

BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER!

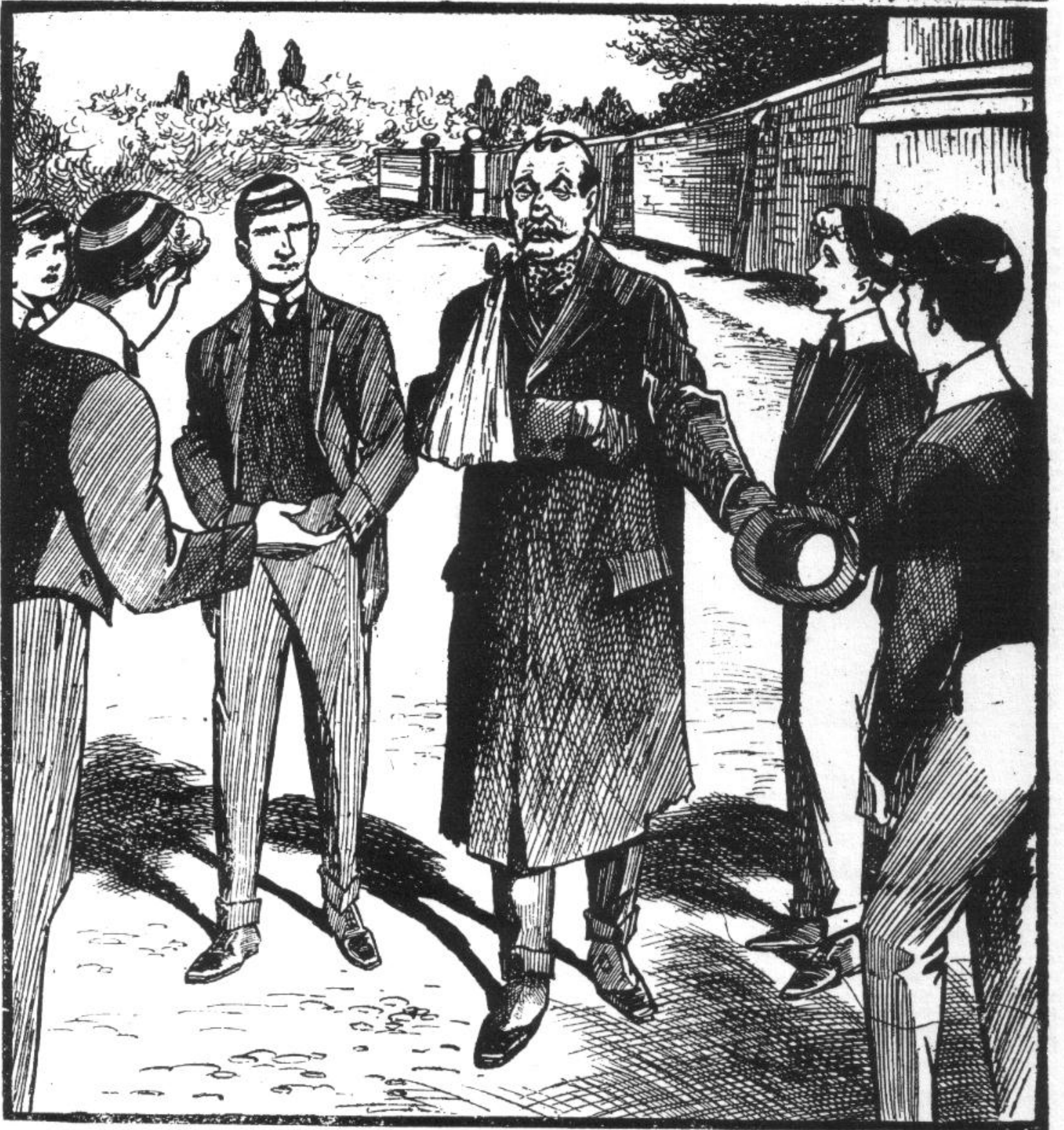
A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



The Magnet 1st

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THE WOUNDED WARRIOR!

(An Extraordinary Scene in the Grand Long Complete Story in this issue.)

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MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1d., 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 FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

By Frank Richards.

Frank Nugent is one of the most popular characters at Greyfriars, but we have not heard a very great deal about him of late, the last story in which he played a leading part having been that very fine yarn, "A Split in the Study." To my mind, that was one of the finest pieces of work Mr. Richards has ever done; but I really think next week's story equals, if it does not surpass it. Nugent was in trouble in "A Split in the Study." It was not in any way whatever his fault. Wharton was entirely to blame. This time the trouble which comes upon Frank is very largely his own fault. Pride hampers him, as it hampered Wharton then. There seems absolutely conclusive proof that he has funkcd. He has not, and a few words from him would clear up the whole matter. Those words he will not speak. Rather than bend his pride to an explanation, he prefers to turn his back on those who want to believe in him—on his oldest friends—even upon Harry Wharton! But the truth comes out at last, and the Remove sees how utterly wrong it has been in putting upon Frank Nugent the stigma of being

"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A PERSONAL NOTE.

My Chat must be short this week. I am back at the office to write it after spending several days in bed, a victim to the fashionable complaint of influenza. I never did care much about fashion, anyway; and in this matter I would very much have preferred being out of it. But the "flu." is the sort of thing that gives you no more choice than the Huns are giving to the unfortunate Belgians for whom they are so kindly finding work in Hunland! Better the influenza than the Huns, however! The worst feature of such an absence as this is the pile of work that collects while one is away. I feel like shuddering when I look at the heap of letters waiting to be answered. But I am glad to have them, all the same. I know that most of them are testimonies to the tie of friendship between my readers and myself, and they are welcome for that reason. And here—I have not had an opportunity before—I should like to offer my thanks to the many readers who sent along pretty Christmas and New Year cards. I assure them that the good wishes thus conveyed were most heartily reciprocated.

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Owing to circumstances over which I have no control, I cannot start publication of

"IN A LAND OF PERIL!"

this week, or possibly for some weeks to come. The gap will be filled with

EXTRACTS FROM "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD."

Some of my readers would, no doubt, prefer the serial. Well, this is a treat in store. Meanwhile most will, I think, be satisfied to renew acquaintance with the efforts of Peter Todd, Mark Linley, and other Greyfriars juniors with a literary bent.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 6 of this series will be Johnny Bull. The popularity of these pen-sketches seems fully proven. Not one reader has said he does not like them, while a large number of letters expressing enthusiastic approval has been received. So look out for No. 6 very shortly!

A LIST OF THE REMOVE.

Guaranteed up to date, and supplied by Mr. Frank Richards himself—and if he does not know, who should? I know this will be welcomed, for many have been the inquiries as to the occupants of the respective studies on the Remove passage. So Mr. Richards has been kind enough to arrange the juniors in the order of their studies and here is the list:

- No. 1.—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent.
- No. 2.—George Bulstrode, Peter Hazeldene, Tom Brown.
- No. 3.—Robert Donald Ogilvy, Dick Russell.
- No. 4.—Herbert Vernon-Smith, Harold Skinner.
- No. 5.—Kipps, Glenn.
- No. 6.—David Morgan, Micky Desmond, Dick Rake, William Wibley.
- No. 7.—Peter Todd, Alonzo Todd, Tom Dutton, Billy Bunter.
- No. 8.—Treluce, Smith minor.
- No. 9.—Monty Newland, Dick Penfold, Trevor.
- No. 10.—Bolsover major, Elliott.
- No. 11.—Sidney James Snoop, William Stott.
- No. 12.—Lord Mauleverer, Piet Delarey.
- No. 13.—Bob Cherry, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Mark Linley, Wun Lung.
- No. 14.—Johnny Bull, S. Q. I. Field (Squiff), Fisher T. Fish.

As to the rest who are sometimes inquired about—Esmond, Banthorpe, Leigh, Vane, Carlton, and perhaps one or two more—they must be understood no longer to be at Greyfriars. This is on Mr. Richards' own information, and you will hardly dispute the authority, I think!

THE ARRIVAL OF HURREE SINGH.

I wish to draw the attention of my readers to the grand, long complete story dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. contained in this Friday's issue of the "Penny Popular." This story is entitled, "Aliens at Greyfriars," and it deals with the arrival of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh at the famous school. Order your copy of the "Penny Pop" to-day!

NOTICES.

Leagues, Correspondence, Etc.

More members wanted for club and magazine.—Roland Walker, 92, Oakleigh Rd., New Southgate, N.

Private W. Burns, St. Luke's War Hospital, Bradford, wishes his hearty thanks to be notified to readers who sent him back numbers, etc.

Eric W. McLean, 53, Manchester Rd., Altrincham, is starting an amateur magazine. Copy sent for 2d.

J. Ratcliff, 51, Alexandra St., Southend-on-Sea, wants more members for his league for helping soldiers. Readers anywhere eligible. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

—North London Branch: S. Arrowsmith, 1, Ashford St., Hornsey, N.

C. E. Page, Ferndale, 2, Seymour St., Observatory Rd., Cape Town, South Africa, would be glad to correspond with a boy reader of 16 in Canada or Australia.

Girls wishing to join a correspondence club should write to Miss Monica Eagin, Water Hall, Leeds.

Harry Sunter, 8, Vicars Rd., Roundhay, Leeds, wants members for a foreign stamp club. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

Willie Wade, 16, Sharp St., Burnley, would like to correspond with another boy reader of 15.

Your Editor

A Complete School-
Story Book, attrac-
tive to all readers.



The Editor will be
obliged if you will
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when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

BUNTER'S BIG BROTHER!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The juniors left it to Peter Todd to elucidate the facts. (See Chapter 3.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Brother!

ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

W. G. Bunter, Esq.,
Greyfriars School,
Kent,
England.

THAT was the address on the letter. It lay in the rack, waiting for William George Bunter of the Remove. Fellows who looked at the rack glanced at it, and then looked at it a second and a third time. It was news to the Greyfriars fellows that Billy Bunter had "somebody at the Front."

But there it was, as plain as could be. "On Active Service" couldn't be mistaken. And the envelope was marked "Field Post Office." Evidently that letter to Billy Bunter had been posted somewhere in France.

Bob Cherry spotted it, and whistled. Nearly everybody at Greyfriars had somebody at the Front—a brother or cousin or father or uncle, as the case might be. But it had not been known hitherto that Billy Bunter enjoyed such a distinction.

Billy Bunter certainly talked a 'good deal about General Bunter, and Colonel Bunter, and Captain Bunter, but the Remove declined to believe in the existence of those distinguished personages.

For, in spite of the old maxim that certain persons should

have good memories, Billy Bunter always mixed up his statements in the most reckless way. He had assigned his distinguished relatives to at least a dozen different regiments, and he had bestowed upon them nearly every rank, from second lieutenant to field marshal.

Sometimes the warlike Bunter was a colonel in the Guards. Sometimes he was a captain in the Northumberland Fusiliers. Occasionally he was a lieutenant in the London Regiment or the Manchester Regiment. At other times he was a major in the 17th Lancers. On special occasions, as it were, he was a general attached to the Staff.

It depended on how the spirit moved Billy Bunter at the time.

So the sight of a letter, evidently from the Front, for Bunter made the Remove fellows stare.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, as he spotted it. "Seen this?"

"It's for Bunter, and it's from the Front," said Harry Wharton. "The fat bounder must have a relation there, after all!"

"Must be a bit different from our Bunter, if he's at the Front," remarked Johnny Bull.

"The difference must be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Is it from the captain, the major, the colonel, or the general?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" called out Bob Cherry, as the Owl of the Remove came in sight.

Billy Bunter came up.

There was a peevish and discontented expression upon his fat face.

Money, as usual, was tight with Billy Bunter. The postal-order he was always expecting had not arrived. Bunter senior, too, seemed to be practising war economy at the expense of his sons at Greyfriars, and allowances were very slim. And all the rich and titled relations, to whom Bunter often referred, seemed to have forgotten his existence, so far as sending remittances was concerned.

"I say, you fellows," began Bunter, blinking dolorously at the Famous Five through his big spectacles, "I've been disappointed about a postal-order. I was going to ask you fellows to tea. I suppose, under the circumstances, you wouldn't mind lending me five bob till my postal-order comes?"

"There's a letter for you!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, good!" Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his glasses. "Might be my postal-order, after all!"

"Are you expecting a postal-order from the Front?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh? No, of course not!"

"Then there won't be a postal-order in it!" grinned Bob. "It's from the Front!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "Look here, I think you might lend a fellow five bob!"

Bob Cherry took the letter from the rack, and tossed it to Bunter.

"There's your letter, Fatty!"

Billy Bunter caught the letter in his fat hands, and blinked at it.

"It's for you," said Harry Wharton, as Bunter looked at the address with evident surprise.

"It's from the merry old general!" said Bob.

"Or the cheery old major!" said Nugent.

"Or the esteemed field-marshal!" chuckled Hurree Singh.

"By gum!" said Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was plainly puzzled by the letter from the Front. It was not difficult to see that he had not been expecting a letter from that quarter of the world; but the address was unmistakable.

But William George Bunter recovered from his surprise in a very few moments.

Unexpected as the letter was, the fat junior realised that its arrival helped to bear out his swank on the subject of his warlike relations.

"I'm jolly glad this has come," he remarked. "I was getting a bit anxious about—about Rupert!"

"Rupert!" repeated the Famous Five together.

"Yes, my brother at the Front," said Bunter casually.

"Your brother!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes; in the Lancashire Fusiliers, you know."

"Your brother's at Greyfriars, in the Second Form," said Nugent. "You haven't any other brother, you fat bounder!"

Bunter gave him a lofty look.

"This is my elder brother," he explained.

"Never heard of him before," said Johnny Bull suspiciously.

"It's generally an uncle or a cousin, who's a general, a colonel, or a major at the Front!" grinned Bob Cherry.

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ON SALE WEDNESDAY.

"THE INTRUDER!"

"This is from my brother Cecil——"

"Cecil!" howled the juniors.

"Yes; my elder brother Cecil!"

"You said Rupert a minute ago!" shrieked Bob.

"Ahem! His name is Cecil Rupert, and we call him sometimes Cecil and sometimes Rupert," said Bunter hastily.

"Oh, my hat! George Washington was a fool to you, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry admiringly. "And Ananias wasn't in the same street with you!"

Bunter sneered.

"I suppose you'll suggest next that I went to France and posted this letter to myself?" he said, with heavy sarcasm.

"Well, no," admitted Bob. "You couldn't have done that. If it were possible I should think so. But it isn't."

"I've mentioned lots of times about my relations at the Front. The fact is, Cherry, you're jealous because my brother's a colonel, and your father's only a major!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I dare say this means that he's got the V.C.," said Bunter. "All the Bunters are jolly brave, and I've been expecting to hear for some time that—that Herbert had got the V.C."

"Herbert!" gasped Bob.

"I—I mean, Rupert—that is to say, Cecil!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His name is Rupert Cecil Herbert!"

"And you call him Cecil, or Rupert, or Herbert, just to ring the changes?" suggested Bob Cherry. "I see. Bunter, old chap, you ought to have a good memory. There's an old proverb that Bunters should have good memories!"

"Oh, rats!"

Billy Bunter strolled away with the letter.

"Well, he must have some sort of a connection at the Front to get a letter at all," remarked Bob Cherry. "All the Bunters can't be such worms as our Bunter. But why the dickens he can't tell the truth about it beats me!"

"No letters here for us," remarked Harry Wharton. "There's going to be famine in the study. The Bounder's asked us to tea; we'd better go!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the Famous Five proceeded to Vernon-Smith's study, which was always a land of plenty, the Bounder being blessed with a superabundance of that necessary article, cash.

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter had retired to seclusion under the elms to read his letter from the Front. And as Bunter perused that unexpected communication from the seat of war, a very peculiar expression came over his fat face, and a very cunning gleam into his round eyes.

Whether the letter was from his brother the general, the colonel, or the major, or not, it was very welcome to William George Bunter, and the cunning gleam behind his big glasses showed that a scheme of some sort was working in his fertile brain.

And, having read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested that letter from the Front, Billy Bunter rolled away in search of his minor, Sammy Bunter of the Second Form, and for some time the two Bunters were deep in consultation—a consultation punctuated by fat chuckles.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Bunter at the Front!

VERNON-SMITH of the Remove was standing a spread in his study.

The Famous Five were there, and Squiff, and Mark Linley. Skinner, who was Smithy's study-mate, had invited himself to stay.

The study was pretty well filled, and when the door opened, and a fat face adorned by a large pair of glasses blinked in, there was a general chorus:

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter came in calmly, and blinked at the tea-party.

"Hallo! Having tea?" he remarked.

"You didn't know, of course," grinned Skinner.

"I wasn't thinking about tea, Skinner," said Bunter loftily, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"You weren't!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Not thinking of tea at tea-time! Oh, William George!"

"I'm thinking about my brother," said Bunter sadly.

"What's the matter with Sammy? Has he burst all his waistcoat buttons?"

"I don't mean Sammy. I mean my major—my brother at the war, you know."

"Which of them?" asked Bob.

"Eh?"

"Rupert or Cecil or Herbert?" queried Bob. "They're all at the war, you know, and they're all your brothers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"I mean Rupert Cecil Herbert, my elder brother," said Bunter firmly. "I haven't come here to tea—you needn't think that. I'd forgotten all about tea."

"Pile it on!"

"And I haven't come to borrow your rotten bobs—"

"None to be borrowed," said Harry Wharton. "Unless Bob Cherry would do. That's the only bob we've got left."

"A few bobs would be no use to me," explained Bunter.

"No good my offering one or two, then?" grinned the Bounder.

"None at all, Smithy."

"Eh!" ejaculated Vernon-Smith.

"I want a rather considerable sum—"

"And won't you be happy till you get it?" asked Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Then you're booked for a sorrowing life."

"I've come here because you're here, Wharton—"

"N.G.," said Wharton. "Stony as the Kaiser's heart."

"Because you're captain of the Remove, I mean. I think it's up to you to take up the matter, as captain of the Form."

"What matter?" asked Harry, in astonishment.

"About my brother."

"But Sammy's in the Second Form—"

"You know I don't mean Sammy!" roared Bunter. "I mean Aubrey—that is to say, Cecil—my big brother."

"Is he bigger than you?" asked Nugent. "My hat! What a circumference he must have! Not bigger sideways, surely?"

"He's wounded," said Bunter pathetically.

"Where?"

"At the front, of course."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Impossible! If he's your brother, Bunt, he's wounded at the back, not at the front."

"You can sit here and make jokes about a soldier chap lying in hospital!" said Bunter. "I'm disgusted at you!"

Bob Cherry's face changed a little.

