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NUMBER 66.

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By
Frank
Richards.



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Carberry dropped the fragment of cigarette from his mouth as if it had suddenly become red-hot.



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of the
Boys of Greyfriars,
— BY —
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bunter's Hospitality.

LETTER for you, Bunter!"

The fattest junior in the Remove at Greyfriars came down the stairs two at a time. Billy Bunter was always expecting a letter, and always expecting to find a postal-order in it. He was usually in sore need of a remittance; all the more so because his remittances were few and far between. Hence his excitement when Bulstrode, who was standing before the letter-rack in the hall, called up the stairs to him.

He came down in such haste that he very nearly rolled down, and trotted eagerly over to the rack.

"Thanks, Bulstrode!" he exclaimed. "I was coming down to see if there was one for me. Where is it?"

Billy Bunter blinked anxiously over the rack. He was the shortest and shortest-sighted junior in the Lower Fourth, and there were many letters there. His big spectacles did not seem to improve his vision very much, either.

"Give it to me, Bulstrode. I'm rather anxious about that letter. You see, I'm expecting a postal-order, and there has been some delay about it."

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, chuckled. He seemed

to find it amusing to watch the short-sighted junior blinking in search of his letter.

"Or very likely it's from the Patriotic Home Work Association," went on Bunter eagerly. "I'm expecting three pounds from them for some picture-postcards I've been colouring for them. I'm jolly well in need of the money, too, because that chap Wynn, of St. Jim's, is coming to see me shortly, and I want to stand him a decent feed. You might give me the letter, Bulstrode."

"It's the top one," grinned Bulstrode.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, I can't reach it. I say, you know, you are an ill-natured beast! Ow! Leggo my ear!"

"What am I?" asked Bulstrode pleasantly.

"I—I mean you're a jolly good fellow," wailed Billy Bunter. "That's really what I meant to say."

"Then you'd better be a little more careful in selecting your words," grinned Bulstrode, giving Bunter's ear another twist. "It didn't sound as if you meant that at all. You can jump for your letter."

Bunter murmured something under his breath, which he could not venture to say aloud, and dragged over a stool to stand on to get his letter. Bulstrode kicked it as he mounted, and the fat junior rolled over and sat down on the floor.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you—you— Here, I say, Wharton, give me my letter, will you?"

It was not Harry Wharton who was coming along, however, but Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire. He glanced at Bunter and Bulstrode, and reached a letter from the rack that was addressed to himself. It was in a girl's hand, and Mark's face brightened up very much as he looked at it. Bunter rose to his feet, and rubbed his bones where they had come into rough contact with the floor.

"Ow! I'm hurt! Give me my letter, will you?"

"Certainly," said Mark Linley.

"Let it alone!" said Bulstrode. "I want to see the fat young ass jump for it."

Linley did not reply. He simply reached the letter down. Bulstrode's eyes gleamed, and he grasped the Lancashire lad's wrist.

"Put that letter back!" he said.

"I shall not!"

They looked at one another steadily for a moment, and Mark Linley stiffened up ready for a tussle, if need were. It was not the first time he had fallen foul of Bulstrode. But the Remove bully, with a short angry laugh, turned on his heel and walked away.

Mark Linley handed the letter to Bunter.

"You'd better cut off!" he remarked, with a glance towards Bulstrode. And Billy Bunter took his advice. As Mark Linley walked away, to read his own letter, Billy Bunter scuttled upstairs, and along the Remove passage to No. 1 Study. Four juniors were at work round the table in that study—Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Singh. Billy Bunter dropped into the armchair.

"Any letters for us?" asked Bob Cherry, looking up.

"There's one for me," said Bunter. "I'm sincerely sorry, Cherry, but I never thought of looking if there were any for you."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"I'm blessed if I know the hand on this letter," went on Bunter, blinking at the envelope in his hand. "It can't be the postal-order I was expecting, or I should know the handwriting."

"Think you could think all that, instead of saying it?" asked Frank Nugent. "We happen to be working."

"Oh, really, Nugent! I suppose this is from the Patriotic Home Work Association, with the three pounds that didn't come last week. It will come in awfully handy, as it's a half-holiday to-morrow, and I am simply stony. There's that chap Wynn, too, whom I invited to come over. He may come to-morrow."

Harry Wharton sat upright.

"What's that about Wynn?" he asked quickly. "What are you talking about?"

Bunter was opening the letter by jabbing his thumb into it. He paused and looked up at Harry Wharton.

"Didn't I tell you I invited Wynn to come and see me, when we were over at St. Jim's the other day?" he said. "It's the chap they call Fatty Wynn, you know, a jolly decent chap, something like me—good-looking."

"You've invited him over here?"

"Yes, of course. Why shouldn't I?"

"No reason why you shouldn't, if you can look after him. He looked to me like a chap who will want feeding."

"Well, I suppose I shall be able to stand him something decent, out of a cheque for three pounds, Wharton?"

"You young ass! You're as likely to get three hundred pounds as three!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! If I happened to be stony, I suppose you wouldn't let a visitor starve. They did us down awfully well at St. Jim's when we went over there for the cricket match, and—"

"Of course, we should look after him," said Wharton, looking worried. "Only we should like to specify the time our guests come ourselves. If you leave the trouble to us, I think you might leave the invitations to us also, you young duffer!"

"I'm sincerely sorry that you should look upon Wynn's visit as a trouble—"

"I don't! I never said so! Shut up, for goodness' sake, or I shall lose patience with you," said Wharton. "If Wynn happens to be coming to-morrow, it's deuced unlucky, that's all, as we're all on the rocks."

"It will be all right. I'm pretty certain that this letter contains a substantial remittance from the Patriotic—"

"Oh, rats!"

Wharton went on with his work, and Bunter, with an indignant sniff, unfolded the letter. There was no business heading to it, so it did not evidently come from the Home Work Association. Billy Bunter blinked over it, and a long, low whistle escaped him.

"Phew! My word!"

No. 66.

"THE MAGNET" NEXT WEEK: "HARRY WHARTON'S WARD." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

He expected the chums of No. 1 to question him, but they went steadily on with their work. Bunter whistled again, and still they did not look up. He grunted, and blinked at them.

"Look here, you chaps! This is rather serious!"

"Oh, dear, what is it now?"

"This letter isn't from the Home Work Association—"

"I knew that before you opened it, duffer!"

"It's from Fatty Wynn."

"Well?"

"Well, read it!" said Bunter. He threw the letter on the table, and Bob Cherry picked it up and read it aloud, with a knitted brow.

"New House, St. Jim's.

"Dear Bunter,—You can expect me to-morrow afternoon, Figgins and Kerr are doing some sprinting with Tom Merry and the School-House chaps, and I want to have another engagement, so if convenient to you I will keep my promise of paying you a visit. I shall get to your station at four. Kind regards.—Yours sincerely, H. WYNN."

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. They would have been glad enough to see any fellow from St. Jim's. They had been very well treated on the occasion of their visit to the school to play cricket there. But it could not be denied that the visit came at an unfortunate moment.

As frequently happened in the juniors' studies, it was a time of scarcity of cash; and Fatty Wynn, of St. Jim's, would not be exactly an ordinary visitor. He was a very decent and jolly fellow, and they could not help liking him. But he was like Bunter in one respect. He had an apparently insatiable appetite. He would naturally expect something a little out of the common in the feeding line, and the Remove chums would have been only too glad to entertain him. But at a time when they were "stony"—how was it to be done? Bunter, as usual, had made a mess of things, and as usual, also, he was least worried of all about it.

"I say, you fellows, I suppose you'll be getting up something pretty decent for Wynn?" he observed, reclining at ease in the armchair, with his feet on the fender. "I am sincerely sorry that I've been disappointed about a postal order, and that the cheque hasn't come from the Patriotic Home Work Association. I'm short of tin at the present moment, but of course I'm going to stand my whack. Wynn is my guest, that's understood. Any expense you chaps are put to will go down to the account, and I shall settle up out of my first cheque from— Ow! Wow!"

A heavy dictionary, hurled by Bob Cherry, smote Bunter on the chest, and cut him short. The fat junior gasped.

"You utter beast, Nugent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Was that you, Cherry? I think you're a rotter. You might have jolted my spectacles off, and if they got broken you'd jolly well have to pay for them. You know I've got a delicate constitution, and, in fact, might fade away any day and expire."

"You're a jolly long time about it," said Bob Cherry unsympathetically.

"We shall have to see this through somehow," said Harry Wharton. "Bunter has got us into a fix as usual."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't think you ought to be inhospitable—"

"You shrieking ass, I'm not inhospitable! I haven't any tin till Saturday. Can't you understand?"

"Well, you can get some from somewhere I suppose? I think you ought to be willing to stand a feed to a guest. I don't complain about your keeping me short, but when it's a question of hospitality to a guest, why I—"

"I've got another book here," said Bob Cherry. "Another word, and you get it—"

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"Oh, really—Ow!"

Biff!

"Oh, you beast!"

"You'll get the inkpot next, if you don't keep quiet."

And Billy Bunter thought he had better be quiet. The chums of the Remove went on with their work, but they could not put quite all their attention into it. They were "stony"—with no prospect of raising the wind till the end of the week—and the morrow was Wednesday, and an important guest was coming. Wharton finished his work, at last, and rose from the table. Billy Bunter was quiet—very quiet in the armchair, and Harry felt for a moment that perhaps they had been a little too sharp with him. No doubt he was sitting there thinking out how the difficulty was to be got rid of.

"Don't worry, Billy," said Harry. "We'll see it through somehow."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"He's not worrying. Look at him!"

Harry looked, and laughed. Billy Bunter was fast asleep in the armchair, with his mouth wide open, and a perfectly untroubled expression upon his fat face. He certainly was not worrying.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Cash Wanted.

MARK LINLEY sat on the edge of the table in his study, looking at the grate, with a wrinkle in his brows. There was no fire in the grate; the weather was getting too warm for fires, except for cooking purposes. He was alone in the study. He shared it with Lacy and Russell and little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, but they were down in the common-room at present. Linley was glad to be alone; he had some thinking to do.

There was a letter in his hand—his letter that had come by the same post as Billy Bunter's. Apparently it caused him some mental exercise, as in the case of Bunter's letter, too. Mark Linley's face had brightened up wonderfully when he saw the handwriting on the letter; it had clouded over again now.

Linley, the scholarship boy, had friends and foes in the Remove at Greyfriars. He was always cheery with his friends, and always quiet and indifferent towards his foes, unless they took active measures to show their dislike, and then on more than one occasion he had shown that he could take care of himself as far as fist-cuffs were concerned. Bulstrode had learned to his cost that the mill-lad from Lancashire was not to be bullied; he had never forgiven his defeat, but Mark went on his way quietly without caring for the bitter enmity of the Remove bully. He had firm friends in No. 1 Study, and with most of the Form he was on more or less cordial terms.

Things had seemed to be working in his favour of late. But at the great school, far from his kindred, the one-time mill-lad often felt lonely, and thought with longing of the humble and homely fireside in far-off Lancashire. There were the faces he knew; there was spoken the musical dialect his ears had been accustomed to from his childhood. The news that his younger sister had come to London to stay with her relations there, and that he might see her, had delighted Mark. It was like a breath of home in a strange land.

But London was distant, and a boy in the Lower Fourth was not likely to obtain the necessary leave of absence. Mark had not cared to ask for it, but it was possible for his sister to come to Greyfriars. The other fellows often received their relatives there on half-holidays, and there was no reason why Mabel should not come. Mabel, of course, was eager to see the great school to which her brother had gone, and which her parents spoke of in awed tones. And Mark would have given anything for the sight of a face from home.

And now Mabel was coming!

Mark's feeling at first had been one of sheer delight. He pictured himself showing the girl about Greyfriars—the old buildings—the dim old library—the great gym. and the dusky chapel—the old elms that had stood there since the reign of the first Edward. He could imagine how it would all delight her. But other thoughts had come into his mind.

There was still a very considerable portion of the Remove that held aloof from the mill-lad, or just tolerated him. Mabel might see it all—she was innocent enough, but no fool—and Mark writhed at the thought of allowing her to see the struggle he had entered into in coming to Greyfriars. His people had no idea of it; and, needless to say, Mark had not told them anything of it. They had trouble enough to keep him there, even with the aid of Bishop Mowbray's scholarship, without being worried by knowing that he was regarded as an interloper by half the Form he belonged to.

And if Mabel should see it all!

And that was not all, either. It was quite possible that Bulstrode and some of the choice spirits he chummed with might go out of their way to be unpleasant on the occasion.

No. 66.

NEXT
WEEK:

"HARRY WHARTON'S WARD."

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of Mabel's visit; might even be rude to the girl herself. It was a weight on Mark's mind, and he found himself almost wishing that Mabel were not coming.

But that was useless. She was coming, and on the morrow afternoon, and he could only make the best of it.

His reverie was interrupted by the kicking open of the study door, and Russell and Lacy came in. Mark put his letter into his pocket. He was on nodding terms with his study-mates, that was all; they were civil, and no more. He went out of the study, and in the passage he met the chums of No. 1 Study. Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation.

"Here he is! Linley shall have first chance!"

Mark smiled.

"What is it?" he asked.

Bob took him by the button-hole.

"It's an awfully serious matter, old chap. A shocking and unexampled misfortune has fallen upon No. 1 Study—a kind of thing that was absolutely unheard of—"

"Why, what is it?"

