

THE GREYFRIARS' EDITOR.

THE

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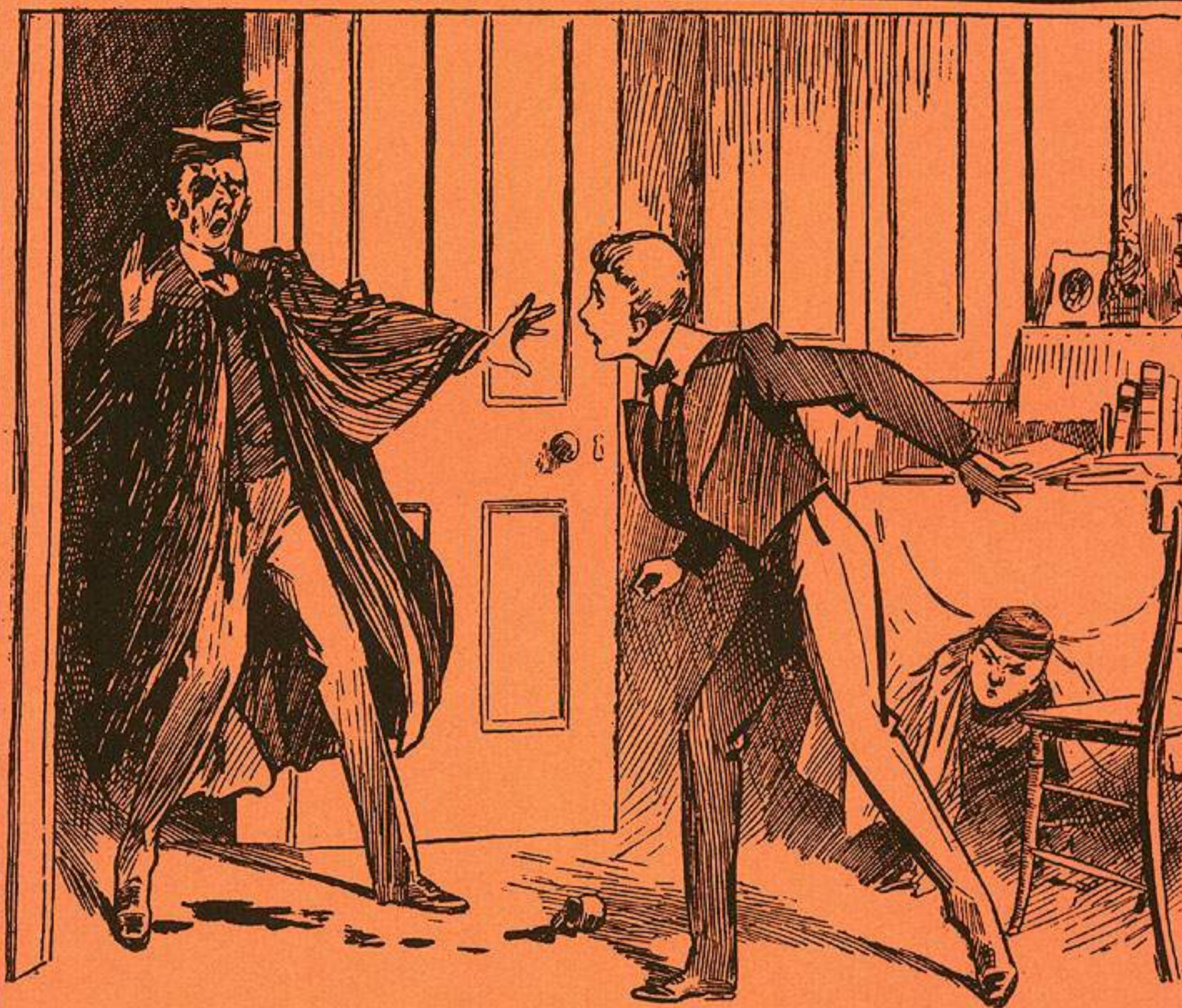
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LIBRARY VOLUME 3.
NUMBER 76.

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By
Frank
Richards.



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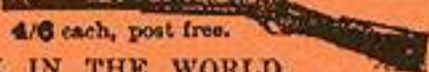


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Billy Bunter, Editor!



A Long, Complete
Tale of the
Greyfriars Chums.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Great Wheeze.

BOB CHERRY came out of Study No. 13 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, and walked along the passage whistling cheerily. Bob Cherry's whistle was loud enough, if not particularly sweet; and voices were heard from some of the studies as he passed, requesting him in far from polite terms, to "chuck it." Whereat Bob Cherry whistled crescendo, till he arrived at the door of Study No. 1, where he ceased whistling, and kicked at the lower panels.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed, as he tried the door, and found that it would not open. "What's the matter here?"

There was no reply.

Bob Cherry, somewhat puzzled, pushed harder on the door. It yielded an inch or two, showing that it was not locked, and Bob became aware of a foot jammed against it on the inside.

"Hallo, hallo! Why don't you open the door?" he shouted.

"Oh, really, Cherry," said a voice from within, "you can't come in, you know."

"Why not?"

"You see, you don't belong to this study now—" "Well, I suppose I can give you a look in if I want to?" exclaimed Bob, bestowing a sounding kick upon the door, which made it groan again. "Open the door, you fat young oyster, do you hear?"

But Billy Bunter did not remove his foot from the door. "I say, you know, you can't come in," he said. "You see—"

"I don't see. Is Wharton there?"

"No."

"Nugent, or Inky?"

"No."

"Then what are you doing that I mustn't see?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What little game are you up to, Bunt?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Open the door!"

"You can't come in, you see."

Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose.

It was only a few days since he had left No. 1 Study, and had been transferred to No. 13, at the other end of the Remove passage.

A certain amount of rivalry had somehow arisen between the two studies, but still, that was no reason why Bob Cherry shouldn't pay a visit to his old quarters if he wanted to.

So Bob thought. He kicked at the door again, and again, but still the stubby boot within remained jammed against the door, and it did not open. It yielded another inch or two, but that was all.

There was a patter of feet in the passage, and Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, came scuttling along. He was Bob Cherry's study-mate in No. 13, with Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire. He stopped as he saw how Bob was engaged.

"No open?" he asked.

"No," said Bob wrathfully. "That young porpoise Bunter has got his hoof against the door. There's something up, I suppose, but, of course, I'm going in."

"What you tinkee?" grinned Wun Lung. "Me open door. What you tinkee?"

He stooped down, close to the slit between the door and the jamb, taking a pin from his sleeve. There was barely room to insert his wrist in the opening, but he contrived to do it. Bob Cherry grinned as he watched him. He thought that Billy Bunter would soon be shifted now.

Wun Lung groped within with his slim fingers, and there was a sudden roar in the study.

"Ow!"

Bob Cherry chuckled, and pushed at the door. There was no longer any resistance. The door flew open, and Bob strode in. Billy Bunter, with his spectacles nearly falling off his fat little nose, was executing a kind of dance on one leg, and clasping the ankle of the other with both hands.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anything the matter, Bunty?" asked Bob Cherry innocently, as he watched the antics of the fat junior.

"Ow! I'm hurt! I'm bleeding to death!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! You beast! Yah! Ow!"

"You're making a jolly lot of row for a chap at death's door," said Bob heartlessly. "For goodness' sake expire quietly, and make a decent and respectable end. Now, why were you trying to keep me out, you grampus?"

He looked round the study.

Billy Bunter, suddenly forgetting that he was bleeding to death, made a jump towards the table, and dragged a big sheet of blotting-paper over some manuscript sheets that lay there.

"It—it was only a j-j-joke, Cherry," he stammered. "I didn't really want to keep you out, you know."

"Make an effort and tell the truth for once, old chap," said Bob. "You'll find it easier than you think."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What were you— Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was extremely short-sighted, and although he had covered the sheets with the blotting-paper, as he thought, he had left the end of one of them exposed to full view.

And on that sheet, in big sprawling letters, Bob Cherry read the words:

"BUNTER'S WEEKLY."

"A MAGAZINE FOR THE AMUSEMENT, INSTRUCTION, AND GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF ALL FORMS AT GREYFRIARS SCHOOL."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," grunted Bunter peevishly.

Bob Cherry roared with laughter, and Wun Lung doubled up in a paroxysm of silent merriment. It seemed comical to them that Billy Bunter's secret was staring them in the face, so to speak, under Bunter's own eyes, without the fat junior being in the least aware of it.

"What are you cackling at, you silly asses?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"'Bunter's Weekly'!" roared Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha! What has made you weakly, old chap? Under feeding, I suppose?"

Billy Bunter blinked down at the exposed sheet, and uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"A magazine for the general improvement of Greyfriars," gasped Bob Cherry. "I can see Greyfriars being improved by Billy Bunter. Oh, my hat!"

"Look here, Cherry, you boast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're not going to scoff that idea, anyway. It's my idea—anyway, it's mine in a way. You see," went on Bunter, more confidentially, "when I was at St. Jim's, they showed me a copy of a school paper they've got there, called 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' and it rushed into my mind at once to start a school paper here. Don't you think it's a ripping idea?"

"Absolutely scorching."

"I'm thinking of running it on business lines," explained THE MAGNET—76.

NEXT WEEK:

"THE GREYFRIARS BUN FIGHT."

Bunter. "All contributions to the paper to be paid for at advertisement rates, and the name of the author appears on the stuff. Every copy to be sold at a penny, and proceeds to go to the editor for expenses."

"Are you going to ask me to be editor?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Who, then—Wharton?"

"Certainly not."

"Inky?"

"You know jolly well that I shall edit the paper myself, Bob Cherry. It requires a fellow of more than ordinary ability for a thing of that sort. As you're not in our study now, you won't have a hand in it. But I'll tell you what," said Bunter, in a burst of generosity, "if you like to advance the cash required for initial expenses, you shall have a hand in it, and shall be made an honorary sub-editor. I could start the first number on five pounds."

"Make it five hundred," suggested Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Oh, really, Cherry! On second thoughts, I could make five shillings do," said Bunter.

"On third thoughts, you might make it five pence."

"Oh, really, Cherry! Say sixpence—for a contribution of sixpence you can have your name on the paper as honorary sub-editor."

"Thanks. I think I'll keep the sixpence. But this wheeze of a school paper isn't a bad one," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "The idea crossed my mind when Tom Merry was over here, and he told me about his paper. I've a jolly good mind to take it up."

"You've a jolly good mind to take up my idea! Look here, Cherry—"

"My dear ass—"

"It's my wheeze."

"Oh, I'll make you an honorary sub-editor!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Besides, as you have so politely and delicately pointed out, I don't belong to this study now, and it's open to me to borrow the wheezes from No. 1 Study if I like. Come on, Wun Lung, old chap. We'll start a school paper, and call it the 'Wun Lung Weekly.'"

"What you tinkee?"

"Look here, Bob Cherry—"

But Bob Cherry and the little Chinese were gone. Billy Bunter blinked after them, and then blinked at the heading of "Bunter's Weekly."

"The beast!" he murmured. "I won't stand it! I'll—I'll— Hallo!"

Three juniors came into the study—Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, otherwise known as "Inky." Wharton hurled his cricket-bat into a corner.

"Tea!" he said.

"Tea!" said Nugent.

"Tea!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Tea!" roared three voices together.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Contributors.

BILLY BUNTER blinked at the chums of No. 1 Study. He had intended to keep his great idea dark till the first number of the school paper was sketched out, and all ready for the first contributions, when he hoped to spring it on the Remove, and gather in a harvest of small silver by means of his original idea of making contributors pay for the publication of their stories. But there was the heading of "Bunter's Weekly" plain for all to see.

"What on earth have you got the table lumbered up with this rubbish for?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Don't you know it's past tea-time?"

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A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

"Are you ill, Billy?" asked Nugent sympathetically.

"Ill? No!"

"The esteemed Bunter must be rather rocky somewhere," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "He has actually forgotten the time of a meal! It is marvellous!"

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"What's this rot?" asked Frank Nugent, staring at the headline on the sheet of manuscript. "Bunter's Weekly! What the— Who the— How the—"

"Bunter's Weekly! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha! The laughfulness is terrific. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter's Weekly!" gasped Nugent, holding it up. "A magazine for the—"

"Amusement, instruction, and general improvement— Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Wharton.

"Of all the esteemed Forms at Greyfriars!" grinned Hurree Singh.

Billy Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a jolly good idea to start a school paper," growled Billy Bunter. "I'm just the chap to edit one, too. You want a powerful intellect and a wide grasp of all sorts of subjects to be a successful editor. That's just where I come out strong. If you fellows like to put down your names as honorary sub-editors, I can let you have the positions for the moderate charge of five shillings."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling! Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Bob Cherry has just been here, and he has boned the idea. He's going to start a school paper himself. If you chaps were decent enough to stand by a chap in your own study, you'd snatch him baldheaded, and jolly soon stop him."

"Oh, rats! Let's have tea."

"I've no time to think of tea now," said Billy Bunter loftily. "I'm not one of the chaps who spend their whole time in thinking about their meals, like some chaps I could name. I've had a snack while I was drawing up the leading article of the 'Weekly,' and I don't want any tea."

