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By
FRANK
RICHARDS



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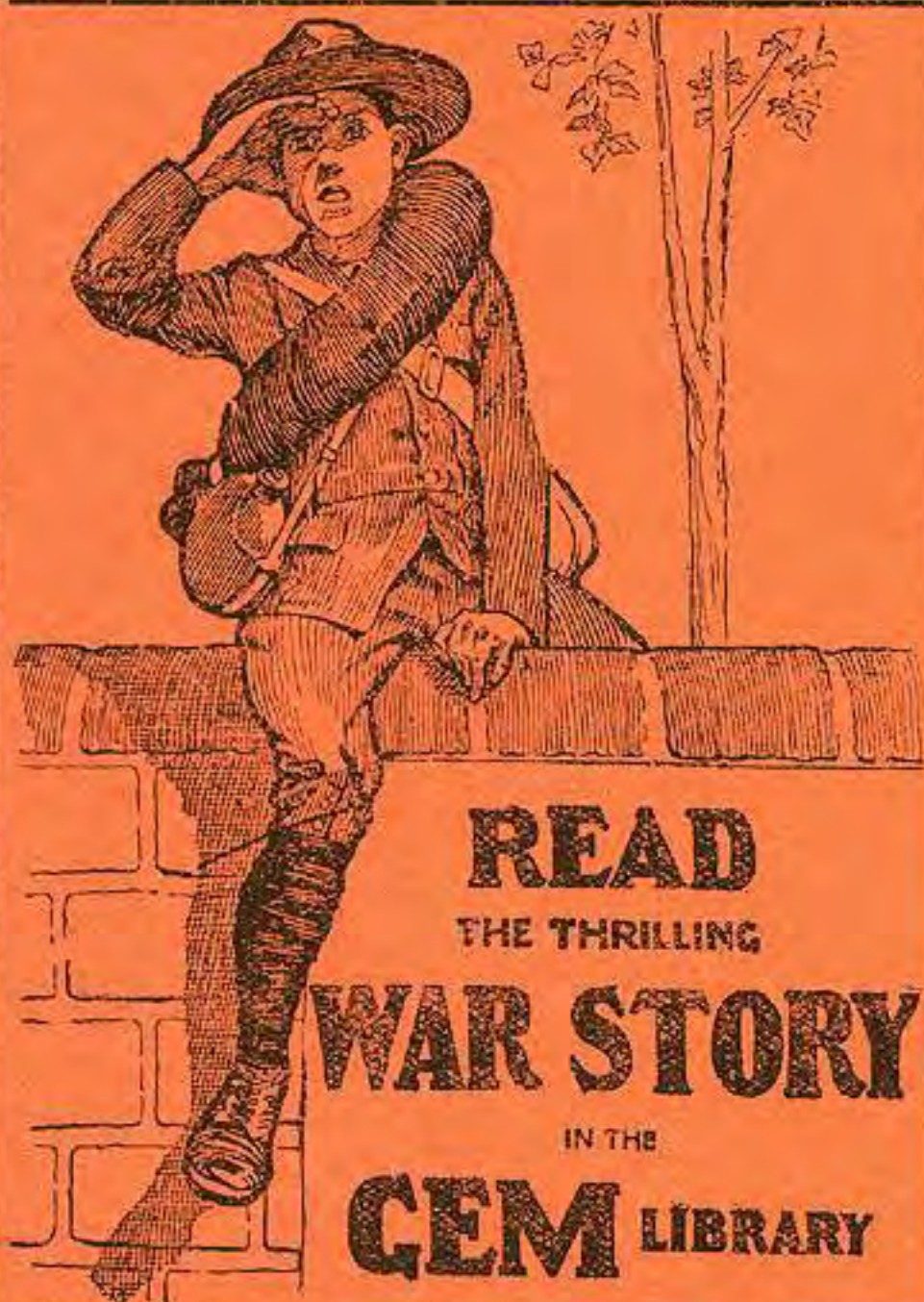


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Complete School Tale
of the
Boys of Greyfriars.

By

FRANK
RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Suffragette at Greyfriars!

"BUT it's a question of justice!"
"Exactly. But—"
"Simply justice!"
"Yes, but—"
"Taxation without representation
is tyranny—"
"Certainly, but—"
"Do we ask for more than our
rights?"
"Certainly not, but—"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured
Bob Cherry softly. "What's the
row? Our respected Head weareth
a worried look."
"The worriedfulness is terrific,"
purred Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.
"And the charming English miss is
also terrifically excited."



Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh were crossing the Close at Greyfriars, when the voices fell upon their ears, and they glanced in the direction of the doctor's house.

Dr. Locke was standing at the foot of the steps, talking with a very charming young lady, who appeared to be greatly in earnest, while the Head was trying to dismiss the subject—unsuccessfully.

The chums of the Remove knew the girl at a glance—it was Miss Locke, the Head's youngest sister, who was a graduate of Girton, and who had visited Greyfriars several times before; on one occasion taking charge of the Remove during the illness of the Form-master, Mr. Quelch.

She was fully qualified for the post, and during her short authority as Form-mistress the juniors had learned to like her and to respect her very highly.

At first, certainly, they had not taken kindly to "petticoat government," but Miss Locke had won them over by kindness, firmness, and feminine tact, and they had almost all been sorry when she left.

Miss Locke was certainly looking more animated now than the juniors had ever seen her before, and her voice was at a slightly higher pitch than usual. The deprecating looks of the doctor showed that he was aware of it.

The juniors could not help catching the words as they passed; and in fact there were several other fellows within hearing, who were listening with great interest and with covert grins.

Bulstrode and Skinner and Stott of the Remove, for instance, were lounging under the big elm near the doctor's door, winking at one another as they listened. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, stood in a group not far away, grinning, as Bob Cherry expressed it, "like a set of Cheshire cats."

The Head was only too painfully conscious of the spectators, but Miss Locke seemed to have completely forgotten that she was talking in the Close, and that her voice reached other ears besides the doctor's.

"I repeat," she said warmly, "if we were asking for more than our rights, tell me in what way? Taxation without representation is tyranny. Is it not?"

"I quite agree with you, dear, but—"

"Why did our American colonies revolt?" demanded Miss Locke, fixing the Head with her eye, and propounding the question suddenly, as if it were a conundrum.

"I—I do not remember for the moment," stammered the doctor.

"I will tell you," said Miss Locke sternly. "They revolted because the English Government taxed them without allowing them representation. That, gentlemen, is why the American Colonies revolted, and this country lost the empire of half a continent. That, gentlemen—I mean, my dear brother—that is what is happening in England to-day. You are taxing without allowing representation to the persons taxed. Can you wonder that it is leading to a revolt of the taxed persons?"

"Certainly," said the Head. "I mean, certainly not. That is to say you are quite right. Only—"

"No, I will not allow you to defend tyranny," said Miss Locke firmly. "Every side should be allowed to fully and freely state its opinions."

"I think—"

"You are taxing the women, but you are not allowing them votes. What does that amount to?"

"Dear me! I really do not know."

"It amounts to tyranny. It is a tyranny to tax unrepresented persons. It is tyranny to keep people silent who wish to state their opinions."

"I think——"

"This country boasts freedom of speech. Yet upon this very subject people who wish to speak are rudely interrupted and forced to hold their tongues."

"I think——"

"I repeat, is this justice? Is this fair play?"

"I think——"

"No, gentlemen—I mean my dear brother, no, this is not fair play. The women of England will not endure it."

"I really think," murmured the Head, "that we had better finish this discussion indoors. A number of juniors are listening to us."

"What they hear may enlighten them."

"Yes, but——"

"When they grow up they may be prepared to render to women the measure of justice which the present generation denies to them."

"Possibly, but——"

"I should be glad to address the school on the subject, and prove to them——"

"Heaven forbid," gasped the Head. "Pray come in, my dear sister."

And he passed his arm through Miss Locke's, and the Girton girl had no choice but to enter the house.

Harry Wharton and his chums looked at one another. Bob Cherry was chuckling, and a grin was dawning upon Hurree Singh's dusky face. Harry was smiling, too.

"My only chapeau!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Did you hear?"

"The hearfulness is great."

"Miss Locke has become a suffragette."

"The suffragettefulness is terrific."

"Never mind," said Harry Wharton. "She's a ripping girl, all the same, and the right sort; and we all have ideas at times."

"Oh, I don't know——"

"Well, I don't assert that you have any ideas; but as a rule——"

"Oh, don't be funny. I am disappointed in Miss Locke," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "I don't approve of the suffragettes. I don't know much about them or their opinions, but I strongly disapprove of them."

"What do you think now, Wharton?" demanded Bulstrode, coming towards the captain of the Remove. "You were standing up for Miss Locke when she was here before, and she ran the Remove. What do you think now?"

"Just the same. I would stand up for her the same as before if she took the Remove and treated us as decently as she did then."

"I always said that a woman's place was in the home," said Bulstrode. "I never approved of feminine Form-masters. I was against it, and we'd have ragged her out of Greyfriars if you hadn't stood up for her, and made the Form follow your lead. Now she's developed into a suffragette."

"Well, I suppose she has a right to her opinions."

"Rats! A woman ought to get her opinion from her father or brother, and stick to them. It's utterly absurd for a woman to start thinking on her own."

"Quite right," said Skinner. "That's my view. Of course, in the case of a single woman who's alone in the world it's different. But a woman who has a father or a brother or a husband or a son, ought to ask him about it."

"Exactly," said Bulstrode. "What I want to know is, what's the world coming to?"

"Hear, hear."

"I jolly well know that if Miss Locke starts addressing the school on the subject, I shall interrupt," said Bulstrode. "We'll get a party to go and make a row."

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner and Stott.

Harry Wharton's eyes flashed.

"That would be a cad's game, anyway," he said. "Whether the suffragettes are right or wrong, it's caddish to be rude to a woman."

"Oh, rats! I suppose that means that you are going to stand up for the suffragettes, as you did for feminine government in the Lower Fourth," growled Bulstrode. "I warn you that if you start anything of the kind, Wharton, you'll find yourself in Queer Street."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. Bulstrode was the bully of the Remove, but Wharton did not fear him or his threats.

There was something very irritating about Wharton's shrug of the shoulders, as his friends—as well as his enemies—had noticed.

Bulstrode's dark face turned darker with rage, and he came

closer to the captain of the Remove, his eyes gleaming and his fists clenched.

Harry Wharton faced him calmly, and Bulstrode thrust his angry face within six inches of Wharton's as he spoke again.

"Mind what I say," he growled. "You bucked up against the Form over the petticoat government, and you've backed up that mill-boy from Lancashire in the teeth of the Form. The Remove have had about enough of it, I can tell you. You put on too many airs, and a lot of the fellows are sorry they elected you captain."

"I am ready for a re-election if the fellows like," said Wharton disdainfully; "but I don't believe it. As for backing up the chap from Lancashire, he's worth fifty of you, and I mean to back him up, Form or no Form."

"Well, don't you interfere with me in this, that's all. If there's any suffragism at Greyfriars, I'm going to rag the suffragists——"

"I suppose you'll act like a cad in any case," said Wharton, shrugging his shoulders.

Bulstrode snapped his teeth with rage. He did not reply in words, but he let out his right, and the sudden unexpected blow caught Harry on the point of the chin and sent him with a crash to the ground.

"Shame!" cried two or three voices.

"You coward!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, springing forward with clenched fists. "That was a foul blow! Come on."

"Get back——"

"Bah! Come on, I tell you."

Bulstrode had to put up his fists, for Bob Cherry was hitting out right and left. They were soon going at it hammer and tongs. But Bob Cherry, sturdy and plucky as he was, was no match for the burly Bulstrode, the biggest fellow in the Remove.

He was quickly getting the worst of it; but Harry Wharton, who had been dazed for the moment, staggered to his feet.

His eyes were blazing. He ran forward and pulled Bob Cherry back.

"Let him alone, Bob. This is my business."

"Oh, rats! Let me go on now."

"Leave him to me."

Bob Cherry made a grimace.

"Oh, just as you like."

Harry Wharton advanced upon Bulstrode, his fists up and his eyes flashing. The bully of the Remove faced him.

"Come on," he exclaimed. Bulstrode's blood was up now, and he was careless of the fact that Wharton had licked him before. "Come on! I'm ready."

And Wharton came on.

There was a shouting and a pattering of feet from all sides, as fellows ran up to see the fight.

Rows between Wharton and Bulstrode were common enough, but they seldom came to fisticuffs, and as they were both doughty fighting-men, the "mill" was worth seeing.

But the combat was not suffered to come to a finish.

The juniors were too excited to remember that they were fighting in full sight of the Head's window.

The door at which Dr. Locke had entered suddenly opened, and the Head appeared on the steps, and there was a cry of alarm from the boys.

"Cave!"

The spectators of the combat melted away like snow in the sun, and as the Head came towards the scene with a frowning brow Wharton and Bulstrode separated, and stood looking very flustered and sheepish.

"I am surprised at this in you, Wharton," said Dr. Locke gravely. He did not say that he was surprised at it in Bulstrode.

"You will each take a hundred lines for fighting."

"Yes, sir," said Wharton quietly. "I am sorry."

"This must go no further. If I hear of anything of the kind again I shall punish you both most severely."

And the Head turned away. Wharton and Bulstrode

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looked—or rather glared—at one another, and went different ways. Bob Cherry slipped his arm through Harry's and led him off to a bath-room to wash away the signs of the conflict. Harry was looking a little bruised, and so was Bob. But the latter was chuckling.

