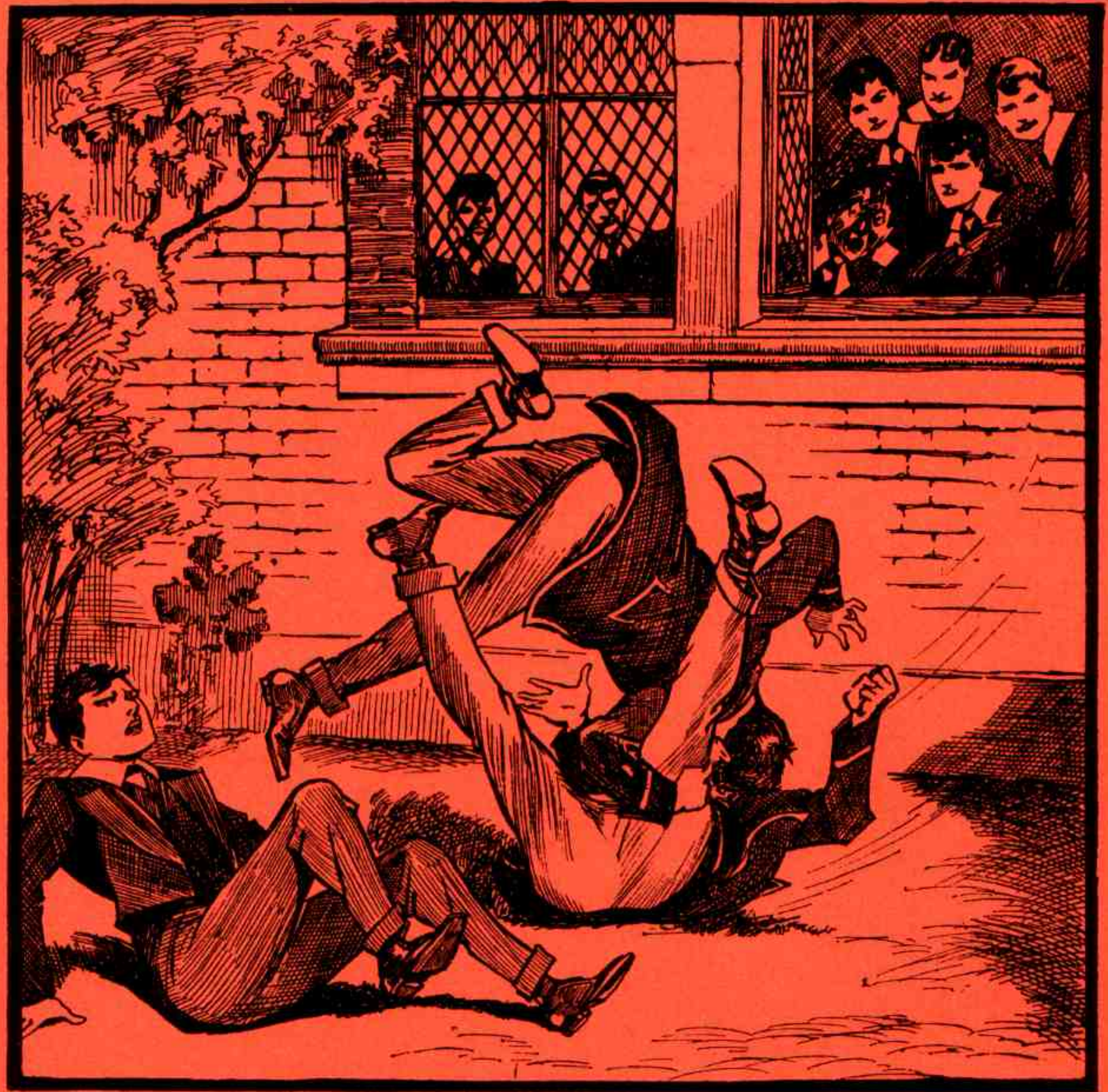


Grand Long School Tale!



COKER & CO. CHUCKED OUT!

(An amusing incident in our long, complete School Tale.)

STORYETTES.

HIS MONEY'S WORTH.

Bill Curry was a butcher. What's more, an enterprising butcher, who was determined to extract from his business every penny that could be extracted. His favourite dodge was always to cut off just a little more meat than his customers asked for. The latter rarely objected, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred paid cheerfully for the extra quantity.

So he pursued his cunning course without even a twinge of conscience—that is to say, until the day when Jim Travers got the better of him.

It was late one Saturday evening, and Jim, rushing into the shop just before closing-time, said:

"The missus wants a shilling's-worth of steak."

"Right!" replied Bill. Then, cutting off the meat, he weighed it, wrapped it up, and passed it to his customer.

"There's one-and-threepence-worth," he remarked casually.

"That won't be too much, I suppose?"

"Oh, no," replied Jim—"not for a shilling!"

Then, throwing down the coin, he took the meat and walked out.

IT WOULDN'T WASH.

Farmer Turtle was in London for the first time, and thought his best celebration of the occasion would be a good dinner at a smart restaurant.

He manfully struggled all through the menu.

"What cheese can ye recommend, man?" he inquired of the waiter. "I'd loike something new."

"Will you try a little Roquefort, sir?" suggested the waiter.

"Hang it! I've never heard of it; but bring it along. I loike the name, anyway."

The cheese particularly tickled his palate, and he thought his wife might like to try this "new" cheese. Arriving home late, he laid the small cheese, in its silver-paper wrapping, on the sideboard.

"I can't say as I likes your new-fangled London soap," said his wife next day, as he came in from the fields. "It may be mighty stylish, but I couldn't kinder get any lather; and when I washed the children wi' it they grumbled like mad!"

DID THE VICAR STOP?

It was too much. Every Sunday old Adams, who blew the organ, would continue blowing after the music had stopped, thereby producing most undesirable sounds.

Time and again had the organist taken him to task for it.

"Right, mister," had been old Adams's invariable reply.

"I forgits, you know."

One Sunday the organist could stand it no longer.

The congregation had been set tittering by the old man's forgetfulness, and during the sermon the organist seized the opportunity to write him a note on the matter, and hand it to a choir-boy to deliver.

Misunderstanding the whispered directions, the lad handed the note straight up to the vicar, who astoundedly read the following:

"Will you stop when I tell you to? People come here to listen to my music, not to your horrible noise!"

EARLY SYMPTOMS.

"Yes," sighed the bride, "marriage makes a big difference."

Her mother-in-law laughed.

"Can one month's experience really have taught you so much wisdom? But, tell me, child," she added, "what has George been doing? Is anything wrong?"

"Oh, no," said the girl, "I don't think anything is wrong." She hesitated for a minute. "But, d'you know," she continued, "whenever—whenever I sit on George's knee now, his foot goes to sleep so much more quickly than it used to!"

WHAT'S SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE—

"Teddie," said Mildred, with a contemplative look, "how much money have we in the bank?"

"We!" replied her husband, in sarcastic mood. "I have about a hundred pounds. Why do you inquire?"

For a second there came a glint in the feminine eye; then laconically:

"I just wondered, that's all. I have a letter to-day from the lawyer who wound up poor pa's estate, and I find he had much more to leave than anyone expected."

"That's fine!" exclaimed hubby, suddenly alert. "How much do we get from him, Milly?"

"We!"—surprisedly. "I get a few thousand pounds! Why do you inquire?"



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SHE HANDLED THE POEMS.

"Is the editor-in-chief in?" asked the visitor, as he strolled into the magazine office at eight o'clock in the morning.

"No, sir," answered the charwoman politely. "He doesn't get here so early. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Perhaps you can. I suppose you are not connected with the poetical department of the magazine?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" was the quick reply.

"You are? And what do you do?"

"I empty the waste-paper baskets, sir!"

STUDIES FOR LAZINESS.

The subject under discussion was laziness. And what more appropriate subject could be found for a hot June evening?

Potter's idea, however, of the laziest man on earth was promptly capped by James.

"Why, I once knew a man," declared the latter, "who stayed in bed for twenty years, simply because it was too much trouble for him to get up and dress himself."

Then Brown, the globe-trotter, chimed in.

"Recently," he said, "while I was over in America a couple of tramps, basking in the sun by the roadside, called out to me as I was passing, and said that they were absolutely famished—done to the world, in fact."

"Well," said I, "there's a farmhouse quite near. Why don't you go there and beg some food?"

"That's what we want to do," one of them replied, "but we're both too tired to volunteer; so we're going to toss a penny to see who must undertake the job."

"Then why delay?"

"Ay, mister. We're waiting for an earthquake to come along and throw the penny up!"

"IF AT FIRST—"

Cheerful was the agent, and sunny was the sky, as he stepped into the private office of the business man.

"I have here, sir," he began, "a patent glass-cutter for two shillings. I might—"

"Don't want any glass-cutters!" snapped a sharp voice behind the desk.

"Well, then, I have a carpet-cleaner. In thousands of homes—"

"I don't need a carpet-cleaner!"

"Ah, perhaps not! But this phonograph will certainly interest you. Its entire cost is but three pounds. There isn't another—"

"I hate phonographs!" thundered the voice behind the desk.

"Indeed, sir! A camera no doubt meets your recreation needs. Only—"

An ominous growl stopped this little flow.

"No camera to-day? Does a fast motor-car appeal—"

A fiery face was pushed over the desk.

"For goodness' sake, stop! Give me a glass-cutter, and get out of here!"

"Thank you, sir!" said the agent. "That's all I had to sell in the first place!"

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Until Further Notice.

"O H. rotten!"
"What a beastly sell!"
"This is the giddy limit!"
Those exclamations, and a good many more, were uttered in chorus by the crowd of Greyfriars juniors.

Morning lessons were just over, and the juniors had swarmed out of the School House in great spirits. It was a fine, summer morning, and the sun shone merrily in the old Close of Greyfriars. Quite a large party of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form—had made directly for the tuckshop in the corner of the Close, to refresh themselves, after arduous labour in the Form-room, with the sparkling ginger-beer and the luscious jam-tart. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, had had an unusually generous remittance that morning, and his Form-fellows were nobly and loyally ready to back him up in "blucing" it.

And then, to use an expression dear to the heart of the novelist, their feelings may be better imagined than described when they beheld the shutters up on the little shop, and a paper pinned on the door, bearing the dreadful words:

"CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!"

The Schoolboy Shopkeepers!

A Splendid, New, Long Complete Story of the Chums of Greyfriars.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

"Well, of all the rotten sells, this is about the rottenest!" said Bob Cherry. "'Closed until further notice!' And when are we going to get the further notice? What are we going to do for ginger-beer?"

"And jam-tarts?" said Nugent.

"And rabbit-pies?" groaned Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, we're not going to stand this. Mrs. Mimble can't play these rotten tricks on us! It's too thick! I suppose the old girl doesn't want us to die of starvation?"

The juniors grinned. Billy Bunter did not look as if he were in danger of dying of starvation. He looked more likely to perish of fatty degeneration of his whole person.

"I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, too," said Bunter. "I was going to stand you fellows a really stunning feed when my postal-order comes—"

"When!" murmured Bob Cherry. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Indian junior, remarked that the whenfulness was terrific.

"But what are we going to do?" exclaimed Tom Brown. "It's too rotten shutting up the tuckshop like this! It's a jolly long walk down to Uncle Clegg's in the village."

"This is the second time Mrs. Mimble has played this rotten trick on us," said Billy Bunter, in an aggrieved tone. "The blessed shop was closed a few weeks back, and some of you chaps got it in the neck for breaking bounds to go down to Uncle Clegg's one night. It's too thick!"

"It's rotten!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"We won't stand it!"

"Bang on the door," said Bolsover major.

"Good egg!"

"I guess we've a right to be served," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I calculate it's not business to close the shop in business hours. We don't run our businesses like that over there."

Bang, bang, bang!

Bolsover major thumped on the door with a large stone, and the noise rang through the little shop and the little house. The juniors cheered on Bolsover major, and some of them backed up his noisy summons with their boots on the door. They were annoyed, and they were indignant. Mrs. Mimble, the gardener's wife, had the privilege of keeping that little shop within the precincts of Greyfriars School, and there was no other tuckshop within a mile. It was "up" to Mrs. Mimble, therefore, to keep the tuckshop open when her numerous customers wanted to patronise it.

For a crowd of hungry juniors to be told to wait till "further notice" was the limit.

Bang, bang, bang!

Thump, thump, thump!

"Let us in!" roared Bunter.

"Come down and open the door, love!" sang Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang, bang, bang!

A window above the little shop opened, and Mrs. Mimble looked out. The plump face of the good dame bore an expression of distress. She was greeted by a roar from the juniors below. The crowd had increased in numbers—there were Fourth-Formers, and fags of the Third there now, and Coker, of the Fifth, had come along. All of them were loudly indignant at the closing of the tuckshop.

"Come down and let us in!" roared Coker, of the Fifth.

"Open the blessed shop!"

"What's the little game?"

"I want some ginger-beer!"

"I want some tarts!"

"Come down!"

"My dear young gentlemen," began Mrs. Mimble, "the shop is closed until further notice. I am very sorry indeed

There was a roar.

"Rat!"

"Come down and open the door!"

"We'll bust in the door if you don't!"

"The bustfulness will be terrific, my esteemed Mrs. Mimble."

"Young gentlemen, I assure you—" said Mrs. Mimble.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Yah!"

"Come down and let us in!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Let's hear what Mrs. Mimble has to say? What is it, ma'am? If you are ill, or anything of that sort, we don't mind serving ourselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Young gentlemen—please be quiet! The shop is closed because there is influenza in the house. My little boy has influenza. You must all keep away until he is well. I am very sorry, but it cannot be helped. Until the shop is reopened, you must go to Mr. Clegg's in the village when you want anything. I am sorry!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"What did the kid want to go and catch influenza for?" growled Bolsover major. "Like his cheek, I think!"

"I don't see why he can't be sent to a hospital," growled Billy Bunter. "That's what hospitals are for! There's the new Cottage Hospital in Friardale—you could have him taken there in a cab."

"Shut up!" said Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a dig in the ribs that made him gasp. "If there's illness in the house, that alters the case. Sorry the kid's laid up, Mrs. Mimble, and hope he'll soon get well. Who's coming down to Friardale?"

"Nothing else to be done," grunted Bolsover major. "I think it's rotten!"

"I am sorry, young gentlemen," said Mrs. Mimble from the window. "Perhaps in the course of a week—"

"Week be blowed!" growled Billy Bunter. "Do you think I'm going to walk down to Friardale every time I

want a blessed jam-tart for a blessed week? Why can't the blessed kid be shoved off into the blessed hospital—Ow! Leggo my ear, Bob Cherry, you beast! Yaroooh!"

Mrs. Mimble closed the window.

The disappointed juniors crowded away—and a large number of them walked down to Friardale with Harry Wharton, to carry out the important task of "blueing" the remittance. After they were gone, ever and anon fresh customers arrived at the school shop, only to be faced with the fatal notice on the door—"Closed until Further Notice." And there was growling and grumbling loud and deep among the Greyfriars juniors.

One junior, however, neither growled nor grumbled. It was Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. Fisher T. Fish had smitten his thigh with a sounding smack, a sign that a great idea had entered his mighty brain. Fisher T. Fish was a youth full of ideas, and simply bristling with clever schemes. His ideas generally turned out to be quite useless, and his schemes always ended in smoke—but failure never daunted the enterprising Yankee junior.

Fisher T. Fish was thinking. And when F. T. Fish did some thinking, something was bound to happen, he guessed.

When Harry Wharton & Co. came back from their little excursion to Uncle Clegg's, in Friardale, they found a paper pinned on the notice-board in the hall. It was in the spider-legged handwriting of Fisher T. Fish. And it ran:

"All members of the Remove are requested to turn up in the Rag after lessons, to discuss Ways and Means of dealing with the Tuckshop Question. A new and thoroughly business-like scheme will be submitted by the under-signed:

"FISHER TABLETON FISH."

"More fishy schemes!" grunted Johnny Bull. "I wonder what it is this time? He's tried a money-lending scheme, and a pawnbroking scheme, and got it in the neck each time. Like his cheek to call a meeting, too. Who's Fish?"

"I guess Fish is the brainy man in this school," said the voice of the individual in question. "I guess this scheme is a regular high-roller—just a few."

"Oh, rats!" said Johnny Bull.

"The ratfulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Fish!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with his amiable smile.

"I guess you'll see; you just watch out!" said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "I guess this is going to put the lid on—some!"

"But what's the idea?" asked Wharton.

"That's what I'm going to explain to the meeting, I guess. You turn up in the Rag after lessons, and you'll hear something drop, I guess."

And Fisher T. Fish declined to be more explicit. He walked, or rather strutted, away, and the juniors burst into a chuckle.

"I think I can see myself missing the cricket to turn up at a mouldy meeting in the Rag!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Same here!" grinned Frank Nugent. "Fishy can hold his meeting all on his lonesome—just a few. I mean some."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Quite Off!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, picked up a pointer, and came towards the desk where sat Fisher T. Fish, of New York. Afternoon lessons were proceeding in the Remove Form-room, and Mr. Quelch was imparting to the juniors some really valuable information about the early days of Rome. But there was one fellow in the class who had no ears for Roman history. Fisher T. Fish was plunged in thought, and having failed to answer after Mr. Quelch had spoken to him twice, it was evident that he needed waking up. Mr. Quelch had taken up the pointer for that purpose.

Fisher T. Fish had a pocket-book open on his knees under the desk, and was making jottings in it with a pencil. He was deep in calculations, and he had forgotten that there was such a person as Henry Quelch, and such a place as Rome. A rap from the pointer brought him back to everyday life with a jump.

"Yaup!"

Fish jumped out of his calculations, and blinked at the Remove master.

"What are you doing?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"I guess I'm makin' a little calculation, sir," said Fisher T. Fish. "I reckon that with an expenditure of ten pounds as capital, I can make the thing fairly hum!"

"Ah! You are making calculations in that pocket-book. I perceive?" said Mr. Quelch amiably.

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M

290



Crash! Crash! There was a sound of jam-pots smashing on the floor inside the store cupboard, and the shareholders danced with rage outside. If they could have got at Bunter just then his fate would have been little better than that of the jam-pots; but they could not get into the cupboard, and Bunter could not get out! (See chapter 10.)

"Yep!"

"Very good! You see the wastepaper-basket?"

"Yep!"

"Kindly place that pocket-book in it, and then attend to your lessons. You will also write out a hundred lines of Virgil."

"Oh, gee-whiz!" said Fisher T. Fish in dismay. "I say, sir, these are very valuable calculations. I'm working out—"

"Put that rubbish in the wastepaper-basket immediately!" thundered the Form-master.

Fisher T. Fish groaned inwardly and obeyed.

The Removites grinned as he returned to his place. Fish was evidently devoting lesson-time to calculations concerning the great new scheme which was to be unfolded at the meeting—if there was a meeting. The Yankee junior looked round at the grinning Removites with an injured expression. He did not make any more calculations that afternoon. Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye was upon him.

But as soon as class was dismissed, Fish made a bee-line, as he would have called it, for the wastepaper-basket. Mr. Quelch's voice rapped out.

"You will leave the rubbish there, Fish!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Fish.

And the Yankee junior left the Form-room disconsolate.

"I guess it's time for the meeting, you chaps!" he ex-

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claimed, as the Remove streamed down the wide passage towards the door of the Close.

"I kinder guess it's time for the cricket," said Bob Cherry, "and I kinder calculate that I guess better than you do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five took their bats and departed. Fisher T. Fish grunted discontentedly. He caught Peter Todd by the elbow as he was going out.

"Come on, Toddy!" he said.

Peter Todd stared at him.

"Come on where?" he asked.

"Important meeting in the Rag!"

"Oh, blow the meeting!" said Todd. And he jerked his arm away and walked off.

"You're coming, Bolsover, I guess?"

"Guess again!" said Bolsover major, with a chuckle, as he sauntered out into the Close.

"Dutton, old man!" Fisher T. Fish took the arm of the deaf junior. "I say, Dutton!"

"Eh!" said Tom Dutton.

"You're coming to the meeting?"

"Don't you be cheeky!" said Tom Dutton, shaking an unexpected list in Fisher T. Fish's surprised face. "I don't allow anybody to tell me I'm bleating!"

"I didn't say bleating!" roared Fish. "I said are you coming to the meeting?"

NEXT
MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

"Eating what?"

"Meeting, ass—meeting!" shrieked Fish.

"Oh, there's going to be eating at the meeting!" said Dutton. "All right, I'm on, if it's a feed. What have you got?"

"I guess it's not a feed. It's a meeting!" yelled Fish.

"But what are you going to eat?"

"Eat nothing! It's just a meeting!"

"You said it was a feed, you silly ass!" said Dutton wrathfully. "I think you're off your dot. Seat!"

And Tom Dutton gave Fisher T. Fish a shove, and he "scatted." The Yankee junior snorted, and looked round for fresh victims. He spotted Billy Bunter, and bore down on him.

"This way to the Rag, Bunter!" he said.

"Feed?" asked Bunter.

"Nope."

"I'm not coming, then."

Bunter rolled away, and Fisher T. Fish gave another disgusted snort. One of the most brilliant ideas of modern times was practically going begging, and he could not even get the fellows to listen to him. It was said of old that wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it. Fisher T. Fish felt that it was true.

The Yankee junior made his way alone into the Rag in the hope that the meeting would "roll up" into that famous apartment of its own accord. But the Rag was empty, and it remained empty save for Fisher T. Fish. He waited a quarter of an hour in the hope that the crowd would come. But the crowd showed no signs whatever of coming.

"Well, of all the silly guys, I guess they take the whole bun!" growled Fish. "But they've jolly well got to hear my wheeze, all the same."

And he sallied forth again from the Rag. Mark Linley was just going up to the study with a Greek lexicon under his arm, and Fish hailed him.

"Time for the meeting, Linley."

Mark grinned.

"I'm just going to do Greek!" he said.

"Oh, I guess that can wait! This is a most important meeting—a big idea, sir, that will make your hair curl."

"I'll leave my hair as it is, thanks," said Mark, and he disappeared with Liddell and Scott, and Fisher T. Fish gaited.

"I've got to get somebody to set the ball rolling," he muttered. "When one comes, they'll all come, and follow one another like sheep. Hallo, young heathen!"

Wun Lung, the little Chinese, blinked at him with his almond eyes. Fisher T. Fish did not like Chinese, but he was ready to gather in anybody to his meeting.

"I guess you're wanted, kid," he said. "Just you come into the Rag!"

"No savvy!" murmured Wun Lung.

"It's an important meeting."

"No savvy!"

"I want you to come."

"No savvy!"

And Wun Lung scuttled away down the passage. Fisher T. Fish, with a very red face, stamped out of the School House, and took his way to the cricket-field. Most of the juniors were there, and the Famous Five were at practice. Hurree Janset Ram Singh was bowling, and Frank Nugent was at the wicket. Fisher T. Fish seized Harry Wharton by the arm.

"I guess you've forgotten something!" he exclaimed.

"What's that?" asked Wharton.

"The meeting."

"Eh—what meeting?"

"My meeting!" said Fisher T. Fish indignantly. "A most important meeting in the Rag, to discuss the question of the tuckshop. I guess I'm going to make things slide, some. I've got a regular scorching wheeze."

"Let it scorch, then!" said Wharton, laughing. "I'm staying here. Run away and hold your meeting, or stay here and hold your tongue, just as you like."

"I guess you're a silly jay," said Fisher T. Fish. "Cherry, old man, you've got more sense than Wharton any day. You'd better come."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Thanks awfully. But I'm not coming. I'm playing cricket."

"Look here——" began Fish.

"Look out!" shouted Bob.

"Eh, what? I guess—yaup! yaroooh! oh, Jehosaphat!" Crack!

The ball was whizzing, hot from Nugent's bat, and Fisher T. Fish was in the way. If he had not been in the way, Bob Cherry would have made an easy catch. As it was, Fisher T. Fish made the easy catch—with his left ear!

The Yankee junior jumped clear of the ground, and clasped his hand to his ear, and roared:

"Oh, oh, oh! Great Scott! Jumpin' Jehosaphat! Oh, crumbs! Y-r-a-o-o-o-oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cricketers stood and yelled with laughter. Fisher T. Fish rubbed the side of his head, and glared at them wrathfully. He shook a bony fist at the hilarious juniors.

"I guess I won't admit you silly jays to my meeting now!" he roared. "You can go and chop chips! Yah!"

And Fisher T. Fish stamped wrathfully off the cricket-field, leaving the Removites yelling with laughter. He went into the Rag once more, in the hope of finding somebody there, but the Rag was empty. Fisher T. Fish slammed the door in great dudgeon. The meeting was evidently off.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Great Idea.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in from the cricket with ruddy faces and cheerful looks. The Famous Five crowded into Study No. 1 for tea. The famous Co. were distributed in three studies along the Remove passage, but they generally met in one of them for tea, and this time it was No. 1, which was fortunate, as Harry Wharton had a considerable amount of his remittance left.

But a sudden thought came into Wharton's mind as he was unlocking his desk to extract therefrom a golden sovereign.

"My hat! I'd forgotten!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Nugent. "Lost the quid?"

"Oh, no. But the tuckshop's closed."

"Oh, rotten!"

The juniors had forgotten that little circumstance. But there it was, staring them in the face. The school shop was closed, and if they wanted any of the usual little delicacies for tea it was necessary to cycle down to the village.

"My hat!" said Johnny Bull. "It's beastly! Somebody ought to start another tuckshop in the place, if the Mimbles are going in for influenza and things."

Nugent opened the study cupboard.

"Lucky we brought in a bag of tarts to-day," he said.

"Lots of bread-and-butter, and tarts to finish with."

"I'm hungry!" said Johnny Bull, in a tone that implied that bread-and-butter and tarts were not of much use so far as he was concerned.

"Same here," said Bob Cherry. "Things are getting into a rotten state. It's the worst thing that could happen. Why, when the Head was ill, it didn't bother us so much as Mrs. Mible's blessed kid having the influenza."

"No fear!"

"What's to be done?" said Wharton. "Can't wait till somebody goes to Friar Dale. We shall have to do the best we can. If you fellows have anything in your studies, you can fetch it here and whack it out."

"I've got a tin of sardines," said Johnny Bull.

"Buzz off and get it, then."

And the Famous Five sat down to a frugal tea. They had been on much shorter commons before, certainly, when funds were low. But it was especially hard upon them now, when funds were high. All five were flush with money, as it happened—a most unusual circumstance for the chums of the Remove. And it was simply fearful, as Bob Cherry remarked, that they should be rolling in wealth, and not be able to expend any of it for the good of trade.

The sardines vanished at record speed. The chums of the Remove had got to the tarts, when the study door opened and the thin face of Fisher T. Fish looked in.

"Too late!" said Bob Cherry.

"All gone!" said Johnny Bull.

"I guess I haven't come here for tea," said Fisher T. Fish. "I've got something to say to you chaps. Nobody's come to my meeting——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'm willing to take you fellows into the scheme——"

"Thanks! Leave us out!" said Harry Wharton.

"I guess I'll make you all members of the Committee of Ways and Means," said Fisher T. Fish. "Now, don't play the giddy goat, but listen to me. The tuckshop's closed—we don't know for how long. Something's got to be done, and I guess I'm the antelope that's going to do it."

"Somebody's got to be done, you mean, if you're going to do it!" growled Johnny Bull.