The three juniors stared at him.

"You don't want any tea?"

"No. I could do with some, but I can't bother about it now," said Bunter. "Now, I shall want contributions for the first number of the 'Weekly.' All contributions have to be paid for by the contributor at the rate of a shilling a column. Would you fellows like to put your names down first?"

"No, thanks."

"The price will probably be raised later. There is bound to be a rush on the space of this splendid, up-to-date, and widely circulated paper—ahem! upon this paper which will shortly be widely circulated, I mean. You'd better not miss the chance."

"I'd rather see that we don't miss tea. Get that rubbish off the table."

"I've finished with the table. Now that Cherry knows about the paper, I shall have to get it fixed up as soon as I can," said Bunter. "I'm going round canvassing for contributors. Sure you fellows wouldn't like to come in on the ground floor?"

"Quite sure, thanks."

"Well, I'll be off. I think you're missing a big chance, but it's your own look-out."

And Billy Bunter gathered up the scribbled sheets, and left the study. The chums of No. 1 burst into a laugh.

"So this is the latest," grinned Nugent; "Bunter as an editor! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a bad idea about the paper, though," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "A school paper is a jolly good idea, and we might make something of it."

"The goodfulness of the esteemed idea is terrific."

"Bunter's taking it jolly seriously to miss his tea over it," grinned Nugent. "I'm not going to miss mine."

He pulled open the door of the cupboard where the study provisions were kept.

"Hallo! Have you moved the things?"

"No; they're there."

"They're not."

"Yes, there's the ham, and the cold beef, and the hard-boiled eggs—"

"They're gone!"

"The cold pudding, and the cake—"

"Gone!"

"The bananas—"

"Gone!"

"Then what on earth is left?"

"Nothing!" roared Nugent.

"Phew! Bunter said he had had a snack."

"No wonder he didn't want his tea," howled Nugent.

"The young wolf has scoffed the lot. Now what are we going to do? It's too late for tea in Hall."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We shall have to get it in some other study, I suppose. Where can we invite ourselves?"

THE MAGNET—76.

"Shall we give Bob a turn?"

"Good idea!"

There was nothing else to be done. Bunter had doubtless taken a series of snacks while he was engaged upon the planning of the first number of "Bunter's Weekly." At all events, the cupboard was bare, and there was hardly a crumb left for the chums of No. 1 Study, who had come in very sharp set from cricket practice.

The three chums left No. 1, and hurried along the Remove passage. Bob Cherry's new study was at the other end. Billy Bunter was standing in the doorway of Bulstrode's study, and they heard him speaking in persuasive tones as they came along.

"I say, Bulstrode, you know, it's the chance of a lifetime. You get your name in print as an author, and you never know what that may lead to. I've heard that big London editors sometimes look over school magazines in search of new talent. This may be the making of you. You may have powers you've never suspected, as an author or a poet. Everything goes in at a shilling a column, poetry or prose."

"You young ass!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! Couldn't you write a poem about the Spanish Armada, or a story about Nelson—something stirring and patriotic, you know? Patriotism is awfully popular just now. I am sure you could if you tried, and you must admit that a shilling a column isn't much."

"Get out!"

"Yes, I'm just going; but don't you think you could manage a poem—say, at sixpence a column? I can offer you reduced rates, as I am sure it will be a ripping poem, and improve the circulation of the magazine. Or would you like to advertise white rabbits for sale? You could shove it in at the same rate as poetry."

"Are you going, you howling ass?"

"Yes, certainly, but— Oh!"

A big volume whizzed through the air, and smote the fat junior on the chest.

He reeled out of the study, with a gasp like escaping steam, and plumped into the arms of Harry Wharton.

"Ow!" he gasped. "The beast! Bulstrode, you rotter! Ow! I'm hurt! Thank you, Wharton! Ow! Leggo! Lemmy ear alone!"

Wharton was fastening finger and thumb on Bunter's fat ear. The junior squirmed.

"What have you done with the grub?" demanded Harry.

"Ow! I've eaten it, of course! Wow! I was hungry, and I had to have a snack to keep up my strength for my literary work. Yow!"

Billy Bunter wriggled out of Wharton's grasp, and rubbed his crimsoned ear ruefully.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, scat! We're going to get some grub with Bob Cherry. Blessed if I know why the Head couldn't take you out of the study instead of Bob."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, you fellows, if you're going to tea with Cherry, I'll join you. I'm feeling pretty hungry."

And Billy Bunter, leaving his canvassing for contributors over for the present, followed the chums of the Remove towards No. 13. Harry Wharton tapped and tried the door, but it was locked. A cheery voice was heard within.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's there?"

"We are! Have you had tea?"

"Yes, long ago."

"Got anything left?"

"Not a crumb."

"Rats! You might let a fellow in, anyway."

"Can't be did. I'm busy—getting out the first number of my new paper, 'Cherry's Weekly.'"

"What!" roared Bunter. "Your new paper! My new paper! Yah! Beast! You've boned my idea! Yah!"

"Don't interrupt me, Bunter, with that row. Surely you know that an editorial office ought to be quiet and undisturbed. You will make my leading article rocky."

"Yah!" roared Bunter, through the keyhole. "It's my wheeze! Yah!"

"Oh, get away!"

"Yah! It's my idea! You've boned it! Yah!"

"You can contribute to the paper, if you like. I accept all contributions at the reasonable rate of a shilling a column, either poetry or prose. After to-day an extra charge will be made for poetry, so you had better close at once."

"Yah!"

Wharton and his friends retreated, laughing heartily. Whether Bob Cherry was in earnest or not, they did not know, but Billy Bunter was boiling with indignation. He yelled and roared through the keyhole, and Bob Cherry soon ceased to reply; and Bunter desisted at last.

"The beast!" he muttered. "I'll jolly well mess up his precious 'Cherry's Weekly' for him. Cherry, you rotter,

open this door. Look here, I'll go into partnership with you, if you like. If you care to stand the expense, I'll edit the paper for nothing, and only have two-thirds of the profits."

There was no reply to this generous offer. Billy Bunter kicked at the door, but there was no reply to that either, except a subdued chuckle, which he recognised as Wun Lung's. But suddenly a new expression came over Bunter's face. Since Bunter had developed his powers as a ventriloquist, he had succeeded in many a little jape, for though most of the lower school knew what he could do, they were not always prepared for it. And as a ventriloquist and an imitator of voices, Billy Bunter was certainly very clever. As a rule, it was safe to take, as Bob Cherry put it, a hundred per cent. off his statements of what he could do; but there was one thing he could do, and do well, and that was ventriloquism.

He walked away very noisily down the passage, and there was a chuckle in No. 13 as the juniors there heard him go. Bunter grinned, and stole back on tiptoe, and opened the door of the box-room at the end of the passage, which was only half a dozen paces from the door of No. 13. This was to make all ready for a sudden retreat. Then he tapped at the door of No. 13.

"Hallo, open this door!"

Bob Cherry jumped up from his table. For it was the voice of Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, his study-mate, and Bob Cherry made haste to open the door.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Is Not to be Taken In.

"COME in, kid!" said Bob Cherry, as he threw open the door of the study. "We're busy, and you can help. We're starting a new— Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry stared into the passage. It was empty.

The junior gazed up and down, greatly puzzled. Mark Linley was not the fellow to play a trick of that sort on him, and he wondered where the junior from Lancashire had got to.

He closed the door of the study and locked it again, and sat down at the table. The table was littered with papers, and the floor was pretty thickly strewn. Bob Cherry was hard at work.

The fellows in the Remove seemed to expect No. 13 to keep its end up against No. 1, and the new Co. had soon fallen into the way of it. The idea of a school paper, published in No. 13 before No. 1 had time to take it up, appealed very strongly to Bob Cherry. He had set to work at once, ably seconded by Wun Lung, and the result was that scribbled sheets lay all over the study. The table, the floor, and the shelf were all covered by this time, and about half the sheets were crumpled up, Bob being dissatisfied with them. The new paper had cost a considerable sum in foolscap already, but the young editor was too enthusiastic to even think about that.

"Blessed if I can get on with this leading article!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Listen to this, kid, and stop grinning!"

"Me listen."

"We have the honour of presenting the first number of 'Cherry's Weekly' to an expectant public. We trust that the first number will be received—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Tap!

"Open the door, Bob!"

It was Mark Linley's voice again.

"Go away!" roared Bob. "That door's not going to be opened. You should have come in when you had the chance."

And he went on reading.

"We trust that the first number will be received with approbation by our vast and numerous circle of readers, and that they will—"

Tap! Tap!

"Open this door!"

"My hat! It's Quelch!"

Bob Cherry made one bound to the door, and threw it open.

Then he blinked in amazement at the empty passage.

There was no one to be seen. Yet Bob Cherry had plainly heard the familiar, metallic tones of the master of the Remove.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What do you think of that, kid?"

Wun Lung grinned.

"Me savvy! Bunter playee tlick!"

"How do you mean?"

"Ventriloquist!"

"Oh! Fancy my not thinking of that before," said Bob savagely, slamming the door. "But I was half-expecting to

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see Quelch, you know, because I haven't shown up some lines he particularly wanted to see by teatime. How can a chap do lines when he's editing a paper, I'd like to know?" He locked the door. "That door's jolly well going to stop shut now, whoever comes to it!"

And Bob Cherry sat down at the table again, and picked up the rough draft of the leading article of the school paper. There were a good many rough drafts crumpled up on the floor already.

"And that they will appreciate our efforts, and not grudge the small sum of one penny, which will purchase a copy of the new paper." That sounds all right?"

"Allee lightee!"

"Contributions may be submitted to the Editorial Office, No. 13, Remove Passage. All contributions must be written on both sides of the paper only."

Tap, tap! A hand tried the handle of the door outside.

Bob Cherry glared at the door.

"Go away!" roared the amateur editor.

"Open the door!"

It was the Remove-master's voice.

But Bob Cherry, of course, was not to be taken in this time.

"Cut off, you ass!" he shouted.

"What!"

"Get away!"

"Cherry!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Are you insane, Cherry? Open this door at once!"

"Rats!"

The handle was rattled furiously.

"Open this door! Upon my word! Cherry, open this door, or—or I will have you punished severely!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Do you know who I am, Cherry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather! It's because I know who you are that I'm not going to let you in, fathead!"

"What!"

"Oh, run away and play!" said Bob Cherry impatiently. "I'm busy. Go and eat coke! Go and chop chips! Buzz off!"

"Boy, open this door!"

"Rats!"

"Open this door at once!"

"More rats!"

"I—I think you must be insane, Cherry. Before I report this extraordinary conduct to the Doctor, I will give you one more chance. I command you to open this door! I have come to see about the imposition you have not shown up, as directed by me. Will you open this door instantly, Cherry, or will you not?"

"Doesn't he do it wonderfully?" grinned Bob Cherry. "I should really think it was Quelch talking, you know, if I didn't know how well that young bouncer can imitate a chap's voice."

"Will you open this door or not?"

"Not!"

"Boy, what does this mean?"

Bob Cherry rose quietly from the table, and took up the inkpot. Wun Lung watched him with a grin.

"Look here!" whispered Bob. "I've had enough of his old buck! You unlock the door quietly, and whisk it open, kid, and I'll bung the ink in his chivvy before he has time to dodge! See? I think, perhaps, he'll let us alone after that."

"Ha, ha! Me savvy!"

"Quick, then!"

The juniors stepped quietly to the door. Wun Lung silently turned the key, and Bob Cherry raised his hand with the inkpot in it, and stood ready to hurl the contents at the troublesome individual outside the door.

"Now, then!"

The door whisked open.

Bob's arm swept through the air, and the stream of ink shot full upon the figure outside. There was a shout.

"Oh! Upon my word!"

Bob Cherry staggered back into the study.

"My only hat! It's Quelch!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, stood in the doorway, petrified. His gown and his face were liberally splashed with ink, for the inkpot had been full, and Bob had expended the whole of the contents in that dexterous throw.

The Form-master's aspect would have been comical to indifferent eyes, but Bob Cherry did not see anything funny in it. He was overcome with horror at what he had done. He staggered back into the study, and caught at the table

for support, his eyes fastened in a sort of fascinated stare upon the inky face of the Remove-master.

"Quelch!"

Wun Lung, with a gasp of terror, squirmed under the table, and stayed there. Mr. Quelch was speechless for some moments.

He found his voice at last.

"Boy, are you mad?"

"Oh, sir, I—I—"

"Cherry, you—you must be insane! You—you have assaulted me, your Form-master! You will be expelled for this, sir—expelled! Expelled!" roared Mr. Quelch, his anger rising. "Yes, sir, expelled from Greyfriars for this unheard-of outrage!"

"Oh, sir, I'm sorry! I—"

"I dare say you are sorry, Cherry! I have no doubt of it. But you will be sorrier yet, shortly!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Yes, sir!"

"But I—I—I—"

"Me solly, too!" piped Wun Lung, blinking out from under the table. "Me no tinkee—"

"I'm awfully sorry, sir! You see—"

"Not a word!" Mr. Quelch dabbed the ink from his face with his handkerchief. "Not a word, Cherry! I go to the Head to report this matter. Prepare yourself to follow me there! You will be expelled!"

