

Double-Length Tale of Harry Wharton & Co
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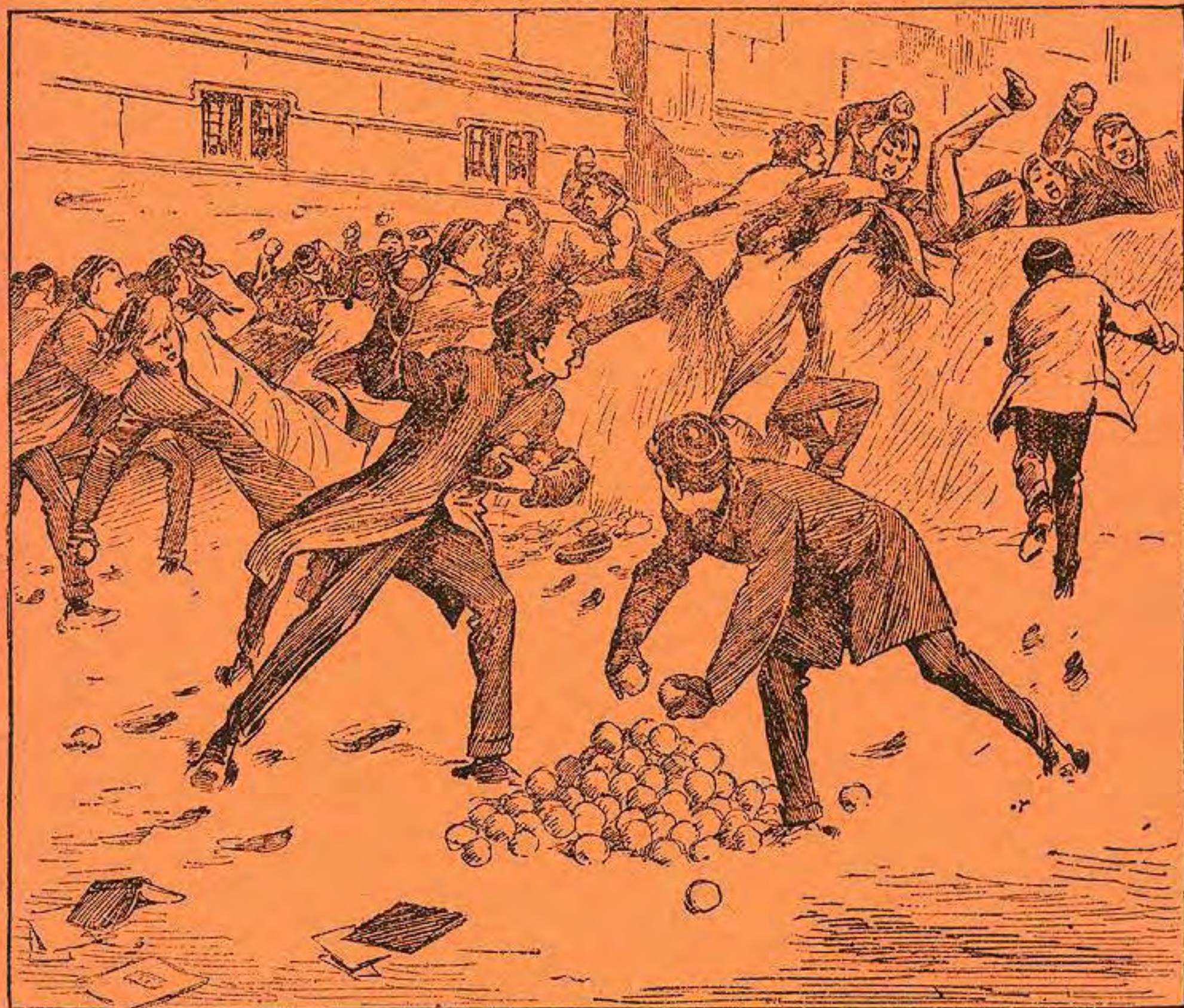
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THE
GREYFRIARS VICTORY.

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

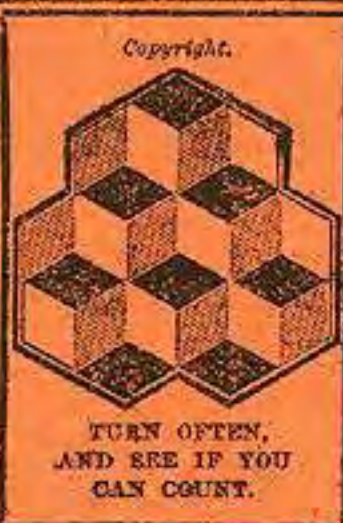
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By
FRANK RICHARDS.THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Fight in the Snow.

BIFF! Harry Wharton gave a jump. He was crossing the Close at Greyfriars, towards the School House, when the snowball caught him behind the ear.

The snow was falling thickly in the Close in the early December evening. The ground was carpeted with it, the roofs gleamed white with it, the walls were topped with it—it was snow, snow, snow everywhere! Wharton, muffled up in coat and cap, and scarf against the bitter wind, had just come back from the village. He was far from expecting any attack at that moment, and the sudden snowball took him quite by surprise.

He spun half round, and as he did so half a dozen more snowballs broke upon his face and head. There was a yell from half a dozen figures looming up through the falling flakes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Down viz ze Remove!"

Biff, biff, biff! came the rapid snowballs.

Harry Wharton staggered under the hot attack, and, losing his footing, sat down in the snow. There was a yell from the juniors of Herr Rosenblum's Foreign Academy, and they rushed forward.

"Collar him!"

"Collar to pounder!"

"Rescue!" shouted Harry Wharton, with all the force of his lungs. "Rescue, Remove!"

He struggled to his feet. The aliens were round him in a moment, pelting him with snowballs, and yelling with laughter. But there was a shout from the door of the Greyfriars School House.

Bob Cherry had been looking out for his chum, and he heard Harry's shout. It was a shout never left unanswered



by a member of the Remove—the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars. As Upper Form fellows sometimes complained, the Remove had rows enough among themselves, but against outsiders the whole Form were as thick as thieves.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "A raid from the aliens, by Jove! Rescue, Remove! Buck up!"

And, without even stopping to put on his cap, Bob Cherry dashed to the rescue. His sudden rush knocked the aliens right and left. The snow had deadened his footsteps, and they did not see him till he was there. Bob Cherry gave Wharton a helping hand, and the captain of the Remove staggered up, gasping for breath.

"Buck up, Remove!"

Removites were swarming out now, gathering up snowballs as they came. The missiles whizzed through the air in clouds, and the aliens, after an ineffectual attempt to face the storm, retreated towards the Cloisters.

"They're running! After them!" roared Bob Cherry.

Wharton's cap and scarf were gone, and he was smothered with snow. But he joined in the scrimmage at once, and was the first to dash after the retreating aliens. Fast went Hoffmann, Meunier & Co. towards the Cloisters, but faster still flew the snowballs from the Removites, hot on the track.

The Cloisters—a relic of the ancient abbey of Greyfriars—separated the grounds of Greyfriars from those of the New Academy. They were often the scene of wild scrimmages between the Greyfriars lads and the foreign juniors belonging to Herr Rosenblum's establishment. Into the dark shades of the Cloisters went the aliens on the run, and the Removites of Greyfriars dashed after them with a ringing hurrah.

"Hold on!" shouted Wharton suddenly.

In the dim, wintry dusk he had caught sight of a wall of

snow ahead. The aliens had retreated behind it, and turned upon their pursuers, reinforced by two score or more of their comrades. Harry realised at once that the aliens had built their snow fortifications in the Cloisters, and then Hoffmann & Co. had invaded the Close with the intention of provoking the Greyfriars lads to the attack—and had succeeded.

Harry's warning came too late.

The wild rush of the Greyfriars juniors carried them right on, and they crashed pell-mell into the snow wall, and there was a chorus of gasps and yells.

"Oh! Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Gr-r-r-o-o-oh!"

The walls of the snow fort were thick, too thick for a rush of assailants to penetrate them. The Removites reeled back from the impact, choked and blinded with snow, and dazed by the volleying of snowballs from over the wall. The aliens, safely ensconced in the fort, yelled defiance.

"Down viz Greyfriars!"

"Sock it to dem, ain't it?"

"Giff dem peans!"

"Pravo!"

"Come on!" yelled Bob Cherry, picking himself up, and rushing desperately on. "Come on, and clear them out!"

"Hurrah!"

And the Removites rushed on fiercely. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry clambered over the snow wall, only to be seized by a dozen hands and hurled back again. Their Form-fellows followed them gamely, but in vain. Inside the snow fort were heaps and heaps of snowballs ready made, ready to the hands of the defenders, and the volleying was incessant. Snowballs smashed on faces and ears, thick and fast. And whenever an assailant contrived to clamber over the wall, there were aliens ready to hurl him back.

In vain the Removites flung themselves again and again on to the fort. It was impregnable. It was built in the form of a half-moon, the two horns enclosing the gate of the academy grounds behind, and so it was impossible to surround the aliens. The attack could only be made from the front, and the fort was crammed with defenders. Even Harry Wharton had had enough at last. He drew back, gasping.

"Hold on, kids!" he exclaimed. "'Nuff's as good as a feast! We can't do it just now!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode. "We're going to do it!"

"I tell you——"

"More rats! Come on, whoever's game!"

And Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, rushed forward. A score of snowballs smashed upon him from the fort, and he was bowled over like a ninepin. He gave a yell as he bumped on the hard flags of the Cloisters.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Is that how you're going to do it, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode sat up, gasping.

He was within easy shot of the fort, and snowballs were showering upon him. Harry Wharton ran forward and dragged him out of range. He was too dazed by the volleying to help himself.

The Greyfriars lads stood looking on at the fort with burning eyes. The aliens were yelling with defiance and derision. But the position was too strong; it could not be taken by a frontal attack.

"I say, this is rotten!" exclaimed Nugent, panting for breath.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!" murmured Harree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The defeatfulness is a hard pill to take swallowfully!"

Harry Wharton's brow was grim.

"We're not going to give in," he said; "only we can't rush the place from the front. It's too strong."

"I suppose we're not going to knuckle under?" sneered Bulstrode. "Seems to me that what the Remove wants is a new captain!"

"Faith, and it's a baste ye are!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, you didn't do so well when you led just now, Bulstrode; you were bowled over!"

"I wasn't backed up."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob Cherry. "What's to be done, Harry? We can't give in to the aliens. It would be a fearful blow to our giddy prestige, to say nothing of the way the Upper Fourth would chip us about it."

"The chipfulness would be terrific!"

Wharton's brows were contracted with thought. The Remove always looked to him for guidance, and there were few difficulties he ever failed to grapple with. A sudden gleam shot into his eyes.

"Good!" he exclaimed.

"What's the wheeze?"

"We can't get into the fort here, but I've got an idea. Some of you chaps can climb the academy wall at another point, and take these bounders in the rear. If you can get

into the academy grounds, you can get at Hoffmann & Co. through their own gateway behind the fort."

Bob Cherry gave his leader a slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Bravo!" he yelled.

"Well, don't knock me over," said Wharton; "and there's no particular need to warn the aliens that we've got an idea for knocking them out!"

"By Jove, you're right! Come on, you kids; we'll settle 'em this time, and teach Hoffmann & Co. that they can't get their ears up at the Greyfriars Remove without getting sat on!"

A dozen juniors followed Bob Cherry, and Wharton's party, to draw attention from the manœuvre, recommenced the attack on the snow fort. The aliens, little dreaming that foes were on the way to take them in the rear, yelled and pelted snowballs, keeping the assailants off without much difficulty. But while the combat was going on, Bob Cherry and his merry men were climbing the academy wall at some distance, and dropping one by one within the grounds.

In five minutes they were all in, and were creeping silently through the snow towards the gates. The gates were open, and outside them, in the Cloisters, was the snow fort, crammed with aliens. The yelling of the excitable foreigners made a terrific din in the echoing old Cloisters.

"Come on!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Give 'em a yell, and then give 'em socks!"

And the Removites yelled.

The sudden yell from behind startled the aliens, and it was immediately followed by the rush of Bob Cherry and his followers, in their very midst.

"Ach!" roared Hoffmann. "Wat is tat pefore?"

"Ve are betrayed!" shrieked Adolphe Meunier.

The aliens' defence was utterly broken up. As they scrambled with the sudden invaders from the rear, Harry Wharton and his comrades made a fresh attack, and this time there was nothing to stop them.

With loud hurrahs, they scrambled and clambered over the snow walls, and mingled in the fray that was raging in the crowded fort.

At close quarters the aliens were simply nowhere.

The surprise had shaken their nerves, and they were taken between two fires. Their piles of ready-made snowballs were seized upon at once by the invaders, and hurled at them in volleys. Yelling and shrieking and struggling, they were swept through the gateway into the academy grounds, and followed there by whizzing snowballs.

Twice they charged desperately back, but each time the Removites held the fort, and flung the aliens back again through the gateway.

At last Hoffmann & Co. gave it up.

They retreated, fatigued, and gasping for breath, Meunier slamming and fastening the gates to prevent pursuit into their own ground.

A ringing cheer from the captured fort followed.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

And the cheer, ringing out with all the force of British lungs, woke every echo of the old Cloisters, and drowned the defiant shrieks of the aliens.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter does not wait Tea.

"WHAT on earth have you been up to?"

Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, asked the question, as the breathless Removites came in after the battle in the Cloisters.

The juniors certainly did present a curious sight.

They were covered with snow and mud, their clothes were wet and rumpled, half of them had lost their caps, and most of them had their collars torn out, to say nothing of the liberal allowance of black eyes and swollen noses that had been gained in the fight at close quarters.

"It's all right, Wingate——" began Harry Wharton.

"Is it?" said the captain of Greyfriars grimly. "If that's your idea of what's all right for a junior Form, Wharton, I can only say that you've got a lot to learn! You look like a gang of hooligans!"

"You see——"

"It was like this——"

"I'll explain——"

"Oh, don't all jaw at once!" said Wingate. "You'd better go and make yourselves a little more respectable before Mr. Quelch sees you. You jolly well deserve fifty lines each!"

"We've wiped up the ground with the aliens!" said Bob Cherry.

Wingate grinned.

"I don't suppose that would seem as meritorious to Mr. Quelch as it does to you," he said. "You'd better cut!"

And Wingate walked on. His advice was too good not to be taken. The juniors "cut." They ran upstairs, and invaded the bath-rooms.



Wun Lung looked at the detective, and then at the postcard. Then he looked at Levison, and, to the surprise of everyone in the study, went off into a shriek of laughter.

"Decent of Wingate," Hazeldene remarked. "Some of the prefects would have lined us—and Quelch would, anyway. We are in a state."

"Faith, and I feel as if I'd been under a motor-car!"

"The shockingness of our esteemed state is indeed terrific!"

"Buck up with the cleaning," said Harry Wharton; "there's a meeting of the Operatic Society after tea, you know, and we don't want to be late."

"Right you are!"

Ten minutes later the chums of the Remove—the Famous Four of Greyfriars—came along to their study—No. 1, in the Remove. Billy Bunter was looking out from the doorway anxiously, and he uttered an exclamation as Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came along together.

"I say, you fellows, you're fearfully late!"

"Yes; we've been having a row with the aliens," said Bob Cherry. "Why didn't you come out and lend a hand?"

Bunter blinked at Bob Cherry through his big spectacles. "I had to get tea in the study, Cherry; and I suppose I couldn't do that and go out scrapping with a lot of aliens as well," he said.

"Quite right," said Nugent. "Billy is a first-class cook, and a worst-class fighting-man, and he chose the better part, as they say in the goody-goody story-books. So long as he's got tea ready we'll forgive him missing the shindy."

"Especially as it was a good missfulness."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"But where is the teaful refreshment?" said the Nabob of Bhanipur, looking round the study. "The esteemed cloth is laid, and the plateful and the cupful utensils are in a state of preparedness, but I see no signfulness of the honourable tomy."

"You see, you fellows—"

"Buck up with the grub, Billy. We've been having a scrap in the snow, and we're hungry."

Bunter blinked uneasily at the chums of the Remove. He seemed to have something like a weight on his mind.

"Tea was to be ready at six sharp," he said. "Wharton said he would get in from the village before six, and you fellows were to come up with him."

"Yes, we're late."

"It's close on half-past six now."

"Can't be helped, Billy. Better late than never."

"Ye-es, but—"

"Trot out the grub!" said Bob Cherry briskly. "Are you keeping the sausages warm? You don't mean to say you haven't cooked them yet?"

"Nothing of the sort! I promised to get tea ready by six o'clock, and I'm a fellow of my word," said Bunter, with dignity.

"That's all right, then. Where is it?"

"You see—"

"No, I don't see," said Bob Cherry. "That's the trouble. If you've cooked the sausages, where are they? Where's the jam—the new pot of strawberry? Where's the cake? And the marmalade-tarts?"

"You see—"

"Come, Billy," said Harry Wharton, "trot out the grub, old chap."

"You were so jolly late, you know, I—I thought I wouldn't wait for you," said Billy Bunter. "You see, I've got a rather delicate constitution, and I really only keep myself going by having regular meals, and plenty of them. I thought that in justice to my health I couldn't wait for you."

"Well, that doesn't matter," said Nugent. "Of course,

we shall lose the entertainment of seeing you eat, which is a show in itself, and worth the price of admission—"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"But what we're chiefly thinking about just now is eating something ourselves. We're hungry, Billy—hungry! Don't you catch on? Comprenez vous? Savez-vous? Why the dickens don't you produce the grub?"

"You see, I couldn't wait for you, and—and I had my tea—and—and—"

"My only hat!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've had ours, too!"

"Well, you see, I—I was hungry, and—I hardly noticed it, you know—but the grub went," said Billy Bunter, rather nervously. "I really didn't mean to scoff the lot, you know, but—but it was your own fault for being late."

The Famous Four glared at the fat junior with feelings too deep for words.

They had come in famished from the snow-fight in the Close, and as it happened there was an extra plentiful tea in the study that evening, and they had been looking forward to it.

Harry Wharton was the first to recover himself. He burst into a laugh.

"Well, we might have guessed what would happen if we were late!" he exclaimed. "It was like trusting a kleptomaniac in the strong-room of a bank!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"We ought to scrag the young cormorant, though, on principle," said Bob Cherry, frowning. "The fact is, we're not bringing him up properly."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He wants suffocating half a dozen times a day. I think we had better frog's-march him along the passage and chuck him downstairs."

"The chuckfulness would be a wheezy good idea."

Billy Bunter retreated in alarm. He had just eaten the meal intended for five fellows, and he did not feel inclined for rough usage.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Collar him! Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up, Hazeldene? It's not time for the operatic meeting yet."

Hazeldene, of the Remove, entered the study with a letter in his hand. Billy Bunter, taking advantage of Bob Cherry's attention being transferred for the moment to the new-comer, scuttled out of the study.

"It's all right," grinned Hazeldene; "I haven't come to tea."

"Not much use if you had," grunted Bob Cherry. "That young wolf has scoffed up everything in the study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It may strike you as funny, Hazeldene, but I don't see anything comical in going without tea!" growled Bob Cherry. "It's over in Hall long ago, and we're dished."

"The dishfulness is truly terrific."

"Then I've come just in the nick of time," said Hazeldene. "I haven't had tea yet, and I've got a good spread. Wun Lung's cooking it for me."

The faces of the Famous Four brightened visibly.

"Talk about corn in Egypt," said Bob Cherry. "Hazeldene, old son, let me fold you to my bosom and weep."

"Rate!" said Hazeldene. "I'd like you to come along to tea, if you will. But what I came here about was this letter. It's from my sister Marjorie."

"Good! Any news?"

"It's about the operatic performance we are giving on the day before breaking up for the Christmas holidays," said Hazeldene. "You remember I was to write and ask Marjorie if she could come and take a part?"

"Right! I hope she can come?"

"That's the worst of it; she can't—at that time. She's going away for the end of December, and I'm joining her at the place for the Christmas vac. Before she goes she's coming to pay Mrs. Locke a visit, though, so we shall see her."

"Oh, I say, that's rotten!" said Harry Wharton, the manager of the junior operatic company. "We depended on her for the show."

"Yes, she's awfully sorry, and so am I."

"Well, I suppose it can't be helped," said Harry. "She would come if she could. I'm glad she's coming to Greyfriars before Christmas, anyway. It's a long time since we've seen Marjorie."

"Does she mention anybody in particular in her letter?" asked Bob Cherry carelessly.

"No; only sends kind regards to all."

"Oh!"

"May as well go and see if Hazeldene's feed is ready," suggested Nugent. "I don't know how you fellows feel, but I'm famishing."

"Come on, then!" said Hazeldene.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Study Feed.

WUN LUNG, the Chinese junior, was seated by the grate in Hazeldene's study. The little Chinese, with his quaint Oriental face and almond eyes, his pig-tail, and his bland smile, was liked very well by the chums of the Remove, though they did not always know what to make of him. Wun Lung, in spite of the simplicity of his manners and his smile, was deep—very deep—and the Greyfriars juniors had learned that he was no stranger to the "ways that are dark and tricks that are vain," for which the heathen Chinese is supposed to be peculiar.

The little Chinese's fame as a cook was great in the Lower Fourth. But his feeds were avoided. His Chinese habit of making tasty dishes of such—to English minds—unsavoury materials as a cat or a dog, caused the juniors to look upon his spreads with suspicion.

