

THE GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

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**2**



**A REFUGE AT LAST!**

*(From the Original Painting by Philip Howard.)*

# MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," sd., Every Monday, "THE GEM" LIBRARY, sd., Every Wednesday, "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d., COMPLETE LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," sd., Every Friday, "CHUCKLES," Price 3d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.



## For Next Monday:

### "THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!"

By Frank Richards.

Billy Bunter plays the chief part in next week's fine story. Bunter suddenly becomes quite affluent. Suspicious are aroused, for to put it mildly, Bunter's previous periods of affluence have usually coincided with someone's losses. Peter Todd takes very drastic measures in his efforts to find out whence the money has come. But it is made fairly certain that no one at Greyfriars has lost anything. Then something of the truth leaks out. In dire trouble, Bunter goes to Harry Wharton and his chums for aid. To the best of their ability they help him. It is Monty Newland who does most, however. Bunter's gratitude is—well, extremely Bunterish. But the other fellows hope, without greatly believing it, that he will have learned a lesson at least—the lesson that hard is

### "THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!"

## ANOTHER SILLY LETTER.

I am not publishing the letter which follows because the writer dares me to do so. That is an old, old trick, and it fails nine times out of ten. But I think it worth while to let my readers see this particular screed as a shining example of the sort of letter to avoid writing.

"Dear Editor,—I want to know what you put so many advertisements in your paper for. I am not running the paper down, for I read it myself. It is a tiptop story-book, but I think it is a shame that you should take up two and a-half pages in advertising. First you had half a page, then a whole page, and now it's got to two and a-half pages. I tell you straight, I think it's too bad. We do not pay for advertisements. We do not want them. We want the story. But still, I suppose you are looking after your own pocket. 'Every man for himself.' Many a lad spends his only coppers in the papers, and you give him advertisements. It's not fair! Anyway, I DARE you to publish this letter, mind, not for the sake of seeing it in your paper, but to let all readers see it. If you are British, you will not refuse the challenge. I am not the only one in our district who thinks it too bad, and they are watching me write this letter. —Wishing you success, yours truly, ENGLANDER."

The picture of the district looking over "Englander's" shoulder as he pews his moving missive stirs me almost to tears. But his absurd cocksureness in the face of his absolute ignorance of business matters keeps me from indulging in the melting mood.

Advertisements are a recognised part of the revenue of every paper, and the great majority of papers simply could not pay their way without them. It is quite true that readers do not pay for advertisements; but the advertisers do! If my correspondent or any other reader feels himself aggrieved he has his remedy—a very simple one. When a thing is not good value, drop it. That is far better than writing foolish letters, whose only merit is that they are mildly amusing.

The theory that the editor benefits directly by advertisements is an utterly absurd one. Very few editors indeed own the papers they control. It is the proprietors, who have to bear the expense and the risk, who receive the advertisement revenue, and are well entitled to it, too. I am sure my readers have little notion of what the risk in starting a new paper is. Support is never certain, and if it fails, hundreds—even thousands—of pounds may be lost in a very short time. To the average editor advertisements are, on the whole, rather a nuisance than otherwise, for they tend to upset his plans as to the arrangement of the contents, the length of stories, and all that sort of thing. But he welcomes them, nevertheless, for he knows that they are a healthy sign. Advertisers look out for papers that are obviously going well, you see.

## THE VICE OF COCK-SURENESS.

A very clever man—Professor Jowett, of Balliol College, Oxford—once said: "None of us is infallible, gentlemen, not even the youngest of us." I often think of these words when I read my correspondents' letters. So many of them know so much better than I do. Yet I am much older than they are, and am not altogether without brains to profit by the experiences that the added years have offered me. Moreover, those very letters help me to know how utterly wrong some of the most cock-sure of my readers are. For if one of them suggests a change that he is absolutely certain will largely increase the popularity of this paper, I generally find that it is something which, in the first place, he particularly wants himself, for his own reasons, and which, in the second place, nobody else wants at all. For my readers are not slow to let me know what they want, and in cases where it is evident that the want is a real and general one, and where the change is practicable, I am not slow to respond.

## THE GREAT DAY IS COMING!

There is no necessity for me to repeat my request for opinions on the suggestion that the Harry Wharton stories be published in the "Penny Popular." My first request brought in shoals of letters, all unanimous in context, and I am glad to be able to tell you that the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.

## WILL APPEAR IN THE "PENNY POPULAR."

I cannot tell you the exact date this week, but next Monday I will let you into the secret, and will also tell you of

## ANOTHER SPLENDID ATTRACTION

which I have in store for you in connection with the "Penny Popular."

## A READER'S WORK.

The very ingenious and amusing full-page illustration on page 33 is the work of a reader who ought to make good as a black-and-white artist sooner or later, I think. It is not faultless, but one lives and learns, and I think it well worth reproduction, and congratulate the young artist upon it.

## FOOTBALL NOTICES.

### Matches Wanted By:

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ALVESTON 2ND (14).—4-mile r.—T. Church, 12, Redcliffe Parade, Redcliffe, Bristol.

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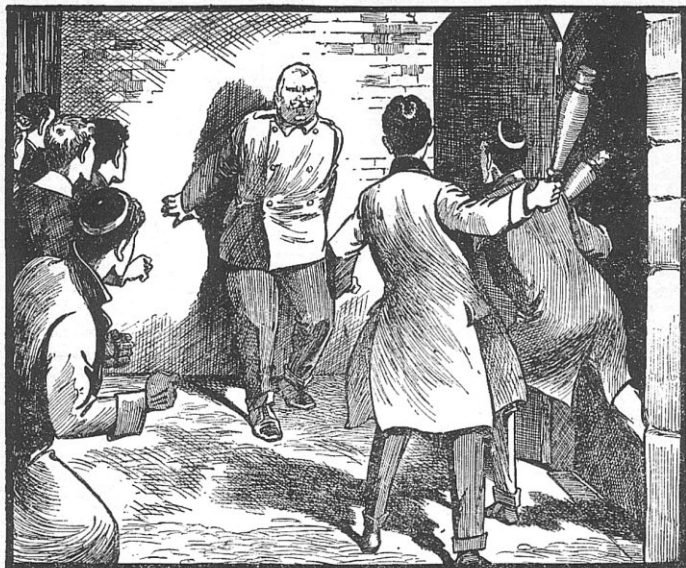
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THE HOUSE ON THE HEATH!

An Extra-Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Adventures  
of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The big German, dodging a swipe from the Caterpillar's club, backed away to the wall, his face white with desperation. The next moment the juniors of Greyfriars crowded in. (See Chapter 23.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

"SNOW!"  
"More snow!"  
"The snowfulness is terrific!"  
"By Jove!" said Harry Wharton. "It's coming down!"

It was coming down. There was no mistake about that. The thick flakes fell steadily, and the old Close of Greyfriars was like a winding-sheet.

The ancient elms had disappeared under a thick covering  
No. 461.

of snow; every wall and sill and gutter was piled thick and white.

"We shall have a ripping journey to-morrow," remarked Bob Cherry. "You will enjoy it, Inky—what?"

Hurree Janset Ram Singh, otherwise known as Inky, shuddered. The dusky son of India's torrid clime had never got quite used to the English winter.

"The enjoyfulness will not be terrific," he murmured. "But we must bear it graciously, my esteemed Bob."

"I say, you fellows—"

Harry Wharton & Co. were looking out of the hall window

at Greyfriars, at the snow that was piling down thickly in the Close. Some hardy youths were out of doors in the falling flakes—Tubb and Paget and Bolsover minor and some more of the Third—building a snow man. The chums of the Remove looked upon that little game with a lofty and patronising eye. They glanced round as Billy Bunter came up the passage.

"I say—"  
"Bob Cherry held up his hand.  
"Nothing doing!" he said concisely.  
"Oh, really, Cherry—"  
"Nothing at all!" said Bob firmly. "We know your titled relations are simply raising postal-orders and banknotes on you for Christmas. We know they haven't arrived, owing to the snow and the war, and the fact that they haven't been posted—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"And we're not going to cash them in advance," said Bob.  
"Nothing doing! Try next door!"

"Look here—"  
"Go and ask Smithy. Smithy's rolling in Christmas tips."  
"You silly ass!" roared Bunter. "It isn't that this time—I mean, it isn't that at all!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, I'm in rather a hole," said Bunter. "I think you fellows might have a little sympathy, as it's Christmas-time."

"You use up such a lot of sympathy," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "But what's the trouble this time?"  
"You know we break up to-morrow?"

"Yes, I believe I've heard it mentioned," remarked Johnny Bull. "We generally do break up on the last day of term."

"And you fellows are going off for a ripping Christmas holiday."

"We hope so," said Nugent. "But so are you, according to what you've told us. Has your uncle the duke forgotten you, after all?"

"And your cousin the marquis?" asked Bob Cherry.  
"And your second cousin the earl?" grinned Johnny Bull.  
"And your esteemed and innumerable relations the viscounts, barons, and baronets?" chuckled Maurice Jamset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter grinned feebly.  
"He, he, he! The fact is, my invitations have fallen through," he said. "Awful, ain't it?"

"The awfulness is—"  
"Terrific!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think you fellows might be serious," said Bunter reproachfully, "considering what chums we've been all the term."

"Have we?" ejaculated Wharton, in astonishment. "This is the first I've heard of it!"  
"I was simply swarmed with invitations," said Bunter pathetically. "I mentioned it to you—"

"That's all right," said Bob cheerily. "We didn't believe it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Ahem! But they've fallen through. Rotten, ain't it? My minor, Sammy, is going to my uncle's at Repley. He won't have me—I mean, I decline to go there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"And—and, as a matter of fact, I'm stranded," said Bunter—"actually stranded, on the day before breaking-up!"

"Well, you've got a home to go to," chuckled Bob Cherry. "It's a chance for you to enjoy the palatial splendours of the Bunter family mansion that you've told us so much about."

"Of course, I should have a ripping time at home—simply ripping!" said Bunter. "But—but—but—"  
"But you wouldn't?" asked Bob.

"No, you ass! But—but the fact is, my people ain't expecting me," explained Bunter. "They think I'm booked for Christmas. In fact, I've told them so."

"You shouldn't tell whoppers," said Wharton, with a shake of the head. "Why don't you take example by the Kaiser? Whoppers always come home to roost."

"Ahem! I should have gone with Mauly—you know how keen Lord Mauleverer was to have me?"

"Yes, we know—exactly!" chortled Bob.  
"Only he's gone off to-day, and somehow he forgot to mention it to me—and I didn't know till he was gone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Of course, I could go home with Toddy. Toddy's keen on it—awfully keen!"

"Toddy gone dotty?" asked Bob.  
"Eh? No!"  
"Then you must be mistaken about his being keen."  
"Oh, really, Cherry! The fact is, Toddy's got a rather poor show. His father's only a skinny solicitor, you know,

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and his blessed cousin Alonzo will be there, and he's a frightful bore. Then there's Smithy. But, upon the whole, I don't care to be seen much with the Bouncer."

"Not to mention the fact that he wouldn't have you at any price," remarked Bob Cherry sympathetically.

"Then Tom Brown and Hazeldene and Bulstrode are all going together, and I don't want to go with a crowd like that, though they were rather pressing—"

"Bow-wow!"  
"Of course, I feel that perhaps I ought to go home with Hazeldene, as his sister Marjorie may expect me—sure to, in fact, and her Christmas holiday will be spoiled if I don't come. You know, she's rather—"

Billy Bunter caught the gleam of danger in Bob Cherry's eyes, and changed the subject suddenly. "Upon the whole, I sha'n't go home with Hazeldene. I don't care about going with Temple of the Fourth, either. He begged me almost with tears in his eyes, but I told him plainly I was going to stick to my own pals in my own form."

"What a jolly good idea!" said Johnny Bull. "Go and look for 'em, and stick to 'em, Bunter."

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter feebly.  
"What are you he-he-ing about?" demanded Bob Cherry.  
"Johnny's little joke. He, he, he!"

"I wasn't joking," said Johnny Bull. "If you've got any pals in the Remove, go and stick to them, and give us a rest."

"He, he, he! Under the circumstances, Wharton, there's only one thing to be done, so far as I can see. I shall accept your invitation."

Wharton stared.  
"My invitation!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, Harry, old chap," said Bunter affectionately.  
"If you call me Harry, old chap, I'll bump your head on the wall, you fat owl! And you can accept my invitation when I give it, and not before!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"  
Wharton remembered that it was Christmas-time, and relented.

"Look here, Bunter, there's nothing doing. Marjorie Hazeldene will be at Wharton Lodge part of the time, and she can't stand you at any price. So you'd better look up some of those titled relations of yours."

Bunter did not seem to hear.  
"I shall help with the entertaining," he remarked. "You can rely on me, Harry. I shall consider it a duty to entertain the guests with some of my splendid ventriloquism—"

"Ventriloquism's at a discount," grinned Bob Cherry.  
"Do run away and play, Bunter! Try Coker of the Fifth."

"Oh, really, Cherry! What time are you starting, Harry?"

"The time we leave Greyfriars."  
"But what time do you leave Greyfriars?"  
"The time we start."

"Look here, you ass! What train are you catching?"  
"A railway train."

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully through his spectacles at the grinning juniors.  
"If I don't know when you're leaving, I mayn't be ready!" he howled.

"Good!"  
"You may have to wait for me, you know."  
"Yes—I don't think!"

"It will be ripping with Marjorie there," remarked Bunter thoughtfully. "Is Clara coming, too?"  
"Yes."

"A bit awkward, that."  
"Eh? How is that a bit awkward?"

"Well, there's a lot of jealousy among girls," said Bunter. "Marjorie will want to monopolise me as usual, of course, and Clara may get her hair off about it. Of course, a chap tries to be tactful. But—Yaroooh!" roared Billy Bunter suddenly, as Bob Cherry grasped him by the collar.

Bump!  
The Owl of the Remove smote the passage floor forcibly, and sat there gasping and blinking. The Famous Five walked away.

"Yow! Beasts!" howled Bunter.  
Coker of the Fifth came hurrying along the passage. He did not see the Owl of the Remove on the floor in the dusk till he had stumbled over him.

"Why, what the thunder—" ejaculated Coker.  
"Yaroooh!"

Coker glared down at the fat junior.  
"You cheeky little fat beast! What are you playing these tricks for?" he roared. "I'll teach you to trip me up!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Murder! Fire! Yaroooh!"  
Coker's boots were of a large size, and the feet inside them were heavy. And Coker seemed to be under the impression that he was kicking for goal.



Billy Bunter squirmed wildly along the floor, and picked himself up and fled. Horace Coker glared after him and snorted.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Rescue Required!

"Pile in!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah!"

Billy Bunter blinked morosely out of the School House into the growing dusk. A snowball battle was raging in the quadrangle, amid the fast-falling flakes, between the Removites and the Fourth, Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth were getting the worst of it, but they were putting up a good fight.

The Owl of the Remore did not join in the snow-balling. Exertion of that kind was not in his line.

The fat junior was thinking out the problem of the Christmas holidays.

It was his custom to plant himself upon somebody for the vacation. For, great as were the glories of the Bunter mansion—according to Bunter—the Owl never seemed specially keen to pass his vacations there.

But Billy Bunter was too inconsiderate and exacting and discontented a guest for his company to be yearned after.

Lord Maulveverer had rescued him—Yeroun-Smith had told him to go and eat coke—Peter Todd had explained politely that he wouldn't be found dead with him in the vac—and other fellows had more or less courteously declined the honour of his company. They did not see hints when Bunter gave them—and if the Owl came out into the open, they replied with more emphasis than politeness. The Famous Five had been Bunter's last resource, but the Famous Five had failed him.

But Billy Bunter was not beaten yet.

The party at Wharton Lodge was very attractive—Colonel Wharton would be home on short leave—Marjorie and Clara would be there—and the Yule-time fare would be plentiful and of the best. Bunter was quite prepared to entertain the Christmas party with his ventriloquial tricks; indeed, he was willing to do anything that would bring him into the limelight. Wharton's black ingratitude made Bunter snort with indignation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry tramped up the snowy steps. "Come on, Bunter! All hands to the mill!"

"Oh, rats! Go and eat coke!" growled Bunter.

Bob Cherry chuckled, and took the Owl of the Remore by the arm.

"Kim on!" he said.

"Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"Slacker! Pile in!"

"Yow-ow! Beast!"

The exuberant Bob rushed Bunter down the steps and into the midst of the snow battle. Bob's idea was that a little exertion in the open air would do Bunter good, and no doubt he was quite right. But Bunter was not in the least grateful for his thoughtful kindness.

He roared and wriggled in Bob's muscular grasp.

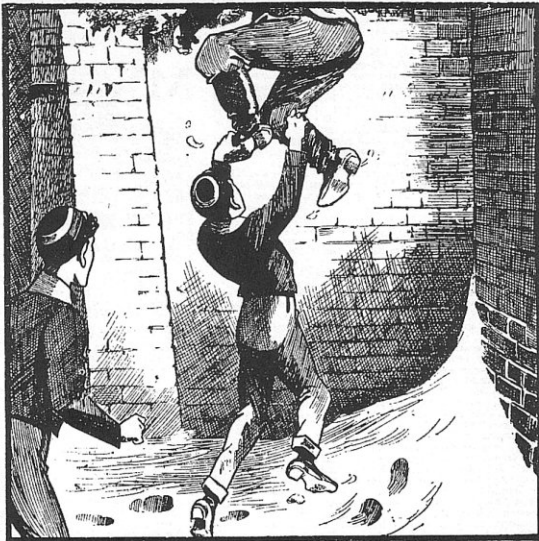
"Leggo, you beast! Yarook!"

"Pile in!" shouted Bob.

"Sock it to 'em!" yelled Temple of the Fourth, leading a charge.

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Wharton, springing forward, grasped the legs dangling against the wall, and dragged with all-his strength. (See Chapter 4.)

Billy Bunter found himself the centre of a whirling crowd of shouting juniors. Temple & Co's charge drove the Removites back, but they rallied and charged in their turn, raining snowballs on the enemy, and the Fourth-Formers were scattered far and wide. The Famous Five were in the lead, and Bunter was left to his own devices by the merry Bob. The rush of the juniors sent him spinning, and he collapsed into the snow, and the juniors rushed on and left him there.

Bunter sat up in the snow and roared. "Yarook! Where's my glasses? Beasts! Yow-ow-ow!" The combatants surged round the snow man erected by Tubb & Co. of the Third.

"Keep off, you silly idiots!" yelled Tubb.

"Keep off the grass!" howled Paget.

But the snow man suffered considerable damage before the Fourth-Formers were driven off, and the fags of the Third joined in the combat, snowballing both parties with great impartiality.

Temple, Dabney, and Co. were put fairly to flight at last, and the victorious Removites returned panting towards the School House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter! What are you sitting there for, Bunter?"

"Yow-ow! You might give a chap a hand up," growled Bunter.

"Righto!" Bob took the fat junior by the ear, and Bunter rose to his feet quite suddenly.

"All right now?" asked Bob cheerily.

"Yah! Beast!"

"Is that how you say 'Thank you'?" asked Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What price the Third Form snow man as a cocksby? No charge!"

"THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Good egg!"

"Let that snow man alone, you cheeky rotters!" roared Tubb indignantly. "That's the Kaiser, and we haven't finished him yet."

"Well, the Kaiser ought to be snowballed," said Bob. "Go it! Three shies a penny, and you needn't shell out the penny!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snowballs rained upon the figure from the merry juniors, and Tubb, who rushed in the way, was fairly bowled over by the fusillade. Tubb roared, as might have been expected—but what was not expected was a loud and prolonged howl from the snow man himself!

"Oh! Don't!"

The snowballing ceased suddenly.

"Wha-a-at was that?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Tubb sat up and blinked at his snow man.

"Oh, crumbs!" he exclaimed.

"Let me out!" went on the voice. "I'm cold—c-c-cold!"

"You silly young ass, Tubb!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Have you snowed somebody up? You frabjous young dummy!"

"I—I haven't—"

"Let me out!" moaned the voice. "I'm f-f-freezing!"

"Great Scott! Who is it!"

"Oh, dear! Rescue! I'm Nugent minor, and I'm catching c-c-cold!"

"My minor!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

He rushed at the snow man, and began to drag at it. The figure was a huge one, about six times life size. There was ample room for a fag to be buried in it—or a six-footer, for that matter.

"Let that snow man alone!" yelled Tubb, scrambling up.

"You rotter; it's taken us hours to make!"

Frank Nugent shoved him angrily aside.

"You silly little idiot, my minor will be frozen! It's a wonder he's not suffocated!"

"I tell you—"

"Pull it down!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Tubb, you young idiot, you ought to be scragged for snowing up a kid like that! It's dangerous!"

"I haven't! I tell you—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Tubb was bundled aside, and the Removites set to work with frantic speed, tearing the snow man to pieces. Billy Bunter looked on grinning, but without lending a helping hand. Apparently he was not concerned for Nugent minor of the Second Form, shut up in the closely-packed snow.

The Third Form fags gathered round furiously. But the Removites kept them off, while Harry Wharton & Co. demolished the snow man in hot haste.

"Go for 'em!" yelled Tubb desperately.

The fags charged.

"Knock those little duffers out!" said Bob Cherry.

"Where are you, Nugent minor?"

"Oh, dear! I'm buried! I'm freezing!"

"Keep your pecker up, Dicky! We'll soon have you out!" panted Nugent.

There was a whirling confetti round the snow man, while busy hands were dragging him down. The roar of excited voices rang all over Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, stepped out of the House.

"Cease this at once!" exclaimed the Remove-master.

"They're smashing our snow man!" yelled Tubb furiously.

"Wharton, what—"

"Nugent minor's shut up inside, sir!" gasped Wharton.

Mr. Quelch stared.

"What? What? Why, such a foolish trick might be fatal!"

"He isn't!" yelled Tubb.

"He is!" shouted Nugent.

"Wharton, are you sure?"

"Quite sure, sir. Nugent minor called to us. He's buried in the snow!"

"Release him at once, then!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "If it is the case, every boy who has had a hand in such a dangerous trick will be severely punished! Lose no time!"

The Removites were losing no time. The masses of snow were being dragged away fast, and Tubb & Co., restrained by the presence of the Form-master, looked on with Hushish looks.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Spotted!

MR. QUELCH watched the proceedings with a frowning and anxious face.

If the Second Form fag was buried in the midst of that gigantic pile of snow, certainly he was in danger of death from cold, and such a trick would have been punished in the most exemplary manner.

"The Removites worked with frantic haste.

"Where are you, Dicky?" called out Frank Nugent anxiously.

There was no reply.

"Dicky!"

Silence from the snow man.

"He must have fainted," muttered Wharton. "Pile in, for goodness' sake!"

"You are sure he is there?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch doubtfully.

"He called to us, sir."

"I can scarcely believe that anybody would play so foolish and dangerous a trick, Wharton."

"We haven't!" roared Tubb. "I haven't seen Nugent minor. I believe he's indoors!"

"He's here, buried in the snow, you young rascal!" exclaimed Frank Nugent angrily.

"He isn't, you ass!"

"You are quite sure you heard his voice, Nugent?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Make haste, then!"

The snow, so carefully and methodically piled up by the fags of the Third, was hurled in all directions. The gigantic snow man diminished in size at a record rate. There was no sound from within the mass—the fag, if he was there, was evidently past speaking. Frank Nugent's face was white with anxiety.

The last masses were dragged and kicked aside, but the imprisoned fag had not been revealed.

"What's the game, Franky?"

Frank Nugent jumped.

He spun round. Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form, had just come out of the School House, apparently attracted by the excitement going on in the quad.

Frank stared at him with bulging eyes.

"Dicky!" he gasped.

Nugent minor returned his stare in surprise.

"I'm not a ghost!" he remarked. "What's the matter with you?"

"Dicky! I—I thought—"

"Nugent minor!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "Wharton, Nugent, what do you mean by telling me that Nugent minor was buried in the snow?"

The juniors gazed at the fag in bewilderment. It was only too evident that he had not been buried within the snow man.

"I told you he wasn't!" howled Tubb.

Wharton gasped.

"He—he called to us, sir," he stammered. "His—his voice came from inside the snow man—"

"Wharton! The figure is quite demolished now, and you can see for yourself that no one was inside it—Nugent minor or anyone else."

"Ye-es, sir!"

"It was an esteemed trick!" exclaimed Maurice Jamset Rosi Singh.

"I can't understand it," said Bob. "I heard Nugent minor call out. I knew his voice, too!"

"Bunter?" yelled Johnny Bull.

"What?"

"Bunter!" roared Johnny wrathfully. "It's that rotter's ventriloquism!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Where's Bunter? I'll squash him!"

But Billy Bunter had disappeared. The Greyfriars ventriloquist had prudently not remained on the spot till the discovery was made.

The Removites looked very sheepish.

They had been completely taken in by Bunter's trick, and they had smashed up the snow man upon which Tubb & Co. had laboured so long. They were feeling inclined to lynch Bunter.

Mr. Quelch uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Absurd!" he exclaimed. "You were deceived by a childish trick, it seems, and you have demolished a figure to

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which these Lower Form boys apparently attached some importance!"

"We—we're sorry!" stammered Bob.

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, honoured sir!"

"I told you nobody was there!" roared Tubb. "It's taken us two hours to build that snow man, and now you've smashed it up, you beast!"

"Tubb has very just cause for complaint," said Mr. Quelch severely. "You must rebuild the figure, my boys, since you have demolished it without cause. That is only just."

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Wharton.

Tubb grinned.

"That's all right!" he exclaimed. "I'll show you how to do it. Are they to rebuild it under my directions, sir?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch. "You will see for yourself, my boys, that that is only fair."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch went back into the House looking cross. The Removites looked at one another, and at the grinning Tubb. They caught sight of the Remove-master a few minutes later at his study window. Perhaps Mr. Quelch was keeping an eye on them, in case of further disturbance.

There was no help for it. Harry Wharton & Co. set to work. Under the directions of Tubb & Co.—in great spirits now, at the sight of the Remov fellows working under their orders—the snow man was rebuilt.

It was a good hour's work in the falling snow, and the fags of the Third, at least, enjoyed it.

"The rotten things' done now!" growled Bob Cherry at last.

Tubb chortled.

"Now you can pull it down again if you like," he remarked. "We're done with it. Quite a pleasure to see you kids work. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Third-Formers, and they troped off, chortling.

The Removites, breathing hard, went indoors. They felt as if they had earned their tea.

As they came up to the Remove passage Billy Bunter met them, with an expansive grin on his fat face.

"I say, you fellows—"

"So you're here!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ho, ho, ho! I say, I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Wharton. I'll keep you amused all the way to-morrow, in the train, with my ventriloquism—Yah! Oh! Ah! Yoop!"

The rest of Billy Bunter's remarks were inarticulate, as the Removites walked over him, and nearly every pair of boots in the Removs was wiped on Bunter's pearly form before they had finished. A ventriloquist's life, like a policeman's, is not always a happy one.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### A Sudden Alarm!

**B**ANG!

"My hat!"

Bob Cherry jumped to his feet.

"That was a rifle!" he exclaimed.

No. 1 Study was crowded.

On the last night of term the Famous Five were entertaining their friends to a little farewell supper.

On the morrow the Greyfriars fellows would be scattering to the four corners of the three kingdoms, not to meet again till after the Christmas vacation.

The little celebration in No. 1 Study was a wind-up to the term in great style.

Harry Wharton & Co. had asked their friends, which meant nearly all the Remove.

Tom Brown and Squiff and Peter Todd, Tom Dutton and Dick Rako and Wibley and Morgan and Micky Desmond were there, of course, and Vernon-Smith and Newland and Ogilvy and Delaney and Vernon-Smith and Trelves too; and Skinner, though not exactly a friend of the Famous Five, had assumed a cordial friendliness for the occasion, and so had Snoop and Stoit and Bolsover major. Needless to say, No. 1 Study was not quite equal to accommodating the crowd.

There was an overflow in the passage, and everybody was kept busy passing things to everybody else.

There was a ceaseless buzz of voices, a clinking of knives and forks and teacups, a popping of ginger-beer corks. Few seats were to be had, but that could not be helped. Even Billy Bunter did not grumble at not having a seat; he was only too glad to be admitted to that feast of the gods at all. Bunter stood at the table, very busy. He was not bothering about passing anything to anybody. His active jaws never ceased their motion for a moment, and his fat hands were required to keep up a constant supply to those unresting jaws.

In the midst of the chatter and laughter the sudden report of a rifle came ringing across the snowy quadrangle, and the talk died suddenly away.

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

The study window was open, in spite of the thickly-falling snow. In such crowded quarters there was a great deal of warmth.

The sudden rifle-shot came clearly to the ears of the crowd of Removites. Billy Bunter's fat hand was arrested on its way to his mouth.

"Somebody shooting!" said Squiff.

"What the merry dickens—"

Bang—bang!

"There it goes again!"

Harry Wharton ran to the window. Darkness lay without, broken only by the white glimmer of the snow and a star or two in the heavens.

"I—I say, you fellows, is it a Zepp?" ejaculated Bunter, in alarm.

Bob grinned as he looked from the window.

"My hat! Run for it, Bunter!" he shouted.

"Wha-a-at's the matter?"

"Dozens of 'em!" shouted Bob.

Billy Bunter gave a howl, and dived under the table.

"Keep 'em off!" he shrieked.

"Dozens of what, you ass?" shouted Bolsover major.

"Snowflakes," said Bob cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows," quavered Bunter, under the table, "is—is it a Zepp? I—I say, gather round, you know, and—and keep the shrapnel off me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar in the study. The juniors were not likely to gather round the Owl of the Remove to keep the shrapnel off him—if there was any shrapnel.

Billy Bunter was alone in his opinion of the high value of his fat person.

"Let's go down," said Bob Cherry. "It isn't a Zepp: it's too early for Zepps. Besides, the Ifuns are afraid to come out in Zepps in this weather!"

"It's a rifle-shooting," said Wharton. "It must be soldiers after somebody!"

"A spy, perhaps," said Peter Todd. "There was a spy once on this coast—"

"More likely somebody got away from the concentration camp at Wapshot," said Harry. "Hark! There it is again!"

Bang!

There was a general rush for the stairs. The juniors wanted to know what was going on. But not all of them left the study. Billy Bunter, finding that it was not Zepps, crawled out from under the table, and resumed his frontal attack upon the provisions; and Bunter's "big offensive" was very successful.

Skinner and Snoop and Fisher T. Fish joined him. They were not anxious to go anywhere where shooting was going on.

But most of the Remove came downstairs with a rush.

The Famous Five and Squiff and Peter Todd were the first out in the quadrangle. The voice of Mr. Quelch was heard in the lighted hall.

"Remain indoors! Do you hear?"

"Too late, cocky!" murmured Bob Cherry, as he ploughed through the snow across the quad—a remark, needless to state, which was not intended for the Form-master's ears.

Sampson Quincy Illey Field chuckled.

"We didn't hear him," he remarked. "We were out already!"

"Of course we were!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The outfulness was terrific!"

Knock—knock—knock!

