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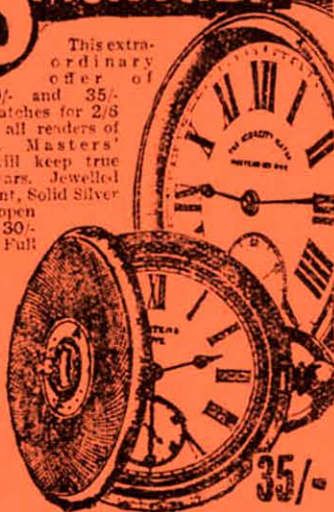
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Harry Wharton's Downfall

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

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

afternoon, and a half-holiday. Outside the weather was bright and sunny, and seemed to invite the juniors to the cricket-field. But the Greyfriars Remove were not thinking of cricket just then.

There had been a royal feed in the Form-room—a really unusual and ripping feed, and even Billy Bunter had had enough to eat. It was a farewell feed to Hurree Jamsel Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur, who was going away.

Not for good. The cheerful, kind-natured nabob was very popular in the Remove, where he had plenty of friends and no enemies. His good temper was as well known as his peculiar English. But Hurree Jamsel Ram Singh had to return to India for a time. The fellows would have missed him at any time, and they were giving him a good send-off now. Hurree Jamsel Ram Singh was reigning prince of Bhanipur in his own country, and he had to attend the Delhi Durbar for the Coronation of the King and Emperor, George V. Hurree Singh was leaving Greyfriars that afternoon, and the chums of the Remove were doing their best to cheer him up before he went.

The feast was over; it was getting near time for the nabob to leave to get his train. His luggage had already been sent on. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, had made

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Nabob's Farewell.

"SPEECH!"
"Speech!"
"Go it, Inky!"
"Hear, hear!"

There was a scene of great enthusiasm in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars. Lessons were over; it was Wednesday

a neat little speech, setting forth the popularity of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and the personal qualities that caused it. And the Removites would not be satisfied without a speech from the nabob himself.

Probably they knew that a speech in his peculiar English would be comic. Perhaps that was one of their reasons for insisting upon it.

The nabob was blushing through his dark skin.

"Up with you!" said Frank Nugent, who was sitting beside the guest of honour.

"My worthy chum—"

"Up you get!" roared Bob Cherry, on the other side.

"M-m-m-my worthy Cherry—"

"I say, you fellows, pass the jam-tarts!"

Needless to say, that request came from Billy Bunter.

Bunter had had enough, more than enough; but he was not satisfied with more than enough. He seemed bent upon going on till, as John Bull remarked, the buttons flew off his waistcoat and distributed themselves over the floor.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Speech, speech!"

"Buck up, Inky!"

"I say, you chaps, you might send me over a tart—oooooch!"

Ogilvy sent over a tart—not in the way Bunter wanted it. It caught the fat junior fairly on the nose, and the jam plastered over his face and his spectacles. He started up with a wild roar.

"Oh! Yow! Beast! Yah—"

There was a roar.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really—ow—"

"Push him out!"

"Order!"

"Speech!"

Harry Wharton clapped the Nabob of Bhanipur on the shoulder. Billy Bunter wiped his fat face savagely with a handkerchief. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rose in his place, and there was a cheer.

"Hurrah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Inky!"

Hurree Singh cleared his throat.

"Ahem!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ahem!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ahem!"

"Bravo!"

"Shut up, you asses!" shouted Bulstrode. "How are we to hear what he says if you keep on whooping all the time?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!"

"Go it, Inky!"

"On the ball!"

"Ahem!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ahem! My worthy chums, the auspiciousfulness of this unprecedented and never-to-be-forgotten occasion is like a garden of flowers to my soul."

"Hear, hear!"

"The stayfulness of my honourable self in this esteemed and ludicrous school has been pleasantly full of joyfulness on all occasions. From the extremely venerable Head down to the most youthful of the esteemed fags, I hope I am good-termfully the friend of all the worthy persons."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am going back to India for the Delhi Durbar. I shall bearfully take with me the interesting recollections of my ancient days at this honourable coll., and shall always remember England as the land of my youth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it!"

"When I return—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, when I return here, I shall be gladly happy to resume the broken cement of friendship."

"Hear, hear!"

The nabob accepted a glass of ginger-beer held up to refresh him by Bob Cherry, and continued, waxing eloquent.

"My dear and worthfully esteemed and ludicrous friends, let my going be a new and forged bond to unite the two countries which we have the esteemed happiness to represent. It has been said that India is not loyal to the British Lion—"

"Shame!"

"Yes, it is a shameful thing to say, for are not the two countries united even closer by the forged bonds of mutual interest and affection, than by the sea that washfully laves

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their honourable shores? Shall not the Indian Tiger lie down with the British Lion like the lamb of the tale. Shall they not die together under the same flag, and tell the story to their grandsons in their esteemed old age?"

"Good!"

"Can't be done!" said Bulstrode. "Dead men tell no tales."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Bulstrode!"

"Pile it on, Inky!"

"When shall their glory fade?" said Hurree Singh, growing more and more eloquent, and more and more mixed, as his enthusiasm mounted. "If those who state the untruthfulness are confounded and shown up, shall not the confounded rascals—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Shall they not cease from troubling, when the weary are at rest? And if not, why not?"

"Hear, hear!"

What Inky's last question referred to, and how it was to be answered, nobody seemed to know; but the Removites cheered till the Form-room rang. In the midst of the cheering, Goaling put his head in at the door.

"Which the trap's ready, sir."

And so the farewell meeting to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh broke up, and the nabob and his chums went up to get their coats on.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Means Business.

BR. LOCKE, the Head of Greyfriars, stood in the hall to shake hands with Hurree Singh as he left, and most of the masters followed his example. Seniors and juniors gathered round to wish him good-bye. He mounted into the trap, and as many of the Remove as could find places mounted with him. Harry Wharton and Nugent, his own study-mates, of course, were there, and John Bull found a place, too, and Tom Brown, of New Zealand, and Hazeldene and Fisher T. Fish, the American.

Other fellows meant to follow the trap on their bicycles, and some had already started on foot to give Hurree Singh a final cheer when his train went out.

Quite a crowd went down the dusty road towards the station. The trap dashed on its way, and soon arrived in the little village of Friardale, where many youths shouted after the trap. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's complexion had always made him an object of especial interest to the youths of Friardale.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the trap halted at the station.

"The herefulness is terrific!" murmured the nabob.

The closely-packed juniors tumbled out.

A crowd bore Hurree Jamset Ram Singh into the station, and overriding any objections raised by the porters, swarmed upon the platform.

The train was not yet in. Hurree Singh was going alone to London, where a gentleman from the India Office was to meet him.

There was a shadow on the nabob's face now.

He was glad of the chance to see his native country again, and looked forward with keen anticipation to the imposing ceremonies of the Delhi Durbar. But he was sorry to leave the school he had grown to like, and the chums from whom he had been inseparable.

"It won't be for long, old chap!" said Harry Wharton, squeezing his arm.

The nabob nodded.

"No, I shall returnfully come back to Greyfriars," he said brightly. "Meanwhile, my worthy chum—"

"Yes."

"I have the word of warning to utter," said Hurree Singh, in a low tone, and with a very mysterious manner.

Wharton looked at him in astonishment.

"A warning to me?" he asked.

"Yes, my worthy chum."

"What is it, Inky?"

"Keep the watchful eye upon the esteemed Bulstrode."

"Bulstrode?"

