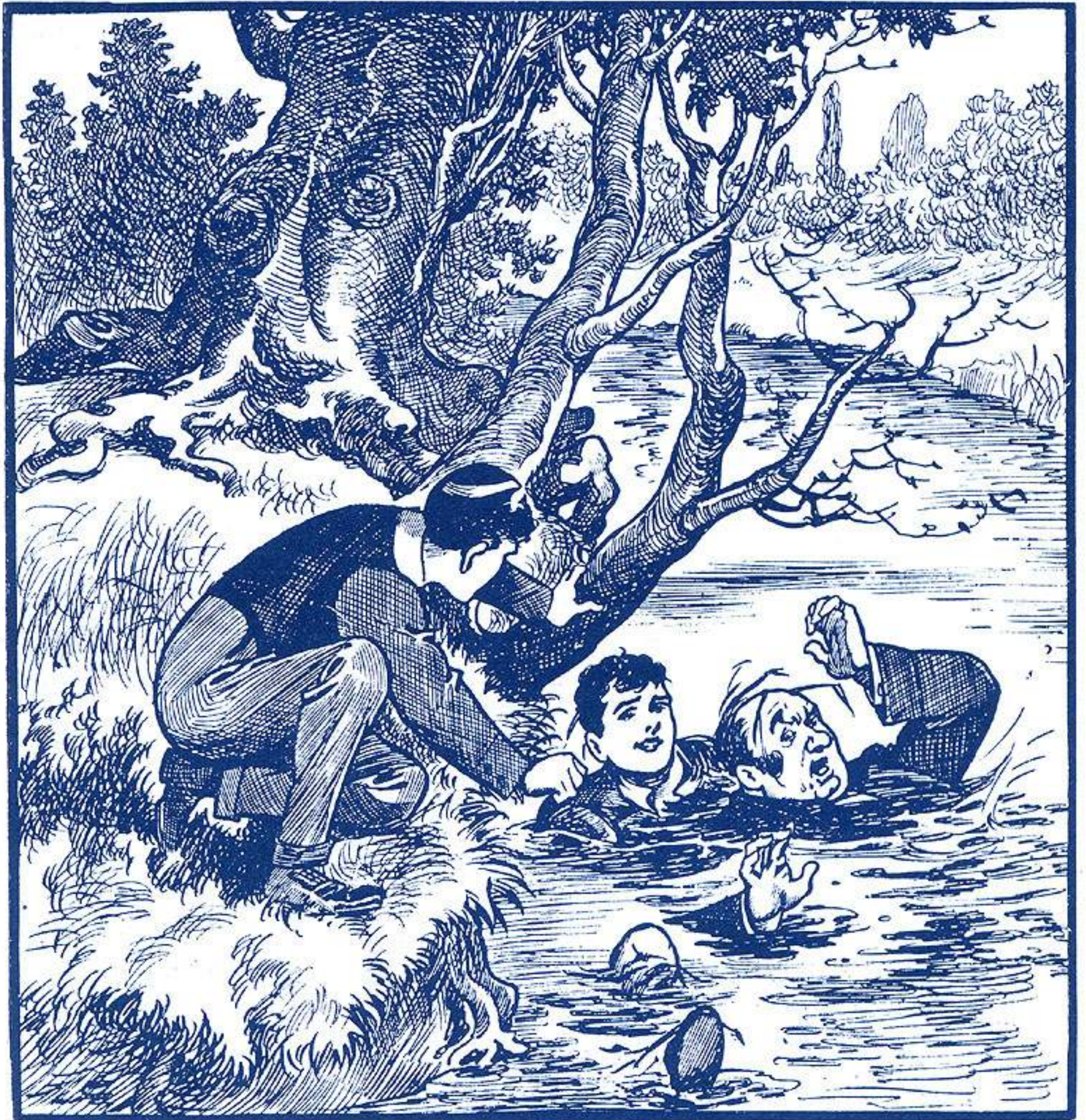
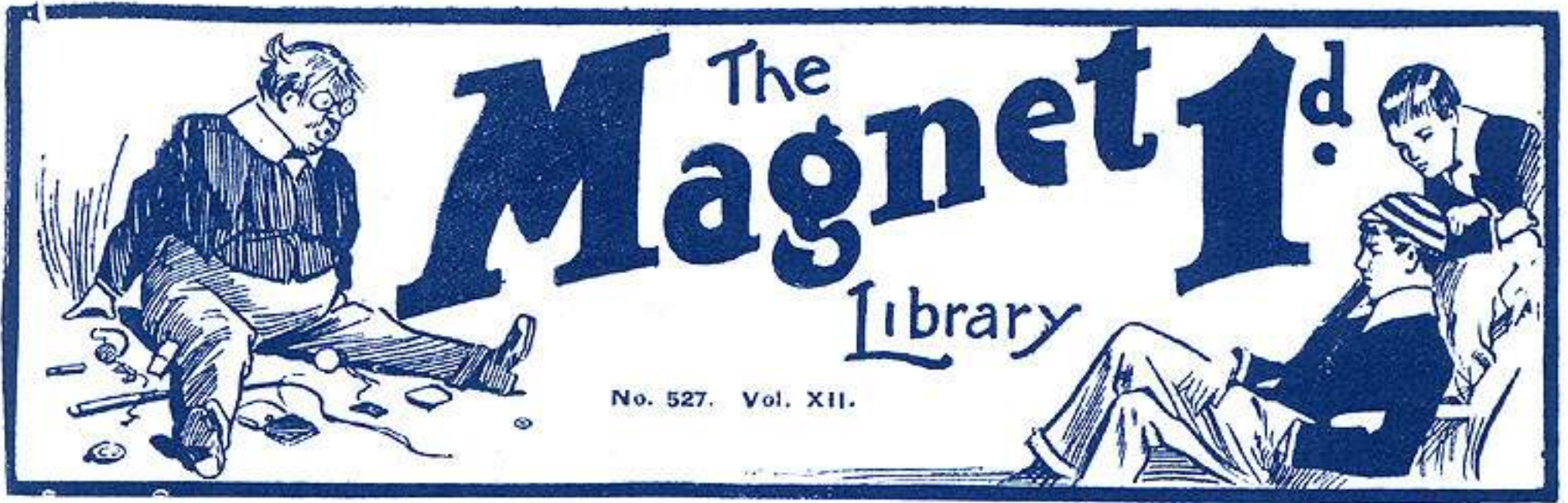


A BIRD OF PASSAGE!



THE RESCUE OF DRAKE'S FATHER.

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16-3-19

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

A BIRD OF PASSAGE!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Arrival of Archie!

"SMILE your sweetest smiles!" said Bob Cherry.

"And make a sweeping bow as if you'd been born and bred at Court!" said Frank Nugent.

"Paradise Court, d'you mean?" grinned Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be funny!" said Nugent. "We've got all our work cut out this afternoon to prevent this new kid coming into Study No. 1. It'll be a tragedy if anybody's allowed to barge in."

The Famous Five of Greyfriars School were striding along the frosty road to Friardale Station. It was a crisp and cheerful winter afternoon, and in the ordinary way the juniors would have been chasing the elusive leather on Little Side.

But there was more important business on hand. During morning lessons Mr. Quelch had announced that Archie Drake, a new boy, was arriving that afternoon. This intelligence was received without excitement; but when Mr. Quelch proceeded to say that the new arrival would share Study No. 1, Harry Wharton & Co. pricked up their ears.

They were a happy family as they stood, and intruders into the sacred circle were far from welcome. Whatever sort of person Archie Drake might chance to be, Harry Wharton & Co. would like him better outside their own study. In his case, distance would lend enchantment.

Accordingly, the Famous Five had put their heads together and devised a scheme whereby they hoped to relieve themselves of the new boy's company.

Their first intention had been to tell the unsuspecting Drake that the fellows in Study No. 1 were awful bounders, and that the best thing he could do would be to pitch his tent elsewhere with all speed. On second thoughts, however, they decided that it would be wiser not to deceive the new fellow, but by talking sweetly to him, and explaining the position in all its bearings, to persuade him to favour someone else with his society.

"We'll give him a stunning feed in the village," said Johnny Bull. "That'll pave the way. And when he's tackling his seventh doughnut, and guzzling his fourth ginger-pop, he won't be in a position to refuse anything."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

Bob was not personally affected by the new boy's coming, neither was Johnny Bull, for they were not quartered in No. 1; but they knew exactly how their chums felt in the matter, and were quite willing to lend a hand, and to say sweet things to Archie Drake.

The little station platform was deserted, but the signal was down, and a few moments later the train came jolting in.

"See if you can spot the guy," said Nugent. "Watch us rush around and

do his bidding. Nothing like making a favourable impression at the start."

From a reserved first-class carriage at the rear of the train stepped the fellow who had unwittingly deprived the Famous Five of an afternoon's football. He was a slim youth, dressed expensively but not gaudily, and remarkably good-looking. His mild blue eyes roved up and down the platform, and finally rested upon the Famous Five, who lost no time in coming up to him.

Five caps were whipped off five heads at once, and five voices exclaimed simultaneously:

"Jolly pleased to meet you, Drake!"

The new boy was obviously surprised at the greeting. Before leaving home he had been told by his father that public schools were places of torment for unhappy new boys, who were kicked and cuffed by their seniors from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof.

But certainly the boys who now confronted Archie didn't look like doling out kicks and cuffs. On the contrary, they looked as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouths.

"Can we see to your baggage?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Shall we show you the way to the esteemed exit?" purred Harree Singh.

"Would you like to come along to the tuckshop and have a good, slap-up feed?" asked Bob Cherry.

"At our expense," chimed in Johnny Bull.

Archie Drake grinned expansively.

"The answer's in the affirmative every time," he said. "Awfully decent of you fellows to do all this for me!"

"Not at all!" said Bob Cherry.

"We'd do more than this for a decent chap!"

"But how did you know I was a decent chap?"

"Eh? Oh, we we had a sort of intuition, you know," said Bob feebly.

The new boy looked keenly at the faces of his companions, perhaps under the impression that a practical joke was being played upon him; but he was soon reassured when Harry Wharton led the way into the little bunshop, and bade Archie order what he liked, irrespective of quantity.

Drake was hungry, for he had sustained a six-hour journey on a couple of stale sandwiches. He hardly said a word, but fed to his heart's content, the Famous Five watching him with amused and friendly smiles.

"It's working like a charm," Bob Cherry confided in Whartons car. "In a few minutes we shall be able to pop the question."

Wharton nodded. For the past half hour he and his chums had done everything possible to get on the right side of Archie Drake. And they had little doubt that they would soon win him over.

"Another mince-pie, Drake?" asked Nugent.

Archie yawned. His eyes were beginning to present a puffy appearance.

"No, thank you, dear boy!"

"Some more of those doughnuts?"

"Grooh! Don't tempt me! I've got as much cargo on board as I can carry, I reckon! Is this really your treat?"

"It is--it are!" said Johnny Bull.

"Then you're real sports! I don't know how to thank you!"

"Don't try," said Wharton. "Come along! We'll foot the bill, and then take you up to the school."

"The school!" echoed Archie. "Oh, yes! That reminds me!"

A grim expression came over his face as he spoke. Up till now he had seemed very happy-go-lucky in his manner, but the mention of Greyfriars appeared to stir him to action, for he swung round on Harry Wharton and exclaimed:

"Who's your best fighting-man?"

"Bob Cherry," replied the captain of the Remove, in surprise. "But what

"Bob Cherry! That's the curly-headed cove, isn't it? Then here goes!"

And, before the juniors could faintly realise what was happening, Archie had whisked off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and rushed to the attack.

Bob Cherry gave a roar as the rather bony knuckles of Archie Drake came into violent contact with his nose.

"Yaroooooh! Oh, my stars! What's the little game?"

"I--I'm licking you!" panted Drake.

"That's only the first instalment. Hang on a bit, and I'll—"

But the amazing Archie got no further. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent whirled him off his feet, and held him back.

"Lemme go!" yelled Archie. "I'm doing famously! I shall have him licked to a frazzle inside a couple of minutes!"

Bob Cherry made his way forward. His face was furious.

"You madman!" he roared. "You burbling jabberwock! What d'you mean by it?"

"I wanted to lick you—smash you to a jelly, you know!"

"But, why? What have I done?"

Archie sighed wearily.

"Let go of me, you fellows!" he said.

"I'll explain when we get to Greyfriars."

"That's all very well!" hooted Bob Cherry. "It's not going to be all give and no take! You've dotted me on the nose, and it's up to me to reciprocate!"

"Oh, let the kid off, Bob!" said Harry Wharton. "He doesn't seem responsible for his actions. After what's happened, I think we'll have him in Study No. 1, so that we can keep an eye on him, or he might prowl round at night knifing masters, or something of that sort."

Bob Cherry grunted. As for his attacker, he put on his coat, and accompanied the Famous Five to the school.

Whatever Archie Drake's motive had been in suddenly attacking such a sturdy warrior as Bob Cherry, he had certainly opened his innings in dramatic style, and was by way of being a decided novelty in new boys!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A World to Conquer!

"NOW, Drake," said Harry Wharton sternly, "we want to know about it!"

The Famous Five had escorted the new-comer into Study No. 1, and the looks they bestowed upon him were far from amiable.

But Archie Drake didn't seem to mind. He had an unlimited supply of self-confidence, and calmly took a seat astride the study table, munching an apple, and swinging his heels to and fro with the regularity of a pendulum.

"If you think you can come here and start punching people's noses just as you like, you've woke up the wrong passengers!" growled Johnny Bull. "And, unless you can give us a satisfactory explanation of why you went for old Bob, we'll jolly well bump you—hard!"

Archie hurled the core of his apple with unerring aim through the open window.

"Well, it's this way," he said. "I can see that you fellows are true blue, and that nothing I tell you will go farther than this study. My pater's a fearfully eccentric cove—"

"Takes after you, then," murmured Nugent. "Like father, like son!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't rot! I'm in the very dickens of a hole! I want ever so much to come to Greyfriars!"

"Well, you're here, aren't you?" gasped Wharton, in surprise.

"Yes, but only on probation. I've got to fulfil a lot of beastly conditions before I'm allowed to remain. This morning, before I left home, my pater sent for me in his study, and jawed me to this effect. 'See here, Archie,' he said, 'it's my intention to make a man of you. I'm not going to have you leading a slack life. You've got to be first in the field in everything. You've got to master every game and every lesson that's in front of you, and not only master it, but leap ahead of all your schoolfellows!'"

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"That's a tall order if you like!" grinned Nugent.

"I've got exactly a fortnight," continued Archie. "In that time I've got to prove myself the best boxer, footer-player, runner, scholar, and general athlete in the Remove. If I fail, then my pater will take me away!"

"How rotten!" said Wharton. "I'm sorry for you, kid. You're up against big odds!"

"That may be; but I'm going to see this thing through! I'm dead nuts on getting a public school education, and nothing's going to stand in my way! We'll take boxing, for a start. I understand you're the Remove's best man, Cherry?"

"I don't know about that," said Bob modestly. "There's Peter Todd, and Vernon-Smith, and Dick Russell—all topping boxers. But you'll find me quite enough to go on with."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent. "And if you lick Bob, you can safely say you're the best fighting-man in the Remove."

"Good! Come into the gym, Cherry, and I'll strew the hungry churchyard with your bones!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Out in the passage the party ran into Billy Bunter.

"What's going on?" asked the fat junior.

"We are!" grinned Bob Cherry. And the Removites swept Bunter out of their path, wiped their boots on him, and proceeded on their way.

"Ow! Beasts!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"I'll pay you out for this! Hi, you new

kid! I want you to do—ahem!—a little financial transaction with me. Don't go away!"

But Archie Drake, who was by way of being a student of human nature, and could read Billy Bunter like a book, passed on unheeding.

The gym was deserted when the juniors entered; but it didn't remain deserted long. Any fight in which Bob Cherry figured was certain of spectators; and seniors and fags, Fifth-Formers and Removites, clambered upon the box-horse and parallel-bars, and settled down to witness what they devoutly hoped would be a thrilling entertainment.

Archie Drake glanced wistfully at his rival as they peeled off their coats.