The bell in the porter's lodge was ringing, and there was a heavy knocking at the school gates.

Old Gosling was not in a hurry to get out of his warm and cosy lodge into the driving snow.

Knock—knock—knock!

"Open this gate!" roared a deep bass voice from the road.

"Soldiers!" ejaculated Bob.

"Soldiers!" exclaimed Wharton. "What the dickens do they want here?"

"Come on!"

The juniors rushed down to the gates. Their hearts were thumping with excitement.

Outside in the driving snow half a dozen frosty figures in khaki could be seen, and one man was beating on the gates with a rifle-butt.

"Let us in!" roared the deep voice again.

"I'll call the porter!" shouted back Wharton.

"Quick, then!"

"What in thunder's the matter?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as Wharton hammered at the door of the lodge.

"THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

"He's dodged in there over the wall."

"Who has?"

"He has—the man we're after!" exclaimed the sergeant impatiently. "Let us in!"

"Shan't be a tick," said Bob. "through the bars of the gate. Is it a prisoner escaped from Wapshot?"

"Yes, yes! A prisoner of war—Ludwig Wolf! Look out if you see him; he is armed!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors hammered at Gosling's door. It opened at last, and Gosling glared out with a very red face.

"Look here, what's this game?" exclaimed Gosling heatedly.

"What I says is this 'ere—"

"Open the gates at once!" shouted Harry.

"Them gates is locked for the night—"

"Soldiers, you ass!"

"Quick!"

"Will you open this gate, in the King's name?" roared the sergeant.

Gosling jumped.

"Wait till I get my keys!" he exclaimed.

"Quick!"

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "What a go! It's a prisoner of war escaped from the camp at Wapshot, and he's dodged over our wall!"

"Then he's in the quad!" exclaimed Nugent, blinking round him in the darkness.

The snow was falling thickly, and in the darkness and the whirl of the flakes it was impossible to see more than a yard.

Gosling tramped down to the gates with his jingling keys. Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout came hurrying down from the House, with their umbrellas up. The juniors promptly dodged out of the way of the masters.

"We're going to have a hand in this," muttered Squiff.

"We're Boy Scouts; we're jolly useful at a time like this!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's look for the beast! We may find his tracks!"

"The snow will cover them pretty quickly."

"Never mind; there's a chance. Come on! We don't want an armed Hun hanging round Greyfriars!"

"Right-ho! Come on!"

It was evident that the prisoner who had escaped from Wapshot had fled along the high-road, closely pursued by the soldiers. He had clambered the school wall in time to escape being run down, and there was little doubt that the school was surrounded to cut off his escape. On that dark and stormy night the Hun had had a good chance of getting clear, but it was evident that the men in khaki were very wide awake.

Harry Wharton & Co. hurried to the school wall, where it bordered the road. The snow was piled thick within, having drifted against the wall to a depth of three or more feet. The fugitive could not have jumped down inside without leaving traces in the snow.

The enterprising juniors hoped to find them before they were hidden by the fast-falling flakes. As for the danger of running down a desperate Hun, who was armed with a deadly weapon, they did not stop to think of that.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" breathed Bob Cherry. "Here we are!"

He stopped, panting.

The white pile inside was broken in one place, evidently by the fall of a heavy and bulky body from the wall. It was there that the fugitive had dropped in. Through the thick snow heavy tracks led away, only half-obliterated by the new flakes.

"Come on!" muttered Harry.

They ran along the track, but they had to slow down to keep from missing it in the dark. They heard in the distance the clang of the opening gates and the buzz of excited voices.

The track in the snow led them round the School House—the fugitive had avoided the house. Probably he intended to make a fresh break on the other side of Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton drew his companions to a halt as he heard a quick, hurried breathing close at hand in the darkness.

The juniors listened, with beating hearts.

They heard the panting breath, like that of a hunted animal, and caught the sound of boots scraping upon a wall.

"He's there!" whispered Wharton. "He's climbing the wall into the fir plantation! Come on!"

They rushed on, their footsteps inaudible in the carpet of snow.

On the grey stone wall, where it abutted the fir plantation that stretched beyond the school-grounds, a dark figure clung. The man had his hands on top of the wall, crumbling through the thick snow, and was dragging himself up desperately.

The snow slid and crumbled in his hands, and his grasp was uncertain; but he would have pulled himself over, and

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escaped into the fir plantation beyond, had not the juniors been there.

But Wharton, springing forward, grasped the legs dangling against the wall, and dragged with all his strength.

There was a gasp from the fugitive.

For an instant he clung, struggling savagely; then his hands slid through the snow, and he came hurtling down, and the Hun and the schoolboy rolled in the snow together.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Hun!

"A CH, Gott!"

The German's grasp closed on Harry Wharton, and the junior yelled to his comrades. He was in the grip of a powerful man.

But his comrades were ready. They piled in, the whole crowd of them, and the rascal was grasped on all sides.

He struggled desperately under the juniors, Wharton instinctively grasped at his right hand, and clutched the wrist, and he had reason to be glad that he had done so. There was a revolver in the hand, which the German would certainly have used.

"Pile in on him!"

"Pin him!"

"This way!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Crack!"

The revolver exploded, but the bullet was buried in the snow. The German's hand was on the ground, jammed there, and held by main force.

"This way!"

"Acht! Acht!"

"Got you, my beauty!" grinned Bob Cherry breathlessly, as he hooked his arm round the German's neck from behind, and held on, half-choking the ruffian. "Keep hold of his paws, you fellows!"

"You bet!" panted Harry.

He jammed his knee on the German's right arm, and wrenched the revolver from his grasp.

The man was still struggling savagely under the juniors. But, powerful fellow as he was, he was no match for seven determined juniors of Greyfriars.

They swarmed over him, crushing him down into the snow, and holding him there by sheer weight.

Lights were dancing in the dark quadrangle now.

The shouting had been heard, and the soldiers were hurrying to the spot, Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout, and two or three Sixth-Formers of Greyfriars hurrying with them.

"This way!" roared Bob. "We've got him!"

"What!"

"Great Scott!" yelled Wingate of the Sixth. "They've got him!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Wharton—Cherry—"

"Fie! Bless my soul!"

"Get him, sir!" said Wharton.

"Dear me!"

The sergeant ran up, and held a lantern over the face of the still struggling German.

The light revealed a blonde, hard face, with glittering eyes of pale blue—a hard, cold, and cruel face, now flushed with exertion and rage.

"That's him!" said the sergeant jubilantly.

The men in khaki had the German in their grasp in a moment.

The juniors released him, quite content to leave him to the Tommies. He had given them a hard struggle, in spite of the odds.

"I heard a shot!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Nobody hurt, sir," said Johnny Bull cheerily.

"Not a scratchful mark, sir, except an esteemed thick nose," said the Nabob of Bhanpur. "I have had a fearful punch on my honourable proboscis."

"Bless my soul! And you juniors?"

"We picked up his track in the snow, sir," said Harry.

"We thought we'd better collar him. We thought it was up to the Remove. Ahem!"

"You should not have run into danger," said Mr. Quelch severely. "Sergeant, this is the man you were searching for?"

"That's the bound, sir!" said the sergeant, with great satisfaction. "He got away three hours ago from Wapshot. He tackled our officer from behind, and got him down, and got his revolver away. He's fired on us twice. He'll have to answer for it!"

There was a red gash along the sergeant's bronzed cheek, where evidently a bullet had gone very close. The wound must have been painful, but the hardy soldier did not heed it.

The German stood quivering in the grasp of the soldiers. His hard, savage face was pale now with rage and hatred.

The juniors' faces became as grey as they looked at him. The German's face was not a pleasant one to look upon. They could imagine what that hard, brutal nature had been guilty of when it held undisputed power over a wretched population in a conquered country. The juniors felt that it would be a long time before they forgot that white, savage face and glittering, cruel eyes.

"I suppose the brute's a Prussian," muttered Bob Cherry. "Is the beast a Prussian, sergeant?"

The sergeant nodded. "Yes. Lieutenant Ludwig, of the Prussian Guard," he said. "Captured on the Western Front after the Big Push. One of the worst devils in Belgium, from what I've heard. But we've got him!"

"Ach! You will not keep me!" muttered the Prussian, gritting his teeth.

"I'd keep you safe with a bullet, if I had my way!" growled the sergeant. "Sorry to have troubled you like this, sir," he added, turning to Mr. Quelch, with soldierly courtesy. "Duty, sir, you know. And I'm much obliged to these young gentlemen. The rascal might have given us no end of a hunt on a night like this, and got away after all!"

The men in khaki marched the sullen prisoner away, with a strong grip on either arm. The juniors followed them down to the gates.

As they were passing through the gateway a change came over the German's savage face.

His lips parted, he uttered a faint moan, and his whole weight hung upon the soldiers who were grasping him.

"My hat! He's fainted!" exclaimed Bob. The sergeant knitted his brows.

"He may have been hit!" he exclaimed. "I must see if he is wounded. Lay him down here, boys!"

The Prussian was lowered in the snow, and the sergeant bent over him to see whether he was wounded. Several riflemen had been fired in pursuit.

What happened next passed like a flash. The still, unconscious form came suddenly to life. The sergeant reeled back from a violent shove. The Prussian was on his feet, and springing for the open doorway!

He was out in the road in the twinkling of an eye. "Shunning, by gum!" gasped Bob.

"After him!" yelled the sergeant, staggering up. "Taken in, by thunder! Taken in by a blessed Boche! Shoot! Shoot!"

Crack! Crack! The Tommies ran savagely out at the gate, several rifling as they ran. The juniors were rushing in the same direction, when the sharp voice of Mr. Quelch called a halt.

"Wharton—all of you, stop! Do you hear? Come back!" The Removites reluctantly halted.

"We might help, sir," began Harry Wharton. "Nonsense! I cannot possibly allow you to go chasing about the country in this form, at such an hour!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "You have done quite enough."

"But, sir—"

"That will do! Go indoors at once! Lock the gates, Gasling!"

The clumsy of the Remove unwillingly tramped back to the School House. They would willingly have joined in the chase, and made a night of it, as Bob Cherry remarked. Still, it was not likely that they would be of much use in such a hunt. The men in khaki were quite capable of doing whatever was to be done.

"What a deep rotter!" said Nugent, as they came back into the house. "He took me in. I thought the brute was wounded, or something, and had fainted."

"Same here! He's not likely to get away, though," said Harry. "I dare say we shall hear in the morning."

The convivial party gathered once more in No. 1 Study. But they found that the supper had to be finished on very frugal lines.

While they had been busy out of doors, William George Hunter had been very busy indoors.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**  
**OF for the Holidays!**

**T**HICKER than ever!" Bob Cherry looked out of the window of the Bouver dormitory as the juniors turned out at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning.

The snow was still falling. The old elms were almost hidden from sight, the walls were shapeless masses. Never had the Greyfriars juniors seen so heavy a fall of snow, and especially upon breaking-up day.

"My esteemed hat!" ejaculated the Nabob of Bhanipur, shivering. "This excellent British weather is terrific!"

"Looks like a pleasant journey home for all of us to-day," remarked Vernon Smith. "Might get hung up somewhere on the line in this snowstorm."

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"By Jove, that would be a giddy experience!" said Harry Wharton. "Not a pleasant one," grinned the Bouver. "But I shouldn't wonder. Nice weather for that Hun to be camping out in, if he got away after all."

"The silly ass would be frozen to death, I should think."

"Well, it wouldn't be much loss."

The juniors shivered as they dressed. It was a bitterly cold morning. Billy Bunter was quaking with cold, and he put on so many clothes that his podgy figure looked more podgy than ever.

Harry Wharton & Co. tramped out in the snowy quad before breakfast, however, as usual. They came in steaming. Tubb's snow man was a giant by this time, piled thick with new snow. The juniors enjoyed ten minutes with snowballs, chasing the great Horace Coker of the Fifth, who inenitiously ventured out for some fresh air. Coker was fairly driven into the shelter of the house again, breathing wrath and vengeance.

But the Greyfriars fellows were in great spirits, in spite of the excellent British weather, as Hurree Singh called it.

The weather was at least seasonable, and in any circumstances breaking-up day was a day to be enjoyed.

Not that the juniors did not have an affection for every old grey stone in the old school. But a holiday was a holiday, and Christmas was Christmas. Every fellow had a cheerful expression on his face; even Billy Bunter, in spite of the still doubtful circumstances of his vacation, looked quite cheery. Perhaps Bunter did not regard the circumstances as doubtful. He had fully made up his mind that he was going to spend the vac at Wharton Lodge. Wharton's views on the subject did not seem to weigh much with William George Hunter.

"I say, you fellows, who's going to lend me a bag?" asked Bunter, coming on the Famous Five with a very affable expression.

"I'll lend you a thick car!" said Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cackling about now?" demanded Bob.

"He, he, he! I can take a joke, you know," said Bunter, with determined good-humour. "Can I have your bag, Wharton—the new one?"

"No."

"Ahem! I'd rather take a bag. If I happen to want anything, you fellows would be able to lend it to me, if I don't take enough things."

"Buzz off!"

"I suppose I'd better take my evening clubber, Harry?"

"Take anything you like," said Wharton; "and if you'll take your hook at the same time, I shall be awfully obliged."

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter was evidently determined to regard all remarks as jokes when they hinted that he was not going to Wharton Lodge.

By the time the brake left for Courtfield with the luggage Hunter was ready. A crowd of fellows started together for the early afternoon train. Billy Bunter was with them. The platform at Courtfield Junction swarmed with Greyfriars fellows, seniors and juniors, with rugs and bags and umbrellas, and the station was in a buzz of voices and pleasant excitement.

Harry Wharton had intended to make some inquiry that day as to the fate of Ludwig Wolf, and whether the Hun had been recaptured; but he had been too busy, and the matter had passed from his mind. The juniors had something more agreeable than Huns to think of on breaking-up day.

The Famous Five waited for their train, and Billy Bunter sat down to keep an eye on them. Peter Todd and Squill were going by the same train, and they joined the Famous Five. An earlier train lummed away with a crowd of fellows, and Mark Linsley waved his hand to Bob from the window, and Bob snatched off Hurree Singh's hat to wave back enthusiastically, much to the surprise of the nabob.

"Our train's late," Harry Wharton remarked at last. "Snow on the line, very likely," said Vernon Smith. "All the trains seem out of time to-day."

"My hat! How it's coming down!"

Under the platform roof, the juniors stamped their feet to keep them warm. Beyond the roof, the snow was coming thickly down, falling in feathery flakes on the permanent way. Outside the station, streets and roofs and fields glistened with unbroken white.

The juniors regarded the station clock anxiously. The train had not come in. It was twenty minutes behind time now.

"Lovely, to get hung up here for the afternoon without even starting!" growled Bob Cherry.



"Oh, rats! Don't be so jolly cheerful!"  
 "I say, you fellows, when is that beastly train coming?" growled Bunter. "I'm getting jolly cold. If I'd been in your place, Wharton, I'd have had a car home."

"Go on!"  
 "If you fellows would like me to do some ventriloquism to pass the time—"

"Shut up!"  
 "Oh, really, Bob—"  
 "You begin," said Bob wrathfully, "and there'll be a dead porpoise lying about this station soon afterwards."

Billy Bunter snorted. Ventriloquism seemed to be at a discount.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Courtenay and the Caterpillar."

Two juniors of Highcliffe School came on the platform, wrapped in coats and scarves. They were Frank Courtenay and De Courcy of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe, the old friends of the Removes. The chums of the Remove greeted them warmly.

"Catching our train?" asked Wharton.

Courtenay smiled.

"We're catching anything we can get," he said. "The service seems to be at sixes and sevens to-day."

"Our train's half an hour late!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Blessed if I don't start walking it soon!"

There was a train of feet as a crowd of Highcliffe fellows came on the platform—Ponsonby & Co. of the Fourth, Ponsonby & Co. bestowed sniffing looks on the chums of Greyfriars. They were not on good terms.

"That dashed train's late!" growled Ponsonby. "Rotten, I call it! I say, Courtenay, do you know when that dashed train's comin' in?"

"Haven't the least idea."

"Looks like bein' hung up here," said Gadsby. "Pleasant prospect, by gad! Somethin' ought to be done."

"Looks as if we're goin' to be done, dear boy," remarked the Caterpillar. "Never mind; it's all in the day's work."

"But I do mind," grunted Gadsby. "I call it rotten!"

"Well, call it rotten, if that's any comfort," assented the Caterpillar urbanely.

Gadsby grunted discontentedly.

Ponsonby went to the stationmaster's office to inquire, and came back frowning. Harry Wharton & Co. were taking the delay as cheerfully as possible; but the nuts of Highcliffe seemed to regard it as a special injury and grievance. They went into the waiting-room to smoke while they waited.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here she comes!" exclaimed Bob Cherry at last.

The train came in, and there was a rush for carriages. The crowd that had gathered was evidently too big for the train, and there was going to be a considerable amount of crowding. The Famous Five and Spiff and Peter Todd lagged a carriage, and Billy Bunter squeezed in after them. Courtenay and the Caterpillar came along the train and stopped at their door.

"Any room?" asked the Caterpillar.

"Full up!" said Bunter promptly.

"Room for two, if you don't mind squeezing," said Harry Wharton. "Come on—if you're travelling third."

"By gad! Are you willin' to travel third, Franky?"

"Of course, you duffer!" said Courtenay laughing.

"Come on, then!"

The chums of Highcliffe entered the carriage. It was supposed to seat eight, but there were ten in it now—one of whom took up space enough for two. Ponsonby & Co. were spluttering with wrath outside the first-class carriages, which were full and crowded. There was no room for them. Bob Cherry grimaced as he looked along the train.

"No room looks like getting left," he remarked.

"By gad, it's shockin'—and scandalous!" roared Ponsonby. "Somethin' ought to be done about this! Come on—we shall have to go third!"

"No room here," said Bob as the angry nuts of Highcliffe crowded along. "We're two over the number already."

"Oh, gad! Some of you get out, then!" growled Ponsonby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars' juniors were not likely to accede to that modest request. Ponsonby & Co. crowded angrily along the train looking for seats. They had to separate to get places, and the intended game of nap, which was to cheer up their journey, was destined never to come off.

"We're off now," said Bob. "Goodness knows when we shall arrive anywhere; but we're off, at least!"

"Hurrah!"

The train glided out of the station into the snowy country. Through a landscape white as a winding-sheet, under thick mists rolling in from the sea, the juniors started.

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## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

## Snow-bound!

"I SAY, Wharton—"  
 "Hallo, Tubby?"  
 "Can I have your rug?"  
 "Eh?"  
 "I'm cold," explained Bunter.

The captain of the Remove looked fixedly at the fat junior. It was cold—very cold—in the carriage, and Wharton's rug was tucked about his knees. Billy Bunter had no rug.

"But I shall be cold if I give you my rug, Bunter," said Harry.

Bunter sniffed.

"If you're going to be selfish, Wharton—"

"Selfish! My hat!"

Harry Wharton slipped off the rug, and passed it to Bunter, who tucked it about his fat legs with great satisfaction.

"Silly ass!" commented Johnny Bull.

"Anything else you'd like, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry with deep sarcasm.

"Well, now you mention it, I'm rather peckish," said Bunter cheerfully. "Have you got any toffee about you, or any sandwiches?"

"No, porpoise!"

"Got any toffee about you, Caterpillar?"

De Courcy shook his head sorrowfully.

"Sorry," he replied. "I never carry toffee. If I'd only known I was to have the pleasure of your company, Punter—your name's Punter, isn't it?"

"Bunter."

"Oh, yes, Bunter. Have I met you before somewhere?" asked the Caterpillar. "You seem to know my name."

"Oh, really, Caterpillar—"

The juniors chuckled. The Caterpillar always made it a point to forget Billy Bunter's existence, and every time he met him Bunter's claim to old acquaintance came as a surprise to De Courcy. The Owl of the Remove never quite knew what to make of him; but certainly he did not make much progress in being pally with the owl's nephew.

"Got any sandwiches, Courtenay?"

"Sorry, no," said Frank Courtenay, smiling.

"For goodness' sake, take this bag and dry up!" said Johnny Bull, tossing a bag of sandwiches to the fat junior. It caught Bunter on his fat little nose, but Bunter did not mind. The sandwiches consoled him.

The train glided on. It was supposed to be an express, but it was not going at express speed. Traffic had been dislocated by the heavy snowfall, and the service was, as Frank Courtenay had said, at sixes and sevens.

The wintry mist was deepening into the dusk of evening. The juniors glanced out of the windows from time to time. Beside the line the snow was piled thick, and the heavy flakes were still coming down. They had passed several stations, but the journey was evidently to be a slow one.

"I say, you fellows, is there a restaurant-car on this train?" asked Billy Bunter suddenly.

"No fear!"

"We shall want a feed at this rate," grunted Bunter.

"Why, we shall be hours yet."

"All right, perhaps," said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Oh, crumbs! I hope you fellows have brought plenty of sandwiches!"

"Not a giddy sandwich," grinned Bob. "Johnny had some, but you've stuffed them, you porpoise."

"Look here, suppose we're hours on the way, what are we going to do for something to eat?" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm.

"Well, in case of extremities, we shall have to eat hot, same as they do in an open boat at sea!" said Bob. "As the fattest member of the party, Bunter, you'll go first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad, what a ripping idea!" exclaimed the Caterpillar enthusiastically. "Punter's such a generous chap, he would jump at the chance of sacrificin' himself for the sake of the rest of the party."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I could manage it," said the Caterpillar, eyeing Bunter in quite a professional way. "I've never done any pig-sticking, but—"

"Ow! You beast!" gasped Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The train's stopped!"

"Stopped, by gad!"

"What's the matter?"

The juniors crowded to the window.

The guard had alighted from his van, and he came hurrying along the train.

"Keep your seats, gentlemen! Keep your seats, please!"

"What's happened?" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Snow on the line."

"Oh, my hat!"  
Every window in the train was crammed with faces. From the darkness above the whirling snow fell incessantly.  
"Well, this is a merry go!" exclaimed the Caterpillar.  
"Fancy bein' hung up on the line, with our sorrowin' parents expectin' us!"  
"We shall have to fall back on Bunter after all!" chuckled Bob. "I'm getting hungry already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
The guard could be seen in consultation with the engine-driver. Evidently they were at a loss. Ten minutes passed—a quarter of an hour. Then the passengers began to alight from the train. Some tramped to and fro to get warm; others surrounded the guard with volleys of questions.

The train was at a standstill. There was a deep cut ahead, and Harry Wharton & Co., scouting ahead of the train, could see that it was blocked with a heavy slide of snow from the hillside. Progress was impossible.

"Looks cheery—what?" said the Caterpillar. "The dashed train will have to go back again! We shall have a merry Christmas at school! Phew!"

"I say, you fellows," yelled Bunter from the carriage, "are we going on?"  
"No, Fatty, we're not."

"Are we going back?"  
"Blessed if I know! Are we going back, guard?"  
The guard grunted. He was getting tired of questions.

"Can't!" he snapped.  
"Why can't we, then?"  
"Line's blocked."

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"  
"Can't be 'elped," growled the guard. "There's been a slide of snow, and the line's blocked behind and before."

"Then we're going to stay here?" ejaculated Nugent.  
"Unless you can whistle for a hairyplane to come an' carry us 'ome, sir!" said the guard, with crushing sarcasm.

"But something's going to be done, I suppose?" exclaimed Wharton.  
"Certainly, sir. We're sending for 'elp."

"Good!"  
"And in two or three hours, perhaps, we may get a party 'ere," said the guard calmly; "and p'raps by morning the line may be cleared. I don't say it will, with the snow coming down like this 'ere; but it may."

"Great pip!"  
"Oh, crumbs!" howled Bunter. "And what are we going to do for something to eat, guard?"

The guard grunted.  
"There won't be nothing to eat," he replied. "You see, sir, we didn't foresee this 'ere. It don't 'appen every day."

"Lot of silly idiots!" howled Bunter. "I'm jolly well not going to starve!"

The guard hurried away; he had no time to waste on Bunter. The Owl of the Remove blinked at the juniors in anguish.

"I say, you fellows—"  
"Oh, dry up!" said Bob.  
"But I'm hungry already!"

"Shut up!"  
"We may be here all night, you know. Look here, you fellows ought to think of something. After getting me into this—"

"What?"  
"If this is the way you look after a guest, Wharton—"

"A-a-a guest!" ejaculated Wharton.  
"Yes—you won't get me to accept another invitation for Christmas, I can tell you!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"  
"Shut up, you fat villain!" roared Bob Cherry. "I'll dump you down in the snow if you don't dry up!"

Billy Bunter dried up, but he blinked wrathfully at the juniors through his big spectacles. Evidently the Owl of the Remove regarded himself as a very much injured party.

The juniors consulted together. The prospect of staying in the train all the evening, and perhaps all night, was dismaying. Without being as hungry as Billy Bunter, they did not enjoy the prospect at all. But the train was at a standstill, and the time when it would be extracted from its predicament was very problematic. The juniors discussed the situation, while Billy Bunter blinked at them with blinds of deep indignation.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### A Startling Meeting!

"WERE not sticking here!" exclaimed Harry Wharton at last. "It's rather too much of a good thing. What about hoofing it somewhere?"

"Pretty prospect!" said Johnny Bull.  
"Where?" asked Peter Todd.  
"Oh, anywhere, out of this!"

The juniors looked round them. On either side of the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 46L.  
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railway-track stretched the sheet of snow, here and there broken into white masses where trees and bushes stood. There was no habitation in sight. Not even a road could be seen. Overhead the sea-mist was thick, and through it came the incessant fall of flakes.

The prospect of a tramp through that snow-hidden country, in a district they did not know, was not alluring.

But a night without food or warmth in the snow-bound train was still less attractive.

"Might make a break," said Peter Todd. "Anybody know where we are?"

Nobody did.  
"Well, we should soon find a road, and we could follow it," said Harry. "We should be bound to arrive somewhere."

"In a snow-drift, perhaps," suggested Squiff.

"Jolly way to pass Christmas, buried alive in a snow-drift," remarked the Caterpillar meditatively. "I'm game, if you are."

"Better than sticking here, I should think," said Courtenay thoughtfully. "I suppose anybody would give us a shelter for the night, anyway, if we came to a house."

"Any port in a storm," said Nugent.

"Well, suppose we try?" said Wharton, looking round.

"I don't feel inclined to stay shivering in the train all night. If we don't find anything, we can come back."

"Yes, that's so."

"Let's try, at any rate."

"Well, who's coming?" asked Wharton.

"The whole merry family," said the Caterpillar. "You're comin', Franky?"

"Certainly!" said Courtenay.

"Can't do better," said Peter Todd.

Billy Bunter rolled out of the carriage.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You'd better stick in the train, Bunter," said Harry.

"We're going to try and find a night's shelter somewhere. But it will be a rough tramp in this kind of weather, and we mayn't find anything."

"I'm coming!" growled Bunter.

"You're not up to it, you fat duffer!" said Bob.

Bunter snorted.

"You want to get rid of me, you beast! I know your little game. Well, after getting me into this, you can get me out again. I'm coming, I tell you!"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You can come if you like," he said. "You'll be sorry for it, most likely; but please yourself."

"I'm jolly well coming, anyway!"

Vernon-Smith stepped out of the train.

"You fellows off?" he asked.

"Yes; coming?"

"Some of the passengers are going to try back along the line. I think I'll try that way."

"Good luck!" said Harry.

Bulstrode and Rake and several more fellows joined the Bouncer, and Squiff and Peter Todd joined the party. The Famous Five, however, kept to their own idea of leaving the line and finding a road, and Courtenay and the Caterpillar decided to come with them; Billy Bunter, too, did not mean to lose sight of Wharton's party. Eight juniors lumbered through the snow up the embankment, and found themselves in a snowy road that ran alongside the railway.

"The guard says we're three miles from a station," Wharton remarked, as they came out on the snow-covered road. "But there's a village a mile off the railway, and we ought to be able to get to it. I don't see why not."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I—I suppose we couldn't get a taxi from anywhere?" mumbled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's question had the effect of choking up the chums of the Remove as they started on their tramp through the snow.

There was a good foot of snow on the road, and the hedges were piled thick, and the gaunt trees had disappeared from view.

It was hard work tramping along, and Bunter, at least, was soon out of breath. What wind he had left was expended in grumbling.

The road wound away from the railway, and it was only by the whitened trees that the juniors could be sure that they were following the road at all.

They halted at some cross-roads.

The juniors looked at one another blankly.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We might have done better to go with Toddy and Squiff and the Bouncer."



The Owl of the Remove sat up cautiously, and blinked round him in the darkness. "I say, you fellows!" he murmured. But there was no reply. (See Chapter 13.)

"Rather late to think of that," said Courtenay, sniffling.

"We've come a good mile. No good chucking it now."

"I say, you fellows, I'm tired."

"Go hon!"

"I suppose you couldn't join hands and carry me, could you?" mumbled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"You're right; we couldn't!" chortled Bob.

"By gad," said the Caterpillar, "is Bunter always such an entertainin' chap? How lucky we've got him to cheer us up with his funny sayin's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, which of these dashed roads are we going to take?" said Johnny Bull. "There doesn't seem to be much choice."

"You pays your money and takes your choice!" grinned Bob. "I dare say one of them leads to the village the guard spoke of."

"But which?"

"The whichfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, ring off, Bunter! What are we going to do, Wharton? You're leader!"

"If we could get directions from somewhere," said Harry, staring round into the snowy night—"if we could meet somebody—"

"Not likely to meet anybody this cheery evenin'!" grinned the Caterpillar.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob suddenly.

He bent down to the snow at their feet.

"Tracks!" he exclaimed.

"By Jove!"

"Tracks, by gum!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "What luck! Somebody's passed this way—and not so long ago, either!"

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"Ripping!"

The juniors examined the tracks in the snow. The fact that they had not been obliterated by the fast-falling flakes showed that they had been made but a short time before.

"Good!" exclaimed Wharton. "That settles which road we're to take. We'll get after that chap, whoever he is, and ask him the way—to anywhere."

"Hear, hear!"

"Better run for it, or he may be turning off the road," suggested Nugent.

"Hold on!" roared Bunter. "Don't leave me, you beasts! I can't run! I'm too tired!"

"Confound you!" said Wharton angrily.

"Look here, you got me into this—"

"Why couldn't you stay in the train, you fat oyster?" growled Bob Cherry.

"Yah!"

"No need for us all to sprint," said Harry quickly. "That chap can't be far away. I'll get after him and speak to him, and you can follow."

"Right-ho!"

Harry Wharton broke into a run. In the dim winter evening there was light enough to keep to the deep tracks in the snow. In a few minutes, however, he vanished from the sight of his comrades.

His footsteps made no sound in the snow.

In five minutes, or less, as he ran on silently, a figure loomed up dimly in the gloom before him—the figure of a man tramping on steadily up the snowy lane.

Wharton had no doubt that the man was a native of those parts, who could direct him. A stranger was not likely to be abroad in the lonely lane on such a night.

"Hold on!" called out Wharton breathlessly, when he was within a few yards of the hurrying figure.

He saw the man give a violent start, evidently startled at the sudden sound of a voice behind him.