"More trouble in the family," he remarked. "If there's going to be the question of suffragism at Greyfriars, Harry, the fellows will be set by the ears about it. Bulstrode has already made up his mind to rag the suffragists."

"Bulstrode's a cad!"

"Granted. As you are backing up suffragism——"

"I'm not," said Wharton quickly. "I haven't thought anything about the matter. I'm against anybody acting like a pig towards women."

"Well, Bulstrode's bound to act like a pig, he always does; it's the nature of the beast, and so you're committed to the other side," grinned Bob Cherry. "You always seem somehow to be setting yourself up in favour of something unpopular."

Wharton turned red.

"I can't help it; I'm not going to do what I believe to be wrong for the sake of getting on the side of the majority."

"No, I rather think you like to be with the minority, for the sake of a row or two."

"Look here, Bob——"

"Rats! You're not going to have a row with me," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "If you take up suffragism, as I can see you will do, I'm not going to punch your head about it. You can have votes for women if you like, and I'll remain neutral; but remember what the song says—'Don't be a Suffragette!'"

"Look here——"

"Here's the bath-room; come in and have a wash; you need it."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Causes Trouble.

"HALLO, -hallo, hallo! Somebody's got this one!" growled Bob Cherry, as he tried the handle of the bath-room door and found it locked on the inside.

"Well, the next one will do. Hark!"

A sound came from the locked bath-room. It was a low, gurgling sound, as of someone expiring by strangulation. The two juniors started and looked at one another.

"Great Scott! Is that somebody drowning in the bath?" muttered Bob Cherry in alarm.

"Groo-gorrororrororor!"

"It—it sounds like it," said Wharton, and he knocked on the bath-room door. "I say, in there, who are you, and what's the matter?"

"Hallo, what's wrong?" said Frank Nugent, coming along the passage. "It's Bunter in there, if you want to know; I saw him go in."

"Billy Bunter! There's something up! Hark!"

"Elp! I'm suffocating!"

"It's Bunter's voice!" exclaimed Bob Cherry excitedly.

"And there must be something wrong with him to make him drop his H's like that."

"Elp! 'Elp!"

Harry Wharton banged on the bath-room door. The three chums of the Remove were greatly excited. Billy Bunter was often a great trial to them, between his vast appetite and his continual practice at ventriloquism. But the thought that he was suffocating behind a locked door was a terrible one.

"Bunter! Open the door!"

"I'm suffocating!"

"What is it?" bawled Nugent through the keyhole. "Are you in the bath?"

"Elp! 'Elp!"

"Is the water over you? Why don't you jump out?"

"I'm suffocating!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, turning quite pale. The last words of Billy Bunter were in an expiring tone. "We must get him out somehow. He must have fallen into a full bath and can't get out somehow. He's so jolly fat, you know."

"Bang at the door!"

Bob Cherry put up his foot and crashed it on the lock. But the lock was strong, and the door was of stout oak. It did not even shiver. The juniors looked almost desperate. How were they to save Bunter?

Harry wrenched at the door savagely; but it would not budge. Nugent looked wildly up and down the passage and made a rush for the heavy oaken stool at the end. He ran right into Mr. Quelch, who had heard the noise and was coming to see what was the matter. He had thoughtfully brought a cane with him, and the cane whistled in the air as he grasped Nugent by the collar.

"Nugent! You—you——"

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Nugent. "I want to get that stool and burst in the bath-room door, sir——"

"Nugent!"

"Bunter's in there, sir, and he's suffocating in the bath."

"Goodness gracious! Bring it at once!"

The Remove-master rushed to the bath-room. Wharton's anxious face was turned towards him. The looks of the juniors fully convinced the Form-master that the case was serious. He wrenched at the door; but it was immovable. Nugent ran up, dragging the heavy stool after him over the linoleum.

"Gracious!" gasped Mr. Quelch, as he heard the sounds from within the bath-room. "There seems to be no resource but to break in the door. Poor boy! Poor boy! Whatever can have happened?"

"Elp! 'Elp! I'm suffocating!"

"Poor boy! Poor boy!"

"Here you are, sir!" cried Nugent excitedly.

He dragged up the stool. Mr. Quelch grasped one end and the boys grasped it, too, and it was jammed with terrific force against the lock. There was a fearful crash, and the door flew open, the lock smashing to atoms under the impact.

The crash was followed by a wild yell from within the bath-room. A fat junior, whose plump face was adorned by a big pair of spectacles, was sitting on the edge of the bath. He was fully dressed, and the bath was quite empty, so it was evident that he had not been bathing.

He was scared almost out of his wits by the bursting in of the door, and he stared open-mouthed at the intruders.

"Oh, really, Wharton!" he gasped. "You—you startled me! You'll get into a row for busting that door, if old Quelch finds out you did it."

"Old Quelch is here," said a voice that made the short-sighted junior jump. "Is that the way you speak of your Form-master, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, sir, I—I wouldn't have called you that if I had known you were here, sir—I—I mean I wouldn't have called you that under any circumstances whatever."

"But you did call me that, sir!" roared Mr. Quelch.

"I—I—I'm sincerely sorry. I—I really meant to say that there's no master at Greyfriars I respect so highly as I do you, sir."

"If that was what you meant to say, Bunter, you expressed yourself very unfortunately. You will take fifty lines for impertinence."

"Oh, really, sir!"

"And now, sir, what do you mean by creating this false and idiotic alarm and causing me to help in damaging the property of Greyfriars College?" cried Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean by pretending that you were suffocating?"

"I, sir?" gasped the fat junior. "I—I didn't, sir."

"You did! You said you were suffocating, in a voice that sounded as if you really were suffocating."

"That—that—that was my ventriloquial voice, sir."

"Your what?"

"My ventriloquial voice, sir. I was practising."

"You young ass!" growled Bob Cherry. "What do you mean by locking yourself up in a bath-room and then making that ghastly row?"

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir. I locked myself in because the fellows like to get round and chip me when I'm doing my ventriloquial practice. I can't practice in the study now, as it's been burnt to the ground, you know, sir, so I've been practising in a bath-room lately. It's the only place where I can be sure of not being interrupted by a lot of duffers—ahem—I mean——"

"You distinctly said that you were suffocating!" fumed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir; I make it a point to speak distinctly when I am ventriloquising on the famous Balmicrumpett principles. I was supposed to be imitating a man confined in a trunk and calling to be let out. You noticed that I didn't pronounce any H's, sir. You can't use the aspirate with a ventriloquial voice."

"You are an absurd young donkey!" said Mr. Quelch. "If I am bothered by any more of your ventriloquial nonsense I shall cane you severely. Meanwhile I shall consider whether to send the bill in for this damaged door to your father."

"Oh, really, sir!" gasped Bunter in dismay. "You'd better send it in to Wharton's uncle, sir. He's rich."

But Mr. Quelch was stalking away. Billy Bunter blinked round at the juniors, who were laughing now.

"Do you think he meant that, Wharton?"

"Shouldn't wonder. It would serve you right for being such an ass."

"He would send the bill in to your uncle if you asked him."

"I'm jolly well not going to, though."

"I don't think you ought to be selfish. I think——"

"Oh, get out; I want to use this bath-room! You can go and ventriloquise on the roof, or in the coal-cellar."

"I am making great progress. I have already succeeded in throwing my voice into all sorts of places, and I have learned to imitate voices, too. You should hear me imitate Skinner's squeaky voice——"

"Your own squeaky voice is bad enough, Bunter. Get out!"

And Billy Bunter got out.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Wingate.

HAZELDENE of the Remove grinned as he put his head into Wingate's study. Wingate of the Sixth, the Captain of Greyfriars, was mending a football, and he looked up with a grunt.

"What do you want, young shaver?"

"Nothing, thanks."

Wingate reached out carelessly towards a football boot, and Hazeldene hastened to explain.

"It's all right, Wingate, I've got a message."

"Buck up with it, then, and clear!"

"It's from a lady."

Wingate rose to his feet and bestowed a glare upon the junior. Big, rugged Wingate, who was rough and ready with all the fellows, but extremely shy and awkward in the presence of the smallest member of the other sex, was not in the habit of receiving messages from ladies.

Hazeldene kept a wary eye upon the senior as he went on.

"Don't get ratty, Wingate; it's all right, I tell you. I've got a message from Miss Locke."

"Oh, the Head's sister! What is it?"

"She wants to see you."

Wingate made a sudden stop towards the Remove, and grasped him by the ear. He gave the ear a twist that elicited a howl of anguish from Hazeldene.

"There, you young rotter, that's for being funny with a Sixth Former!" said Wingate ferociously. "Now travel."

And he turned Hazeldene round, and helped him through the doorway with a single application of his boot. The junior travelled—and dropped on his hands and knees in the passage. Wingate, feeling satisfied, closed the door, with a bang.

It opened again a few seconds later, and Hazeldene looked nervously in.

"Get out!" roared the captain of Greyfriars, striding towards him. "Have you come here to look for a hiding?"

"But it's honest injun, Wingate!" gasped Hazeldene. "Miss Locke sent me with a message to you. She wants to see you."

Wingate paused. The junior's manner was earnest enough, and the Greyfriars captain was convinced.

"Well, why couldn't you say so at first?" he demanded.

"Why, I did; only you——"

"Well, you shouldn't have been funny to start with. Where is Miss Locke?"

"In her sitting-room."

"Good! You can clear."

And Hazeldene cleared, rubbing his reddened ear ruefully.

Wingate's face was as red as Hazeldene's ear. He stood in his study, hesitating.

Wingate was very shy with any kind of girl—even the Head's little daughter, Molly, made him feel awkward. Miss Locke was much older than himself, and very pretty into the bargain. He would have greatly preferred going into a lion's den to going into the pretty little room looking out over the Close which belonged to Miss Locke when she was at Greyfriars. Wingate would have found it easier to dare to be a Daniel than to dare to face Miss Locke, especially as he did not know what she wanted. What could she possibly want?

However, it was impossible to be rude to the Head's sister. He had to go, and he made up his mind and went.

He met Long and Bentley of the Sixth in the passage. They stopped and looked at him curiously.

"Any accident?" asked Long.

"No; why?"

"Your complexion is such a beautiful colour. Have you been eating beetroots?"

"Oh, rats!" said Wingate crossly, and he passed on.

Long called after him.

"I say, don't forget the meeting of the debating society this evening, you know—eight sharp."

"Oh, blow the debating society!" grunted Wingate.

He was near Miss Locke's little sitting-room, which adjoined the Head's study, when he met Blundell and Bland of the Fifth. They also stopped him.

"Have you put up the notice about the debate to-night?" asked Blundell.

"No, not yet."

"Well, the time's getting on, you know."

"Blow the time!" said Wingate.

He strode on, leaving Blundell and Bland as astonished as Long and Bentley. The Fifth and Sixth Forms at Greyfriars took a great interest in their debating society, to whose debates the juniors were sometimes, as a great favour, admitted, on condition, of course, that they never interrupted or wanted to do any of the talking.

Wingate arrived at Miss Locke's door, and tapped. A sweet voice came from within:

"Come in!"

There was nothing dangerous about the voice, but it sent a

cold shiver through the big-limbed captain of Greyfriars. He hesitated several seconds, and then resolutely opened the door and entered.

Miss Locke rose to meet him, with an agreeable smile. The Girton girl was very pretty. Wingate knew that, though he did not look at her. Like many fellows, he would have been much more at his ease with a plain girl. She was older than Wingate; but the captain of Greyfriars towered above her with his broad shoulders. She was simply but very tastefully dressed, and looked, as Micky Desmond of the Remove had already remarked, "a picture entirely." She held out her hand to Wingate—a little white hand that disappeared in Wingate's brown palm, and which he touched very nervously, as if afraid of breaking it.

"How do you do, Wingate?"

"Ye-es," stammered Wingate. "Very fine—er—for the time of year."

Miss Locke looked surprised for the moment. Then she smiled again, and made Wingate sit down in a comfortable chair, where he could sit without looking directly at her. He was thus able to avoid meeting her eyes without keeping his own on the floor, but he did not guess that he owed this advantage to Miss Locke's feminine tact.

"I wished to speak to you, Wingate. It was very kind of you to come."

"Yes, wasn't it," stammered Wingate.

Miss Locke tried not to smile.

"I am so glad to see Greyfriars again," she said. "I am quite attached to the old place. You will remember that I took a Form here once—the Remove—while Mr. Quelch was ill."

"Yes, I remember, Miss Locke."

"I hear that you have a meeting of the Sixth Form Debating Society this evening," said Miss Locke casually.

"Ye-es."

"You allow the boys of the Lower Forms to be present, do you not, in order that their minds may be improved by listening to the discussions?"

"Certainly, Miss Locke."

"Would you have any objection of my coming to hear the debate?"

Wingate nearly jumped.

"You, Miss Locke!"

"Yes. I have never attended a debate of the Sixth Form society, you know, and I should be very glad to do so. Of course, if you do not admit ladies——"

"Not at all!" exclaimed Wingate. "We should be highly honoured. It's awfully kind of you to think of such a thing, Miss Locke."

He was gaining courage as he had not to look at the Girton girl. The thought of Miss Locke at the debates of the Sixth struck him with dismay. But Wingate, like most big strong fellows, in spite of his shyness, had a boundless chivalry towards the fair sex. He would willingly have laid down for Miss Locke to wipe her little boots on, if required.