"I'm sorry to have to do this," he said. "I hate inflicting injuries on an animal, let alone a decent fellow like you. But such a lot depends on it, you see."

Bob Cherry's eyes twinkled.

"Oh, that's all right, kid!" he said.

"Don't distress yourself. I expect I shall give as good as I get!"

"Swanker!" said Skinner, who was standing by. "Give him a jolly good licking. Duck, or Drake, or whatever your name is! Show him he's not the only chap who can hit straight from the shoulder!"

But Archie Drake did not seem at all flattered by Skinner's championship.

"The best thing you can do," he said, "is to run away and learn some manners! With you, vulgarity begins at home, and stays there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Before Skinner could open his mouth to reply to this crushing retort, Harry Wharton summoned the principals into the ring.

"Time!" he rapped out.

Then took place one of the most amazing fights in the history of Greyfriars School.

The fellows had expected Bob Cherry to win, of course; but they had not expected him to do so without having a good run for his money.

At Wharton's command Bob Cherry swung out his left. Drake's guard was at fault, and the blow took him full in the chest. The next thing he realised was that he was on his back, with his legs wildly thrashing the air.

That blow was the first and last of the encounter. To the unbounded astonishment and disgust of the crowd, Archie Drake made no effort to rise.

"Buck up, man!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "You don't mean to say you're beaten already?"

"Ow! It goes against the grain to have to admit defeat, but I give Bob Cherry best. I don't want to face anything like that again, or I shall imagine I'm on the Somme!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "That was a short fight and a gay one if you like! Are you really whacked, Drake?"

"Fair and square!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Coker of the Fifth. "That's one more freak for the Remove museum! Did you ever see anything half so funny?"

"Nothing, except your face!" said Archie Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you cheeky fag!" howled Coker, whipping up an Indian club. "I—I'll jolly well brain you!"

But the incensed Fifth-Former had no chance of carrying out his murderous intention. He came up against a solid wall of Removites, and was obliged to execute a retreat.

Harry Wharton helped Archie Drake on with his coat.

"I'm sorry for you, kid," he said—"frightfully sorry! You've failed at the

first hurdle, and it's pretty certain you'll come a cropper in other directions, too. The fellows here are sportsmen to the finger-tips, and it takes a jolly good man to come here and walk round them like you intend to do. Better give it up as a bad job, and tell your pater his terms aren't fair. He can't expect you to perform miracles."

Archie Drake set his lips tightly together.

"I'm not chucking up the sponge just yet," he said. "I'll hammer away at the punching-ball for an hour every evening, and challenge your chum again in the course of a week."

"But there's the running, and the footer, and the Form-work!" protested Wharton. "You'll have to be a sort of giddy Alexander, with all these worlds to conquer! I tell you, it's downright impossible!"

"My pater would tell you that there's no such word as impossible in the dictionary," said Archie ruefully. "It's jolly decent of you to take an interest in me, and advise me like this; but you see how I'm placed. I've simply got to win through, somehow. I like this new life immensely, and I want to stick to it."

"Well, I wish you luck!" said Harry. "You've got the spirit and the enthusiasm, if that counts for anything."

But as he stood in the doorway of the gym, and watched Archie Drake's retreating figure, Wharton shook his head sadly.

"He'll be licked all along the line, as sure as fate. The poor bounder hasn't the ghost of a chance!"

And Wharton walked thoughtfully away to join his chums at prep in the study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunty Pulls the Strings!

ARCHIE DRAKE slept the sleep of the just that night. He did not let his recent reverse prey upon his mind. After all, he told himself, he had not yet got into his stride. When he had done some stiff training, and his flabby muscles had become firm, he would astonish the natives.

He rose in the morning like a giant refreshed. Several sarcastic remarks were levelled at him across the breakfast-table, for a good many fellows were disappointed at the feeble show he had put up against Bob Cherry.

But Archie Drake took everything in good part, and went in to morning lessons with the conqueror's smile lurking on his lips. For Archie was an excellent scholar, and had little doubt that before the morning was out he would be placed at the top of the class.

The first lesson happened to be history, and Archie nearly jumped for joy. History was his strong point. He could rattle off the dates of the great wars and describe the reigns of England's merry monarchs with almost startling accuracy.

Right from the kick-off, so to speak, Archie went ahead. His genuine desire to please had a favourable effect upon Mr. Quelch, who moved him from place to place, until, at the close of the lesson, only Harry Wharton and Mark Linley were above him.

Black looks were darted in Archie's direction as the next lesson—poetry—commenced. Skinner & Co. greatly resented Archie's sudden rise in the world, and whispered to each other that the beastly upstart was currying favour with Quelch, and deserved to get it in the neck.

"Can't you make him sing small, Bunty?" murmured Skinner, who was seated next to the Owl of the Remove.

"You're a topping ventriloquist, old fellow. Turn the tap on!"

Billy Bunter hesitated. He was a good ventriloquist, true; but unfortunately, other people were aware of that besides himself, and among them was Mr. Quelch.

"Make it worth my while, and I'll see what I can do!" he muttered.

Skinner rubbed his hands gleefully under the desk.

"A couple of bob?" he whispered.

"Done!"

Probably Bunter would not have taken the risk, even for the princely sum of two shillings, but for the fact that he himself was very anxious to score off the unsuspecting Archie. Bunter remembered how, the day before, the new boy had refused him a loan, and the fat junior had made a mental resolve to get even with Archie at the first opportunity.

"We will devote this hour to Byron," came Mr. Quelch's rasping voice. "Drake, you will please begin by reciting 'Maid of Athens.'"

"Certainly, sir!" said Archie, springing to his feet. And he began:

"Maid of Athens, ere we part—"

"Now, Bunt!" hissed Skinner.

"Give me back my treacle-tart!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The class roared with unrestrained laughter. For the first time, they began to give Lord Byron credit for being a comic poet.

"Drake!"

Mr. Quelch's voice sounded like the booming of breakers on the beach.

"How dare you, sir?"

"I wasn't—I didn't—" stammered Archie, in great bewilderment.

"The Form-room is not the place for cheap parody-making!" snapped the Remove-master. "You will start again."

And Archie did.

"Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give me back my treacle-tart.
Or, since that has left thy breast,
Make it veal-and-ham, compressed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter waxed louder than ever. English poetry was usually regarded as a dry lesson, but to-day the comic relief made it highly popular. Everybody appreciated the new version of Byron's ballad—everybody, that is, except Archie Drake and Mr. Quelch.

The latter was simply furious. He pranced about the Form-room like a cat on hot bricks.

"Boy! Drake! Are you doing this with the wilful object of causing me annoyance? Or have you suddenly taken leave of your senses?"

Archie Drake clutched at the desk for support. The room seemed to be going round and round. He had, indeed, spoken the first and third lines of the verse, but the other two had been spoken by some person unknown. And Archie, blissfully ignorant of the fact that Bunter was a ventriloquist, could not for the life of him understand what was going on.

"I assure you, sir—" he began.

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I can only conclude that you have a distorted conception of the piece you are rendering. We will try another. You will recite 'The Isles of Greece.'"

Archie cleared his throat in desperation, and began:

"The Isles of Greece! The Isles of Greece!

Where burning Sappho loved and sung—"

"Pile in, Bunt!" urged Skinner.
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"Where turkeys are a bob apiece,
And tarts are tempting to the tongue."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Somebody's going to swing for this!" murmured Bob Cherry.

There was no laughter now. The fellows felt that the affair had got beyond a joke. Certainly Mr. Quelch did. He snatched up a cane from his desk, and took an indignant stride towards the wretched Archie.

Then, as he caught sight of the smirk on Bunter's fat face, the explanation dawned on the Form-master like a flash. He recalled Bunter's ventriloquial powers, and his lips became contracted in a hard line. Instead of making a bee-line for Archie Drake, he swerved off, and the next moment the terrified Bunter found himself yanked out of his seat in the Form-master's firm grip.

"Ow-ow-ow! Leggo! What have I done?"

"Do not dare to address me in that impudent fashion, Bunter!" roared Mr. Quelch. "I have reason to believe that you have been indulging again in the abominable practice of ventriloquism!"

"Nothing of the sort, sir!" wailed Bunter, his knees knocking together. "I—I've forgotten how to do it, sir! Honour bright!"

Mr. Quelch dragged the quaking junior out before the class.

"Lies will not help you!" he exclaimed. "I am perfectly convinced that Drake was not responsible for the absurd doggerel which I heard! You, Bunter, are the culprit, and your vocal efforts shall be rewarded by a severe castigation!"

"Ow! Lemme off, sir!" pleaded Bunter, scarcely knowing what he was saying in his abject terror. "It was Skinner who put me up to it, sir! He offered me two bob if I'd do some ventriloquism, so that Drake should get it in the neck. I refused to have anything to do with his shady scheme, sir!"

"Oh, you beastly sneak!" muttered Skinner, clenching his hands hard.

The thunder-clouds grew blacker on the Form-master's brow.

"Stand out, Skinner!" he thundered.

"I will deal with you as you deserve!"

Reluctantly Harold Skinner came out before the class.

"Hold out your hand!"

More reluctantly still the cad of the Remove obeyed.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Now the other!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Yoooooop!"

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter had taken advantage of the drama which was being enacted to steal back to his place, hoping and praying that Skinner was to be the only victim.

But Mr. Quelch was not a man who suffered habitually from absent-mindedness. To use a trite expression of his pupils, he was "all there."

"Bunter!" he roared, in a tone which caused the fat junior to leap several inches from the floor.

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"How dare you resume your seat when I expressly ordered you to stand out before the class?"

"I—I wanted a rest, sir," stammered Bunter. "I came over queer, with shooting pains in my head, and—and I think I ought to see a doctor, sir."

"I will add a stinging sensation in the palms to your ailment," said Mr. Quelch drily. "Stand forward without an instant's delay, and hold out your hand!"

The Owl of the Remove rolled forward. Bitterly he regretted having paid any

heed to Skinner. Not only had he lost all chance of obtaining the two shillings, but he was booked for a sound thrashing into the bargain. Mr. Quelch had not spared the rod in Skinner's case, and he was not likely to do so in Bunter's.

Swish!

At the first stroke Billy Bunter let out a yell which rang through half the building. But his vocal powers, instead of winning the admiration of Mr. Quelch, only seemed to lend zest to that gentleman's blows. He gave Bunter six stinging cuts on each hand, and the victim rolled back to his seat emitting groans of direst anguish.

"We will now proceed," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry, Drake, if I have said anything to hurt your feelings. The culprit's identity did not dawn upon me for some time."

"That's all right, sir," said Archie. "Shall I go on?"

"Do!"

And Archie recited Byron with such vigour and spirit that he found himself at the top of the class when morning lessons were over.

It was a feather in his cap, certainly; but many battles remained to be contested, and many a set-back was likely to fall to the lot of the fellow who was in the novel position of being at Greyfriars on probation!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Archie Puts the Lid On!

"REVENGE!"

Coker of the Fifth lingered lovingly on the word. He was at tea in his study with Potter and Greene, his bosom chums, and the subject under discussion was a forthcoming footer match with the Remove.

It wasn't often that the members of the high-and-mighty Fifth condescended to do battle with mere fags, as they expressed it; and when they did so, their pride usually came a cropper. Harry Wharton & Co. atoned for their inferiority in size and weight by exhibiting a rare display of dash, and the matches usually ended with Coker & Co. beaten to a frazzle.

The Fifth nearly always had some excuse ready to explain away their reverses, but such excuses were not likely to hold water much longer, and they realised that until they gave the Remove tit for tat they would be the laughing-stock of Greyfriars.

And at last—according to Coker—revenge was at hand. The Fifth had been practising furiously of late, and without Coker would certainly have given the Remove a run for their money. But with Coker in their ranks, charging his own men off the ball, and making a blithering ass of himself generally, it seemed hardly reasonable to suppose that they would ever be able to snatch a victory.

"We shall simply wipe up the ground with 'em!" said Coker. "When I get wound up there'll be no stopping me. Harold Fleming and Stevo Bloomer will have to give me best."

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" murmured Potter.

"Eh? What's that?"

"I said if the Remove don't like being licked they'll have to lump it," replied Potter calmly. "With you leading us on, Horace, old man, we shall win hands down."

"Then it'll be the biggest miracle of modern times!" said Greene.

"What!" roared Coker.

"I mean, it'll be a miracle if—if we don't win by half a dozen clear goals," said Greene hastily. "We'll keep those cheeky fags on the run, and show 'em that they only beat us by a fluke before."

Meanwhile, the Famous Five were chatting merrily away on the same topic in Study No. 1. Needless to state, their views were in total disagreement with those of Coker & Co.

"We shall simply wipe up the ground with the bounders," said Nugent. "With Coker in the team, they're bound to perform like a set of comedians. We can count on a couple of goals from Coker in advance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There came a tap on the door.

"Come in, fathead!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Archie Drake, smiling good-humouredly, and fresh from half an hour's exertion with the punching-ball, lounged into the study.

"I understand you're playing the Fifth to-morrow?" he said.

"That's so," said Wharton.

"Good!" said Archie. "Is the centre-forward position vacant?"

"No, it jolly well isn't! I'm centre," answered Wharton.

"Then would you mind standing down, so's to give me a chance of showing what I can do?"

Wharton gave a gasp. He had received some cool requests in the course of his captaincy, but nothing quite so cool as this.

"You—you're rotting!" he stammered.

"I'm not," said Archie earnestly.

"Give me a game, and then I can score triumph number two. I've already proved myself the best scholar, and I want to wipe off the footer next."

"Shove him in, Harry!" said Bob Cherry. "It'll make no difference to the result, anyway. Come to think of it, we shall want a goalie. Bulstrode's in the sanny, qucer, and Hazel's gone dead lame."

Archie rubbed his hands delightedly.

"Now you're talking!" he said. "You want a goalie—what?"

"Do you understand anything about it?" asked Wharton doubtfully.

"Rather! You prance about in front of the net like a Red Indian, and frighten the other fellows away so that they can't come near you with the ball."

"First time I've heard it put that way," said Harry. "Still, I think you're keen, and you shall have your chance. But if you let us down you'll get such a terrific bumping that you won't know where you are!"

"Let you down? Not me!" said Archie loftily. "I shall be the saviour of the side. The way that Johnny Horatius kept the bridge will be nothing to the way I shall keep goal to-morrow. Thanks so much, Wharton! What time's the match?"

"Two-thirty."

"Rely on me!"

