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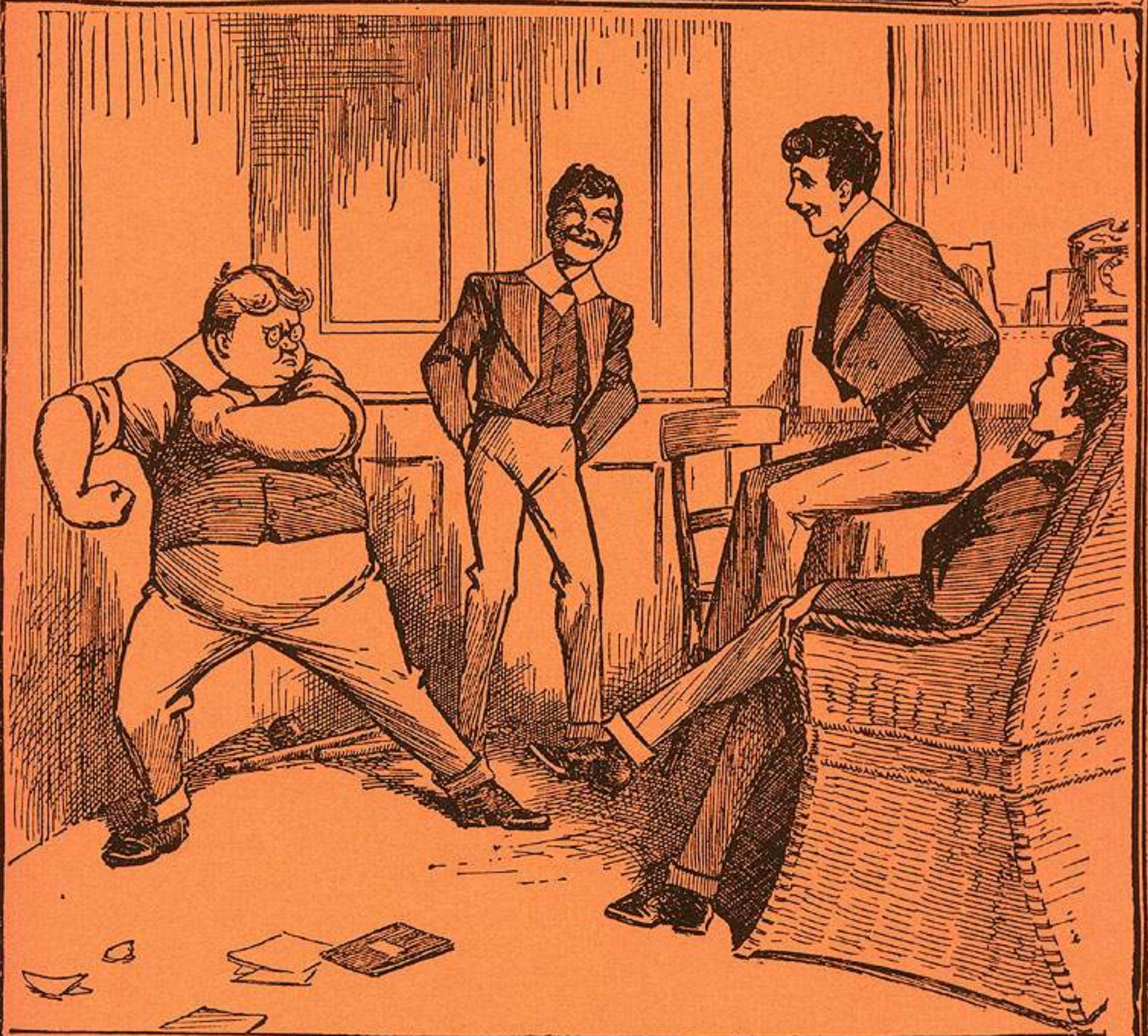
THE  
**Magnet** 1<sup>d</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

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NUMBER 83.

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By  
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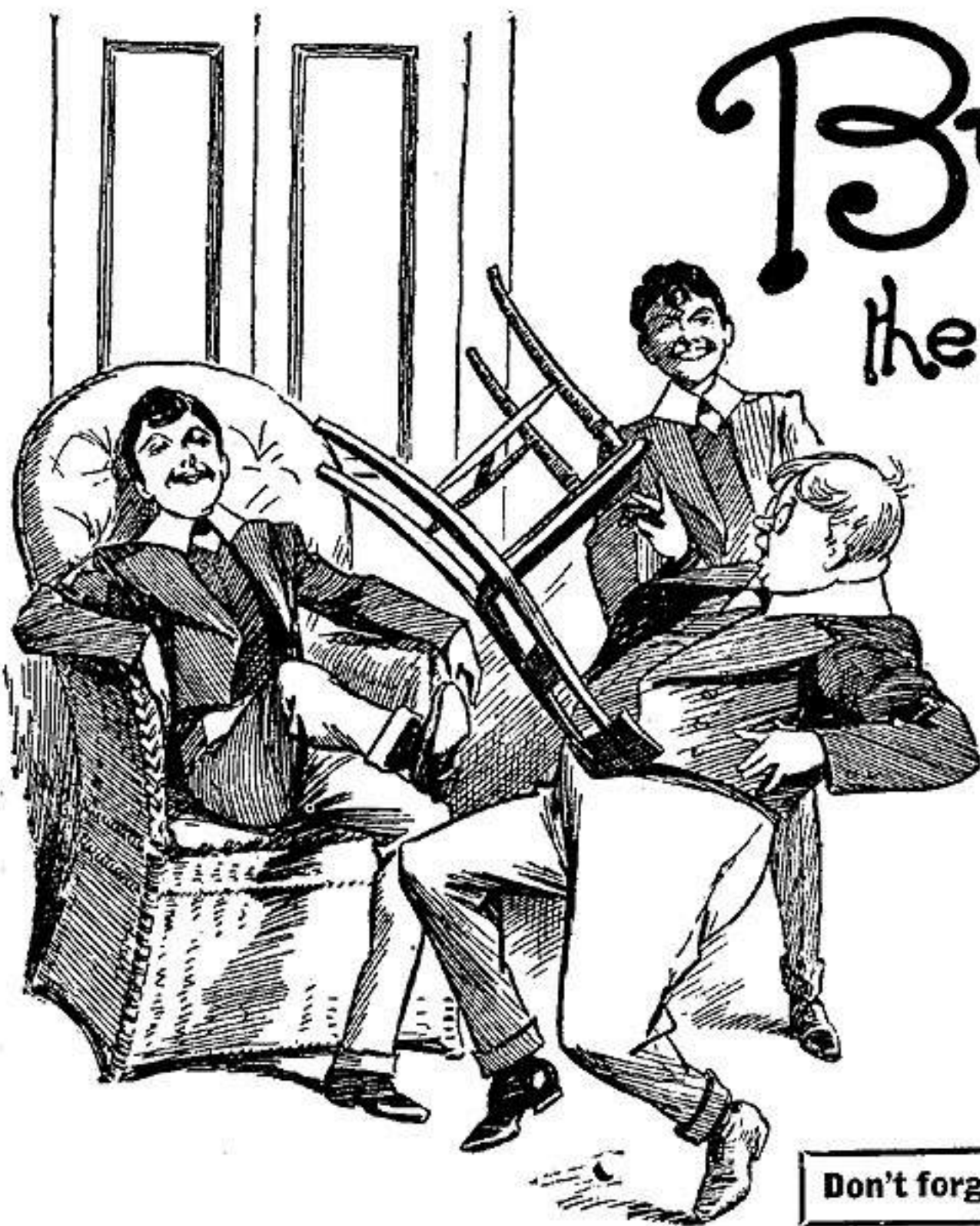
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# Bunter the Bully

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BY

**FRANK RICHARDS.**

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### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Billy Bunter in a New Role.

"I WANT you fellows to listen to me——"  
 "Rats!"  
 "I want to explain——"  
 "Bosh!"  
 "I am going to put it to you straight——"  
 "Rubbish!"  
 "Shut up, Bunter!"  
 "For the last time, will you listen, or shall I have to use violence?"  
 There was no reply to that remark. It took the chums of No. 1 Study too much by surprise.  
 Billy Bunter stood in a threatening attitude, his fat face red with annoyance, and his round eyes gleaming behind his big spectacles.  
 Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the chums of No. 1 Study in the Remove, stared at him blankly.

They were accustomed to all sorts of things from Bunter. He was an incorrigible borrower; he was an incurable romancer. He was several varieties of a worm, as Bob Cherry had expressed it.

But Bunter had never appeared in this light before. Bunter, who had been known to back down before a Third Form fag, and to pelt off helter-skelter before the smallest butcher's boy in Friardale—Bunter was standing in a warlike attitude, threatening the chums of No. 1.

Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove, and the best athlete in the Lower School at Greyfriars, looked at him. Nugent, who could have eaten Bunter in a fistical encounter, looked at him. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh looked at him, with an astounded expression transfixing his dusky face.

"Now, are you going to listen?" demanded Bunter, imagining that his threat had taken effect.

"It's real!" said Nugent faintly. "It isn't a dream. That's Bunter talking—it's the fat porpoise himself!"

"Who are you calling a porpoise?"

"You, Bunty."

"You'd better be careful what you call me, you fellows! I've had enough of the ragging I used to get in this study. I'm going to keep up my end in future!"

"Which end?"

"Oh, don't be funny! Look here, you fellows, things have got to go on a new footing now. I'm not going to stand——"

Nugent hooked his foot into the leg of a chair, and sent it spinning towards Bunter. The back of the chair unfortunately crashed upon the best-filled part of Bunter's waistcoat, and the fat junior staggered back to the door.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"Sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What did you do that for, you rotter?"

"You said you weren't going to stand, so I was offering you a chair," said Nugent blandly.

"Ow!" Bunter rubbed his waistcoat tenderly. "Ow! You beast! You've nearly winded me. Yow!"

"Go it. It sounds like a locomotive letting off steam!"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, ring off!" said Harry Wharton. "I'm trying to work."

"The ring-off-fulness would be the wheezy good idea," suggested the Nabob of Bhanipur, in his purring voice and his beautiful English.

"I say, you fellows, the time has come for a change in this study. You chaps have always lorded it over me——"

"Oh, don't talk rot, Billy. We've only kept you in your place, because you have always been such a miserable worm."

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Nugent?"

"A—a thick ear!" said Nugent dazedly.

"Yes; you're jolly near getting one, anyway!" said Bunter fiercely.

Nugent could only stare at him blankly.

"Now, you fellows," went on Bunter victoriously, "you see how matters stand. I'm not going to stand the sort of thing I used to put up with any longer. I'm not going to be of less account than any other chap in the study."

"You wouldn't be, Billy, if you were a decent chap," said Wharton. "It's because you're a fat little rotter that you're sat upon."

"Do you want a hiding, Wharton?"

"What?"

"If you don't you'd better be a bit more civil. Look here, you fellows may as well understand it once and for all. I'm the head of this study!"

"The—the head of this study!"

"Yes."

"He's off his rocker," said Nugent, in a faint voice. "I always felt that it would come to this. It's the direct result of over-feeding."

"Be careful, Nugent. I'm half inclined to lick you as it is!"

"Lick—me!"

"Yes, rather. I'm willing to live on amicable terms with every fellow in the study. But I'm not going to be put upon any longer."

"Look here, Bunter," said Wharton, in his crisp way.

"What's the game? What are you talking all this-piffle for?"

"It's not piffle; it's business. Since I've taken up boxing——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've developed a wonderful gift for it."

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"And I've licked Bob Cherry in a stand-up fight."

"Oh!" gasped Nugent. "The murder's out now! He's—he's licked Bob Cherry! Oh, hold me while I shriek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked wrathfully at the chums of the Lower Fourth. He had licked Bob Cherry in a stand-up fight, as he said, and Bob Cherry was one of the toughest fighting-men in the Remove. He had only three superiors in that line—Bulstrode, Wharton and Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire—until Bunter licked him. Now, of course, Bunter made a fourth.

That the fight had been a mere piece of "rotting"; that Bob had allowed himself to be licked for a huge hoax upon the stupidest junior in the Remove, was perfectly well-known to the whole Form. Bunter had been told so, but he did not believe it. He fancied himself as a boxer, and it was very gratifying to think that he had licked one of the best fighting men in the Form; and, like most of us, he contrived to believe what it pleased him to believe.

The conviction was firmly fixed in his mind that he had fairly and squarely licked Bob Cherry, and he regarded explanations to the contrary simply as attempts to lower his prestige and minimise his exploits.

His illusion was encouraged by Bob Cherry, who was a confirmed practical joker. Ever since that memorable contest in the barn, Bob Cherry had made it a point to treat Bunter with an exaggerated air of respect, and to stand in fear and trembling if the fat junior hectored him.

The fellows who saw Bunter hectoring a big junior who could

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have knocked him to pieces with a blow would roar with laughter; but Bunter was quite satisfied with himself.

And as the persuasion that he was a great fighting-man was more and more firmly fixed in Bunter's mind, it developed the worst traits in his character; not a very pleasant character to start with.

Bunter was a little bit of a sneak, and a little bit of a poltroon, and those attributes, when united with great physical strength usually produce a bully. Billy Bunter's prowess was imaginary but it was real to him. Hence Bunter was fast developing into a bully.

It was amazing to his study-mates.

It was hard for them to catch on; but as Bunter proceeded, the real state of the case dawned upon their minds. They had noticed, for the past few days, a certain truculence in Bunter's manner; but as he always had some nonsense or other in his mind, they had taken no particular notice of it.

The merriment with which his remarks were received, naturally made Bunter feel very annoyed.

He blinked at the chums of the Remove and clenched his fists.

"Look here, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'd better be careful——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter pushed back his cuffs.

"Very well. Which of you will come on first?"

"C-c-come on?"

"Certainly. I'm going to lick you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha-ha-ha-fulness is terrific."

"Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! You're afraid!"

"Oh, dear! Ha, ha, ha! Oh!"

"Cowards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter glared at them wrathfully and scornfully. They were rolling in their chairs in helpless merriment, but to Bunter it was perfectly clear that they were putting it on, because they didn't care to come to close quarters.

"Well," he said, turning towards the door, "I despise you. You're a set of cowards. I'll jolly well let all the Remove know the kind of worms you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter went out and slammed the door. Harry Wharton rocked to and fro in his chair, breathless with laughter. Hurree Singh was cackling away like an alarm-clock, and Nugent, utterly overcome, rolled on the hearthrug and kicked up his feet.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### "To Your Knees!"

