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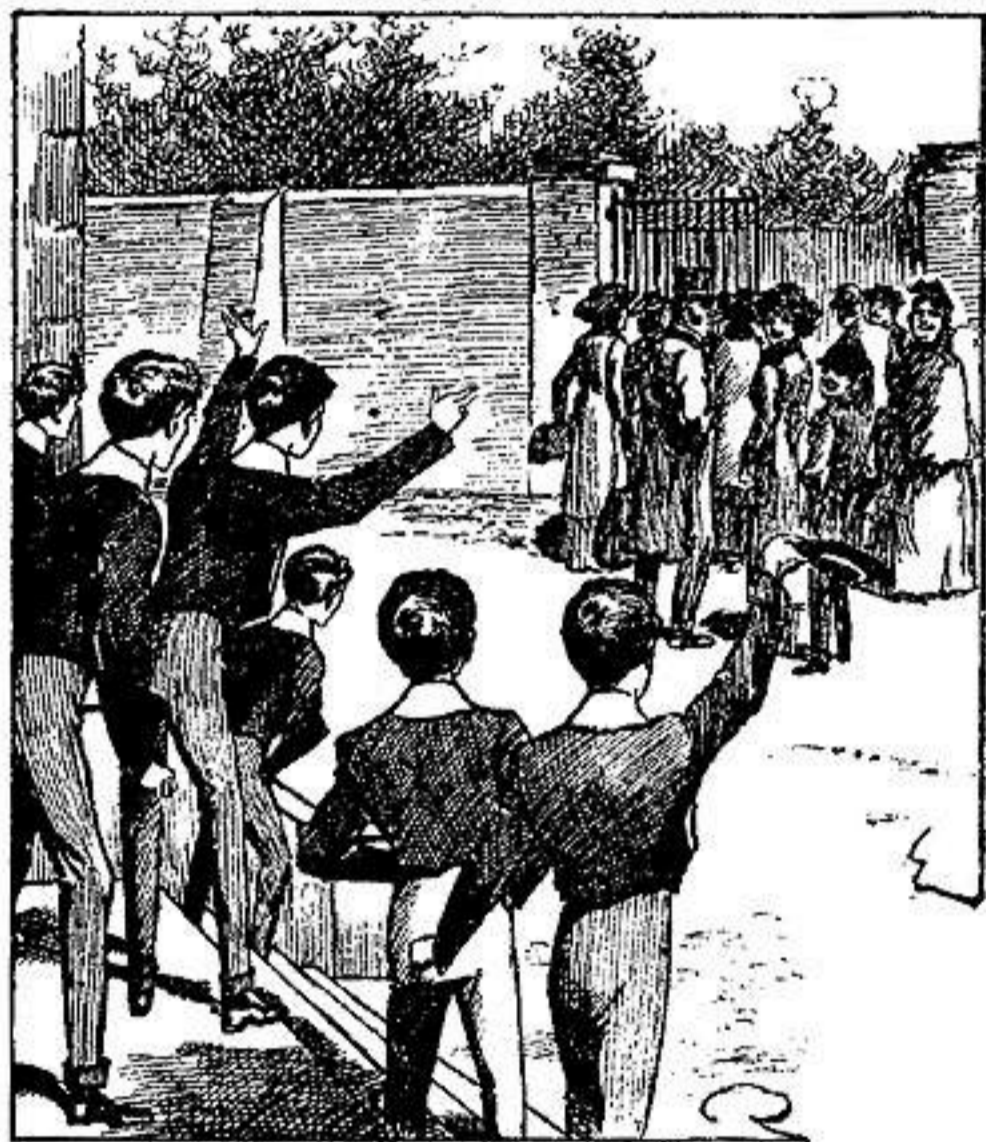
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THE FIRST CHAPTER,
Trotter's News.

"A BIRD—"
"Eh?"
"I say a bird—"
"Where?" demanded Harry Wharton, looking round Study No. 1 in the Remove Passage at Greyfriars.
"I can't see any giddy bird!"
"A bird—"
"You're off your rocker, Bob Cherry!" said Johnny Bull.
"There's no bird in this study, you ass!"
"A bird in—" went on Bob Cherry calmly.
"A bird in where?"
"A bird in the—"
"You giddy gramophone!" roared Harry Wharton.
"Can't you talk about anything else except birds? You're going potty!"
Bob Cherry grinned.
"I was just remarking," he said blandly, "that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!"
Harry Wharton glared.
"You utter ass!" he exclaimed.
"Your bubbling duffer!" said Frank Nugent.
"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!" repeated Bob Cherry calmly.
"You fatheaded chump!" roared Johnny Bull. "What the dickens are you chucking mouldy old proverbs out for? You'll be telling us next that honesty is the best policy!"
"So it is!" grinned Bob Cherry. "By the way you speak,

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By FRANK RICHARDS.

though, we might think you're scoffing at the mere idea of it! A bird in the hand—"

"Dry up, you fathead!" shouted Johnny Bull.

"The dry-upfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Indian junior of the Remove. "My worthy chum is indeed like the esteemed gramophone. The next august record he will put on will be that it is a ludicrously long road without an esteemed turning."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The nabob's peculiar rendering of the proverb was decidedly humorous and the juniors roared. The Famous Five of the Remove had gathered together in Harry Wharton's study to discuss the extremely important matter of finances—and they had scarcely been there a minute before Bob Cherry calmly announced that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. He repeated it, and his four chums glared at him wrathfully.

"What's up with you?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Do you think we came here to learn proverbs?"

"I'm not teaching 'em!" said Bob Cherry. "The conflux of your argument doesn't affect the analogy of the case."

The Removites gasped.

"What?" asked Johnny Bull faintly.

"Which?" said Wharton, staring at Bob Cherry aghast.

"S-say that again!" exclaimed Nugent, holding himself up by grasping the table. "My only hat, where on earth did you learn it? I've never heard such fearful language in all my life!"

Bob Cherry waved his hand.

"Oh, you don't know the English language yet!" he said coolly. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!"

"I believe you mentioned that before!" said Nugent sarcastically.

"The mentionfulness was terrific!"

"And the bumpfulness of the fatheaded Cherry will be terrific jolly soon!" declared Harry Wharton darkly. "If

he doesn't explain what he means within two minutes, we'll sling him out of the study!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Hold on!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "No need to get excited. We came here to discuss financial matters, and I merely remarked that a quid in my giddy pocket is worth two quids in the post! I'm expecting a remittance, but I'm blessed if I know when it'll turn up!"

"You silly chump!" growled Harry Wharton.
 "Why couldn't you explain before?" said Bull.
 "Well, for one reason, you wouldn't let me explain," said Bob Cherry. "You kept interrupting me! But the fact remains, we're in the unfortunate state of being devoid of that very necessary commodity, tin!"

"Have you swallowed a dictionary?" asked Frank Nugent.
 "Why can't you say what you mean, instead of using that flowery piffle?" said Johnny Bull. "In plain language, we're stony!"

"Broke to the wide!"
 "The strandfulness on the esteemed rocks is terrific!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, the question is, what are we going to do?" said Harry Wharton. "The most I've got is twopence-halfpenny. Bull is possessed of a penny, Nugent nothing—"

"And I've got a threepenny-piece with a hole in it!" said Bob Cherry calmly. "Now, I consider that Inky ought to have turned up trumps in a case like this. He's one of the richest chaps in Greyfriars, and when we ask him for loans, he calmly turns round and says he's on the rocks! Inky, old chap, you're a giddy broken reed!"

"I am extremely sorry, my ludicrous chum!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur penitently. "But the august remittance has failed to come to the esteemed hand!"

"It seems that all remittances have failed to come to the esteemed hand!" said Wharton gloomily. "To-day's Tuesday, and we've got nearly all the blessed week before us. It's nearly dinner-time now, and there's no prospect whatever of getting some tin in time to lay in some grub for tea!"

"Well, the only thing is, we shall have to go round to all the fellows," said Johnny Bull. "We might raise the wind by going to old Mauly!"

"That's not a bad idea," said Frank Nugent; "but I believe Mauleverer sent his last fiver away last night for some new togs! Anyhow—"

The door opened, and a fat form rolled into the study. William George Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, blinked round at the five juniors through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"
 "Oh, buzz off, Bunt!" said Harry Wharton.
 "Oh, really, Wharton, I don't see why I should buzz off!" said Billy Bunter. "I—I came to ask you fellows a favour!"

"Sorry," said Bob Cherry, "we can't oblige!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
 "And even if we could, we jolly well wouldn't!" went on Bob Cherry cheerfully. "It's no good you coming here for money, Bunter! Even if we weren't all stony, we'd gracefully decline!"

"You rotten fibbers!" said Billy Bunter indignantly. "I don't believe you're stony at all!"

"Clear off!" roared Johnny Bull. "Do you think we're going to allow you to call us fibbers in our own quarters, you porpoise?"

"Well, I know jolly well you wouldn't all be stony at once!" said Bunter. "You might take pity on a chap! I haven't had any tin for a week, and I've never been near Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop since last Wednesday! And the rotten grub they give you here isn't half enough to keep a fellow's stamina up! I'm half starved!"

"Yes, you look it!" grinned Frank Nugent.
 "Oh, really, Nugent! I admit it hasn't made much difference to my appearance, but I'm feeling awfully seedy!"

If you chaps would only lend me half-a-crown, instead of telling whoppers—"

"Buzz off!" roared Harry Wharton wrathfully.
 "Well, two shillings would do!" said Billy Bunter, coming further into the room. "I know jolly well you've got more than two bob!"

"I tell you we're stony!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.
 "Oh, that's rot—"
 "You insulting rotter!" shouted Bob. "Are you going to clear out yourself, or shall we have to sling you out? You can take your choice!"

"Oh, really—"
 "Collar him!" said Johnny Bull, in exasperation.
 And Billy Bunter was collared. He went to the floor with a bump that shook the whole room, and roared. Just as the Famous Five were about to hurl the fat junior forth, there came the sound of a heavy tread in the passage.

"Old Quelch!" said Johnny Bull. "I wonder if he's coming here?"

"The likelihood is terrific!"
 "Let me go, you beastly rotters!" shouted Bunter, at the top of his voice. "You're a set of rotten bullies, that's what you are!"

"You sneaking bounder!" said Bob Cherry fiercely.
 The footsteps came to a halt outside the study door, and there was a slight tap on the panel. The next moment the door opened, and Trotter, the Greyfriars page, stood grinning in the doorway.

"You ass!" said Harry Wharton, in relief.
 "You speakin' to me, Master Wharton?" grinned Trotter.
 "Yes, I am! Why the dickens did you clump along the passage like old Quelch? We thought it was our giddy Form-master."

Trotter chuckled.
 "Sorry, young gents!" he said. "I wasn't to know as you'd think I was Mr. Quelch."

Billy Bunter struggled to his feet.
 "You beasts!" he said resentfully. "I wish it had been Mr. Quelch! You'd have got a jolly good licking, then!"

"Mr. Quelch is with the 'Ead, I think," said Trotter.
 "My word, young gents, I don't know what's appening, but there's thieves in this 'ere school!"

The Famous Five stared.
 "Thieves!" repeated Harry Wharton.

"Yes, Master Wharton, thieves," said Trotter firmly.
 "I don't like the look of it at all, I don't! It's that mysterious, you wouldn't believe! There's things disappear, an' nobody don't know 'ow they was took!"

"Rot!" said Bob Cherry incredulously.
 "It's right, Master Cherry," said the page-boy seriously. "I ain't tellin' you no lies! There's robberies goin' on, an' 'a' been for days past. Mrs. Kebble, the 'ousekeeper, is nigh off her head!"

"What do you mean?" asked Wharton. "Explain yourself, Trotty!"

"Yes; tell us the giddy details," said Bob Cherry.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Knows a Bit.

TROTTER looked round Study No. 1 with rather an important air.

"You see, young gents, it's this way," he said.
 "Mrs. Kebble, the 'ousekeeper, is in a fine way because there've bin a lot o' things took from the store-room."

"Grab, you mean?" asked Harry Wharton.
 "Yes, Master Wharton; grub chiefly," said Trotter. "Within the last three days you wouldn't credit wot's bin took—seven pound pots o' jam, tins o' biscuits, cheese, cakes, an' all manner o' things! An' the funny part is the store-room door's bin locked the whole time!"

"Then the culprit got in by the window," said Bob Cherry.
 "That 'e didn't, Master Cherry! The winder's bin latched all the time. Mrs. Kebble, she don't know wot to do!"

"Well, it oughn't to be so hard to find out who's doing it," said Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "I expect it's one of the servants—got a duplicate key, perhaps."

"Maybe that, Master Bull, but I don't think so," said Trotter. "All the servants is downright indignant because Mrs. Kebble's bin suspectin' of 'em!"

"One of the chaps, then?" suggested Wharton.
 "I don't see 'ow that could be," said Trotter, shaking his head. "You see, the store-room's right in the servants' quarters, an' if any o' the young gentlemen come down that way they'd be spotted in no time. The winder, too, is just in a place where somebody could be easily seen if he tried to get in. I tell you, young gents, it's fair mystifyin'!"

"I think it's rotten!" said Billy Bunter, blinking round.
 "The chap ought to be found out, and sacked from his post! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if it was old Gosling!"

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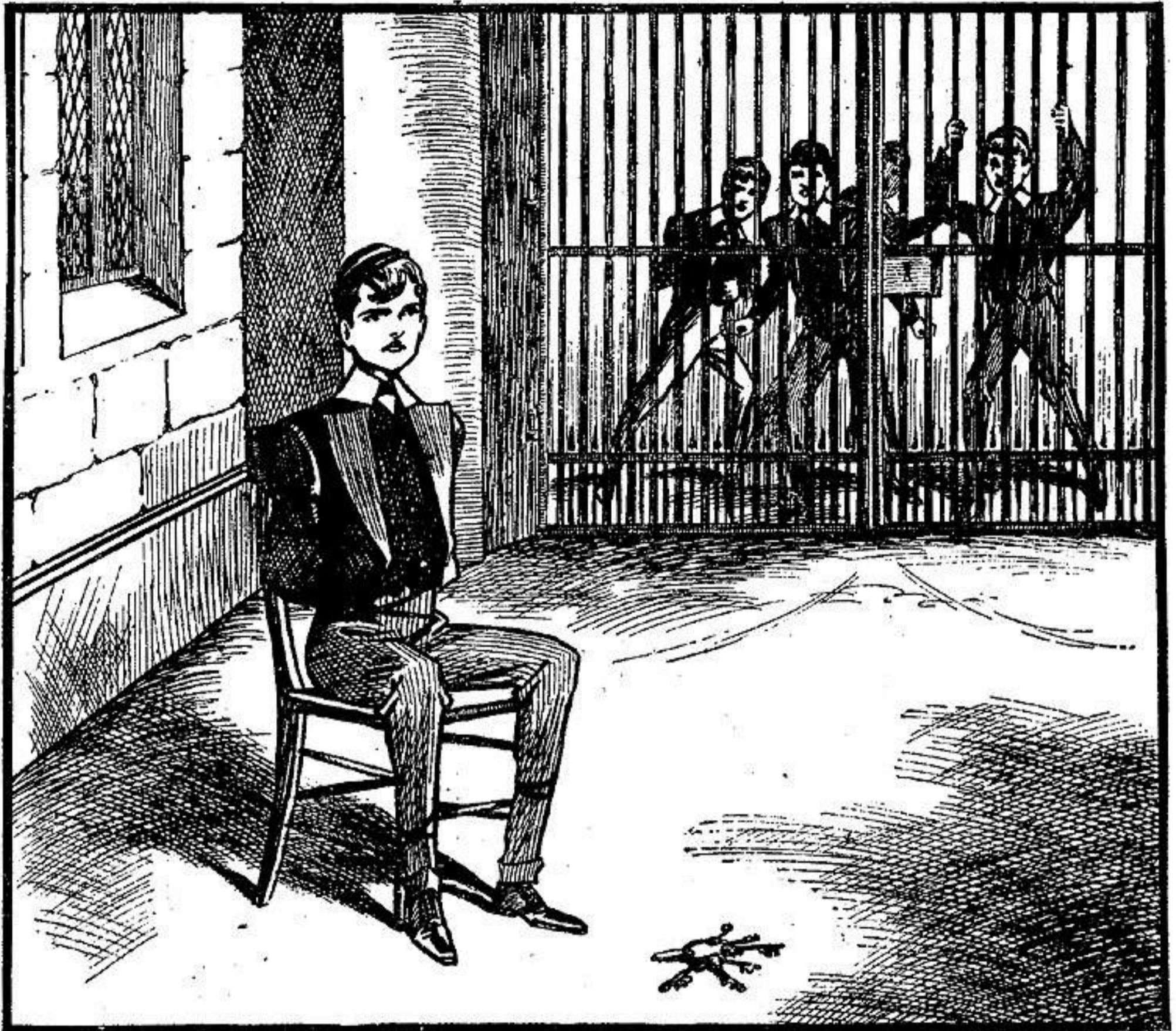
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Harry Wharton & Co. shook the bars of the gate in exasperation. "Get up, you lazy bounder, and unlock the gates!" they roared. "Begad! I can't," exclaimed Lord Mauleverer dolefully. "Temple and Co. have tied me to the chair and I can't move an inch!" (See Chapter 13.)

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "Gossy's all right!"
"You needn't talk, anyhow," said Nugent. "Not so very long ago you kidded that ass Todd to nick the keys of the pantry out of Mrs. Kebble's room."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"
"And then he brought pots of jam round to us," chuckled Bull, "and sold them at less than half price! I wonder if Buntv's doing this job now?"
Billy Bunter swelled with indignation.
"Oh, really, Bull, I think that's rotten!" he protested. "You know jolly well I've had nothing to eat for over a week—anyhow, nothing but the school grub! And it's beastly of you to rake up old things like that! How should I know who's nicking the things out of the store-room?"

"Ah, how should you?" said Bob Cherry, with an oracular air.

"You're a lot of insinuating beasts!" yelled Billy Bunter. "You know as well as I do that if I tried to pinch things out of the store-room again I should have been spotted. One of you chaps might have done it—"

"What?"
"But I've got an easily recognisable figure, and I should have been spotted in no time!"

"Perhaps that's why you've not tried the game on again," grinned Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent!" said Bunter angrily. "I'm going! I'm not going to stop here to be accused of stealing!"

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"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry. "Shut the door after you!"

"Beast!" muttered Bunter, as he left the room, and banged the door.

"I wonder if he has got anything to do with the affair?" said Wharton thoughtfully.

"I don't think so, Master Wharton," said Trotter. "You see, Master Bunter ain't like the other young gents, and if 'e'd bin seen anywhere near, Mrs. Kebble or the others would 'ave suspected 'im. But 'e ain't bin seen near, an' nobody knows who's doin' of it! But that's not what I kem up here for."

"Oh, you've got other bizney, then?"

"Yes, Master Wharton. There was a letter come for Master Cherry this mornin', an' it was some'ow overlooked," said Trotter, fumbling in his pocket. "I thought as 'ow I'd bring it up afore the dinner-bell went."

"Good for you, Trotty!" said Bob Cherry eagerly. "Hand it over!"

"Right you are, Master Cherry?"

Trotter handed out the letter, and then departed. As Bob had expected, there was a remittance enclosed with the letter—a postal-order for a sovereign.

"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry.

"Saved from ruin!" grinned Frank Nugent. "You can lend me half-a-crown now, I suppose, Bob? This giddy quid of yours will just tide over until we get some more remit-

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stances in. I've written home for one, but my pater's not so prompt as he might be."

A minute later the dinner-gong clanged out, and the Famous Five trooped into the dining-hall with the rest of the Remove. Harry Wharton & Co. did not think of Trotter's information again, for, after all, the news was simply concerning the domestic department, and had nothing to do with the boys.

But by tea-time Billy Bunter had not forgotten it. The Owl of the Remove was feeling extremely pleased with himself, although, for some reason, he kept up a continuous wail of lament whenever he met a group of Removites. Bunter had succeeded in creating an impression that he was stony-broke, and that he was in a state of perpetual hunger.

While most of the juniors were having tea in their studies, Bunter was hastening across the dusky Close. The January night was dark and gloomy, and, except for the lights from the windows of the School House, the Close was in total darkness.

Nobody saw Bunter as he crossed the Close.

"I'm as safe as houses!" he chuckled to himself, as he made his way to the rear premises. "Nobody in the whole blessed school suspects me of raiding things from the store-room. My hat! I've never struck on such a grand wheeze before."

Billy Bunter arrived at the dark stable-yard at the rear of the school. Then he entered an old harness-room, which had formerly been used by Dibbs, the groom. But a new stable had been erected a year or two previously, and a cosy little partitioned-off harness-room had been provided. The old place, in consequence, had fallen into disuse.

Billy Bunter entered the old harness-room, and closed the door after him. It was very dark in there, but the Owl of the Remove knew where he was. In less than a minute he opened a seven-pound biscuit-tin, and was soon piling in for all he was worth.

For Bunter was the author of the store-room robberies. Quite by accident the fat junior had hit upon a scheme whereby he could gain an entrance into the store-room without a soul being the wiser.

Four days before he had descended to the cellars beneath the household quarters of Greyfriars. They extended right beneath the kitchens and sculleries, and were very seldom used, except as a place for stowing old lumber.

Bunter, being alone, had explored, and had seen in the flooring above an old trapdoor, which had obviously never been opened for years. Bunter was possessed of an insatiable curiosity, and once he had seen the trapdoor he then and there decided to open it, and see where it led to.

An old packing-case had stood close by, and Bunter soon shifted it beneath the trapdoor. His surprise was great when he found himself within the locked and sacred store-room, surrounded by innumerable pots of jam, tins of biscuits, and dozens of other good things.

The trapdoor opened into a corner of the store-room, beneath one of the widest shelves. The window of the room was small, and, therefore, it was practically dark beneath the big shelf. Probably Mrs. Kebble herself did not know of the trapdoor's existence. It fitted with the other boards perfectly, and one needed very sharp eyes to detect it.

Bunter had been in very high feather at his discovery, but had had cunning enough to leave the good things alone until night-time, for he had made his explorations on a rainy half-holiday.

So, his heart beating quickly with excitement, he had dropped back through the trapdoor on to the packing-case, and had closed it tightly above him. Then, looking very unconcerned, he had strolled out of the cellar and made his way to the School House.

But Billy Bunter had been worried about one little matter—how to gain an easy ingress into the cellar. It was out of the question for him to go through the scullery passages, so his cunning brain had immediately formed another plan.

Out in the yard a large stone slab covered a big hole, down which the coals were shot, and Bunter, upon examination, had found that he could drop down into the coal-cellar, and thus easily reach his objective without a soul being the wiser!

It was a cunning scheme, and no one in the school but Billy Bunter would have thought it out. And every night regularly since—sometimes twice during the evening—he had paid a visit to the store-room. Bunter's greatest lament was that he never had enough pocket-money to buy tuck with; but this wheeze was infinitely better. The store-room was simply packed with good things, and Bunter found himself in the enviable position of being able to make his choice!

The Owl of the Remove had raided the pantry on one historic occasion, but it had ended in disaster. This time there was no possibility of discovery, and the fat junior was revelling in his good luck.

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But he had the cunning to pretend that he was always hungry; he did not want the Removites to suspect that he was the author of the petty robberies in the servants' quarters.

Bunter himself did not regard them in the light of robberies. Any qualms he may have possessed he swept away by declaring to himself that the school never supplied him with enough food, and, as his fees included board, he had a perfect right to satisfy himself from the school supplies.

So Bunter felt quite comfortable in working out his little scheme.

He chuckled to himself as he sat in the harness-room eating biscuits at top speed. After a while he paused as a thought struck him.

"My hat!" he murmured. "Mrs. Kebble made some ripping beef-pies to-day for the Head's household! I wonder if she shoved 'em in the store-room? A beef-pie would be a first-class finish to a feed. I'll buzz off and see!"

And Billy Bunter set down his biscuit-tin and emerged from the harness-room. The coal-hole was quite near, and some little distance from the servants' entrance to the house. In the summertime, of course, Bunter's scheme would have been impracticable; but now, on the dark January nights, he was quite secure, for the servants kept all the doors tightly closed.

Bunter lifted the stone slab which covered the coal-hole and pushed it on one side. Then he gingerly lowered himself into the cavity and dropped. The distance was not great, for the coals were piled high. The fat junior at first did not relish the idea of being down the dark cellars by himself, but his desire for good things overcame his fears, and by now he was quite indifferent.

The Owl of the Remove made his way to the old packing-case, and he soon hoisted his fat form upwards. It was now a simple matter to push up the trapdoor with his hand and scramble into the store-room.

It was so exceedingly simple, in fact, that even now Bunter could scarcely realise his good fortune. The entire supplies of the well-packed store-room were at his mercy, and the door was locked. No one could possibly dream how the good things disappeared. Bunter chuckled softly to himself as he stepped silently into the centre of the room.

After the darkness of the cellar he could see quite distinctly, for there was a glass fanlight over the door. Through this the glimmer of the passage gaslight gave the store-room quite an illuminated appearance.

The fat junior looked round him eagerly, but there was no sign whatever of the longed-for beef-pies!

"Oh, blow!" muttered Bunter disgustedly. "Mrs. Kebble must have shoved 'em in the pantry. Well, now I am here I'll take another giddy tin of biscuits!"

But as Bunter was about to take a large unopened tin his greedy eyes caught sight of a large cake and several tins of freshly-baked mince-pies.

"My hat!" he chuckled. "They're better than biscuits any day!"