"Oh, sir, I—I didn't know it was you!"

"Do not attempt to excuse yourself by falsehood, Cherry! You know my voice; you knew it was I! Not a word!"

"But, really, sir—"

"Enough!"

Mr. Quelch stalked away in a towering passion, as was natural under the circumstances.

Bob Cherry dropped helplessly into a chair, and gazed at Wun Lung, who put his head out cautiously from under the table, and gazed back at him.

"M-m-my only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fancy it being Quelch! This is all the fault of that fat young villain Bunter! It was he at first."

"Allee light!"

"Quelch will report this to the Head. My hat! I shall be kicked out! He won't listen to reason," groaned Bob Cherry. "All through starting to edit a rotten school paper. It was a rotten idea at the start. What on earth do we want with a rotten school paper. You might have had more sense, Wun Lung, really."

Wun Lung stared, as well he might.

"What you talkee? Me!"

"Yes, you! What did you want to start a rotten paper for?" growled Bob Cherry. "It's all through that piffle."

"Me no staltee! You staltee!"

"Oh, don't begin to argue about it now. The mischief's done, anyway. Hallo, hallo, hallo! What do you fellows want?"

Several Removites were gathering round the door. They stared in on Bob Cherry with expressions of amazement, mingled with admiration.

"Well, you did slang him a treat," said Bulstrode. "But what on earth made you do it? You must have known he'd be wild."

"And slamming the ink on his chivvy, too!" said Skinner. "It was all right as a jape. But that sort of thing means the sack."

"Yes, rather!" remarked Ogilvy. "Blessed if I can understand you, Bob Cherry. Were you particularly anxious to be kicked out of Greyfriars?"

"Oh, dry up, you dummies!" growled Bob crossly. "I didn't know it was Quelch, of course!"

Bulstrode shook his head.

"That won't wash!" he remarked. "You know his toot."

"Yes; draw it mild, Cherry!"

"I thought it was Bunter imitating his voice!" howled the exasperated Bob. "Can you understand now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to laugh at, you rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No good telling that to Quelch, I'm afraid," said Skinner, wiping his eyes. "You'd better confess you've been drinking, and—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"What's the row here?" asked Harry Wharton, coming into the study. "Quelch has just gone past No. 1 like a whirlwind, with ink all over his face."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

Bob Cherry explained. Harry Wharton did not laugh. It was funny enough, in a sense, but he realised how serious it was for Bob. Unless Mr. Quelch could be made to believe that Bob had acted in mistake, it was certain expulsion for the unfortunate junior. And it was useless for Bob only to explain. Without being unnaturally suspicious, Mr. Quelch might regard the explanation as a cock-and-bull story. It would be necessary to adduce proof—and Harry knew that. There was only one way—through Bunter.

"Nice state of affairs, ain't it?" groaned Bob Cherry.

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"I'm going to be expelled—all through that fat young oyster and his rotten school paper."

"Bunter will have to explain to Quelch."

"Catch him!"

"He'll have to—and prove it, too. Hallo! What do you want, young Green?"

Green, of the Third Form, was pushing his way through the crowd in the Remove passage. He put his head into the study.

"Cherry's wanted."

"Who wants him?"

"The Head."

"Oh! Where?"

"Head's study. He's to come at once."

And Green walked away whistling, apparently unconcerned by the excitement in the Remove. The juniors ceased to laugh as Bob Cherry rose, with a very gloomy expression on his face.

"I shall have to go," he remarked.

"I say, this is rotten," said Nugent anxiously. "We shall have to get round Quelch somehow."

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"We'll make Bunter clear it up," said Wharton. "Does anybody know where the young rotter is?"

"Hiding himself, of course."

"You fellows hunt for him; he's got to be found."

"Right-ho!" said Hazeldene. "Scatter up and down the passage, you chaps; Bunter can't be far off."

Bob Cherry went to the door. Harry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Keep your pecker up, Bob. I'll make Bunter come and own up to the Head."

Bob Cherry nodded gloomily.

"All right, old chap."

And he went his way to the Head's study. Harry Wharton and his chums joined in the search for Bunter. Although No. 1 and No. 13 had become rival studies, the old friendship was just the same at bottom, and Wharton meant to leave no stone unturned to save Bob from the consequences of his unfortunate mistake.

Bob Cherry made his way slowly and heavily to the Head's study. He knew what to expect there, and he was in no hurry to face it. He could hardly expect his explanation to be believed, unless it was backed up by Bunter—perhaps not then. And he knew Bunter too well to expect him to run the slightest risk for anybody else's sake. Bob Cherry felt that all was lost; and his heart was heavy as he tapped at the door of the Head's study.

"Come in!"

Dr. Locke's voice was unusually deep and stern. Bob Cherry felt a fresh sinking at the heart, as he opened the door and went in.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon the junior. Mr. Quelch was in the study, his face still blotched with the ink. His eyes were glinting.

"Cherry!" Dr. Locke's voice was like a knife. "I have heard a most astounding complaint from Mr. Quelch. Have you anything to say, any defence to make, before I decide to expel you from the school for an assault upon a Form-master?"

"Ye-e-es, sir. I—I—I'm sorry—"

"That is not to the point. You are naturally sorry now that you are face to face with the consequences of your ruffianly action."

"It—it was a mistake, sir."

"What!"

"I—I didn't know it was Mr. Quelch, sir."

"Nonsense!" said the Remove-master. "I had spoken to him, through the door, a dozen times or more, Dr. Locke."

"Yes, sir, but—but—"

"Do you mean to say that you did not know Mr. Quelch's voice, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir, but—but—but I thought it was another chap imitating his voice, sir."

"Indeed! Extraordinary! What other boy?"

Bob Cherry was silent.

"Come, Cherry! You say that another boy had the astounding impertinence to imitate Mr. Quelch—for if he had not done so, you could not suppose that when Mr. Quelch spoke it was this imitator."

"Yes, sir."

"Who was the boy?"

The junior did not speak. He realised that by doing so he might get Bunter into serious trouble.

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"You cannot answer, Cherry?"

"I—I—I'd rather not, sir."

"That is not the question. I order you to do so. If there is any truth in your extraordinary statement, I must see the boy and question him."

There was silence again. It was broken by a sound of hurried footsteps in the passage without. And then a heavy body crashed against the door of the Head's study, and it was burst open.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Close Shave for Bob Cherry.

"WHERE'S Bunter?"

"Bunter!"

"Have you seen him?"

"Where is the fat young bounder?"

"Bunter! Bunter! Bunter! Bunter!"

The Removites were spreading up and down the passage and the stairs, and into the studies, in search of the fat junior.

Wharton looked into the box-room at the end of the passage. Several other juniors had looked into it, without seeing anything of Bunter. But Harry's search was thorough. He looked carefully round the room, and discovered a fat leg and foot protruding from behind a trunk in a corner. He promptly laid hold of the ankle, and gave it a powerful jerk.

There was a yell behind the trunk.

"Ow! Hold on—I mean leggo!"

"Come out, you young duffer!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I—I'm coming! I—I was only just taking a rest. I wasn't trying to hide myself."

"Look here, Bunter, you've got to go to the Head, and

"I'm sincerely sorry, but I've got to speak to a chap downstairs," said Billy Bunter hurriedly, and he scuttled towards the door.

"Stop him, Nugent!"

Frank grasped the fat junior and swung him back. Bunter blinked nervously at the chums through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, I—I'm in a hurry, and—"

Wharton grasped him by the shoulder.

"You know very well what's happened, Bunter; you must have heard Mr. Quelch talking to Bob Cherry through the study door—"

"I—I didn't— Ow! Leggo my ear, Nugent! I—I mean, suppose I did?" said Bunter, squirming. "You see, I couldn't very well interrupt; it's not form to interrupt a master when he's jawing. Bob Cherry is an ass. It's not my fault."

"You've got to go to the Head, and own up."

"I've got nothing to own up to. I haven't done anything."

"About imitating Mr. Quelch's voice, and taking Bob Cherry in, and causing him to make that mistake."

"Oh, really, Wharton, it wasn't my fault! Besides, I can't! Quelch would be waxy."

"You should have thought of that before you played tricks," said Wharton grimly. "Come along."

"Ow—where?"

"To the Head's study."

Billy Bunter wriggled spasmodically as Wharton swung him out of the box-room into the passage, with a grip on his collar there was no escaping.

"I—I—I say, Wharton! I'd rather not go. It doesn't matter if Cherry is expelled— Ow! Let my ear alone! Look here, I'm not going. I won't own up! I won't say a word!"

"Look here, Bunter, you can't be a dirty little cad! You must go and own up, and get Bob off. If you get licked, that isn't so serious as Bob being expelled."

"Isn't it?" exclaimed Billy Bunter wrathfully. "It's a jolly sight more serious for me, I can tell you!"

"Come along!"

Billy Bunter struggled, but he was whisked along, and down the stairs, in next to no time. His struggles redoubled as he was dragged along to the Head's study.

"I won't go in!" he roared. "You—you're a rotten sneak! You can't give me away to the Head! Let me alone!"

"Yes, let him alone," said Bulstrode, who was with the crowd of juniors who were following. "You've no right to give him away, Wharton, if he doesn't choose to own up."

Wharton turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Do you think I'm going to stand by and see Bob Cherry expelled, then?"

"You've no right to sneak."

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"I say, you fellows, Bulstrode's quite right. Wharton's a beast! Rescue! Ow!"

Wharton released the fat junior. He turned his back on Bulstrode.

"Now, Bunter, I won't force you to go—hold on! If you don't go into the Head's study of your own accord, I'll go in and tell him, and you'll be sent for. You can take your choice."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I suppose I had better go in, but

"That's right—come on! Don't be a cad! Besides, most likely you won't get a licking. It was only a joke on your part."

"Well, yes, that's so," said Bunter, a little more comfortably. "Of course, I suppose I ought to own up, too—I mean, of course I'll own up. It's the manly thing to do, and I should have thought of it myself, if you hadn't rushed me so. You feel sure that I sha'n't get a licking?"

"I dare say you won't."

"Here, that's not good enough. I won't go—I—"

But Wharton, losing patience, gave him a push, and sent him spinning on. He crashed against the Head's door, with a force that sent it flying open, and Billy Bunter, losing his footing, rolled into the study.

Dr. Locke started to his feet.

"Bless my soul! What is that?"

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Bunter! Wharton—"

"If you please, sir, Bunter has come to confess," said Harry.

"Confess! What?"

"About the mistake he caused Cherry to make, sir. Dr. Locke is waiting for you to explain, Billy."

"Ow! I'm hurt! Ow!"

"Get up, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir," Bunter scrambled to his feet. "I've had such a fearful shock, sir, that I can't remember anything that occurred, sir."

"Bunter, what do you know about this matter?"

"Nothing, sir," said Bunter promptly. "I wasn't in the box-room when Mr. Quelch was talking to Cherry through the door, sir, and I didn't hear him say anything. In fact, I didn't know he was there."

"Where were you, then?"

"In the box—I mean, I forget, sir."

"Bunter, you are not telling the truth!" thundered Dr. Locke, in a voice that made Billy Bunter jump clear of the carpet.

"O-o-o-oh, sir! I always tell the truth, sir. I was brought up very strictly, sir. I've never told a whopper in my life, sir. My father always used to lick me when I told one, sir."

"Bunter, have you been imitating Mr. Quelch's voice, to lead Cherry to suppose that it was his Form-master speaking to him outside his study, when it was really yourself?"

"No, sir! Certainly not, sir. I wouldn't think of such a thing. I couldn't imitate Mr. Quelch's voice, sir. Besides, Cherry ought to have known that it was Mr. Quelch speaking the second time. I should have known."

"The second time! Then it was you speaking the first time?" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes, sir—I—I mean, no, sir. I wasn't speaking at all—in fact, I wasn't on the spot. I was feeling so sleepy, sir, that I was taking a little snooze in the box-room, and I didn't know anything about the matter till long afterwards."

"What! It did not happen ten minutes ago!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I mean, sir, I—I—I—"

"You are telling falsehoods, Bunter," said Dr. Locke sternly. "You have contradicted yourself several times already."

"Oh, no, sir. You don't understand, that's all, sir. You see—"

"I wish justice to be done," said Dr. Locke. "If I had reason to believe that Cherry really thought a trick was being played upon him by a mischievous junior, and did not know that he was throwing the ink at Mr. Quelch, it would make a great difference."

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch. "I should be far from wishing to punish severely a mistake, however careless. An imposition would meet the case."

"Exactly. Now, Bunter, tell me the truth, and if I am satisfied that your explanation is veracious, I shall not punish you in any way."

"Oh!" said Billy, gasping with relief. "Why didn't you say that at first, sir? I can remember exactly what happened now, sir. I wanted Cherry to open the door, sir, so I imitated Mr. Quelch's voice—I'm an awfully good ventriloquist, sir, and I can imitate voices a treat—and—and then Mr. Quelch came along, and I thought he would be waxy, so I bunked—I mean, I slithered into the box-room, sir—"

"And when I spoke at the door, Cherry naturally imagined that it was you speaking again!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Yes, sir. He was an awful ass, sir."

