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THE
CAPTAIN'S ELECTION.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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THE CAPTAIN'S ELECTION.

A GRAND, COMPLETE SCHOOL
TALE, by
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Cricketers of the Remove.

HARRY WHARTON came into Study No 1 at Greyfriars, and found the room in a buzz of talk. Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh were all eagerly discussing some extremely interesting topic, and the frequent recurrence of the word "cricket" showed what it was.

The reign of King Football was nearly over, and in the bright April days the juniors of Greyfriars—and the seniors as well—were talking and thinking of nothing but the great summer game. Greyfriars was a cricketing college, and in the season the boys talked, thought, and dreamt cricket, and played it with a serious determination which seemed to indicate that it was rather a business than a pleasure to them. They played to win, and they very frequently won; and the three teams the college sent out often came home victorious.

So far as out-matches were concerned, the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—had hitherto been content to fill vacant places in the Junior Eleven, the great men of which belonged to the Upper Fourth and the Shell. But this season the Removites, with new and more vigorous leaders, meant to make a change.

There was no reason, so Harry Wharton declared in committee meeting, why the Form Eleven should not be quite independent of assistance from Upper Forms, and why it should not meet teams of equal weight from other schools, captained by a fellow in the Remove itself.

Why not?

There was no reason why not, that the Removites could see, though Dabney, Temple & Co., of the Upper Fourth, sniffed and shrugged their shoulders. But they were at liberty to sniff and shrug till they were black in the face, Bob Cherry said; and the Remove went on its way with its great idea.

The question of Form captain was a very interesting one, and bade fair to become a really burning question.

There were many candidates. Bulstrode, as cock of the Remove, claimed the position as a matter of course, and was surprised to find his claim disputed. Hazeldene thought that his form on the cricket-field entitled him to the post. Bob Cherry replied to that, that his form entitled him to be kicked, and his cheek entitled him to be thumped, and proceeded to bestow both those rewards upon him on the spot. So Hazeldene was heard of no more as a candidate.

It was this matter that the chums of the Remove were discussing as Harry Wharton came along into the study that fine April afternoon.

"I can depend upon all you chaps, I suppose?" said Bob Cherry, looking round the study at friendly faces.

"Yes, rather," said Nugent. "I'm not putting up as cricket captain myself, and you're the next best."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"And you, Inky?"

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, the Indian member of the Greyfriars Remove, nodded with an expansive smile.

"The pleasurefulness of supporting the candidate of my heart will only be equalled by the valuefulness of our esteemed chum as a cricketful captain," he said, in the beautiful English he had learned under the very best native masters in Bengal.

"Ha, ha! What about you, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, looked up from the teapot he was washing, and blinked at Bob Cherry through his big spectacles.

"Oh, certainly, Cherry! I shall support you with great pleasure!" he said. "If you are elected, I shall stand a feed in the tuck-shop to celebrate the event, if I happen to be in funds. I am expecting a postal-order for a considerable amount to arrive any day now."

"Good! That's three votes!"

"Oh, I can't vote for you, Cherry!" said Billy Bunter.

Bob Cherry stared at him.

"Can't vote for me, you image?"

"No."

"But you have promised me your support."

"Yes, I shall certainly support you as much as I can, as I like you very much, Cherry; but I can't vote for you."

"Are you going to vote for somebody else?"

"No; but—"

"Then you're going to vote for me," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "Don't you think I shall make a good cricket captain?"

"I am sure you will; but—"

"Then why can't you vote for me?"

"You see, I shan't have a vote."

"Eh?"

"I don't belong to the Remove cricket club," explained Billy Bunter. "I regard it as useless to pay a subscription when I do not play cricket, and, of course, only paying members of the Form club have a vote."

"You—you young ass!"

"Really, Cherry, it is not my fault that non-members are not allowed to vote."

"Ass! What's the good of your support if you haven't a vote?" said Bob Cherry in disgust. "You can go and give your support to some other ass—I mean to some ass."

"But—"

"Oh, cheese it! Hallo, Wharton! Of course, you are going to vote for me?"

Harry Wharton came into the study.

There was a curious look upon the lad's handsome face, and a slight colour in his cheeks.

The chums of the Remove looked at him as he hesitated to reply to Bob Cherry's question. It appeared to embarrass him.

"You'll vote for me, Harry?" said Bob again.

"Of course he will," said Nugent promptly, though wondering at Wharton's silence himself. "Of course, he's bound to stand by a member of his own study! We've all got to support Cherry."

"The truthfulness of that honoured remark is apparent," said Hurree Singh. "Bob Cherry will have the heartfelt support of every esteemed rotter present. As your English proverb says, many cooks make light broth, and a stitch in time saves a larger number at a later period."

"The fact is—"

He paused, with the eyes of his chums upon him.

Bob Cherry turned rather red.

"I don't want to ask any chap for his support if he doesn't want to give it," he said, rather huffily. "Of course, I naturally expected my own chums to stand by me at a time like this."

"Of course," said Nugent, "Wharton doesn't mean to refuse."

"The painfulness of the refuse to the esteemed chum would be great," purred Hurree Singh. "But perhaps Wharton has some wheezy idea in his mind of which he has not yet made the candid communication."

"That's it," said Harry.

"If you think I'm not up to the mark as a cricketer, Wharton," said Bob Cherry—

Harry shook his head.

"Not in the least, Bob. From what I've seen of your practice so far, I imagine your cricket is better than most of the junior play at Greyfriars, even including that of the great panjandrums in the Upper Fourth and the Shell."

"Then why don't you—"

"Well, the fact is—"

Harry Wharton paused again.

"I say, Wharton, you're surely not thinking of that little row we had the other day?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Harry turned crimson.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "Surely you know me better than that?"

Bob grinned.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "Your temper is so beastly uncertain, Harry; and a chap never knows whether you're bearing a grudge or not."

"Something in that," said Nugent.

Harry bit his lip. He knew well enough that his passionate and uncertain temper had all but estranged his chums more than once, and of late he had learned to keep it in better control than he had been wont.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "if you've got nothing up against me, and you're satisfied with my form as a cricketer, why can't you vote for me?"

"Well, the fact is—"

"Oh, come, out with it!"

"Well, the fact is, I am thinking of putting up for cricket captain myself."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On the Cricket Field.

BOB CHERRY gave a long, expressive whistle.

"O-ho! So you're thinking of blossoming forth as a giddy cricket captain, are you?" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton coloured again.

"Why not?"

Bob Cherry nodded cheerily.

"Certainly, why not? Why not you as well as myself? You're quite as good a cricketer as I am."

"Better," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Thank you, Inky," said Bob Cherry.

"Please do not imagine that I fail in admiration for your excellent and honourable cricket, Cherry," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But a regardfulness for the truth compels me to state that the cricketfulness of the esteemed Wharton is what you English call an upper cut."

"Ha, ha! I suppose you mean a cut above?" said Nugent. "Well, Harry is certainly a bit stronger in the bowling line, but when it comes to batting—"

"I think I can keep my end up there," said Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Of course, I wasn't thinking of instituting any odious comparisons," he remarked. "I thought I should make a pretty fair cricket captain, that's all, if the Remove would take it on."

"That's a serious question," Nugent remarked. "Are you popular enough to put up for the post, Harry?"

"Oh, that's all right!" Bob Cherry struck in. "I believe I should collar more votes than Wharton, on a question of popularity; but it's a question of cricket pure and simple. If Wharton could show the Remove that it's better to have him at the top of the Form eleven, they'll have him."

"I don't know about better, Cherry; and, as a matter of fact, now I know that you intend to put up, I don't think I—"

Bob Cherry cut him short with a decided gesture.

"Nothing of that, Harry, please. I don't want any candidate to stand out, out of any personal consideration for myself."

"No; but—"

"The Remove Cricket Club can choose between us," said Bob. "There will be other candidates, too, for that matter—Bulstrode for one."

"We can't let Bulstrode get it," said Nugent quickly.

"He's no captain for the Remove. His cricket is nearly all swagger and playing to the gallery."

"The factfulness of the matter is," said the nabob, "that a cricket captain must be able to do more than play cricket. He requires the firmfulness of character and the iron will, and must not be talked over by obstreperous persons. Bob Cherry is too good-natured for the post. Wharton can be as hard as rock."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Well, that's true to some extent, and I don't deny it!" he exclaimed. "But I can always dot a fellow on the nose when required, if I have too much cheek, you know."

"The dotfulness on the nose may not meet the case—"

"Then I could add some thickfulness for the ear," grinned Bob; "and, really, Inky, I shall be inclined to start on you if you give me any more of your painful truths."

"The painfulness is equally matched with the truthfulness!"

"Oh, cheese it! Now, look here, chaps, a meeting of the cricket club en masse is to be held in the Form-room to-night, by order of the committee. We'll put to the meeting the important question—"

"The importantfulness of the question—"

"Oh, dry up, Inky! You'd talk the hind legs off a dead

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donkey. We'll put the question to the meeting, and let 'em settle it. Every member of the club is to be allowed a vote for the captain, and so it will be fair play all round."

"Good!" said Wharton.

"Good!" echoed Nugent. "And now, as it's a fine, dry afternoon, and we've got some more daylight left, I vote that we go out and get in a little cricket practice."

"The suggestfulness is appropriate."

"Come on," said Harry Wharton. "That's what I came here for, you lazy bounders, to fetch you out to practice."

The chums of the Remove were soon in their flannels, and going down to the cricket pitch.

It was bright April weather, and the pitch was in passably good condition, and on the ground appropriated to the practice of the Remove, the chums found a good many fellows already busy.

Bulstrode, the cock of the Remove, was there, wielding a bat, and Hazeldene was bowling to him from the other end. The Form bully glanced at the chums as they came down, and a scowl came over his heavy brows.

There was no love lost between Bulstrode and the chums of No. 1. Bulstrode had been the bully of the Remove till he had fallen in fair fight before Harry Wharton; fairly licked after a hard encounter. He had belonged to Study No. 1 at that time, but one result of the fight had been that he had changed out and allowed Bob Cherry to have his place there. This was very comfortable for the chums of the Remove, and really more comfortable for Bulstrode himself, but he bore a grudge against the famous four on account of it.

"Look out!" called out Skinner, who was fielding.

But Bulstrode's eyes were on Harry Wharton, and the ball from Hazeldene scattered his bails before he could look out.

"How's that?" grinned Hazeldene.

"Out!" said Skinner.

"I wasn't looking," growled Bulstrode. "Of course, that doesn't count."

"Oh, rats!" said Hazeldene.

Bulstrode picked up the ball, gritting his teeth. It was not a match, merely practice, but he was deeply annoyed at being bowled out under the eyes of the chums. He glared at Hazeldene.

"Did you say rats to me?" he snarled.

"Yes, and many of 'em!" said Hazeldene, preparing to run if the bully of the Remove started towards him.

But that was not Bulstrode's intention. He gave his hand a sudden jerk, and the cricket-ball flew, and smote Hazeldene upon the chest. Hazeldene staggered back with a yell, and sat down violently upon the grass.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Bulstrode. "One good turn deserves another! How's that?"

"Bowled out!" said Skinner.

Hazeldene sat up, clutching the cricket-ball. It came back from his hand with a spiteful whiz, and Bulstrode dodged, and the ball clumped heavily upon the chest of Ilurree Singh, who was in the line of fire, and the nabob staggered.

"My only hat!" he ejaculated. "Pray take care where you are bowling, Vaseline? I am not a wicket, neither am I standing here as a target."

"I'm sorry. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out of the way, then, you nigger!" growled Bulstrode. "It was your nigger's face put me off the ball just now. Throw that ball to me!"

"Certainly!" said the nabob politely.

He threw it.

"Catch!"

Bulstrode caught it—with his nose. He gave a fearful yell. Then he gripped his bat and sprang towards the Hindoo, with vengeance in his eyes. Harry Wharton stepped in his way.

"Stop that, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode glared savagely at him. Harry's voice and look were very quiet, but the quiet tones carried weight. Bulstrode stopped.

"Get out of the way, Wharton! I'm going to lay this bat round that fellow's nigger's hide!" he snarled.

"You're going to do nothing of the sort," said Harry Wharton. "Don't be a fool, Bulstrode! If you want some practice, I'll bowl to you a little. I hear that you are setting up as cricket captain in the Remove."

"Why shouldn't I?" growled Bulstrode, not sorry upon the whole to change the subject.

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"No reason at all, that I know of, Bulstrode; only Cherry and I are both setting up for the same post."

Bulstrode stared at him in amazement.

"You? You've got the cheek to set up as cricket captain? I can understand Cherry; but you—well, of all the nerve!"

"I don't see any nerve in it."

"You're about the most unpopular fellow in the Form, I suppose, except Hazeldene," said Bulstrode. "You're a sulky brute, and nobody ever knows how to take you. I

should think the Remove would be off its rocker if it ever had you for captain."

"Well, it's for the Remove to say," said Harry carelessly. "I don't want the post unless the Form wishes me to have it. I think I should be of some use, that is all."

Bulstrode sneered savagely.

"Oh, of course, your only object is to be of use; no idea of thrusting yourself forward in any way, and grabbing all you can get."

