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A Splendid,
Long, Complete Tale
of the Chums of
Greyfriars' Cricket Match.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Eleven.

"Is the list up yet?"

"Not yet."

Bulstrode grunted.

"Just like Wharton to keep us waiting!" And he thrust his hands discontentedly into his pockets and waited.

He was not the only one that was anxious—there were a score at least of the Greyfriars Remove waiting before the notice-board, or lounging about the hall.

Anybody could have seen that an important announcement was expected. Ever since the Lower Fourth had come out of the class-room some of the boys had been waiting there, with serious and anxious countenances.

There were a good many notices on the board, but none that possessed any interest for the Greyfriars Remove. They were waiting for their Form captain, Harry Wharton,

to put up the list of players for the St. Jim's cricket-match, to be played the following day, and just then no other matter had any interest for them. Wharton and the cricket committee were still in consultation, and the result of their deliberations was not yet certain.

Some of the fellows, of course—such as Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Micky Desmond—were certain of getting their caps. But all the places were not definitely filled so early in the season, the team was subject to changes for the better—and of course every cricketer who was outside the eleven imagined that it would be improved if he were put inside it.

The St. Jim's match, too, was the biggest of the Greyfriars Juniors' cricket-matches. They had to face a team that should have been above their strength, for it was recruited from the Shell of St. Jim's, as well as the Fourth Form; while Harry Wharton's eleven was wholly taken from the Remove at Greyfriars. But the Greyfriars Remove were a

hard-playing Form. They had defeated their own Upper Fourth, and would willingly have taken on the Fifth, if the dignity of the Fifth had allowed such a contest. Wharton had every hope of going to St. Jim's with a victorious eleven, but the matter required great care. The cricket committee were giving it their undivided attention. Personal considerations could not be allowed to weigh. Any player who was off his form was expected to be willing to make way for a better—but whether he was willing or not, he would have to go.

And so hopes were high among the fellows who had had no chance so far in the eleven. When the committee had finished, Wharton was to post up the list, and every chap waiting there was hoping to see his own name.

There was another reason, too, why some of the fellows wanted to be included in the eleven. Instead of the usual half-holiday that Saturday, there was a whole holiday for the players in the St. Jim's match. The journey to St. Jim's was a long one, even by express, and the members of the team were excused morning lessons. A whole holiday, and a run into Sussex, naturally formed a great attraction for all the Remove.

The fellows loitered about anxiously. Some of them looked careless, but the way they started when anybody came along, thinking it might be Wharton with the cricket-list, showed that their carelessness was assumed.

Bulstrode wore a heavy frown. He had little expectation of seeing his name up. He had been in the eleven before, but he had allowed his form to deteriorate, and he could not reasonably expect to be played under the circumstances. But of late he had been "bucking up"—more with the idea of showing the Remove what he could do, than with a hope of getting into the eleven.

"Of course it all goes by favouritism," he confided to his chum Skinner. "Wharton always puts in the fellows belonging to his own study."

"Faith, and they're the best cricketers in the Form intirely!" broke in Micky Desmond.

"Oh, rats! I would undertake to bat, or bowl, or field with any of them! But you'll see that Wharton won't put my name down!"

"Faith, and it's such an ill-tempered baste ye are!" said Micky. "Even if ye can play cricket, ye'd be always makin' trouble!"

"What-ho!" said Hazeldene. "You see, Bulstrode, your temper can't be relied on. But I'll tell you what—I saw Wharton looking at you this morning when you were batting against Stott, and he looked pleased."

Bulstrode sniffed.

"I don't care whether he's pleased! I know jolly well he won't put me in! I was Form-captain before he came, and he's too jolly jealous of me to give me a chance—I know that! This team is run by favouritism! He puts in the chaps in his own study—Cherry, Nugent, and the nigger. He'll put you in, Hazeldene——"

"I hope he will."

"Not because you can play cricket, though—you can't—but because of your sister Marjorie! That's why he put you in the footer eleven!"

"I believe I can keep goal," said Hazeldene, his temper rising, though he did not want to quarrel with the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode was a hard-hitter, and besides Wharton and Mark Linley nobody in the Remove liked the idea of tackling him.

"You wouldn't have had a chance to keep goal, only——" "Faith, and it's a grumblin' baste ye are, Bulstrode! Hallo, here's Wharton!"

There was a general movement as Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, came along, and stopped before the notice-board with a paper in his hand.

It was the cricket-list at last!

The fellows crowded round eagerly. Bulstrode, with an affectation of indifference he was far from feeling, held back.

"Shove it up, Wharton!"

"Let's see it!"

"Right!" Harry Wharton pinned up the notice. "I'm sorry some of you chaps are left out, but of course I couldn't take a side of forty to St. Jim's! I believe we've got the best material in the team, and I think we've got a good chance of licking Tom Merry's eleven—and, after all, that's what we all want. I know that you'll believe I've done my best, anyway, and not allowed personal feelings to count!"

"Oh, of course!" sneered Bulstrode.

Wharton glanced at him, and smiled slightly, but he did not reply. Having pinned up the paper, he walked away, and there was a rush to read it.

"Read it out, Micky!" said Skinner, who couldn't get near the board.

"Faith, and it's all right—me own name's there!"

"Read it out!"

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"RIVAL SCOUTS."

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"Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh——" began Micky.

Bulstrode interrupted him with a scornful laugh.

"All No. 1 Study!" he said. "What did I say?"

"There's a surprise for ye further on, Bulstrode, darling!"

"Oh, get on!"

"Desmond—that's me—Morgan, Ogilvy, Hazeldene——"

"Of course!" sneered Bulstrode. "Didn't I say Hazeldene would be in? That's on account of his sister Marjorie!"

"It's a lie!" broke out Hazeldene fiercely. "You know Wharton wouldn't——"

"Eh, what's that?" said Bulstrode, turning on him. "I'll——"

"Shut up!" said Skinner. "Let's hear the rest!"

"Next man's Skinner——"

"Hurrah!" said Skinner.

"Then Mark Linley——"

"Linley!" Bulstrode almost roared out the name. "That rat from a cotton-mill—that mill-hand who sneaked into Greyfriars on a scholarship? Fancy putting him into a team to play a school like St. Jim's! Pah, it makes me sick! Wharton has got up this list specially as a fling at the Form! I vote that we all stand up against it, and elect a new cricket committee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you Irish image?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You haven't heard the eleventh name yet, darling!"

"What is it—the Chinese, I suppose? It would be like Wharton to play Wun Lung in a cricket eleven!"

"Faith, it isn't—it's ye're own!"

"What!"

"There's the name—Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode's face was a study.

He pushed the other fellows aside and stared at the list himself. There it was, plain enough—the last name on the list was his own. Wharton had put him into the eleven.

Disappointed as most of the fellows were at finding their own names missing, the expression on Bulstrode's face made a roar of laughter go up.

"Faith, and I think we'll protest in a body, and make a stand agin them!" said Micky Desmond. "Is it ready ye are to take the lead, Bulstrode?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All favouritism!" grinned Hazeldene. "Bulstrode's quite right! We'll ask Wharton to scratch the last name off, and go on strike if he doesn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bulstrode. "Of course, I——"

"Ha, ha, ha! He thinks the list is all right now!"

"Well, if Wharton's trying to do the fair thing, I think we ought to back him up——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode glared at the Removites, but it was of no use attempting to check that torrent of laughter. After what the Remove bully had been saying, his change of front was absurd enough, and the juniors could not help laughing. Bulstrode put his hands in his pockets and walked away, leaving the Remove still roaring.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Joins the Party.

THAT evening the Remove eleven were making their little preparations for the journey to St. Jim's. They were to leave the school before morning lessons, in order to arrive early on the St. Jim's ground. The eleven were looking forward to the visit and the match, and great was the envy of the fellows who couldn't go. Bulstrode was in an unusually good temper, and was heard to reply

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civily every time he was addressed—a most unusual circumstance. Two or three disappointed cricketers made attempts to persuade Wharton to make a slight alteration in the list, but they found their Form-captain as hard as iron.

Billy Bunter was the most troublesome. As he was in Wharton's own study, he seemed to consider that he had a natural right to go into the eleven. He had always considered that, but he had never had his claims admitted. Just now he was more than ever importunate. He could play cricket as easily as he could navigate an aeroplane, but he was far from looking at his cricket as other fellows looked at it. Besides, as he explained to Wharton, this was a special occasion.

The door of the committee-room had been locked against Bunter, but after the notice was on the board the fat junior hunted Wharton down and expostulated. Harry Wharton had plenty to see to, but Bunter was not to be denied.

"I say, you fellows!" he exclaimed, bursting into No. 1 Study, where the Famous Four were busily discussing the morrow's journey. "I say—"

Bob Cherry took Bunter by the shoulders and slewed him round. Then he dug his knuckles into the back of the junior's fat neck and marched him to the door. This proceeding had to be submitted to by Bunter, because he was helpless in Bob's muscular grip, but he wriggled wildly.

"Oh, really, Cherry— I say, you fellows—"

Bob marched him through the door and solemnly gave him a lift with his boot, which started him along the passage.

"Now, you buzz off!" said Bob. "There's no time for you to talk—it's bedtime in about four hours, so we should have to interrupt you, anyway! Don't start—get off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob went into the study again, and slammed the door. It opened again in a few seconds, and Billy Bunter blinked in through his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Get out!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ye-es, but I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry stooped for the poker. Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"What is it, Bunter? You can't jaw now!"

"It's about the cricket-team," said Bunter, blinking indignantly at Bob. "I want to point out to you once more that if I'm left out—"

Bob Cherry groaned.

"My hat! Is he going to start that again?"

"I'm thinking of the honour of the school," said Bunter loftily. "I'm not the chap to brag, but you've all seen me play cricket—"

"We have!" grinned Nugent. "It was a sight for gods and men—and little fishes!"

"The sightfulness was terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The batfulness of the esteemed Bunter was only equalled by his bowlfulness, and was like nothing else ever seen on the earthful globe."

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"Don't begin on that topic again, Billy," said Harry Wharton, raising his finger warningly. "It's no use talking sense to you, and I've given it up. If you say the word 'cricket' again, you go out of this study on your neck!"

"I suppose it's no good trying to combat jealousy," said Bunter. "If you're determined to leave me out, I don't care."

"Then shut up, if you don't care."

"What I was thinking is, if you leave me out of the eleven, you ought, at least, to take me to St. Jim's with you," said Bunter. "I don't think you ought to go back on a fellow in your study. You will need a fellow to come along to see to things, and you want an extra chap outside the team. I ought to be there. You must feel that."

"You wouldn't be any use."

"The uselessness of the esteemed Bunter would be terrific."

"I don't see it. Anyway, I want to go. There was that chap Wynn, who was over here from St. Jim's some time back. I struck up a friendship with him, and he said he'd be glad to see me at St. Jim's. I—"

"It's only members of the team who have leave in the morning," said Wharton. "You can follow on in the afternoon if you like."

"I don't want to make such a long journey alone; besides, there's a difficulty about the fare. As a matter of fact, I haven't any money. I've been expecting a remittance from the Patriotic Home Work Association, for some postcards I've been colouring for them, but somehow it hasn't come yet. I—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Is the pleasure of Bunter's company worth the railway fare, chaps?" he asked.

"Not much."

"No fear!"

"The nofulness is terrific."

"Oh, really, you fellows! You see, Wharton, you could

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ask leave of Mr. Quelch, and he would be certain to give it. You could say you were taking me as a reserve—Owl! Let my ear alone, you utter beast!"

"Then don't you recommend me to tell Mr. Quelch lies, you young rotter! I've a jolly good mind to kick you out of the study!" said Wharton wrathfully.

"Oh, really, you could take me as a reserve if you liked! Look here, you ought to get permission for me to come. I expect it of you."

"Well, I'll ask Quelch," said Wharton impatiently. "Now buzz off!"

"That's all right! I say, I've been disappointed about a postal order. Could you lend me half-a-crown till I—Owl!"

Bob Cherry's boot was making active play upon the fat limbs of the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter dodged and twisted, and escaped from the study, and Bob slammed the door after him. This time Bunter did not return.

"Blessed if I know why we stand that young rotter!" growled Bob Cherry. "I shall suffocate him some day—I feel it!"

"Now, about what we were discussing," said Wharton. "It would be ripping if Marjorie Hazeldene could come over to St. Jim's, and I don't see why not. Miss Penelope Primrose gave permission for her to see the St. Jim's match when I spoke about it, but I forgot to mention that it was a whole day match away—I mean I made it a point to forget. I thought it more judicious to break that gently to her, as Marjorie will have to miss morning lessons at Cliff House. My idea is to send Hazeldene over to Cliff House on his bike, to arrange the matter. There can't be any objection to Marjorie going with her brother, can there? And we shall all look after her. If Clara could come, too, it would be ripping. There will be a girl at St. Jim's, too, whom Marjorie would like to see—that chap D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel. He told me in his letter that he was going to make it a point to play in the match because his cousin, Ethel, was coming to watch it. It would be a jolly holiday for Marjorie, and if Hazeldene puts it nicely to Miss Primrose, it ought to come off all right."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily. "Let's go and find Vaseline, and put it to him now."