"Then if you have no objection——"

"We should be—delighted. I know all the other fellows will simply jump at the idea."

"Thank you very much, Wingate. I suppose you have settled the subjects for discussion this evening?"

"No—yes."

"Because if you had not I should have ventured to make a suggestion," said Miss Locke, with a sweet smile. "Of course, you must not allow me to suggest anything if you have already settled on the subjects."

"Of course not," assented Wingate. "I—I—mean the subject is not exactly settled yet, Miss Locke; and we should be—be glad of any suggestion. I'm sure it's very kind indeed of you."

"If you would really like a suggestion——"

"Very much indeed, Miss Locke," said Wingate, beginning to think that the Head's youngest sister was a jolly sensible girl, and took interest in things that most girls did not understand.

"Thank you so much, Wingate. I was thinking of suggesting one of the burning questions of the day."

"Good! The debating society always prefers some present question for debate," said the Greyfriars captain. "It's a good wheeze—I mean a good idea. But what is the burning question?"

"Cannot you guess, Wingate—the question which is now agitating the public mind, to the exclusion of everything else?" said Miss Locke, a little reproachfully.

Wingate screwed up his forehead thoughtfully. His thoughts usually ran upon football, and he did not just then remember that there might be matters of great public interest unconnected with the great game.

"Anything to do with the offside rule?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" said Miss Locke, who did not know what the offside rule might possibly be, and who didn't want to have it explained to her.

"Oh, I know—of course!" said Wingate brightly. "You mean the question of the maximum wage in professional football."

Miss Locke made a little gesture.

"Not at all. I mean the question of votes for women."

Wingate's jaw dropped, and he stared blankly at the Head's sister.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Burning Question.

"**V**OTES for women!" said Wingate blankly. "Yes. That is surely a burning question of the hour?"

"Why, you mean the suffragettes?"

"Exactly."

"Oh, I see," said Wingate. "You want us to pass a vote of condemnation—that the Greyfriars Debating Society strongly disapproves of the action of the suffragettes in making such a row."

Miss Locke coloured a little.

"Not at all. I want you to discuss the question fairly, on its merits—whether women should have votes."

"Of course they shouldn't," said Wingate.

"Why not?"

"Well, they never have had 'em, you know."

"Yes, that is an excellent reason; but reasons might be found on the other side, too. For instance, it might be suggested that women should have votes because they hadn't had them."

"I—I never looked at it like that," Wingate paused, and looked at Miss Locke for the first time, in his amazement forgetting his bashfulness. "Miss Locke—you—you—you are not a suffragette?"

Miss Locke smiled.

"Perhaps I am, Wingate."

"But—but—but suffragettes are all ugly and bad-tempered," blurted out Wingate—"at—at—at least, I've heard so."

"Perhaps you have had incorrect information."

"Ye-o-e-es."

"For instance, I am not bad-tempered," said Miss Locke. "I don't know whether you think me ugly; but you cannot call me bad-tempered, I am sure."

"Oh, Miss Locke!"

Wingate's ejaculation was quite tribute enough to Miss Locke's good looks. The girl laughed.

"Come, then, Wingate, will you debate this subject this evening. You see that you have been misinformed on some important points, and a debate will help to clear errors away from other minds."

"Certainly, Miss Locke," said Wingate, feeling somewhat dazed. "I will put the notice up at once. Will you be in the room at eight?"

"Yes. Where is the room?"

"Perhaps—perhaps," said Wingate, growing bolder—"perhaps I had better call for you here, Miss Locke. You wouldn't like to come alone."

"Thank you very much, Wingate."

And the girl shook hands with Wingate, and he departed, wondering whether he was on his head or his heels. Miss Locke a suffragette! He certainly had to revise his opinion of those militant ladies now!

Wingate walked along like a fellow in a dream, as he thought about it. He went straight to his study and drew up the notice and went out to post it up in the hall. There were a good many fellows there, waiting for him to do so, and there was immediately a crowd round the notice-board. Wingate felt over his jacket for a pin, without finding it, and Long handed him one.

"Subject as discussed before, I suppose," said Long. "Whether cigarette smoking is harmful to growing youths."

Wingate shook his head.

"No; there's a new subject on this evening; it's one of the burning questions of the day, and a discussion of it may remove errors from the minds of you fellows."

"My word! He talks like a gramophone! What's the subject?"

"Votes for Women."

"What!"

"Votes for women," repeated Wingate calmly. He was self-possessed enough when he had only fellows round him, and he was quite prepared to argue or to fight with anybody, on that subject or any other.

"Votes for women!" said Long dazedly. "Did you hear that, Bent?"

"Yes," said Bentley, "Wingate's joking, of course."

"I'm not joking."

"But what on earth have votes for women to do with the Sixth Form Debating Society?" demanded Long, and Bentley, and Carberry, and several more.

"It's a burning question of the hour. I daresay you fellows have a lot of rotten prejudices on the point. The ignorance on this subject is amazing. I know lots of chaps who think that all the suffragettes are ugly and ill-tempered," said Wingate.

"So they are," said Carberry.

"Miss Locke is a suffragette."

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"What!"

"Getting deaf?" asked Wingate pleasantly. "I should advise you to consult a specialist."

"Then the jokes those youngsters have been making are true, after all," said Long, excitedly. "I heard some of the Upper Fourth jawing it over. Temple and Dabney were saying that Miss Locke is a suffragette."

"Well, it's correct."

"But that's no reason why we should discuss the subject at our meeting," said Long. "I'd rather stick to 'Cigarettes Harmful to Growing Youths.'"

"It's settled now."

And Wingate put up the notice.

A great many fellows, besides the members of the debating society, read over the notice with keen interest.

"Meeting of the Sixth Form Debating Society at 8 p.m. Subject to be discussed: Votes for women. Chairman, G. Wingate."

"Well, my only hat!" said Carberry, "I'm against it."

"You can go and eat coke," said Wingate, walking away.

The crowd round the notice-board thickened.

Blundell and Bland, and several other fellows who belonged to the Fifth and the debating society, came up, and read over the notice with grunts of disapproval. But they did not venture to question the authority of Wingate. As a matter of fact Fifth-Formers did not count very much in the debating society. They were only tolerated there by the high and mighty seigneurs of the Sixth.

Juniors came from far and wide as the news of the notice spread. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, read it with many a chuckle.

"Juniors are admitted, of course," said Temple, "that's the rule. We'll go."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"Not allowed to speak, though," said Fry. "The seniors have a keen objection to hearing any common-sense at a debating club meeting. But it strikes me that we ought to be allowed to go on suffragist lines, on an occasion like this—chain ourselves to the seats, you know, and kick up a row."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove, of course, took a great interest in the matter. Harry Wharton and his friends heard of the notice and came to read it. Bob Cherry grunted, Nugent grinned, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled his dusky smile. Only Harry's face remained serious.

"It's a good idea," he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Harry turning suffragist!"

"Oh, rot," said Wharton, colouring. "I think it's a good idea to discuss the matter, that's all. There can't be any harm in that. After all, it's a serious question whether one half the nation should be deprived of votes."

"Well, it's only the female half," said Nugent.

"I suppose we'd better go," said Bob Cherry. "Juniors are admitted. Of course, the debaters will all be down on votes for women."

"I say, you fellows——"

"The whole thing's rot," went on Bob Cherry, with the air of one who had devoted at least five minutes to the thinking out of the subject, and so had settled it to the satisfaction of all reasonable persons. "Women don't want the vote."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, rats!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Besides, they wouldn't vote if they had the vote," said Nugent, triumphantly.

"Then there couldn't be any harm in giving it to them," said Wharton.

"Oh, rats!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter! Did you speak?"

"I have spoken several times, Cherry, and you haven't listened. I say, you fellows. I think we ought to go to the debating meeting——"

"Well, we're going. You can come if you're not eating at the time."

"Oh, really, Cherry! What I was going to say is, that it's jolly cool of the Sixth to make a rule that juniors aren't allowed to speak. I was thinking of working off some ventriloquism at the meeting and mucking it up, just to teach them a lesson."

"If you start any ventriloquial squeaking at the meeting, my son, you will probably go out on your neck, and serve you jolly well right," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Oh, really, rats!"

And Bunter's further remarks were not listened to. There was a gleam in the eyes behind Bunter's big spectacles as the chums of the Remove walked away.

"I'll jolly well startle them some day with my ventriloquism," he muttered, "I'll make 'em believe in it. They say a prophet is never honoured in his own country, and nobody at Greyfriars

ever understands me. I'll make 'em sit up! With my wonderful abilities as a ventriloquist, and my marvellous powers as an imitator—oh—really, Cherry, I wish you wouldn't thump me on the shoulder like that."

"It's not Cherry, ass, it's Bulstrode. Can't you get out of the way when a chap wants to see the notice-board?"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode——"

"Oh, seat!"

Billy Bunter turned away, and ran into Skinner. Skinner took him by the shoulders and ran him up against the wall, and bumped him there.

"Ow! Ow, really, Stott——"

"It's not Stott, dummy, it's Skinner! What do you mean by running into me?" demanded Skinner, in his peculiarly squeaky voice.

"I'm sincerely sorry, but—ow—wow—wow!"

Skinner bumped him on the wall again, and let him fall into a sitting posture, and then joined Bulstrode, grinning. The two Removites laughed loudly as Billy Bunter scrambled up and walked away. But there was a vengeful expression upon the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Plans Vengeance.

"Go and eat coke! Rats! Poof! Bosh! Go and eat tin-tacks! I'll give you a black eye! I'll give you a dot on the boko! Go and eat cabbages! Yah!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry stopped as soon as they heard the voice. It proceeded from a deserted class-room, and they recognized the squeaky tones of Skinner. Though why Skinner should be uttering those wild exclamations in the empty class-room was more than the chums of the Remove could comprehend.

"Off his rocker," said Bob Cherry, sententiously. "I always thought it would come to that. These funny merchants always end in lunatic asylums—if they get their deserts, anyway."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Blessed if I know what to make of it," he said. "We'd better give him a look in, perhaps Skinner's practising ventriloquism."

"If he is we'll slay him and bury him under the fireplace. One ventriloquist is enough for any Form to put up with."

They pushed open the class-room door, and entered. A single burner illumined the great room and the dim rows of desks. On the dais at the upper end Billy Bunter stood, and he blinked at them through his big spectacles.

The juniors looked round them. There was no sign of Skinner, and they guessed that he was hiding under one of the desks.

"What's the row here?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Where's Skinner?"

"Blessed if I know," said Billy Bunter. "If you want Skinner, you'd better ask Bulstrode. I left him with the other beast."

"Now then, Bunt! You know where people go when they tell crammers," said Bob Cherry, warningly. "We heard Skinner's voice as we came along, and he was saying things. We looked in to see if he was off his rocker, as we shouldn't mind the trouble, if necessary, of taking him to a padded cell. Where are you, you skinny ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Billy Bunter.

"What are you cackling at, dummy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the row?" shrieked Bob Cherry, taking Bunter by the collar and shaking him. "Are you starting in life as a funny man? If so, I warn you that your career will be cut short. You'll get it where the chicken got the chopper."

"Broo—you're chook—chook—choking me! I say, Cherry, you beast, don't shake me like that—if you make my glasses fall off you may break them, and you'll have to pay for them, so there."

"What are you cackling at then?"

"Nothing, only—only Skinner isn't in here."

"Oh, come," said Wharton. "We heard his voice, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ow, ow, don't shake me, Cherry. If you break my glasses——"

"I'll break your neck if you don't stop cackling," growled Bob Cherry. "You've no right to let a cackination like that loose on a defenceless public. Shut it."

"But—but—but it's true! Skinner isn't here."

"Then how could we hear his voice?"

"It wasn't his voice."

"Don't prevaricate, you fat little fibber. I'd know Skinner's unearthly squeak that he calls a voice, anywhere."

"It was I. I was imitating Skinner's voice for ventriloquial purposes——"

"Rats, and many of 'em."

"I'm sincerely sorry that you should doubt my word, Cherry. I think this discussion had better cease," said Bunter, with dignity.

"If it was you," said Cherry, suspiciously, "you can do it again. Go ahead."

"Very well. Here goes, you fellows. I'm sincerely sorry that you——"

"Cut the cackle."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Will you go ahead?" roared Bob Cherry.

And he looked so dangerous that Billy Bunter thought he had better stop arguing and go ahead.

He cleared his throat with a preliminary cough, and started.

"Rats! Go and eat coke! Get off the earth! I'll dot you on the boko!"

It was the same voice that Wharton and Cherry had heard as they passed the door of the class-room.

But it undoubtedly was Bunter that was speaking.

The imitation of Skinner's squeaky tones was perfect, and there wasn't a fellow at Greyfriars who wouldn't have sworn that it was Skinner speaking; if Bunter had not been in plain sight.

Harry and Bob looked at one another.

"My only hat!" said Wharton. "Bunter's getting on! It's Bunt right enough—and he can imitate voices—some voices."

"I'm glad to see you can do me justice, Wharton," said Bunter, with a very dignified look. "Of course, some voices are harder to imitate. But if there's anything unusual about a voice, like Skinner's squeaking, I can soon pick it up. I can't throw Skinner's voice about yet, but I can imitate it all right."

