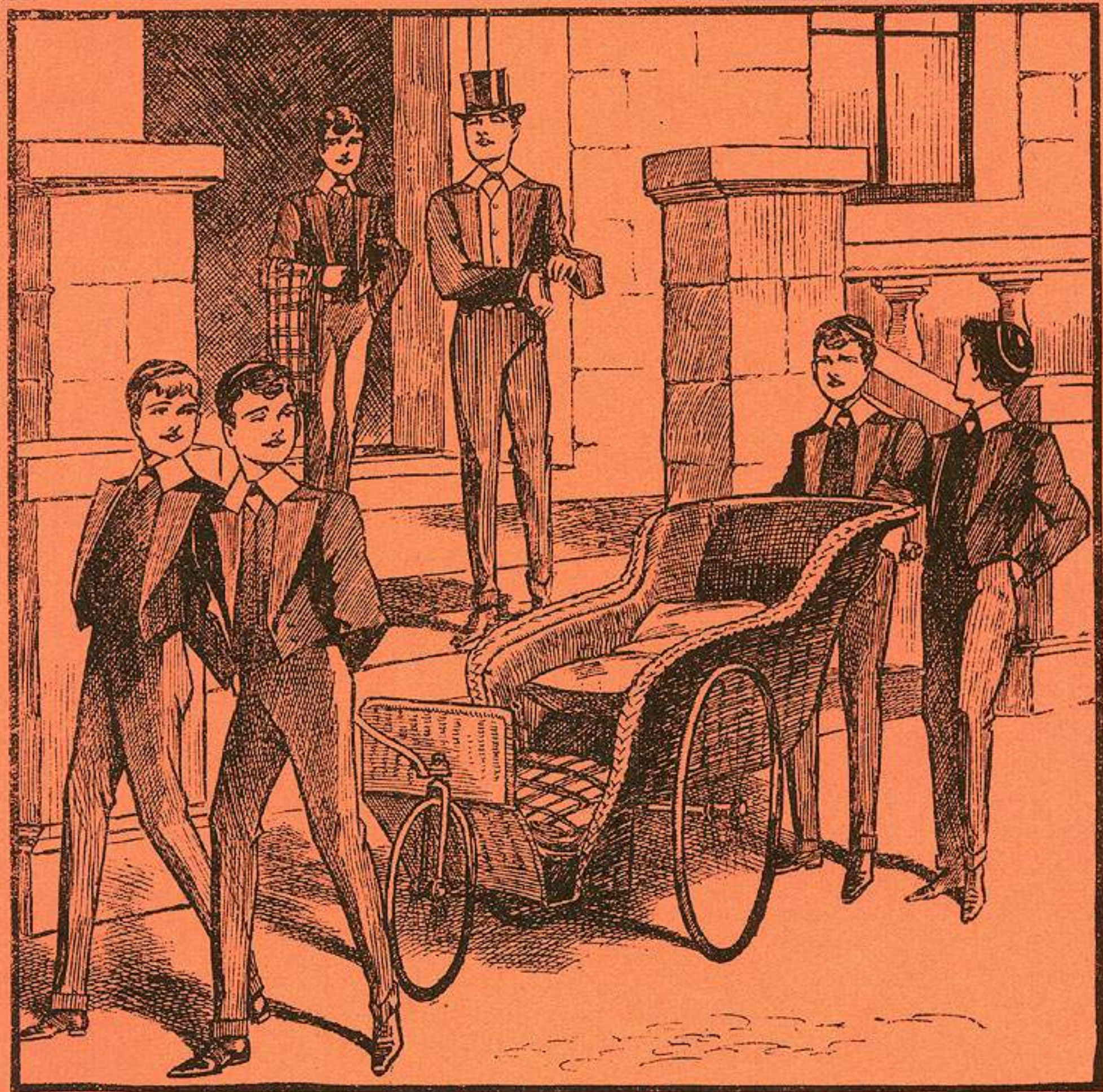


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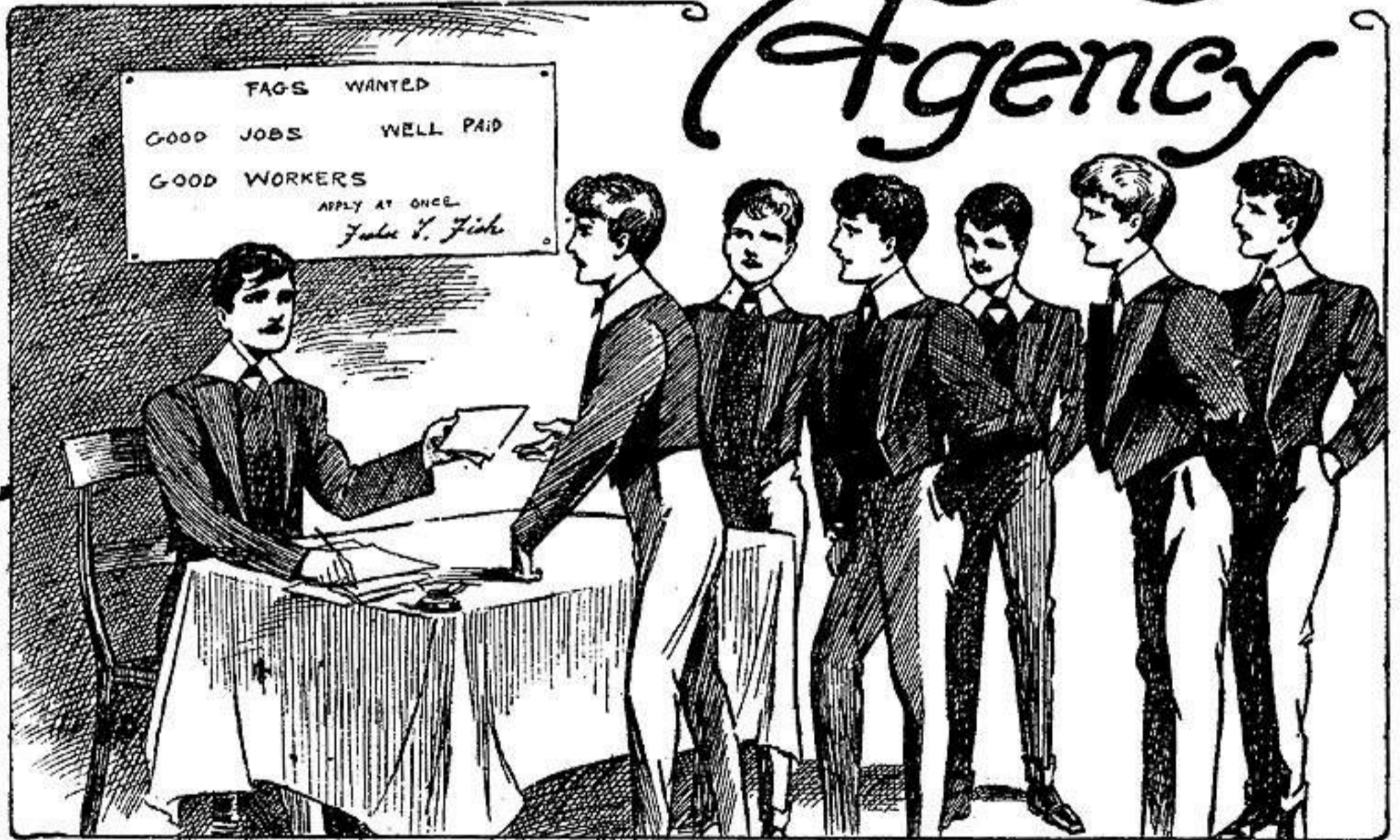
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Fish's Fag Agency



THE FIRST CHAPTER. No Takers.

LORD MAULEVERER came out of his study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, and glanced up and down. The dandy of the Lower Fourth was looking somewhat bored, and his languid eyes rested for a moment upon Tubb, of the Third, who had just appeared.

"By Jove!" murmured the schoolboy earl. "The very chap I want! Tubb! I say, Tubb, my dear fellow, I want you!"

Tubb, of the Third, looked down the passage.

"What's up?" he inquired.

"I want you to clean my boots," explained Lord Mauleverer languidly. "They're never cleaned really well by the boot-boy, you know, so I want you to do them for me."

"Go hon!" grinned Tubb.

"There are only seven pairs," added Mauleverer thoughtfully. "You could do them quite decently in an hour, you know."

"I dare say I could," said Tubb—"if I was ass enough to try!"

"Begad—"

"But I'm not ass enough to try!" grinned Tubb, walking away. "Remove chaps ain't allowed fags, my son, so I'm not going to clean your blessed boots."

Lord Mauleverer stared after the departing Third-Former in surprise.

"Begad!" he murmured. "The young bounder!"

The schoolboy millionaire walked down the passage with a thoughtful expression upon his brow. The Remove at Greyfriars were, of course, not allowed fags, but Lord Mauleverer considered this a most unjust rule. Mauleverer was not exceedingly fond of work, and he would much rather

See
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Cover for our
Splendid 1913
Calendar.

see others do it than do it himself. Being a very precise and elegant junior, he always kept his study in a spick-and-span condition; and as he had a study all to himself he had to do all the work himself. He had just finished tidying the room up, and the labour had made him quite weary. At the last moment he had remembered that his boots required cleaning, and he felt too languid to start on them. Therefore, he was looking for some fag who would be kind enough to take on the job.

Dinner was over, and it happened to be a half-holiday that day. But as it was raining outside most of the juniors were in the School House, grumbling forcibly at the unsociable weather. Lord Mauleverer descended the stairs with a far-away expression in his eyes.

"Halla, hallo, hallo! Wherefore that worried look?" asked Bob Cherry cheerfully, meeting Mauleverer half-way up the stairs and slapping him heartily on the back.

"Begad!" gasped his lordship "I was thinking, my dear fellow!"

"What with?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Why, my brain, of course!" said Mauleverer innocently. "I have several pairs of boots that require cleaning, and I'm looking for somebody to do them."

"I know the very chap," said Bob Cherry promptly.

"Begad! Who?"

"He's a bit of an ass, you know, but I'm quite sure he could clean boots if he only tried!"

"Please tell me his name, my dear fellow," said Mauleverer eagerly.

"Sure you want to know?"

"Of course!"

"Well, his name's Mauleverer!" grinned Bob Cherry, passing on. "He's a bit of an ass, but I'm sure he could clean boots!"

Lord Mauleverer stared.

"You—you mean myself?" he asked.

"Exactly! Ta-ta!"

Bob Cherry disappeared, and the schoolboy earl realised that the cheerful Removite had been pulling his leg. He sniffed elegantly, and continued his descent to the hall. There was a sudden scuffle, and Gatty and Myers, of the Second, whizzed round a corner. They biffed into Mauleverer, and sent him flying.

"Begad!" gasped the dandy of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha! Sorry!" chuckled Gatty.

"Your own fault, you know!" grinned Myers.

Mauleverer scrambled to his feet.

"Never mind," he said, brushing himself down. "You ought to be more careful, though. I want to ask you fellows something."

"Fire away!" said Gatty condescendingly. "We can spare you a minute!"

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"My dear fellows, a minute's no good," he said. "I want you both for an hour!"

"An hour!"

"Yaas, just about an hour."

Gatty and Myers exchanged glances.

"Thanks, all the same, Mauly," said Myers; "but we've got a giddy engagement elsewhere. See you again later!"

"Begad! Don't be in such a beastly hurry!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer hastily. "I want you in my study, you know."

The two fags paused, with visions of a gorgeous feed before their eyes. It happened that the heroes of the Second were out of funds, and any possibility of a feed could not be lightly passed by. And Lord Mauleverer was renowned for his liberal spreads.

"Oh, well, we'll come up if you like!" said Gatty.

"Just to please you," added Myers.

"Good!"

The schoolboy millionaire led the way upstairs, congratulating himself upon having found two willing helpers. They

were fags, and as they were not working for anybody else at the moment, they may as well clean his boots.

Lord Mauleverer walked into his study, the two fags bringing up the rear. A cheerful fire burned in the grate. Mauleverer's study was the most elegant study at Greyfriars. Fellows in the lordly Sixth had looked into the schoolboy earl's study and envied. A rich Turkey carpet adorned the floor, a magnificent lounge was placed close to the fire; and the lounge was smothered with cushions which had cost three and six guineas apiece, at Liberty's. The chairs and table were of inlaid mahogany, and the whole study was furnished with a grandeur which was remarkable. Lord Mauleverer had an allowance which would have made the other fellows gasp had they known its exact amount. Even Lord Mauleverer himself did not know that. He spent his money lavishly, and everybody had to admit that he was possessed of exceedingly good taste.

Gatty and Myers looked round.

"Don't see any feed!" muttered Gatty.

"He'll bring that out in a jiffy," said Myers. "I expect he's got us here to prepare it for him. I don't mind so long as I get a feed!"

"Eh? Did you speak, Myers?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"It's all right, Mauly. I was only telling Gatty that we're willing to give you a hand straight away."

"Thanks awfully!" drawled his lordship languidly. "You can get to work at once, if you like."

"Good!"

"You'll find the boots——"

"I'm a ripping hand at frying a bloater on a couple of pens!" went on Gatty enthusiastically. "Of course, I don't suppose you'd care for your bloaters that way, especially when they're a bit niffy, but we're not so giddy particular! Where do you keep your things? Poke the fire up, Myers, you ass!"

Lord Mauleverer elevated his eyebrows.

"You'll find the things under the lounge!" he exclaimed, realising that the fags were labouring under a wrong impression. "The boots are here. There are seven pairs——"

Gatty looked up from the lounge.

"There's nothing here except some rotten old boot-cleaning brushes," he said indignantly. "Are you talking out of your hat, Mauly?"

"Certainly not!" said his lordship. "Those boot-brushes are practically new. You'll find a tin of stuff along with them——"

"Tin of stuff!" roared Gatty. "What the dickens are you jawing about? Where's the grub? What's the good of brushes for a giddy feed?"

"Feed?" asked Lord Mauleverer blankly.

"You—you chump!" yelled Myers. "Ain't there a feed?"

"Begad! You've only just had dinner!" ejaculated the schoolboy millionaire. "I want you to clean these boots for me. There are only seven pairs, and you'll do them in about an hour!"

Gatty and Myers gasped.

"Y-you b-brought us here to c-clean boots!" stuttered Gatty.

"Yaas, of course——"

"And ain't there any feed?" roared Myers wrathfully.

"Of course not! I didn't mention anything about a feed," said Lord Mauleverer, in surprise. "I want you to clean those boots."

The fags gazed at one another in indignation.

"Why, you—you dressed-up fraud!" roared Gatty. "I thought you wanted us to prepare a feed for you."

"Begad——"

"You giddy swindler!" yelled Myers wrathfully.

"My dear fellows——"

"Bump him!" roared Gatty, in exasperation. "Bump the rotter!"

"My only Aunt Selina! We'll scalp him!" shouted Myers.

With one accord the two fags rushed at Lord Mauleverer, and the amazed Removite was jerked off his feet before he could save himself. He went to the floor with a bump.

"Yow!" he roared. "Begad! You young rascals—— Ow!"

"Smother him with his rotten cushions!" roared Gatty indignantly.

The cushions were ruthlessly yanked off the lounge, and the fags pelted their owner with them. Lord Mauleverer roared helplessly. The cushions smothered him, and before he could rise to his feet, Gatty had seized the coalbox and emptied the contents upon the pile of cushions. The coal-dust descended in a shower, and the air was thick with it.

"Now!" gasped Gatty. "Now perhaps you won't play any more fatheaded tricks on respectable Second-Formers!"

"Begad!" spluttered Lord Mauleverer. "You young rotters! By Jove, I'll——"

But Gatty and Myers, feeling themselves justly avenged, retired from the study and stamped off down the passage.

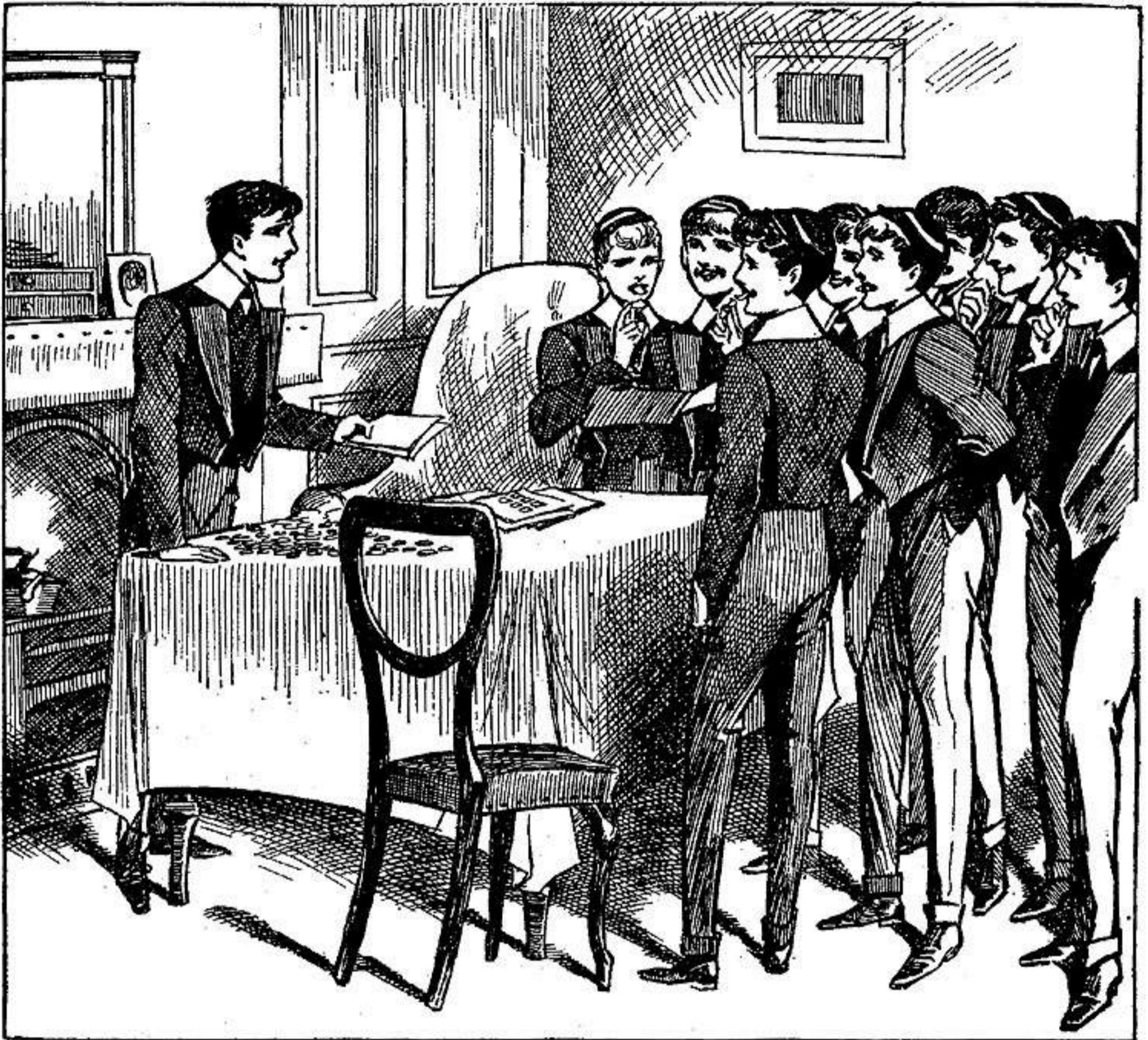
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"This is all very well, Fishy," said Leigh of the Remove, "but I'm blessed if I'm going to pay a penny a week for signing my giddy name! Do we get any benefits from this insurance?" "I guess that's a question that'll be discussed at a later date," replied the Fag Agent. (See Chapter 7.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Fisher T. Fish's Great Idea.

FISHER T. FISH, the keen American junior in the Remove, came out of his study a few minutes after Gatty and Myers had vanished. Fisher T. Fish was the business man of the Remove—or thought he was. The American junior was not very particular about his business methods, and every now and again he "broke out in a fresh place," as the Removites expressed it. In his own estimation, Fisher T. Fish was a business man from the word "go," and took good care that he never "came out at the little end of the horn," as he termed it in the beautiful American language. Nevertheless, Fisher T. Fish was not always so successful in his enterprises as he would have people believe. But the Yankee junior refused to be disheartened, and when he was blessed with a new idea, he set about carrying it out with more enthusiasm than ever.

He crossed the Remove passage to Lord Mauleverer's study. It happened that Fisher T. Fish was short of cash, so he meant to ask Mauleverer for a temporary loan. The schoolboy earl was very handy for that purpose, even if he was useless in other respects. He lent money with great frequency, and in nearly every instance forgot all about it afterwards. To most of the juniors this made no difference,

and they paid up as soon as they received remittances from home. But Fisher T. Fish was a business man, and if he borrowed money, and the lender forgot to ask for it back—well, it was the lender's funeral, not Fish's. Fish would have paid up upon demand, but if Lord Mauleverer didn't choose to ask for the money back he couldn't expect Fisher T. Fish to remember it.

The American junior entered Lord Mauleverer's study. "I say, Mauly, I guess I want to speak to you," he began. Then he caught sight of the schoolboy millionaire, and opened his mouth. "Gee-whiz!" he ejaculated. "You're dirty—some! Have you been heaving coals?"

Lord Mauleverer was in the act of clearing up the room after Gatty and Myers' demonstration of wrath, and he looked up with a smutty and begrimed face.

"Begad!" he ejaculated. "It's those young fags! The little rascals tipped the coals over me because I asked them to clean a few boots, you know! They thought I was bringing them to a feed, and were disappointed when they found that I wanted them to do a little work!"

Fisher T. Fish grinned. "I guess they would be wild," he said. "Remove chaps ain't allowed fags, and—"

"But why not?" asked Lord Mauleverer plaintively.

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"RAKE, OF THE REMOVE!"

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"What's the good of being in the Remove if we can't have fags to do the work for us? Begad, I've a good mind to ask the Head if I can have a couple of fags!"

"I guess that would pan out beautifully!" grinned Fish. "Why, you ass, the Head would fire you out of his study!"

Lord Mauleverer nodded dismally. "I'm afraid he would, my dear fellow," he said. "I'd give ten shillings to have my study well looked after—ten shillings a week! But who's to do it? I can't ask any of the servants, and to get help from outside would be too thick! If the fags would only be reasonable——"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish suddenly. "I've got an idea! You say you'd be willing to give somebody ten bob a week—two dollars fifty cents in real money—to look after your study?"

"Yaas," agreed Lord Mauleverer; "but——"

Fish turned and opened the door. "I'll be back in five minutes," he said briskly. "Begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "What's the matter with him?"

Fisher T. Fish entered his own study. Johnny Bull, Fish's study-mate, happened to be absent, and the American junior paced up and down with an excited look in his keen eyes.

"By Jove, it's a great wheeze," he muttered. "It'll work a real treat if I get to business in the right way! There might be other chaps, too, who'd like fags! I guess this idea's a slap-up top-holer! There's no flies on me, and if I don't make this scheme buzz—— Well, I guess I'll shut up shop!"

Fisher T. Fish made some rapid calculations in his mind, and then sat down at the table and worked out some figures for a few minutes. Finally he rose with a sheet of paper in his hand, and moved towards the door.

"It'll work," he murmured shrewdly—"it'll work a treat, or I'm no judge! With Mauly alone it'll mean at least two dollars—or thereabouts—every week. And there might be other chaps who'll be glad of a fag or two as well!"

Fisher T. Fish was full of his new idea, and he crossed over to Mauleverer's study with a springy step. He found that the schoolboy earl had cleared up, and was looking his own elegant self again. True, the valuable cushions were somewhat crumpled, but the coaldust had not done very much harm.

