

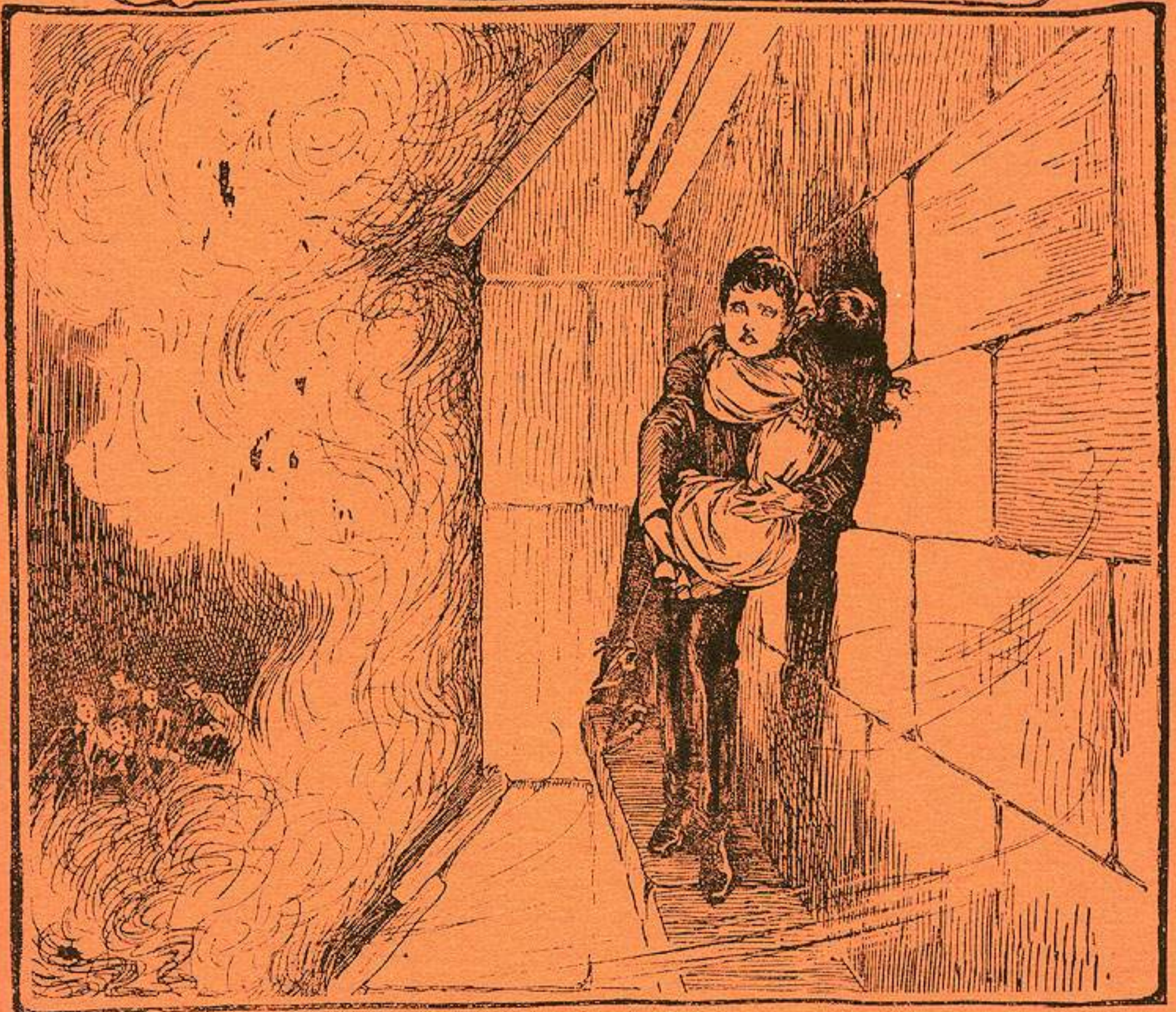
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By
FRANK
RICHARDS




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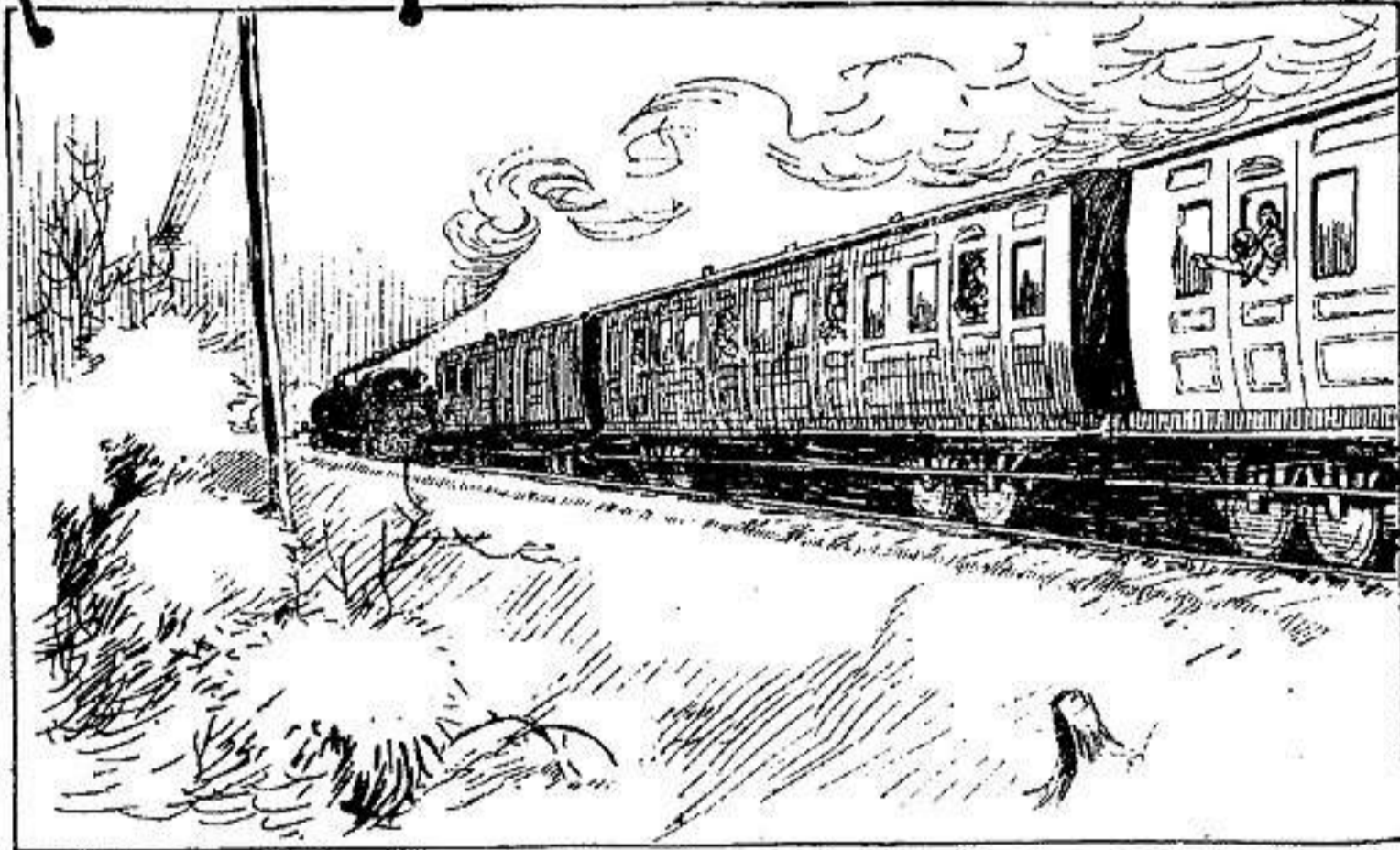
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The New Term at Greyfriars



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

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Back to School!

THERE were faces at all the windows in the train, and a deafening din proceeding from most of the carriages. The express swept on through a snowy landscape, leaving a trail of black smoke and an echo of shouting voices behind.

The boys of Greyfriars were returning to school after the Christmas vacation. The special train was crammed from end to end, and, although by no means glad that the holidays were over, the trainload of youthful humanity seemed in high enough spirits, and they were celebrating their return to the old school in the most vociferous way possible.

From one carriage especially the din was terrific. It was a carriage occupied by fellows belonging to the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. The Removites of Greyfriars generally made their presence heard wherever they were, but on the present occasion they were excelling all previous efforts.

The carriage was crammed; every seat was taken, and fellows were standing at the windows or sitting on one

another's knees. Frank Nugent was playing the "Grand March" from "Tannhauser" on his mouth-organ. The effect, from a musical point of view, was somewhat spoiled by the fact that Bob Cherry was playing "Bill Bailey" on a tin whistle at the same time. Bulstrode, Skinner, and Stott were telling some unknown person, at the full force of their lungs, to love them and the world was theirs. Wun Lung, the Chinese boy, was singing a song in Chinese, which had an apparently endless refrain of "Ko, ke, ko, ke, ko, ko, ke!"—or something that sounded like that. Hurreo Janset Ram Singh, the Hindu junior, not to be outdone, had burst into an unintelligible chanting melody, celebrating the heroic deeds of Rama, in a language only known to himself. Harry Wharton was almost the only one who was not singing something, and he was stopping his ears.

"Hold on, you chaps!" exclaimed Nugent, suddenly breaking off his stirring march. "You're off-side! Can't you keep quiet, and listen to the music?"

"That's what we want you to do," said Bulstrode. "I wish you'd shut up that unearthly instrument. Go it, Skinny! Buck up, Stott! 'Lo-o-o-ve me, and the world is mi-ine!'"

"Bob—I say, Bob, old man, do back-pedal with that whistle!"

"Rats! I must play something, or I shall hear Bulstrode sing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, from his corner, where he was eating sandwiches at express speed—"I say, if you like to shut up that row——"

"Don't interrupt! Go it, Skinny!"

"But I say, you fellows, if you'll shut up, I'll give you a little ventriloquial entertainment till we get to Friardale. I can throw my voice——"

"I wish you could throw Bulstrode's voice," said Bob Cherry. "I'd get you to throw it out of the window."

Bulstrode broke off again, to glare at Bob Cherry.

"What's that, Cherry? What's the matter with my voice?"

"Blessed if I know, but it must be something serious, to judge by the sound," said Bob cheerfully.

"If you're looking for a thick car——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Friardale!"

The little country station was in sight. Some of the singers and players stopped their performances, but others kept on merrily, and the train swung into the station with a roar of mingled melodies. Before the train had stopped the doors were flying open, and venturesome youngsters were jumping out. Bulstrode was the first, and he stumbled on the platform, rolled over, brought up against a trolley, and gave a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no sympathy for Bulstrode; only a yell of laughter followed him from the carriage. The juniors poured out, and the long wooden platform was alive with boys in a few seconds.

Bob Cherry thumped the sleepy Friardale porter on the back, and roared in his ear:

"How are you, Freddy?"

The unfortunate man jumped clear of the platform.

"Oh, Master Cherry——"

"How are you, Freddy?" said Bob Cherry, insisting upon shaking hands with the porter. "How is Mrs. Fred and all the little Freddies?"

The porter grinned. His name was not Freddy, and he was an unmarried man, but Bob was disposed to be humorous. But on the first day of the new term there was a regular harvest of tips at the station, and the porter was all smiles. There was a terrific bumping of luggage on the platform, but the Removites paid no attention to that. They knew it would be sent on without trouble from them.

Harry Wharton & Co. linked arms, and marched along the platform, clearing a way through the crowd by the sheer force of shoving. They were not in any particular hurry, but they were in high spirits, and so they shoved their way along, cheerfully disregarding loud and strenuous objections on the part of the shoved.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Dab!" said Bob Cherry.

"Temple and Dab and little Fry! Shove them along!"

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, had stepped out of a first-class carriage, and Temple was arranging his necktie by the aid of a pocket-mirror held by Dabney. The heroes of the Upper Fourth were somewhat particular in their persons, and they usually held themselves up as shining examples to the rowdy Remove. Consequently Bob Cherry's suggestion was hailed with enthusiasm by the Removites. Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh marched on with linked arms and the force of a steam-roller, marched into the Upper Fourth trio, and marched over them.

Temple, Dabney & Co. went down helplessly, and sprawled on the platform, and there were boot-marks on their nice clothes when the Removites had passed. The pocket-mirror—alas!—was in fragments, and Temple's necktie was hanging out over his crumpled waistcoat.

Temple sprang to his feet in a rage.

"You young rotters!" he roared. "I'll——"

"Oh, rather!" gasped Dabney.

But the four Removites were gone. They tackled the crowd on the platform like Rugby forwards in a scrum. They shoved, and shoved, and made their way. Fellows who got in the way lay sprawling on the platform, and the Famous Four went marching on.

Near the exit was a thick crowd, with some big Fifth Form fellows in it. The Remove usually reserved their favours for the Upper Fourth, and let the Fifth alone. A senior Form was a little too strong for them to tackle. But on the opening day of the term they were capable of anything.

"Right on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Right-ho! Here goes! Shovel!"

"The shovefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And they shoved!

"Look out!" roared Blundell, of the Fifth. "You cheeky young beggars! Where are you shoving—hey?"

"Keep off, you young rascals!" yelled Bland.

"Shovel!" said Wharton tersely.

And they shoved again! And Blundell went one way, and Bland another, and a couple more fellows rolled on the planks, and the Famous Four squeezed through.

