MY STRAIGHT REPLY TO MY CRITICS!

TOP INSET (PICTURE) **THE GREAT SWIMMING CONTEST.** BOTTOM INSET PICTURE **THE BOXING CONTEST.**

LARGE PICTURE **THE END OF THE GREAT MARATHON RACE.**

(Three of the many exciting incidents in this week's grand complete school tale, by Frank Richards.)

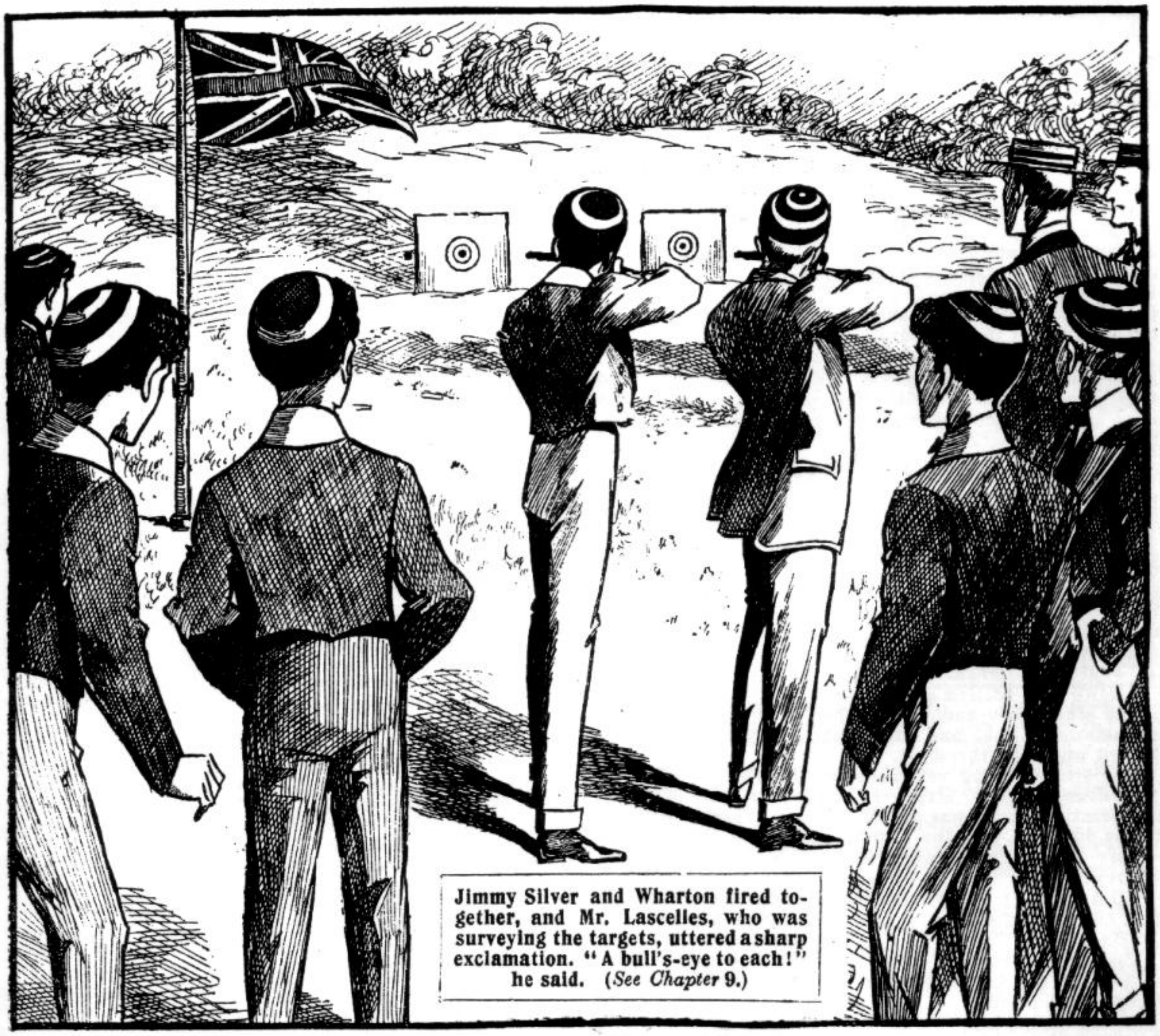
Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.

The Magnet 1d. Library

SPORTSMEN ALL!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Jimmy Silver and Wharton fired together, and Mr. Lascelles, who was surveying the targets, uttered a sharp exclamation. "A bull's-eye to each!" he said. *(See Chapter 9.)*

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Distinguished Visitor!

"I AM this way!"

"Buck up with those sardines, Franky!"

"Any more tea in the pot, Squiff?"

Such were the exclamations in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, on a warm evening in July. The study was filled to overflowing, for it was a great occasion. The Remove eleven had entertained Redclyffe at cricket that afternoon, and had sent them home "with their tails between their legs," as Peter Todd cheerfully expressed it. Not that there was anything to make a song about in beating Redclyffe, who were only a fair-to-moderate side; but Bob Cherry, the sunny, good-humoured member of that select band known as the Famous Five, had scored a century. Such an achievement was almost unique in the annals of Remove cricket, and the juniors celebrated it in fitting style. The fatted calf had been slain, so to speak, and invitations issued ad lib.

In addition to Harry Wharton and his immediate

chums, the two Todds, Hazeldene, Penford, Vernon-Smith, Russell, and many others had been bidden to the feast; and Bob Cherry, who occupied a position at the head of the table in the only armchair, bore his blushing honours thick upon him.

For the past few days the resources of No. 1 Study had been decidedly limited. Like the seed in the parable, the Famous Five had fallen on stony places; but a handsome remittance from Johnny Bull's Australian uncle had saved the situation. As a result, the supplies for the feed were on a most lavish scale, and the Remove were not slow to do themselves justice. The merry clash of knife on fork made fitting harmony to the company's high spirits.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Harry Wharton, when the table had been cleared, "I rise upon this auspicious occasion to congratulate our chum and colleague, Robert Cherry, upon his ripping performance against Redclyffe."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Bob!"

"On the ball, Wharton!"

"'Taint every junior at a school like Greyfriars who can pile up a hundred runs to order," Wharton went on. "There aren't many youthful Archie Maclarens knocking about, and when a Remove chap runs rampant like Bob has done, and plays a three-figure innings, the day should be marked with a red letter."

"The brandfulness of the day with the esteemed redful letter should be terrific!" purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his weird English.

"This season," pursued Wharton, his handsome face aglow with enthusiasm, "the Remove is out to play cricket, with the accent on the word play. We're out to keep the great game of England alive, and any who want to kill it, and introduce some fop's game, will get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

"In the neck!" grinned Nugent.

"We have beaten Rookwood," Wharton resumed, "and wiped up the ground with Redclyffe. Highcliffe can't raise a team, and we wouldn't play 'em if they did. So they're non est."

"Non what?" interrupted Johnny Bull.

"Non est—out of existence, you ass! It's French, or Latin, or something," said Wharton vaguely.

"Oh!"

"Highcliffe are out of the running," continued the orator, "and Trumper & Co., of Courtfield County Council School, aren't up to our weight. St. Jim's is a tougher nut to crack, but next time we play 'em we'll make Merry and his crowd sing small."

"Bravo!"

"That's the ticket!"

"Down with St. Jim's!"

The study door had been pushed open before the last exclamation arose, and an immaculately-dressed youth paused upon the threshold.

The overwhelming vehemence of the Remove's battle-cry drowned the stranger's repeated attempts at conversation, and it was not until Harry Wharton glanced in his direction that the tumult ceased.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton, in dismay. "It's D'Arcy!"

"D'Arcy of St. Jim's!" murmured Bob Cherry, wishing that the study floor would open and swallow him up.

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors gazed at one another with wry looks. Their enthusiasm for Greyfriars had been displayed at an unfortunate moment.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—the one-and-only Gussy, as he was called at St. Jim's—advanced into No. 1 Study. He did so with difficulty, owing to the crowded condition of that famous apartment.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, putting up his monocle, and taking a haughty survey of the Removites. "Did I undahstand you fellahs to say 'Down with St. Jim's'?"

Wharton coloured.

"It was only—ahem!—a figure of speech!" he stammered. "We meant to say that Greyfriars was top dog."

"Weally——"

"I'm very sorry if we've ruffled your feelings, D'Arcy," said the Captain of the Remove humbly. "We were a bit excited, that's all."

"Well, if you put it that way, deah boy, I shall be delighted to ovahlook the offence."

Wharton nodded solemnly.

"Take a chair," he said. "Now, then, Hazel, make way for a guest! Sorry there's no more grub, D'Arcy; but we'll send round to Mrs. Mimble's for some pastries, if you like."

"Pway don't wowwy," said the swell of St. Jim's graciously, as he took the chair Hazeldene vacated. "My patah, Lord Eastwood, is waitin' with his cah, and this is simply a flyin' visit. I've got some awf'lly good news for you fellahs."

"Get it off your chest, Gustavus!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, who, like most of the Greyfriars fellows, was well acquainted with the St. Jim's aristocrat. "Tell out the joyous tidings!"

Arthur Augustus adjusted his famous monocle, and beamed at the Removites.

"The fact is, you chaps," he said, "you are goin' to have a week's holiday."

"What?"

"Gammon!"

"Come off, Gussy!"

"It's true," said D'Arcy impressively. "That's why my patah came ovah to see your Headmastah!"

"But wherefore this thusness?" asked Peter Todd. "Why should Lord Eastwood want to give us a week's holiday? You haven't been doing the heroic bizney, and saving his lordship's life, I suppose, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"No such luck!" he exclaimed.

"But what——" stammered Wharton.

"Your perplexity is undahstandable," said the swell of St. Jim's. "The fact is, Tom Mewwy and a lot of our fellahs have been thinking——"

"Go hon!" said Nugent. "I didn't know there was anything of that sort done outside Greyfriars!"

Wharton wagged an admonishing finger at his chum.

"Be civil to the stranger within the gates, Franky!" he said.

Nugent subsided.

"We have been thinkin'," D'Arcy went on, "that it would be a jollay good wheeze for some of the schools in the distwict to collabowate in a gweat sportin' carnival. That is to say, we could have wunnin' waces——"

"What are they?" asked Bob Cherry politely.

"Weally, deah boy! I twust you are not so entiahly ignowant that you don't know what wunnin' waces are! I mean the hundred yards, and the mile, and pewwaps the Mawathon——"

"Oh, I see!" said Bob solemnly. "Resume, Gustavus!"

"Then we could have a swimmin' contest, and a wow on the wivah."

"A what-er?" gasped Peter Todd.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows were unused to the aristocratic utterances of the great Gussy.

"A wow on the wivah!" repeated D'Arcy. "An event wun on similah lines to the 'Versity Boat Wace, you know. Theah could also be a gweat boxin' contest, and pewwaps, if we could bowwow a wifle-wange, theah could be a shootin' competish."

"Good egg!" said Wharton heartily. "By Jove, but this isn't a bad stunt, you fellows!"

"But it would take a deuce of a time to get through a programme like that!" said Nugent.

"That's why D'Arcy's pater has got us a week's holiday, you chump!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors were delighted. The prospect of a sports week was in every way an entrancing one.

"Of course," said D'Arcy, "we sha'n't wun and wow and box and shoot and swim without any definite object. My patah intends to pwesent a magnificent twophy, in the form of a silvah cup, to the school winnin' the gweatah numbah of events."

The Removites were overjoyed.

"Gussy," said Bob Cherry, "come to my bosom and weep! Your pater's a first-class, gilt-edged brick! The whole thing's simply stunning!"

"Six more pulls!" roared Wingate. "Come on, kids! One—two—three—four—five—SIX!" "They've done it!" yelled Courtenay, who was as excited as a fag in the Third. "Oh, well played, Wharton!" *(See Chapter 10.)*

"Glad you think so, deah boy. I must be off now. My patah's goin' in the cah to Wookwood and Highcliffe to ask the headmastahs for their permish in the mattah."

"Highcliffe!" exclaimed Wharton, a cloud gathering on his brow.

"Yaas."

"But we—er—ahem—that is to say, we're at daggers drawn with Highcliffe," said Harry. "They don't play the game!"

"I pwesume you are wefewwin' to Ponsonby and his set?" replied D'Arcy. "In that case, you may set your mind at west. Ponsonby's a wank outsidah, as I am well awah, and I should not dweam of gettin' him to join in. But Fwank Courtenay is theah, and he seems to have enwolled a lot of decent chaps undah his bannah; so we ought to give them an invite."

"That's all right," said Wharton. "I forgot Courtenay for the moment. And that other fellow—the Caterpillar—he's true blue."

"I can imagine De Courcy exerting himself to the extent of a Marathon race, or even handling a rifle!" grinned Vernon-Smith. "He's reduced slacking to a fine art, and he'll groan when he knows we're going to have a sports week."

"I don't know so much about that," said Squiff. "Courtenay seems to be bent on reforming Highcliffe, and the Caterpillar's one of his most ardent disciples. Of course, he can't play cricket."

"I should think not!" said Wharton.

He called vividly to mind an occasion when Bob Cherry had wrecked De Courcy's wicket with a slow ball, such as might not have baffled a child of eight.

"And I don't think he knows the difference between a footer and a maiden over," pursued Squiff. "But that's no reason why he shouldn't be able to handle an oar or sprint a hundred yards. Apart from that, Highcliffe have got some decent sportsmen outside Ponsonby's set. There are two brothers called Wilkinson, who are Trojans at boxing, and a kid named Smithson, who's come on a lot lately."

Wharton nodded.

"Well, that's O.K.!" he said. "If the other schools join in there ought to be great sport. Very glad to have seen you, D'Arcy, old man! Your pater's one of the best, and so is the Head, to agree to the wheeze! Now, then, you chaps, three cheers for Lord Eastwood and Dr. Locke!"

And the juniors responded with such heartiness that the sound could be heard all over Greyfriars. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he made his elegant way down the passage, smiled to himself.

"The beggahs can cheeah now!" he murmured. "But they won't feel so jubilant when they've had a feahful lickin' all wound, and St. Jim's is top-dog. No, bai Jove!"

With which emphatic observation the swell of St. Jim's stepped out into the Close, where Lord Eastwood awaited him with the car.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Mutiny!

DURING the days that followed discussion was rife as to who was the best runner, jumper, boxer, and swimmer among the juniors of Greyfriars.

Permission had been obtained for the four schools to combine in a great sports tournament, and the competitors had a few days in hand for training and getting fit generally.

An extensive programme had been mapped out, and Greyfriars was naturally very keen on bagging the honours. The way in which the events were to be judged was simple. Three points were to be awarded to the winners of each contest, and one point to the runners-up. Thus, if a Greyfriars fellow won the hurdle race, his school gained three points; and if a Highcliffian came second, he had the consolation of securing a solitary point for his school. This rule applied not only to the individual contests, but to those in which several juniors were engaged, such as the boat-race.

Harry Wharton & Co. were fairly confident that, when the total number of points were reckoned, they would be first, and the rest nowhere. The same opinion prevailed at St. Jim's, and likewise at Rookwood and Highcliffe. Each school had set its heart on securing the magnificent "silvah twophy" of which D'Arcy had spoken.

The boat-race was to be the opening event, and was to be rowed on the River Sark on Monday. Greyfriars prided itself on its oarsmen, though competitions on the river were pretty much of a rarity. Most of the Removites had been putting in some hard practice, while the St. Jim's fellows went into training on the Ryll.

That evening the names of the Greyfriars crew appeared on the notice-board in Big Hall. The announcement met with the approval of eight fellows—those immediately concerned. The others were not slow to voice their disappointment of Wharton's selection.

The crew was as follows:

H. Vernon-Smith (stroke), H. Wharton, F. Nugent, R. Cherry, M. Linley, J. Bull, R. Penfold, and T. Brown.

Paget of the Third had been appointed to the onerous post of coxswain.

"What a rotten, fifth-rate crew!" snorted Bolsover major. "Wharton doesn't know a good oarsman when he sees one. He'll regret having left me out when St. Jim's have romped home about twenty lengths to the good!"

"The Famous Five are all down, I see," said Skinner.

"You are wrongfully misinformed, my Skinny friend," purred Hurree Singh. "My own esteemed name is omitfully absent."

Harold Skinner grunted.

"Anyway, it's a beastly crew!" he said viciously. "I hope they smash an oar, or get into a current or something! Ow! Leggo my ear, Cherry, you beast!"

"Is that what you call loyalty to the school?" asked Bob, in disgust. "You hope we come to grief—eh?"

"Nunno!" gasped Skinner hastily.

"Well, dry up, then!"

But, although Skinner had no option but to "dry up," the dissatisfaction in other quarters was not so easily quelled. It boded ill for Harry Wharton that Peter Todd was among the malcontents.

The worthy Peter felt disappointed. He considered that no crew would be complete without him, and the fact that such chaps as Penfold and Brown had been preferred to him made him writhe. True, both the fellows in question were skilled oarsmen, but Peter Todd was of the opinion that he could go one better. He made his way to No. 1 Study, with a brow like thunder.

Harry Wharton was seated on the table, chatting to Nugent and Hurree Singh, when Todd entered unceremoniously.

"Cheery-oh, my Todful chum!" said Hurree Singh, his white teeth parting in a smile. "Wherefore this rushful entry?"

Peter Todd ignored the Nabob, and strode up to Harry Wharton.

"I've seen the apology for a crew you've stuck up on the notice-board," he said.

Wharton gave a laugh.

"It's a first-rate crew, Toddy!" he said cheerfully.

"First-rate be blowed!" growled Peter. "It strikes me as being a crew of freaks! Sorry I can't congratulate you on your selection!"

Wharton frowned.

"That's rot!" he said sharply. "I suppose I'm captain of the Remove?"

"I suppose so."

"And I'm entitled to select what I consider to be the best eight?"

"Yes."

"Well, keep off the grass, then!"

"I'm surprised at Toddy complaining," said Nugent, in shocked tones. "He's usually as meek as a lambkin. Of course, it's hard cheese on you, being left out, old man, but there's heaps of other events, you know. There's the swimming——"

"Blow the swimming!"

"And the boxing——"

"Hang the boxing!"

"To say nothing of the Marathon!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Todd. "I'd set my heart on getting into the Greyfriars eight, and I haven't even been given a chance. Wharton's a jolly sight too high-handed in these matters!"

Harry Wharton sprang off the table.

"Be careful what you say, Todd!" he exclaimed, clenching his fists. "I tell you, I chose the best eight available. Things are coming to a pretty pass when the captain of a Form can't exercise his own judgment without being interfered with!"

"Then you won't include me in the crew?"

"No!"

"You won't even give me a trial?"

"No!"

"Why?"

"Because of your confounded cheek in rushing in here to criticise the crew!" said Wharton angrily.

"Then I may as well be frank with you, Wharton. I'm not a dead letter in the Remove, as you know; in fact, I've got a good deal of influence with most of the fellows. And if you don't choose to accept the services of a good oarsman when they're offered to you, I shall raise an eight on my own account. The same remark applies to the other sports. If I can't have a fair show in any of 'em, I'll organise teams myself. Got that?

"You—you cad!" said Wharton hotly. "Is that what you call pulling together for the sake of the school? Is that your idea of playing the game? If so, it doesn't coincide with my own. Until to-day, you've struck me as being thoroughly decent. Our little rivalries in the past have been of the friendliest character. And now you choose to create a split in the Form, simply because your captain doesn't consider you sufficiently qualified to row in the eight. I think you're a beastly rotter!"

"Same here," said Nugent.

"The rottenfulness of the unworthy Todd is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Look here!" yelled the irate Peter, brandishing his fists in Wharton's face. "Ain't you going to listen to reason?"

"Rats!"

The incensed junior struck out with his left, but the blow never got home. Before Peter Todd knew what was happening he was whirled off his feet and sent hurtling into the corridor without. Three pairs of boots drove home the advantage, and Todd collapsed in a heap upon the linoleum.

"Yarooh! You cads! I'll make you sit up for this! Wait and see! Ow! I'm hurt! Yow!"

The study door slammed, and the remainder of Peter Todd's mumblings and threatenings and gruntings and gurglings were wasted on the desert air.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Peter Todd Astonishes the Natives!

"ANYBODY seen Bunter?" asked Peter Todd, after dinner next day, hailing a party of juniors who were sauntering in the Close.

"He was guzzling ginger-beer in Mrs. Mimble's when I left the tuckshop," said Skinner.

"Thanks!" said Peter. "I'll rout him out!"

And he proceeded to the tuckshop under the elms.

William George Bunter was seated upon a stool at the counter, his fat face irradiated like a full moon, and a glass of ginger-beer at his elbow. The porpoise of the Remove was in funds. Only a few weeks since, he had entered into partnership with Fisher T. Fish, the astute Yankee junior, and the precious pair of rascals had hoped to bring off a successful coup at the expense of the Gobbey Ginger-beer Company. The scheme had failed dismally—as such schemes usually did—but Bunter had managed to raise a substantial loan from Fish as an advance payment on the tremendous sum which was to accrue to the partners. The fact that the wheeze fell flat did not induce Bunter to pay back the money he had borrowed; and for some time he had been living on the fat of the land.