"Look here, Mauly," said Fish, closing the door. "Your grievance is that the Remove aren't allowed fags?"

"Yaas, my dear fellow," said his lordship languidly. "I feel quite knocked up, you know, after clearin' up this room."

"Well, I've got a real business proposition to lay before you," said Fish importantly. "I guess I want to introduce to your notice my new agency!"

"Your new what, my dear fellow?"

"Fisher T. Fish's Fag Agency," said the business man of the Remove, with a wave of his hand. "I guess it's the smartest thing that's ever happened in this sleepy old school! The company is a real business one, and will run the affair on strict business lines!"

"Begad! The company, my dear fellow? What company?"

"I guess it was formed about five minutes ago," said Fisher T. Fish. "My Fag Agency is absolutely it! I do all the work—supply the fags, and see that they're insured. All you have to do is to pay me the salary, and worry no more!"

"Begad!"

"You, yourself, have nothing whatever to do with the servants of the company," went on Fish eloquently. "All you have to do is to see that they perform their duties, and report any irregularities to the managing director—that's me!"

"I—I don't think I quite understand, my dear fellow," said Mauleverer, a little bewildered. "What's the idea, Fish?"

"Oh, well, I guess it's not your fault—you weren't brought up to be a business man!" said the American junior pityingly. "I'll explain in simple language! I've formed an agency—an agency to supply fags to all those who are willing to pay a reasonable sum for the service rendered. I guess fags aren't allowed to Removites, therefore they ought to be willing to pay a small sum for the privilege of having them."

"But it's against the school rules."

"The school rules don't count any!" said Fish. "There's no need for any of this affair to leak out to the masters. It's simply a Remove concern, and I can assure you that it's the real thing—a sound business proposition. You want fags, and I supply them! You simply have to pay me and bother no more. It's no business of the fags what you pay me, and it's not your business to inquire what I pay the fags! As long as matters are settled satisfactorily, I guess it's O. K.!"

"Yaas, but——"

"Now, as to terms," went on the Yankee junior, who once he started, required some stopping. "My terms are about as reasonable as possible. I'll supply you with as many

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fags as you like at a shilling a head—that is, a shilling a week. If you want four fags, you pay me one dollar; if you want eight fags, you pay me two dollars. You see, it's so simple that it hardly needs explaining!"

Lord Mauleverer's eyes gleamed. "Begad, it doesn't seem at all a bad idea, you know," he said interestedly. "I take it that you've formed a company to supply fags to the Remove?"

"Yep!"

"And if I want some, I've simply got to pay you a shilling each per week, and the fags are—er—delivered?"

"That's the idea exactly!" said Fish quickly. "What do you think of it?"

"My dear fellow, it's absolutely great!"

"Good! How many fags do you require?" said Fisher T. Fish, opening a notebook with a very businesslike air. "I guess if you'll just mention the number, I'll put the business in hand without delay, and you'll have the fags along in less than an hour!"

"Begad, that's quick!"

"This company's got no grass growing around it, you can take my word for that!" said Fisher T. Fish keenly. "Now, if you'll just hand out the number of fags you require——"

"Well, I should think eight will be enough," said Mauleverer thoughtfully. "I can find plenty of work for eight of them, you know. By Jove, this idea of yours is splendid, Fish! Life will be worth living if I can get all my work done for me!"

"I knew you'd approve," said Fish confidently. "Now, if you'll hand me two dollars—say half-a-sovereign in your peculiar coinage—I'll put the matter in hand at once. There'll be a little change over, but I shall require that for entrance fees," added Fish vaguely.

"Entrance-fees?"

"Yep. Just a little matter of form, you know, for the first customer."

"Oh, very well," said Lord Mauleverer languidly, feeling too tired to think about the matter. "Here's your half-sovereign. If you'll get the—er—business in hand I'll be glad! It'll be teatime soon, and I should like somebody here to get things ready."

Fisher T. Fish took the gold coin.

"I guess the fags will be around in less than an hour," he said confidently.

He left the study briskly, and crossed the Remove passage with a smile of intense satisfaction on his keen, thin face. The business man of the Remove was always extremely optimistic. He had got the money for the first week's wages from Lord Mauleverer, and it now remained to obtain the fags.

"I guess that won't be a difficult job," he murmured. "Gee-whizz and Christopher Columbus! I can see this wheeze panning out in ripping style. If I get some other Remove fellows to take to it, I can see a regular weekly haul coming into the pocket of the managing-director of this agency!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Applicants Galore!

JOHNNY BULL, of the Remove, looked up as Fisher T. Fish entered his study. Johnny Bull had come in during Fish's absence, and he was now sitting before the fire, reading. The sturdy junior could not fail to see the look of keen satisfaction upon his study-mate's countenance.

"You're looking happy," he remarked. "Some new hare-brained scheme entered your head? If it's anything to do with this study, like that giddy shop you opened once, you'll——"

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"My dear chap," said Fisher T. Fish coolly, "that idea was nowhere in comparison to the one I've got now. I sha'n't require the study for a shop, although it'll be the offices of the company."

Johnny Bull snorted.

"You're not going to start any of your rotten schemes here!" he exclaimed warmly. "Look here, Fish, if you play the giddy ox in my study you'll jolly well get chucked out on your neck! I give you warning, so you'd better go easy!"

Fisher T. Fish waved his hand.

"Don't you worry," he said. "You'll know all about it this evening. For the present I've got some work to do, so you'll oblige me by keeping quiet. At the present moment I'm Managing-director of Fish's Fag Agency——"

"You're which?" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Oh, I guess there's no need to go into all that now," said Fish. "There's a customer waiting, so I've got no time to waste!"

And the American junior routed out a large piece of cardboard and commenced writing some huge characters upon it in blue pencil. There was silence in the study, except for the crackling of the fire and the patter of the rain out in the Close. At the end of five minutes Fisher T. Fish rose from the table and surveyed his handiwork.

"I guess that'll do," he murmured.

And, stowing the cardboard away under his coat, he left the study without enlightening Johnny Bull any further. Fish went straight down to the fags' common-room. A terrific din greeted his ears as he opened the door, and a chorus of shouts went the air.

"What do you want, you Remove boulder?" shouted Dicky Nugent, of the Second.

"Clear out!"

"You're too fishy for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish held up his hand.

"Silence——"

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

"Boo!"

Fish gave up hope of addressing the crowd of noisy fags, so simply produced the piece of cardboard and held it up for the fags to read. The desired effect was immediate, for instantly the din died away and the Third and Second Formers commenced reading the inscription:

"NOTICE:

Fags Required at Once! Good Wages for Good Workers! Apply at the Offices of Fish's Agency, Study No. 14, Remove Passage.

(Signed) FISHER TARLETON FISH,

Managing Director."

"My only Sunday chapeau!" ejaculated Dicky Nugent. "What's the wheeze? I say, Fishy, what's the idea of this fatheaded notice? Who wants fags——"

"Good wages——eh?" shouted Bunter minor greedily.

"That looks all right! I don't mind fagging for somebody if I'm going to be paid!"

"It's all spoof!" yelled Paget, of the Third.

"That's it! More blessed Yankee swank!" agreed Tubb, with a sniff. "You'd better clear out, Fishy, before you get thrown out. We don't want any of your old buck here, you know!"

"Dry up, Tubby!" roared Smith III. "I'm jolly well going to see what the wheeze is, and chance it. I'm stony broke, and if there's any tin being chucked about, I'm there!"

Fisher T. Fish grinned, lowered the notice, and retreated from the room. He knew that the fags would be at Study No. 14 almost before he could get there himself. As he walked up the passage a whole crowd of excited fags streamed behind him, jostling one another vigorously.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent turned the corner, and gazed in amazement at the curious procession.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "What the dickens are you up to, Fishy?"

"What's the game?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I guess there's no game about this," said Fish coolly. "These kids behind me are coming up to my study, I reckon, and before long the bulk of them will be in my employment."

"Great Scott!" gasped Wharton. "He's mad!"

"Oh, quite!" agreed Frank Nugent. "The chap talks as if he were a factory owner, or something like that. I expect it's another of Fish's hare-brained schemes!"

Other Removites came out to view the unusual spectacle. Bulstrode and Bolsover and many others looked on grinning as Fisher T. Fish passed by, followed by the crowd of fags.

"The chap must be dotty!" said Hazeldene.

"The dottyfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Indian junior of the Remove. "The honourable Fish is evidently off his esteemed rocker!"

But Fish smiled a superior smile, and passed on his way serenely. So far his new wheeze was panning out in a way that left nothing to be desired. He had no doubts regarding his ability to engage sufficient fags to supply Mauleverer.

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday.

He arrived at Study No. 14, and walked in, the crowd of noisy fags bundling in after him. In a few moments they filled the study to overflowing, and Johnny Bull, who was still reading, glared round in amazement and wrath.

"What the dickens is this?" he roared. "Clear out, you cheeky young rotters!"

"Half a minute," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "They're applicants!"

"I don't care if they're sardines!" yelled Johnny Bull. "They're not going to be packed in this study!"

Fish pointed to the door.

"We sha'n't be in here long," he said calmly. "If you'll just pop off for about ten minutes, Bull, I'll get these kids out of the way, and I guess we shall have the place to ourselves. Don't worry! It won't last long, and life's too short to start a row over nothing!"

"Why—why, you Yankee swanker!" shouted Johnny Bull indignantly. "I'll go now, but if there are any more invasions like this I'll do something desperate! I'm blessed if I'm going to be turned out of my own study by a lot of noisy fags!"

And Johnny Bull pushed his way through the crowd, and strode off wrathfully. The door closed behind him, and Fisher T. Fish took his stand at the rear of the table. Fags collected round on all sides, their voices filling the air with a terrific din. Fish rapped upon the table with a ruler.

"Silence!" he shouted. "I want to speak to you all."

"Go it, Fishy!"

"On the ball!"

"Pile in, old man!"

"I guess I'll pile in soon enough when I get a hearing," yelled Fisher T. Fish. "Gentlemen of the Second and Third, I've got a real business proposition to lay before you, and if you're possessed of the sense I credit you with, you'll fall in with my plan and welcome it with open arms."

"Get to the bizney!" shouted Gatty impatiently.

"Hear, hear!"

"Don't be so blessed long-winded, Fishy!"

"Right you are," agreed the managing-director of Fish's Fag Agency. "I guess I'll get down to rock-bottom facts. Are there any fags here who are hard-up, and could do with a regular paying job?"

A chorus of acquiescence supplied the answer.

"Well," proceeded Fish coolly, "I've formed a company for supplying fags to Remove chaps. The work will be fairly light, and the wages liberal, considering everything——"

"What's the work?" shouted Dicky Nugent.

"Yes. Who've we got to fag for?" demanded Tubb excitedly.

"Well, the agency has undertaken to supply Mauleverer, of the Remove, with eight fags within an hour," explained Fisher T. Fish calmly. "Mauly wants eight of you kids to fag for him immediately. As I said before, the work will be fairly light, for eight of you will get all the work Mauly wants done in less than half an hour each day. The wages——"

"Yes, what about the wages?" demanded Dicky Nugent.

"The wages, gentlemen, will be fourpence per week for each fag," said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "Fourpence per week——"

There was a howl.

"Fourpence a week be blowed!" roared Gatty. "Likely we're going to work for a whole week for fourpence, ain't it?"

"Giddy swanker!" yelled Myers.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Fourpence a week——"

Fisher T. Fish held up his hand.

"You don't catch on," he said quickly. "If there was only one fag going to work for Mauly, you'd have a right to grumble. But there are going to be eight. That'll mean that the work will be done in an eighth of the time; it'll mean that you won't have more than twenty minutes' work a day. And don't forget that the fourpence is simply a nominal fee."

"Nominal rats!" growled Dicky Nugent.

"Please be reasonable, gentlemen," went on Fish quickly, seeing that the fags were somewhat impressed. "You'll get fourpence a week for doing a few minutes' fagging for Mauly every day. Then there'll be the feeds. You all know that Mauleverer is an exceedingly generous chap. He'll stand you teas every day, probably, and the job's worth taking for that alone. Then there will be tips. Mauly might want one of you to pop into Friardale, and he's sure to give you a bob when you come back. So you see that the fourpence is merely a matter of form, to ensure your being in the services of the company. Now, I guess all those who'd like to fag for Mauly will have to hold up their hands."

There was a few minutes' excited chatter among the fags, then every hand in the room was shot ceilingwards. Fish had certainly put the matter in such a light that all the fags were eager to be employed by the agency. Fourpence a week wasn't much, but it was something more than the fags got for working for the seniors. And, besides, as Fish had pointed out, there were the feeds and the tips. And twenty minutes a day wasn't much.

Fish surveyed the eager crowd with intense satisfaction.

"There's one other little matter I wish to discuss before taking you along to Mauleverer's study," he said coolly. "You'll all have to be insured against accident—all of you, that is, who are given jobs. And I guess it will be necessary for each employee of the company to sign a form. A penny stamp will be required from each of you, and the insurance-policy must be renewed every week—"

"Why, you swindler," roared Gatty, "that will bring the wages down to threepence!"

"That's nothing to do with the company," said Fish calmly. "All fags who refuse to comply with the agency's regulations will have to git! That's only a matter of form, however. I'll take you along to Mauleverer's study now, so that he can choose eight of you to work for him. After he's made his choice we'll discuss details."

Fisher T. Fish pushed his way to the door. The fags were too excited to think much about the insurance-policy—the main thing was to be engaged by Lord Mauleverer—and they followed Fish in an excited crowd. The idea had caught on wonderfully, and the cute American junior was in high feather. He could see that he would make a good thing out of the agency, if it only lasted.

The fags crowded out into the passage.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" said Fish impatiently.

"Oh, really, Fishy!" protested Billy Bunter, blinking at Fish through his big spectacles. The Owl of the Remove had just rolled up the passage, having been told of the new wheeze by one or two fags who had remained below. Billy Bunter was quite willing to fag for anybody if there was any money attached to the job.

"You're not wanted, Bunter!" said the American junior.

"Slide!"

"I don't see why I should," said Bunter indignantly.

"I've got just as much right to apply for a job as any of these kids."

"Oh, all right, if you're a candidate!" exclaimed Fish, opening the door of Lord Mauleverer's study. "Follow me in!"

"Good!" said Bunter.

He and the fags crowded into the schoolboy earl's magnificent study. Lord Mauleverer had been dozing on the sofa, and he stared at the invading army of fags in astonishment. They poured into the room, and filled every corner.

"Begad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, in mild protest. "What's the meanin' of this—this crowd of kids, Fish? I don't want all these fags, you know. I shouldn't be able to move with all this lot about me. Begad!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Interviewing the Candidates.

"MY dear chap," explained Fisher T. Fish coolly, pushing Lord Mauleverer back on to the sofa, "these fags here are simply candidates. I've brought them along so that you can interview them and choose the eight you require."

"That's not a bad idea," said Lord Mauleverer. "Jolly good of you, Fish. Of course, I can judge which kids would suit me better than you could."

"Naturally," said Fish. "You see, I am making no extra charge for the privilege, although it's departing from strict business lines. Now, there are about twenty fags here, I guess, including Bunter, of the Remove, and there's Leigh as well, I can see. That makes two Removites, about ten Second-Formers, and eight Third-Formers. I guess you can choose your number from among that lot."

Lord Mauleverer rose to his feet, and surveyed the gathering languidly.

"Begad, you know, it's a bit of a bore," he yawned, "but I suppose I've got to go through it! Suppose you all come round in front of the lounge one at a time? Then I can question you and pick out the fellows I want."

"The very idea!" exclaimed Fish. "We'll start with the Second. All Second Form kids line up!"

The Second Form fags accordingly scrambled into position. By this time the whole crowd were willing and eager to be employed by the agency. It was a novelty, for one thing, and, for another, Lord Mauleverer was an exceedingly easy fag-master. The juniors foresaw that if they obtained employment in his study it would mean endless feeds and numerous tips. In consequence, there was tremendous excitement. All the fags wanted to be chosen.

Sammy Bunter was the first fag in the line, and he stood blinking excitedly before Lord Mauleverer. His major, meanwhile, was making vigorous signs to him, which Bunter minor took not the least notice of.

"You clear out, Sammy!" muttered Billy Bunter warmly. "If Mauly wants a cook, there's not a chap to beat me, and I'll skin you alive if you get the job!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bunter minor. "I'm—"

"Silence!" shouted Fish. "If any chap interrupts again he will be denied the privilege of being engaged. All interrupters will be chucked out!"

A dead silence reigned in the study, and Lord Mauleverer looked round rather uncomfortably.

"Begad, I hardly know how to begin!" he murmured.

"Well, Punter minor—"

"My name's Bunter!" growled Sammy aggressively.

"Oh, sorry!" said his lordship. "I'm not at all sure, Bunter minor, that you're not too fat to do any real work!"

"Oh, rats!" said Sammy Bunter warmly. "I'm not half the size of Billy, anyhow!"

"You young fibber!" roared Billy Bunter. "I'll scalp you—"

"Outside!" said Fisher T. Fish determinedly, grabbing hold of Billy Bunter's fat arm. "You've forfeited your chance of getting a job. Git!"

"Oh, really, Fishy!" protested Billy Bunter, in alarm.

"I—I won't do it again! Really, you know—"

"Well, dry up, then!" growled Fish.

Bunter dried up.

"Do you think you could manage to clean my boots, Bunter minor?" asked the schoolboy earl doubtfully. "I've got seven pairs, you know, and I shall want at least two pairs done a day."

"Anything else?" asked Sammy cautiously.

"No; I don't think there'll be anything else for you to do," said Lord Mauleverer. "If you're confined to doing boots alone, you ought to do them well. The question is, can you do them properly?"

"There ain't a chap in Greyfriars who could do 'em better."

"Good!" said Lord Mauleverer, in relief. "That's one!"

"Am I engaged?" asked Sammy eagerly.

"Yaas, my dear fellow."

Sammy Bunter passed on to the other side of the room with a smug grin upon his face.

"Next one!" ordered Fish sharply.

Gatty took his place before his lordship.

"I shall want a fellow to look after my togs, you know," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "As a rule I have to brush them down myself, and it's the very dickens of a fag. If I engage you as clothes-brusher, Fatty—"

"Gatty, you ass!" said Gatty indignantly.

"Sorry! If I engage you as clothes-brusher, Gatty, I should want you to take my clothes down from the wardrobe once a week and give them a thorough brushing. That would save me an awful lot of fag."

"Good!" said Gatty. "I'm on!"

"Look here, you young bounder, I want that job!" shouted Tubb, of the Third. "I can brush clothes a dashed sight better than you can! You'll only have to work one day a week, you lucky beggar!"

"Dry up, Tubb!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Gatty's engaged!"

"That's all very well," said Tubb discontentedly. "If Mauly goes on at this rate, he'll engage all the Second-Form kids and leave us out altogether!"

"Give us a chance, Mauly!" roared Paget.

Lord Mauleverer waved his hand.

"Don't worry, my dear fellows," he said languidly. "I won't engage all these youngsters."

Nevertheless, before Lord Mauleverer had finished with the Second-Form contingent he had engaged Sammy Bunter, Gatty, Myers, and Dicky Nugent. Myers was engaged as messenger to and from the village—a job which Myers was intensely pleased with, for he foresaw many tips in the future. Dicky Nugent filled the post of crockery-washer, owing to the fact that Dicky had a reputation for being extremely careful with the "crock."

"Now for the Third," said Fisher T. Fish. "There are four more fags required, and those four I reckon will have to come out of the Third."

"Good!" said Tubb, with satisfaction.

"Rotten!" shouted Leigh of the Remove. "Where the dickens do Bunter major and I come in?"

ANSWERS

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"Begad!" exclaimed the fag employer, "what—what does this mean you young rascals? Have you been having tea?" "Looks like it, doesn't it?" replied Gatty pleasantly. "Couldn't wait for you, you know! You're awfully late, Mauly!" (See chapter 12.)

"You don't come in at all!" grinned Fisher T. Fish. "You go out!"

"Oh, really, Fish!" shouted Billy Bunter indignantly. "If Mauly doesn't engage me as cook, I call it a rotten shame! There ain't a chap in the Lower School who can cook like I can!"

"But you're not a fag at all!" shouted Paget wrathfully. "Look here, Remove chaps are barred. They ain't fags. I don't call it fair that Remove jossers should be allowed to—"

"But you can't cook!" howled Billy Bunter.

"Can't I?" roared Paget. "Why, you Remove worm—"

Lord Mauleverer waved his hand.

"Begad, there's no need to start a roar," he said mildly. "I don't see why I shouldn't choose my own fags, you know. Of course, you Third Formers can't understand the circumstances. You see, I require a couple of fellows to help me to dress and undress in the dorm., and they must be Remove chaps. It's an awful fag every morning to have to dress, so I consider that Billy Bunter and Leigh are engaged as valets. Billy Bunter can also do my cooking."

"Now, you're talking sense!" said Billy Bunter, with satisfaction.

"Rather!" agreed Leigh.

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Chums of Greyfriars next Monday.

There was a derisive howl.

"It ain't fair!" shrieked Tubb indignantly. "Now we shall be pushed out—"

"Not at all," said Mauleverer easily. "Which of you Third Form kids can write the best?"

"I can!"

"I can!"

"You blessed fibber, Smith III! You can't write at all!" "And you've got a fist like a spider crawling about!" shouted Smith III, indignantly.

"Silence!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "All you Third-Formers had better write down a specimen of your scrawl on a sheet of notepaper."

For the next five minutes there was much excitement, and finally Mauleverer inspected a much blotted and grimy sheet of foolscap. There was not much to choose between the lot, but, if anything, Tubb's handwriting was the best. The Third-Formers were waiting for his lordship's decision anxiously.

"Begad, I reckon Tubb's the man!" said the schoolboy earl, with a yawn. "Tubb, you can consider yourself engaged as my secretary."

"Hooray!" yelled Tubb triumphantly.

The struggle for the last post was exciting. For one thing, Lord Mauleverer couldn't think what he wanted an

"RAKE OF THE REMOVE!"

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eighth fag, for, but at last Paget was engaged to fill a vague post as general help. Paget didn't mind, because he reckoned that he would simply have to look on and watch the others working.

Smith III., Taylor, Dobbs, and other Third-Formers, were exasperated and angry at being declined, but Fisher T. Fish consoled them somewhat by saying that he would procure them situations elsewhere. At last the crowd of fags swept out into the passage, and Lord Mauleverer and Fisher T. Fish were alone. His lordship wiped his brow with an expensive silk handkerchief.

"Begad, my dear fellow!" he gasped. "I feel quite faint. Will you please see that Bunter comes along immediately to prepare tea?"

"He'll be here in two ticks!" said Fisher T. Fish. "There's just a little matter of insurance I wish to speak to him and the others about, but as soon as that's over I'll send him right along!"

"Thanks, my dear fellow!"

And Lord Mauleverer lay back upon the lounge, and closed his eyes languidly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Fish's Agency Doesn't Catch On.

FISHER T. FISH found the successful candidates gathered in Study No. 14. Luckily, Johnny Bull had not come back, so the fags had the room to themselves. They looked up interestedly as Fish entered.

"All here?" asked the American junior.

"Yes," said Tubb. "The other chaps have gone downstairs. We want to know exactly how we stand, Fishy. We're Mauly's fags, ain't we—the eight of us?"

"Yep!"

"Then Mauly has to pay us at the end of the week?"

Fisher T. Fish smiled.

"Nope! I guess not!" he said briskly. "You're in my employ, and the paying bizney has to be done by the agency. The Fish Fag Agency does all the work of paying its employees, and the hirers simply make use of the fags."

