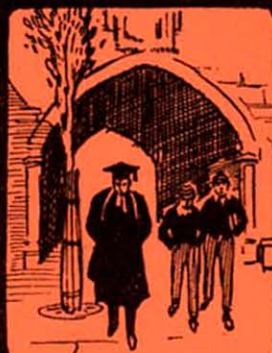


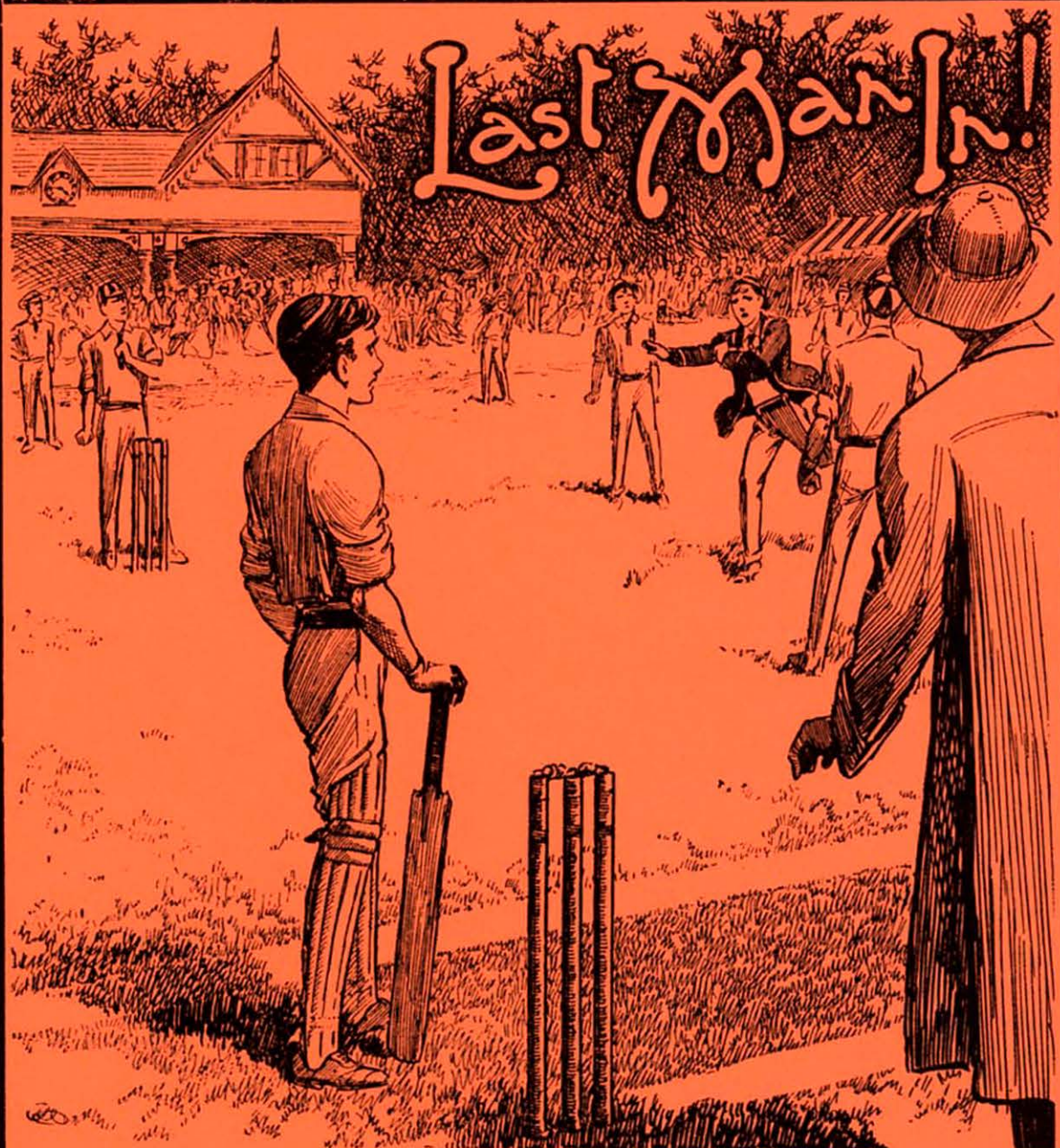
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Last Man In!

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

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Bounder Comes Out Very Strong

CLICK!

It was the cheerful sound of bat meeting ball, and it was followed by a loud cheer from a crowd of fellows round the junior cricket-ground at Greyfriars.

"Bravo, Smith!"

"Bravo, Bounder!"

"Well hit!"

The fellow at the wicket dropped the end of his bat on the crease and smiled slightly.

It was a good hit that he had made, and the ball was soaring to the boundary. But he was not running. It was not a match, merely batting practice; but if it had been serious play, Vernon-Smith would have been piling up runs for his side.

That was the amazing part of it. The batsman who was hitting out like a Jessop or a Fry was not Harry Wharton, the finest cricketer in the junior school—it was not Bob Cherry or Frank Nugent or Tom Brown or John Bull—it was not one of the juniors who had made a name on the playing fields.

It was the last fellow whom Greyfriars generally would have expected to turn out a bat of this sort—for it was Vernon-Smith, the fellow who was known throughout Greyfriars as the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith could do many things, and his knowledge of life—like Sam Weller's knowledge of London—was extensive and varied. There were few card games that he could not play well, and he could keep his end up at billiards against a professional sharper. He knew the form of many horses, and the chances of many jockeys, as well as many bookmakers. His knowledge and experience of such matters was extensive enough to get him expelled instantly from Greyfriars if the authorities there had known anything about

it. He had earned, and well deserved, the title of the Bounder of Greyfriars, and if there had been any specially clever bit of blackguardism at the school the fellows would not have been surprised to know that Vernon-Smith was at the bottom of it. That was the peculiar kind of cleverness he had!

But Vernon-Smith as a cricketer!

It was a surprise all round. When he joined in the junior practice and went to the wicket hardly a glance was given to him. No one expected him to be able to bat. But when he received every ball that Frank Nugent or Tom Brown could send him and knocked them all away with the greatest ease the fellows began to stare. It began to be clear that Herbert Vernon-Smith could do something else besides smoke cigarettes and make bets at the Cross Keys in Friardale. There was something in the Bounder of Greyfriars, after all.

"He can bat!" said John Bull, in tones of great surprise.

"Looks like it!" said Frank Nugent ruefully, as the ball was tossed back to him. "He's keeping up his wicket like a giddy Grace!"

"Let Inky have a try."

"Good egg! Where are you, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, and the best junior bowler at Greyfriars, lounged forward in his sleepy way.

"I am here, my worthy chums," he remarked. "The helpfulness of my esteemed self is terrific."

"Get the Bounder out."

Hurree Singh took the round, red ball.

"I will do my honourable best," he said.

"Go it, Inky!"

"Play up, Bounder!"

Unpopular as the Bounder of Greyfriars was, the fellows were sportsmen, and they wanted to see him stand up to the nabob's bowling. It was an unexpected exhibition on the part of Vernon-Smith, and the fellows were amazed, but some of them were pleased. As Bob Cherry remarked, it showed that the chap was not all bad. There was hope yet for one who could bat like that!

Harry Wharton was coming down to the cricket-ground with his bat under his arm to join in the practice. He looked surprised as he heard the shouts of the Removites.

"Buck up, Bounder!"

"Well hit!"

"Hurray!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wharton, who was captain of the Remove Form, and skipper of the Form cricket club.

"What's all that?"

"The Bounder's batting!"

"The Bounder—batting?"

"Yes," said Tom Brown, "and sticking it like Grace."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I never expected to see Vernon-Smith bat like Grace," he said. "It will be worth seeing! My hat!"

Wharton broke off, as Vernon-Smith met a regular "twister" from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, playing it perfectly and snipping it away into the slips with the greatest of ease.

Wharton stared.

"Was that a fluke?" he said.

Tom Brown shook his head.

"He's been batting like that for ten minutes, Wharton."

"My hat!"

"Play up, Inky!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was looking a little grim as he gathered up the ball again. He was not used to seeing a fellow stand up to his bowling like this. Harry Wharton was the only fellow in the Remove—the Lower Fourth—who was really able to keep his wicket intact against Inky's bowling. It was a surprise to the dusky junior to find that Vernon-Smith, the despised black sheep of the Remove, could do it, too. And Hurree Singh meant business this time!

He backed away from the wicket and took a little run and turned himself into a catherine-wheel, and the ball shot out like a four-point-seven shell.

Click!

There was a spin on that ball that would have baffled many a county batsman. But it did not baffle Vernon-Smith.

But met ball, and the red leather went whizzing away far, far into the long-field.

Then Harry Wharton, little as he liked the Bounder of Greyfriars, joined in the roar of cheering that went up.

"Hurray!"

"Bravo!"

The Bounder smiled.

He was a "dark horse" this time. He had kept his powers a secret, in the cold, secretive way that was part of his nature. He would not show what he could do until he chose, and

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until it would be useful to him. He had his purpose to serve now. After this display of first-class batting before half the school, Harry Wharton, the captain of the Form team, could not refuse to play him in the Remove eleven.

That was Vernon-Smith's idea. The antipathy between Wharton and himself was deep and keen, but public opinion would be too strong for Harry in this case.

Not that Vernon-Smith, as a rule, cared twopence about cricket, or about playing in the eleven. But he cared very much for having his own way, and for cutting an important figure in the eyes of the school. And there was another reason, too, why he wanted to play in the Form eleven for the next match—the first big match of the season—when the Greyfriars fellows met Highcliffe School. It was likely to be a difficult and trying match, and it was like the Bounder to want to shine forth on a most important occasion and then to let the matter drop indifferently. And Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House School, was to be there to see the match, too; and the Bounder was possessed by a curious desire to shine in the eyes of Marjorie Hazeldene.

There was little doubt now that he would be offered his cap for the eleven. It was already being discussed on all sides—although a quarter of an hour before fellows would as soon have thought of selecting Vernon-Smith for the eleven as of selecting Billy Bunter or Alonzo Todd.

Wharton watched the batting, with a wrinkled brow. He did not like the Bounder, and he did not want to play him against Highcliffe. But the fellow's batting was undeniably good. He was meeting the hardest balls that Hurree Singh sent down to him, and meeting them with the greatest of ease. His batting was attracting general attention, and fellows of higher Forms than the Remove were gathering to look on.

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, came along with Courtney, and looked on at the batting, with considerable surprise in his looks. He knew the reputation of the Bounder—who was, in the Remove, what Loder and Carne were in the Sixth. That such a blackguard as Vernon-Smith should turn out such a batsman seemed like a miracle to Wingate.

The Greyfriars captain tapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder.

"This is rather a surprise from Vernon-Smith," he remarked.

"Quite a surprise, Wingate. I don't understand it," said Harry, with a puzzled look. "I remember, though, that he could play footer when he chose—though he never chose very often."

"I hear that you have a hard match on for Saturday."

"Yes, with Highcliffe Juniors."

"If you want a bat, I should advise you to try Vernon-Smith. There can't be many fellows in the Remove who can bat like that."

Wharton nodded.

"I was thinking of it, Wingate."

Click!

The ball soared away again, and there was a faint sound of cracking glass in the distance.

Then a shout.

"My hat!"

"It's the window of the pav."

"Bravo, Bounder!"

That mighty stroke was Vernon-Smith's last. He tucked the bat under his arm, and strolled off the pitch. Another bat took his place, and the practice went on; but it was followed with little interest. All the talk of the Remove ran upon one subject—the unexpected display by Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars! Who would have expected it of the Bounder? That was the general remark—and the general opinion was that Harry Wharton would have to play Vernon-Smith against Highcliffe, whether he liked it or not.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Slight Misapprehension.

VERNON-SMITH was a fellow with few, if any, friends in the school. He had never gone out of his way to make himself popular, and his money, which seemed to be almost unlimited, only achieved a certain kind of popularity, with a certain kind of fellows. Hazeldene, of the Remove, who was always hard up, chummed with him as a rule. Vernon-Smith paying expenses for both. Billy Bunter would borrow of him to exactly the extent that he chose to lend. Fellows like Snoop and Skinner would be as civil to him as he pleased. But friends he could not be said to have. Even Hazeldene, his best chum, was very reserved under the bonds that united him to the Bounder, and they were frequently upon bad terms. The Bounder did not seem to care whether he had any friends or not. He had a way of finding friends and amusements outside the walls of Greyfriars—



Hurree Singh took a little run and turned himself into a catherine-wheel, and the ball shot out like a four-point-seven shell. Vernon-Smith's bat met the ball, and the red leather went whizzing away far, far into the long-field. (See page 2.)

amusements and friends of a kind the Head would have flogged him for having, if he had known. But the Bounder was very cunning in covering up his tracks.

But the Remove were a sporting Form, and it was curious to see what a revulsion of feeling there was in the Bounder's favour, after the splendid display of batting at the wicket on the junior ground.

The fellows all said, as with one voice, that a chap who could bat like that must have his good points, and they were doubtless right.

Alonzo Todd, who gave everybody the greatest possible credit for everything, suggested that Vernon-Smith had turned over a new leaf, and meant to play the game in the future; and this view found some believers.

At all events, it was certain that Smith was a splendid bat, when he chose, and that Wharton could not do better than play him against Highcliffe.

That it would be a bitter pill for Harry to swallow, most of the Form knew. He was on the worst of terms with the Bounder. Every one of Vernon-Smith's ways jarred upon Harry—his smoking, his betting, his breaking bounds, his low associates outside the school—all annoyed and troubled the captain of the Remove. All the more, as Harry was trying to keep Hazeldene to the straight path, for his sister's sake, and the Bounder was always trying—and usually succeeding—in leading the weak and irresolute lad into crooked ways.

And there were several fellows in the Remove, like Bul-

strode and Skinner, who were inclined to enforce Vernon-Smith's claims, if only for the special purpose of annoying and worrying Harry Wharton. Bulstrode had no chance of playing in the eleven himself, but he had a conviction that by rights he would be captain of the team, and any chance of exasperating Harry was not likely to be passed over by him.

Harry Wharton, when the practice was over, walked away from the cricket-ground, with his bat under his arm, and a thoughtful wrinkle in his brows.

He knew what the general opinion of the Form was, and he was in a very undecided frame of mind about it.

"I say, Wharton!"

Wharton gave an irritable start as Billy Bunter jerked at his sleeve.

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" he said.

The fat junior blinked at him, but did not buzz off.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Don't bother now, Billy. Run away and play."

"I dare say you'd like to avoid an argument on the subject before all the fellows," said Bunter, with a blink round at the grinning juniors. "But I think a chap ought to be willing to stand up in public and own up."

"Eh? What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the cricket eleven."

"Hear, hear!" said Bulstrode.

Thus encouraged, Billy Bunter went on cheerfully.

"You know we've got a jolly hard match on for Saturday,

Wharton. The Highcliffe fellows used to muck up the footer, but they can play cricket."

"I know that," said Harry impatiently. "What are you getting at?"

"I'm getting at this," said Bunter indignantly—"that you have no right to leave the best player out of the team, when you're going to meet a very powerful eleven on Saturday."

"Hear, hear!" said Bulstrode again.

"Go it, Bunter," said Snoop. "Put it plain! You're right."

Bunter blinked at Snoop in some surprise.

"You think I'm right?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"Well, I never expected that from you, Snoop. You think I'm right, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, you see, Wharton, the fellows are backing me up," said Bunter. "My view is that, under the circumstances, you ought to be glad to have the help of a really good all-round cricketer."

"Look here—"

"A fellow who is willing to play, and to overlook the fact that he has hitherto been passed over out of sheer personal jealousy," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "A fellow, though I say it, who is equally good as batsman, bowler, and in the field, and—"

Wharton stared.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "We've seen Smith bat, but we know nothing about his bowling or fielding."

"The nothingfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bunter blinked at Wharton.

"Smith!" he repeated. "Who's talking about Smith?"

"Why, you are, I suppose."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"You young ass!" shouted Wharton. "If you weren't talking about Smith, whom on earth were you talking about?"

"Myself, of course."

"What!"

"Blow Smith," said Billy Bunter. "I don't know whether he can play, but I know jolly well that I can. I'm talking about myself. You know that you jolly well ought to play me in the Form eleven."

Harry Wharton burst into a laugh. He had taken it for granted that Billy Bunter was urging the claims of the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked in great indignation at the juniors as they roared. He did not see why his claims to be played in the eleven against Highcliffe should be the cause of so much merriment.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," he growled peevishly. "Look here—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But look here, Wharton!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Speaking of Vernon-Smith—"

"Oh, hang Vernon-Smith!" said Wharton irritably.

"Thank you," said the Bounder, with a sneer.

Wharton coloured. He had not observed the Bounder among the crowd of juniors, and he would have recalled that irritable exclamation if he could.

"Sorry!" he exclaimed.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, don't mind me!" he said. "Nothing like speaking one's mind. And I don't suppose you're any too well pleased to see me play cricket. You'd rather go on thinking that I'm a black sheep who can do nothing but smoke cigarettes in the box-room."

"If I've thought so, it's your own fault," said Harry sharply. "If a fellow chooses to be a blackguard, it's only natural people should think him one."

"Thanks again."

"That's all very well—" began Bulstrode

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really—"

"Kick him out!"

"Ow! Yow! Yaroo!"

"Look here," went on Bulstrode, "I'm not in the team, but I'm a member of the cricket club, and I want the team to win. I think it would be simply throwing away chances to leave Vernon-Smith out of the eleven."

"Same here," said Snoop.

"You hear that, Wharton?"

"Yes, I hear it," said Harry quietly.

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"Then what have you got to say?"

"Nothing!"

"What!"

"I'm going to think it over, that's all."

And Harry Wharton strode away before anything further could be said. He was followed by a very perceptible hiss from Bulstrode & Co.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Declines to Go.

"JAM," said Frank Nugent, handing the pot out of the cupboard in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage, "and bread-and-butter! That's what we've got for tea."

"All right!" said Harry Wharton carelessly.

"The all-rightfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "especially as the esteemed funds are very low."

"Jolly low," agreed Nugent. "Like Bunter, I'm expecting a postal-order, but it hasn't come yet. But—My hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"The jam!"

"What's the matter with the jam?"

Nugent had taken the lid off the jampot, and was staring into its depths with a wrathful expression upon his countenance.

"It's gone!" he roared.

"Gone!"

"Look there!"

Nugent held up the jampot. The jam was certainly gone; the pot had been scraped out quite clean.

"It's Bunter!" said Nugent savagely. "The cupboard was left unlocked. Bunter's been here raiding our jam!"

"Never mind—"

"Never mind!" roared Nugent. "But I do mind! The jam's gone!"

"Bother the jam!"

"What are we going to have for tea?"

"Bother the tea!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Oh, bother!"

Frank Nugent jammed the jar down on the table, and stared at Harry Wharton. But the troubled expression on Harry's face made Nugent's clear.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "If you're not thinking about the blessed jam, what are you thinking about?"

"About the Bounder!"

Nugent sniffed.

"Oh, bother the Bounder!"

"The botherfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton's brows were deeply wrinkled. He was evidently in a very perturbed frame of mind.

"There's going to be trouble about it," he said, as he sat down, while Hurree Jamset Ram Singh made the tea.

"The Bounder is born to make trouble for people, I believe. Who would have suspected Vernon-Smith of being able to bat like that?"

"Nobody, I suppose; but surely it's all the better? It's good to see that even that rotter has one good point."

"Very likely. But, not to mince the matter, Frank, he's as good a bat as we can find in the Remove."

"Rot! You beat him hollow, and I'm as good a bat as he is!"

"Leaving us two out, I don't know who else bats as he does. The fact is, he's got every claim to be played in the Form eleven. If I leave him out, and we lose the Highcliffe match, what will the fellows say?"

"They'll all be down on you."

"Exactly. Besides, as we're on bad terms, most of them will think I leave him out from personal considerations."

"There's a simple way of getting out of that difficulty," said Frank, pausing for a moment in his work of cutting bread-and-butter.

"What is the way?"

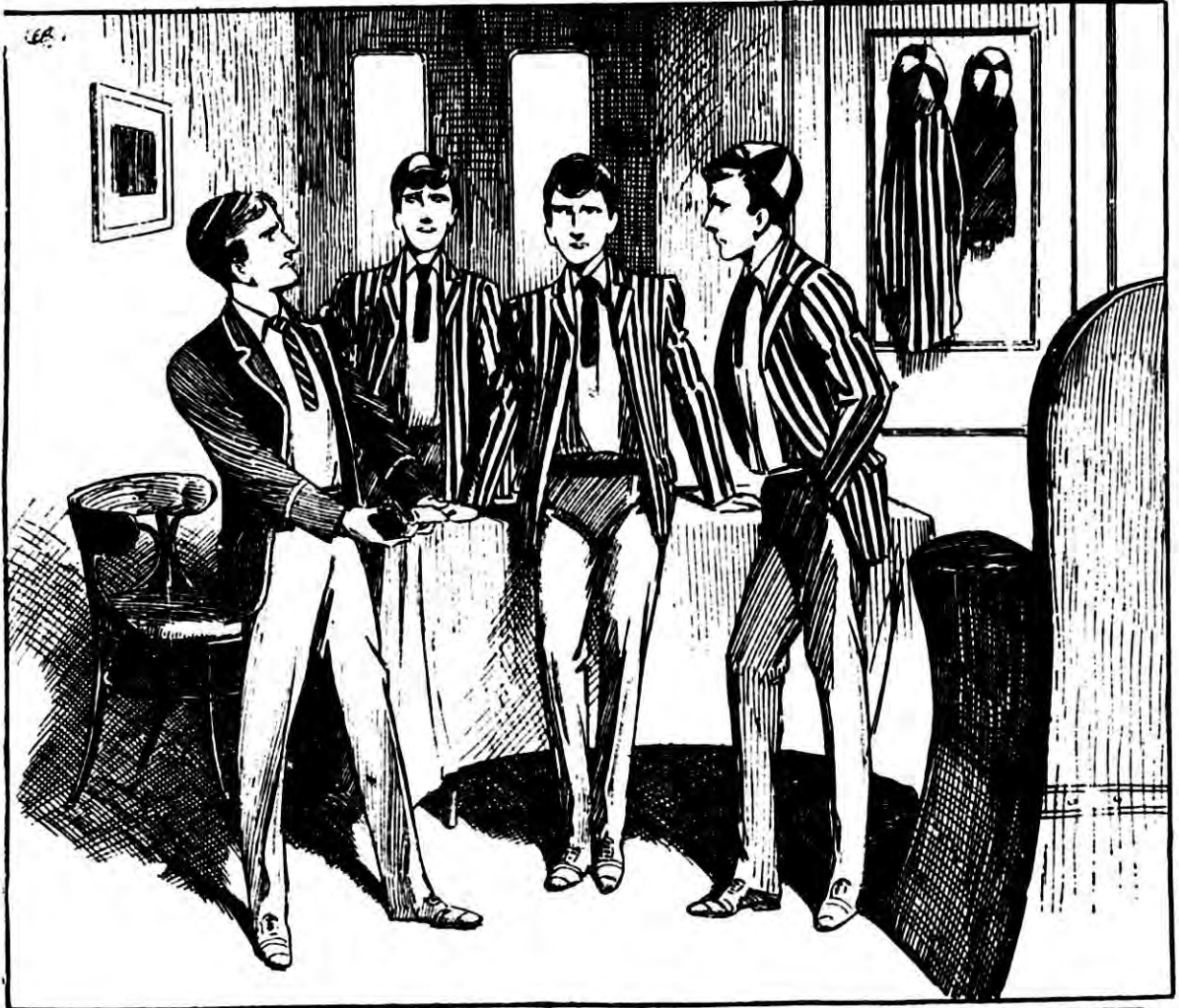
"Play him."