"Look here, you fat duffer, if you've really got a brother in the fighting, you know jolly well I shouldn't make jokes about it!" he exclaimed. "But you're only spoofing as usual. We've never heard of your elder brother before."

"I suppose I ought to know whether I've an elder brother or not?" sniffed Bunter. "You saw the letter from him yourself."

"You've told us a dozen different yarns already about that," said Harry Wharton. "Which of them are we to believe?"

"The poor chap wrote from the hospital where he's lying wounded," said Bunter. "I did think my own pals would be a bit sympathetic."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob uneasily. "If it's true, I'm sorry; but I don't believe it, and that's flat!"

"The flatfulness is terrific, my esteemed Prussian Bunter."

"Well, it's in the letter. You saw the letter yourselves. He's in hospital now, and he wants me to send him some things," said Bunter. "He lost his razor in the trenches."

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"Every lie you tell I'm going to biff you with this cushion," said Bolsover. "Now, have you got an elder brother?" (See Chapter 4.)

and he had some of his things stolen, and—and so on. I'm rather hard up, as it happens. I think there ought to be a Form fund raised."

"My hat!"

"Tain't every chap in the Remove who's got a brother wounded fighting the Huns," said Bunter loftily. "I'd like to know where you would be if those chaps weren't fighting for you."

"Look here, is it true about your brother?" asked Wharton.

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"You're such a spoofing bounder," said Vernon-Smith. "You were telling us a yarn once of a cousin in the Bedford Regiment, and wanting to borrow cash to send him smokes. And it was all spoof."

The juniors grinned at the recollection. Billy Bunter—like the honest gentlemen who own ships—looked upon the war as something from which money was to be made. If money wasn't to be made out of it, what was the good of it, anyway? Not being old enough to be a shipowner, Billy Bunter had to practise war-profiteering on a humbler scale. Having invented a cousin in the famous Bedford Regiment, Bunter was smitten by a cousinly desire to send him smokes; and sought to raise a loan for the purpose. The Bounder had lent him the necessary five shillings; and, to Bunter's intense exasperation, had insisted upon seeing the smokes posted, personally. As Billy Bunter had intended the five shillings to be war-profits, this was most annoying.

Under the Bounder's supervision, the parcel had been made up; and then Bunter had forgotten his cousin's number, and even his name—which was not surprising, considering that the cousin had no existence outside Bunter's imagination.

He demanded delay in sending the parcel while he ascer-

tained the name and number, with the businesslike intention of selling the smokes cheap among the blades of the Remove. But the Bounder was not to be caught napping; and the parcel was sent to the Bedford Regiment itself; Smithy assuring Bunter that if his cousin was in that regiment, he would get his whack in the smokes.

Bunter had the pleasure, such as it was, of sending a parcel in his own name to a great fighting regiment. But the pleasure was not great to Bunter. He regarded the Bounder as having robbed him of five shillings.

"Yes, we remember that merry cousin," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle; "and I asked young Sammy, and he'd never even heard of him. You fat spoofer! Now you've sprung a big brother on us, and if we asked Sammy, I'll bet you a doughnut that Sammy wouldn't ever have heard of Rupert or Cecil or Herbert."

"If you doubt my word, Bob Cherry—"

"I do, rather!" said Bob cheerfully. "You're such a Prussian, you know. How you came to be born outside Berlin beats me!"

"I decline to discuss the matter with you, Cherry! I say, Wharton—"

"Decline to discuss it with me, too, old chap," implored Wharton. "Fair play all round, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's very spectacles glinted with wrath, as he surveyed the chums of the Remove. Certainly he had had a letter from the Front; but on the subject of his heroic big brother the Removites were all doubting Thomases.

"Oh, very well!" said Bunter, with dignity. "My brother's been out there since the start, defending you chaps, and now he's wounded, you can only cackle over it. I despise you!"

And Bunter turned to the door loftily.

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose it's barely possible that Bunter's telling the truth for once."

"The barefulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Look here, Bunter, if you've really got a wounded brother, and he wants anything, we're the right chaps to come to," said Bob. "But we don't take your word about it—see? You've spoofed us too often, with your blessed colonels and majors and generals and admirals!"

"I'll tell you what," said the Bounder. "Let's call in Toddy; he's a giddy lawyer, and he will get at the facts."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll fetch him," said Frank Nugent, and he slipped out of the study.

"I don't mind," said Bunter. "Being a truthful chap, of course, I'm open to answer any reasonable question. I'll have some of that cake while I'm waiting."

And Bunter did. It was only a few minutes before Nugent returned with Peter Todd; but in those few minutes Bunter finished the cake, and began on the tarts. His grief for his wounded brother had not had any perceptible effect upon his appetite.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Lawyer on the Case!

"COME in, Toddy!"

Peter Todd of the Remove followed Nugent into the study. Peter had a dab of ink on his long nose, and another on his eyebrow, and a pen stuck behind his ear. Peter had evidently been at work.

Peter intended some day to follow in the footsteps of his father, who was a solicitor, and he often improved the shining hour by studying huge law-books, which gave other fellows a headache simply to look at them. Peter's knowledge of the law and of legal methods was supposed, in the Remove, to be something really tremendous.

"Well, what's the game?" demanded Peter gruffly. "I've got no time for tea; I'm busy. What has this fathcad yanked me here for?"

"Legal acumen required," explained the Bounder. "If you haven't had your tea, you'd better pile in. We want you to get the truth out of Bunter."

"I'm not a miracle-worker!" growled Peter.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Bunter's had a letter from the Front," explained Wharton. "So he's invented a big brother in the fighting-line, and he wants to raise a Form fund to stand him things. If it's genuine, we're on. If not, not."

The schoolboy lawyer glared at Billy Bunter.

"So you've got a big brother at the Front, Bunt?"

"Yes, I have."

"Name?"

"Rupert Cecil Herbert."

"Why haven't you ever mentioned him before?"

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Billy Bunter paused for a moment. That was a question that required a careful answer. Bunter had swanked so much about relatives at the Front that he did not possess, that it was certainly very curious he should never have mentioned a relative that he did possess there.

"Because—because—" stammered Bunter.

"The becausefulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh.

"Silence in court!" said Peter, frowning. "Now then, Bunter, don't stop to make up a lie; tell the truth!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I—I've never mentioned him because he's a private!" stammered Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Bunter owns up to having a private in the family."

"Not a general?" gasped Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you've got a man in khaki belonging to you, you go up one step in my estimation," said Peter. "Mind, I don't believe it yet, but it sounds a bit truer than usual this time. Why didn't you mention you had a private?"

"Because he hasn't one!" grinned Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner! Do you mean to imply, Bunter, that there is anything against being a private in the King's Army, and that a private soldier's uniform is not a more honourable garb than the gown of the professor, the frock-coat of the statesman, or the diadem of an emperor?" demanded Peter, in a terrific voice.

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter. "But—but, you see, cads like Skinner would have chipped me, you see—"

"Well, you're right about Skinner," admitted Peter. "The whole court admits that Skinner is a howling cad."

"Look here, you silly idiot!" roared Skinner.

"Silence in court! Bob Cherry, you can go and fetch a witness. If Bunter's got a big brother, his minor must have heard of him. Fetch Sammy here. Tell him he can have some of Smithy's tarts, and he'll come like a shot."

Bob Cherry chuckled, and quitted the study. The juniors looked keenly at Bunter. He did not seem disturbed. That might mean that he had told the truth, or that he had primed Sammy with answers for questions. They left it to Peter Todd to elucidate the facts.

Bob came back very quickly with Bunter minor of the Second Form. The fat fag swooped down on the tea-table at once.

"Hold on!" said Peter Todd. "You can't talk with your mouth full, Sammy."

"Yes, I can," said Sammy. His mouth was already full. "I say, these are prime tarts. I'll stay to tea, if you like, Smithy!"

"Have you got an elder brother as well as Billy?" asked Peter.

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

"What's his name?"

"Rupert Cecil Herbert."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Is he at the Front?"

"Yes; been there two years or more."

"What regiment?"

"West Kents."

"Number?"

"Ten sixty-six."

"Rank?"

"Private when I last heard of him."

Peter Todd paused. Sammy Bunter had answered all his questions quite easily—so far as the tarts allowed.

"Blessed if it doesn't look true!" said Bob.

"Has Billy been telling you he's a colonel?" grinned Sammy. "Of course, he's bound to get a commission. You see, he went without waiting for one. That's how it is."

The juniors looked at Peter Todd inquiringly. Unless the two Bunters had carefully compared notes beforehand, the statements could hardly be doubted. Harry Wharton & Co. felt their doubts melt away. Billy certainly was a fabricator who could easily have beaten Ananias at his own game. But he told the truth sometimes. Even the Kaiser told the truth sometimes, as Bob Cherry observed.

"Well, Toddy?" said the tea-party in chorus.

"The yarn seems to be pretty well made out," admitted Peter.

"Well, I'm sorry I didn't believe you, Bunter," said Bob. "But you're such an awful spoofer, you know."

"Don't be in a hurry!" said Peter Todd grimly. "The yarn's pretty well made out, but it's spoofer all the same!"

"Oh!" said the juniors.

"Look here, Toddy—" began Bunter.

"Bunter's started a private because he's found that we don't swallow his colonels and generals," said Peter. "That's why it's a private this time. He's selected a Kentish regiment for him because Greyfriars is in Kent, so it's easy to remember. He's given him 1066 as a number because 1066 is the date of the Conquest—a date even Bunter couldn't forget

if he tried. He hasn't mentioned his elder brother before because he hasn't one. That's how I work it out."

Bunter's jaw dropped. The schoolboy lawyer's clear eyes saw completely through the carefully-concocted tale.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob.

"These two fat rascals have arranged it together," went on Peter. "That's as clear as daylight. Where are you going, Sammy?"

"I—I've got to see Nugent minor!" stammered Sammy, who was making for the door.

"Nugent minor can wait a bit," said Bob, taking the fat fag by the ear. "You stay here, my plump pippin!"

"Own up, Bunter!" said Peter Todd genially. "It's time to own up, you know!"

"It's true!" yelled Bunter desperately.

"Well, there's one way you can prove it," said Peter calmly. "Show us the letter."

"The—the—the letter?"

"Yes; the letter from your wounded brother."

"I—I—I—"

"The repetition of the first personal pronoun is not evidence," said Peter. "Where's the letter?"

"I—I'm not going to show you a private letter!" stammered Bunter. "It mentions all sorts of family matters."

"Quite so! You needn't show it to these chaps. You can show it to me as your legal adviser," explained Peter. "These chaps will take my word for it if it's genuine."

"I—I won't!"

Peter Todd rose.

"Gentlemen of the jury, the yarn is spooof from beginning to end. I sentence those two fat bounders to be bumped three times as a warning."

"Hear, hear!"

The tea-party fairly rushed to carry out the sentence. Bunter major and Bunter minor rushed for the door, but they were collared before they could escape.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Yah! Yah! Yocop!"

"Oh, crikey! Yaroooh!"

Two fat forms rolled out of the study, roaring. Peter Todd grinned, and went back to his study and his law books. The Bounder's door slammed on the two fat juniors gasping on the passage floor.

Sammy Bunter sat up and shook a fat fist at his major.

"You silly idiot!" he gasped.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You frabjous fathead!"

"Grooh-hcooh!"

The fat fag scrambled up and rolled away, snorting. Billy Bunter followed more slowly. That really masterly scheme for annexing a share of his Form-fellows' pocket-money had been a ghastly failure; and once more William George Bunter had been made to realise that the way of the transgressor is hard.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Sticking To It!

BUNTER'S big brother was a standing joke in the Remove during the next day or two. All the Form heard about it and about the legal inquiry in the Bounder's study. And all the Form chortled over it. Bunter was asked endless questions about Cecil Rupert Herbert. Fellows in other Forms heard the tale. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth made merry over it. Coker of the Fifth indignantly chased Bunter with a cricket-stump for having told whoppers on such a subject—Coker of the Fifth having taken the war under his special patronage, as it were.

Good-natured fellows, who were willing to give the Owl of the Remove every possible chance, asked him to show the letter, which would have proved the matter one way or the other. Micky Desmond offered him half a remittance he had just received, if he proved that there was a genuine Bunter in hospital. Lord Mauleverer offered to stand two whole quids—on proof being forthcoming. Squiff was ready with a pound note. Monty Newland was prepared to spring a fiver. Tom Brown had ten shillings. Hazeldene half-a-crown. Rake a five-shilling piece. All at the service of the wounded Bunter, if he existed, but decidedly not at the service of Billy Bunter for guzzling at the tuckshop!

Bunter's only reply was that the letter touched upon private family matters, which he wouldn't care to let anyone read about. But the juniors were ready for him. They offered to read only that part of the letter dealing with Bunter's brother's war experiences and sufferings—Bunter to stick gammed paper over the private family matters before he showed the letter at all.

Even that offer Bunter did not accept, which left no doubt that his yarn was spooof, like so many of his yarns, from beginning to end. He showed the envelope, which certainly had come from the Field Post Office at the Front. That was

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a puzzle at first. Evidently the fat junior had a correspondent there.

It was Vernon-Smith who found a solution to that puzzle. The Bounder came into the Common-room a couple of evenings later, and found the Owl displaying the envelope from the Front, in the vain hope of convincing the Famous Five that it had contained a letter from his wounded big brother.

"Trot out the letter, or shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "We're fed up, Bunt!"

"I can't show you private family matters, Bob Cherry," said Bunter reproachfully. "I'm really surprised at your asking me!"

"Faith, we've caught you there!" chuckled Micky Desmond. "Sure, I've got some stamp-edging here which ye can stick over the part we mustn't see!"

"Go it, Bunter!"

"The—the fact is, the letter's rather—rather mixed up—family matters in nearly every line, you know."

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Bolsover major. "Look here, Bunter, I've got a cousin out there, and he's been wounded, and I'm not going to hear you telling lies about such things. You'll get a thick ear if you don't chuck it!"

"I guess it's too thin, Bunter," said Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior. "If you'd consulted me, I calculate I could have helped you to fix up a better yarn—some!"

"Where do you fellows think this envelope came from, then?" demanded Bunter. "Can't you see it's from the Front?"

"I fancy I can let in some light on that," grinned the Bounder, chipping in. "I've been thinking that out, you chaps."

"Go it, Smithy!" said Wharton. "It puzzles me how Bunter came to have a letter from the Front at all. Some trick about it, of course!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You remember the time he was spooofing us with the yarn about his cousin in the Bedfords. I saw to the parcel being made up and sent off. You remember what Bunter's face looked like—"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Well, the parcel was sent in Bunter's name," said Vernon-Smith. "Chaps in the Bedford Regiment got the smokes, of course."

"Of course. But what—"

"Well, don't you see? Some chap who got some of the smokes, has written to thank the sender. He thinks Bunter is the sender, as Bunter's name was on the parcel."

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Of course! One of them would naturally write. Bunter, you fat Prussian, that letter was from a chap who got some of Smithy's smokes!"

Billy Bunter's face was a study.

"Oh—oh, really—" he gasped.

"Fatheads we were not to think of it before!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in disgust. "That's the explanation, of course! We know jolly well that Bunter hasn't any relations out there!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"You're no good as a war-profiteer, Bunter," grinned Bob. "You must wait till you're old enough to be a ship-owner."

"I—I say, you fellows, Smithy's only talking out of his hat, you know," mumbled Bunter. "My b-b-brother—"

"Show us the letter, then," said the Bounder coolly. "If it's from your big brother, I'll stand you a whole fiver to send him things. If it's from a chap in the Bedfords, thanking you for the smokes, I'll stand you a thick ear. Is it a go?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you see, I can't show you a private letter—"

"We've had all that," said Wharton. "You're a spooofing rotter, and if that chap in the Bedfords knew you, he wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole!"

"I say, you fellows, my brother—"

"Shut up!" roared Bolsover major. "We've had enough of your crammers. You say another word about your brother, who doesn't exist, and we'll frog's-march you!"

"I suppose you're jealous about my brother being at the Front, Bolsover—"

Billy Bunter got no further.

Bolsover major collared him. Three or four other fellows lent a hand, and the Owl of the Remove went round the Common-room in the frog's-march. Nobody had the slightest doubt that the bounder had hit on the true explanation of the letter from the Front, and Bunter's persistence in his yarn was exasperating. The Owl of the Remove roared as he was marched round the Common-room, to the accompaniment of loud laughter.

"Now," said Bolsover major, when Bunter was plumped down at last, "you've been lying, and you've got to own up. See this cushion?"

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"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Groogh!"
 "Every lie you tell, I'm going to biff you with it. Now, have you got an elder brother at all?"
 "Yow-ow—yes! Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the cushion smote him forcibly.
 "I warned you," said Bolsover. "Now, have you got an elder brother?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Yow-ow! No!" roared Bunter.
 "Is he at the Front?"
 "Groogh! No!"
 "That's better," said Bolsover major, while the Removites roared. "Stick to that. Give us any more of your big brother, and you get the cushion again!"
 Billy Bunter gathered himself up, crimson and dusty and gasping. He blinked furiously at the hilarious juniors.
 "You can cackle!" he roared.
 "Thanks, we will! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You wouldn't cackle if my big brother were here!"
 "What!" roared Bolsover major.
 "My big brother— Yarooooop!"
 Bolsover major made a rush, with the cushion whirling aloft, and the fat junior whipped out of the Common-room just in time. And for that evening, at least, nothing more was heard of Billy Bunter's big brother.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Two Heads Better Than One!

"I GUESS you slipped up on that stunt, just a few."
 Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior, made that remark. It was the following day, and Billy Bunter was mooching disconsolately in the quadrangle, while the Remove fellows were at football practice. Bunter felt down on his luck. That great yarn—the most complete and convincing he had ever spun—had failed to convince a single person. Even the simple Lord Mauleverer shook his head and grinned over it. It was hard lines, Bunter felt. With much less astute spoofing, he had raised the wind on other occasions. And here was his most whacking crammer going begging, as it were.

Whether it was from obstinacy or obtuseness, or whether he still cherished a hope of finding believers, Bunter held to his story. His big brother was lying wounded at the base in Flanders, in need of comforts, which Bunter was very anxious to send him—if he could raise the money. And the worst of it was, that if the fellows had believed him there would have been a Form fund for the wounded hero in a twinkling, and quite a handsome sum would have been raised quite easily. Billy Bunter's mouth watered as he thought of it.

If only his old reputation had not clung about him so lovingly, his fictitious big brother would have been worth quids and quids to him. As it was, it seemed that he could only take Bob Cherry's advice, and put off war-profiteering till he was old enough to own ships!

