

"THE THIEF."

A splendid, long, complete tale dealing with the further adventures of the juniors of Study I while on tour.



No. 124 |

Grand, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

| Vol. 4.



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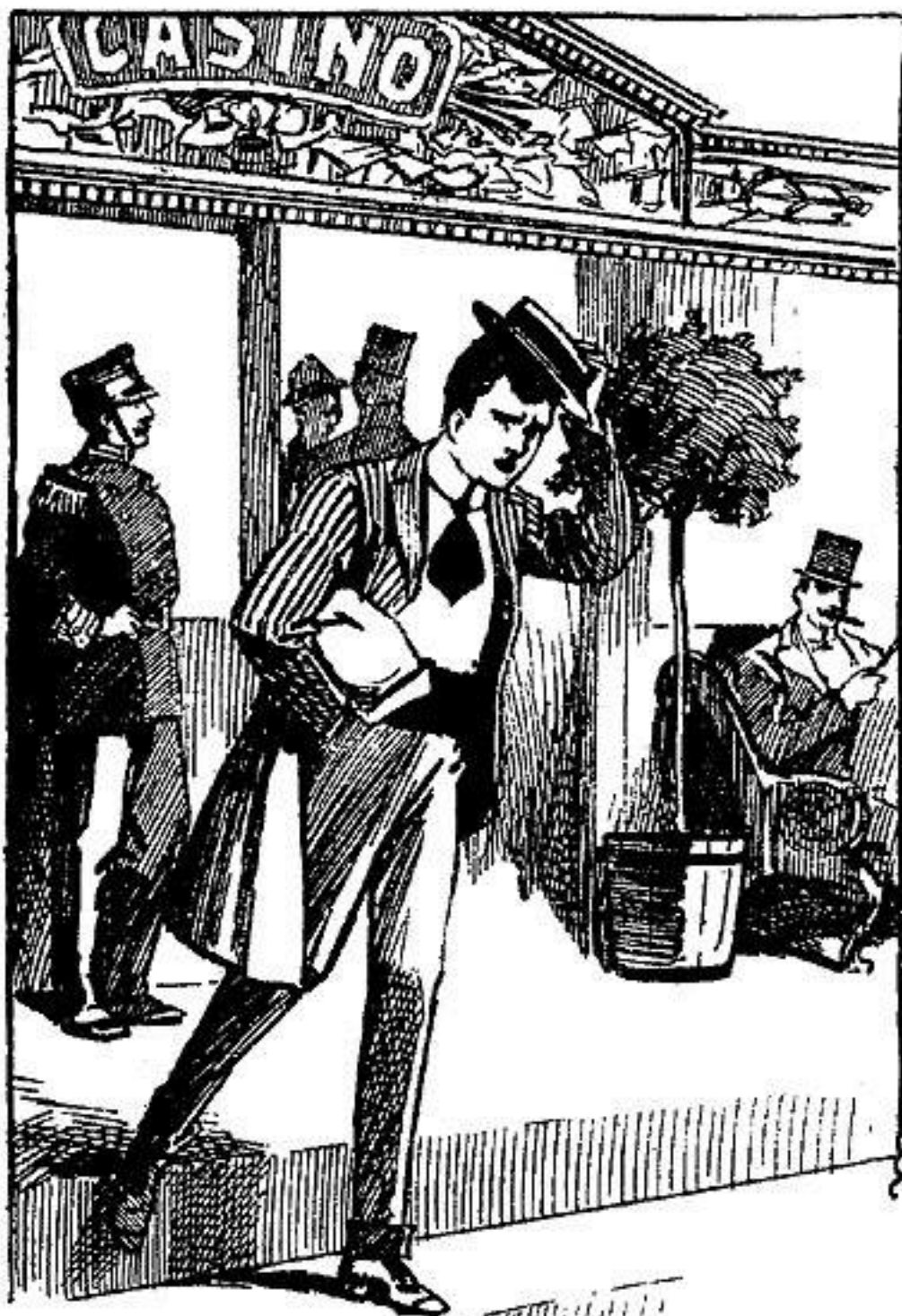
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Not for Bunter.

"HAZELDENE!"

"Where's Hazeldene?"
"I say, you fellows—"
"Don't say anything, Bunter, old chap," said Bob Cherry kindly. "You're dead in this act. I'm looking for Hazeldene. Where is he? Seen Hazeldene, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, raised himself lazily upon his elbow in the rich, deep grass, and pushed back the Panama hat that was shading his face from a blazing sun.

The Thief!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale, dealing
with the further adventures of the Juniors
of Study No. 1 while on Tour.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

"No," he said. "He was here. What's the row? It's not time to take the boat yet. The steamer doesn't start till two o'clock, and it's only a step or two down to the pier at Ouchy."

"Who's talking about the blessed steamer?" said Bob Cherry. "Hazeldene's wanted."

"What for?" asked Frank Nugent, looking up from the latest number of the Paris "Daily Mail."

"To sign his name."

"To which?"

"Sign his giddy name."

"To which?"

"Sign his giddy name."

"Has he come into a fortune?" asked Harry Wharton, sitting up in the grass, and fanning himself with his Panama, getting interested. "Is he to sign for it—or has his lawyer come to make his will?"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Bob Cherry. "It's the facteur."

"The what?"

"The postman. He's got a registered letter for Hazeldene, and in this giddy country it appears to be a custom to sign for your registered letters yourselves. Hence these tears. I mean, hence these yelps for Hazeldene."

And Bob Cherry went up the garden under the purple lilac, looking for Hazeldene.

Billy Bunter sat up in the grass, and looked after him with great interest, blinking through his big spectacles. A registered letter always interested William George Bunter; it smacked of a remittance, and whenever a remittance arrived for anybody, if Bunter was there, he generally contrived to get a slice of it.

The chums of the Greyfriars Remove were far from the old school.

The garden they were in sloped down towards the promenade of the Lake of Geneva—Lake Léman—and over the wistaria that clambered thickly on the garden wall they had a clear view of the lake. The wonderfully blue waters of Lake Léman glistened and rippled in the sun, and miles out on the lake white sails glimmered and danced. Far off on the other side rose the Alps in a line of snow, and to right and left, behind and before, wherever the eye turned, snow-clad Alps met the view.

The chums of Greyfriars were enjoying their holiday. Colonel Wharton, their host at the white villa on the lake, left them very much to themselves, knowing that that was the way for them to get the most out of their holiday in the lovely Pays de Vaud.

He knew that he could trust Harry Wharton to keep out of serious scrapes, though boyish "larks" there might be in plenty.

Billy Bunter blinked at Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, and at Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. The nabob was basking in the sun, keenly enjoying the blaze that reminded him of his home in far-off India.

"I say, you fellows," remarked Bunter, "I—"

"Warm, isn't it?" said Nugent.

"Yes, I say—"

"Too warm for talking, don't you think?" Nugent suggested gently.

The Owl of the Remove snorted.

"Look here, you fellows, Bob Cherry says that registered letter is for Hazeldene, but very likely there's a mistake. I was expecting a postal-order the very day we left Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"Ha, ha! I thought we should get a rest from that postal order in Switzerland!" roared Frank. "Can't you give it a holiday?"

"I feel pretty certain that the letter is for me, and that it contains my postal-order," said Bunter, with an aggressive blink at Nugent. "It's pretty certain that Dr. Locke would register it before sending it on, as the posts are so uncertain in these foreign countries. They're always making mistakes, and the name Hazeldene looks very like Bunter, so—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, I'm going to look into it," said Billy Bunter, rising to his feet. "If that letter's for me, I'm not going to have it handed to Hazeldene by mistake."

"Ass!"

"That's all very well. If there's a whacking big postal-order in the letter, Hazeldene might stick to it. He's been getting into debt, too, since he chummed up with that fellow Vernon-Smith at Greyfriars. I'm jolly well going to look after my remittance. If you don't look after yourself, nobody will look after you, that's certain."

"Come back, you ass!"

"Rats!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away in search of the postman. Bunter was clad in the thinnest possible garments, on account of the heat, but he still strongly resembled a barrel in figure. Harry Wharton glanced after him, and jumped up.

"Bunter!"

But Billy Bunter did not even turn his head. He was hurrying through the lilacs and mimosa towards the house.

"The young ass!" said Nugent, laughing. "We'd better go after him, or he may be getting into some bother. He thinks he can speak French, but he might as well talk Polish or Cherokee for all these chaps can understand of what he says."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Come on, then," he said.

And the Greyfriars chums strolled towards the house.

But Billy Bunter was first.

The doors of the villa were open in the warm noontide. In the wide, cool hall, flagged and adorned with huge tubs of ferns, the postman stood. The "facteur" was a little fat man with a good-humoured, red face, down which the streams of perspiration were trickling. He had a registered letter in his hand, and his book open ready for the recipient to sign.

"Bon jour, m'sieur," he said, civilly, as Bunter came up.

"Bong joor," said Bunter. "My letter, please!"

He held out a fat hand.

"Monsieur 'Azeldene?" asked the postman, with the usual Frenchman's difficulty in tackling the aspirate.

Bunter hesitated.

Even Billy Bunter did not care to assume a name that was not his own for the purpose of obtaining possession of the letter; so he temporised.

"Let me see it," he said. "Je veux voir—vous savez?"

"Oui, m'sieur."

The postman held up the letter.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS." A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

Bunter blinked at it through his spectacles.

It was not a re-directed letter from England. It had evidently been posted in the same town that morning, for the postmark was Lausanne, and the date was that of the same day.

Bunter grunted.

He could not imagine that anybody in Lausanne was sending him a remittance, yet he was loth to give up the idea that the letter belonged to him.

"M'sieur 'Azeldene?" asked the postman again.

"Well, not exactly," said Bunter cautiously; "but I'm his best friend, you see, and I'll take the letter to him."

The postman shook his head. He did not understand a word.

"It will be quite bong," said Billy Bunter.

Bunter's knowledge of French was as fearful and wonderful as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's knowledge of English. Billy had an idea that French people said "Bong" when English people would say "Good," and he used the word "Bong" with great liberality, much to the surprise of French persons who heard him.

"You young rascal," said Harry Wharton, coming in at that moment. "You know the letter isn't for you. Why, there's Hazeldene's name as plain as print," he added, glaring at the letter as the postman held it out for inspection. And then he started. "Blessed if I don't know that fist! It's the Bounder's!"

"Vernon-Smith's?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yes."

"Oh!"

"And the postmark's Lausanne!" exclaimed Wharton. "The Bounder is in Switzerland, and here!"

"My hat!"

"Here you are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, entering with Hazeldene, who was in white flannels, and had a tennis racket in his hand. "The bounder was playing tennis in the next garden. I had to bring him almost by force."

"Oh, rats!" said Hazeldene. "You've messed up the game. Why the dickens couldn't you sign for me?"

"Not allowed."

"Oh, rats! Well, gimme a blessed pencil!"

"Here you are!"

"Where do I sign?" asked Hazeldene, taking the book.

"Signez a l'encre, m'sieur."

"What does he mean, with his secnyay alonk?" grunted Hazeldene.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Sign in ink," he said. "It's the rule. Here's a fountain-pen."

"Oh, all right."

Hazeldene signed for the letter, and took it. The "facteur" bowed himself out, and Hazeldene looked at the letter. He gave a start as he saw the writing, and thrust the letter hastily into his pocket.

"Well, I must get back," he remarked.

And he hurried from the house. But Hazeldene did not return to the tennis-court in the neighbouring garden. He plunged into the most secluded part of the gardens of the Colonel's villa, and there, safe from observation, he opened the letter and read it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hazeldene Keeps his Secret.

HARRY WHARTON wore a worried look as he left the garden gate of the Villa du Lac half an hour later with his comrades. The juniors were all looking very cheerful and bright, with the exception of Harry.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were in straw hats, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in a cricket-cap, while Harry sported a Panama. Billy Bunter had a big cap with the peak pulled down to keep the sun off his glasses. They looked a merry party, happy in the bright sunshine, and in the enjoyment of their holiday. Only there was a cloud on Harry's face as they strolled down to the landing-place.

An excursion on Lake Léman had been planned for the afternoon.

The lake steamer left Lausanne-Ouchy at two o'clock, and coasted along Lake Léman, touching at the ports all along the beautiful shore of the canton of Vaud. The juniors were to land at Montreux, to visit the Castle of Chillon.

Harry Wharton took the six tickets at the booking-office, paying a franc each, and the juniors went down to the end of the quay to wait for the steamer. A crowd of other holiday-makers were waiting there, taking advantage of the sunny weather to make the excursion on the beautiful lake.

Nugent tapped Harry on the arm, as they stood a little apart from the others.

"What's the row, old chap?" he asked softly.

Harry started a little.

"Nothing, Frank."



The Bounder gritted his teeth in helpless rage as Harry Wharton shook him. "Stop! Stop it!" he gasped chokingly. "Stop it!"

"Rats!" said Nugent unceremoniously. "You're grumpy over something, and I think I can guess what it is."

"Well, I suppose you can," admitted Harry.

"It's Hazeldene's letter."

"Yes."

"He hasn't said anything about it to you?"

"Not a word."

"It's curious."

Wharton nodded.

"You know how he came to be with us at all," he said, in a low voice. "Marjorie was anxious about him, because he was in Vernon-Smith's hands, and Smith was leading him into his own rotten ways. I thought I had solved the difficulty nicely in getting Hazeldene out here along with us, and his sister thought so. She was pleased."

"Naturally."

"Of course, I never dreamed that Vernon-Smith could be coming to Switzerland," said Harry restlessly. "It's not a regular holiday; but I know his pater has influence with the Head, and I suppose Vernon-Smith got him to use it."

"Most likely."

"Now he's here, and he's written to Hazeldene. I don't believe he cares twopence for Hazeldene, as far as that goes; but he wants to get in at us," said Harry. "He won't forgive us for stopping his caddish ways at Greyfriars, and getting Hazel out of his clutches. He would be delighted to get Hazel in his hands here."

Nugent gave a low whistle.

"My hat! That would be serious, Harry."

"Yes; as in this country gambling is allowed, and there are public gambling-places that anyone can enter," said Harry Wharton. "I'm pretty certain that that's the way the

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Bounder will amuse himself, and he would simply gloat if he could drag Hazel into it."

Nugent's lip curled.

"Hazeldene wouldn't need much dragging," he said. "He's hinted more than once already that it would be fun to have a flutter, as he calls it."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"He won't have a flutter while he's with us," he said. "My uncle trusts me not to allow any blackguardism of that sort."

"Of course."

"It's rotten! I'm supposed to see that all's above-board; but it's rotten to be in the position of dictating to a fellow as old as myself," said Harry bitterly. "I've been called a prig before, through getting into that sort of position."

"It's rotten. But you've got only one thing to keep in sight, and that is that Hazel's not going to be allowed to make a fool of himself," said Frank.

"You're right."

"Here's the boat!" said Bob Cherry.

"Good!"

The steamer came buzzing down the blue lake from the direction of Geneva, and throbbed up to the end of the pier. The wooden gangway was thrown out, and the passengers for Lausanne came pouring ashore. Then the waiting crowd were received on the steamer, and the second-class passengers went forward—including Harry Wharton & Co. Billy Bunter stopped on the gangway.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Come on, Billy!"

"I've forgotten the guide-book!"

"Blow the guide-book!"

NEXT WEEK: "THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS." A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Come on, you ass! You're standing in the way!"

"Yes; but—"

A sailor hand seized the fat junior, and bundled him upon the steamer. Billy Bunter collided with a fat Frenchman, and sat down on the deck.

"Ow!" he gasped.

He tried to rise, but the incoming passengers were too thick. They stepped or stumbled over Bunter as they poured aboard.

"You ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as they dragged the fat junior out of the sea of feet. "This way!"

Bunter gasped for breath.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Sit down!"

"Groo! I'm hurt!"

Bunter collapsed upon a deck seat, and gasped and gasped. He was very much shaken up, and very perspiring and dusty. He blinked indignantly at the chums of the Remove as he saw that they were grinning.

"I say, you fellows, I—I think I'd better have some lemonade, or I may faint. Will you cut ashore and get me some lemonade, Cherry?"

"Yes, rather—I don't think!"

"Will you go, Nugent?"

"Some other evening," sang Nugent sweetly.

"Oh, really—"

"There's a buffet on the boat, ass," said Wharton. "You can go down and get as much grub and lemonade as you like."

"I'm fagged. I've been treated in a beastly way. I think you might go down and fetch me a soda-water, anyway."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Better get it yourself, Bunter."

"I'm exhausted. You know I've got a delicate constitution," said Billy Bunter pathetically. "I really think—"

"I don't suppose you'd like the way I should bring it," said Bob Cherry, in an argumentative sort of way.

"Oh, yes, really, Cherry—"

"Sure you won't grumble?"

"Certainly not!"

"You'll be quite satisfied?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Oh, very well! I'll get the syphon, then."

"Don't forget a glass, and some lemonade, too, and a few cakes—"

But Bob Cherry was gone.

Billy Bunter blinked at the other juniors. They had caught a glimmer of mischief in Bob Cherry's eye, and scented fun; but the fat junior was thinking only of his inward wants.

"I say, you fellows, it's hot!" he exclaimed. "Would you care to fan me with your straw hat, Nugent?"

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"We're starting," said Wharton.

The gangway had been taken in, and the ropes cast off. The steamer surged away from the Lausanne quay, and throbbed on along the beautiful coast towards the east.

Bob Cherry came up the steps from the buffet with a soda syphon in his hand, and a cheerful grin on his face.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"You've forgotten the glass," he exclaimed, "and the lemonade! Well, I must say you are a duffer, Cherry! I—Ow! Groo! Yow!"

Bob Cherry had directed the nozzle towards Billy Bunter's fat face, and he was compressing his thumb. A stream of soda-water shot out, and it caught Billy Bunter fairly in the mouth he had opened to complain.

The fat junior started up with a stuttering yell.

"Ow! Groo—ooo—oooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fizz! Sizzle! Flzz!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerrooh! Yaroop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter staggered away from the stream of soda-water.

The passengers who crowded the deck were shrieking with laughter.

Bob shut off the stream.

"Is that all right, Bunt?"

"Ow! Groo!"

"Have some more?"

"Stop!" yelled Billy Bunter, mopping his dripping face with a handkerchief. "Yow! Yah! Hold him! Beast! Ow!"

"Well, I warned you that you mightn't like the way I brought you the soda-water," said Bob Cherry. "You said you wouldn't grumble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo—oo!"

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NEXT WEEK! "THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS." A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Won't you have the lot?"

"Ow! Keep him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry made a motion with the syphon. Billy Bunter dodged for the steps and ran below, narrowly escaping a fresh stream of soda-water. His gasping died away in the direction of the steamer buffet.

The juniors shouted with laughter. Billy Bunter was a champion slacker, but he was not likely to ask Bob Cherry to fetch him any more soda-water.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Sees How It Is.

HAZELDENE sat a little apart from the others.

Wharton glanced in his direction once, and saw that he had taken the letter from his pocket, and was reading it again.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove knitted his brows.

It was most unfortunate that Vernon-Smith was in Switzerland now, and still more so, as it was evident that the Bounder of Greyfriars meant mischief.

Harry remembered Marjorie's anxiety about her weak, reckless brother, and her great relief when it was arranged for Hazel to accompany Harry Wharton & Co. to Lausanne.

Was it all to be undone by the Bounder's noxious influence now? What had he said to Hazeldene? Why did not Hazel speak of the letter, or what the Bounder had to say to him? There seemed to be only one explanation.

The Bounder had made some suggestion that Hazel instinctively knew would be opposed to Harry. And the registering of the letter, too, showed that Vernon-Smith had meant to run no risks about it getting into Hazeldene's own hands.

It was food for worry for Harry Wharton.

The boat coasted the beautiful lake.

"Clarens!" called out a deep voice, as it stopped at one of the ports.

Harry Wharton looked at the historic village with great interest. He meant to land there and explore one day.

Then the boat stopped at Vevey, famous as the burying-place of a great Englishman—Ludlow, the last of the Puritan stalwarts—who lies sleeping in the little old church. It was not till Montreux was in sight that Hazeldene rose.

Then he went to the side of the boat, and began to watch the shore anxiously.

Still he had not spoken a word of the letter to Harry.

Billy Bunter came in from the buffet. He had evidently succeeded in borrowing towels somewhere, for he was rubbed dry; and the fat, shiny expression upon his face showed that he had fed.

He rubbed a smear of cream from his mouth, and blinked at Harry Wharton. He had a well-thumbed guide-book in his hand.

"I've found it!" he announced.

"Found what?" asked Harry absently.

"The guide-book. It was in my pocket, after all. I shouldn't like to lose it, as I borrowed it of Temple, of the Fourth, and I didn't mention it to him at the time. He would be waxy if I lost it here."

"I suppose he would," said Harry, laughing. "You had no right to take it."

