FOR D'ARCY'S SAKE!

A Magnificent New Long Complete School Tale of the Boys' of Greyfriars.

The Magnet 1d. Library

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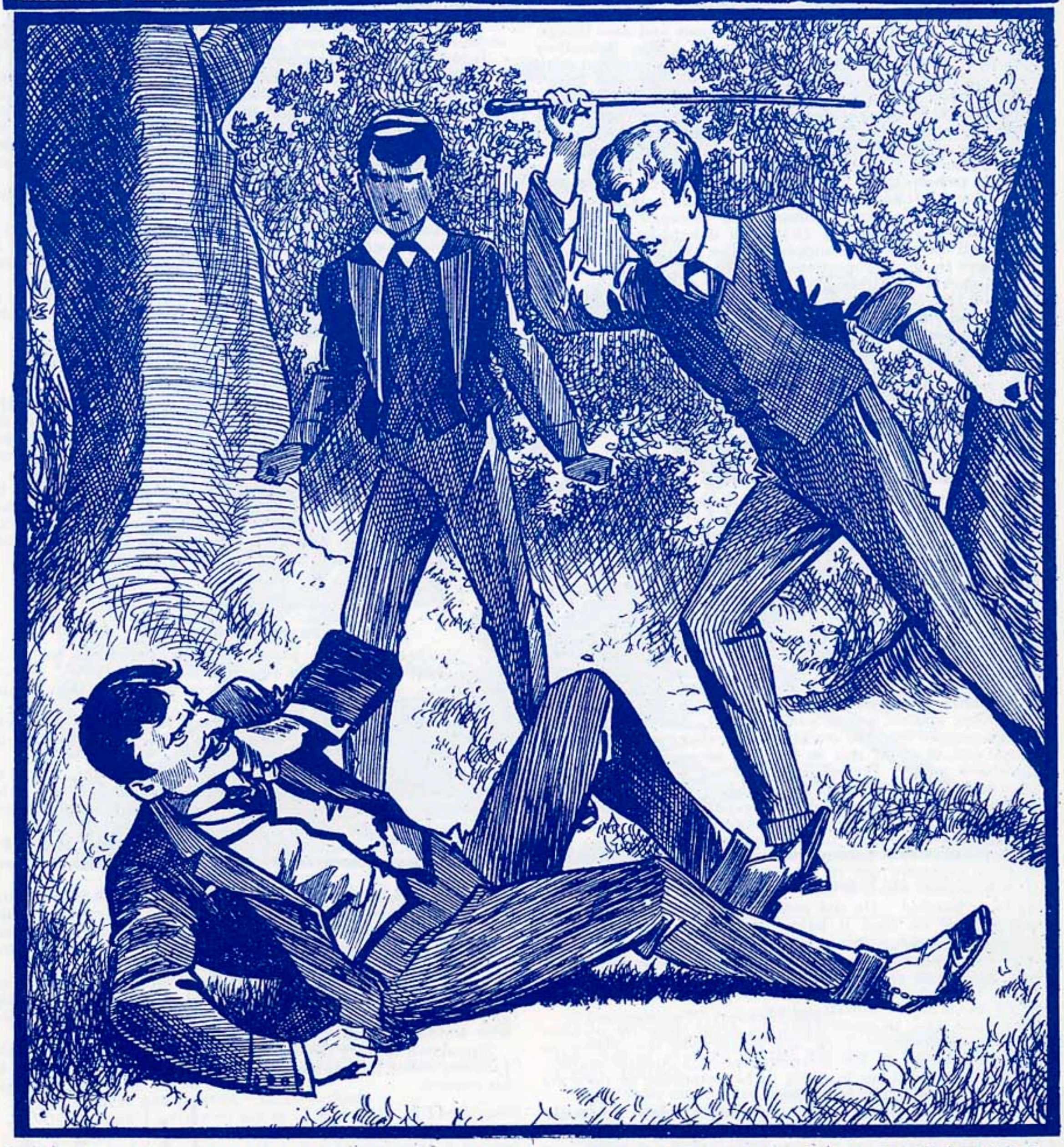

BOB CHERRY ON THE WAR-PATH!

(An Extraordinary Scene in the Splendid Long Complete Tale of School Life in this issue.)

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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.

For Next Monday:

"THE MYSTERY OF MAULY!"

By Frank Richards.

In the fine yarn which appears next week Lord Mauleverer, the slacker of the Remove, wakes up for once and does things, as he did in that other grand story, "The Schoolboy Farmers." But he does not do all that he is credited with doing, and he does not get credit for all that he does—whereby, of course, hangs a tale. By a queer chapter of happenings he changes places with his cousin and double, one Aubrey Spencer, who is in danger of immediate expulsion from Abbeyside, a school not very far from Greyfriars. Spencer, though a good deal of a rotter, is a much more energetic person than his lordly cousin. He fights, and actually beats, Johnny Bull, one of the best fighting-men of the Remove, distinguishes himself as a swimmer, and is the chief cause of a Greyfriars victory in a hard-fought cricket match. All the time he is supposed to be Mauly, and wonderment grows to huge proportions. Meanwhile, the path of the Remove slacker at Abbeyside is far from a smooth one. He is birched and expelled as Aubrey Spencer, but redeems his cousin's credit by an act of great courage. The consequence is that Spencer is allowed to return to his school, and Mauleverer goes back to Greyfriars. But at neither place is the truth made known, and for a long time after the Remove talk of Mauly's astounding two or three days in the limelight, for they have not penetrated

"THE MYSTERY OF MAULY!"

MORE ABOUT CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

This is not a subject I am at all keen on. The Conscientious Objectors are reported—I am happy to say that I don't know any of them—to regard themselves as the salt of the earth. I should feel disposed rather to regard most of them as worms of the earth. But S. P., of Newport, particularly wants me to answer in these columns a letter he has sent, so I will do so.

He writes thus:

"I read with great interest the letter of a reader with regard to the Conscientious Objector, and, though I do not agree with all that he says, I do agree that neither you nor Mr. Richards understands the reason why a C.O. refuses to fight. Now, I know a man who is a C.O., and who not very long ago jumped into the sea at a place where strong currents abound, and at great risk to himself succeeded in rescuing a drowning man. Do you mean to say that such a man refuses to fight because he is afraid? No! The C.O. will not fight because he tries to follow the pathway of our Lord, whose life was characterised by meekness, and Who said that 'Swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into reaping-hooks.'"

S. P. is evidently not an expert at argument. He begins with a statement which is incorrect, and an assumption which is quite unjustified He did not read the letter of which he speaks—unless he read it before it reached this office—for only about a dozen words or so were quoted. He assumes a lack of understanding on the part of Mr. Richards and myself which he has no right to assume. It does not follow that because our views differ from his those views are wrong, or that we are without understanding.

It is quite easy to understand the great majority of Conscientious Objectors. They are people who are either so eccentric as to be fit for incarceration in a lunatic asylum, who would do anything in order to be notorious, or they are cowards who prefer shame to danger.

As I said when I referred to this matter before, there are exceptions. For the Conscientious Objector who says: "I will not fight because my religion forbids, but put me to any service, however dangerous, which does not entail taking life, and I am ready for it"—for that type every man who thinks at all has some admiration. But how many of that type are there among all the thousands who have tried to beg off? Very few! Most of them take shelter behind the convenient excuse that their tender consciences will not allow them to do anything which aids warfare. The man who performed the heroic rescue told of was no coward; let that be admitted freely. But one such case as this really proves very little indeed—if it proves anything.

Into the religious argument I do not care to enter. But in all sincerity I would say that I believe that He Who nearly two thousand years ago walked the fields of Palestine, and suffered for mankind, would hold higher the man fresh from the slaughter of Germans, the man who went out to do his duty by his country and his dear ones, than the brainiest Conscientious Objector whose "principles" keep him from doing a man's work.

Years ago one of the finest men who ever lived—the Rev. Charles Kingsley—asked a question worth thinking over. I cannot quote the exact words, but it was to this effect: Is it reasonable to suppose that of all the instincts implanted in us the combative, and that alone, is wholly evil and deplorable?

Is it? Is there not a time when the man who refuses to fight shows himself thereby something less than a man? And is this not the time?

A WORD OR TWO ON ETIQUETTE.

Letters often reach me signed "John Smith, Esq.," or "Mr. James Brown," or something of that sort. I know that the writers err through ignorance only, intending no harm; but it is just as well that they should be told of their error. Neither "Mr." nor "Esq." can properly be used with a signature. Nor should envelopes enclosed for reply be addressed "John Smith, Esq." "Mr." there if you like, though that is hardly necessary—certainly not "Esq." This sort of thing creates a bad impression if at any time you are sending an application for employment. Avoid it.

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc.

G. Mitchell, 3, Neely Street, Belfast, would like members to note that the address is as given, and not "Peely" Street. Would be glad of more members for his "Gem" and "Magnet" League.

Miss Emily Wescott, 6, Hindmans Road, East Dulwich, S.E., would be glad to correspond with some other girl readers.

Laurence Robinson, 196, Wharf Street, Leicester, wants to form a dramatic society to play Shakespeare, and would be glad to hear from readers in Leicester under 14 interested. Please call between five and seven any evening

Private T. Haines, 14447, C Co., 13th Royal Scots, B.E.F., France, thanks heartily all readers who have sent him letters and papers.

Lance-Corporal J. McTigh, 2 Platoon, A Co., 6th Batt. Sherwood Foresters, B.E.F., France, also offers his thanks for the numbers of the "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library sent him, and would be glad of more if any reader has them to spare. They are appreciated by his comrades as well as himself.

T. Clyne, 19, Oldhill Street, Stoke Newington, N., is starting an amateur magazine, and would be glad to hear from any reader owning a small hand-press or duplicating machine who would co-operate with him.

Signalman Stanley Scott, H.M.S. Bullwhale, care of G.P.O., London, wants to thank all readers who replied so promptly to his request.

Your Editor

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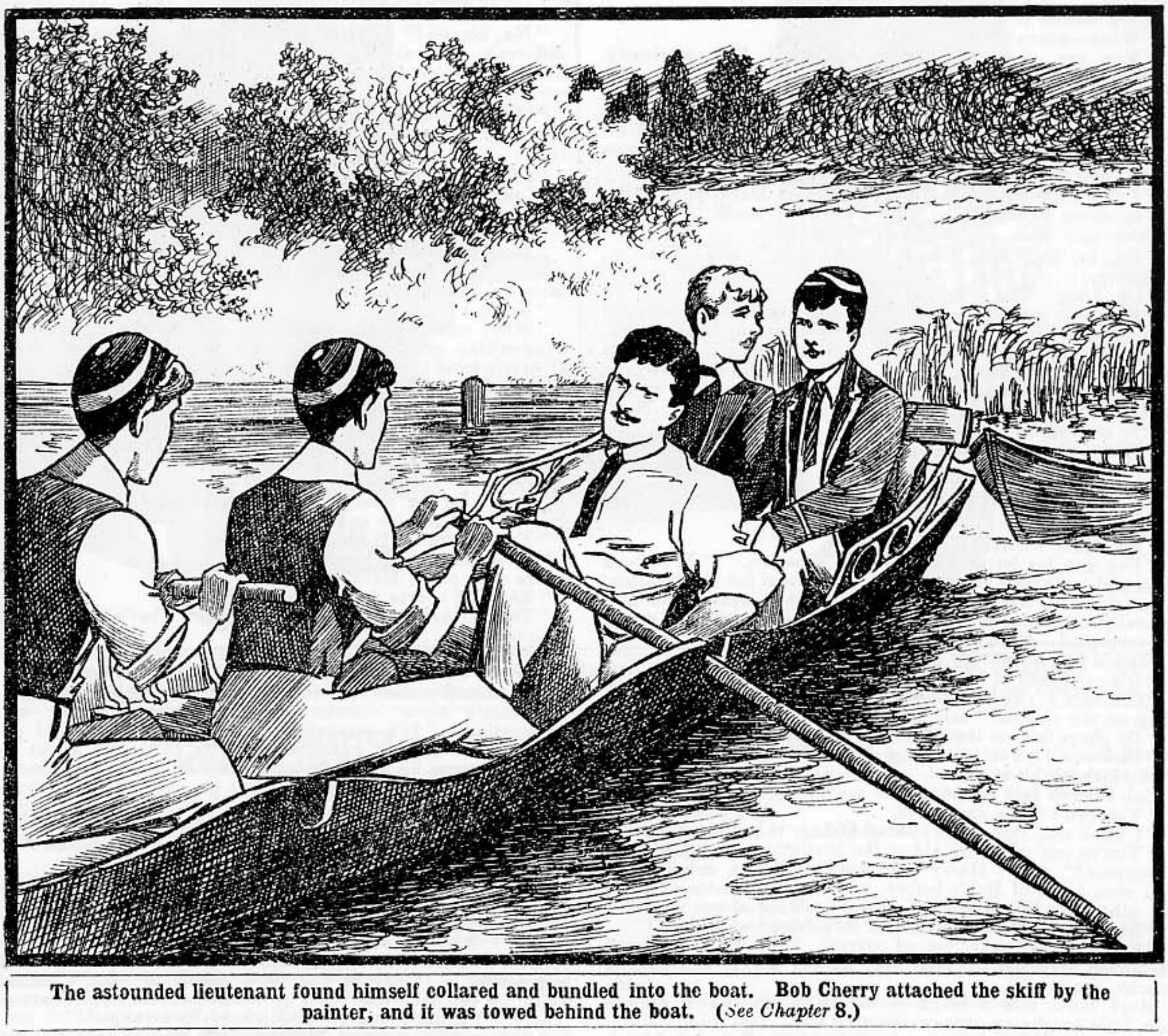
FOR D'ARCY'S SAKE!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



The astounded lieutenant found himself collared and bundled into the boat. Bob Cherry attached the skiff by the painter, and it was towed behind the boat. (*See Chapter* 8.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Not Bunter!

"MARKY!"

Bob Cherry's voice was like unto the voice of a bull of Bashan, as he stood in the study doorway and addressed his chum.

Mark Linley looked up from his work, with an amused smile on his face.

"You seem in good spirits," he remarked.

"Well, I should jolly well say so!" said Bob. "The blessed school breaks up to-morrow, and we're going on our blessed holidays, and the blessed weather has turned over a blessed new leaf, and my pater's got the D.S.O., and we're going to have a ripping vac, and you're coming! Hurrah!"

And Bob, whose spirits were always exuberant, executed a double-shuffle expressive of satisfaction with himself and the world generally, and the study shook as Bob expressed his satisfaction.

"I'm coming?" repeated Mark.

"Yes." Bob paused for breath. "Chuck that rot! What's the good of swotting on the last day of term? No prep to-night. Hurrah!"

Bob's voice could have been heard at the end of the Remove passage. Bob's neighbours were never left in any doubt when he was in high spirits.

"But——" began Mark.

He was interrupted. Bob Cherry swooped down on him, and clutched him, and swept him out of the chair. Mark's pen

went in one direction, and his Greek grammar in another, and the chair flew over on its back. The Lancashire lad found himself waltzed round the study, knocking chairs right and left, and finally crashing into the table and sending it spinning. And there was another crash as the inkstand landed in the fender, and the Greek lexicon—a ponderous volume—followed it there.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob.

"For goodness' sake, chuck it!" gasped Mark, dragging himself away. "What on earth are you burbling about? You've wrecked the study."

"What the dickens does it matter at the end of the term? They'll clean up the studies before we come back to Greyfriars. Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, looked into the study.

"What the merry dickens——"

"Only celebrating," said Bob. "What's the odds so long as you're 'appy? I'm just telling Marky."

"I hope you'll be able to come, Linley!" said Wharton cordially. "It will be ripping for all of us!"

Mark looked bewildered.

"What—where?"

"You can come, Marky?" exclaimed Bob anxiously. "Don't say you can't, you duffer!"

"But where?"

"I've told you! No; now I come to think of it, I haven't told you!" said Bob cheerily. "You know, we're going down to D'Arcy's place for the vac—D'Arcy of St. Jim's, you know—the chap with the glass eye——"

"I didn't know he had a glass eye," said Mark, in surprise. "I've never noticed it. I haven't seen much of him, of course—only when we've played cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha! Bob means his monocle," said Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, I see! His eyeglass!"

"Exactly," said Bob. "You are growing dense in your old age, Marky. This is what comes of swotting over Greek. Here goes Liddell and Scott!" Bob punted the ponderous lexicon across the study. "You're jolly well not going to take Liddell and Scott with you, mind! If you so much as say Alpha and Omega once during the vac I'll biff you! Now, you're coming, of course?"

"Where?" yelled Mark.

"My hat! I haven't told you yet! To D'Arcy's place, of course!" said Bob.

"But he hasn't asked me," said Mark, smiling. "He hardly knows me."

"He's just written to Harry——"

"I've got his letter here," said Wharton. "It's been arranged some time about going to Eastwood for the vacation, of course. D'Arcy's just written about it again, and he's especially mentioned you. He says if you could come he would be very glad. Here's the letter."

Mark's face grew very grave.

"It's very kind of D'Arcy," he said.

"Oh, he's a ripping good sort, though he does talk like a chap on the cinema," said Bob.

"Do chaps talk on the cinema?" grinned Wharton.

"Bow-wow! You're coming, Marky?"

Mark shook his head.

Bob Chery's face fell at once.

"You can't?" he exclaimed.

"I think not, Bob. It's kind of D'Arcy to ask me, but——"

"You're not worrying about the invitation coming so late, I suppose?" asked Harry Wharton. "D'Arcy didn't know you were a pal of Bob's before, you see. When we saw him the other day Bob happened to start talking about you——"

"And he's asked me because I'm a friend of Bob's?"

"For your own sake, too, of course! Dash it all, Marky!" exclaimed Wharton, in astonishment. "You're not getting touchy, are you?"

Mark burst into a laugh—a hearty laugh—which showed how little touchy or over-exacting he was.

"Not at all! It's jolly decent of D'Arcy. But—but I can't come!"

"Are they expecting you at home?" asked Bob. "I mean specially?"

"Not specially. My people would be glad for me to get a change for part of the vac," said Mark frankly. "That would be all right. But—but you chaps seem to forget that—that——" He coloured a little. "I'm a scholarship chap here, you know, and—and not quite up to the rest in some things. You see——"

"What difference does that make?" asked Bob. "Do you think D'Arcy cares whether you pay your fees or not?"

"It isn't that. Only—only D'Arcy's father is Lord Eastwood, and—and I understand that he has a tremendous place——"

"Tremendous!" said Bob. "And it's going to be jolly. His elder brother is home on leave, and some other officers, and they're getting up a cricket week. And if they want some good players, why, that's where we come in."

"And D'Arcy's father, Lord Eastwood, probably wouldn't expect his son to ask home a chap who has worked in a factory for his living," said Mark quietly. "You see, it can't be done. It would be awkward all round."

Wharton smiled.

"So that's the trouble?" he asked.

Mark nodded.

"D'Arcy is rather a sensible chap," remarked Wharton. "I didn't think of that, but it seems he did. He mentions specially in his letter that he has told his father all about you, and his lordship is very keen to make your acquaintance. Here it is in his fist, you doubting Thomas!"