He spun round.

A white, strained face looked back at Wharton through the gloom, and then it was the junior's turn to start.

For that white face, with its startled, glittering eyes, was not unknown to him, though he had seen it but once before in his life.

It was the face of Ludwig Wolf!

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Lost in the Snow!

HARRY WHARTON stared blankly at the Prussian, too overcome with astonishment to find his voice.

He had forgotten all about the previous night's adventure with the Hun who had escaped from the internment camp at Waphost.

Whether or not the man had been recaptured by the Tommies he did not know. Now it was evident that he had not been recaptured, for here he was tramping along the snowy road, a good fifteen miles from Waphost.

For a whole day he had dodged his pursuers, and doubtless lain somewhere in hiding and completely eluded them, for there was evidently no pursuit on his track now.

The startled German glared at the junior, evidently recognising him at the first glance. Wharton found his voice.

"You!" he ejaculated. The German's teeth came together with a hard click, and he made a fierce stride towards the schoolboy, his hands clenched hard.

"You again!" he muttered.

Wharton gave a ringing shout:

"Rescue, Greyfriars!"

Then he stood his ground, prepared for an attack, if the Hun meant that. His comrades were within sound of his voice, and that shout was enough to bring them dashing up at top speed.

The Prussian stopped dead.

He understood that Wharton was not alone, and he changed his intention, if his intention had been, to attack the junior.

He made a run to the side of the road, leaped between the snowy trees, and vanished into a field.

Wharton heard him tramping in deep snow for a few moments, and then he vanished in the darkness.

Bob Cherry came up breathlessly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up?"

"He's gone!" said Harry.

"Eh? Who has?"

"The Hun!"

"What!" yelled Bob.

"It was the Hun—Ludwig Wolf!"

"My only hat!"

The rest of the party came vaulting up and joined them, Billy Bunter straggling painfully on behind. The juniors heard Wharton's explanation in wonder.

"Sure it was the Hun?" said Johnny Bull doubtfully.

"How the dickens could he get here?"

"Tramped it, I suppose—after dark," said Harry. "I should fancy he's lain low somewhere all day."

"Jolly odd to come across him here!" said Nugent.

Wharton flushed a little. He could see that his comrades had suspected that he had been mistaken.

"I tell you it was Ludwig Wolf!" he exclaimed. "I'd know his face again anywhere. Besides, he's bolted."

"Well, whoever it was, he's left the road," said Frank Courtenay. "But who is Ludwig Wolf?"

Harry Wharton explained to the Highcliffe juniors the incident of the previous evening at Greyfriars.

"By gad!" said the Caterpillar. "What an adventure! And you really think you saw the same Hun here?"

"I know I did!"

"What about going after him?" asked De Courcy.

Hurry Wharton shook his head.

"We're not looking for a run across country in this blessed snow-storm," he said. "He will very likely land in a snowdrift, and we don't want to land with him. We've got to get food and shelter for the night. Blow the Hun!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob. "Let him rip! The question is, what in thunder is going to be-come of us? Trouble enough, without bothering about Huns!"

"Quite so!" agreed the Caterpillar. "It looks to me as if we're booked for a night out, anyway."

There was a howl from Billy Bunter.

"I'm not going to stay out all night in this! Do you want me to catch my death of cold, Wharton?"

"You fat duffer! I can't ask you to come, did I?" said Wharton indignantly. "I advised you to stay in the train."

"If you talk any more, Bunter, we'll bury you in the snow and leave you there!" said Johnny Bull ferociously. "Now, Wharton, it's up to you. What the merry thunder are you going to do?"

"We could always get back to the train," remarked Nugent. "That's shelter from the weather, at least."

"We're not beaten yet," said Harry. "We can't get any directions about the way, that's certain. I dare say the Hun knew the way. He was hurrying along as if he was bound somewhere. But we can't ask him. Let's keep on. We've come half a mile up this lane, anyway, and there's nothing to choose between this and the others."

"A Daniel come to judgment!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Come on then, my hearties! We're bound to arrive somewhere. If we keep on far enough in this direction we shall get to Wales. A lovely country for a holiday!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, all roads lead somewhere," said Harry. "Come on!"

The juniors tramped on.

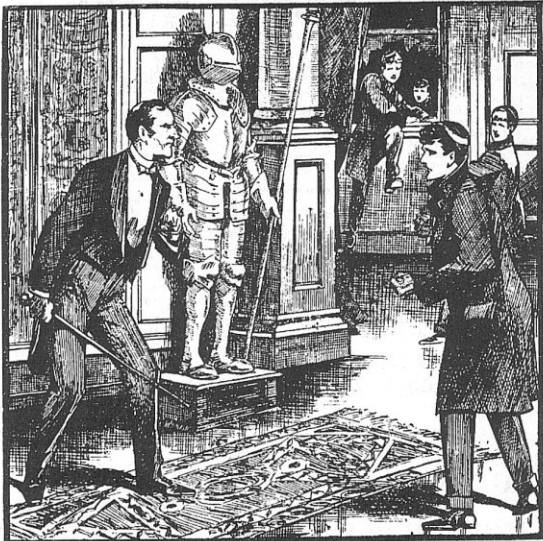
The night was growing later now, and the snow showed no sign of ceasing to fall. Whether there were any habitations near the road they could not tell; snow and darkness hid everything from their sight. The lane wound for some distance between snow-covered trees, and then entered upon a wide moor, where every vestige of herbage was hidden by snow. They tramped on wearily. Behind them the thick flakes covered up their tracks fast.

Billy Bunter gave a yelp at last.

"I—I can't go any further! Stop for me, you beasts!"

"Oh, keep on!" said Bob encouragingly.

"I can't!"



Crawley advanced upon the junior, grasping his stick; but Wharton faced him with clenched hands and glittering eyes. "Hand over the key, or unlock the door!" rapped out Wharton. (See Chapter 12.)

The fat junior plumped down in the snow. Bunter wasn't in good condition, and he was exhausted.

The juniors halted. Exasperating as it was to be burdened with the fat, unfit slacker at such a time, it was impossible to abandon Bunter. Their faces were grave now.

It began to dawn upon all their minds that they had acted rashly in leaving the railway line and venturing into unknown country on such a night.

Around them the wide moor stretched in an unbroken sheet of snow, under the misty darkness and the moaning wind.

How far they had come they did not know; but they knew they had covered several miles.

To tramp back to the railway, where the snow-bound train lay, was a task that would have told heavily upon the stoutest of them—even if they could have found the way, which was very doubtful.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry, after a brief silence. "We're in a precious pickle! Squiff and Toddy were right to stick to the railway, after all."

"The rightfulness was terrific," murmured the nabob, through his chattering teeth.

"By gad, it looks like a night out!" said the Caterpillar calmly. "How do you like the prospect, Franky?"

"Not pleasant," said Courtenay quietly. "We shall have to find shelter of some kind. I felt certain the lane would lead somewhere; but it seems to have stranded us."

"We may have passed the village—or two or three villages—in the dark without seeing them, if they lay off the road," said Harry slowly.

"By gum, it's possible!"

"And we're landed on a merry heath. Bebes in the Wood, only it's snow instead of a wood," said the Caterpillar. "What about buildin' a snow house?"

"What?"

"Eskimos build their houses of snow," said the Caterpillar innocently. "I've seen that in a book somewhere."

"You fathead!" grunted Bob.

"I say, you fellows, I'm dyin'!" groaned Bunter.

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I'm awfully hungry!"

"Well, we're all hungry," said Wharton gently enough. "You must grin and bear it, Bunt, and keep your pecker up."

"I'm cold."

"Don't you find the snow warm?" asked the Caterpillar, with an air of astonishment.

"Yah! Beast!"

Bunter sat in the snow and groaned. His fat legs refused to carry him any farther. The juniors looked at one another. Wharton struck a match and glanced at his watch. It was eleven o'clock.

"They'll wonder at Wharton Lodge what's become of us," said Nugent.

"They'll hear that the train's hung up," said Harry. "They won't guess we've landed ourselves in this, thank goodness. I—I'm afraid we've rather played the giddy ox."

"Hear, hear!" said the Caterpillar heartily. "I've been thinkin' that for some time back."

"We can't leave Bunter!"

"There was a howl from Bunter at the bare suggestion.

"We've got to find shelter somewhere," said Wharton desperately. "Bunter can't keep on, and we can't leave him."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry suddenly.

"You ass! What the dickens—!"

"Look!"

Bob Cherry raised his hand to point.

Through the darkness of the moor a light glimmered. The faces of the juniors brightened up wonderfully at the sight of it. It glamed through the night like a beacon of hope.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### No Admittance!

"A LIGHT!"

"Hurrah!"

"That means a house of some sort," said Bob Cherry brightly. "Kim on! Whoever it is they can't refuse us shelter on an awful night like this."

"We jolly well won't let them, if they want to," growled Johnny Bull.

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"I—I can't move!"

"Wait till I stick this pin in you," said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! You can move, after all!"

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"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The twinkling light on the moor was at a good distance. The juniors left the road and tramped towards it, Courtenay and Bob Cherry taking Bunter's arms and helping him on. But suddenly the light was blotted out.

Darkness lay like a cloak on the moor. The juniors halted.

"Dash it all!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Keep on," said Harry. "It's not far off now, anyway. We shall find the place in the dark."

"Yow-ow-ow!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter now?"

"I'm tired!"

"Like to stay where you are?"

"Beast!"

"Well, there's no pleasing some people," said Bob. "Buck up, Patty; we shall be there in two shakes of a lamb's tail."

The juniors tramped on doggedly through the piled snow. There was no trace of a path leading to the habitation; it was deep under snow. But the house, of some sort, was there, that was certain.

Dark trees loomed up before them at last, and a high wall, thick with snow.

"Here we are!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"There must be a gate somewhere," said Harry. "It's a jolly big place, by the look of it. They're bound to take us in."

The juniors followed the wall round, more than knee-deep in snow now. They were tired to the bone by this time, as well as ravenously hungry. But the prospect of speedy shelter cheered all hearts.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's a gateway, at least! No blessed gate!" said Bob Cherry, in wonder.

"Looks like a dashed ruin, by gad!" said the Caterpillar. The juniors halted, and stared about them.

The wall had ended in a massive gateway; but there was no gate. Within, they could see wide grounds deep in snow. Masses of ivy clung to the wall, swinging in the wind and scattering lumps of snow.

"Some dashed old ruin, like the priory near Greyfriars," said Nugent, in dismay. "Oh, my hat! Nobody here!"

"But we saw a light," said Harry. "There must be somebody here. Come on; we'll jolly well see!"

The thought that they had come upon an uninhabited ruin was demaging. But it was shelter, at least. The juniors tramped on doggedly up a wide drive, shadowed on both sides by huge, leafless trees. The dim form of a large mansion loomed up before them. No light was to be seen; but at that hour it was probable that the inmates—if there were any—were in bed. It was getting towards midnight.

That the great building was partly in ruins they could see, in spite of the darkness and the snow. There was a big porch with massive stone pillars before the door, and the door was fast.

"Somebody lives here, anyway," said Wharton. And he knocked at the door.

Knock, knock, knock!

The juniors had expected to have to knock for some time before they received an answer, at that hour of the night.

But hardly had the third knock sounded, when there was a sound of a movement within.

A bolt scraped, and a chain rattled, and the door partly opened.

A light gleamed out.

The juniors, gathered under the massive stone porch, looked in. Within, they could see a wide, old oak-panelled hall, and they had a glimpse of a picture and a figure of ancient armour. A man dressed in black, with a small electric lamp in his hand, had opened the door, and he cast the light upon them, and scanned them with sharp, startled eyes.

Late as the hour was, the man was fully dressed. Evidently he had not been to bed; yet there had been no light to be seen from the house.

He was a little man, with a hard, pale face, and quick, nervous eyes that seemed to the juniors to have a glitter of fear in them as he looked at them.

The sight of the eight schoolboys astounded him, that was very clear.

"Who are you?" he ejaculated, in quick, staccato tones.

"What do you want here—at this hour?"

"Shelter for the night," said Harry.

"What?"

"Our train was snow-bound," Wharton explained, "and we started tramping to look for shelter. We've lost our way, and— Don't shut the door!" he broke out savagely, as the man in black gave the door a push, with the evident intention of shutting the visitors out.

Bob Cherry promptly shoved his boot in the way. The door remained open.

"This is not an inn!" snapped the man in black.

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"I suppose it isn't," said Harry. "I didn't think it was. But you can't refuse us shelter for the night."

"Neither is this house a refuge for vagrants."

"We are not vagrants!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "If we were, no decent man would refuse us shelter on such a night!"

"You cannot shelter here."

"Where are we to go, then?"

"That is your business, not mine. You cannot come in here!"

The juniors looked at one another. The man in black was evidently only anxious to be rid of them. The utterly brutal inhospitality of such a reception angered them. Bob Cherry shoved his boot more firmly in. There was no time to stand on ceremony. Life itself might have been in danger, in a night spent in wandering in the storm.

"Are you the master of this house?" asked Harry, quietly and contemptuously.

"That is not your business!"

"If you are not the master of the house, I demand to see him!"

"Go your way! You cannot come in here!"

"You confounded, inhospitable brute!" broke out the Caterpillar. "Do you want us to spend the night out of doors?"

"Take your foot away!"

"Not just yet," said Bob cheerily. "If you won't let us in, can you tell us where to get shelter?"

"Yes, yes! Go back to the road—follow it for a mile, and you will come to the village."

"We're not quite equal to doing another mile," said Harry, scanning the man's furtive face keenly. "We've got a chap here who's past walking." And a deep groan from Billy Bunter confirmed that statement. It came into Wharton's mind that the man in black was lying; that he would have said anything and everything only to get rid of them. Though why he should be anxious to be rid of them was a mystery. True, it was probably not agreeable to be invaded in the middle of the night by a party of snowy and hungry school-boys; but that could hardly account for this unfeeling want of common humanity.

"We're not going on," said the Caterpillar decidedly. "We're under the necessity of asking you for shelter, sir."

"You'll get no shelter here!" exclaimed the man in black shrilly. "Go your way!"

"Rats!" said Johnny Bull savagely.

"We cannot go on," said Harry Wharton quietly. "We're tired out. We ask for nothing but shelter."

"Go!"

"Look here—"

"If you do not go, I will set the dogs on you!"

"My hat! Why— Look out, Bob!"

The man drew the door open a little further, and slammed it suddenly. The big, heavy door crashed shut with almost the force of a battering-ram, and Bob Cherry jerked away his boot just in time.

The door closed, and a bolt scraped home. The juniors looked at one another, breathing hard. They were shut out—shut out in the snow and the darkness, refused even shelter from the storm! And for some moments they could not speak.

**THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.**

**Harry Wharton & Co. Mean Business!**

**T**HE Caterpillar broke the silence at last. "My hat! What a merry go!"

Harry Wharton gritted his teeth. His eyes were gleaming with anger.

Billy Bunter sank down in the porch, groaning. The Owl of a Remova was not capable of going farther, even if the others had cared to go on. But the juniors did not mean to budge. They had a right to ask for shelter from the snow, and they did not mean to tramp on in the storm.

"What the dickens are we going to do?" muttered Nugent.

"I—I suppose we can't force a way into a man's house against his will?"

"I don't think that fellow is master of the house," said Wharton. "And if he isn't, he has no right to refuse us admission."

"I say, you fellows, I'm cold!"

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"What about banging the dashed door in?" said Johnny Bull savagely.

"We've a right to shelter," said Courtney quietly. "The man is an utter brute to refuse it. I agree with you, Wharton—he's not the master of the house. We have a right, at least, to see the man the place belongs to."

"Gone to bed, I suppose."

"By gad, we'll soon wake him up!" said the Caterpillar, with a chuckle. "There's a bell-pull here."

De Courcy seized the bell-pull, and dragged on it. The

clanging and clinking of the bell could be heard loudly within. It rang through the silent house.

"Good!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bang on the door! They sha'n't get any sleep while we're out here, at any rate!"

The juniors set to work on the door. The hard-hearted reception they had met with had roused their anger to boiling-point.

Bang, bang, bang! Kick, kick, kick! Clang, clang, clang!

Boots and fists rattled on the big oaken door, and the clanging of the bell was incessant, as the Caterpillar cheerily yanked at it.

The din rang through the house. It was pretty certain that no sleeper could have remained asleep many minutes with such a commotion going on.

Somebody was bound to come to the door, at all events. The juniors warmed to the work, and the attack on the door did not cease for a moment. The din was, as Hurree Singh truly remarked, terrific.

Several minutes passed, and then a window was thrown up. The juniors heard it, and they stepped back out of the porch to look up.

A light gleamed out from the window. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. A head was put out into the falling flakes.

"Who's there?" shouted a voice. It was not the voice of the man in black. The juniors saw a tousled head, evidently that of a man roused from bed.

"We're here!" called back Harry Wharton.

"What do you want?"

"Shelter from the snow. We've lost our way."

"I'm coming down!"

The window closed.

"Good egg!" said the Caterpillar, with great satisfaction. "I thought we'd wake 'em up."

The juniors waited at the door. A light gleamed within, through the thick, stained-glass half-window beside the door. A moving shadow within caught their eye.

Then there was the sound of voices.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's our old friend again!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The shrill, angry voice of the man in black was audible through the door.

"Go back to bed!"

"But, sorr—"

"Leave that door alone, Doolan!"

"But—"

"You hear me?"

"But sure, Mr. Crawley, you'll let the boys in—"

"Nothing of the kind!"

"But Sir William wouldn't wish you to leave them out in the storm."

"That is not your business. I forbid you to open that door!"

There was a pause.

The juniors looked at one another.

They had heard most of the talk, and it was clear that the man in black—Crawley—was not the master of the house, as Wharton had guessed.

"Sir William," whoever Sir William was, was master of the house, and the man in black certainly had no right to refuse them admission.

The other, Doolan, was evidently under his orders, however.

The door did not open. But the casement beside the door in the wide porch opened a few inches, and a red face, surmounted by a shock of red hair, looked out.

"Sure, I'm sorry I can't let ye in, young gentlemen," said the red-faced man. "It's again orders."

"Is the master of the house awake?" asked Wharton.

"No, sorr."

"Call him, then, and let him decide."

"I refuse to allow Sir William to be disturbed!" came the snapping voice of the man in black. "Go your way!"

"We refuse to go!" said Wharton steadily. "Unless the master of the house refuses us admission, we shall come in."

"You insolent rascal—"

"That's enough! Mr. Doolan, if that's your name, will you call your employer?"

"Sure, I can't ag'in Mr. Crawley's orders, sorr," said Doolan. "Ye see, I'm under the orders of Sir William's secretary."

"Well, we are not!" said Harry, setting his teeth. "We are coming in, Mr. Crawley, unless you let us in, we shall smash in the window!"

"What—what—"

"I mean what I say, and I give you one minute to make up your mind!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned the Caterpillar. The red-faced man was pushed aside from the casement, and the pale, angry face of Crawley peered out.

"Go away at once!" he hissed. "We shall not go away! I mean what I said!" The window closed, and a lock clicked.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath. "The brute means to keep us out if he can," he said. "Are we going to stand it?"

"No jolly fear!" "Sir William, whoever he is, will wake up if we kick up a row," suggested Nugent. "He's bound to come down in the long run."

"Must be as deaf as a post, or he'd be awake now," said Bob.

"May be a good distance away. It's a big place," said Harry. "Look here, I'm fed-up with this! I told that cad that we'd smash in the window if he didn't let us in! I stick to that!"

"By gad, here's a stone!" said the Caterpillar. "You fellows game?"

"Game as pie!" said Bob cheerfully.

The Caterpillar brought in a big stone from the drive. Harry Wharton took it in his hands. The light had gone out within.

Crawley evidently supposed, or, at least, hoped, that the intruders were done with. He was destined to discover his mistake.

"We can pay for the damage afterwards," said Harry. "But we're going in—that's flat! I wouldn't refuse a German shelter on a night like this!"

"Go it, old scout!" chuckled the Caterpillar. That cheery youth from Highcliffe seemed to be enjoying the peculiar situation.

Wharton raised the stone.

Crash!

### THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Coming to Blows!

**C**RASH! The heavy stone went clean through a thick pane, scattering glass on all sides, and rolled into the hall.

There was a savage exclamation in the house. The man in black was waiting there in the darkness, on the watch.

Wharton peered in at the jagged opening in the pane. "Will you let us in now?" he asked.

"No!" shouted the man in black. "I will have you prosecuted for this! It is housebreaking!"

"Your master may have something to say about that," said Wharton contemptuously. "Call him, and we will leave it to him!"

"Will you go?"

"No!"

"If you attempt to enter I shall use force to keep you out!"

"Will you, by Jove!"

Wharton looked round.

"We're going in, you chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Get something to smash in this window, then."

"You bet!"

The juniors hurried out of the porch. The white, furious face of the man in black glimmered at the opening of the broken window.

"You shall be put in prison for this!" he said thickly. "You are a gang of footpads! I will have you prosecuted!"

"You know we are nothing of the kind. You can see that we are schoolboys, and that we are lost in the storm. Let us in!"

"I will not!"

"Then you can take the consequences!"

Wharton was determined. He was too excited to reflect upon the legal aspect of the matter. The juniors simply could not remain out in the wild night without danger of death by exposure. It was not a moment for standing upon ceremony. Bunter could not move without being carried, and to tramp away through the snowstorm carrying Bunter, in the hope of finding shelter somewhere at a distance of miles, was not to be thought of. And the inhospitality of the man in black was inexplicable, unless he was out of his senses.

He was not even master of the house to which he refused the lost schoolboys admission. And that his master would not have refused them was pretty clear from the fact that Crawley would not let him be called. What the man's

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motive could be was a mystery; indeed, Wharton almost suspected that he was not in his right mind. But, in any case, the Greyfriars party meant to have shelter for the night.

The juniors came back into the porch, with stones scraped up from under the snow in their hands.

Crash, crash, crash!

There was a fierce exclamation within, as a whole large pane was beaten out of the casement window.

The fragments flew into the wide, panelled hall.

With a stone in his hand Wharton hacked away the last fragments of the pane, so that it was clear for the passage of his body. He intended to climb in, and then open the door for his comrades.

A heavy stick struck from within, and the captain of the Greyfriars Remove uttered a sharp cry as it caught him across the knuckles.

"Now go!" shouted the man in black.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Wait a bit, you rotter!" he panted.

He drew back, rubbing his hand. The savage face of Crawley appeared at the open pane. Bob Cherry stooped outside the porch, and rose, and a snowball whizzed like a bullet from a gun. It crashed fairly into Crawley's face, and, with a yell, he went staggering backwards. The juniors heard a fall within.

"Good for you, Bob!" exclaimed Wharton.

The opportunity was too good to be lost.

Crawley was on the floor within, gasping.

Wharton shoved head and shoulders through the opening, and plunged headlong in at the window.

He rolled through, and landed on his hands and knees on the floor. As he rolled over, his boot struck something hard, and a loud yelp from Crawley announced what it was.

"Yowp!"

Wharton sat up breathlessly.

Crawley sat on the floor, holding his chin with both hands. Wharton's boot had landed there.

But Wharton did not waste a second look on the man in black.

He turned to the door, and dragged off the chain, and shot back the bolt. But the door did not open. It was locked, and the key was not in the lock. Crawley staggered up, panting.

"You insolent young hound!"

The Greyfriars junior turned on him.

"Come through the window, you fellows!" he called out.

Crawley advanced upon the junior, grasping his stick. Wharton faced him with clenched hands and glittering eyes. Bob Cherry came bundling through the window, and as he rolled in Courtenay followed. The Caterpillar was next.

Crawley did not strike. He realised at last that there was no help for it; the intruders meant to come in.

"Hand over the key, or unlock the door!" rapped out Wharton. He was master of the situation now.

"Doolan!" yelled Crawley.

"Comin', sorr!"

The Irishman appeared on the stairs. He stared down in amazement over the broad balustrade at the sight of the juniors swarming in the hall.

"Degrorra!" he ejaculated.

"Doolan, come here! Turn them out!" shrieked Crawley furiously.

Doolan grinned. He was not equal to turning out the juniors, nearly all of whom were now inside.

Johnny Bull seized Crawley by the shoulders.

"Hand over the key!" he said savagely.

"I say, you fellows, don't leave me out!" howled Billy Bunter, from the porch outside.

The fat Removite was not able to get in by the window. The key was needed, and, having gone so far, the juniors did not mean to stand on ceremony. Johnny Bull swung the man in black towards the door in his powerful grasp.

"Open the door!" snapped Wharton.

"I will not! I—"

"Bump him!" shouted Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That peculiar schoolboy method of punishment was probably a new experience to Mr. Crawley. He gasped and yelled as the juniors seized him and bumped him hard on the floor.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yarooop! Oh! Ah! Help!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Doolan from the stairs. He did not make a motion to interfere.

"Now, will you unlock the door?" demanded Wharton.

"You young hound—"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Let me go!" shrieked Crawley. "I will open the door!"

"Sharp's the word, then!"

The key grated in the lock; the heavy door swung open. Billy Bunter detached himself from the stone seat in the porch, and rolled in, with a gasp of relief.

Crawley was released, and he stood panting with rage. Doolan, with a grin, went back up the stairs. It was evident that he did not approve of the secretary's inhospitality, and that he was glad to see the juniors in the house. Crawley panted for breath.

"You have broken in," he gasped. "I shall telephone for the police the first thing in the morning, and you will be taken into custody!"

"We'll chance that," said Harry disdainfully. "I fancy a magistrate would have something pretty strong to say to you for trying to keep us out in the storm."

"Yass, begad!" remarked the Caterpillar. "We're ready to face the music, Mr. Crawley. And since you mention a telephone, we'll ask you where it is. We may as well let our people know we're safe."

"Good egg!"

The secretary made a movement to the stairs. As the juniors were in, and he could not turn them out, he had apparently made up his mind to the inevitable. It seemed to be his intention to leave them to their own devices. But the juniors were not done with yet. The Caterpillar took him by the arm calmly.

"Let me go!" hissed the man in black.

"Where's the telephone, dear boy?"

"Let me go!"

"Would you mind being so kind as to show me where it is?" asked the Caterpillar, with exquisite politeness. "Otherwise I shall twist your arm—like that—"

"Yes!"

"And like that!"

"Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The man in black clenched his free hand, as if to dash it into the cool, handsome, smiling face of the Highcliffe junior. But he did not do so.

"Follow me!" he hissed.

The telephone cabinet opened off the hall. The man in black threw open the door, and De Courcy released him.

"Many thanks, dear boy! You can go to bed now!"

Crawley gritted his teeth and vanished up the stairs.

"By gad, there's no light here!" said the Caterpillar. "Sir William ought to have the electric light laid on—perhaps he didn't expect us to-night!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad, here it is!"

De Courcy's hand found the switch, and the light flashed on. The Caterpillar sat down to the telephone as coolly as if he were using Mr. Mobbs' telephone at Highcliffe School. He rang up his home, and chatted calmly on the wires for several minutes. Then he left the chair.

"Like your turn, dear boys?"

Harry Wharton took the receiver.

He rang up Wharton Lodge, and the deep voice of Colonel Wharton was heard on the wires. It seemed strange to Harry to be speaking to his uncle from that dark and mysterious house, situated he did not know where.

"Harry! Is that you, Harry?"

"Yes. You hadn't gone to bed, uncle?"

"No. I was anxious about you and your friends. I received a telegram to tell me that your train was snowed up. Where are you telephoning from?"

"We've got shelter for the night, a few miles from the railway," said Harry. He did not intend to tell the coloured what peculiar circumstances the party had obtained shelter; it would only have added to his uncle's anxiety.

"We hope to be able to get on to-morrow somehow. Anyway, we're all safe and sound. No need to worry about us, uncle!"

"I am glad to hear it, my dear boy. What place are you in?"

"Ahem! We—we've only just got in, uncle, and haven't asked. But we're all right for the night. I'm sorry you had to stay up."

"That is all right, my boy. You are quite all right?"

"Right as a trivet!"

"Good! Good-night, Harry!"

"Good-night, uncle!"

Wharton rang off.

"Marvellous invention, the merry telephone," said the Caterpillar thoughtfully. "We don't know where we are, or how we're going to get out of it, but we've been able to tell your people we're safe and sound. They won't be worrying about us—that's one comfort. Franky was coming home with me for the vac," he added. "All you fellows beyond for the same place?"

"Yes; my friends were coming home with me," said Harry. "Except Bunter! Would you like to ring up your home, Bunter?"

"I'd like some supper!" said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"But your pater—" said Harry.

"My pater knows I'm with you," said Bunter peevishly.

"How the dickens does he know?" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment.

"I told him, of course."

"You—you told him?"

"Certainly; in a letter yesterday."

The juniors burst into a roar. Evidently Bunter's addition to the party had been a settled thing—settled by Bunter. The Owl of the Remove blinked at the juniors.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" he growled.

"Look here, what about supper?"

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Camping Out!

COURTENAY had switched on the electric light in the hall. The juniors gathered there to consult upon the strange situation.

They were in the house. They had gained shelter. That was something. But the man Doolan had gone to bed, and Crawley had disappeared. "Sir William, the unknown master of the house, had not put in an appearance. There appeared to be no other occupants of the place, so far as they could see. If there had been servants, as would naturally have been expected in so large an establishment, some of them would surely have awakened and put in an appearance. But the house remained dark and silent."

"Jolly queer show!" said the Caterpillar. "You'd expect a dozen servants at least in a place like this. And that red-headed merchant appears to be the only one. It beats me."

"What sort of a queer hole have we landed in?" growled Bunter. "What about supper? I've told you I'm hungry."

"We seem to be left to do as we like," said Harry. "I suppose Mr. Crawley won't offer us any supper, after what's happened."

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"The esteemed and disgusting rotter is too infuriated to be hospitable," remarked Ilurree Janiset Ratu Singh. "There will be no superfluities."

Billy Bunter gave a howl.

"I'm hungry! Famished!"

"Famish quietly, then, you fat duffer!" growled Johnny Bui.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"We want supper," said Harry, knitting his brows. "But —but we can't roam over a man's house raiding his grub. We had a right to come in, but not to help ourselves. We shall have to grin and bear it!"

"The grinfulness will be—"

"Terrific!" roared Bob Cherry. "I could eat a Hun!"

"But we can't help ourselves," said Courtenay quietly. "I don't feel inclined to eat a man's bread, anyway, unless it's freely offered."

"Same here."

"That's a cert," said the Caterpillar decidedly. "Take a notch in your belts, and grin and bear it. After all, supper's a bore, like everything else."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Notin' doing, Bunter! Dry up!"

"I'm hungry!" yelled Bunter.

"Can't be helped!"

"Haven't you fellows got any grub about you?" gasped Bunter. "Look here, I'm not going to die of hunger. Something's got to be done!"

"What about castin' lots for Bunter?" asked the Caterpillar, with a serious face. "He would make a good helpin' all round. I'm willin' to try my hand at pig-stickin'—"

"Yow, you beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Wharton, laughing. "You can miss your supper for once. We've got to camp out here. I don't feel inclined to sleep on a stone floor, however. Let's look for something a bit more comfy."