Wharton made a restless gesture.

"I've thought of that," he said. "I know we want every good bat we can get for the match with Highcliffe. They play footer rottenly, but they're good at cricket, and I hear that they have been training hard, so as to take it out of us for the lickings we gave them in the winter. Vernon-Smith would be useful. But—"

"Well, play him."

"That's easy enough to say," replied Wharton. "But suppose I put him in the team? It's only the beginning of trouble. He will never obey orders, for one thing—he will take every opportunity of crossing me, and if I put his back up, he's quite false enough to lose his wicket on the day of the match, letting a Highcliffe fellow bowl him. It's no good saying so; the fellows would only think I'm prejudiced."



Vernon-Smith opened his Russia-leather purse, and showed his tempters a wad of crackling fivers. "That will show you how much I want your blessed fiver," said the Bounder of Greyfriars. (See page 18.)

But we know jolly well that he's done things as mean as that."

Frank Nugent whistled.

"There's something in that," he said. "But I don't see how you can get out of playing him, Harry. On his form this afternoon, he's easily entitled to a place in the team."

Wharton nodded gloomily.

"That's the worst of it," he said. "I shall have to play him, I suppose; and if I once put him in the team, there will be trouble from the start."

"If you don't put him in, I fancy the Form will cut up very rusty over it. Couldn't you make some conditions with him?" asked Nugent. "Put it to him straight."

Harry did not reply. He felt that it was not of much use making conditions with the Bounder of Greyfriars. Vernon-Smith's word was not to be relied upon.

The chums of the Remove had their tea quietly, with less than usual of the cheery talk over the tea-table. Wharton felt that he was placed in a false and difficult position, and there seemed to be no really satisfactory way out of it.

The chums had almost finished their tea, when there was a loud knock at the door, and immediately following the knock the door was thrown open, and Bulstrode and Snoop and several more fellows crowded in.

Bulstrode's look was decidedly unpleasant. It needed only a glance to show that the bully of the Remove was looking for trouble.

Wharton glanced up quietly.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"The list for the Saturday match is posted up on the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 168.

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notice-board," said Bulstrode, in an extremely disagreeable tone.

"I know that, as I posted it up there myself!" said Harry.

"The names given are 'Wharton, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Cherry, Brown, Linloy, Bull, Desmond, Ogilvy, Morgan, and Hazeldene,'" said Bulstrode.

"That's right!"

"There's no mention of Vernon-Smith."

"Quite so!"

"Are we to take that as meaning that Vernon-Smith is not to be played in the Highcliffe match?" demanded Bulstrode.

"That notice was posted up before I saw Vernon-Smith bat," replied Harry Wharton, with perfect calmness, though Bulstrode's bullying tone was very hard to bear.

Wharton was not patient, as a rule, but he wanted to avoid putting himself in the wrong with the Form if he could.

"But you've seen him since?" said Bulstrode.

"You know I have."

"You know he bats better than any other fellow in the Form?"

"No; I don't know that."

"Well, we all know it!" said Bulstrode, with a sneer.

"The whole Form knows it, for that matter! What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to think it over."

"Are you going to play Smith?"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"You don't care twopence whether I play Smith or not,

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Bulstrode!" he exclaimed. "You are picking on this to cause trouble!"

The Remove bully sneered.

"You can put it like that, if you like," he said; "but the Form will know what to think of it, if you leave out the best batsman in the Remove. Everybody will know jolly well that it's due to jealousy!"

"You've said quite enough, I think!" said Harry. "Will you be good enough to get out of the study?"

Bulstrode planted his foot firmly on the floor.

"I'm here to get a plain answer to a plain question!" he said. "Are you going to give Vernon-Smith his cap for the eleven, or aren't you?"

"Get out of my study!"

"Rats!"

"Will you go?"

"No, I won't!"

Harry Wharton rose to his feet, his cheeks flushed, his eyes flashing, his hands clenched hard. The juniors with Bulstrode retreated a little, but the burly Remove stood his ground. Bulstrode might be a bully, but he had plenty of bulldog courage.

"Get out of my study, Bulstrode, or I'll throw you out!" said Harry Wharton, his voice trembling with anger.

"I don't stir an inch till I've had an answer!"

"Very well!"

Harry Wharton wasted no more time in words.

He strode straight towards the burly Remove, and Bulstrode put up his hands at once. More than once he had gone down before Harry Wharton, but he was seldom unready to put it to the test again.

In a moment more the two were fighting, trampling to and fro in the study, while Bulstrode's followers crowded in the doorway, watching with breathless interest.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Says "No!"

BULSTRODE had plenty of strength and plenty of pluck, and he put up a good fight. But he was no match for the captain of the Remove. Slowly but steadily he was driven back by Harry Wharton—back to the doorway of the study. He fought harder and harder, but again and again he staggered under heavy blows.

"Go it, Harry!" said Frank Nugent encouragingly.

"The go-fulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Bulstrode is getting it in his honourable neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!

Bulstrode's bulky body went heavily to the floor, with a crash that shook the study, and made the teacups dance on the table.

Wharton stood over him, breathing hard.

"Phew!" murmured Skinner.

And he stepped quietly and quickly out of the study into the passage. He did not want to run the risk of getting a terrific right-hander like that himself.

Bulstrode lay half-dazed. He dragged himself up, holding to the door, and gasping for breath.

Wharton watched him with glittering eyes.

"Now, will you go?" he exclaimed.

Bulstrode did not reply. He gathered his strength, and sprang at the captain of the Remove like a tiger.

Wharton closed with him, and they reeled to and fro in the study, grappling fiercely.

"Out with him!" roared Frank Nugent. "Chuck him out! Shall I lend you a hand, Harry?"

"No," said Wharton.

He whirled his burly antagonist towards the door. Bul-

strode exerted his strength, and they came whirling back again, and crashed against the table. There was a smash as the crockery went flying.

"Look out!" yelled Nugent.

Wharton's grasp grew harder on his opponent, and Bulstrode was swung away to the door again.

This time he could not save himself.

Wharton whirled him into the doorway, and flung him away with all his force. The bully of the Remove crashed into Skinner and Snoop, and the three of them rolled on the floor in the passage together.

"Now," said Wharton, between his teeth, "if any of you others want to come in—"

Apparently they did not. They retreated along the passage very promptly. Bulstrode pushed Skinner and Snoop away savagely, and staggered to his feet.

"You bound!" he panted.

Wharton smiled scornfully.

"Come on, if you choose?" he said.

But Bulstrode did not choose. He was too exhausted by the struggle to be able to come on again. He staggered away, and his friends followed him.

Wharton turned back into the study. He was breathing very hard, and his hands were shaking with the exertion.

"You've jolly well broken up the happy home!" remarked Frank Nugent, glancing at the heap of shattered teacups and saucers on the floor.

"The brokefulness is terrific."

Wharton did not reply; he was in no mood for jesting. He was deeply disturbed in his mind. Nugent clapped him on the shoulder.

"You needn't worry, Harry! It will be all right."

Harry nodded.

"I hope so," he said. "There are a good many in the Remove, however, who will be trying to make capital out of this."

"Let 'em rip!"

Wharton smiled. The three juniors quitted the study a little later to go down to the common-room. As they entered it, Ogilvy came up to Wharton. Ogilvy was one of the selected cricketers for the Highcliffe match.

"I hear that the cricket list's going to be amended, Wharton," he remarked, with a somewhat anxious shade upon his face.

"I haven't said so," replied Harry.

"Everybody seems to be saying so."

Wharton was silent.

"I suppose Vernon-Smith's entitled to play, after his show this afternoon," the Scottish junior remarked. "The question is, who will have to stand out to make room for him?"

"I don't think I shall play him."

Ogilvy stared.

"But his batting's splendid!" he exclaimed.

"Batting isn't everything."

"It's a lot, against such a team as the Highcliffians. We've got a ripping bowler already in Hurree Singh, and we're very strong in the field."

"All the same, I do not think I shall play Vernon-Smith."

"There will be trouble in the committee if you don't."

Wharton flushed.

"Let there be trouble, then!" he said irritably.

Ogilvy shrugged his shoulders and said no more. Vernon-Smith had come into the common-room, and a crowd of fellows gathered round as he came towards Wharton. There was evidently a general expectation of a passage of arms.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Wharton?" the Bounder said, with unusual civility of manner.

"I suppose so," said Harry tartly.

"I should like to play in the Highcliffe match. Some of the fellows seem to think I'm good enough," said Vernon-Smith. "Will you give me a trial?"

"I shall have to think it out."

"You've seen me bat. Aren't you satisfied with it?"

"Yes, so far as that goes."

"I'm willing to show you what I can do both at bowling and fielding."

"That isn't all."

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I dare say I could keep wicket at an emergency," he remarked. And there was a chuckle from the Removes.

Harry Wharton reddened.

"I shall not play you," he said. "Not, at all events, unless the committee specially asks for you to be played."

"May I ask why not?"

"Because you're not a fit chap to go into the team. You smoke, and bet, and act the rotter in a good many ways. You're not the kind of fellow for the Form eleven."

"You play a chap in the eleven on his form as a cricketer," said Bulstrode. "His private character doesn't matter."

"I differ from you."

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"The rest of the Form will differ from you, then," said Bulstrode. "The whole Remove knows that Vernon-Smith ought to be played on Saturday."

"Hear, hear!" said Snoop.

Wharton turned away without replying. There were very peculiar expressions upon the faces of the Removites. There was no doubt that the greater part of the Form regarded Wharton's refusal to play the Bounder as an example of sheer obstinacy.

"Well, I call it rotten!" Bulstrode remarked, in a tone loud enough for Harry Wharton to hear.

"Beastly!" said Skinner.

"Caddish!" murmured Stott.

"My dear fellows," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of Greyfriars, "I am sure Wharton would not act in a manner that was not in accordance with his conscientious convictions. My Uncle Benjamin—"

"Oh, ring off, Todd!"

"He says—"

"Rats!"

"Not at all, my dear Skinner. I have never heard my Uncle Benjamin use that or any other slangy expression," said Alonzo Todd, in a voice of mild reproach. "I think that instead of condemning Wharton, it would be better to reason with him."

"Ass!"

"My dear Bulstrode—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Todd blinked reproachfully at Bulstrode, and then ambled after Harry Wharton. He poked the captain of the Remove in the ribs with a bony knuckle, in the decidedly objectionable way he had.

"My dear Wharton—"

"Ow! You ass!"

"I'm so sorry if I startled you, my dear Wharton. I wished to indicate to you the general impression that you would act wisely in reconsidering your decision with regard to Smith."

"Good old dictionary!" murmured Nugent.

"My dear Nugent—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"Under the circumstances, my dear Wharton—"

Frank Nugent took the Duffer of Greyfriars by the shoulders, twisted him round, and sat him down with a bump on the floor. The Duffer blinked at him in great amazement.

"Ow! My dear Nugent—"

But his dear Nugent was gone. He walked away with Harry Wharton and Hurree Singh, leaving the Duffer of Greyfriars sitting there, still in a state of the greatest astonishment.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Enemy.

"HIGHCLIFFE cads!"

Frank Nugent uttered the exclamation, as three somewhat elegant-looking youths entered the Close at Greyfriars.

It was growing dusk; but the Close was still pretty full, the fellows being unwilling to go in out of the pleasant spring weather. Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Vavasour, of Highcliffe College, found plenty of hostile faces turned upon them.

There was no love lost between the Greyfriars fellows and the Highcliffians. The two schools were, in fact, on the worst of terms. The Highcliffians were given to taking up a high and mighty attitude, which the Greyfriars described as "swank," and the worst of it was that they had no grounds for any assumption of superiority. They swanked about their football, but they could not play footer, as the Greyfriars said, for toffee. They swanked about everything else; but whenever they met in contest with the Greyfriars fellows they were worsted. But that did not bring their noses down to the common level of normal noses.

The three of them walked into the Greyfriars Close as though the Close and Greyfriars itself belonged to them. Ponsonby might have had the fee-simple of the whole county in his personal possession by the way he strutted.

"Highcliffe cads!"

"Give 'em a yell!"

"Yah!"

Harry Wharton held up his hand.

"Hold on!" he said. "They may have come over to talk about the match on Saturday. Give them a chance!"

Bob Cherry snorted.

"They've come over to swank in advance," he exclaimed.

"I guess so," said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior.

"I guess I know those guys. Let's bump 'em!"

"Good egg!" said Bulstrode immediately.

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton.

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Shut up, Bulstrode!" said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess it's Wharton's say-so! See?"

Wharton walked over towards the three fellows from Highcliffe.

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They stopped, and surveyed him with a patronising stare. The Highcliffians had some more reason than usual for putting on "side." For although Greyfriars had beaten them hollow at football, at rowing, at swimming, Highcliffe could really put a good cricket team into the field, and the consciousness of that had a wonderful swelling effect upon the Highcliffe heads.

"Hallo!" said Ponsonby.

"Good-afternoon!" said Harry. "You want to see us about the match?"

"Oh, no!"

"Anything else?"

"Not at all."

"Then what have you come over for?" demanded Bob Cherry bluntly.

And there was a laugh.

"Personal reasons," said Ponsonby. "We know a chap in this school; Gaddy knows his father, and he wants to speak to him."

"Oh, I see!"

"Perhaps one of you will have the kindness to show us to Vernon-Smith's room?" said Ponsonby, in a stately way.

"Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes. Gaddy has a message for him from his father about the holidays."

"Oh," said Wharton carelessly, "I believe the Bounder's in his study! Bunter will show you there."

"I say, you fellows, I'm willing to show you the way," said Bunter, rolling up at once. "Come this way! Follow me!"

The three Highcliffe juniors walked after the Owl of the Remove. Harry Wharton and his chums exchanged glances.

"What do they want to see Vernon-Smith for?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"There may be a message for him from Gaddy's father," he said, "but there's something else. They wouldn't walk over from Highcliffe only for that."

Frank Nugent's face became very serious.

"Look here," he exclaimed, "you remember there was an attempt to get a footer match sold, here, and Vernon-Smith was mixed up in it with the Highcliffe fellows! Do you think it's anything of that sort?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"They'll have their trouble for their pains, then, if Vernon-Smith isn't going to play for the Remove," said Bob Cherry.

"Quite so; though I don't think he'd give the match away," said Harry. "Of course, there would be the danger. My idea is that he wants to swank as a great cricketer; but he is too untrustworthy for us to play him."

Meanwhile Ponsonby & Co. followed Billy Bunter into the house. Bunter was exceedingly polite to the Highcliffe youths. He did not seem to share in the general dislike the Greyfriars juniors felt for them.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, as they went towards the staircase, "do you notice that the posts are rather late and uncertain in this part of the country?"

"No," said Ponsonby.

"I can't say I have," remarked Gadsby.

Bunter shook his head solemnly.

"Well, they are," he said. "I'm expecting a postal-order from a titled friend of mine, and it has been delayed, somehow."

"Go hon!" said Vavasour.

"It's rather awkward," Bunter explained. "You see, I want the money, and until the postal-order comes I'm practically stony. Rotten, isn't it?"

"Awfully!" agreed Ponsonby.

"Of course, some chap might lend me the five shillings, and take the postal-order when it comes," Bunter remarked.

"Good idea!"

"If some chap should offer—" Bunter remarked tentatively.

"I hope one will," said Ponsonby politely. "But you're stopping. We want to get to Vernon-Smith's study, please."

Bunter grunted, and led the way upstairs and down the Remove passage. He stopped at the door of the Bounder's study.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, "I suppose one of you wouldn't care to advance me the seven-and-six and take my postal-order when it comes?"

"Quite right—we shouldn't!" agreed Ponsonby. "You are a regular thought-reader, Bunter."

And Gadsby and Vavasour chuckled.

Bunter blinked at them.

"I say, it's a pretty good offer," he observed. "I'm willing to take seven-and-six from you chaps, and let you have the whole of the ten-shilling postal-order when it comes."

"You're too generous, Bunter."
 "Well, the fact is," explained Bunter, "I mean to be generous. I'm willing to take ten shillings from you chaps now, and let you have the whole of the fifteen bob in return."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, really, you fellows—"
 "Is this Vernon-Smith's study?"
 "Yes; but—"
 Ponsonby knocked at the study door.
 "But I say, what about that little loan?" urged Bunter. "I'll send the postal-order straight over to Highcliffe, you know, as soon as it arrives."

Ponsonby chuckled.
 "There might be a delay in the post," he suggested.
 "There are a lot of delays in the post in this part of the country—you said so yourself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, really—"
 "Come in!" came Vernon-Smith's voice from the study.

Ponsonby opened the door, and went in, followed by his two companions, and Billy Bunter blinked after them disconsolately. He had had the trouble of coming upstairs for nothing.

Vernon-Smith looked in surprise at the three visitors. Hazeldene was in the study with him, and he looked surprised, too, and a little uneasy.

"Hallo!" said the Bouncer. "Sit down!"
 The Highcliffe fellows sat down.
 "Got anything to smoke?" asked Ponsonby.

The Bouncer shook his head.
 "I'm on my good behaviour just at present," he explained. "Not a whiff in this study, this week, at any rate. What do you want to see me about?"

"Gaddy's father met your governor the other day."

"Did he?" said Vernon-Smith carelessly.

"Yes, and Gaddy's got permission to ask you for the vac."

"That's it," said Gadsby. "I'd like you to come, Smithy."

"Thanks," said Smith. "I'll let you know."

"There's another matter, too," Ponsonby remarked.

"I thought there was," said Vernon-Smith grimly.

"We're playing the school, here, on Saturday."

"I know you are."

Ponsonby lowered his voice.

"We want to win!" he said.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Disappointment for Ponsonby.

VERNON-SMITH looked curiously at the Highcliffe captain. There was a world of meaning in Ponsonby's low tones.

"You want to win?" he repeated.
 "Exactly."

"Well, you'd better play to win, that's all."

"I hear that you fellows are in ripping form," said Hazeldene.

"The Remove are expecting a big tussle on Saturday."

Ponsonby nodded.

"Quite right," he said. "We fully expect to win. We've been training hard, and we've had a lot of coaching from a professional. I think we're bound to lick your team—almost bound."

"Then you're all right."

"But we want to make sure."

Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith looked at him in surprise.

There was a faint sound at the door, but no one in the study noticed it just then.

Hazeldene changed colour a little. He thought he understood what the Highcliffe junior was driving at.

"We understand one another, I think," said Ponsonby.

"Look here, we know that Hazel is in the team, and we're willing to make it worth his while to give his wicket away. One wicket may make all the difference."

"Oh!" said Hazeldene.

"And as for you, Smith, you might be able to think of something to help us—such as getting some of the players out of form by some means—"

"Oh!" said Vernon-Smith.

"There's a lot at stake," said Ponsonby. "We've got a lot of money on this match, and we can't afford to look upon it simply as cricket. We stand to lose twenty pounds if we lose the match. That's a lot, and we've simply got to win."

"We've got to," said Gadsby.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"You've come to the wrong place," said the Bouncer.

"What do you mean? You haven't chummed up with Wharton since we last met, I suppose?" said Ponsonby, with a sneer.

"Oh, no!"

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Come to London

To See the Coronation:

"You don't want him to cover himself with glory on Saturday, I suppose, as the skipper of the winning team?"

"Not in the least."

"Then you'll back us up?"

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"You see, I may be playing in the team myself," he said.

Ponsonby started.

"You—in the Remove eleven?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean it?" Ponsonby exclaimed eagerly. "That's ripping!"

"Well, I know the committed are almost unanimous about it, and Wharton's the only one who really stands out," said the Bouncer.

"I'm pretty certain of getting my cap for the eleven on Saturday."

"That's splendid! You and Hazel can back us up, and the Remove won't have a dog's chance!" Ponsonby exclaimed.

"If you give us two wickets, and miss all the catches, the thing's a dead cert. We'll put some money on for you, too, and we can easily manage for you to rope in a couple of pounds apiece."

The Bouncer laughed.

"Thank you for nothing," he said. "If I play for the Remove on Saturday I play to win."

"To—win!"

"Exactly."

"But—but remember the arrangement we made about the footer," Ponsonby stammered.

"That's ancient history."

"But what do you want to win for?" demanded Vava-sour.

"You're not a sportsman. You don't care twopence for cricket—you know you don't!"

"Well, you don't seem to care for it much yourself, except as a medium for gambling," said the Bouncer scornfully.

"But anyway, I've got my reasons, and if I'm played for the Form on Saturday, I shall do my level best to make things hot for your team."

"I don't suppose you'll be dangerous," sneered Gadsby.

"There's where you make a mistake. I can play, and I shall play well! You are as good as licked to the wide, already," said the Bouncer coolly.

"Look here—" began Ponsonby hotly.

"No good jawing," said the Bouncer. "Let the subject drop. If I play for Greyfriars, I play to win."

"But if you don't play?"

"There's precious little doubt about it. Wharton will have to give in," said the Bouncer. "We needn't discuss it. You're booked for a licking on Saturday, and if you've been making bets on the match, the best thing you can do is to hedge."

"You—you rotter!"

"Oh, don't begin slanging," said Vernon-Smith. "No good in that. Take it calmly."

"It can't be done," said Hazeldene uneasily. "You led me into playing a rotten game once over the footer, but I couldn't do anything like that again. Wharton knew about it, and he looked over it, and he trusts me now. I couldn't be cad enough to fail him."

Ponsonby sneered.

"I've heard that sort of talk before," he said. "What if I were to call in some of the fellows now, and tell them what you did over that footer business?"

"It would serve you jolly well right," said Gadsby.

Hazeldene turned pale. But Vernon-Smith was made of sterner stuff. He burst into a scoffing laugh.