But Fisher T. Fish had been thinking the matter out for him. Fisher T. Fish was a very keen youth, who elaborated endless schemes for transferring other fellows' pocket-money to his own pockets, and the keen and astute Fishy thought he saw possibilities in Bunter's stunt, as he called it in the remarkable American language.

Which was why Fisher T. Fish bore down upon the Owl of the Remove that afternoon, as Bunter mooched disconsolately under the leafless elms, thinking out the problem of convincing the Remove fellows that his non-existent brother really existed. A somewhat difficult problem to think out.

Bunter gave the Yankee junior a sour look. Whether he had a wounded hero brother or not, he did not expect to raise anything in the way of cash from Fisher T. Fish. Fisher T. Fish would have borne the sufferings of any number of wounded heroes with great fortitude.

"I guess you didn't work the riddle in the right way," said her T. Fish. "You slipped up on it, and no mistake!"

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

"But there's something in the stunt," said Fishy, lowering his voice and looking round cautiously. "I guess I've done a think, and I calculate there's something in it—just a few, I reckon! And I kinder calculate, Bunter, that I could show you how to work the stunt if I get a percentage on the shrocks."

"Speak English, you ass!" said Bunter irritably. "What are you driving at?"

"Those jays are awfully keen on the war, you know," said Fish. "I guess it don't matter a peanut to me—I'm a neutral. Look at Bob Cherry, for instance. He'd pawn his Sunday socks to help a soldier or sailor. Why, if they believed you had a wounded brother at the Front in need of things, they'd shell out all along the line, and raise no end of spendalicks!"

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ON SALE
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"THE INTRUDER!"

"The rotters won't believe me!" growled Bunter.
 "I guess they won't—the way you spin the yarn," said Fisher T. Fish disdainfully. "I reckon, in your place, I'd have had the letter all ready to show."

"But there's private family reasons—"
 "Oh, don't spring that on me!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, in disgust. "I ain't come hyer to hear you talk outer your neck, Bunter. I guess I can put you on to spoofing the jays—and serve 'em right, too! If a galoot's spoofed, it shows that he's the kind of galoot who's born to be spoofed, and if you don't spoof him, somebody else will—that's my idea. Will you follow my lay-out?"

"How?" asked Bunter hopefully.
 "Ten per cent. of the takings; and I guess I'll show you how," said Fisher T. Fish, confidentially. "Of course, don't you mention my name in the matter. The galoots would smell a mouse at once."

"It's a go!" said Bunter. "How, then?"
 "I calculate I want it in black and white," said Fish cautiously. "It's going to be an agreement. Not much good in law; but if you tried to dish me, I'd show the galoots the agreement, and they'd soon have the dollars off you again. Put it down in black and white, and I'm your man!"

Billy Bunter blinked doubtfully at the Yankee junior. Fisher T. Fish prided himself upon being cute and all there, and having his eye-teeth cut; but it was true that most of Fishy's cute schemes ended in what, in his own language, he would have called a fizzle. Still, Bunter reflected that even if Fishy couldn't help him, he couldn't make matters worse, and it was a chance. Certainly, if roguery could do any good, that great quality would not be wanting when Fisher T. Fish took the matter in hand.

"It's a go!" said Bunter at last.

"Hyer you are, then."
 Fish sat down on a bench under the elms, opened his pocket-book, and took out a fountain-pen. Fishy had purchased that fountain-pen for three shillings from Smith minor in a stony period of Smith minor's career, and it was Fishy's till Smith minor should be able to raise ten shillings to repurchase it.

"Write down as I tell you," said Fish, and Bunter took the pen. "I hereby agree to pay F. T. Fish ten per cent. of ail moneys raised on account of my brother in Flanders, in consideration of receiving F. T. Fish's help to convince the fellows of the said brother's existence. Signed, W. G. Bunter."

"That's good enough," grinned Fish, when Bunter had indited that precious agreement. "I reckon that's enough to make you divvy up afterwards."

"You haven't told me yet how it's going to be done!" grunted Bunter.

"I guess I've think that out. You produce the letter from your brother—"

"But—"
 "Don't tell me any piffle about private family matters!" snorted Fish. "You don't produce that letter, because it's a letter from a chap thanking you for some smokes, and nothing else. That's not the letter you're to produce—you'd better keep that letter dark—but another letter."

"I haven't got another letter, fathead!"
 "Oh, carry me home to die!" ejaculated Fish. "Of all the duffers— Look hyer, what's the matter with getting another letter, worded just as you like?"

"How can I get it?"
 "Get a chap to write it, of course—a chap whose fist those galoots don't know."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bunter.
 He blinked wide-eyed at Fisher T. Fish. Certainly, when it came to real rascality, the enterprising Fish could give Bunter points, and beat him easily.

"You spot the stunt?" said Fish. "Chaps at the Front write on anything that comes to hand, with a stump of pencil. Well, you know what you want your brother to write—about being wounded and in hospital, and wanting things sent him, and cash—specially cash, you see, so that you can be sure of getting cash in hand. You produce that letter as the one that came in that envelope from the Front. Put the right date on it, and the name of a hospital—any old hospital will do."

"I—I say, is that legal?" gasped Bunter.
 "Do you thing the galoots are going to spot it and give information about you under the Defence of the Realm Act?" snorted Fish. "They'll swallow it whole, of course!"

"I—I suppose I should be justified, as—as of course my brother really is at the Front," said Bunter, blinking at him.
 "Yep. Well, that's the stunt; and I want ten per cent. of the takings—see?"

"I suppose you can write the letter for me?"
 "No jolly fear!" said Fish promptly. "It's got to be in a man's hand. Get a man to do it. I know a man who'd do that or anything else for two bob."

"I haven't got two bob!" growled Bunter.

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"Oh, rats!"

"Who's the man?" asked Bunter hesitating.

"There's a chap in Courtfield now, who plays the piano at the cinema," said Fish, lowering his voice. "His name's Curll, and he's a boosy bouncer—drinks like a fish. He's tipsy most of his time, and always hard up. He'd do it."

"How on earth did you get to know him?" said Bunter, in astonishment.

Fish chuckled.

"I came across him in old Lazarus' shop one day."

"Where you go to buy second-hand things, that you try to sell to the fellow as new?" sniffed Bunter.

"That ain't your bizney, my tulip! Old Curll was there, trying to sell an old violin to Mr. Lazarus, and Lazarus wasn't taking it. It was worth about a bob, I suppose. Then, blessed if the galoot didn't turn to me and ask me if I wanted a violin!" chuckled Fish. "I told him I'd give him twopence for it, and chance it. He didn't accept the offer. He was half squiffy then, and he began telling me and Mr. Lazarus, and the customers generally, what a great gun he'd been in his early days, when he sang in some operatic company or other, and old Lazarus had a dickens of a job to get him out of the shop, violin and all. I saw him go into the next house—he lodges there. You go to him. Tell him the letter's a sort of joke. He won't ask you many questions if there's a two-bob-bit at the end of the job. Tell him that to begin with. Simple as A B C!"

"I—I say! You go to him——"

"No fear! I guess I'm not appearing in this matter personally. It's your brother, ain't it?"

"Ye-es; but——"

"Well, that's the stunt. Take it or leave it," said Fisher T. Fish.

And the Yankee junior strolled away, leaving Billy Bunter in a very thoughtful and somewhat worried mood. Bunter was very anxious to convince the Remove of Rupert Cecil Herbert's existence, and to get a Form fund raised for his behoof, and he was too obtuse to understand fully the rascality of his scheme. But even the obtuse Owl of the Remove felt uneasy at Fishy's amplification of his scheme. He had a dim idea that it was a serious matter—more especially as Fisher T. Fish declined to have anything to do with it personally.

But the vision of a Form fund—and unlimited tuck in spite of war prices—dazzled Bunter, and he rose to the bait, as the keen Yankee junior was quite convinced that he would. And having, after some mental debate, decided that it would be justifiable under the circumstances—Bunter always liked to feel justified—the Owl of the Remove commenced a round of borrowing to raise the two shillings which were an indispensable preliminary to securing the caligraphic services of Mr. Curll, of the cinema.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Takes the Plunge!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Bob Cherry held up his hand warningly. Billy Bunter had rolled down to Little Side, where the juniors were at football practice.

"Not a word about Cecil Rupert Herbert!" exclaimed Bob. "Just one word about him, and you travel away on your neck! That's a tip."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"For goodness' sake, ring off that subject, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton impatiently. "What's the good of telling whoppers that nobody believes?"

"Tain't that!" howled Bunter. "Look here, I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"Oh, crumbs! Have you chucked up Brother Cecil, and revived the postal-order?" groaned Bob.

"I'm expecting it by the next post——"

"Well, my tip is, go and wait for the postman," said Bob, and he went on the field, leaving Bunter to follow his good advice if he liked.

"Beast!" growled Bunter. "I say, Harry, old chap, I want two bob very badly. It's to help a poor chap who's down on his luck."

"Named Bunter?" asked Harry, laughing.

"No, you ass! Named Curll—I—I mean—never mind his name!" said Bunter hastily. He realised that it would not do to talk about Mr. Curll, whose valuable assistance as a letter-writer was to be obtained for two shillings.

But the captain of the Remove had caught the name, and he glanced curiously at Bunter. He had heard the name before.

"Curll!" he repeated. "I know that name. Some of the St. Jim's chaps were talking about a chap named Curll when we were over there. Lowther knows him, I think. Is it the same?"

"Ahem! If you could spring two bob, old chap——"

"I could, if it's for that Curll," said Wharton, with a nod.

"Is the man in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, that's the man," said Bunter, at once. He knew

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nothing whatever about Mr. Curll's acquaintance with Monty Lowther, of St. Jim's, but he would have said anything to raise the loan he required. "The very man."

"Chap who works in a cinema, and has seen better days?" asked Harry.

"That's it. He's hard up, you know, and I'm going to lend him a hand," explained Billy Bunter. "You might make it half-a-crown, Harry. I'll let you have it back out of my postal-order, of course."

Wharton looked very doubtful. He had heard the St. Jim's fellows speak of Mr. Curll, an old-time operatic tenor, who had run very much to seed, who had come "down to the halls," and from the halls to the cinema.

He had no objection to expending half-a-crown in helping the unfortunate gentleman, especially as he had had a remittance that morning. But he doubted very much whether Billy Bunter would convey the said half-crown to him, if entrusted with it. Billy Bunter had a way of regarding any money as his own, if it once got into his fat hands.

"Come on, Wharton!" bawled Bob, from the field.

"Half a mo', Bob!"

"Of course, five bob would be better," went on Bunter, his hopes rising as he found that Harry had heard of Mr. Curll, and was interested in him. "The chap's a really good sort, you know, quite down on his luck. Used to be a singer or something, and came down through boozing. I suppose you know I can be relied on to take the money straight to him?"

"No, I don't," said Harry bluntly. "But I'll chance it, to the extent of half-a-crown. Here you are!"

Billy Bunter's fingers closed greedily on the coin.

"I say, you know, if you made it five bob——" he began.

"Beast, to walk away while I'm talking! Br-r-r-r!" The captain of the Remove joined the footballers in the field, and Billy Bunter rolled away. He paused as he passed the tuckshop in the corner of the quad. An almost irresistible attraction drew him thither.

Certainly, if by Mr. Curll's assistance a Form Fund could be raised for his mythical brother, that would amount to a dazzling sum in comparison with a mere half-crown. On the other hand, a bird in hand was worth a whole covey in the bush. Moreover, Bunter was hungry—he was always hungry. He who hesitates is lost—and Bunter was starting for the tuckshop when Fisher T. Fish's bony hand dropped on his shoulder.

The fat junior blinked round at Fish.

"Better get off and see Curll while you've got the rocks," grinned Fisher T. Fish. "I saw you squeeze Wharton for a loan. Vamoose the ranch, you fat jay, and get to business!"

Bunter hesitated again.

"You fat clam!" said Fish. "If there's a fund raised, it may come to ten quids or more. Have some sense!"

"Oh, really Fishy——"

"I guess I'll see you out of the gates!" said Fish. "Kim on!" And he drew the hesitating Owl away from the dangerous neighbourhood of the tuckshop.

Billy Bunter grunted, and gave in. Fisher T. Fish started him on the Courtfield-road, giving him final instructions for finding Mr. Curll.

When the fat junior reached Courtfield, temptation assailed him once more as he passed the bunshop; but he kept on heroically, and arrived at Mr. Lazarus' establishment. Next to the shop of Mr. Lazarus was a rambling and seedy-looking building, which was used as a lodging-house; and in that abode, according to Fish, dwelt Mr. Curll, of the cinema, the gentleman who dreamt that he had dwelt in marble halls.

Billy Bunter blinked in at the open doorway, with a sniff of disgust. The house was a good deal like a rabbit-warren, and Bunter had no idea where to look for Mr. Curll in it. As he stood blinking about the hall, where the paper was peeling off the wall with damp, a gentleman came in with a paper packet under one arm. Billy Bunter blinked at him, wondering if this was Mr. Curll.

The gentleman was of uncertain age, and dressed in seedy clothes that had once been good. All his edges were frayed or shiny, his boots were sadly worn down at heel, and his old frock-coat was carefully buttoned up to his chin, probably to conceal the absence of linen. His aquiline nose was very ruddy, hinting that he was in the habit of looking upon wine when it was red, not wisely but too well.

He glanced at Bunter, and Bunter came up to him. He sniffed a little as he came up. A strong scent escaped from the newspaper folded up under the gentleman's arm, and Bunter did not need telling that the packet contained fried fish.

"Excuse me!" said Bunter, with as much civility as he could muster in addressing such a very seedy gentleman. "Do you know if a Mr. Curll lives here?"

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"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

The seedy gentleman took off his old silk hat, and executed bow.

"You behold him, young sir!" said the seedy gentleman.

"Oh! You're Curll?"

"Horatio Curll, at your service," said the seedy gentleman, "and very pleased to meet you, Master—"

"Bunter."

"Master Bunter! To what," continued Mr. Curll, who evidently had a highfalutin mode of address—"to what, Master Bunter, may I attribute the honour of this visit?"

"I—I want to speak to you," said Bunter, hesitating.

Mr. Curll nodded, with a beaming smile.

"I understand. You are a patron of the Courtfield Cinema, and you have a musical ear; you have been struck by the quality of the pianist's work. I understand! You desire to make the personal acquaintance of the artist who has enraptured you. I comprehend perfectly. Follow me, Master Bunter. Allow me to receive you in my own chambers!" added Mr. Curll, with dignity.

And Billy Bunter followed the seedy gentleman up the rickety stairs.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Complete Letter-Writer!

MR. CURLL had asked the fat junior, in his grandiloquent manner, to enter his chambers; but, as a matter of fact, he showed him into one little room, where there were an unmade bed, two or three rickety articles of furniture, and a little window that gave an extensive view of chimneys and roofs. But the hospitable wave of Mr. Curll's grubby hand was quite princely, as he showed Bunter in.

Mr. Curll dwelt largely in the regions of the imagination, which coloured his surroundings, and he probably did not see his grubby quarters with the same eye as the visitor. From his manner, he might have been showing his visitor into a baronial hall.

"Pray be seated, Master Bunter!" said Mr. Curll. "Ahem! Not that chair—this one, please; this one has the full complement of legs."

Billy Bunter sat down.

Mr. Curll placed his newspaper-parcel on the table, removed his hat, and produced a cigarette. He smiled benignly upon Bunter. His misunderstanding of Bunter's motive in visiting him had put the unfortunate gentleman into an exceedingly good humour. Like most gentlemen with artistic souls, who have not been lucky in the pursuit of art, Mr. Curll was hungry for flattery. He liked his flattery in chunks, but any kind of admiration was better than none.

"So you have been charmed by my playing, young sir," said Mr. Curll. "Master Bunter, I do not conceal from you the fact that this visit is most flattering, most gratifying!"

"I say—" began Bunter.

But Mr. Curll ran on.

"Seeing me thus, in humble surroundings, Master Bunter, you would scarcely credit that there was a time when I sat in the lap of luxury," said Mr. Curll sadly—"a time, alas! when duchesses drove in their magnificent motor-cars to snatch a careless word from Horatio Curll."

"My hat!" said Bunter.

"Those times," said Mr. Curll sorrowfully, "are past."

"Looks like it!" grinned Bunter.

"Yet there was a time when the leading tenor of the Roser-Moser Company was great and famous, when audiences hung breathlessly upon every note that fell from his lips," said Curll. "Misfortune, Master Bunter, dogged my steps. What cared I for lucre? When wealth was mine, it ran through my fingers like so much dross. The artist soul scorns such trash. So now you behold me thus—reduced in the world, Master Bunter, to such an extent that the loan of half-a-sovereign, even from a stranger, would not be unacceptable."

Mr. Curll paused, like Brutus, for a reply; perhaps to give his visitor an opportunity of producing half-a-sovereign, if so disposed. No half-sovereign was forthcoming, however, and Mr. Curll ran on:

"From the heights we fall to the depths, my young friend. From the glorious realms of grand opera, Horatio Curll came down to the halls; till at last—can you credit it?—even the halls offered him no place!"

"Drink, I suppose?" remarked Bunter.

Mr. Curll did not seem to hear that remark.

"Now you behold me a relief pianist at the cinema," he said. "Yet, even in so humble a sphere, the true artistic touch makes itself felt. All Courtfield ahem!—crowds to hear my playing. A soulless, vulgar, mean-spirited manager fancies that they comes to see the pictures. Your visit to my humble abode, Master Bunter, proves otherwise. Your ear has been charmed and fascinated by—"

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"Eh! I haven't heard you play," said Bunter.

Mr. Curll came down suddenly out of the clouds, as it were, and blinked at Billy Bunter.

"You—you have not heard me play?" he ejaculated.

"No. I thought they had an orchestra at the Courtfield Cinema," said Bunter. "I've been there lots of times."

"There is an orchestra," said Mr. Curll coldly. "When the orchestra is off duty the place is taken by a pianist—the relief pianist. I am the pianist."

Mr. Curll said "I am the pianist" as he might have said "I am the King of England." But Bunter did not seem impressed.

"Oh, I see," said Bunter. "I remember now, there's a squeaky piano plays sometimes. I wondered what they did it for."

Mr. Curll stood in an attitude such as Ajax might have adopted when defying the lightning, and fixed a steely eye upon Bunter.

"There appears to have been a misapprehension, Master Bunter," he said, with icy dignity. "Kindly do not let us discuss music. I object to discussing my art with the common herd. Why have you called upon me?"

"A chap gave me your name," said Bunter. "He said you'd do me a little service for a couple of bob."