And he spread his handkerchief out on the shelf in readiness to fill it with mince-pies. Just as he was about to pick them up, however, there came a sound of footsteps in the passage. Bunter uttered a gasp, grabbed the cake and his handkerchief, and rolled across to the trapdoor. With great haste he scrambled under the shelf and lowered himself through the cavity. Then he pulled the trapdoor down and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Rotten!" he muttered. "I wonder who it was?"

But the fat junior did not attempt to go back. He knew

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it would have been too risky. He hastened out of the cellar, hoisted himself up through the coal-hole, and replaced the stone slab. In a minute he was in the harness-room, and in ten more the cake had vanished.

Then he rolled away to the Close and entered the School House.

Perhaps he would not have looked so complacent had he remembered that, in lowering himself through the trapdoor, he had laid his handkerchief on the floor of the store-room, and had forgotten to pick it up!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mrs. Kebble on the Warpath.

HARRY WHARTON glared at Frank Nugent in speechless indignation.

"You burbling idiot!" he roared.

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Frank Nugent warmly.

"It was your giddy fault!"

"Rats!"

"The blessed book's ruined!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Good job too!"

"You're a nice chap, Franky!" exclaimed Harry wrathfully. "Go and bust up another fellow's book, and then say it was my fault!"

"Well, you said it was mine!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were in Study No. 1. They had finished tea, and were about to start their prep. They were both looking very flushed, for they had just had an argument concerning a Latin Grammar. Wharton had borrowed it from Tom Brown a few moments before, on the distinct understanding that he brought it back as soon as he had finished with it. Unfortunately, Nugent had wanted it, and had tried to grab it in a playful way. The result was a Latin Grammar with the cover torn off!

"You ass, Franky! What did you grab the blessed thing for?"

"I didn't grab it," said Frank Nugent. "I simply got hold of it, and you resisted. If you'd let go it would have been all right. The thing's busted, anyhow; so it's no good making a row about it."

"But I can't take it back like that!" said Wharton. "It's nearly new, you chump!"

"It doesn't look it!" grinned Nugent.

"I should think not, after you've mauled it about! Haven't we got some glue or something? We can stick the cover on, and Brown'll never know the difference."

"Mrs. Kebble's got some," said Frank Nugent. "At least, she's got some seccotine; and that would be the very stuff!"

"Good egg!" said Wharton. "I'll buzz off to Mrs. Kebble and get some of the giddy stuff. We simply can't take this book back in its present condition."

"If you did you might get it chucked at you!" exclaimed Nugent.

Harry Wharton departed, and made his way to the domestic quarters of Greyfriars. He found Mrs. Kebble in her room, and she raised no objection to fetching a tube of seccotine for him. Mrs. Kebble always kept some by her in case of breakages.

But it was in the store-room, and Harry Wharton followed the housekeeper up the passage.

"There's been very strange things happening in the store-room, Master Wharton," said Mrs. Kebble as she unlocked the door. "There's biscuits and cakes and all manner of things been taken by somebody. It's a fair mystery!"

Mrs. Kebble entered the store-room, carrying a hand-lamp. She looked round her suspiciously, then uttered a startled exclamation.

"My cake," she ejaculated "the cake I made this very morning! It's gone!"

"Something else missing! By Jove!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, Master Wharton; one of my very richest big cakes!" said Mrs. Kebble excitedly. "Well, I never did! This is going too far altogether! I put the cake in there only this afternoon, and saw that the window was secure and the door fast. How can it have gone? Who could have taken it?"

"Ask me another!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully.

"I shall go to the Head!" went on Mrs. Kebble indignantly. "I haven't said anything about it so far, but now it's getting serious. I shall go to the headmaster this very minute!"

"How about my giddy seccotine?" asked the junior quickly.

"Oh, here you are, Master Wharton!"

Mrs. Kebble quickly found the seccotine, and then fastened the door of the store-room. She rushed off immediately, and went straight to the headmaster's study. She tapped on the door, and, without waiting for an

answer, walked in. Dr. Locke sat at his writing-desk, alone.

"I won't stand it any longer, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble flatly.

"Eh?" said the Head. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Kebble."

"I say it's gone too far, sir!" said Mrs. Kebble, glaring at Dr. Locke angrily. "I don't like to trouble you with the matter, but there's nothing else for it! Matters have gone so far that I can't let it pass any longer!"

"Pray explain yourself, Mrs. Kebble," said the Head. "What has gone far enough? You appear to be excited over something."

"And enough to make me, sir! When tins of biscuits, pots of jam, and whole cakes disappear from the store-room it's enough to make any woman excited!"

Dr. Locke looked up patiently.

"Will you please come to the point, Mrs. Kebble?" he requested.

The housekeeper came to the point, and told the headmaster of the outrageous happenings which had lately taken place.

"And now I go to the store-room this evening," concluded Mrs. Kebble excitedly, "and find that one of my best cakes—a cake I made for your own table, sir—has been stolen! It's past all endurance!"

"Dear me, Mrs. Kebble, this story of yours is extremely singular!" said the Head, looking puzzled. "Do you think it possible that some of the boys have been raiding the store-room?"

"No, sir, I don't!" said Mrs. Kebble. "I don't see how any of the boys could get down to the back premises without being noticed. There's nearly always some of the maids in the scullery, and a boy would have to pass through the scullery to get to the store-room."

"But the window, Mrs. Kebble?"

"And the window's just as hard to get at for a boy, sir," replied Mrs. Kebble. "You see, the kitchen window's quite close, and if any boy got in and out of the store-room he'd be heard as well as seen by Dibbs, the groom, who's always about the yard. No, sir; it looks to me as if the store-room's being robbed by one of my own servants. I really don't know what I shall do! The store-room might as well be open to everybody!"

The Head looked thoughtful.

"It strikes me, Mrs. Kebble, that somebody is possessed of a duplicate key," he said. "Either that, or the lock is out of order. It may be possible to open the door with the key belonging to some other lock. In any case, I think it would be as well for you to instruct Gosling to examine the store-room door."

"Very well, sir," said Mrs. Kebble. "Though I don't see how that's going to do any good. It's my opinion that the only way to catch the thief is to set a watch. The lock's as good as it ever was."

"We'll see, Mrs. Kebble. After Gosling has reported to me, I will send word down to you what to do," said the Head. "I quite realise your uncomfortable position, and will make every effort to get to the bottom of the matter in the shortest possible space of time."

And Mrs. Kebble left the Head's study and went in search of Gosling, the school porter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Dodge.

WHAT I says is this 'ere—all boys ought to be drowned afore they grow up!" growled Gosling, the school porter. "It's them young raskils who's bin a-stealin' things out o' the store-room! My heye! I'll give 'em stealin' if I cop 'em!"

"But it's not the boys, Gosling—I'm sure of that!" said Mrs. Kebble. "Will you please come over to the house at once and examine the door lock?"

Gosling growled.

"Yes, ma'am, I'll come," he said ungraciously, "though it ain't me dooty to examine locks arter no day's work's done! The 'Ead ain't got no consideration!"

Mrs. Kebble had found Gosling seated in his little lodge smoking his pipe and taking occasional sips of a transparent liquid beside him. It looked like water, but it wasn't. Gosling would rather have lost a week's wages than drink a glass of water neat.

He rose to his feet with a grunt, and followed Mrs. Kebble out into the dusky Close.

"Things o' this sort ought to be left till the mornin'!" he grunted. "Wet I says is this 'ere—I ain't goin' to waste much time on the old door! Strikes me as the 'Ead don't

know wot 'e's doin'! 'Ow should I know wot to do with the lock? I ain't a locksmith!"

"But you can examine it and see if it has been tampered with," said Mrs. Kebble.

And they disappeared into the house.

The back door closed behind them, and as it did so a sigh of relief escaped the fat lips of William George Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was in the very act of dropping into the coal-hole, and his heart had been in his mouth while Mrs. Kebble and the school porter were within hearing. True, a low wall divided the back door from the yard where the coal-hole was situated, but Bunter mopped his brow with relief.

"My only Aunt Maria!" he murmured. "I thought they were coming this way! I shall have to be jolly quick, or I sha'n't be out again before Gossy leaves!"

And Billy Bunter lowered himself into the coal-cellar, and quickly made his way to the trapdoor.

The fat Removite was feeling very perturbed. Ten minutes before, while in the common-room, it had suddenly struck him that he had no handkerchief. Then he remembered that he had laid it on the store-room floor while he negotiated the cake through the trapdoor. It was there now! And it was marked with his initials!

Bunter felt flabby all over as he thought of the consequences which would ensue if the handkerchief were discovered.

There was only one thing to be done—regain possession of it.

Therefore Bunter had hastened out into the darkness upon his errand.

Despite his bulk, he could be fairly active if he liked, and he liked now. In a very short space of time he stood within the store-room. His handkerchief lay upon the floor near the trapdoor, and Bunter stuffed it into his pocket with a sigh of relief. But he hesitated before taking his departure.

"Might as well have another look round now I am here," he murmured. "That cake was prime, but I'm feeling peckish again, somehow! There's nobody about now, so I may as well take those giddy mince-pies. They look great!"

But Bunter was cunning, and before he proceeded to raid the mince-pies he took a stout piece of string from his pocket and looped it round the handle of the door. It was made specially for the purpose, the other end hooking on to a nail fastened in the beading. This was a precaution in case of a surprise visit. The door opened outwards, so that the string would delay a would-be intruder sufficiently long for Bunter to make his escape.

Having taken this very necessary precaution, Bunter proceeded to fill his pockets with mince-pies.

But somehow he seemed destined to be disturbed this evening.

He had hardly stowed away half a dozen, when he heard Gosling's voice in the passage. With a startled gasp, Bunter swung round and made for the trapdoor. Unfortunately, he tripped, and his fat form rolled heavily against one of the shelves.

The shelf was not made for such harsh treatment, and it gave way with a splintering crash. Eight or nine pots of jam descended to the floor and shattered to fragments. The row was tremendous, and Bunter stood still, in dire terror.

"My hat!" he gasped.

From the other side of the door he heard Mrs. Kebble's voice raised in a shriek.

"My heye!" roared Gosling. "There's someone in the store-room now! Wot I says—"

"Open the door!" screamed Mrs. Kebble.

"Well, ain't I a-doin' of it?" growled Gosling. "These 'ere keys—"

"Give them to me!" exclaimed the housekeeper.

Billy Bunter recovered his wits. Necessity is the mother of invention, and the fat junior realised that if he was to escape he would have to make haste. But there was a chance that he would be missed from the School House, and that Mrs. Kebble would put two and two together.

So Bunter, with unscrupulous cunning, uttered a roar of affected agony. But he did not use his own voice. Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist of no mean powers, and he could imitate anybody's voice with perfect ease. On this occasion he used the voice of Dibbs, the groom.

"Oh, crumbs!" he roared. "I'm nigh busted up! Ow!"

Then Billy Bunter rushed to the window, flung it up, and threw his voice outside.

To Gosling and Mrs. Kebble it sounded precisely as if Dibbs, the groom, had been in the store-room, and had escaped by means of the window.

"My heye!" roared Gosling. "It's Dibbs!"

"Dibbs!" shrieked Mrs. Kebble. "Gracious me!"

"I can't git this 'ere door open!" growled Gosling, tagging

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at the handle. "The dratted key's turned in the lock, too! My heye, it's fastened on the hinside! Wot I says is—"

"Run round!" ordered Mrs. Kebble quickly. "Here, Trotter, you go with Gosling! Dibbs is out the back somewhere, and you must catch him immediately!"

"Dibbs!" exclaimed Trotter, coming up. "Dibbs wasn't in there, ma'am! Why, I just left him talkin' to Mrs. Mimble, over at the little shop!"

"Nonsense!" said the housekeeper quickly. "I heard Dibbs's voice as plain as I hear yours! Can't you get off, Gosling? The wretched man will escape!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—Dibbs ought to be ashamed of hisself!" said Gosling.

And the school porter, with Trotter beside him, hurried round to the back door.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter had lowered himself through the trapdoor into the cellar. The fresh thought had struck him that the coal-hole was uncovered, and that in the darkness Gosling and Trotter might flounder into it. Bunter was troubled with no anxious thoughts with regard to Gosling's limbs. He realised that if Gosling fell into the coal-cellar he, himself, would be discovered.

So Bunter lost no time in making his escape.

Owing to Gosling's little argument at the store-room door, Bunter found that he had time, and to spare. He quickly put the stone slab in place, and then rushed away in the direction of the Close.

But he was not in time. The back door opened, and Gosling and Trotter came out.

"There he is!" roared Gosling.

"Dibbs, you bounder, come 'ere!" said Trotter, rushing forward. "Why, it's Master Bunter! What are you a-runnin' away for, Master Bunter?"

Bunter breathed hard.

"Who's running away?" he gasped. "I—I say, Trotter, is something up? I—I thought I saw somebody running about here, you know. I—I just came to see what's up."

"You young rip!" said Gosling. "I thought you was Dibbs!"

"Well, I like that, Gossy!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "Why are you looking for Dibbs, anyhow? I believe I saw him round by the store-room window somewhere. In fact, I'm sure I did! He—he was running away, yelling out for all he was worth! Blessed if I can make out what's up!"

"You say your saw Dibbs?" asked Trotter quickly.

"Yes, I did!" lied Bunter.

"Then we'd best be a-going," said Gosling. "Hif Master Bunter's seen Dibbs, there ain't no more doubt. My heye, I should never 'ave believed it! Wot I says—"

Trotter uttered an exclamation.

"There he is!" he said quickly.

Billy Bunter turned round with remarkable swiftness.

"What did I tell you?" he exclaimed indignantly. "I knew it was Dibbs I saw!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rough on Dibbs.

BILLY BUNTER blinked at Gosling and Trotter through his big spectacles.

"Come on!" he said quickly. "Dibbs'll escape if you're not quick! I think it's a jolly good job we've found out the rotter!"

"I can't make it out," said Trotter in a puzzled voice. "Why, I saw Dibbs myself a-talkin' to Mrs. Mimble!"

"You must a-bin dreamin'!" declared Gosling. "I've got ears, I 'ave, an' I 'eard Dibbs a-yellin' out in the store-room. 'E got out o' the winder an' 'ooked it. Look at 'im now, comin' towards us as if 'e didn't know nothin' about it!"

"That's only his swank," said Billy Bunter quickly. "Why, only a minute or two ago I saw him running like anything!"

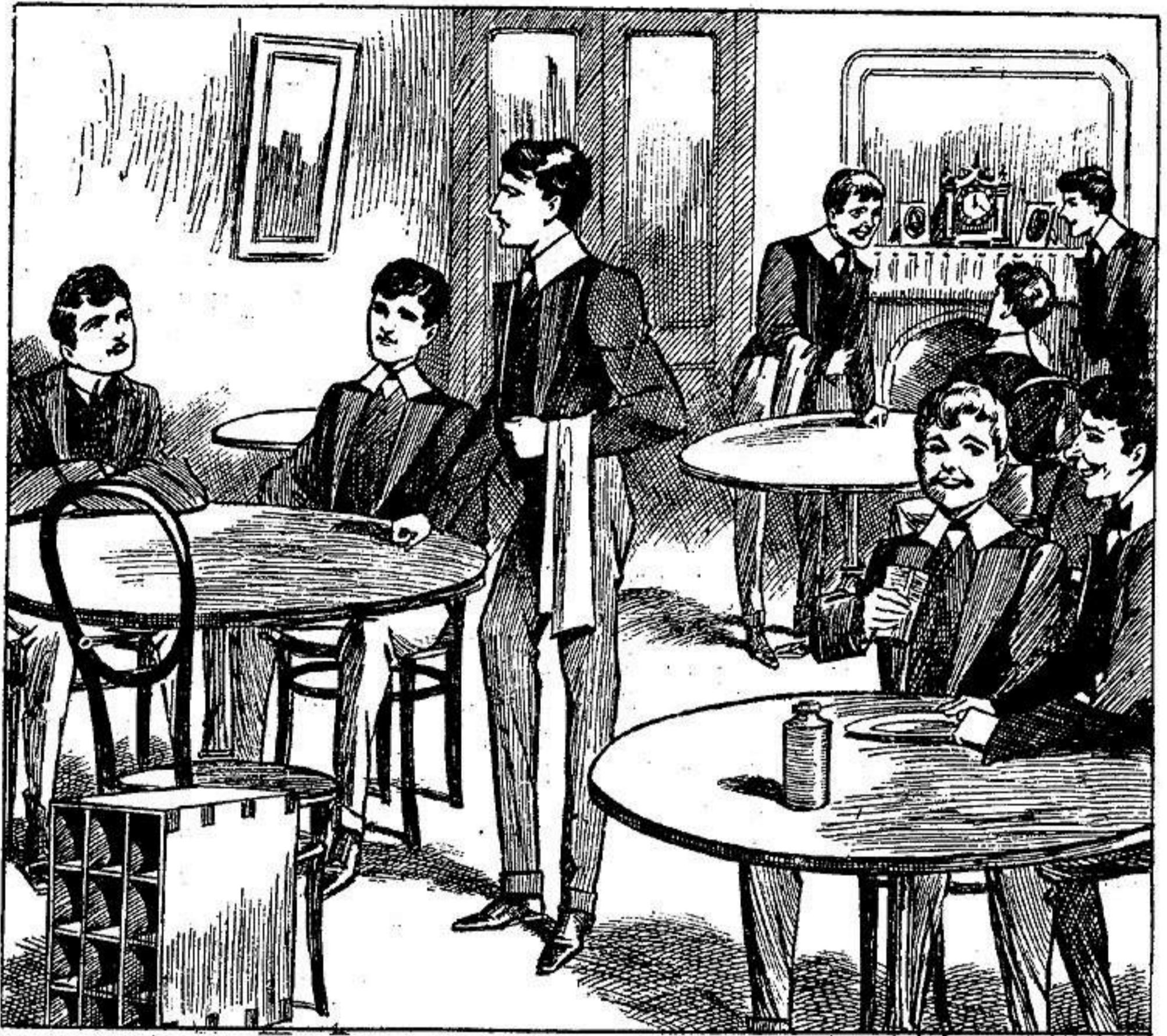
Bunter felt one or two qualms at having to tell such bare-faced untruths, but now he had started the thing there could be no backing out. He had done it on the spur of the moment, and it would not do for him to appear to be in Dibbs's favour. Whatever the consequences for Dibbs, Bunter vowed that he wouldn't own up. He knew very well that if he did own up it would either mean expulsion or else a public flogging. So Bunter lay low.

Dibbs came up. Dibbs was a thin man of about thirty-five, and his character had always been good. He was a great friend of Gosling's, and he looked at the porter and Trotter in surprise.

"Well, what's the matter 'ere?" he asked genially.

Gosling gasped.

"Wot's the matter?" he said darkly. "Wot I says is this 'ere. I've always been a friend o' yours, Dibbs, an' I'm downright sorry to see as you've sunk to stealin' grab o' the school store-room!"



Coker & Co. sat down and gave their orders, but Fisher T. Fish did not seem in a hurry to execute them. "A bob each, please," he said in a business-like tone. "No meals supplied in this establishment unless money paid in advance."—(See Chapter II.)

Dibbs stared at Gosling in amazement. "You off your 'ead?" he asked. "You may be a friend o' mine, Gosling, but I don't allow no man to call me a thief! I ain't bin near the school store-room, let alone nicked any grub!"

"You fibber!" said Bunter indignantly. "I saw you running away from the store-room window!"

"Why, you—you—" began Dibbs wrathfully.

"It's no sorter use your denyin' of it," said Gosling. "I 'ear you myself, Dibbs. You was in the store-room, an' you jumped out o' the winder! Mrs. Kebble 'card you as well, an' you'll do yerself no good by tellin' lies. I'm surprised at yer. Dibbs—downright surprised at yer! You'll 'ave to come along o' me to the 'Ead's study!"

"I sha'n't do no such thing!" said Dibbs flatly. "You must 'a bin dreamin'! I've only just come from Mrs. Mimble's shop! I've been there for the last twenty minutes, an' Mrs. Mimble can prove it. My young sister was there too, so you ain't goin' to come it over me, Gosling!"

Gosling scowled. "Wot I says is this 'ere. I've got ears, an' them ears ain't ones that are easily deceived. I 'card you meself—"

Trotter looked round. "Hallo," he said, "here comes Mrs. Kebble!"

The housekeeper came up excitedly, and with her was Mr. Quelch, the Remove Form-master.

"They've got him!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble, looking at

the little group in the gloom. "Now, my man, what have you got to say for yourself? You were caught fairly in the act, and Dr. Locke will only be doing right if he dismisses you at once!"

Dibbs became angry.

"I reckon this has gone far enough," he said. "I don't know what you're talkin' about! I 'aven't bin near the store-room the whole day long! I've just come from Mrs. Mimble's shop."

"Don't tell lies to me!" said Mrs. Kebble sharply. "I heard you myself, my man, so it's no good your denyin' it. Mr. Quelch, this is the culprit, and he's telling deliberate untruths if he says he was in Mrs. Mimble's shop!"

Mr. Quelch came forward.

"Let me get this quite clear," he said. "You, Mrs. Kebble, and Gosling, were outside the store-room door when you heard a crash within. You then heard Dibbs's voice and the window flung open?"

"Which is right, sir," said Gosling. "Wot I says—"

"You failed to open the store-room door because it was fastened on the inside?" proceeded Mr. Quelch. "You then rushed out by the back door, and managed to secure Dibbs before he got away?"

"Managed to secure me, sir?" shouted Dibbs indignantly. "Why, I just walked up from across the Close!"

"Oh, what a fib!" said Bunter. "I saw you running away from the store-room window myself!"

NEXT
MONDAY:

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S RESCUE!"

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

"You've been dreamin', Master Bunter!" said Dibbs angrily, "or else you're tellin' lies agin me for some reason o' your own."

"You insulting rotter!" shouted Billy Bunter, with great indignation. "You don't know who you're talking to!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, go into the School House at once, and remain there!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Go at once!"

Billy Bunter rolled off, and Mr. Quelch turned to Dibbs.

"So far, Dibbs, things look black against you," he said sternly. "Both Mrs. Kebble and Gosling say that they heard you in the store-room, and it is impossible that they should both be mistaken. Before taking you to the Head I will examine the store-room window."

And Mr. Quelch moved off across the yard, with Dibbs, Gosling, and Mrs. Kebble bringing up the rear. Dibbs was very indignant, and, considering the circumstances, he had good cause to be. Mr. Quelch arrived at the store-room window. Trotter had rushed indoors to get a lantern, and he now appeared with it. By its light Mr. Quelch could see that the store-room window was wide open. It was impossible to detect any footprints beneath the window, for the yard was stone-paved right to the wall.

"Well," said Mr. Quelch, "it is quite evident that somebody escaped from the window. If it was not Dibbs, who could it have been? Now, considering the circumstances, the most obvious place for Dibbs to hide his spoils would be in one of these outhouses. We'll examine them before we do anything further."

"But I can prove I wasn't near the window, sir!" protested Dibbs.

"Please be silent, Dibbs!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Gosling, take this lamp and make an examination of the stables and other buildings. It's a most extraordinary thing for a man in his position to rob the store-room, but we must go by the facts."

"Facts?" snorted Dibbs. "I wish you would go by the facts, sir!"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble angrily. "You know very well that you are the culprit, Dibbs, so it is useless your making any lying excuses!"

Gosling and Trotter, with the lamp between them, searched through the stables. From them they went to the new harness-room, and then to the old one. Quite by accident Billy Bunter had hit upon a place for eating his spoils which was to make matters look very black against Dibbs. After searching for five minutes Gosling gave a shout. They were in the old harness-room, and some biscuit-crumbs on the floor had attracted the porter's attention. An old locker was fixed to one of the walls, and Gosling had fished his lamp into it.

"My heye!" he ejaculated. "Look hin 'ere!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Trotter. "It must be Dibbs, after all!"

The locker was filled with biscuit-tins and empty jam-pots. Mr. Quelch came up quickly, followed by Dibbs and Mrs. Kebble. Mr. Quelch set his lips as he saw the remains of Billy Bunter's numerous feasts.

"Now, sir," he said, turning to Dibbs, "what have you to say?"

"By gum!" gasped Dibbs. "I never put them there, sir! I don't know nothin' about 'em!"

"How dare you!" shrieked Mrs. Kebble excitedly. "How dare you deny it in face of such positive proof? The man's effrontery is amazing!"

"You will come with me to the headmaster's study at once!" said Mr. Quelch firmly.

"But, sir—"

"Enough!" said the Remove-master. "Come with me!"

And Mr. Quelch hurried away, with Dibbs, Mrs. Kebble, and Gosling following. They arrived at the Head's house, and were admitted to his study. It was still comparatively early in the evening, and the Head looked up in surprise. Mr. Quelch and the rest trooped in.

"Dear me," said the Head, "what on earth is this?"

"We've got him, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble triumphantly.

"Got whom, my good woman?"

"Why, the scoundrel who's been robbing my store-room!" said Mrs. Kebble. "We caught him in the act, sir, and he hasn't got a word to say!"

"Oh, ain't I?" said Dibbs indignantly. "I don't know wot Mrs. Kebble's talkin' about, sir! Everybody seems to be off their 'eads—"

Dr. Locke held up his hand.

"Mr. Quelch will explain," he said. "Please be silent."

Mr. Quelch related the facts as he knew them, and the Head looked very grave.

"The case seems very clear, Mr. Quelch," he said at last.

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Both Mrs. Kebble and Gosling heard Dibbs inside the store-room?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere. I ain't the man who's likely to be deceived," said Gosling. "I 'eard Dibbs knock somethink over in the store-room, yell out, an' then climb through the winder. Mrs. Kebble 'eard it, too. I don't like speakin' agin a friend, but facts is facts!"