"Bravo!" roared the Removites on the platform.

"The cheek!" gasped Blundell.

"The nerve!" howled Bland.

But the Famous Four were through, and marching on, laughing heartily. They came out of the station into the street, where the snow was thick on the ground, and feathery flakes were still lightly falling. The school omnibus was waiting, with the driver in his seat, and two horses snorting and steaming.

"Bag the front seats!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

The school 'bus had accommodation on top as well as inside. Nobody who could help it ever went inside. As for the snow, that was nothing. Bob Cherry was in the seat beside the driver in a jiffy, and Harry Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh captured the foremost seats on top. Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, was the next out, and he joined them there. Harry Wharton stood on the seat, waved his cap, and shouted:

"Buck up, Remove!"

And Removites came scrambling on the 'bus from all sides. They were the first, and the top of the 'bus was soon crammed with juniors, and the more slow and stately Fifth and Sixth-Formers found only the inside left for them. Most of the fellows preferred to walk, as the school 'bus had to make four journeys at least to and fro to get the whole lot to Greyfriars.

Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, looked up at the crammed top with a grin.

"You cheeky young beggars!"

"Oh, there's room for you, Wingate!" exclaimed Wharton. "I'll shove one of these chaps off to make room—— Hang it all! I'll get down myself!"

Wingate laughed.

"Nothing of the sort, Wharton. I'll walk."

"Here, get down from there, you cheeky young brats!" called out Carberry, the prefect, coming out of the station. "Get down! Do you hear?"

"Get off, Jim," said Harry to the driver. "The 'bus's full."

"Ay, sir!" said Jim.

"Stop! Get off, you young rotters!" howled Carberry.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Wingate. "Why can't you let them alone? They bagged the places first."

"I suppose the kids have got to make room for a prefect?" snarled Carberry.

"Rats! What's the matter with walking?"

"I'm not going to walk! I——"

Wingate shrugged his shoulders. He did not mean to interfere. Carberry was clinging to the 'bus and running behind it, yelling to the driver to stop. But Jim, the driver, made it a point not to hear him.

"Stop, you scoundrel—stop! Do you hear? Wharton—Cherry—Nugent—get down at once!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There's someone hanging on behind the 'bus!"

"Stop, you young hounds!"

"Whip behind, driver!"

"Ay, Master Cherry."

And Jim slung out the long lash of his whip behind, and Carberry gave a yell as it curled round his legs. He let go, and dropped off the 'bus into the snow, and sat there staring dazedly round him.

A yell of laughter rang from the 'bus as it rolled swiftly onward through the snow, and the last the juniors saw of the prefect he was still sitting there, shaking his fist.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The First Day of the Term.

"HA, ha, ha!"
The shouts of boyish laughter rang merrily through the crisp winter air. The 'bus was crammed inside and out, but the horses were strong and hearty, and the vehicle rolled swiftly on through the snowy lane to Greyfriars.

Village boys in the lane saluted the Greyfriars lads with whizzing snowballs, which were taken with perfect good-humour. The juniors on top of the 'bus struck up a football song with a rousing chorus, and it rang far away over the frozen fields.

A little fat gentleman with a happy, good-natured German face was walking along the lane, and the 'bus overtook him. He glanced up and smiled at the Greyfriars lads, and every hat swept off in salute to Herr Rosenblaum.

Herr Rosenblaum was the headmaster of the New Academy—Greyfriars' closest neighbour—where the sons of foreigners resident in England were instructed, and where they had many a row with the Greyfriars fellows.

Herr Rosenblaum was very popular at Greyfriars, where he had once been German master, and the rows the Grey Friars had with the "aliens" did not make any difference to the respect they felt for the German gentleman.

"Goot-morgen!" said Herr Rosenblaum, raising his hat politely. "I am glad to see te sheerful young faces again mit demselves after."

"Good-morning, sir! Happy New Year!"

"Tank you, Wharton! Te same mit you after!"

The 'bus rolled on, and the little fat gentleman disappeared behind. He had evidently lately arrived at the station, and was walking to the New Academy. The foreign boys did not commence their term till the next day, Herr Rosenblaum having thoughtfully made that arrangement when he opened the New Academy. Had the aliens opened on the same day as the British school, and arrived at Friardale at the same time, it was pretty certain that riots would have been the result. There were rows enough already.

The tower of Greyfriars loomed up, white with snow, in the distance over the leafless trees.

"There's Greyfriars!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Here we are again!" grinned Nugent. "Same old spot! Same old Gosling, with the same old red nose!"

Gosling, the porter, was looking out at the gates, not with a pleasant expression on his face. The opening of the term meant to him renewed work, and Gosling did not love work. His nose was certainly very red, but it might have been with the cold—though it probably wasn't.

The 'bus rolled up to the ancient gateway, and rolled in, and the boys saluted Gosling with more or less politeness.

"Oh, Gossy, Gossy!" said Bob Cherry sadly. "Didn't I warn you when we broke up to leave that bottle on the mantelpiece alone?"

"I'm shocked at you, Gossy!" said Nugent solemnly.

"The shockfulness is terrific!"

"Me shockee allee samee," murmured Wun Lung. "Me tinkee Gossie naughty—velly naughty!"

"Young himps," said Gosling; "young horrors! Why they don't make a law to 'ave all boys drowned at birth puzzles me!"

The juniors clambered down from the 'bus. The old Close was white with snow, and the snow lay in a white mantle on roofs and walls and chimneys. The boys stamped their feet to warm them. Jim, the driver, turned his steaming horses round to trot back to the station for the next load. The Removites poured into the school, and awoke a thousand echoes in deserted rooms and corridors with their shouts.

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Billy Bunter, "I find that dinner won't be ready for a quarter of an hour!"

"Horrid!"

"Hadn't we better have a feed? Mrs. Mimble has her shop open, and she's got a ripping lot of new grub there!"

"Certainly! Come on, you chaps—Bunter is standing a feed to celebrate the new term!"

"Oh, don't be funny, Cherry! Of course, you fellows will have to stand the feed! I should be very glad to do so, but I've been disappointed about a postal order. I expected to find some remittances here waiting for me, but there seems to have been a delay in the post. This has happened to me before!"

"Ha, ha! More than once, I think!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in it, though! Some fellows see a lot of fun in another chap's misfortunes. Are you going to stand—"

"No, I'm going to sit down!"

"I mean are you going to stand a feed?"

"Yes, when I grow up and get rich. At present, the dinner Mrs. Kebble is getting ready will do for me."

"I don't like a fellow to be mean! I don't see why you chaps can't stand—"

"There's one thing we can't stand, Billy, and that's you! Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry took Billy Bunter by the shoulders, turned him gently round, and helped him to start with his knee. Bunter started.

"Let's go and have a look at the study!" suggested Nugent. And the chums of the Remove went upstairs to Study No. 1.

They were glad to see their old quarters again. Their

vacation at Harry Wharton's home had been a jolly one but they had had many merry times in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. There was coal in the locker and the fire was laid. Mrs. Kebble, the house-keeper, saw to the comforts of the juniors—or at least, to those of the juniors whom she liked. The room looked very neat after the cleaning given it lately, and the chums of the Remove glanced round it with considerable satisfaction.

"Ripping!" said Nugent. "I can't say I'm sorry to get back again! We shall want a new square of carpet this term!"

Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, I thought of that when we broke up. This carpet has never looked really decent since the whitewash pail was spilt on it. I asked my aunt about it, and she's going to send a square from Wharton Lodge."

"Good; that will come cheaper!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I think there's something in Billy's idea of standing a bit of a feed—though not ten minutes before dinner! There isn't much work this afternoon, and it's jolly hungry weather. Suppose we do some shopping after dinner, and have a good feed about tea-time? Bunter can cook it for us, while we have a run in the Close."

"Good!"

Dinner was taken in the great Hall at Greyfriars. Half the school was there, but on the opening day of the term dinner was a meal almost indefinitely prolonged, and later comers found plenty of the good things left. Billy Bunter enjoyed that dinner. He was the first at the table and the last to leave it, and he was eating most of the time. And there was a shiny smile of satisfaction upon his fat face when he left the Hall at last.

There was little more than a pretence at work on the opening day of the term—only a little preparation, ready for work which would begin in earnest on the following day. But masters and pupils had plenty to do in getting settled once more in their old quarters.

Billy Bunter hailed the idea of a feed in No. 1 Study. He suggested that it should be something on a rather grander scale than usual, and generously offered to do all the shopping and all the cooking.

"Well, we want it to be rather ripping," Nugent remarked. "We'll come with you and do the shopping, Buntie."

"I could manage it alone, Nugent! I don't want you fellows to have any trouble at all in the matter!" said Bunter, blinking at Nugent through his big glasses.

"You're too kind, Billy! But if you do the shopping alone, I'm afraid you will have so many little snacks that there won't be any feed left!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"So come on, and don't jaw, old chap!"

The Famous Four paid a visit to Mrs. Mimble in force. They were overflowing with pocket-money at the beginning of the term, and their purchases were generous. Billy Bunter's fat face beamed as the pile of goods mounted up, and the five juniors were all laden when they left the school shop.

"Hallo, starting in the grocery and provision line?" asked Hazeldene, meeting the chums as they came upstairs.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No, we're having a feed! Will you come?"

"Yes, rather!"

Before they reached the study Harry had asked Ogilvy and Desmond, who both accepted. Bunter twitched his sleeve as they went in.

"I say, Wharton, I like to be generous, but you needn't

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ask all the Remove, you know! We want the grub to go round!"

"Why, you young cormorant, we have enough here for fifteen or sixteen fellows!" said Harry indignantly.

"Yes, but there's supper to-night——"

"Rats!"

"And a snack to-morrow——"

"We are not standing you a series of snacks, Billy. This is a feed for this afternoon, and we don't want a crumb left on the table."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"And I'm going to ask two or three more fellows."

Bunter blinked disapprovingly, but he knew that it was useless to argue with Harry. He opened the parcels, and prepared to do the cooking, while the chums of the Remove went to make up their list of guests. They looked in at Russell's study, to ask Wun Lung the Chinese, and, as Russell was there, they asked him, too. They met Mark Linley in the hall, and asked him, and the Lancashire lad willingly accepted. But as they walked on, Linley came quickly after Wharton and tapped him on the arm. Harry stopped, with a smile.

"Excuse me, Wharton!" Linley was very red. "I—I'm awfully obliged by your invitation, but I—I——"

"Don't you want to come?"

"Yes, of course! But—well, you know that some of the Remove fellows have made a set against me, because I came to Greyfriars with a scholarship and used to work in a mill!" Linley coloured more deeply. "It's decent of you to take me up, but I don't want to get you into trouble with your friends. If you're giving a party, I'd better not come."

"I understand you, Linley, but it's all right. You will be a guest in No. 1 Study, and I shouldn't ask anybody to meet you who couldn't be relied upon to behave himself. As for Bulstrode and his set, I haven't anything to do with them."

"Well, I—I thought I'd speak——"

"That's all right; it's all serene."

And when the little party of invited guests gathered to march into No. 1 Study, Mark Linley was among them. He was looked at rather curiously. Most of the Remove wondered why Wharton had taken him up. But, as a matter of fact, Mark's quiet, pleasant ways were already winning him friends in the Remove.

Wharton came along the passage and found his guests arriving. He joined them with a cheery smile.

"Come along, you chaps, it's close on feeding-time!"

"My word," said Russell, "there's a jolly strong niff coming from your study! Your chef is burning the grub!"

Harry Wharton sniffed. There was indeed a strong smell of burning proceeding from No. 1 Study. Wharton looked in at the door, and had to hold his breath.

Billy Bunter—in his shirt-sleeves, with an apron round him—was hard at work. The grate was crammed with coal, and a fire was roaring half-way up the chimney. The glow from the fire filled the room with light and heat, and made the gas superfluous. Bunter's fat face was streaming with perspiration. He had a frying-pan in one hand and a fork in the other, and on the fire was a rasher of bacon which had apparently just escaped from the pan.

"Phew!" said Hazeldene.

Billy Bunter turned round.

"Don't come in yet, you fellows! The feed's not ready, and I'm busy!"

"You look it," said Mark Linley, smiling.

"I can't do everything at once, you know! I'm cooking bacon and sausages, and frying potatoes, and boiling the kettle, and warming the rabbit-pies! Run away for another ten minutes!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, coming in. "Not ready yet?"

"Ready in ten minutes!"

"My only aunt, what a niff!"

"It's all right; do get out!"

"Don't have such a big fire, Billy," said Harry Wharton anxiously; "it's dangerous, you know! We shall get into a row if the chimney catches!"

"I'm going to let it down when the cooking's done."

The juniors left the study, and Billy Bunter went on with his herculean labours. A childish voice called to Harry Wharton, and he stopped and looked round.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Causes a Catastrophe.

"MISS MOLLY!"

Harry Wharton greeted the little girl with a smile. It was the Head's little daughter, Molly Locke, a great favourite with the Greyfriars' juniors. Miss Molly was only eight years old, though she sometimes had a grave and serious manner that seemed more suitable to a lady of sixty or so.

"I want you to help me," said Miss Molly.

Harry Wharton smiled.

"What can I do, Miss Molly?"

"Look!" The child held up a broken doll. "Will you mend her?"

Wharton took the doll doubtfully. It had evidently suffered from a severe fall, and the china head was smashed. The face was missing, and the neck was cracked, and the hair hung by a little bit of glue.