**B**ILLY BUNTER went down the Remove passage with a frowning brow and a swagger in his walk. His shoulders were thrown well back, his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, and his fat chin was well up in the air. Bunter was taking his new role seriously, and living up to it. Snoop of the Remove came hastily out of his study, and ran fairly into the majestic Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

Billy Bunter reeled against the opposite wall. He could not get his fat hands out of his tight trousers' pockets in time to save himself with them, and so his head struck the wall with a crack.

Bunter gave a roar.

"Ow! Oh! Gerrooh! Oh, really, Russell——"

"Sorry!" gasped Snoop. "Why don't you look where you are going?"

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"Oh, it's you, Snoop!"  
 "Yes. You've knocked all my wind out, you short-sighted owl!" said Snoop, puffing.  
 Billy Bunter frowned.  
 He remembered that he was a great fighting-man, and he had been hurt. Snoop, too, was a wretched coward, the sneak of the Form, and he had been known to run from an angry fag in the Third. Bunter's courage rose at the thought. Filled with new ideas of his own importance, and determined to be cock of the walk in the Remove, he thought he could not possibly start upon a more favourable object than Snoop.  
 "What's that?" he demanded sharply. "What did you say?"

"Short-sighted owl!" grunted Snoop.  
 The next moment he gave a yell.  
 Bunter's knuckles rapped on his nose, and he staggered back with the water shooting into his eyes.  
 "Ow—ow—wow—why—"  
 "Take that!" said Bunter impressively.  
 "Ow—why—you—"  
 "I've had enough cheek from you Remove kids," said Bunter, while the astonished Snoop gaped at him with wide-open mouth. "You called me an owl!"  
 "Why, you—you boiled owl—you silly owl!"  
 "Put up your fists!" said Bunter.  
 "What?"  
 "I'm going to lick you!"  
 "Lick me!"  
 "Yes. Ready?"  
 "Oh, you're off your rocker!" gasped Snoop. "You couldn't lick a worm! You're afraid of the smallest fag in the Third, you know you are! You've been drinking or something."  
 "I've licked Bob Cherry, and—"  
 Snoop gave a snort.  
 "You utter ass! He was only rotting all the time."  
 "Nothing of the sort. I've challenged him since, and he's refused to meet me again. He says he couldn't possibly put up anything like a show against a chap like me."  
 "He was fooling you."  
 "I'll jolly soon show you whether he was fooling me. Put up your fists!"  
 "I—I—"

As a matter of fact, Snoop was even a greater coward than Bunter, and he would not willingly have fought a child of seven. He backed away from the warlike Bunter, waving his hands deprecatingly.  
 "It's all right, Bunter—I say—"  
 "It's not all right. You've insulted me."  
 "I—I didn't mean to—"  
 "Are you going to fight?" roared Bunter, his courage rising higher as Snoop retreated more and more.  
 "N-n-n-no. I—you see—"  
 "Come on, you coward!"  
 "I—I—"

"Then you'll jolly well apologise," said Bunter severely.  
 "Before all these fellows, too!"  
 The altercation in the passage had brought many of the Removites out of their studies to see what was the matter. Most of them were laughing.

"I—I didn't mean to insult you!" panted Snoop.  
 "That's not enough. You're going to apologise, on your knees," added Bunter, as an after-thought.  
 Snoop looked round helplessly. Bunter's determination made him think that the fat junior must really have developed some new fighting powers; anyway, he was not the sort of fellow to put Bunter the bully to the test.  
 "Better do it, Snoopey," said Bob Cherry gravely. "You know what a fearful fellow Bunter is when he's roused. You remember the awful licking he gave me in the barn the other day."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.  
 Bob remained perfectly solemn.  
 "If we hadn't had the gloves on, some damage would have been done," he said. "Bunter is simply a terror when he's roused. My idea is, that he ought to fight it out with Wharton who's to be captain of the Remove."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Better knuckle under, Snoopey, before he slays you."  
 Snoop's knees were already knocking together.  
 "I say, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking round, "I'm going to make an example of Snoop. I haven't been treated with proper respect in this Form, because I'm a—a peaceable sort of chap. I can lick anybody in the Form. I've challenged Harry Wharton, and he's crawled out of it."  
 "Amazing!"  
 "I'm going to make an example of Snoop. I'm jolly well not going to stand any nonsense in the future. To your knees!" roared Bunter suddenly, turning upon the unhappy sneak of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha! To your knees!" roared Bob Cherry.  
 Snoop sank upon his knees.  
 "Now apologise," said Bunter ferociously.  
 "I—I—I—ap—apologise," mumbled Snoop.  
 "Humbly?"

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"HARRY WHARTON & CO. AFLOAT."

"Yes."  
 "Horribly humbly?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Then you can get up," said Bunter, with a wave of the hand. "I pardon you. All you fellows had better take this as a warning. I'm not going to be trifled with."  
 And Bunter strode away. He left the crowd in a roar.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Dip for Bunter.

**H**AZELDENE of the Remove came out of his study with a clean collar on, his necktie tied quite straight, and with gloves on his hands. Billy Bunter stopped and blinked at him as he came downstairs. Bunter noted the traces of unusual care in Hazeldene's attire, and guessed the cause.

"I say, Vaseline—"  
 Hazeldene did not stop. He left the School House, and strode across the old Close towards the gates. Billy Bunter ran after him, his feet pattering quickly on the path, his fat face red with exertion.

"I say, Vaseline! I want to speak to you."  
 "Oh, rats! I'm in a hurry," said Hazeldene.  
 "You'd better stop, when I speak to you," said Bunter threateningly.

"Eh! What?"  
 "Are you looking for a thick ear, Vaseline?"  
 "A—a—a thick ear!"  
 "Yes. I'm not standing any more nonsense. I'd just as soon give you a thick ear as look at you," said Bunter. "I want to speak to you, so stop. I suppose you're going over to Cliff House to see your sister."

"Yes," said Hazeldene, looking curiously at the fat junior. He was aware of Billy Bunter's infatuation with himself as a pugilist, and was wondering whether it was worth while to roll him in the grass. He didn't want to get any knocks just before going over to Miss Penelope Primrose's School for Girls. Bunter might get in a blow or two before he was convinced that he could not fight; and Hazeldene didn't want to risk appearing at Cliff House with a black eye or a swollen nose. So he decided to give Bunter his head, so to speak.

"I'll come with you," said Bunter.  
 "You jolly well won't!"  
 "Why not?"  
 "Marjorie doesn't like you," said Hazeldene bluntly. "Clara doesn't, either. Nobody likes you. You're a fat, conceited toad!"

Billy Bunter pushed back his cuffs.  
 "Come on!"  
 "Oh, bosh!"  
 Hazeldene walked on towards the gates. Bunter ran after him and caught him by the sleeve.

"Hold on! I'm going to lick you!"  
 "Look here," said Hazeldene impatiently, "I can't thrash you now because I'm going to see my sister. I'll lick you when I come back. Hands off!"

"You know jolly well Marjorie would be glad to see me," said Bunter. "I've seen brothers like you before, jealous when a decent-looking chap comes near their sisters. I'm jolly well coming."

"Oh, don't be a fat idiot," said Hazeldene impatiently. "I'm not taking anybody with me, if I did, I should take Wharton or Cherry."

"Take me."  
 "You haven't been invited."  
 "I can make that all right with them when I get there," said Bunter, with a self-satisfied smirk.

Hazeldene was strongly inclined to hit out straight from the shoulder, instead of that, however, a new idea came into his mind, and he grinned.

"Well, I don't want a row now," he said. "Come if you like, but remember it's on your own responsibility. If anything happens to you on the way, you've only got yourself to thank."

"I don't see what could happen to me, Vaseline."  
 "Don't call me Vaseline," said Hazeldene sharply. "I don't like it."

"Lump it, then," said Bunter, in his most bullying tone. "I'll call you what I like. I'm not going to stand any more nonsense from anybody in the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at."  
 "You will—later."

And Hazeldene strode out of the gates, Bunter's little fat legs going like clockwork to keep pace with him.

There was a grim expression on Hazeldene's face. He didn't want a fight, naturally, just before paying a visit to a girls' school. But to be "bounced" into taking the fat junior there to tea was a little too much. It was more than likely

that something would happen to Bunter on the road. Just outside the gates of Greyfriars they met Bulstrode, who frowned darkly as he saw them.

"Going over to Cliff House now, Hazeldene?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You told me you couldn't take anybody with you."

"I can't! Bunter's coming without my permission."

Hazeldene closed one eye slightly, and Bulstrode grinned. Billy Bunter was too shortsighted to see anything of that.

"Come on, Hazeldene," he exclaimed, "don't stop here talking to that chap! I'm getting rather peckish, as a matter of fact."

"Right-ho!" said Hazeldene cheerfully, following the fat junior and leaving Bulstrode staring after them. "We'll take the short cut by the priory!"

"I don't know," said Bunter dubiously. "You have to cross the stream by the plank that way, and I don't half like that."

"You only have to be careful."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, come on; you don't want to be late for tea, do you?"

That was a sufficiently strong appeal to Billy Bunter. He hurried on as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. Through the thick woods, across the public footpath, a stream about eight or nine feet wide ran murmuring and rippling, crossed by a plank bridge. It was a single plank, resting upon big stones at either end, and perfectly secure to a careful walker. Bunter was nervous, and he was shortsighted, and he was above the average weight. He did not like that plank.

Hazeldene ran lightly across it to the other side, leaving the thick plank rocking after him. Bunter blinked at it.

"Oh, really, Vaseline, you might be a little more careful. The beastly thing isn't steady at all now."

"Oh, rats! You're afraid!"

"I'm not afraid, only I don't want to get a ducking. Hold the plank your end."

"Rubbish!"

"I'll jolly well give you a licking when I get across, Vaseline."

"Oh, bosh! You couldn't lick a rabbit!"

"What!"

"You fat little duffer! Go back!"

"I'm not going back."

"You're not coming to Cliff House," said Hazeldene, laughing. "I wouldn't take a slimy toad like you there for anything. Better drop this new wheeze of bullying, Bunt. It doesn't suit you. And you might get hurt."

Bunter breathed hard through his nose.

"You—you worm!" he ejaculated. "You think you're safe on that side of the water, or you wouldn't dare to jaw at me like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly soon get across, and then just you look out," growled Bunter. "I'll knock you into the middle of next week. When you get to Cliff House, the girls will think you've been through a threshing machine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter said no more. Breathing wrath, he started across the plank. Hazeldene watched him with a peculiar grin till he reached the middle.

Then he suddenly brought down his right foot with a tremendous stamp upon his end of the plank.

The plank jumped, and Bunter gave a yell. His foot slipped along the plank, and he sat down upon it and rolled sideways into the water.

There was a tremendous splash as he disappeared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hazeldene.

"Boo—groo—ooof!"

Bunter's head and shoulders came out of the water. It was only three or four feet deep. The fat junior gasped like a landed fish, and scrambled back to the bank. He tore frantically at the reeds in his efforts to drag himself ashore.

Hazeldene roared with laughter. Bunter dragged himself out, drenched and dripping, and gouged the water out of his eyes and snorted.

"Ow!" he gasped. "I—I'm nearly drowned! I shall catch my death of cold, I know I shall. I'm perfectly sure of it. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you grinning beast! I'll lick you—I'll pulverise you! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Are you coming over the plank?"

"Ow! No! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll—I'll—lick you—ow!"

Hazeldene, laughing loudly, turned and strode on his way. Bunter approached the plank again, but hesitated. It looked none too steady. He could not overtake Hazeldene now. And he certainly could not present himself at Cliff House in such a state.

With a deep discontented grunt, the fat junior turned round and commenced a long and dismal tramp back to Greyfriars.

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## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### The Bully of the Remove.

"M-M-M-MY only hat!"

"What is it?"

"Davy Jones, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter crawled into the house, feeling as if life were not worth living. He had been thoroughly soaked by his dip and he was simply running water. As he entered the house, his boots squelched dismally, and he blinked wrathfully through his damp spectacles.

"My hat! He's been having a bath with his clothes on," said Skinner, giggling.

Bob Cherry shook his head gravely.

"Oh, no. Bunter's not been having a bath. He never does. It was an accident. It is always an accident if Bunter gets near clean water."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The accidentfulness has been terrific," murmured Hurreo Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I've been chucked into the water!" growled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was that beast Vaseline. I'm going to give him a licking when he comes back. I'm jolly wet."

"You look it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Here, you Snoop!"

"W-what do you want?" said Snoop nervously.

"Come and help me change. I shall want my things wrung out, and you may as well do it. Come up to the dorm."

Snoop hesitated, and the Remove stared. Bunter was coming out strong. The Removites never ventured to fag even the Second Form; and here was Bunter fagging one of the Remove itself.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Let him rip!"

And they allowed the fat junior to "rip." Snoop, after a hesitating glance round, followed Bunter to the dormitory. There the new tyrant of the Remove set him to work.

It was a novel sensation to Bunter to be fagged for, and he enjoyed it to the full, and made the most of it. He made Snoop wring out his clothes, and clean his boots, and bring him a change, and help him on with them.

Snoop did it all with burning eyes. He had not sufficient courage to stand up for his independence, even with such a fellow as Bunter to deal with; but he was feeling very savage and sullen all the same.

And Bunter was not a kind master, either. The more Snoop gave in, the more Bunter assumed bullying airs, till at the finish he capped matters by boxing Snoop's ears.

"Blessed if I can stand your stupidity!" said Bunter, as he dealt the unfortunate sneak of the Remove a sounding smack. "Take that!"

Snoop took it. His eyes burned, but he said nothing.

Bunter, feeling considerably refreshed by his change, and relieved in his mind by his indulgence in the novel luxury of bullying, went downstairs. Snoop shook his fist after him from the door of the dormitory.

"You worm!" muttered Snoop. "You miserable worm! You wait!"

Careless of Snoop and his resentment, Billy Bunter descended the stairs. He went into the common-room with his usual swagger, and a general chuckle greeted him.

Bunter the bully was a novelty. Bunter the hypnotist, Bunter the boxer had been funny; but Bunter as a bully simply brought down the house, so to speak. The Remove entered into the thing as a huge joke.

Bob Cherry was the greatest offender. He seemed to take a delight in abasing himself before the fat junior. He could have knocked Bunter into a cocked hat with one blow, and all the Form knew it. But Bob Cherry kept up the pretence of regarding the Falstaff of the Remove with terror.

"Feeling damp?" asked Bob, as the fat junior came in.

Bunter sniffed.

"None of your cheek, young Cherry!"

"Certainly not, my lord."

"Go and get me a chair," said Bunter, in a domineering tone.

"Certainly!"

Bob Cherry obediently fetched the chair; Bunter sat down in it and stretched out his fat little legs. He adjusted his spectacles upon his fat nose, and blinked disdainfully round the room.

"Get me a cushion!" he said.

"Anything else?"

"No; look sharp!"

