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A TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.
BILLY BUNTER'S VENGEANCE.

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**



THE CHINEE'S JOKE !

"Ow !" gasped Billy Bunter. "The ghost—the g-g-g-ghost !"



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Bunter's Vengeance

A School Tale
of
Harry Wharton & Co.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

No Chance for Bunter.

"WHARTON! I say, Wharton, hold on a minute!"

"Can't stop a second, Billy!" said Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove at Greyfriars. "I've got to get to the football committee meeting."

"But, I say—"

"It's at seven, and it's three minutes to now."

"Yes, but it's important—"

"Sorry; can't stop!"

And Harry Wharton ran on, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after him indignantly through his big spectacles. Wharton disappeared along the Upper Fourth passage, and Bunter was still blinking after him, when Bob Cherry came along with huge strides, and walked right into the fat junior.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What are you getting in the way for, you ass?"

Bunter staggered against the wall, and gasped.

"Oh, really, Cherry, hold on a minute! I want to speak to you—"

"Can't stop. Got to attend the meeting of the football committee."

"Yes, but I say—I say, Cherry— Dear me, he's gone!"

Bob Cherry had disappeared.

"I'll jolly well follow them, anyway!" grunted Billy Bunter. "I'm not going to have an important matter shelved like this. They might have asked me to the committee meeting— Hallo, Bulstrode!"

"It isn't Bulstrode, ass!" said Frank Nugent. "And what are you blocking up the passage for, porpoise?"

"Hold on a minute! I want to speak to you—"

"Can't stop. I'm going to the committee meeting—"

"But it's about the football I want to speak."

"Well, you can speak about it if you like, but there's no need for me to stay here and listen. Good-bye!"

And Nugent eluded the fat junior, and hurried on.

"Well, of all the beasts!" murmured Billy Bunter, in utter disgust. "I can only suppose that they have seen me



study," said Hurree Singh. "But the presentfulness of the esteemed Bunter will be superfluous."

And Hurree Singh twisted himself away from the fat junior, and ran. Bunter rubbed his little, fat nose with a determined expression, and started down the passage after the dusky junior.

The Remove Football Club usually held its meetings in one of the Remove studies, but since the recent fire at Greyfriars, the Remove quarters had not been rebuilt. The rebuilding had commenced, but it was progressing slowly. Meanwhile, the Removites had no quarters that they could call their own, and Temple and Dabney of the Upper Fourth had lent their study for the purpose of the committee meeting.

Bunter had nearly reached the study door, when a junior came bolting along the passage, and ran into him and sent him flying. It was Trevor of the Remove. He ran into the study, and banged the door, and Billy Bunter sat up on the linoleum and gasped and blinked.

"Well, my word— Ow!"

Another junior was racing along after Trevor. It was Russell, also a committee-man, and also in a hurry. Seven had just struck. Russell fell right over the fat junior, and gave a yell.

at footer practice lately, and know how I am coming on, and are determined to make a set against me and keep me out of the Form eleven. Hallo! Is that you, Inky?"

"It is my honourable self, my worthy chum!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the amiable Nabob of Bhanipur. "But pray do not cause me the delayfulness, as I am expected at the august meeting of the football committee."

"Hold on a second! I wanted to be present at the committee-meeting—"

"The stopfulness is impossible—"

"Just a minute! Where are they holding the beastly meeting?" asked Bunter. "It is most important for me to be present."

"In the Honourable Dabney's study," said Hurree Singh. "But the presentfulness of the

"What's that—ow!—you dummy? What do you mean by lying about in the middle of a dark passage?"

"I—I—I'm sincerely sorry—"

"Well, that will make you sorrier!" said Russell; and, having gained his feet, he bestowed a powerful kick upon the plump form of Billy Bunter.

Bunter gave a yell, and rolled over on the linoleum, and Russell grinned and disappeared into Dabney's study. Billy Bunter slowly rose to his feet. His fat face was very wrathful.

"It's a set against me in the football club," he said aloud, "that's what it is. They know how I can play, and they're determined to keep me out. I'm not the kind of fellow to stand it."

And Billy Bunter thumped at the door of Dabney's study.

"Go away!" yelled a voice within.

Instead of going away, Bunter tried the handle, and the door opened. Six fellows were seated round the table in the study, and six glares of wrath were turned upon the fat junior.

"Get out!"

"I won't! I—"

"We don't want any ventriloquial entertainments now!" bawled Bob Cherry. "We don't want the latest thing in hypnotism. We don't want to know anything about physical culture, and we're all against thought-reading. Slide!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Slide!"

"It is very important that—"

Trevor jumped up and seized the poker. Bunter was outside the study in record time, and he banged the door after him. In the passage he paused to think.

The fat junior was glowering with wrath. He felt that he was being hardly treated. Bunter was an enthusiast in many things, and though his enthusiasms were, as a rule, shortlived, they were very strong while they lasted.

He had taken up many things in his time, and, as Bob Cherry expressed it, "made a muck of all of them." Ventriloquism had lasted the longest of all, and, as a matter of fact, Bunter had a little gift that way, which had been improved by incessant practice till he was now a very fair ventriloquist.

But, like the youth in the fable who cried "Wolf!" so often when there was no wolf, and was not believed when the wolf really came, Bunter found it impossible to make anybody believe in his ventriloquism.

Even on the occasions when he had induced fellows to listen to him, and had given a demonstration of his powers, they declared that there was some trickery in it; and, unfortunately for Bunter, his reputation as a veracious person did not stand high.

And so just lately he had rather dropped ventriloquism, and as all Greyfriars was talking football, Bunter had taken that up.

He was about as good at football as he was at flying, but he felt within himself the stuff of which first-class centre-forwards are made.

Hence his determination to make his claims heard at the meeting of the football committee of the Remove.

A Form match was about to take place between the Remove and the Upper Fourth. The rivalry was keen between the two junior Forms, and the Remove meant to leave no stone unturned to pull off the victory.

Bunter thought he could help. The trouble was that he couldn't find anybody in the Remove to agree with him on that point.

"Blessed if I'm going to stand it!" he muttered, as he stood in the passage and heard the murmur of the voices from the study within. "For the sake of the Form, I ought to be played against Temple's team, and they've no right to leave out a really good forward. I'll make them listen to reason."

And, with an extremely determined expression upon his face, the fat junior reopened the door of the study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Generous Offer Refused.

HARRY WHARTON was speaking when the fat junior came in. Wharton was looking serious. The selection of the team to play the Upper Fourth was no light task. There were various and conflicting claims, and it required a captain with a will of iron to keep steadily in view the important point—that the team should be a winning one. The young captain of the Remove felt his responsibility keenly.

"It isn't only the licking, if we're licked," he said, "but Temple, Dabney & Co. will crow. They'll say it was like our cheek to challenge an Upper Form. We shall look like a lot of cheeky youngsters who've got what they deserved. I tell you, kids, we've simply got to pull off this match."

"Yes, rather! Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's that porpoise again!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out!"

"I've got something awfully important to say on this very question," said Bunter. "You ought to listen. I suppose you want to beat the Upper Fourth?"

"Bunk!"

"Oh, let him speak!" said Wharton resignedly. "We'll give you a hearing, Bunter; but buck up, before we lose patience and chuck you out!"

Bunter blinked round upon the impatient assembly.

"I say, you fellows, it's awfully important, you know! It's about the football match. You want the strongest team you can get."

"Of course we do. Buck up!"

"I can't buck up if you hurry me. It throws me into confusion. You want the strongest team you can get. At such a time as this, I don't think that any small jealousies ought to be allowed to interfere with the selection of players."

Wharton turned red.

"What do you mean, you young ass?"

"I mean what I say. If there's a fellow in the Remove who can play footer rippingly, and hasn't had a chance yet, he ought to be given a trial. I don't think a team ought to be spoiled because a chap isn't given a chance. Of course, some present member would have to get out; but that can't be helped."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"There's something in what Bunter says," he remarked. "I think I know the chap he's alluding to, too. A chap who hasn't had a chance yet."

"That's it!" said Bunter, beaming. "I'm glad to see you taking this in the right spirit, Wharton."

"Oh rats!" said Harry. "Of course I should make any necessary alteration in the team to improve it."

"But it's your own place that would have to go, you know. Of course, you could play as a winger. You could take Russell's place."

"Thank you!" said Russell.

"If the chap were better than I am at centre-forward, he could have the place, and welcome," said Harry, "and I am willing to leave it to the committee. But I hardly think he's up to it. He used to play Rugger before he came to Greyfriars, and though he's picked up Soccer wonderfully well in a short time, I hardly know about putting him in the front line in a match like this."

"Eh? I don't quite make you out, Wharton. I never played Rugger in my life," said Bunter, blinking at the junior football captain.

Wharton stared at him.

"Who said you did, duffer?"

"Why, you were saying that—"

"I was speaking of Mark Linley, the chap from Lancashire."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of Linley. I was suggesting myself as centre-forward," said Billy Bunter modestly.

The committee looked at him. They seemed unable to credit their ears at first, but when they scanned the fat face of the Owl of the Remove, and realised that he was in earnest, a roar of laughter went up that seemed to shake the study walls.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked round indignantly. It certainly wasn't a flattering way to receive his valuable suggestion, but the committee could not help it. They roared, and roared, and roared again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry hysterically. "Bunty as centre-forward! We should have to roll him along!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sincerely sorry to see this spirit of petty jealousy"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" gasped Harry Wharton, wiping away his tears. "I believe Bunter will be the death of me yet!"

"Look here, you fellows—"

"He could get sixty pounds a week for doing these things on the stage," murmured Nugent. "Why don't you try the music-halls, Billy?"

"If you're going to refuse my offer—"

"Oh, we're going to accept it, of course!" said Trevor. "I can fancy a team with a spectacled porpoise as centre-forward!"

"Of course, all the fellows would have to be careful of my glasses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you can't do anything better than cackle at my suggestions, this discussion had better cease," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Much better!" agreed Bob Cherry. "Get out!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Go and do some more ventriloquism, old chap. You're less funny when you ventriloquise. Go and throw your voice out of window—and if you throw yourself after it, so much the better!"

"I shall let all the Form know that this committee is governed by jealousy and favouritism," said Billy Bunter. "Unless I am given a trial, I shall denounce this committee to all Greyfriars. I warn you."

"Thanks for the warning. Now bunk!"

"I shall hold you up to the finger of scorn—"

"Travel!"

"I shall point out the—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Harry, laughing. "Look here, we can't play you in the Form match, but I'll buy you a sugar football at Mrs. Mumble's when the meeting's over. Now get out, old chap!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Chuck him out, Bob, and lock the door!"

Bob Cherry rose to his feet.

Bunter did not wait to be "chucked" out; he left hurriedly, and Bob Cherry locked the door after him. Then the committee went on with the more serious business of the meeting.

Billy Bunter went down the passage with a wrathful countenance.

"I'll jolly well make them sit up!" he murmured. "I wish I hadn't got out of practice at hypnotism—I'd hypnotise the lot of them and make 'em squirm! By gum, though, I can make 'em squirm another way!"

Bunter suddenly stopped. He remembered that he was a ventriloquist, and he had already used his new powers successfully. By imitating Skinner's voice, for example, he had brought about a conflict between Skinner and Bulstrode, and avenged a good many injuries on both of them. What if he could play the same little game upon the football eleven of the Remove? His eyes sparkled behind his big glasses at the thought.

Bulstrode still believed, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that it was Skinner who had "slanged" him through a locked door, and Skinner had never been able to make the matter out. Skinner was still bearing the traces of his combat with Bulstrode. If the chums of the Remove could be set by the ears in the same manner, Bunter would be avenged indeed!

Billy Bunter did not stop to reflect upon the mean side of the scheme; he was feeling too deeply injured—and he never did reflect upon any matter till it was too late.

"My hat!" he muttered. "Could I do it? I rather think so. With my wonderful abilities as a ventriloquist, it will be as easy as falling out of bed. I'll jolly well make 'em squirm!"

And Bunter stepped into an empty class-room and began to practise. It was very gloomy in the class-room in the January evening, and very cold; but Bunter did not mind that. He started, and his voice echoed eerily through the empty room.

He imitated the clear, cultivated tones of Harry Wharton with marvellous facility, and it was undoubted that the fat junior had a gift that way. No one would have imagined that it was Bunter speaking. When he came to imitating Bob Cherry's louder and deeper tones his success was still more complete. He was still practising when he caught a sudden glow at the dark end of the class-room, and stopped suddenly.

"My—my hat! What—what—"

A face came glimmering out of the darkness, glowing with a strange phosphorescent light. It was a curious face, with a deathly white skin and the lips drawn back, showing a row of white teeth. No body was visible; nothing but the face, and at that terrible face Bunter gazed spellbound.

Without a sound it advanced towards him, and the fat junior, with a sudden gasp of terror, turned and bolted from the room.

He dashed along the passage at top speed, and did not hear a voice call to him, and did not stop till an iron grip was laid on his collar.

"Ow!" he gasped. "The ghost—the g-g-g-ghost! Leggo!"

