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## With Flying Colours



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A Splendid  
Tale of the Greyfriars Chums.

— BY —

**FRANK RICHARDS.**

\*\*\*

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Bob Cherry Is Persuasive.

"LINLEY!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Linley!"

"I say——"

"Linley!" bawled Bob Cherry. "Where are you, ass? Tumble up, duffer! Linley! Mark Linley!"

Bob Cherry's tremendous voice rolled along the Remove passage. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent added their voices, but the combined shouts brought no reply. Billy Bunter blinked at them peevishly through his big glasses.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say——"

"Where's that chap Linley?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I jolly well told him we were going on the picnic this afternoon, and told him to be ready."

"He said he'd come!" asked Nugent.

Bob shook his head.

"Oh, no; he said he wouldn't."

"Well, then," exclaimed Wharton, staring, "perhaps that accounts for his not turning up, you fathead. Let's be off."

"Rats!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter! Linley! Marky! Tumble up, you lubber!"

"Look here, Bob——"

"Bosh! Linley's coming."

"But if he doesn't want to come?"

"He does."

"But if he said——"

"Never mind what he said," replied Bob Cherry obstinately.

"He's coming. I'm not going to have a chap in my study left out."

"You ass! But he's not in your study now—he's back in his old quarters while No. 13 is being repaired."

"That makes no difference."

"And while you're with us in No. 1——"

"Makes no difference, I tell you. Linley's coming." And Bob Cherry bawled along the Remove passage again—"Linley! Mark Linley!"

Billy Bunter eyed the big baskets the juniors were carrying. There was to be a picnic up the Sark that afternoon, a very big affair, to which Marjorie and Clara were coming from Cliff House, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, was bringing his cousin, Ethel.

Billy Bunter was anxious to get to the ground, and start operations on the lunch-baskets, and this delay for Mark Linley seemed to him mere "rot," as he would have called it.

More especially, as Mark Linley was in very bad odour in the Remove just then.

A black shadow of suspicion hung over him—the suspicion of dishonesty. His staunch friends—Harry Wharton & Co.,

and Tom Brown the New Zealander, and a few more—stuck to the Lancashire lad through thick and thin. But the great majority of the Lower Fourth were against him.

Perhaps that was why Bob Cherry was so obstinately determined to include him in the picnic party.

If he remained behind, it might look as if his own friends were beginning to have doubts of his honour.

Harry Wharton had not thought of that, but, as soon as he understood it, he became as determined as Bob Cherry was that Mark should join the picnic party if it could possibly be managed.

"Linley! Lin—Lin—Linley!"

"Marky!"

Still there was no reply.

Bob Cherry snorted.

"Here, amble up and down the passage, and look in the studies," he exclaimed. "Marky's going to this blessed picnic if I have to take him by the scruff of his neck."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I sha'n't shut up! We're wasting time. We've got to meet D'Arcy and the girls by the river, too, and——"

"We'll be in time. Anyway, we're not going without Linley."

"Blessed if I can see why you should make so much fuss of a factory kid, a bounder who came here on a scholarship," grunted Bunter.

Bob Cherry turned on him suddenly.

"What's that?"

"Besides, you jolly well know he's a thief," went on Bunter. "I wouldn't say it before Linley, because——"

"Because he'd lick you, you rotten little worm."

"Oh, really, Cherry! Certainly not. Because I wouldn't like to hurt his feelings."

"You wouldn't like him to hurt you, you mean."

"Well, you know jolly well somebody took those things that have been stolen in the dormitory."

"I shouldn't wonder if it turns out to be a silly jape even now," said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Anyway, you shut up! Mark Linley's not a thief, and if you say it again, Bunter, I'll roll you over and—and jump on you and burst you."

Billy Bunter retreated a step or two. He was about to speak again, but the Famous Four did not stay to listen. They separated and went up and down the Remove passage, looking for the Lancashire lad.

Bob Cherry looked into No. 13, the study he usually shared with Linley, but which was now in the hands of the workmen, owing to an accident following a Remove row. Mark was not there. But a call from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the genial Nabob of Bhanipur, called the juniors to the right track.

"I have discoverfully found him, my worthy chums."

"Where is he?"

"In the esteemed box-room."

Bob Cherry rushed into the box-room.

There was Mark Linley, seated on a small box, with his books on a large trunk, and hard at work.

He looked up with a smile as the juniors came in.

His face was somewhat troubled and lined, and it showed very plain traces of his late encounter with Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove. But it was a very prepossessing face, all the same—the face of a strong, hearty, wholesome, hardworking lad.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are, then."

"Yes, here I am."

"Didn't you hear me calling you?"

Mark smiled.

"Well, yes."

"Why didn't you answer, you image?"

"Well, I had told you I wasn't coming. Bob, and I thought I wouldn't have any more argument."

"That's just where you make your mistake, my pippin," said Bob Cherry, taking hold of the Lancashire lad by the collar and jerking him off his seat. "You're coming."

"I'm not! I——"

"I insist, my boy."

"The insistfulness is terrific."

"Come on, Linley," said Harry Wharton. "Better come. You'll enjoy it, too. It's going to be a ripping afternoon, for so late in the season."

"But——"

"Where's your cap?" asked Bob.

"I—I—— Look here, you chaps," exclaimed Mark abruptly, "you know jolly well the Form has sent me to Coventry, on suspicion of having committed the thefts in the dorm——"

"More fools they!" said Nugent.

"Yes, but it won't do you fellows any good to chum up with me like this. I don't want to drag you all into my troubles."

"Bosh!" said Wharton.

"But——"

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**NEXT WEEK.**

"Where's your cap, Linley?"

"But, I was saying——"

"Never mind what you were saying," said Bob Cherry. "Take his other arm, Nugent, and we'll give him a run down stairs. Wharton and Inky can bring the baskets."

"But—but look here!" exclaimed Mark desperately. "How can I go to a picnic with the girls with a face like this?"

"Well, you can't help your face."

"You ass! I mean the bruises on it."

"Oh, they're nothing. It doesn't matter."

"But——"

"The girls will probably be looking at me, not at you, and they mayn't notice," said Bob cheerfully. "Come on."

"But——"

"Blessed if he doesn't run on like a giddy gramophone. Here, take hold of him, and give him a run."

"It's all right," exclaimed Mark, laughing; "I'll come."

"Why couldn't you say that at first, and save all this bother? Come on."

And so Mark Linley joined the picnic party.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Mr. Chesham Hears Voices.

THE half-dozen Removites looked very merry as they carried their well-laden bags out of the schoolhouse. They were to go up the Sark in a boat, and pick up the party from Cliff House on the bank of the river. The afternoon, for so late in the season, was very warm and fine, and everybody anticipated a jolly afternoon—especially Billy Bunter, who could not keep his eyes off the bags.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter remarked, as they went out, "it's struck me——"

"Buck up, Billy!"

"It's struck me that it will be rather exhausting work pulling up to where we are going to take the girls aboard."

"You won't do much pulling," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Well, I shall steer, you know, and—and steering's exhausting work. It isn't much on the muscles, I know, but it's a tax on the brain."

"Hurry up!"

"All right, I'm hurrying. But as we've got to face such a lot of work, wouldn't it be a good idea to have just a snack under the trees here, before we start?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Come on, then, or we'll leave you behind."

"But about the snack——"

"The esteemed Bunter is anxious about his worthy snackfulness," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"If the fat bounder says the word 'snack' again, I'll squash him!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, you know, I was really concerned about you fellows."

"Shut up!"

"Yes, but——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Chesham! Buck up!"

The chums of the Remove quickened their pace. Mr. Chesham, the new master of the Remove, was coming up the steps of the house, and he would have passed close to them if they had not swerved off. They were anxious not to catch his eye just then. For Mr. Chesham was a terror.

He was taking the place of the regular Form-master, Mr. Quelch, who was away on pressing business. He had done so before in the history of Greyfriars, and there had been ructions. Now there were ructions again.

Mr. Chesham's concern for their health, and his wonderful remedies for imaginary complaints on their part, drove the juniors almost wild; and there had been a general revolt against the "Chesham-ass," as they disrespectfully called him.

By means of Billy Bunter's ventriloquism, Mr. Chesham had been signally discomfited, but he never knew when he was beaten.

Wharton knew by the expression upon the Form-master's face that he was quite ready for further trouble now.

Mr. Chesham proved it by signing to the Removites to stop. They could not pretend not to see him when he was within half a dozen paces, and they came to a reluctant halt.

"Ah!" said Mr. Chesham, looking them over. "Your face is not much better, Linley."

"I hoped it was better, sir."

"Perhaps some slight improvement, due no doubt to the use of the ointment I gave you," said Mr. Chesham, "also the Purple Powder for Bruised Bodies. You remember exactly how I told you to rub it on, to get it well in the pores of the skin?"

"Yes, sir," said Mark; "I remember perfectly."

He certainly did remember perfectly, and it was not worth while adding that that was all, and that he had not rubbed the purple powder into his skin.

"You are going out?" said Mr. Chesham.  
 "Yes, sir," said Wharton.  
 The Form-master glanced at the bags.  
 "Ah! A picnic, I presume?"  
 "Yes, sir. We're going up the river for the afternoon."  
 "Very good," said Mr. Chesham. "A very good way of spending the afternoon, Wharton."  
 "I am glad you approve, sir."  
 "Quite, quite!" said Mr. Chesham heartily. "You are taking a collation with you, I see?"  
 "Yes, sir. We shall have a feed up the river, as we should be back late for tea."  
 "Wholesome food, I hope?"  
 Harry Wharton groaned inwardly. The faddist was on the scent again.  
 "Oh, yes, sir, certainly!"  
 "It's ripping, sir," said Billy Bunter. "Pork pies, ham patties, jelly—"  
 "H'm! Perhaps I had better see it," said Mr. Chesham, with a shake of the head. "I take a deep interest, as you know, in the health of my pupils. Some of the juniors have a habit of eating all kinds of sweetmeats at all hours of the day. I think I had better examine the food before you go. It will be better for your health, and health is too priceless a gift to be lightly thrown away."  
 Wharton breathed hard through his nose.  
 If Mr. Chesham insisted upon the bags being unfastened, and on going through all the contents, it would take a considerable time; and meanwhile, what of the party from Cliff House waiting on the river-bank for the Greyfriars fellows? The thought of keeping Marjorie and her friends waiting while the faddist went through the bags made Wharton very angry.  
 "If you please, sir—" he began.  
 "Come! Put down the bags."  
 "If you please, sir, we have friends waiting for us up the river, and—"  
 "Come, do as I tell you!" said Mr. Chesham sharply.  
 Bob Cherry nudged Billy Bunter. He meant it as a hint that it was time for the ventriloquism to commence; but Bunter was not particularly sharp, and he did not understand.  
 Besides, Bob had a heavy hand, and his nudge was as good as anybody else's shove.  
 Bunter was taken by surprise, and he staggered against Mr. Chesham.  
 "Oh!" he gasped.  
 "You frabjous ass!" murmured Bob Cherry.  
 "Oh, really, Cherry—"  
 "Bunter, how dare you fall against me?"  
 "I—I—I was pushed, sir."  
 "Cherry, did you push Bunter?"  
 "I—I—I was only nudging him, sir," said the unfortunate Bob, as red as fire. "It—it was nothing, sir."  
 "Ahem! Bunter must be very weak to stagger like that from a mere nudge," said Mr. Chesham, looking at the fat junior. "Perhaps it would be better for him to go in and lie down instead of going to the picnic."  
 Billy Bunter nearly fell upon the ground.  
 "O-oh, sir!"  
 "You are over-fat for your size, Bunter, and very flabby about the face. I think this is due to over-feeding."  
 "Oh, no, sir! It's due to under-feeding, sir. I never get enough to eat. I'm a fellow of a very delicate constitution, sir, and I only keep myself going, really, by taking a little snack from time to time—"  
 "Ahem! I think—"  
 It was then that Billy Bunter thought of the ventriloquism for himself. The terrible danger of being kept in on the afternoon of the picnic was quite enough to sharpen his wits.  
 "Mr. Chesham!"  
 It was a sharp voice calling from inside the house, and the Form-master swung round in blank amazement.  
 For the voice was the voice of Mr. Quelch, the absent master of the Remove! Bunter, in his hurry, had not stopped to think, and he had imitated the voice of the man who was a hundred miles from Greyfriars.  
 "Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Chesham. "Mr. Quelch! Has he returned, then? I am very much surprised! Are you there, Mr. Quelch?"  
 There was no reply. Mr. Chesham went nearer to the door and looked in. But there was no one in sight, not even a fag. The house was deserted on a fine half-holiday. Mr. Chesham looked very much puzzled. Mr. Quelch's voice had certainly called his name, but there was no sign of Mr. Quelch.  
 "Dear me," murmured the Form-master, "this is most surprising, most alarming! Can it be that something is amiss with my nerves? Is it really due to the fact that I did not take the full number of terra-cotta tabloids?"  
 He turned round to the juniors again. Harry Wharton & Co. were walking off towards the gates, carrying the bags. Mr. Chesham called quickly after them.  
 "Boys! Wharton! Stop!"  
 "Pretend not to hear," murmured Billy Bunter.  
 But Harry stopped, and the rest followed suit, and they looked round. Mr. Chesham came down the steps towards them.

