

THE ARTFUL DODGER!



TREATING BESSIE BUNTER!

An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. 5-4-19



The Artful Dodger!

A Magnificent New Long, Complete School Tale of

HARRY WHARTON & CO. AT GREYFRIARS.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Called Up!

BUZ-Z-Z-Z-Z!

"Dear me!"

Buz-z-z-z-z!

The telephone-bell rang loudly and insistently in Dr. Locke's study. The Head of Greyfriars turned somewhat impatiently to the instrument.

"Pray excuse me a moment, Mr. Quelch!"

"Certainly, sir!"

A most enjoyable conversation had been proceeding in the Head's study. The Head and the Remove-master had been thrashing out an obscure passage in *Æschylus*. What that ancient Greek gentleman had precisely meant to convey in that particular passage was a moot point; the Head took one view, and Mr. Quelch took another. And that argument was as enjoyable to the two worthy old gentlemen as a first-rate cricket-match was to the heroes of the Remove.

For the matter was a very important one. The Head had been labouring for twenty years or more upon a tremendous edition of *Æschylus*, adorned with lengthy notes in Ciceronian Latin, which was to appear some day and knock all previous editions into a cocked hat, so to speak, and was certain to cause a flutter of excitement among a score of bald-headed old gentlemen at Oxford.

And from the discussion of such sublime matters the Head was suddenly called back to common earth by the buzzing of the telephone-bell.

It was really too bad.

So it was not surprising that Dr. Locke jerked the receiver impatiently off the hooks, and that his voice was sharp as he spoke into the transmitter.

"Well?"

"Hallo! Are you there?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Is that Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"Is that you, Billy?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm Bessie."

"Bub-bub-Bessie!" stuttered the Head.

"Yes, you fat bounder!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head.

He forgot even *Æschylus*, and "Epta epi Thebas," in his astonishment at being addressed as a fat bounder.

"Are you coming to meet me?" went on the voice.

"Mum-mum-meet you?"

"Yes. I'm at Redclyffe now, waiting for a train to Courtfield at half-past three.

I suppose you'll be too jolly lazy to come along to the station?"

"Good gracious!"

"What did you say, Billy?"

"Bless my soul! My—my—my name is not Billy!" gasped the Head. "Madam, you appear to have been given the wrong number!"

"Rot!"

"Eh?"

"That's Greyfriars School, isn't it?"

"Certainly! But——"

"Then it's the right number. Are you Billy Bunter?"

"Billy Bunter!" stuttered the Head.

"Nunno! Certainly I am not Billy Bunter! Bless my soul!"

"Why couldn't you say so, then?"

"Eh?"

"I thought it didn't sound like Billy's voice. Who are you, if you're not Billy? Tell Billy to come to the telephone."

"Madam——"

"Billy's there somewhere, I suppose, isn't he?"

"Probably Bunter of the Remove is somewhere about the school, madam; but it is not customary——"

"Tell him I'm here."

"Madam——"

"Not so much of your madam——"

"Eh?"

"I'm not a hundred years old. I'm Billy Bunter's sister Bessie."

"Oh!"

"I'm coming to see him—see? That's why I rung up Greyfriars. Tell him I want to speak to him."

"Bless my soul!"

"I can't hold on much longer. They'll want me to pay another three d., and I'm not going to. Call Billy."

"Miss Bunter," gasped the Head, "it is not customary for junior scholars to be rung up on the headmaster's telephone!"

"Oh, crumbs!" came a surprised voice along the wires. "Are you the Head?"

"I am the Head!"

"Oh, I thought you were the porter or something!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Still, you can tell Billy I want to speak to him," went on the fat voice, in coaxing tones, "as a special favour, sir. You see, I want Billy to meet me at Courtfield, or else Sammy. I don't know the way to Greyfriars."

"Really, Miss Bunter——"

"They'll cut me off in a minute."

A strange voice—evidently from the exchange—was audible at both ends of the wire.

"Do you wish to take another call?"

"No," came the prompt reply of Miss

Bessie Bunter, "I don't! Keep me on for another minute, and——"

Sudden silence!

The young lady at the exchange apparently considered that Miss Bunter had had her money's worth, and she was cut off.

Dr. Locke breathed hard as he put up the receiver.

"Dear me!" he said. "Really, this is—is—is—ahem! It appears to be a sister of Bunter, of your Form, Mr. Quelch, who was speaking. I—I suppose the— the young lady was unaware how very— very extraordinary——"

Buz-z-z-z-z-z!

The telephone-bell rang again before the Head and Mr. Quelch could get back to *Æschylus* and the "Seven Against Thebes."

Buz-z-z-z-z-z!

"Really—really this——"

Dr. Locke took up the receiver again. "Madam," he exclaimed into the transmitter, "I——"

"Are you there?"

"I am here, and I wish you to understand plainly that I decline to be troubled. Bunter cannot——"

"Can't you call him to the telephone for a minute? I've spent another threepence on it——"

"Certainly not!"

Snap!

The receiver went back on the hooks with a snap that made the instrument jump.

Dr. Locke turned to Mr. Quelch, with a heightened colour.

"Really, this passes all patience!" he exclaimed. "Now, Mr. Quelch, you were saying, when that excessively impertinent young lady interrupted us——"

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch. "To return to the subject. I was about to say—— Bless my soul!"

Buz-z-z-z-z-z!

It was the telephone-bell again.

"Really, I shall have to speak very plainly to that young person!" exclaimed the Head, in tones of intense irritation.

He jerked up the receiver.

"Madam," he almost shouted into the transmitter, "I regard this as an act of extreme impertinence——"

"Dr. Locke——"

"How dare you obtrude yourself upon me in this way!"

"Sir!"

"I refuse to be troubled by you—I distinctly refuse! If I were near you, madam, I should be tempted to box your ears for your excessive impertinence in ringing me up at all!"

"Dr. Locke! How dare you!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Are you intoxicated, sir?" came an outraged voice along the wires. Not the voice of Bessie Bunter, but—as the Head now recognised with horror—the voice of the vicar's wife at Friardale. "How dare you—"

"Good heavens!" gasped the horrified Head. "It—it—it is Mrs. Lambe! Madam, I—I—I beg—I—I— A mistake on—"

"I have never been so insulted in my life! I—"

"Madam—" gasped the unhappy Head.

"My husband, sir, asked me to ring you up, in connection with the church bazaar. That is the reason for what you are pleased to designate excessive impertinence."

"Madam, I—I never—I did not—I mean—that is to say— Oh, bless my soul! Pray listen a moment—"

Silence.

"Madam— Mrs. Lambe—my dear madam—"

But answer there came none! The incensed lady had rung off.

The discussion on Æschylus did not continue in the Head's study. The unfortunate Head was too disturbed just then even to appreciate the uncommon beauties of "Epta epi Thebas."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Pleasant News for Wally!

"WELL hit, Bunter!" Bob Cherry called out that remark in hearty tones.

It was a fine spring afternoon, and a half-holiday at Greyfriars. A good many of the Remove were on Little Side, for cricket practice was beginning at Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, was giving much thought to coming matches and the selection of men for the Remove Eleven.

Not very long since the Remove fellows would have chuckled at the bare idea of Bunter being given a trial for the Remove Eleven. But of late Bunter had never ceased to astonish the Removites.

The Owl of the Remove had astounded them by turning out a first-class footballer. After that Harry Wharton & Co. were prepared to find that he could play cricket, too—and they found that he could!

The fat junior was at the wickets now, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the best junior bowler at Greyfriars, was giving him some of the best. And Bunter was sending them home as fast as they came.

It was a boundary hit that called forth Bob Cherry's shout.

Bunter glanced round, and grinned at the Co. and the other fellows who were watching his performances.

Accustomed as they were to being surprised of late by Bunter, the juniors could not help being surprised again as they watched him.

Only Bunter himself knew the explanation of the mystery.

Even Sammy Bunter of the Second Form, was not yet aware that his major's place in the Remove had been taken by his cousin Wally—for the Bunter cousins were so exactly alike that even Bunter minor was taken in.

Naturally, Harry Wharton & Co., who had met Wally only on a few occasions, had no suspicion.

"Isn't he a corker?" said Bob Cherry. "Why, that fat bounder is going to be one of our best bats, Harry!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"It's a corker," he agreed. "Who'd have thought it? But he can play footer, and he can play cricket!"

"He must have been pretending to be a clumsy ass all the time," remarked Frank Nugent. "But why should he?"

"He always was a spoofer," said Johnny Bull. "But why he should spoof us into believing that he was a clumsy owl beats me hollow!"

"Well, he's improving wonderfully," said Wharton. "Even his sight seems good now. You can see that he's blinking over his glasses instead of through them. In fact, he seems to have an eye like a hawk."

"I suppose Bunter will have a chance for the Eleven?" remarked Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"I rather think so," assented Wharton. He smiled a little. Smithy was very keen on seeing his chum, Tom Redwing, in the Remove Eleven; but even Smithy had to admit that Bunter was a more likely recruit, good as Redwing was.

Sammy Bunter of the Second Form came along, and stopped to blink at Harry Wharton & Co.

"Seen my major?" he asked.

"There he is, you young owl!"

Sammy blinked at the fat figure at the wicket.

"What's Billy doing there?" he asked.

"Batting, of course!"

"Billy can't bat!" answered the fat fag positively.

"Well, we always thought he couldn't," said Wharton. "But he's turning out a cricketer as well as a footballer."

"Gammon!" said Sammy cheerfully.

"What?"

Sammy Bunter winked a fat wink.

"You can't pull my leg, you know," he remarked. "Billy can't play cricket; he's too jolly fat. He can't do anything. Why, he can't see from one end of the pitch to the other!"

"Looks as if he can now," said Tom Redwing, smiling.

"Bosh! I know he can't! I don't understand this game, but you can't gammon me," said Sammy, shaking his head. "I know Billy all right! He's a spoofer! I say, Billy!" he shouted.

Wally Bunter did not look round.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh was preparing to deliver another ball, and the fat batsman had his eyes on the dusky nabob.

"Billy!" roared the fag.

"Dry up, fatty," said Bob Cherry.

"Can't you see he's busy?"

"Oh, that's all rot! He's wanted."

"Shush!"

But Sammy Bunter refused to shush. He shouted again.

"Billy, you fathead, come off; you're wanted. Bessie's coming to see you!"

Whiz!

The ball came down like a bullet—and Wally Bunter's bat was not in the way. The middle stump was whipped out of the ground, leaving the wicket with a toothless look. Bunter of the Remove had spun round, his fat face full of dismay, as the name of Bessie reached his ears.

"Call that batting?" roared Bolsover major in great scorn. "I told you that fat owl couldn't keep his wicket up, Wharton!"

Sammy Bunter chuckled as the wicket went down.

"Is that what you fellows call cricket?" he asked. "You can't spoof me. Billy can't play for toffee!"

"What's the matter with you, Bunter?" exclaimed Wharton. "You didn't even try to stop that ball!"

"I—I—" stammered Wally Bunter.

He came off the pitch.

"Finished?"

"Sammy—Sammy said—"

"You're wanted," said Sammy.

"You needn't go on pretending to play

cricket, Billy; you know you can't play. Bessie's rung you up on the telephone."

"Oh!" gasped the fat Removite.

"It's the telephone in the prefects' room," said Sammy. "Wingate told me to call you; and he said you could tell Bessie not to do it again, because it isn't allowed."

"Oh!"

"Well, ain't you going?" demanded the fat fag. "If you make Bessie hold on till she has to pay again she'll let you hear of it, I can tell you!"

"Oh!"

"Cut along, kid," said Harry Wharton, puzzled by Bunter's confusion and hesitation. "She won't be able to hold on long!"

"Oh!"

"Is your sister coming to Greyfriars, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd curiously. "My dear fatty, we'll stand her tea in the study. We've never seen your sister here yet!"

"Oh!"

The fat junior seemed incapable of any utterance save that dismayed monosyllable. It was evident that the news of Bessie had smitten him with dismay. Sammy blinked at him in perplexity.

"Why don't you go?" he demanded.

"Where—where is Bessie now?" gasped Bunter at last.

"She's waiting for a train at Redclyffe!"

"Oh!"

"She's coming on to Courtfield from there, I suppose," said Sammy. "Wingate told me she said she was at Redclyffe. He's rather ratty at the telephone being used, but he's let her rip, as she's a girl. He, he, he!"

Sammy seemed rather tickled at the captain of Greyfriars wasting so much courtesy on sister Bessie.

"What's the matter, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Eh? Nothing!"

"You won't catch her if you don't go to the telephone at once."

"Oh, I dare say she's cut off by this time," said Wally. "It doesn't matter."

"Well, my hat!"

"What an affectionate brother!" grinned the Bounder. "Let brotherly love continue—when it begins."

"You—you don't understand!" gasped Wally.

"You ought to go, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry sharply. "Dash it all, you can't let your sister wait in the telephone-box!"

"I—I—"

"Cut off! Where are your manners?"

"Assume a virtue if you have it not!" grinned Wibley, who was always ready with a quotation from Shakespeare.

"I—I—"

"Well, she's cut off by this time!" said Sammy Bunter. "I think you're a pig, Billy!"

"I—I—"

"Bessie will jolly well scratch you!" said Sammy. "She came jolly near scratching you last holidays, when you tried to diddle her over the tickets at the cinema!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't!" roared Wally Bunter.

"You did!" said Sammy warmly.

"You arranged for Bessie to take the tickets, and to square afterwards, and then you pretended—"

"I—I didn't!"

"Pretended you thought she was going to stand treat, and Bessie was as waxy as anything. And I'll bet you a tanner," continued Sammy, "that she'll make you pay for the telephone-calls from Redclyffe, even if she has to ring up again!"

"Oh, my hat! Will she—will she ring up again?"

"Of course she will!"

"Oh dear!"

"I suppose she's coming here," said Sammy. "She wouldn't be at Redclyffe otherwise, I suppose."

"C-c-coming here!" gasped Wally.

"Of course."

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

"Don't you want to see her?" asked Peter Todd. "You unnatural young heathen! Don't you want to see your own sister?"

"Yes—no! Oh! Ah!"

Snoop of the Remove came hurrying down from the School House. He came breathlessly up to Bunter.

"You're wanted," he said.

"Has Bessie rung up again?" grinned Sammy.

"Wingate says——"

"Oh, bother Wingate!" growled Wally. "Wingate's too jolly obliging. He shouldn't let kids use the telephone."

"I'll tell Bessie that!" said Sammy.

Sidney James Snoop gave Bunter a very peculiar look. Snoop had become rather friendly with Bunter of late, and the fat junior had done him some good turns. And a very queer suspicion had come into Snoop's mind with regard to the Owl of the Remove. That suspicion he kept to himself, however.

"Wingate says——" he re-commenced.

"Oh, never mind Wingate! Let's get on with the cricket!" said Wally Bunter.

"But I've got to give you Wingate's message. He says your sister——"

"Oh dear!"

"She says she's going to ring up again in five minutes," said Snoop. "You're to be at the telephone then."