"You young fool!" It was the hard, metallic voice of Ionides the Greek, the new Sixth-Former at Greyfriars, and the most unpopular senior there. "You nearly ran into me! What do you mean by dashing along like that?"

"The ghost!"

"Fool! What are you drivelling about?"

But Ionides the Greek changed colour. There was a vein of superstition in his nature, and the junior's terror was so genuine that it was evident that he had seen something.

"The ghost!" gasped Bunter.

"Where—but where?"

"In the class-room—there!"

Bunter wrenched himself away and ran. Ionides hesitated a moment, and then strode along to the class-room door. A diminutive figure was coming towards him; it was that of Wun Lung, the Chinese junior. Ionides glanced at him.

"Have you been in the class-room, boy?"

"No savvy."

"Have you seen anything unusual here?"

"No savvy."

Wun Lung never "savvied" when he didn't want to answer. The senior aimed a blow at him which the Chinese dodged. The little Celestial scuttled off down the passage, and Ionides hesitated at the door of the class-room.

But he did not enter.

He hesitated there a few seconds, and then walked uneasily away. Ionides the Greek was not of the stuff that ghost-hunters are made.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Eleven.

BULSTRODE was standing at the door of the junior common-room when Billy Bunter came up, still looking very scared from his strange experience in the class-room. Bulstrode dropped his hand upon Bunter's shoulder, and the fat junior started.

"Ow! I wish you wouldn't startle me like that, Skinner—"

"Ass! Do you know where Wharton is?"

"Oh, is it you, Bulstrode?" said Bunter, blinking at the bully of the Remove. "Yes, he's in Dabney's study, at the football committee-meeting. I say, Bulstrode—"

But Bulstrode was walking away. A couple of minutes later he was tapping at the door of Dabney's study.

The football committee had finished their deliberations, and Bob Cherry had unlocked the door. He was about to open it when the tap came, and he stopped. He made a sign to the others to be quiet.

"It's that fat villain again!" he muttered. "He hasn't had enough yet. Don't make a row. Let him come in, and I'll nab him."

Bob caught up the inkpot from the table.

He was looking and feeling vengeful. He had had enough interruptions from Bunter, and the cheek of the Owl! in returning to the charge exasperated him.

"The door opened, and Bulstrode put his head in.

"I say—oooooch!"

The contents of the inkpot flew in a stream at the intruder. Bulstrode, suddenly converted into a Christy Minstrel, staggered back with a yell.

Bob Cherry burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! Got him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Nugent. "You've got the wrong man!"

"Eh? What?"

"It's Bulstrode!"

"My only hat!"

The football committee shrieked with laughter.

Bulstrode glared into the study, nearly stuttering with rage. His furious face, streaming with black ink, was a curious sight to see.

"You—you—you beasts—"

"Sorry!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Quite a mistake! I thought it was that young ass Bunter bothering us again."

"It's a lie!"

Bob Cherry turned very red.

"Oh, shut up!" he said. "I suppose you're feeling rather excited; but if you say that again, you'll get something besides ink on your chivvy, I warn you."

Bulstrode did not say it again. He did not feel like fighting just then. He mopped his face with his hand.

kerchief, reducing it very quickly to an inky rag. Bob Cherry generously offered his own to help, and Bulstrode grabbed it, with a growl, and mopped away. His aspect when he was finished was peculiar, and the football committee could not help grinning.

"I'm sorry," said Bob Cherry again. "I really thought it was that fat young villain, and he's been interrupting us before. Of course, we weren't expecting a visit from anybody during a committee meeting."

Bulstrode sneered savagely.

"Of course not! Since Wharton has been at Greyfriars, he has stepped into my shoes in a good many ways, and he has shifted me off the football committee."

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton. "I was elected football captain by the whole Form, and that's an old story, too. What are you raking it up again for? And you don't go in much for footer, either."

"That's what I came here to speak about," said Bulstrode. "Last term I was shifted out of the committee and out of the team. I mean to play the game this term. If you don't intend to go by favouritism this time, I ought to have a chance."

"You can have as much chance as the rest; stick at the practice, and if you're better than a member of the team, you take his place for the matches."

"That's all very well; but it's pretty well known that you always look after your own friends first."

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"If you came here for a row, Bulstrode, you'd better say so out plainly. If not, what do you want?"

"I want my old place in the team. You can say what you like, but you know jolly well my footer is all right. I want my place, to play the Upper Fourth at the Form match."

Wharton shook his head.

"That's impossible. You might have a chance for the next match, but the eleven for the Form match on Saturday is made up."

"I guessed as much," said Bulstrode, with a scowl. "Well, there'll be trouble."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. Bulstrode stood aside, still scowling, while the members of the football committee left the study. Wharton went downstairs to put up the notice on the board.

The Remove were all curious to know who would be playing in the Form match, and Wharton had promised to put up the list when the committee had decided upon the matter.

There was soon a goodly crowd round the notice-board, reading the names of the list of players selected for the Form match.

The list ran as follows:

Hazeldene; Trevor, Morgan; Desmond Russell, Jones; Cherry, Nugent, Wharton, Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, Ogilvy.

"Faith, and it's a good team intirely!" said Micky Desmond, as he read over the names. "Sure, and it couldn't be improved, unless O'Rourke and Clancy were put in."

"Rotten!" said Skinner. "Why, my name isn't there!"

"Faith, and did ye expect it to be?"

"Ridiculous!" said Stott. "Now, you fellows know the kind of half I am—"

"Yes, rather, we do!" said Hazeldene. "Wharton knows it, too—that's why he left you off the list!"

"You needn't jaw, you can't play for toffee! It's only because of your sister that Wharton has shoved you in as goalkeeper."

"Rats!" said Hazeldene cheerfully.

"It's true! If Marjorie were my sister, Wharton would have asked me to play at centre-half!" snapped Stott.

A grip was laid on Stott's collar, and he was jerked back. He whirled round, to find himself looking at Harry Wharton, whose eyes were flashing.

"Will you come into the gym, Stott?" asked Harry.

"N-no. Why?"

"To put the gloves on."

"I don't want to put the gloves on with you, Wharton."

"Then without gloves," said Wharton. "I heard what you were saying to Hazeldene."

"It was only a-a-a-a-a joke," stammered Stott.

Harry laughed scornfully.

"Very well; if you like to eat your words, do so. Only if you make any more jokes like that, you won't have any choice about backing them up with your fists, that's all."

And Stott went away scowling. He was not the only malcontent. Skinner and Lacey both considered that they ought to have been played, and they joined Bulstrode in forming the opposition.

But Harry cared little for the opposition. He was backed by the majority of the Form; and if opinion went against him, he was always ready to resign. But the Remove knew well enough that they would never get a better football captain.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Real Thing at Last.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Bulstrode, Stott, Skinner, and a couple of other Removites were talking in a corner of the common-room when Billy Bunter came up. He had to speak several times before Bulstrode turned his head, with an impatient grunt, and glared at him. Bulstrode had washed the ink off his face, but there were still traces of it round his ears and the roots of his hair.

"Cut!" he exclaimed angrily.

"But I say, I want to speak to you. It's about the football. Some of the fellows in the Remove think there's a jolly lot of favouritism goes on," said Bunter.

"So there is," said Bulstrode more amiably. He was glad to get a new backer, though Bunter certainly wasn't of much account in the Form. "Wharton shoves in his own friends, and leaves us out. That's perfectly well known."

"I say, you fellows, are you going to stand it? It's jolly plain to everybody that there's a better centre-forward to be found than Wharton, and the way he sticks to the place is simply rotten!"

"I don't know," said Bulstrode. "I'm not saying that I'm a better centre-forward than Wharton. I could take the place quite as well, or I could play inside-right."

"I—I wasn't speaking of you, Bulstrode. I was speaking of myself."

Bulstrode stared at him.

"Off your rocker?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner. "Fancy Bunter playing football! It would beat his physical culture and his hypnotism hollow! My word! Bunter playing footer would make the fortune of a cinematograph merchant."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! I'm sorry to see this spirit of petty jealousy all over the Form. I'm practically not on speaking terms with Wharton and his lot now, on account of their jealousy of my form as a footballer."

"Oh, don't, Bunter! It's rough on a chap's ribs!"

"I was thinking," said Bunter, glowering angrily, of forming an opposition, and putting those chaps in their places."

"Then what will you do for feeds?" asked Skinner, grinning.

"I'm sincerely sorry to see that you regard me as capable of being actuated by mercenary motives," said Bunter, with dignity. "Of course, I haven't thought of that at all. Besides, since our study was burnt down, we haven't had any study feeds. We have to take tea in Hall. We can't cook anything anywhere, and Ionides cut up awfully rusty when I cooked a feed in his study. Until the Remove studies are rebuilt, there won't be any more study feeds."

"Oh! That accounts for your disinterestedness, of course."

"As a matter of fact, I'm in want of a good feed now," said Bunter pathetically. "I'm of a delicate constitution, and I only keep myself going by taking plenty of nourishing food, you know. Now I'm not on speaking terms with Wharton's lot, I have to go short, and it comes rather rough on me. I haven't been on speaking terms with them for nearly two hours now—"

"Ha, ha! How you must have suffered! Do you mean to say that you haven't had anything to eat for nearly two hours?"

"Nothing at all," said Bunter. "I'm hungry. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, or I was going to stand myself a feed. I shall be getting it by the first post to-morrow morning, now, and if one of you fellows felt inclined to cash it in advance, that would make the matter all right."

"Oh, ring off!"

"Oh, very well! I had a jolly good scheme for making Wharton & Co sit up; but if you don't want to hear it—"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode. "Fire away!"

"I'm too hungry to talk. If you'd care to walk along to the tuckshop—"

"Catch me standing you a feed on spec."

"You needn't stand the feed till you know the wheeze," said Bunter, with dignity.

ANSWERS

ANOTHER COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. NEXT TUESDAY.

Bulstrode hesitated. Bunter had been Wharton's study mate till No. 1 Study was burnt, and it was quite possible that his acquaintance with the private affairs of the Famous Four might afford the bully of the Remove an opportunity of getting even with the Form football captain.

"Come along," he said abruptly.

And, with a nod to the other malcontents, he walked away with Bunter. Billy Bunter, with a grin of delighted anticipation on his fat face, toddled along beside the burly Bulstrode to the school shop.

Mrs. Mimble came out of her little parlour, and looked decidedly disappointed at the sight of Bunter. Billy was never welcome in the school shop. His stowing capacity for provisions was only equalled by his incapacity to pay for what he consumed.

Billy walked up to the counter, and looked round at Bulstrode. The latter sat down on one of the little tables, and put his hands in his trousers' pockets. Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"You're keeping Mrs. Mimble waiting, Bulstrode," he reminded him.

"Sorry; I'm not going to give any orders," yawned Bulstrode.

"But you said—"

"You know jolly well what I said."

Bunter frowned as Mrs. Mimble, with a discontented look, retreated into her little parlour. Bulstrode grinned.

"Well, I don't see how I can explain, when I am practically perishing of hunger," said Bunter.

"Right-ho!" said Bulstrode; and he walked towards the door. Bunter called after him excitedly.

"Hold on, Bulstrode! Come back a minute, will you? I can manage all right, if I have the feed directly afterwards."

"Get on, then," grunted Bulstrode, turning back. "If you've got a scheme for making Wharton sit up, explain it. And don't waste time."

"I was thinking that if I made them all quarrel, you know, and punch one another's heads, and—"

"Do you mean you know something that would set them by the ears?" asked Bulstrode eagerly. "By Jove, that would be ripping!"

"Yes, rather! I mean by my ventriloquism—"

"Your what?" roared Bulstrode.

"My ventriloquism! I can make— Here, hands off, you beast!"

"You young dummy! Do you mean to say you've brought me here to gas about your silly-fool ventriloquism?" shouted Bulstrode.

"But—but it's genuine, you know. Hold on! I'll prove it! You remember how you lammed Skinner for squeaking at you through the door of your study, and he said he never did it? Well, that was me."

"Rats!"

"It was—really. I was imitating Skinner's voice. I did it to make you go for him. Ow—wow—wow! What are you up to?"

"I'm knocking your silly head against the counter. I'll teach you to play tricks on me!"

"Ow—wow! I—I only mentioned it to prove to you—ow—wow!—that I could do it, you know! Just lemme alone, you beast! Ow! You'll make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

Bulstrode released the Owl of the Remove. He could see that Bunter was telling the truth, for once in a way, and it occurred to him that he might be able to make use of the fat junior to further his ends. Bunter was gasping for breath, and looking very much flustered.

"Look here, you young pig," said Bulstrode, "you ought to have a jolly good hiding for playing that trick on me, and making me give Skinner a lamming. And you'll jolly well get it, too, unless you can prove what you've said. If you can do it, give me a sample now. Go ahead!"

"I'm so hungry—"

"Go ahead!" roared Bulstrode.

"Oh, very well!" said Bunter, who was glad at any rate to get somebody to give him a hearing at last. "I'll make Mrs. Mimble think there's somebody else here."

And with a very clever imitation of Skinner's squeaky voice, Bunter squeaked out:

"Mrs. Mimble! Mrs. Mimble!"