"Yes. You have heard him say that he would be Form-captain again."

Wharton laughed carelessly.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of anything Bulstrode can do!" he said.

"I know you are not afraid, my dear chum, and that is why I fear for you," said the nabob. "Bulstrode is cunningfully deep."

"Thanks for the warning, Inky; I'll remember."



A startled face looked in at the door. "Wharton! Great Scott!" gasped John Bull Junior, as he saw the inanimate form of Harry Wharton face downwards on the study floor.

"Here comes the train!" said Nugent. The train steamed into the station and stopped. Bob Cherry opened the door of a first-class carriage, and Hurree Singh stepped in. His bags followed him.

The juniors crowded round the carriage.

"Good-bye, Inky!"

"Good luck, old fellows!"

Hands were shaken through the carriage-window as the train began to move. Hurree Singh leaned from the window and waved his cap. The juniors waved theirs in return, as the train glided out of the station.

"Good-bye, Inky!"

The train disappeared down the line.

The juniors ceased to wave and shout, and stood with clouded faces for a few moments. It was the natural feeling after seeing a friend off on a long journey. Harry Wharton turned in silence to leave the platform. As he did so, the burly form of Bulstrode, the Bully of the Remove, interposed. Harry Wharton stopped.

Bulstrode was blocking his way, and he had no choice about stopping. He looked quietly at the burly Removite.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I heard what Inky said to you just before he went."

"Did you?"

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"Yes. He didn't mean me to hear, of course!" sneered Bulstrode.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Then it would have been more honourable of you not to listen," he remarked.

Bulstrode flushed crimson.

"I didn't listen!" he exclaimed roughly. "I was standing near, and I couldn't help hearing. But I'm not going to excuse myself to you."

"You needn't talk to me at all, for that matter."

"I've got something to say to you. Inky was right—I'm going to be captain of the Remove. I was Form-captain before you came to Greyfriars, and I think you've held it long enough—you've done precious little good to the Form, as far as I can see."

"It's for the Form to decide, not for you, Bulstrode. Get out of my way, please!"

Bulstrode hesitated for a moment, and then stepped aside.

"Well, we'll settle this at Greyfriars," he said.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"We'll settle it where and when you like," he said.

And he walked on, leaving Bulstrode standing on the platform with a dark scowl upon his brows.

NEXT
TUESDAY: "THE GREYFRIARS TYRANT."

Another splendid, long, complete story of
Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Subscriptions.

HARRY WHARTON looked round No. 1 Study in the Remove passage with a shadow on his face. Nugent gave an expressive grunt.

The study was just the same. But it did not seem the same without the kind, dusky face of Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. The chums had hardly realised how much they would miss him, until he was gone.

The train was speeding Londonwards, with the Nabob of Bhanipur; and it seemed to the chums of the Remove that a shadow had fallen upon the school. They would soon get used to it, but for the moment they felt it keenly.

"Decent chap, old Inky," said Nugent.

"Jolly decent," said Wharton.

"I don't feel inclined to have tea here without Inky, anyway."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I was feeling just the same, Frank. I don't know that we want any tea, after that feed in the Form-room. Let's go for a stroll."

"Good!"

A fat form came rolling down the Remove passage as they left the study. Billy Bunter stopped them, and blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Wharton irritably.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I was only going to say how rotten it is without Inky here!" said Bunter plaintively. "I feel it very much."

Wharton sniffed. He did not believe that statement. He did not believe that Billy Bunter would miss anything unless it was something eatable.

"I was thinking," went on Bunter, "of sending him a little keepsake, you know; something to remember Greyfriars by."

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Nugent, I thought it would be a good idea! A gold watch, or a diamond pin, or something of that sort."

"You've got a legacy, I suppose?" Nugent asked sarcastically.

Bunter blinked at him.

"I'm not going to borrow the money of you fellows, if that's what you mean!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I am thinking of paying for it entirely out of my own pocket."

"Well, go ahead," said Nugent. "And now let us get by. Get out of the way. It would take too long to walk round you."

"Hem! You fellows like the idea of a keepsake? It happens very fortunately that I'm expecting a postal-order this evening—an unusually large one, and it will just pay for the present."

"Good! Get aside."

"Only, you see, the shops in Friarsdale will be closed when the last post gets in," Bunter explained. "If you chaps would advance me the money now, and take the postal-order when it comes, I'd say—ow—ow—yow!"

That was not what Billy Bunter had meant that he would say. But he broke off like that as Nugent seized him in a grasp of iron, and jammed him against the wall.

"You fat young sweep!" exclaimed Frank.

"Ow!"

Biff!

Bunter gasped dimly as he was jammed on the wall. Then Frank released him, and he slid down to a sitting posture, still gasping and puffing. The chums of the Remove walked on and left him there.

Billy Bunter remained for some minutes in that uncomfortable position. He was naturally very short of breath, and he found it difficult to lift his weight up again. Bob Cherry came along the passage with a cricket-bat under his arm, whistling cheerily. He paused as he saw Bunter, and gave him a playful poke in the ribs with the end of his bat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "That's a queer place to take an afternoon nap, isn't it, Bunt?"

"Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've been assaulted," gasped Bunter—"assaulted and battered! Ow! Lemme a hand to get up, can't you, you fathead!"

"Certainly, when you have such a polite way of asking," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Yow! Lemme a hand, you chump!"

Bob Cherry lent him a hand. He grasped Bunter by one ear, and dragged at him. It was not exactly the way Bunter wanted to be helped, but it got him upon his feet in a surprisingly short time.

"Ow! You ass! Leggo! I—I say, Cherry, Inky's gone."

"I'm quite aware of that, as I saw him off at the station." THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 170.

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"Well, I've been thinking of sending him a keepsake, so that he'll remember Greyfriars when he's in India."

"But he's coming back."

"Well, not for some time, you know; and, anyway, a keepsake is a jolly good idea. Both Wharton and Nugent said they thought it a good idea, though they were too mean to contribute anything towards it. Now, I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Rats!"

"From a titled friend—"

"Rats!"

"And I'm going to devote it solely to the purpose of purchasing a keepsake for Inky. If you care to put five bob towards it, you can hand me the money now, and I'll spend it—"

"In the tuckshop," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I was going to say that I'd spend it on the keepsake."

"You might say so, Billy, but you wouldn't do it. Ta-ta!"

"I say, Cherry—"

But Bob Cherry was gone.

"Beast!" murmured Billy Bunter.

The fat junior stood in the passage and reflected. It had seemed to Billy Bunter that the going away of Hurree Singh was an opportunity that could not fail to be of great benefit to him in this way. He had taken it for granted that many of the fellows would be willing to subscribe to a keepsake for old Inky. As a matter of fact, most of them would have been quite willing, only they never dreamed of trusting Bunter. They knew very well that he would expend any money he raised in Mrs. Mumble's tuckshop, and think about the present afterwards. Billy Bunter was too fond of the good things of the earth, and not particularly scrupulous about the way he obtained them; and several fellows in the Remove had cheerfully prophesied that he would go to prison after he left Greyfriars.

Bunter rolled along the passage, and blinked in at the door of Mark Linley's study. After the expedition to the station Linley had returned to work—he generally did some work on a half-holiday. He was deep in Greek now, and Bunter gave a grunt of disgust as he saw the papers lying on the table. It was a marvel and a mystery to Billy Bunter that any chap should spend his time in studying Greek, when he might have been hanging about the tuckshop.

Bunter coughed, and Mark looked up from his task.

"Busy?" asked Bunter.

"Yes."