"Really, boys—"  
 "Mr. Chesham!"  
 It was the voice of Dr. Locke this time, from the doorway, and the Form-master swung round at once.  
 "Yes, sir."  
 "Pray come to my study."  
 "With pleasure, sir."  
 The Form-master hastily stepped into the house. Bob Cherry burst into a chuckle.  
 "Cut, for goodness' sake, before he comes out again," he muttered.  
 And the juniors promptly cut.  
 Mr. Chesham was a little surprised to find that Dr. Locke was not visible in the house, but he concluded that the Head had gone directly to his study after speaking. He hurried thither, and tapped on the door. When he looked in, the Head looked up, and their eyes met. The Head was at work before his open window, and seemed very busy, and certainly did not appear to have been out of his study for some time. There was a slightly irritated expression upon his face as he looked at Mr. Chesham.  
 The Form-master, thinking he had been called there, looked inquiringly at the Head, and the Head looked inquiringly at the Form-master.  
 "Well?" he said interrogatively.  
 "Well?" said Mr. Chesham.  
 "You wish to speak to me?"  
 "No, sir."  
 "Really, Mr. Chesham—"  
 "You wished to speak to me, sir?"  
 "I? Certainly not!"  
 "Eh! You did not wish to speak to me?"  
 "No, I did not."  
 "Then why, sir, did you call me to your study?"  
 "What!"  
 "You called me to your study just now, sir," said Mr. Chesham, a little nettled. "I came at once, thinking from your tone that it was something important."  
 The Head looked at him attentively.  
 "Are you quite well, Mr. Chesham?" he asked in a quiet tone.  
 "Quite well! I hope so."  
 "You have told me already to-day of a supposed voice you heard in the chimney of the Remove Form-room. Now you tell me I called you to my study."  
 "You certainly did, sir."  
 "Where was I at the time?"  
 "In the hall."  
 "And when was it?"  
 "Not two minutes ago."  
 "I have not been out of this study since lunch, Mr. Chesham." The Form-master almost staggered.  
 "What!" he ejaculated.  
 "I have not been outside this room since lunch," repeated the Head, with emphasis. "You see that you were mistaken."  
 "I—I suppose so."  
 "I can only conclude that you are ill, sir. If I did not know your character so well I might suspect you of drinking."  
 "Oh!" gasped Mr. Chesham.  
 "I should recommend you to see a medical man at once."  
 The Head dropped his eyes to his desk again, as a hint that it was time for Mr. Chesham to depart. Mr. Chesham accordingly departed, closing the door behind him with a jerk. He was in a stunned state. If he imagined he heard voices, certainly his nerves must be out of order. Was it due to his omission in the case of the terra-cotta tabloids, or was it something more serious?  
 Mr. Chesham went straight to his room and swallowed a tabloid hastily. Then he remembered the juniors he had stopped in the Quad, and went to look for them. But he was too late. Harry Wharton & Co. were gone.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. Bulstrode Is Sorry.

"BUCK up!"  
 "Right!"  
 "The buckupfulness is terrific!"  
 At a run, swinging the heavy bags between them, the Removites went down towards the Sark. The river gleamed through the trees ahead.  
 The boat was already swinging to a rope from the wooden landing-stage. Wharton had taken it out ready. But just as the chums of the Remove arrived, four other juniors were stepping into the boat.  
 Bulstrode, Snoop, Skinner, and Stott had evidently taken a fancy to Wharton's craft, and they were going to calmly take possession of it without going through the formality of asking permission.

Harry Wharton stopped, with an exclamation, as he saw the four entering the boat. The coolness of it took his breath away. "Hallo, hallo hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Let that boat alone!"

Bulstrode caught the words, and looked round with a disagreeable grin. He picked up an oar to shove it off hastily.

Harry Wharton dropped the bag he was carrying, and bounded forward like a stag. The boat was leaving the plank stage, and in a few seconds more it would have been out of reach. Then it would not be much use to call upon the bully of the Remove to return it. Bulstrode would laugh at the idea. And there was a run upon the boats that fine afternoon, and it might have been very difficult to obtain another.

Harry did not stop to think.

He ran directly to the edge of the planking, and made a flying leap into the boat.

The boat was gliding out fast under the propulsion of the violent shove Bulstrode had given with the oar against the planks. But Wharton's leap was well calculated, though so rapid, and he landed fairly in the boat.

Large as the boat was, the bump of the junior into it made it rock violently—with disastrous results to some of the occupants.

Wharton, unable to keep his footing, sprawled over, and bumped heavily against Snoop, who rolled over the gunwale helplessly into the water.

A wash of the river came over the side, and Skinner yelled as he was soaked to the skin. Bulstrode lost his footing in the shock, and sat down violently in the boat, and gasped.

"Bravo!" roared Bob Cherry from the bank.

"Help, help!" yelled Snoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cad of the Remove was struggling in the water. He got a grasp upon the edge of the boat, and clung there. Skinner was shaking himself like a dog, in the stern. Wharton was upon his feet in a moment.

"You rotter!" howled Bulstrode.

"You cad!" exclaimed Wharton fiercely. "This is our boat."

"Rats!"

"I had got it out ready."

"Bah!"

"Give me that oar!"

"I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly well take it."

And Wharton started towards the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode's eyes were blazing with rage as he sprang up, grasping the oar. He swung it back over his head, and his eyes seemed to flame at Wharton.

"Stand back, or I'll brain you!"

Wharton did not stand back, though Bulstrode looked quite capable in his rage, of carrying out his threat.

But before the Remove bully could do so, if he had intended it, a bag whirled from the bank and caught him in the side, left exposed by his arms being in the air.

He gave a gasp and staggered over.

"Well hit, Bob!" roared Nugent. "Well bowled! Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode plunged headlong over the gunwale. The bag dropped into the boat, the oar into the water. Wharton picked it up in a moment, and swung the boat back to the landing-stage. Neither Stott nor Skinner offered any resistance. Bulstrode was swimming, and Snoop clinging to the boat. The bows bumped against the timber, and Mark Linley caught the painter.

"All right!" he said.

"Good! Get in, and kick those rotters out."

Stott and Skinner did not wait to be kicked out. They scrambled ruefully ashore.

"It was only a j-j-joke, Wharton," ventured Skinner.

"Oh, cut off."

"Help!" gasped Snoop.

"Certainly," said Nugent, leaning over and grasping the cad of the Lower Fourth by the collar, and dragging him out of the water, depositing him in a gasping heap on the planks. "That all right?"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Shall I lend you a hand, Bulstrode?"

The Remove bully did not reply. He swam to the timbers and dragged himself ashore. Harry Wharton's chums were all in the boat now, and the bags with them. Billy Bunter settled down in the stern to steer. Bulstrode shook the water from his clothes, and knuckled it out of his eyes. He stood regarding the boat and its crew with a savage look.

"Sorry we haven't room for you, Bulstrode," said Nugent politely. And the Nabob of Bhanipur murmured that the sorrowfulness was terrific.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"I wouldn't come," he said. "Blessed if I want a picnic with a thief! I should be afraid of getting my pockets picked."

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Mark Linley turned deadly pale, and his lips tightened convulsively. He made a movement as if to spring towards Bulstrode.

"Hold on, kid," muttered Bob Cherry. "He's only trying to draw you. Remember we're going to meet the girls. You don't want a fight now."

Mark nodded silently.

Bulstrode's lip curled as he saw that the Lancashire lad turned quietly to his place and picked up his oar.

"I wish you a pleasant voyage," he said. "There's one comfort for you—if you miss your watches, you'll know who to ask for them."

"Hold your tongue, you cur!" broke out Wharton savagely.

"Bah! You know Linley is a thief—Oh, oh!"

Bulstrode broke off as an arm was thrown round his neck from behind, and he was forced over till he was bent down to the timber stage. Tom Brown of New Zealand—the new boy at Greyfriars—was the fellow who had seized him, and the strength he had displayed in thus quelling the burly Remove astonished the juniors in the boat.

Tom Brown looked down calmly into the face of the furious bully of the Remove, who glared up at him savagely.

"Quite enough on that topic," he said. "You've jawed more than enough about it, Bulstrode. And you are a liar! I don't believe you really think Linley is guilty of the thefts in the dormitory."

"Liar!"

"And now you are going to apologise to Linley for what you said," said the New Zealander quietly, taking no notice of the epithet applied to himself.

"I won't!"

"You will!"

"Hang you! Lemme get up!"

"You can get up when you've apologised," said Tom Brown cheerily—"not before." He gave Bulstrode a twist that brought him right to the edge of the planking, hanging half over the water, which mirrored his furious face below. "Now, then—apologise, or in you go!"

"Never!"

"If you go in, you won't get out till you've apologised."

"Bravo!" grinned Bob Cherry. "First lesson in decency to Bulstrode! Gentlemen are admitted to the show without charge."

A great many of the Greyfriars fellows were crowding up to see what was going on, but no one offered to help Bulstrode. And he was quite powerless in the iron grip of the New Zealander.

"Let me go!" he gasped. "I'll—I'll fight you—"

"You shall fight me as soon as you like—after you've apologised to Linley!"

"I—I won't!"

"Oh, let him go," said Mark. "It doesn't matter."

The New Zealander looked at him.

"Rats to you!" he said cheerfully. "I'm running this show. You go and eat coke!"

Mark laughed. He liked the breezy lad from New Zealand.

"Now, Bulstrode, your last chance."

"No!"

"Then you're going—"

"Hold on. I—I—"

"Get it out!"

"I—I—apologise!" gasped Bulstrode. "I—I'm sorry, Linley."

Mark nodded contemptuously.

"Good!" said Tom Brown, dragging the Remove bully back and rolling him over on the timber. "That will do."

Bulstrode scrambled up. The New Zealander watched him with cool, quiet eyes, and the Remove bully did not "come on."

"I'll make you answer for this Brown!" he said between his teeth.

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"Any time you like," said Tom carelessly. And Bulstrode, who was dripping with water, hurried away in his squelching boots towards the school. Tom Brown waved his hand to the juniors in the boat.

"The show's over, gents," he remarked. "You can buzz off!"

"Hold on," said Harry Wharton. "We're going to a picnic. I was looking for you to ask if you'd care to come, but I couldn't see you. Will you come?"

"It will be ripping," said Nugent. "Plenty of tuck, and Miss Hazeldene and Miss Trevelyan are coming, to say nothing of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his cousin Ethel."

"Right you are!" said Tom cheerily.

And he jumped lightly into the boat, and the juniors pushed off again.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is Concerned for Bunter.

"Bai Jove!"

"What is it, Arthur?"

"Nearly three o'clock, deah boy—I mean deah girl."

"They won't be long," said Marjorie Hazeldene.

Hazeldene of the Greyfriars Remove was looking down the river, shading his eyes with his hand. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was looking at his gold watch with his eyeglass jammed tightly into his eye, as if to assist his vision in seeing the time.

The party from Cliff House had arrived at the rendezvous. Hazeldene of the Remove had gone over to fetch his sister and her friends, and they had taken a short cut to this point on the Sark, where they were to meet the boaters. A quarter to three had been fixed as the time of the meeting; but Harry Wharton & Co., for once, were late.

Marjorie and Clara were surprised. Harry Wharton never was late, so they couldn't understand it. D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland, sat on the grassy bank, with an untroubled brow. Ethel was a sweet-tempered girl, and she did not mind waiting.

The three girls and the two boys had been waiting nearly ten minutes. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had looked at his watch about ten or twelve times. Not that D'Arcy minded waiting himself. But he felt responsible in the matter. It was such doocid bad form, as he would have expressed it, to keep a lady waiting. What the dickens were Harry Wharton & Co. thinking of?

"Pewwaps there has been an accident," suggested D'Arcy after a pause.

"My goodness!" said Miss Clara.

"Why, what accident could happen?" asked Marjorie, with a smiling glance at the swell of St. Jim's.

Girls always liked Arthur Augustus. He was so attentive in a quiet way, and so wanting in that unpleasant kind of conceit which makes some boys so disagreeable to the gentle sex. D'Arcy had an excellent opinion of himself, and he looked upon the whole world in a rather fatherly sort of way. But he did not imagine himself to be a lady-killer, and a girl could chat with him freely and merrily without any danger of being misunderstood.

D'Arcy was looking his best now. He was in spotless white, with a Panama hat to match, and beautifully-fitting tan shoes. From crown to sole he looked a picture, and if anything was wanting to give a finishing touch to his appearance, the gold-rimmed monocle supplied it.

"Oh, there might be lots of accidents," he remarked. "I knew a chap once who was goin' to keep an important appointment, and had his toppah blown off, and lost it, and had to go in a bowlah, you know."

"How dreadful!" said Marjorie.

"Yaas, wathah! It was a bit wuff on the chap, and I know how he must have felt," said D'Arcy with feeling.

"Horrid!" remarked Hazeldene. "But these chaps are all right."

"How do you know, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "They may have been detained."

"They haven't."

"They may not have been able to get a boat."

"That's all right."

"They may have wun aground."

"They haven't run aground."

"But how do you know, deah boy?"

Hazeldene grinned.

"Because I can see them coming up the river."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the gleaming Sark. Sure enough, there was the boat, coming steadily up the gleaming water, propelled by four oars, and at a spanking rate.

"Jolly good!" said D'Arcy, in the tone of a connoisseur. "They can wow. We do some wowin', and we'd like to meet a Gweyfwiahs ewew some day. Hallo, there!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" sang back Bob Cherry's powerful voice.

