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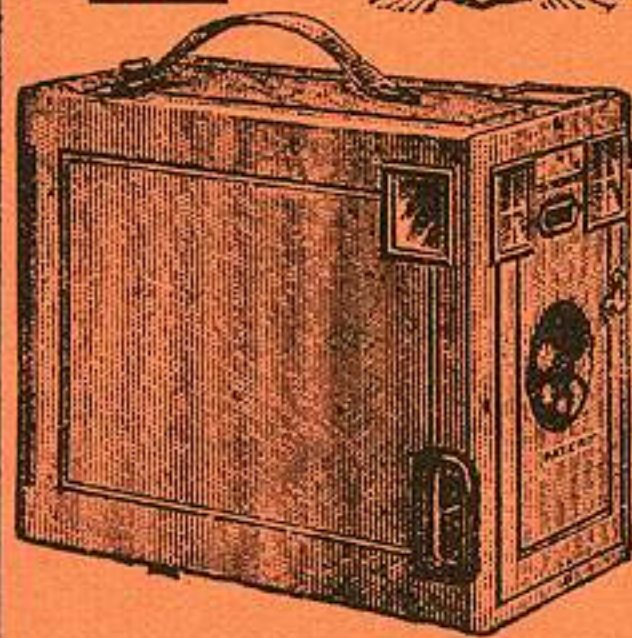
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Linley's Luck

A Splendid Long,
Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton
& Co. at Greyfriars.
— BY —
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Great Expectations.

"TWENTY-FIVE pounds!" said Billy Bunter, rubbing his fat hands with an air of extreme satisfaction. "Twenty-five pounds! It's a lot of money. I wonder what I shall do with it?"

Billy Bunter made the remark in No. 1 Study, in the Remove at Greyfriars. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent stared at him inquiringly.

"Twenty-five pounds!" said Harry.

"Twenty-five pounds!" repeated Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles, and settled a little farther back in the easy-chair, and stretched out his little fat legs.

"Yes," he said. "It's a lot of money, isn't it? I haven't decided yet whether I shall have a motor-cycle or stand a

series of extensive feeds to the Remove. Which would you advise a fellow to do?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I should advise him to get the twenty-five pounds before deciding," he remarked.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "Where are you going to get twenty-five pounds from, you young owl?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"I suppose you're expecting a postal-order," Nugent remarked sarcastically. "Is it to be for twenty-five pounds this time?"

"You see—"

"Perhaps Billy's going to win the Seymour prize," said Wharton, laughing. "That's a money prize for twenty-five pounds, you know, and the award is made to-morrow."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't see why I shouldn't get the prize!"

"I didn't know you'd entered."

"Well, I have; and, as a matter of fact, it's the Seymour prize I'm thinking of," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I was very careful with my paper, and I haven't the slightest doubt that it will pull off the prize—that is, of course, if the adjudicators play the game. I suppose we can rely on them to do the fair thing?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you doubt the honour of the adjudicators, Wharton—"

"I don't, you ass; but I doubt whether you'll get the prize. Why, it's a paper on early Roman history and antiquities, and the Fifth are allowed to enter. What sort of a kind of a chance have you, you young duffer?"

"I've sent in a jolly good paper."

"It will be worth seeing, I should think," grinned Nugent. "I should imagine that the Head will have it framed and hung up in the Form-room, to show people what a chap in the Remove can really do."

"I'm accustomed to jealousy in this study," said Bunter. "I've precious little doubt about getting the prize, if the adjudication is carried out fairly. I know a lot of chaps have entered, but it's brains that a competitor wants in a thing of this kind. I'm rather a dab at Roman history, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The only thing is," said Bunter, glowering wrathfully at the chums of the Remove, "the prize isn't awarded until to-morrow, and I've run short of money. Would either of you fellows care to advance me a pound off the prize?"

"No takers," said Nugent, with a yawn. "You've got about as much chance of pulling off the prize as you have of discovering the North Pole. Why, Blundell, of the Fifth, is in for it, I know, as well as Temple and Fry, of the Upper Fourth, and a dozen chaps in the Remove. There's Linley—"

"Oh, that factory chap!" said Billy, with a disdainful curl of the lip. "I suppose that blessed scholarship fellow hasn't much chance against a gentleman?"

"What gentleman?"

"Me, of course!"

"You've got jolly curious ideas of what a gentleman is like, Billy. You're not even a gentle worm. Mark Linley is worth fifty of you, and he could walk over you in any sort of an exam."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton crossly. "And if you speak of Linley like that again I'll tweak your ear."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up, Billy!"

"But—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully. He was always, as he expressed it, getting sat on in this manner, which was very hard on a fellow in his own study. Bunter attributed it all to personal jealousy.

"Well, to change the subject," he remarked, after a pause, "can you chaps lend me anything off that twenty-five quid?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'm peckish!" said Bunter. "If you would advance a pound, I would stand a feed."

"Shut up!"

"Ten shillings would do."

Harry Wharton rose and took the fat junior by the shoulder. He jerked him out of the armchair, and twisted him round, and propelled him towards the door.

Billy Bunter wriggled in his grasp.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Buzz off!"

"But I—I— Ow!"

Harry Wharton swung him to the door, and opened it, and propelled Billy Bunter into the passage. He propelled him along the passage half-way to the stairs, and sat him down upon the linoleum with a bump.

Bunter gave a terrific gasp like air escaping from a punctured tyre.

"Oo-o-o-ch!"

Harry Wharton grinned, and retreated into his study. Billy Bunter slowly scrambled to his feet, and blinked after him. Bunter was extremely short-sighted, and his big spectacles did not seem to make much difference to it. He saw a form in the passage, and rushed at it wrathfully. He hurled himself upon it, hitting out with both fists.

"There!" he sputtered. "I'll—I'll show you, chucking a fellow out of his own study, you— Oh!"

"Ow!" gasped the unfortunate recipient of Billy Bunter's blows. "Ow! You—you young ass! What do you mean?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

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ONE HALFPENNY.

Bob Cherry grasped the fat junior, and rolled him over on the floor, and bumped him hard on the linoleum.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Stop it! Mind my glasses! If you break them you'll have to pay for them. Ow! I—I—I'm sincerely sorry, I—"

Bump, bump!

"I'm sorry! I—"

"I dare say you are," grinned Bob Cherry. "That will make you sorrier."

Bump!

"Ow!"

Bob Cherry walked on, grinning. Billy Bunter rolled on the linoleum in a state of dust and breathlessness.

"Ow! Beast! Ow! Brute! Ow! Yow!"

"Faith, and I'll get to the end of the passage first, lagorra!" said a cheerful voice on the stairs, as Micky Desmond came up with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Run for it, Inky!"

"The runfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh cheerfully.

"Oh! Ow! Mind— Yaroo!"

"Faith—"

"Oh! Ah!"

Hurree Singh and Micky Desmond crashed into Billy Bunter as they raced along the passage, and both of them came to grass—or, rather, to the linoleum. Micky went down with a terrific bump, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rolled over him.

"Oh, you asses!" groaned Bunter. "You—you've broken my back, and my right leg, and twisted my spinal column."

"Faith, and sure I—"

"I'm dying, I think!" moaned Bunter.

Micky Desmond rose to his feet, his face red and wrathful. Hurree Singh staggered up breathlessly.

"Faith, and phwat were ye rollin' on the flure for, ye omadhaun?" roared Micky.

"I'm expiring!"

"Then a kick or two won't do much damage, if ye're expirin', anyway," said Micky; and he began to use his boot on Bunter's fat person.

"Oh! Ow! Ah!"

Kick, kick!

Billy Bunter scrambled to his feet with remarkable agility for a person who was dying. He bolted down the passage, with the wrathful Micky after him, booting him along. Down the stairs went Billy Bunter at top speed, and Micky stopped breathlessly, and shook his fist after him.

"Sure, and I've saved his life, if he was dyin'!" remarked Micky. "He's lively enough now. Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha-ha-ha-fulness is terrific!"

Bunter crawled into the junior common-room, and collapsed into a chair, grunting.

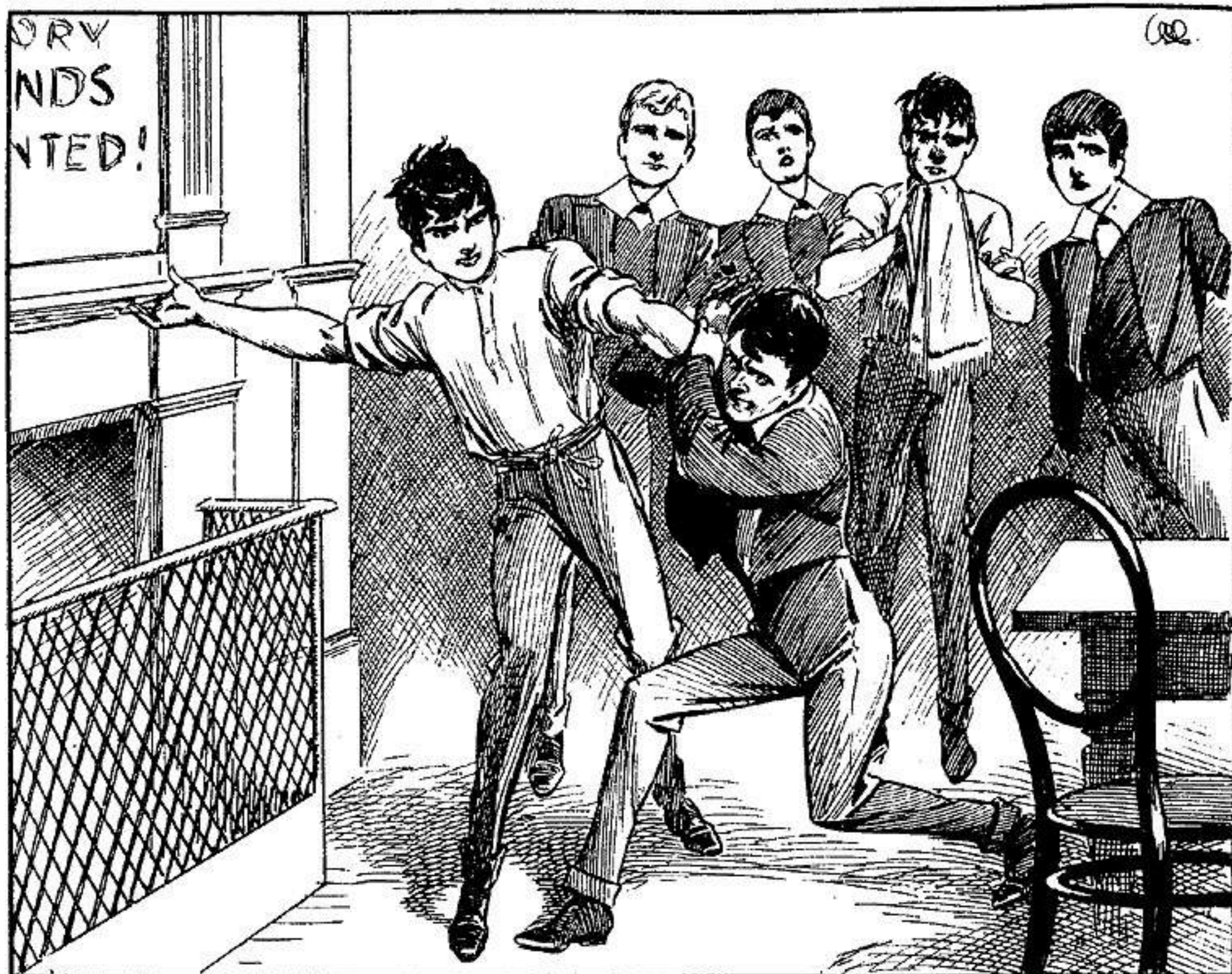
THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Buistrode's Idea.

THERE was a buzz of talk in the junior common-room at Greyfriars. That room was shared by all the Forms below the Fifth, and it was sometimes crowded. As the Remove, or Lower Fourth, was generally on war-like terms with the Upper Fourth, the junior room was sometimes the scene of exciting arguments. There was excitement in the room now, but it was not due to a Form row this time. The juniors were discussing a matter of keen interest to the Lower School.

Greyfriars was an old foundation, and at various times Old Boys had founded scholarships and prizes, and there were really a great many plums to be picked up by Greyfriars fellows, who were of a studious turn of mind. One of the biggest prizes was the Bishop Mowbray Scholarship, which was competed for outside the school, and which allowed the lucky winner to enter Greyfriars free of fees for a term of years. That scholarship was now in the possession of Mark Linley, a Lancashire lad who had spent his early days working in a factory, and had won the scholarship by sheer grit and perseverance. One of the next valued prizes, and one that could only be competed for by the Fifth and the Lower Forms, was the Seymour money prize. It was a sum of twenty-five pounds for a paper on Roman history, and a sum of ready money was extremely attractive to the juniors. Twenty-five pounds, as Billy Bunter had said, was a lot of money, and a fellow could do a great many things with it. There were very many entries for the Seymour prize, and at least a dozen fellows considered that they had a good chance of carrying it off.

Billy Bunter was the most certain of all. Bunter had a faith in his own powers that was not at all proportioned to his abilities. Buistrode, of the Remove, was supposed to have a good chance, and so were Nugent and Wharton and Skinner and Ogilvy. Mark Linley had entered, too,



"You are a miserable coward!" cried Harry Wharton. "Linley is worth fifty of you. You wouldn't have dared to chalk that up if he had been here, so now clean it off!"

but somehow no one seemed to think very much about that. The Lancashire lad was so quiet about himself and his doings that many did not even know he had entered.

They discussed what they would do if they gained the twenty-five pounds, and that sum of money was spent a dozen times in anticipation by all of them. It was Bulstrode who first thought of the "Co." idea.

"We can't all get the blessed quids," Bulstrode remarked, as he stood before the fire in the common-room, with his hands in his pockets. "There are about nine fellows in the Remove who have gone in for the prize, and I suppose eight of them will be disappointed."

"Well, that's a simple sum in arithmetic," Ogilvy remarked. "Take one from nine—how many are left? Eight! Right! Bulstrode, go up one."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Bulstrode. "Now, my idea is that the nine chaps should go Co."

"Co.!" said half a dozen voices.

"Exactly! Go shares, you know; sign an agreement all round, and the chap who gets the prize is to divide up fairly with the others. Of course, he keeps the honour and glory for himself, and divides up the tin."

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze," said Skinner thoughtfully. "That would make a dead cert of over two pound ten each, if the prize is won by the Remove at all."

"That's so. If it goes to a Fifth chap, we're out of it, anyway. If it comes to the Remove, every fellow takes his whack. See?"

"Good!"

"And it's jolly decent of you, Bulstrode," said Lacy. "You've got a better chance than most of us."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"Well, I suppose Wharton has the best chance of the lot," said Ogilvy. "He's keenest on that sort of thing."

Then I should say that Nugent and Bulstrode are about equal for chances."

"Anyway, it's fair all round," said Bulstrode. "A prize of this sort is often carried off by a chap one would never expect to win it."

"Faith, and ye're right."

"The rightfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I have sent in an esteemed paper on the earliful history of the esteemed and honourable Romans, who, as your poet Shakespeare remarks, were all honourable men. I hope to carry off the august prize."

"Well, we all hope to, I suppose," remarked Morgan. "But I'm willing to go even whacks, if you other fellows are."

"Put it to the vote!"

"Right-ho!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Yes, but I say—"

"Shut up!" roared Bulstrode. "Can't you see we're busy? Now, how many of you chaps are in for the Seymour?"

"Skinner, Ogilvy, Desmond, Inky, yourself, and I," said Lacy.

"Then there's Wharton, Nugent—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!"

"But I'm in this," protested Billy Bunter wrathfully. "I've entered for the Seymour, and sent in my paper on blessed Roman history."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle about. I'm willing to come into the Co., and pool my share with you."

"Rats!" said Bulstrode. "You've got no chance, and you're not coming in. Your entering for the Seymour was a joke."

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

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A Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS

"It wasn't; I—"

"Well, you're not in the Co.," said Bulstrode. "We're not going to work hard for a fortnight, to share our prize with a lazy slacker who never does any work at all."

"Oh, really—"

"Kick him out!"

"I—I—I say—ow!"

Bunter finished his remarks in a horizontal attitude in the passage.

"Now, there's seven here," said Bulstrode, "or eight. You're in it, Morgan. Wharton and Nugent will make ten. If you fellows are all agreed, we'll go up to No. 1 and see what Wharton says."

"Agreed!"

"Come on, then!"

And the Removites who were in the running for the Seymour prize trooped up to No. 1 Study, and Bulstrode kicked open the door and led the way in.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Linley Declines.

HARRY WHARTON turned round quickly as the door of his study was kicked open.

The captain of the Remove was not on the best of terms with Bulstrode, the bully of the Form; and Bulstrode's sudden entrance, with a crowd at his back, made Harry think for a moment that the visit was a "rag."

He faced the incoming juniors quickly; and Frank Nugent reached for a cricket-bat on the table, which he had just been oiling.

Bulstrode grinned as he noted the instinctive preparations for him.

"It's all right," he said. "We're only coming on bizney."

"The all rightfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur; and Harry was reassured at once as he caught sight of the dusky face of his Indian chum in the crowd.

"Good!" said Wharton. "Come in!"

And the Removites came in.

"We've got an idea," said Bulstrode.

"Only one?" asked Nugent sweetly. "That's not much to go round among so many."

"Oh, rats! Look here," said Bulstrode irritably, as some of his followers indulged in a chuckle at Nugent's remark. "Don't be funny. We've got an idea. We're all in for the Seymour prize, and the result will be declared to-morrow."

"We're aware of that."

"We're all willing to go Co., and share the prize if any chap in the Remove wins it," explained Bulstrode. "We thought you fellows would like to come in too."

Wharton and Nugent hesitated.

As a matter of fact, they were well known to have an excellent chance, and were generally expected to head the list.

In joining the Co., they would be giving up more than the others. Still, Bulstrode was giving up more than Lacy and the rest.

Wharton did not like the idea. But he was captain of the Remove, and he hated anything that looked like meanness or want of a sportsman spirit.

"What do you say, Frank?" he asked, glancing at his chum.

Nugent nodded.

"I'm willing if you are."

"Right-ho! I'll come into the Co.," said Wharton. "Of course, if the prize doesn't come to the Remove, it all goes for nothing. Blundell and Bland of the Fifth wouldn't come into it, and it's no good asking the Upper Fourth chaps, either."

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ONE
HALFPENNY.

Bulstrode shook his head.

"Not a bit. Besides, we don't want so many in the Co.; the prize wouldn't come to much among more of us. There's ten already; that will be just under thirty bob each, if the prize gets into this Form at all. I think it will."

"Good!"

"But what about Linley?" asked Skinner suddenly.

Bulstrode stared at him.

"Linley, what's the matter with Linley?"

"He's in for the prize."

"Linley! Sure?"

"Yes—well, I heard somebody say so."

"Oh, stuff!" said Bulstrode. "That blessed factory chap wouldn't have the cheek to go in for the Seymour. Besides, what would he do with twenty-five quid if he won it? It's more money than his whole family have ever had since they were brought up in the workhouse, I expect."

Some of the juniors laughed, but all did not. Harry Wharton frowned darkly.

"That's a caddish thing to say, Bulstrode!" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, don't you begin preaching, Wharton. Anyway, the question is, whether Linley is in for the Seymour, and whether we let him into the Co."

"Better let him in," said Ogilvy. "You see, he's a jolly clever chap, and as a matter of fact, he's more likely to rope in the prize than most of us."

"Blessed if I like the idea of letting a factory-hand into any Co. I'm in," said the bully of the Remove, with a spiteful glance at Wharton.

"You'd better put it like that to Linley, and there won't be much chance of his coming in," remarked Nugent.

"Better do the sensible thing," urged Skinner. "Linley's got a good chance."

"But is it certain he's in?"

"Yes," said Harry. "I know he is."

Bulstrode grunted discontentedly.

"Greedy cad, then, that's what I say. He's got the Bishop Mowbray Scholarship already, and he might have let the Seymour alone for some other chap."

"Hear, hear!"

"Rot! He had as much right to enter as anybody," said Wharton.

"Well, I dare say he needs the money, or his people do," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "Still, as he's in it, I suppose we'd better take him into the Co."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Anybody know where he is?"

"Let's look in his study."

"You coming, Wharton?"

Wharton hesitated. He disliked being associated with Bulstrode in anything. The bully of the Remove had a very unpleasant way of doing things, especially in his dealings with Mark Linley. At times Bulstrode was decent enough, even to Linley; but whenever he was crossed or provoked, the old gibe about the factory-lad was sure to come out.

But Wharton could not very well retreat now. He had joined the "Co.," and he felt, too, that he could put it to Linley a little more civilly and agreeably than Bulstrode.

"Very well," he said. "I'll come."