Mr. Curll passed his hand over his noble brow. Instead of an enraptured admirer who had sought his distinguished acquaintance, his visitor was a person who wanted him to do a little service for a couple of bob! It was a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous, and poor Mr. Curll's vanity suffered at that moment an anguish that Bunter was far from comprehending. But Mr. Curll did not follow his first impulse of waving Bunter forth with an imperious hand. For the one-time leading light of the Roser-Moser Company could not afford to be indifferent even to the humble sum of two shillings.

"I should be happy to render you any little service in my power," said Mr. Curll, with quiet dignity. "If you wish me to sing at some private entertainment, I should be happy to oblige. I would accept merely a cab fare. I am not in a position to dictate terms. But two shillings—ahem—"

"Tain't that," said Bunter. "I want you to write a letter. The chap I mentioned said you would do it."

"Oh!" said Mr. Curll, his conceit stirred again. "You desire a letter to be written—a letter of an impressive nature, couched in polished periods—"

"Nothing of the sort! Just a pencil letter. I'll tell you what to write."

Mr. Curll looked downcast again.

"The fact is," said Bunter, "it's a joke really. I'm making out that I've had a letter from the Front. Only a joke. It's to take a rise out of some chaps, you know. Just you dab it down in pencil."

"I see," said Mr. Curll, with a curling lip. "You desire to give an impression that you have relations at the Front in order to feel in the swim. Well, it is a harmless conceit, and I do not object to doing you that little service. You mentioned, I think, the sum of two shillings."

"That's it."

"I generally receive fees in advance."

Billy Bunter produced the half-crown. Mr. Curll sorted out three pennies and six halfpennies, and handed them over in change. He had still a halfpenny left.

"You have pencil and paper?" asked Mr. Curll. "I have none. There was a time when—"

"Yes; a leaf from my pocket-book will do, and I've got a pencil," said Bunter, ruthlessly interrupting Mr. Curll's threatened reminiscences. "Here you are."

"Well, what am I to write?" asked Mr. Curll moodily.

"Lemme see," Bunter reflected. "Dear Billy! Got that?"

Mr. Curll scribbled it down.

"Just a line to tell you that I was wounded in the last push, and am now in hospital at the base." Got that?"

Mr. Curll grinned, and said he had got it.

"I am expecting to get the V.C., and have been offered a commission. I've lost a lot of things up the line, and should be glad if you could let me have some cash—a few pounds would do. Also, if you can, send me a new safety-razor and some parcels of tuck and smokes, and so on."

Mr. Curll wrote it all down without speaking a word. It seemed to Mr. Curll that the schoolboy was simply guilty of a piece of harmless bounce in pretending that he had a relation at the Front, and, though he did not approve of the spoof, Mr. Curll felt that he could not afford to quarrel with two shillings.

"Send ten pounds if you can," went on Bunter, his eyes gleaming greedily behind his spectacles. "I will return it later, when I get my commission." Got that?"

"Yes. Is that all?" asked Mr. Curll.

"Kindest regards to all at home, and remember me to

Sammy.—Your affectionate brother, Cecil Rupert Herbert Bunter."

Mr. Curll finished the letter with a flourish.

"Thanks!" said Bunter, taking it. "It's only a joke, you understand?"

"I quite understand," said Mr. Curll drily. "Quite."

"Good-afternoon!" said Bunter, rising.

"One moment, young sir. You belong to the school in this neighbourhood, I take it?" said Mr. Curll.

Bunter nodded.

"You young gentlemen probably indulge in amateur theatricals and such things?" continued Mr. Curll.

"Yes; lots."

"Quite so. If you should desire to receive instruction in the theatrical art from a past-master, I trust you will remember me. My terms would be very reasonable. Instruction in dramatic art—"

"I'll remember," said Bunter carelessly.

"Or parts taken in private plays," said Mr. Curll. "In an amateur rendering of 'Hamlet,' for instance, I should be very pleased to play the role of the Prince of Denmark. One professional actor in an—ahem—amateur company might make all the difference between failure and a dazzling success. If you and your friends are in need of such services, Master Bunter, you will not forget me."

"Right-ho!" said Bunter. "Good-afternoon!"

And the Owl of Greyfriars rolled out, and Mr. Curll proceeded to unpack his fried fish and partake of his frugal combined lunch and dinner.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Proof Positive!

FISHER T. FISH looked curiously at Bunter when the fat junior came into the Common-room that evening. Bunter caught his glance, and closed one eye.

Fishy grinned. Evidently his counsel had been followed, and the Owl of the Remove was provided with a letter from his brother in Flanders.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, addressing everybody in general.

Nobody took the trouble to reply.

"I say, you know," persisted Bunter. "I say, Wharton."

"Don't!" said Harry.

"Eh! Don't what?"

"Don't say! Don't say anything! You talk too much, you know."

"The talkfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," remarked Hurree Singh. "The silent tongue goes longest to the well, and saves a stitch in time, as the English proverb remarks."

"Look here, Wharton, about my brother—"

There was a yell at once.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Are you beginning that again?" roared Bolsover major, jumping up. "Hand me that cushion, Kipps!"

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter, dodging round the table.

"Keep off, you beast! I've made up my mind to show you my brother's letter."

"Wha-a-t!"

Even Bolsover major stopped and stared.

"You're going to show us the letter!" roared Peter Todd.

"How can you, when you've been spoofing all the time?" demanded the Bounder.

"The letter wasn't from your brother, you fat Ananias!" said Rake. "It was from a chap who got Smithy's smokes."

"I decline to argue about it," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "All I can do is to show you the letter, and then I expect you to apologise all round."

"I guess that's fair and square," said Fisher T. Fish. "If it's genuine, I'll say I'm sorry, Bunter."

Which was really very diplomatic of Fisher T. Fish.

Bunter's announcement was sufficient to draw all the attention of the junior Common-room upon him. Peter Todd looked very suspicious.

"You're going to show us the letter after keeping it back three days?" he exclaimed. "And why this sudden change?"

"I declined to prove my words from a—sense of dignity," said Bunter loftily. "I—I should have refused to take any notice of your measly doubts, only—only, you see, I'm thinking of my poor brother—"

"Alas, my poor brother!" murmured Bob Cherry, and there was a chuckle.

"He's laid up in hospital, and wants some money and things," said Bunter pathetically. "Owing to being short of tin, I can't send him what he wants. And he's been fighting the Huns, and all that. Keeping the beastly Huns off while you fellows slack about playing footer, you know."

"Oh, dry up!" said Wharton. "If you've got a wounded brother in hospital and he wants anything, we'll raise a Form fund for him in a jiffy. But you haven't."

"For my brother's sake, I'm going to prove it to you," said Bunter loftily. "For that reason only, mind. Otherwise I should treat your doubts with the contempt they deserve."

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NEXT
MONDAY.

"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

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"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, trot out the letter," said Rake. "If it's genuine, you can rely on us to play up. I'll believe it when I see it!"

"The whenfulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter fumbled in his pocket.

All eyes were upon him.

Bunter's big brother had been chortled over as a standing joke, and it was simply incredible that the yarn was true after all. But if Bunter produced proof, that settled the matter. There wasn't a fellow in the Lower Fourth who wasn't ready to shell out for a wounded hero if he wanted help—even Skinner and Snoop would have stood something in such a cause.

Billy Bunter produced the envelope the juniors had seen before, with "On Active Service" printed on it, and stamped with "Field Post-Office." He handed it to Harry Wharton.

"There you are!" he said loftily.

"We've seen this before, fathhead!"

"The letter's in it."

"Oh!"

Harry Wharton drew a folded sheet out of the envelope. Then he hesitated.

"Do you want us to see this, Bunter?" he asked. "I don't want to look at your dashed letters, for one."

"You've doubted my word," said Bunter, with crushing dignity. "The only way to set me right with the Form is for you to read that letter out before all the fellows. It's your duty."

"Oh!" said Harry, quite nonplussed. "If you put it like that—"

"I do!" said Bunter firmly.

"Go it, Harry!" said Bob Cherry. "It's up to you."

Wharton unfolded the letter.

"Read it out," said Bunter, as Harry glanced at the pencilled scrawl with astonishment in his looks.

"Lend him your ears," grinned Bob.

"Listen, you fellows," said Wharton.

And he read out the letter. And all the juniors in the Common-room listened with all their ears. For the letter, astounding as it seemed, bore out all Bunter's amazing statements. It ran:

"Dear Billy,—Just a line to tell you that I was wounded in the last push, and am now in hospital at the base. I am expecting to get the V.C., and have been offered a commission. I've lost a lot of things up the line, and should be glad if you could let me have some cash; a few pounds would do. Also, if you can, send me a new safety-razor, and some parcels of tuck, and some smokes, and so on. Send ten pounds, if you can. I will return it later, when I get my commission. Kindest regards to all at home, and remember me to Sammy.

Your affectionate brother,

CECIL RUPERT HERBERT BUNTER."

A pin might have been heard to drop in the Common-room as Wharton finished.

The silence of amazement had fallen upon the Greyfriars juniors.

They stared at Bunter, and stared at one another.

A bombshell falling into the Common-room could not have surprised them more than that letter from Cecil Rupert Herbert Bunter.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose.

"Then—then—then he has got a brother at the Front!" he stammered at last, breaking the amazed silence.

"Oh, what a surprise!" ejaculated Tom Brown.

"The surprisefulness is—"

"Terrific!" grinned Bob. "Terrific isn't the word, though. It's positively stunning!"

Billy Bunter surveyed the Removites through his big spectacles with a lofty expression. He had succeeded in making an impression upon these doubting Thomases at last. There was no doubt about that. Bunter's big brother was accepted as a fact at last.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I apologise, Bunter, dear boy! I take back a lot of the things I've thought about you, begad!"

"I expect apologies all round," said Bunter loftily.

"I suppose Bunter didn't write that himself?" suggested Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I thought of that," he confessed. "But it's a man's fist. Look at it. Bunter couldn't have written it."

"Oh, go easy!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish warmly. "I guess that's the real goods. I'm sorry I doubted you, Bunter. I ask your pardon, by gum!"

"Granted," said Bunter.

"Well, I'm sorry, as it turns out," said Wharton frankly.

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



The seedy gentleman took off his old silk hat, and executed a bow. "You behold him, young s'r!" he said. (See Chapter 6.)

"You do want a lawyer on the job," said Peter calmly. "That letter is spoof?"

"Oh!"
"Draw it mild, Toddy!"

"Dash it all, Todd—" began Harry Wharton.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bolsover major. "Now it's been proved, it's time for you to ring off, Todd. You don't know everything!"

"Admitted," said Peter cheerfully. "And you don't know anything, old chap!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Look here, Toddy, you shut up!" howled Billy Bunter, in great alarm and dismay. "You ring off, Toddy! I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself, while my poor brother is lying—"

"Your poor brother would be lying, if you had one," said Peter. "No doubt about that. I dare say he'd do as much lying as you do!"

"He's lying in hospital."

"Which hospital?" asked Peter, unmoved. "It doesn't seem to be mentioned at all in the letter."

"By Jove, it isn't!" said Harry.

Fisher T. Fish gave Bunter a look. The Owl of the Remove, with his usual obtuse carelessness, had overlooked that detail.

"How are you going to send him anything without knowing his address?" asked Peter sweetly.

"They—they ain't allowed to tell you where they are, at the Front," stammered Bunter. "It's one of the rules of the game. The things will get to him all right, addressed to him with his name and regiment and number."

"That's right enough I think," said Wharton. "I don't quite see what you're getting at, Toddy."

"I'm getting at this," said Peter coolly. "That letter's spoof, and I can prove it!"

"Rats!" said Bolsover major. Bolsover having been convinced himself, he regarded it as pure cheek on the part of anybody else to express any doubts. But the schoolboy-lawyer did not heed Bolsover major.

"Give me the letter, Wharton!" The captain of the Remove handed over the letter. Billy Bunter eyed Todd almost wolfishly. So far as he could see, there was nothing in the letter to give him away. But he had a deep dread of Peter's acute brain and legal knowledge.

"Fancy a chap in my own study stoking up against me like this!" said Bunter bitterly.

"Rotten!" said Bolsover major. "Todd's a suspicious beast. I vote we don't take any notice of Todd."

"We want the truth," said Bob Cherry. "Go it, Toddy! What's wrong with the letter? It's not in Bunter's own list, anyway."

Peter read the letter carefully through, and smiled. "This letter gives itself away, if you could only see it," he remarked. "You'll see when I point it out."

"Well, point it out, and not so much gas!" said Bolsover major.

"Bunter refused to show us this letter before," said Peter Todd calmly. "He gave as a reason that it contained private family matters, which he naturally didn't want anybody to see."

"Thru for yez," said Micky Desmond. "And I offered him some stamp edging to stick over the family bits, bedad!"

"But it was your own fault, Billy. You're such a blessed Prussian; and how could we tell you were telling the truth for once? I don't see why you couldn't have shown this letter before. Nothing in it a chap couldn't see. But I'm sorry, and now it's proved, you can rely on us. Gentlemen, there's going to be a Form fund raised for Bunter's brother."

"Hear, hear!"
"By gad, we're in this, too!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth. "I'd have shelled out fast enough if I'd believed it. I'll start the list with a half-quid."

"Somebody take round the hat," said Nugent.
"Good idea! Get a hat, somebody. Better get a silk hat, as there's going to be a regular swarm of subscriptions," grinned Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter's face expanded in a broad grin of satisfaction. Fisher T. Fish smiled with equal expansiveness. Bunter was booked for the lion's share of the junior subscription; but ten per cent. of the takings came to the keen Yankee. The agreement, in black and white, secured that. Johnny Bull rushed into the hall for a hat, and came back with a gleaming topper Lord Mauleverer had left there.

"Walk up, gents!" sang out Johnny Bull.
Peter Todd had been looking very thoughtful, and not speaking. But he rose up now and his voice was heard:
"Hold on!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Bowled Out!

"HOLD ON!" Peter Todd spoke very quietly, but very decidedly. The juniors, who were preparing to shell out, paused and looked at him inquiringly.

"It's all right, Toddy," said Frank Nugent reassuringly. "We don't want a lawyer on the job. It's a clear case."

Bunter's fat jaw dropped. It was dawning upon him now what the schoolboy lawyer was driving at.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, with a very changed expression.

"You fellows have all heard the letter read," resumed Peter. "I ask you, where are those private family details that Bunter was so particular about?"

"Echo answers where!" grinned Rake.

"There's nothing private in the letter at all—nothing about family matters," said Peter. "Liars should have good memories; but Bunter isn't fitted out for a career as a champion Prussian—the good memory was left out of his composition. He told us, about fifty times, that he couldn't show us his brother's letter because it touched on private family matters. Now he shows us the letter, and there isn't a hint of private family matters in it. And the inference, my children, is that Bunter was lying then and is lying now, and that he got somebody to write this letter for him, to spoof us with!"

Bunter's face was a study.

With all his unscrupulousness, the Owl of Greyfriars was really very badly fitted by Nature to play the part of a rogue.

He had quite overlooked the fact that the letter would be required to bear out his previous statements concerning it. If he had borne that important fact in mind, it would have been easy enough for Mr. Curll to write anything he wished; but he had not thought of it at the time. He thought of it now, but it was a little too late.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath, "of all the rascally spoofers! That comes to pretty near forgery, I should think."

"It isn't forgery," said the schoolboy lawyer. "You can't forge the hand of a man who doesn't exist. But in a court of law it would be called attempting to obtain money under false pretences, and Bunter would be liable to anything up to three years' imprisonment."

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Fisher P. Fish sidled quietly out of the room. There was a thunder-torm ahead for Bunter, and there was no telling what might come out. The Yankee junior wisely decided not to be on in the next scene.

The Removites gathered round the unhappy spoofer with grim looks. They had been very nearly taken in. The Form Fund had been very nearly started. But for the intervention of the schoolboy lawyer, a considerable sum would have been raised for Rupert Cecil Herbert Bunter, and they could guess how William George Bunter would have disposed of it.

"I—I—I say, you fellows—" mumbled Bunter feebly.

"You fat rotter!" said Wharton scornfully. "You seem to have taken a leaf out of Fishy's book! This is just like one of his swindles. What have you got to say for yourself?"

"I—I say, that letter's from my brother, you know?"

"My hat! He's still sticking to it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Don't you know you're found out, you—you—you Kaiser?"

"The Kaiserfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Kaiser is a truthful person compared with the esteemed and ludicrous Bunter!"

"Rotten fibber!" growled Bolsover major. "Jolly nearly swindled me out of five bob! He's got to have a lesson!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"I—I say, you fellows—" "Have you anything to say before sentence is passed on you according to Remove law?" demanded Peter Todd.

"M-m-my b-b-brother—"

"Who wrote that letter for you?" asked Bob.

"My brother Rupert—I mean, Cecil—"

"Was that what you wanted two bob to-day for?" exclaimed Wharton, recollecting. "Did you tip some low-down bounder to write it for you?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Collar him!" roared Bolsover major, in great indignation.

"I—I say, it's all right, you know. I—I made a mistake in—in mentioning those family matters," groaned Bunter. "I—I simply mentioned them as as a figure of speech, you know."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What I—I really meant was that mum-mum-my brother would have written about family matters if—if he'd had time," stammered Bunter. "That was what I really meant to say, you know."

The juniors gazed blankly at Bunter. Bunter had the Prussian gift of lying on the grand scale, but he lacked the other Prussian gift of making his lies sound probable. He never could tell when it was time to stop lying.

"Well, if he doesn't take the cake!" said Bob Cherry. "It's not much good talking to him. He beats the Kaiser at his own game. Collar the fat toad!"

"Yaroo! I tell you—"

"Bump him!"

"Yow-ow! Help! I say, you fellows—yow-ow!—my brother—yaroo! I say— Help! Fire! Murder! Yaroo!"

The indignant Removites did not spare the unfortunate spoofer. Billy Bunter was bumped five times in succession on the floor, letting out a terrific yell with each bump. Then he was rolled over on the floor to the doorway, and twenty



Mr. Curll insisted on shaking hands all round with the juniors. (See Chapter 13.)

boots helped him into the passage. There the unhappy Owl picked himself up and fled, in a very dusty and dishevelled state. And when he had recovered a little he rolled away to Fisher T. Fish's study, to tell the Yankee junior what he thought of him.

Once more Billy Bunter's great scheme had gone awry, and the dazzling vision of a Form Fund, to be expended in tuck, was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Not Beaten Yet!

FOR two or three days nothing more was heard in the Remove of Billy Bunter's big brother. Even yet the Owl of Greyfriars had not admitted that the said big brother was non-existent. Bunter had asserted the existence of Cecil Rupert Herbert so often that he had perhaps begun to believe in Cecil Rupert Herbert himself. But he did not venture to speak about him. The exposure of the fraud of the pretended letter had been complete, and the Removites were fed up. The mere mention of Cecil Rupert Herbert was enough to bring a cushion hurtling across the Common-room, or a boot whizzing in the dormitory, and Bunter realised that it was not good enough.