"Nothing of the sort, I hope," said Harry quietly. "But it's no good talking about it to you, Bulstrode. It largely depends upon the kind of cricket we can put up, I suppose."

"Well, I can knock spots off you in that line, I rather imagine."

"I rather imagine you cannot do anything of the kind. But we will see. How long do you think you could keep your wicket up against my bowling?"

"All the day, I suppose, and the night thrown in, if there were a moon," said Bulstrode sarcastically; "then all the following morning."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, that's rather a big order. Are you willing to try?"

"Bowl, and see."

"Good! I will."

Harry Wharton took the ball, and went down to the bowler's end. Bulstrode dropped the end of his bat upon the crease, and stood with a hard grip on the cane handle, his eyes keenly on the alert.

In spite of his boastful words, the Remove bully knew that Harry Wharton was a fine bowler, and he was by no means so confident in his own prowess as he had appeared to be.

"Play!" shouted Skinner.

The chums looked with interest at the scene. So did a great many more of the Remove who were hanging about the cricket-field. If Bulstrode kept his end well up against Wharton's bowling, it would materially assist him when the time came for the election of the Remove cricket captain.

But it was not to be. Harry Wharton took a short run, half turned himself into a Catherine wheel, and the ball flew with a whiz from his hand. Down it came, with the force of a 4.7 shell, and Bulstrode played—but he did not play the ball. It curled under his bat in some mysterious manner, and there was a crash of a falling wicket.

"Out!" roared Skinner.

Bulstrode glared at his wrecked wicket, and then at the successful bowler, and then gripped the handle of his bat as if he would have liked to lay it about the head of Harry Wharton—as indeed was the case.

"That was a fluke, of course!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You'll see a lot of flukes like that, Bulstrode, if you stand up to the bowling of Study No. 1."

"I wasn't looking——"

"You ought to have been looking," said Nugent.

"You mind your own business, Nugent!"

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is extreme," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "I observed the batting, and there was no flukefulness about it."

"Oh, shut up, Inky! You can try that again, Wharton."

"Certainly," said Wharton. "Let's have the ball."

"Here you are!"

The ball was tossed back, and the wicket restored. Bulstrode gripped his bat, prepared to do or die this time. He was really a passable batsman, but there was more swagger than real quality about his play. He felt that he was no match for Wharton's bowling, but he would not think of admitting as much.

Harry Wharton grasped the round red ball, and took his little run again, a quiet smile for a moment flickering upon his face. He knew that he was too strong for the batsman, and far better batsmen than Bulstrode was ever likely to be. He had practised bowling assiduously, and he seemed to have a gift, too, for the art, which hard practice had developed and perfected. Down came the ball again.

Bulstrode was looking for a whizzing ball like the last, but it came down slow, with a twist on it that would have made some county cricketers open their eyes. Clatter! How it happened the Remove bully never knew, but the ball was among his stumps, and they were on the ground. One was whipped right out of the soil, and another reposed at an angle of forty-five.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Flukes are cheap to-day! I suppose that was another fluke, Bulstrode."

"Oh, shut up, Cherry!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Try it once more, Harry."

"Certainly!"

"I don't feel like batting just now," said Bulstrode

savagely, anxious not to give Wharton's bowling any further prominence if he could help it. "Some of you other fellows take a turn."

And he put his bat under his arm and walked away. Bob Cherry grinned hugely.

"I don't suppose he does feel like batting against Wharton," he remarked. "He can't bat for toffee. I say, send us down a few balls, Harry."

"Right you are, Bob!"

There was a thickening crowd round the Remove ground now. Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, was standing there, looking on with interest. He took a deep interest in junior cricket, and a word of encouragement for the youngsters from the college captain was never wanting.

Harry Wharton bowled to Bob Cherry, and Bob kept up his wicket in a way that Bulstrode could never have done against the balls he received. But at the sixth ball down went the bails. Then at the eighth and the ninth the stumps were down again, and Bob Cherry wore a rather rueful look.

"Take the bat, you bouncer!" he exclaimed.

Harry laughed, and changed ball for bat. Bob Cherry bowled to him, and delivered twelve good balls in succession, but it was not till the twelfth that Harry's wicket fell. And then, as some of the spectators thought, it was rather due to the failing light than to Cherry's bowling.

Wingate patted Harry Wharton on the shoulder as the juniors came off the cricket ground. Harry looked up.

"You'll do," said the captain of Greyfriars. "If the Remove don't make you cricket captain, Wharton, it won't be because your cricket is wanting."

Harry flushed a little. He understood what was implied by the college captain's words. His cricket was all that could be asked, and if he had taken a little more trouble to make himself popular, he would have been sure of the Form captaincy.

"Thank you," he said quietly. "I shall do my best to deserve the post, Wingate, whether I get it or not."

"That's right!"

The chums of the Remove strolled away together. Bob Cherry's arm was linked in Harry Wharton's, showing that he had no feeling of annoyance at being so easily outdone at the great game. He was naturally disappointed, but that feeling could not make any difference to his loyalty to his chum. He felt that his chances of becoming cricket captain had received a blow; but, as a matter of fact, he over-rated the extent of it. Harry's cricket was undeniably good, but Cherry's personal qualities were much more popular, and it was extremely probable that, after all, the Remove would plump for Bob Cherry.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Upper Fourth Object.

THE kettle was singing away cheerily to No. 1 Study as the chums of the Remove came in. There was a pleasant smell of hot muffins. Billy Bunter looked up from the fire with a crimson countenance, and blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"Tea's ready!" he exclaimed. "I suppose you'll want it before you go to the Form meeting. I've opened the sardines; you'll find 'em in the soap-dish. Shall I make the tea?"

"I'll do that," said Nugent. "You butter the muffins. They smell prime."

"Yes, I rather think I can toast muffins," said Bunter. "I intend to stand a regular feed of muffins when my postal order comes. There wasn't enough butter—"

"Why, here's nearly half a pound on the table."

"Yes, I took that out of Wingate's study. One of you chaps must get some more from the school shop and take it back before he notices it. Very likely he wouldn't like it being taken away."

"Ha, ha, ha! I think that's pretty certain. Never mind; those muffins are jolly good. Come and feed, my infants," said Bob Cherry. "We're rather late, and we don't want to get in late to the cricket club meeting. Important members of the Form like ourselves ought to be on the ground early."

"Rather!" agreed Nugent. "Pass the sardines. You can go on buttering the muffins, Bunter; there will be time for you to feed after we're gone."

"That's all very well, Nugent. It doesn't look as if there will be anything—"

"Don't start gassing now, Bunter, old chap; we've got to talk business. I suppose both you bouncers are going to put up for the cricket captaincy?" said Nugent.

"The bothfulness will occasion doubtfulness among the Form voters," said Hurree Singh. "Why not have the tossfulness of the shilling to decide?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I'm willing to stand out if it's the general verdict of the study," Bob Cherry remarked, looking round.

"Not a bit of it, old fellow."

"Same here," said Wharton immediately. "I admit I should like to be cricket captain in the Remove, and I think I could do some good there, but—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Nugent. "The only difficulty is this, that you two will divide the voting, and possibly Bulstrode may get in by reason of that."

"That won't do," said Harry Wharton decidedly. "Bulstrode isn't fit to be captain. He would rot up the cricket club in no time."

"Exactly. Bulstrode will have to be kept out—not that we love Bulstrode less, but that we love the cricket club more. There's no room for him as captain. Still, I suppose we can see how the voting is likely to go at the meeting, as if it appears likely that Bulstrode will get in, one of you two bouncers can stand out, and back up the other, and that will settle it. You can decide in that case by tossing up, as our inky friend suggests."

"Exactly. I say—"

"Hallo, here's some of the Upper Fourth rotters! I wonder what they want?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, glancing at a couple of juniors who had appeared in the doorway of the study.

The two were Temple and Dabney, the heads of the Upper Fourth, two rather elegant youths, who usually assumed the advantage given them by being a few months older, to disparagingly refer to the Removites as "kids," and to assume fatherly airs towards them—airs which were very ill-received by the Remove, the most unruly Form at Greyfriars.

"We've just dropped in to speak to you youngsters," said Temple, affecting not to have heard Bob Cherry's unflattering allusion to himself and his companion.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney, who was a faithful echo of his leader.

"Go hon!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't trouble to come in!"

"Safer on the other side of the door," said Nugent, "if you're going to refer to members of the Remove as youngsters."

"Well, you are youngsters, you know," said Temple, "and jolly cheeky youngsters, too. What I say is—"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Harry Wharton rose to his feet.

"What the dickens do you fellows mean by coming into a respectable study?" he asked. "Lend me a hand to chuck them out, chaps!"

"Certainly."

"The chuckfulness shall be immediate and extremely violent," said the nabob. "Let us frog's march the esteemed rotters."

"Pax!" exclaimed Temple, holding up his hand. "We've come here to talk—"

"Like your cheek," said Wharton. "You do enough talking in that debating society of yours without invading our study for the purpose. When we want a talking-machine here we'll save up and buy a gramophone."

"Look here—"

"Shan't! You've no right to ask a fellow to look at a face like that!"

"If you want me to warm you, you have only got to say so," roared Temple, growing excited.

Dabney tapped him on the arm.

"Oh, come on, kids!" said Wharton. "We do want to be warmed. We want you to warm us. In fact, we're simply yearning to be warmed up by you. Come on!"

"Look here—"

"I won't—for reasons already stated."

"I want to speak—"

"I've noticed you're often troubled that way."

"You confounded cheeky young rotter—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"I want to tell you about the cricket—"

"There's nothing you can tell us about cricket," said Harry Wharton, with a shake of the head. "We knew all there was to be known about cricket before you were born."

"It's about that silly ass's idea of yours of starting an independent Remove cricket team—"

"Hallo! What have you got to say about that?"

"Just listen a minute, and you'll see. I—"

"I say, you fellows, you're letting the muffins get cold," interjected Billy Bunter anxiously.

"By Jove, so we are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That won't do. There's no reason why Temple shouldn't go on talking, if he wants to, while we eat muffins. Go it, Temple."

"Good idea," said Nugent.

The famous four promptly turned to their muffins again. Temple and Dabney exchanged wrathful glances, and came a step further into the study.

"Well, I can't say I exactly like to watch kids guzzling,"

said Temple loftily. "Still, I know how much it means to a Lower Fourth kid to be kept off his feed, so eat away while I talk—"

"Cut it short, old chap."

"I'll talk as long as I like!" yelled Temple, showing signs of losing his temper again.

"Oh, very well!" said Wharton resignedly. "Go on till we've finished tea. When we've done we're going to a Form meeting, but you can stay here and go on talking if you like. Bunter won't mind."

"Not at all," said Billy Bunter hospitably. "He can go on talking for all I care. I don't mind in the least, so long as there's something to eat."

"That's what I call really kind," said Bob Cherry approvingly.

Bunter's kindness did not seem to gratify the captain of the Upper Fourth very much. He restrained himself with a great effort.

"Look here, you kids, I hear that you are thinking of getting up an independent cricket club in the Remove—"

"The lateness of the intelligence is great," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The getupfulness of the cricketful club is complete."

"Yes, you do seem to be a bit behind the times, Temple," said Wharton. "We've already had a cricket club running in the Remove from time immemorial, so to speak, and the difference is that we're going to run a Remove team, and let you keep your old rotten eleven all to yourselves."

"That's the wheeze!" said Bob Cherry.

"I suppose this is your silly idea, Wharton—"

"Well, I had a hand in it," said Harry Wharton modestly. "It was certainly first thought of in this study. We share equally in the credit."

"Credit!" sniffed Temple. "Not much credit due to anybody for a silly muf's idea like that. There are already three teams at Greyfriars, Upper Forms, Middle School, and Junior—"

"Now there's going to be a fourth."

"The Junior team serves all purposes," said Temple. "We in the Upper Fourth are naturally the heads of it, but we've never raised any objection to you chaps having four or even five members in the eleven, as well as a lot of reserves."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, I remember how it was with the football; I wasn't here last cricket season. We had plenty of names put down as reserves for the junior eleven, but you hardly ever played more than two or three Removites."

"There weren't more'n two or three fit to play—"

"I don't know. Do you mean to say that you played the fellows strictly in order of merit?"

"Yes, I did. I suppose you don't suspect me of favouritism?"

"Oh, no; but you've got an idea into your head that your Form is a cut over ours, and we, of course, think the exact contrary."

"Oh, that's all rot, you know!" said Temple.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney. "You must admit that, Wharton."

"Not much. If you played fellows strictly on their merits, you'd have made one of us captain, and played six or seven Removites in the eleven—"

"What!"

"That's our view, at any rate."

"Well, that only shows you're a set of conceited asses," said Temple. "I've come here to talk business. A fourth team isn't wanted at Greyfriars. I don't think it's proper for a low Form like the Remove to get its tail up in this manner. If you fellows have a separate team, you'll get putting on all sorts of airs. You'll get challenging lower Forms at other schools, and village teams—"

"That's just what we intend to do."