"We're stony broke."

Linley laughed.

"Oh, is that all?"

"All!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "I should think that's enough, as we have a guest coming to-morrow—a guest who's one of the jolliest chaps in the world, and will have to be fed like a prince—a fat prince. I dare say you've noticed that Bunter, of our study, has a healthy appetite. Well, Bunter's appetite is point-nought-one to Fatty Wynn's. We want to lay in a supply as if we were going to have a whole battalion of Territorials quartered upon us. And—"

"We're stony!" said Nugent.

"The brokefulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The runoutfulness of the esteemed cash is complete."

"And we're going round to raise the wind," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If you have any odd fivers knocking about, we offer you a safe investment."

"That's it; as safe as if you buried 'em in the ground and forgot the place," said Bob Cherry. "Hand over your fivers!"

"I wish I could, but I've only got five shillings," said Linley. "If that's any use—"

"We won't rob you," said Bob Cherry generously. "We are looking for fivers. It's rather thoughtless of you to be out of banknotes at this important juncture, but I suppose you didn't foresee it. Of course, it's all Bunter again. He blued Wingate's banknote, thinking it was his, and we've had to hypothecate—that's a good word—all our available cash since to make the money up. Bunter isn't worrying; he's only invited a specially hungry guest for us to look after to-morrow. Come on, kids, and we'll see if there's any tin left in the Remove."

And the Famous Four went on their way.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Surprise for Carberry.

IT was a serious case, and something had to be done; but, as usual, misfortunes did not come singly. Never had there been such a scarcity of cash in the Remove at Greyfriars, apparently. The juniors seemed to be mostly in the same state as the chums of No. 1 Study. Bulstrode always had plenty of cash, but the four were on bad terms with the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode might or might not have lent; but Harry Wharton would certainly not have thought of asking him.

Harry did not, as a matter of fact, like the idea of borrowing at all, but under the present circumstances there seemed no other resource. Fatty Wynn was coming on the morrow, and common courtesy required that he should be well looked after, and Billy Bunter had cheerfully left the looking-after to be done by Harry Wharton & Co.

There was one junior in the Remove whose supply of pocket-money exceeded Bulstrode's, as a rule, and that was little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior. Wun Lung was so attached to Wharton that he would certainly have done anything to oblige him, and after failure to raise a loan in various quarters, the Famous Four turned their steps towards Linley's study in search of the little Celestial.

Wun Lung was alone in the study when the chums entered. He was sitting at the table, so busily occupied that he did not look up.

"Busy?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Velly busy. Allee lightee. What you wantee?"

"What on earth are you doing?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, looking in amazement at the work the little Celestial was engaged upon. Wun Lung had a packet of tobacco and some cigarette-papers on the table before him, and was rolling cigarettes.

"Me makee smokee," said Wun Lung, looking up innocently.

"You don't mean to say you smoke, Wun Lung?" exclaimed Wharton, aghast.

The Chinese grinned.

"Me no smokee."

"You know it's against the rules. But if you don't smoke, what on earth are you rolling cigarettes for?"

"Allee light. Me no smokee."

Wharton looked puzzled. The Chinese was a quaint little fellow, and an inveterate practical joker, but he was not known to have any vices. He was as full of tricks as a monkey, but not this sort of trick. Wharton guessed that the cigarettes were a part of some scheme that was working in the little Chinese's brain, but it was pretty clear that Wun Lung did not intend to explain.

"Well, you'd better not let a prefect see them," said Harry. "He would jump to the conclusion that you were going to smoke, and you'd find it hard to explain."

Wun Lung nodded.

"Me savvy."

"But to come to business," went on Harry. "I want to raise some money. I can repay it on Saturday, but I want it particularly for to-morrow. Can you lend me a sovereign or so?"

Wun Lung's face fell.

As a rule, he had half a dozen or more sovereigns in the pockets of his flowing garments, but just now the scarcity of cash seemed to have spread to the little Celestial.

"Me solly," he murmured.

"You stony, too?" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Me bloke."

"What rotten luck," said Nugent. "You're always rolling in filthy lucre, too. The Remove seems to have fallen upon hard times generally."

"The hardfulness of the times is terrific."

"Me so solly."

Wharton laughed. The sorrow in the little Celestial's face was genuine, and almost tragic.

"It's all right," he said. "Never mind, kid. We shall raise the wind somewhere. At a pinch I'll ask the Form-master for an advance upon my allowance. I think Quelch would let me have it."

"Looks to me as if you'll have to," said Nugent. "Leave that till the last, though. My hat! Wun Lung, what are you doing with Christmas crackers?"

The little Chinese looked confused for a moment.

"Allee light," he said.

"But what are those Christmas crackers for?"

"No savvy."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"No savvy."

Nugent laughed. When Wun Lung said that he did not "savvy," it meant that nothing would make him savvy, and it was useless to ask questions.

The Famous Four turned to the door. Wun Lung looked round after them.

"Allee light," he said. "Me tly findee cash."

"That's all right, kid. We'll raise the wind somehow," said Wharton.

And the juniors left the study.

Wun Lung looked worried for some moments. He particularly wanted to oblige Harry Wharton, who had been a good friend to him in the Greyfriars Remove. But he grinned again as he turned to his work. He was carefully rolling the cigarettes, and in the tobacco in each the little Chinese was placing the tiny paper cap from a Christmas cracker.

When he had finished a dozen of them, he placed them in a little paper bag bearing the name of a tobacconist in Friardale, and slipped it into his pocket. Then he put away the remainder of the tobacco and the papers in a cupboard. There was a curious smile on the quaint little face as he glided from the study.

As he went downstairs a harsh voice called to him from the Sixth Form passage, and the little Chinese submissively answered the call of Carberry, the prefect. The big senior was standing at his study door, and he looked down at Wun Lung with an angry frown.

"You young cad! Have you been to the village?"

"If you please, Calbelly—"

"I knew you hadn't," said Carberry, with a glint in his eyes; "you've been in your study."

"If you please—"

"Come in here!"

Wun Lung looked more inclined to bolt, but the bully of the Sixth seized him by the shoulder, and dragged him into his study. There were two other Sixth-Formers there, and they were smoking cigarettes. Carberry was the black sheep of Greyfriars, and his study was the headquarters of

the "fast set" in the Sixth—their "fastness" consisting chiefly in smoking cigarettes and drinking weak whisky-and water.

Carberry slung Wun Lung across the study, and he bumped against Loder, who promptly shoved him off, and he reeled against the table.

"The young cad hasn't fetched my smokes, after all," said Carberry. "If you chaps will hold him, I'll give him a dressing with a fives-bat."

"Certainly, Carberry!"

"No dlessee!" shrieked Wun Lung. "Me gotee cigalettes!"

"You've got them?"

"Allee light."

"Why didn't you say so, then, you young idiot?" growled Carberry. "Give them to me!"

Wun Lung obediently drew the paper bag of cigarettes from his pocket, and handed it to Carberry. The Sixth Form bully took it, and sniffed the smokes with much satisfaction.

"Good! These are the right stuff! Did I give you the money for these, kid?"

"No givee."

"Then I'll owe it to you for the present," grinned Carberry. "You can cut; and you're jolly lucky to get out of this without a licking, I can tell you."

"Me velly glateful," murmured Wun Lung.

"Oh, get out with you!"

Wun Lung got out, and Carberry closed the door. He turned the cigarettes out of the bag upon the table.

"They're all right," he said—"first quality! That young rat knows better than to get me cheap ones."

"You got them pretty cheap, though," remarked Loder; and the three seniors laughed, as if over a good joke.

"Well, try them," said Carberry. "You can chuck away that one, Loder. It's not up to these, I can tell you."

"Right you are!" said Loder; and he threw his cigarette into the grate.

The three seniors helped themselves from the cigarettes brought by Wun Lung, and lighted up. Carberry puffed at his smoke with great apparent enjoyment.

"This is ripping!" he said. "Doesn't seem to quite draw as it should, perhaps."

"I was just thinking the same," said Loder.

"Seems to have a rather curious flavour, this," said Benson suspiciously. "Blessed if I like this smoke much, Carberry!"

"Oh, rats!" said Carberry. "They're first-rate!"

"Well, it doesn't taste—Ow, ow! Oh!" roared Benson.

Crack!

He dropped the fragment of the cigarette from his mouth as if it had suddenly become red-hot. There was a smell of gunpowder in the room.

"Why—What the—How—" gasped Carberry.

"It's—it's exploded!"

"Why, I—Oh!"

Bang!

Carberry's cigarette had followed suit.

The Sixth Form bully jumped clear of the floor.

Loder took his cigarette hastily from his mouth. He was only just in time. The cigarette exploded in his fingers, and he gave a yell.

"My—my word! What the—"

"If you call these first-class smokes, Carberry—"

"If this is one of your little jokes, Carberry—"

"Jokes!" roared Carberry. "Yes, it is a little joke! It's that heathen rat of a Chinese, of course! He's fixed up this for us! No wonder the smokes tasted peculiar!"

He hurled the remainder of the cigarettes into the fire. There was a series of muffled explosions. Carberry was white with rage.

"Let's go and look for that Chinese!" he muttered thickly.

And they went and looked. But they did not find Wun Lung. The little Celestial, chuckling over his joke, was taking very great care to keep out of sight.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode's Little Scheme.

THE problem that confronted the chums of No. 1 Study had not been solved by the following morning. They had regarded Wun Lung as an almost certain resource, but he had failed them. There was still the Form-master, who would doubtless have made the required advance, but Harry Wharton shrank from asking him. Bob Cherry suggested that something might turn up, with

his usual optimism. What might turn up, and where it was to turn up from, Bob did not specify.

Harry was thinking it over during the morning lessons that Wednesday, but without arriving at any solution. Billy Bunter was looking unusually pleased with himself that morning. He was quite certain that there would be a feed for the St. Jim's fellow, and how it was to be provided he did not care in the least. It would certainly have to be provided somehow. The only thing that worried Bunter was that Fatty Wynn was not coming till four in the afternoon. Thinking of the feed whetted his appetite, and he felt that he could not hold out till four o'clock. He nudged Wharton when they came out of the class-room.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Well, have you thought of anything?" asked Harry, thinking that possibly the fat junior had some suggestion to make.

"Yes. I want you to lend me a couple of shillings—"

"I haven't any tin, ass!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You said that yesterday."

Wharton laughed impatiently.

"But I haven't had any since. I've been trying to raise money for a feed in the study this afternoon, but I can't manage it, so far. I thought you might have some suggestion to make."

Billy Bunter pondered.

"Of course, I'm willing to do anything I can," he said, as if it were quite an impersonal matter. "How would it do for you fellows to get up an entertainment, with me as ventriloquist, after dinner, and—"

"Oh, don't talk bosh!"

"Oh, really, Wharton— Well, perhaps I could hypnotise Wingate, and make him lend you a couple of pounds. Oh, really, Wharton! I wish that chap wouldn't walk away while I'm talking to him. And he hasn't lent me the two shillings, either. I can't understand him growing so mean lately. Now I sha'n't get anything to eat until dinner. Gr-r-r!"

And Bunter walked away with an extremely discontented look.

Wun Lung sidled up to Harry in the passage.

"No flouble 'boutee cashee," he murmured. "Allee lightee."

Wharton looked at him.

"Have you come in for a windfall, kid?"

"No windfall. Me findee tin plenty quick."

"Where are you going to find it?"

The little Celestial looked mysterious.

"Allee lightee. Me find."

"But really—"

"No flouble," repeated Wun Lung impressively. "No askee question. Thust Wun Lung. He findee cashee allee light. Me savvy."

And he walked away to avoid further questioning.

Wharton was puzzled. The little Chinese was concerning himself very seriously about the matter, but Harry was not inclined to wholly rely upon his assurance. Wun Lung thought he could raise the wind, but probably the wish was father to the thought.

"I shouldn't wonder if the young boulder can manage it," Bob Cherry remarked when Harry mentioned the matter to him. "After all, he's a chap of his word, with all his funny tricks. I'd leave speaking to Quelch till the last minute. Let's meet Wynn at the station first."

"Right-ho!" said Harry. And so it was settled.

If the chums of the Remove had not been so concerned about their private affairs, they might have noticed that there was "something on" in a certain section of the Remove. Bulstrode and Snoop were doing a considerable amount of whispering together after classes were dismissed. Nugent, happening to pass near them just before dinner, caught an eager question asked by Bulstrode:

"But you're quite sure?"

"Yes; I've seen the letter," said Snoop.

Nugent passed on, without thinking about anything he had heard. It was of no consequence or interest to him—at least, so he deemed then.

The two cads of the Remove ceased to speak till he was out of hearing when they caught sight of him. But Bulstrode was looking eager and excited.

"You've seen the letter?" he repeated.

"Yes, rather! I happened to see it—"

A sncer curled Bulstrode's lip.

"Yes, you often happen to see fellows' letters, don't you, Snoopey?"

Snoop flushed a dull red.

"Look here, Bulstrode, if that's how you're going to take it—"

"Oh, rats! I don't say I'm not going to make use of the information, however you got it," said Bulstrode. "But you're sure?"

"Yes. Her name's Mabel Linley, and she's coming this afternoon by the four o'clock train at Friardale Station. It's in black and white."

