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By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. News of an Old Pal!

AUBREY ANGEL, of the Fourth Form at Greyfriars, came up the Remove staircase, and stopped outside Study No. 1.

There he seemed to hesitate. The study door was half-open, and from within came a buzz of cheery voices.

Harry Wharton & Co., the heroes of the Remove, were discussing the approaching Christmas holidays. Apparently the Famous Five had not yet made up their minds what they were going to do with the vacation. Billy Bunter had rolled into Study No. 1 to help in the discussion, unmasked and unheeded.

But it was a matter of some importance to Bunter. For Bunter declared that, at the festive season, he couldn't even think of deserting his old pals. It was in vain that Bob Cherry urged him to go away and find his old pals and tell them so. Bunter persisted in regarding the Famous Five as his old pals.

Aubrey Angel raised his hand to tap at the door, and dropped it again. He hesitated, and while he hesitated Frank Nugent's voice was heard.

"Well, wherever we go, we all go together."

"Hear, hear!"

"Right as rain," said Billy Bunter.

"That suits me."

"Fathhead!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You're dead in this act, Bunter," explained Harry Wharton. "Can't you go and take a little run?"

"Better decide to go to Wharton's place, I think," said Bunter calmly.

"I can't stand your minor, Nugent, you know."

"And I don't think my minor could stand you," remarked Nugent. "I know I couldn't."

"As for Bull's place, that's all very well," said Bunter. "But your aunt

is a bit of a frightful old bore, isn't she, Bull?"

Johnny Bull did not answer, save by way of a ferocious glare. But glares had no effect on William George Bunter.

"And it's no good going home with Bob Cherry," went on Bunter. "I hardly think his people are well enough off to do us properly."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"And Inky's got nowhere to go, unless we take him with us," resumed Bunter. "But I don't mind. Let Inky come with us, Wharton, by all means."

Hurreo Singh blinked at Bunter.

"So there it is!" said Bunter cheerfully. "It had better be your place, Wharton. I'd ask you all to Bunter Court, only it's not yet—"

"Built?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not yet out of the hands of the decorators," said Bunter. "So you see, Wharton—"

Tap!

Aubrey Angel knocked at the door at last, and entered Study No. 1.

"Hallo! Trot in," said Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five looked rather curiously at Angel of the Fourth. He was quite an unexpected visitor in their quarters.

Billy Bunter gave him an impatient blink. His visit interrupted an important discussion. Bunter wanted the affair of the Christmas vacation to be definitely settled. If he failed to plant himself upon Harry Wharton & Co. he had to look out for other victims. So there was no time to be wasted, as the break-up was close at hand.

"Take a pew, Angel," said Frank Nugent politely.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry, picking up a cushion.

And Billy Bunter grunted and shut up—temporarily. It was impossible for Bunter to remain long in a shut-up state.

"I wanted to speak to you fellows," said Aubrey Angel, looking rather uncomfortable.

"Go ahead," said Wharton.

"It's a half-holiday this afternoon. Do—do you fellows happen to be busy?"

"Not very," answered Wharton, with a smile. "Only with our chins, at present. We're going to get some footer presently, but there's no match on to-day."

"You remember my young brother, Maurico?"

"Mick?"

"Yes; the chap who was called Mick when he was here," said Angel, his colour deepening.

"Of course we remember him," said Harry; and there was a general nodding of heads among the Famous Five.

They were not likely to forget Mick, the gipsy schoolboy. His stay at Greyfriars had been short, but it had had some exciting episodes.

It had been a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars when the discovery was made that the gipsy waiif was not a gipsy at all, but the young brother of Aubrey Angel, the dandy of the Fourth.

"You fellows were rather friendly with him," said Angel.

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurreo Janset Ram Singh, with a nod of his dusky head. "The esteemed Mick was held in distinguished estimation by our honourable selves."

Angel grinned.

"Well, he's coming down to visit Greyfriars to-day," he said.

The Famous Five were interested at once.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

"That's good," said Wharton. "We'll be jolly glad to see old Mick again."

"The gladfulness will be——"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob Cherry

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"I've had a letter from him," continued Angel. "He's coming to see me, of course, to make some arrangements about Christmas, I think—but, of course, he wants to see you fellows, too. He asked me to tell you he was coming."

"Thanks," said Harry.

"He gets to Friardale by the three-thirty. I was goin' down to the station to fetch him here," said Angel, hesitating. "But——"

"Well?"

"It unfortunately happens that I'm detained," said Angel, his face flushing. "I can't go."

"That's rotten."

"I sha'n't be able to see him before five o'clock. It's rather rotten, isn't it?"

"Hard cheese," said Harry Wharton. "Wouldn't Mr. Capper let you off, if you explained?"

Angel's flush deepened.

"It doesn't exactly depend on Mr. Capper. I—I can't get off. I—I was wondering whether some of you fellows, as you used to be jolly friendly with Maurice, would meet him, and—and look after him a bit till five."

Aubrey Angel looked extremely uncomfortable as she made that request. But Harry Wharton nodded assent at once.

"We'll be glad to," he said.

"Oh, certainly!" chimed in Billy Bunter. "You can leave it to me, if you like, Angel."

Angel did not seem to hear the Owl of the Remove.

"I suppose you'll telephone for a taxi!" went on Bunter. "In the circumstances, I shouldn't object to letting you pay for the taxi, Angel."

"Shut up, Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"I've tipped Gosling to let me have the trap," said Angel. "It will be ready in the road at three o'clock. You fellows know how to drive?"

"Yes," said Harry, with a smile.

"One or two of you might go. The trap holds four easily enough. You—you don't mind taking it on?"

"Pleasure!" said the captain of the Remove. And the Co. nodded assent. They were quite keen to see the gipsy schoolboy again. And Angel's evident desire that his young brother should be looked after raised him in their estimation. As a rule, Angel of the Fourth gave all his attention to one person only, and the name of that person was Aubrey Angel.

"Well, I'm awfully obliged," said Angel, rising.

"Not at all."

"Leave Mick to us, and we'll look after him till five o'clock," said Harry Wharton.

"It might be half-past——"

"Those giddy detention tasks!" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "Rotten when your brother's coming. But we'll take care of Mick."

"You're awfully good," said Angel. "I'm having a bit of a spread in my

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

study about six, and I'd be glad if you fellows would come. Maurice would like you to come."

"We'll come, with pleasure."

"Good!"

And Aubrey Angel left the study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Dished!

THREE boomed out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars as Billy Bunter rolled out at the school gates. Like Moses of old, William George Bunter looked this way and that way. At a little distance from the gates he discerned the waiting trap. Gosling, the porter, was certainly not supposed by his employers to lend that trap to boys, especially Lower boys. But Gosling often did that which he was not supposed to do. Certain coin of the realm, crossing Gosling's tough old palm, had a wonderful effect on Gosling.



And so there the trap was, handed over to the Famous Five of the Remove, with many injunctions from Gosling to take care of it, to bring it back safely, and not to drive fast, and to stop whenever a motor-car passed, injunctions to which the Famous Five gave as much regard as they gave to the idle wind, which they regarded not.

"I say, you fellows——" Billy Bunter rolled up to the group in the road.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bless if that porpoise doesn't haunt us like a Christmas ghost!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Bunter, old man, has it ever occurred to you that there's too much of you?"

"Yah!"

"There is much too muchfulness!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I say——"

"Well, we'd better get started," said Harry. "Jump in, Bob!"

It had been arranged that Wharton and Bob Cherry were to go in the trap. Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree

Jamset Ram Singh had wheeled out their bicycles, to take a spin across to Highcliffe while their friends were gone.

"Well, ta-ta!" called out Nugent, and the three juniors mounted their machines and pedalled away on the Courtfield road.

Billy Bunter blinked after them, and then blinked at Wharton and Bob.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Stand clear, Bunter!"

"But I say——"

"Fathead! Get out of the way!"

"I've a message for you!" roared Bunter.

"Then why couldn't you cough it up before?" demanded Wharton. "What's the message?"

"Angel wants to speak to you before you go."

"Oh bother!"

"It's all right," said Bunter. "You'll find Angel in the Form-room. I'll hold the horse while you're gone, if you like."

Wharton dismounted from the trap again.

"You'll hold the horse?" he repeated.

"Certainly, old chap!"

It was quite unlike Billy Bunter to make himself useful in this way.

"Mind you don't let him bolt," said Bob.

Bunter sniffed.

"Think I can't hold a horse?" he snapped.

"Right-ho, Fatty!"

Leaving Bunter holding the horse's head, Wharton and Bob Cherry walked back to the gates. The fat junior blinked after them with a grin.

"What the dickens can Angel have to say at the last moment?" said Bob Cherry, rather crossly. "It's high time we were off. We don't want to keep Mick hanging up at the station."

"Well, this won't keep us a few minutes," said Harry.

They hurried in at the gates, and crossed the quadrangle at a trot to the School House. There they sought the Fourth Form room.

As Angel had told them that he was detained that afternoon, they naturally expected to find him in the Form-room. Detention tasks were generally performed in the Form-rooms. But they found the room empty.

"Not here!" said Bob, looking round.

"In his study, I suppose," said Harry.

"Come on, then!"

It was possible that Angel was doing his detention task in his study, and the two juniors hurried off to the Fourth Form passage. In Angel's study—No. 4 in the Fourth—however, they did not find him. Neither was his study-mate, Kenney, to be seen.

"Dash it all, this is too thick!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "He might have told Bunter to tell us where to find him."

"Let's look along the passage."

The Removites looked into Study No. 3, which belonged to Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth. They found Temple there, and he gave them a lofty nod.

"Seen Angel?" asked Wharton.

"Eh? Didn't know you Remove kids were chummy with Angel," said the captain of the Fourth.

"We're not; but we happen to want him now. Have you seen him?" asked Harry impatiently.

"Not since he went out."

"He's not gone out!"

"He jolly well has!" said Temple, with

a stare. "He went out soon after dinner with Kenney."

"Oh! Is— isn't he detained?"

"Not that I know of."

"Oh, my hat!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry looked at one another rather blankly. Angel had told them that he was "detained," and they had naturally supposed that it was detention by a Form master. Certainly, he might have used the word in another sense. He might have been "detained" by some affair of his own. But certainly he had led them to believe that it was ordinary detention.

"But he sent us a message," said Bob.

"Did he?" yawned Temple.

"Are you sure he's not under detention, Temple?"

"Well, I don't think he is, but he might be. You'll find him in the Form-room in that case. Shut the door after you!" said Cecil Reginald politely.

The Removites left Temple's study. In the passage they looked at one another again. They were rather at a loss.

"Well, we've got to get off if we're going to meet the train at Friardale," said Bob. "It's ten past three already."

"It's jolly odd! How could he have sent us a message by Bunter if he's not in the school?"

Bob gave a jump.

"Did he send us a message?" he exclaimed.

"Bunter said—"

"The fat villain may have been pulling our leg!" exclaimed Bob. "After all, it would have been rather odd Angel sending us a message like that at the last moment. That fat boulder—"

"Oh, come on!" said Harry.

They left the School House rather quickly. It seemed pretty certain now that Aubrey Angel was not in the House. He was "detained" from going to the station by some private affair, that was fairly clear now. And in that case he had sent no message, and Bunter, for some mysterious reason of his own, had "spoofer" the Removites.

Wharton and Bob Cherry went down to the gates at a run. Coker of the Fifth was adorning the gateway with his bulky person, and the juniors did not see him till they ran into him.

Coker staggered back with a roar.

"You cheeky fags!" he bellowed.

"You silly ass!" gasped Bob, staggering back from the shock.

"By gad, I'll jolly well knock your cheeky heads together!" exclaimed Horace Coker wrathfully.

"Hands off, you dummy—"

"Now then!" gasped Coker, and he grasped Wharton and Bob, one in either muscular hand.

But the heads of the two juniors did not come together with a crack, as Coker expected. Muscular as he was, Coker of the Fifth was not quite equal to dealing with two sturdy Removites.

Instead of that the two juniors fastened on Coker, and the great man of the Fifth suddenly and unexpectedly found his feet flying away from underneath him.

With his feet in the air Horace Coker had no means of support, visible or invisible.

The natural result was that Coker sat down.

He sat on the hard, cold earth with a



"By gad!" exclaimed Horace Coker. "I'll jolly well knock your silly heads together!" He reached out and grabbed the two Removites by the shoulders, with the intention of fulfilling his threat. But the burly Fifth-Former was no match for Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton. The great man of the Fifth suddenly found his feet flying away from underneath him. (See Chapter 2.)

concussion that took his breath away. He could only faintly gasp:

"Ooooooooooop!"

Wharton and Bob Cherry left him to it. They had no time to waste on Coker. They went at a rapid run down the road to the spot where they had left Bunter, eager to bump the Owl of the Remove for his temerity in pulling their important legs, and then to drive to the station to meet Mick.

But the trap was not to be seen. They had left it by the roadside, with Billy Bunter holding the horse. Now there was no sign of trap or Bunter.

Bob Cherry halted, panting.

"The fat villain! He's taken the trap—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"That was why—"

"I'll scalp him!" roared Bob.

The enraged Removites stared round for a sign of Bunter, but there was no sign of him. Skinner of the Remove was sauntering along the lane, and Bob shouted to him.

"Seen Bunter—in a trap?"

"Yes, he passed me a few minutes ago!" said Skinner. "I asked the fat cad for a lift, and he didn't even answer."

"Which way was he going?"

"Friardale."

"Has he gone to meet Mick, then?" asked Harry in perplexity.

"Wherever he's gone, we're going after him!" said Bob. "Come on! I'll burst him when we find him. Anyhow, we've got to get to the village. Put it on!"

And at a rapid trot the two juniors started down the road to Friardale, leaving Skinner staring after them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Just Like Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned.

It was a grin of satisfaction. Billy Bunter was in the trap, with the reins in one hand and the whip in the other, bowling along Friardale Lane at a good speed. Bunter could drive—at all events, he flattered himself that he could drive. So far all was going well. The horse seemed a little fresh, and the speed was a little faster than Bunter liked; but when he pulled on the reins the horse shook his head and took no notice. So Bunter decided to "give him his head." That was really judicious, for certainly the horse would have taken his head whether Bunter had "given" it or not.



"Silly asses!" murmured Bunter.

He was thinking of Bob Cherry and Wharton. Having dispatched them on a fool's errand, Bunter had calmly taken possession of the trap. Certainly, in giving them that pretended message from Angel, Bunter had departed from the straight line of veracity. But that was a trifle to William George Bunter. Truth and William George had long been strangers to one another. Billy Bunter had not been brought up at the feet of George Washington, the celebrated Transatlantic gentleman who could not tell a lie—perhaps! Bunter not only could, but did.

Now he was bowling along merrily to Friardale to meet Maurice Angel. Bunter had a high opinion of Mick—of late growth.

When Mick had come to Greyfriars as a gipsy waif all Bunter's aristocratic instincts had been aroused. He had regarded the outsider with lofty contempt.

But when it was discovered that Mick was the brother of the wealthy and well-connected Angel of the Fourth, son of a rich baronet, and actually heir to a huge fortune himself, then Bunter's feelings had undergone a natural change—natural to Bunter.

He was prepared to worship the ground upon which Mick trod, and to offer him the heartiest friendship.

The one-time waif was actually a millionaire—or he was going to be a millionaire when he came of age and inherited the fortune left him by his uncle. A million of money covered a multitude of sins. It was certain that Mick would have a handsome allowance. Any fellow who had a handsome allowance was able to count upon Billy Bunter's warmest friendship and kindest regards.

Whether Bunter would be able to plant himself upon Harry Wharton & Co. for the Christmas vacation seemed doubtful. He was skilful in such matters; but certainly the Co. seemed to entertain strong objections. As a second string to his bow Bunter intended to make himself very agreeable to the one-time gipsy schoolboy. A Christmas at the great mansion of Sir Philip Angel was exactly what Bunter wanted, and he did not see why he should not have it. If Mick proved amenable to the voice of the charmer, he would be able to "turn down" Harry Wharton & Co., and turn up his little fat nose at them and their Christmas holiday. Really, it was worth trying on.

So Bunter bowled off to the station in cheery spirits, little doubting that Mick would be glad to see him. Indeed, how could any fellow resist the fascinating manners of W. G. Bunter?

But there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. Bunter was not destined to arrive at the station in the way he anticipated.

A motor-car came snorting out of the Redclyffe road with a loud blaring of a motor-horn. Bunter's horse required a firm hand when a motor was in the offing. And Bunter's hand was anything but firm.

The horse shied and reared and clattered his hoofs. The car snorted on its way, leaving Bunter with an unmanageable horse, tugging desperately at the reins, and tugging in vain.

"Stop, you beast!" gasped Bunter.

A firm hand could have controlled the horse. But the animal was quite well aware that it was a weak hand that held the reins. He broke into a furious gallop, partly due to the scare, and

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

partly to a wilful temper. Bunter hung on to the reins wildly, his fat face growing white.

"Ow! Stop! Oh dear! I'd better give him the whip!" gasped Bunter.

He gave him the whip. That was not a judicious proceeding. The horse fairly tore along the lane.

"Oh dear! Help!"

The trap rocked from side to side as the horse raced on. Instead of going on direct to the village, the runaway took a fancy into his head to turn into a lane leading towards Woodend. Bunter had no chance of stopping him. This did not look like meeting Mick at Friardale Station; but Bunter, in his terror for his own fat skin, had already forgotten Mick. He dragged at the reins again wildly, but a toss of the horse's head jerked them from his hand, and they hung over the animal's heaving back. Then Bunter held on to the seat and gasped helplessly.

There was a shout in the village street at Woodend as the horse came clattering through with the trap rocking behind him. They were through the village in a minute or less, and the horse, following his own sweet will, turned into another lane that wound away between pasture fields, and galloped on. A farm labourer looked through a hedge and shouted, but that had no effect on the excited horse, save to spur him to greater efforts.

The trap rocked and danced on the rutty road. Bunter was white as chalk now, clinging to the seat in momentary fear of a spill. He gave a yelp of terror every time the trap jumped—and it jumped every minute or so.

From the Woodend Lane they came back into the Friardale road, but on the further side of Friardale. Fortunately the horse turned towards that village, instead of taking the London Road.

Friardale came in sight.

It was past half-past three now, and doubtless Mick had already arrived; but Bunter was giving no more thought to Mick than he was giving to Julius Cæsar. All his thoughts were concentrated upon William George Bunter, and the risk that worthy character was running of breaking his valuable neck.

Loud shouts and scuttling of feet greeted the runaway in the High Street of Friardale. Everyone dodged away, and the runaway had the road to himself. The railway-station came in sight, with the Red Cow opposite—and five or six loafers dodged into the station or into the Red Cow.

"Help!" yelled Bunter.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

The horse tore on.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mick Chips In!

MAURICE ANGEL came out of the little station at Friardale, and looked about him.

Few would have recognised Mick, the gipsy, in the handsome, well-dressed lad. The dark sunburn lingered on the handsome features—that was all the trace that remained of Mick's eventful past.

Very fit and cheerful he looked, as he stood there, glancing about the old village street—the street that once he had trodden in his rags and tatters when he was an outcast and a waif.

He was a little perplexed as he glanced round. He had expected his brother Aubrey to meet him there.

