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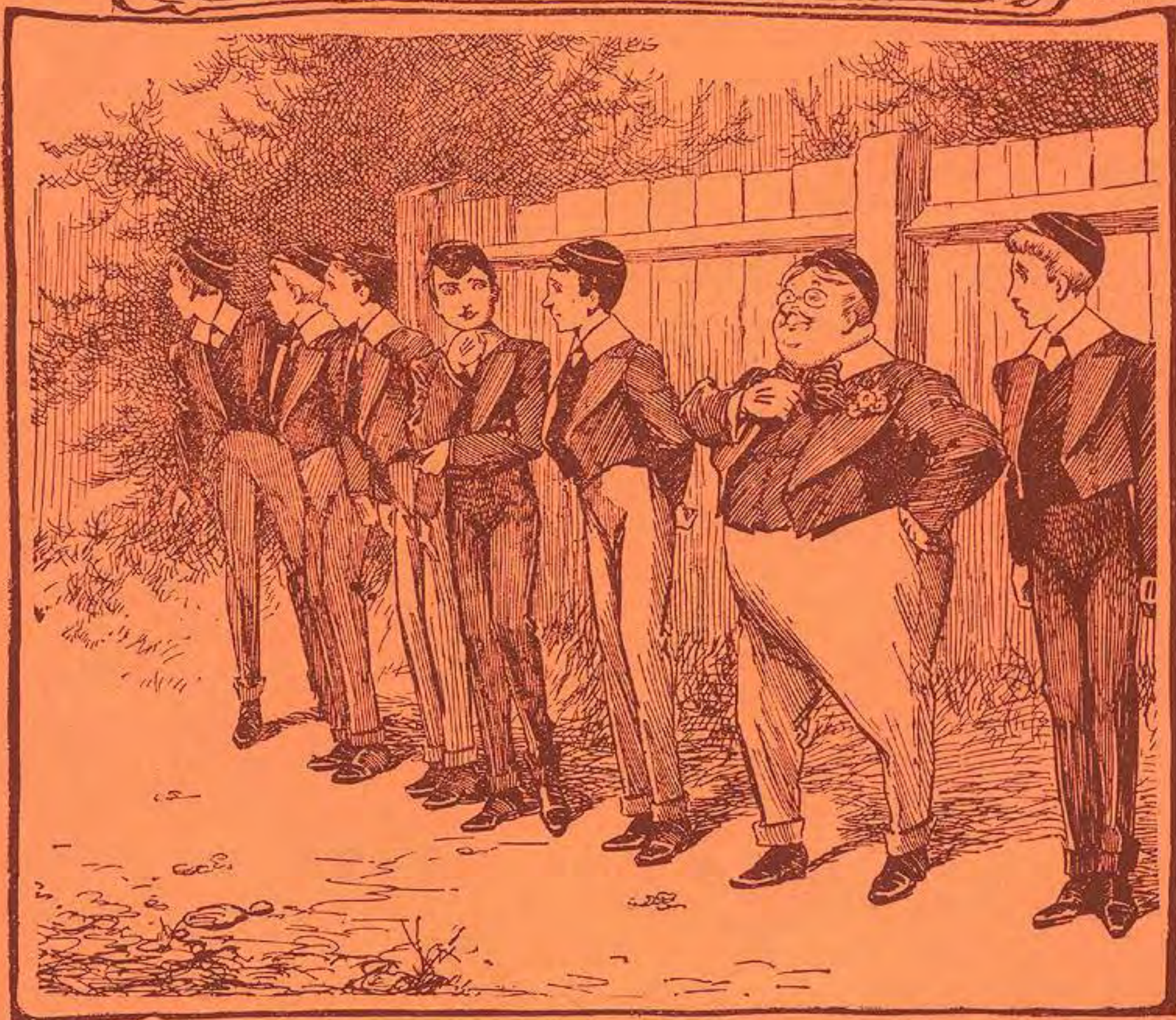
Vol. 3.

COMPLETE
STORY
FOR ALL

A Grand Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

THE SCHOOL DANCE.

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



"They're coming!" exclaimed Nugent breathlessly. "They are coming along, two and two, with Miss Penelope at the head!"



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A Grand, Long,
Complete School Tale

. . of . .

Harry Wharton & Co.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Welcomers.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here comes Nugent!"

Bob Cherry uttered the words as Frank Nugent came scorching up the road on his bicycle, in a cloud of dust.

It was a bright, windy March afternoon. Nearly a dozen juniors belonging to Greyfriars School were gathered in a group on the road that lay between Greyfriars and the sea, winding round the rugged slopes of the Black Pike. They were all looking anxiously down the road towards the village of Friardale, when the dusty cyclist came in sight.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, who was seated upon a boulder by the roadside, reading the latest number of the "Marvel," jumped up at once. The group of juniors all belonged to the Remove—the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars. Their expectant looks showed that they were out that sunny half-holiday upon an important mission. Nugent dashed up on his machine, and jumped to the ground.

"They're coming!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Have you seen them?"

"Yes; saw 'em come out of the station!" gasped Nugent, who had evidently been acting the part of a scout. "They are coming along, two and two, with Miss Penelope at the head."

"Good!"

"They'll be in sight in a few minutes," said Nugent, leaning his machine against a tree. "There's no time to waste."

"Well, we've got it all cut and dried," said Bob Cherry. "Stand in order there, and look as orderly as you can."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Don't all of you start blushing when they come in sight," went on Bob Cherry; "that will spoil the effect."

"Faith, and it's yerself that's blushing already," said Micky Desmond.

"And don't you begin to argue, Micky Desmond, when

"We've no time to waste in jaw," said Bob hastily. "They'll be coming round the corner in a minute——"

"And we must be ready," said Harry Wharton. "No, don't you talk, Bunter; there's no time to listen to you now. You're to stand in order, and raise your caps just at the same moment when I give the signal—and don't look self-conscious."

"I'm not looking self-conscious!" grinned Hazeldene.

"You've got a sister among them!" growled Trevor. "That makes a difference. I can't help thinking that they will—will——"

"They won't eat us."

"They'll—they'll grin."

"Well, suppose they do?" said Nugent. "That won't hurt us! Besides, they won't grin; they'll smile."

"I say, Wharton——"

"Will you shut up, Bunter?"

"But it's just occurred to me——"

"You can tell us afterwards. Now, look here, as soon as they come round the corner, turn on your sweetest smiles, so as to be ready, and prepare to raise your caps as soon as I raise mine."

"The raisefulness will be terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Wish I'd thought of shoving on a silk hat," murmured Bob Cherry. "I say, is there time for me to cut back to the school, and get a topper?"

"No, there isn't."

"Is—is my necktie straight, Nugent?"

"No," said Nugent, looking at it. "It never is."

"You might give it a pull."

"Certainly!"

"You—you ass! I didn't tell you to yank the thing right out!" exclaimed Bob, excitedly. "Now, I shall have to tie it again."

"I say, Wharton, it's occurred to me——"

"Something will occur to your nose if you don't dry up, Billy."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Cheese it!"

Wharton rapped out orders, and the Greyfriars juniors obeyed. In spite of repeated warnings, most of them were blushing now.

It was an important and really unprecedented occasion.

The Greyfriars juniors had received with mingled feelings the news that a girls' school was to be opened at Cliff House, almost within a stone's throw of Greyfriars. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, had declared his intention of making things unpleasant for the new neighbours of Greyfriars, but the greater part of the Lower Fourth followed Wharton's lead, feeling that they were called upon to be civil, at least, to the newcomers.

The discovery that Hazeldene's sister Marjorie was one of the pupils of Miss Penelope Primrose made a difference, too.

Marjorie was very popular with Harry Wharton & Co.

After much discussion, the leaders of the Remove had agreed that the proper "caper" was to give a public welcome to the girls' school.

Bulstrode and his friends had scoffed, but scoffing made no difference to Harry Wharton. As it fortunately happened that Miss Penelope and her pupils were to arrive on Wednesday, the half-holiday, Wharton had a good opportunity of carrying out his scheme.

Hence the party of blushing juniors waiting on the Friardale road.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, had thought of something of the kind, too; but the Remove were first in the field, as they generally were.

Nearly all the Remove had joined in the scheme, but on Wednesday afternoon many of them found their courage fail.

There was really no danger, as Wharton patiently pointed out. They knew Marjorie Hazeldene and the other girls were probably quite harmless. But the bashfulness of some of the fellows was too strong. From over thirty adherents, Wharton's party dwindled to less than a dozen by the time he took up his stand on the Friardale road.

And now, as the pink-faced juniors stood waiting, some of them showed signs of a decided inclination to bolt.

Before them the road made a sweeping curve towards the village. Up the road and round the corner the girls' school were to come, two and two, walking from the station to their new home.

And as the seconds passed, the uneasiness of the Removites grew keener. One might have fancied from their unquiet looks that they expected a herd of buffaloes to come prancing round the corner, instead of about thirty demure young damsels with their hair down their backs.

"That's right," said Harry Wharton, who was the coolest there, though there was a slight colour in his cheeks. "Keep

steady! There's nothing to be afraid of. Don't leave the ranks, Desmond."

"Faith, and I've forgotten something at Greyfriars——"

"Keep your place!"

"But—but—but——"

"Steady! Don't slip out of your place, Russell."

"All right," said Russell, turning crimson.

Bob Cherry was performing mysterious evolutions with his necktie. He wanted to have it straight for once, but his fingers seemed to be all thumbs just now. The necktie was always an obstinate brute, but never had it been so obstinate as now.

"Wharton, old chap, just give this a twist for me," said Bob imploringly.

"Right you are!" laughed Harry.

He fastened the refractory necktie at last. Bob Cherry heaved a great sigh of relief. The perspiration was in great drops on his brow. Wharton turned back to his row of red-faced followers. A place in the rank was empty, and there was a rustling in the bushes by the road.

"Come back, Micky!" shouted Wharton wrathfully.

But Micky Desmond did not reply. He was gone! Several other juniors were strongly inclined to follow his example, but under Wharton's scanning eye they did not care to make a movement of retreat.

"The blushfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, whose own dusky cheeks were a trifle pinker than usual.

"Nothing to blush about!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I——"

"My word," said Russell. "Why, you're as red as a giddy beetroot."

"Oh, rot," said Bob. "That's—that's the sun, of course."

"I say, Wharton——"

"Well, what is it, Bunter?" said Harry, who had his followers in readiness now, and felt that he could spare a moment. "Buck up!"

"It's occurred to me——"

"Buck up!"

"It's occurred to me what Bulstrode wanted the fireworks for."

"Bulstrode! Fireworks! What are you talking about?"

"Bulstrode made Mrs. Mimble look over her old stock of what she had left over from the last Fifth," explained Bunter. "I was in the tuck-shop, and I saw him. He bought a lot—as many as if it were Fifth of November to-day, I should think. I wondered what he wanted them for at the time."

Wharton's face became suddenly grave.

He remembered the threat of the Remove bully that he would give the Cliff House girls a surprise on their arrival.

"The—the cad!" he muttered. "He can't mean to——"

"By Jove, but he does!" exclaimed Nugent. "Bulstrode was among the trees up the road when I came by a couple of minutes ago. I saw him there."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

In a moment he divined Bulstrode's scheme; and whether the girls were frightened or not by the fireworks, it would be an act of rudeness that would very likely lead to strained relations from the start between Greyfriars and Cliff House.

But was there time to intervene?

At any moment now they expected to see Miss Penelope Primrose and her pupils appear round the bend in the road. It was there that Nugent had seen Bulstrode in the trees by the roadside.

There was not a second to lose.

"Stay here, you chaps!" exclaimed Wharton quickly.

"Don't shift! I'll just buzz along and see Bulstrode. If I'm not back by the time they arrive you can take my place, Nugent."

"I—I—— Oh, all right," said Nugent. "But—but perhaps I'd better come, and show you where Bulstrode is."

"Right! You can take my place, Bob."

Bob Cherry was too dismayed to reply. Wharton and Nugent raced down the road, and ran into the trees at the bend. There was a sharp exclamation, and Bulstrode started up before them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hard Cheese.

BULSTRODE was startled, and his breath came quick and short as he looked at the chums of the Remove. He had been kneeling on the ground, and the reason was apparent at a glance. A bicycle lantern was lighted there, hidden in the thick grass among the trees, and beside it was a cardboard box crammed with fireworks. The lantern was evidently placed in readiness for lighting the fuses, so that there should be no delay over matches when the time for action arrived.

"What—what do you want?" stammered Bulstrode.

Wharton fixed his eyes sternly upon him.

"What are you going to do with those fireworks?"

"Mind your own business."

"You were going to throw them into the road to explode when Miss Primrose came by, and frighten the girls."

"Well, suppose I was?"

"Well, you are a rotten cad to think of such a thing, that's all," said Wharton, between his teeth, "and you sha'n't do it."

"Who'll stop me?" demanded Bulstrode fiercely.