"And what's the little game?" demanded Bob Cherry. "What are you practising imitating Skinner's voice for?"

Bunter looked mysterious.

"That's my little secret," he said. "Perhaps you'll hear of a jape later on, and perhaps you won't. You'll see."

And Bunter resumed his practice, and the chums of the Remove left the class-room. About five minutes later Billy Bunter came out, still looking very mysterious. He met Hazeldene in the passage and inquired if he had seen Skinner.

"He's in the gym," said Hazeldene.

"Good!"

Hazeldene stared at him.

"Why is it good?" he asked. "What are you driving at, duffer?"

"Oh, nothing!"

And Billy Bunter walked on quickly. He blinked to right and left; he was looking for Bulstrode. Bulstrode, he guessed, would be doing his preparation now. The Remove studies at Greyfriars had not yet been rebuilt after the fire, and the Removites did their preparation in all sorts of places—in the Form-room, or the junior common-room, or the passages, or anywhere and everywhere. There was one of the Upper Fourth studies that was untenanted, pending a repair to the ceiling necessitated by the swamping it had accidentally received from the local firemen during the fire at Greyfriars. This study had been taken possession of by Bulstrode, till the Remove should receive its new quarters. The Upper Fourth objected; but Bulstrode was too burly a fellow to be easily turned out.

Bunter looked round for the bully of the Remove, and at last came to the Upper Fourth study where Bulstrode usually did his prep. The scratch of a pen and a growling voice within showed that the room was tenanted. Bunter peeped in at the keyhole, and saw Bulstrode and Stott with their books on a packing-case, which they were using as a table.

The Owl of the Remove grinned.

He drew a length of stout cord from his pocket, and silently fastened one end to the handle of the door.

This was accomplished without a sound to alarm the occupants of the study.

He took the other end across the passage, and tied it to the handle of the door opposite, knotting it securely round the handle.

Bulstrode's door was now fastened, and it would have been utterly impossible for him to open it from within, as both doors opened inwards, and they were secured to one another.

"I rather think that will do," murmured Billy Bunter.

He tapped on the door.

"Oh, go away!" rapped out Bulstrode. "I'm busy! What do you want to come bothering for, you silly ass, whoever you are!"

"Open the door!" squeaked out Bunter, in a most lifelike imitation of Skinner's voice.

"Rats! Go away!"

"I sha'n't! Open the door!"

"Open it yourself, you dummy, if you want to come in!" roared Bulstrode, exasperated. "It's not locked."

"Who are you calling a dummy?" demanded Bunter, still in Skinner's voice.

"I'm calling you a dummy, Skinner, and if you don't bolt I'll come out and wipe up the passage with you," shouted Bulstrode.

"Oh, you couldn't do it!"

Bulstrode breathed heavily in the study. Stott was looking surprised. He fully believed that it was Skinner in the passage, and he had never dreamed that Skinner, the funny man of the Remove, had nerve enough to exasperate the Form bully in this way. He concluded that it was another of Skinner's little jokes; and he did not envy Skinner when Bulstrode should finally lose his temper and go for him.

Billy Bunter tapped at the door again. The fact that Bulstrode evidently believed him to be Skinner, and the still more important fact that the door was fastened, emboldened the amateur imitator.

"Are you going to open this door, Bulstrode?"

"No," yelled Bulstrode, "and I give you two seconds to bunk. If you tap at that door again I'll come out and pulverise you."

Tap!

Bulstrode could hardly believe his ears.

The tap on the door immediately followed his speech. He rose from the table with a snort of vengeance, and made one bound to the door.

He dragged at the handle. The door yielded about half an inch to the pressure he put upon it, but did not come wide open enough for him to see into the passage. He dragged at it furiously.

"My word!" said Stott. "He's locked it!"

"He hasn't," snarled Bulstrode, "it's giving a bit. He's got something on the handle. This is one of Skinner's little japes. I'll jape him!"

He wrenched at the door.

But the rope was strong and well knotted. It refused to budge a fraction more, and the Remove bully wrenched and wrenched in vain.

"Unfasten this door!" he yelled.

"Oh, rats!" came back the squeaky voice from the passage. "Go and eat coko! I'll give you a dot on the nose, Bulstrode!"

"My word!" murmured Stott. "Skinny must have been drinking, or something! Bulstrode will pulverise him for this!"

Bulstrode wrenched like a maniac at the door. To think that he—he, the great fighting-man of the fighting Form at Greyfriars, should be threatened with a dot on the nose by a weedy worm like Skinner—it was unthinkable. He promised a variety of things to Skinner as he wrenched at the handle. But the door remained fast.

"You young rotter!" he bellowed through the keyhole. "Wait till I get hold of you!"

"Oh, you couldn't do anything," came back the squeaked taunt. "You're a duffer, you know. Go and eat coko!"

"Oh, my hat! You just wait!"

"Go and eat tintacks! You're no good! You couldn't lick a fag in the Third Form. Go and eat cabbages!"

"I'll—I'll smash him!" gasped Bulstrode. "Fancy talking to me like this. He must be mad! I'll limb him! I'll break his bones! Oh!"

"Yah! Go and eat tintacks!"

"You just wait!"

"Rats! You couldn't touch me! You're no good! I'm going to the gym! I'll bet you daren't follow me there! Yah!"

And there was a sound of receding footsteps in the passage.

Bulstrode gasped with rage.

"Oh, let me once get a grip on him, that's all!" he panted. "I'll show him! Come and help me get this door open, Stott, you dummy! What are you sitting there for grinning like a confounded Cheshire cat?"

"I wasn't grinning."

"Don't start arguing with me, or I'll knock your head off, you chump. Think of some way of getting the door open, you dummy. Haven't you got any sense?"

"Why don't you think of a way, then?"

"Don't jaw at me! I'd wipe up the floor with you for two pins! How am I to get that door open?"

"Blessed if I know! Hold on—suppose you unscrewed the handle on this side, it would fall out on the other, and—"

"Good! Got a screwdriver?"

"There's a little one in my pocket-knife. Here you are!"

Bulstrode grabbed the pocket-knife, opened the screwdriver in it, and proceeded to unscrew the door-handle. In his fury it took him some time, and he was fairly boiling over with rage and impatience by the time he had the handle off. The brass knob gone, the bar slid through to the outside with the pull of the rope on it, as Bulstrode jerked at the door. The door came wide open.

Bulstrode dashed out into the passage.

The rope was there, trailing from the door-handle of the opposite study. But there was no one in the passage.

But Bulstrode knew where to look. He dashed along the passage—and rushed off, straight to the gym—in search of Skinner.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Slight Mistake.

MOST of the Remove were in the gymnasium. While the rebuilding operations were proceeding, they had no studies to go to. The common-room they shared with the Upper Fourth and the fags of the Third, and that wasn't agreeable to them; while the Form-room was a cheerless place. They put in a great deal of time now in the gymnasium; and it did them good.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were there, and so were Nugent and Hurree Singh, passing the time till the Sixth-Form Debating Society should meet. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was performing some marvellous feats on a trapeze, and the chums were watching him, as were many other Removites. Skinner was among the crowd, and Billy Bunter had just come in. Bunter was blinking with suppressed excitement; and as a matter of fact he was on tenter-hooks.

His little scheme had worked very well so far; but there was always a possibility that something might go wrong at the last moment.

And the fat junior simply shivered at the thought of what would happen if Bulstrode discovered who had really been talking to him through the study door.

The junior gave a gasp of affright as he was suddenly seized from behind, and a hand jerked his spectacles off over his head.

"Oh! Oh, really, Bulstrode, it wasn't me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Skinner.

"Oh, is it you, Skinner? I thought—I mean, give me my glasses! You oughtn't to play tricks with a fellow's glasses. If you break them you will have to pay for them, so there!"

"What bids for a pair of spectacles?" said Skinner, holding them up out of reach of the anxious Bunter. "Worn by the famous Bunter, the fattest and silliest donkey ever seen at Greyfriars! Not much good, as the silly ass is always running into people, but a record in size! What bids?"

"Give me my glasses, please, Skinner."

"Any bids for a pair of spectacles?"

Bunter groped frantically up at the spectacles. He was sorely afraid that they would fall and get broken, and that would have been a serious matter for him, for he had not a second pair. Bunter did not see very well with his glasses on; but he was as blind as an owl without them, and so his state of mental distress can be imagined. But Skinner, like many practical jokers, was able to bear with perfect equanimity any sufferings that did not fall upon himself.

"Oh, really, Skinner! I say, Wharton, make him give me my glasses! They might get broken!"

"Why don't you give him his glasses?" said Harry.

"Oh, rats! Why shouldn't I jape a porpoise if I want to? Don't interfere." And Skinner facetiously pretended to drop the glasses, and there was a gasp of affright from Bunter. "There, they're gone now—no, they're not!"

"Give them to me, you beast!"

"Stuff! Any bids for a pair of blinkers, extra large size?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him the glasses," said Harry Wharton, coming towards Skinner. The captain of the Remove spoke very quietly, without the least trace of hectoring in his voice; but Skinner knew that he meant business.

"Certainly, I've done with them," he said. "There you are, Owl," and he poked the spectacles into Billy Bunter's collar. And the fat junior gasped with exertion as he groped to get them out.

"Ill-natured basto!" said Micky Desmond.

"Rats!" said Skinner. "Hallo, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode had just entered the gym. Stott was following him, looking interested. He wanted to see what was to come. Bulstrode looked round, caught sight of Skinner, and came straight towards him.

"Such a lark," grinned Skinner. "I—ow!"

Bulstrode ran straight at him, hitting out. Skinner caught a blow with his chin, and another with his nose, and a third with his eye. Then he sat down.

Bulstrode glanced round him, brandishing his fists.

"Get up!" he roared. "Get up, and have some more!"

Skinner sat where he was, staring up at Bulstrode with a look of bewilderment that was almost idiotic. He hadn't the faintest idea why Bulstrode had attacked him, but the bully of the Remove was evidently on the warpath.

"Get up!" roared Bulstrode. "I'll jump on you if you don't get up! Get up, you grovelling beast! Dot me on the nose, will you? Can't lick a Third Form fag, can't I? I'll show you! Get up!"

"I—I—I—"

"Are you going to get up?"

"No, I'm not!" howled Skinner. "You're mad—you're as mad as a hatter! Hold him, somebody! He's dangerous."

"Get up! I'll smash you into little bits! Get up!"

"What has he been doing intirely?" exclaimed Micky

Desmond. "Sure, and it was mighty friendly ye were only an hour ago."

"Fastened me up in an Upper Fourth study," yelled Bulstrode. "Tied the handle of the door so that I couldn't get at him, and then chipped me through the keyhole!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't!" yelled Skinner. "You're off your rocker."

"You did, you worm! You can't crawl out of it now. You said you'd dot me on the boko! You did, you apology for a polecat!"

"I—I—I didn't!"

"Didn't he, Stott? You heard him?"

"Yes, I must say Bulstrode's telling the truth," said Stott.

"You may as well own up, Skinny, old man. I was in the study and heard you. You said you were going to the gym, and Bulstrode daren't follow."

"I—I—I didn't!"

"Get up!" roared Bulstrode. "Don't lie there telling lies, but stand up and make your words good. Up with you."

"I—I—I—"

Bulstrode stooped and grasped the joker of the Remove by the ears. He jerked him to his feet, and then commenced to pommel him right and left. Skinner went to the floor again, and stayed there.

"My word!" said Bulstrode. "If you don't get up and fight I'll get a dogwhip, and give you a licking with it, so take your choice."

"That you won't," said Skinner, showing some spirit. "I never said anything of the sort, and I didn't fasten your door; but I'll fight you if you like."

"Come on, then, you young beast."

And they fought. Skinner, who was damaged and excited, lost his temper, and fought hard—as hard as he could. But he was no match for Bulstrode. The bully of the Remove knocked him right and left, and, although he received some punishment, it was nothing to what Skinner received.

The unfortunate jokist went down at last, and this time it was plain enough to all that he could not go on. And Bulstrode was somewhat satisfied.

"I think that will do," he remarked. "You'll think twice before fastening me up in my study again, and jawing at me through the door."

"I didn't," moaned Skinner, mopping his mouth with his handkerchief. The "claret" was flowing freely, and his nose was swelling, and one of his eyes was quite closed. Bulstrode had done a great deal in a short time. "I didn't do anything of the sort. You're raving!"

Bulstrode glared at him.

"Still telling lies, eh? You want some more gruel, I suppose?"

"Leave me alone, you beastly bully!"

"I won't let you alone unless you own up," said Bulstrode, kicking him. "Now, then—What the dickens are you up to, Wharton?"

Harry had seized the bully by the shoulder, and dragged him away. Bulstrode turned a fierce glare upon him, but he met a determined look from Harry, and his glare became less fierce at once.

"You'll let him alone, that's all," said Wharton. "He's owned up to being licked, and you won't touch him again."

"I'll touch him if I like."

"Do—that's all."

Bulstrode didn't. Skinner rose to his feet, with a helping hand from Desmond. He was looking absolutely "done for."

"You—you beast!" he grunted. "I didn't fasten your door, all the same. You're mad or drunk! I didn't do it."

"Oh, draw it mild," said Stott. "I tell you I was there, and heard you. It's not ten minutes ago, either."

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation.

"Not ten minutes ago, Stott?"

"About that, I suppose."