Strangely enough, there was a strong affection between Angel of the Fourth and his newly-found brother. Fellows who knew Angel fully expected him to cut up "rusty" when Mick, the gipsy, became a member of his family. The discovery of Mick made a very considerable difference to Aubrey and his elder brother. They would have shared the great fortune left by Colonel Angel to his lost nephew, had Mick never been discovered. And Angel had seemed the very last fellow in the world to feel any regard for one who came between him and his worldly interests. Mick himself had wondered how Aubrey would take it.

Aubrey had taken it in a way that strengthened the affection Mick already felt for him, and that raised him in the estimation of Harry Wharton & Co. The Famous Five admitted that there was more good in Angel of the Fourth than they had ever suspected. He was a dandy, he was a good deal of a snob, he had a supercilious manner that was hard to bear, and he had the tastes and pursuits of a blackguard.

But on this one point it had to be acknowledged that Aubrey played up like a sportsman, at the call of the blood. He was obviously glad that his lost brother was found, and he was strongly attached to him. It made no difference to his ways; he was the same blackguard as of old; the same snob, the same faithless friend and ungenerous enemy—to others. But to Mick he was a kind and affectionate brother, and it was a great redeeming point in his character. And it was not surprising that Mick, in the circumstances, refused to see any faults in the magnificent Aubrey at all.

Mick was looking about him, expecting to see Angel of the Fourth, when the clatter of thundering hoofs announced the arrival of Billy Bunter in the runaway trap. Three or four pedestrians rushed for safety as the runaway came thundering by the station.

"Help!"

Mick recognised Bunter at a glance; but if the hapless junior had been a stranger, and not a Greyfriars fellow at all, it would have made no difference to the gipsy schoolboy.

He made a leap out of the station entrance, and ran into the road as the trap thundered along.

"Help! Ow-wow! Help!"

Mick made a spring at the tossing head of the runaway.

He caught hold—the son of Sir Philip Angel, heir to a million, had not lost the activity of Mick, the gipsy.

For a few moments he was dragged helplessly along, but his weight told, and the runaway's head was dragged down.

A minute more, and he was brought to a halt, a hundred yards past the station, and stood trembling and panting in the grip of the gipsy.

"Oh! Ow! Help!"

"All serene now, Bunter!" panted Mick.

"Ow! Oooop!"

Bunter had rolled off the seat into the bottom of the trap. He was now squirming and wriggling and gasping there.

Mick drew the now-subdued horse to the roadside, and fastened the reins to



a fence. Then he stepped up to help Bunter.

"Here you are, Bunty!" he said, with a smile, and he grasped the fat junior's collar and right-angled him.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Leggo, you ass!"

"What!"

"Do you want to choke me?" howled Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Leggo, you dummy!"

Mick let go. Bunter sank into the seat and gasped for breath.

"Where's my spectacles?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Can't you find 'em for a chap?" howled Bunter. "I dare say you've made me tread on them. If they're broken, you'll jolly well have to pay for them, I can tell you!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Mick.

Bunter's variety of gratitude was a little surprising to his rescuer. But Mick was a good-natured fellow. He groped in the trap for the missing spectacles, and fielded them, and handed them to the Owl of the Remove. Bunter jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked at him.

"Oh, it's you!" he ejaculated, recognising Mick by the aid of his rescued spectacles.

"Little me!" smiled Mick.

"Did you stop the horse?"

"Eh? Oh, yes! I stopped him," said Mick. "He's all right now."

"I had him under control all right," said Bunter.

"Great Scott! Had you?"

"Yes; I was just giving him his head."

"You were," agreed Mick. "He had it, anyhow!"

"If you think I can't drive—"

"Sure you can!" said Mick pacifically. "You could drive in a chariot race, I should think. It looked like it."

A score of the inhabitants of Friar-dale had gathered round the trap now.

Through the crowd came Police-Constable Tozer, with a notebook in his plump hand, and a stern expression on his plumpy face. Mr. Tozer had seen the runaway in time to dodge into the porch of the Red Cow. It was no part of his police duties to get run over by a runaway horse. But now that the runaway was stopped, it was time for the majesty of the law to appear on the scene.

"I shall want your names and addresses!" said Mr. Tozer, blinking solemnly at the occupants of the trap.

"Rot!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"You jolly well know my name and address," said Bunter peevishly, "and don't you butt in here, old Tozer!"

"Old Tozer!" gasped the majesty of the law.

"Shurrup, Bunter, you ass!" whispered Mick. "Do you want this to get to the Head?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bunter.

Certainly he did not want the episode to be reported to Dr. Locke. Gosling, doubtless, would receive most of the blame for lending the trap. But Bunter would receive enough to have the most uncomfortable results. The Head certainly would not cane Gosling; but it was practically certain that he would cane Bunter.

"Master Bunter, eh?" said Mr. Tozer, with a grunt. "Driving a 'orse to the public danger. I've got to report this!"

"He only wants a tip, Mick!" whispered Bunter—in a stage whisper that reached many ears.

There was a chuckle among the assembled villagers, and Mr. Tozer grew purple.

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" exclaimed Mick.

He jumped from the trap. Mr. Tozer, with a lofty and frowning brow, cleared back the staring villagers. Mick spoke to the plump constable in a low

voice, and his hand for a moment touched Mr. Tozer's hand. In that moment a ten-shilling note changed owners. And Mr. Tozer turned the majesty of the law upon the staring crowd, shepherding them off majestically, and leaving the juniors to themselves.

"Think you can manage the horse now, Bunter?" asked Mick.

"Of course I can. I could manage him all the time."

"Hem!"

Mick eyed Bunter rather doubtfully. The horse was quiet enough now, but there was no telling what might happen when Bunter began to drive again.

"That's all right," said Bunter. "Jump in."

"I've got to get back to the station," said Mick. "I expect my brother's waiting for me there."

"He jolly well isn't," grinned Bunter. "You see, old Aubrey couldn't come, and I came instead."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mick.

"Under the circumstances, as he was detained, Aubrey thought he'd ask an old pal of yours to meet you," explained Bunter. "So I got this trap, and here I am."

Mick stared at him.

"You came to meet me at the station in this trap?"

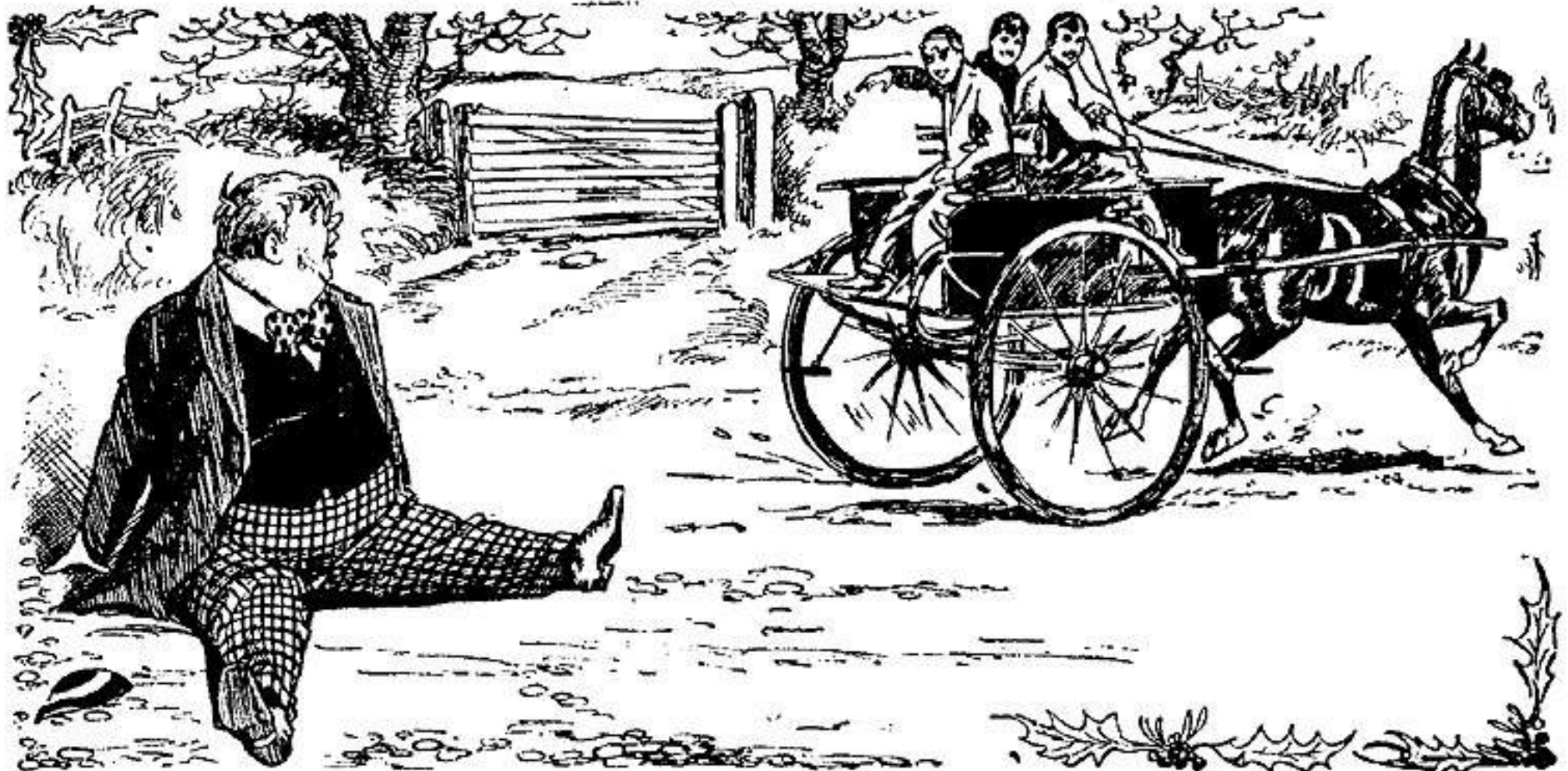
"Just that."

"Aubrey asked you?"

"Well," said Bunter cautiously, "he actually asked Wharton—but Wharton was prevented at the last minute."

"But when I saw you pass the station you weren't coming from the direction of Greyfriars," said Mick, puzzled. "You came round by the lane from Wood-end."

"That blessed horse ran away—I mean, I thought I'd take a sort of roundabout way, as there was plenty of time. Look here, jump in, Mick, old man, and I'll let you drive."



"I say, you fellows—yaroo!—I say—yoop! Leggo! Oh crumbs!" Bump! Billy Bunter sat down in the roadway and roared. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Mick climbed into the trap. "Drive on, Mick, old chap!" said Harry Wharton. The gipsy schoolboy set the horse in motion again. "Look here, you beasts!" roared Bunter. But the "beasts" were gone! (See Chapter 5.)

"I think I'd better," said Mick, laughing.

He loosened the horse, and mounted into the trap and took the reins and whip. As a matter of fact, Bunter was glad enough to hand over the horse to him, though nothing would have induced the Owl of the Remove to admit that he could not handle the animal. Mick turned the trap and drove back towards the station.

At the station he pulled in, and looked about him. In spite of what Bunter had told him, he had some hope of seeing his brother there. But nothing was to be seen of Aubrey Angel.

"We'll get on to Greyfriars," said Mick, at last.

"Might as well stop at Uncle Clegg's for a snack," suggested Bunter. "I'm rather hungry. My treat, you know."

The trap bowled on past Uncle Clegg's and Bunter gave his new driver an angry blink.

"Look here, ain't we stopping?" he demanded.

"You can, if you like, Bunter. I'm rather keen to get on to the school. But I can walk it, if you like."

Bunter snorted. Stopping at Uncle Clegg's was not of much use to Billy Bunter, unless Maurice Angel stopped with him. Although it was to be "Bunter's treat," somebody was required to foot the bill, as was generally the case when Bunter stood treat.

"Oh, let's get on," he said. "I don't mind. I say, Mick, what are you doing at Christmas?"

"Haven't quite decided yet."

"How would you like to come to Bunter Court?"

The gipsy grinned. His stay at Greyfriars had been brief; but long enough for him to learn all about Bunter Court, that magnificent residence of the Bunter family that was not to be found in any directory.

"Thanks," he said. "That would be ripping. When shall I come?"

Bunter almost jumped. It did not dawn upon his fat mind that Mick was pulling his poogy leg, and had no intention of coming for Christmas to Bunter Court, even if that superb mansion had existed outside the realms of Bunter's fat imagination.

"Oh! The—the fact is, it's in the hands of the decorators now," gasped Bunter. "That's why I can't ask you there, old chap."

"Hard cheese," said Mick.

"But it's all right," said Bunter. "We used to be such jolly good pals at Greyfriars—"

"Did we?"

"Don't you remember?"

"No."

"Hem! We did, you know. I missed you awfully when you went. We used to be such pals, that I really couldn't think of spending this Christmas with anybody else. If you can't come to me, I'll come to you."

"But—"

"Don't say a word—it's a go!" said Bunter.

"But—"

"That's settled. Now, about the date—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a familiar roar. And two juniors who were trotting along the lane stopped in front of the trap. Mick drew in the horse at once as he recognised Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. His face brightened

cheerily at the sight of them—in that respect presenting a marked contrast to Billy Bunter's fat countenance.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wanted for Christmas!

"MICK, old man!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, old bean!"

"Jolly glad to see you once more, Mick!"

"The gladfulness is terrific, as Inky would say."

Bob Cherry and Wharton shook hands with Mick over the side of the trap. Billy Bunter sat and blinked at them. It was not a happy meeting for him. Sooner or later, of course, the fat junior had to face the music; but he preferred it later rather than sooner.

"You're looking topping, old chap," went on Bob Cherry, giving Mick's hand a wring that made the gipsy schoolboy wince. "It's no end of a pleasure to see your old chivvy again."

"It's a pleasure to me," said Mick brightly. He was more than glad to see the heroes of the Remove; the fellows who had stood by him faithfully in his dark days, when he had been a waif and an outcast.

"So Bunter brought you from the station!" said Bob, turning a glare upon the Owl of the Remove.

"Well, I brought him," said Mick laughing. "It seems that Aubrey's detained, and Bunter came in his place."

"The fat villain—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"The spoofing porpoise—"

"The fat rascal!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "He spoofed us into leaving him with the trap, and bagged it and cleared."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mick.

"I didn't!" roared Bunter.

"What?"

"I mean to say, I felt that I oughtn't to wait any longer, as you fellows were dawdling about. I suppose you didn't want me to leave old Mick hanging up at the station all the afternoon, did you?" demanded Bunter. "I t—"

"Thank you?" stuttered Bob. "Thank you for bagging our trap, and leaving us to walk."

"You told us Angel wanted us," exclaimed Wharton.

"Well, didn't he?" demanded Bunter.

"You know he didn't."

"I didn't know—how should I know? He might have wanted to see you." No accounting for tastes, you know," gasped Bunter.

"Why, you—you—you—"

"Have him out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Bump him!"

"Yarooooh!"

Mick sat and held the reins, and grinned, as the Owl of the Remove was jerked out of the trap by the two indignant juniors. He understood now how it was that Billy Bunter had arrived at Friardale in Gosling's trap. Billy Bunter struggled and roared.

"I say, you fellows—yaroooh—I say—yooop! Leggo! I say—oh, crumbs!"

Bump!

"Whooooooop!"

Harry Wharton and Bob climbed into the trap, leaving Billy Bunter sitting by the roadside, purple and breathless.

"Drive on, Mick, old chap," said Harry.

"Right-ho!" The gipsy schoolboy set

the horse in motion again. Billy Bunter staggered to his feet.

"Look here, you beasts—"

"Good-bye, Bunter."

"I can't walk back to Greyfriars!" shrieked Bunter.

"Try!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bow-wow!"

The trap bowled on. Billy Bunter broke into a desperate run in pursuit, puffing and blowing, his fat little legs going like clockwork.

"I say, you fellows—I say, Mick, old man! Mick!" yelled Bunter. "I say, it's settled about Christmas, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes," answered Mick, without turning his head.

"I'm coming with you, what!" gasped Bunter. He wanted it quite clear.

"No."

"Wha-a-at? You said it was settled?"

"So it is."

"Settled that I'm coming?" howled Bunter.

"Settled that you're not."

"Beast!" yelled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter's short supply of breath failed him. He stopped and shook a fat fist after the trap, as it rattled on up the lane. A bend of the road hid it from the sight of the Owl of the Remove, and Billy Bunter sat down by the roadside, to gasp and splutter after his exertions. He gasped and spluttered, and spluttered and gasped for quite a long time before he re-started, and, like the weary ploughman, homeward plodded his way.

"Same old Bunter!" chuckled Mick, as he drove on. "He made out that he'd got this trap to meet me at the station, because Aubrey was detained. Aubrey asked you fellows to come?"

"Yes, that's it," said Harry. "We were glad to come, of course."

"My brother's detained by his Form master?"

That was a natural question, but a hard one to answer. But for Bunter's trickery the chums of the Remove would never have known that Angel of the Fourth was not under detention, and they would have answered Mick's question in the affirmative at once. Now that they knew Angel was not within the walls of Greyfriars at all they were rather puzzled how to answer. Angel did not want his brother to know that he was neglecting him on account of some excursion he did not care to give up, for that was evidently the fact of the matter. And the Removites did not want to put it like that to Mick. Bob Cherry stared away over the frosty hedges, leaving the answer to Wharton.

"Well, he mentioned that he was detained," said Harry at last. "He didn't go into particulars. But he's not likely to be free, I understand, till after five, and we're going to look after you in the interval, see?"

Mick smiled.

"It's jolly good of you," he said. "I suppose it would be against the rules if I butted into the Fourth Form room to speak a word to Aubrey before he's let out of detention."

Bob stared away harder across the hedges. Wharton coughed.

"Well, it's the rule that a chap under detention mustn't be spoken to," said Harry diplomatically. Really, the captain of the Remove had a rather difficult task to shield Angel's negligence from his young brother's knowledge.



The door of Ponsonby's study was thrown violently open. Crash! Angel of the Fourth came whirling out of the study. He landed in the passage on his back with a howl of fury. "Oh, gad!" ejaculated the Caterpillar. "Are you always as polite as that to your visitors, Pon?" "The cad checked us," said Ponsonby. "And we're not standing any Greyfriars cheek, I can tell you!" (See Chapter 7.)

"Yes, I suppose so," assented Mick. "I don't want to break any rules during my visit." He chuckled. "I broke enough when I was at the school, didn't I?"

"You did!" said Harry, laughing.

"Well, I wanted to see you fellows, as well as my brother, of course," said Mick. "I've something to say to you about Christmas. You see, as I'm not at Greyfriars now, I don't have much chance of seeing you chaps, and I thought you might like Christmas with me."

He glanced rather anxiously at Wharton.

"It would be ripping to have Christmas together," he went on. "That is, of course, if you fellows like the idea."

"Jolly good idea," said Bob.

"Like the idea of going to Scotland?"

"Scotland?" repeated the two Removites.

"Yes; I'm going up to Scotland for Christmas—place called Lochmuir, in the Highlands. Wonderful old place, with all sorts of historical associations—Bonnie Prince Charlie and the rest. Prince Charlie put up there a few days before the battle of something or other."

"Culloden?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"That's it," grinned Mick. "I'm weak in history, and some other things, though my jolly old tutor keeps pegging away at me. Well, this jolly old castle of Lochmuir is no end of a place, with ancient battlements, a loch and moors and hills and a killed ghost—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, it's being fixed up for Christmas, and it will be jolly comfortable," said Mick. "The pater's idea is that I should take a party of young people there with me, and I think we ought to get a good time."

Harry Wharton nodded.