"I will."

"Look here, you can mind your own business. If I choose to jape the girls' school it's no affair of yours. I'm not asking you to join in. What are you doing?" roared Bulstrode.

The question was somewhat superfluous. Harry Wharton had brought his foot down on the lighted lantern, smashing it, and of course extinguishing it at once.

"That's for a start," said Wharton. "Pick up those fireworks, will you, Frank?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'll knock you flying if you touch them!" shouted Bulstrode.

"I'll see about that, Frank. Take them."

Nugent stooped and picked up the fireworks. Bulstrode, red with rage, plunged forward to strike him but found Wharton in his way. Harry seized the bully by the shoulders, swung him round, and hurled him bodily into the thickets.

Bulstrode, badly scratched and half dazed, stared at him blankly.

"Cut off, Frank!" said Wharton quietly, but breathing hard. "Take the fireworks with you."

"They're mine!" howled Bulstrode. "I—"

"You shall have them back presently," said Wharton disdainfully. "They'll be returned to you at Greyfriars later."

"I'm going to have them now."

"Off you go, Nugent!"

Nugent nodded, and hurried away with the box of fireworks under his arm. Bulstrode made a motion to follow him, and Wharton faced the bully of the Remove with flashing eyes and clenched fists.

"Now," he said quietly, "if you've got anything to say about the matter say it now and quickly. I've no time to waste."

"You've—you've gone too far this time," said Bulstrode thickly. "Put up your fists."

Wharton obeyed. He was thinking uneasily of the girls' school walking up the road from the station and due on the scene any moment now. There was but a thin screen of bushes between the spot where the two juniors stood and the road. Harry had no desire to avoid a fight, but he would have given a great deal to leave it for another time and place.

Bulstrode guessed as much, too, and hence was determined.

"You—you interfering cad!" he hissed. "I'll give you a licking, at least, and you shall have a swelled nose to show Miss Marjorie when she comes along."

"Come on!" said Wharton quietly.

And Bulstrode came on, and under the trees, fresh in their spring green, the two juniors were soon at it, hammer and tongs. Frank Nugent had hurried back to the rest, and he tossed the box of fireworks to the ground, where it lay beside the large cardboard box containing the bouquet Harry Wharton was to present to Miss Penelope.

The plans of the captain of the Remove had been carefully laid. The juniors were to smile sweetly and raise their caps or hats at the same moment, and then Wharton was to step forward, and with a neat speech present the bouquet to Miss Primrose on behalf of the juniors of Greyfriars.

It certainly ought to have been an effective scene, if all went well.

The bouquet was one of the finest that could be obtained at the Friardale florist's, and the speech had been composed by all the Remove putting their heads together over it. Wharton, with his musical voice and his excellent elocution, was just the fellow to deliver the speech effectively.

Unfortunately, Wharton was unavoidably off the scene now.

"Where's Harry?" asked Bob Cherry nervously.

Nugent jerked his thumb towards the thicket at the bend of the road.

"Talking to Bulstrode."

"I—I hope he'll be back for—for—"

"Well, if he isn't, you can take his place. You know the speech by heart."

"I—I—I think you had better take his place, Nugent," stammered Bob. "You—you are much better at that sort of thing."

"Not at all, Bob; your elocution is better than mine."

"Well, suppose Trevor does it."

"No fear!" said Trevor.

"Russell is jolly good at delivering a speech," said Nugent persuasively.

"Yes, at a football concert, if you like," said Russell.

"You're not going to get me addressing a giddy school-mistress, though."

No. 59.

"Look here—"

"I'll look as long as you like, Cherry, but you're not going to shove it off on to me. Wharton left it to you."

Bob Cherry wiped his perspiring brow. There was a sudden exclamation from Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, look there!"

There was no need for Bunter to speak. The fellows were looking, in utter dismay. Down the road two figures, clasped in deadly combat, had reeled out from the trees, and Wharton and Bulstrode were fighting like tigers in the full glare of the sun, in the middle of the dusty road.

"My only hat!" gasped Nugent. "Look, there come the girls!"

They were only a hundred yards or so from the bend of the road, and all was plain in their sight. Round the curve came the head of the column. Up from the village, walking two and two in regular order, came the future pupils of Cliff House.

Very fresh and pretty they looked, too, and freshest and prettiest of all was Marjorie Hazeldene. There was something pleasant, too, though severe in the features of Miss Penelope Primrose, the head-mistress of Cliff House, who walked beside the foremost two—Marjorie and a stoutly-built girl with German features. Miss Primrose was speaking to Marjorie, discoursing upon the beauties of nature, and Marjorie was listening with dutiful attention, when suddenly Miss Penelope broke off with a gasp.

"Goodness gracious!"

Right in front of the startled girls appeared two desperately fighting forms, and the Cliff House pupils came to a halt in dismay, and looked spellbound at Harry Wharton and Bulstrode.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Reception.

MISS PENELOPE put up her glasses, and looked at the combatants as though she could scarcely believe her eyes. Some of the girls shrieked. Wharton and Bulstrode, too deeply engrossed in the combat to notice anything else, remained unconscious of the new spectators on the scene for some moments.

"Boys!" said Miss Penelope, in an awful voice.

Wharton started, and suddenly dropped his hands.

"Hold on!" he muttered. "Stop!"

Bulstrode grinned savagely.

"I don't care for the old cat. I'll stop if you give me best, not otherwise."

"I don't—I—"

"Then come on!"

Wharton gritted his teeth hard. To fight before the horrified lady and the startled girls was impossible. Already Marjorie Hazeldene's eyes were fixed upon him with recognition—and was it disgust?

"Very well, Bulstrode, I give you best."

"Good!"

Bulstrode stepped back. Wharton faced Miss Penelope. His cap was gone, his hair untidy; there was a cut on his cheek, and a trickle of red from the corner of his mouth.

"Boy," said Miss Primrose, "how—how can you fight in this savage fashion?"

"I am sorry, madam—"

"I am glad," said Miss Primrose, "that you are sorry. Look at him, my dears—look at him! Is it not dreadful?"

"Dreadful!" said the dears, with one voice.

Wharton turned crimson. Bulstrode, grinning, shoved his hands into his pockets, and whistled as he strode away through the trees, to show that he at least did not care for the opinion of Miss Primrose and her pupils.

Wharton would gladly have escaped, but he could not walk away rudely while Miss Penelope was talking to him.

"My dear little fellow," went on Miss Penelope, apparently unconscious of the fact that Harry was not a little fellow, but a sturdy junior and a distinguished footballer in the Remove—"my dear little fellow, how can you fight in this dreadful way? What would your dear mother say?"

As Harry Wharton did not remember his mother, who had died when he was a baby, he could not very well answer the question.

"Yes, indeed!" said some of the girls, who did not, however, seem quite so grave as Miss Penelope about the matter. Perhaps it occurred to them that there was a comical side to the scene.

"What would your kind teachers say?" resumed Miss Penelope, who evidently felt herself called upon to improve the shining hour by administering a little moral instruction to the culprit.

"Yes, indeed!" repeated the girls dutifully.

Some of them had become aware now of the group of

Greyfriars juniors watching them from a distance, but Miss Penelope had not noticed.

"Do you not know, my dear child," went on Miss Penelope tenderly, "that it is wrong to raise the hand in anger against a fellow-creature."

Wharton was crimson. He would have given a term's pocket-money for the earth to open and swallow him up.

"Let dogs," continued Miss Penelope—"let dogs delight to bark and bite," my dear boy. But you—Repeat those touching lines, Clara, and they may have a softening effect upon this unfortunate boy."

The young lady addressed as Clara was a golden-haired, blue-eyed, rather mischievous-looking young person. There was a glimmer of fun in her eyes as she recited the lines in a sing-song voice for the edification of the unhappy Removite.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,

It is their nature to;

Let bears and lions growl at night—"

"And fight," my dear," corrected Miss Penelope.

"Let bears and lions growl at night and fight," went on Miss Clara demurely; "They've nothing else to do."

There was a slight sound of laughter among the pupils of Cliff House as Clara concluded her somewhat original version, but a glance from Miss Penelope restored an almost preternatural gravity.

"Remember those lines, my little fellow," said Miss Penelope, patting Wharton on the head. Wharton wriggled. "When you are tempted to raise your hand in anger, remember those lines, and instead of smiting your fellow-creature on the nose, throw your arms round his neck, and take him to your heart. Marjorie, I am surprised at your smiling at such a moment!"

"I—I—I am sorry!" stammered Marjorie.

"I hope so. Remember my words, my little man. And now run away!"

Wharton stood aside for the girls to pass. He looked as if the whole of the blood in his body had been pumped into his face. Marjorie gave him a compassionate glance, but most of the frivolous young persons were smiling.

The school walked on.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Miss Penelope, a few minutes later. "What—what does this mean?"

The school halted again.

The Greyfriars juniors were in the road. The reception planned by Wharton would probably have gone off very well if he had been there; but with the bashful Bob at the head of it, there were certain to be troubles.

"They're coming, Nugent!" whispered Bob, in great anguish. "Take the bouquet ready—"

"You're to take it!"

"But you're going to make the speech."

"I can't; I've forgotten the words!"

"I say, you fellows, suppose we cut as Wharton isn't here—"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I—I don't think it's a good idea to go on—without Wharton, you know. Let's—"

"Rats!" said Trevor. "They've seen us!"

"Yes, but—"

"Lot of idiots we should look, running off like a lot of startled rabbits!"

"Here they are, Bob! Buck up!"

"I—I—I—"

"It's all right—easy as anything!"

And Nugent pushed the crimson junior forward as Miss Penelope majestically halted.

Under the eyes of the Cliff House procession the juniors felt less at their ease than ever.

The girls looked surprised and amused. The blushes in the juniors' faces were a confession of weakness, and the weaker the position of the boys, the stronger, of course, the position of the girls. The fair pupils felt themselves on a vantage ground, surveying the blushing lads, as it were, from a superior standpoint. They smiled, and their smiling was the last straw. The Removites—loud enough and assertive enough in Greyfriars—stood dumb and crimson, their eyes fixed on the ground.

Bob Cherry hardly dared even to look at Miss Penelope as he advanced hesitatingly towards her.

He raised his cap, and all the juniors raised their caps as if by clockwork.

"Goodness gracious!" said Miss Penelope.

"If you please, ma'am," stammered Bob Cherry, trying to recollect the speech. He knew it by heart—when he was self-possessed. Now the words seemed to escape him. "If you please, ma'am, we are grey juniors—"

"Juniors of Greyfriars," whispered Nugent.

"I—I mean, juniors of Greyfriars, ma'am. As our school—I mean, your school—is being opened to-day, we—we—we thought—What on earth did we think, Nugent, you beast?" whispered Bob Cherry shrilly.

"Thought we ought to give 'em a welcome."

"We—we thought we ought to give you a welcome, ma'am, and your pupils," said Bob Cherry. "The opening of a girls' school in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars is a most suspicious circumstance—"

"Auspicious occasion, you ass!" muttered Trevor.

"I—I mean, a most auspicious occasion, ma'am, and I beg to present you with a girls' school—I—I mean, a bouquet—"

Words failed Bob Cherry, and he held out the box. The bouquet ought to have been taken out to be presented, but Bob was too confused to think of it. Nugent tried to whisper that he had picked up the wrong box, but Bob was deaf to everything.

"Goodness gracious!" said Miss Penelope, putting up her glass and surveying the packet of Bulstrode's fireworks that Bob Cherry was generously offering her. "I—I—I am amazed! What use can I possibly have for—for Roman candles and crackers?"

"My—my hat!" gasped the unhappy Bob.

He dropped the box to the ground. He was evidently at the end of his resources, and Nugent had to rush to the rescue. He picked up the bouquet.

"If you please, ma'am, will you accept this bouquet with the love—I—I mean, the kind regards, of the juniors of Greyfriars?"

Miss Penelope beamed.

"Yes, certainly. I think this is very charming of these dear boys—so different from the brutal exhibition we have just witnessed, my dears."

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose!" said the dears.

"I thank you from my heart!" said Miss Penelope. "I accept the bouquet with pleasure—in the spirit in which it is presented. I am glad to see so much really proper feeling among you, dear boys. Are you not also glad, my dears?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose!"

"We are charmed—quite charmed!"

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose!"

"We have just passed two unhappy boys who were striking one another violently upon the countenance," said Miss Penelope. "If those unhappy boys are schoolmates of yours, may I beg you as a personal favour to remonstrate with them, and point out gently but firmly the error of their ways?"

"Yes, certainly!" gasped Nugent.

"Oh, thank you! You are a good, kind boy! We will now proceed, my dears!"

They proceeded.

Hazeldene grinned at his sister, but the rest of the Removites stood, cap in hand, with downcast eyes while the procession walked on.

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath as the last of the smiling girls vanished round a turn in the road.

"My—my hat! This is the last time I shall be chiselled into presenting bouquets to a girls' school! Br-r-r!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode is Startled.

