THE GREYFRIARS PHOTOGRAPHER.

THE

Magnet 1d

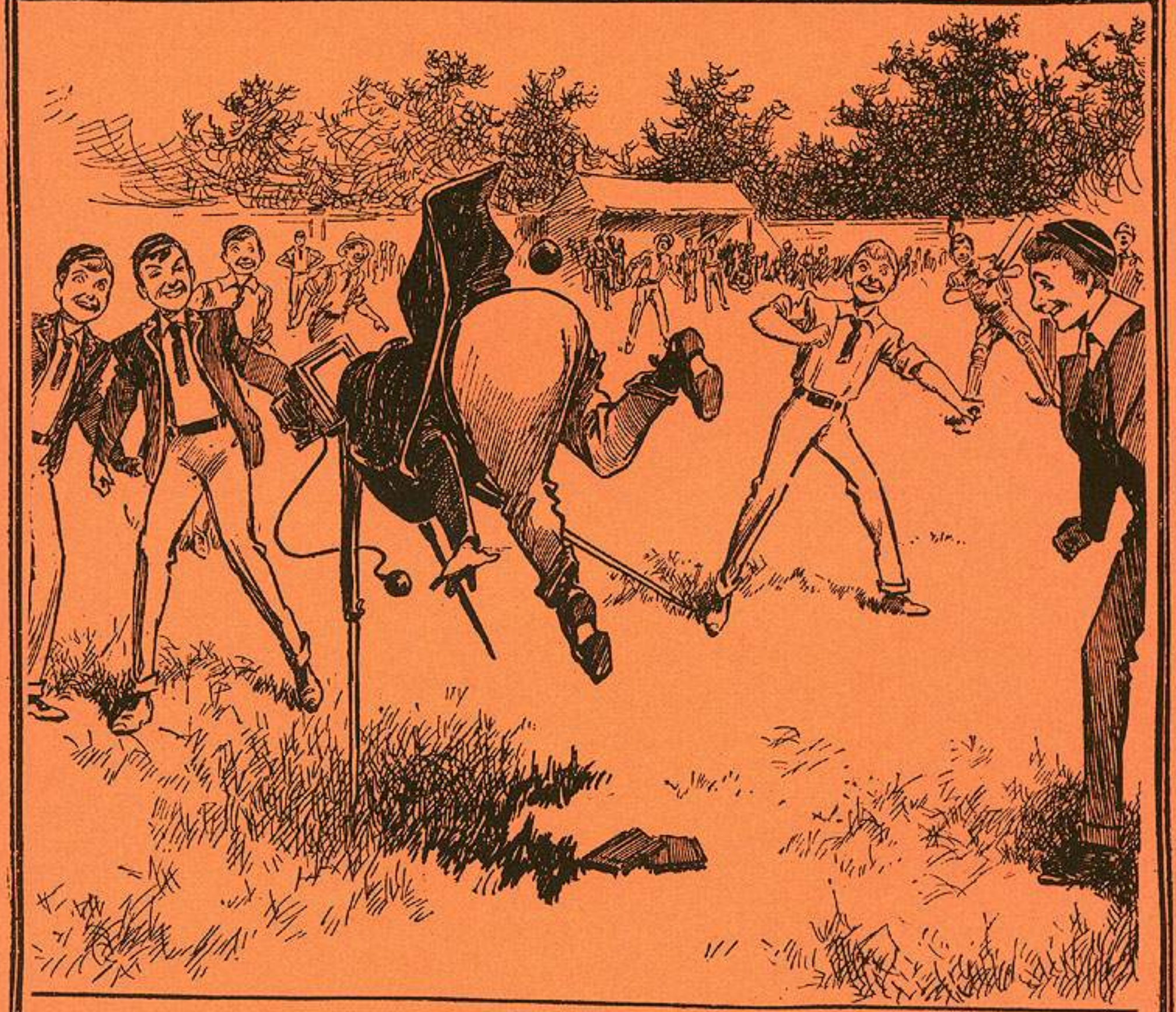
LIBRARY VOLUME 3. NUMBER 72.

Complete Story for All.

A Grand School Tale of

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

By Frank Richards.



THE AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER RECEIVES A SHOCK!

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NEXT WEEK: "The Greyfriars Caravan." A Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

The Greyfriars Rotographer

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

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Bunter is Pleased.

"IT'S come!"

Billy Bunter, who was standing at the window of No. 1 Study, turned round with a gleeful grin as he uttered that exclamation. Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Nugent, who were talking cricket, did not appear to hear the remark, and Bunter repeated it, crescendo, with an indignant note in his voice.

"I say, you fellows, it's come!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking round. "Is that Bunty chirping? As I was saying, Wharton, Carberry was out—right out——"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Out, as sure as a gun—as clear a case of leg-before as ever I saw. But——"

"Look here, you fellows, I tell you it's come! I think you might leave off jawing cricket for a minute on an important occasion like this!" exclaimed Bunter, blinking indignantly at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles. "I don't get a camera every day!"

"Eh! Have you got a camera?" asked Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent, haven't I been telling you for days past that I was going to have a camera, as a prize for selling ten articles for the Imperialist Fair Trading Co.!"

"But you didn't sell the articles," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Most of them were chucked into the fire, or into a pond, if I remember."

"Very likely, but as a strictly honourable fellow I had to pay for them all the same, and so I got the camera."

"Blessed if I know where you got the tin then," remarked Bob Cherry. "I don't remember hearing you ask Wharton for it."

"I have other friends, outside this study," said the fat junior, with a great deal of dignity. "I am not dependent upon Wharton. Bulstrode advanced me the fifteen shillings."

"Phew! Bulstrode!"

"Yes, certainly. Of course, I am going to repay him. I expect to make a considerable weekly income out of my camera—making enlargements for framing and selling them, and so on. It's a much bigger one than I really expected, too."

"You haven't seen it yet."

"There's the carrier's man bringing it in," said Bunter, jerking a fat thumb towards the window. "You can see him! I half-expected a little hand-camera by parcels post, you know—but they've sent me a big stand-camera—look!"

The chums of the Remove glanced out of the study window. The carrier from Friardale was certainly bringing up to the house something which could not be mistaken for anything but the tripod of a stand-camera. The juniors looked surprised, and Bunter chuckled with satisfaction.

"This is what comes after your sniffing and sneering at the Fair Trading Co.," he remarked. "I only sent them fifteen bob, and they've sent me a camera worth perhaps ten or fifteen guineas."

"Rats! Where would their profit come in, ass?"

"Oh, they're really doing it for advertisement, you know."

"More rats!"

"You don't know much about business," said Bunter, with an assumption of superior knowledge which very nearly earned him a "thick" ear. "Lots of firms practically give away their things for the sake of the advertisement. It pays them in the long run."

"I suppose they live on the advertisements," suggested Bob Cherry sarcastically. "So long as they are sufficiently advertised, they don't want any grub."

"Oh, you don't understand business! I've often thought that if we pooled the pocket-money in this study, and placed the finances in my hands, we could make a business concern of it, instead of pegging along from hand to mouth. But I can't stop jawing——"

"I know you can't—you never can."

"I mean I can't stop here jawing, Cherry—I'm going to meet the carrier. They may possibly have sent it carriage forward—it isn't likely, but you might lend me some tin, Wharton, in case I have to pay the carrier. I've run out of money, somehow—partly through being disappointed about a postal order."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You can see the carrier, Billy, and let me know exactly how much it is first," he said.

"If you can't trust money into my hands, Wharton——"

"Well, I can't," said Harry bluntly. "So you can buzz off!"

"I'm not strong enough to keep on running up and down-stairs," said Bunter hurriedly, changing the topic. "You'd better let me have it now."

"You can call up to the window."

"Oh, all right! It's a curious thing that the more money a chap has the meaner he gets with it," Bunter remarked.

Wharton laughed again, and Bunter hurried out of the study. The chums of the Remove looked out of the window. They were rather interested in Bunter's camera. Bunter often took up new hobbies, and the Remove were still grinning over his physical culture and his hypnotism and his aeroplane. Photography was his latest wheeze, and he had become the terror of all the amateur photographers in the school.

Bunter had very indistinct ideas on the subject of "meum and tuum." When he wanted a camera to practise with, he took one, if he could find it. Ogilvy of the Remove was under the necessity of locking his up whenever he was not using it, and even Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, had discovered that Bunter had borrowed his camera. Mr. Quelch's camera was a valuable one, and Bunter had dropped it—and a very painful explanation ensued, which cured Bunter of any desire to borrow Mr. Quelch's camera again. Still he was not wholly dissatisfied with the incident.

"You see, it seems to damage a camera to drop it on stones," he confided to the juniors in No. 1 Study. "Jolly lucky I had Quelchy's camera to practise with, or I might have dropped my own, you know!"

"Blessed if I can make that out," said Bob Cherry, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "From what we can see from here, that looks like an expensive thing—the stand is worth the money Bunter paid. Blessed if I catch on. The Fair Trading Co. isn't a firm of philanthropists—not by long chalks!"

Wharton nodded—he was puzzled, too. It was possible that the Fair Trading Co. were sending a really excellent prize to Bunter, because he was at a public school, and they might hope thereby to obtain a host of customers, whence they would obtain their profit. It was possible—yet not probable. Such a firm was very unlikely to have any goods of really good quality to dispose of at all.

They watched Bunter meet the carrier, who handed over the parcels he was carrying. Bunter blinked up at the study window.

"Two shillings!" he bawled.

"Cheek!" said Bob Cherry.

Wharton extracted two shillings from his pocket. There was no earthly reason why Wharton should pay Bunter's expenses in this way—except that Bunter expected him to do so. And it is a curious circumstance—curious but true—that the Bunters of this world frequently do get their expenses paid by people they have no claim upon, simply because they seem to expect it. Wharton tossed the two shillings down to Bunter, who blinked round for them and picked them up, and the chums of the Remove saw him pay the carrier and receive some change. Then he bore the prize into the house in triumph.

A minute later he was at the door of the study. Bob Cherry opened it, and Bunter came triumphantly in, with the camera under one arm, and the tripod under the other. He blinked gleefully at his study-mates.

"Jolly good prize, eh?" he asked.

"How much did you pay the carrier?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh! The carrier?"

"Yes, the carrier. Sharp!"

"You heard me ask Wharton for two shillings."

"Yes—and I saw the carrier give you some change."

Bunter's fat face fell a little. He was extremely short-sighted himself, and he was continually forgetting that other fellows could see further than he could.

"If Wharton is going to make a fuss about a matter of threepence," he began, with an attempt at crushing dignity.

"I'm not," said Harry, laughing. "Keep it!"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "It's the principle of the thing. He said two shillings when it was only one and ninepence. Hand over that three-d., Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry!——"

"Hand it over!" roared Bob.

Bunter handed it over.

"If Wharton doesn't want it I'll put it into the poor-box," said Bob. "I'm going to bring you up in the way you should go, Billy. I'm going to make an honest duffer of you if I have to skin you doing it."

"Look here——"

"'Nuff said! If you want to unpack your camera on that table, do it while we're gone to the tuck-shop; we want tea when we get in."

And Wharton, Cherry, and Nugent left the study, leaving Billy Bunter to unpack his camera.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hurree Singh's Idea Causes Trouble.

HAZELDENE of the Remove looked into No. 1 Study ten minutes later. He had a letter in his hand and a very pleased expression upon his face. He looked round the study, and seemed disappointed at seeing only Bunter. Bunter was too busy even to turn his head. He had unpacked the camera, and was simply gloating over it.

"Hallo, Billy, where are the fellows?" asked Hazeldene.

"Eh! Don't know!"

"I want to speak to Wharton."

"He's out! I say, Vaseline, isn't this a splendid camera?"

Hazeldene came into the study, and looked at the camera in surprise. It certainly was a splendid one, to a junior's mind at least; and besides the camera, there was a packet of plates and the tripod.

"Good!" said Hazeldene. "Whose is it?"

"Mine."

"Oh, come off, you know!" said Hazeldene pleasantly. "I don't know much about cameras, but I'll wager that never cost less than fifteen guineas."

"Yes, they're doing it for advertisement, you know," said Bunter, beaming. "They lose fifteen solid sovereigns on the transaction, but the advertisement pays them."

"Bosh! Where did you get it?"

"From the Fair Trading Co. for selling ten articles."

"Rats! You've got hold of somebody else's camera by mistake."

"I suppose I ought to know my own camera when I see it," said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "Hallo, here are the fellows!"

Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Hurree Singh entered the study. Each of the four carried some contribution to the tea-table. The table was lumbered up with Bunter's new property and the many wrappings he had taken off it.

"My hat," said Nugent, "that's a ripping camera! They never sent you that for selling ten articles, Billy."

"If you can't believe the evidence of your own eyes, Nugent ——"

"Stuff! There's some mistake!"

"I don't see where the mistake can come in. Here's the camera. If they've sent me the wrong one, that's their look-out."

"Well, clear the table now—tea," said Bob Cherry. "Jolly warm day for lighting the fire, but I don't see how we're to boil the kettle otherwise."

"Pray do not hurry with the ignitefulness of the worthy

NEXT WEEK: "THE GREYFRIARS CARAVAN." Another School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

fire, my esteemed chum," said Hurree Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, in that pleasing variety of the English language which is very much spoken by educated natives of India. "The necessaryfulness is small, for it is easy to boil the honourable kettle otherwisefully."

And the Nabob of Bhanipur laid on the table the little parcel he was carrying with a beaming smile all over his dusky visage. Bob Cherry looked at it curiously as he opened it. Even a fire of sticks for boiling the kettle was not pleasant on a hot summer's day, and all the juniors would have been glad to avoid it. Hurree Singh turned out of its wrappings a little methylated spirit stove, and beamed at his chums.

"That is the rippingfull idea that struck me heapfully," he said. "You can boil the kettle terrifically, and then blow out stove, and the heat is trifleesome."

"Good," said Bob. "I don't know about the niff. Where's the kettle? Well, of all the duffers," he added, as the nabob handed him the big iron kettle they used on the fire. "How long do you think this would take to boil on a methylated spirit stove?"

The nabob's dusky face fell a little. He was just a trifle absent-minded at times, and he had overlooked that rather important point.

"The forgetfulness is terrific," he said. "I should have purchasefully obtained the tinful kettle to fitfully suit the stove. I will buzz off to the esteemed Madam Mimble and obtain the tinful receptacle."

And he hurried out of the study. The grinning juniors proceeded to clear the table. Bunter carefully removed the camera, and Bob Cherry cleared off the wrappings and cut cord with a sweep of the arm. Nugent laid the cloth, and the purchases from the school shop were unpacked. Cold sausages and ham and hard-boiled eggs made a repast which caused Bunter to forget his camera for a moment.

"'Nuff for a family circle," said Bob Cherry. "You're staying to tea, Hazeldene?"

"I just looked in to tell you some news."

"Well, stay to tea," said Harry Wharton. "Is it news from Cliff House?"

"Yes," said Hazeldene, with a grin; and the chums of the Remove were curious at once.