"I'm afraid it's rather far gone, dear," said Harry. "You see, there's a lot of it missing."

"I've got the pieces," said Miss Molly promptly; and she showed a chubby little fist full of fragments of china. "You stick them together again. Dada said he could not stick them; I thought you could."

Wharton smiled at the idea of the grave and reverent Head of Greyfriars with the broken doll, sticking the shattered face together again.

"I'll do my best," he said. "But you mustn't expect much, dear. You will hardly know your dolly again."

"You stick it with glue," said Miss Molly—"It will be all right if you stick it with glue."

"It's rather badly broken."

"Yes, but you can stick it with glue."

Miss Molly evidently had an exaggerated idea of the efficacy of glue in case of a breakage.

Wharton carefully took the pieces, and assured the little one that he would do his best.

"You mend her now?" said Miss Molly.

"Yes, as soon as I can."

"I will come and fetch her," said Miss Molly, with a grave nod. And she walked away down the passage, leaving Wharton with the broken doll in his hands, and a rather rueful look on his face.

But it was impossible to disappoint Miss Molly. Wharton had his doubts about making the doll look as of old by the aid of the glue-pot. But, whatever he did, he could hardly make matters worse. He carried the wreck into Study No. 1, and Billy Bunter looked round peevishly.

"I say, you fellows, the feed's not ready yet."

"All right, Billy!" said Harry, laughing. "I haven't come for a feed. Have you room there for the glue-pot?"

"You can stand it on the hob, Wharton, if you like. It's nearly red-hot."

The glue did not take long to melt. Harry Wharton took the doll between his knees, and glued the shattered face together, stuffing rags inside the hollow head to give the glue a hold. The result could not be called beautiful. The classic features of Miss Molly's doll could never be renewed. But at least all the fragments were united in one piece with some resemblance to a face.

"Don't knock this over, Owl," he remarked, as he laid the doll on a shelf to dry. "And if Miss Molly comes here for it, tell her it will take some time to dry, and I'll bring it to her when it's all right."

"Certainly, Wharton," said Bunter absently. "Jolly hot in here, isn't it?"

"Yes; I hope you won't set the chimney on fire."

Harry Wharton left the study. Billy Bunter perspired on. The study was extremely hot, though the window was open to let in the cold air of the winter evening from the Close.

Mark Linley's door was open as Harry passed it. The Lancashire lad was seated at his table, with an open Homer before him, and Liddell and Scott at his elbow. His face wore a somewhat worried look. Wharton stepped in, with a cheery nod.

"Can I help you?"

"You can, if you like," said Mark, with a rueful grin.

"But it's a shame to make you fag at Greek when——"

"Stuff! It helps me as much as it helps you. Where are you stuck?"

"Here you are—Hector and Andromeda."

Wharton seated himself at the table, and the two juniors were soon busy. Greek was an extra in the Greyfriars Remove, and the lad from Lancashire had taken it up "on his own." Hence his difficulties, in which he found a ready help in Harry Wharton. In the keenness with which he tackled the subject, Harry soon forgot the feed that was preparing in Study No. 1.

It was Mark Linley who first looked up from the work, and sniffed.

ANSWERS

"I say, there's something burning!"
 "Oh, it's only Bunter! He's cooking; and I suppose he's dropped some more bacon in the fire. He's got a fire going like a furnace."

"But hark!"
 A wild yell rang from up the passage. Wharton sprang from the table and ran out of the study, and a cry of horror left his lips.

There was a terrific burst of flame from the doorway of Study No. 1, and Billy Bunter was fleeing down the corridor, with a scared face. An empty frying-pan was still convulsively gripped in his hand.

"Fire! Fire!"
 "You young ass!" roared Wharton. "What have you done?"

"I—it wasn't my fault! The chimney caught, and—and then I was startled, and upset the frying-pan. Then the grease caught fire! Oh, dear!"

There was a roar of flame in the study and the blaze from the door burst out and licked the opposite wall. There was a crackling of burning wood. A pan full of grease had been spilt over the fire, hearth, and floor, and it had instantly caught alight. The carpet was ablaze, and the study was filled with fire and smoke. The draught through from the open window to the door fanned the outburst.

Wharton, with the wild idea of yet getting the fire out, made a rush forward towards the study door; but a rolling volume of smoke and flame drove him back.

Mark Linley grasped his arm, and pulled him away.
 "You can't get in!"

Wharton snapped his teeth.
 "No! There will be a fearful row over this! Give the alarm!"

"Fire! Fire!"
 Fellows were crowding into the Remove passage from all quarters, yelling "Fire!" at the top of their voices.

Billy Bunter made a break for the Close, to get into safety, while other fellows stood around, scared and helpless. Harry Wharton was prompt to act.

"Buckets—quick!" he cried.
 There was a row of fire-buckets in the upper corridor, but they were empty and dusty. There was a tap above on the box-room stairs, but to reach it one had to pass the flames bursting from the blazing study. Harry Wharton would have attempted it, but Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was now on the scene, and he forbade him to do so.

"All of you get out into the Close!" said the Remove master sharply. "The fire is spreading! Get buckets, pails, anything, and you can get water from the fountain. Not that it will be of much use," he added, under his breath.

The whole school was alarmed now. Fellows thronged up from all quarters to lend a hand, and articles of value were hastily carried out of the studies, and water soused on the fire—without much effect. Fifth, and Sixth, Remove, and Shell, worked together like giants.

Mr. Quelch hurried off to the Head, who, startled as he was, by the news, acted quickly and calmly.

He telephoned immediately to Friardale for the local fire brigade—an amateur and volunteer institution, very much admired in Friardale, and much given to fancying itself. The reply came that the brigade would turn out immediately, and then the Head hurried to the scene of the conflagration.

Wingate and several other Sixth-Formers had a hose working now, and were pouring water into the window at the end of the Remove passage, in a continuous stream. It was all they could do; but it did not touch the seat of the fire. The flames were spreading along the Remove passage, and the roar of the fire was audible from one end of Greyfriars to the other.

Billy Bunter stood, with a scared face, the frying-pan still in his hand. There was a red glare of flame on many windows now, and the glass, here and there, was cracking.

The Remove passage was one of the oldest portions of Greyfriars, and, from the quantity of woodwork, seemed ripe for a fire, and the rambling nature of the building made it difficult to get at.

Fellows were streaming in and out, carrying furniture, books, and other articles, and piling them in the Close.

Mark Linley had a Greek lexicon under his arm. Nugent was feeling in his pockets to ascertain whether he had left his mouth-organ in the study. Dr. Locke's face was anxious and alarmed. If the fire should spread to the rest of Greyfriars, the loss would be irreparable. Would the Friardale firemen never come!

"There is not much danger of that, sir," said Mr. Quelch, who knew what the Head was thinking. "The Remove passage has a wall of solid stone towards the rest of the buildings; and, besides, it is easy to flood the upper floor from the tank above in case it spreads. The big staircase is already flooding from the tap in the Fifth-Form passage, and cannot burn."

The Head breathed a little more freely.
 "You are right, Mr. Quelch! But I am afraid this portion of the building will be gutted. Is it known how the fire started?"

"In one of the studies, I believe."
 "Ah! This must be inquired into."

Billy Bunter heard the words, and he shook in his shoes. Dr. Locke called to Hazeldene.

"Go to Mrs. Locke and tell her that there is no immediate danger," he said. "But request her to come into the Close with Miss Molly, in case of accidents."

"Yes, sir!" said Hazeldene.
 He cut off, and in a couple of minutes came back. Mrs. Locke, looking very much alarmed, was following him.

"Where is Molly, my dear?" asked the doctor hastily.
 "Is she not with you?"

"With me? No! I thought—"
 "Then I do not know," said Mrs. Locke. Her gaze turned towards the glare of red on the windows. "It is not possible that—that—"

"Impossible! Why should Molly be in the Remove passage? There is no cause for alarm.
 Harry Wharton heard the words.

His face went white as chalk.
 Why should the little girl be in the Remove passage? He remembered that Miss Molly had promised to return for her doll. Whether she had done so or not he did not know—but if she had—

"Oh, heavens!"
 The words broke involuntarily from his lips in terror. Fear, he had never felt for himself; but the thought of the little girl in the flaming passage turned him cold with dread.

The Head looked at him quickly, as he caught the horrified exclamation.

"What is it, Wharton? Have you seen Molly?"
 "Yes—no—I don't know, sir! But—ah, there is Bunter! He will know! Bunter!"

"I say, I couldn't help it!" muttered Bunter. "The chimney caught, and then the frying-pan upset, and—"

"Bunter! Billy! Did Miss Molly—"
 "It wasn't my fault! I—"

Wharton grasped him by the shoulder, and shook him savagely.

"Billy, did Miss Molly come to the study—"
 "I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Wharton. You might make my glasses fall off, and if they broke, you would have to pay for them—"

"Will you answer me? Have you seen Miss Molly?"
 "Miss Molly? Yes!"

"Did she come to the study after I left?"
 "Yes, she came for her doll. I gave it to her. I told her what you said about the glue—"

"Did she leave the study before the fire broke out?"
 "She was just going."

"Ah! Then she was not in the study!" cried Wharton. And Mrs. Locke, who was listening feverishly, gave a sob of relief.

"Of course, she wasn't!" said Bunter. "She ran out with me when the fire broke out."

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Mrs. Locke. And the Head gasped with relief.

But Harry Wharton's face was white and hard. His grasp tightened on the fat junior's shoulder, till Bunter cried out with pain. But Harry did not hear him.

"Bunter, think, you fool! I met you in the passage when you ran out of the study, but Miss Molly was not with you!"

"Wasn't she? Then she must have run the other way—towards the box-room."
 Mrs. Locke gave a shriek.

Wharton reeled for a moment, his head swimming. He knew the worst now. Miss Molly was in the burning building, circled by fire!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Fighting the Flames.

HARRY WHARTON reeled under the shock; but it was only for a moment. One moment of blank horror, and then he was quite himself again. Miss Molly was in the midst of the fire, for from the Remove passage there was only one way of escape.

If she had not run with Billy Bunter towards the stairs, she must have run up the passage towards the upper stairs to the box-room. In her fright, the child had doubtless not noticed where she was fleeing; but from the upper end of the passage there was no escape. The fire cut off the only path, and as it spread it must reach the child and devour

her. She was doomed—if not a victim to the smoke and flame already!

In that terrible crisis Wharton's brain, after the first shock, seemed to work with strange clearness. He saw it all. As in a picture, he saw the form of the terrified child crouching away from the flames, which advanced nearer and nearer like a hungry beast of prey to devour her. He saw it all, and he heard the wild cry of the mother.

"My child—Molly! Save her!"

Harry ran towards the door.

"Come back!" cried the Head, in choking tones—"come back! You can do nothing."

But for once the captain of the Remove passed a command of the Head unheeded. He dashed in at the door, and up the stairs. The great staircase was smouldering in places, but it could not catch fire, for a stream of water was pouring down it from a tap turned on above.

Harry reached the top of the staircase, untouched by flame, but blinded by the rolling volumes of smoke. He could see nothing, and he kept his eyes closed to allay the smart of the smoke.

But well he knew the way! To the left; and his rapid footsteps rang on the Remove passage, on the flagstones that lay under the linoleum. The floor, at all events, was secure. It was of solid stone.

But the studies on both sides of the boy were ablaze, and the roof was burning. Flame and smoke rushed upon him, and he felt the scorching tongues licking at his skin; but in the excitement of the moment he was scarcely conscious of pain.

He knew what he had to do, and he did it. Before him lay the Remove passage, thick with smoke, blinding with flame. He had to pass through it, and reach the upper end of it, where Miss Molly, if she still lived, must be crouching away from the fire.

He paused one moment to tear off his jacket and wind it about his face. It would save him from the flame to some extent—save him perhaps from suffocation. Already his senses were reeling in the fumes. Could he get through? Even if he braved the flames, could he hold out without air? Grim death was mocking him from the gulf of smoke and fire; but Harry Wharton never faltered.

Right on, right ahead, he went, and he felt the scorching flame on his hands, on his arms; but it was only for seconds.

Then he was through! Smoke was still round him in thick masses, but he knew that he had passed the flames. The fire had not yet reached the end of the passage. Wharton staggered on to the end, and stumbled upon the box-room stairs. Where was the child? He tore the jacket from his face.

"Molly! Miss Molly!"

A frightened cry from the box-room stairs answered him. The child was crouching there, too terrified to move, the damaged doll still clasped in her arms. Wharton groped his way to her, and drew her into his arms.

"Molly, don't be afraid, dear!"

She was sobbing convulsively. She clung to him, and Wharton held her with her little arms round his neck. He was trying to think. To dash through the flames and reach the child had been his first thought; but now? He had found her; she still lived. But how to escape?

He turned back the way he had come for a moment. Could he pass that blazing furnace again? He knew that he had got through it once only by a kind of miracle. Could he pass it again burdened with the child?

The crash of falling timber answered him. Myriads of sparks flew through the blinding smoke. Wharton set his teeth hard. There was a groan in his heart. It was a fall of burning walls in the passage, and the way was blocked. A fiercer rush of flame came up to the very end of the passage and singed his clothes. He staggered up the box-room stairs.

There was no way back!

He opened the box-room door, and closed it behind him. The room was full of smoke, but it was not so thick as outside. He breathed again. The little window high up in the wall offered him a chance of air. He dashed it open, and held the child's head out into the open, and then put out his own.