Wun Lung was the most obliging fellow at Greyfriars, and he was always willing to place his culinary powers at anybody's disposal. A saucepan was simmering on the fire in Hazeldene's study, and a savoury scent proceeded from it, very appetising to the Removites.

Wun Lung was watching the saucepan as he sat on a corner of the fender with a chessboard on his knees. It was a pocket folding chessboard, with a device for fastening the pieces in their squares by pressing a button, so that the board could be folded up and put away at any time without disturbing the game. Wun Lung, with one eye on the simmering saucepan, had the other on the chessboard, and was evidently thinking out a move.

He looked up with a cheerful smile as the Removites came in.

Hurree Singh, who was a great chess-player, glanced towards the board.

"Have you moved rookfully, my worthy chum?" he asked.

Wun Lung shook his head.

"No movee," he said.

"But you must write postfully to-night."

"Me movee after tea."

And Wun Lung rose, clicked the button to fasten the pieces in their places, and shut up the chessboard. He slipped it into one of his capacious pockets. The Chinese junior at Greyfriars dressed in his national garb, much to the interest of the small boys in Friardale when he went out of the school grounds.

"Grub ready?" asked Hazeldene.

"All leady," said Wun Lung, who, like all Celestials, had a trick of changing the "r" into an "l" in his pronunciation. "Allee light!"

And he removed the saucepan from the fire. The stew it contained was poured out into a large dish, borrowed from Mrs. Kebble, the housekeeper, and a savoury steam arose. But a curious expression came over the faces of the visitors. They remembered an equally appetising stew to which they had been invited by Wun Lung, and which they had discovered—after eating—to be made of the defunct poodle of the housekeeper. They had never forgotten that experience.

Hazeldene read the looks of his guests, and grinned.

"It's all right," he said. "It's rabbit—honour bright. I provided all the stuff, and Wun Lung has only done the cooking."

The Chinese junior nodded.

"Allee light."

"Well, that's all right," said Bob Cherry. "It smells ripping—but so did the other. And you want educating up to the pitch of appreciating dog-stews."

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"Velly common in China. Nicee-nicee."
 "They may be nicee-nicee to you giddy heathens, but they're rottee-rottee to us," said Bob Cherry. "No likee—beastly! Savvy?"

Wun Lung grinned.

"Me savvy."

The juniors were soon seated round the table, and Wun Lung served out the savoury stew. The Removites all had liberal helpings, and they pronounced it ripping. There was no doubt that Wun Lung was a great man as a chef.

Harry Wharton glanced at his watch.

"Meeting of the Operatic Society in a quarter of an hour," he said.

"We'll be ready. I think I'll have another helping, Wun Lung."

"Allee light."

Wun Lung helped Bob Cherry, and then took a glance at his chess-board. Harry Wharton followed the glance, and the Chinese junior showed him the chess.

"My turn move," he explained.

"With whom are you playing?"

"Friend in London."

"Oh, I see! A game by post."

"Yes. Play by correspondence."

"I see. When are you sending off your move?"

"Postee to-night."

"Good! I should say move the rook up."

"The rookful move is the excellent one in my esteemed opinion," purred Hurree Singh.

The Celestial looked undecided.

"Other fellow play well," he remarked. "He sendee last move yesteday. Must leply next day, ol game fofeit. No easy."

"I say, you fellows—"

A fat face and a pair of spectacles appeared round the corner. The juniors glared at Billy Bunter, who had a most ingratiating smile upon his plump features.

"Get out!" said Bob Cherry, with laconic brevity.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunk!"

"I say, Vaseline, I think you might remember me when you're giving a feed," said Billy Bunter. "I had it in my mind to ask you to my feed to-morrow."

"Oh, are you giving a feed to-morrow?" asked Hazeldene carelessly.

"Yes, rather! I'd like all you fellows to come," said Billy Bunter, insinuating himself a little further into the study. "I'm having fried sausages, ham, cutlets, and chips, to start, and then one of Mrs. Mumble's fruit-pies, hot, and no end of cakes and tarts. I wish you'd all come. Especially you, Hazeldene."

"I'll come, with pleasure."

"Good! It will really be a decent spread, and I think you'll like it."

"Come into a fortune?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

"Or who have you been robbing?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! As a matter of fact, I shall be in funds to-morrow, as I'm expecting a postal-order."

"My hat!"

"It ought to have come to-day, but there has been some delay in the post. It will be here by the first post in the morning, and I mean to make it a record feed. I—"

"Oh, come in!" said Hazeldene, laughing. "You can have a tuck in, Bunt, but don't start telling us fairy tales about a postal-order."

"Oh, really, Vaseline—"

"Come in. Give him a plate, Wun Lung."

"Allee light."

"My word!" said Nugent, in amazement, as Billy Bunter settled himself down before a large helping, and attacked it in a businesslike manner. "My word! Is that young cormorant really going to eat again? He's just bolted tea for five!"

"I'm rather peckish," said Bunter, blinking at Nugent through his glasses. "I suppose it's this Christmas weather. As for that snack I had—"

"Holy smoke! He calls it a snack."

"I'm not greedy," said Bunter; "but I like a lot. I admit that. When I get the prize of a pound a week in the 'Gem' football competition, I am going to stand a series of extensive feeds to the whole Form."

"When?"

"You needn't speak in that doubtful way, Nugent. I am pretty certain to rope in the first prize, with my abilities in guessing the right answers. I say, you fellows, this is stunning stew! I'll have another helping, Wun Lung. I'll say that for the heathen, he does know how to cook."

Bunter managed a second helping, and a third. Harry Wharton, who was a much slower eater, had just finished his first when Bulstrode came into the study. Bulstrode shared that study with Hazeldene, and he had either scented the stew from afar, or else learned from someone that a feed was in progress. He grinned as he glanced at the table.

"You forgot to mention this to me, Vaseline," he said. Hazeldene shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't forget, Bulstrode."

"Which means that you wanted to give a little party in my study without asking my permission or including me in the list of guests?" said Bulstrode. "I rather think that's like your cheek, you worm!"

"I suppose I can give a feed in my own study if I like?"

"It happens to be my study too. I think I shall invite myself."

"Look here, Bulstrode—"

"Or I'll jolly well turn your party out."

"Good wheeze!" said Bob Cherry grimly. "Begin the turning out, Bulstrode. We're here on Hazeldene's invitation, and we don't exactly think we shall allow a stray dog to turn us out."

"I'll jolly soon—"

"The sooner, the quicker," said Bob Cherry blandly.

"The soonfulness will be the great favour," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I yearn to see the esteemed Bulstrode ejected neck and cropfully."

Bulstrode grinned. He stepped back to the door, and spoke to someone in the passage.

"Carberry! I say, Carberry!"

The Removites looked grim. Carberry of the Sixth was a prefect, and one of the special enemies of the Famous Four. If Bulstrode meant to call a prefect into the dispute, the complexion of the matter was changed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Uninvited Guests—and a Surprise for them.

CARBERRY, the prefect, looked into the study. He looked at the Removites, and the Removites looked at him.

"I say, Carberry," said Bulstrode, "there's a ripping feed going on in here, and if you'd honour us by joining in—"

Carberry grinned. He knew the term: Bulstrode was on with the Famous Four, and he guessed at once how matters stood.

"Certainly, Bulstrode," he said graciously. "I don't usually feed with a mangy set of Lower Form fags, but the stew certainly smells ripping!"

"Look here—" began Hazeldene.

"Got anything to say, Hazeldene?" asked the prefect unpleasantly.

"Yes, rather! We don't mind your joining us, but we bar Bulstrode. We're not going to be chivvied into having him to a feed."

"I understand that this is Bulstrode's study."

"It's mine, too!"

"Bulstrode is your senior, and, of course, head of the study," said Carberry, who could be very exact on points of discipline when it suited him. "I must take Bulstrode's account of the matter."

"Certainly!" said Bulstrode. "It's a good feed, and I should be happy if you would join us, Carberry; and if there's anybody in the company you don't care for, he can be turned out at once. It's an honour to have a prefect to a feed, and I don't want you to stand upon ceremony with these cheeky young beggars."

The prefect grinned again. He enjoyed the situation. Harry Wharton & Co. did not quite know what to do. After all, it was Hazeldene's affair, though they were quite ready to back him up if it came to a row.

"Make room for your betters," said Carberry politely.

"By Jove, this is a ripping stew! I shall have to get the chap who cooked this to fag for me. It must be stunning, if it tastes anything like it smells."

"Any room for two little ones?" asked a voice at the door.

Carberry looked round. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth Form, were looking in. The scent of the appetising stew had reached them in the passage.

"Certainly!" said Carberry. "The more, the merrier! I don't usually feed with Fifth Form rotters, but come in."

"Certainly!" echoed Bulstrode. "It's an honour to have the Fifth to a feed."

"I say—" began Hazeldene.

"Any objections?" asked Carberry.

"N-n-n-no."

"Sit down, fellows," said Carberry, with a princely air. "As you see, there's plenty in the dish, and it niffs a treat. If you youngsters have done, you may as well get a bit further away from the table. There isn't too much room."

Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed, and his comrades looked pugnacious. Billy Bunter, who was not a fighting man, took his fourth helping and retreated into a corner with

...sitting on a box, with his plate on his knees. But the Famous Four did not move a limb. Hazeldene looked worried. He was not of the stuff that heroes are made, and he wanted nothing in the world less than a row with a prefect and two members of the Fifth.

"I—I say, if you don't mind, you chaps—" he murmured.

"Very well, Hazeldene," said Wharton quietly.

Hazeldene's appeal, of course, left the juniors no choice. It would hardly have been the thing to commence ructions in another fellow's quarters without his permission.

Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh moved back quietly from the table. Blundell and Bland grinned, and sat down with Carberry, and Bulstrode took the fourth side of the table. Wun Lung was stirring the stew in the great dish, with a curious smile upon his quaint little Oriental face.

"Ladle it out," grinned Carberry; "I'm hungry. I regard it as a stroke of real luck that I haven't had my tea yet."

"Well, I've had mine," said Blundell. "But fortunately I didn't eat much. I've got room for a couple of helpings."

"I think I can stand as much," remarked Bland. "I can generally put away a good meal in December. And it looks nice."

"It is nice," said Bulstrode.

"Buck up, you heathen!" commanded Carberry.

Wun Lung nodded.

"Me helpee quicke."

"You'd better, or I'll have your pigtail off!"

"No touchee. Me helpee. Velly hot!"

"Well, I like my stews hot," said Carberry.

"Certainly!" chimed in Blundell and Bland. "The hotter, the better in this cold weather."

"Buck up, kid!"

"Allee light."

Wun Lung filled the plates with liberal helpings. It was really a ripping stew, with all kinds of vegetables in the rich broth, and pieces of meat floating in it. The eyes of the raiders glistened.

Hazeldene's face was a study. His guests stood looking on with grim faces, while the outsiders sat to the feast. Fortunately, the Removites had had as much as they wanted—excepting Billy Bunter, who could have tackled a fifth helping.

The steaming plates were placed before the raiders.

Carberry took up a spoon, and plunged it into the rich broth.

"By Jove! This is all right."

"I should say so," remarked Blundell. "Here goes."

And he plunged in a spoon.

Carberry raised the first spoonful to his mouth. The next moment he gave a terrific yell, and jumped up from the table so suddenly that his chair went flying backwards. The spoon dropped from his hand and crashed into the plate, scattering a hot spray of broth upon Bulstrode, who was nearest him. The Remove bully yelled. At the same moment Blundell sprang to his feet, shrieking, and Bland, who had started with a piece of rabbit on his fork, ejected the meat upon the floor, and began to cough violently.

The Removites stared at the raiders in blank amazement. They had thoroughly enjoyed their stew, and they could not imagine for a moment what was the matter with the visitors.

Hazeldene looked indignant. It was bad enough to have his feed invaded like that, without the addition of the curious table manners displayed by the visitors. For the moment, no one suspected the truth, or observed the curious twinkle in the almond eyes of Wun Lung.

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared Carberry, clapping his hands to his mouth. "You young villains! Ow, ow, ow!"

"Oh, oh, oh!" gurgled Blundell.

"Groo!" said Bland. "Gerrooh! Groo!"

"Gentlemen, you now see an interesting exhibition of table manners, as practised in the Fifth and Sixth Forms at Greyfriars," said Bob Cherry, in the sing-song voice of a showman. "First I beg you to observe the Carberry pig."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young scoundrels!" roared Carberry. "What do you mean by it? Who put that pepper in the stew?"

"Pepper!" ejaculated the Removites, in amazement.

"I've burnt my mouth! I'm cho-cho-choked! You—you—" Carberry gasped with rage. "I'll teach you to play tricks on a prefect."

"I'm nearly burnt!" gasped Blundell. "I don't believe I've got any roof left to my mouth, and I know the tip of my tongue has come off. Ow!"

"It's—it's horrid!" sputtered Bland. "I shall have to get something to wash my mouth out." And the Fifth-Former bolted from the study.

Blundell glared at the Removites, who were yelling with

laughter now. He was inclined to charge at them, but his mouth was burning, and he decided to follow Bland in search of cold water. Bulstrode, who fortunately for himself had not yet begun to eat, stared helplessly at Carberry.

The prefect was furiously expectorating. He had taken the largest amount in, and some of the broth had gone down his throat. It seemed to leave a track of fire from his tongue down into his chest. He coughed, and spat, and gasped, and choked.

"You young villains!" he panted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Removites.

"You put that pepper in for me, Hazeldene."

"I—I didn't!" stammered Hazeldene. "I didn't know there was any pepper in it. I don't believe there is."

He tasted a minute spoonful of the stew; then he made a wry face and sputtered. It seemed to burn his very lips.

"My word, it's right enough! It's simply reeking with cayenne. My stew's spoiled. Who the dickens did that?"

Hazeldene's amazement was so evidently genuine that even the suspicious prefect could not doubt him. As for thinking of Wun Lung, the childlike innocence of the Celestial's expression would have disarmed anybody.

"Which of you whelps was it?" roared Carberry, glaring furiously at the yelling Removites.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which of you put the pepper into the stew?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I know," said Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "I'd have done it if I'd thought of it, but it never crossed my mind. But I stand by the chap who did it, whoever he was, and I say it serves you jolly well right, Carberry."

"My opinion exactly," said Nugent.

"The agreeableness of my honourable self is terrific," purred the nabob.

And Harry Wharton nodded assent.

Carberry coughed, and coughed, and looked amazed. Suddenly his eyes fell suspiciously upon Bulstrode. The Remove bully had not yet tasted his stew, and he did not feel inclined to do so now. The fact that he had not started was innocent enough in itself, but it was a proof of guilt to the suspicious and irritated prefect.

"So it was you!" he yelled.

Bulstrode gave a jump.

"I! What do you mean, Carberry?"

"You haven't started yet. You—"

"I—I—I—"

"You young hound! You asked me in here to work off a jape like this on me, did you?" shouted Carberry, seizing Bulstrode by the hair and jerking him out of his seat. "I'll teach you to work off little jokes on a prefect." And he boxed Bulstrode's ears right and left.

The Remove bully squirmed and struggled and yelled.

"Hold on! Leggo! It wasn't me! Don't be an ass! I didn't do it!"

"Then who did?" demanded Carberry, still thumping.

"I—I don't know. I—I—"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, coming forward. "Enough of that!"

Carberry glared at him.

"Do you dare to interfere with a prefect, you young hound?"

"Yes, I do, when he's acting like a hooligan," retorted Wharton. "I tell you you sha'n't handle a member of the Remove like that. Hands off!"

"Hands off!" shouted Nugent and Bob Cherry.

Carberry hesitated. The Famous Four were ready to spring at him, and his grasp upon the Remove bully relaxed. Bulstrode took advantage of it, and tore himself away, and promptly dodged round the table.

"I—I think he's had enough," panted Carberry. "He won't work off a jape on me again in a hurry." And the prefect strode from the study, still coughing and sputtering.

Bulstrode was panting for breath. He had seldom had so sudden and sound a licking.

"Well, it was a good jape," said Bob Cherry. "If we'd known what you were up to, Bulstrode, we—"

"What are you talking about?" groaned Bulstrode. "Oh, I'm aching all over! The brute! I didn't put the pepper in the stew."

"You didn't?"

"No. Oh, oh, oh! I'm hurt."

"Serve you jolly well right, for bringing Fifth and Sixth-Formers into a Remove affair," said Harry Wharton sternly.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"But who did the trick, then?" said Nugent, looking puzzled. "If it wasn't Bulstrode and wasn't us—"

"Wun Lung!" roared Bob Cherry.

"My only hat! Was it you, Wun Lung?"

The Celestial grinned.

"Me tinkee playee jokee," he explained. "Carberry no

comes in Lemove study to feed again, me tinkee. What you tinkee?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I think you're right." And the chums of the Remove roared with laughter.

Bulstrode was the only one who did not laugh. He groaned. Carberry's blows had been hard and heavy. The quarter-past seven chimed out from the tower of Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Hallo, we're late for the meeting!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"You'll excuse us, Hazeldene; we're late. By the way, you're due yourself at the meeting. Come along!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Don't bother, Billy."

"But I say, Wharton, hadn't you better put off the meeting of the Operatic Society till some other evening, as you're so late? You see, I want to do some ventriloquial practice in the study, and——"

"Oh, ring off, Billy! Come on, you chaps!"

"That's all very well, but you're late, and the meeting will hang about a long time now, and I want to get some practice in. Don't buzz off like that! I wish you fellows wouldn't walk away while I'm talking to you." Bunter gave a grunt of great disgust. "Fancy their going away while I

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

"Did he? About the ventriloquism——"

"Hang the ventriloquism! Look here, Wun Lung is in your study a lot, and if you could get that postcard for me I should be glad."

Billy Bunter stared at Levison in amazement.

"What do you want Wun Lung's postcards for, Levison?"

"Not so loud, you ass!" said Levison hurriedly. "Never mind what I want it for. Curiosity, if you like. Could you manage to get it?"

"I—I dare say I could, but——"

"If you can, I'll stand a feed at Mrs. Mimble's."

"Of course, I should be happy to do anything I could for a fellow I like as much as I do you," said Billy Bunter. "Of course, it's horribly mean to read another fellow's postcard, but that's your business."

"You young rotter, I—— Never mind now."

Bulstrode looked out of the study. Whether he had heard anything or not, Levison could not tell. He passed his arm through Billy Bunter's, and walked him away, and the Remove-bully stared after them curiously.



"Gentlemen!" said Bob Cherry, in the sing-song voice of a showman, "You will now see an interesting exhibition of table manners, as practised by Fifth and Sixth Form ralders!"

was talking! I suppose that's what they call good manners! I had better do my ventriloquial practice here, I suppose."

"You'd better not!" said Bulstrode. "You'll jelly well get your neck broken if you begin!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode!"

"Oh, get out!"

Bulstrode was not in a good temper, and Billy Bunter thought he had better get out. He blinked indignantly up and down the corridor. Levison, of the Remove, was coming along the passage, and Bunter tapped him on the arm.

"I say, Skinner——"

"It isn't Skinner, dummy," said Levison, shaking off his hand, "it's Levison. What do you want?"

"Can I practice ventriloquism in your study for a bit? Those operatic idiots are holding a meeting in No. 1."

"Yes, certainly," grinned Levison. "Skinner is doing his prep. there, but perhaps he won't object."

"Oh, dear! I really——"

"By the way, Bunter"—Levison lowered his voice—"Wun Lung, the Chinese, had a postcard yesterday."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Operatic Society Meets.

"WHERE'S Wharton?"

Several voices asked that question in Study No. 1. It was long past the time fixed for the arrival of the members of the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society, and the society, with the exception of the Famous Four and Hazeldene, had arrived.

"Hang it!" said Elliott. "Nice sort of a president we've got, to go out visiting just when we come to the meeting."

"And to take all the vice-presidents along with him, bedad!" said Micky Desmond.

"I'll practise a little while we're waiting, look you," said Morgan. "I suppose you know I'm going to sing a song in Welsh at the entertainment?"

"Sing it at the entertainment, old chap," said Ogilvy, the latest member of the Operatic Society. "Just now I'll practise my Highland Scotch song."

"That you won't!" exclaimed Elliott. "I'll give you——"

NEXT
TUESDAY.

"THE AMATEUR COOKS."

A Grand Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Faith, and I'll recite the Widow Ma'one!" said Desmond.
 "Sure, that will fill in the time a trate!"

"Have you heard of the Widow Malone, ochone?"
 "Oa wyt ti yn bur i mi," sang Morgan, at the top of his voice.

"Mo run geal, dileas, dileas, dileas!" roared Ogilvy, in Gaelic.

"Bonny Jackie, blithe and gay," yelled Elliott, "kissed poor Jenny—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry looked into the study. The others were with him, and they stared in amazement at the members of the Operatic Society yelling in rivalry.

Harry Wharton stopped his ears.

"What the dickens are you kicking up that row for?" he demanded.

"Faith, and I'm practising my recitation."

"I'm practising my Gaelic song."

"I'm practising my Welsh song."

"I'm practising—"

"Oh, ring off! Why don't you practise one at a time, then?"

"Faith, I was willin' to do it intirely, but these spalpeens started as well," said Micky Desmond.