And the Famous Four, who had no preparation to do that evening, immediately went to look for Hazeldene. They found him in the junior common-room, talking to Bulstrode, who was extraordinarily amiable. Wharton drew him aside, and explained. Hazeldene was delighted with the idea.

"Jolly good," he said. "I'll go over to Cliff House with pleasure. Miss Primrose is pretty certain to give permission."

And a few minutes later Hazeldene was on his bicycle, pedalling away on the road to Cliff House School.

The chums of the Remove waited anxiously enough for his return.

Since the Girls' School had opened at Cliff House, Harry Wharton & Co. had seen more of their girl chum, Marjorie, and they had found Marjorie and her friends very pleasant neighbours. The fact that Marjorie had a brother at Greyfriars made communication easier. Without being at all conceited, the Greyfriars cricketers were by no means averse to letting their girl friends see them playing cricket with a team like the St. Jim's juniors. It would be a tough match, and would show them off to the best advantage. Marjorie's company, too, would make the whole affair more of a holiday, and it would be a pleasant excursion for the girl herself. So they were anxious to hear the ambassador's report.

While Hazeldene was gone, Harry Wharton looked into Mark Linley's study. The lad from Lancashire was at work, and had not yet seen the notice on the board. He was alone in the room, and he looked up with a pleasant smile as Wharton came in.

"News for you," said Harry, with a smile.

"About the cricket?"

"Yes; the committee have decided to play you."

A troubled look came over the Lancashire lad's face. Wharton looked at him in astonishment. Any other fellow in the Remove Form would have jumped with delight at a similar announcement.

"You want to play?" said Harry quickly.

"Yes, of course; but—"

"Besides, we want you," said Harry. "As a matter of fact, I can't spare you, whether you want to play or not. You are one of the best batsmen in the Form. You've got to come."

Linley laughed.

"Oh, I shall be glad to come. But—"

"But what?" said Harry, puzzled. "Don't you feel fit?"

"Fit as a fiddle. I was thinking of the railway fare,"

said Linley awkwardly. He coloured, and then went on quietly. "I really oughtn't to have joined the Form cricket club, as I'm poor, and the rest of the fellows have plenty of tin; but you were so decent about it—and I like to play, too. Only—"

"That's all right, my son," said Wharton, laughing. "I shouldn't have let you remain outside the club, I assure you, if I had had to yank you in on your neck. About the fare to St. Jim's, that is pretty steep, I know; but all fares are paid on this occasion out of the funds of the club. It's a bit unusual to have a match with a school so far off, but it's the match of the season to Greyfriars Juniors. I wouldn't miss it to play in a Sixth Form match."

Linley looked relieved.

"That's all right, then," he said. "I'm sorry—"

"Of course, I ought to have guessed. But that's all right. So get your things ready to-night—we leave by the eight-twenty from Friardale in the morning, and we're going to have an early breakfast."

"I'll be ready," said Mark cheerfully.

Wharton nodded and left the study. The two lads had begun life under very different auspices. Wharton had never really known the want of money, while Linley was the son of a mill worker in Lancashire, and had toiled from early childhood for his daily bread. But between the two there was a very real respect and friendship. Some of the fellows avoided Mark—some of them tried to patronise him. There are snobs everywhere, and the Greyfriars Remove was not exempt from them. There was never a hint of patronage in Harry Wharton's manner. He recognised Linley as a true and a brave fellow, and he liked him, and didn't care in the slightest where he came from or what he was.

There was a buzz of a bicycle bell in the Close, and Hazeldene came in. His beaming face showed that he had been successful.

"It's all right," he announced. "Marjorie and Clara are coming, and they'll be at the station in the morning in time for the train."

"Hurrah!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Off to St. Jim's.

THE Remove cricketers did not wait for the rising bell the next morning. They were up and doing while the rest of the Form still slumbered. They went downstairs into a silent house, and found their breakfast served by the time the rising bell began to clang. It cost Bunter a huge effort to get out of bed. But he did it. He had obtained the necessary permission to accompany the cricket team to St. Jim's—or, rather, Wharton had obtained it for him—and he was not likely to miss the chance. He had suggested to Wharton catching a later train, and making it a single innings match at St. Jim's—the object of the change being to allow Bunter another hour in bed. Needless to say, the suggestion was not adopted.

Breakfast was disposed of, and then the juniors set out for the station, carrying their bags. They were in good form, and all feeling and looking fit. Bulstrode's good temper was holding out, and he still seemed in a state of astonishment at finding himself in the team. Billy Bunter was the only one of the party in anything like a grumbling humour. He was muttering to himself, and murmuring things, in the hope of attracting sympathetic attention; but the cricketers were too busy discussing their prospects to have any time to attend to Bunter. Bunter came out into the open, so to speak, at last.

"I say, you fellows, you might have had a brake to the station! You know jolly well that all this walking isn't good for my constitution."

"Yes, we're likely to have a brake for you," assented Bob Cherry. "I can see us blueing the money on it—I don't think. If you're really tired, though—"

"I'm simply fagged out," said Bunter, putting on an expression of exhaustion, which he thought ought to have touched a heart of stone. "My legs are aching, and my—"

"Well, that bank looks very comfy to take a rest on. Why don't you sit down for an hour or so?"

"Good! If you fellows will wait for me and catch a later train—"

"Oh, no, we won't do that! The train goes in ten minutes, and we're going in it. But if you like to rest here for an hour, we don't object. In fact, we'd be pleased."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," grunted Billy Bunter. "On second thoughts, I'm not too tired to walk to the station."

"Well, leave off grumbling, then," said Bob Cherry warningly. "It makes me tired. If I hear you mumbling No. 64.

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again, you'll stop here and rest whether you like it or not."

Bunter preserved a stony silence during the rest of the walk. The juniors came in sight of the station. Two girlish forms were coming in the same direction by another path, and they met at the station.

The juniors raised their caps to Marjorie and Clara.

"Jolly glad you're in time," said Hazeldene. "How did you manage it?"

Marjorie laughed, and the juniors laughed. Hazeldene's frankness was the privilege of a brother, but Bob Cherry felt inclined to punch his head. The two girls were looking very bright and happy. The holiday, and the excitement of a trip to a distant place, evidently pleased them. Marjorie thanked Wharton as they went into the station.

"I know we owe it to you," she said. "It was very kind of you to think of us, and we shall enjoy this excursion immensely."

"Yes, rather. I call it ripping," said Miss Clara. "Not to say stunning."

"Oh, Clara!"

"If you say 'Oh, Clara!' again, I shall say it's spiffing," said Miss Clara determinedly.

And Marjorie didn't say 'Oh, Clara!' again. She laughed, and turned to Harry.

"Miss Primrose has given us the money for our return tickets," she said. "Please take it."

Wharton nodded, and took the money. He would have preferred to take the tickets himself, but it was not for him to gainsay the decision of the persons concerned.

Fourteen return tickets meant a sum of money that made the booking-clerk at the sleepy little station open his eyes.

The train puffed in along the platform, and the juniors looked for an empty carriage. They had agreed that they were all to go together, though it was likely to be a crowd. They had taken third-class tickets; and they were able to find a carriage with two compartments adjoining, and so could all remain together without too much overcrowding.

They all entered at one door, and some of them gained the next compartment by vaulting over the partition.

The whistle screamed, and the train rolled out of the station.

The Greyfriars cricketers were off to St. Jim's.

"I say, you fellows—"

"That's all right, Bunter! We know you're hungry. We know you're on the point of a breakdown for want of sufficient nourishment. Don't tell us."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You can get some lunch at the station we change at, in time to save your life—"

"As a matter of fact, you fellows, I've come away without any money."

"Rotten!" said Bulstrode. "Left your cheque-book and a bundle of banknotes on the grand piano in your study, haven't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! As a matter of fact, we came away in too great a hurry to wait for the morning's letter to come in. I was expecting a postal-order, and a remittance from the Patriotic Home Work Association—"

"Oh, ring off that!"

"Of course, you never believe in my ideas, Cherry!" said Billy Bunter. "You didn't believe in my wonderful powers as a ventriloquist—"

"I believe in your wonderful powers as a gramophone," groaned Bob Cherry. "I don't believe you ever get run down, though."

"Ventriloquist?" exclaimed Miss Clara, with interest.

"Is Bunter really a ventriloquist?"

"Why, I told you I was, at the picnic the other day," said Bunter. "Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember you told me," said Miss Clara, colouring. "But—but—"

Bob Cherry roared.

"Oh, give us some ventriloquism!" said Marjorie, feeling for Clara, under the circumstances. Clara, though she was very candid as a rule, didn't want to explain that she had doubted the statement simply because Bunter had made it.

Billy Bunter beamed at once.

"Certainly!" he said. "It will enliven the journey. You see, besides being a wonderful ventriloquist, I'm a marvellous imitator, and a—"

"And an amazing ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt me, Cherry, when I'm explaining to a lady. I will now give a demonstration

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to you, ladies and gentlemen, of my amazing powers. Of course, there are some things I cannot do. I can make any fellow seem to talk, in his own voice or somebody else's—but I couldn't make Bob Cherry talk politely——"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's one for Bunter."

Bob Cherry laughed, too.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Miss Clara jumped, as the growl of a dog came from beneath her seat.

"Oh, dear! Good gracious!"

Bunter chuckled.

"It's all right! There isn't any dog."

"No dog? But I heard him growl!"

"Ha, ha! That was my wonderful ventriloquism."

Miss Clara looked dubious. But a glance under the seat showed that there was no quadruped in the carriage.

Bob Cherry said reassuringly that there was no animal there except Bunter—a statement which earned him a withering glare from the ventriloquist.

"Good gracious!" said Miss Clara. "It is really clever."

It was a compliment, but it did not sound complimentary.

Miss Clara seemed astounded to find that Bunter could do anything clever.

"You wait till somebody else gets into the carriage," said Bunter confidently.

And, as a matter of fact, at the next station the train stopped at a stout gentleman with a fancy waistcoat, a huge watchchain, and a spotted necktie, stepped in. He was evidently a gentleman connected with the Turf, and doubtless on his way to a race-meeting somewhere.

He took out a little book, and began conning it over as the train started.

Billy Bunter coughed. That was a sign that some ventriloquism was coming, and the juniors waited.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Little Ventriloquism.

THE stout gentleman was very busy with his book and pencil, with which he seemed to be making calculations. He hardly looked at the juniors, save to give them a glare because their chatting interrupted his mental problems. The boys were not inclined to remain silent because the turfy gentleman was calculating the odds in a railway-carriage, and they endured his occasional glares with great fortitude.

Bunter had just coughed, preparatory to beginning operations, when the stout gentleman spoke very snappishly: "Can't you boys be quiet?"

Wharton looked at him.

"We're not making a noise, sir," he said; "and a railway-carriage is a place to talk in. We can't be quieter than we are."

"Don't be insolent, boy."

Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"The insolence seems to me to be on your side," he said calmly.

The stout gentleman turned very red. He stretched out his hand for a moment towards his cane, and then stopped. There was something in Wharton's look, and the look of his comrades, that stopped him. He muttered something under his breath, and returned to his occupation again.

"What price Pinkie?"

It was a voice from behind the stout gentleman. He turned his head and looked into the compartment behind him.

"Eh?" he said. "Did you address me? Pinkie is not running to-day. He is entered for the Schwindell Handicap next week."

Then the turfy man looked puzzled. There were only boys in both compartments, and it had seemed a man's voice that he heard.

The juniors, knowing very well that the Greyfriars ventriloquist was at work, grinned at one another.

The turfy gentleman seemed amazed. He looked round the carriage with a puzzled air, and then turned to his book again.

Hardly had he dropped his eyes upon the mysterious-looking entries on the page, when the same voice inquired, in the same tone:

"What price Pinkie?"

The stout gentleman looked up angrily.

"What idiot is that?" he exclaimed. "Who spoke?"

There was no reply.

"I tell you Pinkie isn't running, whoever you are!" exclaimed the sporting gentleman. "I'm Abel Benson, and I know. Don't be an ass!"

The stout gentleman evidently considered his name a well-known one—as it probably was on the racecourse. The Greyfriars juniors had never heard it before. He snorted, and glared round, and looked at his book again.

"Yes, that's all very well, Abel! But what price against Pinkie?"

"I tell you Pinkie isn't running!" roared Mr. Benson, No. 64.

glaring round. "Where are you? Who are you? Who's talking to me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The boys could not contain their laughter. Billy Bunter was the only one who was serious. He could not laugh and ventriloquise, too. Even Marjorie and Clara could not help smiling. The puzzlement of the sporting gentleman was comic.

Mr. Benson evidently did not suspect a boy of speaking to him in a man's voice. He thought somebody was hidden in the next compartment. He took a grasp on his cane, his looks showing that if he was annoyed again, there would be trouble.

But he had hardly settled into his seat, when the voice was audible once more.

"What price Pinkie?"

The stout gentleman jumped up.

He looked so ferocious that Miss Clara shrank away with a little shriek, but the turfy traveller wasn't thinking of anybody in his own compartment. He brought his cane down on the wooden partition with a crash that rang above the noise of the train.