"Upstairs?" asked Nugent doubtfully.

Wharton shook his head.

"Better not. Might chance on Sir William, and wake him out of his heavy sleep!"

"Ha, ha!"

"We can camp out down here," remarked the Caterpillar. "We've got our coats, and some rugs, and I dare say there's a carpet to squat on. If Sir William's best Persian carpet gets a bit mucked, he's only got himself to thank for not comin' down an' givin' us a Christmas welcome."

"We won't pick out the best Persian carpet," chuckled Bob Cherry. "But we've got to sleep somewhere. I'm nearly dropping now."



Snowballs rained upon the figure from the merry juniors, and Tubb, who rushed in the way, was fairly bowled over by the fusillade. (See Chapter 2.)

The juniors proceeded to look for quarters. The situation would have been very curious if "Sir William" had come down and happened on them. Apparently the master of the house had not awakened at all, and did not know they were there. Anyway, there was no sign of his coming down.

Several large rooms opened from the hall, and the juniors looked into them. To their surprise, they found them unfurnished, and not even provided with electric switches. There was an immense dining-room, containing a mahogany table with a length of thirty feet, but no other article of furniture whatsoever. Other rooms were quite empty, and their dusty condition showed that they were never used.

The wonder of the juniors increased.

It was evidently a house of mystery that they had so strangely entered. As far as they could ascertain, the great building had only three occupants, and the greater part of it was unused.

Several doors, however, were locked.

"Not even a giddy carpet," murmured the Caterpillar. "Our lodgin' will be on the cold, cold ground, like the chap in the song."

"I say, you fellows, there must be a kitchen somewhere."

"We're not going to raid the kitchen," said Harry. "This means camping on the floor, you fellows. Most likely the bed-rooms are unfurnished, even if we raided them—and we can't very well. Dash it all, I could sleep on a bed of bricks!"

"Same here!" yawned Bob.

"The samefulness is terrible."

The juniors returned to the dining-room. There they proceeded to camp on the floor. They were dog-tired, and ready to sleep in spite of cold and discomfort.

It was very cold, but they had their overcoats and some rugs to share. Billy Bunter cheerfully annexed Wharton's rug. The juniors disposed themselves to sleep as best they could. In a few minutes they were sound in slumber. It was long past midnight now, and they were almost worn out.

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But Billy Bunter did not sleep.

Bunter was hungry.

Wharton had vetoed the idea of searching the house for food; the whole party felt that that would be making a little too free with the strange house.

But the Owl of the Remove had no scruples on that point.

Bunter felt the pangs of hunger more keenly than the others, perhaps. At all events, he felt them very keenly indeed. He was only waiting till the other fellows were asleep, to commence a search on his own for provender.

In about ten minutes the Owl of the Remove sat up cautiously, and blinked round him in the darkness.

"I say, you fellows?" he murmured.

No reply.

"You fellows asleep?"

Only the deep breathing of the fatigued juniors answered him.

Billy Bunter pushed aside the rug, and rose cautiously. He knew that his intended exploration would have been nipped in the bud if his companions had awakened. With great caution, the fat junior groped his way to the door.

He opened it carefully, and passed out into the dark hall.

All was silent.

The fat junior closed the door behind him, and struck a match, and blinked round through his big spectacles.

Then he hurried down the hall to the back of the house.

He had noted earlier where the kitchen stairs led downward, and that was Bunter's route. There he hoped to find the larder. Although there appeared to be only three occupants in the house, Bunter argued that there was bound to be a good supply of provisions somewhere. The house appeared to be a great distance from any other habitation, and in such weather communication with the village was difficult—so Bunter confidently expected to find that supplies were laid in. He stole silently down the stairs, groping his way.

The silence and the darkness had some effect on his nerves, and but for the pangs of hunger within the Owl of the Remove would have settled back to the room where the juniors were sleeping.

But the prospect of a feed drew him on.

He reached the lower floor, and stared round him in the blackness. To his amazement, a glimmer of light came from under a door near at hand.

"My hat!" murmured Bunter.

He blinked at the light.

A faint murmur of voices came to his ears from the room. Evidently someone was still awake in the mysterious house.

As he stood with wildly-beating heart, a door was suddenly flung open, and the light streamed out upon him.

"It is only the rats!" he heard Crawley's voice say, within the room.

"I heard a step!" It was a strange voice to Bunter that spoke. "I tell you I heard a step! Ha!"

Billy Bunter stood rooted to the floor, as a bury form loomed over him.

The Owl of the Remove had no time to speak, or even to think.

A powerful hand was laid on his collar, and he was dragged into the lighted room, and the door shut sharply.

**B**OB CHERRY opened his eyes and yawned. The morning light was streaming in through the high, uncurtained windows. It was a dim light, thick with mist. Steadily, unceasingly, the snow was falling outside.

Bob sat up.  
"Yaw-aw-aw!"  
Harry Wharton awakened, and sat up.  
"Wako up, slackers!" shouted Bob, as he jumped to his feet. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! I wonder what o'clock it is? Jolly Christmas Eve—what?"  
"Groogh!" mumbled Nugent, as he stretched himself.  
"I'm stiff all over! My feet are jolly cold."  
"Same here! Groogh!"  
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where's Bunter?"  
"Up first for once," grinned Johnny Bull. "Scouting after grub, of course!"  
Wharton frowned.  
"The fat bouncer! We can't touch the man's grub, if he doesn't want us to! Hang the fat oyster!"  
"Looks lovely weather for travellin'," said the Caterpillar, staring at the misty windows. "But I suppose we've got to chance it. We can't have anythin' to eat till we get somewhere."

"And the sooner the better," remarked Courtenay, waving his arms to warn them. "I'm as hungry as Bunter, I think."  
"No sign of the merry Sir William!" chuckled the Caterpillar, as they went out into the hall. "No sign of anybody! What a hospitable mansion!"  
The snow had been blowing into the hall through the open window. There was quite a pile of it inside. The atmosphere was bitter.

There was a step on the stairs, and the man in black came down. Crawley's face was angry and bitter. The juniors looked at him curiously. Crawley was dressed in rusty black, as on the previous night, and his face was pale and lined, as if he had not slept. His narrow eyes glittered as he looked at the juniors.

"You have remained here without permission," he said. "It is daylight now. Are you going?"

"We are going at once," said Harry. "We only want directions how to reach some more decent place, and then we shall start. We ask you for nothing."

"You would have nothing if you asked!" sneered the secretary.

"By gad! Are you always as merry as this at Christmas-time, dear boy?" asked the Caterpillar.

The secretary did not reply. He threw open the great door, and the snow was whirling in on a bitter gust.

"Go!" he said.  
"We're going," said Harry disdainfully. "But one of our party hasn't turned up. Have you seen him?"

"I have seen nobody. What do you mean?"

"The fat fellow—you must have noticed him last night. He is about the house somewhere."

"I did not see him last night, and I know nothing of him. I am waiting for you to go."

"We are not going without Bunter!" said Harry angrily.

"We'll soon find him," said Bob. "He's bound to be scouting about the kitchen somewhere."

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missing, I shall communicate with the police!" said Crawley bitterly.

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" said Johnny Bull. "Do you want another bumping, the same as you got last night?"

"Never mind that cad!" said Harry. "Let's find Bunter." Crawley watched them with a bitter look as they searched for Bunter. The next floor below was well searched. There the juniors found kitchen and pantry and several other rooms, but no sign of Bunter. They came up again, and looked about the house. But William George Bunter was not to be found.

They gathered in the hall again, puzzled and perplexed, and a little alarmed.

"What the dickens has become of him?" exclaimed Harry. "He can't have gone out in the snow!"

"Impossible!"

"Then where is he?"

Harry Wharton strode towards Crawley, who was standing by the open door, watching them with the same bitter look.

"Where is Bunter?" he demanded.

The secretary shrugged his shoulders.

"I know nothing of him. Probably he is gone."

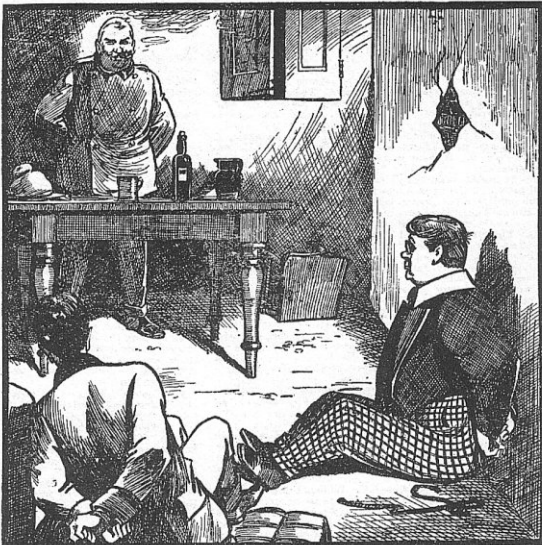
"He would not go alone." Harry looked out into the drifting snow. "He has not gone out by himself in this snow. He is in the house somewhere. Do you know what has become of him?"

"I have said that I do not."

"Well, we shall not go until he is found," said Harry curtly.

"If you are not gone very soon, I shall telephone to the village for the police," said the secretary between his teeth. "You will be removed to the lock-up."

"Telephone as soon as you like! It seems to me that



The German finished his meal, and rose from the table. He then lighted a cigar, and grinned through the smoke at the bound juniors. "You are sorry now that you meddled?" he said with a grin. (See Chapter 19.)



there's something going on here that the police might be interested in," said Wharton savagely.

"Crawley started.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed shrilly.

Wharton looked at him scornfully.

"You had some reason for wishing to keep us out of the house," he said. "I don't know what your reason was, but it was something rotten. You were afraid of having us in here for some reason. Now Bunter seems to have disappeared. We are not going without him, and we are going to search the house from top to bottom to find him. You will unlock all the doors. If you don't, we shall break them in!"

"You dare—"

"That's enough."

Wharton turned on his heel and joined his comrades. The juniors were all looking very grave now.

"Something's happened to Bunter," he said. "We can't go without him."

"No fear!"

"But what the dickens can have happened to him?" said Nugent.

"Blessed if I know! We don't know what time he left us. He was gone when we woke up—that's all we know. He went to hunt for grub, I should imagine. He was too jolly lazy to get up for nothing. We don't know what he may have happened on. There's something jolly fishy in this place, you can see that!"

"The fishy-ness is—"

"Terrific!" said Bob Cherry. "That rotter wanting to keep us out of the house wasn't for nothing. He's playing some kind of rotten game, unknown to his employer, I should say, though the dickens only knows what it is!"

"Bunter may have chanced on something," said Harry, knitting his brows. "That merchant in black has some secret to keep—that's clear enough. We've got to find Bunter before we take a step out of doors. He can't have gone out."

"By gad, the plot thickens!" said the Caterpillar. "Let's roust the whole dashed house out from end to end!"

"That's the programme."

"I forbid you to do anything of the kind!" shouted Crawley.

"Go and eat coke!"

The ground-floor and the lower regions having been searched, the juniors proceeded upstairs. There they found several empty rooms, dusty and desolate. In a wide oak-paneled corridor there were several locked doors. They passed there.

Crawley had followed them up, and he broke in again.

"These are Sir William's rooms," he snapped. "If you intrude upon Sir William Romayne, you will take the consequences!"

"We're ready to do that," said Harry. "Come on, kids, we'll search all the open rooms first."

The juniors proceeded to explore the house right up to the attics. The greater part of the building was unfurnished and evidently never inhabited, and a portion of it was in ruins. There was no sign of Bunter there. They came down again, and as they entered the oak corridor they met the red-faced man they had seen the previous night. Doolan was carrying a tray set for breakfast. He nodded and grinned at the juniors.

"Still here, young gentlemen?" he said. "Top of the mornin' to ye!"

"Good-morning!" said Harry.

It was easy to see that the red-faced Irishman was not in the secret, whatever it was, that the juniors suspected to exist in the strange old house.

"Is Sir William awake?" asked Harry.

"Sure, I'm taking in his breakfast now, sorr."

"Is there anybody else in the house?"

"Only Sir William and Mr. Crawley and meself, sorr."

"What a dashed queer show!" said the Caterpillar. "Is that Sir William's way of living, Mr. Doolan?"

Doolan nodded.

"Sure, Sir William's a scientific gentleman, and he spends all his time on his experiments," he explained. "Niver lays his own rooms, or hardly ever. He took his old place for that reason, because he doesn't want to be interrupted or bothered, yo see, and there's niver any visitors. Sure, you'll hear the machinery goin' after Sir William's breakfasted—the laboratory's next to his bed-room, yo see. Mr. Crawley owns the business, and I look after him—nobody else allowed to enter the rooms. Sure he's a wonderful old gentleman, is Sir William, and I could tell ye about his inventions—"

Doolan checked himself abruptly.

"So he goes in for inventions, does he?" said Bob.

"Sure he does, and sure I'm talking too much intirely," said Doolan. "But, faith, I niver see a sowl, and it's almost forgotten the use of my tongue I have, at all, at all!"

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"Can we see Sir William?"

Doolan shook his head.

"No niver sees anybody."

"How is it he did not awake when we made such a thumpin' row last night?" asked the Caterpillar.

Doolan chuckled.

"Faith, he's as deaf as a post! It'll hear me shoutin' at him soon," he said. "He got you from a wound at the battle of Colenso in the last war. I was in the Army then, young gentleman, and I've never left him since. I was his batman, yo see. Sure, it's a clever gentleman he is. Good-morning to ye!"

"Hold on," said Harry, as the old soldier was passing on with the tray. "Have you seen anything of one of our party—a fat chap—you saw him last night—"

"The fat young goosoon wid the besnacles?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Sure, I've not seen him since last night."

"He left us while we were asleep," said Harry. "It seems to have vanished. We can't find him in the house, and we know that he can't have gone out."

Doolan looked astounded. It was evident that his astonishment was quite genuine.

"Howly mother av Moses!" he ejaculated. "You'll find him somewhere, sorr. He can't have melted away—sure, he was too solid for that, intirely!"

Doolan went on, and entered one of the rooms in the oak corridor. The next moment the juniors heard his voice raised in tremendous tones.

"Half-past nine, Sir William!"

"It is twenty-five minutes to ten," replied a thin, reedy voice. "You are late, Doolan."

"That must be Sir William," said Bob Cherry. "A jolly queer household! I say, that Irish chap is as straight as a die!"

"I think so," said Harry. "But Crawley is a rascal, if ever I've seen one, and I'm certain he knows what's become of Bunter. He must know! Bunter can't have vanished without being touched. And Doolan doesn't know, and that old jolly, Sir William, can't have had a hand in it. Crawley knows!"

The juniors went downstairs again. All the house that was open to them they had searched without result. And, after holding a council of war, they decided to see Sir William before they began breaking locks. But one thing was certain—that they did not intend to leave the lonely house on the heath before had discovered their missing companion.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### An Interview with Sir William!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. waited awhile, having decided to visit Sir William Romayne in his room after his breakfast. Breakfast for themselves was out of the question. But, on reflection, they felt that it would be judicious to allow the baronet to finish his breakfast before disturbing him.

Doolan's explanation had enlightened them a little. Sir William, an old Army officer, was a scientific gentleman, and was engaged upon experiments which were apparently of a secret nature. He had taken the desolate old house on the heath as suited to his purpose, and only occupied the part of the great building that he needed. He lived there, immersed in his scientific work, with his old soldier servant to look after him, and his secretary. Why had the secretary been so bent upon keeping the juniors out of the house the previous night? It could only have been for some strong motive—because their presence, somehow, troubled or alarmed him. What secret had he to keep that was evidently unknown to his master and to Doolan?

The juniors felt that they were stumbling upon the brink of some strange mystery; and they surmised that Bunter somehow had stumbled upon it, and learned what the secretary wished to keep hidden. But they cudgelled their brains in vain. The one certain thing was that there was something hidden, and the only possible explanation of Bunter's disappearance was that the fat junior, prowling about the house, had stumbled upon it.

What had happened to Bunter?

That he was a prisoner was certain, since he did not come back. Yet, if he was hidden in one of the locked rooms, his rescue was only a matter of hours, and the secretary's object in keeping him there was difficult to see.

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton at last. "We're going to see the old chap, at any rate. He ought to know we are here."

"By gad, I'm lookin' forward to the interview!" grinned the Caterpillar. "This looks like bein' a merry Christmas, an' no mistake!"

"If we don't find Bunter, we shall pass Christmas here, certainly, and the whole vacation, if necessary," said Wharton grimly. "Of course, you Highcliffe chaps needn't stop!"

"We're sticking to you till this is cleared up, old chap!" said Courtenay at once.

"By gad, yes!" said the Caterpillar emphatically. "I wouldn't miss this merry entertainment for anything!" The juniors made their way to the oak corridor. They met Crawley there, and guessed that he was on guard to prevent access to the baronet.

"You cannot pass here!" he rapped out.

"We are going to see the master of the house," said Harry.

"You cannot!"

"Rats!"

Crawley gritted his teeth.

"Sir William cannot be disturbed!"

"Will you get out of the way, or will you be clucked?" asked Johnny Bull politely.

The juniors marched on, and Crawley stepped aside only in time to avoid being knocked over. Harry tapped at the door he had seen Doolan enter. It was opened by the old soldier servant himself.

"What do ye want?" he asked.

"To see Sir William."

Doolan hesitated, and glanced at Crawley.

"Do not admit the young scoundrels!" said Crawley, in a choking voice.

"We are going to see the master of this house," said Harry, quietly.

"Come on, you fellows! We've done enough talking!"

"Hear, hear!"

Doolan had no choice about admitting them. He was pushed aside, but not roughly, and the juniors entered the room.

It was a plainly-furnished room, and an open door gave a glimpse of a bed-room beyond. On the other side of the room was a closed door, and from beyond it came a whirring sound, as of machinery in motion.

"Sure, Sir William's at work," said Doolan, scratching his head. "He doesn't loike to be interrupted!"

"Can't be helped. Will you call him, or shall we?"

"Sure, I'll call him. You mustn't go in there!"

Doolan opened the door, and passed into the adjoining room. The juniors caught a glimpse of a vast apartment, with benches, machinery, and shelves innumerable. They could hear Doolan's bull-voice shouting at the deaf baronet; but Sir William's replies were inaudible.

The door reopened, and an old gentleman, with white hair, and spectacles perched on a hooked nose, came out. He was dressed in a flowing dressing-gown, upon which were numerous stains of chemicals. This was evidently Sir William.

He blinked at the juniors over his gold-trimmed glasses. Doolan followed him.

"Here they are, sorr!" bawled Doolan.

"You wish to see me?" said the old gentleman, in the thin, reedy voice the juniors had heard before. "I understand you took shelter here last night from the storm?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Eh?"

"Yes!" shouted Harry.

Sir William put a trumpet to his ear.

"We were lost in the snowstorm, and we asked for shelter," said Harry, as loudly as he could.

The old gentleman nodded.

"Yes, yes! You are very welcome—very welcome! Doolan, look after these young gentlemen, and give them everything they require. I am sorry, my boys, that I cannot do the honours of my house, but I am very busy. Doolan will look after you. You are very welcome!"

With that the old gentleman whisked round to return to his laboratory.

The juniors looked at one another.

It was evidently useless to roar out what they had to say about Bunter's disappearance. It was easy to see that the baronet knew nothing of it. He had spoken contemptuously, but he was plainly annoyed at being disturbed at his work. The door closed behind him, and Doolan grinned at the juniors.

"Well, now ye've seen Sir William, young gentlemen!" he said.

"Well, that's somethin'," remarked the Caterpillar. "Very polite old gent. He's made us welcome to the house, at all events!"

"Decent old boy," said Bob Cherry. "He would have let us in fast enough last night if he'd known!"

"Sure he would, sorr," said Doolan. "The kindest heart in the world! So would I, but for Mr. Crawley's orders. Now, sure, I'll get ye some breakfast. Ye must be ready for it intirely!"

"By Jove, we are!" said Johnny Bull, with deep feeling.

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"You will give them nothing, Doolan!" snapped Crawley from the corridor.

"Sir William's orders, sorr," said Doolan, unmoved.

"You will take your orders from me!"

"Not against Sir William's, sorr," said Doolan cheerfully. "If you young gentlemen will follow me down, sure, I'll give ye all ye want!"

"I forbid you, Doolan!" exclaimed Crawley furiously.

The old soldier measured him with his eye. It was not difficult to see that there was no love lost between Sir William's secretary and his soldier servant.

"Mister Crawley," said Doolan, "we'll keep yer place, and I'll keep mine! I'm to obey your orders, and I know it, but Sir William's orders come first. And with all respect to ye, sorr, but for Sir William I wouldn't stand yer confounded impudence for one minute, and if ye continue to stand in my way, sorr, I'll give ye a taste of what yer countrymen are gettin' in Flanders!"

Crawley, white with rage, stepped aside. The juniors followed Doolan into the corridor.

They exchanged quick glances as they did so. Doolan's last remark had given them food for thought.

Crawley, the scientific baronet's secretary, was a German!

That was the only possible meaning of Doolan's words.

A German!

What, then, was the secret he was keeping, and which Bunter, as they surmised, must have stumbled upon? Not only for Bunter's sake now were the juniors keen to penetrate the mystery of the lonely house on the heath.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.  
A Strange Christmas Eve!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were anxious about Bunter, but they were glad to get some breakfast.

It was long since they had broken their fast. In the big kitchen Doolan cheerily prepared a meal, and the juniors, not unaccustomed to finding for themselves, lent him a hand. There were provisions of every sort galore, and the party sat down to a tremendous breakfast, and they could not help thinking how Billy Bunter would have enjoyed it if he had been there. For once they fully sympathised with the pangs the Owl must have suffered at missing a meal!

Bunter's disappearance was as much a puzzle to Doolan as to the juniors. Harry Wharton explained the circumstances to him, and the old soldier shook his head in blank perplexity.

"He can't have gone away," said Harry. "He wouldn't have gone out in this storm by himself: it's absurd to think of it! He's in the house somewhere."

"Sure, he must be," assented Doolan.

"But he can't have hidden away of his own accord."

"Is he a practical joker, young gentleman, sorr?"

"Not at meal-times!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Wild horses wouldn't keep Bunter away from a meal if he had a chance of getting to it!"

"He's not hidden of his own accord," said Wharton decidedly. "He is being kept somewhere!"

Doolan shook his head.

"Who'd keep him, sorr? There's nobody in the house but Sir William and Mr. Crawley and myself!"

"I suppose you are sure of that?"

Doolan grinned.

"Faith, it's six months I've lived here, sorr, with Sir William, and niver a soul in the place, savin' the expert gentlemen who come from the War Office and the Ministry of Munitions!"

"Oh, Sir William is doing Government work, then?" asked Harry, with interest.

Doolan was silent.

"By gad! Perhaps he's the merry inventor of the Tanks?" suggested the Caterpillar.

"Sure, a still tongue shows a wise head, young gentlemen," said Doolan. "I'm not talkin' about Sir William's business!"

"Quite right," said Harry. "I did not mean to ask you questions. But we must know what has become of Bunter. It's quite plain to me that he has been kidnapped. There isn't any other way of accounting for his vanishing!"

"Howly snook!" ejaculated Doolan, evidently startled by the idea. "If ye think I'd have a hand, sorr, in—"

"I don't," said Harry. "Crawley must be at the bottom of it!"

"But why, sorr?"

"Bunter must have found out something he wishes to keep secret."

"It's draming ye are, sorr!"

"The man has some secret, or he wouldn't have tried to keep us out of the house last night," said Harry.

"Faith, that was mighty queer!" said Doolan. "I couldn't understand him intirely, an' Sir William would be very angry if he knew how the spalpeen had treated yez. Not that it's my business to tell him, an' make trouble. But sure Mr. Crawley has been Sir William's secretary for years an' years, and Sir William trusts him in nearly everything—everything except the sayvett of the machines."

"He is not a Britisher!" asked Harry.

Doolan's lip curled.

"Sure, he's British born," he replied.

"But you said—"

"His father was a German," explained Doolan. "Naturalised in this country forty years ago. Crawley was born in England, so he is British. Sure, his name's Crawley, but his Hun father was born with the name of Schenk. Still, I must say for Mister Crawley that he's patriotic, and he hates the Huns more than I do. He's never tired of slargin' the bastards."

Harry Wharton rose from the breakfast-table.

"We've got to find Hunter," he said. "We don't want to worry Sir William, Doolan, but we've got to search the house for him."

Doolan gave a shrug.

"Report, and be blowed!" said Bob.

Crawley said no more. He accompanied the juniors in their exploration of the house, carrying a large bunch of keys. With the exception of the suite of rooms occupied by Sir William Romayne, every door was unlocked, and every room searched—even the secretary's own bed-room and study. It was impossible for Crawley to resist, for the juniors would have handled him without compunction, and force was on their side.

But the search was fruitless. The locked rooms were simply disused apartments, dusty and desolate; most of them empty, and others containing old, unused furniture.

There was no trace of Hunter.

The Owl of the Remove seemed to have vanished as effectually as if he had melted into thin air.

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Crawley at last.

"We are not satisfied," said Wharton quietly. "Hunter has got to be found before we leave this house!"

Crawley shrugged his shoulders and left them. Doolan was washing tea-cups downstairs, and whistling a tune. The juniors were left to themselves.

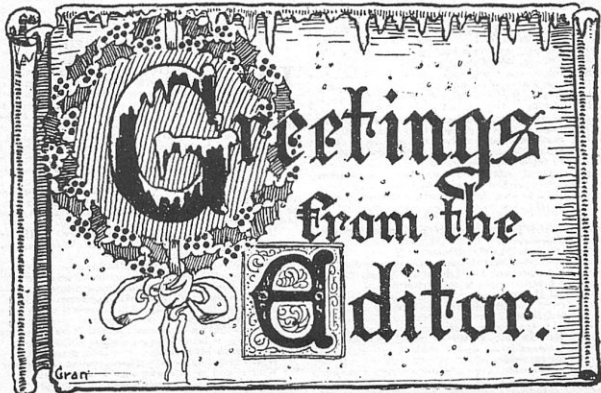
They were puzzled and perplexed.

"Suppose we search the outhouses?" suggested Nugent.

"There is a garage, I think, and some sheds."

"Good!"

The juniors left the house in the falling snow, Wharton



"A lot of the rooms are locked up," said Harry. "We've got to search them. Can you get the keys?"

"Sure, I'll ask Mister Crawley."

"Good! You might mention that we shall burst in every door that isn't unlocked for us!" remarked Johnny Bull.

Doolan chuckled.

"Faith, I'll mention it," he said.

The juniors followed Doolan to the upper floor. They waited in the hall while he fetched the secretary. Mr. Crawley appeared after some minutes, with a red and angry face.

"I have already ordered you to leave this house!" he rapped out. "If I have much more of your insolence, I shall call in the police!"

"Your master has made us welcome here," said Wharton quietly. "Your wishes in the matter don't count, Mr. Crawley."

"Not a rap!" said Bob Cherry. "So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"We are going to search the house," went on Harry. "Will you unlock the doors, or shall we break them in?"

Crawley gritted his teeth.

"I will unlock them, to save damage to Sir William's house," he said. "I shall report all this to Sir William Romayne!"

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taking the door-key, in case it should occur to Mr. Crawley to lock them out.

The outhouses were thoroughly searched, but no sign of the missing junior was discovered.

It was just noon now, and the juniors came in troubled and dispirited. Doolan cheerfully provided them with a meal in the kitchen.

"You've not found the young gentleman?" he asked.

"Not a sign of him."

"Faith, he must have gone away," said Doolan. "He can't be in the house intirely."

"He is in the house, and Crawley knows where he is," said Harry quietly.

Doolan shrugged his broad shoulder. He evidently believed that Billy Hunter had quitted the house on the hearth of his own accord, strange as that proceeding would have been.

Harry Wharton & Co. were at a dead loss.

To leave the place with Hunter's fate unlearned was impossible. But the early winter evening was creeping on. The next day was Christmas, when they should have been enjoying Yule celebrations, and they were expected.

It was a perplexing position. Sir William Romayne had made them welcome to his house, and Doolan was hospitality itself; they could remain if they chose. But a Christmas at

the house on the beach was not exactly the prospect they looked for.

"What about telephoning the police?" asked the Caterpillar.

"No good," said Harry. "They would simply suppose that Bunter has gone away of his own accord, as Doolan does. Crawley would tell them so, too. And if he couldn't be traced, he would be supposed to have fallen into some snowdrift—exactly what would have happened to him if he had gone."

"By gad, that's so! But we can't go without him. What a merry Christmas!"

"I suppose you fellows are all agreed on staying?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Count us in," said Frank Courtenay. "I'm as anxious about Bunter as you are. And I've got an idea, if you care to hear it."

"Go ahead!"

Courtenay lowered his voice.

"It's pretty clear that Bunter left us to look for grub."

"Quite clear!"

"He would have come downstairs to look for the pantry."

"I suppose so."

"Then he vanished. He didn't vanish into thin air. He must have been collared and put somewhere."

"Yes, we know that," answered Johnny Bull.

"Give Franky his head," said the Caterpillar chidingly.

"Franky's been thinkin' it out, and he's got a tremendous headpiece! Franky was brought up among the brainy workin' classes. Go it, Franky!"

Courtenay smiled.

"What I'm coming to is this—Bunter was collared, and not without a good reason. He must have clucked on something that Crawley wanted to keep dark. Whatever it was, it happened downstairs, for Bunter must have been downstairs. Something was going on—something unknown to Sir William Romayne or Doolan."

"But what?"

"Goodness knows; but something! Well, my idea is that by keeping watch in the same place to-night, we may hit on it, too. Suppose we camp out in the dining-room to-night, the same as before, and later on clear off quietly, and keep watch in different parts of the house. One of us can come down in the kitchen passage, another in the hall above, another on the landing upstairs. It will be easy to get cover. Then if anything goes on we shall spot it, and in doing that we shall spot what has happened to Bunter."

The juniors looked at one another. Courtenay's plan was the only one that was to be thought of. It might lead to nothing; but there was a chance.

"Good!" said Harry Wharton at last. "Only—only we shall have to be jolly careful that what has happened to Bunter doesn't happen to us."

"By gad, yaaa!" remarked the Caterpillar.

"We could all keep togetherfully," suggested Hurree Singh.

Courtenay shook his head.

"We should be spotted, and give ourselves away," he said.

"If Crawley had the least suspicion that a watch was being

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A white, strained face looked back at Wharton through the gloom—and then it was the junior's turn to start. For it was the face of Ludwig Wolf! (See Chapter 8.)

kept he would lie low to-night, whatever he may have intended."

"Quite right," said Harry. "But—but what the merry thunder can be going on in this house, that the master of the house knows nothing about?"

"It's a mystery; but we may spot it," said Courtenay.

"Crawley's at the bottom of it, that's certain. Some kind of Hun treachery, very likely—for Crawley is a Hun, whether he was born in England or not." He lowered his voice.