"Then I won't keep you long. I just wanted to tell you that some of the fellows are subscribing to a testimonial for Inky—I mean a keepsake. Wharton says it's a ripping idea, and so does Nugent, and Bob Cherry was very enthusiastic about it. How much are you going to subscribe?"

Mark seemed to be reflecting.

"Of course, we shouldn't expect much from you," said Bunter, in his delicate way. "We know you're only a scholarship chap, and worked in a factory or a chimney or something once. But I think you might make it a bob."

"I will subscribe if I hear from Wharton," said Mark quietly.

"Oh, Wharton's got nothing to do with it! I'm the treasurer."

"I don't trust you."

"Eh?"

Mark smiled.

"Nobody trusts you," he said. "I'm afraid this is a scheme of yours for raising money, Bunter."

The fat junior turned crimson.

"You—you factory bouncer!" he roared. "This is what comes of being considerate to the lower classes. This is what comes of speaking in a friendly way to rotten outsiders!"

"Will you get out of my study?" asked Mark.

"You factory outsider!"

Mark half rose from his seat, and Bunter hurriedly retired from the study, slamming the door after him. Mark Linley sat down again, and went on with his work with perfect calmness. He did not allow his equanimity to be disturbed by fellows like Billy Bunter.

Bunter retreated down the passage rather hastily. He was a little afraid that the Lancashire lad might come out after him. He glanced back, however, and found that Mark's door did not open.

"Beast!" he murmured.

Bunter was beginning to feel despondent. His excellent idea did not seem to work out as he had anticipated.

He looked for Bulstrode. Bulstrode, as a rule, had plenty of money, and sometimes he was generous in parting with it. Bulstrode, too, was making a desperate bid for popularity in the Remove lately; and surely nothing could be more popular than a keepsake for Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Bulstrode was in the doorway, talking to Vernon-Smith, the

Bounder of Greyfriars, when Billy Bunter discovered him. The fat junior rolled up with his most insinuating smile.

"What about a new election?" the Bounder was saying.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bulstrode turned round angrily.

"Bunter, you listening cad, what do you want?"

"I wasn't listening—"

"Get out!"

"I couldn't help hearing what Smithy said. I know what you're talking about, but I'm not going to tell Wharton."

"Buzz off, I tell you!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, I have something to tell you—about the keepsake the Form are thinking of sending to Inky. Wharton and Nugent and Cherry and Linley have all said it's a good idea, and they're going to—to subscribe. Can I put you down for a half-sov.?"

Bulstrode burst into a laugh.

"I should think you have put me down for a mug already," he said.

"Oh, really—"

"You won't get anything out of me," said Bulstrode. "Buzz off!"

The fat junior blinked at him.

"Look here, Bulstrode, you'd better subscribe something. Say half-a-crown. I suppose you don't want me to mention to Wharton that you and Smithy are plotting against him?"

Bulstrode flushed angrily, and for answer he grasped the Owl of the Remove by the collar, and swung him out of the doorway.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Oh! Hold on! Leggo! Yah!"

"Outside!"

Bunter went rolling down the steps. He picked himself up in a very dazed state, and blinked up the steps at Bulstrode.

"Beast!"

The Remove bully made a step towards him, and Bunter dashed off. He did not stop till he was on the other side of the Close. There he halted, panting and puffing.

"Beast!" he murmured.

But nothing more was heard about the proposed keepsake to Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Courtfield Jape.

"DON'T" say anything, my thonth."

"Right-ho, Solly."

"They can't see uth."

"Don't jaw, Solly, or they'll hear you."

"All thereen."

Three youths were crouching in cover on the bank of the Sark. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were walking along the river, talking in low tones. Their talk was chiefly of Inky, and of who should take Inky's place in the Remove cricket eleven. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had been a very good bat, and the champion bowler of the Form, and the filling of his place was a serious matter. It fell to Wharton to decide, as he was cricket captain in the Form.

The chums of Greyfriars were too interested in their talk to observe that three youths had suddenly dropped into cover further along the river path. At this point, a little stream, or feeder, flowed into the Sark, and it was crossed by a bridge of a single plank, resting on the banks. The three youths were coming towards the feeder from the opposite direction, and would naturally have met the Greyfriars fellows at the plank. But they didn't! They dropped into cover in the thickets at the sight of the Greyfriars caps on the river path.

The three were Courtfield fellows—Trumper, and Grahame, and Solly Lazarus, of Courtfield County Council School. And as they saw the Removites coming the idea of a jape at once shot into Solly's fertile brain.

Crouching in the thickets, they watched the two Greyfriars fellows coming on. A bend of the path among the trees hid Wharton and Nugent from their eyes for a moment, and in that moment Solly Lazarus acted quickly.

He stepped out rapidly from his cover, and stooped over the end of the plank where it rested on a stone. He pushed it aside till it rested nicely balanced, looking as safe as ever, but ready to tip over as soon as it had the weight of a foot upon it. Then he darted back into cover with Trumper and Grahame.

The three of them chuckled softly.

The next moment Wharton and Nugent came into sight again, round the trees, walking straight on towards the plank, unconscious of the fact that it had been tampered with.

The Courtfielders waited breathlessly.

The Greyfriars fellows reached the plank.

They had to walk across it to continue their stroll along the bank of the Sark. Nugent reached it first, and stepped upon it.

"Now watch," murmured Solly Lazarus.

For the moment the plank held firm.

Nugent took a second step out, and then he felt it going.

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NEXT
TUESDAY: "THE GREYFRIARS TYRANT."

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PENNY.

"Look out, Harry!" he exclaimed.

Wharton, who was about to follow him upon the plank stepped back in time. Nugent made a spring back, but too late. The plank tipped over, and he shot into the water.

The three Courtfield fellows rose into view.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton looked across the feeder at them. Nugent struggled in the water.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Courtfielders. "How's that?"

"Wet!" chuckled Solly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton did not reply. He reached out to help Nugent. The latter was struggling to the bank. But at that moment the plank, which had fallen into the water, whirled over and struck Frank heavily on the shoulder.

The shock sent him back, and for the moment his arm was useless. The water was running very swiftly out into the larger stream, and before the juniors on the bank realised what was happening, Frank Nugent was swept out into the broad waters of the Sark.

"Help!" he gasped.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Help!"

Wharton did not hesitate. He knew that here the waters of the Sark were swift and deep, and if Nugent should be swept down as far as the Pool he would be in terrible danger. Wharton threw off his coat and hat in a second, and sprang into the stream.

Three strokes carried him to Nugent's side. Frank was being swept away helplessly by the current when Wharton grasped him.

"My only Uncle Tham!" ejaculated Solly Lazarus, in dismay.

He had not expected this result to his practical joke.

The Courtfielders and the Greyfriars fellows were in the habit of playing somewhat rough jokes upon one another, and this ducking was nothing out of the common; but the Courtfield fellows had never dreamed of danger.

Grahame, Trumper, and Lazarus ran down the bank excitedly as the current swept Wharton and Nugent onward.

"Can't you swim, Frank?" gasped Wharton.

"My arm's numbed."

"Hold on to me."

Wharton, holding Nugent fast, struck out for the bank. The swift, tearing current tore him away, and he was being swept out into the stream, when Solly Lazarus plunged in, and grasped him.

"Thith way, my thonth!" gasped Solly.

Grahame and Trumper plunged in up to their knees, and seized hold of Lazarus. They dragged at him, and he dragged at Wharton, who kept hold of Nugent. A minute more, and all three were safe on the bank, very wet and very breathless.