"Oh!" said Mark.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"So you can wipe that off the slate," Bob said. "Lord Eastwood knows all about the factory and the scholarship, and quite approves. Dash it all, Marky, you couldn't think a splendid chap like D'Arcy had a snob of a father!"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Mark hastily. "But things are different. You won't see it, Bob; but—but, you see, training makes at lot of difference to the way a man looks at things——"

"Well, it doesn't with D'Arcy's pater," said Bob. "So if that's all the trouble, Marky, you're coming! You'd like to?"

"Of course I'd like to!" said Mark. "It will be splendid! And my people will be glad to know I'm having a good time. I'll come, of course!"

"Hurrah!"

"I say, you fellows——" Billy Bunter blinked into the study. "Oh, here you are, Wharton! You've had a letter from my pal at St. Jim's!"

"No fear!"

"Why, you—you Prussian!" shouted Bunter. "I saw his handwriting on the envelope! Do you think I don't know D'Arcy's hand?"

"I've had a letter from D'Arcy," admitted Wharton. "But I haven't heard from any pal of yours that I know of."

"Gussy's my old pal," said Bunter, with dignity. "We've got a lot in common, you know—titled relations, and all that. I suppose he mentioned me?"

"No."

"Didn't he say something about taking another chap with you?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Yes," grinned Wharton.

"Well, that meant me, of course!"

"Is your name Mark Linley?"

"Eh? Of course it isn't, fathead!"

"Then D'Arcy can't have meant you. That's the name he mentioned."

"My hat!" ejaculated Bunter. "Do you mean to say that Gussy has asked that factory bounder, and forgotten me?"

Bob Cherry picked up a cushion, but Mark caught his arm.

"There's some mistake!" said Bunter, swelling with indignation. "It's impossible—quite! Gussy's my old pal, and I've really been expecting a letter from him about the vac. I suppose he wrote Linley's name by mistake. Mistakes will happen, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! However, the matter can be arranged," said Bunter. "Linley can't go, of course!"

"Why not?" asked Mark quietly.

Bunter snorted.

"I suppose you've got some proper feeling?" he said loftily. "You are a factory chap—not quite my class, I suppose! Under the circumstances, you can't go—it's quite impossible! Wharton has been asked to take a friend. Well, he can take me! I'll go instead of Linley, Wharton! There! I think that's quite satisfactorily arranged!"

"Not quite!" grinned Wharton. "I like D'Arcy too well to plant you on him, for one thing. For another, I wouldn't be found dead with you anywhere——"

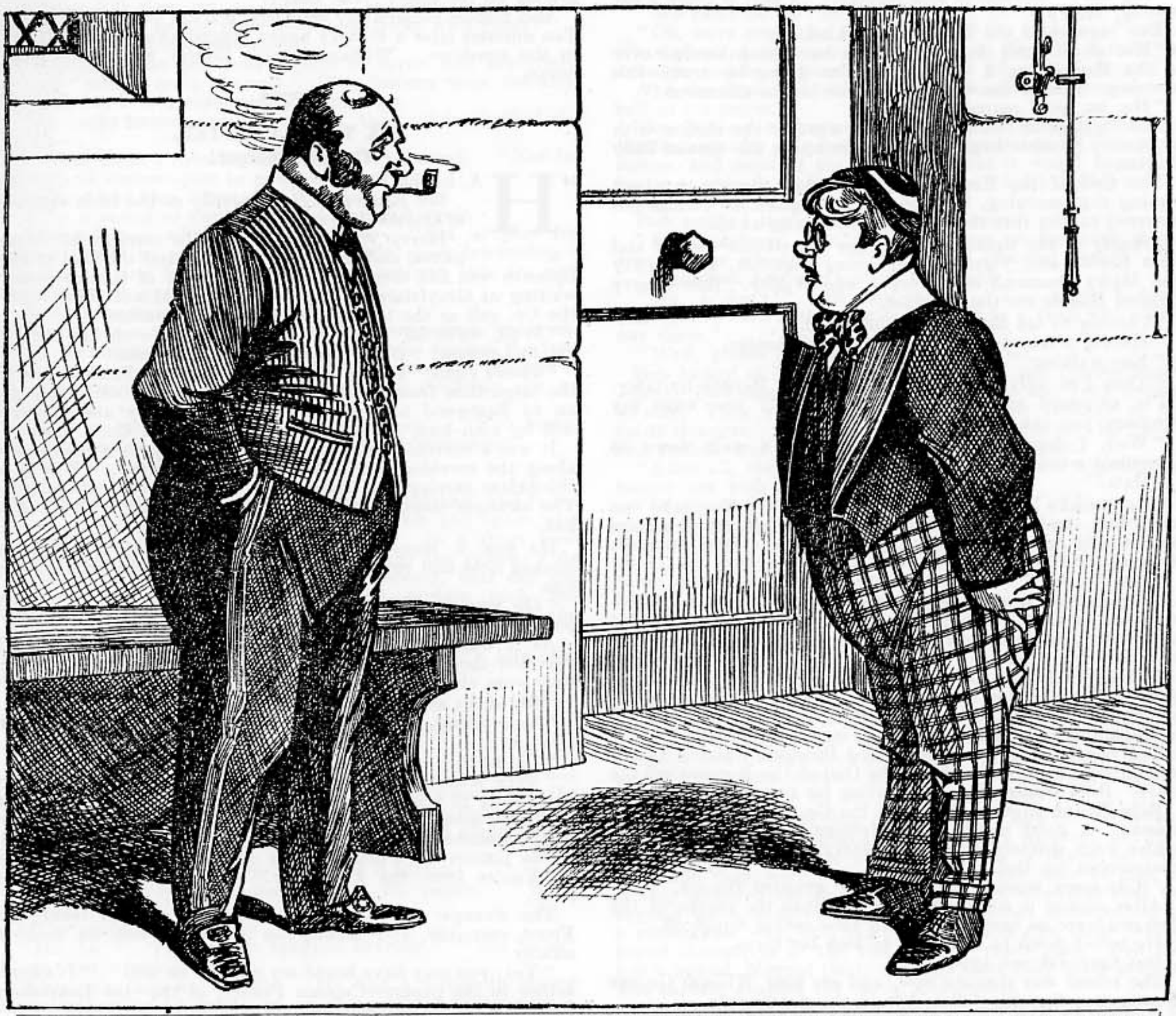
"If you prefer that factory bounder to me——" roared Bunter.

Whiz!

Bob Cherry jerked his arm away from Mark, and the cushion flew. It was a bullseye. It caught Billy Bunter fairly on the chest, and bowled him into the passage like a skittle. Bob kicked the door shut. In the passage there was a bump, and a roar followed.

"Now, when he comes in again——" said Bob, breathing hard through his nose, and picking up a cricket-stump.

But Billy Bunter did not come in again. The cushion was enough for the Owl of the Remove.



"I can't go till my friends come back, can I?" snorted Bunter. Gosling stared at him. "Master Wharton?" he said. "He's not coming back!" "They—they've gone?" Billy Bunter stood rooted to the ground. (*See Chapter* 2.)

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Waiting for the Car!

THE next morning there was a general buzz throughout Greyfriars.

There was always excitement on breaking-up day.

Fellows who weren't going to see one another again for a number of weeks expressed regret or pleasure, as the case might be.

Harry Wharton & Co. were looking forward to the holiday at Eastwood. They were to be together there for a couple of weeks before they went on to their homes. They had often met the St. Jim's fellows on the cricket-field, and they would be glad to see them again. Several of D'Arcy's friends from St. Jim's would be at Eastwood, as well as D'Arcy's Cousin Ethel and his elder brother, Lord Conway, who was home from the Front.

Billy Bunter was looking forward to that vacation at Eastwood, too.

The fact that D'Arcy of St. Jim's had not asked him there did not make any difference to Bunter. He was willing to overlook an omission like that, which he cheerfully attributed to absentmindedness on D'Arcy's part. So long as he arrived with the party from Greyfriars, he felt that he would pass muster. D'Arcy was a hospitable chap, and he would be pleased to welcome an extra pal of Wharton's. He was going with Wharton; that was settled.

"I suppose you wouldn't mind lending me your travelling-bag, Wharton?" he remarked after breakfast. "The new one, I mean!"

"But I want it myself," said Harry.

"Couldn't you take a trunk, or something?" said Bunter peevishly. "I want to have a decent bag with me; they rather keep up appearances at Eastwood, you know!"

Wharton stared.

"At Eastwood?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Are you going to Eastwood?"

"Of course!"

"But you haven't been asked."

"That was an oversight. My old pal Gussy is a bit absent-minded!"

"Well, of all the nerve!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in amazement.

"Anyway, I can go as your pal, Wharton!"

"No jolly fear!"

"Look here! Will you lend me your bag?"

"Bow-wow!"

"What time is the car coming?"

"What car?"

"D'Arcy's car, of course! I suppose he's fetching you in a car? He did the last time you had a holiday with him."

"Better send him a wire and ask him," suggested Bob.

"Will you tell me what time the car's coming, Wharton?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Well, I shall jolly well keep an eye open for it!" said Bunter. "Is it coming this morning?"

"No."

"That's all right, then! I'd rather have dinner before we start. But, mind, when that car comes along this afternoon I'm going in it!"

And Bunter rolled away, looking very determined.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I say, is there a car coming, Harry?"

The captain of the Remove chuckled.

"Not at all. All the D'Arcy cars have been handed over to the Red Cross, I believe. We're going by train—this morning. Bunter can wait for the car in the afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

The luggage of the Famous Five went to the station with a quantity of other bags and boxes, escaping the eyes of Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove, satisfied that the car was not coming that morning, had relaxed his vigilance. It had not occurred to him that the car was not coming at all.

A party of the Remove started for the station—Squiff and Tom Brown and Vernon-Smith going together, and Ogilvy and Micky Desmond and Morgan and Wibley. Bob Cherry clapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"Coming to see Squiff off?" he asked.

"Having a trap to the station?" asked Bunter.

"No—walking!"

"Then I'm jolly well not coming!" said Bunter irritably. "I'm surprised at you, Bob Cherry! If you want my company you can stand a trap!"

"Well, I don't!" grinned Bob. "But a walk down to Courtfield would do you good, you know."

"Rats!"

"Let's make him go!" suggested Nugent. "You take one arm, Bob, and I'll take the other. Marky can help him behind with his boot. Now, then, Bunter! Why, where's he gone?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was making a record run across the quadrangle. A walk to Courtfield in the hot weather was not to his taste, and he had not the slightest desire to see Squiff off.

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned as they walked out of the gates with the other fellows. They were certainly going to see Squiff off, but they were not coming back, as they were catching the next train themselves in a different direction.

The fact that they had suggested Bunter's walking to the station with them quite threw the Owl of the Remove off the track. Billy Bunter was still waiting for the car.

Billy Bunter blinked round for the Co. when he went in to dinner. A good many of the fellows were gone, and the tables were sparsely attended. Harry Wharton & Co. were conspicuous by their absence.

"Silly asses, missing their dinner!" grunted Bunter.

After dinner it occurred to Bunter that the chums of the Remove were an exceedingly long time seeing Squiff off.

He rolled down to the gates to look for them.

But they did not appear.

The school was clearing now, and ere long William George Bunter was the only fellow left in the quadrangle.

Gosling blinked at him from the doorway of his lodge, wondering what the fat junior was still hanging about the school for.

"Dash it all, it's queer the car doesn't come!" muttered Bunter. "I say, Gosling, do you know when D'Arcy's car is coming?"

"Ain't heerd nothing of it!" said Gosling.

"Those silly duffers will keep D'Arcy waiting if he comes!" said Bunter. "Blow it, I believe I'm the only fellow left!"

"I'm goin' to lock them gates when you're gone, Master Bunter," said Gosling pointedly.

Bunter snorted.

"I can't go till my friends come back, can I? What the dickens can be keeping Wharton all this time?"

Gosling stared at him.

"Master Wharton?" he said. "He's not coming back!"

"Not coming back?" roared Bunter.

"Not that I knows on."

"But—but he's coming back to go with D'Arcy in the car, when the car comes!" stuttered Bunter.

"Ain't heerd nothing of that there!"

"But their bags haven't gone——"

"Yes, they has!" grinned Gosling.

"They—they've gone?"

"Yes; they went off to Courtfield with the rest of the luggage!"

Billy Bunter stood rooted to the ground. His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles.

"Then—then they're going by train?" he gasped.

"The twelve train, I think," said Gosling.

"Twelve!" shrieked Bunter. "Why, that went before dinner!"

Gosling nodded.

"And there isn't a car coming at all!" yelled Bunter. "Wharton said it was coming this afternoon—at least, he said it wasn't coming this morning! Oh, the rotter, pulling my leg all the time! Oh, dear!"

And Bunter rolled away furiously, leaving Gosling grinning. Ten minutes later a solitary figure fagged away to the station in the sunshine. William George Bunter was on his way home.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Cardsharper!

"HA, ha, ha!"

Six juniors laughed merrily as the train ran out of Courtfield Junction.

Harry Wharton & Co. had a carriage to themselves, and they were starting, and the Owl of the Remove was not there! And the thought of the fat junior waiting at Greyfriars for the car that would not come made the Co. yell as the train glided out of the station.

"Well, we're off!" said Bob Cherry. "No change till we get to Lexham. D'Arcy meets us there, I think?"

"That's right," said Wharton. "He gets to Lexham about the same time from St. Jim's with his friends. We shall go on to Eastwood together. Blake and Digby and Herries will be with him, I think, and Tom Merry & Co. Hallo!"

It was a corridor train, and as Wharton spoke a man came along the corridor and looked into the carriage. It was a third-class carriage, so there were a couple of seats empty. The stranger stepped in, and sat down, pushing back his silk hat.

He was a somewhat flashily-dressed individual, with a hooked nose and very keen eyes, and a cigarette between his lips.

"Do you young gentlemen mind the smoke?" he asked politely.

As it was not a smoking-carriage, the juniors considered that the stranger might have left his cigarette outside; but they were obliging.

"Oh, don't mind us, sir!" said Bob.

"You young fellows don't smoke, I suppose?" smiled the stranger.

"Oh, no!"

"Very sensible of you," said the gentleman, who was apparently in a talkative and affable mood. "Not good for anybody, man or boy; but one gets into the habit out there in the trenches."

The juniors were interested at once.

"You're from the Front, sir?" asked Wharton respectfully.

The stranger did not look much like a man from the Front, certainly, and he was not in khaki; but he nodded affably.

"Yes; you may have heard my name," he said. "It's been rather in the papers—Captain Punter, of the—the Loamshire Regiment!"

"No, I hadn't seen it," said Harry simply.

The captain laughed good-humouredly.

"D.S.O.," he said lightly. "A little affair of a night attack!"

"By Jove! My pater's just got the D.S.O.," said Bob, with interest. "Perhaps you've met him out there—Major Cherry, of the Engineers?"

"You are the son of Major Cherry!" exclaimed the captain. "Delighted to meet you! My oldest friend!"

The captain shook hands warmly with Bob.

Bob regarded him a little doubtfully. He didn't like to doubt any statement made by a man from the Front, but it was curious that he should never have heard Captain Punter's name if he was Major Cherry's oldest friend.

"You are getting out soon?" asked the captain casually.

"Not till Lexham Junction."

"Quite a long run," said Captain Punter. "Off for your holidays—what?"

"Yes; our school broke up to-day."

"I thought so. This recalls old times to my mind," said the captain, with reminiscent look. "It's a long time since I left Greyfriars——"

"Greyfriars!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yes, that's my old school. You've heard of it?"

"We belong to Greyfriars."

"By Jove, do you?" exclaimed the captain. "How curious that we should meet like this! Same quiet, old-world place—what?"

"I don't think it changes much," said Harry, with a smile. "So you're an old Greyfriars fellow?"

"Yes."

Mark Linley looked quietly and steadily at the effusive stranger. The Lancashire lad was thinking that he had not seen the name of Punter on the Roll of Honour at Grey-

friars, which included the names of all old boys who were serving in any rank.

The captain chatted on about the trenches and Greyfriars, and his war experiences and his schooldays. Presently he yawned a little.

"Must kill time on a journey," he remarked. "You youngsters like to see some conjuring tricks with cards?"

The juniors politely assented.

Captain Punter produced a pack of cards, and performed several tricks quite cleverly. The juniors were thinking that he was a very entertaining gentleman.

The tricks having come to an end, the captain shuffled the cards.

"What about a round or two of nap?" he asked. "Not for money, of course—just to pass the time?"

"Not a bad idea," assented Wharton.

After a round or two the captain yawned again.

"I'll tell you what!" he exclaimed. "Let us play for penny points to make the game a little more interesting—same as playing for counters! I suppose you lads are well provided with pennies?"

And the captain laughed jovially.

There was a pause. Playing cards for money was gambling, and it was not only wrong, but it was against the law. But the juniors felt that they could not wound the feelings of the jovial gentleman from the Front, who evidently saw no harm in it.

"May as well," said Harry, after a pause. "You mean, use the pennies as counters, not to keep the winnings?"

"Just as you like, my young frined."

"All serene!"

A round was played, and the captain called nap, and failed to get it, and had to pay up. He lost again and again, and he paid out silver and received change. In a short time all the juniors were two or three shillings the richer. As the money was to be handed back, however, that did not matter. But they wondered why the captain took the trouble to draw the curtains across the window on the corridor.

"By Jove, you youngsters have all the luck!" said the captain. "Suppose we make it shilling points?"

"But it's all the same, as we're only using the coins as counters," said Harry.

The captain coughed.

"Ahem! Yes, I forgot!"

The train stopped at a station, and the captain slid the pack of cards into his pocket. He hailed a newsboy from the window, and bought a paper, and when the train started again began to read it. The juniors exchanged glances, feeling a little uncomfortable.

"Well, here's your money, sir," said Wharton.

"Eh?" The captain looked over his paper. "What money?"

"The counters, you know."

"Ha, ha!" The captain laughed heartily. "Not at all! Keep your winnings!"

Wharton's face set a little. He had a naturally strong disinclination to be guilty of anything like preaching to a man old enough to be his father: but he did not intend to gamble, and that was the long and the short of it, and his chums quite agreed with him.

"We can't keep your money, sir," he said quietly. "It was understood that the coins were only to be used as counters!"

"Nonsense! Of course, I cannot take it, begad!"

"Well, there it is," said Harry, laying the money on the seat beside the captain; and the others followed suit.

"Begad, have I dropped into a Sunday-school by mistake?" ejaculated the captain sarcastically.

The juniors flushed uncomfortably.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said the captain, laying down his paper. "I can't take the money, that's flat. But if you like to give me my revenge, I'll play you another round or two for shilling points!"

Wharton looked grim. The affable stranger was coming out in his true colours now. However careless and thoughtless he was, he ought to have known that it was wrong to draw schoolboys into a game for money.

Wharton was no fool, and he began to suspect that the affable stranger had never been within a hundred miles of the Front, that he had never been to Greyfriars, and that he had entered the carriage for the especial purpose of fleecing a party of prosperous-looking schoolboys.

"Can't be done, sir," said Harry curtly.

"But why can't it be done?" said the captain, with a puzzled look.

"It's gambling, that's why."

"Begad, it's a dashed Sunday-school, after all!" said the captain.

"Draw it mild, Harry!" whispered Nugent uneasily. "Remember the chap's from the Front!"

The good-natured Nugent would have fallen into the trap simply enough; but Wharton shook his head decidedly.