HARRY WHARTON had not waited to see the presentation. He was at Greyfriars, bathing the bruises on his face under a tap in a bath-room, when the juniors came in. He turned a glowing countenance, streaming with water, towards Bob Cherry and Nugent as they looked in at the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "It was rotten bad luck for you."

"Yes," growled Wharton. "I had a lecture from Miss Primrose—nice, after interfering with that brute to save her from a shock!"

"We've promised to remonstrate with you," said Bob.

"Eh?"

"And to point out the error of your ways."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"We're only keeping our word to Miss Primrose. Beloved youth, think upon the error of your ways—turn from the downward path while yet there is time. O my 'earers—Oh—"

Bob Cherry broke off as a cake of soap caught him in the mouth.

"Ow! Beast!"

"Will you have the sponge next?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"Ow! Pax! I suppose we've remonstrated enough to redeem our promise. I wonder what Marjorie thought of you, doing a fisticuff turn in the high road?"

Wharton flushed.

"I shall explain to Marjorie when I see her."

"Of course. You might explain to Miss Primrose, too, if you get a chance. She must have had quite a wrong impression of you," grinned Bob Cherry. "I hope you gave Bulstrode a good hiding?"

"I don't know; we both seem to have had some hard knocks. Did the presentation go off all right?"

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry confidently. "I made the speech pretty well."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"What are you cackling at, you ass?"

"I am thinking of the way you made the speech."

"Oh, rats! Miss Primrose seemed pleased, anyway! By the way, I've told Bunter to take those fireworks back to Bulstrode, Harry."

"That's right!"

Wharton dried his face, and the chums of the Remove strolled away together. Billy Bunter met them, with the cardboard box full of fireworks in his hand. The fat junior blinked at them.

"I can't find Bulstrode, you fellows. He hasn't come in yet."

"Shove 'em into his study, then."

"Can't you shove 'em in?" said Bunter aggressively. "You know I don't like going upstairs when I can avoid it."

"How can I take them when I've got my hands in my pockets?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Besides, it will bring down your fat—a little exercise!" said Bob kindly. "Run upstairs at top speed, and—"

"I'm not going to do anything of the sort! I think—I say, you fellows, I wish you wouldn't walk away while I'm talking! Blessed if I'm going up to Bulstrode's study!" murmured Billy Bunter, as he found himself alone. "Here, I say, Wun Lung, will you take these fireworks up to Bulstrode's room?"

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, paused with his sleepy smile.

"You're a lighter weight than I am," said Bunter persuasively. "Look here, I'm expecting a postal order this evening. I'll stand you a bit of a feed when it comes. Will you take this to Bulstrode's study?"

"Me take!"

And the little Celestial cheerfully took the packet, and went upstairs with it. He was some little time in Bulstrode's study, but Bunter did not know that or care—the fat junior was busy thinking about other matters. When Wun Lung came out of the study, he seemed to be doubled up in a paroxysm of silent mirth. He became suddenly grave as a burly form came along the passage, and Bulstrode scowled at him.

Wun Lung scuttled off. It was not safe for him to get within reach of the bully of the Remove. There were two fellows at Greyfriars with whom Wun Lung was always at daggers drawn—Bulstrode, of the Remove, and Ionides, of the Sixth.

Bulstrode went into his study. He was feeling somewhat sore from his encounter with Harry Wharton. The hero of the Remove was a hard hitter. But there was great satisfaction in the thought that he had forced Wharton to give him best. If Harry renewed the contest, it would end differently, and Bulstrode knew that. Still, for the present there was satisfaction in the thought.

It was a cold March day, and Bulstrode growled as he saw that his fire was out. Although, as a member of a junior Form, he was not entitled to the services of a fag, Bulstrode usually found some small boy to fag for him, rewarding him with kicks or ha'pence, according to his humour. The room was cold, but Bulstrode noticed that the fire was laid ready for him, and the grate had been carefully swept. This discovery caused his face to clear a little, and he felt in his pockets for a match, struck it, and stooped down over the grate.

He lighted the fire. A quaint little face looked in for a moment at the door as he did so, and grinned. But it vanished as Bulstrode rose to his feet.

The paper stuffed in the grate under the sticks flared, and a thick smoke went up the chimney. There was a sound of fizzing in the fire, but Bulstrode did not notice it.

He picked up his kettle to fill it with water for tea. Hazeldene, who shared his study, came to the door at that moment to come in. Bulstrode held out the kettle towards him.

"Fill this!" he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Hazeldene. "I didn't come here to fag."

"Did you come to get a thick ear?" asked Bulstrode unpleasantly. "If you did, you're going the right way to work. I— Oh! What's—that—the— Ow!"

Bulstrode broke off as a terrific explosion came from the fire.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Bang! Bang!

Fiz-z-z-z-z-z-z!

Hazeldene jumped clear of the floor in startled amazement.

"What the— Who— How—"

Crack! Bang! Fizz!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE GREYFRIARS CRICKETERS."

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

The fragments of the fire were hurled in all directions. Exploding crackers jumped about the room, and squibs and rockets and Roman candles added merrily to the din and confusion.

Bulstrode staggered away from the grate in amazement and terror. With an almost stupefied look he stood with his back against the furthest wall, watching the explosions from the fire.

Hazeldene scuttled out into the passage.

"Help!" he yelled "Fire!"

A youth with a pigtail and a grinning yellow countenance came rushing up. He had one of the fire-buckets from the row at the end of the passage in his hands, and it was full of water.

Wun Lung was ready for the alarm.

"Fire!" shouted Bulstrode in the study. "Fire!"

"Me helpee!" panted Wun Lung.

He rushed into the room with the bucket of water.

To swamp half of it on the fire was the work of a second, and a thick cloud of smoke careered around the study. Then, with a swing of the arm Wun Lung sent the rest of the water over Bulstrode.

The Remove bully gave a roar.

"Me savee you!"

"You—you—you mad beast!"

"Me savee you lifee!" beamed Wun Lung. "No trouble to tankee. Me know you jolly glateful."

"You—you heathen beast! I'll—I'll—"

Bulstrode rushed at the Chinese, who dodged out of the study.

The dripping bully of the Remove followed him furiously. In the passage Wun Lung was sprinting along as if on the cinder-path; but Bulstrode's long legs covered the ground rapidly. The little Chinese threw the fire-bucket behind him at the psychological moment, and Bulstrode stumbled over it and measured his length on the linoleum. Before he could gain his feet the little Celestial had vanished.

Bulstrode limped back to his study. The fire had gone out, and the grate was swimming with water. Smoke and blacks were everywhere. Bulstrode looked round the study, and then stamped out of it, and went down to the common-room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Great News!

"HURRAH!"

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—the Famous Four of the Remove at Greyfriars—were seated in their study, finishing their preparation. Billy Bunter was reclining in the easy chair, having done his work, as well as he ever did it. He had had his tea, and a small loan from Wharton had enabled him to follow it up with a feed in the tuckshop, and so just now the fat junior was feeling especially contented and satisfied with himself and things generally. He was just sinking into a pleasant doze, and beginning to dream that he was a pork butcher with an unlimited stock of pork sausages, when Hazeldene burst into the study, waving a letter in his hand, and shouting like a football enthusiast over a goal at a Cup-tie.

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry dropped five or six blots, and looked round ferociously. Wharton rose to his feet.

"Off your rocker?" he asked.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!" chanted Hazeldene.

"What's the matter?" roared Bob Cherry. "Look here! I've a jolly good mind to wipe this ink off on your silly chivvy."

"Hurrah!"

"The hurrahfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "What is the causefulness of the esteemed hurrahful rejoicing of our worthy chum?"

"It's ripping!"

"What's ripping?" exclaimed Nugent. "Expound, you ass!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"It's simply ripping," said Hazeldene. "I always said she was a jolly good sort; at least, if I didn't say so, I thought so. Anyway, I think so now!"

"I say, you fellows, turn that noisy beast out of the study! I was just getting into such a beautiful doze, and having such a lovely dream."

"No time for dozes or dreams, now," said Hazeldene. "I've got the best news you've heard for a dog's age. Hurrah!"

"Look here! A little less hurrah and a little more news!" said Wharton. "What is it all about?"

"I've just had this letter—"

A Grand School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.

"From Marjorie?" asked Bob Cherry eagerly.

"No; from the Head-mistress of Cliff House—Miss Penelope Primrose."

"Oh!"

"But it's a ripping letter. She says she much appreciates the kindness shown by the juniors of Greyfriars in extending a hearty welcome to the new school—"

"Good!" said Wharton. "I'm glad she's pleased, though my part of the performance didn't seem to go down very well."

"Ha, ha, ha! She's thinking, of course, of the graceful way Bob Cherry presented her with a box of fireworks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob, turning red. "Get on with the washing!"

"Very well. Miss Penelope is giving a sort of celebration at the new school, to celebrate the opening, you know."

Billy Bunter was upright at once.

"A feed, I suppose?" he asked. "That's a ripping idea. If Miss Primrose wanted any expert advice, I'd go over and help with pleasure."

"I dare say there'll be a feed," assented Hazeldene. "There's generally something to eat at a dance."

"A dance!" exclaimed three or four voices.

Hazeldene nodded.

"That's the wheeze. Miss Primrose is giving a little dance to-morrow night to celebrate the opening of the school, and we're invited."

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Thought you'd say that," grinned Hazeldene. "Of course, lots of us don't dance, but there's bound to be a good feed. That's the thing, you know."

"Yes, rather," said Billy Bunter, with emphasis, "I suppose I'm on the list, Vaseline?"

"I suppose so," said Hazeldene, with a disparaging look at the fat junior. "Miss Primrose has asked all who were connected with the plan of giving her a public welcome. You were with us?"

"Of course I was. It was really my idea—"

"Oh, cheese it! It was Wharton's idea, and a blessed hard job he had to get us to back him up and carry it out," said Hazeldene. "But it's turned out jolly well. It was worth the trouble. But I haven't told you all. The affair is to be fancy dress, that's the beauty of it. I'm going to wire home for my toga and things."

"Your which?"

"My toga. I've done Brutus, you know, in amateur theatricals. I shall go as Brutus. Bunter had better go as the Fat Boy of Peckham. He won't have to make up then."

"Oh, really, Vaseline!"

"Miss Primrose has written to me because I'm Marjorie's brother," explained Hazeldene. "But she says I'm to bring all the fellows who had a hand in the welcome, if they care to come, and any others I think suitable. There's really no limit, but, of course, it's understood that only juniors are going."

The chums of the Remove looked very cheerful.

A fancy dress ball was a little out of the common, and was a welcome break in the even tenor of their way.

Dancing, of course, did not appeal to boys so much as it would have appealed to girls; but the idea of going in costume and mask was attractive. And there was the supper for those who cared for it, and their name, of course, would be legion. Free chocolates and ices for youths who were mostly out of pocket-money towards the end of the week—there was something very enticing in the mere thought! Billy Bunter was already dreaming dreams of the supper-room.

"We'll all go!" said Wharton. "We're much obliged to Miss Primrose. We must write her a really nice letter in return."

"Yes, rather. She says she's sorry it's such a short notice, but she has only just decided to let the celebration take the form of a dance to which gentlemen can be invited," explained Hazeldene. "As a matter of fact, I believe the giddy festival was going to be the usual girls' school affair—weak tea and cake, you know, and simpering, and no boys or dogs admitted. Then this stunning wheeze about giving 'em a public welcome made her think of us. Shows she's a jolly good sort."

"Ripping!"

"Blessed if I know how I shall get on with the dancing," said Bob Cherry dubiously. "I can waltz—"

"Ha, ha! Most of us will be a little bit wanting there, but a fellow's not bound to dance, you know."

"Of course not," said Bunter. "I shall be in the supper-room most of the time."

"Of course, a fellow's expected to dance at a dance," remarked Wharton. "It's rather piggish to go to a dance and lounge about after the refreshments, and leave the ball-

room full of wallflowers, as lots of chaps do. It doesn't matter if you don't dance well."

"Yes, that's all very well," grunted Bob Cherry. "You're a good dancer."

"Yes; but look here—a girl would rather have a bad dancer than a silly chump who doesn't dance at all," said Harry. "We can get up a little practice to-day and to-morrow, too, and every chap ought to do his best."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Oh, all right," said Bob. "You'll have to put me through my paces, that's all. Are you going to answer the letter, Vaseline?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Fill it up with best thanks, then, and delighted to come, and so on. Let Miss Primrose see we're grateful. It's really awfully good of her to think of us. When this gets out, all the Remove will want to come."

"Well, I suppose we can take most of the Form?" said Hazeldene. "It's a good idea to have more boys than girls. It makes a dance a success, as every girl is asked, then; and the fellows who miss dances don't mind it so much as girls would. We'll take nearly all the Form."