"Oh, really, Wharton, if that's all the thanks you give a chap who's trying to make the holiday a success, I'm done," said Billy Bunter, with great disgust. "We're just going to land at Montreux. Find me M in the index, will you—you know I'm a little short-sighted."

"Never mind M in the index," grinned Nugent. "We don't want any guide-book stuff."

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"The don't-wantfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, you fellows!" Bunter opened the guide-book and blinked over the index till he found Montreux, and turned over to the leaf indicated. "Here you are! Montreux is beautifully situated on the shore of Lake Leman—"

"Go hon! We can see that!"

"It is an easy distance by tram from Chillon——"

"Rats!"

"The historic castle of Chillon is the place where the Swiss patriot Bonnivard was imprisoned by the Duke of Savoy. He was chained to a pillar in the dungeon. His pillar is still shown, with the original bloodstains——"

"The what?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked into the close print of the book.

"I—I mean the original marks made by Bonnivard as he tramped round the length of his chain. The pillar——"

"Oh, cheese it, Billy!"

"Better get posted before you get there. It saves listening to the chap who shows you round," said Bunter, "and those guide-chaps speak awfully bad French. I can't understand them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really——"

"I was going to say that they had a Kursaal at Montreux," said Bunter. "It's the same kind of a place as a casino, you know. We shall have a look in at the Kursaal, of course?"

"I suppose so," said Harry.

"They play petits chevaux from four to five in the afternoon," said Bunter. "We shall be just in time."

"We can look on," said Harry.

"Hadn't we better have a little flutter?" said Bunter persuasively, and Hazeldene looked round. "It's an easy way to make money, you know."

"For the bank to make money, you mean."

"Well, a chap of my intellectual powers could soon think out a system."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm going to have a flutter!"

"You're not!" said Harry curtly. "We're on our honour, and neither my uncle nor Dr. Locke would allow us to be here to gamble. We'll have a look on at the game if you like, but you can't stake any money."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Dry up, Billy! You make me tired."

"But——"

"Cheese it!"

Billy Bunter looked sullen. He had evidently set his mind on having a little flutter at the Kursaal at Montreux—famous through French Switzerland for its gambling facilities—though a very mild place compared with the gambling resorts in the South of France.

Hazeldene moved his lips, as if about to speak, but did not. He resumed watching the shore.

The boat was ranging up to the landing-place.

When the gangway was put out, the Greyfriars juniors went ashore with the crowd, and Billy Bunter made for a handsome hotel directly opposite the port. There was a row of little tables outside the building, where refreshments could be taken in the open air, and Billy Bunter promptly sat down upon one.

"Aren't you coming along, Bunt?" asked Nugent.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I suppose we're going to have tea first?" he said.

"Why, you've only just fed on the steamer."

"That was only a snack."

"Well, I feel pretty dry," said Bob Cherry. "Let's have some ginger-pop, if we can get it here. Would you like me to get you some soda-water, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I wouldn't," said Bunter, as the chums sat down. "Leave the ordering to me—I speak French like a native."

"Like a native of another country, do you mean?" asked Hazeldene.

"No, I don't!" snapped Bunter, and he started in French on the waitress who came out to take the orders.

The girl looked bewildered. She was a pretty, fresh-coloured Swiss girl, patient and good-tempered like most Swiss girls.

"Pardon, m'sieur," she said softly. "I speak not ze English well."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "She thinks you're talking English, Bunter."

Bunter blinked at the girl.

"It's these blessed Swiss," he said. "They're called French Swiss in this canton, but they don't understand the best Parisian French."

"Ha, ha! You've only tried them with the worst Greyfriars French so far."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

Harry Wharton quietly ordered what was wanted. The Swiss maid understood perfectly, and tripped into the hotel.

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to carry out the orders. Bunter blinked after her, and then blinked at Harry Wharton.

"That's a curious thing," he remarked.

"What is?" asked Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"The girl seemed to understand Wharton. I suppose it's because these people are provincials; and Wharton's French not being so good as mine, they naturally understand it better. That must be the explanation."

And the juniors roared. But their laughter had no effect whatever upon Billy Bunter. Nothing would convince the fat junior that he was not an excellent French speaker, and the failure of the average Frenchman to understand what he was driving at only convinced him that the French were one of the stupidest nations in the world—absurd persons, who did not understand their own language.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Bounder on the Bound.

BILLY BUNTER beamed when the little tables were set out with coffee cups and cakes. He admitted that in one matter Switzerland was ahead of the tuckshop at Greyfriars—in the making of pastry. Billy Bunter disposed of piles of it—of all colours, green, and red, and blue, and pink—with an avidity that would have put the digestion of a rhinoceros to a severe test. But Bunter's digestion seemed to be able to stand anything. The other juniors were a little more moderate, but they did justice to the cakes.

Hazeldene seemed to be preoccupied.

He glanced up and down the street every now and then, as if he would not have been surprised to see someone he knew.

Wharton had thought the matter over, and he came to the conclusion that the best thing was to speak out about it.

He tapped Hazeldene on the arm.

"You had a letter to-day?" he remarked.

"Yes," said Hazel, colouring a little.

"I could not help seeing that it was in Vernon-Smith's writing, when the postman showed it to me," said Harry. Hazeldene started.

"It was from the Bounder?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"I don't want to inquire into your private affairs, of course," said Wharton; "but you know the terms we are on with Vernon-Smith. He is in Lausanne."

"He was when he wrote that letter."

"He wants to renew your acquaintance here?"

"I suppose so."

"And ours?"

Hazeldene grinned faintly.

"Yes—but he does not seem to think you would give him a very cordial reception."

"We should not," said Harry quietly; "but as a Greyfriars chap, we'd make him welcome, so long as he behaved himself. But if he is here for the purpose of having a fling, the further off he keeps from us the better."

Hazeldene bit his lip.

"Well, I suppose there's no objection to my seeing him," he said. "We were on friendly terms at Greyfriars."

"None at all, as far as that goes."

"I mean, I know I'm your guest, and you don't like Smith; but——"

"It isn't that," said Harry quietly. "I shouldn't dream of interfering between you and any friends you met here. But you know that Vernon-Smith is a blackguard. You know that Dr. Locke trusts us to behave ourselves here. While you're in my party you can't do anything you couldn't let Dr. Locke know about."

"I understand."

"I don't want to be put in the position of interfering with you; but there it is. We're on our honour, and you know the Bounder doesn't care a rap for anything like that. He is here to please himself—in a blackguardly way as usual, I suppose."

Hazeldene was silent.

Bob Cherry finished his coffee and rose.

"I suppose we may as well be making a move towards Chillon," he remarked. "We want to have time to go over the castle."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You've finished, Bunter?"

"Of course not. I've hardly started. I've only had eleven of these cakes so far, and——"

"Then the twelfth is going to be the last," said Bob Cherry. "You won't be able to roll on the tram-car if you keep it up much longer. You fellows ready?"

"The readyfulness is terrific."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Look there."

He nodded in the direction of the street.

A well-known figure was coming towards the juniors.

It was that of a fellow of fifteen, dressed in grey tweed, with a fancy waistcoat, and a Panama hat. He had a diamond stud, and gold sleeve-links set with rubies, and a gold watchchain well displayed, and swung a gold-headed cane in his hand. Altogether, there was a great deal of the precious metal shown about the new-comer.

It was Vernon-Smith, of the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

He nodded coolly to the juniors.

"You didn't expect to see me in Switzerland," he remarked.

"No," said Wharton shortly.

"And you aren't over-pleased—eh?" remarked the Bounder, with a sneer.

"No."

"Thanks. I like plain English."

"Well, you'll get it here."

The Bounder eyed him savagely.

"My pater got leave for me," he remarked. "He's staying in Geneva himself. I'm with him, really, but I'm having a run round alone, seeing life."

Wharton's lip curled. He could guess the kind of "life" the Bounder was seeing, from his record at Greyfriars.

"If you care for me to join your party, I can show you round," said Vernon-Smith. "I've been here in Montreux since this morning."

"Come with us, by all means," said Harry. "We're going to explore the ruined castle of Chillon."

The Bounder stared.

"Chillon!" he said.

"Yes. It's a historic place."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"I've never heard of it."

"Then there's a chance for you to learn something."

"I'm not looking for that sort of learning."

"Oh, it's awfully interesting, Smithy!" said Billy Bunter, with his mouth full of meringue.

"The guide-book says—"

"Hang the guide-book!"

"Oh, really, Smith! Besides, there's Byron's poem about the 'Prisoner of Chillon.' I know a lot of that by heart, and I will recite it to you as we go."

"You jolly well won't," said Bob Cherry.

"My hair is grey, but not with years," said Bunter, beginning,

"Nor grew it grey,
In a single day—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "You ass, you've got it wrong."

"Look here, Cherry, if you know this poem better than I do—"

"I think I do. The real lines are 'Nor grew it white, in a single night.'"

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, I don't see that that's any better. 'My hair is grey, but not with years, nor grew it white, in a single night, as men's have grown from sudden fright—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter now?"

"As men's have grown from sudden fears'—duffer!"

"Oh, yes, I forgot!"

"My hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white,
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.'"

"Nuff," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Cheese it! Bolt that other cake, if you're going to, and clear the table—I know you won't leave off while there's a crumb left."

Bunter bolted the cake, and rose. Harry Wharton had settled with the Swiss attendant, and the juniors were ready to go. Wharton glanced at the Bounder, doing his best to assume a cordiality of manner.

"Are you coming with us?" he asked.

"To see a ruined castle?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, no. I'm not interested in ruined castles," said the Bounder, with a grin. "You'd better let me be guide."

"With pleasure, if you've anything better to show us."

"There's the Kursaal."

"We're going to give that a look in later—we want to do Chillon by daylight."

"But the game only lasts from four to five in the afternoon."

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"The game?"

"Yes—the petits chevaux, you know."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"So you are gambling here?" he said.

"Well, you can hardly call it gambling, as the limit is five francs," said the Bounder, with a yawn. "It's a little flutter—a very tame one."

"You can call it a flutter if you like. We are not here for a flutter, and we sha'n't enter the Kursaal while the gambling is going on."

"I understood that boys were not allowed to play," said Bob Cherry, looking curiously at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"They're not."

"Then how—"

"Look here."

Vernon-Smith took a little case from his pocket, and opened it, and displayed an artificial moustache. In a second or two he had fastened it to his upper lip. It certainly made him look years older.

"How's that for high?" he said, with a grin.

"My hat!" said Hazeldene. "I should never have thought of a dodge like that."

"It's a common dodge here. Fellows of seventeen or eighteen frequently shove on a false moustache to get into the salons des jeux," said Vernon-Smith. "I can rig you up in the same way if you care to come with me."

Hazeldene looked at Harry.

It was pretty clear that he would have liked to go with the Bounder. The temptation of gambling, the idea of making a great sum of money easily, was too strong for his weak nature. But Wharton's face was hard and uncompromising.

"Hazel can't come," he said.

"Are you his master?" sneered the Bounder.

Harry flushed crimson. He knew that that was the surest way to make Hazeldene rebellious and obstinate, to hint to him that he was under the control of another.

"No," he said. "But Hazel is with me, and we're trusted not to do anything of the sort. You know well enough that that is the case."

"Oh, keep him under your fatherly wing, if you like!" said Vernon-Smith, with a shrug. "I'm going to the Kursaal now. If you want to find me, Hazel, you'll find me there."

"All right," said Hazeldene.

And Vernon-Smith strolled away, twirling his cane.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The New Prisoner of Chillon.

HARRY WHARTON & Co. boarded the next tram that came along, and it went rattling and jolting with them in the direction of Chillon. The Bounder had disappeared, and Hazeldene was very silent. Billy Bunter opened his guide-book at Chillon, and blinked very attentively at the pages as the tram clattered onward. He looked up presently at Harry Wharton's thoughtful face.

"This will be awfully bong," he remarked.

"Eh?"

"Chillon's a ripping place—simply bong," said Bunter.

"The guide-book says—"

"Blow the guide-book!" said Bob.

"But it says—"

"Rats!"

"It says that there's a restaurant nearly opposite the ruined castle," persisted Bunter. "It's awfully interesting—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. We shall be able to have a snack at the restaurant before exploring the castle."

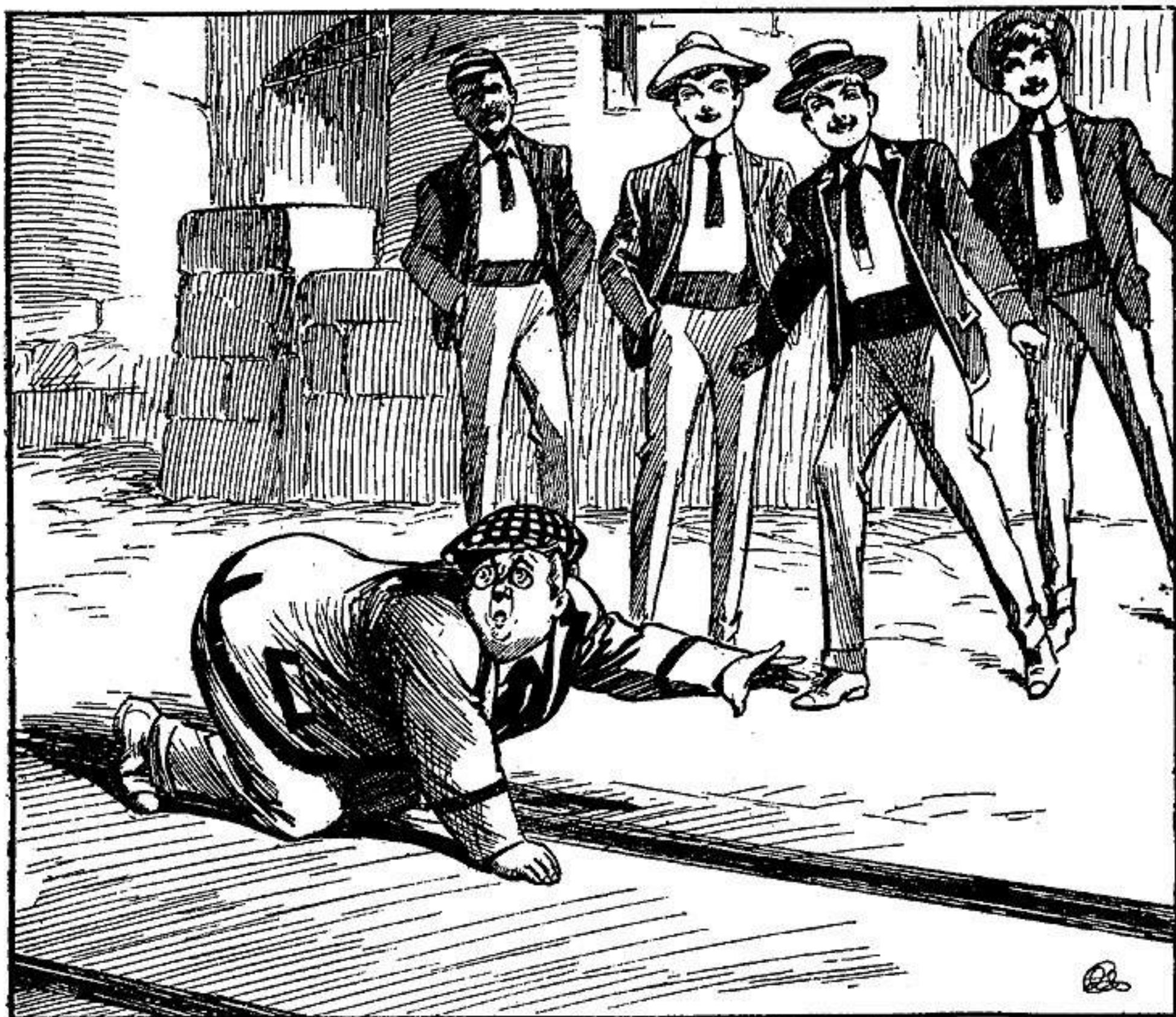
"Why, you young porpoise," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "it's only a few minutes since you were feeding."

"Yes; but it's always a good idea to lay a solid foundation before—"

"Here we are!" exclaimed Nugent, as the tram stopped.

The juniors jumped off.

They were within a few minutes of the castle of Chillon now, and they walked down towards it together. The historic castle where Bonivard was imprisoned stands upon a solitary rock in the lake, connected with the shore by a wooden bridge. Part of the castle is hewn out of the rock, the rest built of the same material. To an antiquarian the place is naturally of the greatest interest. The grey old castle rising abruptly from the blue waters of Lake Lemane is very picturesque; but the hand of the restorer has been at work there, as at most of the "show" places of Switzerland. And the restorer, as usual, has done his work not wisely but too well.



Billy Bunter sat up dazedly on the tram-lines, and gasped.
"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Greyfriars Juniors.

The juniors looked with great interest at the grey old castle as they walked down the path towards it.

"It seems to be pretty well preserved," Bob Cherry remarked. "Look at those windows; they might have been put in last week."

"And they probably were," said Harry, with a smile. "They're restored."

"Oh!"

"The restorfulness is terrific!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Half of it looks like the Tower of London, and the other half like a model dwelling," Nugent remarked.

The juniors reached the castle and paid for admission.

They entered the old courtyard, and a quaint little lady came up and offered her services as guide, in French, with the old-fashioned courtesy of manner which seems to belong to the peasants of Switzerland.

The juniors would greatly have preferred to have no guide, but it was necessary to be polite, so the old lady was allowed to have her way.

Billy Bunter scratched his head as he listened to her explanations of the associations connected with the first apartment they entered.

"Blessed if I understand this!" he remarked. "Do you, Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry, laughing.

"Ah, I suppose it's your bad French again!" said Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can have the guide, Harry," said Bob. "I'll take a stroll round and see if I can figure it out for myself."

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"So will I," said Hazeldene.

The other juniors followed the guide.

She led them into the dungeon where the famous Prisoner of Chillon had been confined for many years by order of the Duke of Savoy, many centuries since.

"Here you are," said Bunter. "The guide-book says

"Cheese it!"

"This is Bonnivard's pillar," said Harry, translating what the guide said. "There are seven, and this is the one he was chained to. Byron's poem about the chap having two brothers here is all moonshine. He was here on his lonesome."

"Must have been awfully short of grub, too, I should think," said Billy Bunter feelingly.

"Hullo! What's that, I wonder?" said Nugent, peering into a dark gap in the rock floor near the dungeon.

Harry asked the old lady in French.

"It's a secret dungeon lately discovered," he remarked. "About six feet by four, and they used to keep prisoners there—in the dark. There's no window."

"My hat! They were the good old times, too!" Nugent remarked reflectively. "I think the good old times are a swindle. Anything down there now?"

Billy Bunter peered down into the gloom.

"Might be original bloodstains, or something," he remarked.

"Nothing, I think," said Harry.

"I think I'll go down," said Bunter.

"Not worth while."

"Rats! I'm going to explore the place," said Bunter.

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warmly. "What's the good of coming to a place if you don't explore it? You won't get me mounting many stairs; but I'm going to look into all the dungeons. Might find some buried treasure or something there, too. Who knows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows needn't wait. I'll follow you."

"Right-ho! Don't forget us when you share out the buried treasure," grinned Nugent.

"Got any matches?"

"Here you are!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors went on, for the guide was doing the guiding at the usual speed. Billy Bunter swung himself down into the cavity, and slid down a rough slope to the floor of the lower dungeon.

He was in complete darkness.

Feeling his way cautiously, he struck a match.

The flicker illuminated a small space, about five or six feet by four, hewn in the solid rock, with a rugged floor and jagged walls.

"My word!" murmured Bunter. "Fancy being shut up here! I'd rather live in the twentieth century, I think, than in the good old times. What jolly beasts they were in those days. It gives one the creeps—"

He struck another match and blinked round.

There certainly wasn't any sign of a buried treasure in the secret dungeon, and Bunter had had enough of the eerie place.

The match burnt his fingers, and he jumped and dropped it. The box fell from his hand, and rolled into a corner. Bunter groped after it, knocked his head on the rock in the darkness, and gave a yell.

"Ow!"

His voice echoed strangely and eerily in the hollow cavity under the rocky floor of the castle.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter, rubbing his head. "Yow! I'm hurt! I wish I hadn't come down into this beastly place. Wharton!"

But the juniors were gone.

They were "doing" the armoury now, at a considerable distance from the dungeons, and as it happened, they were the only visitors to the old castle that afternoon, there was no one to hear Bunter.

The fat junior scrambled towards the exit from the secret dungeon. But it was easier to descend into the dungeon than to climb out of it. An active lad could have reached up and swung himself out without much difficulty. But Bunter was short and fat and ponderous, and anything but active. He slipped on the rock as he tried to clamber up, and rolled back into the dungeon.

He bumped on the hard floor with a bump that took his breath away.

