

“THE REMOVE EIGHT!”

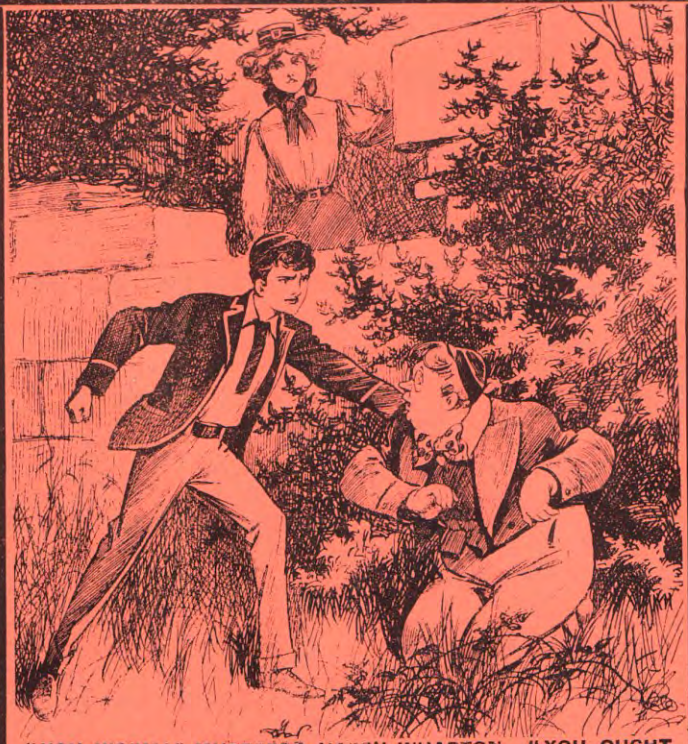
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No. 122

Grand, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

Vol. 4.



“YOU WORM!” MUTTERED HARRY WHARTON. “YOU OUGHT TO BE TRODDEN ON!”

NEXT
TUESDAY:

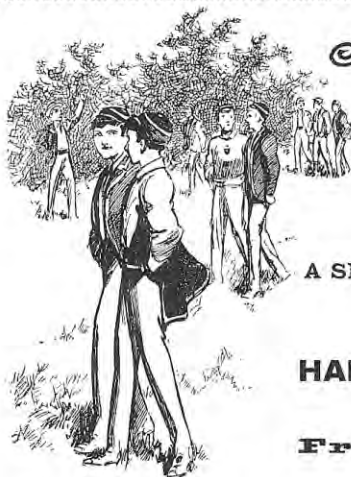
"STUDY No. 1 ON TOUR."

A Splendid, Complete
School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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The Remove Eight

A SPLENDID, LONG, COMPLETE
SCHOOL TALE
— of —
HARRY WHARTON & Co.

BY
Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Letter From Marjorie.

"COMING on the river?"

Bob Cherry, of the Remove at Greyfriars, slipped his arm through Harry Wharton's as he spoke.

The Remove—the Lower Fourth of Greyfriars—had just been dismissed after school, and they had poured out into the bright, sunny Close with a loud and exuberant whoop.

It was a glorious June afternoon, and the green fields and gleaming river seemed to call to the boys—but seemed to call to them all through the grind of lessons in the dull classrooms.

And now they were free, and revelling in their freedom. Some of them rushed off to the cricket-ground, others swarmed down to the sloping banks of the Sark. Harry Wharton had paused outside the schoolhouse.

"You're coming, Harry?"

And Bob Cherry dragged his friend away.

Wharton resisted.

"No, I'm not coming on the river just now, Bob. I——"
"Rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You've got to. No need for any more practice at the nets to-day."

"No, but——"

"We've arranged to have the racer out," said Bob Cherry. "We're going to pull against the Upper Fourth duffers. Come on!"

"But——"

"Lisley and Nugent, and Tom Brown and Hazeldene will be in it with us. Come on."

"Yes, but——"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "You seem to have forgotten all the words in the dictionary except 'but.' Do come!"

Wharton laughed a little. He was being dragged down towards the gates by the exuberant Bob all the time, in spite of his denial.

"I can't come!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!"
 "I've got another engagement."
 "Bosh!"
 "It's an important one."
 "Rubbish!"
 "Seriously, Bob—"
 "Hallo, here you are!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, coming up with Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, and Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire. "Ready, you chaps!"
 "Yes, we're ready," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.
 "Wharton is talking some piffle about having another engagement, but it's all right; he's coming."

"I'm not!"
 "Where's Hazeldene?" asked Tom Brown.
 "Blessed if I know. He agreed to come."
 "He left the Form-room with the Bounder, I remember," said Tom Brown. "I hope he's not going to fail us. Who's going to steer?"

"Inky, Inky, old man, we want you to steer. We're racing with the Upper Fourth bounders."

Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, more familiarly known as Inky, in reference to his dusky complexion, grinned and nodded in his amiable way.

"With great pleasure," he replied. "The steerfulness will be terrific."

"Good! Come on, then!"
 "I'm sorry!" exclaimed Wharton, jerking his arm away from Bob Cherry at last. "I can't come, you chaps!"

"Rot!"
 "Bosh!"
 "Piffle!"

"It's honest Injun!" said Harry. "I—I've got an important engagement. I simply can't come on the river."

"Rats!"
 "Well, what's the engagement?" said Frank Nugent.

"Explain it to us, and we'll explain it away. I expect it's all rot."

"Of course! Explain it, Wharton!"
 "Go ahead!"

Harry Wharton coloured, and a curious hesitation came into his manner. He was, as a rule, the least secretive of mortals, and had few, if any, secrets from his chums. Yet on this occasion he certainly showed no desire to be frank.

The juniors stared at him in surprise.

"Well, what don't you go ahead?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"You see, I—," said Wharton haltingly.

"Behold her blushing," said Tom Brown, with a grin.

"There's a lady in the case. He's going to meet the lock-keeper's grandmother."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Don't be an ass, Brown."

"What's the wheeze, anyway?" demanded Nugent, as he saw that Wharton's colour was deepening. "Where are you going, Harry?"

Wharton did not reply.

"Is it a secret?"
 "Oh, no!" said Harry hastily.

"Then why don't you tell us?"
 No reply.

"My hat!" said Tom Brown. "He groweth mysterious. I say, Wharton, it isn't possible that you're going on the ran-dan with the Bounder, is it?"

The juniors roared.

Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder—was a youth whose ways were not the ways of the Runover, and though he had been "ragged" out of many bad habits, it was known or guessed that he kept up a good many of them in secret, and that he was not unknown as a customer at the village "obacconist's."

Harry Wharton, however, was the last fellow to clum up with the Bounder in any of his secret and disreputable expeditions.

He laughed awkwardly.

"No, it's nothing to do with the Bounder," he said. "But the fact is, I—I'd rather not jaw about it. It's not a secret, but—there's no need to jaw. See?"

"Clear as mud," said Nugent. "What I like about Wharton is that he's so lucid."

"Oh, look here—"

"The lucidfulness is terrific."

"I must be off," said Harry abruptly, glancing up at the clock in the school tower over the elms.

"You must be!" growled Bob Cherry. "Off your blessed onion to leave us in the lurch when we're pulling against the Upper Fourth."

"I'm sorry—"

"You've got to row stroke."

"Put it off till to-morrow."

"Never put off to-morrow what you can do to-day," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a shake of the head.

"Well, I'm sorry I can't come," said Harry. "I must really be off."

And he strode away. The juniors stared at him for one moment, and then rushed after him, and laid violent hands upon him.

Wharton struggled in their grasp.

"Let go, you asses!"
 "Explain, then!"

"Lemme go!"
 "We can't do without you!"

"We're relying on you!"
 "The relucfulness is terrific."

"You've got to row stroke."

Wharton writhed himself loose. He was looking a little flushed and untidy, and so were the others.

"Hang it all, be reasonable, you chaps!" he exclaimed.

"You never told me you wanted me, though it would have been all the same. I've simply got to go. Do be reasonable! Get the Upper Fourth chaps to leave it over."

"Rats! They'll think we're finking."

"Well, good-bye!"

Harry Wharton hurried away. This time the juniors did not stop him. They saw that he was in earnest, and that he must have some important matter to attend to, though what it was was a puzzle to them.

"Blessed if I catch on at all," said Bob Cherry, at last.

"It's not like Harry to be so jolly mysterious."

"How he blushed when I suggested there was a lady in the case!" chuckled Tom Brown. "But of course Wharton isn't that sort of a goat."

"Oh, no, that's rot."

"We shall have to get another man," said Bob Cherry.

"Ogilvy will fill the bill. We've got to find Hazeldene, too. Hunt them up!"

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors scattered in search of Hazeldene and Ogilvy. Bob Cherry was leaving the spot, when the glimmer of a letter on the ground caught his eye.

It was lying in the grass where Wharton had struggled in the grasp of the juniors, and Bob guessed at once that he had dropped it in the tussle.

The junior stooped to pick it up, with the intention of restoring it to Wharton as soon as he came in.

But, as he stooped, reaching out his hand, he suddenly paused, petrified.

The letter was lying so that Bob could not help seeing part of the writing, and two lines flashed into his brain, as it were, before he had time to think. They were staring him in the face, and he could not help seeing them as he stooped. And they struck him like the lash of a whip.

"—come alone, and do not mention it to anyone, please.—"

Marjorie.

That was all that Bob Cherry read—involuntarily.

It was the handwriting of Marjorie Hazeldene, and her name that was signed. Harry Wharton had gone to meet Marjorie.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Does Not Feel Fit.

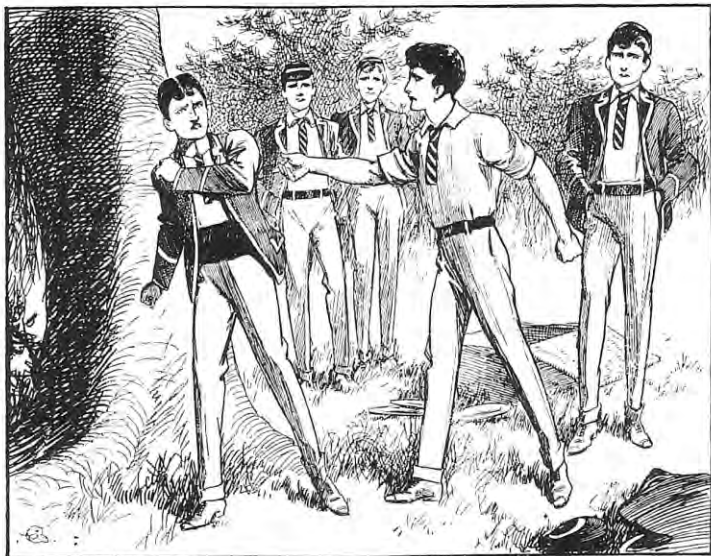
BOB CHERRY stood for some seconds as if petrified, the colour wavering in his cheeks, and a strange pang in his breast. He hardly knew what the feeling was,

but he knew that he was the most miserable fellow in Greyfriars. He picked up the letter, and crushed it in his hand. That much he had been unable to avoid seeing; but he could not see another word. There was a temptation in his heart to read the rest—to know exactly what Marjorie had said to Harry—but honour was stronger than curiosity or jealousy. Bob thrust the letter into his pocket, determined that it should not see the light again till he handed it back to Harry Wharton.

He moved slowly away from the spot, his brain in a whirl. Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House School, was an old friend of the Greyfriars juniors. Marjorie and Clara of Cliff House had spent many happy times with Harry Wharton & Co. Bob, in his big, rough, simple way, worshipped the ground that Marjorie walked on, but there was nothing flighty or morbid about him; he had never fancied that he was in love; he thought never crossed his mind. He thought that Marjorie was a splendid chum, and he was very fond of her, which he showed chiefly by being dumb and awkward in her presence.

Marjorie met the chums frequently enough, in the frankest way in the world; there had never been anything secret about it. Bob knew that Harry was handsome and cleverer than he was, and he had never envied him—he felt proud of his chum. It was only natural that Harry should please Marjorie more than Bob did. But—

But the thought of a secret meeting between them struck



"Now then, Smith, are you ready?" demanded Harry Wharton. "Ready!" asked the Bounder, starting. "What do you mean?"

like an arrow to Bob's heart. That was not playing the game on Harry's part.

It was not like Marjorie, either. And Bob Cherry, for the first time in his life, understood what jealousy was—that terrible self-torture which can be more cruel than the tortures of the Inquisition.

He walked away from the spot with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his gaze fixed straight before him. He seemed to be in a kind of dream, when he was startled out of it by a slap on the shoulder.

He turned round angrily. "Wake up, old chap!" said Nugent. "I—"

"Hang it!" muttered Bob.

Nugent stared at him.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

Bob recovered himself with an effort.

"Wrong? No!"

"I've found Ogilvy," said Nugent. "He's come down with the fellows to get the boat out. I can't find Hazeldene anywhere."

Bob Cherry started.

Hazeldene was Marjorie's brother, and it was through him that the chums of the Remove had come to know Marjorie at all. As Marjorie's brother, Hazeldene enjoyed an amount of popularity, which would certainly never have fallen to his share otherwise.

Hazeldene was a weak, good-natured fellow, and more than once he had been pulled out of very serious scrapes by the chums of the Remove. The knowledge that his folly was a source of anxiety to Marjorie had made Harry Wharton & Co. take him up, and look after him, with very beneficial results to Hazeldene, who was one of those fellows who take their tone entirely from their associates.

"We'd better look for him, I suppose," said Nugent.

"Look for whom?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

"Hazeldene."

"Oh, Hazeldene!"

Nugent looked curiously at Bob.

"What the dickens is the matter with you, Bob?" he exclaimed. "You're talking like a chap half asleep!"

Bob Cherry started again. In spite of himself his thoughts would keep on wandering to that strange meeting between Wharton and Marjorie. Why had Harry met her secretly—why had she asked him not to let the other fellows know?

"I—I'm all right!" he said.

"Feeling fit, I suppose?" said Frank anxiously. "We shall have a hard pull against the Upper Fourth rotters, you know, especially without Wharton to stroke."

"Yes-a."

"Well, let's look for Hazeldene."

"The—the fast is, I think you'd better leave me out," said Bob Cherry haltingly. "I—I don't feel very fit."

"Eh?"

"I don't think I'd better row."

"You ast? You said you were fit when I asked you just now."

"Did I?"

"You're off your rocker, I think. Wake up!"

"I—I—"

"What's the matter?"

"N—nothing!"

"Then come on!"

"I—I won't come! I—I feel rather seely!"

"Well, of all the blessed duffers—"

"Get another chap!"

"Look here—"

But Bob Cherry turned and walked into the House. He had a horrible feeling that if he went on talking the tears would come into his eyes—how and why he did not know. Frank Nugent stared after him disconsolately.

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By FRANK RICHARDS.

"I think they're all off their giddy rockers this afternoon," he murmured. "First Wharton, and then Bob. The ass! We shall get up a wonderful crew against the Upper Fourth—I don't think!"

And Nugent walked away savagely to look for Hazeldene. He had no idea where the fellow could be. He ought to have turned up for the boating party, but he hadn't.

"Here's one of them!" exclaimed a voice; and Nugent found himself face to face with Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, in straw hats and blazers. "Nugent, my son, are you ready to be rubbed off the river?"

Nugent snorted.

"We're almost ready to give you a lesson in rowing," he said. "I don't know how we shall make up a crew, though. Wharton and Cherry can't row!"

"My dear chap, you needn't tell us that!" said Temple, with a wink at his companions. "We know they can't row. None of you can!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth-Formers.

Nugent turned red.

"You ass!" he exclaimed. "I don't mean that. I mean that they can't come on the water this afternoon!"

"Funking—eh?"

"No, ass! Wharton's got an engagement!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Cherry doesn't feel fit—"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Any more trouble in the family?" asked Temple, with a grin that exasperated Nugent almost to the point of letting out his life. "Anybody got a pain, or a telegram from home, or anything of that sort? Any excuse is better than none, you know!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Of course, I never expected the kids to really come up to the scratch," said Temple loftily. "Imagine the Remove rowing against the Fourth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rather!"

"You frabjous burlbers!" said Nugent scornfully. "If we could make up a crew, we'd wipe you off the river in two shakes. But—"

"Good old 'but.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll make up a crew of sorts, anyway!" said Nugent fiercely. "Have your boat ready in ten minutes, that's all!"

And he strode away, followed by a mocking laugh from the Fourth-Formers. Temple, Dabney & Co. were serenely assured of their rowing superiority, and certainly it was very unfortunate that the Remove could not make up a crew just then. But Nugent was determined to row it out, if he had to put a crew of fags in the racing-skiff.

Nugent was not in a pleasant temper as he went in search of Hazeldene. He had not intended to take the lead in the matter at all. But the absence of Wharton and the defection of Bob Cherry left him no choice. And where was Hazeldene? Nugent mentally promised Hazeldene things as he hunted for him high and low. Harry Wharton & Co. had been coaching Hazeldene on the river, as at cricket, and he had proved a very fair pupil. It was hard if they could not have his services at a time like this.

"Seen Hazeldene?"

Frank Nugent asked that question right and left.

For some time the replies were unsatisfactory, but he found an answer at last, when he asked Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode's face assumed a most unpleasant grin as he answered. Hazeldene was Bulstrode's study-mate, and Bulstrode was jealous of the influence Harry Wharton & Co. exercised over him—for Bulstrode would have been very glad to chum with Marjorie's brother, and through him with Marjorie. Marjorie did not like Bulstrode, and doubtless she had her reasons.

"Hazeldene?" repeated Bulstrode.

"Yes," snapped Nugent. "Have you seen him?"

"Certainly!"

"Where is he, then?"

"I don't know whether I should tell you," said Bulstrode.

"What do you mean? I want him—he's to row for us."

"Oh, then, I suppose he won't mind your knowing!"

"Why should he mind? What the dickens are you driving at, Bulstrode?" asked Nugent, angry and mystified.

"He's in the Bounder's study, that's all!"

Nugent started.

"In the Bounder's study?"

"Yes!" said Bulstrode, with a grin.

"Vernon-Smith's study?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing there?"

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Better ask him!"

"I don't believe you!" said Nugent hotly. "You're THE MAGNET LIBRARY—122.

rotting! Hazeldene is going to row for us—and he's no friend of Vernon-Smith's, anyway."

"Well, row and see!"

Nugent turned away without a word more, and strode off in the direction of Vernon-Smith's study. Bulstrode looked after him with a chuckle. There was evidently trouble among Harry Wharton & Co., and Bulstrode was not displeased to see it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In Bad Hands

"BLESSED if I half like it!"

"Oh, rot!"

"That's all very well, but—"

"Don't show the white feather!"

"I'm not!" said Hazeldene indignantly. "But—"

"You're afraid of Wharton, I suppose?"

"No! But—"

"What can they do?" said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer.

"Hang it all! What should you care what they say?"

"It isn't that!"

"Then what is it?"

Hazeldene was silent.

Vernon-Smith watched him with a sneering smile. He was playing upon that weak nature as one might play upon a violin.

Hazeldene, as usual, was hesitating. "One foot on sea and one on shore"—it was the old story.

Hazeldene had little money, and Vernon-Smith was simply rolling in it. Hazeldene had expensive tastes, and a sort of lingering hankering after forbidden pleasures. It was easy for Vernon-Smith to handle him.

The Bounder had made himself pretty generally hated when he first arrived at Greyfriars. Hazeldene had joined in ragging him as heartily as anybody. But Vernon-Smith found that he must have friends if he was to have any comfort. And in an insidious way he was already gaining some influence over a certain section of the Remove.

"We'll have a jolly time," said Vernon-Smith, breaking the silence. "I'm going to have a trap out, and we'll get a lunch-basket and a bottle of fizz, and plenty of smokes, and have a jolly time in the wood."

Hazeldene brightened up a little.

"Skinner and Stott have promised to come," said Vernon-Smith.