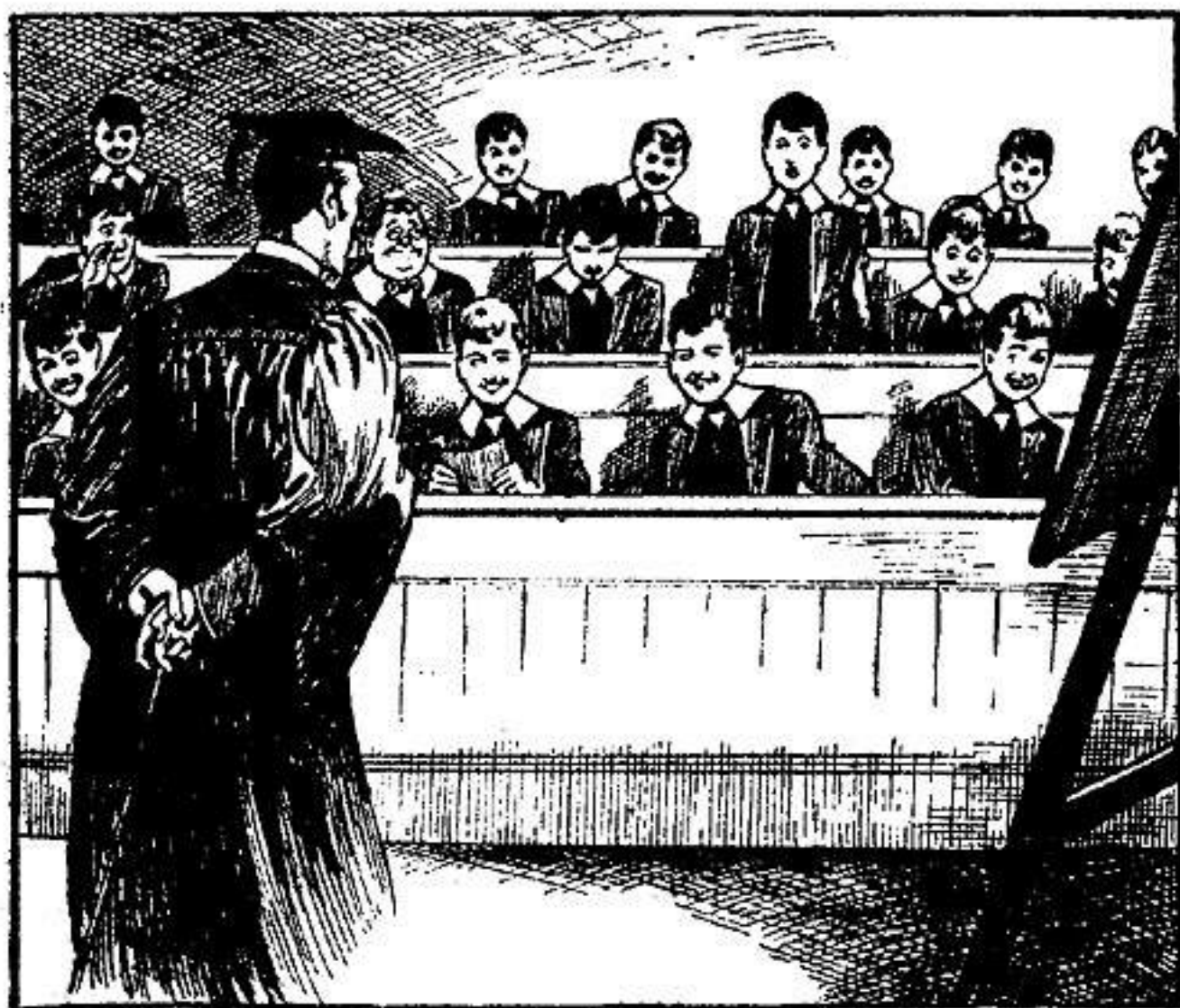
And Archie swung out of the study.

The Famous Five looked at each other rather doubtfully. They were not sure they had not made a mistake. Of course, it was possible that Archie Drake would prove all right, and would hold the fort successfully against all comers. But, on the other hand, it was just as possible that he would prove a freak, and provide many loopholes for the opposing forwards.

"It'll be a tragedy if he doesn't come off," remarked Wharton. "Whatever happens, we've got to win! Once the Fifth succeeded in lowering our colours we shall never hear the end of it."

"If he's as brilliant on the footer-field as he is in the Form-room we sha'n't need to worry," said Johnny Bull. "Let it rest till to-morrow. Then we shall see what we shall see!"

The morning hours seemed interminable next day, and the juniors felt they were growing old as they sat and chafed in the Form-room under Mr. Quelch's



Drake recites—Bunter ventriloquises! (See Chapter 8.)

stern eye. But at last the welcome word of dismissal was given, and after a hurried dinner all roads led to Little Side, where Coker & Co. were already on the ball.

Wingate of the Sixth, who had good-naturedly offered to referee, called the two teams up to the scratch, and Harry Wharton tossed with Blundell for choice of ends, and won.

"We'll kick with the wind," said the captain of the Remove. "Play up all you know, you fellows—especially at back. We mustn't let 'em get too near our goal, or awkward things might happen."

In front of the citadel, resplendent in a red jersey and a silk muffler specially knitted for him by his sister, strutted Archie Drake.

The Remove went great guns. Right from the kick-off they swooped down upon their opponents' goal, and, through Coker's miskicking at a critical moment, Hurree Singh had little difficulty in rushing through and netting number one. It was a grand goal, and the volley of cheers which greeted it was deafening.

The Fifth-Formers looked rather blue for a moment, and Coker was strafed in such a manner that, had he been a sensitive fellow, he would have crumpled up. But the great Horace was perfectly convinced that he was playing the game of his life, and took no heed of his school-fellows' taunts.

Danger menaced the Remove when Blundell and Bland, in a fine concerted run down the field, took the ball to within a few yards of where Archie Drake was standing; but Johnny Bull cleared in the nick of time, and the Remove monopolised the attack once more.

Shortly before the interval Vernon-Smith, who had been performing like a wizard on the wing, sent in a scorching shot, which gave the opposing goalie no chance; and the half-time score stood at two to nil in favour of the Remove.

"Topping!" said Archie Drake, as he passed into the dressing-room with the other players. "How d'you think I'm shaping?"

"Don't be a funny ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "You haven't had a single

shot to save yet. Better repeat your question at the end of the game, and then we shall be able to give you a straight answer!"

When the interval had expired, the Fifth-Formers came on to the field again with flushed faces. For the past week they had bragged about the terrific revenge they were going to exact from the cheeky fags in the Remove; and now it seemed that they were farther from their object than ever.

"Put some ginger into it, you fellows!" urged Blundell. "There's still a faint hope, if we keep the ball well out of Coker's way. Once he gets hold of it, it's a sure goal to the Remove."

"Why, you—you—" hooted Coker.

"Oh, dry up! Go and pick flowers!"

When the game restarted, the Removites were rather inclined to take things easy; and they paid dearly for their mistake. The Fifth-Formers took Archie Drake's citadel by storm, and eventually Greene got his toe to the ball, and it rolled towards the net.

An infant of five could have checked the progress of the rolling sphere; but not so Archie! He stood and gaped at it as it entered the net as if it were some new sort of curiosity.

"Goal!" roared the delighted crowd of Fifth-Formers on the touch-line. "Good old Greene!"

Johnny Bull glared at the Remove goalie with murder in his eyes.

"You—you imbecile!" he snorted. "What in thunder do you think you're doing?"

"Don't reproach me," said Archie mildly. "My uncle, who used to play as an amateur in the Southampton team, says that even the best of goalies are beaten sometimes. I reckon—"

"Groogh! Go and chain yourself up!" growled Johnny. "You're not safe to be at large!"

The Remove played up desperately after this, and only two factors prevented them from keeping their lead. One was that the Fifth were also playing up desperately, and another that Archie Drake had about as much idea of goalkeeping as the Man in the Moon. Within five minutes of his previous

blunder he fumbled a low drive of Potter's, and the score stood at two all.

"Come on!" exclaimed Wharton, with a clouded brow. "I put my foot in it properly when I let that idiot go between the sticks; but we must see the thing through now!"

But the Fifth had improved in defence as well as attack, and the repeated rushes of the Remove vanguard were of no avail. Harry Wharton & Co. did everything but score.

And then, when only five minutes remained for play, Coker secured the ball. Away he went like an infuriated bull, charging out of his path men of both sides with delightful impartiality.

Usually, when Coker made progress in this fashion, it was in the wrong direction; but on this occasion he was heading straight for Archie Drake, and there were none to say him nay!

Johnny Bull and Peter Todd came rushing up with alarm in their faces, but they were too late. Coker's right foot shot out, and the ball whizzed from his toe like a stone from a catapult.

The shot was a wild one, and would have passed on the wrong side of the upright had not Archie Drake left his goal and very kindly diverted the ball into the net.

A moment later Wingate's whistle rang out.

The Fifth had defeated their deadliest rivals by 3 goals to 2! And the winning goal had been the joint work of Coker and Archie Drake!

"Licked!" said Bob Cherry helplessly. "Dished, diddled, and done! And all through Drake! Bump the silly idiot!"

There was no escape for Archie this time. The incensed members of the Remove team closed in upon him, and he was whirled off his feet and bumped down in the mud.

"Ow-ow-ow! Stop it, you beasts!"

"Give him another!" roared Johnny Bull. "Let him have a bump for every goal he let through!"

"Hear, hear!"

For the second and third time Archie Drake was sent crashing to earth. When his schoolfellows had finished with him, he looked a fit object for making mud-pies out of.

Coker & Co. strutted off the field in high feather, Coker in particular being on great terms with himself. By a wonderful stroke of luck the Fifth had succeeded in pulling the game out of the fire; and before retiring to their studies in order to gloat over their victory, they breathed a silent blessing on the devoted head of Archie Drake!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Kindred Spirits!

"DOWN and out!" It was Archie Drake who uttered the words, and they summed up the frame of mind he was in as he tramped down to the village an hour later.

Archie was not the sort of fellow who gave in easily, despite the little affair with Bob Cherry in the gym. He possessed that truly British characteristic concerning which the Huns have had occasion to comment with much bitterness—namely, he seldom knew when he was beaten.

But his spirit was crushed at last, as he realised the hopelessness of it all. The conditions imposed upon him by his father were altogether too severe. He had conquered in the scholastic world; but, so far as sports were concerned, he realised that he could not hold a candle to Harry Wharton & Co. It was Archie's misfortune never to have been grounded

in football and boxing. In time, if only he had the opportunity, he might have become a shining light in both pastimes.

But that opportunity was denied him. When his fortnight's probation was up his father would call upon him for a record of his doings, and he would have to confess that he was far from being the best all-round athlete in the Remove.

"It's rotten!" he muttered, for the tenth time. "I wish I'd never come! Just as I get settled down here, and begin to like the life and the fellows, I shall have to leave it all, and go and slave in some beastly office, or something. It doesn't bear thinking of!"

Archie paced moodily down the village street. Outside the little picture-palace an attendant was bawling something to the effect that one could see the world in motion for threepence. Scarcely knowing why he did so, the Greyfriars junior planked down three coppers, and passed into the stuffy building.

He dropped into a back seat unnoticed, and reviewed his position over and over again, trying to find a way out of his difficulty.

But the more he thought about it the more certain he became that there was no way out. He hated the idea of being beaten; but there was nothing for it but to complete his fortnight at the school and then throw himself upon the mercy of his father.

"Feeling down in the dumps—what?"

Archie gave a start, and spun round in his seat. Behind him sat a boy of about his own age, dressed in Etons, and wearing a school cap, the crest of which, however, was not that of Greyfriars.

"I'm not feeling particularly chirpy just now," Archie replied.

The stranger nodded sympathetically.

"Try some chocolate," he said. "Wonderful thing for the blues is chocolate. Whenever I feel that life isn't worth living I nibble some nut-milk chocolate, and everything in the garden is lovely again."

Archie smiled in spite of himself. He felt an instinctive liking for this cheery youth, who extended a packet of chocolate to him and urged him to pile in.

"Come round and sit next to me," said Archie. "Then we can jaw."

The other fellow did so.

"Allow me to introduce myself," he said. "My name's Verney—Jack Verney."

"And your school?" asked Archie.

Verney shook his head.

"I haven't one," he said. "Fact is—I don't mind telling you, because I know it won't go any farther—but I've run away!"

Archie opened his blue eyes wide.

"Run away!" he repeated. "Why, what ever for?"

"Oh, I was fed up! There was nothing doing at the place—no fun, no excitement. It was just one long round of monotony. So at last, dead sick of it all, I came away."

"Do your people know?"

"No jolly fear! My pater would strafe me like anything if I went home. Luckily, I've got plenty of tin—enough to tide me over for a month or so, anyway, so I shall be all right. I've been crawling about the country like an escaped convict, and arrived here early this afternoon."

"But—but what are you going to do—in the future, I mean?" gasped Archie.

"Heaven knows! But I shall worry through, I expect. Another bar of chocolate? Good man! Now, tell me all about yourself."

"Mine's a bigger tragedy than yours," said Archie, smiling. "My name's Archie Drake, and I was sent to Greyfriars a few days ago with instructions from my pater to become the leading

light in the Form—top dog at footer and boxing and so forth."

"Gee! That's a big order if you like! And how have you got on?"

"Don't ask me!" said Archie mournfully. "I seem to have come a cropper all along the line. I tried to lick Bob Cherry—he's the Remove's champion boxer—and he put me on my back in the first minute. It was awful! And this afternoon I kept goal in a match, and made a blithering ass of myself. So I've come down here to think things over."

For some moments Verney was silent. He seemed to be deep in reflection.

"Look here!" he said at length. "I understand you're fearfully keen on staying at Greyfriars?"

"Yes, rather!"

"But you won't be able to unless you carry out your pater's conditions?"

"That's so."

"Then I've a wheeze—a stunning, gilt-edged wheeze! It'll startle you a bit at first, I expect; but it's workable, all the same."

"Get it off your chest," said Archie. "If you can save the situation for me, I'll be grateful to you for ever and ever!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Sporting Chance!

VERNEY plunged into his topic at once.

"It's like this," he began.

"I'm simply dying for an adventure of some sort. I was bored stiff at that beastly preparatory school. Drake, old boy, I'll tell you what we'll do. Let me go back to Greyfriars to-night under your name?"

"What? I—I don't understand," faltered Archie.

"You will in a minute. I can say, without swank, that I happen to be pretty good at sports. I've played footer from the cradle, and I can box, too—well enough to beat this fellow Cherrybob, or whatever his name is. See here! Supposing I go along to Greyfriars as Archie Drake, and take the place by storm? I'll challenge this fellow Blackberry, and lick him to a frazzle. Then I'll get a place in the footer team, and make the crowd gape and stare. As for school-work, I'm in pretty good form when I get set, and shall be able to hold my own in that department. And as for running, why, I'd undertake to run anybody at Greyfriars off his legs!"

For some considerable period Archie Drake could do nothing but gasp. When at last he found his voice, he said:

"I can see what you're driving at, Verney; but it's impossible—absolutely impossible!"

"I don't see it myself," replied Verney.

"What are you basing your argument on?"

"Well, we're not doubles, to begin with."

"That can soon be remedied. It's wonderful what a little touching-up here and there will do to alter a chap's chivvy. And we'll change our togs, too. Are you game?"

"Yes," said Archie, a little breathlessly. "But—but what am I going to do while you're up at Greyfriars?"

"Shut yourself up in a country inn somewhere. It'll only be for ten days or so. Then, when I've proved myself the best sportsman in the Form, we'll quietly change places again, and nobody will be any the wiser. Your pater will probably tip you a fiver, and in his gratitude will tell you to stay at Greyfriars as long as you like."

"But the risk!" said Archie. "Do you mean to say you're willing to stand your chance of being bowled out?"

"Precisely! I tell you, it'll be topping! I've been wanting an adventure of this sort for ages. Look here. I'll tell you where you can go and smuggle yourself. Do you know the Blackbird?"

"Yes; it's the pub by the side of the river."

"Don't call it a pub. It's a respectable country inn for runaway schoolboys."

Archie laughed.

"We'll go along there now," Verney went on. "There's just time to get some make-up from a little one-eyed shanty I saw in the village."

Accordingly, the two fellows who had stumbled across each other by a strange dispensation of Fate rose from their seats and strolled out of the picture-house. Archie had been there over an hour, but had not seen a single film.

Dusk was falling, and the early stars were twinkling overhead. There was not much fear of the adventurers being seen by any inquisitive master or prefect.

Verney went into the little shop and purchased his requirements; then he and his companion wended their way to the Blackbird, and the boy who had undertaken the delicate and dangerous task of impersonating Archie Drake swiftly set to work.

He was assisted by Jimmy Wyatt, the proprietor of the inn. The Blackbird was not a place of doubtful repute, like the Cross Keys. It was an old-fashioned, respectable hostel, with a rambling garden which stretched down to the water's edge.

Verney had already paid one visit to the inn, for tea; and a friendship had sprung up between him and the landlord, to whom he confided his plans.

"We're doing a transformation trick, Jimmy," he said. "I know you'll keep mum."

"Trust me, Master Verney!"

"I'm going to be Archie Drake for ten days or so," Verney went on, "and Archie's going to be me. I'm going up to the school to see a little job through for him, and he's to stay here with you. You'll look after him well, won't you? Give him plenty of grub, and as much recreation as he wants. You've got some young boxing pupils who call here regularly, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. Master Drake will be quite at home with 'em, and we can rake him up plenty of amusement."

"That's the ticket!"

"I—I say——" stammered Archie. "This is awfully good of you——"

"Rats!" said Verney. "Just you hang on here and have a good time, my son, while I astonish the natives up at Greyfriars. These togs of yours suit me all right. And what d'you think of the make-up?"

