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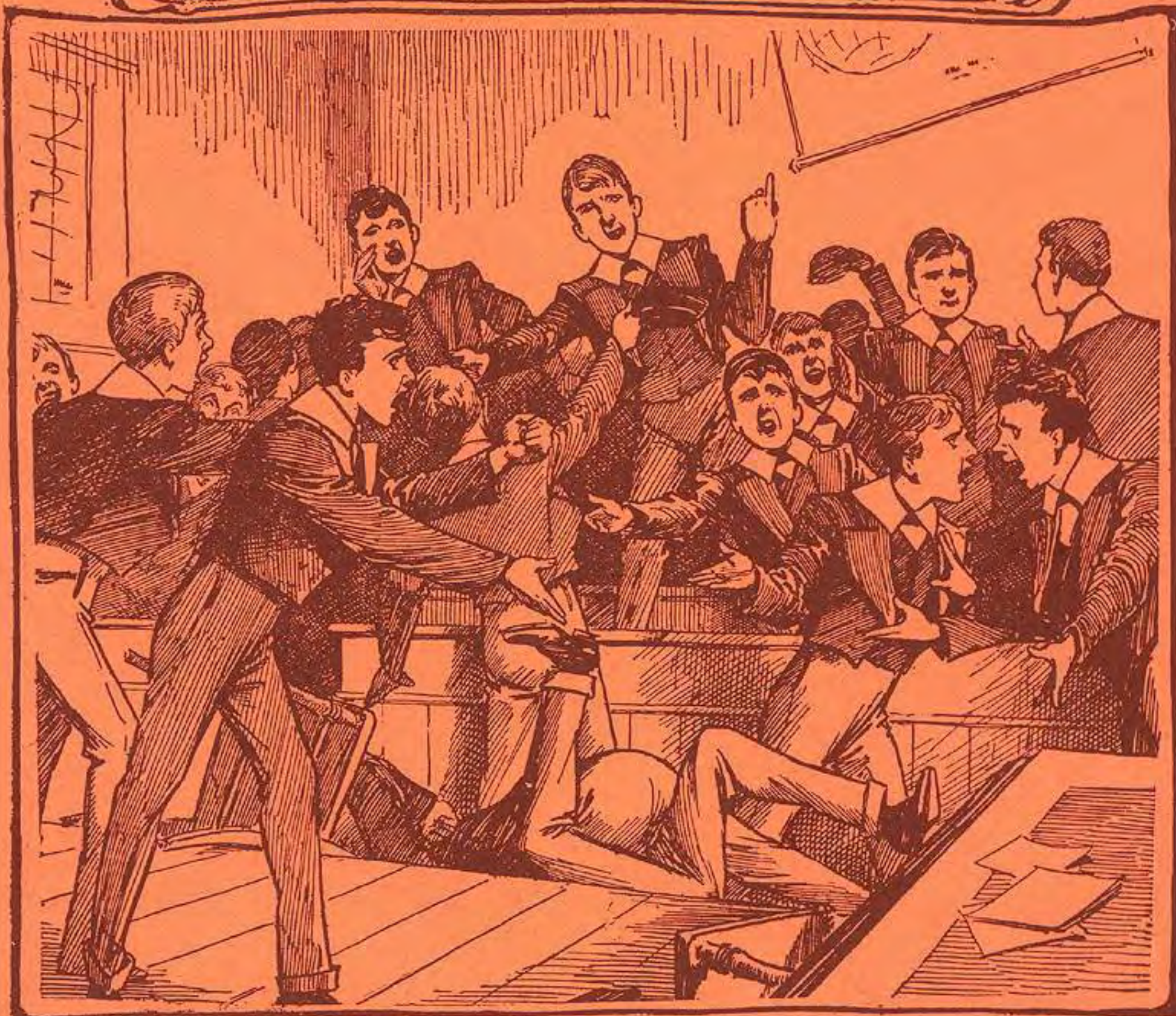
Vol. 3.

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By
**FRANK
RICHARDS**



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The Greyfriars Cricketers

A Grand, Long,
Complete School Tale
of
Harry Wharton & Co.
— BY —
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter Stands Treat!

"NOTICE to the Remove!
"A meeting, of interest to all members of the Remove Cricket Club, will be held in the Form-room at seven precisely."

That laconic notice, signed by Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove, was pinned on the board among a dozen other papers.

It attracted a great deal of attention when the juniors came out of the class-rooms after school that day at Greyfriars.

There were plenty of other notices on the board, but to the Lower Fourth, at least, there was only one that had any interest, and that was Wharton's.

What did it matter to them if—as a paper in Wingate's hand announced—the Sixth Form Debating Society would meet that evening to discuss the question, whether the pursuit of athletics was carried too far at public schools, or if the Fifth-Form Harriers were meeting in Blundell's study to discuss a run, or Hoskins, of the Shell, was announcing a

pianoforte recital with admission free to all comers? These matters might be important to the individuals concerned, but the Remove—the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars—did not care a pin for the concerns of the Sixth, the Fifth, and the Shell.

But a meeting in connection with the Remove Cricket Club was a matter they could take a hearty interest in.

The reign of football was over for the time, and fine spring weather had turned all thoughts to cricket, to green fields, and bright sunshine, and white-clad figures, and the merry click of bat and ball.

There were matters of great importance—to the Remove—to be settled before the juniors began the summer game in earnest, hence the meeting called by Harry Wharton.

And, to judge by the looks and remarks of the juniors who read the notice and commented upon it, the meeting was likely to be an exciting one in some respects.

Bulstrode stopped, with his hands in his pockets, and read the notice, and grunted.

"Like Wharton, isn't it? He puts up a notice worded as if he were a blessed emperor calling his blessed subjects together."

"Yes, rather," said Stott. "But perhaps pride will have a fall this evening."

Bulstrode looked at him quickly. Any suggestion of a "fall" for Wharton was welcome to the bully of the Remove.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I don't see why he should be cricket captain just because he's Form captain. Some of the fellows think there ought to be a new election."

Bulstrode wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"He would be bound to get in."

"Oh, I don't know! The Form makes too much fuss of that chap altogether, in my opinion, and he isn't even civil to some of us."

"Some of us don't deserve it," said the voice of Bob Cherry, as he came along. "Some of us are miserable worms, you know, Stott."

Stott and Bulstrode walked away without replying, and Bob Cherry grinned, and continued on his way to No. 1 Study—the historic apartment in which dwelt the Famous Four—Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, to say nothing of Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter was very much in evidence when Bob Cherry came into the study.

There was a strong smell of herrings, and Bob sniffed appreciatively. Billy Bunter was standing in his shirt-sleeves before the fire, which was blazing brightly. He had a frying-pan on the fire, and was cooking away contentedly, with a glowing face. He blinked round through his big spectacles as Bob Cherry came in.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Oh, is it you, Cherry? I say, what do you think of these herrings?"

"They smell rippingly," said Bob, "and I'm hungry. Where did they come from?"

"I'm standing treat this evening," said Billy Bunter, with a certain amount of dignity. "You fellows have treated me sometimes, and, of course, I must keep my end up. I'm standing this feed."

"On tick?" asked Bob Cherry cheerfully. He knew Bunter.

"Certainly not, Cherry. I bought these herrings of Mrs. Mimble, and paid for them in spot cash. She's an unreasonable woman, and won't let me have tick. It's no use explaining to her that I shall shortly be receiving three pounds a week regularly from the Patriotic Home Work Association. Women don't understand financial matters."

"No, I suppose they don't—your financial matters, at least," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I've explained to Mrs. Mimble that she's running the risk of offending a good customer," said Bunter, turning a herring carefully with a toasting-fork. "I've warned her that I may take my custom to the village shop when I get the three pounds a week coming in regularly, unless she is very careful. But it didn't make any difference. It amazes me that a woman without any business ability, like that, should be able to keep a shop at all. Fancy refusing a little tick to a chap who is shortly to have three pounds a week!"

"Reckless," agreed Bob Cherry. "Perhaps Mrs. Mimble thinks sixpence in hand is worth three pounds a week in the bush."

"Oh, really, Cherry! But what I was going to say is, I've stood the herrings—there are nine of them, so that will be one each for you chaps—"

"And what about the rest?"

"I've been feeling rather low lately, and, you know, I've a delicate constitution, which requires to be kept up with constant nourishment," said Billy Bunter reproachfully. "I haven't had a really decent feed since the night of the party. I suppose you wouldn't like me to fall upon your breast in the agonies of death, for want of a little solid sustenance?"

"I should jolly soon sling you off."

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"You can have your agonies on somebody else's chest. Mine's private property. How long will those herrings be?"

"Only another five minutes. But, as I was saying, as I've stood the herrings, you might add a little to the feed. Suppose you buzz off and get some jam or marmalade at Mrs. Mimble's? We're out of both."

"Oh, it's all right! I suppose I might as well make a contribution."

And Bob Cherry left the study. Bunter turned to his cooking again. Cooking was a labour of love with the fat junior, and he enjoyed it almost as much as eating. He was still busy when Nugent came in.

Nugent sniffed, as Bob Cherry had done.

"Good!" he said. "Where did the Yarmouth steaks come from, Billy?"

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"I'm standing them."

"Had a postal order," asked Nugent, "or has somebody died and left you a fortune?"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I'm standing them, and now you speak of it, you might as well put in something towards the feed. I was going to get a cake if the tin ran to it, but it didn't. Suppose you get the cake?"

"Well, after your noble example, I suppose I may as well stand something," said Nugent, laughing; and he left the study.

Billy Bunter grinned into the frying-pan. The herrings were forming the nucleus of a feed that was likely to become a considerable one. Billy Bunter turned the sizzling herrings, and as they were finished, piled them in a dish on the hob. The study was full of the scent, but it was an appetising scent to hungry juniors.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, came in, and slammed his books on the table. He did not seem to enjoy the herring-scent so much as the others had done. The Hindu was more severe in his diet than the English lads.

"Lovely, isn't it, Inky?" said Bunter, blinking round at him.

"The smellfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur mildly.

"Oh, I forgot; you don't eat herrings! I'm afraid I've got nothing for you, Inky, but bread-and-cheese."

"My honourable self is not extremely furnished."

"Still, if you like to get some bananas, I'll roast 'em for you," said Bunter. "I'm standing a feed this evening, but the funds won't run to much. I don't see why you shouldn't make a contribution. Suppose you buzz off to Mrs. Mimble's, and get some bananas and muscatels and almonds? They'll do you down all right, and will do for me to finish with."

"The worthy suggestion of my esteemed chum is excellent."

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh followed in the footsteps of Cherry and Nugent. The three of them came back together a little later, having met in the tuckshop. They laid their purchases on the table. Bunter had finished cooking the herrings, and he put the frying-pan aside.

"Hand over the bananas. This begins to look a little more like," he remarked, regarding the purchases on the table through his big spectacles. "I think Wharton might make a contribution, too. Did you bring the tomatoes, Cherry?"

"No, I didn't."

"There's time to run back for them, if we wait for Wharton."

"There may be time," said Bob Cherry, sitting down. "But I'm not going. Nuff's as good as a feast, you young cormorant."

"Oh, really, Cherry, when I'm standing a feed—"

Harry Wharton came into the study. He sniffed appreciatively.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I see you've got herrings with it, Bunter. Anything else?"

"Eh? I—I don't—"

"I suppose the herrings haven't taken up the whole two bob?" said Harry, looking at him.

Bunter turned pink as three pairs of accusing eyes were fixed upon him.

"Did you give the young sweep the tin to stand these herrings, Harry?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, of course—to get something for tea, anyway."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Why, he told me he was standing a feed, and chiselled me into making a contribution!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"And my worthy self also," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"I say, you fellows—"

"You—you fat impostor!"

"I say, you fellows, Wharton isn't quite correct. I regarded that two bob as a loan," said Billy Bunter feebly. "I am going to return it out of a postal order I'm expecting to-morrow morning."

"Nine herrings didn't run to two bob," said Bob Cherry judicially. "Where's the rest of the tin, you—you—"

"I had to have a snack—"

"How much were the herrings?"

"I paid a whole tanner for them."

"And one-and-six for a snack, when I gave you the tin to get tea with," said Harry Wharton indignantly.

"Of course, I regarded that as a loan. I am going to settle up that and several other little accounts when my postal order comes to-morrow."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, get off the postal-order, for goodness' sake! Let's get tea. We've got to get to the meeting early. As for that fat young burglar—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"We'll keep him waiting five minutes for his tea as a punishment."

Bunter's jaw dropped.

Wharton's idea was adopted at once. Bunter was gently but firmly pushed back from the table, and the juniors served themselves and started.

Billy Bunter expostulated, and pleaded, and almost wept; but the chums of the Remove were adamant.

For five long minutes—which seemed like five years—Billy Bunter watched the juniors eating heartily, and making alarming inroads into the dish of herrings.

Bob Cherry, with his watch on the table, timed him.

"Time!" he exclaimed suddenly.

Bunter made one bound to the table.

There were two herrings left, but they were on Bunter's plate in a twinkling. He started, at a speed which showed that he meant to make up for lost time.

"And let that be a lesson to you," said Harry Wharton severely.

But Bunter did not reply. He was too busy.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Excited Meeting.

THE Form-room was lighted up, and a crowd was gathering in it. Wharton's notice had called together nearly all the Remove. Most of the Form belonged to the cricket club, and mostly as playing members. They turned up in force for the meeting which was to decide the arrangements of the club for the ensuing season.