"The hirers?" asked Leigh.

"Surely!" Fish said in the wonderful American language. Fish always said "surely" when he meant "certainly." He looked round at the fags with a smile of superiority. "The hirer is the person who hires you to do his work. Mauleverer is the hirer in this instance. He transacts all business with me, as managing-director of the agency, and I pay you your wages. If I chose to take one of you away from Mauly, and placed you somewhere else, that would be nothing to do with you."

"Oh, wouldn't it!" said Dicky Nugent warmly. "I should think we've got some say in the giddy matter!"

"No, sir, not a look in!" said Fish coolly. "You'll go where I tell you, or you'll get the sack without a moment's notice! This agency has a very strict rule that all employees shall comply with the regulations of the company, or git! There's no half-and-half measures, I guess. It's business from the word 'go,' and all insubordination will be put a stop to by docking a portion of the wages!"

"Fat lot to dock!" sniffed Paget.

"That's not the point," said Fisher T. Fish. "The wages, after all, are secondary. The real benefit of the employment will exist in free feeds and liberal tips. What I want to impress upon you all is this: that you're in the employment of the Fish Fag Agency, and that Mauleverer has nothing whatever to do with you as regards money. If he has any complaints to make he'll come to me. If you have any complaints to make you'll come to me."

"And when do we start?" asked Gatty.

"Right now!" said Fish promptly. "Mauly wants his tea prepared without delay, so you'd better get along. But before you go I want to talk to you about the insurance."

"Blow the insurance!" growled Tubb. "We've had enough of you and your rotten insurance, Fishy! That time you broke the fellow's windows—"

Fisher T. Fish waved his hand.

"That's past history," he said coolly. "This insurance is quite different. Before you can be officially employed by the agency you'll each have to insure yourselves. I'll have the insurance-forms all prepared by half-past six this evening. At that time, precisely, there'll be a meeting in this study, and all those who want to keep their posts will bring a penny stamp each."

"And what's the giddy insurance for?"

"Accidents!" said Fish. "If any of you meet with an accident during your working period you'll get compensation."

"I—I say, that's not bad, you know," said Billy Bunter. "Suppose I cut my finger, Fishy, what should I get?"

"Fourpence!" said the American junior promptly. "You see, I'm not asking you to insure for no reason. It's a rule

of the agency that all its employees should be insured. Therefore, any kid who jibs against the rule will be dismissed without notice! Get along to Mauly's study now, and see what he wants!"

And Fisher T. Fish turned to the door, and walked briskly out of the study. His cool, business-like air had certainly made an impression upon the fags, and they were inclined to follow his orders to the letter without protest. If he really was their "employer," he had it in his power to dismiss them; and the fags, now that they were engaged as Lord Mauleverer's helpers, didn't want to lose such an exceedingly soft job. After all, it was only through the Fish Agency that they had got the work, so it was only fair that they should comply with the regulations.

Fish strolled down the stairs to the Remove common-room, with a smile of satisfaction upon his thin, keen face. His scheme was panning out well, and if it only kept up it would mean a fair sum weekly for the "Agency's" pocket.

It was still raining outside, and the Removites were in the common-room growling discontentedly. There was nearly half an hour before tea yet, and the juniors hardly knew what to do with themselves. They looked up expectantly as Fisher T. Fish entered the room.

"Hallo, Fishy, I hear you've got a new wheeze!" said Bulstrode, detaching himself from the mantelpiece, and yawning. "More tomfoolery, I suppose?"

"Of course it is!" sneered Vernon-Smith. "I should think you chaps have learned by this time to be jolly suspicious of Fish and his precious schemes! Look what happened last time, when he diddled you all by his precious window-smashing—"

"Oh, ring off, Smithy!" said Fisher T. Fish easily. "You chaps don't seem to appreciate real business! That insurance scheme of mine was a sound money-making concern, only you didn't look at it in the right light! This new idea is quite another thing, and if you've got any sense at all, you'll back me up!"

"We don't know what the idea is yet," said Harry Wharton, with a smile.

"Blessed if I want to hear it!" growled Frank Nugent. "Bull's been telling me something about it, and—"

"Give the chap a chance," interrupted Bob Cherry. "We might as well listen to him as stand about here growling at the rain! It's no good us talking to the weather—and it'll be no good Fishy talking to us! Still, it'll pass the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish smiled good-humouredly. The American junior could stand a good deal of chaff without getting angry. If Fish had one good quality, it was good-humour. He never bore malice, and even immediately after a sound bumping, he had been known to grin cheerfully and pass a joke. Most of the Removites were rather curious about the new wheeze, although they didn't say so.

Harry Wharton & Co., and Bulstrode, Treluce, Vanc, and many others gathered round the American junior as he strolled to the fireplace. Fish looked round approvingly, and grinned.

"I guess you'll take off your hats to me when you've heard what I've got to say!" he exclaimed coolly. "I'm not the chap to boast—"

"Go hon!"

"But this time I reckon I've hit upon a top-notch idea! You'll all agree that the Fish Fag Agency is the very thing the Remove has been wanting for years!"

"The Fish which?" asked Nugent.

"The Fishy Fag Agency," said Johnny Bull. "I don't know exactly what it is, but you'll agree that it's fishy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fish smiled calmly, and proceeded to outline his scheme to the listening Removites. They certainly seemed struck with the idea, but not exactly in the way Fish had anticipated. The American junior concluded his speech by stating that Lord Mauleverer had started the ball rolling by engaging eight fags from the agency.

"Well, I always thought that Mauly was a bit of an ass," said Nugent, "but this proves it beyond dispute! Why, the giddy chump has let himself in for a pile of trouble. One fag would have been bad enough—but eight! Mauly's off his rocker—or else he's walking in his sleep again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Fishy expects us to engage his blessed fags!" sniffed Bulstrode.

"My dear chaps, it's only a shilling each—"

"A bob for each fag per week?"

"Surely!"

"I'd rather pay a bob to keep the young bounders away!" said Nugent.

"I guess you're without sense!"

"Oh, am I?" said Frank Nugent warmly. "Look here, Fishy, if you don't want a thick ear, you'll go easy with your remarks!"

Fish grinned.

"I guess I haven't finished yet," he said coolly. "You don't seem to understand that each fag is insured, and that if there are any complaints to make, those complaints have to be made to the agency. If a fag is unsatisfactory, he is dismissed on the instant, and another installed in his place. You couldn't do that sort of thing without my agency!"

"But we could get any amount of fags to work for us at sixpence a week," grinned Bob Cherry. "Besides, Remove chaps don't want fags! Mauly's different; he's a languid bounder, and as helpless as a blessed kitten! Why, if we had fags in the study, the young beggars would be checking us from morning till night. They've a certain amount of respect for seniors, but the little rotters don't seem to understand that the Remove is just as much entitled to respect as the Sixth! No, Fishy, old man, your agency is off!"

"I guess—"

"What you guess doesn't make any difference," said Bob Cherry firmly. "The Remove can fend for itself, thanks! Fags would be nothing more nor less than a blessed nuisance! If we left the cooking to fags, we should never get a decent tea—even if we got any tea at all! Billy Bunter's a Remove chap, and I will admit he can cook. But even as it is, I expect we shall see poor old Mauly's hair turning white before the end of the week!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish looked round pityingly.

"I guess you chaps don't understand business!"

"We don't," grinned Harry Wharton—"not Yankee business!"

"Oh, rats! You chaps are about as obstinate as mules! Why, over there, I guess my notion would have caught on like fireworks! You're too sleepy over this side of the water!"

"Which shows that we're about ten times as smart as you are!" grinned Bob Cherry blandly. "On your own showing, you're very wide awake in the States, and yet you say your rotten idea would catch on like wildfire! Well, if the Yankee chaps are so easily swanked—"

Fisher T. Fish turned red.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" he growled.

And the keen business man of the Remove passed out of the common-room amid a general chuckle. Fishy's scheme hadn't caught on as well as he had anticipated. But Fish didn't mind. He realised that he would have quite enough to do attending to Lord Mauleverer's fags, and that transaction alone would bring him in a nice little sum every week.

But Fisher T. Fish was a trifle over-confident, and he would soon find that matters would not run on such oiled wheels as he had fondly imagined. The Fish Fag Agency was not at all a bad scheme in theory, but in practice it would not pan out so satisfactorily. There were troublesome times in store for Mauleverer, and the dandy of the Remove would wish, before long, that he had never heard of Fisher T. Fish and his precious fag agency.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Fags at Work.

MEANWHILE, Lord Mauleverer was busy attending to his fags. Immediately after Fish had sent them to the schoolboy earl's study they trooped in unceremoniously, Billy Bunter leading the way. They found his lordship still dozing upon the lounge, and he blinked up at them sleepily as Gatty banged the door to.

"We've come!" announced Paget cheerfully.

"Eh? My dear fellows, what on earth do you want?" asked Lord Mauleverer, staring at the crowd in surprise.

"Begad, pray run away and leave me alone!"

"Rats!" shouted Dicky Nugent. "We're your fags!"

"You ain't forgotten it, have you?" asked Myers, in surprise.

"Begad, you're the young rascal who tipped the coal over me!"

"That's all stale!" sniffed Myers. "You didn't say anything about that when you engaged me! We're your fags now, you know, and we've come to play Old Harry with your study—I—I mean, we've come to fag for you!"

Lord Mauleverer looked round at the grinning fags.

"Begad, I remember now! You're the fags sent along by the agency, I suppose?"

"Yes, you sleepy ass!" yelled Tubb.

"Begad, that's not the way to talk to me!" said Lord Mauleverer mildly. "Well, my dear fellows, I hardly know what to do! I—I suppose you want to work?"

There was a chuckle.

"We don't want to," said Paget frankly, "but, you see, we're engaged by the giddy agency to fag for you!"

"I—I say," put in Billy Bunter eagerly, "it's nearly tea-time, you know, Mauly, and I'm simply furnished!"

"Begad, you don't expect me to provide tea, do you?" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, I should say so!" exclaimed Gatty indignantly.

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"Likely we're going to work for you for practically nothing a week without tea being thrown in, ain't it?"

"Begad, I'm paying you—"

"That ain't the question," said Sammy Bunter, pushing forward. "We want to know if we've got to prepare tea!"

Lord Mauleverer rose and looked round with a good-humoured smile.

"Well, I suppose I must attend to you fellows," he said resignedly. "And as it's the first day of your employment, I'll stand you all a tea in honour of the occasion! There are several jobs want doing, you know, so perhaps you had better get to work!"

The fags grinned.

"Right-ho!" said Dicky Nugent. "Pile in, old man!"

Lord Mauleverer scratched his head.

"Let me see," he murmured. "Oh, yaas, my boots want cleaning. Suppose you get to work on them at once. Nugent minor?"

Nugent minor snorted.

"That's Sammy Bunter's rotten job!" he said witheringly. "I'm the giddy washer-up!"

"Begad, yaas! Bunter, please clean the boots!"

"Oh, all right!" said Sammy Bunter carelessly.

"Bunter major, you had better see about tea," went on Lord Mauleverer languidly. "Here's half-a-sovereign. Lay in something good, you know. I suppose I can trust you to prepare something fit to eat?"

"Oh, really, Mauly!" protested Billy Bunter indignantly. "I'm the best chap at Greyfriars for laying in a good feed!"

"And the best chap at wolfing it, too!" grinned Tubb, of the Third.

"Oh, really, Tubb, my appetite's quite moderate! I admit I'm a bit peckish now, and when I'm peckish I can generally choose a better tea than usual. I'll buzz off to the tuckshop and get some of Mrs. Mumble's ripping pastry. She's got some fresh sosses in to-day, too, and they'll be simply prime for tea."

"Good!" said Lord Mauleverer, looking round. "And you might as well take Leigh and Myers with you. I don't think I shall want either of them at present."

The three fags departed, and Lord Mauleverer looked round at the other five.

"Well, begad, I hardly know— You're not cleaning the boots yet, I see, Bunter minor."

"Oh, there's no hurry!" growled Sammy Bunter.

"Just as you like, my dear fellow. Gatty, I think you're the chap I engaged to brush my clothes—eh?"

"That's me!"

"Good! You'll find some bags of mine up in the dormitory, and a dressing-gown. You might brush them and bring them down here."

"Right you are!" said Gatty.

"Tubb," went on Lord Mauleverer, after Gatty had departed, "there are some beastly lines for me to do. Mr. Quelch gave them to me this morning for inattention. Really, I don't see why he should have done, for I only dozed off for a minute. Suppose you sit at the table and write them out?"

"How about my fist?" asked Tubb. "Old Quelch would spot the difference in a tick. You Remove chaps say he's got eyes like gimlets!"

"Nonsense, my dear fellow," said his lordship carelessly. "Mr. Quelch will never detect the difference. Pray get to work at once!"

"Just as you like," said Tubb condescendingly.

Lord Mauleverer looked round.

"Now, there are Nugent and Paget still idle," he murmured thoughtfully. "Let me see, Nugent is crockery-washer, I think. Suppose you run off, Nugent, until tea's ready? Your business comes afterwards."

"Oh, all right!" said Dicky Nugent readily. "I want to go downstairs to talk to young Smith III."

Nugent vanished, and Lord Mauleverer was left alone with one fag to deal with. This was Paget; and Paget, who had prided himself upon getting off lightly, found himself allotted to the task of brushing the carpet. Paget was rather a dandy in his way, and generally assumed a repose of manner which is supposed to stamp the cast of Vere de Vere. Therefore, Paget was rather inclined to jib at brushing Mauly's carpet.

However, with a mental decision to do the work extremely half-heartedly, he consented.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer, in relief. "I'm glad I've got rid of you all. I feel quite weary after the unusual exertion!"

"Poor chap!" grinned Tubb, looking up from the table.

"I really think I shall lay down upon the couch and have a little nap," announced Lord Mauleverer wearily. "You fellows won't disturb me in the least, and one of you can wake me up when tea is all ready."

And the schoolboy millionaire lay back upon the lounge and closed his eyes. In less than five minutes he was asleep, and the study was fairly quiet.

The door opened, and Billy Bunter appeared, laden with tuck. He was alone, for Leigh and Myers had stopped behind, to come along later when tea was ready. The Owl of the Remove lost no time in getting to work, and he soon had the fire poked up to a cheerful blaze, and the sausages spluttering and frizzling over it. An appetising odour soon pervaded the study, and Sammy Bunter looked up eagerly from his boot-cleaning.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "Those sossingers smell ripping!"

His major blinked at Lord Mauleverer through his big spectacles.

"It beats me how the dickens Mauly can sleep through it all!" he said. "I know jolly well if I was asleep, and somebody started cooking sosses in the room, I should wake up quick enough."

"I'll bet you would," grinned Paget. "The mere presence of 'em in the room would be enough to wako you up, let alone the niff of 'em frying!"

"He, he, he!" giggled Tubb, inadvertently allowing a blob of ink to drop from his pen over the exercise-paper. "You young ass, Paget; you've made me mess up this giddy impot! I don't care, it's Mauly's, and he'll get it in the neck when he takes it to Quelch!"

"My hat, there's a nice niff about the room!" exclaimed Gatty, coming into the study with the trousers over his arm. "I couldn't find the giddy dressing-gown anywhere! I've pulled all Mauly's clothes out all over the dormitory, too!"

"Have you left them there?" chuckled Paget. "Rather! You don't think I should shove them all back, do you? That's Billy Bunter's job; he's the giddy valet!"

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly. "You beastly little bounder!" he said warmly. "If you've pulled all Mauly's giddy clothes out, you'll have to shove 'em back. I'm blessed if I'm—"

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and the next moment the door opened quickly, and Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, appeared in the door. Gatty only just had time to skip out of the way of the opening door, and he stood looking at the Remove-master rather apprehensively.

Mr. Quelch stared. "Why, what— Good gracious! What are all you boys doing in Mauleverer's study?" he exclaimed, in astonishment. "Mauleverer, what is the meaning of this?"

A slight snore was the only reply his lordship made. "Upon my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "The boy is asleep!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Insurance!

MR. QUELCH stood at the door of Lord Mauleverer's study considerably surprised. The scene which met his eyes was certainly an unusual one to be witnessed in a Remove study. Lord Mauleverer himself was sleeping peacefully upon the lounge, utterly oblivious of his Form-master's presence. Billy Bunter was bending over the fireplace, with a very red face, attending to the frying sausages, whilst his minor was vigorously engaged in cleaning boots. At the moment of Mr. Quelch's arrival, Sammy Bunter put on a spurt in order to get finished quickly, and he was working as though for a wager. Paget was grovelling on the floor with a clothes-brush, making a pretence of sweeping the carpet. Tubb, with a lightning-like movement, whipped a clean sheet of paper over the imposition, and pretended to be writing a letter.

Undoubtedly it was an unusual spectacle, and Mr. Quelch gazed into the study with wondering eyes. The Form-master had come to see Mauleverer about the lines, which should have been taken to him an hour previously.

"Boys," he exclaimed loudly, "what are you all doing here?"

"Only—only helping Mauly, sir!" stammered Paget, scrambling to his feet.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch. "Is it usual for so many junior boys to take such an interest in Mauleverer as to come to his study and clean his boots and brush his carpet?"

"Well, you—you see, sir," began Gatty nervously.

"It's like this, sir—"

"Exactly, sir—"

"I—I say, sir!" said Billy Bunter, blinking up from the frying-pan. "I suppose Mauly can have a few coaps in his study, can't he?"

"Silence, Bunter!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Don't be impertinent!"

"Oh, really!" murmured Bunter, aggrieved.

"Mauleverer!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Eh? What?" murmured his lordship languidly. "Begad, I dreamed that old Quelch was calling me—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Paget.

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed.

"It was no dream, Mauleverer," he said, striding up to the schoolboy earl and shaking him vigorously. "'Old Quelch,' as you choose to call me, is here in person, but as you spoke without realising my presence I will let the impertinence pass. I gave you fifty lines to do this morning."

"Yaas, so you did, sir," said Lord Mauleverer, looking alarmed. "Begad, Tubb, have you—"

Mauleverer was stopped by a fierce glare and a vigorous waving of arms from Tubb, who was behind Mr. Quelch's back.

"Well, Mauleverer?"

"I—I— Begad, sir, I haven't done them!" stammered his lordship.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch cuttingly. "I presume you have not had the time to spare?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"And yet I come here and find you asleep upon the couch, with four or five boys working as though they were your servants. I can quite believe, Mauleverer, that you have not had time to write out the lines!"

"Begad!"

"I have no doubt, however, that you will find time this evening to write the imposition, which, under the circumstances, I shall double. You are a lazy, good-for-nothing boy, Mauleverer, and I am greatly inclined to cane you! What is the meaning of this activity in your study? Why are all these boys working in here?"

"There are only five, sir!" stammered Lord Mauleverer, who realised that it would not do to let Mr. Quelch know of the Fish Fag Agency. "You see, sir, I have invited them all to tea, and—and they're just preparing!"

"Very good, Mauleverer," said Mr. Quelch graciously. "Nevertheless, I fail to understand why so many boys should busy themselves in the manner I witnessed upon entering. It is your business, however, so I will retire."

And Mr. Quelch left the room.

"Begad!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer, gazing at the closed door. "Fancy old Quelch bursting in like that, you know! Tubb, you young ass, you ought to have had those lines done by this time!"

"You silly chump!" said Tubb, disrespectfully. "I'm not a giddy magician. I've got fifteen done!"

"Well, you had better continue doing them till tea's ready," said Mauleverer. "By Jove, I really feel quite peckish! Those mutton-chops smell delicious!"

Billy Bunter glared.

"You ass!" he said. "They're not mutton-chops! They're sossingers!"

"It's all the same, my dear fellow," said the schoolboy earl languidly. "Paget, it wouldn't be a bad idea if you set the table. Begad, I'm hanged if you're not using my best clothes-brush to sweep up that beastly coal-dust!"

"Well, it was the only thing I could find!" grumble Paget.

"You really must be more careful, Paget," said Lord Mauleverer mildly. "Ah, here are some of the others! It won't be long now before we get tea."

The door had opened, and Dicky Nugent, Myers, and Leigh entered.

"All ready?" inquired Leigh genially.

"Just upon, my dear fellow."

The wage-earning fags disported themselves very much as though they were honoured guests, and very soon they were sitting down to a sumptuous tea. The fags hadn't had such a gorgeous spread for many a day, and they inwardly blessed Fisher T. Fish and his agency.

"My hat!" murmured Gatty confidentially into Dicky Nugent's ear. "This is a bit of all right—eh? We don't get feeds like this in the giddy hall!"

"No fear!" whispered Dicky. "I don't mind if I'm Mauly's fag for the rest of term! There's fourpence to draw at the end of the week, too!"

"Oh, blow the fourpence!" said Gatty witheringly. "It's these feeds that are the things. Why, I reckon Mauly will supply us with free grub every day. He's a careless bounder, and won't notice how much tin he spends!"

The tea proceeded merrily. Lord Mauleverer felt quite contented. He was one of the best-natured fellows at Greyfriars, and it was a pleasure to him to see others enjoying themselves. Billy Bunter was piling into the good things in his usual whole-hearted manner. In fact, he caused the good things to disappear at a surprising rate, and, as Tubb remarked afterwards, he wolfed up about half the feed himself. Still, the other half was quite sufficient for the rest, so the tea passed off without a hitch.

Dicky Nugent sighed.



The St. Jim's Juniors charged again, and a volley of snowballs poured into the already disordered ranks of the Grammarians. Then the cheery voice of Gordon Gay rang out as he held up the white flag. "Pax! We surrender!" "Cease fire, St. Jim's!" cried Tom Merry. (For the above incident see the splendid long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "WINTER SPORTS AT ST. JIM'S," by Martin Clifford, in this week's issue of our companion paper, "The Gem Library." Out on Wednesday. Price One Penny.

"This is where I come in," he said rather regretfully. "I s'pose I've got to wash-up now?"
 "Rather!" grinned Paget. "You've done nothing yet, you lazy beggar!"
 "Well, help me to clear the giddy things away," said Dicky.
 And in a few moments there was a clatter of crockery in the air.
 The door opened, and Fisher T. Fish thrust a smiling face into the room.
 "Getting on O. K.?" he inquired.
 "Splendidly, my dear fellow," drawled Lord Mauleverer.
 "Good! You'll find my men will soon jog down into their places," said Fish confidently. "They may be a bit fresh at first, but they'll soon settle. From this time onwards, Mauly, you'll have nothing whatever to do yourself. All your work will be done for you."
 "Begad!" said his lordship. "That's ripping!"
 "Just going to wash up, Fishy," said Dick Nugent cheerfully.
 Fish looked across the room quickly.
 "I guess not," he said briskly—"not yet! You'll all come across to the office and be insured before there's any washing-up done! Have you all got your stamps?"
 "Oh, blow the stamps!" growled Gatty rebelliously.
 "I—I say, Fishy, couldn't you do without that stamp

bizney?" said Billy Bunter. "What's the good of it, anyhow? We could sign the giddy forms without stamping them."
 "No, sir!" said Fish firmly. "Without the stamp the insurance-form is worthless. All resisters will be immediately dismissed from the service of the agency. I give you five minutes to procure your stamps and come over to the managing-director's office! This agency is just about the limit in slickness, and if it's employees don't turn up to time—well, they shunt!"
 "But we haven't got any stamps!" protested Billy Bunter, in alarm. "I tell you what, Fishy! I've got a postal-order coming by to-night's post, and I'll—"
 "Rats! Pay up now or you'll be dismissed!"
 Lord Mauleverer felt in his pocket.
 "I believe I have a few stamps here," he announced, opening his luxurious pocket-book. "Yaas; there are one or two," he added, as he produced about ten shillings' worth. "You will want eight, I presume?"
 "Nine," said Fisher T. Fish promptly. "There's one stamp to go on the inauguration form."
 "The which form?" asked Tubb, with a stare.
 "You kids wouldn't understand if I explained," said Fish, with a wave of the hand. "I guess it's a matter of business which needn't be discussed here!"
 "Giddy swanker!" growled Paget. "I don't believe you know what you're talking about!"