"You see," began Morgan—"you see, look you—"

"Yes, I see," said Wharton. "Order! The meeting has now met—"

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "The meeting being met, the proceedings will now proceed, and the honourable members are called upon to shut their heads."

"Look you—"

"Order! No interruptions allowed. This isn't the House of Commons, and you're not a giddy suffragette!" said Bob Cherry severely.

"The meeting has now met—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, here, of course!" said Nugent. "Nowhere else, anyway!"

"Don't interrupt! As president of the meeting, I beg to tender an apology for being late—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I am sure the members of this operatic company will excuse me, when they learn that I was detained by a pig named Carberry, who disgraces the Sixth Form of Greyfriars with his presence."

There was a groan for Carberry.

"But you will be pleased to hear that Cad Carberry has taken a strong dose of cayenne pepper, and is sorry he bothered the Remove this evening."

"Hurrah!"

"To come to business—"

"About time, too!" said Ogilvy.

"Order, order!"

"Well, get on with the washing, then!"

"I have also had a chat with Hazeldene, a respected member of the operatic company, known to you all—"

Hazeldene bowed with becoming modesty.

"Known to you all as a hardworking member of the company, as a singer of some success, and as the brother of a young lady whom we all admire and respect—Miss Marjorie Hazeldene."

"Hear, hear!" said the operatic company heartily. Marjorie Hazeldene was very popular with the members.

"You are aware, gentleman," resumed the president, standing with one hand on the edge of the table to address the members, and really making a very handsome figure—

"you are aware that it was our intention to give an entertainment, comprising all the talent of the junior operatic company, on the day preceding breaking-up, in order to celebrate the Christmas holidays, and to give the term a really good wind-up."

"Bravo!"

"We did not fear the rivalry of the senior's concert," said Harry Wharton, warming to his subject. "Without unduly blowing our own trumpet, I think we may maintain that the Remove can put up as good an entertainment as any other Form at Greyfriars."

"Rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!"

"Neither did we shrink from comparison with the Sixth Form Greek play," went on Wharton. "We know how everybody jolly well goes to sleep while the Sixth are spouting Aeschylus, and nobody at Greyfriars cares a rap for the Seven against Thebes, and all the visitors yawn and wish Eteocles and Polynices in Jericho."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite right!"

"I beg to move that our respected president has hit the right nail on the head," said Elliott. "I know fellows who are looking forward to breaking-up with horror for that very reason."

"It is the aim of the Remove to combine a popular element with really artistic aims," said the president.

"My only hat," murmured Bob Cherry, "where does he get those words from?"

"Dictionary!" murmured Ogilvy.

"Faith, and I've seen him looking them out!"

"Order, order!"

"But I've seen—"

"The honourable member is quite in the wrong. I have not looked out any words in the dictionary for the purpose of a speech!" said the president warmly. "I call upon Mr. Desmond to withdraw his insinuation!"

"Faith, and I'll withdraw anything you like, if you'll only get to the point, darling."

"I am satisfied. As I was saying—"

"We heard what you said," said Elliott. "Go on from the point where you left off."

"As I was saying—"

"From the point where you—"

"Order! Gentlemen are requested not to interrupt the president. As I was saying, it is the object of the Wharton Operatic Society to combine a popular element with really artistic aims. In order to bring our entertainment down to the level of the intelligence of our audience, we have given up the idea of performing either an opera or an oratorio, and have decided to give a variety entertainment."

"Hear, hear!"

"And, as I said, it was fixed for the day before breaking-up. We have just had the unfortunate news that Miss Marjorie, who was to lend us her invaluable aid, cannot be here on that day."

"Oh!"

"The young lady will be here next week, however, and it has occurred to me that we might make the date of the concert a little earlier, so that Miss Hazeldene could still give us her services. I need not point out how valuable her assistance will be to us—to say nothing of the fact that if she does not come, my duet with her will be knocked into a cocked hat."

"Whose duet with her?"

"Mine!" said Wharton firmly. "As president of the Operatic Society, I claim to do the duet with Miss Hazeldene."

"Rats!" roared the Operatic Society.

"Faith, and it's meself—"

"It's me, look you—"

"I tell you—"

"Order, order!"

"Leaving the question of the duet over for the present," said Wharton, shouting to make his voice heard, "you will all agree with me that it is most desirable to have Miss Hazeldene's assistance at the entertainment?"

"Hear, hear!"

"I am glad you all agree on that, at all events," said Wharton. "Now, I move that the entertainment be given a little earlier, so that the only lady member of the Operatic Society can have her innings. Hands up for the motion!"

"Wait till it's seconded, confound you!" grunted Bob Cherry. "I second the motion. Hands up for it!"

Every right hand went up. In fact, Micky Desmond, in his enthusiasm, put both hands up.

"The motion is adopted unanimously," said the president. "The eyes have it. I move that the concert be fixed for Wednesday."

"I second."

"And I third, intirely."

"Adopted!"

"Good! Hazeldene is requested, in the name of the society, to write to his sister and inform her that the entertainment is to be given on Wednesday, and that the Operatic Society is looking forward to receiving her assistance."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'll write to-morrow morning," said Hazeldene.

"That's settled, then. Now—"

Wharton was interrupted. The door of the study opened, and Wun Lung, the Chinese, came in, with his soft step and his innocent smile. There was a shout.

"Outside!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Toddle along, Wun Lung," he said. "This is a meeting of the Operatic Society, and strangers are not admitted to the debates."

"No savvy."

"Run along! Buzz off!"

"No savvy."

"Faith, and you'll savvy if you get a boot behind you!" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

"No savvy."

And Wun Lung, with perfect calmness, curled himself up in the easy-chair. The society stared at him, amazed at his coolness.

"Oh, let him stay!" said Harry Wharton. "He won't

do any harm. Shut the door, and don't let anybody else in. Hallo, who's that?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter! We're talking business."

"I say, you fellows, I want to repeat a proposition I made to you at the previous meeting of the society," said Bunter, blinking into the crowded study. "I am willing to make up a very popular part of the entertainment by giving an hour's ventriloquism——"

"Bunk!"

"With my abilities as a ventriloquist, I can——"

"Scat!"

"Give an exhibition of voice-throwing on the famous Balmierumpett principles, that will——"

"Are you going?"

"Make the fellows open their eyes, and——"

The Operatic Society made a rush to the door. Bunter was grasped, and sent sliding along the passage. The door was slammed after him.

"That settles Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "Now we'll get to business."

And they got to business.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Items.

HARRY WHARTON rapped on the table, and the Operatic Society were all attention. The juniors were very enthusiastic, and they meant, one and all, to make the entertainment a success if they could. The Christmas concert was to be an affair that would ring through Greyfriars, and perhaps be handed down among the traditions of the Remove.

"Gentlemen, it remains now to settle the details of the programme. The rehearsal lately held with conspicuous success in the box-room——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Has shown us what we can do, especially when it is remembered that we gave that full-dress, ripping rehearsal without the aid of a musical instrument."

"I was willing to accompany the singers on my mouth-organ," said Nugent.

"But the singers weren't willing, and I'm not surprised at it."

"Hear, hear!"

"We shall have a good-sized room—perhaps the concert-hall—for the entertainment, and we shall certainly have a piano. The pianist——"

"Hear, hear!"

"I think we shall be able to get a pianist without fees, as you know that Hoskins, of the Fifth, is a good pianist, and he's allowed to practise on Quelch's piano, and if we put it to him nicely, he'll play for us."

"Good old Hoskins!"

"That will save the pianist's fee. And it's not only that, but the kind of pianist you get from Friardale isn't—well, isn't quite up to the mark."

"Hoskins will fill the bill a treat."

"We'll try Hoskins first, anyway. I've already given him a hint about it, and we'll see him later. As I was saying, the success of the rehearsal shows that we can do these things."

"Hear, hear!"

"The point I wish to particularly draw your attention to is this, that the show must be as varied as possible. I shall—with the concurrence of the meeting—ask Levison to give us a turn with his conjuring tricks. Of course, I do not for a moment place conjuring on a level with our work."

"I should think not!" said the society, with one voice.

"But it will afford variety, and Levison is a jolly good conjuror, there's no getting out of that, though the tricks he plays aren't perhaps always quite to our taste. I can put Levison's name down for a quarter of an hour. We could give Bunter a show for his ventriloquism, but he can't ventriloquise, so that settles him. It would add to the variety to bring on the stage a prince of our Indian Empire——"

"Good old Inky!"

"But I don't quite see what Hurree Singh could do. I've tried to coach him in an English ballad, but——"

"I have learned the honourable ballad heartfully, my worthy chum."

"Let's see what you can do, then," said Wharton.

The Hindoo junior blushed a little through his dusky skin. He rose, with the eyes of all the Operatic Society upon him.

"You will generously excuse any little deficiencies," he said modestly. "My acquaintance with the honourable English language is not quite according to the esteemed Cocker, as you say in this country. Also, I have only lately studied the tuneful music of the esteemed song, and perhaps I shall be out notably in one or two places. Otherwise——"

"It will be all right wherever it isn't all wrong," said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Go ahead!"

"The ballad is known by the honourable title of Bonnyful Mary of Argyle."

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Hurree Singh commenced.

"I have heard the honourable mavis singing,
His love song to the esteemed morning.
I have beheld the excellent dewdrop clinging
To the august rose——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As I remarked, I have somewhat forgotten the song both wordfully and tunefully but otherwise——"

"Not enough otherwise," said Nugent, shaking his head.

"Then I shall respectfully retire from the scene of the scene."

And the Nabob of Bhanipur sat down in perfect good-humour. Harry Wharton glanced at the little Chinese, curled up in the armchair.

"I wonder if we could find something for Wun Lung to do?" he remarked. "I say, Wun Lung, can you do anything in the entertaining line?"

"Me singee song."

"Not much! We've heard you sing a song."

"Me givee lecitation."

"A recitation," said Wharton doubtfully. "What about?"

"Lecitation in Chinese about Kwang Kwong, he in love with daughter of mandarin Yang Sing, son of Shang Wang——"

"Oh, my hat! A Chinese recitation would be a little too thick. But I know! Wun Lung shall give a jiu-jitsu show, with Hurree Singh to help him. They're both good at jiu-jitsu. That will be ripping!"

"Good!"

"I shall be honourably pleased."

"Me givee what Wharton wishee."

"That's right," said Harry, making a note on the programme he was drawing up. "Now, about the songs, chaps. My duet with Miss Hazeldene——"

"Faith, and you mane my duet with Miss Hazeldene——"

"Look you, it's my duet with Miss Hazeldene——"

"Mine——"

"Mine——"

"Now, do be reasonable," said Harry Wharton. "I've practised a ripping duet with Miss Hazeldene, and she's consented to sing it with me in public. Now, I think that settles the matter."

"Faith, and I think it's like your check!"

"Well," said Elliott, "there's no objection to Miss Hazeldene and Wharton doing a duet, if she does another with me."

"Faith, and another with me intirely."

"My dear fellows, we can't give an entertainment composed wholly of duets," said Harry Wharton, in a tone of patient expostulation.

"We needn't give any for that matter," grinned Nugent.

"Of course, the whole thing can't be composed of solos."

"Ha, ha! Then suppose we compromise the matter," said Nugent seriously. "Miss Hazeldene shall sing the duet with me."

"If you're going to begin rotting——"

"I'm quite serious."

"Then you're an ass!"

"Faith, and what I think is——"

"Well, we'll put down my name and Miss Hazeldene's first, anyway," said Wharton. "We can discuss it afterwards. We want to get the programme drawn up."

"Well, no objection to that for the present," said Elliott.

"But mind, the question's not settled yet. I'm going to raise it again, for one."

"Faith, and I for another."

"And I."

"And I."

"We shall never get on at this rate. Duet: Miss Hazeldene and H. Wharton," said the president, jotting it down. "That had better come next after the opening chorus. We want to bring Miss Hazeldene on the stage as early as possible, to put the audience on their best behaviour. You don't know how Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth may think of behaving."

"Thru for ye!"

"Next item, a song in Welsh, by Owen Morgan, entitled 'The Bells of Aberdovey——'"

"Better put the title in Welsh, as I'm going to sing it in Welsh, look you."

"What's the title, then?"

"Clychau Aberdyfi."

"Eh?"

"Clychau Aberdyfi."

"Which?"

"Clychau Aberdyfi."

"How?"

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE AMATEUR COOKS."

A Grand Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Oh, let me write it down for you!" said Morgan, with a sniff. "It always amazes me what a fuss you English people make of spelling a simple language like the Welsh!"

"Simple? My hat! It doesn't sound as if it's spelt like that," said Wharton, looking doubtfully at the title written down by Owen Morgan.

"Do English words always sound as they're spelt?" sniffed Morgan.

"Well, no. Now, Morgan will sing the 'Clutchy Aberdovy—'"

"Clychau!" hooted Morgan.

"Cluckhigh."

"Clychau, you ass!"

"Oh, rats! I won't try to pronounce it," said Wharton.

"The chairman will have to tell 'em it's a song in Welsh, and they can guess the rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Next item," said Harry Wharton, "Robert Cherry, Esquire, will sing—"

"For a change!" murmured Elliott.

Robert Cherry, Esquire, glared at the youth from Teviotdale.

"What's that, Elliott?"

"Nothing!" said Elliott. "Get on with the washing, Wharton. What is Robert Cherry, Esquire, going to sing?"

"On the Ball," said Bob Cherry. "It's a football song, and a real ripper. I don't know whether you know it. I'll give you the chorus—"

Harry Wharton held up his hand.

"No, you won't. We don't allow specimens to be given at meetings. We had enough of that at the last meeting."

"There's no rule against it."

"Yes, one has been made since the last meeting."

Bob Cherry stared.

"How the deuce could a rule be made without even a committee meeting?"

"I made it!"

"You made it!" hooted Bob Cherry. "Well, of all the cheek!"

"Faith, and I think—"

"What's the good of being a giddy president if you can't make a rule?" said Harry Wharton. "I've made a rule to bar quotations from the items, or we should never get through. Next item—"

"But I say, that chorus is a real ripper."

"I'll take your word for it."

"But if I gave you—"

"Rate!"

"Look here, I want all you fellows to learn the chorus, so that you can help me out. It's a ripping football song. They're singing it on all the football grounds now, playing it on the bands and so forth, and Greyfriars ought not to be behind the times in taking it up."

"Well, there's something in that—"

"I'll just buzz through the chorus—"

"No, you won't! You can call an emergency meeting of the committee to hear you buzz through the chorus, if you particularly want to buzz through the chorus," said Harry Wharton reflectively. "I should think that would meet the case."

"What I think is—"

"Never mind what you think just now, old fellow. We've got to get on with the programme, or we shall never get finished. Item: Robert Cherry, in the famous football song, 'On the Ball.' Next man in."

"Instrumental solo next," said Nugent. "I play the Grand March from 'Tannhauser' on the mouth-organ."

"Shade of Wagner!"

"It comes out jolly well on the mouth-organ," said Nugent obstinately. "Still, I can do the march from the 'Meister-singer,' if you like that better."

"Better make it the 'Washington Post,' or the audience will buzz things at you," said the president anxiously. "You must moderate your artistic transports, Nugent, old man, especially when you're going to do the trick on a giddy mouth-organ."

"Rats! Everybody knows the 'Tannhauser March,' I suppose, and if they don't, it's time they heard it. Rendered with real artistic effect—"

"On the mouth-organ?"

"Yes, on the mouth-organ," said Nugent.

"Oh, very well, it goes in," said Harry Wharton resignedly.

"Next gentleman!"

"Ballad in Scotch dialect, by Elliott," said the owner of that name.

"Good! Next, please!"

"The Widow Malone," recitation by Michael Desmond, Esquire."

"Good! What are you doing, Hazeldene?"

"I was thinking of a coon song."

"Yes, that will make a change. Coon song by Hazeldene," said Wharton, jotting it down. "What's your little bit, Ogilvy?"

"Mo run geal dileas," said Ogilvy.

"Which?"

"Mo run geal dileas. It's a Highland song, in Gaelic. If you like I'll sing it to you, and you'll see how it goes."

"We shall see how you go, if you start," said Wharton warningly. "I'll take your word for it, and I'll let you write the name down, too. I think that about finishes, chaps. We shall want a solo by Miss Hazeldene as well as the duet. But she will settle that when she comes. I think all's done."

"What price Hoskins?"

"Hoskins! He's going to punch the piano."

"Yes," said Nugent. "But you know Hoskins. He'll accompany us, but he'll want to shove in some pianoforte solos."

Harry Wharton looked uneasy.

"Hang it! It would be better to have a pianist from Friardale than to have Hoskins mucking up the show," he said. "We could allow him last item, of course. It wouldn't matter if he was playing while the people were going out!"

"No, it would get the hall cleared in good time; but I'll wager that won't be enough for Hoskins. He'll want to shove two solos right into the middle. You know what these amateur pianists are?"

"H'm! Of course, that won't do."

"Of course it won't. If he would play something lively it wouldn't be so rotten, but he's bound to choose something like a dirge, or else like a scale exercise. I heard him the other day in Quelch's study, and thought he was tuning the piano, and he said it was a piece by Scratchemoffski, the Russian composer."

"Well, we can allow him the beginning and the end," said Harry Wharton, after a minute's reflection. "That ought to satisfy any reasonable piano puncher. We had better see him about it, and make the best terms possible. And, now, gentlemen, it's time this meeting broke up and we did our prep."

And the meeting of the Wharton Operatic Society broke up accordingly.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Levison is Mysterious.

THE next day, most of the Remove—and most of the other Forms, too—read, with interest, a notice on the board in the hall, in the handwriting of Harry Wharton.

It was written by Wharton in his capacity of president of the Dramatic and Operatic Society, and ran:

"NOTICE!"

"The entertainment given by the Wharton Dramatic and Operatic Society will take place on Wednesday evening next, instead of on the 18th, as previously announced."

"The reason for this change of date is that, otherwise, the gifted and only lady member of the society would be unable to appear."

"Admission to the concert will be free. Members of the Upper Fourth will be expected to behave themselves. Prefects and masters will be allotted reserved seats if application is made in time to the secretary."

"(Signed)

HARRY WHARTON."

The signatures of Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the vice-presidents of the society, followed, and then a postscript.

"P.S.—Programme will be announced in due course."

The Greyfriars fellows read the notice with varying degrees of interest. In the Remove, Bulstrode sneered at the concert, but most of the Form were inclined to back up their young captain. If the concert were a success, it would be one up for the Remove. The Upper Fourth had never even thought of giving a concert.

"Awful nerve these Lower Fourth kids are getting," Temple, of the Upper Fourth remarked, as he read the notice, and yawned. "What do you think, Dab?"

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"They want putting in their places," remarked Fry.

Temple wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"It would be a good idea to take mouth-organs and tin whistles, and make a fearful row, and muck up the concert," he remarked. "But Wharton has foreseen that. You see here what he says about prefects and masters? He's bound to get Quelch there, and very likely Wingate. Perhaps two or three prefects."

"He's rather a deep beast," Fry remarked.

"Oh, rather!"

"But I suppose we couldn't make a row, come to think of it," Temple added. "You see, Miss Hazeldene is going to be there. It would be rather too rotten bad form to



"Don't go yet, Levison" yelled Billy Bunter. "You haven't paid Mrs. Mumble for the feed!"

make a row when there's a girl on the programme. Hazel-dene is a worm, but I hear that his sister is a stunning girl."

"I don't like the idea of the Remove getting their ears up like this."

"I don't see what we can do. I dare say the whole thing will be a frost. I say, Levison," went on Temple, as Levison, of the Remove, stopped to read the notice, "are you in this giddy entertainment?"

"I haven't been asked," said Levison.

"Got any idea what it will be like?"

"Yes; there will be singers who will sing, reciters who will recite, and solo instrumentalists who will give instrumental solos."

Temple, Dabney & Co., looked at Levison, as if not quite knowing what to make of the junior, and then walked away. Levison chuckled, and finished reading the notice. He was turning away from it, when Harry Wharton came downstairs, and nodded to him pleasantly. These two had been on very friendly terms, in some respects, since the time Wharton had rescued Levison from death on the summit of the Black Pike. Yet there was a want of concord between their natures that rendered a close friendship a remote possibility.

"Levison, I wanted to speak to you."

"Well, here I am," said Levison.

"You've been reading our notice, I see. We want you to give us a turn, if you will."

Levison looked at Wharton with something of the old suspicion in his glance.

"Are you joking? You know I don't sing, and I've never recited, and I don't play any instrument."

"That's all right. We've got enough singers, reciters, and instrumentalists to spare," said Wharton, laughing.

"We want you to give us a change. We were thinking of giving a quarter of an hour to conjuring tricks, and that's where you would come out strong."

Levison nodded.

"Oh, I see! Yes, I'll be glad to give a bit of a show, if you'd like me to."

"Thanks; then I'll put your name down. Wun Lung and Hurreo Singh are giving a jiu-jitsu display, for the sake of variety," said Wharton, "and we're getting a number of the songs in different languages, according to the nationality of the singer. That's a jolly good idea, I think."

"The audience won't understand."

"Well, there's the music for those who don't understand the words. Are you coming out?" went on Wharton, as he glanced out of the hall window. "By Jove! the snow's thick."

"Nothing to go out for."

"May knock up a snowballing fight with the aliens. By Jove! Speaking of the aliens, I'll get Hoffmann and Meunier to come to our Christmas concert, and give songs in their own languages. That will be unique."