"There, I knew it! You'll get licked, of course, and make yourselves look ridiculous, and Greyfriars too."

"H'm! We shall see."

"That's all very well, but after it's done, it will be too late. You youngsters are too cocky already. Now, I don't like this wheeze of a Remove eleven—"

"Sorry; but that won't make much difference to the Remove, I expect."

"I regard it as being cheeky on your part—"

"My dear chap, you can regard it as being anything you like; it won't trouble us. We don't want to interfere with your kind regards."

"Well, we're not going to stand it, Wharton, so I warn you. It's a rotten idea, and will lead to cheek and disrespect on the part of the Remove. We set our faces against the whole idea—"

"Well, that ought to finish it, if anything will," Bob Cherry remarked. "There are few things that could stand such treatment and survive."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, I shouldn't be surprised if later on you had the cheek to challenge us to a match, and set yourselves up as the champion junior cricketers of Greyfriars!" exclaimed Temple.

"My dear kid, we're going to!"

"Oh, come away, Temple, it's no good talking to those cheeky infants!" said Dabney. "The only argument they can understand is a jolly good licking."

"Then why not wade in and bestow the lickfulness without delayfulness?" questioned Hurree Singh. "The delightfulness on our side will be terrific."

Temple and Dabney seemed inclined to take the junior at his word. But the odds were too great. The Remove at Greyfriars was a fighting Form, and the famous four of No. 1 Study were a fighting quartette. The Upper Fourth chiefs looked at the Removites, and looked at one another, and stepped out into the passage.

"Well, just remember what I say," said Temple. "We're against all this rot, and we're going to put our foot down on it."

"Well, there won't be much of it seen after that," said Nugent.

"I tell you—"

"Don't tell us any more, Temple. You've talked quite a long time now, and you must think of your vocal chords. Suppose you were to lose your voice from talking so much, what a fearful loss for the Upper Fourth Debating and Jabbering Society!"

"You young rotters—"

"Come along, Temple; no good talking to them. I expect they'll just row, and the thing will come to nothing; and if it doesn't, we'll bust it up for them later."

And the heroes of the Upper Fourth went their way. A yell of derision from Study No. 1 followed them, which almost made them turn back for summary vengeance. But they did not, and the chums of the Remove were left victorious.

"Time to go to the meeting," said Harry Wharton, getting up from the table with a smile. "I thought this wheeze of ours would make the Upper Fourth pretty wild, but I hardly expected Temple and Dabney to give themselves away over it like this. They're afraid of getting put in the shade by the Remove—that's the trouble—and they're right, too. We're going ahead at cricket this term. Come along, kids!"

And the famous four, in high spirits, linked arms and marched along the passage to the Remove-room, to attend the general meeting of the Lower Fourth Form Cricket Club.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Cricket Election.

THE Remove-room presented a lively scene. It usually did at that time, as a matter of fact, but on the present occasion it was a little livelier than usual. The whole Form—or nearly the whole of it—had met to discuss the important matter which was now occupying the attention of the Remove.

The idea which had emanated from Study No. 1 in the Remove had caught on like wildfire—it had been seconded, thirded, fourthed, passed unanimously, and adopted by the Greyfriars Remove amid general enthusiasm.

In the junior eleven, during the football season, it had been very generally and sorely felt that the Remove had not really had a "look in."

The captaincy had naturally been in the upper of the two Forms that supplied the team; Temple had been captain, and Dabney his right-hand man. And although the chums of the Upper Fourth were not accused of favouritism, it was certain that they had a leaning—really natural enough on their part—towards members of their own Form. They regarded the Removites as cheeky kids who had to be kept in their place. If too many Removites were admitted to the team, they would want to be running the show, and so on. Undeniably good players like Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Bulstrode could not be kept out. But only the very best were taken into the fold of the Junior Eleven. And the Remove sorely and angrily maintained that a good many Removites who had not the ghost of a chance of getting into the junior team were far and away better players than some of the Upper Fourth fellows who swaggered about in the caps of the Junior Eleven.

It was a point upon which the two Forms could not be expected to agree, and they did not agree. The suggestion of an independent Remove eleven had been the result.

The Remove already ran a Form cricket club, with all the officers duly elected, and so the way was made smooth for the innovation.

Instead of humbly attending the cricket committee presided over by the lordly Temple, they decided to have a cricket committee of their own, and to elect a captain of their own, and to pick out eleven good men and true to uphold the colours of the Remove on the cricket field.

And the idea of, later on, challenging the Upper Fourth

to a cricket match and beating them, was simply delightful to the warlike Removites.

There was a buzz in the Remove-room as the chums of Study No. 1 entered in a body.

"Here they come!"

Bulstrode looked towards the new-comers with a scowl upon his brow. Before Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry came to Greyfriars he had been cock of the Remove, and his word had been law in the Form-room. Now things were changed. Bulstrode was little better than a bully, at the best, and the Form had found new leaders. Even Harry Wharton was living down the unpopularity his temper had at first excited, and was coming to be looked upon as something like the head of the Form.

"Here they are!" said Skinner. "You're late, you bounders!"

"Sorry!" said Harry Wharton. "We've been listening to the voice of the charmer. Temple and Dabney don't approve of our proceedings, and they came to tell us so."

There was a yell of derision.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lot of difference that will make!" grinned Hazeldene.

"Well, no, it won't make much difference," said Harry Wharton. "Of course, it will make some difference."

"To you, perhaps," sneered Bulstrode, "not to us."

"My dear chap, it will make some difference to all of us—that the more the Upper Fourth is down on our idea, the more we shall go ahead with it."

"Ha, ha! Rather!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Good!" exclaimed Russell. "We'll jolly soon show Temple, Dabney, & Co. that we're not going to have them interfering in Remove affairs."

"Well, rather!"

"The question is," said Bulstrode, "about electing a Remove captain. I was football captain in the Remove, as far as practice went."

"And as far as playing matches went, you seem to have let the Upper Fourth have pretty much of its own way," Harry Wharton remarked.

The Remove bully scowled.

"Well, this new wheeze hadn't been started then."

"No; and what I say is, that the fellows who started it ought to be thought of when it comes to electing a captain," exclaimed Skinner.

"Oh, that's rot, Skinner!"

"Oh, is it? I don't see it, Bulstrode. There's Bob Cherry—"

"Blow Bob Cherry!"

"You can blow him if you like, if he'll let you, but I think that he will make a jolly good cricket captain for the Remove."

"Hear, hear!"

It was a ringing shout, and it showed that Bob Cherry had plenty of backers in the Greyfriars Remove.

"Oh, shut up that row!" said Hazeldene. "Let's get out a list of the candidates, and then let's have a show of hands. That's the businesslike way to proceed."

"Good for Vaseliue!"

"Go it, then!"

"The first question is, how many candidates? Every chap who thinks he's qualified to shine as cricket captain of the Remove is hereby requested to get up on his hind legs and say so," said Hazeldene.

"Well, I'm one," said Bulstrode, coming forward with a rather aggressive glare; "I'm a candidate, and chance it."

"I'm another!" said Bob Cherry, stepping towards him.

"And Harry Wharton's another."

"Stand up and show yourself, Wharton."

"Here I am!"

"That rotten outsider!" exclaimed Bulstrode scornfully.

"Why, it's not so long ago that we had to carry him down by main force to the football practice."

There was a general laugh at the reminiscence. Harry Wharton coloured. He was not particularly proud of some passages in his early career at Greyfriars, but fellows like Bulstrode were not likely to let him forget them easily.

"Well, it's not long since I gave you a licking, Bulstrode," he said. "And, as a matter of fact, it won't be long before I give you another, if you can't keep personal matters out of the discussion."

"That's right," exclaimed Nugent, "keep personal matters out of it. What Wharton did or didn't do when he first came to Greyfriars has nothing to do with the affair in hand, as far as I can see."

"Of course it hasn't," said Russell. "Keep off the grass, Bulstrode. There's no time here for you and Wharton to start chipping one another. Now, we've got three candidates; anybody going to make a fourth?"

There was no reply. Probably a good many of the Removites were anxious enough to gain the glory of captaining the Form eleven, but considered that they had no

chance against the trio of candidates who had already come forward.

"Don't be backward in coming forward," said Bob Cherry, looking round. "It's a free country, you know, and you've only got to speak. It's an open event. Any more coming on? Now, then!"

There were no more coming on; Bulstrode, Wharton, and Cherry were the only candidates.

"Good!" said Skinner. "Now we'd better proceed to the election."

"Right-ho!" said Nugent. "Hands up for—"

"Oh, rats, let's proceed in order!" said Skinner. "You have to appoint tellers first, as there's such a crowd of voters. Then I think the candidates ought to make a speech."

"Only one between them?"

"Ass! A speech each."

"Very well, let them make a speech each," said Nugent resignedly. "You hear, you chaps? You're expected to make a each peach—I mean a speech, peach each—that is—"

"Oh, shut up, and let them talk!"

"You first, Bulstrode, as the oldest and ugliest," said Bob Cherry.

Bulstrode gave the facetious Bob a far from amiable look.

"I haven't much to say," he began.

"Well, that's a jolly good thing, anyway," said Nugent.

"Shut up!"

"Order!"

"Get on, Bulstrode!"

"I haven't much to say. I think I ought to be captain, not only because my cricket's the best in the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha!"

"But because I'm the oldest fellow in the Form."

"And ugliest," said Bob Cherry, sotto voce.

"Shut up, Cherry!" said Skinner. "Keep those painful truths for a more fitting occasion. Get on with the washing, Bulstrode."

"I'll punch that rotter Cherry's head!"

"No time for that now. Are you finished?"

"No," snarled Bulstrode, "I'm not finished."

"Well, got finished, then. We shall have to turn out the gas here in another couple of hours, you know."

"I'm the oldest fellow in the Form, and was captain of the Remove till those rotten outsiders shoved themselves in. I ought to be cricket captain. That's all."

"About enough, too," remarked Russell.

"The enoughfulness is terrific," said the nabob; "Bulstrode has made an esteemed and honourable, rotten speech—"

"Oh, cheese it, Inky!"

"Next man in—I mean, next speech, and for goodness' sake buck up! I don't see why the Remove should stand here like a lot of patient little lambs to be jawed at," said Hazeldene.

"Well, stop jawing, then," said Skinner. "Your jaw next, Cherry."

"I haven't much to say—"

"H'm! The candidates tie on that point," said Russell.

"I haven't much to say—"

"There's nothing original about that remark, Cherry, and you needn't trouble to keep on repeating it."

"I haven't much—"

"You haven't much sense, I think," said Skinner. "For goodness' sake come to the point, and give us a rest!"

"If you are looking for a thick ear, Skinny—"

"Cherry's finished. Next man in!"

"I haven't finished. I haven't started yet—"

"Well, you ought to have. We've heard enough, any way. Now—"

"Look here, I'm going on, so dry up! I haven't much to say. Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I haven't much to say, but here it is—I play better cricket than Bulstrode, and I'm not half so conceited as that bounder is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I think I should make a better cricket captain. I'd do my best, anyway, and you wouldn't find me spoiling my wind by smoking cheap cigarettes on the sly, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's one for you, Bulstrode!"

"That's how I stand," said Bob Cherry. "I think I should make a pretty good skipper. You can elect me or not as you like. That's about all."

"Then for goodness' sake shut up!" said Hazeldene.

"Come and jaw, Wharton, if you want your turn!"

"I don't particularly want—"

"Oh, come and get it over!"

"I haven't much to say—"

"My hat! They're all in the same boat! The rotters haven't much to say, and they're taking up the whole evening to say it."

"I am putting up as candidate for cricket captain of the Remove—"

"We know that already—"

"Because I think I should fill the post pretty well, better than Bulstrode, anyway. A cricket captain who smokes cheap cigarettes is no good, and Bulstrode does."

"Mind your own beastly business!" snapped Bulstrode.

"It is my business when you want to take the lead in the Form cricket!" retorted Harry Wharton. "The first duty of a cricket captain, I suppose, is to keep himself fit. You don't do that. About Cherry I've nothing to say—I've no doubt he'd make as good a captain as I should, if not in one way, then in another—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I don't want to brag about my cricket, but I believe I play a pretty good game, and you've seen me play for yourselves, anyway. If you elect me, I'll be as good a skipper as I know how, and I'll make it a point to get the eleven into first-class form and lick the Upper Fourth."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's about all!"

"Good!" said Skinner, when the cheers had died away—cheers which showed what an advance Harry Wharton had made in the good opinion of the Form during the past few weeks. "Now put it to the vote. Cherry's my candidate, but give every man a chance. Hands up for Bulstrode!"

About a dozen hands went up. Bulstrode looked round with a scowl. Even those who voted for him were mostly the smaller Removites, who did not venture to back up his rivals with the bully's eye upon them. It was perfectly clear that the one-time cock of the Remove had no chance. There were enough against him to give the other two candidates each a majority over his party.

"That settles Bulstrode!" said Skinner. "It's between Cherry and Wharton. Bulstrode, old chap, you're dead in this act!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode; and he swung out of the room with a scowl.

"Now for the others," said Skinner. "His lordship is offended, but I dare say some of us will manage to survive it. Hands up—"

"Wait a bit!" said Harry Wharton, interposing.