"Come out!" he roared. "Show yourself! I'll teach you to joke with Abel Benson! My name is known on every course in the United Kingdom, sir! I'm Benson! Come out! Show yourself!"

The juniors laughed unrestrainedly.

Mr. Benson glared round the carriage savagely, and crashed his heavy cane on the partition again.

"Show yourself!" he roared.

"What price Pinkie, old son?"

The voice seemed to come from under the seat in the next compartment, where several of the Greyfriars party were sitting.

"Will you come out?" roared Mr. Benson.

The voice declined to come out, and the stout gentleman mounted upon the seat to clamber over the partition.

He trod on Frank Nugent, who jumped up, with a howl.

"Here, mind where you're treading!"

But the stout gentleman took no notice.

He was in the last stage of excitement, and looked as if a little more would bring him on the verge of apoplexy.

He clambered awkwardly over the partition. It wasn't an easy task for a gentleman of his size and weight, and he managed it very clumsily. He lost his balance as he went over, and rolled on the seat on the other side, and there was a scrambling out of the way of the juniors there.

"Ware porpoises!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The stout gentleman lay for a full minute on the seat, gasping for breath. The effort and the tumble had quite exhausted him. And, as he paused to recover, a voice came from under the seat:

"What price Pinkie? What's the odds on the field?"

Mr. Benson gave a grunt, and rolled off the seat. He grasped his cane in a businesslike way.

"Now I'll have you out!" he muttered.

And he stooped and looked under the seats—first one, and then the other. Then he rose again, and his face was a study. There was no one there.

"M-m-m-m-my word!" gasped Mr. Benson.

He stared round him blankly.

"My word! It must have been that last whisky at the station!" he muttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Benson rubbed his perspiring forehead. He had never been so amazed in his life.

As he stood in doubt and wonder, the irritating voice came again—from the carriage he had just left.

"What price Pinkie?"

Mr. Benson jumped.

It seemed impossible that the owner of the voice could have skipped from one compartment to the other without being seen; yet that was the only explanation.

Mr. Benson gritted his teeth.

"I'll 'ave you now!" he muttered.

And he began to clamber over the partition again.

"Careful!" said the voice. "Don't bring your ninety stone down too suddenly, or you'll go through the bottom of the train."

Mr. Benson snorted. He was stout, but ninety stone was an exaggeration.

Down he came over the partition again, snorting and gasping, with two buttons off his gorgeous waistcoat, and his tie hanging loose.

"Now, then!" he exclaimed.

The juniors and the girls scrambled out of the way to let him look under the seats.

"There's no one there!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Young liar!" snarled Mr. Benson. "Get out o' the way!"

"Oh, all right! Look, then!"

Mr. Benson looked.

His fat, ruddy face went quite pale when he saw that there was no one in the carriage beside himself and the juniors.

"It was the whisky!" he murmured faintly.

He sat down again, quite overcome. And when a voice at his ear inquired softly "What price Pinkie?" he did not even turn his head.

"It must ha' been the whisky!"

The train stopped, and Mr. Benson jumped out to change carriages. He left the Greyfriars juniors almost in convulsions.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Arthur Augustus is Surprised.

THE absurd adventure of Mr. Benson considerably lightened the long journey. The juniors chuckled again and again whenever they thought of the stout gentleman clambering over the partition, and of his looks when he found that the voice had no body behind it, and his impression that it was due to his too-early whisky. But there was no more ventriloquism on the journey. Bunter, being fairly started, was quite ready to spring squeaky mice on nervous old ladies, or to make imaginary dogs bark under the feet of short-sighted old gentlemen; but Harry put his foot down on it.

He would not have inoffensive passengers worried for the fun of the thing, and so Billy Bunter had to suppress his wonderful powers. He consoled himself with the prospect of letting himself go at St. Jim's. D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, had paid a visit to Greyfriars, and Billy Bunter, who certainly had a wonderful gift for imitating voices, had picked up D'Arcy's accent remarkably well. It was a remarkably aristocratic accent, and very distinguished, and no one would have suspected it of coming from the fat little junior, even if his lips had been seen to move. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of St. Jim's was just the fellow Bunter liked to play his little tricks upon.

"Getting near St. Jim's," said Bob Cherry, when the train stopped at Wayland Junction. "We change into the local train here for—Rylcombe, isn't it?"

"That's the place."

The juniors poured out of the train. Harry Wharton looked round him. The local train for Rylcombe—the station for St. Jim's—was waiting on the other side of the platform.

"This way!" said Harry.

There were several people already in the local train, which was waiting there for the express to come in before starting. The juniors crossed the platform, and Harry became aware of a face and a silk hat projected from the window of a first-class carriage, and of a lavender kid glove waving excitedly to him.

"Bai Jove! There they are! This way, deah boys!"

"It's a St. Jim's fellow!" exclaimed Nugent.

The junior looking out of the carriage was a slim and elegant fellow, clad in Etons that fitted him like a glove, with the addition of a fancy waistcoat. His tie was tied in a way that showed the hand of a master in the art. His collar was the highest and whitest, his silk hat the shiniest, and his studs and sleeve-links the costliest and daintiest that the Greyfriars juniors had ever seen. There was no mistaking this elegant youth. Harry Wharton & Co. had met him before. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's.

Wharton made for his carriage at once. D'Arcy jumped out on the platform, and shook hands heartily with the Remove captain.

"Awfully glad to see you, deah boy!" he exclaimed. "You see, I came to Wayland to meet my Cousin Ethel, who is coming to St. Jim's to see the match, and I thought you might catch the same local, so I was looking out for you."

"Glad to meet you," said Wharton. "Marjorie, Clara, this is D'Arcy, whom—whom I've told you about." Both the girls smiled, whether for pleasure at seeing D'Arcy, or at the recollection of what they had heard about him, was not clear. "D'Arcy, Miss Hazeldene, Miss Clara—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy swept off his silk topper with a courtly bow.

"What a wippin' unexpected pleasuah!" he exclaimed. "More than delighted! Ethel, deah boy—I mean deah gal—"

Ethel Cleveland was looking out of the carriage with a bright smile. She stepped upon the platform, and greeted Marjorie and Clara with a sweetness that won their hearts.

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at once. It was very pleasant to see how the three girls seemed to become friends at once. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy beamed upon them through his eyeglass.

"Urry up, please," said the Wayland porter.

"Pway don't bothah, deah boy," he said. "The twain can wait a few minutes, I suppose."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Come, get in, Arthur."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Urry up there, please!"

There was not room in the carriage, of course, for all the party. Marjorie and Clara and Wharton, Hurree Singh and Billy Bunter and Hazeldene, entered the carriage with D'Arcy and his cousin. The others went further along. The local train crawled out of the station. D'Arcy placed his silk topper carefully on the rack, and gently fanned his brow with a glove. The April morning was warm.

"Awfully glad I met you fellows," he said. "It is wippin'. Some of the chaps are goin' to be at Wylcombe Station with a bwake to take us to the coll. Looks like bein' a wippin' day for the match—all sun and no showahs."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a start. Cousin Ethel looked amazed. It was a voice exactly like D'Arcy's that had replied to him. Harry Wharton gave Bunter a warning glance, but the fat ventriloquist pretended not to see it.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, after a pause. "That was weally stwange."

"What was strange?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Oh, nothin'! I—"

Gr-r-r-r!

D'Arcy jumped up.

"Bai Jove! There's a beastly dog undah the seat! Is it poss. that Hewwies' wotten bulldog has followed me? I can nevah get wid of that bwute!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Oh, pway stand on the seat, deah gals, in case he bites you! I will stwike him with my cane if he is fewocious."

D'Arcy seized his cane and looked for the dog. There was no dog to be discovered, and the swell of St. Jim's looked amazed.

"Bai Jove! I weally thought I heard a dog gwowlin'."

"So did I," said Cousin Ethel, looking very much surprised.

"I weally do not know how to account for the stwange occuwence. I—"

Gr-r-r-r!

The growl seemed to come from overhead this time. D'Arcy looked up, and his eyes became fixed upon a large, strapped bag Hurree Singh had put on the rack.

"Bai Jove! Who does that bag belong to?"

"It is the property of my esteemed self, my worthy chum," said the Nabob of Bhanipur blandly.

"You have wapped up a dog in it by mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Hazeldene.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"It may seem imposs.," he said, "but that is the fact. I am certain that the gwowl pwoceeded fwom that bag. Listen!"

Gr-r-r-r!

It was a fainter growl, but it certainly seemed to come from the strapped bag. The nabob grinned.

D'Arcy tapped him on the shoulder excitedly.

"My deah fellow, you've got a dog wapped up in that bag, and he sounds as if he was suffocatin'. Pway open it and welease him."

"My honourable and ludicrous friend is mistaken. The bag contains only the harmless and necessary requisites for the cricketful game."

"Listen to that gwowl, then."

Gr-r-r-r!

"My esteemed friend may look into the bag, if he thinkfully imagines that the dogful quadruped is concealfully hidden there."

"Bai Jove, I've no doubt on the point, deah boy!"

"Then make the honourable search."

"With your permish—"

"The bagful receptacle is utterfully at the esteemed disposal of my august friend," said the polite nabob. "But I do not thinkfully suppose that the worthy dog is thereinfully concealed."

"I wathah think it is, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus unstrapped the bag. He opened it and looked in. There were cricket things galore, crammed in, but no sign of a dog. D'Arcy stared into the bag in blank astonishment.

"Have you found the worthy dog, my esteemed friend?"

"N-n-n-n-no!"

Gr-r-r-r!

The growl came from right under D'Arcy's feet this time, and he jumped clear of the floor, and dropped the bag. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's properties were scattered at once. D'Arcy looked round for the dog.

"Bai Jove! This is weally most surpwisin'."

"The surprisefulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, as he began to collect up his property.

"It is somebody playin' a twick."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It was done awfully well," exclaimed D'Arcy. "I was weally almost deceived—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I didn't exactly think there was a dog in the bag—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hurree Singh strapped the bag again. Cousin Ethel was laughing, and Marjorie and Clara were laughing, as well as the boys; and Arthur Augustus, who was seldom put out of humour, began to laugh too. A few minutes later the train ran into the little station of Rylcombe, and there was a shout from the platform. The juniors of St. Jim's were waiting there for them.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Greyfriars Juniors at St. Jim's.

THERE were half a dozen juniors belonging to St. Jim's, waiting on the platform for the visitors. Tom Merry, the captain of the St. Jim's juniors, was there, with his chums in the Shell Form, Manners and Lowther. With them were Blake, Herries, and Digby, of the Fourth Form. They immediately spotted the carriages containing the visitors, and came scudding along to them as the train stopped.

D'Arcy looked out of the window with a beaming smile.

"Here they are!" he said. "This way, deah boys!"

Tom Merry pulled the carriage door open. D'Arcy jammed on his silk hat and jumped out, and, of course, it was D'Arcy who assisted Cousin Ethel and Marjorie and Clara to alight. The greeting of the St. Jim's juniors was a hearty one. They had not known that Marjorie and Clara were coming, but they were evidently delighted to see them. Arthur Augustus had taken possession of the three girls, as if they were private property of his, but that did not last long. Tom Merry made a sign to Lowther and Manners, and they took the swell of St. Jim's by either arm.

"Come on," said Lowther affectionately. "I want you to sit beside me in the brake, Gussy, and tell me how to play cricket."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Come on, old chap!"

"I should be delighted to give you some instwuction in the game, Lowthah, and you certainly need it; but weally—"

"That's all right, then. In you get!"

"Weally, Lowthah—Mannahs—"

"Shove him in!"

D'Arcy was helped into the brake by the two Shell fellows, who sat down on either side of him. Meanwhile, Jack Blake had taken possession of Cousin Ethel, and Tom Merry of Marjorie, Digby of Miss Clara. They handed them into the brake as carefully as if they had been valuable pieces of china, and the crowd of juniors followed. It was a big brake, and there was plenty of room for the party and their belongings. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tried to rise, in order to take a seat between Miss Cleveland and Miss Hazeldene. But Lowther had slipped an arm through his, and held him fast.

"Pway welease me, Lowthah! I—"

"I want you to tell me how to play cricket."

"I believe you are wottin', you wottah!"

"Sit down!"

"I absolutely wefuse—"

Monty Lowther jerked him back into his seat. Jack Blake had taken the coveted place with the girls, and D'Arcy submitted to his fate, in a state of simmering indignation. He turned his monocle upon Lowther with a withering expression.

"Lowthah, I wegard you as an uttah beast!"

"Go hon!"

"I wefuse to give you any instwuction upon the subject of owicket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The brake rolled down the lane towards the school. The old grey tower of St. Jim's rose to view over the trees. There was a ringing of merry voices and laughter from the crowded vehicle. They were a merry party. It was a whole holiday at St. Jim's for the cricket eleven, as for the Greyfriars cricketers, of course. The rest of the eleven were waiting at the gates to greet the brake. They looked very fit in white flannels and their House caps.

The St. Jim's junior eleven was formed of fellows from both Houses—School House and New House—but the School House being the larger, most of the members

belonged to that division. There were only three New House fellows in Tom Merry's team, and they were the three juniors known all over the school as "Figgins & Co."—Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn. They were in the gateway now, with Reilly, of the School House.