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Fisher T. Fish did not deign to notice that insinuation. "I guess this is where we get up on our hind legs and take matters into our hands," he declared. "I've got a scheme——"

"Take it out and bury it!"

"The school shop is closed. Has it ever occurred to you fellows that you pay through the nose for the things you buy at the school shop? If you bought 'em in quantities, wholesale price, you'd save half the money."

"Go hon!"

"That's my scheme!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I guess I've got it down fine," went on Fisher T. Fish confidently. "Why shouldn't we join together and pool the money, and start a tuckshop of our own?"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors stared at Fisher T. Fish. It was certainly a surprising suggestion. But it struck them as being a little less idiotic than most of Fisher Tarleton Fish's schemes. Certainly, under the circumstances, something had to be done.

"By Jove!" said Wharton. "There's something in that. If we pooled the money, in shares, we could buy the stuff from the manufacturers, and save all the working expenses out of the cost of the stuff. We could get all we wanted in a large quantity, and put down the cash for it as we whacked it out——"

"Provided that Dunter didn't get on to it," said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess my scheme's a bigger thing than that!" said Fisher T. Fish coolly. "Not only tuck for ourselves, but for all the Form—and all the school, for that matter. We can cut under the tuckshop prices, and still make a handsome profit, by selling to all the fellows, and raise enough capital to increase the stock, as well as paying a bonus to the managing director of the company. After a few weeks there would be a good dividend to whack out among the shareholders."

"Oh, good!"

"With a capital of ten pounds, I'd undertake to see the thing through in A1 style," said Fisher T. Fish. "I've had a lot of experience of business. My popper owns some of the biggest stores in New York. We know how to do things over there, you bet. Now, put it that we form a company of us six, with a capital subscribed of two quid each——"

"Make it two bob!" said Johnny Bull.

"Two quid each—or, say we take four or five other fellows into the company, and make the subscription a pound each," said Fish. "That will give us a working capital, say, of ten quid. I could go over to Courtfield and buy up a quantity of stuff, getting rock-bottom prices for quantities, and get it carted here. We store it in the Rag, and open shop."

"My hat!"

"We supply a good article at a reasonable price," said Fisher T. Fish. "As managing director, I shall have a bonus on the profits——"

"Oh!"

"And in return I shall be willing to give my time to managing the business. You fellows take it in turns to help me as shopkeepers. I guess you're not so mouldy, old-fashioned as to suppose there's anything derogatory in keeping a shop—eh? We grew out of those funny ideas hundreds of years ago in the Yew-nited States. Takes brains to keep a shop and to rake in the dollars these times—you hear me?"

"Limited Liability Company—eh?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That's the platform. I guess it will go," Fisher T. Fish took a stump of pencil from his pocket, and picked up a sheet of impot. paper. "Now, shall I put down your names as shareholders? Every fellow with one share has a voice at the shareholders' meeting, two shares takes two votes, and so on. Shares a quid each."

The chums of the Remove exchanged glances.

Fisher T. Fish's latest took their fancy to some extent. With the school shop closed, certainly it was time something was done. The new firm would not lack customers when their nearest business rival was at Friardale, a mile away. If the goods supplied by the new company were good and cheap, fellows would rather do their shopping in the Rag than walk or cycle down to Uncle Clegg's, in Friardale.

"Well, it's not a bad idea," Wharton said, thoughtfully.

"I guess it's a jolly good idea," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Why, we can make a regular Wanamaker's of it, a regular Marshall Field's, you bet!"

"Ten quid is a lot of money."

"And I kinder guess that we couldn't raise it, just a few!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Fisher T. Fish reflected.

"No need to raise the lot at once," he said. "I suppose you know how limited companies are run? Issue of shares—you pay so much on application, so much on allotment, and you don't pay up in full unless the money's needed. You're liable to be called on to pay up the face value of the shares if the company needs money, that's all. Each shareholder

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

in the School Shop Company pays, say, five bob at first, five bob more when the shares are handed out. If the company makes a profit, you don't pay anything more at all. In case of loss, you can be called upon for the other ten bob. But there won't be any loss."

"How do you know that?"

"I'm going to manage," explained Fish.

The juniors grinned. They did not regard the management of Fisher T. Fish as an absolute guarantee against loss.

"The shareholders have to elect a managing-director, don't they?" asked Nugent.

"Not in this case. I take that job as founder of the business. I take also one share gratis, in consideration of providing the scheme."

"Oh!" said all the juniors together.

"I guess you don't want to be mean, do you?" demanded Fisher T. Fish. "The scheme is worth something, if it pans out a success."

"Well, that's right enough—but——"

"We'll put down the shares at a pound each," said Fisher T. Fish, scribbling on the impot. paper. "Say eleven shares—one gratis for me, and ten to be paid for. You fellows pay five bob each now, and five more when the shares are delivered. Ten times ten bob is five pounds—twenty-five dollars in real money. With five quid to start, I'll undertake to get the business going in splendid order."

"And if you don't——"

"Then you'll be called upon to pay up the other ten bob each on the shares, that's all!"

"And elect a new manager," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, that will be all right—I shall make things hum," said Fisher T. Fish. "Now, whack out the boblets, and I'll go round and hunt up the other shareholders. I shall easily get five more fellows to take up shares when they know that you chaps have come into the company."

"Well, we might as well," said Wharton, with a glance at his comrades. "After all, if we can't sell the stuff, we shall have it, and it will be worth the money."

"That's so!" said Bob, with a nod.

"Sign here!" said Fisher T. Fish, spreading a scribbled paper on the table.

"What's that?"

"Only an application form for shares in the School Shop Company."

The juniors read the form carefully—they knew Fisher T. Fish. But it was all right, and they signed in turn. Then the five shillings each were handed out, and Fisher T. Fish slipped them into his pocket and rose.

"I guess that's O. K.," he remarked. "Managing director takes a bonus of ten per cent. on all net profits, in lieu of salary. That's square."

"Ye-es!"

"If you'd rather pay me a salary——"

"No fear!"

"Then that's all right. I guess I'll absquatulate now——"

"You'll what?" demanded the juniors, in astonishment.

"Vamoose the ranch!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "Slide, you know. I've got to look out five other shareholders."

And Fisher T. Fish "absquatulated," in a mood of great satisfaction, and left the Famous Five to finish their tea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The School Shop Company, Ltd.

FISHER T. FISH was right upon at least one point—as soon as the Remove fellows knew that the Famous Five were in the company, there were shareholders enough forthcoming.

They did not trust Fisher T. Fish or his schemes—but what was good enough for Study No. 1 was good enough for them.

And all the fellows who did not want to take shares were full of good wishes for the success of the venture.

A school shop in the Rag would be much more convenient than going down to Friardale for their supplies—and if, as Fish promised, the supplies were better and cheaper than at Mrs. Mumble's, then the prospects were quite rosy.

When Fisher T. Fish showed the application-form in the common-room, signed by all the members of the famous Co. there was quite a rush for shares.

If Fish had allotted shares to all the applicants, the company would certainly have been in a flourishing state so far as the number of shareholders went.

But Fish, as he promptly explained, was conducting that business upon strictly cash basis; and that had the effect of diminishing the number of applicants considerably.

The would-be shareholders were not all ready with the required capital; and promises to pay at some date not fixed were not good enough for Fisher T. Fish. Such offers, as he

explained in the beautiful and expressive American language, cut no ice with him.

Bunter's offer to take a dozen shares on the spot, to be paid for when a postal-order arrived which he was expecting hourly, was declined without thanks.

"I guess money talks!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Five bob down, and five bob more on allotment—that's the ticket!"

"Oh, really, Fishy," urged Bunter, "you can't leave me out. I'm willing to take a block of a dozen shares—"

"Where's the durocks?"

"The—the what?"

"The spondulics!" explained Fish.

"Oh, the money! When my postal order comes—"

"Scat!" said Fisher T. Fish, with terse emphasis.

"If there is going to be a dividend, that will be all right," said Bunter eagerly. "I suppose you'll be paying a dividend on the shares—"

"I guess so."

"A good dividend, I suppose?"

"Yep!"

"That's all right, then. If my postal order is delayed, I can pay for the shares out of my first dividend," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's business, you know. All modern businesses are built up on a system of extensive credit," said Bunter.

"This one isn't going to be, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish.

"You can go and eat coke. How many shares did you say, Mauleverer?"

"I'll take one," said Lord Mauleverer.

"Shove your name down here. How many for you, Bulstrode?"

"One!" said Bulstrode.

"Did you say two, Smithy?"

"I didn't say any," said Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "I know your precious schemes, Fishy. You won't rope in any of my cash!"

"This company isn't begging for shareholders," said Fisher T. Fish, with a great deal of dignity. "Keep your cash in your trousers pocket. Brown, old man, you ought to be in this company. Shall I put down one for you?"

"Right-ho!" said the New Zealand junior. "I don't mind!"

"That's three!" said Fisher T. Fish. "We only want five to make up the number. What offers? Don't all speak at once!"

"Oh, put me down!" said Skinner.

"Five bob, please!"

"Next week!" said Skinner.

"Next week nothing! Fay up or clear off!"

"Then you can go and bury your blessed shares," said Skinner. "I'm not taking any!"

"One for me!" said Newland.

"Right you are!" said Fisher T. Fish, pocketing Newland's five shillings. "Now, follow Newland's example, somebody. Newland's a Jew, so it stands to reason he wouldn't come into the company if it wasn't on a sound business footing. I want one more shareholder—who's the man?"

"Oh, you can put me down," said Bolsover major, throwing five shillings on the table.

The coins disappeared into Fisher T. Fish's capacious pocket.

"Good egg—that's all O.K." he said. "I'll get the shares written out this evening, and you'll have to pony up another five bob when the scrip is delivered. Then the company goes ahead."

And Fisher T. Fish marched off. He captured two more shareholders on his way to the study—Peter Todd and Hazeldene. Fisher T. Fish's face was glowing with satisfaction as he wrote out the share certificates in his study.

That evening they were delivered to their happy owners, and the five shillings on allotment was paid up by the shareholders.

Half the value of twelve £1 shares being paid up, gave the youthful managing director the sum of six pounds to deal with.

If things went well, there was no reason why six pounds worth of supplies should not be the foundation of a great business—so Fisher T. Fish declared.

That evening Fisher T. Fish was busy.

The shareholders were called upon to help; and the Rag was prepared for the great shopkeeping scheme.

There was a large cupboard in the room, where all sorts of lumber had been piled; and this was cleared out, and cleaned out, to form a store-room for the supplies of the School Shop Company.

There was a lock on the door—which was essential—for probably there were quite a number of reckless youths in the lower Forms who would not have hesitated to raid the stores of the company if they had had a chance.

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In front of the big cupboard a counter was rigged up, of boards laid across boxes, and covered with cheap American cloth of marble-colour—which Fish declared looked every bit as good as a marble counter.

The American cloth was quite new, and certainly looked very clean and bright. There were several yards of it, and it occurred to one of the shareholders that yards of new American cloth are not found lying about.

"Where did that stuff come from?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Friardale!" said Fish.

"And those scales?"

"Same place!"

"And that blessed pile of paper bags?"

"Same!"

"Have you bought 'em?"

"Well, I guess they weren't given away with a pound of tea," said Fisher T. Fish sarcastically.

"That's right—some of the company's funds must be expended in shop fittings," said Harry Wharton. "How much have you spent on fittings, Fishy?"

"One quid!"

"Well, that's not dear!" agreed Wharton.

"All bills and accounts ought to be laid before the shareholders," remarked Nugent.

"This company leaves such matters to the managing director," said Fish, airily. "You are free to inspect the books of the company at any moment. You'll find it in the ledger there—expenditure from capital for shop fittings, one pound."

"But where are the bills?"

"I guess they're safe."

"You ought to get a discount for cash in buying things," said Bolsover major.

"I guess that's all right."

"I guess it isn't," said Bolsover major. "I want to see those bills. I'm a shareholder."

"I guess this company trusts its managing director—"

"Better show up the bills, Fishy," said Wharton. "You don't want to make the fellows suspect that you've been making something out of them."

"I guess those bills are locked up—"

"You'd better unlock 'em, then, and sharp," said Bolsover major, pushing back his cuffs.

"I guess—"

"'Nuff said; trot out the bills."

Fisher T. Fish glanced round helplessly. But the shareholders were all backing up Bolsover major in his demand. They knew Fisher T. Fish of old. Fisher T. Fish would have repudiated the suggestion of dishonesty with great indignation. But he prided himself upon being a business man, and with Fisher T. Fish the word business covered a multitude of sins.

"The bills!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Trot 'em out."

"I guess—"

"Show us the bills!"

"Nope! I—"

Bolsover major inserted his knuckles inside Fisher T. Fish's collar, and shook him. The thin Yankee junior was like an infant in the grasp of the burly Removite.

"Are you going to show us those bills?" demanded Bolsover grimly. "You can do it before you are licked, or after, just as you like."

"Hear, hear!"

"I guess I'll show 'em!" stammered Fisher T. Fish. "Leggo!"

He unlocked his desk, and laid an invoice before the juniors. It was from Mr. Lazarus, in Courtfield, and the various items were specified upon it the total coming to one pound and threepence.

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton.

"Wait a bit," said Bolsover. "Old Lazarus always allows a discount of five per cent. on orders above a pound. Why, it's marked here. The total ought to be entered in the books as nineteen and threepence, not a pound."

"Where's the discount, Fishy?" chorussed the juniors.

"I guess the managing director pockets all discounts, as a perquisite, in consideration of his time and energy—"

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"Spoof!"

It was clear at once that the shareholders did not share the views of the managing director upon that point.

"You'll alter that entry in the ledger," said Bulstrode.

"You'll put down shop fittings at nineteen-and-threepence."

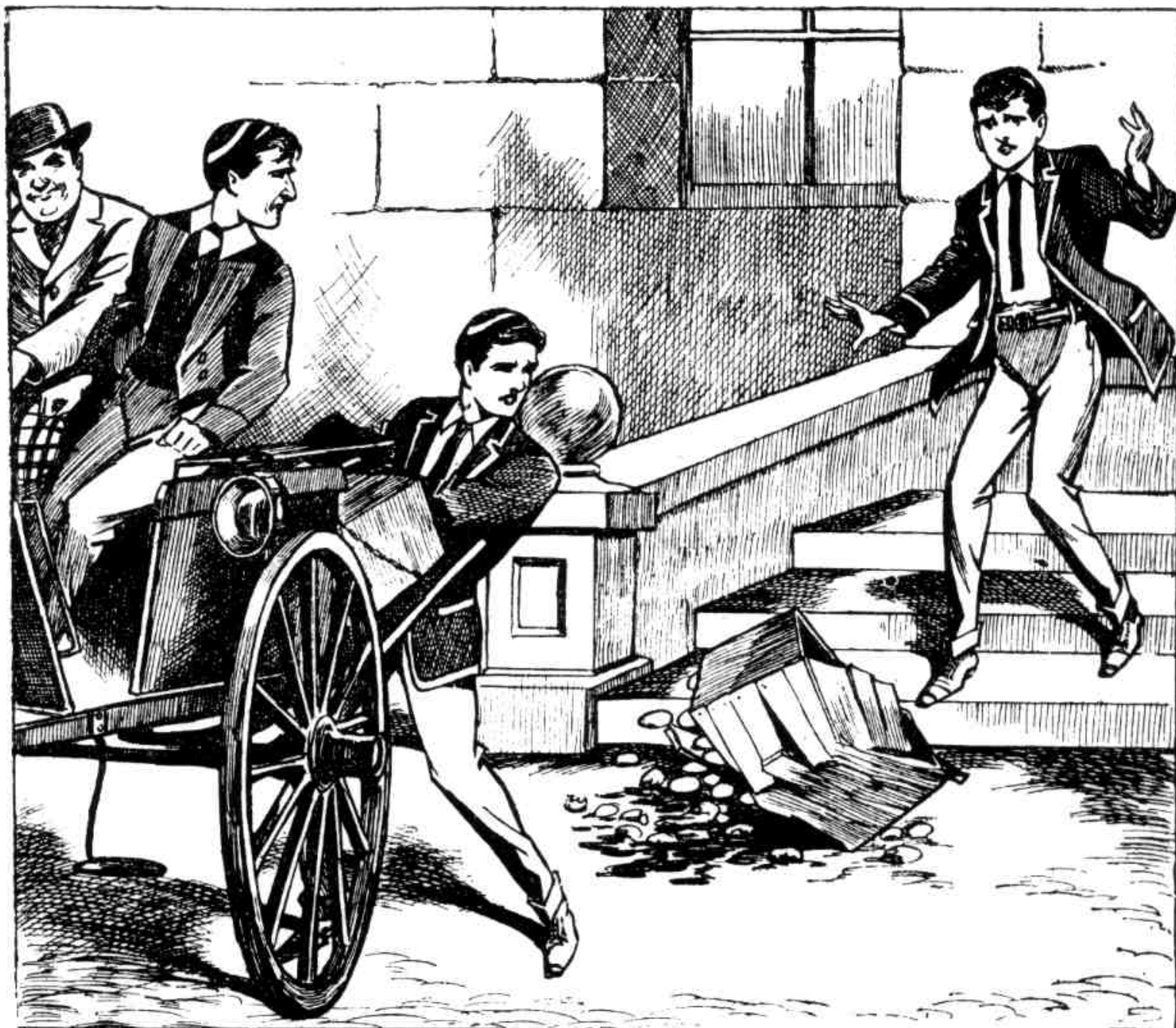
"I guess—"

"Alter it!" roared the juniors.

Fisher T. Fish bowed to the storm. He grunted and made the required alteration in the ledger.

"I vote that we appoint a bookkeeper!" said Johnny Bull.

"Franky's good at accounts, and I vote we appoint him official bookkeeper of the company, with power to examine



There was a terrific crash as the corner of the box caught upon the door. "My hat!" exclaimed Coker. And Fisher T. Fish's face was a study as the box rolled down the steps! (See Chapter 5.)

all bills, and check all accounts, and to see that the company isn't swindled by the managing director."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess—"

"Passed unanimously!" said Harry Wharton.

"I'm on!" said Nugent. "If I'm bookkeeper, you can be jolly sure that there won't be any spoofing. I shall keep an eye on Fishy."

"The managing director declines to be under surveillance," said Fisher T. Fish, with dignity. "I shall resign."

"Good; we'll elect another manager now," said Johnny Bull.

"Ahem! On second thoughts, I won't resign," said Fisher T. Fish hastily. "I shall be very pleased to welcome Nugent as—ahem!—my colleague."

"And your colleague will keep a jolly sharp eye on you!" promised Nugent.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Getting to Work.

THE next day was Wednesday, and a half-holiday. It was a fine summer's afternoon, and the Remove were playing the Upper Fourth at cricket—with the result that they had very little time to bestow upon the new shopkeeping company. But Fisher T. Fish assured them that that would be all right. Matters could safely be left in his hands.

While the Removites were playing cricket, the managing director of the new company was to make his journey to

Courtfield town, there to expend five pounds in the purchase of tuck at wholesale prices.

Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon his shopping powers—he never bought so much as a tooth-brush without trying to get a reduction on the price—indeed, some of the local tradesmen always raised their prices specially for Fisher T. Fish, to allow a margin for that little peculiarity of his.

Fish was quite certain of his ability to get at least seven or eight pounds worth of stuff for a five-pound note, by dint of the sharpness which was a natural gift of a fellow born and bred in the great city of New York.

The chums of the Remove left their managing director to his own devices, and went down to the cricket, and forgot all about Fisher T. Fish and the School Shop Company, in the joys of the great summer game.

It was a hot afternoon, and cricket was thirsty play; and on that afternoon more than ever the juniors missed the tuck-shop.

There was no refreshing themselves with ginger-beer between the innings, no sipping of cheery lemonade with nice little pieces of ice floating in it.

True there was the fountain, at which they were welcome to drink their fill without charge; and Alonzo Todd assured them, upon the authority of his Uncle Benjamin, that clear pellucid water from the spring was better for their little insides than ginger-beer or lemonade, or any summer drink whatever.

Which was doubtless true; but the ungrateful fellows only called Alonzo Todd an ass, and grumbled about the closing of the tuck-shop.

It was evidently a specially favourable moment for the

NEXT
MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.



opening of the Junior School Shop and all the Lower School were interested in the experiment.

On the notice-board in the hall appeared a paper in Fish's handwriting, announcing the opening of the shop for five o'clock precisely.

Seniors as well as juniors read that announcement with great interest, and Coker & Co., of the Fifth, determined to come along and sample the wares of the new firm, as well as a great crowd of juniors and fags.

Fisher T. Fish had often inflicted his great schemes upon a long-suffering Remove, and they had always ended in smoke; but it really seemed at last that the American junior had hit upon "it."

Harry Wharton & Co. were still busy beating the Upper Fourth when Fisher T. Fish returned from Courtfield.

He came back in a trap, and in the trap were a large assortment of bundles, parcels, packages, and boxes, of all sorts and conditions.

Fellows gathered round on all sides to watch them taken out of the trap.

"Lend a hand, some of you!" said Fisher T. Fish. "This shop has got to be open at five, and it's half-past four now. Sale begins at five precisely."

"Anything to oblige," said Coker of the Fifth, and he seized a large wooden box and dragged it out of the trap.

Fisher T. Fish gave a yell.

"Careful with that box! There's eggs in that!"

"Oh, that's all right," said Coker. "I could carry a bigger weight than that!" And he hoisted the box airily upon his shoulder.

"Careful!" said Fish.

"Oh, rats!"

Coker walked in with the big box on his shoulder, and caught the corner of it upon the door, and there was a terrific crash.

"My hat!" said Coker, as the box rolled down the steps.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish's face was a study. The box had rolled from top to bottom of the steps, and the sounds that proceeded from it showed that the contents were not of much use any longer for anything but omelettes.

"You—you jay!" gasped the American junior. "Do you know there were five shillings worth of eggs in that box?"

"Sorry!" said Coker. "You asked me to help."

"I guess you'll have to pay for those eggs!" howled Fisher T. Fish.

Coker chuckled.

"Guess again!" he suggested, and he walked away with Potter and Greene, laughing.

Fisher T. Fish gazed after him, and at the ruined box of eggs, with feelings too deep for words. The unsympathetic fellows round him were laughing. They seemed to see something funny in the incident.

"Can I help you get the tarts in, Fishy?" asked Billy Bunter.

Fish snorted.

"No, you can't! Buzz off!"

"I'll help to pack the things in the store-cupboard, if you like—"

"Into your inside, you mean, I guess. Clear out!"

"Oh, really, Fishy—"

Crash!

"Who's dropped those jam-pots?" shrieked Fisher T. Fish.

"Sorry!" said Bolsover minor, of the Third. "I was carrying them in for you, Fishy, and young Paget shoved against me—"

"I guess you'll have to pay for them," yelled Fish. "Hands off these things, you silly jays! I reckon I don't want your silly help. The man can carry them in."

And the man who had come with the trap carried in the rest of the things, without further accidents. They were stacked in the Rag, ready to be stored away in the store-cupboard. When they were all taken in, the trap-driver touched his cap respectfully to Fisher T. Fish.

"That's the lot, sir," he said.

Fisher T. Fish nodded.

"I guess so," he replied. "I've checked 'em."

"The whole lot, sir," said the man.

"Yep! That's all right."

The man seemed to linger, as if he expected something.

Fisher T. Fish did not seem to see it. He began to transfer the pile of stock into the shelves of the big store-cupboard.

The Courtfield man looked at him meaningly.

"It's 'ot this afternoon, sir," he said.

"I guess it usually is at this time of the year," said Fish amiably. "Hotter than this in New York, though. Good-afternoon!"

"Dry work, sir."

"I shouldn't wonder!"

The juniors in the Rag were grinning. They knew what

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the man wanted, but the business man of the Remove did not seem to see.

"Carrying in them things wasn't part of my duty, sir," said the driver surlily.

"I guess it was."

"Some young gentlemen, sir, asks a man if he's thirsty arter a job like that," said the man from Courtfield, with emphasis.

"Do they?" said Fish, with interest.

"Yessir."

"I guess you are thirsty, anyway," said Fish. "I'm thirsty myself, and I should have a drink if I could afford it. If you're dry, you can take a deep pull at the fountain as you go out. There's no charge, and it's first quality water—same as supplied to the school for drinking purposes."

The driver's face had gradually been assuming the hue of a boiled beetroot. Now it seemed to deepen to purple.

"You're sure there ain't nothing more I can do for you, sir, for nothing?" he asked, with terrific sarcasm.

"No, thanks," said Fish calmly.

"Some gentlemen would have made it a bob," said the driver reflectively.

"They'd have to have more money to waste than I've got," said Fish cheerfully. "Look here, my man, do you get wages from your employer?"

"Course I does, sir," said the man, in surprise.

"Are they the current wages in your trade?"

"I dessay."

"Then you can't expect to be paid twice. If your wages are not high enough, I guess I should advise you to join with others, and start a trades union, and go on strike. But I guess I'm not augmenting your wages. Savvy?"

The man apparently "savvied," for he snorted and marched out. Lord Mauleverer slipped a shilling into his hand as he left the Rag, however, and the purple face cleared.

"You're a gentleman, sir!" said the driver, in a tone that implied that his opinion of Fisher T. Fish could not possibly be expressed in the same words.

"Thanks awfully, my dear man!" said Lord Mauleverer.

And the driver and the trap departed, and Fisher T. Fish was left to arrange his stock.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Good Business!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came off the cricket-field red and thirsty, and in high spirits. They had beaten the Upper Fourth by the comfortable margin of an innings and twenty runs, and they were satisfied with themselves. They were also ready for refreshments, both solid and liquid. And with one accord the cricketers trooped into the Rag—and a good many of the Upper Fourth trooped in with them.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, had smiled superior smiles when they heard of the venture of the school-boy shopkeepers. But on that hot afternoon, with the school shop closed, they were glad enough to take advantage of the new venture. Nobody wanted to walk or cycle down to Friardale for his ginger-beer.

Quite a crowd poured into the Rag.

There were Removites, Fourth-Formers, and fags of the Third and Second. Bolsover minor and Tubb and Paget of the Third were already there, and Nugent minor and Gatty and Myers of the Second had been the first customers. Fellows were gathering like bees round the new American-cloth-covered counter of the School Shop Company.

Fisher T. Fish was ready.

Behind him was the store-cupboard, with open door, the shelves laden with comestibles of all sorts and conditions. Before him was the counter, with piles of eatables and drinkables on it. There were jam-tarts in dishes, and cakes in pyramids, and tins of salmon and sardines in stacks, and bottles of lemonade and ginger-beer, jars of jam and marmalade and preserved fruits in enticing array. Judging by quantity alone, Fisher T. Fish had certainly succeeded in obtaining a large stock for the modest expenditure of five pounds.

"By Jove, that looks business-like!" said Harry Wharton.

"I guess this firm is business-like," said Fisher T. Fish proudly.

Fish looked very business-like himself. He was in his shirt-sleeves, with a white apron on, and looked the part of a youthful shopman to the life. One corner of his apron was tucked up in the professional way, and he had a pencil behind his ear.

"Are you chaps coming in as customers or as members of the firm?" he asked.

"Customers!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I'm thirsty. Hand over the ginger-beer."

"And the lemonade," said Johnny Bull.

"Jam-tarts," said Nugent.