Hazeldene, as the brother of one of the pupils of Cliff House, was a person of some distinction in the Remove. It wasn't everybody who had a sister like Marjorie Hazeldene! And through Marjorie the Removites had become great chums with the girls of Cliff House.

"You see," went on Hazeldene, still grinning, "when the girls were staying here they were greatly taken with the idea of having tea in the study, you know; and Marjorie and Clara seem to think it would be a good wheeze to introduce at Cliff House."

"But the girls don't have separate studies at Cliff House," said Nugent.

"No; but they've worked up something of the sort, apparently; for they've sent us an invitation to tea in the study," grinned Hazeldene. "Listen! It's written by Marjorie; I needn't read the beginning. 'Would you care to come over to tea in the study, and bring a few friends with you?' It's for to-morrow evening," went on Hazeldene. "What do you chaps say?"

"We'll be jolly glad to go, of course," said Wharton. "We always like going to Cliff House. But I don't see what study they're standing the feed in, unless it's the Principal's. I believe Miss Penelope Primrose has a study."

"Ha, ha! She wouldn't be likely to lend it for a junior tea-fight. Still, it's settled; we're going. Hallo, Inky! got the kettle?"

The nabob came in smiling, with a glittering new tin kettle in his hand. He laid it on the table.

"It is here," he said. "The esteemed Mrs. Mimble assured me that it would boil in three minutes on the excellent stove."

"Good! We sha'n't have long to wait," said Bob. "Where's the methylated spirit?"

"The—the—the methylated spirit?"

"Yes, you dusky beauty! Haven't you got any?"

"I am afraid I did not think of the worthy methylated spirit," said the nabob. "I will buzz off and obtain some."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, of all the giddy asses," said Bob Cherry, as the Hindu dashed out of the study, "I think Inky takes the bun. Run and fill this kettle while he's gone, Bunty."

"I'm showing Nugent my camera."

"Well, you buzz off and fill it, Frank."

"I'm looking at Bunter's camera."

"Here, Hazeldene——"

"I'm talking to Wharton."

"Here, Wharton——"

"I'm talking to Hazeldene."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"H'm! Then I suppose it will have to wait till Inky comes back."

"Why can't you go and fill it yourself?" demanded Nugent.

"How can I go and fill it when I'm sitting in the armchair, and I've got my feet on the window-sill?" Bob demanded in turn.

No one proffered an answer to this conundrum, and they waited for the return of the nabob. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came in all smiles, with a bottle of methylated spirit under his arm. Bob Cherry jumped up.

"Fill the kettle, old chap, while I get it going." He jerked off the tin top of the little cheap stove, and poured out the spirit. Of course it gushed out in a flood, and ran over the stove and the tray and the tablecloth. Nugent gave a shout.

"Hold on, you ass!"

Bob Cherry looked round.

"What's the matter?"

The methylated spirit was still pouring from the bottle. Harry Wharton seized his wrist in a grip of iron, and forcibly stopped him. He took the bottle away and corked it up.

"You've got enough there to burn the study down if a match got near it," he remarked. "I think we'll bar methylated spirits in the study after this. It niffs too much."

The room was indeed permeated with the smell of it. Inky looked a little worried. He had meant to be useful and to save trouble; but his idea was simply poisoning the study. But his dusky face brightened up suddenly.

"Put it on the window-sill," he suggested. "There is very little blowfulness of the wind, and it will burn there terrifically."

"It will burn terrifically if you put a match to it in its present state," grinned Nugent, as Bob Cherry lifted the little stove towards the window, spilling a trail of methylated spirit on the carpet. "Take care, Bob."

"Oh, rats! Do you think I can't manage a methylated spirit stove?" grunted Bob Cherry, who was getting a little irritated. "There! that's all right. Gimme a match."

He set the stove on the window-sill, and applied a match. The spirit had overflowed from the stove to the sill, and there was a roar of flame as soon as the match was applied. The flame rose from stove and sill, and the roar of it attracted attention from the Close below. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth looked up in amazement, and Temple gave a shout of alarm.

"Fire! Fire!"

"You asses!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "It's all right! There's no fire!"

But the Upper Fourth-Formers did not hear—or, at all events, did not heed. They dashed into the house, shouting:

"Fire! Fire!"

There had been a fire a short time before at Greyfriars, and the Remove passage had been burnt to ashes. Naturally, it was easy to spread an alarm. Temple, Dabney & Co. rushed upstairs to the rescue, with a crowd of juniors at their heels.

The methylated spirit stove was still roaring away cheerfully on the window-sill, and Bob Cherry was almost black in the face in his endeavours to blow it out. The chums of the Remove giggled almost hysterically as Bob blew and blew, gasping like a wheezy old pair of bellows. But they left off giggling as the door of the study was flung violently open, and a crowd of excited juniors rushed into view.

"Fire! Fire!"

"Hold on!" roared Harry Wharton. "There's nothing the matter—ow—wo—ow!"

Sloosh—swish! sloosh!

Temple, Dabney & Co. had armed themselves with the fire-buckets, which, since the late fire, had always been kept filled with water at the end of the passage. If there had been a real fire in the study, Temple & Co.'s prompt measures would certainly have put it out. As it was, it was the chums of the Remove who were put out.

Sloosh—swish—sloosh!

Right and left the gallant rescuers hurled the water, in great floods, and the Removites roared as they were drenched, and nearly everything in the study was drenched round them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Rescuers!

"FIRE! Fire!"

"Rescue!"

"We'll save you!"

"You beasts!"

"Yah! cads!"

"Get out!"

"Gr-r-r-rooch!"

"Stop it!"

The study was in a roar of voices. The rescuers—most of whom were quite aware by this time that there was no fire—did not slacken their efforts on that account. They redoubled them. Water was passed in the red buckets along the passage by willing hands, and flood after flood was soused into the study.

Often enough had the Upper Fourth come into collision with the Remove, and had the worst of it. But the tables were turned now. It was a field day for Temple, Dabney & Co. They made the most of it. Harry Wharton and his chums staggered under the floods of water that were hurled into the

study. Billy Bunter had squirmed under the table, and was crouching there, drenched. The Famous Four made a rush at the rescuers, but the drenching floods of water drove them back.

Nugent sat down—in a flood: Bob Cherry reeled into the fireplace; Hurree Singh dodged behind the bookcase. Right and left the floods of water soused.

"Fire! Fire!"

Harry Wharton made a renewed and desperate rush at the grinning Temple, the leader of the outrageous "japc."

Right at him came the water—a bucketful, and then another—one meeting him in the face, and the next on the chest. He staggered, but did not fall. He rushed on, and closed with Temple.

"Here, hold on!" gasped the captain of the Upper Fourth. "It's all right! We've saved you."

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

"Now save yourself, then!" growled Harry, gripping Temple tight, and rolling over with him. Harry could not possibly have got much wetter than he already was; but Temple, who was something of a dandy, and prided himself upon being the best-dressed fellow in the Upper Fourth, struggled desperately to avoid the water. But it was of no avail. He went over with a bump, and Harry rolled him on the soaking carpet. And an enthusiastic rescuer, rushing up with a fresh bucket of water, hurled it blindly in, and it flooded equally over both of them.

"Hallo! what is all this fearful row about?"

Wingate of the Sixth came pushing his way angrily through the crowd in the passage. Way was made by the grinning juniors for the captain of the school. The Sixth-Former reached the door of the study, and stood gazing in, in blank amazement.

"What—what—what does this mean?" he gasped.

Temple tore himself away from Harry Wharton and sat up. He was drenched and rumpled and dirty; his collar was a limp rag, his necktie hanging over one shoulder. It was very difficult to recognise the dandy of the Upper Fourth.

"Ow!" he panted. "Yow—grooh! I'm wet."

"So am I," said Harry, getting up. "One good turn deserves another. You won't be so jolly quick to come to the rescue next time."

"What does it all mean?" demanded Wingate.

"There was an alarm of fire," said Fry meekly. "We came to the rescue. We've saved the lives of these youngsters."

"Rats!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You know there wasn't any fire!"

"The ratfulness is terrific."

"There were flames and smoke soaring——"

"Oh, go easy with the soaring!"

"Soaring out of the window," said Fry obstinately. "We rushed to the rescue. You know these youngsters burnt down this part of the school once."

"It was only a methylated spirit stove going a little rocky," said Nugent. "These Upper Fourth beasts knew it jolly well, too."

Wingate grinned.

"There seems to have been a mistake," he said.

"If there was a mistake, we're sorry for it," said Temple. "We considered it our duty to come to the rescue, although we're not on the best of terms with the Remove."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"You beasts!" growled Bob Cherry. "We'll pay you out for this."

"Ungrateful rotters!" said Fry. "This is what we get for saving their lives. Look here, Wingate, anybody will tell you that flames and smoke were soaring out of the study window."

A score of voices eagerly bore out Fry's statement. Wingate nodded.

"Appearances are against you any way," he said to the Removites. "You'd better be more careful with your next methylated spirit stove. Be off, you youngsters."

Wingate walked away, and the juniors followed, grinning—all except Temple. He was a little too wet and rumpled to grin.

The occupants of No. 1 Study looked at one another. Never had a disaster fallen upon the study so suddenly and so completely. Billy Bunter crawled out from under the table and whimpered.

"I shall catch my death of cold through this," he moaned. "I know I shall! I regard you fellows as responsible. I am certain I shall expire."

"Well, that's one comfort," said Bob Cherry heartlessly. "If you're quite certain on that point, Bunter, it's a sufficient consolation for what's happened."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"My hat!" said Harry. "This has been a time! I think we'll put off tea a little while we go and get cleaned up. We'll make those Upper Fourth rotters sit up for this, too!"

Hazeldene wiped the water out of his eyes.

"You'd better come and have tea in my study," he remarked. "You can bring the grub along, but—but not the methylated spirit stove. I'd rather have the fire lighted and the kettle boiled in the usual way."

"Yes, just a few!" said Bob Cherry. "I've come across some rotten ideas in my time, but I must say that Inky's ideas are about the rottenest I have ever encountered."

"But if the worthy stove had been handled with the modicum of commonplace sense, the occurfulness of the catastrophe would have been non-existent," suggested the Nabob of Bhanipur gently. To which Bob Cherry replied with an ancient and expressive monosyllable—"Rats!"

The juniors had to change their clothes from top to toe. Outer and inner garments alike were drenched. After a rub down and a change of clothes they felt better, and Hazeldene's suggestion of having tea in his study was adopted. No. 1 was not likely to be fit for habitation for some time to come, and the boys' maid, who had the pleasing duty of keeping clean the whole Remove passage, was certain to have plenty to do in getting No. 1 to rights again.

Hazeldene shared his study with Bulstrode. The latter was present when six juniors presented themselves at the study door, and Hazeldene ushered his guests in. Each of the guests carried a contribution to the tea, but the methylated spirit stove still reposed on the window-sill of No. 1. Bulstrode was sitting in the arm-chair, with his feet on the table, reading, when the juniors came in. He looked round, and Wharton's brows contracted a little. He was on the worst of terms with Bulstrode, and though Hazeldene certainly had the right to ask anybody he chose into his study, Harry half regretted having accepted the invitation. But, to his surprise, Bulstrode greeted the rather numerous visitors with a genial nod, and rose from his chair.

"Hallo, I hear you've had a fine old time," he remarked.

"I believe I saw somebody about your size in the crowd, chucking in the water," said Bob Cherry suspiciously. The burly Removite chuckled.

"Well, everybody has to lend a hand at the alarm of fire," he said. "I did my little bit towards putting you out. It was really a very bright idea for Temple, Dabney & Co. They don't usually hit on a thing like that. Have you fellows come in to tea?"

"Yes, Hazeldene's asked us; our study's drenched."

"That's all right; you're quite welcome. I'll light the fire," said Bulstrode.

And he proceeded to do so. The juniors could only stare. It was so utterly unlike Bulstrode to say or do anything of the sort that they were naturally a little bewildered. True, only a few days before Harry had been the means of doing Bulstrode a great service, and clearing him of an unjust suspicion. But he had never expected that to make any great change in the "manners and customs" of the Remove bully.

However, the fire was soon going, and the kettle singing away cheerily, and the juniors—hungry enough for their very late tea—sat down round the table. Bulstrode brought out several good things from the cupboard to grace the board, and joined them. He could be very agreeable when he liked—and he liked now. During the tea, it crossed the minds of the visitors several times that perhaps they had been a little rough on Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter made a record short stay at the tea-table. After eating only enough for three, he rose to his feet.

"I shall have to buzz off," he remarked.

Bulstrode looked at him in amazement.

"Buzz off?" he repeated. "Why, there's some more jam—and more ham—and more cold beef."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"Sit down, porpoise, and finish the jam, at least," said Bulstrode good naturedly.

"I really don't see why you fellows should imagine that I eat a lot," said Bunter, with an air of offended dignity. "I'm of a delicate constitution, and I require keeping up with constant nourishment. Otherwise, I don't care much for eating—I really do it from a sense of duty."

"Jolly dutiful chap, Bunter!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I've got to look after my camera now," said Bunter. "I only hope it hasn't been damaged by those asses flooding the study like that. If you fellows like to come out into the Close when you've finished and have your photos taken, I shall be very pleased to take you in a group. I am thinking of doing coloured enlargements at ten shillings each; they would make a splendid ornament for any fellow's study. Blessed if I see what you're cackling at."

And Bunter went out, leaving the chums of the Remove still cackling.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Greyfriars Photographer Receives a Shock.

THE tea passed off pleasantly enough, in spite of the somewhat incongruous elements in the party, and a little later the Famous Four rose to go. Hazeldene rose, too.

"Hold on a minute, Vaseline," said Bulstrode. "I want to speak to you."

Hazeldene nodded, and stayed behind when the others left the study. He was looking a little uneasy. He did not know

quite what to make of Bulstrode's unusual good temper, and he was afraid that there was something behind it.

"You've had a letter from your sister?" said the burly Removite agreeably, but without looking at Hazeldene. The latter nodded.

"Well, can't you tell a fellow if there's any news?"

"Oh, it's nothing!" said Hazeldene awkwardly. "Marjorie and Clara want me to take a few friends over to Cliff House to tea to-morrow night."

"I thought so. Who are you going to take?"

"Only No. 1 Study."

"You can't take your own study-mate, I suppose?" asked Bulstrode, with an unpleasant glitter in his eyes.

Hazeldene reddened, and was silent. He had half expected that, and he did not know what to say. Wharton would have said out plainly, "No, I can't," but Hazeldene was not much like Wharton. He was too weak by nature to say a direct "No" to anybody, and his weakness had got him into more than one serious scrape.

"Well, you see," he began at last—"Marjorie says——" He hesitated.

"She says a few friends," said Bulstrode. "I suppose I'm a friend? Hang it! I think I've stood your friend once or twice."

"If you're referring to that money——"

"I'm not. I suppose what you mean is, that your sister doesn't like me?" said Bulstrode slowly.