"Yes. After all, they were nearly all in the welcoming business, but they ran away before the girls came along," Nugent remarked. "It's only fair, but I think we shall have a tussle to keep the seniors out."

"Yes, rather. There's the Upper Fourth—Temple, Dabney & Co.—will be ready to tear their hair about it."

"Let 'em tear it!"

"And there's Ionides, of the Sixth. He fancies himself awfully in dress clothes. He would live in 'em if he could."

"Sixth-Formers are barred, of course. We're not going to take along big chaps who would patronise us, and put us in the shade."

"Rather not."

"Thought I'd come and tell you first," said Hazeldene. "I'll get along, now, and let the others into it. There'll be a rush on the costumier's in Friardale. Most of us who belong to the Operatic Society have some togs already, luckily."

And Hazeldene left the study. Bob Cherry took hold of the table and dragged it back against the wall. The others stared at him in astonishment.

"We're just going to begin," explained Bob.

"We haven't finished our prep. yet."

"Blow the prep. I want to get into form for the dance, and you can put me through it for a start, Harry."

"But the prep.—"

"Prep. be hanged!"

"Oh, very well!" said Wharton, laughing. "Here goes! Get your mouth-organ, Frank, and play us the waltz from 'Faust.'"

Nugent obliged with the mouth-organ, and Bob Cherry, with a feeling that he was a baby elephant learning tricks, began to practise.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Waltzes.

THUMP, thump, thump!

Bump, bump!

The study door opened, and a startled face looked in. "Faith, and is it murderin' each other ye are, intirely?" asked Micky Desmond excitedly.

"Clear out!"

"But what's the matther intirely?"

"We're practising."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry seized the poker, and rushed towards the door. Micky skipped out into the passage, and ran, still laughing hysterically.

Bob flung the poker into the grato with a clang.

"Silly ass! Why, you dummies are cackling, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you? I can't see anything funny."

"Of course, you can't," said Nugent. "We can, though."

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Get on with the washing, old chap! You're progressing a treat. All I want to know is, if you don't mind—"

"Well, what do you want to know?"

"Whether you're doing a waltz, a barn dance, or a Highland fling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry cast an eye towards the poker again, but Nugent struck up a waltz tune on the mouth-organ, and Bob Cherry tried to get into step. Harry Wharton gave directions and explanations. Bob had said that he could waltz, but it began to be clear that he had exaggerated.

The bumping of his feet on the carpet made a din that could be heard over half Greyfriars. There was a sound of tramping on the stairs, and Blundell of the Fifth put his head in at the door. Blundell was looking red and furious.

"You howling asses!" he roared. "What is this fiendish row about?"

"Oh, bunk! I'm practising dancing."

"Dancing! Steam-rolling, you mean."

"Oh, buzz off, Blundy! Your face worries me!"

"My fist'll worry you, if you don't stop that row."

"Rats! I suppose a chap can waltz in his own study."

"Take your boots off, then!" shrieked Blundell. "The row can be heard all over the beastly house."

"I never thought of that. I've got some shoes somewhere."

Blundell glared, and went out, and Bob Cherry hunted for his dancing shoes. He found them, and changed his boots, and then his practice was a little quieter. But only a little. His idea of dancing seemed to be to fling up his feet and bring them down on the floor as heavily as possible, and in that he was quite successful. He remonstrated with Nugent for not keeping correct time with the music, though, as a matter of fact, Nugent was quite correct in time. But something was wrong somewhere, and Bob Cherry wasn't inclined to admit that it was his dancing.

"Oh, keep time do!" he said, for the tenth time.

Nugent removed the mouth-organ from his lips.

"Look here, Bob, the fault is in your feet. You're only supposed to put in a certain number of steps, at a certain rate—not to stamp on the floor at record speed as if you wanted to go through into the Form-room."

Bob Cherry glared.

"I'm keeping time all right, you ass!"

"Yes, that time you're keeping would do all right for the treadmill, but it's no good for a waltz."

Bob looked strongly inclined to commit assault and battery on the spot. But Nugent, apparently unconscious of having said anything offensive, struck up the waltz from the "Merry Widow" at a lively rate.

"Come and be my partner, some of you!" grunted Bob Cherry. "I can't learn the blessed steps without a partner. Of course, as far as that goes, I know the steps all right. I'm a pretty good waltzer. It's only practice I want."

"The wantfulness is terrific."

"Come on, Inky. I know you're a good dancer. You can take the lady's part," said Bob persuasively. "Gimme your fist."

The obliging nabob consented. Bunter climbed on the table to get out of the way, and Wharton stood in a corner, and Nugent retreated behind the easy-chair to blow out the music from a place of safety.

Bob Cherry took the hand of the dusky junior, and placed an arm about his waist.

"Not right round!" called out Wharton. "This isn't a romp on Hampstead Heath, Bob! Tackle him in the middle of the back."

"There?" asked Bob, giving the unfortunate nabob a thump in the small of the back to indicate the spot he was referring to.

"Oh," murmured Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh, "I—I am somewhat painfully hurt, my worthy chum. The breathfulness is short."

"No, lower down," said Wharton, laughing. "Take hold of the back of his belt—that will do. Now begin again, Nugent."

"Ta-ta-ra-ta-ta-ta-ta!" went the mouth-organ.

And Bob Cherry danced.

The Nabob of Bhanipur was light and graceful, and an excellent dancer, and he could take the lady's place with ease and grace. Unfortunately Bob Cherry wasn't quite up to taking the gentleman's place.

He dragged Hurree Singh round violently, and stamped on his toes as a start, and a wail of anguish came from the poor Indian.

"Ow! Oh, my worthy chum——"

"It's all right! Keep step!"

"But——"

"Keep step! Don't put me out, now I've once started."

Hurree Singh was dancing under difficulties on one leg, as the other foot had been too damaged to be risked again near Bob Cherry's feet.

But even on one leg the nabob was able to hop through it, and keep time. Bob Cherry had fairly started now. As a matter of fact, all he really wanted was confidence, and not to think about his feet too much. Once started, he went on doing the thing correctly from instinct, till he began to doubt about the steps, and then, of course, all went wrong. Exactly what went wrong no one saw, but Bob Cherry's feet became mixed up with the nabob's, and they rolled on the hearthrug.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites could not help it. Bob Cherry's look, as he sat up on the hearthrug, was too funny for words.

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Hurree Singh had rolled under the table. He showed no disposition to come out. Bob staggered to his feet.

"Oh, stop that cackling!" he exclaimed. "I—I think I lost step."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it was really Inky's fault."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, Inky. We got on pretty well that time—let's have another try."

"The getonfulness was great!" groaned the nabob. "But the bumpfulness on the worthy floor was terrific. I fear I cannot dance again."

"Stuff! Come out!"

"With the esteemed permission of my honourable chum, I will remainfully stay where I am."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you come, Wharton. You won't be as clumsy as Inky."

"I'm afraid I might be!" grinned Wharton. "I'll be a wallflower, if you don't mind, Bob. I—I want to sit out this dance."

Bob Cherry grunted. In a ball-room he would doubtless have secured some unhappy partner, but in No. 1 Study there were no takers. But just then the study door opened, and Temple of the Upper Fourth looked in.

"You fellows had better make a little less row," he said. "I——"

"There's your partner, Bob."

"Good! This way, Temple!"

"What are you up to?" roared the elegant captain of the Upper Fourth, as Bob dragged him into the study.

"Leggo!"

"You're my partner for this dance."

"Are you off your silly rocker? Leggo!"

Nugent struck up the music. Bob Cherry began to waltz, and Temple had to go round with him, whether he liked it or not. He was doing more struggling than dancing, however. The juniors roared with laughter, and Nugent could hardly keep up the blasts of the mouth-organ. Round the study they went careering. They crashed into the bookcase, and Temple's shoulder went through the glass, and there was a crash. They bumped against the table and sent it reeling, and there was a roar from Billy Bunter as he slid off and bumped on the floor. Nugent, unable to play any longer, threw down his instrument, and shrieked with merriment. But Bob Cherry went on dancing. Chairs went spinning to right and left, until, with a final bump, the waltzers went to the floor.

They sat up rather dazedly, and looked at one another.

But before they could do more, there was a rush of feet in the passage, and three or four angry Sixth-Formers rushed in. Temple had come as a messenger from the Sixth-Form prefects that the noise was to cease, and its growing worse instead of better naturally caused the angry passions of the Sixth to rise. Wingate, North, Carberry, and Ionides rushed into the study.

They did not waste time in words.

They collared the juniors, careless of remonstrance and resistance, and kicked them out of the study. The Removites scattered in the passage, dodging the angry pursuit of the prefects, and Bob Cherry's dancing practice for that evening was at an end.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Uninvited.

THERE was excitement in the Greyfriars Remove the following day. A fancy dress ball was something quite out of the common for the Removites, and it was natural that they should think and talk of nothing else. Even the last football match of the season paled in importance beside it, and it was not only the fun and excitement of the dance and the costumes, but the fact that it was for the Remove alone, that delighted the juniors. Not only the senior Forms, but the Upper Fourth were barred. Removites, and Removites alone, were asked to Miss Primrose's little celebration, and the juniors were glad enough that they had backed up Harry Wharton's plan of giving a public welcome to the girls' school. Temple, Dabney & Co. were ready to kick themselves, if that would have done any good. For the sake of the dance, they would willingly have extended the olive-branch to the Remove, and fraternised cordially with the heroes of the Lower Fourth. But the Lower Fourth were not accepting any olive-branches just then.

Hazeldene, who, as Marjorie's brother, was the person in communication with Cliff House, found himself very much sought after by the Upper Fourth fellows. Temple, Dabney & Co. waylaid him after morning school, and asked him into the tuckshop with bland smiles.

Hazeldene accepted the invitation; he also accepted ginger-beer, lemonade, jam-tarts, toasted scones, and cream-puffs. The generosity of the Fourth-Formers knew no bounds, and Hazeldene's appetite seemed to be equally unlimited. But when they approached the delicate subject they had in mind Hazeldene was like a rock.

"I hear you're going to a dance at Cliff House," Temple remarked.

"Yes, to-night," said Hazeldene, beginning on his ninth tart. "I say, these tarts are ripping!"

"Have some more! Some fresh tarts here for Hazeldene, Mrs. Mimble, and mind they're the best!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"I hear you're in charge of the invitations, and can take any chaps you like," Temple went on agreeably.

"Any chaps in my own Form," said Hazeldene.

"Well, any juniors, I suppose."

"Oh, no; Third Form fags would be out of place, of course."

"What about the Upper Fourth?"

"Are you a junior Form?" asked Hazeldene, apparently astonished. "Why, you've been telling us for dog's ages that you're our seniors."

Temple turned pink.

"Well, of course, we're a senior Form in a sense; still, by the rules of the school the Shell and Lower Forms are considered juniors, and we're below the Shell. Therefore—"

"Yes, I'll have a couple more, thank you! Marmalade ones, for a change!"

"Therefore, there's nothing against our going."

"Of course not," agreed Hazeldene. "I only wish you could come."

"Well, why can't we come?" asked Temple, somewhat warmly. "Look here, Vaseline, to put it plainly, we'd like to come."

"I'd like you to, too, like a shot; but, you see, I'm taking only Removites."

"But you could make an exception——"

"I wish I could, but it wouldn't do. You see, practically all the Remove are coming, and I can't march in with an invading army, you know. Thirty-five guests are enough for any dance."

"But the girls would like older fellows—better dancers—to dance with."

"Shouldn't wonder. If Miss Primrose writes to me to that effect of course I'll take you all like a shot," said Hazeldene blandly.

Temple, Dabney & Co. exchanged glances. They were strongly inclined to collar Hazeldene on the spot and wipe up the floor with him.

"Now, look here, Hazeldene, old chap—— I say, will you have some more tarts?"

"N-no, thanks! I think I've finished."

"Another ginger pop?"

"N-no. Thanks awfully!"

"Now, old fellow, we'd like to come——"

"I'm afraid it can't be fixed," said Hazeldene, shaking his head solemnly. "But I'll tell you what I will do," he went on, in a burst of generosity. "I'll tell you all about it, and what it was like, when I get back."

And Hazeldene walked rather quickly out of the tuckshop before Temple could reply. He left the Fourth-Formers speechless.

The Removite chuckled as he strolled across the Close. His chuckle died away as Ionides of the Sixth came by and stopped. The Greek was one of the worst-tempered fellows at Greyfriars, in spite of an outward polish of manner which he knew how to assume, and the juniors made it a point to give him as wide a berth as possible. But just now there was no chance of avoiding him, and to Hazeldene's surprise he had an agreeable smile upon his olive face. Hazeldene stopped.

"Ah! I wanted to speak to you," said Ionides agreeably.

"Yes," said Hazeldene, inwardly wondering at the senior's politeness. But the Greek's next words enlightened him.

"I hear you are going to a dance to-night—you youngsters."

"Yes; the Remove are all invited."

"Doubtless the invitation is open to seniors."