Bob Cherry brought the cushion.

"Put it behind my head," said Bunter. "Down behind the shoulders, you fool! Don't let me have to tell you twice."

Bob Cherry obeyed quietly.

An irresistible chuckle burst from the Removites as they

looked on. Bob Cherry had squeezed out a whole tube of seccotine upon the cushion as he placed it behind Bunter and the fat junior settled back unconsciously upon the mass of stickiness. In a few minutes the cushion would be hermetically sealed to his jacket. Bunter gave the grinning juniors a haughty look, quite unconscious of the cause of their mirth.

"Oh, stop that cackling!" he said. "I can't stand a row. Have you got the latest number of 'Pluck.' Skinner?"

"Yes; I haven't read it yet."

"Well, I want it."

"Here you are," said Skinner obediently, handing his paper to Bunter. "There's a story in it about a chap like you—a chap who was brave, and handsome, and whom everybody was fond of."

Bunter grunted and took the paper. He did not read it, however. Bunter was not fond of reading, unless he could get some lurid American "horrible." He was content to sit where he was and enjoy the novelty of his new reign.

The fat junior was tired after his painful experience and the long walk, and he soon fell asleep in his chair. He was awakened some time later by the sound of voices near him.

"I suppose Bunter will nearly kill him."

It was Bob Cherry's voice. Bunter blinked at the speakers. They were Cherry, Nugent, and Wun Lung, the little Chinese. Bunter was too shortsighted to notice that they saw his eyes open, and exchanged glances. He blinked at them, and affected to slumber, for Bunter was never above playing the eavesdropper.

"I suppose so," said Nugent.

"It's rough on Hazeldene."

"Yes; especially as his sister is coming over to see him to-morrow."

"Amazing Bunter developing as a fighting man like this, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather. He's a terror."

"Perhaps we could beg Hazeldene off. Bunter's as good-tempered and generous as he is brave, you know."

Nugent seemed to be about to choke.

"No-es," said he. "So he is. What can we do then?"

"S'possee we standee feed?" suggested Wun Lung, the little Chinese junior, who was Bob Cherry's study-mate, with Mark Linby, in No. 13. "S'possee we standee Buntel big feed, puttee him in good tempel."

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you awake, Bunter?"

"I've just woke up, Cherry. I'm jolly hungry."

"Supper soon!" said Nugent.

Bunter snorted.

"No bread-and cheese and weak cocoa for me," he said contemptuously. "The school shop's not closed yet, is it?"

"Oh no."

"Well, I'm going to have a feed. Has Hazeldene come in yet?"

"Yes."

"Where is he? I'm going to give him a big licking."

"Won't you let him off?" said Bob Cherry pleadingly.

"No, I won't."

"Be a decent chap, Bunter, and let him off this time. Remember how young he is."

"I'll jolly well give you another hiding, too, Cherry, if I have any of your cheek. I'm going to lick Hazeldene."

And Billy Bunter rose from his chair. The cushion at his back, stuck fast to his jacket, rose with him, but Bunter did not notice it.

"Look here, Bunter, will you let Hazeldene off if we stand you a feed?" said Bob.

Bunter appeared to reflect.

"Well, make it a decent one," he said.

"Come on, then."

And Bob Cherry solemnly led the way to the door. In the passage the juniors passed Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch stared at the fat junior in amazement. What Bunter could possibly be carrying a cushion on his shoulders for, the Remove-master could not imagine.

"Bunter!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter.

"What are you carrying that cushion about in that ridiculous manner for?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Cushion, sir?"

"Yes; what do you mean?"

"M-a-n-mean, sir?"

"Don't repeat my words, boy. What do you mean by carrying a cushion in that absurd manner?"

"Ma-a-anner, sir!" stammered Bunter, who did not know what in the world his Form-master was driving at.

Mr. Quelch frowned heavily.

"Bunter, I presume you are imitating a parrot, in repeating my remarks, from sheer impertinence."

"N-n-n-no, sir. But—but I'm not carrying a cushion, sir."

"You are carrying a cushion on your shoulders."

"On my s-s-shoulders, sir!" gasped Bunter.

He groped over his shoulders, and felt the cushion there. He pulled at it, and succeeded in pulling the back of his jacket up over his head.

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Mr. Quelch watched him sternly.  
"That is a most ridiculous trick, Bunter."  
"I—I—I didn't know it was there, sir. It's—it's stuck to me."

"Absurd! How can it be stuck to you?" exclaimed the Form-master, taking hold of the pillow and giving it a wrench, that brought Bunter spinning round him like a humming top. "Dear me! It is indeed stuck."

"Ow! wow!"

"Let me try, sir," said Bob Cherry, demurely. "I think there must have been some seccotine or something spilt over the cushion, sir."

"Dear me! It is very probable."

"Lend a hand, Nugent, will you?"

"Certainly."

And Bob Cherry and Nugent laid violent hands upon Bunter. The fat junior gave a howl as they dragged his jacket right over his head, and nearly up-ended him.

"Yow! Leggo!"

"We're trying to get the cushion off."

"Ow! Leave it alone."

Wrench! wrench!

"Ow! wow! yow!"

"Go it, Nugent!"

"Right-ho—I think it's coming!"

"Hard as you can!"

"What ho!"

They wrenched again with all their force. Bunter was dragged helplessly to and fro, staggering and gasping and protesting.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch; "Perhaps you had better—"

"It's coming, sir."

It was indeed coming. There was a sound of violent tearing, and the cushion came away. Unfortunately the greater part of the back of Bunter's jacket came with it. The fat junior staggered away and fell upon his hands and knees, and Nugent and Cherry sat down on the floor, with the cushion and the back of Bunter's jacket in their grasp.

"Ow! Oh, really, you fellows! Ow!"

"It is your fault Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "You ought to be more sensible. Take that cushion back where it belongs, Cherry. The damage done to it will be charged in your bill, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Enough."

And Mr. Quelch strode away. Bunter felt round his back, where he could feel the draught very plainly.

"Ow! my jacket's torn."

"Nevel mindee," murmured Wun Lung. "Comee and feedee."

That invitation was not to be resisted. Bunter followed the Chinese junior with a big patch of white shirt showing at his back, and followed by grins from whoever he passed on the way.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Something Like a Feed.

**W**UN LUNG the Chinese, had more pocket money than any other junior at Greyfriars, not excepting even the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur. He was very free with it, too, and it flowed like water as long as it lasted. When he stood a feed, he could be very princely about it. Bunter's eyes were glistening behind his spectacles as they entered the tuckshop. It was nearly time for Mrs. Mumble to close, and she did not look particularly pleased to see Bunter. Bunter was not a paying customer.

Wun Lung, however, was a customer of another order, and the good dame brightened up considerably when he extracted a sovereign from the folds of his voluminous garments.

"Please feedee Buntel," said Wun Lung, in his murmuring Oriental voice; "Givee Buntel all he wantee to eat."

"I say, Wun Lung, that's jolly decent of you."

"You lettee off Hazeldene."

"Oh, yes, I'll let him off."

And Bunter began to feed.

Bunter could do a great deal in that line when he let himself go, and he did let himself go now, at top speed. He sat at one of the little tables in the tuckshop, and Wun Lung waited on him assiduously. Bob Cherry and Nugent came in, followed by Skinner. They grinned cheerfully and helped in the waiting.

Bunter was too busy to notice the lurking grin on Wun Lung's face, or to observe that he scattered a little powder on several of the dishes.

It was a quite harmless herbal powder, but it had a certain medicinal quality, and if taken in strong doses was likely to cause painful disturbances in the inward regions.

Wun Lung graduated the doses he administered to Bunter very carefully. He wanted to give the fat junior a few twinges, but not to hurt him.

Bunter's appetite seldom slackened till he had eaten enough

for two or three; but on this occasion he slowed down unusually soon.

A strange expression crossed his fat face.

"I say, you fellows, I won't have any more of that rabbit pie," he said.

"Why, it's a ripper," said Bob Cherry.

"H'm! It seems to me it must be a bit wanky."

"Why it looks all right."

"I thought it had a taste."

Once or twice more Bunter expressed doubts. But he made an excellent meal, the other juniors hardly eating anything.

Even Bunter was satisfied at last.

He rose from the table and stretched his plump limbs.

"I think I've had enough, Wun Lung."

Wun Lung shook his head.

"Oh, noce, noce," he said, persuasively; "eatee mole, much mole."

"Well, another tart, then."

"Mole gingel pop."

"Perhaps one glass."

"Nothel apple."

"I'll shove it in my pocket. I daresay I shall be hungry to-night. I'll shove in some of these cakes and buns, too."

And the fat junior calmly proceeded to fill his pockets. Wun Lung watched him with inexhaustible patience. He settled up with Mrs. Mimble, and then Bunter borrowed a half-crown of him.

Then the juniors left the school shop.

Harry Wharton met them at the door of the schoolhouse. The fat, greasy look upon Bunter's face showed that he had had a feed.

Wharton looked curiously at Wun Lung. He knew what that lurking, peculiar smile upon the little Chinese's face meant.

"Near bedtime," he remarked. "Had your supper, Bunter?"

"Yes, and a jolly good one. I'm thinking of changing into No. 13 Study," said Billy Bunter. "I should be treated better in there, I think."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"They're welcome to you," he said. "Are you willing to take in the prize pig of Greyfriars, Bob?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter turned a wrathful look upon the Remove captain.

"Now then, Wharton! None of that."

"None of what?"

"Your cheek! I've warned you that I'm not going to stand it. I'm going to be treated with proper respect in this school, or I'll know the reason why, and so I tell you."

"My dear ass—"

"Shut up! I don't feel inclined for a scrap just after a hearty supper, or I'd give you a thick ear now."

And Bunter walked on.

"My hat!" murmured Wharton. "What a beauty he would be, if he were really the fighting man he fancies he is."

"Wouldn't he?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Nice side of his nature, ain't it? We're bringing it to the light, you know, so that we shall really know our Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter went very slowly upstairs to bed with the Remove. He had, as Bob Cherry expressed it, a very full cargo on board. He was beginning, too, to experience some slight pains internally.

"I—I say, you fellows," he remarked, "did you notice anything wrong with the gooseberry tarts?"

"No," said Bob Cherry.

"Was it the apple dumplings, do you think?"

"Was what the apple dumplings?"

"I—I seem to feel a slight pain."

"Where?"

"Inwardly. I suppose it must be a twinge of indigestion."

"Rot," said Bulstrode. "Porpoises never have indigestion."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Me give you medicine if you likee, nicee Chinese medicine," murmured the junior from the Flowery Land.

Bunter made a grimace.

"I don't want any of your rotten Chinese medicines."

"What I like about Bunter," said Bob Cherry, "is his nice politeness and his gratitude. You're always so certain of kind appreciation from Bunter."

"Oh, you shut up."

"Eh! What?"

"Shut up," said Bunter. "'Nuff of your jaw. Do you want a thick ear?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"No, dear Bunter, pray let me off. You have let off Hazeldene you know. As you are strong, be merciful."

Bunter laid his hand upon his waistcoat and gave a sudden grunt.

"The prize pig grunteth," said Russell.

"Ow!"

"What's the trouble?"

"Ow! I—I don't quite know. I—I think it must have been

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the ham patties. Do you think it possible that Mrs. Mimble would use potted ham for those patties, you fellows? If the ham came from Chicago, that would account for it."

"Account for what?"

"I—I feel a slight pain."

Wingate of the Sixth, looked in at the dormitory door.

"Hallo! Not in bed yet?"

"Shan't be a tick, Wingate."

"You'd better not," grunted the captain of Greyfriars.

And the juniors turned in.

The Sixth Former turned out the light, bade the boys good-night, and retired. Then in the darkness a voice was heard from Bunter's bed:

"Ow! I've got a pain!"

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Fagging for Bunter.

**B**ILLY BUNTER apparently expected a sympathetic answer, but he did not get one. Some of the juniors gave vent to resounding snores, and some to chuckles, but that was all. Merely that and nothing more.

"Ow! I've got a pain."

Still silence!

"You rotters! I've got a pain! It must have been the kidney pie, I think. I've had a suspicion for a long time about those kidney pies. Hang it! I'm pretty certain it was the kidney pies."

Snore!

"Perhaps, though, it was the ham patties. What do you think, Wharton?"

"I think I'm going to sleep."

"I've got a pain."

"Well, you're welcome to it."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I am suffering intense agony!"

"Could you manage to suffer it quietly?"

"You heartless lot of rotters! You don't care if I expire in agony in my bed," growled the fat junior.

"Oh, yes, we do, if you make a row about it," said Nugent.

"Of course, if you like to expire in agony without disturbing anybody, I've no objection."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Look here, I think I should feel better if somebody rubbed my back," said Bunter, "I've heard that it's a great cure for indigestion."

"But ostriches never have indigestion."

"Snoop!"

There was a loud snore from Snook's bed. Snoop had no mind to sit up in his nightshirt and rub Bunter's back on a cold night.

"Snoop! Snoopey!"

Snore!

"Snoop! I say, Snoop! Wake up, Snoop, will you, some of you?"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I don't think he needs much waking."

Bunter sat up in bed, and clutched his pillow. It was dark, but he knew just where Snoop's bed was, and just where his head would be.

The pillow flew through the air.

Biff!

It descended suddenly upon Snoop's head, and the sneak of the Remove was startled almost out of his wits. He gave a tremendous roar.

It was useless for him to pretend to be asleep after that.

"Snoop! Snoopey!"

"Yaw—aw—aw!" yawned Snoop, "is that you, Bunter?"

"Yes, it is. Get up."

"What for?"

"Don't argue with me. Get up!" roared the new bully of the Remove, "get up, and come here. Do you hear?"

"My only hat!" murmured Bulstrode, who had a great reputation as a bully himself, "what a nice nature!"

"Ripping," said Bob Cherry, "he's learned his manners from you."

"Rubbish! You can't say I was ever a worm like that."

"My dear chap, Bunter is now like a Bulstrode record on the gramophone. He's simply picked up your manners and customs."

Bulstrode grunted. He could not help feeling that there was some truth in it, and bullying small boys certainly seemed meaner to him as a looker-on, than it did when he was doing the bullying himself.

Snoop slowly crawled out of bed.

Bunter blinked through the gloom at the dim figure in the nightshirt that came reluctantly towards his bed.

"Snoopey, is that you?"

"Yes, it's me," said Snoop, sullenly.

"I want you to rub my back."

"Your—your back!"

"Yes, the doctor recommended my pater to have his back rubbed for indigestion. I'm going to try it."



## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

## Bunter is Called In!

"I'm jolly well not going to rub your rotten back."

"Do you want a licking?" roared Bunter.

"N-n-n-no."

"Then don't argue with me."