"I'll try the giddy cake!" said Bob Cherry. "Now then, my man, serve up, and don't keep your patrons waiting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you run accounts here, don't you?" asked Billy Bunter.

"No, sir!" said Fisher T. Fish, as he handed out articles with wonderful celerity to his crowding customers. "No, sir; we do not! This business is conducted on lines of strict cash. We supply a good article at a reasonable price, sir, and we defy competition."

"I'm expecting a postal-order——"

"We cash postal-orders for customers, charging a commission of two per cent. on the transaction," said Fish.

"My postal-order's coming to-night——"

"Then you'd better look in again to-night," said Fish amiably. "I'm afraid we can't trade just now, Bunter. This isn't a philanthropic institution, or a Home for Indigent Cadgers. This is a business, sir."

"Oh, really, Fishy——"

"Ginger-beer? Yep! The best on the market, sir. Champagne, Mr. Temple? Nope. At present we don't stock champagne, but we have our special ginger-beer, which is better than any champagne that was ever made in French chemists' shops. Jam-tarts? Certainly, Mr. Fry! Six tarts at twopence—one shilling, please!"

"I'll see you later," said Fry of the Fourth, as he demolished the sixth of the twopenny tarts.

"I guess you'll see me now," said Fisher T. Fish. "One shilling, please!"

"I'm afraid I've left my money in my study, on the grand piano," explained Fry humorously.

"One shilling, please."

"When will you have it?" queried Fry. "Now, or when you can get it?"

"Both, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish calmly. "Bolsover, old man, you're big enough to see that customers pay cash, and you're in the firm. I can't serve customers and look after bilkers at the same time. Will you persuade Mr. Fry to pay cash?"

"What-ho!" said Bolsover major, lounging over towards Fry of the Fourth. "One shilling, Fry. Cash down on the nail, or hand the goods back."

Fry could not very well disinter the jam-tarts and hand them back, and as Bolsover major was a dangerous customer to tackle, he paid.

Ogilvy of the Remove had purchased a beef-steak pie, and taken it away to his study. He came back five minutes later, holding that pie in the study tongs, with his nose screwed up into an expression of ineffable disgust.

"Look at that!" he roared. "Do you see that, Fish?"

Fisher T. Fish looked at it.

"Yep!"

"Do you call that a pie?"

"Beef-steak pie—fivepence," said Fish. "That's a penny cheaper than in Friardale, and it saves you the walk."

"But I can't eat it!" roared Ogilvy. "It's mouldy!"

"Stuff! That pie was in good condition when it was sold. Perhaps you've been keeping it in a damp place."

"I haven't had it ten minutes!"

"Lemonade—yep!" said Fish, turning to another customer. "Here you are, Mr. Bulstrode. The very best. Cash down, please. Thank you!"

"Look at this pie!" roared Ogilvy. "Smell it!"

"Sardines?" said Fish. "Certainly, Mr. Brown. Large or small tin?"

The exasperated Ogilvy plumped the beef-steak pie down on the counter, into the midst of a pile of jam-tarts. The tarts were not improved thereby. Fisher T. Fish gave a shout.

"What are you up to, you jay?"

"I want my money back! That pie's mouldy!"

"Piffle! You got that pie cheap. Take it away; it's yours!"

"You can keep it," said Ogilvy. "I'll take it out in ginger-beer. I suppose the ginger-beer isn't mouldy?"

"You let that ginger-beer alone!" shouted Fisher T. Fish, as Ogilvy collected up five penny bottles. "Are you going to pay for it?"

"I've paid fivepence for the pie, and you can keep the pie."

"This company doesn't take back goods once sold and paid for. Take your pie away. If you want that ginger-beer you must square for it."

"Rats!" said Ogilvy.

"Put it down!" roared Fish.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Here, Bolsover——"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, examining the pie.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"That's not a good pie, Fishy. You oughtn't to have sold a mouldy pie to Ogilvy, and taken his money."

Fisher T. Fish glared at his shareholder.

"What do you know about business?" he snapped. "Who's managing director of this company, I'd like to know? Haven't you ever heard of the first principles of business?"

"You seem to have heard of the first principles of swindling," said Harry. "While I hold shares in this business, you're not going to spoof anybody. You'll hand Ogilvy his money back, and sharp."

"I guess——"

"It's all right, Ogilvy," said Nugent. "We're keeping Fishy in order. This is a fair business, only Fishy can't get out of American habits in a hurry. Fishy, if you don't hand Ogilvy back his money immediately, we'll make you eat the pie."

"Look here, you jays——"

"Money back at once!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"The shareholders are not permitted by the rules to interfere with the managing director in the administration of the business——"

"Are you going to hand Ogilvy his money back, or take a thick ear?" demanded Wharton.

Fisher T. Fish groaned.

"Blessed if I'd have started the business if I'd known you were such a set of unbusiness-like jays!" he said. "There's your fivepence, Ogilvy. I guess I don't know how a business is to be run to a profit on these lines."

Bob Cherry sniffed.

"Haven't you ever heard that honesty is the best policy?" he demanded. "You want to keep customers as well as to get 'em. It doesn't pay in the long run to sell wooden nutmegs. Try honesty for a change, Fishy."

"I guess——"

"I'm not having this cake," said Bolsover minor of the Third, slamming a large cake down on the counter. "Look at it—simply mouldy!"

"You've bought that cake, and you're keeping it," said Fisher T. Fish angrily. "Do you think this firm has nothing to do but to change goods?"

"I want my money back!" said Bolsover minor.

"And you're jolly well going to have it, kid!" said Bolsover major emphatically. "Don't you try to swindle my minor, Fishy!"

"It isn't swindling," pleaded the business man of the Remove. "Buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest—that's business. Of course, things you buy in the cheapest market are sometimes a bit off colour. That can't be helped."

"Hand my minor his money, you spoofer!"

"I appeal to the shareholders——"

"Hand him his money!" chorussed the shareholders.

"We'll jolly well bump you baldheaded if you don't."

And the managing director had to give in.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. The Shareholders' Meeting.

THE busy scene in the Rag was over at last, and the crowd of juniors departed, leaving the School Shop with a greatly diminished stock, and the till crowded with coppers and small silver. But Harry Wharton & Co. did not depart with the rest. All the shareholders in the new company were anxious to know what profits, if any, had been made, and to go over the accounts with the assistance of Frank Nugent, Esquire, official accountant to the company. Fisher T. Fish blinked at the juniors over his depleted counter, as he began to pack the unsold stock away in the big store-cupboard.

"No need to wait," he said. "I can pack this stuff away all right. I don't want to bother the shareholders to help."

"The shareholders are going to hold a meeting after the sale," said Harry Wharton. "The giddy shareholders want to know how the thing is going, and also they want to impress upon their managing director some tips about honest business, and not swindling."

"Hear, hear!" said all the shareholders.

"I guess——"

"This firm is not going to supply rotten goods," said Wharton. "So long as I'm a shareholder the stuff has got to be good quality."

"I guess this business has got to pay——"

"If it won't pay with honesty it can fail, and be hanged," said Wharton. "It's dishonest to sell bad stuff, and you know it, so shut up."

Fisher T. Fish groaned over the obstinacy of human nature, and gave in. The meeting was held on the spot, the shareholders mostly sitting on the marble-covered counter. The juniors were all greatly interested in the rise and progress

NEXT
MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

of their new business, and they were more than willing to devote the necessary time to it. There had been a most extensive sale, and if Fisher T. Fisher's forecasts were anything like the facts, there should already be a handsome profit to the good. Hazeldene proposed a dividend on the spot, and a daily dividend so long as profits were made.

"Let's see how much the profits are before we whack them out," said Harry Wharton sagely. "No good counting the chickens in advance, and whacking out shares in a big round nought. Get to work, accountant."

"Documents, please, managing director," said Nugent.

"I guess I've got all the bills here," said Fisher T. Fish. "I've checked off on this paper all the goods sold, and the remaining stock is here under your peepers. I reckon you'll find it all O.K."

"Expenditure for stock, five pounds!" said the accountant.

"That's all right," said Bulstrode. "The other quid was spent last night for shop fittings."

"Net receipts to-day, two pounds ten shillings."

"Good egg!"

"How much of the stock remaining?" asked Tom Brown.

"There ought to be half of it left, at that rate."

"That's if we sell at cost price, ass," said Nugent. "Fishy has bought these things at wholesale prices, and we make a profit, same as Mrs. Mimble does. We ought to have at least two-thirds of the stock left."

"Yes, I forgot! How much is left, Fishy?"

"We're proceeding to the stock-taking at once," said the official accountant. "You can yell over the goods, Fishy, and I'll check them off."

"I guess you can safely leave it all to me—"

"I guess we're not going to do anything of the sort. You fellows turn the goods over, and shove out all the bad stuff. We're not selling any rubbish."

"Right-ho!"

Fisher T. Fish looked with a frown as the stock was ransacked and sorted out. There seemed to be a good proportion of stuff that was off colour. Ham that was beginning to show signs of age and decrepitude; cheese that was, as Bob Cherry expressed it, growing whiskers; jam-tarts in which the bloom of youth had faded, and in which enterprising flies had found premature burial; cream puddings that "talked" at quite a distance of sour cream—all these, and other things of the same sort, were taken away from the general stock, and piled at the other end of the counter.

Fisher T. Fish's brow grew more and more clouded as he watched the sorting out process. It began to look as if there wouldn't be much stock left. The customers that afternoon had insisted upon taking only good stuff, so all the rubbish was left on his hands, so far, and it bore a very heavy proportion to the remaining stock.

The shareholders were frowning, too. All of them agreed with Wharton that no bad goods should be sold, but they were not pleased at the prospect of having so much stuff left on their hands which had been paid for with the company's capital.

"That's finished," said Tom Brown at last. "Blessed lot of stuff there that's no good except for burying in the garden."

"I guess—"

"Now we'll go over the stock," said Wharton severely. "I suppose these bottles of ginger-beer are all right, Fishy? You haven't bought a cheaper variety made of water without ginger, or anything like that?"

"Nope!"

The stock was gone over. The selling value of it was approximately thirty shillings. Nugent made his simple calculations:

"Net takings, £2 10s.; in hand goods, £1 10s. Total, £4."

There was a general growl from the shareholders. They could not be delighted with the result. The takings and the remaining stock were valued at four pounds. The capital expenditure had been five pounds. The whole transaction therefore represented a loss of one pound to the School Shop Company.

"Is that the way you manage a business, Fishy?" demanded Nugent. "A loss of one pound at the first stock-taking."

"Rotten!"

"Rats!"

"I guess you're a set of silly jays," said Fisher T. Fish. "Look at that heap of stuff you've chucked out. I guess I roped that in extra cheap, and we should make a whacking profit by selling it, even at a low price. It represents two pounds of the purchase money, and has a selling value of three pounds ten at least. Put that down in the account, and the whole transaction shows a handsome profit."

"A handsome swindle, if we sold that stuff," said Wharton. "Look here, you must get them to take that back, Fishy."

Fish shook his head.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

"Imposs. I had it at a special low figure because it was a—a—a little shop-soiled," he replied. "They won't take it back, and if you fellows back me up as you ought to back up your managing director, we could pass it off on the customers among the other stuff, and decline to change any article once paid for—"

"Shurrup!"

"Spoofer!"

Fisher T. Fish shrugged his narrow shoulders with a hopeless air.

"Well, if you don't understand the first principles of business, I guess I can't help it," he said. "It's a loss, then, unless I can dispose of the stuff somehow. Don't you know it's a great rule to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; and adulteration is one form of competition. But if you're dead set on playing the giddy goat, let her rip!"

"If you can dispose of that stuff honestly, do it!" said Harry Wharton. "Somebody who isn't very particular may give you five bob for the lot; only none of your palming it off as good stuff, you know. That's barred!"

"Yes, rather."

"Gentlemen, I rise to put a motion to the shareholders," said Bulstrode. "Fish having proved that he's no good as a managing director, I suggest kicking him out of the honourable position and electing a new one."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, shucks!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "Give a man a chance! I guess I haven't had time yet to run the business."

"You've had time to make a dead loss of a quid!" said Newland.

"I guess the money will be rolling in next week."

"We'll give him a chance," said Harry Wharton. "Suppose we allow him till Saturday to show a profit, on the distinct understanding that if there is any more swindling he gets the order of the boot instanter."

"Hear, hear!"

And so it was agreed. And the meeting of shareholders in the School Shop Company, Limited, broke up, extremely dissatisfied with their too business-like managing director.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Little Party.

"JOLLY good wheeze!" said Potter heartily.

"Ripping!" said Greene.

Coker nodded cheerfully. Coker, too, thought it was a jolly good idea, and ripping. Coker of the Fifth, as usual, was in funds. His kind Aunt Judy had sent him a big remittance, and Coker, also as usual, was proceeding to get rid of it in the shortest possible time. Potter and Greene, his chums and study-mates, were only too willing to help him. They always lent old Coker their aid at times like that.

"As soon as last lesson's over," said Coker of the Fifth, "we'll buzz straight out; and we shall have heaps of time."

"We can cut cricket practice," Potter remarked.

"Blow cricket practice!" said Coker, with a majestic frown. "The Fifth are playing the Sixth on Saturday. I've offered Blundell to play for the Fifth. You fellows know how I play cricket?"

"We do!" said Greene solemnly.

"We does!" murmured Potter.

"Well, what do you think Blundell said?"

"Jumped at the offer, of course," said Potter blandly.

"With both feet, of course," said Greene.

Coker shook his head. "No!"

"No!" repeated his chums, in great astonishment, winking at one another with the eyes that were furthest from Coker.

"No!" said Coker. "Blundell said he'd ask me next time the Fifth were playing marbles, but while it was cricket he would leave me out. What do you think of that for the captain of the Form—what?"

"We want a new Form-captain," said Greene.

"Blundell's a bit played out," said Potter. "He can't tell a really extraordinary cricketer when he sees one."

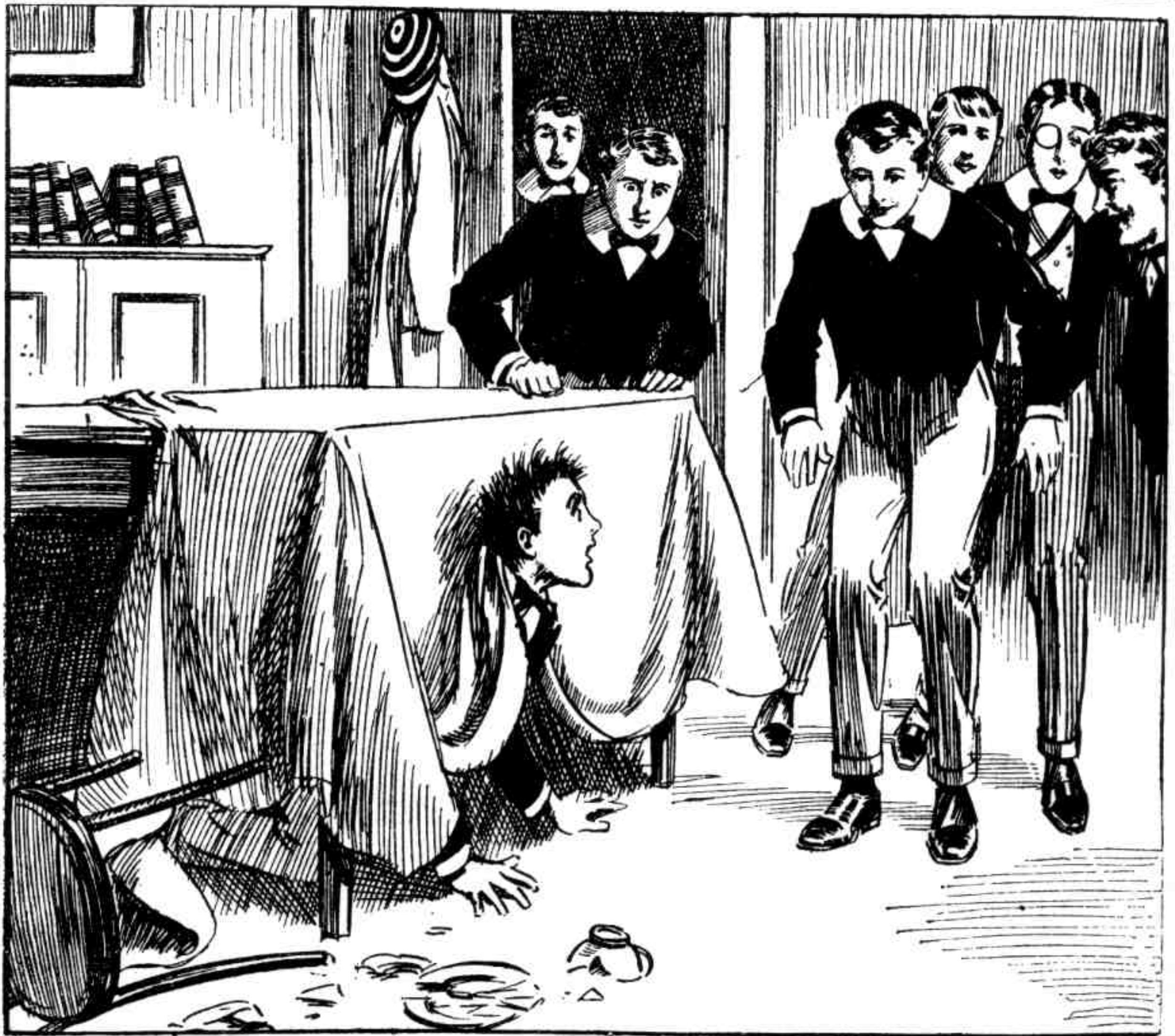
"So I'm going to cut cricket practice to-day!" said Coker of the Fifth, with a great deal of dignity. "I shall decline to turn up on the ground at all."

"Hear, hear!"

"So it's all right about the picnic. Those Remove kids are always having picnics out somewhere, and they have the girls from Cliff House to them," said Coker. "Now, I don't see why the Remove fags should be the only chaps who can get girls to come to their picnics, do you?"

"Certainly not!" said Potter.

"Are we going to have any girls?" asked Greene, a little dismayed, and thinking that perhaps he, at least, would turn up to cricket practice, after all.



"What on earth are you doing under the table?" demanded Lowther. "Have you seen the black man?" gasped Crooke. "He's just been here. Help me barricade the door, for goodness sake! He made me get under the table, and he's gone to your study to murder you!" (The incident depicted above is taken from the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. in the "THE GEM" LIBRARY, entitled: "THE MESSAGE OF MYSTERY!" by Martin Clifford. Out on Wednesday. Price One Penny.

"Yes!" said Coker impressively. "After all, a picnic with only fellows is rather rotten. And why shouldn't we have girls with us, same as those fags do?"

"Have you asked the Cliff House kids?"

"Oh, no; I'm going one better."

Potter and Greene exchanged glances. They were cheerfully willing to join Coker in his little picnic, and nobly prepared to do their level best to do justice to the fare provided. But Coker's idea of going one better than the Remove by adding ladies to the party somewhat dismayed them. They would have been quite satisfied without any addition of the feminine element to the party. But Horace Coker, after all, was giving the party, and a feed was a feed. So Greene and Potter put on their friendliest smiles, and took a deep interest in Coker's idea.

"You've asked somebody, then?" Potter inquired.

"What-ho!"

"And she's coming?"

"Yes; two of 'em!"

"Oh, good!" said Potter, with great heartiness. "What sort of a critter—ahem!—I mean, who are they?"

"You know the girls in the bun-shop at Courtfield," said Coker—"Miss Spriggs and Miss Phrump. Two ripping girls!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"My hat!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

NEXT
MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

Coker looked sternly at his comrades as they uttered those two dismayed and involuntary ejaculations. Potter and Greene had been taken off their guard for the moment. They did indeed know those two young ladies at the bun-shop in Courtfield—two young ladies who had been young ladies as long as the oldest inhabitants of Greyfriars could remember. Generations of schoolboys had come and gone, but Miss Spriggs and Miss Phrump of the bun-shop went on for ever!

"Well?" said Coker grimly.

"Oh, lovely!" said Potter feebly.

"Did-did-did-delightful!" stammered Greene.

"I suppose you like them—eh? Two ripping girls," said Coker. "Miss Spriggs is rather older than us—eighteen."

"Eighteen!" murmured Potter. "How do you know?"

"I asked her," said Coker simply.

"And she told you?"

"Yes."

"Eighteen?"

"Yes."

"I'm not surprised that girls like you, Coker, old man," said Potter affectionately. "Girls always like touching simplicity and gentle faith in a chap. Queer thing about Miss Spriggs being eighteen. She was seventeen when my uncle was at Greyfriars."

"Look here, Potter—"

"How old is Miss Phrump?" asked Potter, with interest.

"Seventeen," said Coker defiantly.

"Oh, good! When my uncle was at Greyfriars, he——"

"Blow your uncle!" said Coker crossly. "I don't want to hear anything about your elderly relatives. Do you want to come or don't you?"

"Oh, rather," said Potter. "We shall be delighted to see Miss Spriggs and Miss Phrump—sha'n't we, Greeny?"

"Fascinated!" said Greene. "Charmed!"

"That's all right, then," said Coker. "They're going to meet us by the river at half-past four. We shall have just time to scoot across after lessons."

"What about the grub?" asked Potter, glancing up at the clock tower. "It's just on time for afternoon lessons now. Have you got the grub ready?"

"That won't take long. Money makes the mare go," said Coker.

"But the school shop's closed till further notice."

"I know that. Haven't you heard about those kids starting a shop in the Rag?" said Coker. "I dropped in and had a tart, and it was all right. We can buy up half their stock."

"Good egg!" said Potter. "That will be making use of the cheeky little bounders. I suppose the stuff's all right?"

"Yes; I've sampled it. Besides, Wharton's in it. Wharton's a cheeky young rotter, and doesn't understand that the Fifth is the Fifth, but he's honest enough; he wouldn't palm off rubbish on customers. We'll make 'em make up a big lunch-basket for us. That will be all serene."

"Good!" said Potter. "It wouldn't do to keep the old ladies waiting——"

"The what?"

"I—I mean, the young ladies. I say, it might be as well to keep this dark. I don't know what the Head would say about Fifth Form chaps meeting girls from the bun-shop," said Potter, rather dubiously.

"No harm in it," said Coker. "I suppose nobody would suspect me of being a bounder?"

"Certainly not, old chap! All the same, may as well say nothing about it. Let's go and look over the stock in their giddy School Shop."

"Come on!" said Coker.

And the chums of the Fifth proceeded to the Rag.

The School Shop, Limited, was in full swing then. Fisher T. Fish had announced that it would be open for half an hour after dinner, and as he had ceased trying to palm off bad stuff to his customers the juniors had rolled up to purchase. Before dinner, Fish had cycled down to Courtfield and returned with a fresh consignment of goods, so that the stock was still ample. The two pounds ten shillings takings had been reinvested in fresh stock, and this time the managing director had not purchased damaged or mouldy goods at a specially low price. He still had a great pile of damaged stuff to dispose of somehow, and his chances of disposing of it seemed slim. But he had refused Johnny Bull's offer to bury it in the garden. It was of no use, but the school business-man could not bear the thought of throwing it away.

Fisher T. Fish was behind the counter, in apron and shirt-sleeves, when Coker & Co. came in. There were several fags feeding at the counter, but most of them were gone, as it was close on time for afternoon lessons. Fisher T. Fish was about to close the shop when the Fifth Formers arrived.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen!" said Fish affably. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Got any stuff left?" asked Coker.

"Heaps!" said Fish genially. "The company has renewed its stock to-day, after a great rush of custom yesterday. This business is simply humming."

"So are the beef-steak pies," growled Bolsover minor.

"I guess I can suit you," said Fisher T. Fish, in the best manner of the up-to-date American salesman. "Can I interest you in these specially A1 seed-cakes——"

"May as well have a snack," said Coker. "Sample the stuff, you know."

"You're simply full of good ideas to-day, Coker," said Potter admiringly.

Coker threw down a five-shilling piece with a lordly air, and the Fifth Formers sampled the stock of the School Shop. Certainly the stuff was all right. Ginger-beer, and jam tarts, and dough-nuts certainly were as good as anything supplied by Mrs. Mimble or Uncle Clegg in Friar-dale.

"Well, that's all right," said Coker. "You're charging the usual prices, I suppose?"

"I guess we defy competition."

"Can you make up a luncheon-basket for a picnic?" asked Coker. "I want a really good spread, and enough for five—better put in enough for six, to make sure."

Fish's eyes glistened.

"I'm your antelope!" he said heartily. "Just give me an

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,

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idea what you want, and I'll quote a special price for the whole turn-out."

"Good egg! Say, three cold chickens," said Coker, "half a dozen meat-pies, two dozen jam-tarts, two dozen cream-puffs, one dozen ginger-beer, pound of doughnuts, pound of ham, pound of tongue——"

"Good egg!" chirruped Fisher T. Fish, jotting it down on a sheet of sugar-paper. "I suppose you'll want tea—and sugar—and condensed milk."

"Yes; shove 'em in!"

"And our special home-made bread—and our extra light and tasty French rolls——"

"Good!"

"Our special dairy butter, warranted—and our particular line in fresh eggs——"

"Shove 'em in!"

Fisher T. Fish rattled off a list of things in an airy way. Coker was nothing if not lavish when he was standing a feed, and he said "yes" to everything, until it really seemed that he was laying provisions for a siege instead of a picnic.

"If there's anything left over we can bring it home, and it will do for feeds in the study," he explained to his companions, and Potter and Greene concurred heartily.

"I guess I can name a special price for that lot, and the company will lend a lunch-basket," said Fisher T. Fish. "No charge for that if the basket is returned safe and sound."

"Good enough; what's the figure?"

Fisher T. Fish ran over his list.

"Two-pounds-ten the lot," he said.

"Well, I must say that's reasonable," said Coker.

"Special price for the quantity, you see," said Fisher T. Fish. "By supplying really good stuff at rock-bottom prices, this company is going to capture the whole trade."

"Good!" said Coker. "Change a fiver for me?"

He tossed the banknote upon the counter.

"I'll change this for you," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'll have to ask Mauleverer to change it. Mauly, old man."

Lord Mauleverer was in the Rag, and he willingly changed the fiver for five sovereigns. Then two pounds ten shillings were handed to Coker, and Fisher T. Fish gave him a receipt.

"I want the lunch basket immediately after lessons," said Coker. "We're starting the moment we're out of the Form-room, as we're meeting friends by appointment."

"That lunch-basket will be ready, sir," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Ready on the nail. The motto of this firm is, 'We deliver the goods.'"

"Righto, then!" said Coker.

"I'll make up the lot at once, and put the basket in your study," said Fish. "Basket with lock and key, and I'll hand you the key when you come out of the Form-room."

"That's all right!"

And Coker & Co. departed satisfied. Fisher T. Fish was also satisfied. For Fisher T. Fish saw, at last, a chance of disposing of that heap of spoiled stock which was left upon his hands! The School Shop Company would not be put to that dead loss after all—thanks to Horace Coker and Coker's picnic.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Punishment Fits the Crime.

"BUNTER!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out Bunter's name with emphasis. Afternoon lessons were proceeding in the Remove Form-room. Billy Bunter was slacking more than usual. Now he had allowed his head to fall upon his fat hands as if he were going to sleep.

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter raised his head, and blinked at the Form-master through his big spectacles.

"Yes, sir," he said in a feeble voice.

"What is the matter with you, Bunter?"