Skinner glared at him.

"I'm running this election, Wharton."

"I can see you are," assented Harry. "You're running it in rather a hurry, too. I don't want a show of hands against Bob Cherry."

"Are you withdrawing, then?"

"No, not exactly that, either. I've got a suggestion to make—"

"Oh, get it over then, for goodness' sake!"

"Go it, old fellow!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "You shut up, Skinny! You want to do all the talking. Give a chap a chance!"

"Oh, if that's all I get for backing you up, Cherry—"

"Cheese it! Go ahead, Wharton. I don't want a show of hands against a pal, and if there's any other way—"

"This is my idea," said Harry Wharton. "It's between Cherry and myself, that's admitted. My idea is to settle the question on our cricket form. We can get up a scratch match to-morrow afternoon between two Remove elevens, with Bob Cherry on one side as skipper, and myself on the other. The skipper who makes the best show to be elected captain of the Remove team."

There was a cheer at once.

The suggestion just "jumped" with the ideas of the Remove, and it was evident that it would be unanimously adopted. The contest, too, promised some excitement for the Removites. Bob Cherry slapped Harry Wharton on the back.

"Good for you, Harry! I'm agreeable!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Suggestion's adopted unanimously!" said Skinner. "The election's suspended for the present; Bulstrode's knocked out, and Cherry and Wharton are going to settle the question on the cricket-pitch. Gentlemen of the Remove, this meeting is now over, and I'm off to my study for some tea!"

And the meeting of the Remove broke up.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Upper Fourth Get Their Backs Up.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Don't!"

"Oh, but I say!" went on Billy Bunter, unheeding. "It's rather interesting, you know! I have only just heard—"

"That your postal-order is coming, Billy?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

Billy Bunter shook his head.

"BILLY'S BOOM."

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
by FRANK RICHARDS.

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE HALFPENNY.

"No; there's some delay about that, Cherry, and, speaking of that postal-order, I'd like you to lend me a bob, if you will, till it comes, as I'm nearly stony!"

"It will be a long till," Nugent remarked.

Bob Cherry, with a grimace, tossed the shilling to Billy Bunter, who put it into his pocket carelessly enough. Billy believed that he would pay it back some time, and so his conscience was quite easy. As a matter of fact, Billy Bunter had never been known to repay a loan all the time he had been at Greyfriars. So Bob Cherry was not quite so easy in his mind as Bunter was. But the lender is usually not quite so satisfied over a transaction as the borrower.

"I say, you fellows," went on Billy Bunter, "it's interesting, you know—I thought you chaps would like to hear about it—"

"What is it?"

"I heard it from Skinner, and I've no doubt it's all quite correct—"

"But what is it?"

"I made up my mind to tell you fellows at once as soon as you came back from the Form meeting—"

"What is it?" howled three voices together.

"Oh, don't be impatient, kids!" said Billy Bunter. "You confuse me when you speak so loudly. You know Temple and Dabney are down on the idea of a Remove eleven—"

"They can be down on it till they're black in the face," said Bob Cherry. "It won't make any difference to us!"

"Hardly," said Nugent.

"Not a bitfully," said Hurree Singh. "We shall only go on our way with the more invincibility of the determination because of the oppositeness of the esteemed rotters of the Upper Fourth."

"But what have you got to tell us, Billy?" said Wharton.

"Do make an effort and get it off your chest, kid!"

"Ain't I trying to do it, but you chaps keep on interrupting me," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "Temple and Dabney have called a meeting of the heads of the Upper Fourth in their study—"

"Have they? What for?"

"Skinner says Hazeldene told him that it was to consult upon measures for putting the Remove in their place."

Harry Wharton's eyes glinted with the light of battle.

"By Jove! If they like to throw down the gauntlet we'll take it up!" he exclaimed. "The Upper Fourth want teaching that they cannot interfere with the Remove with impunity!"

"That's a jolly good word, anyway," said Billy Bunter admiringly.

"But how does Vaseline know what he told Skinner?" asked Nugent.

Bunter shook his head.

"I don't know; Skinner didn't say."

"You can depend upon it it's all right," said Bob Cherry.

"Hazeldene generally manages to get hold of the right information. Lots of things come to the ears of a fellow who isn't above listening at a keyhole."

"That's true enough."

"I expect Hazeldene overheard something," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "I can't say I like his methods, but if the Upper Fourth are plotting against us, it's high time we went on the warpath ourselves."

"What-ho!"

"We'll see Hazeldene, anyway, and see what he says."

"Where is he, Bunter?"

"I think you'll find him in the common-room."

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton.

The famous four lost no time in getting to the common-room in quest of Hazeldene. Hazeldene, otherwise known as Vaseline, was the Paul Pry and Peeping Tom of the Remove, and few things went on in the Form, or any other Form at Greyfriars, without Vaseline getting to know all about it.

The chums of the Remove were quite ready to go on the warpath. So long as the Upper Fourth confined their objections to the new Remove team to words, it did not matter much. But if they were going to take active measures, the Remove had its reputation as a fighting Form to keep up, and it was a good idea to get the first blow.

Hazeldene looked rather alarmed as the four chums ran him to earth in the junior common-room and surrounded him. But Harry hastened to reassure him.

"It's all right, Vaseline," he said. "We only want a word or two with you."

"The wordfulness will be friendly and polite," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The hostility of the meeting is non-existent."

Hazeldene grinned.

"Well, what's the trouble?" he asked.

"What's that about a meeting in Temple and Dabney's"

NEXT TUESDAY.

study?" asked Harry Wharton. "A meeting against us, I take it?"

"Oh, it's a fact!" said Hazeldene. "I happened to hear Temple say to Dabney—"

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh.

"You often happen to hear people say things when they don't know you're near, Vaseline!" he remarked.

Hazeldene scowled.

"Oh, all right, if you don't want me to tell you—"

"But we do," said Harry Wharton. "Go ahead!"

"I heard it quite by accident. I thought they had something up between them, so I—I mean, I was passing by chance, and—"

"That's all right. Get on with the washing!"

Temple spoke to Dabney about the meeting that was to come off in his study after tea. He asked Dab if he had told the fellows.

"And what did Dabney say?"

"He said he had, and that there would be seven or eight fellows there, to discuss the plans for putting the Remove in its place."

"Not much doubt about that, Harry," said Bob Cherry, with a shake of the head.

"No, rather not."

"Are you going to get up some wheeze against the Upper Fourth?" said Hazeldene.

"Well, we're going to think it over," said Harry Wharton diplomatically. He was by no means disposed to take the cad of the Remove fully into his confidence.

The famous four strolled away.

"There's no doubt about it," said Harry Wharton, when they were alone in the passage, "the Upper Fourth are going to get up on their hind-legs and try to smash the Remove cricket club."

"They'll find it a rather big job," remarked Bob Cherry.

"Bigger than they anticipate, I fancy," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "My idea is to carry the war into Africa at the start."

"Into Africa?" said Hurree Singh, looking puzzled. "But the Dark Continent is a long way from here, and what purpose—"

Harry laughed.

"That's a figure of speech. I mean, carry the war into the enemy's country."

"Ah, I see! You speak in the metaphoricalness of the poetic speechfulness," said the nabob. "I am comprehensively enlightened. Pray proceed, my esteemed chum."

"Let them hold their giddy meeting," said Harry Wharton. "That's where we come on the scene. We'll wait till they're all in Temple's study, and then—"

"And then—"

"We shall want a screwdriver and some screws."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Temple, Dabney & Co. in Trouble.

TEMPLE, of the Upper Fourth, was looking serious and earnest—deadly earnest. Temple, of the Upper Fourth, had made up his mind, and he meant to let Greyfriars generally know it—especially the Remove.

"They're coming," said Dabney, coming into the study. "I've spoken to six fellows. That will be enough for a representative meeting, and the study won't hold a crowd."

Temple nodded.

"Quite right, Dab. Who are coming?"

"Giddy and Blane and Fry, Castle and Lorne and Scott."

"Good! After all, so long as the heads of the Form settle the matter, there's no need for the small fry to be allowed to jaw about it," said Temple. "We've got to crush the Remove, and that's all there is about it!"

"Here they come!"

The members of the Upper Fourth called to the meeting were coming into the study. Fry and Scott and Giddy came in first. They looked round anticipatively, as if in search of something.

"Looking for anything?" asked Dabney pleasantly.

"Well," said Fry, "we thought—"

"You thought what?"

"You asked us all to come—from Temple."

"That's right," said Temple. "I told Dab to ask you."

"Then"—Fry looked round expressively—"then it isn't a feed!"

"A feed! Goodness, no!"

"Oh!" said Fry.

"Oh!" said Scott and Giddy.

Temple looked rather annoyed.

"I don't see why you should jump to the conclusion that it was a feed," he said. "I want to talk business."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you don't want to attend this meeting, Fry—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Fry, sitting down in the

rocking-chair. "I don't mind. I'm willing to stick it out for a bit, anyhow. What do you fellows say?"

"Well," said Giddy, "I think there ought to be something to eat, but I don't mind. Temple's a good sort, and I don't mind if he talks a bit, so long as he doesn't keep us here jawing all the evening."

"That's how I look at it," said Scott.

Temple was about to make a rather annoyed rejoinder when the other three invited members came in. Castle and Lorne and Blane seemed to look round for something, just as the other three had done.

"No, there's no feed," said Temple sarcastically. "Sit down, if you can find anything to sit on, and pay attention."

Castle looked inquiringly at Fry.

"What's on, Fry?" he asked.

Fry shook his head.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "Better ask old Temple!"

"I'm going to tell you as fast as I can!" snapped Temple. "This meeting is called to talk business—important business—"

"Anything to do with the cricket?" asked Castle.

"Yes, in a way."

"Then go ahead, old fellow! By the way, have you heard about that new wheeze they're getting up in the Remove—having a cricket team of their own?"

"Cheeky young rascals!" said Blane.

"That's what this meeting is called about," said Temple.

The meeting was all attention at once.

"I thought Dab had told you."

"Yes, he did tell us something," said Blane. "But I was playing cricket, and didn't notice."

"I remember it was something about the Remove now," said Castle, with a yawn. "Are you going to drop on the cheeky kids and crush 'em, Temp?"

"Yes, that's the idea."

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting encouragingly.

"Shut that door, Dab, and let's get to business."

"Oh, rather!"

"You know, chaps," said Temple, looking round—"you know that the Remove have always been the cheekiest and impudentest Form at Greyfriars—"

"Oh, rather!"

"They have wanted to be put in their place long enough. My idea is that we've left the work too long, and ought to take it in hand in earnest now."

"Good idea!" said Castle.

"Their latest is to withdraw their support from the Junior Cricket Club, and take their members out of the Third Eleven," said Temple. "They're starting a new cricket team to belong entirely to the Remove—"

"Yes, we know that!"

"Don't interrupt me, Giddy, please!"

"Oh, get on! Don't tell us things we know!"

"Well, my idea is that it's time for us to come down heavy, and bust up the concern!" said Temple. "What do you fellows think?"

"It's a good idea," said Castle—"a jolly good idea. But how are you going to carry it out? That's the question!"

"The important point is to decide whether they're to be put down," said Temple. "If we decide that they are, it only remains to bring the weight of the authority of the Upper Fourth to bear upon the matter."

"Good! But do you think they will take any notice of it?" asked Fry. "My experience of the Remove is that they're a sight too cool and cheeky to care a rap for the weight of the authority of the Upper Fourth."

"That's so," said Castle, with a nod.

"I suppose we can put them down if we try!" said Temple angrily. "If necessary, we can get the leaders in here and give them a licking."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"I think that—What's that at the door?"

"Nothing."

"It's somebody trying to get in, I think."

"Rot! If anybody wanted to get in, I suppose he could walk in, couldn't he? The door's not locked!"

"Well, as I was saying, it's simply a question of putting the Remove in their places, and teaching them to regard the Upper Fourth with proper respect. I—Who on earth is that fumbling with the handle of the door outside?"

"I heard it that time," said Fry, looking round.

"Anybody there?" called out Giddy. "If there's anybody there, come in!"

There was no reply. But somebody was certainly touching the door-handle on the outside. Dabney went to the door.

"I'll jolly soon see!" he remarked. He turned the handle of the door and pulled, but to his surprise it would not come open. He pulled again. The door was fast.

"There's something wrong with this door, Temple."

"Rot! Why don't you pull it open?"

"It won't come open!"



"Then why can't you vote for me?" asked Cherry.
"You see, I sha'n't have a vote," replied Billy Bunter.

"Don't stand there and talk piffle like that, Dabney. It will come open if you pull it, I suppose!"

"Suppose you come and try yourself!" said Dabney crossly. "I tell you it won't come open!"

"Rats! I'll jolly soon open it!"

Temple took the handle of the door and gave it a violent jerk. But the door did not budge. There was a sound of a chuckle in the corridor.

Temple uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There's somebody outside there! It's a jape!"

"They're holding the door!" said Fry.

"Ass! They couldn't hold it so tight as that!"

