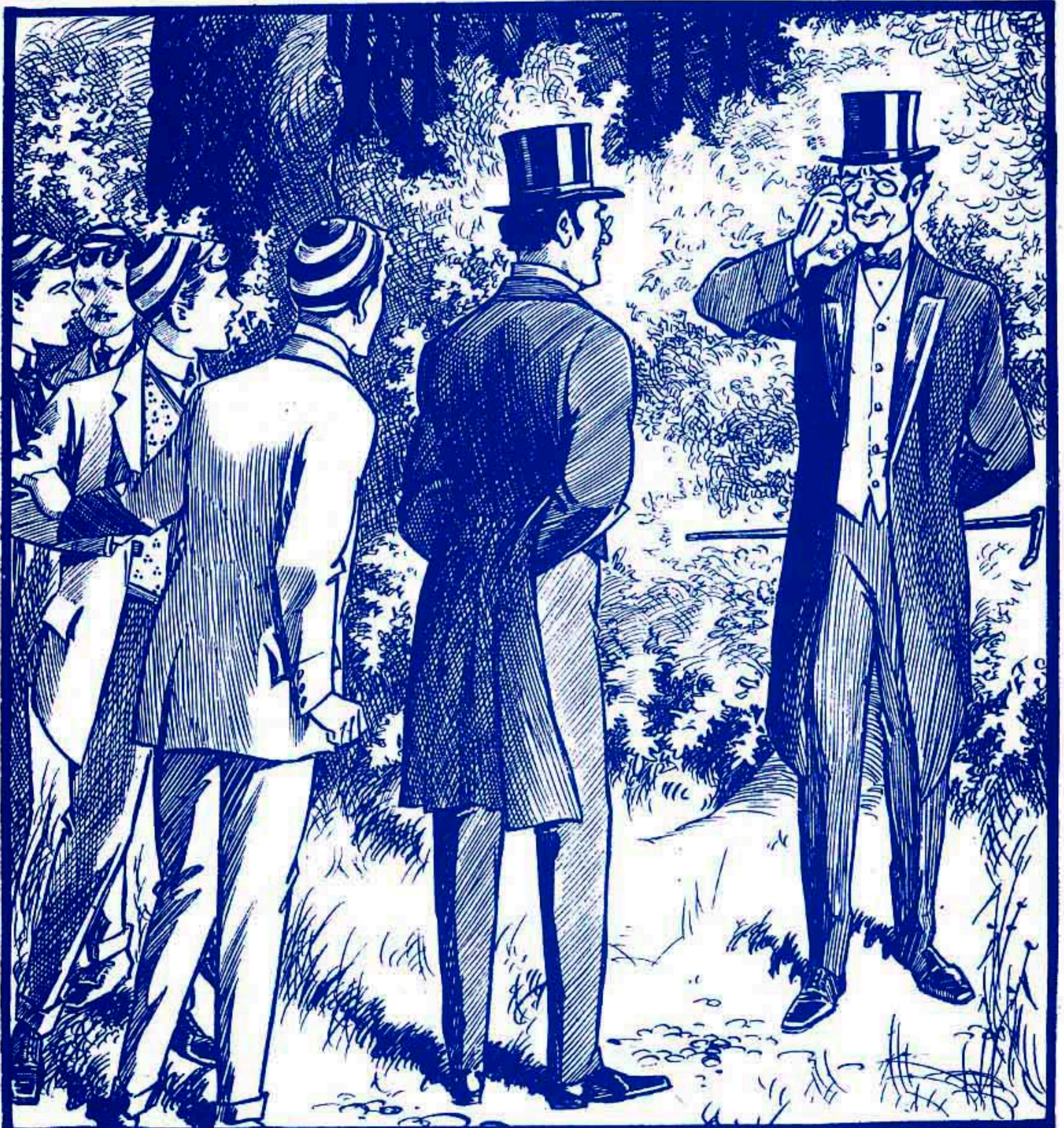
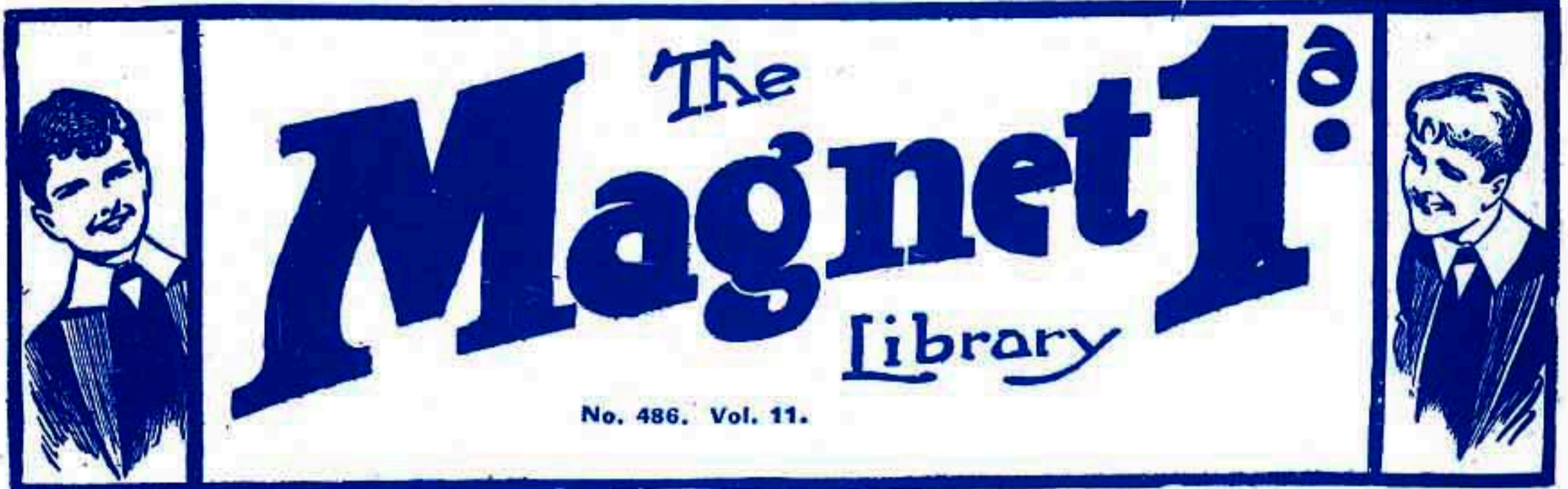


PETER TODD'S VENGEANCE!

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



MR. MOBBS' DOUBLE!

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A Magnificent
New Long
Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton
& Co. at Grey-
friars School.

PETER TODD'S VENGEANCE!

By
Frank
Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Fifty Pounds!

REGISTERED letter for you, Toddy!

Billy Bunter made that announcement, rolling into No. 7 Study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars with an air of great importance, and a registered envelope clasped tightly in his podgy hand.

"Sure it's for me, porpoise? Sure it ain't for you?"

Bunter had been known to make curious mistakes in the matter of letters addressed to other fellows—especially when he was expecting a remittance.

"Oh, really, Toddy, some fellows have all the luck!" said the Owl, blinking behind his big spectacles in quite a forlorn manner. "Here have I been looking out for a postal-order—"

"But you always are looking out for a postal-order, tubby!"

"For weeks and weeks—"

"Terms and terms," amended Peter Todd, grinning.

"And it doesn't come. But you—"

"Eh? I haven't got any titled relations, you know, Fatty!"

"What's that got to do with it? I wish you'd talk sense, Peter—you can if you choose!" said the Owl peevishly.

He still kept hold of the letter. It was as though he really could not bear to give it up.

"Well, I'll talk sense, oyster! As that letter is for me, and not for you, just hand it over, and clear out!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I think it's up to you to stand treat, after me fagging all the way up here with this, too!"

"Can't be did, Bunty! Clean against Lord Devonport's rules, and the Defence of the Realm Act, and—"

"I wish Lord Devonport had never been born!" said Bunter morosely.

"We might have someone else worse." "We couldn't!" replied Bunter pathetically.

The food-rationing scheme had hit William George Bunter terribly hard, in spite of all his attempts to evade it.

"Hand over!" snapped Peter, looking towards the corner in which he kept a cricket-stump for Bunter's special benefit.

Still Bunter temporised. There must be a remittance in that registered envelope. Peter Todd could never be so cruel as to refuse to whack out after getting a remittance of such value that it needed registration—an uncommon event with Peter, whose people were not wealthy.

Peter couldn't—it would be too cruel! But, all the same, Peter might. Toddy really did not appear to worry about the food regulations a bit.

"Really, Toddy, you needn't be in such a blessed hurry, you know!" said Bunter. "You didn't even know this was coming—"

"How do you know I didn't know, you fat-headed tub of inferior margarine?"

"You didn't say anything about it."

"I don't tell you all my secrets, you babbling oyster!"

"That's just what I complain of."

Toddy. You ain't open with an old pal!"

Peter got up, and took a stride to the corner where the cricket-stump reposed.

"I can stand a lot of things," he said darkly: "but there is a limit!"

"Here, I say! Oh, don't, Toddy! Leave that thing alone! Here's your letter!"

Peter's hand still hovered over the stump.

"If you call me your old pal again—"

"But it's the truth, Toddy—you know it's the truth!" murmured Bunter desperately, as Peter laid down the stump and took the letter.

"If you found it at the bottom of a well, you'd better go and look for some more," said Peter, slitting open the envelope. "Fetch up a bit better brand this time, too."

"Ooooh!"

Bunter gave a terrific gasp.

Five-pound notes! Not one five-pound note, but several lots, as it seemed to the dazzled eyes of William George Bunter.

Peter Todd looked up.

"Still there, tubby?" he said. "Didn't you hear me tell you to bunk?"

"Oh, I say Peter—oh, really! Who's sending you all that whack of money?"

"That's no bizney of yours, porpoise!"

Peter was counting the notes now, Bunter counted, too.

Ten of them—fifty pounds!

Springs of affection welled up in the breast of Billy Bunter.

He had always been fond of Peter Todd—so he told himself. And he would have knocked down anyone who disputed the statement—if small and weak enough to be knocked down with impunity.

But never before had Bunter felt within him such an overflowing wealth of affection for Toddy as he felt now.

Fifty pounds! Fifty pounds in the hands of a fellow whose term's pocket-money amounted to no more than well-to-do fellows like Coker or Johnny Bull. To say nothing of rich ones like Maul-everer and Hurree Singh and Wun Lung, could spend at one time without missing it!

Fifty pounds in the hands of a member of the quarter inhabiting Study No. 7!

Surely must there be profit for Billy Bunter out of a windfall like that!

"I say, Peter, old chap—"

"Haven't you gone, you fat worm?"

"Nun—no! Oh, don't be unfriendly, Peter! It ain't like you. Look here, if I were you, I shouldn't say anything to Louzy or Dutton about this!"

"Wouldn't you?"

"No. You see, they—they—well, I don't want to say anything against them. You know I hate backbiting. But there's such a thing as high principles, and 'tain't everybody who's got principles like mine—"

"I should jolly well hope not! But I've got no sort of use just now for either your principles—if any—or your excessive interest in things that don't concern you!"

And Peter carefully folded up the

notes, put them in his pocket, and moved towards the door.

Bunter caught him by the arm.

"I say, Toddy!" he almost wailed.

"Leggo, or you'll get—"

Peter wrenched himself free. But Bunter followed him into the passage.

"I don't want your company, porpoise!"

"Oh, but—oh, really, Toddy—"

"And, what's more, I won't have it! If a hint ain't suffish, you'll get kicked downstairs. Perhaps you'll begin to understand then!"

"You ain't grateful, Peter Todd!"

Peter stopped, and stared at the Owl.

"What have I got to be grateful to you for, you lump of blubber?" he rapped out.

"I brought you that letter, didn't I?"

"You weren't asked to do that. And on the whole, I'd rather you left my letters alone, you unwholesome image!"

Peter went on his way. Bunter was following; but Peter turned and glared at him in so savage a fashion that the Owl halted.

He did not omit to note, however, where Peter went.

It was to No. 12, the study occupied by Lord Mauleverer, Piet Delarey, the South African, and Sir Jimmy Vivian, the schoolboy baronet from the slums.

That struck Bunter as very queer indeed. Going to Mauly with fifty pounds was like taking coals to Newcastle. And there was no reason why Peter Todd should seek out Delarey, to tell him of this bit of luck; while as for Sir Jimmy, he was quite out of the question.

Peter walked in, after a tap at the door which brought no response.

Only Mauly was there. He lay on the couch, dozing peacefully.

Peter hooked him by the shoulder.

"Oh, begad, you might leave a chap alone!" murmured his lazy lordship, opening his long-lashed eyelids with extreme reluctance.

"No business to be snoozing at this time of the day, Mauly," said Peter, in brisk tones.

"Why not, begad? But never mind. Can I do anything for you, Toddy?"

"Yes. Take these back!"

And Peter thrust the little wad of fivers into Mauly's hand.

"Oh, certainly, if you say so! But it was only the day before yesterday you borrowed the cash, begad!"

"Well, didn't I tell you that you'd get it back to-day?"

"'Pen my word, Toddy, if you ain't a most surprisin' fellow!"

"Never mind about that. I don't expect you to understand me—the mental strain might be fatal. But I'm ever so much obliged to you, Mauly. Ain't you going to count them, you dummy?"

"What for? I suppose I can trust you, Toddy?"

"Hope so, I'm sure. But you're going to count them all the same—make no error about that. I like to have things done in a business-like way."

Mauleverer sighed, sat up, counted

the notes, and handed them back to Peter.

"Here, I don't want them!" Peter said.

"Put 'em in the drawer, will you, Toddy, if it ain't too much trouble?"

"I won't!" snapped Peter. "Where's your pocket-book, you slacker?"

"In my breast-pocket, I think, begad! Or in the drawer, or the cupboard—I know it must be somewhere!"

Without ceremony Peter put his hand into Mauly's breast-pocket. He drew out a little Russia-leather case, and placed the ten notes inside it.

If the eye of George William Bunter had been placed to the keyhole a second earlier it would have been in time to see that action. As it was, it was just in time to be too late.

Peter Todd moved to the door. Lord Mauleverer subsided back into the cushions.

William George Bunter beat a strategic retreat.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tea in Study No. 7!

THERE were some additions to the usually frugal tea-table in No. 7 Study that evening.

Peter Todd had not much spare cash; but he was prepared to spend all that he had, if need were, to further his vengeance upon Ponsonby & Co.

He did not grudge the cost of a couple of tins of salmon and a box of special oatcakes.

These things were really for Bunter's benefit, though Peter had no notion of letting the Owl have more than his fair share of them.

For purposes of his own Peter wanted Bunter to believe in that big remittance.

Bunter would expect something after seeing it. It was hardly likely that the small additions made would meet Bunter's views as to the extent to which Peter ought to "whack out."

But the Owl knew that Peter Todd held the Food Controller in respect. And the salmon and oatcakes would keep Bunter interested, and probably lead him on to talk—to make a proposition which Peter wanted him to make. For Bunter's conversation on general topics Peter Todd had no mighty yearning.

Peter Todd's desire for vengeance on the Highcliffe nuts was a burning one. And small wonder!

Many times before this had Greyfriars fellows suffered at the hands of the nuts. And many times had the Highcliffe nuts been put through it by the Remove.

On the whole, however, the honours plainly rested with the Remove. That famous body had in it far more pluck, brains, and resource than the nuts of Highcliffe could boast.

The Ponsonby-Todd feud had had its origin on the Greyfriars cricket-ground, on that memorable day when the Highcliffe Fourth had beaten the Remove—a red-letter day in the annals of the victors!

Ponsonby had been insulting to Peter. Peter had pulled Ponsonby's nose.