"I—I don't feel quite well, sir," said Bunter faintly. "I—I've been feeling queer all day, sir. Would you mind excusing me for a little while, sir, so that I can get some fresh air, sir. If I could walk in the Close for ten minutes——"

Mr. Quelch looked at him sharply. He knew that the Owl of the Remove was a malingeringer to the finger-tips. But Bunter had worked up an expression of intense suffering upon his fat face, and even the keen-eyed Remove Master was taken in for once.

"You may walk in the Close until next lesson, Bunter, if you feel faint," he said.

It was very hot in the Form-room. Outside the sun was blazing down. It was not surprising that the fattest fellow at Greyfriars should be feeling faint. But Billy Bunter did not look faint as he quitted the Form-room, and closed the door behind him. He grinned gleefully, and hurried briskly away—but not to the Close. Billy Bunter turned his steps in the direction of the Rag.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

He peered in cautiously through his big glasses, but the room, was, of course, empty in the afternoon. All the fellows were in the Form-rooms. Billy Bunter rolled into the Rag, and burst into a fat chuckle.

"He, he, he!"

A moment more, and he was behind the counter of the school shop. The counter was bare, all the goods being safely locked up in a big store cupboard in the wall. The cupboard was a large one, as large as a good-sized larder, and it extended from the floor almost to the ceiling. There was ample room inside for all the stock of the School Shop Company, however extensive that famous concern might become under the management of Fisher Tarleton Fish.

Billy Bunter turned the handle of the high cupboard door, but it did not, of course, open. It was locked, and the key was in the pocket of the managing director. But Billy Bunter had been devoting a great deal of attention to the lock of that cupboard ever since it had been the storehouse of the company. His investigations had revealed the fact that the lock was the same size and make as the lock upon the cupboard in the Remove Form-room. And before lessons Bunter had abstracted the key from the Form-room cupboard, and it was in his pocket now.

He grinned cheerfully as he inserted the key in the lock.

Click!

Bunter gave a gasp of delight. The door opened before him, and the treasures of the School Shop Company were spread out before his eyes.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Bunter.

He blinked round the Rag once more, and then stepped inside the cupboard, and drew the door shut after him.

There was a little barred window at the top of the cupboard which let in a glimmering of light. There was also a gas-jet, but Bunter did not need that. He had light enough for his purpose.

He drew the door shut after him, and latched it. If anybody came into the Rag then, they would naturally not suspect that there was anybody inside the store cupboard.

Safe in his new quarters, and secure from observation, Billy Bunter set to work.

The stock of the schoolboy shopkeepers was at his mercy. But there was no mercy in the heart of the Owl of the Remove.

He started on the lighter pastries with a good appetite. He had had a good dinner little more than an hour before, but Billy Bunter was always ready to eat. His eyes simply danced with delight at the prospect spread out before him. There was more there than he could possibly have eaten if he had been famished; and never before had he been in such a delightful position.

His jaws worked with marvellous celerity. So busy was he that he had no ears for a slight sound in the Rag, on the other side of the massive cupboard door. It did not even occur to him that anyone had suspected his true reason for leaving the Form-room for a little walk in the Close.

But someone had.

Five minutes after Bunter had left the Remove Form-room, Vernon-Smith had suddenly put his hand into his pocket, and drawn therefrom a letter. Vernon-Smith rose in his place, with a very concerned look.

"If you please, sir—"

"What is it, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I forgot to post this letter to my father, sir," said the Bounder of Greyfriars. "May I run down to the school-box, sir? It won't take a few minutes, and I shall catch the four collection. My father asked me to answer him at once."

"Very well, Smith."

"Thank-you, sir," said the Bounder, and he hurried out of the Form-room.

Vernon-Smith was no more particular than Billy Bunter about a falsehood. He left the Form-room, but he did not make for the school letter-box. He made for the Rag, as the Owl of the Remove had done.

The Rag was empty when Vernon-Smith looked into it. He tiptoed round the counter at the end of the room, and listened carefully outside the door of the big store-cupboard. From within came a steady sound of the champing jaws, interrupted every now and then by a grunt of fat satisfaction.

The Bounder grinned. He had guessed where Billy Bunter was; and now he was sure. But the Bounder had not come there to save the supplies of the School Shop Company, Limited. He was not a shareholder, and he was quite willing that the voracious Owl of the Remove should deplete the stock of the schoolboy shopkeepers. His idea was quite different from that. He listened to the champing sound for a few moments, and then bent down before the door, and with great care drove a little wooden wedge under it. If Billy Bunter could have seen him, he would have known that the Bounder knew of the abstraction of the key from the Form-room, and was "on" to his little game. But Billy Bunter was too busy to think of anything at all.

Vernon-Smith pushed in the wedge tightly with his thumb, and then drove it home with a sudden kick.

The door was fast now; it opened outwards, but it would

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

certainly never open again until that wedge was removed. Vernon-Smith grinned and walked away. He did not care if Bunter heard him now. He returned calmly to the Form-room, and resumed his place there, and settled down cheerfully to his lessons, wondering what would happen.

Billy Bunter, inside the cupboard, had heard that kick that fixed the wedge irrevocably in its place, and for a moment he left off eating. His first thought was that he was discovered by the schoolboy shopkeepers, and he waited in terror for the cupboard door to open and reveal the angry shareholders. But the door did not open, and there was silence in the Rag.

"Wha-a-a-at was that?" muttered Bunter, when two or three minutes of silence had elapsed. "Some silly ass has come in and kicked the door. What on earth for, I wonder?"

He peered through the keyhole, but he could see only a strip of the counter, and part of the room. He did not venture to open the door to look out, in case there should be somebody in the Rag. But as there was no alarm, his courage returned, and he resumed his gastronomic performances with undiminished energy.

Even Billy Bunter's appetite began to fail at last, and he grew very particular, and picked out the choicest morsels. When even these cloyed, he ceased eating, and gasped for breath. He was looking very shiny and jammy, and feeling a little bit uncomformtable in the neighbourhood of his waistcoat. Never in his life had he enjoyed so tremendous a feed, but now that it was over the feeling it gave him was not exactly enjoyable.

"Grooh!" murmured Bunter. "I—I hope I haven't overdone it. Perhaps that last cake was a bit too much. But I never really get enough to eat. May as well put by something for a rainy day while I'm here."

And with sedulous care he filled all his pockets with cakes, dough-nuts, and parcels of other eatables. All his pockets were bulging out by the time he was prepared to leave the scene of his depredations.

Then he turned the handle of the door and pushed it.

The door did not open.

Billy Bunter stared at it blankly for a moment or two; and then, thinking that perhaps he had locked the door on the inside and forgotten, he put in the key and tried to turn it. But the key did not turn, and he realised that the door was not locked.

"Jolly queer!" murmured the fat junior. "It's got jammed somehow. Why doesn't the beastly thing open!"

He shoved hard at the door. It did not budge. The harder he shoved, in fact, the more tightly the wedge became fixed under the door. The fat junior ceased his efforts at last, gasping for breath, and streaming with perspiration.

"Mum-mum-my only aunt, it's fixed! Oh, crumbs!"

He rested a few minutes, and then tried the door again. He shoved it, and kicked it, and banged upon it with his fat fists. All of no avail. The door refused to budge. The fat red face of the raider turned almost green as he realised that he was a prisoner in the store-cupboard. He understood now the meaning of the sound he had heard ten minutes before. Someone had followed him into the Rag, and fastened the door of the store-cupboard on the outside. Bunter gasped with dismay.

Mr. Quelch would be expecting him back in the Remove room. If he did not return, there would be trouble. And if he remained shut up there till the schoolboy shopkeepers came to open their shop—the thought made him shiver. If they discovered him in the midst of their depleted stock—the culprit captured red-handed, so to speak, on the scene of the crime!

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

He attacked the door again. He kicked and hammered and shoved. He sank down on a box at last, breathless and exhausted. He blinked in dismay at the little barred window. The thinnest of juniors could not have crawled through that little window—and Billy Bunter was not thin!

"Oh, crumbs, I'm done in! Oh, dear!"

It occurred to Bunter that it was very hot and stuffy in the cupboard. He had not noticed it while he was eating. He noticed it now. He was perspiring at every pore, and the drops ran down his fat face. He gazed at the food spread about him with almost loathing. He had eaten too much already, and for once in his life the sight of food had a sickening effect upon the Owl of the Remove. He could not eat any more. The mere sight and smell of it made him feel quite ill. The Mikado says in the comic opera:

"My object all sublime,

I shall achieve in time,

To make the punishment fit the crime—the punishment fit the crime!"

It had happened in Billy Bunter's case. The fat junior sat gasping in the midst of plenty—surrounded by good things

he would almost have died rather than have touched! It was a case of the punishment fitting the crime—with a vengeance!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Exit!

MR. QUELCH pursed his lips when he noted that Bunter had not returned at the end of the lesson. Next lesson, as it happened, was French, and Monsieur Charpentier came in to take the Remove, and Mr. Quelch left the juniors in his charge. But by the time the Remove had given the usual amount of time—and the usual amount of attention—to the tongue of Voltaire and Racine, Bunter had not come in. When Mr. Quelch came back to the Remove room for last lesson, he glanced to Bunter's place, and found it still empty.

Then he frowned.
"Has not Bunter returned, Wharton?" he asked, addressing Harry as head of the Form.

"No, sir," said Harry.
"This is very curious. Kindly go and look for him, and tell him to return at once."
"Yes, sir."

Harry Wharton went out into the Close. Billy Bunter was not to be seen there. He looked for him in the cloisters and the gym., though the gym. was not a likely place to find William George Bunter in. He came back into the School House, and gave a careless glance into the Rag in passing; but the Rag was empty. He could only surmise that Billy Bunter had gone out of gates. If the tuckshop had been open, he would have expected to find him there; but Mrs.

Mimble's little establishment was still closed till further notice. Wharton could only surmise that Bunter had taken French leave, and gone down to Uncle Clegg's in Friardale.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, as Harry Wharton came back into the Form-room without Bunter.

"I can't find him, sir."
Mr. Quelch elevated his eyebrows.
"You cannot find Bunter?"
"I'm sorry, sir—no."
"You have looked for him?"
"Yes, sir, I've looked."

"Then he must have gone out?" said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips with an expression that boded no good to the Owl of the Remove when he turned up again.

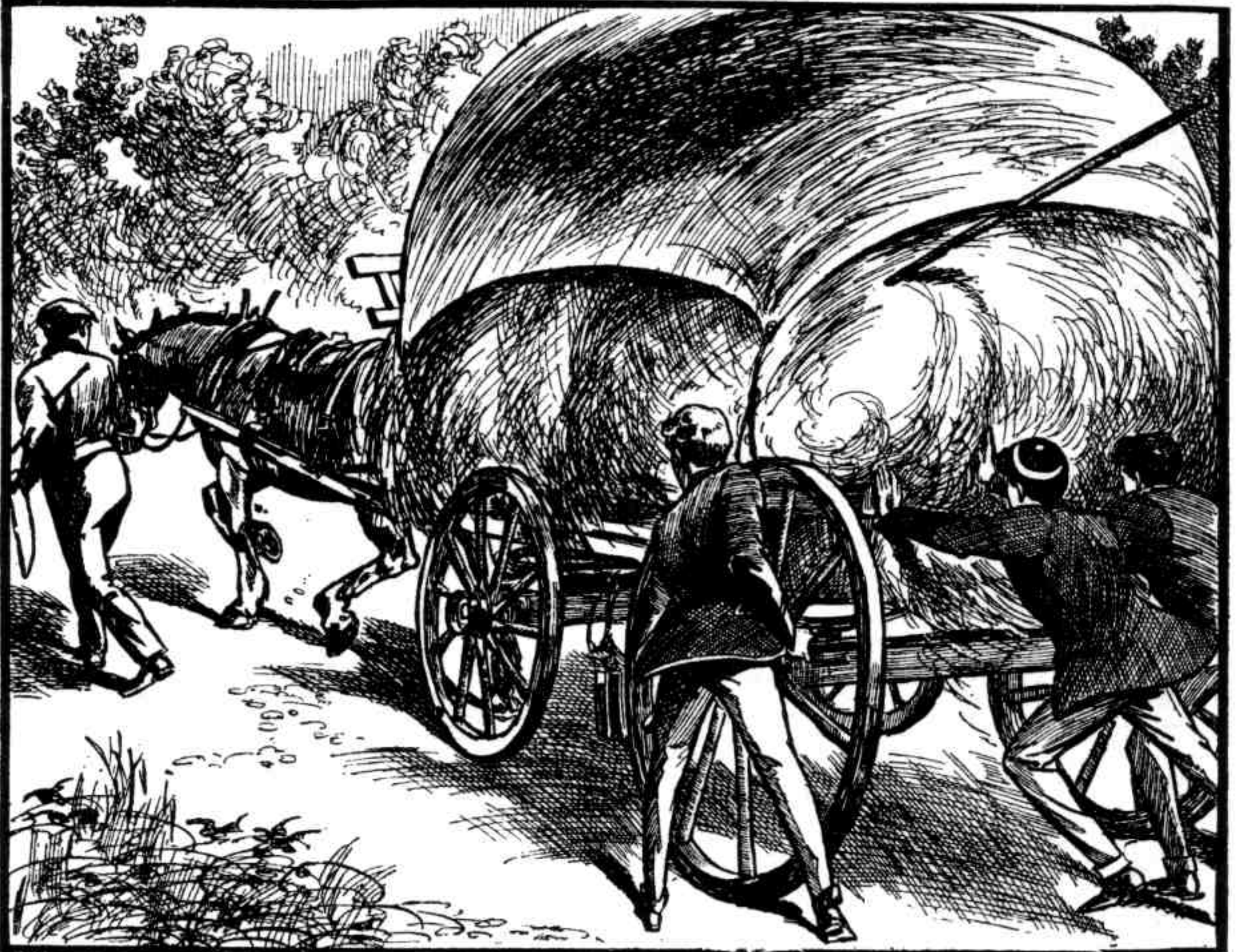
"I don't know, sir."
"You may go back to your place, Wharton."

Harry went to his place, wondering what had become of Billy Bunter. Unless he had gone to the village, it was impossible to imagine what had become of him. And it was simply amazing that Bunter should have the unheard-of nerve to break bounds during lessons, with the certainty that his Form-master would miss him and inquire after him. Mr. Quelch was not the kind of master that boys cared to trifle with in that manner, as a rule. If Bunter had done it, he was displaying a "nerve" the juniors had never given him credit for.

Last lesson ended, and Bunter had not appeared. Vernon-Smith kept his own counsel, but he grinned to himself. There was a surprise awaiting the schoolboy shopkeepers when they re-opened their shop; and the Bounder wondered how much of their stock they would find remaining.

Mr. Quelch was evidently very angry. His brows were

 GOOD TURNS.—No. 7. 



THREE "MAGNETITES" DOING A GOOD TURN FOR AN OVER-LADEN HORSE UP A STEEP HILL!
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290



"Chuck 'em away!" exclaimed Greene. "I'm feelin' quite ill!" "Oh, my hat!" said Coker, as the cold chicken floated down the river after the ham and the eggs and the beef-steak pie, and the tongue followed the chicken! (See Chapter 12.)

knitted, and he called to Harry Wharton as the Remove filed out of the Form-room.

"Please find Bunter as soon as you can, Wharton, and send him to my study."

"Yes, sir," said Wharton.

He followed the rest out of the Form-room. All the juniors were surprised by the peculiar absence of Bunter.

"Blessed if I knew the young ass had such a nerve," said Bob Cherry. "Why, Quelchy will simply skin him when he comes in."

"And I've got to find him," said Harry.

"You've looked already, haven't you?" said Nugent.

"Well, come down to the cricket."

"But Bunter!"

"Did you look for him on the cricket-field?"

"Of course I didn't."

"Then you can look for him there now," said Nugent, linking his arm in Harry's. "Look for him between the runs. He's fat enough to be seen when he turns up."

And Wharton laughed and went down to the cricket with his comrades. After all, there was no pressing hurry to find

Bunter, and Harry was almost certain that he was out of gates, and that it was no use looking for him.

Meanwhile, Fisher T. Fish had gone along to the Fifth Form-room to meet Coker & Co. coming out. The Fifth were dismissed a few minutes after the Remove, and Coker and Potter and Greene came out together.

Horace Coker looked at his big watch—a birthday present from his affectionate Aunt Judy. He sniffed.

"Just like old Froot, keeping us five minutes late on an occasion like this!" he said. "We shall have to buck up to get there in time. I don't want to keep Miss Spriggs and Miss Phrump waiting. Where's that Fish kid—"

"I guess I'm on hand," said Fisher T. Fish, detaching himself from the wall he had been leaning against. "Always on hand for business—that's me, and don't you forget it!"

"Did you put the lunch-basket in my study?"

"Yep! Here's the key."

"Good! Come on, you chaps!"

Coker took the key, and hurried on to his study. Three minutes later the chums of the Fifth were striding out of the School House, Horace Coker carrying the lunch-basket,

which was of a good size and considerably heavy. Fisher T. Fish watched them go, with a friendly grin.

"I hope they'll enjoy that feed," he murmured. "It's all rot to say the stuff isn't all O. K.—rather fresh in places, that's all. Hardly notice it in the open air, and when they're hungry after a walk. It will go down all right, and there's no reason why they shouldn't enjoy themselves. I really hope they will!"

And Fisher T. Fish strolled down to watch the cricket. It was no use opening the Junior School shop until customers were ready to come. Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh was bowling to Harry Wharton, and the cricket practice was proceeding merrily, when Nugent minor of the Second Form arrived on the ground, his sunny face wreathed in broad smiles.

"Fishy here?" he called out.

"I guess so," said Fish. "What's wanted? Crowd of customers waiting in the Rag. If so, I'll happen along—though it isn't quite time to open yet."

"There's a crowd," grinned Nugent minor. "Not customers, that I know of."

"What's the matter?" asked Frank Nugent.

Dick Nugent chuckled.

"Bunter!"

"Has he come in after all?"

"He hasn't gone out."

"Eh? What?"

"He's in the store-cupboard, yelling to be let out!" grinned Nugent minor.

"What!"

"Bunter in my store-cupboard!" roared Fisher T. Fish. "Why, all the stock will be gone—I—I—I guess I'll scalp him. I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Fisher T. Fish, and he broke into a desperate run for the School House. The news spread among the juniors, and a crowd of the cricketers followed the excited Yankee junior.

There was, as Dicky Nugent had reported, a crowd in the Rag. They were laughing. They laughed more loudly than ever as Fisher T. Fish burst into the room, with a very red face, waving his hands in fury.

"Where is he?" roared Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From the store-cupboard at the end of the room came a sound of hammering on the inside of the door, and a muffled voice.

"Lemme out! Lemme out! I'm suffocating here! It's hot! Look here, you beasts, I shall faint! Yah! Lemme out!"

"He's in there!" yelled Micky Desmond. "Faith, and we can't open the door intirely. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors yelled. But the shareholders did not laugh. If Billy Bunter had had a free run on their stock ever since he had left the Form-room, their shares must have considerably deteriorated in value. Fisher T. Fish made a rush for the store-cupboard, and dragged at the handle. But the door did not open. The American junior rapped furiously on the door.

"Bunter! You snide! You slabsided jay! Come out!"

"I can't get out!" roared Bunter from within. "Do you think I'd have stuck here for hours and hours and hours if I could get out, you silly fathead?"

"Is the door locked?" asked Harry Wharton, in amazement.

"It don't seem to be, but I guess it won't open."

"Bunter!" called out Harry. "How did you get in?"

"Walked in, you idiot."

"Are you holding the door?"

"Of course I'm not, you silly ass!" Billy Bunter was in a state of high exasperation, and was evidently not disposed to be complimentary. "Don't ask idiotic questions, but open the door. I tell you it's like an oven in here. I'm suffocating."

"Well, suffocate quietly for a bit, and we'll get you out," said Bob Cherry.

"Yah! Lemme out!"

"If the door isn't locked, why the dickens doesn't it come open?" exclaimed Frank Nugent, pulling at the handle. "It's jammed somehow. The beast must have got another key and let himself in, but the door isn't locked now. What the dooce—"

"It's jammed," chuckled Russell. "There's a wedge under it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Who on earth could have put that there?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, staring down at the wedge under the door in astonishment.

"Somebody caught Bunter there and shut him up!" said Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "What larks!"

"It's not a lark for the giddy shareholders, growled Johnny Bull. "There won't be much of our stock left."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

"There won't be much of Bunter left when I'm done with him, I guess," howled Fisher T. Fish. "Get that wedge out, some of you, while I get a cricket-stump."

"It's not so jolly easy," said Bob, trying to drag the wedge away. "It's been jammed tight under the door. I can't move it."

"Sure and I've thried," grinned Micky Desmond. "I couldn't move it."

The juniors essayed in turn to remove the wedge. But it was immovable. Fingers and thumbs were quite useless upon it. They gave it up. Fisher T. Fish came back with a cricket-stump, and growled when he saw that the door was not yet open.

"Can't you do it?" he demanded.

"It's fixed too tight—it won't move, Fishy."

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"Oh, get out of the way and let me do it!" he said.

Fisher T. Fish was born, apparently, with a conviction that he could always do things that other fellows couldn't do. The juniors grinned, and made way for him, and the Yankee schoolboy bent down and grabbed the end of the wedge between finger and thumb, and strove to move it.

But the wedge was too tightly jammed, and Fish had no chance with it. He strove with the obstinate wedge for several minutes, while the Removites looked on and chuckled. Fisher T. Fish rose to his feet at last, panting and warm, and sucked his thumb.

"I guess it's too tight," he said. "It will have to be split up. Some of you go and find a hammer and chisel."

"Buzz off and find 'em yourself, you cheeky ass," growled Bull.

"I guess—"

There was a loud thumping on the inner side of the store-cupboard door. Thump, thump, thump, thump! Kick! Bang!

"Are you beasts going to lemme out?" roared Bunter.

"You'll have to wait a bit—"

"I can't! I won't! Yah! If you don't lemme out I'll smash up the things!" yelled Billy Bunter. "Yah! Open the door at once, or I'll start on the jam-pots."

"Hold on, the door's wedged; we're going to get it undone—"

"Will you open this door, you beasts?"

"Wait a minute!"

Crash! Crash!

It was a sound of jam-pots smashing on the floor inside the store-cupboard. Billy Bunter was getting desperate, and he was keeping his word. He had remained silent long, in the hope of finding some way out of his predicament; but now that he had taken the desperate measure of making his presence in the cupboard known, and risking the vengeance of the schoolboy shopkeepers, he didn't mean to remain there a minute longer. He was convinced that the juniors were keeping him shut up to punish him, and he was prepared to smash everything within reach to hurry them up.

Fisher T. Fish had gone for a chisel. Wharton rapped furiously on the cupboard door, and yelled to Bunter.

"Stop that, Bunter! If you smash the things, we'll slaughter you! Stop it, I say!"

Crash! Crash!

The shareholders were all there now, and they danced with rage as they heard their property smashing inside the store-cupboard. If they could have got at Bunter, his fate would have been little better than that of the jam-pots. But they could no more get at him than he could get out.

"Are you going to open this door?" came Bunter's voice sulphurously, through the keyhole.

"We can't!" yelled Wharton. "It's wedged. Fishy's gone for a chisel."

"Yah! Rats! Open the door, you beast!"

"Wait a minute!"

"I won't wait a second!" yelled Bunter. "I'll keep on smashing the things till you let me out!"

"You fat villain!"

Crash! Crash! Crash!

"Oh, we—we'll boil him in oil when we get him out!" gasped Nugent. "There go all the profits of the company, the fat beast!"

Crash! Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the fellows who did not hold shares in the shopkeeping company seemed to regard the matter as a screaming joke. They yelled and roared. The news of Bunter's imprisonment had spread, and crowds of fellows were swarming into the Rag to look on. The roars of laughter from the Rag sounded through the passages; and it was not surprising that Mr. Quelch was drawn to the spot.

The Remove-master strode into the room with rustling gown, and a frowning face. The roar of merriment died down into chuckles which were irrepressible.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly disturbance?" exclaimed the Remove-master angrily.

It was Bunter's voice from within the cupboard that replied:

"Will you let me out, you rotter?"

"What! Bunter!"

"You beast! Let me out!"

Bunter evidently did not know that the Form-master was there. Mr. Quelch frowned at the giggling juniors, and strode towards the store cupboard. He rapped upon the door with his knuckles.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes! Yes, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"What are you doing in there, Bunter?"

"Some beast shut me in, sir!"

"Open the door at once, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch angrily. "This is an altogether unpardonable trick."

Wharton pointed to the wedge.

"We keep grub—I mean eatables—in that cupboard, sir," he explained. "Bunter must have gone in to scoff them—"

"To what?"

"To eat them, sir; and somebody has fastened him in. Buck up with that chisel, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish started work with hammer and chisel. Bang, bang, bang!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

After the Feast—the Reckoning.

FISHER T. FISH hammered and chiselled at the wedge—but it was hard, and it was firmly jammed in, and progress was slow. Mr. Quelch looked on, frowning; but even their Form-master's frown could not keep the juniors from grinning. Nobody had known where Billy Bunter was until his voice was heard from the store-cupboard in the Rag, and the juniors had wondered what had become of him. Now they were wondering how much was left of the stock of the School Shop Company, Ltd. Vernon-Smith observed that the stock was likely to be more limited than the company, after Bunter had done with it.

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

The wedge was chiselled into pieces at last, and the cupboard door was pulled open.

Billy Bunter was revealed.

It was very hot and close in the cupboard on that sultry day, and the Owl of the Remove showed signs of it.

His complexion was crimson, and perspiration was rolling down his fat face, and he was gasping for breath.

He staggered out of the cupboard. The shareholders of the School Shop Company looked in, and exchanged furious glances. There were smashed jars and jam on the floor—and the shelves had been greatly depleted by Bunter's raid. All the choicest morsels had vanished—there was hardly a jam-tart or a cream-puff left. Nearly a dozen ginger-beer bottles lay empty on the floor along with the smashed jam-jars.

But for the presence of the Remove-master, Billy Bunter would have been seized upon the spot, and given the punishment he deserved. But with Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye on them, the juniors could not handle Bunter as they wished.

The fat, perspiring, jammy junior rolled out, gasping. Mr. Quelch frowned at him sternly.

"Bunter!" he rapped out.

"Yessir!" gasped Bunter.

"What were you doing in that cupboard?"

"D-d-doing, sir?"

"Yes!"

"I—I—I was fastened in, sir!" said Bunter feebly.

"You have been eating?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"What! There is jam on your face and hands, Bunter!"

"I—I might have taken a snack, sir."

"Taken a snack!" growled Johnny Bull. "You fat villain! You've bolted half our stock!"

"The boltfulness of the esteemed Bunter has been terrific," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, indignantly.

"You came here when you left the Form-room, Bunter?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "You were speaking falsely when you said you were faint."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Did you come directly here or not?"

"I—I—I— Yes, sir!"

"To eat things that did not belong to you?"

"I'm going to pay for them, sir," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I hope you don't think, sir, that I'd take the stuff without paying for it. I know exactly what I've eaten, within a dozen things or so, and I'm going to pay these chaps. I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, sir, and I—I'm going to settle up out of that—in full, sir!"