Bulstrode and his friends had come to oppose. They didn't care very much what the Form captain suggested; they only meant to oppose it, anyway. An opposition conducted on these lines was certain to find plenty to do.

There was a buzz when Harry Wharton came in with his friends. The Famous Four were inseparable, and were always, or nearly always, seen together, and the occasions when they had fallen out were very few. Wharton's entrance meant that the meeting was about to come to business, and attention was turned upon him from all sides. Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, followed the Famous Four in, and sidled up near Harry in his unobtrusive way.

Bob Cherry had appointed himself informal chairman, and in lieu of a bell to clang for order—and something of the kind was likely to be wanted—he had armed himself with a motor horn, which could not fail to be heard in every corner of the room—and of Greyfriars as well.

"Well, we're ready for business," said Nugent, "Mr. Chairman."

Toot, toot!

"What's that ghastly row about?" demanded Bulstrode.

"That's the signal for order."

"There'll be some disorder if you keep up that awful row."

Toot, toot!

"Gentlemen," said Harry Wharton, "this meeting is called—"

"We know that already, Wharton. Get to the cricket."

Toot, toot, toot!

"I cannot get to the cricket unless there is silence," said Wharton, with unusual mildness. "Gentlemen, this meeting is called—"

"Hear, hear!"

Toot, toot, toot!

"To discuss the cricket prospects for the coming season, and to arrange for the appointment of the usual officers."

"Hear, hear!"

"Before proceeding," said Bulstrode, standing on a chair and looking round, "I should like to point out that there is no reason why the football captain should continue his authority into the cricket season, and to move that an election be held forthwith for cricket captain."

Wharton flushed a little.

"There is no objection to that," he said. "I leave that matter in the hands of Mr. Chairman, as I shall be a candidate."

"Oh, rot!" said Hazeklene. "Wharton is cricket captain, of course."

"Rats! I say Bulstrode!" said Stott.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Well, a show of hands will settle it."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, ring off, Bunter! Hands up!"

"Look here, I'm going to speak! I'm a candidate!"

"What!"

Bunter blinked defiantly at the amazed Removites. Bunter had taken up physical culture once, and though nobody else could see that it had made any difference to him, Billy had fancied himself as an athlete ever since.

"I'm a candidate!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Chairman, I insist upon a show of hands for me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. I don't bat as well as Wharton, perhaps, but you should see me bowl."

"Yes, I'd like to see you—through a telescope!" said Nugent. "I shouldn't like to be within reach of the ball."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Who proposes Bunter?" demanded Bob Cherry, in a businesslike tone.

There was no reply. Nobody seemed anxious to propose the Owl of the Remove for cricket captain. Bunter blinked round him indignantly.

"I propose myself!" he exclaimed. "I insist that that's in order."

"Oh, very well," said the chairman, grinning. "Bunter proposes himself. Any seconder?"

Another chilling silence.

"I second myself," said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well," grinned Bob Cherry. "Bunter seconds himself. Hands up for Bunter!"

A fat hand went up—and then another. The first belonged to Billy Bunter—and so did the second. The fat junior stood with both hands in the air, but no other hand went up.

"How's that?" grinned Nugent.

"Out!"

"I say, you fellows, you don't know what you're missing, you know. As cricket captain, I should raise an extra subscription, and stand a ripping feed on the occasion of every match."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, you're at liberty to make silly asses of yourselves if you like."

"Ring off, Bunter. You're dead in this act. Gentlemen, I propose my friend Wharton for cricket captain for the ensuing season," said Nugent.

"I have the esteemed honour of backing up my estimable chain secondfully," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Hands up for Wharton!" shouted Bob Cherry.

A forest of hands went up. Bulstrode looked round with a scowling brow. He had had a faint hope that he might succeed in wresting the captaincy from the hero of the Remove, but that hope was speedily extinguished. The majority for Wharton was even greater than he had looked for.

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "Now hands up for Bulstrode!"

Five or six hands went up.

"Do you demand a count, Bulstrode?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"No," growled Bulstrode.

"Any more candidates?"

There were no more. Harry Wharton was almost unanimously re-elected captain, and Bulstrode stood with a black look on his face.

Nugent, as secretary, had no opposition, but there was a tussle over the treasurer'ship. Nobody wanted the post as a matter of fact, but Bob Cherry offered himself. Billy Bunter started up like a jack-in-the-box, and made known his claims in an insistent voice. There was a howl of laughter at once.

"Fancy Bunter as treasurer!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The funds would be invested in the tuckshop in about half an hour."

"If you think I'm not to be trusted with money, Cherry—"

"I'd trust you with untold gold, Billy, if you were chained up," said Bob Cherry reassuringly.

"I demand a show of hands."

Bulstrode and his friends voted for Billy Bunter, from a spirit of mischief, and for the same reason several other fellows backed them up. But they were in a minority, and Billy Bunter was disappointed. A vision of unlimited feeds faded from his mind. Already, in his mind's eye, he had seen himself expending the cricket funds upon a series of feeds, the said funds to be made up from his profits from the Patriotic Home Work Association. Billy Bunter hadn't the faintest idea that that would be something perilously like embezzlement; but, fortunately, there was no chance of the cash being entrusted into his hands.

These details being settled, the amount of the subscriptions was fixed, and Bob Cherry made a candid statement to the effect that he meant to have them in early, or know the reason why.

In spite of Bulstrode, business was being got through speedily; but there were other matters behind, of which the Form as yet knew nothing. But it was generally understood that Harry Wharton had something to say, and the fellows were anxious to get through business in order to hear it.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVALS OF GREYFRIARS."

A Grand School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.

"Gentlemen," said the Chairman, "our respected captain

"Hear, hear!"

"Will now address the meeting on an important subject."

"Go ahead!"

"On the ball, Wharton!"

"Toot, toot!"

"Stop that ghastly row, Cherry!"

"Order!" "Toot, toot!" "Order!"

"Chuck him out!"

"Toot, toot, toot!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove Cricket Club," said Wharton, "as you are aware, in the matter of sports, the Remove not so long ago were humble followers of the Upper Fourth. We had a few places in their team, and they graciously condescended to let us play in matches sometimes. We have changed all that. The Remove now has an athletic club of its own, and we have beaten the Upper Fourth in a Form football match."

"Hurrah!"

"But liberty, which is a jolly good thing in itself, as every poet for ages past can testify, comes expensive at times."

The Remove looked graver.

"As we are quite independent of the Upper Fourth now, and are allowed a separate ground," went on Wharton calmly, "we must expect to pay for it. We want new fittings of all sorts, and they cost money. An extra subscription all round would do it, but that wouldn't be popular if it could be avoided."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Wharton's going to make the club a present of all that's needed. Bravo, Wharton!"

"Bravo!" roared the Form.

Harry turned red, and darted an angry look at his enemy.

"I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I haven't the tin, for one thing, and for another, I don't believe in the idea of a club taking additional assistance from a single member who happens to have money. It destroys independence. I'd rather play cricket with a split bat and home-made stumps than have presents made to the club by a single member!"

"Hear, hear!"

"My idea is to give a concert by the Operatic and Dramatic Society, the proceeds to go to the cricket fund."

"Good!"

"All artists will give their services free, and there will be a charge for admission, which will go to the fund. Of course, all the Remove will turn up; and I hope we shall be able to get other fellows to come."

"Hear, hear!"

"I hope that will find the sum wanted; and if it doesn't, we shall have to fall back on an extra levy. That's all."

"I beg to oppose the whole proposition, root and branch," exclaimed Bulstrode. "When I was captain of the Remove—"

"Don't quote ancient history, old chap."

"When I was captain of the Remove, it was my honour and pleasure to aid the sports' club in a small way financially."

"That is what I object to," said Wharton quietly.

"The other fellows don't object," sneered Bulstrode. "I am no longer captain. I dare say Wharton makes a much better captain than I do."

"No, no, no!" said several voices.

"Well, the majority think so, and I don't dispute it. The Remove knows best what it wants. But what I say is, that I'm still willing to assist the club in a humble way, though no longer at the head of affairs."

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

"So if Wharton has no objection, that will settle the difficulty, and save the fellows from having to listen to the singing of the Operatic and Dramatic Society."

There was a roar of laughter, and the general looks showed that the Remove regarded Bulstrode's offer as a generous one, and were willing to accept it. But Wharton's mind was fixed.

"I do object," he said quietly. "I consider that the club oughtn't to place itself under obligations to a single member."

"Suppose you let the club decide for itself," said Bulstrode insolently. "You're not Tsar of Greyfriars, you know."

"The club won't accept your offer while I'm captain."

"Oh, look here, Wharton—"

"Wharton's right."

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look here—"

"What I say is——"

"Toot, toot, toot!"

There was a hubbub of voices, and the vigorous tooting of the chairman's motor-horn was unheeded. Every fellow had an opinion to express, and expressed it, in most cases at the top of his voice.

"Order!" roared Nugent. "Order!"

"Toot, toot, toot!"

The motor-horn sounded merrily, the raucous note of it penetrating to the further corner of the school buildings, and startling the Head himself in his study. The door of the Form-room was suddenly flung open, and Wingate, of the Sixth, rushed in, followed by two-thirds of the members of the Sixth Form Debating Society.

The din from the Form-room had disturbed the great men in the midst of their deliberations upon the important subject, whether athletics are carried too far in public schools. They had stopped only to pick up canes and walking-sticks, and then they rushed into the Remove-room.

No time was wasted in words. The cricket club meeting broke up hurriedly. They stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

There was a wild scrambling and yelling, and the cricket club bolted out of the room, hotly pursued by the debating society.

And the juniors, some of them rubbing smitten places tenderly, scattered in all directions; and for that evening, at least, the discussion was over.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The First of April.

THE rising-bell was clanging, and the Remove were tumbling out of bed in the bright sunshine of the first morning in April. Billy Bunter, always the last to rise, sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes, and yawned.

"I say, you fellows, I believe that beast Gosling starts on that bell earlier every morning," he growled. "It can't be time to get up yet. Gimme my clothes, Cherry, will you? I find it much better for my health to warm my things a bit in bed before getting up. You see, I— Ow, ow!"

Bunter skipped out of bed with remarkable celerity as Bob Cherry squeezed a cold sponge over his neck.

"Ow! You—you beast, Cherry! Oo-ooch! It's c-c-cold this morning! I don't think I shall bath."

Billy Bunter made that remark regularly every morning, and he lived up to it. Harry Wharton, glowing from a cold tub, dressed himself cheerfully, while Bunter crawled shivering into his clothes, and then proceeded to wash the most prominent parts of himself that were left uncovered. He was last down from the dormitory, as usual. He found a group of Removites at the foot of the staircase, who all turned round to look at him.

"Here he is!" said Skinner.

"I say, Bunter, have you heard?"

"Heard what?" said Bunter, blinking at the juniors through his big glasses. "Is there a letter for me? I'm expecting a postal-order this morning."

"No, there isn't a letter—"

"It might be a registered one. The remittance will probably come in gold."

"Ha, ha! There isn't even a registered letter," said Russell. "But your name's up on the board."

"My name?"

"Yes, in the cricket list."

Billy Bunter, like the famous Mr. Stiggins, swelled visibly.

"I thought Wharton would see the proper thing, and do it, at last," he said, with stately dignity. "Of course, you

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fellows know what was the result when I look up physical culture."

"Yes, rather," said Skinner; "I remember you broke a looking-glass with an Indian club."

"I don't mean that," said Bunter hastily; "I mean the difference it made to me physically. It was strict training that gave me my present splendid physique."

They looked at the little fat junior, who seemed to be almost bursting through his Eton clothes, and there was a general cackle.

"The splendour of the physique is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh; "it is only equalled by our worthy fat chum's cricketful excellence."

"But I say," said Bunter, struck with a sudden doubt, "is my name really up on the board?"

"You can see it for yourself."

Billy Bunter hurried away to the notice-board. Among the other papers there was certainly one in Harry Wharton's handwriting, giving the list of Removites who were wanted to turn up at first cricket practice after morning school. The name of W. G. Bunter had been inserted in the list by another hand, but Billy was too short-sighted to note the difference in the handwriting.

He beamed round contentedly on the grinning juniors.

"You'll see something after lessons," he said.

"The secfulness will be terrific."

And Bunter went in contentedly to breakfast. To Wun Lung, the Chinese, who sat beside him at the breakfast table, Bunter confided his intentions of showing the Removites what cricket really was like. Bunter, according to his own account, united in his person the pace of Hayward, the hitting powers of Fry and Jessop, and the ease and grace of a Palaret. Wun Lung appeared to be duly impressed, and Bunter did not notice the curious glimmer in the almond eyes of the Chinese.

Bunter never enjoyed lessons, but this morning he was peculiarly anxious to get through. His inattention was so great that the Form-master's wrath descended upon him more than once, and before the morning was over, Bunter was the richer by a hundred lines. But as Bunter more frequently than not contrived to get someone else in his study to do his lines, that did not weigh very much on his mind.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, at last, as Billy came out of a day-dream to answer a question at random. "Bunter! You are giving no attention to the lesson."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"What are you thinking about?"

"Well, sir, the fact is, I'm wanted to play in the Form eleven," said Bunter importantly. "I was really thinking about cricket, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at him sternly.