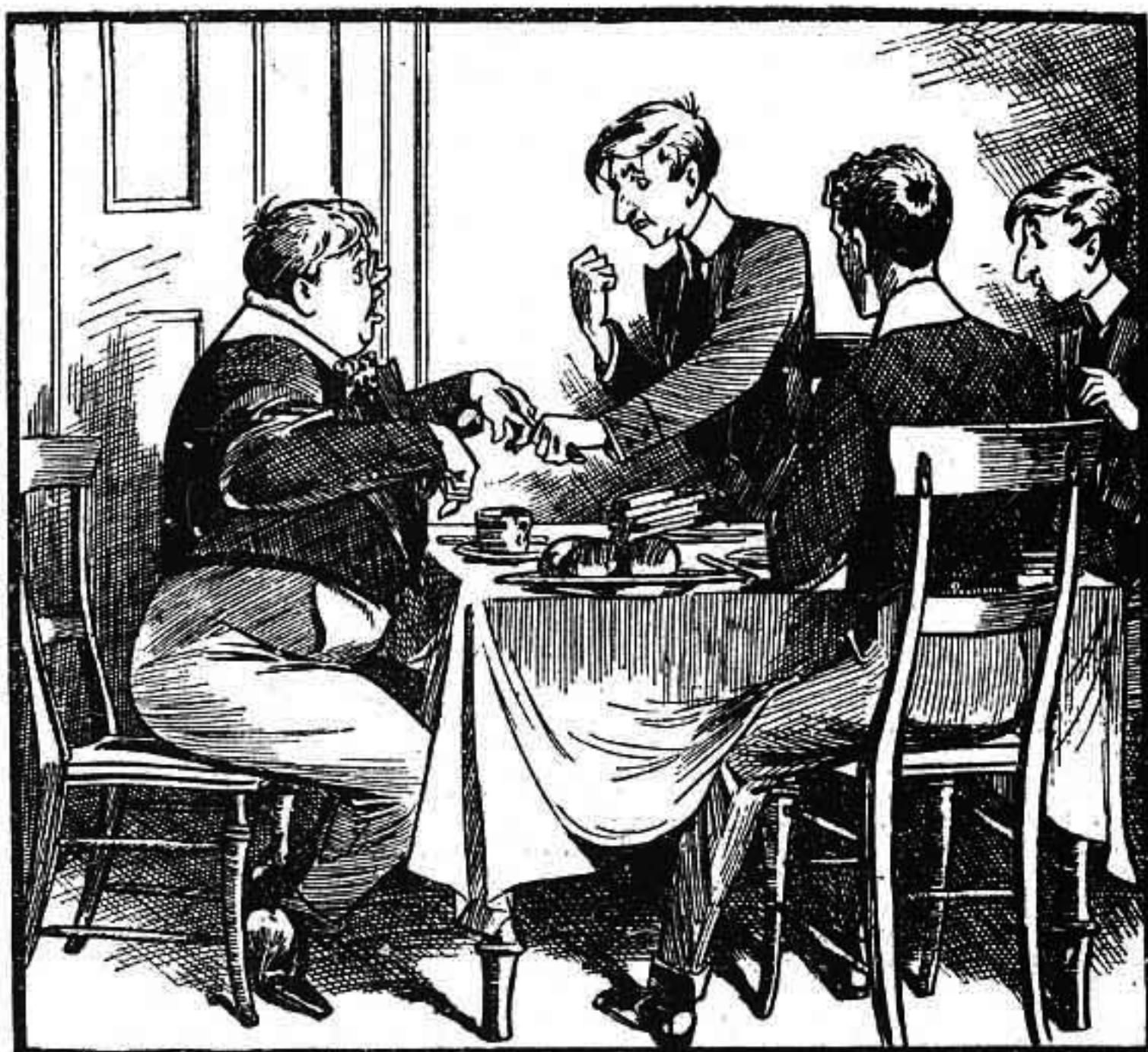
It was the kind of quarrel that might have been settled by a fight.

But fighting was not in Cecil Ponsonby's line. He liked to have heavy odds on his side.

So he had waited his chance, and on one hot Sunday afternoon—the day before the election for the captaincy of the Remove—that chance had come.

Peter Todd could never think of that day without bitterness. The nuts had seized him. They were five to one, and all his struggles were unavailing.

They had bound and gagged him. They had anointed his face with raddle



Peter Todd rapped Bunter's knuckles with a fork. (See Chapter 2.)

—the red stuff used for marking sheep. And—worst injury of all—they had slashed off his famous forelock, with as much more of his hair as they could hack off with the blade of a penknife! Then they had left him—a figure of derision—left him to be found by the Cliff House girls and by Harry Wharton, his rival for the captaincy!

Wharton was captain again now. He had behaved in that affair like the generous, great-hearted fellow he really was, and Peter had practically withdrawn in his favour—which had seemed to Peter the least he could do. For Harry Wharton, Peter had none but friendly feelings—more friendly than ever.

But it was natural that Peter should put to the account of Ponsonby & Co. the very real humiliation he had gone through.

For Peter Todd was proud, though he might deny being so; and his pride had had a nasty knock.

No ordinary vengeance would suffice him. Merely to put Pon & Co. through it as he had been put through it by them—that was not enough!

He intended to show them up for the mean-spirited rogues and cowards they were. The trap baited for them should be the trap of their own greed!

And now the bait was set, and Peter waited in patience for Bunter to make the next move.

Bunter rolled in to tea with a smirk on his fat face.

He looked at the additions to the ordinary fare, and his eyes glistened behind his big spectacles. They were something, at worst—something to testify to unusual affluence in No. 7.

But then his face fell. They were something, indeed! But they were not much!

With fifty pounds in his pocket Bunter would have done things in very different style from this.

"Aren't you satisfied, tubby?" asked Peter.

"Well—er—really, you know, Toddy, salmon ain't much."

"There's oatcakes, too, you greedy worm! A decent tea, I call it!"

"There ain't enough. I could eat that little lot myself, and be hungry still."

Alonzo held up his hands in expostulation.

"My dear Bunter!" he said. "In times like these—"

"Oh, you dry up!" snapped Bunter.

"Jolly good spread—eh, Bunter?" said Tom Dutton, who, being deaf, had not heard a word that had passed.

"Pretty rotten, I call it!" snorted Bunter.

"You needn't have any, you know, oyster. You can go down and get your tea in Hall!"

Bunter sniffed his contempt, and pulled his chair to the table.

"I don't see that anything's been forgotten," said Tom Dutton, drawing up.

"Silly deaf post!" muttered Bunter.

"Eh? Toast did you say? There's no fire. And, anyway, what do we want with toast when we've got this ripping oatcake stuff?"

Bunter drew the dish of salmon towards him.

Peter Todd promptly rapped Bunter's knuckles with a fork.

"Ow-yow! Wharrer doing, Toddy, you beast?"

"Manners, porpoise—manners!" said Peter. "I'm going to serve that salmon. After all, I paid for it!"

Bunter watched with greedy eyes while Peter carefully divided the salmon into four equal parts. If the stuff had been weighed out it could hardly have been apportioned more accurately. Peter Todd had an excellent eye.

"That is really more than I need, Cousin Peter," said the gentle Alonzo. "I am endeavouring to act upon the advice given us by the Food Controller. And I really find that I am the better, both in body and brain, for rising from the table without that sense of repletion which—"

"What are you at, you fat thief?"

But it was hardly necessary for Peter to ask what Bunter was at.

Bunter's knife and fork had stretched out towards the plate which Alonzo had pushed back to Peter, and there would

certainly have been no sense of repletion for Alonzo if Bunter had had his way with that plate.

"Oh, really, Toddy! If Lonzy is such an ass as to take any notice of old—"

"Of Lord Devonport, if you please, porpoise! That nobleman's name is going to be treated with proper respect in his study, or I'll know the reason why! Dutton and I may not be so unselfish as Lonzy; but we wouldn't be so blessed piggish and unpatriotic as you for a pension!"

"Of course, that was his intention," said Tom Dutton. "Trust Bunter to bag anyone else's grub if he gets half a chance!"

Peter put a small piece from Alonzo's plate on his own, a piece a trifle larger on Dutton's, and a fragment just perceptible to the naked eye on that of Bunter.

"Of all the stingy beasts! Why, it ain't a mouthful!"

"Another word, oyster, and I'll put you out of your misery by taking back what I've given you!"

Bunter was not going to risk any such catastrophe as that. He scarcely spoke again until everything eatable on the table had vanished.

All but the sugar—a commodity very strictly rationed. Bunter's fingers were just closing on a lump—for Bunter could wolf sugar when nothing else was to be had—when the teapot descended with some force on those picking digits.

"Yarooogh! I didn't—I mean I wasn't—it was pure absence of mind, Toddy!"

"Absence of dirty fingers is what we prefer in the sugar-basin, tubby," said Peter.

"Oh, blow the beastly old war!" Bunter mumbled, sucking his fingers.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter the Tempter!

AFTER tea was over, and the washing-up had been done, Alonzo ambled out, and Tom Dutton stuck his head into a book. Tom's deafness had made him a great reader.

Bunter had not helped in the washing-up. He had merely sat in the one armchair the study boasted, wrapped in deep and solemn meditation.

At another time Peter Todd would have expelled him from the armchair on principle.

But Peter left him alone this time. Bunter was thinking hard, and that suited Peter.

A silence followed. Bunter was the first to break it.

"I say, Toddy!"

"Shurrup! I'm reading!"

"Oh, there's plenty of time for that! I say, Toddy, you know—about that chink, you know!"

"What chink, you fat idiot?"

"That fifty quid."

"Who said there was fifty quid?"

"Well, I couldn't help seeing that, could I?"

"You see too much, Bunter."

"I'm a chap that takes a good deal of notice, of course. Sometimes I think I should make a first-class detective."

Peter gave an inarticulate growl.

"Toddy!"

"Will you dry up, you fat ass?"

"But, Toddy, what are you going to do with all that chink?"

"I'm not going to lend any of it to you, so you can make your mind easy about that."

"I haven't asked you to, have I? I've got my own dignity, I suppose?"

"I've never seen any sign of it. Plenty

of fat, foolish swank; but that's quite another thing."

"I know what I should do with it," said Bunter, in his most mysterious manner.

"So do I. You'd scoff it!"

"I shouldn't, then! How could a chap get through a whack like that buying grub, with all these rotten, silly food regulations about? If you ask for more than sixpenn'orth the asses begin to look down their noses at you!"

"Never heard of your buying anything besides grub!" growled Peter.

"Well, it ain't exactly buying. There are other ways of having a good time—and, for that matter, there are other things a chap can buy, apart from grub."

"As, for instance?"

"Cigarettes!" answered Bunter, behind his fat hand.

"Fiddlesticks and cabbage-stalks!" retorted Peter, and went on reading.

"Toddy!"

"Oh, get out, do! I'm fed-up with you!"

"It wouldn't be half a bad notion to turn that money over, you know."

"P'r'aps not. But I ain't going to have you turning it over for me, so you needn't go prying into my desk. Wherever it is, you won't find it there."

"If you don't know me better than that by this time, Peter Todd—"

"I don't, Bunter! But I know you just as well as that—and I fancy it's a pretty useful sort of knowledge, too."

"Look here, Toddy, do be friendly, and listen!"

"Do play the fly to your spider, eh? No, thank you, porpoise!"

"It ain't that. I'm the last chap living to try to do a pal down. Ask anybody who knows me!"

Tom Dutton lifted his head from his book and glanced across at them.

"Dutton, frinstance?" said Peter.

"Deaf ass!" snorted Bunter, who knew that Tom's opinion of him was by no means an exalted one.

Peter shut his book.

"If you've got anything to say, oyster, say it," he said. "I can't sit here all the giddy evening while you work round to it."

"Look here, Toddy, money makes money, you know."

"You don't claim that as original, I hope?"

"I don't see why I shouldn't. I thought of it myself."

"What's your wheeze? Want to take me into partnership in a money-lending bizney, me supplying the brass, and you collecting the interest?"

"Nothing of the sort! I leave that kind of thing to Fishy," said Bunter loftily. "My titled relations would never forgive me if I went in for anything so low!"

"Jolly particular people, aren't they?"

"Of course they are! It's a case of noblesse oblige, you know, and all that sort of thing," Bunter said, smiling his most fatuous smile.

"Ah!" said Peter Todd drily.

"My pleasures are the pleasures of a gentleman," went on Bunter.

"That's news. I thought they were more in the prize porker line."

"But that's off now. I—I mean, nothing of the sort, Peter Todd! You needn't be insulting when I'm thinking hard for your benefit!"

"Can't see yet where my benefit comes in."

"Look here, Toddy, you're jolly sharp, aren't you?"

"Too sharp for you, porpoise, I hope and trust."

"That ain't what I mean. Oh, really, Toddy, you might chuck pretending to

misunderstand every blessed word I say!"

"Right-ho, oyster! We'll have a heart-to-heart talk. A heart-to-heart talk with a bladder of lard ought to be quite amusing."

"You don't play cards—at least, you make out you don't. But if you did you'd play a jolly good game, I'm sure," said Bunter thoughtfully. "You're cool, and you've got no end of nerve!"

"Leading up to a suggestion that it might be worth my while to throw in my lot with Skinner and the merry blades, and pick up their twopence-halfpenny or so to add to my little pile, eh? No, thank you, tubby!"

"Nothing of the sort! Skinner's a mean beast, and none of that set ever have much chink. Except Bolsover, at times. And he's no good. He gets as mad as a hatter when he starts losing."

"Of course, there are Loder and Carne," said Peter, in a meditative way, as if he were turning Bunter's suggestion over in his mind. "I dare say they'd overlook my crime in being a mere junior if they knew what a pot of money I've got. It's an idea, Bunty."

"I've got a better one!" said Bunter eagerly.

"Hardly likely, I think. This seems to me quite good—for you. If I play with Loder and Carne—and win anything—why, you shall have a share of the plunder, tubby!"

"Look here, Peter, don't! Don't go doing anything so foolish! They ain't the right sort for you—they'd rook you, you know!"

"I don't think there's much danger of that," said Peter.

And indeed there was no danger at all, for Toddy had not the smallest intention of gambling with the black sheep of the Sixth.

"I know of a dodge worth a dozen of that," Bunter said.

Tom Dutton looked up again, and Bunter rudely said:

"Scat!"

"What's the valuable dodge?" inquired Peter, in an off-hand manner.

"Those Highcliffe chaps are always on for a flutter. And they've heaps of money, some of them."

"H'm! That don't seem a very convincing reason why I should let 'em grab any of mine, Bunter."

"But they can play straight enough—when they like, you know."

"They might not be in the mood when they sat down to play with me, Bunty."

"Well, if they started the other game, you're cute enough to give as good as you get, I suppose?"

Peter felt inclined to take the fat villain by the back of the neck and hurl him out of the study. But he dissembled his wrath.

"Something in that, I dare say; though I'm hanged if I'd do it!" he replied. "Anyway, your scheme's no go, because Pon and I simply ain't on speaking terms. The next time I meet Pon I mean to make the rotter wish he'd never been born."

"Oh, that's all rot, you know, Toddy! Pon would come round and be friendly all serene if you would."

"You think the fifty would make all the difference, Bunty?"

"Sure it would," answered the fatuous Owl. "I'll try, if you like—there's no harm in that, anyway."

Peter looked at him long and hard.

"Shall I try, Toddy?"

"You can do precisely as you like about that, Bunter."

But Peter knew that Bunter would try, and he had no doubt as to Ponsonby's answer. One fish had swallowed the bait, and the other would soon follow!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Nuts of Highcliffe!

"OH, by gad, there that fat cad Bunter!" It was Cecil Ponsonby who spoke.

A little crowd of the nuts hung about the gates of Highcliffe.

Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson minor, Vavasour and Drury and Merton and Tunstall were all there. Some few inferior hangers-on of the noble society of nuts might be absent. Some of these weak-kneed specimens were even guilty of playing games at times—conduct which Pon & Co. considered in the highest degree reprehensible. The real nuts despised games—unless of chance.

Bunter rolled towards them. He had got himself up for the occasion—even to the extent of washing his neck thoroughly. His face was adorned by a fat smirk intended to promote harmony.

"What's Mobby sayin' to the fat rotter?" said Gadsby curiously.

Mr. Mobbs, the snobbish little master of the Fourth, had met the Owl some fifty yards from the gates, and had stopped him.

"Better go an' ask him, dear boy," yawned Pon.

Mr. Mobbs was asking Bunter, in rather an acid tone, whether he was on his way to Highcliffe.