"Good!"

"It ought to be a jolly party."

"I suppose so," Hazeldene hesitated. "The fact is, I—I promised to row for the chaps this afternoon. They've got a pull on against the Upper Fourth fellows, and they wanted me."

"Was it a promise?"

"Well, I said I'd row."

"That's nothing—you've changed your mind," said Vernon-Smith. "I suppose they can get somebody else."

Hazeldene laughed rather ruefully.

"Oh, yes, I'm not a first-class oar, by any means, only they're expecting me, and—and they've treated me decently."

"You can row another time," said Vernon-Smith, who cared as little for rowing as for cricket. "Hang it, I'm offering you a good time!"

"Well, all right, I'll stay in here till they're gone," said Hazeldene weakly. "No good seeing them and having a jaw about it."

"I dare say the coast is clear by this time," said the Bounder, and he opened the door of the study and glanced

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down," the passage. "Hallo, there's Nugent coming up stairs!"

Hazeldene started.

"Confound it! He's coming to look for me, I expect!"

"I don't suppose so."

"I—I— Is he coming past No. 1?"

"Yes; he's passed his own study."

"Then somebody's told him I'm here," said Hazeldene hurriedly. "I—I'll get out of sight."

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Get into the cupboard, then."

Hazeldene stepped into the cupboard, and pulled the door nearly shut. His heart was beating painfully. He did not want to face Nugent just then. It was one thing to do wrong, and quite another to face a friend he was treating shabbily.

Nugent looked grimly at the Bounder as he came up to the study doorway. He glanced in over Vernon-Smith's shoulder, and saw that there was no one there—no one, at all events, that he could see.

The Bounder looked at him.

"Do you want anything?" he asked.

"Yes—Hazeldene."

"Hazeldene."

"Yes; is he here?" asked Nugent abruptly.

"Look," said the Bounder.

Bulstrode told me he was in your study," said Nugent.

"I thought he was rotting at the time. Have you seen him?"

"Since class, do you mean?"

"Of course," said Nugent irritably. "We all saw him in the Form-room. I want to know where he is now. He's coming to row for us."

"He may have gone down to the boathouse, then."

"Oh, all right!"

Nugent cast another glance round the study, and turned away. The Bounder closed the door, and Hazeldene stepped out of the cupboard. He was looking very red and flustered.

"He's gone," said Vernon-Smith, with a grin.

"Yes. He never suspected I was here. I—"

"Well, what?"

"Nothing," said Hazeldene uneasily. "I suppose they'll find somebody else. We'd better wait till they're on the river before we get out. We don't want to run the risk of being watched."

"Right."

Frank Nugent went down the passage with a frowning brow. Unless Hazeldene had gone down to the river already, Frank could not imagine where he was. The junior lost no time in getting down to the boathouse. He found his chums there, but there was, of course, no sign of Hazeldene.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were lounging on the wooden landing-stage. Their boat was launched and quite ready.

Nugent looked round with a look of exasperation.

"Hasn't Hazeldene come?" he demanded.

"No," said Tom Brown. "Can't you find him?"

"No; he must have gone out. He's disappeared, anyway."

"Oh, find somebody else, then! Hazeldene isn't worth his weight in gold. Where's Bob Cherry?"

"He's not coming—doesn't feel fit."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"It's rotten!" said Ogilvy.

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

"We'll put in Morgan," said Nugent. "Morgan, old man, get off that rail, and get into your blazer. We want you to row."

"Right you are," said Morgan cheerfully.

The Remove fellows pushed their boat out, and Hurree Singh took the rudder lines. Temple, Dabney & Co. grinned as they pushed off.

"Pretty scratch crew," remarked Temple. "They wouldn't have had any chance against us anyway, but now it will be simply a walk-over."

"Oh, rather!"

"Ready, you ehaps?" called out Temple.

"Yes," said Nugent, with a glance over his right.

"Up to the island, round it, and back again," said Temple. "That's the programme."

"Right."

"Who's going to start us?"

"We'll ask one of the seniors. Wingate, will you start us?"

Wingate, of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, glanced at the junior boat with a smile. He was standing up in a punt close to the landing-stage.

"Certainly," he said. "Get level."

The juniors took their places, and waited for the signal. Wingate brought his palms together in a very good imitation of a pistol-shot.

Crack!

And the oars dashed into the water.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

Away went the boats, the Remove getting the better start. But the Fourth-Formers soon made up for that.

Temple, Dabney & Co. had practised many a time and oft, and it was only a scratch crew, called together without any special preparation, in the lower Fourth boat.

The Upper Fourth oars kept time like clockwork, Temple stroking the boat in a way that proved that he was not wholly a dandy, in spite of his elegant ways.

The boat shot ahead.

Nugent set his teeth.

"Pull, you beggars!" he muttered.

The Removites pulled hard.

They put on a splendid spurt, and came level. But the Fourth-Formers only smiled. They were keeping up a long and steady pull that was worth more than many spurts.

The Upper Fourth boat seemed to walk away.

Harder the Removites pulled, and harder and harder, and they shot ahead once more; it was the last flicker of the candle before it expired.

They were half-way to the island in the river now.

Before they reached it, Temple, Dabney & Co. had pulled level, and they were first round the island.

On the home stretch they kept the lead all the way.

With a quiet, steady pull in perfect unison, they swept back towards Greyfriars, the Removites, red and flustered, pulling after them in vain.

Fellows on the bank shouted encouragement to the racers.

"Go it, Temple!" yelled the Upper Fourth fellows.

"Make it a dozen lengths!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Walk away from 'em!"

"Back up, Remove!" shouted Treluce. "Don't be licked!"

"Get a move on!"

"What are you fellows going to sleep for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites' eyes were gleaming.

They pulled harder and harder.

But it was of no use.

With their oars in the air, Temple, Dabney & Co. glided up to the landing-stage, amid laughter and cheers from the crowd of fellows there.

They had won by more than six lengths.

"Chuck it," growled Nugent. "This is the fault of those chumps—their frabjous asses—those blessed burbling jaberwocks."

"Try it again?" asked Temple affably.

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

"Take it calmly, old chap!"

"Br-r-r!"

"Of course, you couldn't expect—"

"Rats!"

And Nugent swung away, leaving the Upper Fourth fellows roaring with laughter. Frank Nugent was generally a good-tempered and good-humoured fellow, with a smile on his face under the most disagreeable circumstances. But for once his good-humour failed him. At that moment there was not a more excited or a worse-tempered fellow than Nugent in the length and breadth of Greyfriars.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter on the Track.

HARRY WHARTON had a frown upon his usually sunny face as he left the gates of Greyfriars, and walked down Friarale Lane. The time of his excursion was certainly unfortunate, and he was sorry to leave the Remove rowers in the lurch. But his appointment was made before he had heard that Bob Cherry had taken up a challenge of the Upper Fourth, and in any case, he would have gone anywhere Marjorie had asked him, race or no race. The Upper Fourth could wait, if necessary, and Marjorie couldn't.

Wharton had intended to leave the school quietly after lessons, without mentioning the matter to anyone; but that had proved impossible. And it was very awkward that he had to insist upon going, without being able to explain why his object or his destination was. It drew more attention to the matter than he desired.

He was puzzled, too. His friendship with Marjorie was as open as a friendship could be, and he could not imagine why she wanted to see him alone, and why he was not to tell the other fellows. But, of course, he had no choice but to obey her wishes to the very letter.

He strode along the lane, deep in thought—too much occupied to notice a patter of running feet on the dusty road behind him.

It was not till the short, quick gasps of the runner were nearly level with him, that he became aware that he was being pursued.

Returned his head quickly, and looked at the pursuer. It was a short, fat junior, with perspiration streaming down his plump red cheeks, and a succession of sharp gasps escaping from him.

Wharton's brow darkened still more. He had been unable to explain to the chums of the Remove, and it was worse than ever to have Billy Bunter, the Paul Pry and Peeping Tom of the school, following on his track.

"I-I say, Wharton," gasped Bunter breathlessly.

"What do you want?"

"I-I'm quite out of breath. Walk more slowly, will you?"

"No."

Harry quickened his pace. The panting Owl of the Remove broke into a quick trot again to keep pace with him.

"I-I say, Wharton—"

"Don't come with me, Bunter. I don't want you."

Wharton did not measure his words in speaking to the Owl. Bunter was too thick-skinned to understand anything but the plainest of plain English.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!"

"I-I say, you know, I-I think I ought to come! It's rotten for a fellow to sneak off to a feed all alone like this," said Bunter warmly.

"A what?"

"A feed!"

Wharton could hardly help laughing. Billy Bunter had evidently witnessed the scene in the Close, and the only explanation he had been able to imagine was that Harry had a feed somewhere which he did not wish to share out.

"You young ass!" said Wharton. "There's no feed!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"It's nothing of the sort."

"Where are you going, then?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, really—"

Wharton quickened his pace again. He was striding on now as if he were on a stiff walking stick. Billy Bunter's little fat legs wobbled like clockwork to keep pace with him.

"I-I say, Wharton, if it's not a feed—"

"It isn't."

"Honour?"

"Yes, you young ass; honour bright."

Billy Bunter grunted discontentedly. He knew that Wharton would not tell an untruth, so he was satisfied as far as that went. But he was decidedly dissatisfied in other respects.

"Not a feed!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Do you mean to say that you've fetched me all this way from Greyfriars for nothing?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I didn't want you to come, Billy," he remarked. "I didn't know you were coming, till I heard you grunting behind me like a blessed pig."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Now you had better cut back—"

"I-I say, Wharton, you know, I-I'm hungry," said Bunter. "It's some time to tea. Can you lend me five bob?"

"Go and eat cake!"

"I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, and—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Don't walk so fast, Wharton, I-I can't keep up with you!" gasped Bunter. "Don't be a beast, you know. Did you say you would lend me five bob off my postal order?"

"No, I didn't!"

"A bob would do, and I'll return it the moment my postal-order comes!"

Wharton uttered an exclamation of annoyance. Bunter was always pestering him for money, and he did not pester in vain when Harry was in funds. The captain of the Remove groped in his pockets. It was the quickest way to get rid of the fat junior.

Bunter watched him expectantly through his big glasses.

"If you could make it two bob, Wharton—"

"Oh, dry up!" Wharton fished out a shilling, and tossed it to the Owl of the Remove. "Catch! Now buzz off!"

"Ow! Yow!"

Billy Bunter caught the shilling—on his nose, and it dropped into the dust. The fat junior rubbed his nose and blinked round for the shilling, while Harry strode on. Billy picked up the coin, and ran after Wharton, calling to him to stop.

"Hold on a minute, Wharton!"

Wharton did not pause.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

Billy Bunter pounded on in the dust.

"Hold on! Wharton! Hold on a tick! It's important! I—I say—"

Wharton turned his head impatiently.

"What is it? What's the trouble, you duffer?"

"It's about this shilling. Would you rather have it back out of my postal-order to-night, or shall I put it down to the old account?"

Wharton gave the fat junior one glare, and then reached out and seized him by the collar. Billy Bunter howled as he was whirled round like a teetotum.

"Ow! Groo! Yow! Yow!"

He upon blindly round, and sat down with such violence that a cloud of dust flew up from the white road surface.

Bunter sat in the dust and choked and gasped. Harry Wharton stepped over a stile, and disappeared in a foot-path through Friar-dale Wood, leading down towards the sea and Cliff House, and the fishing village of Pegg.

"Ow! Ow! Groo!" gasped Bunter, staggering to his feet. "The—the beast! Just because I wanted to be businesslike! Groo!"

Bunter gasped, and wiped his spectacles, and replaced them on his little fat nose. He blinked wrathfully after Wharton.

"The rotter!" he murmured. "Mean beast! Only a shilling and I know his aunt in Switzerland sent him a tip this week. What the dickens is he off for, too? He wouldn't tell the chaps, and he's awfully nervous about my following him. I—I'll jolly well find out. It's my—my duty, in case there's anything shady going on."

And Billy Bunter, having decided that it was his duty to play the spy and eavesdropper, stole cautiously into the wood on the track of Harry Wharton.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Marjorie's Brother.

"MARJORIE!"

The girl was waiting under the trees, within the precincts of the old priory garden in the heart of the wood. Near her rose the ruined wall of the priory, heavy masses of old stonework covered with moss. The place was very solitary, and very beautiful. Picnic-parties sometimes camped in the old priory, and then it was lively enough; but now it was deserted, and the sunshine fell only upon grey stone and dark-green moss, and the shimmering foliage of the trees.

Marjorie was waiting; she had reached the rendezvous first. Harry Wharton came at a run through the trees as he caught sight of the graceful figure standing by the old wall.

She turned her head towards him.

Wharton came up quickly, raising his cap. Marjorie smiled, and held out her hand.

"I am so glad to see you, Harry."

"Same here!" said Wharton.

He was looking at her curiously. He did not know the reasons of the secret rendezvous, but he knew that Marjorie must have some reason, some good one. She was not at all the kind of girl to do anything in a clandestine way. And Wharton could see a little pucker in the usually smooth brow, a look of anxiety in the eyes that were usually calm and cheerily smiling.

"What is it, Marjorie?" he asked. "Is there anything wrong?"

"Yes."

"And I can help you?"

"I think so."

"Then I'm jolly glad you wrote to me," said Harry. Marjorie smiled faintly.

"You were surprised to receive my letter?" she asked.

"Well, yes, a little," said Harry honestly. "I thought something or other must be up."

"You have done as I—as I asked you?"

"About keeping it dark, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Of course."

"I know it must seem strange to you," said Marjorie, colouring a little. "But you will understand when I explain to you. Of course, I know I haven't any right to ask you to bother about the matter at all—"

"You haven't?" said Harry quickly. "We're friends, aren't we? You know I should be jolly glad to do anything I could."

"Yes, I know it," said Marjorie softly. "That is why I wrote to you, Harry."

"Let's sit down, and you can tell me about it." Marjorie sat upon the mossy wall, and Harry seated himself beside her. "I'm sorry I'm a few minutes late, Marjorie. It wasn't my fault; I couldn't get away without—"



"I ought to have kept an eye on him," said Harry Wharton. "But I never thought he'd chum with a chap like Smith."

"It does not matter, Harry. Have you—have you seen my brother?"

Wharton started, and gussed everything at once. More than once before he had learned that Marjorie's brother was in trouble, and had helped him out of it. He understood now; Hazel's was causing his sister anxiety again.

"He was in the Porch-room as usual, Marjorie," answered Harry. "I haven't seen him since. I came straight away, almost."

"You have not noticed anything—anything unusual?" Wharton shook his head.

"No. I—I'm afraid I've been thinking a lot of the cricket lately, though. You know I played in the first eleven last week, and—and I suppose I've been a bit wrapped up in myself," said Harry, colouring a little. "But Hazel—"

"Has he been keeping to the cricket practice?" "Well, no, now I come to think of it, he cut it on Wednesday."

"Why?" "He was out, I believe. I didn't ask him any questions."

"You don't know who he was out with?" "No; I never thought about it. Ogilvy, or Bulstrode, perhaps. No, I remember Ogilvy was playing. But why—"

"I have heard some of you speak of a new boy you have at Greyfriars," said Marjorie, in a low tone. "The boy you call the Bounder?" "Oh, Vernon-Smith! He's a bad lot, but we're improving him," said Harry, with a smile. "We've ragged him out of THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

smoking in his study, and smuggling champagne into the school, and that sort of thing."

"He may simply have transferred his foolishness outside the school, Harry."

"Yes, that's possible; but in that case I don't see how we're to touch him. But what does Vernon-Smith matter?"

"Nothing to me; but Hazel—"

"Oh, you're afraid Hazel may get under his influence," said Wharton thoughtfully. "That would be rotten for Hazel, certainly. Smith is a rotter to the core, and Hazel is too easy going. But I don't think it's likely to happen."

"It has happened." Wharton started.

"Are you sure, Marjorie?" "Quite sure."

"I've seen nothing of it." "But it is true, all the same. Harry, you have been a good friend to Hazel, much better than he deserved, and it would be only natural if you grew tired of his folly, and left him to himself. But—but—"

"But I wouldn't do that," said Harry. "Hazel is a decent chap, only he can't say 'No.' He's nobody's enemy but his own. If I thought he was getting into the hands of the Smith beast—excuse me—the Bounder, I'd take any trouble to stop it. I didn't know he was on more than noddling terms with the chap. You are sure?"

"Yes. I met them together in Friarale yesterday."

"Oh!" "They were going into the garden of the Cross Keys, that

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

public-house on the river," said Marjorie. "I spoke to Hazel, and he said he was only going to play a game of bowls. But I know the Cross Keys is out of bounds for Greyfriars boys."

"By Jove, I should think it is! It's the rottenest hole for miles round," said Harry warmly. "They'll get the police there soon day."

Marjorie looked deeply distressed.

"Then you understand, Harry, how anxious I feel. I asked Hazel not to go in, and he was—was sulky. He said he meant no harm, and couldn't leave his friend; and he went in with Vernon Smith. That was why he didn't come to the cricket."

"The young ass!" said Wharton.

"I—I can't do anything, you see, as I'm over at Cliff House," said Marjorie, with a moisture on her eyelashes that Marjorie did not help seeing, and that made him murmur various promises to himself about what should happen to the Bunder later on. "Hazel is so—so self-willed, and he thinks he knows so much better than a girl. But—but you remember the trouble he was in before, when he went to the moneylender. You saved him from that, Harry. You are on the spot, and—and you are so good; I felt sure that you would look after Hazel if you could."

"So I jolly well will," said Harry. "I ought to have kept an eye on him; but I never thought he'd clung up with a chap like the Bunder. I'll look into it, rather."

"Only don't tell Hazel I've asked you," intoned Marjorie. "He would think—I, he is proud, you know, and wouldn't like being looked after by a girl."

Wharton's lips set for a moment. He knew Hazeldene, and his sort of pride. He knew perfectly well that as soon as Hazel was in trouble, he would go to his sister to get him out of it. His pride would not prevent that.

But he nodded assent.

"Just as you wish, Marjorie."

Besides, it must not be known at Greyfriars that Hazel went to the Cross Keys, said the girl. "He would get into trouble with the masters or prefects."

"That's true enough."

"Don't mention to anyone that you met me this afternoon, Harry, and no questions can be asked," said Marjorie. "It is the better way to say nothing. I am so glad that you can and will help me."

"Of course I will—" Harry broke off suddenly.

A rustle in the bushes behind the wall caught his ear. He turned his head quickly, and caught a glimmer of two round glasses among the twigs. His face darkened with anger.

The next moment he had leaped down on the inner side of the wall, and seized it for a time that was wriggling in the bushes, and dragged it out into the light.

Marjorie uttered a startled exclamation;

"Bunter!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Caught in the Act.

BILLY BUNTER wriggled in Wharton's powerful grasp. Wharton's face was savage, and boded ill to the fat junior. He knew at once, of course, that Bunter had been playing the spy, and had intended to play the eavesdropper; but he had hardly been near enough to hear what was said, when Wharton pounced upon him. Harry was pretty well satisfied that Bunter had heard nothing, but he was none the less angry. He shook the fat junior furiously.

"You cad!" he muttered. "You worm!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"You fat brute!"

"Yow!"

"Bunter!" said Marjorie. "Did he follow you?"

"I suppose so. He is always spying and listening. By Jove—"

"Don't hurt him," said Marjorie.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, really, Wharton, now! I didn't follow you. I—I got here quite by accident. I was looking for birds' eggs—"

"Don't tell him!"

"Ow! Well, perhaps I. I wasn't exactly looking for birds' eggs; but—but I I wasn't watching you, and I I haven't heard a word."

"You worm!"

"Yow! Don't shake me like that, Wharton. Ow! You'll—you'll disturb my digestion, and you might make my glasses fall off. If they get broken you'll have to pay for them, so there."