"It will be a polyglot concert by the time you've done," grinned Levison. "You'd better get Wun Lung to give you a Chinese song."

"No, that would be rather too thick," said Wharton, laughing.

"By the way," said Levison abruptly, "speaking about Wun Lung—"

He paused. Harry looked at him curiously.

"What about the Chinese, Levison?"

"What do you think of him?"

"What do I think of him?" repeated Wharton, puzzled by the question. "I don't quite follow. He's a decent little chap, though I must say he's too fond of practical jokes, and has a very curious sense of humour. He never gives me the benefit of it, though, so I suppose I ought not to say anything about it. He's a good chess-player, and a jolly good fellow."

"A good chess-player?" said Levison. "I don't know anything about that. I don't play chess, and I couldn't make a move. As for his being a jolly good fellow, you may alter your opinion about that."

Harry Wharton stared.

"I don't understand you, Levison. Have you got anything up against Wun Lung?"

"Oh, no; but—" Levison paused, and then went on abruptly. "Look here, Wharton, have you noticed what was in the papers some time back—about Chinese spies in Europe—in England?"

"No," said Wharton, "I can't say I did. Some rot, I expect!"

"I don't know. I'm not so sure it was rot."

"You don't suspect Wun Lung of being a Chinese spy?" said Wharton, laughing. But Levison's face remained perfectly serious.

"How do you know? It's a bit queer his being here, at all. There aren't many Chinese juniors in English schools. Then there's that old uncle of his who came here after him—a suspicious old rascal."

"But he was Wun Lung's enemy. He tried to kidnap him, to take him back to China."

"H'm! That may have been a put-up job."

"My word, Levison!"

"How do you know? Besides, do you know that Wun Lung is in correspondence with someone in the Chinese Embassy?"

"By Jove! No."

"Well, he is."

"How do you know?"

Levison coloured.

"Well, I do know," he said evasively, "and they correspond in a cipher, too. I know that. A very curious cipher, and not Chinese."

Harry Wharton's brow grew dark.

"I don't quite know what to make of this, Levison. I can't help concluding that you have seen some of Wun Lung's correspondence, and I can't think he has shown it to you."

Levison's face went very red.

"Never mind how I know!" he replied. "I do know; and I can tell you—"

He broke off as Wharton held up his hand.

"Don't tell me any more, Levison! It's impossible for you to have learned anything without having descended to—to—well, in plain English, to having read another fellow's letters; and I'd rather not be mixed up in anything of that sort."

Levison bit his lip.

"I was going to tell you all about it, and ask your advice."

"I'm sorry. Our ideas are a bit different on this subject, I suppose?"

"Do you think I would look at your letters?" said Levison, with a flash in his eyes. "This is a different case. The end justifies the means."

"Nothing of the sort. No end can possibly justify any means that are not justifiable in themselves," said Harry. "Nobody has a right to play a dirty trick on the ground that good may come of it."

"If that's how you speak to me I'm done," said Levison, between his teeth. "I suppose I was a fool to speak to you? I wanted— But never mind."

Wharton's face relaxed. He knew that it could not have been easy for the suspicious, secretive Levison to speak confidentially at all. But the thought of being mixed up in any matter tainted with espial was revolting to Harry's nature.

"It's all right, Levison," he said. "I suppose you mean well. But I don't agree that the end justifies the means,

unless the means are of a kind that will bear the light of day, and then they don't need justifying. There's a very old Book that tells us that a man should not do evil that good may come of it. Besides, old fellow, this idea of yours is all moonshine."

"They don't think it all moonshine at Scotland Yard."

Wharton gave a start.

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind what I mean," said Levison sourly. "I've told you too much already."

"Do you mean to say that there are detectives—"

"I mean to say nothing."

And Levison effectually put an end to the discussion by walking away. Harry Wharton gazed after him with knitted brows. The junior's words left, as it were, an unpleasant taste in his mouth. The captain of the Remove was still standing by the window, now looking moodily out into the falling snow, when Wun Lung joined him. Wharton glanced at the little Chinese with more than usual interest.

The quaint, little face, the almond eyes, looked the same as usual; but Wharton remembered how he had often thought that Wun Lung, for all his surface simplicity, was deep—very deep. Was it possible that there was anything in Levison's suspicions?

"Tea is luddy," said the Chinese.

Wharton, with a half-smile, dismissed the idea from his mind. Levison was very keen and acute. But this very keenness led him, sometimes to over-reach himself; and Harry believed that this was an egregious case of too much "cuteness."

"Right-ho! I'm coming, kid," he said.

And he went up to No. 1 Study with the Chinese.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Ventriloquism at Last!

BILLY BUNTER rose from the tea-table in Study No. 1 with a satisfied expression upon his fat face. He had started first, and finished last, and for once he had had enough to eat. The chums of the Remove were getting out their books, and Billy Bunter blinked round at them.

"I say, you fellows—"

"When you've done with that table, Billy—"

"I'm finished, Nugent—"

"So is the grub, I see!" remarked Nugent, glancing at the table. "It's always a dead-heat between you and the tummy."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Well, get the table cleared, if you've really finished; we've got work to do," grunted Bob Cherry. "There's some rehearsing to do after prep., too. I've got to put you fellows through the chorus of my song, if you're going to back me up on Wednesday."

"I say, you fellows, I was going to say—"

"Never mind what you were going to say, Billy. You say too much, and too often. Lend a hand with these things."

"I was going to suggest that you fellows did your prep. in the common-room this evening—"

"I shall suggest that you are awarded a prize thick ear, and I shall carry out the suggestion on the spot if you don't shut up!" said Bob Cherry.

"You see, it's awkward for me having you fellows always in the study. I never get a chance to do any ventriloquial practice."

"You can go up in the box-room and do it, if you close the door."

"It's too cold there."

"Well, go out in the Close, then."

"It's snowing in the Close."

"Then go and eat coke! If you begin throwing your voice about in here, I shall begin throwing a fat porpoise out there!" said Bob, with a nod towards the passage. "That's a fair warning!"

"I'm sincerely sorry—"

"Your apology's accepted. Now shut up!"

"I'm sincerely sorry that there should be so much jealousy in this study!" said Bunter, blinking at the juniors. "You can't keep my wonderful abilities as a ventriloquist in the background, all the same, Cherry. When I get the prize in 'The Gem' football competition, I am thinking of hiring the Town Hall in Friardale, and giving a show, with seats at five shillings and half-a-guinea."

"Make it twopence, old chap, and you might rope in an audience of half a dozen."

"If you fellows liked to make up a party to come, and pay in advance, I could manage it without waiting for the end of the football competition—"

"Yes, I can see the whole Remove rushing, fit to break their necks, to get tickets at half-a-guinea each!" said Bob Cherry humorously. "I think you get funnier every day,

Billy. But I wish you'd go and be funny somewhere else just now."

"I must get in a little practice before I do my prep," said Bunter, with a sniff. "I can only say I'm sincerely sorry to see personal envy so rampant in this study."

And the fat junior walked out. He left the Removites chuckling. Bunter's exploits as a ventriloquist had hitherto been too funny for anything, and after so many failures the juniors naturally did not believe that he would ever succeed. His faith in himself was touching; but he had just as much faith in himself as a hypnotist, and a thought-reader, and a physical culturist, and a fisherman, and on each and every occasion he had failed lamentably to achieve anything but absurdities.

Bob Cherry shut the door after him, and the chums of the Remove worked. Their time was pretty well occupied of late, with the arrangements for the Christmas concert to attend to as well as their ordinary work.

Billy Bunter drifted down the passage with a disconsolate expression, and as he knew the reception he would meet with if he began to practise ventriloquism in anybody's study, or in the common-room, he started practice in the corridor.

As a matter of fact, Bunter's practice had for some time past been assiduous, and in ventriloquism, as in everything else, assiduous practice tells. If the fat junior had any gift that way, the gift had a good chance of showing itself.

"Are you there?" demanded Bunter, addressing the window at the end of the passage. Then he squeaked out the reply in his ventriloquial voice, "Yes, I'm 'ere."

Bunter gave a start. He always believed that his voice proceeded from the spot that he wished it to, but on the present occasion it seemed more certain than ever. Levison came along the passage, and tapped him on the shoulder. Bunter gave a jump, and turned round.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Ass!" said Levison.

"Oh, is it you, Levison? I say—"

"Who's that outside the window?" said Levison, looking at the blurred panes curiously. "Precious rum place for anybody to get in this snow!"

Bunter gave a jump. His heart beat wildly. It was success at last. Levison was fonder of "rotting" a fellow than anybody else in the Remove; but this time he was evidently in earnest. Suspicious to the finger-tips, he believed that there was somebody outside the window, and that Bunter was "putting up" a trick to show off his ventriloquism.

"I say, Levison, there isn't anybody there!" he exclaimed eagerly.

"Bosh!"

"It was my ventriloquism."

"Rats!"

"I tell you it was!" said Bunter. "How could there be anybody outside the window? It's a sheer drop of over twenty feet, and the sill is covered with snow."

Levison looked puzzled. Bunter's statement was quite correct, and it did seem impossible for anybody to be outside the window. The suspicious junior went to the window, and opened it. A bitter December blast blew fiercely in, scattering snowflakes along the passage, and causing the gas further up the corridor to flicker. The snow on the window-sill was undisturbed, save by the wind.

Levison jammed the window shut again. Billy Bunter grinned at him knowingly.

"Do you believe me now?" he asked.

"No, I don't."

"Oh, really, Levison—"

"You can't take me in!" said Levison contemptuously. "Haven't I heard you squeaking before? Don't I know it's all humbug?"

"My wonderful abilities—"

"Your wonderful bunkum!"

"I tell you it was my voice I made proceed from the window!" said Billy Bunter angrily. "You oughtn't to doubt a fellow's word."

Levison laughed scoffingly.

"Well, you see, your word isn't worth much, Bunter!"

"I tell you—"

"Well, if it was your voice, do it again," said Levison. "If you do it while I'm standing here watching you, I'll swallow the yarn."

"I'll jolly soon do that!"

"Well, I'm waiting."

Bunter cleared his throat. He had an inward fear that it was only a fluke, and that he could not do it again; but he meant to try.

"Well, go ahead!" said Levison.

"Are you there?" called out Bunter.

"Yes, I'm 'ere!" came the squeak, in reply.

But this time, unfortunately, it was evidently Bunter who squeaked. His fears had been well founded. The first success was a fluke—or perhaps his present nervousness entailed his failure. He looked uneasily at Levison, who burst into a laugh.

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

"Well, I'm waiting for the voice-throwing to start," he said.

"I—I've done it!"

"But I could see all the time that it was you squeaking."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"I knew it was all humbug!" said Levison. "But never mind your rotten ventriloquism now! Did you get that postcard?"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Cipher.

LEVISON came nearer to Bunter, and lowered his voice cautiously, as he asked the question. He cast a suspicious glance up and down the corridor, but there was no one in sight. There could be no doubt that Levison was deeply in earnest, and intensely interested in the task he had set himself in investigating the supposed mystery connected with Wun Lung.

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly. He was thinking less of Wun Lung and his mysterious correspondence than of his beloved ventriloquism.

"I say, Levison—"

"Have you got that postcard yet?"

"Oh, blow the postcard! I tell you that was my voice from the window. I did really throw my voice that time."

"Oh, rats! Will you tell me—"

"I tell you—"

"Well, I believe you," said Levison, changing his tone. "Come to think of it, it would be impossible for anybody to be outside the window."

"I thought you'd see reason in the long run," said Bunter, who was too dense to see that Levison was only assenting for the sake of getting rid of the subject. "You see—"

"Yes, I see. About that postcard—"

"You see, I've practised the ventriloquism so long that I'm bound to be able to do it now, if I've got any gift at all for it, and really, you know, my abilities in that direction are simply wonderful."

"I know they are, Billy—marvellous! But—"

"If you like, I'll come to your study and give you an hour's show, Levison, all by yourself."

"I was thinking of the tuckshop," said Levison blandly. "Mrs. Mimbble has such ripping tea-cakes to-day, and—"

The mention of tea-cakes was enough for Bunter. Even ventriloquism faded into insignificance beside the prospect of a feed. The fact that he had lately had tea, and eaten enough for two or three, made no difference to Bunter.

"I'll come with pleasure, Levison!" he remarked.

"But what about that postcard?"

"Eh? Wun Lung's postcard—"

"Not so loud, ass! Have you got it?"

"Yes. Wun Lung chucked it away, and I picked it up," said Bunter, groping in his pockets. "Of course, there was no harm in my taking it when Wun Lung had thrown it away, was there?"

"Of course not. Did he throw it away? Didn't he try to destroy it?"

"Well, he chucked it into the grate."

"I suppose he meant it to go in the fire," said Levison.

"I shouldn't wonder. It fell among the cinders, and I picked it up."

"Did Wun Lung speak to anybody about it?"

"Not that I know of. I saw him copy down into a pocket-book what was written on it, that's all."

"Give it me!" said Levison eagerly.

"Ain't we going to the tuckshop?"

"Yes, yes; but give me the postcard!"

"It's in my pocket somewhere. I can hunt it out in the tuckshop, while we're ordering the stuff," said Bunter. "We'd better be getting along, you know. Mrs. Mimbble closes soon."

"Give me the postcard now, confound you!"

"Look here, Levison—"

Levison gritted his teeth. Billy Bunter apparently had borrowed some of his own suspiciousness. At all events, he did not mean to produce the postcard until the feed was before him. Levison turned away with an angry brow.

"Come on, then, you fat young brute."

"I say, Levison, I don't think you ought to call me names. If you don't want me to come to the tuck-shop, I won't," said Bunter, who felt that he was master of the situation. He did not know nor care why Levison was interested in Wun Lung's correspondence, but he could see how deadly in earnest the junior was.

"Oh, come on," said Levison, more amiably; "it's all right!"

"Well, if you really want me to come—"

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE AMATEUR COOKS."

A Grand Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Of course I do! Do buck up, or Mrs. Mimble will have closed her shop."

The hint was enough for Billy Bunter. The juniors put on their caps and turned their collars up, for the school shop could not be reached without going into the open air. They dodged along under the leafless trees and close to the walls, for shelter, and ran into the tuck-shop. Mrs. Mimble was preparing to retire to her little parlour when they came in.

"Tea-cakes," said Levison, "scones, tarts, jam-puffs—anything! Give me that postcard, Bunter!"

"Wait a minute while I give my orders," said Bunter, who was evidently bent on leaving nothing to chance. "Did you say I was to begin with saveloys?"

"You can if you like."

"Good! Have you any baked potatoes, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Certainly, Master Bunter!"

"Shall I have half a dozen baked potatoes, Levison?"

"Yee—yes," said Levison, fuming with impatience.

"Good! I suppose I'd better have some sausages, too. Of course, it's for you to say."

"Have anything you like! Give me that postcard!"

"Well, that's generous of you, and no mistake!" said Bunter, beaming through his spectacles. "I'll remember this when I get the prize of a pound a week in the 'Gem' football competition, Levison. Did you say I was to have a rabbit-pig?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Put them on this little table, will you, Mrs. Mimble? Levison is paying. Get out some jam-puffs, and cream-puffs, and some of those ripping tea-cakes. I want them warm. You can warm 'em while I'm eating the first lot. Did you speak, Levison?"

"Yes, you young beast! Give me that postcard!"

"Right you are!" said Bunter, picking up knife and fork. "This is what I call good, you know. Most of the fellows think you're a bit of a cad, but I think you've got your good points, Levison. I say—"

"Give me that postcard," said Levison, in a low, concentrated voice. "Give it to me at once, or I'll tell Mrs. Mimble I'm not paying for these things."

Bunter's jaw dropped in dismay. His credit was about as good as that of the famous Richard Swiveller, and he knew that Mrs. Mimble wouldn't let him have a mouthful that was not paid for in advance.

"Oh, I say, Levison!"

"Give it me!" yelled Levison.

"Here you are," said Bunter, in an injured tone, fishing a postcard out of his pocket. "I suppose you don't think that I didn't mean to give it to you, do you? It's no good to me. There you are!"

Levison snatched up the postcard, and Bunter plied knife and fork with great activity. Levison held the card up to the light, and read.

He smiled grimly as he read. If it was not a secret cipher, it certainly looked like one.

For this is what was written on the postcard addressed to Wun Lung, and which Billy Bunter had seen him copy down in his pocket-book:

"QKt—x—KR's P, Ch."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

On the Track.

LEVISON sat and stared at the mysterious postcard. Billy Bunter looked at him curiously once or twice, but Levison did not notice it. He was intensely interested in the mysterious cypher.

"QKt—x—KR's P, Ch."

What could it possibly mean?

Whatever it meant, one thing was certain—to Levison's mind, at least. The correspondence was not a harmless one, or it would not be conducted in a cipher, and especially so utterly impenetrable a cipher.

What could it mean?

In the silence, broken only by the click of Billy Bunter's knife and fork, and the steady champing of his active jaws, Levison tried to figure it out.

"QKt—x—KR's P, Ch."

It was amazing!

The "Ch" was doubtless short for China, or Chinese. That seemed clear enough. But the rest of the cipher?

It seemed a hopeless task to attempt to unravel it. But Levison meant to do it, and to keep the secret to himself until he had succeeded. He would show Wharton who was right and who was wrong.

He rose at last, and put the postcard in his pocket. Bunter looked up in alarm as he turned towards the door.

"Levison! I say, Levison!"

"Oh, don't bother me now!"

"But you haven't paid Mrs. Mimble!" yelled Bunter.

"Oh, I forgot. How much is it, ma'am?"

Mrs. Mimble, looking curiously at Levison, stated the amount, and he paid without a murmur. The good dame was surprised. Levison was not known as a generous boy, and she did not know what to make of his standing Billy Bunter so extensive a feed, especially as he had eaten nothing himself.

Levison left the place, leaving Billy Bunter still actively at work. The fat junior had had good things piled to right and left on his table, and there was enough even to satisfy his appetite, and a little over perhaps. Levison had paid without a word, and a feeling of regret came over Bunter. He might have had more—enough to fill his pockets as well, if he had foreseen that Levison was going to be such an absent-minded beggar. It was too late, now.

Levison walked away, careless of the falling snow. As he went towards the School House a snowball caught him under the chin, and there was a yell from the December gloom.

"Ach! I tinks tat I have him after."

"Ciel! Zat vas ze good shot!"

"Forwards, ain't it?"

"Sock it to heem!"

Levison gritted his teeth. He was in no humour for horseplay with the aliens. He broke into a run, and a volley of snowballs came after him, smashing all over his body and legs. He stumbled in the snow, and fell on his face. Before he could rise again the aliens were upon him.

"I tinks I catches him!"

"Ciel! It is I zat catches him!"

Hoffmann and Meunier were squatting on the prostrate Levison. The Removite wriggled and yelled.

"Get up, you alien idiots!"

"Ach! I gatches him pefore!"

"I catches him, you Sherman duffair!"

"Vat you call me?"

"Sherman peeg."

"I calls you French pounder—peastly pounder!"

"Ciel! I zashes you for zat!"

"I tinks tat no French peast can trash Sherman! I goes for you, and rolls you in te snow!"

And Fritz Hoffmann was as good as his word. He gripped Meunier, rolled him off Levison, and rolled him over and over. Meunier yelled and squirmed.

"Ach! I tinks I teaches you lesson, ain't it?" panted Hoffmann.

"Sherman peeg! Rottair! I licks you!"

"Peast!"

"Peeg!"

Levison staggered to his feet. But there were other aliens about. Limburger and Lerouge and Charpentier rushed at him, and had him down in the snow in a twinkling.

"Rescue, Remove!" yelled Levison.

But the door was closed and his voice was not heard. Fortunately for Levison, the Franco-German feud was in full swing now.

Adolphe Meunier yelled for help in breathless French, and Lerouge and Charpentier dashed to his aid. Hoffmann was rolled off him and plumped into the snow, and, of course, Limburger rushed to help him. Again Levison staggered up. The aliens were rolling and struggling in the snow, scattering it in all directions, gasping and panting and shrieking. Levison did not stop to see how it ended. He cut off towards the house, and dashed up the steps.

There was a yell from the gloom behind him.

"Hold! Ze rottair is escape!"

"Ach! It is your fault!"

"Zat is not true! It is your fault!"

"After him pefore!"

"Oui, oui; aftair him!"

The aliens rushed in pursuit. Levison darted into the house, and slammed the door. The aliens, disappointed, gave a yell; and then, not desirous of being caught by a master so near the rival school, they disappeared through the falling snow. Levison brushed himself down in the hall.

He was feeling very satisfied as he did so. He was fairly on the track now. This was the third mysterious postcard he had seen. Two earlier ones he had seen in the letter-rack, and though he had not been able to examine them closely, he knew that they were in the same kind of cipher.

"By Jove," he muttered, as he finished dusting off the snow, "there may be another there, now. I'll look, any-way."

He strolled to the letter-rack, in which were a number of the evening letters that had not been taken away by their owners.

There could be no suspicion attached to his action if it was observed, as he had a right to examine the rack to see if there were any letters for himself.

As it happened, there was one, and he took it; but he gave it hardly a glance. His eyes were upon a postcard addressed to Wun Lung.



"Look here, Bunter," said Levison. "If you can get me the postcard Wun Lung received yesterday, I'll stand you a feed at Mrs. Mumble's."