"Well, she doesn't, you know. It was chiefly the caddish way you treated Linley's sister. I—I mean——"

"I know what you mean," said Bulstrode grimly. "I'm not going to lick you. Blessed if I know what Marjorie can see in that factory cad!"

"He's a decent chap enough."

"There's such a thing as keeping up one's class," said Bulstrode loftily. "But I'm not going to talk about Linley. You know I don't like him. Look here, I—I want to come to Cliff House." He turned red. "I'm not in the habit of going around begging for invitations. But I want to come."

"I—I—I'll ask Wharton."

"What's Wharton got to do with it?" broke out Bulstrode angrily. "Since you were taken up by that study, you're always at the same old tune—Wharton says this, and Wharton says that. Hang Wharton!"

"He's done a lot for me," said Hazeldene with some spirit.

"So have I—if you come to that. Look here, am I coming to Cliff House to-morrow or not?"

"Well, I suppose you can come if you want to," said Hazeldene weakly.

"That's settled then."

Hazeldene nodded, and left the study with a worried look on his face. He knew that the addition to the party would not be welcome to No. 1 Study, and he was very much afraid that it would not be welcome to Marjorie & Co. But there was no help for it now. The Famous Four were going down to the cricket ground, and Hazeldene joined them. Under Wharton's lead, Hazeldene was becoming a very fair cricketer, and he admitted that it was a great deal better than hanging about the Cloisters smoking cheap cigarettes, as had been his habit not so very long ago.

"Do you fellows mind if Bulstrode comes to-morrow?" he asked, a little shamefacedly.

Harry Wharton looked rather grim.

"That's for you to settle," he said shortly.

"Well, he wanted to come, and—and I told him he could. I expect he will behave himself all right, you know. He can be all right when he chooses."

The chums of No. 1 Study vouchsafed no reply to that remark. As Wharton said, it was for Hazeldene to settle who he would take; but if they had known in advance that Bulstrode was coming, they would have hesitated to join the party. It was true enough that the Remove bully could be "all right when he chose"; the trouble was that he very seldom chose to be all right. His impertinence to Miss Primrose had once caused a serious coolness between Cliff House and Greyfriars, and the juniors had not forgotten it.

Without saying anything further on the matter, as it was settled now and could not be helped, they went out to the cricket. The long summer evenings gave light enough for cricket practice almost up to supper time, a fact of which the keen cricketers of the Remove took full advantage. The Upper Fourth were at practice on their ground, which adjoined the Remove pitch, and they greeted the Famous Four with grins, and one or two cries of "Fire, fire!" Wharton & Co. studiously took no notice, though their faces were somewhat pink.

Harry Wharton donned his batting gloves, affecting not to hear the voice of Billy Bunter, who was calling to him to come and join a group to be photographed. Bunter had the camera in position now. There were a crowd of juniors round him, and a few seniors, all surprised to see Billy in possession of the stand camera. Billy Bunter's romances about his financial resources were well known all over Greyfriars, and generally discounted; but the camera seemed to back them up for once. It was evidently an expensive one.

"Look here," said Blundell of the Fifth. "It's no good

your telling us that you got that camera as a gift from the Fair Trading Co. We can't swallow it. If it's a present from somebody, why can't you say so?"

"Well, if you don't believe me, Blundell, I'm sincerely sorry, but——"

"Of course I don't."

"Well, there's the camera."

"Yes, I see it is. It strikes me that you've been borrowing tin all this time on false pretences, and that you've got money," said Blundell severely.

Bunter was not blind to the advantage it might be to him to be supposed to "have money"; so he let it go at that. He turned his attention to the camera, leaving Blundell convinced that he had secret resources which he had drawn upon for the purchase of that valuable article.

The camera was in position, and Bunter was all ready to dodge under the black cloth. Ogilvy, the amateur photographer of the Remove, had given him a few hints about using it, and Bunter had already had considerable practice with other people's cameras. Ogilvy offered to take the photograph for him, and handle the whole matter, but this generous offer was declined.

"Now you chaps who are going to have your photos taken," said Bunter, in a business-like tone. "Stand together. Try to look pleasant, Blundell."

"Why, you cheeky young bounder——"

"And don't talk. Keep your feet still, Micky Desmond."

"Faith, and I——"

"You can't jaw while I'm posing you. All of you ready? I say, Wharton—I say, you fellows," said Bunter, bawling to the cricket pitch. "Do you want to come and join the group? I can't waste quarter-plates, but you can come in this lot if you like."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" called back Bob Cherry, who was bowling to Wharton, and the Nabob of Bhanipur added that the cokefulness was terrific.

"I'd advise you to get a bit further off with that camera," called out Frank Nugent. "There's no net up on this side."

"If you think I'm going to muck up all my arrangements for the sake of your rotten cricket, Nugent——"

"Oh, suit yourself, Peckham!"

"All of you chaps ready?"

"Faith, and it's ready for five minutes we've been. I shall have to stand on the other leg intoirely."

"Keep still!" said Bunter, disappearing under the cloth.

"Righto—buck up!"

And the group stood very still, with that painful expression upon their faces which a photographer's victims generally summon up when they are told to look pleasant. Click!

The click came from the cricket-field, where Wharton was playing Bob Cherry's bowling. A mighty swipe sent the ball on its travels, and for a moment the fieldsmen did not know where it was gone. But only for one moment. Then they knew!

For Billy Bunter was seen to give a convulsive leap into the air, his little fat legs kicking out spasmodically from under the black cloth; and then the camera went over with a crash.

Billy Bunter had stopped the ball—quite unintentionally—and there was a roar from the cricketers:

"Bravo! Well stopped!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
The Splendid Gift.

"OW!" roared Bunter, clapping his hand to the spot where the ball had struck him, and dancing round the fallen camera. "Ow! Oh! Ooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The group were no longer still, they were rocking with laughter. Billy Bunter danced and yelled, and Nugent ran up for the ball. He disentangled it from the black cloth.

"Thanks!" he said airily. "You stopped that beautifully, Bunter."

"Ow! ow! I'm hurt!"

Nugent ran back with the ball. The grinning cricketers resumed their play, and Billy Bunter blinked savagely at the group before him. They were yelling with merriment.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," growled Bunter. "I'm hurt. Help me to get that beastly thing upright again, some of you. I shouldn't wonder if it's damaged. If it is, somebody will have to pay for it. I'm not going to have my camera damaged. Oh, do stop cackling like a farmyard full of rotten hens!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ogilvy and Desmond gave Bunter a hand up with the camera. He blinked at the cricket-ground. Wharton was still batting, and Bunter considered it upon the whole advisable to get further off. He carried the camera over towards the house, and the group followed. They were anxious to have their photographs taken; as Russell remarked, it wasn't every day you could get it done for nothing.

Bunter set up the tripod again, at a safe distance. He was almost under the windows of his form-master's study now, but he did not notice Mr. Quelch looking out of the window with an amazed expression upon his face.

Having formed the group to his satisfaction, Bunter was about to disappear under the black cloth again, when there came a sudden interruption.

"Bunter!"

It was the Remove-master's voice, in tones so sharp that Bunter gave a wild jump, and nearly knocked the stand over again.

"Y-e-e-e-s, sir."

"What are you doing with that camera?"

"This camera, sir? Taking photographs, sir. I haven't taken any yet, as I've been continually interrupted by silly asses—ahem!—I—I mean, I——"

"Whose camera is that?"

"Mine, sir!"

"Take care what you say, Bunter. I was expecting a new stand camera to be delivered to me this afternoon. As it did not arrive, I sent down to Friardale, and have just received word that it was taken in here by a boy, who signed the carrier's note for it. Where did you get that camera?"

"This—this camera was sent me, sir, as—as a prize."

"A prize! A fifteen-guinea camera as a prize in a competition? Take care, Bunter!"

"Not in a competition, sir. It was sent me by the Imperialist Fair Trading Company, sir, as a prize—a—a bonus, sir—for selling ten articles."

"What was the value of the articles?"

"Oh, they were practically priceless, sir. Everything of the finest quality; it was practically impossible to estimate their value——"

"I mean, what did you give for them?"

"Fifteen shillings, sir."

"Is it possible, Bunter, that you were stupid enough to expect a bonus of fifteen guineas for selling articles to the value of fifteen shillings?" thundered the Remove-master.

"You—you don't understand, sir," said Billy Bunter feebly. "They do it for—for the advertisement, sir."

"Don't be ridiculous, Bunter. Did this camera come here addressed to you?"

"I—I never looked at the address, sir. You see, I was expecting a camera, and so I took it for granted——"

"You took a little too much for granted, I think," said Mr. Quelch. "That is certainly my camera. You damaged my last one, Bunter, when you had the incredible impertinence to take it from my room. If you have damaged this one, you will hear from me. Ogilvy, please take that camera into my study."

"Certainly, sir."

Billy Bunter blinked after the disappearing camera in utter dismay.

"You—you're not going to take it away, sir?"

"I am not going to lend you an expensive camera to play with, if that is what you mean," said the Remove-master severely. "I will overlook your mistake, Bunter, if I find that the camera is not damaged. I cannot, however, refrain from expressing the opinion that you are the most crassly stupid boy at Greyfriars."

And with this cheering remark the Remove-master turned away and followed Ogilvy. He disappeared after the camera, leaving Bunter blinking at the grinning faces round him.

"So that's the explanation," grunted Blundell. "I knew jolly well you never got a camera like that from a swindling company."

"Oh, really, Blundell——"

"Faith, and now I come to think of it, there's a parcel addressed to Bunter in the hall!" chuckled Micky Desmond. "I shouldn't wonder if it's the camera from the Fair Trading Company, Bunty darling."

Bunter went slowly into the house. He was still rather inclined to think that the mistake was on Mr. Quelch's side, and that the camera really belonged to him. But, sure enough, in the hall was a small packet addressed to William George Bunter, Esq., Greyfriars. Billy Bunter picked it up, and turned it over, and looked at it. There were advertisements printed on the outside of the wrapping, and in good-sized type appeared the words "Imperialist Fair Trading Co."

There was no mistake about it, this was the camera.

Surrounded by a crowd of grinning fellows, Bunter opened the packet. It contained a camera, and a grandiloquent note informing the fortunate recipient that this was the magnificent Hawkseye Camera, which was awarded him for selling the ten articles. The camera certainly was a camera; but it was not exactly up to Bunter's expectations, especially after handling the new camera of the Form-master. It was a tiny thing, covered with black cloth, and contained six cheap tin dark-slides. There was no doubt that it would take photographs, though what kind of photographs it would take remained to be proved by experience.

Bunter's face was a study as he examined it. The crowd round him roared.

"Blest if it was worth while pestering fellows to death to buy ten giddy articles to get a thing like that," said Trevor.

"Oh, it's a camera!" said Skinner. "You can't buy 'em even like that under two-and-six. I should say the cost-price was ninepence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the ten articles were worth about threepence each," remarked Lacy, with an air of calculation. "That makes half-a-crown for the articles and half-a-crown for the camera—five bob the lot—in return for Bunter's fifteen bob—or somebody else's fifteen bob, rather, as I suppose Bunty borrowed it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a swindle!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Everybody told you that at the start," grinned Skinner. "But you knew such a precious lot, you frabjous duffer."

"I wish I had the fifteen bob now," growled Bunter. "This is what comes of being so beastly honest. I'm always suffering for my honesty. Blessed if it isn't enough to make a chap throw up his principles."

"You wouldn't have to exert much strength to throw up yours," said Russell drily. "They'd go up like a ping-pong ball."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter grunted, and walked away with the camera under his arm. He looked in at Bulstrode's study. The big Removite was writing a letter, and the envelope, already addressed, lay on the blotting-sheet. It was addressed to "Miss Hazeldene, Cliff House School, near Friardale." Bunter, who never failed to see everything that did not concern him, noticed it at once. Bulstrode looked up irritably, and pushed the envelope under the blotting-paper.

"What do you want?" he said angrily. "Why can't you knock, you young pig?"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Bulstrode. Of course, I didn't know you were writing to Marjorie Hazeldene, or——"

"What do you want?" roared Bulstrode.

"It's about this camera. It's a swindle. Quelch has collared my new camera. He says it's his, and I've got this thing. That's all I've got in return for the fifteen bob I sent to the Fair Trading Company."

"Serve you jolly well right! Get out!"

"But look here; if you had left it to me I shouldn't have sent them the money; not till my postal-order had come, anyway. You really made me lose that money, Bulstrode."

"Well, it was my money. Shut up, and get out."

"It wasn't your money if you gave it to me," argued Bunter. "You insisted upon getting a postal-order, and crossing it, as if you thought I should try to keep the money!"

"I knew you'd keep it if you could, Bunk."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! Under the circumstances, as you've caused me a dead loss, I think you ought to have this camera, and refund me the fifteen shillings."

Bulstrode did not reply to this decidedly cool suggestion. He rose from his seat and picked up a dog-whip. Bunter made a wild rush for the door, but he was not quite quick enough. The lash curled round his fat legs, and he jumped about a foot off the linoleum, and then he went down the passage as he could never have gone down the cinder-path. He kept on at a wild rush till the slam of the door informed him that Bulstrode was not pursuing, and then he stopped breathless.

"The—the beast!" he muttered. "Fancy deliberately doing a chap out of fifteen bob like that! I—I've a jolly good mind to complain to the Head!"

But on second thoughts Bunter decided not to mention the matter to the Head.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Bunter in the Wars.

"I SAY, you fellows, what time are you starting this afternoon?"

Billy Bunter asked the question the next morning, as he bore down upon the chums of the Remove in the Close just before morning school.

Harry Wharton looked at the fat junior in a very peculiar way.

"What do you want to know for?" he asked in his turn.

"Well," said Bunter, blinking at him, "I suppose I'd better get ready, hadn't I? I shall have to put on a clean collar, and—and——"

"Wash your neck," suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"No need," said Nugent. "Bunter isn't coming, so he can leave his clean collar in the box, and let the present one get a shade darker—if it can."

"Oh, yes, I'm coming, Nugent!"

"Your mistake."

"Look here, if you think you're going to leave me behind, you're jolly well mistaken," said Billy Bunter wrathfully. "Besides, what would Marjorie say?"

"She won't notice whether you're there or not."

"Won't she. If a chap's wilfully blind I've nothing more to say about the matter," said Bunter. "But I tell you that if I don't come Marjorie Hazeldene will be pretty cross. You'll see."

"Look here, you worm," said Bob Cherry, taking Bunter by one fat ear. "It's because you're such a fat, conceited, nasty little pig that we're not going to take you. You aren't fit to talk to a girl. You're going to stay here, and if you say another word on the subject I'll—I'll squash you like a fat beetle!"

And Bob Cherry strode away. His companions went with him, evidently in full approval of Bob's decision, and Bunter was left blinking with wrath.

He stood blinking for a minute, and then he ran after them. He wasn't going to be left out of that tea-party if he could help it.

"Hold on a minute, Wharton!" he panted. "Look here, if Marjorie & Co. are going to have tea in the study they'll want somebody to help them with the cooking. You know what a jolly good cook I am."