"Oh, my only Uncle Tham!" ejaculated Solly Lazarus.

"By Jove!"

"Ow! Groo!"

Nugent sat up, drenched, in the grass. He glared at the Courtfield fellows.

"You utter chumps!" he gasped.

"You thee, my thon—" began Solly.

"You fathead!"

"You thee—"

"I see you're a set of japing dummies!" roared Nugent. "You've ducked me and wetted my clothes through!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly a-sos!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, it was only a jape," he said, "and it's lucky it's ended no worse. We'd better get in and get dried, I think. We've no time to lick you Courtfield chaps now."

"How lucky for you!" grinned Trumper.

"Rats! Good-bye!"

"Of all the chumps—" went on Nugent.

"Oh, come on, Frank!"

"Thorry," said Solly Lazarus—"awfully thorry, my thon. But you can't fall into a thream without getting wet, you thee. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fathead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton dragged Nugent away.

"Come on!" he exclaimed. "You'll catch a fearful cold and so shall I. Get a move on."

"Oh, all right!"

They hurried back towards Greyfriars. It was some little distance to the school, and they ran most of the way to keep off a chill. Bulstrode met them in the gateway as they came in.

"I want to speak to you, Wharton—"

"No time now."

"It's about the matter we've got to settle."
 "Can't you see I'm wet through?" demanded Wharton.
 "I've got to change."
 "Rats!"

Wharton flushed.
 "Let me pass, Bulstrode, you cad! If you're looking for trouble, I'll settle it with you afterwards. Let me pass!"
 Bulstrode burst into a mocking laugh.

"Oh, you can put it off if you like!" he exclaimed.
 "You cad! You know I'm willing to meet you at any time!" Wharton exclaimed fiercely. "I've licked you before, and I can lick you again!"

"You'll have a chance to-day, then."
 Wharton pushed past him without replying. Nugent was beginning to shiver. They entered the house, and ran up to the dormitory.

"Get your things off quick, Frank! You're catching cold," Wharton said anxiously.

"What-ho!"
 And the two juniors stripped off their wet garments as rapidly as possible.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Looking After Nugent.

FRANK NUGENT was certainly catching cold. He sneezed several times while he changed his clothes, and several times Wharton saw him give a sudden shiver. Wharton rubbed himself dry with a hard towel, and changed into dry things quickly; but Nugent was more slow. He sneezed again as he finished, and then burst into a rueful laugh.

"I've got it, Harry."
 "You're going to have a cold!"
 "Yea."

"It's rotten, Frank. Look here, let's go to the house-dame, and she'll give you something for it," said Wharton anxiously.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Frank. "It will pass off. Besides, she would want me to go to bed."

"Well, you can go to bed."
 Frank shook his head.

"Can't be did."
 "Why not? There's nothing special on this evening, and you can get excused prep. if I explain to Mr. Quelch."

"What about Bulstrode?"
 "Hang Bulstrode!"
 Nugent laughed.

"With pleasure," he said. "Only, you see, it can't be done. Bulstrode has as good as challenged you to fight him, and I'm going to be on the scene. There will be trouble with Bulstrode as soon as you go downstairs, and I'm not going to stay in bed while you're on the war-path, my son."

"I'll put Bulstrode off till to-morrow, then."
 "You can't; he means business."

"Oh, rats!" said Wharton. "Look here, I'm not going to have you knocking yourself up, Frank, because of that chap. You're going to bed."

"I'm not."
 "You are. You sha'n't go down. Why, you're coughing now!" Wharton exclaimed. "Look here, Frank, don't be an ass. This is the way chaps get pneumonia—catching a cold and neglecting it. You'll go to bed now, and I'll ask Mrs. Kebble to come here and see you."

"Bosh!"
 "You're not going to leave this dorm," said Wharton determinedly. "If you try to, I'll fight you instead of Bulstrode."

Frank laughed again.
 "Don't be an ass, Harry."

"I mean it."
 "But you can't fight Bulstrode without me being there to back you up," said Frank. "Besides, I'm not going to miss it."

"I'll put him off."
 "He won't let you."

"He'll have to let me," said Harry. "No more talk. You're going to bed, and I'll stay in the dorm. with you, and that settles it."

"Well, if you're determined to be an obstinate ass—"
 "I am," said Harry, laughing.

"Then I suppose there's nothing else to be done. But mind—you don't fight Bulstrode till I'm there to back you up."

"Agreed."
 Nugent began to undress again. There was no doubt that bed was the best place for him.

As a matter of fact, Frank had been a little "seedy" of late, and the sudden fall into cold water after a walk in the warm sun had given him the beginnings of what might

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be a very serious cold. He undressed and turned in, and Wharton covered blankets over him, and then quitted the dormitory to go to the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Kebble, the Greyfriars housekeeper, was accustomed to looking after any small ailments of the boys—they were only removed to the school sanatorium when matters became more serious.

A group of juniors met Wharton on the staircase as he went down into the Remove passage. They were Bulstrode and his friends. Bulstrode was carrying his most swaggering air. He seemed to have an idea in his mind that Harry was seeking to avoid a conflict, and that idea, of course, encouraged him. More than once the two had met in combat, but the advantage had almost always been with Harry. But Bulstrode had heaps of bulldog pluck, and he was generally willing to come up to the scratch again for another trial. Just now he was more than willing. He was at the top of his form, and he knew how much a victory over Harry would help him in his struggle for the captaincy of the Remove.

He held out his arm to stop Wharton as he came down.
 "I've been waiting for you," he remarked.

"I can't stop now," said Harry.
 Bulstrode sneered.

"You're very busy all of a sudden," he remarked. "You couldn't stop when you came in, and you can't stop now. When can you stop?"

"Not now."
 "You've changed your clothes. What's the pressing business just now?"

"Yes, buck up, Wharton!" said Skinner.
 "Don't funk, you know!" remarked Snoop.

Wharton flushed.
 "I tell you I can't stop now," he said; "I've got something to do. If you want trouble, Bulstrode, I'll attend to you to-morrow."

"To-morrow won't do for me."
 "To-morrow will have to do for you."

"What's the matter, Wharton?" asked Ogilvy. "Aren't you well?"

"Yes, I'm all right."
 "Then why can't you meet Bulstrode?" asked Russell.

"Nugent's seedy."
 "Nugent!" said Bulstrode. "Well, I don't want to fight Nugent."

"I'm looking after him."
 "Rats!"

"I suppose Nugent will have a jolly long illness if Wharton can get out of fighting till he gets well," Snoop remarked satirically.

Wharton made a step towards the sneak of the Remove. Bulstrode interposed in his way.

"You won't touch Snoop!" he said.
 "Bulstrode—"

"If you want to slog anybody, slog me."
 "I tell you—"

"Oh, rats! Come to the gym."
 "I can't come now."

Bulstrode burst into a scoffing laugh, and it was joined in by many of his friends. It made Wharton's ears tingle; his hands clenched hard, and he turned upon Bulstrode. The Remove bully was quite ready to meet him.

But Wharton remembered Nugent, and his promise. He turned away quietly, and went downstairs. Louder rang Bulstrode's laugh after him.

"Funk!" sneered Skinner.
 "Wharton's afraid!" said Snoop.

"Coward!"
 "Cad!"

The epithets rang in Wharton's ears, and his heart was beating like a hammer. He was tempted to turn back and charge into the midst of the scoffers, hitting out right and left.