"Then Skinner didn't do it. He's been here for the last twenty minutes or more to my knowledge."

Bulstrode gave a jump. He knew that Bob Cherry would not speak an untruth; and, besides, there were several exclamations from other fellows who had noticed Skinner's presence in the gym twenty minutes earlier.

The bully of the Remove began to realize that he had been a little hasty. But he was completely puzzled, too.

"Did you see him?" demanded Trevor.

"N-no; the door was fastened on the outside. But he was jawing at me, and I'd know Skinner's voice anywhere. There's nothing else like it at Greyfriars."

"Except when Gosling is sharpening his saw," said Nugent.

And there was a laugh.

"It couldn't have been Skinner's voice, if it happened ten minutes ago," said Trevor. "I know he was in here when seven struck, and it's turned a quarter past now."

"Seven struck just before he started at my door," said Bulstrode, puzzled. "Well, if it wasn't Skinner, I'm sorry."

"Lot of good that will do me, now," mumbled Skinner.

"Well, you shouldn't have a voice exactly like somebody else."

"I hadn't! It's all rot! You've been drinking!"

"Yes, it's all rot," said Wharton. "There isn't another voice like Skinner's at Greyfriars. Somebody must have been imitating him."

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

He was looking at Bunter. The imploring looks of the fat junior, a dumb appeal to Bob not to give him away, explained everything. Bob Cherry yelled with laughter. He understood now why the Owl of the Remove had been practising imitations of Skinner's voice in the class-room.

Harry Wharton understood, too, and he joined in Bob's laugh. Bulstrode looked at them with an angry, sullen glare.

"So you know who it was?" he snarled.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes."

"Who was it, then?"

"You must find out for yourself, Bulstrode, old chap. Ha, ha, ha!"

But Bulstrode did not find out.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Debating Society Meets.

WINGATE came to the door of Miss Locke's sitting-room, with the full expectation of having to wait at least ten minutes for that charming young lady. To his surprise he found the door open, and Miss Locke standing by the window quite ready. The suffragette evidently did not claim the privilege of the old-fashioned woman—of being late for an appointment.

She nodded to Wingate with a bright smile. It occurred to Wingate just then that he was a couple of minutes late himself, but Miss Locke did not appear to have observed it.

"So kind of you to come for me," said the Girton girl, "I am quite ready. Marjorie!"

Marjorie Hazeldene rose from a deep easy-chair where she was sitting by the fire, and threw back her curls with the pretty little shake of the head that some of the Greyfriars boys found so captivating. Marjorie was Hazeldene's sister, and she was a favourite with the Head's wife, kindly Mrs. Locke, and she was very frequently at Greyfriars.

Wingate gave her a nod and a smile. Like all the fellows senior or junior, he liked Marjorie; and indeed, a fellow would have had to be very disagreeable and grumpy not to like the sweet smile and soft brown eyes of Hazeldene's sister.

"Marjorie may come?" said Miss Locke.

"Very welcome," said Wingate. "I am afraid she will be bored with a Sixth Form debate."

"Oh, no," said Marjorie. "I shall like it so much!"

Wingate felt rather proud of himself, but at the same time a trifle uneasy, as he escorted the two girls along the corridor. Miss Locke was ten years older than Marjorie, who was only fifteen, and they both looked very pretty and charming. Wingate felt safer with Marjorie, of the two, but he was no more able to meet her brown eyes than to meet Miss Locke's blue ones.

Several fellows looked at Wingate as he came along, envying him very much; but their glances made Wingate colour.

"My word! Old Wingate's coming out!" murmured Long. Blessed if I don't go and fetch Miss Molly, and join the procession."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate's face was as red as a beetroot by the time he reached the apartment where the Sixth Form Debating Society held their meetings. Miss Locke, with the sense of delicacy that is instinctive with women, had not wished to be the only member of the gentler sex at the meeting, and she had captured Marjorie and brought her, too. Marjorie did not know anything about suffragism, and she had heard from her friends in the Remove that the Sixth Form debates were terribly dreary affairs. But she was willing to face the ordeal to oblige the Head's sister.

The room was very full.

The Sixth and Fifth Form debaters were all there, and the seats allowed to fellows of the upper Forms who cared to come in and listen—usually empty—were now full up. The fact that Miss Locke was to be there interested the seniors, and the subject, too, was one of unusual interest.

The space at the back to which the juniors were relegated was crammed. The Famous Four had good places, and Hazeldene, Mark Linley, Wun Lung, and Micky Desmond were with them. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were very prominent; and Bulstrode and Stott were there, with several of their set. Skinner felt too damaged to come. Billy Bunter was squeezed among the Famous Four, deliberating whether he would work off any ventriloquism.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Hazeldene's sister!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I say, Vaseline, Marjorie hasn't joined the suffragettes, has she?"

"Rather not," grinned Hazeldene. "Got too much sense."



"Oh, really, Wharton!" gasped Billy Bunter, "You—you startled me! You'll get into a row for bursting that door, if old Quelch finds out you did it." "Old Quelch is here," said a voice that made the short-sighted junior jump.

"Oh, I don't know," said Nugent. "Sense doesn't run in the family."

"Oh, rats."

"In my opinion, all the suffragettes ought to be in Holloway," said Bulstrode. "I'd teach 'em! Rather!"

"Thanks for your opinion, old chap. It's not much good."

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, don't jaw. Wingate's looking over here already."

"Let him look! I think—"

"Shut up, there," said Wingate, glancing at the juniors. "Talking is not allowed."

"If it's not aloud," murmured Nugent, "where's the objection?"

"Oh, rotten!" said several voices.

"Silence!"

Marjorie looked round, and nodded to her brother.

Wingate tapped on the table.

"Gentlemen! With the full concurrence of every member of the Sixth-Form Debating Society—"

"Hear, hear!" said Long, encouragingly.

Wingate glared at him, and proceeded.

"—Miss Locke, the sister of our respected Head master, is admitted to the full honours of this sitting of the society."

"'Ear, 'ear!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Full honours is good."

The members of the debating society exchanged glances, and Carberry murmured "Cheek!" under his breath. Wingate had not consulted anybody about the matter, so the "full concurrence" was rather a strong expression. However, Wingate was used to having his own way when he had only his own sex to deal with.

"Miss Locke proposes—"

Carberry rose to his feet.

"May I be permitted one question, Mr. Chairman?"

"Ye-es. Buck up."

"You have stated that Miss Locke proposes. Is it to be understood that Miss Locke, as a suffragette, approves of women proposing?"

A chuckle swept through the room.

Wingate turned crimson, and two or three fellows said "Cad!" and "Shut up!" very audibly. Some looked at Miss Locke. The girl was looking straight before her, and not the slightest change in her face showed that she had even heard Carberry's impertinence. She did not colour in the least, or seem to be aware that she was being looked at.

"Sit down," said Wingate, sharply.

"I have asked a question—"

"Another word, and I'll kick you out of the hall. If you want to insult a lady, you should choose a safer time, you cad."

Wingate did not lower his voice as he spoke, and Carberry turned crimson in his turn.

"Miss Locke proposes that the resolution be put: 'That this meeting approves of the Parliamentary franchise being extended to women,'" said Wingate. "That is the subject for discussion this evening. Fellows are free to speak for and against the resolution, so long as they observe the rules of decent breeding."

"That's one in the eye for Carberry," murmured Bob Cherry.

"Anybody descending to personalities will leave this room on his neck," the chairman added, as he sat down.

And there was a murmur of cheering. The way Wingate went to the point made him very popular with the Greyfriars.

fellows, though sometimes some of them found he had a very rough edge to his tongue.

"Good; then Carberry will soon be travelling on the wrong end," said Nugent. "Silence, people! The proceedings are about to proceed."

"The proceedfulness is terrific," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And the debate began.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Lively Debate!

MISS LOCKE sat very calm and quiet, her hand on Marjorie's. Dempster, of the Sixth, was the first senior to air his personal views on the subject of votes for women,—or, as Wingate had put it in chairman-language, upon the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women. Dempster was a great talker, and his orations were a great feature of the debating society's meetings. As he rose, there were audible murmurs of encouragement in the room.

"Go it, Dempsey."

"On the ball, old chap!"

Dempster smirked a little, and cleared his throat. Addressing himself to Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, he begged to move that the resolution be rejected, on the following grounds:

"The proper place for women," said Dempster, of the Sixth, "is the home!"

"Hear, hear!" said a dozen voices. The idea of women at home seemed to strike the whole gathering favourably. As Temple pathetically remarked to Dabney, who was to sew a chap's buttons on, if all the women went out to meetings and neglected the home. Home was a sacred place; a place where you could get your buttons sewn on, if only women wouldn't get these modern crazes.

"Yes," said Dempster, encouraged. "The proper place for women is undoubtedly the home. Where do the virtues of the female sex shine with the greatest refulgence? At home! Where is a woman in her most useful sphere? At home! If women become members of Parliament, they will no longer be domesticated. Instead of meeting us and comforting us on our return from the day's labour—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Dempsey!"

"Instead of that, they will be out when we get home; they will be attending to their parliamentary duties, or making speeches, and so forth. Why, the whole comfort of the male sex depends upon women remaining quietly at home."

"Hear, hear!"

And the general opinion was that Dempster had knocked down the wicket at the first ball. That was unanswerable!

And Dempster sat down, feeling that he had demolished the opposition. Miss Locke gave him a sweet smile, as if she fully agreed with him on some points, as no doubt she did.

"Jolly good speech," said Bob Cherry. "But I'm blessed if I can make out whether he's for the women or against them."

"There's Blundell on his legs."

"Go it, Blundy! Look out in goal!"

"Shut up, you kids," said Blundell. "I move that the resolution be sat upon."

"Hear! hear!"

"As my friend Dempster has so ably remarked, a woman's proper place is the home. I object to extending the Parliamentary franchise to women, because I object to it in itself, and I object to its necessary sequel, feminine representation. Imagine to yourselves feminine Members of Parliament! I——"

"My word, he beats the gramophone."

"Go it, Blundy! Keep it going."

"But I foresee an end to all business if women obtain an entrance into Parliament," said Blundell. "I foresee that debates will be interrupted by discussions on the latest thing in hats——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That the Honourable Leader of the Opposition will in all probability scratch the Speaker if he interrupts her——"

"Oh, go it! Blundell's good."

"And the Premier,—I mean, la Premiere, if we get a lady prime minister—will go into hysterics on the floor of the House if she can't pass her measure."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Also that women have a natural taste for grandmotherly legislation. It is well-known that a large number of women are kicked to death every year by drunken husbands. They object to this——"

"Curious," said Longley. "Some women are hard to please."

"They object to this," said Blundell, firmly. "Now, mark—if women once get into Parliament they will try to stop it. There's only one way to stop it, and that's by abolishing the drink traffic. Women members of Parliament will immediately

start trying to abolish the drink traffic. They will deprive the working-man of his beer."

"Shame!"

"I fully agree with my friend who said 'Shame.' After a day of honest and weary toil, is not a working-man entitled to his beer? It refreshes him to——"

"Kick his wife!"

"Nothing of the sort. It refreshes him to drink his beer,—at all events, I suppose it does, or he wouldn't drink it—and probably not more than one per cent. lose control of themselves in consequence and commit acts of brutality. In fact, I think——"

"You don't think at all, or you wouldn't talk such rot," said a voice from the junior seats.

"Who is that interrupting?" demanded Wingate, frowning.

"I did," said Mark Linley, standing up with a red face. "I am the son of a workman, and I want to say that Blundell is talking like a patronizing ass, and you can kick me out if you like."

"Kick him out," said Carberry. "That's the mill mongrel who came here on a giddy scholarship! Nice manners for Greyfriars!"

"Shut up," said Wingate. "Sit down, Linley. As a matter of fact, you are quite right, but you mustn't interrupt the speeches."

Linley sat down, and Harry Wharton slapped him on the shoulder. Blundell, of the Fifth, turned a glare upon the captain of Greyfriars.

"Look here, Mr. Chairman——"

"Oh, get on," said Mr. Chairman, "and keep to the point. What on earth has women's suffrage to do with the drink traffic?"

"I'm trying to demonstrate it. Women in Parliament would try to put down the drink traffic; hence my opposition. As a matter-of-fact, I withdraw my remarks concerning the working-classes; I know that there is more and worse drinking done among the rich than among the poor, and I hope our friend from Lancashire is satisfied now. But the fact remains the same—the women would be down on it, and so I oppose the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to the other sex."

"Next man in," said Wingate, forgetting himself for a moment, and there was a general chuckle.

Long rose to the occasion.

"I beg to move an amendment that the Parliamentary franchise is useless to women, and that their proper place, as our friend Dempster maintains, is the home," he said. "I agree with the previous speakers, and have also to say that women are coming much too much to the fore just now, and ought to be put in their place. We will give them every kind of chivalry, but we won't give them votes."

"Hear, hear!"

Bentley moved that Miss Locke should be heard in support of the resolution, and there was a cheer. Miss Locke coloured a little, but, at the chairman's request, she stood up and spoke.

"It is very kind of you to give me a hearing, gentlemen," said Miss Locke. "I do not claim to be able to put my case so clearly and concisely as the previous speakers, or to keep so close to the point under discussion, but I will do my best."

Harry Wharton smiled at Nugent. There was a trace of irony in Miss Locke's remarks, but it was lost on the assembly in general.