"No! only the Remove."

Ionides' eyes glittered.

"Are you quite sure of that, my young friend?" he asked.

"It might please me to look in for the dance. Is there any reason why I should not?"

Hazeldene hesitated. If he took a senior in the party, Miss Primrose would probably make no objection; but it was understood that only juniors were to go. If Ionides thrust himself into the party it would be in the worst of taste, but the Greek's look showed that Hazeldene would refuse at his peril. Hazeldene had had a close acquaintance with the

Greek's knuckles already, and he didn't want to repeat it. Yet his blood boiled inwardly at the idea of being bullied into taking the Greek along with his party."

"Well?" said Ionides, in a significant tone.

"I—I suppose you can do as you like, Ionides," said Hazeldene, with an effort.

"Good! Then I shall go—perhaps!"

And the Greek strode away. Hazeldene walked on moodily. He had not ventured to answer the Sixth-Former as he had answered Temple, Dabney & Co.

Hazeldene started and looked up quickly as he received a slap on the shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Wherefore that pensive brow?"

"That cad Ionides! He says he's coming to the dance."

"Seniors aren't admitted."

"He's coming all the same."

"Is he?" said Bob Cherry grimly. "If he comes with us, we'll make things warm for him on the way. There will be enough of us to eat him."

Hazeldene's face cleared, and he laughed.

"I hadn't thought of that," he said. "Of course, we can bump him into a ditch—accidentally—and muck up his clothes, and he'll have to come back."

But Ionides had thought of it. The Greek was far too cunning to place himself at the mercy of the juniors who detested him. He meant to go to the dance—but not in the Remove party. He intended to go alone, and in his unbounded conceit he had no doubt that he would properly impress Miss Primrose and her pupils, and be quite the lion of the evening. Whereas—— But we must not anticipate!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Fancy Dress.

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, was a much-worried man that day. The excitement in his Form was very much to the detriment of lessons. He had not heard yet about the fancy dress ball at Cliff House, and he wondered what on earth was the matter with the Remove.

Even Wharton answered questions at random, and Wharton was top boy in the class, and usually of some assistance to the Form-master in lessons. And the others were much worse. They simply could not fix their thoughts upon their work, and impositions fell like hail. Glad enough was Mr. Quelch to dismiss his class, and glad enough were the class to be dismissed.

Mr. Quelch, looking somewhat heated, dropped into the Head's study after the Remove were dismissed. The Head wore a thoughtful expression.

"I cannot understand the Remove to-day," Mr. Quelch remarked. "There seems to be something going on in the Form."

The Head smiled.

"Ah, yes, then you have not heard. Miss Primrose has written to me to ask my permission for the Form to go over to Cliff House this evening. She is celebrating the opening of the new school with a dance in fancy dress, and I have consented to let the boys go. No doubt they are excited."

Mr. Quelch laughed.

"Miss Primrose has written me a very pleasant letter," said the Head. "She has been pleased by some idea the juniors had of giving her a welcome as she came to Cliff House yesterday. She is a very estimable lady, and I have special reasons for keeping on amicable terms—both because we shall be near neighbours, and because my sister is to be the second mistress at Cliff House. And I really think the little excursion will do the boys no harm."

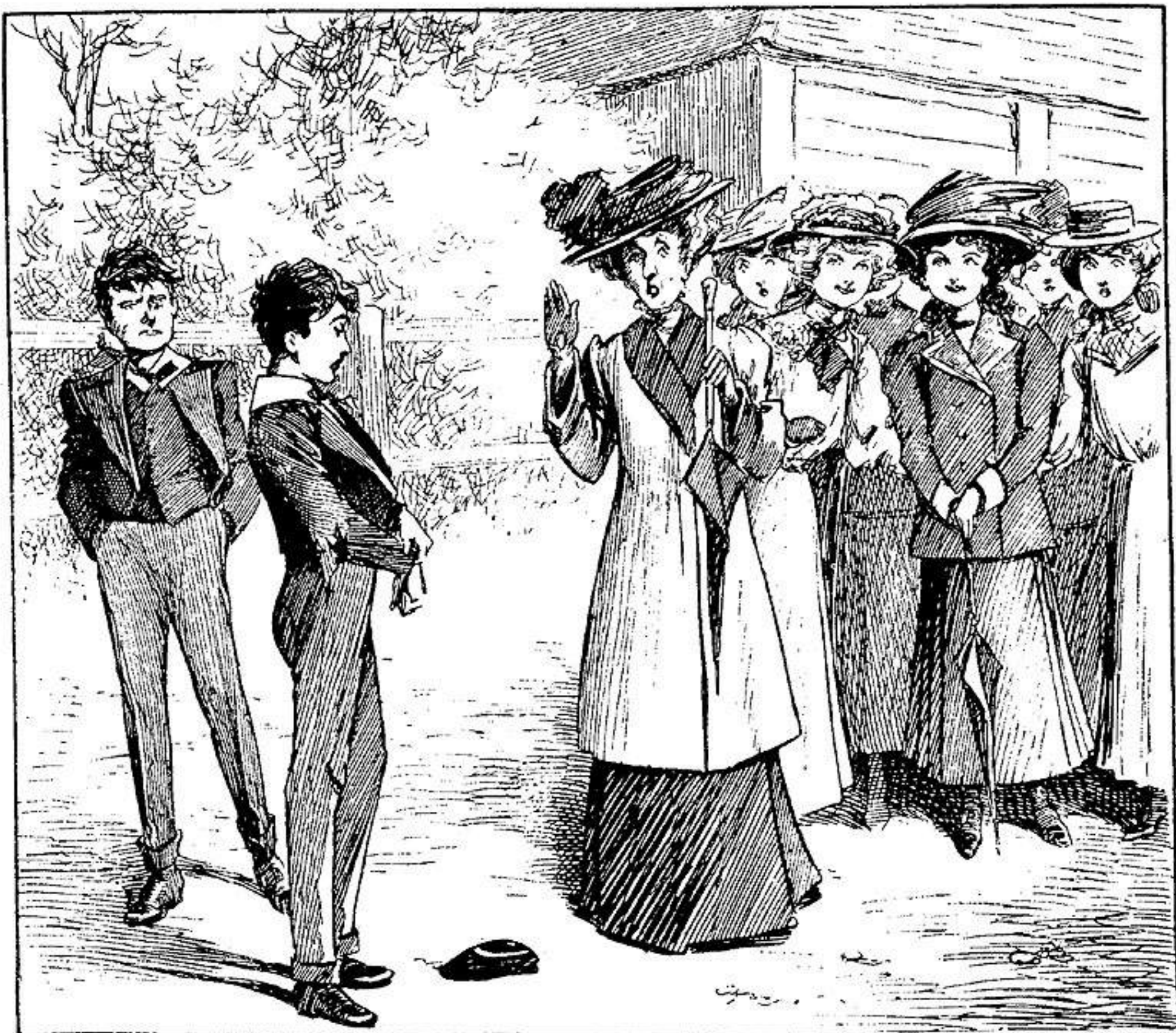
"Certainly not," said Mr. Quelch.

"So I have consented. The party will be an early one, as, of course, late hours would not be permissible. I shall walk over to Cliff House myself to bring them back to-night. Till then, I think I can trust them with Wharton. He will see that any exuberance is kept within bounds. You might as well give him a hint to that effect."

"I will certainly do so," said Mr. Quelch.

And he did. Harry Wharton received the hint dutifully. There were some wild spirits in the Remove, but Wharton had a firm character, and they knew that he was not to be trifled with. Bulstrode was not to go—he was firm on that point. Harry never bore malice, but he knew that he could not trust Bulstrode, and he was inexorable on that. Hazeldene had charge of the list of guests, and he was quite willing to follow Harry's lead in the matter. Bulstrode growled and stormed, but it was to no purpose.

The invited juniors were busy thinking about their costumes. The costumier's at Friardale had been raided, and everything he could furnish at such short notice was carried off. It was a harvest of silver to him; but when his stock



"Boy," said Miss Primrose, regarding Harry Wharton reproachfully, "how can you fight in this savage fashion!"

was exhausted, he could do no more. And there were not enough costumes to go round. The Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society possessed a considerable amount of "props" used in their theatrical representations, and these were brought to light at once. No. 1 Study had no difficulty in getting "fixed." As for the rest, they had to knock up costumes for themselves if they could not hire them, and so the Remove were very busy.

Everybody lent a hand cheerfully, and Mrs. Kebble, the housekeeper, and several of the maids helped in the cutting, changing, sewing, and turning. Never had the Remove been so busy and so cheerful over it. The Upper Fourth looked on enviously—but it was good-natured envy. Temple, Dabney & Co., like decent fellows, came forward to help, and many articles were contributed by the Upper Fourth in the hour of need. Even the garb in which Temple himself played Hamlet in private theatricals was cheerfully lent to Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter had declined to adopt Hazeldene's suggestion of going as the Fat Boy of Peckham, though Hazeldene had pointed out that that would save him the trouble of assuming a disguise. Billy Bunter had once worn the garb of the Toreador in a semi-comic representation of "Carmen" given by the Operatic Society in the Remove; and Billy Bunter fancied himself immensely in the character of the bold Escamillo. And when the costumes were brought out, Bunter plumped at once for that of the Toreador. It was in vain that Bob Cherry, who had had an eye on that rig-out himself, remonstrated.

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"You see, a little, round, fat animal isn't suited to a character like that," Bob explained. "If you can't go as young Peckham, you could take on a character like Il Remendado in 'Carmen,' or Leporello in 'Don Giovanni,' or Guru in 'Madame Butterfly.' What's the good of a fat snail like you going as a bullfighter?"

"I'm sincerely sorry to see such a lot of jealousy rampant in this study," said Bunter, with dignity. "I remember that when we were doing 'Carmen,' you didn't want me to sing the Toreador song, though it just suited my fine baritone. I'm surprised at you, Cherry, and I must say I'm shocked, too."

"You'll burst the costume, too, and then it won't be any use for future occasions."

"If I burst it I will replace it in our wardrobe at my own expense. I am shortly receiving three pounds a week from the Patriotic Home Work Association, and then—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Besides, I sha'n't burst it. Look here, it goes on as easy as anything."

"Yes, before supper," said Bob Cherry dubiously. "But what about after?"

Billy Bunter did not deign to reply to that question. He dressed himself as the Toreador, and he made the fattest and shortest Toreador on record. But he was quite satisfied with himself, and, after all, that was the main point.

Bob Cherry satisfied himself with the uniform of a Spanish soldier, also belonging to the "props" of "Carmen." Harry Wharton looked very handsome in

Elizabethan ruff and trunk hose, which showed off his fine limbs to advantage. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was a little exercised in his mind as to his character. Bob Cherry suggested Nana Sahib, but was frowned upon immediately. Nugent suggested Uncle Tom—the proprietor of the celebrated Cabin—but the nabob explained that the nigger-fulness of his esteemed complexion was not sufficient. It was finally arranged that the nabob should go as an Indian prince, and he ransacked his extensive wardrobe for gorgeous robes and blazing jewels for the occasion.

Wung Lung, too, came to No. 1 Study for advice. The little Celestial was a difficult subject. The pigtail was fatally in the way of making up, and Bob Cherry's suggestion that he should cut it off and grow another later on was apparently not acceptable to the youth from the Flowery Land.

"Well, go as you are," Nugent suggested. "Everybody will think you're a kid made up as a Chinaman, and they'll think the disguise excellent."

The little Celestial chuckled.

"Me savvy," he said. "Me tinkee good wheeze."

And when the time came to depart, Wun Lung, like Hurree Singh, dressed in his most gorgeous garb for the occasion. It was a numerous and merry party that set out from Greyfriars in the March dusk. Vehicles were not to be obtained, and the boys put on greatcoats over their costumes, and walked. The distance was short, and there was nothing else to be done. They crammed their shoes in their coat-pockets, to change at Cliff House. And nearly all Greyfriars turned out to see them go.

Hazeldene looked over the party carefully to see that only the invited were there. He was somewhat puzzled to see no sign of Ionides.

"The beast has changed his mind, I suppose," he remarked.

Harry Wharton looked doubtful.

"That wouldn't be like Ionides."

"Well, he isn't here."

"More likely he doesn't want to walk with a lot of juniors," Ogilvy remarked. "He may be coming alone later."

"Then we sha'n't be able to bump him in the ditch," said Bob Cherry regretfully. "I hope Miss Primrose will be down on him, that's all. March!"

They marched.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Great Preparations.

CLIFF HOUSE was in a blaze of light. From the windows the light shone out far over the shadowed sea, visible to the fishermen in the bay and mariners in passing vessels. Cliff House was en fete.