"Ow!" he gasped.

He lay there for some minutes to get his wind back. Then he rose to his feet, bumping himself several times on the rock.

"Yow!" he growled. "What an ass I was to come down here! All through Wharton's rotten idea that there might be a buried treasure here! The ass! How am I to get out? Yow! What a beastly place! Yah!"

He clambered up the rock again.

He caught a hold on the upper part, but he had to drag himself up by his hands to get out; and Bunter was far too heavy a weight to be able to pull himself up anywhere by his hands.

He made the attempt, and was rewarded by a painful ache in his arms, and he let go again and rolled into the dungeon.

This time he did not make another attempt.

He sat on the rocky floor in the darkness and yelled for help.

He was a prisoner—the Prisoner of Chillon—and just about as helpless to make his escape as the original Prisoner of Chillon had been, unless someone came to his aid.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Severely Injured.

LITTLE dreaming of the painful predicament of Billy Bunter, Harry Wharton and his chums went on exploring the old castle. Chillon was full of interesting relics of a remote past, and the juniors were keenly interested. They finished at last, and came out near the ancient gateway. Bob Cherry had rejoined the party, but Hazeldone and Bunter were not to be seen. Harry Wharton bestowed a two-franc piece upon the Swiss dame, and was rewarded with profuse thanks, that being probably twice or thrice her usual gratuity. Then Harry looked round for the others.

"Where's Hazel," he asked, "and Bunter?"

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"Haven't the least idea."

"Better look for them," said Harry. "They close the castle at a quarter to five, I think, and it's jolly near that now."

"Right you are!"

The juniors had had enough walking up and down passages and stairs, but they set out to look for the missing two. Neither was to be seen.

But as they went towards the deep dungeons, so renowned in the history of Chillon, they heard a curious, echoing sound from the distance.

Harry stopped to listen.

"What is that?" he exclaimed. "It sounds like thunder, but the weather's as clear as possible."

"May be the lake washing against the castle walls."

"We didn't hear it before."

"Well, let's see."

They hurried on.

The noise was rumbling and echoing in the dungeons; but they soon ascertained that it was the sound of a human voice, repeated and redoubled in the echoing hollows till it boomed like the distant rumble of thunder.

"It's someone calling!" exclaimed Harry.

Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha! Bunter!"

"Phew!" exclaimed Nugent. "Is it possible that he's still in that blessed secret dungeon, and can't get out?"

"My hat!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

They ran to the opening of the secret dungeon. They stood on the edge of the black gap and peered down. Sure enough, the echoing voice came from below. It was feeble now with repeated efforts.

"Help!"

"Bunter, by Jove!"

"Hallo! Hallo! Hallo! Are you there, Bunter?" shouted Bob Cherry, as if he were calling up the fat junior on a telephone.

"I say, you fellows—"

"That's Bunter!"

"I—I say, rescue, you know!" groaned Bunter. "I'm dying!"

"Rats!" said Harry, who knew that Billy Bunter always made the worst of everything, in order to extract sympathy. "Don't be a duffer!"

"Oh, I'm starving to death! How many days have I been here?"

"Days?"

"Yes!" groaned Bunter, from the darkness below. "Did you miss me when you got home?"

"Got home?"

"Yes! What day is it?"

"What day?" repeated Wharton dazedly.

"Yes! How many days have I been buried here?"

"Ha, ha! You ass! We've only just finished looking round the castle!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You've been here about half an hour or three-quarters."

"Look here, Wharton, I know I've been here three days at least, famishing in the darkness, and I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tried to climb out," moaned Bunter; "and I slipped back, and broke my leg."

"What?"

"I can't move! You fellows will have to lift me out. Oh!"

And Bunter groaned deeply.

Harry Wharton looked alarmed.

He knew that Billy Bunter was a champion malingerer, but the groans sounded genuine now, and it was quite possible that the clumsy Owl of the Remove had injured himself in clambering over the rough and slippery rocks.

"Are you rotting, Bunter?" asked Harry sharply.

Bunter groaned again.

"I think I'm dying."

"Oh, cheese it! I'm coming down!"

"M-m-mind you don't tread on me, Wharton! I'm just below, you know!"

"I'll be careful."

Wharton swung himself down into the cavity. Hanging with his hands, he felt with his feet for a safe place to step. Bunter seemed to fill up most of the floor; but Wharton found a place, and he alighted close to the fat junior.

He struck a match, and bent over Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove was stretched on the floor, and he blinked up at Wharton in the light of the match with an agonised expression. But that went for little, for Bunter was a humbug of the first water.

"Now, then, Billy, where are you hurt?"

"Ow! It's my leg!"

"Which leg?"

"The—the right one!"

Wharton passed his hands over Bunter's right leg, feeling for the injury.

Billy Bunter gave a heartrending groan.

"Ow! You're hurting me fearfully!"

"Blessed if I know what to think!" muttered Harry. "You're such a fearful fibber; and you'd give us any amount of trouble for nothing."

"Oh, really, Wharton I don't think you ought to talk to a chap like that when he's dying!" said Bunter plaintively.

"But I forgive you!"

"Cheese it!"

"I forgive you all! You've always been pretty mean to me—keeping me out of the cricket eleven because you were jealous of my form, and keeping me short of grub in the study at Greyfriars. But I forgive you!"

"Shut up!" roared Wharton.

"Now, I'm dying——"

"Dry up! You talk too much for a dying person," said Harry. "Look here, I'm going to shove you out of this place."

"Mind! My leg's broken in two places!"

"Rats! Stand there ready to catch hold of the fat brute, Bob."

"Right you are!"

Wharton grasped the fat junior.

Bunter gave a yell.

"Ow! My arm's sprained, and you're pinching it!"

"Look here——"

Bunter groaned.

"Ow! Leave me alone! Let me die in peace!"

"Look here," said Harry, "make an effort! You've got to get out. Do you want to be left here all night? They're closing the castle now."

"You'd better send for help," said Bunter faintly. "Send for a dozen men, and——"

"You fat duffer! Get up!"

"My leg's broken!"

"Let me get a grip on you——"

"You're hurting my arm!"

"Hang your arm!"

"Oh, really——"

"Messieurs," said a voice above, and Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh turned from the cavity, to see an official of the castle, "le chateau est ferme."

"The castle's closed, Harry!" Bob Cherry called down.

"Here's a chap come to give us the order of the boot!"

"Now, let me help you, Bunter!" urged Wharton.

"I can't move."

"Do you want to stay here?"

"Send for help."

"Messieurs, il faut aller," said the official.

"We've got to get out, Wharton!"

Harry clambered out of the cavity, with a red face. He began to believe at last that Bunter was really hurt.

The official looked at him in astonishment. He looked very flushed and dusty.

Wharton explained in French.

The Swiss looked sympathetic at once. He was a big, burly man, evidently an old soldier.

"I will lift him out, m'sieur," he said in his own language.

He swung himself into the cavity.

Bunter groaned.

The big Swiss lifted him as if he had been a baby, and raised him up to the reach of the juniors bending down from above.

They lifted him out upon the rocky floor of the upper dungeon.

Bunter gave a hair-raising groan.

"Oh, I'm expiring!"

And he closed his eyes and lay still.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Carried.

"MY hat!"

"It's genuine this time!"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"The genuineness is terrific! The unfortunate Bunter is terrifically done in!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And the juniors looked down on Bunter with great concern.

Their sympathies were slow to wake, because the fat junior was so hopeless a humbug and impostor that it was impossible to trust a word he said. But he certainly looked now as if he were in a faint.

The big Swiss clambered out of the cell.

He looked at Bunter, and a curious expression came over his bronzed, bearded face. There was a twinkle in his blue eyes.

"He is hurt," Wharton explained in French. "Will you help us carry him to somewhere where he can have surgical care?"

The Swiss smiled.

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He bent down beside Bunter and examined him. The way he set to work showed that he knew something of surgery himself.

"The right leg, and one arm," said Wharton.

The Swiss nodded.

He examined the limbs, and shook his head.

"Rien," he said, looking up at Harry.

"What?"

"Rien, m'sieur."

"Nothing!"

"Pas de tout."

"Nothing at all," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "The young rascal has been humbugging us all the time, then!"

Bunter opened his eyes.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Then you're not fainting!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I've just recovered my senses," said Bunter, blinking. "Just in time to hear your unfeeling remarks. What does that chap know about broken bones, I should like to know. He was feeling in the wrong place, too!"

"How do you know he was feeling at all if you were in a faint?"

"Well, you see, I—I——"

"You fat humbug!"

"I—I——"

"You spoofer!"

"You see——"

"Yes, we see that you've taken us in!" said Wharton wrathfully.

"Oh, really——"

"Shut up! Get out of this before we kick you out!"

Wharton placed a two-franc piece in the Swiss's hand. He grinned and touched his cap. He understood Bunter.

"Get up!" roared Nugent, digging Bunter in the ribs with the toe of his boot.

"Ow!"

"Will you get up?"

"I—I can't!"

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry. "He's still keeping it up!"

"The cheeky ass!"

"I—I'm dying!" said Bunter, who never could tell the exact moment when humbug was of no further use. "I—I shall have to be carried away!"

Bob Cherry winked at his chums.

"We'd better carry him," he said.

"I'll see him further first!" said Nugent warmly. Then, catching Bob Cherry's wink, he grinned. "Oh, all right! Sure you want to be carried, Bunter?"

"Yes. Ow! Yes. I'm suffering fearfully."

"Lend a hand here!"

They grasped Bunter. He was seized by his arms and legs, in a most uncomfortable way, and rushed at top speed out of the Castle of Chillon.

He yelled and struggled in a surprising way for one who was so terribly injured. This was not the way he wanted to be carried.

"Ow!" he roared. "Leggo! I—I think I can walk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sure I can walk. Let me down!"

"Too late!" grinned Bob Cherry, as the fat junior was rushed across the wooden bridge, amid laughter from a dozen onlookers. "You couldn't walk when you were wanted to, and you're not going to walk now."

"Ow! Yow!"

"Bring him along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Yah! Help!"

The juniors rushed their fat burden along the path leading up to the road.

"Frog's-march!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The frogfulness of the march is terrific."

"Ow! Help!"

Bunter yelled and wriggled in vain.

He was frog's-marched along the path, the juniors pausing at every fifth or sixth step to bump him on the ground.

They yelled with merriment, and Bunter yelled, too, but his yells were not at all merry.

He had humbugged them completely, but he was paying the price of humbug now. The juniors were exasperated, and they meant the lesson to be a lasting one.

And it was.

Bunter had insisted upon being carried, and they carried him. He wished he had walked, if it had been twenty miles, when he experienced that variety of carrying.

He was rushed up to the road at last, and bumped down on the dusty tram-lines.

The juniors gasped with exertion and merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Feeling better, Bunter?"

"Like to be carried again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sat up dazedly on the tram-lines. His fat face was crimson, and streaming with perspiration. His collar was torn out, and his jacket huddled up round his shoulders. His waistcoat was split down the back, so that there was a view of shirt and gaudy braces. He sat and gasped.

"Beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotters!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Groo! Oh! Ow! Yah!"

And the Greyfriars chums yelled again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter pumped and pumped to get back his expended wind. Bob Cherry gave a sudden shout of warning.

"Look out, Bunter!"

"Yow!"

"Look out! There's a tram coming!"

Billy Bunter squirmed off the tram-lines in a twinkling. He rolled into the grass, and blinked round for the tram. He could not see one.

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry, where is the tram?"

"Coming from Montreux," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "It's a quarter of a mile away, but I thought I'd warn you in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were fagged with laughter. Billy Bunter had given them a great deal of trouble, but the laugh was worth it.

The fat junior scrambled up at last, and began to dust himself down and put himself to rights. His fat face was very sulky.

"By the way," Bob Cherry remarked suddenly, "where's Hazel?"

Wharton gave a start.

In the trouble caused by Billy Bunter, he had quite forgotten Hazeldene. The junior had not been found, and he had not turned up.

"Phew!" said Nugent. "He can't be shut up in some corner of the castle, can he?"

Wharton shook his head.

"He isn't such an ass as Bunter," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"He must have left the castle while we were going round."

"That's odd."

"Perhaps he's gone for a stroll round, or we may find him at the tea-shop yonder," said Wharton abruptly. "Let's see!"

They went on to the tea-shop. It was really a large hotel garden, set out with little tea-tables, very pretty under the trees in the sunshine.

Hazeldene was not there.

As a matter of fact the captain of the Greyfriars Remove did not really expect to see him there. He could not help suspecting, as soon as he found that Hazeldene was missing, that the junior had gone to join Vernon-Smith in Montreux.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Has to Speak!

THE Greyfriars juniors sat at a little table at the garden side, where a low stone wall divided it from the edge of the cliff. On the other side of the wall was a drop of twenty feet or so to the road where the tram-lines ran. The mountains rose in steep slopes from the shores of Lake Leman, and almost every house was on a level different from the next. Sometimes two rooms in the same house would be on different levels, though side by side. At the back of the garden rose the mountain wall of grim rock.

Where the juniors sat they were in full view of the road, so that Hazeldene could not miss them if he should be looking for them.

But Wharton had little expectation of that. He did not believe that Marjorie's brother was still in Chillon.

The juniors had their tea, Billy Bunter showing that his painful experiences had had no diminishing effect upon his appetite.

Harry Wharton could not help feeling a little worried.

He was responsible to his uncle, and to Dr. Locke at Greyfriars, for the conduct of the party, and he had promised Marjorie, too, to look after her brother.

He had never thought of Hazel giving him the slip like this—for that was what it really amounted to.

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He was very silent during tea.

The juniors finished, and rose from the table, and Wharton settled the very moderate charge, Bunter grunting discontentedly as he rose.

"I'm not half finished yet," he said.

"You never are," said Harry. "You can feed again at Montreux, if you like."

"Are we going to the Kursaal?" asked Nugent, who understood very well what was the cause of the cloud upon Wharton's brow.

"Yes," said Harry briefly.

And the juniors walked into the gay town on the shores of Lake Leman. Montreux, with its bright shops and great hotels, was very different from Chillon. The juniors walked along the principal street, thronged with visitors and tourists. It was easy enough to find their way to the Kursaal.

It was a large and handsome building.

The juniors passed into the vestibule through the turnstile, and Harry Wharton paid a franc each for the party, at the desk inside where the controller sat.

Then they passed into the inner vestibule—large, airy, and spacious. On the left was a cloak-room, on the right a room partitioned off with glass, evidently the gaming-room.

But it was dark and closed now; gaming had ceased until the evening.

Wharton glanced round.

The vestibule was pretty well crowded, as were the stairs leading to the upper floor, where were the reading-room and restaurant.

Was Hazeldene there?

He glanced into the "salle des jeux." It was deserted, the long green table covered with cloth, the lights extinguished. Light came through the glass from the vestibule, however. On the wall was a notice in French: "Les enfants ne sont pas admis dans le salle." Wharton's lip curled. Young persons might not be admitted to the gaming-room, as a rule; but the Bounder's device would make it easy enough. The officials were not likely to be very strict in excluding anyone who had money to lose.

Where was Hazeldene?

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.

Wharton turned round quickly.

"Have you seen him?"

"Not Hazel, but the Bounder."

"Where?"

"He's just passed on the balcony."

Wharton crossed a large room, dotted with tea-tables, on the other side of which French windows opened upon a balcony. Harry stepped out of one of the windows, and a view of the wide lake, gleaming in the sun, burst upon his eyes.

There were several men on the balcony, and one boy. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith. He was lounging there and smoking a cigarette. The false moustache dropped over his upper lip, and that and the cigarette certainly made him look years older than his age.

Wharton's lips came together hard. At Greyfriars the Bounder had been thoroughly ragged for his smoking proclivities, but here in a foreign land it was not Wharton's business to interfere with that. He took no notice of the cigarette.

Vernon-Smith glanced round, and started a little at the sight of Wharton. He nodded, however, the next moment.

"So you've come!" he remarked.

"Yes."

"You're too late for the petits chevaux. It doesn't begin again till nine o'clock this evening," said Vernon-Smith.

"I did not come here to gamble, as you know."

"There's a concert going on downstairs," said Vernon-Smith, with a drawl. "I don't care for it myself, but I believe you're musical. It's good music—Wagner and Brahms and Saint-Saens. Is that what you're after?"

"No."

"Then you've come just for the pleasure of a chat with me?" said Vernon-Smith, with an agreeable grin. "That's very good of you."

"I've come to look for Hazel."

"Hazel?"

"Yes."

"Have you lost him?"

"I think he has been here," said Harry Wharton. "We missed him at Chillon. It occurred to me that he might have come here, and you might have met him."

"Oh, I see!"

"Have you seen him?"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

Wharton repeated his question, his voice rising a little. He was certain now that the Bounder had met Hazeldene, and he felt a strong suspicion that he had tempted the weak and foolish fellow to play. It was as much as Harry could



"Yow!" growled Billy Bunter. "What an ass I was to come down here! All through Wharton's rotten idea that there might be a hidden treasure here!"

do to keep his hands off the cool, mocking face before him. Several of the people on the balcony looked at the Greyfriars fellows curiously. They felt that there was something in the wind.

"Have you seen him, Vernon-Smith?"

"My dear fellow—"

"Answer my question."

"I don't choose to answer it," said the Bounder, with a steely glitter in his eyes. "You seem to have taken it upon yourself to play father-confessor to Hazeldene—and he doesn't like it. I'm not going to help you to bother him. Let the fellow alone. He's as old as you are, and quite able to look after himself."

"Have you seen him?"

"Find out."

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Wharton clenched his hands hard.

"I don't want to make a row here," he said, in a low concentrated voice; "but I know you've seen Hazel, and if you don't tell me where to find him, I'll shake you till you do. Now then, are you going to tell me?"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

"No! Mind what you do. You'll get thrown out if you make a row here."

"I don't care."

"Fool! Hands off!"

"Will you tell me—"

"No!"

Wharton said no more. His grasp was on the Bounder in another second. In the grasp of the champion athlete of the Lower School at Greyfriars, the Bounder was a baby.

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

He struck fiercely, and a red mark came on Wharton's cheek. The next moment he was swept off his feet, and jammed against the wall, with a crash that brought a cry from his lips, and left him gasping.

Wharton held him there with an iron grip. There was a buzz of voices on the balcony. Wharton did not even hear them.

His gaze was fastened upon the startled, alarmed face of the Bounder. Vernon-Smith realised that he had gone too far.

"Now, then," said Harry, between his teeth, "where is Hazel?"

"You fool!" hissed the Bounder. "Release me! You're attracting everybody's attention."

"I don't care."

"You mad idiot!"

"Where is Hazeldene?"

The Bounder ground his teeth in helpless rage. He was a child in Wharton's hands, and Harry, in his anger and excitement, was shaking him as a dog shakes a rat.

"Stop! Stop!" gasped Vernon-Smith chokingly. "Stop it! I'll tell you."

"Have you seen Hazeldene?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"He has been here?"

"Yes."

"Where is he now?"

"In the gardens, I believe."

Wharton released the Bounder. Vernon-Smith, choking with rage, but not daring to wreak it in action, put his collar straight.

"He has played?" said Harry, in a low, tense voice.

"Yes."

"And lost money?"

"Yes."

"You made him play?"

"Pah! I am not his keeper."

Wharton trembled with rage.

"If we weren't in a public place, I'd thrash you within an inch of your life," he said. "You cad! You unspeakable cad!"

The Bounder gave him a look of evil animosity.

"I'll make you suffer for this," he said, in a low, shaking voice. "I'll make you squirm! As for Hazeldene, he shall play again—and again. I'll show you that I can do as I like with him. I'll show you—"

Wharton stayed to hear no more. He strode into the building, and descended to the gardens in search of Hazeldene.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Broken Friendship.

"HAZEL! Hazeldene!"

Wharton called the name softly among the trees. He had looked up and down the gardens for some minutes, but had seen nothing of the junior he was seeking.

"Hazel!"

He stopped suddenly. In a seat under a clump of the trees, half hidden by flowering boughs, sat the boy he sought.

Hazeldene must have heard him calling, but he gave no sign.

Wharton looked at him.

He was sitting in an attitude of deep dejection, and his eyes were fixed upon the ground. His hands clasped one knee. He knew that Wharton had stopped, and was looking at him, but he did not raise his glance.

"Hazel!"

"Well?"

"I've been looking for you?"

"Have you?"

Wharton sat down beside him on the seat. He did not quite know how to deal with Hazeldene in this mood.

"I've seen Vernon-Smith," he said slowly

"Yes."

"You've been gambling, Hazel?"

"Yes," said the junior defiantly.

"You've lost your money?"

"Every cent."

"Much?"

"Oh, no," said Hazeldene, with a bitter smile. "Only all I had—a few louis. It lasted quite a long time, as they have a five-franc limit. Mind, I'm not saying anything against the bank. They don't ask you to play, and I believe they play fairly, as far as that goes. But it's a rotten game—no player has a chance—it's all calculated to give him no chance. It's a swindle."