Probably Bunter's big brother would never more have been heard of; but there was a much cuter brain than Bunter's thinking the matter out. And after a few days had elapsed that cute brain had solved the problem, to its own satisfaction at least. And Bunter received a visit from Fisher T. Fish in his study, Fishy carefully selecting a moment when Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were not there.

Bunter gave him a ferocious blink. So far, he had not profited by the cute Yankee's assistance, unless a bumping in the Common-room could be counted as profit.

"I guess I've thought it out for you," announced Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, get out!" said Bunter.

Fish carefully closed the door.

"Look hyer, you jay!" he said. "You slipped up on that letter bizney; it was your own fault. I could have worked the raffle slicker than that. You've only made matters worse with your bungling. But that idea of a Form Fund is the real goods, and it's too good to be lost. Look hyer, there's one way you can clinch 'em. Your brother's got to come to Greyfriars."

Bunter's spectacles almost fell off in his astonishment.

"C-c-come to Greyfriars!" he stuttered.

"Yep."

"But he can't; he—he—he's in Flanders!"

"Oh, don't give me that!" growled Fish. "Keep that for those jays. I've had my eye-teeth cut long ago. Your brother won't have to come from Flanders, as you haven't got a brother there. He'll come from Courtfield."

"Courtfield?" yelled Bunter.

"Sure!"
"But I haven't got a brother at Courtfield, you silly ass!"
"Yep, you have—Curll!"
"Kik-k-k-k-Curll!" stammered the astounded Bunter.
"Yep."
Billy Bunter blinked at the Yankee junior in some alarm. It really seemed to him that Fisher T. Fish was taking leave of his senses—such as they were.

"Don't you bite?" asked Fish impatiently. "That galoot Curll is an old actor. He could do the bizney on his head, and nobody at Greyfriars has ever seen him. You told me what he said to you the other day, about coming here to help the amateur theatricals, if he could get the job. Well, he could dig up an old khaki suit from somewhere, and put on a moustache, and there you are. What's the matter with his dropping in at Greyfriars as your brother Rupert, on leave from the Front?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

"It's a real cinch," said Fisher T. Fish, with great satisfaction. "If your brother actually comes to see you, they can't doubt his existence any longer. He just drops in for half an hour—"

"But I've told them he's wounded. I mean, he is wounded—"

"He's been transferred to a home hospital, and recovered enough to make visits," said Fish. "He could come with his arm in a sling."

"But—but people ain't allowed to wear khaki unless they're in the Army or got a military job of some sort. You get put in prison for it. Curll wouldn't take the risk."

"Hum! Well, being a wounded soldier, he needn't be in khaki," said Fish. "He could be allowed out of the hospital in plain clothes. They are sometimes."

Billy Bunter looked very thoughtful, and a fat grin overspread his face. Now that he understood the stunt, it quite appealed to him. Even Peter Todd couldn't doubt the existence of his big brother, when that gentleman stood before him in flesh and blood. Mr. Curll was a stranger to everybody at Greyfriars; and he could put on a military moustache and bandage his arm. There was no doubt that he would play the part—for a consideration. Some yarn could be told him to hush his scruples, if he had any.

"It's a cinch—what?" asked Fish.

"I—I suppose it could be worked. Curll would want a quid at least."

Fisher T. Fish nodded.

"I guess that can be fixed. We'll have a new agreement, and I go halves in the plunder, instead of ten per cent. That will see me clear. I'll see Curll this time, and fix it with him; you'd only make another bungle. You can come with me, as he's going to be your brother. I'll stand the quid, and take it out of the fund before we divvy up."

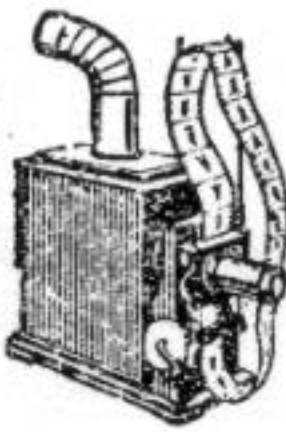
"Look here, you greedy rotter—"

"Halves, and all exes paid before the divvy!" said Fisher

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T. Fish firmly. "And you'll put it in black and white. Otherwise, the game's off."

Bunter gave him a glare, but he had no choice in the matter. He could not carry out the scheme without Fishy's financial assistance, and the Yankee's terms had to be agreed to.

"Is it a go?" demanded Fish.

"I suppose so," growled Bunter. "You blessed Shylock!"

"Well, you get half the loot for nothing," said Fish indignantly. "It's my stunt, too, and I've got to fix up the whole caboodle."

"I say, Curll's too jolly old," said Bunter dubiously. "He must be over military age, or he'd be in the Army now."

"That don't matter a cent. He looks old because he's been through awful hardships and been wounded, you see," explained Fish, with a chuckle. "They won't expect a wounded hero to look young and fresh."

"Well, that's so."

"Besides, there are lots of johnnies over military age in the Army. They take a man of any age if he's fit. He's one of those patriotic chaps over age who don't believe in leaving it all to the young men, you know," grinned Fish.

"I don't see why it shouldn't work," said Bunter. "But—but suppose Curll thinks it's a swindle—"

"I've thought that out. You tell him—or, rather, I guess I tell him—that this is a practical joke on the chaps, and we're going to see whether he can play the part, to put him to the test as an actor, with a view to giving him a job afterwards in our private theatricals."

Bunter gazed at Fisher T. Fish in great admiration.

Certainly, if the matter was put to Horatio Curll in that light, there was no doubt that Horatio Curll would jump at it.

"Well, you're jolly deep," said Bunter. "Of course, Curll mustn't know anything about the Form Fund."

"No fear! Either he would want a whack in it, or he'd refuse to touch the bizney at all: depends on the kind of galoot he is. We keep that part dark."

Bunter jumped up out of the armchair.

"Let's go!" he said.

"I guess I'm ready. And on Wednesday, when he's going to come along, you get a telephone call from your brother—"

"Do I?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Yes. He rings up Greyfriars to tell you he's got leave from the hospital, and is going to look you up."

"But—but—"

"I shall give you the call from Courtfield post-office, fat-head!"

"Oh, I see!"

"There's two receivers on the 'phone in Quelch's study. You can get Wharton or Bob Cherry to take the other, and hear your brother speak," grinned Fish.

"Oh, my hat! But they'll know your voice: you talk through your nose, you know, and you don't speak English."

Fisher T. Fish glared at Bunter as if he could eat him.

"You silly jay!" he roared.

"Well, you do," said Bunter obstinately. "Anybody at Greyfriars would know your nose-voice, and you'd begin guessing and calculating too—"

"Curll can do the telephone trick," said Fish, after a pause, perhaps realising that there was something in Bunter's objection. "Come on; let's go and see him."

He broke off suddenly as the study door opened, and Peter Todd came in.

"Well, can you lend me that grammar, Bunter?" said Fish casually.

This was intended as a very cunning stroke, to give Todd the impression that Fish had simply dropped into the study to borrow a grammar. Unfortunately Billy Bunter was not quite keen enough to play up. He blinked at Fish in surprise.

"Eh! What grammar?" he asked.

"That Latin grammar," grunted Fish.

"Do you want a Latin grammar?"

"Haven't I said so, fathead?"

"You didn't say so before," said Bunter. "And what the dickens do you want with a Latin grammar if we're going to Courtfield?"

Fish suppressed his feelings with a very great effort. His wonderful cunning was quite thrown away, with Bunter as a partner in rascality.

"Hallo! Going to Courtfield?" said Peter Todd. "Have you taken to walking in your old age, Bunter?"

"Oh, come on, Bunter!" growled Fish, and he clutched the fat junior by the arm, and led him out of the study.

"Here's a Latin grammar, if you want one, Fishy!" called out Peter Todd.

Fish did not reply, but led Bunter away to the stairs. He was afraid of what the fat junior might blurt out next. Toddy, who had picked up his Latin grammar, laid it down again, somewhat puzzled.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 469.

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Startling News!

WHARTON!

Mr. Quelch called out from his study doorway, as the Famous Five were going down the passage on Wednesday afternoon. Wharton stopped at once.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you find Bunter, please, and send him here? Tell him his brother has spoken to me on the telephone, and wishes to speak to him." Mr. Quelch started. "Bless my soul! What is the matter with you, Wharton?"

Wharton had almost fallen down.

"His—his—his brother, sir!" he stuttered.

"Yes."

"Do—do—do you mean Bunter minor, sir?"

"Certainly not. What an extraordinary question, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch sharply. "His elder brother, who informs me that he has leave from the hospital to pay him a short visit here. Kindly call Bunter without delay."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Harry.

The Famous Five went out into the quadrangle like fellows in a dream. They were utterly astounded. It had been settled beyond the shadow of a doubt that Bunter's elder brother existed only in Bunter's fervid imagination. And here he was telephoning to Mr. Quelch!

"It's a trick!" growled Johnny Bull. "Another dodge of the fat rotter to make us believe in his blessed brother!"

"He could get a man to telephone—same as to write the letter," said Nugent sagely. "It's only some more spoof."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Well, we'd better find Bunter," he said.

Bunter was found in the quadrangle, talking to Peter Todd. He was seeking to raise a small loan from Peter, to be repaid out of a postal-order he was expecting hourly.

"You're wanted, Bunter," said Wharton. "You've been asked for on Quelch's telephone."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Bunter peevishly.

"Fact, my fat tulip," said Bob Cherry. "It's your brother."

"Eh?"

"What?" yelled Peter Todd.

"So Quelch says," said Harry. "Cecil Rupert Herbert has leave from the hospital, and he wants to speak to Bunter on the 'phone."

"Ganmon!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"What sort of spoof are you playing now, you fat boulder?" demanded Peter severely.

Billy Bunter blinked at him with great dignity.

"I've been expecting to hear from my brother," he said calmly. "He's been transferred to a home hospital, you know. Look here, you come with me and hear what he says, Toddy. You may believe a pal's word, then."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Peter grimly.

He accompanied Bunter to Mr. Quelch's study. The Form-master gave Bunter a very kind nod. It was the first he had heard of Bunter's big brother at the Front, and the news disposed him kindly towards the Owl of the Remove.

"You may use the telephone to speak to your brother, Bunter," he said. "I shall return in five minutes."

Mr. Quelch quitted the study. Bunter took up one receiver, and Peter Todd the other, and Bunter spoke into the transmitter:

"Hallo! Are you there?"

"Yes. Is that my brother Billy?"

It was the rich, rolling voice of Mr. Curll, and Bunter grinned as he heard it. Mr. Curll, under the impression that he was helping in a harmless practical joke, which was to test his powers as an actor, and perhaps afford him a job in helping in amateur theatricals, had entered into the scheme with great heartiness, encouraged by fifteen shillings down, and the promise of a further half-sovereign afterwards.

"Yes. Are you Cecil Bunter?"

"I am."

"Jolly glad to hear you're up again, Cecil!" said Bunter, with a triumphant blink over the receiver at Peter Todd.

Peter, with the other receiver at his ear, listened with a puzzled expression. He hardly knew what to think.

"How is your wound?" went on Bunter.

"Better—much better," said Mr. Curll. "I have to wear my arm in a sling, that's all. I've got a short leave from the hospital, Billy, so I've rung up Greyfriars to ask you whether I can see you if I call to-day?"

Peter almost dropped the receiver.

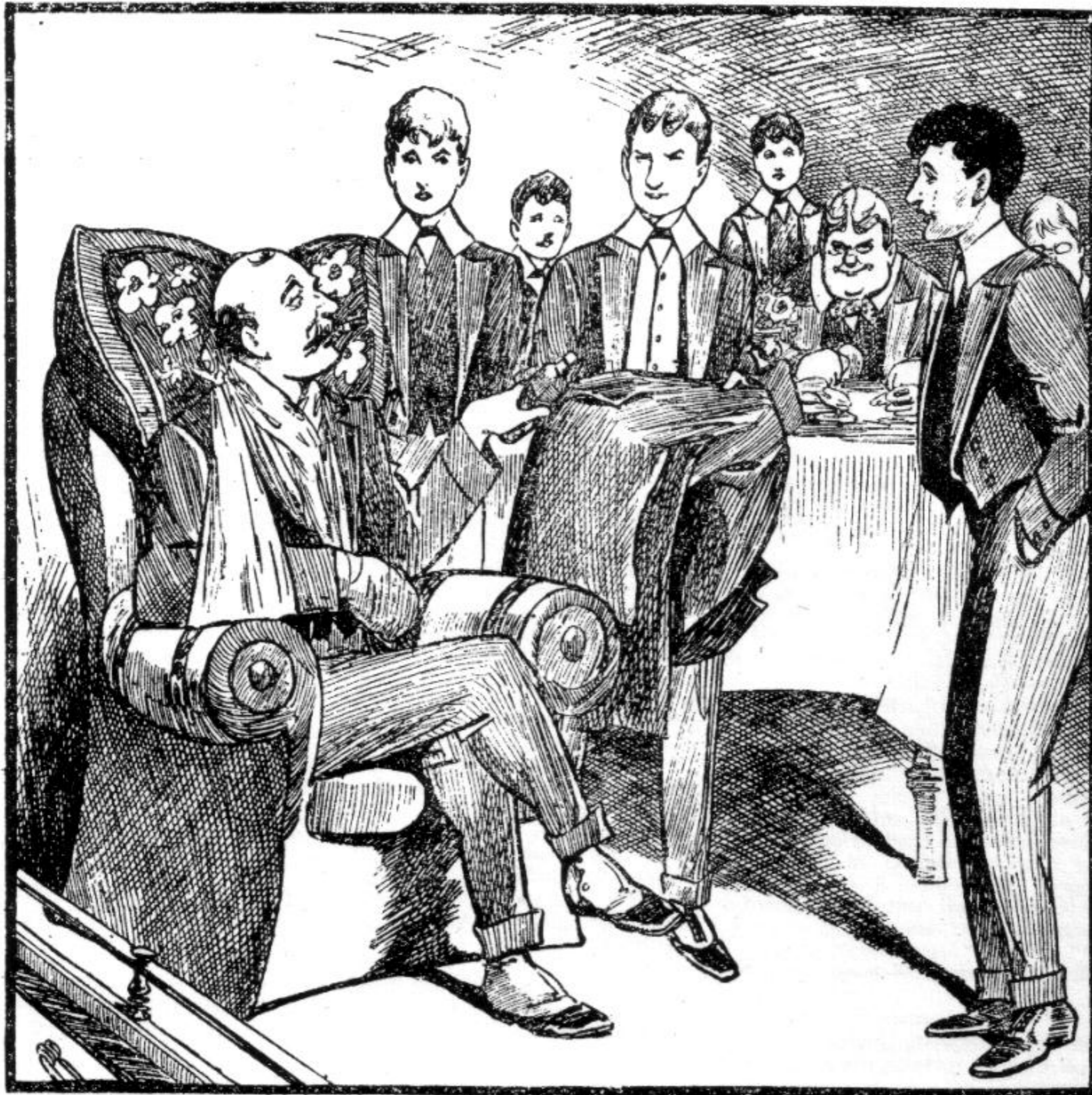
"Certainly!" said Bunter at once.

"You won't be at lessons?"

NEXT
MONDAY.

"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS



Mr. Curll was enjoying himself. (See Chapter 13.)

"No; it's a half-holiday to-day—Wednesday, you know!"
 "Yes, yes; I ought to have remembered that, Billy. That's lucky. Then it will be all right if I come along?"
 "Right as rain!"
 "You can expect me in about an hour, then."
 "Right-ho!"
 "I'll have tea in the study with you, Billy. You've told me a lot about your feeds in the study in your letters to me out at the Front. I'm quite keen on it!"
 "We'll have a stunning spread all ready!" said Bunter.
 "My friends will rally round on an occasion like this!"
 "How's Sammy?"
 "Quite chippy. He will be jolly glad to see you, Cecil!"
 "Expect me in about an hour, then."
 "Right!"
 Bunter put the receiver on the hooks. He blinked at Peter Todd, who slowly laid down his receiver.
 "Well, my hat!" said Peter.
 "Perhaps you believe in my brother now?" sneered Bunter.
 "I'll believe in him when I see him," said Peter drily.
 "You'll see him this afternoon."

The two juniors quitted the study. Peter looked like one in a dream. Even the keen-witted schoolboy lawyer was puzzled.

If Bunter's brother came to Greyfriars, that disposed of the theory that Bunter had tipped a man to telephone to him—at least, Peter thought it did. Peter was quite non-plussed.

"Well, what's the spoof this time?" asked Bob Cherry, as they joined the Famous Five in the quad.

"Blessed if I know whether it's spoof or not!" said Peter, while Bunter gave a scornful snort. "Somebody's telephoned as Bunter's brother—"

"Same chap that wrote that letter for him, very likely," remarked Nugent.

"But he's coming here."

"Here!" yelled the Famous Five, with one voice.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 469.

ON SALE WEDNESDAY.

"THE INTRUDER!"

"So he says, at least."

"Well, my hat!"

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you're going to stand by me when my brother comes?" said Bunter. "I happen to be short of money to-day, owing to a disappointment about a postal-order. Cecil wants to have tea in the study. I've told him lots of times how I'd like to entertain him in the study in my letters out to him in Flanders!"

"I know the game!" growled Johnny Bull. "We're to stand a whacking feed in Bunter's study, and something prevents the blessed brother from turning up at the last minute! Spoof from beginning to end!"

"Oh, really, Bull!"

"The spoof-fulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh, shaking his dusky head. "It is a dodge to get a feed swindlefully!"

"Look here, Inky, you black bounder—"

"Blessed if I know what to think!" confessed Peter Todd. "If this chap on the 'phone is genuine, I suppose the letter was genuine. If there's really a chap from the Front coming here, it's up to us to treat him decently!"

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"I say, you fellows, he'll be here in an hour!"

"Rats!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I'll tell you what," said Harry Wharton. "We'll get a decent tea ready, and if the chap comes we'll do him as handsomely as we can. If he doesn't come—for any reason what, ever—we'll duck Bunter in the fountain, and he won't get a glimpse at the feed!"

"Good egg!"

"Done!" said Bunter at once.

"Eh? You're willing to agree to that, Bunter?" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"Of course I am! My brother will be here in an hour!"

"Well, I'm blown!" said Johnny.

Johnny Bull, like Thomas of old, was of a doubting turn of mind, but even he was almost convinced now.

"It's a go, then," said Harry Wharton. "And if it's genuine, we'll see about that Form Fund when the chap's gone!"