"Have they locked it on the outside?" asked Giddy.

"Here's the key on the inside!"

"By Jove, so it is! I don't see what they've done, then!"

"I do!" said Temple savagely. "They've fastened a rope across, from the handle of this door to the handle of the door opposite!"

"By Jove, that will keep both of them closed!"

Temple hammered on the panels of the study door with his fists. He was in a towering rage at being thus fastened up in his study, and he had not the slightest doubt that the Removites were at the bottom of it. And the humiliation of being fastened up in his study by the very juniors whose defeat had been under discussion was too terrible to think of. It was not only the jeers of the Remove, but the merciless chipping of his own Form, that he had to fear.

"Open this door, you young rotters!"

There was another chuckle from the passage. But the Removites deigned no other reply. There was a faint creaking sound outside, exactly what, Temple could not determine.

"Is it going in, Bob?"

He heard Harry Wharton's voice murmur the question.

"Yes, but it's slow. You see, the wood's jolly hard."

"Never mind, so long as it does go in."

"Oh, that's all right! This is the second screw. I'll make it four before I finish, and then the door will be safe till doomsday."

Temple gasped.

"My only hat! They're screwing up the door!" he exclaimed. "They've fastened the rope across just while they're putting in the screws, to keep it safe!"

"My only aunt!"

"Open this door, you young beasts! We'll break your necks for this!"

There was only a chuckle in reply.

The heroes of the Remove wasted no words upon the lordly members of the Upper Fourth. Bob Cherry was busy with screws and screwdriver, and his chums were helping him all they could. The screws were driven firmly in, and the door of Temple's study would have required a battering-ram to shift it. Then the rope across the passage was taken down. It was no longer required.

Temple was still hammering helplessly on the inside of

the door. His companions joined him in that exciting occupation, without making much impression upon the stout oak, and making still less upon the chums of the Remove.

"Will you open this door?" roared Temple at last. This time not even a chuckle replied to him. There was a sound of receding footsteps, and then dead silence in the passage. The chums of the Remove were gone. Temple hammered for a minute or two longer in helpless fury, and then desisted. The chief members of the Upper Fourth looked at one another. They were looking sheepish. They had met together in solemn conclave to decide the fate of the Remove, and the Removites had coolly screwed them up in the study.

It was a terrible blow to the prestige of the Form; but even that was not the worst aspect of the case. How were they to get out?

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Exit.

"WELL," said Fry, in a tone of concentrated sarcasm, "why don't you open the door, Temple?"

Temple was looking very red and flustered with his efforts.

"I can't! Can't you see it's fastened?"

"Yes, it's fastened," said Fry. "Is this the way you are going to put down the Remove, Temple? Is this the way they're to be put in their place?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"What I say is," said Fry, looking round—"what I say is, that I've had enough of putting the Remove in its place, if this is the way to do it. Nice set of silly asses we look at the present moment, don't we?"

"Well, you never looked anything else, you know!" said Dabney.

"What I say is—"

"You've said enough," grunted Temple. "If you can think of a way of getting this door open say so, otherwise shut up!"

"What I say is—"

"We're screwed in," said Temple; "no getting away from that. I don't see that it's anybody's fault. We couldn't foresee a thing of that sort."

"Of course not," grinned Fry. "You couldn't, anyway."

"Well, you couldn't either, confound you!"

"I wasn't calling the meeting, that I know of. I wasn't setting out on the war-path with a flourish of trumpets to put the Remove in its place. I wasn't—"

"Oh, cheese it! How are we going to get out, you fellows?"

The fellows all looked at Temple in a very expressive way.

"That's your business," said Castle. "You asked us into your study, and we naturally expect to get out again. It's for you to settle that."

"How could I help it?"

"A chup who sets up to lead us against the Remove ought to lead us into something better than this," said Fry. "We were going to put the Remove down. Instead of that, they've put us down."

"They're not doing anything of the sort."

"What do you call this, then? We shall be the joke of Greyfriars. What I say is—"

"We've got to get out before it gets wind, that's all."

"How?" asked the irritating Fry.

"Not by standing there asking fool's questions!" snapped Temple. "Hallo! I can hear somebody coming along the passage. Let's call to him, and—"

"He'll spread it all over the school," said Dabney.

"Yes, so he will. We won't—"

"Yes, we will," said Castle. "I don't care if it's spread all over the school, or all over the country, I'm not going to stay in here all night!"

"Look here, Castle—"

But Castle was already rapping on the door. The footsteps in the passage ceased.

"Hallo, out there!" called out Castle.

"Shut up, Castle!"

"Shan't! Hallo there!"

"Hallo!" came back a voice from the passage.

Temple groaned. It was the voice of Billy Bunter, the Owl.

"It's a Remove fellow!"

"I don't care! Hallo, Bunter!"

"Hallo, kid!"

"Can you get this door open?"

"Yes, I suppose so, by turning the handle. What's the game?"

"It's screwed up on the outside."

"Oh, is it? Somebody been having a joke with you?"

"Well, yes. Will you get a screwdriver, and take the screws out?"

"I wish I could, but I'm afraid I'm too tired to do hard work like that. Perhaps somebody else will come along and do it."

"If you don't, I'll give you a fearful licking!" roared Castle.

"And I'll give you another!" yelled Blane.

"I'm sincerely sorry, but—"

"Hold your row!" growled Temple. "I say, Bunter, if you can get the screws out without attracting a lot of attention, I'll stand you a ripping feed at the tuckshop!"

"Good egg!" murmured Dabney.

The Upper Fourth fellows grinned; they could not help it. Temple evidently possessed some of the qualities of a leader. He knew Billy Bunter's weakest point, and had called it to mind at once.

"I say, will you really?" came back Billy Bunter's voice through the keyhole. "Do you mean that, Temple, honest Injun?"

"I give you my word."

"What sort of a feed do you mean?" asked the cautious Bunter. "Just a few jam-tarts and a bottle of ginger-pop?"

"Well, isn't that enough for taking a few screws out of a door, you young hog?" exclaimed the exasperated Temple.

"It's a jolly long job," said Billy Bunter. "I think there are about four screws in the door, and they've been driven right in."

"The rotters! Well, go and get a screwdriver."

"What about the feed? Will there be a mutton-pie? I'm so fond of mutton-pies," said Bunter.

"Yes, there will be a mutton-pie. Now, go and—"

"And some of those nice little pork-pies that Mrs. Mimble makes. I am awfully gone on Mrs. Mimble's pork-pies."

"There will be a couple of Mrs. Mimble's pork-pies. Now, go—"

"What about the liquid part? I am fond of lemonade."

"You shall have a whole bottle. Now—"

"I don't care for the bottled stuff, Temple. I'd rather have a jug of the home-made lemonade that Mrs. Mimble makes herself."

"You—you—of course, you shall have which you like, Bunter; and some jam-tarts and cream-puffs as well. And a jolly good hiding to finish with!" murmured Temple, sotto voce.

"What did you say, Temple?"

"I said I'd be glad if you'd have some cream-puffs and jam-tarts to finish with."

"Yes, I should like them; but I really like finishing a feed up with Jordan almonds and muscatels, Temple."

"All right; you shall have those instead."

"Did you say instead, or as well, Temple?" asked Bunter through the keyhole.

Temple gritted his teeth.

"I mean as well—you shall have those as well."

"Of course, I shouldn't like to appear exacting in any way, Temple."

"Oh, of course not!" said Temple, grinning with fury.

"As you're standing the feed, I know it's your business to say what we shall have, and I'm only offering a few suggestions."

"That's all right. I adopt all the suggestions, and I'll think of some more nice things, too, while you're taking out the screws, if you'll only buck up."

"That's jolly good of you, Temple. I never did hold with the fellows who said you were a silly ass and a rotten waster. I like—"

"Oh, if only he were on this side of the door!" said Temple wildly.

"What did you say, Temple?"

"I'm anxious to get to that feed, Bunter, and to see you enjoying yourself. Will you get a screwdriver as quickly as you can, and get the door unfastened?"

"Right-ho! It's a bargain about the feed?"

"Oh, yes; honour bright."

"Good! I'll go and borrow Wharton's screwdriver—"

"Hold on!" roared Temple.

"What's the matter now?" asked Billy Bunter, called back as he was just scudding off. "I thought you were in a hurry."

"Don't go and get Wharton's screwdriver, Bunter. Anybody else's will do."

"But Wharton will lend me his."

"I'd rather you got another."

"I don't see what you're getting at, Temple. I'll ask Wharton and Cherry to come and lend me a hand in getting the screws out."

"No, don't! I—I shouldn't like to trouble them. I—I'm not on very good terms with them," stammered Temple.

"I—I'd rather you got somebody else's screwdriver, Bunter, really. There's one in Castle's study."

"In the drawer of the table," said Castle
 "Oh, all right. I'm going."
 "Don't say anything to Wharton, will you?"
 "Why not?"
 "Because I—I don't want you to. If you do, the feed's off."
 "But I don't see—"
 "Will you go and get that screwdriver?" roared Temple.
 "Yes, certainly."
 "Then buzz off, you image!"
 "Oh, very well."
 And Billy Bunter buzzed off, and at the corner of the passage ran into the arms of the famous four.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

No Rescue.

BILLY BUNTER uttered an exclamation as four pairs of hands closed upon him and seized him, and stopped his progress with a sudden jerk. His spectacles nearly fell off, and he clutched them in his hand and jammed them on his nose again.

"I say, you fellows, let go!" he exclaimed. "What are you stopping me for? I'll tell Wharton if you don't let me go."

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"I'm Wharton, you Owl!"

"Oh dear, are you really? I didn't know you. You know, I'm awfully short-sighted. I thought it was Bulstrode, or that beast Cherry."

Bob Cherry gave Billy a severe shake.

"Can't you see me, either, you mole?"

"Oh dear! Cherry, I beg your pardon! When I said 'beast,' I was thinking of Nugent."

Nugent gave the unfortunate Owl a dig in the ribs.

"You were thinking of me, were you, you young ass?"

"Is that you, Nugent? I say, don't shake me, you know! I wish you'd let me go; I'm in a hurry!"

"Yes, I know you are," said Wharton, taking a tighter grip on the Owl's collar. "You have just been talking to Temple through his door, haven't you?"

"Yes, Wharton, some rotter has screwed him up in his study. A beastly rotten trick to play on a fellow, don't you think?"

"It was us that did it, you young ass!"

"Oh, was it? Well, do you know, Wharton, I thought it might be, you know, because it's such a jolly clever jape, and I thought it very funny."

Wharton laughed.

"If you don't stop rattling out fibs, Billy, I shall jam your head against the wall!" he said severely.

"Oh, please don't do that, Wharton—you'll very likely knock my spectacles off, and if they were to get broken—"

"Oh, dry up! You were going to let those Upper Fourth rotters out of their study, weren't you, you young scamp?"

"Well, they asked me to, you know, and I didn't like to refuse, especially as Temple offered to stand me a ripping feed at Mrs. Mumble's."

"Well, you'll have to refuse," said Harry Wharton. "We didn't take the trouble of driving in those screws simply to afford you the pleasant exercise of pulling them out again."

"Oh, I don't really want to take the screws out, Wharton, and if you stand me a feed instead of Temple, I don't mind—"

"Well, I won't stand you a feed, Billy; but if you touch those screws, I'll stand you a thick ear," said Wharton.

Billy Bunter made a grimace.

"Of course, Wharton, I'd do anything to oblige a fellow I like as much as I do you," he said. "You know how I like to please you."

"The obligefulness of the esteemed young rotter is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "If we shut him up in the study and apply the lockfulness to the door, he will be out of the mischief. Saturn finds workfulness for idle hands, as your English proverb so exactly expresses it."

"Saturn! You mean Satan!"

"Saturn, I think," said the nabob, with a shake of the head. "It was Saturn in the esteemed copy-book I used in Bengal under the best native masters."

"Ha, ha! Make it Saturn then, or Uranus, or Jupiter if you like. Perhaps if we tie Billy to a door-handle by the neck, it will do as well."

"Oh, please don't be brutal, Wharton! Now I know you screwed those rotters up in their study, I shouldn't think of letting them out, of course! I'm rather sorry about that feed, but I know you're only joking; I know you'll stand it, all the same."

"Perhaps. Now, instead of opening the door of Temple's study, you can stand on guard and see that nobody else opens it. Mind that."

"Certainly, Wharton."

"My idea is," Wharton remarked, as the famous four walked away and left Billy Bunter alone in the passage, "that when they find they cannot get out, they'll try the window; and we want to have some of the Remove out in the close to greet them."

EVERY TUESDAY, **The "Magnet"** ONE HALFPENNY. LIBRARY.

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

"The greatfulness will be terrific. The Upper Fourth have assumed airs towards the honourable Remove, but now the laughfulness will be a boot on the other foot."

The chums of the Remove left the spot. Meanwhile, Temple & Co. were growing impatient. Temple hammered on the door and called to Billy Bunter.

Bunter heard him calling, but did not answer. It was no good arguing the matter with Temple, and Billy would not have ventured now to unscrew the door for the sake of a feed of Gargantuan proportions. The word of the four was law in the Remove.