The good lady came into the shop.

"Yes, Master Skinner! What is it?"

Then she looked round her in amazement.

There was no sign of Skinner in the shop, and Bulstrode and Bunter were grinning.

She looked at them suspiciously.

"Where is Master Skinner?" she asked.

"Look under the counter, ma'am!"

"Nonsense, Master Bunter—"

"'Ere I am!"

It was a squeaky voice, and it certainly seemed to proceed from under the counter. Mrs. Mimble stooped in amazement, and looked there. Bunter turned a triumphant

look upon his companion; but, to his surprise, Bulstrode seized him by the throat and jammed him against the wall.

"Wh-wh-what's the matter?" gasped Bunter. "Hold on!"

"You young pig! Think you can take me in?" grunted Bulstrode. "Think I don't know that you and Skinner have put this up between you? You got him to cut round here first and get under the counter."

"I—I—I didn't! Look there!"

At that moment Skinner entered the tuckshop. Bulstrode released Bunter, and stared at the Remove in blank amazement.

It was pretty clear that Skinner could not have been under the counter. Mrs. Mimble rose with a red and puzzled face, and when she saw Skinner standing at the counter her eyes nearly started from her head.

"Goodness gracious! Master Skinner!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?" said Skinner, in surprise.

"Seen a ghost?"

"I—I thought you were under the counter."

"Oh, that's a jolly good joke!" said Skinner. "I suppose I'm likely to get under your counter, ain't I? Give me some sausages, Mrs. Mimble, and don't bother that bottle on your mantelpiece any more to-night."

And Mrs. Mimble was too flustered even to resent the insinuation.

Bulstrode clapped Bunter on the shoulder.

"Good! Ripping! But keep it dark."

"You believe me now, I suppose?" said Bunter, with an important air.

"Yes, rather; but keep it dark!"

"Right. But what about the feed?"

"Oh, go ahead! It's worth it. You can have anything you like up to five bob," said Bulstrode, who had plenty of money, and was generous enough when he was pleased.

Billy Bunter did not need telling twice.

He travelled into Mrs. Mimble's good things at express speed, and he got rid of that five shillings' worth of tuck in record time.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Rift in the Lute.

WUN LUNG the Chinese came into the junior common-room looking rather white, and with a black bruise showing on his forehead. Harry Wharton noticed it, and came over to him at once.

It was the day after the football committee-meeting. School was over, and most of the Remove were in the common-room. Some were doing their preparation there, as well as they could in the buzz of voices.

"Accident, kid?" asked Harry Wharton.

The Chinese shook his head.

"No accident," he said. "Me gettee whackee!"

Wharton's brow darkened.

"Do you mean to say somebody hit you hard enough to make a bruise like that?" he exclaimed quickly. "Was it Bulstrode?"

"No Bulstlode. Ionides."

"The brute!"

Wharton was not surprised to hear it. Heracles Ionides, the new Sixth-Former, was the best hated senior in the school, and he specially disliked the Chinese. Wun Lung had schemed the scheme by which the juniors had "got their own back" on the Greek, and it had come to the Sixth Former's knowledge. And since then Wun Lung had felt his heavy hand more than once.

"The beast!" said Nugent. "He ought to be shown up!"

"And he shall be!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "Come with me, Wun Lung."

"Whele goee?"

"To the Head."

"No goee. Allee light. Me payee out Gleek."

Wharton hesitated.

"Look here, the brute ought to be shown up," he said. "He's always down on you. The doctor would give him the order of the boot if he knew the kind of cad he was."

"Allee light. Me payee out!"

"How did it happen?"

"He catchee me in passage. Me lun, he kickee. Me fall, knockee head on ffool. Me makee Gleek sitee up. Me savvy."

"You've got some little scheme for getting level?" said Wharton, laughing. "What is it? Can we help you?"

"Me tinkee. Me see Ionides in bed-loom nightee," said Wun Lung. "He puttee facee wash on facee, and blush hail and puttee on scentee, and puttee hail in culling-pins."

"My hat!" said Nugent, in disgust. "I knew he was a

dandy, but I never thought even Ionides would put his hair in curling-pins!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's where his beautiful curls come from," he remarked. "My hat! What a lark if he could be brought out of his room one night with his hair in pins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wun Lung's almond eyes glistened.

"Me tinkee dat. Me makee him come out."

"Oh, so that's your little scheme?"

"Me savvy. Me makee him come out nightee. Playee ghostee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removeites grinned gleefully as Wun Lung's scheme dawned upon their minds.

The new Sixth-Former had already become noted in the school for his effeminate ways; but the curling-pins were a dead secret.

To bring him out before a crowd of fellows with his hair in pins would be a joke he would never quite recover from.

"You waitee," said Wun Lung. "Me showee up! Me makee all schoolee laff. What you tinkee?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you cackling at, Nugent?"

Nugent looked round quickly.

Bob Cherry was standing near at hand, with his hands in his pockets, looking up idly at a map on the wall, which showed the sea coast near which Greyfriars stood. Bob had not looked round, but Nugent had no doubt that he had spoken. He knew Bob Cherry's voice by that time. He did not even notice that Billy Bunter was standing near, partly screened from sight by the bulky form of Bulstrode.

"Been studying new manners, Bob?" asked Nugent.

"Eh?" said Bob Cherry, looking round. "What's that?"

"I wasn't cackling, as a matter of fact. I was laughing."

"Were you?" said Bob. "Well, it's a free country, and you can laugh if you like; but what are you looking ratty about?"

"I'm not looking ratty."

"Well, don't catch a fellow up so," said Bob Cherry wonderingly, for Nugent was usually the best-tempered fellow in the Remove. "Anything the matter?"

"No. I'm sorry you don't like my cackle, as you're pleased to call it, that's all."

"Dotty?" asked Bob pleasantly.

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent, walking away huffily. Bob Cherry looked after him, and then looked inquiringly at Harry Wharton.

"What's the matter with Franky?" he asked. "Have I huffed him in any way?"

"Well, you didn't speak in a pleasant tone," said Harry, "and I suppose he didn't like you to call his laugh a cackle."

Bob Cherry looked bewildered.

"But I didn't. I never said anything about cackling."

"Oh, draw it mild, old chap!"

"I tell you I never said anything of the sort. I suppose you can take my word, Wharton."

"But I heard you."

"You didn't hear me."

"Bob!"

"I say you didn't hear me!" exclaimed Bob excitedly. "I suppose I ought to know whether I spoke or not. Look here. Bulstrode, did you hear me say what Wharton says I said?"

"No," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Harry warmly. "You were standing quite close, you must have heard him."

"So I'm a liar, too, as well as Cherry?" said Bulstrode, with an unpleasant laugh. "I didn't hear Cherry say anything of the sort."

Wharton made an impatient gesture, and turned his back on Bulstrode. He knew that the bully of the Remove would be only too glad to make trouble if he could.

"You must have spoken without thinking, Bob."

"I didn't speak."

"Very well," said Wharton quietly. "If you say so, Bob, it's no good discussing the matter any further. It's of no importance, anyway."

He walked away. Bob Cherry looked after him, and made a movement as if to follow. Then he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked away in another direction.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Capper is Startled.

THERE was something like a coolness between Bob Cherry and Nugent after that little incident. But when the Remove went up to bed that night, Nugent tapped Bob on the shoulder as he walked beside him.

"Don't look grumpy, old chap," he said. "It's not worth while having a row about nothing."

Bob Cherry grinned. He was thinking the same himself.

"That's all right," he said. "But I'm blessed if I know why you should imagine I spoke when I didn't speak."

"But you did speak, Bob."

"Oh, rats! It's a case of illusion, I suppose, and you and Wharton were dreaming," said Bob Cherry. "Never mind it, anyway. What is that young duffer Wun Lung grinning at like a Cheshire cat?"

"There's a joke on, up against Ionides. It's coming off to-night."

And Nugent explained in a whisper. Bob Cherry grinned gleefully. Anything up against the unpopular senior was welcome to the Removeites.

The Remove turned in, and Carberry, the prefect, saw lights out. He scowled at the juniors, grunted in reply to their "Good-night!" and slammed the door, in his usual amiable way. But the Remove did not go to sleep.

Wun Lung sat up in bed, and drew up the clothes round him for warmth. The Famous Four had made up their minds to keep awake and keep him company, but as the quarters struck from the clock tower, it occurred to them that it was quite sufficient for one to be wakeful.

They dropped off one by one, and the Chinese junior was the only one left awake in the Lower Fourth. Wun Lung sat upright, his unwavering eyes gleaming in the darkness of the room. With Oriental impassiveness he sat there, without motion, while the clock struck and struck again.

Harry Wharton was fast asleep, when he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and started into wakefulness again. He looked round him drowsily in the gloom.

"Is that you, Wun Lung?"

"Me hele," whispered the Chinese.

"What's the time, then?"

"Half-past eleven."

"By Jove! I've been asleep."

The Chinese junior chuckled.

"Allee light. You wakee now, wakee othels. Me goee out. Savvy?"

"Right-ho!"

And Wun Lung glided silently from the room.

Harry Wharton slipped out of bed. It was bitterly cold in the room, but he did not care for that. He dragged his clothes on hastily.

There were only seven or eight other beds in the room. The Remove dormitory had perished in the fire at Greyfriars, and the Remove were still scattered in various quarters. An old box-room had been fitted up with beds for seven or eight of them, and it was in this room that the Famous Four were sleeping. Harry shook Bob Cherry by the shoulder, and woke him, and then did the same for Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Nugent. There was a glimmer of spectacles in the gloom of the room.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Shut up, Bunt!"

"What's the row?"

"You're talking, that's all."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Oh, go to sleep!"

Bunter grunted, and settled down under the warm bed-clothes. He had had a suspicion that a feed was on; and finding that it was not the case, he had no further interest whatever in the proceedings.

The chums of the Remove crept quietly from the room. They had to go down a staircase into the Upper Fourth passage, and then down to the Sixth Form quarters. As they came into the passage, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave a sudden convulsive start.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter, Inky?" muttered Bob Cherry.

"The terrific vision," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The glimpsefulness was instantaneous, but the sight was terrific."

"Hallo, Inky's seen a ghost!"

"The ghostfulness was great."

Nugent gave a chuckle.

"It's Wun Lung, I expect."

"Hark!"

A voice floated through the dusk of the passage. It was that of Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth.

"You may as well come out of hiding, sir. I know you are there."

Wharton clicked his teeth.

"It's Capper! He's spotted Wun Lung, and the game's up."

"Wait a minute! That Chinese generally squirms out of a fix. Wait a tick!"

The juniors looked down the stairs before them. In the corridor below they could see the form of Mr. Capper, dim in the gloom. The Fourth Form-master had evidently returned late after going out, and had been coming upstairs in the dark, when he caught sight of a boyish form on the

stairs. But it was pretty clear that he did not know who it was he had seen, as he used no name.

"Boy, you may as well come out at once," said the Form-master sternly.

"Not likely!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look there!"

A sudden light glimmered on the stairs.

"Ah," murmured Hurree Singh, "the terrific vision!"

A deathly face, with parted lips and grinning teeth, and strangely burning eyes, glimmered out of the gloom in a phosphorescent light.

The juniors felt their hearts leap into their mouths.

"Good heavens!" murmured Bob Cherry. "What—what—"

There was a gasping cry from Mr. Capper.

The deathly face was turned towards him. The juniors saw it no more, but it was full in the view of the Form-master.

Mr. Capper stood rooted to the spot. He glared up the stairs at the terrible vision, which seemed to be floating down towards him in the darkness.

There was no body to be seen, only that deathly face, strangely, eerily lighted up; and it was no wonder that the Form-master gazed spellbound.

It was only for a few moments. As the terrible vision came nearer, Mr. Capper turned and fled, and dashed away at top speed, gasping inarticulately as he went.

His footsteps died away down the long corridor. Then from the darkness of the staircase came a faint chuckle.

Wharton drew a quick breath of relief.

"My hat! It's the Chinese!"

"The—the young rascal!"

"The rascalfullness is terrific."

The Removites hurried down. They ran into the Chinese in the dark, and Wun Lung turned round, and they saw the deathly face again. But this time the countenance of Wun Lung was grinning above it. It was simply a grotesque Chinese mask, and the junior had taken it off.

"You young scamp!" muttered Harry Wharton. "You gave us a start!"

Wun Lung chuckled softly.

"Me tinkee makee Ionides staltee too. What you tinkee?"

"But—"

"Me hully up, 'fole Massa Cappel makee low."

"Hold on! This won't do, kid. It's a rotten trick to startle people by playing ghost. Look here—" But Wun Lung had already glided away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Curling-Pins.

HERACLES IONIDES, the Greek Sixth-Former, was asleep. A glimmer of fire was still in his grate, and curious shadows played to and fro in his room. The Sixth-Formers at Greyfriars had bed-room and study combined. Ionides' room was the best furnished in the Sixth. He had plenty of money, and he spent it carelessly enough.

The bed was in an alcove, half hidden by curtains. The grate was on the opposite wall, and Ionides, with the curtains looped back, could watch the fire as he went to sleep. There was a comforting warmth in the room, and a lingering trace of scent in the air.