The building was large and well-planned. Round the handsome house were wide gardens, with pleasant paths and alleys, already looking green and growing in the spring. Fairy-lamps lighted the conservatory, and Chinese lanterns glimmered among the trees. It was a very mild and soft evening for the season, and a breath of a pleasant south wind came over the sea. The large school-room had been prepared for the dance, and the state of the floor had cost Miss Primrose and her fair assistants much thought. Mr. Tripper, the dancing-master of Friardale, had had charge of the arrangements, and he had done his duty nobly. All was ready now, and Miss Primrose was ready to receive her guests.

That good lady was in a little flutter. She was very much under the influence of Miss Locke, of Girton, her henchman—or rather, henchwoman. Miss Locke was the sister of the Head of Greyfriars, and was well known at that school. She was a charming young lady with advanced ideas, and advocated votes for women, and all sorts of modern things that almost made Miss Primrose's prim hair stand on end. Among other theories, she had one that it was a good thing for young people of opposite sexes to meet frequently. She had an idea that feminine society exercised a civilising influence upon boys—which was no doubt very true—and that masculine society was equally beneficial to girls, helping them to learn fortitude, and courage, and frankness—masculine virtues which Miss Locke found somewhat lacking in her own sex.

Miss Primrose had her doubts, but Miss Locke had her way—as she generally did. The elder lady was aware that she was quite dependent upon Miss Locke for the management of the school, which was beyond her own powers. She was, in addition, as fond of the girl as if she had been her own daughter—for Miss Locke had a winning way that was not to be resisted.

This dance was to be the first shot, so to speak—and Miss Locke had far-reaching plans for what was to follow. But

how those plans turned out depended greatly upon extremely uncertain young people.

Miss Locke had arrived that day, and was ready to help the school-mistress with the evening's entertainment. An orchestra had been brought from the nearest town, and it consisted of the inevitable piano, backed up by five or six instruments, and the various instrumentalists were able to keep something like time with one another, which was a small blessing, and something to be thankful for.

The girls, of course, were in a state of great excitement, though they tried not to appear so. They, one and all, blessed Miss Locke for guiding the ideas of the principal into the right path.

Miss Primrose had promised them a little celebration for that evening, but they had only looked forward to tea and seed-cake, and no society but their own. To have that somewhat depressing treat changed for a dance—and a dance in fancy dress—was like a dream from the Arabian Nights.

And the fact that it was a masked ball added immensely to the excitement.

That Marjorie Hazeldene might dance with her own brother without knowing who he was interested the girls very much, as well as the exciting task of guessing which of the masked juniors were the boys who had blushed under their demure gaze on the Friardale Road the day before.

There was murmuring and whispering and laughing among the fair pupils of Miss Primrose, and more than one pair of bright eyes looked from the corner of a blind to see whether the Greyfriars juniors were coming.

Marjorie was looking very sweet, as her friend Clara admiringly remarked. The girl was looking forward to seeing her old friends from Greyfriars, her brother among the number. The calmest of all was Miss Primrose's German pupil, Fraulein Wilhelmina Limburger. She was a stout, fair-complexioned girl with flaxen hair and a fat, good-natured face and sleepy, blue eyes. Her placid German calm was so undisturbed by the approaching festivities that the volatile Clara longed to shake her.

"It is goot!" was all Wilhelmina replied to Clara's or Marjorie's remarks on the subject.

"But you like dancing, don't you, Wilhelmina?" exclaimed Clara.

"Ja," said Wilhelmina. "It is goot! It makes you hungry!"

"Hungry?" said Clara and Marjorie together.

"Ja," said Wilhelmina innocently. "And dere is a goot supper. Miss Brimrose has been ferry careful to have a goot supper."

"Oh, my gracious!" said Clara. "Fancy thinking about the supper before the dance has even commenced!"

"It is a goot supper!"

"How do you know?" demanded Clara.

"I have seen it," said Miss Limburger, with stolid German satisfaction—"I have seen it, and it is goot! There is plenty, and it is goot. I tink dere is one mistake that Miss Brimrose make in te arrangements."

"And what is that?" demanded Marjorie.

"Dere are too many dances before to supper interval."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hark!" exclaimed someone. "I can hear them!"

"My goodness," said Clara, "it is the boys! How is my hair, Marjorie?"

"Beautiful, my dear!"

"Oh, I feel so excited!"

"Dere is noting to be excited about," said Miss Limburger. "Dere is enough supper for eferone."

The Greyfriars juniors had indeed arrived.

Some of the girls peeped into the hall to see them. The juniors were in great force, and the peepers noted with satisfaction that there were likely to be more boys than girls at the dance. That would make it a pronounced success, from the feminine point of view.

Miss Primrose received the juniors in great state. A large room opening off the hall had been assigned to them, and there they removed their coats and hats, and changed their boots.

Billy Bunter, to his great satisfaction, found that there were refreshments prepared for those who desired them, and, needless to say, he desired them. He was still busy satisfying the wants, real or imaginary, of the inner man, when a wail was heard from the big school-room, a preliminary canter, as Bob Cherry termed it, of the first violin.

"Buck up!" said Harry Wharton.

"Hold on, Harry! Don't buzz off like that!"

"What's the matter?" asked Wharton, looking round.

"Look here! How do these trousers look?"

"Ripping! You expect a Spanish soldier's trousers to be baggy, of course."

"Ye-es, but not quite so baggy as these beastly things,"

said Bob Cherry, looking down rather ruefully at his legs.

"The coat is a size too large, too."

"I'll pin it anywhere you like for you," said Skinner.

"Well you might yank it in a bit across the shoulders. I feel like Ikey Moses in secondhand clothes," groaned Bob Cherry. "Pin it across—Ow! You murderous ass! What are you stabbing me in the back for?"

"Ha, ha! I'm sorry. The pin slipped."

"Oh, let it alone! Ow! Get off, you idiot!"

Bob Cherry swung round. He knew Skinner, and guessed how accidental those pinpricks were. He let out his left, and Skinner rolled on the floor.

It was Skinner's turn to yell then.

"Order—order!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"Oh, it's all right," grinned Bob Cherry. "Skinner had one accident, and I've had another, that's all."

"You've nearly busted my jaw!" groaned Skinner.

"Serve you jolly well right! Perhaps you won't be so funny next time. Will you pin this for me, Stott?"

"Thanks!" said Stott, moving away. "You're rather too free with your left-handers for me."

Nugent did the required pinning at last. Bob Cherry's clothes certainly looked two or three sizes too large for him, but otherwise, Nugent said, they fitted him to a hair. With which Bob was forced to be comforted.

He was thinking, of course, of Marjorie. However, the fact that they were to be masked, gave him courage. He could face any girl he did not have to look at. Billy Bunter, with a smear of jam on his mouth, was giving himself some finishing touches before a glass. The little mask left most of his fat face open to view, and he scorned to take notice of a suggestion that he should put his head in a bag, or wear a fire-screen. He was humming a music-hall tune as he looked in the glass, with smug satisfaction at his supposed good looks, and presently he broke into words:

"Put me among the girls!"

A grip of iron descended on his shoulder.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"It isn't Wharton," said Bob Cherry. "Wharton's gone."

"Oh, really, Cherry! You're crumpling my jacket, and—"

"Look here, you young pig," said Bob Cherry, with emphasis, "if I hear you buzzing any of your music-hall tunes again, I'll squash you! Do you hear?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"And take that greasy grin off your face!" commanded Bob, a little unreasonably. "I'd take the face off, too, if it belonged to me, if I had to shave it off with a jack plane."

"Look here, Cherry—"

"You—you fat little oyster," said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "What you want is a hiding, to start with!"

"I suppose you can't help being jealous about Marjorie and me," said Billy Bunter, with an air of dignity. "I always was a demon with the—"

Biff!

Bunter sat down suddenly, and Bob Cherry walked away. When Billy gathered his dazed senses, and rose, he was alone in the room. The merry strains of a popular waltz floated through the door, and showed him that the dance had begun. He rubbed his nose, which looked very red.

"The beast!" he murmured. "That's the worst of those big, long-legged chaps—they always get frantically jealous of us good-looking medium-sized fellows. It's not my fault how I look, I suppose, and I don't encourage the girls."

And Billy Bunter sniffed, and moved off towards the ball-room with the easy, graceful motion which disrespectful Removites had compared to the rolling of a tub.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Dance.

THE large school-room presented a scene of great animation.

Besides the boys and girls, there were some half-dozen grown-ups present, but these were mainly directing their efforts to make things go smoothly, and add to the enjoyment of the young people, without thinking of themselves. Miss Primrose, with a blush that made her kind old face look twenty years younger, had allowed Harry Wharton to take her round once, "pour encourager les autres."

Wharton danced to perfection, and in the garb of a courtier of Queen Bess, with the mask partly concealing his face, was not to be recognised as the lad Miss Penelope had read such a lecture to the previous day on the Friardale road. Miss Primrose thought him a very nice lad, indeed, and never connected him in her mind with the boy who had been fighting Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter, in spite of the charm he was convinced he possessed for the fair sex, did not obtain partners easily.

It is true that the Toreador received many glances from all quarters, and he was too short-sighted to see with what smiles they were accompanied. Perhaps such a fat Toreador appeared remarkable to the girls of Cliff House; or perhaps the idea of a Toreador in a big pair of spectacles struck

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them as comic. Billy Bunter rather prided himself upon his dancing, and he was anxious to show his Form-fellows—and Bob Cherry especially—what a perfect Don Juan he was. Unfortunately, the girls' programmes seemed singularly short of vacancies. Billy Bunter had danced often enough at home, but then, as frequently happens, the feminine contingent had been in excess of the masculine, and it had not occurred to the fat junior that a girl, rather than remain a wallflower, will, as a rule, dance with anything. On the present occasion, there were plenty of good partners to be had, and a fat Toreador went begging.

Although Billy Bunter was careful to preserve a polite form of speech, his manner, if not his words, indicated that he considered he was conferring a real favour upon any lady he honoured with a request to dance. His conceit received a number of rude shocks now, and by the time he had missed four or five dances, he began to think of the seclusion of the supper-room, with yearning.

But Miss Locke had an eye open for everything—indeed, the girl, in her quiet, unobtrusive way, was performing as many duties as half a dozen stewards. There was one of the Cliff House pupils who was likely to pair well with Billy Bunter, and that was Miss Wilhelmina Limburger. The stout German girl was very good-tempered and good-natured, and her tastes were very like those of the fat junior. An introduction was effected, and Miss Limburger calmly appropriated Billy Bunter.

Bunter was glad enough to get a dance, if only to show the other fellows that he could do so; but, as a matter of fact, dancing fatigued the fat junior. As another matter of fact, it fatigued Miss Wilhelmina Limburger, and she was glad of a rest. Billy Bunter led her to a seat, glowing with warmth and exertion, and Miss Limburger gave him her fan to fan her. The tired Toreador would have been glad of a rest, but he stood up and fanned the German maiden, and Miss Limburger smiled on him sweetly.

"Warm, isn't it?" said Bunter.

"I tinks it is," assented Miss Limburger. "I tinks I like an ice."

"May I fetch you one?" said Bunter.

"Ach! I tinks so!"

Bunter glided away and fetched the ice. Miss Limburger smiled sweetly again, and announced that she would like another. Bunter went for it, and brought it to her, and it followed the first. Miss Limburger then made the discovery that a third ice would be acceptable.

Bunter wanted to do the polite thing, which, of course, forbade him to desert his partner till she was claimed. Miss Limburger had the next dance empty, so she was not likely to be claimed, and Bunter could not plead an engagement. And Miss Limburger showed no desire to be led back and placed in the care of Miss Primrose. She was very comfortable where she was with Bunter waiting on her, and Bunter was thinking of endless ices, to be had free gratis for nothing, and feeling far from comfortable.

Billy went for the third ice, and temptation overcame him in the vestibule, and he stopped to eat it. He was just finishing it with great enjoyment, when he felt a tap of a fan on his arm, and he started so suddenly that he dropped the glass, and it smashed to pieces.

"Oh, really!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Ach! You eats him yourself!" said Miss Limburger. "I tink you long time, and comes to look for you, ain't it?"

Bunter turned crimson.

"Well, you see, I—I—I had a sudden faintness," he explained. "I'm a chap with a delicate constitution, and I can only keep up my strength by taking constant snacks."

"Tat is pad," said Miss Limburger sympathetically. "I tinks I comes and takes snacks mit you."

And she slid her hand into Billy's arm, and he had no choice but to walk her away to the refreshments. Still, it was something to get into the room. And, being there before the other fellows gave him a chance—or he thought it would. But it turned out otherwise.

Miss Limburger was a really dangerous rival for Billy Bunter in gastronomic feats, and she kept the fat junior so busy looking after her that he had no time to look after himself.

Bunter felt a certain admiration for her. The German girl was a girl after his own heart. He wondered what the other fellows saw in Marjorie, in comparison with Miss Limburger.

But he was very hungry. If he hadn't been hungry, he might have fallen in love; but hunger always came first with William George Bunter.

And suddenly he bethought him that he was a ventriloquist. Miss Limburger was contentedly eating a rabbit-pie, and between munches telling Bunter what she would have next, when a sudden squeak came from beneath her chair.