"You may settle that with the boys the articles belonged to," said Mr. Quelch; "but you have another matter to settle with me, Bunter."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"I—I don't owe you anything, sir!" said Bunter, in dismay. "If I did, sir, I'd settle up like a bird, sir, out of my postal-order—"

"You lied to me to get out of the Form-room, sir!" said the Remove-master sternly. "You intended to come here and eat these things!"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then why did you enter the cupboard?"

"To—to see if the things were safe, sir. I've got my doubts about some fellows—Bob Cherry, for example—"

"What!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I didn't see you, Cherry," stammered Bunter, blinking at the indignant junior through his big spectacles. "I didn't mean you—I—I meant Nugent—"

"You meant me?" demanded Nugent.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped the short-sighted Owl of the Remove. "Nunno—I really meant Tom Brown, you know, the New Zealand chap. I've got my doubts about him—"

The New Zealand chap strode forward.

"About me—eh?" he demanded.

"Oh, lor'! Nunno, not you, Browney, old fellow—"

"Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "You are lying!"

"Yes, sir."

"What! You admit that you are lying?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, looking round. "Bunter, I believe you are so untruthful that you hardly know when you are lying and when you are not!"

"Yes, sir! That is to say, no, sir!" said Bunter. "Thank you, sir!"

"You—you stupid boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I am convinced that you made an untruthful excuse to get away from your lessons, and that you intended to come here and eat this unwholesome stuff, which does not belong to you. I shall cane you severely for missing two lessons this afternoon, Bunter!"

"Oh, sir! It wasn't my fault!" wailed Bunter. "Some rotten beast fastened me up in the cupboard, sir, or I should have been back in ten minutes."

"Then you admit that you left the Form-room purposely to come here?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"But you have said that you would have been back in ten minutes if someone had not fastened you up in the cupboard."

"Oh, no, sir; I didn't say that!" said Bunter.

"What!"

"I didn't say somebody, sir. I said some rotten beast, sir!"

"It is the same thing!"

"Not at all, sir. Of course, I wouldn't contradict you, sir. But I don't think you ought to think I'm admitting things when I'm not, sir. I'm not the kind of chap to miss lessons for the sake of a feed, sir. I'm too fond of my lessons."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. The idea of Billy Bunter being fond of his lessons, and declining to miss them for a feed, struck them as funny.

Mr. Quelch could not help smiling too.

"You are a ridiculous boy, Bunter!" he said.

"Thank you, sir!"

"You have nothing to thank me for, you stupid lad," said the Remove-master tartly.

"No, sir! I mean, yes, sir!"

"You were fastened up in that cupboard within a short time of leaving the Form-room, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. Some awful rotter—"

"Vernon-Smith!"

Vernon-Smith was moving towards the door; but he had to stop as Mr. Quelch rapped out his name.

"Yes, sir," said the Bounder, with perfect coolness.

"Did you follow Bunter here and fasten him up in the cupboard? I remember that you made an excuse to leave the Form-room shortly after him."

"No, sir!"

"Where did you go?"

"To post my letter, sir!" said the Bounder, without a muscle flinching.

Mr. Quelch looked at him hard, but the Bounder met his gaze with perfect steadiness. A falsehood did not cost much to the Bounder of Greyfriars, and he was perfectly well aware that there was no evidence against him, and that his Form-master was too just to punish him on suspicion—though the suspicion was very strong in this case.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, after a pause. "I am bound to believe you, Vernon-Smith, and I hope you are telling the truth. I should have punished you for keeping Bunter away from his lessons—though for the rest, he fully

deserved what happened to him, for his greediness and unscrupulousness. Bunter, you will follow me to my study."

"If you please, sir—"

"Follow me at once!"

Mr. Quelch strode rustling from the room. Billy Bunter blinked round at the juniors, who were glaring at him—at all events, the shareholders in the School Shop Co. were glaring. The rest were laughing.

"I say, you fellows, I'm jolly well not going!" said Bunter. "I—I say— Yar-o-oh! Leggo!"

The angry shareholders rushed at Bunter, and collared him. They whirled him to the doorway of the Rag, and he went hurtling forth into the passage. He landed there with a loud bump.

Mr. Quelch, who had reached the end of the passage, turned round at the noise. He stared at the fat junior sprawling in the passage.

"What—what is that?" he exclaimed. "What—"

"We're helping Bunter out, sir," said Bob Cherry meekly.

"Ow—ow! Yar-o-o-oh!"

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"Follow me, Bunter!"

He walked away. Billy Bunter sat up and blinked at the juniors in the doorway of the Rag. They made a movement towards him, and the fat junior jumped up and bolted and dashed after Mr. Quelch. Mr. Quelch's study was not a desirable place to visit under the circumstances, but it was still less desirable to remain and face the angry shareholders in the School Shop Company, Ltd. Bunter chose the lesser of two evils.

In the Rag the shareholders counted up their losses, which were tremendous. In Mr. Quelch's study howls of anguish were heard.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not Quite a Success.

"HERE we are!" said Horace Coker.

"And here they ain't!" said Potter. "Fat lot of use hurrying!"

"Glad we're here first," said Coker. "It's bad form to keep a woman waiting, you ass—rotten bad form!"

They can keep us waiting if they like—it's only to be expected. They haven't sense enough to be punctual. But we have, so it's up to us—see?"

Having delivered that complimentary opinion of the intellectual powers of the fair sex in general, Coker planted down the big lunch-basket. It was a charming spot that had been chosen for the picnic—a gentle slope of greensward down to the river, backed by fir-trees, and a big oak spreading wide branches and sheltering the chosen spot from the sun. Coker had certainly shown great judgment in selecting the place.

Potter and Greene would have been a little more contented if Coker had shown still greater judgment in keeping the picnic to themselves. As it was, they had felt bound to hurriedly put on clean collars before leaving the school, and to brush their hair and their hats, and now they would have to be on their best behaviour. It was a blazing afternoon, and they would have liked to throw their jackets off, but they could not very well await the arrival of Coker's lady friends in their shirt-sleeves. But after all, it was going to be a good feed, and they were getting it for nothing, so Potter and Greene were very polite and patient.

Coker felt in his pocket for the key of the little lock on the lunch-basket. He found the key and unlocked the padlock, and opened the lid of the big basket. As he did so, there was a step on the towing-path.

"Here they come!" grunted Potter.

The two young ladies appeared in sight, and they came up with sweet smiles. Miss Spriggs was a merry blonde, and Miss Phrump a romantic brunette. Both of them were quite young things, and had been young things for years and years and years. In the bunshop in Courtfield, perhaps, they looked rather younger things than in the full glare of the summer sun; but they wore enormous hats, which threw their faces into the shadow, and certainly their cheeks were rosy enough, though whether Nature had planted the roses there was another question. As a matter of fact, they were a pair of healthy young women who worked hard for their living, and were cheerfully prepared to picnic with schoolboys on their little outing if there was no older male escort to be found.

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Coker jumped up from the lunch-basket and greeted his lady friends warmly. He presented Potter and Greene, who were very polite and a little shy.

"Where are the camp-stools, Potty?" asked Coker.

"Didn't bring any," said Potter.

"Well, you must be an ass!"

"Well, you didn't bring any, either," said Potter warmly.

"It would be so lovely to sit on the grass!" said Miss Spriggs dreamily, but with great tact. "I adore the grass!"

"Positively delicious!" said Miss Phrump.

Nebuchadnezzar himself could never have been fonder of grass than those two tactful young ladies appeared to be at that moment. So they sat down under the big oak-tree and smiled sweetly. They wondered inwardly whether Coker would tread on their feet, or whether Potter and Greene would upset tea and butter over their dresses; but their faces remained immovably fixed in sweet smiles.

"We've got a spirit-stove here," said Coker. "We'll have the tea ready in a jiffy. I suppose you'd prefer tea to ginger-beer?"

"Ginger-beer is delicious," said Miss Phrump, "but perhaps I should prefer tea. Yes, I think I should prefer tea."

"Good egg!" said Coker.

"Yes, and perhaps an egg as well," said Miss Phrump.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter, as he observed that the young lady had misunderstood Coker's exclamation.

Horace Coker glared at him.

"Anything the matter with you, Potty?" he demanded.

"Nunno," stammered Potter.

"What are you making that row for, then?"

"Ahem! I—I—"

"Shut up, then, and get the spirit-stove lighted!"

"Look here, Coker—"

"Look here, Potter—"

"How dreamily beautiful the river looks from here," said Miss Phrump. "Do you not think so, Mr. Coker?"

"Does it?" said Coker. Coker had no eye for scenery, and he had never noticed it. "Yes, I believe it does, Miss Phrump. Jolly beautiful!"

And the incipient row with Potter was ripped in the bud. The spirit-stove was started, and the tea was made, and then the eggs were put on to boil. Potter took the eggs out of the bag, and his expression was a little queer as he handled them. He was observed to sniff in a somewhat doubtful manner. However, he plunged the eggs into the little tin saucepan, and they boiled.

When they were done, Potter took them out, and egg-cups were set up for the young ladies and the eggs placed in them. Miss Phrump and Miss Spriggs declared laughingly that they were not hungry at all, but there was a satisfied look in their eyes when they glanced at the crammed lunch-basket.

"Eggs all right?" asked Coker, as he observed the young ladies looking at them with very peculiar expressions upon their faces.

Miss Phrump made an heroic effort, and tried to taste her egg, but she could not. The smell of it as soon as it was cracked was too terrific.

"I—I think, after all, I'm not hungry enough for an egg," she said faintly.

"I—I think the same, thank you!" murmured Miss Spriggs.

"Why, they're whiffy!" exclaimed Coker. "You must have been an ass to cook them, Potty. Haven't you got a nose?"

"Not so big a one as yours!" growled Potter.

Coker's nose was a very prominent feature on Coker's face, and he did not like to hear it mentioned. He pushed back his cuffs, for the moment forgetting the presence of ladies.

"Please take the eggs away!" murmured Miss Spriggs.

Coker threw them into the river.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I'll be more careful with the next. Potter doesn't know a good egg from a bad one. He doesn't know enough to go in when it rains. Now, here we are!" Coker sorted over the remaining eggs, sniffing at each to make sure whether it was a good one. His face turned almost green after a few sniffs.

"Oh, crumbs! They're all the same!" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"I could have told you that," said Potter.

"Chuck 'em away, for goodness' sake!" said Greene. "They're simply talking, Coker. Rather rough on the fishes to chuck 'em in the river, though."

Splash! splash! splash! The eggs disappeared into the waters of the Sark. Coker's brow was frowning. It was a most unfortunate beginning to his picnic, and he inwardly resolved to make Fisher T. Fish repent of it. The tuck the Fifth-Formers had tasted in the School Shop had been all right, but that packed in the lunch-basket was evidently not up to sample.

"Never mind," said Coker. "Will you try the ham instead?"

"I adore ham!" said Miss Spriggs.

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"I love it!" said Miss Phrump gushingly.

Coker served up the ham. It seemed to him to have a rather queer odour, but he was too confused and worried to think of it. But the young ladies gazed at the ham on their plates in dismay and dread. It was evidently very ancient ham, and had a smell and a flavour all its own.

"I—I think, after all, I am not hungry," said Miss Spriggs.

"Anything wrong with the ham?" asked the dismayed Coker.

"Only it's talking!" said Potter viciously. "I must say you are a silly idiot, Coker, to bring stuff like that to a picnic!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Potter—"

"Try the chickens—if they don't walk away!" said Potter sarcastically.

"I adore cold chicken!" murmured Miss Spriggs, but with visibly diminished enthusiasm.

Coker carved the cold chickens. But the process of carving was enough. It made him feel quite faint, and he had to turn his head aside as he carved.

"Chuck 'em away, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Greene.

"I'm feeling quite ill!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Coker.

The cold chickens floated down the river after the ham and the eggs. Coker rummaged through the lunch-basket in despair. He brought to light some beefsteak-pies, but the first cut through the crust revealed the fact that the beefsteak-pies were only fit to follow the cold chickens—and they followed. Then he tried the tongue, but the tongue, as Potter remarked with grim humour, was talking. And the tongue was sent to talk in the river.

Miss Spriggs and her friend were growing restive by this time. They had very healthy appetites, and the walk along the river had freshened them. But it was pretty clear that there was nothing to eat.

Even the tarts were ancient and "wangy," and the young ladies turned up disdainful noses at them. There was a cake, but it was old and as hard as nails, and might have been an heirloom, as Potter remarked.

Coker was in despair.

Miss Spriggs and Miss Phrump sipped their tea. And Miss Spriggs, developing a sudden and unexpected vein of sarcasm, asked Coker whether it was tea, or whether he had put in sawdust or anything like that by mistake.

Coker assured them that he hadn't. It was tea right enough, and if it didn't taste like tea, it wasn't his fault.

"My word!" growled Greene. "There won't be anything to eat but bread-and-butter. I suppose that's better than nothing."

Miss Spriggs did not say that she adored bread-and-butter. She was grimly silent. Coker began to cut bread-and-butter in huge "hunks," suitable more for fags of the Second Form than for delicate young ladies like his guests. The bread was hard and aged; the butter was odoriferous, and had evidently seen better days. But there was nothing else, and Coker offered it timidly to his guests.

One sniff was enough for them.

Their patience was exhausted. They could not help suspecting the unfortunate Coker of an elaborate joke on them—of inviting them, as it were, to a Feast of the Barmecides, where there was a great show of plenty, and nothing to eat.

They exchanged glances, and rose to their feet. They gathered their skirts round them in the disdainful manner of young ladies who wish to be specially crushing.

"I think we need not remain," said Miss Spriggs, with chilling dignity. "We are very much obliged to you, Mr. Coker."

"Very much!" said Miss Phrump, satirically.

"I—I say!" ejaculated Coker, in dismay, as the two young ladies sailed off. "I say, I'm awfully sorry, you know. I've been taken in—"

"I think we have," said Miss Spriggs majestically. "We had an impression that a gentleman asked us to a picnic."

"We were mistaken," said Miss Phrump.

"We find that the person we mistook for a gentleman was a foolish schoolboy, with a foolish taste for practical jokes," said Miss Spriggs crushingly.

"And we do not like practical jokes," said Miss Phrump.

And then the young ladies sailed off in earnest, turning a deaf ear to Horace Coker's almost frantic expostulations and apologies.

"Oh, crikey!" said Coker utterly aghast, as his guests disappeared down the towing-path. "This is a ripping go, I must say."

Potter and Greene snorted. They had been disappointed as well as the two young ladies from the Courtfield bun-shop.

"Of all the silly asses!" said Potter.



"Of all the blithering, chortling, burbling chumps," said Greene, in measured tones.

"It wasn't my fault!" roared Coker. "I sampled the stuff, didn't I? I've been swindled by that Yankee. My hat! I'll scalp him! I'll slaughter him! I'll squash him! I'll

Words failed Coker. He tramped away towards Greyfriars, leaving the lunch-basket and the crockery where it lay. They belonged to Fisher T. Fish, so it did not matter to Coker what became of them. Potter and Greene tramped furiously after their leader. They would gladly have ducked Coker in the river, but that was not practicable; but there would be some consolation in "taking" it out of Fisher T. Fish. And with that object in view, the chums of the Fifth tramped away with knitted brows towards Greyfriars.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Something for Bunter.

"WALK up, gentlemen!"

The School Shop in the Rag was open. Fisher T. Fish, in apron and shirt-sleeves, was behind the counter. Quite a crowd of juniors had come round to purchase. The School Shop Company was doing a brisk business. Bunter's depredations had depleted the stock; but there was plenty for the shop that evening. And after the shop was closed Fish meant to cycle down to Courtfield and order a fresh supply. Indeed, as Fish declared, the business was going strong. There had been one loss—the spoiled goods the customers refused to take. But these had now been disposed of at a handsome profit. Bunter's raid caused another loss, but the profit on the Coker transaction more than covered it.

It was characteristic of Fisher T. Fish—and perhaps of older business men of his great nation—that he looked chiefly to immediate sales and takings, and never even thought of consolidating a business by giving his customers good value for their money. If he thought of that at all, he regarded it as an old and played-out Britisher idea, quite out-of-date in these progressive days of adulterated food and wooden nutmegs.

He had sold a quantity of rubbish at a good price, and he was satisfied. That Coker wouldn't be satisfied was another matter. If Coker kicked up a row, he would have to get out of it somehow. Even now, after the lessons he had had, he would have sold spoiled stuff over the counter, and thus gradually choked off customer after customer and ruined the business, but for the sharp eye the shareholders kept on him.

Harry Wharton & Co. had warned him that if anything "rotten" was discovered among the stock again, they would make him eat it, and charge him the price in full, out of his first "whack" in the dividend.

Fisher T. Fish was quite prepared to sell ancient eggs, and smelly herrings, and out-of-date beefsteak puddings, but he was not prepared to eat them himself. He realised that the shareholders were in deadly earnest, and he submitted. But he groaned over what he called stick-in-the-mud British ideas of doing business. According to the American idea, a customer was an oyster, to be opened by any possible means. The fact that a customer who was satisfied would come again, and that a customer who was dissatisfied wouldn't, did not appeal to Fisher T. Fish, whose eye was upon immediate takings.

Owing to the care exercised by the shareholders, and not at all to the marvellous business ability Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon, the business was indeed going strong. And profits were being made. Buying at wholesale prices and selling at retail prices naturally produces a profit, and the schoolboy shopkeepers were not at the terrible expense of rent, rates, and taxes, which ruin so many unfortunate businesses that might otherwise pay their way very well.

After allowing for stock left over or spoiled, the schoolboy shopkeepers had every reason to look forward to a real dividend on the capital subscribed.

Even the loss of Bunter's raid would be covered. About the Coker transaction, the shareholders knew nothing. The managing director was keeping that as a private speculation of his own.

The company had written off the spoiled stock at a loss, and if Fisher T. Fish could dispose of it, he was entitled to—or so he "guessed," at all events.

The Famous Five had returned to cricket practice now, but the Rag was pretty full of juniors. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were there. They had sniffed at the Remove scheme, but they had to admit that it was very convenient to buy tuck in the Rag instead of trotting down to Friardale.

Fisher T. Fish was kept very busy.

He was pleased to see that a number of seniors were dropping in, too. He would not have been pleased to see Coker just then, but he was glad to see any others of the Fifth. It showed that the business was extending.

And he was too busy to note that the Fifth Formers were

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exchanging signs and winks, and that their number was constantly increasing.

Blundell and Bland of the Fifth had strolled in first, and after them came others. Potter came in, and Fish glanced at him rather sharply; but Potter was looking quite cheery, and he began to talk cricket to Blundell. Greene came in a little later, with some more of the Fifth.

If Fisher T. Fish had been as keen as he prided himself upon being, he might have "guessed" that mischief was brewing.

But he didn't. He went on serving his customers cheerfully. Fourth Formers, and Removeites, and fags gave him plenty of orders. The Yankee junior's eyes gleamed as Billy Bunter rolled in. Bunter seemed to have recovered from the caning Mr. Quelch had given him, and also the terrific feed of the afternoon. Apparently his appetite had returned, for he came up to the counter, blinking rather suspiciously at Fish through his big spectacles.

"I say, Fishy—" he began.

"Yep!" said Fisher T. Fish, idly taking up a soda syphon.

"I say, old fellow," Bunter went on affectionately, "my postal-order will be here shortly, and then I'm going to pay for the stuff I had to-day. You can put it at any figure you like; I'll square up—as soon as the postal-order comes."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, I do; and—and as I'm going to square up, I suppose you wouldn't mind letting me have a few tarts now—"

"Nothing else?" asked Fisher T. Fish blandly.

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"Well, yes; I'll have some ginger-beer, too—"

"Like some soda-water?" asked Fish.

"Not particularly."

"Not if I give it to you for nothing?" asked Fish.

"I say, you're jolly decent, Fishy. Yes, I'll have it if you like. I—"

"Good! You're going to have it whether you like it or not," said Fisher T. Fish. "Here you are! I guess I hope you'll like it."

Then Bunter understood—as the siphon was turned upon him.

Swissssss-h!

"Grooogh! Gerrooogh! Yah!"

Swish!

"Yaroooonop! Ow! Stoppit! Chuckit! Yawwwp!"

Billy Bunter staggered back under the whizzing stream of soda-water. His fat face was drenched, his collar was a limp rag, his spectacles were blurred, and the water ran down his hair and his ears and his neck.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow! Grooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Beast! Ow! Rorter! Yah! Grooogh!"

Fisher T. Fish set down the empty syphon, and chuckled.

"Now you absquatulate," he said. "That's all you'll get here, and if you walk your chucks into this shop again, I guess you'll get some more—just a few! Travel!"

"Grooogh!"

"Are you going to vamoose the ranch?" roared Fish.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

Fisher T. Fish caught up another syphon, and Billy Bunter made a wild rush for the door. He disappeared, grunting and gasping, and mopping at his face with his handkerchief. The Yankee junior grinned.

"I guess that jay won't come back hyer again," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not come back again; but another customer—and a much more dangerous customer—came in as the Owl of the Remove staggered away. It was Coker of the Fifth. Coker glanced round the Rag, and saw that nearly all the Fifth Form were there. Then he closed the door of the Rag, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

Fisher T. Fish viewed this proceeding in alarm.

"I guess that door's got to be open, Coker, just a few!" he exclaimed. "My customers want to come in, I guess."

"That's all right," said Coker, grimly. "You've got plenty of customers to deal with now, and you won't have time for any others. We're here on business. Buck up, Fifth!"

And the Fifth-Formers, chuckling, bore down upon the school shop and the Yankee junior—looking very business-like indeed!

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. Goths and Vandals.

HORACE COKER certainly meant business.

He had returned to Greyfriars in a towering rage, and his first impulse had been to rush into the Rag and wreck the school shop on the spot, and slaughter Fisher T. Fish amid the ruins of his establishment.

But the more cautious Potter counselled prudence.

It was no use three of the Fifth entering into a row with half the Remove—they would be chucked out on their necks, as Potter elegantly and graphically expressed it—and justice would not be done.

Coker listened to the voice of wisdom. He confided his wrongs to his friends in the Fifth Form—and the Fifth-Formers were willing to help him almost to a man. Coker had paid two pounds ten shillings for stuff that was worthless, and he had been swindled; there was no other word for it. To make Fish hand back the money, and then to wreck the school shop and slaughter Fish, seemed the plain course of duty to the Fifth. They were ready to do their duty, and as it was certain that force would be required, they all leant Coker their aid. They dropped into the Rag by one or two or three at a time, without exciting suspicion. Coker came in last, and found all his forces gathered; and then, to quote Potter again, the band began to play.

There were twenty or more juniors and fags in the Rag, but they were not disposed to take on a tussle with a dozen determined seniors. And the door was locked, so that it was impossible for the Famous Five to come to the rescue till all was over. Coker & Co. had laid their plans well.

Some of the shareholders were present; three or four—Lord Mauleverer, and Newland, and Peter Todd and Bulstrode. But they had no chance, if they put up a fight—and the disinterested customers were there to buy tuck, not to wage war in defence of the tuckshop. Coker looked upon the startled crowd as he reached the counter.

"If you kids try to interfere," he said, "we shall wallop you! If you don't, you can look on and enjoy yourselves. You can scramble for the bits if you like."

"Hear, hear!" said Bunter minor of the Second Form.
"Not a bad idea!" said Tubb of the Third, thoughtfully.
"Hold on!" exclaimed Peter Todd indignantly. "You're not going to raid the shop, Coker. Why, you blessed burglar—"

"I don't mind explaining," said Coker loftily. "I gave an order here for a lunch-basket, and paid two-pound-ten for it. The basket was packed with filthy rubbish, and my picnic was spoiled. My lady friends have cut me over it— They think I was playing a rotten jape on them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Coker gave Todd a ferocious glare.
"Oh, you think it's funny, do you?" he demanded. "Perhaps you'll think it funnier when we've finished here."

"Let's start!" said Blundell. "I want to get back to the cricket."

"Hold on," said Todd. "If Fish has been swindling you, we'll make it good. We don't allow him to swindle, when we can find him out. Fishy, you worm, did you palm off that rotten stuff on Coker?"

"I quoted him a special price for it," said Fisher T. Fish feebly. "If the stuff had been A1 quality, it would have been worth more than two-pound-ten."

"You planted that muck on him?" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"I guess—"
"You spoofer!" growled Newland. "You'll have to give Coker his money back."

"I guess this firm doesn't do business on those lines. I guess that was a private speculation of my own."

"Give Coker his money!" roared Bulstrode.

"Nope!"
"You hear him?" said Coker. "Come on!"

The Fifth-Formers made a rush. All the sympathy of the crowd was on the side of Coker & Co. row. Fisher T. Fish had swindled Coker, that was plain, and the sooner an example was made of Fisher T. Fish the better. And perhaps the fags were not averse to picking up valuable fragments from the wreck of the School Shop.

"I say, you clear off!" shouted Fisher T. Fish. "You can't do this, you know. Business is business— Yarrooh! Oh, my hat! Great Washington Post! Yah!"

The rush of the Fifth against the flimsy counter upset it in a second. The trestles rolled over, the counter collapsed, and there was a terrific crash of dishes and plates, and bottles and jars, and tins and glasses.

Crash, crash, crash! Smash!
"Collar the cad!" roared Coker.

Fisher T. Fish was promptly collared.

Bulstrode and Todd and Newland rushed into the fray—not to help Fisher T. Fish, but to save their property. But they had no chance. The Fifth-Formers tossed them out of the way, and proceeded with the work of destruction.

Fisher T. Fish was struggling wildly in the grasp of Coker and Potter. They jammed him down on his back on the floor, and held him there. Then Coker roared at him.

"Are you going to hand my money back?"

"Nope!" gasped Fish.

"Two-pound-ten! Do you hear?"

"Nope!"
"We'll squeeze it out of him," said Coker. "Bring those jam-jars here. Now scrape the jam out over him, Greeney."

"What ho!" said Greene.

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Greene opened the jam-jars by the simple process of banging them on the floor and cracking them into pieces. He ladled out the jam, and ladled it upon Fisher T. Fish's face. The Yankee junior struggled and wriggled frantically, but Coker and Potter held him fast.

Jam was smothered upon the Yankee junior till his features disappeared under it.

"Now will you pay up!" roared Coker.

"Nope!" spluttered Fish. "Groo! Nope! Go and chop chips! Nope!"

"Give him the ginger-beer."

The Fifth-Formers, roaring with laughter, opened bottle after bottle of ginger-beer, and poured the contents over the unfortunate junior shop-keeper.

Face and hair and clothes were drenched with it. Soda-water followed, and lemonade, till the stock of liquids was exhausted. The state of Fisher T. Fish by that time was simply horrible. Jam and cream and marmalade, ginger-beer and soda-water smothered him, and Potter shook out the canister of tea over him, and then the tin of coffee, and then opened tin after tin of condensed milk and added it to the mass.

Fisher T. Fish was in such a state by this time that the Fifth-Formers hardly cared to touch him. He was a wriggling mass of sticky horror.

The waste of their valuable stock excited the shareholders to frenzy. They put up the best fight they could, but they had no chance whatever.

Blundell and Bland and the rest dragged them to the window, one after another, and dropped them into the Close.

Fisher T. Fish remained in the hands of the ragers, alone. As for the crowd of customers, they were scrambling for scraps from the wreck. Tubb, of the Third, jumped from the low window with his pockets bulging with tins of condensed milk, and Bunter minor escaped laden with pineapple tins and jam tarts. But the Fifth-Formers, to do them justice, did not forget their dignity as seniors—they were there to punish, but not to raid. They did not devour—they destroyed.