"You are going to play in the Form eleven, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed! Is the Remove getting up an eleven to play marbles with the Second Form?"

There was a ripple of laughter in the class. Mr. Quelch, like most masters, permitted himself a little joke occasionally, at which the Form dutifully laughed, whether they saw it or not. They could always tell by the expression of the Form-master's face whether he had made a joke or not.

Bunter turned red with indignation.

"Certainly not, sir! It's the cricket eleven. I'm down for first practice, to try for my cap for the eleven, and I'm bound to get it."

Mr. Quelch, seeing that the fat junior was in earnest, looked puzzled for the moment. Then he remembered the date, and smiled. Harry Wharton was looking perplexed, too. He had not seen the insertion in his notice on the board, and the others had taken care not to point it out to him.

"Well, well," said Mr. Quelch, "you must not think of cricket in class. Pay attention to your work, or we shall quarrel, Bunter."

"Yes, sir."

The Form were dismissed at last. Billy Bunter's usual proceeding, after escaping from class, was to head for the school shop, if he had any money. If he hadn't any, his usual proceeding was to borrow some, and then make for the tuck-shop. But on the present occasion he actually forgot the existence of Mrs. Mimble's little shop behind the elms, and followed the other Removites down to the cricket pavilion.

All Greyfriars was making preparations for the coming season. The muddled oaf at the goal, to borrow the elegant phrase of Kipling, was giving place to the flannelled fool at the wickets. Those expressions had been often in the mouth of Billy Bunter while he was excluded from the Form eleven. Now, however, he was thinking that cricket was a jolly good game.

The weather was bright and dry, giving promise of an enjoyable cricket season to come. And although the boys were sorry to say good-bye to King Football, they welcomed King Cricket with open arms.

The ground, of course, was not yet all that could be desired. The season was early yet, but it was time to be up and doing. Every Form at Greyfriars was busy on the same tack. Wingate was making the lordly Sixth turn out for practice. The seniors certainly did not show more zest than the youngsters. Wharton meant the Remove Eleven to go ahead that season.

The first practice was of course very informal. There were over twenty candidates for the coveted eleven places, and Wharton had to pick and choose. The task of a cricket captain was not a light one. To be guided wholly by the interests of the game, to leave out one's own personal friends, and to put in one's rivals, was neither easy nor pleasant. But Wharton had a strong character, and the Remove knew that at all events they could depend upon him to use his judgment without fear or favour.

Wun Lung, the Chinese, was among the juniors who wanted a trial. His appearance among them caused general grins, but Wharton had conceded a trial. But when Billy Bunter came out of the pavilion with pads and gloves on, and a bat under his arm, Harry Wharton stared at him blankly.

"Bunter! What on earth are you doing in that rig?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"Well, I like that, Wharton!"

"Do you? Well, I don't like fooling!" said Wharton crisply. "Get those things off, and clear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Buzz off, Billy. We've got a lot to do."

"I say, you fellows, listen to him! Of course he knows jolly well that I'm in the first practice!"

"Oh, rot!" said Harry impatiently. "What on earth put that idea into your head?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, you know jolly well that you put my name in the list yourself!"

Wharton stared at him.

"I? Nonsense!"

"I appeal to the other fellows. Isn't my name in the list on the board?"

"It's there, right enough!" grinned Russell.

"The rightfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"First of April, you know!"

Billy Bunter gave a jump. He had forgotten that it was the First of April, and that the insertion of his name in the cricket list might be a catch.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Sorry, Billy, but some ass has shoved your name in for a joke; I never put it there. Buzz off!"

Billy Bunter blinked round him wrathfully.

"I say, you fellows, what a rotten joke! Who was it? You—you grinning Chinese beast, I know what you were chuckling at now!"

Wun Lung seemed to be doubled up with mirth. The Removites roared with laughter.

Bunter gripped the bat and made a rush at Wun Lung. He might as well have charged a will-o'-the-wisp. Wun Lung dodged instantly, and the end of the bat clumped on the chest of Micky Desmond, and bowled him over as if he had been shot.

The Irish junior gave a yell, and sat looking dazed, and the Removites roared again. Wun Lung was hugging himself with mirth.

Billy Bunter blinked at Desmond in dismay.

"I—I'm sincerely sorry!" he gasped. "I—I—I—"

"Be jabers, and I'll make ye sorrier intirely!" roared Desmond, as he struggled to his feet. "Bedad, an' I'll give you—"

"I—I—I'm sincerely—"

"Hold on, Micky!" exclaimed Harry. "It was an accident."

"Faith, and it was a mighty painful one, thin!" said Desmond, rubbing his chest. "I shall have a bruise there as big as a duck's egg!"

"I expect you'll have a duck's egg to match it, too, when you begin batting," Bob Cherry remarked sympathetically.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Faith, Cherry, ye gossoon, I—"

"I say, you fellows, I'm going to bat as I've put my pads on, you know. I don't see why I shouldn't have my trial for the eleven as well as the rest."

"Look here, Billy—"

"Well, I shall jolly well draw out my subscription from the club, then—"

"You haven't paid it in yet," said Bob Cherry.

"I'm only waiting for my postal order to come—I mean I shan't pay it, which comes to the same thing. Why

shouldn't I have a trial, especially as I've taken the trouble to get ready?"

Wharton laughed. He was good-natured, and, after all, it would not take many minutes to get rid of Billy Bunter. So he nodded assent, and Bunter, to his joy and satisfaction, was sent in first. He had no doubt that he would be able to show the Remove some batting that would open their eyes to his real qualities as a cricketer.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The First Cricket Match.

HARRY WHARTON had selected twenty-two for the trial, leaving himself out. Bob Cherry captained one eleven, and Nugent the other. Bob Cherry's side batted first, and Harry had made him a present of Billy Bunter.

Bob opened the innings with Billy. The fat junior swaggered to the wicket with a very important air, and took up his position. Nugent put Hazeldene on to bowl against Bunter's wicket.

Hazeldene was a moderately good bowler. He would not have had much effect upon Harry Wharton, but Billy Bunter was an easy prey.

The fieldsmen looked on, grinning, as he went to the pitch, and the waiting batsmen watched the proceedings with great interest.

Billy Bunter blinked at them, and blinked at the bowler.

"Over!"

The ball came down. There was a fiendish yell from Billy Bunter. His bat clumped down on the turf, and the fat junior hopped on one leg, clasping the other with both hands, and executing a savage dance that would have excited the envy of a dervish.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow, ow, wow!"

"How's that?" yelled Hazeldene.

"Out," said Wharton—"leg-before-wicket!"

"Ow, ow, wow!"

"Get off the earth, Bunter!"

Bunter left off nursing his leg at last, and lowered it gingerly to the ground. It had received a shock, but it was not hurt so much, after all. The fat junior blinked at the cricket captain with almost speechless indignation.

"Did you say 'out,' Wharton?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Well, of all the cheek! I wasn't ready."

"You heard me call 'over!'"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I suppose I might be allowed a minute to get ready. If you're going to be so particular, I'll be more careful next time, though."

"There's not going to be any next time."

"I say, Wharton, that was only a trial ball, anyway."

Wharton burst into a laugh, and signed to Hazeldene to bowl again.

"I'll give you another chance, Bunter."

"Right-ho! I'll show you something like batting this time."

Hazeldene grinned as he grasped the ball again. Billy Bunter took up his position, and was careful this time not to place his legs before. He was so careful, that he kept well away from the wicket, and to the onlookers it appeared very doubtful whether his bat would interfere in any way with the ball. Still, that was the batsman's business.

Down came the ball, and Bunter swiped at it. His bat struck something—it was the bails from the wicket. But the shortsighted junior was not aware of that. He knew he had hit something, and he ran. The ball whipped his middle stump out of the ground, and laid it beside the bails, but that was nothing to Bunter.

He ran.

A roar of laughter rose on all sides. Mingled with it came a sound of clapping hands and a girlish:

"Bravo!"

The Greyfriars fellows looked round in surprise. Half a dozen girls were standing by the ropes looking on, and evidently in great admiration of Bunter's exploit.

They were recognised at once. Hazeldene's sister Marjorie was there, with her friends, Clara and Alice, and the flaxen-haired German girl, Wilhelmina, and two others. They belonged to Cliff House, the new girls' school that had been opened the previous week near Greyfriars. The best of relations were established at present between Greyfriars and Cliff House.

The Remove had all been invited to a party at Cliff House, and had there made acquaintance with Miss Penelope Primrose's pupils, and they had become very good friends.

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"THE MAGNET"
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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVALS OF GREYFRIARS."

A Grand School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.

Billy Bunter heard the handclapping. He saw the Cliff House girls as he ran, and their applause elated him. The other juniors simply shrieked.

Miss Marjorie & Co. thought they knew something about cricket, and, to show their knowledge, they were cheering Billy Bunter, who had knocked his own bails off, and was out, but, like Charley's Aunt, was still running.

"Bravo!" trilled Marjorie.

"Well hit!" exclaimed Clara.

"Good man!" cried Alice.

"Hurrah!" chorussed the rest.

Bob Cherry put his hands to his sides and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why don't you run, Cherry, you ass!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! You're out!"

"Out?"

"Can't you see your wicket's down?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Two or three fieldsmen took Billy Bunter by the shoulders, and gently but firmly marched him off the field. The fat junior went off disconsolately. He could not quite understand yet what had happened to his wicket, and he was rather inclined to think that there was some japing about it.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh went on in Bunter's place. The nabob was a good batsman, and Hazeldene's bowling made no impression upon him; and at the change of ends Nugent in vain bowled to Bob Cherry.

Wun Lung was in Nugent's team, and he had been put to field in the slips. No one supposed for a moment that he would be of any use, and to that fact Bob Cherry attributed what happened.

He had cut away a ball, and was running, when there was a roar from the crowd:

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

The diminutive figure of the Chinese had fairly leaped into the air, and the leather clicked into the palm of his hand.

Bob Cherry stopped short, and stared at the Celestial in amazement.

Wun Lung grinned genially. The ball went up from his hand skyward, and came down straight as a plumbline to his palm again.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "How's that?"

"Out!"

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Who'd have thought it?"

There was a fresh sound of hand-clapping from the girls.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Well bowled!"

"Well bowled, indeed!" trilled the rest.

And the juniors shrieked. The batsman had been caught out, and to hear the bowler thus cheered was distinctly diverting. It had been a difficult catch, and nothing was due to the bowler—in fact, most of the fellows set it down to a fluke on the part of Wun Lung.

But Wharton thought differently. He recalled the little Chinese's wonderful skill in every variety of gymnastics, and the almost uncanny facility he showed in every kind of juggling. That curious skill was probably proving useful to him in fielding. He could catch a ball under almost any circumstances, and it occurred to Wharton that Wun Lung would be a dangerous man in the field. He determined to watch the little Chinese carefully. The Remove eleven would have enough good batsmen, and bowlers, too, and a strong fieldman would be a great acquisition.

And Wun Lung showed that it was no fluke.

Two batsmen in succession were caught out in the same over, and it was the little Chinese who accounted for both of them.

The Removites, surprised as they were by the unexpected development on the part of the little Celestial, cheered him heartily; and the Cliff House girls cordially joined in the cheering, though the object of it on their part was the latest batsman who had been sent back to the pavilion. But a little mistake of that kind did not matter.

Third man out closed the play for the time, as it was nearly time for dinner. The trial match was to be resumed afterwards, at the point where it had left off. Harry Wharton guessed that the Cliff House girls had had some object in coming over, besides that of watching the play, and he was right. As the cricketers came off the field, raising their caps very politely to Marjorie & Co., Hazeldene's sister exchanged a glance with her friends, and all the girls assumed expressions of gravity and importance. It was evident that something unusual was coming.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Cricket Challenge.

"So glad to see you over here," said Harry. "It's awfully jolly for the schools to be so close together, isn't it? You're interested in cricket?"

Marjorie smiled loftily.

"Of course! We play cricket!"

Harry Wharton almost gasped. Remembering the points in the game which had earned the applause of Marjorie & Co., he could not help wondering what kind of cricket they played at Cliff House.

"My goodness!" said Clara. "Why, of course we play cricket! Marjorie is a lovely batsman—I mean batswoman."

"I'm sure of that," said Wharton, feeling that he was speaking the strict truth, for he had no doubt that Marjorie was lovely at the wicket in at least one sense of the word.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "I—I should awfully like to see you chaps—I mean you girls—play cricket."

Nugent went off into a sudden shriek, and Bob Cherry glared at him. Nugent tried to turn his laugh into a cough, and nearly choked in the process.

"That's just what we want," said Marjorie triumphantly.

"Oh, we'll come! It will be—be awfully interesting."

"Ah, you don't understand yet. You don't know what we've come over for," said Marjorie. And all the girls smiled.

"To pay us a visit, I suppose," said Hazeldene.

Marjorie shook her head.

"Yes, of course; but something else as well. You'll never guess, so I may as well tell you. We've brought over a challenge."

"A—a—a which?"

"A challenge. Who is your cricket captain—I don't mean of the school, but of the Remove. Of course," said Marjorie gravely, "we couldn't play a senior team. The Sixth Form would beat us easily."

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I mean, certainly. Wharton's cricket captain."

"And Nugent's secretary."

"Then you're the persons I want to see," said Marjorie.

"I'm cricket captain of Cliff House, and Clara is secretary of the Cliff House Cricket Club."

"My—my hat!"