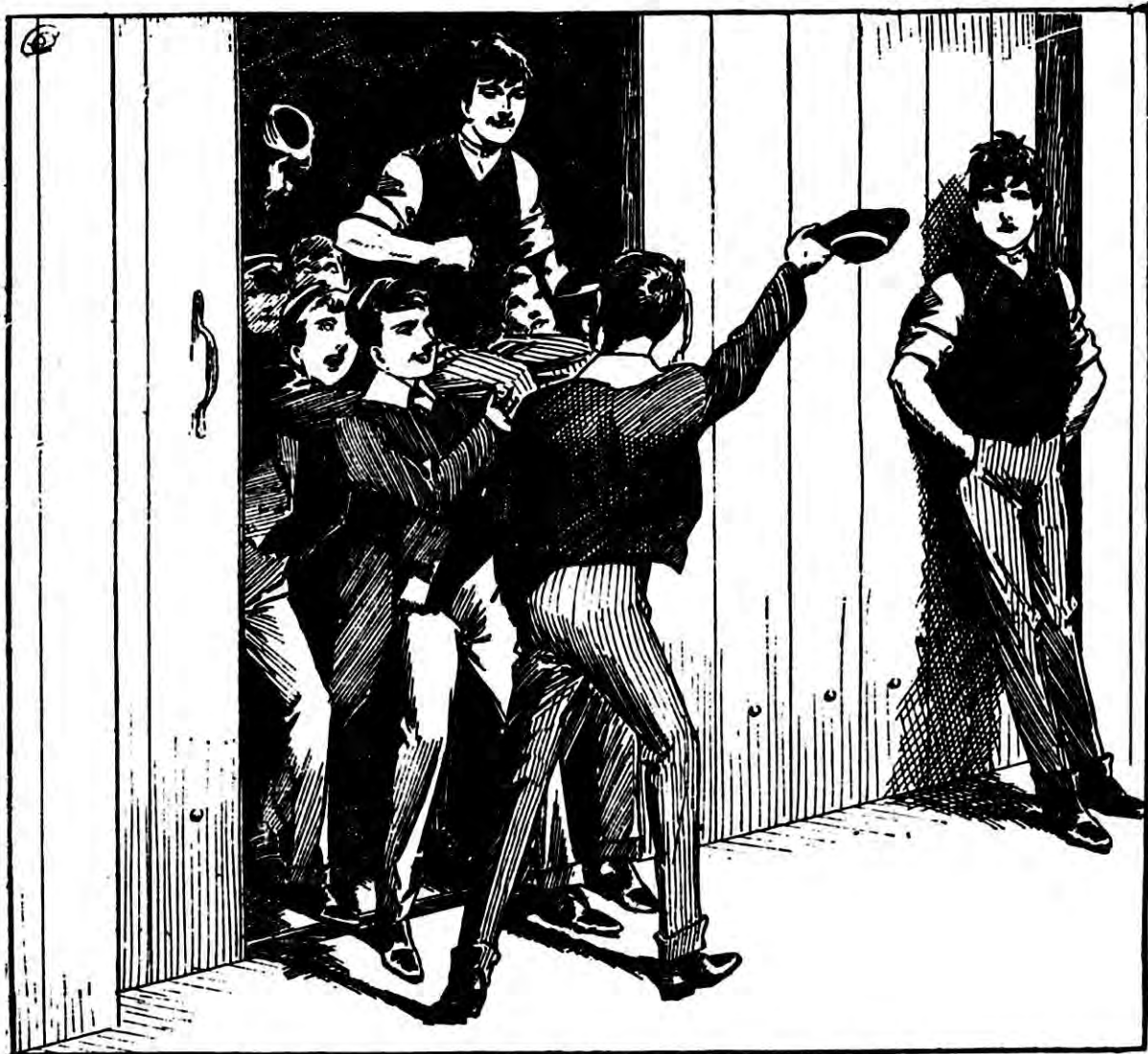
But he restrained himself, and went on quietly towards the housekeeper's room. The juniors in the Remove passage were talking excitedly. The general opinion among Bulstrode's friends was that Wharton was striving to avoid a combat, and that opinion was coming to be shared by many other fellows outside Bulstrode's own set. Wharton's own elms laughed the idea to scorn, but they seemed to be in a minority now.

"Wharton's funkng!" said Stott loudly.
 "Rats!" said John Bull, hearing him. "Shut up, you fat-head!"

"He won't meet Bulstrode."
 "Bosh! Hold your tongue, or I'll stop it for you!"

And Stott held his tongue. But Bulstrode came to the rescue.
 "Stott's quite right," he said. "Wharton's funkng."
 "That's a lie!" said Bull, in the plain, direct way he had. Bulstrode flushed.

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE," is the title of the grand complete school tale of **TOM MERRY & CO.,** in this week's "Gem" Library. Order the "Gem" to-day. Price One Penny.



"Bravo, Bulstrode!" roared the Remove. Harry Wharton, his face bruised and cut by the stress of the fight, looked on at the triumph of his rival, and a bitter smile curled his lips.

"Well, I say it's so," he replied. "You can stand up for him if you like, Bull, but you can't alter the fact. He's funkling."

John Bull took his hands out of his pockets for a moment. "Well, if you're spoiling for a fight, you can begin on me," he remarked. "I'm quite willing to take up the quarrel for Wharton."

Bulstrode laughed sneeringly. "Wharton won't get out of it like that," he said. "I'll fight you if you like, Bull, after I'm through with Wharton, not before."

"Quite right!" said Skinner. Bull put his hands into his pockets again. "Oh, rats!" he said. "I guess there won't be much of you left to fight Bull when Wharton's finished with you, Bulstrode," Fisher T. Fish remarked.

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. Bulstrode gave his scoffing laugh. "Then why doesn't he come on?" he asked. "You know why."

"Rats! Stuff!" And Bulstrode swung away, swaggering. He had no doubt on the subject now. Harry Wharton was trying to dodge

the fight, which meant that he was funkling, or that he had no hope of success. In either case Bulstrode felt that he was booked for a victory, and he rejoiced exceedingly at the prospect.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Patience.

NUGENT grinned at Wharton as the latter came into the dormitory. Mrs. Kebble was by the bedside, and she had been what Nugent called "dosing" him. He had taken the doses with the patience of a martyr, and Mrs. Kebble was satisfied.

"Mind that he does not get up, Master Wharton," she said. "He is going to have a bad cold, and I think he will have to be moved into the sanatorium in the morning, but we shall see."

And the good dame quitted the dormitory. "Well, this is rotten luck for you, Franky!" "Rotten ain't the word!" groaned Nugent. "I suppose I shall have to miss your fight with Bulstrode after all. If I'm in the sanatorium I can't be there."

"I suppose not."

Another splendid, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS

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"It's beastly!"
 "Yes, it is, old man. Feel up to a game of chess?"
 Nugent grunted.
 "No."
 "Draughts?"
 "Ow! No."
 "Like to jaw?"
 "No."
 "What then?"
 "Oh, you can read me something out of the 'Boys' Herald'—the Hobby column first."
 "Oh, all right!"
 Wharton began to read.
 "By the way," said Frank, interrupting him, "has Bulstrode been on the rampage again?"
 Wharton coloured.
 "Yes."
 "He is spoiling for trouble?"
 "Yes."
 "He means to have a shot at the captaincy, Harry."
 "I've seen that for a long time, Frank."
 "You won't let him get it?"
 Wharton's jaw squared.
 "Not if I can help it," he said.
 "Mind you keep yourself fit, Harry. If he should happen to lick you, it would mean a much bigger chance for him."
 "He won't lick me, Frank."
 "Well, go on with the hobbies."
 Wharton continued to read. The dormitory door opened, and Skinner looked in, with a very unpleasant sneer upon his face. Wharton heard the door open, but he did not turn his head, and his reading continued without a change of tone.
 "So you're here?" said Skinner.
 Then Wharton looked round.
 "Yes, I'm here," he replied. "Am I wanted?"
 "Oh, no," sneered Skinner. "If you choose to stick up here in the dorm. when Bulstrode is waiting for you downstairs, I suppose you can do it. The whole Form will jolly well know that you're funkling, that's all!"
 And Skinner went out and slammed the door.
 Wharton half rose from his chair.
 "Don't take any notice of the cad," said Frank.
 The captain of the Remove sat down again.
 "You're right, Frank."
 "Give him a licking after you've done with Bulstrode. Go on."