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"Good!" chuckled Bulstrode. "If it's all right we can make that cad wriggle over this. Only you're such a liar, Snoopey—"

"Look here—"

"Oh, don't begin any humbug with me!" said the Remove bully contemptuously. "I know you, Snoopey. You lied about Linley, and got us all to send him to Coventry, and since the truth was found out you've had a dose of Coventry yourself. It would be just your game to start the fellows ragging Linley again, so as to be able to creep back into being noticed. I know you."

"Well, you can let the matter alone if you like," said Snoop sullenly.

"Not a bit of it! It's cheek enough of a factory-hand to come here at all, scholarship or no scholarship," said Bulstrode, with virtuous indignation, "but to want to bring his rotten relations here fairly takes the cake! We have our people down here to show them round, but fancy this chap having the cheek to bring a factory-girl!"

"I thought it was awful cheek," said Snoop; "that's why I mentioned—"

"No it isn't," said Bulstrode. "You thought it would be one up against Linley, you know you did, and you don't care whether the school's disgraced or not. If you did, you wouldn't stay in it."

Snoop bit his lip. Bulstrode was a most uncomfortable sort of ally. At that moment Snoop probably hated Bulstrode more than he did Mark Linley.

"We're not going to have this sort of thing," said Bulstrode. "If I were captain of the Remove, I'd put Linley in his place quick enough. The fellows elected Wharton for Form captain—"

"Some of them are sorry for it since he's taken such a stand about Linley."

"I should think so. But Wharton, or not Wharton, the outsider's not going to bring his factory people round Greyfriars without somebody having something to say about it. Keep this dark, Snoop, except from our set. We'll have a party at the station when the train comes in."

Snoop whistled.

"I say, that's going it rather strong, Bulstrode!"

"I mean to go it strong. It's time somebody made a stand for the dignity of the school," said Bulstrode. "There's too much of this giddy Radicalism and Socialism about, and a chap ought to stand up for his class. These people ought to be shown their place."

"Of course they ought!" assented Snoop. "The cheek of Linley to fancy that he's a fellow like us!"

Bulstrode could not help grinning. Linley would have felt very small if he had fancied himself a fellow like Snoop.

"Oh, don't you start on that tack, Snoopey!" said Bulstrode. "It only makes you look funny. I must go and tell the fellows about this."

And Bulstrode walked away, leaving Snoop scowling.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Chips In.

MARK LINLEY strode along Friardale Lane with his quick, springy step. In the bright spring afternoon the Lancashire lad was feeling very happy. His misgivings were gone for the time, and he was thinking only of the pleasure of seeing a face from home and hearing again the musical sound of a Lancashire voice.

The little railway-station at Friardale was looking very quiet and sleepy in the sunshine. It was not at all unusual for Greyfriars fellows to be about the station on a half-holiday, and so the sight of Bulstrode and Snoop did not excite any suspicions in Linley's mind.

He wished they had not been there just when his sister was coming, but that was all. The purpose they might have never crossed his mind.

They took no notice of him, but when he had passed them they grinned. Just inside the station Kidd and Mukle, two of Bulstrode's set, were lounging by an automatic machine.

They exchanged winks at the sight of Linley, and he observed it. He looked directly at them, and they grinned and turned away.

Feeling vaguely uneasy, Mark went into the station.

Three more fellows belonging to the Remove were there—Berry, Eden, and Kettle. They were all of Bulstrode's set, and the avowed enemies of the "scholarship boy." Mark could no longer doubt that something was "on," especially when Bulstrode and the rest followed him upon the platform, with the evident intention of meeting the incoming train.

A red flush came over Mark's face.

He guessed that the news of his sister's coming had

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reached Bulstrode's ears, and that the bully of the Remove intended that something unpleasant should happen upon her arrival.

Mark's eyes blazed at the thought. He had had some misgivings on this very subject, yet the thought that the fellows could deliberately plan rudeness to an unoffending girl was almost incredible to the lad. But as he looked at Bulstrode & Co. he could not doubt that they meant mischief. The train was due soon and Mark was not the kind of fellow to leave such a matter unsettled till the last moment. There were seven of the Removites but Mark walked straight up to Bulstrode on the platform.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

Bulstrode grinned.

"Have you bought up the station?" he asked in his turn. And his followers chuckled.

"My sister is coming by the next train in," said Mark quietly. "I don't like to think that you fellows can be cads enough to intend any rudeness to her."

"Cads—eh?" said Eden.

"Yes, cads!" said Mark, with flashing eyes. "I say, if you intend anything of the sort, you had better say so now!"

Bulstrode burst into a jeering laugh.

"And what will you do?" he said. "Turn us out of the station?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall try," said Mark quietly.

Bulstrode stared.

"My hat, he's going to try to turn seven of us out of the station, kids!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mark set his teeth. He was in a dangerous mood at that moment, and ready for anything. But before anything further could be said there was a clatter of footsteps on the platform, and a cheery voice.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry, and his chums were with him. They looked curiously at the white, fierce face of the Lancashire lad, and the derisive faces of the others.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" repeated Bob Cherry, looking from one to the others. "What's the trouble, my sons?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Bulstrode.

"I make this my business," said Bob blandly. "I see that frowns are mantling the noble brow of our friend Marcus, and I ask the reason."

"The frownfulness is terrific, and——"

"Explain," said Nugent. "We've got a friend coming in by the four o'clock train, and if there's going to be trouble, we want to get it over before then."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Wharton. "What's the trouble, Linley?"

"The trouble is this," said Linley between his teeth. "These cads know that my sister is coming in by the next train, and they've come here to be rude to her."

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Is that the case, Bulstrode?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Will you answer my question?"

"No; I won't!"

"Very well. Listen to this. If one of you says or does anything Miss Linley might be offended at, it will mean trouble—real trouble—for I'll give the chap a hiding on the spot, till he can't stand upright!"

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"Will you? I——"

"'Nuff said!" broke in Bob Cherry. "You can't expect decent chaps to talk to worms like you. Shut up!"

"The 'nuff-fulness is terrific!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the train!"

Wharton tapped Linley on the arm as they turned towards the incoming train. The Lancashire lad's face was dark and troubled.

"Don't worry, Linley. The cads won't dare to say anything now."

Linley nodded without speaking.

The train clattered into the station.

From the window of a first-class carriage a fat, beaming face looked, and the chums of the Remove rushed off towards it to greet Fatty Wynn, of St. Jim's. A girl looked from a window further down the train, in a third-class carriage, as the train stopped, and Mark Linley hurried down to help his sister to alight.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Linley's Sister.

FATTY WYNN grinned cheerily at the chums of Greyfriars. His fat, round face seemed almost to fill the window of the train. Billy Bunter was the first to reach the carriage door, and he dragged it open as the train stopped. He gripped Wynn's fat hand, and jerked him out upon the platform.

"Here you are!" he said. "Jolly glad to see you! I've brought some friends to meet you, Wynn. How are you, old boy?"

"Ripping!" said Fatty Wynn. "I needn't ask you how you are! Hallo, Wharton—Cherry—Nugent—Jampot——"

"Jamset," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur—"Hurree Jamset Ram Singh."

"Holy Jampot in English," said Bob Cherry, in a tone of explanation.

"My worthy chum——"

"Jolly glad to see you all!" said Fatty Wynn. "I say, Bunter, you've grown since I saw you last."

"Why, it was only a couple of weeks or so——"

"I mean sideways," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh!"

"The sideways development of the honourable Bunter is terrific."

"Oh, really, Inky—— But, speaking of grub——"

"I wasn't speaking of grub."

"Well, I was, then. Speaking of grub, how do you feel after your journey? Pretty sharp set, I suppose?"

"Well, middling," said Fatty Wynn modestly. "I'm not a fellow to eat much, as a rule, but I do get hungry at this time of year, you know. It's the weather about this time, I suppose. Figgins and Kerr stood me a feed just before I left St. Jim's, and it was pretty decent, you know; but it's a long journey, and I've had practically nothing in the train—only a cold chicken, and some ham and sausages, and a pigeon pie, and a few pounds of apricots and some pears. I admit I could do with a taste."

"There's a jolly ripping feed at Greyfriars, I needn't tell you," said Bunter. "But I was thinking that a snack in the village as we pass the tuckshop——"

"Just the thing!" said Wynn heartily.

If looks could have slain, assuredly Bunter would have fallen upon the platform like a dead Falstaff at that moment.

For the chums of the Remove had absolutely nothing in their pockets, and their credit was already strained at the village shop.

It was extremely doubtful if Uncle Clegg would stand anything more on "tick," and to have to give him a trial before a visitor, at the risk of a refusal, was too bad for anything.

But Bunter did not care. Probably he did not even think about the matter at all. He wanted a feed, and he hospitably wanted to feed Fatty Wynn, and that was enough for him. Such details as raising the wind could be left to lesser intellects.

Wynn's prompt acceptance of the offer was only to be expected. But Wharton worked up a ghastly smile.

The situation was about as awkward as could be imagined, for it would never do to let the visitor for an instant suspect the shortness of cash. It would make him feel so extremely uncomfortable that it was impossible to contemplate it for a moment. Anything but that.

"Come on, then!" said Harry, with hollow cheerfulness.

And they moved towards the exit from the platform.

Bulstrode's eyes glinted as they went.

"It's all right, Snoopey!" he muttered. "They won't want to kick up a row before the St. Jim's fellow."

"Better keep off the grass."

"Are you afraid?"

"Well, I don't want Wharton slogging me after Wynn is gone. You know what a beastly hard hitter he is—you ought to know!"

Bulstrode scowled; he did not like reminders of his defeat at Wharton's hands. But his expression changed in a moment, as a new idea came into his mind.

"Come over here," he said. "I'm going to speak to them."

"But——"

"It's all right—it's not a row."

Snoop and the rest followed Bulstrode rather uneasily towards Mark Linley and his sister. After what Wharton had said, they were very chary of a row with the Lancashire lad. Wharton was, as Snoop uneasily remembered, such a beastly hard hitter, and he never failed to keep his word.

Mark had forgotten them for the moment. He was speaking to his sister, and for the time being the two were alone—alone with thoughts of home. Mabel was a year younger than Mark, somewhat slight in build, but very like

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her brother in feature. She was very plainly dressed—plainly and cheaply—but quietly, with no attempt at adornment beyond her means. She looked a very sweet, innocent, and unaffected girl, and her admiration of Mark was very evident. He was a "big brother" to her; and in his school clothes and cap and neat boots, he, of course, looked very different from the brother she had been accustomed to at home. Her admiration was mixed a little with awe; Mark was evidently to her the embodiment of all that was noble and admirable.

"How changed you are, Marky!" There was a trace of the Lancashire burr in her voice that gave it a very musical and caressing sound. "I should hardly have known you!"

Mark smiled.

"Only changed in looks, Mab, that's all."

"Ah, yes, in nowt else, I am sure," said Mabel. "Are these boys friends of yours, Marky?"

Linley coloured a little.

"No," he said shortly. "I don't get on very well with that set. This way out, lass."

Mabel looked at him quickly.

"How do you get on at the school, Marky?"

"First rate," said Mark cheerily. "Most of the fellows are simply ripping. Wharton, for instance. I've told you about him in my letters."

"Yes; I should like to see him."

"You will see him, lass. He's one of the best, and most of the others are all right; of course, there are black sheep everywhere," said Mark lightly.

He stopped as he was going towards the exit, for Bulstrode and his friends had come directly into his path.

Mark's eyes glinted.

"Do you want anything?" he said quietly, his heart beating fast.

"Nothing," said Bulstrode, with a scarcely perceptible sneer. "Only to extend the welcome of Greyfriars to Miss Linley."

His friends stared, as well they might, at this change of front. Mabel, remembering what Mark had just said to her, looked puzzled.

"We are happy and proud to welcome Miss Linley," went on Bulstrode, in an airy way. "We shall be delighted to show her any little attention in our power."

"Oh, thank you!" said Mabel innocently.

"The change from a factory looming-room," went on Bulstrode, whose knowledge of the interior of factories was limited—"the change from the looming-room—or the muling-room, whichever it is—must be very great—as great as it was to you, Linley, when you first came to Greyfriars on that excellent scholarship. We all want to take care of Miss Linley. We should like to show her round."

"Yes, rather!" said Snoop.

Mark Linley was chafing; he detected the irony of Bulstrode's manner, which was as yet lost on Mabel.

"You are all very kind," said Mabel. "I was almost afraid to come and see Marky at such a big school, but now—"

"Marky is very happy, I am sure," said Bulstrode, while his friends tried in vain to suppress their chuckles. "He is getting on famously at Greyfriars. He is quite a leader of society there. To be in Linley's set is really the hallmark at Greyfriars. Not to know Linley is to be oneself unknown."

Mabel looked puzzled.

"Naturally, it took him some time to get used to his new surroundings," went on Bulstrode blandly. "Some regulations he was not accustomed to troubled him very much at first—such as the rule of washing regularly every morning, and keeping his finger-nails clean, and—"

"I am sure—" began Mabel indignantly.

Mark's eyes blazed.

"That's enough," he said.

And his look made even Bulstrode step quickly back. Mabel's heart was beating violently, and she caught her brother by the arm.

"Marky!"

Mark controlled his temper with an effort.

"Come on, lass."