They greeted the brake with a cheer, and took off their caps gracefully to the girls, Reilly, in addition to that, waving his round head in his enthusiasm. They clung on the brake as it rolled into the wide green quadrangle, and Figgins, with one leg over the side of the brake, was introduced to Marjorie and Clara.

The vehicle stopped in front of the School House. Kildare, of the Sixth, looked out, with a pleasant smile on his handsome Irish face. He was captain of St. Jim's, but he had agreed to umpire the match for the juniors—an act of kindness of which the lads were very appreciative. It was not a small thing for the head of the Sixth to give up almost a whole day to the juniors, and Kildare's umpiring, of course, gave the match an importance in the eyes of the whole school which it would not otherwise have possessed.

The ground was in excellent condition, beautifully rolled, and ready for play. The visitors were taken straight into the pavilion, while Cousin Ethel, who was quite at home in Mrs. Holmes' house at St. Jim's, carried off the two girls.

The Greyfriars juniors were not long in getting ready for play. A cold collation had been prepared, to refresh the visitors after their long journey, and Billy Bunter at least did it full justice. And there was one junior of St. Jim's who was very willing to see that Bunter had of the very best. It was Fatty Wynn, of the New House. During the St. Jim's visit to Greyfriars he had struck up a friendship with Bunter. Bunter was not half so decent a fellow as Wynn, but their tastes were alike. And Fatty Wynn, great performer as he was at the table, recognised his master in Billy Bunter. Bunter could easily distance him when it came to clearing a well-spread board. And Fatty Wynn admired him greatly. Next to eating himself, Fatty Wynn liked to see others eat, and it was as good as a play to him to sit and watch Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, this is ripping!" said Billy Bunter, his fat face glowing as he looked over the lunch. "Yes, I will have the rabbit-pie, Wynn. I'm fond of rabbit-pie. You may as well shove some of the ham over here—and the beef. Just a minute, and I'll be ready for another helping."

"Good!" said the gratified Wynn. "I say, I cooked those rabbit-pies myself—made 'em and cooked 'em. Mrs. Kenwigg let me do it in the kitchen in the New House."

"Then you're a jolly good cook!" said Bunter. "I can cook a bit myself, but I couldn't beat this. When I grow up I want to be a chef in a big hotel, and taste everything that's cooked. That's my ideal life."

"And a jolly good ideal, too!" said Fatty Wynn. "Chaps don't often have ideals as sensible as that. There's a chap here named Skimpole who's a Socialist. He wants to bring in Socialism—he says that's his ideal. There's D'Arcy, whose ideal is to be the best-dressed fellow in the school. Then there's Merry and Blake and Figgins—they want to bat like Fry. There's Kerr—he wants to bowl like Knox. But to my mind, a fellow of a serious turn of mind naturally takes to cooking. It's the most important of all the arts. And then think what a jolly time a cook has."

"Yes, rather!"

"As a matter of fact," said Fatty Wynn confidentially, "I'd rather be cooking the feed for after the match than playing myself."

"So would I," said Bunter. "Pass the ham again."

"You see—"

"And the mustard."

"But they can't spare me from the side. They want me to bat. I—"

"And the bread. Thanks!"

"But we're going to have a good feed afterwards, all the same," said Fatty Wynn, booming. "Tom Merry's seen to that. There's been a whip round, and we've laid in supplies that would make your mouth water."

Bunter's mouth did water.

"Got 'em all ready?" he asked.

"Yes. Mrs. Mimms has 'em in charge, except the cakes and tarts, and figs and apples, and things. They're in a box in Tom Merry's study. They've been carefully selected this morning, and they're ripping."

"In Tom Merry's study?" murmured Billy Bunter. "I may get hungry again presently—h'm!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Time to be moving!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yeas, wathah!"

Looking very fit in spotless white, the cricketers turned out. Tom Merry's eleven looked quite as fit as the visiting team, and many of the fellows were older. The list was as follows: Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, Blake, Herries,

Digby, D'Arcy, Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Reilly. Harry Wharton looked them over outside the pavilion, and he had to confess to himself that the Greyfriars juniors had never tackled so businesslike-looking a side.

"We've got all our work cut out, Harry," Nugent remarked.

And Wharton nodded assent.

"Yes, it will be a tussle."

"The tusslefulness will be terrific!"

"Still, we shall beat them. It's a ripping day, and a ripping ground. Here come the umpires!"

Tom Merry and Harry Wharton tossed for choice of innings, and the luck of the toss fell to Wharton. He elected to go in first, and Tom Merry led his men out to field.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Greyfriars In.

GREYFRIARS opened their innings with Micky Desmond and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The latter, though by no means a Ranji, was a very good batsman, and could generally be relied upon to keep his end up with credit. The slim, dusky Indian made a very handsome figure at the wicket. He stood in a graceful attitude, waiting for the ball from Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry had put Wynn on to bowl the first over. The plump Welsh junior had lately developed his powers as a bowler, and he was the most dangerous of the St. Jim's side. He did not look dangerous, and Hurree Singh did not expect much when he saw the rotund figure of Fatty at the bowler's end. Fatty Wynn backed away, and took a jerky little run, and the ball came down.

Clack!

Hurree Singh stopped it dead on the crease, and looked surprised. He knew that he had had a narrow escape that time. He was more watchful for the next. He stopped the next ball; the third he managed to snick through the slips for a single. This brought Micky Desmond opposite the Welsh junior. Micky explained afterwards, to incredulous listeners, that there was nothing wrong with his batting, but that there was something specially tricky about that ball. Tricky or not, the ball eluded the bat, and gently lifted the middle stump out of the ground.

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Ow!" murmured Micky Desmond. "Sure, and it's out intirely! I wonder how that happened?"

"Duck's eggs are cheap to-day!" remarked Bulstrode, as Micky Desmond brought out his bat.

The Irish lad looked at him.

"Go in and thry yourself, ye gossoon!"

"That's what I'm going to do," said Bulstrode. "I don't think you'll see my wicket go down for a nought."

"Faith, and if ye can bat as well as ye can brag, it's a Jessop ye are!"

"Next man in!" said Wharton.

"Right-ho!" said Bulstrode cheerfully, as he buttoned his glove. "Keep an eye on me, Micky. If I go out for a duck's-egg, you can kick me."

"Begorra, and I'll not forget!"

Bulstrode strode down to the wicket. Fatty Wynn was waiting patiently, and the St. Jim's fieldsmen were grinning.

They had great faith in Fatty Wynn. But Bulstrode's faith in himself was great. He had been surprised at being included in the Greyfriars eleven, but he wanted to show that he was worthy of a place in it. He wanted the other fellows to see that Wharton had been wrong in leaving him out so long. Also, he had the not unnatural vanity of wishing to cut a figure in the eyes of the girls who were looking on at the innings. Cousin Ethel, Marjorie, and Clara were interested spectators, from their comfortable seats in front of the tent. Bulstrode went on to bat in a cheerful mood. That mood did not last long.

Fatty Wynn took that jerky little run again, and sent down a ball like a four point seven shell.

Bulstrode played a fraction of a second too late, and the round red ball was in his stumps, and the bails were flying, and there was a roar.

"Well bowled, Fatty!"

"Bravo!"

"How's that?" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Out!"

Bulstrode stared at the wicket as if he could hardly believe his eyes. He was out first ball. It was incredible.

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The wicket was a wreck, and Fatty Wynn was grinning. Everybody was grinning. There had been a pronounced swagger in Bulstrode's manner as he went to the wicket, and the duck's-egg followed with a comic effect.

But there was no doubt that he was out. The bails were set up again, and the next man was leaving the tent with the bat under his arm. Bulstrode drew a deep breath, and in a savage mood walked off the crease.

He went back with a gloomy frown upon his brow.

"Hard cheese," said Harry Wharton, as Bulstrode passed him.

Bulstrode nodded without speaking.

He flung his bat down, and looked at the field. As he did so, he staggered forward under the impetus of a tremendous kick in the rear.

"There ye are, me bhoy!"

Bulstrode gave a yell, and fell on his hands and knees. Everybody turned to stare at him, and at the grinning Micky, who had bestowed the kick.

"What on earth—" began Bob Cherry.

"Micky, are you mad?"

"Faith, and it's sane I am. He asked for it if he went out with a duck's egg, and faith that's what he got."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "He asked for it, that's true enough."

Bulstrode jumped up, black with rage.

He clenched his fists, and rushed straight at the Irish junior, but two or three fellows caught hold of him and stopped him.

"Hold on! You can't row here!"

"Let me get at him!" screamed Bulstrode, struggling furiously.

"You can't kick up a row here!"

"I'll pulverise him!"

"Sure, and you asked for it."

"You—you—"

"Stop that!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't you start rowing here. Bulstrode, keep your temper, or get off the field!"

Bulstrode gritted his teeth, but he calmed down. He had, indeed, brought it upon himself, though Micky might have been a little more judicious. He growled something under his breath, and the row ceased. Meanwhile, Hazeldene had gone in to face the last ball of the over.

Hazeldene went in very nervously. He was a fair batsman, but he was not ahead of either Desmond or Bulstrode, and the bowling made him uneasy. That was not the mood in which to face it successfully. And Hazeldene did not prove successful.

Fatty Wynn delivered a more dangerous ball than ever to finish the over, and Hazeldene had no chance at all against it.

His bat swept the empty air, and there was a clack of a falling wicket.

The St. Jim's juniors yelled.

"Hurrah! The hat trick!"

The hat trick it was, in the first over!

The Saints were delighted, and they cheered Fatty Wynn to the echo.

Hazeldene went back crestfallen, and he found his comrades wore serious, not to say gloomy, faces.

Greyfriars were three down for a single run, the single taken by Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

It was a bad beginning.

The field crossed over, looking very well satisfied with themselves and with the start they had made.

If matters went on like this, the Greyfriars innings would not be a long one, and something like a walk-over lay before the home team.

Harry Wharton, who was next on the list, picked up his bat. Hazeldene made a grimace as he met his captain's eye.

"I'm sorry," he said. "That fat chap is a demon. Look out for a ball that comes just where you don't expect it."

Harry Wharton smiled.

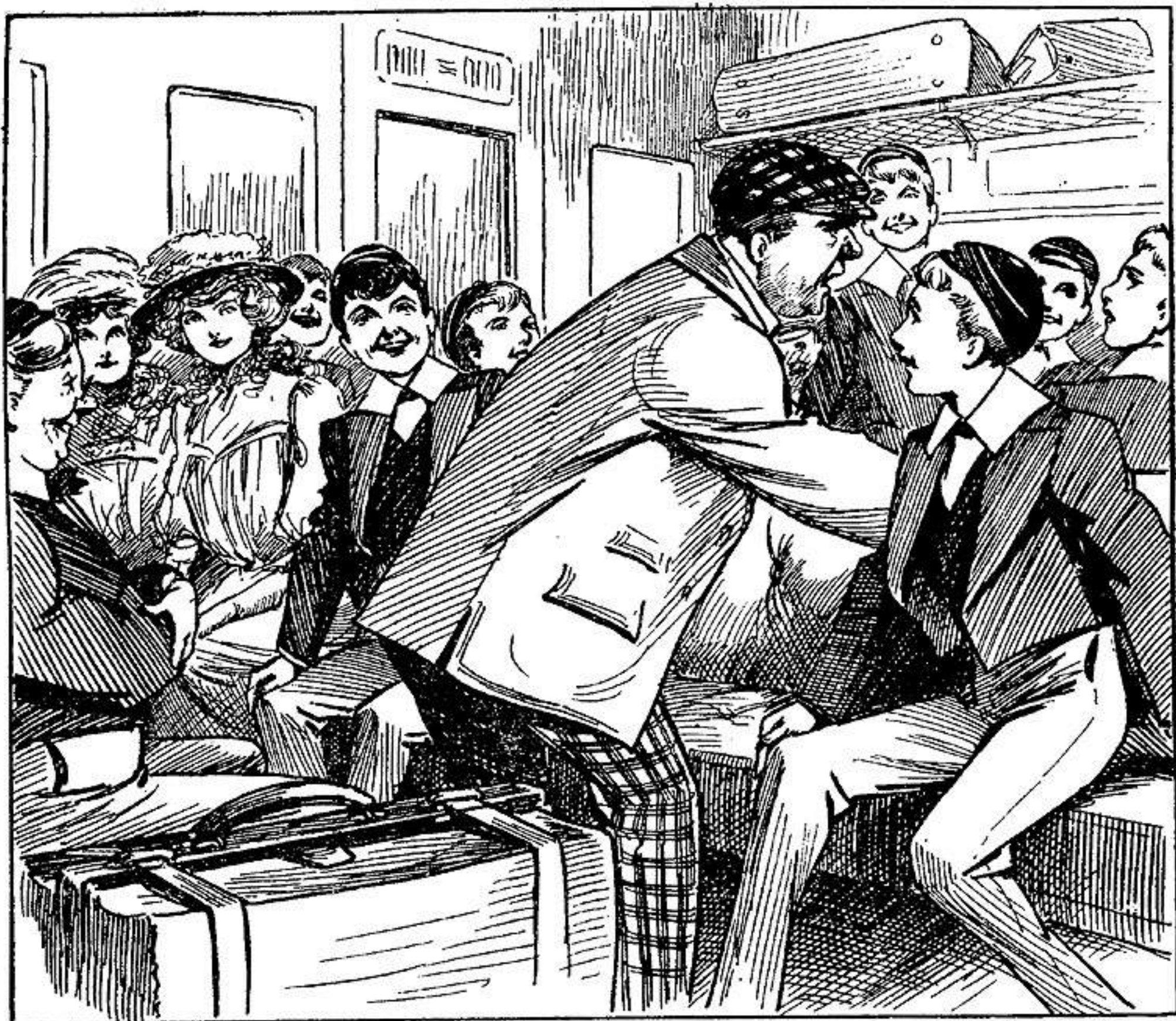
"I'll look out for it," he said. "Things will be serious if this goes on. They've got at least one ripping bowler."