"Oh crikey!"

"Wingate says you can wait in the prefect's room," said Snoop. "Hadn't you better go?"

"I—I—No, I——"

"Look here, Bunter, don't be such a fat worm!" said Bob Cherry indignantly.

"If you don't go, I'll go, and let your sister know that we're not all savages at Greyfriars. If she's coming here this afternoon she's got to be treated decently, you fat bounder!"

"You—you don't understand!"

"No, I jolly well don't!" growled Bob.

"If I had the good luck to have a sister I shouldn't treat her like that. I think you're a worm!"

"The wormfulness is terrific, my esteemed, measly Bunter," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wally's fat face was crimson.

The juniors were quite shocked at him, and the unhappy youth could not explain why he dreaded an interview with the sister of the genuine Billy. He had his secret to keep.

"Well, are you going?" demanded Bob gruffly.

"N-n-no."

"Then I'll go."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wally anxiously. "It's all right. I—I don't suppose Bessie is set on coming here. If—if I don't go and answer her, I—I dare say she'll go home again."

"After coming as far as Redclyffe!" exclaimed Bob.

"Well, you see——"

"She's coming here all right," said Sammy Bunter. "She's mentioned in her letters lately that she's thinking of giving us a look-in. You know she has, Billy!"

"Well, if you won't go to the 'phone, Billy Bunter, I'll go, and I'll give her an invitation in the name of the Remove!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"I—I—I say——"

"Rats! You've said enough!"

"Go it, Bob!" said Wharton.

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"I'm going it!"

And Bob Cherry strode away to the School House with a ruffled brow, and Wally Bunter blinked after him—over Billy Bunter's spectacles—in utter dismay.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not Polite!

BUZ-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z!

The telephone-bell was beginning as Bob Cherry entered the prefects' room in the School House.

Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth were chatting at a window, and they glanced round at the junior. George Wingate frowned.

"Isn't Bunter coming?" he demanded.

"I've come for him, Wingate. He's—he's at cricket."

"Oh, all right! You may as well give Miss Bunter a hint that the telephone wasn't put here to be rung up by kids at railway-stations," said the captain of Greyfriars.

"Oh, all right!" stammered Bob.

Buz-z-z-z-z-z!

Bob Cherry took off the receiver.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Is that you, Billy?"

"No; it's Bob Cherry."

"Oh, I know your name! Billy's mentioned you to me," came Miss Bunter's voice over the wires. "You're the kid he licked, ain't you?"

"What?"

"Why doesn't Billy come?"

Bob Cherry breathed hard over the receiver. Apparently Billy Bunter, in relating at home his exploits at school, had included a description of an imaginary fight with Bob in which he had come off best.

"The fat rotter!" murmured Bob wrathfully.

"Eh—what did you say?"

"N-n-nothing."

"Were you calling me names, Bob Cherry?"

"Oh, no, no! Certainly not! I—I was alluding to your brother," gasped Bob. "Sorry!"

"Oh, that's all right! I see you know Billy."

"Oh!"

"I'm waiting at Redclyffe Station," went on the fat voice. "I've got nearly half an hour to wait for a train. I made the wrong change owing to mistaking the name of the station. I'm going on to Courtfield."

"Yes?"

"Where's Billy?"

"He's on the cricket-ground."

"Not playing cricket?"

"Yes. Practice."

"Oh crumbs! I never knew Billy could play cricket. Look here! Tell him to come to the telephone. Tell the fat bounder I want to speak to him!"

"He—he—he's rather busy. I've come instead."

"Br-r-r-r! Just like Billy! He always was a selfish beast!"

"Oh!"

"I've been put to no end of trouble telephoning to him," went on Miss Bunter peevishly. "I got the head-master's number first, and the old chap was no end snappy."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then I looked out some other Greyfriars numbers in the book, and got on to somebody with a voice like a saw, who said he was Mr. Prout——"

"That's our master of the Fifth," gasped Bob.

"He refused to send for Billy for me to speak to him," continued Miss Bunter indignantly. "I don't think much of Greyfriars maimers."

"D-d-don't you?"

"No, I don't! Lot of Huns, I should say! And now I've got through Billy won't come. Br-r-r-r!"

"It's too bad!" said Bob. "Billy's rather—ahem!—busy at the present moment. I—I hope you're coming to Greyfriars, Miss Bunter."

"Yes, I'm coming. I get to Courtfield at half-past three."

"Good! We shall all be very glad to see you. It will be a pleasure to all the Remove!" said Bob gallantly.

As a matter of absolute fact, Bob did not anticipate any very great pleasure in meeting Miss Bessie Bunter, but he felt that he was bound to make up for the Owl's shortcomings as far as possible.

"That's very nice of you," said Bessie Bunter. "Does Billy want to see me?"

"Ahem! He—he's bound to, isn't he?" gasped Bob.

"Well, he's never been specially keen on my coming to Greyfriars, or I should have come before. I shouldn't be coming now, only I'm going to Lexham to stay with my aunt, and I shall pass near Greyfriars, so I thought I'd call in for the five shillings he owes me."

"Oh!"

"You can tell him to have the five bob ready, or there will be trouble!" added Miss Bunter.

"I—I will."

"And I want him to meet me at Courtfield Station. I don't know the way to Greyfriars."

"I—I'll tell him."

"Tell him that if he doesn't come I'll scratch him!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes."

"Tell him I shall have tea at Greyfriars, too. That's important. Mind you don't forget that."

"Yes."

"And——"

Miss Bunter's voice ceased suddenly. She had had her money's worth. Bob listened for a minute or so, but there was nothing more. Miss Bunter was not expending another threepence.

Bob Cherry put up the receiver, and left the prefects' room.

He returned to the cricket-ground, where he found Bunter at the wicket's again. But the Owl of the Remove was batting very badly now. He had a worry on his mind, and it was spoiling his form. Sammy Bunter was looking on with a grin.

"I told you he couldn't play cricket, you fellows," Sammy remarked. "You can't spoof me, you know!"

Vernon-Smith was bowling. The Bounder knocked down Bunter's wicket with the greatest ease, and the fat junior gave it up. He came off, with his bat under his fat arm, as Bob Cherry arrived.

"Bunter, you fat bounder——"

"Well?" grunted Wally.

"I've spoken to your sister."

Grunt!

"She'll be at Courtfield at half-past three, and you're to meet her at the station."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"She's coming to collect the five bob you owe her——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't owe her five bob!" howled Wally.

"You do!" hooted Sammy. "She's mentioned it lots of times in her letters."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"She's going to have tea here," said Bob, "and if you don't meet her at the station, she's going to scratch you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And she jolly well will, too," said Sammy Bunter confidently. "You remember the time she scratched you for bagging her cake, Billy!"

"I didn't!" shrieked Wally.

"Yes, you did! And you were going to punch her nose for scratching you, only cousin Wally was there, and he took you by the back of the neck," said Sammy, little dreaming that it was cousin Wally to whom he was speaking.

"Oh, shut up, you fat little rotter!" growled Wally, as the juniors roared with laughter. They were getting quite an insight into the happy conditions reigning in the Bunter household.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Sammy. "You give me the five bob to take to her, and I'll go and meet her at the station."

"You'll go to the tuckshop and blue it on tarts, you mean!" snapped Wally.

"Look here, Billy—"

"Rats! You—you can go to the station if you like—"

"With the five bob?"

"No!" roared Wally.

"Then I'm jolly well not going."

And Sammy Bunter rolled away, apparently washing his hands of the whole matter.

Wally glanced round at the grinning juniors.

"You fellows seem jolly amused!" he snapped.

"We're going to see Bessie scratch you when she comes!" grinned Bolsover major. "I'll hold you fast enough if you try to punch her nose, I promise you!"

"I wouldn't do such a thing, you silly ass!"

"Sammy says—"

"Bother Sammy! I—I say, Wharton, will you give my cous—my—my sister a message when she comes?"

"Certainly. What is it?" asked Harry.

"Tell her I'm called away, and—and I'm sorry I can't see her this afternoon," stammered Wally. "I—I've got to go out."

Harry Wharton frowned.

"You've got to go out?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Is it important?"

"Very."

"This is the first we've heard of it," said Harry. "You never intended to go out till you found that your sister was coming, you fat fraud! Look here, Bunter, don't be such a pig. You can't go out!"

"And you sha'n't!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I suppose it's my bizney whether I go out or not?" hooted Wally.

"No, it isn't!" answered Bob decidedly. "You belong to the Remove, and you're not going to disgrace us by acting like a Prussian Hun. If you don't know how to treat your sister decently you'll be shown."

"Look here—"

"You start to go out, and I'll stop you fast enough," said Bob grimly. "I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself."

"Look here, Bunter—" began Nugent.

"I'm going out!" said Wally obstinately.

"You're not!" answered Bob.

"I'll show you, bless your cheek!" growled Wally.

And he strode away in the direction of the gates. The next moment Bob Cherry was striding after him, and his grasp closed on Bunter's collar, and the fat junior was whirled back.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Bid for Liberty!

"YAH! Leggo!"

"Hold him!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally Bunter spun round in Bob Cherry's grasp, his fat face red with wrath

He was almost feverishly anxious to get away before Bessie Bunter could possibly arrive at Greyfriars.

He had passed himself off on all Greyfriars as William George Bunter—just as Billy Bunter had passed himself off at St. Jim's as Walter Gilbert Bunter. But, though he was quite confident of playing the part successfully in the Remove, he dreaded the sharpness of feminine eyes. He avoided Sammy Bunter of the Second as much as he could, though there was little danger of detection in that quarter. Whether Bessie Bunter would detect the imposture or not Wally could not tell, but he feared it. Female eyes were sharper than eyes of the masculine variety, he knew. And besides, Bessie was certain to refer to home affairs with which Billy was acquainted, and Wally assuredly was not.

It was only too probable that her suspicions would be aroused if she found her supposed brother Billy ignorant of things she mentioned, which Billy himself could not possibly be ignorant of.

And if Bessie "tumbled" to the truth,

Wally breathed hard.—It was only important that he should not meet Billy Bunter's sister at close quarters; but he could not explain that.

"Blessed if I ever heard of such a pig!" said Ogilvy, in disgust. "Why, a Hun would have better manners than that! Don't let him go!"

"I don't mean to," said Bob.

"Tain't your business!" roared Wally.

"I'm making it my business, my fat pippin," retorted Bob Cherry. "If a lady honours Greyfriars with a visit she's got to be treated civilly. If it's the five bob you're worrying about, we'll lend you that."

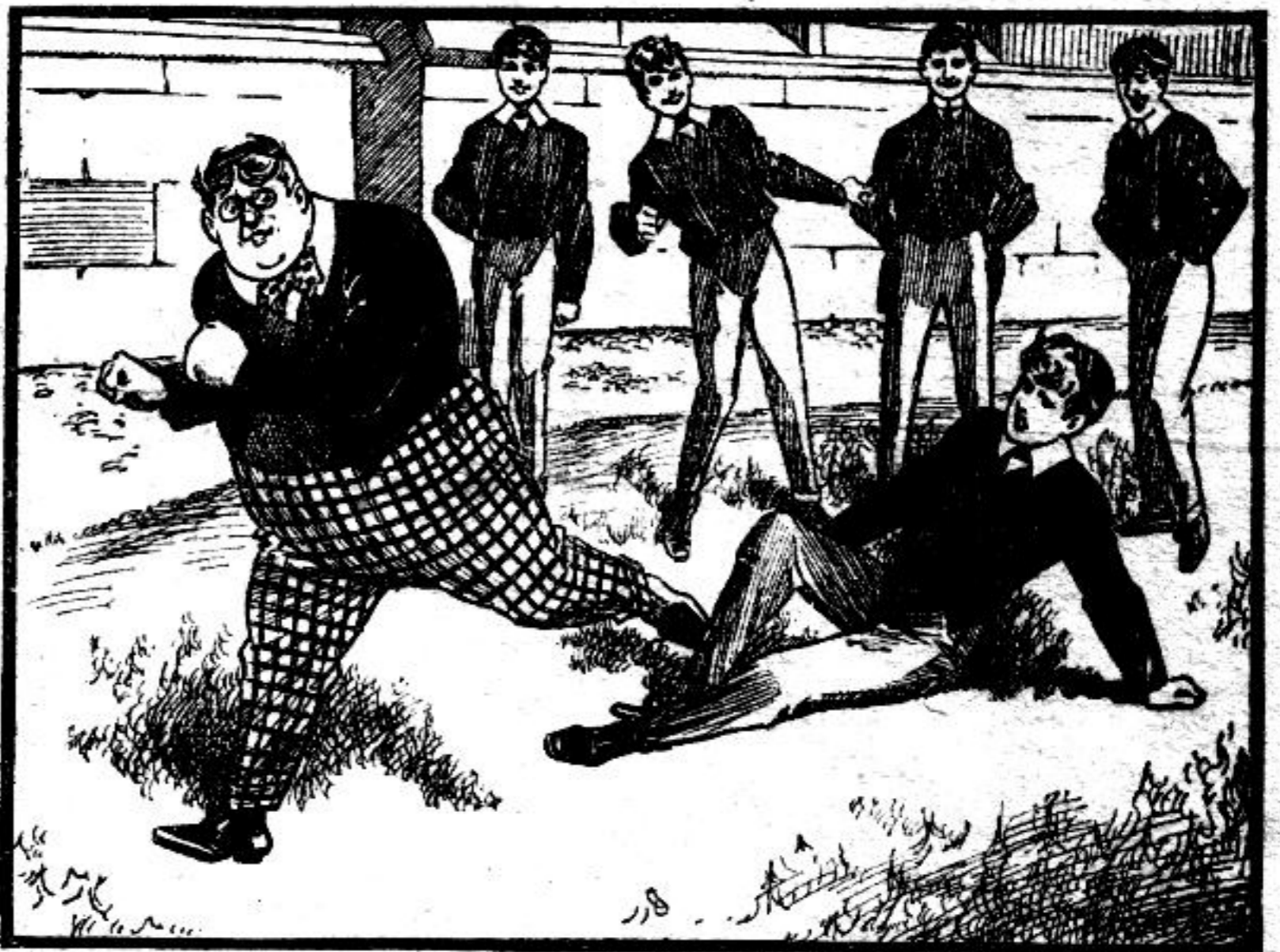
"The lendfulness will be a terrific pleasure, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"I tell you—"

"Well, you're not going," said Bob.

"Bunter will have to go out if he's going to the station," remarked Sidney James Snoop.

"Not yet," answered Bob. "It isn't time yet, for nearly an hour. And when he goes he won't go alone—he's going in



Before he quite knew what was happening Bob Cherry was sitting in the grass and Bunter was streaking at top speed for the gates. (See Chapter 4.)

the secret would be a secret no longer, and Wally's adventure at Greyfriars would come to a sudden and inglorious termination.

It was impossible to explain to the juniors without betraying himself, and without explanation it was impossible for them to understand why the fat junior should act with such utter discourtesy towards the fair visitor.

