

THE REMOVE MASTER'S SUBSTITUTE IN THIS
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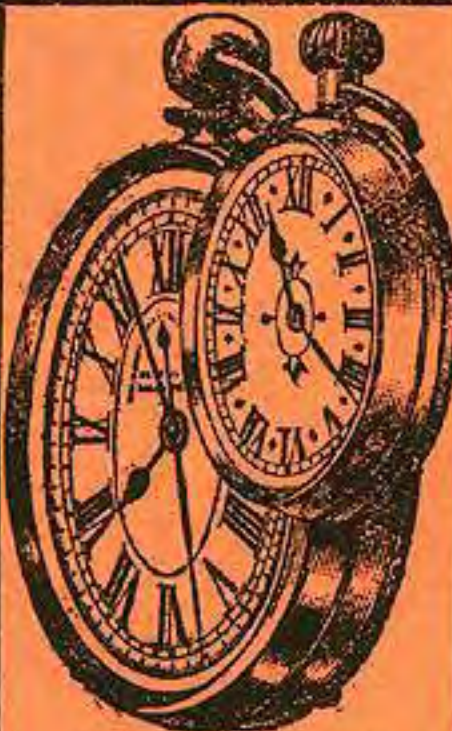
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By
FRANK
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THE REMOVE MASTER'S SUBSTITUTE

A Splendid Com-
plete School Tale
of Greyfriars,

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

An Agreeable Disappointment.

"WHERE'S that young bounder? Tea's not ready!" Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh, the chums of the Remove at Greyfriars, had just come into study No. 1, hungry, after their cricket practice. They had expected to find the table laid and tea ready, and there was a general growl of exasperation when they saw the table bare, the kettle in the fender, and the fire not even lighted.

"Where's that young bounder?"

"What has happened?"

There was no sign of Billy Bunter in the study. It was Bunter's duty to get the tea in Study No. 1. Bunter did not go in for cricket, but he was a wonderful cook, and as he never had any money, he found it a convenient arrangement to always get the tea in the study, and instal himself as a permanent guest at the festive board. As a rule, he could not be accused of forgetting meal-time—far from it.

But on the present occasion he had certainly overlooked the fact that it was time tea was ready. There was not a sign of preparation for a meal, and Bunter was not to be seen.

Nugent looked at his watch.

"And we're three minutes late, too!" he exclaimed indignantly.

Harry Wharton looked serious.

"Something must have happened," he remarked. "I can't believe that anything short of an earthquake would make Bunter forget a meal."

"He can't have forgotten it—that's impossible," said Bob Cherry decidedly. "You see, he must be hungry himself. Something has happened."

"The probability is great," murmured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "The esteemed Bunter has never been known to forget a meal, my worthy chums. There has been an accidental happening to the honourable rotter."

"Better go and look for him, I suppose."

"Better get tea ourselves," said Nugent. "I'm jolly hungry for one. I expect Billy has been invited to a feed, and has forgotten all about us."

"Well, that wouldn't matter if the young villain had told us beforehand," said Harry Wharton. "But to—Hullo!"

"Hullo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here he is!"

A fat face, adorned by a pair of enormous spectacles, looked in at the door. It belonged to Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove.

The Famous Four made a simultaneous movement towards him.

"You young rascal!"
 "You terrific rotter!"
 "Where have you been?"
 "Why haven't you got tea?"
 "I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, blinking through his big glasses at the chums of the Remove. "I say—"
 "Get the fire lighted."
 "Boil the kettle."
 "I say, you fellows—"
 "Look here, if you don't—"
 "I say, you fellows, have you seen her?"
 "Her! Whom?"
 "Her!"

Harry Wharton took the fat junior by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Now, then, you young ass, explain yourself, and sharp," he said.

Billy Bunter wriggled in the grasp of the captain of the Remove.

"Please don't shake me, Wharton. It disturbs my nerves, and you may make my glasses fall off, and if they break, you will have to pay for them."

"Will you explain what you are talking about, you young ass?"

"Certainly, Wharton. I shall be very pleased to do so, but don't hurry me, or I get confused, and—"

Harry Wharton laughed. It was certainly of no use hurrying Billy Bunter; it was certain to make him all the slower in explaining.

"I thought perhaps you had seen her," said Bunter, blinking through his big glasses. "I have, you know."

"Whom?"

"The doctor's sister."

"Dr. Locke's sister!"

"Yes; you knew she was coming to Greyfriars on a visit, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes!" said Harry Wharton carelessly. "She's a B.A., or something, isn't she?"

"That's it," said Nugent. "I've got a picture of her in my mind's eye. Tall and thin, of course, with a nose like a knife, and an eye like a gimlet."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Undoubtedly the worthy sister of our esteemed Head is a blue-stocking miss," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "But that must not prevent us from showing her the extreme respectfulness."

"Certainly not," said Bob Cherry. "But you don't mean to say that you've forgotten tea because the blue-stocking has come, Billy?"

"I don't know whether she has blue stockings," said Billy Bunter. "I didn't see. I know she's a jolly nice girl."

"A what?"

"A jolly nice girl. She's not tall and thin and nosey at all—not the least bit in the world. She can't be more than twenty-three or so."

"By Jove!"

"A pretty slim girl, and not like what Nugent describes."

"Really!"

"A lot of the fellows have seen her, and Skinner says she looked at me very sweetly as she came in," said Billy Bunter bashfully. "Of course, there was nothing in that. Girls have looked at me before."

"Yes, I dare say they have," assented Nugent. "I dare say they wondered what you were doing outside the Zoo."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"But, I say, this is interesting about the Head's sister," said Bob Cherry. "I should awfully like a look at her, if she's really like what Billy says. There must be something wonderful about her, to make Bunter forget it was tea-time."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I should like to see her."

"It's easy enough," said Billy Bunter eagerly. "I can show you, if you like. She came out of the Head's study a minute ago, and has gone along to look at the class-rooms. The Head is showing her over Greyfriars. She'll be along the passage in a few minutes, and you can see her over the banisters."

"Good!"

"Follow me," said Bunter importantly.

The chums of the Remove followed him. They were curious to see Miss Locke, and to observe whether Billy's enthusiastic description was correct. Bulstrode came out of his study as they went towards the stairs.

"Anything on?" he asked.

"The Head's sister," said Bunter. "I'm going to show these fellows—"

"Oh, cheese it, Billy, and get along!"

"Certainly, Wharton; but—"

"Get along."

Bunter got along. Bulstrode joined the juniors, and so did Hazeldene and Micky Desmond. Several other fellows, hearing what was on, came along, too, and so the Removites numbered quite a crowd when they reached the staircase.

The staircase was rather dusky, and the juniors flattered themselves that they could crouch quietly there and watch over the banisters for the passing of the doctor and his interesting sister, without being observed.

The stairs were soon crammed, and the juniors watched breathlessly. A class-room door was heard to open down the passage. A whisper ran through the group of watching juniors:

"She's coming!"

The stately figure of the Head appeared, with a slim, girlish form by his side. The juniors had just caught sight of the latter, when there was a sudden commotion on the upper stairs behind them.

Herr Rosenblum, the German master, had come out of his room, and was descending the stairs. The German was rather short-sighted, and the stairs were dusky. He walked right into the crowd of juniors without knowing that they were there, and fell over them.

"Ach! Himmel!"

The German gasped out the words as he rolled over the crowded juniors.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"My hat!"

It was a chorus of wild exclamations as an avalanche of juniors, falling over one another, rolled down the stairs.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Girl from Girton.

MISS LOCKE stopped, and uttered an exclamation.

"Goodness gracious! What is that?"

The Head put up his glasses in amazement.

"Dear me, something appears to have happened!"

Something certainly had happened.

Nearly every junior on the stairs had rolled down to the bottom, and for some moments nothing could be seen but wildly-waving arms and legs.

Miss Locke gazed at the avalanche in blank amazement.

"Ach! I was hurt!"

"I say, you fellows, gerrof me chest!"

"Faith, and it's a pancake I am intirely!"

"Get off!"

"Gerroooh!"

"Hullo, hallo! Crawl off, you bounder!"

"The crushfulness is terrific."

Harry Wharton was the first to extricate himself from the crush and gain his feet. He scrambled up, red and breathless, his head singing from the impact of a hard elbow behind his ear.

Miss Locke looked at him, and he looked at Miss Locke.

At a glance he saw that Billy Bunter's description was quite correct. There was nothing of the "blue-stocking," the learned miss, about Amy Locke. A young and graceful girl with a sweet face, and soft, brown eyes.

"I—I beg your pardon!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Miss Locke smiled.

"Indeed! You have nothing to apologise for."

"We—we must have startled you."

"Well, yes, you did."

"You did indeed, Wharton," said the Head severely.

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"What does this mean? Explain yourself. What do you mean by falling downstairs and startling us?"

"We didn't fall on purpose, sir."

"H'm, I suppose not. But—"

"I say, you fellows, help me up. Some of my ribs are broken, and I have sprained my spinal column and twisted the carotid artery in my shoulder."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You must be awfully clever to do that, Billy. Have you damaged the pericardium in your scapula, by any chance?"

"Really, Cherry—"

"My hat!" gasped Nugent. "I'm knocked to bits. Can I help you, Herr Rosenblum?"

"Ach! Tank you, ain't it, mein poy?"

Nugent helped the breathless German to his feet. The juniors were scrambling up, looking very sheepish. Bulstrode rubbed his head ruefully, and Levison was rubbing his leg. Micky Desmond mopped a stream of red from his nose. Herr Rosenblum puffed and blew like a grampus.

"Ach! I tink tat I am vinded, ain't it?"

"Herr Rosenblum, will you tell me how this happened?" exclaimed the Head.

"Himmel! I know not! I step on te stair, and it is not a stair, it is a poy, and he move, and I fall."

"What were all you boys doing on the stairs?" asked the Head sternly. "This might have been a serious accident. What were you doing there?"

The juniors were silent.

"Answer me, Wharton!"

"Well, sir, the fact is—"

"Go on!"

"We—we—we—"

"I am waiting, Wharton!"

"The explainfulness is difficult," said Huree Singh, coming to Harry's rescue. "We are fearful of offending the charming miss."

"Eh? My sister! What do you mean?"

"The newfulness of the arrival of the charming miss reached us, and we hurried to behold the esteemed and never-sufficiently-to-be-respected sister of our honourable headmaster sahib," explained the Nabob of Bhanipur. "For fear of bringing the blush of consciousness to the cheek of beauty, we ensconced ourselves hidefully on the honourable staircase, to observe the charming miss unscenfully."

Miss Locke coloured slightly.

"I assure Miss Locke that we meant nothing but respect," said Harry Wharton. "We wished to see her without appearing impertinent or curious, and so—"

"Oh, I see!"

"That is the case exactfully. Then the honourable and ludicrous Herr Rosenblum stepped footfully upon us, and the catastrophe occurred suddenly. The regretfulness is terrific."

Miss Locke laughed.

"I hope your curiosity is satisfied now," she said. "It is fortunate that no damage has been done."

"Ach! I am vinded, ain't it?"

"Really—" began the Head.

There was a deep groan from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows," he said faintly, "I sha'n't be able to get tea in the study to-night. I'm dying!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head.

"Gracious!" said Miss Locke. "Is the poor boy really hurt?"

Harry Wharton bent over the fat junior.

Billy Bunter had lost his glasses, and he was breathless; but a brief examination satisfied Harry that the fat boy of the Remove was not otherwise injured.

But Bunter thought otherwise. He had had a heavy bump, and he made the most of it. He groaned again deeply.

"Help me up!" he murmured. "Carry me somewhere, and get me something to eat. It may not be too late to save my life!"

"Oh, get up!" said Harry. "You're not hurt!"

"Really, Wharton, that seems to me quite heartless."

"Get up!"

Miss Locke came quickly forward, a look of concern upon her pleasant face. She knelt down beside Bunter.

"Perhaps the boy is really injured," she exclaimed.

"Let me see."

"He's all right, Miss Locke."

"But perhaps— Dear, dear me!"

Billy Bunter had suddenly leaped up with a wild yell. He showed remarkable agility for a youth who was on the point of death.

"Dear me! What is the matter? Is he delirious?"

"Ow! Somebody stuck a pin in me! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! It hurts!"

"This—this is absurd," said the Head, with a frown.

"Who did this?"

"If you please, sir," said Bob Cherry meekly, "I thought

it would be the quickest way of seeing whether he was dying or not—"

"Cherry!"

"I'm hurt!" growled Billy Bunter. "My spinal column is sprained, and—"

"Don't be absurd, Bunter! How could your spinal column be sprained? Boys, you may go, and don't let anything of this kind occur again."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I hopefully trust that the charming miss forgives us heartfully," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Miss Locke smiled.

"Quite, my friend."

"The apologise is terrific."

"We're well out of that," muttered Bob Cherry, dragging Huree Singh away. "Come on, Inky, you've apologised enough, and life is too short for all you'd like to say. Let's slide."

And the juniors promptly slid.

The Head and his sister walked on, a very majestic frown upon Dr. Locke's face. But there was a twinkle in Amy Locke's eyes, and a dimple in her cheek.

"They are the Form I was telling you about, Amy," said Dr. Locke. "The most unruly Form in Greyfriars."

"The Remove?"

"Yes, the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. There are many fine lads in the Form—such as Wharton and Cherry and Nugent—but they are wild and reckless, much more so than I wish to see, though I approve a certain amount of spirit in a boy." The Head paused a moment. "Mr. Quelch has his hands full with them. Poor fellow, he has lately been ill, and, to my mind, he came back to his duties too soon, before he was really fitted to resume."