"Sir William is engaged upon some invention for the Army, that's pretty plain. How do you know that Crawley isn't spying upon him for the Germans? The Huns would have given a good deal to know about the Tanks. If there's something new in that line coming along, they will be trying every means to get wind of it. That may be Crawley's game."

"By gad!"

"In that case, the rotter's a German spy!" said Wharton, drawing a deep breath.

"Either that, or bribed by the Huns to betray his master," said Courtenay. "He's none too good for that—he's a Hun!"

"By Jove! If we get on to his game, Sir William may be jolly glad we showed in here last night," said Bob Cherry.

"Slush!" murmured the Caterpillar, as Doolan came along.

The juniors had no doubt of the Irishman's good faith, but they did not mean to breathe a word of the plan of campaign they had formed.

"Ye're stayin' the night, young gentlemen?" asked the soldier servant, with a comical grin.

"Yes."

"Sure, I'll get ye some blankets and rugs, thin!" said Doolan. "Is this yere idea of a merry Christmas?"

And he chuckled, and went about his work.

Both Harry Wharton and the Caterpillar need the telephone again that day. They informed their people that they could not get on their journey, and were staying the night in Sir William Romayne's house.

That was all that it was necessary to tell.

And, indeed, if the juniors had decided to leave, it would have been difficult work to make their way across the storm-swept heath amid the deep snowdrifts.

Doolan brought them blankets and rugs, and they camped out as before. There were no beds that he could offer them. The old soldier went to his own room above. Crawley they had not seen during the evening. But as they lay down in their rough beds on the floor of the desolate dining-room, the door opened, and the secretary looked in.

Wharton raised his head and looked at him.

"So you remain here?" said Crawley, with a sneer.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

The secretary snapped the door shut.

"By gad," murmured the Caterpillar, "Franky was right! That rat didn't come here to ask that question; he knew we were staying. He came to see whether we had all turned in, and were out of the way!"

"Right on the wicket!" said Bob.

The juniors had no doubt that the Caterpillar was right. Needless to say, they did not think of sleep. But they lay very silent; and the secretary, if he lingered, heard no sound to hint that they were awake.

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Disappearance of Frank Courtenay!

HARRY WHARTON rose silently from his blankets.

It was past midnight.

As he moved there was a rustle, and Courtenay rose also, his example followed by Bob Cherry and the Caterpillar.

It had been agreed that the four juniors should keep watch that night, the rest remaining in the dining-room. Four were enough for the purpose. In the dark the four arranged their blankets and rugs to give them the appearance of covering sleeping forms, in case the secretary should look into the room. They had removed their boots.

"Come on!" whispered Harry.

"Ready!"

Silently the captain of the Remove opened the heavy oaken door.

In the hall without there was no glimmer of light. Dimly and faintly the window by the door glimmered, and that was all.

The great house was buried in silence and darkness.

The juniors did not speak. They had arranged all details beforehand, and there was no need for words.

Bob Cherry softly ascended the stairs to the first landing, where he encoined himself behind an armoured figure. He had wisely taken a blanket with him.

The Caterpillar remained in the hall, taking cover behind another of the figures of ancient armour with which the great hall was adorned.

Wharton and Courtenay silently descended to the lower regions.

A wide, curving staircase led to the kitchen floor, with a landing in the middle. Wharton remained on the landing.

Courtenay descended to the bottom of the staircase, where a wide-flagged passage ran. Upon this the kitchen and several other rooms opened.

Frank Courtenay stepped silently along the black passage, groping his way without a sound.

Except for the darkness, there was no cover to be taken; the passage was bare of any kind of furniture.

On the staircase landing Wharton kept close in the darkest corner.

There he put on his boots, for the cold was too bitter for stocking feet. It was cold enough, in any case.

But he set his teeth and waited patiently, enduring the discomfort.

An hour passed—it seemed like many hours to him. Another, though Wharton could hardly gauge the time. There was no light; and, besides, he had left his watch behind lest its ticking should betray him.

The silence was deep and oppressive.

But it was broken at last. Wharton's heart gave a bound as he heard a sound above him on the staircase.

In the dense darkness someone was moving.

There was no glimmer of light. But the fact that someone was coming down without a light was a sufficient proof that his business was secret.

The cautious footsteps came nearer.

In the deep gloom a moving shadow passed the junior on the landing. He caught the sound of hurried breathing.

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The footsteps went on down the stairs.

Wharton's heart was thumping.

Someone had passed him in the darkness. Was it Crawley? What was his mission at that hour of the night? What strange secret was he upon the verge of discovering?

He did not move.

In the lower passage Courtenay was watching and waiting. And Harry knew that the Highcliffe junior was on the alert.

Faintly from below came the sound of an opening door.

Then intense silence.

Wharton waited.

Minutes passed like hours—long minutes, till it seemed to the Greyfriars junior that he had been waiting a century.

What was the man doing there?

Had Courtenay spotted him—was he watching him? There was no sound or sign from Frank Courtenay.

Had he made any discovery?

There was a sound at last—a footstep. It came up the stairs, still in dense darkness.

Wharton recognised the stealthy step that had passed him before.

He crouched back in the darkness.

The step passed on, and died away above.

Silence again!

Wharton allowed ten minutes to pass to let Crawley—if the unknown man was Crawley—get clear.

Then he descended the stairs to the flagged passage below. He was eager to see Courtenay and compare notes with him.

"Courtenay!" he said, in a faint whisper.

There was no reply.

"Courtenay!"

Harry ventured to raise his voice a little. But from the darkness of the flagged passage there came no answer.

Wharton felt a throb at his heart.

For the first time it came into his mind that something might have happened to the Highcliffe junior in the darkness there.

"Courtenay!"

He called out the name loudly now.

But only the echo of his voice along the passage answered him.

Wharton stood frozen for a moment.

Courtenay was not there!

It was not Courtenay who had passed him going up the stairs—he was sure of that. Where was the Highcliffe junior?

What deadly, unknown peril had lurked there in the darkness? Wharton clenched his hands, his heart throbbing, as he peered round him in the gloom.

"Courtenay!" he shouted now. "Are you here?"

The echo answered.

Wharton made a bound to the stairs and ran up. Further concealment was not to be thought of. His only idea was to call his comrades and make an instant search for Courtenay.

He rushed into the hall above.

"By gad, you're makin' a row!" said the cool voice of the Caterpillar.

"Have you seen anyone, De Courcy?" panted Wharton.

"Not in this merry light!" chuckled the Caterpillar. "But I've heard somebody. Somebody came downstairs in the dark. I heard his footsteps."

Bob Cherry hurried down from the landing as he heard their voices.

"Somebody passed me," he said, "and came back again, too!"

"Where's Franky?" asked the Caterpillar suddenly, with a note of alarm in his voice.

"Heaven knows!" gasped Wharton.

"What!" yelled the Caterpillar.

"He didn't answer when I called. Something's happened to him. We've got to search—"

The Caterpillar uttered a sharp cry, and dashed away.

"Wait for us!" shouted Wharton.

But the Caterpillar did not wait. Wharton tore open the door of the dining-room.

"What's the matter?" It was Nugent's voice.

"Something's happened to Courtenay—come on!" panted Wharton.

"Great Scott!"

"Better have a light," said Johnny Bull. "I've got a lamp here."

Johnny Bull lighted the lamp, and the juniors rushed downstairs on the track of the Caterpillar. They found De Courcy raging in the flagged passage below. He was shouting the name of his chum—

"Franky! Franky!"

But only the dull echoes answered.

"He's got to be found!" panted the Caterpillar, looking at the Greyfriars junior with a white face. "What's happened to him? Those bounds—" He broke off. "Franky! Franky! Franky!"



"Search the whole blessed place!" muttered Nugent. "The searchfulness will be terrific!"  
Up and down the juniors ran, flashing the lamplight into every corner. They searched the kitchen, the pantry, and every room on the floor. Every corner was scanned, and scanned again. An hour slipped away, as they prolonged the useless search.  
But it was futile.  
Frank Courtenay had vanished as if the floor had opened and swallowed him up. He had vanished, as Billy Bunter had vanished, without leaving a trace behind.

**THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.**  
**By Whose Hand!**

**W**ITH haggard faces the breathless juniors gathered in the flagged passage.  
Somewhere there, within a few yards of them, Frank Courtenay had disappeared.  
Where was he?

The Caterpillar's face was white and strained. He was as cool as ever, but his eyes were gleaming savagely.  
"He's gone," said Bob Cherry, in a hushed voice. "But how—where—"  
"Crawley knows!" said the Caterpillar, between his teeth.  
"It must have been Crawley who passed us in the dark—" "And Crawley has done something with my pal!"  
"The amazefulness is terrific," said the quiet voice of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Caterpillar is off-side."

"What do you mean?" growled De Courcy. "It must have been Crawley."  
"What do you mean, Inky?" asked Wharton.  
"The esteemed Courtenay was a strong and terrifically plucky young sahib," said the nabob. "The ludicrous and disgusting Crawley is a small and skinny person, and the august Franky could have knocked him out in one round. It would not be possible, my esteemed chums, for the atrocious Crawley to collar Franky and make him a prisoner."  
"By gad!" muttered the Caterpillar.

Bob Cherry clapped the Nabob of Bhanipur on the back.  
"Good old Inky! I never thought of that! But it's right on the wicket!"

The puzzle was deepened. Hurree Singh's argument was certainly correct; it would have been impossible for the secretary to handle Frank Courtenay. The stalwart junior captain of Highcliffe could have knocked Mr. Crawley spinning, and handled him to any extent, at his ease. If Frank Courtenay had been seized by force, it certainly had not been by Crawley. For that was impossible.

"What can it mean?" muttered Wharton. "Inky's right; Crawley couldn't have touched Courtenay. He was no match for him, or anything like it. But—but I heard no sound of a struggle—no sound at all. Even if the villain used a weapon, there would have been some sound; and I heard nothing."

"The esteemed Franky may have followed the ludicrous Crawley somewhere, where you would not hear."  
"But—but what happened to him then? Crawley couldn't have disposed of him. It's out of the question."  
"Which makes one thing clear," said the Caterpillar quietly. "There was somebody else on the scene."

"But—but who?"  
"A confederate of Crawley's, of course."  
"Not Doolan?" muttered Nugent.  
"Impossible!" said Wharton, at once. "I believe Doolan's true blue; but besides that, whoever came downstairs came down alone."  
"That's certain," said Bob.

"Quite certain," said the Caterpillar. "It was Crawley; and his confederate was down here already."  
"Here!" muttered Johnny Bull. "But how—"  
"Here," said the Caterpillar. "Down here Bunter disappeared; and now Franky has disappeared. Which means that there is some door we have not seen, that leads into some place we don't know of. And that's where we shall find Bunter and Franky, and Crawley's friend!"

"But—but that means that Crawley is keeping somebody hidden here, unknown to his master!" ejaculated Nugent.  
"Evidently," said the Caterpillar calmly.  
Wharton uttered an exclamation.  
"And Bunter spotted it, scouting down here after grub!" he exclaimed. "That's why Bunter was collared. That's the secret!"

And Courtenay's spotted it, too, and he's followed Bunter," said Bob, with a deep breath. "My hat! It's getting thick!"  
"And that's why Crawley didn't want strangers in the house—lest they should get on to the secret," said the Caterpillar.

"I don't see that," remarked Johnny Bull. "He had to THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 46L.

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risk Doolan finding out; and Doolan has been here a long time, about the house all day. Dash it all, how could Crawley keep somebody hidden here without Doolan finding it out, after weeks and weeks—"  
"He couldn't!" said the Caterpillar.

"But—"  
"And because he couldn't, it's pretty plain that the man, whoever he is, hasn't been here long," said De Courcy shrewdly. "Some scoundrel in a deep game with Crawley, of course; and very likely he arrived on the same night you did."  
"My hat!"

The juniors regarded one another. They were learning something of the mystery of the lonely house at last; they were certain of that.

The fact that Crawley could not have handled Courtenay proved that he had a confederate to aid him.

The man's presence in the house was unknown to Doolan. Evidently it was someone whom Crawley was hiding in some secret recess known only to himself, without the knowledge of Sir William Romayne or his soldier servant.

The thing was certain, from the juniors' point of view; and it pointed to some treachery on the secretary's part.

Was the hidden man a spy to whom the secretary was to communicate what he had discovered of Sir William's secrets?

It was not probable.  
The secretary, if a spy himself, could have found some simpler means of imparting his information, without keeping a confederate hidden in the house for at least twenty-four hours.

But otherwise, why had the man been there, and who was he?

That it would be dangerous for Crawley if he were discovered was evident from the fact that Bunter and Courtenay had been spirited away.

Only the pressure of deadly danger could have induced the secretary to resort to such desperate measures.

Cudgel their brains as they would, the juniors could think of no explanation of the mystery.

But one certainty stood out clearly: there was some hidden recess, with a secret means of admittance, near at hand, to which the two juniors had been taken.

In that hidden recess Crawley's unknown confederate had been hidden; and there the two kidnapped juniors must be concealed.

And the juniors, convinced upon that point, recommenced the search, hunting for a sign of a secret door.

But they hunted in vain.

If the door existed, as doubtless it did, it was too well hidden to be unearthed.

The night was growing old when they gave up the search in despair.

"It's no good!" exclaimed Wharton at last. "It's there, I'm sure of that—but where?"

"The wherefulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh sadly.

De Courcy gritted his teeth.

"It's got to be found!" he said. "We've got to find Franky and Bunter. And if we don't find them by morning, we're going to call in the police—what?"

"I—I suppose so."

Dawn was breaking as the juniors came wearily up the stairs. In the hall they met Doolan, who had just come down. The Irishman looked at them curiously.

"You're up early," he remarked.

Wharton explained what had happened. Doolan's eyes opened wide as he listened, and then he grinned.

"Howly snoke!" he said. "The young gentlemen must have gone off. Faith, a bhey can't vanish into the air, sorr!"

"Do you know of any secret door, or anything of that kind, about the place?" asked Wharton.

"Divil a wan!"

"You've never heard of such a thing?"

"Niver!"

The Irishman was evidently puzzled, but he concluded that Frank Courtenay must have left the house, for reasons best known to himself. The juniors did not make any reference to the theory they had formed as to the existence of Crawley's confederate. It was plain that Doolan would have laughed at the idea; and they did wish Crawley to learn of their suspicions.

The juniors, tired and dejected, sat down to a gloomy breakfast. It was a strange Christmas morning!

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Hidden Hun!

"COURTENAY! Is that you?" Frank Courtenay stared about him. Where was he? It seemed like a dream. He lay helpless upon a brick floor, his hands bound tightly behind him, so tightly as to cause him pain. The dim light of a lamp glimmered in the cellar, for such it evidently was.

On a bench near the lamp a burly man sat at a rough wooden table. He was eating. Courtenay stared at him, and stared round him. He could see no trace of a door to the cellar.

He knew how he had come there. The footsteps that had passed Wharton on the stairs that eventful night had passed Courtenay in the flagged passage, and he had followed the dim shadow that entered one of the lower rooms.

Then suddenly, without warning, he had been seized in the darkness, in a powerful grip that he knew it was not Crawley who had seized him.

A rough hand had been clapped over his mouth, and, scarcely able to struggle in the fierce grasp laid upon him, he had been dragged through an unseen doorway. A knee pinned him to the earth while his hands were bound, then a door closed. He knew no more than that—till the lamp-light glimmered out, and then he could see about him.

He lay in a cellar not more than a dozen feet long, with a bare brick floor. The walls were of bare brick, and wet with damp.

There were a few articles of furniture in the cellar, a few rugs and blankets on the floor. Close by him, his hands bound behind him, lay Billy Bunter, propped in a sitting posture against the wall.

Bunter's fat face was pale and pinched, his eyes glimmering behind his spectacles, his whole aspect forlorn and miserable. "You here?" muttered Courtenay.

Bunter groaned. "I've been here for weeks! Oh, dear!" Courtenay smiled slightly.

The Highcliffe junior was a prisoner, and evidently in savage hands. But his courage was high. "You've only been missing one day, Bunter," he said.

"Only one day! It seems like years! That awful rotter collared me, and he's kept me tied up here," groaned Bunter. "What does it mean? I believe he's a German! Oh, dear!"

Courtenay glanced at the burly man eating at the table. There was little doubt that he was a German. The blonde face, the cold, pale-blue eyes, the spiked moustache, showed as much.

A German! What was he doing there, hidden in this strange den under the house on the heath?

"I—I came down to look for grub," groaned Bunter. "I saw a light here, and—and that chap collared me, and bundled me in here! I—I didn't mean to be finding out anything. I

couldn't help seeing the light. I've been starved. Only a crust of bread all day. Me, you know!"

And Bunter groaned deeply. The man at the table glanced round at the sound of voices. His heavy brows knitted as he looked at Frank Courtenay. "Hound!" he said, in a guttural voice. "So you were fool enough to push yourself into what did not concern you. You will suffer for it!"

"I was looking for Bunter," said Courtenay. "You have kidnapped me, too, but it will not be for long. You will be found here, and we shall be found."

The German smiled grimly. "I shall not be found so easily," he answered. "You and your friends were searching all day for that fat pig. I know it. What did you find?"

Courtenay was silent. He understood that the secret cellar must be entered by some door cunningly concealed. Would his comrades ever be able to find him?

"You will not be found," grinned the German, watching his dismayed face. "You will remain here after I am gone. And you will not talk. You will not be able to babble of what you have spied out. You have looked your last upon the light of day!"

"You cannot keep us here long," said Courtenay. "You think so?" The German pointed to the brick floor. "You will remain under the ground, my fine fellow! Do you think I place any account upon your life? Mein Gott! In Belgium I have ordered dozens such to be shot down! Have you heard of Louvain, of Dinant? I was there. I was in command! Gott in Himmel! We routed them out of the houses like rabbits from a warren. Puff! Bang! Men and women, boys and girls! Rabble, whom we made an example of. Your life! With my own pistol I have shot down a dozen such schoolboys. We gave them a lesson in Belgium!"

And the ruffian grinned as over a pleasing recollection. Billy Bunter shook like a jelly. There was no doubting the savage earnestness of the German. To a butcher of Belgium, his hands and his soul stained red with blood, the lives of a couple of English schoolboys did not count for much.

"Do you know why you still live?" continued the German menacingly. "Do you know why you have not yet paid for your wedding?"

"And why?" said Courtenay, in a steady voice. "Because I may yet be discovered here. Because I may not escape after all. In that case, I do not wish to be hanged. It is a chance. Mein Gott! I would crush you like a fly; but I do not wish to put the rope round my neck if I am taken. That is why you yet live. That is the only reason."

Courtenay, as he looked at the hard, savage face, could quite believe it. Fear of justice was all that held the German's murderous hand.

The ruffian turned back to his meal, watched with hungry eyes by the Owl of the Remove.

Courtenay sat silent, busy with his thoughts. He had made a discovery, though useless to him. Crawley was undoubtedly

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keeping this scoundrel hidden in Sir William Romayne's house without the baronet's knowledge. This man was his confederate, though what his business might be in the place Courtenay could not guess.

The secretary had discovered the secret cellar—probably the old, half-ruined building had many such secret nooks, and this one had come to the eye of the spying secretary. Doubtless he had searched for such a recess in order to have a hiding-place in case of his rascality being discovered. He had hidden his confederate there, and the juniors, stumbling upon a knowledge of the secret, had been kidnapped to keep them silent.

For the moment, at least, their lives were safe. The two scoundrels feared the consequences too much to think of taking their lives.

But afterwards? Crawley could not release them without being immediately exposed. Courtenay, with a heavy heart, realized that unless he was found by his friends and rescued, the German's threat would be true—he would never look again upon the light of day!

Evidently the German inhabited the hidden cellar; and doubtless Crawley visited him at night to bring him food, perhaps to consult with him. Crawley's mysterious actions were easily understood now. He had sought to keep the strangers from coming into the house lest by chance they should discover something; probably in a state of nervous terror from the presence of the German, for Crawley certainly was not a man of courage.

With only Doolan and Sir William in the house, Crawley's communications with the hidden German had been easy enough. But probably the entrance of eight strangers to put up there had thrown him into a panic. He had doubtless been visiting the secret den when Bunter so unluckily came down in quest of food. The two meals had had no choice but to kidnap the Owl, and the kidnapping of Courtenay had been forced upon them in the same way.

There was little hope in Courtenay's heart now; but his face was calm, his heart beat steadily.

The German finished his meal with a bottle of wine, and rose from the table. He lighted a cigar, and grinned through the smoke at the bound juniors.

"You are sorry now that you meddled!" he said. "And your friends—if they remain and search—what do you think will happen? They shall join you here—one by one—one by one! Now that we have gone so far, we cannot stop. You have put your head in the lion's jaws. Now it is for us to attack, then? For the others will chatter to the police, perhaps! We shall not risk that. This cellar will hide the secret. English honor! If I were but sure of escape, I would blow out your brains before I sleep!"

The German turned off the lamp, and threw himself upon the rug. In a few minutes he was breathing stertorously.

"I—I say!" It was a quivering whisper from Billy Bunter. "I say, Courtenay! That awful villain would murder us as soon as look at us!"

"We're safe at present," said Frank.

"Yes, I know. But I'm frightfully hungry. And it's so cold. I asked him for a blanket, and he only swore at me in German," mumbled Bunter.

"Our friends will find us," said Courtenay, more to encourage the unfortunate Owl than because he thought so.

Bunter grunted.

"They ought to have found us long ago," he grumbled. "I shall speak jolly plainly to Wharton about this. Oh, dear, it's cold!"

"Can't be helped! Try to sleep," said Frank.

"How can I sleep when I'm hungry?" said Bunter aggressively. "It's rotten of Wharton—asking a chap to a Christmas variation, and planting him in an awful place like this! I say, I believe that beast of a Crawley is a German! He was talking to this beast in German. Oh, dear, I'm cold!"

There was a movement from the German.

"Silence!" he growled.

Billy Bunter hardly breathed. There was silence in the cellar after that, broken only by the heavy breathing of the Owl.

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER. Another Disappearance!

**W**HAT are we going to do?"

It was almost a hopeless question. Harry Wharton & Co. felt themselves baffled and beaten.

Courtenay's plan of keeping a watch had turned out disastrously. Crawley would be on his guard now—he knew that they had been keeping watch on the previous night. Keeping watch again would be fruitless, now that he was on his guard.

The juniors had spent Christmas morning searching for a trace of the hidden door, of which they suspected the existence. But the search was futile. If the door existed, it was well hidden.

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They thought of the police. But they felt that it would be useless to tell such a story to the police—even if they had come. Even that was doubtful, for if Wharton had telephoned for them, certainly Crawley would have telephoned in Sir William's name to defeat him. They had learned from Doolan that the nearest village was three miles away, across the heath. It was doubtful if they could have reached it through the snow. But if the police had come, they could imagine the smiles that would greet a story of kidnapping in the house of Sir William Romayne, and of a secret door of which Sir William and his servant knew nothing.

The police would conclude, as Doolan evidently concluded, that the two juniors had gone of their own accord, in an attempt to get to their destination for Christmas. Indeed, they could see that Doolan half suspected that the juniors were pulling his leg in declaring that Bunter and Courtenay had disappeared.

They were thrown upon their own resources, and it was not easy to decide what was to be done. They took a midday meal with Doolan, who went up to Sir William's rooms afterwards, and remained there, probably helping the baronet with his experiments. Occasionally the juniors roamed about the great bleak house in the hope of yet discovering some clue.

"Where's the Caterpillar?" Wharton asked suddenly, some time after lunch. The juniors were in the great hall discussing the matter.

"Downstairs, I think," said Bob. "Poor old Caterpillar's awfully cut up by Courtenay's vanishing like that. I believe he's still looking for a secret door."

"We ought to keep together," said Harry uneasily. "Goodness knows what might happen to any of us after what has happened!"

"The togetherness should be terrific!" remarked Hurro Janset Ram Singh. "Let us go downfully."

The juniors hurried downstairs. They did not think that De Courcy had made any discovery, but Wharton felt uneasy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Where is he?"

"Caterpillar!"

"De Courcy!"

The High-life junior was not to be seen.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Nugent, his face growing pale. "Nothing can have happened to De Courcy, surely?"

"Caterpillar!" roared Bob Cherry.

The shouts of the juniors rang eerily through the empty rooms.

They searched far and wide.

De Courcy was not to be seen!

He had been below stairs—they knew that. He had not come up. He had been alone, and he had vanished!

Wharton set his teeth hard, and his eyes blazed.

"Crawley knows where he is! I'm fed-up. Let's go and see Crawley, and we'll have the truth out of him!"

"Goul egg!" said Bob Cherry, between his teeth.

The juniors rushed upstairs. They knew the secretary's room, and they hurried to it.

The door was locked. Wharton pounded on it.

"Mr. Crawley!"

There was no reply from within.

"Open this door, or we'll break it in!" shouted Wharton. No answer.

Wharton looked round hastily. There was a heavy oaken settee in the passage, and he pointed to it. The juniors seized it, and rushed it at the door like a battering-ram.

"The lock could not withstand the tremendous shock. It burst, and the door flew open.

The juniors rushed into the room.

"Now, you scoundrel—"

"He's not here!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

The room was empty.

"Where is he, the rotter?" panted Wharton.

Bob gave a shout.

"Downstairs, of course! He had a hand in collaring the Caterpillar, ten to one!"

The juniors, pale with excitement by this time, rushed down the broad staircase. Crawley was in the hall. He glanced at them as they came rattling down the broad stairs.

"You are making fools here!" he said, with a sneer.

"Where is De Courcy?" shouted Wharton.

The secretary shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you mean? Has another of your party gone?" he said sarcastically. "I shall ascertain whether anything is missing."

Wharton clenched his hands hard.

"De Courcy has disappeared!" he said, between his teeth.

"You have had a hand in it!"

Another shrug.

"Will you tell us where he is?"

"I know nothing of him. If he is not here, he has probably gone. Perhaps he did not care to remain where he was not welcome!" sneered the secretary.

"Collar the cad, and twist the truth out of him!" said Johnny Bull savagely.

The juniors advanced threateningly upon the secretary. Their blood was at boiling point.

"De Courcy has been kidnaped, like the others, and you were there when it was done!" said Harry Wharton hotly.

"Tell us where he is, or take the consequences!"

"Doolan!" shouted Crawley.

The big Irishman appeared on the stairs. He hurried down.

"What's the matter, intirely?" he exclaimed, interposing. Wharton patted out an explanation.

"Another of thim gone!" grimed Doolan. "Sure, it's practical jokers ye are!"

"I tell you it is no joke—he has been kidnaped!" shouted Wharton.

"Howly smoke! And who'd be kidnappin' the gessoon?" said Doolan soothingly.

"That scoundrel who stands there!"

"And sure the little man couldn't do it, intirely!"

"Not he, but the man he is hiding in the house!" broke out Wharton. "Ho has a confederate here, hidden—"

Crawley's face became deadly white. But the old soldier burst into a roar of laughter.

"And is it meself who wouldn't be seeing the spalpeen!" he exclaimed. "And sure I've seen nothing of him. It's shamming ye are, sorr. Yere friend has gone out for a walk, beadal, or gone home, and faith, I wonder that ye all don't go home, intirely."

"We are not going without our friends," said Harry. "We're going to get the truth out of that scoundrel."

"You will help me against these young ruffians, Doolan," said Crawley, pale to the lips.

Doolan nodded.

"Sure it's me dooty," he said. "Hands off, young jiltmen! You've got to reckon with me."

The juniors paused. They did not want to handle the Irishman, who had been kindness itself to them. And the heavy old soldier would have been a very tough handful, too. Doolan grimed good-naturedly.

"Begorra, why don't ye take your way home, and ye'll find your friends there before ye," he advised.

"We'd better go to Sir William," said Nugent. "He ought to know—"

Doolan chuckled.

"Sir William won't see yez," he said. "He won't open his dore to yez, and he won't hear yez if ye knock. He's busy, and sure there'll be a surprise for the Huns when his work's done, beadal."

"Not much of a surprise, I think," said Wharton bitterly.

"Not if Mr. Crawley can send the information to his countrymen, the Huns!"

"You dare to insinuate—" hissed Crawley.

"I am almost sure of it," said Wharton quietly. "That is your business here, Mr. Crawley; and your hidden confederate is here to help you."

Crawley smiled.

"You are welcome to your opinion," he said. "Do you intend to remain longer in this house, as you have Sir William's permission?"

"We intend to remain till our friends are found. And I am going now to telephone to the nearest police-station!" exclaimed Wharton savagely.

He strode away to the telephone cabinet. Crawley watched him with a peculiar smile on his face. The captain of the Remove soon discovered the reason of that smile as he saw the telephone.

The receiver had been taken away, and the telephone was disconnected. The guests in the house on the heath were cut off from the outside world!

## THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

### Bunter Is Useful for Once!

"BY gad, I'm glad to see you again, Franky!"

The Caterpillar was quite cool.

The strange situation in which he found himself did not seem to affect the nerves of Rupert de Courcy in any way.

Frank Courtenay gave his chum a hopeless look.

De Courcy sat on the brick floor, his hands bound behind his back, his hair ruffled, but his face quite cool and calm.

"You here, too!" muttered Courtenay.

"Quite a surprise, by gad!" said the Caterpillar. "I was THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 461.

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nosin' about the cellars, lookin' for you, Franky, when the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the giddy fold. I'm ashamed to say that I was caught nappin'. We'd worked it out that the merry secretary had a confederate here, and I was an ass to be there alone—but, there you are! Collared, by gad—bundled in here on my neck—and the fellows will be lookin' for me!"

The Caterpillar had lost his liberty, but not his cheery spirits. But Frank Courtenay's heart was heavy.

"A cheery Hun—what?" said the Caterpillar, glancing at the burly German, who was seated on the bench, smoking.

"A German!" said Courtenay. "Crawley is hiding him here for some reason. They've got me, Caterpillar, and now they've got you. And their game is to get the others, too, one after another, to keep their secret dark."

"What a merry little game!" grinned the Caterpillar.

"And what are they goin' to do with us? Is this a cheery Christmas party?"

"Not quite!" said Courtenay, laughing in spite of himself.

"I'm afraid, old chap, that they mean to leave us here when they bolt!"

"What a trial for Punter!" sighed the Caterpillar.

"Merry Christmas, Punter! I think your name's Punter!"

Billy Bunter groaned.

"We shall have to get our hands loose somehow and begin on Bunter," said the Caterpillar. "I felt all along that it would come to that. Lucky Bunter's so jolly fat. He will last us quite a long time!"

Another dismal groan from Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was not in a mood to appreciate the Caterpillar's lunnon.

"Who is that Hun Johnny, Franky?"

"I don't know; but a confederate of Crawley's no doubt."

"And the cheery secretary is a Hun spy, of course—lookin' for Sir William's little secrets?" remarked De Courcy.

"The next thing in Frank's won't come as a surprise to the Huns—what? Not if Crawley can manage to get hold of it! This looks a bit, if we're in a fix, Franky!"

"I'm afraid we are, old fellow."

"Never say die!" said the Caterpillar cheerfully. "If we could only get loose we can handle that Hun—Bunter bein' such a toppin' fightin' man—what?"