"I have only a few words to say," said Miss Locke. "It is maintained that the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women must lead in the course of time to the election of women members. That is quite certain, and I admit it freely. It is our aim to send members to Westminster."

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "That's straight from the shoulder, anyway."

"There are many abuses in society which can only be dealt with by women," explained Miss Locke. "The underfeeding of children, for instance. Men do not understand these matters, or realize their importance. If women were in Parliament I firmly believe that there would not be a starving child in England to-day. Every woman is a mother at heart—and the poor children of our slums require mothering. Men will talk, and talk, and talk—but they will do nothing. Action is required; therefore I propose extending the Parliamentary franchise to women."

The gathering gasped.

They had always been under the impression that women talked, and talked, and talked, and the men did things. Miss Locke appeared to hold an opposite view. Some of the fellows looked very thoughtful.

"Then there are the conditions under which girls work in factories—yes, and mothers of families, too," said Miss Locke. "One gentleman has very truly said that the proper place for women is the home. I fully agree with him. But I should be glad to be informed how a woman can remain at home and work in a factory at the same time. I assure my friend that the suffragettes, as a party, have this great principle to maintain—that a woman's proper place is the home. They want

to make homes healthy, and happy, so that the women of England can live in them, and remain in their proper place. Men have governed this country for the whole period since the English have been a nation, considerably more than a thousand years. They have not yet abolished sweating, and child and women labour in factories. They have not yet abolished poverty. They have not yet abolished still more terrible evils. Give the women a chance."

"My hat!" murmured Wingate. "I—I never looked at it like that before."

"Men have tried for a thousand years, and failed miserably," said Miss Locke. "During that time the women have waited. Can you wonder at it that they are tired of waiting?"

There was silence.

"Give the women a chance," said Miss Locke firmly. "They ask equal rights—an equal voice in making the laws that govern them. An equal voice in voting for taxes they help to pay. That is all. They ask for a fair share of power, so they can make the home really a home—because they maintain that a woman's proper place is the home. I have finished."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Harry Wharton.

And there were loud cheers. Whether the fellows agreed with Miss Locke or not, they were carried away by her earnest, beautiful face, and her evident sincerity. It was plain to even the most obstinate that a suffragette was not necessarily a hard-featured virago with a taste for hearing her own voice in public.

Wingate put the resolution to the meeting. But it was not passed. Masculine prejudices revived in time, and it was defeated. An amendment was put to the effect that that meeting was opposed to the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women, and carried.

Miss Locke smiled.

She did not care which way the resolution went. She had made the boys think on a subject upon which, previously, they had only had unthinking prejudices. And that was her object.

So while the more obtuse male mind fancied that it had its way, the girl had achieved her purpose all the same—as often happens.

And the meeting broke up—with Miss Locke openly defeated and secretly victorious—and the boys dispersed, excitedly discussing the affair, and all agreed upon one point—that for the first time in its history the Sixth Form Debating Society had had an interesting debate.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. Temple Means Business.

TEMPLE, DABNEY & Co., of the Upper Fourth, had been whispering together a great deal during the meeting of the debating society, and after it was over they adjourned to Temple's study, and whispered and grinned still more. Temple, Dabney & Co. were down on female suffrage, with a very heavy down. And a "jape" had entered the mind of the captain of the Upper Fourth, which he was discussing with his chums, for the discomfiture of the suffragists who might be found within the walls of Greyfriars.

And the next morning Temple, Dabney & Co. were looking very mysterious.

Harry Wharton and his chums noticed it, and as any plotting on the part of the Upper Fourth was generally up against the Remove, they took some interest in the matter.

But they soon learned that it was not the Remove that Temple & Co. intended to "rag" this time. Temple, in fact, was quite willing to share his new "wheeze" with the Remove. He broached the subject to Harry Wharton in the common-room after school.

"We've got a little game on, Wharton," he said, confidentially. "If you Remove kids like to come into it, you can. It will be ripping fun. Will you come in?"

"That depends. What's the wheeze?"

"It's up against the suffragettes."

"Against Miss Locke, do you mean?" asked Harry, frowning. Temple chuckled, not noticing the frown.

"Well, yes, in a way. Have you heard that Miss Locke is giving a lecture this evening, in the Lecture Hall?"

"Yes, there's a notice up."

"The subject is 'The Enfranchisement of Women,' and discussion is invited," said Temple, with a grin. "Our idea is to hold a little discussion. You know how the suffragettes bust up meetings, and won't let speakers speak, and keep on ragging till they're chucked out. Well, our idea is to work off the same 'wheeze' at this meeting, see? What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

"You ought to put it the other way round in this case," grinned Fry. "What's sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose."

"Ha, ha, ha! It was Fry thought of this last night, Wharton, and this lecture Miss Locke is announcing gives us a chance to work out the idea. We're going to have a banner with the word 'Votes for——' "

"Hold on," said Fry. "Don't you tell the wheeze unless Wharton is coming in to it."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

Temple nodded.

"Quite right. What do you say, Wharton? It would be a howling joke to work off suffragette methods on the giddy suffragettes."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"You'd better not tell me any more," he said. "I'm against it. I don't believe in being rude to women under any circumstances—excuse me, but it's better to speak plain English."

"Yes, but they bust up men's meetings."

"Only some of them. Some of the suffragettes are off their rockers; there's no doubt about that, and they want a padded cell apiece, very likely," said Harry. "But there's another sort—like Miss Locke. They're a more sensible sort, and they're much more numerous, too, though the others make more row. I suppose you can't imagine Miss Locke fighting with a steward at the Albert Hall."

"Ha, ha—no! But the whole thing ought to be put down, you know."

"Why?"

"Well, because—because it ought, you know. A woman's proper place is the home," said Temple, with an air of wisdom.

"Yes, but there are hundreds of thousands of women in England who haven't homes, or only homes fit for pigs to live in. Miss Locke says her party want to make the homes fit for women to live in."

"Ye-es, but—but—you see, old chap, if you let 'em start, you never know where it will end. I believe in keeping women in their places. Anyway, it's a jolly good wheeze, and the banner we are making in Fry's study will make the fellows simply yell. We'd like you kids to back us up—you can yell louder than we can, and we want to make a dickens of a row."

"Can't be did! And I warn you that if you are going to interrupt Miss Locke, and spoil her lecture, I shall be against you all the time."

Temple snorted.

"A lot that will matter to us," he said. "If you Remove kids want a row, you can have it, and it will make it all the merrier."

And so the discussion ended.

Harry Wharton went to look for his chums, and found them reading the notice on the board. The notice briefly stated that with the Head's permission, Miss Locke would give an address on the Enfranchisement of Women, at eight o'clock, in the Lecture Hall, and all were invited.

"More trouble," grinned Bob Cherry. "There's a lot of fellows mean to interrupt, and give Miss Locke some Albert Hall business."

"I'm for law and order," said Nugent. "Give everybody a chance. I don't believe in votes for women, but let 'em talk if they want to. It's a woman's privilege to talk, and a fellow's not bound to listen."

"The logicfulness of my honourable chum is terrific," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The talkfulness is unobjectionable, so long as the listenfulness is not compulsory."

"Faith, and ye're right," said Micky Desmond. "But sure this suffragettism ought to be stamped out with a firm hand, intirely. And what are ye grinnin' at now, ye spalpeens."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "Do you stamp with your hand, Tipperary?"

"Faith, and I—"

"Oh, rats," said Harry. "Look here the Upper Fourth are going to wreck the meeting if they can. I'm against that."

"You're generally against something or somebody," Bob Cherry remarked. "It's a little way you've cultivated all your life."

Harry turned red.

"Look here, Bob—"

"Oh, it's all right; don't get ratty. If the Upper Fourth are going to wreck the meeting, we'll turn up in force and wreck the Upper Fourth," said Bob cheerfully. "It really isn't of much consequence which side we're on, so long as we make the Upper Fourth hop."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Good! That's my idea—we're up against Temple & Co., anyway—and if we can shove in some defence of beauty in distress, all the better."

"Exactly. We'll turn up in force at the meeting, and as soon as the Upper Fourth start, we'll start."

"The startfulness will be terrific."

"Good! We'll pass the word along to all the Form."

And they did! The Greyfriars Remove received the news with mingled feelings. A great many of the juniors would rather have joined with Temple, Dabney & Co. in ragging the suffragette. But the prospect of a row with the Upper Fourth was very tempting. A free fight in the Lecture Hall might very easily come to pass, and such a thing was too unique to be missed.

Bulstrode and his set growled, and declared they'd side with Temple anyway; but, as a matter of fact, they would not venture to do anything of the sort. With all their faults, the Removites had one great virtue—they stood by one another through thick and thin in all matters outside the Form. A fellow who had sided against his Form in any row would have led a very unhappy life at Greyfriars afterwards.

To find themselves the champions of law and order was a novel experience to the most reckless and unruly Form at Greyfriars, and they rather enjoyed it.

Meanwhile, Miss Locke was quite unaware of the intentions of the two junior Forms. She was thinking of her lecture.

Dr. Locke, who was very fond of his youngest sister, had given his consent to the lecture, with many inward misgivings.

Whether suffragism was right or wrong, he felt that Greyfriars was not exactly the place for theories on the subject to be propounded.

But Miss Locke's views were different.

She believed in training the youthful mind, and opening the intelligence of the boys while they were young enough to learn to think for themselves.

And the Head had not liked to refuse, especially as his sister was leaving Greyfriars on the following day. And so the lecture was to be given.

There was a great deal of excitement at Greyfriars as the time fixed for the lecture drew near. All the Forms had decided to turn up. There was a general feeling that something would happen, a kind of electricity in the air. And no one was inclined to miss it, whatever might happen. Seniors and juniors looked forward to the lecture with great keenness.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Votes for Schoolboys.

"DON'T shove!"

"Get out of the way, then!"

"Get out of the way yourself!"

"Rats!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear——"

"If you are looking for a prize nose——"

"Lemme pass!"

"Go and eat coke!"

These, and other remarks of a similar complimentary nature were freely made at the door of the Lecture Hall some time before the hour announced for the lecture on the important subject of the enfranchisement of women.

The juniors meant to get good places; and as there weren't enough good places for all of them, a considerable amount of pushing and shoving resulted.

Temple, Dabney & Co., and the rest of the Upper Fourth, meant to get in first when the door was opened, and the Remove meant to do the same.

The scuffle at the door was warm, and grew warmer. Wingate of the Sixth came along with a cane to see what was the matter.

"Quiet, there, you young rascals!"

"It's these cheeky kids shoving, Wingate!"

"It's these Upper Fourth rotters won't take their faces away, Wingate!"

Harry Wharton & Co. squeezed through the doorway, and raced for the front seats. The foremost rows were reserved for the seniors, and could not be taken. Of the junior seats, Harry and his chums had the best. After them came a rush of the Remove, with Upper Fourth fellows in hot pursuit.

Bob Cherry stood up on his chair and waved his cap.

"Come on!" he shouted. "Bag the seats! Buck up, Remove!"

"On the ball!"

The Remove certainly bagged the best seats. They meant business, and they used fists and elbows with great effect.

The juniors streamed in, and the Remove were mostly well to the front. The front row, as a matter of fact, was wholly filled by Removites. There sat Harry Wharton & Co., and the yellow face of Wun Lung the Chinese grinned beside the dusky countenance of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

As the seniors began to come in, the din among the juniors died away a little. Wingate and Carberry and Long shouted to them to be quiet, and they obeyed more or less, and the prefects sat down with great dignity. The Sixth Form row filled up, and the Fifth. Blundell and Bland and their friends looked ripe for mischief; but as members of a senior Form, they felt they could not be guilty of too much ragging. They had their dignity in the eyes of the juniors to consider. But most of them were very much in sympathy with Temple, Dabney & Co.

There was a hush in the hall as the door at the upper end opened, and Miss Locke entered. The girl looked very sweet in her plain dress, with her hair done in a simple and becoming fashion. She looked at the audience with a cheery smile, and won many hearts before she had said a word.

Then Wingate rose, with a very pink face. The captain of Greyfriars had consented to act as chairman, and the encourag-

ing remarks he received from the audience did not add to his self-possession.

"Go it, Wingate!"

"On the ball, old chap!"

Wingate stammered a few words. He did not quite know what they were, and the hearers did not quite know, but they cheered him. They were always ready to cheer Wingate, the most popular fellow in the school.

Then Miss Locke rose and faced the audience. The girl was very pleased to see the room so full, and she glanced over row after row of eager and excited faces.

It was not merely the lecture on the enfranchisement of the gentle sex that caused the excitement; but Miss Locke did not know that.

The girl began in her quiet, clear voice that, without apparent effort, reached distinctly to every corner of the room.

"I am glad to see so many friends here," she said. "I know I can depend upon a courteous hearing even from those who do not agree with me. I shall not make a long speech; and when I have finished, I shall be glad to answer any objections anyone here desires to raise. The subject of the lecture is the enfranchisement of women, and I intend to give a brief sketch of the history of the movement, and then point out the chief objections to the present system, which gives a vote to Charles Peace, and denies one to Florence Nightingale."

"Hear, hear!" said a dozen Removites.

Temple of the Fourth Form stood up.

"Is it in order to ask a question?" he said.

"No," grunted Wingate; "not till the end of the lecture."

"May I speak one word? With all possible respect to Miss Locke personally, it is a well-known fact that when a member of the gentler sex begins talking, she never leaves off until interrupted——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Upper Fourth, and most of the Remove, too.