His eyes gleamed, and his heart beat.

It was another of the mysterious postcards. If he could see the back he had not the slightest doubt that it would turn out to be in cipher.

He calmly put up his hand to it, and turned it over.

Yes, there was the cipher!

"KKt—KB3, dis. Ch."

The "Ch" of the former postcard was repeated, but in other respects there was little resemblance. But it was evidently the same cipher used for a different message.

There was a light step in the hall, and Levison turned with a guilty start to see Wun Lung.

He pretended to be busy opening his letter, and glanced covertly at the Chinese. Wun Lung gave him no attention. He took the postcard from the rack, and glanced at it. Then he grinned.

"Me tinkee so!" he murmured aloud. "Allee light!"

And he put the postcard in his pocket, and walked away. Levison gazed after him with gleaming eyes.

"Oh, you thought so, did you, and it's all right!" he murmured. "We'll see whether it's all right, my pippin! I

can't move in a matter like this openly, in case—in case of a row; but they've had my anonymous letter at Scotland Yard before now, and I don't think it will be without effect."

And Levison walked away to his study, to shut himself up there and ponder over the cryptogram.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Some Instruction—with Interruptions.

BOB CHERRY had finished his work, and he announced that fact to all concerned, by hurling his books right and left, and rising from the table.

"If you fellows are going to be all night—" he began.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You haven't been finished a second, Bob. Give us a chance."

"Oh, I don't mind waiting," said Bob Cherry, in a tone of patient resignation, "only don't forget that we've got to go to bed to-night, some time, and we've got to go through the chorus of my song first! Hallo, hallo, hallo, Billy! Whence that greasy grin? Have you been robbing somebody of a feed?"

A fat face, with a smile on it that was decidedly greasy, had come into the study. A fat body followed it, and Billy Bunter sat down with a sigh in the easy chair.

"I've had a rather good feed," he remarked; "Levison stood it—a really decent feed. I shall remember Levison when I get the prize of a pound a week in the 'Gem' football competition."

"You'll want a jolly long memory, then."

"You can't discourage me, Cherry. If I were to allow myself to be influenced by small jealousies, I should never—"

"Oh, cheese it! You fellows done yet?"

"Nearly. Shut up!"

"The donefulness of my honourable self is terrific."

"I don't intend to be discouraged, as I was saying. The first prize is given for the most correct answers, and as my answers are all correct, I am bound to rope in the first prize."

"How do you know they are all correct?" grinned Bob Cherry.

"With my remarkable abilities at solving the pictures—"

"Oh, I see! If you're relying on your remarkable abilities, you are all right," said Bob Cherry solemnly. "It's what may be called a dead cert."

"Oh, really Cherry—"

"I've got the song here, you chaps, when you're ready," said Bob Cherry. "Finished? Now, just look over the music with me first. I wish we had a piano here—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't interrupt, you fat duffer, when we're studying music!"

"But I'm going to do my prep. now—"

"Do it, then. We're going to practise the chorus of this football song—"

"Look here, I can't do my prep. while you fellows are bawling out a chorus."

"Then I'm sorry for your prep. Now, it begins like this—"

"But, I say, Cherry—"

"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry. "How dare you interrupt a professor of singing who is imparting knowledge to his pupils? You should have done your prep. before. We've done ours. Get out!"

"I've been having a feed with Levison—"

"Then go and have another feed with Levison. Look here, Harry, you start with a shout, at the first verse—"

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry rolled up his sheet of music, and made a rush at Bunter. The fat junior skipped out of the study in alarm, and barely escaped a mighty swipe. The music crashed on the doorpost, and the paper buckled up.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry, breathing hard. "I've nearly ripped the thing to pieces, and it cost me sixpence. If that young porpoise comes in here again, I shall commit porpoiseicide. Look here—"

"Get on," said Nugent. "What's the thing about? We'll give you a quarter of an hour, and if you haven't finished the course of instruction by then, it's all up."

"That's only fair," said Wharton, laughing.

"The fairfulness is terrific."

"Well, then, pay attention and don't interrupt. The tune's simple and awfully catchy, and easy to pick up. You can imagine me a professor of singing, and this is my studio. The bookcase is the grand piano. Now, put your beef into it, and don't get sharper or flatter than you can help. My dear pupils—"

"Oh, get on with the washing, Bob, and out the cackle!"

"My dear pupils," said Bob Cherry, ignoring the interruption, "I am about to coach you in the chorus of the famous football song—"

"Buck up!"

"Pay attention. Here you are: 'On the Ball!' Football Song, words by Charles Hamilton, music by Percy Harrison—"

"We can see that for ourselves—"

"Do get on with the washing, old chap! We've to go to bed to-night."

"The get-onfulness with the esteemed washing would be the boonful blessing to me," purred the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, here goes—hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's that?"

The door opened, and the fat face and spectacles of Billy Bunter looked in. The fat junior kept a wary eye on Bob Cherry.

"I say, have you fellows finished? I've got to do my prep—"

"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I've got to do my—"

Bob Cherry reached out for a book from the table, and Billy Bunter promptly dodged out of the study. Bob kept the book in his hand, with a vengeful expression on his face.

He flattened out the crumpled music, and proceeded, keeping one eye on the door.

"Look here, then; I'll sing the first verse to give you an idea how it goes—"

"As you are strong, be merciful—"

"Oh, don't be funny, Nugent! Attend to business. Here goes!"

Wharton, Nugent, and Hurree Singh threw themselves into attitudes of intense—not to say exaggerated—attention, and Bob Cherry began to sing.

"Here's a cheer for the grand old game,
And a cheer for the men who play;
Here's a shout for the boys at home,
And a yell for the lads away!
Hurray!"

"Hurray!" shouted the three juniors.

"That's the first verse, and then you shout Hurray—"

"Hurray!"

"I say—"

"Hurray!"

"You shout—"

"Hurray!"

"You utter asses!" roared Bob Cherry. "You don't keep on yelling it like a lot of giddy parrots—"

"Hurray!"

"Shut up, I tell you—"

"Hurray!"

The door opened, and a pair of glimmering spectacles looked in.

"I say, you fellows—"

Biff!

The book, hurled with all the strength of Bob Cherry's arm, smote Billy Bunter on the chest, and bowled him clean out. The fat junior disappeared, and the sound of a heavy bump was heard in the passage, followed by a series of expressive grunts. Bob Cherry grinned. His feelings were relieved.

"Now, you chaps, don't be silly asses, and let's get on with the chorus!" growled Bob Cherry. "When this song is sung, everybody's supposed to join in the chorus, and lift the roof off, if possible. The chorus is a real ripper."

"Let it rip, then."

"On the ball, on the ball—"

Nugent looked round him.

"Where's the ball?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"I can't see it."

"You shrieking ass, that's the first line of the chorus!"

"Oh, I see! Why couldn't you say so?"

Bob Cherry glared, and resumed his shouting; for it must be admitted that it resembled shouting as much as it did singing.

"On the ball, on the ball,
Loud and clear it rings like a trumpet-call!
Hear the shouts excited roll,
Buck up there! Look out in goal!
On the ball, ball, ball!
On the ball, on the ball!"

Bob Cherry's voice, as he reached the last line, rang through the study and through the corridor, and through the greater part of Greyfriars. There was a step in the passage, and the door was pushed open. Bob Cherry turned round in a fury.

"Get out, you dummy! Oh—oh—oh—I'm sorry, sir! I thought it was that young ass, Bunter, again."

And Bob Cherry's face went scarlet as he met the eyes of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Greyfriars Remove.

Mr. Quelch's expression was very curious as he looked at Bob Cherry.

"You should be a little more careful, Cherry," he said quietly; "that is not a really courteous way to address even Bunter. I looked in to tell you that you must make a little less noise."

"A—a—a little less what, sir?" stammered Bob Cherry.

"A little less noise, Cherry."

"I—I wasn't making a noise, sir."

"Indeed! Then it was one of the others; but I thought I recognised your voice," said Mr. Quelch, looking at him.

"I certainly thought I heard you shouting."

"I—I wasn't making a noise, sir. I was singing."

"Oh!"

"We were practising for the concert on Wednesday, sir," said Bob Cherry, gaining courage. "I'm putting these chaps up to the chorus for my song. They have to join in the chorus. It's a ripping song, sir."

"It seems to me to be a very noisy one, Cherry. I must

really request you to give your instructions a little more quietly."

"Ye-es, sir."

And the Remove master went out and closed the door. Nugent chuckled.

"Of course, he hasn't an ear for music," said Bob Cherry, looking round. "An untrained ear can't always distinguish between shouting and singing."

"Sometimes it is honourably possible that the distinctness is lacking in existence, my worthy chum."

"It's a ripping song—"

"Yes, likely to rip a roof off," agreed Wharton. "It will do all right, and we'll help you out with the chorus. It will make row enough, anyway."

The door reopened, and Bunter looked in warily.

"Are you fellows done?"

Bob Cherry made a clutch at the poker, and Billy whipped out of the study and fled for his life.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Gentle Pianist.

MARJORIE is coming to-morrow," Hazeldene remarked to Wharton, on Monday morning. "She will drive over, in time to have a bit of a rehearsal ready for Wednesday."

Harry Wharton nodded with a satisfied look.

"Good! We haven't Miss Marjorie's solo down on the programme yet, and we're going to give it a good middle place. Have you seen Hoskins?"

Hazeldene grinned.

"Yes; I heard him asking Mr. Quelch if he could go to his room just after school. Quelch lets him punch his piano, you know."

"By Jove, I can hear him now!" said Wharton, noticing the distant strains from the direction of the Remove master's room. "Quelch has promised to let us have our final rehearsal in his room, with the piano, same as we did when we were giving an opera once. It's working against difficulties to rehearse without an instrument, and my flute isn't much good for that purpose. I haven't been able to interview Hoskins."

"Better secure him now, while you've a chance."

"Right; I'll go up and see him."

Harry Wharton made his way to Mr. Quelch's quarters. The quarters allotted to the master of the Remove were on the first floor. He had a study downstairs also, but he did not keep his piano there. Mr. Quelch was of musical tastes, but his tastes were not shared by all the other masters, and there was a passive resistance to the idea of a piano among the studies. Harry Wharton tapped at the door of the room whence the crash of a piano proceeded, and, as there was no reply, he opened it.

The piano sounded louder than ever. Mr. Quelch's instrument was an upright, as there was no room for a full grand. It was a very fine instrument, and Hoskins of the Fifth was going for it in a businesslike manner.

"Hoskins! I say, Hoskins!"

Hoskins turned a vacant glance upon Wharton, and continued to assail the keys.

"Hoskins, old man; when you've got a minute to spare—"

"Shut up!" roared Hoskins.

"But—"

The crash of the piano ceased. The pianist turned a glare upon Harry Wharton that might have frozen a stone image.

"You utter young ass!"

"What's the matter?"

"You've ruined it!" hooted Hoskins.

Wharton looked startled.

"Ruined what?"

"The reverie!"

"The—the reverie!"

"I was playing a reverie—a musical reverie, fathead!"

"Oh! Something of Raff, I suppose, or Brahms."

"Nothing of the sort. It was a composition of my own."

"By Jove!" said Wharton, looking interested. "Do you compose for the piano?"

"I should think so," said Hoskins, thawing a little. "I have composed sonatas before now. I don't want to run down Beethoven, but I think I can turn stuff out quite up to the 'Moonlight' sonata. If you would care to hear me run over my latest sonata, I could do it in three-quarters of an hour."

"Thanks awfully, old chap, but—"

"It would improve your taste, perhaps. I dare say it needs it, too. You Remove kids haven't much ear for music."

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"

LITERARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

"Of course, we haven't your opportunities, Hoskins," said Wharton placably.

"It isn't only opportunities. It's the gift."

"Yes; you've got a wonderful gift, I know."

"Well, without bragging, I must say I think I have," said Hoskins. "There's few fellows of my age who can compose sonatas equal to Beethoven's."

"Very few, I should say," agreed Wharton, suppressing a chuckle. "You must be jolly clever, if you can do that, Hosky."

"It's not so much cleverness," said Hoskins. "It's a kind of inspiration. When an inspiration seizes me, I rush to the piano and work it out. I often get wonderful effects that way. I was knocking off a reverie when you came in like a silly chump and interrupted me."

"I'm awfully sorry!"

"Oh, it's all right! I dare say I shall get into the mood again!" said Hoskins. "Of course, these things depend largely on the mood."

"I suppose so."

"It all depends upon the temperament, really! Now, I have the temperament of a great composer."

"Jolly lucky for you. Have you written any of them down?" asked Wharton.

"Lots and lots! I'm keeping all my early compositions," explained Hoskins. "When my name is known to fame, and the word 'Hoskins' has become a household word in the musical world, my earlier compositions will be eagerly sought after. Beethoven, in his later period, will be nothing to Hoskins in his earlier period."

"My hat!"

"Yes, rather!" said the modest pianist. "I dare say you know, for instance, that all the great composers play ducks and drakes with the rules of harmony, and counterpoint! That shows they're great composers. Well, I play ducks and drakes with the rules, too. I shove down the fruit of the inspiration. You'd find enough consecutive fifths in one of my compositions to turn an academy professor's hair grey. I belong to the newer, the freer school."

"You put it really rippingly, Hosky. Would you—"

"For instance," said Hoskins, crashing both fists down on the keyboard, with a discordant crash that made Wharton shudder. "Listen to that!"

"Ow!"

"You don't find a chord like that even in Wagner," said Hoskins, with a superior smile. "You will find it in my latest sonata."

"My hat! I wish you'd leave it there—I—I mean, you must have a wonderful ear to detect the music in that, Hoskins. You know we are giving a concert on Wednesday—a Christmas concert—"

Hoskins nodded.

"I've heard something of it," he replied. "If you had asked me, I could have given you some hints on how to do it to insure success!"

"I—I didn't think of that. Of course, if you cared to give us any advice, Hoskins, it would be listened to with the profoundest respect." Wharton did not say that it would be followed! "What I wanted to ask you was—"

"Oh, it's all right, I understand!"

"Good!" said Harry, rather relieved. "I knew you'd be obliging, Hoskins!"

"Certainly! For the sake of improving musical taste in the Lower School—if for nothing else—I should be happy to play my sonata—"

Wharton's face fell.

"Eh?"

"Besides the sonata, which will take about three-quarters of an hour, I could put in a reverie, a fantasy, and a march," said Hoskins generously. "In fact, I could fill up the whole evening, if you like!"

"We—we couldn't think of troubling you—"

"Not at all. I never get tired."

"The audience might—I mean, your works are far above the heads of the Remove," said Wharton. "They wouldn't understand your sonata—especially your ripping idea of shoving in consecutive fifths and things."

"Quite possibly. But I do not believe in conceding anything to a depraved public taste," said Hoskins firmly. "Let us keep a high standard, and the public will in time come up to it."

"Ye-es, but—"

"My sonata—"

"You see, it's a concert—not a pianoforte recital," explained Wharton. "We could give you a solo, of course, but what we really wanted was for you to accompany the singers."

"Oh, I see! You could get a professional pianist from

ANSWERS

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE AMATEUR COOKS."

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of Harry Wharton & Co.

Friardale to do that!" said Hoskins, with a disdainful emphasis on the word "that."

"Yes, but—but we believe in supporting home industries," said Wharton. "It would be much more ripping to have a Greyfriars chap. Besides, it would give the school an opportunity of seeing what you can do—that you—you know how to accompany as well as to compose sonatas and things."

"There is something in that; and certainly a good accompanist makes the success of a concert," assented Hoskins. "I don't mind helping you out. How many solos will you want me to play?"

Wharton would gladly have replied "none," but that would hardly have done under the circumstances. His reply was diplomatic:

"You see, we'd like you to give us a big selection, only—only we have to consider the audience—their taste, I mean. I'm afraid I can't claim a high degree of musical education for the Remove."

"By George, you're right there!"

"So, you see, we—we must break it to them gently, as it were. Your sonata would be ripping for fellows who understood it, but—the Remove won't. Same thing with your reveries, fantasies, and so on. I was thinking that you could have the first item on the programme—place of honour, you know—"

"H'm!" said Hoskins doubtfully.

"You could play some lively march—say, the march in the last act of 'Carmen,' arranged for the piano, or the 'Soldiers' Chorus,' from 'Faust.'"

"Rather below my abilities, that sort of thing," said Hoskins.

"Miles below," agreed Wharton readily. "But the great thing is to get the audience interested. Why, at concerts in London, I've seen people go to sleep over the 'Pastoral Symphony,' who would have been glad to wake up and listen to something they could understand. It's no good sending the audience to sleep, is it?"

"I don't think they'd sleep through my sonata."

"Well, no; I don't think they would, if that chord you gave me just now is a specimen. The Seven Sleepers couldn't sleep through that. Rip Van Winkle would have woke up!"

"If you're joking, Wharton—"

"Not at all! If you could give us some lively prelude—"

"Oh, I dare say I can fix it!"

"Then we'll give you the very middle of the programme," said Wharton generously. "What do you say to a quarter of an hour in the very middle, to play one of your own compositions?"

The Operatic Society had already agreed that there was to be an interval of a quarter of an hour, and Bob Cherry had suggested that it would do no harm if Hoskins was playing the piano at the time. Hence Wharton's offer. Hoskins nodded assent.

"Good! I'll play 'Daffodils—a Reverie.'"

"And then you have the last item, too," said Wharton.

"Some sort of a jolly march will be all right—"

"I can play one of my own marches—"

Wharton's heart sank, but he tried to smile.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "That will be—be ripping! You'll have plenty of work for the evening—"

"Oh, that's all serene! I don't mind."

"You'll have to accompany every artiste, and play a musical accompaniment to the jiu-jitsu performance of Wun Lung and Hurree Singh."

"To such base uses may we come," said Hoskins. "But it's all serene; I don't mind! Now, if you'll bunk, I'll try to throw myself into the mood again, and get on with that reverie."

"Right you are!" said Wharton promptly. He had been afraid he would be asked to stay and listen to the reverie, and, under the circumstances, refusal would have been difficult. "Thanks awfully, old fellow!"

And as he closed the door the crash of the piano burst forth again.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

An Anonymous Letter.

"EXCUSE me, young gentlemen; this is Greyfriars, I think?"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were standing at the gates, looking out into the thick snow of the road, when a little man stopped and addressed them. He was a little, stout gentleman, with a good-humoured face, and very keen, black eyes. He wore a thick overcoat and a soft hat, and had his trousers turned up.

"Yes, sir!" said Wharton civilly.

The stranger glanced in at the gates. It was Tuesday, and it had left off snowing at last. In the Close the Remove

and the Upper Fourth were hotly engaged in a battle with snowballs, and Wharton and Bob Cherry had been thinking of joining in when the stranger came along. A fine picture the old school made, with snow gleaming on the chimneys, the roofs, the walls, on every ridge, and on the leafless branches of the old elms.

"Ah!" said the stranger. "Thank you!"

He entered the gates, and walked towards the school-house. The two Removes turned and looked after him.

"I wonder who that is?" Bob Cherry remarked. "Looks a good-tempered codger. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look there!"

The stranger had given a sudden jump. The juniors, not noticing him, or caring, anyway, were hurling snowballs right and left, and a couple had caught the stout little gentleman, at the same time, one on each side of the head.

He jumped, and sat down in the snow.

Harry Wharton ran quickly forward to help him up. But the Remove were retreating from a determined rush of the Upper Fourth, and the juniors ran over and sprawled over the little gentleman.

Half a dozen of them fell over him, and he shouted and gasped under them. Harry Wharton could not help laughing, but he dragged the juniors right and left, and allowed the stranger to rise.

"Thank you!" gasped the little man, sitting up in the snow.

"Let me help you up, sir."

"Thank you!"

The little man accepted Wharton's aid, and stood up in the snow. He was looking a little dazed and bewildered. His coat had come unfastened in the scramble, and several papers were scattered in the snow. Bob Cherry gathered them up and returned them to the stranger.

"Hope you're not hurt, sir," said Nugent, coming up.

"We didn't see you, sir. We're all sorry."

"Awfully sorry, sir," said Temple, of the Upper Fourth.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

The little gentleman grinned breathlessly.

"It's all right," he said. "It was an accident. But hold on with your snowballing until I get inside, will you?"

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir."

"Thank you very much."

And the little gentleman walked on to the house, at a somewhat accelerated pace. Bulstrode grinned, and gathered up a snowball. Harry Wharton's hand fell heavily upon his arm.

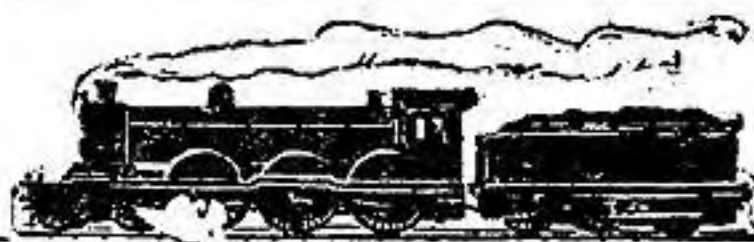
"Drop that, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully looked at him fiercely.

"Mind your own business, Wharton! I'll snowball him if I like."

"Not after we've told him we'd drop it," said Nugent.

"I'll do as I like!"



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"No, you won't," said Wharton.