Glorious was the feel of the biting winter air on his scorched face. Miss Molly's eyes opened again; her frightened glance turned upon him.

"Take me away!"

"Yes—yes, dear! Don't be afraid!"

"I'm so frightened!"

"I will take care of you," muttered Wharton. "Don't be afraid."

He was racking his brains to think of a means of escape. The window was high up, and looked out over the green at the back of the chapel. He could see nothing of the crowd

in the Close. How was he to escape? How was he to save Molly? The child trembled convulsively as she clung to him.

The smoke was thicker and thicker. It was creeping thickly under the door, and the door itself was scorching, and would soon be alight. The box-room stairs, up which Harry had so lately passed, were ablaze.

The boy gazed from the window. Far below the chapel green looked so cool and inviting, the cropped grass glimmering in the light from blazing windows. He looked round him. There was a ledge of stonework under the window, and it ran along and met the slope of a slate roof. Alone, he might have managed the climb; but burdened with a child—

Yet to save himself alone never crossed his mind. If it was death that awaited him there, he would not leave her.

"I am so frightened!"

The child's voice was broken and weak. She was fainting in the suffocating smoke. Wharton made up his mind. To creep along the ledge, up over the slates, and gain the roof of the chapel was his only chance of life, and he knew it.

In all probability he would fall, and then it was death to both of them. But that was better than death in the fire!

He had resolved, and he wasted no time. If the attempt was to be made, the sooner the better.

"Molly"—his voice was quick, but very kind and gentle—"let me cover your face from the smoke. I am going to take you away."

The child made no resistance. He fastened his handkerchief tightly over her eyes, blindfolding her. He knew that if she saw her danger she would struggle, and then doom was certain.

"Molly, will you keep still, and I can save you?"

"Yes," whispered the child.

But she was trembling. Wharton opened the window wide, and gathered her into his arms.

"Keep still!"

It was not difficult to clamber out on the ledge. Then, with his left arm round the little girl as she clung to his neck, and his right hand clutching at the brickwork on his right, Harry Wharton crept along the ledge between earth and sky; and behind him a volume of smoke rolled from the window.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Shadow of Death.

FACES in the Close were white and scared. Harry Wharton had not been seen again, and all feared that he had succumbed. Bob Cherry and Nugent had made a dash up to the Remove passage, but they had found it blocked with smoking woodwork, and had had to retreat. The way was barred. They knew that Wharton could not return, if he still lived, and their hearts were as heavy as lead as they emerged gasping for breath into the Close.

"It's all up!" groaned Bob.

Mrs. Locke had fainted, and had been taken away. Dr. Locke was white as a sheet, and trembling in every limb. The child he loved was doomed—he felt it—and the bravo lad who had gone to her rescue was doomed too. The Head, almost overcome, leaned his trembling hand against a frosty tree for support.

"God help us!" he murmured again and again. "God help us!"

There was no sign yet of the firemen from Friardale. The boys had desisted from their useless efforts. They had taken care that the fire did not spread to the main building, but the Remove rooms were utterly gutted.

Flowing water and stone walls kept the flames from the rest of the building. The firemen, if they arrived, would be too late. Nothing now could save Wharton and Molly, unless Wharton could save himself and the child.

"He's done for!" muttered Nugent, with the tears hot on his eyelids. "Poor old Harry! He can't get out now."

"Me tinkee p'laps he gettee in box-room," murmured Wun Lung, the Chinese, in his soft voice. "S'posee we lookee at window?"

Nugent started.

"Good! Come on!"

The Removites raced round to the chapel green. From that point they could see the window of the box-room.

Smoke, tinged red with flame, was pouring from the window and a dozen others. They could see nothing else at first. Bob Cherry groaned.

"There's the secret passage," he muttered, "but it's been bricked up. But for that, Harry could have—"

Nugent gave a cry.

"Look!"

"What is it?"

"Can't you see him? It's Harry!"

"Great Scott!"

Nugent had first discerned the figure creeping along the stone ledge, high up in the dusky air.

In the darkness of the night and the dim rolling of the smoke, the figure was imperfectly visible, but there was no doubt that it was Wharton, and they could see that he had a child on his arm.

"Heaven!" Bob Cherry turned almost sick. "He will fall; he must fall!"

"God forbid!"

They watched anxiously, with thumping hearts. Word soon spread that Wharton had been seen, and the crowd thronged round to look at him. Dr. Locke came, and he staggered as he looked up and saw the figure clinging to the ledge. Looked at from below, it seemed to be inevitable that Harry must lose his footing.

"They will be killed!"

"Don't look!" muttered Mr. Quelch. "God help them; we cannot!"

Nugent pulled Bob Cherry's sleeve.

"He's making for the chapel roof, Bob!"

"Yes. If he reaches it—"

"He must—he must!"

"If he does, how can he climb up the slates? Oh, Frank!"

"That's what I was thinking. We know how to get on the chapel roof from the end of the chapel, Bob. Come on; we may be able to help him. He will have to climb up the ridge. We can help him there."

"Right!"

The two juniors tore off. Bob stopped as they reached the chapel.

"You go on, Frank. I'll cut into the gym. for a rope; we may want it."

"Good!"

Five minutes later the two venturesome boys were clambering from a window upon a ledge under the chapel roof, and thence to the slates. It was risky work, more so as the slates were frosty, but they never faltered for a moment. Bob Cherry had a strong rope looped over his arm. They gained the ridge in the centre of the roof, and looked anxiously for Harry Wharton.

He had reached the end of the ledge, and was taking breath there. His position was terribly perilous. On his right the brickwork rose to the edge of a roof, the edge being above his reach. The stone ledge was a foot wide, and rounded off. On his left was the abyss.

But he had reached the slates of the chapel, which ended at a couple of feet's height above the ledge he was following. He rested his hand upon them, and slowly lifted Molly upon the slates. A single false movement, and the child would have slipped—he would have slipped himself.

And a slip meant a fall of a hundred feet to hard earth.

His heart was beating quickly, his teeth were set like a vice, his face white and rigid.

All depended on his nerve

His nerve did not fail him. The little girl was placed on the slates, but the slope was considerable, and only his support kept her from rolling off. To climb on the slates himself, and with his burden to reach the ridge a dozen yards distant, seemed impossible.

Had he come so far to fail now?

"Harry!"

It was a whispering, trembling voice from the roof of the chapel.

Wharton looked up. There was a glimmer of starlight on the slated roof, and on the stone ridge along the centre sat two forms astride. His heart beat almost to suffocation. He knew that his chums had braved death to aid him.

"Bob! Frank!"

"Hold on, old chap!" muttered Bob Cherry. "We're here; we've got a rope."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Keep a stiff upper lip. Look out! I've made knots along the rope, and made a loop at the end. Catch it as I slide it down."

"God bless you, Bob!" muttered Wharton thickly.

The rope came slithering down the slates. Harry Wharton caught the loop at the end with an almost convulsive grasp.

"Got it?"

"Yes. I will fasten it to Molly; you pull her up."

"And you?"

"I will wait till she is safe." Harry whispered to the child: "Molly dear, it is all right now."

But there came no reply from Molly. The child had fainted. Wharton was glad of it; she was spared the horrors he was suffering himself.

It occupied him but a few moments to securely knot the rope round her under the arms. Then he called out to Bob.

"Pull up!"

The juniors pulled. Molly slid up the sloping slates at the end of the rope, and Wharton watched her with tense anxiety. Her weight was nothing to the two sturdy

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Removites; in a minute or less they had pulled her up to the stone ridge in the centre of the chapel roof.

On the other side of the chapel the end of a ladder came into view against the edge of the slates. Wingate of the Sixth was mounting it, and his head rose to sight. He looked up the slope at the juniors on the ridge.

"It's Wingate!" muttered Nugent. "Wingate, old chap—"

"Are you safe there?"

"Yes, yes. We've got Miss Molly. Will you take her if we lower her down?"

"Yes—quick!"

Nugent lifted the little girl over the ridge, and allowed her to slide down on the other side of the roof, towards the ladder. Wingate, standing on the ladder, took her into his arms.

"Unfasten the rope, Wingate; we want it for Wharton."

"Good!"

The rope slithered up the slates again. Wingate descended the ladder with the insensible child in his arms. Dr. Locke ran forward with a gasping cry, and took her.

"But—but Wharton?" he cried.

"He is coming, sir."

Every eye was now on Harry Wharton. The child was safe, but her rescuer—he was still in terrible danger. He waited patiently on the ledge while Miss Molly was lowered to Wingate, but at last Nugent slung the rope back to him.

He breathed deeply with relief as he saw it coming. His position on the ledge was insecure; the rounded edge of it was dangerous foothold for his feet, and the frosty slates offered little grip for his hands. How he remained there so many minutes without falling he never knew. But he was clinging there still when the rope came back, and he caught it.

"Hold it fast," he called out; "I'll climb up with the rope."

"Right you are!"

Nugent, holding the rope, crouched behind the stone ledge, and so gave it a secure hold. Wharton clambered up the slates with the assistance of a grip on the rope. He reached the ledge, and Bob Cherry grasped him.

"All right now!"

To descend to the ladder and reach the ground was the work of a minute or less. But Harry Wharton would probably have fallen then if his chums had not taken care of him. He was utterly spent with his terrible efforts, and as his feet touched the ground he reeled like a drunken man. Bob and Frank held him tight, and Hurree Singh dashed up to lend a hand.

"Wharton!" Dr. Locke came up, his eyes full of tears. Never had the boys of Greyfriars seen the Head so moved as he was at that moment. "Wharton, my dear lad, you have saved Molly."

"She is safe?"

"Yes, and unhurt—save for the shock. But for you—"

The Head shuddered. "God bless you, my boy! Greyfriars should be proud of you."

"Hurrah for Wharton!" shouted Hazeldene.

There was a ringing cheer at once. Up till now the anxiety had been so keen and intense that every lip seemed frozen. The pent-up feelings of the boys found expression in that wild cheer, which rang far over the frozen fields.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

But Harry Wharton did not hear it. He had fainted.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Friardale Fire Brigade.

HARRY WHARTON came to himself in a few minutes. He was not the kind of fellow to succumb for long.

He opened his eyes and looked about him. He was lying on a sofa that had been dragged out into the Close to save it from the flames, and Nugent was supporting his head, while Bob Cherry was bathing his forehead with cold water. There was a group of fellows round him with anxious faces. Harry struggled up into a sitting position.

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

Bob Cherry laughed a little hysterically.

"Nothing, only you fainted."

"Did I?"

Wharton passed a hand over his forehead. It was grimy with smoke. His skin was smarting in a dozen places; his clothes were burned into holes.

"By Jove," he said, "that was a narrow shave, and I don't want to go through it again."

"Precious few chaps would like to go through it once," said Hazeldene, grinning. "You ought to hear what the Head said. It would make you blush."

NEXT TUESDAY:

"THE NEW SIXTH-FORMER."

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Story.

Wharton coloured uncomfortably.

"It was nothing to make a fuss of; and I suppose I couldn't leave Miss Molly there to be burned. Have the firemen come yet?"

"Somebody says they're in sight."

"Good! Hallo, Bunter! You've got a jolly lot to answer for, you young sweep. We shall be turned out of our study over this."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't think you ought to blame me! I was cooking a good feed to oblige you fellows. Isn't it awful?"

"The fire? Yes, rather."

"I don't mean the fire; I mean the feed. All that grub wasted! Why, we had enough in the study for a record feed; and now——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to laugh at," said Bunter crossly. "I know I'm jolly hungry."

"Go and eat coke, then," said Bob Cherry. "There won't be anything left but the wall of the passage in the Remove quarters. The whole place will have to be rebuilt. What are we going to do for studies?"

"And for bed-rooms," grinned Hazeldene. "The Remove dormitory has fallen through into the studies."

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton, getting up. "There will be a bill for somebody to pay! This will use up all Bunter's postal-orders for a long time to come."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"I feel pretty dirty," said Harry; "do I look black, Bob?"

"Ha, ha! Something like a chimney-sweep after an exceptionally hard day's work."

Harry rubbed his face; but that only made matters worse. His skin was black as coal with the grime of the smoke. The grime had been won by heroism, but his chums could not help grinning at his looks.

"I think I'll go and get a wash."

"Rats! Here comes the fire brigade. You can't miss this."

There was a wild shouting at the gates of Greyfriars. The fire brigade had arrived.

"Here they come!"

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Dr. Locke, hurrying to the spot. "I am glad you have come, gentlemen. I do not think there is much danger of the fire spreading now, but it shows no sign of dying out."

"We'll soon have it under, sir," said the captain. "Buck up with that hose, there! Don't be all night!"

"Who are you a-ordering about, Bert Jones?"

"I'm ordering you. Will Hodge, and you'd better buck up."

"Stuff! What I say is——"

"Get out that hose!"

The Head looked on in surprise. He knew that the fire brigade of Friardale was an amateur affair. On occasions when they were training they had the fire-engine out, and played the hose gallantly over the trees and shrubs of Friardale Green, and swaggered about in brass helmets, to the great delight and admiration of the little boys of Friardale. If there were scoffers who regarded them as not being quite up to the form of a professional fire brigade, they kept the opinion secret. The Friardale brigade was the pride of Friardale, and they fancied themselves immensely. But it had to be admitted that discipline was not perfect.

The captain, in his other moments, was employed at the local drapery stores, and his right-hand man was also the right-hand man of Mr. Sandeman, the Friardale grocer.