"It's ripping!" said Archie admiringly. "Blessed if I see how you've wangled it!"

"Oh, I used to dabble in amateur theatricals at the preparatory school! What's your opinion, Jimmy? Shall I pass muster?"

"I guess so, sir," said the landlord. "You're as like each other as the Siamese Twins."

"Good! Now, Archie, I want some information about the Greyfriars fellows. I want the names of all the Remove chaps that matter, and all the masters. And put me up to the routine, and all that sort of thing. It would be awful if I came a cropper right at the start."

Archie nodded; and he devoted the next half-hour to giving Verney every tit-bit of information which might come in useful.

"I think I've got the hang of things," said Verney at length, rising to his feet.

"But there's one point," interposed Archie, "which seems to have been overlooked."

"And that is?"

"Why, when you start licking Bob Cherry, and playing footer like a giddy Trojan, the fellows will wonder why the dickens you were such a duffer in the first place. You see my point?"

"I do," said Verney; "and I'd already made provision for it. I shall simply say that I was off-colour when I had the previous bout with Cherry, and kept goal for the Remove. That'll answer all right. And now I'll say au revoir, old fellow! Whatever you do, don't go exhibiting your classic form in the public thoroughfares. We must keep this affair awfully, fearfully dark!"

"I'll be dead careful," said Archie earnestly. "And don't forget—if you find the game too hot to last you must come and tell me, and we'll swap places again."

"All serene! But I don't think I shall get myself tied into knots at all. So-long!"

"So-long," said Archie, "and good luck!"

"Same here, sir!" added Jimmy Wyatt.

Verney took a final look in the glass to assure himself that his make-up would stand the scrutiny of his future school-fellows, then he passed through on to the garden path, and the next moment was swallowed up in the darkness.

It was a bold game that he was about to play; but his heart leapt at the adventure, and there was to be no turning back in the case of the bogus Archie Drake!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Revival!

"HERE he is!"

"Here's the rotten freak who let us down this afternoon!"

"Give him another bumping!"

Such was the welcome which greeted Jack Verney as he swung into the junior Common-room at Greyfriars half an hour later.

It was a thrilling moment for the impostor as he stood there before an audience of a dozen fellows. What if they should detect him? What if he had overlooked some detail of his make-up, and it proved his undoing? Supposing the sound of his voice gave him away?

These and others fears flashed through Verney's brain as he confronted the clamorous crowd. But he showed no sign of uneasiness.

"I wasn't up to the mark," he said, imitating Archie Drake's voice to perfection. "I've felt groggy several times just lately; in fact, I was off-colour when Bob Cherry trounced me the other day. He wouldn't do it again!"

"Why, you silly duffer," exclaimed Bob, "you met me on fair terms, and had your chances! If you think there was any unfairness about it, I'm willing to give you an encore."

"Ripping!" said Verney. "That'll suit me down to the ground. I'm feeling fit as a fiddle now, and sha'n't make any more bloomers. If I don't put the kybosh on all your athletic champions by the end of the fortnight I shall want to know the reason why!"

"Well, I'm dashed!" said Harry Wharton, laughing in spite of himself. "Nobody can say you're wanting in pluck. I should have thought you'd have taken a back seat after your bumping this afternoon."

"That's not my way," said Verney. "Nothing can stop me when I'm wound up. Coming along, Cherry?"

"Like a shot!" said Bob. "But let me tell you this. You won't get another chance of a scrap with me. You've had

one, and this is the second. There won't be a third. I'm not going to let you go on making a fool of yourself ad lib. Got that?"

Verney nodded, and led the way to the gym.

The usual crowd followed in his wake. That Archie Drake would have the colossal nerve, after the easy manner in which he had been licked on his first evening at Greyfriars, to renew his challenge to Bob Cherry, passed all comprehension.

"He'll be smashed to a pulp in the first round," said Bolsover major. "And serve him jolly well right, for his cheek!"

Verney, who overheard the remark, took no heed. His thoughts were full of the coming encounter. Game and determined boxer though he was, he realised at the outset that he would have all his work out out to lick the sturdy Bob Cherry.

"Buck up, and put him out of his misery, Bob!" said Frank Nugent.

Bob Cherry grinned, and rushed to the attack; but the grin had faded from his face a moment later, and in its stead was a look of surprise and wonder.

He had expected the contest to be short-lived, and had not anticipated having any trouble with his adversary. Therefore, it came as a rude shock when the latter broke cleverly through his guard and punched him violently on the nose.

"Well hit, sir!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "My hat! Drake's shaping a thousand times better than he did the other day. You wouldn't think he was the same chap."

"There he goes again!" said Peter Todd. "Right on the mark that time, too! He's leading old Bob the dickens of a dance!"

Verney's attack was rendered all the more effective by its unexpectedness. At the end of the first round he had more than held his own against Bob Cherry.

"What ever's the matter, Bob?" asked Harry Wharton, as he fanned his chum's flushed face.

"Hanged if I know! The fellow's boxing like a giddy pro. He must have been pulling my leg the other day."

"But you don't mean to say you're going to let him lick you?"

"Eh? Not if he lives to be as old as Methuselah! I'll make him sing small in the second round, or I'm a Dutchman!"

Bob certainly put a vast amount of ginger into his blows on the resumption, but he got as good as he gave. Verney fought like a tiger, and displayed a dash which no one had ever seen before in connection with Archie Drake.

Bob Cherry levelled things up a little in the third and fourth rounds, but his chances of victory grew more and more remote as the fight proceeded.

He had bellows to mend, whereas his opponent was still as fresh as a daisy, and gave every indication of being able to withstand the pressure until further orders.

The crowd stood spellbound, like fellows in a dream. They couldn't understand it at all. Could this really be Archie Drake, the junior who but a few short days ago had been knocked out by a single blow of Bob Cherry's fist?

The fight had reached the seventh round when the climax came. Verney went all out for victory, and managed to get his man hemmed into a corner. Then he fairly let himself go, and blows simply rained upon Bob Cherry till his brain began to reel and his knees became unsteady.

"My only aunt!" said Vernon-Smith. "To think we should ever live to see

this! Bob Cherry hasn't been licked more than half a dozen times in his life, but his number's up now!"

And so it proved. With a final terrific bombardment, Verney closed the contest and his opponent's right eye at the same time.

Bob Cherry went down in a huddled heap, and Nugent counted him out amid a silence which conveyed more than the most uproarious applause could have done.

Bob Cherry beaten! And by Archie Drake, a raw, untamed new kid! The fact took a good deal of digesting, but it remained a fact, all the same.

The first fellow to congratulate the victor was Bob himself.

"Drake, old man, you're a giddy marvel!" he said, sitting up on the mat and blinking out of his one sound eye. "Put it there!"

"No malice, I hope?" said Verney, shaking hands, with a smile.

"Not a bit of it. It was a fair fight, and I give you best. But—but— Oh, it beats me altogether! I can't get over it."

"I expect it does seem rather a shock," said Verney. "But I haven't finished yet. I shall prove myself the best sportsman in the Remove long before the fortnight's up, as sure as my name's Ver—I mean, Drake!"

And the speaker strode out of the gym with an expression on his face which showed that he meant it.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Well Played, Verney!

"WHAT cheek!" Thus Johnny Bull, as, in the company of his chums, he scanned the notice-board in the hall.

An elaborately-designed placard had been pinned up in a prominent place, and it bore the words:

"I, Archie Drake, of the Remove Form, hereby challenge all and sundry to a mile race. This is in order to prove beyond all dispute that I am the champion runner. The course to be four times round the cricket-field.

"All who accept this challenge are invited to hand in their names to the above-mentioned Archie Drake, Study No. 1, by midday.

"The race will be run this afternoon."

"The limit, isn't it?" said Nugent. "The boulder seems to think he can lick us as soon as look at us. We shall jolly well have to show him that he's far from being cock-of-the-walk. Why, he'll want to be skipper of the Remove next!"

Harry Wharton nodded grimly.

"I admire the fellow, in a way," he said. "He's got pluck enough for a whole giddy army of Gurkhas! But we can't let him go on scoring off us. He's licked old Bob, and there it's got to stop."

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "We must acceptfully jump at his esteemed challenge, and run him off his ludicrous legs."

During the interval between breakfast and morning school a constant stream of juniors poured into Study No. 1. By the time the bell for lessons rang Archie Drake had no less than twenty names on his list of rivals.

All the good runners in the Remove had risen to the occasion. Besides the Famous Five, such mighty men as Mark Linley, Vernon-Smith, Peter Todd, and Dick Penfold had handed in their names, and it certainly seemed as if the enter-

prising Archie would be beaten. It was not reasonable to suppose that he could romp home first against such a crowded and brilliant field.

The youthful impostor had a very trying time of it that day. He was a pretty good scholar, but not quite up to the weight of the fellow he was impersonating. There were one or two awkward moments, but luck was with him, and even the gimlet-eyes of Mr. Quelch failed to penetrate his disguise.

When afternoon lessons were over, Verney changed into running-shorts and a vest, and joined the throng of competitors on the cricket-field.

"This is where you get it in the neck, Drake!" said Harry Wharton. "If you can outdistance every man jack of us you'll be something more than a marvel!"

Faulkner of the Sixth came striding on the scene.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"It's a challenge, Faulkner," explained Nugent. "Drake thinks he can run the lot of us off our legs in a mile race, and we're going to prove to him that he's quite off-side. Will you act as starter, and all the rest of it?"

"With pleasure," said the Sixth-Former good-humouredly.

Then the twenty competitors came up to the scratch, and Faulkner's eye roved along the long line of crouching forms.

"Are you ready?" he asked

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There was a general nodding of heads. "Go!"

Like greyhounds released from the leash the runners leapt forward, to the accompaniment of a rousing cheer from the big crowd which had collected.

At the very start Jack Verney knew what he was up against. He had been far and away the finest runner at his old school, but between a mere preparatory school and a place like Greyfriars there was a great gulf fixed. The opposition in the past had been weak sort of stuff at best. Now Verney was encountering some real talent.

The runners kept more or less in a bunch throughout the first stage of the race, and there was little to choose between them. When the second lap began, however, Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith leapt well ahead of the others, and sped over the turf like deer.

Verney was going along in great style, but when half the race had been completed he was still some thirty yards in arrears. The fellows looking on regarded it as a forlorn hope, so far as he was concerned.

But they had reason to think differently when, a moment later, the new boy put on a tremendous spurt, fairly flashing over the intervening ground.

Four juniors at present stood between him and victory. They were Bob Cherry and Vernon-Smith, who were still well to the fore, and Harry Wharton and

Mark Linley. The two last named were already whacked, for they had put up a pace which was too hot to last; but Bob Cherry and the Boulder were going great guns.

It was going to be a great finish. Everybody saw that. A tape had been suspended where Faulkner stood, and behind it surged a turbulent throng of juniors, urging their favourites on.

"It's Bob Cherry's race!" somebody exclaimed. "Good old Bob! The others are getting left!"

But even as the words were uttered Bob Cherry came a cropper. His foot struck a small mound of turf, and he lurched forward on his face, to the intense disappointment of his backers.

Verney saw what had happened, and strained every nerve to reach the fluttering tape. Vernon-Smith was whizzing along like a streak of lightning; but with a supreme effort Verney came abreast of him, and fairly flung himself through the air.

The next instant he lay panting on the grass, exhausted and dead beat, but rejoicing in the knowledge that he had won—won gloriously at the eleventh hour!

"Splendid, kid!" came Faulkner's admiring voice. "The finest race I've ever seen! Hard luck, Vernon-Smith!"

"Drake deserved to win," panted the Boulder. "I thought it was a dead cert. for me, but he had me fairly licked at the finish."

Harry Wharton came in third, and Dick Penfold, who had run a well-judged race, was fourth. Mark Linley was the next to reach the tape, and all the juniors took their defeat in good part, and congratulated the bogus Archie Drake with great cordiality.

Verney picked himself up, and put on his sweater.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "That was warm while it lasted! The boxing was stiff enough, but it doesn't compare with this! There's only the footer now. I understand you're playing Highcliffe on Wednesday, Wharton. Will you give me a game?"

The captain of the Remove looked doubtful. He had not forgotten the farcical match against the Fifth, when Archie Drake had practically made the opposition a present of three goals.

"You're not thinking of that affair the other day?" said Verney. "I wasn't myself then. Give me another chance. On the wing this time, if you like. I promise you won't regret it."

"Frankly, I don't care about it," said Wharton, hesitating. "There will be something like a riot on the part of the other fellows. I don't fancy they'll approve."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Bob Cherry. "Let Drake have a shot on the wing. If he can't do anything else, he can run, so he won't be such a wash-out as he was in goal!"

"Very well," said Wharton. "But I can't guarantee that you won't be flayed alive if you make another exhibition of yourself, Drake!"

Verney laughed.

"Set your mind at rest," he said. "I'm going to do great things against Highcliffe."

"Hanged if I don't believe you!" said Johnny Bull. "You've improved out of all knowledge in the last day or so."

"Coming along to tea in No. 1?" asked Nugent.

"Sorry, but I've got an appointment," Verney replied. "Thanks all the same."

And, with a genial nod to the fellows he had conquered, he turned on his heel and strode joyfully away from the scene of his triumph.

THE NINTH CHAPTEL..

Nearing the Goal!

HALF AN HOUR later Verney crept cautiously up the garden path to the rear entrance of the Blackbird. Just as cautiously, Jimmy Wyatt came to the door, and opened it.

"Oh, it's you, sir, is it? Step right in! I was afraid it might have been one of the masters up at the school. Thought p'r'aps they'd smelt a rat."

"No giddy fear! Where's our young friend?"

"Master Drake, sir? Oh, he's slogging into the punching-ball upstairs as if he owed it a grudge! Go up and see him, sir! He'll be as pleased as Punch to know you're here."

Verney took the stairs in half a dozen strides, and entered the improvised gymnasium where the youth of Britain underwent instruction in boxing and sword-drill.

Archie Drake had his coat off, and his sleeves rolled up to the elbow, and was pounding the punching-ball with tremendous vigour. He swung round as the intruder entered.

"Why, Verney!" he exclaimed delightedly. "Fancy seeing you!"

Then his face fell, as it occurred to him that perhaps Verney's little scheme had been squashed, and he had come with a message that the game was up.

"What—what's happened?" he faltered.

"Oh, lots of things. There's nothing to get alarmed about. I've done great deeds since I saw you last—deeds for which you'll get the credit when you go back to Greyfriars."

Archie's eyes lit up with pleasure.

"Tell me all about it," he said. "I'm dying to know how you've got on."

"Well," said Verney modestly, "I've kept my end up in the Form-room; I've laid Bob Cherry on his back in seven rounds; and this afternoon, to the accompaniment of boisterous applause, I finished first in the most gruelling race I've ever run in my life!"

Archie Drake let out a wild whoop of delight, and, clasping his impersonator round the waist, waltzed him round and round the little room till Verney was obliged to howl for deliverance.

"Oh, you're a topper!" said Archie, desisting at last from his merry antics. "You're one of the very best! And d'you mean to say nobody has twigged you yet?"

"No. I'm Archie Drake, the genuine article, so far as they're concerned. My hat! How they'd carry on if they knew I was only a cheap imitation! There have been one or two anxious moments, I assure you, but I've worried through. Only one thing remains to be done."

"And that is?"

"You must drop a line to your pater. Get a sheet of notepaper, and I'll tell you what to write."

Archie obeyed, and the following letter was compiled at Verney's dictation:

"My Dear Pater,—You will be pleased, I know, to hear that I am putting my fortnight's probation at Greyfriars to very good account. I have proved myself beyond dispute the champion boxer, runner, and scholar. Should you wish to confirm this statement, you may write to Harry Wharton, who captains the Remove Form.

"I still have one item of the contract to perform. On Wednesday next we are playing Highcliffe, another big school in the district, and Wharton has very kindly consented to give me a game. I don't know exactly how you are going to judge whether I'm the best footballer in the Form or not. Must I bag more goals than any of the other fellows? Anyway, I leave this to your discretion.