"All these girls are playing members," said Marjorie, with a wave of the hand. "And—and we are in—in ripping form." She stole a glance at Wharton, as if to see whether that was the correct term, and as he did not smile, she concluded that it was. "We're in ripping form this season, and we mean to make things—things—things—Oh, dear, I can't remember the word!"

"Hum!" said Miss Clara.

"Yes, that's it. We mean to make things hum. There is no other girls' school near Cliff House, so we can't fix up any matches with girls—and, besides," went on Marjorie confidentially, "girls, as a rule, don't play cricket well. They don't know much about the game. And, of course, we don't want to waste our time fooling with a lot of—of—"

"Butterfingers," said Clara.

"With a lot of butterfingers," went on Marjorie. "We would much rather play a boys' team, and have a real match worth fighting for."

"That is so," said Miss Wilholmina. "Te cricket match is goot, and te cold collation after te match is more goot."

"So we've come to challenge you," said Miss Marjorie. "Of course, it's only fair to warn you that we've made a close study of the game—Goodness me, are you ill, Nugent?"

"N-n-n-n-no," gasped Nugent, "only—only a sudden spasm. It's all right."

"We've made a close study of the game," resumed Marjorie, looking a little suspiciously at Nugent, "and we're in—in grand form. If you'd like to decline the challenge till you've got into better form, we don't mind."

"Not at all," said Clara.

"In fact," said Alice brightly, "we want you to be in your very best form, so as to make the match worth playing."

"Exactly," said Marjorie. "Now, do you accept, or would you rather put it off till you are in better form?"

Harry Wharton looked helplessly at Nugent. He would not have wounded the feelings of the girl cricketers for untold gold. But—but to play a match—in the sight of all grinning Greyfriars—

"Let me see," he remarked thoughtfully, at last. "I shall have to consult the secretary about a vacant date."

"My goodness," said Clara, "I forgot that! Of course, all our dates are open, as we haven't fixed up any match yet."

"Yes, we could meet you any half-holiday," assented Marjorie. "I do hope all your dates aren't full up already, like those at Redclyffe."

"Redclyffe?" said Nugent inquiringly.

"Yes. I wrote a challenge to Redclyffe School, and their secretary replied in a most polite note, and told us how

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dreadfully sorry they were that all their dates were full," said Marjorie innocently.

Nugent seemed to be in danger of another spasm. Bob Cherry made a curious sound in his throat, as if he were on the point of choking.

Wharton turned a little red. He would gladly enough have replied that all the Remove's dates were full, but that would not have been quite correct. And, absurd as a cricket match with Cliff House would be, he could not tell Marjorie an untruth, though he could not help suspecting that the Redclyffe secretary had stretched a point.

"Let me see," said Wharton reflectively. "We have Saturday afternoon this week. The season hasn't really begun yet, and that's open. But—"

"That will suit us beautifully."

"Of course," said Marjorie, "if you think you're not up to our form, and you don't want to discourage your men by beginning the season with a defeat, don't mind saying so. We sha'n't mind."

"It isn't exactly that—"

"I hope," said Marjorie, with a trace of lofty scorn in her voice—"I hope that you have no objection to playing a girls' team. I suppose you don't think it wrong for girls to play cricket?"

"Certainly not. It's right—very right. It's a ripping game, and it's bound to do everybody good that plays it, of course. Girls ought to play it as much as boys, if they feel inclined to," said Wharton emphatically.

"Yes, rather," said Nugent, "especially when they make a close study of the game, and get into grand form."

Marjorie looked at him, but his face was quite grave, almost solemn.

"Well, what do you say?" she asked, looking at Wharton again. "Do you accept the challenge?"

"I don't know about the state of the ground for a serious match."

"Oh, we should like you to play on our ground," said Miss Marjorie sweetly. "We have a beautiful ground, where we practice ourselves. We haven't played a match on it yet with anybody."

There was only one answer Harry Wharton could make, without transgressing the unwritten laws of courtesy.

"We'll come, and thanks."

"Very good," said Marjorie delightedly. "Mind, we are going to beat you, so you know what to expect."

"We'll give you a tussle."

"Yes, that's just what we want you to do, so that if we beat you, it will show that girls can beat boys at their own game in a serious match," explained Marjorie. "Now we must run away, or Miss Penelope will miss us at dinner. Good-bye!"

And Marjorie & Co. departed, leaving the Removees looking at one another rather blankly.

"Well, we're in for it now, and no mistake," murmured Bob Cherry. "I shall be glad enough to pay another visit to Cliff House, but—"

"But to play a cricket match—"

"It will be funny."

"Well, I'm jolly glad it won't be here, for all Greyfriars to look on and cackle," said Harry Wharton ruefully. "We must make the best of it."

And that was evidently the only thing to do. The challenge had been accepted, and the match was to be played.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Puzzling Case.

BILLY BUNTER sat in No. 1 Study with a decidedly dissatisfied look upon his face. The fine April day was drawing to a close, and from the playing-fields could be heard, for some time past, the merry voices of the cricketers. But Bunter had not joined them. His first efforts to get into the Remove eleven had been so little appreciated that he had dropped the idea. He had, indeed, offered to show what he could do as a bowler, but the other fellows had firmly expressed their determination not to risk being brained by a fat duffer and a cricket-ball; and then Billy Bunter had indignantly declared that he washed his hands of the whole matter. To which Bob Cherry had rejoined that they needed it, anyway; and Bunter retired, glowering. He was feeling dissatisfied now.

It wasn't only that he wasn't included in the cricket list. That he attributed to envy, and could understand. But financial troubles were thickening round Billy Bunter.

The famous postal-order, the arrival of which had been so long expected, had never arrived, and Bunter's latest scheme for raising the wind seemed equally unproductive. He had purchased a colour-box for six shillings from the Patriotic Home Work Association, for the purpose of colouring picture-postcards, at which easy and artistic occupation he fondly

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hoped to earn three pounds a week. That was the sum mentioned in the attractive advertisement that had first caught his eye, and Bunter had no doubts about his ability as a postcard painter. Unfortunately, all the postcards he coloured had been returned to him as not quite up to the mark, and fresh ones were sent for him to try his skill afresh. As Bunter was paying all the postage, in stamps borrowed from Wharton, the Home Work Association was not losing anything on the transaction.

The chums of the Remove had tried to point out to Billy that the Patriotic Home Work Association had only wanted his six shillings from the start, and that they were now simply trying to tire him out, at his own expense.

Bunter had refused to credit it.

But it was slowly dawning on him at last that there might be something in it. He was sitting in the study, pondering upon the subject, when the chums came in, fresh and glowing from the cricket-field, and as hungry as hunters.

"Tea ready?" asked Bob Cherry, as he pitched his bat into a corner. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you gone to sleep, Bunt?"

"No, I haven't. I'm thinking——"

"Stuff! Why haven't you got tea ready?"

"There isn't anything for tea."

"What about the sausages and the cold ham?"

"I suppose you didn't want me to perish of hunger," said Bunter, with dignity. "I had to have a snack to keep up my strength."

"You—you—you— Come downstairs, kids, and let's have tea before it's gone," said Bob Cherry. "I'm going to get a muzzle for Bunter out of my next remittance."

"I think I'd better come with you," said Billy Bunter, rising slowly. "I'm jolly hungry myself. I only had a snack. I say, you fellows, I've had another letter from the Patriotic Home Work Association."

"Three pounds this time, I hope," said Wharton.

"Well, no, my work isn't quite up to the mark yet."

"Ha, ha, ha! I fancy it never will be."

"But look here. They gave me the name and address of a chap who was earning three pounds a week by colouring postcards for them. He lives at Fernhill, and that's not very far from here. Suppose you were to come over with me, and see whether there's anything in it or not."

"Of course, it's all spook."

"Yes, but they give a real name and address, and if it's a swindle, we could show them up, you know."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"All right. I'll get a pass from Wingate, if I can, after tea, and we'll run over."

"And if it turns out to be genuine——"

"Don't worry; it won't."

And after tea, the pass being secured easily enough from the captain of Greyfriars, the two juniors quitted the school. It was half-an-hour's walk to Fernhill, and as they passed through the village of Friardale, Billy Bunter hinted at the propriety of hiring the ancient hack that stood outside the station.

"You can have it if you like," assented Wharton. "I'm going to walk."

"Well, will you settle with the driver?"

"Not much."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Come on, you young ass. It's not a long walk, and I'm giving up half the evening anyway," said Wharton impatiently. "I haven't five shillings to waste on laziness. Get a move on!"

"I'm afraid that over-exertion may have a harmful effect upon my constitution. You see, I'm delicate."

"Cut your meals down to eight or nine a day, and then you'll be all right."

"Oh, really——"

"Are you coming on, or going back?"

"I'm coming," groaned Billy Bunter. "If I fall down in a state of exhaustion, and have to be carried home, it will be your fault."

"You won't be carried home by me, at all events," said Wharton grimly.

That warning, perhaps, prevented Bunter from falling down in a state of exhaustion. He wore an injured expression, but he toddled on, keeping in an incessant trot to keep pace with Wharton's stride. They reached Fernhill at last, and inquired their way to the house of Mr. Jones, and soon found it. Wharton felt a certain amount of hesitation in knocking at the door, but Bunter explained that the Patriotic Home Work Association had given him Mr. Jones's address as that of a man who was earning three pounds a week in the evenings by colouring cards for them, and had distinctly stated that Mr. Jones would be willing to answer all inquiries.

Wharton knocked, and the door was opened by a buxom dame. She did not seem at all surprised at their visit, and Harry guessed that they were not the first who had called

on the same mission. They were shown into a neatly-furnished room, where a man was seated at a table with a brush in his hand, and some moist colours at his elbow. A heap of cards lay before him, and several that had been coloured were laid out to dry. Wharton saw at a glance that there was a certain amount of skill in the colouring, but how the man's labour could be worth three pounds a week was a mystery, for the cards certainly could not be sold at a high figure, and the quantity it would be necessary to sell, to leave a margin of profit sufficient for the association to pay the painter three pounds a week would have to be enormous. Yet when Mr. Jones rose from his work with a pleasant smile on his homely face to greet them, Harry felt at once that if there was a swindle, this man was not a party to it.

"Good-evening, young gentlemen!" said Mr. Jones. "So you have called about the postcard colouring for the association?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry. "Your name was given to us—I mean to Bunter here. They tell us you are getting three pounds a week for colouring postcards, and that everyone can earn the same amount. I hope we are not interrupting your work."

"That is nothing," said Mr. Jones. "Please sit down! Will you take a cup of tea, after your walk? Yes, I am sure you will. Mary, my dear, bring in some tea and cake. No, I won't take 'no' for an answer."

"You are very kind, sir."

"Not a bit of it! I have benefited too much by the kindness of the association not to be ready to do anything I can," went on Mr. Jones, when the juniors—who certainly were hungry after their walk—were discussing cake and tea. "You see, I work in the garden, and raise vegetables and flowers, and make something out of that; but it's the evening work that keeps me going. I had an injury in my trade, and I can't follow that, and this work of the Home Work Association came in the nick of time. Would you like to see some of my work?"

And he showed them cards, coloured and uncoloured, and explained every detail to them. Billy Bunter's face grew brighter and brighter, and Wharton's more and more puzzled. It was perfectly evident that Mr. Jones was honest, and sincerely grateful to the Patriotic Home Work Association, and if one man was earning three pounds a week by evening work, why not others?"

The time passed very pleasantly, and the visitors had quite a long chat. Mrs. Jones joined them, and the good lady was evidently as sincere as her husband, and loud in her praises of the generous scale of payments adopted by the Home Work Association, and their promptness in sending the remittances.

It was all a great puzzle to Wharton, but to Billy Bunter everything was as clear as daylight. The whole thing was genuine, and he had been right all along, and his chums were only Doubting Thomases. When the juniors took their leave at last, they had stayed much later than they had intended, and nine was chiming out from the village church as they said good-night to Mr. Jones.

Harry Wharton gave a start as he heard it.

"By Jove, we're late!" he exclaimed, as they went down the garden path. "We'll take the short cut home by the sea, Billy, and get in in time for bed."

"Right-ho!" said Billy Bunter, grinning contentedly. "What do you think of the Patriotic Home Work Association now, Wharton?"

"Blessed if I know what to think!"

"Mr. Jones is genuine enough, eh?"

"Yes, he's genuine."

"Well, then, if they're paying him three pounds a week, why shouldn't they pay me the same? My work will jolly soon be as good as his. His is no great shakes, from what I could see."

"That's true enough."

"Ain't you convinced yet?" demanded Billy Bunter indignantly.