And there was not always perfect harmony. It was fortunate, perhaps, that serious fires never happened in Friardale. The fire brigade might have been found unequal to the strain.

But the fire at Greyfriars gave them their chance! They had come rattling up to the school, too late to be of much use, but burning to distinguish themselves!

"Don't be a silly chump," Bert Jones whispered fiercely in the ear of Will Hodge. "We've got to get the fire under, you idiot!"

"You can be civil spoken, all the same."

"Ain't I your captain?"

Will Hodge grumbled something indistinctly. He thought he would have made a better captain himself. The fire-engine rattled up to the burning portion of the rambling old buildings, and the firemen soon had the hose ready. There was a plentiful supply of water in the Close, so there were no difficulties on that score.

The efforts of the Greyfriars fellows had been pretty successful, and the fire, confined within certain limits, was beginning to sink.

But that mattered nothing to the amateur firemen.

They were determined to save Greyfriars, whether it was in danger or not!

They turned a mighty stream of water into the window of the corridor, and there was a tremendous sputtering and crackling and hissing.

Flames died down, and huge volumes of smoke rose and rolled across the quadrangle.

Some of the smoke spread through interstices into other parts of the buildings, and rolled out of the windows, a fact that at once caught the keen eye of Will Hodge, the grocer fireman.

"Look here! It's catching over here!" he cried.

Captain Jones turned round angrily, but the sight of the smoke pouring from a class-room window convinced him that his lieutenant was right.

"By gum! So it is! Hose this way!"

Smash!

The powerful stream of water went through the class-room window like a stone, smashing the glass to fragments, and poured in over desks and forms.

Dr. Locke hurried up.

"What are you doing? My dear sir, you are flooding the class-rooms!"

Captain Jones took no notice.

He had his hand on the nozzle of the hose, and was too busy to talk. The Head grasped him by the shoulder.

"Mr. Jones, pray—— Oh, oh, oh!"

His grasp on Mr. Jones's shoulder had made the amateur fireman turn partly round, and the nozzle was directed full against the doctor.

The stream of water caught him full under the chin, and he was swept backwards as if he had received a right-hander from a prizefighter.

"Oh, oh!" gasped the Head.

Captain Jones stared at him, too startled by what he had done to think of turning off the water. Harry Wharton ran forward and grasped his wrist, and pushed the hose away from the Head, who was fairly bowled over. Unfortunately, the stream of water only turned upon new victims. Mr. Quelch gave a shriek as it caught him under the ear, and then Wingate yelled, with the stream playing upon his waistcoat.

Harry jammed Captain Jones's wrist downward, and the water rushed to the ground, and leaped up in great splashes.

"You ass! Shut it off!" he roared.

The captain mechanically obeyed.

"My—my 'at!" he gasped.

Dr. Locke gave the amateur fireman a glance that spoke volumes, and went indoors. Mr. Quelch said some things that made Mr. Jones colour very much, and followed the Head.

Captain Jones, feeling very annoyed, redirected his attention of the fire. He swamped the burning portions of the building with water, and he swamped a great many portions that were not burning. He sent swamps of water over everything and everybody within reach. And when the last spark had been extinguished, and the blackened embers were dripping with water, and everything else was dripping with water the gallant captain ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest.

And the fire-engine went off at the gallop back to Friardale, to be greeted with wild cheers from the Friardalers. And from that hour it was firmly believed in all Friardale that the local fire brigade had saved the school from being entirely gutted, and none believed it more firmly than Captain Jones and his merry men.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

New Quarters.

DR. LOCKE was looking very worried, as he sat in his study with Mr. Quelch. The fire was out, and the firemen were gone at last. But now the Head's worries were only beginning.

Greyfriars had gathered in force for the beginning of the term, and there were a number of new boys, too. There had been none too much space to spare at any time. But now——

"The Remove studies are gutted," said Dr. Locke. "That is not so serious, as the Lower Fourth can do their preparation in the class-rooms until the rooms are rebuilt. But the dormitory is gone. Where are they to sleep?"

Mr. Quelch looked thoughtful.

"They could be put in the Upper Fourth dormitory, sir," he said. "The boys could sleep double until further arrangements were made."

Dr. Locke smiled slightly.

"But you know what terms the Remove is upon with the



There was a strong smell of burning proceeding from No. 1 study, where Billy Bunter—in his shirt-sleeves, with an apron round him—was hard at work. Harry Wharton looked in at the door, and had to hold his breath.

Upper Fourth. What would be likely to be the result if the two Forms were put into the same dormitory?"

The Remove master smiled, too.

"You are right, sir."

"Of course, if nothing else can be thought of, we must adopt that plan," said the Head slowly.

"It would make matters worse to put them in with the Fifth, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "There would be endless disturbances, I am afraid."

"True. I think— Come in!" The doctor broke off as a tap came at his door.

The door opened, and a stout little German gentleman presented himself. The Head rose with a smile of welcome, and shook hands with him.

"I am glad to see you, Herr Rosenblaum. I did not know you had returned."

"I return mit meinselb to-day, ain't it," said Herr Rosenblaum. "How did you vas, mine friend? How did you vas, mein dear Mr. Quelch? I tink tat I comes over to speak to you apout te fire, ain't it."

"Pray sit down, Herr Rosenblaum. Yes, we have had a fire, and it has placed us in a serious difficulty."

"I tink tat I knows him. I tink tat I gome ofer to help you, ain't it."

The Head smiled. Herr Rosenblaum had a curious way of expressing himself in English, but there was no doubt that his heart was in the right place, and that he was in great earnest.

"Thank you very much, Herr Rosenblaum."

"No tanks," said the Herr, beaming. "I tink tat I does all I can. I tink I remember tat you lend me te cash to build te New Academy—"

"Pray don't speak of that," said the Head hastily.

"I tink I speaks of him, ain't it. I tinks I opens te New Academy, and I owes it all to you pefore. I tink I make it pay, too. Te money come in."

"I am very glad to hear it."

"But I not yet fill him up mit poys," said Herr Rosenblaum. "Dere is a lot of space tat is not fill pefore."

"It will fill up in time."

"Ja, ja! But shoost now, I put your poys in dere, hein?"

The Head started. It had not occurred to him that his houseless Form might find shelter in the New Academy "over the way."

"My dear Herr Rosenblaum—"

"Mein poys not gommece te new term till to-morrow," explained the Herr. "Te house all empty now. Ven tey come pack, te peds not all full, as I say. Plenty of room to put up te Remove, mit a little squeezng. Te poys not mind squeezng, hein? Petter tan sleeping in te passages mit demselves."

"This is very kind of you, Herr Rosenblaum," said the Head, looking very pleased and relieved. "I did not think of this; but it is just the way out of the difficulty. If you could put up the Remove for a couple of days, that will be splendid. The class-rooms are still intact, and it will only be a question of sleeping accommodation."

"Den tat is arranged?"

"Yes; and thank you very much. Mr. Quelch, will you inform the Remove that they will sleep in the New Academy to-night, and direct Mrs. Kebble to supply them with what they will require. I am afraid most of their things have been destroyed in the burning of the dormitory."

"Certainly, sir!"

And Mr. Quelch left the study. The Remove soon learned of the new arrangements, and they received the news in surprise at first, and then with something like hilarity.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's fun!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, when Mr. Quelch was gone. "You remember the times when the aliens were at Greyfriars, you kids! There were rows!"

"The rowfulness was terrific."

"One good turn deserves another, and now we're going to invade their quarters. We shall be established there before they come back for the new term."

"Looks like ructions to me," grinned Nugent.

"And to me, my son. We shall be in possession, and I think we shall give the aliens a high old time when they arrive!"

And the Remove, always ready for a row, and especially combative at the beginning of the term, when they had not yet settled down to the collar, grinned gleefully over the prospect.

After supper, Herr Rosenblum looked into Greyfriars to herd his new flock across the Close to the New Academy. The snow was falling in light flakes, and the boys put their hats and coats on. Each fellow carried a bag containing the things he needed for the night. Skinner likened the procession to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, after spoiling the Egyptians. Mr. Quelch watched them start, with a somewhat anxious glance.

"Of course, you will do your best to keep up the reputation of your Form for—er—orderly conduct and good behaviour," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said Bob Cherry. "We sha'n't allow the aliens to come any nonsense over us, sir."

"Not much, sir," said Nugent. "If they try any little games, you can rely upon us to put them in their place, sir."

"We shall keep our end up, sir, never fear," said Harry Wharton cheerfully.

"The keepfulness of the honourable end will be terrific."

Mr. Quelch sighed.

"I did not mean that. I meant—well, well, never mind. Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And the Remove marched.

Across the Close in the falling flakes, to the dusk of the ancient Cloisters, where in earlier times the monks of Greyfriars had walked and meditated upon holy things—or perhaps upon the good cheer which they kept in their larders, and the red wine that was stored in their vaults—if old tales of the abbey were to be believed. Through the grey, old Cloisters went the Removites, through the iron gateway into the neatly-laid-out grounds of the New Academy. The huge, square red-brick building which offered so startling a contrast to Greyfriars, loomed before them.

The New Academy was a quite modern building, and perhaps had a beauty of its own; but to the eyes accustomed to the grey old stones of the ancient Greyfriars, it appeared as an ugly red-brick monstrosity. Yet when the boys were inside, they realised that modern buildings had some advantages whatever they lacked in appearances. There was electric light everywhere, and the passages all led to somewhere, and were wide and airy. In Greyfriars, passages frequently led to nowhere, and odd little rooms were poked away in corners where a stranger would never have suspected their existence. The arrangements in case of fire were perfect, and the whole building could have been flooded from the top in five minutes; a study fire would have had no chance of spreading.

Yet, in Wharton's eyes, at least, the convenience did not compensate for the oppressive newness. But he wouldn't have betrayed his opinion for worlds. Herr Rosenblum had gone over and over the plans of the Academy before, and while it was being built, and the finished edifice was the pride of his heart.

His face beamed as he ushered in the Remove.

The place was strangely silent without the usual occupants. The foreign lads who tenanted the New Academy were a noisy crowd, and excited voices could always be heard jabbering in French or German somewhere about the place, in term time. But now the school had the stillness of the tomb.

"Ach, mein poys," said Herr Rosenblum, "dis seem like older times, ain't it? I teach you Sherman vunce at Greyfriars, now I welcome you as guests in mein own school. Tat is a change, pefore. You follows me up to te dormitory, ain't it?"

And the fat little German led the way.

The stairs were very broad, and edged with brass, upon which the boots of the Removites clinked and rang.

Herr Rosenblum switched on electric lights as he went, and the progress of the juniors was through a continual blaze of illumination, which contrasted strangely with the dusky shadows of the old passages at Greyfriars.

There were two dormitories in the New Academy—a small one occupied by the senior boys, who were few in number, and a large one in which the younger lads had their quarters. This was divided in the middle by a rail, and on one side were the German beds, on the other the French. The dormitory was very large, and very bright and clean, and the touching of a single switch outside the door flooded it with light from a dozen points.

"Ach, and tat is your quarters, pefore," said Herr Rosenblum, beaming. "I tink tat you goes to ped mit yourselves, and tat I comes and put te light out after, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir."

And the Herr left the juniors to themselves.

"Nice quarters," said Bob Cherry, looking up and down. "Clean as a new pin. And the beds look comfy."

"Jolly quiet here," said Hazeldene.

"There will be row enough when the aliens come back."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

And the boys of the Greyfriars Remove, being pretty thoroughly tired out with the events of the first day of the term, turned in, and were soon asleep in their new quarters.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Aliens.

IN the winter sunshine the next morning the gutted portion of the Greyfriars buildings looked dismal enough.

The last trace of smoke had died away, and the charred ruins were covered with a light coating of snow.

It was possible to trace where the rooms had been, by the remains of the strong stone walls; but with the exception of the solid stone, nothing was left.

Study No. 1, in which the chums of the Remove had spent so many jolly times, was gone—gone for ever!

The Remove dormitory, the scene of many a riot and pillow-fight, had disappeared, and the old box-room where the secret passage ended, would never be seen again.

The boys looked at the ruins with grim faces.

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry.

"Beastly," agreed Harry Wharton. "It won't take them long to rebuild the place, I suppose, but it won't be the same."

"And there's all our property destroyed, too. My books—"

"And my bat—my football boots—our clothes!"

"My camera!" growled Buistode.

"The place was insured," said Hazeldene. "I suppose the things will be paid for. But it will be rather rotten having to hang about in the class-rooms till the studies are rebuilt. It's all very well for the Third Form to do their prep. in a Form-room. It's a come-down for the Remove."

"The come-downfulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows, it's very rough, you know. Where are we to have any feeds now that the studies are burnt down?"

"Oh, hang you and your troubles, Buntly! It was your fault the place was burnt!"

"Oh, really, Hazeldene—"

"If it hadn't been for your unearthly appetite—"

"It was really Wharton's fault. I was cooking the feed for Wharton. Of course, if there is any inquiry, I shall expect Wharton to own up."

"Well, my hat!" said Harry. "I must say I like that!"

The boys went in to breakfast. Before morning chapel it became clear that there would be an inquiry into the cause of the conflagration. Billy Bunter was called into the Head's study. That Bunter had started the fire was generally known, and so Dr. Locke had decided to question him.

Billy Bunter was feeling very uneasy, but he looked resolute, when he came into Dr. Locke's room. He didn't mean to have the blame put upon him. The Head looked at him with a searching glance.