The Removites were chuckling. Bunter the Bully seemed to furnish them with endless amusement. And if Snoop was mean enough to put up with bullying from such a fellow, that was Snoop's look out.

"You can sit on the bed, if you like," said Bunter. "Rub gently in the small of the back—ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Don't go at it as if you were hammering nails in, you ass. Gently."

Snoop snarled and rubbed. He contrived to score Bunter's back with his nails, and the fat junior shrieked.

"Ow! You ass, I'll lick you for that."

Bunter reached out and gave the sneak of the Remove a sounding smack across the head.

"Take that, and get to bed," he snarled.

Snoop retreated without a word.

Bunter wriggled and rubbed his back, which was now paining as much as his inward regions. The fat junior was feeling extremely uncomfortable altogether.

"That fellow's an utter fool" he muttered. "Bob Cherry!"

Snor-r-r-re!

"Bob Cherry, come here."

"Yaw—aw! Did you call, Bunter?"

"Yes I did. Come here."

"I'm sleepy."

"I don't care whether you're sleepy or not. Come here and rub my back."

"My hat!" muttered Harry Wharton.

And the Remove gasped. Bob Cherry was willing to make great sacrifices to carry out his elaborate joke on Bunter, but no one expected him to fag for the fat junior. But Bob hopped out of bed.

"Right you are, Bunter," he said, "you won't lick me if I come near you, will you?"

"Not if you behave yourself."

"You see, you big strong chaps are liable to hit out very hard, without knowing how much force you put into it."

"It's all right, if you rub my back gently. If you act the fool like Snoop, I shall lick you, so I warn you."

"I'll be jolly careful," said Bob Cherry. "Will you lend me a hand, Nugent?"

"Certainly," said Nugent.

"Careful," said Bunter, as the two Removites, their grinning invisible in the darkness, seized him. "Mind, you dummies."

"Oh, we'll be careful."

"Better use something to rub it with," said Bob Cherry, thoughtfully, "our knuckles are not hard enough."

"You dunny, you're not to use your knuckles—"

"There's an old football oot at the end of my bed, Nugent. I think that would do rippingly."

"You ass—"

"What's the matter now, Bunter?"

"Don't you touch me with—"

"Got the boot, Frank?"

"Here you are."

"Good. Bunter mustn't struggle. Sit on his head."

"Ow—yow—wow-w-w-wow—"

Bunter was plumped face downwards in his bedclothes, and Frank Nugent sat on his shoulders. Then Bob Cherry began to rub his back with the football boot.

"Ow! Ow! Oh! Stop it! Chuck it! Oh!"

"Go it, Bob! He seems to be getting better."

"Stop it! Chuck it! Oh!"

"It's all right, Bunter. This is doing you good."

"Yah! Ow! Yaroo!"

"Give it a bit more elbow grease, Bob."

"Good! Keep still, Bunter."

"I'll keep him still!"

"Help! Ow! Yar-o-o-o-h!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the Removites, unable to restrain their mirth.

"Do you think that's enough, Bunter?"

"Yow! yes! yow!"

Bob Cherry pitched his boot to the floor.

"Get off his head, Nugent."

Frank Nugent got off. Billy Bunter, gasping and spluttering, sat up in bed.

"Ow! You beats!"

"Don't you feel better?" asked Bob Cherry, innocently.

"I—I—I'll lick you for this to-morrow morning."

"Isn't your indigestion cured?"

"I—I—I—I'll pulverise you."

"Would you like another rub?"

"Don't you touch me, you beast."

"There's no pleasing some people," said Bob Cherry, going back to bed. "Bunter always was an ungrateful pig. Perhaps you'll be better in the morning, Bunty."

"Beast!"

And long after the rest of the Remove were asleep, Billy Bunter was still turning uneasily in his bed, as twinges of mysterious pains caught him.

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THE next morning, Bunter was fast asleep while the rising-bell was clanging, and he did not wake till Bob Cherry kindly squeezed a wet sponge over his fat face. Then he awoke with a gasp.

"You—you beast!" he spluttered, as the cold water ran down his neck, "I'll—I'll give you a jolly good licking."

"I'm only trying to save you from a row," said Bob Cherry, innocently. "Rising-bell's gone long ago."

"Oh, I didn't get much sleep last night."

"You won't get much breakfast if you don't get up."

Bunter grunted, and turned out of bed. His ablutions did not take him long; they never did. Even if he started six or seven minutes later, he would finish as soon as anybody."

He was in a bad temper that morning. He had very much over-eaten himself the previous evening, and that, added to the taste of medicine the Chinese junior had given him, naturally disturbed him in the morning. Ordinarily, Bunter in a temper was not much trouble. He would growl and complain, and somebody would throw a boot at him, and all would be calm and bright again. But Bunter, with the knowledge that he was a great fighting-man—Bunter the Bully—was more troublesome when his temper was "rocky."

He blinked savagely round the dormitory. Harry Wharton and Co. were soon gone down, but Snoop was not yet out of bed. Bunter went over to his bed, dragged him out, and administered several sound spanks to his person.

Snoop said nothing, but his eyes burned.

Somewhat relieved in his mind, Bunter went to the washstand for the infinitesimal wash he indulged in of a morning. He blinked wrathfully at Snoop, who was dressing himself.

"There's not going to be any rotten laziness in this dormitory," he said, "I don't like this sticking in bed till the last minute. You look out, my boy, that's all."

"You stick in bed yourself," growled Snoop.

"That's no business of yours," said Bunter, in his most bullying tone. "As head of the Remove, I can do as I like. You do as I say, not as I do."

And Snoop scowled and was silent.

"Head of the Remove," growled Skinner, as he went downstairs. "My only Panama hat! Head of the Remove! Well, if Bunty's head of the Remove—ha! ha! ha!"

Skinner chuckled as he went down. Some new and humorous idea seemed to have come into his mind. He might have been seen whispering and chuckling with several other Removites that morning, and from their looks it might have been guessed that some big joke was on.

After morning school, Billy Bunter swaggered down the passage with his new manner on. The Removites made way for him respectfully. As he went into the Clove, Skinner and Bob Cherry and Nugent and Bulstrode came up to him, all with the most respectful manner possible.

Billy Bunter blinked at them.

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly thirsty."

"Yes, it's a warm day," said Bulstrode. "Come along to Mrs. Mumble's and have some gingerpop."

"Jolly good idea."

Billy Bunter came along willingly enough.

Bulstrode stood him unlimited ginger pop. The juniors stood round him in attitudes of respectful admiration, and Bunter swelled visibly with importance. This was something like! He was jolly glad that he had taken up boxing, and worked hard at it! At last he was taking his proper place in the Form!

"Now to come to business," said Skinner.

"That's it," said Bob Cherry, "better come to business. Only I don't know whether it's worth Bunter's while."

"Well, he's so jolly brave, it will be all right."

"Yes, but he'll hardly like wasting his time on a chap like Champigny."

"Yes, that's so. Still, to oblige us—"

"And as head of the Remove, Bunter is bound to protect us," said Skinner.

"Yes, Bunter will admit that."

Billy Bunter looked a little uneasy.

"What are you fellows talking about?" he asked.

"It's about that fellow, Champigny, at Herr Rosenblum's Foreign Academy over the way," said Skinner. "You've seen him—he goes about with Meunier and Hoffmann. He's rather a big fellow—taller than you, though not so splendidly built."

"Not half," said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, I've seen him," said Bunter, "I'll have another ginger pop."

"Ginger pop this way, Mrs. Mumble."

"Certainly, Master Bulstrode."

"He swaggers about a lot, and thinks he can lick us," said Bob Cherry. "We were thinking of getting Wharton to take

him on, and knock some of the conceit out of him. But as you have developed so wonderfully as a fighting-man, we thought of you."

"Wharton's all right," said Nugent, shaking his head, "but he doesn't box like Bunter."

"No; he would admit that himself."

"He hasn't Bunter's style—that splendid finish, you know."

"Oh, I don't doubt I could lick the fellow," said Bunter, "I don't think it's quite worth my while, though. I prefer a foeman worthy of my steel, you know. I'll have another ginger pop, and some jam tarts."

"You might tackle him," said Skinner, "we look to you to protect us. You could lick him quite as easily as you could Bob Cherry or myself."

"That wouldn't be very hard."

"Let's go down to the Cloisters and look for him," suggested Nugent. "Give me your arm, Bunter. You don't mind if I take your arm, do you? I know it's a distinction to be seen with you. You ought not to pass over your own study mates, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," said Billy Bunter, as he left the tuck-shop arm in arm with Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, with Bulstrode and Skinner grinning in the rear, "I don't mind taking you chaps about. I'm not proud. So long as I'm treated with suitable respect, I'm quite willing to chum up with anybody. As for this French chap, I'll knock him into a cocked hat."

"Bravo, Bunter."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm perfectly willing to protect you fellows."

"I suppose there's no doubt that Bunter will get in as captain at the next Form election," Skinner remarked.

"Hardly!" said Bulstrode.

"This way to the Cloisters! Come on."

Bunter simply puffed with pride. Form Captain! In his wildest dreams, he had hardly dared to hope for anything like that, though the thought had crossed his mind.

Captain of the Remove—William George Bunter, captain of the Remove! The thought was quite enough to turn Bunter's empty head.

At that moment, he would have faced a whole army of French juniors—until he came to close quarters with them. The juniors entered the Cloisters, on the other side of which lay the grounds of Herr Rosenblau's Foreign Academy. Between the Greyfriars juniors and the foreign fellows rows were frequent, as was only to be expected, and the honours were mostly on the side of the English school. But there was a new boy at the Foreign Academy now—a French boy named Champigny, who was a swaggering bully—very much like Bunter himself in that respect but bigger and more powerful in every way. He rather overbore Meunier and Hoffmann, who had been the leaders of the aliens, and had administered several lickings to small boys belonging to Greyfriars. The Greyfriars fellows had thought of matching Harry Wharton against him, and putting him into his place; but it had occurred to Skinner to choose Bunter as the Greyfriars champion, by way of a jape.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as they entered the Cloisters. "There's the bounder, with Meunier and Charpentier."

The French boys sighted them at the same time.

Billy Bunter blinked nervously at the new French boy.

Champigny was head and shoulders taller than Bunter, and looked a tough customer in every way.

Bunter believed that he had licked Bob Cherry, but—! The more he looked at Champigny, the less he liked the prospect of a fight with him. He pulled at Bob Cherry's sleeve.

"I—I say, Cherry, I—I don't want a row with a chap I don't know, you know," he stammered.

"Oh, that's all right," said Bob, cheerfully, "I'll introduce you."

"Ye—e—es, but—"

"Come on," said Bob, dragging him towards the French juniors.

"Certainly, but—I—I—I'm sincerely sorry, but I've forgotten something. I—"

"This way! Here we are!"

And Bob Cherry rushed Billy Bunter onward at top speed, and sent him bumping right upon the chest of Henri Champigny.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Champion of Greyfriars.

CHAMPIGNY gasped, and staggered back. Billy Bunter was no light weight, and he had rolled heavily upon the French boy's chest.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Mon Dieu!" panted Champigny.

Bob Cherry took off his cap.

"Gentlemen, allow me to make you known to one another. Monsieur Champagne—I mean Champigny—this is William George Bunter of ours."

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"Ciel!"

"William George Bunter, this is Monsieur Henri Champigny, of theirs."

"Ow!"

"Now you know one another."

"Ciel! I zink zat you insult me, you fat cochon!" exclaimed Champigny, bending his brows fiercely upon Bunter.

The fat junior retreated in alarm.

"I—I—I—"

Bob Cherry ruthlessly pushed him forward again.

"Of course you mean to insult him, Bunty," he said. "That's what you've come here for. He insults you horribly, Piggy. You don't mind my calling you Piggy for short, do you?"

"Ciel! I am insult."

"Punch his nose next, Bunter."

"I—I—I—"

"I zink zat I not have ze nose punch viz myself. I zink zat I goes for zat cochon, and zrases him."

"Look here," began Bunter.

"Cochon!"

"Blessed if I know what you mean by a coshaw," said Bunter.

"But I'm not going to be called names by a blessed alien, so I tell you."

"That's the music, Bunty."

"Go it, William George."

"Pile into him!"

Thus encouraged from all sides, Billy Bunter showed a little more spirit. As a matter of fact, the juniors had only brought him there for a "rag" and they meant to interfere before he was much hurt. A few hard knocks were no more than he deserved for his arrogance. That was how Bob Cherry looked at it. But the affair was to turn out in a way they were far from suspecting.

It had not occurred to Bob that the big French boy, with all his swagger and bluster, might be no braver than Billy Bunter, at bottom.

Bob had forgotten the old saying—generally a safe one to follow—that bullies are cowards as a rule.

The moment Bunter assumed a warlike attitude, a great deal of the ferocity died out of the manner of Champigny.

He retreated a few paces in his turn.

"Ciel! Who is this fat peeg?" he asked.

"I've introduced him," said Bob Cherry, "Now begin."

"I—I—I—I'm r-r-ready," said Bunter.

"Ciel! I zink I fight not viz vun smaller zan myself."

"Oh, Bunter doesn't mind."

Meunier and Charpentier grinned at one another. Champigny had lorded it over them a great deal, owing to his size; but his unwillingness to tackle Bunter gave them a hint that he was not the great fighting-man he pretended to be.

And with one accord they determined that the fight should take place, whether Champigny wanted it or not.

"Go eet," exclaimed Meunier, "Zat garcon is a terrible fightair, but you are not afraid of heem."

"You vill leeck him, so easy," said Charpentier, snapping his fingers.

"Ciel! Zat is true. Mais—but—"

"Rats! Get to business," said Bulstrode, "I think you're afraid."

"Afraid! I, Henri Champigny, afraid!"

"Well, get to work, then."

Billy Bunter puffed out his chest. He took his spectacles off and handed them to Nugent to hold. He rubbed his eyes and blinked at the aliens. The more doubtful Champigny appeared about beginning, the more Bunter's courage rose, of course. He felt the proud consciousness that he was a Britisher, after all, and that Champigny was a blessed alien, as he would have put it.

"Come on," he exclaimed, brandishing his fists. "Make him come on."

"I zink—"

"Shove him this way, Meunier, do you hear?"

"I zink zat—"

"Go on, garcon—fight heem," exclaimed Meunier, giving Champigny a violent push behind the shoulders that sent him staggering towards Bunter.