Wharton continued to read. But he read out without being fully aware of what he was reading, his eyes and voice following the words mechanically. He was deeply troubled in his mind. He knew what must be going on downstairs. The impression against him in the Remove must indeed be a bad one when a fellow like Skinner dared to come out into the open like this—like the slave in the story who twisted the dead lion's tail. But Skinner might possibly find out in this case that the lion was not dead.

The dormitory door opened again. This time the visitor was Snoop. He did not come in, and he held the door ready to close again quickly if needed.

"Wharton! I say, Wharton!"
 "Well?" rapped out Harry.
 "Aren't you coming down?"
 "No."
 "Bulstrode's waiting for you."
 "Let him wait."
 "The fellows are all saying that you're afraid."
 "Get out!"
 "Yah!"
 Squelch!

Nugent had reached out from bed and taken a wet sponge from his washstand. With unerring aim he flung it at Snoop. The missile was unexpected, and it caught Snoop fairly in the face.

He was bowled clean over.
 "Ow!" he gasped.
 He disappeared into the passage, and the sponge dropped to the floor. Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The door slammed, and Snoop took his departure. Nugent settled back into bed with a grunt.

"I say, Harry, you can't stand this!" he exclaimed. "I'd better get up—"

"No."
 "We must go down and talk to Bulstrode."
 "You can't."
 "Well, look here. You go down, and I'll stick here," said Nugent, with an effort.

Wharton shook his head.
 "I'm not going to leave you, Frank. For one thing, I know jolly well you'd get up and dress."

"Well, I'm not ill."

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 "THE BOYS' HERALD." id.

"You're not going to get up?"

"Oh, go on reading!"
 Wharton went on reading. He was uninterrupted for some time. Then Ogilvy came into the dormitory. Ogilvy was a friend of Wharton's, though he did not belong to either of the two parties into which the Greyfriars Remove was divided.

"Nugent sick?" he asked.
 "Seedy."
 "You're staying with him?"
 "Yes."

"Look here, Wharton, speaking as a friend, I should advise you to go down," said the Scottish junior. "Bulstrode's swaggering about the Form-room, and saying you're afraid to meet him in the gym."

"Let him say so."
 "Don't you care?"
 "Not at all."

"Oh, if you take it that way, I've nothing more to say," said Ogilvy, somewhat nettled, and he quitted the dormitory. Nugent looked very uneasy.

"Blessed if I like this, Harry," he said. "I'd give a term's pocket-money to see you standing up to Bulstrode in the gym, and knocking him to bits."

Wharton laughed.
 "I hope you'll see that to-morrow, Frank."

"This will make a bad impression on the Remove. Some of the fellows will think I'm not really seedy, you know, and they may think you're sticking up here to keep out of Bulstrode's way."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.
 "They ought to know me better than that, Frank; and I don't care twopence for their opinions, anyway."

"Yes, but—"
 "Besides, they'll be undeceived when I meet Bulstrode to-morrow, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so."

"Let's get on with the washing."
 And Harry Wharton resumed reading the "Herald" serial, and dismissed other matters from his mind. They were not interrupted again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Stopped.

DOWNSTAIRS, in the junior common-room, there was a great deal of excitement among the Removites—and among other juniors who used the common-room, too.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were interested, and so were fags in the Second and Third Forms. Harry Wharton had always been cock of the walk in the Remove, but it really looked as if the end of his reign were approaching. And although it was plain to the more reflecting fellows that Wharton was the best captain the Remove could have, many of the Remove welcomed the prospect of his downfall.

Harry had his faults—he was a little high-handed sometimes, but it only proceeded from his contempt for anything that was small or mean. He would have no patience with shuffling or deception, and he did not consider personal conceit when he was making up the cricket eleven. All the black sheep in the Remove, such as Vernon-Smith and Snoop, hated him; many disliked him; and even those who voted for him most cordially as captain regarded him somewhat as a fellow of uncertain temper, who might mount the high horse at any time, to the general discomfort. Bulstrode, on the other hand, had an outside manner of bluff heartiness which went a long way towards winning him popularity. Even his bullying proclivities did not make him exactly unpopular, for he generally bullied fags in the lower Forms, and some more of the Removites were addicted to that, too. And Bulstrode had plenty of money, and spent it freely; and Bulstrode did not set up an uncomfortably high standard for fellows to live up to.

Besides, the juniors may have wanted a change. The Greek peasant of ancient times who wished to exile Aristides simply because he was tired of hearing him called the Just was a very human person. The idea of "bringing Wharton down off his perch," and having a change, anyway, appealed to many of the Removites.

And Wharton was very uncompromising about the matter, too. Instead of being alarmed and concerned, he took the matter in his usual lofty way. If the Remove didn't want him for Form captain, he was willing to resign—that was his attitude—and he would ask no fellow for his vote. Just as if he was doing the Form a favour by being captain, as more than one fellow put it, with deep indignation.

Success seemed to be beckoning Bulstrode on.
 "Wharton's funkling a row," said a dozen voices in the

common-room, and though Harry's friends spoke up for him, their voices made little impression.

"Why doesn't he come down?" demanded Bulstrode.

"Nugent's seedy, and he's staying with him," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, rot!"

"He's funking."

"Stuff!" said Tom Brown. "You know Wharton never funks anything."

"Oh, you'd stand up for him," said Bulstrode, with a sneer. "Blessed if I think we ought to have a funk for a Form-captain."

"Not much."

"No fear!"

"Down with Wharton!"

"I say, you fellows, if Wharton resigns, I think that my claims ought to be considered," said Billy Bunter. "You see—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really—"

"I guess the Remove may go further and fare worse," said Fisher T. Fish. "If you've got the brains of bunny rabbits you'll keep Wharton."

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"Oh, I guess you make me tired!"

Loder, the prefect, put his head in at the door with the usual ill-tempered expression upon his face.

"Get to bed, you young sweeps!"

And the Remove went up to bed. They found Harry Wharton talking to Nugent, sitting on the edge of the bed. Many sneering glances were turned in Wharton's direction, but he did not appear to see them.

Bulstrode came up to Nugent's bed with a very disagreeable sneer upon his face.

"Feel pretty seedy?" he asked.

"Middling," said Frank.

"I suppose you don't feel well, either?" asked Bulstrode, turning his glance upon Harry Wharton.

"I'm all right," said Harry.

"Rough on you to have to stay up here all the evening."

"I don't mind it."

"Perhaps you preferred it to coming down?" Bulstrode suggested, and there was a loud laugh from the Remove.

"I understand you, Bulstrode." Wharton rose from the bed. "You have an idea that I have been avoiding you?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, it's a mistake—a mean, caddish mistake, too. A decent chap wouldn't have thought such a thing."