The juniors crowded into the passage. Bob Cherry was coming along, and he stopped to look at them. Bob Cherry, once an occupant of No. 1 Study with Wharton, was now a dweller in No. 13, with Mark Linley and little Wun Lung, the Chinese. Bob was not entered for the Seymour prize; he would have gone into any football, hockey, or gymnastic competition, but early Roman history was a bugbear to him. Bob didn't care in the least whether Romulus founded Rome, or whether Rome founded Romulus.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "Is this a reception, or a tea-fight, or what? Been having a feed without asking an old chum, Harry?"

Harry laughed.

"No. We're going shares in the Seymour prize—if we get it. We want to speak to Linley about it. Do you know where he is?"

"I left him in No. 13 a few minutes ago—grinding Greek."

Bulstrode sniffed.

"Let's get there," he said.

The juniors were soon at the door of the end study in the Remove passage. Bulstrode opened it without the ceremony of knocking. Mark Linley was sitting at the table busily at work. He was at Greek. Greek was not a subject in the Remove, but Mark had taken it up "on his own," so to speak, and he spent a great deal of time over Xenophon and Liddell and Scott, which the other juniors spent in amusement or idleness. The Lancashire lad glanced up as the juniors came in.

"Do you want me?"

"Yes, if we're not interrupting the Greek," said Bulstrode sarcastically.

"That's all right. I can stop."

"Good! I hear that you're in for the Seymour prize."

"Yes."

"You think you are going to get it, I suppose?"

"I hope so," said Mark quietly.

"Not satisfied with the Mowbray," said Skinner. "Blessed if you're not on the make, and no mistake."

Mark coloured.

"I suppose I have as much right to enter as anyone," he said. "I need the prize more than you fellows do, too."

Bulstrode laughed rudely.

"Yes, that's the truth, I've no doubt."

"There are fellows here who have won more than two prizes," went on Mark. "Blundell of the Fifth won the Nobel and the Dowell, and he's entered for this prize, too."

"Just so," said Harry Wharton. "I've won another prize, too, and entered for this. Bulstrode is talking out of his hat."

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode. "Well, look here, Linley! We've formed a Co. to share the prize if it comes to the Remove. You understand? All the entrants go Co., and take an equal whack if the Seymour comes to the Form at all."

Mark Linley nodded, with a slightly troubled look on his clear, intelligent face.

"I understand."

"Are you willing to join?"

The Lancashire lad was silent.

"You get the same chance as we do," said Bulstrode. "It's fair all round. If the prize comes into our Form at all we get about thirty bob each. I suppose you haven't a better chance than another, so you don't risk more."

"No, but—"

"Don't you think the idea's a good one?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"Then you join?"

Mark Linley hesitated for a moment—but only for a moment. Then he answered quietly and firmly:

"No!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Outsider.

THERE was a moment of silence in No. 13 Study. Mark's face was very troubled, but very determined. He evidently meant what he said.

Some of the juniors looked at one another sneeringly. Harry Wharton dropped his eyes. He was feeling very uncomfortable. He knew that Linley was a "sportsman," as a rule, and he had always stood up for him. He was disappointed now.

Bulstrode was the first to speak.

"You won't come into the Co.?" he said.

Linley shook his head.

"Why not?"

The Lancashire lad was silent. He did not seem to know quite what to say. Bulstrode's brow grew dark.

"So you want to stand out?" he said. "You want to keep your chance all to yourself, and you won't go Co. with the rest of us. And you're the chap who's growled about not being treated as one of ourselves—the chap who wasn't satisfied with being an outsider."

"Jolly rank outsider, I say!" said Skinner.

"Yes, rather!"

"I suppose you think you've got a better chance than most of us," went on Bulstrode, in his sneering tone. "You think the Seymour is pretty certain to come to you, and you want to keep it."

"No. I don't think I have a better chance than Wharton or Nugent—I think I have less than Wharton, as a matter of fact."

"Then you'd be a gainer by going Co."

"Yes, but—"

"But you're a greedy cad, and you don't want to risk having to share out the money!" said Bulstrode scornfully.

Mark flushed crimson.

"It's not that," he exclaimed. "I—I—"

He broke off.

"Well?" said Bulstrode.

"I've nothing more to say."

"Oh, leave him alone," said Skinner. "He's on the make. I jolly well hope he won't get the Seymour!"

"Same here!"

"I don't see letting him alone," growled Bulstrode. "If he won't come into the Co. he ought to be made to."

"That's rot!" said Wharton quickly. "He's his own master. He can do exactly as he likes in the matter, and he has a right to."

"And you think it's decent of him to keep out of the Co.?"

Wharton was silent. Linley looked at him quickly.

"Do you think I ought to join, Wharton?" he asked.

Harry shifted uncomfortably.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

EVERY
TUESDAY.

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ONE
PENNY.

"I think you ought to do as you like," he replied. "It's a matter for you to settle in your own mind."

"I've got my reasons," said Mark awkwardly. "If—if matters were different I'd be only too willing. But—but under the circumstances—"

"What circumstances?" said Bulstrode.

"There's no need to go into it. But I can't join the Co. I'm sorry, if you wanted me to. Very likely I sha'n't win the prize, anyway."

"You jolly well feel certain about it, or you'd join the Co.," said Bulstrode.

"Nothing of the sort."

"Then why are you keeping out?"

Linley was silent.

"Oh, come away!" exclaimed Lacy. "It's no good talking to him. He's got about as much of the sportsman in him as Gosling the porter has. Come away!"

"Well, I suppose you're right."

Harry Wharton did not speak. He was disappointed. He had not wanted to join the Co. himself, but he had come into it for the sake of "playing the game." He knew that Mark had made his position in the Form much worse by keeping out. And if he really did win the Seymour prize he was certain to be extremely unpopular.

But Wharton felt that it was no business of his. Linley knew best how to manage his own affairs.

Bob Cherry remained in the study after the Co. were gone. Bob was Linley's chum, but he was as disappointed as the rest. He felt that the Lancashire lad had not acted up to his usual level, so to speak.

Mark looked at him uneasily.

"What are you thinking of, Bob?" he asked, as he noted the pucker in Bob's brow. Bob was staring into the fire.

He started uneasily at Linley's question.

"Nothing," he said.

"Yes, you are," said Mark, with a faint smile. "You're thinking that you'd rather I went into the Co. with the other fellows."

Bob coloured.

He stared at the fire without replying for a full minute more, while Mark watched him in silence. Then suddenly he turned round and fixed his eyes on Linley.

"Well, why didn't you enter the Co.?" he exclaimed. "The fellows expected it."

"I couldn't."

"You're your own master, I suppose?"

"In a way, yes."

"The money-prize is paid to the winner, and it's his own," said Bob. "He can do as he likes with it."

"Yes, but—"

"Of course, if you think you have a better chance than the other chaps it would be giving up a lot, but it's the same with Wharton. He had the best chance of the lot, and he's gone into the Co."

"You don't understand," said Mark. "It's not that. I don't think I have as good a chance as Wharton. But if I do win I want all the prize. Don't you understand, Bob? You know where I came from—you know my people are poor. Do you think I can afford to do a thing like this as the other fellows can? Can't you see that my people know I'm in for the prize, and if I win it— Don't you see?"

Bob nodded.

"I see," he said slowly. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, the money's booked in advance in case you win it?"

"Well, something of the sort," said Mark quietly. "There's no need to explain exactly how it is, but—but if I win the Seymour I want every shilling of it. If I don't win it—"

He broke off; his face was so pale that Bob stared at him in alarm.

"What's the matter, Marky?"

"Nothing. I must win it—I shall! I put my best work into the paper, though Heaven knows I wasn't much in a fit state for work when I did it!" said Mark in a faltering voice. "I hope I shall win it."

Bob looked at him closely.

"Is there anything the matter, Linley?" he asked. "For the last week or two I've noticed that you've not been looking quite yourself. I put it down to lag over the exam."

"Oh, I'm all right!"

And Mark Linley turned to his work again. That was one thing he could always do—when he was troubled he could find relief in hard work. He could bury himself in it, and drive away troubling thoughts, though but to return, perhaps, when the work was done.

Bob Cherry glanced at him, and quitted the study. Bob was worried, but he understood Mark's position a little better now.

When he was gone Mark looked up from his work. He sat

for some minutes in troubled thought, and then drew a letter from his pocket. It was written in a crude, uneducated hand, on common paper, but that hand was very dear to Mark Linley. The letter was from his father.

"Mabel is just the same—no better and no worse. We are hoping for the best."

That was the line that Mark read a dozen times. The face of his young sister rose before him as he read.

A sigh left his lips. He thrust the letter into his pocket, and turned to his work again. And then for hours he sat there at work, hardly shifting his position, his brain concentrated upon his labour, and his thoughts not allowed to wander to other matters, strive as they would.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Tough Encounter.

"WHO did that?"

It was Harry Wharton who uttered the question, in a tone of ringing anger.

He had just come into the common-room, and an inscription chalked in big letters on the looking-glass over the mantelpiece caught his eye at once.

The inscription was large enough for all to run and read, and it was very much to the point.

"NO FACTORY HANDS WANTED!"

Wharton's eyes blazed with anger.

There were a crowd of Removites in the room, and some of them were laughing, evidently over the notice on the looking-glass.

Harry's eyes flashed round upon them.

"Who did that?"

"Find out!" said Bulstrode.

"I'm going to! Who did it?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Was it you?"

Wharton stood directly before Bulstrode, his eyes blazing. The bully of the Remove faced him with his hands in his pockets and a sneer on his face.

"It might have been," he said. "As a matter of fact, it wasn't. But I would have done it if I had thought of it."

"Cad!"

"Same to you!" said Bulstrode lazily. "I really think, Wharton, that even you might give up the factory chap now. I think he can't prove more clearly than he has done that he is such a rank outsider."

"Hardly!" remarked Snoop.

Wharton turned towards Snoop. The cad of the Remove shrank a little before his glance. Harry's hand fell heavily upon his shoulder.

"Did you chalk that on the glass, Snoop?"

"I—I—"

"Did you?"

"Mind your own business!" said Snoop savagely. "Bulstrode won't let you bully me, either! I'm going to do as I like, I suppose?"

"Then you did it?"

"Suppose I did?"

"You'll undo it, that's all!" said Wharton grimly. "Take out your handkerchief and wipe that caddish rot off the glass—at once!"

"I won't—I—"

"You will, or you'll put up your fists!"

"Bulstrode!"

The bully of the Remove swaggered forward.

"Let him alone, Wharton."

"Do you stand up for him?"

"Yes."

"Very well," said Harry, pushing back his cuffs, "we'll settle that, if you like, and then I'll make Snoop clean down the glass."

"I'm ready."

"Then come on."

More than once before Wharton and Bulstrode had come to blows. They had been enemies from the beginning. But matters had generally ended in Harry's favour. Bulstrode, however, had plenty of dogged pluck, and the knowledge that he had the moral support of many of the Form made him more resolute now.

Feeling was certainly with Bulstrode in the common-room. Wharton was captain of the Form, but many of the fellows had considered that he carried matters with too high a hand.

His determination to be friendly with the Lancashire lad had caused trouble, too. Now Mark Linley had made himself as unpopular as he had even been in his first days at Greyfriars. Wharton's championship of him caused dark looks among the juniors.

Harry cared little for dark looks. He was, perhaps, too little given to considering the opinions of others. But in this case he felt that he was right.

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Bulstrode came on in a fierce attack, and Wharton met him grimly.

He was angry, but his anger did not interfere with his coolness or his judgment. It simply gave an extra energy to his blows.

Bulstrode's hands were swept up, and Wharton's fist came home on his chin, and the Remove bully dropped to the floor as if he had been shot.

The crash of his fall made the floor ring again.

"Oh!" gasped Bulstrode.

He sat up dazedly, nursing his chin, and blinked at Wharton. The captain of the Remove stood quietly, his chest heaving a little, waiting for the burly junior to rise.

Skinner helped Bulstrode to his feet.

"Go it, old chap!" he said.

Bulstrode's eyes were burning. The heavy blow had shaken him up. But he was savagely determined to keep on.

Snoop quietly slid towards the door. Frank Nugent stepped into his path, and the sneak of the Remove stopped.

"Get back!" said Nugent quietly.

"I want to pass—"

"Get back!"

Snoop looked at him, and obeyed.

"You'll stay here till it's over," said Nugent cheerfully. "You're on in this act, you know, though it isn't your cue yet."

"Look here—"

"Shut up!"

Snoop shut up. Fellows were pouring into the common-room now, and crowding round Wharton and Bulstrode. The news of a fight had spread as if by magic.

The combatants were already at it again, hammer and tongs.

Bulstrode was fighting desperately, and his huge and heavy fists had come home several times upon Wharton's face. Dark bruises were showing on Harry's skin, and his lip was cut and streaming red.

But Bulstrode received more than he gave. In a few minutes his right eye was closed, and his nose was swelling as if it intended to double in size.

But he kept doggedly on.

"Go it, Bulstrode!"

Wharton smiled bitterly. The cries of encouragement to the Remove bully came from all sides, and hardly a voice was calling to him. But that, if it influenced him at all, only made him the more determined to lick the bully of the Remove.

Crash!

Bulstrode went down again with a crash that shook the solid floor.

This time he did not rise.

Skinner and Lacy helped him up to a sitting posture, and he blinked dazedly round him. His eyes gleamed at Harry Wharton.

"I'm done," he said thickly.

Wharton nodded.

"I didn't want to begin," he said, "and I'm glad to finish. Now, Snoop."

"Look here—" began Snoop.

Wharton's hand grasped his shoulder. He was marched towards the grate.

"Now take out your handkerchief, and clean down the glass," said Wharton quietly.

"I won't!"

"You had better."

Snoop looked round for support. There were glances of sympathy for him, but no one seemed inclined to take up his cause, after the lesson Bulstrode had received.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"You are a miserable cad," said Harry. "Linley is worth fifty of you. You wouldn't have dared to chalk that up if he had been here. Clean it off the glass, or else put your fists up!"

Snoop slowly took out his handkerchief. He was quite as big as Wharton, in fact, a little taller as far as that went. But he would as soon have tackled a tiger in the jungle as the Remove captain when he was in an angry mood.

"Oh, all right!" he grunted. "It—it was only a joke."

"You'd better not make any more jokes like that, Snoop. It won't be good for you."

Snoop wetted his handkerchief and rubbed at the glass. Plenty of chalk had been used in putting up the inscription, and the glass was not overclean. Snoop's handkerchief was not in an enviable state when he had finished.

"That will do," said Wharton. "I advise you to keep off the glass in future, Snoop."

Snoop grunted. Harry Wharton turned away, and met Mark Linley face to face. The Lancashire lad had just come into the junior common-room, and his expression showed that he had read the inscription on the glass before Snoop had cleaned it off.

"Thank you, Wharton," he said quietly. Harry nodded. The other fellows, in a very pointed manner, strolled off and left the two of them standing quite alone.

"Look here, Linley," said Harry abruptly, "I don't want to interfere in your affairs—you know I'm not in the habit of meddling. But why don't you join the Co. over the Seymour prize? The fellows expect it of you."

"I can't!"

"I suppose you know your own business best, and I don't want to urge you," said Harry. "But it's not considered sportsmanlike to keep out. It looks as if you're unwilling to take a chance with the rest, or to be chummy. All the other fellows in the Remove have gone Co., and the fellows don't like your standing out."

"I know, and I'm sorry; but it's impossible."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Harry uncomfortably. "I thought I'd tell you what I was thinking about the matter, that's all. Of course, it's not my business."

"I hope you won't think badly of me. I know the chaps look on it as unsportsmanlike. But—" Linley hesitated. "I need the money, Wharton. If I win the prize, I want it. I'm not like the rest of you—I can't afford to share it out. And I need it for a special thing, you understand—something very special."

"Oh, all serene! I suppose you know best, but it's unfortunate."

Mark Linley glanced after Wharton as he walked away. But he did not speak, and he was very silent for the rest of that evening. To the muttered words intended for his ear, and the endless innuendoes among the Removites, he paid no heed—even if he heard them. He had other food for thought.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Winner.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I want to give you a last chance for the prize," said Billy Bunter, glowering at the chums of the Remove through his big spectacles. "Of course, I expect ingratitude. A fellow never tries to do other fellows a kindness without getting misunderstood."

It was the day after the scene in the common-room. The result of the Seymour competition was to be announced that afternoon, and all the fellows were very keen about it. Billy Bunter was as keen as any, though the idea of his winning the prize made the other fellows smile.

Morning school was over, and as it was Wednesday, and a half-holiday, work was ended for the day, except for the preparation in the evening. Harry Wharton & Co. were standing outside the schoolhouse waiting for the summons into the hall, where the announcement was to be made. At two o'clock the school were to be assembled for the purpose—or, rather, the Forms which were concerned in the matter. The Sixth had nothing to do with it. Billy Bunter came blinking out of the House in search of Harry Wharton, and, having found him, he proceeded to make his generous offers.

"You see, I'm pretty certain to get the prize," explained Bunter. "With my abilities, I don't see that there can be much doubt on the subject. If the adjudication is fair, the prize will come to me. It's absurd to suppose the adjudicators will favour anybody."

"Quite absurd," agreed Nugent.

"Then you admit I'm most likely to get the prize."

"Rats!"

"It's practically a certainty."

"And you want to share it out?" said Bob Cherry sarcastically. "How kind and generous of you, Bunter!"

"Well, the fact is, I mean to be generous," said Bunter. "I want to treat you fellows well. You have sometimes lent me small sums—once or twice—"

"Once or twice! Great Scott!"

"I want to do the decent thing by you," said Bunter. "I think I'm doing it in letting you into my chance for the prize. Now, am I to come into the Co., or not, Wharton?"

"Not!"

"Don't be beastly mean. Even if you think I haven't much chance of pulling off the prize, you might as well let a chap into the Co."

"I would, but the others wouldn't; and it goes by the majority."

"Oh, really, Wharton, as captain of the Form—"

"Do ring off, Billy!"

"Oh, very well!" exclaimed Bunter. "Mind, if I get the prize, I sha'n't share it with you if you don't let me into the Co. You can't expect it."

"We won't expect it," said Harry, laughing.

"I'm sincerely sorry to see you chaps so mean and selfish by the way, I hear that Linley isn't in the Co.?"

"No, he isn't."

"Good. I'll speak to him."

Mark Linley had just come out of the House. Billy

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Bunter rolled off towards him, and stopped him by pulling at his sleeve. The sturdy Lancashire lad looked down at the fat junior.

"I say, Linley, I want to propose something to you. You know I've always had a high opinion of you," said Bunter.

"What is it?"

"I should really have chummed with you," went on Bunter, in his tactful and delicate way, "but my society is so much sought after, you know, that I really haven't had time. I quite intended to take you up, though you are only a factory chap. There's nothing snobbish about me. My belief is that a true gentleman can do anything, and speak to anybody he likes, without danger of being misunderstood. Don't you think so?"

"Have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes, rather. I hear that you have entered for the Seymour. So have I. Now, those cads won't let either of us into the Co., so I thought we might pool our chances—form a Co. of two, you know. I'm willing to if you are. If either of us gets the prize, we halve it. What do you say?"

Mark could not help smiling. The idea of the greatest dunce and duffer in the Remove competing for the prize at all was amusing.

"No," he said.

"Oh, really, Linley—"

"I am not sharing with anybody. Certainly not with you."

Bunter blinked at the Lancashire lad through his spectacles, almost speechless with indignation. Linley jerked his arm free, and walked away.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Bunter. "Of all the cheek! A blessed coal-miner, or factory loomer, or shuttler, or whatever he is—fancy his refusing! It serves me right. A gentleman ought to know better than to take any notice of the lower classes. It gives them swelled heads."

And Bunter drifted away discontentedly. The summons into the hall came a few minutes later. The juniors poured in with suppressed excitement. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, gave the Remove a superior smile as they marched in. They did not think it likely that the Seymour prize would go to the Lower Fourth. The Fifth-Formers were of exactly the same opinion as regard the Upper Fourth. Blundell and Bland and their friends were certain the prize was coming to the Fifth.

The Forms assembled in their places. A good many of the Sixth had come in, too, to hear the announcement made.

The Head appeared on the dais, and raised his hand for silence. The buzz of talk in the hall died away.

The juniors listened breathlessly.

Twenty-five pounds was to be awarded during the next few minutes to one of them, and each competitor hoped that it would be himself. But all agreed in hoping that whoever the winner was, it would not be Mark Linley—or almost all. Even Harry Wharton was inclined to hope that Mark would not win—for Mark's own sake. For his winning the prize, and keeping it all to himself, would be the last blow to his chance of ever setting himself right in the eyes of the Form.

Mark Linley was standing with the Remove, silent and pale. Harry Wharton glanced at him, and started as he read the tense anxiety in his face.

Linley, though poor, and always careful with his money—the little he had—had never shown any signs of meanness or stinginess. His keenness to win the money prize was a surprise to Harry. Doubtless he needed the money, but—

The Head was speaking.

"You know why you have been called together. It is to hear the result of the competition for the Seymour prize. That prize, founded by an Old Boy of Greyfriars, is awarded once a year to the boy in the Fifth Form or below, who sends in the best paper on Roman history and antiquities. I am happy to say that a larger number than usual have competed for the prize, and that a large proportion of the papers sent in are very creditable—very creditable, indeed."