"We can't do it," he said.

"Oh, have your own way!" sneered the captain. "Begad, it's a pleasant experience for a man to come back from the trenches and be lectured by a gang of schoolboys, begad!"

And the captain, looking very much offended, buried himself in his paper.

The juniors exchanged uncomfortable glances. To hurt the feelings of a man fresh from the Front seemed too utterly rotten, and most of the party felt that it would have been better to stretch a point for once. Only Mark Linley seemed to agree with Wharton.

Bob nudged the captain of the Remove.

"For goodness' sake, don't let's get on the high horse, Harry!" he whispered. "The chap's offended now."

"I suppose you don't want to gamble?"

"No, I don't!" said Bob tartly. "You know I don't. But there's such a thing as being civil to a chap who's been out there."

"Well, please yourself!"

Bob looked at Nugent and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh. Johnny Bull shook his head. But Nugent and Inky nodded weakly. They shrank from wounding the feelings of the polite stranger. Bob coughed, and the captain met his glance and smiled, and the cards came into view again.

"After all, there's no harm," said Bob, as if arguing the matter out with himself.

"Of course, it's only fun," said the captain. "I'm as down on gambling as any man could be; but I'm not asking for lectures from a superior young person. Begad, it's the first time I've ever been called a gambler!" he added, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

Wharton did not speak. His resolve was unshaken, however. The captain could call it gambling or not as he chose; but it was gambling, there was no doubt about that. Bob wondered how the captain made a distinction between gambling and playing nap for shilling points; but Captain Punter himself seemed to see it, and to be deeply wounded by the imputation of gambling.

The three juniors and the captain were soon playing away merrily, and though luck at first favoured Bob and Nugent and Inky, it soon turned, and they found themselves paying out shillings galore to the pleasant stranger.

For the game itself they cared nothing, and the excitement of gaming did not appeal to their healthy natures; but they felt a certain diffidence about expressing a desire to leave off while they were losing. They did not wish to look as if they grudged the shillings. A kind of weakness that the captain quite understood. But the shillings mounted up in a remarkable way, and in an hour or less the three juniors found themselves at the end of their ready cash. Bob had lost a pound, Nugent thirty shillings, and Inky three pounds. The captain shuffled the cards, and smiled.

"Time for another round before we reach Lexham," he remarked.

Bob Cherry grinned feebly.

"I'll chuck it, if you don't mind," he said.

"The chuckfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "There is no longer an esteemed shot in the locker."

"Same here," mumbled Nugent.

Captain Punter smiled, and slipped the cards into his pocket.

"I dare say I shall see you young gentlemen again," he remarked. "May I ask where you are going for your holiday?"

"Eastwood House," said Bob unsuspiciously. "Near Easthorpe."

The captain started a little.

"Perhaps you are going there?" asked Bob. "I believe a lot of officers from the Front on leave are going there."

"Ahem! Not at present," murmured the captain, with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes. "However, I dare say we shall meet again. I owe you my thanks for having made my journey a very pleasant one. Begad, here's Lexham!"

The train stopped.

On the platform a very elegant youth in a Panama hat was pacing to and fro, and he turned a gleaming eyeglass upon the train. The juniors passed down the corridor to the door and jumped out, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, greeted them warmly. Blake and Herries and Digby, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were also there, and they shook hands all round. Captain Punter stepped from the train within a couple of yards of the cheery group. D'Arcy's eyes fell upon him, and he started.

"Gweat Scott!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Do you know the captain?" asked Bob.

"Bai Jove! That feahful wascal Puntah!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
D'Arcy Of St. Jim's!

"PUNTAH! You wascal!"

Captain Punter backed away a little. The meeting with the swell of St. Jim's had evidently disconcerted him.

The Greyfriars' juniors looked on in astonishment.

"You—you know the chap?" ejaculated Nugent. "What are you calling him names for?"

"I twust you are not acquainted with him?" exclaimed D'Arcy. "The man is a feahful wascal, and ought to be awwested!"

"We—we met him in the train. He's from the Front, you know——"

"Wats! He is no more fwom the fwont than I am. He is not in the Army at all. And he is not a weal captain."

"No fear!" grinned Blake. "He's a card-sharper and a billiard-sharper. We've met him before, and he tried to diddle us!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The captain recovered his nerve at once. He raised his silk hat with a sardonic grin.

"Sorry I can't stop," he remarked. "Happy to see you again, Master D'Arcy. Remember me to Lord Eastwood, and that scrubby little scoundrel of a brother of yours!"

And the captain walked jauntily down the platform, and disappeared among the passengers.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned pink with wrath.

"Bai Jove! Hold my hat, Blake, while I go and give that wottah a feahful thwashin'!" he exclaimed.

Jack Blake held his chum, instead of his chum's hat.

"Go easy," he remarked. "We haven't come here to see a dog-fight, you know!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You know that fellow, then?" asked Bob shamefacedly.

"Yaas, wathah! He is a feahful swindlah, and we have met him. He twied to swindle us, and make us play cards, and all that."

"Oh, by Jove!" said Bob. "That was his little game with us. He—he told us he was from the Front, and that he was an old Greyfriars chap."

"An old Wandsworth Scrubbs chap, more likely!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"What awful asses we were!" said Bob, crimson with anger and mortification. "I suppose he was pulling our leg all the time, and he really got into our carriage to get us into a game."

"Can't be helped now," said Wharton.

"Don't say 'I told you so,' for goodness' sake!" mumbled Nugent.

"I wasn't going to, Franky. You were a silly ass, if you come to that. You didn't want to hurt his feelings."

"Well, I thought he was from the Front."

"An officer from the Front wouldn't banter a party of schoolboys into playing cards for money, you ass!"

"Well, I suppose he wouldn't," agreed Bob. "But I took it all as gospel. And he seemed hurt, so—so——"

"So you played the giddy goat," said Mark Linley. "And that was what he was aiming at all the time."

"I suppose he was," admitted Bob. "Why the dickens couldn't you tell us what he was, Wharton, if you knew?"

"Well, I wasn't sure, of course."

"Nevah mind, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, comfortingly. "Everybody makes mistakes, you know, and a mistake from a good motive is not so very bad."

"Has he looted you?" chuckled Blake.

"Oh, yes! That doesn't matter so much, though. But to have gambled with a shady sharper, that's rotten!" growled Bob. "My hat! If I meet him again I'll jolly well give him a dot in the eye!"

"Shall we adjourn to the buffet?" asked Arthur Augustus, changing the painful subject. "We have a quarter of an hour to wait."

"Good idea!"

In the buffet, they found D'Arcy minor, of the Third Form at St. Jim's. He was feeding a shaggy mongrel with biscuits. He greeted the Greyfriars fellows in a somewhat offhand way. The manners of the Third Form were not so polished as those of D'Arcy major.

"You are vewy untiday, Wally," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "There are beastly hairs all over your jacket!"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" implored Wally. "Look here! We've got to get a carriage to ourselves the rest of the way. I'm not going to have passengers grumbling at Pongo all the time. They call this country civilised, and yet there are people who object to a dog in a railway carriage!"

"You ought to put him in the guard's van, Wally."

"Catch me!" said Wally disdainfully.

And when the train started for Easthorpe, the young rascal of St. Jim's smuggled Pongo into the carriage under the coat he carried on his arm, and the party had the pleasure of Pongo's company for the rest of the journey.

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh were still a little depressed over the incident of the captain. It was a humiliating recollection, and it made their cheeks burn to think of it. But their comrades made it a point to forget the whole affair, and they ended by forgetting it, too. They arrived at Easthorpe in great spirits.

"I twust you fellahs will not mind walkin' to my place," said Arthur Augustus when they alighted from the train. "The bags can be sent on fwom the station. The cahs have been handed ovah to the Wed Cwoss, you know."

Nobody objected to walking, and the party set off cheerfully, the Greyfriars juniors grinning at the recollection of Billy Bunter, who was still probably waiting at Greyfriars for the big car—which had been handed over to the Red Cross.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Too Many Captains!

LORD EASTWOOD greeted his son's guests cordially. He did not appear to discern any difference between Mark Linley and the rest of the Greyfriars fellows, and Mark realised that his uneasiness was quite without grounds. If anything, his lordship was a shade more urbane with the Lancashire lad than with the others.

Cousin Ethel was at the house, and Aunt Adelaide, both of whom the Greyfriars chums had met before. Captain Lord Conway was there on leave, and a handsome young lieutenant, who the juniors found was Micky Kildare, a cousin of the captain of St. Jim's. There were also Cousin Ethel's brother, Captain Cleveland, and Lieutenant Percy Locke, the nephew of the Head of Greyfriars; and another officer whom the juniors were still more delighted to see—Lieutenant Lawrence Lascelles, once mathematics-master at Greyfriars.

Larry greeted the juniors very kindly. There were several more gentlemen in khaki whom the Greyfriars fellows did not know.

A "cricket week" was in progress at Eastwood House for the entertainment of Lord Conway and his brother officers, and the new arrivals saw the finish of a match between the house-party and a team from a neighbouring garrison. Harry Wharton & Co. looked on at the cricket with a critical eye. In the Greyfriars Remove they "played" cricket, with the accent on the "played," as Bob Cherry expressed it. The play was, as Wharton remarked, pretty good for country-house cricket, but as he watched it an idea came into his mind, which he communicated to his chums later on, when they had retired for the night. The Greyfriars juniors occupied several communicating rooms, and they gathered in Wharton's room for a "jaw" before going to bed.

"Of course, a chap doesn't want to look like swanking," Wharton commenced.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What is it now?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"I was thinking about the cricket. D'Arcy says they haven't got all the dates filled. We ought to get some cricket while we're here."

"D'Arcy is arranging a match with the village chaps," said Nugent.

"I don't see why we shouldn't play the house team."

"Oh, my hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "They would look upon a challenge as the sublime cheekfulness."

"I suppose they would," admitted Wharton. "But I don't see it. There's enough to make up an eleven, with the St. Jim's chaps, and we could play them. I think we could beat them."

"Ahem!"

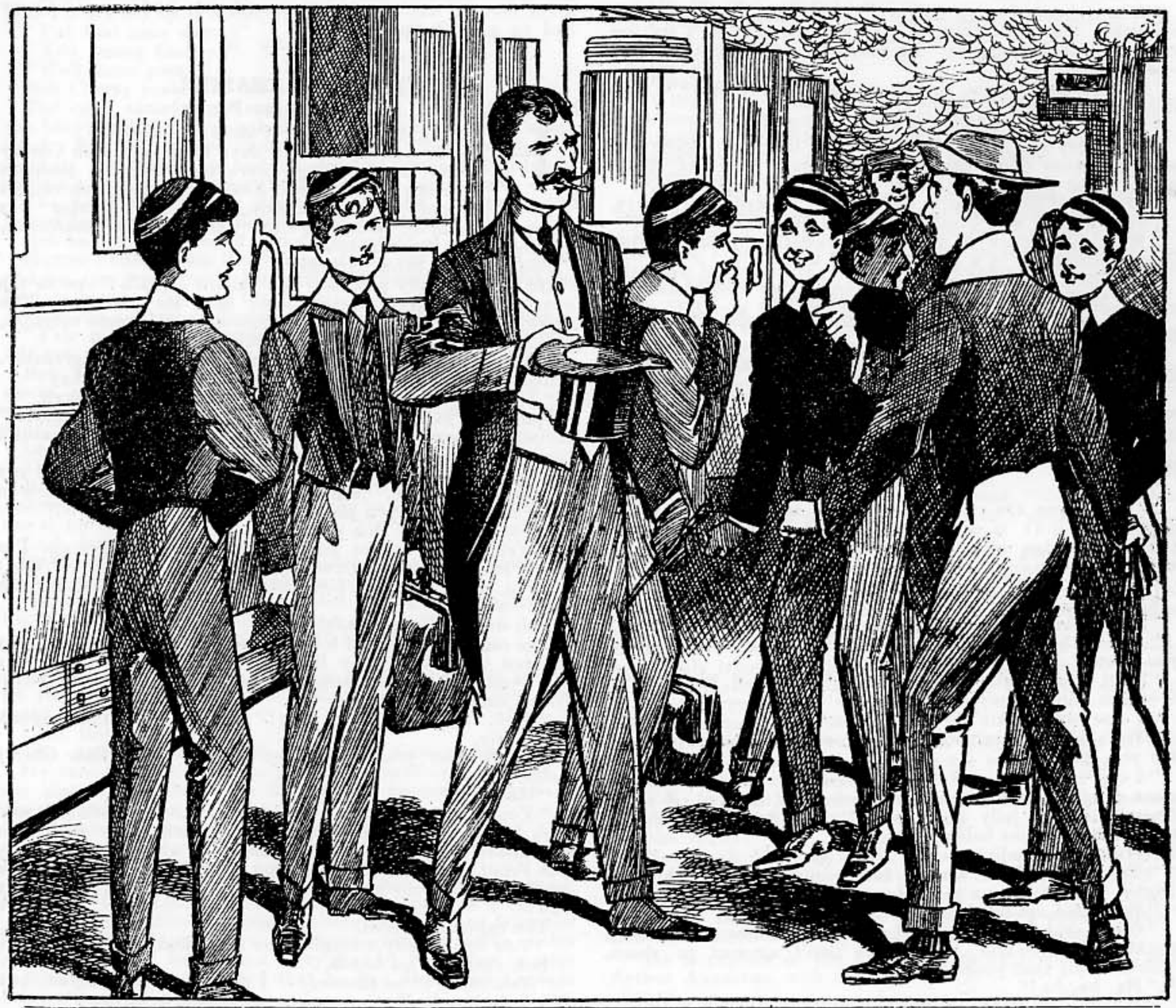
"If it could be fixed up," said Wharton, his eyes sparkling, "we might get Smithy and Brown and old Squiff to come over for the match—they're not too far away. With two bowlers like Inky and Squiff, and bats like Smithy and—ahem——"

"Me!" grinned Bob.

"Yes," said Harry, laughing; "and myself, I was going to say, I don't believe in false modesty—ahem——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With the team we could make up we could give them a tussle. Conway is a good bat, and Larry is tiptop, but the rest are only average; they've done more killing Huns



"Puntah! You wascal!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You—you know the chap?" ejaculated Nugent.
(*See Chapter* 4.)

than playing cricket for a long time. But--but I suppose if we challenged them they would—would——"

"Cackle," said Johnny Bull.

"The cacklefulness would be——"

"Terrific!" grinned Bob.

"Well, I wouldn't mind their cackling if they'd play us," said Harry. "But I suppose they would think it swank. Still, I'll mention it to D'Arcy later on. It would be ripping if it could be fixed up. It would be a feather in our caps to beat the chaps who have beaten the Germans."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. enthusiastically.

The next morning, when the cricketers were resuming the unfinished match, the juniors rowed up the river. In the boat Harry Wharton diplomatically suggested his idea to Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "That's a wippin' ideah! But old Conway would think it was swank, you know. But Lascelles—you chaps know Lascelles——"

"Yes; he's an old Greyfriars man."

"Yaas, I thought so. He's captainin' the team," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pewwaps you fellahs might put it to him. Suppose I speak to Conway, and you fellahs speak to Lascelles, and pewwaps we can awwange it between us. I am suah we could make up a team to beat them."

"It's a jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Tom Merry heartily. "And we could make up a ripping team. Let's see. How many are there of us?"

"Seven St. Jim's and six Greyfriars, without counting Wally," said Bob. "But we could get a few more Greyfriars chaps for the match."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the joke?"

"I was just thinking we could get a few more St. Jim's chaps for the match."

"Oh!" said Bob. "I—I see!"

"Of course, we want to make up the stwongest team possible," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Old Kangy would be wippin'——"

"That Cornstalk chap in your team?" said Wharton. "Let's put him down, then. He's good."

"But he has gone up to Scotland with Kerr, deah boy."

"Oh! Then we won't put him down."

"Then there's Figgins. He's a wippin' bat!"

"Good! We could make room for Figgins——"

"But he's gone to Scotland with Kerr, too."

"Well, if he's in Scotland, he can't come to Hampshire for a cricket match."

"Then there's Fatty Wynn. I weally think there nevah was a juniah bowlah like Fatty Wynn."

Harry Wharton nodded eagerly. He well remembered the fat St. Jim's bowler, who had accounted for a good many Greyfriars wickets in the matches.

"Ripping!" he exclaimed. "We must have Wynn!"

"But he's gone up to Scotland with Kerr, too!"

"Oh!"

"Look here," said Monty Lowther. "Are we making up a cricket list or a list of chaps who have gone up to Scotland with Kerr?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"What about Jimmy Silver?" said Tom Merry. "You remember that Rookwood chap? I heard that he's staying somewhere in Hampshire. He bowls as well as Fatty Wynn—or nearly."

"If he hasn't gone up to Scotland with Kerr," said Wharton, laughing.

"No; luckily he hasn't. I'll put him down."

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton both took out pencils and paper to write down the name of Jimmy Silver of Rookwood. Then they looked at one another and laughed.

"Ahem! Who's going to be skipper?" asked Tom Merry.

"Just what I was wondering," said Wharton.

"Well, Greyfriars is rather a cricketing school," Bob Cherry remarked, in a casual sort of way.

"St. Jim's is wathah a cwicketin' school, Chewwy."

"We play cricket," Johnny Bull observed.

"The playfulness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"If you mean that we don't play cricket——" began Jack Blake, rather warmly.

"Not at allfully," said Hurree Singh at once. "But the esteemed Blake will admit that there is playfulness and playfulness."

"And fatheadedfulness and dufferfulness," remarked Blake.

"Ahem!"

"I twust you are not goin' to begin to argue on a warm day, Blake. It is wathah a difficult point, havin' two cwicket captains to choose fwom. Howevah, there is a weally simple way of settlin' that difficulty."

"Toss up for it?" suggested Manners.

"Not at all!"

"Then what's the way?" demanded Blake.

"Leave the skippahin' in the hands of a third partay, you know."

"Well, that's rather a good idea," assented Blake. "If Wharton and Tommy agree to leave it to me——"

"I was not thinkin' of you, Blake."

"Well, Herries isn't exactly cut out for a cricket captain, are you, Herries?"

"I don't see it!" said Herries warmly. "Some swanking asses think a lot too much of themselves, Jacky! I think Gussy's idea is jolly good, and I'm ready to captain the team, other parties being agreeable."

"I was not alludin' to you, Hewwies."

"You might have known Gussy meant me!" chuckled Digby. "Gussy has a really keen eye to a chap's form——"

"But I did not mean you, deah boy!"

"Oh!" said Digby. "Well, you don't know much about cricket, Gussy; and your ideas don't amount to much. You'll admit that yourself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Dig. I wegard that wemark——"

"But who is D'Arcy suggesting?" asked Bob. "Not Jimmy Silver? He's all right, but he's a Rookwood chap, and——"

"I was not thinkin' of a Wookwood chap, deah boy. I was thinkin' of myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed the party through his eyeglass in great surprise as that roar of laughter rang through the boat.

"Weally, deah boys, I do not quite see the joke——"

"Blessed if I knew you were such a humorist, Gussy!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I must put that in the comic column of the 'Weekly.'"

"I am not jokin', Lowthah!"

"Yes, you were!" Lowther assured him. "And it's one of the funniest things you ever said! How do you think of these funny things?"