The stock displayed on the counter was smashed right and left, the counter was wrecked, the nice new American cloth that covered it was ripped into tatters. Glasses and jars and dishes were smashed. Then the store-cupboard was cleared out, and the contents added to the heap of wreck and ruin.

The devastation was swift and complete. A sudden descent of the Goths and Vandals could not have been much more terrific in its results.

Coker and Potter and Greene, meanwhile, were devoting all their attention to Fisher T. Fish. That sticky and furious junior still refused to part with his ill-gotten gains. The damage to his clothes was certainly greater than the value of the two-pound-ten; but Fish was determined. He had the cash, and he "guessed" he was not going to part with it.

"Are you going to hand out my money?" yelled Coker.

"Nope!" gasped Fish.

"Bump him!" said Potter.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Now, then—where's my cash?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Take it out of the young thief's pockets," suggested Greene.

Coker shook his head.

"No fear. I'm not going to take it from him. He's going to give it to me, fair and square. He's swindled me, and he's got to hand back the money of his own accord. Now, Fish, where's my two-pound-ten? Are you going to give it up?"

"Nope!"

"Hallo, here come the Remove!" ejaculated Blundell, as there was a crash at the door of the Rag. Voices yelled through the keyhole.

"Let us in!"

"Open this door, you cads!"

"Down with the Fifth!"

"What are you up to, you beasts?"

Harry Wharton & Co. had been called in. Bulstrode had dashed down to the cricket-ground to warn them of what was happening in the Rag. The Famous Five and a crowd of the Remove had rushed in at once to deal with the raiders. But the door of the Rag was locked against them, and they could not get in. Inside the Rag they could hear crashing and smashing as the work of destruction proceeded.

"Open this door, you beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker. "Don't you wish we would! Buzz off, you kids! Go and play marbles! You can't come in here!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Now, Fishy, where's that two-pound-ten?"

"I guess that's mine," spluttered Fish. "I guess it was a fair trade. I quoted you a special price, and you accepted the goods. I guess that's all."

"Here's a cricket-stump," said Bland. "Wallop the young swindler!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroo! Yah! Oh!"

"Where's that two-pound-ten?" roared Coker.

"Yaroo! Ow!"

"Look out!" gasped Potter. "They're coming in at the window!"

The open window, only a few feet above the Close, was crammed with heads and faces of the Removites.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wound Up!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. had rushed round to the window as soon as they found they could not get the door of the Rag open.

The destruction of their property made them simply furious; and they were eager to get to close quarters with the raiders.

The wide window was crammed with Removites, scrambling in, as Potter caught sight of them and gave the alarm.

All the shareholders were there now, and nearly all the Remove were backing them up. It was no longer merely a matter of the school shop—it was a Form row, and the Remove rallied up eagerly for a tussle with the Fifth.

The Fifth-Formers rushed along to the window to eject the new-comers. But Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry and Bolsover major were already in, and they met the rush of the Fifth-Formers with doughty blows. They held back the rush while the Removites scrambled in after them. Most of the juniors were fresh from the cricket-field, and they had had the presence of mind to bring bats and stumps with them.

The bats and the stumps proved very useful. The Fifth-Formers were driven back with loud yells as the Remove charged.

Coker dashed into the combat at once, and Fisher T. Fish was released. But Fish did not join in the fight. He was not a great fighting man, and he was exhausted; and he had the jam and marmalade and cream and milk and tea and coffee to scrape off.

He scraped away furiously, while the battle raged round him.

The odds were on the side of the juniors now, but the Fifth were seniors; and with bare hands they would probably have held their own.

But the bats and the stumps decided the matter.

The Fifth were driven towards the door, and Blundell yelled to Coker to unlock it. But in the confusion of the moment Coker could not find the key, and a charge of the juniors drove the Fifth away from the door. They backed away towards the window, the Removites pressing them hard.

Potter set the example of jumping from the window, and Greene followed him, and then the Fifth scrambled out as fast as they could.

Coker remained to the last. Coker was a bulldog when it came to a fight, and he never knew when he had had enough. He charged at the juniors, but half a dozen of them grasped him and brought him down.

Coker rolled on the floor, struggling fiercely. Hands grasped him on all sides, and he was swung off the floor.

"Chuck him out!" shouted Wharton.

"Leggo—ow—ow!"

"Out he goes!"

Coker was whirled to the window, and dropped out bodily into the Close. He fell on Potter, and his fall was fortunately broken. Potter did not seem to regard it as fortunate. He roared.

"Ow! Gerroff, you silly ass!"

Coker scrambled up.

The window was crammed with Removites inside now. They glared at the Fifth, and shouted defiance.

"Come on, you rotters!"

"Come on, Coker! Come and have some more!"

Coker dabbed at his nose, which was streaming red, and grinned. He could afford to grin now. The business of the Schoolboy Shopkeepers was not likely to survive the devastating raid of Coker & Co.

"I think we've pretty well done them in, anyhow," said Coker. "There won't be any more of their blessed swindling. I fancy. But I'm going to have my two-pound-ten back, all the same—now or some time!"

And the heroes of the Fifth cleared off.

Harry Wharton jammed down the window, and turned back into the Rag.

A scene of disaster and desolation met his indignant eyes.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,

Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

A cyclone seemed to have struck the Rag and the School Shop. Of all the valuable stock of the School Shop Co., Ltd., hardly a thing remained unbroken. Tarts and cakes were squashed out of shape, broken bottles and jars, and spilt jam and condensed milk lay on all sides. The counter was in pieces, the marble cloth in tatters. The greatest wreck of all was Fisher T. Fish. He was gasping dismally as he scraped off the stickiness.

"The rotters!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "The awful beasts! We'll make them pay for it! This is more than a joke—it's rotten! They've no right to destroy our property."

"What was Coker saying about two-pound-ten?" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Blessed if I know what he means."

"If this is a rotten raid, we'll make them pay for it somehow," said Wharton. "But if it is some more of Fish's swindling, it's a different matter. If Fish has swindled Coker out of two-pound-ten, and won't pay it back, it's no wonder Coker was wrathful. We should have done the same."

"The samefulness would have been terrific, my worthy chum," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, "and the swindlefulness of the esteemed Fish was probably the cause."

"We'll jolly soon see. This is a meeting of the shareholders, Fishy," said Harry Wharton. "We want to know the facts."

"Ow!" groaned Fisher T. Fish.

"Do you owe Coker any money?"

"Nope."

"Do you mean that he was talking out of his hat, then?"

"Yep!"

"Oh, get it out, Fishy, you rotter!" growled Bulstrode.

"We know all about it. Coker asked for his money back when he came in."

"I guess—"

"Fishy has been swindling him," said Peter Todd, with a grunt. "It serves us right for letting Fishy have a hand in the business at all, when we know him so well."

"Why, it was my idea from the start!" howled Fisher T. Fish indignantly, glaring at Todd with a jammy glare. "I guess a galoot has a right to run his own business—some!"

"Somebody had better clear up this muck before the masters or prefects spot it, I should say," Newland remarked.

"Fish is in charge of the shop," said Bolsover major. "He can do that."

"I guess I'm going to clean myself before I do anything else!" gasped Fisher T. Fish, and he scrambled away jammily to the door. Coker had dropped the key there, and Fish picked it up and inserted it into the lock; but before he could turn it, Johnny Bull had caught him by a jammy shoulder and swung him back into the middle of the room.

Fisher T. Fish spun round, and glared at the sturdy junior wrathfully.

"Wharrer you up to?" he roared.

"Didn't you hear us say that this was a shareholders' meeting?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Yep! But I'm going to—"

"You're going to stay and attend the meeting, my son, and give an account of your giddy stewardship," said Frank Nugent.

"I guess—"

"Gentlemen of the School Shop Company, Limited, the meeting is now open," said Harry Wharton. "We have to call upon the managing-director for a full account of his managing and directing."

"Hear, hear!"

"We have reason to suspect that the managing-director has been swindling the customers, and leading them to reprisals, which have had the effect of mucking up the business."

"Yes, rather."

"Now, Fishy, what have you got to say?"

"I guess I want to clean this jam off before I go in for any chin-wag!" growled Fisher T. Fish.

"The jam can wait. More likely you want to clear off and put Coker's two-pound-ten in a safe place before we make you give it up!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The likefulness is terrific, my worthy chums."

Fisher T. Fish turned a little pink. Perhaps Johnny Bull had spotted correctly his motive for being so anxious to get out of the Rag, and away from the shareholders' meeting, at that moment. But whatever his motive might be, certainly he had no chance of going. Johnny Bull was on guard at the door, and the unhappy managing-director resigned himself to his fate.

"Now, we're waiting for your statement," said Harry Wharton. "Did you sell that rotten stuff to Coker, and take good money for it?"

"I guess I quoted him a special low price—"

"Did he know it was rotten goods?"

"He was at liberty to look."

"Did he know it, I say?" roared Wharton.

"Nope."
"He paid you for it?"
"Yep!"
"Two pounds ten shillings?" demanded Harry Wharton.
"Correct!"

"Haven't we warned you that you're not to sell any rotten stuff in the name of this company?" demanded Wharton, frowning.

"I guess this wasn't in the name of the company. The company had chucked the stuff away. It wasn't any use to the company. I sold it on my own. I calculate that I've a right to make a private speculation if I like. I guess that's what I did. I planted it on Coker, because he's a jay. He should keep his eyes peeled, I guess. Boys who go round in this world with their eyes shut must expect to get skinned. Coker's got left. That's all. I guess I'm going now—"

"You've guessed wrong, then. You're not going yet," said Harry Wharton calmly. "You're going to answer for your sins, you spoofing bounder. Did you explain to Coker that it was not in connection with the firm, and that it was a private speculation of your own to plant that rubbish on a jay?"

"Nope!" growled Fisher T. Fish. "Of course I didn't!"
"You swindled him?"

"Business is business!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I suppose you stick-in-the-mud Britishers will never be able to understand business. It's no good trying to explain, I guess."

"No good trying to explain to us that swindling is business," agreed Wharton. "We shouldn't believe you. What have you got out of it? Even if it was honest, it wouldn't pay. Your clothes are ruined, and I suppose they're worth more than two-pound-ten. All the stock has been destroyed, and the business finished—quite done in! That's the result of hustling methods in business, isn't it?"

"I guess I'm going to call on the shareholders to shell out more capital to renew the stock," explained Fisher T. Fish. "Each of the shareholders is liable to pay up another ten bob on his pound share, to meet the liabilities of the company. I shall assess it at ten shillings to each shareholder holding a single share—"

"You won't screw ten shillings out of me, you spoofer!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'm fed up with you."

"Same here!"

Opinion seemed to be unanimous among the shareholders. The losses on the School Shop had so far outclassed the gains to such an extent that the prospect was not at all encouraging. And it was known, too, that Mrs. Mimble's shop was to be re-opened on the following day. The shareholders consulted together, and Wharton, as chairman, communicated the results of the deliberations to the managing-director.

"The shareholders have decided that no issue of further capital can be contemplated—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Fish. "The whole stock's gone. The cash in hand is only enough to pay for the crockery that's been broken. There must be a fresh issue of capital to re-start the business."

"Then the business can go to Jericho!" said the chairman of the shareholders' meeting. "We're pretty nearly fed up with it, and Mrs. Mimble opens again to-morrow—and

YARNS TO TELL.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

"Yes, those curtains 'aven't been down for months, and she never cleans her step from one week's end to another!"

The little confab had already lasted an hour between Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Pollins—next-door neighbours. Suddenly, at the farther end of the street, the doctor's carriage stopped. All the street were eagerly excited.

"Ere, Johnny," said Miss Jenkins, "run over to number forty-eight, and ask how old Mrs. Brown is."

"Well, what's she say?" she inquired eagerly of her offspring on his return.

"She says, 'Mind your own bizness. 'Tain't nothin' to do wi' you 'ow old she is!'"

CATCH FATHER WITH THIS!

"Just had a shock," explained Snookey. "I was seated next to a lady on a 'bus coming down the Strand, and, thinking to impress her, put on my last cigar. Imagine my astonishment when she suddenly snatched it out of my mouth and threw it overboard!"

"Did you dive after it?" struck in the Chirpy One.

"No; but I grabbed her toy dog, and dropped that overboard, too! 'Sir,' she yelled, 'I threw your cigar over

we're more than fed up with you. There won't be any more capital. Moreover—"

"I'll guess I'll advance as much as two-pound-ten, at five per cent. interest, to start the business again," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You won't advance Coker's two-pound-ten, if that's what you mean," said Harry Wharton grimly. "You're going to hand that back to Coker."

"I guess not!"

"Lay it on the table now!" commanded Wharton.

"Nope."

"Collar him and take it away from him," said Harry. "We'll send Coker in here to fetch it, if he wants it. Take Coker's money and lay it on the table."

Fisher T. Fish made a wild rush for the window. But the Removites were after him in a twinkling, and he was captured and dragged back. Bolsover major turned out his pockets, and two sovereigns and half-a-sovereign were speedily unearthed. The Yankee junior struggled frantically.

"I guess I'm not going to stand it!" he roared. "I guess that's mine—I guess—yaroooh—I calculate—Yowp! I reckon! Yah-h-hh!"

Bump! Fisher T. Fish was dropped from the window, and he rolled in the Close, and a shower of squashed tarts and other fragments followed him as he fled.

The career of Fisher T. Fish as managing-director of the School Shop Company, Limited, had come to an end. And the School Shop Company, Limited, had come to an end simultaneously with the career of its managing-director.

Coker recovered his two-pound-ten; and the reputation of the defunct company for honesty of dealing was vindicated.

But Fisher T. Fish mourned over his loss, and like Rachel mourning for her children, he refused to be comforted. He persisted in considering that Horace Coker owed him two pounds ten shillings— But the first time he dropped into Coker's study to ask for payment of the same it was also the last time. He left the study "on his neck," as Coker described it afterwards to Potter and Greene; and, after that he never ventured to say the words 'two-pound-ten' within hearing of Coker.

The shareholders of the School Shop Company, Limited, had lost all the subscribed capital; but, as Nugent remarked, that was getting off pretty well, considering that they had had an American business man for their managing-director.

The next day Mrs. Mimble re-opened her little shop, and among her best customers to celebrate the occasion were the cheerful youths who had nearly become her rivals in business—The Schoolboy Shopkeepers.

THE END.

(Next Monday's splendid long, complete school tale is entitled, "UP AGAINST IT!" by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY in Advance. Price One Penny.)

because it was against the regulations!" "That's the reason I threw your dog overboard," I replied.

"We both looked over the 'bus to see what had become of our possessions, and there was the pom. running along by the side of the 'bus. And, what do you think was in its mouth?"

"The cigar?" ejaculated the Chirpy One with promptitude.

"No; its tongue!" said Snookey.

OVERHEARD IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE.

"Hour and twenty minutes, next train, sir," said the porter, as he turned into the porters' room on the little country station.

"H'm!" muttered the Irishman philosophically, as he entered the waiting-room. "I'll put on a pipe."

He had been calmly seated for about a quarter of an hour, when a fussy, nervy little woman entered and sat on the chair next him.

"Sir, if you were a gentleman," she remarked, with asperity, "you would not smoke here!"

"If ye were a lady, ma'am, ye'd sit farther away," he retorted.

Strained silence pervaded the atmosphere, but presently she burst forth again in a thin, cutting voice:

"If you were my husband, I'd give you poison!"

Slowly and comprehensively, the son of Erin surveyed the acrimonious lady, puffing quietly at his pipe.

"If you were my wife," he said, as he quietly felt for his pouch, "I'd take it!"

Our Grand New Serial Story!

MYSTERIA

By **SIDNEY DREW**, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins, and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters, which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, which slips out of its secret cave on its mysterious new quest. Ferrers Lord makes for an uncharted island, which he intends to use as his headquarters, and, arrived there, he lands with a party to make the acquaintance of the inhabitants, leaving Prout in charge of the launch. Prout captures a wonderful talking cockatoo, which has evidently escaped from some vessel, but which is now enrolled as one of the crew of the Lord of the Deep as James Jimson, A.B. Back on the submarine, the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but a terrific volcanic eruption occurs, in the course of which a blazing fire-ball falls on the Lord of the Deep, passing clean through her from deck to keel. The millionaire runs the submarine aground in the bay of the nearest island, and sends Ching-Lung and Thurston with a party of men in the launch to cut some logs. On landing the party are confronted by a curious figure in a red tam-o'shanter, who warns them that the island belongs to Germany. Ching-Lung laughs at him, however, and he strides off, while the party proceed to cut down some palm-trees.

(Now go on with the story.)

Strange Behaviour by the Germans.

A lordly palm came crashing down, and Thurston proceeded to lop it.

"I say, it would be easier to lever it down to the water than to lift it on the carriage," said Ching-Lung. "Gan and I will take the job on. Wake up, lazy! What do you think we pay your dog-licence and keep you in candles for?"

"Cos I was borned so butterfuls—hunk Chingy?" lisped Gan.

"No, to work!" roared his Highness. "W-o-r-k! That's what we keep you for. Didn't you know?"

Gan-Waga dropped on his knees, and held up two supplicating hands.

"Den shoots me at twices, Chingy!" he groaned. "Dat betterfuls dans workings. Bull a pullet in me, Chingy. Me ses put a bullets in me. I sooners dies."

"You will if you don't watch it. Look out! Mind you don't break your spectacles!"

Down crashed another palm, flinging up a shower of sand and water. The hill was fairly steep, and, with the help of a couple of poles, Ching Lung and Gan-Waga levered the first trunk along, and splashed it into the creek. The tide was practically at a standstill.

"How do you like gathering firewood. O fat and mighty one!" inquired the prince.

"I likes cangles betterer, Chingy," said Gan-Waga truthfully.

"Yes, the ambition of your giddy life is to get a job in a tallow factory, isn't it? You're an oily rascal, Ganus, but you've got to help me to shift some more trees. Trot along, dear—trot along!"

"I nots a navy, Chingy!" said the Eskimo, with high scorn.

"Who said you were? If you were painted red, and kept your mouth open, you'd be a pillar-box. I'd give a prize

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 299.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

of a pinch of snuff a week for life to anybody who can tell me what you really are. Tie a stick to yourself, and sit on a barrel of gunpowder, and if I'm anywhere in the vicinity with a box of matches you'll soon be a rocket!"

Gan smiled feebly as he waddled up the hill. They rolled down two more of the lopped trunks, and got them afloat. Another tree was tottering to its fall, when Barry suddenly checked his gleaming axe.

"Joe," he said, gazing down towards the rocky valley. "Oi just seed a walkin' fog-signal. Av ut wasn't that, ut was a walkin' pickled-cabbage."

"Then tell it to walk up 'ere, and bring some cold beef wi' it," said Joe.

"Whisht! Oi seed ut wance more. Bedad, ould red-nob is skulkin' about. Will, may Oi—Luk, sor! Thrayson, as Oi'm a man!"

A dozen figures broke from the shelter of the rocks, headed by the red tam-o'shanter, and dashed towards the launch.

In a few seconds they had hauled the little vessel high and dry. Gan-Waga and Ching-Lung, who were half-way down the hill, halted in dismay.

"The blackguards; They're stavin' her in!" yelled Joe.

"It's piracy!"

He snatched up Ching-Lung's rifle, and Joe was a deadly shot.

"Stop, you maniac!" cried Thurston. "They've all got rifles, and could mow us down with one volley. Ching, come back!"

They could hear the sullen thudding of steel against steel. A cloud of mist drifted down the hillside.

The prince and the Eskimo, both boiling with indignation and rage, came running back.

"How many rifles have we?" panted Ching-Lung.

"Only two, sor!" groaned Barry dismally.

"Then we're the biggest asses unhung! Those dogs mean mischief. Get back over the slope. What did I say?"

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

The mist had hidden everything. A bullet sang through it, and the shriek of the flying lead was followed promptly by a sharp report.

Like experienced veterans who had weathered many a fight, they scattered and ran. It was barely a hundred and fifty yards to the brow of the hill. They sprang over its sheltering crest, and halted.

"If this 'ere is Britain agen Germany," said the carpenter, spitting on his hand, "I 'ope Germany 'as got her coffin ready!"

"Did anyone count the scoundrels?"

"I did, sonny," replied Ching-Lung. "With red-knob, there was just a baker's dozen."

"And my Uncle Dennis of Ballybunion Castle always towld me that thirteen was a meighty onlucky number," added O'Rooney. "Och and bedad, av Oi only had the photograph of an eighty-wan-ton gun Oi'd blow the sawdust out of the murtherin' spalpeens! Oi'd make Misther Joolius Faber as cowl'd and dead as Joolius Saizer. Only let me get at the miserable baste!"

Ching-Lung, a grim look in his slanting eyes, glanced upwards. There was a thin break in the angry rush of clouds. A gust of wind beat the mist down.

The effect was brief, but extraordinary. The heads of half a score of men appeared.

At the distance their bodies were invisible, and their heads seemed to be severed, and resting on a white sheet. The red tam-o'-shanter was very conspicuous.

"I guess I could bore a hole in that red target," said Ching-Lung, snicking up the sight of his rifle to four hundred yards.

"Wait a bit, old chap!" said Rupert. "We don't want to do anything rash."

The chance had gone. Another gust swept the fog away. Not a man was visible. The launch had been turned over on her side, battered in, and most probably looted into the bargain.

"Now they've made full-sized idiots of themselves!" said Ching-Lung. "Perhaps they fancy we belong to some two-and-sixpenny pearling vessel. Oh, did she?"

"See those colours there? Oh, mein sauer-kraut und bolony! Dot vas Shermans' flag, ain'dt ud? Ach, der sauce off der kippers!"

A flag fluttering from a pole rose over the rocks. It was the black-and-yellow imperial standard of Germany, with the motto, "Gott mit uns," and the date 1870.

"Gintlemen," grunted Barry O'Rooney, "wud yez kindly tell me phwat kind of an insect that is on that flag? Oi mane that big black reptile in the middle, wid the crown over ut."

"It ain't an insect, or a reptile neither, ignorance!" said Joe. "It's the Black Eagle wi' two heads."

"All the better. Oi'll wring both ut's necks and twist both ut's heads off afore the ball's over!" said the valiant Barry. "'Oh, whoy and oh, whoy did Oi forget my little gun, that darlin' pet? Shame 'twas to lave that precious dear. Bedad, Oi wish Oi had ut here. Oi'd slip wan carthridge in the bolt, and make that two-necked eagle moult.' How's that for a poem made up on the spot?"

"You ought to make another like it, and drop dead on the spot!" sighed Joe. "That's wuss than rat-pizen taken on an empty stomach!"

"I sooners eats tin-tackses and boot-protectors dan hears dats!" said Gan-Waga mournfully. "It pain my poors insides bad 'nough awfuls."

They were not in the least uneasy, but they were highly indignant. The outrage was unpardonable.

To have their boat smashed, and to be wantonly fired upon by a gang of desperadoes, was a monstrous crime that called for swift and stern justice. Nations had been plunged into costly wars for less.

Not for a moment did either Ching or Thurston imagine that Germany had the slightest interest in the Isle of the Twin Pillars or in Julius Faber.

Many a desperate and bloody battle has been waged by rival vessels for the possession of seal colonies and guano beds on the Southern Seas.

"I'm pretty sure you were right, Ching," said Rupert. "They've found guano, and they mean to stick to it. I wonder who really owns this show?"

"I don't know, sonny. It wasn't down on the Admiralty charts till Lord mapped it in. You can wager it isn't worth much, or somebody would have roped it in long ago. I know one thing, though. Herr Julius Faber has bitten off a much bigger piece than he can swallow."

"The worst of it is, he's camped down right in our way home."

"And it's a strong place, too, sonny. A few pom-pom shells would fetch him out at a rush. My stars! It's so cheerful that I want to sing. Any sign of a rainbow yet?"

To stir would have been the height of folly. They had had two tastes of the temper of the gang already. It was maddening to sit there in the drenching downpour, helplessly,

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

with nothing to do except watch the fluttering flag and the torrent-swept hillside.

"What's the fellow's idea, I wonder?" said Thurston. "Why did he smash our boat? Can he want to make us prisoners?"

"Av Oi had him here," growled Barry murderously. "Oi'd persuade him to tell yez politely by ticklin' his ribs wid a knife!"

"And me helps yo' butterfuls," said Gan-Waga.

"One thing is jolly plain," said his Highness of Kwai-hai. "He's not aware of the job he's tackled. He must think we belong to some wind-jammer or little steamer with about a dozen hands. When tongs like those chaps tumble across guano they can see a fortune staring them in the face. Guano costs money, and they'll fight to keep it, tooth and nail. Of course, it may be pearl-oysters, but it amounts to the same thing. Naturally, when we don't show up there'll be a search-party, and Mr. Julius expects another haul. The German business is all a pure bluff. The very way the reptile warned us off shows that he has struck oil, and he wants to load up before anyone else can put a finger in the pie."

"Ut might be treasure, sor," suggested Barry—"poirates buried gold. Yez niver can till in those outlandish holes. Oi wance dug up some treasure meself at Ballybunion. Oi was diggin' wurruns to go fishin', whin all at wance the spade struck somethin' wid a dull and holler thud."

"What did it strike?"

"A buried brick," went on the Irishman. "Oi tuk out the brick to kape handy to throw at the policeman whin he came round, and there, starin' me in the face, Oi seed a chest. Fancy findin' a buried chest! Bedad, Oi was so excited Oi rushed into the castle. My Uncle Dennis—arrah, phwat a man he was for breakin' heads at fairs—was clanin' the grate. 'Uncle, I yells, 'Oi've found a chest buried in the garden.' 'Whereabouts?' he howls, takin' a drink out of the blacklead pot in mistake for the whisky-jar. 'Alongside of the onion-bed,' I says. 'Then, he jabbers,' says he, 'ut's the money your grandfayther Moike towld us he'd given to buy knives and forks for the cannibals, the ould fibber. I guessed he'd hid it,' he says. 'Hurroo! We'll be rich for loife!' Wid that we both runs loike mad."

"And was dere lotses of moneys, Barrys?" questioned the interested Gan-Waga.

"Oi didn't wait," said Barry. "He'd got a powerful hard fist. He ran north, and Oi ran south. Ut was a foine chest, all the same. Yez see, bhoys, ut happened to be the chest of our ould tom-cat, that Oi'd laid in the cowl'd and silent tomb a few months afore."

"Hass!" snapped Joe.

"The same to you, and many on 'em!" said Barry. "Oi'll invoice yez to dinner when the carrots and thistles get rope."

Had they selected the palms pointed out by the engineer, they would have been visible to those on board the submarine through an ordinary pair of field-glasses. The trees they had chosen were easier to get aloft, but they were hidden from the ship. The inaction became intolerable.

"This won't do. We must try and make a move of some kind," said Rupert impatiently.

"I've been thinking the same thing for the last half-hour, old man. I wish the pigs would show themselves. How about making a long sweep of it, and coming down to the bay. We ought to be able to walk under the cliffs at low tide."

"But Lord will send to see what has become of us before that," said Thurston. "They'll pull up in the dinghy, and bolt straight into the net."

Ching-Lung nodded, and let his eyes rove into the misty valley behind him, and then up the hill beyond. A man's figure showed black against the gloomy skyline.