Harry Wharton came quickly towards the group. Fatty Wynn and the rest were going out of the station. Wharton raised his cap to Mabel.

"I say, Linley, we're going to drive up to the school," he said. "Can we give you a lift—and Miss Linley?"

"Thanks very much," said Mark gratefully. "This is Harry Wharton, Mabel. Wharton, my sister Mabel."

There was such a ring of pride in Mark's voice as he said "my sister Mabel," that it went straight to Wharton's heart. Absence from home, association with the sons of wealthy men, and an education far beyond that of his sister, had not made the slightest difference to Mark Linley—not the faintest trace of snobbishness had crept into that frank, manly nature. He was as fond and proud of his sister now

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as he had been in the old days, when they had gone up to the mill gates together as half-timers.

Harry shook hands with Mabel cordially, taking no notice of Bulstrode & Co. His manner was so pleasant and courteous that the shy little girl did not feel in the least constrained, and they chatted pleasantly as they left the station, Mabel walking between Wharton and her brother.

Bulstrode looked after them with a sneer on his lips.

"Sickening, I call it!" he said. "Fancy a chap like Wharton chumming up with a whole family of factory kids! Where are you going, Berry?"

"Anywhere," said Berry. "I've had enough of this."

"What do you mean?" demanded Bulstrode fiercely.

"What I say. It was a rotten cad's game, and when I looked at that girl, I felt jolly well ashamed of myself," said Berry. "You can put that in your pipe and smoke it! I'm off."

Bulstrode was about to make an angry retort; but he found that Berry was not alone in his views. The others followed him, leaving only Snoop with the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"They're afraid of Wharton!" he snarled.

"Of course," said Snoop; "that's it!"

"Don't tell lies!" said Bulstrode. "You don't think anything of the sort."

And he thrust his hands deep into his pockets and strode away. Perhaps he was feeling a little ashamed himself.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Turns up Trumps.

"MIND you don't forget to stop at the tuckshop," said Billy Bunter.

The driver grinned, and touched his cap.

"Right, zur!"

And he clambered into his seat. It was a big, roomy trap, and there was plenty of room in it for the chums of the Greyfriars Remove and their new friends. Fatty Wynn spread himself over as much space as Billy Bunter—about twice as much as anybody else required. Mabel Linley, who blushed and smiled shyly when Harry Wharton introduced his friends, was assisted into the most comfortable seat, and the shabby old rug was arranged as a cushion for her. She sat with Mark on one side, and Harry on the other, looking very pleased and happy. The juniors piled themselves in anyhow, and the vehicle started, Billy Bunter keeping an anxious eye open lest the tuckshop should be passed.

Nugent looked at Wharton, and met his eye.

"Going to risk it?"

"Must."

And Nugent gave a shrug of conical despair.

"Stoppee, pleasee!"

It was a voice from the road.

"Wun Lung, by Jove!"

The little Celestial was standing in the road, waving his hand excitedly. Wharton tapped the driver's shoulder.

"Stop, please."

"Right, zur!"

"Me comee in," said Wun Lung.

"My word," said Fatty Wynn, looking down at the quaint, diminutive figure of the little Celestial. "I didn't know you grew Chinamen here."

"He belongs to our Form," said Harry.

"Oh, yes, I remember now! I've seen him before. He seems excited about something."

"I think he's got a message for me."

Nugent grinned.

"By Jove, I hope he has!"

Wun Lung was jerked into the trap, and they went on. He sat beside Wharton, and his hand met Harry's, and he squeezed something into it. It was a little silken purse. Harry looked at him inquiringly.

"Allee light!" murmured Wun Lung.

And Wharton's brow cleared considerably.

He could feel through the silk that the purse was full of coins, though he did not know what they were. Wun Lung had evidently "raised the wind" somewhere, and come along at the last moment just in time to save the situation.

Five minutes later the trap stopped outside the village shop.

The juniors streamed into the shop, and Wharton stopped outside for a moment, and signed to Frank Nugent to stop too.

He opened the purse and poured the contents out into the palm of his hand.

Then he uttered an exclamation of amazement.

There were ten sovereigns there!

Ten pounds!

Wharton stared at the little heap of gold in his hand.

"Where on earth——" he began.

Nugent grinned.

"Jolly good windfall," he said. "Never mind where Wun Lung got it. We know he came by it honestly, and that's enough. He's got rich people, you know. Of course, you won't want to use half that—or a quarter."

"Of course not."

"Put it somewhere in safety, and let the young bouncer have it back later."

Wharton nodded, and slipped the gold into his leather purse. He handed Nugent a couple of the sovereigns.

"Will you cut on ahead to Greyfriars," he said. "Get a really good feed at Mrs. Minble's, and have it ready when we get there. Wynn will be hungry again by the time we get to Greyfriars, I expect."

"Right you are!" said Nugent, laughing.

And he slipped the money into his pocket and set off towards the school. In the village shop, Billy Bunter was giving his orders with the air of a prince. But Uncle Clegg knew Bunter, and he listened to his princely orders without stirring a muscle or moving a limb.

"Well, don't you hear?" exclaimed Bunter, at last.

"Ees," said Uncle Clegg. "I 'ear."

"Then why don't you move?"

"My terms is cash!" said Uncle Clegg grimly. "I knows you."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Uncle Clegg——"

"My terms," said Uncle Clegg, "is cash!"

"Here, Wharton! Where are you, Wharton! I say, you fellows, where's Wharton? This beast won't serve us till he sees the tin. I should think he would know me by this time!"

"Perhaps he does!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Wharton came up to the little counter.

"It's all right, Uncle Clegg," he said.

The old man was brisk at once. He knew Wharton. He would have hesitated to let any schoolboy have on credit the amount that Bunter had just been ordering, but he knew that if Wharton hadn't the money in his pocket, he would say so.

"I won't keep you a minute, Master Wharton."

And Uncle Clegg proceeded to set out his wares. There was a cheery pop-pop of ginger-beer corks, and a gurgling of liquid into glasses. Mabel Linley was looking a little bewildered. Wharton brought her a fresh and nice-looking tart on a plate and a glass of lemonade as she sat on the only chair in the shop.

Mabel accepted them with a soft smile. She was beginning to get accustomed to the juniors. Nothing could have exceeded their courtesy to the scholarship boy's sister. One and all were anxious to make up for Bulstrode's rudeness, and to give Mabel a better impression of Greyfriars. Only Bunter and Wynn gave more attention to the good things on the counter than to Miss Linley.

"I must say that I call this ripping," said Fatty Wynn, as he consumed his eleventh jam-tart. "It was thoughtful of you chaps. The tarts here are good."

"Ain't they?" said Bunter. "Ripping. Uncle Clegg is rather a beast, but the tarts his wife makes are good. He looks a beast, doesn't he?"

"Oh, he's all right!"

"That he isn't! He's often refused to trust me for a few tarts—times when I've been hungry, too. Once I told him that if I didn't have some refreshment quick, I felt that I should sink down and expire on the floor of his shop. And he said that he would give me in charge if I did anything of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that, Wynn!"

"Of course not," said Fatty Wynn, at once. "It was rough, wasn't it?"

"I should think so. I've a jolly good mind to work off some of my ventriloquism on old Clegg," said Bunter, with a gleam behind his spectacles.

"Go it!" said Wynn, starting on his twelfth. "I shall—I shall finish with this one, or I sha'n't be hungry when we get to Greyfriars."

Billy Bunter cleared his throat.

"I say, Uncle Clegg, is this rabbit-pie fresh?"

"Quite fresh, Master Bunter."

"Liar!"

Uncle Clegg gave a jump.

It was a hollow voice, and he could have sworn that it proceeded from the rabbit-pie. He stared at it open-mouthed.

"My heye!" he gasped. "My heye!"

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"The thing speaks for itself," grinned Bob Cherry. "It actually talks."

"My heye! I must be dreamin'!"

"I wonder what it's made of," said Bunter.

"Mew-ew-ew-ew!" came from the pie.

There was a roar of laughter.

Uncle Clegg's eyes seemed about to drop from his head.

"My—my heye!" he said faintly. "I swear, gentlemen, that's as good a rabbit-pie as you never eat. My heye!"

"Mew-ew-ew!"

"You ought to kill your cats before you make 'em into rabbit-pies," said Bob Cherry severely. "I call this cruelty to animals."

"My heye!"

"Mew-ew-ew-ew!"

"Here, we'd better get out of this," said Bunter. "If that's what the rabbit-pies are made of, who knows what the tarts are made of? Let's get out. I should recommend you not to settle up for that little lot, Wharton."

The juniors, laughing loudly—and Mabel looking very puzzled—left the shop; and so dazed by the unexpected evidence from the rabbit-pie was Uncle Clegg, that it would have been quite easy to leave without settling the bill. But Wharton stayed behind to settle it. He paid Uncle Clegg, and left him standing like a man in a dream, gazing blankly and dazedly at the rabbit-pie.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie to the Rescue!

MARK LINLEY'S face was very bright as he helped Mabel into the trap again. The kindness of Wharton and his friends bade fair to make the Lancashire girl's visit to the old college a great success. Mabel was such a sweet, shy little thing, that one could not help liking her; and Harry Wharton wished very much that she would meet Marjorie during her stay at the school. Boys, of course, could be very nice, but Harry knew that Mabel would feel more at ease if there were another of her own sex in the party. And Marjorie Hazeldene was just the girl to take care of the shy little visitor from the far-off cotton county.

The trap drove up to the gates of Greyfriars in fine style, and quite a crowd of fellows gathered to see them alight. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth came along to chip their rivals of the Remove; but seeing a lady in the party they raised their caps instead, and passed on. Temple, Dabney & Co. were great on form. But some of the Remove were not quite so polite. During the stay in the village shop, Bulstrode and Snoop had returned to Greyfriars, and they stood looking on now with sneering faces. But for the presence of Mabel, they would have been cleared forcibly off the scene in a very short time.

Mabel looked round her with awe and wonder as she went into the old Close, shadowed on all sides by the grey old buildings, but wide and sunny. The buildings awed her, and the sight of a master in gown and mortar-board crossing the Close intensified the feeling. She clung more closely to her brother's arm. Harry Wharton walked with them at first as they went in; he wanted to speak to Linley.

"We're going to get up a bit of a celebration in No. 1," he remarked. "Will you and your sister come? We should all be pleased."

"You're awfully good," said Mark hesitating.

"Marjorie Hazeldene will be there," said Harry. "I've just heard that she's over here with her brother."

Mark looked at his sister.

"I—I should like to come very much," said Mabel shyly.

"Good! Then it's settled. Six o'clock is the time."

"Right you are," said Linley, "and thanks very much!"

Mabel glanced after Harry Wharton as he rejoined his friends.

"What a nice boy Wharton is!" she remarked.

Mark laughed.

"Yes, I told you you would find him so, didn't I, lass? He's a fine fellow—one of the very best. He's made things very different for me here from what they might have been."

They were walking along slowly under the old elms. Mabel's face was very thoughtful, and she was silent for some moments.

"But you are not good friends with all the boys here, Marky?"

"Not all," said Mark evasively. "Of course, that wasn't to be expected."

"No, I suppose not, Marky."

"I get on rippingly with those I come most in contact with," said Mark. "Harry Wharton and his set—and they're the best in the Form. Those other fellows you saw at the station are the rotters. I don't see much of them."



"You don't mean to say you smoke, Wun Lung!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, aghast. The Chinese grinned and went on with his work.

Mabel nodded, and was silent. Alas, for Mark's brave determination not to let his sister see anything of the trials he had to face at Greyfriars! Before she had set foot within the Greyfriars grounds, Mabel knew it all—it came to her intuitively. The scene at the railway-station had been quite sufficient.

But she would not speak about it.

Mark, as he walked with her about the old school, pointed out the various objects of interest, and in the pleasure of doing so, he became bright and happy, and the little cloud left Mabel's face.

Her interest in the old school was keen. She looked with wonder into the huge gym., and with awe into the ancient chapel, where morning service was held, and where the sunlight glinted through stained-glass windows that had glimmered in the suns of seven hundred years. The change from the busy hum of a Lancashire town to the quiet and calm of that old chapel struck the girl strangely. This was something out of what she had known before, in her limited experience. She began to understand, too, the affection in Mark's heart for the school, in spite of the troubles he had to battle with there.

"It is beautiful," said Mabel softly.

They strolled away to the old cloisters, quiet and calm in the afternoon, shady from the blaze of the sun. Mark pointed out the gates on the other side, where the New Academy stood, and told her of some of the many rows and "japes" between the Greyfriars lads and the alien pupils

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of Herr Rosenblum. And Mabel's laughter as she listened echoed among the old cloisters.

It was very quiet and calm there. It seemed impossible that they could be so near to the swarming playing fields, and yet so secluded and quiet. Faintly from afar came occasionally the click of bat and ball, and a sound of shouting from the cricket-field, where the Sixth-Form were playing a match. There was a sound of footsteps in the cloisters, and Carberry, the prefect, came in sight. He glanced at the brother and sister. His eye glinted a little as he looked at Mark. Many a rub had the Lancashire lad had with the bully of the Sixth.

"Go up to my study for me, Linley," said Carberry. "Get my straw hat, and bring it down to the gates."

Mark hesitated.

As a Removite he was liable to fag for the Sixth, of course, at any time; but it was particularly galling to be ordered off like that when he was showing his sister round the school, and time was so limited.