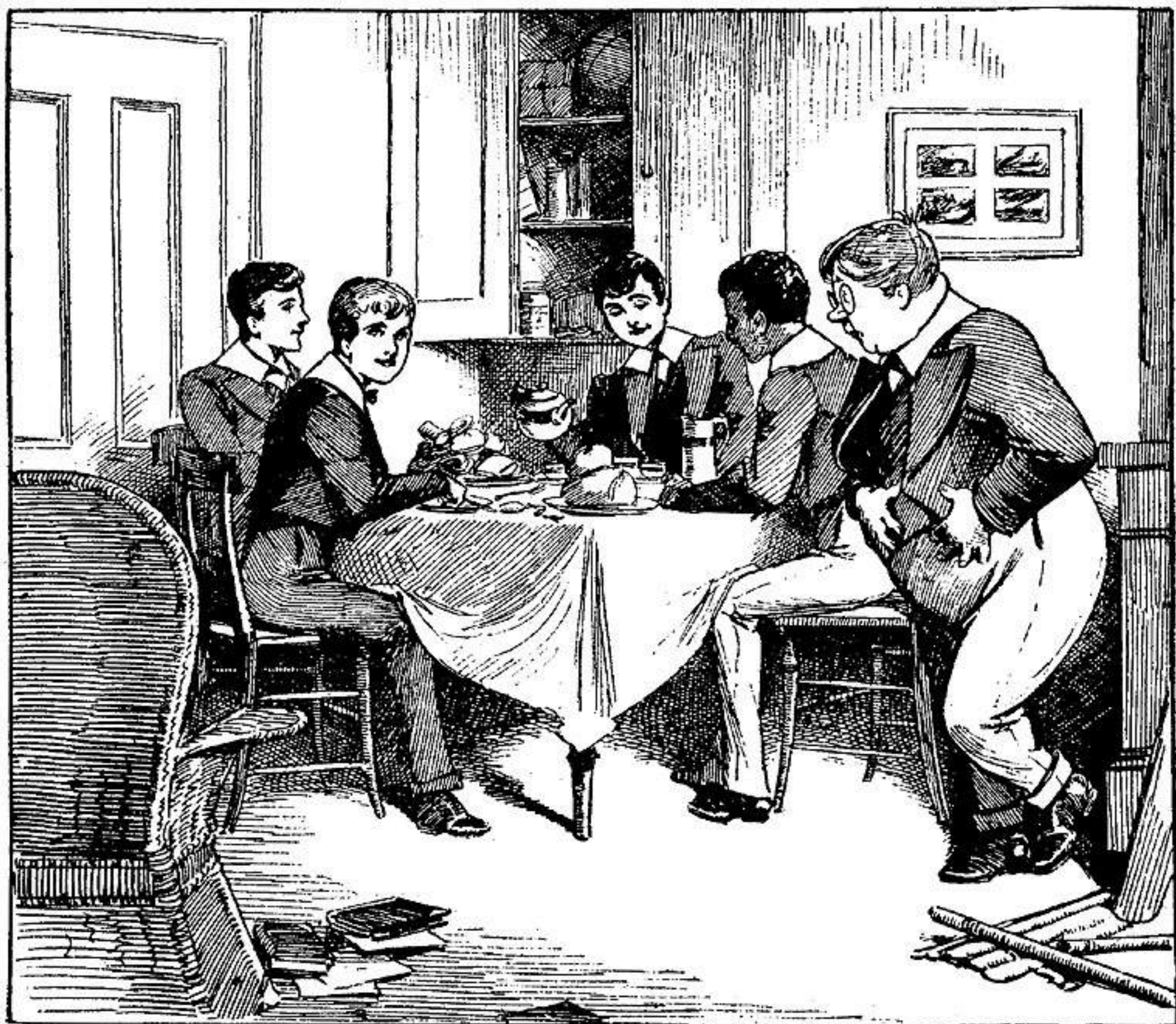
"No," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I can't quite catch on to it, but there's a swindle somewhere. Mr. Jones may be a dupe—a stool-pigeon, to help them catch mugs. I know jolly well that they're not paying three pounds a week to people for colouring picture-postcards, and that's flat. If they're paying Mr. Jones—and I suppose they are—it must be that it's worth their while to expend three pounds a week to secure a bona-fide reference and a standing advertisement, and Mr. Jones is about the only chap who's receiving any tin from them."

Billy Bunter sniffed.

"Oh, that's awfully far-fetched, you know."

"I think it will turn out to be correct."

Bunter sniffed again, and they walked on in silence by the coast path, with the high Shoulder rising on their right, and the silver sea glimmering in the starlight on their left."



For five long minutes—which seemed like five years—Billy Bunter watched the Famous Four eating heartily, while Bob Cherry, with his watch on the table, timed him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Caught by the Tide.

THE two juniors walked quickly along the shingly path. They had just time to get in at Greyfriars if they lost no time, and even Billy Bunter put his best foot foremost, and hurried on without grumbling. But as they rounded a jutting spur of the great cliff, Harry Wharton halted with a sudden exclamation.

"The tide!"

He caught Billy Bunter by the shoulder, and stopped him. Before them lay a hollow of the cliff, where the tide from the German Ocean was beating against the rocks of the Shoulder. More than one unlucky pedestrian had been caught by the tide on that perilous path, and as it was impossible to climb the cliff there—at least, for a stranger—there could be only one result to such a mishap—a body washed up on the sands of the bay the following morning.

"Eh? What are you stopping for, Wharton?" asked the short-sighted junior, blinking at his companion.

"The tide's in."

"My word! Lucky we weren't there to be caught in it."

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton. "We know the time of the tide, and I suppose we should have too much sense to be caught in it. Only we can't go on now. We should never get past the cliff in time, and we shouldn't be able to come back, either."

Billy Bunter granted.

"We shall be in late."

"Can't be helped. We shall have to take the path over the cliff. Come on!"

And Wharton turned to retrace his steps a hundred yards or so to the spot where a path left the beach, and zigzagged upward among the rocks of the Shoulder. Bunter followed him grumblingly.

"I—I don't think I shall be able to do the walk, Wharton. I'm not strong, you know, and I never could climb these rugged paths."

"Like to stop on the beach for the night?"

"No, of course I wouldn't."

"Well, ass, you must either come or stay," said Wharton.

"What's the good of grousing? Get a move on!"

There was certainly nothing else to be done. Billy Bunter growled and obeyed. He seemed to forget that it was entirely on his account that Wharton had undertaken the expedition at all, and he blamed Harry for everything that went wrong.

But Wharton was used to that, and it did not affect him. He helped the fat junior over the most difficult places, and took no notice of his grumbling.

They came out on the top of the cliff, Wharton breathing rather hard, and Billy Bunter gasping like a landed fish.

"All right now," said Wharton cheerily. "Come on!"

"All right for you, perhaps! I'm tired. I believe this exertion will have a bad effect upon my constitution. I'm getting hungry, too."

Wharton laughed, and set off at a swinging stride along the path at the edge of the cliff. On his left the Shoulder

dropped away almost as abruptly as the side of a house down to the beach far below. The beach was hidden now by the tide, roaring over the broken rocks and in the hollows of the cliff.

Billy Bunter kept on the inner side of the path; he had not the iron nerve of the captain of the *Remore*. Save for the wash of the waters below, no sound came through the silence of the April night. Suddenly Harry stopped, and listened. In the silence a faint cry was heard.

"Did you hear that, Billy?"

"Eh? I didn't hear anything!"

"There it is again! Hark!"

"It's only a curlew."

"It isn't! It's a human voice," said Wharton, his face going white, "and it's from the beach!"

"It can't be! The tide's in!"

"Ass! It must be somebody caught in the tide!"

Wharton knelt on the very verge of the cliff. In the dim starlight the sea rolled like broken sheets of silver. Here and there he caught the lines of foam as the tide rolled over sunken rocks, but the bulging of the cliff hid what was immediately below him from his sight.

He listened intently. Billy Bunter waited, with a low undercurrent of grumbling. Wharton turned his head sharply.

"Hold your tongue!"

He listened again. From the dusky depths below came a faint cry that rang in his ears with a curious thrill.

"Help!"

"Look here, Wharton, I'm not going to wait!"

Wharton sprang to his feet. Bunter caught his expression in the starlight, and the words died on his tongue.

"Billy, there's someone caught in the tide, and it's a girl's voice!"

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At the Peril of Life

"HELP!"

Faint and low on the breath of the night wind came the cry from the hollow cliff. It was a female voice—Wharton was sure of that. His brain reeled for the moment. Caught in the tide! The unfortunate wayfarer must have clambered upon some rugged jutting of the cliff out of reach of the devouring waves. But that refuge could not serve long. The tide was coming in fast. Long before Wharton, running his hardest, could get to the fishing village on the bay—long before a boat could be brought round—all would be over.

With a throbbing heart the boy knelt again on the verge of the cliff, where the descent was so steep that it made Bunter's head reel to even look at it.

"Help!"

Again that faint cry from below. The caller could have had little hope of being heard. But in the faint hope that someone might be following the cliff path at that hour, and might hear the call, she cried for help.

"Hallo-o-o!"

Wharton shouted back the word.

There was a long pause. He wondered whether the unseen one below could hear his voice.

Then the reply came back.

"Help! Can you hear me?"

"Yes. Where are you?"

"Clinging to the cliff. I am caught in the tide!"

Wharton felt a strange shiver pass through him. Far-off and faint as the voice was, he thought he recognised those tones.

"Are you Marjorie Hazeldene?"

He hardly dared put the question into words. If it was Marjorie—Marjorie penned up there by the deadly tide—doomed to a helpless death!

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Harry Wharton!"

A joyful cry came back.

"Harry! Oh, can you help me?"

"Yes," called back Wharton; "I will—I will!"

How, he did not know. What help was there? But in that terrible moment one determination became fixed in Harry Wharton's mind—that if the worst happened, Marjorie should not perish alone in the breaking waves.

He rose to his feet again. He pressed his hand to his forehead, and tried to think. Bunter watched him in silence. Even his grumbling was quieted now, at the thought that a girl was in danger of a terrible death.

"What can I do?"

The question hammered into Wharton's brain. What could he do? Long before a boat could be got round the end would have come.

"A rope!" he exclaimed. "If I could get a rope!"

He gave a despairing glance round. Where was a rope

to be obtained on that lonely, barren cliff? The thought of Cliff House came into his mind. Miss Penelope's school was close by the cliff, looking out on the sea. A quick run—but he paused again. He could not leave Marjorie there. He grasped Bunter by the shoulder, and spoke in quick, low tones.

"Billy! You know where Cliff House is—you'll find them up, for they must have missed Marjorie! Cut off as quickly as you can, and tell Miss Primrose what's the matter here! You understand?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Tell them to get men—bring a rope—and come here! Quick! There's not a second to be lost!"

"But—but— You go, you can run quicker——"

"I'm going down the cliff!"

Bunter almost shrieked.

"Down the cliff! You're mad! You'll fall—you'll be killed!"

"Never mind that! Go off, and run for your life! Remember, if you waste a second, it may mean two deaths at your door!"

"I—I—I'll go, but——"

"Cut off!"

Wharton turned to the cliff again. Billy Bunter stared at him for a moment, with staring eyes, and then set off towards Cliff House as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

Wharton knelt on the verge.

"Marjorie!"

"Yes, Harry?"

"Courage! I have sent Bunter for a rope! Help will come! How far are you from the water?"

"It is touching my feet!"

"Can you climb higher?"

"No. There is nothing to hold on!"

Wharton drew a deep breath. It was a matter of minutes, then—five, perhaps ten—before the girl was swept from the cliff.

"Courage, Marjorie! I'm coming down!"

"No, no!" came back an anxious cry. "No, no! You cannot; you will fall!"

"I shall be all right!"

"You will be killed!"

Wharton did not reply. He knew that it was only too likely that he would be killed. But he did not hesitate for a moment. He threw off his cap and coat to free his movements, and kicked off his boots. Then, carefully selecting the most favourable spot, he swung himself over the cliff.

Some fragments of stone, displaced by his movements, rattled down the cliff, and dropped with a faint sound of splashing into the sea. The faint, hollow sound struck dully and forebodingly on his ears. It might not be many moments before he, too, dropping from the steep cliff, might fall heavily into the curling foam, to grim and hideous death on the sharp rocks.

Yet his courage did not falter.

In the daylight, long before, Wharton had climbed the Shoulder, but it was in an easier spot. This place was new to him, and whether it was possible to climb it he did not even know. But if it was possible he would do it, if not—But he did not waste time thinking of that.

Down, down, down, scraping on the cliff, catching hold of any inequality of the rock, any tuft of vegetation growing in the clefts, sometimes hanging by two fingers, with his weight pressed against the rock, sometimes pausing in a more secure spot to take breath and rest for a few moments.

At length he came to a place, twenty yards down the cliff, where the rock bulged out under him, smooth as a billiard-ball, offering no hold for hand or foot, and with a chill of despair he stopped.

He was close to the end of his journey now, and he was stopped. He could not look downwards without losing his hold, but the wash of the waters was clearly audible to him. Without looking down, he called:

"Marjorie!"

"Harry!"

Her voice came back, near at hand now. Below that bulging that stopped him, that was where she was. It prevented him from going lower, it prevented her from climbing higher. It divided them, while death crept on grimly towards the girl!

"I am near you, Marjorie!"

"Yes, Harry!"

"Hold on! Help is coming! They will not be long! Are you in the water now?"

"Yes. It is coming in fast!"

"You can hold on?"

"Yes." The girl's voice was almost a sob. "I—I will try! But you, Harry—where are you?"

"I am near you! I am coming!"

"God help us both!"

The boy gritted his teeth. He would not be baffled. Slowly, cautiously, he worked his way round the bulging rock. Where there seemed scarce footing for a skylark he found a hold. Lower and lower he went. But it was useless. Below him now was a sharp drop, where a fly could only cling, and with a groan of despair he climbed back to his former position.

But he was not beaten yet.