"By Jove," he cried, "I believe we're in the soup. Ru! There are more of them over yonder. It's impossible to signal. There's not a bit of wood or grass that isn't as wet as if it had been soaking at the bottom of the sea for twelve months."

The figure vanished suddenly and suspiciously. A man with honest intentions would not have dived out of sight so promptly.

"Are you sure it wasn't a nigger, old chap?"

"I'm perfectly certain it wasn't," said the prince. "This is a nice game to play—for the other side. I shall do something desperate in a minute."

"Thin, bedad, lind me a bob, sor," said Barry O'Rooney, "and Oi'll hoire an umbrella. Oi shall soon be a fish av this kapes on."

"Hang it, get hold of my rifle!" growled Ching-Lung in utter desperation. "I'll speak to the hound. If he looks like treachery, bore a hole in him, Joe. He can't mean murder. Let's see if he'll answer this."

NEXT
MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.



He waved his soaked pocket-handkerchief. Presently a white rag was seen fluttering above a low rock. The red tam-o'-shanter came into view; and, slipping a revolver into his sleeve, Ching-Lung walked boldly forward, holding up his hands.

Julius Faber advanced to meet the prince, his hands extended above his head to show that he carried no weapons.

"That'll do," he shouted gruffly. "We're near enough to jaw. Why the dickens couldn't they send a white man, instead of a dirty Chinese? Stand still, and get on with the talking. What d'ye want?"

"My red-capped, honest, German friend," said Ching-Lung quietly, "that is the identical question I wish to put to you. What do you want?"

And so the two stood face to face, glaring at each other menacingly.

Tells How Ching-Lung, When He Thought He Had Won the Game, Discovered that His Opponent Had an Ace Up His Sleeve.

Joe crept along the ridge on hands and knees, for Faber, guessing that he was covered, did his best to make a rampart of Ching-Lung. Faber wiped his grey beard, and laughed harshly.

"It's no good fooling matters," he said. "We want to be let alone, and we don't want you here. You came without asking. People who stick their noses into other people's business often get them bitten off. We were here first. If you wanted a thunderin' island, why didn't you find out one for yourselves? Aren't there plenty of them in these seas? What the deuce do you come nosin' about here for, anyhow?"

Ching-Lung put on his most bewitching smile. He was generally most dangerous when he looked as he did then.

"You go a little too fast for me," he said. "You want to be let alone. Being rather particular about the company I keep, I can solemnly assure you, Red-cap, that I had no intention of interfering with you. You did not invite us to come. Quite true! I have no recollection of receiving a scented invitation-card with gold edges from you. Nor do I want this island. I have quite as much property of my own as I can manage in one small lifetime. To come to the last point, most honourable Red-cap, I admit I am puzzled. If you do not want us here, why in the name of all whys do you stave in our boat, and thus prevent us from going away?"

The shifty, black eyes gave him a perplexed look. Faber could not make him out. He absolutely recoiled when he saw that Ching-Lung was smoking. The movement nearly cost him his life, for Joe was keenly watching. Had he put another ounce of pressure on the trigger, Faber would have rolled over, a dead man. He recoiled another step. Ching-Lung was holding a ridiculous little paper umbrella over the glowing tip of his cigar.

"By the way, illustrious Red-cap," continued the prince in honeyed tones, "as yet you have not informed me why you staved in our boat. And why, most magnificent one, as we are not ducks or minnows, do you expect us to swim?"

"I'll tell you," Faber leaned forward. "Do you know what a paradox is?"

"Perhaps I don't. What I do know, greatness, is that you speak marvellous English for a German."

"Well, I'll tell you. A paradox is a statement that contradicts another, so to say. We don't want you here, but we do want you here. And, you yellow, juggling dirt, we mean to keep you here. You'll be useful. We'll make you work. By thunder, we'll show you what work is like! Try to bolt, and we'll kill you like flies! Look over there. You'll see my men."

Ching-Lung's smile broadened, but he did not turn his head. Such an ancient trick as this to take him off his guard tickled him.

"You are a funny man!" he said. "So you're going to make us work. Well, strange as it may seem, we don't like work. Do you know what I think is the best thing to do? Frankly, I'd be delighted if you could teach some of our boys to work."

"I'll teach 'em, don't fret!" said the man, with a vicious chuckle.

"I wish you'd come and talk to them, Julius—you must really come and talk to them. If you don't"—his voice sank into a strangled hiss—you'll never talk again, Herr Red-cap! Follow me, you cur, step by step—step by step, hound! Move! Five seconds I give you, and only five! Will you teach us how to work? Move, hound—move, or I'll stop your teaching for good and all!"

To the amaze of Rupert, Joe, and Gan-Waga, and to the puzzled consternation of the scoundrels ambushed among the rocks, Ching-Lung began to back up the slope. His hands were still raised above his head, and so were Faber's.

But the German—if German he was—followed the prince.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

His eyes, flushed with blood and aglow with horror, were fixed—not on Ching-Lung's face, but on the prince's left knee. He seemed hypnotised.

"By the ghost of Biddy McCarthy, what does ut mane?" gasped Barry. "Luk at ut follerin' loike a tame shape!"

Ching-Lung stood still.

"Hands up, most glorious Red-cap!" he said. "I have another in my pocket, and a trusty lad of mine has a bullet ready for you. No ducking or dodging, dear Red-cap! In love and war, you know, all cheating is fair. Just hope as hard as ever you can hope that I sha'n't trip over anything. If I do, it will be pretty bad for you. I'm only a dirty Chinaman, you know, but I can tame dirty white men. Step out carefully, my pet. That's very nice. I like people who do as they're told."

What did it mean? Faber's face was distorted fiendishly with fear and rage. He kept pace with Ching-Lung. They stepped over the ridge not three paces apart, and, uttering a terrific "Hurroo!" to which Gan-Waga added a hysterical "Butterfuls!" Barry rolled into the arms of Gan and hugged him.

Ching-Lung's teeth gripped the butt of a revolver. A string attached to the cocked trigger was tied round his left knee.

The slightest backward jerk of his leg, or the slightest stumble, would have exploded the weapon, and shot Faber dead. Ching-Lung let the revolver drop into his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "allow me to introduce you to Signor Don Mister Herr Sir High Duke Senor Faber. He has come all this way to see you because I asked him, with this shooter. And I'm a dirty Chinaman. Oh, no, you don't!"

Faber gave a cry of pain. A heavy blow on the shoulder from Joe's rifle stopped the hand that was flying towards his hip-pocket. Barry promptly seized the concealed revolver.

"Oh, Ching," said Thurston, tears of laughter in his eyes, "you're a terror!"

"Wud yer loike me to wring his neck, or shall we save him up to burrn on the bonfoire noight, sir?" grinned Barry.

"Oh, just see what he's got!" said Ching-Lung.

"Oh, sees what de bad 'nough ugly faces gots!" added Gan-Waga, his face aglow with pure delight. "P'haps dero some slossidges, hunk?"

"Better tie him up, boys," advised Thurston.

"Good idea, Ru!" Ching-Lung pointed over the ridge. "Great, noble, and very funky Red-cap, yonder you will behold a gun-carriage, various hatchets, splinters, and ropes. Fetch the ropes. My friend here with the rifle can put a bullet through a hole the size of a halfpenny ninety-nine times out of a hundred. I can do the same with a hole the siz of a farthing. 'Nuff said. Ropes, please!"

"Do—do you mean you'll shoot?"

"Try us, and not so much lip!" said Joe grimly. "Do as you're telled."

Just as he was about to start, Barry, as alert as an often-hunted fox, seized him by the collar.

"More mist, sor!"

"Good man!" said Thurston, looking behind him. "Ho might have got clean away."

"No, he wouldn't, sir," said Joe. "I'm watchin' that, Mr. Rupert."

They could not even see each other.

"All roight, Oi've got him, sor!" said Barry's voice. "Bo jabers! he's done me—he's—"

"He ain't done me, not much!" growled Joe. "Don't be in such a 'urry, mate. That's a rifle, feel it—eh? Very well, don't be so lively."

It was some time before the drenching fog drifted away. "There's more coming up," said Ching-Lung quickly, "and a lot of it. It won't be here for some time, though. Fetch those ropes."

"I must, then?" snarled the prisoner.

"If you don't," said Joe, regarding Faber most unlovingly, "I'll knock your head clean into the river."

"Phwat a treat for the eels that wud be!" said Barry. "Move along, yez ugly spalpeen."

Faber clambered over the ridge. Two rifles were following all his movements. Any attempt to escape, as he knew well enough, meant at least an ugly wound, if not certain death. He picked up the thickest rope he could see. A puff of smoke burst over the rocks, tossing up a splash of sand. One of his own men had fired.

"Hurry up, there!" bellowed big-voiced Joe.

The man returned sullenly. Barry snatched at the rope.

"Luk at phwat the ugly baboon has brought," he said.

"Does he think, bedad, we want to tow an ironclad wid ut?"

"Makes ole ugly faces picks its, Chingy," said Gan-Waga.

"Another good idea! Bravo, Gan! Just unwrap that,

Red-cap. Take one strand out. Don't look so white. We don't mean to hang you with it just yet, only to tie you up. Sometimes we make people work just for fun. We like fun. Work or—"

"Into the river goes that lump you call a 'ead," said the carpenter, swinging the rifle like a golf-club. "Get to it!"

It was a hard and tarry rope, but Faber proved himself an expert seaman by promptly splitting asunder the strands.

"Tie him up, Barry," said Ching-Lung.

He was watching the sky. He stooped, and whispered in Thurston's ear. Rupert nodded.

"It must be done," he said.

"It can be done, old man. It's easy."

"But they'll hear it," protested Thurston.

"Not they. The ground is too soft, and the wheels are too well oiled. Here she comes. Watch that it doesn't lift. No, it's a dream. So-long!"

Ching-Lung glided into the mist-cloud that drove over the hill. When it cleared away, Ching-Lung was in safety, and the gun-carriage was within forty yards of the ridge. A second cloud poured down.

"Now we'll give him a ride in our nice motor-car," said his Highness of Kwai-hal, dragging the gun-carriage over the ridge. "Here it is."

"Faith, thin," grinned Barry, who was helping Joe to bind the prisoner, "moind yez don't exceed the legal limit of spade, or Oi'll run yez in. Oi'm a police-thrap. My Uncle Dennis had the foineest mothor-car—rowl over, yez spalpeen!—that iver left a horrid smell behoind ut. Will yez kape quiet, or must Oi woipe me boots on your face? Oh, ut was a lovely mothor-car, wid—wid wheels on ut, and—

"I thought you said your uncle had been dead twenty years," remarked Joe, busy with the rope.

"So Oi did, and so he has," retorted Barry.

"Why, you dotty ourang-outang," said Joe, "ow d'ye make it out, then? It ain't ten year since they was first runnin' motor-cars in Hengland."

Barry gave him a glance that might have withered up a bronze statue.

"This was in Ireland," he roared. And Joe said no more. "In Ireland, where the snakes don't come from, fathead!"

"Yo' gotted him, Barry, butterfuls!" said Gan. "Ho, ho, hoo! In Irelands, Joes, where de snakeses comes froms."

Thurston and Ching-Lung whispered together.

"I don't like it," said Rupert. "Why not leave the fellow here?"

"Because I've taken a passionate longing to be near him, sonny. The tide's on the ebb now, and—"

"Then send Gan-Waga," said Thurston. The swim is nothing to him. Or let us all go together, and leave the prisoner behind."

"What! In the cold rain? Rupert, my boy, you're a heartless, merciless bounder! Oh, for shame! Think how wet he'd get."

His Highness spoke jestingly. He was silent for a moment, and then he laughed.

"All serene," he said. "Unfasten your boots, lads, for you've got a long swim before you. We're going to take advantage of the next lot of mist to scuttle away to the river. The tide should be running out fast."

"Are we goin' to lave ould pudden'-face, sor?"

"M'yes, it looks like it, Barry," answered Ching-Lung. "His dear pals will find him later. Here it comes, as thick as pea-soup. Keep close together and swim hard. We shall be hundreds of yards below the rocks before it clears away if we have any luck. If we don't have luck, drop down flat and lie as still as mice till another cloud arrives."

Barry patted the surly prisoner on the head, and advised him to be a good boy. Like a dense cloud of smoke the fog billowed down.

"I don't like it, Ching," repeated Thurston. "We're doing the worst thing possible, I'm certain."

"Not a bit of it. Scoot along, chaps."

Grasping each other's hands they plunged into the fog and down the sodden slope. Ching-Lung, unknown to his comrades, turned back. He stumbled against the gun-carriage in the dense gloom.

"Sorry," he said, as he trod on something yielding. "You needn't swear at me, sweet Red-cap. I didn't mean it, really. Jove! If I wanted an island, I'd choose one that had decent weather. Can you swim?"

Another long instalment of this splendid adventure story in next Monday's issue of "The Magnet" Library. Please order your copy in advance. Price 1d.)
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 290.

NEXT
MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of Harry
Wharton & Co. Order Early.

SPECIAL NEW FEATURE!

Greyfriars Lyrics

BY

"The Magnet" Library's Own Rhymester.

No. 4.—FISHER T. FISH.

I guess you've heard of Fisher Fish,
The enterprising Yankee?
The boys who he has tried to "dish"
Denounce his ways so swanky.
He seeks to gain, in manner deft,
The great almighty dollar,
And calls it "biz," but it is theft
To every Greyfriars scholar.

His business instinct made him start
A mode of money-lending,
In which he took the leading part—
Both firm and fellow blending.
But when his clients noticed how
The interest kept jumping,
A fearful vengeance they did vow,
And Fish was bruised with bumping.

Not all the bumps received could crush
His wonderful endurance,
And Fishy started, with a rush,
A system of insurance.
The fellows entered with a will,
But when, in wrath and wonder,
They learned that benefits were nil,
Poor Fish was rent asunder!

Do you imagine, after this,
That Fish desisted? No, sir!
He next began, in perfect bliss,
The business of a grocer.
His tea had neither form nor void,
His coloured cakes were curious;
The cheese was constantly annoyed—
Its bark was fierce and furious!

To sample Fishy's foreign eggs
Was simply suicidal;
'Twere wise to drive them down with pogs,
Or check them with a bridle.
The Greyfriars chaps had had enough—
Fish took a fearful licking;
To extricate him from his stuff
Was worse than oakum-picking!

An agency for faithful fags
Found Fishy in the centre;
This plan, with many rows and rags,
Returned to plague the inventor.
Then Fish began to realise
That British boys love fairness;
And his behaviour, in their eyes,
Had savoured not of squareness.

The deeds which Fishy doth declare
He did in New York City,
Like all the tales of "over there,"
Are listened to with pity.
Although the Yankees may deride
The British race as dwindlers,
Well might they waste their foolish pride
On Fish, the Prince of Swindlers!

The Subject of next Monday's Lyric
will be

PETER TODD.



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
EDITOR,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
 EVERY WEDNESDAY
 AND
"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

The Editor
 is always
 pleased to
 hear from
 his Chums,
 at home or
 abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"UP AGAINST IT!" By Frank Richards.

In our next week's long, complete school story, entitled as above, Harry Wharton and his chums of the Remove Form at Greyfriars have a new problem to face. Owing to the trouble that the unruly juniors have been giving of late, the powers that be decide to put a prefect in charge of the Remove passage, and to that end a box-room in the passage is converted into a study for Walker, of the Sixth.

Walker announces his intention of keeping a strict eye upon his charges, and the Remove are

"UP AGAINST IT!"

with a vengeance, the problem being to get rid of the obnoxious prefect. This task leads the Form to give their well-known "ragging" tactics full play, and there is trouble of the most lively kind. Every "Magnetite" will enjoy reading of how the Removites fare in the struggle against this fresh invasion of their rights in next Monday's issue.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Mabel Godfrey (Catford).—My recent reply to your query on this page has brought forth two letters from fellow-readers. One of these, Charles Engel, of 47, Lockley Street, Limehouse, London, E., is anxious to communicate with you, having the idea that he may be able to renew an old acquaintance thereby. The other—Charles Wright, of 123, Dundee Street, Edinburgh—offers to let you have any numbers of "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library issued since June, 1910. I leave it to you to communicate with either or both of these readers if you so wish, as neither of them is aware of your present address.

A. Brown (Motherwell).—Great patience required to accomplish your task. Try and persuade your jackdaw to imitate certain words which you must constantly repeat to him.

R. A. (Coventry).—Plugging your ear with cotton-wool is the only way to stop the water entering it. Try again, and plug harder, although be careful not to damage your ear.

J. Hodgkinson (Heywood, Lanes). I am afraid I cannot value your coins. Write to the editor of the "Connoisseur," 39, Maddox Street, London, W., and ask his advice.

THIS WEEK'S "PENNY POPULAR."

The issue of our splendid companion paper,
"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

which is now on sale, boasts such a splendid programme of attractions as to draw all my chums' special attention.

"THE MASTER CHEAT."

A thrilling tale of Sexton Blake, the world-famous detective's, encounter with the Prince of Cardsharps.

"ROUGH JUSTICE."

By Martin Clifford.

A grand, complete school story of the popular chums of St. Jim's—Tom Merry & Co.

"ON EQUAL TERMS," By S. Clarke Hook.

One of Jack, Sam, and Peto's most interesting and exciting adventures; and

POPLETS,

the great competition, by means of which dozens of "Penny Popular" readers are supplementing their pocket-money by winning the splendid

CASH PRIZES

which are offered every week. I don't want a single one of my "Magnet" chums to miss this week's "Penny Popular"—it's a "top-hole" number! So get it to-day, readers, if only to satisfy yourselves that I am right in my commendation of it.

"HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL MAGAZINE."—No. 3. THE TONE OF YOUR MAGAZINE.

Now that you have your mag. in something like working order, there is an important point you must not forget, and that is what is called the "tone," or style, of your paper. This must be kept above suspicion, and this is how to keep it so. First and foremost, have nothing slipshod in your publication, whether it be faulty grammar, general inaccuracies in regard to facts stated, or bad arrangement of the features. The secret of keeping these things right is just care and attention, and plenty of extra trouble. Be sure of everything you write ere you allow it to be published, and if you are in doubt with regard to grammatical rules, ask your master for his able assistance and for general information, if you have not a school library—there will be a public one available—and the librarians will be ready to help you to get at what you require. Be careful to avoid anything of a personal nature, especially when it casts an adverse reflection upon anyone in or out of the school. Keep up to date in school politics, but take no side, merely state facts.

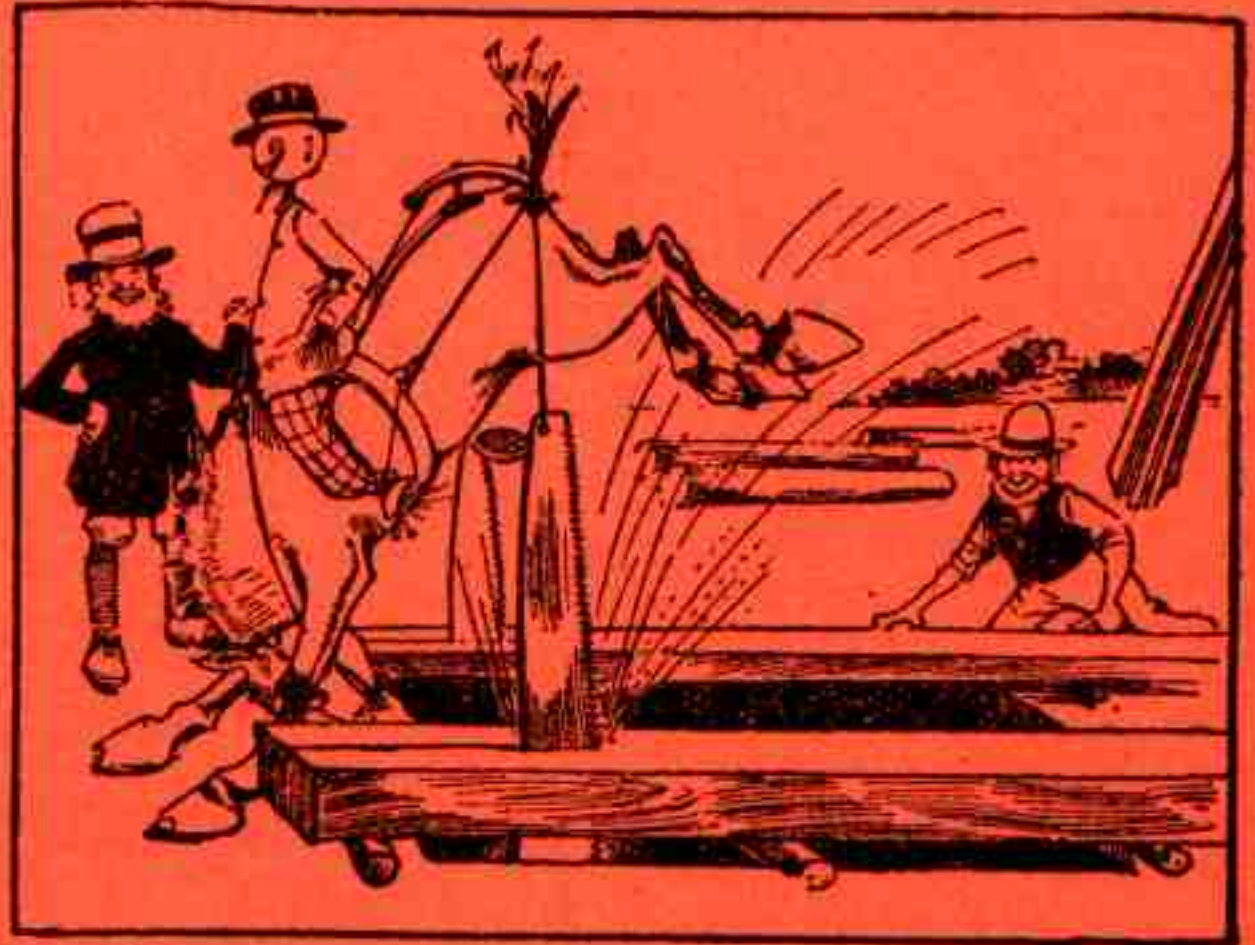
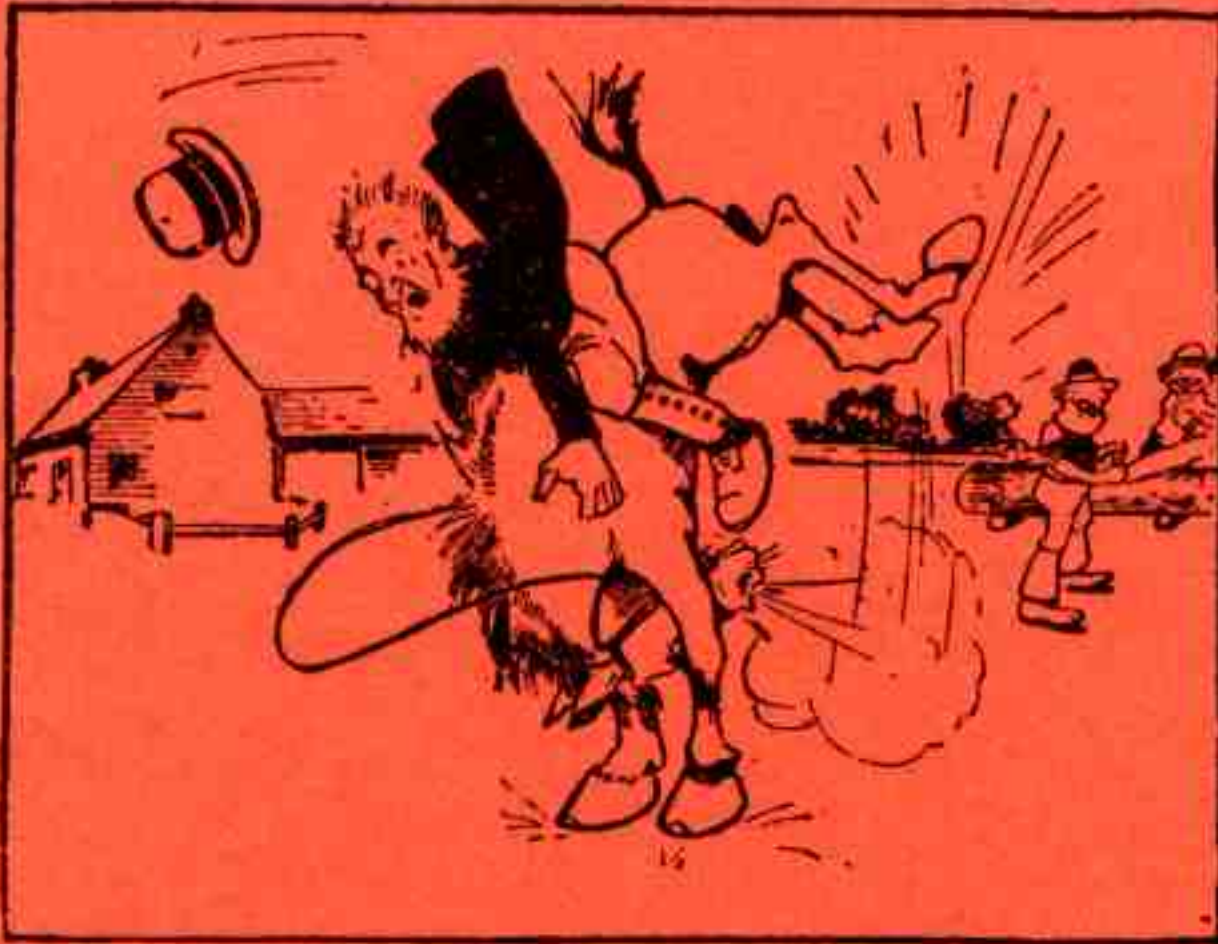
FICTION.

This is an attractive feature of every paper, and the public reads more of this kind of matter than anything. Schoolboys like fiction, but it must be of such a nature as appeals to the right instincts. This is a point only one school magazine in a hundred pays sufficient attention to. Statistics given by a leading writer, who had spent years reading stories of all sorts from beginners, went to show that 90 per cent. of the stories in school magazines dealt with the following theme: "A man or woman enters a railway compartment to find, after the rain has started, that the other occupant is a dangerous lunatic, with a knife," etc. This teaches a broad moral, avoid burglars, murders, crime of any sort, and except, in rare cases, sentimental love-stories. You are a boy, and you know that all this stuff doesn't appeal to you half so much as a good, rousing footer yarn, with a grand finish up, two minutes to play, the skipper with a sprained wrist, and a goal wanted to win. Let your contributors know, therefore, that you want stories for boys—school life, footer yarns, sport yarns, showing pluck and endurance, self-sacrifice, thought for others, and occasionally a real good gripping adventure story. See to it that the stories are natural and life-like, have plenty of bright dialogue, and stick to the plot. Don't meander off telling the colour of the hero's eyes in fifty words, dismiss it in a couple of lines. In short, get stories about phases of life that are known well to the writers. If you can get good funny stories that really raise a laugh they will be popular.

(Another article of this interesting series will appear in the Chat Page next Monday.)