And so it was settled.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Brother Arrives!

"BUNTER'S brother's coming!"

The news spread like wildfire in the Remova. There was not a single believer at first. Bunter's spoofing proclivities were too well known. The general opinion was that the promised visitor would fail to turn up at the appointed time, and that the telephone call would turn out to be one more trick.

But Bunter's confident manner staggered even the hardest doubters. If the big brother didn't come, Bunter would not touch a crumb of the feed that was preparing in No. 7 Study.

That was understood. He was to be ducked in the fountain, in addition. Yet Bunter displayed no uneasiness, and was evidently looking forward to the arrival of the war-worn hero. Sammy Bunter, of the Second Form, was equally keen.

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Sammy, of course, was to be in the festive-party at No. 7 Study, and he was bringing Nugent minor and Gatty with him.

As the time for Cecil Rupert Herbert's arrival drew near and Bunter showed no sign of nervousness, the Removites simply had to be convinced that the thing was genuine, and that Bunter for once had been done an injustice.

Fisher T. Fish, who was generally suspicious, professed to be quite convinced of the genuineness of the affair. Fishy was coming to the feed. All was grist that came to the cute Yankee's mill.

No. 7 Study presented a very unusually festive appearance. Everything but table and chairs had been cleared out to accommodate the large party, and the good things had been laid in on a lavish scale. When it was a question of entertaining a man from the Front, it was no time for war economy; the juniors were agreed on that.

Bunter, having been disappointed about his postal-order, could not make any cash contribution; but he helped in the shopping and the cooking, and liberal contributions were forthcoming from the Famous Five, and the Bounder, and Squiff, and Lord Mauleverer, and several other fellows. Bunter's big brother was to be entertained on a princely scale, if he came. And Billy Bunter's keenness banished the last doubt that he would come.

Quite a crowd of Remove fellows waited at the school gates for the first appearance of Bunter's brother. There was a howl when a man, with his arm in a sling, was seen coming up the road.

"Bunter's brother, 'by gum!" said Bolsover major.

"He ain't in khaki," said Wibley.

"Well, they don't wear khaki in hospital."

"They wear blue, though, and he ain't in hospital blue. That can't be the chap."

"He's got his arm in a sling."

"Well, we'll soon see," remarked Bob Cherry. "Here he is!"

The stranger halted at the gates. He was dressed in ordinary clothes, with a big overcoat and a somewhat worn silk hat. His face was very ruddy, and a military moustache adorned his upper lip.

He did not carry himself much like a soldier, but perhaps the straightness had been taken out of his back in hospital. His right arm was in a sling, but he raised his topper very gracefully to the juniors with his left hand. There was a slight uncertainty in his carriage, which might have been due to his sufferings, or—though the juniors did not suspect it—to the cup that cheers.

"Young gentlemen," said the stranger, in a rich and rolling voice, "is this Greyfriars School?"

"Right on the wicket!" said Bob Cherry.

"Thank you! I have called to see my brother."

"What name?" asked Squiff.

"Bunter!"

"Oh!"

"Come right in," said Bob Cherry, more than convinced now, and very repentant of his many doubts. "We'll take you to Bunter, sir!"

"Thank you, young sir!" The new-comer marched in in the midst of a crowd of juniors and a buzz of voices.

"By gad!" said Temple of the Fourth, in wonder. "It's right enough! Looks a bit shabby, poor beggar! We'll make that all right with the fund—what?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"We'll jolly well see him through his troubles," said Bolsover major, quite touched. "Bunter said something about his having lost his things. We'll jolly well raise twenty quid for him up and down the school."

The new-comer paused in the quadrangle and looked about him. It would not have been Mr. Curll if he had not played his part in truly dramatic style.

"So now, at last, I behold Greyfriars!" said Bunter's brother. "These grey old walls—this green and grassy quadrangle. How well Billy has described them in his letters to me!"

"Has he really?" ejaculated Bob.

"Been out there long, sir?" asked Nugent.

"Two years," said Bunter's brother. "You young fellows here in quiet old England little dream what we go through out there. Shells falling day and night, muddy dug-outs, grub running short sometimes, and the Boches always there. My young friends, it seems like a dream to be stand-



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ing here amid these peaceful surroundings. I almost think I shall wake up and hear the guns roaring."

Mr. Curll was really born for the theatre. When he was playing a part he more than half believed that he was the character he represented. Mr. Curll had never been nearer to the Front than Folkestone; but he had read the papers, and he had a vivid imagination.

He walked on in the midst of the juniors, who were much impressed. There wasn't a fellow in the crowd who was not eager to do anything he could to make that war-worn veteran as comfortable as possible. Even Skinner was looking kind and sympathetic. Billy Bunter was rising in the estimation of his Form-fellows. It was something to have a brother who had been fighting the Huns for two years. Bob Cherry, if he could, would have given one of his own sound limbs to replace the wounded arm reposing in the sling. He need not have worried, as it happened.

Private Bunter was escorted in great state into the School House. Quite an army of juniors marched him up the broad staircase and into the Remove passage. Bob Cherry threw open the door of Bunter's study.

"He's come!" he announced.

Billy Bunter turned a ruddy face from the fire. He had been giving the final touches to a really handsome spread.

"My hat!" said Wharton. "He's here!"

Private Bunter marched in.

"Hallo, Billy!"

"Hallo, Cecil!"

They shook hands.

"Here's Sammy!" added Billy Bunter, and Bunter minor came forward, grinning.

"How you've grown, Sammy!" said Bunter's brother, shaking hands with the fat fag. "By gad, I should hardly have known you!"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Curll would not have known Sammy at all but for Billy Bunter's introduction.

"Ripping to see you here, Cecil!" said Sammy.

"What does it feel like to be home again, Cecil?" asked Billy.

"It thrills my bosom," said Mr. Curll impressively, "to be once more amid the familiar haunts of my youth—"

"Were you a Greyfriars chap, sir?" asked the Bounder curiously.

"Ahem! No. I was speaking generally," said Mr. Curll, a little taken aback. When Mr. Curll was on the dramatic tack he was not to be stemmed by such trifles as facts, and he was in danger of putting his foot in it.

"These are my pals, Cecil," said Billy Bunter hastily. "Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Inky, Bull, Vernon-Smith, Toddy—"

"Delighted to meet you!" said Mr. Curll. "This reception touches my heart, my young friends. It reminds me of the old days when the Roser-Moser Company—ahem!"

"The what?" ejaculated Bob.

"I guess tea's ready, Mr. Bunter!" said Fisher T. Fish hurriedly. He was a little anxious as to what Private Bunter might say next.

"Hungry, Cecil?" asked Billy.

"I could eat a little," said Mr. Curll. "We are not allowed heavy meals when on leave from the—the hospital. But breathing my native air has given me an appetite. Is this my chair? Thanks!"

The distinguished visitor sat down.

There was quite a keen competition among the juniors to wait on him. Had Mr. Curll consumed a quarter of the good things pressed upon him he would probably have been seriously ill in No. 7 Study. But he did very well. The unfortunate gentleman was accustomed to very short commons, and the feed in the study was a feast of the gods to him.

Harry Wharton & Co. scarcely troubled about their own tea; that was a matter of little importance. But Billy Bunter and Sammy and Fisher T. Fish did not miss anything that was going. It was the chance of a lifetime for Bunter major and Bunter minor, and they did not let it pass; and Fishy was on the make as usual.

Outside the study fellows gathered to look in—quite respectfully. The news had spread far and wide that Bunter's brother had come, and everybody wanted to see him. Even the great Coker of the Fifth came along with Potter and Greene to see the distinguished visitor, and Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came in to shake hands with him.

Mr. Curll evidently enjoyed the fuss that was made of him, and he rose to the occasion. He talked as fast as he ate, and his stories of trench-life and hardships and perils at the Front were thrilling. Mr. Curll was under the impression that the whole affair was a schoolboy joke, which was to be explained

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

afterwards to the fellows he was spoofing. He had not the faintest suspicion that he was being used in a money-making scheme. Mr. Curll did not see any harm in playing a scintillating part for an hour or so, and he played it with zest. But the general excitement on the subject of Bunter's brother did not wholly please Fish and Billy Bunter and Sammy. They were afraid that Mr. Quelch might hear of the distinguished stranger, and come in to speak to him—or even the Head. And they were uneasy as to Mr. Curll's nerve in such an emergency.

But tea went off rippingly, as Bob Cherry put it. The war-worn warrior evidently enjoyed himself, and his one hand did quite as much service as two. But the time came when Mr. Curll could eat no more.

"Would you young gentlemen object to a little smoke?" he asked.

"Not at all, Mr. Bunter!"

"Not a bit!"

"We get used to it in the trenches, you know," said Mr. Curll.

"Of course!" said Wharton. "I—I'm afraid we haven't anything to smoke here, though. I'll cut off and ask Mr. Prout for some cigars."

"I guess not!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish hastily.

"Thank you! I have my own smokes," said Mr. Curll. "Hand me over my overcoat, Billy."

Billy Bunter was too busy to move, and Vernon-Smith handed Mr. Curll his overcoat. From the pocket Mr. Curll produced a shabby cigar-case, and, as it happened, a flask came to light at the same moment.

Fisher T. Fish blinked at the flask in some alarm. Mr. Curll had received fifteen shillings in advance, and it was pretty clear that he had not expended the money in settling with his landlady. Mr. Curll had expensive tastes. He had laid in half a dozen shilling cigars and had his flask filled, and a faint aroma that clung lovingly about him hinted that he had also inspired himself for the part he had to play by several drinks.

To Fish's relief, however, Mr. Curll slipped the flask back into his pocket. He opened the case and took out a cigar. Bob Cherry brought a light, and the visitor puffed at his cigar with great enjoyment. It was months since poor Mr. Curll had smoked anything but a cheap cigarette. The study was soon thick with smoke, but the juniors suppressed their coughs, and heroically kept up an appearance of quite liking it.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Exit Bunter's Brother!

MR. CURLL was enjoying himself. Seldom or never had the poor gentleman such an opportunity of expanding himself—of taking up the whole of the conversation and being listened to with respect and attention and admiration. It worried him a little not to be able to tell his kind audience all about his early triumphs as a tenor in the Roser-Moser Company, and how duchesses had hung upon the golden notes that dropped from his lips.

But he indemnified himself by relating thrilling yarns of his supposed experiences at the Front. Talking and smoking together made Mr. Curll thirsty. He had suffered from thirst all his life. The Arab in the sandy desert was not more thirsty than Horatio Curll. For some time Mr. Curll bore that thirst with quiet fortitude, but it was growing upon him.

He found himself so comfortable that he was in no hurry to move. Fisher T. Fish and Billy Bunter gave him significant looks, but he did not see. Now that his visit had proved the existence of Private Bunter, the schemers were anxious for him to go while all was safe. And, moreover, there was the business of raising the Form Fund to be seen to. But Mr. Curll was too comfortable to move, and everybody excepting the schemers was anxious for him to stay longer. So Mr. Curll was blind to significant glances, whether he saw them or not.

"This is happiness!" said Mr. Curll dreatily. "I shall think about this visit when I am back in the cin—in the trenches. I shall dream of it. I—I feel a bit thirsty, if you don't mind my mentioning it."

"Right-ho!" said Bob. "Would you like ginger-beer?"

"Ahem! I have to take my drink according to medical orders," explained Mr. Curll. "While on leave I must not disregard the—ahem!—instructions of my doctor. Owing to the nature of my—my wound, I have to take a certain quantity of stimulating liquor daily. Anything of a spirituous nature would do."

Harry Wharton looked rather grave.

"I'm afraid we've nothing of that sort," he said. "And—and it's against the law to give anything of that kind to wounded soldiers, sir."

"I guess so!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish, in great alarm. "Don't think of it for a moment!"

"I—I say, Cecil," stammered Bunter, "ain't it about time you have to get back to the—the hospital?"

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"There is no hurry," said Mr. Curll calmly. "You don't want to get rid of me, Billy?"

"Nunno. But—"

"I guess it's about time you got along, Mr. Bunter," said Fish unceremoniously.

"Dry up, you cheeky ass!" growled Bob Cherry indignantly. "Hold your silly tongue, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish had to shut up. The hospitable juniors were not likely to allow him to hurry the distinguished visitor off.

"Don't trouble about getting me anything, young gentlemen," said Mr. Curll graciously. "I am always provided with the refreshment I require, by—by my doctor's orders. I have it here."

The flask came into view again.

"May I trouble someone for a glass?" asked Mr. Curll.

"I—I say, don't give him a glass!" mumbled Bunter. But Bunter was not heeded. A glass was produced at once. If Private Bunter was taking spirituous liquors by his doctor's orders, he was to have his way.

The juniors could not help thinking that the medical man who had ordered such refreshment for a wounded warrior must have had rather unusual ideas for a medical man. But that was no business of theirs.

The liquor gurgled from the flask into the glass.

"Hot water?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Please!" said Mr. Curll, sniffing at the aroma from the glass as if he loved it—as no doubt he did.

The water added by Mr. Curll did not make much difference to the brandy. The fiery liquor was almost neat when Mr. Curll tossed it off—from a tumbler. How any man, let alone a wounded man, could stand such a drink, was a mystery. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Curll could not stand it. His face flushed, his eyes became fishy, and he held on to the armchair he was seated in. His cigar dropped on the hearthrug, and burned there unnoticed by Mr. Curll, till Bob Cherry thoughtfully put his foot on it.

"I—I say, it's time to get off, Cecil," said Bunter, forgetting even to continue his attack on the cake in his alarm. There was no telling what Mr. Curll might say or do under the influence of liquor. Fisher T. Fish had not considered that possibility in advance—the flask had not entered into his sharp calculations at all.

Mr. Curll gazed at Bunter with a fixed and fishy eye.

"Did you address me?" he asked.

"Yes, C-c-ccil—"

"My name is Horatio!" said Mr. Curll.

"What!" ejaculated Peter Todd.

"As for you," resumed Mr. Curll, still with his eyes fixed upon Bunter's dismayed face, "I despise you!"

"I—I—I say, you know—"

"You fancy," said Mr. Curll, in tones of the deepest scorn, "you imagine, petty trifler that you are, that the people come to the cinema to see your absurd pictures. The faintest glimmering of common intelligence, sir, should apprise you that they come for the pianist—that if I left your wretched cinema, sir, the public would follow me, as the multitude, sir, always follow men of genius."

Mr. Curll, under the influence of nearly a tumbler of strong liquor, was Horatio Curll again, and he supposed that he was talking to the manager of the Courtfield Cinema.

The juniors listened in dead silence.

Bunter's face was a study. Fisher T. Fish gazed longingly at the door. Sammy Bunter, who happened to be near the door, slipped out and vanished. Sammy could see that trouble was coming, and Sammy sagely considered it time to clear.

"I trust," said Mr. Curll, "that I shall see you all in front this evening. I regret that I cannot offer you passes. A soulless manager, gentlemen, believes that the public come to see his absurd movies, and he declines to give me passes for my friends. Gentlemen, the pictures are poor, and the orchestra is not first-rate; but the relief pianist comes on at six o'clock, and the relief pianist, gentlemen, is a genius. Gentlemen, I am the pianist!"

"You—you—you're the pianist!" stammered Wharton.

"Where?" asked Peter Todd very quietly.

"At the Courtfield Cinema, gentlemen. Doubtless," said Mr. Curll mournfully, "you are surprised. Horatio Curll, who sang to crowded houses in the great days of the Roser-Moser Company, whose door was crowded by the motor-cars of the nobility, plays the piano in a cinema! To such base uses may we come, as Shakespeare very truly remarks. Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, may stop a hole to keep the wind away! And I, gentlemen, I—Horatio Curll, of the Roser-Moser Company—play the piano in a hole-and-corner cinema in a country town!"

"Curll!" exclaimed Wharton. "That's the name! It's the chap Lowther mentioned to me at St. Jim's!"

"He's not Bunter's brother!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Bump that fat spoofer!"

"I—I say, you fellows, it was only a joke!" yelled Bunter. "And it was Fishy's idea. He did it all. He gave the boozy beast fifteen bob— Yarrooh!"

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Fisher T. Fish was struggling through the crowded study to the door. Peter Todd promptly shut the door and put his back to it.

"Not so fast, Fishy!" he said grimly.

"I—I guess—"

"Do not break up the merry party," said Mr. Curll, blinking round genially. "It is not yet midnight. Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl until it does flow over."

Mr. Curll began to sing, in a voice which showed that he must have sung very differently in his early days, if he had really been a great tenor:

"For to-night we'll merry be—for to-night we'll merry be—"

"Lemme pass, Peter Todd, you jay!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Blessed if I think he's ever sober!" growled Johnny Bull. "Look here, you boozy image, what have you come here spoofing us for? You're not Bunter's brother."

"Bunter!" repeated the dazed Mr. Curll, catching the name. "Master Bunter, I trust you are satisfied? I trust Master Fish is satisfied?"

"They look it," grinned the Bounder.

"Rely upon me to play the part to the very life," resumed Mr. Curll dreamily. "I have played 'Hamlet' and 'Brutus' to crammed houses. The part of a wounded hero, gentlemen, is pie to me. Rely upon me. I guarantee to bring down the house. I accept your assurance, gentlemen, that it is simply a little joke upon your schoolfellows. Horatio Curll has come down in the world, but he is not capable of deceit for any ulterior object. I accept your assurance. I accept, also, the small sum of fifteen shillings, which I require to settle with my landlady. My fees, gentlemen, are reasonable."

"The rotten spoofers!" growled Johnny Bull. "I knew jolly well Bunter hadn't a brother at the Front!"

"Gentlemen, I trust you are satisfied, and if you are pleased with the way I have carried out this little, harmless deception, I trust you will be able to offer me an engagement to assist in your school theatricals. You may rely upon me—a past-master in the dramatic art, reliable and sober—above all, sober and steady, gentlemen. Where's that flask?"

"We must get him away somehow," said Wharton, with a deep breath. "Don't be rough on the poor beast. Those rotters seem to have spoofed him as well as us. But he must be got away before he's seen. If Quelchy got on to this—"

Fortunately, Mr. Curll was not quarrelsome in his cups. He allowed himself to be raised from the armchair, and walked out of the study. Fishy and Bunter would gladly have followed, but Todd and Bob Cherry remained on guard. The exposed spoofers were not to escape just yet.

Harry Wharton & Co. gathered in a crowd round Mr. Curll, and walked him away to the gates. Fortunately he went quietly. He was in a dizzy and dreamy state of mind, but overflowing with good-humour and jollity. He was got safe out of gates at last, and in the road he insisted upon shaking hands all round with the juniors, and inviting them all to the Courtfield Cinema to hear a really wonderful pianist. But he departed at last, and zigzagged away along the road to Courtfield, with his hat on the side of his head, and pouring forth wheezy melody.