If it was not a mouse, it was a very lifelike imitation.

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"Ach!" shrieked Miss Limburger, starting up. Bunter blinked at her in well-simulated surprise. "What's the matter?"

"Ach! Der Maus! Te mouse!"

"What mouse?"

Squeak! Squeak! Squeak!

Miss Limburger sprang upon her chair out of danger. But squeak, squeak, still came to her ears, and the squeaking seemed to be all round her. With a gasp, the German girl fled, leaving her supper unfinished. Squeak, squeak, squeak, followed her, and haunted her till she disappeared.

Billy Bunter winked solemnly at the ceiling.

He called up one of the hired waiters from Friardale, who were in attendance in the supper-room, and with that gentleman's assistance, planned a supper that should fully compensate him for all the troubles he had gone through.

Miss Limburger rejoined Miss Primrose in the big school-room, which was filled with the strains of music and merry voices.

Miss Primrose was seated with several friends round her, looking on at the enjoyment of the young people with beaming smiles.

The dance was a great success so far.

The shyness of the girls, and the bashfulness of the boys, had, to a very great extent, been overcome by the tact of Miss Locke, ably seconded by Marjorie and Harry Wharton, in her endeavours to make things go.

Nearly everybody was dancing, and every girl who cared to do so had a partner, and everyone was enjoying himself or herself thoroughly.

Some of the dancing, on the part of the gentlemen, was a little clumsy, perhaps; but the girls were patient. Bob Cherry seemed to imagine at times that he was on the football-field, making a desperate run for goal, and he had a weakness for regarding other people's feet as proper resting-places for his own. But for the mask which he fondly imagined concealed his identity, he would never have dared to dance at all. As a matter of fact, he was perfectly well known. Skinner remarked—out of Bob's hearing—that his feet would serve to identify him anywhere. And, indeed, Bob's feet were several times very much in evidence. Still, he was having a good time and what he wanted in skill he made up in good temper and willingness to please.

There was no doubt that Wharton was the partner liked best of all the Greyfriars fellows; but Bob would have been the last to feel envious of him. He regarded that as a matter of course. Probably next to Wharton in popularity came Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire. Linley danced as if born to it in the dances he knew, and those he did not know he did not venture upon. There were plenty of fellows to take the required places, and so it did not matter to anybody but himself.

A dance was ending, and Harry and Marjorie, Bob and Clara, found themselves together, and sat down near a cluster of ferns a short distance from Miss Primrose, just as a new arrival entered the room.

Bob caught sight of him, and uttered a low ejaculation, which caused Harry to look round.

"Ionides!"

Wharton's brow contracted a little. Of course, it was nothing to a Removite if a Sixth-Former chose to be guilty of bad form; but Wharton felt it as reflecting upon him as a Greyfriars fellow.

"Confound him!" he murmured. "So he has come!"

"Yes, and not in fancy dress. I suppose he didn't know—or else he doesn't care. He looks as if he thought the place belonged to him," growled Bob Cherry.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Amateur Waiter.

IONIDES certainly did look quite satisfied with himself. Whether he had known or not that it was a fancy-dress affair, he had not taken the trouble to come in costume.

He was in ordinary evening-dress, and it could not be denied that he looked very elegant. Some of the girls glanced at him with approval—a fact that was not lost on the juniors, and which did not make their feelings any the more pleasant towards the cad of the Sixth.

Ionides came up to where Miss Primrose sat, after a glance about the room. Although he seemed to regard himself as monarch of all he surveyed, he condescended to pay his respects to his hostess.

But Miss Primrose was far from observing that she was receiving a distinguished guest.

All the guests at the dance were in fancy dress, and Miss Primrose, seeing a young man in ordinary evening clothes advancing towards her, fell into the excusable error that it was one of the hired waiters from Friardale. The waiters were the only persons there in dress clothes, and so the mistake was quite excusable. Miss Primrose was a trifle short-sighted, and she did not look very closely at the Greek.

"You may bring me an ice," she said.

Ionides stared a little. He had no objection to getting an ice for his hostess, but Miss Primrose's tone was hardly what he would have expected.

However, as the good lady turned away her head and began to speak to Miss Limburger after addressing him, he turned a little pink, and moved away to obey.

Bob Cherry gripped Harry Wharton's arm in ecstasy.

"Did you hear that, Harry?"

"No; what was it?"

"Miss Primrose takes him for a waiter."

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors looked on with great interest as Heracles Ionides reappeared with the ice, which he carried very gingerly.

"Ahem, madam! You requested——"

Miss Primrose turned her head towards him.

"Ah, yes, my ice! Thank you."

"I have the pleasure——"

"Yes, thank you; you may go."

"Permit me to——"

"Eh? Did you speak? Stay! you may fetch an ice for this young lady."

"If you will permit me to——"

"Pray do as I tell you!"

Ionides' teeth came together hard; but he obeyed. He brought the second ice for Fraulein Wilhelmina, who accepted it without a look at him, only murmuring "Tank you!" as she might have done if he had been a waiter, as indeed she thought he was.

The next dance was beginning now, and the couples were taking their places. The Greek was red with anger. He wanted to introduce himself to Miss Primrose, and it was impossible now. Miss Locke seated herself beside the principal, and Ionides made almost an appealing gesture to her.

Miss Locke did not acknowledge him.

She had a faint remembrance of having seen the Greek at Greyfriars, but that was all; and as she knew seniors were not invited to the dance, she did not know what to make of Ionides' presence there, and wasn't in the least inclined to come to his help. His air of superiority was quite enough to make Miss Locke ignore him.

It was the last dance before the interval, and the juniors and the girls enjoyed it immensely, while the Greek stood looking on with eyes like lightning.

When it was over, a general move was made to the refreshment-room.

Billy Bunter was there, half-way through a tremendous feed, and too busy even to look up when the rest came in.

Bob Cherry, to his great delight, found himself in possession of Marjorie. He had not planned it, but it had worked out like that; and he did not know that he owed the last dance to the skilful management of Harry Wharton, who would gladly have had it himself, but denied himself the pleasure for the sake of friendship.

Harry was with Clara, and that cheerful girl was prattling away at express speed, on every subject under the sun. The masks were removed at supper, and Clara gave a little shriek of surprise on discovering that the handsome Elizabethan courtier was the youth who had been pommelling Bulstrode on the Friardale road the previous afternoon.

Wharton coloured as he saw that he was recognised.

"Don't give me away to Miss Primrose," he said pleadingly. "You see, I was forced into that—that row against my will, really."

"And Miss Primrose lectured you severely."

"Yes, didn't she? If she had known the facts——"

"What were they?"

Wharton hesitated, but Bob Cherry, who had brought Marjorie to the same table, chimed in.

"The other chap was going to chuck fireworks to make you scream, and Wharton stopped him."

"How good of you!" said Clara, beaming. "Do you know, I thought you were rather a nice boy, though you did look horrid with so much dust on your face, and one of your eyes closed up. Were you much hurt?"

"Not a bit."

"Weren't you much surprised to find it was I?" asked Bob Cherry, looking bashfully at Marjorie when he was unmasked.

Marjorie smiled.

"I had a suspicion whom it was," she said.

"You know, I knew you all the time," said Bob. "As a matter of fact, I knew Miss Clara too, from seeing her yesterday. And, by Jove, there's Ionides again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors subdued their laughter, but they could not quite help it.

Heracles Ionides was passing them with two plates full of sandwiches to place on a table, having been directed by Miss Primrose to do so.

The Greek was puzzled and angry.

Miss Primrose's mistake had not yet dawned upon him, but he could not quite make her out. He had had no opportunity at all of introducing himself, being kept too busy waiting on the guests.

The juniors, naturally, were not slow to enter into the spirit of the thing. Orders rained on Ionides from all sides.

"Here, my man," said Nugent, "bring me some ginger-pop, sharp!"

Ionides, scarcely believing his ears, glared at him.

"Buck up, my man; make yourself useful!"

"You let my waiter alone!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"This chap is looking after me. Here, Johnny, here's a tanner for you. You stick to this table."

"Ah!" muttered the Greek, livid with rage. "Ah! I will—I will make you smart—"

"Don't bother about that," said Bob Cherry coolly; "look smart yourself. I suppose you're being paid for this?"

Ionides almost choked.

"Paid! Paid! What do you mean?"

"I suppose you're not waiting at table for nothing?" said Bob innocently. "Anyway, buck up and get us some sandwiches."

"You—you—you—"

"Deaf? Sandwiches—I said sandwiches!"

Ionides hurried away. He could not trust himself near Bob Cherry, or he would have thrown etiquette to the winds, and hurled himself upon the junior in full sight of Miss Primrose and her guests.

Miss Penelope's mistake dawned upon him at last, and the humiliation of it made his cheeks burn with rage.

He made his way to the hostess, with the intention of explaining, but he found her busy. He insisted upon attracting her attention, however.

"Yes, yes, my good man, what do you want?" exclaimed Miss Primrose, surprised and annoyed. "Please go and wait on my guests."

"Ah! You think—you think—" The Greek choked with fury.

Miss Primrose looked alarmed.

"Dear me! My goodness gracious! The dreadful man is intoxicated!" she murmured. "I—it is terrible! There is nothing stronger than orange wine in the place, yet—"

"Madame, I—you—I—"

"He must have brought spirits with him," said the scandalised Miss Primrose. "I—I shall certainly complain to Mr. Sweet. It is very wrong of him to send me such a waiter."

The Greek gritted his teeth.

"Madame—"

"Yes, yes, my good man, pray go!"

"Madame—"

"Pray go! Do you not see that people are observing you?" said Miss Primrose, greatly distressed. "Pray calm yourself, and go!"

Ionides was stuttering with rage. He seemed to be about to lose control of his temper entirely, and in that case the juniors would have been only too glad to throw him out.

He was saved from that by the sight of the Head, advancing to the spot with Miss Locke. Dr. Locke had accepted Miss Primrose's pressing invitation, being, as a matter of fact, somewhat uneasy as to the behaviour of thirty-five Removites taken out of his immediate care. He started as he saw the Greek.

"Ionides! What are you doing here?"

"I—I came—"

"I understood that only juniors were invited by Miss Primrose."

Miss Primrose almost fainted.

"Dr. Locke, is—is—is this one of your boys?"

"Yes, madame, a senior of the Sixth Form. I understood—"

"Goodness gracious, I took him for a waiter!"

"Ha, ha! I mean—ahem!—Ionides, you have yourself to thank for this. I presume your coming here was due to some misunderstanding, but you should have been more careful. You had better retire at once."

And Ionides retired. He caught the laughing looks of the juniors turned upon him, and hardly restrained his rage till he was safe in the silence of the garden. There he gave free rein to his passion, and clenched his fists and brandished them in the air, and hissed out strong expressions in Greek till he was somewhat calmed.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Thinks It a Success.

HARRY WHARTON restrained his laughter as well as he could. Clara was laughing too, and Marjorie could not subdue a smile. Bob Cherry would have given worlds to jump up and execute a war-dance in the middle of the room.

"Oh, it was too gorgeous!" he murmured. "How are the mighty fallen! Fancy Ionides the Great being taken for a common or garden waiter! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not much of a compliment to the waiters."

No. 59.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE GREYFRIARS CRICKETERS."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me tinkee me findee loom hele."

It was the voice of Wun Lung, the Chinese. He found room at a table next to Wharton's, with a sunny-faced girl whom Clara immediately addressed as Milly.

Marjorie knew Wun Lung, of course, but to the rest he was a stranger, and there was not one who did not think that his Chinese aspect was a disguise got up for the occasion.

"Isn't it marvellous?" said Clara, looking at him.

"What's marvellous?" asked Wharton.

"Why, this make-up. He speaks just like a Chinaman, too. I danced with him, and if it had not been a fancy-dress ball, you know, I should have taken him for a real Chinaman."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"He's been taken for a real Chinaman before now," he remarked.

"Me tinkee Bob Chelly jokee," said Wun Lung, looking round. "Me leal Chinese."

Clara clasped her hands ecstatically.

"Isn't it wonderful?"

"Amazing," said Bob Cherry. "You wouldn't think how well that pigtail is fixed on, too. It would be a joke to jerk it off."

"My goodness! How funny!"

"Me leal Chinese," said Wun Lung. "No savvy. No disguise. Me leal."

"Oh, come off!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't keep it up with us, you know."

"No savvy!"

Wun Lung turned his head away to look after his partner.

Bob Cherry whispered to Clara:

"Fancy his keeping it up like that!"

"Yes; he deserves to have his pigtail pulled off," said that lively young lady, with a longing glance at that ornament of Wun Lung's head.

"Give it just a jerk—it's close to you—and watch results."

"Oh, I dare not!"

"It's all right; serve him right, you know."

Clara hesitated. But the spirit of mischief was too strong for her, and she suddenly took hold of the pigtail and gave it a sharp jerk.