Bulstrode's hand went up. Wharton grasped his wrist, and the snowball fell to the ground. The little gentleman disappeared into the house. Bulstrode scowled savagely and turned away. It was too late to bestow any of the kind attentions he had intended upon the stranger.

The juniors resumed their snowballing. Nugent uttered a sudden exclamation as he stooped for a snowball, and Wharton glanced at him. Levison, who was near at hand, looked towards him, too.

"What's the matter, Frank?"

"Look there!"

An envelope lay in the snow. It was evidently one that had been dropped by the stranger, and had been overlooked. As it lay face upwards in the bright winter sunlight, the juniors could not help reading the address as their eyes fell on it.

There was no name, only an address, and the address was "Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard, London." And the postmark was "Friardale."

Wharton's and Nugent's eyes met.

"A detective!" muttered Nugent breathlessly.

But Wharton was thinking of more than that. He pointed to the envelope.

"You know that writing," he said.

"My only hat! Levison's!"

Nugent uttered the words aloud in his amazement. Levison ran forward and picked up the envelope.

"I'll return this to him!" he exclaimed; and before either of the juniors could speak, he ran off towards the house with the envelope in his hand.

Harry Wharton and Nugent stared at one another. Wharton's face was very grim, and Nugent looked puzzled and bewildered.

"What does it mean?" he exclaimed. "What could Levison possibly want to write to the Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard for?"

"Hush!"

"But—but I don't understand."

"No need to give Levison away," said Harry Wharton quietly. "Better keep it dark; though it makes me feel pretty sick. Levison has been writing anonymous letters."

"My only aunt!"

"It's pretty plain. You saw that there wasn't any name on the envelope—only just the address. He didn't know who to write to, so he just wrote to the Criminal Investigation Department. Of course, it was bound to get into the right hands."

"But—but why—"

"I think I know. I remember something Levison was saying to me the other night," said Wharton, knitting his brows. "He is on a wild-goose chase; it's his suspiciousness again, leading him on a false scent. I can't explain, because he was speaking in confidence. I told him plainly I wouldn't have a hand in the matter, but I never dreamt then that he had gone as far as this."

"But—but what can it mean?" said Nugent mystified. "I suppose nobody at Greyfriars has committed any crime?"

"Levison may imagine that someone has."

Nugent whistled.

"But there must be some evidence, Harry, to make him take such a serious step as writing an anonymous letter to the police. There may be something in it."

Wharton shook his head.

"I don't believe it for a moment. It's a mare's nest; a case of a fellow being too clever by half, and over-reaching himself. I suppose he has worked it out to his own satisfaction that he's justified in playing this dirty trick. I never thought he would quite descend to that!"

"Well, whether he's right or wrong, it's a dirty trick to write anonymous letters," said Nugent. "He ought to be shown up to the whole Form."

Harry Wharton shook his head quickly.

"No, no; keep it dark. We don't want to disgrace the Remove."

And the captain of the Remove walked away with a clouded brow. Meanwhile, the little gentleman had been shown into Dr. Locke's study.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Gentleman from Scotland Yard.

DR. LOCKE, the Head of Greyfriars, gazed at the card in his hand, and then at the little gentleman who had been shown into his study, and then at the card again.

The good old doctor did not know what to make of it, and the little gentleman smiled at his evident amazement.

"I take it that this visit is a surprise to you, sir," he remarked. "You were far from expecting a call from Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard."

"You are quite right, sir," said the Head. "I certainly cannot imagine what your business is with me. But pray be seated."

Mr. Fix sat down.

"I will explain as briefly as possible," he said. "I am here in consequence of an anonymous letter received at my department at Scotland Yard."

The Head gave a start.

"An anonymous letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"But—but I do not understand! Your department has received an anonymous letter relating to Greyfriars College!" exclaimed the Head, with stately astonishment.

"That is the case. Under the circumstances, it was considered best to communicate with you, and that is why I am here. No need to let the matter leak out and become public, if it can be helped. That would probably be unpleasant for you, sir, and would do no one any good."

"That—that is very kind and considerate of you," said the Head. "But I still do not understand. Was the letter written from this school?"

"I think so, sir."

The Head was quite at sea. He could only stare at Mr. Fix in amazement. The detective produced a bundle of papers from his pocket, secured by an elastic band. He looked through them, and selected a letter.

"I have the envelope here," he remarked. "I cannot find it at this moment. It bears the postmark of Friardale, the village close to this school."

"And the letter?"

"You will see that it is written in a boyish hand—though somewhat firm and decided for a boy—a boy of strong character, an expert would say," remarked Mr. Fix, with a smile. "Look at the letter, sir."

The Head took the letter, adjusted his pince-nez, and read. He read it with growing astonishment and indignation in his face. It ran as follows:

"Sir,—A very serious matter is going on at Greyfriars College, which ought to be investigated by the proper authorities. It would be advisable for the police to look into the antecedents and connections of a Chinese boy in the Remove."

"A FRIEND TO JUSTICE."

"Dear—dear me!" gasped the Head. "What—what can possibly be the meaning of this? I am quite in the dark."

Mr. Fix smiled grimly.

"The usual rule with regard to an anonymous letter," he remarked, "is to set it down to spite on the part of the writer, who would gladly cause injury without running the risk of punishment. Yet there are cases in which a man may write such a letter from a mistaken sense of duty—especially a man of a mean and suspicious turn of mind. Sometimes they are worth investigating. In the present case, when perhaps the honour of a great public school is at stake—" The Head bowed. "In the present case, we thought it advisable to look into the matter, and see what it means. The writer of the letter should be discovered, and if there is anything in this charge, it can be ascertained. If there is nothing in it, you will doubtless impress upon the offender that it is wrong to write anonymous letters."

A grim look came over the Head's face.

"I shall certainly do so, Mr. Fix," he replied. "But is it certain that the letter was written from this college? You say the postmark is Friardale."

"Yes; I cannot find the envelope at this moment," said the detective, looking through his papers. "But the postmark certainly was Friardale."

"Then may it not have been written by someone in the village?"

"You see that it is a boy's hand."

"True; but there are boys in the village, many of them on hostile terms with my boys, especially with the Remove—a somewhat unruly Form."

"The—er—Remove?" Mr. Fix evidently had some uncertainty as to what the Remove might be.

"The Lower Fourth Form," explained the doctor.

"Ah, yes! I had my reasons for concluding that the letter was written here," said Mr. Fix. "It does not sound as if it were written by a village lad. Besides, it is evidently someone on ill-terms with the Chinese lad who has written it. A village boy would hardly dislike him so much, more than the others; or, taking the letter to be in earnest, would hardly have any opportunity of suspecting him to be engaged in any nefarious business."

"I suppose that is so."

"The letter seems to be written by someone intimately acquainted with this boy—by someone who has opportunities of observing him. My own view is that the writer of this

letter is in earnest, and really suspects the Chinese boy of some underhand business. Everything, therefore, points to the writer belonging to this school—probably to the same Form as the Chinese."

"True."

"What kind of a lad is this Chinese boy?"

"Wun Lung? I have not seen much of him, as I come very little into contact with the lower school; but I understand that he is a very quiet, inoffensive, harmless lad, of an unusual simplicity of nature."

Mr. Fix wrinkled his brows a little.

"Humph! Not the kind of boy, then, to make a bitter enemy?"

"I should certainly say not."

"Nor the boy to engage in any—anything nefarious?"

"Scarcely, I should say."

"The writer of this letter, then, has probably made some absurd blunder, in placing a false construction upon some innocent matter," Mr. Fix observed. "I have very little doubt that that is how it will turn out. But the first question is, to find the writer of the letter. If he is outside the school, that will be difficult; but if my theory is correct, and if he is belonging to Greyfriars, it will be easy."

The doctor nodded slowly.

"The handwriting in this letter will be an unfailing clue. You have only to submit it to your masters, who, I suppose, know the handwriting of their boys."

"Certainly."

"If the writing, then, is that of a Greyfriars boy, you will know for certain in a few minutes."

"Undoubtedly."

Mr. Fix smiled with satisfaction.

"Then I have no doubt that the matter will be cleared up satisfactorily," he said. "When it is cleared up, the letter can be destroyed, and no one but ourselves be the wiser for a very unpleasant incident."

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Fix. It would have been very—I may say inexpressibly painful to me, had it become known outside the school that a Greyfriars boy had written an anonymous letter accusing one of his school-fellows," said the Head, looking very distressed.

"I quite understand your feelings, sir. But there is no need for a syllable to be spoken on the matter outside this room. I should suggest consulting first the master of the Form to which the Chinese boy belongs—I think it is most probable that the anonymous writer is in the same Form."

"Yes, that is probably correct."

"We will make him explain his letter, and give us his grounds for this very serious accusation against a foreign lad," said Inspector Fix, with a smile. "If he has any reason to advance for the accusation, he shall advance it."

"It is impossible. I firmly believe that Wun Lung is the most harmless boy in the Lower Fourth Form."

"We shall soon ascertain. Will you send for the Form master?"

"Certainly."

Dr. Locke touched a bell, and sent a servant for Mr. Quelch. The master of the Remove, who was preparing to go in to afternoon school, came at once, considerably surprised as he was by the summons at that moment.

He entered Dr. Locke's study, and noted the Head's troubled face with some surprise.

"Mr. Quelch, this is Inspector Fix, of Scotland Yard," said the Head. Mr. Quelch bowed. "He has called about—about a letter. But stay! Kindly look at this writing, and tell me if it is that of a boy in your Form."

Mr. Quelch took the anonymous letter.

"Am I to read this, sir?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Very good."

Mr. Quelch read the anonymous letter, and his brow went very dark. The doctor watched him anxiously.

"I am hoping," he said, "that the letter was written by someone outside Greyfriars, and not by a boy belonging to this school, Mr. Quelch."

"I am afraid the hope is ill-founded then, sir."

The cloud upon Dr. Locke's face darkened.

"You know the handwriting, then, Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is that of a boy in your Form?"

"Yes."

Mr. Fix smiled slightly, as much as to hint that he had known it all along. The doctor's face was dark and distressed.

"And his name?" said the Head slowly.

"Ernest Levison!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Levison's Little Mistake.

MARJORIE!"

A trap dashed up to the gates of Greyfriars through the powdering snow, and a charming girl smiled down at the Removites in the gateway. Marjorie Hazeldene had arrived!

Harry Wharton was first out of the gateway. Bob Cherry and Hazeldene were close behind. The vehicle halted, and Harry Wharton gave Marjorie his hand to alight.

The girl gave the juniors a bright smile. The winter wind had brought a rich colour into her cheeks, and her eyes were sparkling. Her face, framed in furs, looked very beautiful.

"Jolly glad to see you, Marjorie," said Hazeldene. "You're just in time to catch us before afternoon school, too. Come in!"

"I have a bag in the trap," said Marjorie.

"I've got it," said Bob Cherry cheerily.

He had it—one end of it, and Harry Wharton had the other. Wharton laughed and let go, and Bob Cherry carried off the bag in triumph. The trap drove off, and Marjorie accompanied the juniors into the Close of Greyfriars. There was a shout from the snowballers, and several of them came racing up. Marjorie's walk up to the house was a veritable triumph. With Hazeldene on one side, and Wharton on the other, Bob Cherry and Nugent behind, Wun Lung and Hurree Singh and a dozen others all round, the laughing girl walked up to the House, and parted with the juniors at the door, and went in to see Mrs. Locke. The Removites looked at one another with great satisfaction.

"We'll have the rehearsal in Quelch's room this evening, with Hoskins punching the piano," Bob Cherry remarked. "I say, we haven't settled about who's to sing the duet with Miss Marjorie."

"Yes, we have," laughed Harry. "I sing it."

"But look here—"

"My dear chap, I've practised it with her, and there's no time to start practising an entirely new thing now, is there?"

"I—I suppose not."

Harry Wharton slapped him on the shoulder.

"It's all right, Bob, you shall turn the music."

It was time for the Remove to get in to afternoon lessons, and the Form went into the class-room. But Mr. Quelch did not come in. A prefect came along from the Sixth Form-room, and entered. It was Carberry.

"Order, you whelps!" he said amiably. "I've got to look after you for a bit. Don't make a row or you'll hear of it."

The Removites looked at one another in surprise. Mr. Quelch was very seldom absent from his class. Harry Wharton noted that Levison's place was empty, and he thought he understood.

He guessed where Levison was, and where Mr. Quelch was, and he was right. While the Remove were going through first lesson under the gentle guidance of Carberry, Levison was in the Head's study. He had been called in there by a fag, and he went with a beating heart. But he had plenty of nerve, and his face was calm and quiet as he entered.

Dr. Locke, Mr. Quelch, and Inspector Fix all fastened their eyes upon the junior as he came in. Levison met their gaze firmly.

"You sent for me, sir," he said.

"Yes, Levison," said the Head. "I wish to know whether this is your work." And he handed the anonymous letter to the junior.

The attack was too sudden for Levison to be prepared for it. His face went white as he glanced at the letter.

"You wrote that?" said the Head sternly.

"I—I—I—"

"You wrote that letter?"

It was useless to deny it. The boy had never dreamed of the swift conclusions a Scotland Yard official might come to, or of this visit to the school to clear the matter up. His scheme was falling to pieces about him, and there was nothing for it but to own up and make the best of it. After all, he had acted in good faith; his suspicions were not without grounds.

"Yes, sir," he said, as firmly as he could. "I wrote it."

"I will not speak now," said the Head, "of the meanness of the action—of the cowardice of an anonymous letter, as cowardly as a stab in the back. I shall speak to you on that subject later. Now, why did you write it?"

"I thought it was my duty to do so."

"You thought it your duty to make a cowardly attack on your Form-fellow?"

Levison did not flinch.

"I thought his conduct ought to be examined. I believe there is reason for suspecting him, and it is a matter for the police."

"You suspect Wun Lung of what?"

Levison hesitated for a moment. Put into plain, bald words, his suspicions did seem to be shadowy, yet there had been enough to convince him.

He coloured, and his eyes sought the floor.

"Better speak out," said Mr. Fix.

"Well, then, Wun Lung is engaged in something underhand. There has been talk lately of Chinese spies in England, and—and Wun Lung receives letters in cipher from someone at the Chinese Embassy."

"How do you know? What letters?"

"I should have said postcards—I have seen them."

"You have been guilty of the despicable meanness of reading someone else's correspondence!" said the Head, in scathing tones.

Levison flushed crimson.

"I—I thought that under the circumstances I should be justified."

"Silence! There could be no circumstances to justify such an action. You say you have read postcards in cipher addressed to Wun Lung at this school?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you understand the cipher?"

"No; I couldn't get on to it. I have been trying to decipher it, but I haven't succeeded yet. The police ought—"

"Then you know absolutely nothing; you base your suspicions wholly upon the fact that Wun Lung received postcards in cipher?"

"Well, I—I—"

"And probably you have made some mistake about that," said the Head. "Mr. Quelch, will you send for Wun Lung?"

The master of the Remove went to the door. Wun Lung was sent for, and the Remove watched him leave the classroom with growing amazement. The Chinese lad, who was considerably astonished himself, came to the Head's study. He looked in amazement at the serious faces of Mr. Quelch and the doctor, at the inscrutable visage of Inspector Fix, and the confused face of Levison. Whether a row was coming or not, he did not know; but his innocent face assumed a bland and insinuating smile.

"You sendee for me, sir," he said.

"Yes, Wun Lung," said the Head kindly, "I wish you to answer a question. Have you received any postcards in cipher at this college?"

The Chinese junior shook his head.

"No, Mass' Doctor!"

"You hear, Levison?"

"It's not true!" cried Levison passionately. "He received one last evening, and one the other day. He's had several lately."

The Chinese looked amazed.

"No leceivee!" he said.

"It's a lie!"

"Silence, Levison! Wun Lung, did you receive a postcard at all last evening?"

"Me leceivee from friend in London."

"Have you it about you?"

"It is here."

Wun Lung produced a postcard from one of his ample pockets. Levison caught a glimpse of it, and uttered an exclamation of triumph.

"That is it!"

Wun Lung looked at him, and looked at the postcard. Then he looked at Levison again. Then, to the surprise of everyone in the study, he went off into a shriek of laughter.

"Wun Lung—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

But the Chinese seemed unable to stop. He was simply doubled up, and shriek after shriek of uncontrollable merriment rang through the study. The postcard fell to the floor, and Inspector Fix picked it up. He glanced at it, and looked puzzled for a moment, and then a broad grin overspread his face, and he passed the card to the Head.

"Is that the cipher, Levison?" he asked.

"That's it!" said Levison excitedly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head adjusted his gold-rimmed pince-nez, and looked at the card, and Mr. Quelch looked at it at the same moment. Then irresistible smiles broke out over their faces. Levison gazed from face to face, in angry astonishment. Why did the mysterious cipher provoke nothing but amusement?

"Dear me!" said the Head, trying to become grave. "This is too utterly absurd for anything! Levison, is this the mysterious cipher?"

Levison glanced at the card to make sure. Yes, there it was—KKt—KB3, dis. Ch.

"That is it, sir!"

"Dear me! How absurd!"

"I don't see it!" almost shouted Levison. "Why is Wun Lung receiving cipher messages?"

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

"Calm yourself, Levison! I presume you do not play chess?"

"Chess," said Levison—"chess! No."

"I presume so, or you would have read this mysterious cipher without much difficulty."

Levison gasped.

"I—I—I don't understand, sir."

"Then I will explain. I suppose, Wun Lung, that you have been playing a game of chess by correspondence?"

"Me playee with friend in London," murmured the Chinese junior.

"Good! Levison, you have made an egregious blunder, and I hope to make you understand fully how absurd you have been. I will read this cipher to you. When a game of chess is played by post, it is customary for the moves to be sent on a postcard, and the abbreviations are naturally used. KKt—KB3 simply means that the king's knight moves to king's bishop's third square."

Levison's face was a study.

"The 'dis. Ch.' simply means that, by the king's knight being moved off the square it hitherto occupied, a check upon the adversary's king is discovered."

Levison did not speak.

His suspicions, his theories, had indeed recoiled upon him with a vengeance. His mysterious cipher turned out to be the ordinary abbreviations used in writing down moves at chess. If he had been acquainted with the game, he would never have fallen into the absurd blunder. His face was scarlet now, and tears of vexation started to his eyes. Punishment he did not care for, but to be made an object of ridicule stung him to the quick.

"And so the whole message—KKt—KB3, dis. Ch.," resumed the Head, "reads like this: King's knight to king's bishop's third, discovering check. Do you understand?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"I presume that Wun Lung's other postcards were on the same subject, so we need not examine them," said the Head. "Mr. Fix, I am sorry you have been given the trouble of a journey by this boy's incredible folly and ill-nature. Levison, you may go! I shall expect you immediately after school, and shall try to impress upon you that it is inadvisable to suspect your Form-fellows on shadowy evidence, and doubly inadvisable to disgrace your school by the abject meanness of writing anonymous letters."

And Levison slowly turned and left the room.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE AMATEUR COOKS."

A Grand Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Christmas Concert.

HARRY WHARTON and his chums heard the story of the mysterious cipher from Wun Lung, and they laughed over it till the walls of Study No. 1 rang. But outside No. 1 the story did not go. The chums of the Remove agreed to keep it dark; Levison had certainly been punished enough. The mare's nest he had discovered had brought as much ridicule as contempt upon him; and his visit to the Head's study after school was a still more painful affair. Levison showed a curious distaste for sitting down all that evening and the next morning.

But the approach of the Christmas concert banished the matter from the minds of the Removites. The rehearsal with Marjorie in the operatic company was a great success. Hoskins playing up nobly, and only inflicting one of his reveries upon the company when the rehearsal was over.

All the singers were in good form, and it was agreed at last that Wharton was to have the duet with Marjorie. It was conceded to the rest of the company that they should join in the repetition of the chorus, and all were more or less satisfied.

Needless to say, the Head had willingly granted the use of the hall, and when the time of the great entertainment came, the hall was crowded. Hoffmann and Meunier had accepted Wharton's invitation to give a song, and a crowd of the aliens came over to the concert.

But there was no rowing now—all was peace and goodwill, and an air of Yuletide goodfellowship reigned everywhere. Even Bulstrode was in a good temper, and agreed to be a steward for the evening.

It was expected that some effort would be required to keep order, for, besides the aliens, the Upper Fourth came en masse. Most of the Fifth and Sixth came in; and Mr. Quelch, aware of the possibilities of a riot, came in himself, with a couple of other masters.

In the presence of the great men, of course, it was impossible for any ragging to be indulged in by members of the Upper Fourth, and the aliens would have to moderate their excitability.

Front seats were provided for masters and prefects. When all was ready, Hoskins took his place at the piano, and, as Bob Cherry put it, the proceedings proceeded.

Of course, in the best regulated concert, there were certain to be small hitches. Hoskins was to give a lively march as a start, but in a fit of absent-mindedness he started playing one of his own sonatas instead, and had to be stopped. But

as the hall was full of the sound of footsteps, coughing, grunting, shifting, and the other sounds which precede a concert, nobody minded.

The first item was a duet between Miss Marjorie and Harry Wharton, and it went off with a swing. Loud was the applause, elicited as much by Marjorie's sweet face and blushes as by the singing. Then Morgan sang "Clychau Aberdyfi" in Welsh. Very few understood the words, but what did that matter? Morgan was encored, and sang "Rhyfelgyrch gwr Harlech," more familiarly known to the boys as "Men of Harlech." And it was cheered to the echo.

