Bob Cherry. "Cooky says blue dish is ours, pink dish Russell's, and green dish Levison's and Desmond's."

"Ours looks jolly rich, doesn't it," said Nugent.

"Seems to me to smell of treacle," said Levison.

"Oh, that's your fancy."

"My word!" said Skinner. "It fairly reeks with butter or grease of some sort, though."

Bob Cherry coloured, but Nugent shook his head decidedly.

"Nothing of the sort, Skinner. It's only your fancy."

"Fancy or not, it's jolly greasy."

"Start with No. 1 Study pudding!" said Levison. "All

the judges take a bit and taste it. The makers are out of it, of course."

"Right-ho! Carve away, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton plunged a knife into the steaming pudding. There was no denying that it was sloppy, and Skinner suggested using a spoon instead of a knife. Skinner's suggestion was received with a chuckle by the judges, and with a freezing silence by the makers of the pudding. There were six judges, and so No. 1 Study was pretty full of juniors. Each of the judges received a plate with a small slice of pudding on it, and was invited to taste and try.

Skinner was the first to taste, and he made a decidedly wry face.

"No likee?" murmured Wun Lung.

"It's horrid! Tastes of rancid butter."

"Simply reeks of treacle," said Stott.

"And it's nearly all peel," said Trevor. "Why didn't you put the fruit in in equal proportions? That's the proper way!"

The chums of No. 1 Study looked at one another. They were all growing crimson.

"It's all rot!" said Bob Cherry. "That extra butter makes it all right! It would have been a failure without the extra butter!"

"What extra butter?" demanded Wharton. "Do you mean to say you put in any extra butter after we had finished the mixing?"

"Well, you see, I—I—"

"That's it," exclaimed Nugent, tasting the pudding; "that's it! I can taste the butter myself now!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "I knew, of course, that it wanted more butter, so I put it in last night!"

"You ass! That's why it hasn't been improved by the extra peel I—I—I—"

"Eh? You put the extra peel in after all?"

"Well, yes, before breakfast this morning. You see, I knew it needed it, and it would have been all right, if you hadn't shoved in that filthy butter!"

"I say, you fellows, this is horrid! The pudding's not fit to eat!" said Billy Bunter indignantly. "It's all because of Cherry and Nugent fooling about with the pudding! I took the trouble to mix in the treacle this morning—"

"You did what?" roared Bob Cherry and Nugent.

"I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Bob Cherry! You might make my glasses fall off, and if they broke—"

"You put that rotten treacle in?"

"It wasn't rotten treacle, it was jolly good treacle; and if you hadn't mucked the whole thing up with your butter and peel, the pudding would have been perfect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton. "You've improved the pudding between you till it's uneatable!"

"Well, of all the asses—" began Nugent.

"Of all the dummies!" said Bob Cherry.

"Of all the blessed lunatics!" said Billy Bunter.

"Oh, get on to the next pudding!" said Hazeldene. "This one is poisonous, and it won't take the prize, anyway!"

Even Wun Lung was making a wry face over the pudding, though he could eat anything as a rule. No. 1 Study pudding was unanimously condemned, and was thrown aside in a way not very complimentary to its makers and its improvers.

"Tly other one," said Wun Lung.

Levison and Desmond's pudding was the next one tried. The judges tried it, and looked at one another; and tried it again, and looked at one another once more.

Micky Desmond began to look a little excited.

"Faith, and is it findin' fault ye are with our iligant pudding, bedad!" he exclaimed.

"There's something wrong with it," said Hazeldene.

"You've forgotten to put any sugar in."

"Faith, and sure I—"

"And any spices either," grunted Trevor.

"Sure, and I—"

"Taste it yourself, then!"

Micky Desmond tasted it himself, and his face was a study. Levison looked daggers at him.

"You—you utter Tipperary ass!" he exclaimed. "I attended to everything else, and I trusted just those two details to you, and you go and leave them out!"

"Faith, and it's sorry I am intirely, but I remember now that I forgot!" stammered Micky. "Sure, and the illigant pudding's spoiled intirely, so it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was No. 1 Study's turn to laugh, and laugh they did, heartily. Most of the judges joined them, and the study rang with merriment. Levison was looking annoyed, and Micky Desmond dismayed.

"Of all the chumps," said Levison, in measured tones; "of all the howling asses—"

"Faith, and I've admitted I forgot intirely!" said Micky.

"Faith, a fellow can't do more than own up!"

"That won't make the pudding oatable, ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Does Desmond's pudding take the cake?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"No!" came unanimously from the judges.

"Throw it away!" said Ogilvy. "Russell's stuff will have to take the prize! However bad it is, it can't be as bad as Wharton's or Desmond's!"