"Get off! You're not coming, and that's flat!"

"You—you beasts! I'll—I'll write to Marjorie myself. I wish I had asked Bulstrode to put in a word for me now."

"Eh? What's that about Bulstrode?"

"Oh, you didn't know he was writing to Marjorie last night, did you? Well——"

Bob Cherry looked angry for a moment, and then he gave Bunter a push that made him sit down with a bump on the grass.

"Some more of your yarns, I expect," he said savagely, and the juniors walked away, and Bunter, quite out of breath, was unable to asseverate that it was not a yarn this time.

Indeed, it was some minutes before he was able to rise to his feet, and then the Removites were gone.

Billy Bunter looked decidedly morose when he came into the Remove-room with the rest that morning. He particularly wanted to go to tea at Cliff House, and he attributed his exclusion to jealousy on the part of Wharton & Co.

The evident high spirits of the comrades added to Bunter's displeasure. They were looking forward to tea at Cliff House, especially "tea in the study," though how it was to be arranged was a mystery.

During morning lessons Bunter several times observed the chums whispering to one another, and he knew they were talking over their plans for the visit.

"I—I wish I could muck it up for them, and then they'd know better than to leave me out," muttered Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to try."

Billy Bunter remembered that he was a ventriloquist, and that he had already caused trouble in the Remove with his powers in that line.

He turned it over in his mind, and blinked doubtfully at Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, but did not venture. He might have embroiled the chums of the Remove, or he might have been bowled out, and the way Mr. Quelch would have punished any "fooling" in the class-room was well known to Bunter, and it made him shiver in anticipation.

After morning school Bunter approached the chums of the Remove on the subject again; but they went on to the cricket practice, apparently not even hearing his insistent remarks. He sought out Hazeldene, and found him talking to Mark Linley under the elms.

Bunter heard what they were saying as he came up, and his indignation knew no bounds when he learned that Hazeldene was arranging to take the Lancashire lad to Cliff House to tea.

"My word!" murmured Billy Bunter. "That chap is a scholarship kid, a chap who has worked in a mill, and Vaseline's going to take him and leave me out! What on earth is the world coming to, I wonder?"

Billy Bunter did not reflect that the "mill boy" was a lad whom anybody might have been proud to own as a friend, and that Marjorie liked him unconsciously because he had that inborn respect for women which is the mark of a brave and manly nature.

Billy Bunter was probably incapable of feeling respect for anything, unless it were something to eat, and if a girl were at all kind to him he immediately began to plume himself and reflect upon his powers as a lady-killer.

"I say, Vaseline," he said, poking Hazeldene in the ribs in the unpleasant way he had—"I say, old fellow——"

"Hallo!" said Hazeldene. "How long have I been old fellow? I haven't had a remittance to-day, and I'm not expecting one, so you needn't work off that on me."

"Oh, really, Hazeldene——"

"Buzz off! I'm talking to Linley."

"Yes, I know you are," said Bunter indignantly. "I heard what you were saying, and really, I must say I am shocked. If you're looking out for an addition to the party you might take a gentleman—myself, for instance. Linley's all right," added Bunter hastily, remembering that the Lancashire lad was a hard hitter. "But it's no good blinking facts. Better take a gentleman while you've got the chance."

Hazeldene looked from one to the other—from the well-set-up, athletic Lancashire lad, to the fat, greedy owl of the Remove, and burst into a laugh.

Mark Linley laughed, too. Bunter was too ridiculous to excite anger.

"Blessed if I see what you're cackling at," said Bunter peevishly. "You know jolly well that Linley oughtn't to have been sent to a school like this. My people were shocked when I told them. They said I mustn't associate with him; but I'm so good-natured. I've always taken notice of him, haven't I?"

"Thank you," said Mark.

"Well, it's nice to see a fellow properly grateful," said Bunter fatuously. "But to come back to our mutton, Vaseline. I'll come with you to Cliff House this afternoon, if you like."

"I don't like," said Hazeldene.

"Oh, really—you see, I ought to come. I can help with the cooking. And then, there's my camera. Ogilvy has some plates that will just fit it that belonged to an old camera of his, and haven't been used. I shall be able to take photos——"

"Like the last lot," grinned Hazeldene. "Would you mind going and talking somewhere else, where I can't hear you, Bunty?"

"Look here, if you won't take me——"

"Well, I won't, and that settles it," said Hazeldene, who did not consider the fat junior worth wasting politeness upon. "My sister doesn't like you."

"Stuff! That's all you know. Sisters don't tell their brothers everything. If you only knew—ow-wow!"

Thump!

Bunter staggered against a tree, rubbing his nose, which felt as if it had swollen to twice its natural size on the spur of the moment.

"Ow!" he gasped. "You beast! I'm hurt!"

Hazeldene was glaring at him.

"Got any more to say?" he demanded.

"Ow-wow! No. I—I was only joking."

"You'd better find another subject for jokes," said Hazeldene. "I'll give you a licking you'll remember next time."

And he strode away with Linley.

Billy Bunter rubbed his red and swelling nose ruefully, and dabbed it with his handkerchief, as he discovered that the "claret" was flowing.

"Beast!" he murmured. "They're all beasts! I'm thrown away at this school. There's nobody here who's fit to be my chum. Fancy that beast punching my nose like that, just because his sister's fond of me. Ow! it hurts." And Billy Bunter drifted away disconsolately.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Detained.

"HALLO! hallo! hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, as they came into the class-room that afternoon. "Where did Bunter get that nose?"

"Phew!" said Nugent. "Looks as if he had jammed it against something—somebody's fist, very likely."

"The jamfulness must have been great," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur, "for the crimsonfulness and the swollenfulness of the honourable Bunter's esteemed proboscis are terrific."

Billy Bunter went sulkily to his seat.

He was feeling injured—in his nose and in his feelings. He was annoyed with everybody, and especially with Hazeldene.

When M. Charpentier came in to take the French class Bunter's eyes glittered behind his spectacles.

He had not ventured upon any "fooling" while Mr. Quelch was there, but with the French-master it was different. M. Charpentier was a weak man in dealing with boys, especially the fellows in the most unruly Form at Greyfriars.

Wharton & Co., of course, were on their best behaviour. M. Charpentier had an aversion to punishment, and he was not nearly so free with the taps from the pointer as Mr. Quelch. But he was more free than the Form-master with impots, and that afternoon the chums would rather have been caned to any extent than detained after half-past four.

Detention was M. Charpentier's almost invariable punishment for all offences, and detention was just what they dreaded just then, with the invitation to Cliff House before their minds.

And so the Famous Four were very good, and Hazeldene was very good, and even Bulstrode, who often found amusement in giving the French-master as much trouble as possible, was very good as well.

Mark Linley, who knew the value of learning far too well to ever waste time in class, was the same as usual—quiet, respectful, and attentive, and so keen to gain knowledge that the master always turned to him with a sense of relief after the other fellows.

There were many fellows in the Remove who characterised Linley as a "swot" and a "sap"; but Mark's early training had been too hard for him to have any inclination to waste his chances.

As the Removites, as a rule, followed the example of either Wharton or Bulstrode, the whole class was on good behaviour, and M. Charpentier, who always entered the Remove-room with an uneasy feeling, was greatly relieved.

But there was trouble to come.

Bunter was on the warpath.

He bided his time until M. Charpentier was talking to Hazeldene, and then he began.

"Ve vill take ze vairb penser," said M. Charpentier. "You, Hazeldene——"

"Yes, sir."

"You vill tell me—eh, vat you say?"

"Excuse me, sir. There's a spot of ink on your nose."

It was a voice exactly resembling Hazeldene's, and it came from the back of the class where Hazeldene was.

"Ciel!" said M. Charpentier. "Zat is no mattair."

He drew out a big handkerchief and wiped his little fat nose with it.

"Is it gone now?"

"Eh, sir? I didn't speak."

"You tell me zat I have spot on ze nose."

"No, I didn't, sir," said Hazeldene, who had been mentally preparing to answer the French-master's questions, and had no ears for Bunter's ventriloquism.

"I zink you vander in your mind, Hazeldene," said M. Charpentier, looking puzzled. "However, to continue. Ze present indicative of penser."

"Je pong, tu pong, il pong," said Hazeldene cheerfully.

"My word!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Why don't you make it je ping-pong while you're about it?"

"Go on, Hazeldene."

"Excuse me, sir——"

"Eh? Who speak?"

"You've a spot of ink on your nose, sir."

"Mon Dieu! Zat is no business of any poy in zis class," said M. Charpentier irritably. He rubbed his nose again till it shone like a poppy. "Zere! Now go on!"

"Excuse me, sir——"

It was a voice from the end of the class, and M. Charpentier turned in that direction somewhat excitedly.

"Who speak viz me?" he exclaimed.

"There's a spot of ink on your nose, sir."

M. Charpentier breathed hard. He rushed to the little glass behind his desk, and looked at the reflection of his nose. That organ was growing red from the rubbings he had given it, but there was no trace of ink upon it.

He came out again with knitted brows. It was evidently a "rag," to his mind—a concerted piece of impertinence such as the Remove sometimes indulged in when they were on the warpath. It was natural that M. Charpentier should think so, for every time he heard the "Excuse me!" it was in a different voice.

"Mon bleu!" said M. Charpentier. "I zink zat vun poy in zis class start a shoke and zat ozzer poys take it up. I zink zey are foolish and sheeky. Ve vill go on viz ze lesson, and I hope zere be no more interruptions."

"Excuse me, sir——" "It was a voice from the back row, and M. Charpentier stared fixedly across the class.

"Vat you say?"

"You've got a spot of ink on your nose, sir."

"It is not true," shouted M. Charpentier. "I ordair you to stand out before ze class, you garcon who speak."

But the garcon who spoke did not accept the invitation. M. Charpentier was growing as red as a turkey-cock.

"If you please, sir—."

M. Charpentier whirled round.

"There's a spot of ink on your nose, sir."

The French-master simply gasped.

He could not "place" the speaker, or be certain of the voice, and all the boys were looking amazed, and their faces gave no clue. Such an unheard-of length of impertinence was amazing even to M. Charpentier, who had had some troublous times with the Greyfriars Remove.

He looked staring at the class at a loss what to do, and in the painful silence that ensued the voice was heard again from a different direction.

"Excuse me, Mossoo——"

"Mon Dieu!"

"There's a spot of ink on your nose."

"Ah! I not bear zis!" shrieked the French-master. "It ees a trick—a plot! It ees vat you call a rag! I not bear eet. I detain ze whole class for an hour after ze school."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Billy Bunter, "that wouldn't be fair, sir."

"Silence, Buntair!"

"Yes, sir, but——"

There was a deep murmur of disapproval from the Remove. It certainly wasn't fair to punish the whole class because of a few raggers and their little jokes.

M. Charpentier hesitated as he heard the murmur. He was an excitable little man, but he tried to be just.

"I have been badly treated viz you," he said. "I try to do my duty, and I am stop and prevent all ze time. I call upon the shokers to stand forth."

But the jokers did not stand forth.

"Excuse me, sir——"

"Ah! Zere is ze shoker again! Who speak?"

"There's a spot of ink on your nose, sir."

"Mon Dieu! Zat is too mooch. Hazeldene, it vas you who start dis shoke, and I detain you until six o'clock zis evening. If zere is vun more shoke I detain ze whole class! I mean zat."

"But, sir," said the dismayed Hazeldene, "I——"

"Silence!"

"But I didn't——"

"Anozzer word," shouted M. Charpentier, almost dancing with rage—"anozzer vord, garcon, and I send you in to ze Head."

Hazeldene was silent. He hadn't any idea why M. Charpentier had picked upon him, but it was clearly worse than useless to argue with the little Frenchman in his present state of mind.

There were no more jokes during the lesson, and M. Charpentier congratulated himself that the threat of detaining the whole class had had its effect. As a matter of fact, the ventriloquist had effected his purpose.

French was the last lesson that afternoon, and when it was over—to the equal relief of master and pupils—the Lower Fourth were dismissed from the Form-room. As they went out, Hazeldene was the recipient of many sympathetic glances. He remained sitting at his desk.

The Remove went their way. M. Charpentier closed down the lid of his desk with a bang.

"You vill remain until six o'clock, Hazeldene," he said. "You vill occupy ze time writing out ze irregular vairbs. Bring zem to me at six o'clock in my study."

And he quitted the Form-room.

And Hazeldene, with a heavy heart, began to write.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Uses His Influence.

BILLY BUNTER looked into the Form-room five minutes later. Hazeldene's pen was scratching away wearily; he had written about three lines. He looked up as Bunter cautiously opened the door and popped in, closing it behind him.

"What do you want?" said Hazeldene curtly.

"Hush! I'm running a lot of risk by coming here and speaking to you, Vaseline," said Bunter. "There would be a row if Mossoo came in."

"Buzz off then!"

"Well, I must say you're ungrateful, Vaseline. I've come here to do you a favour. I can get you off if I like."

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Hazeldene irritably.

"Oh, really, Vaseline! If you don't want to go over to Cliff House, all right. I thought you'd like to get off the detention."

"What do you mean?" said Hazeldene with a gleam of hope. Bunter seemed to be very much in earnest. "You can't get me off the dentention."

"I think I can, and I'll try if you like."

"How?" demanded Hazeldene.

"That's my business. I'll try if you like."

"Of course I should like. Don't be an ass."

"And if I can get you off, you'd like me to come to Cliff House with you?" said the fat junior blandly.

Hazeldene hesitated. He could see Bunter's drift now, and he did not believe that the junior had any means of getting him set at liberty. But if he could manage it, it was only fair to take him to the tea-party. Billy Bunter blinked at him anxiously.

"Well, what do you say, Vaseline? If I can get you off, will you invite me to tea at Cliff House? You're taking Bulstrode and Mark Linley, as well as the chaps in my study, so you might as well——"

"Yes, confound you!" growled Hazeldene. "I know you're only gassing as usual, but if you can get me off I'll take you."

"Right you are, wait a minute."

And Billy Bunter disappeared, leaving Hazeldene in a state of surprise and anxiety. The fat junior almost ran into the chums of No. 1 Study as he left the class-room. They were coming to speak to Hazeldene. Bob Cherry caught Bunter by the shoulder, but the fat junior twisted himself loose.

"Don't stop me," he said, "I'm going to see Charpentier about letting Vaseline off. I think it will be all right if I use my influence."

And he ran off, leaving the chums astonished. A minute later he was tapping at M. Charpentier's door, and the French master bade him enter. The little Parisian was sitting by the sunny open window reading a Paris paper, which he laid on his knee as Bunter came in.