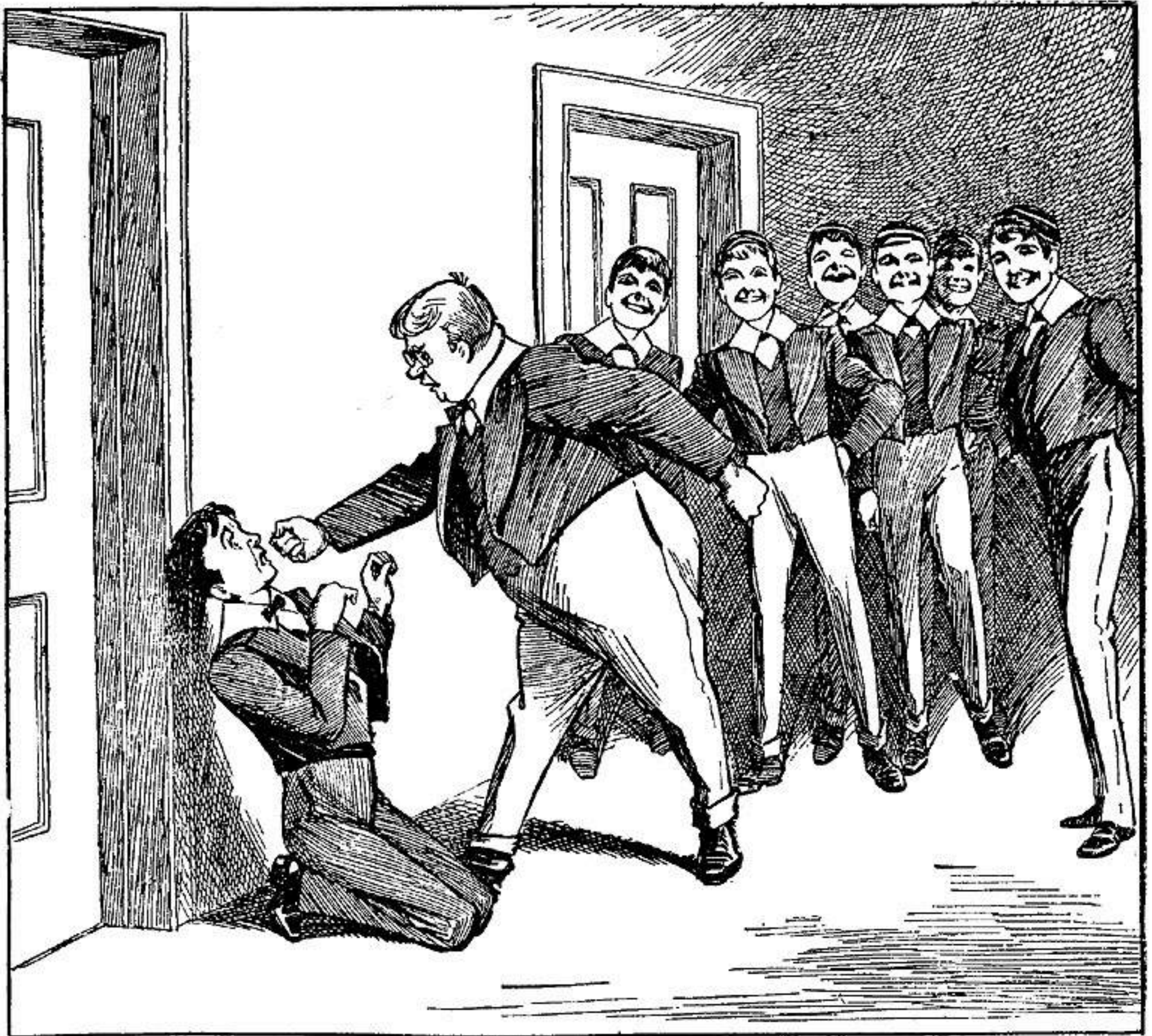
Billy Bunter landed out, and caught the Frenchman a sounding rap on the nose.

Champigny gave a roar, and clapped his hand to that organ.

"Ow! Ciel! Ow!"

Bunter danced round him. The fact that Champigny was unwilling to fight was now apparent to everybody, and Bunter, in consequence, was as brave as a lion. If the bully of the Foreign Academy had known Bunter's true character, he would, of course, have tackled him readily. But all he knew of Bunter was that the Greyfriars fellows had brought him forward as a champion. He naturally concluded from that that appearances were against Bunter, and that he was in reality an athletic and rather terrible antagonist.

Bob Cherry gave a giggle, as he saw Bunter dancing round the big French boy.



"Do you humbly apologise?" said Bunter ferociously. "Yes." "Horribly, humbly?" "Yes," answered the unhappy Snoop, in a trembling voice.

It was too funny to see Bunter as a fighting man, urging Champigny to "come on," when Champigny could have knocked him sky-high with a single blow, if he had had the courage to deal it.

Meunier and Charpentier were sniffing with disgust. They had their funny ways, but they were brave enough. They had no mercy for the coward.

"Return zat blow!" shrieked Meunier.

"Go for heem!" yelled Charpentier.

"Ciel! I am hurt!"

"Come on!" roared Bunter, making frantic passes at Champigny, and tapping him all over the ribs and chest. He could hardly reach the French boy's face, and without his glasses he could hardly see clearly where to hit him. But many of his blows took effect, all the same. "Come on, you blessed alien! Put up your hands, you rotter! Stick to it! Come on!"

"I zink zat I am fatigue."

"Yah! Take that!"

Champigny rolled on the ground.

Bunter, more excited than ever, pranced round him, brandishing his fat fists and shrieking to him to get up and be licked.

Champigny, who apparently had no taste for being licked, remained where he was.

"Get up!" roared Bob Cherry, almost choking with laughter.

"Get up, you bounder! Oh, this is as good as a circus."

"Better," gasped Nugent, wiping his eyes. "Oh, Bunter,

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Bunty, you'll be the death of me yet. Fancy Bunter striking terror to the hearts of his foes. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up!" shrieked Meunier. "Coward!"

"Coward!" yelled Charpentier, stirring Champigny with his foot. "You are disgrace to your country. You are not Frenchman. Yah!"

"Come on, you blessed alien! Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ciel! I am hurt! I zink zat my back is sprain.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Licked!" roared Bob Cherry. "The great champion is licked, and Bunter has done it. Come on, Bunter. You're a great chief!"

"I'd rather make a complete job of it," said Bunter. "He's not half licked yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I zink zat ve lick him, zen," said Meunier. "He is disgrace to la belle France. I avenges ze insult myself presently. Charpentier, mon ami, lend me ze hand, and ve vill giff him ze march of ze frog."

"Good! Ve vill!"

Champigny began to struggle, but the two French lads, bubbling over with indignation, seized him, and marched him off into the gates of the Foreign Academy, giving him "ze march of ze frog" in a way that made him roar.

Bunter put on his jacket with a satisfied smirk.

"That's all right," he remarked. "You fellows can always look to me for protection. I'll look after you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that! Bulstrode, come along, I am thirsty; I shall want some more ginger pop."

"Go and eat coke!" said Bulstrode.

"Are you looking for a thick ear?"

"Oh, come on," said Skinner, linking arms with Bunter and dragging him off before Bulstrode could reply, afraid that the bully of the Remove might spoil the jape. "I'll stand the ginger pop."

"I'm jolly well not going to have any cheek from Bulstrode."

"Of course you're not. But he wouldn't dare to be cheeky to you. Now put it to yourself calmly, Bunter. Do you think any chap in the Remove would dare to be cheeky to you?"

"Well, I suppose not."

"That's right. Come along and have some ginger pop."

And Bunter went along and had it.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Free Kicks.

IT was a half holiday that day at Greyfriars, and as the weather was fine, most of the juniors were looking forward to a pleasant time. Hazeldene's sister Marjorie and her friend Clara were coming over to see Hazeldene, and Harry Wharton & Co. were more than usually attentive to Hazeldene on account of it. They were laying little plans for a pleasant feed of cakes and ices and ginger beer under the trees in the Close.

Other fellows in the Remove were laying other plans. Skinner borrowed a fragment of cardboard from Bob Cherry, and a camel-hair brush from Ogilvy, and some ink from somebody else, and spent ten minutes in concocting a little placard. This he affixed to a hooked pin, and concealed under his jacket. Then he went to look for Billy Bunter.

He found the fat junior engaged in living up to his new role. Bunter was bullying a Third Form fag in the Close, and the fag was scowling. As he was about half Bunter's size, he couldn't do anything else. Bunter pulled his ears, and sent him away scowling, and blinked at Skinner.

"Jolly thirsty this afternoon," said the fat junior.

"Yes, it's dry," said Skinner. "By the way, there's some dust on your jacket—let me rub it off."

He rubbed the back of the jacket, and affixed the placard to it at the same time, quite unknown to Billy Bunter.

"Any ginger pop going?" said Bunter.

"Not as far as I'm concerned," said Skinner. "I'm stony."

"You'll jolly well stand me a ginger pop, or you won't be able to stand at all," said Bunter threateningly.

Skinner became immensely submissive all at once.

"All right," he said. "Come on."

Bunter trotted off with him to Mrs. Mumble's. He hadn't the faintest idea that there was a placard on his back, and that it bore in large, staring black letters on a white ground:

"PLEASE TAKE A FREE KICK!"

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were standing outside the tuckshop, and they were the first to sight that peculiar invitation pinned to the back of the Falstaff of the Remove.

Temple chuckled.

"Can't refuse a chap a thing like that," he said.

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"Here you are!" said Temple, landing out with his foot, and lifting Bunter a couple of feet along upon his way.

The fat junior gave a roar.

"What on earth—"

"Well, you asked for it," said Temple, as he walked away with his friends, chuckling. Bunter blinked after him.

"The utter ass! I've a jolly good mind to go after him and lick him!" he growled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming along. "Free kick—certainly! Here you are!"

And Bob Cherry's boot—which was a good size in boots—drove the fat junior fairly into the tuckshop, and sent him rolling there on his hands and knees.

"Ow! Yow!" spluttered Bunter. "What beast was that? What do you mean? Ow! I'm hurt! I'll jolly well pulverise you."

He staggered to his feet. Bob Cherry was gone, and so was Skinner, and the promised ginger pop was not forthcoming. Bunter knew better than to ask Mrs. Mumble for it when he was out of cash.

He went out of the school shop, in the vilest possible temper. Snoop was just coming in, and Bunter gave him a bullying push that sent him to the door-post.

Snoop did not make any return for that little favour. Only his eyes glowed. Bunter went out, and almost ran into Bulstrode. The Remove bully glanced at him as he passed, with a grin.

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"Certainly!" he exclaimed.

Bunter blinked round at him.

"Eh! Did you speak, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, I'll take a free kick."

"You jolly well won't! I—Ow!"

Bunter went staggering forward.

Bulstrode walked away, laughing. Bunter blinked after him, in growing amazement. It seemed to him that a sudden attack of insanity had descended upon the fellows of Greyfriars. What on earth did they all mean by kicking him like this?

"Hallo!" exclaimed Carberry of the Sixth, as Bunter passed him. "Well, blessed if that doesn't take the cake."

"What does?" asked Ionides.

"Look at that!"

"Ha, ha, ha! We must do as requested."

"Good! Both together."

Two Sixth Form boots, planted at the same moment behind Bunter, fairly hurled him off his feet. He went down in the grass on his hands and knees, and then rolled over and sat up, blinking. The two Sixth-Formers were walking away. Bunter wondered whether he was in a dream.

"They're all mad!" he said to himself with conviction. "All as mad as hatters! The silly asses! Fancy kicking a chap!"

And the fat junior, feeling decidedly disturbed and sore, went on his way. He received several more kicks before he reached the door of the School House, and the curious thing was that the kickers seemed to think that they were obliging him. Ogilvy gave him the last as he was entering the School House, and sent him staggering into the arms of Harry Wharton, who was coming out.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wharton, catching Bunter by the collar with one hand, and holding on to the door with the other.

"Where are you running to?"

"Ow!"

"Can't you see where you're going?"

"Yow! A beast has just kicked me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton, catching sight of the notice on Bunter's back. "Ha, ha, ha! Well, you must expect it, if you ask for it."

"Ask for it! What do you mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Wharton walked away without any further explanation. Bunter wandered in, thinking that Wharton was as mad as the rest.

Wun Lung the Chinese caught sight of him, and crept up quietly behind the fat form of Bunter, and took the free kick.

Bunter gave a whoop and tottered forward, just as Mr. Quelch came out of his study. He caught at the Remove-master to save himself from falling, and tore a huge rent in his gown.

Mr. Quelch uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Bunter! What do you mean?"

"Ow! Some beast kicked me. Yow!"

"Wun Lung, did you kick Bunter?"

"Me kickee," said the little Chinese cheerfully.

"What! You admit that you kicked Bunter?" demanded the Form-master.

"Me kickee, allee light."

"You young heathen beast—"

"Silence, Bunter! Why did you kick Bunter, Wun Lung?"

"He askee."

"What?"

"Bunter askee," said the Chinese, with a smile that was child-like and bland.

"It's a lie!" hooted Bunter. "I didn't ask—I wouldn't! As if I should ask to be kicked, you rotten heathen alien!"

"Silence! Wun Lung, you must intend this for impertinence. What do you mean by saying that Bunter asked to be kicked?"

"He askee takee free kick."

And Wun Lung pointed to the notice on Bunter's back. Mr. Quelch glanced at it, and could not suppress a smile. He jerked it off and showed it to Bunter.

"Look at that, Bunter. Am I to understand that you deliberately wore this absurd placard on your back?"

Bunter's jaw dropped as he stared at it blankly.

"N-n-n-no, sir. Of course I didn't know anything about it. Some beast has done that for a joke, I suppose."

"Ha, ha—I mean, very foolish indeed! Wun Lung, you surely knew perfectly well that Bunter had not placed that notice on his back himself?"

"No savvy."

"You must have known that Bunter did not really wish you to kick him," said the Remove-master sternly.

"No savvy."

"Did you think so, Wun Lung?"

"No savvy, sil."

"Come, you must give me a plain answer. You certainly did not imagine that it was Bunter's wish to be kicked?"

"Me no savvy."

The Form-master looked intently at the Oriental junior. Wun Lung's face was perfectly mild and innocent.

"You may go, Wun Lung."

"Me tankee you, sir."

And Wun Lung went his way. As soon as he was out of sight of the Form-master the little Chinese doubled up in a paroxysm of silent merriment. Mr. Quelch went on his way with a rather perplexed look.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter is Shut Up.

"MARJORIE!"

Four voices uttered the name simultaneously. Four juniors started to run to meet the two girls who entered the old gateway of Greyfriars with Hazeldene of the Remove.

Marjorie Hazeldene and her friend Clara looked very charming in white summer dresses and big shady hats.

But more charming than the dresses or the hats were the two pretty faces with their bright eyes and agreeable smiles.

Four hats went off as if by clockwork.

"Good-afternoon!"

"So jolly glad to see you."