They had, perhaps, no right to interfere if Bunter chose to act like a Hun, but they assumed the right for the honour of the Remove. Such lack of the most elementary manners reflected upon the Form.

Bob Cherry's face was quite grim as he grasped the fat junior by the collar and jerked him back.

"No, you don't!" he said.

"Leggo!" roared Wally.

"Rats!"

"I've got to go out, I tell you!"

"Bosh!"

"It's important!" howled Wally.

"Where does the importance come in all of a sudden?" asked Harry Wharton.

company, to see that he acts like a civilised Christian."

"Oh, you silly ass!" groaned Wally.

"You don't understand!"

"I understand that you're not going to disgrace the Remove with the manners of a Prussian Hun!"

"Will you let go?"

"No, I won't, till you're indoors!"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Make away!" he said cheerily. "It seems that you've told your sister a yarn about having licked me at school—"

"I—I haven't!"

"She said so on the telephone. Now's your chance to make it good," said Bob.

"I'm waiting to be licked."

"Lot go!"

"Rats!"

"Then here goes!"

Bob Cherry grinned as the fat junior grasped him. But his grin faded away the next moment. Billy Bunter certainly could have made no more impression upon the sturdy Bob than a Lilliputian

upon a Brobdingnagian; but it was Wally that Bob had to deal with, if he had only known it. To his amazement, he found Bunter's grasp like iron, and a fat leg was hooked in his, and before he quite knew what was happening, Bob Cherry was sitting in the grass, and Bunter was streaking at top speed for the gates.

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After him!" yelled Nugent.

"Tally-ho!" roared Bolsover major.

With a rush, a dozen Removites were after the fleeing Bunter. They expected to run down the fat junior half-way to the gates; but they had forgotten the new form Bunter had shown of late. With all the weight he had to carry, Wally Bunter was fleet of foot, and he kept the start he had gained.

Bob Cherry scrambled up in great wrath and joined in the chase.

But Bunter kept well ahead, and he whisked out of the open gateway into the road well ahead of his pursuers.

"Put it on!" gasped Wharton.

"After him!"

"Stop, Bunter, you rotter!"

Wally did not stop; and he did not heed. He felt that the success of his adventure at Greyfriars depended on his speed, and he put all his beef into it. The pace at which he went up the road made the juniors stare as they rushed in pursuit.

In a few minutes half the pursuers had dropped hopelessly out of the chase.

But the Famous Five, and several more, kept up the running, and Wharton and Hurree Singh began to gain on Wally Bunter a little.

"Don't let him get away!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It's up to us now!"

"You bet!"

"Put it on!"

"Who the dickens would have thought the fat bounder could mizzle like that?" gasped Johnny Bull.

Wally Bunter looked back.

Wharton and Hurree Singh were gaining, and half a dozen others just keeping pace. The fat junior put on a spurt, his lips set, and his eyes gleaming over Billy Bunter's glasses.

Harry Wharton forged ahead of the nabob, and gained steadily now. Wally heard his hard breathing close behind, closer and closer.

"Stop, you fat duffer!" panted Wharton.

His outstretched hand touched Wally's shoulder.

The fat junior stopped suddenly and backed. Harry Wharton crashed into him, and the fat figure stood like a rock. Wharton felt as if he had dashed into a stone wall. He staggered back, and sat down in the lane.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Wally Bunter laughed breathlessly as he started again. But he had lost a few moments, and those few moments were enough. The fleet-footed nabob was upon him, and a dusky hand grasped Wally's collar from behind.

Hurree Singh was on his guard, and he was not caught as Wally backed at him. He spun the fat junior round in a circle, with an iron grasp on his collar.

"Caught!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The catchfulness is terrific!"

"Yaroo! Leggo!"

"Rats, my esteemed, fatheaded Bunter!"

Wally grasped the Nabob of Bhanipur desperately; but Wharton was up now, and grasping the fat junior. Wally's arms were pinned.

"Got him!" panted Wharton.

"Hurrah!"

"Now, you fat bounder——"

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"Let me go!" yelled Wally furiously.

"No fear! You're coming back to Greyfriars!"

"I won't!"

"You'll jolly well see!" grinned Bob Cherry. "March him along, you chaps, and I'll follow behind. I'll help him if he slacks!"

"Look here——"

"March!"

Wally resisted as he marched towards Greyfriars. Then Bob Cherry's boot came into play. Biff!

"Yooop!"

"I'll keep it up as long as you do," said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally Bunter did not keep it up. He marched.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Coker Chips In!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in at the gates of Greyfriars, with the Owl of the Remove in their midst, in triumph.

Wally Bunter was red and wrathful; but there was no help for it. The Famous Five did not mean to let him go. They had decided that it was up to them to see that Bessie Bunter was treated with courtesy at Greyfriars by her brother Billy; and what Billy lacked in courtesy they were ready to impart to him by drastic methods of instruction.

The hapless Wally could have explained, certainly, that he wasn't Billy; but that was not feasible under the circumstances. He could only grin and bear it, or bear it, at all events, even if he could not grin.

"This way, dear boy!" grinned Nugent. And the fat junior was walked across the quad towards the School House.

Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth were chatting on the steps, and they glanced curiously at the little crowd of juniors. Wally determined to appeal to them for help—a rather desperate resource; but better than meeting Bessie Bunter face to face.

"Coker!" he gasped.

"Hallo?" said the great Horace loftily.

"Lend me a hand, old chap."

Coker frowned.

"Not so much of your old chap," he said severely. "I don't allow Remove fags to call me old chap!"

"Lend me a hand, will you?" howled Wally.

"No, he won't," said Bob Cherry.

"Come in, Bunt. You'll get the frog's march if you don't walk in."

"You silly ass——"

"Kim on!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Coker, striding in the way. "Let's hear what this is about."

"Get aside!" snapped Wharton.

Coker planted himself in the way.

"Now, what's the matter?" he demanded. "You can appeal to me, all of you, and I'll decide the matter!"

Horace Coker of the Fifth was a great man in his own eyes; and he rather fancied himself in the role of a Lord of Appeal. But the chums of the Remove did not fancy him in that role at all. They did not intend to stand any interference from the Fifth.

"Buzz off, you silly fathead!" was Wharton's answer.

"None of your cheek, Wharton——"

"Lend me a hand, Coker!" gasped Wally.

"You fat rotter—calling in the Fifth!" exclaimed Frank Nugent indignantly.

"Do you call that playing the game?"

"Toad!" said Vernon-Smith.

Wally flushed.

But for his haunting dread of meeting Bessie Bunter he certainly would not have thought of appealing for aid outside the Form. But the case was desperate. He simply had to elude Bessie somehow.

"I—I say——" he stammered.

"Kim on!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I won't! I——"

"Halt!" said Coker sternly. "I'm going to see into the rights of this matter, Wharton! I can't allow bullying!"

"You silly chump!" roared Wharton.

"Enough of that! Now, tell me what's your row with Bunter, and I'll decide whether to let you go ahead!"

"Coker, old chap——" murmured Greene.

"You dry up, Greene!"

"But I say——" began Potter.

"Don't say anything, Potter! I'm settling this affair!" said Coker loftily.

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance, and strolled away. If the great Coker chose to get mixed up in a row with a gang of fags that was his look-out; and he could extricate himself from the consequences without their help. That was what Coker's chums thought.

Horace Coker did not heed their departure. He fixed a stern look upon Harry Wharton & Co., holding up his hand commandingly.

Apparently Coker supposed that the stern look and the upraised hand would daunt the unruly fags and bring them to a respectful stop. On that point Coker was mistaken—as he frequently was.

Wharton whispered quickly to his comrades, and Wally Bunter yelled as he was seized by many hands and swept off his feet.

"Rush him!" rapped out Wharton.

The juniors charged, holding Bunter as a sort of battering-ram; and the fat junior crashed into Horace Coker with a mighty crash.

Bunter's weight was no joke—and with the force of half a dozen Removites behind it it was irresistible.

Horace Coker went spinning backwards under the shock.

Crash!

"Yooop!" roared Coker breathlessly, as he sat down inside the doorway. "I——Yah! Oh! You young rotters! Yooop!"

"Come on!" gasped Wharton.

The Removites rushed the wriggling Bunter up the big staircase. They were anxious to get off the scene. The uproar must certainly have been heard in many quarters, and they were willing to leave Coker to explain to any masters who might come along to inquire what the din was about.

At a rush the juniors went up the staircase with Bunter, leaving Coker sprawling on the floor, spluttering.

"Yow-ow-ow! Woop!"

"Coker!"

Mr. Quelch came whisking out of his study with an angry face.

He had been reading over some of the Head's Ciceronian notes on "Epta epi Thebas," to give the Head his opinion later on; and, naturally, he was annoyed by a disorderly interruption. It was really hard lines if a hard-working Form-master could not read over Ciceronian notes on a half-holiday without being interrupted by a terrific uproar.

"Coker! Boy!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ow! Oh! Ah!"

"You utterly ridiculous boy!" exclaimed the Remove-master. "How dare you play these childish tricks! Get up off the floor at once!"

"Ow! Wooh!"

"I am surprised at you, Coker! You are in the Fifth Form, and yet you are sprawling about on the floor in a manner that would be shockingly undignified in

a little boy in the Second Form! Get up at once!"

"Why, I—I—I—" spluttered Coker. "I shall report this to your Form-master, Coker! You absurd, ridiculous, noisy— Ah! Here is Mr. Prout!"

"What ever is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Prout, hurrying up.

Mr. Quelch pointed a thin forefinger at the hapless Coker, who was sitting up by this time, trying to get his second wind.

"That absurd boy!" he answered. "He appears to find some extraordinary gratification in sprawling about noisily on the floor! Such absurdity in a Fifth Form senior boy is—is, really—"

"Bless my soul! Coker! Get up at once!"

"Ow! I—I—I—"

"Obey me, sir!" thundered the Fifth Form master.

Coker staggered up dazedly.

"I—I—I—" he spluttered.

"Have you no sense of dignity, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Prout. "I am not surprised that Mr. Quelch is shocked at you, Coker! No boy in his Form, although a junior Form, would act in so utterly undignified a manner!"

"I trust not," exclaimed Mr. Quelch with emphasis.

"I am ashamed, of you, Coker!"

"But—but I—I wasn't—I didn't—I never—" stuttered the unhappy Horace. "I assure you I—ow!—I never—wasn't—didn't—"

"You need not stand there stuttering incoherent words, Coker! Go to your study at once, and write out two hundred lines from the 'Æneid'!"

"But I—I—I—I—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"I—I assure you, sir—"

"Do you wish me to take you by the collar, Coker?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Coker went.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In Durance Vile!

"POOR old Coker!" murmured Bob Cherry, almost suffocating with merriment. "Always shoving in where he isn't wanted, and always putting his hoof in it!"

The Removites chuckled.

The turn of the big staircase hid them from below, and they had had the entertainment of hearing the two Form masters rating Horace Coker, and they seemed to find it amusing. Even Wally Bunter was grinning.

"Now bring that fat bounder to his study!" said Harry Wharton. "Roll him along if he won't walk!"

"Look here—" began Wally.

"Shurrup!"

Wally Bunter cast a longing glance towards the staircase. But several hands were upon him, and he was marched along to No. 7. The Famous Five, and Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith and Squiff and Ogilvy, followed him in. Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, was in the study, busy at French; and he looked up in surprise at the invasion.

"Hallo! What's up?" he asked.

"It's all right!" said Peter Todd.

"Who?" asked Dutton.

"Eh? Who what?"

"Who's going to fight?"

"Oh, my hat! Nobody!" howled Peter.

"It's all right!"

"There isn't much room in this study for a fight, Peter. Better go down to the gym, I should think! Besides, Bunter's going to help me with my French!" said the deaf junior. "Have you finished cricket practice, Bunter?"

Wally nodded. It was easier to answer Tom Dutton with his head than with his lungs.

"All right! I've got the 'Henriade' here," said Dutton. "Mossoo's marked the passage I'm to take to him, and I'd be glad if you'd help me. If you other fellows want to fight you can go into the passage!"

"We don't want to fight!" roared Bob Cherry.

"What rot!" said Dutton, staring at him. "Who's in a fright, I'd like to know? Not me! You couldn't frighten me, Bob Cherry—unless your face did it! That might!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you silly ass—" began Bob.

"Eh?"

"Fathead!"

"I can't hear what you say if you mumble like that, Bob Cherry! Why don't you speak plain?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "I give it up! Why don't you keep a megaphone in this study, Toddy?"

"Are these fellows staying here, Peter?" asked Tom Dutton, in surprise.

Peter nodded.

"What for?"

"To see that Bunter does not mizzle."

"Not Bob Cherry?" exclaimed Dutton. "He's not going to whistle here! He whistles like a railway-engine in a fit!"

"Don't explain!" gasped Wharton. "My ear-drums won't stand it! Now, Bunter, you've got to stay in this study till it's time to go to the station to meet your sister."

"I'm not going!"

"Well, we'll go for you, then!" said Bob Cherry. "You can help Dutton with his French, if you like! Blessed if I know how you can help anybody at French, or anything else, a dunce like you!"

"You'll stay here, Bunter," said Peter Todd.

"I won't!"

"Why don't you want to meet your sister?" demanded Peter.

"Find out!"

"Do you think your manners are a credit to the Remove?"

"Blow the Remove!"

"Bump him!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Hold on—the study-floor won't stand it! This is my study, you know!" said Peter Todd. "If you won't stay here of your own accord, Bunter, you'll be kept here. These chaps can stay in—"

"What about cricket?" asked Bob.

"Well, somebody must stay and keep an eye on the fat bounder."

"You can do that, Toddy. The animal is your study-mate."

"I'm going to play cricket."

"Well, so are we."

"Dutton's the man," said Vernon-Smith. "If he's going to do French with Bunter he won't mind staying in."

"Good egg! Tell him, Peter! You've got the strongest lungs."

"Dutton!" roared Peter Todd.

"Eh?" Tom Dutton looked up from the "Henriade," where he was finding the place marked for him by Monsieur Charpentier. "Did you speak?"

"Did I! Oh, crumbs! Yes, I did! Bunter's got to stay in the study!" roared Peter. "He's trying to dodge his sister, who's coming here to visit him. We're not going to let him. See?"

"Let him see what?" asked Dutton, catching the last words, and misunderstanding as usual. "He can see anything he likes in this study, I suppose!"

"Oh, help!"

"We want you to keep Bunter from scooting!" roared Bob Cherry.

"What utter rot!" said Dutton. "He can't do any shooting in this study. Do you mean with a pea-shooter?"

"Better lock him in!" said Nugent, laughing.

"No good locking him in—he will

mizzle out of the window down the ivy, as he did that time when Clara Trevelyn came here to box his ears for his impudence!" growled Bob.

Peter Todd put his mouth near Dutton's ear, and bawled an explanation.

Dutton nodded, comprehending at last.