"Therefore, with Miss Locke's permission, I will ask a single question now. At the end of the lecture I may be carried from the hall in a state of exhaustion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Locke coloured ever so little.

"I have no objection to a question now, if the audience desire it," she said. "It is not in order, but my wish is to convince, not to merely uphold rules. Master Temple may ask his question, with the chairman's permission."

"Fire away," said the chairman.

"Thank you," said Temple victoriously. Temple had nerve enough for a regiment of dragoons, and the fact that every eye in the hall was fixed upon him did not worry him in the least. "Miss Locke maintains that women should have voting rights equal to man."

"Unquestionably."

"Although intellectually inferior?"

Miss Locke smiled.

"Women as a rule are prevented by circumstances from being as candid as they would wish," she said. "But every woman in an independent position, I think, who can venture to speak her mind, will maintain that woman is intellectually the equal of man. It is perhaps a slightly different kind of intellectuality, but there is no question of a difference in quality."

"But men maintain that women are not fit to govern."

"Possibly—but that does not alter the fact."

"Then women should be given votes, in spite of the men's belief that they are not intellectually fit to exercise the right with discretion?"

"Decidedly. Give them a chance."

"That being made clear," said Temple, with a lurking grin, "I come to the question I wish to ask Miss Locke. Does she approve of votes for children?"

"Votes—for—children?"

"Yes. Votes for schoolboys, for instance."

"Certainly not."

The hall was quiet enough now. The fellows began to see Temple's drift, and they were enjoying the joke.

"May I ask why not?" asked Temple, in a honeyed voice.

"Because children's intellect is not sufficiently developed for them to exercise the right of voting with discretion."

"But that is exactly the argument used by the average man towards the woman's claim to a vote—that the woman is not sufficiently developed intellectually to exercise the right of voting with discretion."

Miss Locke was silent.

"In reply to that contention, you say, give them the vote whether they're fit or not," said Temple, "and give them a chance. I suggest that on the same grounds votes should be given to schoolboys, whether they are fit or not—give 'em a chance."

"Hear, hear!" roared the delighted juniors.

"Can Miss Locke give me an answer?"

"The whole question raised is absurd," said Miss Locke.

"That is no answer. It would be easy for a man to say that a woman's claim to the suffrage is wholly absurd, but the

suffragettes would not accept that as a settlement of the question."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Master Temple—"

"I challenge Miss Locke to adduce a single reason for giving the suffrage to women which is not an equally good reason for giving it to children," said Temple.

"Hear, hear!"

Miss Locke's lips tightened with vexation.

The whole audience was laughing, and Temple was considered to have scored. Dabney was unwinding a banner from under his jacket, and several juniors were helping him to pull it out. It was a large banner, with an inscription on it in letters nearly a foot high.

"Miss Locke will now proceed with the lecture," said Wingate. But there was a shout.

"Answer! Answer! Answer old Temple first!"

"Why shouldn't schoolboys have votes?"

"Don't shirk the question!"

"Really—" said Miss Locke.

Temple was on his feet again.

"Unless the question is satisfactorily answered," he said, "I consider it my duty to denounce the whole woman's suffrage movement as humbug!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Women are claiming a right which they are not willing to extend to schoolboys, intellectually a much superior class of the population—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If every new class asking a vote is to be a judge of its own fitness, then I maintain that schoolboys ought to have the vote, and I am sure that there is not a schoolboy in Great Britain and Ireland who will not agree with me."

"Faith, and it's right ye are!"

"Hurrah!"

"Votes for schoolboys!"

"No gammon! Justice all round!"

"We only ask for justice," said Temple, humorously parodying a suffragette speech. "We ask for bare justice. Why should not a schoolboy claim equal rights with a woman? Taxation without representation is tyranny. We do not pay direct taxes, I admit; but we pay indirect taxes as much as grown-ups. There is a duty on tea, for instance, and we pay a tax every time we have tea in the study. There is a tax on tobacco, and the Third Form fags pay that tax in the price of the cigarettes, when they go behind the chapel to get out of the way of the prefects and have a smoke."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As a schoolboy, I object to injustice towards my class. Votes for schoolboys, or there will be trouble. I scorn the insinuation that schoolboys are intellectually inferior to grown-ups!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah!"

"The Upper Fourth at this school have formed a Schoolboys' Social and Political Union, with the object of securing the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to schoolboys. Grown-ups have governed this country since England was a nation, a period of considerably over a thousand years. You can all see the mess they have made of things. School-children in the poorer districts suffer from starvation and cold and things. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, would this state of affairs long continue if schoolboys were represented in Parliament?"

"No, no!"

"And I frankly admit," went on Temple, with superb coolness, "that our object is not merely to secure votes, but to secure seats in Parliament. The country will never be well governed until an equal number of boys sit at Westminster with the grown-ups to help make the laws."

The audience simply yelled. Even Miss Locke was laughing now. Logic—of a sort—was on Temple's side, and the whole

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thing was very funny, at all events. And most of the audience did not see how Temple was to be satisfactorily answered by the suffragette.

"Too long, too long," said Temple eloquently, "one half of the nation has groaned in servitude. The children form a good half of the nation, and they are totally unrepresented in Parliament. Think of it—half a nation deprived of votes in a country that is supposed to be governed on democratic principles! Gentlemen, the time has come to strike. We have waited for a thousand years. Can you wonder that we are tired of waiting?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple seemed to have made a note of Miss Locke's sentences at the debating society meeting, for the purpose of turning them against her.

"I am done," said Temple. "But I must say this—we want deeds, not words. Yes, gentlemen, deeds, not words. It is all very well for the women to say that when they have the vote they will look after us. We are quite able to look after ourselves. Votes for schoolboys—or war! No suffragette meeting within the precincts of Greyfriars will be allowed to proceed until their programme includes votes for schoolboys!"

"Hear, hear!"

Then the banner, till then hidden, was raised and flaunted by the Upper Fourth. It was a huge strip of red twill, fastened on canes, and bore in huge white letters

"VOTES FOR SCHOOLBOYS!"

The whole hall rang with laughter. Wingate shouted for order, but he was not even heard.

"Deeds, not words!" yelled the Upper Fourth. "Votes for schoolboys! Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet. He had been laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks, but he remembered that he was there as a champion of law and order, and fair play for suffragettes.

"Chuck them out!" he shouted.

"Order!"

"Hurrah! Deeds, not words! Votes for schoolboys!"

"Line up, Remove!"

"Chuck them out!"

And, led by Harry Wharton, the Removites scrambled over the chairs at their old foes, and a wild and whirling conflict was soon raging. The banner was torn down and trampled on, and the rivals scrambled and rolled hither and thither, wrestling and pummelling and yelling. The din was terrific.

"Chuck them out!"

"Votes for schoolboys!"

"Hurrah! Deeds, not words! Votes for schoolboys!"

The struggling crowd swayed towards the door. Order, it was utterly impossible to restore. Seats were overturned, fellows sprawled in every direction, and dozens were fighting at once. The Remove put their beef into it, and the Upper Fourth went streaming through the doorway.

And then two or three masters and prefects came on the scene with canes, and although order was not restored, the combatants were dispersed, and at last the pandemonium died away.

But the wreckers had succeeded in their object; after the terrific disturbance it was impossible to deliver the lecture, especially as most of the audience were gone. Miss Locke had retired, and the lights were turned out in the Lecture Hall. Harry Wharton & Co. had played up like Britons and done their best; but the wreckers had scored, and for an hour or more the Upper Fourth celebrated their triumph by parading the Close under the stars and yelling "Votes for Schoolboys!"

THE END.

Next Tuesday:

Another Splendid, Complete School Tale of

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Please order your copy of "THE MAGNET" Library in advance.

PRICE ONE HALFPENNY.

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. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard transfers into the Ploughshares, while 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. 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 told that in due time he will be court-martialled. One day Sligo has a letter from his wife, describing how, while cleaning out a certain set of offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields, she discovered a dusty document under a safe, relating to Tom Howard's affairs, and that Sergeant Hogan, a former servant of Colonel Dashwood's, with whom Mrs. Sligo was acquainted, had joyfully affirmed that it established Jack Dashwood's claim to the Colonel's estates. This letter Sligo maliciously shows to Leonard Dashwood, who manages to destroy it, together with one from Sergeant Hogan to Tom Howard. The latter forms one of a party of wounded which is proceeding to the base hospital, under the command of Leonard Dashwood. The party is attacked and badly cut up. During the fight Dashwood attempts to murder Howard, but finds himself observed by Sligo. Bill Sloggett's suspicions are also aroused. On reaching camp again, Sligo visits Lieutenant Dashwood in his tent, and demands £100 blackmail "on account."

(Now go on with the story.)

Dick Vivian Has Suspicions.

Leonard Dashwood smiled sardonically as he unbuttoned his jacket, and felt for the money-belt that encircled his waist.

"I am going to give you five pounds now," he said; "the rest you shall have when we get down to the plains again."

Sligo's hand closed on the money, and Leonard Dashwood drew a quick sigh of relief. He was going to get out of it cheaply, then, after all; but Sligo's next words dispelled that illusion.

"That won't do for me," he said, in a very businesslike tone, that was not lost on the lieutenant. "There's such things as IOU's, and you're goin' to give me one now for ninety-five quid. Think I trust you further than I can see you? Besides, who knows whether you're coming out alive?"

Leonard Dashwood registered a mental vow that Alf Sligo's bones should whiten among those rocky valleys, and Sligo interpreted the gleam in his eye.

"Yus, I know what you're thinkin' about; and if you put me through it, it'll be somethin' for the missus and the kid. Oh, the kid's dead, by the way! Well, it'll be all the more for the missus. 'I O U ninety-five pounds,' and my name and yours to appear on the paper. I see Mr. Vivian coming this way, so 'urry up."

Leonard looked at him for a moment.

"Very well," he said, "you shall have it!"

And, tearing a leaf out of his notebook, he wrote some words upon it in pencil, folded it across the middle, thrust it into Sligo's hand, and hustled him out of the tent.

"Clear off quickly," he whispered. "It won't do for you to be found here."

And Sligo saluted and marched off, dodging round the tent before Dick Vivian reached it.

Dick had some communication to make to his brother officer on regimental matters, and stood in the doorway of the tent to deliver his message. Leonard had sat down on a camp-stool, and listened to him haughtily; but Dick was suddenly aware that his eyes dilated and his face grew green as he looked past him and, turning round, Dick found Alf Sligo at his elbow.

Alf Sligo was standing at attention, but as Dick looked at him the boy's sharp eye intercepted a very obvious wink.

"Hallo!" thought Dick Vivian; and as he had not concluded the business on which he had come, there was a momentary pause.

"I'll attend to you presently," said Leonard Dashwood, in a curious voice, at the same time drawing his handkerchief from his sleeve and mopping his forehead.

"All right, sir," said Sligo, with a familiarity in his tone that made Dick open his eyes. "It is only that you forgot to put my name on the paper, sir."

He fell back a pace, but happening to hold the incriminating document open in his hand, Dick Vivian could not help seeing the letters "IOU" upon it, and from the start he gave Leonard Dashwood knew he had seen.

Dashwood stretched his arm out.

"Give it me!" he said, almost snatching it from Sligo's fingers; and scribbling in the purposely omitted name, he handed it back to him.

Sligo saluted with perfect gravity, swang round on his heel, and went his way.

"Reckon I had him there," he laughed to himself; and so pleased was he with the success of his effrontery, that he went along with his head in the air, and the little scrap of paper held negligently between his finger and thumb. He was dreaming dreams, was Alf Sligo.

In the meantime, Leonard Dashwood thought it imperative that he should give some explanation to Vivian, for Dick's face had grown suddenly cold, and he stood there, with an unlighted cigarette between his lips, staring at his old schoolfellow with undisguised astonishment.

"That's the worst of doing a brute like that a good turn," said Leonard, feeling for his cigar-case. "I was fool enough to give his wife some money before we left Aldershot"—Leonard fortunately remembered the existence of Mrs. Alf Sligo at that moment—"and he's been on my track ever since."

He drew out a cigar and bit the end off, looking up furtively to see what effect his words had on Master Vivian.

"Ninety-five pounds seems rather a lot of money to dispense in charity, Dashwood," said Dick, his lips curving in a contemptuous curve. "You used not to be so generous."

For a moment he thought that Dashwood would have sprung upon him, for his dark eyes blazed, and he made a convulsive forward movement that nearly brought the camp-stool down with a crash.

"Look here, I say," said Dick, "we'll not have any of that sort of thing, if you please. I couldn't help seeing the IOU, you know, when that fellow held it under my very nose. Of course, it's not my business, but the whole thing seems very strange. I'm just going over to see how poor old Jack is getting on. Don't forget the adjutant wants that return at once."

And the next moment Leonard Dashwood was staring out of the tent door, all the bustle and the hum of the camp beyond it very blurred and misty to his bloodshot eyes.

"By thunder, I shall find myself in no end of a fix, unless something happens!" he muttered.

NEXT
TUESDAY.

"BUNTER'S VENGEANCE."

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By Frank Richards.

How the Colonel of the Ploughshires Found Something.

Colonel Martin, commanding the Ploughshires, was a little, active, wiry man, who loved his regiment more than anything else in the world. It was well known that he was writing its history, and wherever Colonel Martin went a bulky notebook went with him, in which he was always jotting down fresh facts and figures, to be incorporated in the great work.