And Wharton went out to the wicket.

The Greyfriars fellows looked more hopeful as he took his stand there. Wharton was always reliable, and even Fatty Wynn would not find it easy to deal with him.

The next over was bowled by Jack Blake.

He delivered a series of lightning balls, which would have



"Come out!" roared the stout gentleman to the invisible voice. "I'll teach you to joke with Abel Benson. Show yourself!" The juniors laughed unrestrainedly.

been dangerous to most junior batsman, but Harry Wharton succeeded in playing them.

The over gave the Greyfriars skipper five runs, and a wicket still intact, and the visiting team looked more cheerful.

"I knew Wharton would stop the rot," said Bob Cherry confidently.

Bulstrode grunted.

"He hasn't faced that fat boulder yet."

"Wynn won't get his wicket very easily!"

"Rats! You'll see."

And they did see!

The odd run had brought Harry Wharton opposite the bowling from the other end, and so he was now opposed to the redoubtable Fatty.

Fatty Wynn saw at a glance that he had an adversary to deal with of a bigger calibre than the preceding batsmen, and he put all he knew into the bowling.

Wharton, who was well on his guard, contented himself with stopping the first four balls of the over.

By that time he had, to a great extent, taken the bowler's measure.

For the fifth, he ventured to let fly, and there was a yell from the Greyfriars fellows as the ball went on its journey.

"Hurrah! That's a boundary!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

And a boundary it was! Wharton stood quietly waiting No. 64.

for the next ball. Fatty Wynn snapped his teeth as he took the round, red ball in hand again. He wasn't used to a batsman standing up against him so calmly and successfully. He sent down the last ball of the over with a vim.

Harry Wharton swiped at the ball, and away it went, and the batsmen ran.

How they ran. It was difficult to say whether the Greyfriars Remove skipper or the slim, dusky Indian was the fleetest of the two.

"Once, twice, thrice, and a fourth!"

Then Wharton dropped his bat on the crease, and waved the eager Indian back.

"No!" he shouted.

And the Nabob of Bhanipur clumped down his bat in time, as the ball came whizzing in straight as an arrow from Tom Merry, and crashed into his wicket a second later. But the bat was on the crease, and the umpire shook his head.

"Not out!"

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry, flinging his cricket cap into the air. "Bravo! Hip, pip!"

He did not see where the cap came down, but Billy Bunter did. Bunter was eating an ice-cream close by the tent, and Bob Cherry's cap descended upon it, and smote it from his hand. Glass and spoon went down into the grass, and Billy Bunter gave a jump.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

He put his spectacles straight, and glared round him.

"Who threw that cap at me?"

But no one replied, and the fat junior went off discontentedly in search of another ice. Every eye but Bunter's was on the pitch.

Hurree Singh was batting now against Tom Merry.

The Indian junior kept his end up well, but Tom Merry proved to be more than his match in that over.

At the last ball the wicket fell, and Hurree Singh carried out his bat, with a total of a dozen runs to his credit.

Bob Cherry was the next man in.

Wharton and Cherry between them kept the game going, and the score at last showed a disposition to go up rapidly.

It stood at sixty when Bob Cherry was caught out by Figgins.

Nugent came next, but his luck was out. He went out leg-before with only three runs to his credit. Morgan joined Harry Wharton, and did better, but he was stumped before he had been in very long. Ogilvy had worse luck than ever, being caught out by Reilly first ball. The score was at sixty-seven when last man in was called.

Last man in for Greyfriars was Mark Linley.

Bulstrode sneered as the Lancashire lad went out to the wicket to join Harry Wharton for the last stand against the St. Jim's bowling.

"The game's up!" he remarked. "We shall be all down for less than seventy! We've had cruel luck, and that chap won't pull matters up."

"Cruel luck and cruel play, some of us," said Bob Cherry, with a laugh. "It isn't your job to run anybody else down, Bulstrode, considering."

"I had rotten luck, otherwise——"

"Otherwise you would have done wonders. Of course, so would every mug who gets out for a duck's egg."

Bulstrode scowled, and walked away. But he deserved the rebuff. He had not done well enough himself to afford to sneer at others. He looked on at Mark Linley's batting, and it is not too much to say that he would have been glad to see the Lancashire lad's wicket go down for nothing.

But that was not to be!

Linley was not a brilliant batsman. He had not Wharton's style, but he was a steady and reliable fellow in cricket as in everything else.

He played Fatty Wynn's bowling with great care, and lived through an over against that dangerous bowler, and let himself go when he was opposed to a less tricky enemy. The runs piled up, and the St. Jim's crowd, who had deemed the innings near the finish, woke up to the fact that it had taken a new lease of life.

Bob Cherry clapped his hands like the report of a pistol as Mark Linley made a boundary hit for four.

"Bravo!" he roared. "Buck up, Lancashire!"

"Bravo, Linley!"

"Well hit!"

Mark Linley smiled. The lad who had come to Greyfriars on a scholarship seldom heard himself cheered by his comrades, and it was very pleasant to him. The Greyfriars fellows were sportsmen all, and there was no surer road to their esteem than by excelling in athletics, especially in cricket and football. Even Bulstrode's sneers at the "mill-boy" were silenced as the crowd cheered him after hit.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "This looks like lasting! Fatty, old man, if you don't get Wharton out in the next over I'll scrag you!"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"It's not so easy, Merry. You can try yourself, if you like!"

"Rats! What's the good of having a champion bowler and doing the work oneself? You go on, and get him out, or I'll—I'll stop your lunch!"

And Fatty Wynn chuckled, and went on to bowl. He did his level best this time. And it was needed, for the score was at ninety-nine. For the first innings, Greyfriars Remove had done very well after all. Fatty Wynn sent down a ball that tempted Wharton to hit out. There was a shout as the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was seen to leap into the air at point.

"My hat! He's got it!"

D'Arcy held up the ball.

"Caught! By Jove!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry rushed to the swell of St. Jim's, and gave him a tremendous slap on the shoulder.

"Good old Gus! Ripping!"

"Ow!"

"Out!" said Kildare.

The innings was over. So was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He staggered up, and jammed his monocle into his eye, and glared at his cricket captain.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"RIVAL SCOUTS."

Another Splendid Long, Complete
School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Ripping, my son!"

"Yaas, wathah! I fweely acknowledge that it was wippin', but I dislike extwemely bein' knocked about in that wuff mannah. I——"

"Where's Gus?" shouted Jack Blake, dashing up. "Where's the bonny boy?"

"Here I am, deah boy, what——"

"I want to slap you on the back, my son."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Here you are!"

"I pwotest! Stop! Ow! Weally——" And Arthur Augustus fairly took to his heels to avoid the congratulations of his comrades. He did not stop till he was safe on a chair between Cousin Ethel and Marjorie.

The innings was over. Greyfriars all down for ninety-nine. And the St. Jim's side were preparing to go in. Arthur Augustus remained where he was, feeling very much at home with three sweet girlish faces round him. Morning lessons were over now at St. Jim's, and there was a crowd round the field to watch the home innings.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

D'Arcy Bats!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"I don't know what their batting's like," said Harry Wharton, "but if it's anything like their bowling, we shall have all our work cut out."

"Yes, rather," agreed Bob Cherry. "And I hear that Merry is a sort of Fry and Palaret and Jessop rolled into one."

"The ratherfulness is terrific. In fact——"

"I say, you fellows, aren't you going to have any lunch before the next innings?"

"Oh, go and eat coke."

"You see——"

"Time to get on the field, my sons," said Harry Wharton. "Come on!"

"I suppose I'm going on to bowl, Wharton," remarked Bulstrode, tentatively, as they went into the field.

"I suppose you're not," replied Wharton. "Inky will have most of the bowling, and Bob Cherry and Linley will do the rest, except for a change."

"Of course, that cad Linley——"

"Shut up!"

"I'll say what I like. I——"

Harry Wharton stopped, and looked the bully of the Remove full in the face. Bulstrode was scowling.

"Look here, Bulstrode," he said, "I've put you in the team this time, to give you a chance, and I haven't counted it up against you that you scored only a duck's egg in our innings. But don't give me any trouble. If you make me repent that I put you in, I sha'n't make the same error again, I promise you."

Bulstrode bit his lip, and was silent.

The Greyfriars fellows went out to field. The batsmen came along, and took up their positions. Tom Merry and Figgins opened the innings, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his broad-brimmed hat pushed back on his head, and his eyeglass in his eye, explained to Cousin Ethel and Marjorie and Clara what was to be expected.

"Tom Mewwy is a vewy good batsman," he said, "and Figgins is not bad, you know. But you will see some weally good battin' pwesently."

"Indeed," said Miss Clara innocently. "When will that be?"

"I won't mention the name of the most wippin' batsman on our side," said D'Arcy. "It might sound conceited; but you will see."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"There," exclaimed D'Arcy, "Tom Mewwy's battin'! That was weally a nice little stwoke, you know. That late cut is wathah a favouwite of mine."

The ball was whizzing away, and the fieldsmen and the batsmen were running. The girls looked on with great interest. Tom Merry's cricket was always worth watching, as Cousin Ethel knew, and as the Cliff House girls were finding out. D'Arcy passed comments on every stroke, giving praise where it was due, but very plainly intimating that there was better play to come presently, presumably when he went into bat.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Marjorie, clapping her hands, as Figgins cut the ball away to the boundary, and Miss Clara said that it was ripping.

"Yaas, that's wathah good," said D'Arcy. "Figgins can bat a twifle, but——"

"I say, D'Arcy, excuse me——"

D'Arcy turned his head as Billy Bunter came up behind his chair. The fat junior from Greyfriars blinked at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Did you address me, deah boy?"

"Yes. Will you tell me which is Tom Merry's study?"

D'Arcy turned his head a little more round, and surveyed Billy Bunter attentively through his eyeglass. He had seen something of Bunter, and he remembered that there were good things galore packed in Tom Merry's study.

"Tom Mewwy's study," he said. "Ask Lowthah. He's standin' there, and he belongs to the study."

"I've asked him."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said I could go and eat coke," said Billy Bunter, with a look of indignation. "Then I asked Manners. He said I could go and eat cokernuts."

"Well, why don't you?"

"Oh, really, D'Arcy—"

"Bettah go and ask Mannahs or Lowthah again," said D'Arcy. "If they don't want you to know the numbah of their study, I dare say they have their weasons."

"Hurrah! Well hit!" roared the crowd, as Tom Merry cut the ball away, and the batsmen ran once more.

"Bwavo!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I couldn't have done that bettah myself."

"Or as well!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, you're a chump, you are!"

D'Arcy put up his monocle again, and stared at his friend. Blake was looking at the batting, and Billy Bunter was standing by with a peculiar grin on his fat face. As a matter of fact, the Greyfriars ventriloquist was at work again.

"Weally, Blake, I wegard that wemark as wude and wotten!"

"Eh—what? Are you still talking, Gussy?"

"I wegard chump as a wude and oppwobious expwes-sion—"

"Well, what about it?"

"You addressed me as a chump."

"Off your rocker? I didn't speak!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I suppose it was a guilty conscience," said Blake pleasantly. "You know you are a chump; that's it."

"I wefuse to be addressed as a chump. I considah you are a wude beast."

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wefuse to wing off. Undah the cires—"

"Silly ass!"

D'Arcy turned round hotly. It was Digby's voice, but Digby was looking at the game, not at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Digby, you wude beast—"

"Eh? What's the matter?"

"If it were not for the pwesence of ladies, I should give you a feahful thwashin'. I wegard you as a wottah."

"What on earth have I done?" exclaimed Digby, in amazement.

"You chawactowised me as a silly ass."

"I didn't, unless I'm getting into the habit of speaking my thoughts aloud unconsciously," said Digby.

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah farthah," said the swell of St. Jim's, with great dignity. "I—"

"Bravo, Inky!" roared the field.

Tom Merry's wicket was down—clean bowled by Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. In the interest excited by the fall of the first wicket, D'Arcy forgot his many affronts.

"That was a twicky ball, Miss Hazeldene," he remarked.

"Tom Mewwy did not play quite forward enough. Now, I should have been a little more forward."

"Are you always vory forward?" asked Miss Clara demurely.

D'Arcy did not quite know how to take that question, but before he had time to think it out he was called to take his innings. He rose from his seat, and took his bat, bestowing a smile upon the three girls that was a promise of great things to come.