"You miserable rotter!" Wharton's wife shook with anger. But for Marjorie's presence, he would have given The Magnet Library—122.

the fat junior the licking of his life then and there. "You worm! You ought to be ridden on!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I—I don't see why you should be so angry because I—I happened to meet you here!"

"You followed me."

"If you think I've spied on you, Wharton, there's nothing more to be said on the subject," said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I prefer to let the matter drop."

"Let him go," said Marjorie.

Harry released the fat junior. Billy Bunter gasped for breath, and put his collar straight, and bestowed a smirk on Marjorie. Her glance was like steel, but the fat junior was too short-sighted and too self-satisfied to observe that.

"I—I say, Marjorie, I'm glad to see you. I—"

"It is time for me to return to Cliff House, Harry," said Marjorie.

"May I see you there?"

"Certainly."

"I'll come, too," said Bunter. "I haven't seen you for some time, Marjorie, and I've got lots of things to say. You see—Ow!"

Harry Wharton took the fat junior by the collar, and swung him away.

Bunter went rolling into the thickets, and the rear he gave announced the fact that he had discovered some thorns. Wharton and Marjorie walked away. Billy Bunter extricated himself, emerging, from the thickets. It took him five minutes to find his glasses, which had fallen off in the shock, and then he blinked round in vain for a trace of Wharton. But Bunter did not feel inclined for any more shadowing just then.

Harry was silent and angry as he walked away with Marjorie. After the rendezvous had been kept a secret, it was bitterly annoying to have it discovered by Bunter, the tell-tale of the school. Bunter would spread it all over Greyfriars, and then the fact that the meeting had been kept secret would look curious. Wharton would not be able to explain that Marjorie had had something confidential to tell him concerning her brother. He would be able to make no explanation at all.

Marjorie's face was set.

"I'm sorry," said Harry at last.

"The girl nosed."

"It can't be helped," she said. "I hope he did not hear me mention Hazel."

"I am sure he heard nothing."

"Then it does not matter."

They walked on through the summer wood. The nearest way to Cliff House was by following a fence-marked track through the heart of the wood. Suddenly Harry Wharton stopped and listened.

Pop!

The sound was that of the drawing of a cork, and it was not a ginger-beer cork, either.

Marjorie stopped, too.

"There is a picnic in the glade," she remarked.

"Yes, I suppose so."

They walked on again. Their path lay through the glade, and there was no way round, save by plunging through dense thickets.

They stepped out into the open.

Wharton's teeth came together with a sharp click.

Four juniors of Greyfriars were seated in the glade—comfortably in the thick grass. A large hamper was open near them, and a white cloth was spread on the grass. There were bottles of ginger-beer and lemonade, and there were cakes and fruits in abundance to an extent which showed that a considerable sum of money must have been expended upon the feast.

Wharton did not need telling that the Bunder was one of the party. Only the son of the Cotton King would be able to afford so much money as that feast must have cost.

The Bunder sat on a little hillock, and there was a long-necked bottle in his right hand, a glass in his left.

He was pouring out a liquid that fizzed and creamed.

"Champagne!" muttered Harry.

A lighted cigarette lay in the grass beside the Bunder, smoking. He had laid it there while he poured out the wine.

Slimmer, Stutz, and Hazeldene were sitting round him, and each had a glass in his hand, in which the liquor was gleaming.

Stutz had just tasted his, and was making a wry face.

ANSWERS

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co
By FRANK RICHARDS.

None of the picnickers observed the new arrivals in the glade.

"Ow!" said Stott. "I don't like it!"

"Bosh!" said Vernon-Smith. "It's the real stuff, and worth its weight in gold!"

"I'd rather have some sugar in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith simply roared. He laughed so much that he upset some of the champagne over his trousers.

Harry Wharton drew back into the shadow of the trees, and drew Marjorie with him. Skinner and Hazeldene were joining Vernon-Smith in laughing at Stott; though, as a matter of fact, both of them secretly agreed with Stott in his taste. They would have preferred sugar in the champagne.

Marjorie's face had gone very pale.

To find her brother in Vernon-Smith's party was a bitter blow to her. It was a realisation of her worst fears.

Wharton drew her back into the shelter of the trees.

"Better not let them see you," he whispered. "I'll chip in and get Hazel away. But you—"

Marjorie nodded.

"Yes; it would only make him obstinate."

Wharton set his teeth for a moment. He would deal with Hazeldene's obstinacy in a drastic way, if necessary. But his face softened again as he saw the pain and distress in Marjorie's.

"Leave it to me," he whispered.

"Yes. I will go."

"But—"

"It is better for me not to be here. I will go, Harry."

"Yes; you're right."

Marjorie gave him a grateful and tremulous little smile, and stepped away into the wood. Wharton waited a moment or two till her footsteps had died away. He understood her feelings. Hazeldene, weak and foolish, had the peculiar obstinacy which belongs to a weak nature. The thought of being called to order by a girl would have put his back up at once. And Wharton was glad, too, that Marjorie would not be present during his interview with these merry picnickers. There might be hard words and blows, and a scene that was not suitable for the girl to look upon.

"A toast, kids," Vernon-Smith was saying.

"Go ahead!" said Skinner.

"We'll drink to Marjorie Hazeldene," said Vernon-Smith, with a look out of the corner of his eye at Hazel, who started when his sister's name was mentioned. "I met her in Friarale yesterday. I never thought Hazeldene would have such a good-looking sister."

"He doesn't look it, does he?" grinned Stott.

"Hardly," said Skinner.

"Oh, shut up!" said Hazeldene. "And you needn't bring Marjorie's name out here, either, Smitty. Keep your rotten toasts for somebody else."

"Rata!" said Vernon-Smith. "Here's to Marjorie, the most stunning girl I know—and our better acquaintances."

Hazeldene flushed angrily.

The juniors raised their glasses, and as they did so Harry

Wharton strode into the glade.

"Stop!" he rapped out.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Rascal Well Thrashed

HARRY WHARTON'S voice rang through the glade, and the merry party stopped before the glasses reached their lips. They were startled almost out of their wits. Skinner gave a jump, and the champagne in his tumbler shot out over his shirt and necktie, while Stott spilled nearly all he had on his knees. Hazeldene lowered his glass. Vernon-Smith jumped up, his liquor splashing in the grass round him.

Not a drop had been drunk.

"Stop, you cads!"

"Phew!" murmured Skinner. "Wharton!"

"Harry Wharton!"

"My hat!"

Hazeldene, looking red and shamefaced. He dared not meet Harry's eyes. Skinner and Stott looked very uncomfortable, too. Vernon-Smith's brow was dark with rage.

"You meddling puppy!" he exclaimed. "What do you want here?"

Harry looked at him steadily.

"You've been ragged for this in Greyfriars," he said.

"I thought you were cads."

"Mind your own business!"

"It seems that you're not; you've simply changed the scene. And you've brought three other fellows into your rotten foolery three fellows who ought to have known better."

"You—you—"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Hold your tongue, Smith! What have you fellows got to say?"

"It's—it's only fun, you know," said Skinner lamely.

"It's the bestly rascality and bad form, Skinner, and you know it."

"Well, you see—"

"A chap doesn't get champagne every day," said Stott

"All the better for him."

"Oh, draw it mild, Wharton!" said Hazeldene. "Hang

it all, you're not our father confessor, you know!"

Wharton turned on him like a flash.

"So this is why you're neglecting cricket and rowing!" he exclaimed. "To guzzle like a low blackguard with that dirty outsider!"

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands with rage.

Hazeldene bit his lip.

"Oh, draw it mild—"

"You've acted like a cad, Hazel, and you know it! You others the same! It would serve you right if I reported the whole thing to Wingate!"

"You won't do that!" said the three juniors in a breath.

"No, I won't, but I'll take jolly good care that it doesn't happen again! I'm not captain of the Remove for nothing. How many bottles of that stuff have you got there, Smith?"

"Only one," said the Bounder sullenly.

"The one you've opened!"

"Yes."

"Hand it to me."

"I won't!"

Wharton strode up to him, with his eyes blazing.

"Give it to me!"

The Bounder, gritting his teeth, handed him the bottle. Wharton smashed it on the trunk of a tree, and the champagne left in it ran over the bark.

"So much for that!" said Harry grimly. "Now for the smokes! Give me every one you have, or you'll be sorry for yourself!"

"I won't!"

Wharton grasped the Bounder and jammed him up against a tree. Vernon-Smith struggled wildly in his grasp.

"Let me go!" he panted.

"When I've finished, not before!"

And Wharton turned out the Bounder's pockets. Several packets of cigarettes came to light. Wharton put them in his own pockets.

"I shall turn these as soon as I get back to Greyfriars," he remarked grimly. "Have you anything to say against it?"

"I will make you suffer for this, some day!"

"Look here, you're carrying matters with a jolly high hand, Wharton!" said Hazeldene.

"Hold your tongue!"

"But I—"

"That's enough!"

Wharton released Vernon-Smith and stepped back. He stripped off his jacket, and threw it on the ground, and rolled up his sleeves.

"Now, then, Smith, are you ready?"

The Bounder started.

"Ready? What do you mean?"

"I'm going to lick you!"

The Bounder retreated a pace.

"As captain of the Remove, and as a decent chap, I'm going to put down this sort of thing," said Wharton quietly.

"You've been ragged by the Form, and it's done you no good. You are going to fight me now."

The Bounder turned white.

"I won't!"

"You will! You've deliberately led these three fools into your own rascally ways, and you'll do worse if you're not stopped. You're going to have a lesson now."

"We may as well be off, I think," said Skinner, with a yawn.

Don't go, Skinner!"

"But—"

"Stop where you are! You're going to see Vernon-Smith licked. It will be a warning to you."

"Look here, I shan't stay here if I don't choose to!" said Skinner blusteringly.

"If you take a step out of this glade you shall answer for it!"

"I—I—"

"Enough said! Now, Smith—"

"Help me, you fellows!" cried Vernon-Smith desperately.

"We're more than enough for him. Collar him and rag him."

"He's Form-captain, you know," muttered Stott. Skinner and Stott would soon have tackled a wild bear as Harry

Wharton in his present mood.

"Pah! You're afraid of him!"
 "Well, so are you, for that matter!" said Skinner, with a grin. "Why don't you tackle him? It's one to one."
 "I will not!"
 "Are you ready, Smith?"
 "Handle off! Help! Rescue!"
 "It's your funeral, Smithy," said Skinner. "We can't interfere in a fair fight, can we, Stott?"
 "Of course not," said Stott. "Smith's such a rotten outsider, he doesn't understand these things. On the whole, it was a bit tickle to bring champagne and smokes to a picnic." Wharton advanced towards the Bounder.
 "Will you put up your hands?" he said, between his teeth.
 "No!" yelled the Bounder.
 "You'll get the licking, anyway!"
 "Hands off! Oh!"

Wharton's open palm came across his cheek with a crack like a pistol-shot.

Vernon-Smith staggered back against a tree. His face was dandy white, save where the red mark of the blow showed up vividly and lividly on the cheek.

"Is that enough for you?" said Harry.
 Without a word Vernon-Smith sprang at him. His blood was at fever-heat now, and he was reckless.

In a moment more they were fighting.

Hazeldene, Stott, and Skinner stood looking on, with quiet and very subdued looks. They feared Wharton when he was in that temper. It was more than the orgy in the glade that was exasperating Wharton—it was the fact that Marjorie had seen it, and seen how far her brother had fallen. For that, too, the Bounder was to pay.

The weeds covered Bounder, who never took exercise, and spoiled his wind by smoking, was nothing like a match for Wharton.

He was knocked right and left. Wharton's fists rained upon his face, and he reeled to and fro, striking out blindly, hardly touching his assailant, but receiving punishment all the time.

He collapsed at last, rolling in the grass at Wharton's feet. Harry stood looking down at him with merciless eyes.

"Get up!" he said.
 "Oh!"
 "Get up, you coward!"
 "I—I can't!"

"You'll get up and take your gruel, or it'll be the worse for you!" said Harry. "I'll lick you with a switch if you won't face my fists."

The Bounder staggered to his feet.
 "Go it, Smithy!" said Skinner encouragingly.
 "Cowards!" yelled the Bounder. "Why don't you help me!"

"It's one to one, you know."
 "Coward!"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.
 The fight recommenced, and Vernon-Smith gave ground all the time, but he could not avoid the punishment Wharton gave him. After two or three minutes of hard hitting he fell again.

This time Wharton let him lie.
 The Bounder lay and gasped, and gasped, as if his breath would never come, and all the while his eyes glittered at Wharton like a snake's.

Harry turned from him contemptuously.
 "That's enough for Smith," he said. "It would serve you fellows right if I gave you the same."

"Oh, draw it mild, Wharton!"

"I would, only—" Wharton paused. He was angry enough to "go for" the whole party there and then, and the wasters of the Remove would not have made much of a stand against the young athlete.

Why did he not? It was because Marjorie's brother was one of them. He did not wish to lay hands on Hazel.

Hazeldene was standing biting his lips. His face was dark and angry—anger and shame were struggling in his breast, but anger was predominant.

Wharton looked at him.
 "Are you coming back to Greyfriars?" he asked.

"Not with you!" said Hazeldene.

"Better come."
 "I won't!"

Wharton nodded curtly. He had destroyed the champagne and taken possession of the cigarettes. There was no harm in the rest of the picnic, and the juniors were welcome to it—with what appetite they had left.

The captain of the Remove strode away through the wood. Marjorie was long gone. Harry turned his steps in the direction of Greyfriars, and his brow was very moody as he went.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Trouble.

"HALLO, Bob!"
 Harry Wharton uttered the exclamation as he came up to the gates of Greyfriars. Bob Cherry was leaning against the big gates, looking down the road.

He started and flushed as Harry Wharton came up.

"Hallo!" he said coldly.
 "Have you rowed it off with the Upper Fourth, Bob?"

"No. I—I wasn't in it."

"Not in it?" said Wharton, in astonishment.
 "No."

"Why not?"
 "I wasn't fit."

"By Jove," said Harry, "that's curious! You're usually fit, Bob, old man. Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Oh, no!"
 Bob Cherry's answers were laconic in the extreme, and he kept his eyes away from Harry's. His manner puzzled Wharton considerably. If he could have imagined any cause of offence between himself and Bob Cherry he would have thought that Bob was "edgewise," but he never quarrelled with Bob.

He concluded that Bob was disappointed at not rowing in the six, and that that accounted for his peculiar manner.

"I hope you beat the Upper Fourth, though?" Wharton remarked.

"No; Nugent's boat was licked."

"By much?"
 "Six lengths"

"My hat!"
 "Rotten, isn't it?"

And Bob Cherry put his hands into his pockets and strolled away. Wharton glanced after him in astonishment, and then went on into the Close. Temple, Dabney & Co. were there, and they grinned at the sight of Harry Wharton.

"Six lengths," said Temple, in a voice loud enough for the captain of the Remove to hear as he passed. "Rather good, eh?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Oh, I don't know!" remarked Fry. "You see, the Remove can't row."

"No! Fry's right there!"

"Six lengths," grinned Temple. "It's comic!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Yes; that's it—comic!"

Harry Wharton passed on without giving a sign of having heard the remarks of the Upper Fourth fellows. He expected the Upper Fourth to crow over such a victory. The chuckles of Temple, Dabney & Co. followed him.

"Where's Nugent?" he asked, as he met Mark Linley. The Laneshire lad smiled slightly.

"In his study," he said. "He's awfully disappointed, and—no—not very—very cheerful. I suppose you know Temple licked us?"

"Yes, six lengths. What did you let them do it for?"

Mark laughed.

"Not on purpose," he said. "We couldn't help it. We were only a scratch crew, anyway, and Temple and his lot have practised together every day. We could get up a crew in the Remove to beat them. I know that."

"And we jolly well will!" said Harry.

And he went on to the School House. He understood that Mark Linley meant that Frank was in a bad temper, but Wharton wanted to see him.

Harry looked into No. 1 Study.

Nugent was there, sitting on the window-ledge, and staring out into the Close, with a dark frown upon his brow.

He did not turn his head as Harry came in.

"Well, I'm back," said Harry.

Nugent did not reply.

"You've had your race with the Upper Fourth."

A grunt.

"It was a bad licking, Frank."

Another grunt.

"How the dickens did you manage to let them get six lengths ahead?"

Nugent turned round at that.

"It's because we've got such a ripping good Form captain, who goes out for a walk and leaves us in the lurch when we've got a race on!" he said.

Wharton laughed.

"Nothing to cackle at, that I can see!" said the incensed Nugent. "The Upper Fourth are doing all the cackling that's necessary, and some over. Bob Cherry kept out of the crew, too, so you can imagine what a walk-over Temple & Co. had."

"Yes; I can imagine it."

"All your fault!"

"I don't see it. You shouldn't have got up an affair like that in such a blessed scratch way!" said Harry warmly.



The Bounder sat on a little hillock, with a long-necked bottle in his right hand, and a glass in his left. "Champagne," muttered Harry Wharton, from his point of vantage.

"You didn't say a word about it—just accepted a challenge from Temple as if winning a boat race were as easy as rolling off a log—"

"It was Bob who took it on. Temple was gassing about the Upper Fourth eight, and Bob said we'd pull them off the river."

"That's all very well, but a thing like that needs some preparation," said Wharton. "The Upper Fourth have been practising together for weeks. Temple's crew is at the top of its form. Why, they're thinking of challenging the Shell! And then you chaps think you can call up a crew after school, just as you'd call up a dozen fellows for cricket practice, and take them on! You're an ass, and Bob's another!"

"Well, we weren't going to let them gas! Besides, if you and Bob had pulled for us, we should have licked them!"

Wharton shook his head.

"We shouldn't have licked them, Frank, old man! They'd have been too good for us, as we hadn't prepared for the tussle."

"Rats!"

"As many as you like; but we should have been licked, though not by six lengths, I hope," said Wharton, laughing.

"But look here, you chaps have rushed into this thing like a set of chumps—"

"Thanks!"

"Well, that's how it stands, you know. You've gone into it without thinking, and got licked, as you might have expected; but one swallow doesn't make a summer. We can try it over again, when we've had time to get into trim, and then we'll make the Upper Fourth sing to a different tune."

Nugent sniffed.

"They won't give us the chance, I expect. They've licked us, and they'll be satisfied with that."

"They'll have to; we'll ship them into it, if they won't! But they will; Temple is a sportsman. We'll row it over again next week, and knock their eight into a cocked hat! We'll get out training every morning!"

Nugent's face cleared.

"Well, it's not a bad idea," he admitted. "They're crowing at top speed now, and the lags of the babies' Forms are grinning at us!"

"No wonder! I mean—ahem!—it can't be helped!" said Harry. "I'll speak to all the chaps, and get them to pull together."

"Here's Bob!"

Bob Cherry looked into the study.

"I say, Nugent! Hello, hello, hello!" Bob Cherry broke

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

A Splendid Tale of the Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

off as he saw Wharton in the study, and turned very red.

"Oh, I didn't know you were back!"

And he stepped back hastily into the passage.

"Stop a minute, Bob; I want to speak to you!" said Harry.

"Sorry! Can't stop!"

And Bob Cherry walked quickly away down the passage. Harry stepped to the door, and called to him again, but Bob did not turn his head. Wharton glanced back at Nugent with an expression of surprise.

"Anything the matter with Bob?" he asked.

"Not that I know of."

"It's curious."

And Wharton's face was darkly shadowed. He had caught a glimpse of Bob's face, and Bob's expression—unless he greatly misread it—meant trouble. But why? Wharton asked himself that question without being able to find an answer to it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Something Amiss.

TEMPLE, DABNEY & CO. were certainly putting on a great deal of side over their victory. The Remove did not consider it much of a victory, snatched as it had been, when the Remove eight were not in form for a stiff contest. But the Upper Fourth thought differently.