The girl from Girton nodded thoughtfully.

"Why doesn't he take a rest, then?"

"Well, while he was away we had a substitute in his place—a gentleman named Chesham, who was highly recommended to me, but turned out to be a—well, a faddist," said the Head. "There is no other word for it. He had great difficulties with the Remove. Mr. Quelch has a strong sense of duty, but, really, he would have done better to leave the resumption of his duties a little longer. A few days' rest might—"

"Suppose—"

The Head looked at his sister.

"Suppose what, Amy?"

"Suppose Mr. Quelch were to take the rest he needs, for a few days—"

"He would willingly do so if there were someone to take the Remove; but it is such a heavy charge upon my time. I am already busy—"

"Why should I not take the Remove for a few days?"

The Head stopped suddenly in his amazement. He looked at the calm face of the Girton girl as though he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Amy! You!"

"Yes."

"You take the Remove!" murmured the Head.

"Why not? You know I have taken my degree, and am fully qualified as far as that goes. And—"

"The most unruly Form in Greyfriars!"

"I could manage them."

"But, my dear Amy—"

The girl laid her hand upon his arm.

"Let me try, Arthur. That can do no harm, at all events. I am here for several days, and I should like the experience, and Mr. Quelch can take the rest he wishes—or, rather, needs. Let me try."

"Well, really, Amy, if you really wish—"

"I do."

"Then you shall try."

There was a surprise in store for the Greyfriars Remove!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Remove is Amazed.

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

"Fact!"

"It can't be!"

"It is!"

"Rats!"

"You can say what you like," said Hazeldene, who was standing in the doorway of Study No. 1, where the chums of the Remove were having their tea, "but I tell you it's on the notice-board in the hall."

Bob Cherry set his tea-cup down with a clatter.

"I suppose you're trying to jape us," he said. "I can't take it in."

"It's there, in the Head's handwriting."

"The improbableness is terrific."

"It's a fact."

"I say, you fellows we all know Vaseline," said Billy Bunter, with a wise wag of his head. "He's an awful crammer, you know."

Hazeldene turned red.

"Shut up, Billy!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, certainly, Wharton, if you wish; but you know Vaseline as well as I do. You remember that time he dished you over the exam—"

Bob Cherry stamped on Bunter's foot under the table. The fat junior broke off with a howl. Hazeldene had turned over a new leaf of late, and was on very good terms with the chums of Study No. 1, but Billy Bunter's indiscretion knew no bounds.

"What did you do that for, Cherry?"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Really, Cherry—"

"Well, it's a fact," said Hazeldene. "You can look at the notice-board yourself when you come down, that's all."

And he walked away.

"It can't be!" exclaimed Nugent. "If there's a notice on the board to the effect that Hazeldene says, it must be a hoax."

"The hoaxfulness is terrific."

"As if the Remove would knuckle under to a woman!"

"And just a girl, too!"

"It's all rot!"

"I don't know," said Harry Wharton, with a thoughtful frown. "Miss Locke is a B.A., you know; and as Quelch has been looking rather sick—"

"But a mere girl—"

"Quelch came back too soon, and a rest would do him good. He would have stayed longer at the seaside, only Chesham mucked things up."

"That's so."

"It may be possible—"

"I don't see how we can stand it," said Nugent. "It's too much of a come-down for the Remove. How the Upper Fourth will chuckle at us!"

"Yes; I can see Temple, Dabney, & Co. grinning at us over it," said Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I know what we're going to do, though. We can't be rude to Miss Locke."

"H'm! I suppose not."

"We can't rag her as we ragged the Chesham ass!"

"But are we going to stand it?" demanded Bob Cherry wrathfully. "We shall be guyed by the whole school. A girl teacher—as if we were kids in the Second!"

"It is a bit rough, and no mistake; but it may only be a jape, after all. Let's go and look at the notice-board."

"Good! That will settle it."

And the chums of the Remove, leaving their tea unfinished, left the study. Billy Bunter did not go with them. He was curious, too; but he was hungry, and hunger always came first with Billy Bunter. He went on steadily, finishing up the ham and eggs and sardines, and then carefully and methodically clearing off the cake and biscuits, and everything else except the crockeryware. Then he sat down in the only armchair, with a sigh of satisfaction.

Harry Wharton and his friends descended to the hall, and found a crowd round the notice-board. There were a good many Upper Form fellows, and they were grinning gleefully. The Removites looked wrathful.

"I say, have you seen this, Wharton?" exclaimed Russell.

"Not yet."

"Well, look at it."

Harry pushed his way forward. He looked at the notice, pinned up among the others on the board. It needed only a glance to show that it was really in the Head's handwriting, and that it was perfectly genuine.

"To-morrow, and until further notice, the Remove will be taken by Miss Locke, in the place of Mr. Quelch, who is leaving Greyfriars for a few days."

"That's the Head's hand," said Bob Cherry.

"And his signature," said Nugent.

"The genuineness of the honourable notice is great."

"It's true."

"Of course it's true!" said Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth. "Just what you kids in the Remove want, too—a lady teacher—eh, Dab?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"That's it," said Fry. "They want teaching manners; they always did. A nice, gentle, kind lady teacher—"

"We've taught you manners before now!" said Bob Cherry warmly. "We're ready to start again."

"Rather!" said Nugent emphatically.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Start, then."

"We'll jolly soon—"

"Hold on, there!" exclaimed Wingate, of the Sixth, the

captain of Greyfriars. "Don't start rowing in the hall, or you will catch it."

"Oh, these kids are cheeky, as usual!" said Temple loftily. "We have to keep them in their place, you know. They're going to have a nice lady teacher—"

Wingate laughed.

"Oh, shut up, Temple!"

The chums of the Remove walked away with wrathful faces. Not one of them thought of going up to the study to finish tea. It would have been useless, as Billy Bunter had, as a matter of fact, finished it already. But the Removites were thinking of other things.

"We're not going to stand it," said Bob Cherry. "Miss Locke is a nice girl, but she's not going to boss the Remove."

"That's the music! But how are we going to stop her?"

"How are we going to stop her, Harry?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No good asking me conundrums."

"You must think of something. What's the good of being the blessed captain of the Remove if you haven't a blessed idea in your head?"

"Well, a chap must have time to think."

"The emergency is great, and the botherfulness is terrific!" purred the nabob. "We shall become the laughful stock of the honourable asses in every other Form!"

"That's where the shoe pinches. You can see how Temple, Dabney & Co. are cackling already."

"Something must be done," said Wharton.

"Yes; but what?"

"I don't know," said Harry frankly. "I've never looked for a situation like this before, and I don't exactly know how to meet it, and that's a fact. We were taken by surprise by the Chesham ass; but we soon took his measure, and made him sit up. I don't know how we shall deal with Miss Locke."

"We're not going to have her for a giddy Form master."

"Form mistress, you mean," said Levison, joining them.

"This is a pretty come-down for the Remove, isn't it?"

"That's just what we were talking about."

"Aren't you going to do anything, Wharton?"

"What can I do?"

"Well, you ought to know. You're head of the Form. If you can't get us out of a thing like this, what's the good of being captain?" demanded Levison unpleasantly.

"Oh, you travel along!" said Bob Cherry, taking Levison by the shoulder and giving him a push. "There's too much of your flip-flap. Scoot!"

The chums of the Remove strolled away from the spot, still discussing the matter, but it was difficult to come to a decision. There was nothing to be done, as a matter of fact, and that was the trouble. But the alternative—to grin and bear it—was not to be thought of. There was trouble ahead for the Remove, and just how matters would turn out could not be told.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Petticoat Government.

THE Remove marched into their class-room the following morning with mingled feelings. There was suppressed wrath and indignation in every face, but the dominant feeling was one of expectancy.

Some cherished a hope that the matter would, after all, turn out to be a hoax, or a mistake, or anything but a fact. Others opined that Miss Locke would lose her nerve when the time came to take the Remove at morning lessons. Few really expected to see the Girton girl installed in their Form master's place to wield the pointer of authority.

The Remove took their places. Miss Locke had not yet appeared. The clock hand pointed to a minute past the quarter-past nine. The Form mistress was late. But that, after all, was the privilege of the sex, and did not imply that she was not coming.

"I'm not going to stand it, for one!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Nor I," said Hazeldene; "if there's anything else to be done."

"Something must be done."

"But what?"

"Oh, don't ask me silly ass questions!" growled Bulstrode.

"The honourable Bulstrode has no more knowfulness than the rest of us," observed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The objectfulness is terrific!"

"She isn't coming," said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up! Here she comes!"

Miss Locke entered the room.

The Removites, who had expected her to be nervous, were disappointed. There was not the slightest trace of nervousness about Miss Locke. She gave the Form a bright smile and a cheery nod, and walked straight to the Form master's desk.

There was a murmur in the Remove.

"Well, she's got pluck," muttered Bob Cherry. Miss Locke faced the Remove. She certainly had pluck. "Good-morning, my boys! As you know, I am taking the Form for a few days, while Mr. Quelch has a rest, which he needs very much."

The Remove were silent.

"I am sure we shall be very good friends," continued Miss Locke. "There will be no difference at all in the lessons. You will work exactly the same as if Mr. Quelch were with you."

Bulstrode grinned.

"Shall we?" he murmured.

Miss Locke's eyes fixed upon Bulstrode.

"Did you speak?" she asked quietly.

"N-no!" stammered Bulstrode, turning red.

"Very good. If any boy has anything to say before lessons commence, I am quite willing to give him a hearing."

Levison was whispering to Billy Bunter. Most eyes turned upon Harry Wharton. The Remove expected him to rise and denounce feminine rule in no measured terms, but the hero of the Remove did nothing of the kind. He sat in his place, his eyes on his desk.

There were audible murmurs, and Skinner leaned over from the desk behind to give the captain of the Remove a nudge.

"What is the matter?" asked Harry, looking testily round.

"Aren't you going to speak?"

"What am I to say?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Well, I don't, either."

"The impossibleness of being rude to a charming miss is terrific!" purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"That's the worst of it!" growled Bob Cherry. "If she were a man—"

"If she were a man, the difficulty wouldn't have arisen."

"True!"

"Hallo! There's that ass Bunter getting up! Sit down, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was on his legs.

Levison had been whispering to him earnestly, and it was pretty plain that he had succeeded in persuading Bunter to speak, against his secret disinclination.

"You're just the chap to do it, Billy," muttered Levison. "Besides, you know, from the way she looked at you yesterday, that she likes you."

"Do you really think so, Levison?"

"It's absolutely certain. Then, how concerned she was when she thought you were hurt after that tumble down-stairs."

"So she was."

"You're the chap to speak, Bunter. Go it!"

"Of course, I know I could put it better than any other fellow in the Form; still—"

"Go it. You're the chap!"

"Well, if you really think so—"

"Of course I do! Up with you!"

And Billy Bunter, thus persuaded, rose to his feet. There was a unanimous murmur from the Remove.

"Sit down!"

Bunter blinked round through his big glasses. Miss Locke fixed her eyes upon him.

"Do you wish to speak?"

"Y-e-e-e-es, ma'am!" stammered Billy.

"What is your name?"

"Bunter, ma'am—William George Bunter."

"Well, you may go on, Bunter."

"If you please, ma'am—What was the next?" murmured Bunter, glancing down at Levison, who sat at his side.

"You don't approve of female Form masters."

"Ah, yes. If you please, ma'am, I don't approve of female Form masters."

The Remove burst into a giggle. Miss Locke gave Bunter a look which would have frozen anybody else, but it had no effect upon the short-sighted Billy, who did not even see it.

"What was the next, Levison?" he murmured.

"You think women ought to keep their place," whispered Levison.

"If you please, ma'am, I think women ought to keep their place—"

"And wash up dishes at home," whispered the prompter.

"And wash up dishes at home," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round at the Remove. He could see nothing to laugh at himself. Levison was grinning. There was a red spot in either of Miss Locke's pink cheeks.

"Have you finished, Bunter?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"If I did not think that you had been prompted to make these absurd observations, I should punish you severely!" said Miss Locke.

Bunter gasped. This certainly did not sound as if Miss Locke was very "sweet," as Levison had put it, in his direc-

tion. Still, he immediately reflected that women were great adepts at hiding their feelings.

"You have been prompted to this impertinence," said Miss Locke. "What was the boy next to you whispering to you?"

Levison looked uneasy. He had not expected the Girton girl to be so extremely keen-sighted and observant.

"I—I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"The next boy will stand up."

Levison unwillingly stood up. The eyes of the whole class were upon him. Bunter dropped upon the form again with a gasp. He was glad to be out of the range of Miss Locke's clear eyes.

"What is your name?"

"Levison," said the new boy in the Remove sulkily.

"You prompted Bunter to make these ridiculous observations?"

Levison was silent.

"Answer me, Levison!"

"Yes, I did," said Levison. "I don't see that they are ridiculous. I think—"

"I am not asking you what you think, Levison. Pay attention to me. I will overlook this fault of yours, as I do not wish to commence here by inflicting a punishment. But it must not occur again. Understand that, please, all of you. We will now proceed to first lesson."

Levison sat down, looking red and spiteful.

"I must depend upon you for some information in this matter," Miss Locke went on, glancing at the first row of boys. "I shall soon get into the ways of the Form, I think. You must help me. What is first lesson?"