"Weally, you ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I was not jokin'!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I was speakin' quite sewiously!"

But the whole party agreed that Arthur Augustus had been joking, and it was in vain that the swell of St. Jim's assured them that he wasn't; they persisted that he was, and Gussy had to give it up.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Punishment for Punter!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Punter, by Jove!"

It was a couple of days later, and Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh were following the footpath through the park to Easthorpe when Bob caught sight of the captain. Captain Punter was sauntering along, swinging his cane as he sauntered, apparently in cheerful spirits.

Bob Cherry's brow darkened.

He had mentally promised the gallant captain "one in the eye" on the next meeting, and here they were! The captain caught sight of the two juniors at the same moment, and raised his hat with a smile and joined them.

"I thought we should meet again," he said agreeably. "Rippin' mornin'—what? Enjoyin' your holidays—hay?"

"The enjoyfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

And Bob, rather at a loss, stood silent. The "captain" certainly deserved "one in the eye," but Bob felt a natural hesitation about giving it to him.

"The fact is, I thought I might fall in with some of my young friends here," said the captain. "I believe I won some money from you the other day—a pound or two?"

"You did!" said Bob grimly.

"Well, if you're not pressed for time this morning, I'm ready to give you your revenge," said the captain. "What do you say? Quite a pleasant little game here under the trees—what?"

Bob drew a deep breath.

The captain had taken him in once. But the rascal evidently did not understand why Bob had played in the train. He was ready to begin again, and he supposed that the Greyfriars juniors were ready, too.

"Well, what do you say?" rattled on the captain pleasantly.

"I say that you're a rotten rascal!" said Bob Cherry deliberately.

"Hay?"

"You're a professional cardsharper and swindler!" said Bob hotly. "You imposed on us the other day with your lies about being an old Greyfriars chap and an officer from the Front! That's why I let you have your way! And you really got into our carriage to get us to gamble, you rotten cad!"

The captain sneered.

"You were ready enough!" he remarked.

Bob clenched his hands.

"You rotter!" he shouted. "I didn't understand you then, but I do now! You are a low, swindling trickster!"

"What beautiful manners they must learn at Greyfriars!" Captain Punter remarked, with a smile. "Go on! You are quite an entertaining young gentleman!"

"You've no business here!" went on Bob. "This is Lord Eastwood's land, and you're trespassing!"

"How do you know I've no business here?" grinned the captain. "Perhaps you are not the only young fellow with a sporting taste!"

Bob almost trembled with indignation. He had played, it was true, but it was from weak good-nature, because he had been deceived in the rascal. To be spoken to as if he were in the habit of gambling was a little too much.

"Master D'Arcy, for instance," pursued the captain. "That young gentleman has quite a taste for a little flutter. I had the pleasure of meeting him on a steamer once, and he was quite a sporting card."

"That's a lie!" said Bob.

"The Hunfulness of the esteemed rotter is terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

Bob Cherry pushed back his cuffs.

"You can put down that cane, and put up your hands!" he said, between his teeth. "You took me in with your lies, and now you're going to answer for it!"

"Ha, ha!" roared the captain.

"My esteemed Bob——" murmured the nabob dubiously.

"I'm going to lick him!" said Bob determinedly. "I don't care whether he's bigger than I am! I'm more fit than he is, anyway! Are you ready, Punter?"

"Ha, ha!"

The captain seemed highly amused. As he was a man, and Bob merely a schoolboy, the idea of a contest seemed humorous to him. But Bob was a sturdy lad, and, as he had said, he was in better condition than the captain. Late hours and smoking and drinking did not make for fitness.

The Greyfriars junior advanced on him, with his hands up.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

The captain ceased laughing as he saw that the schoolboy was in earnest. He took a tighter grip on his walking-cane.

"Stand back, you young fool!" he said harshly. "For two pins I'd lay my cane about you!"

"Put that cane down!"

"You young fool——"

"Well, here goes!"

Bob Cherry rushed to the attack. Slash!

The cane came down savagely enough, but Bob dodged the blow, and the cane lashed on his shoulder instead of his head. It was a savage blow, and it hurt; but Bob did not heed it. He rushed on, and his clenched fist came full in the captain's face, and Punter staggered back with a yell.

The next moment he recovered himself, however, and leaped forward, slashing fiercely with the cane.

Bob had to give ground under the shower of blows.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dashed into the conflict at once, and his arm went round Punter's neck from behind, and the captain bumped down in the grass.

"Let me go, you confounded nigger!" yelled the captain.

"Fair play, my esteemed scoundrel!" purred the nabob. "If you will not fight fistfully, you will be licked canefully!"

Bob Cherry, panting, hurled himself on the struggling rascal, and wrenched the cane away.

"Now, you can have some of your own medicine, you cad!" he panted.

Lash, lash, lash!

The captain writhed and roared under the blows.

Bob Cherry's blood was up. His face was marked by the lashes of the cane he had received, and he showed the writhing rascal no mercy.

Lash, lash, lash!

Captain Punter rolled away through the grass, followed up by the lashing cane, and leaped to his feet.

He made a spring at Bob, but the lashing cane still rained blows on him, and he backed away and dodged.

"Give me my cane, and I'll go!" he yelled.

Bob grinned.

"I'm giving it to you, and I'm going to give it to you till you go!" he said. "Take that, you rotter, and that, and that!"

Lash, lash, lash!

The captain, crimson with rage, fairly took to his heels.

He vanished down the footpath, only pausing a moment in the distance to shake his fist at the juniors. Then he disappeared from sight.

Bob Cherry tossed the cane far among the tree-tops.

"That will do for Punter!" he remarked. "I don't think he'll ask us to join him in a little game again."

"I rather think not!" grinned the nabob. "The damagefulness to his esteemed and disgusting person was great!"

Bob Cherry rubbed the places where the cane had fallen on him ruefully. He was hurt, and there were red marks on his ruddy face. But he was not sorry that he had fallen in with the sharper. He considered that he had done with Captain Punter now for good.

"Bai Jove! What has happened?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the two juniors came on the St. Jim's fellows in the park. "Have you had an accident, Chewwy?"

Bob rubbed his face, and grinned.

"I've met Punter," he explained.

"Puntah heah?"

"Yes; and we had a bit of a scrap. I think he was more hurt than I was."

"Bai Jove, I twust you gave him a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wondah what he was hangin' about heah for?"

"He hinted that he was here to see you," said Bob bluntly.

"The feahful Pwussian!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I twust you did not suppose that he was speakin' the twuth?"

"Of course not; but he said so."

"Bai Jove! Which way did he go?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, with a warlike look.

Bob Cherry laughed.

"He's far enough away now," he said. "I don't suppose we shall see him again after what he's got."

But in that Bob Cherry was mistaken. The Greyfriars juniors had by no means done with the redoubtable captain yet.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Declined With Thanks!

"HA, ha, ha!"

Thus Captain Lord Conway.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon his elder brother, and surveyed him with a frigid look.

"Weally, Conway, I do not see any cause for laughter!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Conway.

"I wegard this mewwiment as ill-timed and unseemly, Conway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you ass——"

"What's the merry joke?" asked Lieutenant Lawrence Lascelles, coming up. Lord Conway was swinging in a hammock, and Arthur Augustus was standing beside the hammock, with indignation on his noble brow.

Conway roared again.

"Better tell Lascelles, Gussy," he suggested. "It's really Larry's business, as he's captain of the house team."

"Certainly," said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "Mr Lascelles, I have just suggested to Conway that we should play the house eleven. For some weason I do not pwofess to undahstand, he has gone off into widiculous mewwiment."

To D'Arcy's surprise and wrath, Lieutenant Lascelles also went off into ridiculous merriment on the spot.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the viscount from the hammock.

Arthur Augustus looked from one to the other. His very eyeglass gleamed with indignation.

"If these are Army mannahs," he said, crushingly, "I weally considah that the War Office ought to take notice of it! I am surpwised at you, Conway! I fail to see any cause for this mewwiment."

"My dear young ass," said the viscount, "the House team is not looking for a glorious victory over a schoolboy team."

"Highly honoured!" grinned Lascelles. "But we rather feel that you would be above our weight, and we can't risk our laurels in such a reckless way."

"It is a soldiah's bizney to wisk anythin'," said Arthur Augustus unsuspiciously. And then, as Mr. Lascelles yelled again, he added: "If you are pullin' my leg, sir——"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Lascelles. "The fact is—ahem!—we are highly honoured; but—but really, you know——"

"As a mattah of fact, Mr. Lascelles, I wathah think we should beat you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have some wathah good playahs," said Arthur Augustus, "but most of your team are wathah so-so."

"Oh, begad!" said Lord Conway.

"Yaas, wathah! You haven't a single bowlah like Huwwee Singh of Gweyfwiahs."

"Not really?"

"Not at all, Conway. And if we could get Jimmy Silvah heah for the match, he would wathah open your eyes at bowlin'."

"I have not the honour of Jimmy Silver's acquaintance," said Mr. Lascelles gravely. "Is he a county champion?"

"He is captain of the Fourth Form at Wookwood," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Miles above our form, of course," grinned Conway. "I hardly think we're up to playing Fourth-Formers. Ha, ha!"

"You chaps seem to be enjoying yourselves, bedad!" said Lieutenant Micky Kildare, coming up with Lieutenant Locke. "What's the joke intirely?"

Mr. Lascelles explained, and Micky Kildare and Percy Locke yelled. The idea of playing the schoolboys seemed to strike all members of the house team as comic.

"Am I to undahstand that you wefuse the challenge?" asked Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Ahem! Yes."

"Pewwaps you are afwaid of bein' beaten by schoolboys?" said the swell of St. Jim's, with crushing sarcasm.

"Exactly," assented Mr. Lascelles. "You've hit it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have a vacant date on Tuesday," said Arthur Augustus. "I am only askin' you for a one-day match, you know."

"Faith, you'd make shavings of us!" said Micky Kildare. "We can't take the risk! Facing the German guns is one thing, but facing a team of Fourth-Formers—bedad, we couldn't do it!"

"Couldn't possibly!" said Lord Conway.

"Not equal to it!" said Mr. Locke, shaking his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

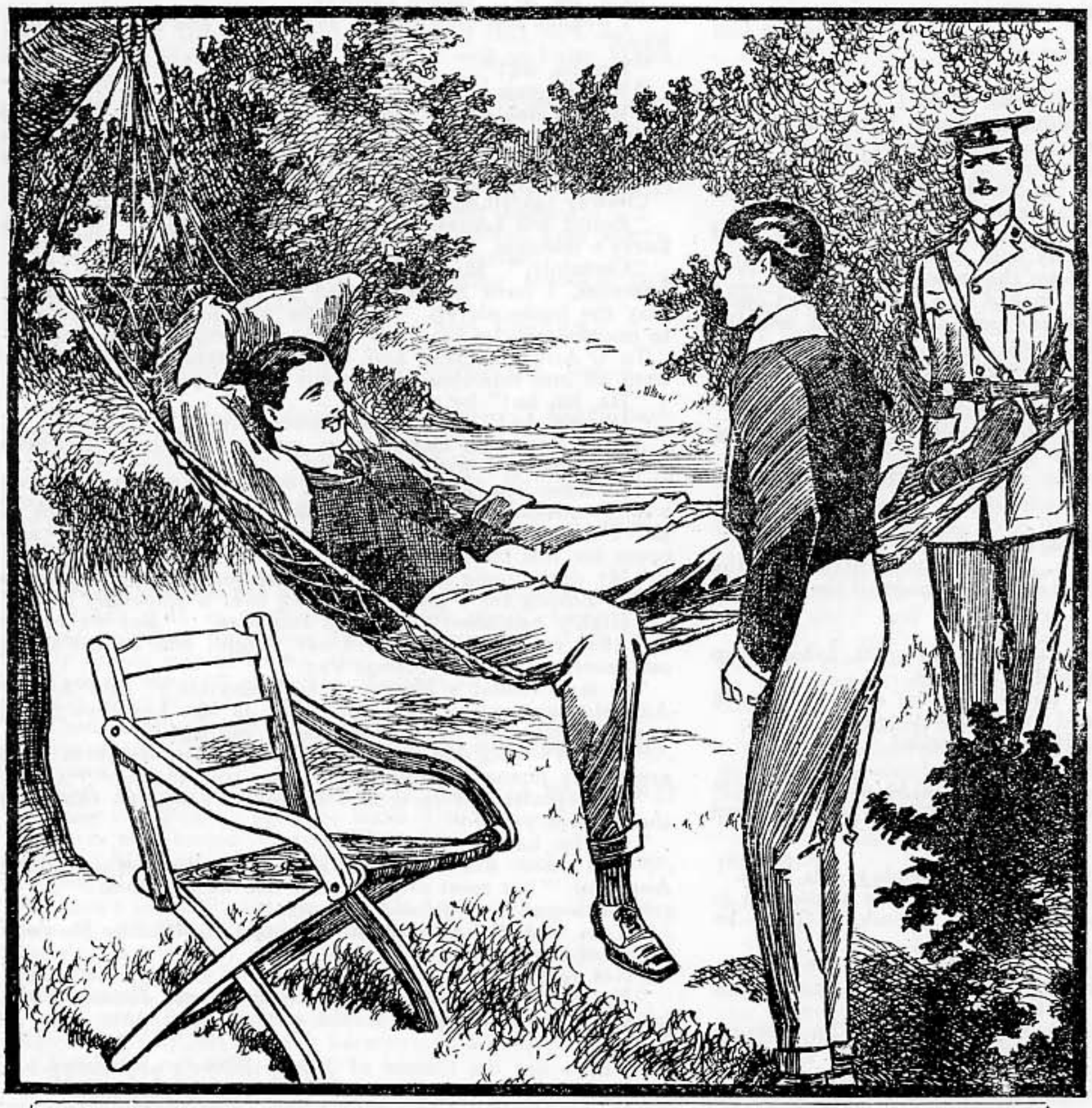
"I wegard you as an ass, Conway! And if you fellahs were not guests undah my father's woof, I should wegard you as asses, also," said Arthur Augustus.

And the swell of St. Jim's walked away, leaving the cricketers howling.

There was a deep pink of indignation on D'Arcy's cheeks as he joined the juniors on the lawn. Cousin Ethel, who was pouring out tea, looked at him inquiringly.

"I wegard it as wotten!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Has anything happened, Arthur?" asked Ethel softly.



"I wegard this mewwiment as ill-timed and unseemly, Conway!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "Ha, ha, ha!" "What's the merry joke?" asked Lieutenant Lawrence Lascelles, coming up. (*See Chapter* 7)

"Yaas. My bwothah Conway is a silly ass!"

"Runs in the family," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Lascelles is anothah silly ass!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with Larry?" asked Bob Cherry.

"He is a silly ass, Chewwy! Young Kildare is also a silly ass!"

"Kildare!" said Tom Merry. "He's our skipper's cousin, Gussy!"

"Yaas; but he is a silly ass! And Mr. Locke is a silly ass!"

"Nephew of our Head!" said Johnny Bull chidingly.

"Yaas; but that does not altah the fact that he is a silly ass."

"The silly asses seem to be terrifically numerous," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Is that all the esteemed list?"

"I have no doubt that the west of the eleven are silly asses, too!"

"But what has happened?" asked Ethel.

"I have challenged the duffahs to a cwicket match," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "and instead of givin' me a sensible answah, they have simply howled like widiculous hyenahs!"

"Oh! That's what the laughing was about?" said Harry Wharton.

"Yaas, wathah.

"Then I agree with you that they are silly asses."

"They wefuse the challenge," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, we could make up a team to beat them."

"Hear, hear!"

"We jolly well ought to make them play somehow!" said Bob. "It would rather surprise them to see their wickets go down."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But do you really think you could play the house team?" asked Cousin Ethel dubiously. Her sympathy was with the ambitious juniors, but she was very doubtful. "Conway has played for his county, you know."

"They've got two or three that we couldn't touch," said Tom Merry. "But the greater part of the team is very average, I think."

"Terrifically average," said Hurree Singh. "Quite ordinary."

"In fact, extra-ordinary," said Lowther.

"Of course, we should have to select our team very carefully," said Harry Wharton. "We could get some Greyfriars fellows here——"

"Ahem! We could collect some St. Jim's chaps——" remarked Tom Merry.

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"F'rinstance," said Bob Cherry, "what price this as a list: Wharton, Cherry — ahem! — Inky, Bull, Nugent, Linley, Vernon-Smith, Tom Brown, Squiff, and—and perhaps a couple of St. Jim's chaps—say Blake and—and D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Chewwy ——"

"I hardly think you'd touch the house team with a team like that," remarked Manners, with a shake of the head.

"I was thinking of a list," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Something like this: Merry—ahem!—Manners, Lowther, Blake Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, and two more St. Jim's chaps we could get here, and Jimmy Silver of Rookwood, and—and—and a Greyfriars chap— say Wharton or Cherry."

"Well, of all the rotten cricket teams I ever heard of——" began Nugent.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"It seems to me that you will find it as hard to make up a team as to beat the house eleven," said Cousin Ethel, laughing.

The juniors joined in the laugh. The claims of the respective schools was evidently a matter that would need settling, if the match ever came off.

"Well, we could decide on a policy of give and take," said Wharton thoughtfully. "Suppose we played four St. Jim's chaps—that's fair——"

"I was thinking we might play four Greyfriars chaps," said Tom Merry blandly.

"Halves!" suggested Mark Linley.

"Good! That would make five and a half from each school," said Monty Lowther heartily. "Couldn't be better!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Jimmy Silver of Rookwood for odd man," said Mark.

"Well, that's a good idea," said Tom Merry.

"Not bad," assented Wharton; "but——"

"Yes, I was going to say 'but'——"

"The butfulness is terrific!"

"May I make a suggestion?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"Yaas, wathah, deah gal!"

"Go it!" said Blake.

"Well, why not play some practice matches, and pick out the best players on their form, irrespective of the schools?"

"Bai Jove, you know, that's a wippin' ideah!"

"I believe that is usually the way players are selected for important matches," said Ethel, with a smile.