Hammer, hammer, hammer!

"Bunter! Bunter! Where are you? I say, Bunter, old chap, can't you hear me? Where has that young scoundrel got to? I say, Bunter, young Bunter! Buck up, old fellow! Oh, wait till I get my hands on you, that's all!"

Whereat Billy Bunter grinned. Temple was fast losing his temper, what was left of it. The Upper Fourth fellows in the study were growing more and more impatient. They had their various avocations for the evening, and they did not relish being shut up in Temple's study. Besides, they knew what a chatterbox Billy Bunter was. If he did not let them out, he would chatter, and bring a crowd along to see the screwed-up door. The actual perpetrators of the jape might be mum, but not so Billy Bunter.

And so it proved. The shouts from Temple's study were heard, and when a fellow came along the passage and saw the grinning Bunter, he asked him what was the matter. And Bunter explained.

"Ha, ha!" shouted the junior, who happened to be Skinner, of the Remove. "We must fetch some of the fellows to see this!"

The fellows were not long in coming. In a very short time a dozen Removes were collected outside Temple's study, and they were joined by youngsters in the Third Form. The passage gradually grew more and more crowded.

"Bunter! I say, open this door!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "You can't come out! You fellows ought to be in a lunatic asylum, and this is the nearest we can get. You can't come out!"

"I'll break your neck, Skinner!"

"Ha, ha! You've got to get out first!"

"Hullo, what's all this row about?"

Carberry, of the Sixth, came along the passage. The juniors scattered, and Carberry thumped at the door of the study.

"What are you making that row for in there? Hallo, what on earth is the matter with the door?"

"It's been screwed up, Carberry," said Temple, meekly enough, from within. He recognised the prefect's voice. "Will you tell some of those young rotters to unscrew it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Carberry. "Unscrew it yourselves!" And he walked on.

The Removes collected round the door again. A number of fellows belonging to the Upper Fourth came along, the news having reached them. Temple hammered on the door.

"Let us out, you beasts!"

"By Jove, they're screwed up!" said Tunstall, of the Upper Fourth. "All right, Temple, old man, we'll soon have you out when we can get a screwdriver!"

"Will you?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming up with Nugent. "That you won't, not without a row, anyway! Line up, chaps!"

"Hurrah for the Remove!"

The Remove lined up. In the passage there wasn't much room for fighting, but the Removes meant business. There were a crowd of them there, too. Tunstall and his friends looked puzzled. They were greatly outnumbered, and the leaders of the Form were shut up on the other side of the screwed door. How to maintain a hand-to-hand fight, and at the same time draw the long screws from the hard wood was a puzzle.

"Go for them!" shouted Temple through the keyhole.

"Clear the brats off!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tunstall, rather doubtfully.

"Buck up!"

"But, I say, Temple, couldn't you chaps get out of the window?"

"Hang the window! Get those screws out, or I'll punch your head presently, Tunstall!"

"Oh, all right! Go for 'em, kids!"

"Sock it to 'em!" roared Bob Cherry.

The Remove were there in force. The Upper Fourth fellows made a rush, but they could not drive the Remove back. Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh came dashing into the fray, and the din in the passage was terrific. The angry voice of a master was heard on the stairs.

"Stop that noise instantly!"

The combat ceased.

"BILLY'S BOOM."

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
 by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT TUESDAY.

"Are they gone?" shouted Temple, through the keyhole. He had not heard the master's voice, and noted only the cessation of strife.

"No, they're not!" grunted Tunstall. "Old Quelch is on the stairs, and he says we're to shut it."

"Never mind Quelch!"

"You wouldn't say never mind Quelch if you were on this side of the door!"

"I'll punch your head, Tunstall!"

"Oh, rats! What do you mean by getting yourself screwed up in a study, anyway? Nice sort of a leader for a Form you are—I don't think!"

"Just you wait till I get out, Tunstall!" roared the exasperated captain of the Upper Fourth.

Tunstall laughed scoffingly.

"Well, I think it will be a jolly long wait," he replied. "Anyway, I'm not going to have old Quelch down on me because you're idiot enough to get locked up in a study! No jolly fear! I'm off!"

And Tunstall suited the action to the word. The Removites clustered round the screwed door, gave a suppressed cheer. Temple inside the study was raving.

"It will be the window next," said Harry Wharton, with a grin. "Some of you stop here and see that nobody sneaks back and unscrews the door. We want to have a little reception got ready for them in the close. My hat! If the Upper Fourth aren't the standing joke of Greyfriars after this, I'll give 'em my head for a football!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Temple Catches the Ink.

TEMPLE gave up hammering at the door. In spite of his bold words to Tunstall, he did not intend to brave the wrath of the Remove master. He looked at his Form-fellows, and his Form-fellows looked at him. They were all looking very wrathful, excepting Fry, who was looking sarcastic.

"Well, you haven't improved matters much," Fry remarked. "There doesn't seem to be any getting out at the door."

"You'll go out at the window if you don't shut up!" growled Temple.

"I expect I shall go out of the window anyway, if I want to get out at all," said the provoking Fry. "The only alternative seems to be getting up the chimney."

"Which wouldn't suit us," ventured Dabney.

The feeble pun was greeted with a chilly glare from the Upper Fourth fellows.

"If Dabney is going to make jokes, I'm off, if I break my neck," said Fry. "Who's for the window?"

He crossed to the window and opened it. The fellows all followed him, Temple and Dabney looking rather uncertain.

"I say, we can't get out at the window, you know," said Dabney. "We shall look such beastly silly asses if we're spotted."

"Not much sillier asses than we look at present," said the unpleasant Fry.

"Oh, shut up! I suppose we shall have to do it. It's a long way down, though," said Temple, peering into the darkness under the study window. "Shouldn't wonder if we break our necks over it."

"Well, you go first, and then it won't matter. If you break your neck, we'll have a try at getting up the chimney instead."

"It's your idea, Fry."

"Yes, it was left to me to think of a way out of the difficulty, though I don't put on so many airs about being leader of the Form as some people."

"Well, as it's your idea, you go first."

"I don't see it. You're the leader of the Upper Fourth—at least, I've heard you say so, though I've never noticed you do any leading. But if you funk it—"

"Who says I funk it?" roared Temple.

"Well, go first, then!"

"Do you think I am afraid to go first?"

"Oh, rats! Go first, and prove you're not!"

Temple cast an extremely uncertain look into the darkness. All was still and quiet under the old trees in the close—suspiciously quiet, if Temple had thought of it. But he was thinking only of the difficulties of the matter.

"We shall have to have a rope of some kind," he said.

"There's one in the locker," said Dabney.

"Will it bear a chap's weight?" asked Castle. "No need to run big risks, you know. There would be a fuss if Temple busted his neck."

"It's borne my weight," said Dabney.

"Oh, that's all right, then!" said Fry. "If it's stood the strain of your feet—"

"Oh, dry up!"

The rope was fished out, and uncoiled, and the end

attached securely to the leg of the table. Then the loose rope was dropped from the sill, and the end of it was heard to clatter on the ground.

"It's long enough," said Fry. "Now, then, Temple! Off you go!"

"There's no hurry, I suppose?" snapped Temple.

"Oh, no—not if you want to make an all-night job of this!" said Fry. "I should like to get out of the study before bedtime, but I don't make a point of it."

"I'm just going, confound you!"

"Well, go then," said several voices.

Thus adjured, Temple rather gingerly climbed out on the window-sill, and took a grip of the rope with both hands. He let himself swing loose, and then went down the rope hand under hand.

"You see, it's easy enough," said Dabney. "Call out when you get to the bottom, Temple, and I'll come next. Why, what's all that?"

The Upper Fourth fellows crammed the window, staring out into the gloom. The strain had gone off the hanging rope, showing that Temple had reached the ground. A gasp was heard, a patter of feet, and shadowy figures loomed up in the gloom.

"My hat! It's the Remove!"

The Remove it was. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh had the unfortunate captain of the Upper Fourth in their grasp almost before his feet had touched the ground. He was dragged from the rope and secured.

"Let me go!" gasped Temple. "You—you rotters—"

"Collar the rope, kids!"

"Good!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Bring his wrists together."

Temple's wrists were pulled together behind him, and the end of the hanging rope was knotted round them. He was gasping with rage, but utterly helpless in the grip of the Removites.

"That's right!" laughed Harry Wharton. "I say, you chaps up there, you can pull up that specimen of yours if you like."

"You young rotters—"

"Come down and help me!" yelled Temple furiously. "What do you mean by sticking up there like that, you funks, while they're tying me up?"

"We can't come down more'n one at a time."

"Well, come then, confound you! Why can't you come?"

"Those Remove beasts will collar us one by one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites. "That's the cheese! Good old Dabney—he smells a rat!"

"Come and help me!" roared Temple. "I'll punch all your beastly heads presently!"

"I'll jolly soon shift them!" exclaimed Fry. "Wait a tick; I'll get that big bottle of ink from the cupboard, and if that doesn't shift 'em—"

He did not finish, but left the window hurriedly. Sharp ears below had caught the words, and the Removites hastily cleared back. Fry reappeared at the window. A swamping shower of ink descended into the gloom from the big bottle he held in his hands. There was a fiendish yell beneath the window.

"Ha, ha!" roared Fry. "Thought I'd shift 'em!"

"Ha, ha!" roared the Removites. "How do you like ink, Temple?"

"Stop it!" shrieked Temple, as the ink swamped down. "You're smothering me! You're not smothering them; you're smothering me, you dummy!"

"By Jove, I'm sorry, Temple; but I've shifted them, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's all this fearful row here?" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, coming upon the scene. "What the—"

The Removites, choking with laughter, vanished into the gloom. Wingate stared in amazement at the figure with the blackened face wriggling at the end of the rope.

"Who the—who the—how the—who is it?"

"It's me!" gasped Temple furiously and ungrammatically.

"You? Who are you?"

"Temple, of the Fourth! I'll—I'll pulverise those Remove villains!"

"What do you mean by appearing in the close in this state? You ought to know better, Temple. I'm surprised at you."

"Do you think I could help it?" yelled Temple. "My door's screwed up, and I came down this way; then they collared me and tied me up, and then that idiot Fry swamped this ink down over me!"

"I did it to shift those youngsters."

"You utter dummy!"

Wingate burst into a laugh.

"Well, I hear you've been down on the Remove cricket club lately," he said. "I suppose this is their reply, isn't it?"

"We're going to put them in their place—"

"It looks more as if they'll put you in your place," said Wingate drily. "Here, let me untie you. Don't any more of you come down this way; it's dangerous. Temple can get round and unscrew the door for you. And now, my advice to you is to let the Remove alone."

And the captain of Greyfriars walked away laughing.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Cricket Match—Captain of the Remove.

THE next day there were black looks among the Upper Fourth fellows when they met the Remove; but for the present they were taking Wingate's advice, and letting that exceedingly troublesome Form alone. The Remove were satisfied with their triumph, and for the present, too, they had no inclination for a row. This was rather an unusual state for the Greyfriars Remove; but it was accounted for by the fact that interest centred in the cricket match that was to come off in the afternoon, and which was to determine whether Bob Cherry or Harry Wharton was to be captain of the new Remove team.

After morning school, the talk in the Remove was of the coming test match. The two candidates were to captain rival elevens, and they were busy selecting their teams. There were plenty of good cricketers in the Greyfriars Remove, and it was not hard to find a twenty-two capable of putting up a good game. In Harry's team, distinguished by red-barred caps, Hurree Singh played, while Nugent entered the ranks of Bob Cherry's eleven.

When the time came to pitch the stumps, the Remove crowded down to the cricket ground, and they were surprised and gratified by the general interest Greyfriars appeared to take in the match.

Wingate was there, to look on, with several of the Sixth and Fifth, and the Remove, of course, was there to the last fellow. Even little Billy Bunter had come down to blink through his big glasses and cheer.

Temple, Dabney, & Company were there, too. They were there to hoot and deride, but the unexpected presence of the school captain had the effect of keeping the Upper Fourth within bounds.

It was a glorious April afternoon, sunny and quite dry, and ideal weather for the grand old game. There was a cheer from the crowd when Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry tossed for choice of innings. Bob Cherry looked very fit, with his long limbs and well-set head, and his blue-striped cap stuck on the back of his thick, curly hair. Harry Wharton, too, was in fine form—handsome, athletic, quiet-looking, but very determined.

Bob Cherry won the toss, and elected to bat first. A single-innings match had been agreed upon, for there was no time for a full match to be played in an afternoon. If the Blue Caps "stuck it out" for very long, as it was, it was probable that Wharton's team would have a failing light to bat by. But, as it turned out, Bob Cherry's side had a shorter innings than they had anticipated.

Harry put Hurree Jamset Ram Singh on to bowl against Bob Cherry, who opened the innings with Nugent. The over gave Bob Cherry seven, and he finished at the other end of the pitch, so that he still had the bowling. Harry Wharton took the ball from the Indian nabob, and went on to bowl.

"Go it, Wharton!" came an encouraging shout.