"You needn't shout," he said peevishly. "I'm not deaf. I can hear you if you don't mumble."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'll see that Bunter doesn't act like a pig," said Dutton. "I'll keep him here all right. Besides, he's going to help me with my French. I dare say you misunderstand Bunter—he's not such a bad sort as we used to think. Are you ready, Bunter?"

"Oh, yes," said Wally.

There was evidently no escape at present, though the fat junior had not by any means given up the idea of escaping. He was anxious to get rid of the crowd, as a preliminary.

He sat down at the table with his deaf study-mate, and the juniors crowded out of the study. Tom Dutton was an athletic fellow, and supposed to be quite capable of handling a fat fellow like Bunter, and he had agreed to keep the Owl there. And the Removites were anxious to get back to Little Side.

"Safe enough," remarked Bob Cherry, as they went down the passage. "Blessed if I understand even Bunter being such a pig. I thought he was improving lately—but he seems more piggy than ever. Some of us will have to go to Courtfield to bring his sister here."

"Time for some cricket first," said Harry Wharton.

And the chums of the Remove left the School House.

In Study No. 7 Wally Bunter and Tom Dutton worked at the "Henriade" for a quarter of an hour; and in that time the fat junior—who was remarkably good at French—helped Tom over the difficult passages.

"Thanks very much!" said Dutton. "You're a good sort, Bunter. Isn't it queer that you used to be considered a regular all-round pig?"

Wally grinned. He wondered whether his cousin Billy, who had taken his place at St. Jim's, was there considered an all-round pig. It was very probable.

"I'm really obliged," went on Dutton.

"I'm going to stand something for tea, Bunter. If your sister's coming, as Toddy says, I suppose you'll have her here to tea?"

"No fear!"

"Eh?"

"You've got to take that to Mossoo?" shouted Wally.

"Oh, yes."

"Better take it at once."

"You'll stay here till I come back?"

No reply.

"You see, I've told the fellows I won't let you bunk," said Dutton. "You come with me to Mossoo's study, then."

"Right-ho!" said Wally, with alacrity. Once downstairs, he thought he would soon find an opportunity of slipping away.

The two juniors left the study together and went down. The House seemed deserted below; on that fine half-holiday everyone was out of doors—or nearly so. They arrived together at Monsieur Charpentier's study, where they found the French master sitting by his window, reading a "Figaro" three days old.

Mossoo laid down his paper as Dutton came in with the "Henriade." Wally followed him in, with a very patient expression; but as soon as Dutton was busy with the French master, the fat junior stepped quietly out of the study into the passage.

"Bunter!" ejaculated Dutton.

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Wally drew the door shut.
 "Garçon!" exclaimed Monsieur Charpentier, as Dutton made a movement towards the door. "You are interrupting yourself, isn't it! Pay me ze attention, mon garçon!"
 There was no help for it. Tom Dutton had to remain; and Wally, with a grin on his fat face, walked down the passage—to liberty.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
No Go!

BILLY!" Wally Bunter stopped, with a frown. He was peering cautiously out of the doorway of the School House, calculating his chances of making a break for the gates; and he was about to put his chance to the test when Sammy Bunter rolled up and gave him a brotherly poke in the ribs.

"They've been ragging you, haven't they?" grinned Sammy.
 "Yes!" growled Wally.
 "Why don't you want to see Bessie?"
 "Br-r-r!"
 "Of course, she isn't very nice," said Sammy, with the candour of a near relation, "but you oughtn't to try to clear off just because she's coming. She would be awfully waxy if she knew."
 "Oh, bother!"
 "If it's the five bob—"
 "It isn't, you fat duffer!" growled Wally.
 "Then what is it?"
 No answer.

"I don't quite understand you, and that's a fact," said Bunter minor. "You seem a different chap since that time cousin Wally came to visit us here. What are you grinning at?"

Wally did not explain.
 "I think the fellows are quite right to keep you in," continued Sammy. "I think you're an awful pig, Billy! Are you cutting off now?"
 "Yes, you ass!"
 "I don't really think I ought to let you go," said Sammy, shaking his head. "It's not treating Bessie decently. She's never been to Greyfriars before, and I don't see why you can't be civil. The pater would jolly well lick you if he knew how you were behaving!"

"Will you shut up and cut off?" demanded Wally.
 "Certainly not!" answered Sammy loftily. "I'm shocked at you, Billy, and disgusted, too! I'm not going to let you mizzle!"

Wally Bunter clenched a fat hand, but Bunter minor only grinned.

"I'll yell!" he said.
 The fat hand was unclenched again. Wally did not want to have a crowd of the Remove on his track again. He glanced uneasily along the passage. Tom Dutton might be released any moment from the French master's study.

"Are you hungry, Sammy?" he asked at last.
 "What-ho!" said Sammy, with deep feeling. "I only had three helpings at dinner, and I've had nothing since excepting some toffee and a cake."

"I say, cut off to the tuckshop and get me some tarts, will you?"
 "Mrs. Mimble is out of tarts."
 "Well, a cake, then—anything you like!" said Wally desperately. "Mrs. Mimble has some nice bob cakes—"
 "Very small ones," said Sammy Bunter disparagingly. "Not much bigger than a biscuit."

"Well, a two-bob one, then."
 "I say, Billy, she's got some really nice cakes at three-and-six—enough for

one chap, anyway," said Sammy. "Would you like one of those?"
 The two Bunters eyed one another. Sammy was grinning.
 Three-and-six evidently was the price of Sammy's silence.

Wally Bunter fumbled in his pocket, and without another word drew out a half-crown and a shilling, and passed the coins into the fat palm of Bunter minor.

That cheery youth did not waste time when the plunder was once in his grasp. Like the gentlemen in "Macbeth," he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once.

The fat fag fairly streaked across the quadrangle to Mrs. Mimble's little shop in the corner behind the trees. Apparently Bessie's claims to courteous consideration did not weigh in Sammy's fat mind in comparison with a three-and-sixpenny cake.

Wally drew a breath of relief when he was gone. As soon as Sammy had vanished the fat junior looked out cautiously, and saw that the coast was clear. He was stepping out of the doorway when there was a shout behind him.

"Bunter, stop!"
 It was Tom Dutton. He had finished with the French master in time, owing to Sammy's unfortunate intervention. He came down the corridor at a great burst of speed.

"Stop!" he shouted.
 Wally set his teeth and dashed out into the quadrangle. All depended on his speed now.

"Stop him!" roared Tom Dutton, as he dashed down the steps after the Owl of the Remove.

There was a shout from several directions. Bolsover major was talking with Dupont of the Remove under the elms, and he rushed at once to cut off Bunter, as his attention was drawn to the fugitive.

Wally dodged round him desperately, but he dodged in vain. Bolsover major's grasp closed on him.

"No, you don't!" grinned Bolsover. Wally grasped him fiercely, and Percy Bolsover, much to his astonishment, found the fat junior quite as much as he could handle. But he did not have to handle him alone. With a rush Harry Wharton & Co. arrived from the cricket-ground, and Tom Dutton came panting up at the same moment. Bunter was surrounded.

"Collar him!"
 "Nail the fat bouncer!"
 "You silly chumps!" roared Wally indignantly. "Let me alone! I tell you I'm going out!"

"Not this afternoon!" grinned Bob Cherry.
 "Bring him in!"
 "Oh, you rotters!" groaned Wally.

He made no resistance as he was taken into the School House again. It was futile. In a few minutes the dismayed and enraged fat junior was once more in Study No. 7.

The juniors plumped him, panting, into the armchair.
 "Keep him safe for a minute!" said Bob Cherry. "I know a way of fixing him!"

Bob rushed away, and returned in a couple of minutes with a coil of cord from the box-room.

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Wharton. "Look here—" began Wally wrathfully.

"Your own fault," said Bob. "You're going to stay here till Miss Bessie comes. We'll meet her at the station, and bring her along, and you're going to be here to meet her."

"I tell you—"
 "Ring off!"
 Wally made a desperate rush for the door, but he was seized at once and hurled back into the chair, breathless.

Three or four grinning juniors held him there while Bob Cherry got to work with the rope.

The fat legs were tied to the legs of the chair and the fat arms to the sides with plenty of rope and a superabundance of knots.

Wally's fat face was furious. His last hope was gone now.

Bob Cherry was doing his work scientifically, and there was no chance whatever of escape from that array of knots. The juniors grinned at Bunter when Bob had finished—which was not till he had used up all the rope.

"I think that fixes him!" said Bob.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Let me go, you silly chumps!" groaned Wally.

"We'll let you go when Miss Bessie arrives if you promise to behave," said Frank Nugent, "not before."

"No fear!"
 "The no fearfulness is terrific, my esteemed and pigful Bunter!"

"Oh, you rotters!"
 "You can leave him like that," said Tom Dutton. "I'll keep an eye on him, and see that he doesn't get loose. I'm disgusted at you, Bunter. You're a disgrace to the study!"

"Blow the study, and blow you!" growled Wally.

"We'll lend you the five bob when Bessie comes, so that she won't scratch you!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Read
"THE STONY STUDY!"
 A Wonderful Complete
 Story of Tom Merry & Co.
 at St. Jim's,
 By MARTIN CLIFFORD,
 in
THE "GEM."
 Out This Wednesday.



"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. chortled as they retired from the study once more, leaving Wally glaring furiously over Billy's spectacles. Tom Dutton grinned as he sat down to his French grammar. Dutton had work to do that afternoon, and he was prepared to do it with one eye on his fat study-mate.

"I say, Dutton, old chap—" muttered Wally when the Removites were gone.

"Eh?"

"Let me go, will you?"

"What are you mumbling about?"

"Let me go!" shrieked Wally. "I want to go out!"

Dutton frowned.

"If you call me names, Bunter, I'll lick you when you're let loose again. As for being a lout, you're the only lout here, and a fat, ill-mannered lout at that!"

"Will you unfasten me?"

"Eh?"

"Untie this rope!" raved Wally.

"Oh, don't be an ass! What do you want soap for? You can't wash yourself with your hands tied, I suppose? If you mean that you want to get me out of the study, I'm not going."

And Tom Dutton settled down to work, and was deaf-doubly so—to any further remarks from Wally Bunter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

TAP!

It was a quarter of an hour later when the tap came at the door of Study No. 7. Tom Dutton did not hear it, but Wally glanced up as the door opened.

His fat face brightened as he saw that the new-comer was Sidney James Snoop.

He was friendly with Snoop. He had done that somewhat shady and wayward youth a good many good turns, and had helped him on the path of reform, which the black sheep was now following with more or less success. Snoop was not of a specially grateful nature, but he seemed to be grateful to Bunter, and certainly felt cordial towards him.

Wally hoped that Sidney James had come to do him a good turn, and certainly he had never needed a friend more than he did now.

He was looking forward with utter dread to the arrival of Bessie Bunter.

He knew that young lady. Although she was as short-sighted as her brother Billy, she was remarkably sharp in other respects, and Wally had a dismal foreboding that she would see through the imposture which had taken in all Greyfriars.

There was no harm in the imposture, certainly, and there was no punishment to be feared. But exposure meant the end of Wally's career at Greyfriars, and for that reason, and for others, he was anxious not to be found out.

Snoop smiled a little as he saw Bunter sitting tied in the armchair.

"My hat! They've made sure of you!" he remarked.

"Get me loose, Snoopey!" muttered Wally.

"You don't want to meet your sister Bessie?" asked Snoop, eyeing him very curiously.

"N-no."

"The fellows can't understand that at all."

"Blow the fellows!"

"They think you're acting like an awful pig."

"I—I suppose they do. It can't be helped. I've got to get away," said Wally. "Do let me loose somehow, there's a good chap!"

Tom Dutton was looking at Snoop. He raised his hand as Sidney James made a step towards Bunter.

"Don't touch Bunter, Snoop," he said. "He's got to stay here till his sister comes!"

Snoop paused.

Bessie Bunter was nothing to him, and he did not care much about the considerations of courtesy which moved Harry Wharton & Co. He would willingly have released Bunter, but with Tom Dutton on guard it was impossible. Dutton could have handled two or three Snoops; and it was clear that if Sidney James had attempted to release the fat junior Tom would have bundled him neck and crop out of the study.

Wally realised it, and his face fell.

"I—I'm afraid there's nothing doing, Bunter," said Snoop hesitatingly. "You've done me some good turns, and I'd help you if I could. But—" He paused. "Look here.—I'll tackle Dutton, if you like. It won't be much good; but I'll do my best."

Wally shook his head.

chalk is like cheese. Are you spoofing us?"

No answer.

"Mind, I'm your friend," said Snoop. "If you trust me, you can depend on me; and if you're afraid of Bessie seeing you, I'll try to keep you clear of her. But I'd rather know the facts."

Wally did not speak.

"All the fellows have been astonished by the change in you since the time your cousin came to visit us here, and we heard he was being sent to St. Jim's," pursued Snoop. "You were so much alike that fellows kept on mistaking one for the other. The only difference was that Billy wore glasses and Wally didn't. But since that time you've had no difficulty with glasses. You always blink over them, and, in fact, never use them at all. So I ask you plainly, Bunter—afe you spoofing us?"

Still no reply.

"You've done me some good turns, and it beats me hollow why Billy Bunter should take the trouble to do anybody a good turn. You help Dutton with



Bunter had no chance whatever to escape from that array of knots. "I think that fixes him!" said Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 7.)

"Don't try!" he said. "Dutton could make rings round you, old scout."

"Well, I suppose he could," said Snoop uneasily.

Wally grunted. His brief hope had faded away.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" asked Sidney James. "I'd really do anything I could, Bunter. Is it really important for you not to meet Bessie Bunter?"

"Yes."

"But why?"

Silence!

Snoop was watching the fat face intently. He was friendly, but he was curious.

Wally Bunter avoided his searching glance. He was aware already that Snoop was suspicious concerning him.

"Look here," said Snoop at last. "You can trust me, Bunter. You needn't mind speaking. Dutton can't hear a word. I've been thinking a lot about you, old scout. You're Billy Bunter to look at, but in other ways you're no more like Billy Bunter than

French—and Billy Bunter was always a dunce at French, as well as at everything else. You play good footer and cricket—and Billy could never touch either. And I know Wally Bunter wanted to come to Greyfriars instead of going to St. Jim's." Snoop smiled. "Own up, old top! I believe you're Wally Bunter all the time, and you've changed places with Billy. Own up!"

Wally glanced quickly towards the door.

"All serene. Nobody about, and Dutton can't hear us," said Snoop reassuringly. "I'm going to keep it dark if you own up, of course."

The fat junior drew a deep breath.

Sidney James Snoop was certainly not the fellow he would have selected to take into his confidence; but there seemed no help for it now. And, with Snoop's assistance—if it could be obtained—he had a faint hope of yet eluding the threatened meeting with Bessie Bunter.

"Well, suppose it was so," he muttered at last, "there's no harm in it. I

wanted to come to Greyfriars, and Billy wanted to go to St. Jim's. That's all there was about it."

"Then it's true?"

"Yes," said Wally, with a deep breath.

"My hat!" said Snoop. "What a game! And Billy Bunter has gone to St. Jim's in your name same as you've come here?"