The Head paused.

The juniors knew that there was bound to be a preamble before the announcement was made, but they wished the Head would "buck up," and come to the point.

Dr. Locke cleared his throat, and went on.

"In all, thirty papers have been sent in. Of these, six are excellent. Two of them are so good that I have had to consider very carefully which to award the prize. These two belong to boys in the Remove."

There was a suppressed cheer from the Remove.

The Fifth-Formers and the Upper Fourth fellows looked at one another in great surprise.

"My only hat!" murmured Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

The Remove trembled with eagerness. Whoever had won the prize, if he were in the Co., there was a share for every competitor, and a feed, at least, for every chap there.

"Silence, please!"

The buzz died away.

"These papers belong to Mark Linley and Harry Wharton," went on Dr. Locke quietly. "and, as I have said, I have had to consider very carefully between them. I have finally decided to award the prize to Mark Linley——"

A deep groan from the Remove interrupted the Head.

Dr. Locke's face flushed with anger.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "How dare you interrupt me."

There was silence instantly. Mark Linley stood with pale face and beating heart. His eyes were glowing.

"I have decided to award the prize to Mark Linley," went on the Head, with a severe glance towards the Remove. "But as Wharton's paper is so good, and so very nearly equal to Linley's, I shall add a second prize of five pounds, which I shall award to Wharton."

"Hurray!"

It was a loud and spontaneous cheer from the Remove at that.

Dr. Locke's face relaxed. He allowed the juniors to have their cheer out, and then he resumed.

"I am glad to see that Wharton's success is popular with his Form-fellows. It is a proof that hard study is not incompatible with hard play in the football-field, and in gymnastics generally."

"Good old Wharton!"

"Hurray!"

"But I am sorry," went on the Head, his voice growing deeper, "to see that the still more creditable success of Mark Linley does not evoke the same enthusiasm. Linley has won the first prize. He has laboured under many disadvantages not felt by the other competitors, and yet he has succeeded. Every honour is due to Mark Linley. I trust that his Form, composed of manly British boys, will recognise his merit, and that no taint of snobbery will prevent them from congratulating him as he deserves."

It was unusual plain speaking for the Head. Some of the Removites looked very uncomfortable, but they shut their lips hard.

"I should be very pleased," said the Head, "to hear a cheer for Linley, as for Wharton."

"Hurray!"

Half-a-dozen voices gave that shout. Harry Wharton and his special friends cheering with all their might; but the others shut their lips.

"Linley and Wharton, please step forward!" said the Head.

"If you please, sir——" squeaked a voice.

"Silence, Bunter!"

"But—but I think there's some mistake, sir!"

"What?"

"Yes, sir, I——"

"Stand forward, Bunter!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nothing for Bunter.

BILLY BUNTER came forward. The fat junior was looking a little uneasy, but at the same time determined. He meant to have justice done.

Dr. Locke fixed a severe glance upon him.

"Now, Bunter, what do you mean by stating that there may have been a mistake?" he exclaimed.

"You—you see, sir, I think you said that—that Linley takes the first prize, sir, and Wharton the second!" stammered Bunter.

"That is the case."

"Then I think you must have overlooked a paper, sir."

"What?"

"I—I was entered for the Seymour, sir. I——"

There was a giggle in the Remove, immediately suppressed, as the Head's glance turned in that direction.

"Bunter, I am aware that you were entered for the Seymour prize," said Dr. Locke sternly. "The competition was open to all, so I could not forbid you to enter; but I certainly disapproved of your doing so. You are utterly incapable of sending in a respectable paper on such a subject—if, indeed, on any."

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Among the papers sent in," resumed the Head, "there is one that would reflect discredit on a boy in the Second Form. It is a mass of mistakes, incorrect grammar, and slovenliness. That paper bears your name."

"Oh, sir!"

"If it had not borne your name, Bunter, I should have supposed it to be an impudent joke," said Dr. Locke. "But as it did bear your name, I knew that it was the work of the most careless and slovenly boy in the Remove. You may go back to your place."

Billy Bunter went back. Even the Owl of the Remove was crushed at last. The Head's opinion of his historical paper

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left no doubt on the point that he had not really been overlooked, but had really lost the exam.

A general grin from the Removites greeted him as he wriggled back, but Bunter hardly noticed it. He was thinking of the twenty-five pounds, and of the endless feeds he had already enjoyed in anticipation.

"Wharton and Linley!"

The two winners came forward.

"I congratulate you both," said Dr. Locke. "Your papers would be a credit to boys in a higher Form, and would not have disgraced the Sixth. You have well won the awards, which I now hand to you."

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Bravo, Linley!" shouted Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh, and Tom Brown and Hazeldene joined in. But the rest were silent, save for little Wun Lung, the Chinese, who piped out "Blavo!" with his peculiar accent.

The two juniors thanked the Head quietly, and the school broke up. A crowd of juniors surrounded Wharton as he went out, with the envelope in his hand.

Mark Linley went into the outer hall, his envelope in his hand, and there he drew aside from the others and opened it. His hands were trembling. It was one of the conditions of the Seymour prize that it should be handed directly to the winner in money, and there were five crisp banknotes in Linley's letter.

Mark Linley had never possessed as much money before—probably had never seen as much at any one time. He rustled the notes in his fingers with a look of delight.

Bulstrode looked across at him with a sneer.

"Look at the blessed miser!" he said, loud enough for Linley to hear.

Mark Linley flushed crimson, and, thrusting the banknotes hastily into his pocket, he turned away. The juniors poured out into the Close. Temple came up to Wharton with a faint grin on his rather handsome face.

"Congratulations!" he said.

"Thanks!" said Harry. "But Linley takes the biscuit."

"Yes, and I'm glad," said Temple. "I dare say he can do with the tin, and as I've lost, I'd rather he had it."

"Same here."

"Where is he?"

"Oh, he's gone to gloat over his money," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "Blessed if I ever saw such a miser."

Snoop sniggered.

"He may need it to get new boots and things," he suggested. "His boots are jolly old, and he's wanted new ones all the term. He—ow! Leggo my ear, Wharton, you beast! Ow!"

"Shut up, then, you cad!"

"Ow—wow!"

Snoop squirmed away, holding his ear ruefully between finger and thumb, and rubbing it. Wharton's grip on it had been very business-like.

The Removites, instead of going down to the football-ground, were standing about in groups, discussing the award. The faces of the Co. were mostly dark and angry. If Linley had joined the Co. there would have been a substantial little sum each for them. They had been willing to take the risk themselves. It was too bad that Linley should have kept out of the Co., and should have been the one to take the prize.

The juniors were annoyed and indignant.

When Mark Linley came out with his cap on a little later, there was a very audible hiss from the group of juniors.

The Lancashire lad flushed, and then his face went pale; but he looked neither to the right nor to the left, but strode on directly to the gates of Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter was outside the tuckshop, and as he caught sight of Linley, he toddled over towards him.

"Stop a minute, Linley!"

"I can't; I'm in a hurry!"

"Oh, really——"

"I've got to get to the post-office, and catch the post," said Mark patiently. "I've got to register a letter, so I haven't any time to waste."

"I'll keep up with you," said Bunter, his fat little legs breaking into a trot to keep pace with the sturdy stride of the Lancashire lad. "You remember my mentioning to you about going Co. over the prize?"

"Oh, yes."

"It was a pretty generous thing of me, you know, because I expected to get the prize myself," explained Bunter. "But I'm always doing these things, though I often get misunderstood. Now, as it happens, curiously enough, you've won the prize."

Mark smiled faintly.

"Curiously enough," he assented, "I have."

"Well, I suppose the company still holds good?" said Bunter. "If I had won, I should have considered myself bound to share with you, after what I said——"



"Mabel is just the same—no better and no worse. We are hoping for the best." That was the line Mark Linley read a dozen times.

"Don't tell lies, Bunter!" said Mark brusquely.

"Oh, really, Linley! You see, I'm telling the exact truth, and as I should have shared with you, you ought to share with me. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Nonsense."

"You mean to say you won't share?"

"Don't be an ass! Of course not."

"Well, I suppose you won't mind lending me a little money?" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I could do with five pounds."

"Don't be silly."

"Well, five bob would last me till I get a postal-order."

"I can lend you nothing."

Bunter blinked at him in indignant surprise.

"You can't lend me a few bob when you've just had twenty-five quid handed to you. Oh, really, Linley—"

"Do leave off bothering me," said Mark Linley patiently.

"You may as well, for I have nothing to give you."

"I wasn't asking you to give me anything. I suppose you don't think I'm the kind of chap to accept a gift of money? I hope I've got an independent spirit. I merely require a loan to last me till my postal-order comes."

Mark Linley quickened his pace. It was the only way to shake off the persistent fat junior. Billy Bunter's little fat legs went like clockwork as he strove manfully to keep pace.

"I say, Linley—hold on. I can't walk so quickly—"

"Then get away."

"Oh, really, I say—"

Bunter gasped and stopped. Mark Linley was striding on as if he were entered in a foot-race. Billy Bunter was left blown and breathless.

"Beast!" muttered Bunter, as the Lancashire lad disappeared down the lane. "Beast! This is the last time I'll ever condescend to take any notice of him."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Issues Invitations.

MARK LINLEY was absent over an hour, and during that time Bulstrode & Co. were not idle. The bitterness of feeling against the Lancashire lad was deepening in the Remove. The juniors, careless and thoughtless enough for the most part, looked upon the prize Mark had won as simply so much money to be spent. Linley had refused to come into the company, and so had kept the whole prize when he won it. But that he would "blue" a five-pound note at least in standing a Form feed was a general expectation. If the Lancashire lad had done so, he might have reinstated himself in the regards of the juniors. But it did not seem to be his intention.

At all events, he had said nothing about it. He had simply gone down to the village immediately after receiving the money, and as yet he had not returned. Bob Cherry, his

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A Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

study-mate, knew no more than the others what he intended to do.

Bob was a jolly and good-natured fellow, not much given to deep thinking. He had been rejoiced to hear that his chum had won the prize. He, naturally expected that a considerable amount of it would be "blued," and, as a matter of fact, he was already making some preparations for a study feed.

Bulstrode looked for Bob Cherry, and found him in his study. Bob was clearing away books and papers off the table, and little Wun Lung was securing the frying-pan.

"Linley come back?" asked Bulstrode.

"Not yet."

"I suppose you're standing a pretty good feed here on the strength of the twenty-five quid?"

"Well, I suppose there will be a bit of a celebration," admitted Bob. "Remove chaps don't win twenty-five pounds every day."

"I suppose all the Form are invited?"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then."

Bulstrode scowled.

"Don't think I want to come and feed with a blessed factory hand!" he exclaimed. "I wouldn't come if I were asked."

"Then what are you grouching about?"

"Linley's expected to do the decent thing. It was rotten enough his keeping out of the company. But all the Form will expect a hand in celebrating the prize, of course. Any other fellow would have issued the invitations already."

"Well, that's Linley's business, isn't it?"

"I think it's the business of all of us."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I believe he's gone to the village to order a jolly good feed," said Bob cheerfully. "It's for him to decide whom he asks and whom he doesn't. I can't undertake to do it for him."

Bulstrode grunted and quitted the doorway.

"Better borrow some crockery up the passage," Bob Cherry remarked, glancing into the cupboard. "Our lot won't stand much of a raid, kid."

Wun Lung grinned. His almond eyes closed almost to slits, as they always did when he was busy with his thoughts.

"Easy hollow clockely," he remarked. "But—"

"But what, kid?"

"Chelly, sure that feedee comees off?"

Bob Cherry stared at him.

"Of course."

"Markee say noting."

"Well, he's bound to stand a feed on the strength of a win like that," said Bob Cherry indignantly. "You don't think he's mean, do you?"

"No tinkee. But—"

"Oh, blow your butts. Of course, Mark will do the decent thing. I hope he will make a good thing of it, and ask the whole Form. I shall advise him to."

"Me tinkee—"

"Oh, don't you tinkee, kid. You clean the frying-pan, and bank up the fire, while I go and borrow some crocks."

"Allee lightee; but me tinkee—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

And Bob Cherry quitted the study, and went along to No. 1. It was empty, and he went to look for Harry Wharton & Co. in the Close. They were on the footer ground, putting in some practice at passing and dribbling.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry hailed them. "I suppose you're coming to the feed?"

The juniors came to the ropes.

"What feed?" asked Nugent.

"Linley's celebration feed."

"Is he standing one?" asked Wharton.

"Of course he is," said Bob Cherry indignantly. "Do you think a chap I chum with would win a prize of twenty-five quid, and stick it all in his trousers' pocket, and leave it there. Of course, he's going to stand a feed."

"But—"

"It's only the right and decent thing to do, I suppose, isn't it?"

"The rightfulness and decentfulness are terrific. But—"

"Oh, never mind your butts, Inky. I suppose you're coming, you chaps?"

"Oh, certainly," said Wharton. "But has Linley actually said that he is standing a feed?"

"I suppose it wasn't necessary for him to say so," said Bob wrathfully. "He's bound to do what's decent, I suppose?"

"But did he say so?"

"Well, yes, practically."

"What did he say exactly?"

"Blessed if I remember exactly. Lemme see, I said it was ripping for him to have won the prize, and he said yes, it was jolly."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Is that all?"

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"Isn't that enough?" demanded Bob Cherry. "I suppose a chap couldn't speak much plainer. Anyway, it was plain enough for me."

"Oh, all right, we'll come, if there's a feed."

"I want to borrow your crocks and some chairs."

"Anything you like, old chap."

"Right you are."

And Bob Cherry marched off, leaving the chums of No. 1 Study to continue their practice. He met Temple, Dabney & Co. as he went in.

"Jolly glad your study-mate has pulled it off, Cherry," said Temple affably. "I'd rather have had it myself—"

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"But I congratulate Linley. Where has he disappeared to?"

"He's gone out."

"The Remove don't seem to be very chippy over his success," remarked Fry. "They'd rather somebody else had won."

"Oh, they're a lot of asses!" said Bob contemptuously. "Never mind them."

"They're saying that Linley hasn't played the game, and that he's acting meanly over the prize," said Fry.

"Rats!" said Bob warmly. "If you say anything of the sort—"

"I didn't say it—the Remove are saying it."

"Oh, blow the Remove! Look here," said Bob. "Linley has gone to the village to lay in a supply for the feed. You fellows have taken it very decently, and we'd be glad if you came to the celebration."

"Well, we're not in the habit of feeding with Lower Fourth chaps," said Temple loftily; "but on the present occasion—"

"Oh, rather."

"Rats!" said Bob. "None of your bunkum. You can come to the feed if you like, but no bosh, you know."

Temple grinned.

"All right, we'll come. And thanks."

"Right-ho!"

Bob Cherry went his way. He met Hazeldene and Tom Brown in the passage. They were talking to Bulstrode, and Bob heard the Remove bully's loud voice as he came by.

"Oh, there's not going to be a feed, or any sort of a celebration. You needn't expect anything of the sort from that factory chap."

"Rats!" broke in Bob Cherry. "There's going to be a stunning feed. Will you two chaps come?"

"What-ho!" said Hazeldene.

"Yes, rather," said Tom Brown. "Glad to. I'm jolly glad that Linley got the prize, too. He's a decent sort, and he deserved it."

"So there's going to be a feed?" said Bulstrode.

"You heard what I said."

The burly Removeite laughed scoffingly.

"Oh, all right," he said. "I'll believe it when I see it, that's all, and I advise the other fellows to do the same."

And Bulstrode walked away, leaving Brown and Hazeldene looking rather curiously at Bob Cherry. Bob's face was flushed with anger.

"Don't take any notice of him," he said. "He's wild because he lost, and because Linley won. I don't see why Linley should have joined the company either, if he didn't choose."

"Oh, no! But is it a cert that there's going to be a feed?" asked Hazeldene.

"Of course, it is."

"Oh, all right, but—"

"Isn't my word good enough?" demanded Bob Cherry, who was beginning to get irritated by the dubiety expressed on all sides on the subject.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Then turn up in No. 13 at about half-past four, and you'll find everything ready."

"Good! Rely on us."

Bob Cherry nodded and walked away. He met Micky Desmond and Ogilvy in the passage, and asked them to the feed, and they readily consented. Two or three more fellows were asked, all willingly agreeing to come, and then they helped Bob Cherry make a collection of crockery and chairs for No. 13.

When that was done, Bob began to feel rather anxious about the continued absence of Mark Linley. He had so taken it for granted that Mark had gone to the village to make big purchases at the tuckshop, that no doubt of it crossed his mind.

The only question was, when would the Lancashire lad be back. Bob Cherry looked at his watch several times.

"He must be spending a lot of time selecting the things in the tuckshop, Wun Lung," he remarked.

Wun Lung smiled in his peculiar way.

"What you tinkee?"

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"I wish I'd gone with him now, to help him carry them." Wun Lung nodded.

"Might have got them at Mrs. Mible's, really—only, of course, there's a bigger variety in the village shop, when a chap is standing a really good feed," said Bob thoughtfully.

"Mark was quite right to go there."

"Chelly lightee."

"I think I'll stroll down to the gate and meet him. Keep up a decent fire, and have the kettle filled ready, kid."

"Allee lightee."

Bob Cherry left the study. He walked down to the gates of Greyfriars, and looked out into the road.

There was no one in sight yet. Bob waited, and whistled to pass away the time. His whistle broke off abruptly as he saw the sturdy form of the Lancashire lad come into sight at last, striding towards the school.

Bob looked a little puzzled as he saw that Linley was carrying nothing. But he concluded that the things were too heavy for a junior to carry, and were being sent.

Mark nodded with a cheery smile as he came up to the gate.

"I've been waiting for you, kid," said Bob.

"Yes," said Mark, a little surprised.

"Where are the things?"

"What things?"

"Being sent on, I suppose?" asked Bob, with a glance down the road in search of Uncle Clegg's little handcart.

Mark Linley looked very puzzled.

"I don't quite catch on," he said. "What's being sent?"

It was Bob Cherry's turn to look puzzled then.

"The grub," he explained.

"The grub!"

"Yes. Haven't you been to the tuckshop, to order the grub for a celebration feed?"

Linley started.

"No," he said.

"No! Where on earth have you been, then?"

"I've been to the post-office."

"Oh!" said Bob.

They walked into the gateway together. There was a very puzzled and uneasy expression upon Bob Cherry's face, and Linley was looking restless and worried, too. Bob Cherry broke the silence that had fallen between them.

"Then you haven't ordered anything, Mark?"

"No!"

"You can get the things at Mrs. Mible's here; and, after all, it's really better to give the old lady a turn," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "This way!"

"But—"

"There isn't really much time to waste, Linley, if the feed's to come off soon after four," said Bob.

Linley flushed.

"The feed! I don't understand."

"The celebration feed," explained Bob. "It's all right; I've asked the fellows. If you want any more you can soon let them know. The only thing now is to lay in the tommy, and we'll get that done at once. Why don't you come?"

Mark hesitated, the colour deepening in his cheeks.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Sorry! What about?"

"I suppose I'd better be frank. There is not going to be any feed."

Bob jumped.

"No feed!"

"No!"

"But—but—but," Bob stammered helplessly—"but—no feed!"

"I'm sorry. No!"

"But—but I've asked the fellows! My only hat!"

And Bob Cherry stared at the flushed face of the Lancashire lad in blank dismay.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wrathful Guests.

"FAITH, and we're early!"

Micky Desmond came along the Remove passage with Ogilvy, and looked into No. 13 Study.

Wun Lung, the Chinese was there, reading a letter from home—a curious-looking letter in mysterious characters. His almond eyes turned upon the two juniors as they looked in. Micky was puzzled. There were no signs of a feed in the study, and Wun Lung was settled comfortably in the armchair, reading his letter.

"Early," said Ogilvy, looking at his watch. "H'm! Still, it's better to be early on these occasions."

"Sure ye're right. I say, ye heathen, where's Cherry?"

ANSWERS

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NEXT WEEK: "THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

"No savvy."

"Where's Linley?"

"No savvy."

"Where's the feed?"

"No savvy."

The two juniors glared at the Chinese. But for the fact that they had come to a feed in the study, they would probably have dragged him out of the armchair and bumped him on the rug.

"I suppose they haven't got the grub in yet," said Ogilvy. "We'll give them a look in later."

And Ogilvy and Desmond strolled away again. Ogilvy uttered a sudden exclamation as they reached the end of the passage.

"There's Cherry!"

They ran down the stairs to meet Cherry. But when they reached the bottom of the staircase he had gone.

Perhaps Bob was not anxious to meet his expected guests just then. Desmond and Ogilvy looked decidedly puzzled.

In No. 13 Study, Wun Lung went on reading his letter cheerfully. Hazeldene and Tom Brown looked in a few minutes later, and they, too, were surprised to find no trace of a feed—no signs of it excepting the imposing collection of chairs and crockeryware.

"Where's the feed?" asked Hazeldene.

"No savvy."

"Has Linley come in yet?"

"No savvy."

"I suppose there is going to be a feed!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"No savvy."