"We've been waiting for you."

The boat glided up and bumped on the grassy bank, and Hazeldene caught the painter.

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The Greyfriars juniors jumped up and raised their straw hats.

"Sorry," said Harry Wharton. "It's too rotten to be late, but we've had a chapter of accidents."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Pway don't mention it, as fah as I'm concerned," said D'Arcy. "If the ladies will ovahlook the occuwence——"

"Of course. We know you couldn't help it," said Cousin Ethel, smiling. "I hope nothing serious has happened."

"Oh, no! In the first place, we couldn't find Linley, and we had to dig him up in a box-room. Then Mr. Chesham found us, and we had to dodge. Then there was a a-a-a-an argument with some chaps who wanted to borrow our boat. It was really too bad, you know."

"Nevah mind, deah boys, it's all ovah now," said D'Arcy. "I was wathah anxious about you, as a mattah of fact, and I wished I had come stwaight to Gweyfwiahs to look aftah you."

"Thank you very much," said Wharton, while Bob Cherry grinned. "It was awfully kind of you, but we pulled through."

"Yaas, I am glad to see that you pulled through."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter! Get out of that seat, and put the cushions in place."

"But I say——"

"Oh, ring off!"

"I think you might allow me to make a suggestion for the comfort of the ladies, Bob Cherry."

"Oh, go on! It's the first time you've ever made a suggestion for anybody's comfort but your own."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Put those cushions there."

"Yes, but I was going to suggest that the ladies are probably hungry after their walk from Cliff House, and it would be a good idea to take a snack here before going on up the river——"

"Shut up, you young pig!"

"But really——"

Bob Cherry gave the fat junior a prod in the ribs, and Bunter collapsed on a seat gasping. Before he could recover his breath the party of picnickers were all in the boat, and Harry Wharton was pushing off again.

The craft was a roomy one, but its capacity was well taxed by the picnickers. There were three girls and eight boys, so the party was numerous enough.

Tom Brown, who was now introduced to the Cliff House girls for the first time made a very good impression upon them. The only disagreeable element in the party was Billy Bunter, and several times as they pulled up the river Bob Cherry was on the point of hoisting him overboard, and was only restrained by the presence of Marjorie.

Billy Bunter regarded himself as fascinating where girls were concerned, and he gave both Marjorie and Clara some killing looks from behind his big spectacles.

Marjorie and Clara seemed quite unconscious of them, and Harry stamped on the fat junior's toe without having any effect upon him, except to make him yelp.

Billy Bunter decided that Marjorie and Clara were being coy for the sake of disguising their real feelings, and he turned his fascinating glances upon Cousin Ethel.

Ethel was talking to D'Arcy, who, as a guest, was not asked to take an oar. She did not even notice what the fat junior was doing; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy noticed it, and it puzzled him very much.

The swell of St. Jim's carefully adjusted his eyeglass, and examined the countenance of the Greyfriars Falstaff.

Bunter was casting what he believed to be a killing look in the direction of Ethel; but to D'Arcy it seemed as if the fat junior must be ill, to draw so curious an expression to his face.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

Harry Wharton, who had taken the rudder-lines for a change, looked across at him.

"Anything amiss?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's extwaordinawy."

"What is it?"

"Buntah."

"What's the matter with Bunter? Anything wrong, Billy?"

"No," said Billy. "I'm a bit hungry, that's all. I'll leave a snack from one of the bags, if you like."

"I don't like."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"It's extwaordinawy," repeated Arthur Augustus, still with his monocle turned upon the fat face of William George Bunter.

"Oh, you're thinking of his face," said Nugent. "Yes, it is a bit out of the common. Make a jolly good Guy Fawkes mask, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Extwaordinawy!"

"But what is it?" asked Hazeldene.

"The cuwious expression upon Buntah's face. Did you feel any stwange pain, Buntah?"

"Certainly not."

"You do not suffer from St. Vitus' dance?"

"Of course I don't," said Bunter indignantly.

"You have no fearful disease?"

"I—I haven't. Of course not. I took to sleep-walking once, but that's not a disease, and it was caused by shortage of grub, I believe. What are you driving at? There's nothing wrong with me."

"It is gone now."

"What is gone?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The extraordinary expression on Bunter's face, an expression as if he were about to expire in fearful agony."

"By Jove!"

"Turn your face to the left again, Bunter, please. That's how it was when I caught that extraordinary expression. You were looking towards my Cousin Ethel."

Bunter spluttered. Whether D'Arcy was really puzzled, or whether he was solemnly pulling his leg the fat junior could not guess; but he knew now what was the "extraordinary expression" Arthur Augustus was alluding to.

He turned his face as D'Arcy requested, but the swell of St. Jim's only shook his head.

"No, it is gone now."

The boat pulled on. D'Arcy turned his eyeglass every now and then upon Billy Bunter. As soon as he thought he was unobserved—and Bunter was a great deal like an ostrich in that respect—the fat junior started again.

There was a sudden exclamation from D'Arcy.

"There it is again!"

"What?" demanded three or four voices.

"That extraordinary expression upon Bunter's face. It comes on him when he turns his head towards my Cousin Ethel."

Bunter turned crimson. The Greyfriars fellows were looking at him with accusing eyes.

Cousin Ethel's cheeks were pink. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked frankly perplexed.

"Oh, Bunter's all right," said Bob Cherry blandly. "It's a sort of—a sort of facial contraction he has, and he gets over it if he's smacked on the back. I smack him on the back; you know, because I have a light hand—sometimes."

And Bob Cherry promptly put the cure into practice.

Billy Bunter, who guessed that punishment was coming, tried to squirm out of the way, but that was not easy in the crowded boat.

Bob's left hand fastened on his collar with a grip of iron, and his right hand rose and fell as if he were beating carpet.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

Smack! Smack!

"Ow! Ow!"

Smack!

"Ow!"

"You see how much good it's doing him?" said Bob, looking round. "What a healthy yell he gives."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Smack! Smack! Smack!

"I say, you fellows——"

Smack! Smack!

"Ow! Ow! Wharton, stop him! I—ow—yow—oh!"

"Are you feeling better?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"No—yes—ow!"

"Do you think you are quite cured?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"I don't mind giving you a few more smacks. It's practically no trouble to me."

"I'm all right!" shrieked Bunter. "Lemine alone."

"Very good!" said Bob Cherry, sitting down. "Notice if he has any more of those expressions, you chaps, and we'll put his back for him again. We have to look after Bunter. He may go off into a decline any time if we're not careful with him."

Billy Bunter collapsed, gasping for breath. He was still gasping and silent and sulky, when the boat pulled up to the place chosen for the picnic. But Billy Bunter had been cured. There were no more killing looks during that picnic.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### No Sugar for Bunter.

"WHAT a lovely spot!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel in delight.

"Lovely!" said Miss Marjorie and Clara together.

"Ripping!" agreed the boys.

"Bai Jove! I weally wegard it as wippin', and no mistake," observed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is quite as nice as some of our scenery about St. Jim's."

"Go hon!" murmured Hazeldene.

It was indeed a beautiful spot. The greensward sloped gently

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down to the river, on the margin of which the bulrushes grew thickly. Big old trees, still in thick green foliage, shaded the spot.

The sun was blazing with summer heat, and the foliage intercepted the rays, and cast a pleasant shade upon the scene.

Round about the stretch of green were big, thick bushes, which screened the spot from view except in the direction of the river.

A better spot could not have been chosen for the picnic.

It did not take the juniors long to secure the boat and to land their cargo.

Bob Cherry, who was a handy man in camping, selected the spot for a fire, and found three or four big stones to make a natural grate, and piled up fuel from the thickets and lighted it.

Billy Bunter turned cooking utensils out of one of the bags, and his fat face wore a cheerful smile as he did so. To the fat junior cooking was the second greatest enjoyment to eating.

While most of the juniors were engaged in preparations for tea the girls were equally busy. Marjorie and Ethel laid the cloth on the grass for tea, while Miss Clara helped to unpack the provisions.

The quality and quantity of the latter caused some widening of eyes among the guests of the picnic.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon them, and noted the jam and the marmalade, the cake, and the tarts, the jellies and the preserves, as well as more solid items like pork pies, ham patties, beef puddings, and so on, and his eye glimmered behind his monocle.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "How Fatty Wynn would like to be here, wouldn't he, Ethel?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I think he would, Arthur."

"I like that chap Wynn," said Billy Bunter, looking up from greasing the frying-pan.

Bunter had declared that no picnic was complete without fried sausages, and, as Billy's fried sausages were a dream, his chums had allowed him to have his way.

"I like that chap, you know. I am going to visit him at St. Jim's one of these times. He's a chap I can chum with."

"Yaas wathah!"

"He can cook, and he knows a good thing when he sees it. I jolly well wish he were here!" Then Billy Bunter glanced at the provisions, and remembered that Fatty Wynn's appetite resembled his own. "Ahem! I—I mean, I should always be glad to see him at Greyfriars."

Sizzle, sizzle, sizzle!

Bob Cherry sniffed appreciatively.

"Nice!" he said.

"Bai Jove, it's wippin'! Do you know, deah boys, I am gettin' wathah hungwy, you know. I do not eat a gweat deal as a wule, but on the present occasion I weally think I shall distinguish myself."

"Good!" said Billy Bunter. "I think you'll like these sassingers, D'Arcy. Remember the time we were cooking in your study at St. Jim's, and a rotten prefect walked off the tuck. We made him sit up for it, hey?"

"Yaas, wathah—thwough your ventwiloquism, deah boy. I wegard that as a wathah clevah twick of yours. I couldn't do it myself, you know."

"Bet you couldn't!" said Bunter. "It's a wonderful gift. I have marvellous abilities as a ventriloquist—even more than I have as an amateur photographer and a boxer. There'd be a great deal more heard about me at Greyfriars if I hadn't to contend with jealousy in my own study."

"Bai Jove!"

"Measly old study too," said Bob Cherry. "No. 1 used to be top study in the Remove, you know, D'Arcy, till No. 13 was started. Now——"

"Now don't tell D'Arcy any fairy-tales, Bob," said Nugent. "I shall be bound to undeceive him, you know."

"Now don't be an ass, Nugent."

"Then don't you be a duffer, Bob."

"Look here——"

"Order!" exclaimed Wharton, laughing. "This is a picnic, not a study row. It's all right, Miss Cleveland; don't be alarmed. This is a way they have when I don't keep them in order."

And Cousin Ethel laughed.

"The sosses are getting browned," said Bunter. "Who's going to make the tea?"

"I am," said Marjorie.

"Good! Then it won't want any sugar," said Bunter, with a simper.

"Won't it really?" said Marjorie, with perfect gravity.

"Mine won't, anyway. He, he, he!"

Marjorie made the tea.

The cloth was spread, and really the array of good things was very imposing. It was quite enough to make any junior's mouth water, and it did make mouths water—other mouths besides those of the picnickers.

From the thickets four pairs of eyes were watching the camp now. Bulstrode & Co. had arrived on the scene!

Snoop sniffed appreciatively.

"Smells all right, eh?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bulstrode. "We want some of that."

"Not much good asking to join."

"I wasn't thinking of asking to join."

"I suppose you're not thinking of a row," said Skinner.

"What chance have we got, four of us, against that crowd?"

"I've got a wheeze."

"Go ahead," said Stott tersely. "If there's any wheeze for getting hold of that tuck, I'm ready to hear it. I'm jolly hungry."

"Look here, if they saw the boat adrift——"

"How can the boat get adrift?"

"Suppose one of us took his shoes and stockings off and waded down the edge of the water? The rushes are high enough to hide him if he crouched low."

"Yes, that's so."

"They would make a run for the bank as soon as they saw the boat going. Then the three here could make a rush for the camp and clear out the grub—or a lot of it."

"Jolly good! But what about the girls?"

"Oh, never mind the girls."

"Well, a chap doesn't want to look a pig, you know."

"Well, shove something over your face—daub it with some of that thick black mud from the river, and then you won't be recognised."

"Good egg!"

And the four young rascals stole away through the thickets towards the water's edge. Quite unconscious of their proximity, the campers began their tea. Marjorie poured out the tea, and Cousin Ethel and Miss Clara passed round the teacups. Billy Bunter disposed of a couple of sausages, and stirred his cup at intervals, and finally tackled the tea. He put the cup to his mouth and took a deep, deep draught.

Then his fat face twisted up as if he had taken a dose of quinine, and he choked.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?"

"Ow! Yow!"

"My hat, what's the matter with him?"

There was a lurking smile on Marjorie's face; but the others were perplexed.

"Anything wrong with the tea?" demanded Wharton.

"Ow! Yes."

"Bai Jove! What is it?"

"N-n-n-no sugar in it!"

"Eh?"

"There wasn't any sugar in my tea!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I've got a sweet tooth, as you know. I distinctly said three lumps. There wasn't any sugar in it!"

And he blinked at Marjorie.

"Dear me!" said Marjorie. "You said you didn't take sugar."

"What?"

"I am sure you said, when I said I would make the tea, that you wouldn't want any sugar in yours."

Bunter blinked; and the juniors grinned. Marjorie's face was quite serious, and the Owl of the Remove was too short-sighted to see the humorous twinkle in her eyes.

"Ow!" grunted Bunter. "I—I didn't mean that."