Bunter had often visited Highcliffe before, and thereof had come trouble. Mr. Mobbs had more than enough trouble with his Form; and it was rather a curious fact that the fellows chiefly responsible for it were not those upon whom he was consistently down, but his cherished pupils, like Ponsonby & Co.

For Mr. Mobbs was an arrant tuft-hunter. He would rather have been kicked by a lord than have shaken hands with the most worthy of plebeians. Ponsonby and the rest of the nuts were dear to his heart because they were "highly connected."

Perhaps Mr. Mobbs had never heard about Bunter's aristocratic connections. Or perhaps, having heard, he shared the incredulity of Greyfriars. Anyway, he was something short of well-disposed towards William George.

Bunter raised his straw hat with elaborate politeness. He did not really respect Mr. Mobbs, but he judged it best to make a show of doing so.

Mr. Mobbs made no proper acknowledgment of the salute.

"Are you going to Highcliffe, er—Whatsyourname?" he snapped.

"Yes, sir," was the Owl's meek reply.

"I think you had better turn back. I do not regard with approval the intercourse between the two schools."

"Oh, really, sir! I'm sure you can't object to me, sir! I can quite understand that you're not keen on Wharton and Cherry and that sort of fellow, but—"

To some small extent Mr. Mobbs was propitiated by that traitorous speech. It was chiefly to the Famous Five and their friends that he took exception. Also, Mr. Mobbs was in a hurry.

"Well—er—Bunter, I trust that your visit to my boys will not be productive of anything in the way of unpleasantness, as I regret to say is all too often the case when—or— Good-morning to you, and please endeavour to behave yourself!"

Mr. Mobbs passed briskly on. Bunter, scowling like a Hun, also passed on.

But Bunter straightened out his face before he reached the gate. The greetings of the nuts were couched in language that might have made a worm turn, but failed to make Bunter.

"Hallo, butter-tub!"

"Oh, by Jove! How is it you ain't interned, Bunter? I thought they were interning all the giddy Huns!"

"Merry old bladder of lard! Oh, my hat, what a tie!"

"Abso—bally—lutely the limit!"

"What was Mobby yarnin' to you about, Fatty?" inquired Gadsby.

"Mr. Mobbs was inquiring after my titled relations," replied Bunter, with dignity, but without veracity.

"Does he want to pop something, then?" grinned Monson.

"Don't let's hang about here," said Ponsonby, with a wink to his cronies.

"Come along a bit farther up the road! Our Head's gettin' a bit particular in his old age, you know, porpoise. He doesn't like to see us talkin' to tag-rag and bob-tail, like Greyfriars chaps!"

"Oh, well, of course, I know there are an awful lot of howling cads at our show!" said Bunter, with a lofty toss of the head. "I often say that I wonder any respectable school can—"

"My hat! What's that got to do with Greyfriars?" sneered Monson. "Nobody would be silly ass enough to call Greyfriars respectable, I should think!"

"Oh, yes, they would, Mon!" said Merton. "That's just the word for it. Lower middle-class, y'know, an' all that sort of thing."

"That's exactly how I look at it," answered the Owl, with a heavy sigh. "I can't think why my people sent me there. It ain't really at all the sort of place for a fellow of my tastes."

"I should have reckoned it might be, too," said Gadsby thoughtfully. "It's a bit of a pigsty!"

They were moving away from the gates now. Bunter, in his greedy folly, went like a lamb to the slaughter.

"I suppose you'd rather have been here, Grunter?" remarked Merton.

"I should jolly well think so!" said Bunter fervently. "This place would suit me down to the ground. Why, with my old pal Pon and the rest of you chaps I should be in my element! Greyfriars is a rotten hole. There ain't any respect for blue blood there—not a giddy scrap! And as for sportsmanship—well, there! I— Yooop!"

Bunter's straw hat—a new one—left his head at that moment, owing to a doubtless accidental movement of Vavasour's elbow. But Bunter was saved the trouble of picking it up for himself. Monson picked it up.

Monson's intentions were good, it is to be presumed, but he was certainly clumsy.

He made three grabs at the hat before he managed to get hold of it, and at each grab the hat slid along the road, collecting dust.

And when he attempted to replace it he made rather a bad shot. For it rolled off again; and Drury chose the precise instant in which it fluttered down to give a kick indicative of the innocent high spirits within him. It was purely accidental, of course, that Drury's foot went through the crown of Bunter's new straw.

"Oh, I say, Fatty, I'm afraid that's made rather a mess of your hat!" said Drury, grinning.

"That's the worst of havin' such a round head, porpoise!" said Pon.

"A bad sign. Chaps of really good family don't have fat, round heads," chimed in Tunstall, shaking his head solemnly.

"It ain't a very good hat, anyway," said Monson.

And by that time it most certainly was not.

"I—I— Oh, really, you fellows, this is a bit too thick!" burbled Bunter.

"Accidents will happen, dear boy," Pon answered calmly.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

Bunter, sighing, pressed down the crown of his hat, and shook some of the dust from it.

He was half-inclined to go back with his mission unaccomplished. After all, there might be other ways of making his own profit out of Peter Todd's supposed slice of luck.

But to start back at once only meant an instant ragging.

"Look here," he said hastily, lest worse might befall him. "I came over to tell you chaps something—something really interesting!"

"Let's hear it, then," replied Pon, with a prodigious yawn. "It's no end of a giddy time since I heard anythin' really interestin'. What's happened? Has the noble Cherry been sacked for pocket-pickin', or the illustrious Wharton been —"

"It's nothing at all of that sort. It's about Toddy."

The nuts grinned at one another. They seemed to find the very mention of Peter's name amusing.

"Has his giddy hair grown again yet?" jeered Gadsby.

"It's nothing of that sort. Look here, if I were you I should cut all that out! If Toddy can forget it, I don't see but what you can."

"Todd can't—not likely! He'll remember it as long as he lives!" said Ponsonby, with a very unpleasant smile.

"And we don't want to," added Vavasour, who would not have been sorry to know that Todd had forgotten.

Vavasour was very far from being of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Toddy's come into a whack of money!" announced Bunter, swelling with reflected importance.

"Rats!" said the rude Gadsby. "He's only the son of some measly country solicitor. The chap is as poor as a church mouse."

"And if he was fairly rolling in it he'd take jolly good care we didn't touch any of it, so what the merry dickens does it matter to us?" said Monson.

"I know what I know!" Bunter said mysteriously.

"An' that don't amount to a fat lot!" growled Merton. "You're as ignorant an' fat-headed a bladder of lard as can be found outside Germany!"

But Pon appeared to take Bunter's news more seriously than the other nuts.

"What's the game, Bunter?" he asked.

"Does the great Todd want a little flutter with better sportsmen than Greyfriars boasts—eh?"

"That's it, Pon!" said the Owl eagerly. "He's ever so keen!"

"Is he? Is he, really? Well, you can tell him I forgive him, an' if he likes to come along for a hand at nap or banker he will be received on a friendly footin', by gad!" replied the magnanimous Pon.

Greedy was working in Cecil Ponsonby just as Peter Todd had been sure it would. Pon hated Peter, and could have had very little doubt that Peter hated him. But hating a fellow was no reason why one should shy at the notion of relieving him of his superfluous cash, in Pon's eyes.

"I—I—well, you know, Pon, old pal, Toddy may expect a bit of an apology first. I'm not sure, but he may, you know."

"Even that might be managed," Ponsonby answered affably.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Council!

"MY hat, Toddy, if you aren't a regular knock-out!" said Dick Rake admiringly.

"Can't think how he does it, can you, Rake?" asked Piet Delaroy, with his cynical smile.

"I can't think, either," said Bulstrode. "Don't worry, old scout! You never could," said Tom Brown.

There was quite a council of war in Study No. 7. Peter Todd and Tom Dutton were there, though Tom might almost as well have been absent for all that he understood of what was going on. Tom tried his best to hear; but they all mumbled so—at least, to his thinking.

The three Colonials were present—Squiff and Tom Brown and Piet Delarey. Bulstrode and Rake had come along, and also Kipps and Wibley.

Alonzo was not there. He had ambled out. Lonzy was of little use in cases like this.

And Bunter was not there!

Bunter was in the passage, wandering disconsolately up and down, like a very fat and very disgruntled Peri outside the gates of Paradise.

It was of no use for Bunter to wander up and down the passage. He could hear nothing and see nothing.

Peter Todd had behaved with what Bunter considered worse than his usual beastliness.

He had actually covered the keyhole inside with a thick sheet of cardboard. Bunter could see nothing, and the application of his fat ear to the orifice brought him no more than a confused murmur of voices.

"Oh, really! I wouldn't be so suspicious as that beast Toddy for all I could see!" muttered Bunter. "And after I've stood his friend with Ponsonby, too! He wouldn't have got anyone else here to do that, I know!"

"I don't just see how you worked it out, Toddy," said Bulstrode—never quite the quickest of fellows to see anything.

"Well, I made a start with Bunter," said Peter. "You can't trust the porpoise, but you can depend on him."

"I don't see the merry difference," said Kipps.

"There's heaps. You can't trust Bunter, I say; but you can depend on him—to be Bunter. And that was all I wanted of him."

Bulstrode grunted. Bulstrode was all for direct and forcible methods.

"So I borrowed fifty pounds from Mauly—"

"My hat, you're going it some, Toddy!" said Wibley. "I don't blame you for trying to even up things with that Highcliffe gang; but if it's going to be as expensive as all that—whew!"

"Oh, dry up, Wib!" said Squiff. "Go on, Toddy!"

"And I sent it in a registered letter addressed to myself to a friend in town, and he posted it to me. I meant to open it before the porpoise, anyway; but what I had more than half expected happened—he brought the letter up. So when he saw me take ten fivers out of it he naturally jumped to the conclusion that I was simply rolling in oof. Shouldn't wonder if he's had a squint or two in my desk since, just to see if I'd been careless with them, and they needed his shepherding."

"I wouldn't leave them there if I were you, Toddy—not for a blessed hour!"

"I didn't, Browney. I took them straight back to Mauly."

"But I don't see where Pon & Co. come in," objected Bulstrode.

"Have a little patience! The porpoise knew—or thought he knew—same thing—that I'd got lots of oof. What would he just naturally hope for it to be spent in?"

And as with one voice all present—except Tom Dutton—answered:

"Grub!"

Bunter—outside—heard that, and felt more discontented than ever. There was

no feed on in No. 7—he was sure of that. He knew exactly what was in the cupboard, and if there had been anything hidden elsewhere in the study he would have known all about that, too. It was next door to an impossibility to hide food from Bunter.

But they were talking about grub. About some future feed, no doubt! And that beast Toddy meant to spend all that whack of money without any help whatever from his dear old pal William George Bunter!

"But if he sees no chance of grub?" asked Peter, his eyes going from one face to another.

"He doesn't care a scrap about anything else in this world!" said Tom Brown, with intense conviction.

"But what's he done before when he's had more cash than he could eat?" asked Peter.

"Eaten it!" said Rake. "Gorged till he bust—"

"That's the word!" cut in Squiff. "Ain't it, Toddy?"

"He's gone on the bust. He's rolled over to Highcliffe, and let the nuts rook him," said Delarey. "It's happened more than once in my time, and I dare say it happened before that."

"But Bunter hasn't the chink. Toddy has it," said Kipps.

"No, Toddy hasn't," amended Rake. "Didn't you hear him say he's handed it to Mauly?"

"Blessed if I can make head or tail of it!" said Bulstrode. "It all seems to me just about as clear as mud!"

"You'll understand in a minute," Peter Todd said. "It's all easy enough, to a chap with a little knowledge of human nature who cares to think things out."

"You can't call the Owl's human nature," said Wibley.

"Near enough, Wib! I guessed that he'd think the next best thing to having the money himself to chuck away at Highcliffe would be to get me to go over and do likewise, with his help, of course."

"But he knows you hate Pon like poison, Toddy! He can't be off knowing that!"

"He doesn't understand Rake. These greedy rotters are kind of blinded when they see a chance of handling another chap's chink. Anyway, the bladder of lard came tempting me almost at once. He was jolly sure Pon didn't harbour malice, he said; he even promised an apology on Pon's behalf for that little bizney—if Pon saw any chance of rooking me. Bunter's plan was, of course, that he and I should rook Pon & Co.—sort of spoiling the Egyptians, you know. But Pon would look at it the other way."

"And did you tell him you were on?" inquired Tom Brown.

"I didn't; but I let him fancy I was weakening. It was all that was needed. He rolled over to see his dear friends, the nuts, and I dare say he told them there was a fine fat pigeon for the plucking. Anyway, the apology's come!"

"You're not going to accept it, Toddy?"

"You bet I'm not, Delarey!"

"But you can't make it up with Pon if you don't," said Bulstrode.

"I'm not going to make it up with Pon."

"But I thought the game was to get him gambling with you somewhere, and then catch him on the hop, and put paid to his account?"

"So it is. But I couldn't in decency do that if I accepted his lying apology, even though I was ever so sure it was false—written with his tongue in his cheek, the rotter!"

"You won't get him to come if you

don't accept it. He'll smell a rat," said Kipps.

"No, he won't. 'Pecunia non olet'—'Money does not smell,' said some old Roman johnny. But this money will smell too loud to Pon for him to twig the rat. Pon's greedy, Kipps."

"It ain't like Pon to apologise at all," said Bulstrode. "Not unless a chap has the rotter down in the dust with both hands to the back of his neck. He'll apologise fast enough then."

"Seems to me, Toddy, that you've fixed all this up on the principle of 'Pull the string and the figure works,'" said Squiff.

Peter Todd grinned.

"It's only through having studied human nature, old scout," he said. "Of course, I can make the Bunter figure work by just pulling the string. But the rest's only a matter of knowing what a chap will do in certain circumstances, and you get that through knowing the chap."

"And even then you can't be sure!" growled Bulstrode.

"Not quite. But when you leave off being sure you chip in, and work things, instead of leaving the chaps to do as they like."

"And that's where we come in," said Delarey, smiling.

"My dear fellow, you couldn't come in before that."

"To do just as you tell us?"

"No, Bulstrode! I don't want to order anybody to help. I've asked you to help—that's all. Of course, I want you to help me in my scheme, not to tell me about one fifty times better."

"Oh, I'm willing enough to help, Toddy! What is the giddy scheme?"

Peter explained. And nobody interrupted him—which was a most unusual thing in a Greyfriars junior meeting.

It was a good scheme—they all agreed upon that.

"You don't mean to ask Wharton & Co. to take a hand, Toddy?" said Squiff.

"No, I don't."

"They'd be willing to," said Tom Brown. "Though there might be one or two things in it that Wharton wouldn't cotton to."

"Such as Toddy gambling with the depraved nuts—even as a stratagem," said Delarey, with a wry smile playing about his mouth.

"The only thing I've got against that lot," said Peter firmly, "is that when they come in they want to boss the show. Let them boss their own shows! This is mine, and I'm going to put it through my way—see? There ain't a better or nicer fellow at Greyfriars than Wharton. But he isn't in this."

And on that point Peter was firm.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Talks!

BUT if they thought they were going to carry the thing through without the Famous Five they overlooked the influence of chance—and William George Bunter!

It was partly chance that set Harry Wharton & Co. wondering about Peter Todd. But it was chiefly Bunter.

Bunter rolled into No. 7 Study after the visitors had departed.

He sniffed in at the cupboard. It was in the same poverty-stricken state as when he had last looked.

Nothing had gone. But no additions to stock had been made.

Peter Todd had gone off with the rest; but Dutton was still there.

"If I had all that chink I bet I'd have something better to show for it than that, for all the Food Controllers going!" Bunter said.

"Sowing? What, potatoes?" asked Tom Dutton. "You're too late for that, Bunter, besides being too beastly lazy!"

"Silly deaf ass!" muttered Bunter peevishly.

Tom Dutton did not hear, which was just as well for Bunter.

Bunter was still sniffing about the cupboard in a hopeless, forlorn kind of way, when Peter Todd came back.

"Yarooogh! Leggo my ear, Toddy, you beast!" roared the Owl.

"Presently, porpoise. What are you nosing round after?"

"If I had all the clink you've got, Peter Todd, I wouldn't waste it in gambling," said Bunter morosely. The emptiness of the cupboard made him feel morose.