And the two inquirers retired. It was time for the feed now, but something had evidently gone wrong with the arrangements.

"We'll give them a little more rope," said Hazeldene.

When the passage was clear, Bob Cherry came along to the study. He entered with a glum face, and his face grew glummer as he saw the heaps of crockery.

In the innocence of his heart, Bob had taken the celebration feed for granted, and had issued invitations with royal generosity. There was likely to be trouble now.

Wun Lung slipped the letter into a pocket in his voluminous garments, and looked up at his English chum.

"Chappee comee askee tea," he remarked.

Bob Cherry grunted.

"There's going to be no feed," he said.

"Me tinkee—I mean, allee light."

"We sha'n't want all these things now," said Bob. "Hang it! They'd better be taken back where they belong. I don't know what I'm to say to the fellows. It's past tea-time now, and they'll be turning up."

"Velly bad."

"It's rotten! I really don't understand Linley. I've never known him to be stingy before, and it's rotten."

"Velly lotten."

"This study ought to stand a feed, anyway," said Bob Cherry. "I would have rushed off and got some stuff in myself, only I'm stony. I—"

Bob Cherry was interrupted.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Harry Wharton & Co., flushed and ruddy from footer practice, came cheerily into the study.

"Here we are," announced Frank Nugent. "Hungry as hunters!"

"The hungerfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"You see—" began Bob Cherry.

"I see you haven't started getting tea yet," said Harry, looking at his watch. "And we've got extra special appetites—worthy of Billy Bunter."

"The Bunterfulness of my esteemed appetite is terrific."

"Never mind; we'll lend a hand."

"Good!" said Nugent. "Can I do any cooking?"

"You see—"

"You've got a good fire, anyway, and somebody has been cleaning the frying-pan," said Nugent; "and there's crockery enough, goodness knows. Where's the grub?"

"You see—"

The three chums stared at him.

"Nothing gone wrong with the feed, I hope?" said Nugent.

"Well, you see—"

"Scott! You don't mean to say it's off!"

"I—I made a mistake," explained Bob Cherry haltingly. "Linley hasn't gone to the village for grub. He's not going to stand a feed. It's off. I'm sorry—"

"The sorryfulness of my esteemed self is also great."

"You see—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, we see! It's all right, Bob, as far as we're con-

cerned; but we'll buzz off, if you'll excuse us. We shall have to get in something for tea; we're fearfully hungry."

"I'm sorry, you know—"

"Oh, that's all right!"

And Wharton and Nugent and Hurree Singh quitted the study. Bob Cherry groaned.

"It's alleo light," murmured Wun Lung.

"Is it?" said Bob. "They're only the first. The other fellows won't take it as patiently as that, I can tell you. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they come!"

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were trooping along the passage. They looked in at the open doorway with cheery faces. The usual terms of warfare they were on with the Remove were forgotten now. Temple had on a nice fancy waistcoat and a new tie to do proper honour to the occasion. Dabney had brushed his hair, and Fry had put on a clean collar. They meant to keep up the credit of the Upper Fourth.

Bob Cherry gave them a helpless nod.

"Good-evening," he said feebly.

"Good-evening!" said Temple affably. "I hope we're not too early."

"Oh, no; not at all!"

"Or too late," said Fry, glancing round in vain in search of eatables.

"N-n-no!"

"You haven't started yet?"

"No."

"Good!"

"You see—"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"You see—"

"We're willing to be useful if we can," said Temple. "Fry can cook beautifully, and Dab knows how to open bottles and things."

"Oh, rather!"

"You see—see—see," stammered Bob Cherry, "there's been a slight mistake! The feed's off!"

Temple, Dabney, & Co. gave a simultaneous jump.

"Off?"

"Yes. I'm sorry—"

"Faith, and what's that?" exclaimed Micky Desmond, coming into the study with Tom Brown and Ogilvy and Hazeldene. "The feed's off!"

"Yes. You see—"

"Yo omadhaun! And sure I've refused an invitation to tea in Russell's study because of it!" exclaimed Micky indignantly.

"You see—"

"Jolly hungry!" said Morgan, coming in. "I hope tea's ready, look you! What, haven't you started yet?"

"You see—"

"The feed's off!" exclaimed Ogilvy wrathfully. "Feed's off! I suppose it's a jape—he's got us here like this to make asses of us!"

"Faith, and sure I—"

"You see," said poor Bob. "it's like this. I—I—"

"I—I!" mimicked Temple. "It's a jape, of course!"

"It's not a jape! You see—"

"Where's Linley? He was standing the feed, wasn't he?"

"No. You see—"

"Faith, and we've been done entirely!"

"Cheeky young spoofer!"

"It's a swindle!"

"Look here, we're jolly well not going to come here for nothing!" exclaimed Fry. "Cherry ought to have a lesson!"

"Good egg!"

"Bump him!"

"Here, hold on! You see—"

"Collar the cad!"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on! Help! Ow! Yow!"

Half a dozen pairs of wrathful hands seized Bob Cherry. He struggled desperately, trying at the top of his voice to explain. The disappointed guests bumped him heavily on the floor, and bumped him again.

"Another!" said Temple. "And another!"

"Good!"

"Ow!"

Bump!

Crash!

Bob Cherry crashed against the leg of the table as he struggled, and the table reeled and rocked. The pile of borrowed crockery upon it shot in a stream to the floor.

Crash! Rattle! Bang! Crash—ash!

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a bill for somebody to pay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The floor was strewn with smashed crockery. Hardly an article had escaped unbroken. The guests trooped out of the study.

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NOW
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"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

No. 13 Study laughing loudly. Bob Cherry staggered to his feet, breathless and dusty and dishevelled. He stared in dismay at the heaps of smashed crockery.

"My hat!" he gasped feebly.

Wun Lung chuckled softly. Bob Cherry dropped gasping into a chair, and sat surveying the wreck with feelings too deep for words.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Has it all His Own Way.

"LETTERS just in!"

"Any for me?"

"And me?"

Mark Linley came into the hall with an eager look on his face. The afternoon post was in, and the fellows who expected letters were gathered round the letter-rack. There was an envelope addressed to Mark Linley in a rough handwriting. Bulstrode took it down.

"That is for me," said Mark quickly.

The Remove bully grinned.

"Oh, yes, I know the fist!" he said. "Catch!"

He tossed the letter into the air. Linley's eyes flashed for a moment, but he said nothing. He picked up the letter from the floor and opened it, and drew out the rough sheet written in a crabbed hand within.

Standing back against the wall, the Lancashire lad became absorbed in his letter, and oblivious of his surroundings.

Billy Bunter came blinking along anxiously to the group of juniors.

"Anything in the rack for me?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Expecting a postal-order?" asked Ogilvy.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am," said Bunter. "You see, I was expecting one this morning, but there has been some delay in the post. The Post Office authorities are to blame. They ought to be stopped doing these things somehow. I've been put to considerable inconvenience by my postal-orders not coming to time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's very odd," said Bunter, blinking over the letters. "Nothing for me here. I suppose you haven't taken my letter by mistake, Bulstrode?"

"No, ass!"

"Is that a postal-order you've got there?"

"Yes," said Bulstrode, drawing a postal-order from an envelope and putting it into his pocket.

"You may have mistaken the name on the envelope—I remember I opened one of your letters once in mistake for a letter of mine," urged Bunter. "How much is the postal-order for?"

"Ten shillings."

"I was expecting one for that amount—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Bulstrode.

"That's all very well, but I think you ought to let me see it to make sure that it really isn't for me—"

"Shut up!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bulstrode, as Hazeldene came along.

"Have you had that celebration feed yet?"

Hazeldene shrugged his shoulders.

"No; it's off!"

Bulstrode burst into a laugh.

"What did I tell you?"

"Really, I don't remember," said Hazeldene.

"I said that Linley never had any intention of standing a feed, and that he was too jolly mean to think of doing anything of the sort," said Bulstrode.

"Well, I suppose he knows his own bizney best."

"Very likely," said Tom Brown. "Bulstrode, of course, could manage it for him a little better, but—"

"I think I should stand a Form feed if I had won a prize of twenty-five pounds," said Bulstrode. "And his chums expected him to, and they made all the giddy preparations."

"Yes, that was funny," said Ogilvy. "There will be a ripping bill for somebody in No. 13 Study to pay for the broken crockery, too."

"Oh, Linley will pay that, of course!" said Snoop, with his disagreeable grin. "He was really to blame, so of course he will foot the bill. Besides, he's rolling in money now."

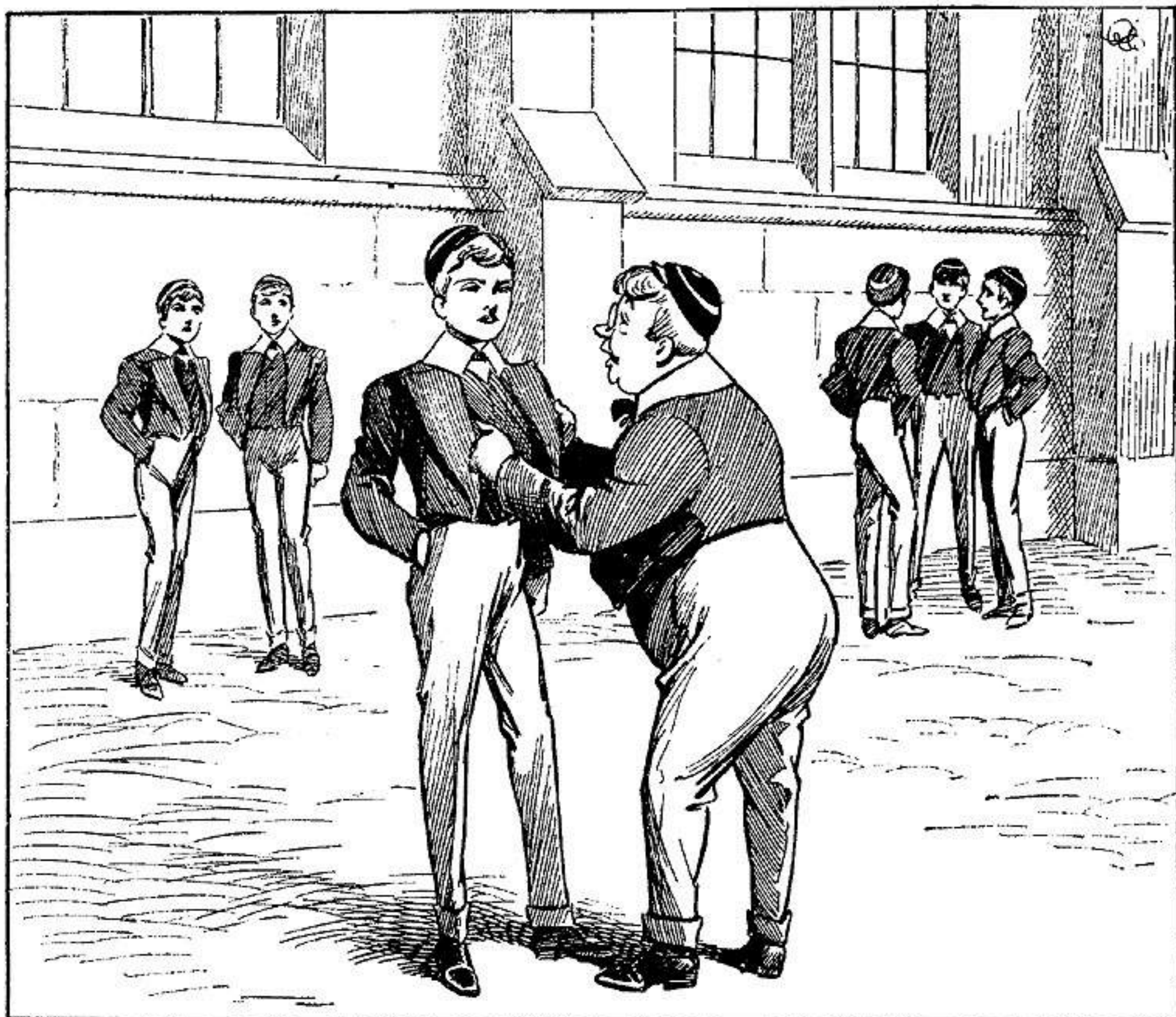
"No fear!" said Bulstrode. "Linley means to stick to the tin—every red cent. Blessed if I know how we stand him in the Remove at all!"

"Oh, shut up, Bulstrode!"

"Rats! I say that the chap's a rank outsider, and a rotten, stingy Shylock, and I think he ought to be sent to Coventry by the whole Form!"

There was a deep pause.

Bulstrode's words were spoken purposely loudly for the Lancashire lad to hear. Mark Linley was a quiet and patient fellow enough, but it was never safe to insult him. He could take his own part, and was always ready to do so if he had



"I wasn't asking you to give me anything, Linley," explained Billy Bunter. "I merely require a loan to last me till my postal-order comes."

a just cause for quarrel. But now he either did not hear or did not heed Bulstrode's insulting words.

He remained motionless, his eyes fixed upon his letter.

Bulstrode sneered.

Any other fellow in the Remove—any fellow with spirit, at all events, would have called him to account for what he was saying, but Linley said no word.

"What about sending him to Coventry?" said Bulstrode, growing bolder. "I don't think decent chaps ought to speak to such a cad."

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Snoop. "Mean cad, that's what I say!"

Still Linley gave no sign.

The Removites almost gasped in astonishment.

That a fellow like Mark Linley should be insulted even by Bulstrode with impunity was a surprise; but that he should allow himself to be ragged by the sneak of the Remove—

What was the matter with Linley?

He was standing quite motionless, and he was reading the letter—or was he reading it?

It seemed to Bulstrode that he was staring at the letter fixedly, but without seeing it.

It was not a long letter, and the Lancashire lad must have reached the end of it before now.

Bulstrode grinned disagreeably. It seemed to him that Linley was pretending to read, in order not to appear to have heard what was said about him.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

Where was his pluck?

"A fellow who could win twenty-five pounds in cash and refuse even to stand a study feed to his own chums is a special sort of worm, and I bar him, for one!" went on Bulstrode. "We've stood the factory, but I'm blessed if I think we ought to stand that!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold your tongue, Bulstrode!" said Harry Wharton, joining the group.

Bulstrode looked at him with a sneer.

"Mind your own business!" he retorted. "I suppose Linley can speak up for himself if he doesn't like my remarks?"

Wharton bit his lip. Truly enough, he had no right to interfere. Mark Linley was big enough to take care of himself if he chose to do so. And if he did not choose—well, it was none of Harry's business.

"Look at him!" said Bulstrode, in his most insulting tone. "Look at the rotter! Standing there pretending to read a blessed letter, because he hasn't the pluck to speak up for himself!"

"Boo!"

"Factory cad!"

Linley made no sign.

Bulstrode stepped towards him and clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder. Mark Linley started, and looked up confusedly.

"What is it—what do you want?"

A Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

His voice was strange and husky as he muttered the words. "I suppose you've heard what I said?" asked Bulstrode, surprised by the curious look and tone of the Lancashire lad.

"I—yes—no! Don't bother!"

Bulstrode flushed red.

"Liar!" he said. "You heard, only it suits you to pretend that you didn't! I said you were a cad—a mean cad—and a rank outsider!"

Linley stared at him almost stupidly. Everyone expected his fist to shoot out, and Bulstrode was ready for it. But Mark did not raise his hand.

"Let me alone!" he muttered.

A mocking titter ran round among the juniors. Glances of contempt from all sides fell upon the Lancashire lad—unnoticed. He did not see them.

Bulstrode laughed scornfully.

"So you are going to take that lying down, are you?" he said. "Will nothing stir you? I called you a cad—a mean cad."

Linley looked at him, and moved away. Bulstrode stared after him in amazement. He could not understand him at all. The more Linley endured at his hands, the more the Remove bully was determined to provoke him. Linley had licked him at least twice, and Bulstrode had not forgotten or forgiven it. This was his chance for revenge.

He strode after the Lancashire lad, and grasped him by the shoulder, and swung him back.

"Hold on a minute!" he exclaimed sneeringly.

"Let me go!"

"Coward!"

The juniors caught their breath. Linley stared at Bulstrode for a moment, then wrenched himself free and walked away.

"My hat!" said Bulstrode. "Well, if he likes to go quietly after that, he may! I'm done with him!"

A loud and prolonged hiss from the group of juniors followed Mark Linley. He did not turn his head.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Something Wrong.

HARRY WHARTON went into No. 1 Study with a dark and frowning brow. He was troubled, worried, disappointed. He did not understand Mark Linley at all. He had always felt a keen liking and friendship for the Lancashire lad, partly because of Mark's own good qualities, and partly because the more snobbish members of the Form were "down" on the lad who had worked in a factory before winning the Mowbray Scholarship and coming to Greyfriars. But Harry was cruelly disappointed now. Linley had been called a coward to his face, and he had walked away without a word.

What did it all mean?

Had Harry been mistaken after all in him? Or what was the matter with Mark Linley?

He had always been averse to disputing and fighting. He had endured a great deal in patience at the hands of the superior persons in the Remove. Yet when occasion demanded he had shown that he had plenty of pluck. He had stood up to Bulstrode in fair fight, and licked him after a desperate tussle, and not so long ago. Where was his spirit now? What was the matter with him?

"Blessed if I like this!" said Frank Nugent uncomfortably. "I always liked Linley, but—well, this is the limit, I think."

"The limitfulness is terrific."

"I don't understand it quite," said Wharton slowly. "We all know that Linley is poor, but twenty-five pounds is a large sum, and he might have spared a pound, or even a half-sovereign, to do the proper thing. He must have known very well that the fellows expected it. It looks mean."

"It is mean," said Frank.

"The meanfulness looks terrific; but perhaps the esteemed Linley has his own reasonfulness for his honourable conduct," suggested Hurree Singh.

"Then his knuckling under to Bulstrode like that. I don't understand it."

"Blessed if I do, either!"

"Hallo, here's Bob!"

Bob Cherry put a very red face into the study.

"Have you seen Linley?"

"Not lately."

"I hear there's been a row in the hall, and Bulstrode called him a coward"

"Yes; we were there."

"And Linley took it quietly?"

"Well, yes."

Bob Cherry snorted.

"I think Linley's gone mad," he said. "I must say I don't feel so chummy towards him since he made such a giddy ass of me this afternoon; but Bulstrode's not going to call a friend of mine a coward. Anyway, Linley isn't a coward, even if he's a bit close with the money. It's up to No. 13 Study to teach him manners."

"But—"

"I wanted to see Linley. He ought to fight Bulstrode. It's the only decent thing he can do. Don't you chaps know where he is?"

"No. Isn't he in No. 13?"

"No. Well, I'm going to look for him, and if I can't find him, I'm going to look for Bulstrode. Somebody's got to stand up for No. 13, and if Linley won't, I will."

"We'll come with you."

They looked for Mark Linley, but for a long time the quest was in vain. He was not in the common-room or the gym., and the box-rooms were drawn blank. And when they inquired for him, the replies they received were couched in sneering tones.

"Oh, you won't find him!" said Skinner. "He's skulking, of course. He wants to keep out of Bulstrode's way."

Skinner suddenly found himself sitting on the floor, laid there by a mighty swipe from Bob Cherry. He was still sitting there when the chums walked off.

"Have you seen Linley, Snoop?"

The cad of the Remove sniggered.

"No; and you won't, either."

"Why not?" asked Bob Cherry, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"Because he's skulking away somewhere—Ow!"

Snoop sat down violently, and Bob Cherry rolled him over with his foot before he walked on. Bob was very red.

"Let's look in the Form-room," suggested Nugent, thinking that any further inquiries conducted on this system were likely to lead to trouble.

"Good! He might be there."

The chums turned in the direction of the deserted Form-room. The room, of course, was deserted on a half-holiday. There was no reason to suppose that Mark Linley was there, excepting that they could find him nowhere else in a search that had already lasted half an hour.

They came down the wide, deserted passage, and paused at the Form-room door. It was ajar, and Harry, looking in, could see a seated figure in one of the forms.

It was Mark Linley.

But Harry did not enter.

He held up his hand as a sign to the others to be quiet, and they looked in over his shoulder in dumb amazement.

Mark Linley was seated at the desk, with his elbows upon it, his face in his hands, and a kind of convulsive trembling was running through him from head to foot.

He was crying!

The juniors looked on blankly. They had never seen Linley cry before; he was not one of the crying kind.

Wharton signed to the others to follow him, and stepped silently away. He would not intrude upon the lad at that moment.

At the end of the Form-room passage the juniors stopped, and stared at one another's faces in blank amazement.

"What on earth—" began Nugent.

"It can't be Bulstrode insulting him," said Wharton, in a low voice. "That wouldn't make a chap like Linley blub."

"Not much!"

"He must be ill!"

"He doesn't look it."

"Perhaps he's had bad news," Nugent suggested. "You never know. There may be something wrong at home. He's had a rough time here, as you know, but he's never blubbed before. It must be something awfully bad, I should think, to make him turn the water-works on."

Wharton nodded.

"Well, it's no business of ours," he remarked. "Better not let him know we saw him. It will make him feel rotten."

"Yes, rather!"