But it was useless to object. He did not want a scene of violence before Mabel.

"Very well, Carberry," he said quietly.

"Cut off at once," said Carberry, strolling away in the direction of the gates. Mabel looked at her brother in surprise.

"Who is that?" she asked.

"He's a prefect," said Mark, "a sort of monitor, you know. We juniors have to fag for the Sixth—he's in the

Sixth Form, you know. Do you mind waiting here a few minutes, Mab, while I get his hat. I've got to go."

"Of course, I don't mind, Marky. I will sit on this seat here—it is lovely to be here," said Mabel.

"That's right; I'll be back under five minutes."

And Mark Linley cut off.

He passed Bulstrode and Snoop in the Close, but without noticing them; for he was sprinting along in a hurry. He stopped a moment, however, to raise his cap to Marjorie Hazeldene. The girl was crossing the Close, looking very sweet and fresh in her white blouse and summer hat. She gave the Lancashire lad a smile.

"You are in a hurry," she said. "Don't stop."

"I'm fagging for Carberry," said Mark. "I've left my sister in the Cloisters."

Marjorie looked interested.

"Your sister is here?"

"Yes, waiting for me in the Cloisters."

"Then hurry," said Marjorie, with a smile.

Mark Linley ran on, and Marjorie changed her direction, going towards the Cloisters. But Bulstrode and Snoop were there already. There was an evil expression on the face of the bully of the Remove. Snoop looked uneasy. He saw that Bulstrode had some scheme in his mind, and he remembered Harry Wharton's reputation as a hard hitter. But for that, he would willingly have backed up Bulstrode in anything caddish.

"What are you going to do, Bulstrode?" he asked, as the Remove bully dragged him into the Cloisters.

Bulstrode chuckled.

"Don't you see? Linley has gone off for some reason, and left his sister there."

"Well, what then?"

"Oh, you're a dummy! Now's our chance!"

Snoop shrank back a little.

"I—I say, Bulstrode, you're not going to hurt a girl—"

"Who's going to hurt her?" said Bulstrode fiercely.

"Oh, I—I thought—"

"Then don't think, idiot! I'm only going to give Linley a scare. We'll make the factory girl go into the chapel, and fasten the door so that she can't get out, and Linley will be in a state of stew when he can't find her."

"She'll be frightened."

"I don't care if she is."

"But—"

"Shut up and come along."

The next moment they were in sight of Mabel Linley. The girl was sitting on the seat under the shade of the Cloisters, glad of the rest in the shade from the summer sun. She looked up as the cads of the Remove came along, and a shadow crossed her face. Bulstrode stopped, without raising his cap.

"Your brother wants to see you in the chapel," he said.

Mabel half rose, and then sat down again. She did not trust Bulstrode.

"Marky told me to wait for him here," she said.

"Well, Marky's changed his mind, and he wants you to go to the chapel now."

Mabel shook her head.

"Come along!"

"I must wait for my brother here."

"Look here, he wants you to go to the chapel, and I'm to take you," said Bulstrode roughly. "Will you come?"

"I must stay here."

"Stuff! You've got to come!"

"I do not believe you," said Mabel, at last, looking the Remove bully steadily in the face. "You are not a friend of my brother's. You were rude to me at the station. I shall stay here."

Bulstrode's eyes glinted with rage.

"Will you?" he said savagely. "You'll come along."

He seized the girl by the wrist. "Take her other wrist, Snoopey, and we'll have her in the chapel in a jiffy."

Snoop hesitated. Mabel, surprised and alarmed, struggled to draw her wrist free. But Bulstrode held it with a savage grip. Her strength, of course, was nothing to his, and she was dragged along.

"Let me go!" panted Mabel. "Oh, help!"

"You coward!"

It was a voice ringing with indignation, as Marjorie Hazeldene ran between Bulstrode and the Lancashire lad's sister. "Let her go at once, you coward!"

Bulstrode started back, and released Mabel in sheer surprise. He had not expected to see Marjorie at that moment. The colour flushed crimson in his cheeks.

"You coward! You coward!"

Marjorie threw one arm round the Lancashire girl, and faced Bulstrode with flashing eyes, as if ready to defend Mabel by physical force if need were. Shame and rage were struggling in Bulstrode's face, as he stood with clenched hands, his finger-nails digging into his palms.

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"THE MAGNET" NEXT WEEK: "HARRY WHARTON'S WARD." A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Entertaining the Guest.

THE scorn flashing from Marjorie's eyes brought the red into the cheeks of the Remove bully, as he stood hesitating and confused. Snoop quietly scuttled off through the Cloisters. Bulstrode's eyes sank before Marjorie's; but at last he forced a laugh.

"There's nothing to get excited about," he said, biting his lip. "I wasn't going to hurt her. Do you think I would hurt a girl?"

"I think you are brute enough for anything," said Marjorie scornfully.

Bulstrode's eyes burned.

"You ought to be ashamed," said Marjorie. "Did he frighten you much, my dear?"

Mabel was clinging to her, still panting and terrified.

"N-n-no," she stammered, but her frightened face belied her words. "I—I—"

"Oh, don't be stupid!" said Bulstrode angrily. "Why should I hurt you? I was going to lock her in the chapel, so that her brother wouldn't find her when he came back. It was only a joke on that factory cad."

"Was it?"

Bulstrode swung round at the voice of Mark Linley.

"Yes," he said defiantly. "Do you think I'm afraid to tell you so, cad?"

Mark's fists were clenched convulsively as he advanced upon his old enemy.

"Put up your hands," he said thickly.

"Marky!"

His sister's voice recalled Mark Linley to himself.

He remembered Marjorie, too, and he flushed red as he turned towards the girls.

"I am sorry," he said quietly. "I shall see you again, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully shrugged his shoulders.

"When you like," he said, with a sneer; and he walked away with an air of bravado which was all assumed. In reality, he felt that he had cut a very poor figure, indeed, before Marjorie Hazeldene, and he would have been very glad to appear well in her eyes.

"Thank you very much, Miss Hazeldene," said Mark softly. "It was very kind of you to help my sister."

Marjorie smiled.

"I am very glad," she said. "I hope you will not let this go any further with Bulstrode. It was only a stupid joke."

Mark nodded.

He had his own ideas about that, but he would not explain them to Marjorie. There would be time for an explanation with Bulstrode later. The quarter to six boomed out from the tower, and Mark gave a start.

"Time to be in Wharton's study in a quarter of an hour," he exclaimed. "I believe you are coming, Miss Hazeldene."

"Yes," said Marjorie, "and I shall bring your sister with me. Come with me now, my dear."

And with her arm round Mabel's waist, Marjorie marched off her protegee. Mabel, shy, and still frightened, gave a glance of tremulous gratitude, and Mark looked after them with a curious expression in his eyes. He was thinking of Marjorie—he had often thought of her before, and always when he did so, a new softness came over his face. He was still standing there, thinking, when a hand clumped down on his shoulder, and he turned to see Hazeldene, of the Remove.

"I was looking for you," said Hazeldene cheerily.

"Have you seen my sister?"

"Yes; she has just gone in."

"They're getting the feed ready in Wharton's study," said Hazeldene. "I'm coming. I get in because Marjorie's there, you see. Where's your sister?"

"She's coming with your sister," said Mark, wondering what Hazeldene would think of a friendship between his sister and the sister of the scholarship boy. But Hazeldene did not seem to think anything about it. As a matter of fact, Hazeldene had a weak character, that took its colouring from its surroundings. He had lately associated much with Wharton & Co., and the meaner part of his nature seemed to be lost to sight.

"Well, come on," he said. "We don't want to be late."

And the two juniors walked away together.

There was a buzz of preparation in No. 1 Study in the Remove.

Nugent had carried out his instructions well, and by the time Wharton & Co. were at the school, the provisions had been laid in.

Cash being in plenty, there was no need for economy, for once, and Nugent had not erred on the side of economy.

The lavish orders he gave delighted the heart of Mrs. Mumble, at the school shop, and the services of Master

Mimble were requisitioned to carry the purchases to No. 1 Study.

When they were piled on the table, they made quite an imposing array. Nugent tidied up the grate, and lighted the fire. It was a warm day, but the fire would be wanted for cooking, and Nugent prepared the utensils, and had them all clean and ready by the time the juniors came in.

The aspect of the study was very cheerful, if a little warm for the weather. Harry Wharton looked in, and gave a nod of satisfaction. Billy Bunter's eyes danced behind his big glasses.

"I say, you fellows, this is all right," he remarked. "I say, Wynn—where are you, Wynn?"

"Here I am," said Fatty Wynn, who was at Bunter's elbow, and he gave the fat junior a playful dig in the ribs that made him gasp for breath.

"Oh—oh, really, Wynn—"

"This looks jolly," said Wynn, looking round the study.

"A bit warm," said Bob Cherry.

"I don't notice it. I always like a study better with a fire in it. Looks more homely," said the boy from St. Jim's.

"Good. Bunter can look after the cooking," said Harry Wharton. "Six o'clock suit you for the feed?"

"Oh, yes, rather! I'm glad I didn't have much at the village shop, considering," said Fatty Wynn. "Is Bunter your cook?"

"Yes, rather, and a ripping one. I'll say that for him."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I'm a bit of a cook myself," said Fatty Wynn, with a longing glance at the shining frying-pan. "I generally do the cooking in Figgy's study, in the New House at St. Jim's. Even Jack Blake owns up that there isn't a cook in the School House to equal me."

Wharton nodded. He did not take very much interest in cooking himself, but he could understand that it might seem very important to Fatty Wynn.

"We've got up one or two things to fill in the time till tea," said Harry. "You play cricket at St. Jim's, I know—I remember your bowling. I suppose you'd like to show the fellows here how you can bowl, eh?"

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said Fatty Wynn, with his eyes still on the frying-pan.

"I dare say you'd like a stroll round the place, and a dip in the river?"

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn, who was watching Bunter unwrap some really fat and nice-looking sausages. "I—I'm sorry. What did you say?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

He saw the way Fatty Wynn's mind was turning, and that Billy Bunter's guest would be most entertained by Billy Bunter at that moment.

"I say," said Fatty Wynn, "it's a bit warm for cricket, isn't it?"

"Well, perhaps rather warm."

"An'—and a bit cool for bathing."

"Yes, perhaps so," said Harry, laughing.

"I'll tell you what," said Fatty Wynn, in a burst of confidence. "If you don't mind my mentioning it—"

"Go ahead, my son."

"Well, I'd awfully like to stay in here and lend Bunter a hand with the cooking, if he'll let me," said the fat Fourth-Form.

Bunter gave him an approving blink.

"Oh, certainly, Wynn! I'd like nothing better."

"Just as you like," said Wharton. "If you won't be dull—"

"Dull!" Fatty Wynn's tone expressed unbounded amazement. "Dull, with these ripping sausages to cook—and the bacon—and the chips! Dull!"

"Well, if you like the idea—"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then we'll leave you to Bunter's tender mercies," said Bob Cherry. "Bunter, we trust No. 1 Study's guest into your hands!"

"Right-ho!" said Bunter. "I'll look after him! What do you fry sausages in at St. Jim's, Wynn?"

Harry Wharton & Co. crowded out of the study, glad to get out of the heat of it on that warm afternoon, and chuckling to themselves.

They left the two cooks in earnest discussion.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "It's a case of 'two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one,' and no mistake. Wynn's a much more decent fellow than Bunter—no mean tricks about him—but in the grub line he might be Billy's twin."

"The twynfulness of the grubful resemblance is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"We're free for a bit," said Nugent. "What do you say to a bit of cricket practice till six?"

"Good wheeze! Come on!"

"I'll follow you," said Harry Wharton, catching sight of Wun Lung just then in the passage. "I want to speak to Wun Lung."

The little Celestial looked for a moment as if he would like to avoid the meeting, but as that was impossible, he No. 66.

wreathed his face in his blandest smile. Harry tapped him on the shoulder.

"I want to speak to you, kid! I haven't had an opportunity of speaking to you about that tin—or thanking you."

"Allee light," said Wun Lung.

"It came in awfully handy, and saved me from a lot of awkwardness," said Wharton. "I'm ever so much obliged."

"Allee light. Me muchee glad."

"But where did you get it from, kid?"

A vacant look overspread Wun Lung's face.

"Me no savvy," he replied.

"Come, I want to know," said Wharton. "Ten pounds is a big sum. I'm not going to use more than three at the outside, so I will give you the other seven now. Mind you put it in a safe place!"

Wun Lung shook his head.

"Me no takee!"

"But, my dear kid, I'm not going to use it."

"Keepee till to-morrow, then."

"I'll keep it till to-morrow, if you like, though I assure you I sha'n't use it," said Wharton. "But look here, kid, I really wish to know where it came from. How did you manage to raise the wind?"

"No savvy!"

"Did someone lend you the money?"

"No savvy!"

"Have you sold anything of value to raise it?"

"No savvy!"

Wharton laughed a little impatiently. He felt really concerned about the matter, but it was clear that he would get no information from the little Chinese. Whatever might be the source of the windfall, Wun Lung did not mean to acquaint Wharton with it.

"Well, if you don't want to tell me, I won't ask," said Harry at last. "But I hope you haven't got yourself into any difficulty over it. If you have, you must come to me to help you out of it."

"Allee light."