"You'd have to find proofs, for one thing," he said, "and I don't think the fellows would listen to you, for another. Suppose I call the fellows in, and tell them the offer you've just made me?"

"My hat," said Hazeldene, "they'd rag you bald-headed! You'd be half-killed by the time you got away from Greyfriars!"

Ponsonby started to his feet.

"I—I was not serious, of course!" he exclaimed hastily.

"If you won't come to terms—"

"Can't!" said Vernon-Smith.

"You're going to play to beat us?"

"Yes."

"Hang you, then, we've had our journey for nothing!" said Ponsonby sulkily. "We shall remember this, Smith."

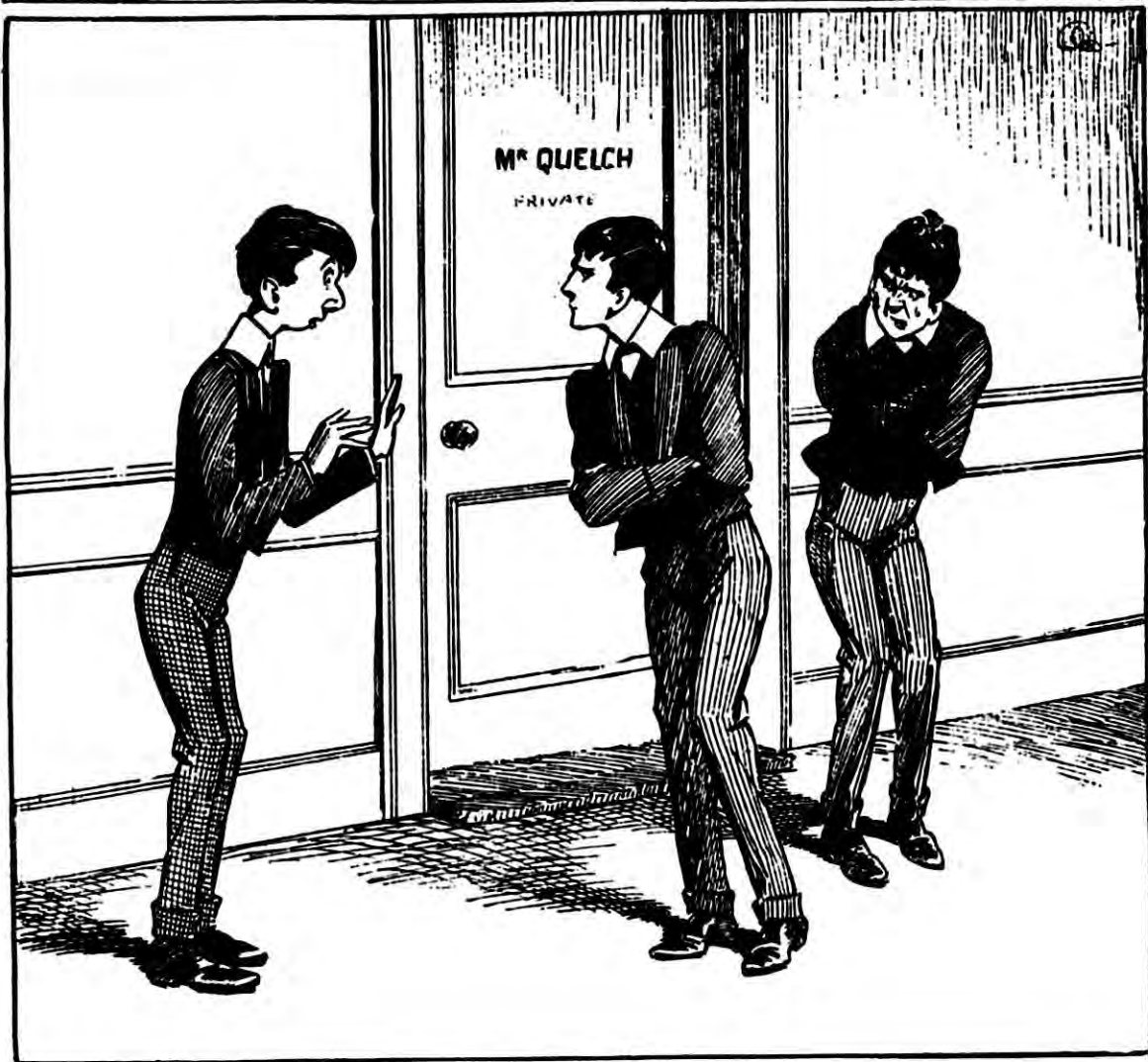
The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Remember it as long as you like," he said. "I'm sorry I can't oblige you, but you can't expect me to play your game against myself."

Ponsonby swung to the door angrily. He flung it open, and there was a sudden yelp, and Billy Bunter pitched forward headlong into the study. The fat junior had had his ear to the keyhole, and the sudden opening of the door had taken him by surprise.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Ponsonby gave him a furious look. He was in a savage



"I am so sorry, Bulstrode and Skinner," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, turning on the two humorists of the Remove Form. "I fear that you deceived me, but I forgive you fully, and I am so sorry that you have been punished. (See page 13.)

temper, owing to his disappointment, and he was willing to wreak it upon anyone. Bunter came just in the nick of time, as it were.

"You fat cad!" shouted Ponsonby. "You were listening."

"Ow! I— Oh!"

Ponsonby kicked the gasping junior out into the passage. Bunter rolled on the linoleum, yelling for help. Vavasour and Gadsby followed Ponsonby out into the passage, and they joined in kicking Bunter.

"Ow!" roared the fat junior. "Yow! Help! Yah! Help! Oh! Rescue!"

"Hullo, hullo, hullo!"

"What's the matter here?"

"Let him alone!"

The Highcliff fellows desisted as a crowd of Removites came upon the scene. Bunter was not popular in the Remove, but the fellows were not disposed to see him kicked by Highcliffians.

"Stop that!" exclaimed Harry Wharton angrily. "What are you kicking Bunter for?"

Ponsonby scowled.

"He was listening at the study door!" he exclaimed.

"I—I wasn't!" yelled Bunter. "I was only—cr—stooping to tie up my shoe-lace!"

"Why, the fat beast is wearing button-boots!" said Gadsby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S REMORSE."

"I—I mean that I—I was stooping to button a button that had come undone—"

"Don't tell lies, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton sharply. "You were listening, and you deserve to be kicked across the Close."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!"

"I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter. "I overheard them quite by accident, and they're in such a jolly temper because I know they've been trying to bribe Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith to sell the match on Saturday."

"What!" roared the Removites.

"I'm not staying here to listen to this rot," said Ponsonby hastily. "Come on, you fellows; we shall be late for calling-over."

And the three Highcliffians tried to push their way along the passage. But the Remove blocked the passage, and Wharton called to his companions not to let them pass.

"You're not going to keep us here!" Ponsonby exclaimed furiously.

"You'll stay till we've heard what Bunter has to say."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Let us pass!" roared Gadsby.

"Stand where you are!"

"We won't—we—"

"Stop them, you fellows!"

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"You bet!" said Fisher T. Fish; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked that the stopfulness would be terrific.

Ponsonby and Gadsby and Vavasour looked very much alarmed. Vernon-Smith had closed his study door. They evidently had no help to expect from him or from Hazeldene. And the Remove crowd in the passage were looking dangerous.

"Look here!" exclaimed Ponsonby desperately. "Are you going to take the word of a fellow who listens at a key-hole?"

"Something in that," said Bulstrode.

Wharton looked steadily at the Highcliffe leader.

"Do you deny trying to arrange with Vernon-Smith to lose the match for us?" he asked directly.

Ponsonby flushed red. He was not a particularly honourable fellow, but he shrank from the lie direct. But his hesitation was brief.

"Yes," he said.

"Let them go, then," said Harry Wharton. "After all, we can't take Ponster's word."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up!"

The Removites, somewhat unwillingly, parted, to let the Highcliffians pass. Ponsonby & Co. departed gladly, breathing more freely when the gates of Greyfriars had closed behind them.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Vernon-Smith Is Chosen.

HARRY WHARTON fixed his eyes upon Billy Bunter when the Highcliffe fellows were gone. He fully believed that, for once, Bunter had spoken the truth.

But Billy was so mendacious that it would not really have been fair to anyone to accept his evidence. And it would not have been exactly the "thing" to rag the Highcliffe fellows within the walls of Greyfriars, however much they might deserve it.

Bunter had risen to his feet, and was rubbing his injured places, and panting for breath, puffing and blowing with great vigour. The kicking had hurt him considerably.

"Now, then, Bunter," said Wharton, "you say that those fellows were trying to bribe Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith to lose the match on Saturday."

"Ow! Yes."

"But Smith isn't in the team."

"He told Ponsonby he expected to be played—ow! He said you wouldn't be able to prevent the committee putting him in—Yow!"

Wharton coloured, and his colour deepened as there was a faint chuckle from some of the Removites in the passage.

"You heard all that, Bunter?" Nugent asked contemptuously.

"Ow! Yes!"

"Without listening, of course?" sneered Bulstrode.

"I was tying my shoe-lace—I mean, buttoning my button—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what did they say in reply?" asked Tom Brown.

"You don't mean to say that they agreed to sell the match?"

"Ow! They refused."

"Both of them?"

"Yes. Hazeldene said he couldn't do such a thing—ow!—and Vernon-Smith said he wouldn't! Yow!"

Wharton was silent.

It was pretty clear that Bunter was gasping out the truth; and all that he said was in favour of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

The Highcliffe fellows, with whom Vernon-Smith was known to be on chummy terms, had asked him to sell the match, if he played in it, and he had refused. That was what it amounted to.

It was as clear a proof as could be required of the good faith of Vernon-Smith; and as such it impressed all who heard it.

Even Wharton could not but admit to himself that, if Vernon-Smith played in the match on Saturday, he could be relied upon now to play his best for the school.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm fearfully injured!" groaned Bunter. "That villain has broken some of my ribs. Ow!"

"My dear Bunter," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, in great distress, "pray allow me to examine the injury, and—"

"Yow! My ankle is sprained!"

"Perhaps I can restore it for you. I will pull one way, and Cherry can pull another, and between us we —"

"Ow! Keep off, you idiot!"

"My dear Bunter—"

"I say, you fellows, I—I feel very faint. If you'd give me your arm as far as the tuckshop, Wharton—"

"Oh, rats!"

"If you'd do so, Nugent—"

"Bosh!"

"I say, Cherry—"

"I'll lend you my foot, instead of my arm," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are."

"Ow! Yow! Yow!"

Billy Bunter disappeared down the passage at surprising speed. Alonzo Todd blinked after him in great surprise.

"Dear me! Bunter must have been mistaken about his injuries, or he surely could not run so fast!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Wharton," exclaimed Bulstrode, "I suppose, after this, you won't be able to stick to your plan of boycotting the best batsman in the Remove. Vernon-Smith has shown that he can play, and he's proved that he'll do his best for the Form."

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"You'll have to put him in, Wharton," said Snoop.

"Oh, mind your own business," said Wharton.

And he walked away.

But it was clear, as the juniors dispersed, that there was only one opinion among them. Bunter's unexpected testimony in favour of Vernon-Smith had made a deep impression. The Remove had decided in its own mind, that Vernon-Smith would have to be played in the school match, and if the cricket captain held out, there was likely to be trouble.

Bulstrode looked into Vernon-Smith's study. The Bounder of Greyfriars was chatting with Hazeldene with perfect coolness, as if the scene transpiring in the corridor had had no interest for him at all.

"Hallo!" said Bulstrode. "I think it's all right, Smithy."

"What's all right?" asked the Bounder.

"You'll be put in the team."

"I don't see how they can keep me out, under the circumstances," Vernon-Smith remarked. "But are you sure?"

"There's going to be a meeting of the cricket committee this evening," said Bulstrode. "I'm on the committee, though I'm not in the team, and I'll jolly well see to it that the subject comes up."

"Thanks awfully!"

"You needn't thank me," said Bulstrode candidly. "I'm going to take a rise out of Wharton. I was sports captain in the Remove before he came, and I think he swanks too much in another chap's place."

"Oh, rot!" said Hazeldene.

Bulstrode took no notice of that remark.

"Besides, I want Greyfriars to win," he said. "And you bat as well as anybody in the Form. Blessed if I know where you picked it up!"

The Bounder laughed.

"I've been coached by a professional," he replied. "I fancy my cricket is a bit above the average of junior cricket at a school."

"Well, you're going in the team, if I can work it," said Bulstrode. "If Wharton makes any objections, there will be a warm time for him in committee."

"Good egg!"

Bulstrode nodded, and quitted the study. He went directly to Wharton's study, where the cricket committee were to meet.

When the committee met there, curious fellows in the passage heard the sound of raised voices, and it was pretty clear that the meeting was a stormy one.

Eagerly Bulstrode's friends waited for him to come out. The door opened at last, and the burly Removite came out, flushed, and with a sparkle of triumph in his eyes.

"Well?" exclaimed Skinner.

"It's all right," said Bulstrode.

"Wharton's given in?"

"Yes."

"Hurrah!"

Harry Wharton had given in.

It was soon known to all the Remove that most of the committee had been unanimous on the point of playing Vernon-Smith, even Wharton's chums taking that view, and Wharton had yielded to the expressed wish of the majority.

Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was to play for the Remove in the coming match with Highcliffe juniors.

Wharton still had his misgivings. He had yielded to the voice of the majority, but he was not satisfied. But the matter was settled now; and whatever misgivings Harry had, he kept to himself.

ANSWERS

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THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Kindly Aid.

"BUT I'm sure I could not blame Mr. Quelch for that, my dear Skinner."

"Oh, no, Todd!" said Bulstrode hastily. "We don't blame him."

"But it's jolly hard lines, I say."

"It's surely better than having your collars ruined at the laundry," said Alonzo Todd. "They've spoiled quite a lot of mine, and my Uncle Benjamin—"

And for once in a way Alonzo Todd broke off his main subject to think over what Bulstrode and Skinner had just told him. It seemed incredible that Mr. Quelch should be reduced to doing his own laundry. Yet that was what the two had just told Alonzo.

Bulstrode and Skinner grinned at one another.

"I don't think the laundry's at fault," said Bulstrode evasively.

"But, my dear Bulstrode—"

"Masters have to make ends meet somehow," chimed in Skinner.

"But—"

"Especially at Greyfriars," went on Bulstrode. "I can quite understand."

"But there must be some mistake, you fellows. Besides, Mr. Quelch could get Gosling to do his laundry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo looked hurt.

"I fail to see any cause for laughter, Bulstrode and Skinner. I think that was a perfectly sensible suggestion. It is undignified for a master to have to do his own collars," he said.

Bulstrode and Skinner turned faces of mild surprise on Todd.

"We didn't say Quelch was doing his own collars," they said.

Alonzo looked embarrassed.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Bulstrode and Skinner, if I misunderstood you—"

Skinner made a gesture of dissent. Bulstrode waved his hand as if it were nothing.

"What's to be done?" they said, together.

Alonzo Todd stroked his chin, looking down his nose the while. He seemed to be trying to think it out. Bulstrode and Skinner could not maintain their gravity in face of it.

"Pray what is the joke, Bulstrode and Skinner?" inquired their victim, in his gentle tones. "I thought you seemed anxious about Mr. Quelch. It isn't one of what you call your japes, is it? Because if it is, my Uncle Benjamin told me never to have anything to do with japes."

"How can you, Todd!" said Bulstrode, in mock offended manner. "Come on, Skinner. We'll leave him. It's no place for us. We can't associate with a chap who deserts his Form-master in the hour of trouble."

And without more ado Skinner pretended to follow Bulstrode.

Alonzo looked almost tearfully after them for a second. Then he ran to Bulstrode.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, my dear Bulstrode," he said. "I am sure I am most willing to help Mr. Quelch, if I can. But are you sure of this?"

"It doesn't matter, Todd," said Skinner coldly. "If you cannot do a thing willingly, you needn't bother."

"But, my dear Skinner, I should be delighted! My Uncle Benjamin told me to always be as obliging as possible. Pray have the goodness to suggest what I might do."

The supplicating tone in poor Alonzo's voice was very touching. Skinner and Bulstrode affected to relent. They stopped and looked at one another as if they were thinking it out.

"Well," said Bulstrode, "that's rather difficult, Todd. You understand how it is, of course. Skinner and I have got two very important appointments on, or we'd take this thing on like anything—"

"Yes—yes, of course, my dear Bulstrode. Please proceed!"

"Well, I heard Quelch tell Pratt just before dinner that he wished he had a larger mug to soften the prints—"

Alonzo looked deeply pained.

"Oh dear," he said. "My Uncle Benjamin would be sorry to hear that a master at Greyfriars was thus reduced to washing his own shirts. Poor gentleman!"

"Now if you could get him a larger mug, Todd?" suggested Skinner.

Alonzo beamed at him.

"Oh, my Uncle Benjamin would be pleased, Skinner," he said. "I say, you fellows, I don't know how to do laundry work, but I've heard clear starch mentioned in connection with the process. D'you think Mr. Quelch would like some?"

Bulstrode and Skinner nearly choked with suppressed laughter.

"Rather!" said Bulstrode.

"You're a thoughtful chap, Todd!" echoed Skinner. "The very thing. It will be of immense assistance to Mr. Quelch."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" said Alonzo. "I suppose I'd better begin at once?"

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NEXT "THE BULLY'S REMORSE."

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"The sooner the better, Todd," said Bulstrode.

"Do you think I could get anything else that would be of use to Mr. Quelch?" asked Alonzo. "Would a gas-iron be of any use, for instance. I could borrow one from Gosling, you know."

"Too late, Todd," said Skinner sorrowfully. "Quelch's borrowed it already."

Alonzo Todd's jaw dropped. There could be no doubt about it. His Form-master was apparently greatly reduced. He must waste no time.

"Well, good-bye for the present, you fellows," he said. "I'm so sorry you can't come. But you may rely on me. Poor Mr. Quelch!"

And, leaving the plotting pair to laugh it out in a quiet corner of the Close, Alonzo made all haste to Mrs. Mimble's shop under the elms.

The good old dame was rather surprised at Alonzo's demand for "clear starch."

"Why, Master Todd," she said good-humouredly, "I don't keep it. But if you wanted it very particular, I dare say I could oblige you with some. I have some starch in the house."

"I do want it, very particularly indeed, if you please, Mrs. Mimble," said Alonzo earnestly. "It's a most distressing case—"

Alonzo stopped as the old lady looked curiously at him. Then she went within and brought Alonzo what he wanted. The Duffer of Greyfriars beamed words of gratitude at Mrs. Mimble.

Putting the money on the counter like one in a dream, he went out.

"I do find 'em, now and then," said Mrs. Mimble, scooping the cash into her till.

Alonzo just heard the last words, but he had only a vague idea of what the old lady meant.

He had yet to get a washing-mug from somewhere. Gosling was the only person he could think of. Besides, he was the handiest person. To the lodge went Alonzo. Gosling was not in. Apparently there was no one within. Alonzo was in despair. How could he clear-starch, so to speak, if he had no washing-mug. Then his heart rejoiced. There, in the little yard behind, was a splendid washing-mug of very comfortable proportions.

"But Uncle Benjamin would never consent to my taking it without leave," thought poor distressed Alonzo. "But what am I to do? Surely, under the circumstances, I am justified in borrowing it. Mr. Quelch will soon have done with it, and I can easily explain to Gosling that it was I, and not Mr. Quelch."

It never occurred to Alonzo that if Mr. Quelch had taken a number of Gosling's mugs, the lodge porter would hardly have dared to "row" Mr. Quelch about it. Alonzo wavered a moment longer. Then he boldly took the washing-mug, resolving to return it the instant Mr. Quelch had finished with it. Up to his study he went. Locking the door, he rolled up his shirt-sleeves. The mug was rather dirty inside, but that was a trifle to Alonzo. The thing was to supply Mr. Quelch with clear starch. A little dirt, one way or another, was nothing in comparison to assisting his Form-master through a trying ordeal. Then Alonzo remembered, too late, that it would have been best to have filled the mug with water first. But the architecture of Greyfriars came to his rescue. There was a lavatory not far from Mr. Quelch's study door. Cautiously Alonzo crept towards it, carrying the mug at arm's length. Safely inside the lavatory, he locked the door, and commenced to stir up the starch. Then the thought occurred to him that it might be a joke of Bulstrode's after all. He would go and see.

Approaching Mr. Quelch's study, he listened just outside the door. There was undoubtedly a smell of a gas-iron, and then all doubt was cleared from Alonzo's mind as he heard a low swishing sound from within the room.

"Poor fellow!" sighed Alonzo. "He really is washing his shirts, I believe."

Alonzo's face glowed as he got back to the lavatory. He was just in the very nick of time. He was arriving with his assistance at the opportune moment. His Uncle Benjamin would indeed be very pleased with him. He gave the mixture a final turn, when it occurred to him that he could hardly present himself in a master's study in his shirt-sleeves. But there was no time to go back for his coat. No. He must assist poor Mr. Quelch at once. And, without more ado, he walked carefully to the master's door. Setting the mug of starch to one side, he knocked.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Quelch.

Alonzo opened the door timidly.

The master was on the far side of his study near the window. He appeared to be deeply interested in some things that looked like faded grocer's almanacs to Alonzo. He looked up as Todd came in.

"Good gracious!"

Starch making is not conducive to a tidy appearance, especially in Alonzo Todd's case. His forelock had sustained a slight frost of starch. Likewise his nose-tip appeared to have been trying conclusions with a billiard chalk, while his chin, during urgent attention to recent business, had apparently been well laved by the snowy tide he had just mixed in Gosling's mug.

Alonzo was rather startled by Mr. Quelch's ejaculation. But, gathering himself together, he bowed respectfully.

"Please excuse me, sir," he began. "But may I say at the beginning how deeply moved I am to find you reduced to—"

And Mr. Quelch turned from what he was doing, in sheer amazement, to watch Alonzo's mouth opening and shutting like a mechanical doll.

"Pray what is the meaning of this foolery, Todd!" he demanded.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, sir," replied Alonzo. "No, not foolery, sir. If you will be so kind as to receive me, I've ventured here to make you a present."

The Form-master smiled. Alonzo's present demeanour would have tried anyone's gravity.

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. "What a strange fellow you are, Todd. I'm very busy, but I'm sure it's very good of you to think of me, and I shall be very pleased if you will bring in the present."

"Thank you, sir."

And Alonzo backed out through the door to fetch the clear starch.

The Duffer of Greyfriars found the mug rather more than he bargained for. It was fearfully heavy. But though he slopped a considerable amount on his waistcoat, Alonzo succeeded in raising the mug on to Mr. Quelch's desk.

"Here it is, sir," he said meekly.

Mr. Quelch turned again from his work.