The shout showed how much more popular Harry was becoming in the Remove. The affair of the previous day had something to do with that. He had provided Greyfriars with a standing joke in his "jape" on the leaders of the Upper Fourth, and the Remove appreciated it keenly.

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Play up now, Cherry!"

Harry Wharton bowled. Bob Cherry played the ball, and it dropped on the crease as dead as a doornail. Again and again he simply stopped the ball, and then at the fourth he snicked it away through the slips for two. Bob still had the bowling, and he was looking very serious. Harry's bowling was of a quality seldom met with in a junior Form, and Bob Cherry realised it.

Down came the ball again. It looked a rather easy thing this time, and Bob Cherry swiped at it for a boundary; but that boundary didn't come off. The ball curled in under his bat in a curious way, and there was a clatter—and his bails were on the ground.

"How's that?" roared the Remove.

And the umpire's laconic "Out!" was hardly needed.

Bob Cherry made a good-natured grimace, and carried out his bat for a total of nine. He grinned at Harry as he passed him.

"Well done!" he said.

And Harry smiled back.

There was nothing like malice in Bob Cherry's sunny

EVERY
TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE
HALFPENNY.
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nature, and he showed no annoyance, though he had gone in hoping to make at least twenty or twenty-five.

Next man in stopped Harry's last ball, and then Skinner bowled. The Blue Caps batted pretty well for a time, totting up a fair average of runs. But when Nugent, the best batsman after Bob, went on, Harry took the ball again. He did not exactly like bowling against his old chum; but there is no friendship in cricket. He went on to bowl, and did his level best.

The first ball of the over was stopped dead on the crease, as in Bob Cherry's case. The second ball found a resting-place among the "timber," and Nugent stared dismally down at a wrecked wicket.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wingate. "That kid Wharton bowls like a county crack! He will be a credit to Greyfriars yet—though one wouldn't have thought it when he first came here."

Nugent tucked away his bat under his arm and walked away.

"What price duck's eggs?" called out Bulstrode.

"Well, you ought to know," said Nugent cheerfully.

"Yes, that is extremely trueful!" Hurree Singh exclaimed. "The honourable Bulstrode is a cricketful dealer in the esteemed eggs of the duck."

"Next man in!"

The next man in looked out very carefully for the third ball of Harry Wharton's over. But his care availed him little, for the ball came down like lightning and scattered his bails before he knew what was happening.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Next man in!"

The disconsolate batsman vacated the wicket, and Russell went in. Russell's wicket joined the great majority a few moments later. There was a roar of delight from the spectators.

"Well bowled!"

"The hat-trick!"

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton ceased bowling with that over. He did not wish to take too much of the game for himself, and he had done enough to show his quality. The innings petered out for a total of forty-four runs; not at all bad, under the circumstances.

Wingate tapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder when the field came off.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Keep that up, my boy. We shall see you in the first eleven of Greyfriars one of these days. This is a bit better than sulking—eh?"

Harry turned red at this allusion to his early experiences at Greyfriars.

"Yes, rather!" he said.

The first innings was over earlier than anyone had expected; a result due more to Harry Wharton's bowling than to anything else. If he batted as well as he had bowled, there was not much doubt as to whom the Remove would select as cricket captain for the season.

Harry opened his innings with Hurree Singh and Skinner. Bob Cherry and Nugent, with the ball, made short work of them, and they both retired within a few minutes of one another with a total of nine to their credit. Then Trevor was bowled for two by Bulstrode, and Hazeldene's wicket was the next to fall, for one.

Four down for twelve was the figure when Harry Wharton went on to bat, with Santley at the other end.

There was a general movement of interest now. Most of the spectators present had seen Harry Wharton bat before, but practice was very different from a test match upon which a cricket captaincy depended.

How he would shape at the wicket on this occasion was an interesting problem, and all the Greyfriars' fellows present were interested.

He soon showed that, whatever his failings might be, a want of nerve was not one of them. He faced Bob Cherry's bowling with perfect coolness, and though the first over proved a maiden, it showed that Wharton knew how to keep his end up.

Santley's wicket fell to Nugent's bowling, and then Bob Cherry bowled to Harry Wharton again. And now Harry let himself go. It did not matter what kind of ball Bob sent down, they all seemed the same to the batsman. Fast and slow, lob and yorker, he hit them all over the field.

The blue caps had enough leather-hunting during that single over to last them a considerable time, and at the end of it Harry Wharton, with seventeen runs to his credit, still had the bowling, and looked as fresh as a daisy.

"By Jove!" said Wingate.

And the Remove were cheering. And even Dabney, Temple, & Co. could not quite forbear a cheer to the splendid batting of their rival.

And Harry was still batting well. His side were seven down for 40, and he was still going strong. Another wicket

"BILLY'S BOOM."

Another Tale of Harry Wharton and his Chums,
by FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

down, and a new man in. But now Harry had the bowling again, and he proceeded to make hay of it.

A three, and then another wicket down. Nine down for 43!

Last man in, and two runs wanted to win! Harry was batting again. Down came the ball from Bob Cherry, as dangerous a one as he could make it.

Harry Wharton stepped out to it and swiped.

The merry click of bat and ball was followed by the flight of the leather—away, away, where the eye strained in vain to follow it.

There was a roar. It was a boundary, and the game was won—well won, and Harry Wharton not out!

"Well hit!"
"Hurrah!"

The level green swarmed with fellows. Harry Wharton was rushed off the field in the midst of an excited crowd. Wingate slapped him on the back, and the Remove cheered him to the echo. It was the hour of triumph for Harry Wharton. Once the "outsider," the most unpopular fellow in the Form, now how changed—acknowledged on all sides the hero of the Remove!

Bob Cherry was the first to shake hands with him.

"You've won, old fellow!" he remarked, as they went in to change out of their flannels at last. "It was a complete do, and I don't complain. You're far and away the better cricketer of the two."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry.

"I mean it; you're captain."

"The Form will have to decide that."

"Oh, they won't take long about that!" said Bob Cherry, laughing.

And Bob Cherry was right. At the meeting in the Remove-room after the match, every member of the Lower Fourth Cricket Club turned up, and there was no doubt whatever as to what the general verdict would be.

Harry Wharton's name was on every lip. The splendid quality of his cricket had banished the last vestige of the old prejudice against him.

Skinner stood up and proposed Harry Wharton in the midst of ringing cheers. His voice was hardly heard for the cheering, and when he called for a show of hands, almost every right hand in the room went up.

Then Nugent called for a show of hands for Bob Cherry. The number that went up was so few that Bob's backers did not trouble to ask for a count to be made. The majority for Harry Wharton was overwhelming.

Skinner jumped up again.

"Wharton has it!" he shouted.

"Hear, hear!"

"And anybody who has anything to say against it, let him now shut up, and for ever hold his peace," concluded Skinner, rather vaguely.

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton was looking rather red. He was elected captain almost unanimously, but it was his chum who had been left out.

"I say, chaps—"

"Speech—speech!"

"Silence for the captain!"

"I say, I'm awfully pleased and honoured—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But upon second thoughts—"

"Hallo!"

"As a matter of fact," went on Harry, "I'd rather Bob Cherry were elected captain—he'll make a better one than I shall, and besides—"

"Rats!"

"I tell you I'd rather; Bob Cherry is the man!"

"Leave it to Cherry!" exclaimed Skinner. "Now, then, Cherry-ripe, what have you got to say? Do you accept Wharton's offer?"

"No," exclaimed Bob Cherry emphatically, "I don't!"

"But—" began Harry.

"Nuff said, old chap! I know what you mean, and I appreciate it, but you're the man for Remove captain, and if we had an election over again I'd vote for you. That's flat."

Loud cheers.

"My hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "What do you say now, kids—is Wharton such a bad fellow, after all? Why, his beastly temper is getting almost as sugary as Billy's."

"Oh, I say, Nugent!" said Billy Bunter.

Harry Wharton laughed. He was growing accustomed to plain speaking in the Greyfriars Remove.

"Have you made up your mind, Bob?"

"Yes, I have," said Bob Cherry; "that settles it. You're captain. Three cheers for the cricket captain of the Remove!"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

The cheers were given with a will, till the Remove-room rang again. And as Hurree Singh said afterwards, the cheerfulness was terrific.

THE END.

(Another long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton and his chums next Tuesday, entitled "Billy's Boom." Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price 1d.)

Commencing in "THE BOYS' HERALD."

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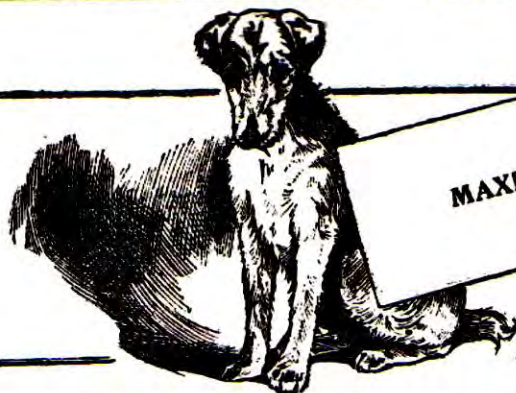


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"Who are you?" demanded the patrol leader, eyeing the scarecrow. "My name's Glyan," answered the boy, "but they gen'ly call me Chippy."



NEW STORY SHOWING HOW TWO BOYS BECOME DETECTIVES.

By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

GLANCE OVER THIS FIRST.

Frank Dennis and Bob Lomax, two City clerks, are thrown out of employment. Having no prospects they decide to make the detective business their profession, and assume the name of "Maxennis."

Grip, their dog, in a strange manner is instrumental in getting their first client—a Mrs. Brewer—who is continually receiving threatening picture post-cards from Leigh-on-Sea, from a man evidently aware that his victim is coming into a legacy. Lomax visits Leigh, and pursues his investigations among the regular senders of picture post-cards in the district. Meanwhile, Dennis, with intent to learn more about Mrs. Brewer, calls at the house of a neighbour of hers, a Mrs. Biddlecombe, and, asking for Mrs. Brewer, is told that she lives next door.

Dennis Enjoys a Gossip.

"Perhaps, madam, you might be aware if your friend—you said the lady was a friend of yours, didn't you?—is at home or not?" said Dennis.

"Which she ain't," Mrs. Biddlecombe said miserably.

"She's out; she always is out just about now."

"Oh, that's inconvenient!" Dennis looked disturbed.

"But perhaps she'll be home soon. Do you think so?"

"There ain't no telling!" Mrs. Biddlecombe opened the door a few inches wider, so that her visitor could see the whole of her shaking head. "There's no one knows when-ever she'll get back once she's out!"

"How's that?" inquired Dennis, who betrayed no sign of going away.

"Ah!"

A world of meaning was thrown into Mrs. Biddlecombe's exclamation. Like Lord Burleigh's celebrated nod, that

"Ah!" spoke of far more than might be told in mere words.

"You mean—"

Mrs. Biddlecombe nodded her head.

There was silence for a few seconds, and then Dennis made a movement.

"That's very awkward, you know," he said testily. "I must see Mrs. Brewer, and the sooner the better, for my business is concerning some money that has been left to her, and, as you know—"

A flash of interest came into Mrs. Biddlecombe's tired eyes.

"What—more money?" she exclaimed. "Well, if some people— But there, it's said as money's the root o' all evil, and I'm quite sure that money don't always do folks no good; just the reverse sometimes."

"Quite right, madam; very true," Dennis agreed. "But—"

"Mrs. Brewer—"

"Would you like to come inside 'ere and wait?" Mrs. Biddlecombe interrupted suddenly. "As I was saying, Mrs. Brewer ain't always to be depended on, an' there's no telling when she'll be home. An' it seems a shame as you should have to go back again after coming all this way to see 'er; an' goodness only knows how long you'd have to wait. Come inside, sir, an' welcome, if you don't mind! I'm a particular friend o' Mrs. Brewer, an' I'm sure she'd think as I'd acted very unneighbourly an' unfriendly if I didn't ask you in to stop a bit until she comes back."

She opened the door quite widely, and Dennis, protesting that he really didn't like to so take advantage of the lady's kindness, and only did so with the greatest reluctance, did step inside, and was shown into the front room of the dwelling.

He fully appreciated the fact that the sudden kindness of Mrs. Brewer's friend and neighbour was due to the curiosity aroused by his artful hint of the money left; he well knew that she was desirous of learning more about it,

being evidently one of those persons who take a deal of interest in the business of other people, and by asking him into her house she hoped to have her curiosity gratified.

"So Mrs. Brewer have come into more money," she observed, sitting down and folding her arms. "Well, I'm sure I'm glad to hear of it, not but what it don't seem hardly fair, as some people should have all of it an' others hardly nothink. But then that's what the Scripture says, so it don't do for us to go against it. Is it a great deal, sir?"

"Not so very much, madam."

"Ah! Still it's somethink. Well, all I can say is that I hopes as how it'll do her more good nor what the other lot did her. Money means worries an' troubles along of it, and, poor soul, she've found out the truth of that!"

"Your friend has already had a legacy?" queried Dennis, more than half ashamed of himself for the deception he was practising.