The fact that the Remove had beaten them at football and cricket made their rowing victory more than ever gratifying to the Fourth-Formers. The way Temple & Co. "swanked" about it was, according to the Remove, simply sickening, but to the Upper Fourth it was quite natural. Had they not vindicated the dignity of a superior Form, and put a set of cheeky faces in their places?

The patronising manner adopted by Temple was extremely exasperating to Harry Wharton & Co.

Even Hurree Janset Ram Singh, whose Oriental serenity was generally quite untroubled, allowed himself to be worried by the Fourth Form swagger.

"The sidefulness of the esteemed Temple is terrific!" he remarked. "It will be necessary to take him down pegfully, and diminish his renowned head!"

To which the others cordially agreed.

"You chaps ought to have some practice on the river," Temple remarked to Harry Wharton, as he met him in the junior common-room that evening. "If you like, I'll come down with Dab some morning and coach you a bit!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Rate!" said Wharton cheerfully.

"Well, as you like!" said Temple loftily. "But Greyfriars has always been a rowing college, and you really ought to do something to keep up the school's reputation. Your performance to-day, for instance, was rotten!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Rats again!"

"Six lengths, my son—six lengths!"

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled in chorus.

"Well, I wasn't there, and Bob Cherry wasn't," said Wharton.

"It was only a scratch crew, anyway."

"The best you could turn out!" said Fry.

"Bosh!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"We'll row you over again," said Harry. "Fix it for next week, and we'll row you over the same course, and undertake to give you a good pull for your money!"

Temple shook his head.

"My dear kid, it would be beneath the dignity of the Upper Fourth to row such a race again! It's comic!"

"Oh, rather!"

"We've given you a lesson, and there the matter rests!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Just so!" said Fry.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Well, if you're afraid—"

"Afraid!" echoed Temple, Dabney, and Fry, in one voice.

"That's the word!"

"You cheeky young ass—" began Temple wrathfully.

"Well then, prove you're not, by taking us on again!"

said Harry. "You rowed a scratch crew, picked up at a minute's notice, and you've been practising for weeks. Give us till next Wednesday to get into form, and we'll race you and lick you!"

"Of course, you couldn't do it!" said Temple, with a sniff.

"But we'll give you a chance. We'll row you on Wednesday afternoon."

"Done!"

"And you'd better pull up your socks, and do your level best," added Fry. "We'll make it seven lengths next time!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—122.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

"Oh, rather!"

"We'll see!" said Harry.

The Fourth-Formers walked away chuckling, though perhaps not quite so gleefully as before. Temple had to admit that the Remove had not had time to prepare for that contest, and that after a week's training the Lower Fourth would undoubtedly do better, especially with Wharton, the best oar in the form, to stroke.

Still, Temple anticipated victory. He had a serene confidence in himself, which had been rudely shaken on the football and the cricket-field, but not yet on the river.

Harry Wharton was looking for Bob Cherry when he met the Fourth-Formers. Bob was not in the common-room, and Harry went to his study to find him. Bob's study—No. 15—was at the end of the Remove passage, and he shared it with Mark Linley and little Wun Lung, the Chinese. Harry heard the voice of the Chinese as he came along the passage towards No. 15. The door of the study was wide open.

"Whatee the instiel, old man?"

Wharton started a little.

That something was the matter with Bob Cherry he already knew, and this made it evident that Wun Lung had noticed it, too.

He quickened his pace.

"Nothing!" came Bob Cherry's deep voice, in reply.

"Why Chelly looked lotten, then?"

"Oh, I'm all right!"

"Why not low in boatee?"

"Hum!"

"Chelly oatee solts," said Wun Lung sympathetically.

"Not hungry? Wun Lung standee tleat if Chelly hungry."

Bob Cherry laughed, in spite of himself.

"No; I'm not hungry, kid!"

"Chelly eatee noting ten-time."

"Yes, I did; I had some toast."

"One little bisee."

"Blessed if you don't see everything, Wun Lung," said Bob.

"Look here, I'm feeling out of sorts. It's all right."

"Chelly likes be alone," said Wun Lung. "Mo takes little him."

"All right, old chap."

The little Chinese left the study just as Wharton reached it. He nodded to the captain of the Remove, and went down the passage. Harry looked into the study, and Bob Cherry nodded shortly.

"I heard what you said, Bob," said Wharton. "I hope it's nothing serious."

"Oh, no."

"Just out of sorts?"

"Yes," said Bob, avoiding Wharton's eyes.

"Good. It was unlucky, though, just now, considering. But we're going to pull over the course again with the Upper Fourth next Wednesday."

"Oh."

"We're going to train hard, and lick them if we can," said Harry. "That's what I wanted to see you about. I'm going to arrange a practice on the river for every morning before breakfast."

Bob Cherry hesitated.

"Do you want me?" he asked slowly.

Wharton stared at him.

"Want you! Of course."

"Oh, all right."

"Don't you want to row?" asked Harry, in amazement.

"Yes, I'll row—if I'm wanted."

"Of course you're wanted. Look here, Bob," said Harry, coming further into the study. "Is anything wrong—I mean, has anything got your back up? If it has, better have it out now, and not keep it smouldering."

Bob Cherry coloured.

"Why should you think so?" he asked.

"From your manner, that's all."

"Oh, rubbish!"

"Then it isn't the case?"

Bob did not reply.

Harry Wharton looked at him in silence for some moments. Bob Cherry turned towards the window, and stared out into the Close, as if greatly interested in the pigeons hopping under the old trees.

"Well, Bob?"

"Well?"

Bob Cherry did not look round.

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You'll turn up for the practice?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes."

"Very well."

Harry Wharton quitted the study. He walked down the passage to Study No. 1, and went in. Neither Nugent nor Hurree Singh was there, and Wharton was about to leave

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

the study again, when an envelope lying on the table caught his eye.

It was an ordinary white envelope, and the name, "Wharton," was scrawled across it in pencil.

Wharton picked it up.

He did not know the hand that had scrawled his name, and even at that moment, in a careless glance, it struck him that the hand was purposely scrawling.

He opened the envelope.

"Dear Harry."

The words caught his eye.

"Marjorie!" he exclaimed.

He glanced down the page rapidly. Then he started and fumbled in his pocket. He had read that letter before. It was the one that had called him to the meeting in the wood by the old priory.

Wharton frowned.

"I must have dropped it," he muttered. "Somebody's picked it up, and put it back here for me. Jolly decent of him. He must have read part of it, though, or he wouldn't know that it belonged to me. How beastly unlucky."

And Wharton, still frowning, put the letter between the bars of the grate, and watched it twist up in the flame. It was safer there.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Has Something to Tell.

"I SAY, you fellows."

"Oh, go and eat cake!" said Bulstrode.

Bulstrode was standing outside the school tuckshop, chatting with Skinner and Snoot, when Billy Bunter came up.

The fat junior looked tired and dusty, and extremely bad-tempered.

He blinked at Bulstrode sulkily.

"I say—"

"Buzz off!"

"But I—"

"Look here, I've got nothing to lend you, and I'm not going to stand treat," said Bulstrode brusquely. "Get off the grass! Now, I say, Skinner, if I'm not given a place in the eight to row the Upper Fourth—"

"I say—"

"There will be trouble. I could stroke the boat quite as well as Wharton, old man—"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"Oh, very well, if you don't want to hear the news!" said Billy Bunter sulkily. "I thought it might interest you, that's all."

Bulstrode turned towards him a little more civilly.

"What news?" he asked. "Do you know anything about the eight?"

"The—the eight?"

"Yes, the crew Wharton is getting together to row the Upper Fourth next Wednesday afternoon," said Bulstrode.

"So far, it's known that Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, and Inky will be in the eight. The others—"

"I don't know anything about that."

Bulstrode snorted.

"Then buzz off, and don't bother, you fat duffer."

"It's about Wharton."

"Well, what about Wharton?"

"And Marjorie Hazeldene—"

Bulstrode started.

"What?"

"Still, if you don't care to hear—"

"Rubbish! Go ahead."

"You said just now—"

Bulstrode seized the fat junior by the collar.

"Now, what is it?" he asked, shaking Bunter violently.

"Ow! Leggo! You—you are disturbing my digestion!" howled Billy Bunter. "You may make my glasses fall off, too, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

"What's that about Marjorie Hazeldene?"

"Leggo, and—and I'll tell you!" gasped Billy Bunter.

Bulstrode released the fat junior. Bulstrode was looking angry, and Skinner and Snoot were very curious and malicious.

"Go ahead, Bunter," said Skinner.

"I—I feel so faint," said Bunter. "I've walked all the way from the old priory, and I don't think I have strength enough to talk unless I have a snack first."

Bulstrode clenched his fist.

"You'll have a licking instead of a snack, if you don't get on," he said. "Now, what is it? Quick!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Give him a feed," said Skinner. "This is awfully interesting, you know. Come into the shop, Bunter, and I'll stand you some tarts."

"Very good, Skinner. You're awfully decent. I feel awfully faint."

"This way, Fatty!"

Billy Bunter, with a reproachful blink at Bulstrode,

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

followed Skinner into the shop. Snoot followed, and then the bully of the Remove, more slowly.

Bulstrode was called the bully of the Remove, and he had never looked more dangerous than he did now. He was scowling darkly, and his cheeks were rather at a loss to know what made him so angry.

That he would have liked to see more than he did of Marjorie, and that he was jealous of Harry Wharton & Co. on that account, they knew.

But the sudden anger that flushed into his face now they could not understand. They were curious to hear what Bunter had to say, and hoped that it was something against Wharton, and they supposed that Bulstrode felt the same.

Billy Bunter rolled up to the tuckshop counter, and started on the tarts at once. Mrs. Minble uttered an exclamation as she came out of her little parlour.

"Master Bunter! Let those tarts alone."

She knew Billy Bunter too well to allow him to touch anything he had not shown that he had the money to pay for.

"It's all right, Mrs. Minble," said Skinner. "I'm paying for two of them."

And he laid the money on the counter.

The fat junior blinked at him.

"Only two, Skinner?"

"Yes, porpoise."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Two's enough. Get on!"

Bunter polished off the two tarts in record time. Then he blinked hungrily at the dish.

"I'm awfully peckish," he remarked.

"Rats!"

"Two more."

"More rats!"

"Well, one, then."

"Look here," said Skinner, "I've stood you the tarts; now get on with the story. What is it?"

"Oh, really—"

"The young rotter's lying as usual," said Bulstrode harshly.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"If he's lying to me, after he's eaten the tarts, I'll make him sorry for himself," said Skinner. "Now, then, Bunter—"

"Well, you see—"

Skinner took a grip on the fat junior's collar. His face was very grim.

"You'll go ahead with the yarn without any more fooling, or I'll march you straight to the fountain and shove your head into it," he said.

"Ow! Oh, really—"

"Now, then!"

"I—I say, it's all right—of course, I meant to tell you," said Bunter. "Leggo my collar. You—you know that Wharton wouldn't row in the eight this afternoon."

"Yes."

"He had a particular engagement, and wouldn't tell any of the chaps where he was going."

"I know that," said Bulstrode.

"Well, he went to the old priory."

"Did he?"

"Yes, and guess what for?"

"Well, what for?" demanded Skinner.

"To meet Marjorie Hazeldene."

"Rats!"

"It's true. I happened to see them, sitting on the wall of the old priory, and—"

Bunter giggled.

Bulstrode's brow grew as black as thunder.

"Well?" he said, in a low voice. "What else?"

"Well—he, he, he—Marjorie's head was very close to Wharton's shoulder—his, he, he!—and—"

Snack!

Bulstrode's open hand caught Billy Bunter's fat cheek with a crack like a pistol shot.

Bunter gave a yell of pain, staggered, and fell in a heap on the floor.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Knocked Out.

BILLY BUNTER rolled on the floor, gasping, and it was some moments before he assumed a sitting posture, adjusted his spectacles on his little fat nose, and blinked at the Removites bewildered.

"Wh-wh-what was that?" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner. "It looked to me like a smack on the chivvy. What do you think it was, Snoot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode did not laugh. He stood with a dark brow, looking down angrily upon the fat junior.

Bunter blinked at him nervously.
"Wh-wh-what did you do that for, Bulstrode?" he stammered. "Was it a j-j-joke?"

"It's a joke that'll be repeated if you say another word about Marjorie Hazeldene, you fat cad," said Bulstrode.

"Wh-wh-what?"
"If you were anything but a cowardly, crawling worm, I'd make you come into the gym, and lick you now."

"Oh!"
"You dirty cad!" said Bulstrode, his voice trembling with anger. "Did you think that we were as mean and rotten as you are, to want to hear you telling lies about a girl behind her back?"

"Oh—oh, really—"
Skinner and Snoop exchanged glances, and turned very red. As a matter of fact, they had been more than willing to hear what Bunter had to say.

But with Bulstrode it was different.
Bully he might be, but his disposition lacked the petty meanness which distinguished Billy Bunter. Not that Bunter meant to be mean. He always acted and spoke without reflection, and he was too well satisfied with himself to doubt at any time that he was acting in the best possible manner.

He sat and blinked at Bulstrode in bewilderment and indignation.

"Well, you are a beast!" he exclaimed.

"Worm!"
"I—I wish I weren't so short-sighted, I'd certainly give you a jolly good licking," said Billy Bunter. "You're a beast. I—I'll tell Wharton."

Bulstrode laughed.
"Tell him!"

"Here he is!" said Skinner, as Harry Wharton entered the tuckshop with Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Snoop glanced at Skinner, and quietly left the shop. Skinner followed him. Under the circumstances, they did not care to pursue the subject in the presence of Harry Wharton.

"Ginger-pop, please!" said Nugent, walking up to the counter. "Three!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, Bunter, what the dickens are you doing on the floor?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter groaned.
"I—I can't get up," he said; "I—I'm hurt."

"Fallen down from over-feeding?" asked Nugent sympathetically.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The over-feeding of the honourable Bunter is terrific. Perhaps it would help him revive if I were to squirtfully pour the esteemed soda-water over his worthy fat chivvy," said the Nabob of Bhanipour, taking a soda syphon in hand.

"Ow! Step him!"

"Get up, you dunder!" said Wharton.

"I—I can't."

"What's the matter with you?"

"My—my head—is—is aching, and I've twisted my ankle. Bulstrode hit me when I wasn't looking."

Bulstrode gave a scoffing laugh.

"Get up, you fat cad, and I'll hit you when you are looking, then," he exclaimed.

"Ow! I—I can't."

Wharton's brow darkened. Bulstrode's bullying propensities were only too well known to him. He glanced from the fat junior to the bully of the Remove.

"Did you knock Bunter down?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bulstrode briefly.

"What for?"

"Ask him."

"It—it wasn't for anything," groaned Bunter. "I—I never did anything. It was just his bullying. You're captain of the Remove, Wharton. You know Mr. Quelch said once that a Form-captain's duty was to put down bullying. Ow! I have a feeling that I am going to be awfully ill. Perhaps some jinn-tarts would make me feel better."

"What did Bulstrode slog you for?"

"Nothing at all. Ow!"

Wharton looked dubious.

"What did he do, Bulstrode?"

"He can tell you. If he doesn't, I won't."

"I—I didn't do anything. The—the beast suddenly punched me and knocked me down," said Bunter, with a groan. "My shoulder-bone is broken, I think."

"Tubbish!"

"I wouldn't care if it was," said Bulstrode, "or your neck, either, you cur."

"Oh, really! Why don't you lick him, Wharton?"

"He's welcome to try," said Bulstrode, with a sneer.

Wharton snapped his teeth.

"Bunter is such a fearful fibber, I can't believe a word he says," he replied. "But if I thought you had knocked him down for nothing, I'd jolly well lick you."

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I don't intend to excuse myself to you," he said. "You can go ahead as soon as you like, and I dare say you'll get as good as you give."

Bulstrode's manner was as offensive as possible, and it was all Wharton could do to keep from taking him at his word, there and then. But he restrained his temper.

"Get up, Billy," he said.

"I—I can't! I—I think you ought to stand by a chap in your own study. I—I'll never stand up for a girl you like again, if you're going to let me be bullied."

Wharton started violently.

"What's that?"

"Bulstrode can say what he likes about Marjorie next time, and I won't— Ow!"

Bunter broke off and yelled as Bulstrode rushed at him, and began to kick him. The burly Remove's heavy boots pounded upon the fat person of the Owl of the Remove. Bunter forgot that his bones were broken, and leaped up with remarkable agility, and dashed to find refuge behind Harry Wharton.

"Ow!" he roared. "Help, help! Keep him off!"

Bulstrode was rushing after him, inflamed with rage, when Wharton interposed.

"Stand back!" he said sternly.

"Let me get at him!"

"I won't!"

"Stand aside!"

"Rats!"

Bulstrode said no more. He rushed forward furiously, and in another moment he was fighting with Harry Wharton.

They tramped round the tuckshop, fighting furiously.

Wharton's face was very hard. If Bulstrode had been saying anything against Marjorie Hazeldene, he wanted punishing, and Wharton was ready to give him the punishment. In the heat of the moment he did not reflect that Bunter's statements and innuendoes were generally untrue.

Billy Bunter squirmed out of the way of the combatants, and sat on the counter, blinking at them through his big spectacles.

He knew that Wharton had licked the bully of the Remove more than once, and could lick him again if he tried, and he was satisfied.

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"Well," said Harry Wharton, "you believe me, I suppose?" But Bob Cherry's eyes were on the ground, and he said nothing.

That he was causing the captain of the Remove to fight in an unjust quarrel did not trouble the fat junior in the least. He only wanted to see the blow Bulstrode had given him avenged.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Mind the eggs!" roared Nugent.

"Look out for the counter!"

"The look-outfulness is terrible!"

Mrs. Mumble looked very worried.

"Pray stop, young gentlemen!" she exclaimed. "You must not fight here. Pray stop at once! I shall call for help! Stop!"

Crash!

Wharton had put in a terrible right-hander at last, and it caught Bulstrode upon the point of the chin.

The bully of the Remove staggered, and went in a heap to the floor.

He lay there, gasping, completely knocked out by that terrific drive from the shoulder.

Wharton himself was staggering, breathless.

Bulstrode lay on the floor for some moments, quite dazed.

He rose slowly at last, and unsteadily. Wharton stood ready for him, but the fairly Removite did not come on.

"This isn't the end of it," he said thickly. "I—I'll make you pay for this soon, Wharton."

"Any time you choose," said Wharton contemptuously.

And Bulstrode walked unsteadily out of the shop.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"Serve him jolly well right," he said. "He's a beast!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

He hit me when I wasn't looking. You haven't given him half enough, Wharton."

Wharton laid his hand heavily upon the fat junior's shoulder.

"You said that he was speaking against Marjorie Hazeldene," he said. "Is it true?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What did he say?"

"I—I don't remember exactly, but—"

"You can't tell whether Bunter's lying or not, in any case," said Nugent. "Ask Skinner. He was here, and he went out of the shop when we entered."

"Good idea!" said Harry.

"I—I say, you fellows!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm.

"I—I say—"

Wharton did not reply. He walked out of the bookshop, and Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh finished their ginger-pop and followed him.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. From Friends to Foes!

"B OB, have you seen Skinner?"

Bob Cherry looked up from the book he had picked up as Harry Wharton entered the junior common room.

"No," he said brusquely.

Harry Wharton paused.

"I wanted to speak to him," he said. "I've got something to say to you, too. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

Bob Cherry dropped his eyes upon his book again.

"Is that awfully interesting?" asked Harry sarcastically.

"It's the latest number of the 'Empire'."

"And you find it more interesting to read upside down?"

Bob Cherry turned scarlet, and lowered the paper. As a matter of fact, in picking it up so hastily, he was holding it upside down.

He rose to his feet.

"Well?" said Wharton. "If you're got anything up against me, why can't you say so? You don't want to speak to me?"

"No," said Bob.

"Why not?"

The other was silent.

"You've got something against me?"

"Perhaps."

"Can't you talk plain English?" demanded Harry, who was fast losing his temper. "There's no need to pretend to be reading when I come in, or to talk in perphases. Tell me what you're sulking about!"