"But you said so."

"I meant it would be sweet enough if you made it—see?"

Marjorie looked perplexed.

"But now you say it is not sweet enough! I made it."

"Yes; but—— Ow! Who trod on my foot?"

"Nuff jaw, Bunter. Ring off."

"Oh, I say, you fellows——"

"Dry up, for goodness sake! I—— Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look at the boat!"

Bob Cherry sprang to his feet.

The boat, which was just in sight over the rushes, had suddenly, and without apparent cause, started drifting away on the river.

"It's going!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Here, buck up, or we shall have to walk home!"

The prospect of that was enough to make the Removites "buck up." They leaped up and rushed down to the bank. Only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was left sitting on a campstool beside the spread cloth; even Marjorie and Ethel and Clara had run down to the bank in the excitement.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, rising in a leisurely way and adjusting his eyeglass. "How excited they seem! I——"

He broke off suddenly.

There was a rush of footsteps upon the grass behind him, and the swell of St. Jim's received a shove that sent him rolling on the sward. As he gasped in startled amazement there his eyes nearly started out of his head as he saw three individuals with blackened faces engaged in hurriedly "lifting" the greater part of the picnic.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### D'Arcy Distinguishes Himself.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up, and groped for his eyeglass. He could see perfectly well without it, but he never felt quite himself unless it was jammed into his eye. And this was evidently a case in which he needed all his wits about him.

"Bai Jove! My only hat!"

They took no notice of him. They were too busy. Three youths they looked like, but with complexions never grown in England. D'Arcy blinked at them in absolute amazement, and it was not till the raiders were rushing off with the greater part of the picnic in their possession that it dawned upon him that they were boys with their faces blackened for purposes of disguise.

He sprang to his feet.

Bulstrode, Skinner, and Snoop—for they were the three—were loaded. They had things crammed in their pockets and gathered under their arms and in their hands. They only wanted a few seconds to get clear.

But the swell of St. Jim's was on the warpath now.

Staying only a second to jam his monocle more firmly into his eye, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed straight at the retreating raiders as they made for the thickets. At the same time he let out a yell of warning to the chums of Greyfriars.

"Wescue, deah boys! They're waidin' the gwub!"

There was a shout in reply from the bank, where the juniors were looking after the drifting boat. Stott was drifting in it, and at a safe distance from the bank he was making a series of grimaces at the exasperated juniors.

"Look out!" muttered Bulstrode. "Knock that silly ass over!"

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy simply hurled himself upon the raiders.

Snoop went headlong to the ground, shedding cakes and apples and bottles of ginger-beer on all sides. Arthur Augustus rolled over him, but he was on his feet again in a moment.

"Stop, you wascals!"

"Get out of the way!"

"Wats!"

"Hands off, you ass, or——"

"More wats!"

The odds were nothing to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He clutched hold of Bulstrode and Skinner, and hung on like grim death. Without letting go their plunder, they could not hit out, and they tried to rush on, dragging the elegant junior with them.

But D'Arcy proved that elegance was not incompatible with physical strength and activity in his case.

His grasp did not relax, and he hung on to both the raiders at once, with a grip on each, and shouted to Harry Wharton & Co.

"Wescue, deah boys! Pway huwwy up!"

His shouts had given the alarm, and some of the juniors were running back from the bank to see what was the matter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "It's a raid! That's why the boat went adrift! Collar the cads!"

"The collarfulness is terrific."

Bulstrode, muttering something between his teeth, let the loot fall to the ground, and turned savagely upon D'Arcy.

"Let go, you fool!"

Bulstrode was thinking only of escape now. But he had caught a tartar in the person of the swell of St. Jim's.

"I wefuse to let go! I——"

"You utter idiot!"

"I decline to be chawactewised as a—— Ow!"

D'Arcy staggered over as Bulstrode's heavy fist clumped on his chest. But he retained his hold upon Bulstrode, and dragged the bully of the Remove to the ground with him.

"You fool!" shouted Bulstrode. "I——"

"You wottah!"

"You silly ass!"

"Wats, I wegard you as a wuff cad!"

Bulstrode wrenched desperately to get away, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hung on, and, with a skilful twist, he got Bulstrode underneath, and sat upon him.

Bulstrode struggled desperately, but D'Arcy remained firm in his seat, pinning the Remove bully to the ground.

"Get up, you idiot."

D'Arcy recovered his breath a little.

"I wegard you as a wotten cad," he remarked, "and I absolutely wefuse to get up. You have stwuck me violently upon the chest and wumpled my waistcoat. I considah you a beast."

"You dummy——"

"That is an oppwobwious expwession, and if I had not alwoady handled you vewy wuffly, I should immediately pwocceed to administrah a feahful thwashin'."

**TOM MERRY "IN THE GEM," 1d.**

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 90.  
SPECIAL DOUBLE-  
LENGTH STORY.

**"THE FIFTH AT GREYFRIARS."**

By FRANK RICHARDS.  
NEXT WEEK.

There was no chance for Bulstrode and Co. now. The Remove chums were on the spot, and they were all in the grasp of many hands.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet, as Bob Cherry and Mark Linley seized Bulstrode and secured him.

D'Arcy proceeded to dust and smooth down his rumpled attire.

"Bai jove," he remarked, "that was quite a stwuggle, and it has thwown me into a fluttah. I am glad, howevah, that I captured the boundahs."

"Good," said Harry Wharton. "Who are they? Blessed if I can make out their chivvies with the mud smeared on them."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bulstrode."

"And this is the esteemed Snoop."

"And this is that rotter, Skinner."

"It—it was only a j-j-joke!" gasped Skinner. "Of course, we never meant to take away the grub."

"Of course not," said Snoop. "We—we meant to—to bring it back in the boat, as—as a surprise to you. He, he, he!"

"Well, it would have been a surprise to us if you had brought it back," remarked Tom Brown. "What do you say, Bulstrode?"

Bulstrode snarled.

"We were going to raid the grub, and scoff it," he said. "They're telling lies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The truthfulness of the esteemed rotter is terrific."

Billy Bunter, who was gathering up the scattered provisions, blinked up at the juniors.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked "it stands to reason they meant to keep it. Fancy a chap giving up a feed when he had once started on it! It's inconceivable."

"Of course, it is," agreed Bob. "To you, anyway."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up, Bunter. Look here, you chaps, Bulstrode and Co. have daubed themselves with mud for the pleasure of the thing. Let's give them a little more pleasure of the same sort. There's a nice deep strip of mud close to the water."

"Good wheeze!"

"Yank them along."

"Lend a hand, Brownie. Where's that Brown chap got to? Here, hang on, Nugent."

"Right you are."

Tom Brown had disappeared, but his absence was hardly noticed. The three captured raiders were run down to the water's edge. They wriggled in horrid anticipation. In this spot there was a belt of thick mud close to the rushes, and the prospect of being ducked in it was horrible. Bulstrode would not utter a word, but Skinner and Snoop were loud in their entreaties to be let off.

Marjorie, Clara, and Ethel had said nothing so far; but now Cousin Ethel touched Harry Wharton lightly on the arm.

"Please let them go?" she said.

Harry Wharton hesitated.

"They ought to be punished, you know," he said. "It isn't only the raid, but trying to muck up a picnic where there are lady guests. They really ought to be put through it a little."

"Yes, but—"

"But it's just as you like, Miss Cleveland," said Harry gallantly. "Chaps, let the rotters go."

"Here, I say—"

"It's all right—Miss Cleveland wishes it."

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter. Let the bounders bound."

Bulstrode, Skinner, and Snoop were released. They lost no time in cutting off through the thickets, not being quite sure that the juniors would not change their minds.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, you get the grub ready, Bunter."

"Yes, but I say—"

"My hat, how that chap does go on talking! Make some more tea, Billy."

"Yes, but I say—"

"The jawfulness of the esteemed Bunter is truly terrific."

"I say, you fellows," persisted Bunter; "can't you listen a minute? What about the boat? We don't want to walk home to Greyfriars."

"Oh, I'd forgotten that!"

"Of course you had! I say—"

"Oh, ring off! What about the boat, you chaps?"

The juniors turned their attention to the boat again. They had forgotten it for the moment. Under the big, over-hanging trees the boat floated at a distance from the bank, with Stott sitting in it. Stott had watched the capture of his friends, but being out of reach himself, he did not feel at all uneasy. As the juniors looked towards him once more, he grinned at them.

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Bob Cherry waved his hand.

"Bring that boat back, Stott."

"Rats!"

"We'll scalp you!"

To which threat Stott only replied by placing the thumb of his right hand to his nose, and slowly extending all the fingers in the direction of the Greyfriars picnickers.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Merry Picnic After All.

HARRY WHARTON breathed hard through his nose. He was deeply exasperated; but there was no getting at the exasperating Stott. The boat was captured, and if it were not recovered there was no way of getting home after the picnic except by walking. The walk would have been a long one for the juniors; but for the girls it would have been quite fatiguing. But there seemed to be no way of getting at Stott.

Billy Bunter was making fresh tea, and re-laying the cloth. The others fastened their eyes upon the boat. What was to be done?

"Stott, Stott, you rotter!"

"Hallo!" said Stott.

"Bring that boat here."

"Rats!"

"We'll snatch you bald-headed, if you don't."

"More rats! I suppose you want me to join the picnic, oh?"

"Not much."

"Well, if you do, I'm willing. I'll make it pax and join the party, if you like."

"Go and eat coke!"

"I'll give you a few minutes to decide. I'd just as soon drift down on this boat to Greyfriars, as join your old picnic. I hope you'll enjoy the walk home."

"Bai jove!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Look there! Mind, don't let Stott see you looking; but shove your peepers on that branch."

"Phew!"

"Bai jove!"

From one of the big trees close to the water a giant branch extended nearly half-way across the stream. The end of it dropped down towards the water, and the foliage at the tip was not more than six feet from its image mirrored below. Upon the branch a form could be seen, working its way along from the trunk towards the end of the branch; but so cautiously that it had not been noticeable till this moment, when Bob Cherry happened to catch sight of it.

It was Tom Brown, of Taranaki.

Wharton's eyes glimmered as he saw the New Zealander. If Tom Brown reached the end of the branch unseen by Stott, it would be the simplest thing in the world to drop into the boat, which was just below.

"My hat!" murmured Wharton. "That's where he was gone, then! I wonder if he'll do it!"

"Go it, Mutton!" murmured Nugent under his breath.

The long, thick branch drooped more and more as the New Zealander drew nearer to the end of it; but Stott, who never thought of looking overhead, did not observe it. And the juniors, to keep his attention occupied, immediately began calling out to him again, and telling him the various treats that were in store for him if he did not bring back the boat.

Suddenly there was a sharp creak from the branch. Tom Brown was very near the end, and it was drooping so much that the foliage was within three or four feet of Stott. Stott glanced up quickly.

He was petrified for a moment as he saw the form of the New Zealander within a few feet of him.

He grasped the oars to shove the boat out of the way. He had been keeping her level with the bank, and it needed only to drift a few yards on the current to save him from the threatened attack. But it was too late!

Tom Brown swung below the branch—and dropped!

The branch sprang upward as his weight was taken from it, and the boat rocked as his feet came crashing down into it. He reeled over and caught at the gunwale, sitting down violently upon a thwart; while Stott, taken by surprise, was rolled over by the rocking of the boat, and went helplessly over the side.

Splash!

There was a yell from the bank.