As the chums of the Remove had, as yet, made no arrangements for the

Christmas holidays, Mick's suggestion appealed to them strongly. A haunted castle in the Scottish Highlands, hills and heather and snow, appealed to their imaginations, as well as the prospect of treading in the footsteps of the gallant and ill-fated prince whose fate had been sealed at the battle of Culloden. But there was a drawback—was Aubrey Angel to be there?

Mick's next remark answered that unspoken question.

"You fellows get on all right with my brother now?" he asked.

"Much better than we used," said Harry. "We haven't had any rows since you left, Mick."

"That's good."

"Of course, Remove and Fourth don't have much to do with one another," said Bob.

"Aubrey will be with me, and the pater, of course," said Mick. "If you're friends with Aubrey now it's all right—if you'd care to come."

"We'd like to come," said Harry slowly. Certainly he liked the idea, but the thought of Aubrey Angel was a troublesome one.

"Of course, you'll have to speak to the others," said Mick quickly. "I want all five of you."

"Right-ho!"

Greyfriars was in sight now. Mick's face lighted up at the sight of the old school.

Bob gave Wharton a look. If Mick was about Greyfriars all the afternoon it was very probable that he would learn that Angel of the Fourth was not in the school. The chums of the Remove had undertaken to "look after" Mick till his brother was free, and it occurred to both of them that it would be judicious to "look after" him outside the walls of Greyfriars. Certainly Mick would be wounded if by chance he learned that it was not really detention that kept his brother away.

Wharton understood Bob's look, and nodded.

"Now we've got the trap, what about running on to Highcliffe?" he asked. "Nugent and Inky and Johnny are there; they've gone over to see Courtenay. You'd like to see Frank Courtenay, Mick, and they'll give us some tea, and it will fill in time while your brother is—is detained."

"Good egg!" said Bob.

Mick nodded at once.

"Jolly good idea," he said.

And the trap bowled on past Greyfriars, and kept on by the Courtfield Road to Highcliffe School. And Wharton and Bob Cherry felt more easy in their minds. If Mick did not get to Greyfriars till after five o'clock he was unlikely to learn of Angel's manoeuvres, and it was certainly a case where ignorance was bliss.

It was an enjoyable drive through the keen frosty air, and the three juniors arrived at Highcliffe in great spirits. At the gates they found Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who had just arrived there after their spin. And the Famous Five and Mick walked in cheerfully to call on Frank Courtenay, the junior captain of Highcliffe, little dreaming what was to happen during their visit.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Visitors of Highcliffe!

"FRANKY!"

"Hallo!"

"They're keepin' it up!"

It was Rupert de Courcy, otherwise known as the Caterpillar, who spoke. He was standing with his hands in his pockets at the window of Study No. 3 in the Fourth Form quarters at Highcliffe School. Frank Courtenay, his study mate, had just come in.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

"Who's keeping up what?" asked Courtenay, with a smile.

"Pon & Co."

"Oh, Ponsonby!" said Courtenay, indifferently. "I noticed that they weren't at the foter."

"You've been urgin' the flyin' bull, old man?" yawned the Caterpillar.

"Yes, and feel all the better for it. I noticed that you didn't turn up, Caterpillar."

"I was goin' to," said De Courcy. "I was thinkin' of it seriously. Unfortunately, I didn't get further than thinkin'."

"Frowsting in the study, what?" asked Courtenay.

"I've been resistin' temptation," answered the Caterpillar gravely.

"How's that?"

"Didn't you hear me make a remark as you came in? Pon & Co. are still keepin' it up. They've got a guest in their study—a regular goer. You know Angel, of the Fourth Form at Greyfriars?"

"I've seen him."

"He's one of the lads," said De Courcy—one of the nuts—one of the won't-go-home-till-mornin' crowd. I believe they're makin' the fur fly in Pon's study—Pop an' Gaddy, an' Monson, and the jolly old Angel."

Courtenay frowned.

"Well, it's no bizney of ours, I suppose," he remarked.

"Isn't it? You don't feel inclined to drop in and see Pon, an' take a hand in the giddy game?"

"Fathead! Surely you haven't been thinking of anything of the sort?" asked Courtenay, a little sharply.

The Caterpillar nodded.

"Thinkin' and thinkin' and thinkin'," he answered. "But, as I remarked, I've been resistin' temptation."

"You never mean half you say, Rupert," said Courtenay, with a smile. "Now, what about tea?"

"Tea if you like! Any old thing! I say, what would the Head say if, by a wonderful chance he dropped into Pon's study?"

"Order of the boot, I suppose."

"It's not likely to happen," remarked the Caterpillar. "But it might! Might have happened to me, Frank, if you hadn't plucked me like a jolly old brand from the burnin'."

"Ass!"

"Very interestin' chap, Angel," remarked the Caterpillar, as he watched Courtenay raking the fire together to boil the kettle for tea.

"Is he?" said Courtenay, without interest.

"No end. Never saw a chap who was such a complete goer," said the Caterpillar. "I hear that there's been a lot of talk about him lately at Greyfriars. He had a brother, or somethin', who was lost among the gipsies, or somethin' or other, and he turned up, and he's comin' into a fortune that would have come to Angel. Quite a romance, what?"

"Quite!" said Courtenay.

"And the odd part is, that Angel takes it well," said the Caterpillar. "From what I know of the dear man, I'd have expected him to hate that new brother like poison. Instead of which, he sort of takes him to his manly breast and weeps over him, tears of undiluted joy. Doesn't that show, Franky, that a fellow should never be cocksure in his opinions? I should have set Angel down for an

arrant blackguard without a single good quality in his make-up. And it turns out that he's got one—just one."

"So has everybody," smiled Courtenay. "Nobody's so black as he's painted, or as he paints himself. Are you laying the cloth?"

"Oh, yes!" The Caterpillar did not stir. "My people know the Angels, and I've seen his pater at home—Sir Philip, a stiff and stern old johnny, a good bit like a ramrod to look at, with a jaw like a vice. Not much like his hopeful son. Angel isn't a chip of the old block. I think you ought to lay the cloth, Franky, as a reward for virtue. I've been resistin' for a whole hour the temptation to join in the game in Pon's study. Angel's reckonin' with money, and it might have been a good thing for me—with Christmas comin', too, an' expenses mountin' up."

"Fathead!" said Courtenay. The Caterpillar glanced from the window as Courtenay laid the cloth. His eyes fell on six juniors who were coming across the quad.

"Oh, gad! Visitors!" he ejaculated. Courtenay joined him at the window. He opened it at once, and waved his hand to the Greyfriars fellows below.

"Come right up!" he called out. "Right-ho!"

"Oh, my hat!" said the Caterpillar. "Do you recognise the new sheep in the flock, Franky? That dark-faced kid is young Angel."

"Angel's brother?"

"Yes—the kid they call Mick. Think he knows his brother's here, keepin' it up in Pon's study?"

Courtenay looked startled.

"He can't be that sort," he said. "Wharton's set wouldn't be friends with him if he were."

"Just what I was thinkin'. They'll have to pass Pon's study to get here," said the Caterpillar. "If the kid knows all about Angel of the Fourth, it doesn't matter; but if not—"

"Come with me, Bunter!" "Yar-oooh!" Mr. Quelch fastened a finger and thumb on Bunter's fat ear, and the Owl of the Remove had no choice but to accompany his Form-master.

(See Chapter 10.)

"If not, he'd better not know. He must be on a visit to Greyfriars, as he's come over with those fellows," said Courtenay thoughtfully. "He probably doesn't know that his brother is here at all. No need for us to tell him."

"I'll trot down and meet them," said De Courcy, and he strolled out of the study, leaving Courtenay to hurry on a few extra preparations for a more extensive spread.

The Caterpillar paused as he was passing Ponsonby's study. In that study Pon & Co., the black sheep of Highcliffe, were "keeping it up." In an atmosphere of cigarette-smoke, the young rascals were card-playing, and the stakes were probably high—generally they were in Pon's study. And that they were oblivious, just then, to all considerations but the game, was evident from the unsubdued voices, that the Caterpillar could hear proceeding from the other side of the locked door.

"Your deal, Angel."

"What rotten luck!"

"Filthy! Oh, give us a match!"

Tap!

De Courcy knocked lightly at the door. In an instant there was a startled commotion in the study. Slack as everything was at Highcliffe, there was always some little danger of discovery for the black sheep of the school; always the possibility that the Head might wake up to his responsibilities, and make an example. The knock at the door startled the gamblers, and Pon's voice called out rather breathlessly:

"Who's there?"

"Little me!"

De Courcy grinned as he heard a gasp of relief in the study.

"Only the Caterpillar!" said Gadsby's voice.

"Did I make you jump?" chuckled De Courcy.

"You did, you ass!" snapped Cecil Ponsonby. "Comin' in to take a hand?"

"Not this time—just expectin' visitors, who would be shocked at anythin' of the sort, old bean."

"Oh, rot!"

"I just tapped, old banana, to warn you not to talk too loud," said the Caterpillar. "Suppose the Mobbs-bird should walk along the passage, what? Or the Head? Or even a prefect? Moderate your giddy transports, old beans, or you may get nabbed."

And the Caterpillar walked on to the stairs. Ponsonby & Co. took the hint. De Courcy met Harry Wharton & Co. on the stairs, and greeted them cheerily. When he came back past Pon's study with his visitors, there was only a subdued murmur of voices from within, which the passing juniors did not heed. Harry Wharton & Co., and Mick, arrived in Courtenay's study, without the slightest suspicion that Angel of the Fourth was at Highcliffe.

Frank Courtenay greeted them very cheerily.

"Tea's just on ready," he said. "You've dropped in just at the right time. Jolly glad to see you."

"I thought we'd give you a look in, as we're breaking up so soon," said Harry. "You know this kid, Mick?"

"Yes, I remember him," said Courtenay, with a nod and a smile. "I saw you at Greyfriars, Mick. So you're on a visit there now?"

"That's it," said Mick cheerily. "I'm



"Come with me, Bunter!" "Yar-oooh!" Mr. Quelch fastened a finger and thumb on Bunter's fat ear, and the Owl of the Remove had no choice but to accompany his Form-master. (See Chapter 10.)

staying over to-morrow. These chaps are trottin' me round this afternoon because my brother's detained."

"Angel of the Fourth—detained?" asked the Caterpillar, with a rather curious look at the gipsy schoolboy.

"Yes. Rotten, ain't it?" said Mick. "He's got detention till after five; that's why these chaps are planting me on you fellows."

"Oh gad!" murmured the Caterpillar. Frank Courtenay turned to take up the teapot to hide the expression on his face. It was clear enough now that Mick did not know that his brother was at Highcliffe.

"Let's see, we shall want some chairs," said the Caterpillar thoughtfully. "One—two—three—four—I'll borrow some in Smithson's study."

He opened the door.

Crash!
From Study No. 5 just along the passage came the crash of an overturned chair, and then a shout.

"You rotter, Ponsonby!"

It was the voice of Angel of the Fourth. Apparently there was a rift in the lute; trouble among the merry party of black sheep in Pon's study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

When Rogues Fall Out!

HARRY WHARTON gave a violent start.

He had been stepping out of the open doorway to help the Caterpillar carry in the borrowed chairs. The shout from Study No. 5 came quite clearly to his ears, and he knew the voice at once. The shout was followed by an angry buzz. The truth rushed into Wharton's mind at once. He knew now how and why Aubrey Angel had been "detained" that afternoon. It was an appointment with the blackguards of Highcliffe that had kept him from meeting Mick.

Wharton's eyes met the Caterpillar's, and De Courcy smiled faintly. Then both of them looked at Mick.

Mick, fortunately, was well inside the study, near the fireplace. He had heard the crash and the shout, as all the fellows in the study had, but the voice had not come so clearly to him as to the two juniors stepping out of the doorway. The expression on his face showed that he had not recognised Aubrey Angel's voice.

Wharton's eyes met De Courcy's again, and De Courcy drew the study door quickly shut. They stood in the passage, listening to the buzz of wrath in Study No. 5. Evidently a serious quarrel was in progress among the card-players.

"Does the kid know about his brother?" whispered the Caterpillar.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"He thinks Angel is detained at Greyfriars," he muttered. "That's why we brought him over here—never dreaming that Angel was here all the time."

"I savvy. He'd better not know."

"Not if it can be prevented," said Wharton quickly. "But those silly asses are kicking up a shindy!"

Voices were rising in Pon's study again. Two or three juniors came along the passage and stood outside, listening and grinning. Angel's voice rose above the din.

"You rotters! Hands off!"

"The kid will soon hear at this rate,"



Harry Wharton captured the ball and started for the goal. Suddenly Angel of the Fourth rushed him. There was a sharp cry, and Harry Wharton went sprawling. Immediately players and spectators voiced their objections: "Foul!" "Penalty!" "Dirty play, Angel!" The whistle sounded for a penalty, and dark glances were cast in the direction of Aubrey Angel. (See Chapter 11.)

murmured the Caterpillar. "I think we'd better take a hand."

He moved along quickly to Pon's door, followed by Wharton. At the same time Ponsonby's door was thrown violently open.

"Outside!" shouted Ponsonby.

Crash!

Angel of the Fourth came whirling out of the study. He landed in the passage on his back with a howl of fury.

He sprawled there, panting, while Ponsonby & Co. crowded in the doorway, laughing.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated the Caterpillar. "Are you always as polite to visitors as this, Pon?"

"The cad checked us!" said Ponsonby. "We're not standin' any Greyfriars cheek. I can tell you!" And he gave Wharton a sneering smile as he noted the captain of the Greyfriars Remove with the Caterpillar.

Angel sat up breathlessly.

"Cheat!" he panted.

"Give him some more!" exclaimed Gadsby.

"Dear me! Did he catch you in the act, Pon?" asked the Caterpillar sympathetically. "That old trick of yours—aces under the table?"

"You cheeky cad!" roared Ponsonby.

Angel staggered to his feet. His handsome face was crimson with rage.

"You cheat! You—"

"That's enough!" interrupted Ponsonby savagely. "You're not wanted here, Angel! Get out!"

Angel sprang at him, too infuriated to think of the odds against him, or to care for them. His fierce attack drove Ponsonby back into the study under a shower of blows.

"Back up, you fools!" panted Pon as he gave ground before Aubrey Angel. And his comrades piled on Angel.

The Caterpillar looked on with a grin. It was no affair of his if a quarrel sprang up among this set of shady blackguards, and one of them was ragged by the rest. But Harry Wharton's feelings were different. Angel of the Fourth, rotter as he was, was a Greyfriars fellow, and his brother at least was Wharton's friend. And there was such a thing as fair play, too, though it appeared to be unknown in Ponsonby's study.

Without stopping to reflect Harry Wharton rushed into the fray.

Gadsby and Monson and Ponsonby were piling on Angel, but the intervention of Wharton made a big difference. The captain of the Greyfriars Remove

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

was a good match for any two of the Highcliffe knuts. His right landed full in Monson's face, sending him spinning; his left a second later caught Gadsby in the eye, and Gadsby sprawled on Pon's expensive carpet, yelling. Angel had gone to the floor with Ponsonby sprawling over him, punching him savagely. Wharton turned on Ponsonby, gripped him by the back of the collar, and dragged him off by main force.

"Ow! Leggo!" shrieked Ponsonby.

With a swing of his strong arm Wharton sent him whirling across the study, to bring up against the wall and collapse in a heap.

"Ow! Ow!" Gadsby sat up with one hand to his eye. "Caterpillar, you cad, pile in! Collar that Greyfriars rotter!"

"Dear man," said the Caterpillar urbanely, "if I piled in I should be on the side of the Greyfriars rotter. Better leave me out. He doesn't seem to need any help."

Harry Wharton helped the breathless Angel to his feet. Angel was panting, spent, and he leaned heavily on the captain of the Remove.

"Better get out of this!" muttered Wharton.

"They've swindled me! They——" choked Angel.

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Wharton roughly. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, and you know it. Come out!"

"Not before I've——"

"Come, I tell you!"

Wharton fairly dragged Aubrey Angel from the study. He gave a quick, anxious glance towards Courtenay's door. It was still closed. He hurried the breathless Angel towards the stairs, amid a chorus of chuckling from the Highcliffe juniors who had gathered in the passage. Angel resisted.

"Look here!" he panted. "Mind your own business! I——"

"Your brother's here!" whispered Harry.

Angel gave a start.

"My brother—Maurice?"

"Yes—Mick!"

"Here?" panted Angel.

"He's in Courtenay's study. Get along before he sees you here!"

"You brought him here?" muttered Angel fiercely. "You——"

"We didn't know you were here. We only knew you were lying about being detained at Greyfriars," said Wharton sharply. "Do you want him to know you were here, and what you were doing?"

"No!" breathed Angel.

"Hurry up, then!"

Aubrey Angel made no further demur. He hurried downstairs with Wharton, took his hat, and hurried out of the house.

"Keep it dark!" he whispered as he went.

Wharton nodded, and turned back into the house. The Caterpillar met him at the foot of the staircase.

"Comin' to help me with those chairs?" he asked urbanely.

"Yes," said Harry.

When they returned to Study No. 3 in the Fourth, Wharton and the Caterpillar carried a couple of chairs each. Courtenay gave them a quick glance, but said nothing. As for the Greyfriars fellows, they were maintaining a polite obliviousness to the fact that a row had been going on at Highcliffe. A look at

Mick's face showed Wharton that he had no suspicion that his brother had been a party in the row.

Quite a cheery party sat down to tea in Courtenay's study. They talked of football, and of the coming holidays, and Mick told them stories of his old life with the gipsies, and the time passed quickly enough. The Greyfriars party had to take an early leave.

When they left, Courtenay and the Caterpillar walked down to the gates with them. In the quad they passed Ponsonby & Co., who scowled at them savagely.

But the scowls of Ponsonby & Co. did not worry the Greyfriars juniors. Johnny Bull and Harree Singh and Nugent wheeled out their bicycles, and Wharton and Bob and Mick mounted into the trap. Ponsonby followed them down to the gates, his eyes fixed on Mick with keen curiosity. Mick's strong resemblance to Aubrey Angel had caught his eye at once, and he remembered what he had heard of the gipsy schoolboy of Greyfriars. He ran up as the Greyfriars fellows were bidding farewell to Courtenay and the Caterpillar at the gates.

"So that's young Angel, the gipsy kid, is it?" asked Ponsonby.

Mick looked down on him from the trap.

"That's me!" he answered cheerfully.

"Aubrey's brother—what?"

"Just that," assented Mick. "You know my brother?"

Ponsonby laughed evilly.

"Well, rather!" he answered. "Quite well, in fact. You're in rather queer company for Angel's brother!"

"Good-bye, you fellows!" exclaimed Wharton, taking up the whip. "Stand clear, Ponsonby!"

"Oh, hold on a minute while I'm talkin' to Angel's brother!" grinned Ponsonby. "Aubrey's a great friend of mine, you know. I didn't know Angel's brother was here this afternoon. I'd have asked him——"

Crash!

Harry Wharton's heavy hand descended on Ponsonby's hat, crushing it over his eyes and ears. Ponsonby gave a howl, and staggered back, and Wharton drove on the trap.

The Greyfriars fellows were a good distance down the road when Ponsonby, with a red and furious face, had struggled out of his hat. The Caterpillar chuckled merrily. He understood Wharton's object in thus drastically cutting short any further observations of Cecil Ponsonby.

"I—I—I'll——" panted Ponsonby, glaring after the trap.