"Yes."

"I think I can guess why," grinned Snoop. "You've been in a lot of trouble the last few weeks that Billy left for you. He edged out of it all. I suppose he's busy now burrowing quids from D'Arcy and Tom Merry."

"I shouldn't wonder!" growled Wally.

"And you—"

"I can't own up now it's gone so far!" muttered Wally. "It was Mr. Penman, my old employer, started me for St. Jim's. It's his old school, and he would be hurt if he found I'd given it the go-by to come here. But I wanted to come here, as I knew the fellows. I—I didn't fully consider about some aspects of the case. It hasn't been all roses being taken for Billy. And—and now I'm afraid of Bessie."

"What's she like?" asked Snoop.

"Like Billy, only more so. I—I dare say she's not a bad sort, in her way," added Wally hastily, remembering that it was a girl he was speaking of. "But she's very nosy—I mean, sharp—that is, keen. She'll talk to me, and speak about things she supposes I know about, and she'll spot that I don't, and—and—I believe she'll tumble that I'm not Billy. And then all the fat will be in the fire."

Snoop looked serious.

"I'd let you loco if I could," he said.

"I say, I might call Stott and Skinner, and they might help."

Wally shook his head.

"If there's a row, that will bring the other fellows here. I've got to stick it, Snoop. But there's something you could do if you liked."

"I came here to see if I could do anything for you, Bunter," answered Snoop quietly. "I mean it!"

"You could meet Bessie at Courtfield Station at half-past three."

"Like a bird. But what—"

"And keep her away!" said Wally eagerly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"She don't really care twopence about coming here," said Wally. "She's only going to drop in on her way to Lexham. It's chiefly the five bob that beast Billy owes her."

Sidney James chuckled.

"I'll give you the money to settle up that blessed debt!" said Wally. "And some more, too, and you can take her to tea. Would you mind?"

"Oh, not at all! I dare say I can act the squire of dames, if it will do any good," said Snoop, with a grin.

"If there's more time to fill in before her train starts for Lexham, take her to the cinema. Anything, in fact, to keep her away."

"But will she—"

"Oh, yes! I know her!" said Wally confidently. "She's as keen on a feed as Billy, and she'll stay in the teashop as long as your money lasts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll do it, Snoop?"

"Certainly! Shall I know her?"

"She's as like Billy Bunter as I am."

"Then I shall know her all right."

Sidney James Snoop looked at his watch. "There isn't much more time, if she gets to Courtfield at half-past three. Hand me the tin, and I'll cut off. I'll do my best."

"Thanks, old chap!" said Wally gratefully. "There's a pound note in my pocket-book. You'll have to get it out. Mention to Wharton and those asses that you're going for Bessie, or they'll be going, very likely. That wouldn't do."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Stop that!" shouted Tom Dutton, jumping up as Snoop moved towards Wally. "Do you want to go out on your neck, Snoop?"

Snoop jumped back.

"It's all right!" roared Wally. "He's not letting me loose!"

"I'll see that he doesn't!"

"There's a pound-note in my pocket. I want to give it to Snoop."

"Eh?"

"Pound note!" shrieked Wally.

"Who's a goat? Do you mean me, or Snoop?"

"Oh, crumbs! Yell in his ear, Snoop. Put your beef into it."

Sidney James Snoop put his beef into it, as directed, and Tom Dutton nodded, though still suspicious.

"I'll watch you!" he said.

And Tom Dutton watched while the pound note was transferred to Snoop, and watched him leave the study, still suspicious. He closed the door after Snoop, and returned to his work, looking up every now and then as the door opened and grinning faces looked in at the hapless Bunter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

Meeting Bessie Bunter!

"IT'S up to Toddy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, then, Toddy!"

"That's all very well—"

"Of course it is. Go and get your best bib and tucker on, old sport, and hike off to meet the fair Bunter-bird!"

"I think Wharton—"

"Stuff!"

"Or Nugent—"

"Now, look here, Toddy—"

There was rather a warm argument proceeding as Sidney James Snoop came down to the cricket-ground. It was close on time for somebody to start to Courtfield if Miss Bessie Bunter was to be met at the station, but nobody seemed specially anxious to figure as the ambassador of the Greyfriars Remove. All the juniors were agreed that Bunter was a pig, and that his sister had to be treated with polished civility when she came to Greyfriars; and they were agreed that they would rag Bunter without mercy if he failed to come up to the high standard of courtesy required of members of the Remove.

On the other hand, there was no doubt that it was a fine afternoon, that fine afternoons which were also half-holidays were none too common, and that the cricket-ground was very attractive.

So although the chums of the Remove agreed that Miss Bunter ought to be met at the station by some nice youth with his best manners on, so to speak, every fellow was willing to leave the distinguished task to some other fellow. It was really a competition in self-denial.

The general opinion seemed to be that as Peter Todd was Bunter's study-mate, it was up to Peter. Peter admitted the need of polite attention to the fair visitor, but pointed out that there was a very special late cut he was desirous of practising.

Toddy's objections were being overcome by a general concurrence of hostile opinion when Snoop arrived on the scene.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he saw Sidney James. "What about Snoop? He's pally with Bunter."

"You fellows very anxious to go to the station?" grinned Snoop.

"Of—of course," said Wharton. "But, as captain of the Remove, I've got to keep an eye on the cricket practice, you see."

"There's my late cut—" began Toddy.

"I'm ready to go, of course," said Bob Cherry. "I'd go like a shot, only I think that Toddy, as Bunter's study-mate, is—"

"My late cut—"

"But what about you, Snoopey?" asked Bob. "You've been very chummy with Bunter lately. I dare say his sister is an awfully nice girl—most chaps' sisters are. If you were keen on going, I dare say Toddy would stand aside, and yield the point."

Peter Todd certainly looked as if he would.

Snoop laughed.

"Bunter's just asked me to go to the station and meet Bessie," he said.

"Oh, good! I—I mean, are you going?"

"Yes, I may as well go. I've nothing special on."

"Good man!" said Peter Todd. "You're not half a bad sort, Snoop. Mind you put on your best manners."

"The bestfulness of the esteemed manners should be—"

"Terrific!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Mind your good manners are terrific, Snoopey!"

"And tell Miss Bunter that we're going to have tea in the study, and we'll be honoured and delighted with her company," said Peter.

"The company of any charming miss is a terrific honour, and especially that of the esteemed and ridiculous Bessie. Do not forget that, Snoopey."

"I'll remember," said Snoop. "I thought I'd mention to you fellows that I was going, or you'd come to punching noses over it, you all seem so keen. Ta-ta!"

And Sidney James Snoop strolled away, leaving the heroes of the Remove looking a little peculiar over his last remark.

"After all, Snoopey's the proper person to go, as Bunter's chum," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"And we'll make a fuss of her when she arrives, just to show that the Greyfriars Remove knows how to treat a lady," said Bob.

"Hear, hear!"

"And if Bunter doesn't play up we'll lynch him!"

And, that point settled, the juniors returned to cricket. It was quite a comfort to think that Snoop was really the most proper person to meet Miss Bunter at the station. They were able to devote themselves to bat and ball with a clear conscience.

Snoop walked away cheerfully to Courtfield.

He was glad of the chance of doing something for Wally Bunter in return for the good services he had received at the hands of that fat youth; though he was aware that if Harry Wharton & Co. had suspected his intentions he would not have had the chance of doing Wally that good turn.

But the chums of the Remove were in blissful ignorance of Snoop's real object.

The junior reached the station a few minutes late. The first object that met his eye as he arrived was a fat figure standing in the station entrance.

Snoop almost jumped as he looked at the young lady, so striking was her resemblance to Bunter of the Remove.

Miss Bessie Bunter had the same round, chubby face, the same round eyes,

and apparently the same spectacles perched upon the same fat little nose.

She was blinking round her with an expression of wrath, doubtless because brother Billy was not at the station. Snoop hurried up. There was no doubt that this was the young lady he sought. She blinked at him as he raised his cap with great politeness.

"Excuse me," said Snoop. "Miss Bunter, I believe?"

"Yes. Are you from Greyfriars?"

"Yes, I've come from Bunter."

"Oh!" said Bessie Bunter, eyeing him. "Isn't Billy coming?"

"He can't," explained Snoop, grinning, as he reflected how many miles away the genuine Billy was at that moment. "I've come instead."

"Oh, all right! Are you Bob Cherry?"

"My hat! No; I'm Snoop."

"Billy is a little fat beast!" Miss Bunter confided to him. "He's too lazy to come to the station. I know him!"

"The fact is—"

"You needn't tell me what Billy said. I know him, I tell you. He's fat and lazy!"

"Oh!"

"You can see me to Greyfriars if you like," said Miss Bunter graciously. "You can carry my umbrella and my bag and my rug."

"Oh, yes! Certainly!"

Snoop took the bag in one hand, the umbrella in the other, and Miss Bunter laid the rug over his arm. Snoop felt pretty well loaded by that time.

"I've left my parrot at home," said Miss Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Aunt Jane doesn't like parrots. She's rather a cat."

"Is—is she?"

"Yes. I'm going to stay with her at Lexham, you know. I've got two hours to spare, so I'm going to see Greyfriars. Come on! Which is the way?"

"I—I say—"

"Well?"

"I—I—I say—"

"Do you stutter?" asked Miss Bunter.

"Eh? No."

"Then what's the matter with you?"

"N-n-nothing."

"There you are, stuttering again! You should take something for it."

"I—I—I—"

"Singing is a good thing," said Miss Bunter. "If you can't speak without stammering, sing it. Try."

"Oh! The fact is, Wally—Billy—ahem!—you see, the fact is Bunter thought you might be hungry after your journey," stammered Snoop. "He's told me to take you to the bunshop first."

To his relief, Miss Bunter's fat face brightened.

"That's not like Billy," she said. "Billy never thinks of anybody but himself. But it's a good idea. I'm simply famished. I've only had half a dozen sandwiches in the train, and a cake and some butterscotch and a few oranges. Where's the bunshop?"

Snoop joyfully led the way to the bunshop. He was finding his task easier than he had expected.

It was not far to the bunshop, and Snoop led the way with the bag, the umbrella, and the rug. Miss Bunter followed him cheerfully.

"By the way, what time does your train start for Lexham, Miss Bunter?" he asked.

"Five-thirty."

"Two hours to fill up!" murmured Snoop. "It will have to be the cinema."

They sat in the bunshop, and there was tea. From his knowledge of the Bunter family, Snoop had expected to see Miss Bessie do well at tea. But he was sur-

prised at the unusual powers displayed by the young lady in the gastronomic line.

He began to feel glad that he had some cash of his own about him as well as Wally Bunter's pound note.

Miss Bunter was quite at her ease with the junior. She seemed to be quite untroubled by shyness of any sort. She talked almost as fast as she ate—which was at a good speed. She confided to Snoop her genuine opinion of her brother Billy—which did not appear to be a flattering one. And it was rather clear that the charming young lady would not have broken her journey at Courtfield to call upon William George but for the consideration of that ancient debt of five shillings standing over from last vacation.

"That reminds me," said Snoop, as soon as he could get in a word, "Bunter gave me five bob—"

"Yes, another cake, please," said Miss Bunter to the waitress—"a bigger one—much bigger."

"He said he owed you five bob—I mean Billy does—that is to say—Here is the money!" stammered Snoop.

"Are you?" gasped Snoop.

Miss Bunter nodded.

Snoop could only gaze at her. Apparently quite unconscious of having made a remarkable and surprising statement, Miss Bunter tucked into her third cake. It was not a small cake; but it looked small when Miss Bunter had been at work on it for a couple of minutes. Then it vanished.

"If you're not in a hurry to get back to school—" said Miss Bunter.

"Not at all."

"Then we may as well have tea here."

"Eh?"

"Don't you think it's a good idea?"

Sidney James Snoop was under the impression that Miss Bunter had had tea—in fact, several teas rolled into one. Apparently, however, what the cheerful young lady had consumed was only a sample.

"Shall we have tea?" asked Bessie Bunter, with a winning smile.

"Oh, yes!" gasped Snoop. "Certainly."

"I'll give the orders, if you like."

"D-d-d-do!" stammered Snoop.

And Bessie Bunter did.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Delightful for Snoop!

HARRY WHARTON & CO., at Greyfriars, were wondering by that time why Miss Bunter did not arrive, escorted by Snoop.

But all thought of Greyfriars and of the great William George had vanished from Bessie's mind. She was having tea.

At all events, she called it tea. To Sidney James Snoop it seemed like a big dinner, a couple of lunches, and a few breakfasts, and any number of teas combined. Snoop had fifteen shillings belonging to Wally Bunter in his pocket, which he had supposed would be more than ample to pay for any light refreshments the young lady required. Now he was beginning to have his doubts about that.

His doubts strengthened. He was glad—very glad—that he had ten shillings of his own. Certainly, ten shillings was ten shillings, and he did not want to part with it; but he was in for it now. He had undertaken to help Wally Bunter; and he was prepared to "blow" his ten shillings in doing so. Besides, probably Wally would reimburse him afterwards. But—a horrid doubt was smiting him hard. Would the ten shillings, added to the fifteen, be sufficient to "square"?

That was a dreadful question. For, although the piping days of peace had returned, the cheery profiteer was still abroad in the land, and prices had not come down as hopeful people had expected on the return of peace. The Courtfield bunshop, like many firms, realised that it might be years before the next war, and intended to make hay while the sun shone. Steep prices and a long bill. No wonder Snoop was growing worried!

Miss Bunter did not seem worried.

She was enjoying herself.

Snoop had left off eating, in a vague hope of keeping the bill down a little. He had all a boy's natural unwillingness to hint to a feminine companion that there were financial difficulties. Bessie Bunter urged him many times to "go it"; but Snoop declared that he had no appetite—which was true, for his alarming position had quite taken it away.

No doubts seemed to occur to the festive Bessie. Perhaps she was not aware that the bunshop charged super-war prices. Besides, Snoop had told her that Bunter had given him the money

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"Well, my hat!" said Miss Bunter. "Fancy Billy paying his debts, without being ragged into it! He must be changing."

"He has changed," grinned Snoop.

Miss Bunter bestowed the five shillings in her bag.

Then she glanced up at the clock in the bunshop.

"Four o'clock," she said. "Plenty of time yet."

"Lots!" agreed Snoop.

"I'm hungry!" remarked Miss Bunter.

"Here comes the cake."

"Billy told you to stand tea?" asked Bessie Bunter.

"Yes; he gave me the tin."

"Well, it beats me," said Bessie.

"Billy must be changed. I wasn't really very keen about seeing him; but I really want to see him now. Is he as fat as ever?"

"I—I believe so."

"He was always fat," said Miss Bunter. "So is my young brother, Sammy. I'm the only one of our family with a slim figure."

to settle, and perhaps, from an economical point of view, she did not want to risk leaving any of it unexpended.

Perhaps she did not think at all, being hungry, and the fare at the bunshop being very good.

Snoop's conversation consisted now of disjointed monosyllables. He was making wild mental calculations.