"Bravo, Maori!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

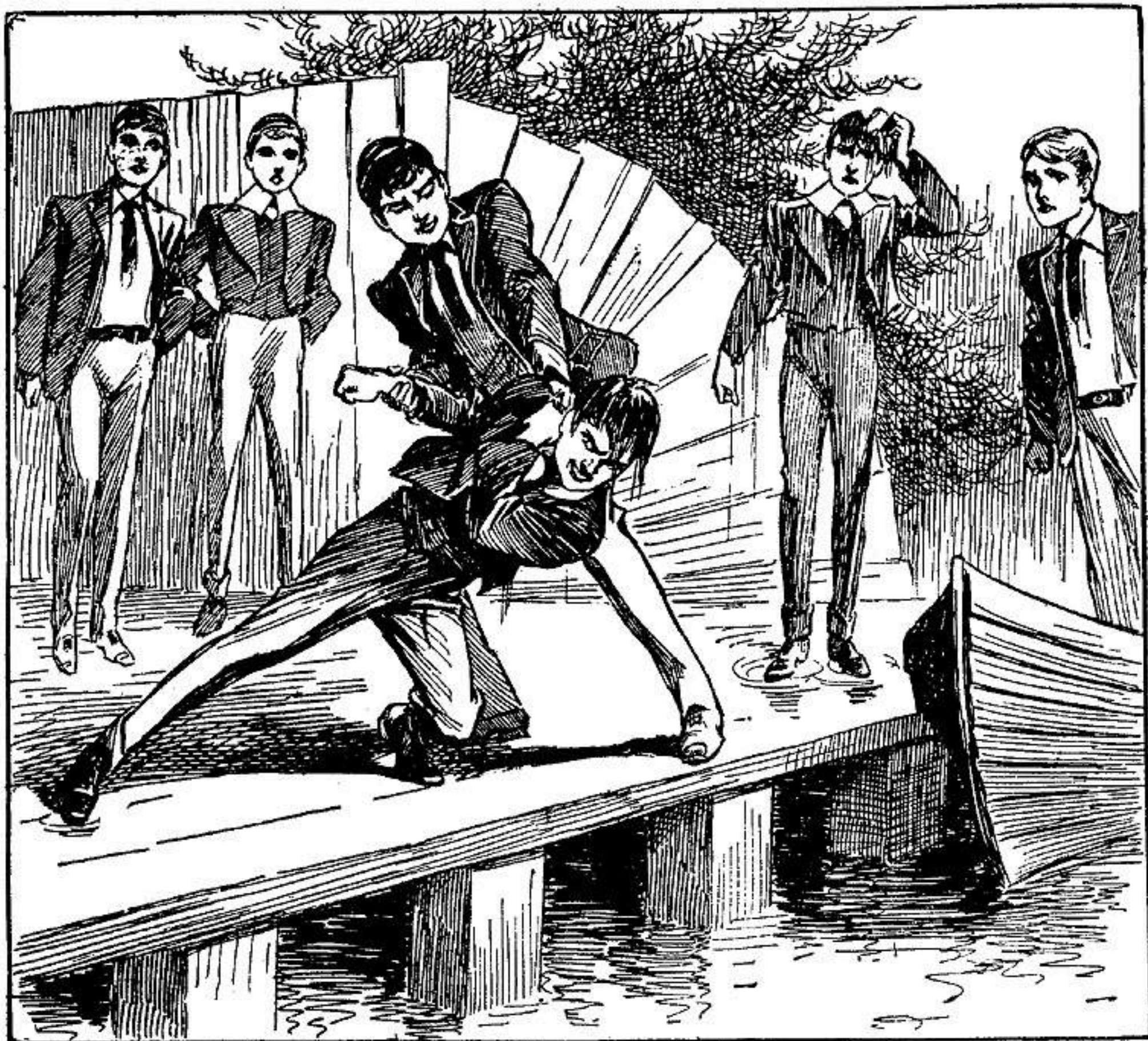
Tom Brown sprang up. He was a little breathless, that was all. Stott had come up, and was clutching at the boat and gasping.

"Help, help! I can't swim! Yow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Ow! Help!"

The New Zealander grasped the Removite, and dragged



"Now, then, Bulstrode," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior—"apologise to Mark Linley, or in you go!"

him into the boat. Stott collapsed there, with all the desire to resist taken out of him. Tom Brown seized the oars, and with a few strokes brought the boat to shore.

Stott, in the grasp of many hands, was rolled out on the greensward. He presented a far from prepossessing picture, drenched with water, and with his hair plastered down his face with the wet.

"Better take a run, or you'll catch a cold," remarked Wharton.

"Start now!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, cut off! We'd give you a jolly good ducking, only you've had one. Cut off, before you get the frog's march, too."

"I—I——"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Hazeldene, giving Stott a prod with the boat-hook.

"Ow!"

Stott wasted no more time. He "buzzed off" and disappeared in the wood. Nugent made the boat fast again.

"Bai Jove, it was a stwroke of luck gettin' the boat back again," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, polishing his eyeglass. "I wegard the action of Bwown as showin' gwent pwsence of mind."

"Hear, hear."

"I could not have done it bettah myself, you know."

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, wathah."

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"Tea's made," said Billy Bunter. "If you fellows want to jaw, you'll excuse me if I begin."

They settled down to the picnic again.

It had been an exciting interlude, but no harm had been done—except to the raiders. In a few minutes the scene was forgotten amid the clatter of tea-cups and knives and forks, and the still more incessant clatter of active tongues.

If there was a face shaded by care during the merry picnic, it was that of the Lancashire lad; but even Linley seemed to have thrown off the weight from his mind, and to be determined to be happy.

It was not possible for him to forget wholly, of course, that he was marked in the Form; that the greater part of the Greyfriars Remove believed him to be a thief.

But if only for the sake of his friends he was resolved to cast no cloud upon the festive scene around him. And indeed, in such cheery company, it would have been difficult for anyone to be sad.

After the repast—or rather, after all but Bunter had finished, Bunter being "not out," a song was called for, and Bob Cherry gave the Territorial song, "What's the Matter with England?" The tune was a little patchy in places, and the voice was not quite reliable, but Bob finished to great applause, the juniors all joining in the chorus and making it ring through the trees.

Then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a recitation, remarking that he "wathah fancied himself weetin' at an al fwesco concert."

D'Arcy gave the "Burial of Sir John Moore," a piece he was rather fond of giving, and, as Bob Cherry murmured to Tom Brown, it was a nice cheerful subject for a picnic. But when D'Arcy recited it, the piece lost all its tragic character, and his hearers always persisted in regarding it as a comic recitation.

"Not a sound was heard, not a funeral note,  
"As his corpse to the wamparts we hurried,  
"Not a soldier discharged his—bai jove, I quite forget  
what it was that the soldier did not discharge, dear boys."  
"His gun?" suggested Bob Cherry.  
"Yaas, wathah, but it ought to rhyme, you know."  
"Never mind, make it gun."  
"Vewy well, for the sake of gettin' on with the washin', I will," said D'Arcy, gracefully.

"Not a soldier discharged his farewell gun,  
"O'er the gwave of the hewo we hurried."  
"Good!"  
"We hurried him darkly at dead of night,  
"The sods with our bayonets diggin'—I weally cannot  
quite wemembah what they did, I think it was diggin'—"  
"That's all right; cut ahead."

"By the stwugglin' moonbeam's misty light,  
"And the lantern, dimly—dimly—dimly—"  
"Jigging!" suggested Nugent.  
"Swigging," said Bob Cherry.  
"No, that would not make sense, dear boys."  
"My dear fellow, there never is any sense in a recitation."  
"Yaas, but—"  
"Third lap," said Hazeldene, "Get on!"  
"Yaas, but—"  
"Go on!"  
"Buck up!"  
"Get on with the washing."  
"Yaas—"  
"The yaasfulness of the esteemed D'Arcy is terrific."  
"Yaas, wathah, but—"  
"Go ahead."  
"Oh, vewy well."

And Arthur Augustus went ahead, and finished the recitation—in the same style—amid loud laughter and applause. Bob Cherry remarked that it was the funniest thing he had heard for a dog's age, and D'Arcy explained to him that it was serious business—and was still explaining it when the time came for the picnic to break up, and for the picnickers to embark.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Bob Cherry Is Clumsy!

IT was a pleasant drift down the stream to Greyfriars. The juniors were all in good tempers, pleased with themselves and with their excursion, and the girls were equally happy and contented. They disembarked near the school, and the whole party walked to Cliff House to see Marjorie & Co. home.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, as they drew near to Cliff House, "I must say that I have spent a vewy comfy afternoon, and I shall wemembah it. You fellows must come and see me when I am on my holiday, you know."

"Oh, you're going to have a holiday, are you?" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, yaas, you know—I am goin' to Pawis."

"Pawis! Where is that?"

"Bai jove! You know where Pawis is."

Bob Cherry scratched his nose.

"Blessed if I do. I've never heard of it before. Is it in India?"

"Weally, dear boy—!"

"My cousin means Paris," said Ethel, laughing.

"Oh, I see—my mistake."

"I am goin' to Pawis shortly on a holiday," remarked Arthur Augustus. "My governah is awwangin' it. I should be awf'ly glad if you fellows could make it convenient to wun ovah for a week end, you know."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We'd be jolly glad to," he remarked, "I don't see how it could be worked, though. Many of you going?"

"Yaas, I shall take some of the fellows. Bai jove, here we are at Cliff House."

Good-byes were said, and they parted. The juniors marched home to Greyfriars in a merry mood, and burst into a chorus as soon as they were out of sight of Cliff House. Only Mark Linley was silent.

Harry touched him on the arm.

"No good thinking about it," he said: "I know what's in your mind. It will all come right soon, depend upon it."

Mark coloured a little.

"Yes, I suppose I am an ass to mope," he said, "Moping can never do any good, anyway."

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**Special!**

**GRAND DOUBLE NUMBER.**

**NEXT WEEK**

"That's right."

"But—how can the truth come out. Most of the fellows believe I'm a thief. If I did not take the things, someone else did. But who?"

Harry shook his head.

"It's a mystery."

"I can't think of any chap who might have done it. Snoop is the worst cad in the Remove—and somehow I can't think that Snoop did it."

"I agree with you there."

"Then what can be the explanation?"

"It's a mystery, as I said. But it will come out—it must come out. For one thing, the rotter, whoever he is, will try it again, and get caught."

"I can't understand it," said Mark, shaking his head. "If there's a thief in the Form, one would expect him to take the money, but—the other things, you know. Who could want to take trousers and socks?"

"It's amazing enough."

"I suppose there's nobody off his rocker in the Remove?" suggested Mark, "that's what it looks like more than anything else, to me."

"Not that I know of—excepting Bunter. He's off his rocker, whenever he gets a new hobby—but not in this way. I simply can't get on to it."

They entered the school gates. Gosling, the porter, looked at them as they came in, and he shook his head portentously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, affably. "The dear man was feeling worried about us, you know. We've come back, Gossy."

"The esteemed Gosling may lighten the load of anxiety upon his honourable and respectable breast," said the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Gosling grunted.

"Wot I says is this 'ere," he remarked. "If you was all drowned, it would be a good riddance to bad rubbish. That's wot I says."

"Go hon!"

"Which Mr. Chesham has been looking for you, and he says to me, says he, when them young rips come in, he says—"

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Nugent, "I think I can hear the respected Chesham using those words! My word!"

"He says to me, he says, when them young rips come in, he says, send them to my study direct, he says, I've got a bone to pick with them, he says."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Which you can go or not as you like," said Gosling. "That's what he says to me, and wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Thanks for delivering the message, Gosling, and especially for translating it into Gossy-lingo."

And the juniors walked on, leaving the school porter grunting.

"It's genuine enough, though Gossy has improved upon Mr. Chesham's language," Harry Wharton remarked. "We'd better go in and talk to Chesham."

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific, my worthy chums. Doubtless the respected Chesham is feeling the alarmfulness for our august health."

Bob Cherry gave a groan.

"We dodged him before the picnic," he remarked. "We can't dodge him now. But if he works off his pills and potions on me, there will be trouble."

"The troublefulness will be terrific."

The juniors presented themselves at Mr. Chesham's door. Harry Wharton tapped, and the Remove master's voice bade him enter.

The juniors entered, feeling a great deal like lambs going to the slaughter. The gas was alight in Mr. Chesham's study, for the evening had closed in now. Mr. Chesham was standing at his table, with a glass in his hand, containing a red liquid. He was adding water to it from a carafe, with a careful hand, thinning it down to an exact consistency. He glanced over the carafe at the juniors.

"Wait a few moments," he said.

"Certainly, sir."

They waited, and watched the Form-master curiously. His brows were wrinkled, and his eyes were fastened upon the glass in his hand.

Bob Cherry made a grimace.

"That's something for us," he murmured under his breath, in Wharton's ear. "Bet you it's a dead certain cure for picnicking."

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Are we going to take it?" murmured Bob Cherry. "You watch your uncle."

Bob Cherry shifted his position, as if to give the others more room, stumbled against a chair, and fell headlong on the table.

"Oh!" he roared.

Mr. Chesham gave a jump, and the glass fell from his hand, and was smashed into a hundred pieces on the table. The

carafe in his left hand jerked forward, and sent a flood of water up his right sleeve."

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh! Really! Ah!"

He put the carafe down with a force that nearly cracked it, and shook his arm for the water to stream out of the sleeve.

"Oh!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I—I was clumsy, sir."

"Cherry! How can you be so clumsy—so—so utterly like a rhinoceros, sir!" shouted Mr. Chesham. "You—you ought to be led on a chain, Cherry."

"Yes, sir."

"That was the very last dose I possessed of the Pink Pick-me-up for Full Feeders," said Mr. Chesham. "I was going to give you a dose each, to take off the effects of the reckless gorging you have undoubtedly indulged in during this afternoon."

"Oh, no, sir."

"Do not contradict me, Wharton."

"But, sir—"

"Have you consumed a greater part of the huge supply of provisions you carried from the school in your bags this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"In that case you have over-eaten yourselves."

"Oh, no, sir. We—"

"Silence! I presume I am a better judge of these matters than you are."

"I don't know that, sir," said Harry, somewhat nettled. "I suppose a fellow of fifteen is old enough to know when he's eaten enough."

"I will not argue the point with you, Wharton. I was going to administer a dose of this invaluable medicine; but now Cherry, through his clumsiness, has destroyed it, and I have no more left."

The juniors tried to conceal their satisfaction at the news, but not very successfully. Mr. Chesham eyed them with a grim smile.

"As the medicine is destroyed, I cannot administer it—"

"Hurray!"

"What!"

"I—I didn't speak, sir!" stammered Bob Cherry, remembering himself. "That is to say, I—I didn't mean to speak!"

"You were expressing satisfaction, Cherry at the idea of not having to take the medicine," said Mr. Chesham sternly.

"Oh, sir!"

"I think that was the meaning of your disrespectful exclamation, Cherry."

"O-oh, sir!"

"However, this effect of your clumsiness will make no difference."

The juniors' faces fell.

"I shall be able to obtain a fresh supply at the chemist's in the village," said Mr. Chesham. "I will walk down there this evening for the purpose, and if necessary I will go over to the market town to obtain it."