"I suppose your cousin is a great batsman?" said Marjorie to Cousin Ethel.

Ethel laughed.

"He certainly thinks so, at all events," she replied; "but we shall see."

D'Arcy went down to the wicket with an easy saunter. He took his position, and waited gracefully for the ball to come down. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled a wicked smile, and sent down a curler. D'Arcy swiped at it, fully intending it for a boundary hit. His bat, however, struck nothing but the atmosphere.

"Bai Jove, it's a wide!"

But it wasn't a wide. It was a dead centre ball, and it whipped the middle stump out of the ground, leaving the wicket looking toothless.

D'Arcy stared at the wicket, and then at the bowler.

"How's that?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

And Kildare grinned.

"Out!"

"Bai Jove!"

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D'Arcy put up his eyeglass, apparently doubting that he was out until he had another good look at the wicket.

"You're out!" roared Blake. "Get off the grass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Will you come off?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy walked off, and Monty Lowther went in. The swell of St. Jim's was still looking surprised. He evidently could not make it out.

"What price duck's eggs!" howled Gore of the Shell.

"I wegard that as a wude question, Goah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy dropped into his seat again. He was looking a little pink, and he felt that he had to explain to the girls.

"I wasn't looking for a ball like that," he remarked.

"I suppose not," agreed Miss Clara demurely.

"You see, it had a cuwious sort of a twist on it."

"It must have had," assented Marjorie.

"I weally should have played a little—a little back to it—not exactly as I did play, you know."

"Yes, so I suppose," said Cousin Ethel.

Arthur Augustus thought he had better give up explaining.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Raider.

THE St. Jim's innings continued, with varying fortune, amid great interest from the crowd; but it had lost one spectator. Billy Bunter was gone. The fat junior had strolled off to the School House, with an air of exaggerated carelessness that would have indubitably attracted general attention, had not everyone been so keenly interested in the match.

Billy Bunter entered the house, and looked round him. A big, athletic man was coming towards the door, and Billy Bunter raised his cap politely, and spoke to him.

"If you please, sir—"

The big man, who was Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, stopped, and looked down at Billy Bunter with a pleasant nod.

"What is it, my lad?"

"Can you tell me which is Tom Merry's study, sir?"

"Upstairs," said Mr. Railton. "No. 10 in the second passage."

"Thank you, sir!"

The House-master, who was going out to look at the match, walked away. He naturally supposed that Bunter had been sent in by Tom Merry to get something from his study. Bunter had expected that, and he had judged correctly. The fat junior grinned as he ascended the stairs.

He easily found the Shell passage, and the door of the Tenth Study stood open. The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove walked in coolly, and blinked round him. Where was the feed?

He looked in the cupboards, and in the desk, and the bookcase, and then on the shelf. The feed was not there.

Billy Bunter's brows contracted a little. He had relied upon the information gained from Fatty Wynn, and he had been certain of finding and enjoying a big feed in Tom Merry's study.

"He couldn't have been rotting!" murmured Billy Bunter. "He isn't the sort of chap to fool about upon such a serious subject. The grub must be here somewhere. I suppose they've put it out of sight, in case any greedy rotter came nosing about after it. Some chaps are greedy enough for anything."

He looked under the table, and dragged out a large box. He opened the lid of the box, and gave a gasp of admiration. There were the good things in enticing array.

"My word! How ripping!"

There was a step behind him, and he looked quickly round. Finn, Dane, and Glyn, of the Shell, had just come in. The three St. Jim's boys looked at Billy Bunter, and looked at one another. They knew at once what Bunter was there for, and they were inclined to help him out of the study with their boots, but politeness to a stranger within the gates forbade.

"Hallo," said Buck Finn, "I guess you're here first!"

"Looks like it," said Glyn.

"Ye-e-es," stammered Billy Bunter, quite taken aback.

"You—you see—"

"Exactly. That's what we've come for—to get the grub out ready for the lunch," said Buck Finn. "Jolly of you to lend a hand!"

"I—I—I—"

"They want the grub ready after the innings," explained Finn. "The stumps are going down pretty quick, so we came to get it out. Quite an unexpected pleasure to find you coming to help."

"Yes, rather!" said Clifton Dane.

"You see, I—I—"

"That's all right. We're to take some of these things, not the lot. Lend a hand here, you chaps; and get a bag, one of you."

"Boys, I want you!"

It was a voice from the passage—the voice of Mr. Railton. The Shell fellows did not guess for a moment that a ventriloquist was at work.

"Yes, sir?" said Glyn.

And they hastened out of the study.

Billy Bunter plunged his hand into the box, and grabbed up a bag of tarts. He squeezed them into his jacket. He had no time for more.

The St. Jim's juniors looked up and down the passage. There was no sign of Mr. Railton there, and they were amazed.

"Some pesky young rotter playing a trick, I guess," said the American junior.

"It was Railton's voice," said Clifton Dane, very much puzzled.

"Well, he isn't here."

They re-entered the study. Bunter had jammed the bag of tarts out of the sight of the juniors, and was looking very red and guilty. Buck Finn noticed the swelling of his jacket, but made no remark.

As many of the good things as were wanted were packed into a large bag, and then the box was pushed back. The juniors lifted the bag into the passage, and Finn closed the door, locked it, and took out the key.

"Wh-wh-what's that for?" stammered Bunter.

"I guess some pesky young pig might come around hunting for grub," said the American junior blandly. "Can't be too careful."

Billy Bunter flushed. Dane and Glyn, exchanging glances with Finn, walked away. Buck Finn stooped over the bag, and signed to Bunter to help him.

"I say, it's jolly heavy," ventured Billy Bunter.

"I guess so. It was jolly good of you to come and help," said Buck Finn. "Lend a hand, will you? Awfully good of you!"

Bunter groaned inwardly, but stooped and grasped the handle. The bag was very heavy, and Finn, though he appeared to be exerting himself, took care to leave the greater part of the weight to Bunter.

"Oh, really, I—I say, it's heavy!" gasped Bunter.

"I guess so. Come on!"

Billy Bunter staggered along under the weight of the big, closely-packed bag. He was red and gasping by the time they were out of the School House. He dumped the bag down on the steps and panted for breath.

"I—I say, let's have a bit of a breathe!" he gasped.

"Certainly! It's heavy. Perhaps you would manage it better if you hoisted it on your chest," suggested Finn.

Billy Bunter thought of the bag of tarts crammed under his jacket, and shuddered.

"N-n-n-n-no, I—I don't think so."

"Try it on your shoulder, then."

"I—I—I—"

Before Bunter could decide what to say, Finn had slung the heavy bag up, and plumped it on his shoulder. Bunter staggered under the weight, and perhaps it was by accident that Finn allowed the bag to slide upon the fat junior's chest.

Squelch!

The tightly-crammed paper bag under Bunter's jacket burst, and the tarts were squashed out over his waistcoat.

Bunter gave a shudder of horror, and let the bag slide away without attempting to hold it. But Finn had it safe.

"Ow!" murmured Bunter. "Oh, dear! Oh, really, I—I— Groooh!"

"Anything the matter?"

"N-n-n-n-n-no!"

"Lend us a hand, then. Perhaps we'd better carry it between us, after all."

Bunter lent a hand. The bag was carried down to the cricket-ground. Curious glances were cast at Bunter. Jam was squeezing out from under his jacket, and made his trousers sticky, and every now and then a squashed tart escaped.

"That chap's a walking jam-factory," grinned Manners. "Look at him!"

Bunter heard the words, and looked down at his clothes. He gave Buck Finn a look that ought to have slain him on the spot, and waddled away in unspeakable wrath. Buck Finn chuckled gleefully. Bunter's raid had been a very unfortunate one for himself. He had captured nothing but the tarts, and they had not benefited him much. Behind the pavilion Billy Bunter scraped and scraped at his jammy waistcoat, and murmured expressive things.

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NEXT
TUESDAY:

"RIVAL SCOUTS."

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

D'Arcy Takes the Tart!

THE St. Jim's innings had come to an end. The batting had been very good, especially in the cases of Tom Merry and Blake. D'Arcy's was the only duck's egg.

The total for the innings had been 95, which was 4 under that of the visitors; but the difference did not amount to much. Both sides felt quite equal to getting a long way ahead on the second innings.

The afternoon was sunny and warm, a perfect April afternoon. The lunch was taken on the grass, *al fresco*, and it was a merry party that gathered there. In spite of the strenuous struggle of the match, the sides were on the best of terms, and all of them in perfect good-humour, with the exception, perhaps, of Bulstrode.

As for Billy Bunter, he did not turn up at first to the lunch, much to the surprise of his comrades. He was inquired for, and Buck Finn explained the slight accident the fat junior had met with. The Greyfriars fellows roared with laughter, but Harry Wharton looked serious.

"I'm sorry for this, Merry," he said. "The young bouncer was after the grub, I suppose. He ought to have a jolly good licking!"

"The lickfulness should be terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed fat Bunter bringfully draws the disgracefulness upon our honourable selves."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, it's all right! I dare say he was hungry. Fatty Wynn would have done just the same, wouldn't you, Fatty?"

Fatty Wynn looked up from a pie.

"I shouldn't wonder," he replied. "You see, it must be awfully hard for a fellow to keep away from the grub when he's really hungry. I dare say Bunter feels much the same as I do. This April weather makes me fearfully hungry!"

"So does any weather," grinned Figgins. "May I pass you some of the rabbit, Miss Hazeldene?"

"Thank you!"

"Your plate, please, Miss Ethel."

"Oh, no!" said Cousin Ethel, laughing. "You really must not, you know. I am not Fatty Wynn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Bunter!"

Billy Bunter came along, looking decidedly worried. He had scrubbed the jam off his waistcoat, and the exertion had tired him, and made him extraordinarily hungry. His face brightened up at the sight of the feed.

"Hungry?" asked Fatty Wynn sympathetically.

"Famished! I say, you fellows, make room for me!"

"Here you are!" said Wynn hospitably. "Here's your place! I've kept back this rabbit-pie for you to start on."

"Oh, really, Wynn, that's awfully ripping of you! I say," went on Bunter, as he started on the rabbit-pie, "I wish you'd come over and see us at Greyfriars as soon as you can, Wynn. I am shortly getting three pounds a week from a Home-Work company I'm doing some work for, and I am going to stand a series of ripping feeds with the first three pounds I get. If you'd come—"

"Delighted!" said Fatty Wynn, beaming. "I'll fix it up. Of course, it's a jolly long way to Greyfriars, but I could manage it on a half-holiday. This is really ripping of you, Bunter!"

"Not at all," said Bunter. "You're a chap after my own heart, and I jolly well wish you were at Greyfriars. I could chum up with you."

And then Bunter devoted his attention to the pie, and had no more time for speech. The feast was a merry one, and there was an endless clatter and chatter. Cousin Ethel and Marjorie and Clara looked very bright and happy, and if they had eaten a tenth part of what their attentive companions pressed upon them, they would have excelled the finest performances of Fatty Wynn and Billy Bunter.

Figgins was looking after Ethel with great devotion, and D'Arcy, seated between Marjorie and Clara, divided his attention between the two. Billy Bunter cast an eye on D'Arcy after he had finished the rabbit-pie. Fatty Wynn helped him to jam-tart, and Bunter travelled through jam-tart at express speed. At the same time his brain was working.

Bunter, fat little fellow as he was, and amazingly unattractive, had always had the idea that he was a ladies' man, and if a girl ever addressed him with common politeness, he deduced from that that his charms had found another victim. He regarded D'Arcy's place as belonging to himself by right, but the swell of St. Jim's showed no sign of moving until it was time for the second innings.

"Some of this marmalade tart, Gussey?" said Blake.

"Aw—no—thank you, Blake! You see, Miss Hazeldene, when a chap sends down a ball like that, I let out with the bat, like that, and then I can always take three at least."