"A dozen jam-tarts, please, Mrs. Mimble!" he ordered haughtily. "Twopenny ones! I'm rather peckish."

But Bunter was not destined to eat and enjoy the jam-tarts which had made Mrs. Mimble famous among generations of Greyfriars boys. Peter Todd came into the shop at that moment, and he fastened a firm grip on his study-mate's collar.

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"Not just yet, my gormandising friend," said Peter Todd coolly. "You're coming along to the study, Bunty."

"Go and eat coke! Leggo me neck, Todd, you beast! I tell you, I won't—— Oh! Yah! Draggimoff!"

The leader of No. 7 Study yanked the fat junior from his perch, and, without relaxing his grip, hustled him out of the tuckshop.

"Mum-my tarts!" moaned Bunter feebly.

"There's something more important under way than scoffing jam-tarts!" said Peter grimly.

And Bunter was borne through the Close like a whirlwind, and bundled into the study, where he was allowed to collapse, panting and puffing, into the armchair.

There were several other juniors in the study. Alonzo Todd and Dutton were seated at the table, and Skinner, Russell, Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and Tubb of the Third were standing in a group by the fireplace. Why Tubb of the Third was there was a mystery.

"Now we're all here," said Peter Todd, "we'll get to bizney. I've called you fellows together on a very important matter. As you know, the sports week opens on Monday, and the first item on the programme's a boat-race. Wharton has raised some sort of a crew——"

"A set of duds!" sniffed Skinner.

"Quite so. And it's my intention to enter the field against him, so to speak. It's up to us to see that the Remove colours ain't lowered in the dust, as they certainly will be if that tin-pot crew represents us on the river!"

"B-but we can't hold out against Wharton!" stammered Bulstrode.

"Can't!" said Peter Todd scornfully. "There's no such word as 'can't' in the vocabulary of No. 7 Study! You fellows knuckle under too much to that chap Wharton. He's a decent enough sport, I'm only too willing to admit, but there's a giddy limit to the sort of thing he's doing now. He's selected a crew from his own friends, and we're not going to be mouldy slaves, and take it lying down. Don't you know what Chaucer said—'Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow!'"

"Ahem! I thought it was Byron!" murmured Russell.

"Well, whoever the johnny was, he had sound common-sense!" said Peter. "Wharton's ridden the high horse too long. As far as rowing goes, I fancy I can get together a crew that'll make St. Jim's look green, and paralyse Rookwood and Highcliffe. Most of you fellows are pretty good oarsmen, and you'll improve with practice. There's some raw material, I know"—Peter nodded in the direction of Bunter and Alonzo—"but I expect I shall knock it into shape. Anyhow, the wheeze is a jolly good one, though I say it. Those in favour, show hands!"

Every fellow held up his hand, save Tom Dutton, the deaf junior. Dutton had followed the conversation of his chief with extreme difficulty.

"What about you, Dutton?" asked Peter. "Don't you think it's a rattling good wheeze?"

"What! In summer?" asked Dutton, looking mystified.

"Summer, you frabjous ass! What are you talking about?"

"Shout?" said Dutton. "No, you needn't shout. I'm not deaf—only a little hard of hearing. Fancy saying it would freeze, and it's July!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter. "Get me a megaphone, somebody! I said 'wheeze,' not 'freeze,' you insane duffer!"

"Yes, I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Tom Dutton, nodding.

"Surprised at what?"

"Seeing the games suffer, if it was to freeze in summer."

"Why, you—you——" stuttered Peter Todd. "Oh, carry me home to die!"

"I say, Toddy," said Bunter, considerably mollified now that he knew the nature of the proceedings, "I think it's a spiffing idea, you know."

"It's going to mean hard work, and plenty of it," said Peter Todd grimly. "You'll have to reduce your weight, Fatty, and I'm going to see that you do it. We don't want a whacking great lubber like you to sink the boat! For the rest of the week, you will run a mile first thing every morning."

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bunter.

"And take a course of Sandow's developers twice daily."

"Groo!"

"And now, as it's a half-holiday, we'll get along to the river," said Peter. "It's imperative that we get the crew into working order as soon as possible. I've engaged young Tubb as cox."

Tubb of the Third grinned. He was not at all averse to the experience of steering a crew which included such freaks as Bunter and Alonzo Todd.

It was a glorious afternoon, and plenty of fellows were either in, on, or beside the river when Peter Todd's crew arrived on the scene.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What sort of a procession's this? Looks as if Peter Todd's taking the whole giddy family out!"

Harry Wharton, who was standing by the boathouse with his chums, frowned.

"The silly ass is trying to cause a split in the Form!" he growled. "I suppose that's his crew for the race on Monday. Well, he won't be allowed to compete, that's all. There's only one team allowed from each school."

"Here they come," said Johnny Bull.

The party advanced to the boathouse, and Peter Todd gave instructions for one of the boats to be run down to the river and launched.

"Mind how you get in, Bunter," he cautioned, as the fat junior gingerly approached the rocking craft. "Plant your feet in the centre, you idiot!"

Billy Bunter followed out Peter's advice. He swayed uncertainly for a moment, and it seemed inevitable that he would have a side-slip into the Sark; but Russell steadied him from behind, and he managed to gain his seat, though the boat lurched dangerously from side to side.

"Now," said Peter Todd, ignoring the grinning onlookers, "you chaps take your time by me, and young Tubb can steer. We sha'n't go very far, as it's only a t

trial row, but put your beef into it while you're at it. Ready?"

"Row, brothers, row!" sang out Bob Cherry from the boathouse.

"Go!" exclaimed Peter.

There was a confused splashing of oars, and the boat started forward. There were several casualities at the outset. Alonzo Todd chopped the water with a vigour which nearly wrecked the boat, and Bunter thrust the handle of his oar clumsily forward, catching Skinner in the small of the back.

There was a roar from Skinner.

"Yarooh! Keep off the grass, you dummy! Yow-ow!"

"Silence in the boat!" ordered Peter Todd, looking round. "Pull together there, you boobies!"

The fellows on the bank were almost in hysterics. The idea of such an ill-assorted crew attempting to lick three rowing schools of good repute made them weep with merriment. Even Wharton was laughing at the absurd spectacle.

Five of the juniors were rowing well, but the other three were more of a hindrance than a help. Bunter, who, in his usual cool conceit, fancied himself as an oarsman, beat the water furiously with his oar, hoping to cause a sensation among the spectators. He succeeded. But it was hardly the sort of sensation Bunter intended.

Alonzo Todd relaxed his grip for a moment, and his oar slipped from his hold and went careering down the river; whereupon the unthinking Duffer leaned over sideways in the boat to try and rescue it. It was only by a miracle that a catastrophe was averted.

Tom Dutton, who failed to comprehend the orders which Tubb rapped out from time to time, had long since given it up as a bad job. He sat still with the crew, but did nothing. Like the hero in the poem, he was among them, but not of them.

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!" gurgled Bob Cherry, mopping his brow. "This'll be the death of me, I know it will! It's funny enough for the front page of 'Chuckles.' They've covered about six yards in as many minutes! Oh, dear!"

It would be all up with the duffers if they happened to get caught in the current," said Wharton.

Apparently Wingate of the Sixth thought so, too, for he came up at that moment with a boat-hook, and, swinging it out, pulled Peter Todd and his colleagues into the bank.

"Hi! Wharrer you up to?" demanded Peter Todd.

"Pulling in a set of silly asses!" growled Wingate. "It's a wonder you kids haven't capsized ages ago. Out you get!"

Peter Todd was inclined to rebel, but the captain of Greyfriars seized him by the scruff of the neck and hauled him on to the bank.

"Poor old Toddy!" said Bob Cherry, as the members of the crew set off for Greyfriars. "Better drop that rot, old man, and fall into line!"

Whereat Peter Todd snorted audibly, and made reply with that ancient and classic monosyllable:

"Rats!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Coker Eats His Words!

"IT'S too funny for anything!"

Thus Horace Coker, the moving spirit among the Fifth-Formers at Greyfriars. Coker was having tea in his study with Potter and Greene, his bosom chums, and when the great Horace emitted the statement above-mentioned his guests raised their eyes politely from their plates.

"What's too funny?" asked Potter.

"Why, the amusing efforts of those Remove kids to collar Lord Eastwood's Cup. Were you by the river this afternoon, by any chance?"

"We were," murmured Potter and Greene.

"And did you see that screamingly funny crew of young Todd's?"

"We did."

"Well, I reckon it beats the band," said Coker. "It's too good a thing to miss; and I've just thought of a stunning wheeze to make those fags sit up."

"Go hon," said Potter, unmoved.

He knew Coker's wheezes of old, and placed no great faith in them. But it would hardly have done to have said as much to the mighty Horace.

"Wharton & Co. are on the point of going to press with the next number of 'The Greyfriars Herald,'" pursued Coker. "Now, you know my abilities in the poetic line?"

"We do—we does," murmured Greene.

He was not likely to forget the historic occasion on which Coker had written a thrilling war-drama, called "Red Ruin," which had been performed at Eastwood House.

"Well, my idea is this," said Coker. "I'll write a satirical poem on young Todd and his crew of freaks, and bribe the printer to put it in with the other stuff."

"Good egg!" said Potter, not very heartily, however.

"How's this for a start?" asked Horace.

Potter almost turned pale.

"You're going to start spouting now?" he gasped.

"Certainly!"

"But you can't compose poetry—real poetry—at a minute's notice!" said Greene.

"Rats!" said Coker loftily. "What about Shelley? He wrote most of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' in twenty minutes."

"Shelley didn't write 'The Pied Piper,'" said Potter, aghast. "It was Browning, you burbling chump!"

"Well, Browning, then! If Browning could write yards and yards of that piffle in twenty minutes, it stands to reason that I could go one better!" said Coker. "Listen!

"In full-oared might, upon the silvery Sark,
Behold a crew of frabjous freaks embark.
Young Tubb is at the rudder—off they go!
They row, they row, they row, they row, they row."

"Mercy!" moaned Potter.

"That could be the first stanza," said Coker, unheeding. "Then it could go on something like this:

"'Come on!' cries Peter Todd. 'Oh, pull, pull, pull!
Thick ears will flourish if you play the fool.
Heave-ho, my hearty lubbers—breast the bay!
'Tis Greyfriars, Greyfriars, Greyfriars leads the way!'"

"But there ain't a bay on the Sark!" gasped Potter.

"Fathead!" said Coker witheringly. "A poet can take a bit of license, can't he?"

"Some poets take a jolly sight too much!" murmured Potter. "What's the idea of repeating a word about a dozen times in one verse?"

"To give emphasis to the thing, of course!" snorted Coker. "Look here, George Potter, don't you be so critical, or there'll be trouble in the world!"

"All right," said Potter wearily. "Don't mind me. Go ahead!"

Coker "went ahead." He piled on the agony, so to speak; and his Form-fellows groaned. Coker the Poet was not an inspiring picture.

"Alas! alas! alas the fags turn blue,
For see approach the daring Rookwood crew!
Eight sturdy fellows, rowing might and main.
They gain, they gain, they gain, they gain, they gain!"

"If they gained to that extent, they'd be at the mouth of the Thames in a jiffy!" said Greene.

"The winning post is now in sight, in sight——"

"Here, hold on!" said Potter. "You're a bit premature, aren't you? The race has only just started!"

"Dry up, Potter!"

"The winning-post is now in sight, in sight,
The crew of freaks is shaking with affright.
The craft capsizes—every duffer swims!
Then comes a roar: 'St. Jim's! St. Jim's! St. Jim's!'"

"Quite potty!" murmured Greene, tapping his forehead significantly. "It's the hot weather, I suppose. I can't hold out against this much longer. Something will burst!"

"I won't go on with the poem," said Coker.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Potter fervently.

"But those verses'll give you some idea of what the whole thing will be like. My hat, but we'll make those

Remove kids sing small! I'll start writing out the poem. I can remember what I've made up, word for word. It's a sort of genius, you know."

"Once spouted, never forgotten!" murmured Greene.

Horace Coker drew paper and pencil towards him, and began to write. At the same moment a fat junior went scudding away along the Fifth-Form passage, and a little later burst breathlessly into Peter Todd's study.

"What's up, porpoise?" demanded Peter, as his fat study-mate pumped in breath.

"That beast Coker!" spluttered Bunter incoherently. "Happened to hear—plot to put poem in 'Herald'—running down our crew!"

Peter Todd sprang to his feet. He did not altogether approve of the manner in which Bunter had come by his information, but he believed in that bad old proverb which has it that all is fair in war. Coker should be slaughtered, and that soon! It was like his confounded cheek to jeer at the Remove's best oarsmen.

So Peter Todd paraded the Remove passage, and called unto him six good men and true, in the form of Russell, Bulstrode, Morgan, Ogilvy, Desmond, and Brown. This done, he proceeded with his escort to the Fifth-Former's study.

Coker had just put the finishing touches to his humorous poem, and he jumped up in alarm as the study door was thrown open and the avengers streamed in.

"What do you fags want?" he demanded wrathfully.

"You," said Peter Todd, motioning to Russell to close and lock the door. "I understand you've perpetrated a funny poem at our expense?"

Horace Coker grabbed at the manuscript which lay upon the table, but Micky Desmond was a shade too quick for him. He seized Coker by the arm and dragged him aside.

"Faith, an' ye'll stay where ye are, Coker darlint!" he exclaimed.

"That's it!" roared Bulstrode, springing forward. "Bump the bounders!"

The Removites closed in upon the unhappy trio, and there were none to say them nay. Potter and Greene shouted and expostulated, but all in vain. The invading party lifted them bodily into the air, and bumped them severely on to the study carpet.

There was a chorus of wild yells. Peter Todd, with the able assistance of Desmond, stuck to the burly Horace, and pulled him up short against the mantelpiece. The rest of the juniors were engaged in sitting upon Potter and Greene, completely obliterating them from view.

"Hands off!" roared Coker.

"Not this evening!" panted Peter. "Some other evening! What have you been writing about my crew?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

"It is my bizney," said Todd. "I say, don't suffocate those two beauties, you chaps! Some of you come and lend a hand with Coker. I'm going to make him eat his words!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He shall masticate his precious poetry!" said Peter grimly. "D'ye think I'm going to allow a Fifth Form cad to slander my crew—one of the finest outside the 'Varsities? No jolly fear!"

The leader of Study No. 7 picked up the effusion and read it, his eyes gleaming with wrath. Coker watched him in silent apprehension.

"You howling maniac!" roared the irate Peter, at length. "Is this your idea of a jape, you—you——"

Words failed Peter. He stepped forward, and, crumpling the sheet of paper into a ball, thrust it into the mouth of the hapless Coker, wrenching down the Fifth-Former's chin with one hand.

"Gerooooogh!" spluttered Coker. "Gerraway, you young cad! Ugh-h-h!"

"Chew it up!" commanded Todd, who was thoroughly master of the situation.

Coker had no option but to obey. It was an undignified experience, to be compelled to eat his own effusions, and the paper was anything but appetising. Peter Todd gave him a sharp rap underneath the chin when he considered the victim was not eating fast enough; and the other Removites chuckled hugely at the situation.

The unfortunate Horace choked and spluttered, and spluttered, and choked, until he had digested the whole of his poem; and then, vengeance having been duly executed upon the Fifth-Formers, the juniors quitted the study.

Potter and Greene struggled to their feet, gasping. They glared at their leader, who was leaning heavily against the mantelpiece, with a sickly expression on his face.

"You prize lunatic!" howled Potter. "You burbling jabberwock! This is what comes of your writing such silly piffle! You deserve to be boiled in oil!"

"I tell you it was a stunning poem!" retorted Coker. "It had the real funny element, such as you see in the headlines of 'Chuckles.'"

"Oh, rats!" said Greene. "Go and drown yourself, you crass idiot!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, bump him!" growled Potter, exasperated.

The two Fifth-Formers wasted no more time in words. They fell upon Horace Coker with one accord, and smote him hip and thigh. And when the painful ceremony was over, Potter and Greene were assured that—for some time, at any rate—the last had been seen of Coker the Poet.

— —

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Three Men in a Boat!

TRUE to his resolve, Peter Todd had insisted upon Bunter running a mile every morning, and taking a frequent course of Sandow's developers. The mile consisted in running round Little Side six times, and Billy Bunter, who turned the scale at something approaching fourteen stone, showed no marked enthusiasm for the task. When the daily event concluded, under the keen eye of the persistent Peter, Bunter usually had bellows to mend.

It was Friday, and Peter Todd, although he showed no outward and visible sign of misgiving, was not altogether satisfied that his crew was properly licked into shape.

Bunter and his cousin Alonzo were the weak spots. He could have dispensed with their services had he so chosen, and elected two fellows who were more competent to handle an oar. But that would have detracted from the honour and glory of Study No. 7. After his crew had triumphantly passed the winning-post, Peter wanted to say that No. 7 were "top dogs" in the Remove. It was, therefore, essential that every member of that famous study should have a place in the boat.

When afternoon lessons were over Peter bore down upon Billy Bunter in the Close, and nudged him in the ribs with a bony elbow.

"Ow!" mumbled Bunter.

"What are you eating, porpoise?" demanded Peter, noting the paper bag that protruded from the fat junior's capacious pocket.

"Only a few tarts, Toddy, old man."

"Tarts?" exclaimed Peter, aghast. "What do you mean by it, you burbling great bladder of lard?"

He wrenched the bag of pastry from Bunter's pocket and hurled it into the elms.

"Oh, I say!" groaned Bunter. "Six tarts gone—tuppenny ones, too! And I've had nothing to eat since dinner!"

"You're not going to gorge on that abominable stuff while there's a chap named Peter Todd alive to stop you!" said the leader of No. 7. "But I tell you what, Bunty. If we win the boat-race on Monday you shall have the feed of your life afterwards!"

But Billy Bunter took no heed of this tempting offer. He cast longing and almost tearful eyes at the spot where his precious tarts had fallen. Like Rachel of old, he mourned, and would not be comforted.

"Kim on!" said Peter. "You and Lonzy are going through it this afternoon. You're going to manage a boat by your little selves, while I impart instructions. Twiggez-vous?"

Bunter groaned. He would have given his right hand to back out of it, for Peter Todd exacted a vast amount of work from his crew. However, Alonzo came up at

that moment, smiling serenely, and the trio proceeded to the river, Bunter groaning intermittently.

The man in charge of the boat-house looked at the juniors rather doubtfully. There was considerable risk in having a boat on the Sark if the oarsmen were inexperienced, for the craft might be swept into a dangerous current. But Peter Todd reassured the man, and a frail-looking three-seater was launched.

The boat had to be firmly held while Bunter got in, for the Owl of the Remove was no light weight. Alonzo Todd followed, and Peter took his place with the rudder-strings.

"Now," said the cox, surveying his two study-mates with extreme disfavour, "you're going to row as far as the landing-stage at the Cross Keys. It's over a mile, so if you want any tea this evening you'll have to put the pace on!"

"Groo!" mumbled Bunter. He was finding the July sun unpleasantly warm.

"Row up!" commanded Peter, as the boatman pushed them off from the bank. "And keep in time. Don't chuck your arms about like a giddy windmill, Bunter! Bend well forward to it, Lonzy!"

Thus admonished the hapless oarsmen applied themselves to their uncongenial task. Twice Bunter "caught a crab," completely drenching Alonzo, who was behind him; and even the veriest novice in the art of rowing could have foretold that Todd's crew didn't stand an "earthly" in the coming boat-race with the rival schools.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter, keeping his oar stationary with one hand and mopping his brow with the other. "I'm done!"

"Oh, come!" said Peter encouragingly. "Never say die, you know!"

"I, too, am exhausted, my dear Peter," came the faint voice of Alonzo. "The excessive strain is intolerable!"

"Pooh! You're a fine pair, I must say!" declared Peter. "You've come about twenty yards, that's all! Is this the way you're going to lick St. Jim's and the rest of 'em on Monday? You're too faint-hearted. Row up!"

"It's all very well for you to sit there like a graven image and pile on the agony!" said Bunter. "I—I'm feeling quite ill! I've strained my stomach, or something!"

"This is what comes of guzzling jam tarts!" said Peter reprovingly. "Perhaps you'll remember in future that tarts are taboo. Pile in!"

Bunter and Alonzo gripped their oars once more and started to row. It was slow work, in spite of the fact that they were going with the stream, and it seemed to Peter Todd as he watched the puny efforts of his crew that the Cross Keys would not be reached that side of midnight.

Billy Bunter presented a woeful spectacle, such as might have moved a heart of stone. Perspiration was pouring down each side of his fat face and he was grunting as though in his death throes. Time and again he tried to row into the bank, but Peter Todd wasn't having any. He kept a firm grip of the rudder-strings, and the boat remained for the most part in mid-stream.

After what seemed an eternity to the luckless oarsmen the island came in sight, and Peter Todd leaned forward and spurred his men on with words of encouragement.

"Stick to it!" he exclaimed. "I said I'd bring you up in the way you should go, and I mean to do it! What's that, Bunty? Feel tired? Buck up, my poor old porpoise! You're out of condition, that's what it is."

"Groo!" gasped Bunter.