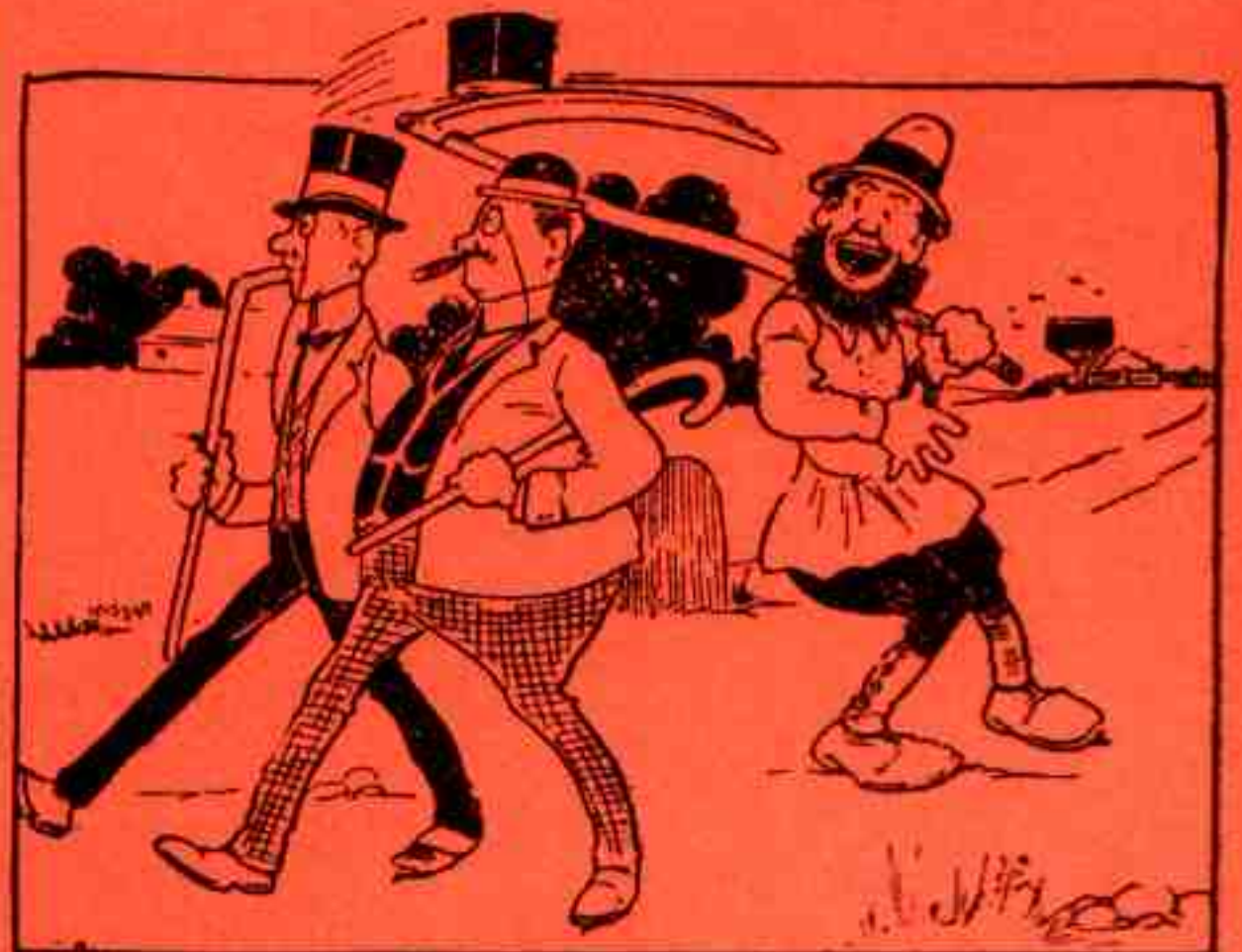
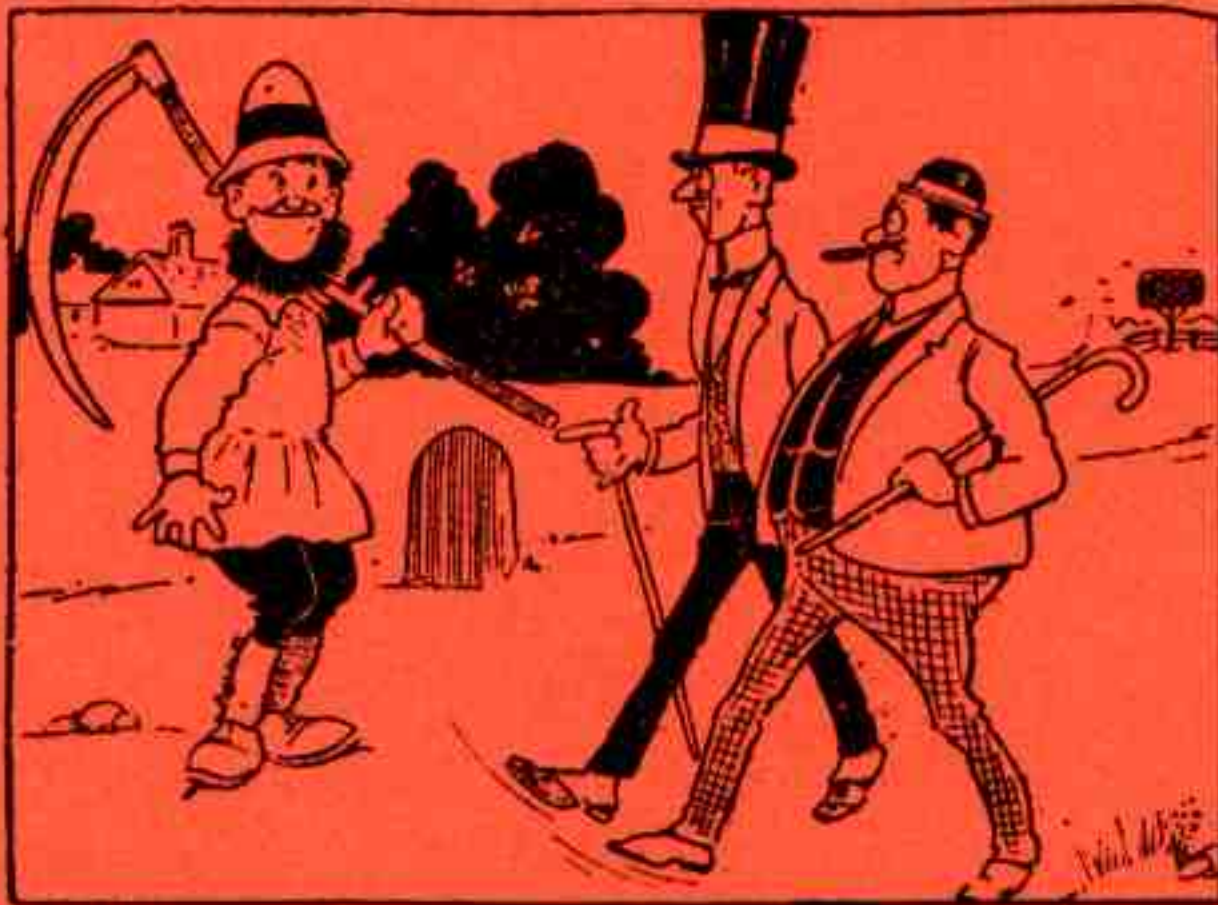
The Editor

A SAW-SEE IDEA!

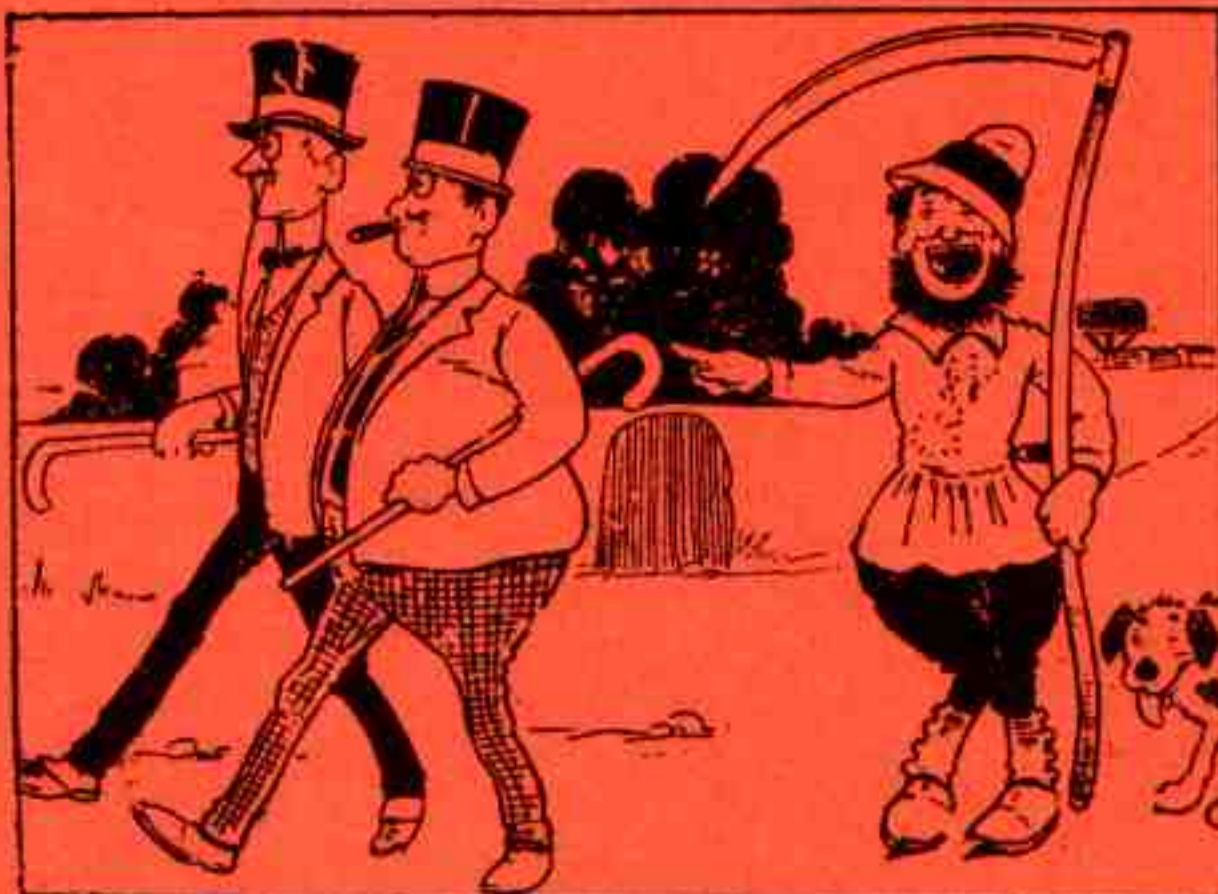


1. "Never saw such a horse in all my life! He does nothing but stand on his fore feet and work his hind legs like a windmill. He's no use for riding or driving, anyway." 2. "But for sawing timber there is not his equal in the whole of this country."

A LITTLE BIT OFF THE TOP!



1. Algy and Bertie were taking a stroll in the country, listening to the birds twittering in the trees and the frogs croaking in the crockery; but just then a funny thing happened—yes! 2. Farmer Hayseed's scythe took a little bit off the top of Algy's topper, and—



3. It fell on Bertie's little bowler, and, believe us, you couldn't tell one hat from the other. It's a fact; and if you don't believe us, ask them.

HEARD AT THE BALL,

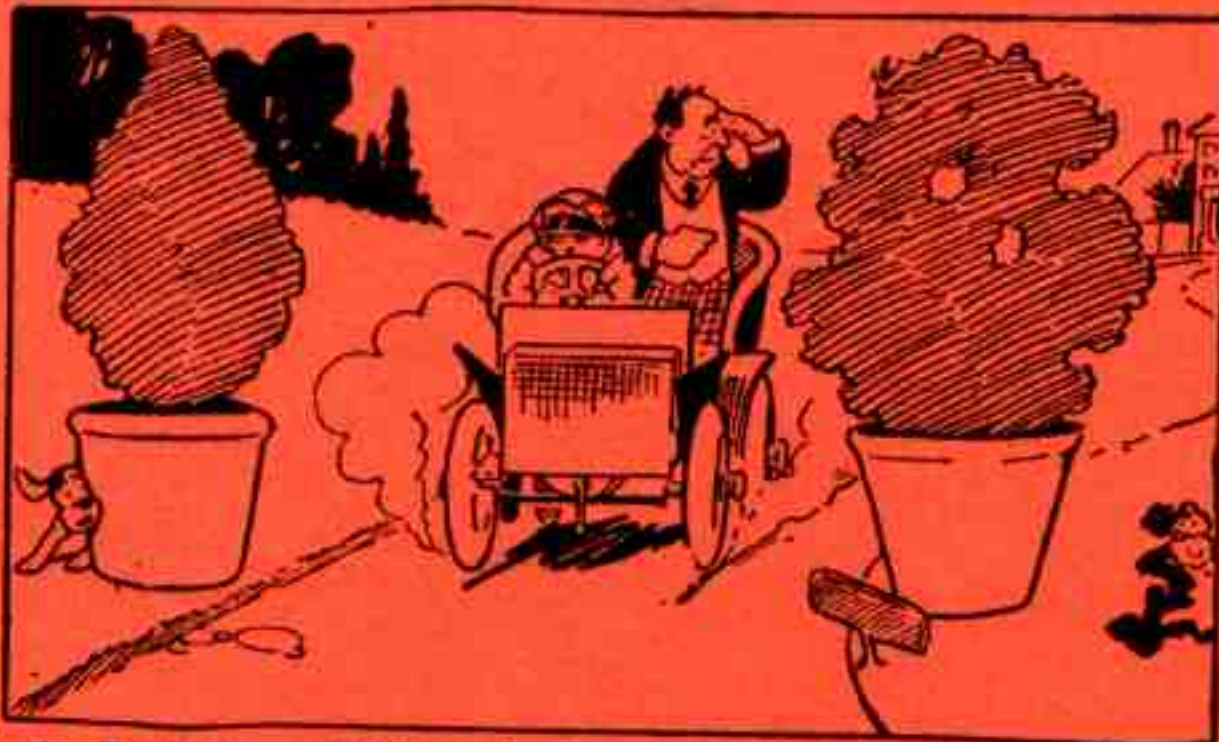


Pierrot: "How did you get your stolen watch back so quickly?" Jester: "The poor idiot of a thief took it to a pawnshop, where they at once recognised it as mine."

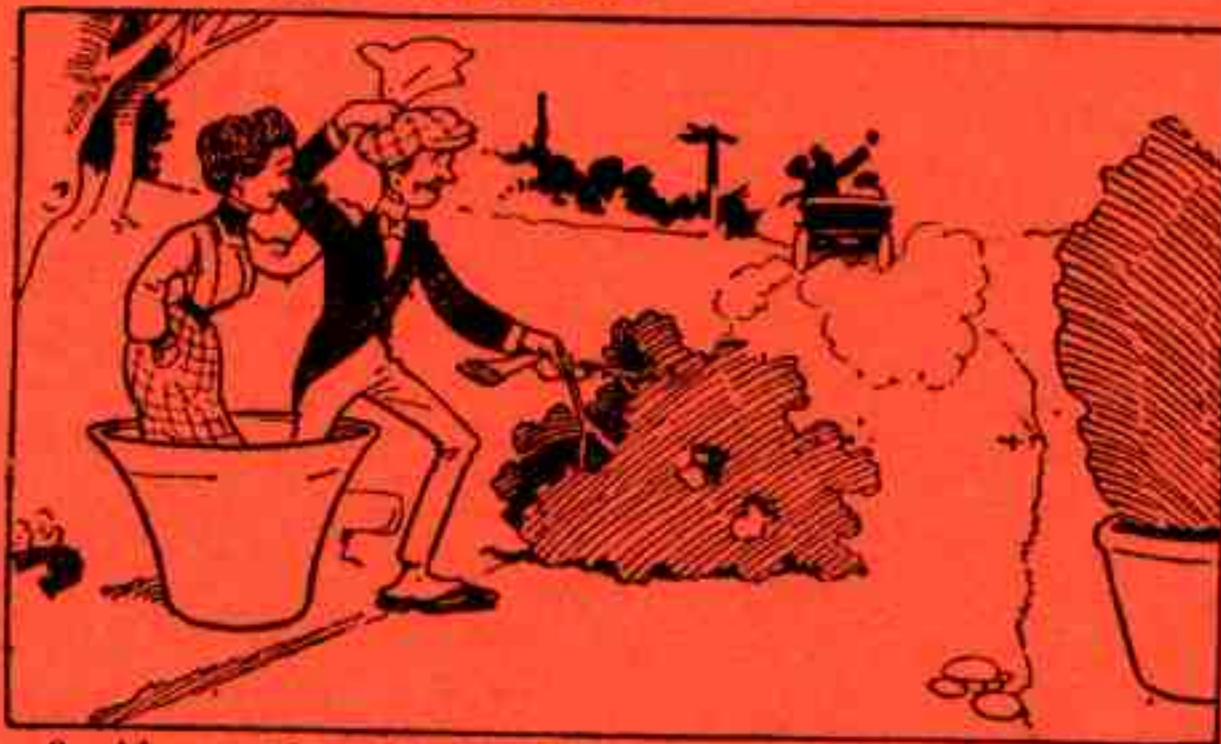
PA IS STILL LOOKING FOR THEM.



1. "Now, I wonder how we can come out on top in this series of spasms?" said Jollyboy, who was eloping with the Count de Gornbroke's daughter. "Oh, I have it!"

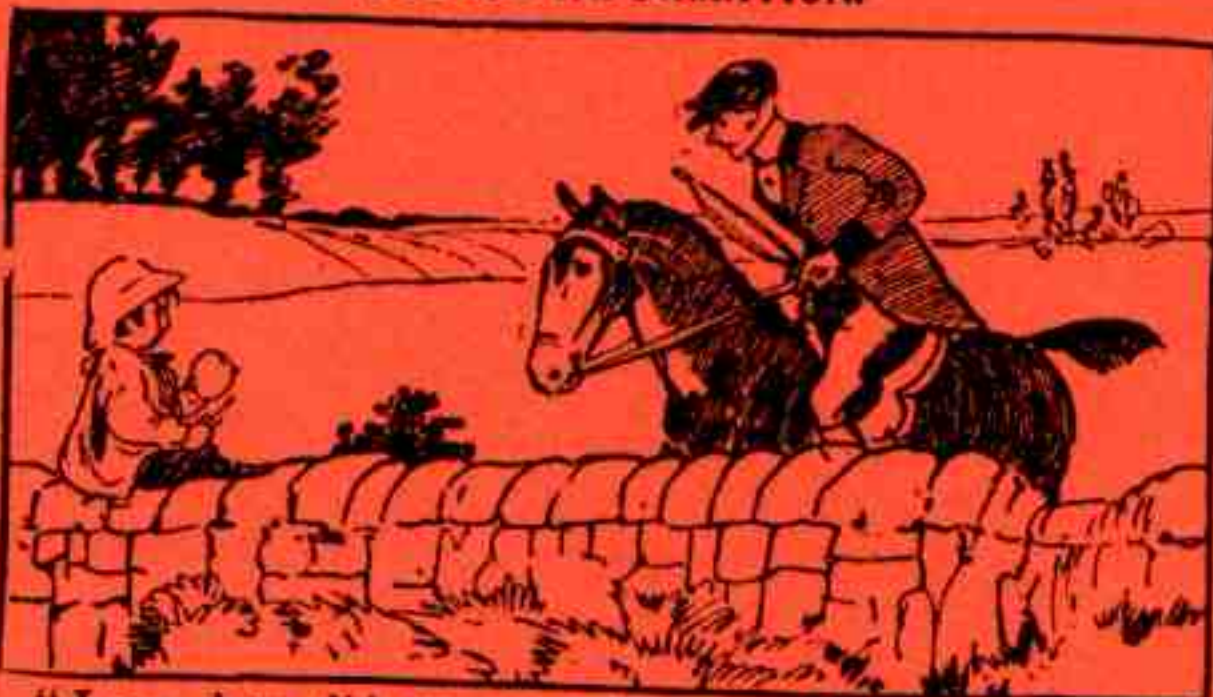


2. Just then old Gornbroke came along on his thirty-five candle-power motor. "I'll find them, if it takes me for ever and a day after," he squeaked, as the motor dashed along at about ninety inches an hour.



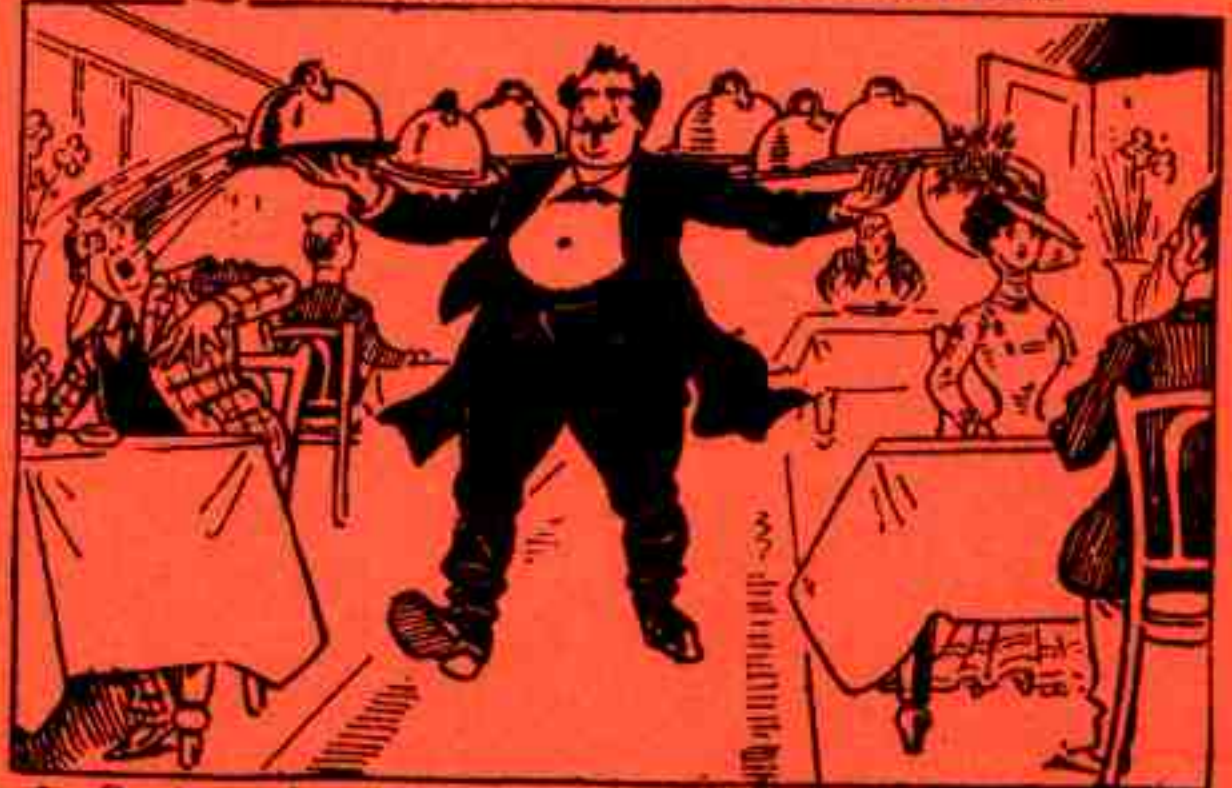
3. Ah, we thought that flower-pot on the right in the last picture looked a bit suspicious. "What a good thing you were wearing the latest thing in hats!" said Jollyboy to his lady love, as they toddled off.

USEFUL INFORMATION.



"I say, boy, did you see a hare run by here?"
 "Yes, sir. I think it'll be three years next Christmas."

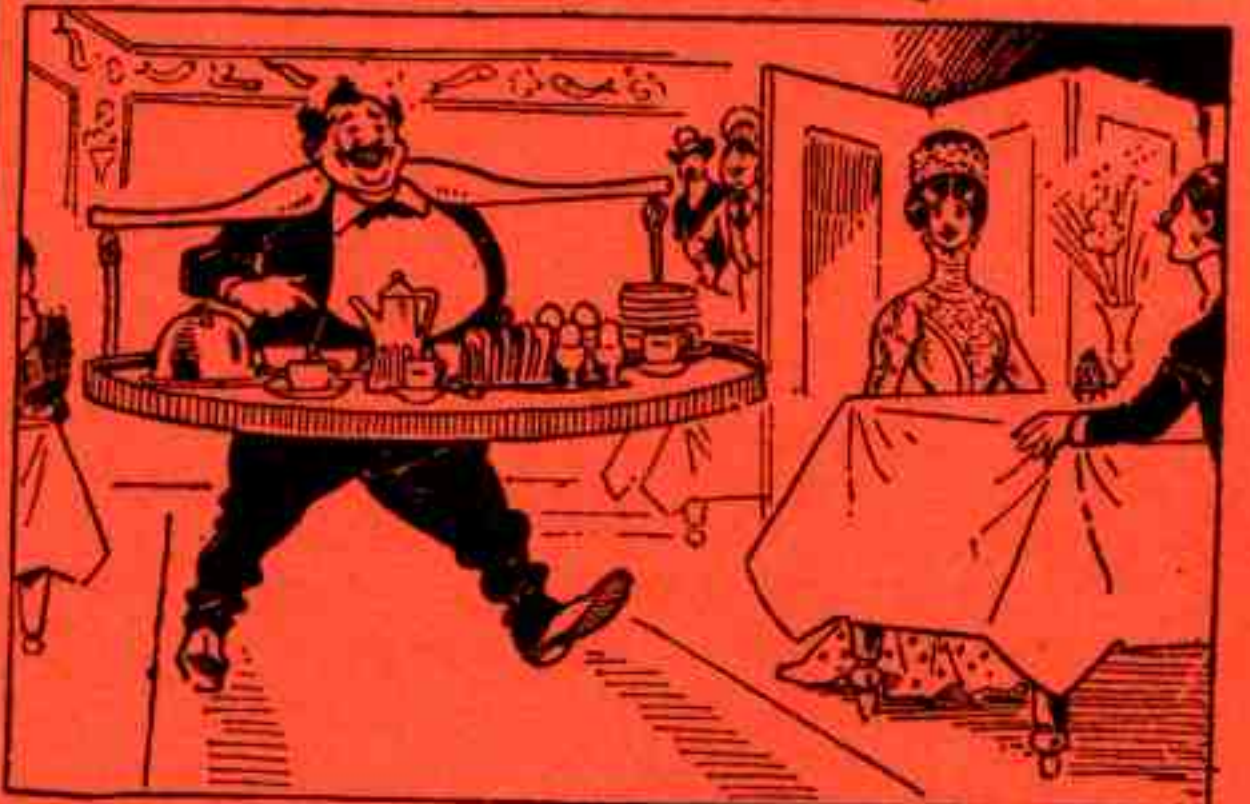
THE WAITER CARRIED ALL BEFORE HIM.



1. Gustav, the waiter at the Hotel de Barberspole, found business had increased to such a merry extent that his job meant a daily acrobatic performance, to say nothing of breakneck juggling, which Gustav liked not at all.



2. However, it so happened that while Gustav was taking a day off in the country he met sweet little Dolly, the dairy-maid, and much admired the manner in which she carried the milk to the farm without spilling a drop.



3. So he made his appearance the next day with a similar contraption, and now the customers come for miles round to see him marathon about with his express non-upsettable, easy-gettable patent.

A GOOD TIP.

The Guest: "May I give you a tip?"
 The Waiter: "You may, sir."
 The Guest: "Keep your thumb out of the soup when you hand it to customers in future. That's all."