"Ahem! If you imitated Mr. Quelch's voice then, you can do so now, as a proof that you are telling the truth," said Dr. Locke. "I am afraid that I cannot place the slightest reliance on any statement you make without corroborative evidence, Bunter."

"Yes, sir. I can imitate any voice that's a little out of the common, sir—anything that has any characteristic a fellow can grasp, I mean. Mr. Quelch has a sort of raspy sound in his voice that makes it easy—"

Mr. Quelch turned pink as he heard a suppressed chuckle from the passage.

"That will do, Bunter," said Dr. Locke hurriedly.

"Yes, sir. I'll give you the imitation with pleasure, sir." And Bunter reproduced Mr. Quelch's voice with so much fidelity that the Head started. "Now, then, what are you juniors doing there? Get to your studies at once."

There was a sound of scuffling feet in the passage.

So faithful was the imitation that the crowd outside really believed that it was Mr. Quelch speaking, and they ran off at once. The Head heard them go, and he could not but be satisfied with that unexpected proof.

Bunter grinned gleefully.

"You heard that, sir! If you like, I'll give you a series of imitations. I'm awfully clever at that sort of thing, and—"

"That will do, Bunter. I am satisfied that you have spoken the truth for once. Cherry, you acted in a very hasty and thoughtless manner, but I exonerate you from the blame of throwing the ink over a master. I am sure you believed it to be this foolish and impertinent junior."

"Oh, really, sir!"

"Silence, Bunter! You will take five hundred lines for your carelessness, Cherry, and I hope it will be a lesson to you to think before you act on another occasion. You may go. As for you, Bunter, I have promised not to punish you, and I shall keep my word. But if I hear of your venturing to imitate a master's voice again, I promise you equally faithfully that I shall give you a caning that will cause you to remember the occasion for a very long time to come. You may go."

"Oh, really, sir, I—"

"Leave my study!"

And Billy Bunter went.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Claims His Reward—and Gets It!

HARRY WHARTON linked arms with Bob Cherry as the latter came out of Dr. Locke's study. Bob was still looking very serious. He knew that he had had a narrow escape, and he pressed Wharton's arm as they went down the passage.

"Good for you, Harry," he said, in a low voice. "If you hadn't brought that fat young beast here, I should have been done for. It was only that that got me off."

"Thank goodness you did get off!" said Wharton, with a deep breath. "Lucky the Head was willing to listen to reason."

"Yes, he's really an old sport," said Nugent. "So is Quelch. As for that ass Bunter, he ought to be scalped."

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter came trotting after the Removites. "I say, it's all right now. I've got you off, Cherry."

Bob Cherry glared at him.

"Oh!" he grunted. "You've got me off, have you?"

"Yes, certainly. You were really an ass, you know, to think that it wasn't Quelch. I suppose it was really a mistake?"

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"You didn't really know it was Quelch, eh?" chuckled Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry's brow became as black as a thundercloud, but the short-sighted junior did not see it.

"Didn't you hear me tell the Head so?"

"Oh, yes; but you would naturally put it that way, of course. You didn't want to be expelled. I say, it was jolly lucky for you I had the pluck to own up."

"You had the what?"

"The pluck," said Bunter firmly. "Wharton thought I should get a licking, but I said I didn't care—"

"My hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Well, perhaps I didn't put it exactly like that," said Bunter hastily. "I—I meant that I didn't care, and that it was no use trying to hold me back, because I was determined to go to the Head's study and own up."

"My word!" murmured Nugent. "You ought to be a poet, or a journalist, or something, Bunter. You've the imagination to run a Press agency."

"Oh, really, Nugent! You see, I was really bound to own up—it was the manly thing to do—but there are lots of fellows who wouldn't have done it. I ran a jolly big risk

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in getting Cherry off, but I didn't mind that a bit. I think that Cherry ought to stand something in return, but that's for him to decide."

"I'm standing something," said Bob Cherry. "I'm standing you! Lots of fellows couldn't."

"Oh, really, you know! If you wanted to stand me a feed, for instance, I shouldn't refuse. I think you might stand me a feed. I've been through a trying time, and anything of that sort always makes me hungry. I need keeping up. I saw Wun Lung taking some strawberry jam and treacle into your study this afternoon. Of course, I don't mean to say that I want any reward for owning up to the Head in a manly way. But if you thought you owed me something in return—"

Bob Cherry's eyes gleamed.

"So I do," he replied. "I certainly think I owe you something, Bunter. Come to my study. You shall have all the jam and all the treacle."

"Right you are!" said Bunter with alacrity. "I'm rather fond of jam, and I like treacle. This is very decent of you, Cherry."

"Yes, isn't it?" said Bob grimly. "Come along."

"I'm coming. I say, Wharton, you're coming? You can have some of the jam. If you'd like to make it up to me you can stand me some tarts at the tuckshop afterwards. Why, he's gone! Nugent— He's gone, too!"

Wharton and Nugent had walked away chuckling. They guessed that Bob Cherry had something in store for the fatuous Billy, but they did not feel inclined to interfere. Bunter, as he said himself, deserved a reward for the way he had owned up.

Bob Cherry entered his study with the expectant Billy at his heels.

Wun Lung had waited there, and he was looking very anxious. Mark Linley was there, too, with a shade of anxiety on his face, but they both brightened up at the sight of Bob's cheery countenance.

"Is it all right?" asked Linley.

"Yes, rather!"

"Wun Lung glad," said the little Chinese, "alleo lightee."

"You see, Billy Bunter owned up about the rotten trick he played in the manly way that one would naturally expect of him," said Bob Cherry. "I've promised him the jam and the treacle in return."

Wun Lung grinned.

He read more in Bob Cherry's expression than the Owl of the Remove thought of reading there.

"Allee light," he murmured.

"Get out the jam and treacle, Wun Lung."

"Me savvy."

Billy Bunter blinked with satisfaction as the little Chinese brought out a jar of treacle and a flat dish of jam.

"I say, you fellows, this is decent of you. I never really get enough to eat in No. 1 Study. Wharton keeps me awfully short."

"Will you start with the jam or the treacle?" asked Bob Cherry politely.

"I think I'll start with the jam, Cherry. It looks awfully nice. I— Oh! What on earth are you up to? O-o-o-och!"

Bob Cherry slammed the dish of jam upside down on Bunter's head. It ran down over his ears, and he gave a wild yell. He clawed at it with his hands, and drew them away jammy and sticky.

"Oh! Ow! Yow! What are you doing? Oh!"

"Take the treacle now, Bunter!"

"Ow!" gasped Billy, making a break for the door. "Oh, you beast! I— O-o-h!"

Bob Cherry jerked him back with one hand and with the other emptied the jar of treacle upon the fat, alarmed face.

Billy Bunter sputtered and yelled.

"Now, you young oyster!" said Bob Cherry, in measured tones. "You wanted something in the way of reward for your owning up, and I promised you the jam and treacle. You've got 'em!"

"Ow—wow—yow!"

"Now you can cut. If you give me any more of your giddy ventriloquism, or any more of your manly way of owning up, this is only a joke to what you'll get next time. Cut!"

And Bob Cherry led Billy Bunter to the door and bestowed a gentle kick to start him, and the fat junior went dizzily down the passage. He put in his treacly head at the door of No. 1, where Wharton and his chums had started their prop. They stared at him blankly.

"What on earth's the matter?" demanded Harry.

"Yow! It's that rotter Cherry! He's jammed and treacled me all over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Blessed if I can see anything to chuckle at! It will take me half-an-hour to get all this off! Look here——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you ought to stand by a chap in your own study. You ought to raid No. 13 and snatch them bald-headed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters, are you going to go for Cherry or not?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at the yelling juniors, and indignantly stamped away. It was pretty clear that he would get no vengeance for his injuries from No. 1 Study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The First Number of Cherry's Weekly.

BILLY BUNTER wore a thoughtful expression in class the following morning. His random answers to some of Mr. Quelch's remarks brought him lines galore; but Bunter never worried about lines. He seldom did them himself. Bunter was thinking over his grand idea, and he naturally had no time to bestow much attention upon such trivial matters as vulgar fractions or Latin prose.

Once or twice he looked towards Bob Cherry, when Bob wasn't looking at him—as he thought—and grinned. As a matter of fact, he was too short-sighted to see that more than once Bob caught his grin, and stared at him in return. Bunter seemed to be enjoying a joke all to himself, and Bob wondered what it was.

When morning school was dismissed, Bob Cherry did not immediately burst out into the Close with a shout, as usual. He hurried away towards Study No. 13. Cherry's Weekly was the attraction. Bob had taken up the idea quite seriously, and he was determined that Cherry's Weekly should appear before any rival paper could make its appearance. Harry Wharton and Nugent strolled out into the Close, and Billy Bunter, for some reason best known to himself, kept close at their heels. Hurree Janset Ram Singh tapped the fat junior upon the shoulder.

"What of the esteemed mag. that my fat friend is editorially producing," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Is the first number ready?"

"Oh, really, Inky, there's a lot of work to be put into it yet and I haven't collected any of the subscriptions," said Bunter. "If you like to pay your subscription now——"

"The thankfulness is great, but the excusefulness is terrific."

"Early subscribers get the paper at a reduction. I can let you have it for five shillings a year, all cash to be paid strictly in advance."

"The ratfulness is terrific. I will expend the sum of one penny on the paper first numberfully, when it is producefully published."

"Well, it will take some time, and I require money to work with. If you knew anything about business, you would understand that, Inky. I can't get on with it just now, as I want a stroll before dinner, and—here, hurry up, or we shall lose Wharton."

The nabob looked at him in surprise.

"Is it necessaryful to keep the esteemed Wharton in sight?" he asked.

"Yes, rather; I'm expecting Cherry—I—I mean, I want to speak to Wharton. What are you staring at, Inky?"

"The esteemed Cherry," said Hurree Singh, looking towards the School House with an expression of amazement on his dusky features. "He appears to be labouring under the great excitement."

Billy Bunter gave a gasp, and scuttled after Wharton, and poked himself in between Harry and Nugent. They looked down at him.

"What do you want?"

"N-n-nothing; but—but I think Cherry wants to speak to you. He seems excited about something," stammered Billy Bunter.

The Removites looked round. Bob Cherry certainly did seem excited about something. He had come out of the house at a run, and was glaring up and down and round about the Close as if in search of someone; and his expression seemed to imply that something painful would happen to that someone when Bob Cherry sighted him.

He caught sight of Billy Bunter, who seemed to be trying to make himself as small as possible behind Wharton, and came racing over towards him.

"I—I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, "you—you'll stand by a fellow in your own study, won't you?"

"Of course," said Harry; "but what's the matter?"

"Where's that young villain?" roared Bob Cherry. "Come out, Bunter; you're too fat to hide behind Wharton, you young ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" said Bunter, dodging round

Wharton as Bob Cherry chased him. "I—I say, you fellows, stop him; he's dangerous!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Wharton, as the two dodged round and round him, bumping him in turn, Bob Cherry in hot chase of Billy Bunter. "You'll have me over soon! You're making me giddy! What's the row?"

"I'm going to squash that fat beetle."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come here, you fat young burglar! Stop!"

"Here, you stop!" said Harry, seizing Bob by the shoulder, and forcing him to halt. "You can't play 'here-we-go-round-the-mulberry-bush,' with me for the mulberry-bush! What is the matter?"

"That young reprobate has been in my study," roared Bob Cherry. "The first number of Cherry's Weekly——"

"The which?"

"The first number of the new school paper—it was almost finished last evening, and I got into a row through leaving my prep. undone to do it—and it was left on my table. Somebody dodged into my study this morning, and messed it up. Look here!"

Bob Cherry flourished a roll of manuscript under Harry's nose.

Harry looked at it. As Bob flattened it out, he read on the front page, "Cherry's Weekly. A Journal Devoted to the Amusement and Instruction of Greyfriars."

But there was no more to be seen, for the manuscript volume would not open; each page had been dabbed to the next with seccotine, and it was possible only to turn the corners of the leaves.

Wharton could not help grinning.

"Look at that!" roared Bob. "There's an evening's work! My leading article and a poem, an article on mills in Lancashire, by M. Linley, Esq., Extracts from the Works of Confucius, translated by Wun Lung—all messed up! There were blank pages left for you fellows to fill up—all spoiled! Look here! I'm going to make Bunter eat this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, I—I——"

"How do you know it was Bunter messed it up?"

"Of course it was Bunter. He daren't deny it."

"I—I—I——"

"I'm going to make him eat it! Come here, you young sweep."

"I—I say, you fellows, you stand by a chap in your own study. It was my idea, you know, and Cherry boned it. So, of course, I busted up his first number. He shouldn't go around borrowing people's ideas."

"Why, you borrowed it yourself, from Tom Merry at St. Jim's."

"Ye-e-es, but——"

"Come here and be squashed, you—you beetle. I—leggo, Wharton! I tell you I'm going to squash him!" roared Bob Cherry. "He's wanted squashing for a long time."

"Hold on, Bob——"

"I won't! I'll squash him!"