"Faith, and I—"

"Come on, try the other one! Carve your pudding Russell, old man!"

"Right you are! Hand over the plates!"

Russell began to cut slices of his Christmas-pudding. It was certainly a nice-looking pudding—at all events, nicer-looking than the others. It had a rich smell, though there was something in that which was not wholly pleasing as the juniors sniffed it. But certainly Ogilvy seemed to be right when he said that it could not very well be worse than the other two.

The plates were handed to the judges, and Hazeldene was the first to taste the third pudding. The next moment he jumped up, and plate and slice of pudding went with a clatter to the floor.

"Ow! Oh, he's trying to poison us! Ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Ow, ow!" yelled Hazeldene, expectorating into the fire and rubbing his lips with his handkerchief. "It's poisonous!"

"Rot!" exclaimed Russell, as the other judges hesitated to taste. "It's a ripping pudding, and I made it with my own hands from a recipe my mother sent me from home! if you say my pudding's poisonous, I'll jolly well punch your head, Vaseline!"

"Taste it yourself!" yelled Hazeldene.

"Of course I'll taste it!"

And Russell defiantly shoved a goodly quantity of the pudding into his mouth, and closed his jaws on it.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Isn't it nice?"

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r! Where's that Chinese? I'll scalp him!"

Wun Lung was squirming towards the door. Russell spat out the pudding and rushed towards the Celestial. Harry Wharton caught him by the shoulder and pulled him back.

"Hold on, Russell—"

"Lemme go! Grr-r-r-r!"

"Hold on! What's Wun Lung got to do with it?"

"Gr-r-r-r-r! He put in the Worcestershire sauce after all!"

And Russell broke loose and sprang after the Chinese. Wun Lung went scudding down the passage, his pigtail flying behind, and Russell scudded after him, bent on summary vengeance.

The study rang with laughter.

"Worcester sauce!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only hat! Worcester sauce—and about a gallon of it, to judge by the taste!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were still shrieking over it when Russell returned, his looks showing that he had not succeeded in catching the elusive Celestial. His expression evoked a renewed yell of laughter.

"But I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, "the puddings were all rotten—who takes the prize?"

"Good; there's the prize!" said Ogilvy. "The puddings were all too bad for the prize to be awarded, and I suggest that the cash be divided equally among the Board of Judges, to reward them for their trouble and for being nearly poisoned by the Christmas-puddings."

This was unanimously agreed to by the judges, but there was a yell of denial from everybody else in the study. It was Harry Wharton who found a solution of the difficulty.

"As the prize cannot be awarded under the circumstances," he said, "I suggest expending it in some of Mrs. Minble's Christmas-puddings, so that we sha'n't miss the feed, after all."

"And I second the motion!" exclaimed Billy Bunter promptly. "I say, you fellows, I never heard Wharton say a more sensible thing in his life!"

And Harry's suggestion was adopted without a dissentient voice. The Christmas-pudding Competition was over, and the Christmas-puddings were quietly buried in the garden.

THE END.

(Another splendid complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled "A Lad from Lancashire." 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. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard transfers into the Ploughshires, while 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. 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 told that in due time he will be court-martialled. In the meantime, a detachment of the Ploughshires, which includes Dick Vivian and Leonard Dashwood, have a fierce encounter with the tribesmen under Jamra Khan, in the courtyard of an old monastery. Having repulsed their assailants, the Ploughshires take some much-needed rest. At the first grey streak of dawn, Captain Montgomery gives them the order to "get on the move again."

(Now go on with the story.)

The 25th to the Rescue—Bill Sloggett gets Left Behind, but Gives a Good Account of Himself.

The bugler breathed into his instrument, but the captain checked him.

"We won't make more noise than is necessary," he said. "Fall in, men!"

And, shaking themselves together, the little company of the Ploughshires adjusted haversacks and fell in.

Montgomery went to the door, dragged the bar from its socket, and flung it on the grass.

"Now we shall have to put our shoulders to it," said the captain. "I expect some of those dead niggers outside are lying close up. I wonder how many we dropped through the loopholes?"

They put all their strength to it, and the huge door opened inch by inch.

"Hold hard a minute!" said Dick. "Let me slip through and drag some of the corpses away."

And Montgomery stepped aside to let him pass. But Dick did no more than put his nose round the corner of the door, for all the Pathans seemed on a sudden to have been let loose, and to be pouring into the courtyard from the deserted temple.

"By gad, now for it!" cried Montgomery, whipping out his revolver. "This accounts for the sudden disappearance of these fellows. They must have known of some ancient passage. Steady, my lads! There's no need to remind you that you are Ploughshires!"

And he fired two quick shots into the rush. His men answered with a cheer, and the next moment they were hand to hand with the fanatical tribesmen.