"The gladness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows!" broke in a voice.

Billy Bunter rolled up.

Bunter was clad in white ducks, with a sash and a wide-brimmed hat, and looked more fat and heavy than ever.

But he was evidently pleased with himself, and fancied that he was cutting a very handsome figure in the eyes of the girls.

He raised his hat to the girls with that half-impertinent, half-patronising air that made all girls dislike him, and grinned amiably.

"Ripping afternoon, isn't it, Marjorie?"

"Yes," said Marjorie Hazeldene shortly.

She was "Marjorie" to her friends in the Greyfriars Remove; but somehow she did not like Bunter to address her by her Christian name. But a little thing like that was not likely to affect Bunter, and he was not afraid of a licking now.

"We're going to have tea under the trees," said Bunter, speaking as if he were quite master of the ceremonies; whereas, as a matter of fact, he was not even invited to the feed.

Bob Cherry looked daggers at the fat junior, and then, as Miss Clara's eyes turned upon him, he tried to change the expression of his face in time. He pretended to be coughing, and became as red as a beetroot.

"My goodness," said Miss Clara, "are you ill?"

"Groo—oo— No, thanks."

"You have a cold?" said Marjorie anxiously.

"No-n-n-no! Groo!"

"I didn't know you had a cough, Cherry," said Hazeldene in surprise.

"I—groo—oo—haven't."

"What are you barking for, then?"

"I—groo—ooo—och—I'm not barking."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Here, I want to speak to you, Bunter," said Nugent, suddenly taking the fat junior by the arm and leading him aside.

The others, who guessed that what Nugent had to say would be better said out of the presence of the girls, contrived to walk on with Marjorie and Clara, leaving the fat junior behind with Nugent.

"I—I say, Nugent—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I—I sha'n't shut up! I'll give you a jolly good licking!"

"Rats! You young ass! That was a jape so far as it went, but it's time to write finis. Do you see?"

"Look here—"

"You're not really a fighting-man—you're a rotten, cowardly, beastly, little fat toad!" explained Nugent.

Bunter turned as red as a turkey-cock with indignation.

"You—you rotter!" he ejaculated. "I'll—I'll give you the licking of your life. Come into the gym."

Nugent hesitated a moment, and then he nodded quickly.

"All serene. I'll come into the gym."

And he linked arms with Bunter and led him thither. Bunter blinked at him several times doubtfully. He had an idea that this was bluff on Nugent's part.

If Nugent turned out to be in earnest—

Bunter's new courage sank a great deal at the thought.

He was in a less boastful frame of mind as they reached the gym. The big building was almost empty, most of the fellows being out in the playing-fields or on the river.

"I—I—I say, Nugent—"

Frank Nugent made no reply.

He led the way to a little room where some of the gymnastic requisites were kept, and opened the door.

"Come in here," he said.

"Wh-wh-what for?"

"Get in."

"I—I won't!"

Nugent seized the fat junior by the shoulders, and bundled him in. Billy Bunter rolled over in the midst of an over-

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"HARRY WHARTON & CO. AFLOAT."

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turned confusion of foils and masks and ropes and other paraphernalia.

"Ow!" he roared. "I'm hurt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door slammed to.

Billy Bunter jumped up and ran at it fiercely. But before he could touch the handle the key clicked in the lock on the outside.

Bunter hammered on the door furiously.

"Open this door!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent's laugh was the only reply he received.

He heard the junior hurrying away, and he hammered on the door in vain. Few had seen the trick Nugent had played; and they, guessing that Bunter was making himself obnoxious to the girls, were not inclined to interfere.

Nugent left the gym with a grin on his face, and joined his friends. Harry Wharton gave him a quick, inquiring look.

"Where's Bunter?" he asked in a low voice.

"In the gym."

"Staying there?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Lumber-room—door locked," said Nugent briefly.

Wharton laughed.

Marjorie and Clara had heard nothing of the exchange of words, and they had no suspicion. They did not care in the least what became of Bunter.

The juniors had already made their preparations for that pleasant little afternoon tea.

Under the shade of one of the large, overhanging elms a little table had been set out, with a spotless cloth, and upon the table were arranged plates and glasses, and bottles of ginger-pop and lemonade, cakes, and strawberries in little neat baskets, and little brown jugs of cream.

It was a very pleasant and enticing array, and the girls smiled cordially as they sank into the deep, comfortable garden-chairs.

In the Close the sunlight was falling in great sheets of heat, but under the thick branches of the elm all was shady and calm.

As the juniors and their girl chums sat there, a happy little group, many an envious glance was turned upon them by fellows who passed in the hot sun.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Fall of Billy Bunter.

BILLY BUNTER hammered on the door of the room till he was tired. His knocking did not pass unheard. As he desisted, at last, he heard a voice of inquiry from the other side.

"Anybody in there?"

"Oh, yes, Ogilvy," exclaimed Bunter, putting his mouth to the keyhole, "I'm locked in!"

"Dear me!" said Ogilvy.

"The key's in that side of the lock."

"So it is."

"Will you unlock the door? I've been shut up here by that beast Nugent because he's jealous of me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The footsteps of Ogilvy could be heard dying away. Bunter kicked on the door.

"Ogilvy! I say, Ogilvy!"

There was no reply.

Bunter removed his spectacles, wiped his perspiring nose, and replaced them. He blinked at the immovable door in wrath.

"Hallo! Anybody in there?"

It was the voice of Snoop.

Bunter started with hope. Snoop, at least, would let him out; Snoop would not dare to keep him a prisoner there.

"Yes, Snoopcy, I'm here. Open the door, there's a good chap."

"He, he, he!" giggled Snoop.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Open the door."

"He, he, he!"

"Will you let me out!" roared Bunter. "I'll give you the hiding of your life if you don't unlock the door!"

Still that disagreeable snigger of the sneak of the Remove was all that Bunter received in reply.

"He, he, he!"

"I'll give you an awful licking!" roared the fat junior, through the keyhole.

"Rats! You couldn't lick a mouse."

# ANSWERS

A Splendid Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.

"Wh-what! What's that?"

"They've only been fooling you. You couldn't lick a tame rabbit. I'm going to give you a hiding."

"You wouldn't dare to say that if the door wasn't locked!" roared Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter snorted with wrath. It was bad enough to be shut up there by Nugent, and to be mocked by a fellow like Ogilvy; but to have the very worm turn on him in that manner was too galling. Snoop the sneak—Snoop whom he had cuffed and bullied—even he was defying him now that there was a locked door between them!

And then that tea under the trees—the cake—the ginger-pop—the strawberries and cream!

Bunter groaned in anguish of spirit.

He tapped on the door again, resolving to speak the sneak of the Remove fair, since threats were of no avail through a locked door.

"Snoop! I say, Snoopey!"

"Hallo, Porker!"

Billy Bunter bristled with wrath. Snoop was venturing to call him Porker—because the door was locked. But he controlled his wrath.

"Snoopey! Open the door, there's a good chap!"

"He, he, he!"

"Don't be a cad, Snoopey."

"He, he, he!"

"You mongrel!" roared Bunter, losing patience. "I'll break you into little bits when I get hold of you."

"He, he, he!" sniggered Snoop.

Then suddenly the sound of the snigger died away. A heavier footstep sounded outside the little door. Bunter heard a voice he knew well—the deep voice of Wingate of the Sixth.

"Who's been locking this door? Young rascals!"

There was a sound of the key turning in the lock. The door opened, and Wingate came in, snorting.

He gave a start as he nearly knocked over Billy Bunter.

"Thank you, Wingate. I——"

"What are you doing here?"

"You see, I——"

"Get out!"

"I was shut up——"

"Well, shut up again, and get out."

"You see——"

"Oh, get along, do, and don't bother."

Bunter got out of the room, sniffing with indignation. He was in a state of towering wrath, but he did not dare to argue with Wingate.

He looked round for Snoop, but Snoop was gone.

Billy Bunter breathed hard through his nose.

"The rotters!" he muttered. "They think they're going to do me out of my tea, I suppose. I'll show 'em! I'll jolly well give Nugent a licking before the girls. That'll make him feel small! I'll kick him out, and won't let him have any tea, and if the others don't like it, I'll give 'em a licking all round. I'll jolly well show 'em who's master. Let 'em look out!"

And Billy Bunter strode from the gymnasium, with wrath and thunder in his contracted brows.

It did not take him long to reach the spot where the chums were discussing strawberries and cream under the big tree. Snoop was there now, and he was relating something that made the chums chuckle, and brought smiles to the faces of Marjorie and Clara.

Bunter simply snorted. They were daring to make fun of him before the girls! The cheek of it!

He resolved to bring them to their senses. He strode up to the spot, and scowled at Snoop, who retreated a few paces.

Bunter looked at Frank Nugent.

"I've been let out!" he exclaimed.

Nugent nodded.

"I see you have," he said. "Jolly careless of the authorities at Bedlam, that's all I've got to say."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Nugent——"

"I'm looking."

"You shut me up——"

"Then I ought to have a medal from the Humane Society, for shutting up a chap like you on a hot day," said Nugent.

"It's jolly hard to shut you up."

"Oh, don't be funny. I'm not going to be treated——"

"Not by me."

"I'm not going to be treated in this fashion!" roared Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton turned a quiet, but meaning glance upon him.

"You seem to forget who's present," he said.

Bunter sniffed.

"No, I don't."

"Well, buzz off."

"I won't!"

"Bunter!"

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NEXT  
WEEK:

SPECIAL SUMMER NUMBER



"I can lick any fellow here," said Billy Bunter. "I'll lick you if you give me any cheek."

"Now, look here, you funny merchant," said Wharton, leaning forward a little. "You've been japed by the Remove till you don't know where you are. You can't fight—you can't do anything but eat. You're the worst figure as a bully that ever was made. Don't be an ass. Buzz off, or be quiet."

"I'll lick you."

"Oh, Bunter!" said Marjorie.

"I'm sorry, Marjorie, but I have to be firm," said Bunter.

"I'm the head of this Form. These fellows are cheeking me. I shall have to make an example of them."

"He, he, he!"

It was an irresistible snigger from Snoop. Bob Cherry, who had had enough of the joke on Bunter, had fully explained matters to Snoop, as he realised that Bunter would not be cured of his hallucination without a licking, and he didn't want to hurt him himself.

Bunter turned upon Snoop fiercely. Snoop was about the easiest fellow to tackle, for the purpose of showing his prowess before the girls from Cliff House.

"What did you say, Snoop?" he roared.

"He, he, he!"

"I'll teach you to cackle at me!" snorted Bunter.

"Hold on, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, who didn't want even such a farcical fight as Billy was likely to put up, before the girls.

But Billy Bunter was not to be restrained. He was on the warpath, so to speak, and he meant business. The reputation of Bunter the Bully was tottering, and it had to be sustained.

"Come on, Snoop, you worm!"

"He, he, he!"

"I've licked Bob Cherry, and I've licked Champigny. Come on, and I'll lick you!"

"He, he, he!"

As Snoop did not come on, Bunter came on himself. He rushed upon Snoop, smiting out at him in a good deal of the manner of the sails of a windmill.

"Don't be alarmed, Marjorie," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Bunter won't hurt Snoop, and Snoop won't hurt Bunter. They're too much afraid of one another."

Bunter and Snoop closed in deadly conflict. Bunter's hat went flying in one direction, and his glasses in another. Snoop, clutching the fat junior tight and close, so that Bunter could not hit him, danced about with him, dragging him hither and thither.

The girls had looked alarmed for the moment, but the fight was so absurd that they were smiling now.

It was perfectly plain that the combatants were afraid of each other, and were grasping one another so close to avoid blows.

But Snoop was a trifle the less afraid of the two. He made an effort presently, and hurled Bunter into the grass. The fat junior lay gasping like a newly landed fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get up!" yelled Snoop, simply bursting with courage now. "Up with you!"

"Hold on," said Wharton. "'Nuff's as good as a feast. You buzz off, Snoopey!"

And Snoop buzzed off. Bunter slowly rose to his feet, and set himself to rights. There was no chair for him, but he no longer thought of turning Nugent out of his. It was dawning even upon his obtuse brain that he had been "rotted" in a way that could only have been done with a silly, conceited fellow, and that he had made a most egregious ass of himself.

And as that conviction forced itself into his mind, the truculence died away out of his manner.

"Of course, you fellows knew it was all a joke," he said, helping himself to strawberries without being invited.

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry. "We did."

"I—I mean, a joke on my part. I knew what you were up to, you see, and I entered into the spirit of the thing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Funny, wasn't it? I made you believe that I—that I—I was a bully like Bulstrode, only in fun, of course."

"Yes, it was funny," agreed Wharton—"more funny than you think. We know now what a nice fellow you would be if you were as big and strong as Bulstrode; so we're more satisfied with you as you are—a fat, lazy worm."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Have some strawberries, and shut up!"

And Bunter obeyed. He ate his strawberries and cream in silence, while the juniors and the girls chatted merrily. Bunter had little to say, for once in his life. Even he had been made to feel very small indeed; and, needless to say, from that time, though Billy Bunter continued to vex his friends in many ways, nothing more was heard of Bunter the Bully!

THE END.

(A Special Summer Number of "The Magnet" Library next Tuesday, containing a double-length tale of the Chums of Greyfriars entitled: "Harry Wharton & Co. Afloat." Don't forget to order in advance. Price One Penny.)

# ONE OF THE RANKS



## A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

### A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys is forced to leave Sandhurst through the treachery of his step-brother, Ian, and enlists in the Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester. Unfortunately for Ronald, Ian joins the Wessex as a subaltern, and, assisted by Sergeant Bagot and Private Foxey Williams, does his best to further disgrace Ronald. In a sham fight with an Irish regiment, a recruit named Augustus Smythe loses his head and uses his bayonet, wounding one of the Irishmen, and this incident causes high feeling between the two regiments. Ronald is in the town one evening with three friends, who are giving a little dinner in his honour, when he notices Ian follow a Mr. Mordecai, a money-lender of the worst type, into the Roebuck Hotel. The two engage a private room, as their conversation is of a very confidential nature.

(Now go on with the story.)

### Ian Chenys' Nerves.

"Yeth. Thnow and holly and things. Beautiful time, Chrithmath!" said Mr. Mordecai, giving his silk hat a polish and depositing it carefully on the floor. "I remember oneth—"

"Excuse me, but my time is short!" interrupted Ian curtly. "I did not arrange this meeting to discuss the season of peace and goodwill toward men with you, Mr. Mordecai. I want to come to business straight away."

"Ah, quite tho, Mr. Chenyth; of courth!" agreed the moneylender, far from abashed. "Bithneth, eh? Next to Chrithmath give me bithneth! Well, here we are! And what can I do for you now?"