There was a yell from Wun Lung.

The pigtail was firmly attached to his head, having grown there, and the jerk on it hurt. He jumped, and dropped a cup into his saucer. Then he looked round, his almond eyes wide open, at the dismayed Clara.

"Me hultee. Ow!"

Clara seemed unable to believe her eyes.

So far from coming off, the pigtail had proved its genuineness by standing the strain, and she realised that she was dealing with a real Chinaman.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Wun Lung smiled sweetly.

"All jokee," he said. "Allee light. Me savvy."

And he turned away placably enough. Clara gave Bob Cherry a reproachful look.

Bob looked as if he were on the verge of apoplexy.

A movement was being made for the dancing-room again.

The second half, as Bob Cherry termed it, was even more animated and enjoyable than the first, all the remains of shyness and constraint having passed away.

The evening passed all too quickly, and the happiness in the young faces was reflected in those of Dr. Locke and Miss Primrose, as they watched the dancers.

Billy Bunter did not reappear, however. He had eaten of the hearty supper not wisely, but too well, and he felt much too sleepy to seek the crowded room again. Instead of that, he wandered out into the conservatory, found a comfortable seat, and went to sleep. His musical snore was the only sound heard in the conservatory, till two young persons seated themselves close at hand. Bunter's snore was for the moment suspended, and they did not observe him in the dusky light.

"No, I won't forgive you," said Clara, "and I won't have any chocolates. So there!"

"But it was only a joke," pleaded Bob Cherry.

"The poor Chinaman was hurt," said Miss Clara primly.

"Besides, it was silly."

Bob Cherry rubbed his chin. His little joke had been quite a harmless one, but he felt that perhaps it had been more suitable for boys than girls.

"How would you like to have your hair pulled?" said Clara severely.

(Continued on page 15.)

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"You can pull my hair if you like," said Bob Cherry. "Pull it as hard as you like, and call it square." Clara broke into an irrepressible ripple of laughter at this scheme for setting the matter right. Sn-o-o-o-ore!

The girl started in affright. "My goodness! There is some animal in the ferns!" she exclaimed.

Bob Cherry pushed through the ferns, the girl looking after him nervously. The junior uttered an exclamation.

There was Billy Bunter in a seat on the other side, leaning back with his mouth wide open, snoring away as if for a wager.

Bob Cherry gave a sniff of disgust. "It's only Bunter, the fat Toreador."

Clara's laugh rippled again. Bob Cherry carefully took a chunk of chocolate from a packet.

"Shall I?" he asked. "He trod on my foot," said Clara, "and tore my sash. He is a conceited fellow."

Taking this as permission, Bob Cherry skilfully dropped the chocolate into Billy Bunter's mouth, and stepped back quickly behind the ferns.

"Gr-r-r-r! Br-r-r-r-r! Ow-w-w-w! Gr-r-r!"

"Let's go," whispered Clara hurriedly.

They vanished. Billy Bunter put his spectacles straight and came peering round, but he found no one. Bob Cherry and Clara, the best of friends now, walked off together, and the fat junior was left grumbling alone. But he ate the chocolate!

The enjoyable evening was drawing to a close now. The last waltz was waltzed, and the last strains of the band died away, and then came the leave-taking.

Sorry enough were both boys and girls to part. The evening had been a very happy one, and they could have wished it to continue till the small hours of the morning. But they were not even allowed Cinderella limits. At half-past ten came the close, and the Greyfriars juniors took their leave.

"What a beautiful evening!" said Marjorie to Clara, after the guests were gone. "Hasn't it been lovely?"

"Splendid!" said Clara ecstatically. "Don't you think so, Wilhelmina?"

"Goot!" said Miss Limburger. "Ferry goot! Te supper was beautiful."

And Marjorie and Clara laughed merrily.

Similar opinions were being exchanged by the Greyfriars lads as they walked home, following the stately form of the Head.

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry. "I never thought an evening spent with girls could be half so ripping."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Yes, it was ripping," said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to return the compliment some time—somehow. It will be fun, if we can manage it."

"I say, you fellows, it was ripping; but you didn't enjoy it so much as I did. I got a good start in the supper-room. You can say what you like, but the best part of a dance is the feed. I know!"

And the chums laughed. They marched home, and turned in, somewhat fatigued, but quite happy, to sleep a dreamless sleep after the night of the party.

THE END.

(Another Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday entitled "The Greyfriars Cricketers." Please order your "Magnet" in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

GRAND TALE OF ARMY LIFE.



READ THIS FIRST.

On the death of his father, Jack Dashwood finds to his astonishment that he has been practically disinherited in favour of his Uncle Dominic and Cousin Leonard. He consequently enlists in the 25th Hussars, under the name of Tom Howard, and soon becomes a corporal. Dominic Dashwood's death occurs just as the 25th are sailing for India. On their arrival there, Leonard joins the Ploughshires. A frontier war breaks out, and the 25th receive orders to mobilise for the front. A trooper named 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, who has been promoted to sergeant. An I O U for £95, which Dashwood had given to Sligo as hush-money, falls into Colonel Greville's hands.

A general advance is now ordered, and the column moves into the difficult Mahmud country. Sir Ponsonby Smithers, with three squadrons of the 25th Hussars and four companies of the Ploughshires, effects a juncture with General Jefferies, and is shortly in the thick of a severe engagement. Sligo is hit, and gives Sloggett an important message for Tom Howard before he dies. Subsequently Leonard Dashwood finds Sligo's corpse, and sneeringly informs Tom that his chance of hearing something to his advantage from Sligo is gone for ever.

(Now go on with the story.)

No. 59.

Leonard Dashwood and Bill Sloggett.

While this fighting was taking place, a plucky sowar of the 11th Bengal Lancers, who had volunteered for the duty, was riding alone through the mountain passes, and by dint of great bravery, intelligence, and native cunning, reached General Jefferies' force as the dead were being buried and the wounded mules being put out of their misery.

He brought an order which the brigadier read as the surgeons were dressing his wound. The commander of the field force, twelve miles off, at Nawagai, had already learned by heliograph that Sir Ponsonby Smithers had effected a junction with the 2nd Brigade, and ordered him to rejoin his own force as soon as possible. At the same time, he instructed Jefferies to proceed with his work of punishment, not knowing the very tight place in which the officer had found himself.

Sir Ponsonby frowned when the Brigadier imparted the orders to him, but there was no help for it.

"I am sorry to lose you, Sir Ponsonby," said that officer, especially as I have few enough men for the job. You had better take advantage of this man's guidance, and as the enemy seems to have drawn off, I should recommend you to start at once."

After a hurried meal the Ploughshire companies fell in. The 25th climbed into their saddles and waved farewell to their gallant comrades, the Lancers, and, turning their backs on the valley, wound away in the cool of the morning into the hills that lay between them and Nawagai.

Their guide reported that the road was tolerably clear of the enemy—only a few parties occupying some of the higher terraces along the side of the pass—and, with two

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE GREYFRIARS CRICKETERS."

A Grand School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.

companies of the Ploughshares as advance-guard, the Hussars in the centre, and the rest of the infantry bringing up the rear, the little column got under way.

For an hour the steady tramp proceeded, without incident of any kind, although far behind them came the rattle of small-arms as the 2nd Brigade began its attack on Domo-dolah. A little later the boom of an explosion came to their ears—it was Jefferies' sappers blowing up the fort. But a bend in the pass took them out of earshot, and now no sound broke the stillness but the tramp of their feet, the occasional plunge of a horse on the rocky track, and the gurgle of some mountain torrent, swollen by the previous night's rain.

For two hours the climb was steep, and several times it was necessary to halt for a brief space to breathe the men. Then, when some four miles of precipitous track had been negotiated, there was a halt of another kind, and the crack of Martinis told them that the advance-guard was engaged. The general, who had been riding with Colonel Greville, pushed forward to the head of the column, and for some time every one remained on tenterhooks. The firing increased, but after a while word was passed down to continue the march. The resistance had been overcome, and the column started off again.

No word of mine could properly convey the nature of the road we were following. Now it mounted apparently to the sky, until the men ahead of you on the mountain crest seemed mere brown dots and scarcely larger than rabbits. When you reached that point in your turn, it was to find the track plunging down into an unfathomable abyss—perhaps in some places barely wide enough for a man to walk beside his horse—with the valley lying thousands of feet below, and nothing between you and eternity if your horse proved restive, or your foot slipped. Then there came a place where the pass forked. The right-hand road led to Nawagai, the other, a narrow goat-track, mounting still higher into the immemorial hills.

At that place a more serious resistance was offered to the march. Heavy firing was again heard from the distance, and some sniping shots from the opposite side of the valley dropped among the Hussars in the centre. Once—away upon the left, where the mountain peaks stood out sharp against the brilliant blue of the sky—some white figures had been noticed, who seemed to be keeping pace with the column, but they had now disappeared.

Word was sent back to the rearguard, some distance behind, to halt, and the cavalymen, standing beside their horses on the edge of the precipice, had time to grow impatient before the march was resumed. As a matter of fact, they had been ordered forward a good half-hour before they moved, but the messenger who came from the head of the column had been killed by a chance bullet, and his bones are whitening to this day on the mountain-side, hundreds of feet below that narrow path.

It was Sir Ponsonby Smithers himself who, finding they did not come up, rode back to them; and, when they had filed past him where the road was a trifle broader, he continued his way to look at the rearguard, bidding Sergeant Howard follow him.

Tom turned his horse and rode after the general; and Bill Sloggett, taking French leave of the squadron, followed too, about a hundred yards behind. Sir Ponsonby found Dick's company sitting down among the boulders waiting patiently, many of the men smoking their pipes, and no sign of the enemy anywhere.

"You can fall in, Captain Montgomery," said Sir Ponsonby. "I think the road is pretty clear now."

And the captain, saluting, gave the word, and the rearguard sprang to its feet. Sir Ponsonby's eagle eye rested for a moment on the wild, romantic scenery of that region, and, turning his horse round, rode back at a brisk trot, soon losing sight

of the company, and followed by the sergeant. The general had not gone very far when he came face to face with Bill Sloggett.

"What the dickens are you doing here?" said the general.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I—"

Sloggett's voice failed him.

"But you what?" commanded the general.

"Don't know, sir," said the corporal.

And Sir Ponsonby laughed.

"Ah, you are the mighty swordsman of the 25th! I remember you now. Fall in with the sergeant, and don't let me find you leaving your post without orders again. I have no room for modern Don Quixotes in my column."

But though the general spoke severely, Sloggett saw that he smiled under his grey moustache, and Bill bestowed a prodigious wink upon Tom Howard as they rode after the general.

Now it was all very well for Sir Ponsonby Smithers to talk about modern Don Quixotes, for he himself was about to plunge into an encounter with even less reason than the corporal had for deserting his squadron. At the place where the pass forked Sir Ponsonby reined in, and, pointing with his hand up the goat-track, cried out in Urdu:

"Son of a burnt father, what in the name of Gehenna are you doing with that gun?" It was the old story of Frederick the Great and the Pandour who aimed at him from behind the tree, and the result was very similar—for the tribesman, who had levelled his rifle full at Sir Ponsonby's breast, quailed before the general's exclamation, and sank deeper into the shadow of the narrow cleft.

All might have been well had Sir Ponsonby allowed it to remain there, but his hot fighting blood suddenly boiled within him, and, whipping out his sword before he had time to think, he spurred after the man, thinking no doubt of the days when he and Harry Dashwood did such deeds of daring.

Tom was close behind Sir Ponsonby, and he saw that the tribesman was not alone, and that several others lurked behind the rocks towards which Sir Ponsonby was making. Bill Sloggett required no command to follow the sergeant as Tom turned his mare from the track and galloped after the general.

"Look out, sir," Tom cried, "there are half a dozen rebels behind those rocks!"

But the warning came too late. A man in a blue garment, belted round his waist, darted into view, and Sir Ponsonby's horse, shying violently, reared and fell back on the rider, pinning the general's legs to the ground.

An exclamation of rage broke simultaneously from the throats of the sergeant and the corporal, and then from behind them there arose another sound—a thud and a great crash and a splintering of rock. Some men on the hillside had dislodged a boulder, which rolled down and closed the mouth of the gorge in which they were a moment before the head of the rearguard swung into sight.

The road was still full of dust as the Ploughshares went by, and the men congratulated themselves that the rock had not fallen into the road itself, little thinking that the general was behind it in deadly peril of his life.

Tom and the corporal leapt from their saddles and, drawing their swords, rushed to the general's assistance. Tom grasping the horse and trying to disengage Sir Ponsonby from under it, while Bill placed himself between the enemy and the fallen officer.

Bill Sloggett had secured the sword of one of the dead Bengal Lancers in place of the one that had snapped when he made his ineffectual attempt to rescue Alf Sligo; and the weapon being beautifully balanced, and as keen as a razor, the corporal settled down to work.

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