"Silly ass!" groaned Bunter.

"I've been wriggling for hours," said Courtenay. "I can't get loose. I'm afraid you can't, either, Caterpillar!"

De Courcy shook his head. He had already made that discovery.

"Then we're booked, Franky?"

"It looks like it!"

"What a life!" sighed the Caterpillar.

At the further end of the cellar the German sat and smoked, occasionally casting malignant glances towards the prisoners.

The minutes passed heavily to the unfortunate juniors. There seemed no hope.

The unavailing search already made showed that the secret door could not be discovered from without. Now that the scoundrels had gone so far, their game was clear; in fact, they had little choice in the matter.

The juniors' tongues had to be kept silent at any cost. One by one they were to join the prisoners in the hidden cellar.

They might perish there, and nothing would be known or suspected.

It was the price they were to pay for chancing upon the traitorous secretary's guilty secret.

But the Caterpillar was thinking hard.

He rolled over as if to get into a more comfortable position, and came closer to Billy Bunter. The fat junior looked at him with lack-lustre eyes.

"Bunter, my pippin!" murmured the Caterpillar.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I believe you're a giddy ventriloquist—what?" whispered De Courcy.

Bunter nodded.

"I've heard you play tricks," said the Caterpillar. "A fellow who didn't know it would never spot yep—an awfully clever chap like you, Bunter."

The Owl of the Remove grimaced faintly. Even in his present situation soft sawder had not lost its savour.

"You're the chap to help us out of this," whispered the Caterpillar. "You can chuck your weird voice about, and imitate anybody's toot—what?"

"Of course I can!" said Bunter. "All the chaps in the Remove are jealous of me on account of that—especially Wharton."

The Caterpillar smiled.

"Well, now's your chance!" he said. "Give that Hun some of your blessed ventriloquism, an' make him open the secret door. It may get spotted. The chaps are searchin'!"

for us far an' wide. Make the disgustin' Hun think his pal is callin' him, or somethin'. You're a bright youth, Bunter! Couldn't you work it?"

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He was terribly afraid of the big German, but there did not seem to be much risk in the experiment, for certainly the Hun was not likely to guess that there was a ventriloquist in the hidden cellar.

And there was, as the Caterpillar said, a bare chance of rescue, if fortune favoured him.

Bunter gave the little preliminary cough the Remové fellows knew so well.

"I'm on!" he murmured. The Caterpillar, smiling, rolled back against the wall, and waited. Courtenay had heard the whispered colloquy, and he felt a gleam of hope.

If Bunter succeeded in helping them, it would be a case of the mouse and the lion over again. But in such a fearful emergency any help was not to be despised.

The German was smoking grimly, with knitted brows. The confinement in the narrow precincts of the hidden cellar told upon him, a man accustomed to open and active life. He was in a savage and disconcerted mood. Suddenly he gave a start, as a voice—faint, as if it came from the further side of a wall—was audible.

"Let me in!" Faint as the tones were, it was easy to recognise the high-pitched, squeaky voice of Crawley, the secretary.

"My hat!" murmured the Caterpillar. "Was that—?" Bunter gave a fat wink, and the Caterpillar grinned. He had been almost deceived for a moment.

The German sprang to his feet, evidently astonished. He started towards the cellar wall, and the Caterpillar, following his amazed glance, knew that it was there that the secret door was situated. The wall appeared to be of solid brickwork like the rest; the door was not visible to the eye.

"Mein Gott!" "Let me in!"

The German ran to the wall, and pressed on one of the bricks. A section of the wall rolled open, evidently a door of massive weight, for the outer covering of brickwork moved with it. The German stared through the opening into the darkness of a large cellar beyond.

"You are here?" he muttered. The outer cellar was dark and empty.

Had the juniors been there searching at that moment the secret of the hidden cellar would have been revealed to them at a glance.

But the outer room was empty. The German stared into the darkness, evidently amazed. "I heard his voice," he muttered. "Crawley! Aro you here?"

"Yes, yes! Help me!" came the faint, quavering tones from the darkness.

"Where are you?" "Here, by the stairs! I have fallen—"

"Fool!" The German strode through the opening and across the outer cellar, groping his way to the narrow stair that led down from above.

The Caterpillar's eyes blazed. "Oh, what luck!" he muttered. "Franky—Franky, get that door shut, and shut the rotter out—what?"

Courtenay gasped. "Good!"

The two juniors rolled over towards the door. On the further side of the large outer cellar the German was groping in the darkness, muttering savagely to himself in his own tongue.

Courtenay and De Courcy scrambled to their feet, and fairly bounded to the secret door.

It opened inwards into the secret cellar.

Their hands were bound, and they could not use them. But they shoved at the door with their shoulders fiercely.

It rolled shut. There was a click. The door was fast.

The German was shut out of the secret den!

Billy Bunter watched the two juniors in frozen silence, his round eyes expanding with terror behind his glasses.

He had not anticipated that move. But the quick brain of the Caterpillar had spotted the chance, and seized upon it.

"Now that hound's got to be kept out!" said De Courcy between his teeth.

"The door opens from the outside!" "Not with us against this side," said the Caterpillar. "Jam your boot against it old scout! Oh, if my hands were free! But keep your boot against it! Come and help, Bunter!"

Bunter did not move. "You fat fool!" roared the Caterpillar. "Come here and help! It's your last chance, as well as ours!"

"He—he—he'll shoot us!" stuttered Bunter.

"Very likely, if he gets in again. Come and help keep him out!"

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Bunter scrambled up in terror, but more afraid of letting the Hun in than of keeping him out. His heavy weight was added against the inside of the secret door.

"By gad, there's a fa-teenin' here!" muttered the Caterpillar, his face lighting up. "Look, Franky!"

Deep in the brickwork, only visible to a careful examination, was a rusty iron bolt.

The Caterpillar dragged furiously at his bound hands. But he could not get them loose. The German's work had been done too well; the knots defied his efforts.

There was a sound of fumbling on the other side of the massive door, and pressure from without.

"Hold fast!" muttered Courtenay. The three juniors had their boots planted against the door. The weight of the door was great, and it was not easy to move, in any case. It had swung slowly and unwillingly on heavy hinges when the German opened it. The pressure from without had no effect—the door remained shut!

"If a chap could only get at the bolt!" muttered the Caterpillar savagely.

Harder came the pressure from outside, but the door did not yield. Courtenay's boot was planted between the door and a jutting brick in the uneven floor of the cellar. It made a wedge that could not be moved, unless his foot was crushed, and the strength of the German was not equal to that.

The pressure ceased at last. The German in the outer cellar had evidently become exhausted, and stopped to take breath.

"First round to us!" grinned the Caterpillar. "If we keep him out there, Franky, he will be spotted—what?"

"What-ho!" said Courtenay.

"Can't you get loose, Bunter, while we're holding the door?"

"I e-can't, you ass!" stuttered Bunter.

The Caterpillar looked round savagely. Knife and fork, from the German's last meal, lay on the table.

"Get that knife in your teeth, Bunter."

"Wia-af for?" "Don't jaw! Get it, and come here—sharp!"

Bunter obeyed. He bent over the table, and caught the handle of the knife with his teeth, and came back to De Courcy.

"Hold it tight in your jaws while I saw this dashed rope across it!" muttered the Caterpillar.

It was not easy work, for the Highcliffe junior's hands were bound behind him, and the rope was thick and strong.

But Bunter held the knife firmly in his teeth, and the rope was sawed along the blade again and again.

The Caterpillar's wrists were scratched and cut by the blade, but no sound of pain passed his lips. The dandy of Highcliffe, with all his elegant ways, was as hard as nails.

A strand of the rope parted, then another. The coil loosened.

"I think I can manage it now!" muttered the Caterpillar. "You've dissected me about enough, Bunter."

De Courcy exerted all his strength, and the half-cut rope parted.

His hands were free!

They were stiff and cramped from the rope, but De Courcy hardly noticed it. He seized the rusty bolt, and drove it home.

"The iron grated into the socket."

"All serene now, Franky," drawled the Caterpillar. "The merry Hun won't come back to his dug-out. Highcliffe wins!"

"Oh, what ripping luck!" panted Courtenay.

He removed his boot from the door. Whether the German was pressing on the door again they did not know. The iron bolt held fast.

The juniors parted breathlessly. De Courcy took the knife, and sawed at Courtenay's bonds.

"Let me loose!" gasped Bunter. "His eyes glisted through his spectacles. "There's grub here—lots of grub!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Let me loose, you beast! I'm hungry—famished!" howled Bunter.

The Caterpillar did not heed him. He sawed through Courtenay's bonds, and Frank began to exercise his stiffened limbs. Then he turned his attention to Bunter, and cut the Owl of the Remove loose.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Pins and needles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh! Yow-ow-ow! I'm cramped all over!" wailed Bunter.

"Would you rather be tied up again?" grinned the Caterpillar.

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"THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!" By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

It was some time before Bunter could use his arms. But he found that he could use them at last, and then he opened the basket from which he had seen the German take his food. The next moment Bunter's jaws were busy. He was making up for lost time, and his exertions were simply tremendous.

## THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

### Coming to Grips!

HARRY WHARTON came out of the telephone cabinet, his face set and grim.

Crawley gave him a mocking look.

"Can't you telephone?" asked Nugent.

"It's cut off."

"Oh, my hat!"

"There is the door," said Crawley. "Your way lies open, if you choose to take it!"

"Not without our friends," said Harry.

Crawley smiled, and left them.

"Well!" said Bob Cherry. He looked out of the hall window. The darkness was closing in now, amid snow and wind. "We could get through this, somehow, to the village, Harry."

Wharton shook his head.

"We're not leaving the house," he said decidedly. "That's settled. We've got to depend on ourselves."

"The Famous Five against the field!" said Bob, with a grin.

"It is up to you," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But what is the esteemed move on the board?"

"We've got to find the secret door!" said Wharton savagely.

"We know it's there, and we're going to find it, somehow!"

"We've tried!"

"If at first you don't succeed, try againfully," murmured the nabob.

"Well, it's that or nothing!" said Johnny Bull. "Come on!"

Without much hope, but determined to leave no stone unturned, the juniors descended once more below stairs. In the kitchen they could hear Doolan whistling "Tipperary," and there was a scent of cooking. The soldier servant was busy. The Famous Five descended to the cellars, of which there were half a dozen opening out of one another.

They had searched them, and searched them again. But the secret lay there, and they knew it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, flashing the lamplight before him. "The door's fastened!"

It was the last door. Beyond lay the last cellar, so far as they knew. The door had been open before. It was shut now, and fast.

Wharton felt over the door.

"My hat! It's locked!"

"Crawley locked it after him, I suppose," said Nugent.

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"Then the secret door is in that cellar most likely! We know it's in one of them. We're going to open this door!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific," grinned the nabob. "But perhaps the esteemed Doolan has a key."

"Cut off and ask him, Inky."

"With pleasurefulness."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hurried away, and returned in a couple of minutes with Doolan, in his shirt-sleeves and apron, looking puzzled.

"Locked, begorra!" ejaculated Doolan, trying the door.

"Sure, ye can't go in, young jintlemen. Misther Crawley must have locked it."

"Well, we're going in," said Harry. "If you can't get the key, we shall smash it open."

Doolan whistled.

"Ye're making free here, young jintlemen," he remarked. "But, sure, I'll spake to Misther Crawley."

Doolan went upstairs, and the juniors waited impatiently. The locking of the cellar seemed to them a proof that they were on the track.

"There was a hurried step on the stairs, and Crawley came down, panting and breathless, Doolan following him more slowly.

The secretary rushed forward.

Without heeding the juniors, he tried the door. It was easy to see that he was amazed and alarmed to find it locked. It was not Crawley who had locked the door.

"Good heavens!" muttered Crawley.

"Will you open that door?" asked Harry grimly.

Crawley turned on him with blazing eyes.

"I will not!" he shouted. "And I forbid you to touch it!"

"You can forbid till you're black in the face!" said Harry resolutely. "But we're going into that cellar."

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"What do you want there?"

"The secret door is there," said Harry.

"Fool!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Get something to smash it in, you fellows!" he said quietly.

Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry rushed a heavy stool from the kitchen. Doolan looked on with wide-open eyes.

Crawley sprang in front of the door. His hand slid into his pocket, and it came out with a Browning pistol in it.

The juniors started back.

"Hands off!" panted Crawley. "I've had too much of this! Hands off, or I shall shoot!"

"Howly smoke!" gasped Doolan. "Is it mad you are, Misther Crawley?"

"We are going into that cellar," said Wharton unflinchingly. "You dare not shoot! But we shall chance it, anyway. Stand aside!"

"Stand back!"

Whiz!

The man's eyes were burning with desperation, and it looked as if he would keep his threat. But he had no chance.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, who were holding the stool, exchanged a quick glance, and the heavy stool suddenly whizzed through the air.

It struck the secretary full on the chest, and he was slammed back against the door, and fell headlong on the stone flags.

The pistol crashed to the floor, and in an instant more Harry Wharton had seized it.

"Good for you, Bob! Collar that cad!"

Crawley, panting dazedly on the floor, was seized at once. Johnny Bull and Nugent grasped his arms and pinioned him.

"Howly mother ay Moses!" muttered Doolan dazedly.

"Take care of that shootin'-iron, young jintlemen."

"I may need it," said Harry coolly. "I can see now that Crawley did not lock that door. It was locked from inside. That means that his confederate is there!"

"Howly smoke!"

The Irishman stared suspiciously at the panting secretary. Even his simple mind was beginning at last to share the suspicious of the juniors.

"Have ye got a key to that dure, Misther Crawley?" he asked.

"No!" panted Crawley.

"Was it locked from inside, intirely?"

"No, no! No one is there!" shrieked Crawley. "How could anybody be there? Fools! Let me go!"

"Hold him," said Harry quietly.

"We've got the merry rotter," chuckled Bob. "Go for the door!"

Nugent and Hurree Singh lifted the stool. With all their strength they crashed it on the lock.

Crash, crash, crash!

The lock flew to pieces under the terrific battering. The stool was dropped, and the juniors shoven at the door.

It yielded an inch or so, and then remained fast. Doolan uttered a shout.

"Faith, an' somebody's holdin' it inside!" he yelled.

"Misther Crawley, who's in that cellar?"

The secretary did not reply.

He gave a deep groan, and staggered against the wall. The game was up now, and the wretched trickster knew it.

"Lend a hand, Doolan!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Sure, an' I will!"

The juniors crammed themselves on the door, the big Irishman lending his strength. Crawley, leaning on the opposite wall, watched them with haggard looks. There was pale despair in the face of the treacherous secretary, and he did not raise a hand to interfere.

## THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

### Turning the Tables!

"BY gad, listen!" The Caterpillar started suddenly.

Dimly, in the secret cellar, faintly but unmistakably, there came a sound of heavy crashing.

Courtenay and his chum exchanged quick glances. "There's somethin' goin' on out there," remarked the Caterpillar.

"The chaps searching for us," said Courtenay.

De Courcy drew a deep breath.

"There are three of us here," he said. "Two, rather—Bunter's no good in a scrap. Could we two tackle that Hun, Franky, if we let him in?"

"We'll try," said Courtenay.

"He's a big beast," said the Caterpillar reflectively.

"Strong as a horse—he handled me like a kid when he clattered me in the cellar. Crawley helped him, though.

But—but with somethin' in our paws, Franky, we ought to be able to handle him, now we've got our paws loose—what?"

"I say, you fellows, don't open that door!" roared Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"You silly asses, keep him out!" howled Bunter. "Look here—"

"Oh, go and chop chips!" said the Caterpillar. "We're goin' in for a merry fight for freedom, my fat tulip, an' if you don't want to share, you can go an' eat coke! I advise you to take in!"

The Caterpillar looked round the secret cellar for a weapon.

Courtenay followed his example.

Billy Bunter ceased his operations on the provisions in his alarm.

"You silly asses!" he gasped. "Now he's out, keep him out! We've got plenty of grub—"

"You can stay here grubbin' as long as you like, old scout," said the Caterpillar. "We're goin' for the Hun. The legs of that table will about suit us, Franky—what?"

"Good!" said Courtenay.

"Mind the grub!" howled Bunter as the Highcliffe juniors seized the table.

But the Caterpillar did not mind the grub. He pitched the table over, and the grub went far and wide.

Two legs were wrenched off the table. The Caterpillar swung his improvised club in his hand, and Bunter dodged it with a squeak.

"The Hun won't like this on his napper!" grinned the Caterpillar. "Mind you hit hard, Franky! Huns have to be tapped jolly hard!"

"You bet!" said Courtenay. "Come on!"

They approached the secret door, and De Courcy pushed back the iron bolt.

Then he pressed on the sunken brick, as he had seen the German do to open the door.

The secret door swung back.

The lamplight from the secret room streamed out into the larger cellar beyond.

The two Highcliffe juniors, on their guard against a rush from the German, looked out.

But there was no danger of a rush from their enemy.

The lamplight through the secret doorway disclosed a peculiar scene.

They saw the burly German.

He was hunched against the cellar door on the other side, holding it shut with all his strength.

He had no eyes for the secret cellar behind him—no eyes for the juniors who were venturing out.

For the German, far across the large cellar separated them from the German, who was holding the outer door shut.

On the other side of that door evidently there was strong pressure, and the German, powerful as he was, was yielding to it.

He was panting spasmodically as he drove himself against the door, striving to resist the pressure that came from without.

The Caterpillar glanced at Courtenay, grinning.

"Our merry pals are on the other side of the door, Franky," he whispered. "We shall take the cheery Hun in the rear. What a go!"

"Come on!" muttered Courtenay.

"He hasn't seen us yet, havin' the disadvantage of havin' no eyes in the back of his Hun head. Give him a yell!" chuckled the Caterpillar.

The two juniors rushed out into the outer-cellar.

"Give him socks!" roared the Caterpillar.

His voice rang and echoed through the cellar like thunder.

The German fell away from the door he was holding, and spun round in sudden alarm.

The door flew open at the same moment.

Light streamed in from both sides now, and in the outer doorway the juniors of Greyfriars were crowded.

"Rescue!" yelled the Caterpillar.

The big German, dodging a swipe from the Caterpillar's club, backed away to the wall, his face white with dejection.

His struggle to keep the door shut against Harry Wharton & Co. had exhausted him. He was panting spasmodically.

"Go for him!" shouted Courtenay.

Crash!

The Caterpillar's heavy club smote the desperate rascal, and he staggered and fell.

Before he could make a movement to rise the juniors were upon him.

Courtenay and the Caterpillar fastened on him like hounds on a stag, and Harry Wharton & Co. were only a second behind.

The sudden sight of the missing juniors had astounded the German, but there was no time to talk now.

The German had to be secured first.

The juniors, breathless with excitement, piled in on him.

The burly ruffian was struggling furiously, hitting, tearing, and clawing like a cat.

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But the odds were overwhelming.

He almost disappeared under the crowd that piled in on him, and in a few minutes he lay breathless and exhausted.

"Got him!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Make Bunter sit on him!" panted the Caterpillar.

"Ha, ha!"

"Faith, an' it's a Hun, an' no mistake!" exclaimed Doolan. "So this is yere friend, Mistor Crawley?"

Crawley made no reply. With shaking limbs, the wretched rascal was stealing away to the stairs.

The old soldier rushed after him, and grasped him by the shoulder.

"No, ye don't!" he said grimly. "Ye've a lot to account for before ye mizle, Mistor Crawley! Kim here!"

He dragged the shivering rascal into the cellar.

The German, exhausted and overcome, lay panting under the juniors. Every limb was held in a grasp of iron.

The Caterpillar ran into the secret cellar, and returned with a rope—part of the cord that had bound his own wrists an hour before.

He knotted it round the thick wrists of the panting German.

"One good turn deserves another, dear boy," he remarked, smiling down upon the furious face below him.

"Ach!"

Harry Wharton rose panting when the German was bound. Crawley was shivering in the grasp of the Irishman.

"Bring the lamp here!" exclaimed Harry. "I've seen that rascal somewhere before!"

Bob Cherry caught up the lamp, and the light streamed upon the hard, coarse, unshaven face of the German.

Then, from all the Famous Five at once, burst a shout of astonishment.

"Ludwig Wolf!"

## THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

Caught at Last!

LUDWIG WOLF!"

"The Hun from Wapshot!"

"Great Scott!"

The Prussian glared up at the astonished juniors.

He recognised Wharton now, as the captain of the Remove recognised him.

"You know him?" exclaimed Courtenay, in astonishment.

"By gad! An old acquaintance—what?" said the Caterpillar.

"It's the Prussian," said Wharton. "You remember I told you—he escaped from the prisoners' camp at Wapshot, and the soldiers ran him down at Greyfriars the day before we broke up!"

"By gad!"

"The man I met on the road here," went on Wharton. "I wondered what he was doing in this direction. Coming here, of course!"

"Well, this is a go!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, scanning the prisoner's face. "It's the same scoundrel we collared at Greyfriars—no mistake about that! I—I thought you fancied you saw him, Harry, at that time on the way here—"

"I know you did, ahead!"

"He must have been sunning here all the time," said Johnny Bull. "He knew the place, though we didn't!"

"And he couldn't have got here much before us," said Courtenay, with a whistle.

"That's how we saw a light; and that's why Crawley didn't want to let us in, by gad!" smiled the Caterpillar.

"He had only just received his Hun friend. That's why we found him up and dressed in the middle of the night. Fancy his feelin', dear boys! He'd just got his Hun pal into the house when we came thunderin' at the door! Must have given him a start—what?"

The mystery was clear now.

"No wonder Crawley was keepin' him well hidden," said the Caterpillar. "Not healthy for him to have an escaped prisoner found here. It would rather have given away his own merry connections with the Huns!"

"I say, you fellows, you can put this down to me," said Bunter. "If I hadn't come down scoutin' for grub that night, I shouldn't have found Crawley here talkin' to the Hun boss—I mean, I suspected something all the time, and came down to see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I snuck a rat all along, you know, and decided to investigate!"

"Don't be beat the Kaiser on his own game!" said Bob Cherry admiringly. "If you keep on lying like that, Bunter, you'll make this Hun jealous!"



"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter snorted.

"Well, wasn't it my ventriloquism that did it?" he exclaimed. "Look here, Courtenay, you know it was!"

"That bit's right enough!" said Courtenay, laughing. "We've been prisoners in that den yonder; you fellows, where the Hun was hiding. Caterpillar thought of using Bunter's ventriloquism to trick him—"

"Oh, really, Courtenay—"

"And Bunter played up. He made the brute think Crawley was calling him, and he left the secret cellar—"

"And we shut him out!" chortled Bunter triumphantly.

"I called on these chaps to back me up, and we—"

"You did!" ejaculated the Caterpillar.

"Yes, rather, I—"

"Anyway, we shut the brute out!" said Courtenay. "Caterpillar did the whole bizney, really. And when we were loose we came out to handle him, though I don't know how it would have ended if you fellows hadn't been here. We heard you crashing at the door, though we didn't know what was going on!"

"Jolly lucky you were on the spot!" drawled the Caterpillar. "We were prepared to brain the brute with the legs of his own table, but he might have downed us. But we've downed him among us—what?"

"Oh, I should have settled him!" said Bunter. "I should have given him one fearful blow straight from the shoulder, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that would have settled his hash, with your weight behind it," chuckled the Caterpillar. "It seems that the honours are with Bunter! Three cheers for Bunter, and may his circumference never grow less!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Mr. Doolan, do you believe these chaps were in the house all the time, now?" asked Harry Wharton, laughing.

The old soldier rubbed his nose.

"Faith, and it's the surprise of me life," he said, "and that spalpeen was here, and me not knowin' it! And sure, I never knew that cellar was there; I've never seen that door before!"

"Crawley knew it."

"Sure, it's a spyin' baste he is! And he was hidin' an escaped Hun there!" exclaimed Doolan indignantly. "What will Sir William say?"

"Sir William will know the ead in his true colours now," said Harry Wharton grimly.

Crawley panted. His face was white as a sheet, and his knees knocked together.

"I—I can explain," he gasped. "You—you misjudge me. That—that man"—he cast a glance of hate at the bound Prussian—"he came here two nights ago and demanded shelter. He threatened me."

Ludwig Wolf burst into a harsh laugh.

"It is useless now," he said. "The game is up!"

"Hound!" yelled Crawley. "It is you who have ruined me! Why could you not take your chance, without troubling me here?"

"It isn't much good lying now, Mr. Crawley," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Ludwig Wolf came here to take shelter with you because he knew you were a spy in the pay of the Germans. He would never have come otherwise. You hid him there, to help him to escape later—unwillingly, I dare say."

Crawley ground his teeth.

It was easy to see that he had not been willing to take the terrible risk of hiding the escaped Hun in the house on the heath.

But he had been in Wolf's hands.

The rascal had presented himself, desperate, and Crawley had had no choice but to conceal him. Sir William and Doolan were sleeping, and the wretched spy had concealed the ruffian in the secret cellar—a secret he had discovered long before, and kept to himself, perhaps with a view to his own safety in case of suspicion.

The sudden arrival of the lost schoolboys when he had barely disposed of the fugitive had thrown the secretary into a panic, and it is quite easy now to understand his efforts to keep them out of the house.

Even then all might have gone well for him but for Bunter's expedition to search for food at the time when Crawley, believing all the juniors asleep, had stolen down to take food and drink to his unwelcome guest.

From that moment the wretched schemer had had little choice, and only the disappearance of the juniors could save him from an investigation that would have been fatal to him. And there was no doubt what his ultimate design was. When he had learned the secret of the invention, for which THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 461.

he had wormed himself into the scientific baronet's confidence, he would have fled, and the prisoners in the hidden cellar would have been left to their fate.

The rascal said no more. It was useless to lie; the truth was too evident. He stood unresisting while Bob Cherry bounds his hands. The juniors did not intend to allow the rascal to escape. They were jubilant at the capture of the Ludwig Wolf. But Crawley was the more valuable of the two. There was little doubt that he had learned much too. There was little doubt that "I" which Sir William already of the "new thing in Tanks" that he should not be planning, and it was very necessary to his countrymen.

"I rather think Sir William will be glad we came," remarked the Caterpillar, as the juniors marched their prisoners upstairs. "I suppose we ought to explain to him. I leave the job to the chap with the strongest lungs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, you can lave it to me, sorr," said Doolan. "This way!"

Ludwig Wolf, savage and sullen, and Crawley, white with fear, were marched up to the oak corridor. Doolan opened the door, and they entered. Sir William Romayne was there, seated in an armchair before a fire, conning over a paper covered with weird-looking figures. Evidently there was no Christmas repose for the baronet inventor. He looked up, with a knitting of his white brows, and started to his feet at the sight of the prisoners.

The explaining was left to Doolan, who was accustomed to talking to the deaf inventor.

Sir William listened, with amazement in his face, and when Doolan had finished he fixed a thunderous look upon the wretched Crawley.

"A spy!" he ejaculated. "Crawley, whom I trusted in spite of his origin. The scoundrel! My boys"—the baronet turned to the juniors—"my lads, I thank you with all my heart! You do not know how much you have done for your country. I do not think that villain has learned much of the secret of my laboratory; but if he did learn it, and informed his fellow-rascals at Berlin, my invention would have been useless; the Germans would have been ready for it. Doolan, telephone for the police at once! Stay! I will do it myself!"

The baronet turned to a telephone at his elbow.

Crawley fell upon his shaking knees.

"Mercy!" he muttered huskily.

"Take him away!" said the baronet.

The two prisoners, still bound, were placed in a room and locked in. And when the police came an hour later, tramping through the snow, Ludwig Wolf, the escaped Hun, and Crawley, the spy, were handed over to them.

And the Caterpillar remarked:

"I don't know whether this is what you fellows would call a merry Christmas. But I'm satisfied, for one."

"Same here!" grinned Bob Cherry. And Hurree Singh remarked that "the samfulness was terrific!"

And Billy Bunter chimed in:

"I've had a rotten time here. I was really thinking, Wharton, of telling you that under the circumstances I'd changed my mind, and I couldn't come home with you for the vac. But I can overlook it all, old chap, as it's Christmas-time, and you can depend on me to stick to you till we go back to Greyfriars!"

At which Harry Wharton laughed, and he did not say nay. After the sufferings of Billy Bunter in the hands of the Huns he was cheerfully allowed to inflict himself upon the Christmas-party.

And the next morning the party started through the snow in Sir William's car, and looked their last upon the House on the Heath.

There was a warm welcome waiting at Wharton Lodge. The party had certainly arrived rather late for Christmas-festivities, but, as Bob Cherry remarked, better late than never. It had come very near to being "never."

Later Courtenay and the Caterpillar joined the party at the Lodge, and the holiday was a merry one for all.

Colonel Wharton had heard the story of the strange adventure at the house on the heath with astonishment, and he heard it several times over from William George Bunter. And Bunter's version grew more wonderful every time, and, needless to say, the principal figure in his yarn was that of William George himself; and Billy Bunter, in his own estimation at all events, was the hero of the hour.

THE END.

Go't miss "THE WAY OF THE TRANSCRESSOR!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

# Extracts from Recent Numbers of "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD."

## BILLY BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS-BOX.

By FRANK NUGENT.

WE all chortled when Wharton showed us the letter from Miss Clara.

Bill House broke up a day before Greyfriars, and Clara wrote to tell us that she was home with Marjorie, and she put in a postscript, which was just like Clara:

"P.S.—I have had a letter from Bunter. Please give him a box on the ear from me."

"Well, is Bunter going to have his Christmas-box?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton laughed. "I don't know whether to give it to him—"

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled up. Of course, he had heard us. Bunter hears everything. "I say, just you hand it over—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter wrathfully. "If Miss Clara has sent me a Christmas-box, just you hand it over at once!"

"Fatehead!" said Wharton. "You see—"

"I see that I'm going to have my property," said Bunter. "You needn't think of keeping back what belongs to me, Wharton. I thought Miss Clara would send me some little keepsake for Christmas. She's rather gone on me, you know. I wrote her a rather sweet letter— Yarooohoo! You beast, (cherry! Keep your rotten hoofs to yourself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to give it to me?" roared Bunter. "Look here! If you don't hand it over at once, I'll complain to the Head, so there!"

The Head was walking in the Close, and he heard Bunter, and looked round.

"You ass!" said Wharton. "Shut up!"

"I won't shut up!" bawled Bunter. "I'm going to have what belongs to me!"

Dr. Locke came towards us, frowning.

"What is this?" he rapped out.

Wharton turned red.

"It—It's nothing, sir!" he stammered.

"Bunter, kindly explain your words!"

"It's all your fault, Wharton!" said Bunter. "I'm going to have justice! Miss Clara has sent me a Christmas present, sir, and Wharton won't give it to me!"

The Head frowned more severely.

"Is it possible? Is that the case, Wharton?"

"Not exactly, sir. It isn't exactly a Christmas present—"

"It's a Christmas-box, sir!" howled Bunter. "Miss Clara has asked Wharton to hand it to me, and he won't!"

"Is that correct, Wharton?"

"Well, yes, sir," admitted Harry.