Then came Nugent with the "Grand March" from Tannhauser on the mouth-organ. Unfortunately, a large number of the audience seemed to regard it as a joke, and there was great laughter, which somewhat put Nugent out. But he blew on gallantly to the finish, Hoskins accompanying him on the piano—sometimes getting a little ahead and sometimes a little behind, but finishing within a few bars of him. Nugent was not encored.

Bob Cherry was next on the programme with "On the Ball." Needless to say, a football song appealed to the Greyfriars fellows more than anything else, and they willingly made allowances for any shortcomings in the singing. Harry Wharton & Co. took up the chorus, and roared it out with all the force of their lungs, and as the tune was simple and catchy, the other fellows were soon "on" to it, and they all joined in with a volume of sound that bade fair to lift the roof off.

Bob Cherry was encored again and again, and on each occasion he gave some of the extra verses, and he went off at last extremely well pleased with himself and his success.

And then came Wun Lung and Hurree Singh in a jiu-jitsu display, and then Elliott with a Scottish dialect song, and Hazeldene with a coon song, then conjuring tricks by Levison, and "Mo run geal dileas" by Ogilvy, which was as little comprehended as the "Clychau Aberdyfi," but just as much appreciated and cheered. Needless to enumerate the items of that most successful concert. Hoffmann and Meunier were cheered, too, and even Hoskins received applause for his solos, though the audience were careful—very careful—to moderate the applause, so that it should not be understood as an encore.

And at the finish Hoskins, by a happy inspiration, struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and the Operatic Company and the whole audience joined in it, and the roar of the old, familiar air closed the Christmas concert.

THE END.

Next Tuesday.A Grand School Tale of **HARRY WHARTON & Co.,**

ENTITLED:

"The Amateur Cooks,"

A Tale of the Greyfriars Christmas Pudding Competition,

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

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GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Unfortunately for Jack, however, his Cousin Leonard is attached to the 25th as second lieutenant, and, with the aid of a bullying trooper named Sligo, succeeds in getting Jack deprived of his stripes. By the death of his father (Dominic), Lieutenant Dashwood is at first prevented from accompanying the 25th to India; but he subsequently joins the troopship at Port Said, and he then hears that he has been transferred to the Ploughshires—an infantry regiment. Jack is soon reinstated favourite, and becomes once more full corporal. A frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. On their way to the scene of war the 25th are continually "sniped" by the rebels, and Tom has many exciting adventures, in one of which he becomes possessed of a ring. Sligo is bribed by Dashwood to drug Tom Howard one night while the young corporal is on picket duty. Tom falls asleep at his post and is carried off by the enemy during a skirmish. His life is spared owing to the chief, Jamra Khan's, recognition of Tom's ring, and the next night, with a fellow-captive, Sundar Singh, of the Sikhs, Tom escapes in disguise. After many adventures the two come in sight of the British camp, when Leonard Dashwood fires on them, pretending to think they are tribesmen, and Sundar Singh is killed. Tom is welcomed back by all ranks, but is told that he will be court-martialled for sleeping at his post. In the meantime, however, an engagement with the tribesmen takes place. Part of our forces climb the hills to the right of the enemy, to cut off their retreat, while the remainder advance by twos and threes along a rock-strewn causeway.

(Now go on with the story.)

Honour and Disappointment.

Someone shouted from the cliffs on the right that the enemy were escaping on the other side of the ridge, and a squadron of the Guides, under Captain Palmer, put in their spurs and dashed off in pursuit.

The squadrons having got somewhat jumbled up by reason of the badness of the road, Tom Howard found himself carried away by the impetuous gallop of the native sowars, ever eager to be where there is any fighting going forward; and finding it impossible to return to his own regiment, he rode on with them, several of the dark-skinned native troopers shouting a welcome to him in Hindustani.

Magnificent fellows are those of the Guides Cavalry, and the deeds of their gallantry in defence of our Indian Empire would fill volumes.

On the other side of the spur, Tom found himself riding through fields of high Indian corn, and hearing a British voice behind him, looked over his shoulder.

"This is a little bit of orl right," said Bill Sloggett, who had manoeuvred to follow Howard, and had succeeded beyond his wildest expectations. "Wish I could get one of those black johnnies to swap swords with me. I don't think much of these blades of ours."

Bill Sloggett was, as usual, in a murderous mood, for fighting was the very breath of his nostrils, and he gave a loud cheer as they saw a yelling mob of white-garbed Swatis and blue-clad Bunarwals tearing for their lives through the swampy ground. They were well ahead, and making for the hills, when, seeing a knot of our officers riding hard, Bill Sloggett, giving vent to an ear-splitting cat-call, soon overtook them, and was thus in time to take part in a Victoria Cross incident.

Lieutenant-Colonel Adams, of the Guides, ordered some men to dismount and open fire on the hill for which the enemy were making; but unfortunately Captain Palmer, who commanded the first squadron, did not hear the order, and continued to gallop on towards the hill, in company with Lieutenant Greaves, of the Lancashire Fusiliers, who was war correspondent for the "Times" of India.

Captain Palmer rode straight for a standard-bearer, and cut him down; but at the same moment a bullet struck his wrist, and his horse was shot, while Mr. Greaves's pony, becoming unmanageable, carried him among the enemy's swordsmen, where he was hit in the body by a bullet, and instantly fell among the terrible blades.

"Come on, Sloggett!" cried the corporal. "There is work for us over yonder!" And they rode straight at the mob of tribesmen, who were slashing the life out of the unfortunate lieutenant.

Colonel Adams and Viscount Fincastle, of the Scarlet Lancers, followed by Lieutenant McLean of the Guides and several men, set their spurs in at the same moment, and rode to the rescue.

Tom's sword flashed brightly in the sunshine, and leaping his horse into the middle of the throng, he cut left and right among the shaven pates of the Pathans, who fought with frantic fury. It was a hand to hand combat, in which officers and men fought shoulder to shoulder, and Bill Sloggett was in his element. After several minutes of sword and revolver, they forced the tribesmen back, and sent them streaming off towards the hill, Tom putting down three with as many successive strokes; and then wheeling his mare round, came back to the group of officers, who were lifting Mr. Greaves from the ground. He was terribly cut, and as Lord Fincastle picked him up, a bullet passed through his body and killed him.

Lieutenant McLean received a mortal wound, and several of the horses were bleeding; but thanks to the fire which the Guides kept up from a ziarat close by, and also from the village of Nawakili, they were able to retire, carrying the dead man and the dying with them, under a hot fire from four or five hundred of the enemy who swarmed on the hill before them.

"What's your name, corporal?" said the colonel of the Guides.

And Tom told him.

"I shall see that it is conveyed to the proper quarters," said the colonel; "and also that of your companion. Who are you, sir?"

"William Sloggett, 25th Hussars, sir," said Bill, wiping his brow with a bloodstained hand, which did not improve his appearance.

"You're a terrible fellow, and I'd rather have you on my side than against me," said the colonel, entering the names down in a notebook.

The little party took shelter in a clump of trees, the dead body of Lieutenant Greaves lying across Colonel Adams's saddle; but the gallant dash and the carbines of the dismounted Guides had kept the enemy in check, and they continued their retreat, leaving the rest to return through the rice-fields to the ridge, which General Meiklejohn had meantime captured.

A squadron of the Guides, under Brasier Creagh, continued the pursuit as far as the village of Abuch, and two squadrons of the 11th Bengal Lancers had repulsed a thousand tribesmen who had threatened the baggage camp.

Our total losses were two officers killed and two wounded,

five natives, and two camp followers, and the gate of Swat had been forced.

That night Colonel Greville sent for Tom Howard and Private Sloggett. The colonel's face was grave, and he tugged at his moustache thoughtfully for a moment before he spoke.

"Trooper Sloggett," he said, "I have had an interview with the commanding-officer of the Guides, and, from what he tells me, I am going to report your conduct to the general."

Bill Sloggett saluted, and he grinned from ear to ear. His face was still smeared with gore, and he looked a terrible fellow indeed.

"Colonel Adams has recommended you most strongly, Howard," continued the colonel, turning to our hero, "for the highest distinction a soldier can win—the Victoria Cross; but, all things considered, I feel I cannot forward the recommendation until you are clear of the charge which is hanging over you. I am sorry, Howard, as I think you know, but I must do what I believe to be my duty."

Tom gave a great gulp, and turned away, a tear furrowing the dust on his cheek as he strode off to rejoin his squadron.

The Strange Adventures which Befell Dick Vivian and his Company.

Dick Vivian sat on a charpoy, or native bedstead. He was very hot and tired, and very flushed, and his brown hair was matted with the sweat of combat, for the Plough-shires had had their chance, and done some hard fighting on the Landakai Ridge.

"I shall have something to write home at last," he was thinking to himself, when Leonard Dashwood came up; and then the smile suddenly passed from the boy's face.

"Is there anything in that bottle?" said Leonard Dashwood.

"You can look for yourself," replied Master Dick. "I have already told you twice that I don't wish to have any communication with you. You must have a hide like a rhinoceros."

Leonard scowled, and mixed himself a drink.

"I don't know whether you consider your attitude conducive to discipline and good understanding in the regiment, Vivian!" he said hotly.

"I don't know anything at all about it," retorted Dick. "All I know is that I am not compelled to associate with unrepentant cads because we both happen to hold his Majesty's commission."

Leonard glared savagely on the subaltern, and Dick, tossing his nose in the air, lit a cigarette, and looked out over the plain.

The troops were camping, and the westering sun had already begun to throw the shadow of the mountains across the causeway in the rice-fields. Both young men sat in silence as far from each other as possible in the native hut where they had taken up temporary quarters. But the silence was broken by quick footsteps approaching, and Captain Montgomery came into the hut.

"Ah, give me a peg, one of you chaps. I've got a throat like a limekiln. And then tighten your belts, and buck up, both of you. We have got to search some Buddhist ruins over there about three miles off, and the company is falling in now."

Dick swallowed the remainder of his drink, and got up at once, and in a few minutes the three officers joined the company of khaki-coloured infantry, who sprang to attention as they came up.

"Everything in order, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right! March!" said the captain; and away they went, raising a cloud of dust as they left the camp behind them, and struck out for a distant hillock, crowned by a mass of ruins, centuries old, beyond a ridge of hills which hid it from the camp.

Tom Howard, walking along over the plain in a vain endeavour to get his disappointment over, saw them go, and, shading the sun from his eyes with his hand, watched them.

"My greatest friend and my greatest enemy," he said, as he recognised the figures of Dick and Leonard.

And then the little khaki band disappeared among the tall maize, their helmets bobbing like a clump of brown dots, as Tom turned back to the cavalry camp.

Captain Montgomery pulled out his glasses, and reconnoitred the hillock. A number of jackals scurried away, and a vulture rose and flew off, with a discordant scream. The body of a dead Pathan was the only sign of humanity they could see. Filing up the path, they halted before the great gateway of the ruins, which was half monastery and half fort.

Dividing the men, they made a circuit of the walls, and then went inside, to find the place deserted. Dick and the

captain climbed to the top of the towers, which commanded a fine view of the surrounding country.

Sculptured remains there were in plenty, broken pillars littered the interior of the court, and there were large, silent rooms full of the gloom of the approaching evening.

In the archway itself hung a huge gate, and it was evident from the trampled grass that grew rankly all about that men had been there, and that recently. But if they had been, they had also gone. And bidding the company "Pile arms!" they fell out, and began to prepare their rations.

A fire of brushwood was soon burning brightly in the court within the gateway, and a sentinel passed backwards and forwards outside, while they prepared to spend the night with as much comfort as possible in their lonely quarters. Captain Montgomery posted another sentry look-out on the top of the tower which overlooked the court, and while the kettle was boiling, the officers strayed about, examining those strange relics of ancient civilisation which are to be found dotted all over the mountainous land.

Then they made a little mess for themselves in the doorway of a large room, making careful search in the sandy soil for scorpions and vipers. The men clustered round the fire, talking over the stirring events of the day. Private Johnson and a certain Corporal Simmons, wrangling loud and long as to which of the pair had killed the greatest number of Pathans on the ridge.

Dick lay back with his hands under his head, his back turned towards Leonard, who smoked a cigar gloomily, conscious of the uncomfortable restraint which his presence threw over their conversation.

As the light faded the glow of the fire grew brighter, fed by assiduous privates with armfuls of brushwood from time to time. It lit up the arch of the ancient gateway, it shone on the rifles piled just within the gate. Every now and again the sentry, pacing backwards and forwards without, crossed the pathway of light, and his bayonet gleamed as he looked regretfully inside at his more fortunate comrades.

Dick, who had glared at the fire until his eyes blinked, felt in one of the breast-pockets of his jacket, and drew out a sheet of paper and a pencil. It was a good moment to write home, with all the recollections of the fray fresh upon him, and, placing the paper upon his knee, he began to scribble.

Leonard Dashwood, looking out of the corner of his eye, saw what the lad was doing, and gnawed his lip. He had no one to write to—no one who cared a jot about his welfare, or the reverse.

It was very different with Dick Vivian. There were the governor and the mater at home to look anxiously for every mail, and to whom the evening papers brought terrible thrills of anxiety as the varied fortunes of the campaign were flashed across the wires.

There was Muriel, too, and all the rest of the good folk at Vivian Towers, to each of whom every one of Dick's happenings meant so much.

"I wish you could peep over my shoulder," he wrote, "and see where I am writing. It is a weird ruin of a place on a hill, jolly old, and full of bats and creeping things, and just in front of me the men are sitting round the fire singing. Jack's cousin—the one who did him out of his inheritance—is two paces away on my right flank, looking the picture of bad temper. He and I don't speak now—at least, he tries to, but I cut him dead. He's played Jack up shamefully. But I'll tell you all about it when I come home."

"We had a ripping fight to-day! Our chaps and the Sikhs and the Punjaubees went up a hill like the side of a house, and when we got to the top we bayoneted the niggers like flies. I suppose the mater will shudder, but I cut down two myself, and shot a third. He was an old chap with a shaved head, and very nearly killed my sergeant. He had a very curious wooden rosary round his neck, which I collared, and am going to send home to Muriel."

And so he rambled on, filling his letter with disjointed, boyish sentences, but saying a great deal about Jack Dashwood.

"They think no end of him in the 25th," he wrote, "and his colonel knows who he is, but, being an awful brick, he doesn't say a word about it. Jack had the rummiest adventure the other day. He was carried off into the hills, and made great pals with some native chief or other, whom he afterwards pelted with rocks, and sent the whole outfit scotching down a mountain-side steeper than the switchback at Earl's Court. I'd have given anything to have seen it—a huge cliff, weighing about a ton, bounding down the track, and the Pathans running like blazes! The worst of it is that—"

Dick's letter broke off abruptly, and the reason of it was this. Through the long grass at the foot of the hill a horde of dark-skinned men had been creeping silently. The night had descended, and the only light was from the twinkling

stars overhead and the red glow of the fire inside the Buddhist courtyard.

The sentry had been relieved, and Captain Montgomery, having returned to find Dick busy, had sat himself down with his back against the doorway of the room, occupied with his own thoughts, which were principally of Mrs. Montgomery and his little daughter thousands of miles away. The men had dozed off, and the fire was sinking low.

Dick, trying to formulate a sentence that would fitly describe the cloud which had fallen upon Tom Howard in that matter of sleeping at his post, glanced up from his paper and out through the archway on the twinkling stars.

"Heavens! Look yonder!" he yelled, springing to his feet. "Here are the Pathans on top of us!"

Montgomery and Leonard Dashwood sprang up, drawing their revolvers, and the silence that had lain over the fort an instant before was suddenly broken by a babel of terrific yells.

What had happened to the sentry was afterwards discovered, when they found him terribly mutilated in the grass outside. What happened then, was a sudden rush of wild figures, who pounced upon the piled arms and carried them off through the archway before the startled officers could fire a shot.

Then the great door, which to all appearances had revolved on its hinges for the last time years before, was swung to from the outside, and the little band of Ploughshares found themselves in a trap.

Fiendish shrieks and triumphant laughter rang in the darkness outside; and loudest of all, although they did not know it, was the voice of Jamra Khan, delighted at the success of his strategy.

A Warm Corner—How Tom Howard again won his Right to the Victoria Cross.

The horses of the 25th Hussars had just returned from watering the next morning, when word was passed for "B" Squadron to be in the saddle in a quarter of an hour, carrying two days' rations.

"What's up now, Clavering?" said Tom, pulling his girths tighter.

"Our brigadier is going up the valley to receive the submission of some of these khan fellows," said the sergeant, "and we are going with him as escort."

Presently Sir Ponsonby Smithers, a political agent, and several officers of the staff appeared, well-mounted, and followed by a troop of Bengal Lancers, and the Hussars trotted off in their wake. It was a magnificent morning, the sky intensely blue overhead, and the sun beating fiercely down on the sandy valley.

It was traversed by a broad watercourse, down the centre of which a tiny stream now trickled, which in winter was a roaring river, bordered by rice-fields artificially irrigated, and the general and his escort jingled along under groves of chenar-trees—the Indian plane.

The Pathans, subdued by our advance, had signified their intention of giving in, and there were half a dozen insurgent chiefs to visit and make terms with. About two miles out they came to the first fort—a large enclosure some hundred yards square, with walls twenty feet high, made of stones roughly plastered together with mud, and here and there lined with courses of timber. A square tower stood at each corner, loopholed for musketry, and from the gate as they approached rode forth the khan.

He was a tall, good-looking man, with an aquiline nose, and he rode a fine pony. He was better dressed than any of the rebels Tom had hitherto seen, wearing a bright green waistcoat gay with lace and flowing sleeves of white linen. His shaven head was adorned by an embroidered skull-cap, and a curved sabre, the scabbard of which was set with precious stones, hung at his side.

Riding with all the dash of an accomplished horseman, he reined in, salaamed, and leaped to the ground, offering his sword to Sir Ponsonby, who told him to get on his horse again and follow them. Twenty or thirty of his followers, armed with shields and swords, clustered about the gate; and Sir Ponsonby Smithers, who was well acquainted with all the thousand dialects of India, opened the conversation in Pushtu.

"You have broken your faith," said Sir Ponsonby, staring at them. "What have you to say?"

"There was war, and we fought," replied the Khan, drawing himself up. "It is over now, and we desire to live at peace. What more would you have?"

The Oriental mind is peculiar. They accepted their beating in good part, and could not understand why we did not do the same. A fight was a fight: they were always fighting.

"You have one hundred rifles," said Sir Ponsonby. "They must be handed over to us, and you shall go unpunished."

The Khan drew a silver-mounted pistol from his belt, and presented it to the general.

"By the beard of Mahomet, this is the only firearm we possess!" he said. "You are at liberty to search my house."

NEXT
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ONE
HALFPENNY.

Of course, Sir Ponsonby knew the man was lying, but that was another matter. He gave an order for the escort to dismount, and, passing into the inner courtyard, every corner of the place was ransacked, without success. The Lancers, accustomed to search for arms, prodded and peered in every likely place; but they found nothing.

"It is even as I told you," said the khan, with a smile.

Another and another fort were visited, and it was noticed that there were no women or children about. They had evidently been sent to a safe place, and had the escort been less in number, this story might have ended very differently.

The fourth fort, a few miles further up the valley, was built on the same lines, but was a place of more importance, and over a hundred tribesmen mustered to meet the newcomers. Here, as in others, no arms were discovered. It was approaching noon, and when the khan invited the officers to break bread with him, they were nothing loth, and went into the courtyard, where two huge chenar trees grew, and where a very excellent meal was served for the unwelcome visitors.

"Loosen your girths, but don't off-saddle, men," said Sir Ponsonby. "Be on the alert, but I don't expect any treachery here."

And then the officers went in, and sat under the shade of the chenar trees, to partake of the hospitality of the rebel chief.

Tom and Clavering sat down in the shadow of the gateway, looking at the strange scene, the massive walls of the fortified dwellings, the rows of picketed horses, the pennants of the Bengal Lancers, hanging limp and motionless in the sun-glare, and within, a mixture of European and Asiatic, in the figures of the officers and the barbaric splendour of the chief.

Mr. Blennerhasset lay at full length on a charpoy, his legs stretched straight before him, feeling all the better for the meal of rice which he had just consumed; while the general and the khan conversed in that strange Pushtu tongue. Fruit and chupatties were handed round, and the khan's servants carried food to the escort, the Sikhs alone refusing to eat, as, according to their creed, they could not touch anything prepared by the hands of a Mussulman. A guard was kept in the gateway, and sentries were posted, for it was not safe to trust implicitly to the enemy, who were capable of every treachery that the Asiatic mind could suggest.

Like the first khan they had visited, their host wore a magnificent sabre; and Captain Vincent, having expressed a desire to examine it, the khan passed it over to him, at the same time declaring that he had others far finer and of richer workmanship.

"Tarry a little, and I will show you a sight to gladden the eyes," said the chief, rising, and going into the house.

They waited a little while, but he did not reappear, and Sir Ponsonby Smithers set down the sherbet he had been drinking, and exchanged glances with the political agent. They looked round, and saw that the native servants had also withdrawn.