"Great Scott!" he cried, catching sight of Alonzo's streaked appearance, and the mug full of starch. "The stupid boy has stood it on top of my best prints!"

Alonzo was wildly alarmed. But the word prints brought his business to his mind.

"Oh, sir," he went on, fixing a sort of faithful-hound face on the Form-master, "let me say again how deeply moved I am at your misfortune—"

"My what?" said the astonished master.

"Your fearful misfortune of having to wash your own shirts, sir," said Alonzo, with tears in his voice.

"But what in the name of fortune has such nonsense got to do with you putting your absurd washing mug on my rare old prints. You foolish boy. Those engravings are worth pounds!"

"Engravings! Pounds, sir!"

But for reply Mr. Quelch made a dive into one corner for a cane. Almost before he could realise the turn events were taking, Alonzo was speeding round and round the master's desk in a vain endeavour to avoid the uplifted cane.

"Oh, sir!" he wailed. "Please reflect! I deeply respect your circumlocutions. I'll agree to call them rare old engravings. But I'm deeply sorry to see a master— Oh, sir, you needn't keep anything from me."

"I don't intend to!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

And Alonzo got it just below the braces.

"Ow—wow—ow!" he howled.

Round and round the study he tore, Mr. Quelch after him like an avenging spirit.

"You stupid boy!" said the master. "You must have a lesson!"

And Alonzo was made to howl wildly as the avenging cane rose and fell.

"Ow—wow—oh—ow!" yelled Alonzo. "You misunderstand me, sir! Ow!"

"I don't think so," said Mr. Quelch.

And Alonzo Todd got a stinger that made him leap in the air. The movement was fatal. As he came to earth again he could hardly maintain his balance, and, wildly grasping at anything in his reach, his long arm came down on the nearest object—the washing-mug of starch. This was, of course, no support, and down he went to the floor, with the starch all over him.

"Yow! Groo! Wow! Srrrrooo!" spluttered Alonzo.

Mr. Quelch came forward with a noise like an angry bull. His prints were ruined. But Alonzo was too quick for him. The sting of the cane had sharpened his wits somewhat.

The Duffer of Greyfriars made no mistake about finding the door. But the Form-master was there as soon as Todd was.

Mr. Quelch's strong grasp was upon Alonzo's collar as he sought to dash out into the passage, and he was swung back into the study.

Mr. Quelch was a severe master, but as a rule he maintained a quiet equanimity of temper. But that quiet equanimity seemed to be quite gone now. The loss of his

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valuable prints, damaged beyond repair, naturally excited him.

He swung Alonzo back into the study, and fixed a deadly frown upon the dismayed and terrified Duffer of Greyfriars.

"Now, Todd!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Alonzo.

"What do you mean?"

"Me-e-can, sir?"

Todd's unfortunate habit of repeating what was said to him instead of replying always came to him in moments of stress like this. It was not the kind of answer to turn away wrath.

"Todd, you have ruined my prints!"

"Prints, sir?"

"How dare you bring a ridiculous mug of starch into my study?"

"Study, sir?"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"Todd! You utterly absurd boy!" he shouted. "Answer me, instead of repeating my words like a parrot, sir!"

"P-p-parrot, sir?"

"What do you mean by this intrusion into my study, Todd?"

"Intrusion, sir?"

Mr. Quelch breathed hard through his nose, and raised the cane. His intention to lay it about Alonzo's shoulders was so evident that Todd dodged at once. The cane came down upon the table with a resounding crack.

"Oh!" gasped Todd.

"Boy!"

"Yaroo!"

Mr. Quelch rushed round the table after Todd. But in doing so he left the door unguarded, and Alonzo Todd made a wild rush for it.

Mr. Quelch was after him like a shot, but the Duffer of Greyfriars was too quick for the Form-master.

Alonzo dashed from the study.

Mr. Quelch stood in the doorway brandishing his cane, but he did not have a chance to use it again. Todd had never been known as an athlete, but he had a turn of speed just now that was quite surprising. He dashed along the passage as if he were competing for a very valuable prize on the cinder-path, and disappeared from the eyes of the angry Form-master.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Fairly Caught.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"My only hat!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Oh, dear! Ow! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"It's Todd!"

"He's ill!"

"Poor old Todd!"

"I guess he's sick, and no mistake!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Alonzo Todd was sitting in the window-seat in the Remove passage, rubbing his limbs where Mr. Quelch's cane had fallen, and groaning.

Todd had fled from the study before the master of the Remove had given him all that he intended for him, but he had received quite enough to make him feel very sore and uncomfortable.

He blinked sorrowfully at the sympathetic juniors.

"Ow!" he groaned. "What would my Uncle Benjamin say? Yow!"

"Why should your Uncle Benjamin say yow?" asked Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows, it's no laughing matter," said Todd.

"I have been caned very severely by Mr. Quelch—"

"Oh, a licking!" said Nugent. "What for?"

"I was trying to be obliging. Hearing that Mr. Quelch was reduced financially, and compelled to get up his own linen—"

"What?" shrieked Nugent.

"Hearing that he was in these unfortunate circumstances, I tried to help him," groaned Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me to help people and to be useful and obliging in every way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Even if there were a misunderstanding—as I fear now there must have been—Mr. Quelch should have been patient, as he could not fail to see that my intentions were good," gasped Alonzo. "Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughter. I suppose, now, that Bulstrode and Skinner were mistaken, and Mr. Quelch was

not doing his own laundry at all. It was a very remarkable mistake for them to make."

Nugent shrieked. Todd gazed at the juniors in amazement. Most of them were nearly weeping.

"Mr. Quelch doing his own linen?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows——"

But the juniors were staggering away, laughing almost hysterically. Todd gazed after them in surprise and sorrow. It was really too bad that his misfortunes should be laughed at in this way.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" he groaned.

He rose from his seat at last, and moved off to a bathroom to clean off the starch that smothered him. Bulstrode and Skinner met him in the passage. They looked as if they were just recovering from a bad attack of hysterics.

"Hallo, Todd!" said Bulstrode. "Have you had an accident with the starch?"

The Duffer of Greyfriars looked at him more in sorrow than in anger.

"Yes, Bulstrode," he said reproachfully.

"How did it happen?"

"Mr. Quelch was very angry. He caned me, and the starch fell over me as I was seeking to escape an unmerited castigation."

"Well, that's rough," said Skinner. "I suppose Mr. Quelch misunderstood you. You couldn't have put it delicately, Toddy."

"I fear that you were deceiving me."

Skinner looked deeply injured.

"Did you hear him, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"I heard him," said Bulstrode.

"Weren't you shocked?"

"Horribly!"

"I wonder what Todd's Uncle Benjamin would say if he heard him talk like that?" said Skinner. "Disgusted, I should think."

"My dear Skinner," said Todd anxiously, "I trust I have not done you an injustice. But certainly there appeared to be some mistake. Mr. Quelch was washing old prints, not print shirts at all."

Bulstrode shook his head.

"Not at all," he said. "Quelch must have taken you in. I suppose he felt annoyed at you knowing he was doing his own laundry work."

"Oh, dear!" said Todd.

"The best thing you can do is to go back and explain," said Bulstrode.

Todd looked dismayed.

"But Mr. Quelch was very violent," he said.

"It's a matter of principle. I suppose you're not going to act in an unprincipled way because you're afraid of a caning?" demanded Bulstrode loftily.

"Oh, certainly not."

"Quelch is under a mistake—he thinks you were getting at him over his poverty. You ought to explain—tell him that, although he has been reduced to washing his own shirts and has pawned his Sunday trousers, you respect him just as much as ever."

"Right!" said Skinner.

"But are you sure he's pawned his Sunday trousers, my dear Bulstrode?" asked Alonzo, in great concern.

"I've seen the ticket," said Bulstrode.

"Dear me!"

"Explain it to him fully, and see what he says," said Bulstrode. "My belief is that he will be deeply touched, and that he will put his arm round your neck and cry, as they do in the Little Georgie books."

"Poor Mr. Quelch! You are certain, my dear Bulstrode, that he is reduced to those terrible straits, and cannot afford to pay his laundress?"

"My dear Todd, I know that the laundress has threatened to send Quelch's bill in to the Head if he doesn't pay up, and that's why he's pawned his Sunday bags," said Bulstrode unblushingly.

"Bulstrode!"

It was a deep voice, and it made Bulstrode jump as if it had been the report of a cannon or a clap of thunder.

It was the voice of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove-master came along the passage with rustling gown, and his face pale with anger. His eyes were gleaming.

Bulstrode stood transfixed. He could only stare at Mr. Quelch blankly, his jaw dropping. The Remove-master frowned at him.

"It is fortunate I came by in time to hear you, Bulstrode," he said. "So this is a joke, I suppose, that you are playing on Todd?"

"Oh, sir!"

"You were the cause of his absurd visit to my study?"

"N-n-no—yes, sir."

"And you allow yourself the liberty of maligning and slandering your Form-master for the purpose of a joke upon this simple boy?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

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"I—I—I——"

"And you, Skinner, you are a party to it?"

"I—I—I——" stammered Skinner.

Mr. Quelch made a gesture.

"Follow me to my study, both of you."

He strode away.

The two practical jokers of the Remove gave one another a hopeless glance, and followed the Form-master.

They entered the study with pale faces. Mr. Quelch selected a special cane, and turned upon them with a brow like thunder.

"Hold out your hand, Bulstrode!" he rapped.

"If you please, sir——"

"Not a word! There is no excuse! Hold out your hand instantly!"

Bulstrode obeyed. He received six cuts, and then came Skinner's turn. Skinner had only four, but they were four to be remembered.

Mr. Quelch waved his hand to the door.

"Now go," he exclaimed, "and learn in future that if you cannot keep your propensity to practical joking within limits it would be wiser not to select your Form-master as a victim."

The two humorists of the Remove staggered out of the study, their hands squeezed under their armpits. Alonzo Todd met them in the passage. The Duffer of Greyfriars was looking very concerned.

"I'm so sorry, Bulstrode and Skinner," he exclaimed. "I fear that you deceived me, but I forgive you fully, and I am so sorry that you have been punished. Under the circumstances, my dear fellows, do you not consider it advisable to turn to the paths of truth, and—— Ow!"

Bulstrode and Skinner had no patience left. They seized Alonzo and bumped him down upon the floor, and trod on him as they passed on. Not a word did they speak. They tramped over Todd and walked away scowling, and the Duffer of Greyfriars sat up and gasped.

"Oh dear!" he murmured. "Ow! What exceedingly ruffianly conduct! Ow! My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked—nay, disgusted!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprising Letter.

"LETTER from Highcliffe—Ponsonby's list," said Bob Cherry, taking an envelope down from the rack the next morning.

The post was early at Greyfriars, and the fellows generally got their letters before breakfast. Bob Cherry tossed the letter over to Harry Wharton, who caught it. Harry looked at the superscription in some surprise.

He was in communication with the Highcliffe fellows, in a way, as Greyfriars Juniors were playing them on Saturday. But Ponsonby and his friends had been there the previous evening, and if they had anything to say, it was curious that they could not have said it then. Ponsonby must have written that letter soon after his return to Highcliffe for it to be delivered at Greyfriars by the first post in the morning.

Wharton slit the envelope with his penknife and drew out the letter.

"Something about the cricket, of course?" said Nugent.

"I suppose so."

"Better read it out," said Bulstrode.

Wharton did not reply. He opened the folded sheet and read it. A puzzled expression came over his face.

"Well?" demanded half a dozen voices.

"It's something for the committee to settle," said Harry. "Ponsonby refuses to play the match on our ground."

"What!"

"I'll read out the letter."

The juniors gathered round to listen. They were looking amazed and angry. The match had been arranged for Saturday, and it was already Thursday, and it was settled that it was to be played on the Greyfriars ground. To withdraw at almost the last moment like this was utterly unsportsmanlike.

Wharton read out the letter:

"Dear Wharton,—After the way we were hustled in your place, you will not be surprised if we decline to visit Greyfriars for the match. We expect that if we beat you there will be ragging, and we don't want a fight of eleven chaps against fifty."

"We are perfectly willing to play, according to agreement, if you choose to visit us, instead of our visiting you. Our ground is quite as good as yours in every way, and the distance to travel is not worth thinking about. So if you are in earnest about the match, you will come. Otherwise,

we shall know that you are funkng it, and that you meant to win by having a crowd against us on your own ground.

"Please let me know. You need not be afraid of ragging here. You can bring as big a crowd as you like to see fair play.—Yours sincerely, A. PONSONBY."

"The cad!"
"The rotter!"
"The howler!"
"The outsider!"

The words burst in a sort of storm from the Removites. Their faces were dark with anger.

The letter from Highcliffe was about as unpleasant as Ponsonby could possibly make it. Every line in it contained an insult, and an insult that the writer must have known to be unjust.

Ponsonby knew perfectly well that there was no danger of his team being ragged by numbers on the Greyfriars ground. But there was a good possibility of that happening to the Greyfriars fellows if they went over to Highcliffe. Such a thing had happened before on the Highcliffe ground.

"The cad!" said Nugent between his teeth. "I suppose they're funkng the match now they find there's no chance of winning it by foul play, and that letter is to provoke us into scratching."

"It seems clear enough," said Ogilvy.

"The clearfulness is terrific."

"Faith, and we won't let him do it!" exclaimed Micky Diamond wrathfully. "We'll go over there, if they won't come here, and lick them all the same—the spalpeens!"

"Hear, hear!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I'm blessed if I quite understand Ponsonby writing a caddish letter like this!" he said. "I suppose it must be as Nugent says—he hoped to get at somebody in our team to sell the match, and as he's failed in that, he wants to scratch."

"We won't scratch!"

"No fear!"

"But if we don't, they'll have a big crowd over there ready to hustle us!" Bob Cherry exclaimed. "That's the second string to Ponsonby's bow, I take it."

"We'll take a crowd over with us—all the Remove, and the Upper Fourth, too, if they'll come," said Wharton. "Temple, Dabney & Co. will come to see fair play, and so will a lot of the Fifth. If they're going to look for trouble, we'll give 'em all they want."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I suppose they can't have any idea of getting at our men by getting us over there to their ground," John Bull remarked thoughtfully.

Wharton started a little. Was it possible that Ponsonby hoped still to persuade Vernon-Smith to play into his hands? It was surely a desperate chance, to rely upon persuading the Bounder at the eleventh hour, for the Greyfriars Junior team would not arrive at Highcliffe till just before the time for the pitching of the stumps.

"I hardly see how they could depend on that," Wharton said slowly. "Besides—"

"Besides what?"

"Well, Vernon-Smith couldn't play us false now if he wanted to, without our knowing he was doing it."

"That's true."

"He wouldn't do it—and besides, he wants to win."

"Of course he does," said Bulstrode, in an aggressive tone, "and you've no right to suggest that he might possibly sell the match under any circumstances whatever!"

"I'm speaking from my experience of the Bounder, and not through my hat," said Wharton quietly. "But I don't choose to discuss the subject with you, Bulstrode."

"The question is, what reply is to be sent to this letter," Mark Linley observed. "I suppose we're not going to scratch the match?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then, if they won't come here—"

"If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain," said Nugent, with a grin.

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Harry Wharton laughed.

"Exactly!" he said. "We'll reply, accepting the offer to play on their ground instead of ours, and in case they intend any foul play, we'll mention that about fifty fellows are coming over to see the match."

"Good!"

"That's all right!"

"The all-rightfulness is terrific."

And so it was settled. It was agreed that the letter should be written and posted immediately after morning school. But there were two members of the Remove team who were far from satisfied when they heard of it, and those two were Hazeldene and Vernon-Smith. Hazeldene was the first to hear, Harry Wharton mentioning it to him when the Remove were going into class.

"You're going over to Cliff House before Saturday?" Wharton asked.

"Yes," said Hazeldene. "I'm going over there to tea to-day with my sister."

"Good!" Then you can mention to her that the match is to be held at Highcliffe instead of Greyfriars. It doesn't make any difference, as the girls will go over with us in the brake."

Hazeldene gave quite a jump.

"How do you mean? What—?"

Wharton showed him Ponsonby's letter. Hazeldene read it, and the colour was wavering in his face.

"It won't make any difference to Marjorie?" asked Wharton.

Hazeldene shook his head.

"N-n-no!" he said. It was clear that he was not thinking about Marjorie. "But—but what do they want us over there for?"

"I don't know."

"You're going?"

"Yes."

"It must mean some trickery."

"All the Form will go to see fair play, and we shall get as many of the Upper Fourth and Fifth as we can to come," replied Wharton.

Hazeldene knawed his lip uneasily.

"Look here," he muttered, stopping and lowering his voice. "You remember what happened once before—how they tricked me over the footer match, and I—I—"

"That's all over now. I know you wouldn't do anything of the sort again, Hazel," said Harry, looking him straight in the face.

Hazeldene nodded eagerly.

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed. "that's all right. But—but

I can't help thinking that Ponsonby and those cads are thinking of something of the sort. They are going to try and get at Vernon-Smith or at me in some way—try and make us sell the match."

"Your way is clear. If they do, hit out at whoever proposes it," said Wharton.

"And I will!" exclaimed Hazeldene, between his teeth. "The cads! I'm certain they have something of the sort in their minds. I won't stand it. But I must tell Smith this."

And Hazeldene hurried over to the Bounder of Greyfriars, joining him near the Form-room door.

Vernon-Smith had not yet heard of the letter from Highcliffe, but Hazeldene acquainted him with it in a few seconds. The Bounder looked startled and uneasy.

"Do you understand it?" asked Hazeldene.

The Bounder shook his head.

"Hang it!" he said. "I don't catch on at all, unless Ponsonby is laying some sort of a trap for us. He may try the gentle 'suation bixnay when we're there. A lot of good it will do him if he does."

"Don't you think there's anything else in it?"

The Bounder stared.

"What else could there be?" he asked.

"I don't know," confessed Hazeldene, "but I feel jolly uneasy about it, that's all. I know that Ponsonby is up to something."

And the Bounder, as the dark shadow on his face testified, felt uneasy too. He was frowning thoughtfully as they went in to class.

NEXT WEEK:

"The Bully's Remorse."

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Vernon-Smith remained alone in the tool-shed—helpless to escape, helpless even to call out and make his plight known. Four o'clock chimed out from the tower, and the Bounder of Greyfriars knew that the Greyfriars innings was beginning without him. (See page 21.)

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Valuable Recruit.

HARRY WHARTON had not wanted to include the Bounder in the list for the Remove eleven, but the unanimous feeling in the Form and on the cricket committee had been too much for him. He had put his misgivings aside, and decided to play Vernon-Smith, with the uncomfortable consciousness that if it turned out well, nobody would give him credit for playing the Bounder under the circumstances; and that if it turned out badly, all the blame would be laid upon him for not sticking to his guns. But, as footer and cricket captain in a junior club, Wharton was getting accustomed to that kind of justice, and the thought of it did not trouble him very much. What did trouble him was the doubt whether the Bounder would let the side down.

He had no faith in Vernon-Smith, and his want of faith was justified. It was known to Wharton and several other fellows that the Bounder had once tried to sell out a footer match to these very Highcliffe fellows. After that, what faith was possible in the fellow? Yet, from what Bunter had overheard, it seemed that the Bounder had given pretty good proofs of good faith in this match at least.

Wharton was uneasy, but he had yielded to the general feeling, and it was not like him to look back.

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Having put Vernon-Smith in the team, he ceased to worry about it as far as he could, only an inward misgiving haunting him that it might be the cause of the loss of the cricket match for Greyfriars.

And Harry was determined to win that match, if it could be brought about by any means within the limits of fair play.

Feeling ran high between the two schools, and there was no doubt that the Highcliffe fellows had treated Harry Wharton & Co. very shabbily on several occasions, and their latest attempt to induce the Bounder and Hazeldene to sell out had incensed the Removites deeply.

There was not a fellow in the team who was not longing to give the Highcliffians the record licking of their lives.

Had it been a footer match, they would have had no doubt about doing it. At football the Highcliffians were simply duffers. Greyfriars Juniors had walked over them, again and again, at the winter game. But at cricket the Highcliffe crowd came out strong, and they had been training furiously for weeks, now, in the hope of snatching a victory.

For Ponsonby & Co. were very keen to leave a field unbeaten for once in a way, and, besides that, they had bet beaten on the match. It meant a great deal financially to the young rascals, whether they won or lost. And they had put all they had in them, into getting ready for that match.

If anything went wrong with the Greyfriars team, the victory would fall to Highcliffe. There was no doubt about that.

Wharton had seen the Highcliffe eleven at practice, and he knew the form they were in.

The teams seemed pretty well matched, in Wharton's opinion, and he knew something about cricket form.

A single wicket thrown away might mean defeat to the side, and if Vernon-Smith yielded to Ponsonby's influence at the last moment, all was lost.

True, if the Bounder did anything of the kind, he would stand a good chance of being ragged out of Greyfriars afterwards.

Yet it would not be easy to tell whether a fellow lost his wicket purposely or not, if he were standing up to a good bowler.

On the other hand, if the Bounder did his best, there was no doubt that he would prove a great accession of strength to the team, after the remarkable display of batting he had lately given.

Wharton, trying to look upon the best side of matters, put all his mind into the practice for the coming match.

He kept his team hard at it, and Vernon-Smith, slacker as he was usually, seemed to have no objection to turning out early and late at the nets.

It really looked as if the Bounder were in earnest at last, and Harry's misgivings were probably shared by no one else in the team.

Frank Nugent did not trust the Bounder much, but he was quite convinced that the fellow meant to do his best. On the cricket committee, Nugent had voted for including Vernon-Smith in the eleven, whosoever had to be left out to make room for him.

Wharton was anxious to see how the Bounder shaped at bowling, and in the field, and he put Vernon-Smith on to bowl against Bob Cherry that afternoon after school. Bob Cherry was a good bat of the slogging order, and he never even entertained the idea that Vernon-Smith could possibly bowl him. He was destined to be undeceived.

Vernon-Smith took the ball quietly, and delivered it with perfect ease of motion. Bob Cherry's middle stump was whipped out of the ground.

Bob stared at it in comical astonishment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he ejaculated.

"My hat!" said Nugent. "If that wasn't a fluke, it was as good as Inky could have done, Harry!"

Harry Wharton nodded. He could not but admit it.

"The goodness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset

Ram Singh, "and it was not an esteemed fluke, either."

"He can bowl!" said Wharton.

"Try that again," said Bob Cherry, as Tom Brown tossed

the leather back to the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith grinned, and tried again. At the second ball, Bob Cherry's bats were down. Bob walked off the crease.

"He can bowl!" he said to Harry.

"It looks like it."

"Try him yourself, Harry. If he can bowl you, he can bowl any man-jack they keep at Highcliffe."