"Sulking!" exclaimed Bob, firing up at once.

"Yes, that's the word."

"I've got nothing to say."

"I suppose it can't be my going out to-day, and leaving the boat," said Harry. "I couldn't stay. It was important—as you'd understand, if you know."

The sudden blaze of scarlet in Bob Cherry's face warned Wharton that he was on the right track, though quite by chance.

"Is it that, Bob?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"It was impossible for me to row—besides, we're trying the race over again with the Upper Fourth next Wednesday, and—"

"It's not that."

"Then it's something else?"

"I suppose so."

"There's something, then—something you've got up against me?"

Bob Cherry was silent.

Wharton's eyes blazed.

"You won't tell me what it is?" he cried.

"I've nothing to say."

"Then you're a——" Wharton checked himself in time.

"I won't tell you what I think of you, Bob Cherry. Perhaps you can guess."

Bob's lip curled.

"Perhaps we'd better both shut up on that topic," he remarked. "My opinion of you wouldn't flatter you if you heard it."

"What have I done?"

"You don't know?"

"Of course I don't."

"Just think—and if you can call to mind anything jolly mean, and jolly caddish, that's it," said Bob Cherry bitterly.

Harry Wharton started back a pace.

"Do you know what you are saying, Bob?"

"Yes; I think so."

"You accuse me of acting in a mean and caddish way?" demanded Wharton, breathing hard.

The other nodded.

Wharton set his teeth.

"We've always been friends," he said. "We had rows when you first came, but that was my fault, and I owned up that it was. We've been good friends most of the time that you've been at Greyfriars. But friend or not, you won't say a thing like that to me without answering for it."

Bob Cherry's lip curled again.

"I'm ready to stand by anything I say, if you choose."

Wharton clenched his hands.

"Then put up your fists!" he exclaimed savagely.

"I don't care if I do."

"I am ready."

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Nugent, coming into the room. "You two, stand back! Bob, keep off Harry, you ass!"

"I——"

"I——"

"Collar him, Inky!"

"The collarfulness is terrific."

Nugent threw his arms round Wharton and shoved him back. Hurree Singh did the same with Bob Cherry. The two juniors glared at each other.

"Let me go!" said Wharton angrily.

"Let go, Inky!"

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific."

"Look here——"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

"Chuck it——"

"You asses!" said Frank Nugent, in measured tones. "You frabjous asses! You burbling chumps! You wallowing fatheads!"

"Look here——"

"What's the row about?"

"Ask Cherry."

"Ask Wharton!"

"That's what I'm doing, and I can't get any sense out of either of you," said Nugent. "Anyway, you're not going to fight."

"The notfulness is terrific."

"I don't want to," said Bob Cherry. "All I want of Wharton is that he lets me alone, and doesn't talk to me."

"What?"

"You heard what I said."

"Certainly—I'm not deaf. I want to know what you mean, you cheerful lunatic," said Nugent wrathfully.

"My worthy Cheerful chum is off his esteemed rocker," remarked Hurree Singh, with a shake of the head.

Bob Cherry shook himself free from the nabob's grasp.

"I've nothing more to say," he remarked.

"What have you got against Wharton?"

"He probably knows."

"I know nothing about it," said Harry. "I give you my word, Frank, that I haven't the faintest idea why Cherry has got his back up like this all of a sudden."

"If it wasn't your missing the race—which would be absurd——"

"It wasn't that. Don't be an ass," said Bob.

"Then what was it?"

"Nothing."

Nugent looked angry now.

"Then you're up against Wharton without condescending to explain what's the matter!" he exclaimed. "Is that what you call cricket?"

"I've nothing to explain."

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank. "What you want is a jolly goodumping, to bump some commonsense into you."

"Don't be an ass."

"Let him alone," said Harry Wharton, with a glitter in his eyes. "He has called me mean and caddish, and won't say what I've done. I'm done with him now, anyway."

And Wharton walked out of the room.

Nugent and Hurree Singh looked at one another, and then at Bob Cherry. Here was a storm, and no mistake, and how it had arisen they had not the faintest idea. And Bob Cherry evidently did not intend to explain.

"Well, Bob?" said Frank at last.

"Well!" said Bob grimly.

"Aren't you going to explain?"

"No."

"Then you're an ass."

"Thanks."

"And you're a rotter, too!" exclaimed Nugent, losing his temper. "You've no right to call a fellow names, and not explain your reason."

"I didn't want to say anything, but Wharton would have it."

"But what's the trouble, you ass?"

"Nothing." And Bob Cherry walked out of the common-room to avert further argument.

Nugent and Hurree Singh exchanged glances.

"The worthy Cherry is certainly off his honourable rocker," the Nabob of Bhanipur remarked.

"Blessed if I don't think so!" said Nugent.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Hurt.

BILLY RUNTER entered No. 1 Study with a dubious expression upon his face. It was some time after the scene in the common-room, and the chums of No. 1

Study were there together, busy with their prep. Bunter ought to have been busy too, but he was thinking about other things—chiefly things in the tuckshop. Billy Bunter was hungry.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, as he came in.

Harry Wharton looked up from his work.

There was an expression upon his face that would have startled the fat junior if he had not been too short-sighted to see it.

"So it's you, Bunter," said Harry quietly.

"Yes," said Bunter, sinking into the armchair with a grunt.

"I'm jolly tired, and jolly hungry."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. I've been up and down half Greyfriars trying to find a chap to advance me something off my postal-order," said Bunter. "I can't find anybody. It's coming to-morrow morning by the first post, and it's rotten hard lines that I can't raise anything on it to get a snack now."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

"Shut the door, will you, Nugent?"

"Certainly."

"I want to talk to this fat rotter."

Bunter blinked at him.

"I want to talk to you, too, Wharton," he remarked. "I think you might lend me a few bob, considering."

"Considering what?"

"Perhaps I'd better not bring it out before these chaps," said Bunter.

"You'd better," said Wharton, with dangerous quietness.

"I think you'd better explain why I ought to lend you a few bob."

"Oh, very well! I thought you were keeping it dark from these chaps!"

"Keeping what dark?"

"About Marjorie."

Wharton clenched his hand.

"I have just been explaining to Nugent and Inky about that meeting," he said. "I knew you would make a yarn of it, and I have mentioned it."

"Oh!"

"Nugent and Inky know that I met Miss Hazeldene this afternoon, to talk over a private matter—a little service she wished me to perform," said Wharton. "All Greyfriars can know it, for that matter."

"Oh!"

"As you spied upon me—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"As you spied upon me, you—you reptile, you know all about it already, and you're welcome to mention it to anybody you choose," said Harry. But mind, when you're tale-bearing, it will be safer for you to stick to the truth."

"Oh, really—"

"And now, why should I give you money?"

"I didn't say I wanted you to give me any money," said Bunter feebly. "I—I suggested the loan of a few shillings until my postal-order comes."

"Don't talk nonsense!"

"Oh, you know, it will be here to-morrow morning at the latest!"

"You thought I should give you money for keeping secret that you watched me to-day," said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "I shall not give you a penny."

"I—I'm sincerely sorry that you should think such a thing of me, Wharton," said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "I merely wanted a loan, to be repaid as soon as my postal-order arrived. But—"

"That's enough. I've spoken to Skinner since I saw you in the backshop," went on Harry, his eyes glowing. "Skinner has told me what passed there. Bulstrode never said a word about Marjorie Hazeldene."

"Oh, really—"

"It was you, you cad—you, you worm—"

"Look here—"

"And Bulstrode knocked you down, as any decent fellow would have done if he heard you saying caddish things about a girl!"

"I—I—"

"Isn't that true, you fat worm?"

"Well, you see—"

"I'm going to speak to Bulstrode about it, and tell him I'm sorry I interfered with him," said Harry. "If he wants to lick you after this, I shan't interfere again."

"Oh, really—"

"And mind," said Harry, in his hardest tone, "if you were worth it, I'd lick you now—lick you till you couldn't stand. And if you say a single word about Marjorie that I take the least exception to, I will lick you. Remember that."

"I—I say—"

"That's enough. Shut up!"

"But I—"

"Hold your tongue! I'm sick of you, and we're all sick of you, and your rotten caddishness. I'd give a term's pocket-money to have you changed into another study!" said Harry bitterly. "I don't see why you should be inflicted on us."

"I—I—"

"Shut up!"

Billy Bunter shut up, blinking indignantly at Harry Wharton. The latter went on with his work, without deigning to bestow another glance upon the fat junior.

Bunter sniffed in the armchair.

Wharton's contempt did not pierce his thick skin; but he realised that Harry was in no mood to be trifled with, and he was silent.

It was a bitter disappointment for Bunter.

He had fully expected to raise loans from Harry on the promise of keeping secret the meeting at the old priory, and this anticipated source of income was abruptly cut off. Although not blessed with very much keenness as a rule, Billy Bunter could see that Harry was in deadly earnest now.

"I say, you fellows—" he began at last.

Wharton made an angry gesture.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Hold your tongue!"

"But—"

"If you don't shut up, I'll sling you out of the study. I tell you I've had more than enough of you to-day!"

"Yes, but—"

Wharton sprang to his feet.

He grasped the fat junior by the shoulders, and whirled him out of the armchair. Frank Nugent opened the study door.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Yah! Oh—leggo!"

Wharton swung him through the doorway.

Then he let go.

Billy Bunter collapsed upon the linoleum.

"Ow! Yoo!" he gasped.

Wharton slammed the door after him.

The Owl of the Remove slowly regained his feet, and regarded the door dubiously through his spectacles.

Under the circumstances, he decided that he had better not reopen it. He moved slowly along the passage, and looked into No. 13, in the hope of finding Wun Lung with supper, as the little Chinese generally had something going when he was in funds. Wun Lung was seated at the table, cheerfully consuming cream-puffs, and Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles at the sight of them. Bob Cherry was sitting near the window, talking to Mark Linley, and he did not even look at Bunter.

"I say, you fellows!" began Bunter. "I—I've just looked in—"

"Then look out again!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Don't bother!"

"I'll have some of those cream-puffs, Wun Lung!"

"No savvy!"

"I'm hungry!"

"Wun Lung sorry for Bunter!"

"Give me some of the tomy, then!"

"No savvy!"

"Just one of the cream-puffs, Wun Lung, old chap!"

"No savvy!"

"You greedy heathen rotter!" growled Billy Bunter, changing his tone. "Blessed if I know what they let a blessed heathen into the school for!"

"No savvy!"

And Wun Lung grinned as he went on with the cream-puffs. Billy Bunter blinked round the study discontentedly.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, "I've got a postal-order coming to-morrow morning. Would you care to advance me five bob off it?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"A bob would do, and—"

"Buzz off!"

"I'm being treated meanly in my own study," said Bunter pathetically. "Wharton is awfully waxy, because I caught him with Marjorie in the wood to-day—"

"What?"

"You see, they were sitting on the wall of the old priory, and Marjorie was leaning her head on his shoulder, and—"

Bob Cherry sprang to his feet, his face furious.

"You fat beast—"

Billy Bunter realised his danger, and made a wild spring to escape.

Bob Cherry rushed after him and kicked.

Bunter rose on the end of his feet like a football. He crashed down in the passage, and there was a yell.

"Ow! Help! Yaroo!"

Bob ran after him, still kicking. The fat junior scrambled and rolled along the passage, fairly dribbled along like a football till he reached the staircase, and there he rolled down and escaped.

Bob Cherry returned to the study. He was breathing heavily.

"It's only his rot," said Mark Linley, as Bob came in and flung himself into a chair. "I know he never saw anything of the kind."

Bob did not reply.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. A Surprise for Bulstrode.

TOM BROWN came into Study No. 2 in the Remove passage, which he shared with Bulstrode and Hazeldene, in a rather remarkable way. He was performing a kind of jig, and he kept on the performance after he had entered the study, considerably to the disturbance of Bulstrode, who was doing his prep. Hazeldene was not there. The Remove bully looked up angrily. Bulstrode was not in a good humour; his chin was still aching violently, and there were dark bruises on his face from his encounter with Harry Wharton in the school shop.

"You ass!" he exclaimed. "What are you up to?"

"Too-rail—oo!" was Tom Brown's somewhat enigmatical reply.

"You chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you doing?"

"Gloating!"

Bulstrode stared at the junior from New Zealand in astonishment. Tom Brown jiggered round the table twice, and finally sat down in a chair and gasped for breath. He grinned at the astonished Removeite.

"You utter ass!" said Bulstrode. "What's the row?"

"I'm in the eight."

"What?"

"Wharton's selecting the eight to row against the Upper Fourth next Wednesday," explained the New Zealand junior.

"I'm one of the crew."

Bulstrode scowled.

"I guessed how that would be," he replied. "So long as Wharton's Form-captain, everything will go by favouritism."

"Rats!"

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. Wharton wouldn't put a chap in unless he thought he could row better than the chaps he left out," said Tom.

"You know it, too!"

"I don't know anything of the sort. Do you think you can row better than I can, for instance?" said Bulstrode.

"I don't know—shouldn't wonder! Besides, you may be put into the eight!"

Bulstrode sneered.

"Not likely."

"The crew isn't quite made up as yet, as far as I know," said Bulstrode. "There'll be Wharton himself, of course."

"Well, I don't suppose the boating skipper could be expected to leave himself out of the crew?" grinned the New Zealand junior.

"Then there will be Inky and Nugent, because they're Wharton's chums—"

"Inky is a good oar, and Nugent first-class. You know that!"

"Then there will be Bob Cherry, because he used to be in Wharton's study, and they're chums, and, of course, Mark Linley, the factory fellow."

"Worth fifty of some fellows who've never been in factories," commented Tom Brown cheerfully.

"Then you," pursued Bulstrode; "and, of course, Hazeldene, on account of his sister Marjorie—same reason that he's in the cricket team."

"Bosh!"

"You know it! Ain't the names already down?"

"All but Hazeldene—I'm not sure about him."

"As for the eighth man, I don't know," said Bulstrode. "Ogilvy, or Morgan, or Russell, or Micky Desmond, I suppose—though none of them row so well as I do."

"Wharton will put the best men in."

"Stuff!"

"If you're fit, he'll shove your name down."

"Rats!"

"By the way, where's Hazeldene?" said Tom Brown. "I don't know whether he's in the crew, but from the way he's been going on lately, I should say he's got a healthy chance of being left out."

"I believe he's in Smithy's study."

Tom frowned.

"He ought to keep away from the Bounder. Vernon-Smith won't do him any good!"

There was a tap at the door, and Harry Wharton came in. Bulstrode looked at him grimly.

Harry took no notice of the burly Removeite's unpleasant look.

"I'm sorry I interfered with you in the tuckshop to-day, Bulstrode," he said, coming to the point at once. "Skinner told me just what passed, and I know that Bunter was lying. If I had known then, you might have liked him as much as you liked."

Bulstrode grinned slyly.

"You might have given me credit for a little decency," he suggested. "Am I the kind of fellow to talk about a girl, do you think?"

Wharton coloured.

"Well, you wouldn't explain," he said. "Still, I've said I'm sorry. I was taken in by that young rotter. I shall be more careful another time."

Bulstrode nodded.

"Oh, it's all right!" he said. "The fat young brute wants a licking every day of his life, and if he were in this study, he would get it."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122

"He will get some in No. 1 if he doesn't alter his ways," said Harry, frowning. "He was spying on me to-day, and saw me meet Miss Hazeldene. Miss Hazeldene had something to tell me—and that was all, of course. We just met and exchanged a few words, but Bunter seems to have put a different construction on the matter."

"And I jolly well shut him up," grinned Bulstrode.

"I'm glad you did. I'm only sorry you wouldn't explain, so that I could know how matters stood," said Harry. "I came in and found Bunter groaning on the floor, and you had nothing to say; so what was I to think?"

"Well, it's all right," said Bulstrode, turning to his books.

Wharton coloured again. It was not easy to get on with Bulstrode.

"There's another thing I want to mention," he remarked.

"I'm doing my prep," said the Removee bullily pointedly.

"Oh, very well, let it go!"

And Wharton turned towards the door.

"Hold on," said Bulstrode curiously. "Go ahead. I—"

"To-night will do. I'll tell you in the dorm."

"Rats! Tell me now—the prep. can wait," said Bulstrode, a little ashamed of his rudeness. "Don't mind what I said. I've got an awful ache in my jaw—it was a pretty hard knock that laid me out, you know."

"Right," said Wharton, turning back. "I want to ask you if you'd care to row in the eight on Wednesday."

Bulstrode jumped.

"Me!"

"You."

"In the eight?"

"Yes."

"You're not joking?"

"Certainly not. You're a good oar, and we need you—if you'll row. Only—Wharton hesitated a moment. "I had better speak plainly. I am skipper, and my orders will have to be obeyed till after the race. We shall be sticking at practice pretty closely, and every chap will have to be fit, and keep himself so. If you care to enter on those terms, we shall be glad to have you."

Bulstrode nodded.

"That's fair enough."

"Well, are we to depend upon you?"

"Yes, rather," said Bulstrode, with emphasis.

"Good. First practice at half-past six in the morning."

"Right-ho!"

Wharton turned to the door.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bulstrode suddenly. "Just a minute, Wharton. You're not—"

He paused. Wharton looked at him in surprise.

"Yes?" he said.

"You're not giving me this place in the boat because—because of that row to-day, are you?" blurted out Bulstrode.

"You wouldn't be such an ass!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No, of course not! I'm asking you to row because I want the Removee to beat the Upper Fourth, and I think you can help us do it."

"Then I'm your man," said Bulstrode heartily, "and—and I'm sorry I—I wasn't more reasonable about—that affair. Only I was wild at hearing Bunter speak in that caddish way, and then when you were willing to believe that I had done it, I—"

"I understand, I'm sorry," said Harry frankly.

"It's all right. I'll be ready for practice in the morning."

"Half-past six."

"Good. You'll find me ready."

And Wharton quitted the study, with a better opinion of Bulstrode than he had ever had before. Many times Bulstrode had shown good qualities under his unpromising exterior—never more than now, and it made the Removee captain regret that he should mar what might have been a fine character by being at the same time a bully and ungenerous enemy. Such Bulstrode certainly was; but at the present moment Wharton was nearer feeling friendly towards him than he had ever been before.

Tom Brown grinned at Bulstrode as Wharton closed the study door.

"I won't crow over you," he remarked. "But if I were in the mood to crow, I could say—what price favouritism now?"

"Oh, rats!" grunted Bulstrode.

And he devoted himself to his work, while the New Zealand junior chuckled softly.

HAZELEDENE carefully avoided Harry Wharton that evening, and Harry did not seek his society. The next day it was the same. Harry understood that the scene in the wood, when the picnic had been interrupted, and Vernon-Smith threatened, must have been humiliating enough to Marjorie's brother. He wished to spare Hazeldene's feelings, though on one point he would concede nothing—Vernon-Smith's blackguardism would be put down with a firm hand.

If Hazeldene chose to cut up rough about it, Wharton did not quite know what to do. For Marjorie's sake he wanted to help the weak, reckless fellow; but how he was to help him against his own will was not clear.

He could not prevent Hazeldene from associating with the Bounder if he chose to do so, and he could not always have his eye on the Bounder to see if he was playing the "giddy goat" again.

After the lesson he had received, Harry believed that the Bounder would be very careful for some time, and that probably was the case.

But Hazeldene avoided Wharton in a way that showed he strongly resented the interference of the Form-captain.

For Hazeldene's opinion of him Wharton would have cared little. But through the dissatisfaction Hazeldene there might come a breach in his friendship with Marjorie, aided, too, by Billy Hunter's injudicious chatter. Wharton had plenty of trouble on his mind just now. Besides Hazeldene, there was Bob Cherry, who was "up against him" for some reason, he could not guess what; and at the same time he had the care and the responsibility of the Remove eight upon his mind.