A cloud of dust came floating along the plain, and in the middle of the cloud rode the squadron of the 25th Hussars and the troop of Bengal Lancers. There were bandaged hands and swathed brows in the squadron, and one man was supported between two of his comrades. It was simply a toss-up whether he would hold out until they reached the camp.

In the middle of the valley rose a conical hill, and on the

top of the hill a clump of ruined towers and walls. Sir Ponsonby had his field-glasses in his hand, and took stock of the ruins as they approached.

"Wonderful people these old Buddhists must have been," he said. "I suppose one day, when the whole of this region belongs to us, we shall make some very interesting discoveries—"

He finished his sentence abruptly, for the general himself had just then made a very interesting discovery. It was so curious that he remained with his glasses to his eyes, wondering whether he had seen aright. It seemed to him that a tribesman with a shield on his arm and a sword in his hand had suddenly risen out of the plain at the foot of the hill, risen into full view, standing upright in the morning light, facing the advancing party, and then as suddenly disappeared. Some of the Bengal Lancers confirmed the general's suspicion by a guttural cry.

"The enemy are yonder, sahib!" said the daffadar. And the general ordered a halt, but still kept his glasses on the spot where the man had disappeared, and this time there was no mistaking. A head and shoulders rose above the ground, looking for a moment in their direction, and then vanishing.

"I say, 'Oward," said Bill Sloggett, who knew nothing of all this, pointing to the ruins, "when a man goes on to the house-top and waves his shirt, what does it mean?"

"By George, there is somebody there!" said the corporal. "Clavering, what is that figure on the ruins?"

And the eyes of the squadron saw simultaneously a rushing figure, frantically brandishing a speck of white as he ran, hotly pursued by several more. But their speculations were broken by a sudden order to advance, and, at full gallop, the little party dashed for the hill.

The general had kept his eye rigidly fixed on the spot where the mysterious figure had disappeared, and as he reached it he called to the Lancers, in Hindustani, to halt. Looking down from his saddle, he saw a fissure in the plain—a fissure marked by a block of chiselled masonry and the prints of many feet all round about it. He gave a command to the sowars, and they clustered round the hole, bending forward with a gleam of anticipation in their faces, and their lance-points, with the fluttering blue-and-red pennons, pointed at the opening.

The rest of the party had gone on, and as Sir Ponsonby overtook them, he heard the muffled roar of voices and a solitary revolver-shot.

It was the Ploughshires' last cartridge! After that there was a mad rush up the path, a cry of astonishment at the sight of a solitary khaki figure surrounded by a heap of white-clad Ghazis. The carbines were drawn from their buckets; No. 3's gathered the reins of the horses from which their comrades had dismounted, and the Hussars rushed under the gateway, headed by Mr. Blennerhasset, his eyeglass firmly fixed in his eye, and his long legs out-distancing his men.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Mr. Blennerhasset. And the next moment he was firing right and left until he had emptied his revolver, and then he drew his sword.

They were just in the nick of time. Seven of that brave little band of khaki lads were down on their faces in the trampled grass. Three times that number of the tribesmen littered the courtyard; but the company, armed only with its bayonets, was on the swift road to extermination.

A shout of welcome came from the hoarse, parched throats as the Hussars rushed in, and Jamra Khan's roar of rage was

drowned in the wild squeal of his followers, who, panic-stricken, fled through the doorway of the monastery building, carrying him with them in their flight.

Like hounds freed from the leash, the Ploughshires sprang forward in pursuit, in spite of Captain Montgomery's command to halt; and Bill Sloggett looked round with a wild eye, finding nobody to kill.

But Bill was not altogether destined to disappointment, for down the stone stair from the roof sprang an exhausted figure, stripped to the waist, still clutching the shirt with which he had signalled to the relief party.

It was the bugler, who had dropped his bugle at the first onset, and had been pursued by three Swatis for a very terrible five minutes.

Down they came after him, so keen on his slaughter that they were half-way to the courtyard before they saw what had taken place; and then Bill Sloggett, with a silent chuckle of satisfaction, sprang up the steps to meet them.

"That squares up for that little fat beggar I ought to 'ave killed over yonder!" said Bill Sloggett, when he returned. "Let me see, that makes eleven altogether since this little sketch began! I shall be losing my tally if I'm not careful!"

How the General Led His Party into the Vaults.

"I must congratulate you, Captain Montgomery," said Sir Ponsonby Smithers, when he had heard the story. "You have made a very brave stand. Now, we have two things to do. Will you tell off a party of your men, and we will bury these six poor fellows on the scene of their last fight? In the meantime we have the Pathans in a trap, and will give them short shrift!"