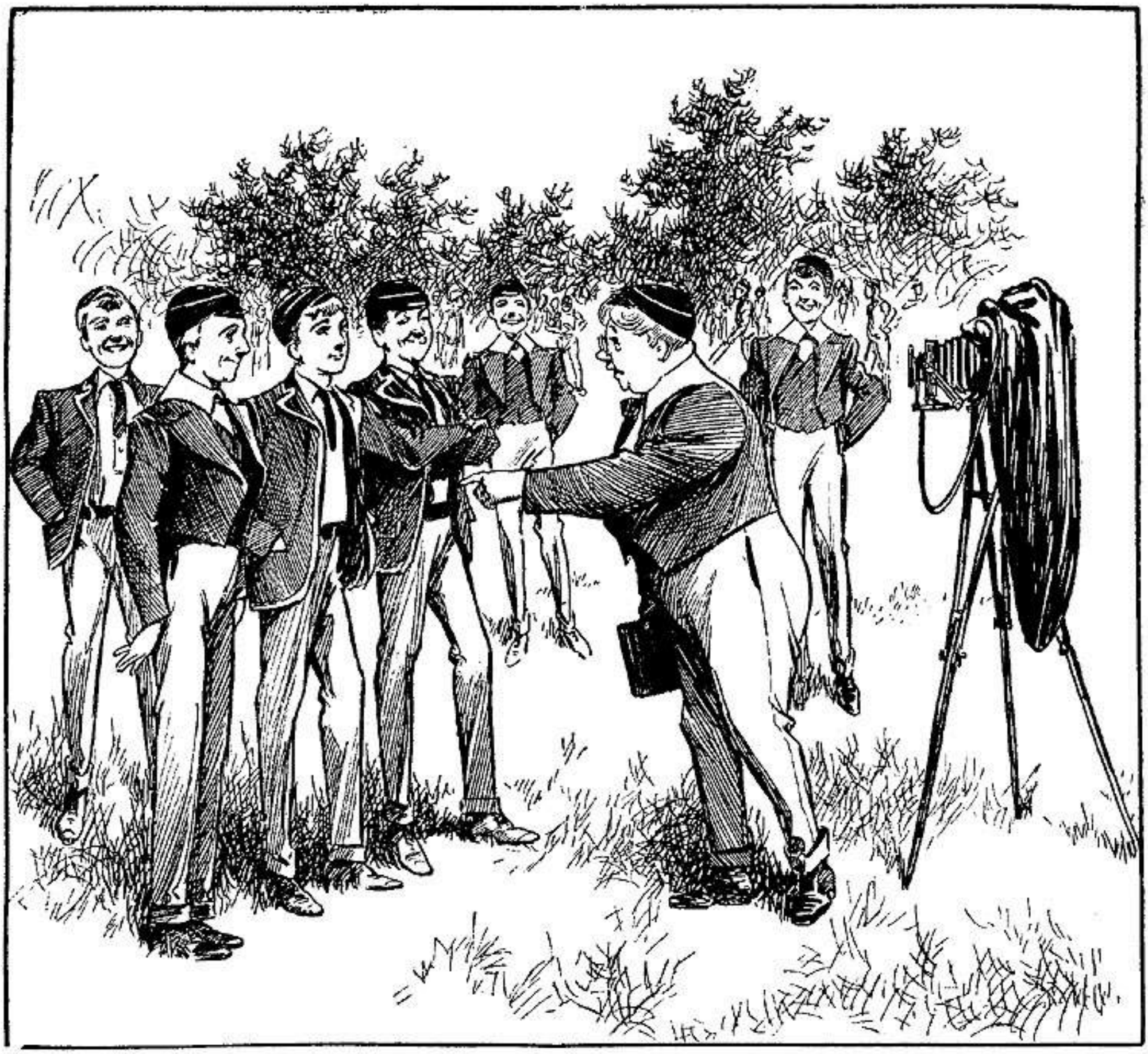
"Vat you vant, Buntair?" he asked.

"If you please, sir, I—I'd like to explain about Hazeldene. It wasn't he who checked you in class this afternoon, sir."

"Buntair! I zink——"

"It was another chap imitating his voice, sir," said Bunter hurriedly. "I can tell you who it was, sir."

"Ciel! Is it possible zat I have been unjust," said M. Charpentier, greatly distressed. "Undair ze circonstances, Buntair, you should certainly tell me ze name of ze vicked poy who did imitate ze voice of ze ozzer. Vat is his name?"



"Now you chaps who are going to have your photos taken," said Bunter in a business-like tone, "stand together. Try to look pleasant, Blundell! Keep your feet still, Micky Desmond!"

Billy Bunter hesitated.

"You see, sir, I—I—I'm afraid——"

"Zere is nozzing to be afraid of," said Mossoo kindly. "I vill protect you from ze poy, if it is he zat you are afraid of."

"It's—it's not, sir. I—I hope you won't punish me, sir—you might think I had done wrong in—in——"

"Not at all, garcon. It is ferry right and good of you to tell me ze troot," said M. Charpentier. "I not regard it as ze sneek. You tell me all, and I see zat you are not hurt."

"Then you won't punish me, sir?"

"Certainly not."

"Thank you, sir. The—the fellow was—was——"

"Yes, Buntair, who was it?"

"Myself, sir."

Monsieur Charpentier looked at Bunter dumbly for a full minute. The fat junior stood waiting in uneasy silence. He did not himself fully realise how colossal his nerve was in catching the master like this. Twice M. Charpentier opened his lips to speak; once he stretched out his hand towards the cane. But he restrained himself. He had given his word.

"Buntair," he said at last, "zis is a trick—an impertinent trick—but the vord of a Frenchman is his bond. You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

"I vill speak viz Hazeldene myself. Get out of my sight, or I shall forget my parole and giff you ze trashin'."

Bunter got out of his sight willingly enough. He looked in breathlessly at the Form-room door a few moments later. The chums of No. 1 Study were in the room chatting with Hazeldene, discussing pros and cons.

"Better clear," called out Bunter, "Charpentier's coming here."

And he vanished. The juniors promptly "cleared," and when the little Frenchman arrived in the Form-room, only Hazeldene was there, his pen industriously working away over the foolscap.

"Hazeldene," said the French-master, "I have been enlightened on zis mattair—I am sorry zat I punish you ven you do nozzing. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Hazeldene, in wonder. "Thank you very much!"

"I am sorry zat you have been detain at all."

"Oh, that's nothing, sir! I don't mind."

And Hazeldene gladly put his books away, and joined the chums of the Remove, who were waiting for him in the Close. They were glad, and decidedly surprised, to see him. Bunter who was with them gave a chuckle of triumph.

"What did I tell you, you fellows?" he demanded.

"A lot of lies," said Bob Cherry. "Don't talk to me about influence with a master. Don't I know you?"

"Charpentier's let me off," said Hazeldene. "He says he knows it wasn't I chipping him in the Form-room, though I'm blessed if I see how he knows it."

"I gave him the tip," said Bunter. "I needn't go into

details, but I've cleared the matter up. I used my influence with Charpentier——"

"Oh, ring off!" said Bob Cherry irritably. "Look here, is it true, Hazeldene, what this fat worm says—that you've promised to take him to Cliff House if you got off?"

"Yes; I'm sorry. But it really seems to be Bunter who got me off, and it's only fair to take him," said Hazeldene. "I can't understand how he worked it; the only thing that's certain is that he hasn't told us the truth about it."

"Oh, really, Vaseline——"

"Oh, shut up! You're coming; but don't jaw."

Many fellows, however thick-skinned, would have declined permission to accompany the tea-party on terms like those; but Billy Bunter was not particular. He buzzed off to get a clean collar and his camera, and Bob Cherry called after him to wash his hands—a performance Bunter was not fond of.

The chums of the Remove were a little more careful than usual in their attire as they dressed to go out. They donned their nicest clothes and silk hats—a sacrifice on the altar of appearances, as they would greatly have preferred caps or straws. As they came downstairs Bulstrode joined them. Bulstrode was also very nicely dressed, with a silk hat on, and a very gay waistcoat. The usual domineering manner of the bully of the Remove was conspicuous by its absence. He nodded awkwardly to Wharton and his friends, without speaking. The others felt awkward. They did not want Bulstrode in the party, and they had no intention of being hypocritical about it. At the same time, he was Hazeldene's guest, and entitled to civility. Mark Linley joined them in the hall. He, too, was sporting a topper—his Sunday topper—the weekday one being decidedly the worse for the wear and tear of the term.

"What nice boys we look!" said Nugent, grinning. "My hat, how comfy those chaps look in flannels over there!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Billy!" said Bob Cherry imperatively. "And look here, if you open your mouth once at Cliff House, I'll jam my knuckles into it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, how am I to have my tea without opening my mouth?"

"Well, except to eat, then," said Bob, with a grin. "That's except opening it about fifty thousand times, I suppose."

Bulstrode drew Hazeldene a little aside. The big, burly Removite was looking curiously awkward and conscious.

"Look here," he said, in a low tone, "if you don't want me to come, say so, and I'll get back!"

"Oh, it's all right," said Hazeldene shortly.

"I wrote to your sister last night," said Bulstrode abruptly.

"The dickens you did!"

"Yes. I told her I was sorry about—about some things that—that happened once," said Bulstrode. "Blessed if I know why I care about her opinion, but I seem to somehow. I don't think she'll mind my coming."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Hazeldene, in wonder. "Marjorie never bears malice on her own account; but—but you did treat Linley's sister in a caddish way, you know. I—I say, Bulstrode, you're not ill, are you?"

The big Removite glared at him.

"Ill! No. Why?"

"Oh, nothing; but—but you seem different somehow," stammered Hazeldene. "I thought you might be ill."

Bulstrode relapsed into silence, and did not speak again during the walk to Cliff House, while the rest of the party chatted away pleasantly enough.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Great Preparations.

"MARJORIE!"

"Yes, dear?"

"Buck up!" said Clara Trevlyn, looking in at the class-room door at Cliff House—Miss Penelope Primrose's School for Girls.

Marjorie Hazeldene laughed as she came out. She had lingered behind a moment to speak to Miss Locke, the second mistress of Cliff House. There were three or four girls gathered round Miss Clara in the passage, and they were all looking very animated and excited.

Marjorie Hazeldene was the acknowledged chief. She was not as lively as Miss Clara by any means, but her head was much the steadier of the two. It had been Clara's idea in the first place to ask the Greyfriars boys to tea in the "study," and Marjorie had assented, the other girls agreeing with enthusiasm.

During their short stay at Greyfriars the Cliff House girls had been able to observe the manners and customs of that curious animal, the Human Boy. At least, that was how Miss Clara put it. Miss Clara's settled opinion, upon the whole, was that boys were horrid, but that they had their good points, and really ought to be encouraged.

And there were some Greyfriars' customs that appealed to her very much. Tea in the study was one of them. They had no separate studies at Cliff House, and that was a grievance with Miss Clara. They were allowed to ask their boy-friends to tea, certainly; but where was the fun of having friends to tea at a long table, presided over by Miss Primrose? Tea then became simply a meal—merely that and nothing more. The adventurousness of tea in the study, of lighting their own fires and boiling their own kettle, making their own tea, and so forth—all that was lost. But Miss Clara intended to take a leaf out of the Greyfriars book, and she had brought Marjorie round to her way of thinking.

Tea in the study was an institution at Greyfriars; and why not at Cliff House? The girls put their heads together over it. Hence vast and secret preparations, and the invitation to the Removites.

"Come, Marjorie," said Clara reprovingly, as she linked her arm in her friend's. "You can chatter about painting to Miss Locke another time."

"I was only saying——"

"Oh, I know—the Coreggiosity of Coreggio!" said Miss Clara, laughing. "Never mind that now. We've got to get ready for Hazel and his friends. We mustn't lose time, in case anything goes wrong with the arrangements."

And after a cautious look round, to make sure that they were not observed, the girls quitted the schoolhouse, and followed a path through the trees to a distance of about twenty yards from the house. Here stood the gardener's shed, where Mr. McIlvaine, the genial Scottish gardener of Cliff House, kept all his paraphernalia. Mr. McIlvaine was away just now, and not likely to appear on the spot, and the girls were taking advantage of his absence.

During the day they had paid several visits to the shed, and added much in the way of furnishing and adornment to improve its appearance.

The floor of the shed was of bare planks, but they had covered it with a square of carpet, and the gardening implements had all been stacked away out of sight. Some neat chairs had been smuggled into the shed, and a box containing tools, which was too heavy to be moved, had been covered with a counterpane and several cushions to transform it into a sofa.

The grate had been carefully cleaned up, and a fire laid. As a fire was very seldom lighted in the shed—and never during the summer—it was a little doubtful how the chimney would draw. But that could not be helped. It might draw all right, but, as Miss Clara said very sensibly, it was no good meeting troubles halfway.

Chintz had been hung over the walls to conceal the rough wood and such implements as could not be removed. Marjorie & Co. had spent a considerable amount of pocket-money on their purchases for the adornment of the gardener's shed, but that would not be wasted, for Miss Clara, who was full of ideas, pointed out that all the materials could be worked up into something or other to be given to the poor.

"By Jove," said Miss Clara, who had picked up that expression—and many more—from the boys of Greyfriars—"by Jove, doesn't it look ripping!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Stuff!" said Miss Clara cheerfully. "No time for 'Oh, Clara!' now. The bounders——"

"Oh, Clara!"

"The bounders," repeated Miss Clara obstinately—"the bounders may come along any time. We've got to get ready. I'll light the fire. Milly, did you get the—the grub?"

"I've got the provisions here, Clara," said Milly Brown, with a slight emphasis on the word provisions.

Miss Clara laughed the laugh of superior knowledge.

"The fellows in the Remove call it grub when they have it in the study," she exclaimed. "Or 'tommy'—sometimes 'tuck'; never provisions. Anybody got a match?"

Nobody had.

"Cut off and get a box of matches, Milly," said Clara. "You get out the grub, Wilhelmina. Don't start on it, though."

The German girl smiled, not to say grinned.

"It is ferry goot," she said. "Milly did buy in der village der goot sausage and bacon, and der lufly eggs and cake. Goot—ferry goot cake!"

"Where's that frying-pan?"

"Dear me," said Marjorie, "where's the frying-pan?"

"I—I forgot it," stammered Alice Lake.

"My goodness, that chap forgets everything!" said Miss Clara. "Buzz off and get the frying-pan, you duffer!"

"Oh, Clara!"

"Buzz off!" cried Miss Clara. "Don't stand looking at me! Buzz off and get the frying-pan, you—you ass!"

Quite overcome, Alice hurried off for the frying-pan.

"What price something to drink?" said Miss Clara. "Did you bring the ginger-beer, Norah?"

"Faith, and I forgot it intoirely!" said Norah Flynn

"Go and get it then! My goodness, you'll turn my hair grey among you!"

Milly Brown dashed in breathlessly with a box of matches. Miss Clara gingerly drew a pair of housemaid's gloves upon her hands, and proceeded to light the fire. The fire lighted—and smoked! Apparently, there was no draught up the chimney; at all events, the smoke poured into the shed.

"Br-r-gr-r-r-r-br-r-gr-gr!" said Miss Clara, coughing.

"Oh dear!" said Marjorie. "Wave something before it, Clara, and make the smoke go up the chimney!"