"Oh, sir, we don't want you to take all that trouble on our account!" ventured Nugent. "We—we'd rather run the risk, sir!"

"I dare say you would; but I have my duty to do."

"But, sir, if you please—"

"I shall not be back before your bedtime," said Mr. Chesham.

"However, I will come to your dormitory at the earliest possible moment, and administer the dose. You will take it in bed; and, in fact, it is more beneficial if taken a short time after retiring."

The juniors looked blank.

"That is all," said Mr. Chesham. "You may go."

"Th-thank you, sir."

They left the study. In the passage they looked at one another with long faces.

"Well, you are an ass, Cherry!" Hazeldene remarked. "We might as well have taken the dose now and got it over, instead of being woke up in the middle of the night to take it."

"The mightfulness as well is terrific."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry. "There may be another accident to-night—who knows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I'm going to swallow any of his pink poison for miserable mugs!" growled Tom Brown. "Better mistake him for a burglar when he comes into the dorm. and shy pillows at him."

"Jolly good egg!"

"If we smash his bottle of muck he can't administer it then, that's a cert," said the New Zealand junior. "One thing's jolly certain, if I'm awake when he comes in, he will get a biff."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, cheese it, Bunter!"

"But I say, you fellows, I tell you what—if you like to stand a bit of grub for me to—to be occupied with, I'll stay awake to-night and watch for Chesham."

"Ha, ha! How long would you stay awake after you had finished the grub?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Mind, whoever's awake biffs the duffer with a pillow," said Tom Brown. "That's settled."

And the others agreed unanimously.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 90.

SPECIAL DOUBLE-LENGTH STORY.

EVERY  
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"

LIBRARY.

ONE  
HALFPENNY.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER

### Something Nice for Bulstrode.

**B**ULSTRODE was in the common-room when the juniors came there a little later. The bully of the Remove was looking sulky. His adventure on the picnic ground had led to hot words between him and his friends, and his failure had been exasperating. Most of the fellows knew about the raid, and how it had ended, and had chipped him about it. Bulstrode looked at Harry Wharton & Co. with a sullen glare as they came in, Mark Linley with them. He would have said or done anything at that moment to annoy them, and unfortunately there was a weapon all ready to his hand.

"Mind your pockets!" he called out.

Some of the juniors laughed. Mark Linley turned fiery red, and then pale. He knew, of course, what Bulstrode's meaning was.

Wharton caught his sleeve.

"Don't take any notice," he whispered.

And the Lancashire lad nodded, though his teeth came together hard, and his eyes were glinting like steel.

But taking no notice was not exactly the best way of dealing with Bulstrode. He noted the change of colour in the Lancashire lad's face, and when he saw how one shot told, he was not slow to follow it up with another.

"Anybody lost anything lately?" he asked, addressing the whole room;

"Yes," said Snoop; "Linley's lost his temper. He, ho, he!"

"Now thing for Linley to lose anything," remarked Bulstrode. "It's Linley's neighbours who lose things, as a rule."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Linley believes that 'findings are keepings,' of course, wherever he finds anything—even if it's in another fellow's pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mark Linley gritted his teeth.

"I can't stand that," he said.

"Give him a hiding," said Bob Cherry. "He won't be happy till he gets it."

The Lancashire lad strode straight up to Bulstrode, who put his hands in his pockets, and greeted him with an insolent stare.

"No good," he said. "I'm looking after my money, and I've locked my watch up in my box. Better try somebody else!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You coward!" said Mark Linley. "Put up your hands!"

"Rate!"

"Then take that!"

Smack!

Bulstrode reeled under the smack of the open palm, which sounded like the crack of a whip on his face. He caught his breath.

"Chaps, I'm not going to fight a convicted thief. If he can't take it calmly, he's got to be ragged. Collar him!"

"Good! Let's rag him!"

"Give him the frog's march!"

"Kick him out! We don't want any thieves in the Remove!"

"Kick him out! Hurray!"

A dozen hands reached out for Mark Linley.

The Lancashire lad faced his enemies, his chest heaving, his eyes blazing.

"I am no thief!" he said, his voice almost choked with passion. "And you know it, too, most of you. The thief is among you. I defy you all, you cads!"

"Kick him out!"

"Roll him over!"

"Down with him!"

Mark Linley struck out right and left as the excited Removites closed in upon him, like waves upon a rock.

But he had no chance against so many.

Bulstrode and Stott rolled on the floor under his heavy blows, but then he was dragged over and hurled down.

It would have gone hard with the lad from Lancashire if he had had no friends at hand at that moment.

But he had friends—staunch chums who were ready to stand by him through thick and thin.

"Come on!" roared Bob Cherry. "Come on! Sock it to the rotters!"

"Hurray!"

"This way!" shouted Harry Wharton, and he dashed among the adherents of Bulstrode, hitting out right and left.

His chums followed him fast.

# ANSWERS

"THE FIFTH AT GREYFRIARS."

By FRANK RICHARDS.  
NEXT WEEK.

The rush of half a dozen stalwart juniors broke up the crowd round the Lancashire lad, and enabled Linley to get upon his feet.

Mark was red and gasping, his collar was torn out, his nose streaming red; but he was as full of pluck as ever.

The Removites closed in upon him again, and at last it was seen that Harry Wharton's influence was broken. His backing up of the Lancashire lad had had the inevitable effect, which he had more than half expected. The Remove had turned against its captain.

The fellows crowded up from all sides, and Bulstrode was the Form leader now—Wharton was the outcast, and his friends were few.

But that made no difference to the chums of No. 1 Study.

They stood round Mark Linley, and met the rush of a score or more of foes with heavy blows, that made some of the assailants sorry they had not been a little slower.

Still, the odds were too great for the conflict to last.

"Sock it to 'em!" roared Bulstrode. "We'll give them all a lesson now—it's time they had their combs cut. Wharton's bossed the Remove too long!"

"Hurrah!"

"Roll 'em over!"

"Down with the thieves!"

"We must get out of this," muttered Wharton. "They're too many. Make for the door!"

"Right you are!"

"The too-manyfulness is terrific!"

The chums, in a compact body, fought their way to the door, the excited juniors howling round them, rushing on every few moments, only to be hurled back again.

The chums gained the doorway, and the passage beyond; and then the Remove made a final rush at them.

There was a wild and scrambling conflict in the passage.

In the midst of it, Mr. Chesham appeared in his hat and coat, dressed to go out. He stared at the fighting juniors in blank amazement and horror.

"Boys! Boys!"

The Removites were too excited even to hear him.

"Boys!"

"Sock it to them!" roared Bob Cherry. "Down with the rotters!"

"Down with the thieves!"

"Cads!"

"Yah!"

"Boys! Cease this instantly! I—oh! Oh!"

A rush of the juniors swept the Form-master off his feet.

Harry Wharton & Co. went rushing past and gained the staircase. Mr. Chesham staggered to his feet in the midst of a swarm of pursuing juniors.

He caught the nearest one by the ear. It happened to be Bulstrode; and Bulstrode squirmed and wriggled.

"Boys!"

"Cave!" gasped Skinner.

There was a rush to escape, as soon as the juniors saw that it was a Form-master whom they had upset.

They disappeared in various directions, with amazing speed; only Bulstrode, who could not escape, remained in the grasp of the Form-master.

Mr. Chesham gasped and blinked, and blinked and gasped.

"Bulstrode! It is you!"

"Yes," growled Bulstrode.

"What is all this riot about? You are the oldest boy in the Form, and you should know better. Bulstrode, surely you are aware that it is extremely bad for the health to indulge in this excited horseplay. You are flushed, and in a feverish state."

"I'm all right, sir," growled Bulstrode, nervously apprehensive of a remedy for his supposed feverishness. He knew Mr. Chesham.

"You are not all right, Bulstrode. Come with me."

"W-w-where, sir?"

"To my study."

"But—but—I—it's not fair, sir, I wasn't any worse than the others, anyway!"

"I am not going to punish you, Bulstrode. I have been upset and roughly treated, but I am a patient man. I am not going to punish you. I am going to give you something for your feverishness."

"But I'm not feverish, sir."

"I suppose I know better about that than you do, Bulstrode."

"But, sir, I—I feel all right."

"The feelings are a very deceptive guide in a case of illness. Sometimes a man feels all right, as you express it, on the very verge of death."

"Oh!"

"Your state is not as serious as that—at least I hope not—but the fact that you feel all right is a sure sign that you are in a more feverish state than I believed at first. I shall give you a double quantity of the Electric Elixir."

"If you please, sir—"

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"That will do, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully, inwardly chafing, was dragged to the Form-master's study, and Mr. Chesham carefully mixed a doubly strong dose of the elixir. He stood over Bulstrode while he drank it, and Bulstrode had no chance of wasting a drop. What it was made of the junior did not know; but it tasted as if it were made of a mixture of the sourest possible lemons with bitter almonds and quinine. It nearly doubled Bulstrode up.

He groaned and gasped when the dose was fairly down.

"How do you like it, Bulstrode?"

"Ow! Rotten!"

"Do you feel better?"

"No," groaned the Remove bully. "Worse! A thousand times worse!"

"Dear me, that is quite alarming! The only thing is to repeat the dose—"

Bulstrode made one bound for the door.

"Bulstrode! Boy! Come here!"

But Bulstrode was gone.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Light At Last.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"I was going to say that my offer's still open—"

"So is your mouth. Shut it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If you fellows like to stand something in the way of supper, I'll stay awake and look for the Chesham ass to-night—"

"Rats!"

That was all the gratitude Billy Bunter received for his generous offer. The Remove went up to bed; most of them in a bad temper.

Bulstrode was still suffering inwardly from the effects of the medicine administered by the faddist Form-master. Most of the others were suffering from hard knocks received in the combat in the common-room.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not speak to the others.

It was definite now that they were to be sent to Coventry along with the Lancashire lad. They took it quietly enough. With so many in "Coventry," Coventry lost half its terrors; and there were, too, a good many juniors in the Remove who would never carry out the sentence completely against the chums of No. 1 Study. Harry Wharton went to bed without showing a sign that he cared a rap for the latest move of Bulstrode & Co. Billy Bunter had been warned by Bulstrode not to speak to his study mates, or he would have to share their exclusion; but Bunter was wise in his generation, and he knew that the feeds in No. 1 Study were worth more to him than anything he was likely to get from Bulstrode & Co. Therefore he remained loyal; and he plumed himself a great deal upon sticking to his friends in the hour of distress—but he did not receive so much gratitude as he expected.

The fat junior turned in in a discontented mood. If his offer had been accepted, he would probably have remained awake as long as the provisions lasted, and fallen asleep a few seconds after the last mouthful. The juniors were quite aware of that. As it was, Bunter dropped off to sleep about a minute after getting between the sheets, and he was asleep when Wingate looked in to turn out the lights and say good-night.

Tom Brown sat up in bed.

"Going to wait for the medicine man, chaps?" he asked.

Snore!

"Oh, I think I'll sit up a bit, anyway!"

And the New Zealander sat up a bit—for exactly three minutes. Then he put his head upon the pillow and went to sleep.

Slumber reigned in the Remove dormitory.

The hours tolled from the clock tower, unheard by the tired and soundly sleeping juniors.

They did not hear the chimes, and they did not hear a quiet footstep in the Remove passage—they did not hear a door open in the dormitory. They did not see a lamp glimmer from the gloom of the passage.

Mr. Chesham looked into the room.

"Ah, all asleep!" he murmured. "It is a pity to have to wake them up, but if the medicine is not taken, they will be in an unenviable state by to-morrow morning. I must do my duty, however unpleasant it may be to myself and to—er—others."

He glanced at the beds occupied by the picnickers of the afternoon, and gave a slight start.

One of them was empty.

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Chesham.

It was Billy Bunter's bed.

As it was past eleven o'clock, Mr. Chesham's surprise was natural. He immediately concluded that the fat junior was

out of bed for the purpose of obtaining a surreptitious feed; not an uncommon happening in the Remove dormitory.

"Dear me! How fortunate I came here! I shall be able to save the unfortunate youth from the effects of his foolish gluttony!" murmured Mr. Chesham.

The next moment he gave a jump, and the lamp almost fell from his hand.

A figure in white loomed up in the gloom, advancing straight upon him.

Mr. Chesham backed away in alarm.

"Dear me! Bunter!" he gasped.

It was Bunter, in his night-shirt, looking very much like a ghost in the dimness of the Remove dormitory. Mr. Chesham turned the light of the lamp full upon him.

"Bunter!"

The fat junior did not reply.

He came straight on, as if he did not see Mr. Chesham, and was unaware of the presence of the Form-master in the dormitory.

Mr. Chesham felt a creepy sensation.

He did not quite know what it was, but there was something very uncanny about Bunter at that moment.

"Bunter!" His voice quavered in spite of himself.

"Bunter! Get back into bed immediately!"

The junior did not reply. He strode straight on, and Mr. Chesham had to step out of the way, or Bunter would have crashed right into him.

Then, as the fat junior passed close, the mystery was explained. His eyes were closed; he was walking in his sleep.

Mr. Chesham shivered a little.

He remembered now that Bunter had mentioned in his presence that he was addicted to somnambulism. His visit to the dormitory had caused him to discover the fat junior in a somnambulist fit; and the kind-hearted Form-master was very glad that he had come. It was quite possible that he would save Bunter from breaking a limb on the stairs.