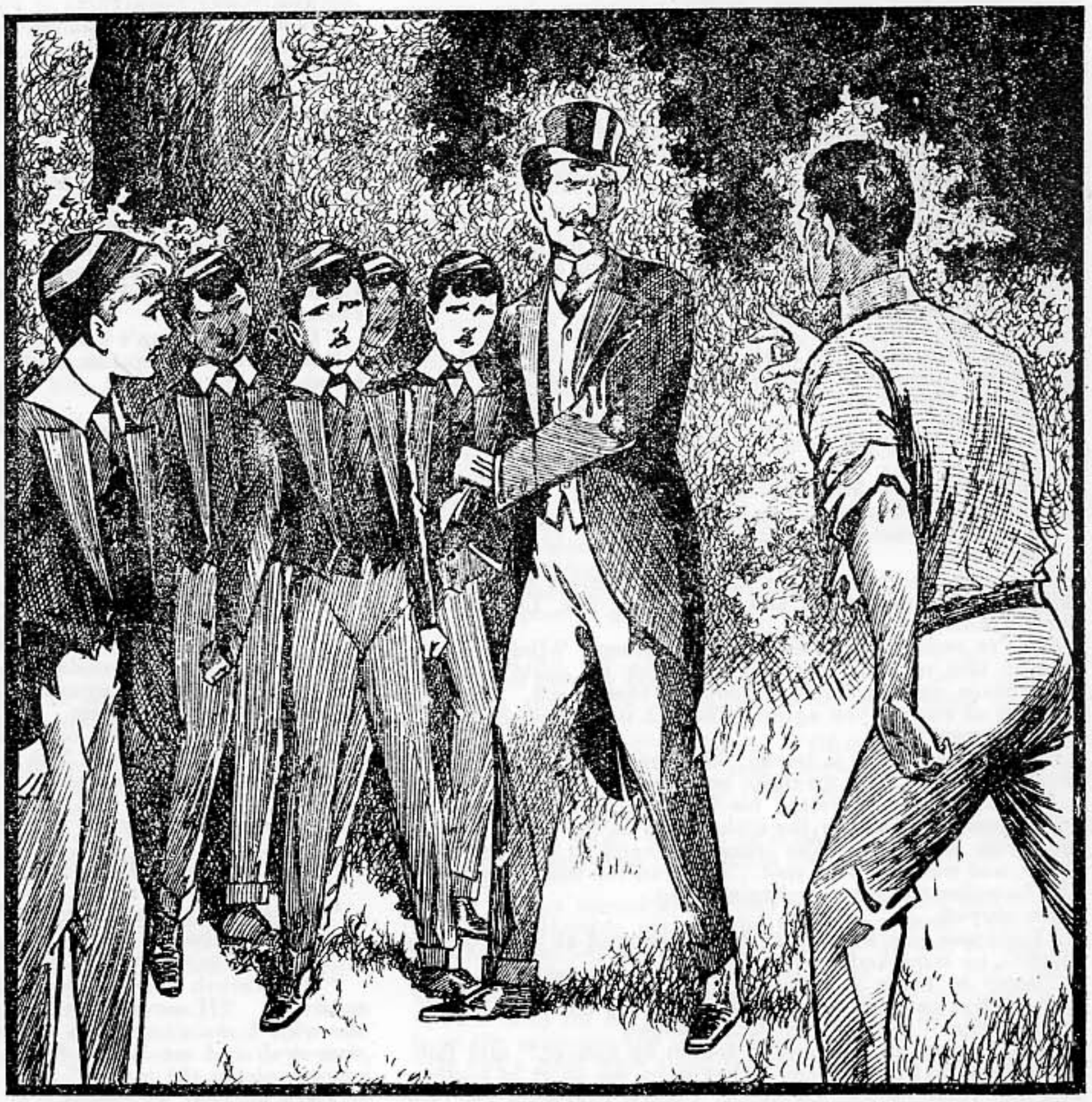
"Jolly good!" said Tom Merry heartily. "We'll do it—what?"

"Hear, hear!"

"The uncommon sense of the esteemed and beautiful miss is great!" said Hurree Singh. "As the English proverb says, the good advice saves a stitch in time from going longest to the well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel's advice was indeed good, and it was acted upon. That forenoon the practice began. It was not settled yet, certainly, that the juniors were to play the home team; but they had agreed among themselves that, somehow, it was going to be contrived. How, was a question that still remained to be answered.



"Stop!" broke in a deep voice. The juniors started, and spun round. It was the voice of Lieutenant Lawrence Lascelles! (*See Chapter* 10.)

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Compulsion is Applied!

"COMPULSION is the order of the day now," said Mark Linley.

The Famous Five and their chum were holding a discussion, a day or two later, while their boat floated down the river in the summer sunshine. How to induce Mr. Lascelles to accept the challenge to a cricket-match was the question under discussion.

"Compulsion?" repeated Bob Cherry.

The Lancashire lad nodded, with a smile.

"Yes. If Larry won't play us on the voluntary principle, suppose we apply compulsion? Everybody's being compelled nowadays to do something or other. And I've got an idea."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I don't quite see how Larry can be compelled," he remarked. "But if you've got an idea, Marky, get it off your chest!"

"You see, D'Arcy can't take any steps in the matter, as Lascelles is a guest, and a chap can't go for a guest," said Mark. "But we are only fellow-guests, so we can do as we like. Moreover——"

"Good word!" said Bob.

"Moreover," grinned Mark, "Larry used to be a master at Greyfriars, so he is an old pal, in a way. We can be free and easy with an old pal. And Larry is a good sort, and can take a joke. He isn't a Greyfriars master now, so it won't be a question of lines or a licking."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, then, my idea is to fix Larry up somehow, and make him agree to play us," said Mark. "We can catch him napping, and make terms. F'rinstance, he's gone up the river this morning sculling, on his lonesome, and he may pass us any minute now coming back. Suppose we collar him——"

"Wh-a-at!"

"Collar a Greyfriars master!" yelled Frank Nugent.

"But he isn't a Greyfriars master now; he's a soldier-boy."

"But—but you mustn't collar soldier-boys, you know."

"Why not?" said Mark coolly. "He may think it a cheek——"

"My hat! I should say so!"

"But we sha'n't collar him as a mathematics-master, or as a lieutenant; we shall collar him as a cricketer, and we're cricketers, so that puts us all on an equal footing."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Bob Cherry. "And what are we going to do with him? Hold his head under water till he agrees to play us?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, not quite so bad as that," said Mark, laughing. "But we can make him a prisoner of war, and make terms."

"Oh, crikey!"

The juniors looked at one another dubiously. Mark's scheme for fixing-up the match with the house team almost took their breath away. But the sheer cheek of it appealed to the Famous Five. After all, Mr. Lascelles was not a Greyfriars master now. He was a cheery young lieutenant on leave, who was quite a different kind of person.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Bob.

Mr. Lascelles' skiff came in sight round a bend in the stream, the young man sculling against the current.

"Well, what do you fellows say?" grinned Bob Cherry. "There's Larry, and here's us."

"Stop him!" said Wharton, laughing. "We'll try it."

The juniors pulled across the course, and Mr. Lascelles slacked down. Wharton held up his hand.

"Hallo! What is it?" called out Mr. Lascelles.

"Jump!" said Bob.

Hurree Singh remained at the lines, and the other five suddenly jumped into the skiff. Mr. Lascelles regarded that proceeding in amazement. The little skiff rocked and swayed as the juniors crowded in it.

"What the dickens——" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles.

"Sorry sir," said Bob Cherry, "but you are a prisoner!"

"Wha-at?"

"Prisoner of war, you know."

"Is this a joke?" asked Mr. Lascelles good-humouredly.

"Yes, in a way," said Wharton. "Better surrender, sir; you see, the odds are against you. We should be sorry to use force——"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Mr. Lascelles. "You cheeky young rascals——"

"Get into the boat, please!"

"Thank you; I will remain where I am!" said Mr. Lascelles drily.

"Collar him!" said Bob.

"Why, what—what do you mean? Great Scott!"

The astonished lieutenant found himself collared and bundled into the boat. Mr. Lascelles, a little breathless, simply glared at the juniors.

"Now, what does this mean?" he exclaimed sharply.

"It means that you're a prisoner of war, sir," explained Bob, "and your freedom depends on your coming to terms. You are going to be held to ransom."

"I suppose this is what you would call a jape, in the Remove?" said Mr. Lascelles, half-amused and half-angry.

"Yes, sir. We want you to play our team at cricket."

"Nonsense!"

"You think that's nonsense?" asked Bob.

"Yes, decidedly!"

"Then we're going to keep you a prisoner till you decide that it isn't nonsense," said Bob coolly. "It's Marky's idea—Marky is a regular genius. Pull for the island, you chaps!"

"This joke has gone far enough, I think," said Mr. Lascelles. "I will return to my skiff——"

"Bow-wow!"

"What!" roared Mr. Lascelles.

"Bow-wow! Likewise, rats!" said Bob.

"You impertinent young rascal——"

"Bow-wow!"

Mr. Lascelles gasped. He made a movement towards the skiff, and Bob cast it off, and let it float. Mr. Lascelles sat down again.

"We're awfully sorry, sir," said Wharton. "But we want to play that match. You see, we think we could beat the house team, and we think it would do them good. You're a prisoner of war till you agree. There it is in a nutshell."

"Nonsense!"

"The regretfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!" murmured Hurree Singh. "But we mean business."

Mr. Lascelles compressed his lips.

The juniors pulled for the little island in the river, about a mile from Eastwood. The island belonged to the Eastwood estate, and was a solitary spot. They ran the boat ashore, and Mr. Lascelles was requested to step out.

He obeyed.

"I suppose you know that I am expected at Eastwood to lunch?" he remarked.

"Sorry to make you miss your lunch, sir," said Johnny Bull. "But you haven't agreed yet to play our team."

"Nonsense!" rapped out Mr. Lascelles.

"Wild beasts are reduced to reason by hunger," said Bob. "I've read that somewhere. They keep 'em short of tommy, and they come round. Of course, I don't mean that you're a wild beast, sir——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But the same dodge will work with you. About dinner-time you'll be willing to play that match, if you miss your lunch."

"And suppose I acquaint Lord Eastwood with your very extraordinary conduct?" said Mr. Lascelles.

"Oh, you won't!" said Bob. "We know that you'll play the game."

Mr. Lascelles laughed, in spite of himself.

"Are you going to leave me here?" he asked.

"You've hit it."

"You see, we might adopt much more drastic measures," said Johnny Bull. "Such as holding your head under water——"

"You young rascal!"

"But we won't try that till to-morrow," said Johnny Bull, unmoved. "If you stay on the island all night you'll be reasonable in the morning."

The juniors entered the boat and pushed off. Mr. Lascelles made a movement to follow, but he stopped. The juniors waved their hands.

"Good-bye, sir! Think it over!"

And they rowed away, leaving Mr. Lascelles staring after them.

"I—I—I say, it's an awful cheek!" remarked Nugent, as they pulled back to Eastwood.

"The Greyfriars Remove is famous for its cheek," said Bob Cherry. "After all, it's a cheek of Larry to refuse our challenge."

"But—but we can't keep him there all night."

"Rot! We'll keep him there a week if he doesn't come to terms."

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors arrived at Eastwood for lunch, and mentioned casually that they had met Mr. Lascelles, and that he would not be back to lunch. But—cool young gentlemen as they were—the chums of the Remove could not help wondering how their daring scheme would turn out.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.
Startling News!

"Bai Jove! I wondah where Lascelles is?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark towards evening.

"It's wathah odd that he doesn't come back, isn't it?" he said. "You fellahs met him on the wivah this mornin', I undahstand?"

"Yes; he's staying out," said Bob Cherry. "I've an idea that he won't come in to dinner. Might mention it to your pater."

"Yaas, wathah! But what is he doin'?"

"Taking a sort of rest, I believe."

"Nothin' happened to him, I hope? His skiff was bwought back by somebody."

"Yes; we saw him land from it."

"It's wathah queeah, isn't it?" said Arthur Augustus musingly. "Howevah, Mr. Lascelles is his own mastah. By the way, I sha'n't see you fellahs this evenin'. I'm goin' to wun ovah and see Jimmy Silvah. What about askin' him to come ovah for the match?"

"Ask him, by all means," said Wharton. "The match is coming off."

"They haven't agweed, you know."

"Oh, they'll agree all right! I believe Lascelles is thinking it over now."

"Bai Jove! That's good news. Then I will certainly ask Silvah."

Mr. Lascelles did not appear at dinner. Some of the plotters were feeling a little uneasy, but they did not change their intentions. After dinner they intended to row down to the island and interview Mr. Lascelles. Bob Cherry thoughtfully suggested taking sandwiches in the boat. During the

afternoon. Bob had rowed down and hailed him, and Mr. Lascelles had only called him a cheeky young rascal—evidently not having come to reason yet. But the Removites sagely opined that by nightfall he would be tired of playing Robinson Crusoe on the island.

Tom Merry & Co. were not aware of the little game planned by the Greyfriars fellows, and Arthur Augustus least of all. It was a case in which a still tongue showed a wise head. D'Arcy, however, had no time to think about Mr. Lascelles, as he had departed to visit Jimmy Silver. In the cool evening Harry Wharton & Co. sauntered down to the boathouse. A lad from the village was loitering on the path, and he came up to the juniors.

"Master Wharton 'ere?" he asked.

"Yes," said Harry. "What is it?"

"I got a letter for you, sir."

The lad fumbled in his pocket, and produced a letter.

"There ain't any answer, sir," he said. "Master D'Arcy said I wasn't to wait."

Wharton started.

"Is this from D'Arcy?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. Master Arthur give me the letter afore he got into the train."

And the lad hurried away.

Harry Wharton slit the envelope in a state of considerable surprise. He could not imagine why Arthur Augustus should have sent him that note by hand.

He looked at the letter, and his face changed.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the trouble?"

Wharton did not reply. He stared blankly at the letter. His face was quite pale.

"Nothing happened to D'Arcy, surely?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes; and something jolly serious. Look at the letter!"

The chums of the Remove read the letter, and their faces became very grave. It was written in the elegant caligraphy of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, which all the juniors knew well by sight; and it ran:

"Dear Wharton,—I am going to ask you a great favour. I am afraid you will be surprised, and perhaps shocked. I am in awful trouble.

"I have given Captain Punter my I O U for some money I owe him; I suppose you can guess how I came to owe it to him. It is for twenty pounds.

"I dare not let my father know. But unless the money is paid this evening he is going to take my paper to Lord Eastwood. I can't face it. I've gone away to get out of it.

"I dare not come back. I can't face my father if he knows. Captain Punter is to meet me in the park, on the riverside opposite the island, at eight. I cannot be there; I have no money to pay him.

"I know it's a cheek, what I'm going to ask. But I am desperate, and I cannot return home unless you help me. Can you and your friends possibly raise the twenty pounds, and pay Punter, and get my paper back? If you can, go and keep the appointment for me, and pay him, and he will give you the paper. Of course, I shall settle up later—within a few weeks at the most. Don't mention a word to Tom Merry or the others: I couldn't bear them to know. I've been a fool. I know that. If you can settle with Punter, do so for my sake, and let me know, so that I can come home. If you send a wire to the Red Lion at Lexham I shall know. For goodness' sake, help me out of this if you can! Of course, you won't lose the money. Take this letter with you, and show it to Punter, as proof that you come from me.

"I know it's a lot to ask. But I'm in an awful fix. Do help me out if you can.

"A. A. D'ARCY."

The Removites looked at one another aghast.

"The silly ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"That rotten beast Punter said something about knowing D'Arcy!" muttered Bob Cherry. "But D'Arcy said it was lies."

"He's a cunning brute," said Nugent. "You know how he spoofed us in the train. D'Arcy's a simple kid, and he's got into his clutches, and now the beast is blackmailing him!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"The villain ought to be in prison!" he said.

"He ought to be. But poor old D'Arcy can't be shown up," said Bob. "He's a silly ass; but we must see him through this. He said he was going to see Jimmy Silver, and he's really run away from home."

"Awful duffer!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Blessed if I know what we ought to do!" said Harry, knitting his brows. "D'Arcy's father ought to know this. But we can't mention it, as he's specially asked us not to. But—but——"

"We must see him through," said Mark Linley quietly.

"Yes, rather!"

Harry Wharton nodded. It came as a surprise to all the Removites to learn that their kind host was in such a terrible scrape. Arthur Augustus had never struck them as a youth with any vicious propensities at all. But he was an unsuspicious and easy-going fellow, and they had already had experience of the racally card-sharper's cunning. The thoughtless junior had fallen into his clutches, and this was the result.

There was no doubt in the minds of the juniors as to what they must do. D'Arcy had to be got out of his scrape, and that before his father knew that the desperate lad had run away from home.

"What about the money?" said Wharton, after a pause. "Twenty pounds is a lot of money. Of course, D'Arcy will settle up later. But where's it to come from now?"

"We've got to raise it somehow."

"Turn out your pockets," said Johnny Bull.

There was a general turning out of pockets. Harry Wharton had three pounds, Nugent had one, Johnny Bull had five, Bob Cherry one, and Mark Linley one. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned benevolently, and produced a ten-pound note. The Nabob of Bhanipur was generally well supplied with cash.

Wharton drew a breath of relief.

"That's enough, and a quid over," he said. "Lucky we're in holiday funds. It will clear us out, but that can't be helped."

"Jolly good luck we've got the tin!" said Bob. "Lucky we've got a bloated nabob in the gang!"

"The luckfulness is terrific!"

"Now, who's going?" asked Nugent.

"I suppose I'd better go, as D'Arcy asks me," said Harry.

"Better all go," said Mark. "Punter is a thorough rascal, and he may not give up the paper after he is paid. If he plays any tricks, there had better be enough of us to handle him."

"Good old Marky!" said Bob. "Of course, we'll all go!"

"It's close on eight now," said Harry, looking at his watch. "By Jove, it's turned eight! We'd better get off."

"What about Larry?"

"Larry can wait. In fact, he'll have to. That villain may go to Lord Eastwood if he thinks the appointment isn't going to be kept."

The juniors turned away from the boathouse, and hurried along the riverside path in the thickening dusk. They had no doubt that Captain Punter would be prompt to his appointment, and there was no telling what the rascal might do if he were disappointed. It was no time for sitting in judgment upon D'Arcy for his folly; the pressing need was to save him from the exposure and disgrace he dreaded.

It was a good walk along the river as far as the island, and the dusk was thick by the time the juniors arrived opposite the island. There they slackened down, and peered round in the shadows for the captain. The red glimmer of a cigar caught their eyes.

Wharton hurried forward.

"Is that you, D'Arcy?" It was the well-known voice of Captain Punter. He removed the cigar from his mouth. "I'm glad you've come. Otherwise——" He broke off. "It's not D'Arcy! What the dickens does this mean?"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Larry Chips In!

CAPTAIN PUNTER backed away a step, his brow contracting, and peered at Wharton in the deep shadow of the trees by the river.

Wharton clenched his hands hard.

It needed all his self-control to keep from dashing his fist into the cunning, fox-featured face of the card-sharper.

"Have you come here from D'Arcy?" asked the captain roughly.

"Yes," said Harry quietly.

The captain put his cigar into his mouth again, and stared with a sneering smile at the juniors as they gathered round. The Greyfriars fellows were looking very grim.

"So D'Arcy has told you about it?" sneered the captain.

"Yes."

"I should have fancied he would keep it dark. He seemed to me rather nervous of his noble lordship hearing anything about it," grinned the captain. "Of course, I want some proof that you are here for him."

"I suppose the money's proof enough?"

"Not quite. Unless you've got something written to show me, you can go about your business," said the captain coolly. "How do I know that you're not simply meddling and spying into D'Arcy's affairs?"

Wharton restrained his anger with an effort.

"D'Arcy wrote to me," he said. "I've got the letter here. He told me to bring it and show you."

"Let me see it."

Wharton handed him the letter.

Captain Punter struck a match, glanced at the letter, and nodded.

"That's good enough!" he said. He applied a match to the letter, and it flared up. "No good leaving that in existence," he remarked. "If you dropped it anywhere it would be bad for D'Arcy."

"I intended to destroy it," said Harry.

The captain dropped the burnt fragment into the grass.

"Well, that's done," he said. "Well, you're here from D'Arcy. Have you got the money—twenty pounds? Unless you have——"

"I have it!"

"Oh, good!"

"I don't think you're entitled to it, or to a penny of it!" said Harry quietly. "I suppose you got D'Arcy playing cards, and won it from him, you scoundrel! But he has asked me to pay you, and I'm going to do it—when you hand over his I O U. Give me the paper."