Her glance was upon Bulstrode, who towered head and shoulders above any other fellow in the Remove. Bulstrode winked at Skinner, who sat next him.

"Roman history, miss," he replied.

Harry Wharton knitted his brows. Bulstrode had told an untruth, for the sake of taking a "rise" out of the fair teacher. Miss Locke had no suspicion.

"You will let me have your book, please," she said.

"I am sorry, miss, but—"

"You surely have your books with you?"

"I ought to have them, ma'am, but—"

"Well, what?"

"I have left them on the piano in my study," said Bulstrode.

The Remove giggled joyously. The idea of a piano in a junior's study struck them as funny. Perhaps it appeared rather peculiar to Miss Locke, too, unused as she was to a boys' school. She gave Bulstrode a quick glance.

"You have left them where?" she asked.

"On the piano in my study, ma'am."

"Go and fetch them at once!"

"Certainly, ma'am."

Bulstrode left the class-room. Miss Locke turned to Harry Wharton. He was head boy, and there was something in his face, too, which made one of a weaker sex turn to him naturally in a time of difficulty.

"Let me see, your name is—"

"Harry Wharton."

"Very good. Please lend me a book for first lesson."

Wharton coloured.

"You have not forgotten your books, too, Wharton?"

"No, ma'am, but—"

"What is it?"

"Bulstrode made a mistake. First lesson is not Roman history."

Miss Locke's brow contracted just a little.

"Ah, a curious mistake! Please give me some more correct information on the point, Wharton, and we will proceed."

Harry did so, and several fellows who had expected him to carry on the game of "chipping" started by Bulstrode were disappointed. Harry's manner to the young lady from Girton was quiet and respectful. As a matter of fact, Wharton did not know what to do. He did not like the situation, but it was not easy to see a way out of it. First lesson was over when Bulstrode returned.

"Where are your books, Bulstrode?" asked Miss Locke, as she saw that the bully of the Remove came in empty-handed.

"They're not there, ma'am."

"Two mistakes in one morning!" said Miss Locke significantly. "You had better be careful, Bulstrode. Go to your place."

Bulstrode went to his place with ostentatious slowness.

"What is second lesson this morning, Wharton?" asked Miss Locke.

"Latin, ma'am."

"What books do you use?"

"Eutropius and Cæsar. It is the third book, *De Bello Gallico*, this morning."

"Thank you, Wharton!"

Miss Locke opened her book.

"Where did you leave off yesterday?"

"Cap. 7, ma'am."

"Good! We will go on from there. 'His rebus gestis, cum omnibus de causis Cæsar pactatam Galliam existamaret,' you will construe, Bulstrode."

"I haven't a book, ma'am."

"You have not found it yet?"

"It wasn't on the piano in my study," said Bulstrode.

"I think, upon the whole, I must have dropped it during my canter round the Close before breakfast."

"Bulstrode!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I have already warned you to be careful. Take Levison's book, and construe."

"Certainly, ma'am!"

"Begin, then."

Bulstrode glanced at the Latin, which he could have construed with perfect correctness if he had chosen; but he did not choose.

"Cum omnibus de causis Cæsar pactatam Galliam existamaret"—Cæsar got upon an omnibus—

There was an irresistible cackle from the Remove. Miss Locke turned pink.

"Bulstrode!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You will go to the bottom of the class."

"But—"

"Don't answer me, sir. Do as I tell you!"

Bulstrode looked at Miss Locke, and then at his grinning Form fellows. Then he set his teeth and sat down in his place. There was a buzz in the Form.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Firm Hand.

MISS LOCKE looked at Bulstrode, who kept his eyes fixed doggedly upon his desk. The buzz was followed by a breathless hush. Bulstrode had taken upon himself the burden of defiance. What would come of it?

"Bulstrode!"

Miss Locke's voice was very quiet and cool. The Remove bully did not reply, nor look up. His heart was beating, but the die was cast now. He meant to show the Remove that they would have done better in making him leader than in conferring that honour upon Wharton.

"Bulstrode, go to the bottom of the class."

Bulstrode did not stir.

"Bravo, Bulstrode!" said Levison, in an audible whisper.

"Levison!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Go to the next place at the bottom of the class, next to Bulstrode."

"What for?" said Levison insolently.

"For impertinence, sir!"

Levison did not move. There was a painful silence in the Form. The Remove had chafed at feminine government; but now that there was actual rebellion, some of them began to think that, after all, it was not very manly to "rag" a woman. After all, Miss Locke meant well, and it was only for a time. Wharton's eyes were beginning to sparkle. He was strongly inclined to back the Girton girl up.

"Very well," said Miss Locke, taking Mr. Quelch's pointer from the desk, "Bulstrode, stand up!"

Bulstrode sat still. Miss Locke came up to the first row of desks, the juniors watching her with breathless interest.

"Stand up, Bulstrode!"

There was something in her voice now that made the Remove bully obey. He rose uneasily to his feet, his brow dogged and sullen.

"Hold out your hand!"

Bulstrode started

"Hold out your hand, sir!"

The Remove gritted his teeth.

"I won't!"

Miss Locke's lips were set in a tight line. There was a gleam, too, in her soft brown eyes—a gleam of determination.

"Listen to me, Bulstrode! You will hold out your hand and take your punishment, or I shall send a note to Dr. Locke, reporting you for insolence and insubordination. You know what the result of that will be."

Bulstrode knew. It would be a flogging, and a severe one, in the Head's study. It struck him all of a sudden that in defying Miss Locke, it was not merely the girl graduate he was defying, but the whole power of Greyfriars, represented for the moment by that slim and graceful girl.

"Go it, Bulstrode!"

It was a whisper from several reckless fellows behind him; but Bulstrode was not inclined to "go it."

Slowly, very slowly, he held out his hand. Miss Locke

gave him a sharp cut across the palm. The pain was nothing to the burly Remove, but he coloured crimson with the humiliation of it.

"The other hand, Bulstrode!"

The other hand came out slowly. The pointer descended with a sounding smack, that rang through the silence of the class-room.

Bulstrode wriggled.

"Now, you will go to the bottom of the class, Bulstrode!"

For a moment Bulstrode stood still, a struggle evidently going on in his breast, and then he slowly and savagely moved from the desk.

"You heard what I told you, Levison?"

Levison followed Bulstrode without a word.

"And now," said Miss Locke, "we will resume. You may construe, Wharton."

Harry Wharton stood up and construed. He did it perfectly, without a fault, and received a word of commendation.

"Rotten sneak!" muttered Levison. "Trying to curry favour with that confounded Suffragette!"

"This isn't the finish!" muttered Bulstrode. "I had to give in—"

"You did, and no mistake!" said Levison, who was always ready with a sneer at friend or foe. "It was a climb-down!"

"Oh, shut up! This isn't the finish!"

"Take fifty lines each for talking in class, Bulstrode and Levison!"

And the two malcontents "shut up," then, promptly enough.

The morning lessons went on, and the feelings of the Remove warmed a little towards the girl from Girton.

She showed very plainly that she was quite up to the work of the Remove, and, indeed, gave them the impression that she was beyond it, and was condescending, as it were, from vastly superior heights of knowledge.

Yet she showed nothing of the blue-stocking manner.

She could be severe, as she had shown in the case of Bulstrode and Levison. But to the boys who were attentive and painstaking, she was kindness itself. But the thought of what was to come after school made the Remove chafe. They shrank from the prospect of the chipping of the Upper Fourth. Bulstrode and Levison were not the only ones who came to grief. The eye of the Form mistress was upon Billy Bunter.

Bunter had a bag of tarts under his desk, and from time to time he helped himself, when he thought that he was unobserved. He seldom ventured upon anything of the sort when Mr. Quelch was taking the class, but he was not so much afraid of Miss Locke. But the Girton girl's eye was upon him.

"Bunter!" Miss Locke rapped out presently, so suddenly that Billy, who had his mouth full, gave a jump, and nearly choked.

"Gr-r-r—yes, miss?"

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing, please!"

"You are eating!"

There could not be much doubt upon that point, for Billy Bunter's jaws were working away like a machine in his hurry to bolt the mouthful.

"You must not eat in class, Bunter!"

"If you please, miss—"

"Don't let me see you doing it again!"

Billy Bunter inwardly resolved that she should not. But he did not mean to leave his tarts till school was dismissed. He waited until Miss Locke's back was turned, and then he recommenced with another tart.

"Bunter!"

"Ow!" murmured Billy Bunter. "She's got eyes in the back of her head, I believe!"

"Bunter, you are eating again!"

"If you please, ma'am—"

"You are a greedy boy, Bunter!"

"If you please—"

"Come out here!"

Bunter, looking extremely nervous, stepped out before the class. He was thinking of the pointer, but it was not that he had to dread. Miss Locke signed to him to go up to the blackboard and take the chalk.

"Now, Bunter, you will write as I tell you on the blackboard!"

"Yes, ma'am!" stammered the alarmed Billy.

"Write 'I must not be greedy!'"

"I—I—"

"Write!"

"Very well, ma'am!"

And Billy wrote. There was a yell of laughter from the Remove as they read the sprawling words. Miss Locke's face was a study. For this was what Bunter had scrawled across the blackboard:

"Miss Locke must not be greedy!"

"Bunter!"
The tone of Miss Locke's voice made Bunter drop the chalk to the floor. He jumped, and blinked at the young lady through his glasses.

"Ye-es, ma'am?"
"How dare you write that nonsense?"
"That—that what?"
"That impertinent nonsense, sir!"
"But—but you told me to!" stammered Billy, frightened, but manfully sticking up for the facts. "You told me to yourself!"

The Remove giggled joyfully.
"I told you to write 'I must not be greedy'!"
"That's what I've written!"
Miss Locke looked at him searchingly, and then suppressed a smile. She saw that it was not intentional impertinence she had to deal with.

"The fatheadedness of the honourable Bunter is terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Well, he would take first prize in a fool-show, and no mistake!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!"
"Yes, ma'am? You told me——"
"I intended you to write the first personal pronoun. Do you understand now?"

"Yes, ma'am!"
"Then write as I have said!"

Bunter picked up the chalk, and wrote:
"The first personal pronoun."

The Remove giggled without restraint. Miss Locke turned pink.

"Bunter, I cannot credit that you are really so stupid!"
"What's the matter now?" gasped the unhappy Billy.

"I've only done as you told me! I don't see what all the fellows are cackling at! I can't see anything to laugh at myself. What's the matter?"

Miss Locke tried not to smile. She rubbed the board clear, and then took the chalk from Bunter, and traced the words on the blackboard herself:

"I must not be greedy."
"Oh, I see now!" gasped the fat junior. "But——"

"You will stand under the blackboard for the rest of the lesson, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Miss Locke——"
"You will do as I tell you!"

And Bunter did.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Course of Chipping!

"HE'S not a bad sort!"
That was Bob Cherry's comment, as the Remove came out after morning lessons. Harry Wharton nodded assent.

"Quite right, Bob!"
"I say, you fellows——"

"But all the same we're not going to be taught by a woman!" said Nugent. "It's infra dig., to say nothing of the cackling we shall get from the other fellows."

"Oh, the other fellows can go and eat coke!"
"That's all very well, Harry; just wait till it begins!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, don't bother, Billy! Can't you see we're busy?"

"Look here, Nugent, this matter is growing serious! The dignity of the Remove is at stake! I say, you fellows, oughtn't Wharton to do something?"

"Rats!" said Harry, walking away.

Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles.

"It's all very well to say rats," he remarked. "That's easy enough. But what's to be done? I don't think the Remove ought to stand it!"

"You must not be greedy!" said Hazeldene, wagging a warning forefinger at Bunter.

"Oh, cheese it, Vaseline! What we want is a new leader for the Remove! Let go my ear, Nugent! You're hurting me!"

"It's not Nugent," said Bob Cherry, compressing his grip upon Billy's plump ear. "It's I, fathead! What's that about a new leader?"

"Of course, I was only joking, Cherry!"

"Sure?"

"Yes. Ow—ow—wow—wow!"

"So was I!" grinned Bob Cherry. "A joke for a joke—one good turn deserves another!"

And he followed Harry Wharton, leaving Billy Bunter rubbing his ear ruefully, and wondering whether he had been really joking or not.

It could not be denied that Miss Locke had, upon the whole, made a good impression upon the Remove.

She had shown that she could be plucky and determined, and pluck and determination were qualities highly appreciated by the Greyfriars Lower Fourth.

At the same time she had been very kind, and the boys would have appreciated her kindness very much, but for a certain sheepishness they felt about it, and a mortal fear lest "the other fellows" should consider them "soft."

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

Bulstrode and Levison were bitter enough. But they found little sympathy among their Form fellows. They had stood up against feminine government, only to surrender unconditionally at the first show of firmness. Bulstrode's dream of heading a revolt of the Remove had been brief, and it was over.

A good many fellows had questions to ask Harry Wharton. They wanted to know what he was "going to do." To each questioner in turn Harry had the same reply to make.

"Nothing!"

"You call yourself leader of the Form, don't you?" said Levison, with a sneer.

"I don't call myself anything," said Harry tartly, "and I'm not in the best sort of temper just now, so don't bother me!"

"You don't like petticoat government any more than we do?"

"Very likely!"

"Something ought to be done!"

"Do it, then!"

"If you are captain of the Remove——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"We want a new leader!"

"Get one, then!"

But that was just where the difficulty came in. It was not easy to find a leader who could lead the Remove out of the predicament it found itself in. Meanwhile, the Upper Fourth were, of course, making the most of the affair.