"Have a drink?" said Ian, pushing a decanter towards him.

"Thankth! After, perhapth, but during bithneth, never!" said Mr. Mordecai, waving a fat and somewhat grimy hand in deprecation.

"A good motto, no doubt!" snapped Ian, pouring out a stiff three fingers of brandy. "But I—well, I've been feeling a bit run down lately, and I find it bucks me up! Here's to another three thousand!"

He tossed off the drink, and Mr. Mordecai bowed and smiled.

"Very neatly put, Mr. Chenyth," he said in acknowledgment. "Tho ith to be three thouthand thith time, ith it? Three thouthand, and five latht time, thath eight thouthand. Well, we mutht thee if we can't accommodate you. By the way, what were the thecuritieth, again?"

"The Chenys estates, to which I am next-of-kin," answered Ian.

"Ah, of courth! You had an elder brother, did you not?" asked Mordecai, in a wheedling voice, consulting a notebook.

"A stepbrother. He is dead."

"Dead! Ah, poor fellow, I remember now! Thorry to have been the clumth. It mutht have been a very thevere blow to you, I'm thure."

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"HARRY WHARTON & CO. AFLOAT."

"Very," answered Ian curtly.

"Three thouthand, eh?" continued the moneylender, watching him dreamily from between his dark-lashed eyelids. "And your poor thtepbrother ith dead?"

At that moment there came the steady tread of heavy boots on the landing outside. Ian turned ashy grey, his jaw had dropped, his hands were clutching the elbow of the chair in which he sat, looking waxy white against the dark Spanish mahogany. His eyes were fixed in terror on the door, as if he expected it to be flung open suddenly, and some avenging hand to reach forth and pin him down where he was sitting.

All this time Mordecai was watching him, the half-closed lids veiling the cunning eyes.

The footsteps passed, but not till they had echoed away up the staircase and along the corridor overhead did Ian relax a single nerve or muscle.

"Excuse me for startling you like this!" he stammered, and gulped down half a tumbler of raw spirit in a single toss. "I've been very dicky of late—all nerves, in fact! The least thing—the least noise upsets me. But now to business!"

"Ah, yeth, to bithneth!" said the moneylender, sitting forward in his chair and dismissing the little incident, apparently, from his mind. "Three thouthand poundth, eh? It ith a large thum to raith in thethc hard timeth, but we will thee what we can do to oblige an old client."

The heavy footfalls which had resounded outside the door at such a dramatic moment were not those of detectives, as Ian had feared, but of Ronald and his three chums making their way quietly to the room where their repast awaited them.

The unexpected appearance of the moneylender in Woolchester, and the certainty that it must have some connection with his brother's visit to the hotel, had cast a damper on Ronald's spirits.

In spite of the long reckoning which stood between him and his stepbrother, he could not help noticing, with compassion, the awful ravages which the happenings of the last few months had worked upon the lad.

His once handsome face was haggard and drawn with the sheer torture of the life he had created for himself. There was a twitching of the lips, too—now hopeless, as if the nerves could no longer control the muscles; now wolfish, as if the teeth were ever ready to clench and snap when the moment should come to turn at bay. The eyes were the eyes of a man who is drugged to resist some unbearable torment rending body and soul.

Ronald knew the secret of that lacklustre gaze. Lieutenant Bob had hinted to him as much of that interview with Ian as an officer might, in discussing such matters with a common private. He had waited for Ronald to say something which would open the matter on a more personal basis, for some instinct told him that there was a bond between the two men—a kinship which loosed the hand of the one and sealed the lips of the other.

Ronald, however, had not yielded to the temptation to unburden himself. If ever he was compelled to, he knew that he could find no stauncher friend than Fairly, for all his eyeglass, and languid, foppish ways. When roused.

A Splendid Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards.

Lieutenant Bob was a man of action, a straight hitter, a bad enemy, and a sterling ally. Ronald knew that.

Mouldy and his other chums, however, were quite oblivious of the gloomy thoughts weighing down the heart of their guest. They attacked the good fare without ceremony, and the one and only toast of the evening, after the King, was "Privit Chester, as'll have 'two up' with anybody in the world."

This being honoured, and cigars lit, it was time to make a move to the Paragon.

"And what are you going to do with the turkey?" asked Ronald, with visions of the military police.

"Why, take him with us, of course!" said Hookey, in surprise. "I'll roll him in my overcoat—so; and then where's the harm? Come on, lads! It's the R'yal box that we want to-night. Somewhere where we can spread ourselves, and wink at the gals, and show 'em what fine specimens of hoomanity they has to look arter their dear little 'earts an' 'omes!"

The turkey being duly enfolded in Hookey's overcoat and tucked under his arm, Mouldy settled the bill, gave twopence to the waiter for himself, and the four fell into step and set out for the music-hall.

Even then they had forgotten all about the affair with the Fermanaghs, and the likelihood of ructions before the night was out. A few stragglers of the Irish regiment were passed, but though they got a black look or two, none were bold enough to attack such a hefty quartette.

A stage-box having been duly paid for, it was occupied in force, and Mouldy and Hookey, each with fat cigars of the biggest and strongest brand they could purchase for twopence, lounged at ease over the balcony.

The programme was a long one, if not a strong one, but there was one item which promised to be of thrilling interest. This was the first appearance of Ivan Pushoffsky, the Polish Bear and Champion Wrestler of Two Hemispheres.

"Now's your chance, Hookey," said Mouldy maliciously. "You always used to be gassin' about your wrestling. Have a cut at the cove, just to show 'em what's what."

Hookey turned pink at this. As a matter of fact, when he knew for a certainty that there were no other wrestlers in the regiment, he had been guilty of a little harmless boasting on the subject; but of late, since wrestling had become a popular pastime in the gym., and men like Ronald had come upon the scene, he had discreetly kept his mouth shut as to his prowess on the mats.

"Have a go at him yourself, if you're so jolly anxious!" growled Hookey uncomfortably. "Or put Chester up. He's the man for the job!"

"Not I!" said Ronald, laughing. "I'm after no more laurels. Besides, he'd make a catherine-wheel of me!"

"Don't you believe it," said Mouldy. "Now, see here! This blessed alien has the neck to say he'll wrestle all comers, and any man as stands up against him for five minutes 'll get five pounds—and for ten minutes, fifteen golden sufferins. 'Ang me, if I don't have five minutes' worth myself!"

"You!" sneered Hookey. "Why, I could put you on your back inside of ten seconds. You're talkin' through your hat, you old loonatic!"

"You put me on my back!" said Mouldy, firing up. "You! Not in ten years, let alone ten seconds! Try it, you brass-headed, gas-balloon—try it now, on the floor of this box, and see the mess I'll make of yer!"

### Hookey and Mouldy Accept a Challenge.

"Steady on, you two!" said Ronald, half choked with laughter at the sight of the faces of the two old warriors. They had advanced their noses within six inches of each other, and were breathing defiance as hard as they could puff and blow. "Steady on, now, or you'll be getting yourselves into trouble!"

"Well, he shouldn't call me a gas-balloon!" snarled Hookey.

"And you shouldn't go braggin' about puttin' me on my back! The idea! You—you—"

"Tony and I'll put you both on your backs in a minute, and sit on your heads for the rest of the evening, if you can't stop yapping at one another like two mongrels!" said Ronald, squeezing between the pair and leaving them to scowl over his broad shoulders.

"Now, to settle this little difference of opinion, I've got the very plan. When this Polish chap appears, you, Hookey, as the challenger, get on the stage and take him on. I'll time you by my watch. Then Mouldy can have his turn, and the one who stands up longest wins. How's that for a bargain?"

"And I'll have a bob on it with Mouldy that I beat him, and give him five to one."

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"Right you are; I'll hold the stakes," said Tony. "And I'll back myself for another bob at the same figger," said Mouldy, handing over his shilling. "Haw, haw! To listen to yer, Hookey, anyone 'ud think you knew enough about wrestling to shake a doormat! Garn! Ten seconds! Haw, haw!"

Fortunately for the success of the evening, the wrestling turn was the next item on the programme. Neither of the rivals, therefore, had time to think twice of their bargain before they found their eyes bulging at the sight of an enormous brute of a man, who came forward, escorted by a grubby little creature in evening-dress.

"Here, I say, he's a bit large, ain't he?" gasped Hookey, who had offered himself as the first victim. "Look at them arms of his—they're bigger than Mouldy's feet, and that's saying something!"

"You leave my feet alone," snorted Mouldy, somewhat comforted by the thought that he came second, "and get ready to put him on his back, same as you was going to do to me just now!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the grubby little man, coming forward to the footlights, "Hi 'ave the honner to hinteraduce to you to-night Ivan Pushoffsky, the Polish Bear, and Champion Wrestler of the Universe! Pushoffsky is hopen to take hon hall comers on the terms printed in the programme, and hany gentlemen in the haudience who feel disposed to avail themselves of that munificent hoffer, 'ave only to give their names to the management at the door on the right, and the Polish Bear will take them hon, one sad hall in the horder of priority. While these gentlemen are makin' hup their minds, Ivan Pushoffsky will give displays of Greeker-Roman an' ketch-as-ketch-can, with Patsy Dolan, Champion Wrestler of the Emerald Isle."

The last announcement was greeted with a yell of delight, which showed that the Fermanagh boys were in some force in the gallery and pit. Indeed, the house was packed with redcoats, the Wessex men, owing to long stoppage of leave, being well in the majority.

While Mouldy and Hookey were watching, with awe-stricken gaze, the fate of Patsy Dolan, Ronald scribbled their two names on a scrap of paper, and smuggled it to Tony. The latter saw the wheeze at once, and slipped out of the box, leaving neither of the rivals the wiser.

"'Ark at 'im! Did yer hear them poor chap's bones scrunch?" murmured Hookey feebly to himself, as the champion of the Emerald Isle succumbed to a half-nelson which might have rolled a 4.7 gun from its mountings.

"He slaps his arms and legs as if he wanted to break 'em, too!" groaned Mouldy, dinly wondering what his own agonies would be like when he came to submit himself to the same mauling process.

Suddenly, with a crash that sent the hearts of both into their mouths, Patsy Dolan was lifted high in the air, swung three times round Pushoffsky's head, and plumped down upon the stage as if he were of no more consequence than a sack of cement.

"Mouldy, old man," said Hookey, reaching for the other's fist in the darkness of the box, "that finishes me! I take back all I said! I'm no coward, but rather than put myself in the talous of that rampaging rhinoceros I'd eat all I said, and lose my bob!"

"Same 'ere, Hookey!" said Mouldy, with something like a catch in his voice. "We'll say no more about it. Where's young Tony? He's got our stakes! Why, where has the young varmint got to? He's bolted!"

"No, no!" said Ronald, laughing. "He'll be back in a minute. He only left the box a second ago. Listen, and hear what the manager has got to say. It looks as if somebody has been found in the audience to meet the Polish Bear."

"Well, it ain't neither of us, I give you my word!" said Hookey, with feeling. "I wouldn't wrestle with that cove, not if I was 'Ackenschmidt and Sandow rolled into one! 'E's dangerous, that's what 'e is!"

Meanwhile the grubby little man in the dirty linen and dusty swallow-tail coat had come forward to the footlights.

"I am 'appy to state," said he, "that among the haudience to-night we 'ave two distinguished champions, both heager and hanxious to try their skill against the Polish Bear, as he helects to call 'imself on the Henglish stage. Their names are Privit Mouldy Mille and Privit 'Ookey Walker, both catch-weight champions, I ham hinfomed, of the R'yal Wessex Regiment."

"What!" yelled Hookey, scarlet with rage, in a voice which could be heard high above the vociferous cheer which greeted the announcement.

"What!" squeaked Mouldy, clinging to the edge of the box in his bewilderment, and looking more like a condemned man in the dock than a gallant warrior on enjoyment bent.

"That young Tony 'as done this! I'll flay him alive! I'll tear 'im in three 'alves and dance on 'im—see if I don't!" yelled Hookey, glaring round wildly.



EVERY  
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ONE  
HALFPENNY.

"So will I!" echoed Mouldy.

"Gentlemen, Ivan Pushoffsky is ready," said the grubby man, with a smirk, advancing towards the box and bowing.

In a wild desire to create some diversion, Hookey grabbed up his prize turkey by the neck, and, swinging it round, brought it down with a thud on the top of the grubby man's head.

He went down like a ninepin, and so did Hookey. In his anxiety to put all the force he could muster into the blow, he toppled himself over the front of the box, and pitched headlong on to the man with the bass fiddle, reducing that instrument to kindling-wood.

The audience rose and yelled with delight at this, and a posse of uniformed attendants, under the command of the manager, made a dash to capture Hookey.

Hookey was not to be taken without a struggle, however. His blood was up, and though the bass fiddle man made several efforts to brain his assailant with the neck of his instrument, which was all that remained, Mouldy, who had regained possession of the turkey, was able to place him hors de combat from his vantage-point above.

Meantime Hookey was doing his best to arm himself with a mighty brass horn, which the long-haired owner wore wound round his neck, and clung to it as if it was a life-belt.

Before he could effect his purpose the Polish Bear himself interfered. Getting a firm grip of the old soldier's tunic collar, he hauled him bodily out of the orchestra on to the stage, and stood him on his feet.

"Now zen," he roared, "I haf had enough of zis! Are you ze schoundrel vot is called 'Ookey Valker, or are you not? Answer me zat!"

"Yes, yes!" yelled the audience. "That's him, guv'nor! Take him on! 'Ookey's the boy! Bravo, 'Ookey!"

"Ten you are ze schoundrel!" said the Polish Bear, gnashing his teeth. "You send your name oop to me to zay you will me wrestle, and py tunder, you haf cot to do it! Dake off your clothes!"

"Where's that limpin' viper Tony?" bleated Hookey miserably, looking round wildly for some avenue of escape. "All right, mister, just wait half a mo'! I'll be back in a tick! I'm lookin' for my pal!"

But the Polish Bear was not in the mood for waiting even half a tick. Catching poor Hookey round the neck with a slap which nearly dislocated his spinal vertebrae, he flung him flat on his nose on the ground. Then he dropped across him, fixed half-nelsons and hammer-locks on to him galore, twisted his arms and legs until the joints cracked, picked him up, swung him round, and banged him down again, always managing to frustrate Hookey's desperate endeavour, which was to get both shoulder-blades flat upon the mat together, and so end his torture.

### Ronald's Glorious Victory.

There was one thing about Mouldy and his old chum. However much they might snap and show their teeth at each other at times, that was entirely their own business. Let an outsider interfere and take sides, and the pair would promptly forget their quarrel, and unite forces to turn and rend him.