For a minute he paused to rest his aching limbs, to recover his breath; then he worked his way down, on the other side of the bulging rock. How he did it he did not know, but he found a way. Where there seemed no hold he clung on. Lower and lower, down, down, till a glimpse of a fluttering dress in the starlight caught his eye.

"Marjorie!"

A white face and despairing eyes looked at him in the shadow of the rock.

"Harry! You have come!"

The girl was up to her waist in the water, clinging on mechanically, in danger every moment of being swept away. Only the courage given her by Harry's coming had enabled her to hold on so long. She was exhausted, fainting.

Wharton went no lower. He knelt on the tiny ledge of rock, clinging with one hand, and extended the other down to Marjorie.

The girl clasped it with her cold fingers.

"Marjorie!" Wharton spoke in hurried, gasping tones. "Can you pull yourself up here, with my help? Try!"

"I will try."

There was little for the girl to hold to save the hand extended from above. But death was below—the hungry waves, clamouring for their victim.

Wharton exerted all his strength, and Marjorie was drawn to the tiny ledge. There, she was not safe; the ledge was not ten inches wide, and it extended only three feet in length. But it was a foothold, and so long as they could cling to the face of the cliff, death was kept at bay.

Marjorie's strength was gone. Wharton held on to a jutting point of rock with his left hand, and his right arm was flung round the girl's drooping form. Marjorie, almost fainting, leaned against the cliff.

The tide was creeping on. Some minutes passed in silence; both were too exhausted to speak. The water washed slowly up to the ledge; it was soon over their feet. Marjorie trembled as she realised that it was washing right over the spot where she had been clinging. But for Wharton's helping hand, where would she be now?

Wharton listened intently for some sound from above. Only the night breezes murmuring in the crannies of the cliff came to his listening ears. Would help never come?

He doubted if he could have climbed back in his exhausted state; but with Marjorie to aid it was evidently impossible. He could only wait for help.

Exactly how high the water would rise he did not know. It was washing round their feet; but he thought it must be almost at the full now.

"You have saved my life, Harry—if we get away now."

"We shall get away," said Harry cheerfully. "Help is coming; they may be up there with the rope any minute now. How did you come to be caught in the tide, Marjorie?"

"I—I had forgotten the tide. I was walking home from Ferndale, and I took the short cut by the sea. And when I found I could not go forward, or go back, I was frightened. I remembered what the fishermen had told me, of a man being caught here in the tide and drowned. And then I heard your voice."

"Thank Heaven we came this way!"

A light flashed from the cliff. Harry's heart beat. From above came a hoarse voice shouting through the gloom:

"Ahoy, there!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Rescue.

HARRY WHARTON uttered an exclamation of relief. He knew the voice; it was that of Captain Stump, the wooden-legged old seaman who dwelt in the Anchor Inn, at Pegg. It was help at last.

"Hallo!" shouted back Harry.

"Are you all right—all at auld?"

"Yes."

"And the leddy?"

"Yes."

"Bust my topsails! That's lucky! Look out for the rope!"

"Right-ho!"

A thick, tarry rope came fluttering down against the cliff. Harry Wharton caught the end, and called out to the sailorman.

"I will fasten it round you, Marjorie, and you must hold on as well."

"Yes, Harry."

60.

EVERY
TUESDAY,

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He made a wide loop in the rope so that Marjorie could sit in it as in a swing, leaving a loose end to tie round her so that she could not fall out even if she let go. Then he gave the signal to Captain Stump to haul away. There were three or four stout fishermen on the cliff, and the hauling up was the work only of a few minutes. The girl, clinging to the rope above her with both hands, was pulled into reach, and lifted over on the top of the cliff.

Miss Penelope Primrose was there, with Miss Locke and some of the girls of Cliff House. They received the fainting girl with tender hands, Miss Penelope almost in tears. Marjorie had been missed and searched for, and Billy Bunter had found Cliff House in a state of alarm. To call the fishermen to help from the village was quick work, long enough as it had seemed to Harry and Marjorie, clinging to the cliff on the verge of doom.

"Come, bring her home at once!" exclaimed Miss Locke, as Miss Penelope fondled and wept over the drenched girl. "Come!"

But Marjorie resisted.

"Not till Harry is safe."

"Bust my topsails! He'll be up in a minute, marm," said Captain Stump.

And Marjorie, wet as she was, was allowed to wait to see her rescuer safe. The rope clattered down the cliff again, and Harry Wharton caught it. He clung to it and was dragged up, and stood upon the cliff, wet, shivering, but glowing with satisfaction. He would have gone through much more for Marjorie Hazeldene's sake.

"Safe now, marm."

Miss Locke pressed Harry's hand.

"God bless you, Harry," she said softly. "You have saved Marjorie's life. You are a brave, brave lad."

And Miss Penelope took both Harry's hands, in her turn, and in her joy and relief and enthusiasm kissed him on both cheeks. Then Marjorie was carried off. Miss Penelope insisted upon Wharton accompanying them to Cliff House to dry his clothes before going home, and Wharton willingly enough assented. Billy Bunter showed a great keenness, too. He was hungry, and he had already tasted Miss Penelope's hospitality, and knew what it was like.

Captain Stump and the fishermen accompanied them to the doors of Cliff House, where Miss Penelope, in the fulness of her heart, had them supplied with unlimited ale for their refreshment, to say nothing of more substantial rewards. And Captain Stump, over his tenth glass of ale, confided to his friends that Miss Primrose was—hic—a real—hic—lady.

Wharton was wrapped in blankets in a bed-room, before a roaring fire, while his clothes were dried. Harry was wondering what they were thinking of his absence at Greyfriars; but his anxiety on that point was not sufficient to induce him to walk home in a skirt and blouse. As for Billy Bunter, he was quite content.

Both the juniors had a good supper, and Billy distinguished himself in the gastronomic line, as usual. He confided to Wharton that he was very glad the whole thing had happened, and even expressed a wish that somebody would be caught in the tide under similar circumstances again in the near future.

The juniors took their leave at last, and set out for Greyfriars. As they went down the path, an unmelodious voice came through the shadows, and a wooden-legged figure hove in sight.

"Ahoy, my hearties!"

"It's Captain Stump!"

"When first I sailed in the Mary Jane,
I was a sailor-b-b-b-boy!"

Captain Stump rasped out the words and tune far from tunefully. Wharton took him by the arm.

"It's time you were home," he said.

The sailorman threw his arms lovingly round the junior's neck, nearly dragging him to the ground.

"Ye-e-r-r-right," he mumbled. "I'm a shipwrecked sailorman, and it's time I was in harbour. But where's the harbour? Bust my topsails! How's an honest sailorman to get 'ome when the road is a-rising and a-falling like the tide?"

"He, he, he!" giggled Billy Bunter.

The sailorman turned upon him instantly. In his state of excitement, due to Miss Primrose's unlimited ale, he appeared to take the fat junior for a foe.

"Bust my topsails! Pirates ahoy! Down with the sea-lawyers!"

And he smote the unfortunate Billy on his little fat nose, and the junior rolled in the road.

"Ow! Oh!"

"Come on!" roared Captain Stump, brandishing his fist. "I'm a sailorman, and I can tackle any dozen sea-lawyers, bust my topsails! Come hon!"

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE RIVALS OF GREYFRIARS."

A Grand School Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co.

Harry Wharton took a tight grip on his shoulder.

"Come home," he said.

The sailorman looked at him belligerently for a moment, and then became as quiet as a lamb.

"Bust my topsails, shipmate! I'm a-coming!"

And Harry marched him up to the door of the Anchor Inn, in Pegg village, and there left him; Bunter keeping a respectful distance from him the while. Then the juniors hurried to Greyfriars. There was a grin on the face of Gosling the porter as he admitted them.

"You're to go straight to the 'Ead," he said.

"Very well."

"I saw 'im take out a cane when he give me my borders," said Gosling casually.

Wharton made no reply. Billy Bunter tugged at his sleeve as they crossed the Close.

"I say, Wharton, you'll own up that it was your fault, you know."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That's all right, Billy. Don't be afraid."

Dr. Locke received the juniors grimly. The cane was on the table ready. But he gave them a chance to explain; and his face changed as he heard Harry's explanation.

Wharton dwelt lightly on his part in the affair. He simply said that Miss Hazeldene had been caught in the tide, and that he had stopped to help her.

"I know I can take your word, Wharton," said Dr. Locke quietly. "You are excused. Good-night!"

"Thank you, sir. Good-night!"

And the juniors went to bed. They were tired out, and they slept like tops till the rising-bell went the next morning.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

An Amazing Match.

HARRY WHARTON felt none the worse on the following day for his adventure on the cliffs, but Bunter adopted an air of fatigue that attracted general attention. In the class that morning Mr. Quelch's eye singled him out, and he was asked, in a sarcastic tone, whether he had made a mistake in imagining the form he was sitting on to be a sofa, upon which he was at liberty to take a nap. The Remove dutifully smiled, but Bunter assumed an injured expression.

"Oh, really, sir, I am so tired!"

"Dear me! Have you, by any chance, been doing any work?" asked the Form-master, in the same sarcastic tone.

"I had a lot of climbing on the cliffs to do last night, sir," said Bunter meekly. "Miss Hazeldene, of Cliff House, was caught in the tide, and very nearly drowned."

"Indeed!"

"Fortunately, we rescued her, sir."

"Whom do you mean by we?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Myself and Wharton, sir. Wharton helped—I may say he did a lot."

Harry Wharton smiled. Mr. Quelch looked curiously from one to the other. He did not quite know what to make of it; but he let Bunter alone for the rest of the lesson, and the fat junior enjoyed the laziest morning of the term.

After lessons, inquiries were piled upon Wharton and Bunter. Harry said blankly that he had nothing to say on the subject. He could not very well relate exactly what had occurred without appearing to laud himself, and he rather chose to appear brusque, even to his chums.

"But is there any truth in what Bunter says?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, yes—as much as usual."

"That's about one per cent., I suppose."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"About that," said Harry, laughing. "The fact is, Miss Hazeldene was caught in the tide, and we came along in time to help."

"I fetched help," said Bunter. "I ran like the—like the wind, and nearly broke my shins—and my neck, too—on the beastly rocks. Wharton stayed there. Of course, I don't say Wharton wouldn't have done what he could. Only it happened to be me that did it, that's all. I don't want to boast. It was really what any fellow might have done. Only as it happened I saved the life of Hazeldene's sister, and if Vaseline likes to stand me a feed, I sha'n't say no."

"You won't have a chance, till I know something more certain on the subject," said Hazeldene grimly.

As Wharton had nothing to say on the subject, Bunter's explanations grew further and further from the facts, till wondrous yarns were afloat on the subject; and Billy assumed the manners and airs of a modest hero.

Meanwhile, the time was drawing nigh for the cricket match with the Cliff House team.

Marjorie was little the worse for her experience, dangerous as it had been, and Harry walked over to Cliff House to

inquire for her, and learned that she was taking her usual place in class.

The cricket match remained a fixture, and the Remove cricketers, whatever they felt on the subject, had to make up their minds to go through with it.

Bunter pleaded hard to be included in the team. The hospitality of Cliff House appealed to him more than the cricket. As no one was keen on joining a team that was to play an opera-bouffe match, Bunter was allowed to have his way. A weak Remove team would give the girls a chance, and make it a little less of a walk-over. So when the time came for the visit to Cliff House, Bunter proudly donned his flannels, which were strained almost to bursting point when he was crammed inside them.

The story of the girls' challenge had gone the rounds of Greyfriars, and the fellows all took a deep interest in the matter. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, had announced their intention of seeing the match, if they had to climb on the cliff that overlooked the gardens of the school. And most of the Remove who could not accompany the team declared similar intentions. There was even a possibility that seniors would come along to look on; the general impression being that the match would be a farce from beginning to end. Judging from the knowledge Marjorie & Co. had displayed of the noble game of cricket, Harry Wharton could not help thinking so himself.

The cricketers walked over to Cliff House in the sunny April afternoon.

"It will be fun, anyway," Frank Nugent remarked, as they came in sight of the gates. "We shall have a good snigger all round."

"Well, keep as serious as possible," said Wharton, wrinkling his brows a little. "I shouldn't like the girls to think we were laughing at them."

"Oh, no, of course not. But—Blessed if I know how I shall keep from grinning, though."

"I fear that the grinfulness will be terrific, my worthy chums."

"Here we are!"

They entered at the open gates of Cliff House. The playing-field of the girls was very smooth and green, and besides the painted wooden pavilion, a tent was erected for the accommodation of the Greyfriars cricketers.

Marjorie & Co. received the visiting team with all the gravity due to the occasion. It had been agreed that it was to be a single innings match, as there would otherwise be no time to play it out. How long the girls' innings would last, however, if the Greyfriars bowlers put forth their strength, might have been calculated in seconds.

"Glad to see you, dear boy," said Marjorie, with quite a cricket manner, as she shook hands with the Remove captain. "Ripping weather for the match."

"Yes, isn't it," said Harry, smiling.

"We're going to give you a tussle, you know."

"We'll try to keep our end up," said Wharton gravely, and giving Nugent a severe glance out of the corner of his eye, just in time to avert an explosion.

The boys looked over the Cliff House team with interest. Eleven charming girls, looking very healthy and bright. Marjorie was captain of the team, and Alice and Clara and Wilhelmina were her right-hand men—or, rather, right-hand women. Marjorie tossed for choice of innings, and lost, and the Remove batted first.

"My goodness!" said Clara. "Hada't we better bat first, Marjorie?"