"Money first!"

"I give you my word that I will pay you the money when I've seen the paper," said Harry. "Give me the paper!"

"Money talks!" said the captain tersely. "Let's see the money!"

The juniors gathered round the captain in a circle. They were quite prepared to handle the adventurer, and to handle him to any extent, in order to extract Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's I O U from him.

Captain Punter looked a little uneasy.

"Give me the paper," said Harry coldly. "Unless you hand it over, it will be taken by force, and we'll give you a ducking in the river into the bargain!"

"You promise to pay up?"

"I've promised already."

Captain Punter slid his hand into his pocket and drew out a paper, and sullenly passed it to the junior.

Wharton struck a match, and examined it.

He was not likely to trust the captain one inch

"That's all right," said Bob, looking over his shoulder at the paper.

It was a promise to pay Captain Punter the sum of twenty pounds, and signed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's well-known hand.

The match went out. Wharton was satisfied.

"Well, is it all right?" sneered the captain.

"Yes."

"Hand over the tin, then."

Wharton passed the twenty pounds to the rascal, whose fingers closed on it eagerly.

"That paper had better be destroyed," said the captain. "It would get my young friend into trouble if it were seen."

"I've no doubt D'Arcy will destroy it," said Harry. "I shall give it to him, of course."

"It would be safer to burn it now."

"That isn't your business. You've got your money, and you can go; and think yourself lucky to get away without a hiding!"

"Stop!" broke in a deep voice.

The juniors started, and spun round. It was the voice of Lieutenant Lawrence Lascelles.

"Mr. Lascelles!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Great pip!"

"The pipfulness is terrific!"

Captain Punter made a hurried movement to go. But a strong hand closed on his shoulder.

"Stop!" repeated Mr. Lascelles.

"Let me go!" shouted the captain, grasping his cane.

"Stop!"

The juniors simply blinked at Mr. Lascelles. They had supposed him to be safe upon the island. How he came there was a mystery, till they observed that his clothes were dripping with water.

"My hat! The tricky beast swam off, after all!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Will you release me?" yelled the captain.

"No, I will not release you!" said Mr. Lascelles grimly. "This matter needs explaining before you go!"

"Mind your own business, confound you!"

"Lower that cane, my man, or I will knock you down!" rapped out Mr. Lascelles.

The captain met his stern gaze, and lowered the cane. The grip on his shoulder did not relax.

"Now, I want an explanation of this," said Mr. Lascelles, looking sternly at the juniors. "It is very fortunate that I arrived here at this moment, I think. I did not wish to make a sensation at Eastwood by appearing there drenched with water, so I left my swim till dark. I expected to enter unobserved after dark; but since I have fortunately met you, one of you may fetch me a change of clothes. This matter, however, must be settled first."

"It's settled already, sir," said Wharton uneasily.

"It is true that I am no longer a Greyfriars master, and you are not under my authority," said Mr. Lascelles sternly. "But as a guest of Lord Eastwood I cannot allow this kind of thing to proceed. I find you here meeting a notorious bad character, and giving him money. I saw you light a match and examine a paper. You will kindly tell me what you are doing, and what is your connection with this man."

"I can't tell you, sir," said Harry. "It's not our secret."

"It concerns another chap, sir," said Bob.

"I think I can guess the name," said Mr. Lascelles. "I heard you mention D'Arcy as I came up."

The juniors were silent. They had no intention of giving D'Arcy's secret away to Mr. Lascelles. The young man had appeared at a very unfortunate moment, from the juniors' point of view.

"You have paid this man money?" asked Mr. Lascelles.

"Ye-es."

"How much?"

"Twenty pounds."

Mr. Lascelles uttered a sharp exclamation.

"You owed him twenty pounds, Wharton?"

"I! Certainly not, sir!"

"Then you paid it for another person?"

"Well, yes."

"D'Arcy, I presume, as you mentioned his name?"

Wharton did not speak.

"Your silence implies that that is the case, Wharton." Mr. Lascelles was no longer the cheery young lieutenant; he was the Greyfriars master again now, and at the school the juniors had never seen him in a sterner mood. "I shall certainly not allow this man to take away such a sum of money, to which I am assured he has no claim!"

"Will you let go my shoulder?" hissed the captain savagely.

Mr. Lascelles did not take the trouble to answer him. His grasp was like iron, and it did not relax for a moment.

"What is the paper this man has given you, Wharton?"

No reply.

"Very well. I shall take this man to Eastwood, where D'Arcy's father will see him and question him," said Mr. Lascelles grimly. "Come!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
Rough Justice!

"STOP!"

Harry Wharton panted out the word.

Captain Punter was resisting, but he had little chance in the grasp of the stalwart young lieutenant. The juniors looked on in utter dismay.

"Let me pass, Wharton!" said Mr. Lascelles, frowning. "I have forgiven you for your trick played upon me to-day, regarding it as a reckless schoolboy joke. I warn you that I shall not be so patient if you are foolish and disrespectful enough to venture to interfere with me now."

"You must stop!" exclaimed Harry. "D'Arcy's father mustn't see that man. It—it can't be! I—I'll tell you about it, if that's the only way."

"Very well! But make haste."

Mr. Lascelles stopped, the unhappy captain still wriggling in his powerful grip. Captain Punter was in a state of mingled fear and fury, but there was no escape for him.

"I—I had a note from D'Arcy," faltered Harry. "He's gone away for the evening; he's run away."

"Nonsense!"

"He said so in his letter."

"Show me the letter!"

"It's destroyed. That rotter destroyed it; but I was going to. D'Arcy asked me to see him and settle his debt, and—and keep it dark. You're forcing me to tell you now, Mr. Lascelles, and it's up to you to keep it secret."

"If D'Arcy has been guilty of a foolish escapade I should certainly not mention it to anyone. But I must know the facts. D'Arcy asked you to meet this man and pay him twenty pounds?"

"That's it."

"How did he come to owe such a man money?"

"I—I suppose he's been playing the giddy ox. That scoundrel tricked him into it somehow."

"It is possible, but it is very unlikely indeed."

"He wrote that it was so."

"And this man destroyed the letter," said Mr. Lascelles grimly. "He has given you a paper. What is that?"

"D'Arcy's I O U for the money."

"Let me see it."

Harry Wharton handed over the I O U. The lieutenant peered at it in the gloom. Wharton struck a match.

"You are sure this is D'Arcy's writing?" he asked.

Wharton started.

"Oh, yes! He's written to me several times, and I know his hand well enough. So do all the fellows."

"Handwriting may be imitated," said Mr. Lascelles. "In what way was D'Arcy's letter, or supposed letter, delivered to you?"

"A kid brought it. He said D'Arcy had given it to him."

"D'Arcy has said nothing about this matter to you by word of mouth?"

"Nothing."

"When you saw him last did he appear like a fellow who had a heavy trouble on his mind and was thinking of running away from home?"

"Oh, not in the least! He said he was going to see Jimmy Silver this evening."

"Have you ever known him tell a falsehood?"

"Of course not!"

"Or to have any relations with this man, or men of the kind?"

"Not that I know of. I remember he said specially that he never had anything to do with Punter, when Punter told Bob he had."

"So he has lied to you twice?"

"Well, you see——"

"If this affair is genuine, Wharton, D'Arcy has lied to you twice—in saying that he had no dealings with Punter, and in saying that he was going to visit a friend this evening."

"Well, I—I suppose——"

"I do not believe for one moment that D'Arcy has lied. It seems to me much more probable that the letter was a forgery, and that this paper is a forgery also."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

Wharton panted.

"A—a—a forgery!"

"Yes. D'Arcy is certainly not the lad to keep such a secret without showing some outward sign of it; and he would not lie. This scoundrel is capable of forgery, as of any other baseness. I do not believe for one moment that the letter you received came from Lord Eastwood's son. The messenger was instructed to tell you that D'Arcy had sent him. Doubtless this rascal has been on the watch for such an opportunity. Did it not occur to you that D'Arcy would be much more likely to appeal to his own schoolfellows in such a scrape? The letter would naturally have been sent to Blake or Merry. It was not sent to them because, I think, they would have scouted the suggestion at once, and would have guessed that it was a trick, knowing D'Arcy better than you do."

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"The matter will be cleared up when you see D'Arcy again, but meanwhile this scoundrel would have escaped with his plunder."

"Oh, the rotter!" exclaimed Mark Linley. "Then it was only a trick to get money out of us?"

"I firmly believe so. And where, may I ask, did you raise so considerable a sum as twenty pounds?"

"It was our holiday cash," said Harry. "It's cleared us practically right out."

Mr. Lascelles laughed slightly.

"D'Arcy would doubtless be obliged to you, if he knew. It was kind and generous on your part, but the money will not be lost after all. You will see why this rascal was eager to destroy the letter. He did not wish the forgery to remain in existence. Doubtless he would have been glad to see the I O U destroyed also."

"He wanted to burn it!" exclaimed Nugent.

"No doubt. As it is, it will remain in existence—to convict him," said Mr. Lascelles. "I will take him to the police-station instead of to Eastwood."

There was a howl from the captain.

"Let me go! I'll hand the money back."

"So you admit it, you scoundrel?" exclaimed Wharton wrathfully.

"Here's the money!" groaned Captain Punter. "I won't keep a penny. Here you are! Give me that paper and let me go! I've done no harm."

"You will go to the police-station with me," said Mr. Lascelles.

Harry Wharton took the notes from the rascal's trembling hands. Captain Punter was quite beaten now. He was shaking in every limb. The plot had been a cunning one, and it had been a success until "Larry" appeared on the scene. Now the rascal had had forgery to answer for, and a cheery prospect of penal servitude in perspective.

"Let us take him to the station, sir," said Bob. "You'll catch cold—ahem!—if you don't change your clobber. Sorry you had to swim."

"Let me go!" mumbled the captain.

"I will take him," said Mr. Lascelles.

The captain's eyes glittered. The false I O U was still in

the young man's hand, and Captain Punter made a sudden snatch at it. He caught it, and in a twinkling he had jammed it into his mouth. Mr. Lascelles grasped his wrist the next moment, but the astute rascal had already swallowed the paper.

"That's something you won't hand to the police!" he panted. "And mind, my story at the station won't agree with yours. Master D'Arcy did give me an I O U, and I'll maintain that right and left. If I'm going to prison, I'll make scandal enough to make you sorry for sending me there!"

Mr. Lascelles' face was a study for a moment. The proof was gone. The wily captain had been too much for him after all.

"Upon the whole," said Mr. Lascelles quietly, "it is probable that Lord Eastwood would prefer not to have an unsavoury police-court case connected with his name. There are other methods of punishing a rascal like this."

He grasped the cane from the captain's hand.

Then he seized Captain Punter's collar with his left hand, and brought the heavy cane into play with his right.

Lash, lash, lash!

The juniors looked on grimly. Captain Punter was getting what he had earned. He had destroyed the proof of his forgery, and a charge against him would have been of doubtful result. But there was no doubt about the punishment that he was getting now. He wriggled and writhed and yelled in the powerful grasp of the young lieutenant, while the cane rose and fell with terrific force.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I didn't know that even Larry was such an athlete. What a carpet-beater he would make!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mercy!" shrieked the captain. "Mercy! Ow, ow, ow! Mercy!"

Lash, lash, lash!

Mr. Lascelles tossed the writhing rascal into the grass at last. Captain Punter lay groaning.

"You are free," said Mr. Lascelles. "And I warn you to give this district a wide berth in future. I shall look for you to-morrow, and I shall repeat that thrashing if I find you!"

He strode away up the path with the juniors, and the captain, groaning dismally, picked himself up and limped away. Mr. Lascelles' advice to him was too good not to be taken, and that night saw the enterprising captain a good distance from Eastwood. The juniors were done with him at last.

Mr. Lascelles halted at the boathouse.

"You may fetch me a change of clothes here," he said.

"Certainly, sir," said Bob. "By the way, it was jolly lucky you came on us, and saved us from paying that awful rotter! Jolly lucky all round! But—but you couldn't have done it if you hadn't been on the island, could you?"

"I suppose not," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Then—then—— I say, I've got some sandwiches I was going to bring you. Would you like them?"

"Thank you!"

"Under the circumstances, as it's turned out so lucky that you were on the island—ahem——"

"I have already forgiven you for that trick!"

"Exactly! But as it's turned out so jolly lucky, don't you think that you ought to play in that match with us, after all?"

Mr. Lascelles stared at Bob. His brow was grim for a moment, but then he burst into a laugh.

"I will think of it," he said. "You are a set of reckless young rascals, but the way you were standing by D'Arcy, though under a mistake, was very decent, and—and perhaps you ought to be rewarded. If you consider it a reward to be thoroughly drubbed in a match in which you have not a ghost of a chance, I will put it to the others, and try to arrange it."

"Hooray!" chortled Bob. "Good old Larry!"

And the Removites gave Mr. Lascelles a cheer. They had gained their point, after all, and all was calm and bright.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.
D'Arcy's Decision!

"By Al Jove, I'm awf'ly obliged to you chaps, but you are wathah asses, you know!"

That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remark when he was told about the affair of Captain Punter. Wharton was somewhat inclined to keep the matter dark, but he felt that it was better to let the swell of St. Jim's know the circumstances, since he was concerned in the matter.

"It was awf'ly good of you to wush to the wescue like that!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "But weally you might have known that I should nevah have played the gidday ox, you know!"

"Well, you see, the rotter took us in in the train, and made us play with him—some of us," said Bob. "Naturally, we thought——"

"You thought that I was just as big a duffah as you—what?" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Well, yes!" said Bob, laughing.

"Of course, you couldn't guess that the lettah was forged, and it was wippin' of you to twy to get me out of the scwape, though I wasn't in one. But it was vewy lucky that Lascelles came along. Wathah cuwious that he happened to be passin' in such a vewy lonely spot!"

"Yes, wasn't it?" grinned Bob.

"I think he'd been on the island," said Wharton blandly. "However, it all turns out all right, as Larry has agreed to play us!"

"Hooray!"

"Now it's only a question of making up the team," added Harry.

"We shall have to put our heads togethah ovah that, bai Jove!"

It was not an easy matter to settle. Tom Merry & Co. were reasonable fellows—none more so—but they had a natural prejudice in favour of their own school. Harry Wharton was reasonable, too, but he couldn't help thinking that Greyfriars was the place the best cricketers came from.

But Cousin Ethel's advice had been followed, and there was plenty of cricket practice, and the form the juniors showed, it was agreed, was to be taken into chief consideration.

But even then there were difficulties, the Greyfriars fellows being firmly of opinion that the form Greyfriars showed was topping; while the Saints, admitting freely that Greyfriars was good, couldn't help thinking that St. Jim's went one better.

After considerable debate, which grew rather warm at times, it was agreed on all sides that Wharton, Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, Tom Merry, and Blake should be included: D'Arcy had brought a message from Jimmy Silver that he could come over for the match, if wanted, and it was agreed nem. con. that Silver should make one of the eleven. That left five places to fill.

Johnny Bull and Nugent and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy and Manners and Lowther were all after those places, and even Wally put in a claim. But it was Mark Linley who was the next selection, making seven in all. And when word came from Squiff and Vernon-Smith that they could come over for the match, their names were put down at once. And—though feeling a little doubtful—the cricketers agreed that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy couldn't possibly be left out, as he was their host.

But Arthur Augustus played up generously.

"Wats!" he said, when the committee of selection told him. "The mattah's in the hands of you fellahs, and if you select me on my form, all wight; othahwise, I will stand out. It's all wight!"

"Oh, you'll play, of course!" said Wharton.

"Of course!" assented Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus fixed his eyeglass on them.

"Can't you think of a bettah man?" he asked.

"Ahem!"

"Of course, as a mattah of fact, I weally don't considah that you could find a bettah man," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "But you chaps are goin' to decide, and I don't want any wot!"

Wharton and Tom Merry looked at one another, and grinned.

"Well, perhaps another Greyfriars chap——" said Wharton.

"Too many Greyfriars chaps in the team now, I think," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head.

"Now, look here, Merry——"

"Look here, Wharton——"

"There are two places to fill yet," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"I was thinking of asking Courtenay, of Highcliff," said Harry. "You fellows know him; he's a ripping player, and he could come over!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry heartily. "That leaves one!"

"And the one had better be D'Arcy."

"Yaas, I agwee with you; but I wefuse to be selected unless you assuah me that you don't think you can find a bettah man!"

"Ahem!"

"By the way, who's goin' to skippah the team?"

"Oh, Greyfriars!" said Wharton.

"Oh, St. Jim's!" said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As the match is comin' off on Tuesday, it would be wathah a good ideah to settle that point, deah boys!"

"Well, Wharton will admit——"

"I think Tom Merry will admit——"

"Leave it to Gussy to decide," said Tom Merry. "We'll make Gussy master of the ceremonies to choose the skipper!"

"That's wathah a good ideah! You can wely on a fellah of tact and judgment, you know!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Agreed!" said Wharton.

There was some anxiety in the team to know the decision of the master of the ceremonies. Arthur Augustus gave the matter a considerable amount of anxious thought. The eleventh place in the team was still unfilled, too. Wharton and Tom Merry were selecting the players, and they had agreed upon ten.

But for the eleventh place, unless D'Arcy had it, Tom was of opinion that a St. Jim's chap should be found—Herries or Lowther or somebody else—while Wharton was convinced that Tom Brown or Peter Todd, of Greyfriars, should be written to.

It was a knotty problem, and on Tuesday morning the team still contained only ten men, and the captain was still undecided upon.

Meanwhile, the juniors had been hard at practice, and both the captains were quite satisfied with their form. The house team appeared to take the coming match as a joke. They had agreed to play, at Mr. Lascelles' request, and it was decided that it was to be a whole-day match; but the opinion of the house team was that before lunch they would be victors, with an innings to spare.

Early on Tuesday morning Jimmy Silver put in his appearance, and Vernon-Smith, Squiff, and Frank Courtenay arrived a little later. Stumps were to be pitched at ten o'clock, so it was clear that eleventh man would have to be one of the fellows who was staying at Eastwood.

Wharton debated in his mind whether it should be Johnny Bull or Nugent, while Tom Merry was weighing the respective merits of Herries, Digby, Lowther, and Manners. And when Arthur Augustus came out in flannels they demanded to know who was going to be captain.

"I have been thinkin' it ovah vewy sewiously, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "The claims of Gweyfwiahs cannot be denied, and for that weason I feel that Wharton ought to be selected——"

"Oh, good!" said all the Greyfriars fellows at once.

"On the othah hand," said Arthur Augustus calmly, "Tom Mewwy has an equal claim, which I do not feel it would be wight to ignore!"

"But we can't both captain the team," said Tom.

"No; that is imposs, so with gweat wegwet I have decided to pass ovah both of you——"

"Oh!"

"Then it occurred to me that Jimmy Silvah would make a wippin' captain, and it would be only a gwaceful act to give him the job, as he has come ovah to play for us."

"You might do worse," agreed Jimmy Silver heartily.

"Only, on weflection, I wealised that our fwiend Courtenay has also come ovah a long way to play for us, and has an equal claim."

"Are you ever going to get to the point?" Jack Blake inquired.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Pway be patient."