"Then, why play?"

"Lot of good asking that, after it's done."

"I did not know you intended to leave us at Chillon," said Harry quietly. "I didn't think you'd be really cad enough to gamble, either?"

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Hazeldene started. As he looked up, Wharton saw that the false moustache was fastened to his lip. That, and the wrinkle of worry in his brow, combined to make him look strangely old and worn.

"Cad?" repeated Hazeldene.

"That's the word. You know we're trusted not to do anything of the sort, and you've broken what amounts to your word of honour."

"Oh, rot!"

"It's different with Vernon-Smith. He's bound to be a blackguard at any time, I suppose, and he's nothing to me, anyway. But you're with me, Hazel—"

"I sha'n't be with you long, if you're going to preach at me!" said Hazeldene savagely. "I've had enough of that."

"I'm not going to preach," said Harry, speaking calmly with an effort. "I only say that you can't gamble while you're with me. I have to answer for it to Dr. Locke."

"Then I'll relieve you of my company."

"You can't leave me. You're my uncle's guest."

"Vernon-Smith is going back to Geneva to-night," said Hazeldene. "He's asked me to stay with him and his pater there."

"You can't."

"Why can't I, if I choose?" demanded Hazeldene fiercely.

"I'm my own master, I suppose."

"Nothing of the sort. If you leave my uncle's house, you leave it to go straight back to Greyfriars," said Harry. "Unless you have Dr. Locke's written permission to go and stay somewhere else on your own."

Hazeldene laughed scornfully.

"I'm not likely to get that."

"Then you can stay with me, or go back to England, as you choose; but you can't speak to Vernon-Smith again. You must see that you're placing me, and my uncle, too, in a rotten position by this," said Harry hotly.

Hazeldene looked sullen.

"Well, I've lost all my tin, and we needn't argue it over," he said. "Vernon-Smith would lend me some, though."

"I can lend you all you need."

"I believe I should have won if we had gone on," said Hazeldene. "You see, the game's new to me. I was just getting into the way of it when it closed down. It opens again at nine o'clock this evening."

"We shall be gone then."

"Ye-es, I suppose so," said Hazeldene hesitatingly.

"We're going now," said Harry abruptly. "We've had enough of the Kursaal. If I had my way I'd have 'em closed, or burnt down. It's rotten that such places should be allowed to exist where decent people come for their holidays."

Hazeldene shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"What rot! They don't ask you to play."

"No; but the rooms are open to all comers, tempting every weak fool to come in and waste his time and money."

"So I'm a weak fool, am I?" said Hazeldene unpleasantly.

"Not much doubt on that point. Are you coming?"

"No."

"Our train for Lausanne is nearly due."

"I'm not coming to Lausanne."

Wharton stood and looked at him.

"Look here, Hazeldene, what do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"You must come."

Hazeldene's eyes burned.

"I won't, then."

"What are you going to do?"

"Stay here."

"Why?"

"That's my business."

Wharton stood perplexed. If Hazeldene was obstinate, what was he to do? He could hardly carry the junior back to Lausanne by main force: and that was hardly the way to treat a guest, even if he could.

What was to be done?

It was quite plain that the gambling fever had taken hold of Hazeldene, and was in his blood, and that all Wharton's arguments would have no effect upon him.

"You can't stop here," repeated Wharton. "What am I to say to my uncle?"

"Tell him I'm much obliged to him for his hospitality, and that I regret that circumstances compel me to cut short my stay with him," said Hazeldene, in an ironical tone of great politeness.

Wharton flushed red.

"Don't be a cad, Hazel."

Hazeldene gave a shrug.

"In a word, you're going to throw me over for that cad, Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Harry abruptly.

"I'm going to accept his invitation. Why shouldn't I?"

"And leave me to explain matters? If you are such a cad—"

"That's twice you've called me a cad. Isn't it about time

this discussion ended?" said Hazeldene, in his most unpleasant manner.

Wharton paused. What to say, or what to do, he did not know. The position was so utterly unexpected. He had never expected anything like this from Hazeldene, even under the influence of the Bounder.

And he thought of Marjorie. He had promised to look after Hazel. He had taken him to Switzerland for that very purpose. As it turned out, he had plunged him into the midst of new and greater temptations. But who could have foreseen the arrival of the Bounder on the shores of Lake Lemán?

If Hazeldene had not been Marjorie's brother, it is quite probable that Wharton would have given him, on the spot, a fécord licking. But that was hardly the way Marjorie expected him to care for Hazel.

Hazeldene looked at him with a sullen brow.

"Well," he said, "you needn't wait. You said your train was due, I think."

"Won't you come, Hazel?"

"Not now."

"You are going to wait for the table to re-open?"

"Yes."

"To play again?"

"Yes."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You won't play again here," he said. "If you stay, I stay, too. And I tell you that I won't have it."

"You won't make a scene here, I suppose?" said Hazel, with a sneer.

"No, but—"

"Look here, I never asked you to look after me!" exclaimed Hazeldene savagely. "I'm not going to be treated like a baby. Vernon-Smith says that you brought me over here to get me away from him, because you thought I couldn't run straight while you were away from Greyfriars."

Wharton was silent.

"It was like your blessed cheek, I think," said Hazeldene furiously. "And if Marjorie asked you, that makes no difference. What right have you got to interfere in my private affairs? I've never asked you to."

Wharton did not speak. There had been a time when Hazeldene had asked him to, and when Harry's interference had saved the wretched junior from being expelled from Greyfriars; but Hazeldene did not choose to remember that now.

"I'm not going to be preached at, and domineered over," said Hazeldene. "If you don't like my ways, leave me alone. I've got other friends. I'm not begging for your society. And I tell you plainly that I'm going to have another try to win my money back."

Wharton's face was pale with anger.

"If you go to the gambling-table again, you're a rotten cad," he said. "You're forcing me to break my trust."

"That's enough."

"You won't come with me?"

"No, I won't."

And Hazeldene strode away savagely among the trees, leaving the captain of the Greyfriars Remove standing alone, and in no pleasant mood.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter—Musical Critic.

"WHARTON!"

It was Bob Cherry's voice calling.

He came down the garden, looking for Harry Wharton.

"Where are you, Harry? Hallo, hallo, hallo! Have you found Hazeldene?"

"Yes," said Harry shortly.

"Where is he?"

"He's left me."

"Time we left, too," said Bob. "The train's nearly due, and we shall be home late at Lausanne if we don't catch it."

"Then we shall be home late," said Harry.

"What do you mean? Are we missing this train?"

"Yes."

Bob looked puzzled.

"Why?"

"Hazel won't come."

"Phew!"

"He's been gambling, and he's lost, and he's determined to try his luck again this evening at the tables," said Harry gloomily.

Bob Cherry's jaw looked very square and grim.

"Well, it's not my business, I suppose," he remarked; "but if I were in your place, Harry, do you know what I should do?"

"Well, what?"

"I'd give him the choice between coming home quietly, and taking the biggest licking of his life," said Bob Cherry.

Wharton laughed a little.

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NEXT

WEEK:

"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS."

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ONE
PENNY.

"I don't say he doesn't deserve it, Bob. He's had lessons enough, goodness knows, not to play the giddy ox in this way. But I can't do it. He's my guest, in my uncle's house, for one thing."

"H'm! I suppose that makes a difference," Bob admitted. "It's not exactly Chesterfield to slog your guest in the eye."

"Hardly," said Wharton. "Besides, I must think of Marjorie. I only bothered myself with the fellow for her sake. What would she say if she knew we had come to blows here—when she was really the cause of his coming?"

Bob Cherry nodded.

"It's a beastly position, Harry."

"I know it is."

"I don't see what you are to do. Hazeldene is acting like a rotten cad," said Bob Cherry hotly. "The commonest decency ought to make him behave himself while he's your guest."

"But he won't. If I could have foreseen the Bounder coming here, of course I shouldn't have taken it on. The rotter's acting more from spite against us than anything else, and he's got Hazel under his thumb."

"Then are you going to leave Hazel here?"

"No. I shall have to think it out. We'll miss that train, and go by a later one. I'll send a wire to my uncle so that he won't be anxious."

The juniors walked down together to the post-office, and Wharton despatched the telegram. Then they strolled into the Kursaal again.

Hazeldene was not to be seen, neither was the Bounder. But Harry had little doubt that they were together.

Nugent and Hurree Singh and Billy Bunter were seated at one of the little coffee tables, listening to the band. The latter was discoursing sweet music from an adjoining apartment. Billy Bunter, who had an idea that he had a musical ear and a knowledge of music, was listening, and giving the other fellows the benefit of his opinion on the performance.

"That's ripping," he said, as Wharton and Bob Cherry came up. "I like that. It's bong—decidedly bong. I always admired Wagner."

Nugent chuckled.

"You always admired what?" he asked.

"Wagner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Billy Bunter. "Wagner's a jolly good composer, and I stand up for Wagner. Wagner's all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've no ear for music!" growled Bunter. "Do you mean to say that that last item wasn't jolly good?"

"Oh, it was all right."

"Then what are you cackling at?"

"Your admiration for Wagner!" grinned Nugent. "You see, that last item was a selection from Samson and Delilah, by Saint-Saens."

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a mistake," said Bunter. "You know how stupid these French people are. People who don't understand their own language are capable of anything. It's been printed wrong on the programme."

"You ass!" chuckled Nugent. "I happen to know the music."

"Rats! You've got no ear."

"Well, you have, and you're in great danger of getting it pulled," said Nugent. "You'd better shut up on the subject of music."

"Look here!"

"Dry up! The band's beginning again."

The strains of the orchestra, very well played, came from the adjoining room. Billy Bunter cocked his head on one side, and listened.

"Perhaps you're right, Nugent," he remarked. "Saint-Saens is a jolly bong composer. I like his stuff."

"You like whose stuff?" grinned Nugent.

"Saint-Saens," said Bunter. "It's really good. Yes, I pass that. I don't care much for French music, as a rule, but that is all right."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"Look here!"

"You fat duffer! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—"

"You chump!" yelled Nugent. "That's Wagner, this time."

"Oh!"

"It's the prelude to the Third Act of Lohengrin, chump, that everybody knows by heart—excepting you, you ass!"

"Rats!"

"Why, you chump, look on the programme, then."

"Stuff! These French people are always making mistakes."

"You'd better cheese it, Bunty," said Wharton, as he sat down. "You weren't built for a music critic. Grub critic is more in your line."

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"Shut up, and let's hear the music."

Bunter blinked angrily. As twenty or more instruments were doing their best with a composition that could not be called a subdued one, his voice was not likely to drown the music; but his conversation was evidently not sought after.

The orchestra blared out the strains of the prelude, and came to a stop. There was a ripple of hand-clapping. Bunter grunted, and busied himself with cakes. He made one more attempt at musical criticism as the band started the next item.

"That's bong," he remarked. "I can't call to mind the composer, but I think it must be Strauss. I like those jolly waltzes."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Nugent. "Why don't you ring off, Bunter? That giddy waltz, as you call it, is the Pilgrim's Chorus in Tannhauser."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—"

"Cheese it! Stick to the grub, and let the music alone."

And Bunter grunted, and decided that he had better do

80.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Evil Genius.

IT was the last item on the programme, and when it was over, the Greyfriars juniors strolled about the Kursaal and the handsome grounds. Although on an infinitely smaller scale than the famous Casino at Monte Carlo, the Montreux Kursaal resembled that celebrated gaming resort in one respect—it was as pleasant a place as one could wish to lose one's money in.

The Kursaal was deserted a little later, to reopen with a fresh flood of life and gaiety in the evening. The juniors walked out into Montreux, and filled up the time by a pull on the lake in the sunset. Billy Bunter did not come with them. He preferred to sit on the bank and rest, though what he had done to need resting after was a puzzle.

The fat junior seated himself upon one of the seats facing the lake, and dozed. He was in a half-asleep state when Hazeldene and the Bouncer came walking along the lake front, and sat down on the seat.

Bunter woke up.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, "have you had your tea? If you're looking for a feed, I can show you a bong place."

"Rats!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'm not going to feed you. Buzz off!"

Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"Oh, really, Smith! I was sitting here before you came. I'm jolly well not going to move for you."

"Shut up, then!"

Bunter snorted, and relapsed into silence. The Bouncer turned to Hazeldene, taking no further notice of the Owl of the Remove.

"You're stony?" he asked.

"Yes," said Hazeldene, in a low voice. "Every blessed franc went!"

The Bouncer grinned.

"And you want to try your luck again?"

"Of course! I've got a sort of feeling that I shall win if I have half a chance," said Hazeldene eagerly.

"It's possible, of course," said Vernon-Smith. "It's not likely, though."

"Why not?" said Hazeldene angrily. "You've been lucky. You've won five louis, you told me."

"I have plenty of money to risk, and it doesn't matter much to me whether I win or lose," said the Bouncer coolly. "I keep a cool head, too, and you don't. Look here, I'm not going to advise you to play. You've had a little flutter, and paid for your experience, and now it's time for you to cry off."

"I suppose I can do as I like?"

"Well, yes. But that's my advice."

"Keep your advice till I ask you for it. I've had enough preaching from Wharton, and, hang it, Smithy, you're not the sort of chap to preach, anyway."

"How much do you want?" said the Bouncer abruptly.

"Oh, a few louis!"

"And when will you return the loan?"

"If I win—"

"Rats! Do you mean to say that you'll only return the money if you win?" demanded Vernon-Smith roughly.

Hazeldene flushed.

"No. If I can't repay you here, I'll repay you in England."

"How? You haven't any money. Five louis is about four pounds. Where are you going to get four pounds from at Greyfriars?"

Hazeldene was silent.

As a matter of fact, he knew that he could not possibly repay the loan unless he won the necessary money at the gaming-table—a foolish hope, as he knew in his heart. But he had not expected the Bouncer to take this tone. He knew that Vernon-Smith had almost as much money as he chose to ask his father for. Samuel Vernon-Smith, the Cotton King, did not stint his hopeful son. But the Bouncer, having regained his influence over Hazeldene, did not mean to pay too much for it.

"You can't pay the money unless you win," said Vernon-Smith, "and you're about as likely to win as to find a goldmine on the beach."

"You didn't say that before I played last time," said Hazeldene sullenly. "You chipped me into playing, as you know very well."

The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't say I won't help you," he said. "If you want to have another flutter, I'll lend you five louis with pleasure, and wish you luck."

"Hand the tin over then, and not so much jaw."

"Wait a bit. I'm not going to lend you money while you stick to Wharton's party. I've invited you to stay with my father and me at Geneva. If you like to come, you can borrow the tin. But I'm not spending money to finance a chap who's going around with Wharton. Do you understand?"

"I'm staying with Wharton in Lausanne, in his uncle's house."

"You're not bound to prolong your visit, I suppose?"

"Well, no."

"I suppose Wharton's not your master?"

"Of course he isn't!" said Hazeldene savagely. "And I've jolly well told him so! I've quarrelled with him already about not leaving Montreux by the early train."

"Good, so far! Come home with me to-night, then?"

"Wharton says that if I leave Colonel Wharton's house, I shall have to go straight back to Greyfriars. Of course, Dr. Locke only gave me permission to come here on the understanding that I should be in the colonel's charge," said Hazeldene uneasily.

"Pah! Cut it, and come with me. I'll promise you a

A REMINDER!



"THE EMPIRE" LIBRARY, price One Halfpenny—my companion paper—is now on sale. You will enjoy reading the splendid, long, complete story in this week's issue.



Hazeldene had gathered up his last coins for a final throw, when a hand fell on his shoulder.
"Monsieur will come with me," said a Kursaal attendant.

jolly time in Geneva, and you can go home with your pockets full of money. There's a Kursaal there."

Hazeldene's eyes glittered.

The fever of gambling was in his veins. Like most weak natures subjected to the strong temptation of gambling, he resisted feebly, if at all.

"I'll come," he said.

The Bouncer smiled.

"Good!" he said. "We'll have a little flutter at Montreux, and catch the late train for Geneva—the train de luxe, you know. I'll stand the tickets."

"You're a good sort, Smithy."

"If you're decent to me, you'll find me so," said the Bouncer. "Now, come, let's get a feed before the tables reopen. I'll stand you a decent dinner at the hotel, and you'll play better with some champagne inside you."

"Thanks awfully!"

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And they moved off. Billy Bunter jumped up.

"I say, you fellows, I'll come to dinner with you, if you like! I—Beasts! Fancy walking right on while a chap was talking to them! Rotters!"

And Bunter sat down again discontentedly. The two juniors disappeared in the dusk. Billy Bunter watched the lake for the return of Harry Wharton & Co.

A boat ran up to the shore, and the Famous Four jumped out. They were looking very ruddy, and a little tired, after their pull on the lake.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here's Bunter, still alive, and he hasn't fed for an hour!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "How do you do these things, Bunt?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Time we had a feed," said Nugent.

"Just what I was going to say, Nugent. I'm fearfully

hungry. I say, you fellows, Hazeldene has gone to have dinner with Vernon-Smith, and they're going to have champagne."

"How do you know?" asked Harry curtly.

"They were talking about it here, on this seat. And Hazel's going to stay with Vernon-Smith in Geneva, and not going back to Lausanne at all."

Wharton did not reply.

The juniors strolled into the town again, and found a pleasant restaurant, where Wharton ordered dinner.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, bilking over the third course, which happened to be macaroni au gratin, "Vernon-Smith's standing champagne to Hazel—"

"You've told us that once."

"I was thinking we might have the same. You see, as we're on holiday, there's no need to stick to the rules, and—"

"Shut up!"

"I think we might have some fizz for once. Smith was urging me very strongly to come with him, but I said I couldn't leave you fellows in the lurch."

"Rats!"

"Next time I get an invitation to a champagne dinner, blessed if I'll stop to think of you," said Bunter. "If I knew what hotel they were at, I wouldn't stay with you now."

"You won't stay with us now, anyway, if you're not jolly careful," said Bob Cherry, holding up a warning finger.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Cheese it!"

"Well, I suppose we can have a smoke after dinner, anyway?"

Wharton laughed involuntarily. Billy Bunter was as imitative as a monkey, and it was curious to see how he was picking up the man-of-the-world airs that Vernon-Smith had adopted.

"No, you can't have a smoke, Billy," he remarked. "Not unless you want to be made to eat the cigarette, as you were once before."

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to be interfered with!" said Billy Bunter. "I suppose I'm an independent chap. I—"

"Shut up!"

"I can do as I like—"

"Ring off!"

"Shan't! I—"

"Mutiny, by Jove!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here's Bunter getting his ears up, as well as the other chump. Must nip this in the bud!"

He rose.

Bunter eyed him nervously.

"Look here, Cherry—Ow!"

Bob Cherry took an iron grip on the back of Bunter's neck. With a powerful jerk of the arm he forced the fat junior's face downwards, and Bunter's fat features squashed into the warm and soft macaroni.

Splash!

"Groo-oo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Phew!" said Bob, releasing Bunter. "You ass! What did you do that for? I didn't mean you to biff your silly chivvy in your silly plate!"

"Groo! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter leaped up. His fat face was streaming with macaroni and gravy. He blinked at the chums through his dimmed spectacles furiously.

"Gro-ogh! Yow! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The waiter came hurrying up. He grinned as he brought a serviette to Bunter's assistance. The fat junior mopped his face, and glowered.

"Cherry, you beast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotter!"

"Go it!"

"Ruffian! Hooligan!" roared Bunter.

"Hurrah!"

"Beast!"

"You'll miss the rest of the dinner, Billy," said Wharton. That warning had its effect upon Bunter. He dropped into his seat again, and restarted. And in the second half, so to speak, his attack was as lively as before the interval.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Intervenes.

THE Greyfriars chums finished their dinner without any more conversation from Billy Bunter. But the fat junior's face was sulky. Hazeldene had asserted his independence, and Wharton had not, apparently, been able to handle him. Bunter meant to assert his also. If a Hazeldene could do as he liked, surely a Bunter might!

That was how the Owl of the Betmote put it to himself. He was going to have a flutter at Montreux, and he was going to do as he chose—rather! All through dinner Billy Bunter was thinking over his wrongs, and resolving that that very evening he would vindicate his liberty.

The juniors left the restaurant, and strolled in the direction of the Kursaal. It was open again now, and the vestibule was brightly lighted.

The juniors entered, and Harry Wharton looked round for Hazeldene. He knew that he would soon be there with the Bouncer.

Wharton had made up his mind what to do. That Hazeldene should not gamble again at the Kursaal he was determined.

It was close upon nine when the Bouncer appeared, walking with his arm linked in Hazeldene's. There was a flush in both faces, and it certainly looked as if Bunter's remark about the champagne was true. Both of the foolish fellows were smoking, too, and trying their hardest to look like men of the world and awfully doggish.