"You'll have to get a new hat, old scout!" grinned the Caterpillar. "Oh, come on, Franky! Don't let's stand here listenin' to Pon swearin'. He shocks me!"

Courtenay and the Caterpillar walked in at the gates, leaving Ponsonby with a wrecked hat in his hand, making emphatic remarks to the desert air.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Grateful!

AUBREY ANGEL came into his study at Greyfriars, and threw himself into a chair. He was tired, and looked a little pale, and there was a troubled wrinkle in his brow. Paul Kenney, his study-mate, was

lounging in an armchair, and he gave Angel a curious look.

"Had a good time at Highcliffe?" he asked.

"No."

"But you've been there?"

"Yes."

"You've got a little mouse under your eye," said Kenney, scanning him critically. "Had a row with Pon?"

"Yes."

Angel's answers were monosyllabic. He did not seem in a mood for conversation.

"You haven't asked me how I liked the pictures in Courtfield," remarked Kenney.

"Oh, rot!"

Kenney laughed.

"You don't seem to have brought your best manners home from Highcliffe, Aubrey. I'm glad I didn't come, as it turned out to be a row. What did Pon do?"

Angel gritted his teeth.

"He's an out-and-out cad, and I'm sorry I ever had anythin' to do with him!" he muttered. "I'm done with him now, anyhow. I should have got the raggin' of my life if Wharton hadn't happened to be there."

"Wharton chipped in?"

"Yes."

"I should have expected him to stand by and snigger," grinned Kenney. "You're not friends. But I suppose he was ready for a row with Highcliffe chaps any time. I say, there's a lot of stuff sent into the study from the tuckshop. You ordered it, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Standin' me a spread?"

"You can stay if you like," said Angel indifferently. "My young brother's comin', and I've asked some Remove chaps."

"Gettin' pals in the Remove? Who are they?"

"Wharton and his crowd."

"My hat! You're not making friends with that lot, Aubrey!" exclaimed Kenney, in amazement.

"Of course I'm not!" said Angel irritably. "But they're my brother's friends, that's why I've asked them. And you've got to be jolly civil to them, Kenney!"

"Any old thing," yawned Kenney. "What time do you expect the merry company?"

"About half-past five. You'll see my brother," added Aubrey Angel abruptly. "You won't mention that I've been out of gates this afternoon."

"Why not?"

"He thinks I've had detention, and that was why I couldn't meet him at the station and bring him here."

"What does it matter what he thinks?"

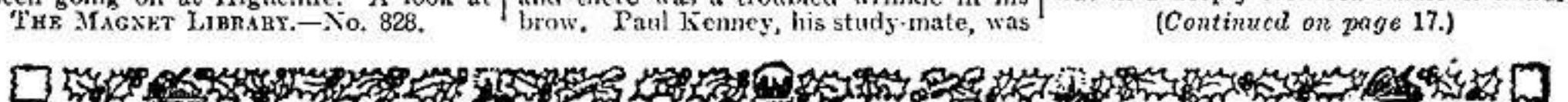
"Well, it does matter!" said Angel savagely. "I let him down because of that rotten appointment with Ponsonby. I wish I hadn't now. But he's not to know anything about it!"

"Oh, all right!" said Kenney resignedly. "Not a syllable from me. But I'm blessed if I can see what it matters!"

"You wouldn't!" granted Angel.

He leaned back in his chair and watched Kenney, with a moody brow, as the latter unpacked the good things from the tuckshop, and prepared the spread for the expected visitors. Aubrey Angel was in a deeply troubled frame of mind.

(Continued on page 17.)



THE GREYFRIARS HERALD



Supplement No. 154.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week ending December 22nd, 1923.



by
Bob Cherry

EDITORIAL!

By
HARRY WHARTON.

ISN'T it funny how people always send the wrong sort of Christmas presents? Alonzo Todd received a football, and he's too timid to play. Bolsover major, the burly bully of the Remove, received from his maiden aunt a book called, "The Folly of Fisticuffs." Tom Brown, who regards white mice as his "pet" aversion, received a whole tribe of them from a doting uncle. Squiff, who already had a dozen penknives in his possession, received yet another! I could go on quoting such cases ad infinitum.

Some of the Christmas gifts, however, were decidedly appropriate. Coker of the Fifth received "A Spelling Book for Babes." Billy Bunter received a miniature telescope, which he will be able to fit into the keyholes of the various study doors when he goes a-prying. Skinner received a box of cigars. Of course, they might have been made of chocolate; but if not, Skinner's countenance will be green by to-morrow!

When Lord Mauleverer told me he was going to spend Christmas in a distant country I was naturally curious. And then his lordship drowsily informed me that he was going to visit the Land of Nod!

Johnny Bull is responsible for the latest riddle. Why is a sprig of mistletoe like a telephone subscriber? Because it is always "hung up."

It is Billy Bunter's proud boast that fifteen different aunts have invited him to spend Christmas with them. Whoever is rash enough to entertain our prize porpoise will have to lay *Supplement i.*

in sufficient supplies of grub to relieve a starving garrison. Bunter's appetite is simply terrific at this time of the year. Last Christmas, according to a rumour we heard, he actually "devoured" the Works of Shakespeare.

Some people long to return to the old-fashioned Christmas, when it snowed in sheets, and when raw faces and red noses were everywhere in evidence. Those were the days when the mail coach would be half-buried in a snowdrift, and Dick Turpin would come galloping on the scene with a curt "Stand and deliver!" Sounds jolly thrilling, and all the rest of it, but I prefer the present-day Christmas, when the only person who "stands and delivers" is the postman!

Talking of Turpin, I wrote a special poem for this Christmas Number. It began:

"Fierce snow the snow upon the moor,
When Turpin spied a coach-and-four,
Swiftly he galloped on the scene,
And thundered forth, 'Hands up, old bean!'"

Apparently Harry Wharton doesn't think a great deal of my poetic flights, for he returned my verses with the following comment:

"These spasms fairly make me sob.
You'd better stick to prose, my Bob!"

One of our cheery correspondents wants to know if Billy Bunter is in the habit of hanging up his stocking on Christmas Eve. We have questioned Billy, and he replies that he always hangs up a sack!

CHRISTMAS again! I do not suppose we shall see snow on the ground, or even frost on the window-pane. There has been a marked tendency of late years for Christmas to be very mild. But we can do without the frost and snow, so long as we have the true spirit of Christmas—the spirit of comradeship and joy, and good will towards men.

Greyfriars School is like a place of the dead at Christmas time. It stands silent and desolate. For seniors and juniors and fags have gone flocking to their homes for the Christmas vacation. The masters have also disappeared, and the only persons who remain on the school premises are Gosling, the porter, and Mrs. Mimble.

But at Wharton Lodge and Mauleverer Towers—and shall we say Bunter Court?—are scenes of gay festivity. Holly and mistletoe and coloured chains are hung overhead, fairy lanterns are lighted, and there is feasting and revelry and dance and song. Out-of-doors we have footer and roller-skating, and snow-fighting and tobogganing when the weather permits.

In the evening, when the curtains are drawn and the log-fire blazes merrily, we gather around and tell ghost stories—weird and fantastic flights of fancy that make the flesh creep and the hair stand on end.

We do not forget our reader-chums at the festive season. We picture you all, a vast multitude, enjoying the delights of Christmas in a hundred happy ways. And we have no doubt that the "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" and the Companion Papers will be welcome guests at many a Christmas fireside.

For our own part we have worked hard to provide you with an extra-special number worthy of this extra-special occasion. And we broadcast our cheery greetings to all of you across the intervening space:

"A Right Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!"
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.



Bunter at the Banquet!

By TOM BROWN.

"IT'S a fact, you fellows!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in tones of great excitement. "You needn't glare at me like that, as if I was telling fibs. Have you ever known me to depart from the truth?"

"No, never!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"Well, hardly ever!" amended Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter stood in the doorway of Study No. 1, and scowled at the Famous Five.

It was breaking-up day at Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton & Co. had packed their traps, and were having a final "pow-wow" in the study, when Billy Bunter had burst in with some amazing information. He declared that Mr. Quelch was giving a breaking-up banquet, to which all the Remove would be invited.

Of course, it sounded much too good to be true. The Famous Five might well be excused for being Doubting Thomases. They knew that Mr. Quelch, with all his virtues, was no beaming philanthropist. He had never before treated his pupils to such a luxury as a breaking-up banquet; and there was no reason why he should start doing so now.

"It's an absolute fact!" repeated Billy Bunter, for about the tenth time. "I saw Quelchy stop Smithy in the Close, and I heard him say there was to be a big banquet at one o'clock, in the junior Common-room. Some of the fellows will already have gone, of course; but those who are still here are cordially invited to the spread.

"What rot!" grunted Harry Wharton. "This is either a flight of fancy on your part, Bunter, or else you misunderstood what Quelchy said to Smithy."

"I didn't! I—"

"Here's Smithy himself," said Johnny Bull, as the elegant figure of Herbert Vernon-Smith appeared in the doorway. "He'll jolly soon tell us if there's any truth in it."

Vernon-Smith advanced into the study. He was looking rather dazed, as if he had received a shock from which he had not yet recovered.

"Heard the news, you fellows?" he asked.

"Well, we've just heard that Quelchy's standing a breaking-up banquet," said Wharton, with a smile. "But that's simply one of Bunter's fairy-tales, of course."

"On the contrary," said Vernon-Smith, "it's true."

"What!"

"Great pip!"

"Quelchy's actually treating us to a feed?" gasped Bob Cherry.

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"You could have knocked me down with a feather when Quelchy came and told me," he said. "He's instructed me to round up all the fellows, and invite them to the spread. What's more, there's going to be an extra-special plum-pudding about as big as three footballs rolled into one; and Quelchy gave the cook a number of threepenny-pieces to put in it—also a real half-sovereign—a bit of genuine gold, my sons!"

Smithy's announcement caused quite a sensation.

"Wonders will never cease!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Fancy old Quelchy lashing out like this!"

"I told you it was a fact, but you wouldn't believe me!" said Bunter plaintively.

Vernon-Smith moved to the door.

"Mind you roll up to the giddy banquet at one o'clock sharp," he said. "It's to be held in the junior Common-room."

So saying, Smithy strode away, to broadcast the good tidings.

The news that Mr. Quelch was giving a breaking-up banquet spread like wild-fire through the Remove; and the excitement was, as Hurree Singh remarked, terrific!

Billy Bunter was more excited than anybody. It was the thought of the half-sovereign in the plum-pudding that made Bunter's eyes glisten. If only he was lucky enough to secure the piece of pudding containing the little gold coin!

Bunter made up his mind to have as many helpings of pudding as possible. The more helpings he had, the greater his chance of becoming the proud owner of the half-sovereign.

At one o'clock there was a general stampede towards the junior Common-room.

Some of the fellows had already departed for the Christmas vacation; but at least a score turned up to the feed.

The long table had been laid, and Mr. Quelch sat at one end of it, smiling upon the assembly. He made quite a happy little speech, saying that we had given less trouble than usual during the term, and that he was showing his appreciation by inviting us to a breaking-up banquet.

We applauded the Form-master's speech, and Harry Wharton made a suit-

able reply. Then the first course arrived on the scene, and soon the rattle of knives and forks and spoons made merry music.

Billy Bunter had decided to eat sparingly of the earlier courses, so that he would be in good form when the plum-pudding arrived. But Bunter's resolve soon broke down. He found the chicken-and-ham so delicious that he had three helpings. In fact, Bunter had shifted an enormous quantity of food by the time the plum-pudding was brought in.

It was a glorious pudding, large and round and steaming, with a sprig of holly sticking out of the summit. Billy Bunter's mouth watered as he gazed at that pudding. He gazed hard at it, too, as if trying to solve the secret as to which particular portion contained the half-sovereign.

Mr. Quelch carved the pudding, and Bunter asked for an extra-large slice—and got it. Instantly he snatched up his spoon and fork and started to dissect his portion of pudding.

"Any luck, Bunt?" asked Bob Cherry.

Bunter shook his head.

"There's a mouldy threepenny-bit here," he said, "but there's no sign of the half-sovereign. Can I have another slice of pudding, please, sir?"

"You will eat that piece first, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, trying hard to repress a smile.

Bunter disposed of his slice of pudding in record time. Then he had another, but drew blank once more. After which he embarked on a third portion, but still there was no sign of the half-sovereign.

By this time the fat junior felt like a tyre which has been pumped up too hard. He was in imminent danger of bursting.

Manfully he struggled through a fourth piece of pudding; though his appetite had been appeased long since, and every mouthful was an ordeal.

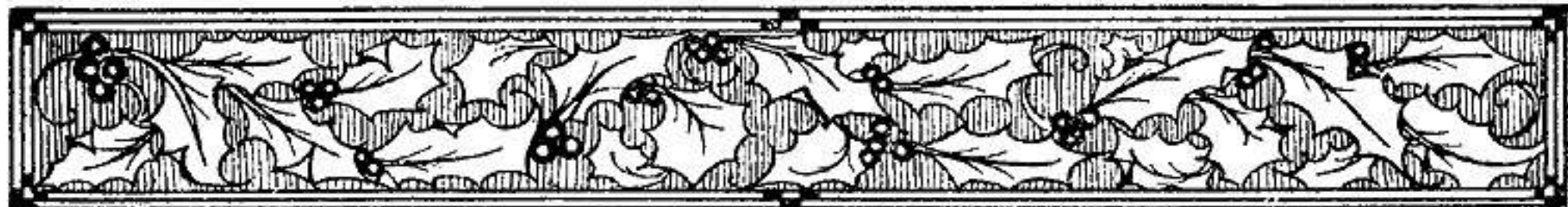
Bunter's complexion grew quite green, and he uttered dire groans of anguish. He had eaten about a quarter of that huge pudding, without any success.

And then, just as Bunter collapsed in his chair, feeling very much the worse for food, the cook came into the Common-room, and approached Mr. Quelch.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," she said, "but I clean forgot to put the half-sovereign in the pudding. Here it is!"

The glittering coin was handed to Mr. Quelch, and the cook retired. Billy Bunter glared after her, with feelings too deep for words!

THE END.





My Merriest Christmas!

A Page of Happy Recollections.

BOB CHERRY:

My merriest Christmas was spent at Wharton Lodge a few years back. It was a traditional Christmas, with snow on the ground, and the lakes and ponds frozen over. The magic hours were devoted to skating and snowballing and tobogganing; and indoors we had feasting and dancing. It was, in every sense of the term, "A Merry Christmas!" I didn't stop smiling from the moment I arrived at Wharton Lodge to the moment I left. They tell me that I even smiled in my sleep!

BILLY BUNTER:

It isn't often that I have a Merry Christmas, bekawse, although it's supposed to be a festival of feasting, I seldom get enuff to eat! They never kill the fatted calf—or, rather, the fatted turkey—when I go to Bunter Court. My last Christmas dinner at home consisted of a tin of sardeens. There was plum-pudding to follow, but I only got enuff to feed an undersized sparrow! However, I once had a really Merry Christmas, when I visited my Aunt Proodence, whose motto is "Feed the Broot!" She fed me so sucksessfully that I had about six billyus attacks at the same time! Aunt Proo didn't invite me the following Christmas, bekawse she declared I had eaten her out of house and home!

DICK PENFOLD:

The merriest Yule I ever spent was at a farmhouse down in Kent. A time of good will and of peace; of topping turkeys, glorious geese! I fed—although I'm not a glutton—till I burst every waistcoat button! We romped by day, and danced by night; it was a time of sheer delight. In fact, I've often sung in rhyme, the glories of that Christmas-time!

HORACE COKER:

My merriest Christmas was when I was allowed to run riot on my motor-bike during the vacation. I invited Potter and Greene to come with me, one in the sidecar, and one riding pillion. But Potter suddenly developed a bad chill, and Greene eggscused himself on the plea that his grandmother was eggspiring! So I went alone, and took a trip up to Scotland. You ought to have seen me wizzing down the mountain roads. I didn't brake my neck, but my pals told me afterwards that it wasn't for want of trying!

FRANK NUGENT:

Every Christmas I've spent has been so thoroughly merry that I can't for the life of me say which was the merriest. But I fancy the coming Christmas will break all records!

ALONZO TODD:

Need I say that my merriest Christmas was spent in the congenial company of my esteemed Uncle Benjamin? It was a time of reckless, riotous rapture—one dizzy whirl of pleasure! I blush to say that we did not retire to rest on Christmas Eve until ten o'clock! And on Christmas night we sat up playing a fierce, exciting game of dominoes until nearly midnight! Shocking depravity, my dear readers! Still, a fellow can be



One way of spending Christmas!

forgiven for indulging in late hours and revelry during the festive season!

(We trust that Alonzo did not carry his dissipation so far as to drink a glass of ginger wine!—Ed.)

MR. PROUT:

My merriest Christmas was spent in the Rocky Mountains, where I was a member of a shooting party. I shot my own Christmas dinner, and cooked it by the camp-fire. In the evening we gathered round and sang sentimental songs. We were rudely interrupted by a tribe of Red Indians, and my Winchester repeater was brought into action once more. I was in deadly form, and put the enemy to flight single-handed. Christmas is a tame affair in England, but in the Wild West it is full of excitement and adventure. I pine for the good old days!

H. VERNON SMITH:

Last Christmas was my merriest. Being passionately fond of football, you can picture my delight when I found that there was to be a match every day at the place where I was staying. I was careful not to partake too liberally of the Christmas fare. Stuffing turkey and getting goals don't go together! I had the satisfaction of being on the winning side in every match except one, where the result was a draw. Some fellows don't care for a footballing Christmas, but to me it is the greatest joy imaginable. I fairly revelled on the muddy fields, and came back to Greyfriars feeling as fit as a fiddle!

DICKY NUGENT:

My merriest Christmas was when we had a snowfite every morning and a skating carnival every afternoon and a big feed every evening. We also sat up half the night telling ghost stories, until our flesh began to creep and our hare stood up on end! Christmas comes but once a year—worse luck! Why can't they have a Christmas Day on the 25th of each month? Ekko answers, "Why can't they?"

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Which I make so bold as to say that my merriest Christmas was when I received over ten pounds in "tips" from the young gentlemen of Greyfriars. That was in the good old days before the War. Times have changed, and the size of my "tips" has changed, too! This year, when the school broke up for the vocation, or whatever they calls it, Master Skinner had the nerve to tip me tuppence! He did it with a flourish, too, as if he was being mighty generous. And Master Snoop and Master Stott—why, they never gave me nothing! If it wasn't for the kindness of a few gents like Master Wharton, I should have no Christmas dinner to eat, no Christmas 'baccy to smoke, no Christmas fire in the grate, and no Christmas limejuice to drink! However, I forgives Master Skinner and his friends for being so mean, and wishes one and all a Happy Christmas!

NO XMAS IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A COPY OF "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" 360 Pages. NOW ON SALE! Price 6/-.





IT is in a state of grate wrath that I sit down to pen this artikle. Matter of fact, I can scarcely sit down at all. I keep hobbing up and down like a plump jack-in-the-box!

A certain newspaper writer has just libelled British boys by saying that they eat too much at Christmas. I can't sue the writer for libel, bekawse she gives her name as "Anne Onymous," and I don't know where she lives.

This interfering old frump—eggscuse my langwidge!—declares that we make a disgusting orgy of our Christmas dinner. First of all, she says, we stuff ourselves with roast turkey and sossidge and bacon, and several kinds of vegetables. Then we consume large and hefty portions of plum-pooding, followed by mince-pies, jellies, blammonges, froot, sweets, and nuts. She says it's enuff to ruin our digestive pianoes—or is it organs?—for good.