Under pretence of looking for some item he might like to eat, he got hold of the "carte" and glanced at the prices. Then he felt faint. Those cakes—not really large—were five shillings each! And Miss Bunter had disposed of three of them before beginning tea!

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Snoop.

Visions of an awful interview with an enraged manager floated before his dismayed eyes.

Miss Bunter smiled at him.

"Found anything you like?" she asked.

"Nunno!"

"Try the jam-puffs."

"No fear! I—I mean, I'm not hungry."

"You're rather a thoughtful boy, ain't you?" asked Bessie.

"Eh—why?"

"You wrinkle your brows so."

"D-d-d-do I?"

"Yes; and, do you know, you've got quite a calculating look in your eyes."

"Oh!"

"These jam-puffs are really nice," said Bessie. "I've had half a dozen to try them. Now I'm going to have some."

And she had some.

"Ye gods!" murmured Snoop.

"Eh? Did you speak?"

"Nunno."

"Tell them to bring the cheese-cakes—I shall be ready for them in a minute."

"Ow!"

"You look quite pale," said Miss Bunter, with some concern. "I hope you've not got flu."

"Oh, no! Not at all! Right as rain," gasped Snoop. "I—I—I'm enjoying myself."

"You look pretty serious about it. I fancy you're really hungry, and you haven't had enough to eat. I'll tell the waitress to bring a fresh lot of eggs and rashers if you like."

"No, no! Don't!"

The bare suggestion made Snoop shudder. No wonder he had a calculating look in his eyes. He was wildly wondering what the bill might possibly come to. He wondered whether they would accept his watch as security—and then he wondered whether it would be any use if they did! His watch was silver—and the bill seemed likely to require untold gold!

Suppose he told them he'd left his purse at home, and asked them to send on the bill! Suppose they thought he was a bilk, and sent for a policeman!

Snoop shivered.

He glanced at the clock. It was nearly five; and it was clearly too late to go to Greyfriars and return to Courtfield in time for the five-thirty. He had saved Wally Bunter!

But what was going to happen to himself?

Sidney James Snoop was really grateful to Bunter for many good turns, and he was quite eager to be of service to the fat junior. But—

He wished he had kept clear of Miss Bunter at that moment. To stop the voracious young lady in mid-career required more moral courage than poor Snoop possessed; but the alternative was to sit in anguish while a bill piled up that he could not possibly pay. What was going to happen when the fateful moment came he did not know, but he felt that it would be something dreadful.

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"Why, it's a quarter past five!" exclaimed Miss Bunter suddenly. "I shan't be able to go to Greyfriars."

"Nunno! I—I suppose not."

"Well, it doesn't really matter, as Billy's sent the five shillings," said Bessie thoughtfully. "I must say that it was uncommonly decent of Billy, as well as giving you the tin for this little spread. I mustn't miss the train for Lexham. Aunt Jane would be waxy. She's rather a cat."

"Oh, no—nunno!"

"I'd better be off to the station now," said Miss Bunter. "You can come and see me off if you like."

"I—I will!" gasped Snoop, wondering how on earth he was to get out of that establishment. It seemed to him that the waitresses were already eyeing him with suspicion.

He debated in his mind whether it would be feasible to make a sudden dash for it, and decided that it wouldn't. At that moment he anathematised, from the bottom of his heart, Wally Bunter and Billy Bunter and the whole tribe of Bunters.

Miss Bunter rose, looked in the glass near the table, and dabbed jam and crumbs off her plump chin.

"Must start," she said. "We sha'n't be able to finish tea."

"Fuf-fuf-finish it!"

"I can get some supper at auntie's, though, and this will last me for the journey."

"Oh! Ah!"

Snoop looked round dazedly. The waitress certainly was lingering near the table, and another waitress seemed to be hovering about. Did they already suspect him of being a "bilk"?

"Well, are you coming?" asked Miss Bunter briskly. "I can't risk losing my train. Tell Billy I'll give him a look-in another time."

"Yes, c-c-certainly!"

Snoop rose weakly to his feet. He felt as if his legs would hardly support him. He had saved Wally Bunter, and now the hour of reckoning had come. He hardly dared look at the slip of paper the waitress laid on the table. It came to forty-two shillings and sixpence.

He had twenty-five shillings! He was conscious of a giddy feeling in his head.

"How much are they charging you?" asked Miss Bunter, with friendly interest. "You don't mind my knowing, do you?"

She gave a little shriek as she saw the bill. "What! My word! I shouldn't pay that, if I were you."

"Eh?"

"It ought to be about ten shillings," said Miss Bunter decidedly. "Say twelve. I'd give 'em twelve, and tell them to go and eat coke if they grumble. Buck up! My train will be going!"

"I—I—I—"

"I'm sorry, but I can't wait any longer. Auntie will be ratty if I'm late. She's rather a cat. You come on to the station," said Miss Bunter. "I'll start."

She picked up her bag, umbrella, and rug, perhaps having a lingering doubt as to whether Snoop would come on to the station before the train started, and hurried out of the bunshop.

Snoop was fumbling in his pockets, apparently in the hope of discovering some forgotten currency notes there. The waitress was waiting politely, but with a polite smile that was growing firmer and firmer every moment. Probably suspicion had dawned in her mind.

"If—if you please, miss, I—I'd like to speak to the manager!" gasped Snoop. "I—I find I—I—"

There was much more firmness than politeness in the waitress's face now.

"Certainly!" she said, with distant loftiness.

She did not leave the table, and Snoop

knew, as well as if she had told him, that she was remaining to see that he did not bolt. She called to another young lady, who summoned the manager. Sidney James Snoop's heart sank into his boots as a portly and pompous gentleman approached him. It seemed to him that every eye in the bunshop was fixed upon his burning face.

He gasped for breath as the manager came up. He would have given the wealth of Golconda for the floor to open and swallow him up.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Five cheery juniors of Greyfriars came into the bunshop in a crowd, and Bob Cherry's merry voice fell on Snoop's ears like heavenly harmony. He spun round, with a gasp of relief.

The Famous Five came towards him.

Bessie Bunter had been gone five minutes or more now, and the chums were too late to see her; but they saw Snoop at once.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You bouncer, Snoop!" exclaimed Bob warmly. "Where's Miss Bunter?"

"She—she's gone!" gasped Snoop.

"Why didn't you bring her to Greyfriars?" demanded Wharton.

"We—we've been having tea."

"The teafulness does not last two esteemed hours," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Jolly near it!" groaned Snoop.

"Look here, what's the game?" demanded Harry Wharton. "As you didn't turn up at Greyfriars, it occurred to me that perhaps Bunter had put you up to keeping Bessie away somehow. Is that it?"

Snoop grinned faintly.

"Then it is so!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "We came along to see, and we've been hunting for you. Bob thought of looking for you here."

"I knew where a relation of Bunter's was likely to be found," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Snoop—"

"It—it's all right!" gasped Snoop. "Miss Bunter didn't really care about coming to Greyfriars. She preferred to have tea here."

"Where is she now?" asked Nugent suspiciously.

Snoop glanced at the clock.

"She's gone on to Lexham. Train left at five-thirty. But I—I—I say, c-c-can you fellows lend me some money?"

"Eh?"

"Bunter gave me fifteen bob for the feed."

"My hat!"

"And I had tea—"

"Isn't that enough?" gasped Bob.

"Look at the bill!" groaned Snoop.

"I—I don't know what would have happened if you fellows hadn't come in. You simply must help me out of this."

The chums of the Remove glanced at the bill, and gasped.

"Billy Bunter's sister, and no mistake!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Did she leave on an ambulance, Snoopey?"

"She hadn't finished when she went. She had to go for her train."

"Oh, crumbs! Lucky she hadn't time to finish, then, or we shouldn't have been able to see you through. Now, then, all hands to the mill," said Bob.

The manager was standing in the offing, so to speak, with a very lofty countenance; but he relaxed as the amount of the bill was forthcoming by a general contribution. Snoop almost tottered from the bunshop with the Famous Five, who were grinning.

"I—I'll settle with you fellows!" he gasped. "I'll get it out of Bunter. He landed me in this! Thank goodness you

fellows came in! Oh dear! What an afternoon!"

Wally Bunter had been released from his imprisonment when Sidney James Snoop came in. He was at tea with Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, and looking quite merry and bright, when Sidney James looked into No. 7. Wally was sure by this time that Bessie Bunter couldn't come, and he was greatly relieved, and very grateful to Snoop.

He nodded cheerily to that hapless youth.

"Hallo, Snoop! Come in, old chap! Meet Bessie?"

"Yes!" gasped Snoop.

"Good! Had a good time?"

"Oh, topping! So good that I never want it again. You owe me one pound seven-and-six."

"Eh? What for?"

"Bessie's tea."

"Eh? You had fifteen bob out of the quid."

"And there's one pound seven-and-six as well!" said Snoop grimly.

Wally's face was a study; but he paid up as cheerfully as possible, and tried to console himself with the reflection that he had, at least, been quite successful in his role as Artful Dodger.

THE END.

(Another Grand, Long, Complete Story of Greyfriars School, by FRANK RICHARDS, will appear Next Monday. Don't miss it.)



Goggs, Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Four new boys—Goggs, Blount, Trickett, and Waters—come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Franklingham, which has been burnt down. Goggs, the real leader of the four, ventriloquist, ju-jitsu expert, and all-round sportsman, looks particularly simple, and intends, with the help of his chums, to hoodwink the Rylcombe fellows into thinking him simple. Goggs & Co. fall foul of Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe, three of the "smart set" at Rylcombe, and Goggs uses his ventriloquism to mystify them.

The Franklingham four share Study No. 3, and are assigned to Dormitory No. 29, which they share with Tadpole, who fancies himself an artist, Weird, who talks in rhyme, and Larking & Co. There is a fight between Larking and Frank Monk, in which Larking fouls, but is hopelessly beaten.

Goggs again uses his ventriloquism, and Larking & Co. suspect that a ventriloquist is at work, though they suspect Blount or Trickett, thinking Goggs too simple.

Goggs, disguised as Granny, arrives at the school and foils the study-wreckers. Frank Monk & Co. appear on the scene, and Larking & Co. are thrown out. Granny stays to tea.

(Now read on.)

The End of the Tea-party (continued).

WAGTAIL could stand no more. His detective duty that afternoon had got upon his nerves; and the period of waiting with nothing to do while Goggs played Granny in Study No. 1 had not improved his temper.

He flung himself at Mont Blanc. Before Goggs, with all his quickness, could do anything to stop them they were rolling together on the floor.

"Ow! Take zat, cochon!"

"Yoooop! Take that, you gidly frog-eater!"

Then Goggs pulled them apart, dusty and panting, but not much the worse for anything they had managed to do to one another.

"Zat is ze feenish!" said Mont Blanc dramatically. "I geeves you my vord—parole de gentilhomme—ees zat not vat you call good enough? Zis person—zis peeg—"

"I regret extremely, my dear young friend, that you should have been subjected to such rough treatment, but—"

"Drrry oop! Hold ze tongue of you! I release me from my promees—ees eet not? I tells evrayvon now!"

"I think not!" said Goggs.

"You jolly well won't, for we jolly well won't let you go!" cried Wagtail.

"I regret to say, Blanc, that it will be necessary to insure your silence by measures that I am very loth to take," said Goggs.

Mont Blanc made a dash for the door.

But Goggs collared him, and the hand of Wagtail was clapped over his mouth.

He was helpless in Goggs' grip. There was something in that grip which seemed to have a paralysing effect upon those who felt it. Goggs could have explained what that something was, but he did not consider it necessary to do so. Ju-jitsu is much more effective when the other fellow does not know what it is.

Mont Blanc's own handkerchief was thrust into his mouth as a temporary gag. He was tied up neatly and tightly, and then another and more effective gag was devised and inserted.

"There!" said Goggs soothingly. "Now I think we shall do quite nicely. It is with the greatest regret, my dear Blanc, that I inflict these inconveniences upon one to whom I am really well disposed on account of his personal merits and the fact that he is of a friendly and allied nation. I cannot acquit Comrade Waters of rudeness to you, but I certainly cannot allow you to break your word, given to me freely and under no compulsion. Comrade Waters will now apologise—"

"Comrade Waters will see you both jolly well hanged first!" snorted Wagtail.

"Ah! In that case, Blanc, Comrade Waters will not apologise. I have a distinct objection to being hanged, as a painful and very undignified process. You see exactly how the matter stands, my dear fellow, I am sure."

Mont Blanc gurgled behind his gag, and his rather beady black eyes looked as if they were starting out of his head.

He would have renewed his promise now had the chance to do so still been his. But he had lost that chance; and, while he was furious with Wagtail, he did feel that perhaps he had been wrong in getting angry with Goggs.

"Coming, you fellows?" sounded the cheery voice of Bags from the passage.

"We are coming, my dear Bagshaw," replied Goggs.

He patted Mont Blanc's round, closely-cropped poll.

"Lie still, sweet infant!" he said kindly. "If you wriggle you may roll off the table and hurt yourself. We shall be back ere long."

"Come on, Goggles!" said Wagtail impatiently.

Goggs frowned at him.

"The grandmother of your schoolfellow must not be addressed in that familiar manner, Master Waters!" he said reprovingly.

"Oh, I forgot! But it's no odds; there wasn't anyone to hear me. Do come on!"

They went, and Wagtail locked the door. That is to say, he turned the key in the lock and then took it out. But the lock was not in first-rate working order, and only a push was needed to overcome the slight resistance the lock would give.

Gordon Gay & Co. had put their study straight, and were getting tea. There was a plentiful supply of good things, for the war was over now, and though everything was still dearer than of old, most things could be got by those who had money for them.

Gay was very polite indeed to Granny. The two Woottons followed his example. But Frank Monk held rather aloof. Goggs noticed that, and he felt sure that Monk smelt a rat. But how far his suspicions went he could only guess.

In any case, he had no notion of letting Monk's suspicions interfere with his game. The end of that must come soon now, for Mont Blanc was sure to give the secret away as soon as he got free. But the game should be played out to the end, whether the end came soon or late.

"Some salmon, Mrs. Strongitharm?" asked Gay. "It's only the tinned stuff, of course."

"Thank you, my dear boy. I will take a large helping."

It seemed rather a queer thing for a lady to say; but Granny proceeded to do justice to the large helping. The appetite of Johnny Goggs was quite a healthy one; and, the supply of tinned salmon being liberal, it seemed good unto Goggs that Granny's share should not be cut short by mistakes as to the capacity of an elderly female for the putting away of such stuff.

Granny was served first, as a matter of course. Just about the moment when Monk, the last of the eight squeezed in around the table to be served, had received his helping, and before he had tasted it, a voice sounded—apparently from the corridor.

"Where is she? They say that my dear grandmother is here, but I cannot find her!"

"Why, there is my dear Johnny!" exclaimed Granny, putting down her fork. "I am here, my dearest boy, in the apartment of your friends, Master Gay, Master Monk, and the Masters Wootton."