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But Lord Mauleverer was too disinterested to worry about the extra stamp, and he handed over the nine without question. The fags took one each, and Fish retained the ninth. Then they all trooped out of the study and crossed over to No. 14—the office of the managing-director.

"Begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. "I'm glad they've gone!"

Johnny Bull happened to be taking tea with Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent in Study No. 1, so Fisher T. Fish and the employees of the agency had No. 14 to themselves. Fish had evidently been preparing for the fags' reception. The table was cleared of its usual paraphernalia, and now it was bare save for an open notebook, a fountain-pen, and a large pile of coppers.

"My hat!" exclaimed Gatty. "Look at the giddy wealth!"

"What's it for, Fishy?" asked Billy Bunter, eyeing the pile lovingly.

"Business," said Fish briefly. In all probability Fish himself didn't know what the coppers were there for, but there was no doubt that they gave the table an imposing and businesslike appearance.

The fags gathered round the table, and Fish cleared his throat.

"You'll understand, gentlemen, that it is absolutely necessary that you should be insured. Therefore, I have prepared this notebook in readiness. Each page is made out as an insurance-form, and you will pass before me, one at a time, stick your stamps in, and sign your name. I guess each form will hold good for a week."

"That's all very well, Fishy," said Leigh, of the Remove; "but I'm blessed if I'm going to pay a penny a week for signing my giddy name! Do we get any benefits from this insurance?"

"I guess that's a question that'll be discussed at a later date," said Fisher T. Fish carelessly. "At present you've simply got to sign the forms and stick your stamps on. I guess you'll understand that if you don't comply with the agency's regulations you'll lose your job without notice. There's heaps more fags to take your places."

And Fisher T. Fish held out the notebook to Gatty, who was first in the line. Gatty took the book, stuck his stamp on, and took up the fountain-pen.

"I write across the stamp, of course?" he said.

"No fear!" said Fisher T. Fish quickly. "Underneath the stamp, you ass!"

"But what's the good of the stamp if I don't write across it?" asked Gatty shrewdly. "I reckon there's some giddy swank about this insurance! Fancy sticking a stamp on and writing your name underneath!"

"Piffle!" sniffed Dicky Nugent.

"Rot!"

"Tosh!"

"I guess——"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Gatty; and he scrawled his name underneath the stamp.

The other fags followed suit. Fish tore off the pages of the notebook as each form was signed. When the last was finished, he picked them all up, folded them carefully, and stowed them away in a drawer.

"Now I guess you can clear off," he said coolly.

The fags cleared off, most of them returning to Lord Mauleverer's study. Fish grinned as the door closed behind them. The keen American junior wasn't quite sure about the insurance scheme himself. Its object was very vague—in fact, Fish had insisted upon it for the sole purpose of obtaining the stamps so that he could sell them again. Fish was being paid a shilling for each fag by Lord Mauleverer, and to his business mind the fags were receiving their fair portion if they got threepence each. They would have fourpence each at the end of the week, but a penny of that went back to Fish in the form of insurance stamps. On the whole, Fish reckoned he could rely upon six shillings weekly from Lord Mauleverer, in addition to a shilling or two extra, perhaps, for imaginary expenses; and as Fish himself did practically no work, his Fag Agency wasn't panning out so badly. Lord Mauleverer, of course, was an exceedingly easy youth to deal with, and Fish congratulated himself upon his keen business instinct in suggesting the wheeze.

He removed the eight insurance forms from the drawer, and then proceeded to carefully remove the stamps. Being freshly stuck on, they came off fairly easily, and Fisher T. Fish rose to his feet and pocketed the eight stamps. Then he turned the gas low, passed out into the passage, and strolled downstairs.

Five minutes later he came into the entrance-hall, smiling cheerfully. In his pocket he rattled seven pennies, and he chuckled to himself as he ascended the stairs.

The business man of the Remove had just left Mrs. Mible's tuckshop, where he had succeeded in selling the good dame his eight stamps for sevenpence. Mrs. Mible had been

rather suspicious of them at first, but, finding that they were quite satisfactory, except for the lack of gum on their backs, she immediately offered Fish sevenpence for the lot—an offer which Fish, being a business man, accepted with alacrity.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success.

THE Removites were grinning when they went up to the Remove dormitory that night. A few of them were inclined to rag Lord Mauleverer, but the majority of them—including Harry Wharton & Co.—had agreed to say nothing whatever to the schoolboy earl on the subject of his numerous fags.

As Bob Cherry had remarked, it would be rather interesting to watch the development of the experiment. Frank Nugent declared that Lord Mauleverer wouldn't stand the fags for more than two days. By letting matters take their own course, the Removites would see how far Nugent was from the truth. They decided that the dandy of the Remove shouldn't be given a word of advice upon the subject.

"I hear he's engaged Leigh and Bunter as giddy valets!" chuckled Mark Linley, the Lancashire junior. "My only hat! Fancy Bunter as a valet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder if they'll perform their duties to-night?" asked Bulstrode.

"Blessed if I know!"

The Removites commenced undressing. The weather was cold, so most of them didn't waste any time in the process. Lord Mauleverer commenced taking his things off with his customary air of boredom, and he was totally unconscious of the curious glances which were cast in his direction.

Billy Bunter and Leigh had apparently forgotten that they had been engaged as valets, for they undressed without even glancing at the schoolboy earl.

"Begad, it's a beastly fag to take one's boots off!" yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"Why not have help?" suggested Stott, grinning.

"Help, my dear fellow?"

"Your giddy valets, you know!"

Lord Mauleverer started.

"Begad, I'd clean forgotten!" he ejaculated. "I say, Bunter, lend me a hand, there's a good fellow!"

Billy Bunter blinked.

"Oh, really, Mauly, I'm just getting into bed!" he protested.

"Yaas, so you are! Perhaps you'll help me, Leigh——"

"Why, I'm in between the sheets, you ass!" said Leigh.

"By Jove, that's awkward!" said the schoolboy millionaire, looking round languidly. "I really thought you would assist a fellow! You know, I engaged you two fellows to help me to undress and dress——"

Fisher T. Fish looked grim.

"I guess those two lazy jossers ain't going to sneak out of their work!" he said firmly. "Hold on a minute, Mauly! Leigh! Bunter!"

Leigh sat up, looking red.

"Look here, Fishy——"

"I am looking," said the American junior, "and I can see a rotten slacker! I guess Mauly engaged you two fellows to act as valets, and I'm hanged if you're going to slide out of your duties in this barefaced way! I reckon you and Bunter had better get up real sharp and give Mauly a hand!"

"Oh, really, Fish——"

"If you ain't out in fifteen seconds, the pair of you will lose your jobs!" said Fish coolly. "It's a rule of the agency that all employees who try to shirk their duties shall be dismissed immediately. Why, you lazy, slab-sided bounders, you haven't done a stroke of work yet! I guess there are just seven seconds left!"

"Oh, you beast!" murmured Billy Bunter disgustedly.

But the Owl of the Remove scrambled out of bed with alacrity; he had no wish to lose his job. Leigh, too, followed his example, and they stood before Fisher T. Fish very much as if he had been a Form-master.

"Don't stand there, you asses!" said Fish impatiently. "Go and give Mauly a hand with his clobber! He's shivering with cold already!"

"Begad, it isn't very warm!" murmured Lord Mauleverer.

The two Removites moved across to the schoolboy earl, feeling very uncomfortable. It wasn't exactly a pleasant task to act as Mauleverer's valets before the grinning juniors; but they had agreed to do the work, and there was no getting out of it.

"My hat, don't they look happy?" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"Rather! I'll bet Mauly'll get mauled before they've done with him, though!" said Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Go it, Bunt! Pull his giddy tie off!"
"On the ball, Leigh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter took one boot and Leigh the other. Then they commenced unfastening them. They both finished together, and gave a strong tug. Unfortunately, however, they had not loosened the laces sufficiently, and their heave had an unexpected effect. Lord Mauleverer jerked forward, and bumped to the floor with a crash.

"Yow! Ow!" he howled in alarm. "Begad! You silly asses!"

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

"Ow! I'm hurt! By Jove, that was awfully careless of you, my dear fellows!" said Lord Mauleverer, scrambling painfully to his feet. "Groo, you really must be more careful, you know! Ow!"

"Sorry!" said Leigh, grimacing, his ill-humour subsiding. "It was your own fault, you know, Mauly, for wearing such tight boots! Still, they're off, and that's one thing!"

"Begad, my coat's frightfully dusty!"

"I shouldn't worry about a little thing like that!" said Billy Bunter. "Come on, Leigh; we'll yank his coat off next, and then his bags!"

Leigh grabbed hold of Lord Mauleverer's immaculate coat, and jerked his lordship round vigorously.

At the same time Billy Bunter grasped hold of the other sleeve, and between the pair of them Lord Mauleverer was jerked backwards and forwards with unceremonious haste.

"Oh dear!" he murmured. "I'd rather do it myself, after all, my dear fellows! Pray go back to bed!"

"Rats!" grinned Leigh. "Yank it off, Bunter!"

The dormitory door opened, and Wingate, of the Sixth, looked in.

"Time you kids were in bed! Hallo! What the dickens are you chaps doing to Mauleverer?" inquired the stalwart captain of Greyfriars, gazing at Bunter and Leigh in surprise. "What are you playing at?"

"Begad, Wingate, it's all right!" gasped Mauleverer. "They're only helping me!"

"Helping you—eh?" said Wingate. "By Jove, you look as if you're being mauled to death!"

There was a chuckle from the Removites.

"Good old Mauly!" murmured Nugent. "My hat, that chap'll be the death of me one day! I wonder what game he'll be up to next?"

Wingate looked round.

"Hurry up!" he said sharply. "I shall come back in five minutes and turn the light out. Don't play the goat, Mauleverer, but get undressed yourself! You'll find it easiest in the end."

"Begad, I believe you're right, my dear fellow!"

Billy Bunter tugged hard at Mauleverer's waistcoat, and Leigh, at the same time, pulled the opposite way. This time it was more by design than accidental, although both Bunter and Leigh looked innocent enough. The waistcoat was an expensive one, and of delicate material. There was a sudden tear, and the garment left Lord Mauleverer's back in two parts.

There was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "That's the kind of valets to have! I say, Mauly, they'll ruin your whole giddy wardrobe before they've done!"

"Begad," gasped Lord Mauleverer, "you really shouldn't be so rough! That waistcoat is simply ruined!"

"I do believe it is!" said Leigh solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, Mauly," said Bunter eagerly, "you might as well give that waistcoat to me now! I can get it patched up, and—"

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

"That's jolly rich, if you like!" said Bob Cherry. "He goes and tears the blessed waistcoat up, and then asks for it! I say, Bunter, what would be the good of that waistcoat to you? You'd want a dozen yards of material shoved in at the back to make it meet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I certainly think that I shall continue undressing without your assistance," announced Lord Mauleverer breathlessly. "I'm quite sure you mean well, my dear fellows, but you are really too rough! Begad, I feel quite flustered!"

And Lord Mauleverer continued disrobing himself without the help of his two newly-engaged valets. The whole Remove was chuckling over the schoolboy earl's misfortunes, and even Fisher T. Fish couldn't keep a straight face.

"I'll bet Mauly won't stand it long," said Frank Nugent confidently. "Before Friday he'll be fed-up with his blessed fags!"

"Not a bit of it!" said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "Mauly's a sensible chap, I guess, and barring one or two mishaps like this at the start, matters will soon jog down into a regular rut. The Fish Fag Agency has come to stay!"

"Perhaps!" said Harry Wharton.

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RAKE, OF THE REMOVE!

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EVERY MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"And perhaps not!" grinned Bob Cherry. "In my opinion—most decidedly not!"

And even Lord Mauleverer himself, as he snuggled down between the sheets, wondered vaguely whether his army of fags weren't more trouble than they were worth.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. A Bathchair.

"I SAY, Tubb, my dear fellow—"

"Hallo!"

"I want you a moment," said Lord Mauleverer.

The dandy of the Remove was standing on the School House steps, and Tubb of the Third was strolling in the Close with Paget. Morning lessons were over, and the dinner-bell would ring in a few minutes. To-day the weather was quite brilliant, and the sun shining clearly from a blue sky. It almost seemed as though the weather had made up its mind to make up for its bad behaviour of the previous day by being exceptionally genial to-day.

Lord Mauleverer was immaculate, and the Close was extremely muddy. Therefore he remained upon the clean steps and waited until Tubb of the Third condescended to walk over.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked the fag coolly.

"Nothing, that I am aware of," said his lordship. "I want to go down to Friardale immediately after dinner."

"All right," said Tubb, "you can go. You have my permission."

"My dear fellow, you don't understand me," said the schoolboy earl patiently. "The roads are simply in a shocking state, and I should get my clothes into a terrible mess if I walked down."

"You can have my aeroplane," grinned Paget.

"Pray don't be absurd, Paget," said Lord Mauleverer. "I was thinking that perhaps one of you chaps, as my fags, would be willing to take me down in a trailer. There are one or two in the cycle-shed, and you can easily borrow one—"

"Why, you slacking bounder," gasped Tubb, "do you mean to say you want me to lug you into Friardale in a blessed trailer to save your bags getting muddy?"

"Certainly!" smiled Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, you—you—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Paget quickly. "I've got an idea!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Tubb excitedly. "I want to jaw at Mauly—"

"I tell you I've got a ripping idea!" roared Paget. "Better than a dozen giddy trailers! There's a first-class bathchair round the back; we could jam Mauly into that and take him down to Friardale in style! Three or four of us can go, and it won't be hard work between the lot of us."

Tubb stared, then shrieked.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha! It's ripping!"

"Shut up, you giddy ass!"

Lord Mauleverer looked at the fags thoughtfully.

"Begad," he exclaimed, "the bathchair idea is not bad at all! Upon the whole, my dear fellows, I think it would be safer than the trailer. It won't be so liable to tip me out, you know."

"Tip you out?" said Tubb, in horror.

"How could you dream of such a thing?" asked Paget solemnly.

"Very well," said the schoolboy millionaire languidly.

"If you'll have the bathchair ready immediately after dinner there will be heaps of time for us to go down to Friardale before afternoon lessons. Awfully good of you fellows to oblige me!"

"Oh, we shall enjoy it!" said Tubb gravely.

Lord Mauleverer smiled and passed into the entrance hall. And immediately his back was turned Tubb fell upon Paget's neck and wept.

"My only Aunt Tabitha!" he sobbed. "It's too gorgeous for words!"

"Old Mauly'll have a ripping ride!" grinned Paget. "We mustn't forget we're his fags, you know, so we shall have to take particular care not to tip him out of the giddy chair."

"Oh, we'll look after him like a baby!" exploded Tubb.

The two fags raced across the Close to a spot where Gatty, Myers, and Nugent minor of the Second were congregated. The Second-Formers were rapidly let into the wheeze, and they grinned delightedly. Then the five fags hurried round to the back, and routed out the old bathchair. The dinner-bell rang, and they sat down at their tables, breathless and excited.

Dinner over, Gatty, Myers, and Dicky Nugent hastened out into the Close. Tubb and Paget rushed up to Lord

Mauleverer's study. The schoolboy earl had just entered, and he looked at the two fags expectantly.

"All ready, my lord!" said Tubb, bowing low.

"Begad! Don't be an ass!" said Mauleverer, frowning.

"Have you found the bathchair?"

"Rather! We've come to escort you down!" grinned Paget.

"Good! This is really very decent of you!" said Lord Mauleverer, looking at the fags in approval. "I certainly think this agency scheme of Fish's is turning out well. You say the bathchair is all ready?"

"Waiting!" said Tubb.

"I'll be down in a minute, then. Perhaps you had better stay here, Tubb, until I'm ready. You can carry my rug down for me."

"Anything to oblige," said Tubb readily. "You cut off, Paget, and see that the giddy landau is all ready when we come down."

Paget cut off.

Lord Mauleverer was a few minutes preparing. The dandy of the Remove was feeling quite elated. He particularly wanted to go down to Friardale, but he had been appalled at the prospect of walking down over the muddy roads. Besides, the walk would have been fagging, and, while he paid fags to wait upon him, why should he walk? Lord Mauleverer was an exceedingly good-natured youth, as unsuspecting of a jape as a new-comer to Greyfriars. He never dreamed that the fags were doing the work for the fun of it. Under ordinary circumstances Mauleverer would have walked, but matters were altered now.

He was a picture of elegance, from his spotless patent-leather boots to his shiny topper. He surveyed himself in a glass, and nodded.

"Begad, I think I shall do!" he murmured.

"Ready?" asked Tubb patiently.

"Yaas. Take this rug, my dear fellow."

Tubb took the rug, with a grin, and placed it over his arm. Then he followed Lord Mauleverer out of the study and down the Remove passage. Several Removites who were passing to and fro looked at the pair in surprise. They arrived at the door, and Tubb grinned delightedly.

For a moment Lord Mauleverer stood on the top step, surveying the scene. Tubb stood by his side. At the foot of the steps was the bathchair, and four fags were gathered round it, waiting the arrival of Mauleverer.

"Buck up!" called Dicky Nugent. "We sha'n't have time before afternoon lessons if you don't hurry!"

"Oh, there's heaps of time!" said Lord Mauleverer, descending the steps and standing beside the bathchair.

"Do I get in now, my dear fellows?"

"Of course!"

"Do—do you think it is—er—quite safe?" asked his lordship rather anxiously.

"Safe as houses!" declared Gatty.

"Begad! It looks rather rickety, you know."

"Oh, you can't go by looks!" said Paget. "My dear

Mauly, once you get in there you'll be as snug as anything! Hop in!"

Lord Mauleverer stepped into the bathchair rather gingerly. Undoubtedly the vehicle was ancient, but its wheels seemed to be strong, and, even if the tyres were gone, that wouldn't affect the stability of it. The wickerwork was ragged in one or two places, but upon the whole the bathchair seemed to be trustworthy.

Lord Mauleverer was a youth totally unpossessed of any swank, and it never even occurred to him that it was somewhat undignified for the scion of a noble house, such as himself, to be seen perambulating the streets of Fairdale in an ancient and dilapidated bathchair. The sole thought which filled his lordship's mind was that the visit to the village would be undertaken without any exertion, and that he could not possibly pick up any of the mud which smothered the roads in slushy patches.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bulstrode, coming out of the School House. "Who the dickens is that in the giddy bathchair?"

"Old Mauly!" grinned Hazeldene. "He's being taken down to Friardale in style by his fags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll bet a fiver he's tipped out before they get there!" chuckled Tom Brown.

The bathchair proceeded majestically across the Close. Two of the fags were pulling and two pushing, whilst Tubb strode on in advance and cleared the way, so to speak.

Harry Wharton & Co. were standing in a group at the gates, and they gazed at the peculiar procession in surprise.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, what's this?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Looks like a wounded soldier, or a chap with the gout," suggested Nugent.

"The honourable soldier's goutfulness is terrific!" added Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, it's Mauly!" said Harry Wharton. "What in the name of all that's silly are you doing in that rotten bathchair, Mauly? You haven't broken your leg, have you?"

Lord Mauleverer smiled as he was wheeled past.

"Begad, no!" he exclaimed. "I'm going down to the village!"

"What's up with your legs?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Nothin', my dear fellow."

"Then why the dickens can't you walk?"

"Too faggin'."

"Too fagging be blowed!" said Bob Cherry. "Why, you ass, this is the very worst thing you could do! What's up with you?"

"Tired."

"Well, if that doesn't take the bun!" grinned Harry Wharton.

"I'll bet my best Sunday topper he's fagged before he gets back!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "Those young bounders have got some game afoot, or I'm a Dutchman! They may be his fags, but they won't be able to resist a jape. I reckon we'd better warn him—"

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No. 12.—OGILVY : MORGAN : RUSSELL.



Undoubtedly it was an unusual spectacle, and Mr. Quelch gazed into the study with widening eyes. "Boys," he exclaimed sternly, "what are you all doing here?" "Only—only helping Mauly, sir," stammered Paget. (See chapter 7.)

Harry Wharton caught Bull's arm.

"No. Let him go on," he said, with a grin. "If Mauly's ass enough to trust himself to the care of his precious fags, let him take the consequences. It's the best thing for him. He'll learn that this fat-headed wheeze of Fishy's is all bunkum, and that it's only a scheme to make money."

"The very idea," said Bob Cherry. "I feel sorry for Mauly, but it'll be better for him to have his giddy eyes opened."

And Harry Wharton & Co. watched the bathchair and its attendant fags until it disappeared round the bend. Then the Removites returned to the Close and chuckled. They had left Lord Mauleverer to his fate, as it were, but in the end it would turn out all for the best.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

And a Bath.

"**B**EGAD! This isn't at all bad!"

Lord Mauleverer lay back in the bathchair comfortably. The vehicle was rattling along the road at a smart pace, and the five fags seemed to be putting their best efforts into the work.

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"Better than walking—eh?" asked Paget breathlessly.

"Yaas, rather, my dear fellow," drawled Lord Mauleverer.

"I really think I shall have to purchase a new bathchair for my own use. This affair, of course, is quite suitable for the occasion, but a new one, with rubber-tyres, would be much more comfortable."

"Oh, much!" said Gatty.

"By the time you get back to Greyfriars you'll send an order off by the next post for a new one," said Dicky Nugent.

"I don't think!" murmured Myers, under his breath.

"Yaas, I think I shall. I— Yow! Oooooop! Begad!" gasped his lordship.

Lord Mauleverer had not intended to make those ejaculations, but they were forced from his lips involuntarily. Without warning, the bathchair had given a sudden jerk, swung half round, and given a fearful lurch to starboard. Its occupant was flung forward, and nearly precipitated into the muddy roadway. In the nick of time he grabbed the wickerwork with a frantic grasp, and hung there, half in and half out.

"Begad!" he gasped. "What's up?"

The fags were roaring.

"I—I— My hat, I thought it was all up!" said Tubb, trying to look solemn. "One of the giddy wheels have come off!"

Lord Mauleverer looked alarmed.

"Oh, dear! Must I get out and walk?" he asked blankly.

"Not at all!" yelled Gatty, who had run after the wheel.

"You hang where you are, Mauly. We'll have the thing fixed up in two-twos."

"Oh, good!" said his lordship, with relief.

The wheel had only been held on by a bent nail, and whether by accident or design, it had been left in such a state that the nail could drop out, with the inevitable result that the wheel would slip off. In any case, Tubb had another nail handy, which certainly looked suspicious. Lord Mauleverer, however, was too flustered to notice these little details.

In less than two minutes the wheel had been replaced, and once more the bathchair rattled on towards Friardale. But the fags had not finished with their charge yet. They evidently had other plans, for Gatty and Nugent minor, who were behind, were grinning like hyenas. As dutiful fags, they should have taken Lord Mauleverer into Friardale and back without thought of a jape. But, whether they lost their jobs or not, they simply couldn't resist themselves. The opportunity was such a splendid one that, as Gatty had remarked earlier, it would be a sin to let it pass without taking advantage of it.

The schoolboy earl, as unsuspecting as ever, sat in the bathchair congratulating himself upon his good luck in obtaining the thing. He paid the fags to work for him, so it was only right that they should earn their money.

"Down hill here," said Gatty significantly.

Dicky Nugent winked.

"It is a bit," he agreed. "You chaps in front had better come behind now. We can all shove the thing, and Mauly can steer."