After uttering this dreadful libel against British boys, the old frump gives her idea of what a Christmas dinner ought to konsist of. "Start off with a little thin soup," she writes, "and follow this with two small sardines and a

thin slice of bread-and-butter. A few seedless raisins may be eaten to finish up with, if desired."

Help! Fancy making a Christmas dinner of thin soup, sardeens, and seedless raisins! It's enuff to make our fourfathers, who used to have tremendous bankwets at Christmas, turn in their graves!

To say that the British boy has too much turkey at Christmas is a fowl slander.

The fact of the matter is, we don't take nearly enuff nurrishment at the festive seezon. It's all rot to say that we overload our stummacks. It would take a good many Christmas dinners to overload mine!

Our Christmas motto should always be, "Eat not to live, but live to eat!" We should pitch into the fatted turkey, and gobble the good old goose, and chew the convivial chicken. We should tuck into the plum-pooding for all we're worth—taking care, however, not to swallow too many sixpenny-peaces in the process. I once knew a chap called Perry, who swallowed so many tanners that it gave him Perry-tonitis!

I eggspsect you would like to know, dear readers, what is my idear of a sootable Christmas dinner. Very well, I will set it out in detail.

- Sossidge. Roast Turkey. Stuffing.
- Bacon.
- Plum-pooding (about the size of a well-blown-up football).
- Apple-Pie and Custerd.
- Jellies. Blammonges. Jam-tarts.
- Sweets. Froot. Nuts.
- Toffy. Chocklit. Caramels.
- Gorge-on-zola Cheese.

If you know of a better meenu than this, adopt it!

Christmas is the greatest feeding festival of the year. Why, then, should we stint ourselves, and go about looking half-starved and under-nurrished?

I am very angry with "Anne Onymous" for writing that artikle in the paper. Being the champion gorger at Greyfriars, it is up to me to take up the cudgels and defend the Christmas dinner. I think you will agree that I have done so very effectively!

Down with the cranks and faddists! Let us eat, drink, and be merry! Let us fortify ourselves with roast turkey and plum-pooding, and defy the killjoys to do their worst!

And now, having let off steem, I will wish all my pals, the wide world over, a right Merry Christmas! In the words of my ansestor, Billy Shakespeare: "May good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both!"



MY TRAGIC FATE!
By a Christmas Turkey.

WHEN I was strutting to and fro in our farmyard home in Friar-dale a party of Greyfriars fellows happened to pass, and one of them—evidently a youth with a sense of humour—called out:

"Merry Christmas, old bird!"
As if a turkey ever enjoys a merry Christmas! He dreads the mere thought of the festive season, and he shudders as the day of his doom approaches.

When Christmas Day dawns you won't see me taking my morning constitutional in this farmyard. Shorn of all my fine feathers I shall be roasting in an oven, and when dinner-time comes I shall be served in the banqueting-hall of the Mayor of Courtfield.

The mayor came and had a look at me yesterday. He said to my owner:

"That's a jolly nice bird over there! You've fattened him up well, 'pon my soul! I've taken quite a fancy to him!"

"Would you like him for your Christmas dinner, sir?" inquired my owner.

The mayor smacked his lips.
"Indeed I would!" he said. "Kindly have him killed and sent round to my place on Christmas Eve."

So my number is up, as the saying goes, and I have but a few short days to live. And that Greyfriars fellow wished me a merry Christmas! Oh, the bitter irony of it!

One of my pals—a big, fat, Billy Bunter of a turkey, who used to waddle around the farmyard with me—met his

doom this afternoon. My owner came out into the yard and scowled at him and said:

"I'll jolly well wring your neck for you!"

He did, too! And the squeals of my poor old pal threw me into quite a flutter.

It's my turn next! They've fattened me up for the festive season, and they're going to pluck me and stuff me and roast me and goodness knows what!

I wish I wasn't so fat, and then I might be able to dodge my doom. Some of my pals always make a point of fasting for about a fortnight before Christmas. Then they become so lean and scraggy that they are passed over and their lives are spared. Lucky chaps! I wish I had had the sense to go without food, and then I might still be in the land of the living on Christmas Day. But I've been stuffing myself at every opportunity, and now I must pay the penalty!

Telegrams That Thrill!
SOME EXCITING MOMENTS DESCRIBED BY OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

HARRY WHARTON:

I have received so many thrilling telegrams at different times that it is hard to say which impressed me most. But I think I must award the palm to the telegram which Bob Cherry sent me in the old dark days when Vernon-Smith, then my enemy, got me sacked from the school. I was actually expelled, and was at Wharton Lodge when Bob's telegram came, saying that he had organised a barring-out in the school tower, and was fighting for my honour. A thrilling telegram, indeed! What was more, Bob's barring-out proved

successful, and I rejoined my old chums at Greyfriars.

MARK LINLEY:

The most thrilling telegram I can remember—though it wasn't addressed to me—was the wire which arrived in the Junior Common-room one evening, announcing that Dick Russell had won the Public Schools Boxing Championship at Aldershot. We had all believed that Russell was a funk, and couldn't box for toffee, and the news came as a staggering surprise. We thought at first that a practical joker must have sent the telegram; but it was confirmed later by the report in the evening paper.

DICK PENFOLD:

The wire that brought the biggest thrill—I can recall the moment still—was sent me by the "Weekly Wonder." I'd won a topping prize, by thunder! I found I'd taken top position in their Grand Poetry Competition. I danced a hornpipe with delight, and never slept a wink that night. I'd never grow the least bit weary of getting wires so bright and cheery!

BILLY BUNTER:

The most thrilling telegram I ever received was from some paper or other, telling me I had won a hamper crammed with delishus tuck! "The hamper is at Friar-dale Station, awaiting collection." That's what it said in the telegram. So I skuttled down to the station at top speed and collected the hamper, and lugged it all the way back to Greyfriars. And when I opened it, what did I find? Topping tarts, delishus doonuts, and charming cakes? Not at all! The beestly hamper was filled with brix! One of my schoolfellows had played a rotten, low-down, despicable jape on me!

SAMMY BUNTER:

I've never received a thrilling tellygram in my life. Nobody loves me enuff to want to send me a wire. Everybody treats me with scorn and despision! I shall have to start sending tellygrams to myself—but the trubble is that it costs a bob a time!

[Supplement ic.

The Gipsy's Return!

(Continued from page 12.)

His affection for his brother was very real. It had not been strong enough to make him throw over Ponsonby & Co. that afternoon, but it was strong enough to make him feel remorseful and ashamed. He shrank from the possibility of Mick's discovering how he had been occupied, and where; but he knew how very easily the facts might come to Mick's knowledge.

And that rendezvous in Pon's study at Highcliffe had not turned out much of a success, after all. Angel had lost money; he had quarrelled with his shady pals; he had come home tired and dispirited and worried. From the bottom of his heart he wished that—for that afternoon, at least—he had thrown over his evil ways and played a straight game. But it was too late to think of that.

Kenney finished preparing the table, and he carelessly took a box of cigarettes from the table drawer and set it on the mantelpiece. Angel gave him a black look.

"Put that rubbish away!" he snapped. "No smokes?" asked Kenney.

"No, you ass!" "Oh! I forgot we're havin' Wharton's crowd," grinned Kenney. "I suppose your young brother wouldn't mind. Might have a little game and a smoke, the three of us, after the Remove fellows are gone."

Angel's eyes glittered at him. "None of that, Kenney," he said. "My young brother's a decent chap, and there's goin' to be nothin' of that sort here while he stays."

"Must be no end decent, brought up among the gipsies!" sneered Kenney. "Anyhow, whatever he is, he knows your ways. He was long enough at Greyfriars to learn the sort of reputation you've got."

Angel winced. "That's enough," he said. "There'll be no smokes and no cards in this study while Maurice is stayin' here."

"Oh, my hat! Is he stayin' long?" yawned Kenney.

"Over to-morrow, anyhow." "And are you goin' to keep good all that time? You can't do it, old man. You'll have a fit or somethin'!"

"Oh, shut up!" There was a step in the passage, and the door opened. Billy Bunter's fat face and big spectacles glimmered in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out, Bunter!"

Bunter wedged cautiously into the study. The sight of the spread on the table made his little round eyes glimmer behind his big glasses. Bunter had a wonderful nose for a spread, and evidently he had scented out the spread in Angel's study.

"I say, Angel, seen your brother yet?"

"Mind your own bizney."

"I want to see him again—"

"Well, he doesn't want to see you," snapped Angel. "Get out!"

"I want to thank him," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Eh?"

"He saved my life." "What!" yelled Kenney, while Aubrey Angel stared at the Owl of the Remove in astonishment.

"Saved my life!" repeated Bunter impressively. "Perhaps you don't know that I took a trap to the station to meet him. Wharton was called away by a—a message. So I went. The horse bolted. Mick sprang to the rescue—"

"Oh, rot!" "He sprang like a lion at the horse," said Bunter. "Seizing the fiery, untamed animal, he—"

"Chuck it!"

"Dragged it down, and—and sat on it," said Bunter. "He saved my life. I'm grateful. Chap doesn't save a fellow's life every day, does he? Well, I want to see Mick, and thank him for saving my life. I was always his pal, you know. Since he saved my life, of course, I'm his friend for—for life. I'm backing him up, you know, and—and sticking to him. I'll wait here for him, if you don't mind, Angel."

Bunter edged towards a chair. Earlier in the afternoon, when Mick had stopped the runaway horse, Billy Bunter had not displayed any symptoms of gratitude. But he had had time to think over the matter since then.

Gratitude was not a leading trait in Bunter's character. But if it was likely to be useful, Bunter could turn it on, so to speak, to order. He was prepared to establish a record in gratitude, and to proclaim to all Greyfriars how Mick had saved his life; and after that, he felt that Mick couldn't do less than ask him home for Christmas!

Unfortunately for Bunter, Aubrey Angel did not believe his statements; and had he believed them would not have been interested. He was interested only in seeing the last of Bunter.

"Are you finished?" he asked. "Nunno! I say, it's a shame to keep these good things waiting," said Bunter, eyeing the table hungrily. "Shall I begin?"

"Leave that cake alone!" roared Kenney.

"Oh, really, you know—"

Aubrey Angel jumped out of his armchair. He was in a bad temper and a state of worried nerves, and a victim was really needed to relieve his feelings. Bunter came in useful as a victim.

Angel grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and spun him round towards the door.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, in direful anticipation.

Bump! Aubrey Angel's well-fitting boot crashed on Bunter, and the fat junior spun through the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kenney.

"Yoooooop!"

There was another roar from the passage as Bunter flew out. Mick had just arrived at the study, after his return from Highcliffe. He reached the doorway from the outside as Bunter reached it from the inside.

"Oh, jiminy!" stuttered Mick.

He staggered across the passage. Billy Bunter rolled at his feet, roaring.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Fire! Murder! Yoooooop!"

Aubrey Angel came savagely out of the study, and proceeded to kick the Owl of the Remove, perhaps on the principle of giving him something to roar for. Certainly Bunter roared. The voice of the celebrated Bull of Bashan was like unto the cooing of a dove, compared with the voice of William George Bunter just then.

"Here, I say, Aubrey, don't hurt him, old chap!" exclaimed Mick good-naturedly.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Mick caught his brother's arm and pulled him back. Bunter scrambled to his feet, and fled for the Remove passage.

For a second Aubrey Angel's look at his brother was grim and angry. But he recollected himself in a moment, and his face cleared.

"Mick, old man! Trot in," he said.

And he slipped his arm through Mick's and led him into the study.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Angel's Study!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came along the Fourth Form passage a little later, and stopped at Angel's door. They grinned at each other a little as the captain of the Remove knocked. They were quite unusual visitors in Angel's study—indeed, their last visit had been the occasion of a ragging, in the time when Mick was a gipsy schoolboy at Greyfriars. On Mick's account, they were prepared to be friendly—as friendly as they could. But how they were to pull with Aubrey Angel was rather a problem. They had no taste in common with the blackguard of the Fourth; his ways were not their ways. Still, for Mick's sake, they were ready to do their best.

"Come in!" Aubrey Angel's voice called out quite cheerily.

The Famous Five entered. The study looked very cheery and bright, with a good fire going, and some holly stuck over the pictures on the walls. The spread on the table was really magnificent. Aubrey did not do things by halves. The chums of the Remove had had tea at Highcliffe; but they had had a run in the frosty air since then, and it was now past six. So they were ready to help Angel clear the festive board, either as a late tea or an early supper.

Aubrey Angel gave them an agreeable smile and a nod; and there was no doubt that Aubrey could be agreeable when he had his best manners on. Kenney was civil. He was on the worst of terms with the Famous Five, and it cost him an effort to be civil. As for Mick, his handsome face was beaming with satisfaction.

Evidently the meeting of the brothers was friendly and cordial on both sides. It amazed Kenney, and it surprised Harry Wharton & Co. There was a kind

inflection in Angel's voice when he spoke to Mick, a pleasant softening in his rather hard face when he glanced at him. It was indubitable that he was strongly attached to his brother, though that redeeming affection did not make a better fellow of him.

"It's all serene, you fellows," said Mick, after a little chat round the table. "Aubrey's jolly glad that you're coming to Lochmuir for Christmas—ain't you, Aubrey, old man?"

Kenney cast a quick sidelong look at his study-mate.

He knew perfectly well that Aubrey Angel hated the bare idea of Harry Wharton & Co. coming to Lochmuir for Christmas. But Kenney had almost given up trying to understand Angel now. Aubrey nodded and smiled genially.

"Mick's told me about the idea," he said. "I hope you fellows will come. My father seems keen on it."

"He's awfully keen on it," said Mick.

"You fellows stood by my brother, in his bad days," said Angel. "My father hasn't forgotten that. I haven't forgotten it. It's no good pretending that we've been good friends, because we haven't. But I'm eager to forget all about that, if you fellows are willing."

"Dash it all, that's jolly decent of you, Angel," said Bob Cherry impulsively.

"The decentfulness is truly terrific!" concurred the nabob of Bhanipur.

"I dare say there were faults on both sides, when we used to row," said Harry Wharton amicably. "You see, Angel, we'd like to spend Christmas with Mick no end. But if you don't like the idea—excuse my putting it plainly—we'd rather not."

For a single moment Angel hesitated.

One word from him, then, would have stopped the whole thing. Mick would have been bitterly disappointed, but he was too attached to his brother to insist upon anything to which Aubrey objected.

And Aubrey objected strongly. He had his own views for the holidays—and the Famous Five did not come into the picture at all. And he disliked them; though, to do him justice, he had tried to overcome his dislike.

But his hesitation was too brief to be noticed.

"My dear chap," he said cordially, "that's all right. If you fellows will come, it will be a pleasure to me as well as to Mick. And you can see that it will be a pleasure to him."

"What-ho!" grinned Mick.

"Then it's a go!" said Harry Wharton, banishing the last remnant of distrust, and speaking frankly and cordially.

After that the juniors chatted freely and cheerfully, while the good things were disposed of. Not a word was said about Highcliffe; and when Mick made some reference to his brother's detention that afternoon, Bob Cherry thoughtfully dropped a cup upon a saucer, and cracked both, to cover up a momentary confusion.

After a very pleasant talk, the chums of the Remove left the study, and returned to their own quarters for prep. Mick remained with his brother; but he knew that Angel had prep to do, and after a time he left, to pay his respects to Mr. Quelch.

After he had gone, Angel did not worry about prep. He threw himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette, a proceeding that Kenney watched with a covert grin.

"Thank goodness it's over!" yawned Kenney. "I had to bite my tongue a dozen times to keep off topics that would have shocked those nice, dear, well-brought-up youths! Oh, crumbs! I say, Aubrey, are you really going up to the hills in Scotland for Christmas?"

"Maurice wants me to."

"Hang Maurice!" said Kenney irritably. "And what about the rippin' time we planned?"

"It's off, I suppose."

"That's all very well," said Kenney savagely. "But I don't see it. Besides, you know jolly well you can't stand Wharton's crowd for weeks at a time."

"I've got to!" growled Angel. "It's no good talking, Kenney. I'm not going to disappoint Maurice. I don't suppose you understand—"

"I don't!" snapped Kenney.

"You wouldn't! But I'm goin' through it, to please him. Perhaps the party won't last very long," said Angel hopefully. "It's a lonely old place, and they may get fed up. Perhaps the jolly old ghost will turn up and scare them off." He laughed. "Besides, any one of those fellows could give me away to Mick if he liked—they all know I was blagging with Ponsonby when Mick thought I was detained—"

"They wouldn't," said Kenney.

"They might—I don't trust them, or anybody, for that matter," said Angel sourly. "I've got to hold a candle to the gentleman in black. They are not bad chaps, really, though they bore a fellow frightfully. Anyhow, I'm for it, and I'm goin' through with it. My brother's had a hard time, and I'm goin' to do everything I can to make up for it."

Kenney sneered.

"I should think you were humbuggin' if you had any motive for pullin' my leg," he said. "As it is, I suppose you're turnin' soft."

"Suppose anythin' you like," said Aubrey contemptuously. "Hand me that Latin dick, and shut up."

"Do you think I'm goin' to stand that crew for the Christmas holidays?" demanded Kenney wrathfully.

"You'll have to if you come with me."

"Don't you want me to come?"

"Suit yourself."

And Aubrey Angel turned his attention at last to prep, with his chum glowering at him across the table.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Too Grateful!

MAURICE ANGEL, otherwise Mick, occupied his old bed in the Remove dormitory that night. There was a cheery flow of chatter in the dormitory after lights out; most of the Remove fellows were glad to see the one-time gipsy schoolboy, and to welcome him to Greyfriars. Skinner and Snoop had a few sneering remarks to make, on the subject of gipsy bounders; but they made no more of them after Bob Cherry slipped out of bed, and paid them personal visits with a bolster. Billy Bunter, on the other hand, was overflowing with the milk of human kindness towards Mick. He sat up in bed to tell the Remove fellows—for about the tenth time—of the thrilling rescue in Friardale, and how Mick had saved his life.

"Fancy it, you fellows," said Bunter

impressively. "The horse was going at a hundred miles an hour, at least. Mick sprang at his head like an arrow from a bow—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Mick.

"Like a lion from its lair," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seizing the fiery steed," continued Bunter, "he dragged it down. At the risk of his life—"

"Dry up!" said Mick. "There wasn't any risk. I know how to handle horses, you duffer!"

"There was heaps of risk," said Bunter. "You risked your life to save mine, Mick, and I shall never forget it. I hope I know how to feel grateful."

"I wish you knew how to shut up," said Mick.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Mick, old chap—"

"Give us a rest."

Bunter did not give the Remove fellows, or the subject, a rest until Bolsover major's boot whizzed through the air and smote him. Then he gave a loud howl, and dropped the subject at last.

The next morning Mick was one of the first up of the Remove; and Bunter, for a wonder, was astir soon after. The grateful Bunter did not intend to lose sight of the fellow to whom he owed so much. Bunter knew by this time about the trip to the Highlands for Christmas, and it was Bunter's fixed belief that the party would not be complete without William George Bunter. And he was going to fasten himself upon Mick by the sheer force of gratitude—if he could. A fellow was bound to be pleased at being proclaimed a hero—at least, that was Bunter's opinion. Bunter knew how he would have liked it himself; and that was enough for him.