Ionides had a great taste for perfumes. He scented his hair, as well as spending almost as much time upon it as a girl. When he went to bed, it was after carefully applying unguents to his face for his complexion, and—as Wun Lung had discovered—putting his locks into curling-pins.

He was sleeping soundly enough, but suddenly, in the quiet of the night, he awoke. He looked round him lazily, and caught the red glow in the grate. Shadows moved to and fro as the light of the dying fire flickered.

There was a strong current of cold air in the room.

Ionides clicked his teeth. He knew that the door must be open, and he knew that he had closed it securely enough before turning in.

Someone had entered his room. He did not feel alarm for the moment. He was unpopular with the juniors, and they had played tricks on him before. He had very little doubt that it was a junior who had thrown his door open and entered.

He sat up in bed, his black eyes glittering. The next moment he gave a gasp of affright. There was a phosphorescent glow in the room, and in the midst of the glow the deathly face and burning eyes looked forth, and Ionides saw the same fearful vision that had so scared Mr. Capper on the stairs.

For some seconds the Greek gazed at it, too terrified to move. Then, with a wild howl of terror, he leaped from the bed, and made a spring to the door. The terrible vision seemed to swoop towards him as he reached the door, and the Greek dashed frantically out into the passage.

He was yelling out wildly in his fright, and his voice rang through the passage. There was a sudden bump in the darkness, and a sharp exclamation from Mr. Capper. The

Fourth Form-master was returning to the scene. He had mastered his fright, and—annoyed at himself for being so startled by what he knew on reflection must be a trick—he had come back to investigate, taking a walking-cane from the hall in passing, in case he should find the practical joker.

The terrified Greek ran right into him, and Mr. Capper grasped him by the collar of his night garments.

"Ah, so I have caught you!"

"Help!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Ow—ow—ow!"

Heracles Ionides wore elegant pyjamas, of the most artistic design. They were very pretty to look at, and very warm for a winter night; but they did not form much of a protection against a lashing cane.

Ionides hopped and jumped and squirmed in pain.

"Ow! Leave off! Help! Murder!"

"Dear me," gasped Mr. Capper, "it is Ionides! A Sixth-Former playing such an absurd trick! Amazing! Disgusting!"

Swish, swish, swish!

A Sixth-Former was not supposed to be caned, even by the Head; but, under the circumstances, Mr. Capper let himself go, and he made active play with the cane.

Doors were opening, lights were gleaming on all sides. A diminutive form, with a curious mask hidden under a buttoned jacket, glided unnoticed from Ionides' room in the dark. Wun Lung rejoined the juniors on the stairs. Fellows were coming out on all sides now, and the Removites did not hesitate to show themselves.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, came racing along the passage, eager to be on the scene of the disturbance, whatever it was. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, were only a minute or two after them. Wingate, of the Sixth, came out of his room in his pyjamas, with a lamp in one hand, and a cricket-stump in the other.

Heracles Ionides tore himself away from Mr. Capper at last, smarting and tingling in every limb. In his anguish he had even forgotten his fright. He was almost weeping with the pain.

"What is this?"

It was a deep voice that asked the question, and there was a hush as Dr. Locke strode upon the scene. The Head of Greyfriars looked about him sternly.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance at such an hour?"

"I am sorry, sir!" gasped Mr. Capper—"very sorry that you should have been awakened. I came in late, sir, and as I was going upstairs I was startled by a fearful-looking face lighted up with phosphorus. I was very much frightened, and when I came to investigate the matter, this boy ran into me, and I have punished him, sir. Such an absurd and foolish trick played by a member of the Sixth Form—"

"Quite right, Mr. Capper! Ionides, how dare you play such a childish trick?"

The Greek was grinding his teeth.

"I did not!" he yelled. "I—I saw the same thing in my room! I was awakened by it! And I was startled, and ran out into the passage! Then I was attacked by Mr. Capper, and savagely assaulted!"

Mr. Capper looked startled. It dawned upon him that he had been a little hasty in jumping to conclusions. The Head looked at him.

"Are you sure that it was Ionides playing this trick, Mr. Capper?"

"I—I certainly thought so, sir," stammered the Fourth Form-master. "You see, I—I found him here, in the dark. I imagined—"

"It was somewhat hard on Ionides to be punished in haste," said the Head drily. "A mistake appears to have been made."

"If there has been a mistake, I am very sorry," said Mr. Capper.

Ionides snorted. Mr. Capper's sorrow did not remove the ache and smart from his tingling limbs.

"This trick was doubtless perpetrated by a boy lower in the school," said the Head sternly. "The culprit shall be found and punished. Meanwhile—Boys, this is no laughing matter!"

The Head looked round in amazement and anger.

Some of the boys were grinning—some were laughing—all appeared to be in the throes of suppressed merriment.

The Head was amazed. He was always treated with great respect personally, even by the Remove, the most unruly Form in the school. He could not understand this outburst of merriment. He frowned severely.

"Boys! Silence! How dare you laugh! Wingate, I am surprised to see even you taking part in this unseemly demonstration!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate!"

"Ha, ha! Sorry, sir! Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Wingate.

"But it's too funny, sir!"

"Wingate, I am surprised—shocked!"

"Look at him yourself, sir!"

"Look at whom?"

"The Greek, sir—Ionides—look!"

The Head looked at Ionides. In the excitement he had not given the Greek more than a casual glance. There was plenty of illumination on the scene now, and the Greek was plainly to be seen.

The light of lamps and candles glimmered on the metal curling-pins in his hair.

The Head gazed—and gazed again. He could scarcely believe his eyes. The juniors were shouting with laughter, and even Mr. Capper could not resist joining in it. The Head gazed—and slowly a smile dawned upon his own severe face.

Ionides, who had forgotten all about the curling-pins, looked round in amazement. He saw that he was the centre of attraction, and the cause of all the laughter, but he did not know why. He scowled furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "What lovely curls!"

"That's where we get our curly hair from!" shrieked Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. "What price curling-pins?"

The Greek understood. His face went scarlet as he put his hand up to his head. There were the pins, in glimmering array.

The Greek gave a cry of mingled rage and shame, rushed into his room, and slammed the door.

Loud and long the laughter rang in the passage.

The Head himself was laughing—he could not help it—and, encouraged by that fact, the boys simply roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Heracles Ionides listened to the ringing laughter as he stood, quivering with shame and fury, in his room.

"Dear me"—the Head recovered himself—"dear me, this is most absurd! Boys, go back to your beds at once!"

And the spectators of that curious scene, still chuckling and sniggering, returned to bed. The Famous Four seized Wun Lung and bore him upstairs on their shoulders, the little Chinese grinning contentedly. But before going to bed Wharton gave him a lecture on the subject of playing ghost, to which Wun Lung listened meekly, and promised to leave that kind of trick severely alone in the future.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Friendship in Danger.

"**S** NOW!" growled Bob Cherry.

Feathery flakes were descending in the Close at Greyfriars as the chums looked out of window in the morning.

Snow was not, as a rule, unwelcome at the school. Snow-fights and scrimmages were exciting and healthy. But just now the juniors were thinking of football.

If the ground were deep in snow the fixture with the Upper Fourth could not come off, and the match to which the Removites had been looking eagerly forward would have to be postponed.

And all other convenient dates were already filled. Hence Bob Cherry's growl, which was echoed by the others.

"Rotten!" grunted Nugent, as he jumped into his trousers. "Beastly!"

"The rotten beastlyfulness is terrific," said the nabob. "But, in spite of the snowfulness, the practice of the honourable footer will be possible, unless the heaviness of the downfall is—"

"Terrific," said Bob Cherry. "Of course, I suppose a few flakes don't matter. I fancy there's nobody here afraid of a little snow, except, perhaps, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode did not reply. He was looking at Billy Bunter, who was sitting up in bed, and putting his glasses on. Bunter blinked at him inquiringly.

"A feed before brekker, if you like," whispered Bulstrode. Bunter's eyes gleamed.

"Right you are!"

And, keeping the bedclothes up to hide his mouth, the ventriloquist of the Remove began his little game again.

"We can manage to get some practice if it doesn't become any worse," said Wharton, looking out of the window.

"There are only some flakes so far. We can get a run in the Close before breakfast."

"Too jolly cold!"

Wharton looked round quickly. It was Nugent's voice; but Frank, who was tying his bootlace, did not look up.

"Oh, bosh!" said Bob Cherry. "A run will warm you up, Franky. Don't you start being afraid of the cold, and setting a bad example to the team!"

"Eh?" said Nugent, looking up. "Who's afraid of the cold?"

"Well, you think it's too cold for a run—"

"Rats! I think a run's a good idea!"

"You've changed your opinion jolly soon, then!"

"I haven't!" said Nugent. "I don't know what you're driving at! Seems to me you're a little bit off your rocker lately, Bob."

And he left the room. As he did so, a voice that anybody there could have sworn was his, made a parting remark.

"I'm not coming out, and you can go and hang yourselves!"

"Oh, can we!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hotly. "Well, of all the pigs, I think Nugent takes the cake!"

Nugent looked into the room again. He had heard Bob's excited tones from the passage, and he was red in the face now.

"What's that, Bob Cherry?"

"I said you're a pig, and I repeat it!"

"Well, you rotter," said Nugent warmly, "what have I done now? If you're looking for a thick ear, you're going just the right way to get it!"

"If you can give me a thick ear—"

"I'll jolly soon show you!"

"Come on, then!" exclaimed Bob, putting himself into a pugilistic attitude. "I wasn't looking for a row with you, but you're a pig, and that's flat, and I'm ready to dot you on the boko as soon as you like!"

Harry Wharton ran between them just in time. Nugent was hitting out, and so was Bob, and Wharton took one fist on his ear, and another on his neck.

"You dummies!" he howled. "Hold on! What are you thumping me for?"

"They mistake you for the honourable punching-ball," said the nabob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

"Sorry!" gasped Nugent. "I meant that for Bob Cherry."

"Sorry! I meant that for Nugent's nose."

"You duffers! What do you want to begin rowing for?"

"He called me a pig!"

"So you are!"

"Lemme get at the rotter!"

"Sha'n't! Stand back!"

"Look here, Wharton, get out of the way! This is nothing to do with you."

"You're not going to fight," said Harry quietly. "Don't be such fools. You oughtn't to have said what you did, Nugent."

"I never said anything amiss that I know of."

"Well, I thought it amiss, as well as Bob. Anyway, let it drop. You're not going to start fighting for that cad to grin at you."

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Bob Cherry. "I won't call Nugent a pig if he doesn't like too much truth at once."

"Lemme get at him!" roared Nugent.

"Bosh! Come down!"

And Wharton dragged Nugent away, and descended the stairs with him. Bob Cherry, looking red and flustered, finished his dressing, and followed. The other fellows had gone down. Bulstrode and Bunter remained alone in the room. Billy squirmed out of bed and grinned. Bulstrode laughed loudly. He gave the fat junior a slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Jolly good!" he exclaimed. "Keep it up! My hat, if it hadn't been for Wharton, they'd have been scrapping!"

The amateur ventriloquist chuckled.

"Yes, rather! They won't believe that I can ventriloquise, but perhaps they'll believe it some time. I say, Bulstrode, what about that feed?"

"Oh, come along, you can have it as soon as you like. Only keep it dark about the ventriloquism."

"Certainly. Of course, I shall have to let them off if Wharton gives in and lets me play centre-forward in the Form match."

"Right!" chuckled Bulstrode. "I'm not much afraid of that happening. Ugh! How beastly cold it is!"

They went downstairs. Several fellows noticed them go into the tuck-shop, and noticed Billy Bunter's fat, greasy smile as he came out. For once in a way, Bunter made a moderate breakfast. He only ate twice as much as anybody else.

"Bulstrode feedee Bunter," said Wun Lung thoughtfully. "What his little gamee, eh? What you tinkee?"