"I'll try."

Wharton went to the crease.

The Bounder's eyes glinted, and he seemed to make an effort to pull himself together. He evidently wanted to bowl Wharton.

He did not succeed. He sent down many difficult balls, but Harry stopped them all, or cut them away into the field.

The Bounder bit his lips when, after half a dozen overs, Wharton's wicket still remained uninjured.

But although he had failed to touch the sticks, there was no doubt that his bowling was of a high order.

Probably no one in the Remove, excepting Harry Wharton, could have stood up to it for so long, at all events.

Wharton admitted it freely. He could not like or trust the Bounder, but he was not disposed to belittle him in any way.

"You bowl jolly well," he said, "I never dreamed that you had it in you, Smith."

The Bounder's lip curled.

"You never asked me about it," he said.

"Well, if a chap can play, one naturally expects him to say so," said Wharton. "No need to hide one's light under a bushel in cricket matters, I suppose. But let's see what you can do in the field."

"Right-ho!"

In the field Vernon-Smith was not at his best. He could field decently, and that was all, but he seemed quite as liable to miss catches as anybody else. But with his fielding only passable, his batting and bowling made him a valuable member of any junior team.

The Removites were confirmed in their opinion that Vernon-Smith was a valuable recruit, and that his inclusion

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in the Form eleven would change Greyfriars' chance into a certainty. Harry Wharton said nothing.

But his chums were anxious to know what he thought about it, and they questioned him as the juniors left the field after practice.

"Look here, Wharton," said Bob Cherry, rather abruptly, "what do you think about Smithy?"

"I think he can bat—and bowl."

"But about his playing for the team?"

"That's settled now."

"But, look here, we voted against your opinion, on the committee," said Bob Cherry. "I was very much inclined to back you up, only—"

Wharton shook his head.

"I asked you all to say what you really thought," he said. "I don't want anybody to back me up unless he thinks I'm right."

"Well, there's the giddy rub; I didn't think you were right. I thought that it would be best to play Smith, and I'm glad you gave in. But—I suppose you're not going to get your back up over it?" said Bob, rather unasily.

Harry Wharton laughed, a little constrainedly. He had a kind of reputation for getting his back up, as Bob put it, over matters that would not have ruffled many fellows.

"No, Bob," he said, "I'm not going to get my back up. I could have held out if I'd liked, and if the committee had overruled me, I should have resigned. But the fact is, I was in two minds myself about playing Smith, and even now I don't know whether it's for the best or not. And that's quite candid."

"But you don't feel easy in your mind about it?"

"No, I don't," Wharton confessed.

"But you surely don't think that Vernon-Smith is going to sell out to the Highcliffe cads, after all?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Well, no; I can't quite think that."

"Then what do you fear?"

"Nothing, really, only—well, I wish Vernon-Smith wasn't in the team, good player as he is," said Wharton. "But that's between ourselves. He's in the team now, and we're going to make the best of it; and I dare say it will turn out all right. Let it drop."

And the subject was dropped.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Not Wanted.

"JOLLY fine day!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as he looked out of the dormitory window on Saturday morning.

The morning sun was streaming into the high windows, and the Close was very bright and fresh.

The breeze from the sea stirred the leaves of the trees, shimmering in the sun. The brightness of the morning was cheering to the Removites as they turned out, especially as it gave promise of a fine afternoon for the Highcliffe match.

"Ripping day for cricket," said Ogilvy. Ogilvy was looking particularly cheerful. It had been a question, for some time, who was to be left out to make room for Vernon-Smith in the team, and it had rested among Ogilvy, Morgan, Micky Desmond, and Brown. At the last moment Micky Desmond had hurt his wrist in the gymnasium, placing himself out of court, as he would not be able to handle a bat for a week or more, and Ogilvy, who had been expecting the axe to fall upon him, so to speak, was very cheerful now. Micky Desmond was correspondingly glum. Even Ogilvy's suggestion that he should come over and cheer did not quite comfort the Irish junior.

Vernon-Smith was looking very fit. For the past two or three days the Bounder had dropped smoking, and late hours, and other indulgences he was in the habit of granting himself. The usual sickliness of his complexion was gone; better habits, and plenty of open-air exercise, had made a wonderful difference. His eyes were brighter, his cheeks had colour in them, and his step seemed more elastic.

More than one of the fellows glanced at him, thinking what a change had come over the Bounder; and even Wharton felt his prejudice insensibly melting away! After all, there was good in everybody, and was it not possible that the Bounder had determined to "play the game" in the future?

And with that thought in his mind, Harry Wharton became more cordial to the Bounder of Greyfriars.

The Remove went down to breakfast in cheerful spirits.

The morning remained fine and sunny, and a fresh breeze blew in at the open windows of the class-room, reminding the juniors of green fields and open spaces, while they ground away at the Gallic War under the eagle eye of Mr. Quelch.

Glad enough were they when classes were dismissed, and they were free for the rest of the day.

A brake was coming over to take the team to Highcliffe—and as many more fellows as could crowd into the vehicle.

Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn were coming from

Cliff House to go in the brake with their friends of the Remove.

Wharton had arranged with a great many Greyfriars fellows to come over and watch the match. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, agreed to come en masse. As a rule, relations were strained between the Lower and Upper Fourth. But when it was a question of standing up for Greyfriars, Remove and Upper Fourth were at one. It is to be feared that the Fourth-Formers hoped the Highcliffians would start a row, in order that the day might end in a glorious rag.

A good many of the Fifth agreed to come, too. Coker, of the Fifth, and his friends Blundell, and Bland, and Higgs, and Potter, said they would come, and bring half the Fifth with them. And Hobson, of the Shell, and a great many more Shell fellows, said they would walk over. Altogether, there were likely to be a hundred or so Greyfriars fellows, of various forms, on the Highcliffe ground—and there was not a chap at Greyfriars who did not believe that such a number of them would be able to eat up Highcliffe at one bite, if necessary.

Some of the fellows, who had to walk over, started early. Others were going over later on their bicycles. The brake was reserved for the team, and the guests from Cliff House, and a few favoured fellows.

"If Highcliffe intend any foul play, they will find they've woke up the wrong passengers, I think," Bob Cherry remarked, with a grin. "There will be a hundred of ours there, and some of the Sixth may come."

"I don't know that I should object to a scrap," said John Bull, "I'd rather get the match over first, though."

"I hardly think the fellows mean a scrap," said Wharton. "Anyhow, I think they'll give up the idea when they find there are so many of us."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Well, if they've got anything else up their sleeve, I'm blessed if I can guess what it is," said Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here are the girls!"

Two bicycles came gliding up to the gates of Greyfriars, and two graceful forms alighted. Marjorie and Clara were looking very fresh and pretty, and evidently expecting a pleasant afternoon. The juniors were careful to say nothing to them about a possible row at Highcliffe. It was no use meeting troubles half-way, or alarming the girls for nothing. Probably there would be no row.

"Oh, here you are, Marjorie!" said Hazeldene. "Give me your bike. You're going over in the brake."

"And here comes the brake," said Bob Cherry.

The brake rolled up, and the cricketers came out with their bags. Bags were piled in the brake. It was a large and roomy one, and there was plenty of space for the eleven, and a few over.

Bob Cherry came out of the House with an armful of rugs, and Nugent gave him a stare.

"What on earth are they for, Bob?" he inquired. "You're not going to take a rug to sit on while you're wicket-keeping, are you?"

Bob Cherry snorted.

"I'm going to make the girls comfy," he said.

"Oh, I see!"

And Bob certainly did make the girls "comfy," as he expressed it, in the brake. Then the Remove cricketers piled in.

"All here!" said Wharton, looking round. "Room for you, Micky, and you, too, Treluce!"

"Right you are!"

"Hold on a minute, my dear fellows!" exclaimed a squeaky voice, as the brake was starting.

Alonzo Todd came rushing out of the House, with a bat under one arm, and a big, well-stuffed bag hanging on the other. His face was very red and excited. He had evidently packed in a hurry.

A roar of laughter greeted his appearance. Harry Wharton stared at him in astonishment.

"What's the matter, Todd?" he asked.

"Wait a minute for me, my dear Wharton."

"No more room in the brake. I'm sorry!"

"You must use Shanks's pony, Toddy!"

"But—but then I shall be late!"

"Late!"

"Yes. It would not be quite right to be late for the match. My Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me that punctuality is the thief of time—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you may be putting me in first, my dear Wharton!" Wharton looked dazed.

"Putting you in!" he gasped.

"Certainly! I have brought my cricketing things. I had only a few minutes to pack after Bulstrode told me I should be wanted to play!" gasped Todd.

There was a roar of laughter. The Duffer was evidently the victim of another of Bulstrode's little jokes.

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NEXT

WEEK: "THE BULLY'S REMORSE."

"Wanted to play!" yelled Bob Cherry. "My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Cherry——"

"Play the Duffer! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Bull——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows——"

"You can take that bat away again, Toddy," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Bulstrode was only pulling your leg, and you're not wanted to play!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove.

Todd dropped his well-stuffed bag to the ground. He blinked round at Bulstrode, who was yelling with laughter, and fixed a glance of reproach upon the burly Removite.

"My dear Bulstrode——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have spoken untruthfully. My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked at you—nay, disgusted!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, driver!" said Tom Brown.

The brake rolled off. Alonzo Todd turned to look after it, and the bat slid from under his arm, and dropped—on Bulstrode's foot. Bulstrode's yell of laughter changed to a yell of quite another kind.

"Yow!"

"I'm so sorry, my dear Bulstrode——"

"Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner.

Bulstrode was dancing on one leg, clasping his injured foot. Alonzo Todd was looking the picture of contrite dismay.

"I'm so sorry!" he said. "Although you have spoken untruthfully, my dear Bulstrode, I was far from wishing to—Oh—ah—yaroo!"

The infuriated Bulstrode was rushing at him, hitting out. Todd dashed away, with Bulstrode in hot pursuit, leaving the juniors yelling. The brake rolled out of the gates of Greyfriars and took the road to Highcliffe.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder Means Business.

PONSONBY was standing at the gates of Highcliffe to meet the cricketers from Greyfriars. Ponsonby's manner was very polite as he greeted them. Ponsonby, like most of the Highcliffe fellows, could be very polite—though there was always a lurking impertinence in his manner that discounted the politeness considerably. Ponsonby was especially polite to the two girls, probably wishing to display before them the great difference between his own manners and those of the Greyfriars Remove. Gadsby and Vavasour and Merton and Monson and the rest of the Highcliffe cricketers took the same line. But in spite of their overpowering politeness, the Greyfriars fellows refused to take offence. They had come there to play cricket, not to be provoked into speaking tartly, or entering into any skirmish of words.

The stumps were pitched, and the stretch of level green looked very inviting. The Greyfriars fellows were shown to their dressing-room in the handsome pavilion. Highcliffe was a richer school than Greyfriars, and there was no doubt that the appointments there were more expensive; and the cricketers had the services, too, of a most expensive professional coach in their practice. Marjorie and Clara were found comfortable seats before the pavilion, where their bright sunshades made agreeable spots of colour on the scene.

Ponsonby beckoned to Vernon-Smith as the Greyfriars fellows went into their room to change into their cricketing things.

"Gaddy wants to speak to you, Smithy," he said.

"Let him go, then," said Vernon-Smith.

"It's a message from your governor."

Vernon-Smith looked surprised.

"A message from the pater!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; your governor gave it to Gaddy's pater."

"Oh, all right!"

"You can change in our room, while Gaddy's jawing," said Ponsonby.

"All serene!"

The Greyfriars fellows exchanged glances as Vernon-Smith followed the Highcliffe skipper. Wharton was very uneasy.

"They're having another try to get at him!" muttered Nugent.

"It's plain enough."

"Look here," exclaimed Bob Cherry abruptly. "Why not come right out into the open, and tell Ponsonby that we know his little game, and that he's got to chuck it?"

Wharton shook his head.

"We're not sure," he said, "and we can't make a scene

In another's fellow's place, right or wrong. Besides, if Smith means to play us false, he'll do it."

"He can't mean that!"

"I'm sure he's all right," said Hazeldene.

Wharton nodded assent.

"Yes, I can't help thinking that they'll have their trouble for their pains," he remarked.

But he felt slightly uneasy, all the same. He was quite right as to Ponsonby's object in getting the Bounder of Greyfriars by himself. Vernon-Smith followed him to where Gadsby and Vavasour were waiting.

"Well, what's the message?" he asked.

Ponsonby laughed.

"That was a ruse," he said. "I wanted to get you away from the other fellows. Look here, Vernon-Smith, I want to speak to you."

Vernon-Smith made an impatient gesture.

"Is it the same old topic?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then you can save your breath," said the Bounder curtly. "My mind's made up on that point, and there's no chance of my altering it."

Ponsonby's brows lowered.

"I want to put it to you straight," he said. "We're involved pretty deep in this match, and we have been depending on winning. I think we should have beaten Greyfriars if you had stood out of the team. We were quite up to their strength before."

"Possibly."

"Look here, I don't ask you to throw your wicket away, but just to stand out of the team," said Ponsonby eagerly. "Make them play a substitute, and we'll take all risks. You can have a sudden faint feeling, or something—anything you like, so long as you stand out of the Greyfriars team."

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"After all, this is jolly sudden, this intention of yours to play," said Gadsby. "You don't play as a rule. It won't hurt you to stand out."

"It can't be done, I tell you!"

"It's not fair to spring it on us like this—your old friends, too," said Vavasour. "We saw you at practice yesterday, and you're the best of the bunch. Do you call it playing the game, to put this on us suddenly?"

The Bounder laughed.

"As a matter of fact, I wasn't thinking of you at all," he said. "I've got my reasons for playing—and winning—and that's all there is about it."

"Look here—"

"I'd better get back; the fellows will begin to suspect there's something on."

"Never mind that! Look here, we'll make it worth five pounds to you, if that's any inducement," said Ponsonby, sinking his voice.

The Bounder laughed again.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded the three Highcliffe fellows together savagely.

Vernon-Smith opened his Russia-leather purse, and showed a wad of crackling fivers, as well as a dozen sovereigns stuck in the little compartments of the purse, in imposing array.

The son of Samuel Smith, the millionaire, was always well provided with money, and he was more than usually well supplied at the present moment. The Highcliffe fellows stared at the display of wealth.

"That will show you how much I want your blessed favor," said Vernon-Smith.

Ponsonby scowled.

"Put your rotten money away!" he said. "I suppose a fiver's no good—and if we said a tenner—"

"It would be the same thing."

"Then what inducement—"

"None."

"You're determined to play?"

"Yes."

"And to win?"

"Exactly!"

Ponsonby clenched his hands.

"Hang you!" he said.

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"Have you anything else to say?" he asked. "I may as well get changed. We don't want to delay the match, I suppose?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Vernon-Smith walked away. He had always been on friendly terms with the Highcliffe fellows, and certainly he had no scruples about doing as they desired, if it had suited him. But it did not suit him, and he felt no compunction whatever about refusing his friends in the most direct manner. It was everyone for himself; that was Vernon-Smith's motto, and he lived up to it.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 168.

READ the splendid tale of "SAINTS V. GRAMMARIANS" in this "GEM" LIBRARY. Tom Merry & Co. entitled: week's "GEM" PRICE ONE PENNY.

The three Highcliffians looked at one another gloomily. Matters were evidently in a very bad way for them.

"It's rotten!" said Vavasour.

"Rotten ain't the word!" said Gadsby unenially. "It's beastly—it's infernal! We shall lose every bob we've got on the game, if we lose the game, and it looks like it now!"

"If Smith stood out—"

"But he won't!"

"I believe that we could lick Greyfriars, man for man, without Smith," said Ponsonby. "Wharton is the only fellow they've got as good as he is, and we can match him. It's having the two of them that knocks us, especially if they bat together."

"But we can't get rid of Smith. I suppose you're not thinking of knocking him on the head with a bat?" said Gadsby irritably.

"I'd be glad to, after the turn he's served us!" said Ponsonby, snapping his teeth. "But there may be other ways. That's why I insisted upon having the match played here instead of at Greyfriars."

"So as to get at Smith to try again? But you've done that—"

"And so as to handle him, if he refused!" said Ponsonby. Vavasour and Gadsby started.

"I say, that's risky!" said Vavasour, in a low voice.

"I don't care—if it can only be done! Suppose he were missing during one innings—after the play's begun, they can't replace him without our consent, and we jolly well shouldn't give it up—they'd be playing a man short."

"My hat!"

"And their best man, except Wharton!" Vavasour remarked.

"Just so."

"If they bat second, it would be ruin to them, as it's only a single-innings match," said Ponsonby. "Even if they bat first, a man missing would throw their field out of gear, and take away their best bowler, excepting Inky. If Smith bowls in turn with the nigger, where will our blessed wickets be?"

"In pieces!"

"Exactly! If we could get rid of Smith—"

"But we can't."

"I don't know about that," said Ponsonby, frowning. "I suppose you fellows are ready to back me up, whatever I do?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Rely on us, old man!"

"Then I think the cad will be missing for the second innings, whose innings soever it is!" declared Ponsonby.

And no more was said on the subject. There was no time for more.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Innings.

LUCK was on the side of the Highcliffe plotters, for when they tossed for innings Ponsonby won. Needless to say, he elected to bat first. He exchanged a glance of triumph with Gadsby and Vavasour. Truly, Fate seemed to be working for them.

After the innings there would be a considerable interval, and tea had been provided by the Highcliffe fellows, who were liberal enough on that score. During that interval they would surely have an opportunity of dealing with Vernon-Smith. And if they succeeded in getting him out of the way, there was little doubt that his comrades would believe that he had deserted them of his own accord.

Ponsonby & Co. knew the estimation Vernon-Smith was held in by his Form-fellows. Even when he returned, with a story of having been locked up somewhere and detained, he was not likely to be believed.

Harry Wharton & Co. went into the field, and Ponsonby and Gadsby opened the innings for Highcliffe.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh was given the ball.

By this time a great crowd of Greyfriars fellows had arrived on the Highcliffe ground. Half Highcliffe was there, and with the Greyfriars crowd added the ground was thronged. Fellows were perched in trees, and on the roof of the pavilion. Although it was only a junior match, there was no doubt that it aroused a great deal of interest at Highcliffe.

The Greyfriars crowd, who had come over prepared for trouble, had to admit that the aspect of the Highcliffians was peaceable enough.

It really did not look as if Ponsonby & Co. had arranged for mobbing the cricketers, as Harry Wharton had half suspected—such a thing having occurred before on the Highcliffe ground.

But if trouble did crop up, the Greyfriars fellows were quite prepared for it, and certainly there were enough of them

to give a good account of themselves. The Remove were there almost to a man. Even Billy Bunter had rolled over, in the hope of coming on in the scene when the cricketers had tea.

Alonso Todd, though disappointed in his hope of playing for Greyfriars, had walked over with a book under his arm, quite ready to cheer himself hoarse for Greyfriars—if he did not wander off into some corner with his book, and forget that any cricket match was in progress at all.

It was the first match of the season for Greyfriars, excepting for practice matches at home. The weather was splendid—a calm, sunny, warm April day. The faces of the cricketers were very cheerful as they started.

Both Greyfriars and Highcliffians watched the first over keenly. That Ponsonby & Co.'s cricket was very different from their football was quite clear from the start. That they had been training hard was easy to be seen. But the result of it all was not so easily to be settled—whether they would win. But, at all events, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, splendid bowler as he was, failed to dismiss Ponsonby for a duck's egg, as he had hoped, and the other fellows had hoped.

The over was ineffective, and Ponsonby was still at his wicket when the field crossed over, and the ball was tossed to Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Gadsby faced Vernon-Smith's bowling.

There was a slightly uneasy look on Gadsby's face. He had watched Vernon-Smith bowling in practice at Greyfriars, and he knew that the Bounder was very nearly as dangerous as the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And the expression on Vernon-Smith's face was not encouraging to his opponent. There was no hope that the Bounder would deal gently with him for old times' sake. Vernon-Smith meant to take that wicket if he could.

Whiz!

The ball came down, and Gadsby—partly from nervousness—played too far forward, and the ball whipped in and took his middle stump out of the ground as clean as a whistle.

There was a yell from the Greyfriars crowd:

"How's that?"

And the umpire grinned, and said:

"Out!"

There was not much doubt of it. Gadsby gave a furious look at his wicket, which had a forlorn and toothless aspect.

Then he carried out his bat. Vernon-Smith gave him a smile as he passed, and Gadsby would have given a great deal to break the Bounder's head with his bat at that moment. But he controlled his rage, and passed on, to hide his rage and chagrin in the pavilion.

"Bravo, Bounder!"

"Good old Smithy!"

"Hurrah!"

The Bounder smiled.

Merton came out to replace Gadsby, and took up his position. Vernon-Smith delivered the second ball of the over, and Merton jumped as his wicket crashed in.

"Out!"

He was the second Highcliffe man to be dismissed for a duck's egg!

The Greyfriars crowd roared.

"Hurrah!"

Vavasour was next man in. He was on his guard, but he was no match for the Bounder's bowling. The third ball of the over knocked his leg-stump out, and the umpire's verdict fell upon Vavasour:

"Out!"

Then the Greyfriars shrieked.

"The hat trick!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Smithy!"

Ponsonby, standing inactive at his end of the pitch, snapped his teeth with rage. His feelings towards Vernon-Smith at that moment were of poisonous rage and hatred. He would gladly have brained the cool, self-possessed Bounder as he stood there smiling calmly.

Harry Wharton's eyes danced.

It was evident that his misgivings had been unfounded—that the Bounder of Greyfriars meant to do his best. The Highcliffe innings had barely started, and it was already going to wreck and ruin—three down for nil!

Harry Wharton's voice joined heartily in the hurrah that greeted Vernon-Smith's hat trick.

Monson was next man in.

He tapped a ball from Vernon-Smith and stopped another, and the sixth he ventured to cut away into the slips.

There was a slight click, and Harry Wharton held up the ball.

"Well caught!"

"Hurrah!"

Monson snapped his teeth.

"Out!"

It was the fourth man out, and not a run had been taken!

Truly, the Highcliffians, in their worst anticipations, had not anticipated anything like this.

And they owed the worst of it to Vernon-Smith—to the

Bounder of Greyfriars—the fellow they had counted upon surely for treacherous aid in winning the match!

No wonder they were furious.

But their fury could not help them now. They could only play on, in the hope of yet snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

And fortune smiled on them a little when Ponsonby had a chance of batting. The Highcliffe skipper began to make the running.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, when he took the ball, did not seem to be quite in his usual form.

At all events, only one Highcliffe wicket fell to his share.

But Vernon-Smith once more counterbalanced it.