He splashed away at his oar in spasmodic jerks, and turned his head to look at the island. It was Bunter's intention to land on that island—or die in the attempt to do so. Without a word of warning, he lifted his oar in the air and crashed Peter Todd over the wrists.

Peter gave a yelp of pain and let go one of the rudder-strings. This was exactly what Bunter wanted. He put his oar into position again and rowed frantically towards the island.

"Hi! Look out!"

There was a warning cry as a crew of eight swept round the bend of the river. Harry Wharton & Co. were out practising, and their boat, manned by eight fellows to whom oarsmanship was a sort of second nature, was fairly mowing along.

Peter Todd saw the danger, and leaned over in an endeavour to regain possession of the rudder-strings.

It was a fatal movement. The junior swayed uncertainly as he tried to steady himself, and the next moment he was precipitated head foremost into the water.

At the same instant, Bunter, who was almost terrified out of his wits, struck out wildly with his oar, and Peter Todd received a crack on the side of the head which almost stunned him. He disappeared entirely from the juniors' view.

"Peter! Peter!" wailed Alonzo, fearful lest his cousin's life should be in danger. "Oh, he has gone! You have killed him, Bunter!"

The fat junior could not speak. His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and he sat looking stupidly down at the swirling waters.

"Save him!" yelled Alonzo, as his cousin's head bobbed up to the surface. "Save him, someone!"

Harry Wharton had taken in the situation at a glance. Jerking off his blazer, he stood up in the boat—now at a standstill beside the bank—and took a "header," straight and clean, into the river.

The juniors watched him breathlessly. It was just like Harry Wharton to leap to the aid of a comrade. He was a fine swimmer, and a few powerful strokes took him as far as Todd's boat. Ignoring the wild cries which fell from Alonzo's lips, he plunged down to the bottom of the river.

There was a groan when the plucky lad came up empty-handed. He had drawn blank, and had risen to the surface for breath.

As Wharton was about to make a second attempt Peter's head again appeared half-a-dozen yards away, and Harry covered the distance in a twinkling and grasped the helpless junior. Then, in the approved life-saving fashion, he turned over on his back and towed Peter Todd to the shore.

"Bravo, Wharton!" roared Bob Cherry, now that the tension was relieved. "Splendid, old man!"

And similar exclamations were taken up by the other fellows.

Harry Wharton grinned breathlessly as he deposited his burden on to the bank. Then, with the assistance of Bob and Nugent, he scrambled out of the water.

"A close call for Toddy!" said Johnny Bull seriously. "If he'd gone down again, he might——"

Johnny did not finish the sentence. The juniors realised only too well that a tragedy might have taken place but for Wharton's prompt action.

Peter Todd was quite conscious now, but very pale. The blow from Bunter's oar had dazed him, and although he made a gallant effort to gain his feet, it was more than he could manage.

"Some of us had better get him along to the sanatorium," said Mark Linley, in his practical way.

"I—I'm all right!" murmured Peter faintly.

"You're not, my pippin," said Bob Cherry genially. "You're coming along to the school with your uncles. Get hold of him, you fellows!"

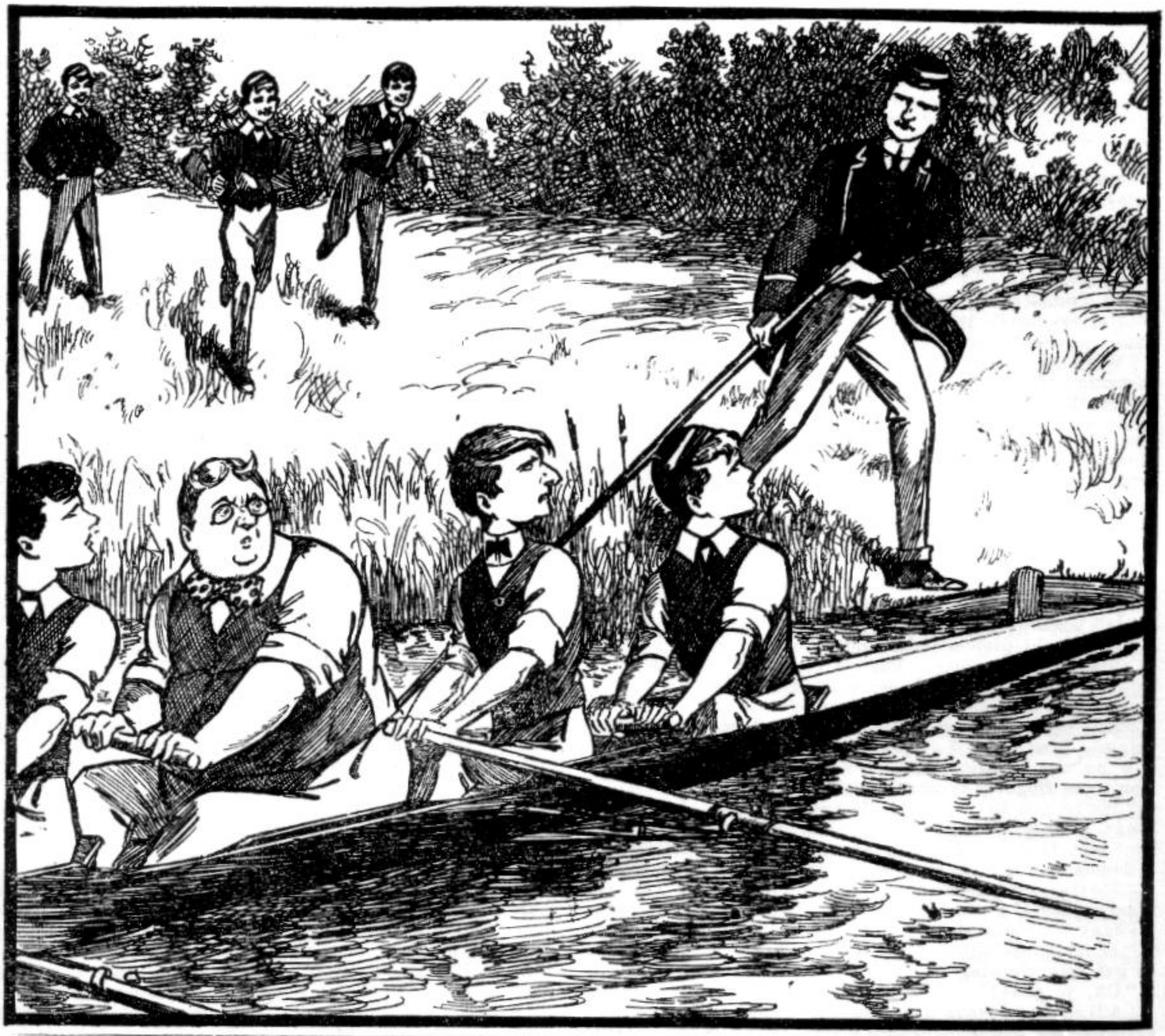
"I'll look after Bunter and the other tame lunatic!" growled Johnny Bull. "Fancy a pair of freaks like that being on the river! Bunter wants a jolly good bumping!"

"He'll get it, too!" said Nugent warmly.

While Johnny Bull and Nugent rowed out to Alonzo and Bunter, the rest of the juniors bore their unfortunate schoolfellow back to Greyfriars. It was found, on arrival at the sanatorium, that Peter was little the worse for his enforced ducking, and the matron ordered him to remove his wet garments and stay in bed in the Remove dormitory for the rest of the day.

When Harry Wharton went into the dormitory to change his clothes, Peter Todd was already stretched between the sheets. He sat up in bed as Harry came in, and extended his hand.

"I'm not much good at gassing, especially in a case



"Hi! Wharrer you up to?" demanded Peter Todd. "Pulling in a set of silly asses!" growled Wingate. "It's a wonder you kids haven't capsized ages ago. Out you get!" *(See Chapter* **3.)**

of this kind," he said. "But you've saved my life to-day, Wharton, and Heaven knows I'm jolly grateful."

Wharton coloured.

"Cut it short, Toddy, old man!" he said, gripping his rival's hand hard. "You needn't make a giddy plaster-saint of me. I did what any other chap would have done under the circs."

"I'm not so sure of it. Why didn't the others rush when that idiot Bunter crashed me on the napper?"

"Perhaps they didn't grasp the situation so quickly," said Harry, with a laugh. "Anyway, it's turned out all right, and there's nothing to make a song about."

Peter Todd looked remorseful.

"I've been thinking," he said, "what a rotten cad I was to set up in opposition against you, Wharton. No, you needn't tell me to dry up! I feel awfully sick about it. And after my playing the giddy ox, and inciting fellows to go against you, you chucked yourself into the river after me. I wasn't worth it."

"Oh, rats!" said Harry, uncomfortably.

"You're a brick!" said Peter; and his voice nearly broke. "A real, stunning brick! And I won't stand in your light after this—no jolly fear! I withdraw my crew from the contest here and now."

"That's all right, Toddy," said Wharton, clapping him on the shoulder. "Here, you lie down again. You'll get a deuce of a cold sitting up like this."

He tucked his schoolfellow in, and proceeded to change into his dry clothes, with a mind very much relieved now that everything was made smooth for the great boat-race on Monday.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Hustling at Highcliffe!

"RATHER a fag—what?"

De Courcy, the champion slacker of Highcliffe, was reclining at ease on his study sofa as he voiced that remark.

"Rats!" said Frank Courtenay promptly. "You've got to exert your little self for a whole week, Caterpillar, old man. You're going to astonish the natives. Highcliffe's in a pretty degenerate state, and there's going to be a revival."

"Can't you put it off for a year?" yawned the Caterpillar.

"No jolly fear! Procrastination's the thief of time. You've got to pile in now, so you might as well make up your mind to it."

The Caterpillar groaned.

"Franky, old boy, you're a hard taskmaster. I never knew a chap to have such astonishin' bursts of energy. I suppose I must really do your biddin' this time?"

"You must!" said Courtenay. "You've got tons of ability in the sporting line, if you like to put your back into it. Now, there's rowing——"

"But you're not goin' to make me row?" gasped the Caterpillar.

"That's all you know about it, then!"

"You're goin' to make me plough an oar through the water?"

"Precisely!"

"Have pity, Franky! I feel faint at the mere thought of it. I'm sure I should expire before I'd done half a dozen strokes. I believe you're tryin' to usher me into a premature grave."

"I'm trying to turn a first-class slacker into a first-class sportsman," corrected Frank.

"Well, supposin' I survive the rowin'. What other hardships are you goin' to inflict on your old pal?"

"You'll compete in the hundred yards and the quarter-mile; and then, if you're alive, we'll want you for the mile."

"Oh, lor!"

The look of dismay on De Courcy's face was really comical. He looked as if his death-warrant were being read.

"Then you'll be wanted to have a few pots at a target, and to swim a few lengths of the bath," said Frank.

"Mercy!" moaned the Caterpillar.

"It's nothing to whine about," said Courtenay. "Most fellows would give a term's pocket-money to be allowed to enter for the sports. There's Ponsonby, for instance. But he must take a back seat this time. We only want chaps who can play the game."

"All right," murmured the Caterpillar. "Any old thing. I suppose I must resign myself to my fate. It's no use arguin' with a fellow like you, Franky. You're so frightfully obstinate."

"We've got to lift Lord Eastwood's Cup," said Courtenay grimly. "With your aid, Caterpillar, I feel confident that we shall do great things. I know what a demon you are when you choose to exert yourself."

"Flattery, thy name is Franky!" said De Courcy, rearranging the cushions on the sofa to his satisfaction. "Thank goodness there's a brief respite until Monday."

"What!" exclaimed Courtenay aghast. "You've got to get into training at once, you giddy slacker!"

"Oh, ye gods!"

"I'll go and rout out the other fellows," said the enterprising Frank. "There's Bob and Tom Wilkinson, Smithson, Duncan, Clavering and Ward. They're all first-class oarsmen. We'll get one of the fags for cox."

And Courtenay quitted the study. He returned a few minutes later with the fellows he had named. They were fine, well-set-up juniors, of a vastly different type from Cecil Ponsonby and his set. The brothers Wilkinson towered above the rest, and Courtenay expected great things from them. Tom Wilkinson was to be the representative of Highcliffe in the boxing contest, and he was very keen on wiping the earth with all comers.

"Now, Caterpillar," said Frank. "Stir your stumps! We've got to—why, my hat! The lazy bounder's actually dropped off to sleep!"

De Courcy, with his head buried in the cushions, had sunk into a profound slumber, and was breathing placidly.

"Here, come out of that!" roared Tom Wilkinson, striding to the sofa. He seized the slumbering aristocrat by the shoulders and yanked him on to the floor.

"Yaw—aw!" gasped the Caterpillar. "Gerraway!"

"Not just yet," said Wilkinson, shaking his victim violently from side to side, and giving him periodical digs in the ribs. "You're a fine beauty to have in a boat crew, I must say! You'll drop off to sleep when the time comes for putting a spurt on!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled the Caterpillar, as Tom Wilkinson commenced to use him as if he were a punching-ball. "Lemme alone!"

"Yes, drop it, Wilky!" laughed Frank Courtenay. "He'll soon get over his confounded laziness."

"I've got such an awfully frail constitution," you know," explained De Courcy feebly, as he drew himself free from his schoolfellow's grasp. "If I exert myself to-day, in this frightfully sultry weather, I shall be a corpse by Monday, and sha'n't be able to turn up at the rowin' and racin' that Franky's so keen about."

"Oh, yes, you will!" said Courtenay. "When you've pulled for about a mile against the stream this afternoon you'll declare yourself as fit as a fiddle."

"Groo!" murmured the Caterpillar.

He looked wildly around for a way of escape; but there was none. Courtenay and Smithson each took one of his arms in a most affectionate manner and marched him out of the study.

"It's up to Highcliffe," said Frank seriously, "to bag that Cup. Our chances are all the rosier because the other schools don't think we stand an earthly. And because it's essential that we should all pull together, Caterpillar, that we're going to have a stiff trial row at once. You know I'm not a chap to be argued with; so you'd better pile in with one of your rare bursts of energy, and provide an eye-opener for the spectators on Monday. Twig?"

The Caterpillar nodded. He was thoroughly awake to the situation at last. Highcliffe had come to such a sorry pass in matters of sport that it was "up to" someone to lift the school out of the rut. And where Courtenay led, the Caterpillar followed.

It was almost dusk when the Highcliffians returned from their trial row, and they were all looking very fit. Unlike Peter Todd's crew of impossibles, Courtenay's merry men had shaped very well, the Caterpillar among them. De Courcy had completely got rid that "that tired feelin'" which usually possessed him, and, all things considered, it seemed that Highcliffe had a chance—however slender that chance might be—of coming out on top, and giving a good account of themselves against the rival schools.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
The Boat-Race!

"HIP, hip, hooray! The holidays start to-day!"

Bob Cherry of the Remove gave vent to that joyful and poetical observation as the rising-bell clanged out on the bright morning air. It was indeed a glorious day, auguring well for the success of the coming sports, and the Removites turned out in high spirits. Freed for a whole week from the tyranny of obnoxious Form-masters, they meant to enjoy themselves to the full, even those who were not booked to appear in any of the events.

"Buck up and get into your togs!" said Harry Wharton, addressing his intimate chums. "We'll have a turn at the nets before brekker to keep fit."

"No mouldy lessons!" said Nugent, with a satisfied sigh. "It's a giddy dream!"

"I say, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter sat up in bed, and yawned portentously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with you, porpoise?"

"What are you chaps all getting up for?" asked Bunter peevishly. "The boat-race ain't till after dinner."

"You think we're going to spend the morning in bed?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, I am, anyway. What's the good of being let off lessons for a week if a chap can't rest his limbs?"

"Begad, I'm with you there, dear boy!" murmured Lord Mauleverer drowsily.

Wharton laughed.

"Slacking in all its glory!" he said. "It's a jolly good thing the honour and reputation of Greyfriars doesn't rest in the hands of that precious pair!"

Bob Cherry made tracks for his washstand, and, securing a sponge, immersed it into a basin of water.

"We'll see if this'll work the giddy oracle!" he said cheerfully, approaching Bunter's bed.

"Yarooh! Keep off!" roared the fat junior, in alarm. "I ain't going to get up for hours yet!"

"Better let him alone," said Johnny Bull. "He hasn't

got over the bumping we gave him for cracking Peter Todd over the head the other day."

"That's so," said Nugent, smiling. "We put Bunter through it then, and no mistake. Let him alone, Bob."

Bob Cherry withdrew reluctantly, and Bunter and Mauleverer resumed their repose unmolested.

By the time the chums of the Remove had got down to the cricket, the two slackers were slumbering as soundly as the Seven Sleepers.

It was an unusual scene for fellows to be at the nets in their flannels first thing in the morning, and the juniors enjoyed their freedom immensely. Bob Cherry took the bat at the outset, and smote like a Goliath for half an hour, when Hurree Singh uprooted his middle stump. Then Wharton went on to bat, and by breakfast-time most of the players had had an innings.

"This is the life for me!" said Squiff, as they went in to breakfast. "Sport—and plenty of it! Better than mugging up Latin any day!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Letter for you, Master Wharton!"

Trotter, the page, met the cricketers as they trooped into the building.

Harry took the letter, and glanced at the postmark.

"Coombe!" he exclaimed. "That's the postal town for Rookwood. The letter's from young Silver for a cert. Hope there's no flaw in the arrangements. It would be too foul if they couldn't raise a crew or something."

"It's more than possible," said Bob Cherry gloomily. "The Rookwooders don't strike me as being top-hole sportsmen, especially Adolphus Smythe and that foppish set. Read it out, Harry, old son! Let's hear the worst!"

Wharton slit open the envelope, and read the letter aloud:

"'Dear Wharton,—We learned with great relish that Lord Eastwood was presenting a silver cup to the school which shows up best in sports. That Rookwood will bag the honours goes without saying, but I have no doubt you will give us a good run for our money.

"'A lot of our fellows, including the crew, are coming over by brake about eleven o'clock.

"'Hoping you will ever have cause to tremble at the name of Rookwood (Classical Side), I am, yours sincerely,

"'JIMMY SILVER.'"

"My hat! What cheek!" said Johnny Bull. "That chap's a cool card, if you like! He imagines we haven't a dog's chance!"

"Blessed are they who blow their own trumpet!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "He'll change his tune by to-night, methinks. He's one of those conceited bounders who fancy they can row, and when they're put to the test catch crabs at every other stroke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall see what we shall see," said Harry Wharton sagely. "Meanwhile, let's wage war on the eggs and bacon!"

As the morning wore on the excitement at Greyfriars rose apace. The whole of the fellows were partaking of the week's holiday, and very few of them went off by themselves. Most of them preferred to stay for the sports, and even the mighty men of the Sixth condescended to honour the great function with their presence.

Presently the names of the rival crews were posted up in Big Hall, and a large crowd gathered round. There was one alteration in the Greyfriars eight, Squiff replacing Tom Brown, who had been a trifle off colour.

The St. Jim's crew was as follows:

"Merry (stroke), Manners, Talbot, Lowther, Figgins, Redfern, Blake, Noble, Frayne (cox)."

"Hot stuff, if you like!" said Nugent. "That's the crew we've got to fear. The Terrible Three—I think that's what Merry, Manners, and Lowther call themselves—are foemen worthy of our giddy steel, and I've heard lots of rummy tales about that chap Talbot."

The Rookwood eight came next, but beyond Jimmy Silver, Tommy Dodd, and one or two more stalwarts, it did not strike the Greyfriars fellows as being very formidable.

When the crowd scanned the names of the Highcliffe crew there was a sudden burst of uncontrollable laughter.

Bob Cherry was almost doubled up.

"The Caterpillar!" he sobbed.

"The one and only Caterpillar!" echoed Wharton. "Fancy including him in the crew! Highcliffe must be on their beam-ends! Do get a photo of De Courcy rowing, someone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The rowfulness will be terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "The sinkfulness to the esteemed bottom will also be terrific!"

"The fellow might be a dark horse," suggested Vernon-Smith. "Young Paget of the Third said he saw the Highcliffe chaps on the water yesterday, and they were cutting along strongly. And De Courcy was with them."

Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"It's quite on the cards," he said. "Because the Caterpillar plays cricket like a Fiji Islander, it doesn't mean to say he isn't a champion in some other direction. Rowing may be his forte."

"Listen, O king!" said Squiff suddenly.

There was the sound of a horn near at hand, and the juniors dashed into the Close, just in time to see a brakeload of schoolboys coming up the drive.

"The Rookwooders!" said Wharton.

But it was not Jimmy Silver & Co. who had arrived. An elegant silk topper, glistening in the sun, revealed the presence of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"The St. Jim's fellows!" said Bob Cherry. "Give 'em a cheer!"

Tom Merry & Co. got down from the brake, with smiling faces, and the old Close rang with cheering on their behalf. While greetings were being exchanged between the rival schools there came a galloping of hoofs, and another brake rolled up, with Jimmy Silver & Co. as passengers.

Wharton looked at the Rookwooders curiously. He had expected to see a set of swankers, more or less, especially if the celebrated Adolphus Smythe was among them. But Jimmy Silver and his followers bore no traces of affectation. They were looking as demure as possible.