Hazeldene started a little as he saw the Famous Four standing near the staircase. He said something in a low voice to Vernon-Smith, who shrugged his shoulders.

The two walked across towards the salles des jeux.

That apartment was lighted up now, and the croupiers were in their places at the long table, but the game had not yet started. The game, although called "petits chevaux," was more properly named "la boule," and it was played by a ball being rolled by hand round a circle of numbered slots. The slot that the ball stopped in was the winning one. The game was simple enough to follow, but calculated, with almost impudent frankness, to give no chance whatever to the player.

Hazeldene and the Bouncer were almost at the entrance to the salon when Harry Wharton stepped into their path. They stopped. Hazeldene did so first, and the Bouncer followed his example, but he pulled at Hazel's sleeve.

"Come on," he said. "The chairs are filling up. It's not easy to get a place at the table unless you're early."

"All right. I—"

"Stop a minute," said Wharton, "I must speak to you, Hazel."

"Buck up, then!"

"You are going to play?"

"Yes, of course."

"You've lost all your money once."

"Vernon-Smith's lent me five pounds," said Hazeldene. "It's more than you would do, though you take it upon yourself to interfere with me all the time."

"I wouldn't lend you a franc to gamble with, certainly," said Wharton; "but you must not play, Hazel. I'm making an appeal to you."

"Rubbish!"

"You know you're not treating me well. You came to Switzerland as my guest and my chum, and now—"

"Well, I'm sorry, but we don't get on," said Hazeldene; "what's the good of sticking together when we don't get on?"

"But—"

"Are you coming?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith impatiently.

"Yes, I'm coming. Do let me go, Wharton. You're wasting time."

"One minute!"

"Look here, I want to get a place at the table!" exclaimed Hazeldene irritably. "Let me alone! Mind your own business, hang you!"

Wharton set his teeth.

"This is my business," he said. "If it's no good to ask you, Hazeldene, I'll put it more plainly. You're not going to play."

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I am."

"Are you going to make a scene here, before all these foreigners?"

"I shall stop you."

"Oh, do let me alone!"

"If you step into that room, Hazeldene, I shall go over and speak to the controller, and you'll be shown out."

"You can go and eat coke."

And Hazeldene jerked his arm free from Wharton's detaining grasp, and followed Vernon-Smith into the gaming-room.

ANSWERS

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NEXT WEEK: "THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS." A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

The game had started now. The round ball was rolling on its first journey on the numbered bowl, and the croupier's voice could be heard.

"Faites vos jeux, messieurs."

"Make your game, gentlemen."

The chairs at the table were filled up. Players stood behind them, and Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith hurried to get places. Behind them there were soon two or three rows of spectators or players standing.

Wharton stood in the vestibule, with a dark look on his face. His chums waited in silence, and Billy Bunter was grinning.

"Blessed if I don't go and have a flutter, too," he remarked.

Bob Cherry took a grip on the fat junior's ear.

"Ow!" squealed Bunter.

"Does that hurt, Tubby?"

"Ow! Yow! Yes!"

"Well, it will hurt worse than that if you make a step towards that room," said Bob Cherry pleasantly.

"Look here, Cherry—"

"Dry up!"

"Wait here for me, you chaps," said Harry Wharton abruptly, and he walked across the vestibule towards the desk where the controller sat, taking the francs and issuing the tickets of admission to the people who were now pouring into the Kursaal.

The controller looked up at Wharton's set pale face. Harry waited till there was a momentary pause in the rush of people, and the man was at liberty.

"M'sieur?" said the man, politely inquiring.

"I believe you speak English?" said Harry.

"Yes, m'sieur."

"Good! It is against the rules, is it not, for boys to play in the room yonder?"

The controller smiled.

"Oui, m'sieur! I am afraid we cannot allow you to have a flutter here—not till you are some years older, monsieur."

Wharton coloured. It was a natural mistake for the man to make.

"I do not want to play," said Harry quickly; "but a chap I know is in there playing, and I want him stopped."

"A man, do you mean, m'sieur?"

"No—a boy."

"But the croupiers will not allow it, if he is really a boy."

"He is wearing a false moustache."

The controller smiled. Perhaps that device was not unknown to his experience.

"Excuse me, m'sieur," he said, and turned to deal with a crowd of people who came pouring in through the turnstile.

Wharton waited patiently. He was in a determined temper, but he did not want to make himself troublesome. The controller looked decent enough, and he had no doubt that the two foolish fellows in the gaming-room would be stopped.

"Very well, m'sieur," said the controller, when he was relieved again for a moment, "I will speak to an attendant, and the matter shall be seen to. If it is as you say, the garçon shall be stopped playing, certainly."

"Thank you, monsieur!"

And Wharton rejoined his chums. Billy Bunter was expostulating with Bob Cherry, who still had a grip on his fat ear, ready to tighten it if the fat junior made the slightest attempt to escape.

"It's all right," said Harry quietly, "Hazel will be stopped."

Bunter grunted.

"I think that's rotten, Wharton," he said. "I think you're acting the giddy goat. I think—"

"Hold your tongue!" said Harry.

And there was something in his tone that made Billy Bunter realise that it would not be judicious to favour him with any more of his thoughts on the subject.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Cowardly Blow.

HAZELDENE had succeeded in obtaining a seat now. A player had retired, leaving all his available cash in the care of the croupiers, and the Greyfriars junior sat down in his place. Hazel had his money on the green cloth of the table before him—his five louis had already diminished to three. Vernon-Smith stood behind him, playing with more caution. But luck was going against the Bounder too, now. He had lost three louis in five minutes, for although there was a limit of five francs on the game, it was played so quickly that money could be lost at a very rapid rate.

Hazeldene was looking irritable.

Like many who cannot resist the temptation of gambling, he was a bad loser. It was not really a game of chance he wanted—he wanted to win. And he was losing.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS."

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"How are you getting on?" asked the Bounder, looking over his shoulder.

"Rotten!"

"Lost much?"

"Two blessed louis."

"Wait for a turn, and then double the stakes," said Vernon-Smith.

"Good!"

The very next time Hazeldene won. He took Vernon-Smith's advice, and doubled his stakes, but the win was only momentary; he was soon losing again—losing money at twice his former rate—that was the only difference.

"Lend me a louis, Smith," he said.

"All gone?"

"All but a few francs."

"Phew! I'm out, too!"

Hazeldene started, and looked round.

"Haven't you any money?"

"Yes, but I shall have to go to the controller and change an English banknote. I—"

"I'll keep on. Luck may change."

Hazeldene tossed a few francs on the green cloth.

Then his feverish eyes watched the revolving ball.

His stake was on seven, and twice the ball nearly fell into seven, and his heart thumped, and his face flushed and paled with unhealthy excitement. Then the ball finally dropped into six, and his money was swept away.

He was gathering up his last few coins for a final throw, when a hand fell upon his shoulder. He looked up, and saw a Kursaal attendant in uniform.

"Monsieur will come with me," said the man, in English.

"Eh? Why?"

"To Monsieur le Contrôleur."

"But—"

"Monsieur will come?"

"Stuff! I—"

"Please come!"

"Better go," said Vernon-Smith, "I've got to go to the controller, anyway, to get some banknotes changed."

"All right," said Hazeldene shortly.

He rose, and the two juniors followed the Swiss to the controller's desk in the vestibule.

The man looked at them curiously.

"What do you want?" said Hazeldene sullenly.

"Persons under age are not allowed to play," said the controller quietly. "You are but boys. Those moustaches are false. You have been pointed out to me. You must not enter the salon de jeu."

The Bounder's teeth came hard together.

"This is Wharton's work," he muttered.

Hazeldene made a passionate gesture.

"I have lost my money," he said. "I am going to win it back if I can."

The controller shrugged his shoulders.

"Les enfants are not allowed to play," he said.

"But—"

"I am sorry, monsieur, but it is the rule."

"I tell you I will play if I choose—hang you!"

"If monsieur enters the salle des jeux again, monsieur will be ejected from the Kursaal," said the controller quietly. "I am sorry, but it is the rule."

And he turned away. Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith drew a little apart, and looked at each other blankly in dismay.

"The game's up," said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

"Are you going to give in, then?"

"You talk like an ass!" said the Bounder irritably. "What's the good of bucking against that? We shall be thrown out if we make a row."

"It's Wharton's doing."

"That's clear enough—and he's done us this time. I'll make him pay for it, somehow!" said the Bounder savagely. "Never mind, there's another Kursaal at Geneva, and he can't interfere with us there. Let's get out."

"I'm going to speak to Wharton first."

The Bounder grinned.

"Oh, slang him as much as you like! I'm going to get my coat, and I'll wait for you in the doorway."

Hazeldene walked across to where Harry Wharton was standing with his friends. His face was white with rage.

Wharton looked at him calmly. He had done what he believed to be his duty, and he was not afraid of the consequences. Hazeldene's anger was less than nothing to him.

Hazel stopped before him, his face working, his fists clenched.

"You've done this?" he said.

Wharton knew what he was alluding to. He nodded.

"Yes," he said; "I've done it."

"You told the controller?"

"Yes."

"You couldn't mind your own business!" said Hazeldene.

fiercely. "You couldn't let me alone! You must keep on meddling!"

"I'm sorry if you look at it in that light," said Harry quietly. "I've stopped you making a fool of yourself—as I believed I ought to do."

"You meddling hound!"

Wharton set his lips, and was silent. Words like that from any other fellow would have drawn a prompt and drastic reply from him. But Marjorie's brother was safe.

Bob Cherry and Nugent almost trembled with anger, and it was all they could do to keep their hands off Hazeldene.

"You silly young cad!" said Bob. "You ought to be licked! If I were Wharton, I'd wipe up the floor with you, and then leave you to go to the dogs your own way!"

"Mind your own business, Cherry!"

Bob clenched his hand, but Wharton pushed him back quickly.

"Bob, don't touch him!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry resignedly. "Blessed if I like this patient-martyr dodge, though! The rotter wants licking, and wants it bad!"

"You think you've stopped me, do you?" went on Hazeldene, looking at Wharton with a bitter gaze. "You're mistaken! Montreux isn't the only place on the shore here that has a Kursaal, and I shall play again, and as often as I like, I've got one friend here, at all events, and he will stand by me! As for you, I've done with you! I'll never enter your house again; I'm going back to Geneva to-night with Smith! Hang you!"

Wharton still was silent.

"I'm stony now," went on Hazeldene. "I might have won it all back; I might have won any amount! I know luck was on the turn."

"You ass!" said Wharton. "Luck would never be on the turn. What do you think these places thrive on—losses?"

"That's my business, if I lose! What has it to do with you? I didn't ask you to find the money; it's cost you nothing! You meddler!"

Hazeldene half-raised his clenched hand. Wharton did not move, but a contemptuous smile glided over his face. It maddened Hazeldene. He raised his hand abruptly and struck Harry Wharton in the face.

Wharton reeled back, startled, little hurt, but with a red mark on his white cheek. He hardly realised for a moment that Hazeldene had dared to strike him.

For a moment Hazeldene stood before him, panting; then Wharton leaped forward, his own fists clenched.

Hazeldene instinctively started back, and threw up his hands to guard, but his guard would have served him little against the attack of the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, if it had been made. But it was not made.

For a moment Hazeldene was in danger, but only for a moment. Then Wharton's hands dropped to his sides, and he stepped back quietly.

"You can go!" he said.

Hazeldene, half-ashamed, hesitated a moment, and then turned upon his heel, and strode away to rejoin Vernon-Smith.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter Asserts his Independence.

HARRY WHARTON did not speak a word as he left the Kursaal with his friends. The fracas in the vestibule had attracted considerable attention; and the juniors would probably have been asked to leave if they had not gone of their own accord. But they obviated anything of the sort by leaving at once.

They went down the lighted street of Montreux in the direction of the railway-station.

Wharton was breathing hard, and was very silent. His chums were silent, too. What had happened had made their blood boil, and they marvelled at Wharton's patience—for that it was only patience they well knew. Harry Wharton could have knocked Hazeldene to pieces in a single round if he had chosen to do so.

Bunter blinked curiously at Wharton. That anybody might be actuated by high principles and perhaps overstrained ideas of duty and honour was a thought that never occurred to the Owl of the Remove. All Bunter knew was that Wharton had been punched without returning the blow, and to Bunter that could only mean that he was afraid. And it seemed to Bunter a more appropriate time than ever for the long-meditated assertion of his independence.

The juniors reached the railway-station. They learned that the train went at 9.52, and they had a quarter of an hour to wait. They went on the platform to wait, still silent and gloomy. The unpleasant incident at the Kursaal at Montreux had cast a shadow over the holiday.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS."

"I say, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter, feeling called upon to break the silence:

Bob Cherry growled angrily:

"Hold your tongue, Bunter!"

"Sha'n't!" said Billy Bunter, edging away a little as he spoke. "Look here, I'm jolly well not going to be domineered over by you fellows! I'm not going to be preached to! I've had enough of it!"

No one replied. The silence encouraged Bunter.

"I'm an independent chap, I suppose," he said, blinking round. "I'm over here for a holiday! Of course, Wharton's putting me up at Lausanne——"

"He's putting up with you, you mean!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! He's putting me up, but he's got no right to control my actions! I'm jolly well going to do as I like!"

No reply.

"I can't have a flutter at Montreux now, as Wharton has mucked that up for all of us with his blessed interfering!" said Bunter. "I shall go to Geneva on the steamer to-morrow, and have a plunge at the Kursaal there!"

Silence.

"If you chaps don't like it, I don't ask you to chum with me!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Shut up, you dummy!"

"I'm not going to shut up! I want this question to be thrashed out, and thoroughly understood. It's got to be understood that I'm absolutely to do as I like, or else I withdraw from the party!"

"Ass!"

"I'm waiting for your reply, Wharton!" said Bunter.

Wharton did not speak.

"Do you hear, Wharton?"

"Eh?"

"I'm waiting for your answer!"

"What! Did you speak?" exclaimed Harry, coming to himself out of a moody reverie. "What is it? Sorry—I wasn't listening!"

Bunter glared at him through his spectacles.

"Well, of all the cheek! Look here, I've been saying that I'm going to assert my independence. I've had enough of this blessed domineering! I'm going to do as I like in future!"

"Yes?"

"I'm going over to Geneva for a plunge to-morrow. I'm going to smoke and drink all the champagne I can get. I'm going to do as I like!"

"Oh!"

"And if you don't like it——"

"I don't!" said Wharton quietly.

"Then I shall decline to be your guest any further, and shall withdraw from your party, that's all!"

"Very well!" said Wharton quietly.

Bunter looked a little taken aback. He blinked at Wharton, and then at the other fellows, who were beginning to grin.

"You—you don't mind?" he remarked.

"Not at all!"

"Of course I don't want to be hard on you," said Bunter; "only I'm going to assert my independence, that's all! See?"

"Yes; I see!"

"Oh, it's all right, then; as long as you understand!"

"I understand!"

Bob Cherry glanced round as two figures came on to the platform. They were the Bouncer and Hazeldene. They had come for the same train, which was going on to Geneva after passing Lausanne. They did not look at the Famous Four, but stood in a different part of the platform to wait.

The train came in.

Harry Wharton & Co. travelled second-class. The Bouncer had evidently taken first-class tickets, for he entered a first-class car with Hazeldene, and they disappeared from view. The next car was a second-class one, and the chums of the Remove entered that.

Billy Bunter followed the Famous Four into the train, and sat down with them. He was somewhat surprised, and very much annoyed, by the way his declaration of independence had been received. So much trouble had been taken in the case of Hazeldene that Bunter could not imagine why none was taken for him.

He did not speak, however, as he sat down. Harry Wharton had taken the tickets, and he had handed them to Nugent's care. Nugent slipped them into the palm of his glove.

The train rolled out of Montreux Station.

A few minutes later the conductor came along the corridor to examine the tickets, in the Swiss way. As on most continental railways, tickets are there examined on the train, and then taken by the conductor before the journey's

and. This has the advantage that it is not easy to miss one's station when the man comes to take the ticket before you arrive at it, and this is a great advantage—Continental stations having a plentiful lack of signs bearing their name. It is possible to search up and down a station quite diligently without learning in the least what name it is called by.

The official stopped by the juniors.

"Billets, s'il vous plait!"

Nugent handed out four tickets, and indicated Wharton, Bob Cherry, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and himself. The official clipped the tickets, and handed them back. Then he turned to Billy Bunter.

"Billets, s'il vous plait!"

"What does he mean by 'bee-yay'?" asked Bunter peevishly.

"Tickets, you ass!"

"Oh, my ticket!"

"Oui," said the Swiss. "Votre billet, m'sieur—ticket!"

"You've got it, Nugent!"

"Eh?"

"You've got my ticket!"

"Rot!"

"Why—"

"Billet, s'il vous plait!" said the Swiss impatiently.

"Look here, Nugent, you've got the ticket; I saw Wharton give it to you!"

"Wharton gave me the tickets for the party."

"Well, then—"

"You don't belong to the party now!"

"Eh?"

"You're independent!" said Frank sweetly. "You can look after yourself, of course! You're not going to be looked after by anybody!"

"H'm! But—"

The Swiss turned away to attend to other tickets in the car. He would come back in a minute or two, however; there was no doubt about that.

Billy Bunter looked alarmed. He had intended to be independent; but independence, according to his ideas, did not mean paying his own expenses—far from it.

"Look here, Nugent, you've got my ticket!"

"Rats!"

"It's mine! I—"

"You're not Wharton's guest now! You're not one of the party! You're on your own! You're independent!" said Nugent relentlessly. "When a chap declares his independence, he doesn't go around asking other chaps to buy him tickets!"

"I say, Wharton—"

"Don't bother me!" said Harry.

"But Nugent's got my ticket, and he won't give it up!"

"Settle it with Nugent!"

"Yes; but—"

"You're independent, you know," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "If Nugent won't do as you want him, give him a licking!"

"Well, I—I don't want to hurt him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're welcome to try," said Nugent.

"Look here—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes the conductor!" said Bob Cherry, grinning. "Now's the time to assert your independence, Bunt! Tell him you'll ride on his old railway if you like without a ticket. Put it to him plain!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"He's looking rather short-tempered. The Swiss milk of human kindness is turning sour," grinned Bob Cherry.

"I—I—"

"Billet, s'il vous plait!"

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Billet, s'il vous plait!"

"You see, I—I haven't one—"

"Si monsieur n'a pas le billet, monsieur paye," said the Swiss.

"What does that mean, Nugent?"

"You've got to pay if you haven't a ticket!"

"Oh! How much?"

"Monsieur—"

"How much?" stammered Billy Bunter. "Combien?"

"Deux francs quarante."

"What does he mean by 'dur-frong-korrongt,' Nugent?"

"Ha, ha! Two francs and forty centimes."

"I—I haven't more than a franc!"

"Tell him to go and eat coke! Show him you're independent!"

"Well, you see—"

"Payez!" exclaimed the Swiss angrily. "Il faut payer!"

"Oh, allez-vous-en et mangez charbon," said Billy Bunter.

The Swiss stared for one moment. Then he grasped Billy Bunter by the collar and jerked him from the seat.

"Yow!" roared Bunter. "Help! Rescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent thrust the ticket and a franc into the Swiss's hand. The man released the fat junior. He realised that it was a joke, and the franc made him take it in a proper spirit. He

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EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

grinned and touched his cap, and passed out of the carriage down the corridor.

Bunter gasped and sank back into his seat.

"Well, of all the rotters!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And that was all the satisfaction the Owl of the Remove received.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Hauls Down his Flag.

BILLY BUNTER was silent for some time, cogitating. He had declared his independence, and his claim had been fully allowed. But, somehow, it was not working out so satisfactorily as he had expected. It began to dawn upon the fat junior that even personal independence might have its drawbacks.

It was some time since the juniors had dined, and Billy Bunter was beginning to feel the qualms of hunger. A good supper would be awaiting the party at the Villa du Lao; but that was at Lausanne, some distance yet.

Bunter blinked at the juniors. Wharton had fallen into a reverie, and his clouded brow told that it was not a pleasant one. Nugent and Bob Cherry were reading the latest number of "Pluck" together, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was in the throes of a mental chess problem. It was a favourite amusement of the nabob to work out chess problems in his head, though how he managed it without breaking anything in his brain-box, Bob Cherry declared, was a mystery.

"I say, you fellows," remarked Bunter, "I'm hungry!"

"Go hon!" said Nugent.

"Is there a feeding-car on this train?" asked Bunter.

"I don't know."

"I think I'll go along the corridor and see," said Billy Bunter. "Will you lend me a few francs, Nugent?"

"Not much!"

"Will you lend me a franc or two, Bob Cherry?"

"No fear!"

"I say, Inky, will you lend me a five-franc piece?"