"Bowled Smith!" "Caught and bowled Smith!"—the words seemed to haunt the unfortunate Highcliffians as that disastrous innings proceeded.

There were but three wickets to fall, when the total score had reached forty runs—a number less than half of what the Highcliffians had reasonably expected at that stage in the game.

But Ponsonby & Co. slogged away desperately.

The Greyfriars were in high good humour now. Vernon-Smith was playing up splendidly, and there was not the slightest doubt that Greyfriars would win, and so the visitors had cause to feel elated.

Again there was a gleam of fortune for the Highcliffians. Ponsonby was still batting, and he had as partner a steady stonewaller, whose defence baffled the most difficult balls sent down by either Hurree Jamset Ram Singh or Vernon-Smith.

Ponsonby made the running, and the runs piled up. For the first time, a Highcliffe cheer was heard on the cricket-ground.

But it was not to last.

Seventy runs was the total, more than half of them belonging to Ponsonby, when there was a wild shout from Greyfriars:

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

"Hurrah for the Bounder!"

Vernon-Smith held up the ball. He had caught and bowled Ponsonby—Ponsonby, the great man of the Highcliffe side—the tower of strength upon whom the Highcliffians relied!

Ponsonby was out.

"Hurrah!" roared the Greyfriars.

Vernon-Smith glanced round towards the pavilion. He had performed a difficult feat, and performed it well. Marjorie and Clara were clapping their hands, and a flush stole into the Bounder's cheeks as he noted it.

For reasons he could hardly have explained to himself, Marjorie Hazeldene's applause was very dear to him.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

Ponsonby carried out his bat, hardly able to hide his chagrin. From that moment the Highcliffe innings "petered out." Five more runs were all the last wickets fetched, and the last man fell with the score at seventy-five.

The Remove cricketers grinned at one another. For there was not the slightest doubt in any of their minds that the Remove of Greyfriars would exceed that total at the cost of half their wickets; and that Highcliffe were, in fact, already beaten to the wicket. As Bob Cherry remarked, all was over bar shouting. He did not know that Ponsonby & Co. had yet a card to play.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. A Desperate Device.

VERNON-SMITH swaggered a little as he walked off the ground, when the last Highcliffe wicket was down.

He had done very well for his side, and perhaps there was some excuse for a little swagger; though not, perhaps, for quite so much as the Bounder indulged in. But that was only to be expected of the Bounder.

"I guess that chap thinks the earth belongs to him now!" Fisher T. Fish remarked, with a sniff. "What price that for swank?"

"Well, you ought to know all about swank!" John Bull remarked.

And the juniors laughed.

"I guess that guy takes the cake, some," said Fish.

"Well, he's done jolly well," Bulstrode remarked.

"The Highcliffe cads haven't a look in," said Morgan.

"Look at Ponsonby's chivvy! Did you ever see such a face on a chap?"

And the juniors chuckled again as they looked at Ponsonby. The Highcliffe junior skipper did not take the trouble to hide his chagrin, or, perhaps, he could not. His face was black with angry annoyance.

"Cheer up, Ponsonby," said Skinner. "What did you expect?"

"Duck's eggs are cheap to-day," Snoopy remarked. "Oh, you shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "You didn't do anything to cheapen 'em, at all events, Snoopy."

Ponsonby took no notice of the remarks made in his hearing; he was thinking about other things.

The innings had taken less time than the Highcliffe side had anticipated, owing to the rapid fall of the wickets and the small score; but it was about time for tea, and tea was ready.

The cricketers fraternised round the tea-table cheerfully enough, although some of the Highcliffe fellows could not help looking a little gloomy.

Ponsonby looked for Vernon-Smith, and found him sitting on one side of Marjorie Hazeldene, apparently quite content with himself.

The Bounder of Greyfriars was, in fact, to a large extent, the hero of the hour. He was not so good a cricketer as Harry Wharton, but his suddenly coming out into the light like this made him remarkable, and there was no doubt that he had contributed a great deal to the now certain victory of Greyfriars.

And if he "swanked" a little on the strength of it, the fellows were disposed to forgive him. So long as they beat Highcliffe, they could forgive anybody anything.

Ponsonby made several ineffectual attempts to get Vernon-Smith away from the tea-table. The Bounder was talking to Marjorie and Clara, and did not appear to be aware of Ponsonby's wish.

Some of the other fellows saw it, and grinned.

"Pon hasn't given up his scheme yet," Frank Nugent remarked to Wharton. "He must think us a set of duffers, playing this game under our noses."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He seems to have met his match in the Bounder," he remarked.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

It was not till after tea was over, and the cricketers were strolling about, waiting for the time of the second—the Greyfriars'—innings that Ponsonby found an opportunity of dropping a whisper to Vernon-Smith.

"I want to speak to you," he said abruptly.

The Bounder yawned.

"Can't you let it drop?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, it's not that!" said Ponsonby, forcing a laugh. "It's quite a different matter now."

Vernon-Smith looked at him in surprise.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Mr. Banks wants to see you."

"Banks—the bookmaker?"

"Yes."

Vernon-Smith gave a low whistle.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to say that Banks has had the confounded cheek to come here?"

"I don't think he's on the war-path," said Ponsonby. "I think he's got a particular tip for you for the Burford races."

"Oh, hang his tips!"

"He says he must see you. I've had the message from a fag, so I had him shown into the tool-shed, round the house," said Ponsonby. "He's safe out of sight there. He says he won't go until he's seen you, and it's a bit rotten for me. If a master should see him here, it would get us into trouble. Of course, strangers are allowed in here to see matches, but a fellow like your friend Banks—"

"Oh, confound him!" said Vernon-Smith. "I suppose I'd better see him. But the innings will be beginning, and I'm third on the list."

"It won't be for ten minutes yet."

"Well, show me the way," said the Bounder impatiently. "Like the man's cheek to come here. But I suppose I'd better see him."

"Go round the house, and keep past the laurels, and you'll see the place just in front of you," said Ponsonby. "I can't very well leave the ground now."

"Oh, all right!"

Vernon-Smith strolled away.

Ponsonby walked over to where Harry Wharton and his friends were chatting with the Cliff House girls, and entered into the talk. Ponsonby was very cheery and good-tempered, and seemed to have got over his chagrin at the disastrous results of the Highcliffe innings.

In fact, he was so courteous that some of the Greyfriars' fellows began to feel that they had misjudged him, and to think better of him, after all.

While Ponsonby kept up that cheery chatting, Vernon-Smith had gone to the back of the school buildings in search of the tool-shed, where the bookmaker was supposed to be waiting for him.

As soon as the bulk of the great building hid him from sight of the cricket-field, Vernon-Smith caught sight of Gadsby, strolling there alone.

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He called out to him.

"Gaddy, where's your blessed tool-shed?"

Gadsby looked at him in surprise.

"What on earth do you want with the tool-shed?" he asked.

"Ponsonby says Banks is there waiting for me."

Gadsby gave a whistle.

"Do you generally receive visits from your bookmaking friends when you're playing in an out match?" he asked.

Vernon-Smith bit his lip.

"Show me where the place is, and don't jaw!" he exclaimed. "They'll be beginning the innings in a few minutes, and I want to get rid of the brute before then."

"This way," said Gadsby.

Vernon-Smith followed him.

The tool-shed was at the end of a long garden—a small, strongly-built shed, with a small barred window, and only one door. The door was open. Gadsby stood aside for the Bounder of Greyfriars to enter.

"There you are!" he said.

"Thanks."

Vernon-Smith strode into the shed.

"Look here, Banks—" he exclaimed, in a loud and angry voice.

Then he stopped abruptly.

Mr. Banks was not there. There was no sign of the fat and red-faced bookmaker of Friardale. Vavasour and Merton, of Highcliffe, were there, and they were all. They grinned at the surprised Bounder.

"What does this mean?" demanded Vernon-Smith angrily.

"It means that you've been done," said Vavasour coolly.

The Bounder uttered an angry exclamation.

"Banks isn't here?"

"No fear!"

"Where is he?"

"Haven't an idea!" said Merton, with an irritating drawl.

"He hasn't been here, then?" asked the Bounder, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"No, he hasn't."

Vernon-Smith bit his lips.

"I'll have something to say to Ponsonby about pulling my leg in this way," he said. "I never heard of such an utterly rotten jape."

The Highcliffe fellows laughed. Vernon-Smith turned angrily to leave the shed, and, as he did so, Vavasour and Merton sprang upon him. Taken entirely by surprise, Vernon-Smith went with a crash to the ground, with the two Highcliffe fellows sprawling over him.

The Bounder struggled furiously.

"What are you up to?" he yelled.

"Give in, you fool!"

"What do you mean?"

"We mean to keep you from playing us tricks, you cad!" panted Vavasour.

Then Vernon-Smith understood. The story of the bookmaker had been a ruse to lure him to the shed, far from the cricket-field, where this trap was laid for him with the intention of keeping him from playing in the Greyfriars' innings.

He made a desperate effort, and wrenched himself away from the Highcliffe fellows, and leaped to his feet.

One fierce bound carried him to the door; but there the form of Gadsby blocked the way, and as Smith tried to rush out, Gadsby closed with him. They struggled in the doorway, but Vavasour and Merton promptly piled upon the Bounder of Greyfriars, and he was dragged back into the shed, helpless with so many hands upon him.

"Help!" yelled the Bounder.

But he had little hope that his voice would be heard. And he had no time to utter a second cry. Gadsby thrust a handkerchief into his mouth, and proceeded to tie it there with a cord, while Merton and Vavasour held the Bounder down, kneeling upon him. Vernon-Smith gasped and grunted with impotent rage.

"There, you cad," said Gadsby, breathing hard. "we've done you now, I think! You've got the rope, Merton?"

"Here you are!"

"Tie the beast up while I hold him!"

Vernon-Smith struggled, silently but furiously. But his struggles were unavailing; there were too many against him. He was bound, hand and foot, and the rope was knotted tightly.

It was a desperate step that the young rascals were taking; but their position was desperate, and they felt so savage a spite against Vernon-Smith that every twist of the rope they gave afforded them a distinct pleasure. The Bounder of Greyfriars lay on the floor of the shed—helpless, silent—only his eyes glowing with rage.

"There," said Gadsby breathlessly, "I think we've done you now, you cad! You won't pile up a score for Greyfriars—you won't cover yourself with giddy glory at our expense—you'll stay here, and when you go back to Greyfriars, I expect you'll get ragged for deserting your side. You cad!"

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And with that the three young rascals left the shed, closing the door behind them. The Bounder of Greyfriars remained alone, a helpless prisoner—helpless to escape, helpless even to call out and make his plight known. Four o'clock chimed out from the tower, and Vernon-Smith knew that the Greyfriars' innings was beginning without him!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Man Missing!

"TIME!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ready!" said Ponsonby cheerfully. "Get into the field, you fellows. You'll take the first over, Monson."

"Right you are!" said Monson, taking the ball.

And Ponsonby led his men out to field.

Harry Wharton called to Bob Cherry and John Bull. They were to open the innings for the Greyfriars Remove.

Bob Cherry swung his bat as he waited on. He was to receive the first over, and he was prepared to knock the Highcliffe bowling into the middle of the next week, if not still further along the calendar.

The absence of Vernon-Smith excited no remark. He was third on the list, but neither Bob Cherry's wicket nor John Bull's was likely to fall soon. At the same time, he should have been there, and Wharton glanced round for him once.

"Who's third?" asked Bulstrode.

"Smith."

"He doesn't seem to be here."

"You might look round for him, and tell him we're beginning."

"Right, I will!"

Monson was bowling to Bob Cherry. Bob gave the ball a mighty swipe, that would have been a boundary, only Ponsonby's hand interposed, and it was a catch instead.

All Highcliffe roared:

"Well caught!"

Bob Cherry made a grimace as the umpire gave him out. Out he was undoubtedly. It was a very neat catch, and a good beginning for Highcliffe.

Wharton looked round sharply for the Bounder.

"Man in!" he exclaimed. "Smith! Where's Smith?"

"I can't find him," said Bulstrode, coming back.

"You go in next, Nugent, will you?"

"Right you are!"

Nugent went down to the wicket. Nugent's innings lasted longer than Bob Cherry's, and he scored six runs before he was clean bowled by Gadsby.

Still Vernon-Smith had not appeared, and Wharton sent in Ogilvy fourth. Soon after this John Bull's wicket fell, and still Vernon-Smith was not available. Morgan was sent in to take Bull's place.

Dark suspicions were now rising in Harry's mind. All his old misgivings with regard to Vernon-Smith were coming back in full force.

Where was the Bounder?

The innings had been in progress nearly half an hour, and fellows were looking for Vernon-Smith on all sides. There was no disguising the fact: the Bounder was not now on the ground.

Why had he left it?

Where was he gone? Had Ponsonby succeeded, after all, in inducing him to desert his side?

Vernon-Smith had shown such good quality in the match, that Wharton was by no means eager to play a substitute. Besides, the opposing captain's consent would be required. Anybody but Ponsonby would not have dreamed of withholding it. But it was useless, as Harry knew by experience, to expect the Highcliffe fellows to play the game. Were the Greyfriars team to finish the match a batsman short—give one whole wicket to the enemy?

It meant defeat!

Wharton had little doubt on that point. The Highcliffians were bowling and fielding well. Even while Wharton was thinking about it, Morgan's wicket fell, and Greyfriars were four down for fifteen.

Hazeldene was called upon to take Morgan's place. Hazeldene stopped to speak to Wharton before he went on.

"Smith doesn't seem to be here," he remarked.

"He's gone," said Harry shortly.

"It's very curious."

"Very curious indeed."

"I—I hope you don't think he's playing you false," said Hazeldene anxiously. "I'm certain that he came here determined to win."

Wharton gave a bitter laugh.

"He's changed his mind, then. He's gone, and we've got to play a man short. It's a wicket lost, and I suppose he hasn't been spirited away. He must have left the ground of his own accord."

Hazeldene looked troubled.

"I can't understand," he said. "I don't catch on to it at all; but I'm certain he meant to do his best for the side."

"Well, get on now," said Wharton. "You're keeping the field waiting."

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NEXT WEEK "THE BULLY'S REMORSE."

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ONE
PENNY.

Hazeldene went to the wicket. But he was evidently in a deeply perturbed and worried frame of mind, and that frame of mind was not conducive to good batting, with a lightning bowler like Gadsby to contend with.

Gadsby's first ball knocked Hazeldene's wicket to pieces, and Marjorie had the pleasure—or otherwise—of seeing her brother retire with a duck's egg to his credit. Greyfriars were five down now.

Wharton signed to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh to go on, and while Inky was putting on his gloves, he went over to Ponsonby to consult with him. Ponsonby met him with a look of some surprise.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" he asked, as if struck by the serious expression upon the Greyfriars captain's face.

"One of my men is gone," said Harry.

"That's odd. Which one?"

"Vernon-Smith," said Wharton, looking the Highcliffe captain directly in the eyes.

Ponsonby met his look calmly.

"Well?" he asked.

"He seems to have left the field, either of his own accord, or because he's been induced to do so by somebody."

Ponsonby nodded.

"Rather an uncertain sort of beggar to choose to play in your team," he remarked.

"I didn't choose him," said Harry curtly. "He was shoved in on me. But that's neither here nor there. He's gone, and I suppose you've no objection to my playing a substitute."

Ponsonby's eyes were like steel at once. The whole of the Remove were on the cricket-ground, and Wharton had all the form to pick from.

The Highcliffe captain shook his head.

"I'm afraid I shall have to object," he said. "I confess that I look on the match as a close thing now, and if you play a fresh man against us, it gives you an advantage."

"You can change a man for a fresh man if you like."

Ponsonby laughed.

"But I don't want to," he said. "That's not the point. I strongly object to your playing a fresh man—that's the point."

Wharton smiled bitterly.

"I understand," he said; and he turned on his heel, and walked away without another word.

The Highcliffe captain felt the scorn in his manner, and he flushed red; but he did not change his mind. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh joined Ogilvy at the wickets, and the innings continued.

Ogilvy was caught out by Ponsonby a few minutes later, and Greyfriars were six down for twenty. Wharton's face was growing very grim. He had intended to go in fifth or sixth himself, but he did not care to go on yet, under the circumstances. He wanted to keep an eye open for Vernon-Smith. He had a lingering hope that the Bounder of Greyfriars might yet appear.

The Greyfriars crowd all knew by this time that the Bounder was missing, and most of them jumped to the same conclusion that had forced itself upon Wharton's mind—that he had played the team false. Bitter were their words as they spoke of the Bounder, and bitter, too, was the blame cast upon Harry Wharton. Wharton had had the fellow thrust upon him; but, then, Wharton was cricket captain. He had said all along that Vernon-Smith wasn't to be trusted. He shouldn't have given way, then. That was the view taken of the matter by many of the fellows.

The Greyfriars fellows watched the match now gloomily. Some of them were looking round for Vernon-Smith, but with little hope of finding him.

"He's gone," said Frank Nugent. "No good looking for him, Wharton. The Highcliffe cads have bought him off somehow. Why not tell 'em so to their faces?"

Wharton shook his head.

"We can't prove it," he said. "Besides, we don't want to advertise the fact that a Greyfriars fellow is worm enough to sell his side. Better hold our tongues."

"Well, I suppose you're right."

"What are you going to do?" asked John Bull.

"Leave it open for him if he comes," said Wharton. "He may turn up yet. There's just the chance, at all events. I'm going on myself next, and Vernon-Smith will be last man in, if he comes."

"If!" echoed Nugent hopelessly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes Inky's wicket!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur was out. He came out with a gloomy look upon his dusky face. The Greyfriars score stood at twenty-five, for seven wickets. The side seemed to have gone to pieces, as if the treachery of the Bounder had sapped away the powers of the other players.

Wharton took his bat and went to the wicket. There was little chance of the Highcliffe bowling hurting him, and the

Highcliffians knew it. If only he could have had Vernon-Smith to partner him at the wicket!

Another Greyfriars wicket fell, and another! Wharton had added ten runs to the score by this time. Thirty-five runs, and nine down. It was time for the word "Last man in!"

As the last Greyfriars batsman took his weary way to the pavilion, Harry Wharton cast a longing glance round him. There was still time for the Bounder to appear, and if he appeared now, even at the eleventh hour, as it were, he would be in time to come to the wicket, and play up for Greyfriars. Was he coming?

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Last Man In!

THE Bounder of Greyfriars, in the meantime, was passing a more anxious and miserable time than Harry Wharton. He had spent a desperate hour in trying to unloose his bonds, in striving to get rid of the gag from his mouth, so that he might shout for help. But his efforts were in vain; the Highcliffe fellows had done their work too well.

He was helpless!

He had to remain there, hot and breathless and furious, until the Highcliffians chose to come and release him, which certainly would not be until after the Greyfriars team had left—defeated!

Then the Bounder could take his homeward way in solitude, and he would arrive at Greyfriars to find all the fellows firmly convinced that he had sold them to Highcliffe, and he could imagine the yell of derision with which they would receive his assertion that he had been entrapped, bound, and gagged by Ponsonby & Co.

They simply would not believe it.

Vernon-Smith writhed with rage at the thought. How was the innings going? Were Greyfriars winning?

He could not think so. And while the wickets were falling he lay here helpless, impotent.

He was exhausted by his strivings to free himself, breathless with rage. He lay in a maddened frame of mind, writhing on the ground.

He could hear the clock strike from where he lay; he knew that it was gone half-past five.

The Greyfriars innings could not last much longer, if as long. How had it gone? When would he know that all was lost by Ponsonby coming to release him?

He heard a step outside the door, and gave a stifled groan. He had no doubt that it was Ponsonby, and that he brought the news that the match was over, and that the Greyfriars Remove had gone home beaten.

But the door did not move.

He heard someone sit down on the bench outside the shed, and a wild hope darted into his breast. It was not Ponsonby; it was evidently someone unconnected with the Ponsonby set. Whoever it was, he might release Vernon-Smith if he found him. Probably it was a gardener, or perhaps some Highcliffe fellow not of Ponsonby's set.

Vernon-Smith made a desperate effort to speak. But Gadsby had tied the gag on carefully. Not a sound but a vague murmur could pass it.

The Bounder of Greyfriars gave up the attempt. He could not rise to his feet, but with painful efforts he rolled over towards the door of the shed.

There he bumped himself against the door, careless how he was hurt, so long as he attracted the attention of the individual outside.

Bump, bump!

"Goodness gracious!"

Vernon-Smith heard that exclamation through the door, and he recognised the voice—the still, small voice of Alonzo Todd. It was the Duffer of Greyfriars!

Hope was in his heart now. He bumped on the door again. If only the Duffer of Greyfriars would open it; and surely even Todd would have sense enough to know that the bumping meant that somebody within wanted the door opened.

Bump, bump!

"Dear me!" murmured Todd. "There is somebody trying to push the door open from the inside; and that is very remarkable, as it opens inwards—very remarkable indeed!"

Bump!

"Perhaps I should render assistance," said Todd aloud. "My Uncle Benjamin would certainly approve of my making myself useful."

Todd opened the door. Vernon-Smith squirmed out of the way as he heard the handle turn. The westerling sun streamed into the shed, and Todd stared in blank astonishment at the sight of Vernon-Smith lying bound on the floor before him.

"Goodness gracious!" he ejaculated.

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Vernon-Smith granted.

"Dear me!" said Todd. "This is most remarkable! It is very odd indeed! I was far from expecting this when I sought a quiet spot in order to peruse the volume which my Uncle Benjamin sent me as a present. I am amazed!"

"Groo!"

"Why have you tied yourself up like this, my dear Smith?"

"Ger-r-ro-o-oh!"

"It is very odd! Dear me! Now I come to think of it, you could not have tied yourself in this manner. It is a jape, I suppose? Would you like me to release you, my dear Smith?"

Vernon-Smith made frantic signs of assent.

Alonzo Todd took out a penknife, and opened it and cut the string that held the gag to the Bounder's mouth. Vernon-Smith gasped for breath.

"My dear Smith—"

"Let me loose!" panted the Bounder. "Ponsonby's friends have tied me up like this to keep me out of the Greyfriars' innings."

"Good gracious!"

"Untie me!"

"What extremely reprehensible conduct—"

"Unfasten me!"

"My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked, nay, disgusted."

"Let me loose, you fool!" roared the Bounder.

"My dear Smith—"

"Let me loose, will you?"

"Oh, certainly! But—"

"Quick—quick!"

Alonzo Todd sawed away at the cord with his penknife: but the cord was strong and the knife was blunt, so the work was not rapid. The Bounder fumed with impatience.

"How has the game gone?" he asked feverishly.

"Eh?"

"Is the Greyfriars innings finished yet?"

"I really do not know, my dear Smith. I retired to this solitary spot to peruse a volume which my Uncle Benjamin—"

"You ass! Have they finished playing?"