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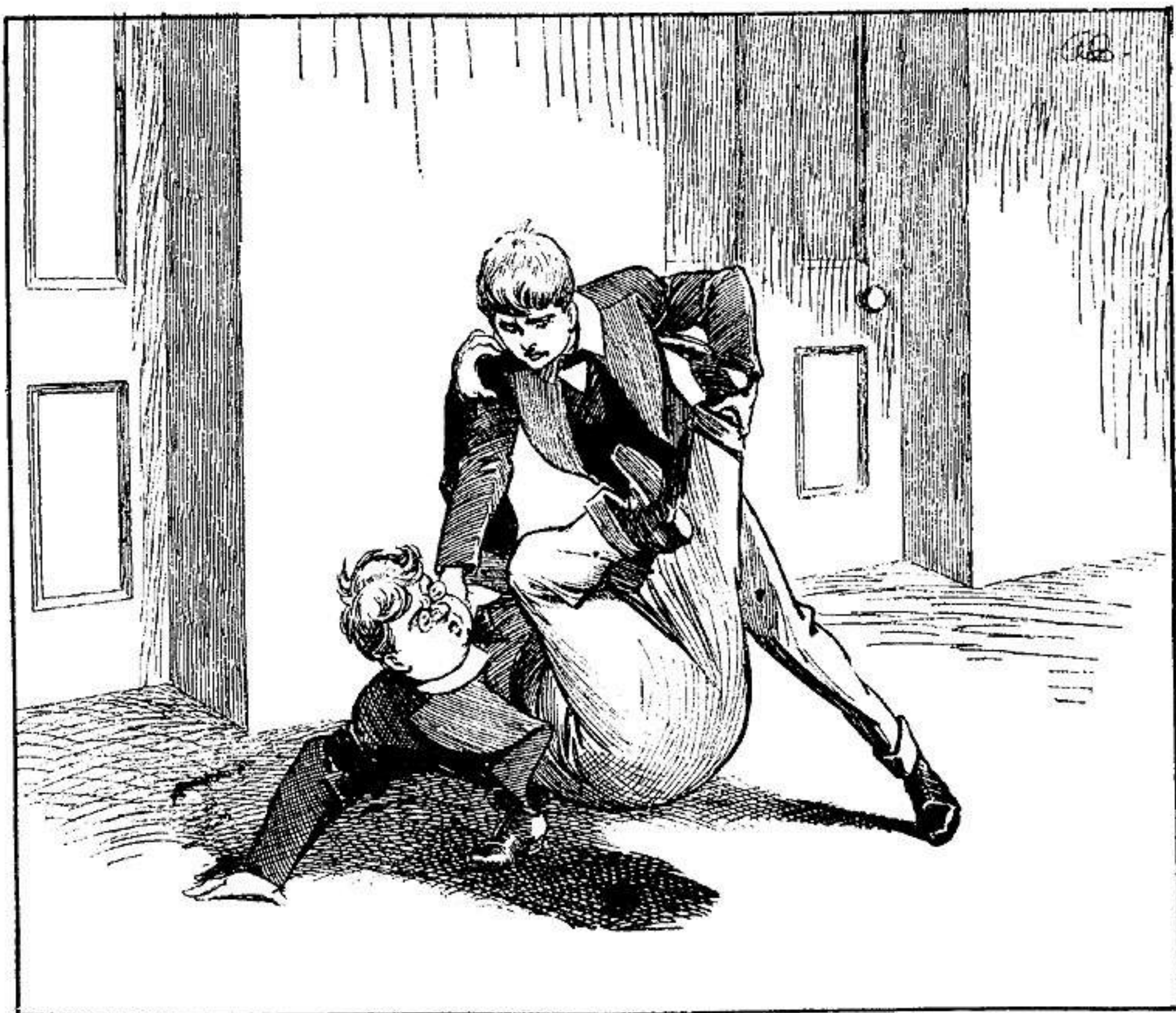
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"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter. "Stop it! Ow! I—I—I'm sincerely sorry, I—" BUMP! "I dare say you are," grinned Bob Cherry. "That will make you sorrier!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Where are you going, Bob?" asked Harry, as the burly junior strode away, with a grim expression upon his rugged face.

"I'm going to see Bulstrode."

"But—"

"You can see what it is. Linley's upset about something, and that's why he allowed that cad to insult him," said Bob fiercely. "He wasn't quite himself at the time. But Bulstrode's not going to sling No. 13 Study while I'm around."

And Bob Cherry marched off directly to Bulstrode's study. Harry Wharton & Co. followed him dubiously enough. Bob was strong and plucky, and a tough customer for anyone to tackle, but he was no match for the biggest fellow in the Remove. More than once he had tackled Bulstrode already, and he had always come off second best, though Bulstrode certainly had not enjoyed it. But there was no stopping Bob now.

The juniors reached Bulstrode's study, and Bob kicked at the door. It did not budge as he turned the handle.

It was locked inside. Bob Cherry banged on the upper panels with his fist, and on the lower with his heavy boot.

"Bulstrode!"

"Hallo!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"I want to speak to you."

"The want is all on your side, then," replied Bulstrode, through the door. "Cut off! I'm busy."

And there were several distinct chuckles in the study. Bulstrode and his friends evidently had something "on."

Bob Cherry kicked furiously at the door.

"Open this door, you rat!"

"Bosh!"

"Coward!"

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Rats!"

"Worm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry gave it up. He strode away, breathing vengeance, and the door of Bulstrode's study remained locked.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode's Wheeze.

BULSTRODE was, as he had said, busy.

Skinner and Snoop were with him in the study. The table was littered over with various theatrical paraphernalia—wigs, beards, moustaches, false hair of all sorts, and grease paint, powder, and burnt corks. The "props" belonged, as a matter of fact, to the Amateur

Dramatic Society of the Remove, of which the president was Harry Wharton, and of which Bulstrode was not a member. The things were kept in a trunk in the box-room till wanted, and Bulstrode had taken the liberty of borrowing them for a little scheme he had on hand.

That was one reason why he would not open the door. He did not want the "props" carried off by force, as they certainly would have been if the members of the Amateur Dramatic Society had seen them in his study.

Another reason was that Bulstrode had a "wheeze" on hand, and wanted to keep it quite secret till the time was ripe.

Bulstrode and Skinner were "making-up" Snoop, and they had paused for a few minutes while the knocking continued at the door. When the chums of the Remove were gone, Bulstrode burst into a laugh, and went on with his work.

"How is it getting on?" asked Snoop anxiously.

"First-rate."

"Ripping!" said Skinner. "Look in the glass."

Snoop stepped over to the glass and looked in. He started as he saw his reflection there.

The junior had been made-up with considerable skill. His face had been painted and stained till it was a brickish hue, and his eyebrows had been bushed out and darkened with burnt cork, and a grey wig was carefully fastened on over his hair. A grey, straggling moustache and a ragged beard completed the disguise.

Snoop looked like a man of fifty, and not a very good-looking or respectable man of fifty, either.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.

"How do you like it?" grinned Bulstrode.

"Oh, it's ripping!"

"What about the clothes?" asked Skinner.

Bulstrode dragged a large brown paper parcel out from under the table.

"Here they are!" he said. "I hired them in Friardale, and had them sent home at once. Of course, the disguise would be no good without the clothes."

"Rather not!" chuckled Skinner. "A working-man of fifty in an Eton suit would look a little odd, I imagine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Show us the clothes," said Snoop.

"Here they are!"

Bulstrode cut the string, rolled the paper out, and disclosed the contents of the parcel. A pair of corduroy trousers, a dirty, tobacco-stained waistcoat, a shabby coat with frayed and greasy sleeves, and a huge pair of ill-made boots came to light. There were also a battered bowler hat, a spotted neckerchief, and a dirty handkerchief of a brilliant hue.

Snoop gave a low whistle.

"My word! What an outfit!"

"I suppose it's about the sort of thing that Linley's father wears."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get into them, Snoopey."

"Right-ho! They'll go on outside my own clothes, I suppose. That will make me look a bit fatter, too."

"Good! Take your collar and boots off, and leave the rest on!"

Snoop was soon dressed in the clothes. They made a startling change in his appearance. He looked more like a tramp than a respectable workman, but that suited Bulstrode's plans quite well.

The Remove bully surveyed him with great satisfaction. There was a kick at the door, but the juniors took no notice of it.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Perfect! Splendid! If I hadn't helped you dress, Snoopey, I shouldn't know you from Adam!"

"My aunt!" said Snoop. "It's a change! I say, I hardly like to go out of the study in this rig, you know!"

"Bosh! That's the idea! You can't do any good by sticking here! I tell you nobody can possibly recognise you! Stick this black pipe in your mouth!"

Snoop put the pipe between his teeth. He certainly looked a most disreputable character. Bulstrode and Skinner surveyed him with delight.

There was a furious kick at the door.

"Let me in!" shouted the voice of Hazeldene.

"Hold on a minute!"

Bulstrode swept the "props" from the table into a bag, then unlocked the door. Hazeldene came in, looking red and wrathful.

"What on earth have you got the door locked for?" he demanded. "I— Why—what—who—who on earth's this?"

He stared blankly at the disguised junior.

"Haven't you met him before?" asked Bulstrode.

"Met him! No."

"Don't you notice any likeness?"

"Likeness! Likeness to whom?"

"One of the chaps in the Remove."

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NOW ON SALE.

"Rats!" said Hazeldene.

"It's Linley's father."

"What!"

"Linley pere," grinned Bulstrode. "Surely you observe the likeness to Mark Linley."

Hazeldene almost staggered.

"My only aunt!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop joined in the laugh, and then the truth burst upon Hazeldene. He uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Snoop! I'd know his cackle among a barnyard full of chickens!"

"Look here——" began Snoop wrathfully.

"What on earth are you getting at?" demanded Hazeldene, in wonder. "Have you joined the Amateur Dramatic Society?"

"Positively for one occasion only," grinned Bulstrode. "This is Linley's father! It's a jape. Do you see? It's a jape to take a rise out of Linley."

Hazeldene chuckled.

"I see. It's rough on him, though—and it will be rough on Snoop, I fancy, if Linley catches him at it!"

"Oh, I'm looking after Snoop!" said Bulstrode, as the cad of the Remove looked a little alarmed. "He won't be hurt. Quite ready, Snoopey?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Mind you drop your aitches," said Skinner. "Speak as rottenly as you can."

"All right."

"Better chuck it," said Hazeldene. "It's a rotten trick, anyway, and——"

"Oh, shut up!"

And Bulstrode and Skinner and Snoop went out of the study. Billy Bunter was just coming along, and he reached the door as they went out.

"I say, you fellows——" The shortsighted junior did not observe Snoop for the moment. "I say——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"I want to speak to you, Bulstrode. I'm expecting a postal-order this evening——"

"Oh, get away!"

"I'm stony just at present. I've been done out of twelve pound ten by that chap Linley, and I think——"

"What's that?" exclaimed Bulstrode quickly. "You've been done by Linley? What do you mean?"

"He practically agreed to share the prize with me—going Co. over it, you know—and when he won it he cried off!"

"Rats!" said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner——"

Billy Bunter broke off, blinking through his big spectacles at the disguised Snoop. The fat junior was speechless with amazement for a moment or two.

"Who—who is that?" he gasped at last.

"Linley's father."

"What!"

"It's Mark Linley's father. He's come to the school to visit his dear boy," grinned Bulstrode. "If you want to do Linley a good turn, you can go and tell him that his father has arrived to see him."

"Oh, really——"

Bulstrode pushed the fat junior aside, and walked on. He was heading for the junior common-room. Billy Bunter blinked after the supposed man from Lancashire, and then tore off to No. 1 Study, where Harry Wharton & Co. were doing their prep.

The fat junior, full of the news, burst into the study like a thunderbolt.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped.

"Oh, don't make a row!" exclaimed Nugent, looking up irritably.

"Oh, really——"

"The rowfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific. I shall incline to think of punching his honourable fat head if he is not quiet."

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Do shut up, Billy," said Wharton.

"But—but——"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Linley's father's come."

"Linley's father!"

"Yes," said Bunter, with his vulgar chuckle. "He's come to congratulate Linley over winning the exam., I suppose. He's an awful sight! A horrible rough, in corduroys and smoking a black pipe——"

Wharton grasped Bunter by the arm, and shook him angrily.

"Stop your silly yarns, you young sweep!"

"Ow—ow! I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Wharton! Ow! You might make my glasses fall off, and if they got broken you'd have to pay for them! Ow! It's really Linley's father, and he's an awful specimen! Ow!"

"Look here, is there any truth in all that?" demanded Wharton roughly. "Has anybody at all come to Greyfriars?"

"Yes, Linley's father."

"Where is he now?"

"Bulstrode was showing him about."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"That mean's a jape of Bulstrode's," he said. "We'd better look into it, you chaps. If Linley's father has come to Greyfriars, he's going to be treated with decency, or there will be a row."

"What-ho!" said Nugent.

"The what-ho-fulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—"

But no one listened to Billy Bunter. Harry Wharton & Co. went down to the common-room, and the loud sound of voices and laughter warned them that there was indeed something on.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Linley Pere.

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Who's that?"

"What is it you mean?"

"Phew!"

Such were the exclamations that greeted the entrance of the stranger into the junior common-room at Greyfriars.

He came in with his battered bowler hat in his dirty hands, and looked about him in an extremely uncertain manner, blinking at the juniors. The gaslight fell full upon the dirty face, the dirty clothes, and the unkempt hair. It was not a wonder that the juniors of Greyfriars were astonished. Such a character had certainly never been seen in the school before.

"Please, young gents—"

"Nothing to be given away," said Stott. "You've come to the wrong place. Try the porter's lodge."

"Yes, rather!"

"You mustn't come in here," said Bob Cherry, kindly enough. "What do you want?"

"I want to see my boy."

"Eh!"

"I've come to see my boy," said the stranger, twirling his hat in his hands, and speaking in dry, husky tones, as if he had some affection of the throat. It did not occur to the juniors that that was done to disguise the voice.

"Your boy!" said Russell. "Oh, I suppose you mean the boot boy! This must be young Jim Crow's father."

"Take him downstairs, somebody," said Ogilvy.

"You'd better go into the kitchen," said Bob Cherry good-naturedly. "I'll show you the way if you like. You're not allowed in here."

"Ain't my boy 'ere?"

"No. He'll be below-stairs."

"That he ain't!" said the stranger positively. "My boy Mark will be 'ere, I say! He's just won a scholarship, or something!"

The juniors simply gasped.

"Why, what's your name?" demanded Elliott breathlessly.

"Linley—John Linley."

"Phew!"

"Are you Mark Linley's father?" asked Lacy.

"Yes, that's wot I am," said the new-comer. "Where's my boy? Where's Marky?"

The juniors stared at him. Many of them felt sorry for Linley. Some had wondered, sometimes, what his people were like. His little sister, Mabel, had visited him once at Greyfriars, and some of the fellows remembered her as a sweet little girl. But of his other relations, they had seen nothing. Snoop & Co. freely suggested that they were not fit to be seen. But Mark's worst enemy had never suspected anything like this. This—this disreputable tramp was Mark's father!

"My only hat!" said Lacy.

Bob Cherry was quite pale.

"Poor old Marky!" he thought.

"Where's my boy Marky?"

"I—I don't know where he is," said Bob. "I—I mean he isn't here. Do you—do you want to see him?"

"Ain't I come 'ere to see 'im?" demanded the stranger.

"Ain't he just got 'old of twenty-five quid in a prize?"

"That's so."

If the juniors had entertained any doubt of the man's identity, that remark would have banished it. The man evidently knew all about Mark's success, and had come to claim some of the money. It was what might have been expected from his appearance.

"Poor Marky!" murmured Bob Cherry again.

"I'm goin' to 'ave some of it," said Mr. Linley, with a confidential glance round. "I'm goin' to 'ave a 'igh old time, I tell yer!"

"Rotter!" muttered Bob.

"Where's my boy—my Marky?"

Bulstrode and Skinner came into the common-room.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Somebody ought to go and fetch Linley!" grinned Bulstrode. "Does anybody know where he is?"

"I saw him go up to No. 13," said Skinner.

"Somebody ought to fetch him."

There was a general hesitation. Even the fellows who had been most bitter against Mark felt sorry for him now. The disgrace of being confronted with such a parent in the presence of his Form-fellows would be too terrible. The Lancashire lad had weathered more than one storm, but he would never be able to hold up his head again after that.

Billy Bunter blinked into the room. Bulstrode clapped him on the shoulder.

"Go and fetch Linley, Bunter."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry. "Let Linley alone!"

"I suppose he ought to see his father."

"I'm goin' to see my boy—my Marky! 'E's goin' to 'and over 'arf the cash to me," said Mr. Linley.

"Go and fetch him, Bunter!"

"Certainly!" said Billy Bunter, blinking at Bob Cherry.

"I really think you're rather heartless, Cherry, to want to stand between a father and son. Is Linley in his study?"

"Yes. Buzz off!"

Billy Bunter buzzed off. He ran upstairs with unusual activity, passing Harry Wharton & Co. as they came to the common-room. The fat junior did not stop running till he was at No. 13 Study.

Mark Linley was there.

The strange emotion which had mastered him when the juniors had seen him in the Form-room, had passed. But it had left its traces behind. His face was deadly pale, and his eyes had an unnatural light in them.

His books were open on the table, but he was not working. For once, even the keen, industrious Lancashire lad was not able to drive himself to work.

He was moving restlessly up and down the study.

He turned towards the door as the Owl of the Remove blinked in, and stared in silent inquiry at him. Billy Bunter giggled.

"I say, Linley—"

"What do you want?"

"I've got some news for you—good news!"

Mark started.

"What do you mean?"

"Your pater's come."

"What?"

"Your father's come!" explained Billy Bunter, with a snigger. "He's in the common-room, and I came to tell you that he was there."

Mark Linley stared blankly at the fat junior. Then he staggered to the table, and held convulsively to it for support.

"Good heavens! What does that mean? Why does father come? Did he—did he say anything—has he any news for me?"

"No, only—"

"Only what—quick!"

"He wants some of the money—the prize—you know—oh!—ow!"

Billy Bunter went spinning, and crashed upon the floor, and the Lancashire lad ran past him down the passage, and down the stairs.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Under False Colours.

"THERE he is!"

"Here's Linley!"

"Here's your boy Marky, sir!"

Linley entered the common-room. The disreputable stranger turned towards him.

"Marky! How are you? Glad to see your old dad, hey?"

Linley stared at the stranger in astonishment. Then he looked at Harry Wharton.

"I was told that my father was here," he said. "Bunter told me so."

"Well, here he is," said Skinner.

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't that your father?"

Mark flushed.

"I don't understand. Surely that man does not pretend that he is my father? Is this a joke?"

Wharton drew a deep breath of relief.

"Then it's not your father, Linley?"

"That? Of course not! Did he say he was?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Then it's all a jape, eh? It's some blessed impostor coming here for a joke!"

"Rats!" said Skinner. "Why should a perfect stranger come here for a joke on Linley? And how does he know about Linley getting the prize? Blessed if I don't believe

Linley is refusing to recognise his own father because he's ashamed of him!"

"Shame!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Yes, it's a shame," said the new-comer. "I'm that boy's father—ain't I brought him up, and found 'im 'is first job in the factory, too? Ain't 'e always been the apple of my eye? I arsk 'im for 'arf the spondulies!"

Linley looked at him.

"I don't know what game you are playing," he said. "Unless you are drunk, you know very well that you are not my father!"

"Shame!" repeated Bulstrode.

"He won't speak to his own father!" said Scott. "Shame!"

"He is not my father!"

"'Ark at 'im," said the claimant—'ark at 'im! Ain't 'e an unnatural son? And to think 'ow I've pinched and scraped for 'im! I only arsk arf the tin!"

"Give him some of the cash, Linley!"

"Shake hands with your own father!"

"Shame!"

Mark Linley looked round him almost wildly.

"I tell you he is not my father!"

"Shame! Shame!"

"He is an impostor!"

"Shame!"

"I tell you——"

"Won't you speak a word to your old dad?" said the stranger, almost tearfully, wiping his eyes on his red-spotted handkerchief. "Ain't it enough to break a father's 'eart? My own boy, wot I pinched and scraped for, to turn agin me like it! Oh, it's 'ard!"

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Harry. "You're not his father!"

"It's 'ard—it's 'ard!"

Mark Linley made a step towards the stranger. Bulstrode threw himself into his way promptly.

"Stand back, Linley!"

"I won't! I——"

"You're not going to lay hands on your own father," said the Remove bully, with virtuous indignation. "We draw the line at that!"

"I tell you——"

"I'm not surprised that you won't own him before the fellows; but you ought to have had too much sense to come to a school like this, when you had such relations," said Bulstrode loftily.

"I tell you I have never seen him before I——"

"Liar!"

"Oh!" came a sudden wild yell from the supposed Mr. Linley. He gave a wild start, and clutched at his hair—too late! Wun Lung had glided behind him, and taken a hold on the back of the wig, and jerked with all his strength. The little Chinese was keener than most of the fellows present, and he had suspected the disguise.