"There isn't anything to wave," said Clara helplessly. "My goodness! How annoying of the fire to smoke like this! I—I—give me a spade!"

Marjorie found a spade, and handed it to her, and Miss Clara began to wave it before the fire to fan the flame. The other girls crowded back in time to avoid being brained with the spade. Clara kept it up for several minutes, till she was nearly suffocated with the smoke, and had to run out of the shed to get a breath.

"Py Chorge!" said Miss Wilhelmina. "Dat is pad—ferry pad! I tinks tat ve all be choked mit ourselves pefore, ain't it."

"Groo—groo—groooh!" was Miss Clara's reply.

"I've seen somebody make a fire draw by fastening up a sheet of paper before the grate," said Marjorie. "Is there a newspaper?"

"I'll go and find one," gasped Clara.

She was five minutes finding the newspaper. When she returned the shed was thick and hazy with smoke, and nobody liked to venture into it. Miss Clara looked into the dimness of it doubtfully.

"It will suffocate you, dear," said Milly Brown.

"Wait till it clears off," suggested Alice, who had returned with the frying-pan. "It may clear off presently."

Miss Clara sniffed.

"The guests may be here at any moment. I'm going in."

And she dashed gallantly into the smoky shed, and jammed the newspaper up before the fire. She had no time to secure it, having to retreat to the open air for breath, and the paper fell on the flames and ignited.

There was a roar as the flame went up.

"My goodness!" gasped Clara. "I—I hope the shed won't catch fire!"

The girls looked on in dismay. Thick smoke rolled from the door of the shed, and dispersed among the foliage above; but very little was coming out of the chimney. The village clock chimed out.

"Oh dear," said Milly Brown, "the boys may be here any minute now!"

"Someone must meet them on the road," said Marjorie hastily, "or they will come up to the gate, and then——"

"All the fat will be in the fire," said Clara. "You cut off, Milly, while I get this—this beastly fire in order."

Milly Brown hurried away. The smoke was a little less thick in a few minutes, probably because the fire was going out. Soon the girls ventured into the shed again. Miss Clara poked the fire, and a fresh smoke rose from the smouldering wood.

"My goodness! It's out!"

"Oh dear!"

"Can I help you?"

Marjorie & Co. started and looked round. Harry Wharton was looking in at the door with a smile on his face.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Miss Clara Cooks the Sausages.

MARJORIE coloured as she met Harry's glance, and then laughed. Miss Clara was looking exasperated, but she laughed, too. The guests had arrived—not at the most opportune moment.

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Marjorie, shaking hands with Harry in the smoke. "I am sorry it is so smoky."

"The smokefulness is certainly terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Perhaps I can help you," said Harry. "I've lighted lots of fires, you know."

Marjorie looked dubiously at Harry's nice clothes and silk hat. He did not look in trim for wrestling with an obstinate fire. But he did not seem to care for that. He took his hat and jacket off, and handed them to Nugent to take care of, and slipped into the work.

It was a strong belief of Miss Clara's that girls could do anything quite as well as boys; but she had to admit that Wharton handled that obstinate fire well.

In two minutes it was going again, the chimney was drawing, and the fire burnt clear. The haze cleared out of the open door and windows of the shed. The Cliff House girls and their guests breathed again.

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Marjorie gratefully.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's nothing."

"You have made your hands dreadfully black," said Miss Clara. "We are ever so much obliged to you."

"Indeed we are," said Marjorie. "There is a sink in the room next to this where you can wash your hands. The gardener keeps his soap and things there."

"Thank you," said Wharton, looking at his hands, which were indeed black and horribly coaly and sooty; "that's just what I want."

The smoke having cleared off, the guests came in. There were ample seats for all of them, the shed having that advantage over a junior study at Greyfriars, which could seldom seat a party if it numbered more than five or six.

Hazeldene looked round the shed with a grin.

"You've fixed this up all right, Marjorie," he remarked. "Is this the study?"

Marjorie laughed.

"Yes, this is the study—our study, you know. We haven't any studies indoors, so we're arranged this as one."

"And a ripping one it makes, too," said Bob Cherry admiringly. "It's tons better than a Remove study at Greyfriars."

"The betterfulness is terrific."

"We meant to have tea ready when you came," said Marjorie confidingly; "but we have been delayed. That fire was such a dreadful bother."

"Too bad," said Nugent sympathetically.

Billy Bunter blinked towards the basket of provisions.

"If there's any cooking to do you can count on me," he remarked. "I'd be only too willing to oblige. Of course, girls can't cook."

"Can't they?" said Miss Clara indignantly. "You shall see. I am cook this time, and I rather think I shall turn the pro—the grub out all right."

Bunter shook his head.

"Better let me handle the grub," he said. "It's a serious matter, you know, if the grub were to get spoiled."

"You shall see," said Miss Clara firmly.

Marjorie looked a little doubtful, but she did not argue with her friend. After all, it was not exactly the thing to let a visitor cook his own tea.

Miss Clara evidently knew all about it, for she took the frying-pan, and rubbed it out, and then called for dripping to grease it.

"Dere isn't any dripping," said Miss Wilhelmina.

"Then butter," said Clara. "It's awfully extravagant to use butter, but I shall have to use it this time."

"I—I forgot the butter," stammered Milly.

Miss Clara gave her a freezing glance.

"You'll be forgetting your own head next," she said. "Do cut off and get the butter, and be quick!"

A wait of several minutes ensued while Miss Brown cut off and fetched the butter. The Greyfriars juniors maintained a perfect gravity, with the exception of Billy Bunter, who was, of course, hungry.

He wanted to suggest beginning with the cake, but there was a look in Harry Wharton's eye that restrained him. He shifted uneasily, and remarked that it was hungry weather, and then gasped as Bob Cherry pinched him, nearly taking a lump out of his fat leg.

Milly Brown returned with the butter, and Miss Clara took it, and opened it on the table. Under the eyes of the Greyfriars juniors she did not wish to hesitate, but, as a matter of fact, cooking was not one of Clara's accomplishments. Billy Bunter could have given her points, and beaten her easily at that game.

She had never fried sausages before, and how much butter to put in the pan to start with was a great mystery to her.

The juniors would willingly have offered advice, but under the circumstances they could not very well do so without being asked, so they assumed an air of elaborate unconsciousness.

Miss Clara hesitated only a moment, then she cut off about half a pound of butter, and jammed it into the frying-pan. Then she put the frying-pan on the glowing fire.

Billy Bunter started up.

"I say, Miss Clara——"

Bob Cherry dragged him down again. He had made up his mind that Billy Bunter was not to be allowed to speak at all, and he was keeping to it.

"Lemme alone, Cherry! I——"

"Shut up!" whispered Bob fiercely.

"Did you speak?" asked Miss Clara, looking round with a glowing face from the fire.

"N-n-n-n—it's nothing!"

The butter was sizzling in the pan now. It melted quickly enough, and the frying-pan swam in liquid grease, being nearly half-full of the melted butter.

Miss Clara detached the sausages, and plunged some of them into the sea of grease, and there were some splashes over the edge of the fire.

Sizzle—sizzle—sizzle!

Miss Clara started back as the spilt butter sizzled and sputtered, and unfortunately gave the handle of the frying-pan a push in doing so. Marjorie sprang forward—too late!

A sea of grease swooped over the side of the pan into the fire, and there was a roar and a burst of flame.

Mark Linley dragged Miss Clara back, and only just in time, or her dress might have caught fire.

"My goodness!" gasped Clara.

"Oh dear!" said Marjorie.

The fire blazed and roared away furiously, fed by the melted grease, and in the midst of the flames the sausages sizzled and scorched, and a smell of burning filled the shed.

"My word!" gasped Billy Bunter. "They'll be spoiled! Oh dear—and I'm so hungry! The sausages will be spoiled!"

"I—I'm afraid they will," said Miss Clara. "Dear me, how warm it is in here! The smell of burning is unpleasant, too."

"Oh, not at all," said Bob Cherry, with great politeness. "I—I rather like it."

"Oh, it's ripping," said Hazeldene. "You'd do better to let Bunter cook, Clara. He's a jolly good cook."

"Yes, rather, I'd be very pleased."

"Stuff!" said Miss Clara decidedly. "One swallow does not make a summer. Accidents will always happen."

"When you are cooking," murmured Miss Flynn.

"I will cook the bacon now."

"I'm blessed if I can stay here and see good food messed up like this," murmured Billy Bunter.

"Did you speak, Bunter?"

"I said I'd go and take some photos in the garden while you were cooking."

"Yes, that's a good idea."

And Bunter went out with his camera under his arm, and the juniors, feeling that Miss Clara would cook more at her ease if no strange eyes were upon her, accompanied him. As they left the "study" Miss Clara flopped the bacon into the frying-pan, and there was a formidable siz-siz-sizzle.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER
Tea in the "Study."

BILLY BUNTER had been disappointed with his camera at first. In comparison with the handsome stand-camera of Mr. Quelch, of which Billy had coolly taken possession till he was forced to give it up, his own one was indeed a wretched thing. But on trial it turned out that it would really take photographs. Ogilvy had some plates that would fit it, and he had good-naturedly shown Bunter what to do. It was a very simple contrivance. The camera was worth about half-a-crown, but properly handled there was no reason why it should not take photographs. Ogilvy had given Bunter half a dozen plates, and threatened him with immediate massacre if he ventured to take any more without permission. But Billy had botched those half-dozen in practice, and as he knew where Ogilvy kept his plates, he had taken the liberty of helping himself to half a dozen more.

He intended, when he had had a little practice, sending photographs to the illustrated newspapers for publication, as he had learned that amateur photographers sometimes made a great deal of money that way. Then, out of his first cheque, he intended to pay for the plates he had taken out of Ogilvy's stock. He was likely to pay for them in another way when Ogilvy discovered his loss. The Scottish junior was not mean, but he had a natural dislike to having his stock of photographic materials raided without permission being asked.

Bunter's camera held six plates, and the previous evening he had filled it by the aid of Ogilvy's red lamp with Ogilvy's plates. He had left the camera in the study after that, ready for use on the following day. He intended to take six pictures while he was at Cliff House, and he had learned enough about photography now to know that he must not open the camera in the daylight to see if the plates were all right. He had done that sort of thing at first.

"Let me see," said Bunter thoughtfully. "It's a good idea to take the photos before tea, as the light is a good deal better. Would any of you fellows care to have an enlargement of a photograph to hang up in the study?"

"Let's see the photograph first," said Bob Cherry, sceptically.

"Oh, really, Cherry, you can depend upon that being all right. I've studied the art as an art, and I'm practically an expert photographer now. I should like to earn a little money with the camera, too, as I want to buy some plates; I can't depend upon Ogilvy always leaving his cupboard unlocked. I could do you some splendid enlargements at ten-and-six each."

"Go hon!"

"That's below the market price of the best quality and superior finish. I shall have to learn how to do the enlargements, too; I don't know yet. You would have to pay in advance, of course, as the process may be expensive."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that. Hallo, here's Miss Primrose coming! I'll snap her!"

"It isn't Miss Primrose, ass—it's Miss Locke!"

"Dear me, so it is."

The juniors took off their hats to Miss Locke.

As a mistress at Cliff House, and as the younger sister of their own Headmaster, she had a double title to respect, and the boys liked her very well, in spite of her strong views on the subject of votes for women. She seemed a little surprised to find the boys from Greyfriars in the school garden.

Marjorie came up to explain.

"Miss Primrose gave me permission to ask my friends to tea, Miss Locke," she said.

"Very good," said Miss Locke. "Tea is almost ready, I think."

Marjorie coloured.

"If—if you don't mind, Miss Locke, we're going to—to have tea in the study," she said. "I'm sure Miss Primrose wouldn't mind."

"Tea in the what?"

"In the study. Would you like to see it?"

"Certainly," said the amazed Miss Locke, and she followed Marjorie to the shed. Miss Clara had just succeeded in burning all the bacon into an uneatable condition, and the smell that

proceeded from the shed was what the Nabob of Bhanipur would have accurately described as "terrific."

Miss Locke breathed hard.

"Dear me! Are you going to eat that?"

Marjorie looked a little dismayed.

"It doesn't look very nice, does it?" she said.

"No, scarcely. Why not throw that stuff away, and make a tea of bread-and-butter and jam and cake?" suggested Miss Locke. "I should think that would be nicer."

"Ye-e-es, perhaps so," said Miss Clara doubtfully. "I—I haven't had much practice in cooking yet. You don't think the boys would like this bacon?"

"I feel quite sure they would not."

"Then I'll throw it away."

"And the sausages, too," said Milly Brown; "what's left of them."

"Ach!" said Wilhelmina Limburger sadly. "Dey was goot sausages, ferry goot; but I not eats dem in dat state—I could not."

Bacon and sausages were deposited in the garden. The smell of burning gradually dissolved away, and Miss Clara washed the blacks off her face and the grease off her fair hands.

"Do stay and have tea with us, dear Miss Locke," said Marjorie.

Miss Locke hesitated. She was afraid of playing the part of a wet blanket at a youthful festivity, but her pupils persuaded her.

She helped to lay the table, and cut the bread-and-butter and cake, and the "study" soon presented a festive and agreeable appearance.

Jugs of bright flowers added to the adornment of the table, and the fire being allowed to go down, the temperature of the "study" became a little more tolerable. Milly went to call the juniors to tea.

She found the photographer of the Remove busy with his camera. Bunter had just taken Bulstrode, the burly Removite having agreed to buy him a dozen new plates if the photograph turned out a success. Bunter snapped the camera with the air of a past-master of the art of photography, and listened for the fall of the plate which would tell that the next was in position for use. He heard the bump in the camera, and was satisfied.

"What's that row?" asked Hazeldene, who knew little of cameras.

Billy Bunter smiled.

"That's the dark slide with the plate in it falling out of place," he explained. "It leaves a new plate in position."

"Oh, I see! Have you finished?"

"No, I haven't. I've got five more plates. Have you come to be photographed, Miss Brown?"

"No; I've come to tell you tea's ready."

"Good. I'll leave the other five till after tea," said Bunter promptly.

And they adjourned to the "study." It looked very bright and cheerful, and the table was well spread and wonderfully clean and neat, with its spotless cloth and dazzling crockery; but the "grub" brought a shade to the brow of William George Bunter.

"Where's the bacon?" he asked bluntly.

"Burnt!" said Miss Clara.

"Oh! And the sausages?"

"Burnt!"

"And the eggs?"

"Burnt!"

Before Billy Bunter could ask any more questions, Bob Cherry pinched him, and he gasped with pain and collapsed into a seat.

Bunter was dissatisfied, but the rest of the juniors from Greyfriars were delighted with the tea; and, as a matter of fact, they were greatly relieved not to be put to a terrible test of politeness by having Miss Clara's cookery placed before them.

The tea was delicious, perhaps owing to the fact that it was made by Miss Locke, and not by any amateur maker of tea. Miss Locke poured it out, too, and bread-and-butter and watercress were passed, and the juniors began an enjoyable tea.