Then Harry Wharton & Co. returned to Study No. 7. They found Fisher T. Fish and Bunter quaking with apprehension.

"I—I say, you fellows, it was only a joke," groaned Bunter.

"We—we never meant to raise a Form Fund, really, you know; and—and it was Fishy's idea all along. He told me about that boozy beast, and got him to write that letter—"

"I guess I'll yell if you touch me!" howled Fisher T. Fish, as the juniors closed round him grimly.

"Yell away," said Bob Cherry. "We're going to touch you hard, you spoofing, swindling rotter!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Yarrooh! I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of you! Ow, ow, ow!"

Fisher T. Fish and Billy Bunter yelled in good earnest. But yelling could not save them. The indignant juniors intended to give them a lesson, and they gave it. For ten minutes the scene in Study No. 7 was what Hurree Singh justly described as terrific. When the wrathful Removites departed at last, Bunter and Fish sprawled on the floor, gasping for breath, and groaning dismally. They had had such a ragging that they were not likely to forget it for the rest of the term, and neither were they likely to concoct another scheme for some time to come.

The Form Fund was never raised, after all. Even Fisher T. Fish gave up the idea of rounding up his Form-fellows' pocket-money by that means. And nothing more was heard at Greyfriars of Bunter's Big Brother.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

EXTRACTS FROM

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD.

THE CASE OF HIS LORDSHIP'S ENGAGEMENT.

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes,
By PETER TODD.

I.

THE amazing flight of Lord Stony de Broke was a nine days' wonder.

As all the world knew, his lordship had been in considerable financial difficulties for some time, and his disappearance at any earlier period would not have occasioned surprise.

But it was when his financial difficulties came to an end, or his engagement to the daughter and heiress of Ebenezer K. Sprouts of New York, that the young nobleman vanished from the aristocratic circles that knew him.

The engagement had been announced in the Society papers, and his lordship's creditors were rubbing their hands with satisfaction, when the news of his inexplicable flight burst upon an astonished West End.

Scotland Yard having proved, as usual, helpless in the matter, I was not surprised when Mr. Sprouts called upon my amazing friend Herlock Sholmes to enlist his services. His lordship's prospective father-in-law was greatly distressed by the extraordinary conduct of the young man.

I was somewhat interested to see Mr. Sprouts, of whose sudden and giddy rise to fortune, due to the war, everyone was talking. In 1914 Mr. Sprouts had been a paper manufacturer on a small scale in New York. Then the war had come, and all was changed. The enormous export of Notes by the American President had caused a run on paper products of all kinds, and Mr. Sprouts' fortune was made. At the present hour he owned a line of steamers exclusively employed in the conveyance of wood-pulp to his factories, and the factories themselves, working in shifts night and day, poisoned the atmosphere of his native city for scores of miles.

With the immense increase in the export of Notes Mr. Sprouts' business expanded, till now he hardly knew how many millions of dollars he was worth. His daughter and heiress, Miss Seleucia Sprouts, was sought by scions of the oldest families in New York, men whose names had been known for months, and even years; some of whom, indeed, even knew who their grandfathers were. But, like many gentlemen of his kind, Mr. Ebenezer K. Sprouts had decided to invest his money in a peerage.

For this purpose he had visited London, where he had made the acquaintance of Lord Stony de Broke. An agreement, naturally, was soon arrived at. His lordship was in need of dollars, and Mr. Sprouts was in need of a son-in-law, and Lord Stony de Broke consented to accept the dollars, with Seleucia thrown in. Seleucia, who was still in New York, signified her consent by cable, and the engagement was announced, much to the satisfaction of his lordship's tailor and hatter and jeweller and wine-merchant. Miss Sprouts had taken the next steamer for Europe, and then—

Then the unexpected had happened! His lordship had called at the Hotel d'Oof, where the Sprouts were staying, to be presented to his fiancee. He had been presented, and had been noticed to turn suddenly pale. He had made an excuse for quitting the room, and had—vanished!

"Clean vamoosed!" said Mr. Sprouts, detailing the strange affair to Herlock Sholmes. "Absquatulated—lit out—simply mizzled! Not a word, and not a line since! All we ycerd about him was that he had jumped into a taxi, and told the driver to drive like thunder. I guess it beats me, Mr. Sholmes, and I calculate I want you to find his lordship."

Herlock Sholmes rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"His lordship is staying away of his own accord?" he remarked.

"I guess so."

"He has given no reason?"

"Nope! It simply stumps me," said Mr. Sprouts. "That morning he was looking jest the same as usual till I introduced him to Seleucia. Then he absquatulated—went off on

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his ear, I guess. I reckon, Mr. Sholmes, that I'm not letting him clear off like that. I want him found."

"And the engagement—"

"That engagement still goes!" said Mr. Sprouts emphatically. "So far as I'm concerned, or Seleucia, any old lord would answer the purpose. But, you see, I've already paid out cash. I've settled with that young man's tailor to stop an action, and I've paid his wine-merchant—a tidy bill, sir! All that was before he met Seleucia. Then, sir, he bolts—absquatulates—vamooses—buzzes off, sir, in this hyer way, leaving me and Seleucia stranded. I guess, sir, that young man's got to be found, and he's going to marry Seleucia right away, sir!"

"If you place the case in my hands, Mr. Sprouts, I will do my best to find him," said Herlock Sholmes. "I promise no more than that."

"I guess that's a deal, Mr. Sholmes. You trot that young jay back to be married to Seleucia, and name your figure, I guess, sir, that Ebenezer K. Sprouts will never be short of spondulicks so long as Woodrow Wilson keeps on sending Notes."

And Mr. Sprouts was shown out.

Herlock Sholmes lighted his pipe in a thoughtful way.

"A peculiar case, Jotson!" he remarked. "How would you account for the sudden flight of Lord Stony de Broke on meeting his fiancee?"

I shook my head.

"I cannot account for it, Sholmes. Unless, perhaps, he may have heard a rumour that the American President is no longer too proud to fight; in which case, of course, the Notes will cease to be sent, and Mr. Sprouts' contract will fall through and his huge profits cease."

"That is hardly likely, Jotson. This export of Notes has now grown into a confirmed habit, and is not likely to cease even when peace breaks out. Probably it will be continued by subsequent Presidents, with an ever-increasing demand upon the resources of the United States for the supply of paper. No; Mr. Sprouts' fortune is secure. It is not that."

"Then what motive, Mr. Sholmes, can the unfortunate young man have had? Although his tailor and his wine-merchant have been paid, there are many other creditors still unsatisfied, so he cannot be supposed to have any objection to the match."

"It is a mystery at present, Jotson, but we shall unravel it. We shall find the fugitive nobleman, and then—"

"You will hand him over to his fiancee?"

Sholmes reflected.

"I shall judge by circumstances," he said. "His lordship may have an explanation to make. We shall see! But now, Jotson, the search begins!"

II.

I NEED not give the details of the search for the fugitive nobleman. The tale would be too lengthy. Lord Stony de Broke was doing his utmost to keep concealed; Herlock Sholmes was doing his utmost to find him.

But the contest was not long; Sholmes was not to be denied. Within a fortnight he called for me in Shaker Street, and I knew by his expression that he had succeeded.

"You have found him, Sholmes?"

He nodded.

"Yes. Come, Jotson. You shall be in at the death, my dear fellow. Not a new experience for you, doctor—what?"

We walked down Shaker Street together and turned into Oxford Street. After a walk of some duration Sholmes halted at a public-house.

"We have arrived, Jotson."

I started.

"Here, Sholmes?"

"Here," he replied, with a smile. "We shall find his lordship, I fancy, in the billiard-room. You see, my dear fellow, the unfortunate man was thrown quite upon his uppers by mizzling out of his engagement with the American heiress. He was compelled to turn to work to support himself. His training at the public school and the University, Jotson, had fitted him for only one possible profession—that of a billiard-marker. Come!"

I followed Sholmes into the billiard-room. It was un-

tenanted save by the marker. The marker came towards us, and Sholmes fixed his eyes upon the noble, aristocratic features, the strikingly hooked nose, which, at the first glance to a trained eye, betrayed the young man as a member of the nobility.

"Good-evenin', gentlemen!" said the marker.

"Good-evening, Lord Stony de Broke!" said Herlock Sholmes calmly.

His lordship staggered back.

Then, recovering himself, he grasped a cue and stood at bay.

"You have found me!" he said hoarsely. "Ha! I see here the hand of Ebenezer K. Sprouts! But I will not be taken alive! Let Seleucia Sprouts return whence she came—or let Ebenezer K. seek a blind nobleman to become his son-in-law! Though her dollars were as numerous as President Wilson's Notes, I would not return!"

"Calm yourself!" said Sholmes soothingly. "I am prepared to hear the reason of your flight. I shall not necessarily hand you over to the tender mercies of Seleucia Sprouts. Explain!"

Lord Stony de Broke thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out a photograph.

"I have her photograph here," he said. "She handed it to me that—that fatal day when first I looked upon her face! I have kept it, and when my courage has failed at the thought of doing honest work for the rest of my days, and I have allowed my mind to linger upon the dollars of Ebenezer K. Sprouts, I have looked upon this picture, and have been strengthened. Look at it, Mr. Sholmes—one look will be enough—and you will know why I fled like a madman from the Hotel d'Oof on that fatal day!"

He held up the photograph.

Sholmes sank feebly into a chair as he gazed upon the pictured features of the heiress of Ebenezer K. Sprouts.

"Enough!" he said faintly. "Take it away!"

III.

IT was some time before Herlock Sholmes recovered sufficiently to leave the billiard-room, and he leaned heavily upon my arm as we walked home to Shaker Street. Needless to say, he threw up the case, and Lord Stony de Broke remained concealed, in fear and trembling, but safe. A few weeks later a fresh diplomatic crisis in Washington led to an immense increase in the export of Notes, and Ebenezer K. Sprouts was called home to superintend the crection of gigantic new paper mills to meet the Presidential demand. Then—and not till then—was Lord Stony de Broke seen once more by his anxious friends and creditors!

THE END.

DOGGY DEAR.

A Story of Marlingbury School.

By MARK LINLEY.

CHAPTER 1.

The Poet.

"Oh, doggy dear, whose limpid eyes
Look up at me with sad surprise,
I can't sufficiently explain
The matter to your canine mind.
It's not because I'm not inclined
To roam the woods and fields to-day,
With you to run, with you to play,
That studying hard I here remain."

"Oh, shut up, Barnett! Do shut up!" yelled Wragg. "I never heard such piffle in my life!"

"It is pretty thick, isn't it? Horrid drivel!" answered Barnett, looking up from the slim, blue-covered magazine he held. "My own notion is that old Anderson's gone dotty."

"What? You don't mean to say Anderson wrote that stuff?" exclaimed Wilson.

"Of course I don't. He isn't so far gone as that. But he let it into the mag," Barnett replied.

"Oh, well, I suppose he had a corner to fill up," suggested Thirlby.

"Might have filled it up with: 'Marlingbury was founded in 1843. It was originally intended for the sons of doctors, but now takes in the offspring of respectable parents also. Its leading ass at time of writing is Thirlby'—and other true items of that sort."

Thirlby, doubly wounded, for he was a doctor's son, hurled a book at the speaker's head. Barnett ducked, and the blue-covered magazine fluttered from his hand to the floor.

Dominy stooped to pick it up, but straightened his back again without doing so.

Dominy had been writhing for the last five minutes. It had never occurred to him when he dropped those lines secretly into the box in Anderson's den devoted to the receipt of con-

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tributions for the "Marlingburian," that they were quite so bad as they sounded when read out in that shrill tone of ridicule by Barnett. He had thought them rather good, indeed.

No one at Marlingbury knew that he wrote verses. He had kept the secret up to this time, but he had not intended to keep it much longer. On the whole, he had expected applause. A poet at heart, though his verse might be pretty poor stuff—some pretty poor stuff has been perpetrated by men whose names are now written high on the roll of fame at Roger Dominy's age—he had not realised the feeling of the average boy towards poets and poetry.

"Is there very much of it?" asked Wragg, in a hollow voice.

"Three verses, I fancy," answered Barnett, picking up the magazine.

"Go on! Let's get it over! I believe I'm doomed to an early death, anyway—the good die young, and I'm frightfully good," said Wragg, the despair of his Form-master and a marked man by the prefects. "But I never expected to die of a dose of poetry. Go on, Barndoor, if you must. I can't think what you see in the drivel, but—"

"Oh, you idiot! It's just because it is such drivel—because it's so beastly funny to think that any chap at Marlingbury should write such—such guff—that I enjoy it. Fancy sitting down in cold blood and writing 'Oh, doggy dear!'"

Dominy turned his flushed face away from the crowd. He would have left the day-room if he could have summoned up resolution to go. But he felt that he must stay; he must hear all the cruel things they said about his verses. He was sensitive, as the poet, however small his gifts, is apt to be; but he was plucky, too—how plucky Marlingbury had not yet discovered.

He could bear it, whatever they said; but he no longer cherished his dream of earning a small portion of fame by the modest admission that he, and no other, had written those verses. Nobody knew—not even Anderson. Nobody should know if he could help it.

Barnett read on to the end, amid jeers, catcalls, and comments that were far sillier than the lines—though, as the comments were prose, no one suspected that.

"Well, I'm jolly well jiggered!" said Thirlby.

"That's all very well, old man," yelled the irrepressible Wragg, whose voice seemed incapable of anything between a shout and a whisper; "but I wouldn't mind betting a trifle you wrote them! You made excuses for Anderson's putting them in; you flung a book at old Barndoor's head—"

"He said I was an ass, and my people weren't respectable! Write such tosh as that! I'd see myself—see myself—oh, anywhere first! I never made a rhyme in my life, and I'm never going to!"

"Then it was you, Barndoor!" said Wragg. "All that talk about them being drivel was just to put us off the scent!"

Wragg did not believe—not the least bit in the world—that either Thirlby or Barnett was the poet. But he had caught a glimpse of Dominy's flushed face, and he suspected its owner.

There was no real malice in Wragg's mind against Dominy; but somehow the two had never quite hit it. They had not the same tastes, and once or twice it had happened that Dominy's temper had been aroused by the other fellow's ragging. It is easier for the ragger to keep his temper than for the ragged. Wragg—Marlingbury called him the "Ragger"—inflicted torture, physical or mental, with cheerful face and mind, and, being himself rather a thick-skinned animal, never could understand why his victims objected.

"If it's necessary, I'll make an affidavit that I didn't do it," said Barnett, whose father was a lawyer. "I'm not going to have a crime like this saddled on me. But it isn't likely any fellow in the Fourth did it. Who would?"

"What senior would? 'Doggy dear' is real kids' talk. But the grammar's all serene, so it can't have been any of the very small kids. Guilty or not guilty, Wilson?"

"Not guilty, you bet!" answered Wilson.

"Guilty or not guilty, Keene?"

"Oh, go to Bath, Ragger!"

"So I will, and have a little mustard in it, dear boy."

Write to the Editor of

ANSWERS

if you are not getting your right PENSION

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE FELLOW WHO FUNKED!"

A Grand Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

I acquit you. Didn't I say the thing was grammatical? Is it yours, Dominy?"

Roger would not have lied, in any case. But it seemed to him that denial, even evasion, was simply impossible. His face must give him away.

"Yes!" he blurted out.

His eyes flashed, and his hands clenched themselves. He felt at odds with all the world. Who were these fellows that they should scorn him for doing—badly, perhaps, but as well as he could—what thousands had done before him, what men had been honoured for doing in the past, would be honoured for doing in the future, for the world will never quite outgrow poetry? Dolts like Keene and Thirlby, empty-headed scapegraces like Wragg, swankers like Wilson and Barnett—who were they that they should despise him?

The mood would have passed quickly, for Roger Dominy's was not a sulky nature; but Wragg went beyond the limits of chaff—so it seemed to Roger.

"Carlo, Carlo!" he called, and whistled as if to a dog. "Oh, doggy dear!"

And then Wilson, who had the sweetest voice at Marlingbury, and took solos in the choir, fitted the strain of a droning tune to those unlucky words:

"Oh, doggy dear, whose limpid eyes
Look up at me with sad surprise—"

And they sang, all of them. They couldn't all sing, really; but that did not matter. Keene's croak did not blend well with Wilson's clear notes, and some of the voices were cracked, and others were not voices at all in a singing sense. But all uplifted the strain:

"Oh, doggy dear, whose limpid eyes
Look up at me with sad surprise—"

A mist was before Dominy's vision, and red rage was in his heart as he fronted the mocking faces. No one gave him credit at the time for pluck in fronting them. Afterwards they remembered that even in this hour of his bitterest humiliation—though how bitter it was perhaps none of them could guess—at Marlingbury he had kept up his end like a man.

"Oh, doggy dear—"

Would they never stop? Dominy felt like going mad. The lines might be silly—he did not believe they were entirely silly, for they had been the expression of actual feeling; but however silly they were, the fellows had no right to torture him like this. They were persecutors, bullies, cads, every one of them.

Roche put his head in at the door.

"Drop it!" he said authoritatively, for Roche was a prefect. "Singing—if you call it singing—can't be allowed to that extent at this hour. Why, what's the matter, kid?"

The chanting had ceased. Dominy turned to the big fellow a scarlet face, with angry eyes and quivering lips. He could not speak.

"Did you see those putrid verses labelled 'A Four-legged Chum' in the mag, Roche?" shouted Wragg.

"Yes. Didn't think they were so putrid. I've seen worse," replied the prefect, apprehending the state of affairs. As he spoke he let his hand drop on to Roger Dominy's shoulder; and to the end of his time at Marlingbury—yea, and beyond that—Wilfred Roche, in reality only a keen athlete and a decent, simple-minded fellow, was, in Roger Dominy's eyes, the very ideal of a great-hearted gentleman. So much does a touch of sympathy mean to the really sensitive fellow!

"Don't let's have any more of this caterwauling! And chuck ragging Dominy. I don't suppose there's another fellow in the whole brainless crowd of you who could have done anything half as good," said Roche.

Then he went. They did not sing again; but, of course, they did not drop the ragging of Dominy. Perhaps Roche had hardly expected they would; but he could do no more to help the youngster.

"Doggy Dear," said Wilson, stepping up to Roger and taking him gently by a button, "what does limpid mean?"

"I'll let you know what a punch—"

"He 'can't sufficiently explain,'" broke in Wragg's high voice. "Hi, Carlo—Carlo! Doggy Dear, do come here: have no fear: take some beer. No, of course, dogs don't drink beer. But old Roche said none of the rest of us could do it, and you all see I can. Here's some more! My canine friend, fear not your end: against all foes I'll you defend. Munch at your bone, and do not moan. I've got the mumps, but I don't groan. How's that, Doggy Dear?"