There was a shout of astonishment from the Removes.

The hair came off in Wun Lung's hand, and with it were jerked off the beard and the moustache.

"My hat!" shouted Bob Cherry. "It's a jape! It's one of the chaps made-up!"

"My word!"

"By Jove!"

Bulstrode muttered a furious word under his breath. Wun Lung's prompt and timely action had quite spoiled the jape. Snoop stood exposed—though it was not yet clear whom he was. But it was clear enough that he was a Greyfriars junior in disguise.

"The—the blessed impostor!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in amazement. "Who is it?"

"Who are you?"

"What's the little game?"

Bob Cherry ran at the disguised junior. Snoop tried to dodge, and ran into the arms of Harry Wharton, who grasped him forcibly.

"Let him alone!" exclaimed Bulstrode, pushing forward.

"Stand back!"

"It was a jape! I——"

Wharton pushed Bulstrode back. Snoop squealed in the strong grip of the captain of the Remove.

"Now then, you cad, who are you?" exclaimed Wharton roughly.

"Oh! Leggo! He, he, he! It was only a joke!"

"I'd know that cackle anywhere!" said Bob Cherry. "It's Snoop!"

"Snoop!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"He, he, he!" giggled Snoop nervously.

Wharton let him go contemptuously.

"It was a cad's trick!" he said. "If I was Linley, I'd give you a good hiding for it, too!"

"He, he, he! I——"

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"Linley won't do anything of the sort!" said Bulstrode, in his most blustering tone. "He will have to settle with me first, anyway."

"He could do that easily enough if he chose."

"Let him choose, then!"

All eyes were turned upon the Lancashire lad.

The joke had been a cruel and insulting one, and if ever a fellow deserved licking, it was Snoop. But Mark Linley did not make a movement towards him. He glanced at the cad of the Remove, and then at Bulstrode, who was pushing back his cuffs in a business-like way.

Then he walked quietly out of the room.

The Removes stared—and some of them hissed. Mark did not turn his head. Bulstrode burst into a mocking laugh.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The White Feather.

BOB CHERRY came into No. 13 Study with a gloomy look on his face. Mark Linley was there, sitting by the fire with his feet on the fender, and a book in his hand. But he was not reading. His eyes were fixed upon the glowing coals, and he did not turn his head as his chum came in.

Bob grunted.

Still Linley did not look round, and finally Bob tapped him on the shoulder. Mark came out of his reverie with a start.

"Hallo, Bob! Is that you?"

"Yes," said Bob Cherry grimly.

Mark did not appear to notice his expression. His gaze returned to the fire. Bob Cherry stared at him in curiosity and uneasiness.

"Are you ill?" he exclaimed suddenly.

Mark shook his head.

"Then what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"What are you letting Bulstrode bully you for?"

"What does it matter?"

"I suppose it matters something," said Bob, in amazement. "There's something to be said for keeping up the honour of the study, you know. Bulstrode is looking for trouble all the time. Why don't you put him in his place?"

"Oh, never mind!"

"But I do mind!" said Bob, rather angrily. "If you don't shut him up, I shall! The next time he begins, there will be a row!"

"Better let it alone!"

"Rats!"

And Bob Cherry left the study abruptly, feeling more annoyed with his chum than he had ever felt before. Mark glanced after him, and then settled down, staring at the fire. He had sunk into a deep and miserable reverie, when there was a sudden disturbance at the door of the study.

It was kicked open, and a paper package was thrown in, and then the door was slammed, and there was a sound of retreating footsteps.

Linley rose, and glanced at the packet on the floor. Across the paper was scrawled the name, Mark Linley.

He picked it up, and mechanically undid the string. As he unrolled the paper, something rustled out upon the table.

It was a white feather!

Linley's pale face flushed as he saw the emblem of cowardice, and his eyes gleamed at the insult.

The feather fell upon the table, and lay there.

Mark Linley stood gazing at it for some moments, and then sat down again. Save for an occasional crackle from the fire, all was silent in the study.

The Lancashire lad's face was pale and set.

But he was not thinking of the white feather, the last taunt of his enemies in the Lower Fourth of Greyfriars.

Other and more miserable thoughts occupied his mind. He was thinking of a little home in Lancashire, of a loved face he had last seen bright and merry, now white and drawn under the stress of severe illness. What did Bulstrode's taunts matter to him now?

The door of the study reopened.

Bob Cherry came in with Wun Lung. Bob's face was still gloomy. The covert remarks he had heard passed on Mark Linley had stung him, but what was to be done? If Mark refused to take his own part, there was no reply to the taunts.

Bob caught sight of the white feather on the table, and jumped.

"What's that?"

"Eh?"

Bob picked up the feather. He saw the paper addressed to Mark Linley, and understood.

His rugged face flushed crimson.
"Was this sent to you, Linley?" he asked.
"Yes."

Bob gave him a single look, and then, with the white feather grasped in his hand, he strode away. Down to the junior common-room he went, with the feather in his hand, and a set look on his face.

Bulstrode was in the common-room, laughing and chatting with a group of juniors. Bob strode directly up to him.

"Bulstrode!"

The Remove bully turned his head.

He grinned at the sight of the white feather, and the others burst into a chuckle.

"Well?" said Bulstrode insolently.

"You sent this to Linley?"

"What if I did?"

"Take that!"

"That" was a ringing smack, dealt with the open hand, and Bob Cherry put a great deal of force into it.

Crack!

It rang like a pistol-shot on Bulstrode's face, and he staggered back, thrown off his balance, and Skinner caught him just in time to save him from falling.

"Oh!" gasped Bulstrode.

Bob Cherry threw the white feather into the fire, and then stood facing Bulstrode, his eyes blazing and his fists clenched.

"Now come on, you cad!" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode needed no second bidding.

He gasped for breath for a moment, and then launched himself upon Bob, hitting out furiously. Bob met him with equal anger, and in a second they were at it, hammer and tongs.

"Shut the door," said Skinner. "We shall have a prefect here."

"Right you are!"

Ogilvy slammed the door. It was time, for the two juniors were making uproar enough. With panting breath and trampling feet, they fought furiously.

But size and strength began to tell, as they were certain to do, and Bob Cherry was driven back, and round, his defence growing weaker under Bulstrode's savage attack.

Bulstrode's eyes were lighted up now with a savage triumph.

He was getting the better of his adversary, and now he meant to pay him in full—and there was not a thought of mercy or generosity in his heart.

At last they closed, and Bulstrode succeeded in getting Bob Cherry's head into chancery. Then Bob's chances were at an end.

"Now then," said Bulstrode, between his teeth, "you cad! You'll go down on your knees, and beg my pardon! Do you hear?"

"I won't!"

"I give you two seconds!"

Bulstrode drew his right fist back, ready to crash it into the defenceless face. Bob struggled furiously, but he could not release himself.

In a moment more the stunning blow would have been struck, but at that moment the door was flung open.

Mark Linley entered hastily.

He gave one glance round the room, and ran towards the combatants. His grasp on Bulstrode's arm swung the bully of the Remove round, and he had to relax his grip upon Bob Cherry.

He wrenched himself free.

"Hands off, you factory cad!" shouted Bulstrode.

Mark faced him with blazing eyes.

"You can let Cherry alone," he said. "If you are looking for trouble, I'm ready!"

Bulstrode laughed sneeringly.

"Have you found your courage at last?" he asked. "Was it the white feather?"

"I am ready for you!"

"Good!"

"Oh, hang it all!" said Bob Cherry. "I'm not finished yet. Let me—"

"This is my business," said Mark quietly. "Bulstrode won't be satisfied till he has forced me to fight. Well, he shall have his way."

"Better get into the gym," said Ogilvy. "There's been row enough here. By George! Here comes Wingate!"

Wingate, of the Sixth, put his head into the room.

"If there's any more row here you will hear from me," he said.

And he disappeared. But it was warning enough. The captain of Greyfriars meant what he said.

"The gym, then," said Bulstrode.

And the crowd of juniors poured out of the common-room, down the passage, and made for the gym, joined en route by most of the Remove.

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THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Licked.

HARRY WHARTON joined the crowd that was pouring towards the gym. He touched the Lancashire lad on the arm as they went in.

"Would you like me to be your second, Linley?" he asked.

Mark nodded.

"Yes, if you will—if you care to," he added, a little bitterly.

"Of course I will."

They entered the gym. Boxing contests very frequently took place there, but this one was to be without gloves. The crowd of juniors formed a ring, sufficiently thick to screen from general observation what was really going on. There was only a few seniors in the gym, and they took no particular notice of the juniors.

Bulstrode was looking, and feeling, triumphant. He was in the best of condition just now, and quite ready for a combat; and he could see that Linley was not.

Mark was pale and worn, and his face showed only too plainly that he was under the stress of some heavy trouble.

It was evident, too, that he took little interest in the fight; that his thoughts were elsewhere.

He had licked Bulstrode before; but anyone looking at the two of them now, would have said that Mark Linley had little chance against the burly bully of the Remove.

But it was not courage that would be wanting.

The two juniors stripped off their jackets, and rolled up their sleeves. Sponges and a basin of water had been provided by a thoughtful junior, and Frank Nugent appointed himself timekeeper.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"What-ho!" said Bulstrode.

"Yes," said Linley dully.

Harry looked anxiously at his principal.

"Pull yourself together, Linley," he whispered. "You're not in a fit state. You don't want to be licked, I suppose?"

"I don't care much!"

"Blessed if I understand you."

"Time!"

Bulstrode swaggered forward, and Mark Linley stepped up to meet him. The fight began at once.

That the usually keen and alert Lancashire lad was not himself was soon clear, if it had not been so before. He was usually a good boxer, and extremely watchful and alert. Now he seemed to be, as Bob Cherry expressed it, half-asleep.

His guard was feeble, and twice Bulstrode's blows came in heavily upon his face.

He reeled under them, but he fought on, but he was evidently on his last legs when Nugent's call of time came to his relief.

Linley sank heavily upon the knee Harry made for him.

Wharton sponged his bruised and heated face, and watched him anxiously. He could not understand Linley in the least. What was the matter with him?

"You're not fit, kid," said Harry abruptly. "I should advise you as your second not to go on with it. Chuck it up now."

Mark Linley shook his head.

"I shall do better in the second round," he said.

"Well, you'll need to."

"The needfulness is terrific," murmured Harree Singh, who was holding the basin for Harry to wet the sponge.

"The esteemed Bulstrode is crowing alreadyfully."

"Stop his crowing, Linley!"

"Yes," said Mark dully.

"Time!"

Wharton felt great misgivings as his principal toed the line again. Bulstrode was swaggering, but Linley was uncertain and hesitating.

"Blessed if I can make him out," said Bob Cherry, who was nursing a black eye, the result of his own encounter with Bulstrode. "He's off his form, anyway. He doesn't seem to have a ghost of a chance against Bulstrode!"

"It's very odd."

"Something on his mind, I suppose," said Nugent. "I can't make Linley out at all lately. He's certainly not fit to fight."

"He won't give in."

"I don't think it will last long."

Mark Linley was playing a losing game. He certainly did his best, but he was not fit. And Bulstrode pushed every advantage mercilessly.

Right round the ring he drove the Lancashire lad, with blow on blow, and up to the call of time Mark had no chance; but then he suddenly woke up, as it were, and threw himself upon Bulstrode with new energy.

The Remove bully staggered back under a fierce attack, and a heavy right-hander under the chin sent him fairly flying.

He crashed upon the floor with a concussion that made the planks ring.

Wharton's eyes danced.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "Bravo, Linley!"

"Bravo!"

Skinner picked Bulstrode up.

"Time!" sang out Nugent.

Bulstrode, looking very dazed, staggered out of the ring, and almost collapsed upon Skinner's knee. He blinked in a dizzy way at his second.

"That was bad," said Skinner sympathetically.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Mustn't let that happen again."

"Groo!"

"You must look out, you know."

"Yow!"

Bulstrode's jaw was aching too much for talk. But Mark Linley was in no better state. He sank wearily on Harry's knee, and did not utter a word as his heated face was sponged. Bob Cherry patted him on the shoulder.

"That was ripping Marky!" he exclaimed. "Bulstrode won't swagger so much in the next round, I fancy. It was spiffing! Give him another like that, and he'll be done."

Mark nodded without speaking.

"Time!"

The combatants faced each other for the third round. The brief spurt of energy on Linley's part was over. Bulstrode drove him round the ring again, and he was more on his guard this time, and gave Linley little chance.

A heavy drive from Bulstrode's right caught the Lancashire lad napping, and he went down. He crashed heavily on the floor, and did not rise.

Nugent began to count.

Harry Wharton watched Mark anxiously as Nugent counted. If he did not rise by the time ten had been counted, he was licked. And Harry hoped that he would not. He was not fit to fight, and there was no use in his taking more punishment.

"One, two, three, four, five, six——"

Bulstrode stood ready to crash his fist into the bruised face of the junior rose. Mark Linley made an effort to drag himself up, but there was no need for Bulstrode's blow. He sank back again from sheer exhaustion.

"Seven, eight, nine——"

There was a breathless silence.

One more, and Mark Linley confessed himself licked, and Bulstrode was the victor. Once more the Lancashire lad strove to rise. In vain! His head was swimming, his senses clouded. He sank back with a breathless groan.

"Ten!"

Nugent put his watch away.

"It's up," he said. "Bulstrode wins. Never mind, Linley, old chap; better luck next time."

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry raised the Lancashire lad to his feet, and helped him on with his jacket. Mark submitted without a word. Bulstrode watched the defeated junior with a sneering smile.

"Well, he's had his lesson," he said, as he got into his jacket. "and there's more where that came from, if it's needed."

Wharton turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Hold your tongue, you cad!"

"I——"

"Shut up, unless you want another fight on your hands," said Wharton savagely. "It's like you to taunt a chap when he's down."

And Bulstrode bit his lip, and was silent.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton linked their arms in Linley's to walk back to the School House with him. They passed Wingate at the door of the gym. The captain of Greyfriars glanced at them rather curiously. He could not have failed to note the state of Mark Linley's face, but he made no remark.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes a Suggestion.

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Go and eat coke, Bunter!"

"Aren't you hungry?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking at the chums of No. 1 Study. "It's a jolly cold night, and I always get hungry on cold nights. That bit of bread and cheese in the dining-room doesn't make much difference to me. It would be ripping to have a bit of supper in the study, I should think."

"There's a crust and half a sardine left in the cupboard," said Nugent. "You can wire in."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

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"Don't offer to go down to the tuckshop, Billy," said Wharton. "We know you don't mind taking the trouble for fellows you like, and that you'd do anything for us—at meal-times."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, I was thinking of a good supper—say ham and eggs, and some toast, and roasted chestnuts to finish," said Billy Bunter persuasively.

"Blessed if he isn't making me feel hungry," said Nugent. "It's bedtime in a quarter of an hour, too. You'd better stand a feed, Billy."

"That's exactly what I was thinking of."

"Come into a fortune," asked Nugent sarcastically, "or has the postal order arrived at last?"

"No; there's been some delay about that, owing to the awful carelessness of the postal authorities," said Bunter. "I am going to write to the Postmaster-General, and complain."

"In time for supper to-night?"

"Oh, don't be funny, you know! I can't stand the feed just now, but if one of you fellows liked to advance me a few bob off the postal order——"

"Rats!"

"Well, then, there's Linley!"

"What about Linley?"

"Why, he's got twenty-five pounds," said Billy Bunter, blinking. "He hasn't even stood a feed to his own chums in No. 13. My idea is that if he won't stand a feed, he should be forced to. What do you think of the idea?"

"Don't talk rot!"

"Oh, really! You see, we could rag him, and make him hand over one of the sovereigns at least, and——"

"Shut up!"

"He practically agreed to go Co. with me, and share the prize," said Bunter. "He really owes me twelve-pound ten. I think I'm entitled to it."

"Bosh!"

"I wish you fellows would be a little bit more sympathetic. You know I've got a delicate constitution, and can only be kept up by constant nourishment."

"Rats!"

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully at the Removites, and went out of the study and slammed the door. His idea of forcibly taking possession of a portion of the Seymour prize was evidently not likely to find much favour there.

He met Bulstrode outside the common-room, and caught him by the sleeve. Bulstrode shook him off roughly. He was in an irritable temper. Although he had beaten Mark Linley in the fight in the gym, he had received considerable damage himself. And a closing eye and a swollen nose and aching jaw did not improve his temper, naturally.

"Keep your paws off me!" he growled.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"Buzz off!"

And the Remove bully strode away.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "Rotter! I—— Oh!"

He staggered as a junior pushed past him. "Oh, really, Elliott——"

"He, he, he!" giggled Snoop.

"Oh, is that you, Snoopey?" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I say, Snoop, I've got an idea. How would you like a jolly good feed?"

"Ripping," said Snoop.

"Then suppose we get some of the fellows to make Linley pay up some of the cash?" said Bunter. "He's no right to keep it all to himself. Any other chap would have stood a Form feed at the least. We're entitled to it."

"Something in that," said Snoop thoughtfully. "It would be easy enough to get the chaps to rag Linley—he's not popular just now. But as for making him stump up——"

"Well, we could tar and feather him if he wouldn't," said Bunter.

Snoop sniggered.

"That's a jolly good idea."

"Well, let's see if the fellows will take it up," said Bunter. "I really think that an example ought to be made of Linley, you know. He's mean. I hate meanness. I can stand a lot of things in a fellow, but if he's mean or despicable in any way, I bar him."

"You'll have to drop your own acquaintance, then, won't you?" sniggered Snoop.

"Oh, really Snoop——"

"But it's a good idea, all the same. Let's get the fellows together, and talk it over," said Snoop. "Tell them to come to my study."

"Right you are!"

And the two least worthy specimens in the Greyfriars Remove separated. Billy Bunter caught sight of a junior in the passage, and stopped to speak to him. He stopped him by catching at his sleeve, in the objectionable way he had, and blinked at the fellow, whose face was not very

clear in the dusky passage, especially to the shortsighted Billy.

"I say, Skinner," said Bunter, "I've got a good dodge on about that cad Linley, you know."

His hand was roughly shaken off.

"Hold on, Skinner, old chap! We're going to collar the mean beast, you know, and make him cash up some of the tin. Don't you think it's a good idea?"

"I am not Skinner," said a quiet voice.

Bunter jumped almost clear of the floor.

"Linley! Oh, dear!"

Billy Bunter blinked in utter dismay at the Lancashire lad. It was to Mark Linley himself that he had been unfolding his precious plan.

"I—I was only joking, of course, Linley," he remarked.

"I—I don't really intend to do anything of the sort. I like you too much, and I really feel very friendly towards you, though you're only a factory cad. I— Well, of all the rude beasts, to walk away while I'm talking to him. This is jolly well the last time that I'll take any notice of the utter outsider."

Billy Bunter was a little more careful after that to whom he propounded his plan. Six or seven juniors willingly joined in the scheme, and in a body they went to look for Mark Linley. He had gone up to his study after leaving Bunter, not caring for the company of the common-room.

The party of young rascals made their way cautiously along to No. 13 Study.

"We shall have to see whether Bob Cherry is there," said Snoop. "No good getting into a row with Cherry. He's sure to take Linley's part."

"Yes, the beast!"

"The Chinee doesn't matter."

"Not a bit."

Skinner tapped at the study door. If Bob Cherry were there, he simply meant to say it was time to get ready for bed. But it was Mark Linley's voice that replied.

"Come in!"

The ragers entered.

Mark Linley was in his chair, with his books before him. Whatever trouble he had on his mind, the evening preparation had to be done. And for once Mark was late with it.

Little Wun Lung was in the armchair, curled up in his usual comfortable attitude. The ragers took no notice of him. Bob Cherry, with his burly form and big fists, was a tough customer to get on the wrong side of, but the little Celestial did not count.

"Lock the door," said Skinner.

Stott turned the key. Mark Linley rose to his feet.

"What do you want here?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Linley—"

"We want a little talk," said Skinner blandly. "You're a disgrace to the Form. We want you to turn over a new leaf."

"Just so!" agreed Elliott.

"It's a question of behaving decently over the prize," remarked Stott. "We're going to give you a last chance of dubbing up like a decent chap."

Mark's eyes gleamed.

"You've come here for nothing, then," he said. "I have no intention of standing anything—not even your insolence. You had better get out."

The juniors laughed. The door was locked, there was no rescue for the Lancashire lad, and matters were entirely in their hands.

"Why not act decently for once?" urged Skinner.

"We're giving you a chance. Any other chap would have spent a lot of the tin royally."

"Yes, rather," said Bunter. "I'm sincerely sorry to see Linley acting in this mean way, and I think he ought to keep our respect. I'm disappointed in him. I can't stand meanness in a chap."

"Get out, please," said Mark.

"Then you're not going to play the game?" demanded Skinner threateningly.

"I have nothing for you."

"Nothing out of twenty-five quid!" said Stott. "Hark at the rotter! And he had it all in spot cash, too!"

"I have none of it left now," said Mark.

The juniors stared at him.