"I ain't so sure you wouldn't, oyster, as you can't gorge your fill nowadays. But I'm jolly sure I'm not going to. Who said I was going to gamble at all, come to that?"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I suppose I don't go about with my eyes shut?"

"No, nor with your mouth shut, either! What do you mean, you bladder of lard?"

"You're not getting thick with Ponsonby for nothing."

"I'm not getting thick with Ponsonby at all."

Bunter stared at him.

"I can't make out how you can stand there and tell me—Yoop! That hurts, you rotter!"

"Tell you what? Now, don't say 'lies,' because it isn't a nice word for innocent lips like yours, Bunt!"

Untruthers; then! So they are, Toddy! I know you've made it up with Pon, because I've seen his let—I mean I haven't seen any letters whatever! But I know, all the same."

"So you've been prying into my—"

"Yarooogh! I haven't! I wouldn't! My high principles—"

"There's Ponsonby and Gadsby, from Highcliffe, down in the quad, asking to see you, Toddy," said Dicky Nugent, sticking his head in at the door. "Let that fat rotter boil his high principles, and you cut along down and boil Pon's and Gaddy's—if you can find 'em!"

"There, Peter Todd! Say you ain't getting thick with Pon now!"

"I told them I didn't know whether your hair had grown enough yet for you to see visitors. Yoop! All right, Toddy, I'm going, anyway!"

For Peter Todd was giving the cheeky Dicky a gentle hint with his boot.

Peter went down. Bunter, feeling much aggrieved at Toddy's flat rejection of his company, rolled along to Study No. 1.

Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Mark Linley were all there; but neither Johnny Bull nor Inky was present.

"Scat!" said Bob, when Bunter blinked in.

"I've come to tell you fellows something," said the Owl mysteriously.

"Well, don't tell it and go! We don't want to hear," said Frank Nugent.

"Harry does, don't you, Harry, old man?"

"I don't!" snapped Wharton.

"Oh, very well. You'll be sorry later on, that's all! You reckon yourselves friends of Toddy's, though I don't know that he is quite so good a friend of yours as he makes out. A chap may know a thing, or a chap may not. It depends upon the chap, and—"

"His bootlaces!" grinned Bob.

"Don't talk rot, Bob Cherry! Look here, Wharton—"

"I've seen it before, Bunter, and it isn't really nice, you know."

"Eh? Seen what? Blessed if I know—"

"That unfortunate face of yours. Take it away!"

"Oh, very well! I was going to ask you to help me to get Toddy out of a nasty hole, but—"

"Toddy in a nasty hole! Rot!" said Bob.

"Perhaps you know all about it, and perhaps you don't, Bob Cherry. I'm not going to tell you anything about secret meetings in No. 7—"

"Good reason why," grinned Frank. "You couldn't have been there!"

"How do you know that?"

"It wouldn't have been a secret meeting if you'd been there, you fat clam!"

"What do you mean about Toddy being in a nasty hole?" asked Harry.

"He doesn't really mean anything. The fat idiot doesn't know what he's talking about!" said Bob contemptuously.

"I know what I know. 'Tisn't only Toddy, either. There's others in it—Squiff and Bulstrode and Wibley—oh, and several more. But I'm not going to tell you chaps anything, as you're so rude to me. All I want to know is how Wharton will like it when Toddy and that lot get chummy with Pon and his rotters, and go over to Highcliffe to gamble—"

"Like the fat black sheep of the flock," said Bob.

"Toddy wouldn't touch Pon with a barge-pole," said Wharton decidedly.

"But he would with a pair of clip-pers," said Frank Nugent.

"He's down in the quad with Pon and Gaddy now!" said Bunter triumphantly. "You chaps think you know so much, but—"

Mark Linley, who had not spoken a word, was standing by the window.

Harry looked at him. Mark nodded, and Harry crossed over to his side.

Three figures were pacing towards the gates together. It was almost a shock to the skipper of the Remove to see Peter Todd walking between Ponsonby and Gadsby.

"Whew!" said Bob, who had also moved to the window. "Bunter's told the truth! And talk about the giddy lion lying down with the merry lamb!"

"Toddy can take care of himself, Harry," said Frank, seeing the cloud on his chum's brow.

"You know what the old proverb says about touching pitch," Wharton replied thoughtfully.

"I thought it was raddle the rotters used," said Bob.

It was just because people would not forget that happening that Peter Todd felt so determined to wipe out the stain on his credit by taking exemplary vengeance on Pon & Co.

He came back from the gates smiling—"grinning like a Cheshire cat," as Bob put it.

They wondered what his game was.

But Bunter knew.

"I told you so!" he said. "Toddy's made an appointment with those chaps. I expect he's going to take Squiff and the rest along. The rotter, when he knows I would have gone—I mean, when he knows that nothing would induce me to have anything—Drop it, Cherry!"

Peter Todd had returned, grinning.

Pon and Gaddy were grinning as they strolled away.

"What's his game, Pon?" asked Gadsby. "He doesn't really feel friendly, you know—he can't! But he says he'll come, an' he seems to mean it."

"Oh, he'll come right enough!" replied Pon, with an unpleasant smile on his handsome face. "Can't you see, Gaddy? You're a bit dull to-day, by gad! The dear Todd's game is to play us at our own game, an' lick us. His notion of revenge

is to walk off with out dils, dear boy. An' not half a bad one, either—if he could bring it off. But he can't, Gaddy—it ain't in him! The enterprisin' Todd will trot along with his little bundle of notes, an' go back without them. He will come to shear, dear boy, an' he will go back shorn!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Peter Among the Nuts!

"CAPITAL place this—eh, you fellows?" said Pon.

"Oh, rippin'!" agreed Gadsby.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

"Glad you like it," replied Peter Todd blandly.

Two days had passed, and Peter was meeting the nuts at the old ruined Priory. It was a quiet place, well off the beaten track. Not a particularly cheerful spot, perhaps. But that was of small consequence to the merry nuts. They seemed quite hilarious.

A blazing sun shone from a cloudless sky, and the leaves only just rustled in the breeze.

There were four of the nuts—Ponsonby, Gadsby, Vavasour, and Monson.

As for Peter, he had come alone. Bunter's company might have been had; but Peter Todd had no yearning for Bunter's company.

Peter had not shaken hands with the Highcliffe fellows. They had been rather effusive in their greetings; but all they had got in return was a careless nod and a few cool words.

He was not going to pretend friendliness towards them. It was not their money Peter wanted—it was his revenge!

"Nice afternoon for a game—eh, what?" said Monson.

"It is," answered Peter, thinking of the cricket-ground.

But the game Monson meant was not cricket, as he well knew.

Ponsonby took out a stylish cigarette-case, and offered it, open, to Peter.

"No, thanks!" said Toddy. "I don't smoke!"

"Oh, by Jove, that's rot, you know! Now, then—just in a friendly way!"

"Look here, Ponsonby! Do you suppose my feelings towards you are exactly friendly? Because you're jolly well off it if you do!"

"My dear chap, I say, you know, it isn't worth while to rake up old squabbles, is it? When a man sits down for a game with another man, it's the usual thing to leave that out," said Pon, in quite an aggrieved tone.

"As long as they're playing, I take it?" returned Peter.

Ponsonby nodded.

"Then I don't mind a truce for that length of time. But I didn't come here with any sort of notion that when you apologised you meant anything by it, and I certainly am not going to take that apology as wiping out things between us—see?"

"You can't expect anything better than that from a beastly cad of a poverty-stricken solicitor's son, you know, Vav!" murmured Gadsby, in the sympathetic ear of Vavasour.

"You look at things in a way I haven't been accustomed to, Todd," said Cecil Ponsonby, frowning.

"I should say that's very likely indeed," answered Peter coolly.

"I should have thought, feeling that way, you would have preferred to have your little flutter among your own rotters! Greyfriars ain't lackin' them!" sneered Ponsonby.

"That's so, unfortunately. But I happen to have a preference at the moment for the Highcliffe brand!"

"If you're under the delusion that you'll get your revenge by walking off with our dibs—"

"I know I sha'n't do that if you can find any way of stopping me, Ponsonby!"

"What do you mean, you bouncer?"

"Exactly what I say, you sweep! I'm willing to play with you—why I am willing is no affair of yours that I can see! You chaps are not my friends; but I'm ready to play. Take it or leave it!"

The nuts did not like the situation a little bit.

They had come there prepared to win Peter Todd's money.

They would play stiff, fake the cards, treat this fellow as they had more than once treated the hapless Banter. It would need to be done with more care, of course; but they did not doubt being able to do it.

Peter's attitude made them feel uneasy, however. What had he up his sleeve?

He must surely have something, or he would not talk in this way! They were four to one—they did not forget that. And if Peter had reserves in the background, Pon had made certain preparations also.

They had suspected a trap—a trap of the ordinary kind. Against that they were, as they believed, sufficiently prepared.

But Peter's manner made them suspect something more now—something out of the ordinary. For none of them could imagine himself talking as Peter Todd had talked to fellows he had hoped to entrap.

They would have been smooth and pleasant—till the trap fell!

But that was not Peter's way. Even now, with everything in train for his vengeance, as he believed, he would have deferred it had these fellows shown a spark of decency—had their resentment at his cool treatment of them proven stronger than their greed.

It did not. And he had not expected that it would. He was sure he knew Ponsonby & Co. too well.

"Oh, we may as well play, though I'm hanged if I like your manner, Todd!" said Ponsonby sullenly.

"After all, Pon, you can't expect everyone who has the dibs to possess the manners of a gentleman!" remarked Gadsby.

"Of a what?" asked Peter, fixing Gadsby with a stony glare.

"Of a gentleman, I said," replied Gadsby, flushing redly.

"What do you know about gentlemen?" Peter inquired sweetly.

"Oh, let's play stiff against the swank-in' rotter from the start, Pon!" whispered Gadsby to his leader.

Peter was not Tom Dutton. He heard that. But it was nothing more than he was prepared for. And he gave no sign that he had heard.

When once the nuts had begun to attempt trickery the cup of their iniquities would be full, and the hour of vengeance would strike!

"Nap, Todd?" said Ponsonby.

"As you like," answered Peter.

They sat down upon blocks of fallen masonry, using a big block as the table. Monson's first position would have given him quite a useful view of each hand Peter took up. But Peter quietly shifted. The nuts all noticed it, and with upraised eyebrows signalled their conclusions to one another.

Peter was not going to be so easy a victim as Banter!

"Shillin' points?" asked Pon.

Peter nodded.

"An' a kitty?"

"If it suits you."

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Peter Todd had far more at stake than any of the nuts, for the money he had in his pocket, small though its amount might be, was all he could count upon for the term. And if he lost it all he would pay up and smile—as long as he could not convict them of cheating.

He was pitting his wits against theirs. His wits were sharper than theirs, he believed. But they had the advantage of knowing the game far better than he did.

Monson went three to start with, and got them. Vavasour tried three, and lost. Ponsonby and Gadsby took two each. So far Peter had not called at all.

"Playin' safe?" sneered Gadsby.

"I'm waiting till the cards come my way," replied Peter.

For three hands after that each call was lost. The thing is common enough with five players, and some of them plunging. The little pile of money in front of Peter Todd was increasing; but he felt none of the exultation of the gambler. The game, as a game, rather bored him than otherwise.

The pool was increasing, too. A good hand fell to Peter—a real nap hand. He called "nap."

Now the nuts were all on the alert.

Ace of hearts—king of hearts—knave of hearts! Three of the nuts were out of trumps after the first round. Ponsonby put the four on the king, the six on the knave. The queen had already fallen. Peter had the ten of trumps and the ace of spades left.

Unless Pon had still two trumps, it was impossible for Peter to go down, provided he played his cards as they should be played.

The next card to be played was obviously the ten of trumps. If Pon had but one trump left, the thing was a certainty then.

But Peter did not play the trump. And he had a reason for not doing so.

He knew that Gadsby, on his right, had stolen a look at his cards. And he had seen Gadsby signal to Pon. In quite a negligent way Gadsby's hand had gone to his left side, and then Gadsby's foot had been lifted casually—as it seemed—and brought down again. It was not a very good imitation of the act of digging; but then digging was hardly likely to be a hobby of Gadsby's, and no doubt the signals had been arranged in advance.

Peter understood them. Gadsby had told Pon that their intended victim held a heart—a trump—and a spade. Peter noted the very slight corrugation of Pon's brow, and deduced therefrom that Pon also held a trump and a spade.

But neither Gadsby nor Ponsonby had the least idea that Todd had seen through their game. They had thought of him as a novice; in two or three cases he had played cards carelessly, not as an old hand would have played them.

And now it seemed that he was playing carelessly again, in the flush of a supposed easy triumph. For he threw down the ace of spades.

"Got you, by gad!" said Pon, and displayed the seven of trumps.

"Rough luck for me, but my own fault," said Peter coolly. "I played the wrong card."

"Oh, it's too late to talk about that now," said Gadsby hurriedly.

Peter's eyes were upon the back of the card which still lay under Ponsonby's hand. Pon had made a movement to thrust it among the pack. But something in Peter's steady glance had restrained him.

"Mistakes will happen," said Peter. "I'm not asking to be allowed to play the hand over again. But how would it have been if I'd played correctly, Ponsonby? You couldn't have come down upon me with another trump, I suppose?"

"No such luck! But you'll have to stand by your mistake, Todd, of course!"

"Oh, of course!" replied Peter cheerily. "By the way, what was your last card, Ponsonby?"

"I don't know that you're entitled to ask that," said Pon coolly. "Catch hold of the cards, Mon!"

But before he could thrust that last card into the heap Peter's fingers were upon it.

"Oh, I really think I am—even if only as a matter of courtesy!" said Peter. "I'm not the only chap capable of a mistake."

"Confound you! Do you mean to insult me?"

As Pon roared that he snatched at the card.

But Peter Todd was quicker than he.

The card was turned up. It was the ten of spades!

"Two of us making mistakes," said Peter calmly. "I rather think you will have to admit, though, that yours was the really bad one, Ponsonby, for you were bound to follow suit, and I've won that nap!"

The nuts smiled in sickly fashion, and Ponsonby mumbled something which might have been an expression of regret for his error—or for its discovery.

Peter arose. He took the money from the pool.

"I'll trouble you chaps to cash up," he said, transferring all the money in front of him to his pockets.

"Do you mean to say you're going to quit?" snapped Pon.

"Certainly! I've had enough."

"But—but— Oh, I say, Todd, that's hardly sportsmanlike!"

"Think not, Ponsonby? But I'm not your sort of sportsman, you know. I'm not the sort who can pretend civility to a fellow in order to rook him!"

"You rotter! I'll make you smart for this!"

A whistle went to Peter's lips, and a shrill blast rang out.

"Oh, two can play that game!" cried Cecil Ponsonby, and he yelled at the top of his voice, "Highcliffe!"

Into the ruins rushed Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Inky and Frank Nugent.

Peter Todd gasped. These were not the fellows he had expected to see!

"Oh, rescue, Highcliffe!" yelled Gadsby desperately.

But not a Highcliffe nose showed. Just as Peter Todd's plans seemed to have gone wrong, so had Cecil Ponsonby's!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In the Friory Woods!

"BE careful, you fellows!" said Squiff.

"Oh, I don't believe there are any of 'em hanging around!" replied Bulstrode.

"Toddy was jolly sure there would be," remarked Delarey.

"Old Toddy's jolly sure about the whole bizney!" said Dick Rake, grinning. "Toddy pulls the strings, you know, and the figures work!"

"And they have, so far."

"Oh, bless you, Browney, I'm not denying it! Toddy's a regular old miracle-worker. I'm almost afraid to go near him when I've got a secret to keep, for fear he should read my brains."

"You needn't worry about that, Dicky," drily observed Wibley.

"Oh, dry up!" growled Squiff. "We're getting jolly close now. I guess you'd better fall out, Wib. It might make the nuts suspicious if you turned up in our company."

Wibley fell out at once. He did not look like William Wibley in the least; and there certainly was something that might have made even an uninterested observer stare in the contrast between him and his company.