After dinner the chums of the Remove went down to the nets, and when they came off the cricket-field, flushed and glowing with healthy exercise, they found Temple, Dabney, & Co. waiting for them.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Temple, affecting a great surprise.

"What are you fellows doing with those bats?"

"Bats?" said Bob Cherry. "Playing cricket, of course!"

"Oh, I thought you had given up cricket!"

"And taken to crochet-work!" said Dabney.

"Or knitting!" said Fry.

The Removites turned red. They did not know exactly what to say for the moment; and the Upper Fourth fellows chuckled over their little joke.

"I hear that your new master—I mean, mistress—is giving out sugar-plums to all the good little boys in the class," said Temple. "Have you had one yet, Wharton?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Harry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Is it true that she made you stand in a corner with a fool's cap on your head for being a naughty boy, Cherry?"

"No, it isn't," said Bob, turning very red.

"Have you been smacked yet, Nugent?"

"You'll get smacked jolly soon if you don't shut up."

"Don't be angry, ickle darling," said Temple. "Let me kiss him on his baby brow, then."

"Oh, shut up!"

"I'd really like to know what you're going to do with that bat, Cherry."

"Certainly," said Bob, letting the end of the bat fall with a clump upon Temple's boot. "There you are!"

The captain of the Upper Fourth gave a terrific yelp.

"Ow, ow! You've squashed my toes!"

"Well, you wanted to know——"

"Ow! Oh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "You know now, Temple. Would you like to know what I'm going to do with mine?"

Temple was dancing on one foot and clasping the other, and he did not reply. The chums of the Remove walked on. They felt that they had had the best of that little argument.

But they were not yet done with the chipping. Near the School House a number of the Upper Fourth were standing in a row, with their hands folded across their chests, and their eyes cast upward, in exaggerated imitation of a girls' class. Scott was talking to them in a high falsetto voice.

"Now, are you going to be good little boys—I mean girls?"

"Yes, please," came the squeaking reply.

"Will you stop being the naughtiest and cheekiest Form in Greyfriars, and be good little girls, if I give you a sugar-plum?"

"Yes, please," squeaked the row of solemn juniors.

The chums of the Remove hurried on with very red faces. The "class" broke up as soon as they were past, and sent a roar of laughter after them. It was evident that the Upper Fourth meant to make the most of the joke.

"I don't know how we're going to stand this," growled Nugent. "Suppose we make a rush and knock the silly asses over?"

"Oh, never mind them!" said Harry. "Come in!"

"I don't see why we should take it lying down."

"We should take it lying down right enough if we tackled a dozen chaps at once," grinned Bob Cherry. "Wharton's right; come in!"

They entered the House, and went up to Study No. 1. Harry Wharton uttered a sharp exclamation as he entered the room—an exclamation of annoyance.

"What's the row, Harry?" asked Nugent. "My hat, I see! Look there, Bob!"

On the bare wall of the study someone with artistic tendencies had been executing a drawing with chalk.

The drawing depicted a schoolmistress of antique appearance, with spectacles and a fringe, with a youth across her knee, grasped by one hand, and a slipper raised in the air in the other.

The artist had certainly not caught anything like a likeness, but there was no doubt as to what the picture was intended to convey—a member of the Remove in the act of receiving punishment at the hands of the new Form mistress.

Harry Wharton was frowning, but Bob Cherry burst into a laugh.

"Oh, hang it," said Nugent, "this is growing past a joke."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's funny."

"They've spoiled our wall," growled Harry. "This is Dabney's work, I know. He thinks he can draw, and he's always scrawling some rot."

"We shall have to get our own back on the Upper Fourth somehow," said Bob Cherry. "We can't let them run on."

"The lifelessness will not be worthy of the livingfulness if the runfulness of the honourable rotters is not stopped," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Suppose we visit the esteemed study of the worthy Temple & Co., and wreck it for them."

"Not a bad idea."

"No time," said Nugent. "It's time for afternoon school. But it's not a bad idea—we'll think of it, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Mouse.

THE Remove took their places very quietly that afternoon. Miss Locke greeted them with a sweet smile. She looked very fresh and pretty in the dull old class-room, and it struck Harry that she brightened the place up very much, and was a much more picturesque figure than Mr. Quelch. It occurred to him also that lessons seemed to be easier.

Miss Locke possessed feminine tact and patience, and did not expect too much, and she certainly had a most sweet temper. Mr. Quelch had ruled with a heavy hand—the Remove needed it, and prided itself on that fact. It began to dawn upon several fellows that the new regime might be pleasanter than the old.

Levison seemed to have profited by his lesson. He was very quiet through the afternoon lessons, but Bulstrode was in a state of suppressed sulkiness. He was as surly as he dared to be, and gave as much trouble as he could. It happened that English history came up that afternoon, and Bulstrode found a chance of giving the fair Form mistress his opinion.

"Queen Elizabeth was popular with the mass of her subjects, but was there a section of the population strongly opposed to her government?" said Miss Locke.

"Yes, ma'am," said Bulstrode.

"And who were they?"

Bulstrode knew perfectly well, but he did not choose to render the correct reply.

"They were the people who were opposed to petticoat government, ma'am," he said coolly.

The Remove chuckled faintly. Miss Locke coloured.

"What did you say, Bulstrode?"

"There were a section of the people who didn't believe in women meddling with government or anything of that sort, ma'am," said Bulstrode.

"Good!" murmured Levison.

Miss Locke fixed her eyes upon Bulstrode.

"That is not correct, Bulstrode."

"I believe it was the fact, ma'am."

"You are at the bottom of the class, Bulstrode, so I cannot send you lower. You will write out twenty times: 'The Catholics as a party were opposed to the government of Queen Elizabeth.'"

"But—"

"No more, sir."

Miss Locke went on quietly with the lesson, and Bulstrode grinned at those near him. His impertinence was worth the twenty lines, in his opinion.

Several times during the afternoon Harry Wharton had noticed a grin upon the face of Skinner, who was sitting two places from him. Skinner was the jokist of the Remove, and it was easy to see that there was something on from his expression, though what the something was Harry had no idea.

"What is it you have under your desk, Skinner?" said Miss Locke suddenly.

"I, ma'am?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Yes, you," said Miss Locke. "You have been putting your hand under your desk a dozen times or more. What have you there? Have you brought an animal into the class-room?"

It was not unusual for juniors to bring dormice or white rabbits into the class-room, and hide them in their desks, though it was against the regulations.

Skinner hastily slid something along to the next boy's desk—Bob Cherry's—and assumed a look of virtuous innocence.

"I haven't anything here, ma'am, except my books."

"Are you sure, Skinner?"

"Quite sure, ma'am."

"Then do not fidget."

"Certainly not, ma'am."

The lesson proceeded. Skinner winked with one eye at Bob Cherry, while the other side of his face, turned towards Miss Locke, was quite solemn. Bob gave him a sidelong glance.

"What have you put in my desk, Skinny?"

"Only my automatic mouse."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Only have a lark. Mum's the word."

"But I say—"

"Cheese it; she's looking at us."

"You must not talk in class, Cherry."

"Very well, ma'am."

Miss Locke turned away a little. She was dealing with Harry Wharton, head of the Form, and the most promising pupil in the Remove. Skinner slid his hand into Bob Cherry's desk, and took back the article he had hidden there.

It was a curious toy, with which Skinner had more than once performed tricks, to the amusement of the Remove. He had been punished once by Mr. Quelch for bringing it into the class-room, but this was unknown to Miss Locke.

It was a mouse, life-size, and worked by an inner spring. As soon as it was set upon the floor the spring worked, and it ran out to the length of a string, which the operator kept in his hand.

The toy was remarkably lifelike, and it was a joke of Skinner's to scare old ladies in railway trains with it, often with great success.

Miss Locke gave Wharton a glance of approval.

"You are a credit to the class, Wharton," she said. "I am proud of you. You fully deserve to be head of the Form."

Wharton coloured a little. The kind words smote upon his conscience a little, after the disagreeable feelings he had had towards the Girton girl.

"If you please, Miss Locke—" said Skinner.

"What is it, Skinner?"

"I think I saw a mouse."

Miss Locke started.

She could be firm and determined in dealing with an unruly Form like the Greyfriars Remove, but her expression showed that a mouse had power to shake her nerve.

"W-w-where, Skinner?"

"Just near your feet, ma'am."

Miss Locke gave a jump.

There was a faint whirr, and a mouse ran round her skirts, and a quick little startled cry broke from the fair B.A.

"Oh!"

The string attached to the mouse was invisible, and Skinner jerked on it. The mouse receded and then ran on again, and Miss Locke fairly ran. In a moment she was standing upon a chair near the master's desk, clutching her skirts round her, and looking to right and left apprehensively.

"Is—is it gone?" she panted.

There was an irrepressible giggle from the Remove. The sight struck them as funny, and in the midst of the giggle was heard the voice of Billy Bunter, in triumphant tones:

"Look there, Levison! I told you she hadn't blue stockings!"

Miss Locke went crimson, and the Remove roared.

"Is—is it gone?"

Bob Cherry jerked Skinner's arm.

"Stop it, you ass!"

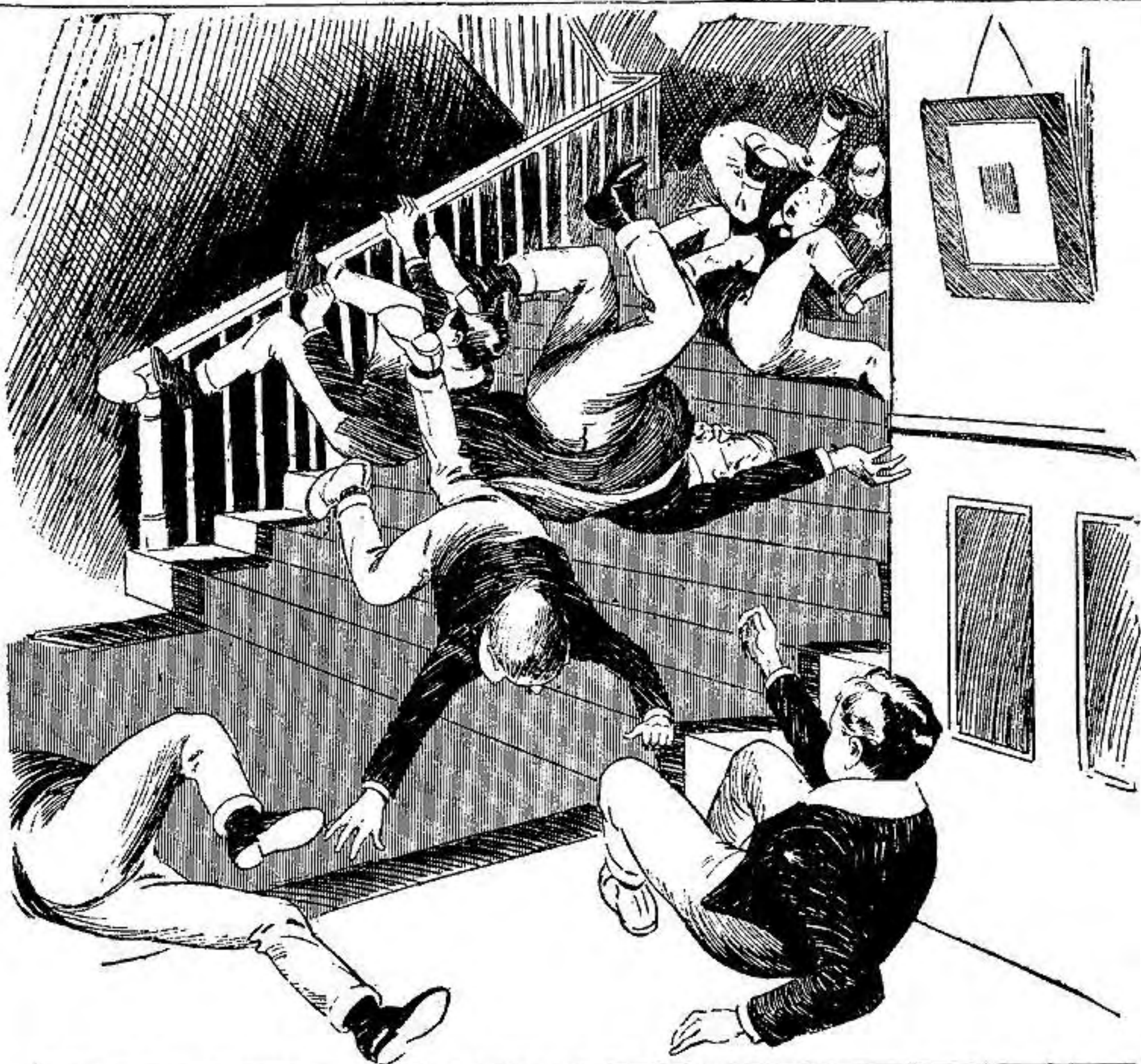
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner jerked in the mouse, and hid it in his desk. Miss Locke descended from the chair, still with an uneasy look of apprehension.

"It's gone, ma'am," said Skinner. "I can't see it anywhere."

"Are—are you sure?"

"It's quite gone," said Harry Wharton, with a warning



Amid a chorus of wild exclamations, an avalanche of juniors, falling over one another, rolled down the stairs.

glance at Skinner. "It won't get into the room again, Miss Locke."

And it did not. But the incident had quite upset the accustomed gravity of the class-room for the afternoon, and at intervals a suppressed giggle was heard, and Miss Locke looked quite relieved when the time came for the Remove to be dismissed.