"We've lost the toss, dear."

"What difference does that make?"

"It's all one," said Wharton quickly. "We should be very glad if you would bat first. In—in fact, we'd prefer it."

Marjorie shook her head decidedly.

"Certainly not: we're going to play the game. I hope you are not going to be like many horrid boys, Harry—giving us advantages simply because we are girls. We want to win this game on our form."

"Ha, ha—I mean, of course. We'll bat, then."

"Oh, very good!" said Clara. "But I don't see why we shouldn't bat first, all the same."

So the Remove opened their innings.

Wharton sent in Bunter and Wun Lung for a start. If the girls could bowl at all, those wickets ought to fall, and encourage them a little. Miss Clara was sent on to bowl against Bunter's wicket.

Miss Clara's ideas of bowling seemed to be a little mixed.

ANSWERS

She retired to some distance from the crease, and took a run forward, and let fly with the ball. Unluckily, it quitted her hand at the wrong moment, and clumped with a fearful shock on the shoulder of Wun Lung, who was standing away from the wicket to give her room.

The unfortunate Chinese gave a fearful yell, and hopped in the air.

Miss Clara looked round in surprise.

"Where is the ball?"

A fieldswoman tossed it back to her. Wun Lung rubbed his shoulder. Clara looked at the poor Chinese indignantly.

"I suppose that is one to us?" she said.

Wun Lung stared, as well he might.

"No savvy, missy," he murmured.

"Isn't that one to us?" Miss Clara called out to Wharton.

"Wasn't it leg before wicket, or something?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I—I mean, no. It's all right. Go ahead!"

Miss Clara looked puzzled and a little dissatisfied, but she went ahead. The next ball missed Wun Lung—he took good care that it should—and it bumped along the ground towards Bunter's wicket. There was no danger to the wicket—except from Bunter, but he swiped blindly, and knocked his stumps down.

"How's that?" called out Miss Clara triumphantly.

"Faith, and it's out!" said Micky Desmond, who was umpiring.

"Hurrah!" shouted the pupils of Cliff House, who were gathered round in an interested crowd. "Bravo, Clara!"

"Well bowled, old chap!"

Nugent, who was almost suffocating with suppressed emotion, went in in Bunter's place. Miss Clara bowled against him, and the ball flew into the crowd, and there was a general shrieking and scattering.

The rest of the over resulted in nothing more serious than that, but Miss Clara showed no desire to cross over.

"Why can't I go on bowling from this end?" she asked.

"It's against the rules, dear," said Marjorie.

"My goodness! Does it matter?"

The Removites laughed, and Miss Marjorie assumed a severe expression.

"Of course," she said, with an air of great knowledge, "if you bowled again from this end, you would be off-side!"

This explanation, which sent the juniors almost into convulsions, quite satisfied Miss Clara, and she crossed to the other end. She still retained the ball, and when the umpire delicately hinted that it should be handed to someone else, she looked at him in innocent surprise.

"Why shouldn't I bowl again if I like?"

"Faith, and there's no reason at all, at all," said Micky Desmond, who was too true an Irishman ever to contradict a lady. "Bowl by all means, alanna."

And no one said nay.

So Miss Clara bowled again, and continued to do so for several overs. She was evidently the crack bowler of the Cliff House team, and on several occasions the ball went within a yard or two of the wicket.

It seldom came near enough to the batsmen for them to hit it, but on one or two occasions Nugent knocked it away, and the batsmen ran.

A hard hit sent it to the boundary at last, and the whole field shrieked and rushed in pursuit. Nugent and Wun Lung ran, and ran, and then dropped into a leisurely walk, and promenaded gently between the wickets.

Meanwhile, the girls hunted for the ball.

It was four or five minutes before it turned up, but only five runs had been registered. The batsmen were laughing too much to run.

The ball came in at last.

Whether the fieldswomen deemed it the correct thing to aim at the batsman, or not, we cannot say; but the ball caught Nugent on the chest, and he sat down with a bump on the turf.

"Oh!" he gasped.

The wicketkeeperess picked up the ball and knocked his bails down.

"How's that?" shrieked half a dozen triumphant voices.

"Out!" said Micky Desmond promptly.

Nugent staggered to his feet.

"Here, I say!" he exclaimed.

"Now, play the game!" said Miss Clara, shaking a finger at him. "You're out!"

"Oh, my hat! All right, I'm out!"

And Nugent carried out his bat. Harry Wharton took his place. The bowler was changed now, and Miss Wilhelmina Limburger took the leather. She made a little run, and came very close to Harry's wicket as she delivered the ball against Wun Lung. Her skirt brushed the bails from Harry's wicket, and she gave a little crow of satisfaction. Apparently she did not regard it as being of much importance which wicket she took.

"How was that, umpire?" she called out.

"Out!" said Micky Desmond.

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"What!" roared Wharton.

"Out!"

"You utter duffer——"

"Faith, and it's out, Wharton, darling. Who's umpiring this game?"

"You are, but——"

"Sure, and I'm not going to contradict a lady, at all, at all. You're out!"

Wharton laughed, and carried out his bat. After that, the innings closed very fast. The bowlers had learned that whenever they cried "How's that?" the umpire would respond "Out!" and, of course, they took full advantage of that fact.

The Greyfriars wickets were soon all down for a total of seven runs, and the Cliff House team rejoiced exceedingly.

"Hard cheese, old fellow!" said Marjorie to Wharton, patting him on the shoulder. "Better luck next time, you know."

"Oh, yes!" grinned Wharton.

"And you haven't taken any runs," said Clara sympathetically. "It's very rough. You did not expect to be out for a pigeon's egg."

"A—a—a what?"

"A—a—a hen's egg," said Clara hastily.

"Ha, ha! You mean a duck's egg."

"I don't see much difference," said Miss Clara stiffly.

"No, no, of course there isn't much difference," said Wharton hastily.

But Miss Clara still looked somewhat prim, and she confided to Miss Wilhelmina that, whether she could talk cricket or not, she could play it better than some boys, judging by results, and Miss Wilhelmina agreed that "tat was so."

And now came the time for the Cliff House innings.

The Greyfriars innings had been finished so quickly that Miss Hazeldene rather regretted it was a single-innings match. However, she did not propose an alteration. After all, if the juniors were beaten, they were beaten, and that was the main point. And Cliff House wanted only seven runs to tie, eight to win, and considering their success, so far, victory seemed certain.

"If the batting is anything like the bowling, it will be ripping!" Bob Cherry murmured.

"The rippingfulness will be terrific!"

"You can bowl, Nugent."

Nugent took the ball doubtfully. However, he went to the crease. Marjorie and Clara were opening the innings for Cliff House, and Clara received the first over.

She swiped at the ball as if she were attempting to describe a circle with the bat, but the ground got in the way, and the willow jarred and dropped from her hands. The ball whipped the middle stump out of the ground.

"How's that?" sang out Nugent.

"Not out!"

"Eh—what?"

"Not out!" said Micky Desmond obstinately. "A lady's never out first ball of the over."

"Oh, chuck that ball over here!"

Nugent bowled again, with the same result; but Miss Clara showed no disposition to leave the wicket. She set up the stump, and put the bails straight again, and took middle. The Greyfriars juniors looked at her dazedly.

"Well, that's out, I suppose?" said Nugent; and even Micky Desmond's Irish politeness was at a loss. But Miss Clara was unmoved.

"Of course not!" she said indignantly. "I wasn't looking."

"But——"

"Please bowl again!" said Clara, in a tone that decided the matter.

Nugent bowled again. Marvellous to relate, Miss Clara struck the ball with the bat, and it went straight into the hands of Wun Lung. The Chinese grinned as he held up the captured ball.

"How's that?"

"Faith, and I'm afraid it's out."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Clara. "I should have taken several runs if that person had not stopped the ball. I don't know whether you call this cricket. I regard it as persecution, so there!"

Harry Wharton gasped for breath, and made a sign to the fieldsmen not to stop any more balls. After that the batting went on more briskly. Miss Clara and Miss Marjorie took runs, and the fieldsmen sauntered up in a leisurely manner with the ball after they had taken them.

At last Bob Cherry, by sheer force of habit, sent the ball into the sticks from the long field, and Marjorie was out.

She took her defeat smilingly enough.

Miss Wilhelmina joined Clara at the wickets, and between them they did the rest of the batting for that remarkable innings.

At seven runs the crowd of Cliff House pupils set up a

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great cheer. It was echoed by a crowd of Greyfriars fellows, who were looking over the wall and admiring that wonderful cricket match. The Cliff House side wanted only one run to win, and they had nine wickets to fall. It looked like a certainty. As a matter of fact, Wharton and Nugent could have taken every wicket without another run being scored, if they had liked; but that would probably not have finished the match, for Miss Clara at least was by no means inclined to admit that she was out when her wicket was down. And as the juniors knew no other way of getting a batsman out, they would have found it a very hard matter indeed to win that match. But they were contented to lose it. Not that they actually threw it away. That would not have been sportmanlike. But they allowed the Cliff House team to play their own kind of cricket, and cheerfully assented to every novelty in the way of rules; and, upon the whole, they enjoyed the game. A philosopher of old declared that there was nothing new under the sun, but he had not had an opportunity of seeing cricket as played by Marjorie & Co. That was new.

The winning run was taken by Miss Clara, who was out several times, according to old-fashioned rules, but still

batting away merrily. And all Cliff House set up a shout of victory, and even the Removites, like the Tuscans of old, could scarce forbear a cheer.

And after the match boy and girl cricketers fraternised in a cheerful tea on the lawn, presided over by Miss Penelope Primrose, and the Greyfriars fellows had a very pleasant time indeed. Billy Bunter disposed of so much cake that he moved in incessant danger of his waistcoat buttons flying off at every motion. And when the time came to say good-bye, the Cliff House cricketers saw their visitors off as far as the corner of the road, and they parted with much cordiality.

"I hope we shall play some more matches, and give you your revenge, you know," said Marjorie. "I like cricket ever so much better than tennis, and it is so gratifying to win the match on our form."

And it was not until the Cliff House girls were quite out of hearing that sundry mysterious cachinnations were allowed to escape the Greyfriars cricketers.

THE END.

(Another Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday entitled "The Rivals of Greyfriars." 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 IOU 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, and is soon in action. Sligo is hit, and gives Sloggett an important message for Tom Howard before he dies. Sir Ponsonby Smithers, with the 25th Hussars and the Ploughshires, is ordered to join the commander of the field force, and advances towards Nawagai. On the way the impetuous general leaves the road to pursue a tribesman, but is attacked by a band of them and wounded. Howard and Sloggett immediately spring to his rescue. (Now go on with the story.)

The Truth Comes Out.

The tribesmen came on warily. There were seven of them all told, but down the mountain-side the rolling stones told them they would soon be joined by others, and if anything was to be done, it would have to be done without delay.

Tom succeeded in getting the general clear of his fallen horse, but found to his dismay that his legs were so badly crushed he was unable to stand, and the position was very critical. Things were in truth very desperate, and the tribesmen were mustering for a rush when the general called out:

"If you can stand your ground for one minute we shall be saved!"

Tom ransacked his brain in vain for any help that was likely to come as far as he could see, but the general, who could speak nearly thirty native dialects with the same ease that you and I can speak our mother tongue, had heard a voice calling from the hill above, and knew that the chief was summoning his followers in a voice that would admit of no disobedience. There was evidently better game in some other place, and after a very trying pause, during which the natives came warily on, their curved swords glittering in the sunlight, on a sudden they turned and fled as fast as their limbs could carry them up the gorge and away. Tom could hardly believe his senses, and caught hold of Sloggett, who was dashing off in pursuit.

"Now, my lads," said the general, "if you can manage to lift me and carry me on to the road, I shall be very thankful. They will certainly come back."

They lifted him very gently, and found that he could not stand; and then, the enemy having vanished as suddenly as they came, Bill Sloggett suggested that he should give Sir Ponsonby Smithers a back. It was not a very dignified spectacle, but it was the only thing to be done, and hoisting the general on to Bill's sturdy shoulders, the corporal trotted away under his load to the track once more, Tom coming a pace or two behind, looking over his shoulder as he followed, leading the mounts. They were in hopes that they would intercept the rearguard, but the Ploughshires had already got by. The general's charger whinnied, and looked reproachfully at him, and endeavoured to follow on three legs; but it had broken one of its fetlocks, and there was nothing for it but to shoot the poor beast, which Tom accordingly did, at the general's request.

It was difficult work getting the two horses that remained round the boulder; but this was eventually done, and mounting Sir Ponsonby, who was now in great pain, they hastened along the road to Nawagai.

Dick, whose company was the rearmost, called a halt when he heard the hoofs on the rocky path behind him, and Sir Ponsonby was passed through the lines, in order that he might reach the doctor as soon as possible.

Sloggett had been about to mount, when Leonard Dashwood touched his elbow.

"Fall back a pace or two, my man; I want to have a word with you," said Dashwood.

Bill did as he was bid, and the two paced forward side by side, with nothing between them and pursuit but a corporal and half a dozen men, who were quite out of earshot.

Leonard Dashwood proffered his strange companion a cigarette. Bill took it, examined it meditatively, and smoked in silence, wondering when Mr. Dashwood was going to begin.

"When I joined your regiment," said Leonard Dashwood suddenly, "you were very pally with Alf Sligo. You remember the time I mean—when we were under canvas at Aldershot?"