For Wibley—as on a previous occasion well remembered by the Remove—was made up to represent Mr. Mobbs, the snobbish little master of the Highcliffe Fourth Form.

It was all part of Peter Todd's scheme. Peter not only felt sure that the nuts would try to cheat him if they failed to win his money by fair means, but he also felt sure that, being themselves treacherous, they would not trust him.

Therefore, he argued, while three or four of them would be seen at the trysting-place, at least as many more would probably be in ambush somewhere near, unseen, but ready to throw in their weight if Peter should prove, after all, not to have come alone.

It was for Wibley to deal with these when found. The rest of Peter's supporters were to help him in putting Pon & Co. through it in the old Priory ruins.

They were drawing near now. "See here," said Squiff, who was in command, "you chaps lie low while I scout forward a bit, and don't move till I come back."

"And suppose the nuts capture you, old man?" said Delarey.

"Suppose your great-grandmother were appointed commander-in-chief?"

It was not very likely the nuts would capture Squiff. The Australian junior was as good a scout as Greyfriars could boast.

He went off now, silently, stealthily, through the tangled undergrowth of the woods that encircled the Priory.

The rest lay down and waited. There were half a dozen of them—Tom Brown, Bulstrode, Delarey, Rake, Kipps, and Tom Dutton.

Bulstrode lay full length on his back under a big tree, clasped his hands under his head, and gazed up at the patches of blue sky visible here and there among the green leaves. Kipps, seated like a tailor, cross-legged, took a couple of old billiard-balls from his pocket, and began to juggle with them in an absent-minded way.

Tom Dutton pulled out a paper-covered book and started to read. The New Zealand junior sat on a fallen log and whittled a stick. Rake and Piet Delarey lay on their stomachs, watching intently the undergrowth into which Squiff had disappeared.

Not ten minutes had passed when Sampson Quincy Ifley Field surprised them by emerging from the wood in their rear.

"Had to make a bit of a circum-bendibus," he said. "They're there—half a dozen of them—within call. I spotted Merton and Tunstall; the rest I couldn't be dead sure of, but it's pretty easy guessing."

"There would be three, at least, with Pon," said Tom Brown thoughtfully. "Say, ten altogether—and that's about as many as the nuts can muster at best. We're eight, counting Toddy and leaving out Wib."

"Let's ambush the ambush, and just wade in and mop them up as soon as Toddy—or Pon—signals!" said Bulstrode.

"Yes, we could mop them up," said Squiff. "But—"

"It would mean a free fight and possibly some of them escaping," interjected Delarey.

"Besides, old Wib would never forgive us if we did him out of his little part," said Rake.

"Sure he wouldn't!" agreed Kipps. "He could bear to miss a scrap—Wib ain't so keen on that sort of thing—but

he's fairly mustard on a spoon, and this ought to be a gorgeous one!"

"It's risky," objected Bulstrode. "I believe my plan's best, after all."

"Well, go and carry it out!" said Squiff.

"But don't expect Toddy to be grateful," added Delarey.

Bulstrode growled as he got up.

"I don't care a hang whether Toddy's grateful or not!" he said. "But have it your own way. I suppose every giddy ass among you thinks he knows better than I do!"

As everyone present was very much of this opinion, no argument arose.

"No need to move yet," Squiff said. "The game is to set Wib at them."

"I'll go and fetch him!" volunteered Rake.

As Wibley was behind them, not in front and in the neighbourhood of the enemy, Squiff let Rake go.

A few minutes passed. Above their heads the leaves rustled pleasantly in the breeze, and around them the woods lay still and slumbrous.

panned out all right, should in a few minutes be leading the Highcliffe rescue-party—the six who had been waiting in ambush—away.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Mobbs the First and Mobbs the Second!

WILLIAM WIBLEY was in his element.

The part in Peter Todd's plan assigned to him suited him to a hair. For Wibley's one absorbing passion was acting; and he held himself capable of playing any role whatever that did not demand too many inches.

He imitated exactly the walk of Mr. Mobbs—a mixture of strut and mince—as he made his way towards the place where Merton and the rest were hidden.

Now, through a screen of bushes, he got a glimpse of the nuts' reserve forces.

They were occupied as might have been expected of them.

Silver was scattered about the turf and cards were in their hands. Pon & Co.



Peter Todd and the Nuts. (See Chapter 7.)

Dick Rake returned.

"Wib's off!" he said, with a grin. "I twigged him pacing up and down the path over there, and he looked so much like Mobby that I'm hanged if I wasn't half nervous about speaking to him for fear it really was Mobby!"

"Easier to take in you than the nuts about that!" growled Bulstrode.

"Wib will take in the nuts all serene!" said Kipps, returning the billiard-balls to his pocket.

"Wake up, Dutton!" said Delarey.

"Eh? Cake? No, I don't know that I want any cake just now—at least, not particularly."

"I didn't say—"

"Are you chaps going to make a move? Has anything happened?"

"Oh, my aunt!" groaned Squiff. "Why didn't we leave him at home?"

But Tom Dutton asked no more questions. He followed the rest as they cautiously drew nearer the path through the woods.

By that path Wibley, if his spoof

were presumably rooking Peter Todd. Merton, Drury & Co., having no one to rook, were chasing one another's small silver in the elevating and skilful game of banker.

"Drury!" snapped the false Mr. Mobbs, in the high, squeaky tones of the true one.

"My hat!" gasped one of the less bold spirits of the nut brigade.

"It's only Mobby," said Merton, in a low voice. "Who cares about Mobby?"

"Yes, sir?" said Drury, without any hurry to reply.

The nuts, while enjoying the liberty Mr. Mobbs' snobbish spirit made possible to them, were not in the habit of regarding him as a person who really mattered much.

But Wibley turned from Drury to Merton, and a portentous frown was on his face.

"You appear to imagine, Merton, that my sense of hearing is defective!" he said.

Merton stared. The merry nuts knew well enough that Mr. Mobbs was not much in the way of hearing anything that it did not suit him to hear: and he was often wilfully deaf to such impertinences as this.

"I refuse to be treated in this disrespectful manner!" rapped out the supposed master. "Stand up, all of you! What do you mean by lounging in that way before me?"

Sulkily the nuts stood up. They could hardly believe their ears.

But Mr. Mobbs had authority, if he chose to exert it. So the nuts stood up.

"What does this mean?" snapped the false Mr. Mobbs, pointing to the scattered silver coins and the cards.

"Just a—a little game, sir!" stammered Tunstall.

"For money?"

The nuts stared harder, and wondered more than ever.

Officially, Mr. Mobbs might be quite unaware of their little habit of playing for money. Actually, he knew of it as well as they did, and winked at it, because they were highly connected and he was a snob and a toady.

"Er—not exactly for money, sir," said Drury. "You see, we had no counters, and—well, you know, one must mark the game with something."

"You are telling me untruths, Drury!"

"Oh, really, sir, I'm not going to stand that! You know that's not my line!"

"Pick up those cards! Give them to me!"

Drury and Merton and Tunstall all stood still, almost ready to mutiny. But two of the others picked up the cards, and the pretended Mr. Mobbs took out a sharp penknife and slit the pack across.

"Take up the money, or leave it there—I am indifferent!"

But the nuts were not, and Drury and Merton and Tunstall did not leave all the picking-up to others this time.

"Now, follow me!"

Wibley strutted down the leafy glade, and the six followed sulkily—away from the Priory!

They had no suspicion at all. They were half-minded to rebel, but suspicious they were not.

"I say, sir! Mr. Mobbs!" called Merton, egged on by the rest to protest.

"Do not address me, Merton!"

"But, sir, that's all very well, you know; but where are you takin' us?"

"To the detention-room!"

"You can't do that, sir! We haven't done anything to be punished for!" said Drury.

"I am not prepared to argue the case with you, Drury!" came the icy answer. "You will have the goodness to follow me in silence!"

If looks had been daggers Wibley's back would have felt very uncomfortable at that moment.

Wibley's back felt quite comfortable; and as for Wibley's mind, it was almost in a state of beatitude.

"My hat! Isn't the bounder just carrying it off to rights?" whispered Kipps to Rake.

"Old Wib's a knock-out!" chuckled Delarey. "Just look at those sulky rotters!"

"And if they only knew it, wouldn't they just rag him!" said Tom Brown.

Wibley had no fear of a ragging. Like an Eastern shepherd, who goes ahead of his flock, he took the nuts—no longer merry—past his hidden comrades. He guessed they would be watching somewhere, and he exulted.

But pride goeth before a fall!

"My hat!" gasped Squiff. "If there ain't Mobby himself!"

There was nothing particularly unlikely

in Mr. Mobbs' choosing to take a stroll through the woods on that beautiful afternoon; but, somehow, no one had thought of the possibility of it.

Yet, there he was!

Even Squiff, ready in emergencies—even Piet Delarey, the Rebel, whom some held the coolest fellow in all Greyfriars—was dumbfounded, and knew not what to do.

The Greyfriars juniors had no respect whatever for Mr. Mobbs. But he was a Highcliffe master, and, as such, could not be dealt with like a Highcliffe junior. Their own Head would hold them to a heavy reckoning if they tried that sort of thing.

It was too late to warn Wibley. And, indeed, he needed no warning now.

Wibley had seen. But so had Mr. Mobbs, and so had the nuts.

Mr. Mobbs knew that he was himself, and, consequently, was quite sure that the figure he saw was not himself. In fact, he did not at first sight connect it with himself. In Mr. Mobbs' eyes, Mr. Mobbs was a much more handsome and stylish figure than this double of his.

"Hang it all, Mobby must have a twin!" gasped Tunstall.

"Rats!" replied Merton. "Such horrible things as that don't happen—they can't, you know!"

"It's spoof—one of the two's a giddy spoofer!" said Drury. "But I'm dashed if I know—"

"Aes! It's this one, of course!" howled Merton. "We might have—"

Wibley heard that. He would have bolted then, but he had no chance.

Mr. Mobbs was upon him—a very angry Mr. Mobbs, who understood now—a Mr. Mobbs with flaming eyes and a face weirdly contorted.

"How—how dare you!" he spluttered.

The game was up. Wibley did not know how near his chums were. But even had he known he would not have called to them for help.

He knew—as they knew—that a rescue would mean the biggest sort of a row. It would not in the long run save him, and it would involve the others in his fate.

So he faced Mr. Mobbs coolly, ready to play a lone hand with all the audacity he possessed, and wait on chance.

"How dare you!" repeated Mr. Mobbs furiously.

"I'm afraid I do not understand you, sir!" said Wibley, in a stiff, grown-up manner.

"You—you utter villain! How dare you masquerade as me?"

Wibley looked at Mr. Mobbs as if that idea was completely new to him.

Then he looked at the nuts.

They knew now. Would they give him away?

Pon and Gadsby and Vavasour would have done it—like a shot.

But Merton and Drury and Tunstall had been known to be quite decent at times. Perhaps, angry as they were, they might prove decent now.

"Masquerade!" repeated Wibley, in a half-dazed way.

And Merton giggled.

"Who are you, fellow?" snapped Mr. Mobbs.

"I really do not see, sir, that I am called upon to submit to your inquisition!" replied Wibley, in more decided tones.

"It's that bounder Wibley!" whispered Merton to Drury. "What a nerve the rotter has!"

"He did us down pretty well," said Drury sulkily.

"Yes, but we can't give him away: it wouldn't be the clean potato—you see that, dear boy?"

"I believe you are a Greyfriars boy!"

snapped Mr. Mobbs, who began to remember things.

But he did not recognise Wibley. That youth had not forced himself upon Mr. Mobbs' notice since his previous escapade in the disguise of the Highcliffe master.

"If you can believe that, sir, you would have little difficulty in believing anything!" replied Wibley calmly.

"And what might your name be?" snapped Mr. Mobbs.

"Brownjohn," answered Wibley promptly.

The form of the question had given him his chance. His name might have been Brownjohn; but it was not, because it happened to be Wibley.

"Is there a boy of that name at Greyfriars?" asked Mr. Mobbs of his hopeful flock.

"Not that I ever heard of, sir," said Tunstall. He also had twigged Wibley now.

"Do you deny that you are a Greyfriars junior?"

Wibley could not deny it point-blank. He temporised.

"I deny your right to ask me futile questions!" he said.

"Do you refuse to come with me to Greyfriars, and answer for yourself there?" asked the master.

Wibley hesitated. He would have refused, if he had felt sure he could trust the nuts. But he did not feel sure.

"As it is not far out of my way, I will comply with your wish, sir," he said stiffly. "At the same time, I consider that it might have been couched in more polite terms!"

Mr. Mobbs peered at him in some puzzlement. The fellow talked like a man, and he looked like one.

But the nuts were grinning. The Highcliffe master noted that, and felt sure they could make the impostor's guilt clear.

"Two of you will come with me," he said. "You, Merton and Tunstall. I shall need evidence at Greyfriars as to the motive of this masquerade."

"Oh, dash it!" muttered Merton.

"Hang it all!" said Tunstall.

But they had to go. Mobby was not to be disobeyed with impunity on the rare occasions when he chose to put his foot down.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Score for the Nuts!

THE encounter between Mobbs the First and Mobbs the Second had taken place out of earshot of the seven Greyfriars juniors in hiding. Or, rather, out of earshot of six of them. For a moment Squiff was missing from among the rest, and he did not return until the procession had moved on.

Then he came gliding back through the tangled undergrowth.

He had heard practically all that had passed, and already he had made his plans for dealing with the situation.

"Only four of the nuts left," he said. "We must split up our forces. Enough to deal with them, and the rest to follow up Mobby and watch out for a chance to rescue Wib."

"Three would be enough for that gang," said Bulstrode. "I'll undertake to mop up the floor with any two of them!"

"Dare say you would," returned Squiff. "But mopping up the floor with them ain't the game. We must collar them at once, for if they join up with Pon & Co. they'll be eight to four, counting Toddy, or to five if four of us go."

"We can't begin to rescue Wib by force of arms," said Tom Brown.

"No; that would only make the case blacker," agreed Squiff. "It's strategy

that's needed. Now then, Piet, here's a chance for you! And Rake, I think, and Kipps."

"Right-ho!" said Delarey. "I won't grumble, though I should have liked the other job better. Come on, you fellows!"

Rake and Kipps followed him. Squiff, Tom Brown, Bulstrode, and Tom Dutton started at once on the track of the four remaining nuts, who were making their way back to the Priory.

Numbers were even; but Greyfriars always counted on having the whip-hand over Highcliffe with even numbers. And the four Removites were all capable fighting-men.

They were close upon Drury and the rest before the nuts were aware of their nearness, and while they were still some distance from the old Priory.

"Rush them!" yelled Squiff.

The nuts swung round. Their first impulse was to flee.

But they gave a whoop of delight as Bulstrode caught a foot against an out-cropping root, and tumbled, and Tom Dutton sprawled over him.

Squiff and Tom Brown ran on. But, to their intense surprise, the nuts, instead of retreating, came towards them, showing light.

"Yarooogh!" howled Tom Dutton. But Bulstrode was silent. His head had struck a tree, and he was quite stunned.

"Stick it, Browney!" shouted Squiff, and he drove his fist hard at Drury's face. For it meant fighting now, not merely tumbling the nuts over and tying them up.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Brown cheerily, and he let fly at Rothamley.

Tom Dutton picked himself up. But he limped as he made in to the combat. He had given his right ankle a nasty twist.

Two to one is longish odds at best. Squiff and Tom Brown found their hands full.

Over full, indeed! Tom Brown was down now, and two of the enemy sat on him at once.

And now, just as Dutton limped up, Squiff was lugged over. Drury and Blades hung on to him like grizzly bears.

Tom Dutton glanced back. Bulstrode lay where he had fallen. He had not stirred. A horrid fear assailed Tom.

He was ready enough to fight, lamed though he was. But what was the use of it if something serious had happened to Bulstrode? Suppose he had broken his neck?

"Pax!" cried Tom.

"Oh, you funky rotter!" howled Squiff.

"Of course I've got to!" answered Tom, misunderstanding, as usual. "Just look at Bulstrode!"

"Here, let me get up!" said Squiff, wriggling hard.

"Not till you make it pax!" returned Drury, grinning.