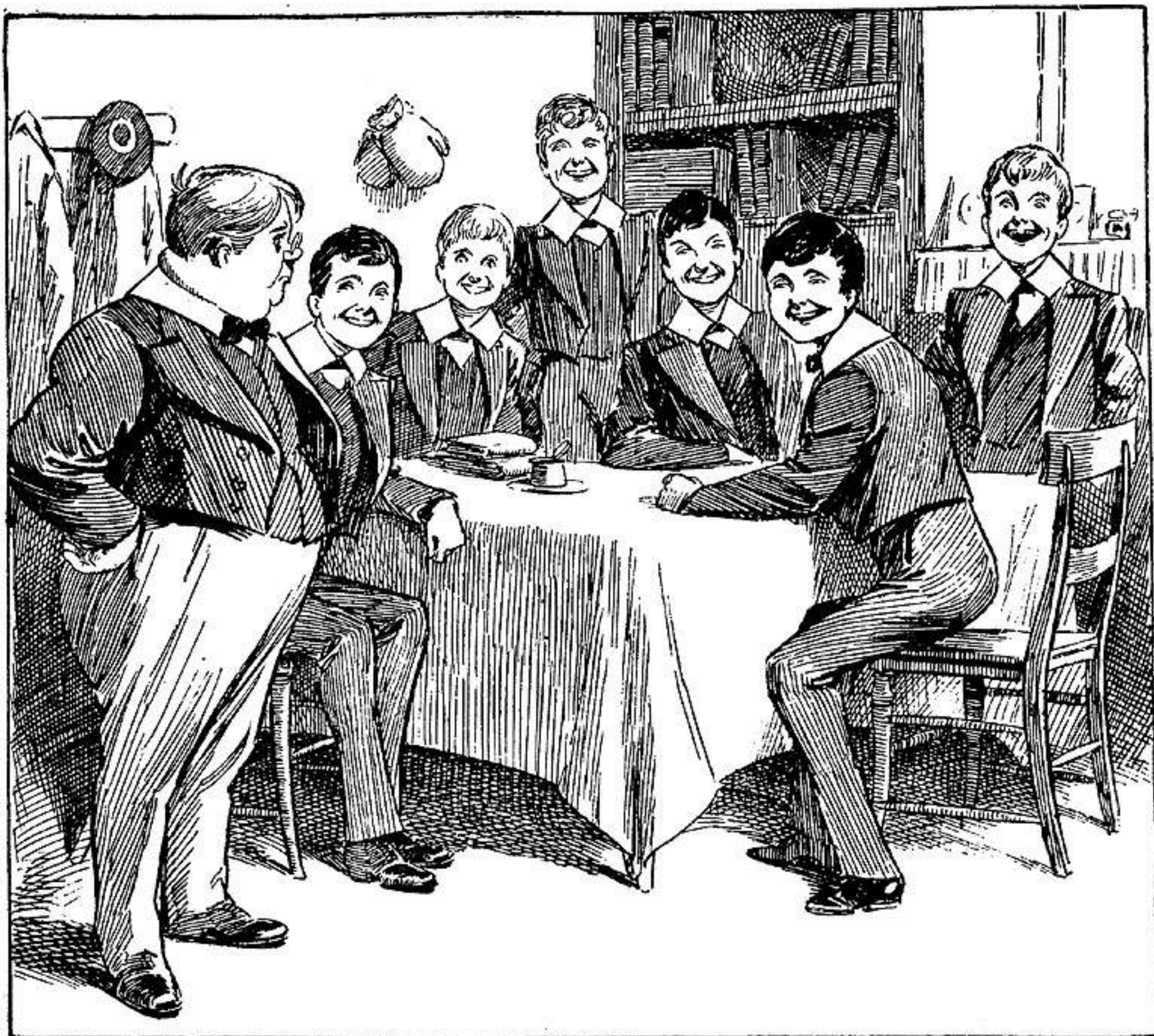
"Oh, they're the opposition now," said Harry Wharton, with a smile. "I suppose Bulstrode is getting up a party on the football question, and he's enlisted the Owl."

He slapped Bunter on the shoulder when he left the dining-room. Billy blinked round irritably.

"Oh, really, Desmond—"

"Chumming up with Bulstrode?" asked Harry, laughing.

"Yes, certainly," said Bunter, with dignity. "There are



"I shall let all the Form know that this committee is governed by jealousy and favouritism," said Billy Bunter. "Unless I am given a trial, I shall denounce this committee to all Greyfriars. I warn you!"

fellows in the Remove who can appreciate me. Of course, I don't want to absolutely drop you fellows. I don't want to be hard on you."

"Thanks, awfully."

"But, under the circumstances," continued Bunter, more and more dignified at every word—"under the circumstances, Wharton, I am compelled to look elsewhere for my intimates. I am not referring now to the way you have kept me short of grub. That was rotten enough. You know that I'm of a delicate constitution, and that I only keep going at all by taking plenty of nourishing food. You have neglected me on that point in the most heartless way, and I've stuck to you."

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes.

"Oh, he's breaking my heart!" he sobbed. "Damon and Pythias aren't in it, and David and Jonathan take a back seat. When it comes to pure, disinterested friendship, Billy Bunter is the man for your money."

"It's not a joking matter, Cherry. I've looked over that, as I said; but when it comes to keeping a fellow out of the Form team, and risking losing an important fixture, out of sheer jealousy, then it's time to cry halt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can show as much effrontery as you like," said Bunter. "That's how the case stands. I'm willing to keep on speaking terms with you fellows, but any intimate friendship is out of the question, so long as the present situation lasts. Of course, if you like to climb down—"

"Anything, anything," said Bob Cherry, weeping into his handkerchief. "Don't deprive us of the inestimable boon of your intimate friendship. Who will there be to cook our grub—and eat it? To whom can we lend our superfluous cash? What will become of us without our tame cormorant?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It's hard on us," said Harry, with a smile. "We shall have to stand it, somehow. I don't quite see what Bulstrode is feeding you for, Billy, but by all means make hay while the sun shines. You'll come back to us when he's busted, I expect."

"Are you willing to give me a trial as centre-forward?"

"Don't be funny, old chap."

"Then the situation remains on the same footing. There will be trouble."

"Spare us!" moaned Bob Cherry. "Don't bring down our budding moustaches with sorrow to the crematorium!"

"You'll see," said Bunter darkly. "Give me a trial, and—"

"But you can't play footer for toffee!" exclaimed Wharton, laughing. "You know you can't Billy! Don't be an ass!"

"I know what I know!"

"Look here, we'll give you a trial," said Wharton. "Come out now—there isn't much snow! We'll give you a trial, and if you show up all right, we'll shove you into the team."

"Very well, it's a go, and if you do me justice, Wharton, I'll restore you to my friendship."

Bob Cherry fell upon Bunter's neck, and hugged him in a transport of gratitude. Bunter's foot slipped, and he went down with a bump, with Bob sprawling over him. He squirmed and gasped frantically, till the Removite rolled off.

"By Jove!" said Bob. "You must have fallen down, Bunter."

Bunter staggered to his feet, and blinked angrily at the joker. Then, with his little fat nose held high in the air, he followed Harry Wharton into the Close.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Given a Trial as Centre-Forward.

THE snow was falling in feathery flakes, but the footballers of the Remove did not allow it to deter them. The ground where the Form match was to be played on Saturday was already safely under cover of thick layers of straw, and if the weather turned fine again, the boys would be able to play. Meanwhile, a few flakes did not prevent them from punting a ball about in the Close.

Billy Bunter was in deadly earnest, but the rest of the Remove seemed to be amused by his trial as a centre-forward.

In the playground the juniors formed up into two sides. Wharton took the place of Hurree Singh, and Bunter took Wharton's place at centre. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh preferred to remain indoors while the snow was falling. To the native of India, the English winter was a hard time. The nabob did not like snow.

Billy Bunter, finding himself the centre of the front line, did not know exactly what to do there; but he finally kicked off.

The other eleven, which was composed of Removites, headed by Lacy, rushed at the ball at once, and Bunter was shouldered away, and went reeling in the snow.

He sat down, and when he recovered his breath, the juniors were half-way across the Close.

Bunter staggered to his feet. He wiped his spectacles, and adjusted them, and blinked after the Removites, who were following the ball.

"Oh, really!" he gasped. "I—I—"

There was a roar.

"Look out!"

The rush was coming back towards Bunter.

The Removites, mingled in a crowd, without much semblance to a couple of football teams, were chasing the ball through the snowflakes.

Billy Bunter was in the midst of the crowd in a twinkling. He reeled to and fro, gasping, shoved, and shifted from one to another.

"Hold on!" he gasped, beginning to feel sorry that he had asked to be given his trial as a centre-forward. "Hold on! Stop it! Ow!"

"Buck up, there!" roared Wharton.

"On the ball! On the ball!"

"Look out!"

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry blundered into Bunter, and sent him flying. Lacy grinned and shouldered him back, and he was biffed into Micky Desmond.

The Irish junior let him roll to the ground, and as he went down, Russell and Ogilvy stumbled over him.

Billy gasped for breath.

"Ow! Gr-r-r! Hellup! Ow!"

"On the ball, there!"

The crowd streamed off again after the elusive leather, which Ogilvy had lifted a third across the Close by a powerful kick.

Billy Bunter sat up in the snow.

Bulstrode came out with his hands in his pockets, and stopped to stare at the fat junior. He chuckled with amusement.

"Hallo! Run over?" he asked.

"N-no," gasped Bunter. "Wharton's giving me my trial as a centre-forward for the Form eleven!"

Bulstrode burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm pretty well winded. I believe the rotters are playing roughly on purpose!" gasped Bunter. "It looks to me like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going to stand it. I'm centre-forward, and I'm going to play!"

And Bunter toddled off to join the footballers again.

A whirl of the crowd caught him, and he went staggering away among the shouting Removites, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels.

"Hold on!" he yelled. "Stop! I—I—"

"Hurrah! On the ball!"

"Buck up there!"

And Bunter rolled in the snow again, and the juniors rushed over him, hardly noticing that they were treading on the fat junior in their excitement.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, came out of the house, and looked on at the scene.

"On the ball!" repeated Temple. "Yes, rather! We'll be on the ball. Come on, kids, and we'll have their footer."

"Oh, rather!"

A crowd of the Upper Fourth rushed into the melee.

"Look out!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Line up there!"

In a moment the Removites, instead of being rivals for the possession of the leather, were a solid phalanx against the rival Form.

A wild and whirling scramble ensued, and many of the juniors grabbed up handfuls of snow and began to pelt.

In the furious combat Billy Bunter was alternately trodden on by both parties, till he managed at last to squirm away and escape.

The fat junior dragged himself from the melee, leaving the Upper and the Lower Fourth to fight it out, and tottered towards the house.

He looked a curious object. He was smothered with wet and snow from head to foot, he had lost his cap, and his collar was torn out. His spectacles, saved almost by a miracle, were clutched in his hand.

Bulstrode, Skinner, and several other fellows were standing on the steps, and they roared with laughter as he came in.

"Good old footballer!" chuckled Skinner. "Aro they going to play you in the Form match, Billy?"

"Ripping centre-forward!" said Bulstrode. "First-class—I don't think!"

"I'm done with those rotters!" gasped Bunter. "Of course, this was all done on purpose. It's jealousy, of course."

"Of course," said Bulstrode, with a wink at Skinner, "you are just cut out for a centre-forward. You ought to play in a League team."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall catch cold," mumbled Bunter. "I shall have to go and change. Ow!"

And he hurried away, leaving the juniors shrieking with laughter. He changed his clothes before the bell rang for morning classes, and by that time the footballers had come in. Wharton laughed as he met Bunter and encountered the indignant glare from his spectacles.

"Feeling pretty fit, Billy?"

"No," said Bunter, "I'm not feeling fit. I'm sincerely sorry to see jealousy of a better player than yourself carry you to such lengths, Wharton!"

The Remove captain stared.

"What's the matter now?"

"You know jolly well what's the matter. I've been biffed about till I believe I'm bruised all over."

"My dear duffer, you must take your chance of that. You asked for it. You couldn't expect us to treat you as if you were made of glass. A chap must expect a rough knock or two at football."

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"The long and the short of it is, that you don't want me to play in the Form match," he said. "I can see that."

"It's pretty plain for anybody to see. You can't play for toffee, old chap!"

"I could if I were given a chance. But whenever I was going to kick the ball somebody got in the way, or else pushed me roughly."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Better cut footer, Billy, and stick to cooking. It suits you better."

"So you're not going to play me?"

"Of course not, you ass. You don't know how to kick a ball yet."

"There'll be trouble," said Billy Bunter darkly.

But Wharton only laughed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Quarrel.

"I DON'T think Bunter will ever make a footballer," grinned Bob Cherry, as the Remove came out of the class-room that morning. "He has been threatening that there will be trouble if we don't play him as centre-forward; but I fancy there will be trouble with the Remove Football Club if we do!"

"I rather think so," said Harry, laughing. "Bunter is funnier as a footballer than as a hypnotist or a ventriloquist, I think. By the way, we haven't heard so much of his ventriloquism lately. He hasn't been practising."

"No; I hope he's getting over it. Here he comes with Bulstrode again. Curious how they are chumming up."

"Vely culious," said Wun Lung, who heard the remark. "Meanee mischief."

"Why, what mischief can it mean?"

"No savvy yet."

Bunter passed the chums of the Remove with his nose in the air. They laughed; Bunter on his dignity was an interesting sight. His dignity would last exactly as long as Bulstrode was inclined to stand him feeds at Mrs. Mimble's, they knew that. Then he would make it up again with the Famous Four. Meanwhile, they were not sorry not to be bothered with the fat junior for a time.

Nugent came last out of the class-room, having been detained a few minutes by Mr. Quelch. As he came down the passage, Bob Cherry's voice proceeded from round the corner.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Pig!"

Nugent flushed scarlet.

His old dispute with Bob Cherry had not been made up, but Wharton's influence had prevented it growing into a quarrel.

He quickened his pace, and came round the corner, but found no one there but Bunter and Bulstrode, who were chatting.

"Is Bob Cherry here?" asked Nugent, looking up and down.

"He's gone on."

Nugent ran up the passage. Bob Cherry had reached the door with Harry, when Nugent caught him by the shoulder and stopped him.