But Mick dodged the fat junior till breakfast. After breakfast, Billy Bunter fastened on him as he was going out into the quadrangle with the Famous Five. Mick made a grimace. His stay at the school was brief; and he really did not want to spend it in the far from fascinating society of William George Bunter.

"Walking round the quad, Mick, old man?" asked Bunter affectionately.

"Are you?" asked Mick.

"Yes, old chap."

"Then I'm not."

"Oh, really, Mick!" said Bunter reproachfully.

"Roll away, old barrel!" said Bob Cherry, laughing.

"As Mick saved my life, Bob Cherry, he—"

"If we really believed that, we'd bump him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I may have saved him from a broken leg," said Mick. "But if he don't give the subject a rest, I shall kick him!"

"I'm grateful —" said Bunter.

"Chuck it!"

"You can say anything that you like, old chap, after the heroic way you risked your life to save mine!" said Bunter. "Now, about Christmas—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter peevishly. "As Mick saved my life, I want him to spend Christmas with me. I know how to be grateful, if you fellows don't. I want you to come to Bunter Court for Christmas, Mick, and I wouldn't take 'No'

for an answer, only the place is in the hands of—of the—"

"Bailiffs?" asked Bob.

"Decorators!" howled Bunter. "As the matter stands, Mick, old chap, what's to be done?"

"Who's to be done, you mean!" remarked Nugent.

"I disdain to answer that, Frank Nugent. I suppose it's pretty cold in the Highlands at this time of year," said Bunter. "I've an invitation from De Courcy to go to the South of France with him and his people. But I've declined. I told him that, under the circumstances, I couldn't desert you, Mick!"

Mick groaned.

"Rely on me, old fellow!" said Bunter. "Dash it all, you saved my life! After that I'd go to the North Pole with you. Count on me for the Highlands. I shall ask Lord Mauleverer to lend me his fur-lined overcoat. I suppose we shall have a special train?"

"Not quite!" grinned Mick.

"Well, so long as there's a sleeping-car, I sha'n't mind," said Bunter. "I can rough it. After you've saved my life—"

"Good-morning, my boys!" It was Mr. Quelch's voice. The Remove master nodded very kindly to Mick, and the juniors capped him respectfully. "What is this story I hear about your saving Bunter's life yesterday?"

"Oh dear!" murmured Mick.

"I have heard it spoken of several times," said Mr. Quelch. "I should be glad to know what happened!"

The juniors exchanged glances. It was Bunter who replied—rushing into the breach, as it were.

"It's quite true, sir. Mick rushed to the rescue—like a lion from his lair, sir—"

"What—what!"

"It was nothing, sir!" said Mick. "Bunter was in a trap, and the horse ran away and I stopped him. That was all—nothing."

"It wasn't all, sir!" exclaimed Bunter. "I was thinking of asking you, sir, whether you ought not to put it up to the Humane Society, and get Mick a medal for life-saving. It was a fearful experience, sir—in fact, frightful. The thundering hoofs of the terrified steed—"

"What!"

"Awoke every echo," continued Bunter enthusiastically. "There were shrieks of terror as the furious animal careered down the village street, hurling everybody to right and left—"

"Bunter!"

"It happened just as I'm telling you, sir. Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, Mick leaped at the fiery heed's stead—"

"The what!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"I mean, the fiery steed's head! Amid thunderous cheers—"

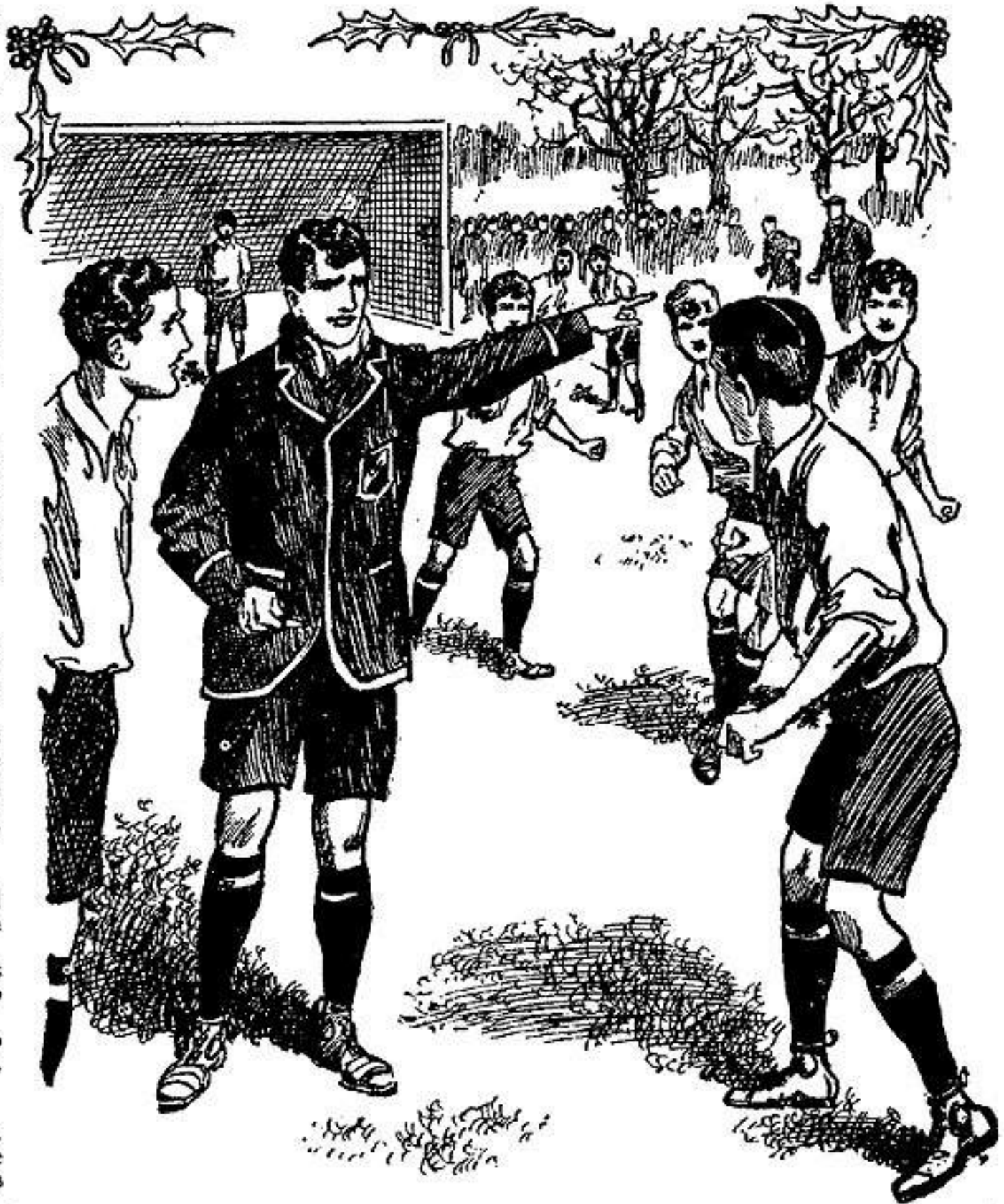
"How dare you talk such nonsense, Bunter!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"N-n-nonsense, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm only telling you how Mick saved my life, sir! Springing at the head of the thundering steed—"

"I understand that you were driving a horse that ran away, Bunter! You have been forbidden to drive, as you cannot control a horse. I am bound to punish you for this."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—"

"Follow me!"



Temple of the Fourth strode up to Angel. "Get off the field!" he rapped. "What?" stuttered Angel. "You cad!" continued Temple. "You've given them a goal—besides disgracing your team! Get off, before I kick you off!"
(See Chapter 11.)

"Hold on, sir!" gasped Bunter, in great dismay. "I—I wasn't driving a horse yesterday, sir."

"What! You have just stated that you were!"

"Not at all, sir! Oh, no! Not a—a horse, sir! I—I only said that Mick saved my life!" gasped Bunter, remembering a little too late that the affair of Gosling's trap had to be kept a secret from the powers.

"Was there not a runaway horse?"

"Oh, no, sir! Nothing of the kind!"

"Then how did Mick save your life?"

"Oh dear! It—it was a motor-car, sir—"

"A motor-car!" gasped the Remove master.

"Yes, sir; just a motor-car! It—it was rushing at me with—with thundering hoofs—"

"With what?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"I—I mean, it—it was rushing down on me!" gasped Bunter, too confused now quite to know what he was saying.

"Mick rushed at it and seized it by the bridle—"

"He seized a motor-car by the bridle!" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Nunno! Not at all! I—I mean, he seized it by the—the spanner—"

"The spanner!"

"That is to say, the magneto!" gasped Bunter. "He seized it by the magneto, and dragged it back, kicking furiously—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you tell me such absurd stories, Bunter? Are you out of your senses?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all! It—it wasn't a motor-car!" stuttered Bunter. "The—the fact is, sir—the—the actual fact—the plain fact, sir—this is how it happened. A runaway steam-roller—"

"Come with me, Bunter!"

"Yaroooh!"

As Mr. Quelch fastened a finger and thumb on Bunter's fat ear, the Owl of the Remove had no choice about going with him. So he went, leaving the juniors howling with laughter.

When he came out into the quad again he was rubbing his fat hands ruefully.

"Licked?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Yes! Quelch's an awful

beast!" groaned Bunter. "He actually cased me for driving a horse in Friar-dale—though I gave him my word that I never did anything of the kind. Ow! Wow! Some Form masters will never take a fellow's word! Wow! Quelch's no gentleman! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's Mick?" asked Bunter.

"Escaped!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You won't find him again before lessons, fat old bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

And the bell went for morning classes, and Billy Bunter had to go in to lessons with the Remove—without further justifying his overwhelming gratitude to the gipsy schoolboy—and with the important question of the Christmas vacation still unsettled. And when, after classes, Bunter sought for Mick, he found him not; and when he discovered that the gipsy schoolboy had left Greyfriars by a morning train, the feelings of William George Bunter were too deep for words.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Cloven Hoof!

"LAST match of the term!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"And we're going to wind up by beating the Fourth to a frazzle!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh observed that the frazzleness would be terrific.

It was a clear, cold afternoon, towards the end of the term. The Remove footballers were first on the ground; Cecil Reginald Temple, the captain of the Fourth, had a little way of being a little behind time. But the elegant Cecil Reginald strolled on the ground at last, and among the Fourth Form team appeared the equally elegant figure of Aubrey Angel.

"Ready, you fellows?" drawled Temple.

"Ready and waiting!" answered Wharton.

"We're goin' to wipe up the earth with you this time, old scout," said Temple cheerily.

"Do!" said Wharton, with a smile.

He gave Aubrey Angel a friendly nod. Since Mick's visit a few days before, the chums of the Remove had been on cheery terms with Angel of the Fourth.

The hatchet having been buried, they were not in the least disposed to dig it up again, and although they could not exactly like Aubrey Angel, they were glad to forget past differences.

The Christmas vacation was quite settled now. Sir Philip Angel had paid a visit to Greyfriars, and talked with the juniors on the subject. He was so evidently glad that Mick's old friends were to spend Christmas with the one-time waif, that the Co., in their turn, were very glad that they had accepted the invitation. And Aubrey, who was a good deal afraid of his father, had said no word of his secret sentiments to the old gentleman. But the more he was, from necessity, silent, the more he chafed at the thought.

Hilton of the Fifth, the referee, blew the whistle, and the ball rolled. The Remove forwards were quickly on the ball and taking it up the field.

Temple & Co. fancied themselves immensely at football, as at most things: but, as a matter of fact, they were nowhere near the form of the Removites. Harry Wharton & Co. were anticipating an easy victory. And in the first half it looked as if their anticipations would be realised. The ball went in from Wharton's foot, and a few minutes later Vernon-Smith followed up the goal with another, and just before half-time Squiff put the leather in.

The Remove players were grinning contentedly when the whistle went for the interval.

"Some game!" grinned Bob Cherry, and his comrades chuckled.

"You'll have to pull up your socks, you fellows," said Cecil Reginald Temple to his followers severely. "We can't let those Remove fags wind up the term by lickin' us! Think of our giddy prestige!"

"They're three up!" remarked Fry sarcastically. "Looks to me as if our giddy prestige is moultin'!"

"Play up!" said Temple. "You specially, Angel! You were shirkin'!"

"Oh, rot!" said Angel sourly.

"You were dodgin' charges," said Temple. "If you're afraid of a charge, you should keep out of the game. You fairly ran when Bob Cherry rushed you."

"Hang Bob Cherry!"

The sides lined up for the second half. The Remove forwards got away with the ball, and there was a hot attack on the Fourth Form goal. But Cecil Reginald was on his mettle now. The Fourth put their beef into it, and fought manfully, and the game swayed back to the half-way-line, and Temple, rallying his forces, led an attack on goal.

"Play up, Fourth!"

"Buck up, Remove!"

It was a breathless struggle now. It looked as if the Fourth would get through. But Hazeldene, in goal, defended well, and Bob Cherry cleared out

the ball. Harry Wharton captured it, and was taking it up the field. And then, all of a sudden, there was a sharp cry as Angel rushed him down, and the captain of the Remove sprawled on the ground. Round the field, from the Removites watching the game, came a roar:

"Foul!"

"Penalty! Penalty!"

The whistle rang out.

"You silly dummy!" roared Temple of the Fourth. "Angel, you crass idiot, you—"

"Foul!"

"Penalty!"

Harry Wharton staggered up. His face was white with pain. His eyes fixed on Angel with a stare of scorn.

"You cad! You rotter!"

Angel did not speak. The foul had been too palpable, and it had taken place in the penalty area. Harry Wharton leaned on Bob Cherry's arm.

"Yah! Play fair! Foul! Foul!" roared the Remove crowd.

Wharton limped off the field. His play was over for that day. Temple of the Fourth strode up to Angel.

"Get off the field!"

"What?" stammered Angel.

"You cad! You've given them a goal, besides disgracing your team! Get off, before I kick you off!" roared Temple.

Angel set his teeth and walked off the field. The game was resumed with a player short on either side.

Four goals to nil was the Remove score when the match finished, a sufficiently overwhelming total. But one goal, at least, the Fourth attributed to Angel and his foul play.

In Study No. 1 Harry Wharton rubbed his injured limb with embrocation, in a painful silence. Bob Cherry spoke at last.

"This looks ripping for our Christmas holiday—with Angel!" he said.

"The cad!" muttered Nugent.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"It can't be helped now," he said.

"We've promised Mick, and made the arrangements with Sir Philip Angel. We're bound to go through with it, whatever Angel does, I suppose!"

"A happy prospect!" growled Bob. "I've a jolly good mind to go to his study now and punch his head!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That wouldn't make matters better. We can keep clear of him to the end of the vac, anyhow; and hope for the best when we get to Lochmuir."

But it was not a happy prospect, and Harry Wharton & Co., as the last days of the term ran out, could not help wondering what would be the outcome of their Christmas in the Highlands.





A Marked Man!

by
Hedley Scott.

A sensational story
of League Football
with a powerful
detective theme.

The Clue of the Tiger's Head!

"HOW on earth did you get here?" gasped Ferrers Locke feebly.

"That can wait for the moment, guv'nor," replied Jack Drake, with a catch in his voice. "Let me attend to you first, sir!"

He whipped out his pocket-knife as he spoke, and in a couple of slashes cut through the cords that bound the sleuth's wrists and ankles.

"That's heaps better!" said Locke, stretching his cramped limbs. "I suppose you haven't got the brandy flask with you?"

"Wrong for once," smiled Drake, diving his hand into his jacket pocket and bringing to light a small flask. He watched his beloved chief take a pull at the contents, and breathed a sigh of relief as Ferrers Locke forced a smile.

"That's put new life into me!" said the sleuth gratefully.

He commenced to stamp up and down, at the same time waving his arms in a circular movement, until he felt his normal circulation returning. Suddenly he remembered the heavy stones in his pockets, and with a muttered ejaculation commenced to unload himself of them.

Jack Drake watched the performance with a shudder. He found no difficulty in supplying a reason for their presence. Ferrers Locke, glancing up, caught the horrified expression on his young assistant's face.

"A little trick of the Tiger's," he chuckled grimly. "But I'm worth a dozen dead 'uns—eh, my lad?"

"You won't be, guv'nor, unless you can dry your clothes," was the reply. "Let's get back to—"

"London?" queried Locke. "Not a bad notion, Jack. I rather fancy Middleham had better wipe off their slate of visitors the name of Colonel Challis. But my confounded clothes. I can't walk about like this."

"I passed a woodman's cottage on the road," said Drake brightly. "You can pitch the fellow a yarn that you fell in the river, and beg leave to dry your togs."

"Good! Lead on, my lad!"

The detective and his assistant started off at a brisk pace along the main road that spanned the heath between the River Twee and the town of Middleham. As Locke gazed about him and found his bearings he realised that he must have been carried down the river for a distance

of five hundred yards or so. Behind him frowned the gloomy row of tenement houses lining the water's edge. Lights twinkled from the dwelling at the extreme end of the row—the house from which Ferrers Locke had been hurled to his death. Even at that moment the sleuth could picture in his mind the smirk of satisfaction on the evil face of Tiger Sleek as he caroused with his

HOW THE STORY OPENS.

JIM BLAKENEY, the eighteen-year-old centre-forward of the Middleham Rangers, who is a nephew of

TIGER SLEEK, a notorious criminal, who has escaped the clutches of the police, and who now has designs upon a secret wireless ray invented by

MORNINGTON HARDACRE, the managing-director of the Middleham Rangers.

RONALD SWIVELLER, the inside-left in the Rangers eleven, and nephew of Mornington Hardacre. Jealous of Blakeney's rapid strides into favour, Swiveller has sworn to get the centre-forward turned out of Middleham. The Tiger gets to know of Swiveller's animosity towards Jim Blakeney, and uses it as a leverage to attain his own ends.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous detective, and his clever young assistant,

JACK DRAKE, are by a strange series of circumstances thrown into contact with Jim Blakeney, who confides in the famous sleuth. It transpires that Tiger Sleek seeks to compel Jim Blakeney to steal the specifications of Mornington Hardacre's invention, and when he finds the lad obstinate, resorts to brutal methods of persuasion. Ferrers Locke offers to take a hand in the case, and resides in Middleham in the guise of Colonel Challis.

Some time later Ferrers Locke falls into the hands of Tiger Sleek and his gang. Determined to rid himself of so dangerous a foe, the Tiger causes the detective to be thrown into the river. A kindly Providence, however, destines that the sleuth should live, and Locke is swept into a disused sewer near the bed of the river. At one part of the tunnel he finds a ladder which leads to a grating above. By dint of hard struggling the detective manages to mount the ladder, and at intervals calls for help. Two hours drag by, and Locke is almost in despair, when a shadow flits across the grating. With all the strength at his command the sleuth calls for help. His cry is answered by no less a person than Jack Drake, his young assistant, who at once proceeds to drag his chief from his uncomfortable position.

(Now read on.)

rascally confederates over the demise of the great detective.

"Here we are, guv'nor!" suddenly announced Jack Drake, breaking in on his chief's reflections.

He had halted outside an ancient cottage that stood back a few yards from the road. The twinkling of a light in one of the lower rooms indicated that someone was "at home." Without loss of time Drake rapped sharply on the door. The detective and his assistant heard the shuffling of feet in response to the summons, and then the door slowly opened. A grizzled old head peered out at the visitors and eyed them up and down.