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Tom Brown. "Look at—"

"That's all very well; but you piled in on us without any reason, an' you dashed well ain't goin' to get up unless you make it pax for the afternoon, an' leave us alone!" said Drury firmly.

Squiff and Tom Brown groaned. Dutton stood irresolute. Then he turned and limped back to where Bulstrode lay. Bulstrode's accident seemed to him too serious for more argument.

"We'll make it pax," said Squiff.

"There's nothing else for it," Tom Brown said.

"An' you'll give us your word that you won't interfere with us again to-day, an' won't follow us when we get up?" said Drury.

There was no way out. The nuts were

not particularly anxious about Bulstrode. Judging him by their own measure, they were inclined to fancy that he had not got up because he had seen his side getting the worse of the scrap, and had no taste for forlorn hopes. But Squiff and Tom Brown knew better. Funking was not in Bulstrode's line. He was badly hurt, they were sure.

To give in was like betraying Peter Todd, they felt.

But it had to be done. And Peter was a cool hand, and could take pretty good care of himself.

"We agree," said Squiff morosely.

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes. We ain't liars, like you chaps!"

"You too, Brown?"

"Yes; honest Injun!" growled Tom Brown.

They were suffered to get up. They hurried at once to Bulstrode, over whom Tom Dutton was bending.

The nuts did not follow. But they had the grace to wait and see whether the damage was serious. In any case, they could not be held to blame, of course!

Bulstrode gave a heavy groan, and looked up dazedly.

"What happened?" he asked.

"Where am I?"

"You tumbled over, old chap, and you must have barged into that tree with your head," said Tom Brown.

"But it's all right," said Squiff. "No need to be afraid of concussion of the brain—not with old Bulstrode!"

It really had been something like concussion of the brain, though, luckily, a slight one—for Bulstrode's head was not at all of the eggshell type. Bulstrode was plainly out of action for the day, and so was Tom Dutton.

"The best thing for you chaps to do," said Squiff, "is to bunk home—and sharp about it!"

"And what are we going to do, old scout?" asked Tom Brown. "We can't help Toddy—that's dead off. And there go those bounders to the Priory again!"

"Let 'em go. I'd trust Toddy to keep up his end against a score like that, unless they took him by surprise. We'd better cut along after the rest, and see if we can do anything for Wib. Browney."

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Fate of Ponsonby & Co.

"**W**ANT any help, Toddy?" inquired Harry Wharton cheerily.

"He could have done with some the last time he ran against these merchants!" growled Johnny Bull.

It was true, and a few hours earlier it might have seemed to Peter offensive. But it did not seem so now.

For Peter's schemes had worked out quite nicely up to this point, and he did not expect anything worse than a momentary check.

He was rather surprised that Squiff & Co. had failed to come to his call.

And Pon was rather surprised that Merton, Drury & Co. lagged.

But both Peter and Pon expected to see reinforcements arrive at any moment. On the whole, Peter was the more certain of the two, for Pon had a suspicion that his crew might hang back if they knew that the Famous Five were there.

"I've been gambling, Wharton," said Peter gruffly.

"So I see," answered Harry, with twinkling eyes.

"And Pon's been cheating," went on Peter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You don't say so, Toddy?"

"I ain't surprised to hear it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The surprisefulness is not terrific, my venerated and absurd Todd!"

"What are you going to do about it, Toddy?" inquired Frank Nugent.

"They'll have to be taught a lesson," replied Peter, shaking his head gravely. "It's wrong to cheat—and beastly clumsy to let the other chap see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The nuts were scowling. But their scowls only seemed to add to the amusement of the Greyfriars juniors.

"Besides, I owe them something," said Peter.

"Oh, by gad, Todd, that's a rotten thing to do!" said Ponsonby.

"What's the rotten thing? The trick you played with that small trump, do you mean?"

"That was a mistake! Dash it all, a chap can't help makin' mistakes, can he? But it's a cad's trick to ask us here to play with you, an' then bring in a crowd of these sweeps to pile in on us!"

"You'd better pick your language a bit more carefully, Ponsonby, or we shall have something to say," said Wharton.

"As a matter of fact, I wasn't expecting to see these gentlemen," Toddy said, with a polite bow to the Famous Five. "But as they are here, and the fellows I expected aren't—any more than the bounders you yelled to for rescue, Ponsonby—well, it rests with them. I sha'n't refuse help if they offer it."

"We're on, Toddy!" said Bob Cherry promptly. "We came along in case you couldn't run this show quite on your little own."

"And we seem to have come in the nick of time," Johnny Bull remarked.

"Well, that's a fact!" admitted Peter. "There would have been four to one, and I really don't think I could have carried out my plans fully. But now I can, with your help. And the first thing to be done is to tie these four rotters up!"

"You talk as if there were a score of you. You've got the odds, but I'm dashed if you'll find us so easy to handle as all that!" roared Ponsonby.

And, seeing that blows would inevitably be struck, Pon struck the first blow.

Harry Wharton took it on his arm, and replied with a jab under the chin that rattled all Pon's teeth.

For about a minute and a half there was a wild, whirling tumult in the Priory ruins.

"Yooop!" howled Vavasour. "Oh, cheeso it! I'm done!"

But Pon and Gadsby and Monson were not so soon done with.

They hit out as hard as they knew how. The Greyfriars juniors, for the most part, sought to grip rather than to punch, and did not hit except when they had to.

Vavasour's early exit from the fray left two of the Remove to deal with each Highcliffian.

Monson went down under Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent. Harry and Inky lowered Gadsby to earth, and eat upon him. Peter Todd and Bob Cherry attended to Pon.

Cecil Ponsonby fought desperately, for he had an inkling of what was coming.

"You've got the needful rope, I suppose, Toddy?" said Wharton.

Peter undid his blazer, and unwound from his lean body quite a coil of thin, strong rope.

It did not take many seconds to tie up the Highcliffe four. Vavasour had attempted to make exit; but Johnny Bull saw to him.

Then Peter Todd produced from his pockets a sharp pair of scissors and a small box of paints.

"I thought about a razor," he said. "But I dare say I can give the beauties a fairly close cut with these. I ain't a

skilled barber; but I don't think I'm as clumsy as Pon."

"You're going to cut off their hair?" asked Wharton.

"That's the idea," replied Peter cheerily. "Any objection?"

"None at all!" said Harry, laughing. "They did worse than that to you!"

"Todd, if you try that—"

"There ain't any 'if' about it, and there ain't any trying, Pon—except that I dare say you'll find it rather trying. It's going to be done!"

"You beastly cad!" howled Pon. "Oh, you shall smart for this!"

"You rotters! You cowards!" bellowed Gadsby.

"Look here! You know, Todd, it ain't fair to treat me like that!" protested Monson. "I didn't—"

"Nor yet me! Oh, I say, I can't have it done! It's dead off—absolutely—"

"Not yet, Vavasour. But it's going to be!" said Peter grimly.

And he set to work. He dealt with Pon first, of course. Pon could not be left to the chance of what might happen.

Pon raved. Pon used language that might have come from the lips of a bargee. Pon fairly foamed at the mouth.

But all he said failed to disturb Peter a whit, or even to break down his gravity. While the Famous Five sat and roared until the tears ran down their cheeks, Peter went on with his work with a face as solemn as an owl's.

"Quite a nice crop!" he said at length. "And so suitable to this warm weather—and to such hot-headed fighting-men as you Highcliffe fellows! Come on, Gadsby, or would any of you fellows like to take the next turn? I've got my hand in now, and I think I can guarantee an up-to-date style!"

But the Famous Five declined as with one voice.

"You ain't got us tied up, you know, Toddy," said Johnny Bull.

Gadsby would also have declined—in fact, Gadsby did decline. Only, in his case, it made no difference.

The language of Gadsby was not much behind that of Ponsonby; but his breath gave out a little sooner.

Vavasour, who was taken next, did not swear. But he whined and whimpered, and finally blubbered outright. Pon and Gaddy were sitting in bonds before him, and the knowledge that he was being made like unto them was too much for him.

Monson went through it in sullen silence, having had time to say all he could think of before his turn came.

Then Peter Todd started to work with the paint-box.

"Sorry I haven't any raddle, Pon!" he said politely. "This is the best I could do for you. Not so beastly, but more variety, you know!"

There was certainly more variety. Peter used every colour in the box on the angry face of Ponsonby. Streak after streak was added. Not only was the face of the nuts' leader used as a canvas, but his closely-cropped head was adorned with alternate streaks of blue and green.

"You look like a Futurist painting, Pon," said Peter, stepping back to get the full effect of his handiwork. "Can you chaps suggest any improvement?"

"It's beyond that," said Harry.

"Ought to be exhibited at the Royal Academy!" grinned Frank.

"It would surely make the fame-fulness of the exalted and ludicrous Todd Sahib if the exhibitiveness were well and truly accomplishfully done!" purred Hurree Jamsct Ram Singh.

"I'll take Vav next," said Peter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Vav will be absolutely IT when you've finished, old scout!" chuckled Bob.

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Helping Wibley!

WIBLEY had not given up hope.

There did not seem much room for hope, certainly. But unexpected things happen; and Wibley trusted that something unexpected would come between him and the anger of Dr. Locke.

But the four—the angry Mr. Mobbs, the sulky Merton and Tunstall, and Wibley, with his hopes falling with every hundred yards—were getting very near Greyfriars before they met anyone at all.

It was Bunter they met then. Bunter was mooching along with a decidedly disgruntled look on his fat countenance.

He looked at them. Mr. Mobbs glared at him. Bunter raised his cap.

Wibley expected him to blurt out, "Hallo, Wib! What are you after?" or something to that effect. It would not matter much, Wibley thought—the Head would not be likely to accept him as "Brownjohn."

But Bunter quite failed to recognise him. He stared and blinked, that was all.

Then he sang out something that made Wibley's heart leap.

"Hallo, Rake! Hallo, Rebel! I say, have you seen Wharton and that lot? They went off without me—quite by mistake, you know. They'll be wondering where I've got to. But that rotter Linley won't tell me—the beastly factory cad!"

"Come here, Bunter!" shouted Delarey.

Wibley did not even look round, though it cost him an effort to keep from doing so.

Delarey and Rake! It was not for nothing these two had followed him up! He did not know that there were three active brains, not two, for Bunter had not hailed Kipps by name. But he knew that Rake and the Rebel were quite the right fellows for an emergency.

Whatever they meant to do, though, they must do it quickly!

Delarey knew that. The sight of Bunter put a notion into his mind at once. He told Rake and Kipps, and both agreed that it was a good notion.

"I say, no rotting!" said Bunter suspiciously.

Merton and Tunstall grinned. Mr. Mobbs frowned. He considered it taking a liberty that these Greyfriars juniors should call to each other past him.

"Honest Injun!" said Delarey. "Look sharp, or you'll never catch Wharton."

Bunter rolled up. Wibley stopped, and tied up very carefully a bootlace that did not need tying. He guessed that all the delay he could contrive would be to the good.

Mr. Mobbs fumed. But Merton and Tunstall did not mind. They had no special wish to interview the Head of Greyfriars.

"Can you imitate Quelch?" asked Delarey sharply of Bunter.

"Me? Of course I can! What a silly question! Everybody knows what a first-class ventriloquist I am!"

"Then you've got to do it now! Wib must be rescued!" answered the Rebel.

"Wib? I haven't seen Wib! Where is he?" gasped Bunter.

"Never mind that! Come along with me! Hoist the fat ass over that stile, you chaps—quick!"

"I—I— Look here! I'm not going to be jolly well ordered about like this, so don't you think it, Rebel! I— Ow-yow!"

Bunter found himself on the other side

of the stile. Rake and Kipps had seized his fat legs and bundled him over.

Delarey clapped a hand over his mouth. "Don't make another sound, and don't bite, or I'll make you sorry for it!" he rapped out. "We've got to get alongside that lot without Mobby twigging us, and before they've gone another hundred yards, too! You'll want all your breath, so don't waste any now."

"He'll never do it, old chap!" said Kipps. "Unless I can stop them, to give you a chance of coming up with him. Oh, I've got it, by jingo! Just the thing! That scarecrow!"

Kipps made a wild dash at the scarecrow, throwing off his blazer as he went. He snatched from the scarecrow the ragged coat and battered hat, which chiefly composed it, and in a moment had completely changed his appearance. His cap was chucked down anywhere—it was of no consequence.

He sprinted along the inner side of the high hedge, passed the procession, and waited a moment to get breath. He saw Rake and Delarey—one each side of Bunter—rushing that fat youth along after him. But Bunter was already blowing so heavily that it was evident he could not be counted upon for any ventriloquial effort the moment he stopped.

Delarey's dodge was to halt the procession by the voice of Mr. Quelch—produced by Bunter, of course. That ought to give Wibley a chance to make a bolt, for Delarey and Rake would take good care that Merton and Tunstall should not run him down—as they could easily do if not hampered, for Wibley's disguise would slow him up.

Kipps' plan was all his own. It seemed even to him a pretty wild one. But it was not because of any nervousness about carrying it out that he halted. Now or never!

Kipps clambered over a gate, and burst right into the midst of the procession. His head was down; he did not appear to have the least idea where he was going. One might have imagined him pursued by savages thirsting for his blood.

But Kipps did not make the mistake of colliding with the wrong Mr. Mobbs.

He barged right into the snobbish little Highcliffe master, and bowled him clean over.

"Yooop!" yelled Mr. Mobbs. "What are you—"

Kipps had tumbled on top of him. His hands touched the heavy watchchain Mr. Mobbs wore. Kipps could not resist the temptation.

He whipped watch and chain out with a dexterity that the most expert of pick-pockets might have envied, and thrust them into the inner breast-pocket of their owner. It was all done in a second, and nobody saw. It can hardly be said that it was done with any definite purpose, save that Kipps vaguely glimpsed a chance of further delay that might help Wibley.

No one recognised Kipps as he went down on top of Mr. Mobbs. No one saw his sleight-of-hand trick. But when he arose not only Wibley, but the two Highcliffe fellows knew him. For the battered hat had fallen off, and the coat had been wrenched from his back by Mr. Mobbs' furious clutch.

"Why, it's young Kipps!" yelled Merton. "What on earth are you after, bargin' about like that, you silly—"

"Do you mean to say that this abandoned scoundrel is another Greyfriars boy?" panted Mr. Mobbs, rising with Merton's help. "Ah, I see! This is an attempt to—"

He grabbed Wibley. Wibley had delayed his bolt just a second too long. If he had recognised Kipps before the

collision he would have been well on his way before this.

"Hold him, Merton! Hold him, Tunstall!" shouted Mr. Mobbs. "Do not let the rascal escape!"

Merton and Tunstall both clutched Kipps. That was not at all what Mr. Mobbs meant, and probably they knew it was not. It was Wibley the little master wanted made secure. Nothing really definite could be proved against Kipps—nothing worse than clumsiness. And, really, clumsiness was about the last fault of which Oliver Kipps was likely to be guilty!

But Mobby's grip on Wibley was too frantic to be put aside easily, and it was not Wibley's game even now to struggle desperately.

Now Bunter, prompted by the Rebel, chipped in.

"Good gracious! What does this mean? I am amazed! Wibley—Kipps! Will you be kind enough to inform me, Mr. Mobbs, what these boys have been doing?"

"Ass!" hissed Delarey. "What did you want to mention names for?"

"I—I— Didn't you—"

"I didn't say give their names, idiot?"

"It doesn't matter. Mobby can't be off knowing!" said Rake.

Mr. Mobbs did not notice the names, however. The sound of Mr. Quelch's voice—for Bunter's imitation was really first-class—had set him gazing wildly around him. Up the road and down the road he looked, and saw no one. The hedge hid Delarey and Rake and Bunter.

"I—I— Is that you, Mr. Quelch?"

"Don't ask absurd questions! Of course it is me!" thundered the voice.

"Quelchy would say 'I,'" whispered Dick Rake.

"Oh, rats!" said Bunter.

"Where are you, Mr. Quelch?" demanded Mr. Mobbs heatedly. "Be good enough to show yourself, please! I have— Oh, stop him—stop him!"

Wibley had bolted!

Merton and Tunstall hardly made even a pretence of trying to stop Wibley. All they did was to let go of Kipps. But Kipps did not bolt. He knew better.