The hero of the hour! (See Chapter 5.)

"I like Greyfriars ever so much. There are very decent fellows here, and I am already a great favourite with the masters. I heard one of them remark only this morning that he would be sorry to lose me.

"I'll write and tell you how I fare in the footer-match. Believe me, your affectionate
ARCHIE."

"How's that?" asked Verney, when he had finished dictating.

"Ripping!" said Archie. "But—but I must say it seems a bit deceitful. You see, I'm making out I'm the best sportsman in the Remove, when I'm nothing of the sort."

"Oh, tosh! A little deception is necessary sometimes, even in the best regulated families. I reckon that letter hits it off a treat. I'll post it for you to-night, and I bet your pater will be awfully bucked!"

"You're a good chap, Verney!" said Archie, with real sincerity. "I'm sorry we can't stop on at Greyfriars together. We should have some ripping times."

Verney sighed. "No such luck!" he said. "I wish it was possible, too, for Wharton & Co. are awfully decent chaps. I shall have to roam the country for a bit, I expect, until my cash gives out. But that won't be just yet."

"Don't your people know anything at all about this business?" asked Archie, in astonishment.

"Of course not, you duffer! They'd have me clapped into that preparatory school again before I could breathe! No, old boy. I shall go to London, and one of these fine days, when I've made good, I shall play the prodigal son and give 'em a surprise by springing in on 'em at home. The Christmas Eve stunt, you know—happy reunion, and all the rest of it. They'll fall on my neck and weep, and even if they don't I sha'n't mind, because I shall be too old to be sent back to school!"

Archie laughed.

"You're a queer fellow," he said. "I can't thank you enough for all you're doing for me. It's splendid!"

"Don't mench! I tell you, it's the most topping adventure I've had, and

I'm enjoying myself as much as an interned Hun. There's been a lot of risks, and tons of thrills, but that only adds a sort of spice to it. I shall feel quite lost when the fortnight's up, and you and I have to change places again. By the by, what sort of a time are you having at this show?"

"Great!" said Archie. "Couldn't be better! I think I've mastered the first principles of boxing, and I sha'n't be nearly such a duffer when I resume my place in the Remove."

"I'm glad to hear that. If you were still shaky, and didn't know how to use your fists, it might look suspicious. Well, I think I'll be getting along now. Don't you wish you could come to the footer-match on Wednesday?"

"Not half! But it isn't safe to venture. It would be the limit if they tumbled to our little wheeze, especially as things have gone so smoothly up till now. Au revoir, old man! Hope you'll put it across Highcliffe!"

"Rely on me!" said Verney. "I shall have my shooting-boots on, and goals are going to be the order of the day. If only I come off—and there's no reason why I shouldn't—you'll be released from all further worry. Your pater will pat you on the back and call you his gallant boy, and the fellows will admire and respect you. In my mind's eye I can see about a dozen fags all tumbling over each other to clean your boots for you, or brush your Sunday topper. And you'll be happy ever after."

Archie laughed heartily at this entrancing prospect; then he bade his chum farewell, and Verney retraced his steps to Greyfriars, where he would have nothing very serious to worry him until Wednesday afternoon.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Finishing Touch!

HIGHCLIFFE, captained by popular Frank Courtenay, once the boy without a name, possessed an eleven which took a good deal of beating.

Ponsonby & Co., the bold, bad blades
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of the Fourth, had been shorn of much of their power, and Highcliffe had revived under the good influence of Courtenay and his loyal little band of supporters. The revival was particularly pronounced in the football world, and the Fourth could now put into the field a side able to hold its own against all comers, and be relied upon to fight gamely to the finish.

Frank Courtenay & Co. looked very fit as they alighted from the brakes which had conveyed them to Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton's mind was not a little uneasy.

"I almost wish I hadn't decided to play Drake," he confided to Bob Cherry. "Still, the thing's done now, and I won't go back on my promise."

"Afternoon, dear boys!" drawled the Caterpillar, who was one of the leading lights in the visiting team. "We've come to give you the very dickens of a liokin'! At a rough guess, I should say the score will be about six to nil in our favour."

"That sounds cheerful!" laughed Wharton. "I should like to hear you repeat that remark in ninety minutes' time. You've got a jolly hot team out, I admit; all the same, I think we shall give you tit for tat—Hullo, Courtenay! Going to toss for ends?"

Frank did so, and Wharton called correctly.

"Line up, you fellows!" he said. "and don't forget, you've got to play the game of your lives!"

"And look here!" added Verney. "If we win, I'll stand the whole giddy team the biggest spread that can be wangled in these lean days!"

"Hurrah!"

The referee blew his whistle, and the next moment the game, which was destined to be one of the most thrilling and dramatic ever played on Little Side, was in full progress.

"Play up, Friars!" came in a full-throated roar from the clamorous crowd on the touch-line.

"Buck up, Drake!"

But Verney had little scope for his activities, for the Highcliffe forwards gained possession of the ball, and raced down the field in line, combining beautifully.

Bulstrode, in the Greyfriars goal, stood erect and self-confident. This was his first appearance in harness since he came out of the sanatorium, where he had wrestled with a severe bout of influenza. But he was quite fit again now, and proved it by the masterly manner in which he dealt with a scorching shot of Frank Courtenay's.

Highcliffe were evidently out for scalps, for they pressed without abatement; and at the end of twenty minutes' play their good work met with its reward. The Caterpillar, scenting an opening, rushed in from the wing and smashed the leather home.

"Goal!"

"That's the first nail in their coffin!" chuckled Bob Wilkinson, with relish. "Keep it up, Highcliffe!"

It seemed that the gods were angry with the Greyfriars Remove that afternoon, for only a few moments later Johnny Bull, at back, had the misfortune to miskick. Bulstrode rushed out to save the situation; Frank Courtenay rushed in, and the Highcliffe fellow won. A gaping net was at his mercy, and he made no mistake.

Highcliffe were two up, and a stranger might have considered the affair all over bar shouting; but he would have overlooked the spirit and tenacity of Harry Wharton & Co., who could be relied upon to keep on keeping on, no matter how great a leeway had to be made up.

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Play ruled fast and furious until the interval, and once, when Verney shook the crossbar with a hurricane effort from twelve yards out, the crowd cheered him to the echo. Harry Wharton all but scored, too; but Highcliffe were still a couple of goals to the good when the whistle blew for half-time.

"Fairly makes you weep, doesn't it?" said Bob Cherry, as the Remove eleven streamed off the field. "We've had quite fifty per cent. of the game, and yet we're two down. I think I shall chuck footer and take up marbles."

But there was someone who felt the situation far more acutely than Bob Cherry.

Jack Verney paced agitatedly up and down the dressing-room, lamenting his bad luck. If things went on in the way they had begun, he reflected, there would be little hope of his being able to say he was the best footballer in the Remove. He had not scored a single goal; and, although he had been responsible for several brilliant runs, the rest of the forwards could lay claim to the same distinction.

It was a very determined-looking Jack Verney who stepped on to the field for the second half. He was thinking of Archie Drake, and of how much depended upon this match. A boy's future career hung in the balance. He had represented to Archie that everything would pass off all right; it was up to him to see that the statement was borne out.

Highcliffe attacked on the restart, but not for long. Bob Cherry rescued the ball from the toes of an opposing forward, and then went away like a whirlwind.

"Pass!" rapped out Verney.

Bob Cherry did so; and then, with a spirited solo effort, the new member of the Remove team wormed his way through the Highcliffe defence, and shot hard and true for goal. The ball evaded the custodian's frantic clutch, and crashed into the net.

"Hurrah!"

"One up at last!"

"Now for the giddy equaliser!" sang out Peter Todd, who had been going great guns at centre-half.

But, instead of an equaliser, a nasty shock awaited the Greyfriars team. Highcliffe secured a corner, and from the resultant kick the Caterpillar netted.

The Removites were silent after that. It was a time for deeds, not words. A moment later they were swarming like hornets round the Highcliffe goal, and all sorts and conditions of shots rained in upon the custodian. But the Highcliffe backs cleared their lines well, and the scores remained unchanged.

Verney had been doing great work. The lion's share of the Greyfriars attack emanated from his wing, where Frank Nugent kept him company.

Highcliffe eased off a little as time went on. It was the worst thing they could possibly have done. Harry Wharton & Co. were acting on the principle that a game's not lost until it's won, and the final stage of that great game would never be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

Verney paved the way for the last big push by robbing Bob Wilkinson of the ball and sending it across to Wharton. The latter, unmarked by any of the opposition, promptly netted.

The cheering which greeted this goal was by no means terrific. It seemed to the lookers-on that the Remove's great rally had come too late in the day to be of any material use.

But Verney didn't seem to think so. No sooner had the ball been set in motion than he raced away down the field, worming his way like a wizard through the Highcliffe ranks.

Then, when within shooting distance, he lobbed the ball neatly into the unguarded corner of the net, and the scores were level.

"Two minutes to go!" panted Bob Cherry. "While there's life there's hope. Stick to it, Drake!"

The referee was already consulting his watch prior to sounding the final whistle. The crowd on the touchline were putting every ounce of ginger into their work, realising that everything hinged upon the last crowded moment.

Highcliffe attacked in full force; but Johnny Bull intervened in the nick of time, and when he sent the ball soaring away down the field Verney pounced upon it at once, and went right away.

"Over here!" shouted Vernon-Smith, who was the only other forward abreast of Verney.

Whiz!

The leather skimmed over the turf, and then it was the Bounder's turn. He feinted round one of the halves, and sent Highcliffe's burly right-back sprawling. Two other opponents closed in upon him the next moment, but they were too late. Vernon-Smith's right foot shot out, and in went the leather.

"Goal!" roared the frenzied crowd.

But they were too premature. The ball crashed against the crossbar, and rebounded on to the field of play.

Then Jack Verney executed his master-stroke. He met the ball with a ready foot, and scored as grand a winning goal as had ever been seen on Little Side.

The referee blew a shrill blast on his whistle, signifying that the struggle was over. The Remove players surged round their hero with ringing cries of congratulation; and the crowd, in turn, swarmed on to the turf, and stamped and shouted and cheered with as much gusto as if a fleet of Zeppelins had been brought down in the neighbourhood.

Greyfriars had won! The tide of battle had been turned, and Archie Drake—as the crowd supposed—had done the footer hat-trick, besides proving himself the finest footballer in the ranks of the Remove.

It was a thrilling and joyous moment for Jack Verney when he felt himself being swung on to the shoulders of his delighted comrades; but the rapture of the situation vanished, and Verney experienced a creeping sensation down the spine when he saw a portly man, of middle age, beckoning and gesticulating and heard him exclaim:

"Well played, Archie! Well played indeed! You were doubtless unaware that I had witnessed your splendid performance."

"Oh, heavens!" muttered Verney, under his breath. "The game's up, with a vengeance!"

For the visitor was Mr. Drake!

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The End of the Drama!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. lowered their champion to the ground, and the next moment Verney stood face to face with the father of the fellow he was impersonating.

A cold sweat broke out on his forehead, and his knees were nearly knocking together.

"Hallo, p-p-pater!" he stammered feebly.

Mr. Drake looked surprised. "You don't seem pleased to see me, Archie!" he said reprovingly.

"Oh, I am, really!" said Verney, making a pathetic effort to force a smile. "But I—I feel a bit groggy. It's been a gruelling game, you know."

"H'm!"

Verney cast a wild eye round the foot-

ball-field. He would have given all his worldly possessions to have been able to escape that awful ordeal.

That which he had never deemed possible had come to pass. Mr. Drake, on receipt of the letter telling him that the Highcliffe match was to be played on Wednesday, had come to the school to see how his son fared.

Verney gritted his teeth in savage dejection.

"You are looking much paler, my boy, than you used to," said Mr. Drake. "The old ruddy colour you formerly had seems to have deserted you entirely."

"That's due to swotting, pater," said Verney. "I've had to burn a good deal of midnight oil in order to get top place in the Form. That's how it is, pater."

"Your manner is very curious, Archie," said Mr. Drake, his brows contracting in a frown. "You didn't use to address me as pater. It was always 'dad.' And your voice seems to have become very high-pitched and unnatural."

"Oh, help!" gasped Verney.

"What did you say, Archie?"

"N-nothing, pater—I mean, dad. Look here, I'm standing a feed to all the Remove players because we've won. Will you come along?"

Mr. Drake gasped.

"You are providing a feast for eleven boys out of your own pocket?" he exclaimed.

"Ye-e-es!"

"But I don't understand. I gave you very little pocket-money when you came to Greyfriars—certainly not sufficient for you to squander in this way. How do you explain your sudden affluence?"

Verney groaned.

"I—I—I'm getting the grub and things on—on tick," he stammered.

"What? You mean to say you are obtaining a large quantity of provisions on credit?" roared Mr. Drake. "This is monstrous! I put my foot down on the whole proceeding! No boy of mine is going to make a beast of himself and invite others to join a disgusting orgy without any money being forthcoming to pay for it! I will not tolerate such conduct for a single instant!"

Mr. Drake glared at the unhappy junior, and then his eye lighted on the glistening silver wrist-watch which Verney wore.

"Archie! Tell me! Where did you obtain this?" he thundered, tapping the watch with his stick.

"Oh, crumbs! It—it was a gift, sir, from one of the fellows."

But Mr. Drake didn't possess that simple faith which is more to be admired than Norman blood.

"Fiddlesticks!" he said. "Do you seriously mean to tell me that Greyfriars harbours a lunatic who passes away the time by scattering silver watches broadcast among new boys? You are lying to me, sir!"

Verney nearly tore his hair.

"I shall go clean off my rocker in a minute!" he told himself.

"Your conduct, Archie, is far from satisfactory," continued Mr. Drake, and his eyes seemed to penetrate Verney's very soul. "There are many points which we shall have to clear up. Why, what on earth—"

Mr. Drake strode forward and seized Verney's left hand. He twisted it round and examined the palm.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, in a tone which cut Verney like a knife. "You are an impostor! I had my suspicions from the outset!"

Verney tried to reply, but could not. His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

"My son Archie has a slight but permanent scar on the palm of his left hand.

No such defacement appears on yours. Now, sir, I will trouble you for an explanation of this outrageous conduct!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had courteously stepped aside when the conversation between Verney and Mr. Drake began: but now that matters had taken this dramatic turn they were impelled to the spot, unable to restrain their curiosity.

"I want an explanation, I repeat!" thundered Mr. Drake.

"Then you shall have it, sir," answered Verney.

He saw the utter futility of beating about the bush any longer. Sooner or later the facts must come to light, and it would be far better to make a voluntary confession than to leave it to Mr. Drake to unravel.

"I'm fairly cornered!" said Verney bitterly. "It's rotten luck, to be bowled out just when I was nearly through with the business. Step this way, you fellows! You might as well know the truth. I'm not Archie Drake!"

"Not Archie Drake!" gasped Wharton, in amazement.

"No. It's wonderful that you haven't twigged it. My make-up's rather skilful, I admit, but it's got flaws."

"Then who the merry dickens are you?" almost shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Jack Verney, of Belvedere Preparatory School."

"This—this is a scandal!" roared Mr. Drake, almost foaming at the mouth.

"Where is my son? What has happened to him, you young villain?"

"I'll take you to him now," said Verney.

"But—but what's the little game?" ejaculated Nugent. "How did you wangle this bizney?"

"Oh, it was quite simple! I'm a runaway—scooted from my school a fortnight ago, and met Drake one evening in the village. He told me the conditions on which he was being sent to Greyfriars, and I resolved to help him out. I succeeded where he failed, and was congratulating myself that it was all serene, when his pater suddenly turned up. That put the kibosh on it. I've had a difficult part to play, but I think you fellows will agree that I tackled it pretty well."

"My only sainted aunt!" exclaimed Bob Cherry solemnly. "Hanged if this doesn't prance off with the whole giddy box of tricks! It sounds too romantic to be true!"

"But it is!" said Verney. "And I've been floored just when victory was within my grasp!"

Mark Linley regarded the speaker curiously.

"You say your name is Verney?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Then I can show you something which will interest you. It's the Agony Column of this morning's 'Times.'"

Verney turned pale.