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"I see," said Marjorie.
 "Pway pass me some tart, Blake," said a voice wonder-
 fully like D'Arcy's.
 "Here you are! You said you wouldn't have it just
 now."
 "Eh? Did you speak?"
 "Yes. Here's the tart."
 "No, thank you, deah boy! I've finished!"
 "You asked for it."
 "Weally, you are labouwin' undah an ewwor. I did
 nothin' of the sort."
 "I believe you're going off your rocker."
 "I wegard that wemark as wude and oppwobious."
 Blake set down the plate, and consoled himself by taking
 a helping. D'Arcy turned to Marjorie again, and a voice
 that seemed to be his proceeded:
 "Weally, Blake, do you mean to scoff all that tart?"
 Blake stopped a piece of tart on his fork half-way to his
 mouth, and glared at the swell of St. Jim's.
 "Gussy! What's that?"
 "What's what, deah boy?"
 "Do you want any of this tart, or do you not want any
 of this tart?" roared Blake.
 "I weally do not, deah boy. Pway don't pursue the
 subject."
 "Well, of all the asses——"
 "I wefuse to be wegard as an ass!"
 Blake snorted, and went on eating his tart. D'Arcy
 sniffed, and wondered why Marjorie and Clara were
 sniling. Ethel was looking puzzled.
 "Bai Jove, that's a wippin' marmalade-tart! You might
 let me have some, Blake. You are a wathah gweedy
 boundah!"
 Blake snorted like a warhorse.
 "You unutterable ass——"
 "Did you addwess me, Blake?"
 "Look here, I don't know whether this is a new brand
 of humour," said Blake, with unpleasant emphasis; "but
 if you ask me for this tart again, you'll get it!"
 "I wefuse to discuss the mattah, Blake. I——"
 "Oh, ring off!"
 There was a minute's silence. Blake looked dangerous,
 and Arthur Augustus indignant. He recovered his com-
 posure, however, and turned to Marjorie to make a remark.
 It was time for the ventriloquist to chip in again.
 "Pway give me some tart, Blake."
 Blake caught up the tart vengefully.
 "There it is!" he exclaimed, and he dabbed the plateful
 into the face of the swell of St. Jim's. "I told you I'd
 give it to you if you asked for it."
 D'Arcy gave a muffled shriek.
 "Ow-ow! Groo! You howwid beast! Ow!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus leaped to his feet, his face was
 smothered with tart, and his eyeglass was opaque with
 marmalade. He gasped and spluttered, and a roar went
 up.
 Tom Merry came along, and burst into a roar of laughter.
 "Ha, ha, ha! Is that you, Gussy? It's time for second
 innings, but you needn't have tried to bolt the grub so
 quickly as all that."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wasn't boltin' the gwub!" shrieked D'Arcy. "It was
 that wottah, Blake!"
 "Well, you asked for it," said Blake.
 "You'd better go and get it cleaned off," chuckled Tom
 Merry. "The Greyfriars kids are going to the wickets,
 and I want you in the field. You're not much use, but you
 may as well stand at cover-point as a matter of form."
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
 "Cut off and get ready; can't wait!" said the St. Jim's
 skipper decisively.
 And Arthur Augustus postponed reprisals upon Blake,
 and went off to get a wash.
 And Billy Bunter chuckled.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fatty Wynn Distinguishes Himself.

THE Greyfriars second innings opened well, with Harry
 Wharton and Bob Cherry at the wickets. Wharton
 was in his finest form, and he knocked up the runs
 in fine style, well backed up by his chum. His
 individual score was at twenty-five, and it looked as if he
 might go on to the century, when fate overtook him, in the
 person of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.
 D'Arcy had requested Tom Merry to put him on to bowl,
 giving as his reason that it was necessary to get Wharton
 out if the game was to be played to a finish. Tom Merry
 declined to accede to the request, and his reason, as stated,
 was that he would as soon trust Herries' bulldog with the
 ball as D'Arcy. D'Arcy's feelings were too deep to allow
 of a reply to that, and he went out to field in a state of
 bottled-up indignation.

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Perhaps his indignation made him extra keen; but cer-
 tain it is that in the very next over he caught Harry
 Wharton out.

There was a shout from the St. Jim's crowd. The Fourth
 Form and the Shell, to say nothing of the Third, and many
 of the Fifth and Sixth, thronged round the field, and there
 was no lack of an audience to appreciate good play. The
 unexpected catch by D'Arcy did good work for the home
 side, and he was given a round of cheering. He raised
 his Panama hat gracefully, and the crowd cheered again.

Tom Merry gave him a slap on the back, but D'Arcy,
 remembering his previous experience, dodged, and Tom
 Merry nearly fell over. D'Arcy grinned at him.

"Pway don't be such a wuff wottah, deah boy," he said.
 "You can always wely upon me for these little things, you
 know. I caught Wharton out in the othah innings, and
 as you wouldn't let me bowl, I caught him out now——"

"Ha, ha, ha! What price flukes?" howled Figgins.

"I wefuse to admit that there was any fluke——"

"Here, play up!"

Wharton carried out his bat for twenty-five. It was a
 good beginning, though he had expected to do more. After
 Wharton's retirement bad luck came thick and fast for the
 Greyfriars side.

Fatty Wynn was bowling again, and the Welsh junior
 seemed to come fresh from his substantial lunch, like a
 giant refreshed with wine, to do wonders. His bowling
 would have puzzled many a county batsman, and the
 Greyfriars wickets suffered.

Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hazeldene went down
 in quick succession, without a single run being scored, and
 the St. Jim's crowd roared over the hat-trick again. But
 Fatty Wynn was not finished yet.

Next man in was Micky Desmond, with Ogilvy at the
 other end. Micky Desmond, remembering his duck's egg
 in the first innings, was awfully careful. But his care did
 not avail.

The ball came down, and his off-stump was whipped up,
 and Micky looked down at the wicket in dismay.

"How's that?" roared Figgins.

"Out!" said the umpire.

Micky had achieved the dreaded "pair of spectacles."
 He went out with a saddened brow, and Morgan took his
 place. Morgan was a good batsman, but Wynn was too
 much for him. Down went his wicket at the next ball,
 and Morgan followed Micky Desmond.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry. While Nugent
 gave a prolonged whistle. "This is a case of rot, and no
 mistake. I—I wish that fat young boulder had suffocated
 himself with another tart!"

Harry Wharton was looking serious.

"Six down for thirty," he remarked. "It looks a bit
 thick!"

"There goes another!"

It was another wicket down. Seven down for thirty runs,
 and the double hat-trick on the part of the St. Jim's bowler!

No wonder the crowd cheered Fatty Wynn! They roared,
 and shouted and clapped, and the fat Fourth-Former went
 quite scarlet with mingled modesty and gratification.
 Figgins and Kerr slapped him on the back till he was
 nearly winded.

"Good old Fatty!" roared the crowd. "The double hat-
 trick! Hurrah!"

Mark Linley went on next. He received the bowling
 from Jack Blake, and stopped the rot. Backed up by
 Ogilvy at the other end, he started the scoring again for
 Greyfriars. The figures crept up, and Harry Wharton
 breathed once more.

"Forty!" he said. "That's better! My hat! There
 goes Ogilvy's wicket!"

Ogilvy had been stumped by a throw-in from the long-
 field from the sure hand of Figgins. Eight down for forty!

Bulstrode came out with his bat under his arm, and
 Wharton glanced at him.

"Go it!" he said. "Better luck this time!"

"Right you are!" said Bulstrode, with unusual hearti-
 ness. "This is a serious business for us. I'll do my best."

But Bulstrode had little chance. He was opposed to
 Fatty Wynn, and though he stopped several balls, he was
 clean bowled by the last of the over without having taken
 a run.

He came out looking very despondent. He had done his
 best, but he had not helped Greyfriars, and, like Micky
 Desmond, he had only the pair of spectacles to his credit
 for the match. Hard as the Remove had expected the fight
 to be, it was proving harder than their expectations. But
 they were not beaten yet.

Nine down for forty!

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took up his bat, and Wharton tapped him on the shoulder.

"Stick it out with Linley," he said.

The nabob nodded.

"The stickfulness shall be terrific, if it lies within my esteemed powers," he said. "The bestfulness is all I can do, my worthy chum."

Last man in!

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh joined Mark Linley at the wickets. He did his best, and it was a good best. Between them the Nabob of Bhanipur and the lad from Lancashire made the running, and the close of the innings was the most brilliant part of it.

The score crept up to fifty, fifty-five, sixty. Then there was a shout; as the ball, glancing from Linley's bat, went right into the ready palm of Jack Blake. Blake grinned, and sent up the ball, and caught it again in his palm.

"Out!"

The Greyfriars second innings was over for a total of sixty. They looked serious over it, but not downhearted. If they could not win on their batting, they might on their bowling. The total for the two innings was one hundred and fifty-nine, and St. Jim's wanted sixty-five to win. There was a chance yet, in Wharton's mind—although Arthur Augustus D'Arcy told the girls that the match was practically over.

"Gweyfwiahs have done vewy well, considewin'," the swell of St. Jim's remarked. "Of course, they couldn't expect to do better, as we have wecwited our eleven fwom the Shell, as well as the Fourth. Though, as a mattah of fact our best playahs are Fourth Form fellows. Wynn, as a bowlah, for instance, and—ahem—somebody else as batsman. I don't want to bwag, of course."

"But the match isn't over yet," said Marjorie.

"Pwactically ovah, deah boy—I mean deah gal. The west won't take long. I was wabthah afwaid that the light wouldn't last, but that innings was such a short one that that will be all wight. Gweyfwiahs have weally put up a vewy good fight, and gweat cwedit is weally due to them, you know."

Miss Clara laughed.

"Well, we shall see," she said. "I hope we shall win, all the same."

D'Arcy was nothing if not polite.

"I hope you will," he said gracefully. "I shall unfortunately be compelled to do my best at the wicket, so Gweyfwiahs won't have much chance. I am sowwy."

D'Arcy wondered why the girls smiled as he went away.

The fourth innings of that eventful match commenced, and it was watched with great keenness. St. Jim's wanted sixty-five to win, but they were not to get it if the Greyfriars field could stop them.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Honours are Easy.

TOM MERRY and Jack Blake were first on the list for the second innings, and they made the fur fly for a start. Tom Merry was a hard hitter, and so was Blake, and they gave the visitors some leather-hunting to keep them busy, while twenty runs were piled up in next to no time.

But the Greyfriars Removites were watchful for chances. They had no bowler like Fatty Wynn to pit against the home batsmen, but at fielding they were superb. And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a trick of bowling which favoured catches in the field; and a man out was a man out.

Tom Merry swiped out at a ball that was purposely sent to tempt him, and there was a click at cover-point. Wharton held up the round red ball.

"How's that?"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

"Out!"

Figgins took Tom Merry's place. His innings was longer, but poorer in results. The bowling was so cautious, and the fielding so careful, that though the wickets did not fall, there were few chances of scoring. A run was stolen here and there, but the score was only increased by half a dozen when Figgy's wicket fell. And Kerr, who followed him in, had even worse luck, being clean bowled at the second ball.

Manners came in next, and kept up his end with Blake for a good quarter of an hour, but only four runs rewarded him. He was stumped at the finish, and gave place to Herries.

Herries swiped a ball fairly into the hands of Mark Linley, and carried out his bat for a duck's egg. Reilly came in, and began to score. Tom Merry watched from the tent.

"Get ready, Fatty," he said. "You're next man in."

Fatty Wynn felt a touch on his arm. He turned round, and met the glance of Billy Bunter.

"Look here!"

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Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened as he saw a big paper bag crammed with tarts in the fat junior's hands.

"I sneaked them out of sight at lunch," grinned Bunter. "I knew I should get hungry before tea. There's a dozen here, and they're new and fresh. Tuck in!"

Fatty Wynn did not need a second invitation.

He "tucked in," and between the two fat juniors the tarts disappeared at an amazing rate.

There was a clack of a falling wicket.

"Blake's out! Now, then, Wynn."

"Half a mo'," gasped Fatty Wynn, cramming the last tart hastily into his mouth. "Groo! Now I'm—groo—oo!—ready."

He hurriedly took his bat, and passed Blake coming in. St. Jim's were six down for fifty-five. Fatty Wynn went on in Blake's place, and received the bowling of the rest of the over, and just lived through it. After those hastily-eaten tarts he did not feel up to great exertions, but he saved his wicket. Then Hurree Singh bowled from the other end to Reilly.

Reilly was in good form, and he hit out. He cut away the second ball almost to the boundary, and ran. Fatty Wynn had no choice but to run, and he ran. The effort was tremendous. Those new fresh tarts were avenging themselves. It seemed impossible to run, and Fatty Wynn dragged his plump limbs slowly along. There was a roar from the crowd.

"Buck up!"

"Get on; this isn't a snail's race!"

"Get a move on!"

Fatty Wynn reached the wicket, and gasped with relief. He was safe at last. But what were the fellows yelling about?

"Run! Run! Run!"

"I have run!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "I—I—oh, dear!"

Reilly was running again. It was a close fit, but there was time. He was half-way down the pitch already, and Fatty Wynn had not left his wicket. The fellows waved their hands and roared:

"Run! Run! Ass! Duffer! Goat! Run!"

Fatty Wynn ran. He started late, and he wasn't in good form for running. Reilly made his wicket safe, but Fatty Wynn had six yards yet to go when Harry Wharton sent the ball crashing into the stumps.

"Out! Oh, you fat duffer!"

They said things to Fatty Wynn as he carried out his bat, gasping. They would have said more, but they remembered the double hat-trick, and let him off lightly.

Lowther was clean bowled in the next over, and then Digby was caught at mid-wicket. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went in to join Reilly, last man in. The St. Jim's score stood at sixty for the second innings. Five wanted to win—and the last man at the wickets.

Arthur Augustus took his stand in his usual graceful attitude. He knew that three pairs of pretty eyes were upon him. He swiped out at the first ball, and it fairly flew. D'Arcy could bat when he liked. He put up his eyeglass and looked for the ball, and then waved his hand to Reilly.

"Don't wun!" he said. "It's a boundawy!"

A boundary it was. Sixty-four! The score had tied!

Arthur Augustus gracefully raised his panama to acknowledge the round of cheering for the hit. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sent down the next ball. Clack! The ball flew, and the batsmen ran.

There was a roar.

Harry Wharton held up the ball—it was a catch at cover-point.

"Oh, well caught!" roared Bob Cherry. "How's that, umpire?"

"Out!"

"Bai Jove!"

And so the great match ended—in a draw.