"Where are you, Mr. Quelch? I— Oh, that scoundrel has stolen my watch and chain! It has gone. He must have stolen it! He is a pickpocket, not a Grey— Oh, pursue him, Merton—pursue him, Tunstall!"

And Mr. Mobbs, without waiting to see whether the two Highcliffe juniors obeyed, dashed after the fleeing Wibley.

Next moment Delarey and Rake had joined Kipps. Bunter came rolling after them.

"I did that jolly well!" he said, with a fat smirk. "There ain't—"

"Wasn't it old Quelch?" asked Merton, his eyes wide open.

"No. It was this fat lout. Bit of a ventriloquist, you know—"

"Oh, really, Rebel! I must say you're not very grateful!"

"It was jolly well done!" said Tunstall. "Of course, that was Wibley rigged up like our little rotter of a Mobby?"

"Yes," answered Delarey. "But you chaps aren't giving him away if Mobby doesn't know?"

"He doesn't. We won't," replied Tunstall, with commendable brevity. "I say, though, what about Mobbs' ticker?"

Kipps grinned.

"That's all right," he said. "I tucked it into his breast-pocket. You needn't tell him so; but you might give him a hint to look there."

"My hat!" gasped Merton. "For sheer cheek you fellows beat all I ever saw!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In the Pool!

VAVASOUR, Gadsby, and Monson were duly dealt with, the Famous Five looking on with interest and broad grins. But Peter Todd did not grin. He did his work with a deadly seriousness.

Hardly had the last streak of paint been applied to Monson when the voice of Drury was heard.

Drury and the three with him had watched the painting operations—themselves unseen. They might have attempted a heroic rescue, but on the whole they scarcely saw the force of trying anything of the kind.

They would be only four to six, and even if the odds had been the other way about the venture would have seemed to Drury & Co. too risky.

"Pax!" said Drury, coming forward, while the others hung back, ready to bolt if need be.

"Oh, you rotten funk!" snarled Pon.

"You're not going to have pax, so don't you think it!" said Johnny Bull decidedly.

"That's for Toddy to say," said Harry.

"Do you want this lot, Toddy?"

"I'd have had Drury if he'd been with these sweet lambs," said Peter. "But I won't trouble about him now. He wasn't quite such a sweep as the rest."

"Oh, all serene!" growled Johnny Bull. "Feeling happy, Pon?"

The other nuts came forward a trifle sheepishly.

"Beastly slackers!" said Gadsby furiously. "Why didn't you come when Pon yelled to you? Funked it, I suppose?"

"We couldn't come," answered Drury. "Mobby dropped on to us—at least, we thought it was Mobby!"

Peter Todd grinned now. So Wibley's wheeze had worked!

"Thought it was Mobby?" said Frank Nugent. "You're a bright gang, I must say! Don't you know your own masters when you see them?"

"Do you mean to say you let yourselves—"

"So would you have done, Pon! So would anyone! It was that boulder Wibley; but he looked for all the world like Mobby, and talked like him, too. And he was marching us off back as cool as you like—"

"When who should come along but Mobby himself," chipped in Blades. "My hat! Even when you saw the two together I'm hanged if you could be dead certain—"

"But Wibley's going to get it in the neck," went on Drury. "Mobby has marched him off to Greyfriars. He made Tunstall and Merton go with him to give evidence."

"What licks me," said Peter Todd, "is where Squiff and his little lot got to!"

"Oh, we settled them!" said Drury calmly. "They were only too glad to make it pax!"

"What! You four wasters settled seven of our chaps?" howled Peter. "Tell me—"

"There were only four—Field and Brown and Bulstrode and that deaf chap," said Blades.

In fact, there had only been two to deal with. But the nuts did not care to go so closely into details as that.

"We'd best be making a move, you chaps," said Peter. "This is serious about old Wib. Hang it all! Who could have thought of Mobby coming on the scene?"

The Famous Five had only half-understood. Peter was about to explain as they moved away, when it struck him

that there was something else that called for an explanation.

"By the way, did you chaps come along quite by accident?" he demanded sharply.

Inky smiled his inscrutable smile. Harry looked at Bob.

"Tell him, Harry," chuckled Bob. "No good trying to draw the wool over old Toddy's eyes!"

"It wasn't an accident," said Wharton. "I suppose we ought to apologise for butting in, Toddy—"

"Jolly glad you did!" said Peter heartily. "Lucky for me, it was!"

"Well, as you take it like that—I thought you might get on your ear about it, you know, Toddy—I don't mind telling you that we followed you because we reckoned you might need our help."

"Oh!" said Peter Todd.

"And you did," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes. Things went wrong, somehow—"

"Sure to—without little us!" said Bob. Peter laughed. His vengeance had been accomplished, and he felt happy.

There was no room in him for jealousy.

"Never saw such fellows as you are for being in at the death!" he remarked.

"I suppose Bunty gave the show away?"

"He told us that you—and a lot more—were falling into bad ways with Pon," said Frank Nugent, laughing.

"And you didn't believe it, Wharton?"

asked Peter.

"Not when I'd thought over it," admitted Harry frankly.

"That's a compliment!" Peter replied drily.

"I'm not going to be in such a hurry again to suspect chaps I know to be decent!" said Harry, flushing.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob.

"What the merry dickens does this mean?"

Well might Bob exclaim!

They were clear of the ruins now. Coming at full-speed towards them was Mr. Mobbs. Not one of them all had ever imagined the snobbish little Highcliffe master could have run at such a pace. It was the more creditable to his athletic abilities, as he had already run farther than they guessed.

But Mr. Mobbs believed that Wibley was ahead of him, seeking refuge in the ruins; and he also believed that his watch and chain were in Wibley's possession. No, not in Wibley's—the fugitive was now a pickpocket in Mr. Mobbs' imagination. He had had no time to think. It had not struck him yet that it was scarcely likely a pickpocket would have disguised himself as Mr. Mobbs of Highcliffe.

Wibley had dodged. Rounding a bend, he had found himself out of Mobby's sight, and had promptly scuttled into the undergrowth.

"It's Mobby!" said Johnny Bull.

"Wib, you mean," Bob Cherry said.

"Stop, Wib!"

Now, ahead, appeared Squiff and Tom Brown and Rake and Delarey and Kipps. They had left Bunter toiling in the rear.

"Stop, Wibley!" yelled Frank Nugent.

Mr. Mobbs gave the six a baleful glance as he darted past them, blowing hard enough for ten, but holding on still.

The nuts still within the ruins heard the shouts. Next moment Mr. Mobbs was among them.

Pon & Co. did not hear Harry Wharton say:

"Duffers! It's Mobby—not Wib! What on earth does this mean?"

Drury had just released Pon from his bonds. The rest of the late-comers were busy with Gadsby and Monson and Vavasour. But Pon was the only one of the four free.

"That's the rotter who messed up the

whole dashed scheme!" yelled Pon. "Sling him into the pool!"

And he went for Mobbs like a tiger. Poor Mr. Mobbs! He could not get out a word—he was too utterly breathless. And his squirming did not tell the nuts anything. Wibley would have squirmed, naturally.

They rushed the unfortunate little master out of the ruins. The Greyfriars crowd were on the spot now.

"Stop it!" shouted Harry. "You asses! Oh, stop it!"

Too late! The nuts had done it! Into the pool floundered Mr. Mobbs, and almost before he had disappeared beneath the water, into the pool dived Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry and Peter Todd.

"Dashed if I'm going in!" said Johnny Bull. "Three's enough!"

Three were none too many. Mr. Mobbs struggled madly. He might have drowned one rescuer. But the three managed to deal with him somehow.

"You silly asses! You awful chumps!" roared Frank Nugent. "It's Mobby you've chucked in!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Ponsonby. His face could not go white, because of its variegated hues; but the countenances of those who had aided him were like chalk.

Now Squiff and the rest came up. Bulstrode and Tom Dutton were not there. And Wibley was scoting back to the barn he had changed in.

"Ha, ha, ha! If this isn't the funniest thing I've ever struck!" chuckled Squiff, as he helped to land Mobby and his rescuers.

"We'd better clear," said Johnny Bull. "It's Pon who's got to settle with Mobby, not us."

"And a jolly good thing too!" said Tom Brown.

It was not a jolly good thing for Pon & Co. They had no easy task in talking round the half-drowned Mr. Mobbs, after bringing him round. The explanations seemed never-ending.

But these explanations did not all take place at the Priory. Some of them were made later, at Highcliffe.

Ponsonby got out of it at last by giving Mr. Mobbs a definite invitation to spend a fortnight at Pon's aristocratic home during the holidays. And when the time came Pon would doubtless manage to get out of that, too!

Mr. Mobbs held much mental debate with himself as to how he could bring to book the Greyfriars juniors. But he had to give up the notion after all. His story was not one that he cared to tell in full to Dr. Locke!

But he was resolved that, if the chance of making them smart ever came his way, there should be no mercy.

Peter Todd was satisfied. But he smiled in rather a wry way whenever he thought of how hopelessly his well-laid schemes would have collapsed had it not been for the Famous Five, whom he had meant to keep out of them—and, incidentally, Bunter, whom he had intended to use only as a tool.

Bunter had only been a tool throughout, it is true—but he had been a useful one, and he was very much exalted by the part he had played.

"Without me, Toddy," he said solemnly, "you'd have been nowhere—that's where you'd have been!"

(Don't miss "THE FALL OF THE BOUNDER!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 22.—TOM DUTTON:

TOM DUTTON can hardly be reckoned among the principal characters of the Greyfriars stories; but he may fairly be said to rank high among the minor ones. His chief distinguishing feature is, in a sense, his deafness. It is by this infirmity that he is apt to be remembered.

But one cannot classify people by their infirmities. Such things have their bearing upon character; but they are not in themselves character. Tom Dutton is "the deaf junior." Yes—but what sort of a fellow is he apart from his deafness? That is what really matters.

A very good sort of fellow indeed! Of the same stuff as Harry Wharton and his special chums, as Rake and Ogilvy and Tom Brown and Squiff in essentials. His deafness makes him a trifle impatient. It may even make him a trifle querulous at times.

Some of the conversations between Tom and others are quite comic. He misunderstands so completely; and he is so sure that there is no necessity to shout at him—he is "not deaf, only a little hard of hearing." And fellows will mumble so! Very few are able to hit the happy medium between shouting and what Tom calls mumbling.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were the first of the Greyfriars juniors to meet Tom. They were at the gates when he arrived. And, of course, misunderstandings

Quelch recognises this, and as a rule has no great difficulty in making Tom hear as much as is necessary. Anyway, the deaf boy keeps up very well with the rest in classes.

Tom Dutton's first scrap at Greyfriars was with the innocent Alonzo. But that was all due to a mistake, and Alonzo has no better friend than the deaf junior now.

It was all through a mistake that Tom fought with Johnny Bull, too. And Tom is no feeble fighting-man, for he held his own with the sturdy, hard-hitting Johnny. That candid youth's cousin, Miss Fluffy—otherwise the Sandow Girl—visited Greyfriars, and while in search of her cousin ran against Tom. He understood that she had been frightened by Bull—whereas, she was not at all the sort of young lady to be frightened by anyone—and in real, though mistaken, chivalry, rushed off to bring Johnny to account. Afterwards he rushed off to Courtfield on a bike to get a spread for the entertainment of Miss Fluffy, and was robbed of it all on the way back—poor Tom!

When Study No. 7, as now constituted, was arranged, three of the four in it had visions of being head of the study. Tom Dutton put a stopper on Bunter's ambitions by knocking him down—not without provocation, be it added. But Peter Todd showed Tom that his own ambition was too high. They fought out the question. Tom fought well, but Peter better. Thenceforward Peter was the unquestioned head, with Tom second in command. Bunter, Peter said, might wait on them. But it is not on record that Bunter ever did much waiting—except, of course, for his postal-order.

Brought up among horses, as he says, Tom is a really good rider, as he proved at the Courtfield Flower Show. It was in the days when Study No. 7 had high hopes of achieving renown, and Peter Todd considered that it would be quite a good move for all four of them to enter in the pony race. The Highcliffe nuts were also entering, and of that came trouble—it might have been very grave trouble, for a blackguardly trick played by the nuts cost Tom a heavy fall. But this was not in the race, and he won that, with Peter second, Alonzo third, and the Highcliffe fellows nowhere.

Peter and Dutton have always been good chums. When Mr. Capper, the Upper Fourth master, a somewhat peppery individual, took the Remove in Mr. Quelch's absence, he did not give Tom fair play. Mr. Capper would not believe that he was as deaf as he seemed, and caned him for his failure to understand. Peter protested strongly—and rightly!

Riding is not Tom Dutton's only accomplishment. He is a footballer of more than average ability, and a skater of speed and skill. The story in which he figures most prominently is that in which he won the prize of £10 offered in a skating race, and so was able to help his cousin out of a scrape. In that story is told how Harry Wharton wanted Tom for a match against St. Wode's; but Tom, though as keen as anyone on footer, refused the honour offered him because he was expecting the scape-grace cousin, and knew him to be in difficulty. Dutton's refusal made no difference; he was lured out of the gates by Peter Todd, and that worthy, with the help of Tom Brown, Bulstrode, and Vernon-Smith, practically kidnapped him for the match. He played a rare good game, too.

The Bounder wanted him for his Greyfriars Crusaders team, but could not make him understand. But, of course, he played in Peter Todd's team for the Coker Cup.

Tom has no patience with Bunter, and that fat youth dislikes him heartily. Peter Todd may believe that he will make a man of Bunter some day; Tom Dutton considers any change of the sort too near a miracle to be likely. But Tom has plenty of patience with Alonzo, whose good qualities he can see through the simplicity that disguises them to some. Those two spend a good many quiet and peaceful hours together, reading. But we have never heard that Tom's taste that way has induced him to borrow that enthralling work, "The History of a Potato!"



Tom Dutton

began at once. Wun Lung's father and Tom's father had known each other in the Far East; and consequently the little Chinese was ready to stand Tom's friend, to give him a welcome. He stopped Bulstrode from giving him a welcome of the wrong sort—with a pail of whitewash. Through Wun Lung's intervention Bulstrode got that pail of whitewash himself, so it was not wasted. Billy Bunter was also prepared to be kind. He took Tom along to the tuckshop, to stand him a feed. It is true that Bunter's programme included finding that he had left his wad of banknotes on the grand piano—or something to that effect—so that Dutton might be induced to shell out. But that went wrong, for Dutton could not be made to understand!

Mr. Quelch found Tom very trying at the outset. Tom assured the Form-master that he could always hear quite well if people only spoke clearly—an assurance which made it all the more difficult for Mr. Quelch to believe that the new boy meant no impertinence at all when he protested again and again his perfect willingness to fetch beer for the master—a thing he had not been asked to do, of course. But one fancies that nowadays Mr. Quelch finds Tom by no means among his most troublesome pupils. For it is not mere obstinacy which makes deaf persons object to people who mumble or talk into their beards, or seem to be discoursing with plums in their mouths. And Mr.

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Musters and Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, escape from the clutches of Faik, a rascally adventurer who is in pursuit of a secret treasure in the African wilds. Faik is working in collusion with Jasper Orme, Bob's cousin, at Cape Town. The two lads are captured by the natives of the Inrobi tribe, who also surround Faik's party. Faik has done the chief of the tribe a bad turn in the old days, and tries to place the guilt on Bob; but, thanks to a Scotchman named MacGregor, and a friendly native—Mendi—he fails in his plot. Bob is acclaimed chief on the death of Kazna, the former leader. The comrades save Faik from the vengeance of the tribe, then push on after the treasure, but are waylaid by Mopo and a strong force. Mopo, who is Bob's deadly rival, is beaten off, with his braves, and Galza, a messenger from the Inrobi, comes to their camp.

He brings tidings of Mopo, who is in pursuit. The companions elude Mopo by diving into the lake, and they find a wonderful underground country, inhabited by a tribe of weird people unlike the human race. These strangers they overcome, secure the gold, and then, after amazing adventures, find themselves back in the world they had quitted.

(Now read on.)

Mopo Reappears.