As the Form filed out, the young lady from Girton signed to Harry Wharton to come to her. Somewhat wondering, Harry obeyed. Miss Locke detached a rose she was wearing, and pinned it to Harry's coat.

"In recognition of the good example you have set the class, Wharton," she said, with a sweet smile.

Wharton was crimson and dumb. It was a graceful action, but he knew how it was likely to be taken by the Remove, and repeated up and down the college. But there was no help for it; he could not be rude enough to refuse, or even hint that he did not care for it. He muttered something and walked on, followed by the Removites, a broad grin on every face.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. A Regular Row.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter as soon as the Remove were out in the close. Grinning faces surrounded Harry Wharton, and even his own chums joined in the mirth.

"You are a credit to the class," said Levison.

"We are proud of you," remarked Bulstrode.

"A nice little flower for the darling's coat," said Skinner.

"In recognition of the excellent example he has set the class," said Hazeldene, with a shake of the head. "Don't forget that."

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

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry Wharton angrily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you don't shut that confounded cackling

"Oh, don't get ratty, kid!" grinned Nugent. "It strikes us as funny, therefore we laugh. And it is funny."

"Hence these cackles," said Bob Cherry.

"The cacklefulness is great, but the funniffulness is terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Let not the worthy Wharton lose his esteemed rotten temper. The greatness of the funniffulness is terrific."

"You cackling asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton swung angrily away, and strode across the Close.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's really got his back up!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "A touch of the old temper—eh?"

"The wrathfulness is great," said the nabob. "Let us go after him followfully, and restore the smile of serenity to his benign brow."

Bob Cherry ran after Harry, and gave him a mighty poke in the ribs. Wharton gasped and turned round.

"What the dickens—"

"That's all right, old chap. That gentle nudge was only to show that there's no ill-feeling," explained Bob.

"You ass; you've nearly busted my ribs!"

"Never mind; don't bother about trifles. And don't get your back up over nothing, either; you know, we were only funning. In short, don't be an ass!"

Wharton's face cleared a little.

"Well, a chap gets fed up with chipping in the long run," he said. "It's bad enough to have it all day long from the Upper Fourth, without you fellows starting it too. I shall get chipped to death over this rose, I know."

"Take it off before it's seen, then."

Wharton shook his head.

"You're going to wear it?"

"Yes. Suppose Miss Locke should see that I had taken it off as soon as I was out of her sight? She would feel insulted."

"The probablefulness is great."

"Besides, it was kind of her to give it me," said Harry half defiantly. "I don't really see what there is to cackle about. Some silly asses will cackle about anything."

"Thank you!" grinned Bob.

"Well, I didn't mean exactly that, either. Still——"

"Here comes Temple, with the Co., of course. Better take that rose off for a bit, anyway," said Nugent.

"I won't!"

"Hallo!" said Temple affably, as he came up. "Don't look ratty, you chaps; we're not looking for a row. We've just heard about Wharton getting a prize for being a good little boy, and we've come to congratulate him."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "We've come to congratulate him."

"Oh, clear off!"

"Not without congratulating you," said Fry. "A nice little boy had a nice little flower, and all his loving school-mates congratulated him—— Ow!"

Harry Wharton's patience, never very great, was exhausted. His fist shot out, and caught Fry on the end of his nose. Fry sat down in the Close with a suddenness that jarred him from head to foot, and gasped:

"Oh!"

Harry looked down at him with a glint in his eyes.

"Want any more?"

"Yes, rather!" roared Fry, scrambling up. "I'll teach you to dot me on the boko, you young villain!"

"Here, hold on!" said Temple. "I say——"

"He's dotted me on the boko!"

"Yes; but——"

"On the boko!"

"Yes; but look here——"

"He's dotted me on the boko. Lemme alone!"

And Fry rushed at Harry Wharton. He was a bigger fellow, as was natural as he belonged to a higher Form. But he found the young captain of the Remove quite ready for him. Harry's fists were already up, and he and Fry were soon at it hammer and tongs.

"Go it!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Buck up, Wharton!"

"The buckfulness is terrific," murmured the nabob. "I will hold your esteemed cap, Wharton. Go for him terrifically!"

"Give him socks, Fry!" exclaimed Dabney. "Give the young bounder what-ho!"

"Oh, you cheese it!" said Bob Cherry. "Who are you calling a young bounder? Look here, put up your fists!"

"I don't want to——"

"Then don't; it's just as you like, of course, but I'm going for your nose."

"You utter ass!"

Bob Cherry was dancing round Dabney, making frantic hits at him, and Dabney had no choice but to put up his fists. Nugent looked on with the light of battle in his eye, and suddenly knocked Temple's hat off.

"What the dickens do you mean?" roared Temple.

Nugent squared up.

"Come on!"

"You young ass, do you think I am going to fight a Remove kid?"

"Yes, or else be licked;" grinned Nugent.

"Look here——"

"There's a oner to start with."

Nugent gave Temple a smart tap on the chin. Temple forgot all about his superior dignity as captain of the Upper Fourth, and went for the Remove like a bull. They grappled and went reeling to and fro in deadly strife.

The nabob looked on regretfully. Three pairs of combatants were engaged in wild and whirling conflict, and the laws of fair play forbade him to interfere. But the blood of the fighting race of Bhanipur was boiling in his veins. Scott, of the Upper Fourth, came running up.

"Hallo! What's the row? What's—— You inky lunatic, what are you up to?"

"I am attacking you fightfully," said the nabob, letting Scott have it with left and right. "I am inflicting the honourable lickfulness."

"Get off—keep off—— Ow!"

"Take that, and that, and—— Oh!"

Scott was hitting out now in return, and the nabob staggered. But he returned to the charge manfully. There were now four couples, fighting away for all they were worth, trampling and gasping. The noise attracted spectators from far and wide, and a crowd gathered round in next to no time.

"Go it, Wharton!"

"Buck up, Dabney!"

"On the ball!"

"Go it!"

In their keen interest in the fight no one noticed a slim, girlish form advancing quickly towards the scene; no one observed Miss Locke till she was on the spot.

"Whatever is the matter?"

"My hat!" murmured Hazeldene. "It's the Girton girl."

The crowd made way for Miss Locke to approach. But the combatants were too excited to see her. Just as she came through the crowd, Harry Wharton's fist landed upon Fry's nose with terrific force, and he rolled at the very feet of the doctor's sister.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton Makes Up His Mind.

"GRACIOUS!"

That horrified exclamation from Miss Locke was enough. The combat stopped as if by magic.

Fry sat up, almost touching Miss Locke, and rubbed his nose. Harry Wharton stood with his hands dropped, his face red with exertion and shame. Hurree Singh and Scott, Bob Cherry and Dabney, Nugent and Temple, separated all of a sudden, and stood looking red and shamefaced.

They looked a disreputable set. Each face bore the plainest possible marks of the fight. Swollen eyes and cut lips and bruised noses were well in evidence, and two or three had trickles of "claret" running down their faces.

They looked at Miss Locke, and Miss Locke looked at them. Fry scrambled awkwardly to his feet.

"You have been fighting!"

The remark was needless, and some of the crowd tittered. Harry's face was scarlet. The whole affair had been caused by his hasty temper, and he was keenly conscious how dirty and disreputable he must look at that moment. He could hardly keep his left eye open, and his nose was bleeding, and staining his white collar with great red blotches.

"Yes," he stammered.

"What about?"

"Nothing."

Miss Locke turned to Temple, Dabney, & Co. severely.

"Temple, you are captain of a higher Form! You should know better than this."

Temple was silent.

"That's all right," said Nugent. "I chivvied Temple into it. It's all right, Miss Locke. We fight sometimes for want of something better to do."

"The exactfulness of my worthy chum's statement is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I aver for my partfulness that I attacked the honourable Scott myself, and gave him socks, simply to keep the honourable ball rolling."

There was a laugh.

"That's the size of it," said Bob Cherry. "It's all right, Miss Locke. This isn't Girton, you know; it's Greyfriars."

"Ratherfully, most charming miss!"

"I am ashamed of you!" said Miss Locke. "This is brutal! I should hope that you are ashamed of yourselves!"

"It was my fault," said Harry Wharton abruptly. "I lost my temper. I—I am sorry I hit you, Fry!"

Fry grinned rather uneasily.

"Oh, that's all right, Wharton; I chipped you into it!"

"I hope," said Miss Locke, "that this is at an end! If it occurs again, I shall have to punish severely the culprits who belong to the Remove!"

"Smack 'em!" said a voice in the crowd.

Miss Locke looked round.

"Who said that?"

There was no reply.

"I think I know your voice, Bulstrode! Did you speak then?"

"Yes, I did," growled Bulstrode.

"You will take fifty lines for importunence!"

"That shuts you up," murmured Hazeldene, as Bulstrode grunted and was silent. He had not expected to be dropped upon so suddenly.

Miss Locke turned to the dishevelled combatants again.

"Mind that this does not occur any more! I forgive you this once, but any boy in the Remove renewing this disgraceful scene will be severely punished!"

And the doctor's sister walked away.

"Nice kettle of fish!" growled Dabney. "All on account of a giddy rose in Wharton's jacket! Why didn't you tell her, Wharton?"

"Because I didn't."

"I rather think I'll go and get a clean up," said Nugent ruefully. "I feel as if I had been under a lawnmower or a motor-car."

"Same here!" grinned Temple.

The chums of the Remove walked away. They were all feeling knocked up, and were glad to get into a bath-room and wash down and change their collars.

Then they went along to Study No. 1. A fire was blazing in the grate and the kettle was singing upon it. Billy Bunter turned a crimson countenance from the fire, where he was making toast.

"I say, you fellows, tea's nearly ready. My hat, you do look rotten! Have you been bumping your faces against something?"

"Yes," grunted Bob Cherry; "against Temple & Co.'s fists! We're hungry! Make the tea, old chap, and don't talk!"

"Really, Cherry—"

"Cheese it!"

The Removites sat down at the tea-table. Harry Wharton was in a thoughtful mood, and there was a wrinkle upon his brow. He did not join in the chatter of the tea-table, and was evidently thinking something out.

"I say, Harry!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

The captain of the Remove came out of a brown study.

"Eh? What?"

"I've asked you to pass the marmalade twice!"

"Sorry; here you are."

"What have you got on your mind?" asked Bob. "Are you thinking out something in Euclid, or studying a new facial expression? If you're doing it with the idea of adding to the agreeableness of your chivvy, take my advice and don't!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I've been thinking. Do you know, we have been playing the giddy goat the last day or two!"

"Nothing new in that," said Nugent; "we often do! But what particular species of the giddy goat are you alluding to?"

"I mean setting ourselves up against Miss Locke."

"Oh!" said Nugent.

"It's all rot," said Harry Wharton quietly. "There's no reason why she shouldn't take the Remove. She's quite capable."

"You've changed your tune!"

"Well, I hadn't thought it out before. As a matter of fact, it was of no use getting our backs up over it, as Miss Locke has the Head's authority behind her. We could do nothing but rag her, as we did the Chesham-ass; and that's caddish towards a woman."

"Well, we haven't done it."

"No; Bulstrode and some of the others have, and they're cads. I've thought the matter over, and I'm going to back up Miss Locke."

"My hat; it's a change, anyway! I say, you'll be giving the women seats in Parliament next!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I don't know anything about that, Bob; but I do know that we've acted the giddy goat, and that I'm going to stop it for one. You fellows can do as you like!"

"Oh, we shall follow in our father's footsteps!" grinned Nugent. "You can depend upon us!"

"Rather!" said Bob, more slowly.

"The ratherfulness is terrific. I agree with the honourable sentiments of our esteemed friend Wharton, and I follow him up backfully with all my heart."

"I don't think you'll be sorry for it," said Wharton. "It isn't as if Miss Locke was a sharp-tempered, nagging blue-stocking who worried us. She plays the game, as a matter of fact, and we ought to do the same!"

"I suppose you're right. But I say, this means loggerheads with a lot of the Remove—this idea of backing up the schoolmarm!"

"Can't be helped."

"I say, you fellows—"

"I dare say you'll have to fight Bulstrode, Harry," Bob Cherry remarked. "Still, you have licked him once, and can do so again."

"I say, you fellows, it's all rot to say that Miss Locke is a blue-stocking! I know she isn't! I've seen—"

"Never mind what you've seen, Billy; pass the toast!"

"I tell you I've seen—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's visitors!"

The door of the study was opened, without the preliminary of knocking, and several Removites presented themselves to view. Bulstrode and Levison were at their head. Their expressions were far from agreeable.

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

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You're too late for tea, and we haven't any old things to give away!" said Bob Cherry. "Good-bye!"

But Bulstrode stepped into the study.

"We've come to speak to you chaps," he said. "We're backed up by the Form, too, I can tell you! We're not going to stand—"

"You'll have to," said Nugent. "Every giddy chair in the study's occupied, you see, and we're not going to shift!"

"We're not going to stand—"

"Well, there's the coal-locker—and the window-sill."

"Let me finish, will you?" roared Bulstrode. "We're not going to stand this petticoat government! The Remove is going to rise against it!"

"Go hon!"

"We've come to see if Wharton is willing to take the lead. He calls himself captain of the Remove, and if he likes to take the lead, let him. I've no objection."

"Nor I," said Levison; "if he has the grit!"

"That depends upon what you have in mind," said Harry quietly. "Suppose you tell me what you are thinking of?"