Bags and Tricks and Wagtail grinned broadly, Gay and the brothers less broadly. Frank Monk did not grin at all. He was watching the lips of Granny.

He watched very intently, but still he was not sure.

"I will be with you in a few minutes, my dear grandmother," spoke the voice of Goggs.

"I regret extremely that I missed you at the station; and now I have to go to Mr. Adams, but I trust he will not detain me long. Please take care of my revered grandmother in my brief absence, my dear fellows!"

The voice had most certainly seemed to come from the corridor, and it was quite unlike the voice of Granny. But Frank Monk's suspicions were not allayed.

The meal went on. Granny displayed an appetite that would have done credit to any Fourth-Former. Nothing came amiss—

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tinned salmon, sausage-rolls, jam-puffs, buns, cake. Every now and then she would jump up from her seat and be very affectionate to Wagtail, who, on his part, showed plainly that he would have been as well content without her demonstrations of affection.

It is just possible that Goggs was getting his own back upon Waters for the trouble with Mont Blanc, which had been almost entirely the fault of Wagtail. Anyway, Bags and Tricks were not hugged and kissed and called "dearie."

Conversation never languished. Granny asked no end of questions. She seemed to have the most startling and original ideas concerning cricket and football.

"I suppose those things are worn to protect your poor little shins when you play football?" she said, pointing to a pair of cricket-pads.

"No, ma'am," answered Gordon Gay. "They are for the protection of our poor little shins at cricket."

"Cricket? But surely no one kicks anyone else at cricket?"

"It isn't usual," said Gay. "But there's the ball, you know. That will hurt sometimes."

"The ball? You use a ball at cricket? Oh, yes, I remember now. But I cannot see how that could hurt. I have frequently used the same sort of ball myself at tennis, and I have been struck by it without any real damage. Surely what a—ahem!—middle-aged lady can bear is not too much to expect boys to bear? I should not think of putting such clumsy things as that on my—er—lower limbs!"

Jack Wootton thought that, considering the amount of stocking that Granny displayed as she got up and went over to the mantelshelf, she really need not have minded referring to her legs as legs.

"And what are those funny things?" asked Granny, picking up a pair of boxing-gloves. "Boxing? Er—you must be making fun of me! What is boxing? I do not think I have ever heard my dear Johnny mention it."

"I shouldn't think he would, ma'am," said Harry Wootton. "It's hardly in his line."

"No; dear Johnny does not care for rough games. I consented once to his engaging in the sport of rounders; but, after a brief trial, he decided that it was too robust for him. Bertram, my dear, what do you boys do with these things?"

"Should you like to put them on, Gran?" said Blount, winking at Tricks.

"I should, very much indeed. But I suppose I must take my mittens off first."

"Oh, no; plenty of room inside. Allow me!"

And Granny allowed Bags to fasten the gloves upon her hands.

"Now, what?" she asked. "Really, what queer things they are, and what absurd paws they make my hands look!"

"Now you double your fists and punch," answered Bags, grinning cheerily.

"Like that?"

"Yes; they're doubled all right. Punch!"

"But how do you punch, Bertram? Please show me. Punch someone, and then I can see for myself."

"Shall I punch Waters, Gran?"

"Oh, yes, please! I am sure Waters will not mind, as it is for the enlightenment of my ignorance, and the dear child is so very fond of me!"

"Brrrrr!" growled Wagtail.

"That's rude, Waters!" snapped Gay.

"Very rude," said Granny. "I have never had to smack Johnny; he has always been such an exemplary boy. But I am very much afraid that I shall have to smack Waters if his conduct does not improve."

"You jolly well—"

Wagtail got the elbow of Tricks in his ribs, and broke off short in his exceedingly improper speech.

"But I'm hanged if I'm going to be made a butt of by Goggles much longer!" he breathed hotly in the ear of Trickett. "He's taking a jolly sight more change out of me than he is out of those chaps."

"That's all right; their turn will come," replied Tricks.

"I'll punch the air," said Bags. "No one seems to want me to punch them. It sometimes hurts, you know, Gran."

"Does it? How very strange! But, of course, these glove things prevent it from hurting, do they not?"

"Not entirely," Gordon Gay replied.

"Dear me! I thought that was what they were for. Punch the air, Bertram dear!"

Blount delivered a hefty punch at the atmosphere in the neighbourhood of Wagtail's head.

"Oh, cheese that!" snorted Wagtail. "You nearly had my napper!"

"What very strange language the dear child has learned to talk here!" said Granny.

"Surely he never conversed in that fashion before? Cheese—cheese! What can cheese have to do with us just now? And I am sure that everyone is quite wide awake, so that there can hardly be a napper among us! We are all quite wide awake, are we not?" said Granny, turning a beaming face upon Frank Monk.

"I am, anyway," answered Monk gruffly.

And Goggs knew that he was very near the end of the game!

Monk was sure now.

"So you punch like that, do you, Bertram?" said Granny, with what seemed a very clumsy imitation of Blount's action. "Now, I wonder whether I could hit anyone hard enough to hurt him? Bertram—"

"I'd rather not, Gran. I—I've a tender face."

"Then Waters—"

"Not for Joe!"

"But your name is not Joe, my dear child. Your name—"

"You can punch me if you like, ma'am," volunteered Gordon Gay.

"May I? How very kind of you! Stand quite still, please, or I may miss you altogether."

At that moment the voice of Mont Blanc was heard in the corridor.

With the Mask Off.

OUVREZ la porte! Open ze door, ees eet not?" howled the French junior.

"The door isn't locked, ass! But we don't want you in here!" shouted Harry Wootton.

But, as a matter of fact, the door was locked. Bags had locked it unnoticed by any of the regular inmates of the study.

"Quite still, please!" said Granny. "So—that is very nice. Now, where shall I hit you?"

"On the nose if you like, ma'am," replied Gordon Gay, with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

"But it is such a very nicely-shaped nose! I should never quite forgive myself if I had the misfortune to spoil it."

"Oh, I'll chance that! It doesn't often break anything when one has the gloves on."

"Open ze door!" shouted Mont Blanc. "You have a vat-you-call swindlaire in zere! Open ze door!"

"Come in, you clump!" yelled Jack Wootton. "The door's not locked."

"But I tell you eet ees! I tell you zat you—"

"All serene! I'll open it!" called Frank Monk.

He strode across the room. Goggs' little hour was nearing its end.

"As hard as I like?" asked Granny.

"As hard as you like!" answered Gordon Gay.

Frank Monk sniffed as he opened the door, and swung round to see Granny deliver her punch.

It was not upon the nose, or, indeed, in the face at all, that Gordon Gay got it. But something that felt rather like a small battering-ram took him in the chest, and he sat down in a hurry.

"Yooop!" he roared, completely taken by surprise.

"Spoofed!" cried Frank Monk.

"Zat ees ze villaine Goggs!" shrilled Mont Blanc, pointing an accusing finger at Granny.

"Time we got out of this!" growled Wagtail.

"Here, come in, you fellows!" said Monk to Lane and Carboy, who were in the passage, having just liberated Mont Blanc. "We don't want everyone to know all about this. What a mug you are, Gordon!"

Lane and Carboy came inside, grinning; and Frank Monk closed and locked the door.

Gordon Gay scrambled up.

"Do you mean to say that that's Goggs?" he cried. "My hat! I'll give it to him!"

He made a dash at Goggs. But that youth was too elusive for him. He dodged behind Bags, evaded the outstretched arm of Wootton major, and sent Wootton minor crashing against the still uncleared table.

Harry Wootton clutched at the cloth as he came down.

"Yaroooh! Ow-w-w-w!" he roared, as the teapot smote his head, and sent a warm stream down his neck. "Yoop! Catch the boulder! Slay him!"

Cups, saucers, plates, all the remains of the spread littered the floor. Like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, Wootton minor sat amidst it all, and lifted up the voice of lamentation and threat.

"Pax!" said Goggs, entrenched in a corner, with a bat as weapon, and a chair in front of him.

"Eet ees not pax at all whatevaire!" shrieked Mont Blanc. "I finds him out, and not to tell I promeese. Zen he and zat other scoundrel, zey binds me and puts in ze mouth of me von vat-you-call gag, ees eet not?"

"You are forgetting something, my dear fellow," said Goggs reproachfully.

"And vat ees eet zat I forget—tell me zat?"

"You're forgetting that you took back your promise not to let on. I really could not agree to that, you know. Keep off, Wootton, my friend, or the question whether this bat or your cranium is the harder will be settled in a manner which may not precisely please you!"

"Is that right, Mont Blanc?" asked Frank Monk, knitting his brows.

Bags, Tricks, and Wagtail had now grouped themselves around Goggs. They had heavy odds against them—seven to four—but they would put up a fight for it if necessary.

But they hardly fancied that there would be a fight.

Mont Blanc and Harry Wootton were very angry. But Gordon Gay, one of the best-tempered fellows going, had already begun to smile; Jack Wootton, always disposed to take his brother's little misadventures as highly amusing, grinned broadly; Monk, though he looked rather grim, had not been spoofed to the same extent as Gay; and Carboy and Lane, who had been outside the spoof altogether, saw it as very funny indeed.

"Pax!" said Goggs again, his bright blue eyes twinkling. "You were well and truly done brown, dear boys; but I am sure you do not harbour malice for that."

"Oh, well, make it 'Pax,'" said Gay. "Do you agree, Harry?"

"If you like. No good doing anything else, I suppose. But the giddy teapot's smashed, and I'm soaked with tea," growled Wootton minor.

"I do not wiz you agree at all, Gay! I will not make it ze pax!" hooted Mont Blanc.

"Then you'll be put out, my son," said Gordon Gay. "It isn't by any means clear yet that you haven't been guilty of conduct unbecoming a Rylcombe Fourth-Former and a Frenchman. You gave your giddy word, and then you wanted to take it back."

"There was some excuse for him," said Goggs. "Waters was quite unnecessarily rude to him. Personally, I have nothing to complain of in Blanc's case, and I trust that he has nothing to complain of as far as I am concerned."

"You zrow me down—you binds me—you gags me—and zen you say 'ope I complains not!' hissed Mont Blanc. "Eet ees zat I vairy mooch complain, ees eet not? I—"

"You'll go out of this on your neck if you don't chuck all that and say you're satisfied!" snapped Monk.

"I am more zan satisfy—I am vat you call full oop—fed up!" replied Mont Blanc, gesticulating wildly.

"Oh, if you're more than satisfied, that's all serene," said Gordon Gay cheerily. "You can cut, or you can stay and hear Goggs tell us all about it, just as you like."

"I zink zat I stay," murmured Mont Blanc. And he stayed.

"Now, Goggles, come out of that corner, and explain everything," said Gay. "Monkey here seems to fancy that he was on to you when none of the rest of us tumbled; but why—"

"So I was!" said Frank Monk. "I began to have my suspicions a day or two ago. I don't mean to pretend that the Granny disguise didn't take me in for a few minutes; but I was soon jolly sure Granny was Goggs. And when he spoke to himself outside in the passage—"

"He didn't!" broke in Harry Wootton, mopping his collar. "He never went outside."

"But he did!" said Monk. "The bounder's a giddy ventriloquist!"

"My hat!"

"That explains—oh, lots of things!"

"Everything, almost."

"No, it doesn't. There's something that licks me yet," said Monk. "Of course, the bounder spoofed us on the way from the station—the St. Jim's ambush that wasn't there, you know. But how on earth could he imitate the voices of Tom Merry and Grundy and D'Arcy and Cardew—chaps he's never seen?"

Monk paused for a reply.

"That shall be explained later," said Goggs.

"Hang later!" cried Gordon Gay. "Let's have your giddy explanation now, old top!"

"I can explain everything comprehensively and conclusively in about half a dozen words," Goggs said.

"My hat! It will be some difference from your usual way of talking, then!" said Jack Wootton.

"Let's have the half-dozen words, Goggles," said Gay.

"As a matter of precise and absolute fact," said Goggs meekly. "I shall need eight."

"Oh, go on!" said Carboy. "Nine, if you like, or ninety, or ninety thousand—that's nearer your giddy line! Only go on!"

"I am not such an ass as I look!" said Goggs, slowly and precisely.

"That's no explanation at all!" growled Lane.

"Oh, isn't it, then? I call it a jolly good one!" cried Bags.

"There's something in it," admitted Gordon Gay.

"I fancy I've got on to what the spoofing bounder means," Frank Monk said. "These fellows were out from the first to take us in. That's why the Goggles-bird wore goggles. Look at him now! For all that silly clobber he is wearing he doesn't look an ass when you can see his eyes, does he?"

Everybody was staring at Goggs.

"But I can, you know," he said.

And in an instant his face altered. It was the same face in features, of course; but the change of expression seemed to alter even them. He looked utterly simple, little short of imbecile.

"That's it!" cried Gordon Gay.

"They started in from the very first to do us down, the spoofers!" said Monk. "And we were fairly had all along the line. We took in all that they said about Goggles being soft and nervous and a duffer all round. Well, he may be a duffer at some things—I don't know. But we've got no proof of it yet."

He paused. Perhaps he expected Goggs or one of his chums to say something.

But all kept silence. There were other surprises in store for Rylcombe yet.

Only wait till these fellows saw Goggs in the cricket-field—till he had occasion to show what he could do at running and jumping—till someone forced a quarrel upon him, and he had to use his fists—till he gave a full display of his capacity as an exponent of ju-jitsu. Oh, and there were other things—lots of them!

Bags and Tricks and Wagtail had not failed to recognise in Gay and Monk and the Woottons fellows of all-round athletic ability: but all three firmly believed that Johnny Goggs was ahead of any one of those four in anything and everything that was worth doing.

"Goggles is a ventriloquist, and a jolly clever one!" went on Monk. "We know that now; but there's no reason why everyone should know it. He did us down over that St. Jim's ambush. He took in those chaps in his dorm. He made Snipe seem to talk all that rot about sugar to Adams because the cad hacked his shins under the table—and I say that it served Snipey jolly well right! He spoofed me into believing that Delamere was calling me—"

"I must apologise for that, Monk," said Goggs quietly. "It was only because I did not want you involved in a fight on account of my trick upon Snipe."

"Oh, it's no odds, old bean! Larking was spoiling for a licking, and he got it."

"You've forgotten one thing Goggles did," said Gay.

"A dozen I dare say," said Monk. "But what's the one you mean?"

"He saved this study from being wrecked by that crowd!"

"So he did!" growled Harry Wootton.

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE GEM. THE BOYS' FRIEND. CHUCKLES. THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Monday:

"LODER'S LUCK!"

By Frank Richards.

Gerald Loder again falls upon sorry times in next Monday's grand long complete story of Greyfriars School.

In desperate need of money, and having exhausted all sources of supply in the Sixth, Loder turns hungry eyes towards the money which Snoop of the Remove has saved up for many terms in order to help his father. The rascally prefect tries all sorts of schemes with the object of transferring Snoop's money to his own pocket; and, finally, he endeavours to use Wally Bunter as a catspaw. In the case of Billy Bunter, Loder would doubtless have succeeded; but Wally is made of different stuff, and the change of places between the two Bunters makes a very considerable difference to

"LODER'S LUCK!"