"No, they have not finished playing, my dear Smith. I—"

"Then there's a chance yet. Quick—quick!"

"My dear—Oh!"

Vernon-Smith wrenched the last of the cords asunder. He leaped to his feet, and scarcely felt, in his excitement, the pain that shot into his cramped limbs with the sudden exercise. He pushed the Duffer of Greyfriars roughly aside, and ran out of the shed.

Todd blinked after him in mild reproach. The Bounder did not give him a glance. He dashed away at top speed, and came round the block of buildings, and ran on till he was in sight of the cricket-field.

He saw the dense crowd, and heard Highcliffe cheering. He saw a batsman making his way to the pavilion, and saw Harry Wharton standing at his wicket—alone! The other wicket was vacant.

No one seemed to be coming out to it. Vernon-Smith understood. It was time for last man in, and he was last man.

He dashed through the crowd madly.

Loud cries of surprise greeted him and rang across the green level to the ears of Harry Wharton.

"Smithy!"

"The Bounder!"

"He's come back!"

Harry Wharton heard it, and his face lighted up. Ponsonby's jaw dropped as the Bounder rushed upon the field.

"My hat," muttered Gadsby, "he's got loose!"

"You fool!" hissed Ponsonby.

Right up to the pitch Vernon-Smith dashed.

"Am I in time?" he shouted. "I've been kept away—kept away by force. Am I in time?"

"Yes," said Wharton. "Get your bat! Here, Nugent's got it ready for you. It's all right, Ponsonby, you cad, we play this out to a finish! Last man in!"

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Winners.

LAST man in! Vernon-Smith grasped his bat and stood up to the wicket, and he seemed to show hardly a trace of the rough and trying experience he had been through. His cricket flannels were soiled and torn and showed plainly the marks of the cords that had bound him, but the Bounder himself seemed in splendid form. It was partly his savage determination that Ponsonby & Co. should not profit by the trick they had played him that upheld him now.

Wharton did not understand all, but he understood enough. The Bounder had been kept away by some trick of the High-

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cliff fellows, and he had escaped in time to take his wicket in the match. That much was clear.

And it was clear, too, that the Bounder was in his best batting form, and that his return to the ranks would cost the Highcliffians dear.

"He can't be in form, anyway," hissed Ponsonby. "Do your best with the ball, Gaddy."

And Gaddy did his best with the ball, but he could not touch Vernon-Smith's wicket. The Bounder cut away his very first ball to the boundary, and the second gave him 2, and the third 3. That brought Harry Wharton to the batting end, and he began to make the fur fly.

Greyfriars cheered themselves hoarse.

With Wharton at one end of the pitch and Vernon-Smith at the other, there was no bowling at Highcliff that could take the wickets. The batsmen were set for as long as they chose; and they would choose, of course, to stay in exactly as long as was needed to beat the Highcliff score.

The Highcliffians were looking grim. Those of the team who had known nothing of Ponsonby's plot regarded the sudden return of Vernon-Smith as a stroke of rotten bad luck. Those "in the know" might have looked upon it as a judgment upon their treachery. For Vernon-Smith exceeded all expectations now. Harry Wharton, as a rule, would have been the "show cricketer" of the Remove, but there was no doubt that even Wharton took a second place to Vernon-Smith now.

Marjorie and Clara clapped their hands, and loud cheers rang out from the Greyfriars crowd at every splendid hit.

The score went up by leaps and bounds.

Once Vernon-Smith had a narrow escape when, in making 4, he barely got home before Ponsonby sent in the ball; but his bat was on the crease in time, and he survived, and after that he was more careful. There was really no need for fours; the batsmen could evidently stay in as long as they liked, and it was better to be slow and sure.

60-65!

Ten wanted to tie, and a boundary by Vernon-Smith supplied 4 of them at once.

Then 1 by Wharton to begin the next over, and then another boundary from the Bounder.

"Seventy-four!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Oh, my only hat! My solitary summer bonnet! Only two to win! Hurray!"

"And there goes one!" yelled John Bull.

It was a single, taken by Vernon-Smith. Then Wharton stopped several tricky balls, and the over ended with the score at a tie. And then Gadsby bowled again to the

Bounder, and the crowd looked on—the Greyfriars grinning gleefully and the Highcliff crowd looking downhearted, especially Ponsonby & Co. For Ponsonby & Co. were already thinking of the settlement of bets upon that match, and the mere thought of it made them feel sick.

"It's all over, bar shouting!" said Miss Clara. "Hurray!"

Click!

The ball was sailing away again—far away beyond the hope of catches. It was a boundary, though boundaries were not needed now.

"Greyfriars wins!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Then the field was black with rushing figures, all surrounding the Bounder, and he was hoisted shoulder-high and carried back to the pavilion.

The Greyfriars were shouting themselves hoarse.

"Hurray! Hurray!"

And at that moment it was fortunate, perhaps, that there were so many Greyfriars juniors on the scene, otherwise the victors would very probably have been mobbed. But there were too many Greyfriars fellows present for that to be safe, and Ponsonby & Co. had to swallow the bitter pill of their defeat as well as they could.

It was in the dressing-room that Vernon-Smith explained what had happened. Alonzo Todd corroborated, though, under the circumstances, no proof was needed. It was a very different matter, telling his story after helping to a victory from telling it at Greyfriars after a defeat. Vernon-Smith was the hero of the hour, and Harry Wharton shook hands with him before all the cheering juniors.

"I'm sorry I doubted you, Smith," he said simply.

"You've played up like a trump to-day, and that's all there is about it."

"And how about those cads—" began Bob Cherry.

"Oh, let them go!" said Wharton. "They've been licked, and they're not worth touching, anyway. Only we don't play Highcliff again. They're a bit too rotten for a decent school to play, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

It was a merry party of victorious cricketers that drove home to Greyfriars in the brake with Marjorie and Clara, and there was quite a celebration at the old school. And the hero of it all was the once most unpopular fellow in the Remove—Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who had been Last Man In.

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled, "The Bully's Remorse!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy of the MAGNET in advance. Price One Penny.)

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial Story are purely imaginary, and it contains no reference or allusion to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

THE MOST THRILLING ADVENTURE SERIAL EVER WRITTEN!

Wolves of the Deep.

The Story of a Great Conspiracy, introducing Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung.

By SIDNEY DREW.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord is the possessor of a wonderful submarine, called The Lord of the Deep. One night the model is stolen from him by Michael Scaroff, a Russian. Ferrers Lord, accompanied by Rupert Thurston, sets out on the track of the Russian, but after a fruitless journey to Brindisi, where one of Scaroff's hirelings is caught attempting to wreck the submarine, Ferrers Lord returns to London. There he learns that Scaroff has built a submarine similar to his own, and that his niece has been kidnapped by the Russian. Ferrers Lord again leaves London on the Lord of the Deep, and one day he, Thurston, and his driver are walking at the bottom of the sea when they are attacked by a shark.

(Now go on with the story.)

Left in the Submarine Forest—An Amazing Adventure.

It was clear that the shark could make nothing of the strange beings who had so boldly invaded his hunting-ground. Thurston knew enough to understand that they were at no THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 168.

great depth, for sharks, as a rule, only haunt fairly shallow water, and are surface feeders.

Suddenly the brute passed so close to him that its side almost grazed him, and he saw the millionaire stretch out his left arm: The shark turned upon its back, and the triangular mouth, armed with rows of spiked teeth, opened to seize upon the arm.

Down flashed the knife, and the water crimsoned with blood. There was a sudden swirling and lashing, and Thurston was swept from his feet into the weeds. Then he staggered up. He was in darkness, for his lamp had gone out. He pushed the lever backwards and forwards, but no light came. The lamp was broken.

He stood for a moment, shutting his eyes to get used to the gloom. When he opened them he saw the outline of the towering weeds shutting him in on every side but one. Here, through a narrow break in the weeds, he descried a barnacled rock—the rock on which Ferrers Lord had been sitting.

NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S REMORSE." A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

He walked towards it; and then a sudden dread chilled his heart. No one was there; there was no open glade, for the weeds rose thicker and higher. And yet his comrades could not be more than a few paces from him. He looked about him for the flash of their lamps, but in vain. Around him was the dense, dark wilderness of weeds, as trackless as the ocean.

Thurston shrugged his shoulders, and laughed, trying to deaden the fear in his heart. He had been struck by the shark in its death-throes, and knocked into the thick weeds, not more than a few yards at the utmost. No doubt the screen of weeds and the blood of the brute darkening the water had hidden the glare of their lamps, and he had walked in the wrong direction. He would soon find them.

He turned, and, retracing his steps, struggled through the weeds. At every yard the submarine forest grew thicker and darker. The awful silence appalled him; it was so hideous and terrible.

He touched strange, clammy things as he tore the weeds aside with his hands—living things that made him shudder with loathing. The wondrous blossoms around him were not plants, but lovely creatures of the sea, whose very beauty was but a bait for their prey. A small octopus waved its sinuous arms threateningly as he roused it from its lair. With Ferrers Lord beside him, the marvels of this strange water-forest would have fascinated him. But he was alone in the great silence—a creature of another world.

He was lost in the submarine forest. Like a thunderbolt the reality of his terrible position came upon him. He was lost and alone! He halted in the midst of the weeds, sick at heart.

Thurston knew that Ferrers Lord would search for him, and that he was searching now. He sat down and endeavoured to think calmly, and for a man in such a terrible situation he reasoned clearly and well. He felt that the best thing he could do was to remain still. Every step plunged him deeper into the fathomless wilderness of weeds.

For a time Ferrers Lord would search for him on foot, and then would return to the Lord of the Deep, and steer the vessel over every inch of the forest. Sooner or later the searchlights would spy him out. Then it struck him that rescue would come sooner if he could find some open space where the glare of the light would not be impeded by the weeds above him.

Rupert went on again in the maddening, horrible silence. The air-bag was working well; but his rescue might be delayed, and he thought it would be wise to husband the supply. He half closed the supply-tube.

A good deal of his fear had left him, and he was either becoming more used to the gloom, or the water was growing shallower, for it was certainly lighter. The weeds thinned, and small fish swam and gambolled about him in shoals. The ground was sloping gradually upwards.

Rupert reached the top of a submarine hill. Beyond him the weed-forest stretched, again as grim and dark as ever. He peered down the slope, and his heart bounded with delight.

Through the dark screen of weeds at the foot of the hill flashed a beam of brilliant light.

"Hurrah!" he thought, wild with delight. "There's the Lord of the Deep! I believe I'll be home first, after all!"

He forgot that he was tired and thirsty, and hurried down the hill. The light grew brighter as he advanced, and, after a time, he faintly made out the long, dark hull of the vessel. Thurston laughed.

"This is what I call a bit of real luck!" he mused. "Certainly, I must have come a roundabout way, but I've got here, all the same. Hallo, they've got the blind of the saloon up! Why—"

He shrank back in anger and fear. The blind of the saloon was raised, and the lamps lighted. A man crossed the room, smoking a cigar, and passed before the window. Thurston crouched into the shadow.

"Great heavens!" he gasped. "A man with one arm—Michael Scaroff!"

Thurston Sees His Foe—A Moment of Horrible Suspense—Questions and Answers—In the Lion's Den.

Thurston was staggered for a moment; but he knew that he was watching the arch-enemy of Ferrers Lord—Prince Michael Scaroff, the stealer of the model. The Russian's face fascinated him. It was the face of a man about forty years of age—clear-cut, bold, and handsome. Scaroff's hair was thin and grey, and he wore a pointed black beard and carefully-trimmed moustache. The eyes were grey and wide apart, and the empty left sleeve was pinned to the breast of a tweed coat.

Rupert could hardly believe that this handsome, open-faced man could be the unscrupulous villain who had baffled them.

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so craftily at every turn. He took his eyes from the Russian and scanned the vessel. It was larger than the Lord of the Deep; but it was evident that it had been hurriedly built. The saloon, though brilliantly lighted, was not luxuriously furnished, and the outer plates of the boat were only partly painted.

Michael Scaroff paced up and down before the window, followed by a shaggy wolfhound, all unconscious of the hidden eyes that were watching him. Rupert crouched in his weedy shelter, puzzling his brains to know what course to take. His plight was worse than ever. He had come forward unseen; but it would be difficult to retreat. And where could he retreat to?

His lips were dry and parched with thirst, for there was no moisture in the compressed air he was breathing. His eyes glistened greedily as he saw the Russian pour out a glass of water and drink it. Again Scaroff resumed his uneasy paces, and inch by inch Thurston edged away.

At last, thinking himself well out of sight, Rupert rose to his feet. What was he to do? Where was he to go? Even the nearness of the hostile vessel and of Michael Scaroff made him less lonely and less abandoned.

"If I'm not found soon," he thought, "by Lord or Horton, I'll have to go to that boat or knock under. The air is like breathing red-hot dust. I suppose it's because I'm not used to diving. It'll be a toss-up soon, and I don't suppose Scaroff will kill me. Strange that such a human wolf should look so manly and good-natured."

The light of the Russian's vessel still shimmered behind him through the weeds. He was afraid to lose sight of it, for to lose sight of it meant, perhaps, to sacrifice his last hope of life. It was a grim alternative, if the worst came to the worst—either to die like a dog in that awful place, or to walk defenceless into the very jaws of the wolf. But life, after all, is the most priceless possession of everything that lives.

Thurston paused irresolutely and licked his dry lips. His throat was scorching, and every breath he took scalded his swollen tongue. In vain his despairing eyes watched for the flash of lamps. Before him the light of Scaroff's vessel burned faintly through the glassy water; but nothing more. Then a hideous thought came into his mind.

What if the Russian should sail away and leave him?

The thought appalled him. He felt that it was impossible for him to endure another half-hour of such an agony of thirst. Besides, he might never be found at all.

He had reached the rising ground, and he looked back at the distant light. A shadow fell across the sand at his feet, and his heart thrilled as he saw the black keel of a boat moving above him. It vanished quickly, and he laughed hoarsely as he wondered what aid he could expect from a boat upon the surface of the water.

"Let me have a good think," he muttered, "while my head is clear enough to do it. This diving-dress is carefully balanced, I suppose, and the amount of air it holds is balanced by the weight of the boots, so that I can just walk easily. If I could get more than the quantity of air in, of course I'd float. And I'm walking heavily now. That's because I'm forgetting instructions."

The instructions were simple enough, but his plight had driven them from his mind. Strapped to his waist was a bag of leather filled with balls of lead. These plummetts, together with the lead-soled diving-boots, exactly counterbalanced the buoyancy of the compressed air when the storage-cylinder was full. As the air breathed by the diver passed through the exhaust-tube, the buoyancy of the cylinder grew less, and by throwing away the leaden balls as required, the diver kept himself at easy walking weight.

Thurston dropped two or three of the balls, and felt that he could move with less difficulty than before. But no light shone through the dark groves around him except one. For a moment he felt bitter against Ferrers Lord. The millionaire must know that he could not have wandered far away. Where was the Lord of the Deep, whose flashing lamps ought to be searching the wilderness of weeds?

Suddenly he felt a grasp on his wrist that made him shudder with pain and loathing. He had been clutching the thick, slimy stem of a giant weed, and a crab, whose lair was in the branches, had seized him with one toothed claw. He stamped the brute to pulp under the heel of his boot, but the claw still clung to his flesh, and he had to prise it loose with his knife. When he glanced up his blood grew chill with nameless dread.

The light had vanished!

A prayer hovered upon his cracked lips as he staggered blindly forward to where the light had been. Then he stumbled and fell. A white blaze shone round him as he rose dazedly to his knees. The vessel was still there, and he had been seen. Those moments of horrible suspense had almost stunned him.

A dozen faces were crowding the window. They drew

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away as the armless Russian advanced. He beckoned the diver to approach with an impatient gesture that showed he was accustomed to command. A slate was brought, and, scrambling something upon it in Russian, he held it up for Rupert to read.

Thurston waved his hand to signify that he was ignorant of the language. Michael Scaroff wrote again—this time in French:

"As you can only answer 'Yes' or 'No' to my questions, raise your right hand for 'Yes,' your left for 'No.'"

Rupert spoke French fluently. His right hand went up, and the Russian cleaned the slate and wrote:

"I never saw a diving-dress like that. Are you diving for amber here?"

Thurston's left hand signified "No." It was evident to him that Scaroff did not suspect the proximity of Ferrers Lord, his hated foe. The Baltic, too, is the great treasure-house of the world's amber supply. Again he wrote rapidly:

"Answer the questions in their order. I am puzzled to find you here. Have you strayed from your boat? Are you in any danger? Do you wish me to give you any help?"

Three times Thurston read the question over. Thrust was choking him, and there seemed no other chance of life. He hesitated, and rubbed his hand over the glass of his helmet, pretending that he could not see distinctly. But in those brief minutes his brain was busy. To allow Michael Scaroff to know that he was Ferrers Lord's ally and confidant would be fatal. But could he hide this fact, concoct some plausible story, and hoodwink the Russian? All is fair, they say, in love and war, and the hope of life was sweet to his young heart. The thought of straying again into the alimy depths of the hideous forest, perhaps to die there and to rot there, made him shudder. And, after all, if he could keep his secret he might aid Ferrers Lord all the more, and help to rescue the girl whose beautiful face smiled down at him in his dreams.

The die was cast. Three times he jerked his right hand upwards.

Michael Scaroff reversed the slate and hid a smile of triumph. When the slate was held up once more, Rupert read:

"I am unable to let you in here, as my workmen have not perfected the watertight chamber. If you will scramble up the ladder to the conning-tower I will raise the vessel to the surface and let you in. Be quick about it, as I do not want any boat to see me."

Thurston climbed the iron ladder and clutched the rail that protected the conning-tower. Almost at once the boat began to ascend, and in a few seconds the glorious sunlight flashed down upon him, and the fresh salt breeze played around him.

A figure emerged from the manhole of the vessel and unscrewed the rivets of the helmet. Thurston filled his lungs with the sweet, moist air. It tasted like the richest nectar, and revived him in a moment.

"This is good," he said aloud. "I was almost choked."

He had not looked at the man; but as he did so he remembered the faces that had crowded the window. The man, like the rest of Scaroff's crew, was a yellow Mongol, with the flat, expressionless face and slanting eyes that distinguish the race. They spoke no language but the strange jargon of the great Eastern plains that lie beyond the Himalayas.

The Mongolian pointed to the companion-ladder.

"My friend," said Rupert, "I don't suppose you will understand me, but I am horribly tired, and my boots and other get-up are horribly heavy. Although you are not my valet, my yellow beauty, I must ask you to help me disrobe myself of these outer garments."

The man again pointed to the ladder, and clapped his hand angrily upon his knife. Rupert sat down.

"No, no," he said, smiling. "I can't walk down there until I am undressed. It's too much to expect."

A harsh voice sounded behind him, and the man sprang to unstrap his boots as Michael Scaroff came softly up the ladder. He nodded to Rupert.

"You are welcome to the Tsaritza!" he said, speaking in English.

"She is certainly an astonishing vessel," answered Thurston craftily. "I dabble in submarine things myself, as you will see by this diving-dress; but such a triumph as this wonderful boat was beyond my wildest dreams. May I ask my host's name?"

"I am Prince Michael Scaroff."

Rupert bowed politely.

"A well-known name," he said. "I am delighted to have the honour of meeting so great a statesman and so clever a scientist. Might I ask the favour of a glass of water?" The Russian spoke to the Mongolian, and, with a salute, the man disappeared. He returned quickly, carrying a silver tray, on which stood a bottle of champagne and a decanter of crystal water.

"I will take the water, if you please, prince," said Thurston, smiling. "I have learnt from this morning's experience the value of water."

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perience that water is better than wine. My diving apparatus is not perfection yet, for the air is terribly dry."

The Russian was eyeing the diving-suit greedily. It was the one thing he needed.

"A sponge soaked in water, or a damping-pad of any kind for the air to pass through, would remedy that. I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Lloyd Rupert," said Thurston, "late of Magdalen College, Oxford."

He was undressed by this time, except for the cumbersome flannels that every diver wears. Michael Scaroff tossed the end of the cigar into the sea and invited him below. Save for the loss of his arm, he was a finely-built, handsome man, and Rupert thought so. With his broad shoulders and well-cut tweed suit, he looked a typical English gentleman. His English, too, was perfect and refined.

Thurston went down into the badly-furnished state-room of the Tsaritza. The inner lining of white wood was unpainted, and contrasted strangely with the luxurious furniture.

"Your diving-dress, you said, was unperfected," drawled the Russian, "and it's just the same with this vessel of mine. She is unfinished as yet; but we are working hard at her day and night."

"It will be a wonderful weapon in the hands of your country," said Rupert.

"Certainly, if I place it there. I have not decided yet. It is a magnificent secret, but I take care to guard it well. I am the only European on board, with the exception of yourself, and all the men were born on my estates, and are my sworn vassals by birth and blood. We do such things well, in Russia, sir. The serf and labourer there is not the employer's master as he is too often in England. No, no; we know how to treat them, and the dread of the knout keeps them in their place. But tell me how you came to be in such a strange position."

Thurston had been racking his brains for some plausible story. In reality, he told the truth as he said:

"It was rather a nasty experience, prince; and only for you and my lucky star I am afraid it would have been all over with me. It seems ages since I left my vessel, though in reality it can only be a few hours ago. I did not intend to go so far; but I got bewildered in the weeds, and lost sight of the electric lamp that was left burning below water to guide me. I suppose they have given me up for dead."

"Possibly," drawled Scaroff drily. "I am sorry I cannot find your vessel for you. I cannot take the risk of having my boat seen. All I can promise is to put you on shore. You must swear not to divulge anything you have seen."

Rupert smiled and nodded. He had spoken the truth, and Scaroff had swallowed the story. But Rupert had no intention of taking any pledge, so he deftly changed the subject.

"I noticed, prince," he said, "that your vessel is heavily armed."

The Russian curled his moustache and flushed uneasily.

"To be sure," he answered hastily; "but that is only for experiment. A vessel like the Tsaritza is not a pleasure-boat, but an effective weapon of offence. This is her trial trip, and I have been trying her guns on sunken wrecks. Up to the present I am not satisfied. Excuse me one moment."

He lifted the curtain that screened the far end of the room, and Thurston bit his lips to suppress a cry as he caught a glimpse of a massive iron-bound chest. In a flash he read the words painted upon it in white:

"Bar Gold.

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The missing liner that had caused so much consternation in London! So Michael Scaroff, this wolf of the deep, had robbed her of her treasure. What has become of her passengers and crew? Perhaps only the great ocean and Scaroff and his yellow fiends could tell the story. Thurston shuddered at the thought.

Then the handsome Russian again appeared, and stood looking out, with his hand ready to lower the blind.