Miss Locke had looked a little severe when she saw Bulstrode first; she was far from expecting to see him in a party invited by Marjorie & Co. But Bulstrode was on his best behaviour. He was so quiet and subdued that the others hardly knew him, and he was painfully respectful to Miss Locke.

It was evident that the bully of the Remove was turning over a new leaf; though why, and how long it would last, were great mysteries to his companions.

But they did not trouble their heads about that now. All was going off well, even Billy Bunter behaving himself, and finding the cake so nice that he ceased to regret the sausages.

"I say, you fellows—I mean you girls," said Billy Bunter, as he accepted his tenth helping of cake, "I should like to take you in a group after tea, you know."

"You took us in a group before," said Miss Clara. "We never heard how the photograph turned out."

Billy Bunter turned pink as his comrades chuckled.

"You—you see, there was an accident to the plates," he explained. "The light got at them and spoiled them. That can't happen this time—I put the plates in last night by the red lamp."

"We will be taken, with pleasure," said Marjorie sweetly; but the dimple in her cheek seemed to indicate that she had not much faith in the powers of the amateur photographer.

And when tea was over, and Bunter had crammed in as much cake as even he could possibly hold, the party adjourned to the garden to be "taken."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

One Thing Needful.

THERE was plenty of light for the camera; if the photographs did not turn out a success it would not be the fault of the sun. Billy Bunter snapped off the five in a very short time, and the bump of the last falling slide warned him that he had come to the end. He put his camera under his arm with the air of one who has deserved well of his acquaintance.

The Cliff House girls walked with the juniors as far as the turn of the road, and then they parted, with many thanks on the side of Harry Wharton & Co. for the enjoyable "tea in the study."

"I am glad you think it a success," said Marjorie demurely.

"Why, it was ripping!" said the juniors in chorus.

"We won't have any cooking next time," said Milly Brown.

And Marjorie laughed.

Bulstrode lingered for a moment behind the juniors. Marjorie, seeing that he wanted to speak, stopped, too, wondering at the crimson flush in the burly Removite's face.

"I—I wanted to speak to you, Miss Hazeldene," said Bulstrode. "I—I'm sorry for—for that little row the other day."

Marjorie nodded cheerily.

"So you said in your letter," she said. "I am glad. It is all right. I had almost forgotten it."

"And you don't owe me any grudge?"

"Why, of course not."

"Thank you, Miss Hazeldene. It's awfully good of you to say so."

And Bulstrode raised his hat and walked after the others. Marjorie's face wore a thoughtful expression as she walked home to Cliff House. She did not quite understand Bulstrode, but it seemed to her that a change for the better was coming over the burly Removite, and she was glad to see it. She was far from imagining that that change might be due to her own unconscious influence.

"About those enlargements," Bunter was saying, as Bulstrode joined them again. "I suppose you fellows would like a souvenir of the happy occasion. I think Marjorie will come out specially well."

"Seeing is believing," said Bob Cherry oracularly.

"Oh, it's all right. If Marjorie comes out well, I shall reproduce a lot of them, and sell them to the fellows at a tanner each——"

"You won't sell my sister's photograph," said Hazeldene.

"Oh, really Hazeldene——"

"Not unless you want the camera and the negatives smashed on your fat head, my son," said Bob Cherry impressively.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Oh, shut up!"

And Billy Bunter relapsed into injured silence.

The juniors walked home to Greyfriars in a cheerful mood, discussing the tea at Cliff House, and some plans for returning the hospitality of Marjorie & Co. Ogilvy, the amateur photographer of the Remove, met them at the gates. He seemed to be waiting there for them, and he grinned as they came up.

"Had a good time?" he asked.

"Oh, ripping!"

"Taken a lot of photographs, Billy?"

"Only six," said Bunter. "The camera only holds six plates, you know. I think there will be about half a dozen successful out of them, you know. I practised with the plates you gave me yesterday, and——"

"Oh! And where did you get these then?"

"Well, you see, I—I—I——"

"You young ass!" said Ogilvy, grinning. "I knew you had taken them out of my cupboard; I went there five minutes afterwards."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy, then you don't mind——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Not at all!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Bunter peevishly. "I say, Ogilvy, can I have your red lamp to develop them by?"

"Certainly. You can go in my study and do it, if you like."

"Thanks awfully. I'll give you one of the pictures."

Ogilvy grinned as the amateur photographer walked away.

"What's the little game?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Anything wrong with the plates?"

"Not at all. The plates were all right. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Ogilvy, chuckling, followed Bunter. The chums of the Remove, considerably puzzled, followed him into the house.

Bunter had gone to Ogilvy's study. There was a closely-

fitting blind for the window, which turned it into a temporary dark-room, and this was already up, as Ogilvy had been doing some developing himself, and Bunter gave a grunt of satisfaction as he saw it. He was an enthusiastic hobbyist, but he did not like anything in the form of work. He closed the door, let fall the curtain over it to keep out any gleam of daylight, and lighted the red lamp. There came a tap at the door.

"Developed them yet?" asked Ogilvy through the keyhole.

"No; I'm just going to take them out of the camera."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the blessed joke?" demanded Nugent, as Ogilvy leaned against the wall of the passage and cackled away like a triumphant hen. "Look here, what is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ogilvy.

Bob Cherry seized him by the throat and jammed him against the wall, and brandished a fist in his face.

"What's the joke?" he roared. "What are you understudying a blessed farmyard for? Expound, you ass!"

"Hold on!" gasped Ogilvy. "You'll—you'll see in a minute. Oh, my only hat! Wait till you hear from Bunter!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Ogilvy went off into a fresh scream, and the chums of the Remove looked at him, and at one another, and waited.

They did not have to wait long.

The door of the study was suddenly flung open and Billy Bunter appeared, with a camera in one hand and two or three empty black tin slides in the other. The fat junior was spluttering with rage.

"Beast!" he roared. "Rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pig! Beast! Yah! You—you—you—oh, there ain't a word!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Matter! Oh, the rotter!"

"Anything wrong with the plates?"

"Plates!" yelled Bunter. "There weren't any plates!"

"What!"

"There weren't any plates! That—that unspeakable villain must have gone to the camera, when I left it in the study last night, and taken them out again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ogilvy.

"But didn't we hear the plates dropping in the camera after each photo you took?" said Hazeldene, puzzled.

"It was only the slides that fell," said the unhappy photographer. "The slides were empty—there weren't any plates in them."

"Then the photographs——"

"There weren't any photographs, ass! I was only exposing the dark slides all the time!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!"

"Oh, my sides!" gasped Ogilvy. "Perhaps you won't collar another fellow's plates next time without asking permission."

"You—you—you——"

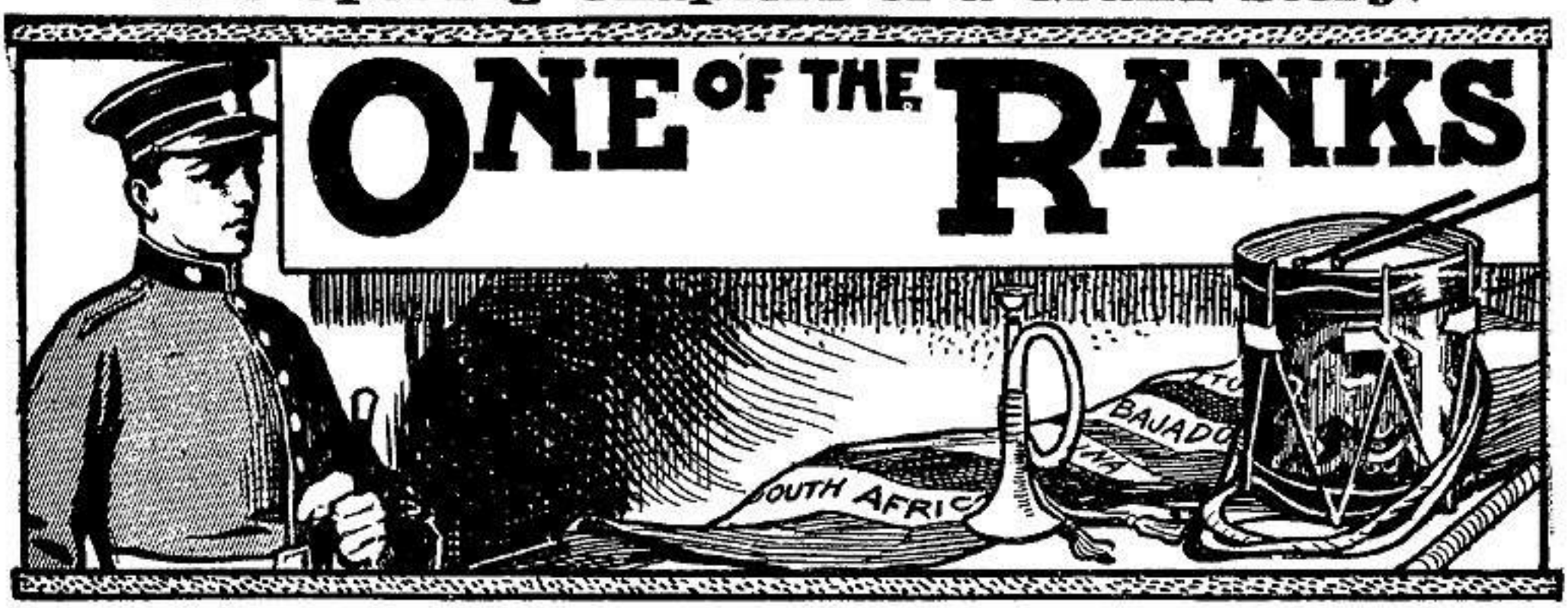
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the yelling juniors, and strode away in high dudgeon. The yell of laughter followed him. And as soon as the story of Bunter's great essay in photography spread, the whole Remove roared, too; and for days afterwards, if anybody wanted to raise a laugh, he had only to mention the Greyfriars' photographer.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the boys of Greyfriars and the pupils of Cliff House next Tuesday, entitled "The Greyfriars Caravan." Order your copy of The "Magnet" Library in advance. One Halfpenny.)

The Opening Chapters of a Grand Story.



A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys, a cadet in his last term at Sandhurst, is falsely accused of cheating in an exam., so one night, packing up a few necessaries, he leaves Sandhurst with his dog Rough. He walks to London, enlists in the Royal North Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester, and is sent down as one of a draft of recruits for that regiment to Woolchester. Arrived there, the rookies are taken charge of by two old soldiers, known as Mouldy Mills and Hookey Walker, who are deputed to explain their new duties. Ronald unfortunately manages to fall foul of Bagot, a bullying sergeant, and Foxey Williams, a private, on the first day. He is sitting in the corner of the barrack-yard playing with Rough, when he notices a headline of a newspaper on which some belts are laid out to dry, and to his astonishment reads of the discovery of his own dead body in the Thames. Ronald has just caught hold of the paper when, hearing footsteps he draws back.

(Now go on with the story.)

Foxey Williams' Find.

Sergeant Bagot had turned the corner, rolling a red-rimmed eye in search of something on which to vent his spleen.

He had not long since been up to a chum's lobby for a morning tot of whisky from a private bottle to keep him going until the mess opened. To his disgust, however, his intended host was out, and his tongue was now ten times rustier for the disappointment than before. The sight of the hated gentleman-ranker came as balm to his injured feelings.

"Hi, you!" he roared swooping down on Ronald. "Keep your hands out of there, d'you hear?"

Ronald turned, tingling with passion.

"Yes, I hear," he answered harshly; "and now I would like to know what you insinuate by that order?"

Hookey's advice was not forgotten, but he felt that he could no more "keep a face like a turnip" under this gross provocation than fly.

"What do I mean to insinuate, you cheeky young swab?" roared Sergeant Bagot. "I mean to insinuate that if you don't keep your fingers off of other people's property in this place, you'll get 'em burned, you blessed area sneak! You let those belts alone, d'ye hear? And cut back to your room. Sharp! March!"

For five seconds it really looked as though Ronald was going to forget all he had ever learnt of discipline, and fell his cowardly persecutor with a straight drive between the eyes.

Sergeant Bagot, indeed, was so alive to this danger that he skipped back out of distance, and opened his mouth ready to yell for aid.

At that instant, fortunately, the barrack clock struck noon. The sharp command "Dismiss!" rang out over the square,

and the squads dissolved at the command, the men hastening off to their quarters.

In the clatter of feet Ronald returned to his senses. Calling to Rough he turned on his heels and strode away.

The sergeant, once his victim's back was turned, broke into an evil grin.

"I thought that would fetch you on the raw, you stuck-up, starchy young upstart!" he chuckled. "You're a bit of a nob, eh? I'll give yer 'nob' afore I've finished with you, or my name isn't Bob Bagot!"

There were many witnesses of the encounter between Bagot and the new recruit; but only one bothered his head to wonder what it might all be about.

Private Foxey Williams, from his place in the front rank of B company, had been watching Ronald's movements out of the corners of his narrow eyes. He had seen him start as his eyes lit on the fluttering newspaper, and his crafty brain was all agog to know what it could contain to produce such a remarkable effect.

Foxey was by habit a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. Experience taught him that there were few scraps of information thus acquired that did not manage, at some time or another to pay for their storage in the cells of his busy brain.

As soon as the drill was dismissed, therefore, he hung about the open window until the owner of the belts removed them from the ledge.

"You don't 'appen to want this any more, do you, chum?" he asked ingratiatingly, picking up the paper, and the man, nodding a surly consent, he tucked it under his tunic and joined the stream of thirsty comrades now heading for the canteen.

Foxey passed the bar by, and, seeking out a quiet corner, spread the pages out before him on the table.

"Ain't nothing fresh this morning I suppose, Foxey?" inquired a pal, who came upon him a few moments later.

"Not a blessed thing, Ginger!" replied Foxey; but there was a sly smile of satisfaction about his peeky face all the same, as he folded up the pages carefully and returned them to his open shirt bosom.

Ginger, having offered to stand the price of a pot, Foxey was left alone for a few minutes while his host laid siege to the bar.

"Now, I wonder if there's anything in that idea after all?" he murmured to himself. "Slaney's at Sandhurst. He'd be the bloke ter write ter; only, if 'e got 'alf a smell that there was anything 'anging to it, he'd want to wangle everything fer 'imself, and leave nuthing fer anybody else. No, Foxey, my boy, you want to play your game quietly on your ownsome. If it turns out wrong, there ain't no 'arm done; but if it's right, s'welp me if there didn't ought to be some juicy pickings in it! Your very good health, Ginger, old pal!" he added aloud, and took a long swig at the proffered pot. "And now, what say to a barrack-room court-martial to-night, with that long lop-eared, ugly recruit of ours for prisoner?"

The Elephant Hussars—Gussy, the Guileless, Comes to Grief Again.

"But if this is a cavalry regiment where are the horses? That's what I want to know."

Augustus Smythe was beginning to get anxious. His one idea in joining the Army was to ride a horse and display his pipe-shank legs in tight overalls and spurs. He had been keeping a watchful eye for some signs of these adornments, but without success.