Bulstrode flushed.

"Then you mean to say—"

"I mean to say that if you like to put your fists up now I'm quite ready for you," said Harry scornfully.

Bulstrode sneered.

"Yes, because Loder may be in any minute to see lights out," he said. "I know your little game. You're willing to fight only when we may be stopped at once by a prefect."

"Liar!" said Nugent from his bed.

"Yes, liar!" said Harry, with blazing eyes. "That's the word!"

He advanced towards Bulstrode, throwing his jacket upon the bed.

"Put up your hands!" he said.

"You won't have to ask me twice!" said Bulstrode.

He threw off his jacket, too, and faced Wharton. Harry attacked him at once with a vigorous onslaught, and the juniors gathered round. Had they been wrong—was Harry, after all, the plucky fellow they had always taken him to be?

Wharton's attack drove Bulstrode back. But even as he pressed on after the retreating bully, Wharton felt a sudden dizziness come over him.

It surprised him, and he wondered what was the matter. His head swam for a moment, and then was quite clear again.

What was the matter? Was he ill?

He recovered in a moment, and pressed the attack. Bulstrode was driven back against a bed, and could go no further. He was fighting savagely, but Wharton's blows were coming home fast.

Crash—crash! came his fists on the face of the bully of the Remove.

The door opened.

Loder, the prefect, stepped in, and his face grew dark with anger at the sight of the Removites gathered round a fight instead of being in bed ready for him to turn out the light. Loder never liked to waste time over his duties as a prefect. He had Carne and Ionides waiting in his study for a quiet little game when he returned.

"You young villains! Stop that!" he shouted.

He rushed forward, grasped Wharton by the shoulder, and flung him back. Then he gave Bulstrode a cuff that sent him reeling.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Get to bed!" he exclaimed. "Wharton and Bulstrode, you will take a hundred lines each. If there is any more disturbance in this dormitory to-night I shall ask your Form-master to come and attend to it."

The juniors turned in.

Loder, with a last scowl round the dormitory, turned out the light and retired, closing the door after him with an angry slam.

"I suppose we can't let this go any further to-night?" said Bulstrode from his bed. "You knew jolly well we should be interrupted, Wharton."

"Of course he did," said Snoop.

Wharton sat up in bed.

"I don't want a row with the Form-master," he said, "but if you don't hold your tongue, Bulstrode, I'll get up and begin again. If you like to shut up, we'll leave it over till to-morrow."

"I'll remind you to-morrow."

"Very well; and now for goodness' sake shut up!"

And Wharton laid his head upon the pillow again.

But he did not sleep easily. A strange feeling of unrest was within him. It was not the trouble with the Form—he had had troublous times more than once since he had been at Greyfriars. As for the coming fight with Bulstrode, he looked forward to that with confidence.

Yet he could not rest.

A flushed feeling of heat would run through him, and then cold—and then that queer throbbing in the head.

What was the matter?

Was he going to be ill?

Had he taken a chill from the sudden wetting in the river and remaining so long in his wet clothes afterwards?

It was quite likely—in fact, it was certain; and he required to be sent into the sanatorium as much as Frank did.

But it was impossible.

Any plea of illness now would be received with derision by the Remove—it would be regarded as only too palpable a pretext for avoiding the tussle with Bulstrode.

Wharton realised that, and he intended to say nothing. He felt that he would suffer anything rather than take any step which would lead to his avoiding the arranged meeting with the Remove bully. He would stand up to Bulstrode in the gym, on the morrow if it killed him!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Alone.

HARRY WHARTON awoke from an unrefreshing slumber when the early rays of the sun stole in at the high windows of the dormitory. The rising-bell had not gone yet, and the rest of the Remove were sleeping.

Wharton felt a dull pain in his head and an aching in his limbs. He was not sleepy, yet he did not feel inclined to rise. It was not like Wharton to slack; as a rule, he turned out of bed as soon as he awoke. But this morning he did not. He lay still, his eyes staring at the windows where the morning light was stealing in, unrested, unrefreshed, in a state of dull languor. So he lay, hardly thinking even, till the rising-bell rang out on the air.

Then the rest of the Form awoke.

Bob Cherry sat up in bed and grunted.

"Groo! That's the bell! Turn out, you lazy bounders!"

"Groo!"

"Yaw-aw!"

"I believe that beast Gosling rings the bell earlier and earlier!" growled Billy Bunter. "I haven't had half enough sleep!"

Bob Cherry stepped out of bed.

"Not had enough sleep, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yaw! No."

"Find it difficult to get up?"

"Groo! Yes."

"I'll help you, if you like?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I don't mind lending a hand in a good cause," said Bob Cherry. "Here you are!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Bunter rolled out of bed under the propelling force of Bob Cherry's foot, and bumped on the floor. There he sat and roared.

"Beast!"

"Is that what you call gratitude, Bunter?"

"Yah! Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you feel this morning, Franky?" asked Bob Cherry, turning towards Nugent's bed.

Nugent coughed.

"Horribly seedy."

"Better not get up, then, till the House-dame's seen you."

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Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS

"I don't mean to."
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo, Wharton, you look pretty off colour!" Bob Cherry exclaimed, looking at the captain of the Remove.
 "What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Bob."
 Bulstrode burst into a laugh as he looked at Wharton.
 "Case of sheer funk, perhaps!" he remarked.
 "Oh, shut up, Bulstrode!"
 "My word, yes!" said Skinner, chuckling. "You've heard cases of chaps' hair turning white in a single night through fear. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Skinner!"
 "Rats! I must say that Wharton looks pasty!"
 "If he feels so bad as all that about it," said Bulstrode, "I'll let him off! I don't want to force a chap to fight me if he's funky. But the Remove doesn't want a funk for a captain—that's what I say!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Quite right!"

Wharton stepped quietly out of bed. Many searching glances were bent upon him. He certainly did look, as Bob expressed it, off colour. But he made a tremendous effort not to give way to the languor that seemed to be trying to steal over him.

"He would not give in! If he said plainly that he was ill, the Removites would certainly jump to the conclusion that it was due to funk."

The fight had been postponed the previous evening, and now to plead illness, when it could no longer be postponed, would look too bad.

Perhaps Wharton was wrong; but the position was a difficult one. He meant to meet Bulstrode face to face, whatever it cost him.

"Well, what do you say, Wharton?" Bulstrode asked. Wharton looked at him steadily.

"I say that I shall fight you to-day."

"Then you're notfunking?"

"I shan't answer that question. I don't mean to enter into an argument with a cad!"

Bulstrode turned crimson.

"Oh, very well!" he exclaimed. "If you meet me, that's all right! I'll do my best to give you a licking, and bring you down off the high-horse!"

"Hear, hear!" said Skinner.

"I'll meet you as soon as it can be fixed, but to-day, anyway," said Wharton. "As for being captain of the Remove, I don't care twopence, as I've said before. If the Form want you for captain, they can tell me so, and I'll resign!"

"Resign!" shouted half a dozen voices.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry. "If you put in Bulstrode as captain, you'll be sorry for it! What will become of the cricket, for one thing?"

"I think I can play cricket a bit, and I've no doubt I could make a feeble attempt towards getting up an eleven," said Bulstrode sarcastically.

"Rats!"

"Bosh!" said John Bull. "You'd make up a team of your personal friends, and get a licking every match!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Brown. "We know Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode looked at them very unpleasantly.

"One thing you can be jolly sure of," he said. "If I make up an eleven, I don't have either of you fellows in it!"