"I heard Dibbs most distinctly!" said Mrs. Kebble firmly.

"Dibbs was then found to be in the near vicinity of the store-room," proceeded the Head. "He claims that he had just come from Mrs. Mible's shop, but that is obviously an excuse. If any further proof were needed, it was supplied immediately upon finding the remains of the stolen goods in the harness-room."

"Exactly!" said Mr. Quelch. "Dibbs's guilt is obvious."

Dibbs looked round wildly.

"I—I ain't done nothing!" he gasped. "I ain't done—"

"Silence, sir!" said the Head coldly. "You will leave my service in the morning! The matter is a trifling one—a mere case of petty pilfering, so I shall simply take the course of dismissing you! I may say that I am grieved to find that a man of your steady habits should have descended to robbing a larder! Why you did it is more than I can imagine!"

"I didn't do it!" panted Dibbs frantically. "I don't know nothing about it, sir! I can prove that I was talking to Mrs. Mible at the time this affair 'appened. 'Ow those jampots an' things came to be in the 'arness-room I don't know! I never put 'em there!"

"You are only making matters worse by lying!" said the Head sternly.

"I'm tellin' the honest truth—"

"Oh, you wicked man!" shouted Mrs. Kebble hotly.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "There seems to be quite an uproar! Dibbs, you will leave the school to-morrow! Mrs. Kebble, will you kindly see that there are some bars placed across the store-room window before many days have passed?"

"I'll see about it to-morrow!" declared the house-keeper firmly.

"I—I ain't sacked, sir?" gasped Dibbs.

"Good gracious! You are not deaf?" said Dr. Locke testily. "Go, sir!"

"But—"

"Leave my study!" shouted the Head.

And Dibbs, looking angry and dismayed, turned to the door and left, the others following behind him. Mr. Quelch stayed in the Head's study. Both the headmaster and Mr. Quelch thought the case was conclusive, and, after a few minutes' conversation, dismissed the matter from their minds.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Dibbs Proves His Case.

GOSLING tapped Dibbs on the shoulder.

"You silly hass!" he said. "Dibbs, I'm surprised hat yer!"

Dibbs, Gosling, and Trotter were in the Close, and Dibbs hardly knew whether he was standing on his head or his heels. The whole thing had been so sudden that he could not grasp it. He could scarcely realise that he was dismissed from the Head's service.

"Look 'ere, Gosling," he said, "you'd better mind wot you're a-sayin'!"

"My heye!" said Gosling. "I never thought you was that sort o' chap, Dibbs! Wot I says is this 'ere—you ain't got no sense! Fancy goin' an' nickin' things out o' the larder—jest as if you 'adn't enough to eat!"

Dibbs recovered his composure.

"I didn't!" he said warmly. "It's all your fault, hany'ow! Wot you mean by sayin' you 'eard me in the store-room is more than I can make out. At the time you said you 'eard me I was in Mrs. Mible's shop!"

"Look 'ere—"

"I was in Mrs. Mible's shop!" repeated Dibbs firmly. "I'm goin' to ferrit this 'ere thing out an' show the 'ead that 'e's mistook! I ask you plainly, Gosling, was I 'ot an' flustered when I walked up to you? Did I look as if I'd been runnin'?"

"Of course you didn't!" said Trotter. "There's a mistake somewhere."

Gosling scratched his head.

"Well, come to think of it," he said, "you wasn't wery flustered. But that don't prove nothin'—"

ANSWERS

"Oh, don't it?" said Dibbs. "It proves that I 'adn't bin runnin'. An' another thing—if I 'ad jest come out o' the store-room, d'you think I should 'a' walked right into your arms? Why, I saw you long enough afore you saw me. If I'd bin up to these 'ere tricks, I should 'ave 'ooked it clear away!"

"My heye!" ejaculated Gosling. "I never tho't o' that!"

Dibbs uttered a sarcastic laugh.

"No," he said; "you wouldn't! Come acrost with me to Mrs. Mimble's shop!"

"Right-ho!" said Gosling. "I'll come, Dibbs! Blowed if I don't believe we've bin agin you too much—blowed if I don't!"

They crossed the dusky Close and entered Mrs. Mimble's little shop. Bulstrode, Tom Brown, Micky Desmond, and several other Removites were there, and they looked up in surprise as Gosling, Trotter, and Dibbs entered.

"Hallo!" said Tom Brown. "Come to buy some lemonade, Gossy?"

"I don't want none o' your cheek, Master Brown," growled Gosling.

"What's all this about somebody boning things out of the store-room?" asked Bulstrode. "Billy Bunter's been pitching us a fine yarn!"

"It ain't none o' your business, Master Bulstrode!" said Gosling. "There's bin a great hinjustice done, by what I can make hout, an' we're a-goin' to set it right!"

"What! Have you turned detective?" asked Vane.

"Gossy, private detective!" grinned Tom Brown.

"Wot I says is—"

"Cases undertaken at the shortest notice!" went on the New Zealand junior. "All work to be paid for at the same rate—fees, one bottle of gin per case! Clients invited to roll up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gosling glared.

"Better come into the back room," he said to Dibbs and Trotter. "These young ribs won't give us no peace if we stop 'ere!"

"We'll give you some pieces, if you like!" said Bulstrode, offering Gosling a plate of crumbs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gosling did not deign to look round, but walked into Mrs. Mimble's little back parlour. Dibbs and Trotter followed, all of them looking serious. Mrs. Mimble gazed at them in astonishment.

"Why, what ever's the matter?" she inquired.

"Dibbs 'as bin sacked," said Trotter shortly.

"Sacked!" repeated Mrs. Mimble. "What ever for?"

"For doin' something I didn't do!" said Dibbs. "I've come to you, Mrs. Mimble, so as you can prove to Gosling I was 'ere when 'e said I was in the store-room. You remember when Gosling and Trotter came out o' the back door a while back?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Mimble. "I wondered what was the matter."

"How long afore that 'ad I bin in your shop?" demanded Dibbs eagerly.

"Why, you'd only been gone about a minute!" said Mrs. Mimble, in surprise.

Gosling turned to the triumphant Dibbs.

"My heye," he said, "that's flat, any'ow!"

"I tell you, Gosling, I don't know anythink about the store-room affair," said Dibbs. "If I was in this 'ere shop a minute afore you came out o' the 'Ouse, 'ow could it 'a' bin me?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" exclaimed Gosling. "I've bin too 'asty, Dibbs. If Mrs. Mimble says as you was 'ere at the time of the 'appening, I don't see 'ow you could 'a' bin in the store-room as well! I'm sorry, Dibbs! Give us yer 'and!"

And Gosling, completely won over to Dibbs's side, solemnly shook hands.

"I suggest we go over an' see Mrs. Kebble," said Trotter shrewdly. "When we explain to 'er, she'll realise she was too quick in accusin' Dibbs. It was 'er fault, really, for fetchin' Mr. Quelch. If we'd bin left to ourselves, we should 'ave got at the truth without goin' to the 'Ead, and this wouldn't 'ave kem about!"

So they made their way to the domestic quarters of Greyfriars, and presented themselves at the housekeeper's room. She looked up in surprise as they entered, and frowned at Dibbs.

"You here?" she exclaimed. "How dare you come into my room in this manner? Gosling, take this wicked man away!"

Gosling waved his hand.

"We've made a mistake," he said. "Dibbs 'ad no more to do with robbin' the store-room than I 'ad! We've proved that 'e was in another place altogether!"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Kebble sharply.

"We've just learnt from Mrs. Mimble that Dibbs was in 'er shop at the very moment we 'eard the crash inside the store-room!" said Gosling.

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NEXT MONDAY: "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S RESCUE!"

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"It's impossible!" said Mrs. Kebble incredulously. "Gosling's right, ma'am!" said Trotter. "An' didn't we find Dibbs right close agin the store-room?"

"That proves his guilt!" said Mrs. Mimble triumphantly.

"No fear!" said Trotter shrewdly. "It proves that Dibbs 'ad nothin' to do with it. We didn't get out in the yard until five minutes arter the smash-up in the store-room 'ad took place. Why, if it 'ad really bin Dibbs, he'd have got clear away! Instead o' that, he walked up to us an' asks wot was the matter, which was natural, sevin' as 'e'd just come from Mrs. Mimble's shop!"

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Kebble. "It really appears that you are right! If Mrs. Mimble can positively say that Dibbs was in her shop at the time, it proves that he couldn't have been here. But we heard him, Gosling—we heard him quite distinctly!"

"Well, it did sound like 'im!" admitted Gosling.

Dibbs snorted.

"Do you think as 'ow I'd let out a yell if I'd really bin in the store-room?" he said sarcastically. "Why, if I'd knocked all them things down, I should 'ave kept as mum as an oyster an' 'ooked it!"

"Of course!" agreed Trotter. "I think, Mrs. Kebble, that the fact of the chap yellin' out proves that 'e wasn't Dibbs. He knew that 'e was discovered, so 'e yells out in a imitation of Dibbs's voice—jest to put you off the scent!"

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Kebble. "I believe I have done you an injustice, Dibbs!"

"You 'ave!" said Dibbs. "A great hinjustice, ma'am! Although at first it looked as though I was guilty, it's proved as I was innocent! What with Mrs. Mimble's word and my sister's, mind yer, I reckon we can prove to the 'Ead that it wasn't me!"

"Your sister's?" asked Mrs. Kebble.

Dibbs's sister was employed by the school as one of the scullery-maids.

"Yes, my sister," said Dibbs. "She was in Mrs. Mimble's shop at the same time. She can prove as I wasn't guilty. There was no one else there, but I should reckon that two will be enough to give hevidence for me!"

Mrs. Kebble rose to her feet.

"Very well," she said. "I will fetch Mrs. Mimble, and I will then go to the headmaster. I am sorry that I misjudged you, Dibbs, but the facts certainly looked black. Strictly speaking, it was Mr. Quelch's fault for insisting upon taking you to Dr. Locke before you had time to prove anything. I realise, of course, that a man of your character would not descend to such petty thefts!"

Mrs. Kebble had changed front with a vengeance, for scarcely twenty minutes before she had been calling Dibbs all manner of uncomplimentary names. But both she and Gosling were now fully convinced that a mistake had been made. It was perfectly obvious, and they were anxious to make amends.

So they fetched Mrs. Mimble, and then held a short consultation. It ended with Mrs. Kebble, Mrs. Mimble, Gosling, and Dibbs hurrying to the Head's study. Gosling tapped on the door.

"Come in!" said Dr. Locke.

The visitors trooped in, and the Head looked at them with a frown.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed testily. "Am I to be bothered all the evening over these petty household matters? Please understand, Mrs. Kebble, that I am busy!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Mrs. Kebble, "but we've made a mistake!"

"A mistake!" said the Head. "In what way?"

"Dibbs is innocent, sir," said the housekeeper firmly.

"We've proved that it wasn't him who took the things out of the store-room!"

The Head looked amazed.

"You've proved that he was not guilty?" he asked incredulously. "You say that to me, Mrs. Kebble, after declaring that you yourself heard him in the store-room? You say that after the remains of the stolen goods have been found in his harness-room? My good woman, it is absurd to come to me with such a tale! I am quite convinced that Dibbs is guilty, and I have done with the matter!"

Mrs. Mimble stepped forward.

"But that wouldn't be fair, sir!" said the good dame warmly. "I can prove that Dibbs was in my shop at the very moment that Gosling and Mrs. Kebble heard somebody in the store-room. He's innocent, sir, and we demand that you reinstate him!"

The Head frowned. He did not like the word demand. And perhaps Mrs. Mimble had been rather injudicious in using it. The Head thought rapidly. It struck him very forcibly that the servants were planning it among themselves to get Dibbs reinstated. Dr. Locke fully believed that the

man had been guilty, and that this visit was an attempt to get him back into his position.

Everything pointed to it. At their first visit there had been plenty of proof against Dibbs. That proof still remained, and the servants had had plenty of time to connive with Mrs. Mimble to make up this story. The Head honestly believed that he would be doing right in brusquely dismissing them.

He heard, with patience, the rest of the evidence from Mrs. Mimble, but it struck him as being very inconclusive in view of the suspicion which had entered his mind.

"Who else was in your shop at the time, Mrs. Mimble?" he asked.

"Nobody, sir, except Jane—Dibbs's sister!"

The Head smiled.

"I really cannot consider this matter any longer," he said firmly. "I am still of the opinion that Dibbs is the culprit; and he will leave my service to-morrow morning. I have already told you that I am busy, so please leave me!"

Mrs. Mimble and the others exchanged indignant glances.

"But it's proved—"

"Nothing is proved, Mrs. Mimble. In my opinion Dibbs is guilty. Please leave me at once. I refuse to discuss the matter further!"

"But, sir!" protested Dibbs.

"Go!" thundered the Head.

And Mrs. Mimble, Mrs. Kebble, Gosling, and Dibbs went—all of them feeling at boiling point at the Head's obstinacy. It did not strike them that his view of the case was almost the only one which could have resulted, considering all the facts. The servants knew that they were in the right—and the Head fully believed that he was in the right also.

And there was trouble to follow, which the reverend Head of Greyfriars never dreamed of.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Matters Reach a Head.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were in the junior common-room. It was nearly supper-time, and the Removites had been discussing the matter of Dibbs, the groom. The news of his dismissal had leaked out, and the juniors were somewhat curious.

"Blessed if I can quite make it out," said Frank Nugent. "There seems to be some kind of row going on among the servants. Even Mrs. Mimble's in it."

"Rather!" agreed Hazeldene. "Why, about ten minutes ago I went across the Close to get some giddy jam-tarts. Mrs. Mimble's shop was closed!"

"Closed!"

"Yes," said Hazeldene. "She never closes before supper as a rule. And as I was coming in I saw old Gossy, Trotter, and Dibbs crossing over to Gossy's lodge. They were arguing no end!"

"Dibbs is dismissed," said Harry Wharton.

"Of course he is," said Bob Cherry. "Bunter's been pitching a yarn about Dibbs nicking things out of the store-room. Trotter told us something about it this morning, and it seems that Dibbs is the culprit."

"That's right," said Billy Bunter. "I happened to be round at the back when old Gossy came round. I saw Dibbs jump out of the store-room window and rush away!"

"Sure it wasn't yourself?" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull!" protested Bunter. "It's jolly likely that I should be able to raid the store-room, isn't it? I just happened to be round there—"

"Yes, you generally do happen to be about when something unusual's going on," said Nugent. "Your nose'll land you into trouble some day, Bunt!"

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"Yes, really!" grinned Nugent.

"Well, it doesn't matter much to us whether Dibbs is dismissed or not," said Wharton. "If the chap's been pilfering things out of the store-room he deserves to be kicked out. If it was old Gossy, now—"

The door opened, and Mark Linley, the Lancashire junior, looked in. He grinned round at the Removites.

"There's a giddy indignation meeting or something going on in Gossy's lodge," he chuckled. "You can hear their voices all over the Close. I expect it's about Dibbs. I don't know what they're up to, but they all seem jolly wild at Dibbs being sacked!"

"Perhaps they're going to strike!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I vote we go out into the Close and see what's up," suggested Harry Wharton.

"Good egg!"

"Lead on, McDuff!"

Ten or twelve of the Removites trooped out of the common-room, and laughingly made their way to the School House door. They passed Coker of the Fifth in the passage.

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Hallo!" said Coker. "What's up with you kids?"

"Nothing," said Bob Cherry. "There's something up with you, though."

"Something up with me?" repeated Coker.

"Yes, you're up!" said Bob Cherry.

"You young ass! Up where?"

"Why, up the pole, of course!" said Bob Cherry, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One for you, Cokey, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young sweeps!" growled Coker, turning red.

The Removites trooped out into the Close, chuckling. Gosling's little lodge, near the gates, was brightly illuminated, and as the juniors got nearer they could hear Gosling's voice raised in a shout.

Harry Wharton grinned.

"Gossy's making a speech!" he said, chuckling.

"I wonder what the row's about?"

"Why, Dibbs, of course!"

"Yes, but it's no good making a row about it," said Nugent. "If Dibbs has been dismissed by the Head, they can't be asses enough to jib against it."

But the juniors did not know how indignant the school employees were. In Gosling's little front room quite a crowd of servants were congregated. Mrs. Kebble had left the Head's study in a white-hot rage, and she had a sympathetic companion in Mrs. Mimble.

The housekeeper felt slighted, because her story of Dibbs's innocence had been flouted by the Head. And Mrs. Mimble was just as indignant because Dr. Locke's decision cast a reflection upon herself. By refusing to consider the matter the Head had as good as said that Mrs. Mimble was the chief participant in a conspiracy to get Dibbs reinstated. And Mrs. Mimble was very angry.

She had consented immediately to Gosling's proposal to hold an indignation meeting. Mrs. Kebble also agreed to attend, and the party included Trotter, Dibbs, Dibbs's sister, five or six other maids, and the cook.

Gosling was the chief speaker, and he succeeded in working up the feelings of his fellow-servants to fever heat. The housekeeper and Mrs. Mimble had been rather dubious at first, about allowing Gosling to address them, but in their excitement they soon forgot all about their dignity.

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" shouted Gosling, banging his fist down upon the table. "Dibbs is innocent. We all knows that!"

"Yes, I am quite convinced of it!" said Mrs. Kebble.

"Then are we a-goin' to see a innocent man chucked hout of 'is post?" said Gosling eloquently. "A little while ago I thought as Dibbs was guilty, but since Mrs. Mimble 'as proved 'e wasn't, I know 'e ain't!"

"Ear, 'ear!" said Trotter.

"It ain't often we 'ave trouble among ourselves," went on Gosling, with a wave of the hand. "but this 'ere time matters 'ave gone so far that we 'ave got to look the facts in the face! Dibbs 'as been sacked, an' wot I says is this 'ere! We ain't going to stand it!"

"It's not so much that," said Mrs. Mimble, "it's the head-master's stupid obstinacy in thinking that we have concocted a story to get Dibbs back in his place. He thinks that I have told lies for such a purpose! It is outrageous!"

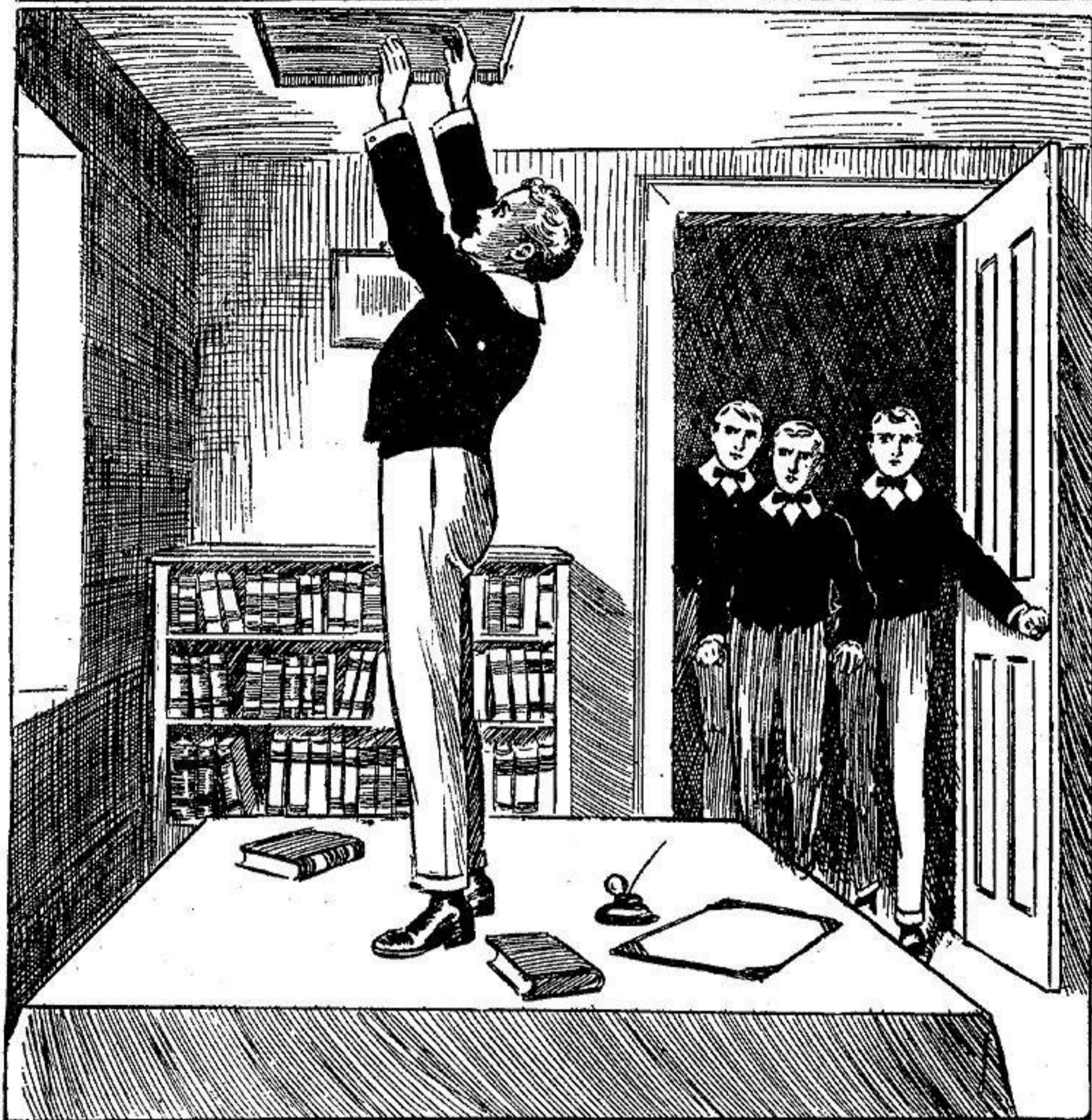
"Hexactly!" said Gosling. "We went to the 'Ead, an' proved Dibbs's halibi hup to the 'ilr! Wot did 'e do? Why, sed we was all to git out o' the study, an' that Dibbs was to go in the mornin' jest the same! 'It's boutrageous, 'as Mrs. Mimble says! Wot are we goin' to do?"

"I don't see that we can do anything," said the cook, a stout woman of buxom appearance. "If the 'Ead says Dibbs has to go, there's an end of it!"

"Ho, his there!" roared Gosling, who seemed to be prefixing his words with more abundant aitches than ever. "Nothink we can do? Dibbs is a pal o' mine, an' if 'e loses 'is job, where'll 'e git another? Nowhere! Bein' dismissed for thievin', he'll 'ave to go right hout o' the district! Wot I says is this 'ere—we've got to make a stand an' force the 'Ead to take 'im back agin! It isn't as though we was backin' hup a guilty man. Ho, no! Dibbs his innocent, an' we're only doin' justice to 'im if we make the 'Ead realise as 'e ain't neverybody! We've got to stand back to back—or rather, shoulder to shoulder, an' see that Dibbs gits justice!"

And Gosling, after that little speech, paused and looked round him. It had certainly made an impression, and even Mrs. Kebble, who occupied a responsible post at Greyfriars, was in sympathy with the voluble Gosling. In fact, the school employees were quite justified in standing up for Dibbs. He was innocent, and had been dismissed.

Dr. Locke was a just man, and he would have been very uncomfortable had he known the true circumstances. But



Jack Blake started back in amazement as he flung open the study door. "My only aunt, what are you doing on our table, Wally?" The scamp of the Third jumped, and lowered his hands hastily. "Oh, nothing," he said, looking rather uncomfortable. (For this incident see the grand long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, entitled "THE THIRD FORM MYSTERY," by Martin Clifford, which is contained in this week's issue of our popular companion paper, "The Gem Library." Out on Wednesday. Price One Penny.

owing to Billy Bunter's cunning, he had been forced to view the case in the wrong light. The Head fully believed that Dibbs was guilty, and that the servants had conspired together to get him reinstated in his post. This had the effect of making Dr. Locke more firm than ever, for he was of the opinion that Mrs. Mimble's proof was a mere invented tale. Dr. Locke did not regard Mrs. Mimble and the others as fabricators, for, after all, their attempts to get Dibbs reinstated were, he felt, inspired by feelings of sympathy towards their fellow-servant. But the old doctor was firm, and he decided that he would not employ a proven thief. True, the thefts were of a trivial nature, but if he kept Dibbs in his employment it might lead to far more serious developments. Therefore Dr. Locke decided to get rid of the man once and for all. The whole thing was a misunderstanding, and was to result in much trouble before it was finally cleared up.

Gosling looked round at the flushed circle of faces.

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"Well," he said, "wot are we goin' to do?"

"The honly thing I can suggest," said Trotter, "is to go to the 'Ead again, an' put it before 'im straight! The 'Ead's a good sort, an'—"

"Once the Head has dismissed a case he won't be bothered with it again," said Mrs. Kebble, shaking her head. "I'm really sorry for you, Dibbs, but I can't see how we can help you."

"But I'm hinnocent!" protested Dibbs. "It ain't fair!" Gosling looked round aggressively.

"Then there's honly one thing to do," he said impressively.

"Wot's that?" said Trotter.

"Strike!" replied Gosling firmly.

"Strike!" gasped Mrs. Kebble faintly.

"Ho, my!" said the cook.

"Crikey!" ejaculated Trotter. "Couldn't be done!"

"Couldn't it?" exclaimed Gosling quickly. Gosling was

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coming out strong over this matter, and he swelled with importance. "Couldn't it?" he repeated. "Wot d' they do in a factory when one o' the chaps is unjustly dismissed? Strike! Well, this 'ere's the same thing on a small scale! If we strike, the 'Ead'll come to 'is senses in time!"