"Eh?" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer.

"You can steer, Mauly," said Dicky Nugent coolly.

"Begad, I'm not sure—"

"Rats! It's as easy as winking," said Dicky. "Myers, swing the steering handle round so that Mauly can grab hold of it."

"Right-ho!" said Myers.

The steering apparatus was simply a long handle attached to the small front wheel—as on all bathchairs—and the vehicle could be either steered by the occupant, or by the individual who was pulling. Myers swung the wheel round, and delivered the steering into Lord Mauleverer's hands. His lordship looked doubtful.

"Begad, will it be all right?" he asked anxiously.

"Of course it will!" said Nugent minor confidently.

"You try it a minute, Mauly, and see! Shove up, you kids!"

The fags shoved up, and the bathchair lurched forward. For a few yards the steering was a bit uncertain, then Lord Mauleverer got the hang of it, and sat back comfortably, his hand resting on the steering-handle.

"It's quite easy," he said in surprise.

"Did you think it wanted learning, like a giddy motor-car?" asked Gatty, with a grin. "You're all right, Mauly. We'll do the pushing, and you can do the steering."

The five fags were grinning in anticipation. Owing to the fact that they were now descending a hill, three of them had dropped behind, and only two were grasping the bathchair.

"He'll do now—eh?" whispered Gatty.

Dicky Nugent nodded.

"Yes," he replied. "Let go."

The bathchair, owing to its momentum on the slope, continued its descent of the hill, unassisted and unchecked. At present it was moving fairly slowly, hardly faster than a walk, so Lord Mauleverer was totally unconscious that anything unusual was happening. In a few seconds the fags and the bathchair were parted by a distance of a hundred yards. Dicky Nugent & Co. doubled themselves up and yelled.

"Oh, my hat!" roared Gatty. "What'll happen to him?"

"Wait till he wants to shove the brake on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The giddy chair'll turn over at the first corner, and tip the bouncer out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The spectacle was, undoubtedly, humorous from the fags' point of view. The bathchair was not an easy-going vehicle, and at first it proceeded on its course at a stately pace. It was wobbling a trifle, as Lord Mauleverer endeavoured to keep it straight.

The schoolboy millionaire was totally unaware that his attendants had left him. His whole attention was engaged upon steering, so it was difficult to glance round. And the grate of the untired wheels upon the muddy road made it impossible for Lord Mauleverer to detect that the fags were no longer accompanying him.

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"Begad, you know, we're going pretty fast!" he said mildly, as the bathchair rattled onwards at an increased speed.

"Bray, slow down a bit, my dear fellows!"

No answer.

The bathchair still increased its speed.

"By Jove, I really must insist upon your slowing down!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer in alarm. "A walking pace is quite fast enough."

Still no answer.

"Begad, I—I—"

Lord Mauleverer, in sheer desperation, snatched a hasty glance behind him. The bathchair swerved giddily, for one awful second tipped up on one wheel, and then continued its course down the hill. It was now flying onwards at considerable speed, and Lord Mauleverer uttered a cry of consternation as he saw that he was alone.

"Begad, I've run away!" he gasped.

Lord Mauleverer crouched forward in the bathchair with his heart beating wildly.

"This is terrible!" he gasped. "Begad, I can't stop the thing!"

Lord Mauleverer was so engrossed in his attempts to keep the bathchair on an even keel that he failed to notice a bulky form in the middle of the road a hundred yards lower down. It was P.-c. Tozer, the stalwart Police Force of Friardale. P.-c. Tozer gazed at the oncoming bathchair in amazement.

"My heye," he ejaculated, "if it ain't one o' them young raskils rushin' about at a speed hexceedin' the law! Young himp! My heye!"

Mr. Tozer stood in the centre of the road and extended his arms. He fondly imagined that it would cause Lord Mauleverer to slow down his untrustworthy vehicle. Lord Mauleverer, however, caught sight of Mr. Tozer, and let out an alarmed whoop.

"Clear the road!" he shouted. "Begad, you silly ass, I shall knock you down!"

"Himpudence!" roared Mr. Tozer. "My heye, I'll make you smart—"

"Out of the way, Tozey, you idiot!"

"I—I—"

P.-c. Tozer did not seem to realise that he was in imminent peril of being run into. His obstinacy in standing in the middle of the road had the effect of bringing Lord Mauleverer's alarming flight to an abrupt conclusion. The bathchair rattled towards the policeman, and at the last moment Mr. Tozer seemed to realise that he was in peril. He stepped aside quickly, with a startled exclamation. It so happened that Lord Mauleverer had, at the same second, swerved in order to avoid the bulky arm of the law.

The result was disastrous.

The bathchair lurched giddily across the road, struck Mr. Tozer a terrific bump upon the waistcoat, and bowled the Friardale Police Force over with a crash. Mr. Tozer floundered on his back in the muddy road.

Meanwhile, the bathchair, completely upset by the blow, dashed on to the grass beside the road, and toppled over on to its side.

Lord Mauleverer was shot out like a stone from a catapult. Unfortunately, the ditch beside the road was filled with thick, muddy water, and the dandy of the Remove plunged in with a wild yell.

For a second he disappeared, then came to the surface, smothered from head to foot in thick, slimy blackness.

"Groo! Begad! Yow!" he spluttered dismally. "Oh, by Jove, I feel rotten! Groo!"

He scrambled up the bank, and stood in the roadway, dripping. It was hardly possible to recognise his features owing to their coating of thick mud.

"You young himp!" roared P.-c. Tozer, who was nearly as muddy as Lord Mauleverer himself. "Try to kill me, would yer? My heye, I'll—"

"You're a silly ass!" snapped Lord Mauleverer crossly.

"My heye, I'll—"

"Rats! What the dickens did you want to stand in the middle of the road like a fatheaded chump for?" shouted Lord Mauleverer indignantly. "It would have served you right if we'd both gone into the ditch! Begad, it would!"

"I won't stand no cheek—"

"Go and eat coke!"

And Lord Mauleverer, his visit to the village quite forgotten, hurried off back to Greyfriars. He was feeling angry and wet, and he was not inclined to be good-tempered when he came upon Dicky Nugent & Co., holding one another up in the middle of the road, cackling with mirth.

"Begad, you young rascals!" said Lord Mauleverer wrathfully.

"Oh, I say, Mauly!" gasped Gatty. "How could we help it? The giddy chair went off by itself—didn't it, you chaps?"

"Of course!"

"How could we prevent it running down the hill?"
"Not likely!"
"We're awfully sorry!" said Dicky Nugent. "Besides, if it hadn't have been for that ass Tozer, you'd have sailed right into Friardale! We couldn't foresee that Tozer would get in the way, could we?"

Lord Mauleverer shivered.
"I believe you did it on purpose!" he said suspiciously.
"Oh, Mauly!"
"Fancy thinking such a thing as that!"
"We don't deserve such unkind thoughts!"

The schoolboy millionaire looked at the fags rather uncertainly for a moment, then he realised that he was in imminent peril of catching a bad cold. So, without further delay, he tucked his arms into his sides and ran on towards Greyfriars.

It was a most unusual spectacle to see Lord Mauleverer running, but, somewhat to his lordship's surprise, he found that the exercise warmed him considerably, and by the time he had arrived in the Remove dormitory, and changed, his good-humour had reasserted itself.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. A Slight Misunderstanding.

"I SAY, Mauly——"
"Well, Bunter, my dear fellow, what do you want?"

"Oh, nothing much!" said Billy Bunter, rolling up the passage towards Lord Mauleverer. "Just wanted to ask you about tea, that's all. I—I suppose you want me to get it all ready?"

"Yaas, of course!" said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully.
"Good!"

The schoolboy millionaire had just come downstairs from the Remove dormitory. He was feeling quite himself again now, and with his usual good nature he had dismissed the affair of the bathchair from his mind. He had been subjected to a good deal of chaff from the Removites, but he took it all in good part.

Billy Bunter's eyes glittered. The previous night he had been given half-a-sovereign to lay in tuck for tea, and Bunter had spent eight shillings of it, and kept the other two for himself. Bunter was not possessed of any scruples, and he would perform the same trick again, if he got the chance.

"I shall want tea for seven, I think," said Lord Mauleverer thoughtfully. "Take this half-sovereign, Bunter, and lay in a really good tea! I shall be ready for it at half-past five, my dear fellow—half-past five exactly!"

"Good!" said Bunter. "Tea for nine——"
"Seven," corrected his lordship.

"Oh, really, Mauly; you know jolly well there are nine of us——"
Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Tea for seven," he said. "I shall rely on you, Bunter, and shall be at my study at the time I just mentioned!"

"Six o'clock. No; half-past five, you said!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Yaas; that's it!" said Lord Mauleverer languidly. "Upon the whole, Bunter, I am very well satisfied with this experiment. It has lifted a load from my shoulders, and if I can rely upon you to get the tea ready, I shall be pleased!"

"Oh, that's all right, Mauly!" said Bunter, lovingly turning over the gold coin in his pocket. "The tea'll be ready on time!"

"Thanks awfully, my dear fellow!"
And the schoolboy earl dismissed the matter from his mind, and strolled away. Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles.

"My hat! If this sort of thing goes on every day, it'll be a bit of all right!" he chuckled. "Ten bob for tea! My only topper! I'd better tell the others!"

Billy Bunter rolled off down the Remove passage and passed out into the Close. His brother fags, with the exception of Leigh, were collected in a little group. Bunter crossed over to them, with a smile of satisfaction upon his fat features.

"I say, you fellows——"
"You generally are saying, Bunt!" said Tubb.

"Oh, really, Tubb! I've come to tell you that Mauly's told me to get tea ready by half-past five exactly. He's given me half-a-quad, and I'm to lay in a big spread, the same as last night."

"Oh, good!" chorused the fags.

"Mauly's a careless sort of chap," went on the Owl of the Remove, "and he told me to prepare for seven. Of course, that's rot! There are nine of us, but Mauly's got such a rotten memory that he forgot. I shall expect you all to turn up immediately after lessons, and lend a hand!"

"Rather!" said the delighted fags.

The bell clanged for lessons a moment later, and the juniors trooped into the Form-room. In the Remove classroom Lord Mauleverer took his place, amid a shower of chaff

concerning his ducking, and many remarks were passed regarding the fags.

Fisher T. Fish sat in his place, with a cool smile upon his face. So far matters had progressed satisfactorily, and there was no prospect of the scheme falling to the ground.

In the recess between second and third lessons, as Harry Wharton & Co. were strolling across the Close, Lord Mauleverer walked up to them.

"I say, my dear fellows," he said, "do you think you could honour me by coming to tea to-night? I'm having a bit of a spread, so I thought perhaps you'd come along, you know."

"You're just the right man at the right moment!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "My dear Mauly, we were just discussing, as a matter of fact, how we could raise enough tin to decorate our tables with grub for tea!"

"Begad, my invitation comes just right, then?"
"Rather!" said Harry Wharton. "We accept on the spot. But how many are you providing for?"

"Six, not counting myself," said the schoolboy earl. "I was thinking of you, Bull, Cherry, Nugent, Linley, and Inky. Do you think you can all be on hand?"

"You can take my word for it we'll be there!" said Nugent.

"What time does the banquet commence?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Half-past—— No; six o'clock exactly!" said Lord Mauleverer, who had got a trifle muddled about the time fixed.

His memory was not a very reliable one, and Bunter's mention of six o'clock had confused him.

"Six o'clock?" said Wharton. "That'll do just nicely—give us time to get an appetite!"

"The appetiteness will be terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I beg to thank the honourable Mauly for his timeful and august invitation. We shall all be on the esteemed hand at the o'clock of six."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Removites at Hurree Singh's quaint English.

Harry Wharton & Co. were certainly glad of Lord Mauleverer's invitation, for they were, temporarily, in the unfortunate state of being in lack of funds.

As soon as afternoon lessons were over Lord Mauleverer set off for Friardale—this time on foot. He glanced at his watch as he crossed the dusky Close, and reckoned that he would have heaps of time to get back to Greyfriars before six o'clock.

Meanwhile, Mauleverer's army of fags were getting busy. As soon as Mr. Quelch had dismissed the Remove, Billy Bunter hurriedly rolled across to Mrs. Mible's. He presented himself, heavily laden, at Lord Mauleverer's study a few minutes later. The fags were there in force, and, to do them justice, they were working fairly hard at clearing up the room. Dicky Nugent & Co. reckoned that if they were treated to feeds they ought to make some recompense.

"Here he is!"
"Here's the giddy grub-merchant!"

"Come in, Bunter, old man!"

Billy Bunter deposited the tuck upon the table, and while the fat Removite cooked the bacon and eggs, the other fags set out the pastry, cut the bread-and-butter, etc. In a very short time the study presented a hospitable appearance.

"My hat!" said Sammy Bunter greedily. "I wish Mauly would come!"

"It's twenty-past five. He'll be here in ten minutes," said Gatty. "It's jolly decent of Mauly to stand teas of this calibre. Bit different to nifty kippers in the Form-room—eh?"

"My hat, rather!"

At half-past five precisely the eggs and bacon were cooked to a turn, and Billy Bunter served them out on to the plates with the air of a connoisseur. His minor, and one or two of the others, were out in the passage, anxiously looking for the schoolboy earl.

Presently they came in and closed the door.

"Well, he ain't here!" said Myers impatiently.

"I vote we start!" said Sammy Bunter.

"I second it!" said his major quickly.

The fags looked at one another.

"Well," said Dicky Nugent thoughtfully, "it's not our fault if the giddy fathead's late, is it? I don't see why we shouldn't start. He'll be here in a jiffy."

Billy Bunter had not waited for Nugent minor to finish, but was already making inroads into the eggs and bacon. In two minutes the whole crowd of Mauleverer's fags were sitting round the table busily causing the good things to disappear. It was a first-class spread, and the fags were hungry.

In twenty minutes the festive board was practically

cleared. The juniors had quite forgotten about Lord Mauleverer, and most of them were feeling satisfied. Billy Bunter and his minor, however, were still gorging, and they did not look up when there came a tramp of feet out in the passage and a chorus of laughing voices.

The door opened abruptly.

"Here we are, dear fellows!"

Lord Mauleverer stepped into his study, then his eyes opened wider, and he uttered a little gasp of astonishment. "Begad!" he exclaimed in dismay.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries it On.

LORD MAULEVERER gazed at the sight before him with amazed eyes. He had ordered tea to be prepared for himself and his guests, and it was startling to find that the feast had been eaten, completely and thoroughly, by his fags!

Billy Bunter was still eating. Dicky Nugent sat back languidly, with his feet resting gracefully upon the table. Tubb of the Third reclined in a similar position; while the others were looking pleased and contented.

Lord Mauleverer gasped and stepped into the study.

"Begad!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean, you young rascals? Have you been having tea?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Gatty pleasantly. "Couldn't wait for you, you know. You're awfully late, Mauly!"

"Eh? What are you talking about?" demanded his lordship in bewilderment.

Harry Wharton & Co. crowded into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "What are all you fags overrunning the place for? My only topper, they've scooped the giddy feed!"

The Removites gazed round wrathfully.

"Well, you young rotters?" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Eaten up our tea—our tea!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The awful gluttons!"

"My hat, we'll—"

The fags scrambled to their feet and backed away from the disappointed Removites.

"Keep off!" yelled Dicky Nugent in alarm.

Bob Cherry jerked Billy Bunter to his feet.

"What's this mean?" he roared.

"Oh, really, Cherry," protested Bunter, "you've no right to come in here bullying! This isn't your study! Mauly told me to get tea ready, and said he'd be here at half-past five. Well, we waited till half-past five, and as he didn't turn up we started."

"Started!" shouted Wharton. "Why, this tea was prepared for us! Mauly invited us all to come to it!"

"Rot!" said Billy Bunter warmly. "Mauly told me to get tea ready, the same as I did last night. Of course, he meant that we should have it with him!"

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"Begad," he said, "there seems to have been a misunderstanding! I told Bunter to prepare for seven, but he evidently thought that I meant that he and the other fags should join me in the tea. It is my fault entirely, my dear fellows. I should have been more explicit."

"That's all very well!" growled Johnny Bull. "How about our blessed tea?"

"We're done out of that!" Bob Cherry remarked.

"Not at all!" said Mauleverer. "I admit we can't have it immediately, but if you chaps care to come here after your prep.—in about two hours' time—I'll have another feed ready for you!"

"Well, that's one consolation," said Nugent. "I'm hungry, though."

"Well, I suggest you come down to the tuckshop and have a little snack," said Lord Mauleverer calmly. "Then, after prep., we'll come here to the real feed."

"That's not a bad idea," said Wharton. "Like the cheek of these kids, though, to scoff somebody else's tea up!"

Lord Mauleverer handed Bunter another half-sovereign, and told the Owl of the Remove to prepare tea by the time arranged. The actual cooking of the feast would have to be undertaken by Billy Bunter and Leigh, for the Third and Second-Formers would have to attend preparation in their respective class-rooms before long.

"Fat lot of good your blessed fags are!" scoffed Johnny Bull disdainfully.

"My dear fellow, I didn't authorise them to—"

"That's just it!" said Harry Wharton as they walked down the Remove passage. "Your fags do things behind your back! I tell you, Mauly, the little bounders are more trouble than they're worth!"

"Begad, I—"

"We'd agreed to let you go your own way," went on Wharton; "but when it comes to such a pass as this, I

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reckon it's time to say something. Why, this affair alone has cost you half-a-quad!"

"Yaas, that's so."

"Nice expensive business it'll be, then?" said Frank Nugent. "The beggars will eat you out of house and home before they've done! Bunter alone is enough to cripple you! I should have thought that you had enough of Bunter in the Class-room and about the House, let alone letting him nose about your study!"

"My dear fellow—"

"It's no good, Mauly, you won't get us to believe it's a ripping idea, because it's not!" said Mark Linley. "Our advice to you is to get rid of the whole blessed lot, without delay! After all, it's only a money-making dodge of Fish's."

The Removites entered the tuckshop, and were soon busy. Meanwhile, Mauleverer's fags were clearing away the remains of the feed. The fags were feeling in no way penitent. If Mauly liked to make such mistakes, it wasn't their fault.

In clearing away Billy Bunter happened to catch his hand against one of the knives. The knife, however, happened to be blunt, and it did not cut Bunter's finger. But it put an idea into his cunning head. With a word of excuse he hurried off to his study. When he emerged a bulky piece of rag was bandaged round his left hand, and an ominous red stain was visible upon it.

"I think it'll do the trick!" he chuckled.

He rolled along to Study No. 14. Fisher T. Fish was at home, and he looked up curiously as Bunter insinuated himself into the room.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded.

"I—I say, Fishy, I've cut my beastly finger!" said Bunter weakly.

"I guess that's bad."

"It's awful!" groaned Bunter. "It's awfully deep! I was clearing away the things in Mauly's study, you know. A rotten knife slipped, and it's cut a deep gash in my middle finger!"

Fisher T. Fish looked at Bunter keenly.

"Well, what's the good of coming to me?" he asked.

"Oh, really, didn't you say we're all insured?" asked Bunter, in an injured tone. "I want fourpence, Fishy! You said it was fourpence for a cut finger!"

"I guess the agency is closed for to-night," said Fish coolly.

"Why, you—you rotter!" gasped Bunter. "I want the money now!"

"Can't be did! The agency's closed, I tell you!"

"Rot!" roared Bunter. "You Yankee fraud—"

"Hold on!" said Fisher T. Fish keenly. "Let's have a look at the cut. If it's a big cut, I guess you get a shilling compensation. If it's just a common or garden sort of cut, it's fourpence."

"Oh, it's awfully big!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Let's have a squint at it, then."

Billy Bunter looked horrified.

"I couldn't," he said weakly. "It's—it's too awful to look at. Why, you'd turn faint, Fishy, if you saw it. It's been bleeding something awful, and if I took the rag off now, it would start again. I'm not sure whether it's grazed the bone or not."

"I guess it must have been a sharp knife."

"It was—it was a fearfully sharp knife," said Bunter. "Come on, Fishy, hand over the bob. I'm going straight down to Friardale to have it attended to by Dr. Globb. It's an awful cut—Ow!"

"Well, what's up now?" demanded Fish.

"It—it gave me a twinge!" gasped Bunter, screwing up his face into an expression of agony. "I—I say, give me the bob quick, and let me get away."

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I guess you're real bad," he said. "Well, since your claim seems to be genuine—"

"Yes!" said Bunter eagerly.

"I'll fork out a bob," said Fish, feeling in his pocket.

"Good!"

Billy Bunter came forward eagerly, even forgetting that the finger was causing him terrible suffering. Fish felt in his pocket, then gave a sudden dive forward. Before Bunter could guess the American junior's intention, Fish had grasped his fat arm.

"Ow—yow!" roared Bunter. "You're hurting me! You beast! You'll start it bleeding!"

"I guess not!"

In a second, Fish had grabbed the red-stained rag. He tugged at it vigorously, and it slipped off Bunter's finger with comparative ease. Bunter's hand was revealed, perfectly whole, with two fingers stained with red ink.

"You slab-sided fraud!" roared Fish. "Clear out!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

"Git!"

"I—I say, you know, it isn't a cut at all!" gasped Bunter. "I've sprained my wrist, and it's hurting awfully."

Fisher T. Fish stared.

"Gee-whizz, I guess you take it!" he ejaculated. "Of all the liars, I reckon you take the Huntley & Palmer and Peck Frean thrown into one! If you ain't out of this study in three seconds, I guess you'll be sorry!"

"Oh, really— Yowooooo! Oh! Oh!"

Fisher T. Fish's boot came into violent contact with Billy Bunter's trousers, and the Owl of the Remove made a dive for the door. He wrenched it open, and fled up the passage.

"Beast!" he roared defiantly. "Yah! Yankee beast!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Indignation Meeting.

BILLY BUNTER was on the point of entering Lord Mauleverer's study when Snoop, of the Remove, came along the passage and slapped the fat junior on the back.

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"Going to do some more giddy work?" grinned Snoop. "My hat, I wouldn't be in your shoes, Bunter! Fancy grovelling at a chap's feet just because he's a rotten lord! I wouldn't do Mauleverer's beastly work for five bob a week!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bunter. "I don't care twopence for Mauly. I'd do just the same for you if you could give me the feeds Mauly's doing. And you're common enough—"

"What?" roared Snoop.

"Well, your father's nobody," said Bunter. "A blessed publican, or a draper, or something like that."

"Why, you—you grovelling, bob-a-week slave!" stuttered Snoop.

Billy Bunter started.

"What's that?" he asked quickly.

"I said you're a bob-a-week slave!" shouted Snoop wrathfully. "I have got a bit of pride, I hope. Fancy fagging for a chap in your own form for a shilling a giddy week! Why, you're—"

"A shilling a week?" ejaculated Bunter. "Who told you I'm getting a shilling a week?"

Snoop calmed down.

"It's common knowledge," he said. "Did you want it to be thought that you were getting five quid a day?"

"Nunno! Of course not," said Bunter quickly. "I—I—I say, Snoop, how do you know anything about it?"

"Why, you ass, everybody knows that Mauleverer is paying Fish a shilling a week for each of his fags!" exclaimed Snoop. "Fish made a speech in the common-room yesterday, and offered to supply fags to all the Remove at a bob a head— Why, where the dickens are you going?"

"Oh, along the passage!" said Bunter breathlessly.

The Owl of the Remove hurried to Study No. 14, leaving Snoop to pass on his way. Bunter looked excited, and he was on the point of entering Fish's study when he changed his mind. He turned and rolled back to Mauleverer's luxurious apartment.

He burst in unceremoniously.