Pushoffsky being the outsider on this occasion, Mouldy felt in duty bound to rush to the aid of his old friend, though it cost him his life. Therefore he wound the neck of the turkey tightly round his wrist, tucked up his sleeve, and, setting one foot on the balcony of the box, leapt on to the stage.

Whirling the plump bird furiously round his head, and roaring strange battle-cries, he advanced upon the Polish Bear, who, by the fearful contortions of his features, seemed actually to be about to gorge poor Hookey whole, like a boa-constrictor.

Meanwhile the manager, seeing this new frontal attack, decided on a flank movement. Heading a rush of his gold-braided minions from the wings to take Mouldy in the rear, he got a sudden backhander with the turkey, which sent him headlong through a wing of scenery.

Here he stuck, with his legs waving in the air, yelling furiously for assistance.

Mouldy, awaking to the new danger, turned like a bull on the posse of attendants, and, whirling right and left, knocked one bottle-nosed doorkeeper into the orchestra, where he subsided gracefully into the interior of the big drum, and sent another through the hole already occupied by the manager.

The third would have had his ribs stove in for a certainty had the tortured fowl only kept its head a little longer. The neck parted in the middle of Mouldy's swing, however, and the battered carcass, breaking away at a tangent, landed plump in the chest of a portly spectator in the stalls.

Overbalanced by the energy of the blow, Mouldy toppled against a ladder in the wings, which happened to be the somewhat insecure perch selected by the limelight man from which to illumine the proceedings on the stage.

The limelight man only saved his life by clinging monkey-wise to a beam somewhere in the flies overhead; but the ladder and all its paraphernalia came hurtling down with a crash right across the stage.

The mighty smash frightened the Polish Bear into a more reasonable view of things, and even stilled for an instant the shrieks of laughter which convulsed the house.

Hookey and Mouldy meantime had seized the brief respite to make a wild dart for their box again, and here erected a formidable chevaux-de-frise of chair legs, from behind which they were determined to sell their lives dearly.

Ronald, who had never left the box, was simply rolling on the floor at the last gasp. His ribs ached, and he could laugh no longer.

If the manager could have got his legs disentangled from the scenery, and his head from underneath the unfortunate minion who had been dumped on top of him, all might have been well.

The curtain could have been rung down, the orchestra—or what was left of it—bidden to strike up, and the incident brought to an informal close.

Fortunately for the gaiety of the audience, however, the manager was incapable of saying or doing anything. It was Ivan Pushoffsky who took command.

In a few biting and highly indiscreet phrases, he expressed his particular and private opinion of the British soldier. He called him coward, poltroon, mongrel, windbag, and everything he could curl his tongue to in the frenzy of the moment.

The red-coat section of the audience held its breath in surprise during the fury of the blast, and then retaliated with a furious roar of defiance.

Those in the gallery started to climb the barrier and drop into the pit, and those in the pit began to make stepping-stones of the people in the stalls in their wild desire to measure fists with the impertinent Pole.

In another ten seconds there would have been bloodshed had not Ronald risen to the occasion.

Clearing a gap through Hookey's barricade of inverted chairs, he leapt on to the stage and held up his hand.

The sight of Ronald Chester, their boxing champion, standing in the glare of the footlights, caused an instant lull in the uproar, followed by a volley of cheers.

"Comrades," said Ronald, as soon as he could make his voice heard above the din, "we have heard the opinion which the distinguished alien, Mr. Pushoffsky, has been kind enough to express as to the British soldier. He has accused him, among other things, of want of pluck, and by that I suppose he means that he is annoyed by the fact that no serious competitor has come forward to-night to accept his challenge.

"Now, I am no wrestler"—shouts of "Rubbish; have a go, lad!"—"but if no better man comes forward to take my place, I intend to take Mr. Pushoffsky on myself at his own terms!"

If Ronald had intended to say anything further, the din

### Next Tuesday:

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## "HARRY WHARTON & CO. AFLOAT,"

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which arose at this plucky acceptance of the professional's challenge decided him to save his breath for the struggle before him.

In any case, an interruption arose in the shape of the manager of the music-hall, who, having been lugged out of his awkward predicament, now came blustering on the scene.

"Dry up, you idiot!" said Ronald quietly, as he divested himself of his tunic. "Can't you see I'm doing this only to save your house from being broken up into firewood? Grin and make the best of it, instead of spluttering there!"

But whether the manager liked it or not, it was evident that neither Ivan Pushoffsky nor the audience were to be denied.

The affair had gone too far already. The foreigner had flung down the gage, and at all costs somebody must take it up.

Quietly Ronald prepared for the struggle. He had elected to wrestle under catch-as-catch-can rules. In this he was ignorant enough, but of the Græco-Roman style he knew absolutely nothing.

One of his father's gamekeepers at Chenys Hall had been a great Cumberland wrestler in his time, and he had taught Ronald one or two grips and checks which he never remembered to have seen used by any professional.

At best he could but try these, and if they failed accept his defeat like a sportsman and a Briton.

The grubby-looking little man held the watch, and the sporting representative of the "Plymport Advertiser" was there to officiate as judge.

The conditions were an out-and-out struggle for mastery, and one fall was to decide the match. The offer of prize-money, made by the manager to Ronald if he succeeded, he curtly refused.

"I wrestle simply for the honour of the British soldier, and I am only sorry that there is not a better man to take my place," said he. And those near enough to overhear the plain statement, cheered him to the echo.

A breathless stillness now fell on the audience as the two men began to weave and feint for a hold.

The difference in physique between the pair was very marked. Ronald was the taller by a couple of inches, but compared with the professional's rugged limbs, his arms and legs were as slender as a boy's.

Bull-necked and bull-chested, the Polish champion was, in sinew, if not in science, a fair opponent for the most powerful wrestler the world has ever known.

Smack—thud! The mighty grip had fallen first on Ronald's wrist and then on his neck, with a weight and a crushing force which staggered him. But his left hand shot out to the Pole's knee, and Pushoffsky seemed to read danger in the movement, for he broke his hold and moved more cautiously.

He had scarcely drawn back a foot than Ronald was at him like a tiger. Cutting the guarding hand down as if he were parrying a sword-thrust, he gripped his antagonist with one arm round the bull-neck and the other braced round the left armpit.

A quick heave, a shuddering strain of five seconds, in which he expended every ounce of strength to topple the mass of muscle from its balance, then he too had to loose his hold.

Now it was Pushoffsky's turn, and he came on with contorted face, rolling eyes, and white teeth bared, as if by this he thought to strike terror into his enemy.

Round and round they circled—Ronald retreating, the Pole in hot pursuit.

At last, with a guttural cry, he leapt forward to close. Ronald met the charge manfully, but seemed to crumple in

the terrible grip. His back crumpled and he fell; the Polish wrestler athwart him to crush him down.

But before his shoulders could strike the boards Ronald had twisted like an eel, and the two landed side by side, grappling as men grapple for very life.

Now something had happened, for the foreigner had suddenly fallen limp in Ronald's straining arms. He must have hurt himself. Yet the rolling eyes and grinding teeth suggested rather helpless fury than pain.

Never relaxing his energies for an instant, Ronald tugged and heaved at the giant pinned to his side, and little by little his furious efforts began to tell.

Inch by inch the Pole was prised from his tenacious hold, and yet few could tell by what cunning means science was gaining the mastery over brute force.

It was a Cumberland hold which Ronald had fixed upon his man, and there was but one way to break it.

As inch by inch Pushoffsky was heaved over on his side, the excitement among the audience increased in leaps and bounds, until at last the man rolled over vanquished. The thunder of the stamping feet was like the roar of an avalanche.

As soon as Ronald's paralyzing grip was released the Pole sprang to his feet. He was quivering with passion, and his face and lips were livid.

"Again, again!" he shouted, gesticulating furiously. "I say you wrestle again. 'Tat was a foul!"

"If you dare to accuse me of playing foul, I'll thrash you where you stand!" said Ronald, beginning to get white-hot in turn.

"You wrestle again, you beastly Engleeshman, or I will kill you!" bellowed the foreigner, rushing at Ronald.

The latter stood his ground, cool as ice. Pushoffsky charged headlong, to his own undoing.

Smack! A straight left had darted through his random arms and landed flush upon his nose, pulling him up dead in the midst of his career.

Pushoffsky's knees buckled beneath him. He threw his arms above his head and toppled with a crash.

Ronald looked at him for an instant, put his hand upon his heart to make sure that he was only stunned, then he put on his tunic. Throwing his leg over the box, he regained his friends just as some clear-witted stage-hand behind the scenes let the curtain down with a run.

"Come out of this!" said Mouldy, handing him his overcoat and cane. "By gum, you're a bit of a holy terror, Chester! But get out of this as sharp as you can!"

"Why?" asked Ronald. "I'm not ashamed of what I've done. I knocked him out in self-defence. If you think I'm afraid of a foreign brute like that—"

"Foreign brute be hanged! It's Tony that's just brought the news. The Fermanaghs are out on the rampage in the town over that jambouce yesterday, when their man got stuck in the arm. They think you did it, and the word's got round that you're in here. They're tearing every Wessox man they get hold of into tatters; but that's nothing to what they'll do with you if they catch you! See, our chaps are climbing out to have a cut at them. We'll get out by a side door and run you back to barracks on the quiet."

"But, look here, I flatly refuse!" protested Ronald, by no means inclined to slink out of trouble like this.

"Take one arm, Hookey, and you, Tony, shove him behind," said Mouldy, ignoring his protests. "Now then, out you go, and no argyfyng. We are not going to see an innocent man brained with an iron bed-leg if we can help it, and I don't know that you won't be lucky if you get no worse. Off belts, now, and be ready for a rush when we show our noses round the door!"

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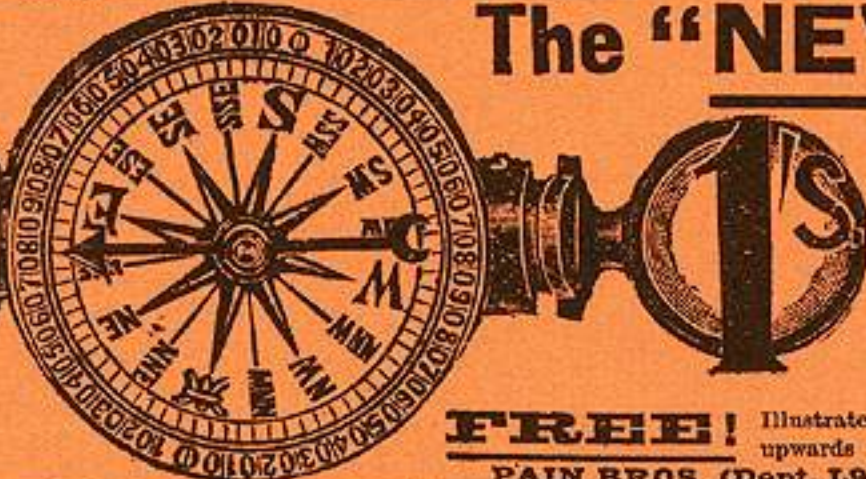
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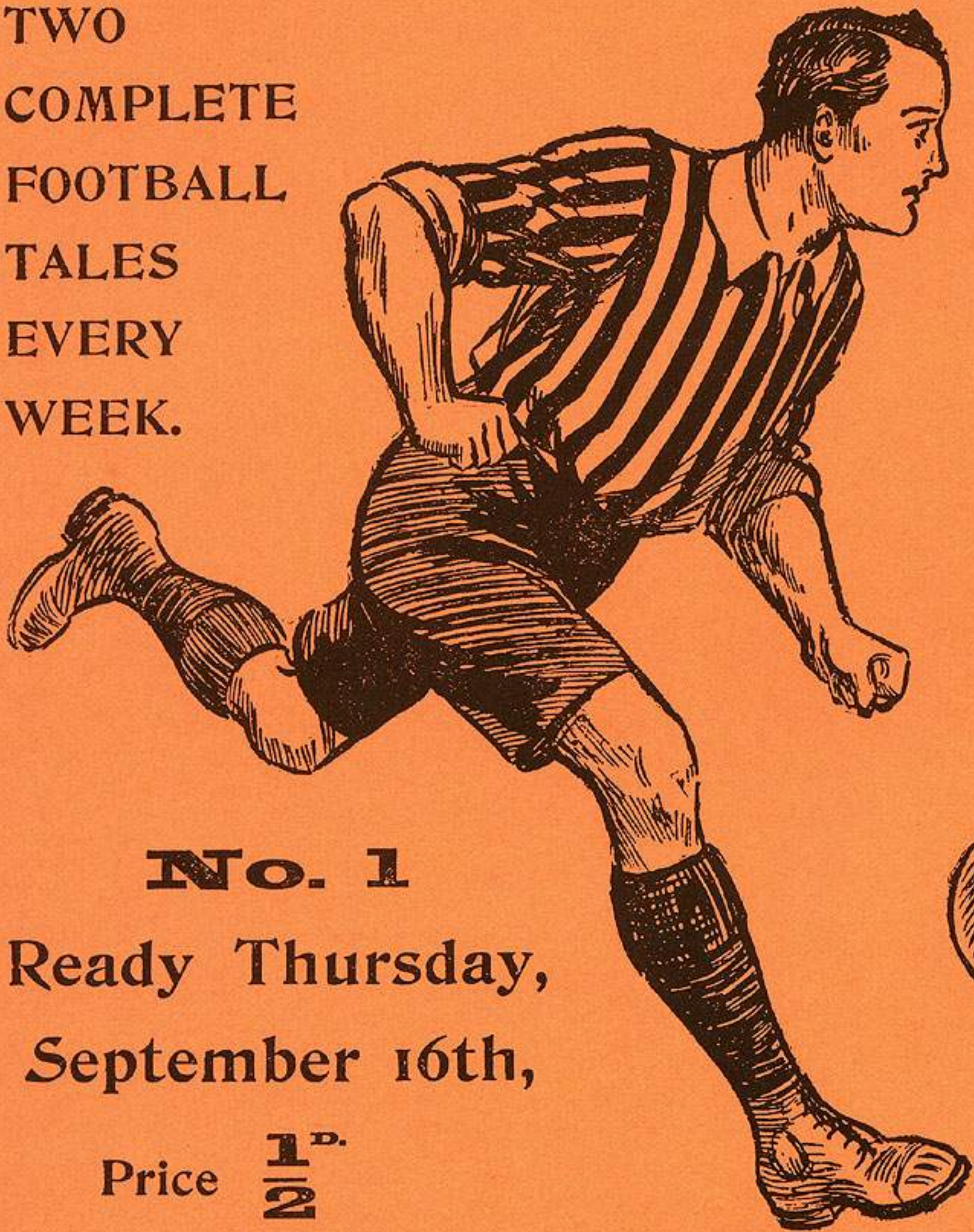
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