Hardly knowing what to do for the moment, Mr. Chesham stood holding the lamp up, and looking at Bunter. There was a subdued exclamation from Bulstrode's bed.

"Hallo! Who's there?"

"It is I," said Mr. Chesham. "Do not make a noise, Bulstrode. Bunter is walking in his sleep, and it may be dangerous to awaken him suddenly."

"My hat! He's done that before, the young ass!"

Several other juniors had awakened now. Mr. Chesham set down the lamp, and lighted the gas. Every waking eye was fixed upon Bunter.

"My only hat!" murmured Harry Wharton. "Look at him!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Look!"

"Phew!"

Bunter had stopped beside Nugent's bed, where the junior's clothes were placed on a chair, and was methodically going through the pockets.

He turned out the loose cash and several small articles, and tucked them under his arm, and then visited Wharton's clothes, and repeated the same actions.

Half the Form were awake now, and they all watched Bunter breathlessly.

Mark Linley met Harry Wharton's eyes.

"The thief!" he muttered.

"The truth's out now, Linley."

"Yes—thank Heaven!"

"It was Bunter—in his sleep."

"My only hat!" muttered Bulstrode.

"The only-hatfulness is terrific!"

Mr. Chesham seemed petrified. Bunter was finished at last, and he concluded by gathering up several pairs of trousers, socks, and some jackets and boots, and thus laden he made for the door of the dormitory.

Harry Wharton whipped out of bed.

"Let's follow and see what he does with them. This may show us where the last lot were put—Bunter won't remember when he's awake."

"Good egg!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Chesham.

"Please come with us, sir, as a witness," said Wharton. "Linley has been accused of stealing things in the dormitory, and you can see what really happened now."

"It is amazing!"

The Form-master and a crowd of excited juniors followed the sleep-walker. Billy Bunter, walking with the curious precision of the somnambulist, went along the passage, and into the box-room. There he opened a long disused cupboard in the wall, and Mr. Chesham flashed the lamplight into it. There, in the damp, disused opening, lay a pile of clothes, and a little heap of glittering articles—money, gold and silver watches, and tie-pins.

This was the store where the mysterious raider had deposited his plunder. The money had not been spent—it was here, to the last shilling.

Bunter deposited his fresh loot in the cupboard, carefully closed the door, and then left the box-room. He brushed

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against Mark Linley in passing, but did not look round. He walked straight back to the dormitory, followed by the juniors.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry. "This simply beats everything! Fancy it's being Bunter, walking in his sleep all the time!"

"He's getting into bed now," muttered Wharton.

"The young ass! We'll chain him down to-morrow night."

There was a suppressed chuckle. Billy Bunter tumbled into bed, drew the clothes about him, and was soon quiet, sleeping peacefully.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Chesham. "This is a most remarkable case, and I will make notes of it. I think I shall be able to prepare a medicine to cure Bunter of this. Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The door closed behind Mr. Chesham, and Bob Cherry gave a chuckle.

"Jolly good!"

"What's good?"

"The Chesham-ass has forgotten what he came here for, that's all!" chuckled Bob. "He's gone away without dosing us with medicine."

"My hat! So he has!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly lucky for us Bunter's a sleep-walker!" grinned Nugent. "But I say, you rotten sweeps, what do you say about the thief now?"

There was a general silence.

"All you mongrels who have been barking round Mark Linley—what have you got to say for yourselves?"

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner. "How were we to know that Bunter was playing these giddy tricks?"

"What have you got to say, Bulstrode?"

"Rats!"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Bah!"

"Well, you ought to be—and if you don't apologise to Linley, I hope the Remove will have the decency to send you to Coventry."

Bulstrode grunted, and went to sleep.

There was no more surprised person than Billy Bunter when the story was told in the morning.

The fat junior knew that he was subject to somnambulism, and he had been a victim of it, at Greyfriars, before. But he had never dreamed of connecting it with the mysterious thefts in the dormitory. He was somewhat incredulous at first, but he had to believe it, and he had an explanation forthcoming at once.

"Well, I'm sorry," he said. "It was rough on Linley, I know. But it's all the fault of you fellows."

They stared at him.

"How on earth do you make that out?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Blessed if I know how we could possibly have had anything to do with it."

"It comes of being underfed," explained Bunter. "I'm a delicate chap, as you know, and I only keep myself going at all by taking constant nourishment. When I go short of grub, it has a bad effect upon my system. You chaps are always keeping me short of grub, and this is the result. I think you ought to apologise to Linley."

Mark Linley laughed. The Lancashire lad seemed to have grown years younger since the previous day.

"I'm liable to have these attacks again, unless I'm well fed," went on Bunter. "The best thing you fellows can do is to raise a subscription in the Form, to stand me some decent suppers. Then it will be all right."

"I don't think!" remarked Nugent. "It's more likely the effect of overeating, and the best thing you can do is to cut down your meals."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"As a friend, I'll help you. In future, I'll scoff your tea as well as my own."

"That you jolly well won't! I—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode came up, looking very shamefaced.

"I want to speak to you, Linley," he said. "I was an ass! It's all right—I know now you weren't the thief. It looked suspicious, but—oh, hang! I'm sorry, I can't say more than that."

Mark nodded.

"It's all right, Bulstrode. I'm glad to hear you say so."

There was no more talk of Coventry in the Remove. Mark Linley's face was very cheerful that day. The Removites almost all did what they could to atone for their injustice, and it was admitted on all hands that Mark Linley had come out of the time of trouble with flying colours. And with that he was content.

THE END.

(A Grand Special Double Number of "The Magnet" next, Tuesday will contain a double-length school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "The Fifth at Greyfriars," by Frank Richards.)

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By FRANK RICHARDS.  
NEXT WEEK.



## A Splendid Tale of Life in the British Army.

### A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys is forced to leave Sandhurst through the treachery of his step-brother, Ian, and enlists in the Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester. Unfortunately for Ronald, Ian joins the Wessex as a subaltern, and, assisted by Sergeant Bagot and Private Foxey Williams, does his best to further disgrace Ronald. The unscrupulous Bagot, however, gets caught in his own toils, and is publicly degraded to the ranks. Foxey Williams obtains a great hold over Ian Chenys, and drives him to desperation. An appointment is made by Foxey for Ian to meet him in a stable—used by a foreigner named Pushoffsky for a physical culture class. The two are alone, and Ian Chenys knocks down Foxey, who eventually dies.

However, Gussie, a recruit in Ronald's Company, overhears a part of the two men's conversation, and a few days before Foxey's funeral decides to tell Ronald his story.

(Now go on with the story.)

### Ronald Advises Gussie.

"One minute, Gussie," said Ronald hoarsely. "Let's have this from the beginning. Now steady yourself, and tell me the whole story."

"Well, it was like this," commenced Gussie miserably, flopping down on the bed.

Then he related the story of his experiences the night before, when he had stolen into the loft—the ominous conversation he had overheard through the thin partition.

"I know who the other man was, too—at least, I think I know. I only heard his voice," he broke off desperately.

"Who was it?" asked Ronald, in a voice that rang so false and so unlike his own, that he feared Gussie would suspect something.

"If I tell you, it is in secret, and you will promise never to reveal it?" answered Gussie eagerly.

"That is impossible. Just think for yourself. How do we know that this other man did not do the deed?"

"Yes, I suppose you're right," said Gussie wearily. "It was Lieutenant Chenys."

There was a long silence. Ronald simply dare not trust himself to utter a word.

"When I was in the cell," continued Gussie at last, "and I heard them talking about you downing the wrestler at the Paragon, and how he was swearing to get his own back, I naturally thought they had been talking about you, though why Mr. Chenys would want to see you laid out is more than I could understand. But there you are, and I was wrong. It was Foxey after all, and now the foreign brute has bolted, and goodness knows whether they'll ever catch him; and as for me, I don't know what to do."

Ronald was in a more ghastly dilemma. It lay with him now to denounce his own kith and kin, or hold his peace, and by his silence make himself a party to the crime.

Pushoffsky would be trailed by the detectives, and if he had not already escaped the country, would be arrested and charged with Foxey's death. The truth would come out then. On the other hand, if the Pole got clear away, suspicion might never fall on Ian. Was that right? Was he himself doing right in helping to shield him?

Ronald asked himself this, but dared not answer.

"Can't you help me?" groaned Gussie, unable to bear the silence any longer. "Can't you advise me what I am to do?"

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"Do!" echoed Ronald, coming suddenly to his wits. "What can you do? A warrant is being issued for Pushoffsky's arrest. You think that he is the guilty man. Very well. I should say, wait until he is arrested, and then speak. Your evidence will be of no help now to anybody. You can offer it when the right moment comes. As for Mr. Chenys, you say you only think the second voice was his."

"Yes, I only think. I couldn't swear to it," answered Gussie.

"Very well, then, I should act as I suggest. Wait."

Gussie accepted the advice eagerly enough. Now that he had unburdened his conscience, he was ready to jump at any excuse for letting the matter rest where it was.

"I think you're right, corporal," he said, with evident relief. "And now I'm going to trot over to the canteen, for I'm feeling like a bit of chewed string."

His footsteps clattered away down the iron staircase, and Ronald was left alone to wrestle with the thousand conflicting thoughts which came surging to his tortured brain.

Right! Wrong! Right! Wrong!

The mental struggle went on with relentless fury, tossing him hither and thither like a boat in a tempestuous sea.

On the one side was set Justice, with hands outstretched grimly; on the other everything—the proud old name of Chenys, his dad, Ian, as he had known him before the canker of greed had warped and withered the youngster's heart. This was his own side, after all, and right or wrong, surely he was justified in fighting for his own flesh and blood?

Never once did he allow himself to remember that this lad he was so anxious to shield, was conspiring against his life.

The bugles sounded "First Post" at last, and the men came trooping back to the room. The roll was called, and gradually, amid the babel of tongues, the clatter of boots on bare plank floor and the bumping and rattling as the beds were made down, Ronald found a measure of peace.

When "Lights Out" sounded three-quarters of an hour later, he was already fast asleep, worn out in body and mind.

### The Last of Foxey—A Novel Shooting Match—Mouldy and Hookey Intend to Take a Hand.

The next week was a terrible one for those in the conspiracy of silence, and they were three.

In due course the coroner's jury brought in a verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown, and meantime the police were hunting high and low for the fugitive Pushoffsky.

Then Foxey was escorted to his long rest.

Six bearers from No. 4 Section carried forth the coffin, draped with the Union Jack, with the dead soldier's helmet and sidearms on the lid.

They bore it along slowly between the ranks of the firing-party, who saluted it at the "Present Arms!" and set it on the gun-carriage waiting to receive it.

High or low, general or drummer-boy, a soldier's funeral is always the same, except in certain details varying with the rank of the dead.

When all was ready, the band, with drums muffled in crape, boomed out the solemn notes of the "Dead March,"

and the mourners stepped forward in slow time. The firing-party marched with rifles reversed, butts pointing to the front under the right arm, and muzzles into the ground behind. Behind came No. 4 Company, officers and men, and in the rear all those who cared to follow.

Nearly every man in the battalion was there, and many from other corps lying close by. It was not that Foxey was popular, but rather that Tommy Atkins makes it a point of honour to show respect for a comrade who is dead. Moreover, Foxey had come to an end in a strange way.

Ian was absent—ill, report said—and for this Ronald and Gussy were glad.

Amid the rolling of muffled drums, the cortege reached the cemetery at last, and the firing-party, with rifles reversed, and hands clasped upon the butts, formed up by the grave.

"Earth to earth!" came the signal at last, and the coffin sank into the grave.

The volleys of blank by the firing-party crashed out. One, two, three! And instantly, as the echoes rattled away among the surrounding hills, the brazen-throated bugles took up the call of "Last Post."

That was the end. Ronald stepped forward, and threw a handful of earth upon the coffin, so did Lieutenant Bob and a few others; but the order had already gone forth to fall in, and the brass band were fixing their music cards, of a selection of lively ditties of the day, on their instruments all ready for the homeward route.

Tommy is not allowed to brood long over a lost comrade, and no sooner was the procession clear of the cemetery gates, than the men were stepping out at a rattling pace to the tune of the "Galloping Major."

Ian shrank back from his window, vainly trying to stop his ears to the clash of brass and thud of sheepskin as the funeral party came swinging through the gate.

He had pleaded illness to escape from duty, and he looked ill indeed. His face was thin and haggard, and his eyes burned like coal in dark pits.

For the past week he had been living in a dream—a nightmare filled with foul shapes ever threatening and receding, but still a dream after all. If he had not drugged himself, his reason, he knew, would have crumbled under the fearful strain.

Still, it was over now. He had done with Foxey for ever. The secret of Ronald's existence was shared by no one else as yet. Pushoffsky had been driven into hiding, and the path in the future promised to be easier than he had ever hoped for.

He must lie quiet now for a space. If he bided his time, all would come right in the end.

What troubled him most was that missing letter which his late servant had intercepted. The paper he had snatched from Foxey's hand and escaped with, was not a letter at all, but a bill. Foxey had duped him there.

The blackmailer had held other letters, but where they were now, Ian could not feel sure. He was hoping they had been burnt in the conflagration. Foxey's jacket, the inside pockets of which were empty, was singed, so that the fire must have come very near to him.

If the packet had been consumed, well and good; if not, and they had been discovered, surely they would have been produced at the inquest. No, he was torturing himself with unnecessary fears.