Wharton laughed, and made a sign to Nugent and Hurree Singh. Three pairs of hands closed on Bob Cherry, and he was suddenly bumped in the grass. Three boots were planted upon his waistcoat as he wriggled there.

"Make it pax with Bunter," said Wharton, laughing.

"I won't!"

"Better!"

"I tell you I won't!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'm going to squash him, and make him eat this number."

"When I say jump, you all jump," said Wharton.

"Here, hold on!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Lemme gerrup."

"Make it pax, then."

"I—I—I—— Look here, take your hoofs off my chest!"

"Rats! When I say three, kids, you all jump. Ready?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Look here, you dummies——"

"One!" said Wharton, counting.

"You utter ass——"

"Two!"

"I—I—I'll make it pax, if you like."

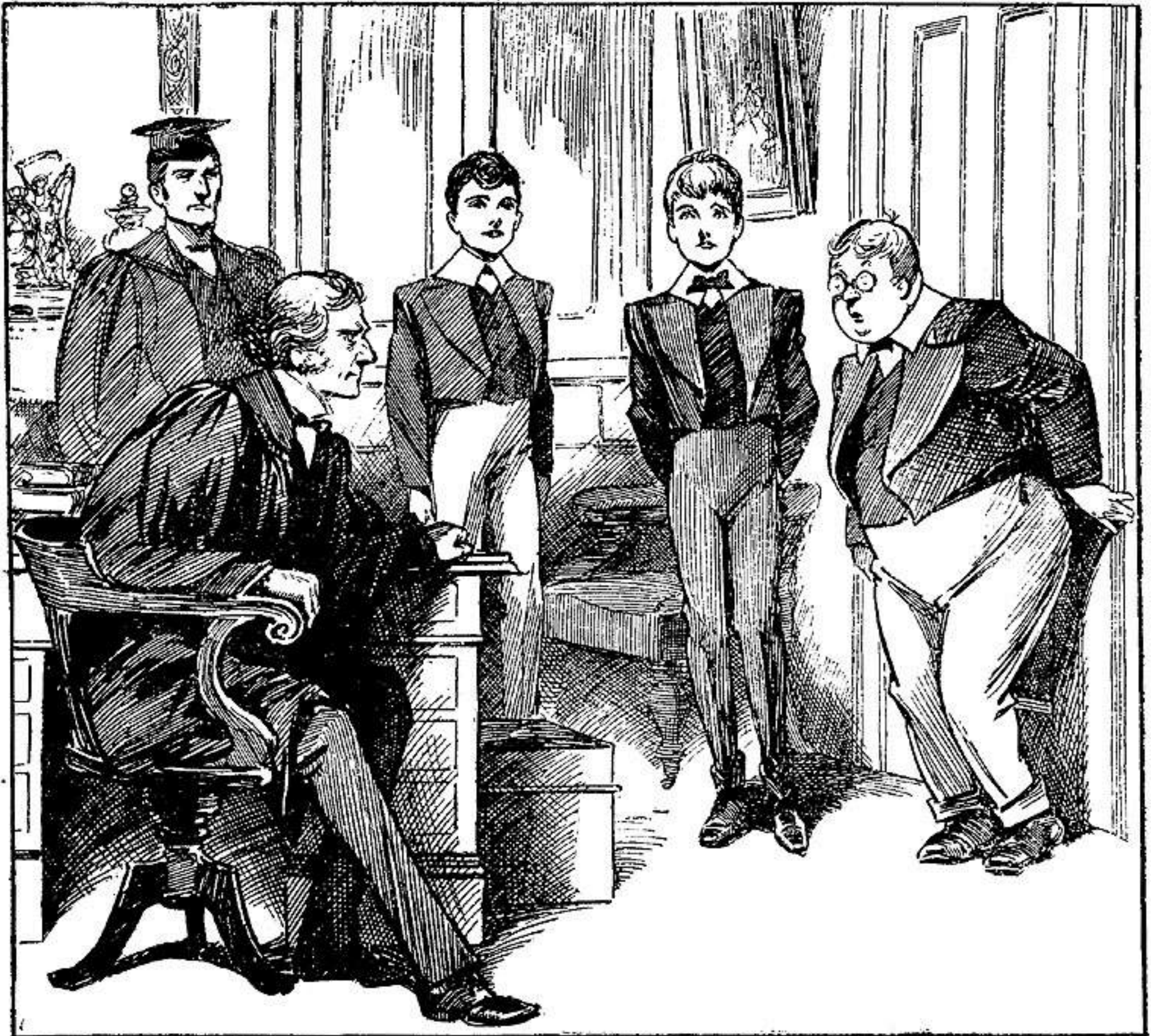
"Good!"

Bob Cherry was allowed to rise. He staggered up, and dusted his waistcoat, grinning ruefully. Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"I say, Cherry, I don't bear any malice," he remarked. "I'll let you contribute to the first number of Bunter's Weekly, if you like. All contributions charged at the low rate of one shilling a column——"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" grunted Bob Cherry, and he stalked away in disgust, with his ruined first number under his arm.

"I say, you fellows, have you made up your minds whether you'd like to contribute to the Weekly?" asked Bunter, blinking at the chums of Study No. 1. "As you fellows are in my study, I could offer you reduced rates.



"Bunter! You are not telling the truth!" thundered Dr. Locke, in a voice that made Billy Bunter jump clear of the study carpet.

Your stories or articles go in, with your name in big type, at sixpence a column. You don't often get an offer like that."

"And we're not going to accept this one," said Wharton, laughing. "Come and let's get some cricket, Nugent."

"Here, I say, you fellows, hold on—beasts! Fancy chaps walking away while I'm talking to them, and making them a really reasonable and generous offer. I say, Bulstrode—oh, is it you, Hazeldene? Are you going out?"

"Yes," said Hazeldene, who was wheeling his bicycle down to the gates.

"Oh! You're going over to Cliff House, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"I'll come with you, if you like."

"Thanks; I don't like."

"Oh, really, Vaseline! Look here, I want to propose to your sister—"

"What!" roared Hazeldene.

"What's the matter?" said Bunter, blinking. "Blessed if I can see anything to get excited about in that. I want to propose to Marjorie—"

"You young ass!" said Hazeldene, taking Bunter by the neck and jamming him, squirming against the wall. "Do you want me to biff your head on the bricks?"

"No, no, no!" gasped Bunter. "Certainly not. Ow—leggo! I say, Linley, make him let go!"

Mark Linley stopped and looked on. Considering the raid he had made on Study No. 13 that morning, it was rather

cool of Bunter to call on Linley for aid. But coolness was one of Bunter's leading traits.

"What's the row, Hazeldene?" asked Linley, good-naturedly.

"The young ass is getting more fatheaded every day, and he's started making funny remarks now," said Hazeldene. "It's hard enough to stand him any time, but blessed if I'm going to stand him funny."

"You can't expect it, Bunter," said Mark, laughing.

"Don't be funny."

"I wasn't being funny!" roared Bunter. "I was speaking seriously on a serious subject. I said I wanted to go over to Cliff House to propose to Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"What!"

"Yes, that's it," said Hazeldene, biffing Bunter's head against the wall. "This is where you stop being funny, Bunter."

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"Serve you jolly well right, Bunter!" said Linley. "Give him another biff, and I'll lend you a hand to roll him in the fountain."

"Oh, really, Linley! Stop! Hold on! Why shouldn't Marjorie contribute to the Weekly if she wants to?"

"Eh? What? What are you jabbering about?"

"Blessed if I can make you out!" gasped Bunter.

"You're off your rocker, I think. I said I wanted to propose to Marjorie to contribute to my new school paper, and you flew out at me like a lunatic."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Linley.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I want to propose to Marjorie to contribute to the 'Weekly,' and I don't see why I shouldn't."

Hazeldene released the fat junior, gasping with merriment. He had certainly made a mistake that time; but then, Bunter was generally impertinent, so the mistake was really his own fault.

"It's all right, Billy, I'm sorry. I thought it was some more of your rotten cheek, you know. You are such a little beast, as you will admit yourself."

"I—I don't admit anything of the sort, you—you rotter! Look here, you've rumpled my collar, and nearly throttled me. Can I come over to Cliff House?"

Hazeldene shook his head solemnly.

"Can't be done, Billy! I couldn't take a chap to a girl's school in a rumpled collar, you know. Ta-ta!"

And Hazeldene wheeled his bicycle away, leaving Billy Bunter struggling with his collar to get it straight, and gasping breathlessly.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "I shall jolly well go all the same! I don't see why I shouldn't propose to Marjorie to contribute to the 'Weekly' if I want to."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

No Subscribers.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What's that?"

"Bunter again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of juniors were gathering round the notice-board in the hall. There was a new notice up, and it had caught Bob Cherry's eye first. Thinking it might be something to do with the cricket fixtures, Bob strolled over to look at it. His surprised exclamation soon drew others to the spot.

The notice was nothing to do with the cricket. It was in the handwriting of Billy Bunter. Big, sprawling writing, plentifully adorned with blots, and with several little variations in the spelling, which showed that the editorial mind was not trammelled by commonplace orthographical rules.

"NOTICE!"

"It having been decided to found a School Paper at Greyfriars, the Enterprise has been undertaken by William G. Bunter. The paper will be published weekly, on the first Monday in every week. The title will be 'Bunter's Budget.' No connection with any spurious imitations further up the passage.

"Gentlemen of the Lower Forms at Greyfriars are invited to submit contributions. All contributions will be carefully considered, and all those which are accompanied by a remittance of a shilling a column will be published in the weekly paper. Special terms for special stories.

"All communications to be made directly to William G. Bunter, at the Editorial Office, No. 1 Study, in the Remove passage.—Sined, WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER, Editor.

"P.S.—No connection whatever with Study No. 13."

The juniors read and stared, and grinned gleefully. Billy Bunter often had curious ideas. He had moved the mirth of his Form-fellows as a hypnotist, as a physical culturist, and as a photographer; but he had certainly never developed anything as funny as this idea of running a paper with contributions to be paid for by the contributors. Such things may not be unknown in the Press, but Bunter's editorial experience was not extensive enough to make him aware that they would be better done sub rosa.

"It's a jolly good offer," chuckled Skinner. "I think I can see the whole Remove rushing along to No. 1 Study with shillings in their fists."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's the editor!"

Bunter bustled up, with a notebook and a pencil in his hand. He was blinking very importantly through his big glasses.

"I say, you fellows, can I put your names down? You'd better subscribe for the first year, Bob Cherry. Any chap paying a year's subscription in advance can have his stuff printed free of charge for one issue. You could pick up some wrinkles, how to run a paper, from my first number, Cherry. Shall I put your name down?"

"I don't think!"

"Shall I put your name down, Skinner?"

"Certainly," said Skinner. "It's a nice name, and you can put it down anywhere you like. Put it in full—Herbert Arthur Reginald Skinner!"

"Herbert Arthur Reginald Skinner," said Bunter, scribbling away in his notebook, regardless of the grins of the

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surrounding juniors. "Good! Shall I put you down for a year's subscription?"

"I don't know. Is that really long enough?"

"Well," said the youthful editor, beaming through his glasses, "there's something in that. We may get a rush for copies, and get sold out, at any time, so it would really be safer to book the paper ahead for a couple of years. I could make a reduction, too, for a larger quantity. You can book the paper for two years for—"

"But the difficulty is, would two years be enough?" said Skinner, with an air of great gravity that made his companions chuckle again. "You may get a fearful rush for copies in the third year, and then a chap who's deeply interested in the serial stories or the advertisements, or anything, may get left all of a sudden. Is it possible to subscribe for the Bunker's Budget?"

"Ahem! Bunter's Budget."

"Ah, my mistake—Bunter's Budget! Is it possible to subscribe for five years in advance?"

"Yes, certainly. I'm sincerely glad to see you taking it up like this, Skinny. I always thought you were a chap of unusual intellect. Let me see, the subscription for five years would be twenty-five bob, but I can let you settle it for a pound."

Skinner shook his head.

"No, Bunter. I must be firm on the point. I can't take any advantage of your generosity. You generous chaps are always giving too much away. I insist upon your booking the paper down to me at the full market price."

"Oh, really, Skinner, if you insist—"

"I do insist," said Skinner solemnly. "I regard it as a bounden duty to insist. I'll book it at twenty-five bob, or I won't book it at all."

"Good! Blessed if I can see what you chaps are cackling at. You'd do jolly well to take example by Skinner. He's a chap of very unusual intellect, and he knows a good thing when he sees it."

"Does he seize it when he knows it?" asked Ogilvy.

"Oh, really, Ogilvy! Lemme see, that will be twenty-five bob, Skinner."

"Exactly!" said Skinner, without, however, making any movement to produce the money.

"Ahem! All cash is payable strictly in advance!"

"My dear chap, you're quite off-side," said Skinner, shaking his head. "All cash, in this case, is payable strictly at the close of the period of subscription."

"Eh!"

"My payment falls due in the year 1914. We sha'n't be at Greyfriars then, but if you hunt me up wherever I am, I'll pay up like a little man. Meanwhile, I receive the copy of the 'Budget' delivered in my study every week."

"Oh, really, Skinner!"