And it was a responsibility.

Wharton had to get his men together for regular practice, and to keep them up to the mark. With most of them it was not difficult to get them up to time. Nugent and There were plenty of fellows in the Form able and willing to work, and Bulstrode was showing a great keenness, which left Wharton nothing to complain about. Bob Cherry, though very quiet and subdued when he was in Wharton's presence, understood his duty as an oarsman, and worked as well as the others, though perhaps not so heartily. Poor Bob was a bad hand at dissimulation, and when he had something on his mind, it showed plainly enough for all the world to run and read.

With Hazeldene Harry had some difficulty.

Obviously under the Bounder's influence, Hazeldene showed a slackness that was irritating enough in a fellow selected to row for his Form.

There were fellows in the Remove who would have given almost anything for a chance to get into Hazeldene's place, and he showed a carelessness about the matter, as if he prized it very little, and could hardly be driven out in the mornings to practise.

Wharton hardly knew what to do about it.

There were plenty of fellows in the Form able and willing to take Hazeldene's place, and there was no doubt that Ogilvy, Micky Desmond, Morgan, or Trelice could have been trained to take their place in the night with as much credit as Hazeldene.

Wharton considered whether he might to drop him.

But he was loth to put such a slight upon him—loth, too, to play into the Bounder's hands by coming to an open quarrel with the foolish lad.

For if Hazeldene did not row in the eight, he would drop out of Wharton's circle, and he would quite under the Bounder's influence. He could hardly be dropped without coming to bad terms over it.

Yet Wharton reflected that his first duty was to the Form and the crew, and that he ought to allow no consideration, even for Marjorie, to interfere with that.

On Saturday afternoon there was to be a pull over the course, and Ogilvy was to time them; and after school Wharton looked for Hazeldene. He had a feeling that the junior might have some intention of going out.

He found Hazeldene talking with the Bounder in the Remove passage.

Vernon-Smith gave Wharton an evil look, and went into his study. Hazeldene made a motion to walk away. Harry clapped him on the shoulder.

"You haven't forgotten the practice this afternoon, old chap," he remarked.

Hazeldene coloured.

"When is it?" he asked.

"At half-past two, same time as the race next Wednesday."

"I was going out with Vernon-Smith."

"Sorry, but the time of the practice was fixed, and you know it yesterday," said Harry quietly.

"I'd forgotten."

"It's hardly a thing to be forgotten," said Wharton. "There are plenty of fellows in the Remove who would jump at your place."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

"Let 'em jump."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't care so much about rowing," said Hazeldene sullenly. "After all, it's a blessed lag, and you don't get anything for it."

Wharton's lip curled.

"I can see that the Bounder has been talking to you," he remarked. "That's his brute's idea of sport. He ought to be kicked out of Greyfriars."

"He's my friend."

"And a rotten bad friend for you or anybody else," said Wharton hotly. "He's trying to make you slide out of the crew, of course. He'd be glad to see you cut the cricket, too, so that he could get you into his hands. Though I'm blessed if I know why he should cultivate you so much more than any other fool in the Form. Snoop and Skinner are ready to suck up to him to any extent. Unless—"

Wharton paused.

He had believed that the Bounder cultivated Hazeldene chiefly as a blow at No. 1 Study; but it occurred to him as he spoke, that there might be another reason. He remembered the toast the Bounder had given at the picnic in the glade. Wharton's eyes burned with anger at the idea that a fellow like the Bounder might have dared to think of Marjorie.

Hazeldene looked at him with a sneer.

"Well," he said, "unless—"

"Never mind. But that cad will do you no good."

"If you choose to call my friends names, Wharton, you needn't trouble to talk to me."

"I thought that I was your friend, too," said Harry, controlling his temper as well as he could.

"Well, let Smith alone, then."

"Haze Smith! Are you coming out to practice?"

"Look here, I'd like to miss it this afternoon. I've promised Vernon-Smith."

"You can't miss it! Don't be an ass!"

Hazeldene shook himself impatiently.

"Put somebody else in my place, then."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

"You want to be left out of the eight?"

"Yes, rather than make a worry of the thing."

"I won't say what I think of you," said Harry quietly.

"But think of Marjorie. She knows you've been selected to row in the eight. She'll be proud if you help us to win. What will she think of you if you slide out like this?"

Hazeldene hesitated.

He had forgotten Marjorie for the moment.

If there was one person in the world who had a permanent and thoroughly good influence over the weak and wayward lad, it was his sister Marjorie.

Harry saw his advantage, and pushed it.

"Hang it all, Hazel, don't go back on the Form in this way. You can go out afterwards, and if you cut the rowing, what are you going to say to Marjorie?"

Hazeldene's hesitation continued. The thought of his sister had more power than anything else to bring him back to the right path. But at that moment Vernon-Smith opened his study door, and glanced out.

"I'll be ready in five minutes, Hazel," he said.

Hazeldene started.

"All right, Smithy."

"You are not going with him, old chap?" said Harry, as the Bounder closed his door.

"I've promised him."

"And you throw over your old friends for that fellow."

"If you don't choose to see reason—"

"That's enough," said Wharton, and he turned on his heel and walked down the passage.

Hazeldene glanced after him dubiously, and then went into the Bounder's study.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Eight at Practice.

HARRY WHARTON strode down the passage with a clouded brow. He did not join his chums, but made his way to the senior common-room, where he expected to find Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars. The big, good-natured Sixth-Form was there. He was chatting with Courtney of the Sixth when Harry came in.

He glanced kindly enough at the Remove-captain.

"Can I speak to you a moment, Wingate?" said Harry abruptly.

"Certainly; go ahead."

"I want to ask you something," said Harry, somewhat embarrassed. "It's a rather peculiar favour to ask, but—"

"Cut it short!"

"We're having a practice of the Lower Fourth eight this afternoon on the Sark. Don't you think it would be a good idea for all the Remove to turn up and watch the practice? It would do them good, in a way."

"I've no doubt they will."

"Yes, but some of them won't—I mean they mightn't," said Harry slowly. "Could you—you don't mind my asking—"

"What the dickens do you want?" asked Wingate, bluntly, while Courtney looked curiously at the Remove-captain.

"I want you to order all the Remove to turn up for the practice," said Harry.

"Oh! Why?"

"Well, I—should like you to. I've got my reasons, but I'd rather explain them, if you don't mind. But you always take some trouble over our sports, Wingate, and if you'd do that, you'd help us a lot."

Wingate looked at him hard.

"I'll do it," he said. "Here, pin this notice on the board."

He wrote on a leaf of his pocket-book, tore it out, and handed it to Wharton. The junior took it with a lightened brow.

"Thanks, Wingate," he said gratefully.

"Not at all, kid."

Harry left the senior room with the paper. The two seniors exchanged glances.

"What the dickens can that mean?" said Courtney.

"Some slackers want to cut the practice, I suppose," said Wingate reflectively. "Perhaps Wharton wants to keep him up to the mark. It may be some fellow he can't afford to kick out of the eight."

"Oh, I see!"

"Anyway, I've got faith in Wharton."

Harry Wharton hurried to the school notice-board, and pinned up the paper.

Five minutes later, a crowd of juniors were reading the notice, with various ejaculations of surprise.

It ran as follows:

"Every member of the Remove is to turn up at the river for the whole time of the crew's practice this afternoon.—Signed, G. Wingate, Capt."

"My only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "That's odd."

"The oddness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Blessed if I can make Wingate out," said Nugent. "Look here, Wharton, here's an order for the whole Form to turn up and watch us at practice."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It will do them good," he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Going out?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Bounder and Hazeldene came down into the hall.

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith.

"Haven't you seen the notice?"

"What notice?"

"Here it is; look at it!"

Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene read the notice through. The latter's face fell, but only a sneer came to the Bounder's lips.

"I suppose that won't make any difference to you, Hazel," he said.

"Oh! It's Wingate's order."

"Take no notice of it."

"Wingate's captain of the School, and head prefect. What do you mean, Smutty? We must take notice of it!"

The Bounder curled his lip.

"I shall not!" he exclaimed.

"You won't go out?"

"I shall!"

"Hang it, look here, Smutty!"

"Come, let's get out," said the Bounder, slipping his arm through Hazeldene's.

The latter shook himself free.

"I can't," he said. "We have got to stick it out for the practice. Wingate means what he says. I tell you a jubilee can't kick against Wingate."

An unpleasant look came over the Bounder's face.

"You will not come?" he exclaimed.

"I can't."

"You are a fool."

"You are a bigger one, if you go out against Wingate's order," said Hazeldene. "I don't know what it's done for, but we've got to toe the line."

"I shall not toe the line."

"It will be worse for you, then."

"Bah! I am going!"

The Bounder made a stride towards the door. A good many of the fellows had overheard what was said. Several of them placed themselves in Vernon-Smith's path.

"Where are you going?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Out."

"You've seen the notice?"

"Yes."

"And you're going to disregard it?"

"Yes."

"We'll see about that," said Bob grimly. "We won't report you to Wingate, because that would be sneaking, but we'll jolly well see that you obey the order."

"I will not. I—"

"Your mistake, my boy; you will. Collar him, chaps!"

The Bounder made a spring for the open doorway, but five or six pairs of hands closed upon him. He struggled, but he was whisked out of the house in a second or two, and under Bob Cherry's directions he was marched down to the river.

"Let me go!" he gasped. "Your rotten racing is nothing to me. Let me go."

"Rats!" said Ogilvy. "You're going to do as Wingate orders."

"I won't!"

"Bosh!"

Vernon-Smith might say that he wouldn't, but he had no choice in the matter, with the grasp of half-a-dozen sturdy juniors upon him.

He was rushed down to the bank of the Sark in record time, and arrived there breathless and gasping, with his cap gone, his collar torn out, and most of the buttons off his waistcoat.

"Keep him there, kids!" said Bob Cherry. "Hold him if he tries to bolt. He's to stay here for the whole time of the practice, according to Wingate's order."

"Faith, and we'll see that he does," said Micky Desmond, slipping an arm through the Bounder's. "Now, ye spalpeen, if ye shirklike I shall very likely land ye one on yer boko—so!—there. I said I would."

And he did.

The Bounder gasped, and ceased to resist. With Micky holding one arm, and Ogilvy the other, he stood between the two juniors, a picture of impotent rage.

"Better take it calmly," advised Micky.

"Hang you!"

"Shut up, you rotten bounder," said Ogilvy. "You may look on, but you're not allowed to talk. You're too polite. Next time you open your mouth we'll duck you in the river."

"Faith, and it's a good idea entirely."

And the Bounder kept his mouth closed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were carrying the eight-oar down to the water. Hazeldene came to the boathouse with a somewhat shamed expression.

"Do you want me to row, Wharton?" he asked. "It seems that I can't go out, anyway, and—and I'm willing to row, if you like."

Such a way of putting it, from any other fellow, would have met with a short and sharp response from the captain of the Remove. But Wharton wanted to be easy with Hazeldene. More than the race depended upon how he dealt with him.

"All right," he said shortly.

And Hazeldene took his place with the crew.

The eight slid into the water.

Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Tom Brown, Mark Linley, Bulstrode, and Hazeldene stepped into the boat, and Morgan, the coxswain, dropped into the stern. A crowd of fellows had assembled on the bank to watch the practice, among them Temple, Dabney & Co. The Upper Fourth-Formers were smiling loftily. But they did not smile so much when Harry Wharton's eight got to work.

Blundell of the Fifth gave the signal to start, and the eight got away in fine style, and went down the river with a steady pull.

It quickened, and they shot past the island at a spanking rate.

Round the island, and back to the landing-stage was the course, and the Remove eight covered it in a time that made the Fourth-Formers open their eyes.

"My word," said Dabney, looking at his watch. "With all his lothiness he had condescended to time the race. 'They've done it in a minute under our time of the other day.'"

"By George!"

"Of course, we weren't putting our beef into it," said Fry.

"Perhaps not, but—"

"But we were pulling hard," said Scott, "and we shall have to pull harder to beat the Remove on Wednesday."

"Oho, rather!"

Temple nodded.

"We've got to beat them," he said. "It means hard training between now and Wednesday, that's all. We can't afford to be beaten by the Lower Fourth."

Loud cheers from the Remove greeted the boat as it dashed up.

All know that the crew had covered the course in less

time than the winners of the last race, and that was a good augury for the success of the Remove.

Wharton's eyes were sparkling as he jumped ashore. His crew had pulled together well, and he was quite satisfied with them.

Ogilvy and Desmond released the Bounder, who strode away with a black brow. He was the only fellow in the Remove who was not gleeful.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER. A Lesson for Bunter.

WINGATE tapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder as the junior came up from the river, his cheeks red, and his eyes bright. Harry looked at him.

"You saw us, Wingate?" he asked.

The Greyfriars captain nodded.

"Yes, I came to watch you," he said. "You did splendidly."

Wharton flushed with pleasure.

"I'm glad you think so," he exclaimed. "I thought it wasn't so bad, considering the few days we've had an eight at practice together."

That was first rate. You've done wonders, and the Upper Fourth will have a tussle to beat you, if they beat you at all," said Wingate. "Your crew is jolly good for a junior crew, and they've got a stroke to be proud of—yourself."

Wharton laughed.

"Are you trying to give me a swelled head?" he asked.

"No; I'm putting it candidly, because I know you're in no danger of getting a swelled head," said Wingate.

"Would you like me to start you on Wednesday?"

"You're awfully good," said Harry gratefully. "Of course we should like it, only we hadn't the cheek to ask you."

That's all right; and I should suggest another course, too. Why not take the same course that is used on sports day by the racing crews?"

"The seniors use it on halves for their practice."

"They won't use it on Wednesday if you want it," said Wingate, with a smile. "I'll see to that. It is a better course in every way than dodging round that island, and you'll find it so."

"We shall be jolly glad, Wingate."

"Then it's settled; I'll fix it. Tell Temple."

"Right ho!"

And Wingate strolled away.

"Isn't he a splendid chap?" said Wharton. "He takes as much trouble about us as if we were a senior team. It will be ripping to have the race over the senior course, though but for Wingate we shouldn't have had a chance there on Wednesday."

Hazeldean had left the rowers now. He was looking for Vernon-Smith; but the Bounder was gone out. He had departed the moment he was released, without waiting for Hazeldean.

Hazeldean inquired for him in two or three places, and when he learned that he had gone, set out to walk to the village.

The Upper Fourth crew rowed over the new course that afternoon, and the Remove crowded along the banks to watch them.

Hazeldean was for the time forgotten, even by Harry Wharton.

When the chums of the Remove turned up in the study at tea-time, Harry remembered the junior, and learned that he had gone out, and had not come in yet, and that neither had Vernon-Smith put in an appearance.

The captain of the Remove wrinkled his brow.

"I suppose they're together," he remarked.

"I suppose so," said Nugent. "I don't see what you can do, Harry. You can't dry-nurse Hazeldean, you know. If he chooses to go to the dogs, he will have to go his own way."

Harry was thinking of Marjorie.

"Yes, it's rough on her, when she has pulled the rotter out of scrapes before."

"Hazeldean isn't so bad. He's a weak ass, that's all, and Vernon-Smith's a cod," said Harry. "He ought to be expelled."

"No doubt about that."

"I'm thinking of the crew, too. If Hazeldean gets up to any foolery, he won't be fit for the race. He may even chuck it up."

"He wouldn't be such an ass."

"He threw it up to-day, and took it on again."

Nugent looked doubtful.

"Hang it all, Harry, are you allowing the ass to play fast and loose like that? He may fail out at the last minute, and we shall be crooked."

Wharton looked worried.

"I know; but I don't want to turn him down if it can be helped. It's a rotten position for me. I suppose I ought to have a clear understanding with him."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

After tea, the chums of the Remove strolled out into the Close, looking thoughtful enough. The Hazeldean matter certainly wanted settling one way or another, and Wharton was in doubt. Billy Bunter was in the Close, surrounded by a group of juniors, who appeared to be greatly interested by what he was saying.

The chums joined the group.

"What's going on, Bob?" asked Nugent, giving Bob Cherry a dig in the ribs.

Bob did not turn his head.

"Bunter's yarning," he said briefly.

"Oh, is that all?"

"You see, I thought I ought to see what was on," said Billy Bunter, too short-sighted to see that the chums of the Remove had joined his hearers. "Wharton was so jolly mysterious, that I thought I ought to look into it."

"Rats!" said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner, it's true. You see, he wouldn't row in the eight, and that showed there was something wrong. That's why I tracked him."

"You mean you spied on him?" asked Ogilvy contemptuously.

"Oh, really, Ogilvy! I hope you don't think I would do a mean thing like that. I just tracked him, to see what was up. I tracked him to the old priory, and there was Marjorie Hazeldean waiting for him."

Wharton's teeth came together hard.

Bunter was at it again. The chatterbox and talebearer of the Remove was not to be restrained, and the happenings of the previous Thursday were still fresh in his mind.

Bob Cherry's face flushed red, but he made no movement. "You should have seen them sitting on the wall!" said Billy Bunter, with a fat chuckle. "Of course, I'm not a spot sport, so I wouldn't show up then. I—"

Wharton strode through the group.

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped as he saw him.

"Oh—oh, really, is that you, Wharton?" he stammered. "I—I thought you were in the study—I—I mean I'm glad to see you. I'm just telling the chaps about—about the way I pretended to track you, just for fun—"

"You cad!"

"Oh! Oh, really—"

Wharton looked round at the juniors. Most of them were looking very curious, and some were grumpy. Wharton's face was pale and set with anger.

"I don't think I need tell you that Bunter is drawing on his imagination," he said quietly. "You know what a liar and slanderer he is."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Of course we do," said Ogilvy. "I don't suppose there's a word of truth in what he says."

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond.

"There is (his much truth, that I did meet Marjorie Hazeldean on Thursday," said Harry. "There's nothing in that, I suppose, as we're friends, and meet three or four times a week."

But Marjorie happened to have something to tell me, and Bunter tried to play the spy and hear, but I found him out."

"Oh, really—"

"That is all there is of it, and I think you chaps know me, and know Marjorie, too well to take any notice of the fat rotter's hints. We simply met and talked for a few minutes, and Bunter knows it as well as I do."

"Well, I—I never said you didn't," said Bunter freely. "I—I was just going to say so. I—I know Marjorie doesn't care anything for you. If it had been me—"

"Hold your tongue!"

"But—"

"You've chosen to speak of one of the best girls in England in a disrespectful way," said Harry, breathing hard. "I've warned you before. Now you're going to be punished."

"Ow! Ow! Yow!"

Bunter yelled and howled as Wharton's grip closed on the back of his collar. But his yells and howls availed him little.

Harry ran him straight to the fountain, and ducked his head into it.

"Grot! Oh-h-h!"

Right into the basin went Bunter's head, and under the water, Splash! Splash! He struggled and kicked violently, while the juniors roared with laughter.

"Ow! Hellup! Grot! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton flung the Owl of the Remove contemptuously from him.

Bunter rolled in the grass, dripping with water, gasping for breath, and blinking through his wet and dim spectacles.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Boast! I— Yow! Yarn!"

Wharton turned away without a word. Billy Bunter slowly picked himself up, amid yells of laughter from the juniors.

He rolled away towards the house to seek a towel and a change of clothes, followed by loud laughter. There was no sympathy for the Owl of the Remove. He fully deserved his punishment; in fact, as usual, he deserved more punishment than he received.

Harry Wharton strode away, alone, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, a cloud upon his brow. He had silenced Bunter; but it was bitterly annoying to him that Marjorie's name should be made a subject of light talk among the juniors.

"The rotten cad!" he muttered, aloud. "I ought to have licked him!"

"He's not the only cad at Greyfriars who wants a licking!" said a voice at his elbow.

Wharton swung round.

Bob Cherry had followed him, and was standing confronting him now, with his fists clenched, and his eyes blazing with anger.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry is Satisfied.