"Show me!" he said quickly.

Linley produced the paper, and indicated a paragraph half-way down. It ran as follows:

"JOHN VERNEY.—Come home at once. All is forgiven, and we will meet your wishes in every possible way. Your mother is suffering great anxiety."

"PATER."

Verney seemed to gulp something down.

"That settles it," he said. "I'm off to London to-night, if there's a train. Glad I haven't got to go back to that beastly preparatory school!"

"Boy," said Mr. Drake sharply, "I refuse to be kept waiting any longer! Take me to my son at once!"

Verney hesitated.

"You—you won't be too hard on him,

sir?" he said. "It was entirely at my suggestion that we changed places."

"Don't be hard on him—hey?" muttered the irate parent. "Wait till I get hold of the young whelp! He'll be heartily sorry for having served me this trick, I can assure you!"

Verney sighed. "But he had done his best to establish peace terms between father and son, and further argument would be wasted. So, in the company of the fuming Mr. Drake, he left the football-field to carry out his unpleasant mission."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Get Out or Get Under!

ARCHIE DRAKE—the genuine Archie Drake—had been finding life very much to his liking at the Blackbird.

Jimmy Wyatt treated him as a brother. He roved about the old place exactly as he chose, and did whatever he pleased. The grub was all right, the bed-room he occupied comfortable in the extreme. In fact, so reconciled did Archie become to the life that there were times when he almost forgot the why and wherefore of his present routine, and even Verney's merry masquerade.

Archie had not been slacking. Far from it. He realised that if he resumed his old place at Greyfriars he would have to acquit himself well in all manner of sport, and particularly in the noble art of self-defence.

He had dearly longed to go to Greyfriars that afternoon and see how Verney shaped in the football match; but the risk would have been too great. Now that the scheme had been carried through successfully so far, it would be a thousand pities to risk exposure at the finish.

So Archie made himself comfortable in his quarters, often pausing to wonder if, after all, the amazing affair would be seen through without a hitch.

"I reckon it'll be all serene, sir," Jimmy Wyatt assured him. "Master Verney's a young gent who can wangle things almost as well as a Conchy in front of a tribunal. He won't leave anything to chance. If he doesn't come through this business with flying colours I'll eat my hat!"

At this juncture Bobby Chivers, one of the youthful pupils who was learning to box at the Blackbird, and who had been admitted into the secret concerning Archie Drake and Jack Verney, came scorching along on his bike, and dismounted at the front entrance. His face resembled a newly-boiled beetroot.

"Oh, it's great!" he said. "Simply great! The Friars have won!"

"What!"

"I saw the finish!" panted Bobby. "It made you as breathless as if you were watching a cinema film of the Wild West! Old Verney was a Trojan! He put on the grandest winning goal I've ever seen in my life!"

Then Archie Drake nearly went mad. He threw his arms round the neck of the bearer of good tidings, and waltzed round and round with him in an ecstasy.

"Good old Verney!" he exclaimed. "What a sport! What a topper! He's won through now—all along the line. And I shall be able to stay on at Greyfriars!"

It was a rapturous prospect. Just at the time when Archie had been about to give up the ghost Jack Verney had appeared on the scene, and by luck and pluck had made it possible for Archie to take a permanent place in the Remove. It was almost too good to be true!

"Did the fellows cheer, Bobby?" he asked.

"Cheer? Ye gods! I should just think they did! They carried old Verney shoulder-high round the field—thinking he was you, of course—and the last I saw of him was when he was jawing to a middle-aged cove who I didn't know—one of the masters, I s'pose."

"It's a dream!" said Archie delightedly. "Why doesn't the silly bouncer buck up and come along? I'm simply dying to congratulate him!"

"He'll come by way of the towing-path, I should imagine," said Jimmy Wyatt.

Archie nodded, and made his way to the back of the inn. Then he scanned the placid waters of the Sark in the gathering dusk.

And in the moment of his triumph and jubilation the Sword of Damocles fell!

Coming along the river-bank, on the farther side, Archie presently discerned Jack Verney, and with him was a portly gentleman whose identity he knew at a glance. It was his father!

For one dizzy moment the trees and hedges seemed to revolve before Archie's wild gaze.

He did not need to ask himself twice what had happened. Verney had been bowled out. He had been forced to make a clean breast of things; and now Mr. Drake was coming along to take full and complete revenge at Archie's expense.

Jack Verney was walking dejectedly, with his hands thrust into his pockets. Behind him, Mr. Drake puffed and snorted, and rolled from side to side like a new kind of Tank.

Then, when he sighted Archie standing at the garden gate on the other side of the river, he gave a gloating exclamation of triumph.

"Got you, you young rascal!" he shouted. "I shall make you suffer severely for this outrageous deception, sir! You shall not play such tricks upon me with impunity!"

Archie backed away, stung by his parent's fierce threats.

Then Mr. Drake, in his hurry and excitement, did a very rash thing.

A narrow wooden plank stretched across the river, and it was necessary for pedestrians to cross it with care and caution.

Archie's father exercised neither. He went charging along the plank like an infuriated bull.

Of course, the expected happened. Mr. Drake lacked the skill and dexterity of the accomplished tight-rope walker, and fairly asked for trouble. His right foot descended on nothingness, his left foot followed; and the next moment the unhappy tyrant was floundering in six feet of icy water!

"Help!" he bellowed, at the same time swallowing a miniature cataract.

"Oh, my stars!" muttered Archie Drake. "This puts the tin hat on it!"

Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle!

Mr. Drake completely disappeared from mortal gaze for some seconds; then his face bobbed to the surface again, and he looked agonisingly to the right hand and to the left.

"Can't swim!" he jerked out in appealing tones. "Help! Rescue! I'm—gug-gug—drowning!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Verney Goes Nap!

FOR one dramatic moment Archie Drake and Jack Verney stared at each other across the river.

The former was about to plunge in to the rescue of his wretched parent, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 527.

but Verney telegraphed a message with his eyes.

"Leave him to me!"

While Archie Drake stood still, hesitating and anxious, Verney wrenched off his coat and boots, and took a header into the river. He came up quite close to Mr. Drake, and grasped him underneath the armpits, winking solemnly at Archie as he did so.

"Rely on me, sir!" he called cheerily. "Hold your head well up, and I'll have you safe and sound before long. It's going to be a tough fight, though!"

Archie Drake, who watched his chum open-mouthed, could not quite see where the tough fight came in. His father was no light weight, it was true, but it ought to be a fairly simple matter to tow him to the bank.

Nevertheless, Jack Verney seemed to make hard work of it.

"Quick!" gurgled Mr. Drake. "Get me out of this, for Heaven's sake! I'm freezing!"

"Shush!" said Verney. "Can't you see that I'm fighting tooth and nail to save you, sir? There's a terrific current here, and it'll want some beating!"

"Why don't you—" began Archie Drake, in perplexity. But Verney frowned him into silence.

For quite two minutes he retained his hold of Mr. Drake, and kicked and splashed vigorously in the water. Then he gave a sort of despairing gasp.

"I'm afraid it's no good," he said. "I shall have to chuck up the sponge! Better one life than two, sir; so I hope you don't mind if I leave you, sir."

"Leave me!" echoed Mr. Drake. "Oh, help! I cannot bear to be left here to drown! Save me, boy—get me out of this terrible mess—and I'll be grateful to you as long as I live!"

"H'm! On second thoughts, I'll have another shot at fishing you out," said Verney calmly. "You'll be open to do me any favours I may choose to ask, providing I land you safely on the bank?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Then hero goes!"

And Verney turned over on his back, and in a masterly manner conveyed his burden to the bank, panting and gasping as if it were a life-and-death struggle.

Archie Drake bent down, and assisted his father to safety.

Mr. Drake was in a terrible mess. His clothes were drenched, and long, clammy reeds clung lovingly round his face and neck.

"Good gad!" exclaimed Jimmy Wyatt, rushing to the spot. "What's happened?"

"Merely one of those little incidents without which life would be dead dull," said Verney, scrambling ashore. "You'd better take Mr. Drake to a nice, warm room, Jimmy, and let him dry his things. I could do with a gas-stove and a change of togs, too."

Inside the inn, Mr. Drake turned to his rescuer with a light of genuine gratitude shining in his eyes.

"My boy," he said, "Heaven bless you! But for you, my dead body might now be swirling in the waters of the weir! You stuck to your guns like a hero—you did, indeed!"

"It was touch-and-go!" said Verney gravely. "I should have given it up in another minute."

"And what is the nature of the favour you desire of me?"

"Simply this, sir." And Verney met the eyes of his companion steadily and fearlessly. "I want you to overlook this deception business, and let Archie remain at Greyfriars."

That settled it. In the face of Verney's apparent gallantry, Mr. Drake could not play the part of the hard taskmaster. He had formed a compact with Verney when

they were in the water together, and he could not swerve from it now.

"Very well," he said slowly. "Archie, you will remain at the school."

"It's you who I've got to thank for this, old fellow!" Drake said, in tones of emotion. "You've been a brick to me all through the piece. How ever can I thank you?"

"Don't try," said Verney, with a smile. "I'm awfully glad things have turned out like this. It's all serene now, and you can come back to Greyfriars and have the time of your life. We'll set the ball rolling by having a feed—the feed I promised the fellows if we won the footer-match. Will you come along, Mr. Drake? I'm sure you will!"

There was a spread in the Rag that evening. No longer might such luxuries as had aforetime graced the board appear; but it was quite a bounteous spread for war-time, during the reign of the Food Controller. Some things were short, but others made up for them.

Harry Wharton & Co. heard the full story of the recent drama from Archie Drake.

The meal progressed merrily, and a cheer went up from the assembled throng when Drake and Verney rose and stood face to face.

They had come to the parting of the ways. Verney was going back—not to the school which had so bored him, but home first, and, later, to some other school, which it was likely enough would also bore him.

For it was not to be denied that with all the skill at manly sports that made him popular, with all the pluck and other fine qualities he had, Verney was a difficult fellow to deal with. The audacity of his spoofing of Greyfriars naturally appealed to the juniors; but the game that he and Drake had played was not really one to grow enthusiastic over after careful consideration.

If Verney had stayed on at Greyfriars there would have been trouble. It would not have come from Bob Cherry. Bob was man enough to take a licking without rancour. But Verney's ambitious and restless nature would have impelled him to fight for first place in the Remove, and the Form would have suffered division into two warring sections.

Drake was not likely to cause any such trouble. There was not much in Drake; and in the long run Verney's dodge was calculated to hinder rather than to help him. Comparisons between Archie Drake, swanky, but on the whole a duffer, and Jack Verney, full of self-confidence and go, but very capable with it, could not have failed to be made.

But as a matter of fact Drake did not stay long at Greyfriars. It was not so ripping as he had thought it would be, and in a few weeks he was taken away and sent elsewhere.

No one foresaw that now, though. They were full of enthusiasm about the redoubtable Verney, and ready to make the best of Drake.

They cheered Verney to the echo as he stood there, erect and handsome, the cynosure of all eyes. The time had come for him to go. At Greyfriars he was but a bird of passage. But the Remove would remember him. In time he might grow into a legend, like the myths of old—might be told of as a kind of super-boy who could whack everybody and do everything perfectly.

Whereas if he had stayed—well, Verney was only human, after all, like the rest of us, and it is possible that he would have disappointed everyone!

(DON'T MISS "COKER, THE JOKER!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

GRUNDY'S COOKERY CLASS!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

I.

THE first we heard of Grundy's latest venture came in the shape of a number of muffled expostulations in Mr. Linton's voice, uttered from behind a handkerchief.

That was the first we heard, that is, but its existence had been made known to us a little previously. The odour was not to be denied, and prep was off for the present.

Accompanied by the whole Form, or thereabouts, Tommy, Manners, and I buzzed along to Grundy's study.

"Grundy!" gasped Mr. Linton. "What is the meaning of this—Phew!"

The wind blew down the chimney, and a heavy volume of something with a ghastly whiff to it enveloped Mr. Linton.

Grundy ceased glaring at Gunn, and began to fan Mr. Linton frantically with a newspaper. The half-asphyxiated master waved him off.

"Oh, dear!" he moaned faintly. "Grundy, explain at once! What is this foolish prank?"

"It isn't a prank, sir!" said Grundy warmly. "This is my cookery class—"

"My only hat!"

Mr. Linton didn't make that surprised observation. He was saying "Phew!" and "Whew!" alternately. The exclamation came from about thirty half-choked throats along the passage.

"My cookery class," said Grundy firmly. "We were getting along swimmingly with the roast beef, sir, when that lunatic Gunn—he glared at his red and flustered study-mate—put Keating's Powder in the frying-pan instead of gravy-salt."

"It was your fault, you ass!" exclaimed Gunn. "Who but a potty ass would keep Keating's Powder in a gravy-salt tin?"

"It was to send off to different chaps at the Front!" roared Grundy. "You know well enough I bought one big tin of it, and split it into portions. And I made it plain enough. I wrote the word 'Disinfectant' on the bottom of the tin in pencil."

"You're a fat-headed chump!"

"Why, I'll—"

"Silence!" stormed Linton. "In future, Grundy, you will kindly conduct these culinary catastrophes outside the building—as far outside as possible. I will—ouch!—retire."

His choking died away along the passage. "Well?" demanded Grundy, glaring at us. "Think you've entered for a grinning competition, or what?"

"What's the wheeze, Grundy, old scout?" asked Dane curiously.

"I'm economising," snorted Grundy; "but these dunderheads are worse than useless! Keating's Powder, the asses! If we send some jolly good, well-cooked cold meat to these canteen people it will save them heaps of labour and time and fires. And then, again, Mrs. Kebble does some very indifferent cooking sometimes. Yesterday I wasted the whole dinner-hour trying to get on the outside of a piece of leather. It was called beef. I volunteered to help her with the dinners, explaining how horrible her cooking was sometimes, and she—ahem!—chased me out with the rolling-pin!"

"Ha, ha! Still, here's luck, Grundy! Cook as much as you like, but don't ask any of us to taste the results!"

We repaired to our respective studies. For the next few minutes the old School House resounded with window-sashes being thrown violently up.

Grundy's Cookery Class, laden with spirit-stoves, pans, and a thousand-and-two other things, staggered across the Close, and disappeared into the woodshed.

Shortly afterwards a not altogether unappetising savour floated in at our open windows, telling us that business had been resumed in new premises.

II.

GRUNDY.—Well meaning, but potty.

GUNN.—Unwilling, but compelled.

WILKINS.—Ditto, ditto.

TRIMBLE.—Out for grub.

SCROPE.—Ditto, ditto.

GIBBONS.—Desperately hard up.

There you have a complete list of the honorary members of Grundy's Cookery Class. Each sported a cookery-book, and each—with the solitary exception of Grundy—made a point of not reading it.

The bell for morning lessons brought them out of the woodshed.

Gibbons smacked his lips, and Trimble did likewise, only more so. Scrope's pockets bulged with something which might possibly have been eatables.

Morning lessons were drawing to a close, when from the farthest corner of the Fourth Form-room rose a prolonged and melancholy groan.

"Ooo-er!"

Mr. Lathom jumped.

"Trimble!" he gasped.

"Y-y-yes, sir?"

"What is the meaning of that ridiculous noise?"

"I—I've got a pup-pup—"

"A pup!" ejaculated the master. "Are you referring to a dog? You have brought a dog into this room, Trimble, during lessons?"

"No, sir!" roared Trimble. "A pain, sir, in my—er—stom—er—under my waistcoat, sir! It's that awful grub of Grundy's, I think. Oo-oooh!"

"Go to Mrs. Kebble, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom exasperatedly; "and in future be less greedy!"

Trimble had not been gone two minutes when Grundy—who was in the Shell Form-room with us, and saw him through the window waddling across the quad—suddenly jumped to his enormous feet, waved his arms wildly, clenched his teeth, and flopped down again.

Mr. Linton glared at him.

"Grundy!" he rapped out. "Are you in pain?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!"

He told us later it was mental pain.

"I don't wonder at it. If the taste of your cooking corresponds with the odour, I am amazed at your swallowing a morsel! Ask Mrs. Kebble to give you an emetic."