"Here he is, the lazy slacker!" said Gatty indignantly. "Nice chap you are, going away and leaving us to do the work ourselves. Had your giddy tea, and—"

Bunter waved his hands.

The fags were all there. They had just finished washing up the crockery, and tidying the room a little. They looked at Billy Bunter in surprise. The Owl of the Remove was in a state of excitement.

"I—I say, you fellows," he gasped, "I've just heard something! It seems to be common knowledge, but we haven't heard it before."

"What is it?" asked Gatty. "News that you're the laziest bounder and the biggest glutton in Greyfriars? That's stale!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You chumps!" yelled Bunter. "It's important."

"Get it off your chest, then," said Nugent minor.

"We're getting fourpence a week, ain't we?"

"Well, I think I've heard something to that effect," said Myers thoughtfully.

"And we're being employed by Fishy?"

"You ass!" said Tubb, of the Third.

"I've just heard how much Mauly is paying Fish for each of us!" said Billy Bunter excitedly. "The rotten swindler is making all the tin himself, and giving us practically nothing."

"What!" shouted the fags, gathering round.

"It's a fact. Mauly's paying him a bob a week for each of us!" roared Bunter. "That's eight bob altogether. We're getting fourpence each. Fishy is making six bob out of it. My hat, I—I—"

Bunter nearly choked with indignation. His fellow-fags, too, were all talking at once. Every one of them looked indignant and angry. They had never given the matter a

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thought before, and, by sheer chance, nobody had told them how much Lord Mauleverer was paying.

"A shilling a week each!" shouted Dicky Nugent.

"Yes. And Fishy is paying us fourpence."

"My only Aunt Selima!"

"Aro we going to put up with it?" roared Sammy Bunter.

"No!"

"Rather not! We'll have tenpence a week each or strike!" yelled Gatty excitedly. "Why, Fishy is doing absolutely nothing. His rotten agency is simply a swindle to make money out of us!"

The fags forgot that they had consented to work for fourpence a week. That was nothing to do with the question. Fisher T. Fish was getting a shilling for each of them, therefore it was only right that they should have the bulk of the money. Twopence for each would be ample commission.

"And there's the insurance, too!" exclaimed Myers indignantly. "That's worse than ever. Why, Fish is simply swindling us on all sides. I vote we go along to his study and demand better wages."

"That's it!"

"Let's go now!"

"Hurray!"

"Beastly swindler!"

"Come on, then!" said Gatty excitedly. "We'll stand up for our rights!"

And the eight fags, having disturbed Lord Mauleverer's room very considerably in their excitement, wrenched open the door, and poured out into the Remove passage. Without pausing they burst open the door of Study No. 14, and crowded in.

Fisher T. Fish jumped up with an exclamation.

"What's all this?" he demanded quickly. "I guess—"

"What you guess doesn't matter at all!" shouted Dicky Nugent. "We've come here to talk business, Fishy! What you call business is Yankee swindling, and we're not going to put up with it! We want an increase in wages, and we're not going to leave this study until you've consented to give it to us!"

"Hear, hear! Go it, Nugent!"

"Pile in!"

Fisher T. Fish gazed upon the excited assembly with a feeling something akin to alarm in his breast. But his eyes flashed firmly, and he faced the fags with a cool, calm smile upon his face.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rough on the Agency.

I GUESS, gentlemen, there's no need to get excited!" said the managing-director of Fish's Fag Agency.

"This office is—"

"A rotten swindler's office!" shouted Paget.

"Hear, hear!"

"Silence!" said Fish coolly. "If you've any grievance to lay before me—in my position as managing-director—you'll have to postpone it till the morning. This office is closed for the day!"

There was a roar.

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"Yah! You rotten Shylock!" shrieked Tubb. "Getting a bob a week for each of us, and giving us fourpence! Call that business?"

"I guess—"

"It's swindling—rank swindling!" said Billy Bunter indignantly.

"And a penny a week insurance on top of it!" howled Myers.

Fisher T. Fish rapped upon the table.

"How the dickens can I talk to you when you're all yelling at once?" he shouted. "As a special concession, I'll reopen the office and consider your grievance. It's all rot, of course; but I guess I'll give you a hearing! I want to know who employs you?"

"Mauly!"

"That's just where you make a mistake!" said Fish coolly. "I'm your employer, and if you ain't satisfied with me, you can clear off!"

"We'll go to Mauly and offer ourselves to him!" shouted Dicky Nugent. "Then we shall get the whole bob for ourselves! I'm blessed if we're going to be diddled out of it by a beastly outsider like you!"

"Mauleverer has entered into a contract with the Agency that he won't engage any fags except through me!" invented Fish desperately. "I pay you a fair proportion—"

"Fair proportion be blowed!" roared Dicky Nugent.

"Do you call fourpence out of a shilling a fair proportion?"

We get fourpence for doing the work, and you get eightpence for doing nothing!"

"Yah! We want tenpence a week each!"

Fisher T. Fish grinned.

"I guess that's a jump!" he said coolly. "Now, look here, gentlemen, I put it to you plainly. I'm giving you fourpence now—or shall do at the end of the week—and whatever you say won't make any difference. What Mauly pays me is no concern of yours. You've agreed to work for the agency for a certain sum, and that sum's not going to be increased because you come yelling round me like a pack of wolves!"

"We want tenpence!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Well, I guess you won't get it!"

"Tenpence!" shouted the fags, in one voice.

"If you don't agree to our terms, we'll jolly well strike!" said Tubb indignantly. "We'll chuck the job up altogether, and make the other chaps promise they won't enter your rotten service! I'm blessed if we're going to be humbugged about!"

Fish looked round coolly, although inwardly he was feeling many qualms. He had been congratulating himself that the agency would bring him in quite a decent little sum every week. But if he acceded to the fags' demand, it would mean that his commission would diminish to a mere handful of coppers. Therefore, Fish made up his mind to deal with the matter firmly, and utterly refuse to make any alteration.

"Gentlemen——"

"Go it!"

"I guess I've considered the matter," said Fish coolly, "and I've come to the conclusion that your grievance is utterly unwarranted and extravagant. Therefore, it is with regret that I have to announce that the agency cannot meet your absurd demands!"

There was a howl.

"Do you mean to say you won't agree?" roared Dicky Nugent.

"Not on your life!"

"You refuse to give us tenpence a week?"

"Yep!"

"Then we won't work any more!" said Billy Bunter

indignantly. "We'll jolly well go on strike until Fishy comes round! Who's with me for the striking bizney?"

"I am!"

"And I!"

Every fag in the room echoed the words, and Fish looked round desperately.

"I guess you're a set of young asses!" he roared. "If you chuck this job away, you'll never get another like it! Think of the feeds you're getting! Do you think you'll do as well if you go on strike? You'll lose the feeds and the fourpence a week into the bargain!"

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"This agency is run on strict business lines, and I guess it doesn't knuckle under any! Within half an hour of your striking I shall have another set of fags installed, and then I guess you'll be done! Once an employee is dismissed by the company he is never reinstated!"

"Oh, dry up!" shouted Dicky Nugent. "We're fed-up with your flowery language, Fishy! We all admit you can jaw, but that's not good enough! We want a plain answer to a plain question. Are you going to give us tenpence a week?"

"Nope!" roared Fish. "I guess that's plain enough, ain't it?"

The fags swayed excitedly.

"Bump him!" shrieked Myers wrathfully. "I never heard of such swindling in my life! I reckon the only thing we can do now is to bump the rotter and wreck his study!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar him!"

Fisher T. Fish looked round in alarm.

"Here, steady on! I reckon there's no need to go to extreme lengths! I want to talk to you calmly——"

"We've done with talking!" yelled Gatty. "We're going to do the bumping now!"

"That's it! Collar him!"

The fags swayed forward in a body, and Fisher T. Fish backed away in consternation.

"I guess——"

But the fags were too exasperated to listen to the

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American junior's talk any longer. They were angry, and they meant to vent their wrath upon their unfortunate managing-director. They grasped hold of Fish on all sides, and the business man of the Remove went to the floor with a bump.

In a moment five or six forms were sprawling all over him, and he lay there, winded and gasping.

"Here," he panted, "I guess you'd better not play any monkey tricks with me, you know! If I start yelling, there'll be half the Remove in in a minute, then you'll get wiped up!"

"Well, there's not going to be any yelling!" said Nugent minor grimly.

"Oh, ain't there?" roared Fish. "Rescue, Remove! Res—"

Fish's voice died away in a gurgle, for Gatty had taken the swift but effective step of sitting on Fisher T. Fish's face. Gatty was no light weight, although he was a Second-Former. Fish was completely smothered.

"Now, what shall we do with him?" gasped Dicky Nugent. "Pour the giddy inkpots over his hair!" suggested Tubb.

"And add a few ashes to it!" put in Paget. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to shove some in his mouth, too! It would stop him yelling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The inkpots were whisked off the table, and Gatty suddenly stood up. Fish was too winded to yell for a moment, and while he was regaining his breath the red and black ink descended in a shower upon his face and hair.

"Yow! Groo! Yaroo!" spluttered Fish. "Oh, you young ruffians! I'll pay you out for this!"

"We want paying for doing our giddy work!" shouted Nugent minor. "Hurry up with the ashes, Gatty!"

"You young hooligans!" gasped Fish desperately. "I say, I guess I'll amend my decision—"

But Fish wasn't heard in the din, and before he could get another word out Gatty proceeded to smother his face and hair with ashes from the fireplace.

"There!" exclaimed Gatty wrathfully. "I reckon he'll do now! Come on, chaps; we're on strike!"

"Hurray!" yelled the fags.

"My—my hat!" ejaculated Tubb, in alarm. "How about prep?"

In the excitement the fags had forgotten preparation, but now that Tubb had drawn their attention to it, they realised that it was just upon time for prep. to start. They looked at one another in alarm, the Fish Fag Agency temporarily forgotten.

"Come on!" muttered Tubb, of the Third.

The fags streamed out of the study in a body, and scuttled away to the Form-rooms. Leigh and Billy Bunter belonged to the Remove, so they did not have to attend prep. They left Study No. 14 with the others, however, and Fisher T. Fish was left to himself.

The American junior picked himself up and gazed at himself in the glass. He presented a sorry spectacle, and he snorted disgustedly. Then a grin stole over his ink-and-ashes besmeared face.

"They've ragged me," he murmured, "but I didn't give in. No, sir, this agency doesn't knuckle under to fool propositions like that. They'll take fourpence a week or nothing. I guess I'll stand firm on that point, and win in the end, too!"

Which was some little consolation to Fisher T. Fish.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Maully is Fed Up!

LORD MAULEVERER looked up from the table suddenly. The dandy of the Remove was doing his preparation in Study No. 1, with Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent. Lord Mauleverer had reflected that work would perhaps have been a trifle difficult in his own study—

with Billy Bunter busily cooking, and several other fags chattering round him. His lordship had come in for considerable chaff, and he was half inclined to have done with the fags and Fish's agency into the bargain. He didn't worry about the expense, but he wasn't at all sure that he was reaping the benefits Fisher T. Fish had outlined.

"Begad!" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton looked up.

"What are you begadding about?" he asked.

"Mr. Quelch gave me some lines to do yesterday afternoon, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer, "and I have clean forgotten to take them in."

"You've done 'em, I suppose?" asked Nugent, grinning.

"Oh, yaas—or, rather, Tubb has done them for me!"

"What? You've let Tubb write lines for you?" asked Wharton.

"Yaas!"

"My hat, you are a chump!" chuckled Nugent: "You'll get ragged bald-headed by old Quelch. He won't be taken in!"

"I don't suppose Mr. Quelch will look at them very care—"

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fully," said Lord Mauleverer. "I've got them in my pocket now, so I think I'll go to his room and hand them in."

"Right-ho," said Wharton, "only don't be long! It's just upon time for our feed, you know."

"Begad, so it is! I won't be long, my dear fellows."

And Lord Mauleverer left the room and made his way to Mr. Quelch's study. Mr. Quelch was in, and he looked up sharply at Mauleverer as the schoolboy earl entered.

"I've brought the lines, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, laying down his pen. "I was beginning to think, Mauleverer, that you had forgotten them. I am glad to find that I was mistaken. There are a hundred, I think?"

"Yaas, sir. You doubled them."

"And I'm not at all sure that I ought not to double them again," said Mr. Quelch. "You should have brought them to me the first thing this morning, Mauleverer."

Mr. Quelch took the lines, and looked at them carelessly. Then his gaze became fixed, and he started. He turned the pages over slowly, examining the imposition with unusual care. Meanwhile, Lord Mauleverer was languidly strolling towards the door.

"One moment before you go, Mauleverer," said the Remove-master, looking up.

"Yaas, sir?"

"These lines are very untidy, Mauleverer," said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"Begad, sir—I—I'm sorry!"

"Did you write them yourself, Mauleverer?"

Lord Mauleverer turned pink.

"I—well, sir—I— That is to say, sir— Begad, aren't they satisfactory, sir?"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"No, Mauleverer, they are far from satisfactory," said Mr. Quelch darkly. "I am amazed that you should have the audacity to bring them to me. Answer my question at once. Did you write them yourself?"

"Yaas—I—I mean no, sir!" stammered Lord Mauleverer.

"I thought not!" said Mr. Quelch angrily. "I've never met with such impertinence! How dare you bring me lines that are not written by yourself? How dare you, Mauleverer? By all appearances, these lines have been written by a Third Form boy. Is this meant to be a piece of deliberate impertinence?"

"Begad, no, sir! Rather not!"

"Then I am amazed," said Mr. Quelch. "I have always known that you are exceedingly lazy, Mauleverer, but I never dreamed that your laziness would go to such extreme lengths. I have already doubled these lines once, and I now fling them into the wastepaper-basket as worthless."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will write me out five hundred lines, Mauleverer," exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily, "and I trust they will be a lesson to you to play no more tricks of this description! I shall expect the lines to be very carefully written out. I know your handwriting, Mauleverer, and if you bring these five hundred lines to me written by some other boy, I shall take you before the headmaster and have you caned."

"Begad!" gasped Lord Mauleverer.

"You may go, sir!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Lord Mauleverer took his departure from the Form-master's study with a feeling of dismay. His lines, in the first instance, had been fifty, and, solely owing to Fish's marvellous idea, they had now been magnified to five hundred. It was appalling, and Lord Mauleverer looked quite pale as he walked up the Remove passage.

"Begad," he murmured, "that young ass Tubb couldn't have written the lines very carefully, or Mr. Quelch wouldn't have tumbled to it! I'm beginning to think that Wharton isn't far from the truth. It seemed a ripping idea at first to have all my work done for me, but, by Jove, it's having the opposite effect. I'm getting about twice as much to do."

He entered Study No. 1, and when he related his experience to Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent they didn't seem in the least sympathetic, but took the matter in a humorous light—in fact, they roared.

"Really, my dear fellows—"

"Oh, Maully, I guessed what would happen!" chuckled Harry Wharton. "I reckon you won't want anything more to do with Fishy's fags after this, will you? Five hundred lines—eh? It's no giddy joke."

"Well, it's Maully's own fault," said Nugent, grinning. "He can't say we didn't warn him."

Lord Mauleverer changed the subject.

"Begad, I think it's about time we routed the other fellows out and went to that feed?" he suggested.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent jumped up with alacrity. They were feeling rather hungry, and the prospect of a hot, appetising meal was certainly cheering. They called at Study No. 13, and routed out Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. Johnny Bull came along the passage as they left the study.

"Feeding time?" he grinned.

"Yaas, my dear fellow. Come along!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

He stopped before his own magnificent study, and opened the door. The gas was turned full on, and the Removites crowded in, laughing and joking. On this occasion they had no suspicion that the feed was not all ready.

"Is everything quite prepared?" said the schoolboy earl languidly as he strolled in.

"Can't smell any nice niff," said Bob Cherry from behind. "It's a cold collation, I suppose? Well, I don't care, I'm not struck on hot dishes myself."

Lord Mauleverer stood in the study, and gazed round him in bewilderment.

"Begad, I—I—" he murmured in dismay. "There doesn't seem to be anything ready, my dear fellows. By Jove, can it be possible that those young rascals have eaten the second feed?"

"What?" roared Harry Wharton & Co.

They didn't stand upon ceremony now, but scrambled into the study with consternated faces. The room was in a state of disorder, some of Lord Mauleverer's precious cushions lying on the floor. The fire was out, and the room was cold and chilly.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The awful young rotters!"

"Your precious fags, Mauly!"

"Begad, I—I can't make it out!" said Lord Mauleverer, looking bewildered. "I told Bunter most particularly what time I wanted the feed. He couldn't possibly have misunderstood me."

"Did you give him any money?" asked Frank Nugent wrathfully.

"Half-a-sovereign, my dear fellow"

"My hat, I reckon that half sov. is in Mrs. Mible's till by this time!" roared Johnny Bull indignantly. "My only hat, of all the rotten frosts, I reckon this takes the cake!"

"The frostfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh warmly.

"I knew what it would be," Bob Cherry remarked with a shake of his head. "I had an idea that the feed would be something like this if you trusted to your beastly fags. Look here, Mauly, you'll have to get rid of 'em. Sack the giddy lot."

Lord Mauleverer's eyes gleamed with determination.

"Begad," he said, "I will! I was half decided when I got those lines from Mr. Quelch, but after this, my dear fellows, I simply can't retain them and keep my dignity at the same time."

"Good for you, Mauly."

"You have got a spark of sense, anyhow," said Mark Linley.

Johnny Bull snorted.

"That's all very well!" he growled. "But I'm hungry! This is the second time I've been diddled out of a feed! Look here, Mauly, I sha'n't come to any more of your blessed feasts, I can tell you straight!"

Lord Mauleverer looked distressed.

"Begad, how was I to foresee this?" he asked plaintively. "I apologise humbly, my dear fellows. But there's still time to have a feed if you all get to work. The fire can be lit in no time, and there's plenty more to eat in Mrs. Mible's shop. I judge we can all be sitting down to a substantial meal at the end of a quarter of an hour if we buck up!"

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Johnny Bull.

"Do without the blessed fags!"

"Rather!"

And the Removites set about preparing the feed for themselves. Yet another half-sovereign was produced by Lord Mauleverer, and, armed with this, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull hurried off to the tuckshop. As they entered Mrs. Mible's little establishment they saw a fat form at the counter.

"Hallo, here's Bunter!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "You fat porpoise, why the dickens haven't you got that feed ready in Mauly's study, according to orders?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"We're on strike!" he explained.

"What?" shouted Johnny Bull. "On which?"

"On strike. You see, you fellows, we found out that Mauly's paying Fish a shilling each for us, and Fish is only giving us fourpence! Of course, we've struck until Fish agrees to come to terms!"

"What's that got to do with Mauly?" demanded Bob Cherry wrathfully. "Was that any reason why you should leave him in the lurch, when he'd invited us all to supper? You—you fat fraud!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"And another thing," said Johnny Bull. "How about the half-sov. Mauly gave you?"

"Oh, that!" said Bunter backing away. "I've—I've spent it!"

"Spent it?" roared Bob Cherry. "What on?"

"Oh, I felt a bit peckish, you know—"

"You rotten young thief!" shouted Bull angrily. "It's a wonder to me how we stand that chap at Greyfriars! He's got no more scruples than a blessed hooligan!"

Bunter commenced rolling out of the shop, but Bob Cherry grabbed his arm.

"I say, Mrs. Mible," he asked, "has this young bounder bought anything since tea?"

"No, Master Cherry. He's only just come in!"

Bob Cherry snorted.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed. "Bunter's been telling whoppers! He's got the half-quad all the time, and he's trying to stick to it!"

"I haven't!" howled Bunter. "I gave it to Coker of the Fifth! I owed him ten bob—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I can just imagine Coker lending you ten bob! And I can just imagine you paying it back, too! Hand it over, before you get bumped!"

"Oh, really," whined Bunter, "I don't see why I should be bullied like this!"

Without wasting further time, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull made the Owl of the Remove produce the half-sovereign.

"Now you can buzz off!" said Bob Cherry politely.

"Yah! You cads!" roared Bunter. "You beasts!"

"Well, I'm glad we've got that half-quad back," said Bob Cherry as they re-entered the tuckshop. "We can hand it to Mauly as soon as we get back, and take the feed in as well. I don't suppose Mauly will care twopence, but it worried me to think of Bunter bluing it just to gorge himself!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last of The Fag Agency.

DICKY NUGENT of the Second rubbed his head thoughtfully.

"It's a bit thick!" he said.

"It is," agreed Gatty readily; "jolly thick!"

"How do you know what I'm thinking about?" demanded Dicky.

"I don't know," said Gatty, looking surprised. "I thought you were referring to your head, that's all. You'd got your fist on it, and you said it was a bit thick. Of course, I agreed with you—"

"You fatheaded ass!"

"Well, you should say what you mean!" growled Gatty.

The Second and Third had just finished their prep., and Dicky Nugent & Co. were gathered in the Form-room. Nugent minor was certainly looking more thoughtful than usual, and he dug his hands into his pockets and stared round at his companions—Gatty, Myers, Bunter minor, Tubb, and Paget.

"It's a bit thick—"

"You needn't tell us that again," said Gatty.

"Oh, dry up, you ass!" said Dicky. "I reckon it's a bit thick to treat Mauly as we've done. After all, you know, it wasn't anything to do with him."

"Yes; but he's paying Fish a bob each—"

"I know that," said Nugent minor impatiently; "but my point is, what's it got to do with Mauly? All said and done, he arranged for us to prepare his supper, and we simply went on strike without thinking about that at all."

"I'm not sure there's not something in it," said Tubb of the Third. "Our grievance was against Fishy. And when you come to think of it, it's rather a rotten trick to leave old Mauly in the lurch."

"Just what I thought," said Dicky. "Look here, there's still time for us to do something if we buck up. We'd arranged to get the feed ready just about by this time, so if we go up now—"

"Good egg!" interrupted Paget. "Come on, we'll buzz off!"

"All serene!" said the others readily.

And the six fags hurried up to the Remove passage. To do them justice, they had repented of their hasty action, and were only too willing to show Mauleverer that they were sorry for having deserted him in his hour of need, so to speak. As they turned the corner into the Remove passage they espied a slim form coming towards them.

"There he is!" shouted Paget. "There's the Yankee swindler!"

"Yah!" roared Gatty. "Sharper!"

Fisher T. Fish came towards the fags with a cool smile on his lips.

"Hold on a minute!" he said. "I want to talk to you kids."

The founder of the Fish Fag Agency had been thinking during the last hour. And Fish had come to the conclusion that it would be best all round for him if he met the fags half way; or, rather, met them with an amendment of their demands. Fisher T. Fish was shrewd, and after a little thought he realised that, if he didn't come to terms very quickly, Lord Mauleverer would get fed up, and have nothing more to do with the scheme. Therefore it was obviously important that he should make peace terms immediately. He could, of course, have dismissed the eight fags and supplied another eight, but Fish was inclined to think that Lord Mauleverer wouldn't agree to that. Rather than have the trouble of teaching a fresh batch their individual duties, the schoolboy earl would dispense with their services altogether. So Fish found it imperative that he should make terms, even at a loss of profit to himself.

"You want to speak to us—eh?" said Dicky Nugent. "Sorry! Can't stop!"

"I guess you will stop!" exclaimed Fish briskly. "Look here, kids, it's no good keeping up this farce! If you want to keep your positions as Mauleverer's fags, you'd better decide, right here and now, to agree to my terms!"

"We won't!" yelled Gatty. "We—"
"Hold on!" said Fish. "I've considered the matter on all points, and I've decided to meet your demands—to a certain extent."

"Oh!" said Dicky Nugent. "What's the new wheeze? We want tenpence a week, you know, or we don't go back to work!"