"But it's unheard of!" gasped Mrs. Kebble.

"Hun'-heard of for a school, no doubt," replied Gosling; "but that's all the more reason why we should do it! The 'Ead'll be hof 'is 'ead in no time hif we strike! With all these young ribs of boys 'e wouldn't know wot to do without servants to prepare the meals! 'E'd knuckle hunder in no time!"

"It's a great idea," said Dibbs. "Gosling, you're a born leader!"

Gosling beamed.

"I don't suggest goin' to hextreme lengths at first," he said. "Wot I says is this 'ere—we'll go hon as usual to-night, as if nothin' 'ad 'appened. Hi suggest that in the mornin' you don't git no breakfast for nobody. When the masters and them young raskils collect in the 'all for breakfast, they won't find none!"

"My 'at!" breathed Trotter. "Wot a lark!"

"What'll the 'Ead do?" went on Gosling eloquently. "Why, begin to realise that we're masters o' the sityvation! 'E'll send down to hinquire what's hup, an' we'll send up a note to say that a deputation of us will wait upon 'im in 'is study hat nine o'clock. Hof course, 'e'll accept, an' then we'll talk it hover! If the 'Ead's still hobstinate, an' refuses to take Dibbs hon agin, we'll go on strike with a vengeance. But hif 'e ain't hobstinate the 'ole thing'll be settled, an' nothink but good can come hof it!"

"'Ear, 'ear!" said Trotter enthusiastically.

"That's my idea," said Gosling, in conclusion. "I don't know wot you thinks hof it, but I reckon it's the honly way!"

The audience, worked up to a considerable pitch of excitement, considered Gosling's scheme to be first-class, and a resolution was passed that it should be put into execution the following morning.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. The Deputation.

CLANG-CLANG!

The rising-bell rang out loudly in the keen morning air.

The juniors rose with the usual bustle and noise, and descended to breakfast with no thought of the exciting events which were to take place that day.

When the Remove took their places at their table they found most of the other Forms at table. But they were not eating. Even the Sixth were sitting idle, waiting for breakfast to come up.

"Been an accident, perhaps," said Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars. "I don't remember a delay like this before. Those juniors will begin kicking up a row soon!"

"And so shall I!" growled Loder, the bully of the Sixth. "I'm hungry!"

"It's rotten!" said Carne.

"Beastly arrangements at this hole of a school!" said Loder. "Time something was done, I should think!"

In the Remove the juniors were beginning to become impatient.

"What's up with the giddy servants?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Forgotten all about us, perhaps," suggested Johnny Bell. "My hat, this is funny! All the giddy Forms waiting for brekker! There's no sign of it yet!"

"Old Prout's getting waxy!" grinned Harry Wharton.

"The waxfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys!" said Mr. Quelch, with a worried frown.

He rose from his chair and crossed over to Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form-master. The two masters conversed together for a few moments, then Mr. Capper, of the Upper Fourth, joined them.

"Having a giddy confab!" said Temple, of the Fourth.

"About time, too!" growled Fry.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

The three masters parted, and Mr. Prout rang the bell. He had done so twice before, but there had been no response. The boys were beginning to get curious. Such a delay as this had never before occurred at Greyfriars.

At last Wingate got up and left the dining-hall. When he returned he was looking very excited and red. He crossed over to Mr. Prout, and handed the Fifth Form-master a note. Mr. Prout read it, and then uttered an amazed ejaculation.

"Upon my soul!" he gasped. "Good gracious!"

Mr. Prout was a middle-aged gentleman with a semi-bald head, and he gazed at the note with an air of incredulity. He rose, gave the note to Mr. Quelch, and the two masters

talked excitedly together for a few moments. Then Mr. Prout hurried from the room.

Meanwhile the boys had been looking on with growing impatience. They wanted their breakfast, and wondered what on earth had happened. Mr. Quelch and Mr. Capper had their work cut out to keep the juniors in check.

Five minutes after Mr. Prout's disappearance he returned, and with him came the Head. Dr. Locke was looking pale and worried, and a silence fell upon the school as he held up his hand.

"Boys," he said gravely, "an extraordinary thing has happened! I—I scarcely realise it even now. No doubt some of you are aware that I dismissed Dibbs, the groom, yesterday for pilfering."

"Yes, sir," chorused a score of voices.

"Well, my boys, the rest of the servants have conspired against me, and actually demand that Dibbs be reinstated. They have temporarily struck work as a protest against my decision! It is extraordinary, astounding! Mrs. Kebble, in whom I had the greatest confidence, appears to be one of the ringleaders. She has prepared no breakfast, and a deputation is to come to my study at nine o'clock."

There was a buzz of excitement.

"My hat!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"The servants have struck!"

"No giddy brekker!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It's awful!" groaned Billy Bunter, in dismay. "My hat, I shall faint if—"

"Silence!" shouted Wingate.

The Head resumed.

"I shall deal with the deputation in the only way possible," he said firmly. "The circumstances are peculiar, and I need not describe them to you now. I shall refuse to meet the servants' demands, and dismiss Mrs. Kebble from my service. It is the only thing I can do, the only way to retain my authority over the household. By dinner-time, boys, matters will be settled, and the usual household arrangements running smoothly!"

"But how about brekker, sir?" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Silence there!" roared Wingate.

"I think, Wingate, that the boys certainly have the right to inquire about breakfast," said the Head. "It is extremely unfortunate, but I can do nothing to alter the circumstances. I dare say most of you have gone without your breakfasts before now, and you will enjoy your dinners all the more! I am extremely sorry, but I myself can do nothing!"

Most of the boys took the news philosophically, and only one or two of them—Billy Bunter included, of course—grumbled. It was very exasperating to be done out of their breakfasts, but, under the circumstances, there was no help for it.

So the boys dispersed, and raked out the leavings from last night's tea. Taking it altogether they managed fairly well.

Dr. Locke was very perturbed, and held a long consultation in his study with Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch. Mr. Prout was of the opinion that he could quell the rebellion very soon if he had his own way, but Dr. Locke thought otherwise. He decided to deal with the matter himself. Mr. Prout was an excellent scholar, and had a flattering opinion about himself, but the Head felt that he was hardly capable of dealing with a matter of this description. It was a task to be undertaken by the headmaster himself.

"It is an astounding state of affairs," said the Head, with a worried look. "I shall be very firm, and refuse to discuss matters. I am convinced that Dibbs is guilty, and that this is merely an attempt to get him reinstated. The servants have been planning it among themselves, thinking that I should be foolish enough to comply. I shall quell the rebellion with a firm hand!"

"It is the only thing to be done," said Mr. Quelch.

"Quite so," agreed Mr. Prout.

Nine o'clock boomed out on the old clock-tower, and almost to the second the deputation arrived. There was a tap upon the Head's door, and the deputation entered. The Head sat at his desk, and the two Form-masters stood on either side of him.

The deputation entered.

Gosling, as the chosen spokesman of the party, led the way. His face was very red, and he had obviously braced himself up for the occasion by liberal allowances of gin-and-water. Behind him came Mrs. Kebble, her face stern and her lips set. Mrs. Mumble followed, looking rather uncomfortable. Then came Trotter, the cook, and, finally, Dibbs's sister. Dibbs himself thought it wisest to remain below.

The door closed, and the Head looked at the deputation with a stern face.

"You, Gosling," he said, "are the spokesman. I presume?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" said Gosling, rather thickly.

"I'm honly actin' as spokesman 'cos nobody else don't relish

the job! I 'ope, sir, as you wou'n't think I'm bein' disrespec-ful—"

"Pray proceed, Gosling!" said the Head testily.

"Hain't I proceedin'?" exclaimed the porter, beginning to feel more confident. "We've come 'ere, sir, to point hout to you that you've done a great injustice! Dibbs his innocent, an' we, as a body, demand that you give 'im back 'is post! Seem' as he's done nothink it'll only be the right an' honourable thing to do!"

"Nonsense, sir!" snapped Mr. Prout. "Dibbs was guilty of very dishonourable conduct, and—"

"Wot I says is this 'ere," said Gosling. "I'm a-talkin' to the 'ead—"

"How dare you!" exclaimed Mr. Prout.

"Please let me deal with the matter, Mr. Prout," said the Head gently. "Gosling, am I to understand that you have any further proof of Dibbs's innocence?"

"Hany further proof?" ejaculated Gosling. "Why, we've got enough, in my opinion!"

"Of course," said Mrs. Kebble. "Yesterday we were quite mistaken about Dibbs, and we have now positive proof that he is innocent. I admit that I was hasty, and if I had stopped to look into the matter I should have found out the truth for myself. Mrs. Mimble can prove that Dibbs was talking to her when the incident actually happened."

"That I can, sir!" said Mrs. Mimble.

"So can I, sir!" said Dibbs's sister.

"But there were no boys in your shop at the time, Mrs. Mimble?" asked the Head. "There is nobody but you yourselves who could testify that Dibbs was in your shop?"

"I saw Dibbs leavin' Mrs. Mimble's shop, sir!" said Trotter.

"Was there anybody in the Close at the time?"

"Nobody, sir; honly me."

"You see, sir," explained Mrs. Mimble, "most o' the boys were doing their preparazion, so wou'dn't want to come to my shop. It's always a slack time."

"Then the fact remains," said the Head, "that I've only your word to go on that Dibbs was actually in the shop?"

"Isn't my word good enough?" shouted Mrs. Mimble indignantly.

The Head tapped his desk impatiently.

"My good woman, I do not doubt your good motives," he said, "but if you wished me to believe this story you should have told it to me last night when Dibbs was brought to me on the first occasion. Mrs. Kebble and Gosling were then quite convinced that Dibbs was guilty, actually telling me that they'd heard his voice, and found the remains of the stolen goods in the harness-room! I will speak plainly, and tell you that I believe you have connived together, and concocted this story in order to make me reinstate Dibbs!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped the cook.

"It's an insult!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble wrathfully.

"I do not mean to be insulting," said the Head quickly.

"In any case the matter is trivial, and you were prompted by purely sympathetic motives to take up this stand. But I am not deceived, and I tell you, once and for all, that I put my foot down firmly! Dibbs is dismissed!"

Gosling stepped forward.

"An' that's your last word?" he said darkly.

"Yes, Gosling, it is. You may all go!" said the Head.

"Oh, may we?" roared Gosling. "Hi don't mean to be disrespec'ful, sir, but wot I says is this 'ere. We came to this study to make you learn sense, an' do the proper thing! An' we ain't goin' to leave until you consents to reinstate Dibbs! That's flat, ain't it, sir?"

The Head's brow grew black.

"You are insulting, Gosling," he said angrily. "I have already stated my decision, and I shall not alter it!"

"You mean Dibbs is chucked hout?" said Gosling.

"Exactly!"

"Then you're more hobstinate than Hi thought you'd be!" shouted the porter, getting excited. "Wot I says is this 'ere. Hif you don't agree to our terms, we strike!"

"You scoundrel!" shouted Mr. Prout.

"We strike!" repeated Gosling. "Hail of us!"

And the deputation nodded approval.

"How dare you!" exclaimed Dr. Locke angrily. "How dare you stand there and behave in this outrageous manner? You will all return to your posts at once! Dibbs is dismissed, and I refuse to discuss the matter further! Gosling, I will not dismiss you, as I think you are behaving under stress of excitement. But if you do not immediately bring this absurd scene to a conclusion, I shall reconsider my decision!"

"Hail right!" shouted Gosling recklessly. "You can do as yer like, you hobstinate old nule! Is Dibbs goin' to be kep' on, or his 'o not?"

"He is not!" shouted the Head, white with fury.

Gosling banged his fist on the desk.

"Then we strike!" he roared. "We strike till you come to your senses! Hi halways thought you was a lot too big for yer boots, an' now hi tell you so to yer face!"

"Good gracions!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"This is outrageous!" added Mr. Quelch.

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"You are right!" said the Head. "Gosling, you will leave the school at once!"

Mrs. Kebble bristled.

"If Gosling goes," she declared flatly, "I go!"

"Madam, I had already decided to dismiss you!" said the Head.

"You old donkey!" shrieked Mrs. Kebble.

"Dear me!" gasped the Head. "This—this is unbearable!"

"Well, you've brought it on yerself!" roared Gosling. "We're standin' together in this affair, an' there ain't goin' to be no backin' hout! If Dibbs ain't took on agin we all leave together! I ain't goin' alone, nor Mrs. Kebble ain't goin' alone! We all goes together!"

"Far, 'ear!" said Trotter.

"If Gosling goes, I go, too!" exclaimed the fat cook.

Dr. Locke was speechless.

"And so do I!" said Mrs. Mimble.

"An' me, too!"

"An' me, too!"

The servants were unanimous in their decision.

"Now," roared Gosling triumphantly, "wot 'ave you got to say? We're the masters of the situation, an' we ain't a-goin' to be done! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

"Which I won't be silent!" shouted Gosling. "I ain't goin' to be shet up by no man—"

"How dare you?" raved Dr. Locke, pale with fury.

"Leave my study at once, all of you! If I consented to this outrageous proposal I should lose all authority in the School! Every servant is dismissed! You will all leave within the hour. Mrs. Mimble, kindly remove your goods from the School shop."

"I will," shouted Mrs. Mimble, "and be right glad to!"

"I never see sich a hobstinate—"

"Go!" thundered the Head. "Leave my room!"

"Then hail the servants his dismissed?" gulped Gosling.

"Yes, sir; every one!"

"Then hail I've got to say is, you don't know wot you're a-doin' of! Hif you think we're a-goin' to take it quiet you're mistook!"

And Gosling, having delivered that final word, gave a final bang to the desk, and stamped over to the door. The other servants, hot and flustered with anger, followed him out as the door closed.

"Good gracions," gasped the Head, "this is terrible!"

And he sank back in his chair, and mopped the cold perspiration from his brow.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout Comes Out Strong.

GREYFRIARS was in a state of excitement.

The junior Forms especially were in high feather. Time for lessons to start had long passed, but everything was in an uproar. Lessons had not started, and the juniors were standing in the Close in groups, excited and noisy. They were discussing the unheard-of events which had taken place that morning. The bulk of them had managed to procure breakfast of some sort, and they were feeling fairly satisfied.

At about a quarter to ten Wingate appeared on the School House steps, and called to the juniors that they were to gather in the hall.

There was much discussion, but at last the School were assembled in the big hall. Then the Head appeared, looking pale and worried, and addressed the boys.

"At breakfast-time I referred to a disagreement among the servants," he said quietly. "Well, boys, I'm sorry to say that I have been grossly insulted, and that the servants threatened to strike. I could not allow such an outrageous state of affairs, so I dismissed every servant in the School! Under the circumstances, it was the only thing I could do, although it may appear to be drastic."

There was a buzz of excited talk.

"However," went on Dr. Locke, "I am procuring other servants immediately from the village, and I have no doubt that matters will soon be running smoothly. It is a very unfortunate affair altogether, but I could not possibly have retained my dignity and complied with the servants' demand at the same time. There will be no lessons this morning, as all the masters will be too busy to attend classes. In a difficulty of this description it is impossible for school work to go on as usual. As to-day is a half-holiday, it does not matter so much. But I shall expect all the boys to hold themselves in readiness this morning to do anything that may be required of them. You may go now, boys."

The juniors streamed out of the Hall excited and elated. They didn't object to missing lessons in the least.

"This is ripping," grinned Frank Nugent. "I shouldn't mind the giddy servants striking every day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder how it'll all end?" said Wharton. "Blessed if I can realise it yet, you know. How shall we get on without old Gossy to slaug? Perhaps the new chap will be an awful bounder."

"My hat, the school will be upside down for a day or two!"

"All the better!" grinned Fisher T. Fish, the American junior in the Remove. "I guess I don't object to things being upside down for a day or two. You're too slow in this old country of yours. Over there we should have a fresh lot of servants within an hour. Yes, sir!"

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent.

The Removites crowded into the entrance-hall.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, emerging on to the School House steps. "Here go the giddy heroes!"

"My hat!"

"Give 'em a cheer!" grinned Wharton.

The juniors crowded on the steps, and looked out into the Close. A stream of servants were sedately walking out of the gates, most of them carrying parcels or bags. Mrs. Keble was very dignified, and Gosling marched along as though he had been performing the most gallant deeds, and was one of the world's heroes. Some of the housemaids, who had been too nervous to attend the meeting in the Head's study, were sobbing into their handkerchiefs.

"Give them a cheer!" repeated Harry Wharton. "May as well liven 'em up."

And an ironic cheer rose on the morning air. The servants disappeared, and the juniors collected in groups in the Close and discussed the situation. It was extraordinary. Such a state of affairs had never occurred before in the school's history. How the Head was going to cope with it remained to be seen. It would certainly prove to be no light task.

An hour passed, and then Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout entered the gates and rapidly crossed the Close. Both were looking extremely worried, and the boys regarded them curiously.

The two Form-masters went straight to the Head's study. Twenty minutes later Wingate appeared in the Close.

The Removites gathered round him in an eager crowd.

"What's up, Wingate?" demanded Bulstrode. "Old Quelch was looking pretty blue."

"There's everything up," said Wingate. "Nobody in Friardale will consent to come up to the school and work! The servants have won over the villagers to their side, and not a soul will come up to the school to work!"

"My only Aunt Selina!" ejaculated Nugent.

"I—I say Wingate," said Billy Bunter blankly, "how about dinner?"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" snapped Wingate. "Can't you do without your dinner for once?"

"But I haven't had any breakfast!" howled the Owl of the Remove.

"Well, we shall manage somehow," said Wingate. "I've just been to the servants' quarters. Everything's cleared up in the kitchen, and the fires still alight. How the dickens we're going to get some dinner, though, is more than I can make out!"

But although Wingate was dubious and the boys dismayed, Mr. Prout had been struck with a splendid idea—at least, he considered it was splendid.

He and Mr. Quelch were in the Head's study, and Dr. Locke was pacing up and down with a worried frown on his brow.

"It is astounding!" ejaculated the Head, pausing in his walk and staring at the two Form-masters. "I really cannot believe that the school is without servants. It is so utterly unreal that, for the moment, I am unprepared. I scarcely know which way to turn."

"It is indeed a trying situation," said Mr. Quelch gravely.

"Appalling," said Mr. Prout—"appalling!"

"Appalling is the very word to use," said the Head. "It is not as though the servants of an ordinary household had been dismissed. There are hundreds of boys here who need looking after every minute of the day! Already they have been forced to go without their breakfasts. Something like a riot will occur if no dinner is prepared for them. Good gracious, I almost wish I had not dismissed them!"

"But it was necessary," said Mr. Quelch. "It was impossible to let them remain. Surely there is some way out of the difficulty?"

It was at that moment that Mr. Prout was struck by his splendid scheme. He looked at Mr. Quelch suddenly through his glasses, and then took the latter off and rubbed them vigorously.

"Upon my soul," he exclaimed, "I've got an idea!"

"Pray tell us what it is, Mr. Prout," said the Head eagerly.

"Why should not the boys themselves—the junior boys, of course—be made to go down into the kitchen and prepare dinner for the rest of the school? Under such circumstances as these it would be quite the right thing to do. The boys will be getting into mischief if they are left to themselves, and the unusual occupation will in no way be distasteful to them."

The Head looked at Mr. Prout in surprise.

"But, my dear sir, it is unheard of!"

"Exactly!" agreed Mr. Prout. "But that is no reason why we should not adopt the scheme. I'll warrant that the boys would prove themselves very able substitutes for the servants. In that manner we could, at least, carry on the household duties until to-morrow. Meanwhile, of course, other arrangements will be made."

The Head looked thoughtful.

"Your scheme seems sound enough, Mr. Prout," he said. "Really, I have a mind to put it to the test. But it would be utterly impossible to leave the boys to themselves. If we did that I am afraid the school would get no dinner at all!"

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No. 14.—MYERS: HOP HI: DUTTON.



The scene in the kitchen was a very animated one. Mr. Prout was frying at the stove, while the Removites were busy at their allotted tasks. Suddenly there was a gasp from Bob Cherry, as the pile of plates he was carrying tottered for one dizzy second, and then toppled over with a crash. "My only Aunt Georgina!" he cried. (See Chapter 10.)

Mr. Prout smiled in a superior fashion. "That is not my idea at all," he said. "Then who would look after them?" asked the Head. "Who would instruct them what to do?" "I should," replied the Fifth Form-master. "You, Mr. Prout?" "Exactly! I pride myself, Dr. Locke, I am quite capable of preparing a really splendid dinner!" said Mr. Prout modestly. "As you are aware, I have had considerable experiences in the shooting-grounds, and have done a considerable amount of camping-out in my earlier days. At that time I found it necessary to prepare my own food, and I may say, without boasting, that I did so in a manner that was eminently satisfactory." "Dear me!" said Dr. Locke. "I—I hardly know what to say. Do you really think you could manage the boys, Mr. Prout?" Mr. Prout smiled. "I do not think anything about it," he said; "I am sure of it! Personally I see nothing else for it. The boys will be

quite delighted at the unusual work, and will, I am sure, enter into it heart and soul."

"But would they not be too old?" said the Head doubtfully. "The Fifth, you know, consider they have a dignity to keep up, and—"

"But I do not propose enlisting the services of my own boys. As you say, sir, they would consider themselves too dignified to undertake kitchenwork. The Second and Third are too young; but, I think, the Remove would just suit our requirements. I will get together a party of Remove boys, and set them to work immediately. In that way, we shall be able to provide the whole school with the usual dinner at a little after the accustomed time."

"Very well, Mr. Prout," said the Head. "Do as you suggest! It is certainly a way out of the present difficulty, and I trust you will be successful in your rather doubtful enterprise."

"Never fear, sir; I am quite confident!" said Mr. Prout. And the Fifth Form-master departed on his errand. He emerged out into the Close, and called a large crowd of

Removites round him. Nearly all the juniors were in the close, and they crowded round eagerly.

"Boys," said Mr. Prout genially, "I have a proposition to make to you—at least, to make to members of the Remove Form. At present it looks very much as though there'll be no dinner for the whole school, but if I can rely upon your assistance I think we can combat the difficulty."

"We're with you, sir!"

"Rather!"

"You can rely on us, sir!"

"I want a dozen Remove boys to volunteer to help me in the kitchen. Under my direction, you will prepare dinner for the whole school. Those boys who will help me kindly hold up their hands!"

For a moment there was silence. The juniors were too surprised for a moment to take action. The proposition was so startling that they could not realise the meaning of it for a moment. Then Billy Bunter raised his fat hand skywards.

"I'll help you, sir!" he bawled from the back of the crowd.

"Thank you, Bunter!" said Mr. Prout.

"Trust Bunter to be first!" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent!" protested Bunter. "I think it's up to us to help Mr. Prout! If we don't, we sha'n't get any blessed dinner! That's what I'm thinking of!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A score of hands went up, and Mr. Prout beamed all over his face.

"I knew you would be sensible, boys," he said. "But I only want a dozen."

And Mr. Prout proceeded to choose his helpers. He picked out Billy Bunter, the Famous Five, Mark Linley, Micky Desmond, Fisher T. Fish, Tom Brown, Bulstrode, and Hazeldene.

Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, had been among the crowd at first, but as soon as he heard Mr. Prout's proposal, he hurried into the School House with rather more haste than dignity. Lord Mauleverer had no desire to be amongst the chosen ones.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, grinned loftily as they passed the Removites. They had heard what was going on, and were inclined to be superior.

"I say, Cherry, my boy," said Temple, "there's a pair of boots in my study that want cleaning. Just give them a rub over, will you? I'll give you a halfpenny for your trouble!"

"Silly ass!" said Bob Cherry, turning red.

"Now then, no insolence!" said Temple sharply.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"He, he, he!" giggled Fry.

"Do you want a thick ear?" asked Bob Cherry darkly.

"Just hark at him!" said Temple to the grinning juniors.

"These Remove chaps are the new skivvies, ain't they?"

"Oh, rather!"

"You fatheaded chumps!" roared Bob Cherry warmly. "If you don't shut up, I'll shove some giddy red pepper in your dinner, Temple!"

"You'll catch it hot if you do!" said Temple.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton. "You'll be the chap to catch it hot, Temple!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackling fatheads!" sniffed Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

And the Upper Fourth heroes strolled away.

Mr. Prout looked round.

"Come, boys," he said; "there's no time to waste!"

"Right you are, sir!"

"Lead on, McDuff!" grinned Bob Cherry, sotto voce.

And Mr. Prout entered the School House with the new Greyfriars domestics following him in a grinning crowd.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Cooking.

MR. PROUT stood in the kitchen, surrounded by his helpers.

The fire, it was found, was still in, and was now roaring cheerfully. The Removites had very great difficulty in keeping their faces straight, for Mr. Prout presented a very unusual appearance.

The Fifth Form-master was not possessed of very extensive hair—in fact, he was quite bald on the top of his napper, as Bob Cherry described it. And as he could not very well stand in the kitchen cooking with a mortar-board upon his head, he had changed it for a white chef's cap, which he found in the kitchen cupboard.

Mr. Prout rather fancied himself as a cook, and he thought it would only be doing the thing properly if he wore a chef's cap. Mr. Prout considered that the boys would be more impressed.

But they weren't impressed; the Removites, in fact, had

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nearly burst into a roar when Mr. Prout donned his unusual headgear.

"Now, boys," said the Form-master briskly, "we must get to work! It is no light task, as you may imagine, to prepare dinner for so many boys. Therefore, you will have to work very hard. I will now allot you your various duties, and trust that there will be no quarrelling."

"We're on, sir!"

"Anything you like, sir!"