"Wharton, I am surprised at you! It is somewhat odd that Miss Trevelyan should be sending Bunter a Christmas-box, but undoubtedly it is his property, and you must hand it to him at once!"

"But, sir—" stammered Wharton.

The doctor raised his hand.

"You need say no more, Wharton. I am surprised at you—indeed, shocked! You will give Bunter, in my presence, whatever it is Miss Trevelyan has sent for him."

"If you order me, sir—"

"I command you, Wharton!"

"Very well, sir!"

Harry Wharton stepped towards Bunter, who grinned in anticipation.

Bill!

"Yarooohoo!"

Billy Bunter uttered a yell that would have done credit to a Hun as Wharton's hand smote his fat ear.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head seemed petrified for a moment. Then he thundered:

"Wharton! How dare you? How—"

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"I was bound to obey you, sir," said Wharton meekly.

"What! You have struck Bunter—"

"I have given him a box, sir."

"A—a what?"

"A box, sir. That was what Miss Clara asked me to give him—a box on the ear, sir. You commanded me to give it to him in your presence, sir."

"Yaroooh! Ow, ow, ow!"

The Head looked at Wharton for a minute in a fixed sort of way. Then he said:

"Oh!"

We waited for the storm to burst. But it didn't burst. The Head's face seemed to work for a minute, and then he grinned—actually grinned. And he turned away without another word, and we heard him laughing as he walked off.

"Satisfied, Bunter?" asked Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow! Beast!" said Bunter.

Which was all the thanks Bunter gave for his Christmas-box.

## CHRISTMAS.

By DICK RUSSELL.

What makes us romp, with sparkling eyes,

And feel we're waltzing on the skies?

What makes the MAGNET twice the size?

Why, Christmas!

What fills our hearts with fun and mirth,

And makes our cares of little worth,

Although there is no "Peace on Earth"?

Why, Christmas!

What makes our sister's heart beat fast,

While Archie murmurs, gliding past,

"Aha! The mistletoe at last!"

Why, Christmas!

And while we gaily whirl and dance,

What makes us think of those in France,

Where daily grows the Great Advance?

Why, Christmas!

What makes the pater young in years,

While Bertie on his skates careers,

And Bob drinks endless ginger-beers?

Why, Christmas!

What makes the chaps of ill-repute,

At whom in rage we used to snort,

Come up and say: "What cheer, old sport!"

Why, Christmas!

And though the war's still raging hot,

And cherished hopes have gone to pot,

Are we downhearted? Not a jot!

It's Christmas!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

BUNTER'S THREAT.

"Dear Sir,—Threw the medium of yore paper, I wish to express my disgust in not being included in the Remove eleven which pleased Highlife. I am a footballer of no mean order, but owing to gellasy I am kepped out of the team. Although you one, you will be jucking other maches away bi not plaing me.

"Tel them to plai me, or take the consequences.—Yores, in very deep disgust, WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER."

(Really, Bunter, you are too funny to live! You almost caused my staff to explode with laughing. All I can say in answer to your letter is, to go and eat—well, anything you can get hold of. But you don't need telling that!—EDITOR.)

THE DUFFER'S INQUIRY.

"Dear Editor, would you kindly give an earnest reader of your paper advice on the keeping of white mice, and oblige?—Yours respectfully,

(My dear Duffer, you are not members of the Zoological Society, or we could probably oblige you. Try Professor Bunkum's book on the keeping of cage-birds.—EDITOR.)

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR! By FRANK RICHARDS.

## HERLOCK SHOLMES'S CHRISTMAS CASE

By PETER TODD.

I.

"Christmas to-morrow!" Herlock Sholmes remarked thoughtfully.

"I started."

"My dear Sholmes!" I murmured.

Herlock Sholmes smiled.

"You are surprised, Jotson, to hear me make that statement with such positiveness," he remarked. "Yet, I assure you that such is the case."

"I acknowledge, Sholmes, that I ought no longer to be surprised at anything you may say or do. But from what grounds do you infer—"

"Quite simple, my dear Jotson. Look from the window upon the dusky streets and the hurrying crowds, all indicative of the approach of Christmas!"

"True! But why to-morrow precisely?"

"Ah, there we go a little deeper, Jotson. I deduce that Christmas occurs to-morrow from a study of the calendar!"

"The calendar!" I exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Exactly!"

"As you know, Sholmes, I have endeavoured to study your methods, in my humble way, yet I confess that I do not see the connection—"

"Probably not, Jotson. But to the trained, professional, mind it presents no difficulties. Christmas, you are aware, falls upon the twenty-fifth day of the month!"

"True!"

"Look at the calendar, Jotson!"

I obeyed.

"It tells you nothing?"

"Nothing!" I confessed.

Sholmes smiled again, a somewhat bored smile.

"My dear fellow, the calendar indicates that to-day is the twenty-fourth!"

"Quite so. But—"

"And as Christmas falls upon the twenty-fifth, it follows—to an acute mind accustomed to rapid deductions—that to-morrow is Christmas!"

I could only gaze at my amazing friend in silent admiration. "But there will be no holiday for us to-morrow, my dear Jotson," resumed Herlock Sholmes. "I have received a wire from the Duke of Hookeywalker, who— Ah, his Grace has arrived!"

Even as Sholmes spoke the Duke of Hookeywalker was shown into our sitting-room.

Herlock Sholmes removed his feet from the mantelpiece with the graceful courtesy so natural to him.

"Pray, be seated," said Sholmes. "You may speak quite freely before my friend, Dr. Jotson!"

"Mr. Sholmes, I have sustained a terrible loss!"

Sholmes smiled.

"Your Grace has lost the pawnticket?" he inquired.

"Mr. Sholmes, you must be a wizard! How did you guess—"

"I never guess," said Herlock Sholmes quietly. "My business is to deal with facts. Pray let me have some details."

"It is true, Mr. Sholmes, that the pawnticket is missing," said the duke, in an agitated voice. "You are aware that the house of Hookeywalker has a great reputation for hospitality, which must be kept up even in these days of stress. It was necessary for me to give a large Christmas party at Hookey Castle, and, to obtain the necessary funds, the family jewels were pledged with Mr. Ikey Solomons, of Houndsditch. The ticket was in my own keeping—it never left me. I kept it in my own card-case. The card-case never left my person. Yet now, Mr. Sholmes, the ticket is missing!"

"And the card-case?"

"Still in my pocket!"

"When were the Hookeywalker jewels placed with Mr. Solomons?"

"Yesterday morning!"

"And the ticket was missing—"

"Last night," faltered the duke. "I looked in my card-case to make sure that it was still safe, and it was gone. How it had been purloined, Mr. Sholmes, is a mystery—an unfathomable mystery!"

"No mystery is unfathomable to a trained mind," said Sholmes calmly. "I have every hope of recovering the missing pawnticket."

"Mr. Sholmes, you give me new life. But how—"

Sholmes interrupted.

"After leaving Mr. Solomons' establishment, where did your Grace go?"

"I had to make a call at the Chinwag Department of the War Office, and from there I returned to Hookey Castle."

"You made no other call?"

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"None."

"It is scarcely possible that a skilled pickpocket is to be found in the Chinwag Department," said Sholmes thoughtfully.

"Impossible, Mr. Sholmes! Every official of that great Department is far above suspicion of being skilled in any manner whatsoever!"

"True!"

"There is no clue!" said the duke in despairing tones.

"But unless the missing ticket is recovered, Mr. Sholmes, the famous Hookeywalker jewels are lost!"

"You may leave the case in my hands," said Herlock Sholmes carelessly. "I may call at Hookey Castle with news for you to-morrow."

"Bless you, Mr. Sholmes!"

And the duke took his leave.

Herlock Sholmes lighted a couple of pipes, a habit of his when a particularly knotty problem required great concentration of thought. I did not venture to interrupt the meditations of that mighty intellect.

Sholmes spoke at last, with a smile.

"A very interesting little problem, Jotson. I can see that you are puzzled by my deduction that the pawnticket was lost before his Grace had mentioned it."

"I am astounded, Sholmes."

"Yet it was simple. I had heard of the great social gathering at Hookey Castle," explained Sholmes. "I deduced that his Grace could only meet the bills by hypothecating the family jewels. His hurried visit to me and his agitation could have had but one meaning—I deduced that the pawnticket was lost or stolen. Quite elementary, my dear Jotson! But the recovery of the missing ticket—"

"That will not be so simple, Sholmes."

"Who knows, Jotson?" Sholmes rose to his feet and drew his celebrated dressing-gown about him. "I must leave you for a short time, Jotson. You may go and see your patients, my dear fellow."

"One question, Sholmes. You are going—"

"To the Chinwag Department."

"But—"

But Herlock Sholmes was gone.

II.

I confess that Sholmes' behaviour perplexed me. He had declared that the pickpocket could not be found in the Chinwag Department, yet he had gone there to commence his investigations.

When he returned to Shaker Street, he made no remark upon the case, and I did not venture to question him. The next morning he greeted me with a smile as I came down into the sitting-room.

"You are ready for a little run this morning, Jotson?" he asked.

"I am always at your service, Sholmes."

"Good! Then call a taxi."

A few minutes later a taxicab was bearing us away. Sholmes had given the direction to the driver—"Hookey Castle."

"We are going to see the duke, Sholmes?" I asked.

He nodded.

"But the missing pawnticket?"

"Wait and see!"

This reply, worthy of a great statesman, was all I could elicit from Sholmes on the journey.

The taxi drove up the stately approach to Hookey Castle. A gorgeous footman admitted us to the great mansion, and we were shown into the presence of the duke.

His Grace had left his guests to see us. There was a slight impatience in his manner.

"My dear Mr. Sholmes," he said, "I supposed I had given you the fullest particulars yesterday. You have called me away from a shove-ha'penny party."

"I am sorry," said Sholmes calmly. "Return to the shove-ha'penny party, by all means, your Grace, and I will call another time with the pawnticket."

"The duke bounded to his feet."

"Mr. Sholmes! You have recovered it?"

Sholmes smiled. He delighted in these dramatic surprises.

The duke gazed with startling eyes at the slip of pasteboard my amazing friend presented to him.

"The missing pawnticket!" he ejaculated.

"The same!" said Sholmes.

"Sholmes!" I murmured. "I could say no more."

The Duke of Hookeywalker took the ticket with trembling fingers.

"Mr. Sholmes," he said, in tones of deep emotion, "you have saved the honour of the name of Hookeywalker! You will stay to dinner, Mr. Sholmes. Come, I insist—there will be tripe and onions!" he added.

"I cannot resist the tripe and onions," said Sholmes, with a smile.

And we stayed.



## III.

It was not till the taxi was whirling us homeward to Shaker Street that Herlock Sholmes relieved my curiosity.

"Sholmes!" I exclaimed, as the taxi rolled out of the stately gates of Hookey Castle. "How, in the name of wonder—"

Sholmes laughed.

"You are astounded, as usual, Jotson?"

"As usual, Sholmes."

"Yet it is very simple. The duke carried the pawnticket in his card-case," said Sholmes. "He called only at the Chinwag Department of the War Office before returning home. Only a particularly clever pickpocket could have extracted the ticket without the card-case, and, as his Grace himself remarked, it was useless to assume the existence of any particularly clever individual in a Government department. That theory, therefore, was excluded—the ticket had not been taken."

"Sholmes!"

"It had not been taken, Jotson," said Sholmes calmly. "Yet it had left the duke's possession. The question was—how?"

"I confess it is quite dark to me, Sholmes."

"Naturally," said Sholmes drily. "But my mental powers, my dear Jotson, are of quite a different calibre."

"Most true."

"As the ticket had not been taken from the duke, I deduced that he had parted with it unintentionally."

"But is that possible, Sholmes?"

"Quite! Consider, my dear Jotson. His Grace kept the pawnticket, for safety, in his card-case. On calling at the Chinwag Department, he sent in his card, naturally. By accident, Jotson, he handed over the pawnticket instead of his own card—"

"Sholmes!"

"And that ticket, Jotson, was taken in instead. That was the only theory to be deduced from the known facts. I proceeded to the Chinwag Department, and interviewed the official upon whom the duke called. There was a little difficulty in obtaining an interview; but he was awakened at last, and I questioned him. As I had deduced, the missing pawnticket was discovered on the salver, where it had lain unnoticed since the duke's call."

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed.

Sholmes smiled in a bored way.

"Elementary, my dear Jotson. But here we are at Shaker Street."

THE END.



## "WROTE SARCASTICK."

(This is another of Peter's Parodies. The original is a well-known verse by the Australian poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon, in which he speaks up for "KINDNESS in another's trouble, COURAGE in your own!" You will see what Toddy has made of it.—H. W.)

Cheer up, Buntz—though the summer's

Gone, hay may be made.

Suck up to the green new-comers—

Theim to lend persuade!

Nearly everything's a trouble—

These tips aren't quite bosh!

When you're eating, pray EAT DOUBLE!

When it's cold, DON'T WASH!



## IT IS RUMOURED—

That the Remove Eleven is the best team at Greyfriars.  
That Gosling dropped and smashed his whisky-bottle when Mr. Prout fired his famous .85 gun. (Evidently Gossy thought the report a bomb.—Ed.)

That Bunter puts on a stone a day. (Don't believe it! But he might if he got all the tuck he yearns for.—Ed.)

That our old boys are doing well with the Colours.

That Fisher T. Fish hasn't any new stunts for sneezing money from his fellow Form-mates. (This seems like a Hun wireless.—Ed.)

That he is still neutral.

That Christmas is coming!

That Bunter's postal-order has come! (Value 6d.—Ed.)

That Herr Gans is not a Prussian, but a Saxon. (Readers, please note.—Ed.)

That Mr. Quelch's eye is still sharp. (Which one?—Ed.)

That the Second and Third Forms have taken up marbles and hopscotch instead of footer. (Why don't the Fourth go and do likewise?—Ed.)

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## GREYFRIARS v. HIGHCLIFFE.

### A Rag-Time Parody.

By PETER TODD.

(NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—Toddy says that his parodies require no explanation as far as any intelligent reader is concerned, and that any silly ass can see what he is driving at. As this seems pretty comprehensive, perhaps it is scarcely in order for me to make any remarks; but I should have liked the whole story told, so that one could know which side won. Toddy will only say that he is not among the prophets, and give vague hints that this is a case of "to be continued in our next"—or some time later. Anyway, his parodies seem to me pretty good, and I like the first verse particularly. Most of you will remember that in "Horatius" Lars Porsena swore by the Nine Gods; but, as Peter says, Frank Courtenay knows better than to swear!—H. W.)

## I.

### COURTENAY'S VOW.

(After Macaulay's "Horatius"—a long way!)

Frank Courtenay of Highcliffe  
Too well brought up to stoop  
To swearing—vowed the laurels  
Of Greyfriars should droop.  
He vowed it to De Courcy,  
Who said, "By gad, old son,  
Rely on my assistance;  
I'm with you all the distance;  
But how's it to be done?"

## II.

### THE CATERPILLAR VOICES DOUBT.

(After "Tipperary.")

"It's a hard, hard job to beat Greyfriars;  
It's a hard, hard job, my son;  
But the hardest jobs, you say, are worth the trying  
When there's glory to be won!  
Good-bye to slacking, sane or silly,  
Good-bye to any hope of rest;  
It's a hard, hard job to beat Greyfriars,  
But we won't give it best!"

## III.

### COURTENAY TURNS DOWN THE NUTS.

(After Scott's "Bonnie Dundee"—but not catching up!)

To the Ponsoy gang it was Courtenay who spoke,  
And he said in effect: "You can go and eat coke!"  
But his actual words were: "You're no good to me  
Or to Highcliffe—bold nuts who think blagging a spree  
Can pack up their traps and clear out of my sight!  
It's a win we are out for, and fellows who might  
Play well if they would are n.g. chaps who can  
And who will do their best are my team, every man!"

## IV.

### WHARTON ADDRESSES HIS MEN ON RECEIPT OF THE CHALLENGE.

(After Campbell's "Ye Mariners of England"—still chasing!)

"Ye juniors of Greyfriars,  
Who hold her honour dear,  
Who know not sloth nor slackness,  
Who fumble not nor fear!  
Line up in ordered ranks again,  
To meet your old-time foe,  
And smash with a crash  
Through the best that he can show;  
While our glad spectators shout 'Hoorsay!'  
And Highcliffe's full of woe!"

## V.

### GREYFRIARS ANTICIPATES VICTORY.

(After "Little Grey Home in the West.")

When Highcliffe is whacked to the wide,  
We shall chortle and yell with delight;  
For to lick them we mean,  
To keep our slugs clean,  
Though we know it will be a good fight,  
They may play as they never have played—  
Backs and forwards and goalie as well,  
With Courtenay the dashing,  
And De Courcy the flashing,  
But of Highcliffe this tale we shall tell:

All they knew how to do, that they did.  
 They were clever and fast, they were strong  
 They passed and they kicked  
 Like good men, but were licked;  
 And we sing now our gay triumph song.  
 We will sing it at eve and at morn—  
 That of two hefty teams we were best;  
 When a draw seemed assured,  
 Then a staunch Friar scored.  
 "Pacep, pheep." Highcliffe's hopes had gone West!

## VI.

### THE DAY OF THE MATCH.

(After Kipling's "Ballad of East and West"—a long, long way after!)

Oh, form is form, and strength is strength, and never we'll own defeat  
 From a team we've beaten not once nor twice, and reckon we always can beat!  
 But facts are facts, and none can deny that when Highcliffe goes all out,  
 With all their men at the top of their form, there's credit in winning the bout!

Frank Courtenay has chosen his team, and a rare good team it is,  
 With defence and attack of the soundest and best, and every-one meaning biz!  
 And the Highcliffe men to Greyfriars have come, all ready for the fray.  
 They are full of confidence and of beans, and mean to carry the day.

## VII.

### THE HIGHCLIFFE TEAM.

(After Longfellow's "Wreck of the Hesperus"—long after!)

It was the Highcliffe skipper bold  
 Who stepped upon the field;  
 Likewise the Caterpillar,  
 And nine more, to combat steeled.  
 Ruddy their cheeks with the glow of health;  
 And they looked what they were—staunch chaps,  
 Who vesp out to win, whatever the odds,  
 And would win in the end—perhaps!

## VIII.

### THE HIGHCLIFFE SKIPPER.

(After Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel"—a bit added!)

A forward fine was Courtenay;  
 Dashing and tricky was his play.  
 Past backs and half-back 'gainst him striving  
 He'd twist, by skill and pace contriving  
 To baffle all that they might do,  
 And to the mouth of goal get through!

## IX.

### THE GREYFRIARS TEAM.

(After Macaulay's "Horatius"—panting, but pursuing still!)

And out upon the rope-ringed turf  
 Sirode the Greyfriars men;  
 And all Greyfriars roared applause  
 As they looked upon them then.  
 There, curly-headed Wharton,  
 With bright new boots well shod;  
 Bob Cherry with the sunny face,  
 Frank Nugent of the girlish grace,  
 The tricky Bounder, full of pace,  
 And lanky Peter Todd!

## X.

### A GOAL FOR HIGHCLIFFE.

(After Mrs. Hemans' "Casablanca"—years after!)

Our Hazel stood between the posts,  
 With calm, intrepid air,  
 And cast his glance o'er the rival hosts  
 That strove for victory there.  
 Then came a rush of the Highcliffe bands—  
 Hazel—oh, where was he?  
 Mixed up in the net, with the ball in his hands!  
 And Highcliffe roared with glee.  
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## XI.

### NUGENT IN THE WARS.

(After Kipling's "M. I."—m-i-g-t be nearer.)

I'm glad my mother can't see me now, mud-plastered from heels to head,  
 Limping hard from a kick—sheer accident—and the ruby flowing red;  
 She'd be horrified, I'm jolly sure, and think it a bitter shame  
 That the other side should maul me so,  
 Though 'twas all in the way of fairness, I know,  
 And nobody minds with a friendly foe—  
 It's all in the glorious game!

## XII.

### THE GAME GOES AGAINST HIGHCLIFFE.

(After Scott's "Marmion"—limping behind!)

When to his feet they got him then,  
 Round gazed Frank Courtenay on his men,  
 "Play up, De Courey! Smithson, play!  
 Not yet is lost the doubtful day,  
 Charge down the field with might and main!  
 Pass, dribble, rush, and pass again!"

(I do not feel justified in writing "The End" here. But this is where Toddy rang off, except for a verse that does not seem to have anything to do with footer, as it is about Bunter. You will find it elsewhere. I had to promise to put it in, or have the other stuff withdrawn!—H. W.)

## THE ESTEEMED EDITOR'S PAGE.

By HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH.

The esteemed and ludicrous Editor having requestfully asked me to undertake this column, it is with terrific pleasure that I address my honourable and ridiculous readers.

The Remove football record up-to-datefully has been first-chop. The esteemed Highcliffe Eleven have been beaten widefully, after a drawful match in which the honours were uneasy. The esteemed Temple & Co. of the Fourth Form have been forced to conceal their diminished heads, and the champions of the Shell have had to sing smallfully. In all their matches the Remove Eleven have achieved glory and honourable mention.

The match with Redclyffe was terrifically keen. In the first half the stormy windfulness did blow in the august countenances of the Remove, and the noble and ridiculous Redclyffians scored twicefully. After the change of endfulness, Fortune gazed smilefully on the Remove, and the ball was put in goalfully by the esteemed Wharton, and secondfully by Squiff. The drawfulness appeared a sure thing and dead cert; when on the strokefulness of time the esteemed Smithy rushed the leather in with active kickfulness for goal. The majestic goalkeeper stepped forthfully with the ball, only to be chargefully knocked back by the rushful Smithy, and the ball was secured netfully. Terrific cheers greeted the victory of the admired and disgusting Removeites. The esteemed Smithy was carried shoulderfully from the field amid loud cheerfulness.

We have received a letter from the respected and despised Fishy, which runs followfully:

"Dear Mr. Editor,—I guess I can give you the office how to make your rag a success. I reckon what it wants is a bustling editor from New York who will make things hum. I calculate I'll undertake to work the raffle on businesslike terms, spot cash. Business from the word 'go' is my motto. What'll you offer for my services?  
 "Yours for spot cash,  
 "FISHER TABLETON FISH."

We beg to offer the esteemed and swankful Fishy a dot in his esteemed eye, which he may receive any day by calling at this office.

The august Coker of the Fifth has also addressed us letterfully:

"Sir,—I understand that you have the blessed cheek to make phun of me in the collums of your rag rag. I, au riting to tell you that if this gows on, I shall drop in at No. 1 Study and mopp up the lot of you.  
 "HORACE COKER."

We note that the esteemed Coker understands that we make fun of him, and we beg to express our respectful astonishment that the majestic Coker understands anything!

"THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!" By FRANK RICHARDS. 35

# THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 1.—HARRY WHARTON.



In starting a series such as this there is, of course, a choice of subjects. But it is rather a limited one. It would be possible to begin with Dr. Locke, the revered Head of the school, or with George Wingate, the school's captain. But, if not one of these two, then No. 1 of the series must surely be none other than Harry Wharton, the acknowledged leader of the Remove, the Form with which the stories are chiefly concerned.

The chief objection to Wharton, in the eyes of many readers, appears to be that he is not Bob Cherry!

If a poll were taken as to the most popular character in this great story cycle, I feel tolerably sure that Bob Cherry would head the list. Compared with him, say some of my correspondents, who are never tired of discussing the merits and demerits of the Greyfriars heroes, Wharton is stand-offish, proud, uncertain of temper.

But the genial Bob, with all his many good qualities, is not the born leader that Harry Wharton is. There never yet was a leader of men or boys who did not find himself unpopular at times. For a leader, unless, indeed, he be one of the type that lead only when pushed, sees further than his followers; and there is always likely to be trouble during the period when they are gradually coming round to his point of view.

He came to the school unwillingly—a sulky, ill-tempered youngster, full of possibilities, but needing to be shaped.

Greyfriars shaped him; and, in return, he has taken a big hand in influencing for good many a Greyfriars fellow since. Some foolish readers have called him a prig. If it is prigish to be utterly honourable, self-sacrificing, generous, loyal—then, indeed, is Harry Wharton a prig! And the more prigish of that type there are the better!

He came under a cloud, at odds with his uncle, passionate, sullen; and before he reached Greyfriars he had quarrelled with Frank Nugent, destined to be his closest chum. But he saved Nugent from a watery death, and Frank never forgot that.

Bulstrode, a brutal bully in those days, and Wharton naturally fell foul of one another. But it was Wharton's fault that, when Bob Cherry blew in, genial and sunny and ready to make friends with any decent fellow, he and Wharton got at odds and fought. In those days Harry's knowledge of boxing was a minus quantity, and Bob licked him to the wick, and told him after the fight that he was "a spiteful rotter!" And Bob meant it, too!

Then Wharton distinguished himself by lucking against compulsory footer. Very wisely, Wingate left his own Form to deal with him. They dealt with him faithfully and effectively.

But brighter days were coming. Wharton learned to box, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 461.

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learned to keep his temper in leash, made friends with Bob Cherry and with other fellows of the right sort.

He played a big part in rescuing Marjorie Hazeldene from the gipsies who had kidnapped her. He enhanced his popularity with the Form by the fair-and-square beating of Bulstrode. He saved the wayward Peter Hazeldene from something very like ruin. And this although only a few weeks before Hazeldene had been guilty of a base scheme against him.

Elected captain of the Form, he took his duties very seriously indeed, as he has always done since. Too seriously, some thought; but they were mostly those who wanted to be left alone to go the way they should not go.

Colonel Wharton, visiting Greyfriars, saw plainly the change in his nephew, but the reconciliation of the two was only brought about by their standing in the very shadow of death together. Since then, though there have been misunderstandings between them, the bond of affection has been as strong as the bond of blood.

To tell here of all the exploits in which Harry Wharton has been concerned, of all the ups and downs of his life at the Kentish school, would take up far too much space, and would leave too little to be told when one came to deal with his friend; and his enemies—all to be dealt with one by one, if this series catches on.

But one must not forget to mention the revolt he led against the faddist Form-master; his plucky rescue of Levison—afterwards of St. Jim's—fog-bound and lost on Black Pike; his efforts, vain but real, to keep that same erratic junior out of trouble; the manner in which he stood up for Wun Lung, the little Chinese, and again for Mark Linley, the Lancashire factory lad, when the hand of almost everyone else was against them; how he backed up Miss Locke, the Head's sister, from Girton, showing real chivalry when too many of the rest forgot, in their dislike of her ways, that she was a lady, and that they were, in name at least, gentlemen; how he adopted a boy—a curious break this, even for Harry Wharton; how he had to face the enmity of Bulstrode, and wore down that enmity by sheer generosity.

Nor must one forget the coming of the Bounder, and the long, hard struggle between him and Wharton. But this may be referred to more fully when it comes to dealing with Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Then there was the time when Wharton was asked to resign the captaincy, and did so, and Bulstrode filled his place. There was the day when Harry, sickening for illness, stood up to Bulstrode, and was licked, but took his gruel like a man. There was the time when, through a rank outsider, Bob Cherry was expelled, and in all the school Wharton and Linley alone remained loyal to the dear fellow whom all had liked so well—but had not loved as those two loved him!

Then Bolsover came along, and started operations by thrashing Harry. And there was the new election for Form captain, with the Bounder standing against Harry, and loyal Juky's race against time to give his chum the vote that made the contest a tie!

Back in the captaincy again, Wharton finds the Bounder's enmity stronger than ever. The Bounder gets Nugent sacked, gets Johnny Bull sacked, tricks Linley into leaving the school on the very eve of an important exam, gets Wharton sacked! Then Bob Cherry plays a lone hand, a desperate game, and wins!

Of all that has passed since then there is scant room to tell. But one episode stands out in high relief—the quarrel with Frank Nugent, when, through Wharton's besetting sin of pride, the chums who had seemed inseparable drift apart, miserable both, to come together again at length. Much of the rest will be referred to in further articles of the series.

No perfect character, this Harry Wharton! He has his faults, but they are venial ones. His temper is too quick, but he generally holds it in leash; he is capable of sulking, but he does not often sulk; he is proud, but pride is half a virtue. And against all that may be set the fact that he is utterly honest; he is a staunch friend, a generous foe; he leads by right of capacity, because the spirit of leadership is in him, and he does not fear to be unpopular if he is only sure that he is right!

Look out for No. 2 of this Series—

BOB CHERRY.



## Our Great School Serial.

THE FOURTH FORM  
AT FRANKLINGHAM.

By Richard Randolph.

## THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS TOLD HOW

two new boys appeared at Franklingham School on the same day. One is a senior—CONRAD HARDING CARDENDEN—the cousin and enemy of HARRY GRANVILLE, the popular captain of the school. The other is a junior—JOHNNY GOGGS, who looks soft, but is by no means as soft as he looks. Goggs chums up with three other members of the Fourth—BLOUNT, TRICKETT, and WATERS—and shares their study. Goggs is quite an exceptionally good all-round athlete for a boy of his age, but he does not blow his own trumpet; and though his chums know that he can run and jump, and that he has made a heavy entry for the school sports, it is quite by chance that his ability as a footballer is discovered. He and his chums plan a trick upon one AMINADAB JARKER, a cross-grained old cobby. Meanwhile, Cardenden has had a row with Granville, the result of which is that Cardenden is transferred to another House, and loses all chance of becoming a prefect. The four Fourth-Formers devise a plot to set Jarker and P.-c. BUSWELL in rivalry for the hand of Jane Green, cook at Grayson's House. Sports Day comes. House rivalry is keen. Grayson's House defeats Hayter's by a single point, very largely through the splendid work put in by Goggs, who proves himself an all-round athlete of high class. In the last senior race Cardenden deliberately spikes Granville; but only the captain and Goggs know that the thing was intentional. After the sports are over Goggs receives an unexpected flying visit from his uncle, MR. RODERICK INGLEBY, a very clever private detective, of whom the boy has always talked as his grandmother. Mr. Ingleby has met Cardenden before, in very suspicious surroundings, and he warns his nephew to be on his guard against the senior. The draw for the House Footer Cup is made, and Grayson's are drawn against Hayter's. Goggs, Bags, and Tricks all have places in their House team. Cardenden goes over to Howlisham, and makes the acquaintance of a certain MR. BRIGHTON FORTESCUE, a dissipated adventurer.

(Now read on.)

## Grayson's v. Hayter's.

"You don't mean to say you're at school?" Mr. Fortescue said, when the senior told him. "Why, I'd have sworn you must have finished with that sort of thing ages ago! A fellow of your spirit, and your knowledge of the world—oh, don't tell me you're a mere school-boy, because I'm not going to believe it! A master, now—no; that won't do! They never have any money to spend, poor beggars!"

"As a matter of fact," Cardenden answered, "I left school a year ago, and I've only gone back now because it suits my book."

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"Ah, that's more like it! Must be a bit slow for you, though."

"Slow as a funeral—dull as ditch-water! I don't know how to stick it, that's a fact!" replied Cardenden.

"No chance of getting over here often, I suppose?"