"We're not going to stand petticoat government!"

"Rot! You've got to stand it!"

"Oh, I know we can't have a revolt in the Form-room, when Miss Locke is backed up by the Head!" said Bulstrode disagreeably. "But we can rag the Girton girl the same as we did the Chesham-ass, and make the place too hot to hold her!"

"A cad's game!"

"Then you won't take a hand in it?"

"No."

There was no hesitation about Harry Wharton's reply. A growl from the group of Removites in the doorway followed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Misunderstood.

BULSTRODE'S eyes glinted. There were half a dozen of the rougher spirits of the Remove with him, and he had the sympathy of many more. He had hoped for a refusal from Harry Wharton, but he had not expected quite so direct a one.

"You mean that, Wharton?" he said.

"Yes, I mean every word. You are not going to rag Miss Locke! It's a cad's game to bother a girl, anyway!"

"Who says we're not going to?" demanded Bulstrode fiercely.

"I do."

"You can keep out of it if you like, but I suppose you're not going to have the thundering check to interfere with us?" exclaimed Bulstrode in amazement.

"That's where you're mistaken; I am."

"You are going to stand up for Miss Locke?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you're joking?" said Levison. "You'll never have the cheek and the nerve to take the schoolmarm's part against the Remove?"

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"You'll see," he said. "I've thought the matter over. Miss Locke is treating us decently, and one good turn deserves another. We're going to treat her decently. It's only a few days, anyway, till Mr. Quelch comes back."

"That's our business! We shall do as we like!"

"Not if I can prevent it."

"But can you prevent it?" sneered Levison. "You've changed your views, but I suppose you don't expect us to change ours, and follow at your heels like a set of little, tame puppy dogs?"

Wharton coloured. His fault was imperiousness, and it was quite probable that he assumed more authority in the Form when he was in earnest than the circumstances would justify. But he was not a fellow to recede an inch.

"I say that Miss Locke is not going to be ragged," he replied. "Any fellow beginning a cad's game like that will have to put his fists up for it, that's all."

"Behold the fair lady's champion!" jeered Bulstrode. "Why don't you go out in armour, and sport a giddy crest, Wharton?"

"Sounds quite like the Middle Ages—Ivanhoe, and all that," sneered Levison. "I should like to know what Wharton's little game is!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Harry angrily. "There's no little game! What the dickens are you driving at?"

"You can't pull the wool over my eyes, and you can't expect me to swallow all this humbug; it's a little bit too thin! You're up to some game, I suppose, and you don't want to let it out! I don't care, so long as you don't interfere with us! We're going to carry out our plans, all the same!"

"What plans?"

"For making Miss Locke get out of the Remove."

"What are you going to do?"

"That's telling! If you're not going to help, you don't want to know anything about what we're going to do! You'll hear soon enough!"

Harry's eyes gleamed with anger.

"Well, I can't say any more!" he exclaimed. "There's going to be no ragging if I can stop it, and that's all I've got to say on the subject!"

"Well, you can't stop it; that's one comfort!" said Bulstrode. And he left the study with his friends.

"I say, you fellows, I wonder what they're up to?" said Bunter, blinking round the study. "I know Bulstrode has got some trick in his mind, because he gave the 'buttons' a tanner to fetch him some fireworks from Friardale."

"Fireworks!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes. I saw him showing a double cracker to Levison, and they were grinning over it. I wonder whether—"

"Are you sure of that, Billy?"

"Of course I am, Wharton!"

Wharton's face was dark with anger. Billy's information let in a ray of light upon the nature of the plan the malcontents had formed for making the Remove-room too hot to hold the schoolmarm, as they expressed it.

"I say, that's a caddish thing to do, if they're thinking of scaring her," Nugent remarked. "I don't like petticoat government, but that's a bit too thick."

Harry set his teeth.

"They're not going to carry out their plan if that's it."

"I don't see what can be done."

"I'll speak to Bulstrode."

"He won't take any notice."

"I'll make him."

"But you don't know for certain—"

"I'll speak to him, anyway."

Wharton left the study, and strode along the passage. The door of Bulstrode's study was open, and the malcontents were in it, talking busily. They stopped as Harry Wharton appeared in the doorway.

Bulstrode looked at him with a sneer. The others fixed their eyes upon him in a rather disconcerting manner.

"Well, have you changed your mind again?" said Levison mockingly.

"No," said Harry, advancing into the study. "I have got a hint as to what your precious plan is, that's all. You are thinking of scaring Miss Locke with a firework explosion."

"How do you know?"

"Is it a fact?"

"Mind your own business," said Bulstrode, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't see why we should tell you anything."

"Not in the least," said Trevor. "It's our affair."

Harry Wharton controlled his temper with difficulty. His eyes flashed round at the mocking faces.

"Well, I suppose I can't stop you," he said; "but I tell you plainly, Bulstrode, if you play a cowardly trick like that, you'll have to answer to me for it."

"Oh, get out of my study!"

"Get out! Get out!"

The juniors took up the cry, and Bulstrode, emboldened by the backing of the others, advanced blusteringly towards the Form captain. He pointed to the door.

"Travel!" he said. "We've had enough of your high and mighty ways! Get out, or you'll get thrown out!"

"There's no fellow here could do it!" blazed out Harry.

"We'll show you! Collar him!"

Strong in numbers, the malcontents hustled round Harry Wharton, and he was forced by weight of odds through the doorway. There, for a moment, he held his own, hitting out fiercely. Then a final effort, and he was hurled into the passage. He staggered breathlessly against the opposite wall, and, as luck would have it, Miss Locke came down the passage at the same moment.

Bulstrode slammed the door. The Girton girl stopped and looked severely at the panting junior.

"Wharton! Fighting again!"

The junior did not speak. He could not exculpate himself. The girl's face grew more severe.

"Whose study is that, Wharton?"

"Bulstrode's."

"Why were you quarrelling with him?"

Wharton was silent.

"This is the second time to-day," said Miss Locke. "You must not let it occur again, Wharton. The next time I shall have no alternative but to report you to the Head."

And she passed on.

Harry Wharton walked away without a word. He could not explain the facts of the case to Miss Locke; but it was hard that he should be called over the coals, under the circumstances.

All the same, he was not disposed to abandon the cause he had taken up. His contempt for the methods of Bulstrode &

Co. made him regret keenly that he had ever appeared to sympathise with their party. His determination was to back up the doctor's sister henceforth through thick and thin, as a chivalrous lad was bound to do. If he were misunderstood by the object of his championship, that could not be helped.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Girton Girl's Champion.

"GOT it, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, rather."

"Then come on. She has been to the class-room, and will be along the passage in a minute."

"Right-ho, Levison!"

"Drop it over the banisters," grinned Levison. "My hat, it will make the schoolmarm jump, and no mistake!"

Bulstrode chuckled.

"I should say so."

"Quiet, now."

The two malcontents of the Remove crouched on the stairs, in the dimness, overlooking the lower passage. There was a sound of a door closing below. Levison nudged his companion.

"She's coming!"

"Good!"

A match scratched in the gloom. Bulstrode had in his hand one of the fearsome contrivances known as a jumping cracker. It contained six charges, and would explode six times in quick succession, once lighted at the fuse.

The bully of the Remove put the flame to the fuse, and blew out the match. There was a sputter of sparks in the gloom.

"Now, then," whispered Levison, "drop it into the passage—she's coming."

"Right-ho!"

Bulstrode reached out with the sputtering cracker. In another second he would have pitched the firework into the passage at the feet of Miss Locke, with results startling enough for the girl from Girton. But at that moment a powerful grip fastened upon him, and he was dragged back from the banisters upon the stairs.

"You cad!"

It was the voice of Harry Wharton.

The sputtering of the cracker's fuse showed Wharton what was going on. He grasped the bully's arm, and bent it back towards him, and it was no longer in Bulstrode's power to fling the firework where he had intended.

His hand was crushed back against his waistcoat, with the cracker in it.

"Let go!" he gasped. "Help, Levison!"

He grappled furiously with Harry Wharton on the stairs, and dropped the cracker. He was only just in time, for the fuse had burnt through.

Crack!

The sharp explosion rang from under the struggling juniors on the stairs. Bulstrode gave a startled yell, and hit out wildly. There was a yelp from Levison. In the gloom he received the blow intended for Wharton, and rolled down the stairs. Harry grasped his foe hard.

"You cad!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Good gracious! What is that?"

It was Miss Locke's startled voice from the passage below. Neither Harry nor Bulstrode replied. They were too busy. Harry's temper was fully roused, and Bulstrode was equally furious. They fought in the gloom, while the cracker continued to explode.

Crack! Crack!

"What is it? What is happening?"

Miss Locke ran in alarm to the foot of the stairs, and looked up. Levison blundered against her, and cut off down the passage before he could be questioned. The Girton girl ran up the stairs. Two struggling forms rolled past her, and she put out her hand and caught them. But they rolled from her grasp, and landed on the mat at the bottom of the staircase, still struggling.

The noise of the explosions and the struggle had attracted a dozen fellows to the spot. It was late in the evening, and the staircase was not lighted at that hour. Someone turned the gas higher in the hall, and another fellow turned a bicycle lantern upon the scene.

"You cad!"

"Hang you, Wharton!"

Miss Locke's face grew hard and stern as it could grow as she looked at the desperately-wrestling forms at the foot of the stair.

"Stop this instantly!"

The combatants separated at last. Wingate, of the Sixth, had come out of his study, and he dragged Bulstrode away from Wharton, while Bob Cherry drew Harry back.

Dusty and dishevelled, the two combatants glared at one another.

Miss Locke looked at them severely. The Girton girl was angrier than any of the Remove had seen her look before.

"Wharton! You again!"

Wharton was silent.

"What's all this confounded row about?" exclaimed Wingate sharply. "I beg your pardon, Miss Locke, but these young rascals turn the place into a pandemonium. Who has been letting off fireworks in the house?"

Neither of the Removites spoke.

"Did you explode that cracker, Wharton?"

"No, Wingate."

"Then it was you, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode scowled, and was silent.

"You will take a hundred lines, Bulstrode," said Miss Locke. "At your next offence I shall send you in to the doctor to be caned."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"And you, Wharton—were you a party to letting off the cracker?"

"No, Miss Locke."

"What were you fighting Bulstrode for?"

Harry was silent.

He was in an awkward position, but he would have faced any punishment, rather than appear to be wanting to make capital out of his championship of Miss Locke.

"Have you no answer to make, Wharton?"

"No, Miss Locke."

"What was Wharton fighting you about, Bulstrode?"

"He can tell you best, ma'am," said Bulstrode.

"You remember what I said to you early this evening, Wharton," said Miss Locke. "You have disregarded my warning, and you have no excuse to make for yourself. You must go to the Head."

Harry Wharton started.

In his early days at Greyfriars he had had more than one rather painful interview with the Head in his study; but those days were over now. Of late he had more than once earned an approving glance from the doctor. It was hard, very hard, that he should get into the black books again, when he was trying his best to do his duty.

"You have nothing to say, Wharton?"

"Nothing."

"Then you will go directly to Dr. Locke's study, and tell him that I sent you there to be punished for fighting," said Miss Locke severely.

"Very well."

Bulstrode grinned savagely. He had his revenge now, and no mistake. He could scarcely avoid chuckling openly at the situation. It was absurd enough, and it seemed decidedly funny to the bully of the Remove. Wharton had interfered with him to save Miss Locke from a painful shock, and as a reward, was to be caned by the Head.

Harry Wharton was too proud to explain, and Bulstrode certainly had no intention of doing so.

Harry turned away, and slowly made his way towards the Head's study. The crowd dispersed, and Bob Cherry ran after Harry. The latter looked round as his chum pulled him by the arm.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerily. "Are you particularly looking for a licking to-night, Harry?"

Harry laughed ruefully.

"Hardly, Bob!"

"You went for Bulstrode because he was going to chuck the cracker somewhere where it would frighten Miss Locke?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell her so?"

"It's all right."

"Ass! If you had told her so—"

"I'm not going to make capital out of it," said Harry Wharton. "She might think I was trying to curry favour. Bulstrode would very likely deny it, too, and then it would be his word against mine. I can't enter into a dispute of that kind."

"You'd rather be licked?"

"Much rather," said Harry quietly.

"Suppose I explain?"

Harry Wharton put his hand quickly on his chum's shoulder.

"Don't you do anything of the kind, Bob."

"But, look here—"

"I'd rather you didn't. I can take a licking. It's all right."

"I think you're an ass!"

"I don't mind, so long as you do as I wish. Mind, not a word to Miss Locke about the facts of the case!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry unwillingly. He stood in the passage, looking worried, while Harry Wharton went on his way.

"Ach! I tink tat Wharton is vat you English call ein ass," said a voice in the gloom. And Bob Cherry gave a jump.

"Herr Rosenblaum!"

The kindly little German master grinned at him beamingly through his spectacles.

"Ach! So tat vas it, vas it?"

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"I beg your pardon, sir!"

"Wharton—Wharton, come pack!"

Harry Wharton looked round.

"You want me, sir?"

"Nein, I do not want you; but I have somethings to say," said the German master. "I tink you vas foolish, Wharton."

"Indeed, sir!" said Harry colouring.

"Ach, ja, ja, mein poy! Tink vat Miss Locke would tink if she learu tat she punish you because you interfere to save her from being startled, mein poy!"

Harry's face went scarlet.

"I hear vat you say as I come along mit meinself," explained the German. "I tink tat it is to case before, now I know tat it is so after. You vas find Pulstrode vatching to throw firework, und you stop him, ain't it?"