Bob looked round.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

He thought for the moment that Nugent only wanted to speak to him. But the red, angry face of his chum surprised him.

"You called out to me in the passage just now," said Nugent angrily, "and I want to tell you that I won't stand it."

"You won't stand what?"

"Being slanged by you!" exclaimed Nugent savagely. "I've had enough of it. If you can't shut up on that topic, there will be trouble!"

"Blessed if I know what you're getting at!"

"You know jolly well!"

"I tell you I don't!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, angry in his turn. "You seem to me to be in nothing but tantrums lately! I don't know what you're driving at!"

"Oh, bosh!"

"Look here, Nugent——"

"Look here, Cherry——"

"Oh, hang it all," said Harry Wharton, looking worried.

"Are you two going to start ragging again?"

"I'm not going to stand Bob Cherry. I don't want anything more to say to him, and that's flat!" cried Nugent.

"Have your own way," said Bob. "Come on, Harry!"

Wharton hesitated.

"Hold on!" he said. "I don't see——"

"Oh, come on, I say! It's no good arguing with Nugent. He's off his rocker!"

"If you go with him, Harry, you needn't come back to me," said Nugent, pale with anger. "You were my chum before Bob Cherry came here. If you give me up for him——"

"He'll be acting like a sensible chap!" said Bob quickly.

Nugent stood looking at Harry, without speaking again, but there was an angry determination in his face.

Harry Wharton was sorely puzzled between the two. Harry was the older chum of them, but Bob Cherry was his friend, too.

"Come on!" said Bob, again, pulling Harry by the arm.

"Hold on!" said Harry. "I don't see what you two chaps want to row for. I——"

"Well, we have rowed," said Nugent. "Are you sticking to that rotter or to me?"

Bob Cherry's eyes blazed.

"Who's a rotter?" he demanded.

"You are!"

Bob sprang forward. Harry dragged him back.

"Hold on, Bob!"

"I won't! He shall take that back, or I'll dust up the floor with him!"

Nugent pushed back his cuffs defiantly.

"Come on, then, and start the dusting!" he cried.

Bob Cherry wrenched himself from Wharton's grasp, and rushed on. In a moment the two juniors were hammering away, while Wharton looked on in blank amazement and indecision, for once in his life not knowing what to do.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "A fight! A fight!"

"A fight! A fight!"

The cry was repeated in all quarters, and juniors hurried up from every side. But the hall door was not exactly the place to choose for a fistic encounter. The master of the Remove was on the scene in a few moments.

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"

ONE
HALFPENNY.

LIBRARY.

"Stop!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the word like the report of a gun. The two Removites stopped, and separated, still glowering at one another.

Mr. Quelch looked at them sternly.

"How dare you fight here?" he exclaimed. "Nugent, Cherry, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves! How dare you!"

"Sorry, sir!" muttered Bob Cherry. Nugent did not speak.

"I hope you are sorry. In case there should be any doubt on the point, you can follow me to my study," said Mr. Quelch caustically. "I shall be able to convince myself that your sorrow is genuine."

Without a word the two culprits followed the Form-master into his room.

The juniors crowding outside the door distinctly heard the swishing of the cane, and the gasps of the juniors as they received the stinging cuts. Bulstrode grinned.

"Serve 'em jolly well right!" he said.

"Shut up!" said Harry Wharton.

And he looked so savage that the bully of the Remove thought it better to shut up. Bob Cherry and Nugent came out of the study looking very white and angry. They did not look at one another as they came out, and they walked away in different directions. Harry, after a moment's hesitation, followed Nugent.

"Frank!"

Nugent looked round. He had been hurt by the caning. Mr. Quelch knew how to lay it on when he thought that serious punishment was called for. But it was not only that. There was a bitter indignation in Nugent's breast. He felt that Harry ought to have stood by him, instead of hesitating between the two. His glance met Harry's like a flash of steel.

"Well?"

"Don't look like that, old chap!" said Harry. "You've nothing against me, at all events!"

"I think you might stick to an old friend."

"Well, I'm doing so. Only Bob's a friend, too. And I can't make out yet what the row's about."

"Never mind what it's about. I'm not going to speak to Cherry again. And you can take your choice between us!"

"That's a rotten way to put it. You're both my friends——"

"Stick to him, then!" said Nugent, turning away.

Harry caught him by the arm.

"Hold on, Frank! It's not like you to be unreasonable."

"Unreasonable, am I?" snapped Nugent. "Go to Cherry, then; you may find him more reasonable! But you can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds!"

Wharton flushed scarlet.

"That's enough!" he said. And he stepped back. His own temper was not a very patient one, and Nugent's words had roused the worst of it.

For a moment an apology trembled on Frank Nugent's lips; but he turned away with the words unuttered.

Harry looked after him with set brows, and then walked slowly away. He met Bob Cherry near the door, and Bob stopped him.

"I'm done with Nugent," he said. "I never thought he was such a rotter. He's picked this row with me for nothing at all."

"I don't understand it. But don't call him a rotter—I don't like it."

Bob Cherry flared out at once.

"Well, I do call him a rotter, and you can like it or lump it! You are not going to dictate to me, Harry Wharton!"

"If you are going to quarrel with me, Bob——"

"I don't care whether I do or not!"

"If you don't care, then, that settles it!"

Harry walked away with his hands in his pockets. Bob Cherry called after him once, but Wharton did not turn his head. He was angry, too, now. Bob did not call a second time. He set his teeth hard, and turned away.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung to the Rescue.

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH, the amiable Nabob of Bhanipur, was greatly distressed. During all the time the nabob had been at Greyfriars, complete accord had reigned between the chums of No. 1 Study.

Number 1 Study had been burnt to the ground, but the Famous Four's friendship had survived that historic apartment, and had been confidently expected to last through life. And now it was ended!

The nabob hardly knew what to make of it. He had not witnessed the quarrels, and the new state of affairs came

as a surprise to him. He learned it first of all from Frank Nugent.

"I have the goodful news," he remarked, when he met Nugent a little after the "row." "The worthy Temple, the excellent Dabney, and the inestimable Fry wish us to take tea with them in their study after afternoon school, as a friendly meeting before the football match to-morrow."

"Good!" said Nugent.

"If you will tell me where the esteemed Wharton is, I will conveyfully take him the excellent newfulness."

Nugent's brow darkened.

"Is Wharton coming?"

"Yes; and the esteemed Cherry."

"Then I can't come!"

The nabob's dark eyes opened wide.

"Why not, my worthy chum?"

"I'm not on speaking terms with them now, and I can't come to a feed if they're to be there."

And Nugent walked away abruptly, leaving the nabob petrified with amazement.

"My wordfulness!" murmured the dusky junior. "The surprisefulness is terrific! The excellent Nugent surely has an esteemed bee in his hat!"

And Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh walked away in search of his other chums, to find out the clue to this mystery. He found Bob Cherry looking out of the stained glass window in the hall in a very grumpy frame of mind.

The nabob tapped him on the shoulder, and Bob looked round with a grunt.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Inky!"

"The newfulness I hear from the esteemed Nugent is paralyzing," said the nabob. "He says he is no longer fully on the excellent speakful terms with your august self."

"That's right!"

"The sorrowfulness in your friend's heart is great. Is it not possible for the rowfulness to be made upfully?"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Not unless Nugent apologises."

And Bob resumed his gloomy stare out of the window. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh shook his head, and went to look for Harry Wharton.

He found the captain of the Remove punting a football about in the Close. The snow had ceased, and there was only a thin layer of flakes on the ground. Harry looked at the nabob with a smile. His face had been very gloomy. It was not a pleasant thing to break with two old chums like Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent. And he was thinking, too, of the match on the morrow. How would they pull together in the contest with the Upper Fourth Form eleven?

"The sorrowfulness of your friend is great," said Hurree Singh sadly. "I heartfully learn that the bustfulness of your honourable friendship is terrific."

"I'm sorry to say it is, Inky!"

"Perhaps the makeupfulness would be the good wheeze."

"I don't see how. I don't quite know what's wrong with those two, but they've rowed, and dragged me into it, and there the case stands. Better let it alone, old chap!"

The dusky junior sighed. He did not see what he could do, but he consulted Wun Lung. He had a great faith in the acuteness of the little Chinese. Wun Lung listened, and his almond eyes gleamed, as if he had a suspicion, but he said little.

"My heart is sadful," said the nabob.

"Mo see," said Wun Lung. "Me lookie into it, my friend. Me savvy."

The quarrel between the Famous Four soon became the topic in the Remove.

Bulstrode and his friends chuckled over it, and wondered what effect it would have upon the football match fixed for the morrow. Bunter did not chuckle. At first he swaggered over his success, till he was in danger of giving the whole game away, throwing out mysterious hints as to what he could say if he liked, and confiding to various fellows that he knew what he knew. But Bulstrode soon stopped him at that. As a matter of fact, the fat junior's conscience was beginning to prick him.

"You young ass," said Bulstrode, interrupting Bunter as he was talking to Wun Lung, and dragging the fat Remove away. "Do you want to put Wharton up to the whole game? Do you know what you'll get?"

"I suppose he would be waxy," Bunter remarked thoughtfully.

Bulstrode gave a scoffing laugh.

"He would lick you till you couldn't crawl, you duffer!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, I don't think Wharton would lick a chap smaller than himself! He's not a bully, you know. You think everybody is like you. Ow! Let go my ear, you beast, or I'll call out to Wharton this minute!"

Bulstrode released him, scowling fiercely.

"You'd better be careful!" he muttered.

"As a matter of fact, Bulstrode, I wish I hadn't played

that trick on them," said Bunter. "I'm beginning to think that Wharton didn't deserve it. He would have the jealousy of all the Remove Football Club to face if he put me into the eleven."

"You dummy!"

"I don't think you ought to call me names, Bulstrode, because I'm a conscientious chap. Wharton had a registered letter this afternoon, and I think very likely he wants to stand a feed to the other chaps. Now, I oughtn't to come between them at such a time. A joke's a joke, but a joke ought to end somewhere."

"You mean you want to get a feed out of Wharton now he's in funds."

"I'm sincerely sorry that you should impute such mercenary motives to me, Bulstrode," said Bunter, with great dignity. "I don't see how I can speak to you after such a suggestion. I think I shall make it up with Wharton, and drop you and Skinner."

"Come along to the tuck-shop, Bunter," said Bulstrode, glowering.

"Oh, certainly, old chap, anything to oblige!" said Bunter.

And the threatened disclosure to the Famous Four was postponed.

Billy Bunter had been very exacting lately in the matter of feeds, and Bulstrode, though he was usually very flush of money, was getting short of that useful article. But so long as the Famous Four were kept in the dark till after the football match, he did not care so much. He would have been glad to see the Form team beaten, and with the best players in it at daggers drawn, it's chance of victory was not great.

Harry Wharton was decidedly worried. But he was too proud to make any overtures to either Bob Cherry or Nugent, and the juniors went to bed on the same terms of silence and dark looks.

Billy Bunter came up to bed fat and contented from a really ripping feed. The bully of the Remove had run up an account at Mrs. Mumble's little shop to feed him, and Bunter was satisfied. There was a strained and painful politeness between Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry, which Bulstrode would have been glad to see break out into fist-cuffs. It needed very little to make it do so, and Bulstrode gave the fat ventriloquist a hint as they came in.

"You've had a jolly good feed, Billy," he remarked.

"Yes, pretty fair," assented Bunter.

"Like another one to-morrow morning before breakfast?"

"Yes. I was thinking of asking Wharton for a little loan."

"Never mind Wharton. You stick to me."

"Oh, certainly, Bulstrode! As a matter of fact, Wharton never could understand how a chap of a delicate constitution requires keeping up on continual nourishment. Of course, I shall see that you have all this back out of my postal-order."

"Oh, of course!" grunted Bulstrode. "Go ahead!"

And Billy Bunter, who was not sorry to show off his new powers before so appreciative a spectator, went ahead. Nugent was undressing, and he had dropped his boots rather noisily on the floor, when Bob Cherry's voice was heard to say emphatically:

"Pig!"

The repetition of that odious epithet made Nugent jump up from the side of his bed, where he was sitting, and turn towards Bob with blazing eyes.

"So you are beginning again?" he said.

Bob looked round at him.

"Eh? Did you speak to me, Nugent?"

"Yes, I did, you insulting rotter. If you want to have it out, say so at once, and put up your fists!" shouted Nugent.

"Oh, you're dotty! Go to bed!"

"You heard what he said then, Wharton!" cried Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"You oughtn't to do it, Bob," he said. "You can't expect a chap to take that sort of thing patiently."

"What sort of thing?" howled Bob Cherry, bewildered and exasperated. "What have I done?"

"You called Nugent a pig when he dropped his boots."

"I didn't."

"It's no good saying you didn't, when everybody in the room heard you!" exclaimed Harry angrily.

"I tell you I didn't!" shouted Bob. "I heard somebody say 'pig,' but it wasn't I! I suppose my word's good enough to be taken?"

"Not against the evidence of a fellow's own ears," said Nugent.