Grundy scuttled out, and fastened on to Baggy outside the woodshed, where he was trying to turn the lock with a key three sizes too small. The whiff of the viands within, simmering on the spirit-stoves, nearly drove poor Baggy mad.

"Oh, would you, fatty!" said Grundy grimly. "Take that! And that! And that! And that!"

When Trimble returned to his Form-room the pain seemed to have been transferred to quite another portion of his anatomy. Possibly, thought those Fourth duffers, it was some form of neuralgia, which has earned quite a reputation for quick changing of quarters.

Classes dismissed, force of habit carried Baggy unconsciously towards the school tuckshop.

"That greedy beast, Grundy!" he grumbled. "Such minging Huns ought to be—"

Baggy stopped, for his attention was arrested by a rather unusual spectacle. From the tuckshop it is possible to see the back of the woodshed, and upon a ladder propped against it the unslender form of Taggles was visible to Trimble. Taggy was leisurely scooping out the gutter.

Baggy grunted, and was about to try his luck in the tuckshop, when his little eyes suddenly began to glimmer cunningly.

He scuttled back to the School House, and entered—not his own study, but that of the brainy Skimpole, in the Shell passage. There he sorted out from a drawer a phial of concentrated extract of cayenne, which

had been palmed off upon Skiamy as a splendid substitute for sugar by an obliging grocer. All the school had heard of it.

With the phial in his pocket, Baggy hovered round the woodshed, waiting for Taggy to descend. He had not long to wait. Taggles had timed that to be a four-minutes' job. At the end of two he stolidly descended, and went off to his lodge to occupy a well-earned half-hour's interval in taking his usual medicine—out of a bottle labelled "Gin."

When he had gone, Baggy swarmed up the ladder. To what source the Grundy C.C. attributed the creaking and groaning of the ladder, and the slight swaying to and fro of the building that there must have been, I haven't the faintest idea. Possibly they thought it was only another air-raid near at hand, not important enough to trouble about.

The enterprising Baggy opened an abnormally large skylight in the roof, and managed just to squeeze through. He found himself in a narrow loft, to which the smell of hot meat permeated. His mouth watered, and his eyes bulged with greed.

Peering through an aperture in the floor, he had a view of the G.C.C. at work. They were clustered round Gunn's stove, making doubly sure that he hadn't introduced Keating's again.

This was an ideal moment for Baggy to carry out his piratical project. A smoking-hot joint of tender roast beef, cooked by the fair hands of Grundy himself, was immediately beneath him. He emptied the contents of the phial upon the top of it, and retired to screw himself through the skylight with a suppressed chuckle and a grunt of emotion.

Barely had he stepped off the ladder on to the ground when Grundy, carrying his dish of roast beef covered with a cloth, emerged from the woodshed, his disciples at his heels.

He looked round at Baggy.

"You'll get nothing by nosing round here, Trimble!" he warned. "Lock that door, you chaps!"

Indoors, Grundy parted with his pupils. They, with Baggy, trooped into the dining-hall.

But Grundy had a deep and desperate scheme afoot, and went down to a room near the kitchen where the school dinners are cooked.

"After the chaps have finished dinner," he murmured, "and wonder why they are feeling as fit as if they had spent a week at Brighton, I'll let them know I cooked it, and they won't know how to thank me!"

He set the dish down on the table, removed the cloth, and placed a new half-crown-piece on top of the joint. He was lounging about the passage when Toby came along with the joint for dinner.

"Ah, Toby, old chap!" greeted Grundy affectionately, lifting the dish out of his hands. "Just step in here a minute, will you?"

With that he entered the room, and slammed the door in the astonished page's face.

It was the work of a moment to slither the dish under a chair. Then the wrathful Toby rattled at the door, and flung it open.

"Look 'ere! Wot—"

"There you are, Toby!" smiled Grundy. "A late Christmas-box, old chap!"

The page looked at the dish on the table, picked up the half-crown, bit it, pocketed it, stared at the blandly smiling Grundy as if he had great doubts as to his sanity, and walked on, carrying the substituted joint.

Grundy was severely admonished by Mr. Linton for being late at table. But the rebuke failed to obliterate the benign smile with which he favoured us all, and which we considered to be perfectly idiotic.

It is Baggy's genial custom, while grace

is being said, to have his knife and fork grasped firmly in each hand, ready for the onslaught. Scarcely had the last word been chanted, when Baggy set to furiously.

As usual, he was the first to begin, but—not as usual—he was the first to stop! His hands flew to his mouth at once, and his fat face was contorted.

"G-g-gle-grrrr! Ooooph!"

These two remarks, unintelligible as they seem, were our salvation. We hadn't had time to taste anything. We all stared at Baggy.

"Trimble," said Mr. Linton, laying down

his knife and fork, "your table manners are really most uncouth!"

"Water!" gasped Baggy. "Yrrrrrrrr!"

With feverish hands he filled a glass and drained it gulpingly, filled another, and repeated the performance; and yet again this did he do.

Mr. Linton looked in amazement from Baggy to the beef, and from the beef to Baggy, and finally tasted a morsel. He didn't taste two!

Some frightful prevaricator says that Scrope and Mellish, at the bottom of the table, were making bets as to who would drain the largest number of decanters!

Personally, I believe it not. (Brother Montagus-forgetteth that he was the f.p. who started the rumour.—Ed.)

But they finished at long, long last.

Grundy, we noticed, had been looking very thoughtful throughout.

"In the circus," he said later, addressing the members of his cookery class who assembled in his study, "the class will be—er—discontinued. You all ought to have benefited by my tuition; but a set of dolts like you are too much for a chap to stand long. Wire into the rashers!"

THE END.

BACKING UP QUELCHY!

By MARK LINLEY.

I.

"HE, he, he!"
The Famous Five and Peter Todd were entering the School House when Billy Bunter's unmelodious cackle fell on their ears. The porpoise of the Remove was standing at the top of the steps, and Snoop, who was lounging in the doorway with him, was also in a state of merriment.

"A measly moneylender, you know!" chortled the fat member of the Remove. "A blessed Sheeny! He, he, he—Yoop!" The last exclamation was occasioned by a slap on the back from Bob Cherry that sent the Owl staggering.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob cheerily. "Have they rescinded all the food orders, or is it because the Soap Controller's forbidden all washing for the period of the war?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"Better than either of those!" said Snoop, with a snigger. "Tell him all about it, tubby!"

Bunter blinked at them rather thoughtfully.

"Well, I happened to be passing Quelch's study when my shoelace became undone—he began cautiously, but he was interrupted by a roar from the Removites.

"That's enough for us!" said Johnny Bull, making to move away. "Come on, you chaps!"

"Here, hold on!" said Bunter hurriedly. "You haven't heard it yet, you know. Well, I happened to catch the sound of voices in the study—quite by accident, of course—and it fairly bowled me over when I heard who was in there jawing to Quelch!"

"Oh, suffocate him, somebody!" groaned Frank Nugent.

"I can tell you I was quite shocked when I recognised the voice," continued Billy Bunter, with an indignant blink at the interrupter. "It's coming to something when a Greyfriars master entertains a chap like Lazarus, and—"

"Lazarus!" yelled the Removites in an incredulous chorus.

"Blessed if he doesn't beat the Kaiser and Hindenburg rolled into one!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "Bump him!"

"It's true!" howled Bunter, backing away in alarm. "Snoopy'll back me up if you ask him!"

"Bunter's right for once," said Snoop, with a sneering grin. "The old Sheeny asked me the way to the Quelch-bird's study as he came in. Fine show-up for Greyfriars, ain't it? Quite a stain on the unblemished reputation of the school! He, he, he! Ow!"

While he was speaking Harry Wharton's finger and thumb had fastened on to his ear, and Snoop fled, leaving Billy Bunter to the tender mercies of the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" said the Owl of the Remove, eyeing them rather apprehensively. "I'm willing to tell you all I heard, as you're special pals, you know; but if you start ragging I shall decline to have anything to say on the subject!"

"Do you think we want to hear the yarn, you fat oyster?" cried Bob warmly.

"Oh, come off, Bob!" said Bunter, with a knowing wink. "You'd like to hear as much as anyone else, of course. You can't fool me, you know. I'm rather deep!"

And while Bob stared at him speechlessly Bunter went on:

"Look here, you chaps, I'll tell you about this. Old Lazarus, the pawnbroker and moneylender from Courtfield, is in Quelch's study, and from the little I heard I reckon

Quelch has been borrowing of him, and can't repay. I might have made certain, only that beast Wingate came along and kicked me out of the passage, though I explained I was only tying up my shoelace!"

"Same old shoelace!" murmured Peter Todd, with a sigh. "Bunter, at one time I had hopes of your ultimate salvation, but I'm losing 'em fast now. Still, a bumping won't do you any harm. Collar him!"

Six pairs of hands grasped Bunter, whirled him off his feet, and brought him into painful contact with the stone step.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Bump him till he tells the truth!" suggested Johnny Bull brightly; and the proposal was adopted unanimously.

"Remember, tubby, we're doing this for your own good," said Harry Wharton. But, judging by his howls, Billy Bunter was by no means grateful for their kindly attentions.

"I tell you it's all true!" he roared, trying to struggle away. They were just raising him in readiness for another descent when the warning cry "Cave!" from Frank Nugent caused them to drop. Bunter as though he had suddenly become red-hot.

Mr. Quelch descended the steps in earnest conversation with a stout individual, whose prominent nose and dark, curly hair left no doubt as to his nationality.

"Lazarus!" whispered Bob Cherry, and the rest of the Co. stared in surprise; while Billy Bunter, who had scrambled to his feet, smirked with satisfaction at this sudden confirmation of his tale.

The Remove Form-master glanced at them severely as he passed, but made no mention of the little rag he had interrupted, and the Famous Five breathed freely again when he had gone.

"Well, what did I tell you?" demanded Bunter triumphantly. "That's old Lazarus, ain't it?"

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Harry Wharton, rubbing his chin reflectively. "It's the first time I've known a Greyfriars master to have dealings with Lazarus. Still, it's nothing to do with us, so I vote we move on."

"I say, you fellows, we ought to take a hand in this!" said Bunter, rolling into the School House after them. "It's up to us as leading members of Quelch's Form, you know, and I propose we go through his desk when he goes out and see if we can find any correspondence. Chaps of our standing in the school are expected to uphold its honour."

"Well, if that's your idea of upholding the honour of Greyfriars, I'd like to know how you'd set about disgracing it!" said Bob sharply.

"Seems to me the only thing Bunter understands is the boot!" said Johnny Bull. "Let's dribble him in to dinner, and perhaps the experience will drive the lesson into his fat noddle."

"The perhapsfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh very dubiously. But he joined in with the rest, and Bunter was duly booted along as far as the dining-hall. And the glare that he gave the Famous Five during the meal might have shrivelled them up on the spot had they not already become hardened to Bunter's glares.

II.

A PAWNBROKER and moneylender of somewhat doubtful reputation is not the sort of man for a schoolmaster to have dealings with, and Harry Wharton & Co. were somewhat surprised at

the incident. However, as Wharton had remarked, it was no business of theirs, and by the time dinner was over the Famous Five had forgotten all about it.

But Billy Bunter and Sidney James Snoop had longer memories for scandal, if for nothing else, and, once free from the restrictions of the dinner-table, they did their best to spread the tale of Mr. Quelch's visitor all over Greyfriars. The consequence was that as Harry Wharton & Co. wheeled their bikes down to the gates they found little groups of juniors all over the place chortling over the circumstance of a Form-master receiving a visit from Mr. Lazarus.

Bunter, of course, had garnished the story with many little interesting details of his own invention, and, with Snoop to back him up, he found many believers. Hence, there was hilarity on Little Side and in the quad. The Famous Five and Toddy were greeted on all sides with demands for confirmation of the yarn as they made towards the gates, but they wisely held their peace, and declined to participate in the discussions.

"We shall soon be fed up with Lazarus, if the chaps keep on in this strain," remarked Bob, as they mounted their machines in the road.

"I'm fed up already!" said Frank Nugent, with a yawn. "Let's forget all about it while we're out, anyway!" And, the nabob having added that the fedupfulness was terrific, the subject was dropped.

Courtfield was reached while it was yet early, and, having made their purchases at the sports outfitter's, the Removites decided on a visit to the cinema. They spent a couple of hours watching the pictures, then emerged once more into the old High Street, and mounted their bikes for the return journey.

Harry Wharton, who was riding in front of the rest, suddenly caught sight of something that caused him to start violently and pull up with a jerk so unexpected as to send the rest scattering in confusion.

"Well, you might warn us before attempting little tricks like that!" gasped Bob Cherry, as he swerved clear of his leader.

"What the dickens was the matter?" demanded Johnny Bull. "It's a wonder I didn't pitch right into you!"

"Sorry!" said the Remove captain, without betraying much evidence of acute sorrow in his face. "One doesn't see a Greyfriars master going into a pawnshop every day of the week, and it rather surprised me for the moment."

"A master in old Lazarus' popshop!" said Frank Nugent, staring, while the rest gave vent to their feelings in expressive whistles.

"Surely it wasn't old Quelch?" said Bob Cherry. But Harry Wharton nodded.

"There was no mistaking him. It almost looks as if Bunter's yarn about the loan is true. Perhaps we'd better keep quiet about this, you chaps!"

"Mum's the word!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Still, it may be all right, you know. Bunter's word is nothing to convict a master on!"

"Well, we have the evidence of our eyes, anyway!" grunted Bull. "We've seen Quelch in confab with old Lazarus, and Wharton's just seen him go into the shop. That should be good enough!"

"Oh, blow Lazarus, and Quelch, too!" said Wharton. "It's no concern of ours, as I said before. Let's talk about the next match!"

This was the signal for a discussion on the merits and demerits of various members of the Remove team, and by the time they had arrived at the school gates Mr. Quelch's

affairs were completely banished from their thoughts.

Billy Bunter hurried up to them as they wheeled their machines to the bike-shed.

"I say, you fellows!" he cried. "Did you see Quelch while you were out? I followed him to the station, but couldn't go farther without my train-fare. Shouldn't wonder if he's gone to meet that old Jew again! Here, wharrer you at, Cherry, you beast?"

"Wheeling my bike into you!" replied Bob cheerfully. And Bunter, with an angry snort, dodged out of the way of the humorous junior, and rolled off towards the School House without learning whether they had met Mr. Quelch, or not.

The Famous Five found, to their relief, that most of the fellows had already forgotten Bunter's story, in spite of the Owl's efforts to keep them interested in it. Consequently, there were no awkward questions to be answered, for which the Removites were devoutly thankful.

Next morning, however, there was an unexpected development in the affair. Just before breakfast, Billy Bunter rolled up to Harry Wharton, his eyes glimmering behind his spectacles in a way that seemed to portend exciting news.

"I say, Harry, old man," he said. "I've just found something that'll convince even you about old Quelch!"

"Oh, for goodness' sake give Quelch a rest!" said Wharton, with a gesture of annoyance. "I'm not interested in his affairs!"

"Yes; but this settles the question for good!" said Billy Bunter, blinking at him. "You see, I happened to pick up this postcard that Trotter dropped from his letter-basket just now, and—ahem!—read it through without thinking. Listen! Dear Mr. Quelch,—I shall be much obliged if you will let me know what you intend to do by Friday, as I cannot afford to wait later. If you cannot give me your definite answer by then, I shall be forced to see Dr. L—about it. But, as I prefer to deal with you, I trust you will take advantage of this last opportunity I am giving you.—Yours faithfully, S. Lazarus."

Billy Bunter paused for breath, and regarded the Remove captain triumphantly.

"There! What do you think of that?"

"Why, you fat, spying cad!" said Harry Wharton, in wrathful tones. "Do you mean to say you've bagged Quelch's correspondence just to satisfy your own rotten curiosity?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I've told you it was quite by accident I read it. I hope I am above prying into other people's letters!"

Wharton grunted, and knitted his brows thoughtfully.

"Sounds as if Quelch's really in debt to the bounder!" he murmured.

"I didn't have a single doubt about it all along," said Bunter, with a smirk. "This postcard only makes it all the more certain."