And that was all Wharton could get out of Wun Lung. He was still thinking over the matter when he went down to the cricket ground to join his chums. But turn it over in his mind as he would, he could not guess where the money had come from—nor was he to know for some time to come—and then the discovery was destined to come as a shock to him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Fatty Wynn is Happy.

FATTY WYNN was smiling a smile as big and round as the full moon. He was in his element now, and the chums of the Remove could not have made him happier than by leaving him in the study with Bunter. He unwrapped the various parcels of good things, and looked them over with the eye of a connoisseur and the smile of a gourmand.

"By Jove, this is all right!" he said. "Do you often have feeds like this in the Lower Fourth, Bunter?"

"Not so often as I could wish," said Bunter, looking up from greasing the frying-pan. "You know, I'm a rather delicate chap, and I have to have continual nourishment to keep me going at all. The other fellows in the study don't seem to understand that, and they keep me rather short."

Fatty Wynn looked puzzled.

"Don't you club together for the study funds," he asked.

"Oh, yes; we put so much each, you know!" explained Bunter, omitting to mention that his share existed only in his imagination as far as paying it went.

"That's it—that's how we do at St. Jim's," said Wynn. "But how do they keep you short, then? I suppose you have your share of the grub?"

"Well, I'm not a big eater, you know," said Bunter. "They've got a silly impression that I eat a lot. I often ask Wharton to lend me a few shillings to get a snack at the school shop, but he won't, you know. He doesn't understand how I require keeping up. He's rather selfish!"

"Is he really?"

"Yes. I don't want to run anybody down, but it's no good disguising the fact that the fellows in this study are selfish," said Bunter, with a sad shake of the head. "The other day Wharton bought a new cricket bat. I spent five minutes or more pointing out to him that we could have a really ripping study feed with the money. But he wouldn't listen to reason. I might have sunk down expiring at his feet, and he would have bought the cricket bat all the same!"

"Going to cook all these sosses?" asked Fatty Wynn, changing the subject.

Perhaps he did not quite agree with Bunter's views, but did

not wish to argue with his host about anything. Besides, the sausages were more interesting than anything else.

"Oh, yes; rather! We want enough to go round!"

"Good! If you find it too warm near the fire, I'll take your place."

Bunter made an effort of politeness.

"Look here, Wynn, if you'd like to cook the sausages, I'll get on with the chips," he said; "they will take some time."

"Right you are!" said Fatty Wynn delightedly.

He had the frying-pan in hand in a moment. Bunter went on with the chips, but he looked at Wynn from time to time. He was not used to self-denial, and he was a little anxious about the sausages, too.

But he soon saw that he had no cause for anxiety. Fatty Wynn was a past master in the art of cooking sausages.

He turned them out in first-class style, sausages after sausages, till a dish on the hob was crowded with them, all done to a turn; and Fatty Wynn's face was red as a beetroot from the blaze of the fire.

"Warm work—eh?" said Bunter.

"Yes, rather! But I like it."

Fatty Wynn took off his jacket and rolled back his sleeves. He felt cooler then, and more in trim for work. From the Close came the merry shouts of the cricketers, but Fatty Wynn did not hear them at such a moment. In the sight and the sound and the smell of cooking, Fatty Wynn was oblivious of everything else.

"Like to do the bacon, too?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, rather! You can do the toast afterwards."

"Right you are!"

The scent of bacon was added to that of the sausages. Billy Bunter, meantime, was making jam-tarts, which he could make quite as well as Mrs. Mimble. The difficulty about them was cooking them at the study grate, and that was always a labour of love with Billy Bunter.

"I think I'll sit on the window-sill for a bit," said Fatty Wynn, when he had finished the bacon. "It must be getting on for time to begin."

"You can poach the eggs, if you like, when I've got this tray of tarts going."

The tray of tarts was placed in a favourable position to "get going," and Fatty Wynn sat on the window-sill, with his legs inside the room, and breathed the cooler air of the Close. Then he poached the eggs, and he did it in a style that Billy Bunter himself could not have equalled.

"My word!" said Fatty Wynn. "This does look ripping! It was awfully decent of you to ask me over here, Bunter!"

"Jolly glad to have you!" said Bunter. "I wish you'd come over seven times a week, as a matter of fact! I'm expecting three pounds a week shortly from the Patriotic Home Work Association, and then I intend to stand a series of extensive feeds."

"Who's standing this one?" asked Fatty Wynn suddenly.

"Oh, I am!" said Bunter. "I've done everything but just find the tin. That's all right; I'm going to settle up with Wharton out of my postal order to-morrow. I really think it will be decent."

"I should rather think so. I say, I'd like you to return this visit, you know," said Fatty Wynn. "My chums in the New House at St. Jim's would be awfully pleased to see you. We'd get up a bit of a celebration, too."

"I'll come, with pleasure!" said Bunter. "Rather!"

"Then there's your ventriloquism," said Wynn, with a chuckle. "You could play tricks on the School House chaps, you know. It would be great fun. Hallo! It's near six, and I think I can hear the fellows coming!"

Bob Cherry looked into the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Getting on all right?"

"Yes, rather!"

"It's nearly six; but no hurry, you know!"

"That's all right; it will be ready at sharp six. Everything's done but the tarts, and they'll finish by themselves while we're negotiating the bacon and sausages."

"The fire can be let down now, I think, Bunter."

"Yes; it is a trifle warm."

"I think I'd like to shove my chivvy into cold water," said Fatty Wynn. "It's rather a warm day to stand close to a big fire."

"Right you are! Come along!"

When Fatty Wynn returned from his ablutions, fresh and rosy and glowing, and in the highest possible spirits, the chums of the Remove were in the study, and the preparations for the feast were made.

The table was covered with a gleaming white cloth, and the crockery and the silver on it made a really imposing array.

Wharton had borrowed the things right and left up and down the passage, and had obtained the loan of a really handsome cruet from Wingate, of the Sixth, and a set of serviettes from the housekeeper.

Chairs had been begged, borrowed, or commandeered, and No. 66.

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were arranged in order, and were eked out with a stool or two.

The bookcase had been shifted out into Hazeldene's study to make more room, and Nugent had politely but firmly pointed out to Bob Cherry that the shelf was not the best place conceivable for his old football boots.

The window was wide open, and a fresh breath of air came in from the Close, and a glimpse of green foliage.

Bunter had been induced to let the fire go very low, at the risk of spoiling the baking of the tarts; but, as Bob Cherry said, he'd rather the tarts were left unbaked than be baked along with them.

Harry Wharton looked round the study with a glance of pardonable pride.

It all really looked very cosy and inviting, and quite fit to entertain distinguished guests.

Mark Linley came along the passage, and looked in, with a cheerful smile on his face.

"Come in!" said Harry cheerily. "It's all ready, and we're only waiting for the ladies."

"I think fellows ought to be willing to wait a couple of minutes for the ladies," said Fatty Wynn.

But the St. Jim's junior was not put to even this strain of politeness. Marjorie was always prompt to an appointment. As six o'clock rang out from the clock-tower, the two girls appeared at the door of No. 1 Study.

"Here they are!" said Hazeldene, who had come in with Linley. "You're not late, Marjorie."

Marjorie laughed. As a matter of fact, her brother usually was late, and she never was. She came in with Mabel, who was looking very shy, and blushing a little, but very happy at the same time.

There was a rush to place chairs for them, and, of course, Bob Cherry trod on Nugent's foot, and caused him to give a howl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Anything the matter?"

"Oh, no," groaned Nugent, hopping on one leg. "I was only exercising my top notes."

"Sorry. I didn't see your foot."

"I could feel yours."

"Not hurt, are you?"

"Not at all," said Nugent sarcastically. "I'm just hopping around for fun. Don't mind me!"

"I won't," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. And he didn't. He placed a chair for Marjorie, who sat down with a smile, drawing Mabel into the chair beside her. Mark Linley sat beside his sister on the other side, and Bob Cherry secured the other place next to Marjorie. Wharton took the head of the table, rather cramped for room, with a junior on each side of him, but wearing his best smile.

Fatty Wynn beamed over the table with a smile that was positively seraphic.

Billy Bunter, with a serviette over his arm, acted as waiter, and certainly he supplied everybody most liberally. Marjorie had to enter a laughing protest, for herself and Mabel.

The little Lancashire girl was very quiet.

It was all so new and strange to her—this feast in a junior study at school—and it opened a glimpse to her for the first time of a world of which she had known nothing.

The fact, too, that her brother was evidently on the best of terms with the fellows in No. 1 Study could not be lost upon her.

Mark Linley, scholarship boy as he was, was evidently on good terms with the best set in the Greyfriars Remove, and it was a relief to the girl's mind to realise it.

After all, what would Bulstrode and his enmity matter, while Mark had friends like these? That they were better-off lads, as far as worldly goods went, the girl, of course, could not fail to see, and yet there was no hint of patronage in their manner; not the slightest trace of an assumption of superiority towards the lad who had worked in a cotton-mill.

The constraint, too, was gone from Mark's manner when he found himself in wholly congenial society, and he was as merry as anyone else present.

The "feed" was in full progress, when Wun Lung came in and joined the feasters, room being made for him willingly, in spite of the crowded state of the table. Bunter had sat down next to Wynn, and Wun Lung sat next, with a bland smile upon his quaint little face. The feast proceeded merrily, and the sausages and bacon were found to be ripping, and the toast perfect.

After the more solid portion of the meal had been disposed of, and the plates had been whisked out of sight into the cupboard, Bunter made a movement to rise, to take a final look at the tarts before serving them, and to make a fresh pot of tea.

He half-rose and sat down again, with a startled and amazed expression upon his fat face.

"Oh, really!" he gasped. And the others gazed at him in surprise.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Pleasant Little Party.

BILLY BUNTER made another attempt to rise, and this time his chair followed him off the floor, and hung on to him as he stood up. The fat junior swung round to see what was the matter, and swung the chair against Fatty Wynn, who was just raising his tea-cup to his mouth.

Fatty Wynn's arm gave a jerk, and the stream of hot tea went swamping over his broad waistcoat.

The guest of No. 1 Study gave a howl.

"Ow—ow!"

"I—I'm sincerely sorry," gasped Bunter. "I—I—"

"What on earth are you up to, Billy?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What are you dragging a chair about in that way for?"

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"Ow! I'm scalded!"

"Mop it up with my handkerchief."

"Of all the asses—"

"How could I help it?" shouted Bunter. "I'm fastened to the chair, or something. It's sticking to me."

Bob Cherry jumped up, and took hold of the chair. He grinned as he saw what was the matter. The tail of Bunter's jacket had been fastened down to the padded seat of the chair with a couple of strong steel hooks.

No wonder the chair had risen along with the fat junior. Bob Cherry looked suspiciously at Wun Lung as he dragged out the hooks; but the face of the little Celestial was blandly innocent.

"Look here!" said Bob. "No wonder your chair dances after you if you fasten yourself up to it like this."

"I didn't!" shouted Bunter. "Some silly ass has been japing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that all right, Wynn?"

"Oh, yes, I've mopped it up," said Fatty Wynn, returning Wharton his handkerchief—a limp rag now. "It's all right."

"If you'd like to change into another waistcoat, I—"

"Oh, no; it's all right! Are the tarts done, Bunter?"

"I say, you fellows, it was this Chinese beast—"

"Did you fasten Bunter to his chair, Wun Lung?"

"Me no savvy."

"Did you hook Bunter on to his chair?"

"No savvy."

Harry Wharton laughed. There was no getting an answer out of the little Chinese if he did not choose to give one, though there wasn't much doubt as to who the practical joker had been.

"Never mind, Billy. Let's have the tea and the tarts."

"That's all very well."

"Then don't grumble. Buck up!"

And the tarts were placed on the table. Fortunately, they were excellently done, and the general praises bestowed upon his handiwork mollified Billy Bunter. The second cups were poured out, and the guests discussed tea and tarts, and Marjorie declared that both were perfect.

"Good!" said Bunter. "I'm glad you like them, Miss Hazeldene. If you ever think of giving a study feed over at Cliff House, I'll willingly come over and help you with the cooking."

Marjorie laughed.

"I'm afraid study feeds are rather out of our line," she said. "I only wish we had studies as you boys have."

"It could be worked, though," said Billy Bunter.

"Suppose you gave a feed in a box-room or somewhere. It seems a shocking thing that girls should be brought up in a way that prevents them from standing one another feeds. It's really an argument in favour of votes for women."

"Yes, rather," said Fatty Wynn, with hearty concurrence. "It's really rough, and I should recommend a round robin to Miss Primrose on the subject."

Marjorie laughed, but did not say whether she thought of adopting the idea.

In the midst of the merry chat round the study table, a disagreeable face looked in at the door. It belonged to Bulstrode, who stood looking in at the feasters for some time without being noticed. Bob Cherry was the first to observe him, and his brow grew dark.

"Room for one more?" asked Bulstrode, with a sneer.

Wharton bit his lip. The addition of the Remove bully would spoil the party, but he did not want trouble before the girls. He knew that Bulstrode was counting upon that, and that he was only seeking to make himself disagreeable.

The situation might have been awkward, but just then a stern voice was audible, apparently proceeding from the passage behind the Remove bully.

"Bulstrode, come to my study at once!"