Wragg's impudent, freckled face was thrust within an inch of Roger's. Roger took a step backwards, and slapped it hard.

He fought Wragg next morning, and, to everyone's surprise, thrashed him. Twenty-four hours later he fought Wilson,

and this time took a beating. But Wilson had two black eyes, and was not allowed to sing the anthem in chapel next day.

Thereafter Dominy fought Keene, and came out on top; fought Thirlby, and had none the worse of an honourable draw; fought Smith tertius, Windebank, Hall, Jennings—in short, fought every fellow who called him "Doggy Dear" to his face and did not back out when challenged to ordeal of battle. And these were few, for Marlingbury was a fighting school.

One fellow who was not afraid he did not fight, for after that evening Barnett never called him "Doggy Dear." Barnett would have apologised if Dominy had given him the chance, for he liked Roger, and was honestly sorry for what he had done.

But Roger never gave him the chance. He was a young Ishmael in those days, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.

But the Form was beginning to discover that Doggy Dear, the poet, had no end of pluck; and perhaps that fortnight or so, during which he never went to bed without aching bruises on face and body, did Roger Dominy less harm than might be thought—possibly even did him good. Anyway, he learned later on to laugh at it.

CHAPTER 2.

The Willersby Run.

"MY word! If Doggy Dear hasn't entered!" shouted Wragg.

The list of the entrants for the great event of the athletic year at Marlingbury, as far as the juniors were concerned, had just been posted, and Roger Dominy's name figured therein.

Roger was only in his second term at Marlingbury, and thus far had not distinguished himself particularly on the athletic side. He played a plucky but not specially clever game at footer. His cricket as yet was an unknown quantity. He had the right build for running, but no one appeared to have thought of him as a runner.

Except Barnett, it seemed.

"Why shouldn't he? The fellow's got some pace. I've seen him sprint down the side line all serene, though he sometimes leaves the ball behind," said Barnett. "And he's sound in the wind. Shouldn't wonder if he wins."

"Oh, rot, Barndoor! You're going to win it; or if you don't, I shall," answered the Ragger. "Can't make out what you see in Doggy Dear. Nasty-tempered little slacker, I call him!"

"I don't think he's nasty-tempered. I'm jolly sure he isn't a slacker. And I hate the way you fellows continually rag him," said Barnett quietly.

"Someone had better tell Doggy Dear that the Barndoor wants to chum up with him," scoffed Keene.

"Someone had better not!" Barnett returned meaningly.

He wasn't quite sure whether he wanted that. But he was very sure indeed that the Fourth was not treating Dominy quite fairly, and that Dominy had pluck. He knew that the youngster had been doing practice spins alone along the roads and over the clayey plough-lands, and he guessed that Dominy meant to put in all he knew to win the Willersby Run. When he had done something that counted, perhaps they would leave off tormenting him about those unlucky verses.

Nobody did tell Dominy, for Barnett could thrash any fellow in the Form, and nobody wanted Doggy Dear to have such a chum. They had agreed among themselves that he was a sulky beggar who could not stand chaff. At least, they said so. Perhaps Barnett was not the only one among them who felt at heart that Dominy had scarcely deserved all the persecution he got.

The great day came, with a bleak north-easter blowing high, grey clouds across the sky, and occasional glimpses of sun that seemed to have no warmth in it. The nineteen juniors—under fifteen, one and all—who lined up outside the great scrollwork gate were shivering as the wind blew shrilly around their bare calves and up their shorts.

Barnett, Wragg, Keene, Thirlby, Windebank, and Dominy were all in the line, and the first-named two were reckoned the likeliest to win the race. They had both pace and staying power.

But Roche, acting as starter, thought as he scanned the line that young Dominy might have at least an outside chance. The youngster's calves were slim, but they were hard. His chest was broad. He looked a runner. Roche hoped he would win. He had a vague idea that the kid had been having rather a rough time of it lately.

They were off to the crack of the pi-tol, and some of them started as though for a sprint race. But among these were not the fancied candidates, and among them was not Roger Dominy. A week before he had covered the ten-mile course,

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all alone, not taking it at racing speed, but jogging along and noting the different places. The going had been very heavy indeed; but he had found himself with a sprint left in him at the finish, though he reckoned that he must do the distance in from thirty to forty minutes better time on the day of the race if he was to have a chance.

A crowd of eight, all reckoned outsiders, led the field at the end of a mile, where the course turned off the road across low-lying meadows. The flag planted by a five-barred gate was scarcely needed; Marlingbury knew by heart the Willersby Run.

Behind the eight Keene and Thirlby ran together. Between them and the next band came Dominy, running alone, and running, as those behind him noted, in good style and well within himself.

Wragg and Windebank were the nearest to him. Three or four others straggled out behind them. Last of all came Barnett, looking as if the race did not concern him in the least. But just so had he looked early in the run last year, when at the end he had fought out the finish with Smith secundus, the favourite, and had been beaten by five yards only.

"Doggy Dear's no duffer," said Windebank.

"We haven't fairly started yet," returned Wragg.

The heavy meadows thinned out the leaders. With only a mile-and-a-half covered Hall got "an awful stitch in his side," and fell out. Smith tertius, Jennings, Banks all dropped back. Dominy drew up nearer to the four remaining; and while they were plugging hard he still looked to be going easily.

An easy jump across a brook, and then a stiff rise fronted the runners—plough-land this, where the clay clung to one's feet, heavier going even than the soggy meadows.

At the further hedge of the second ploughed field—two miles or so from the start—Dominy took the lead. He had made no struggle for it; the leaders had fallen back to him, that was all. He ran easily, with a tireless, loping stride, and his chest rose and fell regularly, with no sign of distress.

Now, Barnett, whose style was of much the same kind, had drawn up to Wragg and Windebank, who had passed both Thirlby and Keene, and were seeing the others drop one by one behind them.

The condition of the run that day was such as to try the mettle of the candidates. The cold wind did not matter, one soon forgot about that; but the heavy going after lots of rain thinned the field quickly.

If the first home did the distance within twenty minutes of the usual time taken, he would have proved himself a runner of more than average ability; and it was likely that more than half the entrants would not finish the course at all.

"Doggy Dear's getting too far ahead. I'm going to clap on the pace," said Wragg, as they left the third ploughed field and reached half a mile or so of macadamised road. "Coming, you two?"

"I'm game!" answered Windebank.

Barnett shook his head, wasting no breath.

Wragg and Windebank sprinted. Barnett watched from behind, running strongly, but without overtaking himself.

And he saw that, though Dominy did not appear to have increased his pace, the two were not drawing up to him very fast. When he reached the flag by the corner of the path through Hallows Wood they were still a hundred yards behind. That is to say, they had gained about fifty yards in half a mile while trying to catch Dominy up, whereas he had never even looked round for them, and had maintained the same level pace.

"Runs like a blessed steam-engine!" said Windebank, puffing a trifle.

"You won't finish, Windy," said Wragg.

"You be hanged, Ragger! I'll finish, if I do it on hands and knees!"

Through Hallows Wood Dominy ran on, the fallen dead leaves soft and squashy under his feet, and Wragg and Windebank pursued, and Barnett came a hundred yards or so in rear of them, and behind Barnett—a goodish way behind—were Keene and Thirlby, still together. Some of the others might finish; but it was very unlikely that any of them would finish in the first three.

Beyond the wood, the course ran over rising ground again, a sandy heath dotted with gorse-clumps, and up on the highest ridge of the heath a red flag flapped in the breeze, and by the red flag stood a tall figure in oilskins. That was Roche, who had ridden out on his motor-bike, to see how the runners fared at the half-way point.

Still nearly a hundred yards ahead of Wragg and Windebank, Dominy cantered up to Roche; and still Dominy's broad

young chest rose and fell regularly, and he breathed easily, and those staunch young muscles of his felt but little strain.

"Bravo, kid!" cried Roche. "It's early for shouting, but, upon my word, you've more than a decent chance!"

Dominy's hand went up in the military salute that he had learned from the old gardener at home, sergeant in his father's regiment once on a time, but Dominy did not speak.

Up came Wragg and Windebank—the former going well still, the latter looking, to Roche's experienced eye, "very nearly cooked." Wragg said, "What cheer, Roche?" but Windebank only gasped inarticulately.

"Young Dominy's going to win," said Roche.

"Rats!" retorted Wragg.

And Roche did not feel so sure when Barnett came up twenty seconds or so later. There was half the course to cover yet, and Barnett was marked down a hot candidate, and Barnett was also a cool customer. Like Dominy, he was travelling his own gait, and the fact that others were ahead did not trouble him in the least.

"I think you've only young Dominy to fear," said Roche.

Barnett smiled, and swept on.

Roche stood and watched the young figures as they moved swiftly across the heath and down towards Revelbrook and the turn for home. Even Barnett was growing small in the distance—and Barnett was last of the four, and a big fellow for his age—when Keene and Thirlby came up.

They said no word; they scarcely looked at Roche. Keene's tongue was stuck curiously out of a corner of his mouth, and Thirlby staggered in his stride; but they were both holding on like the true Marlingbury breed, and Roche nodded approvingly.

He glanced out over the way they had come. No one else appeared from the end of the woodland path. Perhaps no more would come. Anyway, these six would supply the first three. In another moment Roche's motor-engine was humming, and he was bumping down the heath towards the Hallows road, going back to Marlingbury for the finish.

CHAPTER 3.

The Finish.

STILL Roger Dominy held on. To his right was a covert, to his left the ground fell away. For the first time he glanced round, and saw Wragg not so far behind, and Windebank slightly in Wragg's rear.

Then upon his ears there fell a piteous mewling sound, and Wragg, to his utter astonishment, saw the leader in the run go suddenly down on his knees by the side of the hedge.

Wragg sprinted again, scarcely knowing that he did so, but full of curiosity.

Dominy looked round over his shoulder. He would not ask Wragg for help in words; but his eyes were appealing. Roger loved all animals, and he could not pass that fine tabby tom-cat, caught by one leg in a cruel trap, and half dead with fear and pain. He simply had to release it.

"Don't be an ass, Doggy!" shouted Wragg. "You're throwing away your chance. Other chaps coming up behind; they've no chance at all, let them see to the thing!"

The trap was strong. Try as he might Roger could not force it sufficiently to liberate the cat. Wragg ran on a dozen yards, then stopped, and turned.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he called, with a note of appeal in his voice, for somehow he felt ashamed, and yet he was not willing to throw away his hope of winning the Willersby run for the sake of a cat that had been poaching, and got trapped.

Dominy answered no word, but his blazing eyes and crimson face spoke wrath and contempt. For a moment Wragg lingered, then shrugged his shoulders and ran on.

Windebank, staggering past with his head down, barely realised the situation, and the singing in his ears prevented his catching the sharp, little cry of pain that Roger gave as the cruel trap caught his hand, squeezing it horribly.

But next moment Barnett was on his knees by Dominy's side.

"Don't, Barnett!" gasped Roger. "Go on! I'll get him out. They say you're sure to win. Go on!"

"Hang the race! Hang winning! Why, man, the blood's oozing out of your finger-nails! Here, let me help!"

Between them they forced the strong spring of the trap back, and Dominy picked up the half-insensible cat in his arms.

"Leave it there, I should say! I believe the thing's as near dead as is no odds," said Barnett.

The look Roger gave him made him feel ashamed.

"I couldn't leave him. No, he isn't dead. Takes a lot to kill a cat. And I know where he belongs; stopped and stroked him the other day when I was round here. It's only about a quarter of a mile. But you go on."

Keene, with his tongue out still farther now, ran past them; and after Keene limped Thirlby, gone lame, but still

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sticking to it. Barnett stayed by Dominy, slowing pace to his, necessarily slower because of his burden.

They saw with relief an open gate. That was Thirlby's doing; he had understood, though he had said nothing, and he had dropped yet farther behind Keene to open that gate for them.

"Oh!" cried a girl's voice. And the two had a vision of a flushed face and a flowing mane of black hair, a short blue serge skirt, and brown stockings and shoes, all remembered afterwards as belonging to a particularly pretty girl. "Oh, I've been looking for him everywhere! Poor Tab! Thank you so very much!"

"Can't stop. He isn't dead," said Dominy. "And his leg isn't broken, only strained."

Past the garden-gate, whence the girl had darted, with a glimpse of a creeper-covered house inside, the two ran on. They overhauled Thirlby; they were drawing up to Keene. But Dominy's face had grown suddenly pale, and the blood was trickling fast from his fingers. The trap had given them a horrible squeeze.

Barnett saw, but said nothing. Only he still ran side by side with Dominy. He did not want to win the Willersby Run now. He would far rather have seen it won by "Doggy Dear." And he had quite made up his mind that if "Doggy Dear" cared to chum up with him after this, he wanted nothing better.

Keene was passed. Windebank could be seen ahead, toiling up a stiff, grassy incline. They were now off the road again, with still three miles or so to go. How far in front Wragg might be they could only guess.

Dominy held on, but Barnett read in his face the effort it cost him. Could he hold out to the finish?

"Hurrah! There's Wragg!" cried Barnett, as they reached the crest of the upland.

And he spoke as one speaks to a chum. And Dominy heard, and understood, and smiled wanly.

Windebank groaned as they left him behind, and Wragg was not so far ahead now. After all, the two favourites and the outsider would fight out the finish—unless the outsider collapsed first.

The little Marling, swollen by the rains, ran through the valley before them. Wragg had a lead of barely a hundred yards as he reached the bridge of a single plank that spanned it.

He was halfway across when they saw him slip and plunge into the yellow water. Both sprinted then.

"It's—all—right," said Barnett, a trifle winded at last. "The Ragger—can swim—well."

But a cry for help rang out—a cry that struck a chill to their hearts, so full of fear it was.

Dominy was first at the river—only some ten yards or so wide here, but deep, and running fast. He saw that the plank had slipped from its place into the stream, and it seemed likely that in slipping it had struck Wragg; for something had made him helpless.

Into the yellow water plunged Dominy, and into it, in his wake, plunged Barnett. And together they got Wragg to the bank.

"I'm—done!" he gasped, having got rid of a gallon or so of water. "My arm's—broken—I think. Seves me—right—for not—helping you—Doggy!"

"Others coming up behind," said Barnett.

"That's—all—gone! Don't wait—for me! Get on, Doggy!"

Dominy started off, not perceiving that Barnett lingered.

"Ragger, I don't want to win! I want Dominy to pull it off! He deserves it!"

Windebank came up, and plunged in, and was puffing across.

"Idiot!" answered Wragg. "He'll not care—about winning—like that? Not—that sort! Try—all you know—then—"

Barnett waited for no more. He knew that Wragg was right. To throw up the race in Dominy's favour was to deprive him of all the glory of it. Off he went, at his best pace, after Dominy.

"Go on, Windy! You may come in a bad third yet!" said the Ragger, grinning even in his pain.

And Windebank ran on, staggering, but plucky.

The plunge had put new vigour into Dominy. His head no longer pained him so much. But his head was somehow queer, and he did not realise that Barnett was not with him until suddenly Barnett was, and then he knew that a moment before he had been alone.

"Here they come! It's old Barndoor, and— Who if it isn't Doggy Dear!" cried Wilson, standing, with a dozen

others, at the gate of the last field, half a mile from the school.

"Go it, Barndoor! Lick the beggar! Mustn't let Doggy Dear win!" yelled Smith tertius.

And Barnett did all he knew to win. Wragg was right. There must be no giving the race to "Doggy Dear." He was not the sort to care for that!

Shoulder to shoulder ran the two, with only a quarter of a mile left to go. Now and then a drop of blood fell from the smaller boy's crushed fingers; but he did not seem to heed the pain, and while Barnett staggered, his gait was steady, though his face was white and strangely drawn.

The school gate was in sight, and still they ran side by side, both with curiously dulled brains that needed some stimulus from outside to quicken them. One might almost have thought that they had arranged to make a dead heat of the race. Yet, in truth, each was trying all he knew.

Then Roche's voice rang out.

"Come along, young Dominy! Sprint now, and you'll do him!"

And Dominy's brain answered to the call, and his hard young leg-muscles answered, too. He sprinted gallantly.

Barnett tried his best. But there was no power to sprint left in him. His chin fell on his chest. He gasped. He held on still; but Dominy shot ahead, and won the race by a clear twenty yards, and fell in a heap the moment he had broken the tape.

It was Thirlby who finished third, twenty minutes behind Barnett, limping, but holding on still. Windebank had collapsed half a mile from home, and Keene, a poor swimmer, had not dared the passage of the Marling.

"Did Doggy Dear win?" was Wragg's inquiry when he came up, scarcely in worse case than his companion, Windebank, for all his broken arm.

"Yes; Doggy Dear won," answered Wilson, with a wry face. He had seen the finish from afar.

"Jolly good job!" answered Wragg, to Wilson's intense surprise.

And thereafter "Doggy Dear" had only one closer chum at Marlingbury than Wragg. That one was Barnett, of course. From the day of the run Dominy and Barnett were inseparables, and Wragg was a frequent third in the company.

The most curious thing about it was that the Fourth continued to call Dominy "Doggy Dear," and that he didn't mind. But perhaps that was because the manner of the nickname's use had altered. The poet had proved his mettle, had won his spurs. And if he ever wrote verses again while at Marlingbury, he showed them to none but Barnett—certainly not to the Ragger, though he held the Ragger a staunch chum!

THE END.

HE NEVER SMILED AGAIN!

(With apologies to the Shade of Mrs. Hemans.)

By DICK PENFOLD.

The boat that bore the pie went down
And foundered in the Sark;
And Bunter, full of wild despair,
Searched for it after dark.
He failed to find it anywhere,
And gave a gasp of pain.
"My rabbit-pie is gone!" he groaned,
And never smiled again!

They brought huge dumplings up to him,
And tarts in rich array;
A waggonload of sausage-rolls
For him to stow away.
They brought him pastries of the best
The fancy and the plain;
But, no! His rabbit-pie was lost!
He never smiled again!

He sat where ripping cake went round,
And every sort of sweet;
Alas! It wasn't any good,
For Bunter wouldn't eat!
They heard him mourn that rabbit-pie
In sorrowful refrain:
"What rotten luck! I've lost my tuck!"
He never smiled again!

At many a rare and ripping spread
The ginger-pop was poured;
And Mrs. Mumble's finest grub
Adorned the festive board.
But Billy Bunter's rabbit-pie
Had fastened on his brain;
He gnashed his teeth, and piped his eye,
And never smiled again!