"The no-fulness is terrific!"

"Wharton! I say, Wharton! Lend me a few francs!"

"Certainly not!"

"I'm hungry!"

"Well, I don't care!"

"Look here—"

"What I admire about Bunter," said Bob Cherry, with a wink into space, "is his noble, rugged independence—the way he declines to ask favours of people."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Keep it up, Bunter! It suits you! You remind me of William Tell, and George Washington, and other noble independence-merchants," said Bob.

"Rotters!" said Bunter. "I don't want your rotten francs! I'm jolly well going to chum up with Vernon-Smith. He's a decent sort!"

"Go it, then!"

"He's a jolly good chap, and I like him!"

"Go and love him lots, then!"

"Well, I'm going!"

Bunter snorted, and quitted the carriage. He went through the corridor door into the next car—the first-class one in which the Bounder and his companion were travelling. He sighted Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene at once. They were playing cards.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, with an ingratiating smile.

"My king takes it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"I say—"

"Hallo! What do you want?"

"I'm done with that gang," said Billy Bunter, with a jerk of his fat thumb towards Harry Wharton's car. "I've had enough of them."

"Or, have they had enough of you?" asked Hazeldene.

"Oh, really, you know. The fact is, I've been under Wharton's thumb long enough," said Bunter. "I've asserted my independence."

"Well, I don't feel interested in the matter," said Vernon-Smith. "Your deal, Hazel!"

"Right you are!"

"But I say, Smithy," said Bunter, "I—I'm willing to chum with you, you know."

The Bounder stared at him.

"You may be willing," he said, "but I'm jolly well not! I'd as soon chum up with a porpoise or a prize pig!"

Hazeldene grinned as he dealt the cards. Bunter's jaw dropped. He tried to work up an agreeable smile, but without much success.

"Oh, really, Smithy! You're joking, of course!" murmured Bunter.

"Oh, get out!"
 "But I want—"
 "Don't bother!"
 "I'm done with that lot!" said Bunter. "Look here, I want to have a flutter, Smithy. I'm willing to—to borrow some money of you—"

"I dare say!"
 "And to plunge like—like anything!"
 "With my money?" said Vernon-Smith. "Well, of all the cheek! You silly porpoise, do you think I'm going to have you sponging on me?"

"Oh, really—"
 "You're in the light!" said Vernon-Smith. "Will you get out?"

"But I want—"
 "Shut up, and buzz off! If you bother me any more I'll call the guard and have you kicked out for travelling first-class with a second-class ticket."

Billy Bunter retreated, utterly dismayed. There was evidently nothing more to be said. Bunter was obtuse enough, but even he could not doubt that Vernon-Smith did not desire the honour of his company.

He went back disconsolately to the second-class car. The Greyfriars juniors did not look at him. Billy Bunter sank into his seat with a heavy grunt, but he did not succeed in attracting their attention.

He was driven to speaking first.
 "I say, you fellows," he began, "I've just seen Vernon-Smith. The rotter's playing cards with Hazeldene, and I believe they're playing for money. Of course, under the circumstances, I refused to have anything to do with them."

"Wouldn't Smithy lend you anything?" asked Bob Cherry, brutally.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Of course, I declined to have anything to do with such a fellow, and I told him pretty plainly what I thought of him. I refused to touch his money."

"Then I'll bet you never had a chance to touch it."

Bunter grunted and relapsed into silence. He was thinking that he had been a little too hasty with his declaration of independence. He thought it over disconsolately as the train ran on towards Lausanne.

The Swiss came along and collected the tickets, and the train stopped a little later in the Central Station at Lausanne.

The Greyfriars juniors descended to the platform. Billy Bunter followed the Famous Four as they went down the steps to the subway, and emerged into the short cut which runs along the Funicular down to Ouchy.

Bob Cherry stared at him expressively.

"Are you going our way, Bunter?" he asked.

"Eh? Of course I am! What do you mean?"

"You don't mean to say that you are going to Wharton's house?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in great astonishment.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You're independent now, you know. You've chucked us up, and you're not going to have any more to do with us."

"Oh, really—" said Bunter feebly.

"Aren't you going to be independent any more?" asked Nugent.

"I—I—you see—"

"Aren't you going to plunge?"

"I—I—"

"Is not the plungefulness of the honourable asinine Bunter going to be terrific?" asked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really," Bunter stammered, "I—I've nowhere to go—and—and—"

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Don't be an ass, Bunter! Come along—and don't play the giddy goat again, if you can help it."

"Oh, all right," said Bunter, looking greatly relieved. "I—I knew that you were only rotting, of course. I—I knew it all along. Of course, I was only joking, too—I wasn't going to desert you fellows."

"Oh, don't think of us—we shouldn't mind," said Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Come on," said Wharton. "Shut up, Bunter! Don't be an ass!"

And Billy Bunter was more silent than usual as they walked down towards the Villa du Lac.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Colonel Decides.

HARRY WHARTON had a task before him that was sufficiently unpleasant, in explaining why Hazeldene had not come home with the party. It was an extremely awkward matter, for Hazel had treated his host with the grossest disrespect in thus taking himself away, and the Colonel, good-natured and kind-hearted as he was, was very strict on punctilio. But Harry did not shrink from it. He had the thing to do, and he went through with it in his usual resolute way.

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NEXT
WEEK:

"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS." A Splendid School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

The colonel was not there to supper, as it happened, and Miss Wharton had gone to bed.

The juniors had their supper by themselves, and then Harry found his uncle in his own quarters, smoking a cigar and looking over the English papers. The colonel looked up with a kindly smile as Harry came in. The bronzed veteran was very fond of his nephew, though the time had been when relations between them were very much strained. But that time was past now.

"Glad to see you back, Harry," said the colonel. "I had your wire. What was the matter at Montreux?"

Harry hesitated a moment, thinking how he should put it. The colonel pushed a chair towards him.

"Sit down, lad!"

Harry sat down.

"You missed the train at Montreux?" asked the colonel.

"No, uncle."

Colonel Wharton glanced at him, noticing that he was disturbed.

"Of course, you know, I trust you anywhere, Harry," he said, "and I don't want to appear to control your actions, but it is not a good idea for lads of your age to stay out in the evenings in foreign towns, without an elder with them."

"I know it, uncle; but I stayed because—"

"Never mind, Harry, don't trouble to explain."

"You're awfully good, uncle!" said Harry gratefully.

"I should be a rotter if I did anything to make you sorry for trusting me."

"I know you won't, lad."

"I certainly won't if I can help it, uncle. But it wasn't on my account that we stayed later at Montreux, and I want to tell you about it."

The colonel settled himself to listen.

"Go ahead, Harry!"

"You remember my mentioning to you that there was a new fellow at Greyfriars—a rotter named Vernon-Smith—we call him the Bounder."

The colonel nodded.

"Yes; the son of the financier called the Cotton King," he remarked. "The father does not bear an enviable reputation, I believe, but you must not allow that to prejudice you against the son, Harry. It is not the boy's fault if his father corners cotton, and causes misery among thousands of workpeople for the sake of adding a few thousands to his fortune."

"Oh, no, uncle: I don't know much about that, and we were prepared to treat Vernon-Smith well, but he's an unspeakable cad. I can't understand why he wasn't expelled from Greyfriars, but the fellows all thought his father had a lot of influence with the Board of Governors."

"H'm!"

"Well, the Cotton King is in Geneva now, uncle, and he's brought his son to Switzerland with him. The Bounder met us at Montreux."

The colonel looked grave.

"And he's persuaded Hazeldene to go to Geneva with him."

"Ah!"

"Of course, Hazel is free to go where he likes, in a way," said Harry awkwardly. "only the Bounder isn't a decent chap for him to be with. You know I'm friendly with his sister Marjorie, and she's anxious about him. I thought I ought to tell you about it, uncle."

"Quite right, my boy. I should have asked you, certainly, where Hazeldene was. Is he not going to return to us?"

"No."

"You have quarrelled?" asked the colonel, with a keen look at his nephew.

Wharton coloured.

"Well, yes."

Colonel Wharton pursed his lips.

"It is very awkward," he said. "I am answerable to Dr. Locke for you and your friends while you are in Switzerland—Hazeldene among the rest. He has acted very wrongly in going off like this without permission. He should have obtained Dr. Locke's consent first, of course, or at least his father's."

"Neither would have consented."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite."

"It is not simply a dislike you have for this lad you call the Bounder? You are sure it is not merely a prejudice, Harry?"

"He drinks and gambles," said Harry.

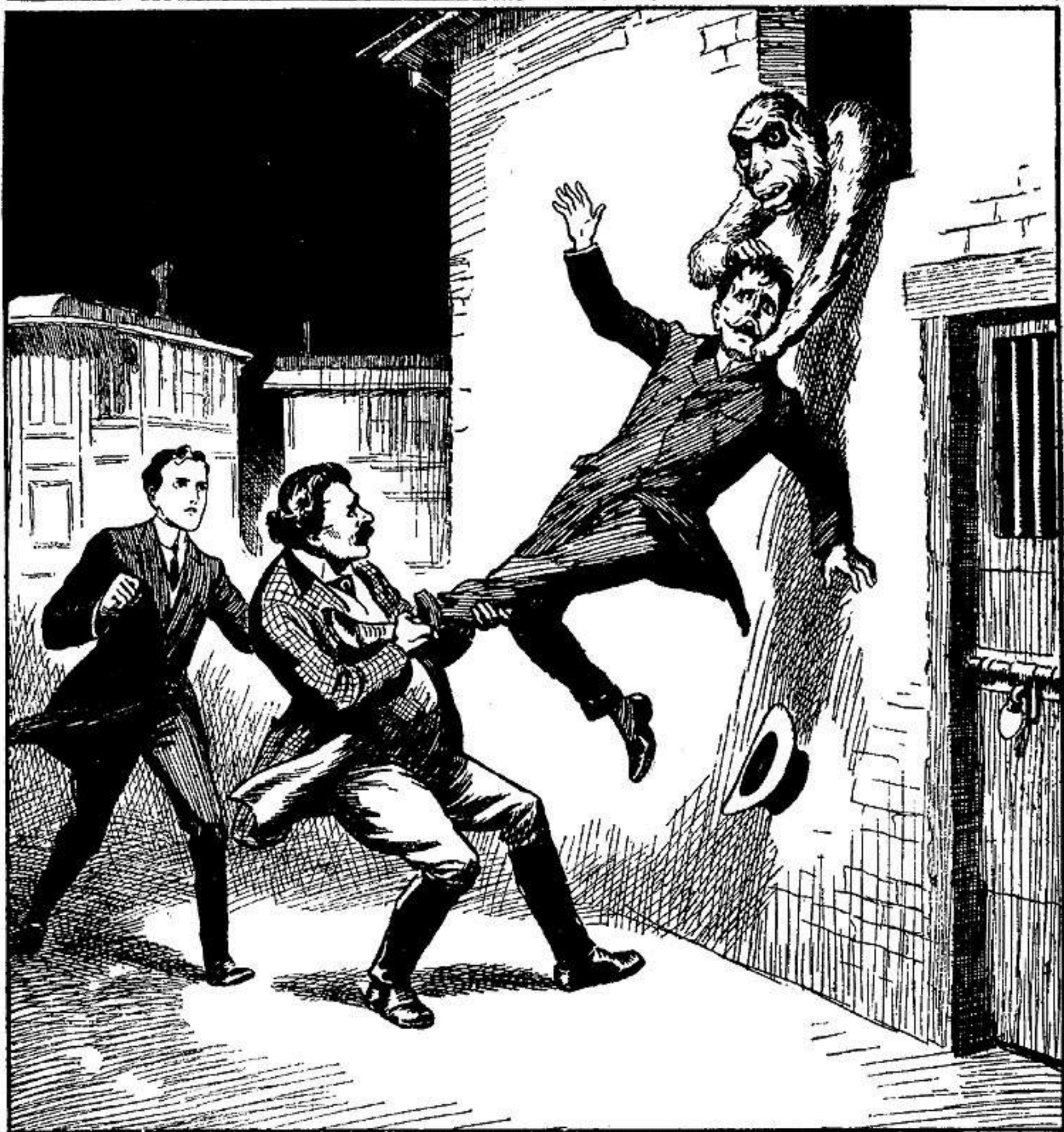
The colonel started.

"You are sure?"

"He has been doing so at Montreux, and inducing Hazel to do the same."

The colonel looked grim.

"Then it is impossible for a boy whom Dr. Locke has entrusted to my care to go with him. I feel responsible



"Come on, quick! He'll be killed!" gasped the showman, dashing up and grasping the baronet by the ankle. But the harder the rescuers pulled, the firmer became the orang-outang's grip and the more savage his temper. (This illustrates an exciting incident in the splendid, long complete story of Jack Rhodes, entitled: "A STRANGE COMMISSION," by Alfred Barnard, contained in "THE EMPIRE" Library. Now on sale. Price One Halfpenny.)

in the matter. You say that they are now staying in Geneva?"

"Yes. Hazel went back with Vernon-Smith this evening."

"And Smith's father is there?"

"Yes; they are together."

"Very well," said the colonel quietly. "There is only one thing to be done. I shall go to Geneva, and call upon Mr. Vernon-Smith. When I explain to him that Hazeldene is there without the consent of his head-master or his own people, he can hardly allow the boy to remain in his quarters."

Wharton looked relieved.

"I suppose so, uncle. That will make it all right."

"Of course, after this, Hazeldene can hardly return to us," said Colonel Wharton, his lips tightening a little. "I will have him sent back to England under proper care."

Harry nodded. He felt that that was the only thing to be done, in the circumstances.

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After what had happened, matters would be most uncomfortable if Hazeldene became a guest at the Villa du Lao again.

"Do you know where they are staying in Geneva?" the colonel asked.

"No."

"Well, it will be easy to find them. A millionaire like Mr. Vernon-Smith is certain to stay at one of the biggest hotels, and will doubtless attract a good deal of public attention," Colonel Wharton remarked.

"Anyway, they will be found at the Kursaal," said Harry.

"Yes, of course. This is a rather unpleasant incident for your holiday, Harry."

"I am sorry I brought Hazel here now," said Harry, in a low voice. "He would have been all right if the Bounder hadn't turned up."

"He's not exactly the kind of lad I should expect you to have for a friend, Harry," said the colonel abruptly.

Harry coloured uncomfortably.

"Well, I don't know that I should chum with him," he said. "He's got a decent side, you know, but—but—well, it's his sister. You've seen Marjorie, and you know what a ripping girl she is. Hazel worries her a lot by playing the giddy goat, and—and a good many fellows at Greyfriars who like Marjorie stick to Hazel on her account, and try to get him to run straight."

"Quite right," said the colonel. "Quite right, so long as it does not work the other way, and he does not induce others to run crooked."

"Oh, that's not likely to happen."

"Not with you, Harry I am sure."

And the colonel bade good-night to his nephew.

"Anything on to-morrow, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry, as the juniors went up to bed.

"My uncle's going to Geneva."

"To see the Bounder?" asked Nugent.

"To see his father, and get Hazel away from them."

"And us?"

"We may as well go too, if my uncle cares for us to come. We haven't done Geneva yet, and there's a lot to be seen there."

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, sitting on the edge of his bed and blinking at them, "Geneva's an awfully interesting city. The guide-book says—"

"Rats!"

"Says that it's awfully interesting. There's the cathedral, with the original—"

"Bloodstains?" grinned Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Of course not. The original carved oak—"

"Good-night!"

"Then there's the Kursaal—"

"Bon soir!"

"And the Rhone river, and Rousseau's island, you know—the island of Jong Jark, you know, and the house where George Eliot lived, and the place where the house was that Calvin lived in—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Calvin used to preach in that very cathedral and it's awfully interesting."

"Who was Calvin?" asked Bob Cherry.

The fat junior was a little taken aback.

"I—I—I really don't know," he said; "but—but he must have been a big gun of some sort, to be mentioned in the guide-book."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Oh, go to sleep, Billy!"

And Bunter grunted and turned in.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Day in Geneva.

COLONEL WHARTON suggested the juniors coming with him to Geneva, at breakfast, and they jumped at the idea. The colonel might be some time in finding the place where the Vernon-Smiths were staying, and the juniors would have time to explore the old and historic city. Miss Wharton was not going. Miss Wharton spent most of her time in the garden, or in being wheeled in a sedan-chair along the lake.

The party were ready to catch an early train.

They walked down to the Gare Central, and caught the train for Geneva, filling up a carriage themselves.

It was an hour's run, mostly in sight of the rolling blue waters of Lake Lemane, and the Greyfriars chums were looking out of the windows most of the time.

The scenery was very fine, and the day a beautiful one. In spite of the trouble Hazeldene was causing them, the boys were happy enough.

The delights of exploring strange countries, and hearing a strange tongue talked round them, were not likely to wear off yet.

Billy Bunter was happy, too.

He had discovered that there was a restaurant car on the train, and he borrowed a five-franc piece from Harry Wharton, and disappeared at an early stage of the journey.

Even the sickening atmosphere of a continental dining-car could not impair Billy Bunter's appetite. He returned without any change from the five-franc piece, but with a new shininess added to his complexion.

The Greyfriars party stepped out of the station at Geneva feeling very cheerful. A brilliant sun was shining upon the broad streets and squares.

"Jolly-looking place!" said Bob Cherry, as he glanced round him.

"Where?" asked Bunter anxiously.

"Eh? I mean the town!"

"Oh! I thought you were looking at a restaurant."

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Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I hope Bunter will be a restaurant-keeper when he grows up," he remarked. "He won't be happy as anything else. And what a jolly good customer he would have in himself."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I will leave you now," said Colonel Wharton. "We will meet for lunch at the National Hotel, my lads."

"Yes, uncle."

And the colonel's tall figure strode off.

The juniors were left to their own devices, but they were not at a loss what to do. They were having only the one day in Geneva, and there was plenty to be seen.

Bunter was already consulting his guide-book.

"I say, you fellows, there's a tram-line from here to Ferney, where Voltaire used to live," he exclaimed. "Voltaire's house is open to inspection in the afternoons."

"Who was Voltaire?" grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter rubbed his nose.

"Blessed if I know, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he was somebody," said Bunter peevishly. "What a lot of rotten questions you ask. And Jong Jark Rousseau was born in Geneva, too, and—"

"Who was?"

"Jong Jark!"

"Ha, ha! Jean Jacques Rousseau," grinned Nugent. "Good! Who was he?"

Bunter grunted.

"How should I know? He's in the guide-book, anyway. I believe he wrote books or something. I believe I've had some of him on an examination-paper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then there's a square here where a chap was burnt alive," said Bunter, blinking into Temple's guide-book. "Chap named Smith, or something."

"Was it Servetus?"

"Ah, yes, that was it—Servetus! He was burnt by somebody for something—religious difference, I think, or something of the sort. Jolly times they must have been to live in, when you got burnt for your religious opinions, and stuck in a blessed dungeon for your political opinions!" said Bunter. "I think the good old times are a swindle. By the way, there are some giddy black swans here, too. We must see them, or we sha'n't have our money's worth, you know. And there's a refreshment-place on the island of Jong Jark. I think that's a place we ought to see first."

"Ha, ha! Come on!"

And the juniors strolled down to the bridge across the mighty Rhone—the great river which flows through Lake Lemane from end to end, and emerges at Geneva, to flow down to the sunny Mediterranean.

The famous black swans of Geneva were swimming in the wire enclosures on the river, and picking up fragments tossed to them by children on the bridge. The juniors looked at them with interest, but Bunter was in a hurry to get on the island.

They reached it, and Bunter promptly sat down at one of the little refreshment tables.

"This is a jolly place!" he remarked.

"Well, I can do with a feed," said Bob Cherry, sitting down also. "Garcon!"

"Garson!" called out Billy Bunter.

A handsome old man came out of the little building on the island and came up to the table where the juniors sat.

Bunter started, in French.

"Keskervousavvy pore mongjay?" he demanded.

The man scratched his head.

"Je vous manger?" said Bunter. "J'ay fang."

"M'sieur?"

"J'ay fang—grang fang?" roared Bunter.

"Pardon!"

"Look here—voyez vous—"

"Pardon, m'sieurs! I no speak German."

"German?" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you might shut up! Look here, he's rotting! You don't mean to say that he really takes my French for German?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," snorted Bunter, blinking wrathfully at the old gentleman, "vous etes Frongsay—eh?"

The man shook his head.

"Greek!" he said.

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, my hat! How the dickens was I to know he was a Greek?" he demanded. "That's why he can't understand my French, of course!"

"Try again," said Bob Cherry, grinning. "Your French

is Greek to us, you know—and, if it's the same to him, he may be able to understand it."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Wharton gave an order in French, and the Greek nodded and bowed, and brought the things.

Bunter grunted in a dissatisfied way.

"All the time I've spent on my French is simply wasted!" he said. "The people here understand Wharton's bad French all right, as they're provincials. If we were in Paris it would be different."