And the juniors bustled about with great haste. Very soon the kitchen presented quite a busy appearance. Mr. Prout had found the larder well stocked, and he soon set about preparing a very special dinner. Exactly what it was going to be the juniors did not know, but Fisher T. Fish found himself allotted to the task of mixing up a huge bowl of flour, milk, and other ingredients, to make a pudding-crust. The things were all ready for him, and Mr. Prout looked at the American junior rather doubtfully as Fisher T. Fish rolled up his sleeves.

"Do you think you can manage it, Fish?" he asked.

"Yep! I guess so, sir!" said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "I'm not going to be beaten by a measly old pudding! I guess the chaps will vote this pudding-crust the best they've ever eaten!"

"Yes; if we get through it!" said Harry Wharton.

"Which is jolly doubtful!" added Nugent.

"Look here, you slab-sided ass," said Fisher T. Fish wrathfully, "I guess I can make a pudding as well as any of you silly fatheads——"

"Silence!" said Mr. Prout angrily. "Fish, proceed with your work, and do not make such free use of those slungy words!"

"I guess I was aggravated, sir!"

"Any boy who starts squabbling again will be sent out of the kitchen!" said Mr. Prout.

The Fifth Form-master turned away to the stove, and Fisher T. Fish dived his hands into the flour-bin.

"Look here, you grimy Yankee bounder," said Tom Brown wrathfully, "you ain't washed your hands! It's likely we're going to eat a pudding after it's been mixed up by your unwashed paws!"

"The esteemed Fish has perhaps forgotten that august detail!" murmured Hurree Singh. "His honourable hands certainly look like the esteemed dirt. The griminess is terrific!"

"Rats!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess my hands are all right!"

"Go and wash 'em!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I guess——"

"We won't eat a scrap of that pudding if you don't!"

"Piffle! Look here——"

"You ass!"

"You chump!"

Mr. Prout turned away from the stove.

"What is the matter?" he demanded testily. "Am I to be annoyed by this continual squabbling? What is the trouble now?"

"Why, Fish is diving his dirty maulers into the giddy flour!" said Tom Brown indignantly. "He ain't washed them since last week!"

"You rotten fibber!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

"Well, yesterday," amended the New Zealand junior.

"Is that true, Fish?" said Mr. Prout, looking at Fish's hands suspiciously. "I trust that you have not attempted to make the pudding-crust without first washing your hands?"

"I guess they're clean enough, sir!"

"Show them to me!"

Fisher T. Fish held out a pair of floury hands. They were certainly rather grimy underneath, and the whiteness of the flour aggravated the effect. Mr. Prout sniffed.

"The boys were quite right to draw my attention to this!" he said. "Fish, go and wash your hands at once! I'm surprised at you!"

"I guess——"

"Go and wash them!" roared Mr. Prout.

The American junior went into the scullery, and chuckles went up from the other juniors. Mr. Prout turned again to the stove, and the others went on with their various duties. Fisher T. Fish returned shortly, and then proceeded to make his pudding-crust. He doled out a supply of flour into a big bowl, and then began to mix it. Presently, when the dough was of a firm consistency, he planked it out on to a board. Fisher T. Fish was now beginning to present a floury appearance. His clothes were floury, his face was floury, and his hair looked as if it was turning prematurely white. But the American junior didn't mind. He had succeeded in making his pudding-crust, and that was the main thing. He rolled it out on the board vigorously.

For the time being there was silence in the kitchen.

The room presented a very animated appearance.

Mr. Prout was standing at the stove, with a frying-pan in

one hand and a fork in the other. Every now and again he turned over a huge slab of meat, and an appetising odour rose into the air. Mr. Prout's face was hot and flushed, and it really looked as though he was doing his best to fry that also!

Mark Linley and Hazel-dene were hard at it peeling potatoes as though for a wager. As a matter of fact Hazel-dene had made a bet with Linley that he'd get his painful finished first. The stakes were a pocket-knife against an electric-lamp, and the two juniors were piling into the work at top speed.

Bob Cherry had just collected a huge pile of plates, and was crossing the kitchen rather uncertainly. His objective was the side-table under the window, and Bob had bitten off rather more than he could chew.

Suddenly Frank Nugent looked round from his work, and grinned as he saw Bob Cherry coming.

"Look out, you ass!" he said sharply.

"Eh? What?" gasped Bob Cherry.

He swung round instinctively, being under the impression that he was about to trip over something on the floor. The pile of plates tottered, paused for one dizzy second in uncertainty, and then toppled over with a crash!

"My only Aunt Georgina!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Nugent.

"Do you mean to say you startled me like that on purpose, you giddy idiot!" said Bob wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Nugent.

Mr. Prout turned from the stove with a start which nearly caused his glasses to fall into the ash-pan. Even that little incident nearly resulted in disaster. Mr. Prout made a clutch at his glasses, and jerked the frying-pan forward. Fortunately he recovered it in time, but not before a spurt of fat had splashed itself all down Mr. Prout's waistcoat!

"Good gracious!" he gasped. "I—I— Upon my soul!"

He looked round with a red face, and several audible giggles were turned into discreet coughs.

"What was that appalling din just now?" said Mr. Prout, glaring round. "Dear me, Cherry, have you dropped those plates?"

"Dropped them, sir!" said Bob Cherry innocently.

"Yes, Cherry, dropped them!"

"They—they do seem to be rather bent!" faltered Bob.

There was a suppressed gasp of merriment.

"Bent!" shouted Mr. Prout. "How dare you joke on such a matter, Cherry? How could you be so clumsy as to drop that pile of plates?"

"How could he be?" murmured Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Bob Cherry. "Something startled me!"

"Something startled you?" repeated Mr. Prout angrily.

"If you cannot be more careful over this work, Cherry, I shall send you from the kitchen!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Pick those plates up immediately, and then help Singh and Desmond with the apples. Fish will be ready with the crust soon, and I want the apple puddings to be in immediately."

"They'll take hours to cook, sir!" grinned Bulstrode.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Prout. "I know what I am doing, Bulstrode. When the school has finished the first course, the apple puddings will be done to a turn."

"Yes; if ever we get through the first course!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"What did you say, Wharton?" said Mr. Prout.

"I merely made a remark about the first course!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Well, make no more remarks, Wharton, but be quick with that suet!" said Mr. Prout sharply. "Chop it up finely, or the puddings will be spoilt. It is imperative that the suet should be fine!"

"The suet may be fine," chuckled Johnny Bull, "but I'll bet the puddings will be rotten!"

Mark Linley lifted his nose into the air, and sniffed.

"There's a rummy niff, sir!" he said.

"There's a what, Linley?" asked Mr. Prout severely.

"A—a peculiar aroma, sir!" said Mark Linley innocently.

"Can't you smell it, sir? Like something burning!"

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "It's the giddy meat!"

"Eh!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, sniffing. "Dear me, I believe the meat is burning!"

"Smells like it, sir, doesn't it?"

Mr. Prout rushed across to the stove, and the juniors nearly exploded. A cloud of smoke was rising from the frying-pan, and Mr. Prout raised it from the stove in dismay.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "The meat is ruined!"

"Never mind, sir," said Bulstrode: "there's the joint in the oven. That's doing all right, I think!"

"I hope so, Bulstrode," said Mr. Prout, with a worried frown.

He bent down quickly, and grasped the oven door.

Then Mr. Prout gave vent to a fiendish yell.

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"Ow!" he roared. "Yow-ow!"

"What's up, sir?"

"Handle hot, sir!"

"Dear me, I am severely burnt!" groaned Mr. Prout. "I had clean forgotten that the handle of the oven door would be hot!"

"Yes, sir; it is rather peculiar," said Johnny Bull, "considering there's a whacking great fire in the grate!"

"Don't be impertinent, Bull! I am really hurt!"

"Shall I fetch the blue-bag, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No, Cherry, you will not!" roared Mr. Prout, very red in the face. "Get on with your work, and do not make so many interruptions! It is mainly because you boys are such a nuisance that I have burnt myself."

And Mr. Prout savagely grabbed the cloth and opened the oven door. The Removites were grinning delightedly, for, although Mr. Prout considered that he was a first-class cook, the juniors thought quite the opposite. Happily, the joint was cooking merrily, and no further mishaps occurred.

Fisher T. Fish succeeded in finishing his crust, and the apple puddings were made. Shortly afterwards the potatoes were put on the stove to cook, and the boys found they had breathing space.

"Hallo!" said Bulstrode suddenly. "Where's Bunter?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Have you sent Bunter anywhere, sir?"

"No, Cherry," replied Mr. Prout. "Isn't he here?"

"No, sir; but I expect I know where he is!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "In the larder!"

Mr. Prout started.

"Do you really think so, Nugent?" he exclaimed. "I will investigate at once!"

And Mr. Prout strode from the kitchen and made his way to the larder. He opened the door quickly, and there was a crash. Billy Bunter stood before the Fifth Form-master, just finishing the remains of a beef-pie.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" thundered Mr. Prout.

"I—I— Oh, really sir, I—I just came to look round!" said Billy Bunter, in dismay. "I—I haven't been eating this pie, sir! It was only just a crumb!"

"Do not lie to me, Bunter!" shouted Mr. Prout. "Go into the school quarters at once, and I will report your conduct to Mr. Quelch. I am extremely sorry that I consented to bring you here! You are a most gluttonous boy!"

"Well, I was hungry!" said Billy Bunter defiantly. "I didn't have any brekker this morning, and my fees include brekker!"

Mr. Prout snorted in disgust.

"Go," he shouted, "before I thrash you!"

And Bunter went.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fish's Restaurant.

"GOOD!" said Coker, of the Fifth. "Dinner at last!"

"Buck up with it!" exclaimed Potter.

"We're starving!"

The dining-hall was filled with boys. They were sitting in their places, and all of them were extremely hungry. True, they did not expect to get a perfect meal, but in their present state of hunger they would be contented with a "scratch" meal.

"Here we are!" said Temple, of the Fourth.

"Good!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Harry Wharton & Co. and the rest of the improvised domestics hurried into the dining-hall laden with steaming dishes. Coker sniffed.

"Got a decent niff, anyhow!" he announced.

"Blow the niff!" said Greene, of the Fifth. "I want to do the tasting bizney!"

Dinner was somewhat late, but now that it had turned up the boys were eager to commence. Whether Mr. Prout had cooked the dinner properly or not was a question, but he had undoubtedly made first-class arrangements. The juniors knew exactly what to do, and in less than five minutes each table was served with its portion. Then grace was said, and dinner started.

It consisted of roast beef, potatoes, and greens for the first course. Undoubtedly the beef was all right, but there was a certain look about the greens which was not very appetising. Coker lifted a forkful of it and put it into his mouth. The next second he gulped hard, and gasped.

"Oh, my hat!" he exclaimed, in horror.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Potter, who hadn't started.

"These vegetables," said Coker. "They're poisoned! I've never tasted such awful mess in my life! I—I feel ill!"

At the same moment there came other exclamations from other tables, and the boys looked at one another uncertainly. There was something wrong with the greens, though exactly what it was nobody could tell. But the fact remained that they were uneatable, and those boys who had not sampled them took great care to leave them strictly alone.

Barring the unpalatable state of the greens, the first course was a fair success. The potatoes were as salt as brine, no doubt, but that was only a detail. Mark Linley had salted the potatoes, and he had evidently used a very liberal hand. The boys were hungry, however, and were not particular.

It did not come out until afterwards that the reason for the disaster to the greens had been an unfortunate mistake on Hazeldene's part. Mr. Prout had instructed him to put a little soda in the greens—in order to preserve their colour, as Mr. Prout explained. Hazeldene had gone to the cupboard, and had found a jar of what he took to be soda. Before Mr. Prout could stop him he had dropped a whole handful of it into the boiler. Unfortunately, Hazeldene had made a mistake; it was proved that he had taken a handful of alum! Alum is not exactly pleasant stuff, and the greens were too full of flavour for words.

The next course consisted of freshly-made apple-puddings and stale jam-tarts. Most of the boys elected to have apple-pudding—but they soon changed their minds. Undoubtedly the puddings had been made in professional style, but, as Bulstrode had pointed out to Mr. Prout, they had not had sufficient time to cook. The result was that each boy was served with a piece of pudding which was decidedly of an uneatable nature. It was practically dough, and the apples themselves were nearly raw. Therefore apple-pudding was off.

The school had to finish their dinners off stale jam-tarts—and there was not sufficient to go round. Consequently, when grace was said, the boys left the table feeling very unsatisfied.

The juniors grumbled quite openly. Temple, Dabney & Co. even suggesting that the Removites ought to be thoroughly bumped for supplying the school with such a rotten meal. Mr. Prout's experiment had not turned out so successfully as he had anticipated, and the Fifth Form-master was heartily glad when the Head announced that the boys

would all have to take tea in their studies—except the Second and Third, who would be provided with money to lay in tuck.

But Fisher T. Fish wore a very thoughtful expression as he entered Study No. 14 in the Remove passage. The whole Lower School was very excited over the strange events which were taking place. But Fisher T. Fish looked cool enough.

Johnny Bull, who shared Study No. 14 with Fish, was in the room when the American junior entered.

"Wherefore that thoughtful look, Fishy?" he inquired.

"I guess I've got a grand idea at the back of my head!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Then you'd better get it out jolly quick!" said Johnny Bull bluntly. "We've had enough of your grand ideas, Fishy! If it's anything like that 'Fag Agency' wheeze of yours, you'll be ragged to death over it!"

"I guess it's something altogether different," said Fish.

"It's an idea suggested by force of circumstances."

"Force of tommy-rot!" snorted Bull. "Look here, Fishy, you're not going to start any fat-headed game in this study, are you?"

"Nope!"

"You'd better not. If I come back from the footer-field and find you have, I'll bump you till you can't stand!"

"I guess there'll be no need for the bumping bizney—ever if you could do it!" said Fish coolly. "No, sir. It's a wheeze that would never have entered your thick head!"

"My what head?" said Johnny Bull aggressively.

"Oh, rats!" said Fisher T. Fish. And he walked out of the study.

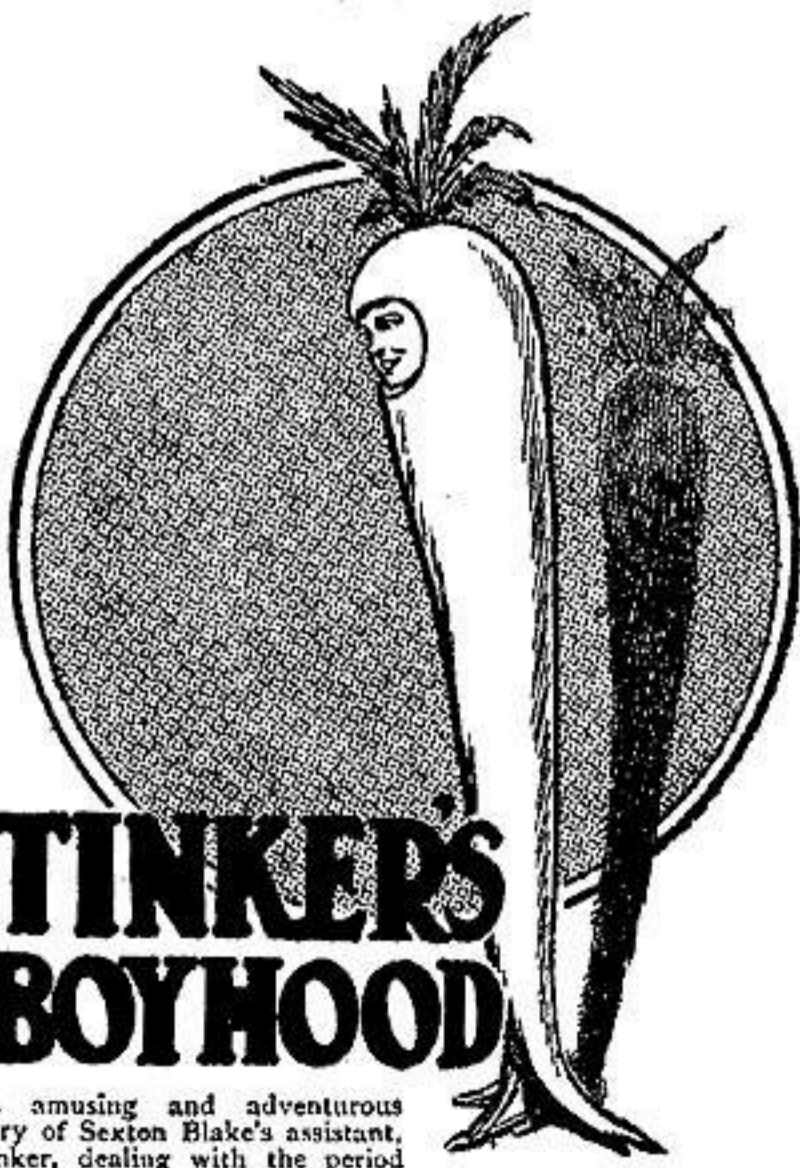
The keen business man of the Remove did not waste much time once he was struck with an idea. On this occasion he realised the necessity for very prompt action, and after thoughtfully making a swift calculation he walked briskly down the Remove passage and sought out Billy Bunter.

"I guess I want you, Bunter," said Fish.

"Want me?" said Billy Bunter. "What for?"

"I want you to give me a hand for the afternoon," said Fish. "I'll pay you a bob for your trouble, and stand you a jolly good feed at the end."

"What's the idea?" asked Bunter cautiously.



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"I'm going to open a restaurant!" replied Fisher T. Fish with perfect coolness.

"You're—you're going to do what?" gasped Bunter. "Oh, really, Fish, it's no good your trying to pull my leg, you know?"

"I guess there's no leg-pulling about it, my son. I'm going to open a restaurant!" repeated Fish. "At a time like this it's the very thing that's needed. You chaps in this sleepy country would never have thought of it, but I'm from the Yew-nited States, and I guess I'm all there!"

"That's about right, too!" grinned Bunter. "You're all there, Fish—at least there's none of you here! No brain, anyhow—"

"Look here, Bunter, do you want a thick ear?" said Fish wrathfully. "I guess my idea's first-class. Mrs. Mumble's shop has been cleared out already, and I can soon rig it up as a giddy restaurant. Not a shop, mind you. I'm not going to start any shop bizney. It'll be a real, first-class restaurant, with dinners provided at a bob a time!"

"Dinners!" repeated Bunter. "We've just had dinner!"

"If you call that dinner, I guess you're off your rocker!" said Fish. "There'll be heaps of chaps patronise my restaurant the very instant I open it. It's at times like this that a business head is wanted. I supply that head, and if you'll lend me a hand we'll get to work right now."

"Right-ho!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm on!"

Anything in connection with feeding appealed to Bunter, and he soon came to his decision.

Once Fish thought of an idea and decided to adopt it, he worked like a nigger to gain his end. On this occasion he was right in the thick of his labours before ten minutes had passed. Unless he got his restaurant going by tea-time it would be useless starting the wheeze. So Fisher T. Fish lost no time.

Mrs. Mumble's shop presented an unusual appearance when Fish entered it. All the stock had been cleared out by the indignant dame, and now the shop presented a bare and dismal appearance. But Fish, with his coat off and his sleeves turned up, soon altered matters. Within an hour the place was transformed.

Fish had worked at express speed, and the counter had been shifted round so that it barred the door at the back of the shop. This left an open space in the room, and Fish had raked out two or three tables and dotted them about. Chairs he had borrowed from the various studies, and the place looked quite clean and attractive.

Then, leaving Billy Bunter to clear up generally, Fish rushed off to Friardale. He was not gone long, and when he returned he was laden with parcels. Fish was a business man, and he had been making bargains—buying up old stock at half the price from the little grocers' shops, and he laid down his purchases with a grin of satisfaction.

"Is that grub?" demanded Bunter greedily.

"It is, my son, but it's not the sort you can eat now!" said Fish. "It's packet soup, uncooked meat, haricot beans, and stuff like that. It is to make a dinner of, Bunt, so if you thought you were going to start wolfing up pastry you're mistaken. There's some bread here, and if you start on it—"

"Bread!" snorted Bunter. "Likely I should eat bread, ain't it?"

Fisher T. Fish proceeded to prepare. There was a good fireplace in Mrs. Mumble's back parlour, and very soon an appetising odour pervaded the "restaurant." Fish had done the thing in style, for outside, over the door, was a big sign, on which were the words:

"FISH'S POPULAR RESTAURANT."

Most of the fellows were out in the playing-fields, so did not see the important sign. However, when they came in to tea there was a large board placed on the School House steps. Harry Wharton & Co. gazed at it in surprise as they came in, just as the January dusk was falling.

"What on earth's that?" said Bob Cherry.

"Looks like a board," replied Frank Nugent.

"My hat! It's another wheeze of Fishy's!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "The ass told me he had something in his noodle. A restaurant—eh?"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors read the sign on the board:

"Fish's Popular Restaurant! First-class dinners provided from five till six! Three courses—soup, meat, and vegetables, and sweets to finish! No swank! Walk up in your thousands! Price One Shilling per head! Walk up! Walk up!"

"Walk away!" granted Frank Nugent. "I'm blessed if I'm going to have any of Fish's trash! We've got first-class sausages for tea, and that'll be better than Fish's loby dinners!"

"Rather?"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

And the Famous Five entered the School House without even deigning to pay a visit to the new establishment. But there were plenty of other boys who felt curious. Among

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them were Coker & Co.; and the Fifth Form combine, after reading the notice, decided to patronise the new restaurant. It so happened that Coker was out of provisions, and he had actually been discussing tea when his attention had been drawn to the notice.

Coker & Co. marched into Fish's restaurant. They found several customers already there. Bolsover, of the Remove, was one of them, and Hoskins, of the Shell, who liked to look big, was occupying a table all by himself.

Fisher T. Fish had enlisted the services, at the last moment, of Leigh, of the Remove, to take orders and act generally as waiter.

"What's this fatheaded wheeze of yours, Fishy?" said Coker.

"I guess it's the real thing," said Fish coolly. "Dinners a shilling a time; and if you ain't satisfied with what you get you receive your money back."

"When?" asked Potter.

"I guess that needn't be discussed," said Fish hastily.

"Well, we'll sample your giddy dinners, kid," said Coker condescendingly. "I must say there's a nice niff about the place, anyhow."

Coker & Co. sat down. Fisher T. Fish hovered near them. A serviette was hung over his arm, and he looked business-like.

"Well, what's the delay?" demanded Coker.

"A bob each, please!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"What! Before we've seen the rotten dinner?" said Coker indignantly.

"I guess so. No meals supplied in this establishment unless money's paid in advance."

"Oh, all right, Shylock!" said Coker. "It's a rotten rush, all the same!"

"Beastly!" said Potter.

"Horrid!" added Greene.

Coker forked out three shillings, and Fish pocketed it with alacrity. He had now about eight customers, so Fish reckoned that it was quite time for him to start supplying dinners. He hopped nimbly over the counter, for it barred the door of the back parlour. From there Fish was able to serve the dinners with ease, and he handed them over the counter to Leigh, who took them round. Very soon the counter was covered with steaming plates of soup.

The diners sat waiting patiently, while a crowd of curious onlookers filled the doorway and the floor-space immediately inside.

The crowd, in fact, was getting quite big, and Fish's eyes gleamed as he ladled out the soup from a huge boiler. By all appearances he was going to do a huge trade, and Fisher T. Fish congratulated himself upon his cute and timely scheme.

Leigh handed the soup round with a very professional air, and Coker sniffed at his approvingly. It was of a ruddy brown colour, and looked first-class. It was made from ready-mixed powder, and was of really good quality.

"What's this," said Coker—"soup a la giddy tomato?"

"Something like that!" grinned Leigh.

"Well, it looks ripping, I must say," admitted Coker.

He took up his spoon and ladled some of the soup rather gingerly to his mouth. Then he looked up in surprise and smacked his lips.

"What's it like?" said Hoskins from the other table.

Coker took another spoonful.

"First chop!" he mumbled. "By jingo, it's great!"

And Coker ate the soup in record time. Coker was hungry, and the soup was certainly very appetising. It had a full, rich flavour, and was just nicely hot. Coker pushed his plate aside with a sigh.

"Well, I'm jolly well surprised!" he said. "I never thought Fish could serve up such really good tackle. If the rest of the feed's as good as this I shall be satisfied."

Suddenly there was a gasp from Bolsover.

"My only Sunday topper!" he roared, with a splutter.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What's up with you, chump?" demanded Potter, with his spoon half-way to his mouth.

Bolsover started to his feet.

"What's up!" he shouted. "I've just made a horrible discovery!"

"You're off your rocker!" said Greene.

"There's—there's— Oh, my hat, I shall be sick!" moaned Bolsover. "This giddy soup's simply swimming with mould! I wondered what all those little green spots were. It's mould!"

"Wha-a-ut!" gasped Coker, turning pale.

"Eh?" ejaculated Potter.

"Mould!" bellowed Bolsover. "That swindling young

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rotter Fish has been trying to poison us! I'm—I'm feeling ill."

The bulk of the diners had only just commenced their soup, but Coker had been in a hurry, and had finished his plateful. He looked round with a sickly expression, and then made a sudden dive for the door.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Fisher T. Fish Gets it in the Neck.

FISHER T. FISH looked over the counter with a rather alarmed expression.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"Yes, there jolly well is!" shouted Hoskins, of the Shell. "This soup is all mouldy! Coker's just dodged outside. He'd eaten his."

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

But Fish didn't even smile.

"I guess it wasn't my fault," he exclaimed. "I bought the soup from one of the village shops. It's packet soup, you know, and it must have been mouldy when I got it. How the dickens should I know the stuff wasn't all right?"