"There appears to be an impression, Bunter, that you were the cause of the fire in the Remove passage," he said. "Will you explain how it came about?"

"I don't want to give anybody away, sir."

"Nonsense! If you did not start the fire, and you know who did, you ought to tell me at once, and I command you to do so," said the Head sternly.

Bunter wriggled uneasily on his feet.

"Well, sir, Wharton would be waxy, and—"

"Do you mean that Harry Wharton was the cause of the outbreak?"

"I'd rather not say anything, sir. It amounts to sneaking. Of course, it was Wharton's idea to have the feed, and the fire was banked up for the cooking. Then the chimney caught. I don't blame Wharton—he couldn't foresee that the chimney would catch alight, sir. I think it has wanted sweeping for some time."

"You may go, Bunter, and send Wharton to me."

"Thank you, sir," said Bunter, in great relief. "I hope you won't let Wharton think I've been sneaking about him, sir. He couldn't help it—"

"You may go."

Bunter went, and Harry presented himself a couple of minutes later. He did not quite know what the Head wanted, but he was afraid he was to receive praise for the rescue of Miss Molly the previous evening, and so he was feeling a little awkward as he came in.

"Wharton, I cannot understand from Bunter how the fire originated. He appears to think that you were the cause of it."

Wharton could not help smiling.

"We were going to have a feed in Study No. 1, sir, and Bunter built up the fire a little too high. The chimney caught."

"Was that all?"

"Well, I think he upset a frying-pan of grease."

"Then why does he assume that it was all your fault?"

"Because he's a young duffer, sir—ahem!—I beg your pardon—because he hasn't very much sense, sir. I was partly standing the feed and so he worked it out that I was at the bottom of it. But, of course, sir," went on Wharton quickly, "we were all in it. Bunter happened to be doing the cooking, but any one of us might have been doing it, and we're equally responsible all round."

"I don't think it probable that anyone but Bunter would have been so careless. I shall have to consider what to do in the matter. But for what happened last night, I should certainly forbid all occupants of No. 1 the use of a study again."

Wharton coloured.

"If you are referring to Miss Molly, sir, I hope you won't let that weigh with you in any way."

"But I must let it weigh with me, Wharton. You certainly ought to have exercised a sharper supervision over a foolish lad like Bunter; but you saved my child's life at the risk of your own, and so it is impossible for me to say anything further on the matter. But while you are here, Wharton, I wish to thank you for what you did," said the Head earnestly. "I had no time to speak as I felt yesterday. You did a deed that has few parallels in heroism, and I am proud of having such a lad in my school. Your name will be put upon the Greyfriars Roll."

"Oh, sir!"

And the Head shook hands with the junior as he dismissed him. Bob Cherry, and Nugent, and Hurree Singh were waiting for him anxiously in the passage.

"Well," said Nugent, "are we to have a study again?"

"Yes, I think so. I'm sorry to say that the Head is letting us off—"

"Eh? Sorry?"

"Let me finish. He's letting us off because I fetched Miss Molly out of the fire. I'm sorry for that; but there you are."

"Oh, I see! Never mind, so long as we have a study again, it's all right," said Bob Cherry. "I hear from Mrs. Kebble that Miss Molly is to stay in bed for a few days—shock to the system, otherwise she's all right."

"Good!"

Morning school was rather slack. The excitement of the fire was so recent, and the Remove, too, had lost many of their books, and were thinking as well of the ructions that were pretty certain to take place in their new quarters that night.

But Mr. Quelch was very lenient. He had noticed the traces of the burns on Harry's skin, and had offered the captain of the Remove remission of morning lessons; but Harry cheerily replied that he was all right, and went in with the rest.

The Remove-room had been flooded by the gallant heroes of the Friardale fire brigade, and there were thick traces of smoke on the ceiling, and of damp on the desks and floor. Many of the desks had been flooded, and books and papers were stuck together. The boys breathed vengeance as they sorted them out.

After lessons they trooped out into the open to look for the aliens.

The foreign youths were expected to arrive at the New Academy about the middle of the day, and the Removites were anxious to greet them.

The snow was thick upon the ground, so, as Bob Cherry remarked, there were plenty of means of giving the young aliens a hearty and seasonable greeting.

It was about two o'clock when the aliens came in sight, marching up the road from Friardale.

Almost opposite the gates of Greyfriars the path branched off the road, where the aliens had to turn along the river bank to get to the front entrance of the New Academy.

At the turning, Harry Wharton & Co. had spent the last half-hour in constructing a barricade of snow, stretching across the lane from side to side.

The aliens came in sight, saw the barricade, and stopped in amazement. The Removites crouched on the inner side of it, and the aliens, from the high road, could not see anything of them, so far.

"Tat is funny mit itself," said Fritz Hoffmann. "I tink tat te vay is plocked."

"I zink zat is correct," assented Adolphe Meunier.

"I tink it is to york of te Engleesh peegs."

"I zink so aussy."

"Tey tink tey make us go round. I tink tat ve climbs ofer," said Limburger.

"Ach! Follow me! Ve soon gets ofer."

And the aliens marched up to the barricade to clamber over it. All was silent; not a sound hinted at the fact that the Greyfriars juniors were in ambush behind the snow breastwork.

"My word!" murmured Nugent. "They're coming!"

"Snowballs ready!" muttered Harry Wharton.

"What-ho!"

The crowd of Removites clutched their snowballs and waited.

The aliens began to clamber over the breastwork, and Fritz Hoffmann, catching sudden sight of the crouching juniors, gave a yell of alarm.

"Look out mit yourself!"

"Ciel! Zey are zere!"

"Give 'em socks!" shouted Harry Wharton.

Up rose the Removites, snowballs in hand, and a blinding volley swept upon the aliens, smashing upon them right and left.

Back staggered Hoffmann, Meunier & Co., with wild shrieks and yells.

"Ach! Te pounders!"

"Mon Dieu! Ze beasts!"

"Ciel!"

"Himmel!"

"Give 'em socks!"

There were heaps of snowballs ready, and the Removites did not want for ammunition. Showers of the handy missiles poured upon the aliens, and they were fairly driven away down the road by the swift volleying.

Bob Cherry jumped on top of the snow barrier and waved his cap.

"Hurrah! Licked—Ow-wow!"

The snow was hardly substantial enough to stand his weight. Bob's feet plunged into it, and he sank up to his armpits.

"Ow! Help me out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You grinning duffers! Help a chap out, can't you? It's c-c-cold!"

And the laughing juniors dragged him out. The aliens did not return. They had had enough, and they went round the longer way to reach the New Academy. It was the first row of the new term, and the Removites had had the best of it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Unable to Agree.

"CIEL! Vat you zink?"

"I tink tat ve goes for te Greyfriars pounders at te soonest bossible time," said Fritz Hoffmann, as Adolphe Meunier burst into the common-room of the New Academy with that excited question. "I tinks tat ve lick dem hollow, ain't it?"

"I mean, zere is great news."

"I have not hear him pefore."

"Zey are coming!"

"Who are coming?"

"Ze Engleesh rottairs!" said Adolphe Meunier excitedly.

"Zey are coming here!"

"Himmel! You say tey come here—here?"

"I explain. I have just hear ze news. Zere was a great fire at Greyfriars yesterday, and last night ze Remove sleep in our dormitory here."

"Vas dot so?"

"Zat is correct. Zey sleep here, and zis night zey come again."

"Py Chove," said Hoffmann, "tat is great news! Ve shows dem te hospitality of te place mit ourselves. Ve puts dem trough it, after."

"I zink zat ve are call upon to be polite, and show ze Engleesh rottairs how to behave viz zemselves."

"Ach, ja, if tey keep teir place!"

"Zat is correct—if zey keep zeir place. If zey not keep zeir place—"

"Ve sholly soon puts dem into it!"

"Zat is vat I zink."

And the aliens were soon excitedly discussing the matter. It was the evening of the first day of the term at the New Academy, the second day of the Greyfriars term.

The idea of having the Remove lodging in their dormitory was an exciting one to the foreign youths. They were torn between two feelings—the desire to be overpoweringly polite, and thus to show the Greyfriars fellows how chaps from the Continent knew how to behave, and the still stronger desire to take advantage of the peculiar circumstances to avenge their defeat of the midday.

And they talked it over with an endless flow of French and German and broken English that would have put the Tower of Babel to the blush. They came to the decision that if the Removites kept their place they should be treated with great politeness and hospitality. But the question was, what was their place, and how were they to be kept in it?

"Zey must treat us viz great respect," said Meunier.

"I tink tat tey should take off deir hats and bow ferry humbly when tey come in," suggested Hoffmann.

"Zat is correct."

"Perhaps it petter if we goes ofer to explain to dem."

"Good! Come viz me!"

And Hoffmann and Meunier promptly crossed the Cloisters and the Close, and entered Greyfriars, and presented themselves at the door of the junior common-room.

The room was unusually crowded.

The burned portion of Greyfriars was in ruins, and the rebuilding had not commenced yet, nor even the clearing of the ground. The Head was making arrangements for new sleeping quarters for the Removites, so that they would not have to trouble Herr Rosenblum for more than a night or two longer. But as for the studies, it was likely to be a long time before they were rebuilt. Meanwhile, the Remove did their prep. in the Form-room, and foregathered afterwards in the common-room to pass their leisure time.

The room was crowded, and the juniors were not pleased. They missed their studies. Small enough had been the rooms, but they had been cosy, and—chiefest of their recommendations—they had been their own. Fellows were masters of all they surveyed within the narrow domain of their own studies. In the common-room it was different.

Wun Lung and Hurree Singh were playing chess amid a babel of tongues. Several members of the Operatic Society were practising a new part song, and their dismal attempts to keep in time and tune simply exasperated other fellows, who yelled at them all kinds of threats across the room. Then Ogilvy was "going over" a Highland dialect song, and Elliott was trying to get the bottom notes in the King's song from "Lhengrin," with the aid of a tuning-fork. Altogether, the room was not a quiet place for a nerve rest.

Hoffmann and Meunier looked in, and the Remove greeted them with a yell. They thought it was a raid at first, and they welcomed it. They were in a great humour for a row.

"Here are the aliens!"

"Chuck 'em out!"

Hoffmann and Meunier advanced into the room holding up their hands in sign of amity. Wharton pushed back two or three excited youths who were rushing forward to commence the "chucking out" process.

"Hold on! Give 'em a chance! What do you want, Hoffy?"

"Ve comes to speak mit you. You comes to sleep mit us in te dormitory in te New Academy to-night, after."

"Zat is correct, I zink?"

"Right-ho!" said Wharton. "Sorry if it puts you out; but I don't see how it can be helped. We've had a fire, you know."

"Ve welcomes you—"

"Zat is correct."

"On condition tat you keeps your place."

"Exactly!"

"But how can we keep our place when we are coming into your place?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"You not understands. You adopt te humble and meek manner, like poys who visit deir superiors."

"And zen ve welcomes you viz ze open arm."

"You takes off your hats and bows humbly."

"And zen you asks politely to be allowed to stay in ze dormitory viz ze young gentlemen of ze New Academy."

"And den you apologisses for te rough peeg vay you snow-ball us."

"And zen ve forgives you and welcomes you."

"Oderwise—"

"Ozzervise, ve makes you sit up."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Any more conditions?" he asked.

"If ve zink of any more ve tells you."

"H'm! We're not going to apologise, we're not going to be humble and meek, and we're not going to eat humble pie in any way at all. We'll let you sleep in the same dormitory—"

"Vat!" shrieked Meunier. "It is our dormitory!"

"Well, we'll let you sleep in it," said Harry, "so long as you don't make a row, of course. We can't have a lot of jabbering in French and German going on when we're trying to go to sleep."

Hoffmann and Meunier stared at him with feelings too deep for words.

They had been prepared to welcome the Remove in a lofty and grandiloquent way, provided that the Remove ate a sufficient quantity of humble pie, so to speak. To have the Removites saying what they would do and what they wouldn't do in their new quarters was a decided shock to the owners of those quarters.

The expression of their faces made the Removites roar.

"That's how it is," went on Wharton imperturbably. "If you chaps keep quiet, and behave yourselves, we've no objection to your sleeping in the same dorm."

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

"Mein himmel!" murmured Fritz Hoffmann dazedly. "He have no objection to our sleeping in our own dormitory, if tat ve do not make a noise!"

"Ceil! Ze sheek—ze fearful sheek!"

"That's all at present," said Harry. "If there's any other rule we want you to observe we'll let you know later on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two aliens gesticulated wildly.

"Engleesh duffair! Rottair! Peeg! Ve teaches you!"

"Himmel! Ve giffe you vun lesson!"

And the two excited aliens darted off to inform their comrades of the spirit in which the Remove were accepting the hospitality of the New Academy.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Row.

THE Remove were feeling somewhat excited when bed-time came, and they prepared to march across the Close to the New Academy. Herr Rosenblum did not come for them this time, but Mr. Quelch saw them as far as the door of the new school. He did not mean them to have any skylarking by the way. Having watched them enter the red-brick academy, the Remove master returned, satisfied that he had done all he could, and content to leave the rest to the academy masters.

The Remove adopted their meekest manners as they passed the inspection of Herr Rosenblum, and the German head-master grinned at them amiably as they went up the broad staircase.

"Good-night, poys!" he said. "I hope you haff comfortable night, ain't it?"

"Thank you, sir! Good-night, sir!"