"What be you want, masters?" inquired a cracked, high-pitched voice. "Lor' bless me, but you've been in the river! Come inside!"

Locke smiled at Drake. The old woodman had observed the sleuth's drenched clothes, and had supplied his own reason for such a circumstance. Like as not he would not bother to ask any further questions. The door was thrown open, and the old woodman beckoned Locke and Drake to enter.

"Come inside," he repeated, "and dry yourself. The night's bitter! You'll be catching your death of cold, I'm thinking!"

With a muttered word of thanks Locke and Drake entered the cottage, and were ushered into the living-room. A huge log-fire burned brightly on the old-fashioned hearth, throwing out a grateful heat.

The woodman bustled about and brought to light an old suit, which Locke changed into whilst his own clothes were drying. Finally, and with many apologies, the old woodman tendered two bowls of steaming rabbit broth, which Locke and Drake lost no time in consuming.

Feeling little the worse for his exciting adventure, the great detective changed back into his own garments, thanked the old woodman for his hospitality, pressed a crisp five-pound note into his unwilling palm, and bade him good-night.

"And now for London!" said Locke as he headed for the town, guided by the myriad lights that danced and swayed before him. "We shall just be in time for the mail train! It puts in at Middleham!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.



"Good!" ejaculated Drake. "I can do with a snooze."

A quarter of an hour later the detective and his assistant were seated in the London express. Ferrers Locke settled himself comfortably on the cushions in one corner and produced his briar.

"Funny thing, my lad," he observed to Drake, "but the Tiger forgot—intentionally or otherwise, I cannot say—to rifle my pockets. My briar is little the worse for its immersion, whilst my watertight tobacco pouch has been a friend indeed."

Pulling steadily at the briar, the sleuth saw it well alight, and then he turned his attention to Jack Drake. He briefly outlined the events which had led up to his capture by the Tiger, and concluded with an account of his experiences after he had been hurled into the water.

Drake listened intently to his chief's narrative, and admired the cool way in which Locke referred to his adventures as if they were nothing out of the ordinary.

"And now, my lad," said Locke when he had concluded his own story, "what on earth brought you to that part of Middleham last night?"

"I'll start from the beginning, guv'nor," said Drake. "Twelve o'clock yesterday I failed to receive the usual telephone message from you saying that all was well. I began to feel alarmed. Without undue loss of time I took the train to Middleham, chartered a taxi outside the station to take me to the Central Hotel, and then received something in the nature of a shock!"

"Don't get you, my lad," said the detective. "What happened?"

"Only this, sir," continued the lad. "I was lolling about in the taxi, impatient to be at the Central, when something lying by the mat on the floor caught my attention. Curiosity prompted me to pick it up. To my surprise, I found it was a gold cuff-link."

"Well?" demanded Locke, for once in a way exchanging roles with the celebrated Dr. Watson.

"On the link in question," continued Drake, who was enjoying himself. "I caught sight of an engraving representing a tiger's head and—"

"What!" Ferrers Locke voiced the exclamation and mechanically fingered his shirt cuff, for the first time becoming aware that the link was missing. "I can see a little daylight now, my lad," he added, recovering his composure. "Proceed."

"I began to put two and two together. The driver of the cab had evidently had you as a fare, sir, that same morning—"

"Really, my lad, I'll admit that the link with the tiger's head engraved upon it was mine, but why do you—or did you—jump to the conclusion that the driver had run me about in his cab that morning? It might have been days before, surely!"

"No, sir," declared Drake emphatically. "The taxis are thoroughly cleaned out overnight, and you can bet your sweet life that anything a 'washer' leaves in a taxi after he's cleaned it isn't worth having. Certain it is no washer would ignore such a thing as a gold cuff-link—and a heavy one at that!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Ferrers Locke admiringly. "Your method of deduction does you credit. What next?"

"I arrived at the Central Hotel, and

decided first to inquire of the porters there if you were 'at home' before I taxed the driver of the cab with having driven you somewhere that morning. As I had expected, I was informed at the hotel that you had gone out immediately after breakfast and had not returned. Something prompted me to be wary of the driver of the cab—whom I had left outside whilst I made my inquiries. I didn't like the look of his chivvy. It had rogue written all over it."

"You scored where I failed," chuckled the sleuth. "I paid too little attention to his face, I'm afraid. Go on!"

"I bluffed the taxi-driver with a yarn that one of the servants of the hotel had seen him driving Colonel Challis about that morning. Now, as Colonel Challis has been only a visitor to Middleham for five minutes, as it were, the obvious retort to my statement should have been to the effect that he—the driver—didn't know Colonel Challis from Adam."

"As things turned out, the blessed driver was thrown off his balance for a moment. He was about to deny any knowledge of you—I could see that in his face—when he suddenly recollected that he had driven you to a place near the river that very morning. I asked him the address, and he gave it me willingly enough. Moreover, he appeared exceptionally anxious to drive me to the spot. I declined his offer and told him that I'd walk. The rest you know yourself. I heard your cries for help long before I reached the old sewer-trap."

"That taxi-driver is a cute bird," said Ferrers Locke grimly. "I can see why he gave you the address of the place he had driven me to in the morning."

"That's where I confess myself beaten, guv'nor," said Drake, shaking his head. "What was his motive?"

"Easy enough," smiled the great detective. "By giving you the address of the Tiger's stronghold, he, naturally enough, expected you to walk into a trap. Once



Swiveller caught hold of the nearest branch and swung himself clear of the window. (See page 23.)

you entered the Tiger's place your number would have been up with a vengeance. Not only would Ferrers Locke, the detective, be safely out of the way, but his 'meddling' assistant also—savvy?"

"I get you now, sir," said Drake. "But, as things have turned out, the Tiger will naturally suppose that I have changed my mind about visiting his den, and he will still have to reckon with you."

"Us," corrected Locke gently. "My lad, I owe you my life. The Tiger—if there is such a thing as justice—owes his life time and again to the law. You have saved me from his hands; you will help me place the scoundrel in the dock. Jack, my lad, I'm proud of you!"

The great detective held out his hand and clasped that of his assistant's. Jack Drake stammered something unintelligible, and blushed a deep crimson. Praise from his beloved chief was praise indeed!

And whilst the Tiger and his gang were congratulating themselves that they no longer had anything to fear from Ferrers Locke, that brilliant criminal investigator was seated in a cosy arm-chair in his study quietly laying plans for the apprehension of the notorious rogue who had defied the police of three countries.

Hardacre Relents!

"IT'S no use, Ronald. I'm weary of your extravagances. Kindly retire!"

"But, uncle, just for this time. I promise—"

"Your promises turn me cold, Ronald," said Mornington Hardacre severely. "I've lost faith in them and you. Go!"

The dignified figure of the managing-director of the Rangers rose from the chair, and seemed to tower over the cringing form of Ronald Swiveller. There was no spark of pity or affection in the glance that Hardacre turned on his nephew. It bristled with contempt.

Ronald Swiveller, with something like a sob shaking his frame, crawled—no other term is applicable—from the well-appointed library of the Myrtles. Mornington Hardacre watched him go, and his lips tightened.

He sat down, deep in worried thought, and stared vacantly into the burning embers of the fire for twenty minutes or so. Simultaneous with the clock in the hall chiming the quarter, Jenkins, the butler, entered the library, deposited something on the bureau, and then inquired of his master if he was in need of anything.

Mornington Hardacre shook his head negatively, and the butler silently withdrew. When he had gone Hardacre broke into speech.

"One hundred and fifty pounds, begad!" he muttered. "One hundred and fifty pounds, the waster! And yet—"

He broke off, and his eyes sought the picture of a handsome woman, whose features bore a striking resemblance to his own, overhanging the small bureau. For some minutes he regarded the picture, his face hard and stern. Then gradually the muscles relaxed, and a soft expression crept into his grey eyes.

"After all," he whispered, "he's your son, Stephanie."

Without more ado, Mornington Hardacre sat down at the bureau and pulled

out his cheque-book. He made out the amount of one hundred and fifty pounds payable to Ronald Swiveller, and carefully blotted the cheque. Then, as if he were prompted to change his mind, Mornington Hardacre hastily enclosed the cheque in an envelope and addressed it to his nephew.

That same nephew, his heart full of bitterness against Mornington Hardacre, who had refused to advance him such a "paltry" sum as one hundred and fifty pounds, was indulging in bitter reflections. With that sum Ronald Swiveller could have stemmed the tide of disaster that threatened to overtake him at any moment. His creditors were growing more persistent than ever. And now—the future looked black enough, he reflected bitterly. Since the coming of Jim Blakeney, Mornington Hardacre had seemed to turn from his nephew with loathing and contempt. No longer was the "old man" good for a "pony." Well, Jim Blakeney would have to pay for coming between them. Hardacre would pay, too; but his payment would take a different form. Swiveller ground his teeth together harshly, and his mind dwelt upon the scheme Tiger Sleek had evolved. The time had come! In the heat of the moment Swiveller had embraced the Tiger's plan with alacrity. Now that it was due to be put into practice, Hardacre's nephew was beginning rapidly to lose his enthusiasm for the task that was to be his.

Had his uncle consented to advance him the sum of money that he was in need of, Swiveller might have felt some remorse, and so refused to assist Tiger Sleek in his cowardly plan. But the old man had not consented—in fact, Swiveller had never before seen him in such a state of rage and indignation. To be dismissed from his uncle's house as though he were a beggar—the house to which Jim Blakeney had an open invitation. It was like gall and wormwood to Swiveller.

"The hound!" muttered Swiveller as he strode along, his thoughts now devoted solely to Jim Blakeney. "It's time you went from Middleham!"

His courage returned as he mused in this fashion. With a harsh chuckle, he keyed himself into his rooms, and rang for the landlady.

"Mrs. Buttrix," he said feebly, "would you be good enough to make me up that cold mixture of yours? I'm feeling very seedy—influenza, I think. Atischoo!"

He broke into a fit of sneezing, and the good lady of the house looked very concerned for her "paying guest."

"You get to bed, Mr. Swiveller," she said authoritatively. "You're in for a bad spell, I'm thinking. I'll send up the mixture in five minutes' time. Mind, you're to drink it whilst it's hot."

"Thanks very much, I will," said Swiveller, with a wry smile that completely deceived Mrs. Buttrix. "You won't let anyone disturb me, will you?"

"Leave that to me, sir. I'll see no one comes bursting into your rooms. You get a long night's rest. Bless me, you can't be laid up at this time. What would your uncle say if you weren't at his table on Sunday?"

Ronald Swiveller did not reply to that question. But his active brain was rapidly forming an impression of what Mornington Hardacre might say did he but know of this "sudden indisposition" of his nephew's.

Swiveller entered his bed-room and undressed. When the boot-boy tapped at his door ten minutes later, and was requested to enter, he found Ronald Swiveller between the sheets, apparently half-asleep.

"Which the missus said as 'ow you're to drink this at once," said the boy cheekily. "It's all right, sir, take it from me—I've had a taste!"



Swiveller's right hand was raised aloft, ready to deal the treacherous stroke, when the sleeping man awoke. "Good heavens!" exclaimed Mornington Hardacre, his eyes opening wide in horrified astonishment. "Ronald! You?"
(See page 24.)

So engrossed was Swiveller with his own thoughts that he failed to evince any surprise at the admission of the boot-boy. On any other occasion he would have "cuffed" him for his cheek.

The boot-boy retired, and his exit was the signal for Swiveller to act. Treading softly across the room he turned the key in the lock, and then hurriedly began to dress. Leaving a glimmer of light burning in the bed-room, he cautiously drew aside the window curtaining and as cautiously raised the sash of the window. With a glance to right and left of him he stepped out on the narrow balcony that ran the length of the building, and softly lowered the window.

"So far so good," he muttered. "Now for the next stage."

By the side of the balcony loomed the shadowy silhouette of an elm-tree. Its branches fell within close distance of the balcony rail. Gingerly Swiveller caught hold of the nearest branch and swung himself clear of the window. The branch sagged under his weight and bent from the trunk until it was scarcely three feet from the ground. Timing his leap to a nicety, Swiveller jumped to the ground and darted into the shadows. He stood still, his heart beating a trifle faster than usual, and listened anxiously. Save for the rustle of the trees bending to the slight breeze that had sprung up, all was still.

Ronald Swiveller pulled his overcoat closely around him, turned up the collar, and strode briskly into the gathering

darkness. He had not gone more than twenty yards when he was joined by another shadowy figure that detached itself from the cover of a hedge.

"All right, comrade," whispered the newcomer. "The chief will be here to direct things in a couple of minutes."

Swiveller nodded, and walked along with the man. In less than a couple of minutes he came face to face with Tiger Sleek.

"Ah, Mr. Swiveller! All prepared—eh?"

Swiveller nodded.

"I have sent Bill Stubbins to assist you. He'll wait outside, in case of any hitch—you understand?"

Once more Swiveller nodded. He felt more assured now that he knew he was to be accompanied by someone on the shady mission that lay before him.

"Good!" The Tiger was speaking again. "Good luck, Swiveller! Don't bungle the job. Here's wishing you a speedy inheritance of the old man's money and the safe delivery of the Wireless Ray into my hands. My share in the swag, so to speak, will follow later—eh?"

There was a peculiar sinister ring in the scoundrel's tones that rather startled Swiveller, but he had little time to pay heed to his discomfiture. The Tiger moved closer to him, and slipped a cylindrical-shaped object into his hands.

"The sandbag—savvy?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

Ronald Swiveller felt his pulse leap as he clutched the sandbag and swiftly transferred it to his jacket-pocket.

"Off you go!" commanded the Tiger. "Everything has been planned to time. The other end of the business has been satisfactorily settled. You understand? Bill, here, will report to me when the job is done. You had better return to your shanty, Swiveller, as soon after events as possible. You've laid your alibi?"

"Yes!" whispered Swiveller hoarsely.

"Good!"

The Tiger withdrew into the shadows. A spasm of apprehension passed through Swiveller as he watched him go. At the back of Swiveller's mind was the idea that he was being made a tool of—a means to an end. But the real end was being kept back from him. Had it not been for the gnarled hand of Bill Stubbins that gripped his arm, Swiveller would have been tempted to throw up the sponge. But a complex Fate was carrying him on—carrying him out of his depth.

"Come on!" whispered Bill Stubbins. "Time we were moving!"

Walking at a brisk pace, the two passed through the town, choosing the back streets for obvious reasons, and then took the road that led past Mornington Hardacre's old Tudor mansion. The town clock struck the hour of seven as Swiveller and his companion halted beneath the high wall that skirted Hardacre's property.

"Over you go, Swiveller!" muttered Stubbins. "There's no time to lose. Remember, he's due at seven-fifteen sharp!"

A Quarter-Past Seven!

JIM BLAKENEY stood before his mirror and straightened a refractory piece of neckwear for the fifteenth time.

"Drat this blessed 'tie!" he muttered crossly. "Ah, that's better!"

He wheeled sharply on his heel as the little clock on his mantel chimed the hour of seven.

"I've cut it fine!" muttered Jim, making a grab at his hat. "Shall just do it, though!"

He was about to leave the apartment when his eyes rested on a single sheet of notepaper that lay on the small table. He picked it up and scanned the well-written contents for at least the twentieth time. As a matter of fact, he knew the text of the extraordinary missive before him by heart. It ran:

"Dear Jim,—It has long since been my desire that you should meet my niece, and a foolish old man's whim can be gratified to-day. Daphne is staying with me over the holidays, and arrives this evening. I wonder if you'd give us the honour of your company at dinner to-night? I rather think you will humour me in this, so I am bold enough to give you the following instructions. I have planned a little surprise for both Daphne and yourself. Will you, therefore, present yourself outside the french windows of the library—which you will find open—at seven-fifteen sharp? Don't come in through the hall. You understand?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

Will explain the idea when I see you. But be prepared for something in the nature of a surprise.

"You will come?"

"Yours sincerely,

"(Signed) MORNINGTON HARDACRE."

"Old Hardacre seems to be developing into a crank!" chuckled Jim, as he folded the letter and placed it in his pocket. "Still, I'm rather keen to learn this big surprise."

With another look in the long mirror that reassured him Blakeney switched out the light, and was soon walking briskly in the direction of the Myrtles. He knew the managing-director of the Rangers was a "stickler" for punctuality, and he was determined to be outside the french windows of the library as per appointment if he broke a blood-vessel in the attempt.

A glance at his watch as he entered the sweeping drive of Hardacre's old place told him that he had made the journey in good time. With light heart

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and a feeling of suppressed excitement that took root in him, brought about by the extraordinary missive that reposed in his pocket, Jim Blakeney neared the french windows of the library.

Was it his fancy, or did he see a fleeting shadow of a man merge into the inky blackness of the night outside the circle of light afforded by the glare from the library? It materialised and faded again so rapidly that Blakeney put it down to mere fancy.

But the shadow that had crossed his path was something more than fancy—as Blakeney himself was destined to realise ere another hour had flown over his head!

The rhythmic ticking of an ornolu clock was all that could be heard in the library at the Myrtles, save the steady breathing of Mornington Hardacre, who, as was his usual custom, had fallen asleep an hour before dinner.

Suddenly a slight creaking sound from the direction of the french windows jarred upon the silence—a sound that would have awakened a less heavy sleeper than Mornington Hardacre.

The sound was repeated at intervals. Then, inch by inch, the french window began to pivot inwards. A dark figure filled the stream of light at the window—a figure that moved silently and with infinite caution.

Moving forward with cat-like tread, the intruder neared the armchair in which Mornington Hardacre reclined.

It was Ronald Swiveller.

Glancing furtively about him, the rascally nephew of Hardacre moved nearer. A light breeze had blown up and a stray current of air was wafted into the library. It scattered a few papers on the oak table and fanned the temples of the sleeping man.

Swiveller now stood behind the chair of his uncle. His right hand was raised aloft, an ugly-looking sandbag poised ready to strike. But, rogue as he was, Swiveller had not the courage to deal the stroke he had contemplated. He started violently as another gust of wind rustled the papers on the table, and then gritted his teeth. His nerves were getting the better of him. His right hand moved slowly downward on its treacherous mission, when the sleeping man stirred. Realisation of what was overhanging him must have caused Mornington Hardacre to glance upward. His eyes opened—opened wide in horrified astonishment as they saw the ominous weapon poised aloft, and then he found tongue.

"Good heavens, Ronald! You—"

Seized with panic and terror at being surprised in the very act of carrying out his nefarious purpose, Ronald Swiveller temporarily lost his sanity. He struck out blindly at the unguarded head—forced on by a will stronger than his own.

With a low moan Mornington Hardacre pitched to the floor.

The fit passed almost as swiftly as it had come. His eyes staring wildly, Swiveller gazed down at the silent figure at his feet; the sandbag dropped from his nerveless fingers. He stood shaking in every limb.

"Good heavens! What have I done? What have I done?"

But Swiveller's remorse was overcome by his terror. He must get away—out of it all. His eyes roamed the library like a hunted hare's. They rested on the flap of the small bureau. An envelope bearing his own name, already stamped for the post, seemed to be magnified a thousand times. He darted towards it and feverishly slit the edge.

And then he recoiled back, clutching at his heart, which threatened to burst. For in a few brief lines Mornington Hardacre referred to the quarrel of an hour or so back, and begged his nephew to accept the enclosed cheque and forget his—Hardacre's—hot words.