As for the wretched man lying in his grave, Ian hardly gave a thought to him. His conscience there was numb as yet. Some day it would awaken. At present he was unsuspected and safe. That was all he cared.

The Wessex were always a shooting regiment, renowned for their prowess at the butts, and at Woolchester they had every opportunity for practice, for a rifle range lay just beyond the barracks at the foot of Kit Hill.

Not content with the ordinary musketry practice laid down in regulations, Colonel Conger gave every encouragement for his men to go to the range and improve their marksmanship. This meant that he and his brother officers had to dip their hands pretty deep into their pockets to provide ammunition; but few grudged the outlay so long as the reputation of the corps was maintained.

In the early spring some important prizes were competed for, and as many of these were inter-company challenge-cups, rivalry ran very strong indeed.

B Company was well skilled with the rifle, but F was at least as good. Still B were in high feather, and so far as the Fairly Cup was concerned, they talked confidently of licking F into a cocked hat.

This cocksureness being very properly resented by F, a free fight resulted in the canteen. The battle took place almost on the eve of the final in which the two companies were due to perform on the firing point.

The result of the fight was that Mouldy Mills got his right eye—the shooting one—so bunged up, that he could not have opened it to save his life, while Hookey Walker sprained his right trigger finger.

Both, therefore, were knocked out of the B Company team, and Ronald and Tony Truscott were promptly

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entered in their places. The pair were inexperienced in competition firing, but they were excellent shots nevertheless.

Mouldy and Hookey, however, were furious, and moped about the barracks like bears with sore heads.

The Fairly Cup—the prize for which was given by Lieutenant Bob—was quite a sporting event. Instead of bullseye targets, the objects aimed at were toy balloons about eighteen inches in diameter. These were tethered by strings in a row along the butt-bank, and, being filled with gas, bobbed with every breeze in a manner most perplexing to the marksman.

The balloons were blue and red alternately, and the captains of the teams tossed up for the choice of colours. Then the red team blazed at the blue balloons, and the blue team at the red as fast as they could fire. As a balloon was picked off and burst, the man corresponding to it among the marksmen had to retire "dead," while the man who had killed him was at liberty to fire at any of the remaining balloons belonging to the foe.

Now, Mouldy and Hookey were two of the best snapshots in the battalion, and excelled in such a competition. Each had been backing their team heavily all round the canteen; but now that they had had to drop out, their confidence in B Company's chances fell to zero. Ronald and Tony were good, but they were some points behind Mouldy and Hookey at this game.

"If we lose—" sputtered Hookey, the day before the final, and then came to a dead halt.

"We mustn't lose! We daren't! It's impossible!" groaned Mouldy feeling his swollen eye tenderly. "Why, if we do, I'm absolutely broke! I've been laying any odds on B winning, and the F chaps have been taking me faster than I could book the bets. Why, I should be out by quids and quids, and I've only got fifteen bob in the world."

"Same 'ere," said Hookey mournfully. "Tell you what, chum, we'll have to wangle it somehow. We can't afford to see our side lose, and we'll just 'ave to 'elp 'em."

Mouldy looked at him for a couple of minutes in silence.

"What d'yer mean?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Wot I say," retorted Hookey grimly. "Now, look 'ere, chum, your right eye is more like a squashed tomarter than a 'uman optic; but if you wos to see a nice fat balloon dancing on a string, not twenty-five yards off you, do you think you could manage to pick it off, shooting left-handed?"

"Why, of course! What are you driving at?"

"Well, I've got an idea. You say B Company's got to win, and, of course, it's bound to win, anyhow, ain't it?"

"Ye-es, p'r'aps," agreed Mouldy doubtfully.

"There's no p'r'aps about it. It's goin' to win 'ands down. We know that, so that what we're goin' to do ain't really helpin' our side at all; but is just makin' things more certain like. You understand that, don't you?"

"Ye-es," mumbled Mouldy.

"Well, then, by sort of standin' round and 'elpin' a little, we shouldn't be acting in any unsportsmanlike fashion, should we?"

"No-o-o!"

"That's all fair and square, then. Now, I'll tell you what we're goin' to do. You know them clumps of furze-bushes on either side of the butt, don't you? Well—you and me—to-morrow will take cover there unbeknownst to anybody afore the shootin' commences, or the markers go into the butts.

"Then, when the 'Commence fire!' sounds, we'll join in, and if B's arter the red balloons, we'll pop 'em off at short range, so that they can win quicker than they otherwise would. We're just savin' time, that's all it comes to. What d'yer think of it?"

"The less we get thinkin' about it the better it seems to me," said Mouldy miserably. "We'll call it strategy, which the books say is indispensable to all milingtery operations, and let it go at that. How about the shots being heard by the markers?"

"We'll use air guns. A pal of mine what keeps a bird-shop has got a couple of nailers he'll lend me."

"But we're both on the sick list," protested Mouldy.

"All the better, they won't be looking to find us in them furze-bushes. We'll dodge that somehow. You leave it to me."

"And how are we to know which coloured balloons we've got to aim at?"

"Ah, that takes some thinkin' out! What price Gussie; he's a reserve, and will be on the firing-point. We must pitch him some yarn and get him to signal. Say we shall be watchin' over the barrack-wall, or something. We mustn't let him into the secret, of course."

"I don't like it, I tell you flat!" groaned Mouldy, when everything had been discussed.

"Nor do I. If we happened to get spotted, chaps who

hadn't got philosophic, milingitary minds, like you and me, might think we was doin' somethin' underhand and dirty, which, of course, we ain't, are we?"

"No-o," replied Mouldy, and the matter dropped.

That night Hookey took Gussie on one side, and explained how he and Mouldy, being denied the pleasure of being present at the match, would be watching from the topmost barrack-window. All they wanted him to do, if he was really a pal of theirs—as they knew him to be—was to blow his nose with a white handkerchief if B were to fire at the blue balloons, or take off his cap and hold it above his head if they were to massacre the red.

"An' I'll be watchin' you with a telescope," explained Hookey, with unblushing face.

Gussie, being a simple-hearted youth, readily agreed to contribute this much to their happiness.

There is a back gate to Woolchester Barracks, close to the kitchens, which is only opened in the morning to admit the pig-tub contractor when he arrives to cart away the refuse.

Mouldy and Hookey, though sick men, contrived to be busy on fatigue work that morning, and obligingly lent the pig-tub man a hand in loading his cart.

There was rather a heavy mist, though scarcely enough one would have thought to account for Hookey and Mouldy losing their way back to the gate, which was only six feet from them. However, such was the case, and before they quite knew where they were, they were lost in the open moor behind the barracks.

"Why, bless me, if we ain't strayed on to the rifle-range!" said Hookey with childlike simplicity, as the lofty butt-bank loomed above them.

"Are you quite sure?" asked Mouldy in an awed voice. "Don't you think you and me had better sit down and rest in them bushes till the fog clears? It'd be awful if we got lost altogether, and died of starvation, after days and days."

"Awful ain't the word," agreed Hookey. "You take the bushes on the left, and I'll pop across to them on the right, and we'll lay down for a spell."

Each had been walking stiffly, as if each had rheumatism in the right knee. The mystery was explained later, when the two old rogues produced an airgun a-piece from the legs of their trousers. A box of slugs was also found secreted in each of their caps.

Burrowing deep into the dew-drenched bushes, and taking cover in convenient hollows, sheltering them from chance bullets, they were soon invisible to any passer-by.

### The Battle of the Balloons.

The morning passed with painful slowness. Neither of the pair had had any breakfast, and they were as hungry as wolves.

In due course the mist cleared away, and the competing teams appeared marching down to the two hundred yards firing-point, followed by a crowd of interested Tommies, who had turned out to witness the contest.

Ian Chenys and a party of markers now entered the mantlets, and Hookey and Mouldy breathed more freely. They loaded their airguns and patted down little embasures in the long grass, so that they could get an uninterrupted aim at the targets, the furthest of which would be scarcely more than thirty yards from their hiding-places on either flank.

Hookey, who was the proud possessor of a pair of opera-glasses—very ancient they were—now glued his gaze on Gussie, who could be seen hovering about in his excitement at the rear of the firing-party.

Up bobbed the balloons at last, swaying about on their strings, and all was ready.

Gussie, up to this moment had forgotten all about his

promise to the two "sick" veterans supposed to be perched like Sister Ann on some pinnacle of the barracks, half a mile away.

Fortunately, he remembered just as the officers of the B and F teams tossed for choice of colours, and up went his handkerchief with a flourish to his nose.

"That means we fire at blue," said Hookey, shutting up his opera-glasses, and, giving one long, low whistle to communicate his intelligence to his fellow-conspirator in the furze clump on the other side.

Now, all that they waited for was the warning-call of the bugle, and then the crash and scream of bullets as the teams opened fire. It would be their turn then to join in, and though Hookey's sprained finger was a severe handicap, and Mouldy was to shoot left-eyed, on account of the other being blackened, they were so close to the toy balloons, which looked like monster, luscious grapes in the morning sunlight, that they felt they could scarcely miss.

The bugle sounded; a short, sharp command rang out, and then bang! crack! crack! bang! swish! wheep! bang!

Pandemonium seemed to be let loose. The two old scoundrels crouched closer than startled hares in their grassy retreat. The shrieking hail of bullets seemed to be directed at them rather than at the butt between them. Sand and gravel flew in spurts as shots struck short, and pebbles screeched and whirled about their hiding-places in a way that was decidedly disconcerting.

Pop! A red balloon had burst, and that was one against their side. Pop! Another had gone. This would never do.

Collecting their scared wits, Mouldy and Hookey simultaneously opened fire with their airguns.

Tossed about by the wind from the flying bullets the toy balloons bobbed and jogged as if they were engaged in some wild dance.

The blue balloon nearest to him fell to Hookey's first slug. Mouldy being nervous and half-scared to death by the din and rattle of it all, bagged only two in seven shots; but his sixth and seventh brought down another brace, and Hookey had also picked a couple in the meantime.

That was seven against blue. Only three of theirs remained, while six red balloons were still bobbing merrily. The fire the six red-riflemen concentrated on the three remaining blue balloons was terrific.

Whether bullets or airgun slugs accounted for the shattered remnant of the blue brigade, it is impossible to say. Anyhow, the blues were wiped out in double-quick time, and B Company had won, as they would have done, of course, even if Hookey and Mouldy had not been there to help.

So far, so good. Neither Mouldy nor Hookey, however, had taken into calculation the question of retreat. There they were, and so long as markers remained in the mantlets, or so long as daylight was over the land, there they had to stick.

To crawl out now would mean detection. Besides, they had to get back into barracks, and as the main gate was out of the question, it would mean a painful ascent of a certain rainpipe, which they had to make use of on many another similar occasion.

They were already hungry at breakfast-time, so that by the time the sun sank to rest at last, they were ready to eat their boots.

"Never mind, think of the dibs we've got to collect, Mouldy, my lad," said Hookey cheerfully. "There's two-pun-two-and-threepence ha'penny a-coming to me out of them fat'eads of F, and I'll have it to-night or know the reason why. After that you can stand me two goes of sausage and mashed, which is all the interest I shall charge you for the use of my colossal intellek."

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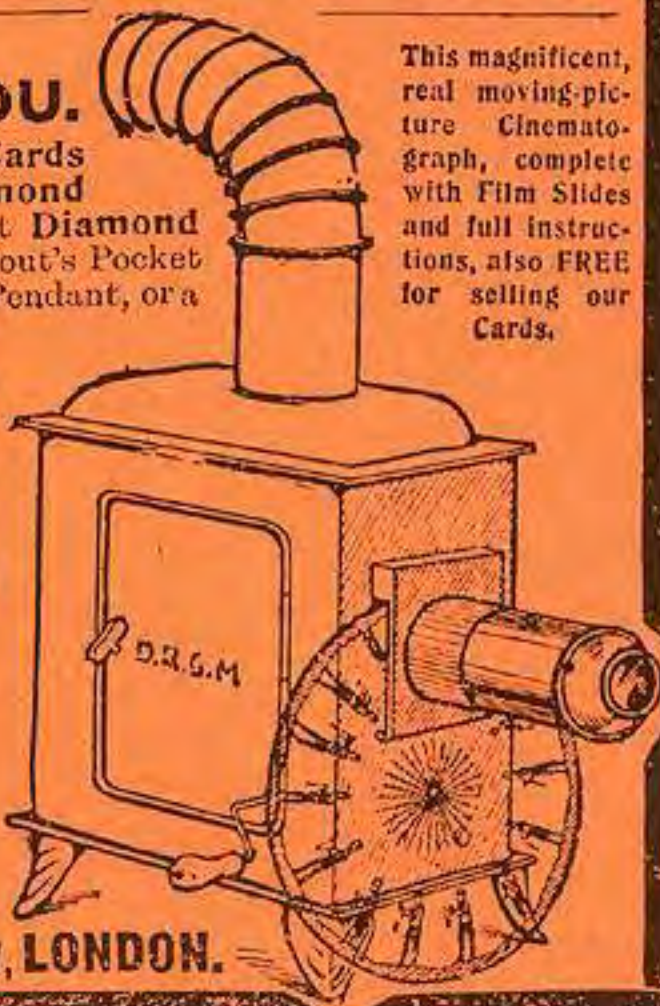
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