"Piffle!" said Fish coolly. "Why, if I accepted those terms, I might as well shut up shop immediately! I guess it wouldn't be worth while carrying the business on. My final terms are these—sixpence a week all round, and no insurance money!"

The fags looked at one another.
"Sixpence be blowed!" said Gatty indignantly. "Why, that's leaving you a tanner for doing nothing! Likely!"

"My dear chaps—"
"Are we going to do it?" asked Dicky Nugent, looking round. "Are we going to let Fishy collar half the money for himself?"

"No!" chorused the fags.
Fisher T. Fish looked desperate. He could see that the fags were determined, and his keen business instinct impelled him to make one more offer. It went against the grain for Fisher T. Fish to give in completely, so he held up his hand for silence.

"Well, as you're so thundering obstinate," he said savagely, "I'll alter it to eightpence a week all round! If you don't like that, I guess you can go and eat coke!"

Dicky Nugent grinned triumphantly.
"Well, that's not so dusty!" he exclaimed. "After all, I suppose Fishy's entitled to something for thinking of the wheeze. Do we accept, kids, or de we not?"

"Might as well," said Gatty.
And the others signified their approval.
"Good!" said Fish. "The strike's at an end, then?"
"Yes," said Nugent minor. "We'll resume work now."
"About time, too!" said Tubb. "It'll be bedtime in two ticks!"

The fags hurried along the passage. They halted at the door of Lord Mauleverer's study, and burst in unceremoniously. They half-expected to see the room empty, but, to their surprise, Harry Wharton & Co. were sitting round the table, finishing the remains of a lordly repast.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tubb.
"You can clear off, you kids!" said Bob Cherry sharply. The fags stared.

"Rather not!" exclaimed Dicky Nugent. "We're Mauly's fags, and we've come to do our giddy work! We're sorry we went on strike, but that was Fish's fatheaded fault! It's all right now—"

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

Lord Mauleverer smiled.

"Yaas, my dear fellows; it is all right!" he said. "I've been thinking—"

"And you've decided to let it pass?" asked Gatty genially.

"Begad, no! I've come to the conclusion that I can get on better without any fags at all!" said his lordship blandly. "So you can depart as soon as you like!"

"Wha-a-at!" gasped the fags.
"You've deserted the ship in time of need," said Harry Wharton, "proving yourselves to be a set of unreliable bounders, so we've persuaded Mauly to chuck you all over!"

"Buzz off!" said Johnny Bull.
The fags looked at one another in dismay. At the very moment when they had come to terms with Fish, they were calmly told that their services were no longer required.

They stumbled out of the study with long faces, and as they closed the door the sound of hearty chuckles followed them out.

"Well, of all the rotten frosts!" grunted Gatty disgustedly.

"Hallo! What's up with you?" asked Fisher T. Fish, coming out of his study suddenly. "I guess you're looking pretty blue!"

"Mauly's just dismissed the giddy lot of us!" said Nugent minor dismally. "We've a dashed good mind to bump you again, Fishy—"

But Fisher T. Fish hadn't waited. He burst into Lord Mauleverer's study with a startled face.

"What's all this rot those fags have just been telling me?" he asked quickly.

"What rot?" drawled Lord Mauleverer.
"Why, that you've sacked the lot of them!"

"It's perfectly true, my dear fellow!"
"True!" yelled Fish. "Why, you've only had the fags for two days! I guess you're potty if you've sacked the lot of them as soon as this!"

"Begad, quite the opposite!" smiled his lordship. "I should certainly have been potty if I hadn't sacked them. Your idea seemed all right, Fish, but it wouldn't work—it really wouldn't work, my dear fellow!"

"Therefore, you'd better buzz off!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"I won't!" roared Fish. "I—"

But Harry Wharton & Co. had had quite enough of the business man of the Remove, and Fisher T. Fish was grasped by rough hands and flung out into the passage. He cannoned against the opposite wall with a crash, and turned round just in time to see the study door close.

Fisher T. Fish sniffed witheringly.

"I guess I might have expected it!" he muttered.

"These silly galoots over here don't know a good idea when it's put before 'em!"

Fisher T. Fish entered his own study, and slammed the door. The American junior never sulked, however, and by bedtime he had quite recovered his good-humour.

Taking all things together he hadn't come off so badly, he reflected. He had taken ten shillings from Lord Mauleverer to commence with, and he still had the bulk of that amount in his pocket. And Fisher T. Fish, like the business man he was, inwardly vowed that he wouldn't disgorge a penny of it.

There had been no little excitement during the period of the experiment, but the Removites tabooed the subject whenever it was mentioned, and from that day onwards nothing more was ever heard of Fish's Fag Agency.

THE END.

(Next Monday's long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled "RAKE OF THE REMOVE!" by Frank Richards. Order a copy of THE MAGNET Library in advance. Price 1d.)

STORYETTES.

ONE FACE WAS ENOUGH.

Bobby's pa was what some people would call obstinate, but what he himself preferred to term strong-minded; and one of his fads was to cut his children's hair himself.

Bobby was the youngest, and when he had reached the age of five, his parent thought it time to cut off his curls.

When the scissors began to play about the top of his head he burst out crying, and implored his father to stop.

"Why?" asked the amateur barber.

"I know what you're doing now, daddy," answered the child, between his sobs. "You're making another face up there for me, like that old gentleman who sits in front of us at church!"

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday.

"RAKE OF THE REMOVE!"

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OUR THRILLING NEW SERIAL STORY. START THIS WEEK!

TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!

THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
BY SIDNEY DREW



Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.



Prince Ching-Lung, adventurer, conjurer, and ventriloquist.



Nathan Gore, jewel collector and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN."

Nathan Gore, millionaire and jewel-collector, clenched his hands furiously, and raved like a madman on the deck of the liner Coronation. He had started specially from America in order to be present at the sale-room in London where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," was to be put up for auction. "A telegram for Mr. Gore," a voice rang out through the darkness. The American was told the message, and as he listened, his face came over deadly pale, and he gave vent to a terrible oath. The message was: "Ferrers Lord purchased 'The World's Wonder' privately. No bidders. Price unknown." "I'll win yet," shrieked the man. "By foul means or fair, I'll win!"

"I'LL TAKE THE CHALLENGE!"

Ferrers Lord's house was wrapped in silence. A faint light shone from the drawing-room. Ching-Lung, his Chinese friend, pushed open the door, then a cry broke from him. A man lay face downwards on the floor. There was a ghastly crimson stain on his collar. The man was Ferrers Lord. "Ching—the diamond!" came a hoarse voice. Ching-Lung opened the drawer which Lord indicated, but there was no diamond there. But a message had been left behind: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst. I defy you. The stone is mine.—Nathan Gore." The millionaire rose to his feet. "I take the challenge, Ching," he said. "I'll hunt him down and bring back my diamond." He begins the chase after the diamond thief, and for five months pursues Nathan Gore through Europe, New Zealand, Teneriffe, and back to London, never once being able to catch him up. While in London, he hears that Nathan Gore had bought from the Dutch a remote island named Galpin. Lord immediately purchases an island four miles south of Gore's, christening it Ching-Lung. Learning that Gore is fortifying his island, and has actually fitted out warships for his own use, Ferrers Lord arranges a hurried expedition, and in a few hours the whole party are aboard the Lord of the Deep, bound for the island of Ching-Lung. When they arrive they visit Nathan Gore's island, and find that it is well protected by forts. Ferrers Lord, wishing to end the chase, sends his conditions of peace to the mad millionaire. They are, that he returns the stolen diamond and publishes in all the papers in the world an apology. Nathan Gore refuses, and war is declared. Ferrers Lord divides his forces, leaving Rupert Thurston and Prout on the Lord of the Deep, and himself, with Ching-Lung and a small party, embarking on the launch. The latter craft is wrecked in a hurricane, and driven ashore on Loneland, an island belonging to Nathan Gore. The shipwrecked party encamp in a cave on the shore, and Ferrers Lord walks away to explore. Some time later, while the crew are lazing about near the cave, a boat belonging to Nathan Gore suddenly comes into sight, and they are discovered. After some parley the captain of the boat steps ashore and walks towards the cave.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Escape from the Cave.

"Well, skipper," asked Prince Ching-Lung, "how is it to be?"

"Well, pard," said Captain Hackerden, "that's jest how you take it."

"What do you mean?"

"Durn it all," growled the Yankee, "it seems a pity! All round, I don't purfess to be a peach, and I've done a few things I'm kinder sorry about. I'm a hired man, you see, boss, and I kin boast that I never went back on the feller who hired me. That's J. F. H. to the bedrock, squire. I'll allow that Gore is loose on the top, but he pays up the dollars. And, durn it, dollars must be earned! It makes me wild all round, now I'm getting to know you. That pal of yours, Mr. Thurston, is an O. K. sport! I like you all! Bein' only a hired man, with a family over at Boston to raise, I must earn my chips honest!"

"Certainly!" said Ching-Lung, smiling.

"And I reckon," went on Hackerden, "that means freezin' on to yer, dead or alive."

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Has it struck you that you are risking a murder trial?"

"No," said the Yankee. "A day back I would have told the wall-eyed ole hoss to go to Klondike and freeze, if he'd put on me like this. I guess, sir, you've kinder hopped outside the law by blowin' up our sea-wall, and sinkin' a submarine. What's between you and Gore, I don't know, and can't hang on to. He's still an Amurrican cit'zen. And they're playing high jinks at Washington over your kybosh tricks. There's a cruiser comin' along; and jest about now they're yellin' out at you in the House of Commons! Piracy is the ugly handle they've stuck on to it!"

Ching-Lung whistled.

"You are joking, skipper?"

"I ain't!" said the Yankee, taking more rum. "Durn me! I wish I was, for I like you! Ef I warn't a hired man, I'd give my left ear to let you slide off. You're good sorts! I wish I could have a palaver with you, boss. Take a wink from me, and surrender. Gore daren't touch you, and you'll just have to go for trial. Be sensible, and yank along with me. I'll watch it with both eyes that you get treated like fightin'-cocks!"

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"You're a good fellow," laughed Ching-Lung, "but you don't know us well enough. I wish you did. This is altogether beastly. I don't want to have to shoot you, and you don't want to shoot me. I admire you, though it is unpleasant, for wanting to earn your dollars. We cannot accept your invitation. You see, skipper, I can only act under orders, too. I have no orders to surrender. It seems a pity!"

"A durned pity!" said Hackerden.

"I was thinking about you and your men. You can't get us out of here, unless you starve us out. I'll be fair with you. Without boasting, I can say that we are excellent shots. Do what you can."

The Yankee sighed.

"If I hadn't been a married man, with a family to raise, boss," he said sadly, "I'd chuck it up. Gore pays monthly, and in advance. The month is up to-morrow at four, and, darn it, I'm in his debt till then! That's the kind of man J. F. H. is. I must do my level best to nail you, and I'll do it! If I kill you, boss, I shall be sorry. You'll give me time to get out of range?"

"Of course."

"Waal, good-day! It jars me more than a trifle, but I kin say I'm no slouch in a fight. And we're goin' to fight."

The Yankee shook hands warmly, and put one leg over the boulder.

"I say, Hackerden!" called the prince.

"Waal, boss?"

"If you don't get killed," said Ching-Lung, "I should like to see you again."

"O'Brien's Saloon, West Street North, Boston, U.S.A.," drawled the Yankee. "S'long! You'll find me at that address. Don't forget it. Boston, West Street North, O'Brien's Saloon. Agen, s'long!"

"So long!" cried Joe and Maddock.

Hackerden went down to the boat whistling, and the four castaways laughed.

"I've seed wasser nor him," said Joe. "Pity he's sich a stickler for dooty."

"Troth, that same is a dangerous weakness!" said O'Rooney. "He'll be gettin' himself hur-rt through ut wan of these days. Farewill-farewill, my American candy! Oi'll thry not to hit yez whin we star-rt wid the popguns."

As the boat was rowed seaward Ching-Lung began to think of Ferrers Lord.

He questioned Barry. Barry had not seen the millionaire, as the prince had thought.

"Ut was seein' that lamp was missin' that set me fancyin' he'd gone innards," explained O'Rooney. "Oi was, half awake and half asleep, and Oi think Oi seed him. Of coorse, Oi may have been dbramin'!"

"Let us have some grub, then," said Ching-Lung.

The prince found no reason for uneasiness. No man in the world was better able to look after himself than Ferrers Lord. He had taken the lamp and a rifle. Ching-Lung seized a blazing-stick, and tried to find footprints, but the covering of the floor at the back of the cave was as hard as rock.

He penetrated the gloom for about thirty yards, and there a wall of sand-stone barred the way. Apparently he had come to the end of the cavern.

Without either bread or biscuits, the breakfast was somewhat of a failure. Maddock was delegated to keep watch.

"What wid lions and Yankees," growled Barry, "and shipwrecks and caves and disert oilands, Oi'm beginnin' to wish Oi follered me ould grandmother's advice, and wint into the pig thrade wid my Uncle Dinnis."

"Don't I wish you had!" said Joe fervently.

"It certainly isn't all champagne and oysters," said Ching-Lung. "We'll have the whole hornet's nest of them buzzing round us soon, and then—"

Ching-Lung sprang to the opening. The boat was pushing off from the opposite shore.

"Those chaps have been put up there to see that we don't bolt while the others take back the news," remarked the prince. "It's just a nice long shooting distance, and no risk of being hit, as far as they are concerned. Look at that chap with a sack on his back. See him? He's got ammunition in that, I expect. Surely you see him?"

"Oi do," answered the keen-eyed Barry.

"Give me a gun!"

The prince steadied the rifle. The man was trying to climb the cliff and reach the ledge. Ching-Lung did not want to kill him, only to frighten him. He was carefully adjusting the sight, when a shout of astonishment from Maddock made him jerk up his head. Man and sack were falling down the cliff into the grassy water.

"A nasty slip that," said Barry, "and ut saves a cartridge."

Crack! The sound was faint, but it threw a new and terrible light on the man's fall. A shot had been fired. The breeze came from the land, and the deadened and distant report had taken some seconds to reach the cave.

Ferrers Lord alone could have fired that shot. In all

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A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the

Chums of Greyfriars next Monday.

"RAKE, OF THE REMOVE!"

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probability he was hiding among the rocks at the mouth of the channel.

The boat had spread her sail, and was heeling over in a fashion that told of a lusty wind further out. Ching-Lung used his glasses. Apparently the man was uninjured, for he had risen, and was swimming hard. And at that very moment three or four louder reports were heard, and a man came bounding across the shingle. Ferrers Lord!

"Safe home, old chap!" cried Ching-Lung.

"Safe home, lads," said the millionaire, "and ravenously hungry."

"And what's the news?"

"Little or none. I tried the back of the cave, in hopes of finding an emergency exit; but the lamp went wrong, and I had to return. Then I took an early walk along the shore. The boat came unexpectedly round the headland, and I had to hide. How did you get on?"

Ching-Lung related details of Hackerden's visit, and the millionaire looked amused.

"So Nat Gore has let the cat out of the bag, and we have become twentieth-century pirates!" he laughed. "I rather like the idea."

"Surely the British and American Governments will not take the old madman seriously?"

"We shall see, my boy," said Ferrers Lord. "Whether they do or do not is a matter of utter indifference to me. They haven't a shadow of right to interfere between Gore and myself."

"I thought every country was compelled to protect its citizens?"

"Of course; that is undeniable. What I mean is—well, to put the point plainly, America must do what she likes. The presence of warships of her whole navy will not frighten me away."

Ching-Lung rubbed his little snub-nose and grinned.

"Old chap," he said, "there was a chap named Napoleon who kicked against the earth. He got kicked himself at the finish. You're something like him, only better looking. Do you mean to tell me, O Ferrers Lord, the inflexible, that, because a man stole a diamond and checked you, you intend to chivy him and snap your fingers at a Great Power?"

"I would, and will, if necessary, snap my fingers at the combined fleets of the world, Ching!" said the millionaire coolly.

"Oh, pip!"

"You must understand, though, that I shall not be hostile. It will be a game of cat and mouse. You may be sure I would not fire a shot for the wealth of a Croesus. My quarrel is a private one, and if the Powers choose to interfere, let them catch me."

Ching-Lung could only laugh. The mere idea of being accredited pirates was delicious, but the idea of playing hide-and-seek with the warships and defying a fleet was even more so.

It was all a huge joke, and even if they were captured the subsequent trial would be the same. Unfortunately, their present position gave little hopes of future hide-and-seek. Unless they could escape, it seemed probable that Nathan Gore would merely have to hand them over to the captain of the American vessel which first arrived at Loneland.

"They'll hardly hang us for piracy," said Ching-Lung. "They won't go to extremes."

"We must not give them the chance, Ching. A trial would be something of a farce, naturally, although we have no legal right to take the law into our own hands. I have never taken any notice of the law. In a way, I am an outlaw. If people knew the facts, they would all be laughing. Well, I have finished my breakfast, and enjoyed it. Robinson Crusoe, the story goes, lived in a cave, but I never admired that gentleman's tastes in anything. A short experience of caves goes a long way. Put on your thinking-cap, Ching, and tell us how to get out of this."

Ching-Lung was beaten. It was easy enough to leave their refuge, trusting to luck to dodge the few bullets and to run for shelter.

To do so would be to step out of the frying-pan into the fire. Their rifles would keep the enemy back, but hunger is more deadly than bullets. Gore could easily surround them, and enforce a surrender. If they left the cave, the mad millionaire would beat the island from end to end.

"We can sum the debate up under two heads, Ching," said the millionaire lazily. "Firstly, to remain here means capture in three or four days, at the utmost. Secondly, to break out, while offering a better chance, also seems a forlorn hope. We shall be driven from pillar to post; and the worst of it is, we are going away from Rupert."

"True, O king," said Ching-Lung; "but you can't cook fish before it's caught. I am a sportsman, and I like a run

for my money. I hate sitting still to be shot at. Let us clear."

"Very good. Here, boys, pack this food up," said the millionaire. He began to pace up and down in his usual way. They were not pressed for time. Hours must elapse before Nathan Gore could send reinforcements, unless there was some method of signalling. Certainly, it was better to abandon the cave, although there was a flimsy hope that the noise of firing might attract Thurston to their rescue. If that hoped failed, a surrender was inevitable.

"Don't you ever ask me to come blowing up sandbanks again!" said Ching-Lung. "I've got a very nasty feeling that we are going to be nabbed."

"By gosh," roared Maddock, "here's one of the tin kettles!"

A cruiser had steamed into sight, and something white fluttered from the cliff, where the men were trying to attract her attention.

"What is the depth, Ohing? I saw you swimming," said the millionaire hastily.

"Oceans of water, old chap."

"We must go. I had not bargained for shells. Run for it, Maddock, while I keep them busy."

He levelled his rifle at the fluttering flag, and the smoke of the shot drifted back into the cave, Ching-Lung's rifle cracked an answer. Maddock slipped over the boulder and fled.

Two or three bullets pinged against the cliff and flattened. The millionaire had his favourite gold-mounted Winchester repeater. It was a light weapon, without either the range or penetrative force of Ching-Lung's Mauser, or of the Lee-Metfords of Joe, Maddock, and Barry. But it permitted fast shooting, extracting its own cartridges without having to open the lock. Barry vanished after Maddock, Joe, and Barry.

"Your turn, Ching!"

The prince darted out into the light, and ran like a hare. The three men were lying down, and firing steadily to cover the millionaire's retreat. A puff of smoke hung for a second over the cruiser's bows, and a shell dropped into the channel with a terrific splash.

"Too late, darlings!" chuckled the prince.

"Them things is what Oi niver did luv!" growled Barry.

Barry ducked promptly as a half-spent bullet buzzed viciously over him. Bending low, they rushed down the sandy slope, and halted in the hollows where, on the previous night, Ching-Lung and Ferrers Lord had seen the lions.

Ching-Lung's Discovery.

The millionaire was seldom at a loss. To go south was impossible. It would bring them right into the arms of the foe. It was equally useless to cross the island. Rupert would be on the south, but their way was barred.

"We must hug the coast, Ching," whispered Ferrers Lord, "and only break through the barbed wire if we are forced to do so. If the worst happens, we must try and slip into the town and steal a boat."

"That sounds something like boring holes in a gunpowder barrel with a red-hot poker!" said the prince.

"Fortune is supposed to favour the brave, Ching."

"My bravery is all in my legs just now, old chap."

"I am more afraid of Rupert than of capture," went on Ferrers Lord. "Ho is not rash as a rule, but I feel sure he would do something desperate and foolish if he learned we were prisoners—probably sink the cruisers or torpedo the forts. Luckily, I left orders that he could do nothing without Prout's consent."

"That was sensible—jolly sensible! Tom is a crafty old fish. I tell you, old chap, I'm going to hook it, and put a bit of land behind me. I don't love the idea of being gaoled."

"Forward, then!"

Their spirits rose as they hurried along. The country was rugged and well wooded. They waded through several streams. About eleven o'clock they disturbed a sow with a litter of wild porkers, and Barry hurled a boulder after them as they scuttled away.

To his intense delight, the stone brained a plump sucking-pig, and a halt was called at once. They built a fire in a hole in the ground, and baked the pig. Joe apologised for the want of apple-sauce and stuffing.

"Oi reckon we can all do our own stuffin'!" said Barry. "This is a jooil of a counthray to give a man an appetite! Oi suppose ut's the say air. Oi'll have another wing. Joey, me king of cooks!"

They had encamped in the centre of a clump of sago

palms. A tiny rill of crystal water ran tinkling past, and lizards of brilliant hues crept out to stare at the strange intruders, with little jewel-like eyes.

It was a beautiful spot, but the mosquitoes were troublesome. There was no sign or hint of a pursuit. Ferrers Lord crept forward and looked over the cliffs. Not a sail, or a spar, or a snudge of smoke was visible.

"It strikes me, old chap," said Ching-Lung, when the millionaire returned, "that if they don't get us before night they won't get us before to-morrow. I'm going to look where this water goes to."

"Be careful, Ching!"

"You bet on it!" said Ching-Lung. "I want to find some sticklebacks."

The breeze had gone, and there was nothing to temper the heat of the sun when Ching-Lung left the shadow of the palms. The rays struck down scorchingly. A pursuit under such conditions, the prince thought, would not make Nathan Gore a greater favourite with his hirelings.

"Pouf!" he gasped. "This would about roast off the hump of a tin camel! It beats ginger and cayenne pepper, and both are hot stuff."

He fanned himself with a palm-leaf, and advanced on hands and knees, accompanied by a cloud of spiteful mosquitoes.

Barry and Joe were watching the long slope to the south. It was from the south they expected the pursuers to come, and the position they had chosen made a surprise from that direction impossible.

Ching-Lung had no false ideas about their security. The number of men Gore had at his disposal weakened the chances of escape. The mad millionaire might easily manoeuvre an advance from several points by landing boats to the north, east, and west.

"A house without a back door isn't healthy in case of fire," thought the prince. "The old man won't leave many holes for us to slip through if he knows how to block them up. That water goes somewhere, and if we can only follow it down below we shall be better off. I don't like being up here. Oh, go home and buzz!"

The last remark was addressed to the mosquitoes, which declined to leave him, and laughed the palm-leaf to scorn. Their attentions were maddening.

The prince was afraid to stand erect, for fear of spying eyes, and his progress through the ferns and grass was slow and laborious. He put his knee on the soft mould of an ant-hill, and then, with a moan of agony, rolled into the tiny stream, for the enraged ants could nip like lobsters.

At length he heard the gurgling of water. The sound grew louder. He saw that the rill emptied itself into a brook about ten feet wide, a stream as clear as polished glass, and quite a yard in depth. The current ran briskly to the north.

"That beggar goes over the cliffs, for banknotes!" muttered Ching-Lung. "A wetting won't hurt, so in I go!"