"They didn't understand you so jolly well in Paris, either!" said Nugent. "I remember you asked the garcon for an omelette aux fins herbes at brekker, and he brought you a toothpick."

"That was his stupidity! The French are awfully stupid. Chaps who don't understand their own language must be pretty dense, I think."

Bunter wired into the refreshments, and wasted no more time in words. He was not finished when the others were ready to leave; but Bob Cherry and Nugent linked their arms in his, and walked him off, vainly protesting.

The juniors strolled across the bridge; and as they reached the further side of the Rhone, Harry Wharton uttered a sudden exclamation.

The juniors glanced in the direction he was looking in, and saw Hazeldene and the Bounder.

The two caught sight of Harry Wharton & Co. at the same moment.

Both Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene turned away, and walked off in another direction.

Harry Wharton compressed his lips.

"The cut direct," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Hazel is growing into a jolly kind of pig under the wing of the Smith animal, I must say!"

"He won't be under his wing for long!" said Harry.

The Bounder and his companion disappeared.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on into the Old Town of Geneva, exploring the narrow, steep streets—so great a contrast to the broad streets and open spaces of the newer town—with great keenness. They very soon forgot about the Bounder.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Cotton King Declines!

"MR. VERNON-SMITH!"

The fat, red-faced, over-dressed man nodded carelessly.

"That's my name!" he said.

Colonel Wharton looked at him.

It had not been difficult for the colonel to locate the Cotton King.

Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith had the largest suite in the largest hotel, and his millions had filled up a considerable space in the Geneva papers, and in Geneva gossip.

Colonel Wharton found his hotel, and sent up his card; and, Mr. Vernon-Smith being at home, the colonel was shown up to his rooms.

It was nearly noon, but Mr. Vernon-Smith was evidently not an early riser. He was dressed, but evidently had not been up long. The remains of a breakfast were on a table, and the millionaire was reading an English paper—open at the financial news.

He rose as the colonel was shown in.

Probably his hopeful son had told him something of Harry Wharton's uncle, for there was a subdued aggressiveness in Mr. Vernon-Smith's manner, and a gleam of pugnacity in his little, light, piggy eyes.

"That's my name, sir," he repeated. "What can I do for you? I've not had the pleasure of meeting you before, that I know of."

"That is correct."

"Will you take a seat?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith, in a grudging sort of way, as if something about the colonel extorted the courtesy from him against his will.

Colonel Wharton shook his head.

"Thanks! But I shall not detain you many minutes."

"Well, my time is valuable," said Mr. Vernon-Smith.

"I shall not encroach upon it long. I understand that your son has made friends with a friend of my nephew—a boy named Hazeldene."

"Very likely."

"He has invited Hazeldene to stay with him here, and the lad has accepted."

"Yes?"

"Of course, in an ordinary way. Hazeldene is nothing to me, and I should not dream of interfering with him," said the colonel. "But it happens that he was a guest in my house, and was entrusted by Dr. Locke to my charge."

"Well?"

"Under the circumstances, you will see that I can hardly let him go in this way."

"Really?"

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NEXT

WEEK:

"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Certainly! I have called to explain to you, and you will doubtless explain to your son that Hazeldene cannot very well stay with him."

"I don't see it."

"The boy was under my charge," explained the colonel. "You will see that I could not let him leave me in a foreign country, without the consent of his parents or of his head-master."

"That's no business of mine."

"But the boy is here with you, is he not?"

"Yes, with my son."

"Can I see him?"

"He's out for the morning with Herbert."

"Well, will you tell him to return to me?"

"No," said Mr. Vernon-Smith deliberately, "I won't!" The colonel flushed.

"Really, my dear sir—" he began.

"What's the harm in his visiting my son?" said Mr. Vernon-Smith unpleasantly. "Why should his father or his head-master object? He's not among strangers—he's with my boy, who's his friend at school, and with me."

The colonel paused.

"There's no harm in his visiting his friends, if he chooses, while he's under your charge," said the millionaire. "Unless you think his friends aren't suitable for him to associate with. Is that it, Colonel Wharton?"

The colonel compressed his lips.

"Well, since you force me to speak plainly, that is the case," he said. "I am sorry to have to say so, but I do not regard Master Vernon-Smith as a suitable companion for a foolish and inexperienced lad."

"Have you seen my son?"

"No."

"Then what do you know about him?"

The Cotton King's tone was unpleasant and aggressive—as insulting as he could make it—but the colonel kept his temper. There was no purpose to be served by quarrelling with this man.

"I know my nephew's opinion of him," he said. "I know the facts, too."

"Yes, Herbert's told me about your precious nephew," sneered Mr. Vernon-Smith. "A young prig!"

"We need not discuss my nephew—"

"You're discussing my son, and repeating what your nephew says against him," said the Cotton King. "And I'll say what I like."

"I can repeat the facts also—you must be aware that your son, lad as he is, gambles," said the colonel.

"A little flutter won't hurt him," said Mr. Vernon-Smith; "and a son of mine can afford to lose as much money as he likes."

"Hazeldene cannot afford it."

"Oh, I expect Herbert will see him through!" said the Cotton King carelessly. "He won't let him want!"

"But the effects of gambling upon a boy's character, and of borrowing money he cannot hope to repay—"

Mr. Vernon-Smith glanced at his watch.

"I'm afraid I haven't time to listen to much more of this," he said. "Have you anything else of importance to say?"

"I have this to say—that Hazeldene cannot remain with your son!" said Colonel Wharton tartly.

"How are you going to get him away?"

"You refuse to send him back?"

"I leave it to him, to go or stay as he chooses. I don't turn my back on my son's guest to please you or anybody else."

"He will choose to stay."

"Then he stays."

"Then I shall have no resource but to telegraph to Dr. Locke, at Greyfriars, and explain to him how the matter stands," said the colonel.

The millionaire smiled.

"Do so."

"Hazeldene will be ordered to return to England by return wire."

"I think I can manage Dr. Locke. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

The colonel quitted the room.

His bronzed face was very dark as he went down in the lift. His interview with Mr. Vernon-Smith had been even more unpleasant than he had anticipated, and it had been wholly unsatisfactory.

And the colonel, though he had not shown any sign of irritation at the impertinence of the Cotton King, had been very much ruffled inwardly by it.

As he stepped out of the lift into the vestibule of the hotel, he caught the sound of Hazeldene's voice, and looked quickly round.

Hazeldene had just come in with the Bounder. They caught sight of the colonel, and Hazeldene started and changed colour, but the Bounder only grinned.

"Good-morning, sir," said Hazeldene, raising his cap.

"I came here to see you, if possible, Hazeldene," said Colonel Wharton. "You left my house to come here against my will. You must leave these people."

"They're my friends," said Hazeldene sullenly.

"You will leave them at once, or I shall go directly to the post-office, and telegraph the particulars to Dr. Locke at Greyfriars," said the colonel coldly.

Hazeldene turned pale.

"Rats!" said Vernon-Smith disrespectfully. "Don't be afraid, Hazel. Even if he does, my pater will make it all right."

The colonel gave the Bounder a look that made even Herbert Vernon-Smith feel a little uncomfortable, and strode from the hotel.

Hazeldene looked very uneasy.

"I say, Herbert, there'll be a row over this," he muttered.

"Who cares?"

"Well, I do. I don't want to be flogged when I get back to Greyfriars," said Hazeldene, with an uneasy laugh.

"Oh, rats! I tell you my governor will see you through."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, come in to lunch, and don't bother."

And Vernon-Smith dragged Hazeldene into the dining-room. The colonel strode away from the hotel with a clouded brow.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Not Allowed to Go.

HARRY WHARTON looked quickly at his uncle when he met him for lunch at the hotel. He saw the cloud upon the veteran's brow, and guessed that the interview with Mr. Vernon-Smith had not prospered. After lunch, the colonel told him about it.

"And you have wired to Dr. Locke?" asked Harry.

"Yes; there was nothing else to be done. I could not leave Hazeldene with Vernon-Smith on my own responsibility. If Dr. Locke thinks he can remain with the Vernon-Smiths, of course my responsibility is at an end, and I have nothing more to do with the matter."

"You have not had an answer yet?"

"Not yet."

The answer came shortly afterwards.

It was very brief.

"Am communicating with Mr. Vernon-Smith.—LOCKE."

The colonel made a gesture.

"Then that is at an end," he said. "Dr. Locke does not ask me to take any steps in the matter. I would do anything I could. But, doubtless, a wire from him to Mr. Vernon-Smith will have the required effect."

Wharton was silent.

He remembered the strange rumour at Greyfriars that the Cotton King possessed some strange influence over the government of the school, and that the Head had not a free hand in dealing with him.

It was possible that the Head would not be able to deal as he liked with this rebellion of Hazeldene's. Was Harry's responsibility in the matter over? Could he leave Marjorie's brother to go to the dogs his own way?

The question troubled Harry's mind.

In the afternoon the colonel was going to see some acquaintances at the English club in Geneva, and the juniors were left to themselves.

Colonel Wharton evidently considered that he had done everything possible in the case of Hazeldene, and that he was called upon to do no more. Harry did not wish to trouble his uncle any further in the matter.

But he felt that he must take some steps himself.

"Penny for your thoughts," said Bob Cherry, as they strolled out into the sunny afternoon.

"Not got indigestion, surely?" said Billy Bunter, blinking at Harry's clouded face. "That lunch was simply ripping, and the cooking was extra bong."

Harry laughed.

"No; I'm all right, Billy. I was thinking of Hazeldene, Bob."

Bob Cherry gave a shrug.

"Always Hazeldene," he said

Wharton coloured.

"He's going to the dogs," he said. "He's Marjorie's brother. If it wasn't for that, he could go his own way, after last night."

"Let him go."

"What will Marjorie say?"

"She wouldn't expect you to stick to him after the way he's treated you."

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By FRANK RICHARDS

"I—I suppose not. But she won't know that, Bob. Besides—"

"Besides, you've made up your mind," said Bob, with a laugh.

"Don't you think we ought to have another try?"

"If you like."

"It may do some good, you know."

"I don't think."

"Well, let's try."

"You're going to see Hazel?"

"He's bound to be at the Kursaal here to-night," said Harry. "We shall see him there, if we go!"

"Well, we may as well go. It's one of the sights," said Bob. "You'll find him gambling, I expect. Are you thinking of giving him away again?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No. I did that at Montreux, because I thought I ought; but he's not one of us now, and I have no right to interfere with him. I sha'n't try to interfere in any way, only—"

"Only fatherly advice?"

Harry turned crimson.

"Don't rot, Bob; it's a serious subject."

"I know," said Bob Cherry; "it's all right. I'll back you up, only I don't think it will do any good. The Bounder's too strong for you."

"I shall try once more, for Marjorie's sake."

"Oh, very well."

And the subject was dropped as the juniors strolled away towards the tram station to take the tram for Ferney.

It was a pleasant excursion along the sunny, leafy road over the border into France, to the village of Ferney, where Voltaire's house still stands as the patriarch left it. Billy Bunter had no curiosity to see the house where a famous man had lived and written lines that stirred Europe from one end to the other. He remained in a cafe in Ferney eating cakes, while Harry Wharton & Co. were shown over the house.

"I'll wait here for you fellows," he said. "Like to borrow my guide-book, Wharton?"

"No, thanks."

"Better have it. It will tell you where to look for the original bloodstains."

"The what?"

"I suppose there are some bloodstains there!"

"Ha, ha! No. Not that I know of."

"Then what are you going for?"

"To see the house."

"Rats! I'd rather stay here and eat cakes."

"Stay here and eat cakes, then, Tubby; we'll come back later."

And Harry Wharton & Co. walked on to the chateau.

Billy Bunter settled down to eat cakes.

The cafe keeper was all smiles and bows, for the juniors looked prosperous enough, and he had no doubt that he had found a splendid customer in Billy Bunter. And certainly he had, in one respect. Bunter had an enormous appetite, which his lunch did not seem to have affected in any way.

His French was a puzzle to the Frenchman, but he pointed to what he wanted, and it was brought, and he polished off cakes and pastries with a celerity he had never shown even in the tuck-shop at Greyfriars.

But there comes an end to all things, and even Bunter was satisfied after half an hour of steady eating.

He slackened down, and the pastries followed one another down his capacious throat at a slower rate.

The proprietor was watching him, evidently much interested in his performance. As Bob Cherry had remarked, seeing the animals fed at the Zoo was nothing to it.

Bunter was finished at last.

"I think I'll go and have a stroll round the village and get up an appetite for tea," he murmured, rising from his chair.

The proprietor came forward.

He had the "addition" in his hand, and there was an array of figures upon it that struck the fat junior with dismay. He suddenly remembered that he had no money in his pockets.

He had expected Harry Wharton to return before he finished eating; but the Removites had not yet put in an appearance.

Bunter felt in his pocket.

He had a franc there, and a few dix-centime pieces, and it was pretty clear that the bill came to many times that amount.

"Combien?" asked Bunter faintly. "How much?"

"Sept francs quarante, m'sieur."

Seven francs forty!

"It's all right," said Bunter. "C'est bien, you know. My friends will settle when they come back. Mes amis payeront quand—quand—oh, dear!"

"Sept francs quarante," said the Frenchman, apparently under the impression that Bunter was seeking the amount of the bill.

"Yes, yes! Oui, oui! Mes amis, my friends—"

"Sept francs."

"Mais, but—"

"Monsieur paye," said the Frenchman, beginning to look suspicious.

"Mes amis!" bawled Bunter. "Mon ami—il payera—he will pay."

"Oh!"

"Vous comprenez?"

"Oui, je comprends."

"Bong," said Bunter, with a gasp of relief. "It's all right, then. I'm going to have a stroll till they come back."

"Sept francs quarante."

"Yes, yes, I know. I'm going out."

He moved towards the door.

The cafe-keeper promptly placed his stout figure in the way.

"M'sieur."

"I want to go out."

The man shook his head.

"You ass!" exclaimed Bunter. "Get out of the way—allez-vous-en!"

"M'sieur reste ici."

"I'm not going to stay here. I'm going out."

"Payez donc."

"I can't pay till my friends come back."

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. But there was no escape, and the fat junior rolled back to his seat, and sat down.

There he waited.

The cafe-keeper sat down, read a newspaper, and smoked a cigar, watching the fat junior all the time like a cat watching a mouse. He evidently had a strong suspicion of Bunter, and did not mean to risk the loss of his seven francs quarante centimes.

Billy Bunter sat and glowered through his spectacles.

It was a good half hour longer before Harry Wharton & Co. returned. They came into the cafe and called for coffee.

The proprietor, relieved in his mind by their reappearance, rose to serve them.

Bunter blinked at the juniors, who looked as if they had had a pleasant time.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Had a good feed, Bunty?"

"Yes, but—"

"Been in here all the time?"

"Yes. The rotter wouldn't let me out," said Bunter pathetically. "He thought he wasn't going to be paid, because I hadn't a miserable seven francs about me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you fellows!"

"I always said Bunter was destined to end his days as a convict," said Nugent. "First he was a Prisoner of Chillon, now he's a prisoner in a cafe. He will finish at Dartmoor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

But the juniors laughed heartily over Billy Bunter's absurd adventure, and the fat junior's grumbles were drowned. The cafe-keeper was all politeness now, and he beamed with smiles as Harry Wharton settled the account. Bunter ate a couple more cakes, and drank coffee, and was comforted.

"Well, this is bong!" he remarked.

And the others agreed that it was. Bunter provided himself with a bar of milk chocolate to eat on the tram going back to Geneva, and forgot to grumble at anything on the way while the chocolate lasted.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance.

ON the tram ride back to Geneva, the Greyfriars juniors filled up nearly one side of the vehicle. Billy Bunter taking up room for two. A stout old lady entered the car outside Ferney, and the juniors watched her with some interest, for her proceedings were most peculiar. She had a basket of eggs and other provisions on her arm, and a smaller basket containing a few articles in the other hand. Before sitting down, she carefully pushed the larger basket under the seat of the tram, and sat down directly before it, spreading out her ample skirts so as to completely hide the basket from view. Then she placed the smaller basket on her lap.

"What the dickens is the game?" said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "I suppose there aren't any highwaymen on this road."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"The old lady looks as if she is hiding her treasures."

Harry Wharton looked puzzled.

"Yes, she seems to be afraid that somebody will see the basket. It's curious."

"The curiousfulness is terrific," murmured Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed tram-conductor is grinning with his honourable chivvy."

"She's caught sight of Bunter, and thinks he can't be trusted if he sees the provisions," said Nugent.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"I've got it!" exclaimed Harry suddenly. "It's the douane."

"The what?"

"The giddy douane—the Customs, you know. You know Geneva is surrounded by French territory, except where it faces the lake. This tram line runs into France—Ferney is in France, you know. We've been over the border, and that innocent old lady has been buying things cheap in France, and she's smuggling them into Geneva."

"My hat!"

"The hatfulness is terrific."

There was little doubt that Wharton had hit on the correct explanation. When the tram halted at the douane station on the frontier, the old lady showed some signs of nervousness. A sleepy-looking official came out of a little building, and looked into the tram. He saw the little basket on the innocent-looking old lady's knees, and did not see the large one under the seat, concealed by her ample skirts. He nodded, and stepped off the car.

The old lady gave an audible sigh of relief.

The car rolled on to Geneva.

And the juniors laughed. The old Swiss lady laughed, too, evidently quite aware that they were amused by the way she had "done" the douane, and sharing in the joke.

"After all, the lady hasn't smuggled in so much grub as Bunter," remarked Bob Cherry. "Only Bunter's got it all inside his waistcoat."

The juniors returned to their hotel as dusk was falling.

Colonel Wharton had not returned, but there was a note from him to say that he would be there to meet them for the train to Lausanne, and the lads had a couple of hours to themselves.

"We'll have a look round the town," said Harry. "Geneva by night will be worth looking at."

"Yes, rather."

They strolled out into the lighted streets.

At several corners there were directions to the Kursaal, and the juniors insensibly bent their steps towards the building.

They reached it at last—a large and handsome building, well-lighted and decorated. They halted outside irresolutely.

"Are we going in?" asked Nugent.

"I don't know," said Wharton. He crossed to a gorgeous attendant in the vestibule. "Has the play started yet?" he asked, in French.

"Oui, m'sieur," said the man.

Harry joined the juniors.

"They're playing in there," he said. "I dare say Hazeldene hasn't gone in yet, though. We'll wait here for a bit."

They waited.

Ten minutes later, Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith came in sight, strolling towards the Kursaal.

They were wearing false moustaches, and were dressed in clothes of as old a cut as possible, and smoking cigarettes.

Wharton's lip curled.

"The pair of silly asses!" said Bob Cherry. "They think they look doggish! Rats!"

Hazeldene started as he saw Wharton. A look of defiance came over his face. Harry stepped towards him:

"You here again!" said Hazeldene.

"Yes."

"You are not going to interfere with me now?"

"I only want to speak to you. Haven't you heard from the Head?"

"Yes."

"Has he told you to return?"

"Yes."

"Are you going?"

"When it suits me," said Hazeldene. "Mr. Vernon-Smith has promised to see me through. You know he has influence with the Head."

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You are going to play now?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"And nothing will stop you?"

"Nothing."

"Have you forgotten Marjorie?"

"Never mind Marjorie now," said Hazeldene. "A chap can't always be thinking of his blessed women-folk. I suppose. A girl has no business to bother her head about a fellow's doings, either."

"Very well, I have no more to say," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I've put up with more from you than I would from any other chap, but it's over now. Good-bye."

Hazeldene hesitated.

"Hold on a minute, Wharton."

"What is it?"

"I want to speak to you. Excuse me a minute, Herbert. It's all right; I'm coming back. I only want to speak to Wharton for a minute."

The Bounder nodded. Hazeldene drew Harry Wharton aside. His face was agitated, and Harry waited in surprise for him to speak.

"Look here, Wharton, I know I haven't treated you well," said Hazeldene hurriedly; and in a low voice, "but—but, I'm short of money."

"Are you?"

"Vernon-Smith won't lend me more than two louis. I—I've lost ten to-day. He lent me that, and—and he says I can't have more than two now."

"You seem to have been going it pretty strong."

"I know that luck will turn to-night," said Hazeldene eagerly. "I hope I shall get enough to clear off my whole debt to Vernon-Smith, and have some in hand. I shall send Marjorie something nice from here if I do. Can you lend me a few louis?"

Hazeldene had never been noted for high spirit or high principle. But that he should ask Wharton for money, after he had struck him in the face only the previous evening, showed how much his character had deteriorated under the influence of the gambling fever. He was evidently in a mood to obtain money anywhere and anyhow, to gratify his longing to try his luck once more upon the green tables.

Wharton shook his head.

"I could lend you some money if you needed it," he said.