"Here we are again!" said Bob Cherry. "How do you do, Silver? This is Merry of St. Jim's. You have heard of him, I suppose? This is the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, complete with monocle."

"Weally, Chewwy——"

"Jolly pleased to see you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver cordially. "Quite a family—what? Where are the Highcliffe chaps?"

"Practising on the river, I expect," said Nugent. "They'll need to!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, they'll be along to lunch," said Wharton. "In the meantime, we'd better take you chaps in tow, and show you the gym and the cricket-ground."

And the party moved off in high spirits.

Coker of the Fifth came along and tapped Jimmy Silver on the shoulder.

"I see you're from Rookwood," he said, noting the school colours which were sewn on Silver's rowing blazer.

"That's so," answered Jimmy.

"Well, I'm Coker—Coker of the Fifth!"

Jimmy Silver did not seem to be particularly impressed.

"You've got an excellent chance of winning the boat-race," said Coker. "The Greyfriars crew's a wash-out!"

"Really!" said Jimmy Silver. "Then you're rowing, of course—er, Coker?"

The Fifth-Former nearly choked.

"Me," he shouted ungrammatically—"me row for the Remove! I wouldn't be found dead in their boat! Didn't I tell you I belonged to the Fifth?"

"More suitable for the Fifth of November, I should say," remarked Jimmy Silver.

And with this amiable observation he disengaged himself from the other's grasp and strolled away, leaving Coker fuming.

By the time the guests had made a tour of the playing-fields, and indulged in some friendly sparring in the gym, dinner was on the board. Before the meal started the Highcliffians arrived, looking very fit.

They did not contribute much to the conversation, and Harry Wharton & Co. put this down to the fact that they stood in awe of the coming contest.

However this may have been, Frank Courtenay was looking very confident as he led his comrades to the river after dinner. The members of the various crews had eaten sparingly. They were wise in their old age, as Bob Cherry expressed it.

The banks were packed with spectators, Lord Eastwood being prominent among the noisy multitude. A large contingent of fellows had travelled from the rival schools —even from Rookwood, which was farthest away from the scene of the race.

The excitement as the four boats prepared to start was intense. The Greyfriars eight naturally received more support than their opponents, and Harry Wharton smiled his acknowledgments as the great race was about to commence.

Crack!

Lord Eastwood fired the fateful pistol, and, like arrows from a quiver, the four boats shot off the mark.

"Greyfriars! Greyfriars!"

A mighty roar arose upon the bank, intermingled with solitary cries of "Rookwood!" or "Highcliffe!" and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's shrill treble: "St. Jim's!"

At the end of ten strokes the boats were dead level; then the Greyfriars bow began to creep ahead in little jerks.

"You're going up, you chaps! You're leaving 'em! Oh, well rowed!" shrieked the shoving, elbowing, stumbling pack of Greyfriars supporters.

In thirty strokes Greyfriars were half a length ahead.

"Keep it up!" shrilled young Paget, above the uproar. "One—two—three—four! Row, you chaps! Lam it through!"

At the end of three hundred yards the Highcliffe eight had regained their lost distance. St. Jim's and Rookwood were speeding along neck-and-neck a length behind.

"Jove!" exclaimed Wingate to Courtenay, as they dashed along the bank. "Who'd have thought Highcliffe would have shown up like this?"

The race was going ding-dong now, with scarcely two feet of difference between the boats.

Vernon-Smith, the Greyfriars stroke, was showing signs of distress, and rowing very short. The crews were evidently both astonished and alarmed at the fight Highcliffe were putting up. Courtenay & Co. resolutely refused to be shaken off.

In the Highcliffe boat, De Courcy was of a raw porridge colour, and his lank hair was damp with perspiration. Smithson was breathing heavily; but Courtenay at stroke rowed strongly and confidently; and the others simply had to keep up.

"Well rowed, Courtenay!" roared their small contingent of schoolfellows. "Stick to it, old man!"

At the bend near the island, Highcliffe's advantage of position put them half a length ahead. And now there was only a quarter of a mile to go.

"Greyfriars! Greyfriars!" bawled Peter Todd through his tin megaphone. "Don't give up, Smithy! Quicken the pace, there's a good chap!"

On and on the boats sped, with Highcliffe still half a length to the good, and Greyfriars and St. Jim's level in their wake.

Rookwood were out of the running now. The terrific pace had told upon them, and Jimmy Silver, though he set a good stroke, realised that it was a forlorn hope.

Vernon-Smith quickened a little, and his boat slowly gained on the Highcliffians. Two hundred yards more!

"Don't give up!" screamed Todd again. "You're nearly there! Row, you chaps! Drive it through!"

The Bounder's dripping face twitched a little.

"Pick—it—up!" he gasped over his shoulder.

Then the spurt began. The crowd on the bank could see Smithson's face, and the look of utter exhaustion in his half-shut eyes. They could hear the Caterpillar's gasp at every stroke, and the frenzied commands of the Highcliffe cox.

"Greyfriars!" came the panting shouts from the bank. "Pick it up! On to it, you chaps!"

Twenty yards from the post Highcliffe were leading by a quarter of a length. Then Greyfriars picked it up with the strength of despair. They went up a yard. Vernon-Smith almost lifted himself off his thwart as he made a final burst. Highcliffe gained a foot, but Greyfriars were creeping up again, when—Bang! The post was passed, and Highcliffe had won by a yard!

Smithson promply fainted over his oar handle. The Caterpillar, too, had to be lifted out and rubbed for five minutes before he could stand.

The spectators were cheering wildly. Disappointed as most of them were that Greyfriars had not finished first, they were sportsmen enough to realise that Highcliffe had rowed a great race. Their persistent practice on the river had brought about its own reward.

Everyone was trying to shake Frank Courtenay's hand at once. The members of the other crews, when they had stepped out of their boats, thronged up to offer their congratulations.

"Begad!" murmured the Caterpillar. "Ow! I'm feeling blue all over! This is what comes of exertin' oneself. Still, I'm not sorry. We won, an' that's all that matters. Franky, dear boy, link your gentle arm in mine, an' we'll saunter back to Highcliffe and break the news to Pon. He'll be pleased. We've performed almost as well as he would have done under similar circs."

"It was a fine race," said Courtenay. "Your chaps were game to the finish, Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We underrated your abilities," he said, "and paid the penalty."

"Never mind!" panted Bob Cherry breathlessly. "We've bagged a point, and if we nurse it and cherish it, it may bloom into a whole forest of 'em. What's the next item on the programme?"

"The shooting-match," said Wharton. "It's at Courtfield, to-morrow morning."

"Thank goodness that won't be such a killing affair!" grunted Frank Nugent. "I say, I feel famished. A couple of sandwiches constituted my dinner. Let's get along to the school."

It had been arranged that the St. Jim's and Rookwood fellows who were competing in the various events throughout the week should be quartered at Greyfriars, where a large dormitory had been specially prepared for them. The Highcliffians, of course, were to sleep at their own school, as it was no considerable distance from the scene of the sports.

Thus ended the first event. But many Titanic struggles were to be waged, and many feats of endurance accomplished, before Lord Eastwood's silver trophy found its allotted resting-place.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Mr. Prout Scores a Bullseye!

"IT'S up to us!"

Jimmy Silver, the shining light of Rookwood, made that remark as he strolled out into the Close with his followers the next morning. The Rookwood crew had shown up to the least advantage in the boatrace, and their defeat was keenly felt. During their short stay at Greyfriars, they had gathered from the conversation which arose in connection with the sports, that Rookwood were regarded as the chopping-block of the other schools. This knowledge was both disconcerting and exasperating.

"We've made a poor start," continued Jimmy Silver; "but poor starts sometimes predict good finishes."

"I hope that's the case now, then," growled Lovell. "Feeling must be pretty high at Rookwood because we lost yesterday. The Moderns will say that there was too much of a Classical element in the crew."

"And think how Smythe and those other cads will gloat," said Newcome. "We'll never hear the end of it unless we pull ourselves together."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"That's what we've got to do," he said resolutely. "We

must be dead on the mark every time this morning. Hallo! Who's this fat old josser waddling along?"

The "fat old josser" in question was Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Mr. Prout presented a singular appearance. He had discarded his scholastic gown for a flashy sporting suit, including a pair of stockings whose hue was both loud and striking. Under his arm was the famous Lee-Metford rifle which was his pride and joy.

"Er—good-morning!" said Mr. Prout genially. "A glorious day, is it not?"

Jimmy Silver made a critical survey of the heavens.

"So I observe, sir," he said pleasantly.

"You are, unless I am mistaken, the representatives of Rookwood School in the coming shooting contest?"

"Yes, sir."

"We are—we is!" murmured Raby.

"Ah! An excellent sport, shooting! In these days of battle, murder, and—ahem!—sudden death, it is essential that the youth of Britain should be able to shoot with a rifle, and shoot straight. When I was in the Rockies, in '87, I gave a display of marksmanship which astonished my colleagues."

"Quite so," assented Jimmy Silver. He was fully prepared to accept the Fifth-Form master's statement; though he concluded that Mr. Prout's colleagues were more astonished at the inaccuracy of his aim than anything else.

"Even now," pursued Mr. Prout, "my hand has lost none of its cunning. I could hit almost any object, however small, within a range of, say, five hundred yards."

Jimmy Silver winked at his comrades, and Newcome sped off to the tuckshop. He returned a minute later with an empty ginger-beer bottle.

"I wonder, sir," he said demurely, "if you would mind giving us—ahem!—a demonstration of your ability. Supposing I placed this bottle on the top of the school gate, sir, do you think you could bring it down?"

"It would be difficult to miss it, my boy," said Mr. Prout, with a superior smile.

"May I put it up, then, sir?"

The master of the Fifth hesitated. It was somewhat beneath his dignity to "pot" at ginger-beer bottles like a schoolboy. But, after all, it was holiday-time, and it behoved a master to throw off his magisterial ways and become boyish for a time. Besides, he was anxious to prove his bold assertion up to the hilt.

Mr. Prout nodded to Newcome.

"By all means put it up," he said.

The Rookwooders chuckled as Newcome went down to the gate. Harry Wharton & Co., who had just come out into the Close with some of the St. Jim's fellows, chuckled also.

"Old Prout's on the war-path again!" grinned Bob Cherry. "He won't be happy till he kills somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "Suahly he's not goin' to twy and dislodge that gingah-beeah bottle?"

"He'll try," said Wharton. "That's about as far as he'll get."

Newcome poised the bottle on the topmost bar of the gate, and retreated hurriedly. He had no wish for Mr. Prout's bullet to sear his ribs.

"Now," said Mr. Prout, bringing the rifle to his shoulder, and oblivious of the fact that a score of grinning juniors were watching the proceedings, "I will see if I can shatter the bottle to fragments."

"Go it, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"On the ball, sir!"

Mr. Prout placed his flabby cheek against the butt of the rifle, and pressed the trigger. There was an empty click, and a ripple of laughter from the juniors.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Prout. "I forgot to put the shot in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Prout hastily pulled out a box of ammunition from his pocket, and loaded the rifle. Then, with an almost terrible look of determination on his florid face, he took aim and fired.

Bang!

The juniors rushed forward to see what had happened. The bottle remained on the gate, intact. But there was a crash of glass in another direction.

"Good heavens!" gasped Wharton. "It's Gosling's window!"

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's see how many casualties there are!" spluttered Bob Cherry, who was almost weeping with merriment.

Gosling the porter came rushing out of his lodge like a demented creature. A poker was grasped firmly in his right hand.

"So they've come!" he roared, brandishing his weapon in a state of great excitement.

"Who's come, Gossy?" asked Nugent.

"The Germans!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which it's nothin' to larf at, young gents!" said the porter. "It's a matter of life and death. Wot I says is this 'ere—the varmints shall only enter this lodge over my dead body!"

"What a thirst for gore the man must have!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"That's not the only thing he's got a thirst for," said Tom Merry, looking into Gosling's kitchen.

The juniors crowded into the room, and Mr. Prout came panting up.

"W-what has happened?" he muttered, fearful lest some poor victim had been cut off untimely through his erratic marksmanship.

"It's all right, sir," said Bob Cherry amiably. "No casualties, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "He hit the bottle after all—but it was the wrong one!"

The juniors yelled. They simply could not help it. On the table in the kitchen stood a glass, half-full of a doubtful-looking liquid; while the fragments of a whisky-bottle were strewn around.

"Some desprit villain——" began Gosling.

"Calm yourself, my dear man," said Mr. Prout. "Any damage which you have sustained shall be made good at once."

Gosling grunted.

"Which it was a nine-shillin' bottle," he growled.

"I do not understand you, Gosling. You surely do not mean to imply that the bottle I have unfortunately smashed cost nine shillings?"

"The price of sperrits havin' gone up," said the porter, with heavy sarcasm, "it natcherally cost more'n tuppence."

"Spirits!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, aghast. "You have been imbibing intoxicating liquor on the premises, you dissolute wretch?"

"Which a man must 'ave a drop o' comfort these days," said Gosling.

Mr. Prout glared.

"I am very glad," he said viciously, "that I have been instrumental in checking what might have become a drunken orgy. I shall refuse to pay a single penny of compensation. Go about your business, Gosling, and remember that if I see so much as a drain of alcohol in this place again, you will be reported forthwith to Dr. Locke!"

And with this dire threat, Mr. Prout gathered his Lee-Metford rifle under his arm and pushed his way confusedly through the throng of grinning juniors. He was feeling very irritated and annoyed with everything and everybody; and devoutly wished he had left his rifle to rust on the wall of his study. In short, he had made a fool of himself.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Jimmy Silver Shows the Way!

BANG!

Bang, bang, bang!

The cracking of rifles could be heard later on that morning at the Courtfield Rifle Range. The great shooting contest between the rival schools had commenced.

St. Jim's and Highcliffe were firing now. They had been drawn together, and the victorious team was to meet the winners of Greyfriars v. Rookwood.

The juniors were firing seven shots apiece at a range of twenty-five yards. There were ten to a team, the best eight scores to count.

Talbot and the Caterpillar were the last to get down on the mat, though the result was by this time practically assured, for St. Jim's had been splendidly consistent. Tom Merry had scored thirty-three out of the possible thirty-five, and Blake and Noble each had thirty-two points to his credit.

"Oh, begad!" murmured the Caterpillar, as he emptied his breech for the last time. "I shall never make a marksman! My arm aches like the very dooce! Ow!"

There was a rush for the targets when Talbot had fired his final shot. They were collected up, and Mr. Lascelles, of Greyfriars, went through them with Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare's face broadened into a smile when the totals were reckoned up.

"St. Jim's has it," he said. "Well done, you fellows! Full scores: St. Jim's, 255; Highcliffe, 238."

"Huwway!" chortled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had fired for Tom Merry's team. "Won by seventeen points, bai Jove!"

"Not much to write home about, so far as you are concerned, Gussy," said Monty Lowther. "You made ten, and are counted out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

There was a brief interval, and then the Greyfriars fellows came forward. Jimmy Silver & Co. followed.

"Pile in, Harry!" said Bob Cherry. "You and Silver are having the first go. Winners to meet St. Jim's, so we must be dead on the mark."

Bob Cherry evidently imagined that Greyfriars would "walk round" Rookwood in the preliminary contest; and Jimmy Silver smiled as he drew his arm through his rifle-strap. The Rookwooders were no mean marksmen, and they meant to provide an eye-opener for their opponents.

Crack! crack!

Silver and Wharton fired together, and Mr. Lascelles, who was surveying the targets through a pair of glasses, uttered a sharp exclamation

"A bullseye to each," he said.

"Bravo!"

"Good old Wharton!"

"Stick to it, Silver!"

The two juniors continued to fire with pronounced success. When the seven rounds of ammunition on each side had been exhausted, Wharton and Jimmy Silver had thirty-three points each to their credit.

Bob Cherry and Tommy Dodd took up their positions next. Both were excellent marksmen, but not quite up to the weight of Wharton and Jimmy Silver. Bob Cherry retired with thirty points, and Tommy Dodd with twenty-nine.

The contest continued in a most interesting manner. Greyfriars gained a point here, and Rookwood there, until, when the last two juniors got down, the scores were level.

Russell of Greyfriars, and Flynn of Rookwood, were the fellows in whose hands rested the chances of victory. Russel, who naturally felt very "nervy," put up a poor show. The Rookwood junior did little better, but he improved upon Russell's effort, and, when the scores were added together, and the two lowest on each side counted out, it was seen that Rookwood had beaten Greyfriars by a solitary point.

"Hard cheddar!" said Jimmy Silver, noting the despondent look on Harry Wharton's face. "You can't win all along the line, you know."

"We ain't won anything yet," growled Johnny Bull. "We were second in the mouldly boat-race, if that's anything."

"You got a point," said Jimmy Silver. "Be thankful for small mercies, my son."

"You're not quite up to Rookwood's weight," said Newcome, with an air of superiority.

"Oh, rats!"

"Well," said Jimmy Silver. "If we don't beat St. Jim's I shall be surprised. We've got a point for being second, anyway."

"St. Jim's and Rookwood—final!" bellowed Mr. Lascelles. It was necessary that he should bellow, for the rifle-range resounded with voices, like the celebrated Tower of Babel.

The final proved to be a ding-dong struggle. Both sets of juniors were skilled with the rifle, and each side went "all out" for the honours.

"There!" said Tommy Dodd, who was the last of the Rookwooders to fire. "I've done my best, and no fellow can do more. Wonder who's won? It's jolly close, I know."

Mr. Lascelles and Kildare went over the targets. The crowd waited in breathless suspense.

"Rookwood has it," said Kildare, with a rueful smile. He felt the defeat of his school keenly.

"Hooray!"

"Rookwood for ever!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. positively went mad with excitement and delight. They had failed dismally in the boat-race, but full atonement had been made now. The faces of all of them—Classics and Moderns alike—were serenely happy.

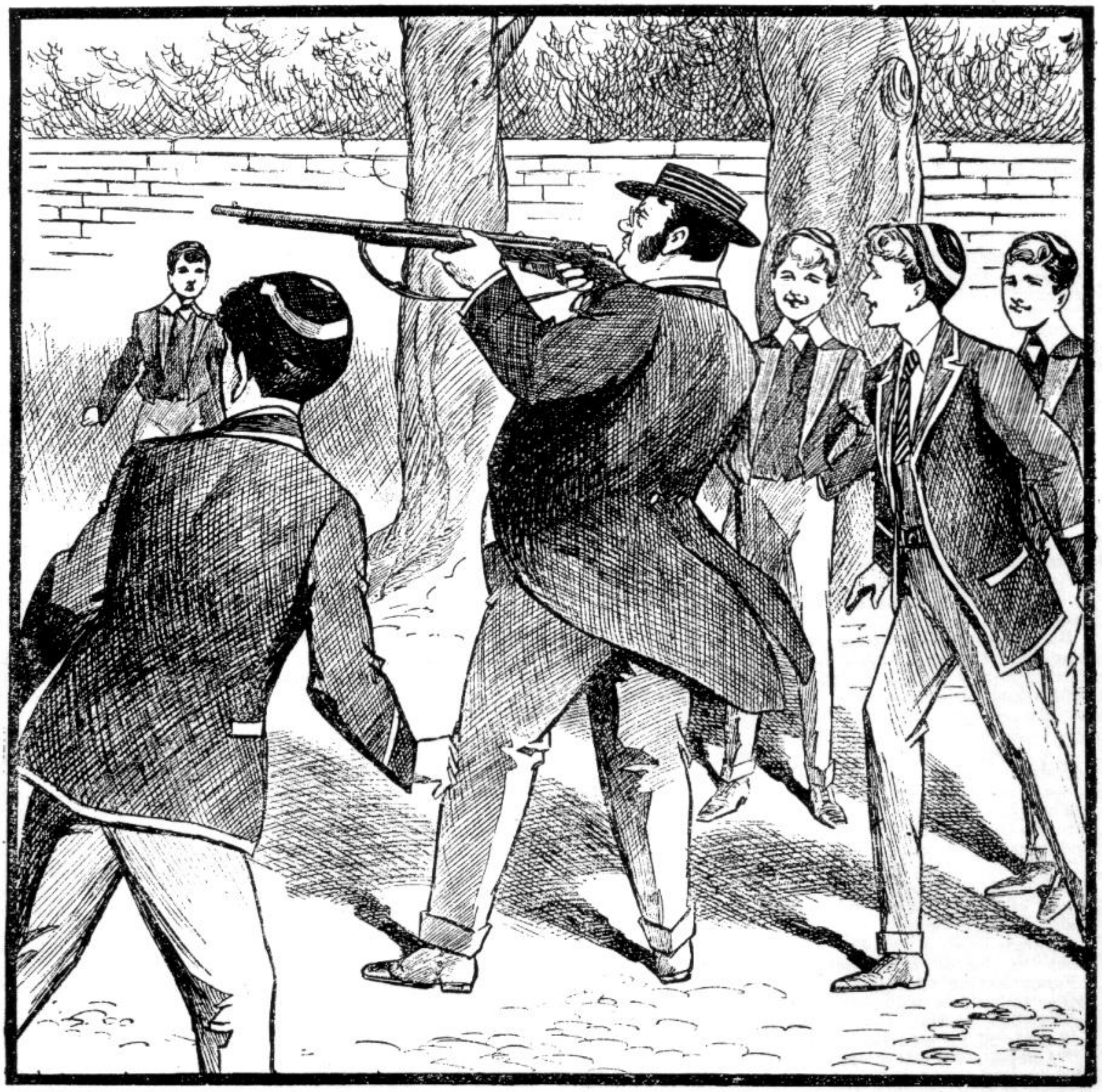
"Let's see the full scores," said Newcome.