So far, he was blissfully ignorant of the fact that, through the wile of the recruiting-sergeant, he had been enlisted into a "mud-crushing" regiment.

At last he resolved to broach the question to Mouldy Mills, his mentor.

Mouldy apparently had forgotten the grudge he bore Augustus for capsizing him into the coal-box that morning.

To the new recruit's intense relief, there had been no more talk of duels with fixed bayonets; in fact, Mouldy had been surprisingly genial all the afternoon, drinking Augustus's beer, and making free with his tobacco-pouch, with the easy assurance of a life-long friend.

The day's work was over. With the exception of Mouldy and Hookey, the old soldiers of the room had drifted off to the canteen.

"Horses, Gussy, my lad!" responded Mouldy, filling his pipe afresh and tipping a knowing nod at Ronald who lay stretched upon his bed-cot.

"Why, they sent 'em all away to the 'Orse Marines at Walmer for bathing-machine exercise, to strengthen their poor ankles arter the manœuvres. Still, we won't see 'em no more, now they've turned us into the Royal Wessex Elephant Hussars."

Augustus glared blankly at Mouldy. He had a sort of idea somewhere in his head that the Horse Marines were an entirely mythical corps. This, however, did not bother him so much as the reference to elephants.

The old soldier's face, on the side turned to his victim,

was as solemn as the Sphinx; but the other cheek was contorted by an elaborate wink for Hookey's benefit, as much as to say, "Keep the ball a-rolling!"

"Here, Mouldy, you're letting yourself run over yourself, ain't you?" said Hookey, catching up his cue. "What's the good of the War Office 'Private and confidential,' if you go blabbing the secret about like this? Now, if Gussy was the sort of chap to go gassing about what you've told him in confidence, he could get you court-martialled and shot for a cert!"

"Not me," simpered Gussy, highly flattered. "I'm not that sort, I can tell you!"

"Gussy, I knew it, or wild horses wouldn't have tempted me to say what I have said," replied Mouldy, with emotion. "Hookey and me, and the colonel, is the only ones to which the secret of the new change has been divulged as yet. They're keeping dark 'oos of the Germans—a sort of surprise packet for the next European war, in fact. But you're of the true, old trusty sort, I know. Lend me your pouch again, old pal. This pipe of mine won't draw somehow."

Whenever Mouldy succeeded in borrowing a fill of tobacco from an unwary comrade, it was a curious fact that the pipe never did draw, for the simple reason that he always took the opportunity to pack a treble allowance at least into the bowl.

Pipe number one being thus put out of action, it was pocketed to be excavated at leisure, while a second cutty was produced and filled, also at the victim's expense.

Augustus scarcely knew what to make of it.

"Elephant hussars!" he blurted at last.

"Yes, it sounds rummy, don't it?" agreed Mouldy. "And it'll look a sight rummier still when the whole regiment's mounted, if all the brutes are as ugly as the War Office 'sealed pattern' one that the colonel has got stabled on the Q T in his washhouse. Awful-lookin' animal, ain't it, Hookey? Hookey's the elephant's ostler, ye know," he explained for Gussy's benefit.

"Horful, ain't the word," said Hookey, laying aside the belt he was pipe-claying. "An ordinary elephant's ugly enough; but now they've got this new process of tanning their hides while they are still alive, the effect's enough to send a blind cat into convulsions."

"Tanning their hides!" gasped Gussy. "Why, what's that for?"

"To make 'em bullet-proof, of course," said Mouldy. "First they dip 'em in extra strong acid till they begin to scratch themselves uneasy like, then they scrub 'em with carbolic, whitewash them, and leave them like that for three months. The effect of that is to make their skins as thick as an inch and a half deal board, but soft like. After that you've got to soak 'em in alum, paint 'em over with blacklead, and electro-plate 'em with cold steel."

"Yes, it's the steel as does the trick. That was Mouldy's idea," continued Hookey admiringly. "Mouldy looks a fool perhaps, but he's got some brains hidden somewhere or another in that ugly head of his. Do you remember when we shot at this one, the first time arter they'd topped him off accordin' to your plan?"

"Don't I just!" chuckled Mouldy. "Why, we aimed point-blank at him with the Maxim at five yards, and he just lifted his blessed trunk and trumpeted that joyful you could see that he liked the tickling of them bullets better than anything he had had in his life!"

"Yes; and the shot bounded back off him as if he was an indiarubber mountain. Wonnerful," said Hookey—"simply wonnerful!"

There was silence after this, broken only by a gurgle from Tony Truscott.

Ronald could hardly believe that any man could be simple enough to swallow so obvious a fable, yet there was no doubt that Augustus Smythe was more than half impressed.

"The one thing against the steel-plating business," continued Mouldy regretfully, "is that it makes the poor creature so irritable, particularly with me. They're wonderful knowing animals is elephants, and I expect that he spotted somehows or another that that process was mine."

"Shouldn't be surprised, Mouldy, old chum," agreed Hookey sympathetically. "It's my belief that Bunny—we calls him Bunny, affectionate like—as Bunny will do you injury some day, Mouldy. Often I goes into the washhouse and find him sitting there a-scratching himself, and meditating like, as if he was saving it up for somebody. Some day some silly juggins'll leave the key in the door, and Bunny will shove his head out of the window and turn it with his trunk, and come rampagin' after you, and then—well, you can't expect to go electric-plating an elephant without hurting his feelings somehow."

"Ah, and if it did so happen, Hookey, I shouldn't be the first poor bloke as sacrificed his life in the noble cause of

science," said Mouldy, with mournful resignation "What I'm looking forward to is the day they sends the noo remounts down from Woolwich Arsenal, and sets the regiment up for the riding drill. It's a bit different to ordinary horseback, I can tell you. I suppose you can ride, Gussy, my lad?"

"Well, not much. That is, I haven't tried yet; but I've read a book of directions," responded Gussy, in a flutter.

"Then you've won half the battle," said Mouldy. "Now, if I was to give you a few practical finishing touches here, I don't mind betting you'd be all right straight away. What say, Hookey? It'd be a bit of a score for him if he took the hurdles first go off, wouldn't it?"

"It would that," answered his chum. "They'd most likely promote him 'lance' on the spot; and who knows, with his fine figure, they might make him rough-riding sergeant in a month? How would ye like that?"

Gussy giggled. He had his doubts about the elephant; but the prospect of early promotion, he felt, was quite on the cards.

"Well, the best way as you can learn is to do what us and the colonel has been doing every day for the last month in his back yard," said Mouldy, picking up a form and lifting it on to the table.

"You see, an elephant's back is broad," he explained, "and jolly hard, too, after the noo process to which it has been subjected. Afore you can hope to attain that grace and elegance which is the pride and joy of every cavalry soldier, you've got to get used to the corners. So us and the colonel, after long experiment, have come to the conclusion that the only way to pick up the seat is to practise sitting across the forms, like so."

Mouldy lifted a second form upon the table, and set it beside the first.

"Now come here, and I will give you a leg up, and show you how to hold your hands. A couple of hours like this will save you months arterwards in the riding-school, to say nothing of your surprising the colonel with your uncommon display of unnatural aptitude."

Gussy, still somewhat bewildered, but not liking to spurn such kindly interest in his welfare, prepared to mount his strange steed, while Hookey, in response to a wink from his pal, ranged himself on the other side.

"Now catch hold of the forms where you think the elephant's mane ought to be and give us a hold of your foot. That's right now. Prepare to mount. One, two, three! Up you go!"

Gussy had not time to consider what portion of a deal form corresponded with the mane of an elephant, or even if the elephant possessed such an adornment.

Mouldy's upward hoist was so vigorous that his pupil was shot spreadeagle fashion across the two forms, which promptly collapsed, and threw him into Hookey's outstretched arms.

Hookey, not being able to arrest his flight entirely, tripped, and landed into a sitting posture on Gussy's anguished countenance.

"Hallo, that was unfortnit. No bones broken, I hope?" inquired Mouldy, peering over the table with sympathetic surprise. "That comes of not grasping the mane firmly with the left hand as soon as you spring."

"I didn't spring," spluttered Gussy, as soon as Hookey had stopped using his head as a seat. "You shoved me!"

"No, did I? Well, perhaps I was a bit anxious like. Still, you did it remarkably well for a novice. I remember it was hours before us and the colonel could get so far as that even, wasn't it, Hookey?"

"Days before the colonel did, anyway. But up ye get, Gussy, old boy, and try again," urged Hookey. "You mount from the off-side this time, 'cos it may happen that you are left-legged, a pecooliarity which lots of cavalrymen go through life, and never know they possess. Now, don't be quite so eager this time."

Ronald, like Tony, had long ago succumbed to internal spasms of mirth, which Gussy, if he had been less engrossed in his task, could not have failed to notice.

The absolute solemnity of the two old villains, and the guileless simplicity of their victim, proved altogether too much for their risible faculties. Aided by Hookey on the one side and Mouldy on the other, the recruit was hoisted on to his precarious perch.

"Now, everything that this 'ere exercise teaches," said Mouldy, "is militring style, and the only way to learn that—just hold out your wrists a minute while I tie 'em loosely with a handkerchief, and, Hookey, you hand up that broom—is to keep your hands tight together, and have a broomstick stuck through your elbows, behind your back, so!"

The pinioning process had been performed so rapidly that Gussy found himself trussed like a chicken before he had realised quite what had happened.

Hookey, tumbling to the joke, had meantime noosed his ankles and lashed them together under the forms, so that he was powerless to dismount from his fearsome steed without tumbling the whole structure with him.

"Here, what's your game?" demanded Gussy, not liking the turn things were taking.

"Game?" inquired Mouldy, in injured surprise. "Well, if that ain't an ungrateful insinuation to make, when Hookey and me has been to all this trouble! Hallo! What bugle was that, Hookey?" he inquired, in alarm.

An innocent bugle, calling on orderly corporals to parade, had sounded across the darkening barrack-square.

"The alert!" answered Hookey. "Tumble out, you chaps, and fall in! Something must be wrong. I only hope——"

"Hope what?" asked Mouldy excitedly, reaching for his cap.

"I hope it ain't ould Bunny who has broken out of the wash-house, and got running amok around the barricks, that's all. If he has, just look out for yourselves, you fellows."

Hookey streaked for the door as he shouted this advice, and Mouldy followed, hustling Ronald and Tony before him. Gussy, in the sudden panic, was forgotten, and left lashed helpless on his strange steed, a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions.

"It is!" he heard Hookey yell, in a voice cracking with hysterical alarm.

"Is what?" demanded Mouldy, grabbing up a pack of blankets as he rushed out.

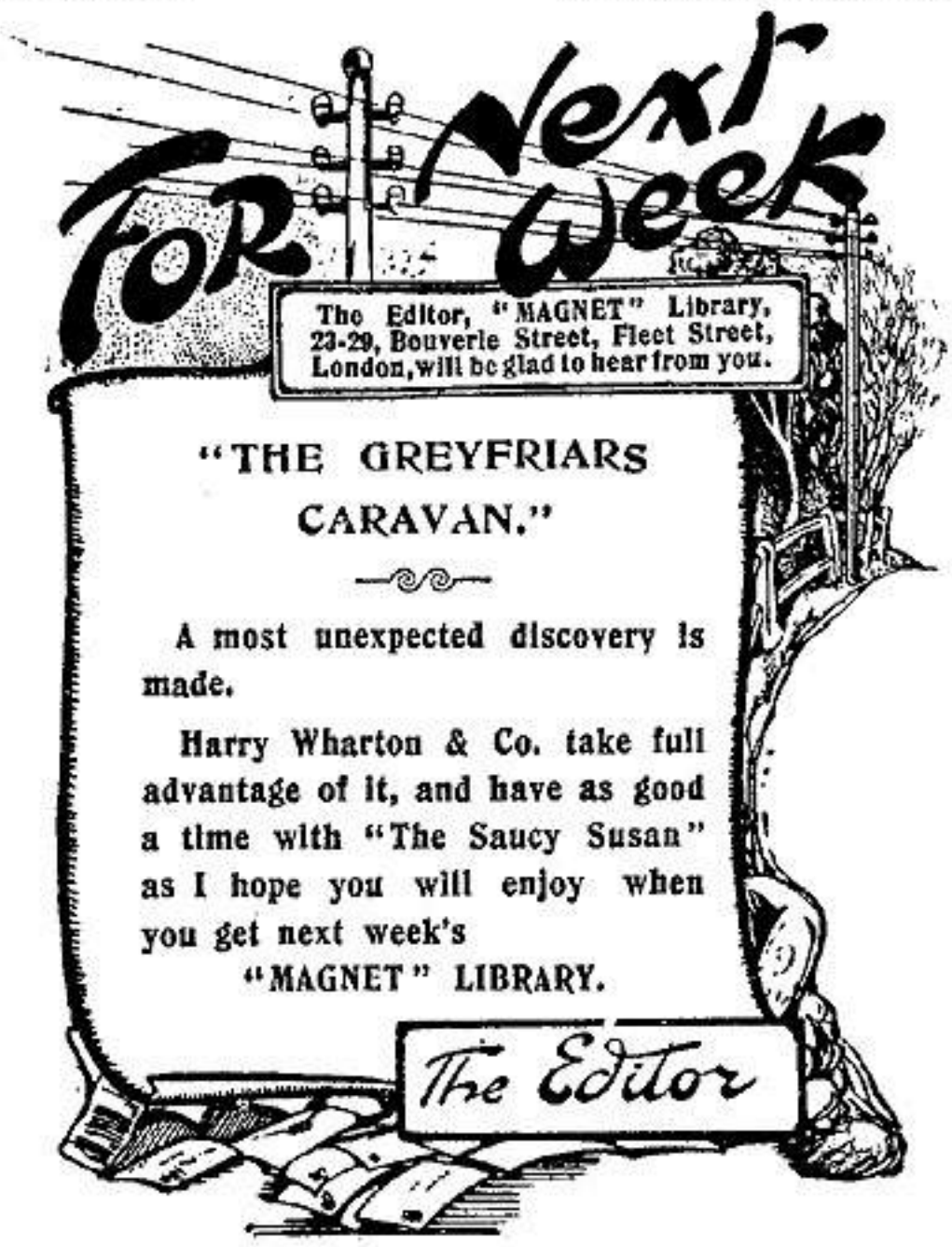
"It's Bunny chewing the head off the sergeant-drummer. Now he's heading this way. Run, Mouldy, or he'll have you next!"

Then the door slammed, and, to Gussy's horror, the gasjets began to flicker and turn blue, and then die down one by one, plunging the barrack-room into darkness.

Five minutes passed away, and still Gussy sat, quaking with nameless fears and stiff with cramp. By craning his neck till his backbones cracked and the forms threatened to capsize and pitch him headlong to the floor, he could almost see the barrack-square, but not quite.

The more he thought over the amazing statements of the two old soldiers, the more convinced was he that they bore distinct traces of exaggeration. Yet, to his fevered mind, it really seemed to him as if there were unwonted stir and excitement on the parade-ground below.

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



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