"And to think that we've done all we attempted!" Ted remarked. "I know I would never have had the pluck to face it could I have foreseen. We've been through much, Bob, since that evening when Faik tried to track you, and we gave him the chuck. That all seems now like a far-away dream!"

"It's all like a dream," Bob replied. "It's not a year yet since I left England. But out here one can see more in months than in a lifetime at home. And that day when I landed at Cape Town! I remember it well, and my feelings when I met my rascally cousin, Jasper Orme. Well, the crooked game doesn't pay. He's as poor, I guess, as the day he tried to play me down, and we've all made fortunes!"

"Ye've told me that story, and oft I've wondered why he wanted to be rid of ye," MacGregor remarked. "There's something behind that, and happen in time ye will find out. And now let us stop for the night. We've come a long way since the start. I reckon another week ought to bring us to the mountain!"

But in this conjecture the old Scotchman was mistaken. The river turned away from the mountain. Using his pocket compass, MacGregor saw that, from travelling north, the river had changed its course to the east.

"Why, that's bringing us round nicely, instead of taking us farther from Cape Town!" Ted chuckled. "It means that we'll have the less distance to go when we start the long trek."

But MacGregor did not answer. He sat in deep thought, and from that time on a certain restlessness came over him. Every day he looked at the compass half a dozen times, and every day the river kept turning slightly. At length, working round from the east, it began to go south. Bob, observing the sun, noticed this, but did not speak about it. And at last they altogether lost sight of the snow-clad mountain which for so long had been their landmark.

Then the river began to grow shallow. They had to keep carefully to the middle to prevent the raft going aground. And a few days later it grew narrow, until at last only twenty yards separated bank from bank.

By this time the old Scotchman could not hide his increasing anxiety. Bob saw that something was on his mind, but the lad waited to question him until they could speak without the others hearing them. The chance came one evening.

"You're worrying about something, Mr. MacGregor," he said.

"I am," MacGregor said. "And more and more every day!"

"What's the cause?"

The old man thoughtfully stroked his beard. "We've been going round in a circle for a good time now," he said. "And doesn't a circle always bring you to the point from which you started?"

Bob nodded.

"And from where did we start?" MacGregor continued.

"From which point do you mean?" the lad inquired.

"When we took that dive by which we got into that wonderful place underground."

"We started from the lake."

"Ay, that's it, and it's that that makes me uneasy," MacGregor murmured. "Dinna forget what we left behind there!"

In a flash Bob understood. But there was no time for further conversation, for they were joined by the others. Nor did a chance come next day, and that evening they were forced to land. The bed of the river was almost dry.

They pulled the raft to the bank, and secured it there. MacGregor whispered to Mendi, who slipped away in the gathering gloom. They had supper, and the boys and Galza fell asleep; but the old man sat wide awake, waiting for Mendi to return.

Presently he stretched out his hand and touched Bob, who was dozing close by.

"I'm unco' uneasy," he said. "But not a word to the others! Come away a bit; I want to talk to ye!"

Bob jumped to his feet and followed him.

"I sent Mendi to reconnoitre," MacGregor explained, "and he has been a long time away. He has found out something, and is following it up. It's my belief we are in danger. Help me to get the treasure out of the raft and hide it!"

"Faik?" Bob asked.

"Yes, I think so, so let us look sharp!"

They set to work to carry the gold on to the bank. Being apprehensive, MacGregor had selected a hiding-place during daylight, and now they carried the treasure to it. There was a hollow close to the bank, some hundred yards farther up, which the old Scotchman had noticed as they passed. In this they put the gold. It dropped down several feet, and they covered it with soil and bushes.

The work took quite two hours, and even then Mendi had not come back. They sat waiting his return, mostly silent, and growing more anxious every moment.

"What can have happened?" Bob asked at last. "Do you think Faik has caught him?"

"Faik could never catch him," MacGregor affirmed. "But there are those who—Ha! Listen!"

A hoot rang out. It was repeated in ten seconds. MacGregor struggled to his feet.

"That's Mendi, and he's running fast," he said, in great agitation. "The second cry was much nearer than the first, and there it goes again, nearer still. Wake up those fellows! Get the rifle! Mendi is being pursued!"

In a moment Ted and Galza were astir. Bob jumped on to the raft to get the rifle. Mendi came rushing up.

"Lo, they come!" he cried. "Mopo and his men!"

"How many?" MacGregor asked.

"A great throng."

"I've got the rifle!" Bob shouted from the raft.

"Too late!" MacGregor shouted back. "We must clear out! Galza! Galza!"

Galza ran to him, and the old Scotchman whispered in his ear. Galza bore away swiftly to the right along the river-bank.

"Noo, away all of ye to the left," MacGregor said.

But a terrific yell sounded only twenty yards away. There came the rush of feet. They saw gleaming eyes and the glint of battleaxes. Next instant they were surrounded.

Bob, with the rifle in his hand, had jumped from the raft.

"Drop the rifle!" MacGregor urged. "If you fire we lose all chance!"

The rifle clattered down.

Mopo strode forward. His evil face was full of triumph. Leaning on his battleaxe, he gloated over his prisoners.

"Hoogh!" he grunted. "So the young white chief and ye of his race have come back from the dead to face death again! Who now shall rule over my people? For in an hour you all shall be with the spirits!"

He flung up his axe, and laughed harshly.

"The torture first!" he cried. "Drag them away! The torture by fire! And then the axe!"

Swinging his axe around his head, Mopo laughed mockingly. Before him the Britishers and Mendi stood helpless. Galza had sped away. At Mopo's bidding the other savages dashed forward.

Prisoners to Mopo.

"We canna do anything," MacGregor said. "Don't put up a fight, lads. They wad only cut us down at once if ye did. But I've something to say to that black rascal."

He stepped forward, cool and determined.

"Oh, Mopo, son of Zinda, hearken while I speak!" he began. "For do I not know the prophecies, and were they not that a white chief should reign over the Inrobi?"

Mopo laughed again.

"That was mere folly!" he sneered.

"So say you, but do all others say so?"

MacGregor asked. "Are not now in the huts of the Inrobi those who await the return of the young white chief?"—and he pointed to Bob. "And have they not chosen him, knowing that thereby the prophecy will be fulfilled? Of what avail then would it be to you to return and say that he was dead. Who would believe you? Would they not wait through the years?"

Mopo lowered his axe and leaned upon it.

"Thou art cunning, but thou failest here," he replied. "I have thought of that. Is there need that the whiteface should return alive?"

"And if you carry him back dead, what reward do you hope for?" MacGregor demanded.

Mopo started.

"Is not Kampa, the great medicine-man, his friend?" the old Scot continued. "And your followers are few, and how many can Kampa summon at his bidding? And if you torture the white chief, will not vengeance be demanded?"

"Yet he would reign in my place," Mopo answered.

MacGregor smiled.

"And for how long, think you?" he asked. "And is it his wish that he thus should reign? Have a care lest trouble befall you. I have spoken!"

He turned and walked back a couple of paces. Looking at Mopo, Bob and Ted saw that he was thinking deeply. Presently Mopo pulled himself up, and put his axe-handle across his shoulder.

"Thou hast spoken with the wisdom of a snake, and much is false, but some is true," he said. "If the young whiteface dies, but not by my command, then how can I be held to blame? And if my wrath is great, will it be the weaker that I have time to nurse it? Pooh! Much will be seen before the dawn!"

He muttered to his followers. They gathered closer round the Britishers and Mendi. Mopo had begun to stalk ahead, and it was clear that the captives must follow. They did not attempt to resist.

"We have gained time," MacGregor whispered to Bob.

"Yes. You've given him something to think about. But for your resource the end would have come very quickly," the lad replied. "But what did he mean, do you think, by those last words? There was a threat in them."

"We winna have long to wait to find out;

(Continued on page 16.)

IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 15.)

he said that much would be seen before the dawn," the old Scot answered. "He means to destroy us, and put the blame on another."

Mopo was walking swiftly on ahead. The other savages made the prisoners press on. After half an hour or so they came to a wide gully, and passed through it. On the far side was a plain, and here they entered a grove of trees.

The savages had prepared a camp. Fires were still burning, and the prisoners were allowed to sit down by one in the centre, whilst their captors gathered before the others. With a sigh, Ted dropped to the ground.

"This is a fair knock-out," he said, "after all we've come through! Do you think that scoundrel Mopo means to carry out his threat?"

"I gave him a hint that Bob has no wish to reign over the tribe, and I think that may have influenced him a bit," MacGregor answered. "But something is going to happen soon."

"And where is Galza? He cleared off pretty smart," Ted continued.

"I thought it well that one at least should be free to help us, if possible," the old Scot answered.

"And the treasure?" Ted groaned. "They'll find it on the raft, and freeze on to it, or else drop it in the river!"

"The treasure is safe," Bob explained. "Mr. MacGregor and I carried and hid it whilst you were asleep. If once we get out of this, we'll have no trouble about that."

The savages had lain down to sleep, except for a few guards who were posted at certain points, and Mopo, who still stalked about the camp. After a while Bob spoke again.

"Mendi would not have much difficulty in doing a bunk," he suggested. "He's one of these fellows, and knows how to creep along. Wouldn't it be a good thing to send him out to reconnoitre?"

"Why do you think that?" Ted asked.

"Because I feel sure that Mopo must be waiting to get a message of some sort," Bob replied. "How else can we explain his vague threat that much would be seen before the dawn? He's waiting for it to happen."

"I think so, too," MacGregor agreed. "And then also we must remember his other threat, that if Bob died, but not by his command, he could not be held to blame. Someone is on the way." He chuckled, and stroked his beard. "Yes, by all means let Mendi go."

Bob turned to the black boy. At the same moment Ted uttered an exclamation.

"What's Mopo up to now?" he asked. "He's leaving the camp, and in a hurry, too."

Bob seized Mendi's wrist.

"Oh, Mendi, friend of white men, with a heart as brave as a lion, you can help to thwart these jackals, who would compass our destruction," he said, speaking fast. "For lo, Mopo is disturbed in his mind, and, see, he is leaving his people! Why thus does he go? It is not for our good. Follow him, then, and bring us back the tidings we seek."

"Gladly I obey," Mendi answered, his eyes shining. "And more than that would I do for my chief. For my heart is sore that I failed to warn thee in time. But now I will not fail, of that be sure. But lie ye all down, and let me lie next the fire so that these jackals may see. Then will they think I am still lying hidden from their gaze when I am far away."

"Good notion!" Ted said, jumping briskly

up. "Let's all walk about a bit first to attract their attention. They'll get on the alert, thinking we mean to make a break for freedom. They won't take their eyes off us, and then when we lie down they'll be sure to notice for certain where Mendi is."

They got up, and began to stroll about. At once the guards called to one another, and the other savages sprang to their feet. Ignoring the hubbub, the adventurers moved around the fire, stamping their feet, and swinging their arms as if cold. After five minutes or so they lay down and pretended to settle for sleep. Silence spread over the camp again.

They did not stir. But from where Bob lay he could see Mendi; and from time to time the lad opened his eyes and glanced at him. At last Bob began to wonder if the black boy had not fallen asleep. But when next he looked he had gone! Without the slightest sound he had left.

They lay still, and presently Ted spoke. "Did you hear anything?" he asked suddenly.

"No," Bob replied. "I'm certain I heard a cry, but very far away."

"Let us hope Mendi has found out something," Bob said.

"Or Galza!" MacGregor murmured, to the astonishment of both lads, who thought he was asleep.

"I forgot about Galza," Ted said. "Did you hear that cry, Mr. MacGregor?"

"No."

"Then I suppose I must have been mistaken. This sort of thing gets at a fellow somehow. And I'm fearfully hungry. I do hope these scoundrels will have the decency to give us breakfast, anyhow."

He groaned so comically that the others had to stifle a laugh.

"Ted's always up or down," Bob remarked. "Now that he's not going to be burnt alive, he's thinking of his grub."

"A true Irishman," MacGregor said. "He's either all of a fizzle, or else he's as melancholy as an old crow on a tree in winter. They'll give ye meaties, Ted, if ye talk to them very nice. And after that they'll start sharpening their axes, and—Hallo! Ye were right, though. There goes a cry for certain. But dinna stir—dinna stir!"

"Mendi has got the rifle from where I dropped it by the raft!" Bob gasped. "Ah! Listen to that again!"

A second shot, sharp and clear, came distinctly to them. The savages were shouting and running to and fro. But the adventurers lay still.

"Raise yourself a bit, Bob, and have a look," MacGregor suggested. "With a' this going on they winna notice ye."

Bob sat up, and drew a sharp breath.

"They're running about on every side," he said. "They've been thrown into a panic. I think, and without Mopo they don't know what to do."

"Can we bolt for it?" Ted asked.

"Not yet. One fellow is trying to rally them. He may succeed. Ah, there goes the rifle again, and another shot, and another! Mendi can't be the only one firing. What does this mean?"

The savages by this time were plainly in a state of great alarm. Again shots were fired in quick succession.

"Mendi can't use a rifle," Ted said. "He's always been afraid of one."

"Then can a British hunting-party be coming this way, and can Galza have told them of our predicament?" Bob asked.

"That's hardly feasible," MacGregor suggested. "We are where no white man ever trod before."

(Next week's issue will contain another splendid instalment of this exciting story.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"THE FALL OF THE BOUNDER!"

By Frank Richards.

It is not easy to imagine Herbert Vernon-Smith, whom we have known so long as the straightest-going of fellows, returning to the old ways that earned him the unenviable nickname of the "Bounder." But he goes back to them in this story, and finds himself at once up against Harry Wharton & Co., his best friends. There is some excuse for him, but not enough to amount to justification. Yet he never wholly kills one's sympathy. He may be the Bounder of old—crafty, unscrupulous, dissipated—but it is with a difference. He cannot quite forget the debt he owes to Wharton, or the real friendship between them. And Marjorie Hazeldene's friendship counts, too. In next week's story, and some others which will follow it, one sees him tugged both ways, but kept from the worst by his own better nature and the remnants of the influence which these two have over him.

Every reader of the MAGNET will enjoy these series, I am sure.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM THE MESOPOTAMIAN FRONT.

Master Fisher and Master Boyd come in for it again this week. The letter of theirs which I printed in a Chat some little time ago has aroused deep indignation among my Service readers. From near and far have come scathing rebukes of these two overweening youths, who took it upon themselves to sneer at the notion of soldiers and sailors really caring anything about our paper.

"A. T. D." writes from the Mesopotamian Front to say that if Fisher and Boyd were out there they "would not worry themselves about leagues and back numbers. They would be glad of the announcement that the mails were in, so that they could have a good read. That's what soldiers and sailors want the MAGNET for! As for your notices, that cannot have been any more to any of them than a side-line—nothing at all to 959 in 1,000, I should say." I have never written to you before, and have never asked for a notice; but ever since I left England the papers have been sent me by my mother every week. I think this little advice will about fit Fisher and Boyd—"Keep your pennies in your pockets!" As for me, and for many another man serving his King and Country, we say: May the MAGNET prosper!

CAN'T BE HELPED!

The paper shortage has compelled us to cut down the number of pages again. No good grumbling—we are on much shorter rations of paper than of food! In order to give as much as possible in the space, the proprietors of the paper have resolved to refuse all advertisements for the present—and this is a bigger sacrifice than some of my readers may realise—and I have had part of the issue set in a smaller type, which gives nearly half as much again to a page. I do not think it would be wise to set the long story in this type, however.

Probably most of my readers get through that long story at a single sitting. In this type it would be a strain on their eyes. But the "Greyfriars Gallery," the serial instalment, and the Chat can be read one at a time, and each in a few minutes, without any great strain.

My loyal readers will not grumble, I am sure. If they feel disposed to, let them compare what we are giving—in quantity and quality—with what other papers give, and I am sure they will see that we still stand ahead, both points considered. As for those who grumble about everything—they will grouse now, of course! But there, it can't be helped. There's a war on, you know!

Your Editor

NOTICE.

In future we shall only print the actual number of copies of the MAGNET ordered through Newsagents. Unless you order your copy in advance, disappointment is certain.

ORDER FORM.

To Mr. Newsagent.

Please keep for me each week until further notice a copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY.

(Signed)