He slid down-stream, touching the bottom with his hands. Now and then the ferns on the banks touched each other, forming arches of lacy green, under which he glided.

At last he stood up cautiously. The brook had trended to the east. A previous survey of the cliffs in the vicinity had shown that a descent to the shore was impossible without ropes. Ching-Lung argued that the constant rush of water, especially during times of flood, would have eaten away the rocks sufficiently to offer a foothold for a plucky climber.

If Rupert appeared while they were on the uplands, they would be unable to reach him, or even to signal to him, without running great risks. It was imperative to reach the shore.

Nor was this all. A bold stroke will often turn the tide. If they could steal round the coast, and creep back into the cave they had abandoned, they would be in the very last place the searchers would think of examining. Sinking down into the water, Ching-Lung floated along. The current became more boisterous, and there was a dull roar of falling water. Then the brook opened out into a wide pool.

Ching-Lung sat with his head above water, and surveyed the parapet. The water gushed over the cliff through a narrow neck. There was a natural bridge above the neck, a great square rock perched on two slim pillars. The prince leaned against the upper rock to peer over, and pulled himself back with a startled cry.

The great rock, to his amaze, had swayed at his touch. He had been within an ace of falling headlong over the precipice.

"A rocking-stone, by jingo!" he gasped.

(There will be another long, interesting instalment of this thrilling serial in next Monday's issue of "The Magnet" Library.)

My Readers' Page.



OUR TWO
COMPANION PAPERS
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
EVERY WEDNESDAY
AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
EVERY FRIDAY.

FOR NEXT MONDAY.

"RAKE, OF THE REMOVE."

By Frank Richards.

Next week's grand, long, complete story tells of the coming to Greyfriars of a new boy—one who is somewhat different to the ordinary run of new boys. In spite of a falling-out with Johnny Bull, of Study 14—when that sturdy junior receives a rude shock—Dick Rake proves a distinct acquisition to the Remove Form, and bears himself more than creditably in the feud with Coker & Co. of the Fifth. In addition to this, Dick Rake is able to do Wingate, the popular captain of the School, a very great service, thereby averting the consequences of a cruel hoax. Altogether, the early career of the new junior of the Remove is an eventful one, and no Magnetite should allow himself—or herself—to miss it.

"RAKE, OF THE REMOVE."

Our Special Pictorial Calendar.

As the special feature of this issue, I have arranged, on page iii. of the cover, a Grand Pictorial Calendar for the year 1913, especially for Magnetites. The idea of decorating this special Calendar with the portraits of some of the principal characters in the popular tales of Greyfriars School is one which I think will particularly appeal to my chums.

I feel my reader-friends will appreciate my New Year's gift of a special "Magnet" Calendar, which they can cut out and hang on the wall of the sitting-room, school-room, or bed-room.

In presenting to my chums this little token of my esteem, I must also take the opportunity of presenting, at the same time, my very best wishes for

**A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL
MY READERS!**

AN ORIGINAL AND INTERESTING PRIZE COMPETITION.

Our grand new Cash Prize Competition, which was announced in the Chat page last week, bids fair to become "all the rage" among "Magnetites" and "Gemites"—the readers of the most popular companion story-papers in existence. The novelty and interest of the contest appeals to every description of reader alike. All you have to do is to buy an extra copy of "The Penny Popular" on Friday, give it to a non-reader, and then get his, or her, opinion on it when it has been carefully read.

I WANT THAT OPINION!

So write it down on a postcard, and send it in to The Editor, "The Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C., before January 20th, 1913.

I am giving HANDSOME CASH PRIZES for the best "opinions"—those which sum up our latest companion-paper, "The Penny Popular," in the neatest, most concise, and most appropriate way.

And don't forget—the three issues of "The Penny Popular" to which this competition applies are:

"PENNY POP.," Numbers 13, 14, and 15!

One of the Special Features of this Contest is the

SPECIAL COLONIAL SECTION,

which will be kept open long enough to allow my chums living in the furthest corner of the Empire a chance to compete.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 257.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars next Monday.

"RAKE, OF THE REMOVE!"

Please order your copy of "THE MAGNET"
Library in advance.

Four Cash Prizes will be awarded for the four best "friend's opinion" postcards sent in by my Overseas readers.

By Request.

I have had a large number of "First Aid" queries from my Boy Scout and other readers; also from many girl-readers, who are taking up this very interesting and important study with enthusiasm.

In response to numerous requests I am therefore printing this week a short article containing a few useful first aid hints, which will be followed by others, equally helpful from time to time.

SOME "FIRST AID" HINTS.

A knowledge of first aid is a valuable asset, and may prove handy to many readers, especially those who are interested in football, where there is always the chance of some slight accident occurring.

In all but the most trivial happenings a doctor's aid should at once be summoned, for first aid is only, as the name implies, a temporary relief until skilled attention can be obtained.

First let me deal with the method of treating slight cuts and injuries to the skin. In the first place all grit and dirt should be removed from the wound by bathing it with warm water, and then placing a piece of boracic lint, bandaged into position, over the injury. In the case of bruises, if the skin is broken, they should be smeared with ointment and then bandaged; whilst if the swelling is at all great, a slight pressure should be applied by means of the bandage.

In the treatment of such accidents as

BURNS & SCALDS,

which frequently occur in the home, the air must be excluded as quickly as possible from the injured part. If the burn is slight, a piece of lint soaked in linseed oil makes a good dressing, and is a sure remedy. If the burn is at all serious, the best thing to do is to cover the part with flour, afterwards removing the clothing round it a piece at the time. If a piece should have become stuck to the flesh, it must not be removed until the doctor arrives; while if the patient should collapse he must be put to bed, and kept warm by means of the application of hot water-bottles to the feet and warm blankets to the body.

(Some more useful "First Aid" Hints will appear next week.)

£3 A WEEK FOR LIFE!

To know for certain that for the remainder of one's life there will be coming in £156 every year, £3 every week, 10s. every working day—what bearing would this have upon an average man, whether young or old, prosperous or unsuccessful?

Primarily it would free him from all anxiety and care. Having no financial worry, he would recover independence and self-reliance, and be able to face the world untrammelled by the pressing needs of the moment. There is no limit to the way in which this munificent life-pension would affect a man's whole career, whilst to a woman it would be no less acceptable.

In this week's "Answers"—the popular home paper for everyone—a pension of £3 a week for life is offered in a most attractive football competition. What competitors have to do is to display their skill in connection with English Cup matches, and full particulars appear in "Answers," now on sale.

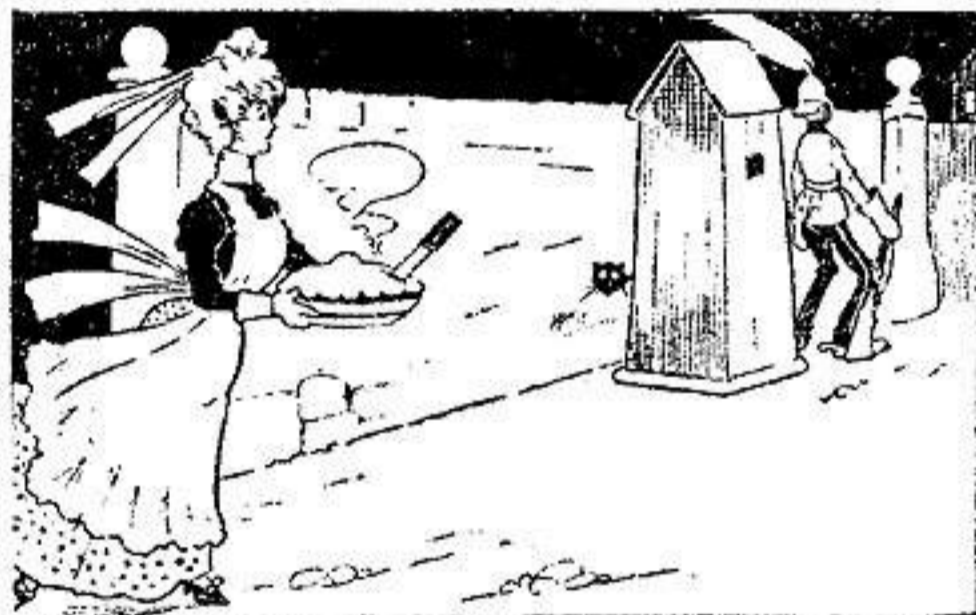
THE EDITOR.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

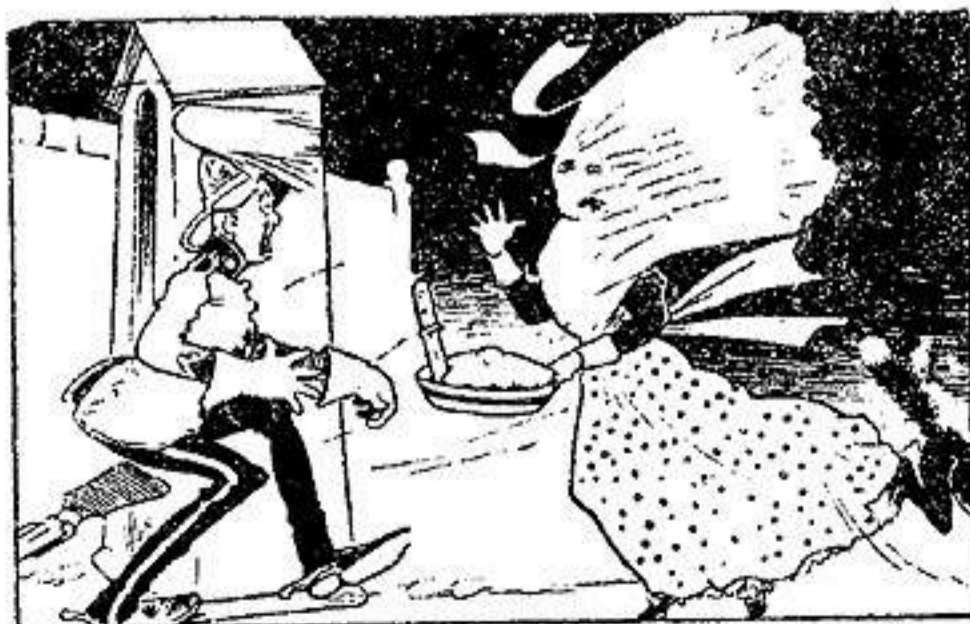
IT WAS ONLY THE COOK!



1. "Ha, ha! She comes!" said Trooper Binks, who was doing "sentry-go" at the barracks. "I can hear her dainty footprints. You can't take your best girl out to supper while on duty; but when your girl brings you supper—well—"



2. "It's not at all bad, is it, boy scouts and others?" But just then a disgusting gust of wind sprang up, and—



3. My word! Didn't Trooper Binks get a shocking shock, when he turned round to take the tasty morsel from the cook. Yes, the lady in white gave him such a shock that it quite took his appetite away. Too bad, wasn't it?"

A POST OFFICE PUZZLE.



"Will this letter get to London to-morrow?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "That's strange!"
 "Why is it strange?"
 "Because it's addressed to Dover."

HE LAUGHED TILL HE CRIED.




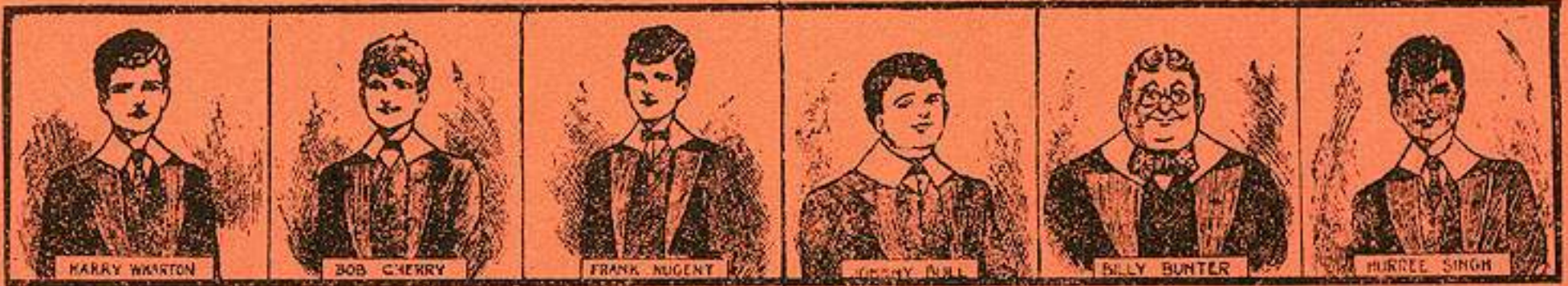
"Whatever makes you cry so, my boy?"
 "Father hit his thumb with the hammer just now."
 "What a sympathetic boy. Is that what makes you weep?"
 "No; I laughed when he did it."



VERY OBVIOUS.

"Hallo, old chap! Got the toothache? Which side is it?"

MORE COMIC PICTURES ON PAGE IV. OF COVER. 



THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY CALENDAR. 1913.



	Sunday.	Monday.	Tuesday.	Wednes.	Thurs.	Friday.	Satur.		Sunday.	Monday.	Tuesday.	Wednes.	Thurs.	Friday.	Satur.
Jan.	...	...	...	1	2	3	4	July	...	...	1	2	3	4	5
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	26	27	28	29	30	31	...		27	28	29	30	31	...	...
Feb.	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	Aug.	...	...	...	...	...	1	2
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	23	24	25	26	27	28	...		24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Mar.	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	Sep.	...	1	2	3	4	5	6
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	23	24	25	26	27	28	...		28	29	30	...	...	...	...
Apr.	...	...	1	2	3	4	5	Oct.	...	...	...	1	2	3	4
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19		12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	27	28	29	30	...	...	...		26	27	28	29	30	31	...
May	...	...	...	...	1	2	3	Nov.	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	...	...	...	...	...	...	...		30	...	...	...	...	...	...
June	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dec.	...	1	2	3	4	5	6
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	29	30	...	...	...	...	...		28	29	30	31	...	...	...

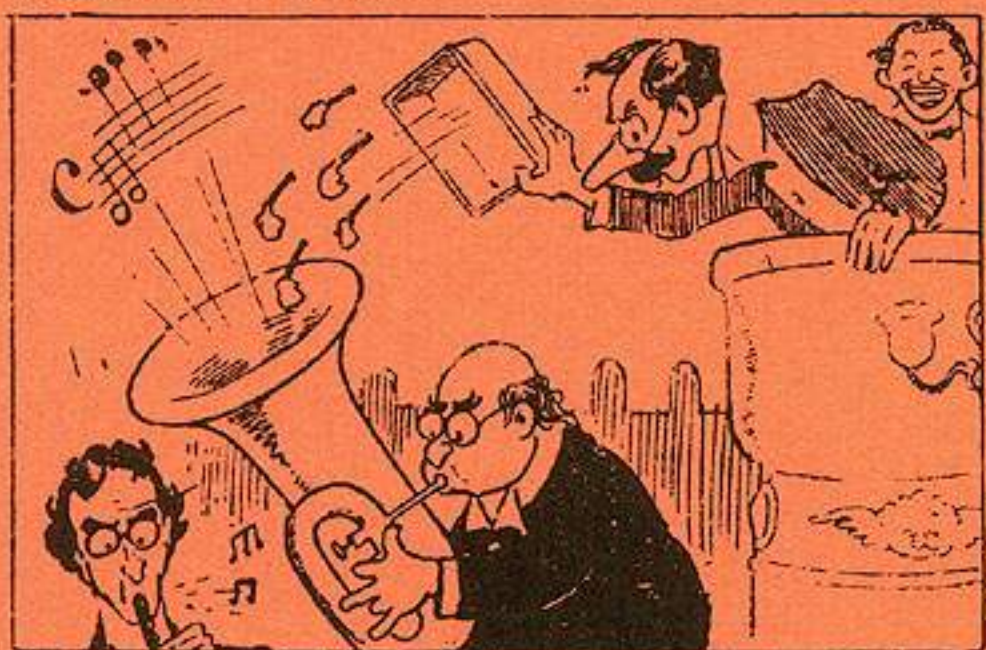
Long, complete school stories dealing with the characters shown on this calendar, appear every Monday in the "Magnet" Library. Price one penny of all newsagents.



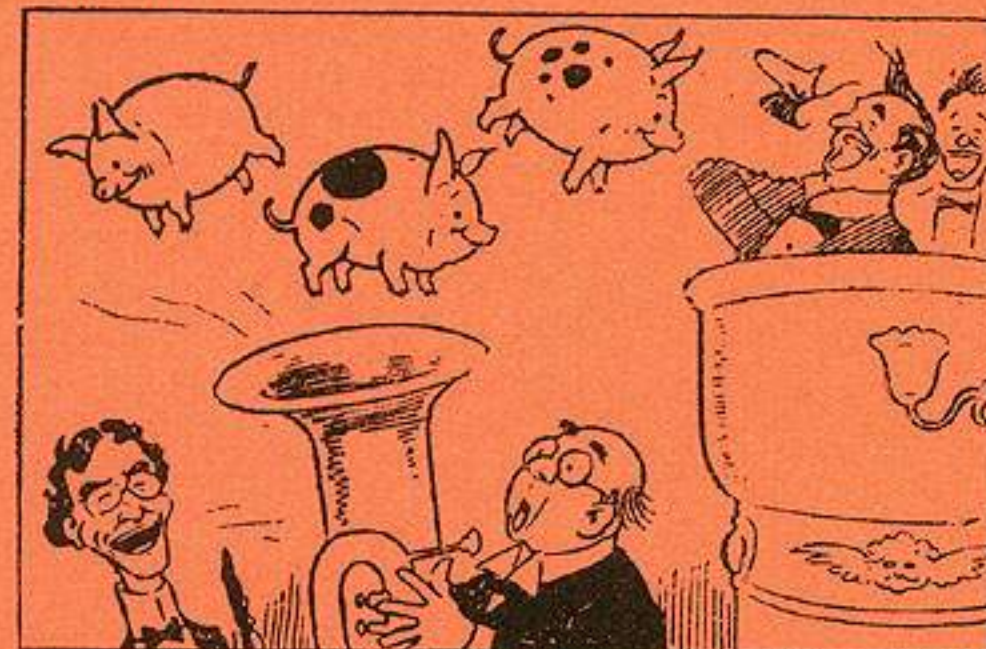
THEY STOPPED THE DRAUGHT.



1. "The draught that chap is making is giving me the earache!" mowned the chap in the box at the panto. "Oh, cease those stormy winds!"



2. "Then if you won't stop it I must do it for you," said the brainy fellow, as he emptied a few indiarubber pigs into the bombardier.



3. With the result that those toy porkers absorbed the draught, and floated airily away, and all was well.



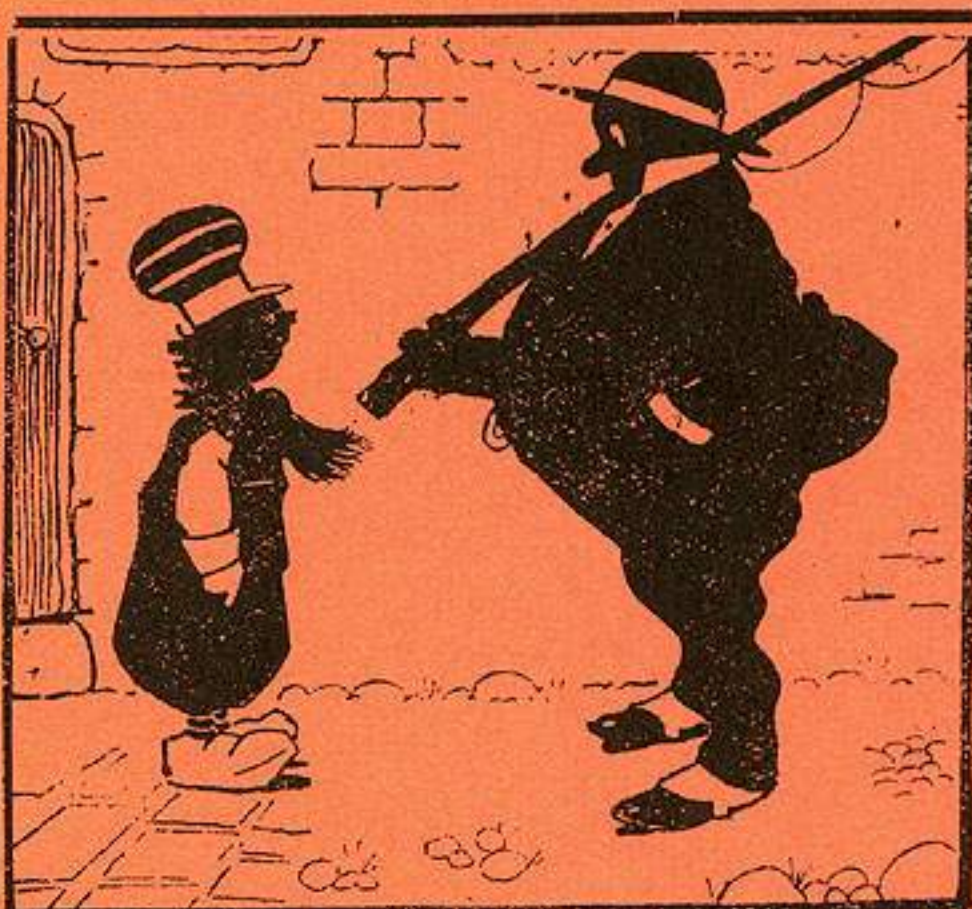
THEN HE GOT A BLOWING UP.

Schoolmaster (referring to volcanic eruptions): "What are those mysterious phenomena, the hidden workings of which no human intellect has ever been able to fathom?"

Scholar: "Gas-meters."

N

CAUGHT.

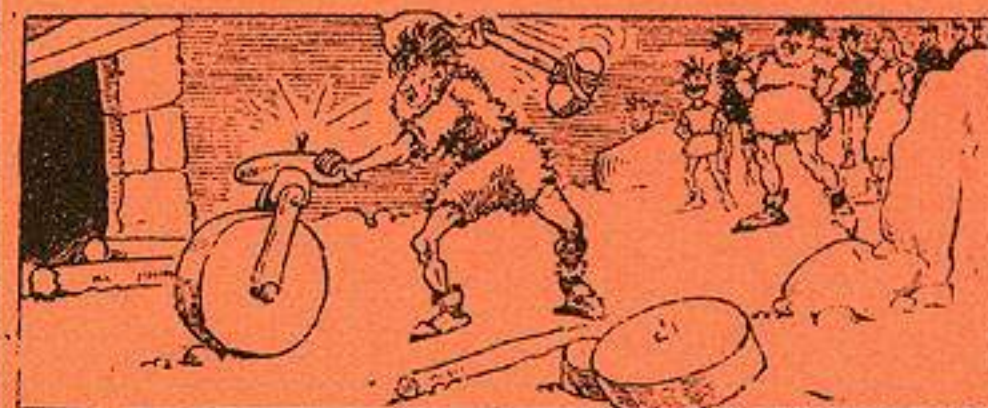


Old Gent: "I'll give you a penny if you can spell f-h."
 Boy: "C-O-D."
 Gent: "That isn't fish, my lad."
 Boy: "Then what is it?"

THE FIRST MOTOR-BIKE.



Stoneaxe had been to law, and the judge awarded him four solid flint farthings damages.



2. But Stoneaxe was a lad who made the best of things, and, said he, "Wait a bit, my lads, and I'll show you the use of brains. Yes, brains, my friends."



3. And ere sunset he'd rigged up a bike and a trailer for Mrs. Stoneaxe. "How's that?" said he. "I told you I was the resourceful fellah, didn't I?"