Coker burst into the restaurant.

"Where's Fish?" he roared. "I'll pulverise the rotter!"

"Here, steady on!" exclaimed the American junior hastily. "I apologise if the soup wasn't exactly the thing, Coker. But it wasn't my fault."

Coker calmed down.

"Well, if you apologise," he growled, "I might look it over. If that ass Bolsover hadn't said anything, it would have been all right. I enjoyed mine—till he yelled out. Then it seemed to turn up in my giddy tummy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the fellows who weren't dining.

Fish explained how the unfortunate occurrence had come about. The American junior failed to mention, however, that he had bought the soup as a job lot, at a quarter the original price.

"Well, hurry up with the next course," said Coker. "I want to get the taste of that beastly stuff out of my mouth."

"Right!" said Fish, in great relief. "Leigh, be ready to hand out the second course!"

In a very short time several plates of appetising-looking steak, with an allowance of potatoes and haricot beans, were served out. Fish was not aware that the beans required soaking beforehand, and in consequence they were almost as hard now as they had been before they had been put in the saucepan.

"What do you call these things?" demanded Coker, trying to jab one of the beans with his fork. "They're raw, Fishy!"

"Rot!" said Fish. "You'll find they're all right. They've been cooking for an hour."

"Well, the meat looks nicely done, anyhow," said Coker. "I'll sample it."

And Coker proceeded to carry out his threat—at least, he attempted to. The knife was certainly blunt, but it simply would not go through the chunk of steak. For toughness, the piece of steak Fish had procured would require some beating. Coker looked up with a dark frown.

He was beginning to realise that Fish's famous dinners were like everything else Fish handled. They had every appearance of being genuine, but when one came to closely examine them they proved to be worthless!

"What's this stuff," said Coker ominously—"leather?"

"Leather be hanged!" said Fish, looking over the counter.

"That's a jolly fine piece of steak! Why, the look of it is enough to give you an appetite!"

Coker snorted.

"It looks all right," he said; "but I didn't buy it to look at. You fatheaded young ass, Fish, it's as tough as nails. I can't stick my giddy fork into the gravy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Temple, at the door.

"Having a happy time, Coker, old man?" grinned Blundell, of the Fifth.

"Oh, dry up!" said Coker crossly. "I'm going to have my money back. First of all, Fish makes me sick with his rotten soup, and now he's trying to palm off old boots in place of beef-steak! I've never seen such a fraud in my life!"

"It's a swindle?" exclaimed Bolsover wrathfully. "If the stuff looked rotten to start with, it wouldn't matter so much. But I've had enough of it. When this lot came before me, I thought I was going to have a really decent feed. It looks ripping, but it's rotten! I believe Fish got the tack from the bootmaker's in the village, and disguised it as beef-steak!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blundell.

"You can laugh!" said Coker sulphurously, rising to his feet.

"I do laugh!" shouted Blundell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

Coker picked up the piece of steak and flung it with unerring aim at Blundell's face. It caught the captain of the Fifth over the mouth, and Blundell gave a howl.

"Ow! Oh, you—you rotter!" he roared. "My front teeth are knocked out!"

"What, by that piece of steak?" grinned Temple.

"Steak be hanged!" shouted Blundell. "It felt like a chunk of iron!"

By this time the would-be diners were all on their feet. Some of them had not been served with the second course yet, but Coker's remarks had decided them. They collected together and made for the counter. Meanwhile, the crowd at the door were looking on with keen anticipation.

"Where's Fish?" said Coker darkly, to Billy Bunter, who was behind the counter.

"He's—he's here!" said Bunter.

"Fish!" bawled Coker. "Come here, you young rotter!"

"I guess I'm busy!" shouted Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess you'll be a jolly lot busier soon!" shouted Coker.

"If you're not here in two ticks, we'll come in there, and duck you in your own blessed soup!"

Fisher T. Fish appeared.

"Now, you swindler," said Coker, "we want our money back!"

"Rather!" said Hoskins.

"Every penny of it!" added Bolsover.

Fish shook his head.

"I guess this company doesn't refund money once it's paid over," he said coolly. "I provided a good dinner for you, and if you don't like it that's not my fault!"

"But you said you'd refund our money if we weren't satisfied!" howled Greene.

"I guess that rule's been altered!" said Fish coolly.

The customers gasped.

Fisher T. Fish's method of doing business was distinctly original, and it made Coker & Co. more angry than ever.

"Are you going to give me my three bob back?" roared Coker.

"I guess not!"

"Then you're going to get bumped, and bumped hard!" shouted the angry Fifth-Former.

And before Fisher T. Fish could raise his voice to object, the counter had been swung away from the door, and the American junior was yanked into the shop.

In a moment he was laid flat upon the floor. His protestations were useless. He even offered to refund the money in full, but his words had no effect. The customers were incensed, and they meant to teach Fish a lesson.

"Now bring some of his giddy grub!" said Coker. "We'll smother him with it!"

"You rotters!" roared Fish. "I—owooooop!"

A piece of steak was jammed hard into Fish's mouth, and he realised how tough it was! A moment later Hoskins came in with a pile of half-cold rice, which Fish had been in the act of serving up. It was a sticky-looking mess, and Fish eyed it apprehensively.

"Look at this!" roared Hoskins. "The third course, by Jove!"

"Rice!" howled Coker. "Plain boiled rice! Smother him with it!"

"Don't you dare!" began Fish.

But Hoskins did dare, and the next second Fish's face disappeared beneath the huge pile of rice. He gurgled and struggled convulsively, but Coker, meaning to be thorough, swamped some of the stuff down Fish's neck. The American junior squirmed helplessly.

"Now," gasped Coker, "that's for swindling us, you Yankee swanker!"

And Coker & Co. and the other customers departed, feeling that they had avenged themselves!

Half an hour later, Fisher T. Fish had cleaned himself somewhat, and he was as cool and self-possessed as ever. The American junior was in no way sulky. After all, he had taken more money than he had laid out, so the experiment had not resulted in a loss.

Which was a very great consolation to Fisher T. Fish.

Needless to say, Fish's Popular Restaurant was popular no longer! Its doors were closed for ever, for it was very certain that after Coker & Co.'s experience, no other customer would ever cross its threshold!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trotter Thinks He Knows.

TROTTER, the dismissed Gregfrians page, walked briskly in at the gates. It was still early in the evening, although fairly dark. Trotter marched straight into the School House, and tapped at the door of No. 1 Study in the Remove Passage.

"Come in, fathead!" sang out Harry Wharton's voice.

Trotter grinned, and accepted the invitation. "Trotter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton in surprise. "My hat, what are you doing here, Trotty?"

"I've bin thinkin', Master Wharton—"

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry, who, with Johnny Bull and Inky, was taking tea with Harry Wharton and Nugent.

"It's right, Master Cherry," said Trotter seriously. "Somethink struck me 'arf an hour ago, so I thought I'd come up and talk to you about it. Gosling an' all the rest of us are in a fearful stew because o' this affair about Dibbs! It wasn't Dibbs who took them things out of the store-room, Master Wharton—it wasn't 'im at all!"

"Who was it, then?" asked Wharton.

"It was Master Bunter, sir!" announced Trotter firmly.

"Bunter—Billy Bunter?"

"Yes, young gentlemen," said Trotter earnestly. "When we—Gosling an' me—ken out o' the 'ouse to rush arter Dibbs, we found Master Bunter there, an' it was 'im who said that he'd seen Dibbs jump out o' the store-room winder. I know that Master Bunter ain't particular about tellin' whoppers, an' that must have bin one of 'em!"

"By Jove!" said Bob Cherry, "I wonder if you're right?"

"I know 'as I am, Master Cherry. It's as plain as anythink. Master Bunter is a ventriloquist, an' it struck me, sudden-like, that it would jest be one of 'is tricks to himitate Dibbs's voice to save himself. If Master Bunter 'adn't been there, I shouldn't 'ave suspected nothin'. But 'e was there—an' I'm sure 'as he's the culprit!"

"My only topper!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "You're right, Trotter! It's as plain as your face! What an ass I was not to think of it before! Bunter's the cause of all this trouble, and he's allowed Dibbs to be dismissed without saying a word!"

"The fat rotter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "The fraud ought to be scalped!"

"The boiffulness in the esteemed oil ought to be terrific!" said Hurrec Singh.

"I've been a-thinkin' of it out," said Trotter. "It ain't no good goin' to the 'Ead an' tellin' 'im all this 'ere. 'E wouldn't believe it without proof, so I reckon I'd better come up 'ere to-morrow mornin' an' do a sort of detective hact! Hif I keep my heyes on Master Bunter I'm sure to find out afore long 'ow 'e manages to git into the store-room!"

And Trotter proceeded to outline his scheme. When he departed he was looking satisfied. Lord Mauleverer was at the gate, and the schoolboy earl was looking very bored.

"'Allo, Master Mauleverer, wot are you doin' 'ere?" said Trotter.

"I'm the beastly lodge-keeper, my dear fellow!" said Lord Mauleverer, yawning. "Quite against my wishes, Mr. Quelch has set me the task of staying at this rotten gate until locking-up time! Begad, it's fearful! There's a whole hour yet!"

Trotter grinned and passed out.

Since tea Mr. Quelch had, indeed, been upon the warpath. The juniors found that they were being turned into domestics in earnest. To their utter disgust, Temple, Dabney & Co., and over half the Upper Fourth, were allotted to the task of making beds for the whole school! There had been an uproar at first, but Mr. Quelch was firm, and at last Temple, Dabney & Co. realised that their turn had come. But they were not the only ones to be given unwelcome tasks. Several boys were ordered to go round the school and clear up after the day's work. The dining-hall required tidying, the kitchen putting straight, and a dozen other important jobs cropped up.

Harry Wharton & Co., having been employed during the morning, were let off now, and the Famous Five, soon after Trotter had departed, sallied out of the gates on a visit to the village. They required some tuck, and as Mrs. Mumble's shop was closed, there was nothing else for it but to go down to Uncle Clegg's, in Friarsdale.

"Don't be late, my dear fellows," said Lord Mauleverer, as the Famous Five passed out. "Begad, I shall lock you out if you are! It is my duty, you know!"

"Rats to your duty!" said Bob Cherry.

Temple, Dabney & Co., from one of the dormitory windows, watched the Famous Five go out. Temple gritted his teeth, and tried to think of a way in which he could get even with Harry Wharton & Co.—for Temple considered that he and his friends had been treated very unjustly. It was the Remove's job to make beds, not the Fourth's!

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

Soon after the work was completed, and the Fourth-Formers sallied out into the Close. Near the gates a still figure could be seen. It was Lord Mauleverer, and the schoolboy millionaire, growing weary of marching up and down, had procured a chair. Mauleverer was always a languid sort of youth, and, despite the chilly January evening, he had actually dozed off.

"My hat!" ejaculated Temple. "I've got an idea!"

"What is it?" growled Fry.

"We'll diddle those Remove kids yet!" chuckled Temple. "There's about half an hour before locking-up, and before then Harry Wharton and his lot will be back. Why not tie old Mauly to his giddy chair and lock the gates! Then when the Remove kids arrive they'll find themselves dished. Do you think it's a good wheeze?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "A first-class idea!"

And the Fourth-Formers, chuckling hugely, routed out a piece of rope, and stole up to the dozing gate-keeper. Then, before Lord Mauleverer could wake up, the rope had been flung round him and drawn tight.

"Begad!" gasped his lordship. "What's up?"

"It's all right," chuckled Temple, "you're only a giddy prisoner! Collar his keys, Fry!"

Fry did as requested, and in less than a minute Lord Mauleverer was bound hand and foot to the chair. Then the chuckling Fourth-Formers locked the gates, and flung the keys down in front of the unfortunate Remove. They were practically within his reach, but, being bound, he was utterly unable to touch them.

"Begad!" he gasped. "You're not going to leave me here? What?"

"We are, my son!" grinned Temple. "When Wharton comes up you can give him our compliments, and tell him we're not going to make any more blessed beds! If there aren't any giddy servants here by to-morrow, we shall get bed-making shoved on to the Remove!"

And Temple, Dabney & Co. went into the School House chuckling.

"By Jove," murmured Lord Mauleverer, "what a ridiculous position to put me in! I—I feel most uncomfortable, begad!"

Ten minutes later Harry Wharton & Co. came up, and Bob Cherry grasped the gates. They refused to budge.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob. "Whose locked the giddy gates?"

The Removes gazed through the bars into the gloom.

"Why, there's old Mauly there, squatting on a chair!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The squatfulness is terrific!"

"Get up, you lazy boulder, and unlock this gate!" shouted Harry Wharton. "What the dickens do you mean by locking it before time?"

"Begad, my dear fellow, I didn't lock it!" protested Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, you can jolly well unlock it!" said Johnny Bull.

"Begad, I can't! Temple has been up to some beastly trick!" said his lordship. "They've bound me to my chair, and I can't move an inch. The keys are just in front of me!"

"Well of all the rotten games!" growled Bob Cherry. "We're locked out!"

Harry Wharton & Co. glared through the gates at Lord Mauleverer. The position was indeed exasperating. The juniors could actually see the keys lying in front of the dandy of the Remove. Yet neither they nor the schoolboy earl could reach them. And the Close was dark and silent. All the fellows were in the School House.

"We shall have to climb over the rotten wall!" grumbled Nugent.

"Yes; it's the only—Hallo, who's that?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

A dark form appeared in the Close. It passed one of the lighted windows, and Bob Cherry let out a shout.

"It's Bunter! Hi, Bunter! Come here!"

"Hallo, who's that?" called Billy Bunter, rolling up to the gates.

In two minutes the Owl of the Remove had let Harry Wharton & Co. into the Close. Lord Mauleverer was released from his unpleasant position, and all the juniors trooped into

NEXT MONDAY: "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S RESCUE!" Another Splendid Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

the School House. But as soon as Harry Wharton had reached the seclusion of No. 1 Study the captain of the Remove banged his fist on the table.

"Trotter was right!" he declared.

"What are you jawing about?" demanded Frank Nugent.

"Why, didn't you notice anything peculiar about Bunter?" asked Wharton. "His face was jammy, and he had come from the back premises! He'd just been on a raiding expedition. The fat little bounder is the cause of all this trouble with the servants! If Trotter doesn't show him up tomorrow I'll jolly well do it myself!"

And the rest of the Co. unanimously agreed that Billy Bunter ought to be stopped at his little game. The Owl of the Remove did not dream that exposure was near. Had he done so he would not have slept so comfortably in his bed that night!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trotter on the Track.

THE following morning the situation was unchanged.

The worried Head of Greyfriars was still unable to procure servants to fill the places of the old ones, and he was now forced to wire to London for some. But even with resorting to this expedient the new servants would not be at Greyfriars until evening.

So there was another day of upset and disorder staring the harassed Form-masters in the face. It was very worrying, and Dr. Locke scarcely knew what to do. He almost wished he had listened to his deputation's demand, and reinstated Dibbs.

But the end of the trouble was very near, had the Head only known it. Trotter, Gosling, and the other servants had remained in the village, for they were still convinced that they would be able to prove Dibbs's innocence, and make the Head realise that he had done them all an injustice even though he had dismissed them for insolence. They had been excited and angry at the time, and when the Head realised that the whole thing was a sheer misunderstanding, he would probably let the matter pass.

Trotter, especially, was certain of getting at the truth. Immediately after breakfast—and a very unsatisfactory breakfast it had proved—Trotter presented himself at the School House. Trotter was not in his page's uniform, but, nevertheless, he hurried up to the Remove passage. He did not wish to be seen there by any of the masters.

"Oh, here you are, Trotty!" said Harry Wharton, who was discussing Bunter's guilt with Frank Nugent in Study No. 1. "We were just talking about you. I think it's time we had an ending to this rotten state of affairs! We simply couldn't get through another day without all of you coming back!"

"You realise how much we're worth now!" grinned Trotter. "But, jokin' aside, Master Wharton, I think as you're right. Considerin' as it's Master Bunter who's bin the cause of it all, I think it's only right that 'e should be showed up!"

"Well, the only thing to do," said Frank Nugent thoughtfully, "is to trick Bunter into going to the store-room. If we can get him to go there at once, you can be on the watch round the back, Trotty, and see how he gets in. There's a giddy mystery connected with it. I'm jolly certain the fat bounder doesn't get in at the window. It may seem taking advantage of him, but in a case like this we can't afford to be too lenient."

"No fear!" said Harry Wharton. "Why, Bunter's a crawling worm! He's actually kept mum and let all the servants be dismissed! Why, he ought to be publicly flogged! If we prove Bunter to be the culprit, and take him before the Head, I don't reckon it'll be sneaking. At a time like this, when the whole organisation of the School is out of order, it would only be doing the fair thing both to Dr. Locke and to the servants!"

"That's what I think!" said Nugent firmly.

"O' course," agreed Trotter, "it wouldn't be sneakin', Master Wharton. In a case like this 'ere it wouldn't be right to do nothin' else. There's all us servants to think about. Why, if you let matters stand, you wouldn't sleep comfortable!"

Harry Wharton banged the table.

"I've got a wheeze!" he said quickly. "The very idea! I admit it's a bit of a stratagem, but if Bunter doesn't walk into the trap you can call me a fatheaded chump! Just listen to this!"

And Harry Wharton rapidly outlined his scheme.

"My hat!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "It's ripping!"

"Not 'arf!" said Trotter. "It'll work a treat! When are you going to do it, Master Wharton?"

"Now—this very minute!" replied the captain of the Remove quickly. "I think it's my duty to do it, and I'm not going to back out. Before we can go to the Head we

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simply must have proof. We're going to have lessons this morning, but if this idea pans out all right, we shall cop Bunter on the hop before lessons start. Trotter, you buzz off round to the back; you know what you've got to do."

"Right-ho, Master Wharton!"

And Trotter disappeared.

"Now, Franky," said Wharton, "say your lines to me."

Frank Nugent grinned.

"I say, Wharton," he said carelessly, "'they're going to clear out the store-room this morning! Every blessed thing's coming out, and before lessons are over the room will be bare! How's that?"

"Ripping!" said Harry Wharton. "I'm off to find Bunter. When I repeat your words to him, I don't think he'll jump to the giddy wheeze."

"No fear!" said Frank Nugent. "He'll be too anxious about the grub!"

Harry Wharton found Billy Bunter standing under one of the old elms in the Close. As a matter of fact, the Owl of the Remove was feeling far from comfortable. He knew that he was the cause of all the trouble, and Bunter felt that he ought to own up. But he wouldn't do it; he hadn't the courage.

Harry Wharton strolled up carelessly.

"I say, Bunter," he said, "heard the latest?"

"The latest?" repeated Billy Bunter. "What do you mean?"

"Why," said Wharton, "somebody has just told me that they're going to clear out the giddy store-room this morning!"

Bunter started.

"What's that?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness.

"Somebody told me that the store-room's going to be cleared out during lessons," repeated Wharton, watching Bunter out of the corner of his eye. "Of course, that's only what I've heard. I wonder if it's anything to do with this striking bizney? Perhaps the Head's going to see what grub there is in the store room, so that he can rake up a dinner."

Harry Wharton scratched his head. It was a signal to Frank Nugent. The latter appeared on the School House steps.

"I say, Harry!" he bawled. "I want you!"

"Right-ho!" shouted Wharton.

And he hastened across the Close, leaving Bunter under the old elms, looking somewhat startled. As Harry Wharton had anticipated, the Owl of the Remove had swallowed the bait without a thought of disaster.

"The store-room's going to be cleared out—oh?" he muttered, in dismay. "And I was relying on another feed to-night! I'm famished!" He looked round him quickly. "I wonder if I dare go round to the back now? There's nobody in the servants' quarters, and even if I'm spotted nobody would connect me with nicking things out of the store-room. I can say I dropped something down the coal-hole!"

And Billy Bunter, dismayed at the thought of being done out of another feed, rolled off across the Close. As Wharton had expected, his greed had got the better of his caution, and he was doing the very thing which would bring about his downfall. Harry Wharton's stratagem was in no way a dishonourable one. He had not told a lie. He had simply acted a part, and Bunter had been deceived.

The back-quarters were lonely and deserted, and Bunter noticed, with keen satisfaction, that the blinds of the kitchen and scullery were down. Without waiting a moment he crossed over to the stone slab which covered the coal-hole, and swung it back. A moment later he had disappeared.

Trotter came into view from the stable.

"My 'at!" he ejaculated to himself. "So that's the way 'e did it! The artful young raskil!"

Trotter nimbly dropped through into the coal-cellar, and cautiously made his way after Billy Bunter. He nearly uttered an exclamation of astonishment as he just caught sight of Bunter's legs disappearing upwards through a trap-door into the store-room.

But Trotter had seen enough. With a look of triumph on his face, he hurried out by the way he had come, and rushed into the Close.

Wharton, Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Bob Cherry saw him instantly, and they rushed across.

"We've got 'im!" gasped Trotter breathlessly.

"Good!" panted Harry Wharton.

"Master Bunter went down the coal-hole!" went on Trotter quickly. "I follered 'im into the cellars, an' found that there's a trapdoor leadin' up into the store-room. I can see now 'ow Master Bunter did the trick! My 'at, an' I never knowed as there was a trapdoor there!"

"The artful young bounder!" exclaimed Wharton. "He deserves to be shown up!"

The juniors hurried round to the yard, and concealed them-

selves in the stable. They did not have to wait long. After five minutes Billy Bunter appeared, rather grimy after his contact with the coal, and he clambered laboriously out of the hole. And as he set the stone slab in place the Removites rushed out upon him.

"Got you!" shouted Harry Wharton wrathfully. "We've caught you fairly and squarely, Bunter. You fat swindler, you deserve to be sacked!"

"I—I say!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've been down there to look for something, you know! Leave me alone, you beasts!"

"We're going to take you to the Head!" said Wharton grimly.

"What!" roared Bunter. "I—I—"

"Oh, shut up! The game's up, you worm!"

And Billy Bunter, howling and struggling, was hastened off to the Head's study.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Innocents!

DR. LOCKE looked up from his desk with a worried frown as there came a tap at the study door.

"Come in!" he exclaimed wearily.

The door opened, and the juniors, with Trotter behind them, crowded in. Billy Bunter was looking pale now, and he was quaking visibly.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "What is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"We've found the culprit, sir!" said Harry Wharton grimly.

"It's a lie!" yelled Billy Bunter. "I had nothing to do with it! I didn't go into the store-room to pick grub at all!"

"Oh, so you admit you did go in!" said Bob Cherry quickly.

"I—I—"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head. "Pray explain the meaning of this extraordinary scene, Wharton! Why have you brought Bunter into my study by force? Has he been breaking the school rules?"

"He's the cause of all the present trouble, sir," said Wharton. "It seems that you've made a mistake, sir. Dibbs was innocent of robbing the store-room, after all. It was Bunter all the time, sir!"

"What!" exclaimed Dr. Locke, his brows darkening angrily. "Pray explain yourself, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton rapidly told the Head how Trotter had come to the school the previous night to tell of his suspicions, and how they had laid the trap for Bunter. The Head was very angry, but, at the same time, a feeling of infinite relief instantly took possession of him.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed at last. "It is through this wretched boy, then, that the whole misunderstanding has arisen? It was you, Bunter, who went in the store-room on Tuesday night. You imitated Dibbs's voice to escape the consequences of your own dishonourable act?"

"I—I didn't, sir!" faltered Bunter. "I—I wasn't in the store-room at all! I only went there to look for my handkerchief. I mean, I didn't go there—"

"Silence!" said the Head wrathfully. "You are contradicting yourself at every point, Bunter. I think it is fairly positive that you are the culprit. In fact, there is no doubt whatever on the matter. You deliberately pilfered food from the store-room, and then laid the blame on to Dibbs! Wretched boy, I have half a mind to expel you immediately!"

Billy Bunter nearly fainted.

"Oh, sir," he gasped wildly. "you won't do that! I confess everything, sir! It was I who was in the store-room, and I did imitate Dibbs's voice! I only did it, sir, because I was afraid of what would happen! I never dreamed that Dibbs would get into trouble, and that it would end in all the servants backing him up! I—I'd made up my mind to come to you, sir, and confess it all this morning!"

"Lies will not help you, Bunter!" said the Head sternly.

"But you're not going to expel me, sir?" panted Bunter breathlessly.

"No, Bunter; I shall not do that," said the Head thoughtfully. "But I shall give you one of the soundest floggings you ever received in your life! I am of opinion that it will do you more good than expulsion! I know your character, and to a boy who has such a fondness for food as you have the offence is not so serious. I have no doubt that having found the trapdoor, it proved too great an attraction for you. You had not sufficient will-power to resist the temptation!"

As a matter of fact, the Head was so relieved at finding the trying situation at a sudden end that he took a more lenient view of the case than he otherwise would have done.

"My boys," he said to Harry Wharton & Co., "I have to thank you for bringing the truth to light. Needless to say, I am intensely grieved that I have been, indirectly, the cause of the servants striking! They may have been insulting in their excitement; but, under the circumstances, I am prepared to overlook that. It is a great relief to know that everything is all right!"

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"Rather, sir!" agreed the juniors. "But it was Trotter who found out the truth!"

"So it was," said the Head—"so it was! Trotter, my boy, I am very pleased with you, so pleased, in fact, that I shall give you double wages at the end of this week!"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Trotter, beaming. "I'm sure I only did wot was right! I'm glad you ain't hexpellin' Master Bunter! I don't reckon 'e'll start nickin' things from the store-room agin!"

"I think you are right," said Dr. Locke, with conviction.