"My—my—"

Swiveller tried to find voice, but his muscles refused their office. He dare not look upon that silent figure stretched prone upon the floor. He must get away at all costs. To his alert ears there sounded the crunch of gravel. Someone was coming up the drive! He was coming along the drive to this—to this—

With a moan like a stricken animal Ronald Swiveller dashed helter-skelter through the french window and out into the safety of the night.

"This is jolly queer!"

Jim Blakeney paused before the open

window of the library at the Myrtles and peered into the lighted room, astonishment written in every line of his face. For the moment the library appeared devoid of any human presence. Then suddenly Jim's keen eyes sighted a sinister heap on the floor. He started violently.

"Great heavens! What's happened?"

The cry left his lips as he darted forward and reached the huddled figure. Jim fell on his knees and gazed long and earnestly into the rigid features.

"Mornington Hardacre—" The young man's words trailed off as he caught sight of a sandbag lying close to the still figure of the Rangers' director. Gingerly Jim picked it up. Then again he turned his attention to the prostrate figure of his benefactor, hardly able to credit the evidence of his senses. He shook the figure before him and called upon it by name, but there was no response. And then the full significance of the situation burst upon him.

"Dead!"

The dread word forced itself between Blakeney's dry lips, and a shudder ran through his frame.

Dead! There was no doubt about it, however; Mornington Hardacre had crossed the Great Divide.

Full of a strange misgiving, Blakeney peered down at the still figure on the polished floor, unconsciously fingering the sandbag which he felt convinced had dealt the fatal blow.

So dumbstruck and paralysed was the young footballer that he failed to hear the deep-toned gong of the clock in the hall striking the quarter, or the discreet tap at the library door. Neither was he aware of the subsequent creak as the latter opened. Again, he was unconscious of the fact that the startled face of Jenkins, the butler, peered in.

Jenkins stifled the cry of surprise that threatened to manifest itself and watched for a matter of a few seconds. He took in the still figure of Mornington Hardacre, the ominous-looking weapon in Jim's hand, and the young man's expression of horror. A slight hissing sound escaped the butler, causing Jim Blakeney guiltily to start and wheel round. He recovered himself on the instant when he recognised the features of the butler.

"Your—your master has met with foul play, Jenkins," he said quietly. "He—he is dead!"

"What?"

The old retainer came closer, and gazed down at the heap of humanity on the floor. One glance was sufficient to tell him that Mornington Hardacre was beyond the reach of any human succour. He turned sharply and confronted Jim Blakeney, his grey eyes ablaze, his aged hands trembling.

"You!" he almost shrieked. "Wh-what have you done? How did you get in here?"

"Done?" echoed Blakeney, for the moment taken aback at the suggestion. "Don't be a fool, man! I know nothing about this—"

"You lie!" shouted Jenkins. "I never let you in the house! The master was alive and well an hour ago. You viper! By heaven, you'll swing for this!"

Before Blakeney was capable of framing a suitable reply the butler had darted to the telephone and was frantically calling upon the local police-station.

"Yes, yes!" he uttered swiftly, in response to an inquiry from the other end of the wire. "The Myrtles. . . Murder. Mornington Hardacre!"

Flinging aside the instrument Jenkins rushed to the side of his master and knelt beside it. So great was his emotion, so great the loss he had sustained—for Hardacre and the old butler were closely attached, although they were master and servant respectively—that he gabbled an unending stream of entreaties, after the manner of a terror-stricken child. Deeply moved, Jim Blakeney watched the grief of the aged butler, and then tried to pull himself together. So strange and unexpected had been the events of the last five minutes that Blakeney failed to realise his own unenviable position on the scene of the tragedy.

"Stop it, man, for goodness' sake!" said Blakeney, touching Jenkins on the shoulder. "Help me shift your master on to the settee."



"What tomfoolery are you trying to give me, eh?" roared the inspector angrily. "Where's this letter you're talking about?" Blakeney jumped almost clear of the floor as his eyes scanned the sheet of notepaper for it was absolutely blank! (See page 28.)

The butler suddenly seemed to be endowed with Herculean strength. For he flung himself upon the young footballer and sent him crashing against the panelling.

"No!" he shrieked. "You sha'n't touch him, you hound! You have done this—you, whom he trusted—you—"

He broke off as a furious tocsin on the door-bell awoke the echoes. Backing cautiously out of the room, as if fearing at any moment that Blakeney would assault him, Jenkins feverishly negotiated the passage and flung open the massive oak door.

A tall, uniformed inspector of police, accompanied by a sergeant, entered the hallway and eyed the shaking butler inquisitively.

"What's the trouble?" demanded the inspector, in his best official manner. "Don't stand there shaking like a jelly! Speak up, man! Where is your master?"

"In there!" replied Jenkins hoarsely. "He—the murderer—is in there, too—in the library!"

In a couple of strides the inspector and the sergeant had reached the door of the library, which they unceremoniously flung open. Immediately Jim Blakeney started forward to meet them. The inspector stopped the flow of words that rose to Blakeney's lips with a curt gesture of the hand. Then he began an examination of the stricken man.

"Too late for us to do anything now," grunted the officer. "He's been hit over the head with a heavy instrument—"

"I found this by the deceased man's side," volunteered Blakeney, proffering the sandbag.

The inspector eyed the footballer suspiciously.

"And might I ask, Mr. Blakeney, what you are doing in this house? It is my duty to—"

"I understand," replied the young footballer, realising that his presence would require some explanation. "I was invited here by Mr. Hardacre himself—to dinner!"

"You lie—you lie!" Jenkins, the butler, shrieked the words. "The master distinctly told me an hour ago that he would dine alone. He asked me to awake him at a quarter-past seven. Besides, how did you get in here, Mr. Blakeney?"

"Just a moment," interrupted the inspector brusquely. "I understand that it was you, Jenkins, who phoned up the station just now and acquainted them of the tragedy."

"Yes, inspector!"

"Then kindly explain the circumstances as you know them and the exact time of your discovery."

"Yes, sir," said the butler nervously. "The master requested me to awake him at a quarter-past seven. It was an eccentric custom of his to sleep for an hour before dinner. I knocked at the library door as the clock in the hall struck the quarter—it's always five minutes slow—and, receiving no answer, I entered of my own accord. To my surprise I saw Mr. Blakeney in the room. He was holding that weapon in his hand and standing over my poor master, who was lying on the floor. He—"

"Do you mean to insinuate—" began Blakeney hotly.

"Kindly keep silent for a moment, Mr. Blakeney," said the inspector coldly. "Let Mr. Jenkins tell his story first."

"He tried to deny that he had killed my poor master," continued the butler. "But if you had seen his face as I saw it you would have been given proof enough of his guilt."

The inspector made a sign to his sergeant to jot down the evidence in his notebook, and then he turned to Blakeney.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Blakeney," he said, in his official manner, "that I shall have to detain you unless you can answer satisfactorily the questions I intend to put to you. I warn you now that anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

Having delivered himself of this usual formality, the inspector cleared his throat with a cough.

"Very well," said Blakeney, in even tones, although his face had paled. "Proceed!"

"In the first place, you say," went on

(Continued on page 28.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.



OVERHEARD IN THE QUAD!

By
FRANK RICHARDS.



A fascinating monologue that will not come amiss to readers familiar with the ways of the great William George Bunter. To those unacquainted with the fat and fatuous Billy this bright and breezy monologue will serve as an introduction. Having once shaken his hand, as it were, you will look forward to reading of his amazing exploits in these pages every week.

I SAY, you fellows— I wish you wouldn't walk off while I'm talking to you. The manners at this school are simply rotten; people always walk away just when I'm beginning to say something. Anybody would think I was a bore, instead of the only chap at Greyfriars with any brains to speak of.

Ow!

If you look at me like that again, Smithy, I'll give you a jolly good licking! Ow! Keep away, you beast—I mean, never mind, old fellow; I can take a joke! He, he, he!

No, I haven't got an alarm-clock in my pocket, you silly asses, and it isn't going off.

I was going to say— For goodness' sake, Bob Cherry, don't keep on interrupting a fellow. I don't know anything about your jam-tarts. I hope you don't think I'm the kind of fellow to go rooting in a chap's study cupboard, and scoffing his jam-tarts! How should I know anything about your jam-tarts! It's not my fault if they're missing, is it? I haven't seen your blessed jam-tarts—never even knew you had any. I hope you can take a fellow's word!

Besides, there were only three, and one of them was stale.

Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. Look here, you chaps, this is serious. I'm expecting a postal-order, and it hasn't come yet. No, it's not the one I was expecting the year before last—quite a different one. It's for a pound, and if you chaps will oblige me with the pound now, I'll hand it over the minute it comes. Oh, dry up, Bob! Of course you won't be getting your old-age pension by that time! What rot! I wish you'd be serious! Now, which of you fellows is going to hand me a pound? I want a pound—

Wow! Wharrer you punching me for, Smithy, you beast? Pounding a chap like that— You silly duffer, I didn't mean that kind of a pound! When I say a pound, I mean a pound, not a pound—I mean to say a quid. I suppose you think that's funny? For goodness' sake, stop cackling, you fellows, and listen to a chap! Blessed if I can see anything funny— No, I don't want you to lend me a looking-glass.

I'm expecting that postal-order by the very next post, and you fellows might lend me the ten shillings, after all I've done for you.

What have I done? Well, I've always come to tea when you've asked me, and I've never failed you when there was a picnic on, and I've been going to stand a big spread for a long time now. Dash it all, don't be mean—hand out the seven-and-six!

I say, you fellows, don't walk so fast—I get out of breath. I'm a bit short of breath after dinner, through not having enough to

eat. I never get enough. I'm hungry now—famished, in fact. They wouldn't let me have a seventh helping at dinner, and it's nearly an hour ago. I've had nothing since then but three jam-tarts, and one of them stale, and a plum-cake. And I've got to keep out of Jones minor's way all the afternoon; I know he'll make a fuss about that cake. He's mean!

Honest Injun, that's all I've had since dinner, excepting some toffee and bananas and some biscuits and a saveloy. If you fellows will lend me that five bob till my postal-order comes, I can hold out till tea. Otherwise I can't answer for what may happen. You can see I'm growing thin! Oh, don't cackle! You wouldn't like to see me fade away before your eyes, I suppose!

Oh crumbs! Keep round me, you fellows—that's Jones minor coming, and he looks as if he's looking for somebody. I shouldn't wonder if he thinks I had his cake—suspicious cad, you know. You fellows know that I wouldn't do anything of the sort.

Oh, go away, Jones—I don't know anything about your old cake! Most likely it was the cat. Now I come to think of it, I saw the cat coming out of your study half an hour ago, with something in her jaws—it looked to me like a plum-cake. As a matter of fact, I don't believe you had a cake at all. Anyhow, it's no good asking me about it. I haven't been indoors since dinner, so I couldn't have been near your study, could I? If you can't take my word, Jones, this discussion had better cease. I decline to argue with a fellow who can't take my word!

Ow! Help!

I think it's pretty rotten of you fellows to stand there and cackle while an old pal is being kicked. I've a jolly good mind to go after Jones minor, and mop up the ground with him.

No, I'm not going—I decline to soil my hands on him. That kind of fellow should be treated with dignified contempt. I hope he'll be sorry for suspecting me of taking his cake—a miserable two-shilling cake with only half a dozen plums in it, too! It didn't last five minutes.

If there's one thing I can't stand, it's having my word doubted. Of course, you fellows wouldn't feel it so much. You don't look at things the same as I do, and you're not so particular. But for a perfectly

truthful and honourable chap like me, it's very painful. You fellows remember the time I was ill from over-working—no, not over-eating, you dummy!—over-working! It brought on an attack of dumbness, and I felt that I couldn't go in to lessons. How could a fellow do his lessons if he was dumb? Well, I told my Form master plainly that I was dumb; and he refused to believe it! Practically calling a chap a fibber, you know!

But about that postal-order— Don't walk so fast! I think you might shell out a miserable sum like two shillings. It's more than an hour since dinner, and I've had nothing except those few things I've mentioned, and some doughnuts and a cold chicken. And I know there'll be a row about that chicken when the housekeeper misses it. She'll complain to the Head, and he won't believe me when I tell him it was the cat, any more than he would when I told him I was dumb. Sickening, I call it! Just as if a fellow was like Ananias or George Washington, you know!

Did you say you were lending me that eightpence, Wharton? No? Well, I must say I despise you, old chap, if you don't mind my mentioning it. After all I've done for you, too! It makes me feel just like Spokeshave—I mean Shakespeare—puts it: How sharper than a toothless child it is to have a thankless serpent. Oh, don't cackle! No, I haven't got that quotation wrong! You fellows don't know much about Shakespeare. I know all his works, from the Lay of the Last Minstrel to the Elegy in a Country Churchyard.

Now, I'll tell you fellows what I'll do. You cash that postal-order for me, and I'll have the whole crowd of you down to Bunter Court for the holidays. I mean it! Hunting and shooting and fishing, you know, and our splendid old butler, Pilkington, to wait on you. What do you think of that? You've never seen Bunter Court yet— Eh, what do you mean by saying nobody else has, either?

Just think of it, you fellows! You'll meet a lot of my titled relations, and you'll like being waited on by our fine old butler, Jennings. I can tell you fellows, my pater's had offers from members of the peerage for his butler, but he won't part with Pilkington at any price.

So shell out, you chaps, like good pals. Dash it all, the postal-order's only for a bob, and it's coming next post. Don't walk so fast, you beasts! I mean, wait for me, old chappies! I'm out of breath! Oh, you rotters! I say, old fellows, I can't keep up at this rate. I say, you fellows, make it a tanner! Ooooh! Grooooh! Fancy fellows clearing off like that when a chap's talking to them!

Beasts!

ANSWERS

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CHRISTMAS CRACKERS!

HIS MUSIC LESSON!

A tackler in a cotton mill, having saved a bit of money, thought he would like a piano. He bought one, second-hand, from one of his mates at the factory. About a week later the man who had sold the instrument saw the purchaser going down the main street of the town wheeling the piano on a handcart. "Hi, Bill!" he shouted. "Not tired of it already, are you?" "No," replied Bill. "I'm only going for my music lesson."

A TRIFLE RUN DOWN!



The Optimist: "Well, I'm a lucky chap, and no mistake. Fancy, my being run over by an ambulance!"

THE PARTY!

The pleasure steamer was just leaving Shrimpton, when the captain saw a red-faced old gentleman come racing up to the jetty. "Put back—put back!" roared the stout old gentleman. "There's a party between sixty and seventy coming." The captain obeyed. The old gentleman stepped on board and sat down. "Thought I'd missed it," he said. "But where's the party between sixty and seventy?" asked the captain. "I wish they'd hurry." "Oh, that's your mistake!" cried the stout gentleman. "I'm sixty-five. Isn't that being between sixty and seventy? And I am a party, aren't I?" The captain said a lot of things, but the rest of the passengers roared.

NOTHING!

"I say, old man, do you know what nothing is? I've been puzzling my brains over it for weeks past." "Oh, that's simple enough. Nothing is a brinless hat with no crown."

HE WHO LAUGHS LAST—?



YOUR EDITOR CHATS!

IF I could have my way at Christmas I would personally offer all the best and heartiest wishes of the season to my myriads of chums all over the world. I would like to meet you all, to shake each one by the hand, and say just the right thing—just what everybody wants to say to a friend now that Christmas has rolled round again, bringing its message of good cheer.

But we have to let impossibilities go by the board, like the painter when they let him go, pots and all. None the less, the message of the good old MAGNET stands. It has got a long way to go, but it will get there! You know what my wishes are—namely, that this jolly old Christmas with its radiant hopes and its good will shall bring happiness to all my pals all over the world. A Merry Christmas to you all, and a Happy New Year! That's how the code words run. You cannot beat them, for they have the true magic. Christmas is a jumping-off place to the big to-morrow. The future will be greater than anything yet known to us all, to the fellows who are stepping into life, to my older chums who are going through the mill. I know how you all look to the MAGNET for some of the good cheer and the jollity which helps us on. I know, too, you will all rally to the old paper in the new days as never before. You will not be disappointed with the favourite weekly which has stood in through days of storm as well as those of sunshine. Just continue to stand by the MAGNET, and your old friend and chum, the Editor, who sends you greeting once again.

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Your Editor.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 828.

A MARKED MAN!

(Continued from page 25.)

the inspector; "that Mr. Hardacre invited you here to dinner this evening?"

"I do!"

"And yet the butler, who, naturally, would know the routine of the house and the number of expected guests, emphatically declares that his master informed him that he would be dining alone."

"In other words," said Jim Blakeney hotly, "you accuse me of telling you a deliberate lie!"

"How else can you account for it?" said the inspector, with an irritating smile.

"I have a letter in my pocket," continued Blakeney, unabashed, "from Mornington Hardacre that reached me this evening. In it he expressly asks me to attend his table to-night at seven-fifteen sharp. I did so—at least, I arrived to time—and found him—"

"Exactly!" cut in the inspector. "But can you explain how you arrived? The butler has already stated that he didn't admit you by the front door."

"Of course he didn't!" retorted Blakeney impatiently. "For some strange reason, which concerned my meeting his niece, Daphne—who is, or rather was, spending the Christmas holiday with him—Mr. Hardacre desired me to present myself at the time appointed outside the french windows of the library."

"What!" exclaimed Jenkins. "His niece? I've known the master for twenty-five years, but I've never heard him speak of his niece. He hasn't a close relation in the world, except Mr. Ronald Swiveller!"

The inspector smiled a superior sort of smile that was duly repeated by the sergeant.

"May I trouble you to show me that letter, Mr. Blakeney?" said the former. "Your story is certainly peculiar in many instances, but no doubt the letter will decide."

"Certainly!" replied the young man, diving his hand into his breast-pocket. "Here it is. Read it for yourself!"

Without unfolding the sheet of notepaper which contained Mornington Hardacre's invitation, Jim Blakeney carelessly handed it to the inspector. With folded arms, a slight smile upon his handsome features, Jim waited for the apologies of the inspector and his parrot of a sergeant.

But as he gazed at the heavy features of the inspector, and followed the purple tint of annoyance that slowly began to

spread over his granite features, Jim Blakeney's smile vanished.

"What's the matter?"

"Matter!" boomed the inspector, holding open the sheet of paper so that Blakeney could see for himself. "What tomfoolery are you trying to give me—eh? Where's this letter you're talking about?"

As Blakeney's eyes alighted on the sheet of notepaper he almost jumped clear of the floor, for the notepaper was absolutely blank! Not a sign or a word was remaining of the strange epistle that had brought him hot-foot to the Myrtles.

"Good heavens!"

So genuine was the young man's surprise and dismay that the police-officers were impressed for the moment. But not for long did they allow sentiment to interfere with their duty. Murder had been done. The law demanded that somebody should be arrested. And, as far as the evidence showed at present, Jim Blakeney was the man responsible for the crime.

"I—I—I—" babbled Jim Blakeney, snatching up the paper and peering at it until his eyes threatened to leave their sockets. "But it was covered in writing and signed by Mornington Hardacre twenty minutes ago!"

"Maybe," grunted the inspector ponderously. "It's like the rest of your story, Mr. Blakeney. It's too tall! I must place you under arrest for the suspected murder of Mornington Hardacre. Wilkins, phone the station for a cab, and ask Dr. White and Constable Brown to come along!"

It was useless for Blakeney to plead his innocence. The inspector had his duty to perform and his duty was clear. With a hard expression on his heavy features the officer produced a pair of handcuffs and dexterously slipped them over Blakeney's wrists.

(Look out for next Monday's thrilling instalment of this fine serial, boys.)

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