"Oh, come off!" said Stott rudely. "You don't expect us to believe that you've blued twenty-five pounds in a single afternoon, I suppose?"

"I have none left."

"Then what have you done with it?"

"That is my business."

"It's our business if a fellow in our Form acts like a mean cad," said Stott.

"Oh, really, Linley, you oughtn't to be mean, you know! If you tried to be decent, we'd treat you as one of ourselves. I'm sure I've always been willing to take notice of you," said Bunter.

"I have nothing more to say to you," said Mark.

"Mind," said Skinner, "we're here on business. If you don't do the decent thing, you'll suffer for it."

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Mark did not reply.

"Is that all you have to say, Linley?"

"Yes."

"Then this is where the ragging begins," said Skinner. "Collar him!"

And with one accord the ragers rushed upon the Lancashire lad.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Rough on the Ragers.

MARK LINLEY put up his fists at once, his eyes gleaming over them. He was in no state for fighting, especially after his tough encounter with Bulstrode only an hour before. But he had no choice about the matter now. The odds were heavily against him, and the ragers were in earnest. Billy Bunter cautiously kept in the background, but the rest of them rushed simultaneously upon the Lancashire junior.

Mark hit out, and Skinner fell into the fender, and Stott dropped upon the hearthrug. Then he was bowled over, and he went to the floor with the ragers sprawling over him.

Wun Lung rose to his feet. The little Chinee was not of much use in a scrap. He ran to the door to unlock it, but Elliott caught him by the shoulder, and hurled him into the armchair again.

"You stay there!" he remarked.

"Ow!" gasped Wun Lung.

"Let me up, you cads!" gasped Mark Linley, struggling furiously under the sprawling heap of juniors.

"Collar him!"

"Sit on him!"

Skinner scrambled out of the grate, rubbing his nose, which had come into violent contact with the fender. It was streaming with red, and neither Skinner's appearance nor Skinner's temper was improved thereby.

"Got the beast?" he exclaimed. "That's right; hold him!"

"We've got him!"

"Sit on him! By George, we'll make him smart for this!"

"He's made you smart," grinned Elliott.

"Oh, shut up! Bunter, bring that ink-bottle here."

"Oh, certainly!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, wouldn't it be a good idea to give him a dab or two with a red-hot poker?"

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"Well, you young beast," said Elliott, giving Bunter a shove that sent him reeling across the study.

"Ow! Oh, really, Elliott, I was only making a suggestion—"

"You'd better not make any more like that."

"But I think—"

"Shut up!"

"Give me the ink," said Skinner. "I'll anoint him. Now then, Linley, you're going to be put through it."

Linley gasped, but did not reply. He was powerless in the hands of the raggers, but he would make no appeal to them.

His flashing eyes looked up fearlessly at Skinner as the latter took the ink-bottle in his hand. Skinner hesitated a moment.

"Are you willing to do the decent thing?" he remarked. "Stand a feed to the whole Form, and make a public apology for being a mean beast, and we'll let you off."

"Hear, hear!"

"What do you say, Linley?"

"Nothing."

"You refuse, then?"

"Yes."

"Then here goes!"

Bang, bang, bang!

It was a sudden and furious knocking at the door. Bob Cherry's voice roared through the keyhole.

"Open this door! It's past bedtime, Linley, and Carne is looking for you. Come out!"

"Bedtime!" growled Skinner. "Just our luck!"

"Oh, we needn't hurry!" said Billy Bunter. "You can explain to Carne, you know. Besides, the door's locked."

"Ass! We shall have to—"

"Why don't you open this door?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Rescue!" shouted Mark.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up!"

Bob Cherry shook the handle of the door furiously. Mark Linley struggled, and the raggers had plenty to do to hold him down. Skinner upturned the ink-bottle, and sent out a great splash of the black fluid; but Mark's struggles had brought Stott's head in the way.

The splash of ink met Stott's ear, and smothered his face, and there was a terrific yell from Stott.

"Oh! Ow! You ass!"

Stott jumped up, knocking Skinner backwards, and the ink-bottle crashed to the floor and broke. A shower of spilt ink scattered itself over the juniors.

"You clumsy ass!" yelled Elliott, who received a spurt of it in the eye.

"Ow! You duffer!"

"You dummy!"

"Ow! It wasn't my fault—the beast—"

"Idiot!"

Wun Lung saw his opportunity, and whipped to the door and unlocked it. Bob Cherry strode into the study, red with wrath.

"What are you up to here?" he roared. "Here, Wharton—Nugent—come in—come and lend a hand, will you?"

Harry and Nugent came quickly along the passage. Bob was already getting to business. The raggers were defending themselves from his vigorous onslaught. The odds would have told against him, but for the prompt arrival of Harry and his chum. They sailed into the melee without stopping to ask questions.

With the three champion athletes of the Lower School against them, the raggers had a warm time, in spite of their numbers.

Mark Linley jumped up, and rushed to the aid of the rescuers, and Wun Lung joined in, doing his little best.

The tables were turned now.

Half the raggers were sprawling on the floor, and the others were driven towards the door under a rain of blows.

"Ow!" gasped Skinner. "Chuck it! We're going."

"You are!" agreed Bob Cherry, giving him a powerful drive on the chest that flung him into the passage. "You won't come again in a hurry, either, I fancy."

"Oh!"

"Out with them!"

"Out they go!"

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Yah!"

The unfortunate raggers were bundled out in a heap. They struggled and scrambled on the cold linoleum, with a wild chorus of yells and shrieks.

"Now bundle out the rest," said Nugent, grinning.

And the raggers who had been floored in the combat were unceremoniously kicked towards the doorway, and added to the yelling heap in the passage.

Wharton burst into a laugh.

"A jolly clean sweep!" he exclaimed.

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"Yes, rather! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter left—"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"What are you doing here?" demanded Harry Wharton angrily. "Do you mean to say you were one of that gang?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—oh, no—of course not! I—I—"

"Was he one of them, Linley?"

"Yes."

"You fat young villain!"

"Collar him!"

Billy Bunter dodged round the table.

"I—I—I say, you fellows, it's—it's all a mistake, you know. Linley is mistaken. I—I really came here to help him. I was just going to interfere—"

"Oh, ring off the whoppers!"

"I'm sincerely sorry that you should doubt my word, Nugent. I came here to make peace, really, and—and—"

Ow! Leggo!"

Bob Cherry's finger and thumb closed on Billy Bunter's ear, and Billy felt as if the appendage was in the grip of a vice. He squirmed painfully.

"Ow! Leggo! Yow! Chuck it!"

"You came here to make peace, did you?" said Bob Cherry grimly.

"Ow! Yow! Yes! No! Yah!"

"You were one of the raggers—eh?"

"No! Yes—yes!"

"You fat worm! I—"

"Ow! Leggo!" wailed Billy Bunter. "I only wanted to make Linley do the decent thing. I thought it would really be best for him, you know—I did really. Ow!"

There was an angry voice in the passage. Carne, of the Sixth, came along with a cane in his hand. It was Carne's pleasant duty to see the Lower Fourth to bed that evening, and Carne did not like being kept waiting.

"Now, then, you rats!"

The raggers in the passage scattered with loud howls as the cane began to lash. Then Carne looked into No. 13 Study.

"Off to bed, you young sweeps!"

He was inclined to use the cane again, but Harry Wharton & Co. did not look as if they would take it quietly.

"Get to bed!" snapped Carne.

"Oh, all serene!" said Bob Cherry. "Come along, Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"This way, Tubby!"

"Ow!"

And Billy Bunter was led to the Remove dormitory with Bob Cherry's vicelike grip upon his fat ear. Bob did not relax it till they were in the dormitory. He led Bunter to his bed, flopped him upon it, and then finally released the ear. Billy Bunter at once clapped his hand to it, groaning.

"Ow! You beast! I'm hurt!"

"Go hon!" said Bob. "Now, look here, Bunter—"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Shut up, and listen to me! If you begin any more ragging, you'll get hurt. Do you understand? You're trouble enough as it is, without starting in life as a ragger. It's not your forte. You're to keep off the grass. Savvy?"

"Ow!"

And the Remove went to bed. But it was very probable that the lesson was enough for Billy Bunter, and that his career as a ragger was over.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

The Form Against Him.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, glanced at Mark Linley the next morning, when the Remove sat down to the breakfast-table. The Form-master could not help noticing the signs of recent combat on Linley's face. But that was not all; the Lancashire lad's usually healthy face was very pale and worn. He looked as if he had not slept; and indeed he had closed his eyes but little the previous night.

The Form-master did not speak, however, till breakfast was over. Then, as he left the dining-room, he called to Linley:

"Come into my study, Linley. I want to speak to you."

"Yes, sir."

Mark followed the Form-master in, and closed the door. He felt a little worried. He had no doubt that he was to be hauled over the coals for the signs of the recent fight; though, as a matter of fact, Bulstrode and Bob Cherry looked very nearly as battered. But Mr. Quelch did not mention the matter.

"I wish to speak to you about the Seymour prize," said the Form-master quietly. "It is a rule of the competition that the prize shall be handed to the winner in money."

A Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Really, this is extremely annoying, Preston," remarked Tadpole. "My artistic studies are already seriously disturbed by the presence of Gordon Gay and the two Woottons in the study. But an extra one will really be intolerable!"

(An amusing incident in the splendid, long complete school tale, contained in "The Empire Library." Now on Sale. Price One Halfpenny.)

"Yes, sir."

"You have received it. Your parents were, however, advised beforehand of your success, and naturally they would have a voice in disposing of so considerable a sum of money."

"Of course, sir."

"I have heard some talk," said Mr. Quelch, "which indicates that there was some plan on foot among the competitors for the prize-winner to share out the money in case of success. The winner would not be allowed to do this without the consent of his parents or guardians."

"I suppose not, sir."

"Then you were not under any agreement of this sort?" Mark flushed.

"No, sir."

"Very good. It was not a sensible plan, and I am glad you did not subscribe to it. You are not likely to waste your prize recklessly, either, I think."

"I hope not, sir."

"Of course, there could be no objection to your expending a portion of it, in any boyish celebration. But any reckless extravagance would be very much disapproved of by the

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Head. I should suggest, Linley, your placing the money in the hands of a master until you have heard from your parents. I should have said this to you yesterday, but you were not to be found after the prize was awarded, and then I went out myself."

Mark coloured again.

"The money is already safe, sir!" he stammered.

"Is it still in your possession?"

"N-no, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked hard at him.

"I think it is my duty, as your Form-master, Linley, to ask you what you have done with it," he said. "I have kept an eye on you ever since you came to Greyfriars. You have had an uphill battle, and you have fought it bravely, so far. Your circumstances have been against you, and you would have done much better if you had had, as the others mostly have, the aid of money. I was sincerely glad to hear that you had won this prize, because I thought that it would help you out of this difficulty. It may mean a great deal to you. I think, therefore, that you should be very careful in the expenditure of it."

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A Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton
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"Ye-es, sir."

"It should enable you to purchase books that you have long needed, and a part of it might be set aside for the inevitable expenses when you pass into a higher Form," said Mr. Quelch. "I am speaking as your friend in this matter, Linley, because I consider it my duty as your Form-master to advise you. I hope you understand that."

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"Then I think you should tell me what you have done with the twenty-five pounds."

"I have placed it in my father's hands, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at him dubiously.

"To be used for your benefit, Linley?"

"Well, sir, not exactly; but—" Mark broke off.

The Form-master's brow wrinkled a little. Mark Linley's people he had never seen; but he knew that they were poor, and in his mind's eye he saw a host of greedy relations taking to themselves the fruits of the lad's industry, careless of the fact that he would need every shilling of it if he was to go on as he had begun at Greyfriars. The suspicion on the Form-master's part was a natural one, when he heard that the junior had parted with the whole of the prize, without retaining anything for himself.

"Very well, Linley," he said shortly. "I would be far from suggesting that you should not trust your father's judgment absolutely. You may go."

"Yes, sir."

And Mark Linley quitted the study. Mr. Quelch remained a few minutes in thought, and then he took his way into the Head's house, where Dr. Locke was preparing for morning chapel. The Head nodded to him cordially.

"Can you spare me a few minutes, sir?" said the Form-master. "I have spoken to Linley on the subject of the prize."

"Certainly! Go on!"

"It appears that he has placed the whole sum in the hands of his father already."

The Head nodded thoughtfully.

"Of course, that is a wise step for any lad to do in similar circumstances," said the Remove master. "His father is his natural protector and adviser. At the same time, it seems to me that someone ought to see that the lad's interests are protected, in case of any injudiciousness on the part of the parents. Such a large sum of money, coming suddenly into the hands of very poor people, is almost certain to be to a great extent wasted, or, at all events, to be used to meet family accounts which have nothing to do with the boy here. You agree with me?"

"Quite. Linley had acted well—at the same time, someone should be more careful of his interests than he is himself."

"Exactly, sir. Would you then approve of my writing to Mr. Linley, and pointing out to him the need the boy will have of the money, if he is to continue his education here with any prospect of success?"

"I certainly think it should be done," said the Head.

"Very good. Then I will do so. Mark Linley would be a credit to any school, and I am anxious that he should have every chance of success here."

"I fully share the feeling," said Dr. Locke. "Write to Mr. Linley, by all means, and let him know as delicately as possible, how Linley's masters consider that his prize should be expended. That a certain proportion of it should be used to relieve his family is only just, but at least half should be reserved for the boy's own needs."

"That is just my view, sir."

And Mr. Quelch went back to his study, and the letter was written. Mark Linley, in happy unconsciousness of the step that was being taken to protect his interests, went into the Form-room after prayers with the rest of the Remove.

But it was pretty clear now that Mark Linley, though "with" the Remove, was not of them. Few fellows spoke or nodded to him.

All the success he had had in making his way in the esteem of his Form-fellows, seemed gone now. His conduct over the Seymour prize had lost him everything, and it had changed to dislike and contempt the indifference of many fellows who had never actively disliked him before.

Even his own personal friends had little to say for him, excepting that it was his own business what he did with his own money. But that was a lame argument, for his own chums had expected some sort of a festival, and had been disappointed. Not that Bob Cherry and the others cared a penny for the feed itself. It was the fact that Linley was not willing to stand it that was cutting. And the Lancashire lad had not spent a penny more than usual since winning the prize, either.

Twenty-five pounds seemed boundless wealth to the other fellows, who seldom had more than a pound at a time, when they were in funds. The winner of such a sum, allowed to have the handling of it himself by the regulations of the contest, was expected to be at least a little free with his

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money. Large subscriptions to the school funds would have come, as a matter of course, and various treats for the lucky winner's own Form. And Linley had done nothing, subscribed nothing, and spent nothing.

Even Bob Cherry had little to say; and, in fact, he did not see more of Linley than he could help now. An inevitable coldness grew up, which, however, Mark was as yet too much worried by other matters to notice.

Linley went out quietly after morning lessons. He strolled into the Close, few fellows speaking to him. The spring sunshine was falling brightly upon the green Close and the old elms, and it insensibly cheered up the Lancashire lad. He sat down upon one of the wooden seats under the elms, and the sunshine fell warmly upon his face, showing up how pale and worn it was.

A group of juniors strolled under the elms, and halted near the seat to chat. Mark did not notice them for a few minutes, but the mention of his own name made him look up. They were members of the Amateur Dramatic Society, and their raised tones showed that they intended their remarks to reach the ears of the junior sitting there. They were discussing an intended production of the Dramatic Society.

"Merchant of Venice!" said Elliott. "Good! And who are we going to cast for the part of Shylock?"

"Oh, Linley, of course!"

"Linley! What a jolly good idea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, that's what I call a ripping good idea!" exclaimed Skinner, glancing round quickly to see whether his victim was listening. "Linley's simply born for the part of Shylock."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wouldn't have to make up for the part, you know," said Stott.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's ask him!"

"Good! Here he is!"

"Come on!"

The juniors crowded towards the seat where the Lancashire lad was sitting. They all began speaking at once.

"I say, Linley, we've got a good part for you."

"Will you play Shylock?"

"Just suits you, you know."

"Your part to the life."

Mark rose to his feet. He gave them a quiet glance of scorn, and walked away. They did not follow, but a loud shout of taunting laughter followed the lad.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

An Artist in Trouble.

"H E, ho, he!"

Mr. Quelch heard Snoop's well-known chuckle as he came towards the Remove Form-room that afternoon. The Remove master was a few minutes late—an unusual occurrence with him—and the Lower Fourth were all in their places before he came.

That the boys would not sit quietly at their desks while they waited for him was a certainty, and the Form-master was not surprised to hear the sound of suppressed laughter as he came down the passage.

Mr. Quelch frowned a little as he pushed open the door. Some joke was evidently on in the Remove-room.

The Form-master looked in. Snoop was standing at the blackboard, which had been placed on the easel ready for use. It was facing the class, and some of the juniors were at their desks, and others were standing about Snoop, most of them grinning and chuckling.

Harry Wharton was looking very uncomfortable. Mark Linley sat in his place, looking straight before him, as if he saw nothing.

"Cave!" muttered Lacy.

The juniors made a rush for their desks as their Form-master appeared.

Mr. Quelch walked on grimly. Snoop made a desperate clutch at the duster that hung on one of the easel-pegs; then abandoning his intention, he fled with the rest, and subsided into his place.

The Form-master stood before the board, looking at it.

He knew that Snoop had been chalking something there, something which had amused the rest of the Remove highly. He naturally expected to find some caricature of himself, or of some other master at Greyfriars.

But it was nothing of the sort. Snoop, who had a certain artistic skill, and could sketch a likeness, had depicted Mark Linley on the board.

The face was the face of Mark Linley, unmistakably, but the body was that of a bowed and ragged old miser. The figure was seated in a depicted cellar, counting over a hoard of gold—the hoard being appropriately marked "£25."

Mr. Quelch's brow grew very stern as he looked at it. He could not fail to see the allusion to Linley and the Seymour prize.

Linley kept his eyes on his desk. He had seen the drawing on the board, but he made it a point not to look at it. Snoop caught the expression upon Mr. Quelch's face, and he trembled in his seat.

"Snoop!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Snoop.

"I think this is your work."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"I did not know you were so artistic, Snoop," said Mr. Quelch. "Stand out here."

Snoop unwillingly obeyed.

"Take the duster and wipe that out."

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Now will you be kind enough to take in this note to the Head?" said Mr. Quelch, writing a note at his desk. "Your artistic talent is so great, Snoop, that I think it should be recognised publicly; and I do not want you to forget the occasion."

Snoop took the note in a shaking hand. He knew what taking a note in to the Head meant.

"And before you go," added Mr. Quelch, "I should be glad if you would apologise to the schoolfellow you have caricatured, for your mean and despicable action."

"Oh, sir!"

"You will tell him that you are sorry, and that you will never be guilty of such a mean and cowardly action again," said Mr. Quelch inexorably.

Snoop flushed crimson.

"Do you hear me, Snoop?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Then you had better obey."

Snoop turned towards Mark Linley, who still kept his eyes on his desk.

"Linley," he began, "I—I——"

He broke off.

"Go on," said Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'm sorry I drew you on the blackboard——"

"That is not exact," said Mr. Quelch. "You will explain that you are sorry for your mean and despicable action, please."

Snoop writhed. There were boys in the Remove who would have been flogged a dozen times before they would have submitted to such a humiliation; but Snoop was not one of them. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Linley! I—I'm sorry——"

"You are wasting time, Snoop."

"I—I'm sorry for—for my mean and despicable action," stammered Snoop.

"That is better," said Mr. Quelch. "I am sorry, too, that there should be so mean and despicable a boy in the Form under my charge. I am sorry that others of the Form have looked upon his mean action in the light of a joke."

The Removites shifted uncomfortably. Bulstrode, who had nerve enough for almost anything, rose to his feet. Mr. Quelch fixed a most disconcerting gaze upon him.

"Have you anything to say upon this subject, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir. Snoop has only written down what we all thought," said the Remove bully. "Linley is jolly mean."

"Indeed!"

"The whole Form thinks so. Even his own friends don't uphold him——"

"That's not true," said Bob Cherry.

"The untruthfulness is terrific."

"Well, they think he's beastly mean, sir, the same as we all do, and they can't deny it," said Bulstrode. "Snoop's done no more than we all thought."

"I should be sorry to think so, Bulstrode. You have a right to associate yourself with Snoop in his meanness if you wish, but not the whole of the Lower Fourth."

"I mean to say, sir——"

"You have said enough, Bulstrode. You may sit down."

"Yes, sir; but——"

"Sit down!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a sparkle in his eyes. And the Remove bully promptly obeyed.

"Now, Snoop——"

Mark Linley rose to his feet.

"If you please, sir——"

He hesitated.

"Go on, Linley," said Mr. Quelch, kindly enough.

"It's very painful to me, sir, to have Snoop punished on my account. I don't mind what he did. He doesn't understand, and I don't care! It's nothing to me, and—and if you'd be good enough, sir, I—I'd rather you let Snoop off."

Mr. Quelch's brows wrinkled for a moment. Some of the juniors expected him to call Mark out and cane him for his audacity, but he did not.

He hesitated several moments before he replied.