"If you please, sir—"

"I tink you should say so to Mees Locke, Wharton."

"I would rather—"

"Ach! If you not say so, I says so for you. Come mit me!"

"But, sir—"

"Come mit me, I dell you!"

The Removite had no choice but to obey. The German master marched along into the hall, where Miss Locke was speaking to Wingate. She glanced up, and nodded brightly to the German master, and then her glance fell upon the scarlet face of Harry Wharton.

"Wharton, have you been—"

The German waved a fat hand.

"Allow tat I explain. Tat pad poy Pulstrode vas going to throw firework to startle you, Mees Locke, out of padness of heart. Wharton stop him."

Miss Locke looked quickly at Harry.

"Is that the case, Wharton?"

"Yes, Miss Locke."

"You interfered with Bulstrode to prevent him playing a trick upon me?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not tell me so?"

Wharton was silent.

"Because he's an ass," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "He was afraid you might think he—"

"Shut up, Bob!" muttered Harry.

"Go on, Cherry!" said Miss Locke quietly.

"He was afraid you might think he was looking for favour," said Bob Cherry. "It's no good treading on my foot, Harry. Miss Locke ought to know."

Miss Locke laughed.

"Thank you very much, Cherry. You should have told me this, Wharton. I might have discovered it after you had been punished, and you may imagine how painful that would have been to me."

"Tat is vat I tink, Mees Locke."

"I am very much obliged to you, Herr Rosenblaum."

"It is a great honour to oblige te charming Mees Locke," said the German, with a stately bow. And he ambled off. Wingate, with a smile, went into his study. Miss Locke looked earnestly at Harry Wharton.

"I wish you had spoken out, Wharton," she said. "I appreciate your motives, but you must let me tell you that it is possible to carry even a proper pride too far. I should have believed you, and I had a right to know."

"I—I am sorry, Miss Locke!"

"Very well, that is enough, Wharton," said Miss Locke, holding out her hand. "I am very much obliged to you, Wharton, and I shall not forget the obligation you have put me under, either. Good-night!"

Harry Wharton shook hands with the Girton girl.

"Good-night, Miss Locke. And—and—"

"And what, Wharton?"

"You can rely upon us—my chums and myself—to back you up, Miss Locke, for all we're worth, while you are master of the Remove."

Miss Locke smiled cordially.

"Thank you very much, Wharton! Then you have got over your objection to petticoat government?"

Harry turned crimson.

"Forgive us, Miss Locke! We—we have been silly asses, I know, but we're going to back you up now."

"Very good! I shall rely upon you."

And Harry Wharton kept his word.

The chums of the Remove backed up the Girton Girl tooth and nail for the remainder of the time that the Form was in her charge, and most of the Remove backed them up, and Bulstrode and his friends had to give in. Matters went very smoothly after that, and when the time came for Mr. Quelch to resume charge of the Remove, more than one fellow was heard to regret the departure of the Girton Girl.

THE END.

(Another grand tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next week. One Halfpenny.)

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"THE GREYFRIARS' CONJURER."

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST!

The story opens with a review of the Redminster Cadet Corps, led by young Lieutenant Jack Dashwood. The proceedings are interrupted when the Headmaster receives a telegram asking him to send Jack home at once, as his father—Colonel Sir Harry Dashwood—is dangerously ill. Dick Vivian goes with his chum, and soon after their arrival at the house the Colonel passes away. Finding he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard, Jack enlists in the 25th Hussars under the name of Howard, and is soon promoted to corporal. He fights Bill Sloggett, a recruit, and defeats him. Through this act he incurs the hatred of Alf Sligo, who swears to champion Sloggett. Jack has a shock when he hears that his cousin, Leonard, is attached to the 25th, as second lieutenant. Before long the latter succeeds in getting Jack deprived of his corporal's stripes. Soon after, the regiment is ordered abroad. By a strange oversight Dominic Dashwood enclosed a letter—wherein is mentioned the loss of an important receipt—written to his son, in an envelope addressed to Jack. Consequently Jack makes a hurried visit to town, and lays a copy of the letter before his lawyer uncle. (Now go on with the story.)

On Foreign Service.

"Have you found the lost receipt?" said Jack.

"What the dickens has that got to do with you?" shouted the lawyer, surprised for a moment out of self-restraint.

"I have an idea that it may have a good deal to do with me," said the imperturbable trooper of Hussars. "I believe that if I could find that receipt some of our situations would be rather reversed. Dominic Dashwood—Dominic Dashwood, of Dashwood Hall!" And the lad's voice rang stern and scathing as he pronounced the last words.

"If you have come here to threaten me," said the lawyer, in a choking voice, "I shall give you into custody. You have already favoured me with your suspicions on a previous occasion, and I am in no mood to stand any more of it!"

"Perhaps your mood will permit you to answer me this question," said Jack. "How comes it, if Dick Vivian received the letter intended for your son, your son must have received the money intended for me, and not handed it over to me, or returned it to the sender?"

The same thought had been in the lawyer's mind, and the grey in his face increased.

"That is a matter for me to ascertain from Leonard," he said, sitting down again, and opening the cheque-book. "Here's the cheque, which you can draw at once, as I have left the cheque open. I should advise you to be very careful, John Dashwood, how you accuse your officer of withholding your beggarly allowance. I must ask you for the original of this letter."

"I am very careful what I do, Uncle Dominic," said Jack, in a low tone, "and I shall be very careful that the letter does not reach your hands. Perhaps some day you will be very glad to exchange it with me for—"

"For what?" said the lawyer, his face working.

"For Dashwood Hall, and the property you have robbed me of," said Trooper Thomas Howard. "Oh, you scoundrel!" he went on, losing control of himself for the moment, and making imaginary sword-cuts with his riding-whip, which whistled in the silence of the room. "If you were twenty years younger I would thrash you within an inch of your life before all your clerks out there, you hypocrite! Not content with growing rich by robbing the widow and the fatherless, you must needs possess yourself of your nephew's inheritance, so that that young son of yours can inherit and occupy the place I should have filled!"

In spite of the thickness of the green baize door, the three

confidential clerks in the outer office raised their heads, as Jack's tirade reached their ears. They telegraphed glances across at each other, and paused, pens in hand; and then the outer door, which led directly from the lawyer's office into the hall, banged with a mighty crash, and solemn silence ensued.

"I expect Mr. Dashwood has been hearing things not exactly to his liking," whispered one of the confidential clerks to his neighbour; and the other nodded, dipped his pen into the ink, and busied himself with the deed before him.

A cab drew up with a rattle, and Leonard Dashwood stepped on to the pavement, handed the driver his legal fare, and went across the paved court and up the old stone steps that led to his father's office. He had to step aside quickly, as a figure came out of the dark hall, and Leonard's fist clenched as he recognised the uniform of his regiment, and Jack Dashwood inside the uniform. The face of Trooper Thomas Howard was furious, crimson with passion, and his eyes were blazing. His riding-whip was clutched tightly in his right hand, and he rushed past his cousin without seeing him.

Leonard Dashwood turned and looked after him. Never before had that stone pavement been spurned by disappointed client as it was on that summer afternoon by Jack's spurred heels. The cabman turned on his perch to look after him; two youths, carrying blue brief bags, turned and looked after him; a policeman at the corner of the little street that leads to the old Sardinia Chapel also turned and looked after him; and then the traffic swallowed him up.

A heavy frown was on Leonard Dashwood's face as he opened the door of the clerk's office, and the head clerk, springing off his stool with alacrity, bade him an obsequious "Good-day," and hastened to the lawyer's room.

"Will you be good enough to wait one moment, Mr. Leonard?" he said; and, passing through the outer office, he tapped on the baize door. But there was no reply. "I do not think Mr. Dashwood will be engaged many minutes, sir," said the head clerk, returning. "But I know he is engaged; in fact, your cousin, Mr. John Dashwood, has been with him for some time."

"My cousin went out as I came in," said Leonard haughtily; "and I'm in a dickens of a hurry!"

The head clerk hurried away, and again tapped at the baize door. Still there was no response, and Leonard, following him, pushed the door open, and entered his father's room. Expecting an angry remonstrance for admitting him without an announcement, the head clerk paused, making a wry face at the other three. Then a startled exclamation brought them all running into Mr. Dashwood's room, to find Leonard, standing in a tragic attitude, staring at his father. The lawyer lay back in his chair, the arms of which he had grasped and relinquished, and his hands looked white and claw-like; but it was his face that riveted the attention of those startled men, for it was set and rigid, the mouth open wide, the eyes staring horribly, and the head clerk, creeping forward, looked at his master, and bent his ear to the blue lips.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, starting back. "He is dead!"

The band of the Lancers paraded early to play the 25th Hussars to the Government siding, and there was a goodly sprinkling of Aldershot folk to line the route, for the 25th had made themselves very popular during their stay in camp. With white service helmets and overcoats rolled, the regiment fell in, and marched off in three parties to the station.

Certain men of the B Squadron, having had old scores to wipe off, had painted things pretty red, and five of them—

Bill Sloggett included—were put into "clink" directly they got on to the transport.

It was morning, grey and early, when the first party reached the station, dismounted, and led their horses on to the platform. Carbines and sabres were deposited upon the ground, and the labour of getting their mounts into the horse-trucks began, and occupied some time. Some of them went quietly enough; others required half a dozen stalwart troopers and a breeching-strap. But at last they were all on board, and the fatigue parties tackled the enormous piles of officers' luggage, cabin trunks and uniform cases. After that came the men's more modest kitbags, certain square, white-lettered boxes belonging to the orderly-room, and all the usual impedimenta which a regiment carries about with it.

Then the men, taking up their arms, got into the carriages, and some who had farewells to take, lingered until the last minute, and many a little domestic tragedy was enacted in that early morning.

Tom Howard, his task finished, stood aside to look around at the scene which was novel enough for him; and, accoutred with haversack, water-bottle, and pouch-belt, he stood beside a pile of hay bales that were being pitched on to the platform from an Army Service waggon.

There was a miserable look on the lad's face as he thought that among the crowd of sightseers and friends, and brakes full of officers that had driven over to see them off, no one would be there to bid him farewell, and he was just turning with a sigh to get into his compartment, holding his carbine and sword in the hollow of his arm, when someone put a hand on his shoulder, and, turning round, to his intense astonishment he saw Dick Vivian, and with him an extremely pretty young lady, who was none other than Dick's sister, Muriel.

"Great Scott! You here, Muriel!" said Jack, stretching out his hand.

"Of course, I am here! Do you think we were going to let you go away without seeing the last of you? I had an awful trouble with Dick, but got my own wish at last!"

Jack thanked her with his eyes, and turned to her brother.

"Well, old chap, this is good of you!" he said. "It's just the one thing I could have wished for."

"Wait a moment; I have something to tell you before you go," said Dick, laughing. "Do you know you've had a loss in your family?"

"What do you mean?" said Jack quickly.

"Dominic Dashwood is dead!"

"The dickens he is!" said Jack, coming unconsciously to attention.

"Yes, and Leonard is not going out with you. He has got leave on the plea of urgent private affairs, so there's a load off your mind, anyway!"

Jack's sunburnt face brightened perceptibly, and he hastened to make further inquiries, but Dick had told him all he knew.

"I got it from young Blennerhasset, who is one of your officers," said Dick. "He met us just now at the other end of the platform."

Young Blennerhasset was a chubby-faced young subaltern; but, though he was a friend of the Vivians, Jack had never met him. He now came hovering round the pile of hay bales, which were being rapidly put on the train, and he would very much liked to have borne down on Muriel Vivian, but hesitated, seeing that she and her brother were in close conversation with one of the troopers.

"By gad," said young Blennerhasset, stroking the line of fluff which did duty for a moustache on his face, "they know Howard, do they? I always guessed that chap was well connected, and a thundering good chap, too! Wish I could get a word with her!"

But Muriel kept her back religiously turned on the officer, and it was only when the cry of "All aboard!" sounded along the platform, and Jack was obliged to get into his carriage, that young Blennerhasset got his chance.

"I must say good-bye, Miss Vivian," said Blennerhasset, swooping down like a hawk. "I did not know you knew Howard of my squadron." He jerked the words out as though apologising for the distance between them. "I say, you know, you might tell me who he is?"

"Has he never told you, Mr. Blennerhasset?" said Muriel icily.

"No; fact is, I never asked him."

"Then I would recommend you to do so," said the young lady, with a flash of the eyes that made young Blennerhasset crimson to the rim of his fatigue-cap.

Then the general—who had come down with his staff in undress uniform, and had been chatting with Colonel Greville—shook hands with the chief, who glanced along the train and saw that everything was in order. Then the railway officials took possession, and the doors were closed and locked. Every window had its full complement of heads, straining out to catch a last glimpse of those they were leaving behind.

"Right away!" said the guard.

The engine gave a whistle, and the band of the Lancers struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and, slowly gathering way,

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the heavily-laden train, with its full freight of Hussars, steamed out of the Government siding.

Eight troopers, with water-bottles and haversacks, overcoats rolled on banderole, and a full complement of swords and carbines, fill a railway compartment tolerably, even when carbines and swords have been flung unceremoniously under the seats, regardless of the fact that they are Government property, and that a heavy pecuniary penalty is exacted if you scratch the barrel of one, or break the blade of the other. Then pipes are lit, some men sitting moodily thinking; but, after a while joining in the general hum of conversation, and, possibly later, in the rousing chorus that some irresponsible youngster shouts at the top of his lungs.