Kildare handed over the sheet. It read thus:

ROOKWOOD.	
Silver	31
Lovell	30
Newcome	30
Raby	28
Flynn	26
Doyle	28
Cook	29
Dodd	30
	232

ST. JIM'S.	
Merry	32
Talbot	32
Blake	28
Manners	23
Noble	31
Lowther	29
Figgins	25
Glyn	30
	230

D'Arcy and Digby had been "counted out" on the St. Jim's side; and Rookwood, by their consistent scoring, had won a splendidly-fought contest by two points.



Mr. Prout placed his flabby cheek against the butt of the rifle, and pressed the trigger. There was an empty click, and a ripple of laughter from the juniors. "Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Prout. "I forgot to put the shot in!" "Ha, ha, ha!" *(See Chapter 8.)*

And Jimmy Silver & Co., as they wended their way from the scene of their triumph, rejoiced with an exceeding joy.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
The Race is to the Swift!

"ONE!" growled Bob Cherry.

"A solitary one!" echoed Squiff.

"An isolated, single, mouldy, confounded one!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"What on earth are you chaps gassing about?" asked Harry Wharton, coming into the common-room in his running shorts, with a muffler round his neck.

"We were heaping praises on each other," said Nugent, with heavy sarcasm, "for having helped to secure one point so far in the sports. One point! Think of it! Dote on it!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"St. Jim's have only got one," he said.

"True, O King!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "But Highcliffe and Rookwood have got three. And what's more, my son, it won't do!"

"Think how some of the fellows'll gloat if another school collars the trophy!" said Squiff. "Temple and those other Fourth Form cads will never let us hear the end of it. And Coker, too! Fancy that prize ass chipping us at every turn! It doesn't bear thinking of. We shall never be able to hold our heads up again."

"Oh, rats," said Harry Wharton lightly. "You're talking out of your hat, Squiff, old man! Because we've only had the fortune to bag one point so far, it doesn't follow that we shall be on the losing side at the finish. It's no good mourning for what might have been. Candidly, I expected it to be a case of 'also ran' in the shooting. We don't get much practice in that direction,

except when we camp out as cadets, which is once in the blue moon. The fact that we're a couple of points behind Highcliffe and Rookwood is nothing to shed tears over. Why, there are a dozen races to-day, of different kinds, and we can pick up those two points in a twinkling."

This cheerful aspect of the case brought new hope to the juniors' breasts. Some of them were "dead certs" for certain running races, and they looked eagerly forward to adding to their meagre supply of honours.

The playing-fields were bordered with numerous sightseers when the races commenced. It was an almost unique gathering, for Marjorie Hazeldene and her girl chum, Clara Trevelyn, had come over from Cliff House; Marie Rivers had come over from St. Jim's; and Ethel Cleveland was there to cheer her noble cousin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; though probably her presence would prove a greater stimulus to Figgins, of the New House at St. Jims, than to anyone else. For Figgins had a profound admiration for Cousin Ethel, and would gladly have made any sacrifice on her behalf.

The hundred yards was the first item, and it attracted fifteen competitors—the cream of the running talent possessed by the various schools.

Crack! went the pistol, and simultaneously fifteen figures shot off the mark and sped towards their goal. It really looked for an instant as if a mass of runners would breast the tape at the same time; and the officials who stood, watches in hand, at the winning-post, had an exacting task.

There was a breathless suspense when the race finished. Not one of the hundreds of spectators round the ground could have guessed who were the first two home; but when Larry Lascelles shouted through his megaphone, "First, R. Cherry, of Greyfriars; second, G. Figgins, of St. Jim's!" there was a loud and prolonged burst of cheering.

Bob Cherry had won the race in the really excellent time of ten and four-fifths seconds, and Figgins had finished barely a yard behind.

"Nothing to grouse about now," said Harry Wharton, joyfully clapping his chum on the back. "We've made up the leeway already, you see."

The hurdle-race came next, and a most exciting contest ended in a win for Talbot, of St. Jim's. Jimmy Silver came in second.

The high-jump and the long-jump saw Highcliffe come into the limelight, for Tom Wilkinson won both. Nugent and Peter Todd were second respectively.

Then came the popular feat of throwing the cricket-ball, in which Vernon-Smith shone. He contributed a throw of ninety-three yards, while Noble, of St. Jim's, managed eighty-eight.

"This is where points are as plentiful as mushrooms, or thick as leaves in Vallambrosa," said Bob Cherry. "Fancy having to fag in a giddy boat like niggers, in order to gain a solitary point, when, by chucking a cricket-ball to the other end of the field, a chap can get three off his own bat!"

"Amazin', isn't it?" said the Caterpillar. "It'll be more amazin' still if I win the quarter-mile. I've been hoardin' up my energy for that."

The juniors grinned. Dark horse as De Courcy had proved himself to be, they could hardly conceive him winning a stiff race such as the quarter-mile. The Caterpillar had seldom been known to walk that distance.

But it was destined to be a day of surprises. Not only did the Caterpillar win the quarter-mile, but he won it handsomely, finishing twelve yards ahead of Talbot, of St. Jim's.

The half-mile, however, called for sterner stuff. Tom Merry, who had been in the background hitherto, won an excellent race, narrowly beating his friend and rival, Harry Wharton.

There were only eight contestants for the mile—two runners from each school. St. Jim's again went up one, Figgins creating a school record by winning in four minutes, fifty-five seconds. Courtenay of Highcliffe was a good second.

Not one of the numerous onlookers felt disappointed at the fare which was provided. The racing was keen and sportsmanlike, and the spirit of comradeship which prevailed between the rival schools was splendid to see. Everyone played the game as it should be played, adhering strictly to the high traditions of British sport.

"Teams for the tug-of-war, line up!" thundered Mr. Lascelles.

Bob Cherry glanced humorously at his chums.

"This is where we smile," he exclaimed. "The tug-of-war's ours, for a cert! We've got Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter pushed his way forward, pompous and important. The tug-of-war was Bunter's solitary event, and he was a rod in pickle for Greyfriars. The Famous Five had fed him up for the occasion, and they were confident that nothing human could move Bunter—once he stuck.

But the Greyfriars juniors had reckoned without their host. St. Jim's had a very valiant trencherman, too, in the person of Fatty Wynn. It was a moot point who was the heavier—Wynn or Bunter.

The crowd, scenting amusement, fairly swarmed on to the ground. They were about to witness a sight the like of which they might never look upon again.

The draw brought Rookwood and St. Jim's and Highcliffe and Greyfriars together. There were to be three pulls to decide each contest.

Rookwood stood no "earthly." That was evident at the outset. They were a comparatively light lot of fellows, and the hefty stalwarts of St. Jim's had little difficulty in hauling them over the line.

Highcliffe shared a similar fate at the hands of Greyfriars. Frank Courtenay & Co. could not shift Bunter, try they never so badly. The Owl of the Remove, with a complacent smile on his chubby face, simply stuck; and it seemed as if he could not have been moved in a month of Sundays.

Greyfriars did unto Highcliffe as St. Jim's did with Rookwood. They pulled their opponents over three times in quick succession.

And now the air was charged with excitement. St. Jim's were to meet Greyfriars in the final! It might almost be called a competition between Billy Bunter and Fatty Wynn.

The rival teams lay back on the rope, waiting for the order to pull. It soon came, and a straining, tugging, heaving mass of humanity met the eye.

"Pull, you fellows—pull!" roared Peter Todd, who was too light to be in the Greyfriars team. "Put your beef into it, Bunter! Pull—pull—pull! Oh, you fat dummy!"

St. Jim's had been heaving like Trojans, and it was now apparent that Wynn was a better man than Bunter, for he had plenty of muscle, whereas his fat rival was out of condition. After a strenuous tussle, St. Jim's had their opponents well over the line.

"Oh, come!" said Mr. Lascelles. "This won't do, Greyfriars! Put some go into it next time!"

Harry Wharton & Co. responded. Johnny Bull took Bunter's place at the end of the rope, and the change had the desired effect. Slowly, but none the less surely, the St. Jim's fellows were borne over the line, and the Greyfriars crowd roared.

"Bravo, you chaps!"

"One all!"

"Third time does the trick."

With flushed faces the rival juniors clung to the rope for the last time. Mr. Lascelles gave the order, and the spectators cheered frantically.

"Greyfriars!"

"St. Jim's!"

"Pull, there, Redfern!"

"Don't slack, Bunter!"

Probably Billy Bunter conjured up visions of the tremendous feed which was in store for him if his side won. He doubtless saw, in the blue sky overhead, as he lay panting on the rope, a realm of jam-tarts, and a vista of doughnuts. Vaguely he felt that it was "up to" him to pull, and keep on pulling until those St. Jim's bounders had given up the ghost. So just when things were looking black for Greyfriars, Billy Bunter applied himself to the rope with stubborn determination.

Harry Wharton & Co. had given way a foot or two, but Bunter's renewed energy enabled them to regain their former position. The applause was, as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh afterwards remarked, "terrific."

For minute after minute the stern struggle went on. No sooner did one school gain a few inches than the other quickly recovered them. It would have been impossible to find two sides more evenly matched.

Great beads of perspiration stood out upon Bob Cherry's brow as he muttered:

"Now for it!"

There was a concentrated effort now made on the part of Greyfriars, and slowly—oh, so slowly—they gained the upper hand.

"Six more pulls!" roared Wingate of the Sixth. "Come on, kids! One—two—three—four—five—SIX!"

"They've done it!" yelled Courtenay, who was as excited as a fag in the Third. "Oh, well played, Wharton!"

Billy Bunter simply flopped down into the grass. He could neither move nor speak, for every ounce of vitality in the fat junior's body had been exhausted in that last grim struggle. The Removites fanned him and consoled him, but it was some time before Bunter became himself again.

"I'm thirsty!" he groaned feebly.

"Poor old chap!" said Nugent sympathetically. "You sha'n't be thirsty long. Give me a hand, you fellows. We'll carry him as far as the trees at the bottom of the field. Bring that jar of ginger-pop along, Bob."

And Billy Bunter—for once the hero of the hour—was snugly ensconced beneath the shady trees, and left there—alone with pints of ginger-beer, and with the feeling that he had deserved well of his country.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
De Courcy in the Limelight!

"NOT so bad," said Harry Wharton, as he poured out the tea in No. 1 Study after the sports.

"The not-so-badfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"It's been a gruelling afternoon, but we've come out with quite a respectable record."

Wharton laid down the teapot and consulted a piece of paper which lay on the table.

"This is how things stand in the matter of points," he said. "St. Jim's, 14; Greyfriars, 13; Highcliffe, 13; Rookwood, 4."

"Rookwood are a set of duds!" sniffed Nugent. "They started well, but only put on one point since the shooting match. Jimmy Silver came in second in the hurdles. That's all they've got to show for an afternoon's sport."

"I think they're out of the reckoning now," said Wharton. "But what price Highcliffe? They're hot stuff. That chap Courtenay's been working like a demon to lick his men into shape. I think we've got more to fear from them than from St. Jim's, in spite of the fact that the Saints are a point to the good."

"Anyway," said Bob Cherry. "In the midst of this great crisis, I implore you to pass the cream buns."

Nugent handed them over, but Wharton's arm shot out, and the plate went flying out of the junior's hand, smashing to fragments on the floor of the study. The cream buns went hurtling into the air in all directions.

"Yarooh!" roared Nugent, springing to his feet. "Wharrer you up to, you silly chump?"

"Every blessed bun spoilt, you burbling duffer!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"And a jolly good thing, too!" grinned Wharton.

"What?"

"The swimming contests come off after tea; and don't you know that it's dangerous to swim on a full stomach, you chumps?"

"Oh!"

There was method in Wharton's madness. He realised that the swimmers of the Remove would have to be thoroughly fit if they were to do themselves justice; and thorough fitness was not to be acquired by eating choice assortments of pastry.

"Two slices each of brown bread-and-butter must be the bill of fare," said Harry. "Sorry it's so meagre, but we've got to get ahead of these St. Jim's bounders, you know."

"The get-aheadfulness must be terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh, with a wise shake of the head, as he stripped a banana.

The Nabob was the possessor of a beautiful side-stroke, and he meant to do great things for Greyfriars before that eventful day was done.

There was a sharp rap on the door of the study, and in response to Wharton's "Come in!" Jimmy Silver entered, with Lovell, Newcome, and Raby in close attendance. The Rookwooders were sparsely clad in sweaters and running shorts, and towels were in their hands or around their necks.

"Ready for the fray?" asked Wharton.

"We are!" replied Jimmy Silver. "So far as I can see, we've got to win every blessed event if Rookwood's to be in at the death; and, as it's next door to impossible to win every race, I suppose we must consider ourselves counted out."

"Rough luck!" said Bob Cherry. He had great admiration for Jimmy Silver & Co. They took their discomfiture like true sportsmen.

"Oh, I'm not going to whine about it!" said Jimmy Silver, forcing a grin. "We shall be lookers-on in Vienna after this, as far as our chances of getting the Cup are concerned. But we shall have a say in the ultimate result, all the same. Buck up, you chaps! You'll be late. The brakes are outside."

The swimming sports were to take place at the Highcliffe baths. After an afternoon spent in the blazing sun, the juniors relished the prospect of a dip; and in a few moments they swarmed into one of the brakes, exchanging cheery comments with Tom Merry & Co., who were in the other.

The drivers cracked their whips, and the vehicles rattled away down the dusty road. It was not a far cry to Highcliffe, and the baths were reached without incident.

Frank Courtenay & Co. were there, looking fit and cool, and impervious to the ironical remarks of Ponsonby and his cronies, who were among the lookers-on.

The proceedings opened with a race of six lengths, and fourteen juniors lined up at the deep end. Mr. Lascelles blew a shrill blast on his whistle, and simultaneously there was a loud splash. The race had started.

"Highcliffe! Highcliffe!" was the cry now. Frank Courtenay & Co. were on their native heath, so to speak, and meant to give a good account of themselves. Courtenay was an excellent swimmer. He utilised the orthodox breast-stroke, which carried him along at a good pace.

At the end of three lengths Courtenay was leading by fully ten yards. Hurree Singh, Wharton, Merry and Talbot were cutting through the water after him.

Wharton did not seem to be unduly exerting himself. He was, nevertheless, keeping up a good stroke, and slowly, foot by foot, he went ahead of Tom Merry and the others, and gained upon Frank Courtenay.

The Highcliffe junior was easing up at the sixth length, whereas Wharton spurted gallantly, much to the delight of the Greyfriars contingent stationed at the side of the bath. Overhauling his opponent with long, steady strokes, Harry Wharton touched the rope first—a second too quick for Courtenay.

"Good man!" said Wingate, helping him out of the water. "Keep that up in the other races and everything in the garden will be lovely."

Wharton smiled, and went into the dressing-room. He was not wanted again until the relay race started.

The next event consisted of two lengths only, but the task was no light one, since it had to be undertaken in old clothes and heavy boots. Tommy Dodd, of Rookwood, finished first after an exciting and amusing struggle, and Tommy Cook, his bosom chum, was second.

The "pyjama-and-candle" race, of one length only, attracted nearly twenty candidates. It was an extraordinary affair, the juniors having to swim in their pyjamas and carry a lighted candle successfully to the other end of the bath. Tom Merry got off the mark well, but, after completing half a length, his candle went out, and he was forced to return to have it relit, in accordance with the rules of the race.

Bob Cherry and Monty Lowther came next, and they were both swimming with excessive caution. The Greyfriars fellow, however, seemed to have more in him, for

he forged a yard or two ahead as they were nearing the finish. His frenzied grab at the rope, however, caused his candle to go out, amid groans from the Greyfriars spectators and roars of laughter from the rest.

Monty Lowther, who was swimming on his back, the handle of the candlestick in his mouth, made no mistake, and reached the rope with his light still burning, to the great joy of all St. Jim's. Jimmy Silver came in a few seconds afterwards.

Then came the relay race, in which the four schools participated. Tom Merry, Harry Wharton, Jimmy Silver and Frank Courtenay went first. When they had completed two lengths another four were started, and so on, until the whole team had finished the course.

There was very little in it when the first four swimmers completed the distance. Harry Wharton and Frank Courtenay touched the rope together, and Jimmy Silver and Tom Merry were a stroke or two behind. Immediately the next four took the water.

Hurree Singh was the Greyfriars representative, and he resorted to his speedy side-stroke. Unfortunately, however, the Nabob, instead of keeping a straight course, went off at a tangent, to the consternation of his chums. By the time he had awakened to the fact that his course was erratic, Hurree Singh's three opponents had surged ahead. It was fairly obvious now that Greyfriars had lost the race, for their two remaining men could never pick up the lost distance.

When the third swimmer on each side had taken his turn, the order of the various schools was as follows: St. Jim's, Highcliffe, Rookwood, Greyfriars.

As the last four fellows plunged in at intervals, the baths resounded with shouts. Jack Blake, of St. Jim's, went first, as soon as Manners touched, and he was quickly followed by the Caterpillar. Lovell, of Rookwood, and Cherry, of Greyfriars, were next in order.

"Go it, ye cripples!" roared Monty Lowther, dashing along the side of the bath. "Good old Jacky! St. Jim's has it!"

But Lowther was all eyes for Blake. He was not watching the Caterpillar, who, although he simply appeared to be gliding along gracefully and leisurely, was in reality making fine headway.

Lovell and Bob Cherry, who had a considerable amount of leeway to make up, realised that theirs was a forlorn hope, and took matters easily.

Jack Blake started on the second and last length with the Caterpillar sticking to him like a limpet. As he turned his head he saw the danger, and went "all out" for victory.

But De Courcy refused to be shaken off. With long, crisp strokes, he kept in the wake of the St. Jim's fellow for half a length, and then fairly flashed through the water. The Highclifflans cheered him to the echo. Even Ponsonby & Co. could not fail to be struck with admiration for his wonderful swimming.

"Is it really De Courcy?" gasped Gadsby. "Can it really be the slacker? My hat! I thought he was quite incapable of anything like this!"

"Same here," said Ponsonby, rubbing his eyes as though in a trance.

A host of Highcliffians urged the Caterpillar on. But he needed no urging on. He drew level with Blake when a few yards from the rope, and, shooting ahead in splendid style, won a magnificent race for Highcliffe.

"Picking up plates next," said Mr. Lascelles, when the storm of cheering had subsided.

Quite a crowd of juniors competed in this popular feature. Mr. Lascelles scattered thirty tin plates in the bath, and one by one the divers plunged in to collect them. Some came up with a good handful; others drew blank altogether.

The highest number fell to the lot of Fatty Wynn, who managed fifteen. But, just as Mr. Lascelles was about to announce the next contest, the Caterpillar came forward.

"Excuse me," he said gracefully. "I don't want to miss my turn. I've been in the dressin'-room for a rest."

"Very well, De Courcy," smiled Mr. Lascelles, throwing in the plates which Wynn had landed. "In you go."

The Highcliffe fellows wore anxious looks as the Caterpillar took his plunge. Fatty Wynn's fifteen required some beating, and they were, as Hurree Singh would have remarked, on the "tender-hooks."

A few bubbles on the surface of the water were the only signs that De Courcy had started his task. The seconds flew by, and still the Highcliffe junior did not appear. Fully a minute had passed ere his head bobbed up, and he piloted his prize to the side of the bath.

Mr. Lascelles took the plates, and began to count them, the crowd watching him breathlessly. The Greyfriars master looked astonished, as well he might.

"Twenty!" he exclaimed, in an almost awed tone.

"Oh, well played!"

"Good old Caterpillar!"

"You giddy cherub!" said Frank Courtenay, delightedly wringing his chum's hand. "We wondered why you were under so long."

"Too much fag to come up, dear boy," said the Caterpillar simply.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Only, of course, it was a rather suffocatin' job, wallowin' about at the bottom of the bath. So I chucked it, an' thought I might as well bring up somethin' to show for it."

"Oh, Caterpillar! You're great!"

"Final race, of fifteen lengths!" called Mr. Lascelles, who, having constituted himself master of the ceremonies, was having a very busy time.

Only six juniors attempted the last event. Most of them were not unnaturally feeling very fatigued by this time.

Vernon-Smith, who had only competed in one of the races, had stored up his energy for the final event. The Bounder had the stroke of a second Burgess, and, to the immense delight of his schoolfellows, he won somewhat easily, Kerr of St. Jim's coming in second.

Thus ended the swimming sports; and as the brakes rolled back to Greyfriars in the dusky summer evening, the hearts of all the juniors were light—save, perhaps, those of Jimmy Silver & Co. The end of the great contest for Lord Eastwood's Cup was in sight, and the honours would rest either with St. Jim's or Highcliffe, who had twenty points each to their credit; or with Greyfriars, who had nineteen. Rookwood alone were without hope.