BOB CHERRY met Wharton's glance, and advanced nearer to him. His hands were down at his sides, but clenched, and clenched convulsively. His look was full of anger, and a bitter scorn that stung Harry to the quick.

Wharton had walked, in his deep and moody thought, through the elms into the somewhat deserted green behind the chapel. Bob Cherry had followed him there; with what intention his manner indicated only too clearly. There was no one else in sight.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Harry hotly.

"I mean what I say," said Harry, his voice trembling with anger. "You have refused to explain why."

Bunter has explained why," said Bob Cherry. "You've made Marjorie the talk of the fellows, and that's enough."

Wharton flushed.

"How could I help Bunter saying so?" he exclaimed.

"You could help giving him anything to say upon."

"How so?"

"You needn't have met Marjorie secretly."

It was out now!

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Then that's what's been the matter with you the past few days," he said.

Bob Cherry's eyes burned.

"Yes, that's it," he said bitterly. "You've acted like a cad, and now you're going to answer for it!"

"Hold on a minute," said Wharton quietly. "I'll fight you if you like. Whatever you think of me, you know I'm not a coward. But we'll have it out plainly first. You don't—you can't believe that there's anything in Bunter's lies. You can't be idiot enough to believe that a girl like Marjorie would allow me to flirt with her, even if I were fool enough to want to."

Bob Cherry turned scarlet.

"No, I don't think so. But you've put it into Bunter's mouth to say so. He was saying the other day that he saw you with Marjorie's head on your shoulder."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"It was a lie."

"I know it was; but all the fellows mayn't think so. Bunter is a rotten-minded car; and there are others like him, too."

"It's rotten, I know; but I don't see how you can blame me."

"Blame you! Of course I do! What did you meet Marjorie secretly for?" exclaimed Bob passionately. "You ought to have known better."

"But—"

"You knew it wasn't right. You knew when you received her letter that—"

Wharton started.

"Her letter! What do you know about her letter?"

"One line, that's all. You left it lying on the ground when you left us that afternoon. I couldn't help seeing one line of it as I picked it up."

"Oh! Then it was you who put it back on my study-table?"

"Yes."

"Without telling me you had found it?"

"I never intended to tell you. But for Bunter's yarns, the matter would never have been mentioned. I had my opinion of you, but I should have kept it to myself."

"And that opinion—what was that?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

Bob Cherry's lip curled.

"It wasn't a flattering one."

"But why do you blame me? If you've seen Marjorie's letter, you know that I was asked to meet her for a special reason."

"Yes; but a girl wouldn't write a thoughtless thing like that unless—unless she was under the influence of somebody," said Bob. "A decent chap's duty is to be careful not to take advantage of a girl's being thoughtless or reckless."

You know jolly well that the Cliff House girls are allowed to meet us as often as they like because it's all open and above board. If Miss Princess had a suspicion that there were negotiations and secret meetings, it would be barred at once. We were all jolly good friends, and you've spoiled it all by acting in this way."

Wharton's brow contracted.

"Then you think we are in the habit of having secret meetings?" he said.

"I don't know."

"And you think—"

"I think it was a reckless thing for Marjorie to write that letter, and to make a secret appointment with you—and I blame you for it," said Bob. "A chap's business is to look after a girl, and not lead her to do things she may be sorry for afterwards."

"I hope I know that as well as you do, Bob! If I didn't think you were one of the most decent chaps in the world, as well as one of the biggest fatheads, I shouldn't be slow in putting my fists up!" said Wharton, half-laughing.

"You think a lot of Marjorie, and so do I; but if you knew what the matter was, you wouldn't think so badly of me, or think she had acted thoughtlessly or foolishly."

"I didn't say foolish—"

"But you meant it! Look here, Bob, as you know so much about the matter, there's no harm in telling you the rest."

"I don't want to know. I—"

"You've got to know now!" said Harry. "Marjorie wouldn't mind your knowing. In the first place, that was the first time I'd ever met Marjorie without you fellows knowing, and probably it will be the last."

Bob Cherry did not speak.

"She wanted to see me to talk over an important matter—a matter that couldn't be made public, and she was particular about keeping the meeting secret, because she was afraid her brother would get to know."

"Hazelene?"

"Yes."

"And why shouldn't her brother know, if it was all right?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Because we were talking about his affairs, and she was afraid he would be annoyed, and act the giddy goat, if he knew that she was looking after him."

"Oh!"

"She had found that Hazelene was chumming up with the Boulder, and that they had been to the Cross Keys—"

"Great Scott!"

"And knowing the scrapes he's been in before, and how jolly near he was once to being expelled from Greyfriars, she was anxious and alarmed. I had the pleasure of fishing the duffer out of his last scrape, as you know."

"I know."

"And so she thought of consulting me about it. She wouldn't give Hazel away to anybody else, and at the same time she was awfully anxious that he should be looked after. But it had to be kept a secret. You know the line he would be likely to take at the idea of a girl looking after him."

"I—I understand."

"And that's all," said Harry. "If you had had sense enough to speak out plainly at first, I'd have explained then."

Bob Cherry's face was a study.

His eyes were on the ground, and he did not speak.

"Well," said Harry, "breaking the silence at last, 'I suppose you believe me?'"

"Yes; I believe you, of course."

"Then what have you got to say?"

Bob Cherry raised his eyes, reddening.

"I've been a fool, Wharton."

"You have, Bob; there's no denying that!"

Bob's colour deepened.

"I—I was wild about it!" he stammered. "I—I was thinking of Marjorie. It seemed so rotten! Well, I suppose you're not to blame. I think—I was in the wrong, and—and I'm sorry!"

"You don't want to fight me now?" asked Harry, with a smile.

"No, as!"

"Quite sure?"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Bob. "I've been an ass! I know I ought to have known you better, but—but—"



"Blessed if I know which is me!" grinned the Topcliffe junior. (An amusing incident in the splendid long, complete school tale of Gordon Gay & Co., entitled "Ginger," by Prosper Howard, contained in "The Empire" Library out this week. Price One Halfpenny.)

He broke off. He did not explain—he could not explain—that bitter pang of jealousy that had shot through him like a burning iron at the mere thought that Marjorie might be something more than a friend to anyone. Probably Wharton understood, in a dim way, the feelings of his chum. He tapped Bob on the shoulder.

"It's all right, old chap; let's say no more about it!"

"Right you are!" said Bob, with a great sigh of relief. "I—I'm glad to get this off my mind! You don't know what a weight it's been to me!"

"I think I can guess. Let it go; it's over and done with! The thing now is to look after Hazeldene, and as you know the whole matter now, you can help me."

And they strolled back to the school together, and Nugent's face lighted up as he saw them on their old friendly footing; and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, in his delight, observed that the joyfulness was terrific.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER. Straight from the Shoulder.

ON Monday morning, at half-past six, the Remove eight rowed over the new course, and timed the row. They knew the Upper Fourth time, and they beat it by twenty seconds, which was a matter of jubilation to the Remove.

Temple, Dabney & Co. sniffed when they heard it, and THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

NEXT
WEEK:

"STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

after school they rowed over the course themselves, and tied the Remove time to a second. They rowed over the course again in the dusk, without being watched by the Remove, but the result they kept to themselves. But Temple, Dabney & Co. no longer pretended to believe that the race would be a walk-over. It would be a very close thing, and they knew it; and Temple, taking a new line, said he was jolly glad of it, and a good race was what he really wanted, and had been looking forward to.

Harry Wharton was feeling very cheerful about the Remove prospects. There was no doubt that Bob Cherry's form had improved since the worry was off his mind, and he was throwing himself into the matter with great heartiness. Hazeldene was the only fellow Wharton was at all doubtful about.

Hazeldene was a good ear, there was no doubt about that, and he was trained to good condition. Cricket had kept him fit, and a few days of constant rowing practice had worked wonders.

His form would be all right, if he chose to row. But Harry had a lurking fear that at the last moment the foolish fellow might fail them. Under the Bounder's influence there was no telling what he might do.

And the Bounder's spite against the juniors who kept him in order was so great that there was no doubt he would do his worst, and if his influence could make a vacancy in the crew it would be made.

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

The later the defection came, the more awkward it would be for Wharton, of course, and the worse for the crew. It was a worry to the stroke of the Remove boat. Hazeldene was turning up for practice regularly, and had said nothing more about quitting the crew.

Wharton had no excuse for dropping him now, even if he wanted to do so. But what was to happen at the last moment?

True, if Hazeldene dropped out, and left the eight in the lurch, his life was not likely to be a very happy one in the Remove afterwards. But he might not think of that, or, under Vernon-Smith's influence, might not care.

It was a secret cause for disquietude to the Remove skipper.

He said nothing about it, however, but took in a quiet way all the precautions he could to prevent the eight from being knocked out by a possible defection. He hinted to Ogilvy and Desmond and Treluce that there was always a chance of a change in the crew, and that they would do well to keep themselves fit in case they were wanted.

A hint was enough for the three juniors, who would have given a term's pocket-money to row in the Form eight.

Micky Desmond, Ogilvy, and Treluce were as assiduous at practice as the members of the eight themselves, and they were all in the scratch crew that was formed to row a trial with the eight on Tuesday.

If Hazeldene failed to row, one of them would fill his place, very nearly as well as far as rowing went, but with the disadvantage of not having practised in concert with the rest—a very great disadvantage, of course.

It was all that Wharton could do, and he looked forward to the day of the race with an anxiety he did his best to conceal.

The junior race had been a small enough affair in its commencement, but it had grown in importance during the last few days.

The good form shown by both crews, and the interest taken in the race by the captain of the school, had brought it well into public notice.

Wharton and his men found themselves the centre of a great deal of interest.

The eyes of all Greyfriars were upon them, and they felt it. The scratch race of the previous week had excited no interest outside the Forms concerned, but the pull fight for Wednesday afternoon, with Wingate for starter, bade fair to bring most of Greyfriars to the banks of the Sark to look on.

The trial on Tuesday was to be rowed after school, and Harry was on the alert as soon as the Form came out of the class-room.

He had seen Vernon-Smith whispering to Hazeldene, and had suspected the Bouncer, but Hazeldene's manner was quite frank.

"Ready?" asked Harry.

"Quite."

"Come on, then!"

And Wharton's suspicions melted away.

The Remove eight and their cox went down to the river, accompanied by the scratch crew they were to row against, and followed by most of the Form to watch the trial.

The scratch crew was composed of Ogilvy, Desmond, Treluce, Russell, Trevor, Elliott, Lacy, and Smith minor, with Wun Lang to cox.

They were a good crew, though, of course, not anything like the form of the eight.

The trial was watched by an eager crowd on the bank.

Wharton's doubts with regard to Hazeldene were soon set at rest.

He pulled as well as the rest, and, in fact, showed unusually good form.

The scratch crew put the best they had into the contest, but they were easily beaten by two lengths, the eight rowing in splendid time.

Loud cheers from the Remove greeted the result.

Not a fellow there but firmly believed that the Remove eight were destined to lower the colours of the Upper Fourth on the following afternoon.

When the Remove boats had pulled off the course, the Upper Fourth rowed a trial, and Temple professed himself completely satisfied with the result.

Both parties, in fact, were quite pleased, and both were quite assured of success on the morrow.

"We shall lick them!" said Bob Cherry, as the rowing men walked up to the school in a body. "It will be another one up for the Remove!"

"The upfulness will be terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"What do you think, Hazel?"

Bob Cherry glanced round.

Hazeldene had left them.

"Where's that chap Hazeldene?"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—122.

"Faith, and he went along the towing-path with Smithy," said Micky Desmond.

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Sure of that, Micky?" he asked.

"Faith, and I saw him!"

Wharton left the crowd of fellows and strolled back to the river. He assumed a careless manner, but there was deep anxiety in his breast.

Hazeldene was gone with the Bouncer along the towing-path. It might mean nothing, but it might mean that they were taking the short cut to the Cross Keys, which had a garden backing on the river. It flashed into Wharton's mind all of a sudden what the Bouncer's game might be. Hazeldene, if asked to throw up his shanks in the boat at the last moment, would be very likely to shrink from such treachery. But if he were induced to make a fool of himself now—if he smoked and drank at the Cross Keys—he would be in no state on the morrow for a hard race. It would suit the Bouncer's game quite as well if he were unfit as if he resigned.

Wharton gritted his teeth at the thought.

He strode along the towing-path, with the river gleaming in the sunset on his right hand and the deep-scented wood on his left.

As soon as he was out of sight of the other fellows, he broke into a run.

"Ah! There they are!"

He uttered the exclamation suddenly as he caught sight of two schoolpals ahead of him on the towing-path hobbling above the bushes.

He quickened his pace.

On the turf of the towing-path his footsteps made no sound, and he was very close to the two juniors before they knew that he was at hand.

The Bouncer gave a little start as he glanced over his shoulder and caught sight of Wharton. Harry came up, a little flushed, and breathing hard.

Hazeldene's face assumed a sulky look.

"Anything the matter, Wharton?" he asked.

"No. Only aren't you going a long way, Hazel? It's getting near locking-up, you know."

"I've got a pass."

"Oh! A prefect's pass?"

"Yes."

"Which prefect?" asked Wharton.

"What does it matter to you?" said the Bouncer insolently. But Wharton did not even look at him, keeping his eyes fixed upon Hazeldene.

"Loder," said Hazeldene sullenly.

Wharton compressed his lips. Loder was a prefect who would always give a pass to a fellow who would perform emmissions for him in the village, such as smuggling cigarettes into the school or taking messages to the Cross Keys.

"Where are you going, Hazel?" he asked.

"For a stroll."

"Hush! you better come in?"

"I suppose Hazeldene is the best judge of that himself," remarked Vernon-Smith.

Harry turned upon him in a flash.

"I wasn't speaking to you!" he exclaimed angrily. "If you give me any cheek you'll get some of what you got the other day!"

The Bouncer retrated a pace.

"Look here, you jolly well let us alone!" exclaimed Hazeldene irritably. "You're not my blessed guardian, I suppose, and I don't want to have anything to say to you, anyway."

"Why not?"

"I've heard what Bunter has been saying," said Hazeldene sullenly.

Wharton flushed.

"I suppose you don't take any notice of that?"

"You've made the fellows jaw about my sister, anyway. If what Smithy says is true—"

Wharton interrupted him fiercely.

"Smith! So the Bouncer has been making trouble! You must have heard Bunter's yarns days ago, and you've said nothing so far."

"I took no notice of him, but—"

"But now Smith has started on the same topic, and you take notice of him?" said Harry angrily. "Can't you see his trying to make trouble? The cad would be glad to see us on bad terms, and to see the Remove licked by the Fourth-Form eight."

Hazeldene was sullenly silent.

"Now, look here, old chap," said Wharton more gently. "The race is to-morrow, and a lot depends on it. Is it asking too much to ask you to come in now, and not go out with Vernon-Smith again till after the race? It's only one day more."

Vernon-Smith burst into a mocking laugh.

"Come on, Hazel! Don't be a booby!" he exclaimed. "This chap will be taken for your dry-nurse next!"

It was exactly the appeal to make to Hazeldene, who, like most fellows who are weak and easily led, hated to be thought under anybody's influence.

"I jolly well won't go in!" he exclaimed. "I'm coming, Smithy! You can mind your own business, Wharton!"

"Look here, Hazel—"

"That's enough! I'm going with Smithy!"

"Come on!" said Vernon-Smith, with a grin of unconcealed triumph at the captain of the Remove.

That grin cost him dear.

Wharton's temper was already almost at boiling point.

As Hazeldene turned to follow Vernon-Smith up the towing-path, and the Bounder bestowed that triumphant grin upon Wharton, the latter let out with his left.

His fist caught Vernon-Smith on the chin with a crash, and the Bounder reeled backwards with a howl and fell.

Splash!

With a splash and a crash of breaking reeds the Bounder plunged into the river, and disappeared under the water.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER. Marjorie Intervenes.

It was only for a second that Vernon-Smith disappeared. He came up spluttering and gasping, and clutching at the reeds and rushes.

"Help!" he gasped.

Wharton seized him in a moment, and dragged him out of the river. He had fallen into the shallow margin where there was more mud than water, and he was in a shocking state. He was soaked from crown to toe, and his clothes were caked with soft, slimy mud.

He fell gasping in the grass.

Round him a pool of water and liquid mud quickly formed.

Harry Wharton looked at him with a grim smile. He had not intended to knock the Bounder into the water, but he was not sorry it had happened. Vernon-Smith was in no state now to pay his visit to the Cross Keys.

"Ow!" gasped the Bounder. "Groat!"

Even Hazeldene could not help grinning.

Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet.

His face, through the caking of water and slime, was white and furious.

Harry Wharton faced him with a cool, contemptuous smile.

Clearly would the Bounder have liked to hurl himself upon the Remove captain, to pound the handsome, scornful face with his fists. But he knew very well that an attack from him would only call forth another and a harder blow.

"You—you hound!" he spluttered.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You're bigger than I am," he said. "I'm ready to settle with you any day in the gym, with or without gloves. And I tell you plainly that that's nothing to what you will get if you don't mend your ways. You're not going to be allowed to make any other fellow in the Remove as big a blackguard as you are yourself!"

"That's meant for me, I suppose?" said Hazeldene, with a sneer.

"Weren't you going to the Cross Keys with Smith?" demanded Harry directly.

Hazeldene was silent.

"If you weren't, say so! You know you were! You know you'd be expelled for it, too, if the Head knew it! You're playing the fool!"

"That's my business!"

Vernon-Smith, with a bitter look at Harry, turned back along the towing-path. He could not go on to the Cross Keys now. He tramped back savagely and sullenly towards the school.

Hazeldene glanced after him, and then looked at Harry. He was trembling with anger.

"You—you interfering hound!" he said. "I suppose I may as well go back now! You've mucked the affair up for me!"

"All the better!"

"But, don't talk to me!" exclaimed Hazeldene savagely. "Do you think I'm a baby to be looked after? I'm my own master, Harry Wharton! I'll go to the Cross Keys and anywhere else if I choose! I've had enough of your dictation, too! I'm hanged if I'll row in the eight to-morrow, either!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You must, Hazel!"

"I won't, then!"

"Look here—"

"It's your own fault. I'm not going to be dominated over. Find somebody else to take my place, and be hanged to you! And you needn't speak to me again! I don't want to know you!"

Wharton looked hard at him. He had not suspected that the malign influence of the Bounder had gone as deep as this.

"Do you mean that, Hazel?"

"Every word!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

"You're willing to play this dirty, cowardly trick on the Form?"

"That's enough!" Hazeldene clenched his hands.

"You'd better not go too far, Wharton! You can't talk to me as you do to Vernon-Smith!"

Wharton's lip curled.

"I'll talk to you in plain English," he replied. "If you play such a trick as this on the Remove, you deserve to be cut by every decent fellow at Greyfriars—and you will be. But let that pass. Look here! Have you thought about Marjorie? What will she say—what will she think—when she knows that you've thrown up the place at the last moment, and left us in the lurch?"

Hazeldene clenched his hands convulsively.

"You needn't mention Marjorie. Vernon-Smith has told me—"

"Lies, I expect!"

"We'll send! He says that you met Marjorie secretly in the wood the day you wouldn't take part in the race—the day you interrupted our picnic and pitched into Smith," said Hazeldene. "He says you had been writing to one another, and—"

Wharton started.

"The cad! He must have been listening when I was speaking to Bob Cherry behind the chapel!" he exclaimed.

Hazeldene gritted his teeth.

"Oh! So you've been discussing it with Bob Cherry, too! It's the joke of the study, I suppose? And it's true?"

"It's true that I met Marjorie."

"Secretly, and that you had been writing to one another?" said Hazeldene. "You've dared to give the fellows a right to talk about my sister? Then what Bunter was saying is true, and you lied—"

"Stop!"

"You tell me to stop, do you?" exclaimed Hazeldene passionately, advancing towards Harry Wharton with his hands up. "Put up your fists, you cad!"