About half an hour after Dick Vivian left Dashwood's tent, the colonel chanced to pass through the camp, in the same direction that Alf Sligo had taken, a very large solar helmet on his head, and his keen, grey eyes dancing right and left and up and down in a restless manner peculiar to him.

It would have been surprising if he had not seen the leaf of a notebook lying on the ground, and it would have been more surprising if he had not stooped his stiff little back and picked it up.

No good Mohammedan ever passes a piece of paper in the road without examining it, lest there should chance to be some words of the Koran written upon it; and Colonel Martin was something like a good Mohammedan in that respect. He had once lighted upon a muster-roll of the Ploughshires about to be cut up for pipe-lights at a little fishing inn on the Hampshire Itchen, and the original warrant for raising the regiment had come into his possession in an equally unexpected manner. So, as a matter of long habit, when the colonel's eyes saw the little blue-lined fragment nestling against the tent-peg, he stooped and picked it up, and screwed his glass in his right eye.

"Alfred Sligo, I O U." Pish! said the colonel. "What rot is this? Hallo! 'Ninety-five pounds!' Wish somebody owed me ninety-five pounds. By gad, I could do with it! What's this? 'Leonard C. Dashwood!'"

The colonel came to a dead stop, read the paper over again, frowned blackly, and, drawing out his notebook, placed it carefully inside the front page. This was a scrap of regimental information that he had never expected. And the next thing was to find out what it meant, and who Alfred Sligo might be.

He continued his walk thoughtfully, still frowning, and found himself among the horses of the 25th Hussars, which Colonel Greville was inspecting at that moment.

"Ah, how are you, Martin?" said the cavalry colonel. "Come to have a look at my nags?"

"Well, it was not my intention," said the chief of the Ploughshires. "But they are always worth looking at!"

Colonel Greville passed the unintentional flattery without noticing it, for he had just seen something that had attracted his attention and roused his ire.

"Sergeant-major," he said, very sternly to that functionary, "who does this mare belong to? We're within half an inch of a sore back there. That's nothing but abominable neglect."

"Sergeant Clavering," said Middleton, looking at the mare's hoofs, "whose is B 32?"

"Trooper Sligo's, sir," said Jim Clavering. "But he's only just rejoined from hospital. She has been ridden by Trooper Sligo."

The colonel of the 25th ordered Trooper Sligo to be instantly produced, for a sore back was an inexcusable offence in his eyes; and that he should have discovered it in the presence of the infantry colonel, added fuel to his annoyance.

"Who did you say that horse belonged to, Greville?" said Colonel Martin gasping.

"A man named Sligo—Alfred Sligo," returned the colonel testily—"a bad soldier whom I should be very glad to be rid of!"

"Thanks, I've no vacancies," smiled Colonel Martin grimly. Then, dropping his voice: "You've already loaded one waster on to me."

There was something in his voice that made Colonel Greville look at him.

"Meaning young Dashwood, I suppose?"

"Precisely," said the chief of the Ploughshires, drawing out his pocket-book. "Can you tell me what possible connection Dashwood can have with one of your troopers? The name of Sligo is uncommon. The Christian names are the same. And Dashwood was formerly in your regiment."

"What on earth are you driving at?" said Colonel Greville, considerably mystified.

And the chief of the Ploughshires handed him the I O U without replying.

Colonel Greville read it as Colonel Martin had done, and he also frowned.

"Well?" said Colonel Martin, after a long pause, during which the cavalry man gnawed at his moustache, and stared

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at the leaf of the notebook with a far-away look in his eyes, as though he were looking through and far beyond.

"By gad, Martin, it's very far from well!" he said suddenly. "There's a great deal beyond this. Would you have any objection to my keeping it for a little while?"

"Not the least in the world. But what do you mean? Is it something that you can tell me, or would you rather keep it to yourself?"

"It's something that you ought to know—something of great importance. It seems to me that I've got the clue in this paper to a mystery that I despaired of solving. Will you come to my tent and have a peg? I have almost finished here."

And, careful horse-master as he was, I am compelled to admit that the remainder of Colonel Greville's inspection on that occasion was of a very brief and hurried nature.

What occurred in the colonel's tent I know not; but the sergeant-major was sent for, and later, Jim Clavering, and the two colonels and the non-commissioned officers held lengthy conclaves for a considerable time, with results that were to bode ill for two of the characters in this narrative.

While Colonel Greville was still interrogating the two non-coms., one of the aforesaid characters blundered unceremoniously into the tent of the other.

"Mr. Dashwood," exclaimed Alf Sligo, his face betraying abject terror, "I've lost that I O U, and I can't find it nowhere!"

Leonard Dashwood had just finished the report, for which the adjutant was then waiting, and looked up, pen in hand, as Alf Sligo blurted out this alarming intelligence.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "You've done it now!"

"Yus, I know," stammered Sligo, whose craven soul was trembling within him. "But I can't help it, Mr. Dashwood. I don't know 'ow it 'appened. I got back to our lines, and the paper was gone. I've been through all my pockets, and walked back the same way I went, but it's gone, and there's an end of it!"

"That's where you make the mistake," said Leonard drily. "If that falls into the hands of anybody who knows our two names, and can put two and two together, both you and I will find that it's only just the beginning. Anyway, you'll lose your money, don't forget that. It's no good you coming here and trying to bluster the thing over my head. What we've got to do now is to get out of the trouble the best way we can. It's no good mincing matters. I'll be perfectly straight with you!"

"I will do anything I can if you'll only tell me what to do, sir," said Sligo, thoroughly cowed, and almost on the verge of tears.

Leonard leaned his elbows on the little camp table, and covered his face with his hands. It served a double purpose, for it hid the expression that came into his face from the furtive eyes of his confederate.

Sligo was evidently in mortal terror, and Leonard intended that he should remain in that very desirable condition, and not get the whip-hand any more.

"You see," he said, looking up suddenly, "if it comes out, we are both ruined. But it'll be worse for you than it will for me. I can clear. But directly that saddle-cutting is brought home to you, as it most certainly would be, off you go to chink, my boy. Hold on; I've not finished. Shut that ugly mouth of yours—you've opened it too wide already. If you go to chink and I do a guy, it will be because the whole thing has come out, while you haven't as much hold over me as would cover a threepenny bit."

Leonard was rubbing it in strong, knowing that all the time, to a certain extent, he was talking through his hat. But it seemed to him that the first thing to do was to restore this troublesome beast to a proper condition of subjection, and the first possible moment to return to England and endeavour to recover possession, by fair means or foul, of the document that would rob him of his ill-gotten gains. He had already decided in his mind to go sick, and get sent down to hospital. After that it would not be difficult to be invalided home. But in the meantime he could take a preliminary step towards securing the tell-tale document; and the man before him was the man for the job.

"You will have to write to your wife, Sligo," said Leonard Dashwood. "The I O U may be found, it may not. We shall have to chance our luck for the present. I will dictate a letter for you. I suppose you can write?"

"Yus, I can write," said Sligo, very submissive, and eager to grasp any way out of the difficulty.

"Well, every man has his price, and every woman, too, and I don't suppose Mrs. Alfred Sligo is any exception to the rule. I shall give you a banker's draft for fifty pounds, which you shall send to her. If she can get hold of that paper from Hogan's hands it will be worth a thousand pounds to you. Remember that. Anyway, it's worth trying."

ANSWERS

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NEXT
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"BUNTER'S VENGEANCE."

A School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By Frank Richards.

"You are a sharp one, Mr. Dashwood, you are" said Sligo, admiration in his voice.

"I should have been sharper if I had left you alone," said Leonard bitterly. "But it's no good crying over spilt milk. Come to me again, or—no, better not. I will write the letter myself, and you can add a few words at my dictation. I'm not going to trust you any more with my handwriting. Now, push off, until I give you the wink."

And Leonard buckled on his sword, preparatory to handing in his report to the adjutant, and Sligo returned to his own lines, pondering deeply over the future, and what the future might bring forth.

Trooper Alf Sligo Hears Things.

"The whole thing is inexplicable to me," said the colonel of the Ploughshires. "I'll be hanged if I can make head or tail of it. What earthly connection can there be between one of my officers and this trooper of yours, whose character, according to the evidence of his own sergeant, could hardly be worse? Dashwood is the only one of my young men with whom I am not in personal touch. But I'll have it out with him before I'm a day older! And, what's more, I'll have him out of the regiment, too! He's very unpopular, and gets on with nobody; although he's pretty keen on his work."

The colonel of the 25th puffed meditatively at his cheroot before he spoke.

"Look here, Martin," he said, at last, "if you will oblige me as a personal friend you will say nothing to Dashwood whatever."

"I don't understand you!" cried the Ploughshire colonel. "No, and the worst of it is I can't explain; at least, not yet. I happened to come into possession of a secret connected with another man; a strange page of family history, which I can't betray to you without betraying my trust. I am pretty confident that this I O U has a great deal to do with it, and it may be only a matter of a few hours before I discover the whole thing. Will you hold your hand, and leave it to me until I give you the result of my investigation?"

"Certainly, if you wish it, Greville"

But, although Colonel Greville spoke with an air of confidence, as soon as the colonel of the Ploughshires had left the shelter—really, a ground-sheet, supported on four sticks with a miscellaneous litter of camp-furniture beneath it, which the Hussar preferred to the luxury of a tent—his face clouded, and he realised the difficulty of bringing anything home to the man he suspected.

"It's the most difficult problem I've ever had to face in my life," he said to himself. "Here's a baronet masquerading as a corporal in his father's old regiment, and one of the best youngsters I've ever had under my command. On the other hand, there's his cousin, who, by some means or other—probably foul—has come into the money. That affair at Port Said was most suspicious, and then—By Jove, I've got it!" And the colonel smote the knee of his riding-breeches with a mighty smite. "That saddle-butting at Aldershot occurred in 'B' Squadron, and this fellow Sligo was the man who did it. Leonard Dashwood was the instigator of the whole business, and Sligo is blackmailing him. But how the dickens am I going to prove it? I wonder whether my baronet-corporal can throw any light on the matter?"

In an improvised shelter, not unlike Colonel Greville's own, made of blankets and ground-sheets strung over a picket-ropes, the colonel found Tom Howard, his wounded limb stretched straight out in front of him, and Dick Vivian sitting on a kitbag at his side. This was one of a long row of similar shelters, closely pitched together; and Alf Sligo, whose hut was next to Tom's, had crawled in a little before to ruminate over the position of affairs.

Dick sprang up, and blushed violently as the colonel's shadow fell across him.

"Don't incommode yourself, Mr. Vivian," said the colonel, returning Dick's salute. "How's the leg, Howard?"

"Much better, sir. I think I shall be able to ride in a couple of days."

"Hum!" said the colonel dubiously. "We will see what the doctor says to that. I hope you are right. We are going to advance directly, and you will be sorry to lose the fun!"

"Very sorry, sir," said Tom, as Dick edged clumsily away.

"Don't go, Mr. Vivian," said the colonel, glancing at the shelters to the right and left. "You are aware that I know who our friend here is. I want to ask you a question or two, corporal, about this outpost business, when you were carried off. You have a man named Sligo in your troop. Have you any reason to connect him with it any way? There's a rumour in the regiment that you were drugged."

Tom caught his breath.

"I am perfectly certain, sir. I should never have gone to sleep if I hadn't been."

The corner of the blanket of the next tent moved a little, and Sligo, who had lain as still as a mouse, thrust his ear forward, and over his face there spread a sickly hue. He knew that he was going to hear things, and trembled violently.

At the colonel's instigation, Tom recounted every incident of the night in question, and the result of Sergeant Clavering's interview with the medical officer.

"I don't think there's a doubt but that you were the victim of foul play, Howard," said the colonel gravely, "and very strong suspicion rests, in my mind, on this man Sligo. Is there any bad blood between you? Was he trying to work off old scores, do you think?"

"He's a bad soldier, sir, and I've had to be down on him a good deal, but nothing to justify such a thing as that," said Tom, hesitating to reveal what was in the back of his mind.

"Did you ever notice any connection between Sligo and Mr. Dashwood?"

Tom had not done so. If the colonel had been questioning Bill Sloggett it would have been different; but honest Bill had kept his own ideas to himself, and Tom did not know what he had seen.

"It's getting pretty 'ot!" thought Sligo, thrusting his head further forward, but keeping well concealed behind the blanket. "I wonder what Mr. Leonard would say if he knew what I'm listening to?"

And then an idea occurred to the sneaking hound.

A climax was approaching. It was evident from the colonel's questions that he suspected Leonard Dashwood of complicity, and Sligo began to turn over in his mind what he had better do. When Hogan wrote again—and he knew he would—there would be a crash, and, far from Leonard Dashwood proving a gold-mine in the future, he would turn out to be nothing but an empty "pocket." Even with the sword of Damocles hanging over his head, Sligo scented something to his own advantage.

Howard had proved himself a very generous, open-handed fellow since he joined, and if he—Alf Sligo—were to place in his possession all the facts of the case, he felt a-wondering how much Howard would give him. It would mean terrible exposure, and possibly he would be imprisoned. But money was the thing he longed for, and if there was money waiting for him when he came out, he could snap his fingers at everybody concerned, and rise to the height of his ambition, which was to keep a beerhouse in Hoxton.

(Another Long Instalment next Tuesday.)

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