Bulstrode started, and looked dismayed, as he recognised the stern tones of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

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He turned and left the doorway, and the chums of the Remove felt greatly relieved.

"Sounds like trouble for Bulstrode," said Mark Linley.

"What are you laughing at, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Can't you guess?"

"You don't mean to say—"

"By Jove, it was Bunter's ventriloquism," said Harry Wharton, bursting into a laugh. "I thought it queer he should come along just then. Bulstrode never guessed."

"Ha, ha, ha! And he's gone to Quelch's study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode was indeed gone to the Form-master's study. He was rather surprised at not seeing Mr. Quelch in the passage, but he was far from guessing the truth. Mr. Quelch's study door was closed when Bulstrode reached it, and there was a murmur of voices within. He tapped at the door, and the murmur ceased, and Mr. Quelch bade him enter.

Bulstrode went in, and the Remove-master looked at him impatiently. He was having a smoke and a talk with Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, and the talk was interesting, and the interruption very unwelcome. Bulstrode, imagining that he had been told to come, naturally stood without speaking, waiting for the Form-master to speak.

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

"Well?" he snapped. "What do you want? Why on earth do you come into my study and stand there like an image?"

"If you please, sir—"

"Quick—your business!"

"You told me to come, sir."

"I told you to come! When?"

"Just now, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at him very attentively.

"I told you to come just now, Bulstrode! What do you mean?"

It was Bulstrode's turn to stare.

"You just spoke to me in the Remove passage, sir, and—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "I suppose this is an attempt to mystify me, and it may be your idea of a joke. It is not mine." He picked up a cane off the table. "Hold your hand out, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode's jaw dropped.

"But—but, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the Remove-master. "I have been here for the last half-hour with Mr. Prout, and yet you have the effrontery to tell me I just spoke to you in the Remove passage. You must attempt a mystification like that with someone more likely to be taken in, Bulstrode. I can hardly credit such effrontery!"

"It is really amazing," said Mr. Prout.

"Hold your hand out, Bulstrode!"

And the Remove bully had to obey. Mr. Quelch was looking dangerous. He received two severe cuts on each hand, and was dismissed with a stern warning of what he might expect if he attempted to jape his Form-master again. The Remove bully went out of the study wriggling with pain, and not feeling at all in the mood for further trouble with the chums of No. 1.

Meanwhile, the little celebration in No. 1 Study was drawing to an end. Both the guests at Greyfriars had to catch an early train, and it was necessary for them to leave early. There was little more than half an hour to spare after tea, but Harry Wharton suggested music, and several songs were sung. Marjorie sang very well, and Mabel shyly gave a recitation in Lancashire dialect, which was received with enthusiasm. Bob Cherry, who had lately been seized with Territorial enthusiasm, sang "What's the Matter with England?" in a voice that left nothing to be desired as far as power went, whatever might be said of its other qualities. It brought a prefect along the passage with a cane, but he retired when he saw that there were ladies in the party. Billy Bunter volunteered to sing the Toreador song from "Carmen" in French, but in the nick of time it was discovered that it was time to start for the station.

A merry party walked down the road to Friardale. They were in good time for the train, and Bunter said if they liked he would give them the Toreador song there, on the platform. But Bob Cherry whispered dire threats as to what would happen if he did—and he didn't.

Fatty Wynn was going a good part of Mabel's way, and he volunteered to take care of the Lancashire girl as far as he went. Mabel was to be met at the other end, of course. When the train came in, they entered the carriage, and Billy Bunter passed a mysterious parcel in to Wynn with a mysterious whisper.

"Right-ho!" said the St. Jim's junior. "I'm bound to get hungry before I get home. Thanks awfully; you are a thoughtful chap!"

NEXT WEEK.

"HARRY WHARTON'S WARD."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and the Pupils of Cliff House.

"Good-bye, dear!" said Marjorie, kissing Mabel Linley. "I want you to come and see me later at Cliff House—will you?"

"I shall be so glad," whispered Mabel. The guard shouted. Kissing and handshaking were over, and Mark Linley closed the door.

"Good-bye, lass!"
 "Good-bye, Marky dear!"
 "Stand back, there!"
 "Good-bye, Wynn—come again, old chap!"
 "What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, and he waved his cap from the window, while Mabel waved her handkerchief. "Good-bye! It was a ripping—"

The rest was lost in the roar of the train, but the juniors could guess that the missing word was "feed." They waved their caps till the train was out of sight, and then the Greyfriars chums walked home to Cliff House with Marjorie. Mark Linley pressed Harry Wharton's arm as they walked back to Greyfriars in the dusk.

"Thanks!" he said, in a low voice. "Mabel has had a good time here. You have made it so; you and Marjorie Hazeldene. I shall never forget it."

"I say, you fellows—"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Bunter talking again!"
 "Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, we must have Fatty Wynn here again. He's a ripping chap, and he knows something about cooking. When I get my first three pounds from the Home Work Association, I shall have him here, and—"

"When!" said Bob Cherry. "I really hope we shall see the St. Jim's chaps again before then."
 And as a matter of fact they did.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of the boys of Greyfriars and the pupils of Cliff House next Tuesday, entitled "Harry Wharton's Ward." Order your copy of The "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)

The Opening Chapters of a Grand Story.



A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys, a cadet in his last term at Sandhurst, is ACCUSED OF CHEATING in an exam., the professor in charge finding a paper of his skeleton notes on the floor by his desk. He is sent to his room under arrest, pending his EXPULSION.

On going to his desk, where he had put his skeleton notes, Ronald finds it had been forced. Private Slaney, the soldier-servant of Ian Chenys, Ronald's half-brother, comes to Ronald's room and, showing him the half of one of Ian's cuff-links, says he found it in Ronald's room, and offers to sell this proof of Ian's guilt. Ronald kicks the black-malling Slaney out of the room, and while the latter is frightening Ian with threats of exposure, sits down to write a painful letter, time after time tearing it up and starting afresh.

(Now go on with the story.)

Breaking Arrest.

But the letter was finished at last, and Ronald rose, his brow moist with the sweat of mental agony. It was for his father, and he knew too well what a deathly blow those few straight lines must deal to his proud old heart.

A knock came at the door, and Cosgrave entered. He shot a startled glance at his old chum as he saw these preparations. Somehow the match revolver lying in its case—the one Ronald had gained as a prize as the best shot in the college rifle-club—seemed to suggest some awful thing, though Cosgrave was ready to kick himself the next instant for the thought.

"No, Cos, you needn't think that," said Ronald, with a bitter little laugh, reading the corporal's glance. "I'm not a coward, I think; anyway, not a coward enough to wash things out like that. You can take that pistol as a keepsake. I shall have no use for it."

"Thanks, old man! I shall treasure it. But what are you going to do now? You won't leave us yet awhile. Lots of things—everything may happen before your papers go through, for if it is in human power to trace this treachery we mean to do it—all of us. You know that, Ron."

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NEXT WEEK:

"HARRY WHARTON'S WARD."

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There was a note of eagerness in his voice which touched the other to the heart.

"I know it, old chap. I knew it from the first. But my mind is made up. I leave to-night. I shouldn't tell you that, perhaps, because you're on duty, and it means 'breaking arrest,' and 'barracks,' and all sorts of wicked things; but I mean it, all the same. To-morrow, Sandhurst will know me no more, and in a year it will have forgotten me."

"Not in one year, or ten," replied Cosgrave fervently. "But where are you going?"

"To 'list as a soldier. There never was yet an elder son of my race who did not bear arms for his King, and all the regulations, backed by all the troops in Aldershot, will not prevent me being true to our traditions. Good-bye, old Cos!"

The hands of the two young men met in a tight grip.

"Some day," continued Ronald, after a pause, "perhaps on India's sunny plains, or at Gib., or Malta, or some other soldier-place, we may tumble across each other. But I'll be a private of the line, and you'll be mounted on a high horse, with rings on your fingers and bells on your toes, like the young lady of Banbury Cross. That's all bound to come to you in good time, old boy, for if ever a chap was born to climb high in the profession of arms, it's you, Cos."

Ronald was laughing now, for he knew that if he did not laugh he would cry.

Then the bugle called "Lights Out!" and Cosgrave, with his heart too full to speak, gripped Ronald's hand again and strode out of the room.

Ronald had changed out of his uniform into mufti, and, having stowed a couple of shirts and a few necessities into a bundle, he lay down upon his bed to wait.

There was already a silence over the vast grey buildings, but lights glimmered from the staff-quarters, and after all there was plenty of time.

Midnight struck, then one. He reached out in the darkness to the little table at the side of the bed. A gilt miniature frame stood there, as it had stood by his pillow ever since he was old enough to think. Enshrined in it was the portrait of Ronald's own mother—a sweet-faced woman, looking on her boy with trusting, compassionate eyes.

Ronald was scarcely more than a baby when she died, yet what a difference her loss had meant and made to him.

He kissed the portrait as he had kissed it on many a happier time, and slipped it into his pocket. Then cautiously he moved to the window and raised the sash inch by inch.

The ground was only a few feet beneath, and a rain-pipe ran down within reach. In a few seconds, with his bundle under his arm, he was treading softly over the gravel to the more silent grass. A fence or two, a stretch of rough heath, and a belt of pines, brought him to the road.

Ronald had one other staunch, unswerving friend in the world—his dog Rough. Pets of any description are forbidden at Sandhurst, but all the regulations in the world could not have parted Ronald from Rough. So his four-footed chum occupied a barrel in a cottage-garden near by, and, being a common-sense dog, was content to live for those brief hours when his master could escape from duty and take him out for a field-day on his own.

Rough happened to be sitting outside his kennel, gazing wistfully at the night sky, wondering what on earth the stars found to wink at so persistently, when he heard a familiar footstep on the road.

Like the wise dog he was he said nothing. He knew perfectly well, so far as military regulations were concerned, he had no right to be on the earth at all; but he also noticed in his doggy experience, that if he only sat perfectly quiet, with his head resting drowsily on his paws, whole legions of generals and people in gorgeous uniforms and plumed cocked-hats would pass him by without dreaming apparently that he was anything more than a common civilian tyke.

After they had gone and all was safe again, he would indulge in a quiet chuckle over this.

To see Rough, when he and Ronald encountered one of these superior persons during their rambles together, was a study. He had a nose for a general, which would have sniffed him out even if he had disguised himself with burnt cork and carried a banjo under his arm.

On such occasions he would bear away from his master, with his chin in the air, as much as to say he had never seen the young cadet in his life before, and he did not care if he never saw him again.

"Rough!" came in a cautious whisper over the low hedge. The terrier did a quiet wriggle, just sufficient to rattle his chain and show that he was on the alert.

The next minute a gate clicked, and a familiar hand had unclasped the swivel which held him. Then Rough skipped through a private hole of his own in the hedge, and made for the corner of the road, where he might offer his formal welcome in perfect safety.

"Well, Rough?" said Ronald, as the dog jumped up at him and corkscrewed round his legs in a silent ecstasy of delight. "A bit of a surprise visit this, eh, old fellow? Well, so it is for me. Do you remember what I told you—that if the worst came to the worst, we two would trot out into the world together and start afresh in life?"

Rough gave a gruff bark, as much as to say "Perfectly!"

"Well, the crash has come. They say at the coll.—some of them, anyway—that I am a cheat—a cribber at exams. What do you think of that?"

Rough didn't think it worth thinking about at all. He didn't care twopence what anybody thought at the coll., or anywhere else, for his private opinion of all men who wore bright buttons and coloured coats was that they were asses—except, of course, his master.

"And now I'm going for a soldier," said Ronald, picking up his bundle.

"Ah, now you're talking!" said Rough, in a series of gruff growls. "Show me the soldier, and I'll help to go for him, too."

Then Ronald laughed as if this was a joke, and the pair set off down the dusty road, overshadowed by whispering pines, through which the stars peeped shyly. It was a long, forty-mile tramp to London, but what cared they?

Ronald is an object of Contention.

Opposite to St. Martin's Church, Trafalgar Square, and with his back to the railings of the National Gallery, Colour-Sergeant Duffy, of the Royal North Wessex Regiment, stood, giving his grizzled moustache its morning curl.

A faded rosette of red, white, and blue ribbons was pinned into his cap, to show that he was there to recruit young men willing to serve King and Country.

A little later there would be a dozen or more veterans in various uniforms parading that stretch of pavement on a like quest, but it was full early yet. Colour-Sergeant Duffy, however, had a firm belief that it was the early bird that caught most worms. Therefore, he always took up his post in good time to pounce upon his prey. While fixing a weedy youth on the opposite pavement with his alluring eyes, wondering whether by any stroke of luck a chest like his would ever pass the measuring-tape, he quite overlooked

a stalwart, broad-shouldered young fellow of nineteen, who had halted behind him to scan the brightly-coloured recruiting-cards hung upon the railings.

Squatting beside his heel, with its head cocked on one side as if equally interested in "The Advantages of the Army" there set forth, was a wire-haired terrier.

Colour-Sergeant Duffy awoke to the proximity of this prize only just in time, for already bearing down upon him like a ship in full sail, was Squadron-Sergeant-Major Bullifant, of the Duke of Lancaster's Own 23rd Lancers. Bullifant was Duffy's most hated rival.

In a fever-heat of excitement, Duffy luffed smartly across the cavalryman's bows, and thus, taking the wind out of his sails, bobbed up at Ronald's elbow.