"So I'm a liar, eh?"

"Yes, you are, if you want plain English."

"Put up your fists, hang you!"

"I'm ready."

The juniors were advancing upon one another with clenched fists and blazing eyes. But at that moment there came a wild yell from Billy Bunter, and they paused to see what was the matter. The fat junior had been suddenly pounced upon by Wun Lung, and the Chinese had flattened him down on his bed and was sitting on him.

"Ow! Help! I won't do it any more! Help!"
 "Shutee up," said Wun Lung, "little lottel—shutee up!"
 "What's the matter, Wun Lung?"
 "Me spotee," explained the little Celestial; "me sarvy. Bob Chelly no say pige; Buntel sayee."
 "Eh? What on earth do you mean?"
 "Ventriloquist."
 "What?"

"Fat Buntel sayee pig in voicee Bob Chelly. You lemembel him speakee in Skinnel's voicee othel day. He speakee in Bob Chelly voicee."

"Impossible!"
 "Me spotee."

The chums of the Remove stared at the little Chinese and at one another. They had never believed in Billy Bunter's ventriloquial powers. His failures had been frequent and ludicrous, and it had not occurred to them that he might have attained success at last. And knowing Bunter's nature, they would naturally have expected his success to be blazoned forth for all to see, if he ever attained any.

"Is it possible?" said Nugent slowly.
 "Me spotee."

"We'll jolly soon know for certain," said Harry Wharton, his brow darkening. And he advanced towards Billy Bunter with a look that made the fat junior shiver in his shoes.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Cleared Up—The Form Match.

WUN LUNG released the fat junior, and Bunter stood shaking before the captain of the Remove. Harry fixed his eyes upon the fat junior.

"Is it right, Bunter? Have you been ventriloquising at our expense?"

Bunter had no particular weakness for the truth; and, in fact, his usual method of getting out of a difficulty was to lie himself out of it. But under Wharton's stern and searching eyes the lie would not come. He had a miserable inward feeling that if he lied the lie would be detected at once, and that it would make matters all the worse for him. Added to that was a desire to show off his powers, and prove to the Famous Four that he was, after all, a ventriloquist.

"Answer me!" cried Harry imperiously.

"Ye-e-es," stammered Billy Bunter.

"I can't quite swallow it," said Nugent. "If you can ventriloquise as well as that, Bunter, give us a proof of it." The fat junior bristled into importance at once.

"Certainly, Nugent! I'm sincerely sorry that you should doubt my word—"

"Oh, cut the cackle!"

"Go ahead, you young rascal!"

Bunter obeyed. The chums listened attentively while he gave them a sample of his new powers. He made his voice appear to proceed from the chimney—and there was no doubt about it this time. Billy Bunter was a ventriloquist at last—the real thing!

"My hat," said Nugent, "it looks like it!"

Harry Wharton's hand fell heavily upon Bunter's shoulder.

"You young villain! So you have been playing tricks on us, and making us row?"

Bunter grinned a little.

"Well, I warned you that there would be trouble if I wasn't put in the team," he said. "You only laughed, too."

"So you have been doing this because we didn't play you in the eleven?"

"I told you there would be trouble. Besides, Bulstrode—"

"Oh," exclaimed Harry, understanding at once, "that's why Bulstrode has been feeding you lately! I might have guessed that that cad was at the bottom of it!"

"That what?" exclaimed Bulstrode fiercely.

"Cad!" cried Harry Wharton, facing him with flashing eyes. "Bunter is only a fool, but you're a cad and a rascal! You have played upon his stupidity to make him serve us this mean trick!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hold your tongue, Bunter! Bulstrode, you are a rotten cad! And if you've got any objection to make to that, get up and make it!"

Bulstrode gritted his teeth—and stepped into bed. He pulled up the bedclothes round him.

"It was a joke," he said; "you can settle it with Bunter."

Wharton made a gesture of contempt. He turned his

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back on Bulstrode with a look that brought the scarlet to the bully's cheeks.

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter, realising that the horn of plenty had ceased to flow from Bulstrode's direction for good, and remembering that Harry had had a registered letter that day; "I say, you fellows, I—I—it was only a joke, you know. I only meant to make you sit up for leaving me out of the eleven, and then I was going to own up."

"Hold your tongue!"

"Yes, but I—I say! I'm sincerely sorry, and—and—"

"Get into bed! If you weren't such an utter duffer, I should give you a hiding!" said Harry savagely. "Get into bed and hold your tongue!"

And Bunter thought he had better do so.

Wharton, Nugent, and Cherry looked at one another. They realised the truth now, and that there was no cause of offence—that their quarrel had been simply playing into Bulstrode's hands.

"The truthfulness is now clearly made up," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The quarrellousness is a thing of the esteemed past, and the proper caper is the shakefulness of the hand."

Wharton laughed.

"We've been a set of asses!" he exclaimed. "You understand now, of course, that it was Bunter who said the things we quarrelled about?"

"Yes," said Nugent. "I—I was an ass, I suppose, but—but Bunter ought to have a jolly good hiding!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The handshakfulness is the esteemed proper caper, my worthy chums."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It's all right! Give us your fist, Franky—not on my nose this time!"

And Nugent laughed and the chums shook hands, and the quarrel, which had threatened to be so serious, was over. The Famous Four went to bed in a much more contented frame of mind, and Bob Cherry, before he turned in, bestowed a hearty thump of appreciation upon Wun Lung which knocked every ounce of breath out of the little Chinese.

Cheery enough the Famous Four looked the following morning. It was a fine, bright, winter day, and there was no sign of snow, and all were looking forward to the Form match of the afternoon. The Remove eleven—in which Billy Bunter was not playing centre-forward—were all in good trim—and so were the Upper Fourth champions, for that matter.

When the afternoon came, and the rival footballers met on the field of battle, Temple, Dabney & Co. were in high and confident spirits. The Remove felt just as confident—and with more reason, as the result showed.

Younger fellows as they were on the average, belonging to a lower Form, they took the great game more seriously than the Upper Fourth, and practised more assiduously, and training was bound to tell.

A goodly crowd had assembled to see the match, and there were cheers as the sides lined up.

Temple kicked off, and the Form match started; and it was exciting at once. The Remove were in fighting form, and they quickly showed that they were out for scalps. A goal in the first five minutes of the match was a foretaste of the wrath to come—for the Upper Fourth.

At half-time the Remove were two up.

In the second half Temple, Dabney & Co. made a desperate effort to equalise, but the Remove were equally determined that they should do nothing of the sort. The result was a keen encounter, that was watched with the greatest interest by the crowd round the ropes.

One goal, and then another, fell to the Upper Fourth, and Temple hoped—for a time. But his hope was brief. With a fine combined effort the Remove brought the leather down the field, and Harry Wharton slammed it in; and the Remove were three to two, with only five minutes more to play.

That five minutes was wholly spent in the Upper Fourth half, and it ended with another goal from Cherry's foot; and then the whistle went.

"Four to two!" grinned Bob Cherry, as they came off the field. "What price the Remove now?"

And the Removites round the field cheered frantically. They had won the Form match! Temple, Dabney & Co. had to hide their diminished heads, but the rest of the afternoon was spent by the Removites in celebrating their victory.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the Boys of Greyfriars next Tuesday. Please order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

ANOTHER COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. NEXT TUESDAY.

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. An IOU for £95, which Dashwood had given to Sligo as hush-money, falls into Colonel Greville's hands. The latter then interviews Tom, who is slightly wounded in the leg, and asks him a number of questions. Sligo, in the next tent, overhears the interview, and this causes him to reflect as to how much money Tom Howard would give him to hear the whole truth of Lieutenant Dashwood's infamous plots.

(Now go on with the story.)

Alf Sligo Throws Out a Strong Hint.—A Brush with the Enemy.

"There's another matter, Howard," said the colonel—"that saddle-cutting business. It occurred entirely in your troop, and your own things were damaged more than once. Does that remark suggest any possibility to you—I mean, coupled with the name of Sligo?"

"By Jove, sir, I hadn't thought of that!" said Tom. "Of course, my cousin has been down on me all through, on the principle that you hate a man you have deliberately wronged. Of course, it's possible; but I don't quite see how Sligo could have done it, because at that time, sir, he was an intimate chum of Trooper Sloggett, and we all had our eyes very wide open."

"Sloggett? That's the pugilistic man, isn't it? Very handy with his fists?"

"Very handy in every way, sir. He's one of the hardest fighters I know. I don't know whether he got a chance when the convoy of wounded was attacked, but I know before that he had killed eleven men with his own hand."

"Used to drink," said the colonel, taking out his notebook. "A reformed character since he came under your influence."

And he looked hard at Tom, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I don't know about that, sir," said Tom, smiling rather shamefacedly. "I tried to give him a leg up, and I must say he's had a clean sheet for a long time."

The colonel wrote some words, and replaced his notebook in his pocket.

"This is getting very hot indeed!" murmured Sligo. "I wonder what the old bloke will say next?"

"The old bloke," as Sligo termed him, had little more to add.

"Keep your eyes and your ears open, Howard," he con-

cluded. "We are on a hot scent, and I believe we shall run our fox to earth before very long. I need not warn you to say nothing that will give a hint that we are watching anybody. Ah, there's 'Evening Stables' sounding!"

And with a pleasant nod to Dick Vivian the chief went away, and Alf Sligo began to wonder how the dickens he was going to get out unseen by the two friends.

Fortunately for him Tom's leg was decidedly on the mend, and, bidding good-bye to Dick, he limped away to the horse lines, Sligo following stealthily a moment later.

A great surprise awaited our hero when orders were read out, for, after the usual information concerning counter-signs, the hour for reveille next morning, and sundry other regimental details, he heard his own name read out.

"Corporal Thomas Howard to be lance-sergeant; Trooper William Sloggett to be corporal. The foregoing promotions are for distinguished gallantry in the field."

Something very like a cheer broke from the men of "B" Squadron, which the sergeant-major instantly checked. But most of them shook Tom by the hand, and there were congratulations for Bill Sloggett, who was not unpopular in the squadron. A pang of bitter jealousy shot through Alf Sligo, and he forthwith began to hate Bill Sloggett with an exceedingly bitter hatred, which he took good care, however, to conceal.

"I knew you'd get something, old chap," said Jim Clavering, clapping Tom on the shoulder, and burning to unbosom himself. "The colonel had Middleton and me up to-day, and asked us a lot of questions about you."

As for Tom, he was in the seventh heaven, and he knew now that it would be only a short time before he exchanged the worsted stripes for three gold-laced chevrons, and he sat long in the gipsy-shelter looking at the starry sky, and the faint sounds of the sleeping tent fell unheeded on his ear. The sentries challenged, the officers made their rounds, a low grunt and grumble came from the transport-camels in the centre of the camp; and then about midnight, when Tom was on the point of settling himself down to sleep, an arm pulled his curtain aside, and a man from the adjoining tent poked his head in.

The young sergeant recognised Alf Sligo, and was struck by the peculiar smile which the moonlight showed upon his face.

"Well, what do you want?" he said sharply. "What's wrong?"

"There's nothing particular wrong, sergeant," said Sligo. "I only wanted to 'ave a look at yer."

"I don't know that I particularly wanted to be looked at," said Tom. "Push off, and get back to your own tent!"

Sligo grinned again, and withdrew. But four words caught Tom's ear, and, leaning suddenly forward, he thrust his head out after the retreating figure.

"What was that you said?" he demanded in a stern whisper.

"I only said 'Good-night, Sir John!'" replied Sligo, in the same tone.

And he disappeared behind his horse-blanket, leaving the sergeant very wide awake indeed.

Tom Howard hardly slept a wink that night, and before "Reveille!" went in the morning, he came out of his shelter, made two strides in the direction of Sligo's tent, and flung the saddle-blanket curtain back with so much energy that the frail structure well-nigh came down with a run.

"Here, get up, and come out of that, Sligo!" said Tom. "I want a word with you!"

ANOTHER COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. NEXT TUESDAY.

Sligo awoke, yawned lazily, looked up at the sergeant, and rose quickly to his feet, reading mischief in his eyes.

"What was that you said to me last night when you turned in?" asked Tom, with a red flush on his face, and a particularly angry glitter in his eyes. "Out with it! Say it again! You called me Sir John. Sir John what?"

"Dashwood," said Sligo, his shifty eyes roaming about Tom's face, unable to meet the stern, steady gaze of the sergeant.

"And where did you pick that up? Where did you know?" demanded the sergeant. "Come, no shillyshallying! Out with it, or I'll give you the most infernal hiding you ever had!"

"Look here, sergeant," said Sligo. "What I know, I know, and the knowledge is worth something. If I told you I could put you on the track of something that you have been looking for a long time, what would you give a fellow?"

Sligo's face had become very white and serious, and Tom, who had drawn his right arm back with the intention of letting it drive and knocking the man silly, slowly allowed it to drop to his side as the man looked at him.

"What do you mean? Quickly, now! What have I been looking for?"

"A paper with your own name upon it," said Sligo slowly—"a paper that will put thousands into your pocket if you can find it."