"Harry, old son," remarked Bob Cherry, as the gates of Greyfriars came in sight, "they're giving us a jolly good tussle, but if that blessed cup's not reposing in No. 1 Study next week, I'll eat my hat—with Gussy's topper thrown in!"

"I'll keep you to your word!" laughed Wharton.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.
When Greek Meets Greek!

GREYFRIARS was in a buzz.

The gymnasium was packed to its fullest capacity, for the boxing competition, the last event but one for Lord Eastwood's trophy, was at its height.

Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, and Tom Wilkinson, of Highcliffe, had been drawn together, and were going it hammer-and-tongs. Round and round the ring they went, both giving and receiving hard knocks. Bob Cherry was beyond all question the best boxer in the Remove; but Tom Wilkinson was also a champion. Moreover, he had the advantage of height and reach.

But Bob stuck to him gamely. On two occasions he was actually floored, but came up smiling each time. As the minutes flashed by, the Greyfriars fellow got into his stride, so to speak, and administered severe punishment to his opponent. Wilkinson went the full ten rounds, but was beaten easily on points; and Bob Cherry, grinning and breathless, placed himself under his chums' care while Tom Merry, of St. Jim's, encountered Jimmy Silver. The winner of this contest was to meet Bob in the final.

Just as Mr. Lascelles called "Time!" an excited figure

dived under the ropes and into the ring. It was Grundy, of the Shell at St. Jim's. Grundy had a great opinion of his powers as a boxer, and considered that if any person were qualified to represent St. Jim's in the final, that person was George Alfred Grundy. Unfortunately, however, Tom Merry had not seen eye to eye with him in the matter, and, with the aid of some of the Shell fellows, had locked him in a barn in the woods, in order to prevent a possible scene at the final. Grundy, assisted by a charitably-disposed tramp, had made good his escape, and, to the amazement of the onlookers, had dashed into the boxing-ring just as Tom Merry and Jimmy Silver were about to shake hands.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Get off the grass, idiot!" muttered Tom Merry.

"Rats!" said Grundy. "It strikes me I'm not a moment too soon. In another jiffy that chap Silver would have wiped the floor with you. Here, let me take him on! I'll whop him!"

But the St. Jim's fellows in the audience had recovered themselves sufficiently to take in the situation. Manners and Lowther and Blake and Figgins rushed to the ring-side. They seized the war-like Grundy, and yanked him back into a seat. Grundy roared and yelled.

"Oh, sit on him!" said Monty Lowther desperately. "Call for Fatty Wynn!"

Fatty Wynn scrambled down from his perch, and, seeing what was wanted, deposited his plump form on the prostrate Grundy.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Silver commenced their battle.

The affair was short and sweet—deliciously sweet to the St. Jim's juniors.

Jimmy Silver was a skilful boxer. He had science in plenty, but compared with Tom Merry he was a mere Lilliputian. The Shell fellow simply played with him.

In half a minute Jimmy Silver found himself against the ropes, blinking from a heavy blow between the eyes. Tom Merry pressed him hard, and swung out his right.

The Rookwood junior went down with a thud. His bolt was shot.

Lovell and Newcome raised their fallen champion to his feet, and bore him out of the ring. Then Mr. Lascelles announced the final:

"Tom Merry, St. Jim's, versus R. Cherry, Greyfriars!"

"My hat!" murmured Wharton. "Bob's got a stiff proposition this time!"

Never before, in the history of the two schools, had Bob been called upon to face Tom Merry in listic encounter—friendly or otherwise. The air was charged with excitement as the juniors, after a brief rest, entered the ring for the second time.

"Time!" rapped out Mr. Lascelles.

The opponents shook hands, and almost immediately Tom Merry's left shot out. His right followed, and the Greyfriars fellow found himself driven into a corner. It was evidently Tom Merry's intention to force the fighting.

Bob Cherry rallied, and successfully guarded the numerous blows rained upon him. He was fighting with his back to the wall, however, and his opponent had all the best of the first round.

"Time!"

Harry Wharton, who was seconding his chum, looked serious as he fanned Bob vigorously with a towel.

"Buck up, old son!" he muttered. "Get him in the open this time. He's dangerous when he has you penned up!"

Bob Cherry followed out this excellent advice in the next round, and retired with honours more or less even. Both he and Tom Merry were stubborn fighters, and it seemed to the spectators that they would go the whole of the ten rounds. In that case, a win on points was the only thing possible.

Tom Merry knew this, and put all the skill and science he knew into the third round. He finished up with a slight advantage.

In the next three rounds that advantage was maintained admirably. Bob Cherry seemed to be boxing carelessly, nonchalantly, and the Greyfriars spectators groaned.

"What's happening to our giddy champion?" asked Peter Todd. "I don't want to swank, but, really, if I

couldn't put up a better show than that, I'd give up boxing and start keeping nanny-goats!"

Vernon-Smith, to whom the remark was addressed, laughed knowingly.

"Can't you see his little game?" he muttered. "He's letting Tom Merry use up his giddy energy, and in the last round or so he'll wade in and slaughter him!"

The Bounder was right. When Bob Cherry came up for the eighth round, he changed his tactics entirely. Where he had been slow before, he now became correspondingly active. During a swift bout of in-fighting he got in a terrific blow on the point of his opponent's jaw, and followed it up with a rap between the eyes with his right.

The crowd woke up. It was, as Fisher T. Fish remarked in his native dialect, "some" fighting. The St. Jim's junior never recovered from Bob Cherry's smashing attack. While he stood blinking at his opponent with watery eyes, Bob sailed in, and, knocking his guard aside, dealt him a terrific blow in the chest, which felled him to the floor like an ox.

Mr. Lascelles began to count. Twice Tom Merry made a gallant effort to rise, and twice fell back again. That last sledge-hammer blow of Bob's had been too much for him. He was done.

"Cherry wins," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Hurrah!"

The gymnasium rang again and again with cheering. The other members of the Famous Five swarmed into the ring, and, hoisting their curly-headed hero shoulder-high, bore him off in triumph to the Remove dormitory, to wash away all traces of the combat.

"Bob, old man, your fist!" said Harry Wharton, when the dormitory was reached. "I couldn't see through your little game at first. My hat, but it was a daring wheeze to attempt a knock-out! And with Tom Merry, too! Oh, you're a giddy gem!"

"'Nuff said!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Ye gods! I'm bruised all over. I'm rather sorry to have knocked old Tommy about; but it's no good being sentimental when the honour and glory of Greyfriars is at stake—what?"

"Not a bit of it," said Nugent. "This puts us ahead now, with twenty-two points. St. Jim's has twenty-one, and Highcliffe twenty. So everything hinges on the Marathon."

"That'll take some winning," observed Johnny Bull.

Wharton nodded.

"Shades of Dorando, but we'll do it!" he said grimly.

"Hear, hear!"

And the Famous Five, who were all engaged in the great race on the morrow, shook hands in solemn compact.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

To the Victor the Spoils!

"PLAY!" said Jimmy Silver.

He gripped the ball hard, and, with a quick run, sent it down swiftly to Harry Wharton, who was at the wicket.

It was the morning of the great day on which the Marathon Race was due to take place, and the Removites, in company with several of the Rookwood and St. Jim's fellows, had turned out early for a game at the nets.

For half an hour Jimmy Silver, the crack bowler of Rookwood, had been trying to dislodge Harry Wharton's bails. Wharton was immovable. He treated Silver's best balls with scant courtesy, and drove the ball with such power that he seemed to be a miniature edition of Johnny Hobbs.

"Here, let's have a go at the bounder!" exclaimed Harry Noble, of St. Jim's impatiently. "He seems booked to stop there all day."

Wharton grinned, and prepared to receive the Australian junior's first ball.

The Cornstalk was a good bowler, of the speedy type. On his day he could bowl like a demon, and he put his best into it now.

The ball fairly whizzed along the turf, and the batsman steadied himself to meet it. A few yards from the wicket, however, it struck a small mound in the pitch,

and broke off sharply, striking Harry Wharton on the ankle.

With a sharp gasp of pain, Harry lurched forward, and fell. The players, considerably alarmed, rushed to the spot.

"Hurt, old scout?" asked Bob Cherry anxiously.

"Ow! It's my ankle!" muttered Wharton, writhing with the pain. "I'm crocked!"

"I say, I'm beastly sorry," said Noble remorsefully. "I ought not to have sent down such a scorcher, especially as you weren't wearing pads."

"That's all right, old chap," said Wharton, rising to his feet with an effort; "but it's mucked me up for the Marathon."

"What?"

"My hat!"

The Greyfriars juniors looked at one another with glum faces. Wharton—the hope of his school in the forthcoming race—was crocked. Their luck was out with a vengeance!

The Cornstalk turned crimson.

"I—I say, Wharton," he said, with a catch in his voice, "this is rotten! I didn't dream of this! I'm afraid it looks as if I did it deliberately, being a St. Jim's fellow; but it was an accident, pure and simple. That's honest Injun!"

"Of course," said Wharton, trying to smile, "everybody here knows you wouldn't have played the cad like that. Don't be such an ass! It was the mound of turf that did it!"

"It's cruel luck, all the same!" said Tom Merry. "Are you sure it'll prevent you from running, Wharton?"

"Great Scott, yes! I can hardly walk, let alone run," said Harry. "Never mind! It's the irony of Fate, I suppose. We must take it smiling."

"Well, you're a jolly fine sportsman, I must say!" said Figgins, with enthusiasm. "Perhaps if we were to put it to Lord Eastwood he'd postpone the race."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!" said Wharton promptly. "You won't do anything of the sort! Someone must run in my place, that's all. Give us a hand, Bob. I'll get off to the sanny and have my ankle bandaged up."

Ill news travels apace, and by breakfast-time all Greyfriars knew of the accident to Wharton. Everyone was genuinely sorry, for the school's chances of success were considerably minimised by the catastrophe.

No less than thirty fellows lined up when the great race was about to start. The distance was half that of the recognised course for a Marathon race. But thirteen miles was a stiff order, and, although thirty fellows got off the mark at the crack of the pistol, it was probable that only half that number would finish.

The track led through Friardale and Courtfield, thence to Wapshot, and afterwards by a roundabout route to Highcliffe, and finished at Greyfriars. Some of the fellows went out on bikes, taking with them little luxuries for the runners; but the majority waited patiently at the school for the finish, which they fervently hoped would be of a dramatic and theatrical nature.

There was little to choose between the competitors until Courtfield was reached. Here Figgins, of St. Jim's, who had a long, loping stride, was first by five hundred yards, and still going strong. Next in order were Frank Courtenay, Tommy Dodd, Vernon-Smith, and—wonder of wonders—the Caterpillar!

At Wapshot the order was unchanged, but Figgins was showing signs of distress now. He had made the pace too hot to last, and had "bellows to mend."

Mile after mile went by. Runners shot past each other on the road, or kept together in little groups. Figgins, despite the earnest entreaties of Glyn and Reilly, who were behind him on their bikes, slowed down perceptibly, allowing De Courcy and Tommy Dodd to forge ahead.

But the Caterpillar, too, was by no manner of means as fresh as a daisy. A long period of inaction hardly fitted him for such a strenuous struggle as this, and before his school came in sight he staggered to the bank and gave up. All the fight had gone out of him.

Tommy Dodd was now leading, but his lead was shortlived. There was a pattering of feet behind him, and Redfern of St. Jim's, who had been going at a jog-trot for several miles, put on a tremendous spurt, and simply flew by. Behind him came Mark Linley and Vernon-Smith, both of Greyfriars.

Only another mile! Ten minutes more, and the result would be assured. Redfern, who had been storing up his energy till the last, seemed to flash along, and things looked rosy indeed for St. Jim's.

But there was a stiff hill to be negotiated yet. Reddy's fine pace slackened involuntarily. Slowly—foot by foot, yard by yard—Linley and Vernon-Smith overhauled him. Tommy Dodd and Frank Courtenay were a dozen yards behind.

And now the gates of Greyfriars hove in sight, and the air was rent with cheering. Redfern clung tenaciously to his lead, but that hill had taken all the go out of him, and he flogged his way painfully along the dust-laden road.

Vernon-Smith suddenly slackened his speed. He had been making the pace for Mark Linley, and his unselfish task was now accomplished.

"Go—ahead—Marky!" he gasped, through his dry lips. "Catch him!"

And then the hard, unemotional Bounder flung himself on to the grass which skirted the road, and cried like a child from sheer exhaustion.

The final effort—the last great stage of that stern struggle—was at hand. His face pale, his features set, Redfern almost stumbled along towards the school gates. Barely ten yards in the rear—but it seemed thirty to Greyfriars fellows looking on—came Mark Linley. On and on he toiled, the perspiration standing on his forehead in great beads. It was now or never!

"Marky—Marky!" shrieked the crowd which clustered the school wall. "Put it on! Spurt—spurt! Oh, well played!"

Inch by inch the Lancashire lad was gaining. Inch by inch, but Redfern was nearly home now. Would the Greyfriars fellow catch him in time?

Redfern turned his head. The movement was fatal, for Linley gained another stride. It seemed for the moment that the two runners would breast the outstretched tape together; but Mark Linley, summoning all the strength remaining to him, made a last desperate burst, winning one of the finest races on record by a bare yard!

There was a babel of voices in his ear, and he sank to the ground, overcome. But the tremendous din which raged around him told him the glad truth. Greyfriars had won the Marathon, and, incidentally, Lord Eastwood's Cup!

. . . . . .

Harry Wharton & Co. cheered Mark Linley's victory till they were husky. Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, and Frank Courtenay & Co. of Highcliffe, all rivalries banished now, met together in Study No. 1 to celebrate the success of the sports.

The study was packed with juniors belonging to the four schools, but, although there was limited space, there was unlimited "tuck." And Billy Bunter, who claimed that he was mainly responsible for the Greyfriars victory, having done great things in the tug-of-war, was allotted a place of honour with Mark Linley at the head of the table.

When Harry Wharton rose to announce the toast, "Lord Eastwood!" the guests cheered loud and long. And then the toast was honoured, in tea and in foaming ginger-pop, with hearty goodwill, by Friars and Saints, Highcliffians and Rookwooders—Sportsmen All!

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY:

"THE MASTER WHO STAYED AT HOME!"

Another Grand School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars. Order your Copy of the MAGNET in advance.

OPENING CHAPTERS. START TO-DAY!

Driven to Sea!

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New Serial Adventure Story.

By T. C. BRIDGES.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Damer, an orphan, is invited by his uncle out to Australia. On arriving he hears of his uncle's death, from a man named Wesley Crane.

Wesley Crane, for some sinister purpose, has Dick drugged and smuggled aboard the Rainbow, a small schooner commanded by Captain Cripps.

The Rainbow sights a derelict. Captain Cripps and Dick, going aboard the vessel, find a youth, who is overpowered by gas fumes, has been left aboard her.

Dick and the youth, Barry Freeland, reach the Rainbow safely; but Captain Cripps, staying longer on the derelict, is apparently drowned, owing to a storm rising, which causes the vessel to founder.

Barry Freeland takes charge of the Rainbow, and, finding some papers relating to pearls on a mysterious island, decides to go in search of the treasure, which rightfully belongs to Dick.

On reaching the island, however, they find the pearls have been stolen.

While on the way to the Solomon Islands in search of Burke, a notorious scoundrel, who has visited the mysterious island and stolen the pearls, the comrades on the Rainbow pick up three of his colleagues, and one of them, Barstow, helps the comrades to recover the pearls, which have been hidden on the island of San Cristobal.

Dick hides the pearls in a sandy cove on the seashore; but then, together with Barstow and a Chinese member of the crew named Chang, falls into the hands of Burke and his gang.

In an effort to obtain from them the knowledge of where the pearls are hidden, Burke has his captives led to an alligator pond, which he calls "The Pit of Scales."

Dick refuses to speak, and Barstow is, therefore, led to the edge of the lake.

"Shall I push him in, cap'n?" asks one of Burke's colleagues.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Storm.

"Stop!" cried Dick. "Stop! He doesn't know where the pearls are."

Burke gave a low chuckle.

"It works," he said—"it works! Then it lies between the Chink and the boy. Bring the Chink along, Pyke. Let's see what he's got to say for himself. I'll bet you——"

His words were drowned in a thunder-clap, far louder and nearer than any yet. The smoke-like mist had thickened, but the air remained as breathlessly still as ever.

Dick paid no attention to the sky. He was watching with horrified eyes as the unfortunate Chang was dragged forward to the brink of the pit, close alongside Barstow.

Chang's pluck was wonderful. There was hardly any change in his yellow face. Only his eyes showed signs of the terror which inwardly consumed him.

"Chink, d'ye see them alligators?" said Pyke. "'Cos you're going to feel 'em if you don't open up about them pearls."

Chang gave Dick one quick glance; then he shut his mouth resolutely.

"In with him!" said Burke curtly.

Dick's self-control gave way.

"No!" he shouted. "No! He doesn't know, either. I'm the only one who knows. I hid them."

Pyke, who was in the very act of pushing Chang over the edge, stopped, and glanced at Burke.

"If you throw Chang in, you shall never know where the pearls are!" cried Dick vehemently.

"I'm tired of this fooling," said Burke to Dick. "You've given us enough trouble for ten. This is your last chance. Out with it! Where are the pearls?"

"Take Barstow and Chang away from the edge," Dick said desperately, "then I'll tell you."

A blinding blaze lit the scene, followed instantly by a crash like the explosion of a powder-magazine. A great dead tree on the far side of the pool was shattered to atoms. The whole air seemed full of darting streaks of flame, and the earth quivered under foot with the enormous concussion. Dick staggered back and fell, sitting on the wet ground.

Before the stunning echoes died, the sky seemed to open, and down came rain, not in drops, but in vast sheets, which splashed up from the ground in a mist of foam. Daylight went like the blowing out of a candle, and thick darkness settled on the scene.

Blinded, half drowned, Dick lay where he had fallen, his bound hands making it impossible for him to rise, or help himself in any way.

Crash after crash followed, and great snakes of electric fire darted through the darkness, yet so tremendous was the downpour that the lightning failed to do more than throw momentary gleams through the night-like gloom. Dick could not see Burke, who a moment before had been within a yard of him.

A hand dropped on his shoulder.

"Keep still!" muttered a voice in his ear.

Nothing seemed any longer too wonderful to be true, and he was hardly surprised to recognise Barry's voice.

Next instant the cords dropped away from his wrists, and he was jerked to his feet. Barry's big hand seized him by the arm, and he found himself racing away, his feet splashing through the water, which, pouring down the slope, swept in a shallow torrent towards the pool.

He fancied he heard a shout behind, followed by the snap of a pistol. But the din of rain and thunder were so tremendous that he could not be sure.

They plunged through thick grass almost as high as their heads, then reached more open ground, and turned downhill. Dick had no notion where they were going. He was content to trust to Barry.

The first fury of the storm passed, it still rained in torrents, but it grew a little lighter, and now a blast of wind bent the trees as if they had been rushes, and tearing away branches and leaves sent them swirling through the forest.

Barry gave an angry exclamation.

"Rotten luck!" he muttered. "Rotten luck! If this lasts, we're done!"

Dick did not know what he was talking about, and did not ask. He needed all the breath and energy that were left him to fight his way onwards against the enormous weight of the wind.

The gale increased in force every moment, roaring so that it drowned the thunder-peals, but as it increased so did the light, and presently Dick caught a glimpse through the thinning bush of the surface of the inlet lashed into one boiling mass of foam by the tremendous force of the wind.

Dick's heart was beating as if it would burst. He stumbled as he ran. This furious race on top of everything else had nearly finished him.

Barry kept on until he reached the edge of the open beach. Then he suddenly jerked Dick aside into a thick patch of scrub. The moment they stopped, Dick dropped to the ground and lay in a heap, panting for breath.

Barry thrust something into his hand.

"Drink this," he said curtly.

It was a flask, and full of some strong-smelling spirit.

Dick took a gulp. It was rum, and it nearly strangled him. As a matter of fact, it was the first time that he had ever tasted raw spirits.

Barry laughed grimly.

"It won't hurt you. It'll pull you together. Gosh, I reckon you've had a sweet time!"

"I have," Dick answered, with a shiver. Then, after a pause: "Barry, I was going to tell," he said, in a strained voice.

"I know. I heard you. Small blame to you, either. I'd let a barrel o' pearls go rather than have seen Chang chucked to those filthy brutes!"

"You really mean that?" demanded Dick.

"Of course I do, you blithering idiot!"

Dick gave a sigh of relief.

"But how did you get there, Barry?" he asked. "How on earth did you manage to turn up just when you did? Burke swore you were dead, and for once I thought he was telling the truth."

"I reckon he thought so, too. I got off to the Brant all right, and collared one of the boats. As I was rowing back someone spotted me from the shore, and set to work on me with a rifle. They holed the boat, and I had to nip over into the water."

"That was Burke from the cave window," put in Dick.

"Don't know where it was from," Barry answered. "Anyway, he didn't hit me, but I had to hang on there and drift for a deuce of a time, expecting every minute to get my legs nipped off by a shark. But I guess the sharks were still busy with that whale, and after a bit the tide put the boat back near the Point, and I swam in again. I took a rest, and then had another shy for the Brant, and got her other boat. But that one hadn't got oars, so all I could do was to paddle her ashore with a bit of board.