"Mein poys are alretty gone up pefore. I comes up to turn out light in a quarter of an hour, ain't it?"

The Remove marched upstairs, and went along the wide, electric-lighted passage upon which the dormitories opened.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Hazeldene, opening the door of the dormitory they had occupied the previous night.

He stepped in, and the next moment started back with a yell.

The door had been a couple of inches ajar—just ajar enough for a tin can to rest on the top, ready for the first comer.

The can was of light tin, very light, and open at the top, and it was crammed with cayenne pepper.

Hazeldene gave a wild yell as the stinging cloud settled about his head, and his yell trailed off into a furious sneeze.

"Ow!" roared Bob Cherry, who was just behind him.

"Oh, lor'!"

"Help!"

"My hat!"

"At-choo-cho-choo!"

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

A yell of laughter greeted the sneezers. The aliens fairly danced with joy. They had laid that booby-trap for the Removites in great hopes, and their hopes had been more than realised.

The Remove crowded in, sneezing and coughing and weeping peppery weeps, and the aliens hugged themselves with glee.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!"

"Tat vas funny pefore, ain't it."
"I zink I laff. Ha, ha, ha!"
"You rotters!" roared Bulstrode.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites were greatly inclined to go for the aliens on the spot. But Herr Rosenblum was soon coming up to see lights out, and they didn't want the kindly German to find a free fight raging.

So they bore it, though they could not grin. And, sneezing frantically, they proceeded to undress.

The foreign juniors shrieked over the joke till some of them seemed in danger of going into fits.

When the laughter died down, someone would begin cackling again, and that would start the rest; cackle after cackle, shriek after shriek.

"Blessed if it isn't like being in a giddy farmyard!" grunted Elliott. "Cackle, cackle, cackle! Yah!"

"Sing to them," said Bob Cherry. "Sing them the King's song from 'Lohengrin,' old chap, and serve 'em right."

"Better than the way you yap out 'On the Ball!'" growled Elliott.

Cackle, cackle, cackle, went the aliens untiringly.

Billy Bunter was the first to be undressed, and he plunged his little fat legs into his bed, and then drew them out again, with a shriek.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob Cherry. "You're always making a row."

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"There's something in my bed—ow—it stings—ow! They've been putting a hive of bees or something in my bed!"

The aliens shrieked again. Wharton flung back the bed-clothes, and revealed a heap of thistles. All the beds had been served alike, but Bunter's discovery had saved the others from an unpleasant experience.

Hoffmann was doubled up with laughter, yelling with all the force of his lungs. Bunter turned a wrathful blink upon him. He seized the sponge from his washstand, dipped it in the jug, and hurled it at the German junior.

Hoffmann was clad in pyjamas, and the sponge landed on the back of his neck. The icy water ran down his back, and he gave a fiendish roar.

"Ach! Vat is tat? I am vet pefore!"

"Wet behind, you mean!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I caught him a treat, didn't I?" said Bunter, much pleased. "I—oh—ow—what's up? Drag him off!"

Hoffmann had rushed at Bunter, and bumped him over his bed in a moment. Billy's fat limbs came down on the thistles, and Billy wriggled.

"Help! Fire! Fire and thieves! Drag him off!"

"Off, man!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, perpetrating a shocking pun as he seized Fritz Hoffmann by the hair and yanked him off. "Be 'offmann!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hoffmann caught hold of Bob, and Bob grasped Hoffmann, and they rolled on the floor. There was a sudden yell from Russell.

"Cave!"

The footsteps of Herr Rosenblum were heard on the stairs.

In a moment the combatants separated, and the juniors made a rush for bed. Dressed and undressed alike tumbled in, and all was peace as the German master opened the door of the dormitory.

Herr Rosenblum looked up and down the room with a smile of satisfaction.

"Tat you vas all in ped, ain't it," he remarked. "I tinks tat you sleep beacefully mit friendly feelings, 'and all vas calm and bright,' as te English poet says. Goot-night, mein poys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The stout German gave another contented glance up and down the dormitory, and then went out and closed the door. The click of the electric switch in the passage outside followed, and the dormitory was plunged into darkness.

Herr Rosenblum's footsteps died away down the passage, and then most of the boys sat up in bed.

"If you want to finish that little scrap, Hoffy, you've only got to get up on your hind-legs and say so," remarked Bob Cherry.

"I tinks tat I licks you, ain't it."

"I zink zat ve goes for zem."

"Rats to you, froggy!"

"I zink zat I vipes out zat insult in ze gore."

"More rats!"

There was a sound of scrambling out of bed. Removites and aliens turned out in force. They were not sleepy yet. They were excited, and ready for a row. And each side, too, suspected the other of intending to play some trick under cover of darkness, and thought the matter might as well be settled on the spot.

Hoffmann groped his way towards Bob Cherry's bed.

The boys were sleeping two and two, but the English lads were all together. Hoffmann and Meunier had been put in the same bed, and they got out of it on different sides, and both had the same idea of getting hold of Bob Cherry and starting with him. They reached Bob's bed at the same time, and each grasped a form in the darkness. It was impossible to see, and Hoffmann did not know that he had hold of Meunier, and Meunier did not know that he had grasped Hoffmann.

"Ach! I licks you!"

"Ciel! I trash you!"

And the two aliens, grasping each other fiercely, rolled on the floor in deadly combat. Bob Cherry heard their gasping breath, and, guessing what had happened, remained quite quiet, save for a subdued chuckle.

Hoffmann and Meunier rolled on the floor, and bumped against the washstand and brought down a clatter of crockery upon themselves, and bumped against the legs of the bed and yelled, and punched each other furiously.

"Ach! I licks you, I tink."

"Ciel! Is zat you, Hoffmann?"

"Himmel! Is tat you, Meunier?"

"I zinks zat you vas Sherry!"

"I tinks tat you vas Sherry also."

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

"Mein gootness!" Hoffmann released Meunier and sprang up. "You silly French pounder, vy for you gets in te vay?"

"Vy you gets in ze vay, you Sherman fathead?"

"Ach! I tink—"

"I zink—"

"Go for dem!" shouted Limburger. "Go for te peegs!"

"Zat is correct! Go for zem!"

And Hoffmann and Meunier, leaving off their quarrel in the middle, made a dive for Bob Cherry's bed. But Bob was out of it, and he was grasping the sponge on his washstand. He caught a glimmer of bare legs, and squeezed the sponge with a sweep through the air.

Hoffmann and Meunier yelled as they were drenched with icy drops.

"Up with you, chaps!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Pillows and bolsters!"

"Buck up, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton groped his way to the door, opened it, and felt outside for the switch of the electric light.

He found it in a moment, pressed it, and the light flooded the long dormitory with a sudden glare.

The juniors blinked in the bright light, and Wharton closed the door again quickly. He seized his pillow, and the others soon followed his example. In the glare of the electric light the juniors could see what they were doing; and though the aliens outnumbered the English lads, the latter did not shrink for a moment from the combat.

Hoffmann and Meunier had made peace to unite their forces against the Remove, and French and Germans and Belgians combined to attack the invaders of the alien dormitory.

The Removites were ready for them.

Harry Wharton's voice rang out, and the juniors followed his lead in a pillow-fight as they followed it on the football-field.

In a compact mass the Removites met their foes, and the eddying rushes of the aliens broke on them like water breaking on stubborn rocks.

Pillows and bolsters make effective weapons at close quarters, and the Greyfriars boys made active play with their weapons.

Some of the French boys began to kick and scratch, in their excitement, but the Removites did not follow their example. They contented themselves with dealing mighty swipes from their pillows, and they knocked the aliens right and left.

The yells and shrieks that rose from the foreign youths were deafening, and it seemed certain that in spite of the thickness of the walls the din must be heard in the lower quarters.

But the boys, Removites and aliens alike, were too excited to think of that. They yelled and shouted and shrieked, and fought on like gamecocks.

From the first the aliens had the worst of it. They were knocked to and fro, and all the time there were at least half their number on the floor.

As fast as the fallen ones sprang up, others were swiped over to take their places, and they sprawled and yelled, and yelled and sprawled, while the Removites went on swiping with shouts of laughter.

"Turn 'em out!" shouted Bob Cherry. "We're not going to have a crew of cheap aliens in our dormitory!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ciel! Stand firm, my brave comrades!"

"Tat you fight like anything, ain't it?"

"Hurrah! Down with the aliens!"

The Remove made a furious rush, swiping right and left, and the foreign youths were driven pell-mell to the door.

They were jammed against the door, and with their backs to it, in a disordered crowd, they strove to resist the victorious attack of the Greyfriars Remove. But they strove in vain. The Famous Four swiped a way through them, and dragged the door open. Then, with an irresistible attack the Removites sent the aliens surging through.

In the doorway the French and Germans stood as long as they could, resisting heroically, but it was of no avail.

One by one, or two or three at a time, they were hurled through, till the last alien had been hurled into the corridor.

Then the Removites seized the door, and jammed it shut, in spite of the resistance of the foreign juniors outside.

Wharton put his foot against it, and the victory was won. The Remove gave a tremendous cheer that rang through the length and breadth of the red-brick academy.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"We've done 'em in!" panted Bob Cherry. "Hurrah for us! They're spificated!"

"The spification is terrific!"

Meunier was thumping on the door from the outside. The aliens were filling the corridor with shrieks and yells.

"Zat you open ze door!" shrieked Meunier through the keyhole.

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Harry Wharton. "You can come in when you are willing to admit yourselves licked and eat humble pie."

"Zat will neffer, neffer be!"

"Then you can sleep in the passage."

"Ciel! Open ze door!"

"Rats!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The thumping and the yelling suddenly died away in the passage. There was a hand on the handle of the door, but Wharton kept his foot tight to the lower panels, and it could not open.

Then came an imperative knock.

"Tat you opens tat door!"

"Rats!" retorted Bob Cherry, "We're not going to open it for any giddy German that ever gerined!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tat you open, ain't it?"

"I tell you—"

"Hold on!" gasped Harry Wharton. "I believe that's Herr Rosenblaum's voice."

"Great pip! I thought it was Hoffy or Limburger."

"Tat you open!" roared the voice again; and this time

it was unmistakably that of Herr Rosenblaum. "I tells you tat you open te door before!"

Harry dragged the door open.

Herr Rosenblaum stood there majestically, in the midst of a soared crowd of aliens—quiet enough now.

It had not occurred to the excitable foreigners till too late that the terrific din they were making was certain to bring the herr on the scene.

Herr Rosenblaum's face was very severe. He looked at the Removites, who immediately assumed expressions of heartfelt contrition that somewhat softened the German headmaster.

"I tink tat you makes vun riot," he said. "I tinks tat you behave yourselves mit a treadful noise, ain't it?"

"We are sorry, sir," said Harry penitently. "We--we were a little bit excited, sir."

The German master smiled grimly.

"Ach! I tink by te sound tat you vas fery morch excited. I tinks tat I offer to giff you shelters for te nights, but I not have my school turn into a bear-garten, ain't it? I tinks I send a master to sleep in here, and keep you poys in order after."

"It's all right, sir. We were only having a little fun."

"Ach! I tinks tat it vas a tunderstorm."

"We won't make any more row, sir—honour bright."

The German looked at him.

"I takes your vord, Vharton. You promises me tat dere be no more row, and I not bunishes any of te poys, ain't it? I tinks tat you have a great temptation to make row."

"We promise, sir."

"Goot! Mein poys, you promise also?"

"Oui, oui, monsieur!" chorussed the French boys; while the Germans chimed in with "Ja, ja, mein herr!"

"Ferry goot!" said the placable German. "I trusts you after. Go to ped."

The aliens crowded into the dormitory. The word of honour they had given was enough for the boys, and there was no more rowing. But the aliens were not content with a truce; they had to make friends.

Meunier and Hoffmann, in the fulness of their hearts, insisted upon kissing Harry Wharton in sign of amity, and the captain of the Remove went through the ordeal with as good a grace as he could muster.

"Goot!" said Herr Rosenblaum, with much satisfaction. "Let dere be beace!" And there was peace.

But that was the last night the Remove spent in the New Academy. Herr Rosenblaum had been very patient, but Dr. Locke would not try his patience too far.

Other arrangements were made for the Remove the next day, and they bade farewell to their quarters in the alien academy—though, as far as their old quarters were concerned, they were still burnt out.

THE END.

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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. One day Sligo has a letter from his wife, describing how, while cleaning out a certain set of offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields, she discovered a dusty document under a safe, relating to Tom Howard's affairs, and that Sergeant Hogan, a former servant of Colonel Dashwood's, with whom Mrs. Sligo was acquainted, had joyfully affirmed that it established Jack Dashwood's claim to the Colonel's estates. This letter Sligo maliciously shows to Leonard Dashwood, whose anger is further aroused by the man's insolence.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Escort to the Wounded.

"Yer can owe the thrashing you promise me for the present!" said Sligo impudently. "Yer see what my wife says about the sergeant writing to 'Oward? Well, I've got 'is letter 'ere." And he held it up. "If 'e reads it, in five minutes' time you're done. 'Ow much will yer give me to hand it over to you?"

Sligo felt so secure in his position, and was so completely confident that he had the whip hand, that he allowed himself to be taken off his guard, and, Leonard Dashwood suddenly leaping from the box on which he sat, snatched the letter from his hand, and tore it open.

His colour came and went, for Sergeant Hogan had spared neither him nor his father, and the whole thing was laid clearly bare.