Sligo saw the trumpeter breathing into the mouthpiece of his trumpet preparatory to blowing the "Rouse," and, being taken off his guard so unexpectedly before he had had time to arrange the cards of what he naturally considered a nap hand, he mentally cursed the lad for being so long about it.

"There is something very mysterious about this," said Howard. "How the dickens did you come to be mixed up with my affairs? Do not play the ass, for I'll have it out of you if I have to take you up before the colonel!"

"You can take me up before fifty colonels!" said Sligo. "The point is what will you give me if I put you on the scent of that paper? True as I am here, I know where it is!"

Tom shivered from head to foot, for he saw that Sligo was speaking the truth. Then the "Reveille" blew, and Sligo, under the impression that he had scored a point, smiled his disagreeable, underhand smile.

"I will see you after stables," said the sergeant abruptly.

And, turning on his heel, he went into his own shelter, feeling that he must be alone; and, dropping his blanket over the opening, he took his head into his hands, his temples pulsating like the piston-rod of a locomotive.

But after stables Sligo was not to be found. He had got himself posted to some duty that kept him away from the sergeant, for he, too, wanted to be alone, feeling that somehow he was playing his last card, and if he made a mistake this time he would probably lose everything.

The next day the camp was in a bustle, and though Tom's face had assumed a peculiar gravity, he went about looking as black as a thundercloud. He had matters to attend to other than his own private affairs, for the advance had been ordered, and they were about to proceed into the Mahmud country.

The night before sniping shots had made the sergeant look out into the darkness several times, and now the war was going to begin, after that brief pause, and the 25th Hussars had orders to march on a reconnaissance up the valley with their old friends, the Bengal Lancers.

In the meantime Sir Bindon Blood had gone to reconnoitre the Rambat Pass, and rode off with his escort before the 25th Hussars got the word to mount.

"Ope we get a chance to show that we earned our stripes to-day, 'Oward—you and me," said Corporal William Sloggett, with a grin.

But the sergeant made no reply as he swung into his saddle. He had not even troubled to get an extra chevron sewn on his sleeve, but Bill had been swaggering about for a good hour in all the glory of his new rank badge.

They halted at a village in the broad, brown valley, and a political officer, who accompanied the reconnaissance, laid down the law to the sullen tribesmen, who denied they had been fighting against us, and swore they remained true to their salt.

In the distance, however, a cordon of armed men held aloof, fluttering their standards, and the sun, which was obscured by heavy clouds, shone on their drawn swords and rifle-barrels.

Presently there came to the political officer some other tribesmen, who told him that in the next village they would find a British troop-horse. So thither rode the cavalry, and though the horse was gone, eager hands pointed out the house in which it had been stabled, and the command was given to dismount and burn it to the ground.

Soon the roar of crackling flames was heard, and a great column of smoke rose skyward. The band of Mahmuds in the distance approached a little nearer, and sent some

dropping shots among the squadrons, who were ordered to retire at the trot.

They had just got under way, when a voice in Tom's squadron exclaimed:

"Where's Sloggett?"

And Tom looked sharply round among the files.

"Pass the word for Corporal Sloggett!" he said over his shoulder.

Corporal Sloggett was not there, and Tom pulled his mare out on to the plain, and looked back under his hand. As he did so a distant catcall came on the wind, and among the straggling huts of the village behind them he saw a little bustle, and in the midst of a knot of armed men his sharp eye detected a khaki-coloured helmet and an arm that whirled a bright blade.

Another little knot of Mahmuds were struggling with a horse, which reared and fought with its forelegs, and finally, breaking away, came galloping after the squadron; and Tom recognised Sloggett's mare.

He did not wait to communicate with Captain Vincent, but just pointed with his hand, and, dashing in the spurs, galloped back to the corporal's assistance.

The band of snipers who had menaced the reconnaissance party were running towards the village, and it was a race between the sergeant and the Mahmuds who would reach it first.

The sergeant won, and his approach was greeted by a shout of welcome from Corporal Sloggett, whose keen desire to kill somebody had got him into serious trouble.

He had stolen away from the house-burning, leading his mare by the bridle, scowling terribly at the keen-eyed, watchful natives, and saying scornful things to them in his best Cockney with the intention of forcing a quarrel; and when the squadron went about, and retired at a trot, Bill suddenly found as much fighting as he wanted; in fact, rather more, for one man against forty has not much chance.

Even with a comrade to back him, the odds were too great, and the sergeant, taking in the situation at a glance as he neared the mob that surrounded the corporal, cried:

"Put your back into it, Sloggett, and I'll get to you if I can!"

Thus adjured, Bill, who had kept the circle at arm's-length, made a sudden dash for a hooked-nose giant with a sword and shield, and ran him through the chest, snapping his own sword off short as he tried to disengage it.

The Mahmuds scattered like sheep for a moment as Tom Howard galloped up, raising a cloud of dust from the plain, and he bowled half a dozen over at the first onset. But round the corner of the Khan's house came other armed

£100 FOR A PRIZE STORY.

Sometime since the editors of "The Red Magazine," the well-known fiction journal, offered £100 for a short story of 8,000 words which, in the opinion of the editors, was the best of those submitted.

The prize has now been awarded, and thereby hangs a tale of romantic interest. It was won by Mr. F. Howel Evans, whose story, in accordance with the conditions of the competition, was placed inside a sealed envelope, his real name and address being concealed.

At first Mr. Evans had no notion of entering the competition, but an idea for a story occurred to him only a few days before the last day of sending in—August 31st last. It was suggested by a paragraph in a morning paper giving an account of a smokeless gun invented by Mr. Maxim, the brother of Sir Hiram Maxim, the celebrated inventor. He actually began writing on August 28th, which left him practically only a day in which to write the story, and then, as he says, "With a sort of desperation, I determined I would try. On that Friday morning, then, I sat down with the words 'The Smokeless Gun' staring me in the face from an otherwise blank sheet of paper. At first ideas for the further development of the narrative would not come; but eventually I made a start, and the story was completed within a fraction of eight hours."

THUS WAS THE £100 WON!

A story written in such novel circumstances should be of interest to all, and you will find it exactly as it was written in the January number of "The Red Magazine," now on sale at all newsagents and booksellers. In spite of its having been written in record time, it is probably one of the most stirring narratives ever penned.

men, who had hitherto kept at a respectful distance, and there was nothing left but to ride for it.

Tom took his left foot out of his stirrup, and pulled his mare up on her haunches beside the corporal.

"Up you get!" he shouted.

And Sloggett, grasping the cantel of the saddle with one hand, and Tom's bridle arm with the other, luckily found the iron at the first attempt, and swung up behind the sergeant.

"Whoop, my beauty, off you go!" cried Tom, touching her lightly with his spur.

The gallant beast, with its double burden, sped like an arrow from its bow, Sloggett's riding-breeches receiving a tulwar-point that rent them from hip to knee, and a volley of Martini bullets whistled about their ears.

The rearmost troop of the Hussars had faced about, as Captain Vincent saw the danger, but the mare carried the two comrades out of danger, and Trooper Rogers, having caught the corporal's horse, Bill Sloggett leapt down, and was in his own saddle in a moment.

"Thanks, old chap!" he said, riding up alongside the sergeant. "D'yer mind shaking 'ands with me? I reckon you saved my life that journey!"

"Get back to your place," said Tom sternly, "and don't play the goat! Perhaps I shall not be so ready next time!"

Returning at a full trot, they soon outdistanced the snipers. But, hearing some lively firing, they looked back, and saw the inhabitants of the two villages engaged in a combat of their own.

The people of the second village resented the fact that the others had peached about the captured horse, and they proceeded to fight it out after the good old tribal fashion which still exists in that wild region.

"Bravo, sergeant!" said Captain Vincent. "I shall report your action to Colonel Greville. Hallo! What's the matter with your leg? Got another wound?"

Tom looked down quickly, and saw that his puttee was saturated with blood; and then for the first time he experienced a great stiffness in the limb.

But it was only the old hurt broken out afresh, and though it began to hurt intolerably, the young sergeant set his teeth, declared it was nothing, and when the squadron halted, he borrowed a fresh puttee from one of the men, which answered all the purposes of a surgical bandage.

The Alarming Adventures of the Hon. Algy.

The result of the various reconnaissances having proved satisfactory from the general's point of view, the advance began the next day. The camp was abandoned, and squadrons and companies, batteries and brigades, pushed into the Mahmud country.

Twenty-four hours afterwards a dapper little officer on a nondescript sort of pony, his feet almost touching the ground, reached the deserted camping place as the sun was setting.

It was the Hon. Algy, late of the Ploughshires, and, reining up his pony on the breastwork that had surrounded the camp, he fixed his eyeglass and surveyed the large, empty quadrangle with a comical expression of annoyance on his face.

"By gad, you know, they have gone!" said the Hon. Algy, half-aloud.

He had got wind of the proposed advance, wrenched himself free from the shackles of the medical authorities down at the hospital, and, girding on his sword—a beautiful weapon, for which the military tailors had charged him unknown guineas and which was warranted not to break or bend at a critical moment—he had mounted a pony and ridden off alone to rejoin his regiment.

He could have cried with vexation—in fact, I am not quite sure that he did not—as he saw the trampled ground where the horses had

stood; the ashes of the camp-fires; the deserted paths where the sentinels had paced backwards and forwards, and all the dreary signs and tokens of loneliness and desolation that met his gaze.

Everything was alarmingly still. Not a sound, save the hot wind sobbing among some stunted bushes, fell upon his ear.

"My luck's out!" said the Hon. Algy. And, taking off his helmet, he wiped the perspiration from his narrow forehead with the daintiest of handkerchiefs, which bore an elaborate monogram worked in silk in one corner.

In a very short time it would be too dark to see anything until the moon rose, and, scrambling his pony through the gap in the rough parapet that surrounded the old camping-ground, the Hon. Algy looked about him for a comfortable spot where he could settle for the night.

He chose an angle in the parapet, and, unfastening his picket-rope, he tethered the pony securely. Then he found three branches of a tree that had been used for the same purpose, and sticking the three ends firmly in the sand, he spread his blanket over the top of them to keep the dew off, and, crawling underneath, sat with his legs crossed—a very disconsolate young gentleman indeed.

A mouthful remained in his flask, and he produced a couple of sandwiches from some crevice of his uniform; and, when he had disposed of them, he lit a cigarette, leaned back against the angle, and smoked meditatively.

Some day, unless a chance bullet took him off, he would succeed to the earldom of Snowdon. At the present moment he was the sole representative of the British peerage in that lonely spot, and found his position very exclusive.

Presently he felt his head nodding, his eyelids drooped, and the Hon. Algy slept the sleep of the just.

Slowly the rim of the silvery moon rose above the Eastern mountain-tops, flooding the valley with light and making the shadows doubly mysterious.

The Hon. Algy awoke with a start, blinked his eyes, and sat bolt upright, to find himself surrounded by a circle of dark, grinning faces; to see the moonlight glinting on swords and yataghans, and to realise that he was a prisoner.

A man with an aquiline nose and a jet-black beard, who seemed to be the leader, peered into his face—the moonlight shining on his eyeballs—and when he saw that his prisoner was awake, he smiled with a mouth of white teeth and ejaculated something that sounded like "Yorigaboo!"

"Yes, I dare say it does," said the Hon. Algy; "but I really do not understand you."

The fierce-looking tribesmen, breaking into a discordant laugh, raised their weapons and shook them in the moonlight. The solitary officer put his hand upon his revolver-case, but the flap was open and the weapon had been removed. It was the same with his sword. The empty scabbard alone rewarded his touch, and his heart began to beat with a little flutter.

"Do any of you speak English?" he said, looking round the circle of faces.

But the only reply was some unintelligible gibberish, whereupon the Hon. Algy fixed his glass with great care and looked vacantly from one to another.

The man whom he had taken for the chief gave him to understand by a sign that they wished him to get up, and he did so slowly, then suddenly snatched one of the supports of the tent-blanket and used it like a club. There was a gleam of steel in the moonlight, and the chief cut it through within an inch of his thumb with the same ease that would have severed a pat of butter. They surrounded him, jabbering and gesticulating, not without searching glances along the valley, and presently they intimated to him by signs that he must mount his pony and go with them.

(Another long instalment of this splendid War story next Tuesday. Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

"BRITAIN INVADED!"

A War Story in
"THE GEM" LIBRARY.

For Next Week

The Editor, "MAGNET" Library,
23-29, Bouverie Street, Fleet Street,
London, will be glad to hear from you.

Harry Wharton & Co. are in for some very exciting times! Our next story will open with a terrific storm and the wreck of a vessel on the rocks not very far distant from the school. The part that is so well played by Harry and his chums I will leave you to find out next Tuesday.

THE EDITOR.

TOM SAYERS

Tom Sayers is just an ordinary British boy with a good allowance of pluck, and his fight against adverse circumstances proves that a true heart can beat beneath a ragged coat. Tom Sayers is not a milksop, neither is he very noble. He has to work out his own salvation, and the adventures he goes through would try the strength of many better equipped to stand against Fortune's hardest knocks and blows.

Read the story of

TOM SAYERS

in this week's

"MARVEL"

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