"Then I thought I'd try and work overland to our own boat over by the brook mouth, and it was just luck that brought me up along by that alligator pond. I saw the whole business from behind a tree, and I was just thinking of running amok with a club, when the storm broke and gave me my chance."

"And you saved me and left Chang and Barstow," said Dick.

"Of course I did," growled Barry. "You were in the worst fix, anyway. You'd owned up you knew where the pearls were."

He paused a moment.

"The boat's down there," he said, pointing. "If this wind lets up a bit we'll shove along out to the Brant. There's no one aboard, and I guess we can hold the ship even if Burke does come out and tackle us."

"But what about Chang and Barstow?" said Dick. "We can't leave them in Burke's hands."

Barry frowned.

"What else can we do?" he demanded. "Are you going back to tackle Burke & Co. with your bare hands?"

"I don't know," Dick answered slowly. "But we can't possibly leave them. It wouldn't be playing the game." As he spoke he scrambled to his feet and turned inland. "Come on, Barry," he said.

— —

After Dark.

"The kid's clean crazy," said Barry, in a sort of despair—"plumb, absolutely loony!"

He sprang to his feet, reached Dick in two jumps, and caught him by the arm.

"Stop it!" he said. "Chuck it! Why, you blithering idiot, you'll only do for yourself, and them, too. Burke & Co. are just about mad enough to pitch the whole lot of us to the crocs if they lay their hands on us."

Dick's face was very white and drawn as he turned to Barry.

"We mustn't leave Chang and Barstow behind," he insisted feebly. "It wouldn't be fair."

"But we can't help it," retorted Barry. "We can't help it. If we go back Burke bags the bunch of us. If we get away to the Rainbow we can get our guns and come back. Don't you understand?"

Dick stared at him in a queer, bewildered fashion. Then quite suddenly his knees gave way, and Barry caught him just in time to save him from falling.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he muttered. "The poor young beggar's absolutely done in!"

With some difficulty he hoisted Dick on his back and carried him slowly down through the yelling gale towards the beach.

When Dick came to himself the first thing he heard was the roar of wind and the splash of waves. Compared with the awful heat of the morning, the air was deliciously cool.

A splash of salt spray sprinkled his face, he opened his eyes, and found that he was lying full length in the bottom of a boat, while Barry, humped up in the stern sheets close by, was watching him anxiously.

A look of relief crossed his face as he saw Dick's eyes open.

"Hallo, old son! Waked up?"

"Have I been asleep?" asked Dick, puzzled.

"Fainted, more like." Barry's voice was more gentle than usual. "No, nothing to be ashamed of. You were just done in. How d'ye feel now?"

"A bit queer in my head. But nothing much. I say, I'm most frightfully hungry."

Barry grinned, and fumbled in his pocket.

"That's a good sign. Here, scoff this!" handing over a ship's biscuit. "Dry stuff, but it'll taste better if you know it's collared from Burke."

"I don't care where it comes from," said Dick, between bites. "Seems to me it's as good as anything I ever ate."

He finished every crumb, and sat up.

"That's a lot better," he said. "To tell the truth, I was jolly near starved. But, I say, what's this boat, and where are we?"

"The boat's Burke's, like the biscuit. And we're lying up in a bit of a creek, waiting for this infernal gale to calm down."

"I remember now" said Dick slowly. "And Chang and Barstow are up there"—pointing towards the shore.

"You needn't worry. Burke won't kill 'em."

"Why?"

"Because they're hostages, you ass! Don't you see? He'll hold 'em so as to swap 'em for the pearls."

Dick's face brightened a little.

"I hadn't thought of that."

"No, you wanted to go back and wade in bald-headed," Barry said, with a laugh. "Just sit tight, and we'll get 'em out of it some way or other. Have another biscuit?"

Dick accepted gratefully. It was not until some time after he had eaten it that he realised it was Barry's last. He was full of apologies, but Barry only grinned.

"There's plenty more in the Brant, and that's where we're going as soon as the wind drops. Now you lie down and take a snooze. There'll be plenty to do when we once get started."

Dick was absolutely fagged out, and the very moment he laid down he was asleep. He woke to find Barry shaking him vigorously, and sat up drowsily.

"Why, it's dark!" he exclaimed.

"And a good job, too!" answered Barry. "If it hadn't been, Burke would have spotted us for a certainty."

"What! Has he been after us?"

"You bet! He and two niggers in the other boat. They came by the first time half an hour ago, and pulled out to the Brant, and it's barely five minutes since they went back. I couldn't see 'em the last time, but I heard the oars."

"Then they may be waiting for us," muttered Dick.

"No. I heard 'em go ashore again. They reckon that we've got back to the Rainbow, or else that we're hidden somewhere ashore.

"Gosh, I'll bet Burke's in a holy rage!" he went on, with a chuckle, as he picked up the piece of board which, during his long watch, he had whittled into the shape of a paddle. "Now, we're going to shove out to the Brant."

"Why not straight to the Rainbow?"

"Because the tide won't turn for another hour or more, and we shall be a darned sight safer on the schooner than here. For another thing, I'm ready for some supper. I don't know how you feel."

"As if I could eat an ox," Dick answered, as he got his hands against the rock under which the boat lay, and pushed her off into deeper water.

The storm was over, and the wind had dropped to a light breeze. Under Barry's strong strokes the boat drove quietly through the ripples. The moon was not yet up, and it was very dark.

Dick, listening anxiously, heard no suspicious sound, and after a little while caught the dark bulk of Burke's schooner looming up through the gloom.

As Barstow had said, she was hard aground, and canted over at an awkward angle.

"No wonder they didn't want to stay aboard her," said Dick, as he scrambled aboard, and found it almost impossible to stand on the heavily-sloping deck.

"I'll stay with the boat," said Barry. "I don't suppose there's any danger, but it's as well to be on the safe side. You go aft, Dick, and down to the cabin. You'll find grub of some sort in the cupboard. Fetch it up, and we'll feed in the boat."

Dick obeyed, but he went cautiously. There was no knowing what surprises Burke might spring on him. He crept softly down the companion, and felt his way into the cabin. He listened a moment, then switched on his electric.

There was no one there. The cabin itself was dirty and squalid. In the middle was a long table covered with oilcloth. Some dirty plates still lay on it, held in position by the fiddles.

He found the cupboard and opened it. There was a tin of maggotty biscuits, and the remains of some corned beef. He decided that this was not good enough, and by means of his electric found his way to the pantry. Here, after a bit of searching, he discovered a fresh tin of biscuits, and several of potted meat. There was also a Dutch cheese, as well as tea, coffee, sugar, and condensed milk.

He selected the best of the food, and carried it back to Barry.

"There's tea and all sorts of stuff there," he said. "Pity we couldn't light a fire and have a square meal."

"Not good enough," Barry replied. "They might see the light from the shore. No, chuck over the grub and let's make the best of a cold feed."

The two biscuits were all that Dick had eaten in twenty-four hours. He was ravenous, and biscuits, cheese and potted meat disappeared in very short order. There was something particularly pleasant in the idea that the delicacies they were consuming were Burke's property.

Suddenly Barry began to chuckle.

"I say, Dick, what price putting a light to the old schooner? We could get away before she blazed up. It 'ud make Burke & Co. sit up, eh?"

"Yes, and they'd proceed to take it out of Chang and Barstow," Dick retorted. "If you ask me, I think it's a crazy notion."

Barry laughed again.

"What's up now?" asked Dick, puzzled.

"Nothing, Dick. I was only thinking you wouldn't have talked that way to me a week or two ago."

"I suppose I shouldn't," Dick answered thoughtfully, and once more Barry chuckled.

"Tide's beginning to turn," said Barry presently. "If we had another paddle we could get on faster."

"I'll find a bit of plank," replied Dick, jumping aboard again.

He soon got a piece that would do, and also a hatchet, and Barry very soon whittled out a second paddle. Then he cast off, and the boat, with the tide under her and two paddles going, slid rapidly out round the mangrove spit.

"Starboard, Dick!" said Barry presently.

"Why, I thought the Rainbow lay dead ahead," answered Dick.

"So she does; but you're not going aboard without the pearls, are you?" returned Barry, with some contempt.

"'Pon my word, I'd almost forgotten them," said Dick.

"I hadn't," retorted Barry. "And once they're safe aboard the Rainbow, I shall feel a deal easier in my mind. Whatever happens then, we hold trumps."

"Paddle easy," he continued, as the boat turned beachward. "There's always the offchance that Burke or some of 'em may be laying for us."

Dick gave a little gasp.

"It's quite likely he will. You see, he knows the pearls are somewhere on the beach. I practically told him that when I acknowledged that I was the only one of us three who knew where they were."

"Don't Chang know? He was with you."

"No. He was down by the boat. He didn't see me hide them."

Barry was silent a moment.

"This is going to be awkward," he said. "Dick, do you think you can go straight to the place where you hid them?"

"I think so. The double rock sticks up a bit above the others. And it's quite close to the water's edge, you know."

"How far from that ledge where you were collared last night?"

"Not more than thirty yards."

"You don't think Burke's found 'em already?"

"He hadn't this morning, because he offered to go halves with me if I'd tell him where they were. Anyhow, it would be a thousand to one against anyone hitting on the place. The whole beach is covered with wells."

"I'll bet he's had a try," said Barry grimly. "Now then"—as he caught the loom of the land through the darkness—"slip in as soft as you can. Make for that spit of rock. We'll lay the boat behind it where she won't be seen, then we'll creep up the beach together."

Dick carefully obeyed directions, and without so much as a rustle the boat came to rest behind the rock. Barry did not drag her up, for the tide was ebbing. He dropped her grapnel into the shingle and left her afloat a little way out. Then he slipped quietly overboard and waded ashore. Dick followed.

During the past twenty-four hours Dick had had quite a number of exciting experiences, and had become pretty well hardened to danger. All the same, this creeping along the beach tried his nerves worse than anything he had done yet.

It was the horrible uncertainty that he found so hard to bear. That and the darkness together. For all he knew, Burke might be crouching there among the rocks within a few yards, listening to his and Barry's every movement. He could almost see the evil grin on the man's bloated face.

Bent double, he crept on tiptoe in and out between the rocks that littered the beach. The sand swarmed with tiny spider-crabs which kept up a continual rustling. This and the low murmur of the ripple on the beach made it impossible to hear if anyone else was moving near by.

The darkness, too, was horribly confusing. True, the clouds which had covered the sky ever since the storm were now breaking, and stars beginning to shine through. All the same, there was not light enough to see anything at more than a few feet distance, and one rock looked exactly like the next.

Dick's only real guide was the fact that the double rock, in the cavity of which he had hidden the pearls, was somewhat higher than those around it, but in the darkness the heights appeared all much the same.

Dick began to feel that he could bear the strain no longer—not if all the pearls in the islands depended upon his doing so. He was on the point of turning and telling Barry so when he saw just in front of him a humped pinnacle which was certainly higher than the rest. He quickened his pace, and, getting close under it, stood up and felt it with his hands.

He gave a sigh of deepest relief. It was the cleft rock.

"Got it at last!" he whispered to Barry.

"About time, too!" was the muttered answer. "We're a deuce of a way from the boat!"

Dick crept around the rock and found the opening. He bent over and stretched his arm in. To his horror, his fingers met a smooth surface of wet sand.

He groped this way and that. The hollow was of no great size. He covered the whole of it, and felt the rough rock all around.

At last he turned to Barry.

"They're not here!" he whispered despairingly. "There's no sign of them at all."

A Game of Hide-and-Seek.

Barry muttered something that was not a blessing.

"I don't see who could have got 'em," he whispered. "As you said just now, it's a thousand-to-one chance against anyone else hitting on the hiding-place. Here, let me have a shot!"

Dick made way for him, and Barry plunged his long right arm into the opening.

Dick stood by in breathless silence.

Barry groped about for a full minute. At last he withdrew his arm.

"You're right, Dick. They're gone!" he said. And his voice held such despair as wrung Dick's heart. It was the first time that he had ever known Barry give way at all, and it frightened him.

"Nothing there but sand," went on Barry. "That brute Burke has bested us, after all! Gad, I'd thought the old lady was safe and happy for the rest of her life—and now!"

What he was talking about Dick had not the faintest idea, any more than who the "old lady" was to whom Barry referred. But next instant all his wonder was forgotten as a sudden inspiration seized him.

"The storm!" he whispered sharply. "We'd forgotten the storm."

"What in thunder do you mean? Have you gone loony?"

"No!" Dick answered impatiently. "Don't you see what I mean? The storm has drifted a lot of fresh sand into the hollow. I believe the pearls are there all right, only buried under a lot of fresh sand."

Barry gasped.

"There's a chance. You may be right."

As he spoke he dived again into the hollow, and began rummaging frantically in the sand.

Again Dick waited, in such suspense that he could hardly breathe.

"I feel something!" Barry panted, pushing forward until his face was hard up against the opening. "I feel something! Gosh, it's one o' the bags!"

He jerked it out, and Dick, as he took it from Barry's hand, had all he could do to keep himself from uttering a shout of triumph.

Another few moments, and out came Barry's arm again.

"Here's the other! Dick, I'll never say you haven't got a head on your shoulders! I'd never have thought of the bags being buried like this in a month o' Sundays!"

Dick glowed with the praise. But he did not let his feelings run away with him. Even in the midst of his delight the fear of Burke touched his heart with a cold finger.

"We're not out of the wood yet," he whispered cautiously.

"I know that," agreed Barry. "Like as not Burke's laying for us not so many yards away."

"We'd best not go back the same way," suggested Dick. "You see, if he is on the beach he'd naturally wait till we came back to the boat before tackling us."

Barry nodded.

"That's a fact. He'd lie up somewhere near the boat, with his pistol handy. Now we've got the pearls, he's got no object in leaving us alive. Gosh, I wish it wasn't so infernally dark!"

"I'm glad it's dark!" returned Dick. "It's better for us than for him. If the moon was up he could lie off twenty yards away and shoot us. As it is he'll have to come to close quarters."

"Ay, that's so. I didn't think of it that way. What d'ye think we'd best do, Dick?"

It was something new for Barry to ask Dick's advice, but Dick was equal to the emergency.

"We'd better split up. You take the pearls and wade into the sea and get round to the stern of the boat. I'll go a little way up the beach and creep through the thickest of the rocks. I shall made a round, and come on the boat from the far side."

Barry considered a moment.

"It's a good notion, Dick. But seems to me you take the biggest risk. I guess we'd better swap places."

"No," Dick answered firmly. "You can swim a great deal better than I can. And there are holes quite close inshore. If I went into one I should make a beastly splash. You won't. Another thing, I'm not so tall as you, and I sha'n't be so likely to be seen as I creep along."

"You're right again, Dick. Now there's only one other thing that bothers me. Suppose you spot Burke, how are you going to let me know?"

Dick shook his head.

"I don't know. Strikes me the only thing to do will be for me to crawl down to the water's edge and pitch a pebble close to you."

"Sounds rather chancy. But I don't see anything else for it. Give me the pearls, then, and I'll start."

He took the two bags, and stowed them carefully in his pockets.

"So-long, old chap! Take care of yourself!" he said.

And then, to Dick's surprise, he thrust out his hand, took Dick's, and wrung it hard.

Perhaps it was this action of Barry's that did as much as anything to make Dick realise the risk before him. All the same there was a warm glow at his heart as he started on his perilous and uncomfortable journey.

Uncomfortable, because he no longer dared to walk. He went on hands and knees, and wherever the ground was open between the rocks, crawled flat on his stomach.

As before, he found the darkness very confusing, but the sound of the ripples breaking on the beach helped him to steer a course. Every minute or so he stopped and listened. But for all he saw or heard he might have been the only human being within miles.

He made a good deep curve inwards, and at last, when he felt sure that he must be about opposite to the boat, began to work backwards towards the water. Soon he was near enough to see the slightly phosphorescent ripples breaking on the shingle, but still there was no sign of Burke.

Dick's spirits rose a little. He began to think that it was possible, after all, that Burke was not in waiting. Yet, knowing the man as he did, he took no risks, and crept on as cautiously as before.

He gained a table-shaped rock, which stood up black and

Dick drew back his arm and hurled the stone with all his might. Up went Burke's arms as though driven by a spring, and the pistol cracked harmlessly in the air. (*See page* 26.)

square and solid to a height of about four feet, and here he ventured to rise softly to his feet, and very cautiously peer over the top.

During the past quarter of an hour it had grown a good deal lighter. The clouds had blown off, and although the moon was not yet up, the great tropical stars hung like small globes of light in the rain-washed sky

Dick's first sensation was one of intense relief. He found that he had hit the exact spot he had meant to. He was within twenty yards of the boat, and on the far side of it. He stared hard at the water, but could not see Barry.

Then his eyes searched the beach. The rocks were everywhere, and in the dim, uncertain light looked like squatting monsters. Some were strangely like living creatures, and one in particular had the strongest resemblance to a man.

For many seconds Dick remained quite still, with his eyes fixed upon this oddly-shaped rock. But there was not the slightest movement or sign of life about it, and at last he made up his mind that it was nothing but a rock, and resolved to risk it, and cross to the boat.

He did not, however, relax any of his precautions, and, dropping down softly again on hands and knees, set out to creep around the table-shaped rock behind which he had been hiding.

He poked his head around the end, stopped, and took another look.

It was as well that he did so, for the first thing that he realised was that the oddly-shaped boulder had vanished. He stayed quite still, staring, hardly able to believe his eyes. But there was no doubt whatever about it.

The rock was gone!

Dick's heart pounded. He knew that his first suspicions had been correct. The rock was no rock at all but Burke himself. There were two questions to be solved. Had he seen Dick? Where had he gone?

If the former, he was no doubt making a circle with the object of getting behind his victim; if the latter—why, then he was probably creeping upon the boat.

Very softly Dick crept back behind his shelter, and lay flat, with his ear against the ground. The whole beach was alive with the tiny creepings of the spider crabs, but he fancied—he could not be quite sure—that he heard the crunch of shingle under a heavier weight.

Suspense became almost beyond bearing. He had a mad impulse to spring to his feet, and make a rush for the boat. Yet he knew that, if he did so, he would be instantly shot down. Burke carried a repeating pistol capable of throwing fifteen shots in rapid succession.

He racked his brain for some plan, and could think of none. Then it occurred to him that, if Burke had really spotted him, the best thing that he could do was to get round to the seaward side of his rock.

Quietly as one of the very crabs he did so, and then made another careful inspection of the beach all around.

This had no result, so he ventured forward a little, and got between two smaller rocks, closer to the sea.

Here, at any rate, he was safe for the moment, and he waited a while, drawing deep breaths, and trying to get control of his jumping nerves.

It was horrible—this game of hide-and-seek, in which the prize was not merely one hundred thousand pounds' worth of pearls, but life itself. For Dick had not the very faintest doubt but that Burke would butcher Barry and himself as calmly as he would have shot a couple of rabbits.

A minute passed—two. Dick's anxiety grew with every second, and it was not more for himself than for Barry.

At last he heard a sound that was certainly not made by a crab. It was something much heavier, for the shingle crunched under a considerable weight. So far as he could judge, the sound came from his right—that is, in the direction of the boat.

At all risks he felt he must see what was happening, and, with infinite care, he raised his head.

Every drop of blood in his body seemed to fly to his heart, for there, within ten feet of him, Burke himself lay crouched behind a rock.

He had his back to Dick, and was peering cautiously over the rock. There was light enough for Dick to see his great squat, toadlike figure and the automatic, which he held in his right hand and rested on the top of the rock.

He was staring hard in the direction of the boat, and Dick realised with a fresh shock that Barry must long ago have reached it, and was no doubt standing in the water under the stern.

Did Burke know this? That was the question. Dick quivered with anxiety as he stared through the gloom, trying to make out whether any part of Barry was visible.

He could see nothing, but it soon became clear that Burke could. Dick saw him raise himself a trifle, and point the muzzle of his pistol towards the boat.

At that moment Dick would cheerfully have given his left hand for a weapon of some sort. Then, with one of those flashes of inspiration, which come sometimes at a moment of great mental strain, he realised that he had one at hand. Under his very knees were a number of large, rounded pebbles weighing a pound or more apiece.

Quick as thought he snatched one up, and counting the risk as nothing if he could save Barry, rose quickly to his feet.

Dick was no great hand at throwing, but at so short a distance Burke offered a mark that could hardly be missed. Dick drew back his arm, and hurled the stone with all his might.

He aimed at the back of Burke's head, but though his missile struck a few inches low, it did the trick all right. Up went Burke's arms as though driven by a spring, the pistol cracked harmlessly, flinging its bullet towards the sky, and Burke toppled over face forwards upon the rock.

Dick arrived almost as soon as the stone. He was in a regular panic for fear Burke would get hold of his pistol again, and he simply hurled himself upon it, and snatched it up.

"Put your hands up!" he ordered, shoving the muzzle hard against Burke's forehead.

But Burke did not move. Dick's stone had practically knocked him out.