"There's only twenty-four hours in a day, you know," remarked Monty Lowther casually.

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowthah, at a sewious moment. There are so many wival claims that it is imposs to decide them on their mewits," said Arthur Augustus. "The only wesource, so fah as I can see, is to diswegard them all, and choose anothah chap entirely."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Blake. "You mean——"

"You mean——" began Bob Cherry.

"I have therefore decided to play in the match——"

"Oh!"

"And captain the team myself——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And I twust," said Arthur Augustus, beaming genially on the astonished cricketers—"I twust that this decision meets with genewal appwoval?"

There was a deadly silence for some moments. Then Harry Wharton gasped:

"Oh, ripping!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I am so glad you are pleased," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vewy satisfactowy to settle such a vewy difficult mattah in a way to please all parties."

And Arthur Augustus joined Cousin Ethel, who had just come out, to explain to her the extremely satisfactory way in which he had solved a knotty problem. The cricketers looked at one another and grinned.

"Good old Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "This is where his tact and judgment come in—he's famous for 'em. Let's get down to the ground."

And they went.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
The Great Match!

MR. LASCELLES and his team arrived smiling. Most of the members of the house team had made other arrangements for the afternoon, fully expecting to be finished with the schoolboys by lunch. They were fated to have their eyes opened, however.

Arthur Augustus tossed for choice of innings with Mr. Lascelles in a very dignified way.

"So you're captaining the side, Gussy?" said Lord Conway.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Poor chaps!" said Wally.

"You cheeky young wascal, Wally——"

"We bat," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Wight-ho!"

Lord Eastwood had come to see the beginning of the great match, and Cousin Ethel was there, and all the juniors who were not in the team. Wally looked on with a sarcastic expression, not at all satisfied with the selection that had passed over his valuable self.

D'Arcy gave the ball to Jimmy Silver for the first over.

"I wathah think you will take them by surpwise, deah boy," he remarked. "Lascelles is the best of the lot, and I twust you will get him out before they know what a surpwise-packet you are."

And Jimmy Silver grinned and said that he would—if he could!

Mr. Lascelles stood up to Jimmy Silver's bowling. He had never seen the redoubtable Jimmy before, and certainly did not suspect for a moment the "surprise-packet" the Rookwood junior was.

The first ball came down very easily, and Mr. Lascelles smiled and snicked it away for 2. Perhaps he was a trifle careless after that easy ball, and perhaps that was exactly what the bowler anticipated. For the second ball was not easy—it came down like a bullet, and whipped the leg-stump out of the ground before the batsman knew what was happening. And from the whole field there came a delighted roar:

"How's that?"

"Out, by gad!" murmured Lieutenant Lascelles.

It was out—there was no doubt about that. Mr. Lascelles walked off the pitch looking a little pink, and Micky Kildare came in to take his place. And Micky gave a regular whoop of astonishment when his middle stump was jerked out and turned over.

Percy Locke was next man in. Dr. Locke's nephew was very careful; he had an eye for a bowler, and he knew that Jimmy Silver was real mustard by this time. But the last ball of the over knocked his wicket to pieces.

Cousin Ethel clapped her hands.

"Bravo!" came Lord Eastwood's deep voice. "Conway, my boy, is this the team you were going to walk over before lunch?"

The viscount grinned rather ruefully.

"By Jove, this is rather a surprise!" he confessed. "We shall have to pull ourselves together."

The house team were not smiling now. They realised that they were in for a decidedly difficult tussle, schoolboys as their opponents were. Jimmy Silver had disposed of the best three bats in the team in one over.

In the next over Lord Conway was caught out by Mark Linley, amid cheers. After that the wickets fell at a good rate—Hurree Jamset Ram Singh accounting for three, and Arthur Augustus executing a graceful catch at point. And the house team, to their astonishment, were all down for 40.

"By the Kaiser's merry whiskers!" ejaculated Micky Kildare. "Lascelles, my boy, you were going to declare for a hundred runs. Where are they intirely?"

"Echo answers where?" said Mr. Lascelles, laughing.

Harry Wharton and Mark Linley opened the innings for the school side. Lord Conway, Mr. Lascelles, and Percy Locke shared the bowling, and the bowling was very good. But it had to be admitted that it was not quite so good as that of Jimmy Silver and Hurree Singh. The wickets went down at a good rate—D'Arcy's intended century turning out to be only 4; but the runs went up at a good average, and the score was at 60 when the last wicket fell.

Then there was an adjournment for lunch—the lunch which was to have seen the schoolboys beaten to the wide. It found them twenty runs ahead on the first innings.

The juniors were in great spirits when they came out for the resumption of play. Mr. Lascelles opened the innings again, with Lord Conway at the other end. This time, however, Jimmy Silver did not deal with him so easily. Mr. Lascelles had taken the measure of the bowling, and, good as it was, it could not beat him. Lord Conway was out in the second over to Blake's bowling, and in the third Hurree Singh tackled Mr. Lascelles, but the nabob tackled him in vain.

The runs were going up, too. Mr. Lascelles was caught by Frank Courtenay at last, when he had piled up 50. The other batsmen came and went, the score piling up, and the field were given plenty of leather hunting. It was late in the afternoon when the last wicket went down for an even hundred.

"Hundred and forty!" said Bob. "We shall beat them yet!"

But the house team were on their mettle now.

Mr. Lascelles was bowling, and Harry Wharton was dismissed for 8, and Tom Merry secured only 6. Blake and Squiff bagged 6 each, and Vernon-Smith secured a round dozen. Frank Courtenay remained longer at the wickets, defying the bowling of Mr. Lascelles and Lord Conway in turn, till he was caught by Percy Locke, with 20 to his credit. Jimmy Silver had cruel luck, losing his wicket for 2. Bob Cherry followed him, with only 8. The schoolboy team wanted 12 to tie, and 13 to win, when Arthur Augustus joined Mark Linley at the wickets.

"It's up to us, deah boy," he remarked, as he passed Mark; and the Lancashire lad nodded and smiled.

The house team were grinning again now. The schoolboy cricketers were not having matters all their own way, after all.

"What atrocious luck!" said Bob Cherry. "Awfully uncertain game, cricket! It looked a sure thing for us."

"A game isn't lost till it's won," remarked Courtenay cheerfully.

"And Gussy has promised us a century!" groaned Blake.

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Bob disconsolately.

But Courtenay was right; the game was not lost till it was won. Arthur Augustus added 2 to the score, and the bowling came to Mark Linley. The Lancashire lad faced it steadily and coolly. He drove the first ball to the boundary, and he cut away the second for a single run. The juniors looked grim as Arthur Augustus took on the bowling. As the swell of St. Jim's was looking for a century, they rather expected some reckless hitting—and a fallen wicket. But Arthur Augustus knew what he was about. He stole a single run, and gave the batting back to Mark, and his comrades cheered him enthusiastically.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Blake. "Not such a jolly bad cricket captain, after all! Gussy knows what's what."

"Larry means business this time!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Stick it, Marky!"

"Four to tie, 5 to win!" murmured Wharton.

Mark Linley drove the ball away for 2, and then again for 2, and there was a roar from the juniors. The match was safe now, at all events.

Again the ball came down, and Mark Linley cut and ran. But Lord Conway was after the leather like a shot, and it came in, whizzing. Right at the wicket Arthur Augustus was racing towards—straight as a die!

Crash!

Arthur Augustus fairly hurled himself forward, and his bat was on the crease as the crash of the falling wickets sounded out. And the umpire shook his head.

"Not out!"

"Hurrah!"

"The winning run!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Bravo, Gussy! Bravo, Marky!"

The next minute the juniors were swarming on the field, and Arthur Augustus and Mark Linley were seized and brought off shoulder-high in triumph, amid thunderous cheers. Mr. Lascelles thumped the Lancashire lad cheerily on the back.

"Well done, my lad!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "It's weally Linley's game, you know. Thwee cheeahs for Lancashire deah boys!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

. . . . . .

It was a close finish, but the schoolboy team had won, and the house team had to hide their diminished heads. And there was tremendous rejoicing among D'Arcy's little party!

THE END.

(Don't miss "THE MYS ERY OF MAULY!"—next week's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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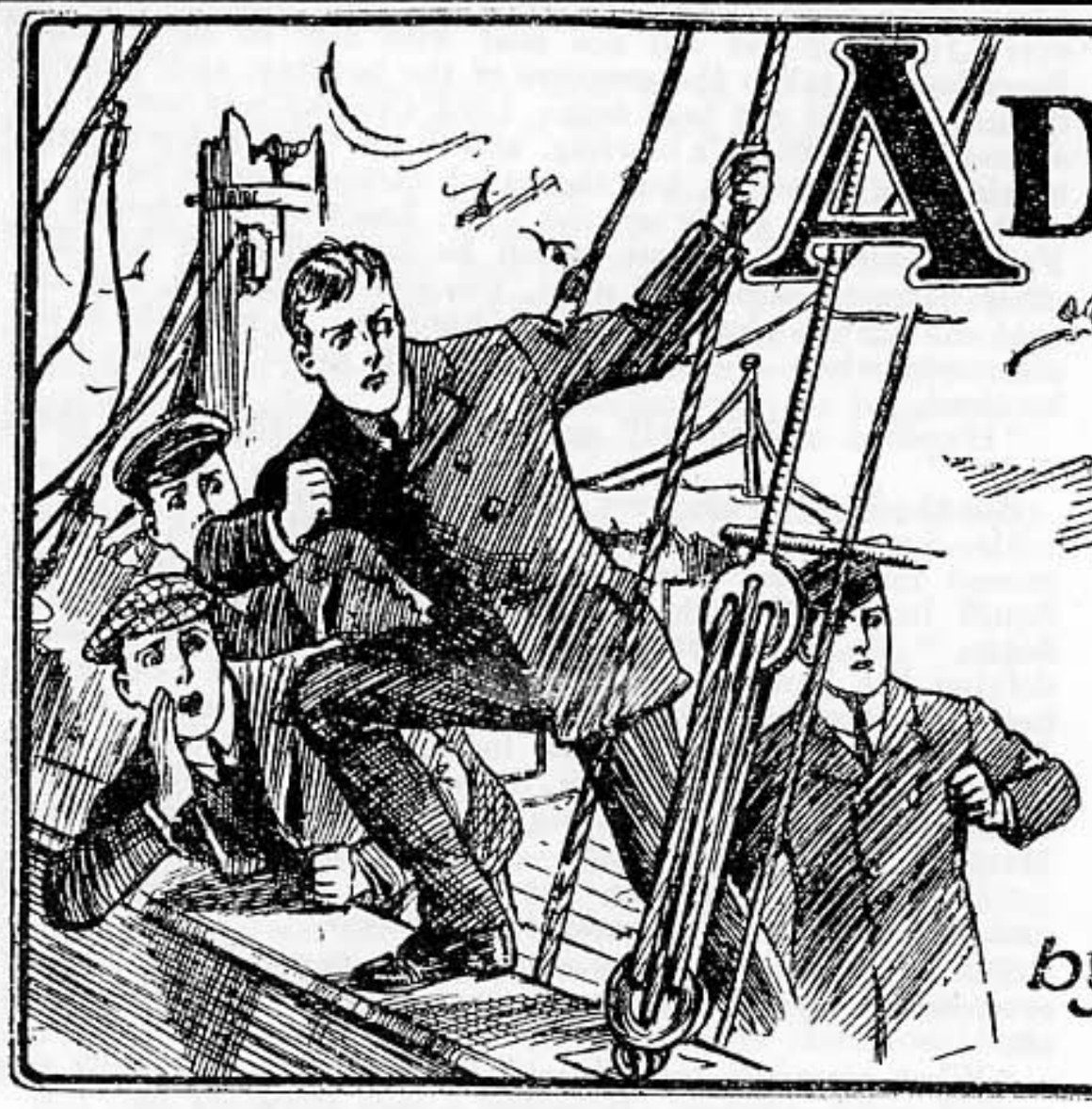

ADVENTURERS FOUR!

A Story of Strange and Thrilling Adventures in an Amazing Quest

by ALEC G. PEARSON.

PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS BRIEFLY TOLD.

Hal Mackenzie receives a mysterious message urging him to come out to the Southern Andes and learn the secret of the Tower of the Golden Star. He sets out, accompanied by his chums, Jim Holdsworth, Bob Sigsbee, and Pat O'Hara.

After many strange and exciting experiences, they arrive at the tower, in which they are trapped by an old witch who calls herself Yarola, the Priestess of the Star. Here they find Hal's friend, Martin Travers, who had been a prisoner in the tower for over a year, and who had sent the message.

He tells them of his plans for escape, by means of a submarine boat—which he has nearly completed—along an underground river, which commences deep down beneath the tower, and runs out on to a great plain many miles away.

The secret of the Tower of the Golden Star is a wonderful composition—which is obtained from a mine far down under the building—which supplies the marvellous golden light which fills the place, and the explosive which is used in the curious weapons of the half-breeds who guard the tower.

Later, Sigsbee is captured by the half-breeds. He is rescued by his chums, led by Aymara, the daughter of a native chief, who has previously helped them.

They return to the tower, where they are attacked by the half-breeds. Though the four friends kill many of them, a number of the half-breeds gain entrance to the tunnel under the moat.

(Now read on.)

The End of the Fight!

"What next?" asked Jim. "They'll be in through the main gates pretty soon, and they mean business this time!"

"There'll be a hundred of them left still!" said Hal.

"Perhaps more. We could hold the tower stairs against a small army, so long as we have any ammunition!"

"They may not attack us up here," replied Jim. "Their dodge may be to wait down below, so as to prevent us getting any food. They'd stand a better chance of starving us out this time; and, what's more, there is no water to be obtained up on top here!"

It was certainly a very black outlook, and for a while no one spoke. Then O'Hara suggested a way out of the difficutly, though the others had already thought of it.

"We don't know yet," he said, "what the breeds will be afther doing. But if they sit down in the courtyard, wid the idea av hunger an' thirst getting the hould of us, it isn't meself that's goin' to remain up here. I've had enough av goin' without ating, an' it's pleasanter to foight than to starve. Se let's go down an' foight our way through 'em, an' waste no more toime in guessing at the next move av our inimies!"

Both Hal and Jim glanced at Aymara. With only themselves to consider, they would have had no hesitation about fighting their way through the breeds, if such a course became necessary, but what about the girl?

Could they afford her adequate protection during a strenuous fight, in which they could not hope to win through unscathed? It would be next to impossible And if she fell alive into the hands of men so savage and cruel as their enemies her fate would not bear thinking about.

But these thoughts were suddenly interrupted by an exclamation from Sigsbee.

"Where's Travers?" he cried. "He's not with us. And I didn't see him go."

"Eh? Why, I never noticed that he had gone, either," said Hal.

They all stared round the battlemented roof as though seeking a solution of the puzzle. Really there was no great puzzle about his disappearance, for he must simply have slipped away unobserved while they were talking.

It was curious that he hadn't said where he was going, and for what purpose, but there were times when he had the fancy for doing things first, and telling them what he had done afterwards.

He's got something up his sleeve," said Jim. "Going to spring a surprise on us."

"Going to spring a surprise on the breeds more likely," was Hal's reply.

And so it proved. For presently Travers reappeared carrying something wrapped up in a cloth, which he deposited carefully on the paved roof.

"Those carrion haven't opened the main gates yet," he said." They're mustering outside—I could hear them—and when they're ready they'll come in with a rush. That is, if I'm not beforehand with them."

He unfolded the cloth, and disclosed several lumps of the grey explosive.

"Say! What are you going to do with that?" asked Sigsbee. "Drop it on 'em?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I'm going to do," replied Travers. "They are not foes for whom we need show the slightest consideration." His face hardened, and his eyes glittered. "They are murderers—and worse. They deserve no mercy!"

Lifting the cloth by the corners, he crossed to the battlements and tipped the contents over the parapet.

Five seconds later a sheet of brilliant flame leaped skywards, and the crash of the explosion was followed by the affrighted cries and yells of the breeds, and the rumble of falling masonry.

Then there rose up a long, low wail. After that there was silence.

"We can go down now," said Travers, and his voice was terribly quiet. "There will be no attack on the tower."

"Look!" exclaimed Jim. "The Scarlet Fires! They are dying down!"

They all stood looking at the vivid scarlet flames as they slowly became less and less, and at last died out altogether.

A curious coincidence," said Travers. "I have an idea the Scarlet Fires will never be lighted again. The breeds are beaten—to a finish!"

How Pat O'Hara Dealt with Captain Garotte.

They descended the winding stairs quietly to the courtyard, and there a strange and terrible sight met their eyes. The great main gates, of immense thickness, and weighing many tons, were shattered into fragments. The broad rock platform in front of them was piled several feet high with debris, principally the masonry of the archway into which the gates fitted. And buried beneath this huge pile of rubbish were the bodies of the slain breeds. The mouth of the tunnel was also completely blocked.

The survivors of the breeds—there were twenty—were standing in a group, as though for mutual protection, in a dazed and terrified state. They were quickly disarmed.

Has Captain Garotte escaped again," said Hal, "or, is he among the dead, I wonder?"

"I guess we'd better find out," replied Sigsbee. "So long as that skunk's alive he'll be scheming. And I'm ready to bet my last dollar he never in his life schemed for anything that would benefit a soul but himself. He's more vile and mean than a coyote, what eats its own dead mates."

"We'll question these fellows," said Jim, indicating the breed prisoners with a jerk of his hand.

Their answers, however, were conflicting, and given sullenly and unwillingly. Some said their leader was killed, others that he had jumped into the moat and escaped by swimming, while others again professed ignorance of his fate. The probability was that none of them really knew what had become of him.

But while the questions were being asked; and answered more or less untruthfully, Pat O'Hara was doing a search round on his own account. He had particular reasons for wishing to find the half-breed leader if he was alive.

Presently an exclamation from the Irishman announced that he had made a discovery.

"What is it, Pat?" called out Jim.

"The thafe av the worrld—I've got him!" replied Pat O'Hara. "There's a hole blown in the side av the tower that ye could droive the fattest pig in Oireland through. Himself was creeping through it intint on mischief, ye may be sure. An' here he is!"

Captain Garotte was dragged forward in a somewhat dishevelled condition, but unhurt. He glared at his captors savagely for a few moments, and then assumed his usual mockingly polite manner.

But it was only assumed. In his heart he was afraid.

"It apears I am a prisoner of war, senors," he said, as he rolled a cigarette. "Well, such is the fortune of war. At one time you win, at another you lose. What are you going to do with me?"

"Hang you!" replied Travers crisply. "What other fate can a murderer expect?"

"Hang me! Me!" His sallow face went grey. "You call me a murderer, yet it is you who would commit murder. I have fought you fairly."

"You, and your followers," interrupted Travers, "have fought by every unfair and underhand means in your power. You are no better than assassins, who lurk behind cover to take an adversary unawares and kill him while his back is turned. It is not so many hours ago that you were going to put one of our party to death by torture"—he indicated Sigsbee by a wave of the hand—"but we were fortunate enough to rescue him. I have your record, and I know you have a hundred foul crimes to answer for. You are not fit to live!"

"Yet you would be wise to let me live," replied Captain Garotte; "ay, and give me my liberty, too!"

"Indeed! Why so?"

Because I hold a secret which would be of the utmost value to you. The price of that secret is my life and liberty."