Bright through the glassy darkness loomed two glaring eyes of fire, and Scaroff hissed out an order through his clenched teeth. The Lord of the Deep was upon them. Every light was extinguished as the screws began to lash the water. Two supple hands seized Rupert's throat then, and forced him back.

"You confounded spy!" snarled the Russian. "You are unmasked, and in the lions' den!"

A Fruitless Search—Where Is Thurston?—Betrayed—Th Pursuit Begins.

Ferrers Lord and Ned Horton, whose trained nerves were ruffled by nothing, stepped calmly back to escape the lashing tail and snapping jaws of the shark. The millionaire had planted his blow well. After a few moments its struggles

grew weaker and fainter, and it floated slowly upwards through the crimson water.

Ferrers Lord's skill and coolness pleased the diver, who had battled with many a hungry shark in the rich pearl-beds of Ceylon. The stained water cleared slowly, and he looked around. Then he touched the millionaire's arm. Ferrers Lord peered about him.

Thurston had vanished.

For a time Rupert's disappearance caused no uneasiness; but as the moments sped on, and there was no response to the flash of their lamps, a vague dread began to creep into the hearts of both.

Where was Rupert Thurston?

Ferrers Lord carried a compass so strongly made in gun-metal and tough glass that the pressure of the water at any depth could not affect it. He gave it to Horton, and made him understand by signs that he was to explore one part of the weed-forest and to guide himself back to the open glade by means of the instrument. The diver took his bearings, and vanished into the slimy forest.

With sinking heart Ferrers Lord went the opposite way, hewing out a path for himself with his massive knife, and flashing his lantern on every side. He knew the agony of terror that his missing comrade must be suffering. The millionaire was cold and emotionless, but he had grown strangely fond of Rupert. He did not despair of finding him; but Thurston was unused to the diving-dress, and could not wear it for long.

The forest was a labyrinth. It was clear that Thurston had wandered away and taken the wrong path. Ferrers Lord turned back at last with a sigh, and his heart grew heavy as he reached the glade and saw the solitary outline of the diver. Horton's search had been unsuccessful also.

Ned Horton rushed to meet him, and, clutching him by the shoulder, pointed eagerly to the south. Ferrers Lord took a small slate from the bag that held his leaden weights and wrote on it:

"What is the matter? Have you found him?"

With feverish haste the driver snatched the slate and pencil, and wrote in turn:

"Yes. Scaroff's boat is lying there, and he is on board. I saw him through the glass."

The blood rushed into the millionaire's face as he stared at the writing.

"To the ship," he scrawled, "as fast as you can. At last! At last!"

Stumbling, tripping, like men demented, they forced their way to the ship. Ferrers Lord half emptied his bag of weights, and, thus lightened, bounded through the water, taking great leaps. They entered the outer chamber, and closed and locked the door. A bell sounded the signal, and the pumps forced out the water.

Then, when the chamber was empty, the inner door swung open, and the glare of lamps dazzled their eyes. A dozen hands freed them of their weighty diving-suits.

"Come, Horton," said Ferrers Lord, "to the conning-tower!"

All was bustle as the torpedo-tubes were cleared for action. The vessel rose to the surface, and men swarmed across the wave-washed decks, ankle-deep in water, to take the coverings from the guns. Two only were uncovered—two long electric guns of huge size, mounted on turntables and fired and worked from the conning-tower. Nathan Trethvick worked like a demon as he crooned out his song:

"Up with the Jolly Roger,

For I'm the skipper now.

And the captain swings on the yard-arm high

Aboard the Sally Howe."

At last the manholes were closed down. Down sank the boat. Ferrers Lord took the wheel, and the lights went out. Slowly the Lord of the Deep crept ahead through the gloom. All held their breath as a distant flicker appeared below the edge of the weed-forest.

"Take the wheel, Horton," said Ferrers Lord.

The millionaire's eyes glittered as he clutched the lever that worked the machinery of the forward gun. A spock of light no larger than a pea suddenly appeared on the sight of the gun. He took aim by this, and the long tube tilted slowly downwards.

His left hand hovered above the button, and a mad cry of rage burst from his lips. No deadly flash answered the pressure of his finger, but the twin searchlights of the Lord of the Deep shone out, and at once the lights of Scaroff's vessel vanished. The millionaire's wild shout rang through the ship:

"Betrayed!"

A blinding column of red flame leapt from the gloom close to the prow of the Lord of the Deep. The boat shot up, and almost rolled over in the wild chaos of tumbling

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water. As she tossed and pitched, shrieks of pain sounded. Horton fell forward upon his face, stunned and bleeding.

Ferrers Lord clung to the inner rail of the conning-tower, his face disfigured with rage. There was a traitor on board. The gun had been tampered with, the lights had been shown to warn Scaroff that his foe was upon him. The well-balanced vessel was almost on even keel again, and the water was settling after the explosion of Michael Scaroff's torpedo.

With twitching lips the millionaire staggered down into the state-room. A few of the electric lights were still burning, though most of the bulbs were broken. He gazed round on the scene of wild ruin.

His priceless mirrors were cracked and broken; the table that had been set out for lunch was overturned, and the carpet was littered with broken glass and battered silver. The Chinese servant lay face downwards beside the door, with the blood streaming from his head.

Lord's face turned white as he remembered something that the thought of revenge had made him forget. He clutched at the curtain to steady himself, and a wave of thankfulness swept over his heart.

Rupert Thurston was on board the Russian vessel!

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered fervently. "I had forgotten, blinded as I was by my lust for vengeance!"

He made his way towards the engine-room. The engines were still working at half-speed, but the men had suffered. One man lay groaning with a broken leg, another was nursing a sprained wrist, and the wild yelling of the terrified ape echoed from Trethvick's cabin. Then came the cruel crack! crack! of a whip, and silence. It was broken by the croaking of the dwarf's voice:

"Oh, the skipper swings on the yard-arm high,

And I'm the skipper now!

He tried to stop the mutiny

Aboard the Sally Howe.

The mate, he's dead—"

"Trethvick!" called Ferrers Lord.

The mate waddled into the engine-room, rubbing his hairy hands.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he tittered. "This is a mighty pleasant experience—eh? It was a near thing, air—a near thing. If the Russian fool had let us run twenty yards closer before he'd exploded his torpedo, it would have been Davy Jones—ha, ha!—Davy Jones for the lot of us!" He turned upon the man with the broken leg, and kicked him savagely. "Shut up, you snivelling brute," he growled, "or I'll murder you!"

Ferrers Lord pushed the dwarf aside.

"Let him alone, Trethvick, or I may take it into my head to treat you badly. Find the doctor, if you can, and then see to the engines. I will take the wheel. Have the wreckage cleared out of the saloon at once, and assemble the men there that are not badly hurt. We have a traitor somewhere, and Heaven help him if I can only lay my finger upon him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" tittered the dwarf. "There's always an 'if'—ha, ha!—always an 'if'!"

"Trethvick!"

The word rang out like a pistol-shot, and the dwarf spun round and met the millionaire's flashing eyes.

"Yes!"

"Do not goad me too far, Trethvick. I tell you there is a traitor on board, and he must be found. We are here below the sea, where might is right. Be careful how you laugh and sneer, you misshapen fiend! What hinders me now from getting rid of you for ever?"

The ready revolver glittered in his hand, and the dwarf recoiled.

"You do not answer," went on Ferrers Lord; "but I will answer for you. It is because I am a gentleman and a man of honour. We have sinned together, Trethvick, and I have pledged you my word. You are at my mercy here, and at other times I am at your mercy. I spare you because I will not break my oath. But, remember, once you try to cross me, that oath is void. Go!"

Nathan Trethvick slunk away like a whipped cur, and Ferrers Lord climbed back to the conning-tower. He did not know what route Scaroff's vessel had taken, but he guessed she would make for the open sea. Powerful as he was, it seemed improbable that Michael Scaroff would enter a Russian fort. Few nations are so greedy of strengthening their military and naval power as Russia, and Ferrers Lord reasoned that the prince would not risk his valuable secret.

He put the vessel about. Luckily, the stout engines had stood the fierce strain, and the electric light plant was quite intact. Had it been a vessel carrying heavy boilers the shock would have shaken the boilers loose and driven them through her ribs.

Ned Horton came round quickly, and saw the millionaire at the wheel.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"But the explosion—the shock?"

"Nothing!" said Ferrers Lord grimly. "You need not be alarmed. Go to the surgeon."

The diver steadied himself down the ladder, mystified. Something terrible had occurred, beyond a doubt. He met Trethvick at the door of the engine-room.

"Hallo!" grinned the dwarf. "Another of you—eh? Bah! It's like an infirmity!"

"What has happened?"

"Happened? Why, you just missed going to the best place for you—Davy Jones!"

Thurston had told the diver what had happened in the miserable little hut on the river, and the dwarf's remark set his blood boiling.

"Davy Jones, or no Davy Jones," said the diver, trying hard to control himself, "there's no need for you to grin over it, Mr. Trethvick!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Why shouldn't I grin, my giant? Perhaps you'd like to see me cry—eh? Ha, ha! I wouldn't have cried very much if some of you had got knocked on the head! Not I! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you wouldn't!" said Horton.

"Not a bit of it!"

The ape began to whine and snarl, and the dwarf sniggered.

"That's Lucifer!" he croaked. "Do you hear him? Let me tell you, Mr. Horton, I think more of old Lucifer than I do of any man aboard this ship. I treat him properly, you see; and if I had my way I'd treat most of you just the same. If Lucifer don't do just what I want I know how to treat him and bring him to his senses. How do I do it? Ha, ha! I'll tell you. I lash him till my arm aches. And that's how I'd treat you!"

Ned Horton's big hands clenched, and he set his teeth.

"Look here," he said very slowly, "you are supposed to be in command of this ship, and therefore you are my master. I don't know what flag we sail under, and I don't know what court would try me for mutiny, nor do I care. You may go to Mr. Ferrers Lord and tell him every word I am going to say to you."

"You look a powerful chap, skipper; but, by Christopher, I'll bet I could swallow you up! Give me your orders in a straightforward manner, and nobody will obey you more smartly or do the work better; but don't bully. Mark my words, skipper, when I tell you I think you're a low, bullying, undersized brute! If you try to bully me I swear I'll wring your neck, if I have to swing for it!"

And burly Ned swept the petrified dwarf aside and marched away.

Mad with rage, Trethvick bounded up the ladder to where Ferrers Lord stood like a statue at the wheel.

"Well?" asked the millionaire.

Nathan Trethvick was foaming at the mouth.

"Mutiny!" he roared. "Red-hot mutiny! You have made me captain of this ship, I think?"

"I have," said Ferrers Lord.

"You have—eh?" shrieked the dwarf. "Very good—very good indeed! And what do you say to open mutiny? I've been threatened—my life has been threatened! What do you say to that—eh? What do you say?"

Ferrers Lord put the wheel over a point, and struck a match to light a cigar.

"Control your temper, please, and speak plainly. Who has threatened your life?"

"Horton, the diver."

The veins on the millionaire's forehead swelled like cords.

"Very good!" he answered. "You are a splendid servant, Trethvick; but you are a failure as a master. You forget that a man is a man, and that any man who is worthy the name has his feelings. You are a bully, and any man would resent that. It does not matter now. You are captain here, and to resent your authority is mutiny. I will give Horton a fair trial. Put him in irons."

Trethvick rubbed his hairy hands gleefully as he waddled off.

So Ned Horton, to his amazement and indignation, was put in irons and locked in the billiard-room.

Like the good-natured giant he was, he was sailor enough not to blame Ferrers Lord. Nathan Trethvick was his captain, and he had used threats towards Nathan Trethvick. If that was not mutiny, it almost amounted to it.

"Never mind," he thought, as the handcuffs clicked upon his wrists. "I'll get my own back before I've finished. Ferrers Lord couldn't do anything else, for discipline's discipline. I wonder what they'll do to me?"

The hours dragged on, and still the millionaire stood at the wheel. His iron muscles scorned fatigue as the pursuit—if such a vain quest could be called a pursuit—went on. Suddenly he beckoned one of the sailors, and the man hastened to his side.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE BULLY'S REMORSE."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Take the wheel, and keep her head just where it is."

"Yes, sir."

Ferrers Lord entered the saloon, and sat down at the table. He sat for a moment, his dark brows knitted, and then touched the bell. The door opened at once, and a column of sailors trooped in, and ranged themselves in silence round the apartment. Last of all came Nathan Trethvick.

"Bring the prisoner," said Ferrers Lord.

Ned Horton, the king of divers, was escorted in between two sailors. The millionaire turned to Trethvick.

"What have you to say against this man?"

The dwarf chuckled.

"I'll soon tell you," he croaked. "Ha, ha! I'll soon tell you, sir. I met him at the bottom of the maindeck companion-way soon after the explosion. I saw he was a bit knocked about, and said jokingly that we'd all had a near squeak of going to Davy Jones."

"And then?" asked Ferrers Lord.

"Then, sir, he jumped down my throat, and it was red-hot mutiny. He said: 'You're a low, bullying brute, and I swear I'll wring your neck, if I have to swing twenty times for it!' Then he tried to knock me down."

"Don't lie!" said Ferrers Lord.

The dwarf turned purple.

"Lie!" he roared. "Who dare say I lie?"

"Silence!" said the millionaire. "It is your turn, Horton."

The diver squared his shoulders.

"I am sorry for what I have done, sir," he said, in his bluff, straightforward way; "and yet I'm not a bit sorry at all. It's like this, sir, to explain clearly. I don't love the skipper, and I'd like to wring his neck; but I'm sorry I lost my temper aboard the ship. I'm most sorry, for he's my captain; and if my temper hadn't got the best of me, I'd have bit my tongue off first. I did say, in a way, all he's told you, sir; but I didn't try to knock him down."

"I deserve to be punished, sir," he went on, "and I won't grumble, whatever you do to me. I'm paid a splendid wage, and there's not a man aboard this ship that I don't like and respect, except that man there. P'raps I'm doing wrong to say this afore my pals here; but I'm on my trial, and a man has a right to speak out then. I'll apologise to Mr. Trethvick for being in the wrong, and for being fool enough to set a bad example on your vessel, sir. And when I say this I've finished. I meant every word I told the skipper, and if ever I meet him face to face where we're on equal terms, we'll have a settlement."

Ferrers Lord stood up, smiling.

"You are a powerful man, Horton," he said, "and well built; but I think Trethvick is your match. As there are no witnesses, I think I can only give one verdict to be fair to both. You are well matched."

The dwarf turned pale.

"You mean—"

"I mean fight it out with any weapons you like," said Ferrers Lord.

Trethvick and Horton Fight a Duel—The Victor's Generosity—"You are a Man, Horton!"

Ferrers Lord's face was like marble as he uttered his strange verdict. It thrilled every heart, and the silent sailors eagerly scanned the two men, trying to decide before the fight began which man would prove the conqueror. They hated Trethvick; but even Horton's breadth of shoulder and strength of limb did not make them confident that he would win.

The dwarf snarled out an oath, and lighted his black pipe. "All right!" he croaked. "You'll never catch Nathan Trethvick turning his back upon a fight. Ha, ha! I'm a mighty tough nut to crack. Perhaps some of you wouldn't mind if I got beaten, eh? Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"If you mean that for me," said Ferrers Lord, with an angry gleam in his dark eyes, "it will be better for you to choose your words more carefully. The prisoner admits that he acted wrongly, and before you fight he will apologise to you. The rest is between yourselves. Apologise, Horton."

As one of the crew struck off his irons the diver obeyed.

"I apologise most deeply, sir," he said, "for having broken the most important rule aboardship, and for having insulted my superior officer. To you, sir, and to Mr. Trethvick I say this, and I'm glad to be able to say it before the crew."

"Clear a ring!" said Ferrers Lord. "You must choose the weapons, Trethvick."

The dwarf, with the black pipe upside down between his lips, tittered, and wrenched a knife from his belt.

"We'll fight with these pretty toothpicks!" he croaked. "With a knife it's man to man, for any fool might make a

lucky shot with a pistol. I'll have no rules, sir. It's fight as you like with me, and fight to kill."

"As you please," said Ferrers Lord. "Do you agree to this, Horton?"

"Certainly, sir."

For a moment a shadow crossed the millionaire's face. He had not intended this, but only a rough-and-tumble fight that would do little harm. He knew the dwarf's strange ways, and hoped that if Horton proved successful it would heal the breach between them, for Trethvick had a queer admiration for any man who could master him. Even when he wrestled with the ape, he caressed the brute for throwing him, and lashed it cruelly when he managed to overcome it.

But matters had gone too far now. The diabolical look of hate in Trethvick's eyes proved that conclusively. Knowing the dwarf's skill with every weapon, he was uneasy about Horton. He lighted a cigar as the room was rapidly cleared. A square of canvas was spread over the centre of the carpet and carefully strewn with sawdust. The two foes removed their boots, and throw off their coats.

Horton tested the broad-bladed knife till it bent almost back to the hilt. He looked a magnificent specimen of British manhood as he faced the misshapen dwarf. His keen, blue eyes reflected the excitement that his face refused to show. There was a soft murmur of admiration as he bent his right arm, and the huge mass of muscle swelled up like a cluster of cords.

"I'm ready," snarled Nathan Trethvick, flinging away his pipe, "and don't forget I'm fighting to kill!"

The millionaire blew out a cloud of smoke.

"Since matters have taken this unfortunate turn," he said, "I suppose I can do nothing but let the fight commence. Such a thing as this never entered my thoughts. I am sorry, Trethvick, that a fair trial of strength will not satisfy you. All I can do now is to appeal to the victor to be merciful. Begin!"

Like cats both men moved forward, eye watching eye, their knives flashing in the light. Never were two men so strangely contrasted. There was a strange hush, like the hush that comes before the storm.

Slowly they circled round each other, their bootless feet pattering upon the canvas, each watching for an opportunity. Ferrers Lord sat with his chin upon his hand, the smoke of the cigar wisping round him. His pale face was set and rigid. He might have been watching a game of chess between two clever players.

Trethvick panted hoarsely, like some wild beast; but it was not for want of breath. Suddenly his crooked knees bent beneath him, and he hurled himself forward. Knife clashed against knife with a shrill, metallic ring, and each man's left hand closed upon the right wrist of his antagonist.

They swayed and reeled, but neither gave way a single inch. Horton had the weight, but he might as well have pushed against a solid rock. When Thurston, who had only half the diver's strength, had overthrown the dwarf, he had been struggling with a drunken man. Trethvick was sober now, and his passionate hatred toughened his long, sturdy arms.

"You have a good grip," he snarled, with a laugh, "a mighty good grip; but old Nat Trethvick's no baby. I've bowled over many a bigger man than you. Ha, ha! You gave an inch that time!"

Bending his back, he forced Horton's arms upwards, and the diver fell back a pace. In breathless silence the sailors watched the grim trial of strength. Both men seemed almost motionless, like figures of wax; but now and again their muscles cracked, and both faces were flushed and perspiring.

Little by little the strain was telling upon Horton, powerful as he was. The clutch of Trethvick's hairy fingers upon his wrist burned him like red-hot iron. He gave way again, and again the dwarf croaked out a laugh.

"Ha, ha!" he tittered. "What did I tell you? Ain't

I mighty-tough for a little undersized imp—eh? As a rule, I won't waste breath when I'm fighting, but I can afford to do it here on a soft job like this. Ha, ha, ha! You'll be off the canvas in a minute, and you'll find the carpet mighty slippery. Bah! Old Lucifer, the ape, could make a better show against me with a knife than you!"

"Thanks for the information!" said Ned Horton calmly.

The calm way he spoke roused the drooping spirits of many of the sailors. They feared and loathed their captain, and they had little hope that Horton would master him. Again the dwarf bent his sinewy back. Before Horton realised it, he had wrenched his right arm free, and the knife shot down like a streak of silver flame.

The diver flung himself back, and the downward blow only scraped his left knee; but it drew blood.

"That's the first trick to me!" croaked the dwarf. "I caught you napping, eh? Ha, ha, ha! Give him some brandy, he's looking faint. Fetch a sponge and a bit of sticking-plaster. Does it hurt, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

Horton did not speak, and Ferrers Lord still kept his old position. Once more the two men approached each other with the catlike tread. The diver's first thought was to gain foothold in the canvas, for the carpet was most treacherous and slippery to his feet. The dwarf was too quick for him.

"No, you don't, my beauty!" he tittered. "I've chucked you out, and I'll take mighty good care you don't get in again."

"That remains to be seen," said the diver, as quietly as ever.

The strain was beginning to tell at last, both on the actors in the strange scene and on the audience. Ferrers Lord alone was cool and emotionless.

Horton was flushed and gasping, and the dwarf was in no better plight.

"A moment!" cried Trethvick, lowering the knife. "I want a drink. Get me a glass of rum!"

"Have you any objection, Horton?" asked Ferrers Lord.

The diver folded his brawny arms and panted heavily.

"None, sir," he answered frankly, "for it gives me breathing time. All I ask in return is a damp sponge, and Mr. Trethvick may have the same, if he likes. He's a fool to drink rum, anyhow."

"Mind your own business!" snarled Nathan Trethvick. "I drink what I like, say what I like, and do what I like without asking you to interfere. Get the fool a sponge and a glass of milk. That'll suit him. I'll wager. Ha, ha! Bring a full bottle of rum with seal on, and the chief will uncork it. Nat Trethvick knows he isn't loved, but he'll take mighty good care none of you drug him. Ha, ha, ha! I take no risks, my lubbers!"

The unopened bottle was placed before Ferrers Lord. The millionaire drew the cork, and Trethvick filled a glass to the brim with the liquid poison. As he drained the glass, he drove the knife into the table and leered at Horton, who was wiping his scorching face with the sponge.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Quite!" answered the diver.

Ferrers Lord raised his hand.

"You are a very good match," he said, "and I think this has gone quite far enough. If you must fight to a finish, why not discard your knives, and fight in the old, healthy, British fashion? What do you say, Horton?"

The diver tossed the sponge away and saluted.

"I am your servant, sir. Your wishes are commands to me."

"Well spoken!" said the millionaire. "And you, Trethvick?"

The dwarf whipped up the knife, his little green eyes ablaze with rage and hate.

"What do I say?" he roared madly. "I say one of us has got to go under! Do you think I am a man, or only a feelingless brute? Am I to be insulted, bullied, and threatened by every common brute you bring aboard this ship, whose captain I am supposed to be? There's my answer!"

(To be continued next Tuesday.)



Bulstrode, the Bully of the Remove Form, goes too far, and, as you will find in next Tuesday's long, complete school tale, he is more than sorry for the trick he plays, and which ends so seriously for the well-meaning Alonzo Todd.

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The Editor

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