The match was over; Greyfriars had drawn with St. Jim's. As nobody was beaten, nobody felt dissatisfied. A merry party gathered to tea after the match, and a crowd of St. Jim's juniors accompanied the Greyfriars party to the station when they left.

The platform was crowded as the train steamed out, with the Greyfriars lads waving their caps from the windows. On the platform a host of caps were waved, and a silk hat—the last, of course, by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Cousin Ethel kissed her hand to Marjorie and Clara. The train sped on, and a last cheer died away behind.

"Well, it's been a ripping day!" said Harry Wharton.

And the Removites agreed, without a dissentient voice, that it had.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete, school tale of Greyfriars next Tuesday, entitled "Rival Scouts." Please order your copy of the "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

The First Chapters of a Grand Story.



ONE OF THE RANKS

A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

CHARACTERS AND SYNOPSIS.

RONALD CHENYS, a young cadet in his last term at Sandhurst. He is on very bad terms with

IAN CHENYS, his half-brother, who narrowly escapes being killed by the accidental discharge of his gun during a struggle with Ronald.

MRS. CHENYS, who hates her step-son Ronald, accuses him of trying to murder Ian. She poisons the mind of

GENERAL CHENYS, who promises to disown Ronald unless he passes his Army exam, at the next attempt.

During the progress of this exam., the professor in charge finds a paper of skeleton notes on the floor at Ronald's feet, and accuses him of cheating, sending him to his room under arrest. The news spreads like wildfire through the college that Ronald Chenys, best of good fellows, had been caught cheating! (Now go on with the story.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER—Continued.

Nobody put it in that way openly, but everybody was forced to admit the ugly truth in their hearts.

And the "old coll." was sorry—not to a man, perhaps, because no one can say that in this world he has not an enemy. It sometimes happens that one's bitterest foe lurks closest to one's elbow, and it was so in Ronald's case.

Slowly now, like one walking in a dream, he made his way into his room, and sank down upon his bed, his head buried in his hands.

"Ruined! Disgraced! Done for!"

He found himself repeating the words over and over again to himself, and yet he could not grasp their terrible significance. His brain seemed numbed.

A bugle blew a blast. It was the warning call for mess. His own kit lay ready beside him, where it had been set out by his soldier servant.

He rose mechanically, and commenced to dress, stumbling about the room like a man in a delirium. Yet the movement was slowly stirring his sluggish wits to life.

"Ruined! Disgraced! Done for!"

His eyes lit upon the gaudy mess-jacket, and he caught it up and looked at it dazedly, as if it was some strange, new thing. The glitter of the burnished buttons seemed to rouse him from the spell which held him.

The mist broke and scattered, and with a rush came the dawn of understanding.

He flung the jacket from him, and sank back upon the bed.

He knew what it all meant now. He was a prisoner, proclaimed and branded as a common cheat. His mess nights were over, and his career as a gentleman cadet had come to a close.

All his boyhood dreams had crumbled into black and bitter dust.

How had it come about? Ronald pressed his aching temples, and tried to think. That he could have taken the slip of notes into the examination-room by any chance was out of the question. He had locked it in his desk that very midday, he could swear.

He crossed to the desk, and tried the lid. It was still locked. He inserted the key, and turned it, but it grated harshly and stopped half-way. This was strange, for the wards had always moved with perfect smoothness.

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A second pressure forced the bolt, and Ronald looked within. The slip of notes had gone.

He had not time to reason what all this might mean, for a tap came to the door at that instant.

"Come in!" he called.

It opened, and a mess-waiter entered, bearing a tray.

"Your dinner, sir!" he explained.

"All right, set it down!" exclaimed Ronald, conscious that his cheeks were tingling.

The man was Slaney, the soldier servant of his step-brother, Ian. He put down the tray with elaborate care, removed the covers, set a chair to the table, and stood for a moment as though he had something to say, and was seeking an opportunity for saying it.

"Where's Flanigan?" asked Ronald. Flanigan was his own man.

"Gone sick, sir. Rheumatiz in the knee, sir. I'm doin' his dooty for 'im!"

"All right, you can get out!" said Ronald gruffly.

"Askin' your pardon, sir—" Private Slaney paused, and gently rubbed the back of his hand. "You'll forgive a liberty, p'raps, but I should like to say how sorry I am to hear o' this unfortunit misunderstandin'."

Ronald turned and glared upon him, scarcely knowing whether to take this as a genuine piece of sympathy or not. He disliked Slaney, though he had never bothered his head to reason why. There was something mean and shifty in the man's close-set eyes.

"Thanks!" he said curtly, and made a pretence of sitting down to his meal, though the mere sight of the food was choking him.

"Yes, sir," continued Slaney, picking up courage to steal a pace nearer. "I couldn't 'elp venturing a 'umble expression of sympathy, particularly as I know it'll all blow over satisfactory to yourself, if not to other parties."

"Look here, what the dickens are you driving at?" demanded Ronald, turning in his chair.

"I said 'particularly as I know it'll all—'"

"I know what you said!" interrupted Ronald sharply.

"I'm asking you what you are driving at?"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Private Slaney, Blackmailer, Gets More Kicks than Halfpence.

Private Slaney, who had been venturing on the liberty of an insinuating leer, suddenly caught the danger-signal in the young cadet's eyes, and flattened out his features into some military mould.

"There are things a man sometimes drops across accidental like," he began in an oily tone; "odd things which by themselves ain't of no value, but when he pieces them together, become worth a considerable deal to the parties involved, as I might say."

"Oh!" said Ronald grimly. He was beginning to get Private Slaney's measure now. "Go on!"

"For instance, this unfortunit' little circumstance I was alludin' to," resumed Slaney, "took place in one of the 'alls which ain't so far from the window of this very room."

This was true enough. As a matter of fact, now Ronald came to think of it, it would have been easy enough to toss

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a biscuit through the very window under which he had been sitting that afternoon.

"Well, what has that got to do with me?" he asked.

"A great deal, sir—a very great deal, p'raps! Shall I say more?" inquired Slaney, screwing up his eyes, and rubbing the back of his hand gently.

"You can please yourself," retorted Ronald, turning to the table again. "If you have anything more to say, though, I shall be pleased if you will say it quickly, and get out."

"Certainly, sir, though what I could tell you is of great value, sir," Slaney laid particular emphasis on the word. "Pertiklerly to a smart young gentleman like you, who stands—"

"Enough of that, my man!" cried Ronald, turning on him in a blaze of indignation. "I know what your game is. You've ferreted out some facts which you think bear on the incident of this afternoon, and you have the impertinence to come to me and suggest that I should buy your dirty wares. Get out of her at once, or, by jingo, I'll wring your neck, you blackmailing scoundrel!"

Private Slaney backed to the door, but only to take up a second defensive position from which he could beat a swifter retreat.

Mr. Ronald Chenys was what he would have called a "dab hand at the gloves," and he had no desire to test his powers in that department.

"I ask your pardon, sir, if I 'ave given offence," he said, with cringing humility. "I do, indeed; only, as an honest man myself, it seemed 'ard to see what I 'ave seen, and say nothing. I ain't talking about what I don't know. I do assure you. I have evidence, but being poor, and having a wife to keep, I want my price. Of course, you being a gentleman, know best."

Ronald was standing, as he had risen, his chest heaving, his eyes fixed on Slaney at the door.

If this man held proof of the treachery against him, what would not this mean to him? Yet how could he stoop to haggle with such a despicable creature?

Slaney saw his hesitation, and thought that the victory was won.

With a quick stride he reached Ronald's side, and thrust his open palm under the full glare of the gaslight.

Resting in it was a small oval plate of gold, curiously chased with Indian workmanship.

At the sight of it, Ronald's face flew from red to white, and white to red again. It was the one-half of a cuff link, which he knew belonged to Ian.

Ronald glared at it, his eyes dilating with horror at the base treachery at which it seemed to hint.

"Do you mean to suggest that my brother—"

He choked back the words with a furious effort, then swung round on Slaney, and gripped him by the throat.

"You scoundrel! You blackmailing cur!" he cried, and flung him reeling against the door. "Go," he roared, "or by Jove, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!"

Slaney picked himself up slowly, his beady eyes twinkling with rage and revenge. He paused and licked his lips, as if preparing some parting shaft; but Ronald leapt again seized him by the scruff of his jacket, tore open the door, and, with a driving kick, propelled him forward on his hands and knees into the passage outside.

Ronald flung the door to with a crash, and returned to his chair. The mere thought of food turned him sick, and he swept aside the loaded tray and buried his head in his hands.

Was this, then, the truth of it all? Had the bitter enmity and hate that his step-brother had always shown him culminated in this?

(To be continued.)

IN THE RANKS.

(Concluding Chapters.)

The End of Leonard Dashwood.

"I am done, Jack!" he said. "I am not sorry; but I have a lot to tell you before I go. Bend down closer, you seem such a long way off! Feel in that pocket!" The words came out very slowly, with a pause between each one. "There is something there which belongs to you. I didn't tear it up, although I said I did."

"Don't worry about anything, Leonard!" said our hero. "Is there anything we can do for you?"

"Yes, I tell you. Feel in that pocket. I shall be easier in my mind when you have got that receipt. It was not altogether my fault. My father was to blame in the first instance!"

Very cautious lest he should press upon the wound through which the young man's life was ebbing, Jack drew forth from the pocket a piece of crumpled paper.

"I don't ask you to forgive me," continued Leonard. "It is too much to expect. I have played it down as low on you as man could, and I can only say I'm sorry."

Jack and the colonel put their hands beneath his shoulders, and were lifting him very gently, when his head fell back, and they laid him gently down again.

Tom Howard rose silently to his feet, took off his helmet, and looked down at the dead man, and the bearers lifted the mangled corpse of the man who had done so much mischief, and laid it upon the stretcher. As they returned to the Nawagai Camp, Colonel Greville, and those immediately with him, turned their horses' heads in the direction of the dust clouds, which showed them where the main body of the squadron was pursuing the flying foe.

They overtook the Hussars after a short gallop of two or three minutes, passing several dead tribesmen on the way, who had been cut down in the pursuit.

Although the spirit of the Mahmunds was broken, and they were melting away like snow before the sun, there still remained little bands of a dozen or more lurking in the clefts and crannies of the rocks, and, as the khaki-clad squadrons rode on, one after another of these hiding bands was put up, like a covey of birds.

Suddenly, you would see a turbaned head peep out from behind a boulder and immediately disappear. Another and another! And then, with screams of terror, the rascals would dart away from their concealment and race madly for the precipitous mountain sides, up which they would scramble out of the horse-men's reach, provided always that they got there first.

Tom Howard rode along mechanically with the rest, his mind too fully occupied with what had just happened to take any keen interest in the pursuit, until he was roused by Clavering's voice exclaiming:

"Well, I'm hanged!" in a tone of such absolute astonishment that Howard looked at him quickly.

"What's wrong, Jim?" he said.

"Don't know whether it's wrong or right, man," replied Clavering; "but it seems to me very little use putting people under arrest on this expedition. There's Bill Sloggett, look at him—lemon-cutting and Turk's heading with the real article, too! By gad, what an arm that chap has got!"

(This story will be concluded next Tuesday. Please order your "Magnet" Library in advance.)

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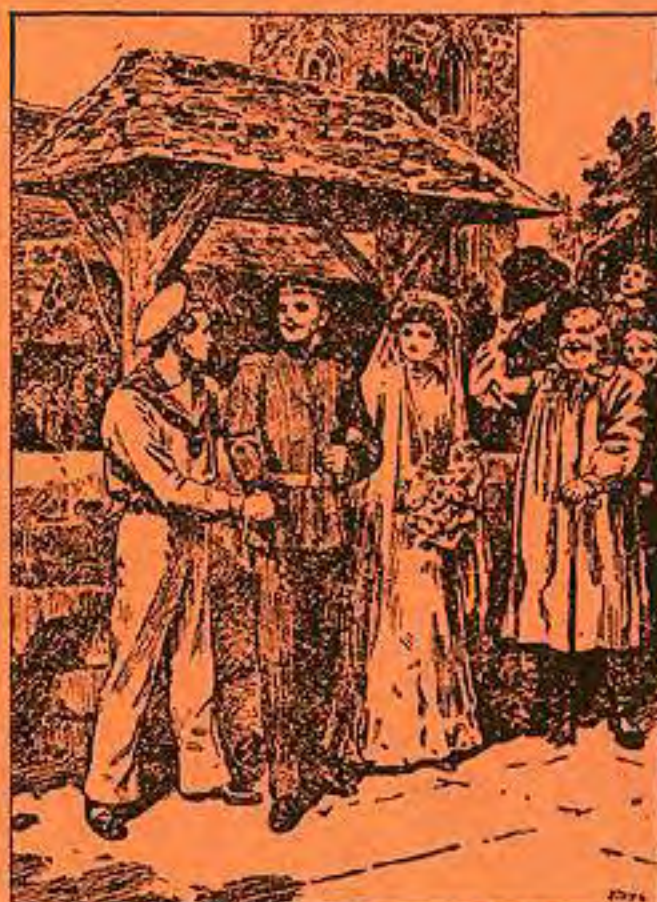
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