Exactly an hour later all the servants trooped in at the gates of Greyfriars.

"Here they are!" shouted Bulstrode, as a crowd of Removites rushed across the Close.

"How do you feel, Gossy?"

"Wot I says is this 'ere!" said Gosling. "I knowed hall along that Dibbs was innocent! Still, the 'ead's a gent! I slanged 'im suthin' cruel, an' 'e's a real good 'un to let matters slip into their usual places agin. It's glad enough I am to be back 'ere, an' I reckon heverybody else his of the same opinion!"

And everybody else was. In two days' time the servants had quite settled down again, as though nothing had happened. Mrs. Mumble had reopened her little tuckshop, and the ordinary routine of work was resumed at Greyfriars. And the occasion is never likely to arise again when the Head will find it necessary to enlist the services of the school-boy domestics!

(Next Monday "Harry Wharton & Co.'s Rescue," by Frank Richards. Order your copy in advance. Price One Penny).

TALES TO TELL.

POOR LITTLE SEPTIMUS.

Little Septimus had been very good, and had recited "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck" with admirable feeling for the benefit of his Uncle Robert.

"He's a wonderful boy!" exclaimed that gentleman enthusiastically. "And he deserves to be rewarded."

So saying, he plunged his hand into his bulging pocket, and with some difficulty—for he was rather portly—extracted a penny, which he offered with great importance to his good little nephew.

"Remember, my boy," he said, "that if you take care of the pennies, the shillings will take care of themselves."

Poor little Septimus looked rather dubious.

"I do take care of the pennies, Uncle Robert," he answered sadly; "but as soon as they get to be shillings my pa takes care of them for me!"

CAT-CALLS.

They were engaged to be married, and called each other by their first names, Tom and Fanny, and he was telling her how he had always liked the name of Fanny, and how it sounded like music in his ear.

"I like the name so much," he added, as a sort of clincher to the argument, "that when my sister Clara asked me to name her pet terrier, I at once called her Fanny—after you, dearest!"

"But I don't think that was very nice," said the fair girl, edging away from him. "How would you like to have a dog named after you?"

"Why, that's nothing!" said Tom airily. "Half the cats in the county are named after me!"

BLISSFUL CALM.

The tender-hearted old lady on a charitable visit through the convict prison stopped for a moment to peer through the little trap in the door of one of the convict's cells, and to exchange a comforting word with the poor fellow inside.

"I am so sorry for you," she said. "I suppose you'll be very thankful when the time comes for you to leave this dreadful place?"

"No, mum, I shan't!" said the man, with unmistakable emphasis. "Don't want no liberty. I'd a sight rather stop where I am!"

"How strange!" murmured the old lady to a warder, as she turned away. "I had no idea the prisoners were so happy. What was the poor man's offence?"

"'E was a bit too absent-minded," replied the warder, with a grin. "'E kept forgettin' as 'ow 'e was a married man, an' 'e's got five wives, all bad-tempered, waitin' for 'im when 'e gets out!"

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TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!



Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.

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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."

Whilst crossing the Atlantic on his way to England—where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," is to be put up for auction—Nathan Gore, the American millionaire and jewel-collector, receives a message from his agent in London to say that the diamond has been bought by his hated rival, Ferrers Lord, who is the owner and inventor of the wonderful submarine, the Lord of the Deep.

Nathan Gore swears he will obtain possession of the diamond, and on the night of his arrival in London he goes to his rival's house, and taking the stone, leaves in its place the message: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing 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 accepts the challenge, and a few hours after the robbery the chase is started. For five months, accompanied by his two friends, Ching-Lung, a Chinese prince, and Rupert Thurston, he pursues Nathan Gore, travelling once round the world, but never being able to overtake him. At last he hears that Gore has bought an island in the South Seas, and is fortifying it. Ferrers Lord follows the mad millionaire to the place in his submarine, and, on arrival, divides his force into two parts, leaving Rupert Thurston with Prout and most of the crew on board the Lord of the Deep, and taking with him Ching-Lung and one or two men in the launch, which the Lord of the Deep carries stored away. This vessel is wrecked, and the crew are stranded on Goreland—Nathan Gore's island—and are eventually sighted by a cruiser belonging to the American millionaire, Barry O'Rooney, one of the crew, catches the fever, and they are forced to hide in a cave while Ferrers Lord goes to get help. Barry, when the fever is at its height, escapes from the cave and swims out to sea, where he is picked up by Captain Hackerden, of the cruiser belonging to Gore. In the morning the captain sends O'Rooney—who has really recovered from the fever, but who still acts as if he is delirious—with an escort of two of his crew to the shore. However, while they are on the sea another storm springs up, the skies darken, and more than once the boat is nearly sunk.

(Now go on with the story.)

Barry Gives His Captors the Slip.

The sail of the boat was an old one, covered with patches, and when it became drenched the added wind-pressure threatened to tear it to ribbons. If the sail went, the boat would have been swamped in a second.

Barry sang, shouted, and laughed. He watched the shore, too, though he had no hope of seeing his lost companions. The ancient hulk came in sight. The storm was growing in violence, and it was imperative to run into the channel for shelter. Barry was compelled to admire the coolness of the big sailor, and the skill he showed in handling the little boat. He brought her in magnificently.

"Me koin'd frinds," thought Barry, "Oi'm goin' to lave yez, and that's the solemn thruth. The say air has put some beef into me ligs, and Oi'm no more faverish than a tadpole in a tank!"

The cruiser was no longer in the channel. The sail came down, and the lascar pulled them to the shore. Torrents of rain were falling, and it was almost as dark as night. The big sailor who had been with Hackerden on his visit to Ching-Lung, bolted straight for the cave, careless of the prisoner. The lad sprang after him.

"Good-boie!" grinned Barry. "Shame on yez to lave me out in the wet! Whoy the ould maniac has forgotten his gun! Am Oi sthrong enough? Come, Barry—come, my broth of a bhoy! Remember yez are an O'Rooney, and remember the fam'ly what-ho!—I mane motto—niver say doie, niver pay rint, and do, or ye'll be done! Away wid yez—go!"

He pushed with all his strength. She was afloat. Barry rolled into her and drove her off with the oar. A red flash

shone through the rain, and a revolver cracked. Barry pulled his hardest. He heard angry yells, and several loud reports. A few splinters were chipped out of the mast of the boat. The wind caught her, and drove her gently across the channel. Looking back, the Irishman could just discern the two figures.

"Boy the way they dince and hop about," chuckled O'Rooney, "Oi should think they loike ut. Och, there's a lot of sinse in balminess—a lot of sinse! Troth, Oi can't bear the thought of the pore dears sthickin' there in the cowl'd, cowl'd rain. They'll get faver for sartin'! Oi must tell them to go in."

Barry kicked open the stern-locker, and found himself the possessor of a little fortune—sea-biscuits, whisky, tinned beef, tobacco, oranges, and a stale loaf. Before fully investigating the board, he pulled the bullet out of a cartridge with his teeth, and fired the blank. The two figures fled.

"Begorrah!" grinned Barry. "Oi've tumbled head-first into a goold-moine of joy! Oi loike being balmy. Mither Sthorm, plaze go away! Yez have done all Oi want yer to. Don't kape me here till the rogues fetch a lot more blayguards, and some of thim floatin' kittles they call iron-clads. Och, here's some frish wather and a tin mug! Oi'll dhrink the hilt of Joolius Sayzer wance more!"

Barry tried the whisky, and pronounced it a "throat." His hopes swelled high. Nothing in the world could shatter his staunch faith in Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung. In Barry's estimation, the men who could capture them had not been born. And Barry was a true son of Erin. It was his nature only to see the happy side of things. Had the noose been round his neck, and the hangman's hand on the bolt of

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the drop, Barry would have felt sure that the rope would break.

"Yes," he pondered, "there are worse things than being balmy. 'T sames a pithy to play the game low-down on Hackerden. Somehow, Oi loike him. Arrah! Go in whin Oi tell yez—go in!"

Barry jumped as a spent bullet whizzed behind him. He was unaware that a revolver would carry so far. He began to pull slowly seawards, putting several questions to himself.

Had his comrades escaped? Were they safely aboard the Lord of the Deep, or were they still lurking on the island? If they were anywhere near the place where he had left them he could not aid them unless the wind changed. The gale had moderated considerably. Sooner or later a search would commence.

"Oi'll go and luk for Mистер Rupert," said Barry, setting his teeth. "Oi reckon Oi'll be dhrowned, for ut's little Oi know how to sail a boat. Will, will, Oi can only dhrown wance. Av Oi—"

Something made him turn and look over his shoulder. Two black hands were gripping the gunwale. The startled Irishman let go the oars, and reached for the rifle. He stood ready to strike with the butt.

The face of the lascar rose into sight, and a knife whizzed past Barry's head. He floundered forward, and had the swimmer by the throat.

"Come in—come in!" said Barry grimly. "Oi'm willing to take a passenger. The boat is big enough for two. Aisy—aisy! D'yez want to git hur-rt? Come aisy, yez dir-rt, or Oi'll throttle yez!"

In Dread and Doubt.

Aboard the submarine dismay and apprehension reigned. The vessel had sailed round Ching-Lung Island twice without finding any trace of the launch. Within five minutes of the breaking of the storm the two dummy destroyers had been battered to pieces.

Daylight showed them the demolished sea-wall, but it was impossible to be certain whether its destruction was due to the hurricane or to the millionaire's explosives.

Gan-Waga was in a state of collapse. He would scarcely speak to anyone. When darkness came, the Lord of the Deep sank until she rested on the sandy bottom.

Prout and Rupert Thurston did not feel inclined to eat. They were too anxious.

"By hokey, sir," said Prout gloomily, "this sort of thing puts a man off his grub! It soon makes 'baccy taste like onions!"

"It's awful!" said Rupert.

"Well, it ain't as cheerful as bein' left a fortune," agreed the steersman. "I ain't a man to whine and snivel, and it's been my rule through life to look a thing square in the face, whether it's bad or good. See 'ere, sir; this is what I mean."

He reached for two or three glasses and a plate.

"The storm blew dead ashore," he went on, "and I'll call the edge of the table the shore. That orange is the channel betwixt the islands. 'Ere's the launch. 'Ow the currents run I don't know. The launch couldn't ha' gone through the channel, for that must ha' been a reg'lar maelstrom, in which she couldn't live. I've looked at Mr. Lord's map till my eyes ached. It ain't a perfect map, for he telled me so. There ain't such a thing, unless that old rogue Gore has made one. Now, do you foller me, sir?"

"I'm trying to, Prout."

"I puts the fork 'ere," said Prout, "and that's Goretown Bay. The launch might ha' run in, but only if it was life or death."

"They would be taken, in that case?"

"In coorse. Mr. Lord's map marks a current runnin' 'ard south round the tail of the little island. There's some of them curly things wi' dots underneath—"

"Notes of interrogation—question marks," said Rupert. "They mean that Lord was not sure about the direction of the current."

"Yes, sir; that's the p'int. On the east side of Goretown the map don't show a gallon of water where a boat could shelter. I looks facts in the face, though it's often a 'cart-breakin' job. If the launch went ashore there, or on the sands, she's scrap-iron now. If she got round the tail of the island there, she'd likely find easy water under the cliffs of the big island. If she didn't get round it—"

Prout shook his big head slowly and sadly. Rupert made no answer. He knew what Prout meant. The launch had certainly come to grief. In order to avoid the cruisers while waiting for the submarine, Ferrers Lord would have run out to sea.

He could only have gone east with the storm behind him. The Lord of the Deep had gone east nearly thirty knots.

"We must keep hoping, Tom," said Rupert. "If we find nothing to-morrow I shall send to Gore. They may be prisoners."

"Mebbe, sir."

"If they are, and he declines to give them up, I shall sink one of his cruisers."

Prout hid a smile. He had the millionaire's signed orders in his pocket.

"We'll wait, anyhow, sir," he answered. "The launch was a fine boat, but it was willainous gale. When I says wait, I mean till moonrise. We'll cruise about all night on chance. If I get a few winks of sleep, I'll be right and fit again."

He fell asleep in his chair. The fore-castle, usually noisy and ringing with laughter, was perfectly silent.

Yard-of-Tape had a few privileged visitors in the galley, where the state of affairs was being discussed with bated breath. Gan, a picture of despair, was permitted to sit on the ice-chest. Gan loathed the sight of a candle, and even butter had lost its charm. During the day he several times threatened to swim ashore.

The sound of the pumps exhausting the tanks broke up the meeting. Rupert had to order the men who were not on duty to bed. The moon was high and clear, but the barometer was uneasy, and Prout prophesied more wind and rain. He and Rupert spent the night in the wheelhouse.

Little did they guess as the submarine slid through the waves that at one time they were within a knot of their lost comrades. Daylight showed them one of the cruisers, hull down, in the north.

Now only half the wheelhouse was above water. Rupert was haggard and worn-looking. He had not shaved, and he had hardly slept an hour. A squall struck the submarine, making it impossible to see anything, for the waves seethed incessantly over the dome.

"Confound the weather!" said Thurston. "Everything seems against us!"

"By hokey, I don't know, sir!" said Prout cheerfully. "It's an ill wind that don't blow somebody good. If it blows down a chimney or two it's very like pushin' some ships along 'ome. It'll give us a chance to eat without feelin' we're wastin' time. And, though I ain't no doctor, sir, I thinks a glass of champagne and a nice bit of fish wouldn't do you no 'arm. And 'ere it comes!"

Yard-of-Tape took up a dainty little breakfast. Rupert had a bath, shaved, and changed his clothes. He knew that Prout was really captaining the ship; but Rupert did not resent it. Rupert was ready to listen to any good advice, and all the men were at liberty to offer it. Prout did not wish to send to Gore, and he said so bluntly when Rupert returned.

"Give me your reasons, then."

"Why, sir," said the steersman, "it ain't for us to make no first move. If he's took 'em, we shall soon know. By axin', you see, we puts ourselves in this 'ere position. We as much as owns up that we expects Gore to do it, and that's as good as sayin' we've done summat that gives him a right to do it. What's been done I know; what's been said I don't know. This job is an odd'un all round. I ain't no sea-lawyer, and I'd sooner take my chances in a scuttled ship nor in a court of law."

"They've been chattering, then?" said Rupert sharply.

Prout buried his bearded chin in a huge tin of coffee.

"By hokey, you can't stop it!" he answered. "Men and women is the same for that. It's a rum v'yage, and they'll talk. It's the only human nater. I've 'eard piracy spoke on, and not as they care. They're all as true metal as a sovereign out of the Mint. But what's to come on it if—if —"

Prout took another long pull.

"Speak out!" said Rupert.

"I mean, sir," growled Prout, "that if the wust 'as 'appened the less we knows the better. Why should I think Mr. Gore should 'old Mr. Lord prisoner? What do I know about their dealin's? I should say keep on searchin' till arternoon, and then send in a boat, axin', as anyone might ax, for 'em to start lookin' about for the launch. There can't be no 'arm in that, nothing for lawyers to catch 'old on and twist into a confession of murder. Why not wait even another day afore sendin'?"

Rupert sat thinking and listening to the noise of the waves as they shouldered the dome. There was a lot of shrewd commonsense in Prout's head.

Thurston was not in despair. No news is better than bad news. The safety of the launch was too much to hope for. The millionaire never broke a promise if it was in his power to fulfil it.

"I'll wait until sundown, anyhow," he said.

Prout climbed the iron ladder to the top of the dome. The squall was passing over. Through the rain and spindrift he caught occasional glimpses of the cliffs.

"By hokey!" he cried. "A boat!"

"Not the launch, Tom?" gasped Rupert eagerly.

"No, sir; I'd give a leg to say it was. A ship's boat, sir, and she's staggerin' inshore, and there's a mighty good sea-man holding her tiller, I lay. I'd sooner be 'ere than aboard that craft!"

"Would it be any good to overhaul her?"

"She'll be in or under afore we could catch her," said Prout.

The rain blotted out the boat. As the Lord of the Deep was rolling unpleasantly, Prout sunk into the dim calm of the under-sea, and switched on the powerful lights.

He puzzled himself over the rough chart of the islands drawn by Ferrers Lord. The map was defective, but not nearly so defective as the regulation charts issued by various Governments, with which he compared it.

Prout made one or two corrections, and lighted his pipe. Then, selecting a leather rubber, he set to work to polish the brass fittings till they shone like molten gold.

"I'm beginning to hate the craft!" said Thurston irritably. "The moment a bit of swell comes on you can see nothing."

"Well, she do lie low in the water," assented Prout; "and there ain't the view from here as there would be from the poop of a three-decker. But there's ways and means, sir. By hokey, ain't we got the camera-hobscorer?"

"Of course we have. Fix it, Tom, old fellow."

Prout pulled a lever, and a long funnel rose from a groove in the deck, and remained upright. The steersman cleared the chart-table, and swung its top over.

The reverse of the table was a circular white disc. The lights were turned out, and the vessel sank a fathom.

A picture of tumbling waves and angry sky formed upon the screen thrown there by the lenses in the funnel.

"I don't see nary a boat," said Prout. "It looks as if she was swamped, sir!"

The rocky shore was dimly visible through the rain and spindrift, but there was no sign of any craft.

The picture was one of marvellous beauty, such a picture as no human hand has ever painted, or ever could paint. The dense black clouds were torn asunder, and the sunlight flashed through.

"It'll soon have finished blowin'," said Prout. "There's more'n enough blue there to make a tar a pair of breeches. By hokey, it was a sharp 'un while it lasted! Ain't it just grand to look at, sir? I've seed them biographs and livin' photos in London, and they're mighty fine; but they ain't got the colours. Dashed if I don't feel like a kid wid a new toy when I'm looking at these obscurers."

"It is beautiful!" said Rupert, turning away.

Prout was quite entranced as he watched the storm-clouds clearing away, and the changing tints of the lashing waves.

The sea was still running so high that occasionally the picture was blotted out by a rush of wind-driven spray that swept across the lenses.

For quite a long time the steersman of the Lord of the Deep leaned against the wheel, his eyes fixed on the changing wonders and beauties revealed by the camera-obscura. Another squall came up.

"This is the last wag of its tail!" said Prout. "But it'll be choppy for hours yet. These here waters are a bit treacherous, drat 'em! I never trust--- My hokey!"

Prout leaned forward, his mouth open, and his tarry fore-finger pointed at the centre of the screen.

"What is it, Tom?" cried Rupert, springing round.

Prout made no answer, and Rupert needed none. A little boat was hanging on the very summit of a monstrous wave. She dropped like a stone into a well, and was lost.

"Swamped for guineas!" said Prout hoarsely.

"No, no; she's there!"

The boat was flung up again. She was very close to them. A great black shadow flashed across the screen.

"There's her sail. Good luck 'elp 'er!" gasped Prout. "Blowed clean out on her!"

"The glass--the glass!" shouted Rupert.

Prout whipped a huge magnifying-glass out of the drawer. There were two figures in the boat. Again she dropped out of sight, and they thought she had gone for ever. But she rose more like a rocket, and a wild cry burst from Thurston's lips.

"It's Barry! It's Barry!"

"Tumble up! Oilskins and belts! Tumble up! Tumble up!"

Prout's roar would have roused a city. He put his whistle to his mouth, and blew a deafening peal. Yard-of-Tape, who was mounting the ladder with two plates of soup, was so startled that he slipped and fell to the bottom, with the soup in his hair. The Lord of the Deep sprang to the surface, and the waves thundered over her.

"Oilskins, belts, and ropes! Tumble up! Tumble up!" yelled Prout.

In a moment the wheelhouse was crowded with men. Rupert looked in vain for the boat as the waves hissed over the dome. The deck was one swirl of water. Rupert groaned aloud.

"What can we do, Tom?"

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"Nothing just yet, sir," answered Prout. "Nobody could live out there, sir. There she is! She ain't down yet!"

They could not open the door, and no man ever born could have kept his footing on the wave-washed deck. The wheelhouse rattled as the sea struck it. They drew in their breath with a long hiss as they saw the boat shoot clean over them, with the wrecked figures clinging to her.

"O'Rooney!" said half a dozen strained voices.

"Open dats doors!"

Gan-Waga had pushed his way in, and was tearing off his clothes.

"No," cried Rupert; "I can't let you go, my brave lad!"

"Opens dats doors!" repeated Gan-Waga fiercely. "I goes and fetches Barry! I nots leis Barry drown. Yo' open dats door, or I smashes him opens!"

Gan whipped up the table to carry out his threat, but he was seized in time. Their utter helplessness was maddening. Rupert raved and stamped. He would have gone out with a rope had they not held him back. It would have been going to certain death, for he would have been battered against the rails, or washed up against the wheelhouse and mangled.

Barry was a general favourite, the life and soul of the crew. Yard-of-Tape wept and moaned, and Gan threatened to kill the men who pinioned him. Prout, though he had a great affection for the Irishman, kept a clear head. He did not even allow his pipe to go out.

"By hokey!" he roared. "You pack of bleating sheep, do some work! Get below, will you? Sling the oil into the tanks, every drop of it! 'Ang on to that mad Eskimo, Dave, and take him wi' you! Clap him in hirons! See to the oil, Mr. Thurston, sir, and use the lot!"

"Look alive there, or, by hokey, I'll wake some of you up wi' a rope's-end! You pack of lazy, mutinous villains, get a move on! By hokey, where's the rope? Now, then!"

Prout woke up Yard-of-Tape in a fashion that made the Frenchman howl and dance. The steersman's energy and example roused Thurston. The Lord of the Deep carried large quantities of oil. It was run off in the tanks, and with a clatter the pumps began to work.

The effect was magical. The oil gushed out on either side of the vessel, and the result was instantaneous and magical. A great cheer rose. For half a cable's length round the ship the water heaved and rolled, but not a wave broke, though they rose in jagged walls beyond the enchanted boundary. And then, best of all, the storm-tossed boat rushed out of the turmoil into the comparative calm.

The door was dashed open. Gan went headlong into the oily sea, and came up under the craft's bows. Barry tugged at the oars, his strength almost spent. A dozen welcoming hands were outstretched to drag him aboard, and to help the half-dead lascar. Somebody put a glass of steaming spirit to the Irishman's lips, and a twinkle came into Barry's eyes as he slowly tilted the glass.

"Do ut again!" he gasped. "Plaze do ut wance more. Troth, Oi want somethin' to dilute the noine million gallons of say-water Oi've afther been and swallowed. Me inside is loike pickled porrk, and Oi hate bein' a sailor bowld!"

"But the chief, Ching-Lung, Joe, Maddock?"

"Ashure, Oi guess!" said Barry. "Oi lift thim there, anyway, all aloive and kickin'. Give the gint wid the bees-wax and blacklid complexion a dhrop of the same. Oi owe him many thanks for comin' wid me, bekas he couldn't hilp ut. Oi'll niver go to say no more--niver, niver! Oi'll be a Militiaman insthead! Arrah! Fill ut agen, and lit me wash some of the salt out of my constitution."

Prout and Rupert was shaking hands. Gan was trying to stand on his head, and the men were laughing and cheering. Barry had brought glorious news. Dry clothes and towels, hot from the galley fire, were brought, and Barry had such a vigorous rub down that he had to yell for mercy. The operation made a new man of him. Surrounded by his comrades, he related the stirring story of his adventure.

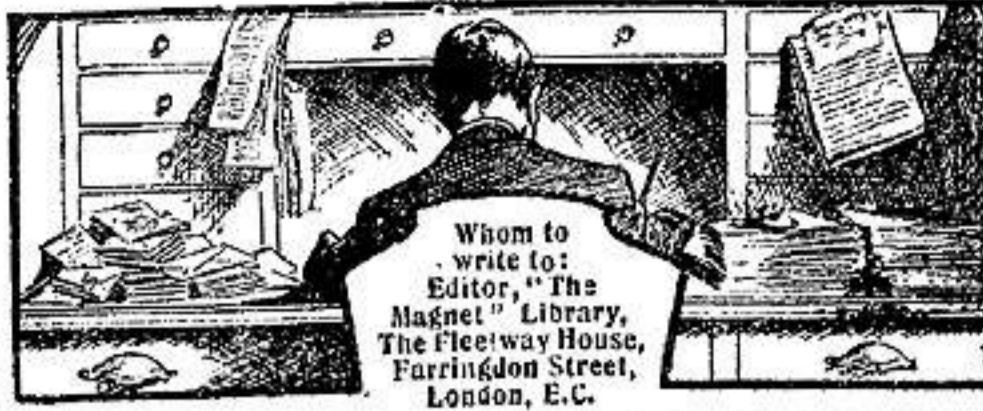
"By hokey!" said Prout. "You did yourself a bit of good when you went off your nut, sonny! You ain't quite the full-sized prize idiot you look! By hokey, you brought a bit of joy back, that's a solid fact!"

"The point is, have they been captured?" said Rupert.

"Niver!" said Barry. "Oi'll bet my castle at Ballybunion Gore hasn't got his claws on thim! Oi can't give no better advice than this: Run up the channel, and land a score of men. They're hoidin' undher the cliff. Av the other blay-guardds foind us, sure the Lord of the Deep kapes a noice collection of iron pills, and she can give thim a dose. Oi shouldn't wondher av they're not back in the ould cave!"

(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.

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S RESCUE!"

By Frank Richards.

In our next splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, Vernon-Smith & Co., finding themselves in somewhat bad odour with their Form-fellows, conceive the happy idea of renting a sort of club-house outside the school, where they can indulge to their heart's content in those forbidden amusements which are so dear to them. Unfortunately for their little scheme, Harry Wharton & Co. get to know of it, and come down heavy upon the bounders of the Remove Form. The exciting incident which finally puts an end to the "Bounders' Club-house" is quite accidental, but might have turned out seriously but for the timely occurrence of

"HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S RESCUE."