"Let me see, it's on the first Monday in every week," said Skinner, glancing at the notice. "I suppose it wouldn't be easy to publish it on the second Monday in a week, come to think of it. I shall expect that paper in my study on the first morning of the first Monday every week, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Stott. "I think I'll subscribe on the same terms."

"And if I don't get the paper regularly on the first morning of the first Monday, you don't rope in my subscription in the year 1914," said Skinner solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Skinner, look here! Don't walk away while I'm talking! Beast! I say, you fellows, are you going to book the paper for a year ahead?"

"On the same terms as Skinner, look you," grinned Morgan.

"Oh, really, Morgan! Skinner was only rotting, you know. I shall have to scratch his name out of my book. Shall I put yours down?"

"On the same terms as—"

"I wish you'd be serious over a serious matter. I say, Nugent, shall I put your name down for a year's subscription?"

"On the same terms as Skinn—"

"Beast! What do you say, Russell? Shall I—"

"On the same terms as—"

"Rotter! I say, you fellows, you're missing a chance. This paper is really ripping, and it's going to make things hum like—like—"

"Like kippers!" suggested Stott.

"Oh, really, Stott! Like anything! I expect there will be a rush of the whole school to get the first number. I shall use my influence to get it taken up in the Upper Forms. It's the chance of a lifetime."

"And all us careless bargees are missing it," grinned Bob Cherry. "Why don't you try the Upper Fourth, Bunter? Temple, Dabney & Co. would jump at it, and Ionides, of the Sixth, would jump at it just as much as they would."

"I might as well try," said Bunter thoughtfully. "I

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
and the Pupils of Cliff House.

suppose if I get a list of Sixth Form names in the subscription, you kids will rally up, then?"

"Oh, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

And Billy Bunter, with his notebook in his hand, rolled away in search of subscribers in the Sixth Form.

He left the juniors roaring with laughter.

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was the first Sixth-Former to receive Bunter's munificent offer.

Billy Bunter ran into him in the Sixth Form passage, literally. Wingate took him by the collar, shook him, and was passing on when Bunter called to him.

"I say, Wingate, I was coming here to speak to you. Hold on a minute! It's important. One of the most important things that have ever happened at Greyfriars."

"Eh?" said Wingate, turning round. What are you babbling about? Sharp!"

"I'm starting a new paper, to represent the cream of the intellect at Greyfriars. Would you care to take a year's subscription?"

"Young ass! No!"

"It's the chance of a lifetime, Wingate. I'll put in your contributions for nothing if you subscribe for a couple of years."

Wingate walked away. Bunter blinked after the receding form, and went along the passage to Ionides' study. Ionides was a Greek, and the richest senior at Greyfriars, and also the most unpleasant tempered. Bunter tapped at his door, and as there was no reply, he opened it, and looked in. The study was empty. Bunter grunted discontentedly.

"Gr-r! I suppose I'd better wait for him. He's a rich beast, and I dare say I shall get a good subscription out of him if I put it to him nicely," he muttered aloud. "You've only got to pretend to Ionides that you think he was a lord in his own country, and he'll be as sweet as anything. I—Ow!"

A grip of iron was fastened upon Bunter's neck behind, and he was swung out into the passage. Ionides' face showed that he had overheard Bunter's remarks, but Billy was too short-sighted to see it.

He wriggled in the grip of the senior.

"I say, Carberry—"

"You young rascal! English brute!" said the Greek, shaking him.

"Oh, is it you, Ionides? I came here to see you. I wanted to speak to you on a most important subject. Ow! Don't you shake me like that! If you make my glasses fall off, and they get broken, you'll have to pay for them, I warn you. You see, I'm starting a new school paper, Ionides—ow!—and I want you to subscribe to it. You can afford to, you know, as you're so rich. I know you're a lord in your own country, and—Ow, ow, ow!"

Billy Bunter went whirling down the passage, to fall in a heap a dozen paces away, and Ionides went into his study and slammed the door. Bunter sat up, looking dazed and bewildered.

"M-m-m-my word! Fancy being chucked about like a sack of potatoes by a beastly alien! Beast! Rotter! I suppose it's really no good trying to get subscribers in the Sixth Form. They're naturally jealous of a junior being cleverer than themselves, I suppose. I'd better try the Upper Fourth, perhaps, and the girls at Cliff House."

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Borrows a Bicycle.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. looked anxiously at the clock in the class-room as lessons wore on that afternoon. They had an important engagement after school, and they were eager for the signal to dismiss. Billy Bunter was equally so. When the big hand pointed to half-past four at last, many of the Remove drew a deep breath of relief. As they filed out of the class-room, Bunter hurried after Wharton, and fastened upon him.

"I say, you fellows—"

"No time now, Bunter," said Harry, jerking his sleeve away. "We've got to get off."

"Are you going out?"

"Yes. Good-bye!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, as the chums of No. 1 hurried away. "Hold on! I wish you wouldn't walk so fast. I get quite out of breath. I say, Wharton, if you're going over to Cliff House, I'll come with you."

"Going to ride," said Nugent.

"I'll stand on the foot-rests of your machine," said Bunter. "I really want to go over to Cliff House, as I want to propose to Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"What!"

"To contribute to my new paper. She could give me some ripping articles, I think, on the subject of cooking, for the Home Column. I'm thinking of offering prizes for short articles, you know, same as they do in 'Home Bosh.' I must see Marjorie about it, so I'd better come over with you. I suppose you'll be staying to tea?"

"Now, look here, Billy. Marjorie and Clara are coming

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EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE HALFPENNY, LIBRARY.

for a spin, and as you haven't a machine, you'll have to leave it alone," said Harry. "I'd take you if I could, though Marjorie doesn't like you—"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know perfectly well that she likes me so much that—"

"That she can't stand you," said Nugent.

"'Nuff said!" exclaimed Wharton. "You can go and edit school papers in the study, Bunter; you can have it to yourself for a couple of hours."

And the Removites hurried off towards the bicycle shed. Bob Cherry was already there, getting out his machine. He coloured a little at the sight of the chums of No. 1 Study.

"Going out?" asked Harry.

"I was thinking so. Look here, shall I come over to Cliff House with you?" asked Bob bluntly, and turning very red.

"Yes, rather!" said Harry, slapping him on the shoulder. "Don't be an ass! We may be in different studies now, but that won't make any difference to us as far as Cliff House is concerned, at any rate."

"Good!" said Bob, looking relieved. "Of course, No. 13 is top study—"

"Rats!"

"But we can settle that in the Remove passage," grinned Bob Cherry. "Out of doors we're the same old Co. It's a lovely afternoon for a run."

"Hallo! I've got a puncture," said Nugent. "You'll have to wait."

It took Nugent a quarter of an hour to reduce his tyre to a satisfactory state. That quarter of an hour was spent by Bunter in trying to borrow a bicycle. He did not succeed. Cyclists, as a rule, are very chary of lending their machines, of course, and every owner of a bicycle knew perfectly well that Bunter never took care of anything he borrowed. He would have brought it home with a puncture or two, covered with mud, and probably with something bent or broken; and it would not even have occurred to him to make the damage good. Hence the refusals which met him on all sides, couched in far from polite terms, too. Bunter was looking disconsolate as he drifted into the bicycle shed, just as the juniors were wheeling their machines out.

"I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows were gone.

Bunter blinked after them, and then blinked round the bicycle shed. There were a good many machines on the stands there, and only a few of them were secured. It was easy enough to take one; but to get it to the gates unseen by the owner was a more difficult task. Bunter never stood upon ceremony when he wanted anything; but he did not want to risk being dragged bodily off a bicycle by an indignant owner.

"Lemme see," he murmured. "There's Stott's machine. He's gone down to the river, I know. I can shove it back when I come in, and he won't know the difference."

And Bunter dragged Stott's machine off the stand.

It was not a very first-class machine. It had certainly seen its best days; but it was naturally very valuable to Stott, who couldn't afford a new one. He took great care of the machine, and nothing would induce him to lend it. That did not matter to Bunter. He wheeled the machine out, and passed Bulstrode near the door.

"Hallo!" Bulstrode exclaimed. "Has Stott lent you his machine, Bunter?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Bunter.

And he wheeled it on rather hurriedly. He mounted on the drive, and dashed down to the gates, rather nervous that Bulstrode might stop him. He whisked through the gateway, and rang the bell furiously at a junior who was in the road.

"Hi, there! Get aside, can't you!"

The junior jumped, and looked round.

It was Stott!

"Hallo, Bunter! Borrowed a machine?"

"Oh! Is—is that you, Stott? Yes, I—I've borrowed Skinner's bike—"

"You haven't!" roared Stott, recognising his property. "You've borrowed mine! I'll—I'll make you squirm, you worm. Get off that machine!"

"Oh, really, Stott—"

Bunter had had to put the brake on, because Stott was blocking up his way, and refused to budge. The bicycle wobbled, and Bunter plunged to and fro in the lane to avoid falling off. He was determined not to dismount; but his wobbling brought him very near to the ditch on the roadside, which was full nearly to the brim with flowing water.

Stott made a rush at him to drag him off, and Bunter

made a desperate attempt to turn the bicycle round and dash off in the opposite direction. But he had hardly room to turn in, and he was too flurried to have any nerve.

The bicycle curled up, and Bunter went flying.

"My hat!" gasped Stott.

Splash!

Right into the ditch went cyclist and cycle!

It was perhaps fortunate that the ditch was there—for Bunter. It saved him from getting hurt on the hard ground. But it wasn't pleasant. He went right under. The bicycle went right under, too. A second later a spectacled face rose dripping from the ditch.

"Ow! Help! I'm drowning! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode, who had followed the fat junior to the gates. "Ha, ha, ha! This way, you chaps! This is worth seeing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared with laughter, but they made no motion to help Bunter. Stott was the only one who did not laugh. He was thinking of his machine reposing in the mud at the bottom of the deep ditch.

"You young sweep!" he shouted. "Bring my bike out!"

"Ow! Blow your bike!"

Billy Bunter tried to scramble out. But his feet were deep in the mud, and he was up to his neck in water. He managed at last to get half-way up on the grassy bank, and then Stott thrust out a foot and sent him rolling back again.

"Ow! Help! Gr-r-r-r!"

Bunter was right in again. He clung to the grass and gasped and blinked.

"Help! Murder! Fire!" he shrieked

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get my bike out!" growled Stott. "You're not coming out till my bike's out."

"Ow! Oh, really, Stott! Help!"

"Don't you try to get out. The bike first, you young fat rotter. I'll teach you to collar my bike. Shove it out!"

There was no help for it. Bunter splashed and groped for the bicycle, and dragged it up. He pushed it up to Stott, who seized it and dragged it from the ditch. Bunter crawled after it.

Stott looked at his muddy and dripping machine, and said things. He would have kicked Bunter into the ditch again, but Bulstrode stopped him.

"Nuff's as good as a feast," said Bulstrode. "Let him alone!"

"Look at my machine!" yelled Stott.

"Ha, ha! It does look rocky. Make him clean it."

"So I will. Bunter, wheel that machine back to the bike shed, and clean it! Do you hear? Quick!"

"Ow! I'm wet. I know I shall get my death of cold. Ow! I've got an important appointment at Cliff House; Marjorie Hazeldene is expecting me! Ow!"

"Liar!" said Bulstrode cheerfully. "Go and change your things, or else you will catch cold, you young duffer. Then if I were Stott I'd make you rub every mark off that machine, or else take it out of your hide."

"And so I jolly well will," said Stott vengefully.

Billy Bunter scuttled off to change his clothes, and when he came downstairs, after about half an hour, he looked round cautiously for Stott. He didn't mean to stay in and clean the machine if he could possibly avoid it. But there was no avoiding Stott. The indignant bicycle owner was waiting for him at the foot of the stairs. Bunter caught sight of him and tried to dodge by, but Stott grasped him by the collar, and ran him off, and did not allow him to halt till he was in the bicycle shed. There Bunter sank breathlessly upon a bench.

"Now then," said Stott grimly, "there's the bicycle. It's wet all over, and smothered with mud. It's got to be cleaned. Take every stain off it, or I'll take the skin off you. Now then!"

"I say, Stott, I've got an appointment with Marjorie Hazeldene, and she'll be awfully disappointed if I don't turn up."

"Don't tell lies!" said Stott calmly. "Marjorie Hazeldene can't stand you. Clean that machine."

"Look here, I'll let you contribute free of charge to the 'Budget' if you like."

"Don't talk piffle. Clean that machine."

"I—I'd rather not, Stott, if you don't mind, and—"

Stott picked up a cricket stump.

"All right. Where will you have it?"

"Oh, really, I—I—I don't mind cleaning the machine, you know. I'll—I'll clean it with pleasure, Stott, old man!"

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"Go it, then!"

And Bunter, with an inward groan, started cleaning the machine. Bunter hated anything in the form of work; and this was certainly hard work. For Stott was very particular about his machine. Even when Bunter had cleaned it, Stott pointed out lots of places where it was still muddy, and cheerfully remarked that it wasn't half done yet. And Bunter groaned and resumed his labours.