"I can't lend you a centime to gamble with, and you know it. Can't you see that you've got no chance? Why don't you chuck it, before you go from bad to worse?"

"I will, if I make a big coup to-night."

"You won't."

"I'm going to try. Will you lend me some money?"

"Not to gamble with."

Hazeldene made a fierce gesture.

"Well, I'm going to play, in any case; and if I lose, it will be worse than you think. But have your own way."

"What do you mean? Stay!"

But Hazeldene strode away, and rejoined the Bounder, and they entered the Kursaal de Geneva together.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Worse than Ruin.

WHARTON was very silent during the evening as he strolled round the brightly-lighted streets of Geneva with his chums. He could not help thinking of Hazeldene and the strange words he had uttered. Hazel was evidently not enjoying his stay with the Bounder, and he had looked white and desperate. What was the thought he had had in his mind when he spoke to Wharton? How could it be worse?

The matter weighed on Harry's mind.

He had said that he would have nothing more to do with the wretched scapegrace, but he relented as he thought about it—and about Marjorie.

Hazeldene did not deserve the anxiety his sister felt on his account, but there it was, all the same, and Wharton had promised to do his best to keep Hazel straight.

The juniors rejoined the colonel at the hotel. Harry Wharton plunged into the subject that was uppermost in his mind when he was with his uncle.

"Would you mind if I stayed in Geneva to-night, uncle?" he asked.

The colonel looked surprised.

"Why, Harry?"

"I'm feeling anxious about Hazel."

The veteran's face hardened a little.

"I think you should have done with that boy, Harry."

Wharton coloured.

"I'll do just as you wish, uncle. But—but he's a weak chap, and he's under bad influence. I should like to keep an eye on him a bit—I feel that I ought to. And it seems to me as if there's something wrong with him, too; he doesn't seem to be quite himself."

"No wonder, after the life he has been leading for two days," said the colonel drily.

Harry was silent.

"But do as you wish, my lad," said Colonel Wharton kindly. "Heaven forbid that I should stop you from doing what you thought your duty. We will stay in Geneva to-night. I will send a message to my sister."

"Thank you, uncle!"

Harry Wharton left the hotel again, and walked away towards the Kursaal. He did not take his chums with him. They could not help him in any way, and he knew that they were tired. He entered the Kursaal, taking a ticket as he went in, and walked into the gaming-room. It was much

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the same as the apartment at Montreux, only on a larger and more lavishly decorated scale.

Harry looked for Hazeldene.

He was seated at the green table, playing.

His face was pale, but his manner was quiet and subdued. The Bounder was standing beside him, and looking irritable. Luck had evidently not been going his way.

Wharton did not approach the two.

He had only wanted to satisfy himself that they were there, and after a glance round, he left the Kursaal and sat down on one of the seats of the public promenade opposite, to watch for Hazeldene to come out.

He was feeling vaguely uneasy; he hardly knew why, but Hazel's strange words and desperate look lingered in his memory.

He waited under the soft stars.

People came out of the Kursaal, people went in; but for some time Hazeldene did not appear.

But he came out at last.

He stumbled down the steps into the street, and walked away unsteadily, and Harry Wharton rose and followed him.

Where was Hazel going? Why had he come out alone? Why was not the Bounder with him? And why did he walk in that strange, unsteady way, as if he were under the influence of liquor?

Where was he going? Harry hurried after him, strangely anxious and uneasy. Hazeldene was making straight for the dark shadowed bank of the Rhone.

What did he intend?

Harry Wharton recalled stories he had heard of ruined gamblers at Monte Carlo who found refuge from dishonour in the deep waters of the bay, and he shuddered.

Was it possible that Hazeldene—

He quickened his pace.

In the glimmer of the starlight he saw the form of the wretched junior standing by the glistening, rushing waters of the Rhone.

He ran quickly forward.

"Hazel!"

Hazeldene gave a cry.

"Let me go."

He struggled in Wharton's grasp, but that grasp only tightened upon him. Harry dragged him away from the glistening water.

Hazeldene's struggle was brief.

He seemed to collapse in Harry's grasp, and after a few moments he was dragged unresisting to a seat under the trees. He sank down on the bench, shuddering violently.

"Why didn't you let me alone?" he muttered. "It would have been over now."

"You do not mean—"

"Yes, I do."

"Are you mad, Hazel?" exclaimed Wharton, inexpressibly shocked.

Hazeldene laughed bitterly.

"It's the best thing I could do," he exclaimed wildly.

"Have you lost?"

"Yes."

"Much?"

"Everything."

"Well, then, all the better—if Vernon-Smith won't lend you any more," said Harry, "you will come to your senses now. As for the money you owe Smith, you needn't let that trouble you. He had no right to lend you money to gamble with, and he knew it would not be repaid if you lost."

"He would lend me more, only he's lost, too."

"Well?"

"You don't understand," repeated Hazeldene, in a hoarse whisper. "I—I've lost a hundred pounds."

Wharton started.

"Surely Vernon-Smith never lent you a sum like that?"

"No."

"You hadn't it when you met him?"

"Of course not."

Wharton sat still petrified.

"Hazel!" he exclaimed at last. "Hazel! How did you get the money?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Did you steal it?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens!"

"I—I didn't exactly steal it," faltered Hazeldene, weakly attempting to extenuate his crime almost before he had fully confessed it. "It—it was a bundle of banknotes. In old Vernon-Smith's room. Herbert left me there alone. I knew I shouldn't have enough to make a coup, you know, with a paltry couple of louis. I—I slipped them into my pocket."

"Good heavens!"

"I—I didn't really mean to change them. It was to have

the feeling of money in my pocket, really. But I—I lost, and—and they went—one by one. I thought luck would turn, and I should win the lot back, but—but it didn't."

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

A Lesson for Life.

COLONEL WHARTON listened to Harry's explanation with a hard, grim face. He looked once at Hazeldene, and his look made the wretched boy shiver.

"So he is a thief, as well as a gambler," he said grimly; "but what has it to do with you, Harry?"

"Cannot you help him, uncle?"

"He does not deserve help. He was given chances enough, before it came to this, and if he were saved from this, he would only fall into another scrape just as bad."

"Oh, no, no!" panted Hazeldene. "No, no! I will be careful. I will never speak to Vernon-Smith again. I—"

"Yes, so you say now; but when you are out of your scrape, it will be a different matter."

"I—I promise—"

"The only thing is to see Mr. Vernon-Smith, and tell him what this young scoundrel has done, and point out to him that he has himself and his precious son to thank for his loss, and that as the money is irrecoverably lost, it will not pay him to create a scandal in which his own name will be smirched. As a business man, he may see it."

"And if he does not?"

"Then matters must take their course."

"When will you see him, uncle?"

"I will go now—it may be too late to-night."

And the colonel went out without another word.

Wharton and Hazeldene waited up for him. The other juniors were gone to bed, and Harry was glad of it. He did not want to make any awkward explanations. It was a miserable hour for the two juniors while they waited.

Hazeldene started up eagerly when at last the colonel entered. Colonel Wharton's face betrayed nothing. Harry looked at him without a word.

"You are safe, Hazeldene," said the colonel shortly.

Hazel gave a choked cry.

"Is it all right?" asked Harry eagerly.

"In a way. I've seen Mr. Vernon-Smith. I told him

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that under his son's influence Hazeldene had become a gambler, and then a thief. I put it in the plainest language I know," said the colonel grimly. "I think it's a long time since the Cotton King had any talk as plain as that. I told him he could make his loss known, and send this young rascal to prison if he liked, and that I, for one, thought it was the proper place for him; but that if the affair were made public, he and his son would figure as perverters of youth, and would be pretty nearly as badly disgraced as Hazeldene."

And the colonel smiled grimly.

Harry drew a deep breath of relief.

"Thank you, uncle!"

"Thank you, sir," faltered Hazeldene. "I—I know you despise me, and—and I deserve it. But—but I've had a lesson, I swear I have. I—I'll manage to pay the money back somehow, when I—grow up! I—"

"I hope you will," said the colonel. "Now go to bed."

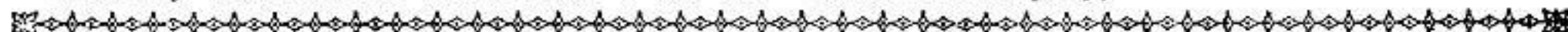
And they went.

Hazeldene did not go back to England. He had had his lesson, and Harry Wharton had only pity for him; and he begged his uncle to allow the boy to come back to the Villa du Lac. The colonel gave in. Hazeldene was very quiet and subdued now; he feared nothing so much as his rascality becoming known at home, especially to Marjorie, and that was more than sufficient to keep him straight. Moreover, he was away from the evil influence of the Bounder now.

And as the days passed the incident was less vividly remembered; and in the busy excursions about the beautiful shores of Lake Lemane, the Greyfriars juniors had other matters to think of. And so ere long, as the shadow faded, even Hazeldene came to enjoy his sojourn with Harry Wharton in Switzerland.

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of THE MAGNET Library in advance. Price one penny.)



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

A new phase in the career of Stanley Dare is opened up by the introduction to the reader of a party of Cambridge undergraduates, who are met together to discuss a matter affecting the honour of St. Martin's College. One of the party, named Latimer, suspects a fellow-undergraduate, Douglas Clayton, of theft. The rest of the party consists of two of Latimer's cronies, and Blount, Paget, and Graham, three of Clayton's friends.

(Now go on with the Story.)



College Chums—A Quarrel.

"I have already told you," said Latimer, after a short pause, "that I have been robbed of a matter of sixty-five pounds—that amount includes the ring—and I mean that the fullest investigation shall be made, and the guilty party brought to justice, whoever he is. Above all things, I hate a thief! It is well known in college that Douglas Clayton has got very much in debt. Been going the pace, I suppose, although, generally speaking, the athletic gang haven't the pluck to do that."

"I didn't know that it required any pluck to drink more than was good for you, and run up bills which you haven't the money to meet," said Graham. "Clayton has been foolish, and has thrown his money away recklessly. And, being good-hearted, he has had a lot of hangers-on who were ready enough to help him spend it, but shunned his society when they found that there was nothing more to be made out of him. Carelessness in money matters was the worst charge that could be brought against him, and I'm quite sure he never regarded that as evidence of pluck."

"Well, there is no need to argue that point," continued

Latimer. "I accuse Clayton of having stolen money and a ring from my bed-room, and in support of my accusation I may tell you that I found two articles of his property in my room. One was a letter which he presumably pulled out of his pocket by accident, and dropped unnoticed; and the other was a penknife, the blade of which had been used to force open a drawer in which the money had been kept."

A dead silence followed this statement, which even Wilfred Blount felt was black enough against his friend. For the thought would intrude itself upon him that Douglas Clayton's creditors had been threatening legal proceedings, and that if Clayton could not raise the money to pay them there would be a crash, and his college career would come to a sudden end.

But for all that, his generous nature would not allow him to harbour a suspicion against his friend.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "Clayton is in ignorance of all this. Let him come in here. Make the accusation to his face, and let us hear what he has to say. Take my word for it, he will give an answer which will sweep away the last shadow of suspicion even from your mind."

"Really, we are getting quite dramatic!" sneered Forsyth. "Latimer, of course, may stretch a point of pity, but the usual thing is to hand a thief over to the hands of—"

"Silence!" thundered Blount. "If you use that word again in reference to my friend, I'll thrash you to within an inch of your life!"

Forsyth turned white to the lips with fear, and cowered back into his chair.

"Latimer," he gasped, "don't allow him to lay hands on me! If he does, I shall report him!"

"Be good enough not to create a disturbance in my rooms, Mr. Blount," said Latimer. "To send for Clayton, and make the accusation against him here and now is not the course I intended to adopt. But since you desire it, I will accede to your request."

Paget at once jumped to his feet, and hurried off to find Douglas Clayton, and in a few minutes returned with him.

As Clayton entered the room, he nodded cheerfully to Blount and Graham, but favoured Latimer and his cronies with a stare of contemptuous surprise. There was certainly no sign of guilty consciousness on his good-looking, bronzed face. He was an excellent specimen of young British manhood—active, sinewy, and cleanly-built, and it seemed absurd that anyone should harbour suspicions of a crime against him.

"I am not at all sure that I clearly understood Paget's statement to me just now," he said; "but I gather that you, Latimer, have dared to accuse me of theft? I can only suppose that Paget has mistaken your meaning. Be good enough to explain yourself."

For one moment Latimer flinched before the steady gaze of the clear, blue eyes; but the next instant he recovered himself, though his voice had something of a tremor in it as he replied:

"I accuse you of having stolen fifty pounds in gold and a diamond ring from a drawer in my bed-room, either last night or some time during the previous day."

"You—accuse—me!" Douglas Clayton stepped up to him with a gleam in his eyes that Latimer did not like. "You bound! You must be mad!"

"I am sane enough, I can assure you," answered Latimer. "Perhaps you can account for this letter and penknife, both your property, being found in my room last night?"

"No; I cannot," replied Clayton. "And I have no idea how they left my possession. I received the letter only yesterday morning."

"Easily explained, I should say!" Latimer rejoined insolently. "You probably heard somebody coming along the passage, and in your haste to get away you left the knife behind."

"Do you actually believe that I am guilty of theft?" asked Clayton, in a voice so unnaturally calm that it ought to have been a warning to the other.

"I am positive of it!" replied Latimer, with an insulting laugh.

But the laugh died upon his lips as he saw the look in Clayton's eyes.

"You lying mongrel!" exclaimed Clayton, bursting into sudden and fierce anger. "If you don't apologise for that insult I will half kill you!"

He had gripped Latimer by the throat, and was shaking him as a terrier does a rat. There was an immediate uproar in the room. Every fellow was on his feet in an instant. Blount and Graham rushed between the struggling pair, and separated them.

"He deserves a hiding, old chap, no doubt," said Blount; "but you had better leave that until afterwards. Come away now, Clayton. None of your friends believe Latimer's atrocious accusation, but the matter has to be settled in another way."

"It will be!" gasped Latimer hoarsely. "You shall pay for this! I shall see you rotting in a gaol yet!"

It is probable that Douglas Clayton would have turned back and given Latimer a good thrashing then and there, had not his comrades restrained him. He cooled down,

however, when he got to his own rooms, and after a short talk with Blount retired to bed.

"Clayton, rouse up, man! Something terrible has happened during the night."

Douglas Clayton sat bolt upright in bed, and stared at the speaker. It was Graham, looking pale and excited. He was half-dressed.

"What is the matter?" demanded Clayton.

Before answering, Graham went to the window, and pulled up the blind. The early morning sunlight streamed into the room.

"What is the matter?" asked Clayton, again.

"Latimer was found dead in his bed this morning," replied Graham slowly.

"Found dead!" echoed Clayton. "Good heavens! What was the cause of his death—does anybody know?"

"Doctor has been called, and he states that death was due to poison."

"Poison! Do you mean that he committed suicide?"

Graham shook his head.

"No," he replied. "He has been murdered!"

Clayton had been hurriedly dressing himself. He paused, and a look of horror came into his face.

"It seems incredible!" he exclaimed. "And I quarrelled with him last night, using a threat against him."

"It was unfortunate that that quarrel took place," said Graham. "But, anyhow, there were several of us present, and know everything that was said."

There was something in the tone of his voice that caused Clayton to spring to his feet, and turn a startled gaze upon him.

"Unfortunate!" he cried. "Why, what do you mean? You are hiding something from me. Surely no one could ever dream that I—"

"Oh, it's a whole chapter of accidents, Douglas, old man!" exclaimed Graham desperately. "Accidents or terrible coincidences, I hardly know which term to use. I have come straight to your rooms to put you in possession of the facts. You had a phial containing curarine in your cupboard, didn't you?"

"Yes. I keep it locked up, as it is a deadly poison," replied Clayton.

"Where is it now?"

Clayton opened the cupboard, and searched about inside.

"It has disappeared!" he cried wildly.

Graham made a gesture of despair.

"The doctor says," he almost whispered, "that curarine is the poison which has caused Latimer's death!"

"Mon, it's an awfu' thing!" exclaimed Professor MacAndrew, as he laid down the morning paper which he had been reading. "A student at St. Martin's has been arrested on a charge of murder. According to the report, he was accused by a fellow-student of theft. The accuser—Latimer, by name—had, or said he had, proofs of the other's guilt. The next morning he was found dead, poisoned by curarine. And Clayton, the one who is arrested, was the only man in the University who possessed any of the stuff. It looks unco' black against him."

"Black, indeed," admitted Stanley Dare, as he rose from the breakfast-table. "Of course, the newspaper report is only a meagre one; but it reads as though Douglas Clayton is the victim of a plot."

"Ye canna speak with authority unless ye hear all the details," answered the professor. "Mon, just think of it—the master of St. Martin's, Dr. Golightly, is an auld college chum of mine. Guid sakes, the pair mon will be upset!"

Stanley Dare had gone over to his writing-desk. Suddenly he turned sharply round towards the door.

"Somebody coming upstairs in a hurry," he said. "A stranger, too, for I don't recognise his footstep. He is mounting three stairs at a time."

(Another instalment of this detective story next Tuesday.)

For Next Week



"THE DUFFER OF GREYFRIARS."

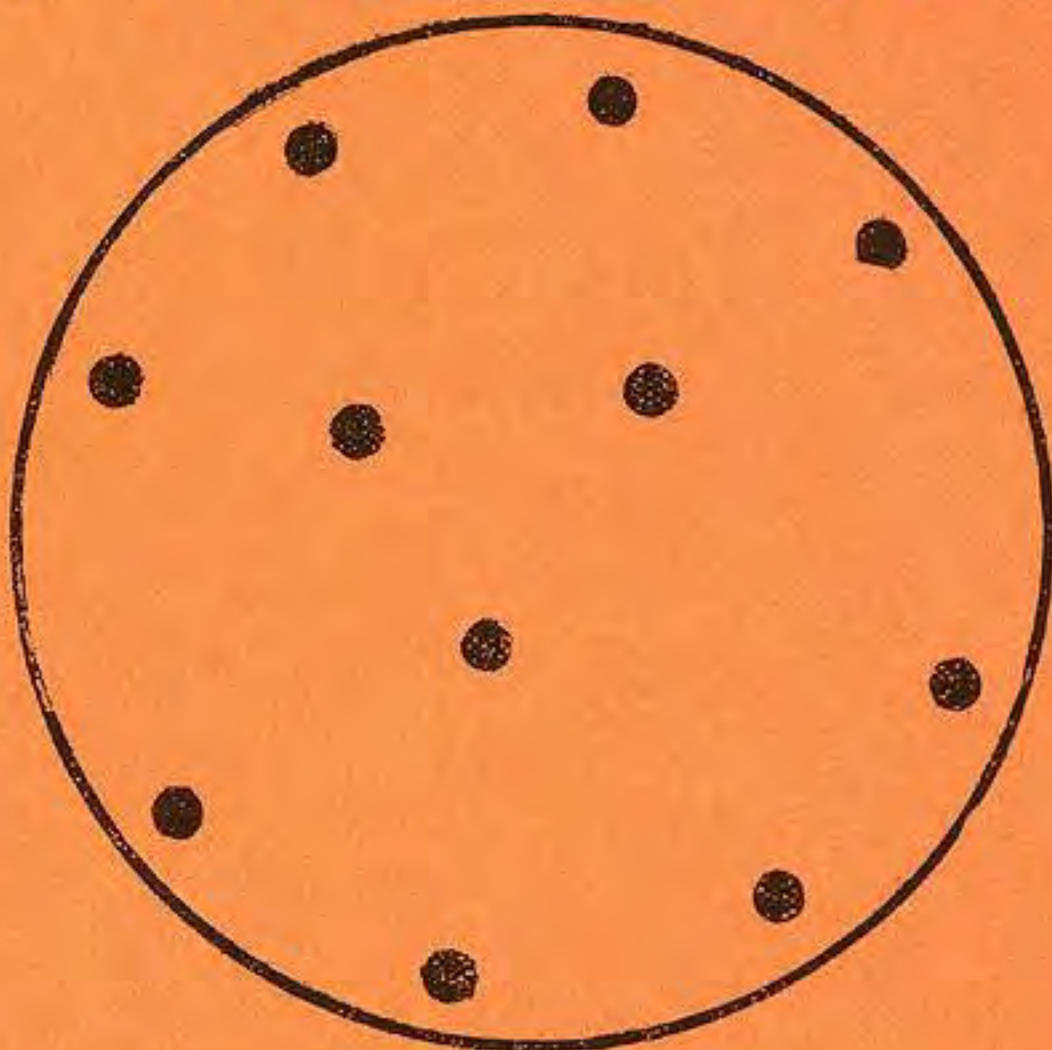
There is something to be said for a change; and, good as you will all admit the tales have been, you will find fresh interest and cause for much amusement when you read in next week's "Magnet" about

ALONZO TODD.

The Editor

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