FURTHER "FIRST AID" HINTS.

Now for a few words with regard to the accidents which happen frequently, and which Boy Scouts and others are often called upon to remedy—such as eye troubles, fainting, and fits.

Eye troubles,

unless of a very serious nature, can easily be overcome by removing the source of irritation with a fine camel-hair brush—in cases where a brush is not to hand, the corner of a clean handkerchief answers the purpose just as well—afterwards bathing the eye with weak boracic lotion.

The treatment for

Fainting

is to loosen the clothing round the neck and chest, and to let the patient obtain as much fresh air as possible, keeping his head in a lower position than his feet, so as to allow the circulation of the blood in the head to restart. Then apply wet handkerchiefs to the head until the patient is recovered. Smelling-salts may also be used to remedy fainting.

People suffering from

Fits

usually require medical assistance; but to help in bringing the patient round, loosen the clothing and admit fresh air. On no account should stimulants be given. If the patient suffers from convulsions at the same time, his movements should be controlled as far as possible, to save him injuring himself; also something hard should be placed between the teeth to prevent the tongue being bitten.

Bandaging.

There are only two kinds of bandages used in first aid work. They are the triangular and the narrow roller, and of these the triangular is the better. For one thing, it can easily be turned into a narrow roller, and it is nearly always to hand in the form of a handkerchief. Any handkerchief can be used, but for preference it should be white, and, of course, clean, as if a coloured one is used the colour is apt to run, and so cause blood-poisoning. Triangular bandages are easily made by folding a pocket-handkerchief into two, and this in its turn can be easily made into a roller-bandage of practically any width by further folding in this manner:

Lay the handkerchief flat, and fold into two—from corner to corner—so as to make a triangle. Then fold the handkerchief once more, taking the top corner down to the centre of the base of the triangle. Again fold it in two, and a fairly wide roller-bandage is obtained. If it is required narrower still, all that is needed is to continue folding until the required width is obtained.

In the case of extreme urgency, if a white handkerchief cannot be obtained, a coloured one may be used, but only when lint is placed between it and the wound.

Bandaging varies according to the position of the injury,
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 259.

NEXT MONDAY: "HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S RESCUE!"

and all that the first-aid man really needs to know is how to bandage in such a manner to protect the wound from further injury through dust or grit while waiting for the doctor.

For instance, for

Bandaging the Head

the method is to make one or two turns round the head to cover the wound, securing it with a safety-pin, afterwards taking the bandage once under the chin to the top of the head, where it can be finally fastened. To bandage the wrist and forearm, start by laying the bandage across the palm of the hand. Then take it behind the thumb, across the back of the wrist, once more across the palm, thus securing the beginning of the bandage, and placing it between the thumb and the rest of the hand, take it right back to the wrist again, and so on in circular turn up to the elbow, and back again.

And so on in general bandaging. As long as one layer of bandage slightly overlaps the preceding one, and is not too tight, but is properly secured, little harm can come to any wound. However, always bear in mind that a little piece of lint soaked in warm water will do much to cure the wound, and will effectually prevent the bandage sticking to the injured part.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

W. A.—You can buy theatrical "makeup" boxes from Messrs. A. W. Gamage, of Holborn, London, E.C.; and from Messrs. Barr & Co., 28a, Bow Lane, London, E.C.

O. W. J. (London).—Thank you for your letter and suggestion. I am afraid, however, that this latter is hardly practicable.

"Southampton Readers."—The first number of "The Gem" Library was published some time before "The Magnet."

E. C. Linnington (Stockbridge).—Thanks for your letter. Sorry I cannot insert your notice.

Harry Fraser (N. W.).—I am afraid I cannot inform you how to make the lamp you speak of. I should think it would be cheaper to buy one than to attempt to make it.

"A Dissatisfied Reader."—I am very sorry you did not like the story you write about, which I judged met with general approval amongst my many readers, according to the letters I received at the time. It is true, as you say, that Vernon-Smith is a junior of bad character, but he has been, none the less, a dangerous opponent to Harry Wharton & Co. Now, however, the Removites know his true character too well to trust him.

COMING SHORTLY!
GRAND NEW CASH-PRIZE
COMPETITION
for Readers of
"THE MAGNET," "THE GEM," AND THE
"PENNY POPULAR."

A Special Note.

I have lately received many nice letters, some of which contain helpful suggestions and ideas, which I should like to answer separately in this column. Unfortunately, the lack of space altogether precludes this, so that I must content myself by a brief acknowledgment of some of the best of these letters. To the following readers my best thanks are due for their interesting and welcome communications:

James Whitehead, Eastwood; "A Delighted Reader," Bangor; W. Davies, Cwm Bran; W. Dallaway, Dalston; "Four Loyal Supporters"; Mrs. Lilian Carlton, Dublin; "An Irishman"; F. C. and S. B., Brixham; I. S.; Miss B. Simpson, Nottingham; L. Draisey, Kingswood; W. L. W., Victoria, Australia.

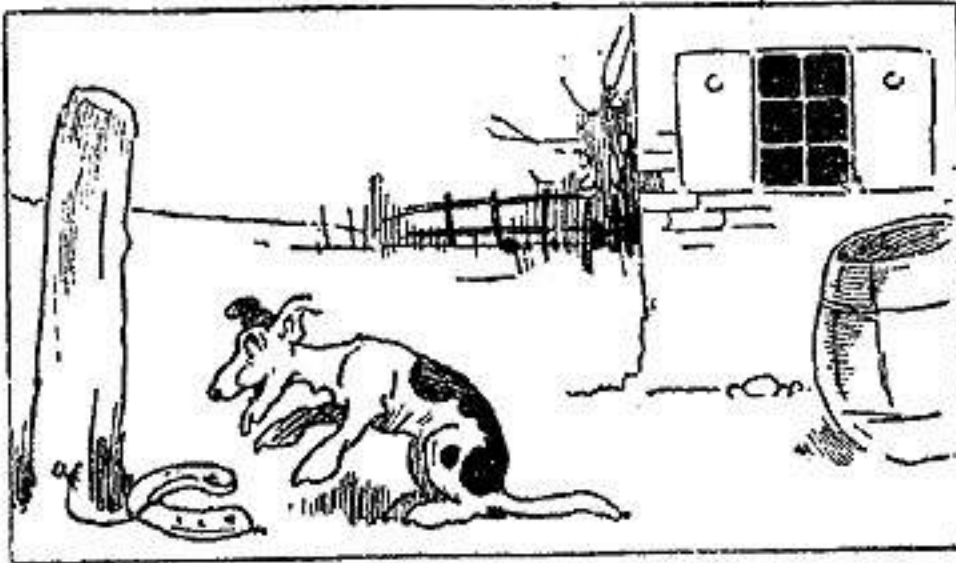
THE EDITOR.

Another Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early.

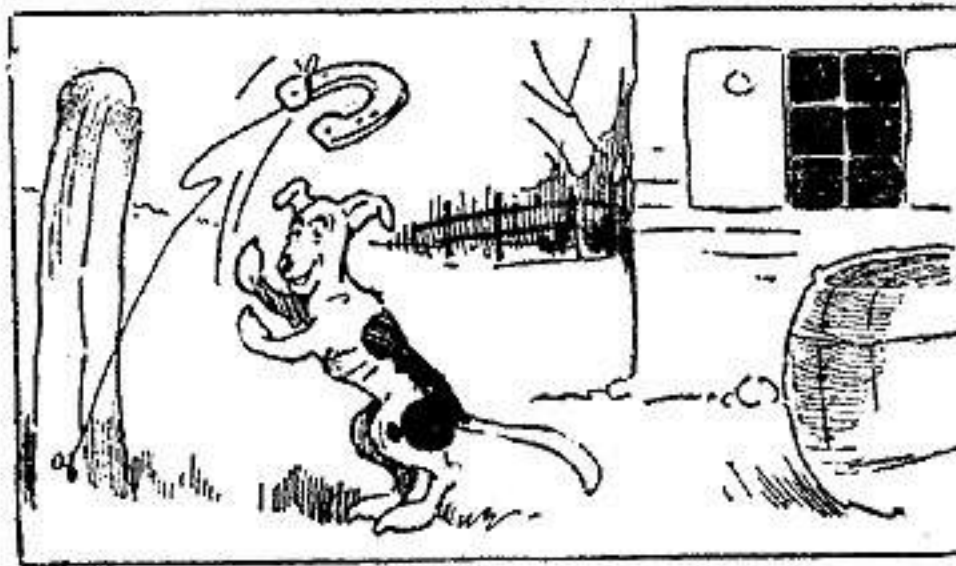
THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY

SPLENDID COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

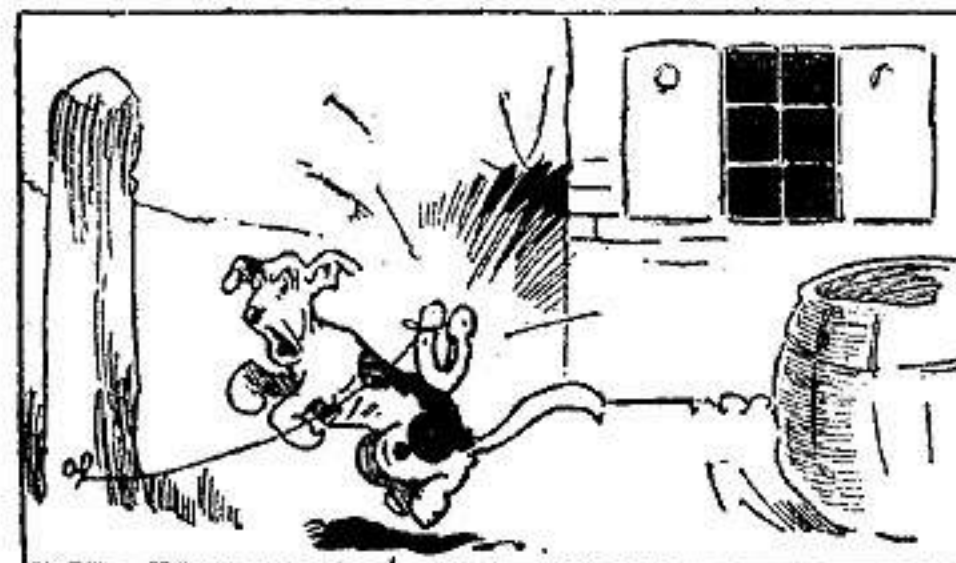
FIDO STARTS 1913 WITH BAD LUCK.



1. "What!" cried Fido. "A horseshoe! Dear me, I knew my luck was in when I got up this morning! Let's see, you sling it over your shoulder for luck, don't you?"

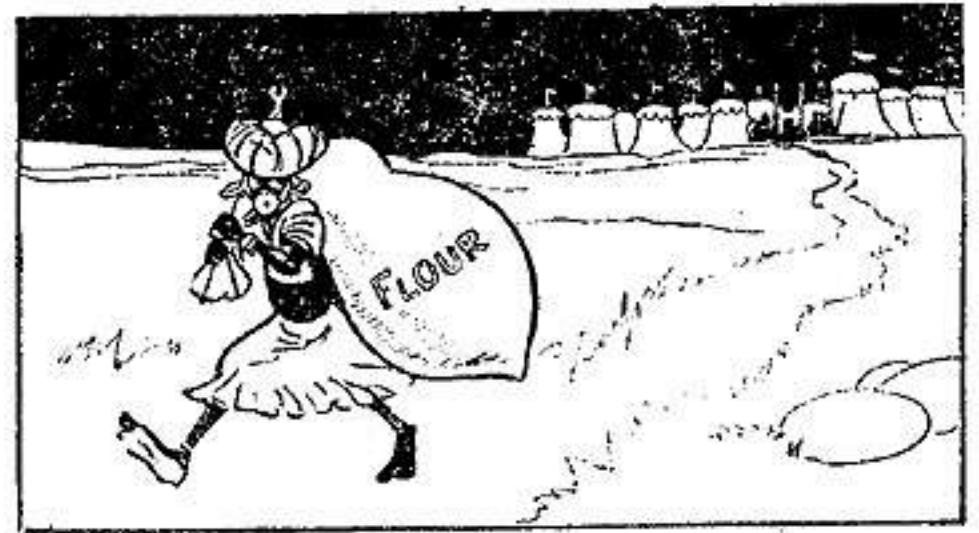


2. "Well, here goes! Now I wonder what good fortune's in store for me this bright and gladsome spring morning, eh? I wonder—I——"

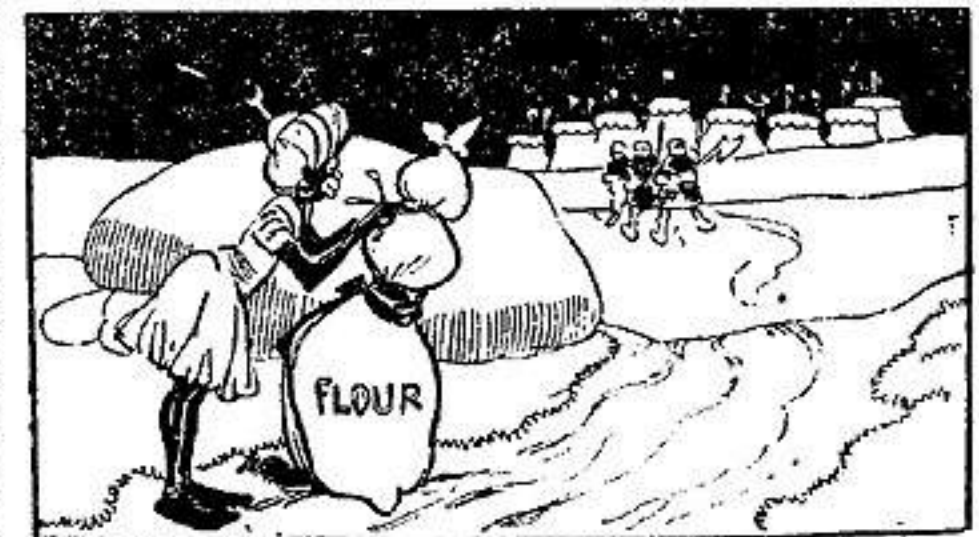


3. "Wow!" For the careless canine hadn't noticed that the horseshoe was tied to the post, and when it caught him a hearty ponk on the jugular point he knew what his luck was.

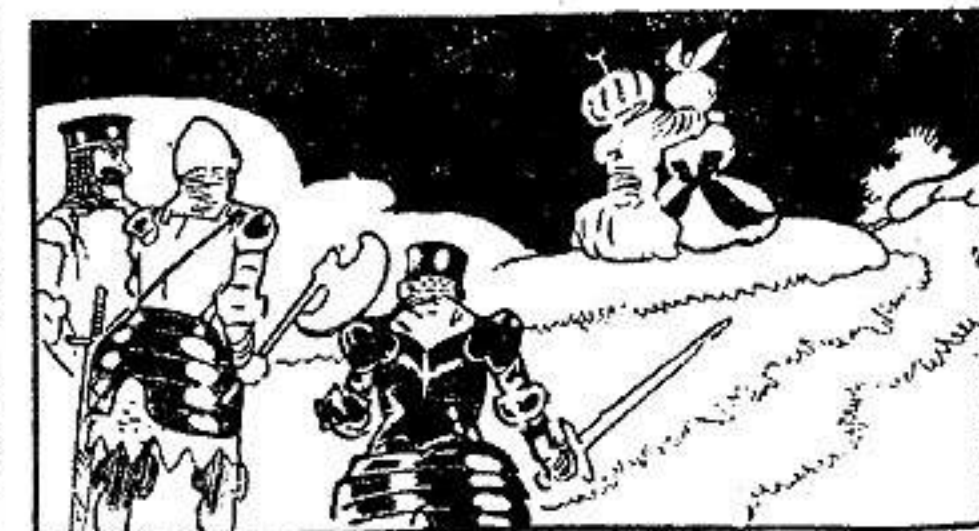
NOT SUCH A SILLY COUPLE AS THEY LOOKED!



1. Pongo, the nig, was leaving the Crusaders' camp with a sack which looked as if it contained some of the knights' property.



2. Presently he heard footsteps, and realised that some of the Crusaders were on his track. So he quietly altered the sack a little bit——



3. And when the Crusaders came up this is what they saw. "I' faith," said they. "Let them alone, silly cuckoos!"

ONLY A POT-SHOT, TOO!



1. "Well, I'm jiggered!" laughed the fat man at the door. "What rummy-looking napper-cases some of these foreigners do wear, to be sure!"

2. But just then his old woman chucked a saucepan at him for being idle, which caught him fair and square on the napper, as above—and then 'twas the Armenian's turn to laugh.

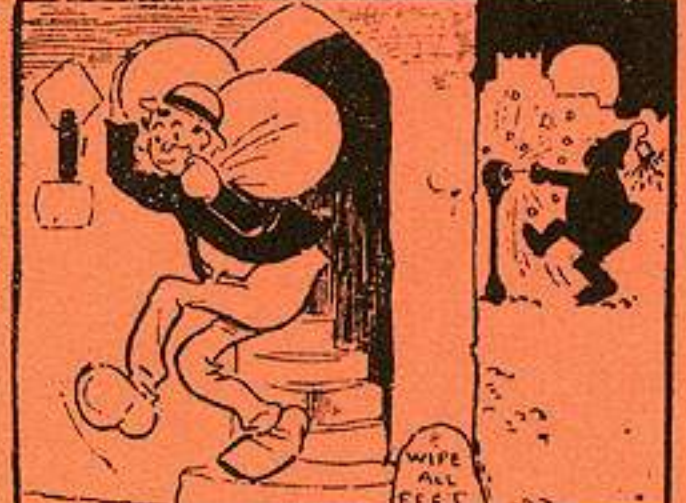
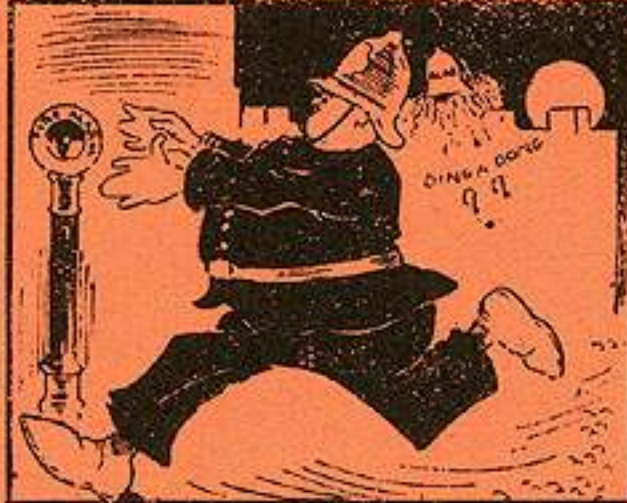
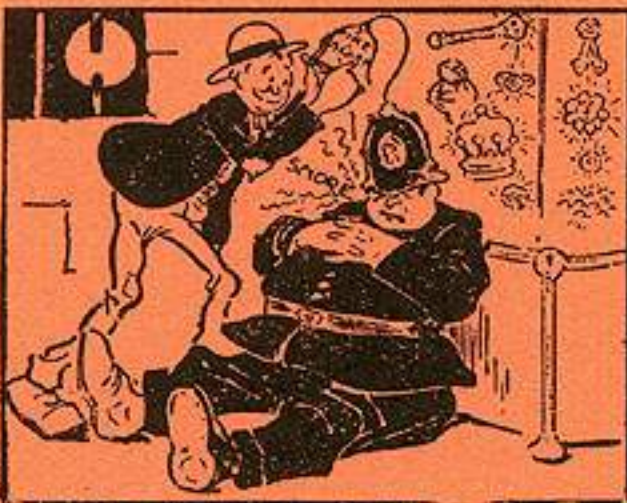
STUCK TO HIS CALLING.



Father: "And so you want to marry Mr. Brown, my dear. Well, now, do you think he shows proper industry in his calling?"

Daughter (indignantly): "I should think so! Why, he's called nearly every night for a month!"

A CROWNING SUCCESS.

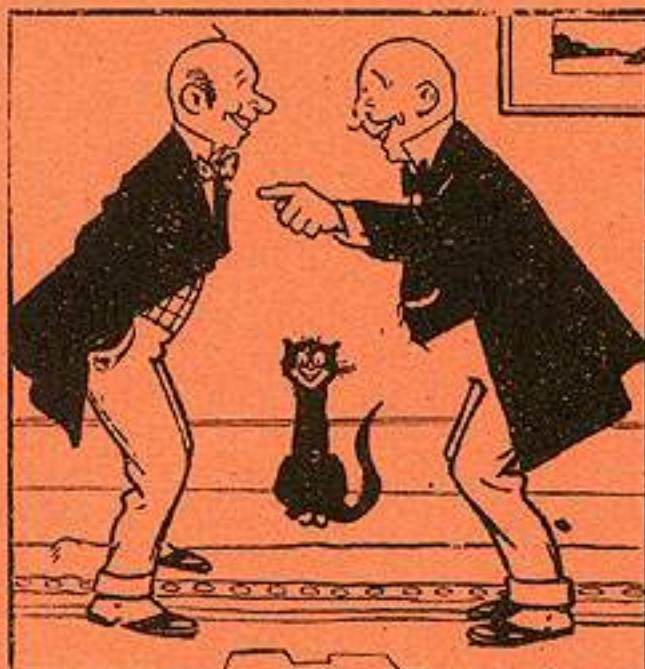


1. "Whoohoo!" chortled Slim Sam, the crack cracksman. "I'll just fix this bell on the constable's helmet, and then help meself to the Crown Jewels."

2. Then the merry old bluebottle awakened from his sweet slumber, and naturally rang the bell. "My word," said he. "where's the fire?"

3. And while he was well at it with the fire alarm, Slim Sam got off with the jewellery. Smart boy, Sam!

MEASURE FOR MEASURE!



"Ever noticed anything remarkable about carpet?"
 "Carpet? No. How do you mean?"
 "Why, it's bought by the yard and worn by the foot."

A FAR-SEEING "BLIND" MAN.



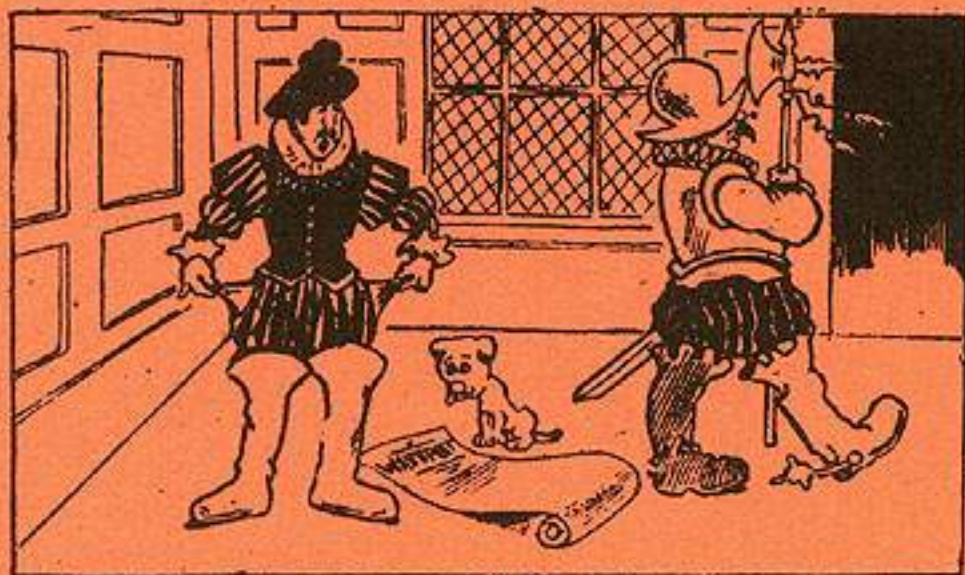
Joax: "That man has been mixed up in many shady transactions."
 Hoax: "What is his business?"
 Joax: "Awning maker."

THEN SHE LOOKED BLUE!



"Goodness! This milk is awfully blue!"
 Milkman: "Well, lady, you see I ain't been in the business very long, an' I don't know jest how much chalk to use."

BLOWING HIS OWN TRUMPET.



1. "Beshrew me!" cried Sir Simon. "'Tis passing rough on me that his Majesty should collar my lands and property, leaving me ne'er a groat! I must e'en live somehow. How shall I manage?"



2. "Hee, hee! I have it. With the help of my trusty riding-boots and my jack-knife, I'll e'en manufacture a musical instrument and replace my fortune! What thinkst thou of the notion, my hearty hound?"



3. Then did the knight sally forth into Cheapside and perform sweet strains, much to the joy of the good citizens, who showered wealth upon him freely. 'Twas right smart of him, wasn't not?



ONLY AN ARCHER.

The Cat: "Hallo, I'm off sharp! There's a chap with a ten-horse power catapult!"

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS!



1. "Ods bodikins!" roared the Baron de Boones. "I ain would I smite my rascally rival, the Duke de Dumum, but yo moat prevents my attack!"



2. Then Miggs, the magician, weighed in with his patent freezing mixture. "For a few groats, sir," said he, "I will e'en do it on thy rivals!" "'Tis a bargain, gadzooks!" replied the Barou de Boones.



3. Then did Miggs, the magician, exercise his mystic powers, and froze the river hard with a mighty freeze. And the baron, calling on his henchmen, slipped over and gave his rival ye good old dusting!



CROAK-Y!

Madame Frog: "Why do people speak of a plague of caterpillars? It seems to me they are a delightful convenience."