Outside a fire was burning, and some men were cooking round it, and, starting to his feet, Dashwood pushed Sligo back, and went towards it.

He held both letters over the flame, and when they had caught, stamped them in among the burning wood until they were both consumed, and then returned to his tent.

"You asked me what I would give you for those letters," he said. "I shall give you nothing, and if you want to save your skin, scoot out of this. You haven't a jot of evidence, and I'm just about tired of this game you're playing."

"I think it's a very good game," said Sligo, folding his arms insolently. "The news in that letter is worth thousands of pounds to Corporal 'Oward, and a great deal more to you. It's worth a thousand pounds to me, and I'm going to 'ave it!"

Leonard's rage rose, and, striding back to the tent door, he seized Sligo by the collar, shook him like a dog would a rat, and kicked him out into the sunlight.

"If I have any more of your nonsense," he said, "I shall report you to the colonel. You'd better hesitate before you come here with your cock-and-bull stories."

But, for all that, Leonard Dashwood's face was ashen grey, and his eyes looked as though he had been sitting up all night.

"It's most unfortunate!" he muttered to himself.

"Nothing will save the situation but my cousin's death, and that I must use my best endeavour to bring about."

Sligo picked himself up, for he had gone flying over a guy-rope.

"Very well—very well," he said, under his breath, "we will see now what the other side will do. If I put 'Oward on the scent—the missus is about right—they won't 'ang 'im, but 'e'll do time!"

"Beg pardon, sir!" cried a voice. "The colonel wants you to fall your company in in ten minutes."

Leonard flung his tent curtain back, and looked out.

"What's going on, sergeant?" he demanded.

"Wounded men going down to the hospital, sir. You're told off as escort to get them over the hills. There's half a dozen of our chaps from yesterday's business, and a corporal of the 25th, who was knocked about when they blew the ruins up."

"Warn the men," said Leonard abruptly. "I'll be with you in a moment."

And he turned into the tent to hide the wave of diabolical delight that passed over his face. He buckled on his sword with trembling fingers, anxious to start on the instant, before Sligo should have had time to start any conversation with the corporal of Hussars. He had not known that Howard had gone sick. In fact, our hero hardly knew it himself, until on arriving in camp he had reeled and swooned into the arms of Jim Clavering, and was thought to have sustained a slight concussion of the brain from the effects of the explosion.

A string of brown mules saddled with panniers was standing by the door of the hospital tent, and as Dashwood approached he saw them tying his cousin safely in.

"Keep your pecker up, old man," said Jim Clavering, who had come up to see them start. "You will be all right in a week or two."

"I'm all right now," said Jack feebly. "I don't see what they want to send me down for at all. I must have got a crack on the head from one of those falling stones, and been half choked with the smoke."

"Well, so long, old man," said Clavering, shaking Tom's hand. And then he paused as he turned away. "Who do you think is commanding the escort, Tom? Your old friend, Dashwood; and now you're off!"

The file of mules started, their suffering burdens swaying in the panniers at their sides. The escort stepped off in the rear, and Clavering retired to the Hussar lines.

"Hallo! You come back?" said the sergeant, running against Alf Sligo.

"Yes. Where's Corporal 'Oward? I want to see 'im."

"You're too late," said Clavering, turning away. "He's gone to the base wounded. I expect your business will keep. Go and report yourself to the orderly-tent at once, and return to your duty."

Sligo's face fell, but there was nothing for it but to obey the sergeant, and he followed him to the quarters of the 25th, where the first person he set eyes on was Bill Sloggett, busily grooming his mare.

"Hallo, Bill?" said Sligo.

"Hallo! You turned up again?"

"Well, you don't seem perticular glad to see me."

"Don't know as I am," said Bill Sloggett, whisking away at his mare's withers.

Sligo passed on, but returned when he had gone a few steps.

"I say, Bill, is Corporal 'Oward badly wounded?"

"Dunno; the doctor thinks so."

And Sloggett went on with his grooming, feeling no inclination to converse with his ancient admirer.

A little later Sligo learned that Leonard Dashwood was the officer in charge of the escort which had gone down with the sick, and his cup of bitterness was filled to overflowing. Sloggett, who happened to be looking at him from the corner of his eye at the time, wondered why Sligo turned so pale when he heard the news.

"Good lor'! I'm out of it this time," he heard the hooligan say. "'Oward will never come back alive, and then I may whistle for my money! Either way, I've a dashed good mind to report the whole thing to the colonel!"

But the sharp voice of Clavering cried:

"Fall in, fatigue party!"

And Sligo, being one of them, marched off mechanically with the rest.

Sighting the Tribesmen.

The little party of Ploughshires was divided into advance guard, main body, and rearguard, and the main body marched along on either side of the line of mules. There were twenty mules all told, which represented a total of forty wounded, and when you throw in half a dozen native water-carriers, Leonard Dashwood found himself in command of quite a respectable force.

The column wound on slowly down the mountain pass, with black rocks on either hand, grown here and there with coarse, rank herbage. The sky was very blue overhead, and sometimes a vulture would sail slowly across it, for where the carnage is, there the vultures are gathered together, and there was carnage in plenty in that Malakand valley.

Leonard Dashwood rode a native pony, and, though he glanced from left to right, and was fully conscious of the importance of the duty committed to his charge, he found his thoughts straying to the one great object of his life—the murder of the man who lay, dreamily half-unconscious, on the offside of the third mule.

It would take them two days to get down to the base hospital, and the road was fraught with perils. The gorge through which they wound was so stern and forbidding that conversation ceased, and no sound was heard but the rolling of the stones under their feet, and the occasional plunge of a refractory mule.

High up above them, against the mountain-side, were the little strips of terraced fields, where the inhabitants grew their crops; and once, where an opening in the side of the valley showed them a glimpse of the lower lands, they could see the bright green of the rice-fields in the sun.

"If I miss this chance," thought Leonard Dashwood, "I deserve to lose everything. All seems to play into my hands. It is Kismet, or Destiny, as these rogues term it."

The medical officer who went down with the wounded was a taciturn, red-headed Scotchman, who was mounted on a sure-footed Khybereen pony, and who had imbibed a hearty contempt for Leonard Dashwood as he watched him putting on his brown, tanned gloves, and select a cigarette with great care from a case in the breast-pocket of his jacket.

With the advance guard strode Private Johnson, a short clay in the corner of his mouth, and the peak of his helmet pulled well down over his nose.

"What's that up yonder, sergeant?" he said, when they had traversed about two miles of the winding valley.

A little speck of fluttering white had caught the private's eye far up among the peaks ahead, although it had disappeared as he pointed out its whereabouts.

"If they started rolling rocks down," said the private, "we should not stand much of a chance."

"It would not surprise me if something of that

sort happened," said the sergeant gravely. "I believe there's something moving ahead yonder. D'ye see those pine-trees? Well, look just below 'em!"

"That's a nigger, sure enough!" said Private Johnson.

"Halt!" said the sergeant. "Go back, one of you, and tell Mr. Dashwood that we have spotted the enemy, and ask him to come up and have a look."

Johnson went back in time to stop the foremost mule, as the little column wound round an angle of black rock.

"Hold on, you chaps!" he said, pushing past them up the stony track. "Beg pardon, sir, but there's somebody moving on the side of the valley, and Sergeant Hawkesley thinks you'd better come and 'ave a look through your glasses, sir."

Leonard jerked his pony's bridle, and made his way past the wounded, and soon found the advance guard all looking in one direction. He took his glasses out of their case, and, following the sergeant's finger, looked steadily for some moments.

"There are three fellows there," he said, without taking his glasses from his eyes; "one standing up, and two lying down, with their guns pointing to the road we shall have to follow. Johnson, go back, and bring up a dozen of our men! We will stay here, and wait while you push on and see if you can discover their little game."

Johnson signalled with his rifle "Enemy in sight," and, taking off his helmet, beckoned with it, and about twenty of the escort came up at the double.

"Get forward, sergeant, and if you pass that point of rock straight ahead and nothing happens, signal to us. We must get along somehow, and you will draw their fire if they mean business."

The sergeant saluted, and went on, Leonard sitting there in the saddle, watching the outline of the hill against the sky. He waited perhaps ten minutes, until the little khaki dots grew faint in the distance, and then from the hill-top there floated out a little puff of smoke, and the crack of a Snider came on the wind to his ears.

It was answered by the Lee-Metfords of the advance guard, and Leonard saw half a dozen of the tribesmen draw themselves up, and disappear among the boulders, and then from the point of the rock he had indicated he saw the sergeant signal "All clear!" with his rifle.

The mules started again, and came within touch of the advance guard, who moved off as they approached, and for another couple of rocky miles they wound uphill and down dale, farther from the support of the camp, and still within the confines of the gloomy gorge.

The track, called by courtesy a road, crossed a water-course, and a clump of chenar-trees spread out their branches and afforded some shade there.

Dashwood cried "Halt!" and, leading the mules into the shelter of the foliage, the party flung itself down to rest, the water-carriers passing among the wounded, and moistening their lips with the luke-warm fluid that filled their goatskin water-bottles.

Dashwood, who had taken care to keep out of sight of that third mule in the train, sat down on a rock, and lit another cigarette. His face was pale with the pallor that was not born of exhaustion, though the scrambling tramp under the blazing sun was tiring enough; and he sat as silent and motionless as the rock itself, with his arms folded, thinking, until the sergeant approached. All trace of the enemy had vanished, and he had no wish to be overtaken by the darkness until they were clear of the gorge.

"Beg pardon, sir, but our halt for the night should be the burnt tower at the end of the pass. It will take us all our time to get there if we stay much longer."

Leonard rose quickly, and swung into his saddle.

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THE EDITOR.



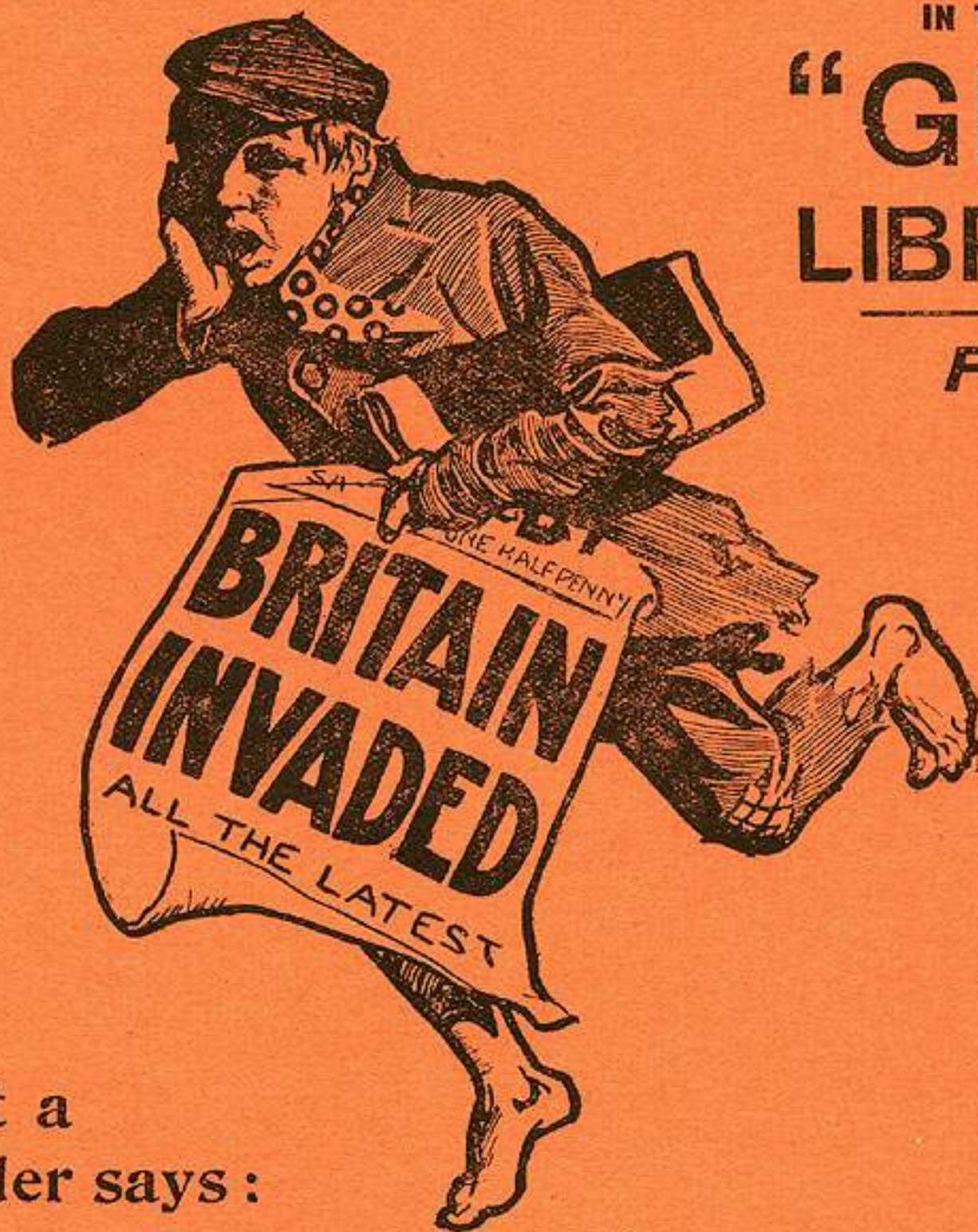
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