"That is a very peculiar thing to say to me, Linley," he said at last. "Snoop deserves to be punished. However,

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as you make the request, I grant it. Snoop, you may go to your place."

Snoop gasped with relief.

"Thank you, sir."

"I hope, Snoop, that you will bear in mind that you owe your pardon to the lad you have treated badly, and act accordingly," said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Yes, sir," said Snoop.

But his glance at Mark Linley, as he passed him in going to his place, showed exactly how much kindness or gratitude there was in Snoop's breast.

The afternoon's lessons began, and the incident of the blackboard was not referred to again. But when the Remove were dismissed, Mr. Quelch signed to Mark Linley to stay behind as the class filed out.

"Linley," said the Form-master quietly, "I cannot help seeing what is going on, of course. Your Form-fellows have made a set against you in this matter."

"Yes, sir," said Mark quietly.

"I think they are wrong; but, upon the whole, is it wise of you to run counter to all their prejudices in this matter, Linley? Don't you think it would be judicious to show a more conciliatory spirit?"

"I cannot do as they wish, sir."

"Very well; it was simply a suggestion on my part, and I suppose you know your own affairs best."

And the Remove-master made a gesture of dismissal.

Linley left the Form-room without a word. He felt that he had sunk in the estimation of the Form-master, as well as of the Form, now; but there was no help for it. As he went out into the passage, the fellows there drew to the right and the left to let him pass. No one spoke to him; but Linley was beginning to get used to that.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Good News.

WHEN the evening post came in, Mark Linley was in the hall, waiting for the postman; and he turned away with a darkly-disappointed face as he discovered that there was no letter for him. He went quietly to No. 13 Study, and worked, and he was left in peace there.

The raggers were keeping the peace; and Bob Cherry showed no great desire to spend time in his own study now. The coldness between the chums of No. 13 was growing, and Mark Linley's enemies saw it with satisfaction.

"I'm done with him," Billy Bunter announced in No. 1 Study.

"Done with whom?" asked Nugent.

"Linley, of course."

"Poor chap!" said Nugent feelingly. "How he'll suffer! Won't you really speak to him any more, Billy, and borrow a bob of him when you're hard up?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Are you really going to wipe his name off your visiting-list, and off your list of creditors?" said Nugent, with emotion.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm done with him," he repeated. "I've been kind to him—very kind; but I've got the usual kind of gratitude you get when you take notice of the lower classes. They snap at the hand that feeds them."

"That's a thing you'd never do, would you, Billy?" said Harry. "You'd welcome any hand that fed you at any time with anything."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Shut up!" said Nugent. "You make me tired, Billy—not to say sick."

"Well, I'm done with him," said Billy Bunter. "As for his twenty-five pounds, he can keep it if he likes. I wouldn't touch it now if he offered it to me."

"Ananias!"

"Oh, really, you know! But I was thinking, Wharton, it's jolly mean of Linley not to stand a feed out of his twenty-five quids; but you had five, you know, and you haven't stood anything yet."

"And I'm not going to," said Harry.

Bunter gave it up. He went out of the study, and slammed the door. Nugent looked rather curiously at Wharton.

"Some of the fellows have been thinking the same as Bunter, Harry," he remarked. "If Linley won't part, they consider it's up to you to celebrate the occasion."

"Let them consider."

"You're not going to do it?"

"No!" Harry paused a moment. "You see, I don't know what Linley's motive is in acting as he's done, but I suppose he has his reasons, and I'm not going to appear to want to show him up by contrast. See?"

"Yes, I see."

"The selfishness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I quite agree with my worthy chum."

There was a light in the Remove dormitory when the Removites went up that night. Some of the Form had evidently gone up early. Wharton heard a chuckle as he entered, and he soon discovered the cause of it.

Bulstrode and Snoop and Skinner were there. They turned away from Linley's bed as the rest of the Remove came in.

Upon the white coverlet a single word had been traced in soot.

"Shylock!"

The Lancashire lad turned red, and then pale. He glanced at Bulstrode, whose fingers were yet black with the soot.

But he said nothing.

"He's getting quite tame," said Skinner, with a grin. "Not so long ago there would have been a fight for that."

"One licking is enough, I suppose," said Bulstrode, with a shrug of the shoulders. "By George! We may get him to get out of Greyfriars at the end of the term if we make things sufficiently warm for him. What price that?"

"Good!" said Snoop.

The Remove went to bed.

Mark Linley was the first up in the morning, though he had been the last to sleep. He went down before the rest of the juniors. When Harry Wharton came down, he saw Linley standing on the steps outside, looking towards the gates.

"Waiting for the postman?" he asked cheerily.

Linley nodded.

"Here he is!"

Linley ran quickly towards the postman. His face was flushed, and his eyes gleaming with eagerness.

"Anything for Mark Linley?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, sir."

"Give it me—quick."

The Friardale postman fumbled in his bag. He was slow and uncertain, and he took his time, and the junior waited on tenterhooks of impatience while he was fumbling.

The letter came out at last, however.

"Here's your letter, sir."

"Thank you."

Linley took the letter, and opened it where he stood, tearing the envelope open with a hasty and nervous hand. His eyes ran swiftly over the contents of the letter.

"Thank Heaven!"

A flush of gladness came over the junior's face; he almost staggered with the overpowering emotion that seized upon him. Wharton came quickly towards him. He put out a hand, and caught the Lancashire lad by the shoulder.

"Thank Heaven!"

"Good news?" asked Wharton, with a smile.

"Yes; thank Heaven! She's out of danger."

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

Light at Last.

MARK LINLEY gasped out the words. It seemed as if a load had been lifted from the mind and heart of the Lancashire lad, and his face had grown years younger.

He looked at the letter again, and read it through. Then he looked at Wharton, a smile on his lips, and his eyes dancing.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed.

"What's all right?" asked the puzzled Wharton. "I don't know what you're talking about. What's all right—who's all right?"

"My sister."

"Your sister!"

"Yes, Mabel. You remember her. She came here once to see me. You helped me look after her when she visited Greyfriars."

"I remember."

"She's been ill."

"I didn't know—you didn't tell us."

"No."

"I think you might have told us," said Harry Wharton warmly. "Hang it all, we all knew Mabel, and liked her. We ought to have known."

"What was the use?" said Mark quietly. "She has been in danger—she might have—have died." His voice almost broke. "There was no need to worry anybody else with it. But it's all right now. She's out of danger."

"Good. I'm jolly glad to hear it."

"The last letter was very different," said Mark, with a shade on his face. "It was critical, then. It might have turned out either way. You don't know how I felt while I was waiting for news. I hope you never will know."

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Wharton nodded.

He remembered the curious scene in the Form-room—Mark Linley, with his face in his hands, his form shaken by sobs—a scene which Mark did not suspect that the chums of the Remove had witnessed. He remembered how the lad had hardly seemed to hear the taunts of Bulstrode while he was reading that letter from home. No wonder. Wharton understood it all now.

"Well, I'm jolly glad things are going on all right," he said. "I suppose that's why you've been off your feed lately?"

Mark smiled faintly.

"Well, I have been feeling rather rotten, of course."

"Yes, I suppose so."

Linley was calm again now. The usually quiet and self-contained lad seldom showed so much emotion; but the good news from the far-off home in Lancashire had stirred him so deeply that he had quite, for the moment, lost his usual reserve. He nodded to Wharton, and put the letter in his pocket, and entered the house.

The Remove went in to breakfast. As Mark sat down in his place, a flush came into his face. A sheet of cardboard had been laid upon his plate, and upon it was written:

"Miser."

He crumpled it in his hand. Mr. Quelch glanced at him from the head of the table. He had a pretty clear idea of what Linley's action meant, and he frowned; but he said nothing. After prayers, the Form assembled in the Form-room, and found Mr. Quelch already there.

The Form-master was seated at his desk, and he had an open letter before him. There was a thoughtful shade on his face.

"Good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning, boys."

The Remove went to their places. Mark Linley's eyes gleamed for a moment as he sat down.

The persecution by Bulstrode & Co. was quite systematic. On the lid of Linley's desk a word had been painted in white letters, which showed up plainly enough against the dark oak.

Shylock!

The paint was hard and dry, and it had evidently been done overnight. It would require some scraping to get it off the desk.

Mr. Quelch glanced at the Lancashire lad, and then at the glimmer of white on the lid of his desk, and came round to see what it was. His face grew dark with anger as he read the insulting inscription.

"Who has done this?" he exclaimed.

There was silence in the class. The juniors looked straight before them. There were at least a dozen of them who knew who had painted that taunt upon Linley's desk, but no one uttered a word.

The Remove master looked over the class.

Then he returned to his desk, and took up the letter he had been reading. The Remove watched him curiously. They could see that something was coming. What it was they did not know.

"Boys," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "I have something to tell you—something that, I think, you ought to know. A boy in this Form won the Seymour prize—twenty-five pounds in cash. You have all believed that he kept his prize entirely to himself, and acted meanly towards his friends; and you have done your best, apparently, to make the lad feel your opinion of him in this respect."

The Remove sat silent.

"The true explanation of Linley's action is known to me," said Mr. Quelch. "I have learned it from this letter, which I have received this morning."

Mark Linley started.

"In order to do Linley justice, and to give you a lesson not to judge hastily and thoughtlessly, I shall tell you the facts," continued Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Mark Linley, turning crimson.

"I have learned all from your father, Linley. I wrote to him in connection with the disposal of the prize-money, and in return he has explained to me."

"I—I—"

"You have nothing to be ashamed of, my lad," said the Form-master kindly. "You have acted nobly, bravely, and all the more so in saying nothing when you were persecuted by these thoughtless lads, who did not know your reasons."

A dogged look came over Bulstrode's face. But the rest of the Remove were intensely curious. Mark Linley's face went red and pale.

"Some of you are aware that Linley has a younger sister," said Mr. Quelch. "I believe the little girl came to Greyfriars once. This little girl has been dangerously ill, and her parents were warned by their medical adviser that there was little hope for her unless she could be removed to some place where she could receive trained care and attention, and the nourishment she required. For this a sum of money was

necessary, and that sum was found by Mark Linley, who providentially won the Seymour Prize, and immediately despatched the whole amount of the prize to his parents to be used for the benefit of his sister."

There was a murmur from the Remove. Mark sat with his eyes on his desk, his cheeks burning. He would have given anything to prevent the disclosure; but there was no help for it now.

"I am glad to say," continued Mr. Quelch, "that Linley's unselfishness will have the desired result. I understand that there is now no doubt of the child's recovery. I only hope that you will try to do Linley justice now."

Bob Cherry waved a Virgil wildly above his head.

"Hurray for Linley!" he shouted.

And the whole Form took up the shout.

"Hurray!"

"Hip, hip, hurray!"

It was an unprecedented ebullition in the Form-room; but Mr. Quelch only smiled. He was evidently not angry.

"Three times three!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Hip, hip, hurray!"

"The hurrafulness is terrific."

Mr. Quelch tried to restore silence at last, but it was some minutes before he succeeded.

As the Remove crowded out of the Form-room, there was a swarm of fellows round Mark Linley, and he was thumped on the back, and his shoulders were slapped and his hands were shaken till he was aching in nearly every bone.

"I knew it was all right," said Bob Cherry. "I knew he was decent all through. Didn't I tell you so. And then he went on rather inconsistently. How could I have been such an ass as to think you mean for a moment, Marky, old chap. Kick me, will you?"

Mark laughed.

"No, I won't, but—"

"I will," said Nugent obligingly, and he did. And there was a roar from Bob Cherry, and he turned wrathfully upon his obliging chum.

"I'm jolly glad we know the facts," said Ogilvy. "Of course, we couldn't guess. You couldn't expect us to. Why didn't you tell us?"

"Of course, he wouldn't tell us," said Nugent. "But I'm jolly glad Quelch did."

"I say, you fellows—"

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ONE
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"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say—"

"We're all sorry, Linley, old chap."

"Oh, it's all right," said Mark, with a slight frown. "I wish Mr. Quelch hadn't said a word; but I suppose he did it for the best. But there's nothing to make a fuss about."

"I—I'd like to say I'm sorry," stammered Bulstrode, coming forward with a very red face. "I—we—we've all been beastly to you, Linley, and that's the fact. I—I hope your sister will get well, too."

"It's all right now, thanks. Only a matter of time."

"I'm jolly glad."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"I sha'n't shut up!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "I've got a jolly good scheme. I think I'm entitled to speak, as I'm practically the only fellow who stuck to Linley all along, and stood by him."

"Well—"

"My only hat!"

"Oh, really, you know, you must remember that I said all along that—"

"Oh, ring off."

"But what I was going to suggest is—"

"Buzz off!"

"It's a jolly good scheme. I think that as Linley's sister is getting well, her recovery ought to be celebrated somehow, and Wharton couldn't do better than blow his five pounds in standing a Form feed to celebrate the occasion."

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"It's a good idea," he exclaimed, "and I'll do it."

And he did. And at that feed the healths of Mark Linley and Mark Linley's sister were drunk in ginger-beer and lemonade with the greatest enthusiasm.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

The First Chapters of a New Serial.



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, having rescued a lad named Tom Winfield from the Thames, into which he had been flung by would-be assassins, becomes interested in the case. He journeys from London to Launceston, Tasmania, where Tom Winfield lives, and there meets his old friend, Professor MacAndrew, who offers to assist him to trace young Winfield's unknown assailants. One night in the hotel at Launceston, a man known as Jim the Tracker enters Stanley Dare's bedroom, but is secured by the alert young detective, who at once rouses the hotel staff. The manager and two waiters rush in excitedly.

Tom Winfield Disappears.

"This fellow entered my room for some criminal purpose," he said. "He was carrying a chloroform pad, which you will find in a corner of the room. Better send for the police and have him taken into custody."

"He is already handcuffed!" exclaimed the manager, who stared about him in a helpless and bewildered manner.

"Yes; I was prepared for him," replied Dare.

"Prepared for him?" echoed the manager. "I can't understand it." Then, turning upon Jim the Tracker, he cried, "Who are you? How dare you break into this hotel? It will get a bad name over this business. But I'll make you suffer for it!"

"Oh, shut your head!" exclaimed Jim the Tracker savagely. "I only talk to men."

Guests of the hotel were now crowding into the corridor. Someone cried out that a gentleman had been chloroformed.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 110.

NEXT
WEEK:

"THE GREYFRIARS FLIGHT."

and that a burglary had been committed. A woman screamed, and fainted at the door of the billiard-room. Men hurried back to their bed-rooms to assure themselves that their own things were safe. The manager sent a waiter off for the police.

In the midst of all this confusion Professor MacAndrew came bounding up the stairs three at a time, scattering everybody from his path. Dare glanced at him anxiously.

"What else has happened?" he asked quickly.

"Tom Winfield has disappeared!" whispered the professor. "His bed-room window is open; chloroform has been used; there are marks of feet on the ground beneath his window; he has been kidnapped!"

Dare cast one look at Jim the Tracker, and the expression of amused triumph on that individual's face made everything clear to him in a flash.

"I've been tricked!" said Dare to the professor. "Baffled by as ingenious a scheme as I have ever happened upon!"

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A Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

The Hut above Whirlpool Reach—A "Sundowner"—Stanley Dare's Recognition.

The news which the professor had brought was sufficiently startling and terrible, but, bad as it was, it might well have been worse.

Tom Winfield's malevolent enemy seemed to have adopted entirely different tactics. He had gained access to the bedroom which the young Colonial had occupied, and as he—presumably with the assistance of others besides Jim the Tracker—had contrived to kidnap Winfield, it is certain that he could, had he so wished, have taken his life.

How it came about that the change of bed-rooms had been discovered was somewhat of a puzzle, as not one of the hotel officials had been informed of the fact. A wonderfully close watch must have been kept on the bed-rooms from outside.

The scheme by which the kidnapping had been made possible was a clever one. Surmising that Stanley Dare would be on the alert, Jim the Tracker had been set the task of quietening him by means of chloroform, while the other miscreants attended to the kidnapping part of the plot. The fact that the tables had been turned on the red-bearded man and the hotel had been aroused served to aid rather than hinder the villainous scheme; for while servants and guests were crowding into the passage outside the young detective's room, other parts of the premises were left unwatched, and the kidnappers were enabled to get clear away.

After hurrying on a few more articles of clothing, Stanley Dare accompanied MacAndrew to Winfield's bed-room, leaving the hotel manager to hand Jim the Tracker over to the police.

There was no evidence of a struggle, although on the carpet there were several muddy footmarks. Here, again, chloroform had been used, for there was a distinct odour of it still in the room.

With a powerful lens the young detective made a short examination of the footprints, MacAndrew holding an electric lamp in such a position that the powerful ray was focussed on each mark in turn.

"Two men have been here," said Dare quickly. "They wore ordinary boots. One of them is slightly lame of the left leg, the whole pressure coming on the ball of the foot. The heel of that foot never touches the ground."

"Heh, laddie!" exclaimed MacAndrew. "Ye read off the signs as easy as prented words."

"We must follow at once, Mac; come along!"

But an unfortunate interruption occurred at this point. The police arrived on the scene, and the inspector informed Dare that he must not leave the hotel until the official inquiry was completed.

"But a friend of mine has been kidnapped!" exclaimed Dare. "His life is in peril. It is imperative that the scoundrels who have carried him off should be followed at once."

"The police will attend to that, sir," pursued the inspector, "if you will give them all the information at your disposal."

"Mon alive!" interposed MacAndrew. "This gentleman is a detective, who has come oot here to investigate a case of which this affair forms part. Ye are hampering him in the performance of his duty."

But the inspector was obstinate. He had heard of Stanley Dare, he admitted; but as he was not in the official force, he could only recognise him as a private citizen. Whatever case he was engaged on was not one of which the local police had any knowledge.

The professor made some very uncomplimentary remarks about the local police, which might have led to further complications had not Stanley Dare drawn him on one side and whispered a few words of instructions.

"It's no use," he said; "I shall have to comply, for the police are bound to go through with the usual red-tape business. But you won't be detained. Try and follow on the trail. They could get into a side street from the hotel

yard, and the chances are there would be a vehicle of some sort waiting for them."

"All right, laddie!"

Stanley Dare turned again to the inspector to give him the information he required, and the professor vanished through the bed-room window with the agility of a young athlete. It was a drop of ten feet to the ground, but the Scotsman alighted on his feet as softly as a cat.

The police investigations occupied about half an hour, at the end of which time Stanley Dare was at liberty to go where he pleased. As Jim the Tracker was marched off between two constables, he turned to Dare with a laugh of derision. He was a cool, easy-going scoundrel, who seemed to care little for the fact that he was arrested.

"You have been nicely dished," he said. "Neat trick, wasn't it?"

"I'm afraid you won't gain much by it," replied Dare.

Jim the Tracker shrugged his shoulders, but the constables hustled him along too quickly to allow of him making a further retort. They had barely got into the street when MacAndrew returned.

"What luck?" asked Dare.

"I was able to trace them as far as the wharf," replied the professor. "They had driven in a four-wheeled buggy that far, but frae that point I lost all trace o' them."

"How was the tide?"

"Just turned. It is on the ebb noo."

"Then the chances are they have gone down stream," said Dare. "Anyway, I'll get hold of a boat and go a few miles down stream, keeping a sharp look-out on each side. You had better make a cast round the outskirts of the town, in case they have not taken to the river."

Leaving instructions with the hotel manager to retain their rooms during their absence, which would be of uncertain duration of time, MacAndrew and Stanley Dare quitted the International on the trail of the kidnappers.

At about six o'clock on the following evening, a man with a stubby beard and unwashed face came to a halt at the edge of a small clearing, in the centre of which was a strongly-built timber "shanty."

The man, whose keen eyes took in every detail of his surroundings with a couple of swift, comprehensive glances, was arrayed in a red flannel shirt, a pair of very much worn buckskin breeches, riding-boots that had seen better days, and a soft felt hat. He carried his "swag" strapped across his shoulders, and the butt of a revolver showed once out of his side pocket, but he hastily concealed it again.

The hut was situated about a quarter of a mile from the river, at that part of it known as the Whirlpool Reach. It was shadowed by giant gum-trees. A thin wreath of smoke curled up from the chimney, but beyond that there was no sign that the hut was inhabited. The "sundowner" walked across the clearing and rapped at the door.

As no answer was given to the first summons, the sundowner, who was no other than Stanley Dare in a clever disguise, hammered at the door again.

This time it was opened, and a voice snarled out:

"Who are you, and what do you want here?"

Stanley Dare looked squarely at the speaker, and he thought that in all his life he had never seen a face in which so much concentrated evil lurked. He was a thin, wiry man, with sandy hair and a small moustache of the same colour.

His eyes had a "fiendish" expression in them—no other word can describe it.

Once before the young detective had looked into eyes like those and that was when the shrouded face had appeared at the window of the Dolphin Inn at Southwark. From the eyes he glanced down at the man's feet, and saw what he expected to see—some accident had contracted one of the tendons of the leg, shortening the limb in a slight degree, so that the man walked with a limp.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling detective story next Tuesday. Please order your "Magnet" in advance. Price One Penny.)

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The Editor

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