"I remember the time you mean," said Bill, lifting his ace-of-clubs nose in the air, and looking straight before him under the peak of his helmet—"time of the saddle cutting, sir."

Leonard darted a swift glance at him.

"Yes, the time of the saddle cutting."

"Well, sir?"

"I said you were rather pally with Alf Sligo. You were pretty good friends, if I remember aright."

"Don't know about bein' good friends. 'E sort o' stuck on to me 'cause I was a 'ard 'itter, an' he was a coward."

"That saddle cutting was a curious business," said Leonard, "and it was strange we never found out who did it."

"I know who did it," said Bill Sloggett sharply.

"What do you mean?"

"The man you was talking about did it. He was paid to do it."

Dashwood changed colour and turned his face away, under the pretence of knocking the ash away from his cigarette.

"If you knew anything about it, it was your duty to inform the colonel," he said, after they had taken another half dozen strides in silence.

"My father was in the 'orse-gunners, an' always said to me: 'If ever you go into the Service, Bill, you never go against an officer.'"

Leonard Dashwood looked at him sharply, drawing himself slightly up.

"I don't know whether you intend to be insolent, or whether it's only your ignorance. I said it was your duty to inform your colonel if you knew the delinquent."

Bill smiled.

"You see, there was two of 'em, sir. There was Alf Sligo what done it, and there was you that paid 'im to do it."

And as he spoke, Bill instinctively brought his hands up, in case he might want them. It was a good thing the rear-guard was a good way behind, or they must have thought many things.

"You insolent scoundrel!" said Leonard Dashwood, his face suddenly becoming pinched and thin. "I shall report you to Colonel Greville at the next halt."

"Will yer?" laughed the corporal, his eyes flashing. "That reminds me, I 'ave somethin' ter report to 'Oward—somethin' I 'ad forgot in all the 'urry of this work—something Alf Sligo said to me when he was dyin'."

The man at his side made a convulsive start towards the corporal, as though he would have demanded what it was; but the next moment he recovered himself, and they went on, still side by side, Leonard feeling as though he had left his heart in the valley behind them. His blood seemed to turn to water, and his knees wanted to knock together; but he pulled himself together with a mighty effort, and spat out the end of his cigarette.

Bill Sloggett, too, was not without a certain amount of internal trepidation. After all, Dashwood was an officer, and he was only a humble corporal; but Bill, in spite of the faults of his early training, or, rather, the want of it, was full of the good old British sentiment of fair play, and he felt a-wondering whether he might not improve that opportunity, which was never likely to occur again, and extract some information from Leonard Dashwood that would be useful to his fellow soldier.

"If you had fifty pounds in your pocket, corporal," said Dashwood suddenly, "what would you do with it?"

"What's the good of fairy tales?" said Sloggett suddenly. "None of my family ever had fifty pounds, and I ain't likely to break the record."

"Don't you make so sure of that. Have another cigarette?"

"No, I don't want no more cigarettes." And the snub nose tilted still further into the air.

"You are an impudent young blackguard; but you seem to have plenty of commonsense," said Dashwood, with a strange laugh. "If you will answer me a question, I will give you a hundred pounds. Now tell me what Sligo's message to your sergeant was."

"And you will give me an I O U, I suppose, same as you gave Sligo? Not 'alf—not 'alf!"

Dashwood, paralysed by the violence of his emotions,

came to a stand on the track, but the corporal kept on, and, turning his head over his shoulder, delivered a last shot.

"The only Dashwood that's got to 'ear Sligo's dying words is Sir John Dashwood. Sligo didn't leave you nothing in 'is will!"

Dashwood recovered himself and strode after the imperturbable Sloggett, but the tramp of the rearguard behind him brought him to his senses, and, letting his arm fall with something like a groan, he swung mechanically down the mountain path, baffled at every turn.

"There's nothing for it now but to go sick and clear out of it all," he muttered to himself.

He was fated to do both before many hours had passed, but in a manner that was not of his own seeking.

A mile further on the headquarter camp showed itself in the sun glare. The outlying picket of the Queens' gave the general a cheer as he rode by, supported on his horse by Colonel Greville. His right leg had been badly crushed and his knee severely injured, and his fine soldierly face was drawn with pain as he went to report the stirring happenings of the last two days to Sir Bindon. They lifted him down and laid him on a charpoy, and Colonel Greville was placed in temporary command of Sir Ponsonby's brigade, to the great joy of the 25th Hussars, who would like to have chaired the colonel round the camp.

It had been feared at Nawagai that the little force had been cut off. As it was, matters were sufficiently serious, and Sir Bindon Blood, who had counted on the support of the 2nd Brigade, now found himself in an isolated position, of no little difficulty and danger, and General Ellis still several days' march off.

When the horses were picketed, Bill Sloggett betook himself to the shelter of an improvised tent, leaned his back against it, and began to think, which was rather an arduous duty to the corporal.

Tom Howard had been summoned with Mr. Blennerhassett and the Hon. Algy to give a detailed account of their fight in the Cave of the Winds, and Sloggett had a good deal to tell the sergeant when he should be free.

He occupied himself in the meantime by going over what Sligo had said to him as he lay dying, and what had happened during his strange conversation with Leonard Dashwood on his way down the mountain.

The sun was hot and the shadow of the tent did not amount to much all told, and as Bill shifted his position his hand encountered something protruding at the bottom of the tent which, upon investigation, proved to be nothing less than a bottle of champagne.

It had evidently been purloined from the officers' mess by some nefarious waiter, who had placed it there for his own consumption, and Bill looked long and lovingly at it. He was very thirsty and very tired, and the temptation was too great for him. Glancing round, he drew his jack-knife, knocked off the neck of the bottle, and took a deep draught.

It was the first time in his life that he had tasted champagne, and, to say the truth, he did not think much of it—neither did he understand the potency and the exhilarating effect of the wine until the bottom of the bottle had been tilted skyward and the last mouthful had disappeared down Bill's capacious throat.

He had gone on short rations, he had worked very hard, he was worn and weary; and when the call for stables sounded and he rose to his feet, his legs gave way beneath him, and he very promptly sat down again.

After one or two efforts, he again rose, staggered over to his lines, stumbled over a picket-rope under the very nose of Sergeant Clavering, was hauled up by that worthy, and upon examination was declared to be drunk.

It is a grave military offence at all times, but of double gravity when the delinquent happens to be in the presence of the enemy, and poor Sloggett's transmission from the lines to the guard-tent, and from the guard-tent to a court-martial was speedy.

At a camp table in front of the orderly tent sat the three members that constituted the regimental court-martial.

The president was Captain Montgomery, who found a very appropriate seat on a champagne-box. Captain Vincent and Lieutenant Blennerhassett were the other two members, while the adjutant of the 25th was present in the capacity of prosecutor, prepared, according to the King's regulations, to prove every essential part of his case by sworn evidence.

Bill Sloggett, in charge of two privates, stood a little way off, his face very sullen; and Tom, who was in charge, had given the word "Escort of the prisoner, attention!" as the three members took their seats.

Again Tom's voice was heard:

"Escort of the prisoner, attention! Quick march! Halt! Front turn! Prisoner, two paces to your front! March! Stand at ease!"

This being done the members of the court-martial were sworn on the Bible that each "should well and truly, and without partiality, fear, favour, or affection, try the prisoner according to the evidence brought before him," the oath being administered to the president by the senior member.

The regimental order convening the court was then read by the adjutant, who asked the accused if he had any objection, personal or otherwise, to any of the members, to which poor Bill replied in the negative, and then gave his name and regimental number, and the charge-sheet was read over by Captain Montgomery.

It was the usual old formula:

"The prisoner, 3821, Corporal William Sloggett, the Queen's 25th Hussars, a soldier of the regular force, is charged with being an habitual drunkard, in that he, at the camp at Nawagai, on the 20th day of September, 1897, did appear at stables in a helpless condition, which necessitated his immediate conveyance to the guard-tent."

Poor Bill having pleaded guilty—as indeed he had no alternative but to do—the first witness was called, and Sergeant Clavering stepped briskly forward and saluted. His evidence was brief and to the point, his sympathies being evidently with the prisoner.

The senior corporal, who had been on duty at the guard-tent, then described the condition in which Sloggett was handed over to his charge, which was practically all the evidence that was forthcoming.

Sloggett's eyes fell when the defaulter's sheet was next produced, for the entries were numerous, and the fact of his having been drunk within the previous twelve months constituted him an habitual drunkard from a military point of view.

The prisoner was now asked if he had anything to say in his own defence, or in mitigation of his sentence. Poor Bill, who had been looking the picture of misery, came to attention.

To everybody's surprise, Sloggett, who had not a leg to stand on, was most unexpectedly eloquent. All the three members of the court-martial and all the witnesses present had seen Bill acquitting himself nobly under very different circumstances, and every eye brightened with the hope that, after all, he might be able to advance some excuse.

That he would be acquitted on the slenderest pretext was a foregone conclusion, but no one was prepared for Bill's peroration when he at last found his voice.

"I was drunk at stables, sir," he said; "'tain't no good denying it. But thinkin' is very 'ard work for me, and when I felt the butt-end of that bottle stickin' in the tent brailin'. I thought it might 'elp me out. I 'ad got a thirst on me, sir, that I would not 'ave sold for 'alf-a-crown; an' I 'ad been very much upset in the march down—very much upset—by somethin' Mr. Dashwood, of the Ploughshires, said to me."

And into Tom's face, as Sloggett paused for breath, there came a dogged, curious look of determination and scorn.

Captain Montgomery, who had been examining the end of his quill, looked at the adjutant and telegraphed a little message to him with a lift of his eyebrows, and the adjutant nodded.

"What do you mean, my man?" said Montgomery kindly. "Had Mr. Dashwood been reprimanding you?"

"No, sir, it's not what you might call reprimandin' me. It was bribery and corruption, and if 'e was 'ere now I would say it to 'is face."

Sergeant Howard drew in his breath sharply, and Jim Clavering looked at him.

"Hallo, Tom, boy! This is something to do with you!" said his brother sergeant. "Let him alone; he is determined to have his say!"

The president frowned. Although he disliked his subaltern very heartily, he did not understand the turn things were taking, and was doubtful in his own mind whether it was wise to let this rough diamond speak out openly before so many listeners; but Sloggett had the floor, and went on quickly.

"There was one of our chaps killed away back in the valley, a private of my troop, and 'e said somethin' to me afore 'e died, and Mr. Dashwood, 'e offered me a 'undred pounds, 'e did, if I would tell him what it was."

Bill came to a sudden stop, and silence fell upon the circle round the tent-door.

Tom made a hasty movement, as though he intended to speak; but Jim Clavering took him by the arm, and pulled him back, at the same time he stepped up to the adjutant and whispered in his ear:

"Beg pardon, sir, but if you would have Mr. Dashwood here, don't you think we might get to the bottom of a good many things? There was the saddle-cutting, and that I O U."

The adjutant looked at him keenly, but he knew the sergeant to be a very sound man, and a very good soldier, and, leaning over the table, he whispered to the president of the court-martial.

All the members bent their heads together in a bunch, and there was a consultation, which lasted two or three minutes.

"Sergeant Howard," said Captain Montgomery—he had made a strange choice of his messenger, but that was matter of accident—"just step over to Mr. Dashwood, of the Ploughshires. Give him my compliments, and say I shall be very much obliged if he would attend here. What? Ah, yes, I remember. Perhaps you would rather not go?"

"No, sir, I would rather not," said Tom, in a voice that made everybody look at him, and brought a not unnatural gleam of anger into the president's eye.

The adjutant saw it, and bent down again.

"Don't take any notice, Montgomery," he said. "You know there is a mystery about these two men. The sergeant and Dashwood are cousins."

"Yes, I remember," said Montgomery. "Well, you send another man!"

And the adjutant, motioning to Clavering, he went off with his long cavalry stride, and there was a pause in the proceedings.

In a few minutes Clavering came back, and with him Leonard Dashwood, his face dark as a thunder-cloud as he approached the circle.

Again the adjutant whispered to Montgomery.

"Yes, yes," said the president, "clear the court of all save the prisoner and Sergeants Clavering and—er—and—er—Howard."

The escort fell back half a dozen paces, and the rest of the onlookers fell back out of earshot, one of their number, at the adjutant's order, going in search of Colonel Greville.

"Now, prisoner, perhaps you will repeat what you have been saying?"

"I said, sir, that on the way down from the 'ills yonder, Lieutenant Dashwood offered me a 'undred pounds to tell 'im Alf Sligo's dying message to Sergeant 'oward, 'ere—I mean to Lieutenant Dashwood's cousin, Sir John Dashwood, Baronet. That's what I said, sir, and Lieutenant Dashwood can't deny it!"

"It's a thundering lie!" shouted Leonard, springing forward, with his hands clenched and his face flaming.

Bill Sloggett brought his hands up in the most approved fashion of the prize-ring; but young Blennerhassett had stretched out one of his long arms, and pulled Dashwood back.

"You will be good enough to remember Mr. Dashwood," said Montgomery severely, "that you are in the presence of a court-martial. I should be sorry to have to place you under arrest!"

"I am not so sure that you would!" thought Jim Clavering, to himself. And his opinion was shared by every man present.

His burst of anger thus summarily checked, Leonard Dashwood glared at the prisoner, unconscious that every eye was riveted on him.

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