"WHY GO TO SCHOOL?"

This rather extraordinary question has been fired at me this week by a Manchester reader who signs himself "Martin Harvey."

I have condensed his question, which in its original form stood thus:

"What's the use of going to school?"

'Tis the high-road to disaster!

All one goes for is to fool

And get impots from the master!"

"Martin Harvey" goes on to say—I have no space for the whole of his poem—that when a fellow has mastered the elementary factors of education, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, he should be allowed to leave school and plunge at once into his career. He would then become a breadwinner, whereas, by staying on at school learning Latin and Greek and other dumb languages, he is simply a drag on his parents, besides wasting valuable years of his life.

Now, I should not have bothered to take this matter up but for the fact that yet another reader—Bernard Tomkins, of Liverpool—has written to me on the same subject. He is not quite so firm in his convictions as "Martin Harvey," for he says:

"School may be all-right,

And I don't agree quite

That we can get on without Latin and Greek;

Though it seems rather rum,

As the langwidge is dum,

That the masters should ram it in three times a week!"

Apparently the masters have not rammed spelling into Master Tomkins. It would seem that he stands as much in need of education as anyone.

I can only say that I flatly disagree with the sentiments of my correspondents. "Martin Harvey," in particular, takes a point of view which is curious, to say the least of it. As far as school-life is concerned, let me tell him that

"He who goes there just to fool

Of course gets impots from the master!"

It stands to reason that a fellow who is continually "playing the giddy goat" in the class-room will never make much headway at school, nor in the great world of work beyond.

How did the great men of our time achieve their success and prosperity? You may be sure they did not rise by means of the indiscriminate use of a peashooter, or by pelting a long-suffering master with paper pellets. They worked hard and played hard, did these great ones, and by energy and unselfishness they helped to make the British Empire what it is.

"Wherefore praise we famous men,

From whose bays we borrow,

That they put aside to-day

All the joy of their to-day,

And, with toil of their to-day,

Bought for us To-morrow!"

If "Martin Harvey" wishes to make his mark in the world, and prove a credit to those responsible for his upbringing, it will be necessary for him to change his outlook, and to regard his school-life not as a medium for playing the fool, but as the stepping-stone to a good and useful career. I take it he is ambitious, and wishes to get on? Very well, then. That, "Martin Harvey," is "the only way."

THE FRANK RICHARDS OF THE PAST

A Lady Reader's Tribute to Talbot Baines Reed.

From a lady reader at Hastings comes a very interesting letter which gives one an insight into the early life of one of the great masters of school-story writing—to wit, Talbot Baines Reed.

Most of my chums are familiar with "The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's," "The Adventures of a Three-Guinea Watch," and other stories which, long before the famous Companion Papers came into existence, proved a source of enjoyment and delight to boys and girls all the world over.

I append some extracts from the letter of my lady correspondent:

"In No. 574 of the MAGNET mention is made of Talbot Baines Reed as a writer for old boys' papers. It may interest you to know that when I was a girl of about fifteen I spent a summer with some friends at Christchurch, in Hampshire, and Talbot was then attending a school in that town. I had a great boy chum at that time (on the lines of Figgins and cousin Ethel), and we used frequently to play cricket against Talbot's team.

"I have a very pleasant recollection of Talbot, and I may say that the knowledge and practice gained from him and from his school-fellows were very valuable to me a few years later when I took charge of boys at my sister's school.

"Talbot was a real good fellow. I always associate him in my mind with Wingate. He left school shortly after this period, so probably escaped the fate which overtook my boy chum, who, with six of his schoolfellows, were drowned while bathing at a spot where the Rivers Avon and Stour flow into the sea. My chum was a delicate, sensitive fellow, greatly misunderstood by his father, and we two were glad to escape from the latter's chipping and sarcasm to join Talbot in the playing-fields. I think the regard and sympathy I felt for my boy chum laid the foundation of the understanding and sympathy with boys generally which have proved of great service to me—first with my pupils, and, in later years, with my troop of Boy Scouts.

"I must add just a few words of thanks for the fine stories you are giving us. The Bunter stories keep me in a pleasant state of wonder as to how the change-over between the two fat cousins will come to light. Of course, I am taking the 'Penny Pop' again!"

I have written personally to my lady reader, who has given us a very interesting picture of the personality of a man whose work will ever call for the highest admiration.

YOUR EDITOR (H. A. H.).

NOTICES.

Back Numbers Wanted by—

William C. Jupe, 30, Bennet Street, West Thebarton, Adelaide. South Australia—"Gems" dealing with Tom Merry, Talbot, and Grundy. 2d. each offered.

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ceasing to mop at his neck. "See here, Goggles, I'll forgive you! Here's my hand on it! The teapot's done in, and so is my collar; but you did save other things that matter more than they do."

"Thank you for your forgiveness, Wootton!" said Goggs gravely, as he took the extended hand.

"Can't make out what those rotters did it for," said Gordon Gay.

"I think it must have been because they do not like some of you," Goggs said mildly. "That was the impression they gave me."

Wagtail opened his mouth to say something. But before he could get a word out the elbow of Bags took him in the ribs.

He did not speak. He had quite expected that Goggs would tell the other fellows how Larking & Co. had plotted to put the blame on to the new boys. Bags and Tricks had also thought that that would be told. But as Goggs thought it best to say nothing about it, all three were ready to follow his lead, though Wagtail did growl his resentment at being elbowed in the ribs into the ear of Bags.

"I licked Larking, and Larking's rather a spiteful beast," said Monk thoughtfully. "But I never did anything against Carpenter, and he isn't quite Larking's sort. As for Snipe, I bar the cad completely—always have barred him, and always shall bar him!"

"Carpenter was not in it willingly, I believe," Goggs replied. "He had no doubt that I was—er—my dear grandmother; and when Larking attempted to thrust me from the door with violence he interposed. That was how he came to be hurt."

"We sha'n't forget that," Gordon Gay said.

"Look here, Goggles," said Jack Wootton, "we know now that you're sane, more or less. Then—"

"Thank you, my dear Hottentot!" struck in Goggs, with a curtsey.

He was still in his feminine garb, of course, and he seemed in no hurry to get out of it.

"Oh, come off it! You know our names all serene; and I shouldn't think there's another chap here with a memory like yours. That was all part of the spoofing game. But what I want to know is why do you talk like that?"

"And what is there in the manner of my conversation, my dear Wootton, to which you are disposed to take objection?"

"There you go! Like a blessed gramophone with some Parliamentary merchant's giddy speech in it!"

"I trust that my English is correct and expressive," Goggs said, with a puzzled look on his face.

"That's just it! You talk English—blessed dictionary English—and we don't!"

"But why do you not, Wootton? I am sure it has its advantages."

"Rats, ass! We haven't time. Why, just now you used about a hundred words to ask what any of us would have asked by saying, 'What's the matter with the way I jolly well talk?'"

"But there seem to me two quite unnecessary words there, Wootton. Pardon me if I err; but I fail entirely to see the necessity for 'jolly well' in your translation of my speech."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Carboy. "Let's chuck this argument. It's no giddy use—any ass can see that!"

"No use at all," said Bags cheerily. "Goggles will do it; he talks even to us like that. I'm glad you can see it's no use, Carboy."

The grins on the faces of Tricks and Wagtail aroused the suspicion of Carboy that there was some hidden meaning in this speech.

"Of course I can see it! Any ass can!" he growled.

"Yes, that's what you said before. That was how I knew you could!"

"Look here, young Blount, if you want your blessed head punched—"

"Pax, my children—pax!" said Gordon Gay soothingly. "Now that we have come together in amity, let not the peace of the meeting be disturbed."

"If Carboy's going to quarrel with these chaps, Carboy's jolly well going out on his neck!" growled Wootton minor. "We've something better than squabbling to think about."

"Rather!" chimed in Wootton major. "We've to take measures to make the best use of Goggles' face and Goggles' ventriloquism, and everything else that is Goggles', against the enemy, whosoever and wheresoever found!"

"That's the ticket!" agreed Frank Monk. "There are eleven of us here," said Gordon Gay. "It's a tolerably big crowd to keep a secret; but I rather fancy we can keep it."

"Unless Mont Blanc goes and gives it away," grumbled Lane. "He wanted to a bit ago—and after promising not to, too!"

"Zat ces not fair, Lane—cet ces not fair at all!" protested the French junior. "I ze secret can keep so well as anozer chap. I—zat ces—oh, you make ze explain to zem, Goggs! You have so many words always ready, and I cannot zink of ze right ones."

"I think Blanc means that Waters—er—got his rag out," said Goggs gravely. "Waters was really a little—er—I fear I really must express myself in English, Wootton! Your language is too hard for me, although I fancy 'got his rag out' is quite a successful attempt at talking it."

"Oh, say it any way you like—only get it out!" snapped Wootton major.

"Waters was not precisely propitiatory and affable to Blanc. Why do you groan, Carboy? Do you find that manner of putting it beyond the level of your exceedingly undeveloped intelligence? No? Well, if you understand, why make rude noises, which are creditable neither to your manners nor—"

"Bow-wow!"

It was Wootton minor who barked first. But the rest of the old hands took up the barking at once, and even Wagtail joined in the noise. The voice of Goggs was completely drowned.

The barking ceased. Within a second of its cessation there came from behind Carboy a low, deep, menacing growl.

"Brrrrr!"

Carboy jumped in alarm, and whipped round.

"I say, there's a dog here, and a jolly savage— Oh, you spoofer, Goggles!"

Tom Merry Looks In.

"I SAY, Gay, are you there?"

It was Morgan who spoke, from the corridor.

"Yes, lots of us!" answered Gordon Gay. "What is it?"

"Here's Merry from St. Jim's come along to see you!"

"Right-ho! Jolly glad to see him again, though he wasn't a visitor we expected. What's the matter, Goggles?"

"I have very special reasons for not wishing to see Merry, my dear Joyful—er—Gayful, I mean, of course!"

"Ass! You might drop all that now, I should think. What's the matter with meeting Merry? You don't know him, do you?"

"Aren't you going to let me in, Gay?" sounded the cheerful voice of Tom Merry.

"Oh, yes, old fellow! Didn't know you were out there! Here, what are you doing, Goggles?"

Goggs was making for the window.

"I am only going home by the way I came here," he replied, as he scrambled over the ledge, displaying open-work stockings and trousers turned up to the knees in doing so. "Do not on any account mention my name to Merry, I beg of you! I will explain later."

"Here, I say, that's dangerous!" said Frank Monk. "Come back, you idiot! Merry couldn't spot you in that get-up, anyway! Come back!"

But Goggs was already half-way on his journey.

Gay unlocked the door, and a handsome fellow with fair, curly hair and blue eyes walked in, smiling.

Everyone there except the three new fellows knew Tom Merry, junior captain of St. Jim's, almost as well as they knew one another. A crowd of them were glad to see Tom. The feud between them and the St. Jim's juniors had phlegm and vigour in it, but no malice. Deep down at the base of it was very real friendship.

From the quad came a roar of laughter. Goggs—or, rather, Granny—for Goggs in that attire was Granny to all but those in the secret—was just scrambling in at the window of the other study; and a small crowd in the quad watched the process with mingled amazement and amusement. The news that a grandmother even pottier than himself had come to visit Goggs had spread pretty widely through the school.

Frank Monk brought his head in, with a sigh of relief. To him that journey from one window to another had not been wholly funny. The depth to the ground was considerable; and, though Monk might have made the passage himself at a pinch, he would

not have cared to make it hampered as Goggs was by a skirt and high-heeled shoes.

"What's the joke down there?" asked Tom Merry, going to the window and clapping Monk on the back.

"They may think that you've stumbled into the lions' den, old fellow, seeing the terms we were on when we last met!" answered Monk readily.

"Then they're easily amused," said Tom. "The lions all look friendly enough, I must say. Hallo, Carboy! How's your poor nose? Right ear still thick, Wootton major? I see you can still hobble about, Gay. We rather thought old Grundy had broken one of your legs when he fell on top of you."

Everybody grinned. The last encounter between the St. Jim's juniors and those of the Grammar School had developed into a free fight. There had been a score or more on each side, and tempers had got really high.

So serious a view had the two headmasters taken of the affair that they had put the schools mutually out of bounds, and had even made new rules which were supposed to prevent any chance of the rival juniors meeting even in the village.

Such precautions as these were not really necessary, of course. But the wisdom of middle age cannot easily understand the sudden ire and the quick forgetting of youth.

Both sides had fought hard, and both had taken and inflicted considerable damage. But both had fought fairly; and within two or three hours all anger had passed, though it was more than two or three days before the wounded ceased to nurse their injuries.

Now both sides were keen to get their own back—but not by battering their friendly foe-men to pulp.

That was quite out of the ordinary course of their warfare. Ambushes, captures, spoofs—all these came into it, but very seldom blows struck in real wrath.

"Your crowd out of sanny, Tommy, old top?" asked Gay.

"Oh, we hadn't any casualties worth mentioning! Old Grundy's nose was about twice its proper size; but I fancy he was rather sorry when it subsided. He'd read or heard somewhere that all truly great men had truly great noses; and he would have liked to be in the great man fashion that way. But, of course, he's quite satisfied that he's in it every other way possible, so the nose is only a trifle—though it wasn't exactly a trifle after you had operated upon it, Gay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Rylecombe fellows. "But what about Manners' black eye?"

asked Wootton minor.

"Yes, and Levison's jaw?" said his brother. "I got home nicely on that!"

"And Blake's ear?" inquired Monk. "It looked like an overgrown ripe fig when I saw it last!"

"And D'Arcy?" chuckled Lane. "My hat, wasn't he a spectacle! Mud from head to foot, and—"

"They're all right—quite happy and chippy, and only longing to return the various compliments," said Tom. "But, as I've told them, they returned them in advance, so they will have to let that slide. I've come now—"

"We see you have, and we're sorry to see such depravity, Tommy!" said Gordon Gay, shaking his head. "Don't you know that you're out of bounds, you bounder? Truly virtuous juniors never break bounds; and if the skipper of the crew isn't truly virtuous who can be expected to be?"

"That's all right, old bean!" said Tom cheerily. "I've good news for you fellows. The truce is over, and the giddy armistice is at an end!"

"What?"

"You don't mean—"

"How was it worked?"

"If you'd be good enough to stop all talking at once, and give a fellow a chance to get a word in, I'd explain," said Tom. "By the way, I see some fellows here I don't know. You might introduce me."

Blount, Trickett, and Waters were introduced to him in turn. Bags was rather afraid he might recognise their names, for it was likely enough that Goggs had talked of them on his visit to St. Jim's. But Tom showed no sign of any such recollection. Frankingham was not mentioned, or his memory might have been quickened. As it was, he merely summed up the three as looking quite the right sort, and was not at all surprised to find them chummy already with Gordon Gay & Co.

(There will be another splendid long instalment of this grand school story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET. Order your copy in advance.)