"I suppose he has been hard hit by the war, or something," Harry continued, still thoughtful. "Old Lazarus is an outsider, though, using threats like that. If I see him coming to tell the Head he'll get a warm reception! And he must mean the Head."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you burbling about?" demanded Bob Cherry, coming up at that moment.

Wharton explained briefly, and Bob Cherry whistled.

"Phew! Poor old Quelch! We must take a hand in this, Harry!"

"That's what I said yesterday," chimed in Billy Bunter eagerly. "Old Quelch ought to be shown up, disgracing the school like this!"

"Fat lot you care about the school!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Let's come and jaw this over with the rest, Harry!"

And Billy Bunter was left to wipe out the disgrace by his own efforts.

III.

THE Famous Five had just time for a hurried consultation before "brekker," and when they were all gathered in Study No. 3, Harry Wharton explained briefly how he had come to learn the purport of the postcard.

"That sounds bad," commented Frank Nugent. "Fancy old Quelch, of all persons, though!"

"The surprisingness is terrific that the esteemed and venerable Quelch should be in debt with the ludicrous and disgusting Lazarus!" said Inky. And the others chuckled.

"Well, what's the best thing to do under the circumstances?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Keep Lazarus out of the school!" replied Harry promptly. "That's all we can do for

the present. And perhaps if we tide over the difficulty for a day or so Quelch will raise the money, or pacify the old bounder somehow."

"Yes; but how are we to keep him out of the school?" demanded Nugent.

"By force of arms! In other words, we're going to kick him out of the school the moment he shows his face this side of the gates!"

"My hat! That's a trifle high-handed, ain't it?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The situation warrants high-handed dealing," answered the Remove leader calmly. "Quelch must be saved at all costs; and, if it's in our power, we're going to do it!"

"Well spoken, noble captain!" said Bob Cherry, in melodramatic tones. "And now for brekker!"

During the meal, the Famous Five regarded their Form-master anxiously; but, somewhat to their surprise, he showed no signs of the cloud that hung over his head. Many other Removites were casting furtive glances at Mr. Quelch, for Billy Bunter had lost no time in giving full details of the latest development of the scandal.

All that day, whenever they were out of the Form-room, the Famous Five kept a wary eye on the gates, ready to make a rush at the sight of Lazarus. But nothing happened until after tea, when a sudden whistle from Bob Cherry, who was on the School House steps, announced the arrival of their expected visitor. The other four members of the Co., who were on the alert, dashed out at the signal, and followed him down the steps.

"There he is; just coming in at the gates!" yelled Bob excitedly. "Nab him, you chaps!"

Mr. Lazarus strolled on serenely towards the School House, all unconscious of the sensation he was causing. But he woke up on finding that the Famous Five had surrounded him, and were barring his further progress.

"Good-evening, young sgentlemen!" said Mr. Lazarus, with an easy unconcern that did not seem quite real.

"Hail!" cried Bob Cherry, making a deep obeisance.

"All hail!" added Johnny Bull, nearly touching the ground with his forehead.

"The hailfulness is terrific!" concluded Inky gravely.

Mr. Lazarus stared at them blankly, possibly thinking that Greyfriars had been turned into a lunatic asylum since his last visit.

"I want to see your master. Allow me to pass," he said, trying to push by Bull.

"About old Quelch—eh?" growled Johnny, changing his attitude considerably. "Well, you've chosen the wrong time, old bird, and we're going to impress that fact on your mind with the aid of that fountain over there. Savvy?"

"Are you mad?" gasped the pawnbroker, with a startled look at the fountain that stood near by. "I haf not touched you, haf I?"

"No; but you're trying to touch our Form-master, which is as bad!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Stop him, Harry!"

Mr. Lazarus tried to bolt, but Harry Wharton's fist closed on his collar and held him fast. A moment later the rest had also seized him, and they carried him, struggling furiously, to the fountain, where he was held for some seconds on the edge of the basin, just over the water. No Chinese torture could have been more nerve-racking than Mr. Lazarus' experience as he gazed into the crystal waters beneath him.

"In with him, when I've counted three!" said Johnny Bull. "One, two—three!"

With a great splash the pawnbroker dropped into the water, and came up spluttering, and gouging the water out of his eyes.

"You—you—you young scoundrels!" he stammered, when he could open his mouth.

"I'll haf the law of you! I'll—"

"Duck him again!" yelled Harry Wharton. "We'll teach him to threaten old Quelch!"

Mr. Lazarus was fairly screaming with rage when he came up for the second time, and his language was strong enough to have made the ancient walls of Greyfriars totter with shame had they been able to hear. By this time quite a crowd of interested onlookers had gathered, but they made no attempt to intervene on the unfortunate man's behalf.

"Once again for luck!" roared Johnny Bull gleefully. And they were just about to throw their victim in for the third time when there came a dramatic interruption.

"Boys!"

"Quelch!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh crumbs! This puts the lid on it!"

Mr. Quelch rustled on the scene with a thunderous brow, and regarded them in utter amazement.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" he asked, in a voice that struck quite a chill to the hearts of the Famous Five.

"I—I—" stammered Harry Wharton.

"Ahem! Just so! You see—" began Bob Cherry. Then he lapsed into silence.

Mr. Lazarus staggered out of his improvised bath, and began explaining with a wealth of excited gestures. The Remove-master's face grew darker and darker as he listened, and when he faced round to the Removites his eyes seemed to pierce them through.

"Do I understand that you attacked this gentleman without provocation, and deliberately ducked him in the fountain?" he demanded.

"Well, you see, sir—"

"It's like this—"

"Wharton may speak for all!" snapped Mr. Quelch. And, with a sort of half groan, Harry Wharton began:

"We were doing it for you sake, sir!"

"For my sake!" repeated the Form-master in astonishment. "What can you mean, boy?"

With a hopeless look at the rest Wharton explained briefly what had happened, without mentioning any names. When he came to the episode of the postcard, Billy Bunter, who was in the front of the crowd, tried to slip away unobserved; but Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes fixed on him with an expression that made him decide that it would pay him better to stay.

"So you imagine I am in debt to Mr. Lazarus, and that he is pestering me for a settlement?" said the Remove-master, in a dangerously quiet voice.

The Famous Five looked at one another rather uneasily. Somehow, it seemed rather different now that Mr. Quelch himself was present.

"That was what we thought, sir," answered Wharton. "That's why we ducked the old—I mean Mr. Lazarus, in the fountain!"

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"Very well. I think I can guess the name of the boy who had been kind enough to investigate my private affairs with such unfortunate results. Come here, Bunter!"

"It wasn't me!" howled Billy Bunter ungrammatically. "I—I'd scorn to do such an action, sir; in fact, I told these chaps that it was quite by accident I read the postcard. I don't know anything about it. I never saw the thing!"

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd, which Mr. Quelch instantly silenced.

"Perhaps when you play the part of an amateur detective in the future you will make certain that you fully understand the purport of any letters you happen to intercept, Bunter. Mr. Lazarus' postcard simply referred to a typewriter of his over which we were bargaining. Another customer had offered a higher price for it, and I was undecided whether I could go up to his figure. Mr. Lazarus very kindly gave me till Friday to think it over. As to the conversation you say you heard in the study, that is pure invention."

The Famous Five gasped in chorus, and five glares of concentrated ferocity converged upon Billy Bunter.

"I—I—we must apologise to Mr. Lazarus," said Harry Wharton unhappily. "Of course, we shouldn't have dreamed of ducking him if we hadn't felt sure we were doing it for your sake, sir."

Mr. Quelch tightened his lips grimly. He believed that, but he could not let mercy temper justice too much.

"All six of you will go to my study, and await me there!" he said. "Mr. Lazarus, I am very sorry indeed that this should have occurred, and I will see that these boys are very severely dealt with. If you will come into the House, you can have a change of clothes."

Mr. Lazarus nodded, and tramped off with the Remove Form-master, leaving a trail of wet behind him. Now that he understood, he seemed to be taking the assault upon him very well.

The six juniors had a very painful interview with Mr. Quelch, and crawled out of the study squeezing their hands under their armpits, and uttering a weird variety of doleful exclamations.

"This is the last time I take it on myself to look after a Form-master!" groaned Bob Cherry.

And so said they all.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 63.—HOP HI.

WHEN Wun Lung heard that his younger brother was coming to Greyfriars he danced.

The Remove felt surprised. It had never been Wun Lung's way to give such open expression to emotion. In almost any circumstances he was able to preserve his impassive look—that look which causes newcomers to the Flowery Kingdom to imagine that they will never be able to tell one Chinaman from another; which makes us here, where a native of the Celestial Land is more rarely seen, cherish the delusion that they are alike. It is a curious fact that most Chinamen have a notion that all Englishmen are very much alike. Both we and they are wrong.

But in part that look of impassiveness upon the face of a Chinaman is a mask. He will not let a Westerner see what he feels. So it is with Wun Lung. For once, however, he dropped the mask.

The tidings he had must have been very joyful to him. Before his brother came he had made friends in the Form. But between him and the best of those friends there was a wide gulf. Inky and he are both from the East, of course. But that does not make them alike in feeling or in thought. The Chinese is as different from the Hindu—and more especially from the Hindu descended from a line of warrior princes, like Inky—as an Englishman or a Scot is from a Spaniard or a Swede. Perhaps the gulf is wider than between the members of any two European races, except always the Germans and the Bulgarians, as compared with any other. One might add the Turks. But the Turks and the Bulgars are really Asiatic races; and the Germans are scarcely human beings.

Bob Cherry is Wun Lung's very good friend. He would do anything for Bob. But all his brains—and the brains of Wun Lung are uncommonly good—cannot avail him when it comes to understanding some of Bob's sayings and some of Bob's doings. Only growing to think and feel like Bob will accomplish this for him.

So Wun Lung must have been very lonely, though he might never have confessed it.

And when the news came he danced on the table, singing something which sounded like: "Ka, kay, ko, ko, ko! Fi! Fo! Ko, ko, ko!"

The Second, into which Form Hop Hi was to come, did not show the same delight. Winifred asked Dicky Nugent and some of the others to tea, and tried to get them to promise to go easy with the new kid. Dicky was ready to promise that he would make the new kid "hop high," but none of them seemed to care to go much beyond that. And that was not at all the sort of promise Wharton wanted.

But the small Celestial proved himself no meek victim of the ragging of his Form-fellows. Hop Hi is every bit as crafty as Wun Lung; and Wun Lung has Skinner or Snoop permanently back-seated when it comes to craft.

He showed it on the day of his brother's coming. Bulstrode, then a bully and a rotter, Skinner, and Snoop went to the station to give the youngster "a friendly reception." Wun Lung tricked them into the waiting-room, locked them in, and upset all their plans.

The three plotters got out after the train had come in, and found the brothers at Uncle Clegg's. Wun Lung saw them coming, and made a hasty bargain with Uncle Clegg for eggs—"velly old eggs, velly old, smelly." We know Uncle Clegg. If Uncle admits that eggs are very old—smelly—then those eggs



are genuine antiques. They were to be had at eighteen a shilling. Bulstrode, Skinner, and Snoop had them, and Wun Lung settled the bill. But Bulstrode had a bill to pay, too. In his haste he sat down in a box of eggs—superior eggs. They must have been superior, for the price that honest Uncle put upon them was twopence each. Bulstrode had sixteen shillings to pay. Now, I wonder whether Wun Lung might not have had eggs from the same box at his price? That must remain one of the unsolved problems of history, however.

The Second got no change out of Hop Hi. For any trick they tried upon him he was ready with a trick in return. Hop Hi gave a dormitory feed, and that and his pluck and cheeriness put him right with Dicky Nugent & Co. almost at once.

But Bulstrode wanted vengeance, and tried to get it. Bulstrode failed. The little Chinese tricked him completely. He got out of the window in the dark, and pretended to drop, out of sheer fear of the bully. He was not really afraid, and he did not drop; he swarmed down a rain-pipe. But Bulstrode

believed him dead, or almost as bad to dead, and was horribly frightened. He soon recovered when Hop Hi admitted the trick, though, and he went with Skinner to the Second dormitory thirsting for vengeance still. The Second turned on the precious pair, and put them through it very thoroughly.

We have not heard a great deal of Wun Lung's minor since then. But naturally we do not hear a great deal about the Second Form. They are too young and small to be rivals of the Remove, and the Remove fellows are not allowed fags, as the seniors are.

But the little chap played a prominent part in the spoof of the kite, when Wun Lung was supposed to have been carried out to sea by his monster kite, and drowned. He was not; it was a dummy figure that the kite took out to sea, and Hop Hi knew all about that. His brother had let him into the secret, for he had a part to play in the spoof.

It was only to be expected that Wun Lung's brother should be overcome with grief; and he certainly seemed overcome. He had to be given a bed-room to himself for his wailings upset the Second horribly. All that helped the plot, of course. It made the feeding of Wun Lung, who was concealed on the premises all the time, easier. And Wun Lung, as his own ghost, almost frightened Loder out of his life.

Loder has always been a special enemy of the two Chinese juniors; and he aided, though he hardly realised fully what he was doing, in the kidnapping of Hop Hi by Fe-Chung, the scoundrelly Chinaman who was out for ransom from the youngster's father. Wun Lung wanted to kill Loder for that; he meant it. But that was before the Famous Five had worsted the kidnapper and got Hop Hi back. Bob Cherry snapped the blade of the dagger Wun Lung had been proposing to insert into Loder under his boot, and the Chinese Removeite was very angry indeed. But he could forgive "handsome Bob Chelly."

We saw Hop Hi following his brother's lead loyally in a recent story—that in which Koumi Rao, of St. Jim's, was carried away by enemies of Inky's by mistake. The two Chinese boys showed rare courage and endurance then. Just as Englishman and Spaniard would feel somewhat as men of one blood—both being Europeans—among a tribe of savages, so the fact of being fellow Asiatics made those two ready to like Koumi Rao, as they have always liked Inky. He was not really much nearer to them in thought and feeling than their English chums; but yet there was that bond—the bond of the East—and, moreover, the Jam of Bundelore had won their hearts by his kindness.

They have pluck enough, those two, though it is different in some ways from British pluck; and most certainly they know how to be loyal to their friends, which is no small thing!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"COKER, THE JOKER!"

By Frank Richards.

Coker has rather a genius for exploiting right ideas in a wrong way. His latest is the notion that cheerfulness helps no end in war-time. This is indisputably right. The fellow who goes about grouching because he cannot get all the meat he wants, or because air-raids don't suit his nerves, or because he has never thought of being a soldier, but is hearing eighteen now, and finds himself obliged to face the prospect of joining up, is doing harm. We are in this war for our lives and all that makes life worth living. It would be better by far that the British

Isles should sink beneath the sea, with every man, woman, boy, girl, and infant in them, than that we should have to submit to Prussian dominion. So the thing to do is to put up with all that the war means, and grumble no more than we can help when it is brought home to us.

Also to be cheerful about it. That is the great Horace's idea. He does his best to carry it out. Unfortunately, his notion of what makes for cheerfulness is an absurd one. Even a good pun does not raise the spirits of those who hear it to any very marked extent; the pun is one of the poorest and cheapest forms of humour. But Coker's puns are not good—they are as bad as puns can be. Kept too long in cold storage, perhaps! Anyway, like some other things that have had that fate, they fail to appeal to the appetite. Coker tries them on very nearly everybody he encounters, including his Form-master. He even tries to cheer up the spirits of a margarine queue by his gems of wit. For the rest—see next number!

NOTICES.

For six weeks from the date of this issue the only notices I am prepared to accept are cricket ones. I don't want to stand in the way of these, for upon them may depend the getting of a Saturday game by a good many readers. But I cannot take notices about back numbers, amateur magazines, leagues, correspondence, or anything of that kind during the period named. By the end of it I hope to have cleared off most of the pile of notices which await insertion. This will be fairer to those whose notices have already been accepted. As it is, newcomers sometimes get in out of their turn, for I cannot pretend to keep the notices in order of receipt—I get far too many for that, and have not the time.

I know the notices are a popular feature, and I do not propose to discontinue them. But it will not hurt any of you to wait a few weeks.

YOUR EDITOR.