"Pull the trigger, Dick; it'll save a heap of trouble!"

It was Barry's voice, and Barry, dripping with salt water, came rushing across from his hiding-place behind the boat.

"Shoot him!" he urged. "He deserves it!"

"I know he does," answered Dick grimly; "but I can't do it in cold blood. Besides, if we keep him we can swap him for Chang and Barstow."

"Swap him! Gosh, I'll lay Pyke and Wigram will be only too glad to be rid of him!" growled Barry. "Much better put a lump o' lead through his head. It'll save us a heap of trouble in the long run."

If Dick had known at that moment how true a prophet Barry was, he might have overcome his natural repugnance to shooting the brute in cold blood; but he did not know, and he could not bring himself to such butchery.

"Tie him up," he said. "We can try him and hang him later."

"Well, he's your meat," grumbled Barry, as he neatly secured Burke's wrists behind his back with a length of cord. "Now catch hold of him, and let's sling him into the boat!"

Burke seemed quite insensible, and he was so heavy that it was all they could do to carry him the short distance to the boat. They dumped him down 'midships, and, taking their paddles, set off as hard as they could go for the Rainbow.

Feng Shin.

"Where's Captain Kempster?" demanded Barry.

They had reached the Rainbow at last, but the only members of the crew who were on deck to receive them were Ah Lung and another Chinaman named San Hoang, but generally known as Sam.

"Him velly sick, boss," answered Sam.

Barry gave vent to an angry exclamation.

"This is the very dickens! Here, you two, lift this man aboard and take him down to the lazarette."

Dick caught Barry's arm.

"No," he whispered. "Don't put him with Redstall and Dent. They may hatch up some mischief between them. Let's lock him in the spare cabin."

"Wish we'd finished him when we had the chance," muttered Barry. "But you're right, Dick. We'll put him there for the night. I shall put leg-irons on him," he added.

"I'd put a strait-waistcoat on him if we had one," said Dick.

Burke, who had now recovered his senses, gave a chuckle.

"You don't seem to trust me, my young friends," he said.

"I'll never trust you till I see you swinging in a rope necktie," retorted Barry. "Still, I guess we'll fix you so you can't do any damage this night, anyhow."

"Give me a mouthful of grub and some place to sleep," Burke answered easily. "I know when I'm under dog as well as the next man."

They wasted no time in stowing him away safely, and he made no objection to the leg-irons or any of their precautions.

Dick, however, had learnt by experience. Knowing the man's powers of persuasion, he would not let any of the Chinamen attend to him, but brought him some supper himself, and, locking the door, took the key away with him.

Barry, meantime, went to see Kempster. He met Dick later in the main cabin.

"The old man's down with fever," he said. "Sharp go, too. He won't be fit for anything for a couple of days."

"That's bad," Dick answered. "We can't leave the ship to the Chinamen."

"It isn't the ship, it's the prisoners. I can't sleep easy with those swine aboard. Wish to goodness we had Barstow here!"

Dick nodded.

"We'll have him pretty soon," he said quietly. "I'll fetch him off some way to-morrow. Now let's have some supper, and then we'll take watch and watch."

Barry stared.

"You take it deuced coolly, Dick."

"It's no use worrying, is it?" Dick answered calmly. "And anyhow, we've got the pearls and we've got Burke. That's not a bad day's work."

"No, it's none so dusty. All the same, I sha'n't be happy till the anchor's up and we're out of sight o' the Solomons. And see here," he added, "I take first watch. No, it's no use your arguing. You go and swallow five grains of quinine and turn in. I'll rouse you out when I want you."

As Dick peeled off the ragged remains of the suit of clothes which he had started out with on the previous morning, his mind was full not of Burke, nor even of Chang and Barstow. It was Barry he thought of. He had begun to realise that this tough, hard-bitten youngster of whom, only a few weeks ago, he had been actually afraid, was a friend worth having. He himself was learning fast, but in all that he had learnt Barry had been his teacher.

In spite of his sleep in the boat, his head was hardly on the pillow before he was off again. How long he slept he had no idea, but it was still dark when he felt a hand shaking him by the shoulder.

Long weeks at sea had taught him to rouse up smartly, and he was sitting up in a moment.

"All right, Barry. I'll be on deck in two twos."

"I didn't mean to wake you for another couple of hours," said Barry. "But the fact is there's something up, and I can't make out what."

"What do you mean? Not Burke?" Dick asked quickly as he flung his legs out and began searching for his boots.

"No, not Burke, for he's in his cabin all right. I don't know what the deuce it is. Didn't you hear anything?"

"Not a thing. A gun-shot would hardly have waked me. What was it?"

"That's just what I don't know——" He broke off sharply. "Did you feel that?"

"Yes; I thought I felt something. Seemed to me as if the schooner lifted. Is there a swell setting in?"

"Sea's as calm as glass," returned Barry shortly. "There! Now do you feel it?"

Dick gave a startled exclamation.

A gentle vibration ran through the whole frame of the schooner. He could feel it plainly through the woodwork of the bunk on the edge of which he was sitting.

"She's aground!" he muttered.

"No, she isn't. That's what I thought at first, and I had the lead over at once. There's full five fathoms under her keel."

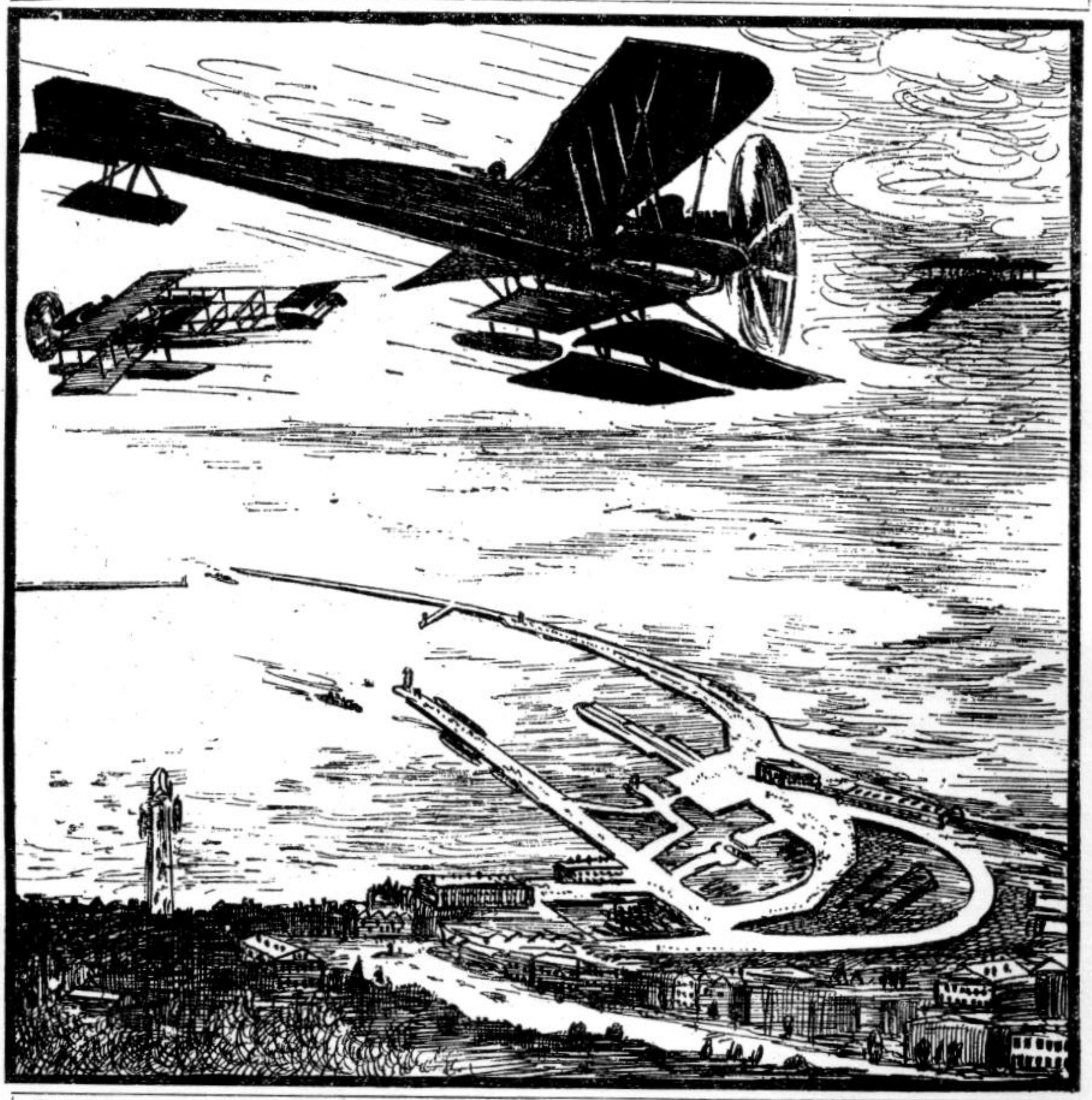
The queer trembling died away, ceased completely, then began again. They could hear the glasses rattling in the rack in the main cabin outside.

A nasty creepy feeling seized Dick.

"What the mischief is it?" he said uncomfortably, and began dressing with all speed.

"I'm hanged if I know!" growled Barry. "It beats me! I'm going on deck again. Come up as soon as you can."

It was hardly two minutes before Dick was beside Barry on the deck. By this time all was perfectly quiet again. The breeze had died out utterly, the surface of the bay was like glass, and the schooner lay upon a perfectly even keel. The moon was up now, and there was light enough to see the



British airmen are frequently called upon to drive off German air-invaders from our shores. The above picture depicts two of our 'planes preparing to attack a hostile raider on Dover. The German 'plane was eventually forced to seek safety in flight from our brave airmen in a badly-damaged condition.

beaches, the cliffs, and the dark forest covering the steep hills that rolled inland.

"I don't hear anything," said Dick after a moment's pause.

"'Sh! There it is again!"

Once more the schooner began to quiver. From stem to stern, from keel to masthead, she was all ashake.

"Feels as if a whale was rubbing against her keel," said Dick.

"That's rot! How could a whale get under her right inshore here? Besides, who ever heard of a whale playing such a fool trick?"

Barry spoke rapidly, angrily. The queer antics of the Rainbow had got upon his nerves badly.

"I've been at sea five years," he said, "and I never knew anything like this. I——"

He broke off suddenly as the schooner heaved under them. Dick and Barry both gripped at stays to keep their feet. Up she went, up, and up, and then dropped suddenly again and lay rocking, her timbers groaning.

Up through the forward hatch came the Chinese crew. They were shrieking and chattering like monkeys. From somewhere down below came terrified yells.

Barry spun round, facing his frightened crew.

"What's the matter with you? Don't make such a filthy noise! Get below!"

But Sam ran up to him.

"No likee!" he said, in a trembling voice. "China boy, him plenty much aflaid!"

For once Barry refrained from turning on them.

"Poor beggars!" he muttered. "No wonder they're scared out of their souls! Well, Sam, what do you think it is?"

"Feng Shin," answered Sam, with chattering teeth.

"What's he mean?" asked Dick, in a low voice.

"Witchcraft," was the answer. "Dick, we're up against it. Nothing will keep a Chink aboard a ship he thinks is bewitched."

As he spoke the schooner once more began to quiver like a fiddle-string. With one accord the Chinese made a rush for the boat in which Barry and Dick had returned from shore, and which was still towing astern.

(Another fine, long instalment of this thrilling serial story next week. Order your copy early.)

MY READERS' PAGE

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price ½d., Every Saturday.

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"THE MASTER WHO STAYED AT HOME!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Next Monday's story is a stirring one, guaranteed to grip its readers from start to finish. Mr. Lascelles, the brilliant young master-boxer at Greyfriars, is made a target for many offensive remarks on the subject of his not having enlisted. Skinner and his fellow-cads put it down to fear on Larry's part, but Harry Wharton & Co., though they cannot help wondering why Mr. Lascelles does not go, know that only powerful personal reasons are keeping him back. A climax is reached when Skinner, with unexampled coolness, incites his companions to parade a row of white feathers in the Form-room. Mr. Lascelles, however, is by no means abashed, and Skinner & Co. are summarily dealt with. Eventually the true facts of the case come to light, and Harry Wharton & Co. never have cause to regret their loyalty and fair play towards

"THE MASTER WHO STAYED AT HOME!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

A. W. O.—Many thanks for a most interesting letter.

R. B. (Fulham).—Billy Bunter's cousin is sixteen years of age, and weighs twelve stone.

G. Davies (Fulham).—I am unable to say where the naval film mentioned in your letter is being displayed.

"A Reader" (Wolverhampton).—I should hesitate to say that "The Boys' Friend" was a better paper than the "Magnet." It is, nevertheless, an excellent journal for boys who prefer a variety of stories. The nearest town to Greyfriars of any size and importance is Ashford. I am not in a position to reply to your last question.

Thomas R. (Hanley).—A portrait gallery has already appeared in the "Magnet" Library, and I do not consider it advisable to repeat the feature.

H. Batten (Highgate.)—I have acted upon your kind suggestion.

YOUR EDITOR'S STRAIGHT REPLY TO HIS CRITICS!

Not long ago I went to considerable pains to point out to my readers why it was that their Editor was not with the Colours. This explanation was accepted, and backed up by the great majority of my reader-chums. But a few letters—numbering about a dozen in all—have been addressed to me by so-called readers, who, in each case, have subjected me to bitter slander, and (of course!) carefully refrained from giving their names and addresses.

I will not weary my chums by enumerating over again the various reasons which have prevented me from enlisting. Suffice it to say that they were good, sound, and genuine reasons, and not trumped-up excuses, as one or two of my correspondents hint in no gentle terms.

I considered it my plain duty to tell my readers why I was not serving. They had a right to know, and I had no compunction in going into details.

Most Editors would, I feel sure, ignore the nasty, backbiting epistles which have polluted my correspondence of late, and throw them aside with indignant scorn. The reason why I have not followed their example is that I would like to say a few straight words to the cads—I know of no milder term—who have seen fit to send me such offensive letters.

Let me say this. If any reader of the companion papers cannot place full confidence in the man who claims to be his Editor and friend, or if he thinks these journals are controlled by a slacker, let him give them up at once. I want no vipers among my select circle of readers.

Some would say that the companion papers are doing no material good to the country. Aren't they, though? Not a day passes without bringing in a host of grateful letters from the Tommies in the trenches, saying that our bright little journals cheer them up as few things else could. At least a score of my soldier-chums have implored me not to relinquish my post, saying that if these papers were non-existent, not a ray of sunshine would enter into the monotonous and prosaic routine of the trenches.

From this morning's postbag alone I have unearthed letters from the following Tommies who are gallantly doing their bit:

No. 2414 PRIVATE JAMES GREEN,
"B" Company, 152nd Infantry Brigade,
51st Division, 6th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders,
British Expeditionary Force.

No. 10142 PRIVATE HOLLINGSHEAD,
2nd Royal Sussex Regiment,
No. 4 Stationary Hospital,
France.

No. 1965 HAL WESTBURY,
No. 2109 PHIL PLANT,
No. 2133 TOM WALKER,
Maxim Gun Section,
7th Worcester Regiment,
British Expeditionary Force.

PRIVATE A. J. MILLS (Clerk),
22 Depot, Unit of Supply,
Army Service Corps,
Army Post Office No. 4,
British Expeditionary Force.

Whilst on this subject, I should like to tell my chums that any spare copies of the companion papers which they would like to send to the above soldier-readers will be warmly appreciated.

And now to resume.

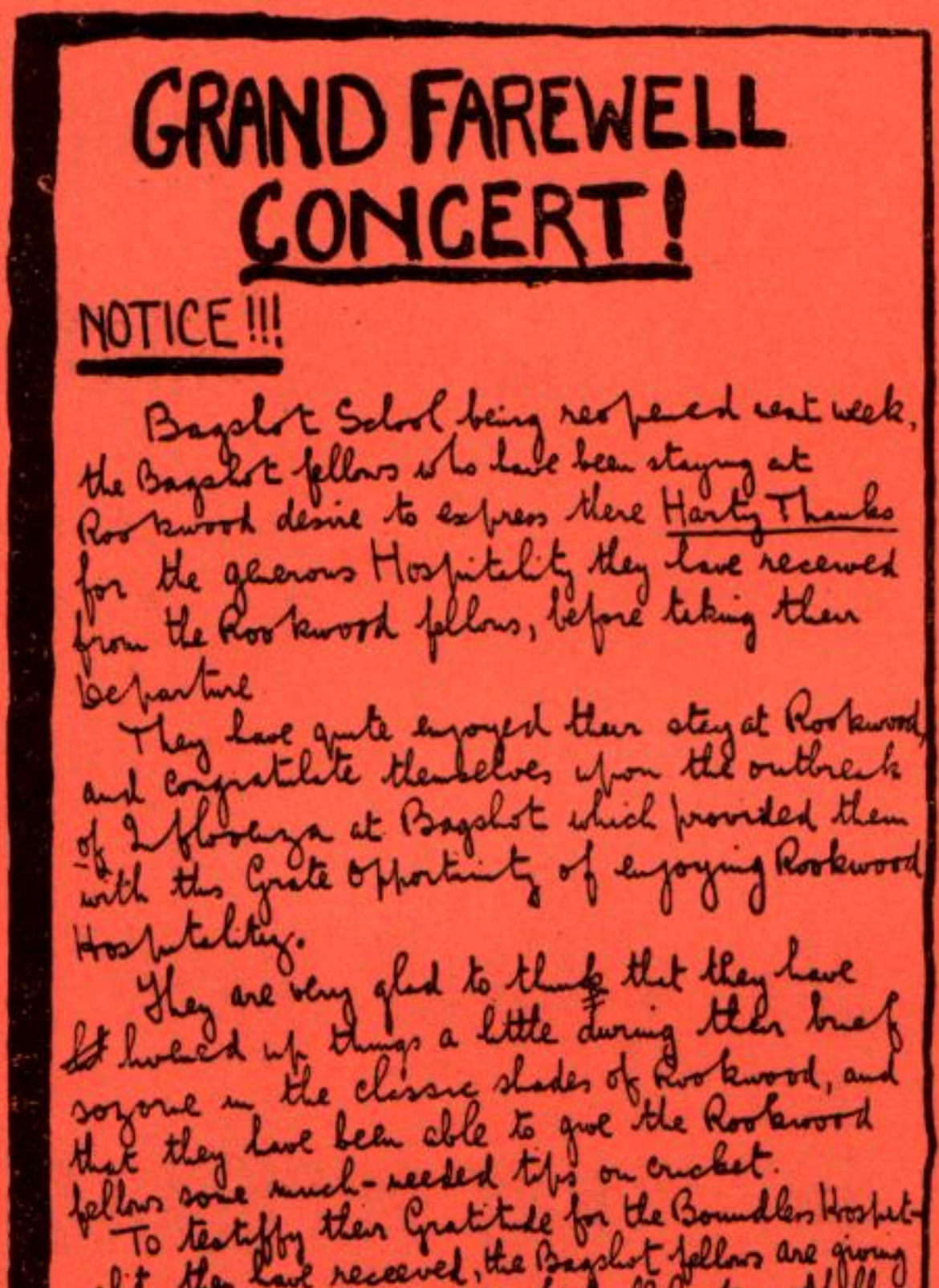
As I said before, no less than six valued members of my staff are at present in France or the Dardanelles, and those who remain are doing their level best to live up to that excellent motto, "Carry on!" so that the places of the absentees may be kept open for them. Consider this, and consider that practically every moment of our spare time is spent in rigorous drill and skirmishing with a Home Defence Corps, and you will see thus that the word "slacker" cannot be connected in any way with your Editor and his subordinates.

One correspondent suggests that I am kept back by fear. I have no desire to boast—indeed, this is not a time for boasting—but those who know my past record in the West Kent Yeomanry will tell you that fear played no part in it. The very suggestion is odious and reprehensible in the extreme, and the boy who made it ought to feel pretty sick with himself. If he imagines that every man who is not at the front funks the Germans, then I am sorry for him, and sorry for England.

But I have said enough. It is a distasteful subject to me at best, and distasteful, no doubt, to my loyal readers, who will probably write me down as a crass idiot for taking any heed of the slanderous epithets of so-called patriots. Now that I have cleared the air, as it were, let me say how warmly I cherish the whole-hearted support of my great army of readers and friends, whose password is "Loyalty," and whose intention it is to back up the companion papers and their Editor through thick and thin.

H. A. HINTON,
YOUR EDITOR.

Printed and Published by the Proprietors at The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, England. Agents for Australia: Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z.; for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, July 31st, 1915.



Read about this in **THE BOYS' FRIEND. Out To-day.**

TURNING THE TABLES!

THE 1d POPULAR

THE 1d POPULAR

THE 1d POPULAR

THE 1d POPULAR

THE 1d POPULAR

THE 1d POPULAR

A
NOVEL
COMPETITION
FOR
BOYS & GIRLS!

HOW MANY WORDS
CAN **YOU** MAKE
OUT OF
THE PENNY POPULAR?

MANY MONEY
PRIZES!
ONLY ONE
WEEK!
SEE THE ISSUE
OUT TO-DAY!

D

31-7-15