The Ploughshires began to dig a grave with their trenching tools, and Sir Ponsonby and the officer reconnoitred for the hiding-place of Jamra Khan.

On the plain at the bottom of the hill the circle of Bengal Lancers sat on their horses round the exit from the subterranean passage, watching and waiting with a grim expectation on their faces. Every kit-bag was ransacked for any scrap of candle it might contain, and quite a respectable array was forthcoming. The Ploughshires looked sullenly on, blessing the loss of their arms; but the Hussars were in high feather as they mustered with their carbines.

Very grim, with his sword in his hand, Sir Ponsonby strode into the Stygian gloom, in spite of all remonstrances from his officers.

"My dear fellows," he said, with a smile, "this is not the first time in my life that I have nosed out rebels. It reminds me of my old Mutiny days, when I and your late lamented colonel, Sir Harry Dashwood, did a good deal of this sort of thing."

"At any rate, sir," said Captain Montgomery, "as I have been in here beforehand, you must allow me to guide you to the best of my ability. The way is straight for about fifty yards, but there are rooms on each side."

They entered, the tramp of their feet rumbling dully in the silence of its interior; and every crevice was examined by men with a candle in one hand and a carbine in the other, without finding any trace of the Pathans. They had not gone far, when the rushing sound that had alarmed the Ploughshires fell upon their ears, and the bats in thousands came whirling upon them, extinguishing half the lights, and causing no little consternation among the party, one man accidentally letting off his carbine, the echo of which went reverberating through the temple.

"We have alarmed them now," said Sir Ponsonby, "and the sooner we find their whereabouts the better."

"Mind the steps, sir!" said Montgomery. "There's water at the other end!"

And as he spoke a loud yell rang from the darkness

ahead of them, and a volley of Sniders and captured Lee-Metfords crashed out with deafening noise. A ball passed through Sir Ponsonby's helmet, and a loud exclamation showed that one of the Hussars had been hit.

"Fire for the flashes!" cried Sir Ponsonby.

And some thirty rounds of ball-cartridge from the carbines flew into the darkness, and could be heard splashing and striking the walls in the furthest recesses. There was a louder splash, accompanied by a yell, and they knew that one of the tribesmen had fallen into the reservoir. Then they waited, dead silence following, until the impatient general, spying a flight of stone steps that led somewhere on the right, held his candle high above his head, and darted forward with all the agility of a young man.

They found themselves in a large square room, with a door at the other end, and several empty cartridge-cases showed that it had just been evacuated by the enemy.

"The place is like a rabbit-hole," said Montgomery. "Hadn't we better divide, sir—some of us go one way, and some the other?"

Bill Sloggett was one of the party that followed the general, and so eager was he that he outstripped Sir Ponsonby, and sprang into a long, low-vaulted hall, holding his inch of candle before him and guarding his head with his sword.

"Stop!" he shouted suddenly. "Stand back, sir!"

And a cold shiver ran down Sloggett's back as a gigantic cobra rose from its coils, its eyes glinting viciously. Sloggett made a tremendous cut, and slashed the reptile in two; but as it fell writhing on the floor, he saw to his horror that the place was full of them, and, though Bill was not afraid of anything that went on two legs, snakes were his pet aversion. To make matters worse his candle dropped from his hand and went out, so that there was nothing for it but to circle wildly with his sabre.

The other men, crowding in the doorway, holding their lights in front of them, saw Bill Sloggett literally surrounded by enormous cobras. The whole vault was swarming with them, and the severed body writhed hideously about his feet.

"Come out of it, man!" cried the general.

And they ran back into the gallery, Sloggett's face as white as death and his teeth chattering.

Captain Montgomery's party had evidently found the enemy, for sharp firing rang out again, and they sped in its direction, not without several furtive looks behind them as they went, lest the snakes should pursue them. They came to a point where the gallery forked, and so confused were the echoes that roared and rumbled in the close atmosphere that they were at a loss to know in which direction the firing lay, and sped hither and thither into chamber after chamber, always coming back to the same place.

At last, and at imminent risk of being fired on by their own party, they suddenly emerged into a hall surrounded

by sculptured figures. At the far end a stone staircase led up to the gallery, and in the gallery were Jamra Khan and his followers, holding the head of the stair. One of the wily tribesmen had lit a torch, and flung it on to the marble bosom of a sculptured god, where it spluttered and flamed out of reach, lighting up the floor of the hall, and showing the Pathans where to direct their aim. The gallery, dimly seen, high up above them, was full of fierce faces and shaven heads, and to storm the staircase meant heavy loss.

(Another splendid long instalment of this story next Tuesday. Please order your copy of *The "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.*)

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P.S.—A fine boy detective tale by Detective-Inspector Coles is in this week's MARVEL. Read it!

THE EDITOR.

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