In the middle of all this hubbub, Trooper Thomas Howard sat in his corner seat, turning several things over in his mind. His Uncle Dominic dead! He did not associate his visit to that individual with his sudden ending, but he would have liked very much to know how, and under what circumstances Dominic Dashwood died. It was a mighty relief, as it happened that his cousin was remaining in England.

"In six months," said Trooper Thomas Howard to himself, "I can get back my stripes again!"

Then his eye fell on Alf Sligo, roaring "Solomon Levi."

Then he thought of the great amount of money he had seen Trooper Sligo spending of late. He had seen him change three sovereigns in one week, and Tom Howard made a mental note of the fact for future consideration. Then he fell to looking out of the window, and taking his last glimpse of old England—which always looks so charming when you are leaving her—until the train slowed down into Southampton, ran through the streets of that busy town, and down to the dockhead, where the troopship Himalaya lay waiting to receive them.

"There she is—that's her!"

It is astonishing what an interest one takes in identifying one's vessel as the train winds in sleepy curves among half a dozen ocean-going steamers, one of which is going to carry you across the sea.

It was raining, and I know few places more depressing than Southampton Docks on a wet day. There were more people there to see them off, and another band. Everyone looked wretched, and the cheer they gave as the troop train arrived was but a feeble affair, half drowned in the scream of a siren from a Cape steamer just loosed from her moorings.

Down from the crowded carriages swung the Hussars into the rain puddles, depositing their kits in one of the huge, draughty sheds, and making their way to the horse-trucks. Their comrades who had preceded them in the previous trains—for Tom had come with the headquarters division—were ready to lend a hand, and the embarkation was accomplished without misadventure.

Up the slippery gangway, on to the crowded deck, went our hero, and took his place amongst the excited Tommies—not all of them excited, by the way, for there were tears in the eyes of more than one sturdy fellow. And the crowd on the wharf cheered, and the 25th Hussars cheered, and the band played "The Girl I left Behind Me." The hawfers were cast off. The captain, in oilskins, on the bridge, anticipating dirty weather, communicated his message to the engine-room, and the Himalaya floated quietly away from the edge of the wharf, gliding out into the mist and rain. So silently did she commence her voyage, that those on the wharf hardly realised that she had started, until they saw the yawning space of dark water between them and her white sides. Then their handkerchiefs waved furiously, and the cheers broke out afresh. The band changed the tune to "Auld Lang Syne" again, and the 25th Hussars were off!

And now for a month Sir John Dashwood, Bart., alias Trooper Thomas Howard, No. 3842, was to experience life on board a troopship. His first experience was not uncommon, as, burdened with his kitbag, he went down the steep companion-way leading to the troop deck, caught his spurs on the brass-bound step, and tobogganned down, to land on the top of Trooper Sligo, who had just preceded him in the same way.

Trooper Sligo picked himself up, and rubbed the back of his neck.

"If you'd only look where yer a-goin' to, you stoopid aristocrat, that wouldn't 'ave 'appened!" snarled Sligo.

And Jack, laughing heartily, cuffed him over the head, saying, "Kennel, dog!" and meandered off to find his quarters.

Heavily laden Hussars were dodging backwards and forwards in an apparently aimless fashion. There were all sorts of pillars and posts to collide with, and projections from the low ceilings, against which your head came with full force if you were not very careful, and through the confusion blue-jackets tacked scientifically, making a longboard and a shortboard, and, somehow, always arriving at the point they wished to gain.

And then it was very dark down there, and as foggy as a bell tent, and our hero, when at last he found out his mess, leaned against the bulkhead, and looked ruefully at Jim Clavering.

"By gad, Jim, is it going to be like this?" he said.

"Pretty bad, isn't it?" said the sergeant, who had had previous experience of troopships. "Never mind, old chap, they'll shake down presently. Stick your arms in that rack. You'll have to hand them in directly. And dump your bag down anywhere. They serve out hammocks at seven-thirty. Pull that form out, pull that table down, and make yourself as comfortable as you can. I will get you put on to some light duty if you like, just to keep you busy. You will find things monotonous after a couple of days."

There were nineteen men in Tom Howard's mess, and, the messes being told off by sergeants on the embarkation wharf, Trooper Sligo had been included among the nineteen, to Tom's disgust.

The mess herded together like sheep without a leader, none having been on a troopship before, and the adventures and discomforts of this little group of Tommies forms a good example of the life of the regiment confined on the troop-deck of the good ship Himalaya.

Tea was served when they were about an hour out—tea, scalding hot, without milk; and bread, dry as a bone, without butter.

"This won't do!" said Trooper Howard. "Hold on, you chaps; I'll find out the grocery bar, and see what can be done."

And dodging his way among the various dark forms that still flitted about in the semi-gloom in the vain endeavour to make themselves comfortable, Tom disappeared, eventually returning with some tins of condensed milk, some butter, and three pots of jam.

"They charge you ninepence a go for this," he said, holding up one of the condensed milk tins, "and I can see that our existence is not going to be all lavender."

It was well known in the squadron that Trooper Howard had money of his own, and while he did not flourish it about, it was the many little acts of this kind that won him the good opinion of his messmates, whose nominal thirteenpence a day did not allow much margin for luxuries.

And in the meantime the mighty troopship—which carried drafts of half a dozen infantry regiments and a battery of artillery, as well as the 25th Hussars—was ploughing her way out of Southampton Water into the Solent, and gliding through the grey drizzle past the Needles, to plunge her bows into rougher water.

Everything was a little chaotic that first night. When you turn a couple of thousand souls into the nooks and corners of a big ship, it takes some time before they settle down and find their level, and Tom was not sorry when the hammocks were served out, and a warrant-officer came down to instruct them as to their fixing.

That part of the programme was not difficult of accomplishment, but the trouble was to climb in when they were once in position, and the things that were said by that particular mess in consequence of the things that were done by clumsy troopers were altogether unfit for publication.

And if you multiply the number of messes by one hundred, every one of which had the same difficulty, and said precisely the same things, you may gather that the interior of the Himalaya was painted pretty nearly as red as Bill Sloggett and his gang had painted Aldershot before they left it.

The bugles sounded "first post" at eight o'clock, as men go to bed earlier on board ship than when in barracks. The roll was called, and then there was a general scurry to get settled before "lights out."

When the bugle went, the electric light was suddenly switched off, leaving them in a state of confusion worse confounded.

Of the eighteen other men in Tom Howard's mess, only three had managed to ensconce themselves in their hammocks. The others

groped aimlessly round, and not a few of them giving up the search after the vain attempt, put their blankets on the hard boards of the deck, and lay down where they were.

To Tom Howard the closeness of the stifling troop-deck was insupportable, and he groped his way to the companion-ladder, and, passing on to the upper-deck, leaned over the bulwarks, and filled his lungs with the fresh, night air.

There was no sound but the turn of the screw astern and the singing of the wind among the funnels and the standing rigging.

The rain had cleared, and the breeze bit so keenly that Tom was glad to take shelter under the lee of one of the ship's boats.

For the first time since he joined the Army, he began to realise the irksomeness of the life.

He wanted to smoke, but knew that it was forbidden, the "cease fire," which is the warning bugle on board ship, having put out all pipes long before.

Somewhere away to starboard a light flashed, but the coastline was no longer visible in the darkness of the night.

Tom was not the only one who found sleep difficult that night, and a tall figure with an overcoat over his pyjamas came loafing along the starboard quarter towards him.

In defiance of regulations, the glowing end of a cigar between the newcomer's lips warned Tom of his approach, and as he came nearer he saw that it was Mr. Blennerhasset.

Mr. Blennerhasset was a very youthful lieutenant, attached to very high collars when in mufti, and a great longing to play polo in the regimental team.

He saw Tom when he got within a yard of him, and recognised him as one of the 25th by the set of his fatigue-cap.

"You ought to be below, my man," said Mr. Blennerhasset. "What are you doing here?"

Tom replied by asking another question.

"Have you been down to the troop-deck, sir?" he asked quietly.

"No, not yet. Why?" By this time Mr. Blennerhasset had recognised the voice, and coloured in the darkness. "Oh, I think I can understand you, Howard. You sort of wanted to escape from the—yes, I know!"

And, by some uncontrollable impulse, Mr. Blennerhasset deposited his elbows over the gunwale, and anchored down alongside the trooper.

It was a good thing it was dark, for young Mr. Blennerhasset was really blushing painfully.

"I say, you know—" he began. "Will you have a cigar? Oh, I forgot, you mustn't smoke now. But what I mean is this. Of course, I didn't know that you knew the Vivians, and I don't want to pry into your business; but at any time, you know, anything I can do for—"

"You're very good, sir," said Tom, unable to suppress a smile, as the lieutenant stumbled and fumbled and blundered on. "I don't think there is anything you can do."

"Well, you know, I wish there was," said Mr. Blennerhasset, quite earnestly.

And then he came to a dead pause, and pulled very hard at his cigar.

Tom, turning things over in his mind, as he stood at atten-

tion, realised the obvious kindness of Mr. Blennerhasset; but for all that, he wished him safely in his quarters, and was not sorry when the pause, growing decidedly irksome, the lieutenant brought the interview to a clumsy termination by half putting out his hand, suddenly remembering himself, returning Tom's salute with great solemnity, and departing to his cabin to dream of Muriel Vivian.

Left to himself, Tom wrapped his greatcoat around him and fell asleep, waking up in the early morning perished with the cold.

The sun was just rising, and it seemed to be the only thing that was awake, except the look-out on the bridge, and, going to the companion-way, Tom descended to his quarters.

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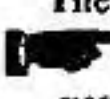
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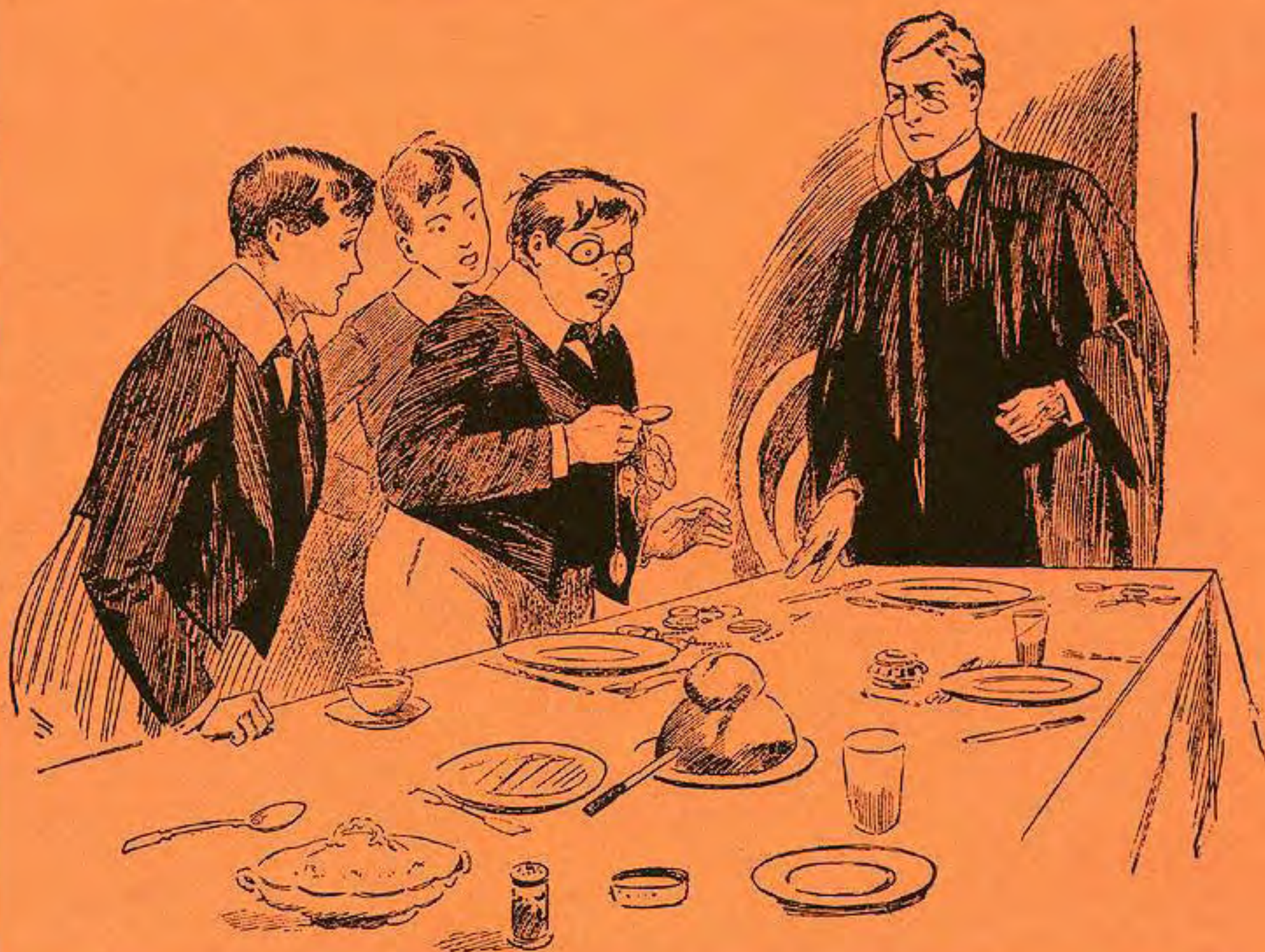
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