Stott sat on a stool and read the latest number of "Pluck," with the cricket stump ready across his knees, in case it was wanted. It was not wanted. Bunter cast many longing glances towards the door, but did not venture to make a run for it. He was giving the bicycle the finishing touches, a good hour and a half later, when there was a jingling and a trampling at the door of the bicycle shed, and the Famous Four came in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bunter working! My hat!"

"He's cleaning my machine," said Stott, rising. "He shoved it into a ditch, and he kindly offered to clean it. I think that will do, Bunter."

Bunter dropped the rag with a gasp.

"Oh! You beast! I'm utterly exhausted. It's too late to go to Cliff House now. I say, you fellows, I wish you'd give Stott a licking. You ought to stand by a fellow in your own study."

"I'll hold your spectacles while you give him a licking," said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Stott quitted the shed, chuckling. Billy Bunter looked at the nice, clean machine, and then at his blackened hands and cuffs.

"Oh! The beast! I've a jolly good mind to shove my boot through the wheels now! I would, only—only—"

"Only you'd get a licking," grinned Bob Cherry. "How did you come to get Stott's bike into a ditch, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter explained, but he received no sympathy. The Removites roared with laughter, and the fat junior marched indignantly out of the shed and left them still laughing.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Wees of an Editor.

BUNTER'S "Budget" did not seem to be prospering, much to the surprise of the editor. He had offered the Remove the fairest possible terms, and they had been rejected with laughter and rude remarks. As Bunter said plaintively, he didn't know really what the fellows did want.

He found no support in his own study. The chums of No. 1 seemed to be willing to agree that a school paper was really a good idea, but they did not agree at all that Bunter was the proper person to edit it.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter at tea that evening, after his experience in the bicycle shed, "you might back me up in this. For the sake of getting the paper started, I'd shove in your contributions for nothing."

"You're too good," said Wharton, laughing.

"The goodness of our honourable chum is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I could not take advantage of his generosity."

"Look here, Inky, don't be an ass! It's the chance of a lifetime. Lots of great authors have started by contributing to school papers. You can shove your stuff in for nothing. I'll only ask you to pay a year's subscription in advance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that. You said yourself that it was a good wheeze, Wharton."

"So it is," said Harry, with a nod. "I think it's a jolly good idea for this study to start a school paper. But you couldn't have a hand in it, Bunter. You could be the office-boy; but anything above that would be too much for you."

"With my abilities as an editor—"

"They haven't done much so far. However, we won't interfere. I think we might start a paper, but you can try your hand first. If you succeed, we'll stand aside and let you edit to your heart's content."

"But I can't succeed unless you back me up," said Bunter, in a tone of patient expostulation. "I must have money to work with. It costs a lot to get a paper printed."

"That's for the editor to settle."

"Yes, but you ought to back me up."

"Backing you up seems to be another expression for handing over all our tin into your hands," said Wharton, with a laugh. "Bring your genius to bear on the subject. Great papers have been started in little back rooms up half a dozen flights of stairs, without any capital to speak of. That's the way to win."

"Yes, but I must have a pound or two to start. If we

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don't soon get the paper going, Bob Cherry will be bringing out one in No. 13. It's all very well to say that this is top study in the Remove, but it won't be if they get ahead of us like that. Look here, I've got a new wheeze by which I can start the paper without any help. I'm thinking of offering prizes among the subscribers for one year, every subscriber to have a prize. Don't you think that ought to bring them in?"

"Certainly, if the prizes are worth more than the year's subscriptions."

"Well, I was thinking of offering some of the things in this study. You fellows ought to back me up a little. I hate a chap being selfish or grasping. I was thinking of a violin as first prize—"

"Have you a violin?"

"Well, there's yours. You don't play it much, and—"

"If you touch my violin, my son, you'll get a champion thick ear," said Harry Wharton impressively. "You know what to expect."

"Then there's a silver-handled penknife as second prize," said Bunter, unheeding. "I'm sure Inky would contribute his penknife for the good of the cause."

"The surefulness is unfounded, my worthy chum. My esteemed penknife will remain in my esteemed pocket."

"Then there's Nugent's new acetylene bicycle lamp. Lots of the fellows would like that. And now lighting-up time is so late, Nugent doesn't really need it."

"Let me see you offering my bike lamp as a prize, that's all!" said Nugent wrathfully.

"I don't think you chaps ought to be selfish. I could make up quite a list of prizes of things you don't really need, if you are agreeable."

"I'm afraid you will find us disagreeable, then," said Harry, laughing. "You must think of some new wheeze, Buntie."

Bunter grunted as he rose from the tea-table. He had finished up the last tart and the last scrape from the jam-dish, and there was nothing more to eat.

"I think you're jolly selfish, that's all. I've got another idea—"

"Go and tell it to Bulstrode, or Temple, or Ionides," said Nugent, yawning. "We're getting fed up with your ideas in this study."

"Look here! If I stand a big feed to the first six subscribers, that ought to fetch 'em in, I think. Of course, I can stand the feed out of the subscriptions, but I shall want a little working capital. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, or I wouldn't ask you chaps. I'm expecting to get some big cheques shortly for some art photographic work I'm doing for the Press. If you could lend me ten shillings temporarily—"

"Make it tenpence!"

"Well, perhaps I could start with five," said Bunter thoughtfully. "Yes, upon second thoughts I dare say I could make five do."

Harry Wharton dived his hand into his pocket. He fished out a half-crown, and laid it on the table. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh added a second half-crown, and Nugent placed a shilling with them.

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened.

"There you are!" exclaimed Wharton. "Take it and go, and don't let's hear any more about your precious paper. I'm fed up with it."

"I shall let you have this back out of the first profits," said Bunter, collecting up the coins. "Shall I put it down in the account?"

"Oh, of course; you mustn't overlook an important detail like that."

Bunter did not reply to that remark. He quitted the study, with the three silver coins jingling together in his

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trousers' pocket. His look as he rolled down the Remove passage was so cheerful that a good many juniors noticed it, and inquired the cause.

"Getting on with the paper?" asked Skinner, with a grin. "You won't forget to let me have my copy regularly on the first morning of the first Monday in the first week—"

"Oh, really, Skinner! Look here! I've been talking over the scheme to No. 1 Study, and they all agree that it's a good one. It's the idea of standing a feed to the first six subscribers. I've got the cash. Look here!"

"Who have you been robbing?" asked Skinner genially. "The fellows in my study have advanced this, as they think the idea is a first-class one. Look here, you chaps pay a tanner each—that's for the first six week's subscription—and I stand a big feed to the first six of you. The feed will cost at least two shillings a head. You all stand to gain that way. It's a prize, you see, for the first six subscribers."

"Good! If you stand the feed—"

"I give you my word as editor of Bunter's Budget," said Billy, with great dignity. "You see, you take your chance. If your name happens to be among the first six, you get the feed. If it doesn't, you don't; but you get a first-class school magazine free every week for six weeks. That alone is worth double the money. You fellows stand to win all along the line."

"Well, that's all right," said Skinner suspiciously, "but I should want to be sure that I'm among the first six."

"That's practically certain in your case. I've got a few names down, but in your case there's practically no doubt that you're among the first six."

"Well, that's good enough; here's my tanner."

Bunter pocketed the sixpence with great glee, and gave Skinner a formal receipt for it. It was only sixpence, but it was his first earnings as editor of the new school paper, and so it was very acceptable. It was a promise of greater things to come.

Cheered by his success with Skinner, who was one of the most suspicious fellows in the Remove, Bunter looked out for fresh subscribers.

He looked into No. 13, and found Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and Wun Lung at work.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Go and do your prep., Buntie."

"There's no hurry for that, Cherry."

"Well, leave me to do mine. There's a hurry for that."

"Look here, I've come to give you a chance. The first six subscribers of a tanner join me in a ripping feed at the school shop. What do you say?"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry.

"I suppose you're going to subscribe, Linley?"

"No, thanks."

"I say, Wun Lung, I suppose you'll be one of the six?"

"No savvy."

"It will be a ripping feed—rabbit-pics, ham and eggs—"

"No savvy."

"You're practically certain to be one of the first six opened—I—mean one of the first six subscribers, and then you secure this really handsome prize."

"No savvy."

"Now, you're a generous, decent fellow, Wun Lung, and you might—"

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"No savvy."

"Look here, you Chinese heathen—"

"No savvy."

"Keep your rotten tanner, then, you yellow-faced, pig-tailed, slit-eyed, fat-headed Chinese pagan!" said Bunter; and he went out of the study and closed the door, leaving the new Co. chuckling.

A few minutes later he had run Bulstrode down in the junior common-room. Bulstrode parted with sixpence carelessly enough, and Bunter was greatly encouraged. He raked in subscriptions from Ogilvy and Russell, and the jingle of the silver in his pocket was like music to his ears. He was still subscription-hunting when the chums of No. 1, having finished their prep., came down. They found Bunter in the passage, talking to Trevor. Billy Bunter's voice was beautifully persuasive.

"You see, Trevor, you're practically certain to be among the first six, and—"

"Oh, there you are!" said Trevor.

"Good! I'll put this down to your name."

And Bunter walked on in search of more victims. Smith and Desmond were induced to part with sixpences on the same terms. Half an hour later Harry Wharton came upon Bunter again, still canvassing for sixpences, and he was using the same persuasive eloquence.

"You see, young Higgs, you're practically certain to be among the first six."

"Oh, right you are!" said young Higgs. "The first six share in the feed?"

"That's it; and a jolly good feed too."

"Well, there's my tanner!"

"Good! Hallo, Stott, are you going to put your name down, too? Oh, is it you, Wharton? I wish you wouldn't bump me on the shoulder like that."

"Look here," said Wharton, half laughing and half angry, "I understand you're going to stand a feed to the first six subscribers?"

"Yes, certainly. Shall I put your name down? You're practically certain to be among the first six, and—"

"How many names have you got down already?"

"Only eight or nine, and—"

"Yet you're telling fellows that they're certain to be among the first six," said Wharton wrathfully.

"Oh, no; I said practically certain. You must have heard me use the word 'practically,'" said Bunter. "I hope you don't think I would deceive anybody for the sake of a paltry tanner or two."

"If you've got eight or nine names down, the fellows can't be among the first six."

"They take their chance of that, of course. I warn them that they will take their chance. It's a kind of competition, you know. But, of course, you don't understand these things. You haven't studied the business of editing a paper."

"Look here, what you were saying to Higgs amounts to a swindle."

"Oh, really, Wharton! I'm willing to make allowances for jealousy, but I really think you ought to stop short of saying things like that. This is business, you know."

"You get a sixpence out of a chap by telling him untruths."

"Nonsense! This is business," said Bunter feebly. It was evident that with Bunter the word business, like charity, covered a multitude of sins.

"Oh, it's no good talking to you!" said Wharton, in disgust. "I imagine the fellows will lick you if the feed doesn't materialise, that's all; and serve you jolly well right!"

"They've no right to grumble if they're not among the first six—"

Wharton walked away without listening to any more. Bunter blinked with indignation, and went in search of more subscribers. He found one or two, and when he counted his ill-gotten gains he found that he had ten sixpences in addition to the six shillings he had raised in No. 1 Study.

"Well, that's not so bad," he murmured. "I suppose I had better go and get in the stuff for the feed now. I'd rather spend the money on producing the first number of the paper, but I must keep my word to the subscribers, of course. I never like a fellow going back on his word, and I have the responsibility of an editor upon my shoulders now. Besides, I feel as if I need a snack myself."

And Billy Bunter made his way to the school shop.

Mrs. Mimble looked at him with an expression of considerable disfavour, which slowly changed to an agreeable smile as Billy Bunter produced eleven shillings in silver from his trousers' pocket, and slapped it down on the counter.

"I'm in funds, Mrs. Mimble," Bunter remarked. "I'm not going to spend all this. I just want enough for a little spread. I don't owe you anything; you had your account

out of my five-pound note the other day. Lemme see, have you any of those nice little pies with the flaky crusts?"

"Yes; some nice ones, fresh made, Master Bunter."

"Then I'll start with those."

Billy Bunter started with the pies. He continued with various other comestibles, and the rate at which he travelled through them was amazing.

Mrs. Mimble served him with great willingness. She was glad to do so—to the exact extent of eleven shillings.

Credit found no favour in the tuck-shop keeper's eyes, especially when Bunter was the customer. Bunter had once paid up an account, through a mistake, and since then Mrs. Mimble had used no other, so to speak. But while Bunter had cash, Bunter was a welcome customer.

Mrs. Mimble watched pies and puddings, preserves and cakes and jellies disappearing with benevolent satisfaction.

Billy Bunter was hungry; he usually was. Money always burned in Bunter's pockets. If he had had five pounds one morning he would have had nothing by evening.

He ate and he drank with a growing enjoyment in his fat face, and it was not till his appetite slackened that it suddenly entered his mind that he must be approaching the limit of his funds.

"I say, Mrs. Mimble, how much does that come to?" he asked.

"Nine-and-ninepence," said Mrs. Mimble grimly.

"Oh, dear, I had no idea that it was anything like that! Are you quite sure you haven't made a mistake?"

"Quite sure, Master Bunter."

"I suppose you wouldn't mind having half in cash, and putting the rest down to the account, Mrs. Mimble?" said Bunter persuasively. "I'm a jolly good customer, you know."