"Not likely, worse luck! My teeth made an excuse this afternoon. Every tooth in my head is sound; but the boulder I asked for special leave couldn't very well examine them."

"Know the Crown and Sceptre at Franklingham?"

"Yes, I know it. The only decent pub in the little one-horse village."

"That's it," said Mr. Fortescue. "Jandlord's on old job of mine. I'm going to look him up one day before long. Why shouldn't you drop in and have a flutter with the pasteboards, or a knock on the green cloth?"

"I'm supposed to be keeping specially fit for a football match, and I actually did train hard up to a few days ago for the sports. But—yes, I think I will! Drop me a line when you're coming, and I'll fix it up."

"Bless you, you needn't keep fit! A fellow of your stamp can be all over those schoolboys without taking any trouble in that way."

Cardenden knew better. He thought of Johnny Goggs, and felt his choler rise.

"Perhaps I may be able to help you with the job you've got in hand over there," said Mr. Fortescue insinuatingly.

"Possibly. We'll see. Ah, here comes my train! So long! Pleased to have met you!"

"May not be so pleased when I've done with you!" muttered Mr. Brighton Fortescue—to his cigar, as it seemed, for he took it from between his teeth and contemplated it thoughtfully. "Nice had you are—oh, no, not at all; and with the very decency of a revengeful, spiteful, malicious spirit in you! Got to keep on your right side if I'm to touch the spot. I can see that. Well, it's no odds to me who gets knocked down and trampled on, so long as I keep my feet!"

The ropes around the pitch on which Grayson's and Hayter's had just lined up were crowded. The whole school was keen on this match.

Thus the teams turned out:

Grayson's: Noon; Granville and Parker; Barnes, Pennell, and Williams major; Trickett, Acton, Goggs, Williams minor, and Blount.

Hayter's: Wade; Christy I. and Tilton; Wingfield, Petworth, and Ball; Allardyce, Christy II., Cardenden, Christy III., and Bliss.

The three Christys were valuable assets to their side. They did not shine specially in the class-rooms; they were only moderate cricketers; they had done nothing in the sports. But at football they were all there, and each of the three had his First Eleven Colours. The younger two were twins, in

"THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

the Fifth: the eldest was a prefect, and one of the fellows who had taken to Cardenden.

Ford of Waymark's, captain of footer, reared.

Thorp!

He had put the whistle to his lips, and as it sounded Goggs kicked off against a strongish wind blowing right down the pitch.

A brief run by the black-and-white forward line was checked by the reds' defence. Tilson kicked hard and high, and the ball was carried by the wind almost down to the Grayson goal.

Granville stopped it, and put it along the ground to Pennell, usually the safest of halves.

But Cardenden caught Pennell napping this time. Before he could pass the leather on to his forward line the new senior was upon him, and had flicked the ball from his feet. Parker charged at him in vain, and as Granville moved forward to tackle him he shot, lifting the ball well into the goal-mouth.

It was an awkward shot to deal with. Noon had to jump; and at the last second the wind swept the ball, and, though he touched it, it went under the bar, struck the upper net hard, and dropped to ground there.

"Beastly sorry, old chap!" said Pennell.

"Never mind, Penny! Better luck next time!" answered Granville.

"I say, Gran, I couldn't help it, really!" Nova said apologetically.

"I know you couldn't, old man. The wind did you." For shakiness he had no sympathy, but for the failure of a real trier plenty. The two who had allowed that goal between them, though neither was really much in fault, were backed up by his replies to their apologies.

A goal in the first three minutes! It did not look promising for Grayson's. But, of course, they knew that the wind blowing down the ground was certain to help the other side's attack.

If it did not drop it would help them later. But, on the whole, the advantage is bigger in having the wind first. Any side is handicapped by crossing over several goals down.

The black-and-white forward line was not shoving at all hardy. Goggs' passes to his wings were all along the ground, and he seemed gifted with an uncanny power of gauging the wind's influence. They nearly always went straight, those passes. And soon his colleagues noted it, and were careful also to keep the ball down. Lifting more than a few inches, it was liable to be taken in the wrong direction by the wind.

They gave Wade no trouble at present. Tilson and Christy—the First Minster—were his shuns called him—dealt with their attacks before they got within shooting range.

But on the whole Granville was very well satisfied. Goggs was playing a quiet game, with nothing showy about it. He had a fairly good half opposed to him, and he made no attempt at dribbling through on his own. He was quick to pass out, and give his wings a chance, and if they could not make very much of the chances given them as yet, they were getting into shape for later on.

Pennell was putting in fine work. Time after time he held Cardenden up. Not again would he be so easily beaten.

But with it all the pressure was great, and Granville, Parker, and Noon were hard put to it to save heavy scoring.

Parker showed greater dash than ever before. He had always been pretty safe, but hitherto a trifle slow. Neither he nor Granville lifted the ball much. They knew that not so could they clear; the wind would bring it back. So they kicked low, generally to the halves in front of them.

Half an hour had gone, and still only the one goal was registered.

"Make-make-make-Hay-Hay-Hay-Hayter's!" roared the partisans of the red around the ropes.

But Hayter's did not seem able to make hay.

"That chap Cardenden isn't as good as we reckoned," said one senior to another.

"Got a pretty big handful in Pennell," was the reply.

"Yes, I admit that. But, after all, a centre-forward who can be bottled up by the opposing half is no great shakes."

They did not realise any more clearly than Cardenden did that he was being bottled up. And he did not like it a bit.

Cardenden had not often met a half as good as Pennell. The fellow was so cool and so unbeatable. If his opponent slipped past, he was after him in an instant, worrying him, struggling, hampering. He kicked equally well with either foot, and headed in great style. And he was in first-class condition, while Cardenden was not.

The new senior had already paid a visit or two to the Crown and Scripture, having found it quite easy to get out THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 461.

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after prep. That sort of thing soon destroys all the good effect of training.

Within ten minutes of half-time, and still with only one goal to their credit, Hayter's were by no means on velvet.

But now came a change.

Pennell went over for the first time, fairly lifted off his feet by a vicious charge from Cardenden. The dark senior dashed on, with the ball at his toes, eluded Parker's charge, and crashed right into Granville. Grayson's skipper staggered, and slipped up on a worn patch of turf. Cardenden shot at close quarters, and Noon had no chance.

From the kick-off the black-and-white forward line got away nicely, and this time made more ground. There was a moment of thrilling suspense when Goggs slipped round Tilson and shot. It looked like a scoring shot, too. But Wade caught the leather in his hands and punted it hard down the field.

It fell close to Christy II., otherwise the Second Minster. He dodged Williams major, and passed across to his brother, then ran on, and twenty yards further down received from the Third Minster, who had meanwhile beaten Barnes.

The Third Minster and Parker were almost in contact, when a deft side-kick sent the leather straight to Cardenden, who put in a regular pile-driving shot before Granville could reach him.

Noon flared out, but the wind made the ball hang, and the Second Minster, darting in, headed it into the net.

Three down! The whistle sounded for half-time.

Some Graysonites were inclined to think the case hopeless. But Granville did not so think.

"If they'd scored twice the number I wouldn't give up hope," he said. "How could they help having the best of it, with that wind behind them? If you ask me, we've done jolly well!"

Then he called the three juniors to him. Thus far Bags and Tricks had not played any great part in the game. They had had little chance.

"Don't be afraid of long passes now," he told them. "Keep the game open. Pass square, or even a little back.

The wind will do the trick for you. If the pass is too forward, you'll lose the ball. Make ground along the touch-lines, you two; but don't run down too far before you middle, or you'll see the leather go behind. Goggs, if you don't score, I'm not sure anybody will. Acton wants things just his way, and Williams can't shoot with his right foot. So don't be too wasteful near goal."

"Very well, Granville," answered Goggs gravely.

Then the captain spoke to Acton and Williams minor.

"Pass in to Goggs when you get near goal, you fellows," he said. "He's a nailing shot!"

"He's a nailing altogether!" answered Acton. "Goggs is all right, Gran."

For Pennell too, the skipper had a word in season.

"Shoot whenever you get half a chance, Penny," he said. "Wade don't like the high, dropping ones."

"All serene, Gran!" answered the school centre-half.

#### Ordered ON!

Now the teams lined up again, and Cardenden restarted the ball.

He did not look too fit. While Goggs, though he had been working hard, had scarcely turned a hair, the other House's centre-forward was palpably tired.

But that mattered less, perhaps, since Tilson's orders had evidently been that his side should concentrate on defence, hanging on hard to their lead, and making no special effort to increase it.

"They had in Wade one of the best goalkeeper Frankingham had ever reared, and in Tilson and Christy I, the best school backs. But the halves were by no means up to the same standard.

Within five minutes of the resumption it was evident that the pressure exercised by Hayter's in the first half was to be equalled by Grayson's in the second.

Granville and Parker were playing almost up to the half-way line, and often a kick from the skipper sent the leather well into the mouth of goal, where Tilson had maced his battalions.

"Gray-Gray-Gray-Gray-Grayson's!" yelled eager partisans on the ropes.

"Oh, buck up, Billy Two!"

"That was a Williams minor, who was scarcely at his best.

"Well maddled, Bags! Oh, bee-autiful!"

"Well shot, Goggles! Goal! No, it's not! Oh, hard lines!"

Then Allardyce got the ball, and went off like a hare on the left. He saw his chance. He had been just clear of an

appeal for off-side. Already he was past the two backs in the magpie shirts. The Christys were running hard, nearly level with him; but Cardenden he could not see.

Parker was outdistanced. But between the Second and Third Minstrels ran Granville, and in goal waited Noon, ready to dash out if need be.

"Pass, Dicebox—pass!" yelled someone. But Allardyce knew better. He had a clear run, and the Christys would be there to help him near goal. He ran on.

Close behind the Christy twins ran two more Graysonites—Goggs and Pennell. Goggs had seen Parker hopelessly out-gogged for pace, and had darted back. Now he was level with the twins and Granville. Now a spurt took him beyond all three, and he whipped round with his back to his own goal again.

Allardyce muddled from close on the goal-line. The ball fell between the Second Minstrel and Goggs. The junior was not the nearest, but he was the quickest.

He was on it! A deft touch, and he had passed Christy.

"Bravo!" roared Pennell.

"Go on, Goggs—go on!" cried Granville.

Cardenden charged at the junior he hated. But, with a wriggle like an eel's, Johnny Goggs was past Cardenden. Petworth faced him, and Ball was closing in. He tricked Petworth, and outpaced Ball.

Before him now were those two stalwarts, Tilson and the First Minstrel. But behind him was the wind, and he had not left that out of his calculations.

He ran on as if he meant to dribble past the two school backs—sheer cheek for a junior! But, as Tilson charged in at him, he lifted the ball clear over Tilson's head, over Christy's, aiming, as it seemed, for the bar.

"Well shot!" shouted Granville, yet scarcely dared to hope. For Wade certainly did not like the high-ones, yet nevertheless he was not easily to be beaten.

Christy, turning his head, saw Goggs run past him, and realised his mistake. Wade had to jump. He fisted, but failed to get much force into it, and the ball dropped almost at his feet. And even as he kicked, Goggs' foot hooked the leather past him and into the net, amid a tremendous burst of cheering.

Grayson's cheered like mad. But the match was not over yet, and for a time after that victory looked none too certain. For the wind suddenly dropped, and the game became more open.

Cardenden seemed to be slacking. As a matter of fact, he was doing all he knew how, but his bolt was shot. It was no bad move that Tilson made when he asked Christy I. to go up into the forward line, brought Petworth to right-back, and let Cardenden take Petworth's place at centre-half.

The First Minstrel was not an ideal centre-forward. But he was a bustling, lusty player, and his brothers, who had been feeling a bit fed-up with Cardenden, hailed his coming to reinforce them with delight.

There followed a fine run down the field, in which all five of the red-shirted forwards played a part, the two speedy juniors on the wings giving good help to the slower but more powerful players inside. Allardyce muddled from near the corner-flag in capital style, and the elder Christy scored with a shot that gave Noon no chance.

An unexpected setback for Grayson's! But they were not disheartened, though the Hayter's war-cry had now a shrill note of triumph in it.

Now the magpie forward-string got going nicely. Tricks started the run, and in the course of some sixty yards each of the five had had the ball, and had made ground with it. No better piece of concerted short-passing had been seen during the game so far.

Tilson charged Goggs just as he was shooting, and the ball merely tricked towards goal. Wade ran out to meet it. Acton ran in to get it. They met. Acton's shoulder took Wade full in the chest and sent him sprawling, and the ball rolled into the net.

Four-two! Twenty-five minutes to go!

"I say, look out for that young beggar, Cardenden!" said Tilson.

The dark senior scowled. It did not please him at all to have Goggs running round him, but to tumble Goggs over was more than he could manage. The junior always seemed able to slip past.

Again the black-and-white shirts raided well into the reds' territory, and again Goggs slipped past Cardenden.

Straining every nerve, the older fellow went in pursuit. Goggs heard him thundering behind, but went on coolly. Then something took him right in the back, and he crashed forward on to his face.

"Foul!" cried a hundred voices.

"It was entirely an accident," said Cardenden to Ford. "I was trying to get in front of him, and I slipped. See, there's the greasy patch that did it!"

Ford glanced at the patch, but he blew his whistle. The foul had occurred just outside the penalty area.

"I'm very sorry to talk about slipping," said Christy II. to

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Next Monday's Number of THE "MAGNET" will be the usual price, 1d., and will contain a Long Complete Story entitled

Christy III.; "but a chap don't put all that force into it when he slips. I don't like that chap, Joe!"

"Not sure that I do myself, Jim," was the answer.

The free-kick yielded no definite result, and for a few minutes thereafter Hayter's had all the best of the game.

"Hurt, kid?" asked Williams minor of Goggs, who seemed shaken and looked pale.

"Nothing to speak of, I thank you," was the sedate answer.

But Goggs was hurt. He had fallen with his right arm under him, and had come down upon his doubled wrist. It felt very painful indeed.

He forgot all about it when the ball came to his feet, though.

The Second Minstrel charged at him, but vainly. Cardenden charged furiously, and even more vainly, for he sprawled headlong as the elusive junior slipped past him.

Petworth hesitated a moment when he should have gone forward to meet Goggs, and in that moment Goggs had slipped between him and Tilson on a diagonal that looked more likely to take him to the corner-flag than to the goal.

But in full career he wheeled round, the ball still at his toes, and put in a hot shot at a very awkward angle.

Wade got to it, but it glanced off his fist into the net, and the Grayson House yell rose and swelled again.

Four—three! Fifteen minutes left. Anybody's game!

Bags rushed up to his chum and seized him by the right hand.

Then he saw the look of acute pain that crossed Goggs' face, and knew that something was amiss.

"What's the matter, old chap?"

"Do not say anything, I beg! I have sprained my wrist—only slightly, but it hurts."

"It was that cad Cardenden, hang him!"

Cardenden heard, and cast a baleful glance at the speaker.

"You can't go on playing, old man!"

"But I can, and I must! Get back to your place, Bags,

please."

Christy I. kicked off, and Pennell stopped a hot rush, and put the leather neatly to Goggs' feet. Goggs passed to Acton, who went round an opponent, and then along the ball hard across to Bags. Bags hurried down the touch-line, and muddled nicely.

Williams minor got his forehead to the ball and sent it high into goal. Wade, jumping to reach it, staggered backwards into the net, gasping, and the ball dropped on top of him.

"I trust I did not hurt you," said Goggs politely. "It seemed to me imperative to charge."

"Oh, confound you! Help me up, you young rascal!" cried Wade, and clutched at the junior's hand.

Plucky though he was, Goggs could not keep back a low cry. It was his injured wrist that had borne Wade's pull, and the pain was almost unbearable.

"I say, what's the row?" inquired Wade, getting up without help.

"Nothing of importance. My wrist is hurt a bit, that is all," answered Goggs. "We must not waste time."

He hurried back to his place.

"That's a plucked one, Tilson," said Wade.

"Who?"

"Young Goggs. Seems he sprained his wrist when he went down, but didn't let on about it till I was ass enough to give his arm a jerk."

Tilson looked grave. In spite of his inclination to like Cardenden, he had not been able to believe that foul accidental. And Tilson abhorred shady tactics.

"He can charge, too. Wonder where he gets the force from, for he hasn't any weight to speak of, and don't look to have much muscle," went on Wade. "He fairly bowled me over."

But Tilson did not hear. The ball had been restarted, and all his attention was given to the game. Hayter's could not afford another slip. Tilson began to wonder whether he had not better bring his original partner to back again.

No! The Christys were off, passing from one to another, making ground fast. Pennell was beaten. The First Minstrel, with ball at toes, met Granville. If he could but get past!

But he couldn't! Shoulder to shoulder they met, and Christy staggered, and Granville had the leather, and sent it hard across to Bags on the outside-left.

Allardyce, within a few yards of his rival, turned and chased him, and Allardyce was Bags' master in speed. But the slight start served. Wade was a storn chase, and Bags ran as if for his life. Wingfield charged down on him, but charged in vain. Bags ran on, and, just before Allardyce came up level with him, kicked hard and true for goal.

Acton, Goggs, and Williams all rushed. Tilson and Petworth met them. There was a brief mix-up, in which the ball seemed lost for a few seconds, while Wado watched, lynx-eyed, from his line. Then the leather came out, propelled downward by Tilson, and the little crowd broke up.

Pennell stopped the ball, and put it cleverly to Goggs, who half turned to meet it.

Goggs whisked round. A foot shot out from somewhere, and he went sprawling.

Ford's whistle shrieked. He pointed to the penalty-kick mark. Then he walked up to Cardenden.

"Your foot, I think?" he said, with ironic politeness.

"It was absolutely unintentional. I was trying to hook the ball from him."

"Can't have these accidents happening so often. Go off the field!"

"What?"

Cardenden stared at the footer captain as though he could not believe his ears.

"Go off the field!"

"This is altogether too thick! I refuse. It was——"

"Go off the field, or, by the living jingo, I'll kick you off it!" cried Ford.

With clenched fists and blazing eyes Cardenden faced him.

"You can't refuse," said Tilson. "Make the best of a bad job, and go."

Cardenden went. His chin drooped on his chest; he looked utterly crestfallen. All round the ropes was silence till some misguided junior started to hiss, and was promptly and soundly clouted.

"You'll let it through, of course, Wade!" said Tilson; and the goalkeeper nodded.

Grayson's had no relish for a goal scored thus. It was too cheap. But Granville would have taken the same course that Tilson did.

Goggs took the kick, and Wade watched it with folded arms. But an astonishing thing happened: Goggs, so sure of foot, kicked wide.

He chanced a ragging for it. But he was not ragged. For in the three minutes left he scored again, and Grayson's had won by five goals to four!

### A Plan of Vengeance!

"What did you do that for, Goggs?" asked Granville, as the Grayson's Eleven walked off the field amid a storm of cheering.

"I really did not think you would wish to score in that manner," replied the junior.

"Might have asked me first, though."

"There was scarcely time for that."

Tilson came up.

"A fair and square win, Granville! Your House is going ahead like a sixty-horse-power car! Awfully sorry about that Cardenden affair. I say, Goggs, how's the wrist?"

"What's the matter with his wrist?" the skipper asked.

"Sprained, isn't it, Goggs?"

But Goggs did not answer. He went suddenly deathly pale, and dropped back into the arms of Pennell.

"Here, hold up!" cried Pennell. "I say, Gran, the kid's fainted!"

It was the first time such a thing had ever happened to Johnny Goggs, and, of course, all that it meant was that the pain had been too much for him. He soon came to, and was quite apologetic for his collapse.

But it increased the general disgust felt at Cardenden's shady tactics, and feeling ran high not only in his own House and in Grayson's, but in the school generally.

Mr. Grayson, who had some skill in surgery, rendered first aid. It was not a sprain, he said, but a dislocation, and he was surprised that the boy should have been able to go on playing after it. He did not refer to Cardenden, and made no inquiry as to the exact circumstances of the injury. But he had watched the game all through, and doubtless he could guess.

When Goggs appeared, with his right arm in a sling, in Study No. II, he found his chums discussing the iniquity of Cardenden.

"It is not worth talking about," he said. "For, after all, it may have been an accident, as he said it was."

"Both of them?" asked Tricks.

"Oh, Goggs knows better than that!" said Bags.

"Accidents don't happen that way. He was sick because this chap licked him in the sports, and kept on running round him to-day, and he got spiteful."

"It's a bit of luck for you, one way, Goggles," remarked Wagtail.

"How is that? At present, I own, I can see no luck in it."

"You'll be able to cut classes for a week or so. I jolly well wish I could! I wouldn't mind dislocating my wrist—as long as it didn't hurt too much—for that."

"But it will not be necessary for me to cut classes. I can write with my left hand," the new boy answered.

Goggs took a pen, and wrote a few words. The writing was altogether unlike his usual hand. It sloped to left instead of to right, and the letters were less firmly formed. But it was quite readable.

As he laid down the pen Allardyce and Bliss came in.

"If you fellows will ask us to tea, we won't say no," said Allardyce.

"That's very noble indeed of you," answered Tricks. "But suppose we don't ask you—what then?"

"Oh, we'll stay without being asked!" replied Bliss, grinning.

"Lucky for you we've got something in the cupboard, then. Go and borrow some crockery, Wagtail. You broke the other stuff, so it's up to you."

Wagtail departed. He was not blind to the honour of taking tea with all five of the juniors who had played in the House game, or he might not have been so ready to obey.

"I must go and get Granville's tea ready," said Goggs, a minute or two later.

"Hats! You can't do that with one hand. I'll go," answered Bags.

"No, I will," volunteered Wagtail, who had just come back with two cups and a saucer that did not match either.

It cost him an effort to make the offer. Only this term had he emerged from the fog stage, and the new liberty meant more to him than to Bags or Tricks, who had enjoyed it longer.

"Queer thing," said Bags, after he had gone, "that chap's ever so much readier to do things for anybody than he used to be, and doesn't grouse half so much. Of course, he was always a good sort, but he's a better sort now. I can't make it out."

"I can," replied Tricks, but did not explain. He had noticed earlier that Waters was being moulded by the influence of Goggs. Wagtail had the capacity for hero-worship that is no bad thing in a youngster.

He was not long gone.

"Granville says he doesn't want me," he explained, returning. "Sends his compliments to Goggs, and says he won't eat toast made by any other hand. Dunno whether he's rotting or not."

"He intends a compliment, Wagtail," answered Goggs solemnly.

"Oh, well, I guess you'd know what the beggar means! Showe the sardines over, will you, Dicebox—that is, if you don't want 'em all? What are you and Misery looking so jolly knowing about?"

Bliss replied with another question, after the American manner.

"What do you think of Cardenden, Wagtail?"

"He's a snake—a hyena—a skunk!"

"Quite a new thing in hybrids, in short, old man," said Goggs drily.

"High-bred? Not likely! Beastly low-bred, I should call the chap!"

Everybody else laughed. Wagtail wondered why.

"What do you think of getting even with him?" inquired Allardyce.

"I don't see how we can. He stamped on Gran's foot, and he tried to say Goggles. There's no getting even for all that, I reckon."

"We might try," said Bliss.

"You chaps have got a scheme," Bags returned. "I'm jolly sure of it. Cut me a hunk of cake, will you, Tricks? I don't want it cut small; I'm not feeling ladylike. Now then, Dicebox, out with it!"

"All you fellows have got to give your solemn promise that you'll keep it dark before I say anything."

"Oh, all serene! There's no difficulty about that!"

"You mean that you promise, Bags?"

"Of course I do! Cut the neckle and come to the horses, Dicebox!"

"Do you promise, Tricks?"

"Most solemnly, old man."

"And you, Wagtail?"

"Oh, rather! Anything you like, if it's a oner for that cad!"

"You do, of course, Goggles?"

"Pardon me, Allardyce, but I fail to see that that it is a thing of course! On the contrary, I decline to promise anything whatever until I have heard the scheme!"

"Oh, all right! It's not likely you'll object after what the rotter's done to you!"

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

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## THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINHAM.

(Continued from page 40.)

Goggs did not answer that. It was no use telling Allardyce that his reasoning was faulty. He would not have understood.

"Well, let's hear it, Dicebox! You're as slow as a turtle!" said Wagtail impatiently.

"You mean tortoise, I think," said Goggs. "But, of course, they're practically the same thing!"

"Then what's the odds? Oh, do get on, you idiot!"

"We're going to rag Cardenden's study," said Allardyce.

"Oh, good notion!" cried Wagtail, with enthusiasm that nearly led to his choking, for to eat cake, drink tea, and about at one and the same time is neither easy nor seemly.

"Who are we?" asked Bags. "Have you counted us in?"

"Rath-er! It isn't just a Hayter rag. Chaps in the other Houses will join. Evans will, I'm jolly certain; and Champneys, and three or four more. Nine or ten altogether will be plenty, but I want all the Houses to be in it!"

"We've counted you four in," said Bliss. "That makes six. The Welsher and Champier eight, and, say, Blair of Wagymark, and one more of our fellows?"

"You have miscounted," put in Goggs. "Your mistake is in including me!"

"Oh, of course, we know you can't do anything much with your wrist so bad!" Allardyce replied. "But you'd like to be in it, of course?"

"Quite incorrect! I should not like to be in it at all. In short, I decline to be in it!"

"Why?" asked Bags, wondering, for in Goggs' place he would have hailed with delight the chance of having some sort of revenge on Cardenden.

And Goggs had been ready enough to play tricks on Jarker and Buswell and Robins, who had offended him by rude-remarks about his appearance.

"Because I dislike the fellow so much that I will not take part in anything against him that would put me in the wrong!"

It was a good reason, but it was not a boyish one.

"Well, anyhow, I sha'n't bother to ask you for any promise to keep it dark!" said Allardyce. "It stands to reason you'd do that!"

Goggs did not argue the point, but Bags said: "We're on, of course, Dicebox. But see here—what about your pretensions?"

"We sha'n't buzz off and tell them we're going to do it, you may be sure. But I don't think they'll mind a fat lot after it's done. I heard the First Miu-strel say that Cardenden was an utter rotter, and he rather took to the chap at first!"

"When is it to be?" asked Tricks.

"Not sure yet. But not to-night, anyway. May be to-morrow. I believe Tilson will be out then. He's learning some jolly musical instrument that nobody else ever heard of, and he always goes down to the village Tuesday and Thursday evenings for lessons. Christy wouldn't lift a finger for Cardenden now, so there's only Tilson to look out for. The rest don't count for much!"

Then Allardyce and Bliss had to clear off, for it was nearing six o'clock.

Goggs was very thoughtful during prep. He did not like this scheme a little bit. Argument was of no use, as he well knew, and he could not quite make up his mind what there was he could do that would be of any use.

### Cardenden Finds Himself Unpopular.

Cardenden read be careful, because there is a plan to rag your study."

Cardenden read these words, and threw down the paper on which they were written with a scornful laugh.

"They needn't think they can scare me!" he muttered. He took the thing for a threat, whereas it was simply a warning.

Never in his life before had Johnny Goggs written, or even thought of writing, an anonymous letter, and this one was no sooner dropped into the letter-box than he half-wished he had not written it.

His chums would think it treacherous if they ever heard of it, he feared.

It was not treacherous. He hated the thought of the ragging, and he did not like to think of the punishment that Bags and the rest might suffer on account of it.

They meant to do this thing to revenge him, and he had no desire to be revenged in that way. He was not sure that he wanted revenge at all. His dislocated wrist had neither increased nor lessened his firm resolve to look out that Granville came to no harm through Cardenden's scheming. It could hardly increase his dislike of Cardenden, because that

had been so strong before that it could not well grow stronger, but he was not revengeful.

The dark senior was quite capable of reporting the ragging, should it take place, to the Head, Goggs believed. And if he did so, there would be heavy trouble for Bags & Co.

So Goggs wrote the brief note, using his left hand, of course—and posted it, and then he wished he hadn't.

And Cardenden read it, threw it down, and sneered at it; then picked it up and read it again, and did not feel so much inclined to sneer this time.

It meant something, he was sure, but in his cunning he could not believe that it meant merely what it seemed to.

He took it to Tilson. His reception was not warm.

"Mean?" Oh, it means that you'd better look out for squalls!" said the head prefect of Hayter's.

"Don't you think it's up to you to do something to stop it?"

"My good fellow, I'm not a policeman! I'm not even a special constable! The thing may only be an empty threat. I don't think so, but there's always the possibility. It's hardly my affair, anyway!"

"I don't like your tone!" said Cardenden hotly.

"And I don't like your methods! If you can take a hint, I'm busy just now!"

Cardenden had to take that hint. He went to Christy I.

"This is more Tilson's affair than mine," said the First Miu-strel in an offhand way.

"I've been to Tilson."

"Oh, well, if you got no change out of him, you're not likely to get any out of me!—It's your funeral!"

Cardenden stood had suffered a heavy slump in Hayter's. For the time being nobody seemed to have any use for the new fellow.

But he had done something. He was well aware that neither the head prefect nor his lieutenant would welcome a ragging in the House, and though they might profess to take the matter indifferently, it was likely that they would take some steps to prevent anything of the sort.

There was a circumstance which made him more than commonly anxious. He had arranged to meet Mr. Brightton Portesque at the Crown and Sceptre that evening. If the ragging took place while he was away, he might find it awkward to explain his absence.

He did not want to miss keeping the appointment. Some correspondence had passed between him and Fortesque, and Cardenden believed that this man would be able to help him to the end he desired.

"The sooner the better!" Cardenden had no relish for putting in a single day more than was necessary at Franklinham. He had had enough of the place already.

Who could have written the letter?

He was quite unable to answer that question till something gave him a clue.

"Regular old donkey, Goggs is!" said one junior to another in the quad after classes.

"I should say so! Fancy having a chance to cut classes, and going and letting on to Lee that he could write with his left hand! As if a chap could be expected to do anything like that!"

"Lee patted him on the back—said he wrote jolly well left-handed!" remarked a third.

"He didn't do it for that. Everybody's patting Goggs on the back just now, but he don't seem a bit pleased with himself. The chap may be an ass, but he isn't sly."

They passed on, and Cardenden heard no more. But that was enough to set him thinking.

He had written more than one anonymous letter, and he remembered trying to write one with his left hand. It had been a failure, because when written it was practically un-readable; but he fancied there were points about this screed that suggested its having been written left-handed.

Goggs! It did not seem possible.

Yet who could tell? The youngster was eccentric, half-mad, Cardenden thought. No one could be sure what a fellow like that might do.

He sent his bag across with a message that he wanted to see Goggs.

His bag returned.

"Says he isn't taking any," he reported.

Cardenden seized him by the back of the neck and squeezed brutally.

"That's a lie!" he said savagely. "Now, tell me what he really said!"

"That was what he said—at least, that's the English of it," bleated the junior, squirming. "Just you stop it! I'm not going to be bullied by you. Everybody says you're —"

"I didn't ask you what everybody says. I asked you what Goggs said, and you'd better tell me."

"He said that, with all the respect due to you—and one of the other chaps said that wasn't a fat lot—he must decline. And he said something about the spider and the fly, too."

(There will be another great volume of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of the Magnet Library. Order your copy in all cases.)