"Yes; but like most other things, it ain't turned out quite all that she expected," Mrs. Biddlecombe replied, with a return to her lugubriousness. "Ah! Well, one can't never tell whether anythink's going to turn out a blessing or the reverse, though it's nearly always the reverse. She've got the money, but she've got troubles along of it."

"How is that?"

"Why, there's the bitter mixed along o' the sweet, the rough with the smooth; not but what it ain't anythink but good for folks that it should be so, but it ain't all honey for the poor soul, as I've told her again and again; and if it was me I'm sure I'd rather be without the money if it was to bring me all that it's brought her."

"And what may that be, Mrs. Biddlecombe? Nothing serious, I hope, or I shall begin to feel sorry for the errand I've come upon."

"Well, that all depends upon what you'd call serious," answered Mrs. Biddlecombe, who was beginning to enjoy herself. "But it's wearing her away to a very shadder, as I tell her lots of times, an' no wonder, for folks can't be happy and peaceful if they don't know one minute from another but what they're going to be murdered in their beds as you may say."

"And is that what Mrs. Brewer fears?"

"It's what anyone'd fear, young man, if they was to get postcards every other day almost threatening to cut them in bits. I ain't strong-nerved myself, the which is why I says as I do scores an' scores of times that I'm glad it's Mrs. Brewer, poor soul, as has got the money, an' not me!"

"Dear, dear!" Dennis murmured sympathetically. "And who is it that sends these postcards, madam?"

"That's what no one don't know, though it's my belief as it's them Socialists and Anarchists that you hear so much about nowadays, killing kings and queens and suchlike. They've 'eard as she's got money an' they're wanting to get it or kill her, perhaps both. I'm sure I don't know, nor does she, poor soul; though we've talked it over hundreds of times!"

"But if she goes about in fear of her life why doesn't she go to the police?"

"Ah!" Mrs. Biddlecombe said oracularly. "Why not! That's what I've said; but she won't do it. I would, I know very well. But no, there she'll sit an' think, an' cry an' brood, an' all the time there's these cards a-coming, until she don't know whether she's standing on her feet or her 'ead!"

"Perhaps she has enemies," Dennis suggested.

"P'raps so; we all have," his hostess said, in a voice of dismal resignation; "even the best of us ain't free from 'em. But she oughtn't to have. As good a soul as you'd find in your life—not but what she ain't got a temper, same as all of us, when she's put out. But so far as I know, and I've known her nigh on thirty year, off an' on, no one ain't

any call to be her enemy. But it's all along o' the money, as I tell you, young man; it's ruined her life, an' now there's more come along to add to it."

Mrs. Biddlecombe was now fairly wound up, and, helped by judicious questions from Dennis, whose vanished anxiety concerning Mrs. Brewer's return, the good lady did not seem to notice, she told all that she knew concerning her unhappy friend, and probably a bit more; for nothing, next to one's own misfortunes, is so interesting as the recital of another's woes, and under such circumstances it is odd indeed if fancy does not get a little play.

Dennis's brilliant idea had indeed been an inspiration; for information concerning Mrs. Brewer he could not have come to a better or more well-furnished source. He learned that "Maxennia's" client was the widow of a coffee-house keeper, who had been so unfortunate as to die six months after the marriage. Before that she had been cook at a private school, where, Mrs. Biddlecombe did not know. Her husband had been prosperous in his business, and had left her a tidy sum of money, until the inheritance of which she had been a comfortable, contented woman, but which had become the source of misfortune.

A good woman was Mrs. Brewer, a perfect lady, and one—this was a prominent virtue in the eyes of Mrs. Biddlecombe—who had no sympathy with the teetotal movement. And this was just as well, for since the coming of the postcards her nerves had suffered to an alarming extent, and, as was well known, there was nothing to steady the nerves like "the leastest drop o' good brandy."

A couple of hours slipped by with extraordinary rapidity, and Mrs. Biddlecombe, having finished dealing with the troubles of her neighbours, began on her own, which Dennis accepted as a hint that he might depart. Thanking his hostess for her kindness, he left the house, stating his intention of calling to see Mrs. Brewer another time.

In addition to the facts concerning Mrs. Brewer personally, Frank had discovered that his client was owner as well as occupier of the adjoining house; and, it being larger than she had any need to use, she had taken a lodger, a young man of four or five-and-twenty years of age, who, having adopted pugilism as a means of livelihood, had done so well in his profession that he was looked upon as the ten-stone champion of the Surrey side of London. This notable person went by the name of Sleeping Sandy, his baptismal appellation being Alexander McDonald, the addition in no way denoting his slumberous nature, but being a delicate reference to his oft-demonstrated ability to put his opponents—in the ring or out of it—to sleep. This information Mrs. Biddlecombe had been able to give because of the friendship existing between her husband and the boxer himself. McDonald, she added, was a quiet, steady young fellow, who seldom got up until middle-day, and was much liked by Mrs. Brewer and the elderly woman who lived with her because of the protection which his presence in the house afforded.

Dennis came away feeling that although he had heard a great deal he had learned very little. Forgetting that his mission was to gain knowledge of Mrs. Brewer, he was disappointed that he had been able to discover nothing bearing upon the matter of the postcards. He wondered if anything useful would result from interviewing Mr. McDonald, and regretted not having inquired where that redoubtable personage was likely to be found.

Acting on the spur of the moment, he stepped into a small sweetstuff and newspaper-shop and purchased a copy of the "Sporting Life." Perhaps Sleeping Sandy was professionally engaged that night; the newspaper might contain an advertisement of the fact if so. But though he looked down the announcements of forthcoming boxing events, he could not see McDonald's name.

Paper in hand, Dennis stood on the pavement lost in thought; he was wondering what to do. Suddenly he was aroused from his brown study by the sudden barking of a dog, and he

awakened to the fact that he had entirely forgotten Grip, who, while his master had been conversing with Mrs. Biddlecombe, had been sitting contentedly on the doorstep. When Dennis had come out he had never given a thought to the fox-terrier.

At a quick pace he retraced his steps along the street. As he neared Mrs. Brewer's residence he caught sight of Grip standing about six feet away from a short, stockily-built man, who was contemplating the animal with some amusement on his heavy, clean-shaven features.

"By Jove! Why that is McDonald!" Dennis exclaimed, as his eyes took in the man who was stamped with the hall-mark of the professional boxing-man.

It was a jump at a conclusion, but it was a correct one. The man was Sleeping Sandy, and, as Grip made a short rush at his legs, he raised his foot and kicked at the dog. Grip accepted the challenge, and the next instant his teeth were in McDonald's trousers.

There was a shout, an oath, McDonald's hands came out of his pockets, dragging an oblong piece of paper with them, and Grip, scenting trouble, loosed his hold, and, snatching up the paper, bolted towards his master, of whom he had caught sight.

Dennis, not wanting trouble with so formidable an antagonist as McDonald, turned on his heel and walked back. At a short distance he stopped, called the terrier to him, and commanded him to drop the slip of paper in his teeth. Grip obeyed, Dennis picked it up, and, seeing that it was a picture postcard, uttered an exclamation of astonishment. Then he hurried out of the street, and went as fast as his legs could take him to the nearest telegraph office.

Dennis had not examined Mrs. Brewer's batch of cards for nothing. His sharp eyes had noticed that each bore a mark distinguishable amid the blaze of colouring. That mark, an A inside a ring, was also on the card Grip had picked up!

Alexander McDonald.

Bob Lomax took the first available train to London after the receipt of the telegram, and went straight to the offices of the firm in the court off Fleet Street. There he was met by Dennis, who jumped to his feet directly he heard the door open and went towards him.

"Well, what is it, Frank?" were the Yorkshireman's first words.

"This." And Dennis pointed to a postcard lying on his desk beside a large magnifying-glass.

Lomax picked up the coloured slip and examined it.

"Same as the others—same series," he said quietly. "But this is queer."

"It is."

"Hasn't been posted."

"No."

"Writing's the same as on all the others," Lomax went on, after a further scrutiny. "How did you get hold of it?" he asked, as Dennis made no reply to his assertion.

"Grip found it."

"Grip! Where?"

"In the street where Mrs. Brewer lives; just outside her door, in fact."

"H'm! Someone drop it?"

For answer Dennis related what he had been doing; his conversation with Mrs. Biddlecombe, and the rencontre with McDonald the pugilist.

"How on earth did he get hold of it? What, in the name of Fate, has he got to do with it?" mused Lomax, regarding the card with puzzled eyes. "It's addressed to our client, message much the same as on all the others, but it hasn't been through the post, and it isn't stamped. This is an eye-opener."

"It is," his partner assented briefly.

"Well, I reckon it was worth fetching me up for," went on Lomax; "though what to make of it I don't know."

(Another long instalment next week. Please order your copy of the "Magnet" in advance.)

For Next Week

The Editor, "MAGNET" Library, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, will be glad to hear from you.

"BILLY'S BOOM!"

Billy Bunter, the chap who is always waiting for "that postal order to turn up," distinguishes himself in the physical culture line.

In fact, like a good many of us, Billy wants to be a strong man.

Does he succeed? See next Tuesday's "Magnet Library."

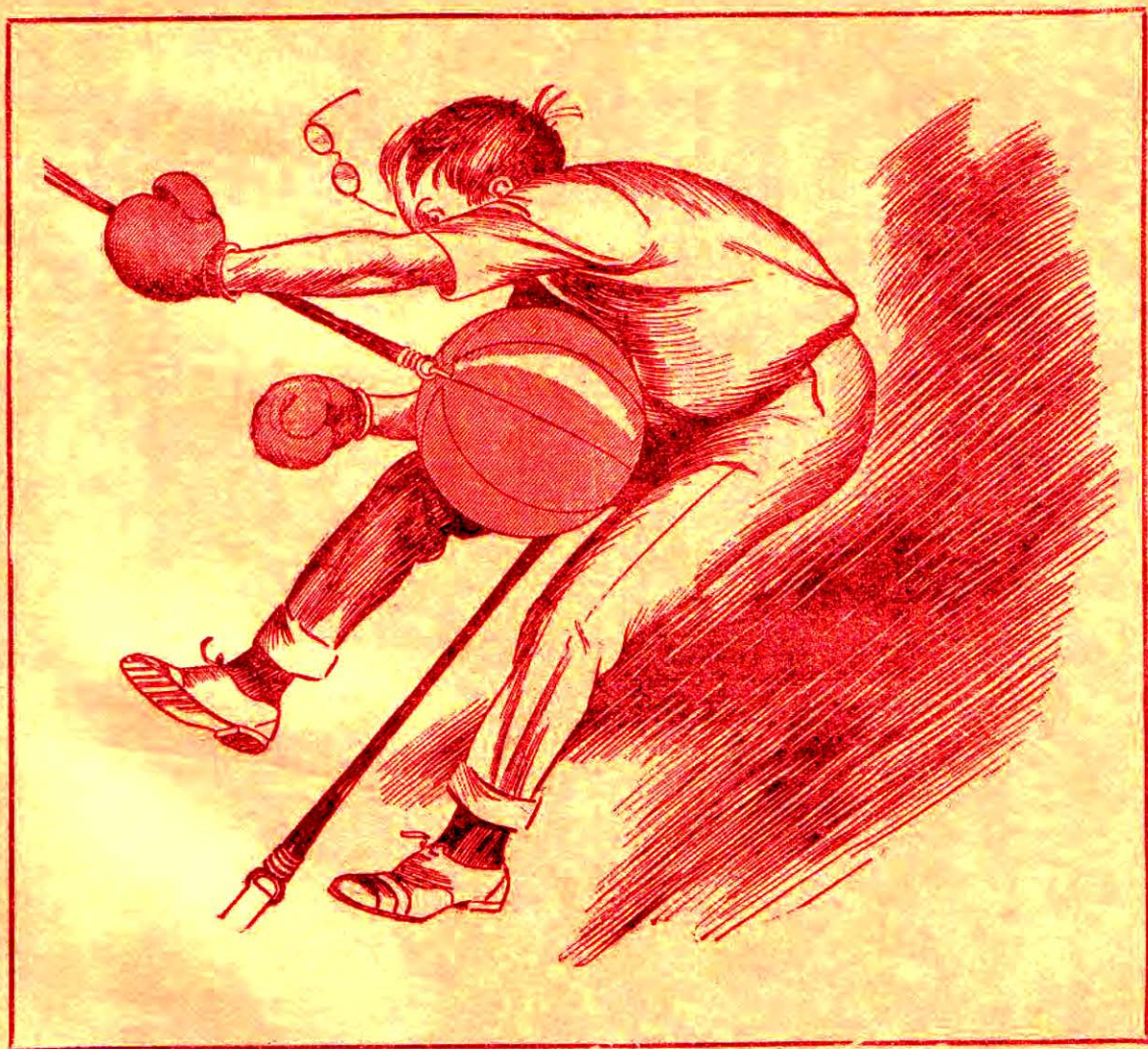
P.S.—The "Gem Library" is also very good.

THE EDITOR.



Next
Tuesday's
Cover!

THE
'Magnet'
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BILLY BUNTER IS BADLY
BIFFED !

(An amusing incident in next Tuesday's Long, Complete Tale, entitled "BILLY'S BOOM.")

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