"We wouldn't degrade ourselves by buying a secret from you at any price," interposed Hal. "You shall have a fair trial, and justice shall be done. No more, no less."

"Say! He's only bluffing about that secret!" exclaimed Sigsbee. "He knows nothing, that Travers doesn't already know better than he, that would be of any service to us."

"That is so," agreed Travers.

"You call yourselves honourable men," said Captain Garotte. "Then—name of the fiend!—give proof that you are. Give me a weapon, and I will fight any one of you—for my liberty!"

He flung his arms out with a dramatic gesture, for he was nothing if not theatrical. But it was only a piece of bluff once more to gain time.

Perhaps at the back of his brain he had some plan of escape.

His request would certainly have been refused, for he deserved no such honourable treatment, had not Pat O'Hara, to the amazement of his comrades, promptly taken up the challenge.

"'Tis meself will foight ye!" he exclaimed. "But there'll be no weapons used. Wid our bare hands we'll settle the matther. They're enough. 'Twill be just a wrestling bout for your liberty—as ye were saying. But there won't be two av us aloive when 'tis finished!"

"Are you mad, Pat?" exclaimed Hal. "What sort of foolery do you call this? He's not deserving of such a chance. Weapons or no weapons, he'd be certain to be up to some vile trickery."

Pat O'Hara grinned.

"I'd be on the look-out for that," he said. "There's a little account to settle between him an' me, and I've the fancy to settle it. Besides, I captured him, so he's my prisoner. We'll foight. He's a strong man, and active, so 'twill be fair. And there's twinty av his own men to look on, and hearten him up, so to spake."

It looked as though Captain Garotte wanted heartening, for he evidently hadn't expected that his challenge would be accepted, and he didn't at all like the look of his proposed antagonist.

"To fight without weapons!" he exclaimed; and he was no longer either theatrical or mockingly polite. "Are we animals that we should fight in that manner? And it is not the custom of my country to fight without a weapon of some sort."

"You have no counthry," retorted O'Hara. "You're a half-breed. 'Tis honouring you I am by condiscinding to foight wid ye at all. But 'tis my fancy. And if you won't try a fall wid me, you'll be hung. So you can take your choice, and don't waste any toime in talk. Me patience is comin' to an ind!"

"If you're dead set on it, Pat," said Sigsbee, "we'll let the business be settled as you wish. That is, if the bold cap'n is willing. But he don't look it. I guess he ain't far off being a coward."

Captain Garotte's face flushed darkly. He had his vanities, and one was to be thought a man of exceptional courage.

"Be it so," he said. "I will fight, then, like a brute beast, with claws!"

"It should come natural to ye," retorted the Irishman.

Then he divested himself of his shirt and undervest, and stood stripped to the waist, a splendid specimen of manhood. He was in perfect condition. His skin was like satin; his sinews and muscles were like whipcord and steel.

Captain Garotte did not follow his example in removing his upper clothing, but contented himself with buttoning his drill jacket tightly over his chest. He was of a different build to O'Hara, not so broad-shouldered, and lighter in weight. But he was muscular, and probably more active on his feet than the Irishman.

His movements were the light, stealthy movements of a panther, whereas O'Hara was more of the bear. The breeds were clustered at the far end of the courtyard, watching the scene with startled, wondering eyes, and muttering among themselves.

O'Hara's comrades were standing near the demolished main gates—as a precaution in case any of the breeds should attempt to escape—Hal a little in advance of the others, for he was acting as umpire.

"Are you both ready?" he asked.

"I am," replied O'Hara.

Captain Garotte nodded, his white teeth showing in an ugly grin.

"There will be no interference from anyone," continued Hal. "If you win, Captain Garotte, you will be set free."

"And if I do not win?" snarled Garotte.

Hal didn't answer that question, though he could have done so had he chosen. He gave the signal, and the fight commenced.

O'Hara closed at once, gripping his adversary in a powerful hold. He made no attempt at using his fists, as in boxing; it was a wrestling bout, but a terrible one, in that there was a life at the stake. A fight to the death, without weapons. Who ever had seen such a thing before?

The Irishman knew something of wrestling, but he was not a scientific exponent of the art, and the consequence was that Garotte managed to wriggle from his grasp, grey-faced and wild-eyed, for O'Hara had a fearful grip.

The half-breed fought warily, eluding his adversary's rushes by skilful dodging and twisting, as he had no fancy for being held in another of those bear-like grips.

But it was not possible to dodge the Irishman for long. O'Hara got him again, and after that it was difficult for any of the spectators to follow the combat closely.

It defied adequate description, as Hal afterwards declared.

They swayed, twisted, and writhed about the enclosed space of the courtyard. Twice they both fell heavily. On the second occasion O'Hara was underneath, as Garotte had

cleverly tripped him. Then the latter showed the kind of foul fighter he was.

Freeing his hands, he endeavoured to drive the balls of his thumbs into O'Hara's eyes, with the object of blinding him.

Cries of anger and execration rose at this dastardly act, but not from the breeds; and Hal sprang forward to interfere.

"Stop that!" he shouted fiercely.

But O'Hara had got the miscreant by the wrists now, and forced his arms back until he yelled with the pain. Then he flung him off, and both leaped to their feet.

"Be aisy," said O'Hara. "Lave him to me. I'll dale with him!"

Again the struggle was renewed, Garotte in truth fighting like an animal, clawing, biting, and howling with rage. But he was nearly spent. His breath was coming in deep gasps.

Then all at once the red Irishman swung Garotte shoulder high, held him poised for a couple of seconds, by neck and waistband, then hurled him, writhing, with fearful force against the wall.

His body dropped, with a heavy thud, on to the stone pavement. The breeds leaned forward, staring, breathless, amazed, and terrified. But their one-time leader lay motionless where he had fallen.

Captain Garotte was dead!

Aymara Bids Them Farewell.

Hal and Jim, Sigsbee and Travers, stepped up to the gallant Irishman, and in turn shook hands with him. It was not an occasion for cheering, or giving vent to their feelings in any noisy fashion. With the defeat of the breeds and the death of Garotte the menace to their safety, so far as any further attack on the tower was concerned, was removed.

"We can surely now," Jim suggested, "march out of the ravine by the way we entered, instead of by the very uncertain route of the underground river in your submarine, Travers."

But Martin Travers shook his head.

"There are hundreds more breeds left," he replied, "guarding the mouth of the ravine, so posted that they would have every advantage over us. Here the advantage was on our side. Not one of us would get out of the ravine alive. Ask Aymara. You will find that she will agree with what I say."

Aymara, who knew more about the breeds even than Travers, did agree.

"But they will not again attack the tower," she added, "now that El Garotte is dead."

"Then you will come with us in the under-water boat?" said Jim.

Aymara shook her head.

"I remain in the mountains," she replied. "They are my home."

"But how are you going to get out of the ravine?" queried Jim. "How can you escape the breeds?"

"Have no fear for me," replied the girl. "There is a way known to me alone, which I may not tell even to you, my comrades. My father showed it to me, and made me take an oath, which I dare not break, never to reveal it to a living soul."

"We should never ask you to break your pledged word, Aymara," said Travers. He turned to the others. "There's another consideration," he added, "even if the way out of the ravine was open to us. We want to take at least a hundredweight of the grey explosive—the nameless force, with its amazing possibilities—back to England with us. We have risked so much to learn the secret that we are not going to abandon it now. As your mules have been stolen, the only means of transport is by water."

"I guess that's a sure thing," agreed Sigsbee. "And now I've got a proposition to make. Let these breed prisoners we've got go free. Turn 'em adrift, so's they can let the rest of their tribe know what's happened to their leader. It'll put the fear of us into their mongrel souls, and they'll give this tower a wide berth for the rest of the time. Anyway, we ain't able to feed 'em."

"It's a good suggestion," said Travers. "Let them clear away the debris which blocks the tunnel, and take the body of Captain Garotte with them."

All agreed to the proposal, and the prisoners were set to work at once. As they were told they would be set at liberty as soon as the tunnel was clear again, they worked with unusual vigour. Sigsbee watched them with a grim smile on his lips.

"They sure never did so much hard graft in their useless lives before," he remarked. "Most times, I reckon, they've got a kind of idea fixed in the mud they call their brains that manual work is bad for the health. An' anyway, it doesn't tire them so much as to steal and murder."

In less than an hour the tunnel was cleared of the fallen masonry, the body of Captain Garotte was laid on an improvised stretcher, and the procession filed out through the gateway.

"No mourners," said Hal, with bitter sarcasm. "Even his own followers are thinking only of their own safety, and care no more for their late leader than they would for a dead dog."

But on one point Hal was wrong. There was a mourner, who appeared unexpectedly on the scene—Yarola, the Priestess of the Star.

During the stirring events of the past three or four days this old crone had been entirely forgotten. No one knew what had become of her after she was released from the chamber in the tower, and no one cared very much. Her reappearance was heralded by a loud, wailing cry, which rose almost to a screech.

Her grief—if it was really grief that she felt—was certainly not of the subdued order.

"You have conquered, white men," she snarled, turning upon them, with her skinny hands bent like talons, "as men of your race always will conquer. I know, because I have seen that which those who now dwell in this land"—she waved her arms wide, as though to indicate the countries on both sides, beyond the mountain ranges—"may also have seen, did they but know how to use their eyes. But if they did see, they have already forgotten."

She bent over the body of Captain Garotte, and touched his forehead with her fingers.

"He was of my kin," she added. "I had told him that death could not touch him while I lived, and he believed. It is strange he should have believed that lie—he who believed so little of anything." She made an imperious gesture to the breeds. "Lead on!" she commanded. "Afterwards, when we have passed through the tunnel, I will lead."

The procession slowly descended the steps into the passage which ran beneath the moat. Yarola went last. They never saw her again.

Jim drew a long breath of relief.

"The air seems cleaner and purer now they've gone!" he exclaimed. "What's the time?" He glanced up at the stars. "Why, the night's almost over. It can't want more than an hour for daybreak."

"Then there's no occasion to bother about getting any sleep now," said Hal cheerfully. "It'll save us all the trouble of going to bed and getting up again. At sunrise we'll have breakfast."

"I'm glad you feel so chirpy," said Jim. "For my part, as I'm not feeling specially hungry——"

"For a wonder!" murmured Hal.

Jim shook his fist at his chum, and proceeded:

"I'd much rather lie down and endeavour to get forty winks or so, and let the sun do the rising!"

"Stow it," interrupted Hal threateningly, "or there'll be more trouble. We've gone through a big strain during the past few days, and we can't stand any more. Your weird jokes would be the limit."

"Always misunderstood!" said Jim, with mock sadness. "Well, as I'm not allowed to sleep, I'll try to work up an appetite for breakfast. 'Oh, would I were a bird, that I might'—eh?—always want to sing on falling out of my nest, when I spied the early worm, so foolish as to get up before the bird."

As there was no further need to have a look-out posted on the tower roof, they collected their weapons and all the unused cartridges, and went down into the lower chamber—the dining-hall, as they had got in the habit of calling it.

Curiously enough, the breakfast was rather a silent meal, as all of them had suddenly become unusually thoughtful. But afterwards they made up for their silence, when it became necessary to discuss ways and means, and arrange details for their forthcoming submarine journey.

The matter of provisions had to be considered first, and Travers calculated that ten days' supply could be stored away in the lockers.

"If we're not up on the surface of the river by that time," he said, "we shall never be up. The end of it all will be in the cool, dark depths, where the happenings in the world will possess no further interest for us."

"The saints preserve us from that ending!" observed Pat O'Hara fervently.

"Well, this evening we shall have to start out on a game-killing expedition, to provide the food we want for the journey," continued Travers. "We shall cut the flesh into strips, and dry it in the sun. If we get any wild geese, or ducks, we can eat them on the two first days. They'll keep fresh. That's all, I think. This afternoon we shall do well to have a couple of hours' sleep."

This programme was carried out, and by good luck game was so plentiful that in two evenings they had shot all they required.

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

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ADVENTURERS FOUR.

(Continued from page 20.)

Then two more days were taken up in drying the strips of antelope flesh, and in the many final preparations for their hazardous journey. On the fifth day they were ready for a start.

The submarine boat had been tested, and found to answer fully to their expectations. They were all collected at the edge of the underground pool. Aymara among them. She was silent and sad, for she was there to say good-bye, and there was no certainty that she would ever see any of them again.

"You are not going to remain in the tower after we have gone, Aymara?" said Travers.

"No," replied the girl. "I shall go away from it at once. I could not remain in it alone. I should be looking for you all; I should be expecting to hear your voices. I cannot see into the future—who can?—but I have the belief that the tower will never be entered again—unless you return."

"I have the same belief," said Travers. "For after to-day it will be in darkness. The Golden Star will shine no more."

"What! Are you going to destroy it?" exclaimed Hal.

"I've already done so," was Travers' reply. "Not the metal star itself, but the light which shines from it over the ravine. I discovered the source of the supply this morning, and cut it off. It wasn't extinguished at once, but it is growing feebler every hour, and will be out before nightfall. When the breeds note that the light has gone from the Golden Star, they'll never dare set foot inside the tower. Now, everything's ready for the start. All aboard!"

Each in turn gave Aymara a parting clasp of the hands. Jim kissed her on the cheek, at which she flushed rosily, and then turned pale. Very little was said.

"We shall see you again, Aymara," said Hal. "If we win through safely to our own country, some of us will return here. A year, perhaps longer, may pass before that time, but whoever comes back will be accompanied by many men, who will drive the breeds from the ravine, if they are still here. Not being a prophet, I can say no more than that at present."

"I shall know whether you get safely through the river which runs in darkness beneath the mountains," replied Aymara. "I believe that you will do so, for you fear nothing, and you never turn back."

"There'll sure be no turning back on this journey," murmured Sigsbee.

They stepped on board the submarine, and Travers was the first to drop down through the hatchway.

"Good-bye, Aymara!"

The others followed him.

"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

Aymara waved a hand in farewell. She couldn't trust herself to speak again.

The hatch was closed and secured. Travers moved a switch, and the interior was flooded with a soft light. But through the bow and stern ports, thickly glazed with talc, two powerful rays streamed out, which would render all things visible in the water, when they were submerged, for several hundred yards ahead and astern.

Travers now manipulated several levers, and the boat began slowly to sink. Gazing through the ports, Jim and Hal saw Aymara standing at the brink of the pool, gazing down at them.

They waved their hands. The boat sank below the surface, and Aymara vanished from their sight. Presently the submarine began to forge ahead. The voyage into the unknown had commenced.

The Seething Cauldron.

"How many knots do you suppose she's going, Travers?" asked Hal, as he gazed out through a port at the water that was creaming past the submarine's sides.

In the brilliant light which flashed out from stem to stern of the boat the water looked like molten gold.

The skipper, designer, and builder of the submarine shook his head.

"I can only make a guess," he replied. "You see, my inventive powers have a limit, and with the materials I had to work with I couldn't design a speedometer, if that's the right name for those gadgets. And to use an ordinary ship's log we should, of course, have to be on the surface. There's a two-knot current with us, so, counting that in, I should think we may be going nine or ten knots over the ground."

"So we're at full speed now?"

"Yes, just about," replied Travers. "Of course, the best that can be said for the engines are that they're makeshifts. Certainly they're strongly put together, but it's too much to expect they will develop high speed, even with the amazing power that's driving them. You see, I haven't learnt yet how to utilise that power to its best advantage."

"By George! I think that what you've done is wonderful!" exclaimed Jim. "I know if I'd tried to tackle such a job I'd have blown myself up before it was finished."

"Faith, that would have finished it!" said O'Hara. "Meself, I'd have been the same way, except I'd have blown meself up at the beginning. Though, be the same token, I was fireman in a tramp steamer at wan toime, and should know a bit about engines." He paused, and then added reflectively: "But not this sort."

Martin Travers laughed heartily.

"You gave me a dig then, Pat," he said, "though I expect you didn't mean it. An engineer would, no doubt, look on these engines as a queer box of tricks, but I'm not afraid of them breaking down. They'll hold together as long as the boat does. Obtaining a supply of fresh air was the chief difficulty, but I discovered many strange things in that wonderful tower, not the least being a store of chemicals. Thus I was able to obtain oxylithe—I believe that is the correct name for it—which is contained in those two tanks. A certain amount of it released now and then purifies the atmosphere."

"I don't know much about these scientific matters," put in Sigsbee; "but what I do know is that we're able to breathe freely, and that's a pretty considerable satisfaction, I guess. Same time, I don't mind admitting I'd feel happier if we were on top of the water instead of underneath. My voyaging has always been on the surface, so far."

"Nothing like having a new experience," said Hal cheerfully. "Makes us feel glad we're alive—as a rule."

"Glad you added that," grinned Sigsbee, "because I could name some new experiences we've gone through that made us almighty sorry, at the time, we were alive."

"Faith, you're plazed wid yourself now that you're not dead!" interposed O'Hara. "So are we all. No less." He glanced round the tiny cabin. "'Tis a cosy place," he went on, "an' no fear of losing wan another in ut. What toime will it be? Down here you can't tell whin it's night, or whin it's day. You don't know whin you ought to be going to bed or whin you ought to be havin' your dinner or tay."

"Sleep when you're tired, if there's nothing to keep you awake," said Travers, "and eat when you're hungry."

"That sounds aisy," replied O'Hara. "I'm not feeling toired just now, but—that's an illigant little stove for boiling wather, but as there's neither tay nor coffee, an' there's no mate wants cooking, it's loikely to rust for want av using."

There was a laugh at the Irishman's unmistakable hint that he was ready for a meal, and as it was five or six hours since they had eaten anything, they were all nearly as sharp set as he evidently was.

So they got out some cold roast duck from a locker, fried some plantains, and made some hot cakes of flour and fat on the little stove, and then sat down to an enjoyable repast. They were a cheerful party, caring little enough for the dangers which surely confronted them in this mysterious river, but ready to meet them when they came.

For they were homeward bound, their mission accomplished, and gave no thought to the possibility that they might never reach home.

For one of the secrets of their success was that they never met troubles half way.

"Now we ought to set watches," Hal suggested. "Four hours on and four off. Travers, being skipper of the boat, keeps no watch. He will have to exercise a general supervision."

This suggestion was agreed to, and it was arranged that Hal and Pat O'Hara should be assistant engineers, after receiving some instructions from Travers, while Jim and Sigsbee performed the duties of helmsmen. Everybody, when not sleeping, would be on the alert and on the look-out for dangers.

"Well, it's your trick at the wheel now," said Hal to Jim, "so you can make a start. You and Pat have the first watch."

"Thank goodness Travers won't have to go to sleep during our watch!" murmured Jim, grinning.

The hours slipped by, and the Last Hope—as they had rechristened the submarine boat—drove on at a steady, even pace. Occasionally a swift, passing glimpse was obtained of the rocky sides of the underground river; but as a rule the Last Hope kept in the middle of the river, which apparently was of good width, and nothing but water was visible above, below, and all around them.

All seemed to be going well, when suddenly, without any warning, the submarine dived sharply, swung to starboard, and then swung back to port. Sigsbee was at the wheel, and Hal was attending the engine—Jim and O'Hara having come off watch an hour before—and the others were asleep.

"What the blazes has got hold of her?" muttered Sigsbee, as he gave the wheel a sharp turn to steady the craft.

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET *Library. Order your copy in advance.)*