"Fancy spending your life in this place, Jim!" said Tom Howard, crushing a black scorpion with his spurred heel. "Bitterly cold in winter, blazing all the summer-time, as it is to-day, always armed at all moments, and your time taken up with either riding out to raid a weaker neighbour, or resisting the attack of one that is stronger than yourself."

Looking across the courtyard, they noticed that the political agent had unfastened his revolver-case, and his eyes were fixed on the door through which the khan had passed. He leaned over the table and whispered something to Sir Ponsonby Smithers, who nodded his head and rose.

"I am afraid you will have to wait, Vincent, and look at these magnificent specimens of Oriental workmanship some other time. Pass the word for the escort to tighten girths. I think we will move on, and pay a visit to the next man on the list," he said.

But it was one thing to come into the courtyard of a Pathan chieftain, and it was another to get out. The words had scarcely passed Sir Ponsonby's lips, when a loud report echoed through the place, and they saw the cunning face of the khan at an upper window, through which he had just fired, narrowly missing the general himself, and scattering a dishful of fruit right and left across the table.

All the party started to their feet, and the men rushed to their horses, while the Bengal Lancers muttered among themselves, knowing what it meant. While the little party had been lunching in the shadow of the chenar trees, through a back postern in the fort man after man had been admitted singly, and now they came with drawn swords into the courtyard, shouting their war-cry. Mr. Blennerhasset jerked out his six shooter, and sent a shot through the window of

the room where the khan had been seen, and matters began to look very serious.

"To your horses!" cried the general. "We must not be shut up in here!"

But the Pathans now blocked up the gateway, and isolated the general from the protection of his escort.

"This won't do," said Tom, in a whisper to Clavering, beckoning several men up at the same time. "We must break in and get the general out."

"And the best way," said Clavering, "is to do it from the saddle." And, running to the nearest troop-horse, he mounted, and setting his spurs in, rode straight for the gateway.

The Pathans hewed at him as he passed, but his mare carried all before her, and he was soon in the centre of the court, from whence the crack of revolvers was now heard. Tom gave a shrill whistle, and his mare, answering to her call, broke loose from the picket rope, and came trotting towards him. Tom twined his fingers in her mane, and sprang into the saddle without using the stirrups; and then, plucking out his sword, dashed after Clavering.

The Pathans heard him coming, and turned to meet him, and there was a great whirl of keen blades, that seemed to fill the archway from side to side.

"If we can't get through we must go over, old lady," said Tom, through his set teeth. And, with a pull of the rein and a set of the spur, the gallant animal leaped clean over the heads of the mob, Tom bending low as he went, and delivering a great semi-circular sweep of his sabre which swept off two or three turbans. A bullet from one of the windows which overlooked the courtyard passed through his helmet.

Mr. Blennerhasset, who had emptied all the chambers of his revolver, and who had not time to reload, seized the table with both hands. He was a very powerful young man, and it would have done Bill Sloggett good to see the way he mowed down four or five Pathans, before the table broke under his grasp, and fell into a dozen pieces.

Sir Ponsonby Smithers, who had not drawn a sword in earnest for twenty years, had unsheathed his blade. It was the same weapon he had carried during the Mutiny—his father's sword, as a matter of fact—and Sir Ponsonby would as soon thought of going into action without it dangling at his side as he would of trying to fly.

"Back, you hounds!" he shouted, running a lean, savage-looking tribesman through the chest. "We must get into yonder angle of the courtyard, gentlemen, until the escort comes to our rescue."

And recognising the wisdom of his words, the little knot of officers fought their way to the other side of the oblong space, where they were protected to some extent, although full fifty of the tribesmen followed them, howling like dogs, and pressing them hard.

That was the sight that met the eyes of Tom Howard as he leapt across the throng that barred the gateway—six British officers penned up in a corner, confronted by a waving mass of arms and tulwars, and shaven heads crowned by little skull caps, all howling and raging and hewing at the six, who stood side by side, endeavouring to keep them at arm's length.

Captain Vincent had his revolver in his left hand, and had just shot two Pathans, when the advent of Tom and the sergeant caused a momentary diversion.

"By gad, look at that!" said Sir Ponsonby Smithers, as the figure of our hero bounded up in the centre of the square. "I have been a pretty fair man at the timber in my time, but that was a fine leap!"

Some of the throng turned round to attack the two non-commissioned officers, while those at the entrance of the court made what haste they could to close the door. Nor was this all, for from the windows and top of the towers more of the tribe were now firing down, somewhat regardless as to whether they hit friend or foe.

"Six rifles that arch liar produced!" said Sir Ponsonby Smithers, parrying a tulwar slash, and cutting down his man. "We will burn the place about his ears for this treachery, if we ever get out alive. What the dickens is that escort doing?"

A terrific volley answered his words. The Pathans, finding themselves unable to close the gates in time, presented their rifles, and all let go at once, and when the roll was called that night there were six men of the 25th Hussars who did not answer to their names, and three sowars of the Bengal Lancers.

There was a momentary pause. The escort fell back, and opened fire with their carbines; but several of them aimed high, the bullets traversing the court, one of them piercing Tom's helmet an inch above his head.

"This won't do, Clavering," he said. "There must be a back way somewhere. I am going to take our chaps round."

Clavering made no reply. He was very busy with three

savage mountaineers, who were all over him, and Tom, with one glance at the densely crowded gate, again set spurs to his mare, gave a loud whoop, and for the second time flew over their heads like a bird, regardless of the fire of his own men.

One bullet struck his stirrup iron, another wounded him in the shoulder, but he was outside in a trice, and whirling his mare round out of the line of fire, reined her up on her haunches.

"If there is anyone who can speak Hindustani, let him tell those Lancer chaps to go round to the back of this place. There must be a door through which these fiends came in. You other fellows follow me. We have got to rush this gate, or the general and the other officers will all be killed. There are over a hundred fellows in the courtyard. That's right, Sloggett! Mount, you chaps, and follow me!"

And, turning the mare round, he set himself at the head of the first dozen that gained their saddles, and bending down low, rode straight into the archway again.

The thunder of the hoofs and the irresistible rush of the men behind him told on the mountaineers, and they shrank back to either side. In rushed the corporal, followed by a score of the 25th and several sowars of the Bengal Lancers; and though the Pathans smote at them from each side as they came in, Tom got through safely, with Sloggett at his heels.

"This is the place for me!" said Bill Sloggett. And he said afterwards that he had never had such a time in his life.

The officers in the corner raised a shout of welcome as the rescue party dashed in like a thunderbolt, and then there was a wild ride round and round the courtyard, prodding and hacking, and hewing and cutting, until the whole place was like a shambles.

Above the clamour came a distant shout. It was the Bengal Lancers, who had found a postern gate at the other end of the court, and bending their turbaned heads low, they dashed into the inner courtyard in time to intercept the treacherous khan, who, from his point of vantage on the tower top, had seen what was going forward, and decided to fly while there was yet time.

He had his foot in his stirrup, when the dark-skinned Lancers rode in one after another, and, with a yell of rage, the rascal ran back into the house. He was not alone in his desire for flight, for many of the men in the outer court had decided that the game was up, and meeting him in the doorway as he was about to ascend the stairs that led to the wall, he was forced literally into the arms of the Lancers, one of whom transfixed him.

Such things do not last long, and in sixty seconds from the time Tom Howard had headed the rush, the Pathans were flying round the courtyard like sheep, vainly endeavouring to get out.

"That'll do, boys!" cried the general. "Let them alone now. We've killed enough. By gad, the place is strewn with 'em!"

"Look out, sir!" shouted Tom. And, lying down on his mare's neck, he made a swift thrust at a wounded Pathan, who, unseen by the general, had raised his tulwar, and in another moment would have slain him.

The Pathan rolled back, grasping at the air; and Captain Vincent, who had rushed forward at the same moment, said to Sir Ponsonby:

"You were never nearer death in your life, sir; and I know you've been near it a good many times!"

Sir Ponsonby regarded the dead Pathan with a grim smile, and his eye glittered as it fell upon the corporal. Tom had recovered his seat, and now sat looking round from side to side, seeing that his work was done, and the few tribesmen who remained alone were surrendering to the excited officers.

Several times had Sir Ponsonby to repeat his order before the slaughter ceased, and even then Bill Sloggett was not satisfied.

"I have chased this little terror three times round this place," said Bill, "and couldn't get near enough to 'ave a whack at 'im! 'Wot's the good of lettin' 'em go when you 'ave a chance like this 'ere?"

And Bill Sloggett sheathed his sword with great reluctance, his opinion of Sir Ponsonby Smithers falling considerably.

"Hot work, gentlemen—hot work!" said Sir Ponsonby, taking off his helmet. "Give me your hand, corporal, and accept my hearty thanks for your assistance! You saved the situation, my boy; and if Sir Bindon Blood doesn't get the cross for you, I will know the reason why!"

Tom knew he had done a good thing, but in the middle of it all, at the general's words, his heart sank. He had slept at his post, and that mystery yet remained to be cleared.

The Trapped Company.

Meanwhile, ten miles off, on the other side of a range of hills, an exciting scene was taking place in and around the ruins of the Buddhist monastery.

"Well, I'm jiggered," said Dick Vivian, as he realised the situation; "we're in a dickens of a fix, Montgomery!"

And leaping across the embers of the fire, Dick cast a quick glance at the spot where the arms had been piled. One stack remained, and one Lee-Metford lay on the ground—dropped in the Pathans' haste. These—the men's bayonets, the swords of the three officers, and their revolvers—constituted all the weapons the whole company had to depend on.

"Fall in, men!" cried Captain Montgomery. "We're in a bit of a mess, and I take full responsibility! One sentry was not enough, but that matter we must settle afterwards—if there is any afterwards!" he thought to himself.

Montgomery was a quick-witted, excellent soldier, full of practical commonsense, and the first thing he did was to look at the door.

A massive iron loop, fastened on to the stout timbers, corresponded to a socket cut in the stone of the wall, and among the grass lay a wooden bar, which had evidently been used to secure the door from the inside.

"Give me a hand, sergeant," said the captain, stooping and picking up the bar, which was of great weight. "If we can't get out, at least the beggars sha'n't get in until we're ready for 'em!"

And slipping the pole through the loop and into the socket, they successfully barred all entry from the outside.

"Distribute those rifles among the men who can use them best, sergeant! I'm going up on to the roof to have a look round!"

And running off, he mounted the ancient stone stairway, three steps at a time, closely followed by Dick Vivian. The roof was flat, surrounded by a parapet, and, creeping cautiously on their hands and knees, the captain and the subaltern peeped over at the enemy beneath them.

"How many do you make, Dick?" asked the captain, drawing his head back after a moment and whispering.

"Something close on a hundred, I should say, captain," said the lieutenant.

"Yes, I make it about that. Now what the dickens are we to do? Here we are, shut up in this hole, with two days' rations and no water that I know of, and nearly all our arms swiped under our very noses! By gad, I shall get broke over this!"

"Keep your pecker up, old man; we will do something!" said Dick, with all the inconsequence of a British youngster. "Let's try their trick, by way of a start, and drop some of those bricks on them. You stop here, and I'll bring up half the company."

"It's not a bad notion," said the captain; "go on!"

And Dick hustled down into the courtyard, and gave his instructions to the sergeant.

"What's Montgomery going to do, Vivian?" said Leonard Dashwood. "This is no time to play the goat, youngster!"

"You had better come and see for yourself," said Dick abruptly. And he led the way at top speed to the roof again.

All about were fragments of hewn stone, and silently collecting them—keeping well back out of sight the while—the twenty men stood, a short stride from the parapet, each posing a weighty missile in both hands.

"They are immediately underneath, hanging about round the gate," whispered the captain. "Don't pitch out too far; just drop them over. Now's your time. Go!"

And stepping forward as one man, they launched the death-dealing shower into the darkness.

For the remaining period of his existence Jamra Khan walked with a bad limp, for one of the missiles crushed his left foot to a pulp. As to the rest, the effect was indescribable. The mob of excited fanatics fled away down the slope, leaving a writhing mass of humanity before the gateway. Fully forty of the tribesmen never moved again, or else dragged themselves with howls of agony along the base of the wall.

It was a brilliant suggestion. The only pity was that it could not be repeated. And as the fugitives paused in their flight and fired wildly at the top of the ruin, the captain gave the word to take cover; and they all crouched down behind the parapet, wondering what they should do next.

For two hours the Pathans at the base of the hill kept up a dropping fire, and bullets fell in all directions inside the courtyard, some pattering on the masonry of the parapet.

Then the firing ceased, Jamra Khan having suddenly reflected that, if he made too much noise, reinforcements might come from the British camp in the next valley; and so the wily Pathan changed his tactics.

All his wounded had now crawled away—some of them could be heard moaning piteously—and nothing remained in front of the gateway but a heap of dead. That gate the enemy now decided to force. British Tommies, armed only with their short bayonets, would be no match for his swords-

NEXT
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
HALFPENNY.

men; and Jamra Khan's eyes sparkled wickedly as he pictured the slaughter they would make behind the doorway.

Dick Vivian had taken off his helmet and raised his head above the parapet, and he it was who first detected the enemy's plans.

"I say, Montgomery," whispered Dick, "there's something going on down yonder. I bet you anything they're going to try and rush us!"

"I believe you're right, young'un," said the captain. "But two can play at that game. Down on your hands and knees, lad; we must get below."

And, carefully concealing all visible sign of their progress, they gained the head of the stone stair and scrambled down into the courtyard.

Montgomery had previously ascertained that the huge door had been loopholed for musketry—possibly the ruin had been the scene of more than one fierce fight among the hillsmen—and now the captain posted his six rifles in a position that commanded the approach to the gates; while Dick and Leonard Dashwood each stationed himself at a loophole of his own, revolver in hand, and waited. To prevent the little garrison getting out, the tribesmen had placed a heavy beam against the outside of the door, embedding its lower end in a heap of stones.

And now, as our friends watched through the lower slits in the planking, they saw silent figures creep up and remove the stones carefully. It was very dark inside the arch, but against the skyline they could make out the forms of the enemy, and watched them remove the beam noiselessly and lay it on the ground. Then half a dozen of them stole forward, and behind them the starlight glittered on the forest of expectant blades.

Captain Montgomery smiled to himself.

"Fearful sell for the beggars when they find we've fastened it on the inside," he whispered in Dick's ear. "Don't fire till I whistle, then let go for all you're worth. You'll have a target as big as a haystack right under your very nose."

*Please write to the Editor and
tell him what you think of this
number.*

A postcard will do!

The six men who had been told off for the work paused a moment, and there was dead silence within the fort. Then the leader of them waved his hand and stepped forward. They grasped the door, and braced their muscles with a mighty effort.

"Hiya!" cried the leader.

And he and his comrades "hiyaed" and hauled like men possessed, but the door did not move.

"Fools, and sons of fools," cried Jamra Khan, limping forward, every step he took causing him intense agony, "your muscles are shrivelled and your bones are dried!"

And the swordsmen, who had been waiting, flung themselves on the door and tore at it with all their strength.

Captain Montgomery whistled. Six rifles and three revolvers crashed out, and the revolvers went on viciously. At such a range not a bullet missed, and the cry of baffled rage that rose from the tribesmen rolled far across the valley, and was thrown back again by the echo of the hills. The bar on the inside of the door held stoutly, and once more the rifles went off as one.

In vain did the furious Pathans smite the planking with their swords; to no purpose did Jamra Khan curse and howl, and call upon the prophet and everything else he could lay his tongue to. Derisive laughter and a hearty British cheer answered him from within the fort, and there was nothing for it but to beat a hasty retreat round the angles of the gateway, leaving more than twenty of their number behind them.

Truly the fortunes of Jamra Khan were not in the ascendant. And, tearing his beard in impotent rage, he seated himself on a slope of the hill and threw dust over his head. Then there came to his side his young brother, who acted in some sort of way as his lieutenant, and, bending down, he whispered into the ear of Jamra Khan. The chief's lamentations ceased suddenly, and he let his beard alone, and over his dark face passed a cruel grin of diabolical meaning.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE AMATEUR COOKS."

A Grand Long, Complete School Tale
of Harry Wharton & Co.

How Jamra Khan Found the Ploughshires were Difficult Nuts to Crack.

It was the darkest hour that precedes the dawn, and after a long pause, broken only by the moaning of the wind among the deserted ruins, and an occasional gasp from the outside of the doorway, which made men look at each other and think things, Captain Montgomery had returned to the top of the wall, but though he had remarkable sight, and searched the ground in all directions, not a sign of the enemy could he discover. The Pathans had gone, there was no doubt about it. They had had enough, and wisely deemed discretion the better part of valour.

"We must stay here until daylight," said the captain, coming into the courtyard again. "We may have a rough time even then. My orders are to stop here till morning. By Jove, I'd give something for a drink!"

"Do you think we could possibly find any water in this place, sir?" said the sergeant, coming up. "Some of the men are in a terrible state, and there's not a drop left in their canteens."

"There's always a well somewhere about these places. We'll hunt it up, sergeant," said the captain. "Has anybody got a light?"

"I've got a piece of candle in my haversack, sir."

"The very thing!" said Montgomery.

And, striking a wax-match, he lit it, and shielded the flame in the hollow of his hand, for there was a strong breeze blowing. Someone else produced another piece of candle. And the captain taking one, and Dick Vivian the other, they started off on their quest, followed by the sergeant and a couple of privates. A circuit of the courtyard produced nothing.

"What about that flight of stone steps, Montgomery, that we spotted when we first came here—the one we decided must go down into the vaults? Let us try that."

"Right you are! If I remember, it was in that low-pitched stone chamber with the pillars."

And the little party passed into the silent gloom of the ancient temple.

They stopped suddenly. A peculiar rushing sound fell upon their ears, and the candle dropped from Dick's hand as something struck it.

"It's only the bats, sir," said the sergeant, picking the candle up before it was extinguished.

The air was filled with a whirring mass of wings and a prodigious squeaking. Bats of all sizes and many colours flew past them in a never-ending cloud. It must have been ages since a ray of light had penetrated the place. They stood waving their hands above their heads until the mysterious denizens had all departed, and after that they looked very carefully on the ground; the flight of the bats suggesting the possibility of snakes and other creeping things.

At the end of the chamber, which was of a great size, they reached the head of the stone steps, and, holding the revolver in his right hand, for precaution's sake, Montgomery led the way. A stifling atmosphere filled the place, and their footsteps echoed with an eerie sound. Rock-hewn vaults led away on either side, and prehistoric figures, carved with marvellous skill, were revealed by the flickering light of the candles.

"This place is worth exploring under different conditions," said Montgomery; "but our object just now is water. Hallo! That was a near thing!"

And he flung himself back. Dick caught him by the waistbelt. The captain had almost stepped over the edge

of an immense tank. They had found what they sought, and, bending down, they saw their own reflections mirrored in a black pool of an unknown depth. The captain put his revolver back in his case, and examined the water in the hollow of his hand.

"Cold as ice," he said, "and decidedly drinkable. It must be fed by a spring, and, from the way the steps are worn here, it was evidently used by the ancient dwellers of this place."

They knelt down and drank greedily, and, filling their water-bottles, sent the two privates back with a candle for the canteens of the rest of the company.

Then the three men stood there, gazing about them, and looking at each other, strangely out of place among these remains of a mighty civilisation, of which we know little. There was not a sound to be heard. The candle shed its uncertain light in a puny circle, and behind that their eyes could not penetrate the unfathomable blackness.

They did not know—and it was well they did not—that barely fifty paces away the eyes of Jamra Khan and fifty of his tribe were watching them.

Presently the heavy tramp and the voices of the water-party echoed through the vaults, and the glimmer of the candle approached. The canteens were soon filled, and they all returned, a strange awe silencing them as they looked from side to side, and marvelled at the silent vastness of it all.

"The men can sleep, sergeant, if they like," said the captain. "We will post a sentry at the gateway, as a matter of form, although nothing but a field-gun can force that door from the outside."

And Private Johnson was told off for the duty, and began to pace to and fro, making a little track in the grass that grew luxuriantly all over the courtyard. But though the men lay down, few of them felt inclined for slumber. The incidents of the night had been too exciting, and they talked among themselves in low voices, and there was a little glow of cigarette-ends among the groups.

"Let's go up and have another look round," said the captain.

And he and Dick mounted to the roof again; Dashwood following a few yards behind them. They had hardly spoken to him the whole time, but he kept near them for company's sake.

Silently the morning came. It was the favourite hour of the Pathan onslaught; but Jamra Khan, misled by the stygian gloom of the vaults, still lingered. A band of pale light began to show beyond the eastern peaks, and Montgomery rose from his seat on the parapet and stretched his arms out with a yawn of weariness.

"We will make a move presently. I am getting sick of this," he said. "To tell you the truth, I sha'n't be sorry to be back in camp. I suppose there'll be a deuce of a bother about those rifles, but it can't be helped. They must have murdered that poor beggar of a sentry."

And he looked down on the carnage below, which was becoming dimly visible in the growing light.

Dick shivered, for it was very cold, and would be until the sun rose, and he took a turn or two along the parapet. Private Johnson was still pacing backwards and forwards inside the gate, and the sergeant sat with his back against the wall, nursing his knees, his mind occupied with those multitudinous things that sergeants think about. He rose quickly as the officer came down the stairway.

"You can get them on their feet, sergeant," said Captain Montgomery. "I think we will move now."

(Another long instalment next week.)

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THE EDITOR.

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