"You are a bad customer if you don't pay for what you have," said Mrs. Mimble. "If you don't pay when you have the money I shall complain to the doctor."

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble, there's the money! I think you are a selfish woman. It's pretty plain that I sha'n't be able to stand that feed now; you can't stand a feed on one-and-threepence. Perhaps I had better have some of those cream puffs and some more jellies, and some tarts, and some gingerpop."

The one-and-threepence did not last long. Eleven shillings clinked into Mrs. Mimble's till, and Bunter, casting a longing glance at the eatables now beyond his reach, turned to leave the tuckshop. There was a shout as he did so.

"Here he is!"

Skinner and Russell and Trevor rushed in. Skinner laid hands on Bunter, and jerked him back as he tried to scuttle out. The fat junior was jammed back against the counter, and three excited faces glared at him.

"Where's that feed?"

"Eh, what feed?"

"The feed for the first six subscribers."

"Ah, I'm sorry about that, Skinner! Your name wasn't in the first six, so you don't come in, and it's the same with you, Russell, and you, Trevor."

"Faith, and here he is!"

Micky Desmond rushed in, and there were half a dozen juniors behind him. Billy Bunter turned pale as he recognised the whole of his subscribers, to each of whom he had assured the certainty of being among the first six.

"I—I say, you fellows, I want to speak to Wharton particularly. I'll see you later—"

"Faith, and you'll see us now!" said Micky Desmond.

"Where's that feed?"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Desmond, but your name wasn't among the first six—"

"Where was mine?" shouted Morgan.

"Lemme see. Yes, you were seventh, Morgan. I'm sincerely sorry—"

"And mine?" yelled Ogilvy.

"Er—you were ninth—"

"And mine? And mine?"

"Tenth, old chap, and eleventh—"

"Then there weren't any first six!" roared Skinner.

"Oh—er—yes there were six, of course—the first six!"

"Then tell us their names."

"Their—their names!" stammered Bunter, fairly driven into a corner at last. "Did you say their names, Ogilvy?"

"Yes, I did, you young welsher!"

"I—I've got them down in my notebook. I'll run up to the study and get it, and—"

"No, you won't!" said Ogilvy, pushing the fat junior violently back against the counter. "You know jolly well you meant to swindle us!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy!"

"Just hand over the tin! Where is it?"

"I—I—I haven't any left. I've been spending it on the—the production of the paper, you know, in—in—er—nourishment for the—the editor, you know!"

"The young sweep! He's blued the tin and scoffed all the grub!" said Skinner. "I had a suspicion that he was doing us all the time! Bump him!"

"I—I say, you fellows— Oh, really, I—I—I—"
Bump!

Billy Bunter went down violently into a sitting position, and Ogilvy seized a couple of jam-tarts and jammed them on his fat face. Skinner followed it up by emptying a bottle of lemonade over his head, and then the fun, having fairly started, each of the disappointed subscribers lent a willing hand. Bulstrode slammed down a half-crown on the counter to pay for the damage, and the juniors took all that half-crown's worth out of Billy Bunter. They jammed him, they marmaladed him, they lemonaded, soda-watered, and gingerbeered him. They filled his mouth with raw eggs, and his hair with treacle and jam. They squeezed oranges down his back, they anointed him with everything that was sticky, and rolled him in the sawdust. By the time they had finished, Billy Bunter was wondering whether he was alive or dead, on his head or his heels. They trooped away finally, leaving him sitting in the sawdust, absolutely dazed and flabbergasted.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Famous Four looked in to see what the excitement was about. "My hat! What is that?"

"It's Bunter!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Great Scott!"
Billy Bunter staggered to his feet.

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"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Br-r-r! Gr-r-r! This is what comes of trying to help fellows—of trying to make the study top study in the Remove! And you stand there cackling! I've had enough of it! If you want a school paper you can jolly well run it yourself, that's all! I'm jolly well going to chuck it! Yah! You cackling asses! I wash my hands of it!"

"You'd better wash the rest of yourself while you're about it!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter, feeling as if life were not worth living, crawled out of the tuck-shop, followed by the laughter of the Remove chums; and it was a long, long time, after endless rubbing and scrubbing, before the stickiness was removed from the clothes and the hair and the fat face of the Greyfriars editor.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled "The Greyfriars Bun Fight," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet Library" in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

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A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUMÉ 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 to Woolchester. Arrived there, Ronald unfortunately manages to fall foul of Bagot, a bullying sergeant, and Foxey Williams, a private, on the first day, and so he comes in for a rough time. On the night that he is doing his first sentry-go, Ian Chenys, his unscrupulous step-brother, enters the regiment as a subaltern, and recognises the sentry. After a stormy interview Ian savagely assaults Ronald, and flees at the approach of the guard. Ronald is discovered bruised and bleeding, but, refusing any explanation, is sent to the guard-room. In the morning Lieutenant Bob Fairly, who suspects Ian's share in the business, compels him to go and see Ronald tried.

(Now go on with the story.)

Before the Colonel.

Lieutenant Bob slipped his arm through the elbow of his slim young comrade, and urged him forth in such a way that Ian could only hold back with an obvious struggle.

"The fact is," Bob Fairly was saying to himself, "you're a little liar, Mr. Chenys, and a precious waster besides! You took too many brandies-and-sodas last night at mess, and when you got outside in the cold night air, you started to paint things red.

"You tumbled across Chester, and, falling foul of him, you patted him, knowing he daren't hit back. Then you bolted, leaving him to get out of the mess the best way he could. You must remember all that or else you would not be so glib with your yarn of an imaginary fall, which I can swear never took place.

"You'll come along and hear your victim tried, if I have to take you there by the ear; and, by Jimmy, if you sit still and see him punished without coming out with the truth

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of the story, I'll proclaim you cad to all the mess as soon as ever I can prove it!"

And yet all the time Lieutenant Bob was smiling, and his arm was linked as affably in Ian's as if they had been bosom pals for years.

"Good-morning, sir!"

They drew themselves up stiffly and saluted as Colonel Conger stalked past, looking more like a ruffled cockatoo than ever; then Lieutenant Bob and Ian fell in behind the little big man, and followed.

Outside the orderly-room were mustered numerous groups of sergeants and men, all with business of some sort to be transacted during "office hour."

On one flank were drawn up eight or ten prisoners under an armed escort of two men and Sergeant Bagot, of the guard. Besides there were the evidences, or witnesses, in their several cases.

The whole of the motley parade came to attention at the thundered command of Sergeant-Major Tozer, as Colonel Conger approached, and no sooner had his spurs twinkled through the doorway than Bugler Midge was sounding the "Prisoners' Call!"

If Ian could have turned tail and run he would have done so. One sweeping glance along that line of crestfallen warriors showed him one who was standing pale and erect, and for a single moment his withered conscience stirred within him.

He cursed himself for a fool, but he cursed more vehemently the blundering interference of Lieutenant Bob in hustling him into this dilemma.

Flushing red and white by turns under Ronald's accusing eyes, which he knew were directed upon him, he pressed in on Lieutenant Bob's heels, and sank into a seat in the background, feeling so like a whipped dog that he could have eaten out his heart with mortification.

The harsh blare of the bugle ceased.

"First prisoner, take your cap off! Escort and prisoners! T'chun! Right turn! Quick march! Left wheel! In you

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

go!" The voice of the sergeant-major sounded from without in a series of rumbling explosions. "Halt!"

The first prisoner found himself facing the seat of justice, his escort on either side of him, and the witnesses on the left.

Still Ian dared not look up until the man's name was called. It was not Ronald's, and he raised his eyes, only to find Lieutenant Bob looking blandly at him.

The first culprit was a thin, scraggy youth, heavy-eyed and shame-faced, who had, nevertheless, given the three burly regimental police a brisk quarter of an hour's work to get him to the guard-room.

The charge against him was "drunk and resisting," and there was a second indictment for "creating a disturbance in his cell."

"Fined ten shillings," said the colonel, when he heard that this was the weedy youth's second offence. "Next!"

Feet tramped out, and others tramped in.

"No. 3002, Private Ronald Chester. Neglect of duty when on guard. Captain Carthew, Colour-Sergeant Jones!" announced the sergeant-major, the last-named being the witnesses.

Ian had made up his mind to keep his eyes glued on the ground before him; but he found them lifting inch by inch under some strange power. Again they encountered Lieutenant Bob's gleaming monocle, shining like some weird, accusing eye, so Ian thought. Then he mustered up courage to steal a glance to where his step-brother was standing, to try and read what resolve was in his mind.

If he betrayed him, Ian would have to lie. What falsehood could he tell to clear himself of a charge which he knew well would mean his dismissal from the Service? It ought to be easy enough to refute the accusation of a man who had been kicked out of decent society already as a cheat.

"Now, Captain Carthew, give your evidence," said Colonel Conger, after glancing at the prisoner.

Captain Carthew told his story with a mercy due in a large measure to Lieutenant Bob's remarks of half an hour before, and Jones, as battalion orderly sergeant, tried to make matters as light as he could.

"Was this man in drink?" demanded the colonel, in amazement.

"No, sir," answered Jones.

"Very extraordinary," snorted the colonel, who, out of his experience, knew of only one root to all Army crime. "We'll hear now what the prisoner has to say. Private Chester, you have heard the evidence. What is your version?"

"I told Captain Carthew last night, sir, that I preferred to keep silence on this matter. That is still my decision, and I am prepared to take the consequences."

Ronald's eyes met Ian's as he made this bold announcement, and the cheeks of the younger lad flushed from the dead white of fear to the pink of shame.

"But—but—confound it!" rapped Colonel Conger. "It's absurd, preposterous, impossible! There must be a reason, and we must have it. It is reported that voices were heard in the direction of your post, and sounds of a scuffle. You are found a few seconds later bruised and with blood on your face. Now you have the impudence to tell us that you prefer to keep silence on the matter. This won't do at all! Where's the sergeant of the guard? Why is he not down to give evidence?"

Bagot was roared for outside by the sergeant-major, and came in in a flutter.

"This man Chester was in your guard last night. Did you notice anything unusual about him before he mounted on sentry on his second relief?" demanded Colonel Conger fiercely.

Bagot felt at a decided disadvantage. If he had only heard the evidence of the others, he would have known what

to say. Still, if he could do this gentleman-ranker a bad turn, he meant to.

"Yes, sir, I thought he seemed funny," he blurted out.

"Funny! Great Jupiter, what do you mean by that? Was he under the influence of drink?"

Bagot looked wildly around.

"Yes, sir—that is, at least—" he stammered, and began to see that he was putting his foot in it.

"Yes, means yes, I suppose, without your qualifying it with 'that is, at least,'" snorted Colonel Conger, getting more ruffled than ever. "So it comes to this, Sergeant Bagot, that you had a man in your guard in a state of intoxication, and you thought fit, nevertheless, to keep him on duty. This is a serious accusation to make against yourself, isn't it?"

Bagot spluttered and stuttered, and admitted it was.

"I must consider that separately. Stand down! Sergeant-major, place that witness under arrest. We'll have the corporal of the guard in now."

Corporal Kedge entered, and stood straight and solemn as a signpost. His version was that Ronald was quiet, as he always was, but not strange, and certainly not under the influence of drink.

Colonel Conger flung his pen on the floor at this, and stamped it into splinters.

"Take the prisoner away!" he exclaimed at last. "I'll hold this case over to the last. It is preposterous, ridiculous!" And he went on bubbling and spluttering to himself, like an overful kettle on a blazing fire.

Ronald was marched out by the escort, and fell in again on the left of the prisoners still untried.

Sergeant Bagot stood near him, his blotchy face still pale with rage and fright.

"All right, you smug-faced swab, landing me in for this!" he snarled, under his breath. "If I lose my blessed stripes for this, then 'Eaven 'elp you, look out for yourself!"

Ronald ignored the threat, and looked straight to his front, while Corporal Kedge, to whom the joke at his sergeant's expense had been passed by Ronald's escort, did a quiet grin in his sleeve.

Inside the orderly-room Ian still sat fidgeting in his misery, conscious all the time that Lieutenant Bob was regarding him with that gleaming basilisk eye of his.

"Confound him, why doesn't he turn the confounded thing away?" he asked himself. "He can know nothing of the truth of all this."

The list of charges was got through at last, and the various malefactors sentenced to fine or imprisonment. Other business was dealt with, and still the case of Private Chester was not recalled.

It was only after Colonel Conger had been in private council with some of the senior officers that Ronald was marched before him again.

"You still persist in keeping silence?" demanded Colonel Conger.

"Yes, sir," answered Ronald firmly.

"Thirteen days confinement to barracks then!" said the colonel shortly; and the trial was at an end.

"Thirteen days C.B.!" exclaimed Corporal Kedge, as Ronald emerged, scarcely able to believe his good fortune. "Well, that's a rum sentence, and the lightest I ever heard of. I don't know what you were up to last night to get mauled about as you were, and it's no good asking, I suppose; but I do know this, you're the first man as ever set his back agin the old man, and come off without being skinned alive. He can't be the man he was, that's evident. Losing his teeth, perhaps, with old age."

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