"Morning, sir!" he gasped briskly.

"Good-morning, sir!" chimed in Bullifant almost simultaneously, addressing Ronald round Duffy's thick neck. "Was you thinking—"

"Of joining the Army?" interrupted Duffy, at the same moment, getting his elbow into Bullifant's ribs, and edging him violently into the railing. "Now then, Bob, you just sheer off!" he said threateningly. "This is my man!"

"Your man be jiggered!" breathed the squadron-sergeant-major, resolved to make a hard fight for so desirable a capture.

Recruits mean money to the recruiting-sergeant. A Militiaman will bring a paltry eighteenpence, and a linesman of cavalry or infantry a humble half-crown, but this tall, strapping chap would pass for the Guards or Sappers, at five shillings, or possibly for the Household Cavalry, at £2 10s.

"It's like your hossified hignorance to think a fine, well-set-up young gent like him is goin' to waste hisself on a mud-crushing mob like yours!" said Bullifant, with scorn. "Why, you're comin' into my regiment, ain't yer, sir? The dashing twenty-third, where every man lives like a lord, has his own horse to ride, and his own sword to carry all day. As for a uniform—why, just look at me!"

Bullifant had dodged Duffy, and skipped round to Ronald's other side, where he stood and blew out his chest like a pouter-pigeon.

Ronald looked, but to Duffy's joy did not seem to be over-much impressed.

"Yes, look at him and laugh," answered Duffy, fixing the sergeant-major with a vicious and malignant glare.

Ronald smiled, not at Bullifant, or because Duffy had told him to. It amused him mightily to see these two old fire-eaters bristling and shaping at each other like a couple of terriers.

"Here, go away, Duffy!" said Bullifant. "You've been eatin' toasted bayonets and curried cordite again for breakfast, in spite of all your sorrowing friends 'ave told you. Some day, with that big, red nose of yours, you'll catch fire and go off bang. Go away! I'm ashamed to be seen talking to you before this gentleman, what is goin' to be our colonel inside six months, or I'm a liar!"

Duffy's face had got so mottled and fiery under these insults that it really looked as if Bullifant's prophecy was going to come true, and that he was going to burst into flames on the spot, to the peril of the National Gallery beside him.

"Look here, you two," said Ronald, chipping in to prevent an open row. "As I'm the bone of contention, suppose you let me have some say in the matter. Frankly, it is my intention to enlist, but though the honour of belonging to such a distinguished regiment as the 23rd Lancers is a great one, and the prospect of riding a horse and carrying a sword all day is enticing, it is not my particular idea of soldiering."

"'Ear, 'ear!" echoed Duffy, in triumph; while Bullifant's face began to fall like the barometer before a thunderstorm.

"I'm going to join the infantry," continued Ronald, "and if the Royal North Wessex will have me—why, I'll say 'Done!'"

"Bravo!" cried Duffy. "Have you and welcome, and the colonel couldn't say more."

"Werry good, then," said Bullifant sourly, preparing to continue his patrol.

He could see that Ronald was not the ordinary type of greenhorn that usually fell to their clutches, and that he knew something of the life he was going to adopt.

"You've got a specimen of the Wessex in front of you," he sneered by way of a parting shot. "He's their showman, though you'd hardly believe it by the look of it; the only one that ain't got web-feet like a duck, and 'is chest stuck round be'ind his back instead of in front. That's why they've sent 'im up 'ere. If you jine 'is crush after that, don't say I didn't tell yer. Good-day!"

And, with a magnificent flourish of his riding-whip,

Squadron-Sergeant-Major Bullifant turned on his heel and stalked towards Trafalgar Square.

"The scoundrel! The mule-rider!" choked Duffy, glaring after his stalwart enemy, while Ronald took the opportunity of indulging in a quiet grin.

After making two or three darts and dashes, as if he meant to pursue his enemy and chastise him on the spot, the recruiting-sergeant turned to his recruit again, and led the way, still snorting like a grampus, in the opposite direction.

Under the little grove of dingy plane-trees, across the broad triangle and pavement, they moved towards the barrack-gate.

Two dingy, brick pillars marked the threshold of the new world into which Ronald was about to enter; a grim, strenuous world, where weaklings are not wanted, and where even the strongest may not boast that he is strong enough.

Tens of thousands had trodden that path before him; the glorious path of duty to the Motherland; the path which, once chosen, must be followed though it leads to death.

Ronald paced it with a soldier's tread. He sprang from a soldier stock, and though all the fates conspired to strip him of fortune and good name, they could not rob him of his birthright to serve his Country and his King.

St. George's Barracks—Ronald Takes the Plunge.

Of all the thresholds to a new life, St. George's Barracks is perhaps the most gloomy and depressing.

A bare, ugly gateway, leading on to a square of sooty gravel; a guard-room and a few squat huts on the left; a building slightly more imposing on the right; a blank wall opposite, and on the fourth side of the square the barracks, tall, dingy, and forbidding.

Just inside was standing a smart corporal of the Guards, on gate-duty, while without, leaning against the wall, was an elderly woman, dishevelled and red-eyed with weeping.

At the sight of Colour-Sergeant Duffy she seemed to rally herself, and the soldier quickened his step, as if to escape her. But she flung herself in his path.

"Sergeant—sergeant, for the love of Heaven give me back my boy!" she cried shrilly. "You'll break my heart if you take him—specially 'im, the youngest I've got, and the best! No, listen, sergeant, listen!" as Duffy tried gently to release her clutching fingers. "For the sake of the mother that bore you, hear me! You won't take him from me, will you? You'll give him back? He's only a slim bit of a lad!"

The poor creature ran on, pouring out her breathless appeal with a desperation which brought a lump into Ronald's throat and tears into his eyes. Even Duffy, used as he was no doubt to such scenes, seemed touched.

"Now, look 'ere, old lady," he said kindly but firmly, "don't you go carrying on like this, or you'll make yourself bad. The youngster is all right. He's goin' into one of the smartest regiments of the Service, the same as this gentleman is goin' to join now. Leave 'im to it. For a lad like 'im it's the finest thing he could do—to jine the Army. Wait till you see him come home on furlough in a few months' time, smart as paint, and with plenty of money in his pocket."

But the sergeant was talking now to unlistening ears. The woman's eyes were turned on Ronald. She seemed to find one glint of comfort and hope in his kindly grey eyes. Here at least was one who would be with her boy in this new, terrible world he was entering.

For a moment the clinging fingers relaxed, and Duffy, taking his opportunity, gently put her on one side and slipped through the gate.

Ronald hesitated at the sight of the woman's bitter distress. He would have liked to frame a few simple words of comfort to the poor old soul, but Duffy's voice rapped out a command to "Come on!" and he, too, passed through the gate.

The corporal on gate-duty gave a sheepish grin.

"Old 'un at it again, colour-sergeant?" he asked sympathetically.

"Yes; the youngster's off by the three o'clock draft, though, and a good job too. Oh, she'll get over it all right, sir, never you fear!" he said, catching Ronald's look of pity.

"Lor', there's lots of them carry on like that, and the young 'uns they're breaking their 'earts over grinnin' all the time from the barrack windows inside. This son of her's she's after has set his heart on soldierin'—I 'listed 'im yesterday—and though he's a good lad and sorry for the old lady, he wouldn't draw back now even if he could. Come along in here, first!"

Ronald obeyed, but Rough, his wire-haired terrier, stayed outside. He, too, was sorry for the poor, forlorn creature crying silently beside the gateway. In fact, the whole morning's proceedings made him feel so down in the dumps, that he felt like crying himself.

He had fondly hoped, when they turned their backs on Sandhurst, that they had done with soldiers and military red-tape and regulations for good and all.

He had been looking forward to really happy, go-as-you-please times with his young master, and now his hopes were dashed to the ground.

If this gloomy, beastly place into which Ronald had just walked was not Sandhurst College, it was something precious like it, that was all he could say. And by the look of the animated ramrod in the red tunic, with the two white stripes on the sleeves, he was prepared to wager his back teeth that there was a notice somewhere, "No dogs admitted!"

Pending further orders, therefore, he decided to adopt his old tactics of appearing to be anybody's dog but Ronald's.

He scratched one ear casually with his hind paw, sat down on the pavement, yawned, and then looked at the Guardsman as much as to say:

"Well, young smarty, who are you staring at?"

That Rough had acted rightly he saw by his master's familiar signal to remain where he was. He took another look at the old lady in the faded bonnet, with the jet ornaments which shook and rattled at every sob, and deciding that there was a fellow companion in distress, he crossed over and sat down at her feet.

Meantime, Ronald had followed on the heels of his guide down the gravel slope within the gate, and, turning sharp to the left, was ushered into a single-roomed building.

"This is where we just run the rule over the doubtful ones," explained Colour-Sergeant Duffy. "But there ain't

any doubt about you—that is, if you're only as fit inside as you look out. You haven't served before, have you?" he asked, with a suspicious glance at his recruit's square shoulders and erect figure.

This was ticklish ground for Ronald, and for many an hour since leaving Sandhurst he had pondered what his reply was to be to a question he knew would certainly be asked.

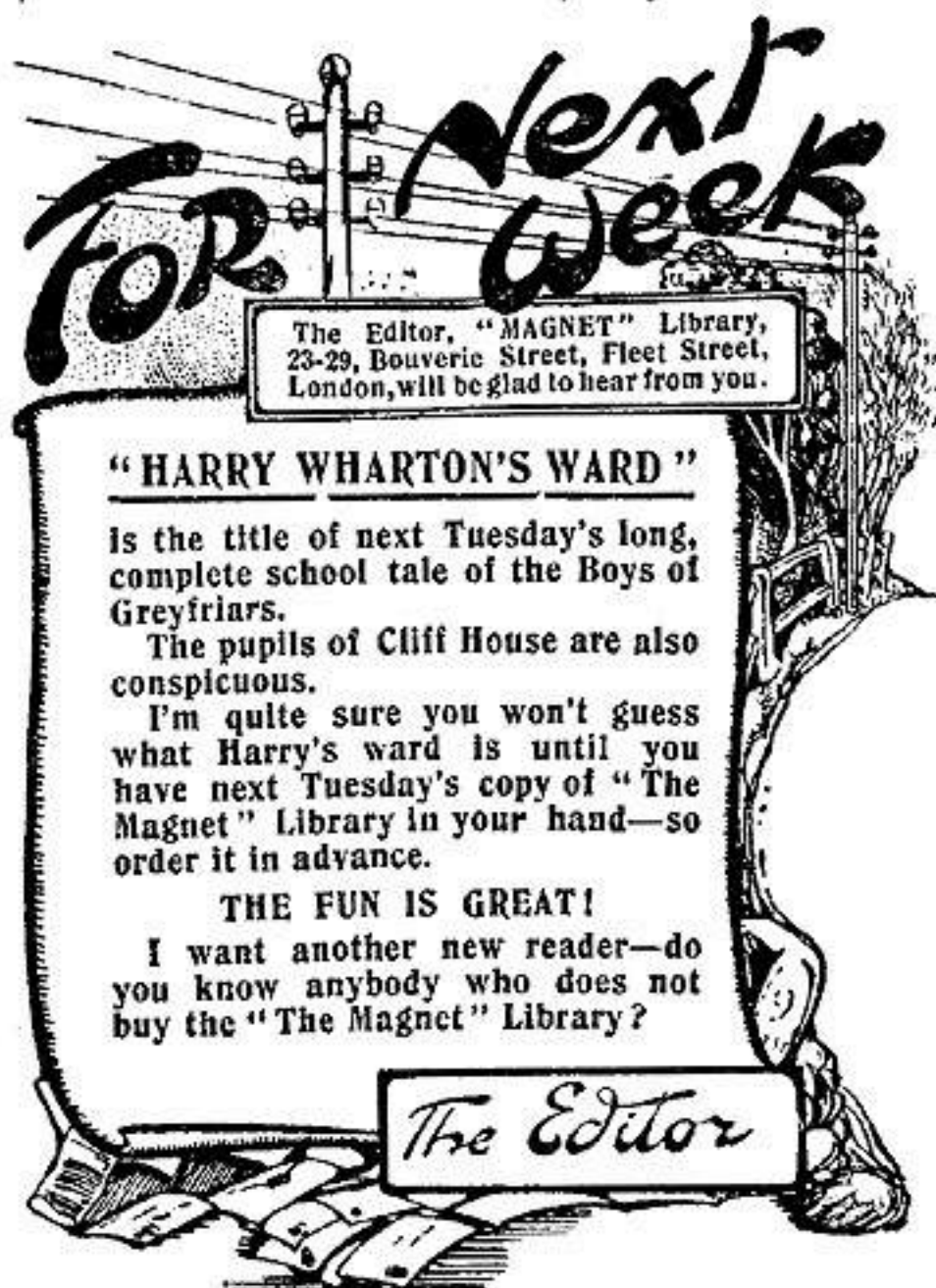
"Does Sandhurst count?" he asked quietly, after a pause.

The colour-sergeant whistled.

"Oh, you're one of them?" he asked, with a knowing yet kindly look. "Been ploughed, eh, and going to make your way up in the ranks?"

"If you mean that I hope to gain a commission some day, I say, no," answered Ronald. "That dream's over and done with; but I'm determined to be a soldier nevertheless, and if I can't carry a sword, I'll shoulder a rifle, and be just as proud."

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