"Don't be an ass, Hazel!"

"Put up your fists!"

Wharton kept his hands down at his sides.

"You know I could lick you as easily as a baby," he said.

"Don't be a fool! Goodness knows, you've no cause to quarrel with me about Marjorie! If I had ever said a word or done a thing in any way wanting in respect to her you'd have a right to stop me as hard as you could. But I haven't."

Hazeldene ground his teeth.

"Yes, I know you could lick me—and you may—and that will show you how much I care."

And he struck full at Wharton's face.

"Hazel!"

It was a sharp cry from the trees. A graceful form ran on, and Hazeldene's arm was caught as he struck. He dropped his hand to his side, turning scarlet.

"Marjorie!"

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Marjorie Speaks Plainly.

MARJORIE panted for breath.

"Hazel! What is the matter with you? How dare you?" she exclaimed.

Hazeldene looked sullen.

"You don't know what the row is," he said. "I'm not going to explain to you. You'd better leave us alone, Marjorie."

Marjorie's eyes flashed.

"I ain't to do anything of the sort, Hazel. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"You don't know what he's done."

"I know what you imagine. I heard what you said as I came along the footpath," said Marjorie, her eyes flashing, and her cheeks burning with indignation. "That is why I ran forward to stop you. I am ashamed of you. Harry is your friend—your best friend—and mine too."

"Yes, and he's made you talked about by every cad in Greyfriars!" said Hazeldene savagely.

"I don't think so! but it is not his fault, but yours, if it is the case."

Harry stood silent.

"Mine!" ejaculated Hazeldene. "What do you mean?"

"Yes, yours. I wrote to Harry, and asked him to meet me, because I wanted to speak to him about you."

"About me?" stammered Hazeldene.

"Yes," said Marjorie, "about you. Because you were getting into your old foolish ways again. Because you were associating with a boy I knew to be bad and wicked. Because I was afraid you would be expelled from Greyfriars, as you would have been once before if Harry Wharton had not saved you."

"Marjorie!"

"Harry came to meet me because I asked him, and I asked him, too, to keep it a secret, because I wanted to spare your feelings, and because I knew you were so foolish and obstinate that you would resent anybody taking an interest in your welfare."

Hazeldene coloured.
Marjorie was speaking very plainly: hitting straight from the shoulder, so to speak. Hazeldene had never seen Marjorie lose her temper before, but she was dangerously near losing it now. Her tongue lashed the junior like a whip.

"Marjorie!" he stammered.
"Yes, foolish and obstinate," said Marjorie. "That wicked boy, Vernon-Smith, is leading you into bad ways, and you know it. You ought to know better. You ought to do better. You ought not to speak to him, and to quarrel with Harry, because he did what I asked him to."

"I—I didn't know you had asked him. I thought—I—"
"You believed what Bunter and Vernon-Smith said, rather than what Harry said, and perhaps rather than what I say!"

"Oh, Marjorie!"
"I am ashamed of you, Hazel. I wish I could think you were ashamed of yourself, too, as you ought to be."

"That's all very well," said Hazeldene sullenly. "I'm jolly well not going to be looked after by a girl, anyway, and as for Wharton—"

"Perhaps you will prefer father to look after you, then," said Marjorie, "for I will write to him and tell him everything, if you keep on with that wretched boy, Vernon-Smith." Hazeldene turned pale.

"Marjorie! You wouldn't give me away to the pater?"
"I would—to save you from being expelled from Greyfriars and disgracing us all," said Marjorie. "You have no right to assume to be your own master after you have asked others to get you out of difficulties, as you have always done. Wharton saved you from being expelled the last time."

"I—I—"
"Yes, you had forgotten that, of course."
"I hadn't forgotten it. But—"

"Harry interfered now because I asked him to. I don't know why I should care what happens to you!" exclaimed Marjorie, bursting into tears.

"Marjorie!"
Hazeldene was all contrition at once.

Marjorie seldom cried, and it frightened Hazeldene to see her. Wharton turned his head away. He felt that if the scene lasted much longer he would give Hazeldene the thrashing of his life. His fingers faintly itched to be upon the foolish lad.

But Hazeldene was repentant enough now.
He approached Marjorie, but she repulsed him.

"Marjorie! I'm sorry, I—I— Look here, don't cry, old girl. I'm awfully sorry. I—I've been an ass! It was what Smith said that made me wild, and—and—I say, don't cry, you know. I'm sorry! I'll apologise to Wharton, if you like. I'll row to-morrow, if they'll let me, too."

Harry Wharton went quietly along the towing-path towards the school.

He felt that it would be better to leave the brother and the sister alone.

He walked moodily towards Greyfriars.

He had never seen Marjorie show so much emotion, and he was bitterly angry with Hazeldene, who was so far from being worth the affection his sister gave him.

Harry Wharton, walking slowly and moodily, was nearly at Greyfriars, when he heard a patter of footsteps on the towing-path behind him.

He turned his head. It was Hazeldene.

Hazeldene looked very pale and shamefaced.
"Well," said Wharton grimly.

"It's—it's all right."
"You call it all right—when you have worried and upset the best girl in the world," said Wharton savagely. "If she wasn't your sister, I'd lick you till you couldn't stand for a week, you fool!"

Hazeldene winced.
"And I should deserve it, I expect," he said, in a low voice. "I'm sorry, Wharton. Look here, I'm going to chuck the Smith chap, and—and if you'll have me, I'll row in the eight to-morrow, and do my best."

"Very well," said Wharton shortly.

And they walked to the school without another word.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

The Rival Eights.

WEDNESDAY dawned bright and fair.
At half-past six in the morning, the Remove eight were on the river for a final spin.

They fully satisfied Harry Wharton.
The last anxiety of the Remove captain was gone now.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—122.

NEXT WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

During the morning, Vernon-Smith spoke to Hazeldene several times, but the manner of his former friend was short and dry. After school, when the Form was dismissed for the day, the Bounder made another attempt. But it was in vain.

"I can't come out this afternoon," said Hazeldene. "I'm rowing in the eight."

"Chuck it."
"Can't."

"Not after the way Wharton's treated you."
"Look here, Smithy, enough of that," said Hazeldene. "I'm sticking to Wharton. If you've got anything to say against him, you'd better say it to him."

The Bounder stared.
"What's come over you since yesterday?" he exclaimed.

Hazeldene coloured.
"Never mind. I mean what I say. I'm rowing in the eight, and I can't come out, and that settles it."

"I shan't ask you again," said the Bounder significantly.
"Don't, then!"

And so they parted.
What had come over Hazeldene since the previous day was a good influence, in the place of a bad one, and for the present, at least, Hazeldene was in the right path. Whether even Marjorie's influence would suffice to keep him there was another matter. But for the present, he was steady and full of firm resolve.

The half-holiday was fine and cool.
The juniors turned out for the race in the highest spirits.

Some of the girls of Cliff House were expected over to see it, and soon after dinner Marjorie and Clara arrived. Harry Wharton ran to meet them as soon as he caught sight of the bright hats and frocks in the distance.

Marjorie coloured a little as she saw him. But Harry made no reference to the scene of the towing-path, and she was soon at her ease.

"So glad you've come," said Harry cheerfully. "It will be a jolly good race, whichever side wins. Hazel is doing well, too, Marjorie. He was pulling splendidly this morning."

"I'm so glad," murmured Marjorie.
"Yes, rather," said Miss Clara. "I didn't think Hazel had it in him."

"Oh, Clara!"
"Well, I didn't, dear, and I'm agreeably surprised," said Miss Clara. "I hope the Remove will win."

There was a big crowd on the bank when the time of the race drew near.

All the Remove and the Upper Fourth were there, and Nugent minor and a band of Second Form fags had turned up to yell.

Many of the seniors, too, joined the crowd on the sunny banks of the Sark.

Marjorie and Clara and several other Cliff House girls were near the starting-post, amid the crowd of juniors.

There was a rousing cheer as the crews came down to the water.

Both crews looked very fit and well, and cheers followed them as they pulled out to the middle of the stream.

Wingate had the starting pistol in his hand, ready to give the signal.

Every eye was on the crews.
Confidence and nervousness and grim determination blended in the looks of the rival eights.

Crack!

It was the signal.
The Upper Fourth boat got away with a good start, and shot ahead. The Remove had not started so well. They were half a length to the lead in the first minute. But Harry Wharton's face did not change.

He was stroking the boat with a quiet, steady stroke, not in the least flustered. The oars behind him dipped in splendid time.

There was a roar from the bank.
"Go it, Temple!"

"Pull away, Remove!"
"Hurrah!"

Temple & Co. had the start, and they improved upon it. The lead of the Fourth Form eight slowly increased till she was nearly a length ahead of the Remove boat.

The enthusiasm of the Upper Fourth was unbounded.
A wild crowd poured along the banks, keeping up with the boats, yelling and waving caps. The Removes were yelling, too, loud exhortations to Wharton's crew to buck up.

But Wharton knew what he was doing.
He increased the rapidity of his stroke, and the oars behind him followed perfectly, and the speed of the Remove boat increased.

But half-way over the course the Upper Fourth boat was still a length ahead.

The Remove were creeping up, however.

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

And as Wharton quickened, and his crew quickened in perfect time, it was seen that the Lower Fourth boat was creeping steadily up.

The length was reduced to three-quarters of a length.

Then to half!

But the boats were over two-thirds of the distance now, and the Upper Fourth and most of the spectators felt that with common luck, Temple & Co. ought to keep their lead to the finish and win.

Wharton's face was hard as iron now.

He knew what was in his men, and he meant to have it out; and they had unbounded confidence in their stroke.

Wharton was speeding up now.

Now was the time for a tussle—now the time for a spurt. The Remove boat speeded up, and in a twinkling, as it seemed, the distance between them was reduced to a quarter of a length, and then to an eighth or less.

There was a roar from the bank.

"Hurrah. Remove!"

"Go it, Temple!"

"Pull! Pull! They're passing you!"

"Buck up!"

The Remove boat was level.

The Upper Fourth were rowing their hardest now; but they had shot their bolt too soon. Now, when a spurt was needed, they hadn't an ounce more in them.

They were doing their best, but—

A wild roar from the bank announced that the Remove boat had shot ahead. An inch—two inches—a quarter of a length!

They were close on the finish now.

Wharton and his men were rowing steadily now, right up to the top speed, and the Upper Fourth laboured after them in vain.

Another roar.

"Go it, Remove!"

"Remove wins!"

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"Hurrah!"

Right ahead shot the Remove boat!

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We've done it!"

And they had!

The Remove boat had won by three-quarters of a length!

There was joy in the Remove that day.

The oarsmen jubilated as they rubbed themselves down and changed after the race. The whole Form jubilated too.

Temple, Dabney & Co. took their defeat in good part. It was a blow for the Upper Fourth, but they stood it well. Temple said they'd row it over again another time, a proposal to which Wharton instantly acceded. For the present, all was joy in the Remove camp.

The chums of the Remove stood a tea under the trees by the river after the race, to which their rivals were invited, and came cheerfully. Marjorie pressed Hazeldene's arm as he dropped upon the bench beside her under the elms.

"You did well, Hazel," she whispered. "I'm proud of you."

It was a merry tea-party; and a toast proposed by Wun Lung was drunk with great enthusiasm in ginger-pop. "The Junior Eighties!" Billy Hunter joined the feast, with rather a dubious air; but he was allowed to remain, and he drank that toast—and would have drunk any number of others, so long as the ginger-pop lasted. And so ended the great triumph of the Remove eight.

THE END.

(Another Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "Study No. 1 on Tour." Please order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.



Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, while staying at Deal with his friend, Professor MacAndrew, receives an urgent appeal for help from an unknown girl. He proceeds to investigate, and is soon in the thick of a very complicated case. He goes in disguise to the Lagger Inn, which he knows to be the haunt of a gang of criminals, and there meets a man named Finlay, whom he already has under suspicion. In the course of conversation, Stanley Dare hints that he knows more about Finlay than that gentleman has any idea of.

"Perhaps you'll give us a sample of what you do know?" snarls Finlay.

At the old Martello Tower.

"I am going to," returned Stanley Dare. "For instance, I was in this house last night, although you don't seem to have guessed it, when that young detective was trapped in the upstairs room. Being, as I have said before, always anxious to increase my knowledge, I determined to find out what you were going to do with him when you rowed out towards the Goodwin Sands, with him lying unconscious in the boat."

He paused. Finlay moistened his dry lips with his tongue. Joe Drecker stood as rigid as a statue at the side of the table, with his unblinking eyes staring straight at his now "unwelcome guest." Stanley Dare proceeded:

"I am not going to tell you of the means I employed to find out what I wanted to know. You may learn that later on, but not now. I had a good view of the Shivering Sand, for that is where you took him. Your boat came back without this young detective whom you had trapped. But I did not trouble about the boat any longer. It was the quicksand which held all my attention. I kept my eyes fixed on it. You can guess what I saw."

As the young detective paused again, the two men exchanged glances, but they did not seem to be able to find any words to express their thoughts. Perhaps they deemed it advisable not to express them within the hearing of this longshoreman who knew so much.

From the bar came a hoarse shout of laughter. The vile

rum, which had been purchased with Dare's money, was already taking effect. It was cheap stuff, and they preferred quality to quality.

"I am not telling you all this for the purpose of getting money out of you to hold my tongue," went on Dare, after a lengthy silence. "But you see how much to your advantage it would be if I was a partner in the 'business' which you carry on."

"Yes, I see now," admitted the landlord.

Finlay rose from his chair.

"I must be going now," he said. "I leave you to settle with Mr. Walker in any manner you may think fit. No doubt you'll be able to come to terms."

He flashed a meaning look at his partner in crime, and then quitted the room. Drecker turned to the young detective.

"Come upstairs," he said. "If those fellows in the bar get drunk they may take a fancy to shove their noses in here, and I don't want any bother."

Dare knew full well what this invitation to the upper room meant. An act of treachery was contemplated. But he was prepared, for it was no more than he expected. The scheme that he had formulated depended largely for its success on an attempt being made upon his life. It was as daring as his plans usually were, and fraught with considerable danger to himself. He slipped his hand into his pocket to feel that his revolver was safe.

NEXT
WEEK: "STUDY 1 ON TOUR."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Lead the way," he said.

As Dare expected, the landlord made his way to the chamber in which the young detective had before been trapped. He flung open the door; the room was in darkness.

"Step inside," said Drecker. "I'll soon get a light."

"After you," replied Dare.

"You won't come to any harm through want of caution," sneered Drecker. "You needn't be afraid of me, anyway."

"I am not," replied Stanley Dare coolly.

After a couple of minutes' delay the landlord struck a match and lit a candle.

"Now then," he said. "We'll come to business—"

He stopped abruptly. He had turned round to face Dare after placing the lighted candle on the table, and now found himself looking into the dark tube of a levelled revolver, held by the supposed longshoreman.

"You will have to remain in this room until my return," said Dare; "and let me advise you to keep quiet, for if you create a disturbance the police will probably be making investigations, and I am quite sure you don't desire them to pay you a visit."

"What game are you playing?" demanded the landlord.

"A game in which I believe I hold the winning hand," answered Stanley Dare. "I am now going after that very respectable manservant Finlay, as I am anxious to take a hand in his game also."

"Who are you?" cried Drecker, garnishing the question with a foal oath.

"You'll find that out later," said Dare. "At present I can only inform you that I'm not exactly what I appear to be. Good-night! Be careful of those shutters, for if you attempt to open them you may come to grief."

With these parting words of advice, uttered in such mockingly polite tones that Drecker broke out again into a volley of curses, he quitted the room and closed the door behind him. It was a spring lock, and he knew that from the inside of the room the door could not be opened. Drecker was caught in his own trap!

Professor MacAndrew had been on watch outside the inn ever since Stanley Dare had entered it. He emerged from the shadow of some trees as the young detective stepped out of a side door.

"I've bottled up the chief of the gang," said Dare. "Which direction did Finlay take when he came away?"

"He went along the road which leads to the cliffs above St. Margaret's Bay," replied the professor. "He canna be far yet. We'll soon overtake him."

"Come along, then. We are hot on the trail now, Mac. I only hope we may be in time to save that poor girl—or woman—of whom we know absolutely nothing, not even her name or personal appearance. The fact, however, that such a crew of scoundrels is opposed to us is proof sufficient that we are doing right in trying to aid her."

"I've never had any doubt of that," responded the professor.

"By the way," exclaimed Dare suddenly, "I managed to secure the other half of that envelope on which the message was written. It was in Finlay's possession, so it shows that he played an important part in the game from the first. I have not had an opportunity of reading it yet. Here it is."

I will place the two halves together. Ah! I was not far out with the words that I supplied in place of the missing ones."

They stopped at a street-lamp, and by its light read the message through. It ran as follows:

"I am at the mercy of a madman. For the love of Heaven save me! The messenger will tell you everything. Unable to write more."

There was no signature.

"At the mercy of a madman!" echoed the professor. "Can it be Thorndyke? I'm sairtain he had gone mad when I was last at the Lodge. But how could she be at his

mercy? And what object can the Lagger Inn gang have in trying to prevent you from rescuing her?"

"If it is Thorndyke that she refers to, it only adds to the mystery," replied Dare. "But it is no use—none of these speculations now. We have something tangible to go on, for I am perfectly certain that Finlay knows where Thorndyke is, and is now on his way to visit him. If the girl is still alive, we shall find her at the same place."

"It's bewildering," muttered the professor, as they hurried on.

Just beyond Waterloo they sighted Finlay crossing a stretch of open ground. He was making direct for an old Martello tower which they could see in the distance—one of those circular towers dotted round the coasts of Kent and Sussex, which at one time were used for purposes of defence, but which now, when not used as storehouses, are sometimes let to private individuals who may have a fancy for living in comparative seclusion.

"We've run him to earth. The tower is the place. What a cunning idea. Hallo! Listen, MacAndrew! I fancied I heard a cry."

Finlay must have heard something, for he started to run. The tower was in a lonely spot, with no other habitation near it. Anybody cooped up in it would stand little chance of being heard under ordinary circumstances, however loudly they might cry out.

Dare and the professor increased their pace, though it was necessary that they should keep under cover as much as possible, as they wished to approach unseen. The manservant had reached the tower by this time, and, pushing open the small door at its base, vanished from their sight inside.

This was the last time they saw him alive.

A light gleamed at a loophole near the summit. Then all at once a piercing scream rang out upon the night.

"Quick, MacAndrew!" cried Dare. "Pray Heaven we have not arrived too late!"

He dashed forward at headlong speed. The heavy door was evidently bolted as well as locked, for his skeleton-key was of no use. It was time for ceremony.

"Stand against the wall, Mac," he exclaimed, as the professor came up panting; "I must get in at that window!"

With the agility of an acrobat he climbed on to the professor's shoulders. There was a crash of breaking glass. Dare pushed up the window sash, and sprang through; then, running down a flight of steps to the lower door, he unbolted it and admitted MacAndrew. The interior of the part of the tower in which they found themselves was in pitch darkness.

Suddenly a ray of light pierced the gloom above them. Then a revolver-shot rang out, followed by a wild burst of awful laughter.

"Laddie, if there's a girl shut up in the tower, she'll be going mad herself at hearing all this uncanny racket!" exclaimed the professor.

"There is a girl here," replied Dare. "I am certain I heard a woman's scream. You must have heard it as well."

"I've heard men scream like that when suffering some awful agony," returned MacAndrew.

They were ascending the circular flight of stairs, but as a second shot had been fired, it was necessary that they should use some degree of caution. An armed man waiting above them would have every advantage.

The shouts and the firing had ceased with startling abruptness, but curious sounds, as of men struggling, could still be heard. Then a wailing cry rang out—a despairing cry such as a man might give whose last hope of life has gone.

For a moment Stanley Dare and the professor paused on the stairway and glanced at each other.

(Another long instalment of this splendid story next Tuesday.)

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