"Oh, we expect that!" said Bull. "It will be rotten favouritism from start to finish. We know you!"

"Nor Wharton in it, I suppose?" asked Morgan.

Bulstrode sniffed.

"There can't be two captains in a cricket team," he said; "and Wharton wouldn't take second place; he's too cocky!"

"It seems to me that you'd leave out all the best men, then."

"Stuff! There are lots of fellows who could put up a first-class game, but they've had no chance while Wharton was captain. He's been keeping in the same crowd all the time, and never giving a new chap a chance."

"That's so!" said a dozen voices.

It was a clever speech of Bulstrode's. Every cricketer in the Remove was, of course, anxious to get into the Form team, and those who had not had a chance under Wharton's lead considered they might have one with Bulstrode. Certainly, he couldn't play thirty or forty youths in an eleven. But every one of the thirty or forty might consider that he had a chance of being selected, if Bulstrode became captain.

Wharton took no part in the talk. He was feeling too "seedy," as a matter of fact, to want to talk. He only wanted to be left alone, to be quiet, till he could pull himself together a bit. But that was just what he was least likely to get now.

He dressed himself quietly, and rubbed his cheeks hard with a rough towel to get a little colour into them.

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He was the last down, staying a few moments after the others to speak to Nugent. Frank Nugent was evidently in a bad way, and there was no doubt that he would have to be put in the school hospital.

He blinked at Wharton with half-closed eyes.

"I'm laid up for a week, I suppose?" he remarked. "It's rotten, Harry! I did want to see you through that row with Bulstrode."

"It's all right, Frank; I shall get through all serene!"

"Oh, yes; you can lick him! Only mind—wade in and do your best from the start, and pile it in all the time. Bulstrode's in splendid form just now, and he's going to do his best to win."

"So am I, Frank!"

The housekeeper came into the dormitory, and Wharton descended after the others. By the time the Remove went in to morning lessons, Frank Nugent had been removed into the sanatorium, and was under the care of the medical man from Friardale. There was nothing serious the matter with Nugent; it was a bad cold that required laying up for a few days, that it might not become serious, and there was no ground for anxiety on his account.

But Wharton missed him very much now. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had gone away, and Nugent was in the sanatorium, and Wharton had Study No. 1 all to himself. At one time Bob Cherry had been a partner in that study, but Bob Cherry was with Mark Linley and little Wun Lung in No. 14 Study.

At the time when Wharton needed both his chums more than at any other time both were gone, and he was left to face his difficulties alone.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

In the Gym.

THE fight between Wharton and Bulstrode, which had now been definitely arranged, occupied the thoughts of the Remove that morning, somewhat to the detriment of their work. Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, could see that the juniors had something on their minds, and he was very sharp-tempered, and lines fell upon careless or preoccupied juniors, not as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa, but very thickly, nevertheless.

But the Removites did not care. A fight that was likely to be the fight of the term was coming off after morning school, and they were looking forward to it with keen interest. There was nothing "soft" about the Remove; indeed, some of them were perhaps a little too hard. A really good slogging fight was a sight they did not care to miss.

The Remove was dismissed at last, and the juniors streamed out into the Close.

Bulstrode swaggered over to Harry Wharton at once as the juniors crowded out. He dropped his hand on Harry's shoulder, in a way that savoured very much of bullying. Wharton lifted his hand, and struck it away.

"Keep your hands off me, please!" he said, between his teeth.

Bulstrode's eyes blazed.

He clenched his fists, and seemed about to begin the attack there and then, but Vernon-Smith restrained him.

"You can't fight here under all the study windows, Bulstrode," he said.

"Hang him—"

"It's not far to the gym."

"Good! Let's go! Are you ready, Wharton?"

"Quite ready!"

"Come on, then!"

And Bulstrode led the way. The whole Form followed, and they were joined by a good many of the Upper Fourth and the Third. And Nugent minor, of the Second Form, came with a band of fags to see the "fun." The contest between Harry Wharton and his rival had excited a great deal of interest throughout the Lower School at Greyfriars.

Bob Cherry slipped his arm through Harry Wharton's.

"I'm going to be your second, Harry!" he remarked.

"Thank you, Bob!"

Bob looked at him anxiously.

"Are you feeling well, Harry?"

"Why do you ask?" said Harry evasively.

"You look seedy."

"Oh, I'm all right!"

"If you don't feel up to the mark, you shouldn't meet Bulstrode now. He's at the top of his form, and he's been practising his boxing an hour a day lately."

Wharton smiled bitterly.

"He's been getting ready for this, of course," he remarked.

"If you're not fit—"

"Oh, I'm fit enough!"



Bulstrode sprang forward and caught Harry Wharton as he fell, holding him in his arms. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "he's fainted!" (See page 22.)

"But—"

"If I weren't fit, Bob, I couldn't put it off now." Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Well, it would be awkward," he admitted.

"You see, the fellows would all think that what was the matter with me was blue funk," said Harry.

"Yes, but—"

"Besides, I'm fit enough to beat Bulstrode."

"He's out to win, you know."

"I think I can lick him."

They entered the gym.

They had the place to themselves just then; not that they were likely to be stopped, even if a prefect had seen them. Glove contests were allowed among the boys, though, of course, even glove contests were not supposed to be carried so far as the rivals of the Remove meant to carry this affair. It was perfectly well understood that this was to be a fight to a finish.

Bob Cherry fetched the gloves, and Wharton and Bulstrode stripped off their jackets and waistcoats, and tied their braces round their waists.

The gloves were not thick; terrible blows could be dealt, even with that protection upon the fist. It was likely to be a hard fight.

"I suppose we're going to have this thing in order?" said Vernon-Smith, who had more experience of the affairs of the prize-ring than usually falls to a junior in a lower Form. "We ought to have a timekeeper."

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"I'm the man!" said Snoop.

"No, you're jolly well not," said Bob Cherry promptly. "I'm Wharton's second, and I object."

"Look here, Cherry—"

"You wouldn't give us fair play," said Bob, in his candid way. "No good glaring at me, Snoop; you're jolly well not going to keep time in this fight. I suggest Bull."

"I object," said Vernon-Smith, at once. "If a chap on our side can't keep time, you're not going to select a chap on your side."

"Whom can you agree upon, then?"

"Let's have an Upper Fourth chap," said Wharton.

"Good! I agree to that."

"Will you keep time, Temple?"

Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth, nodded genially.

"Certainly!" he said. "I'll be timekeeper and referee, and you can depend on fair play. I don't care a brass button which gets licked, so long as it's a good mill. Now, then, are you ready?"

"I am," said Harry.

"So am I," said Bulstrode, stepping forward.

"Shake hands," said Temple.

Wharton kept his hands at his sides.

"Shake hands, now."

"I'm ready," said Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I won't shake hands with a fellow I consider a cad and an outsider," he said, very distinctly.

NEXT
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Bulstrode flushed, and there was a murmur from the crowd of juniors standing round.

"Shame!"

"Very well," said Bulstrode; "I'm sure I don't care."

"Time!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face.

"TIME!"

It was the signal, and the fight began at once. Bulstrode, with his teeth set, and his eyes gleaming, pressed forward at once, beginning a heavy driving attack.

Harry Wharton stood his ground. His guard was very good, and his counters quick as lightning; and Bulstrode's attack was soon stopped by an uppercut that caught him on the point of the chin, and sent him staggering back.

Bulstrode gasped and retreated, and for the rest of that round he was upon the defensive, with the captain of the Remove pressing him hard.

Vernon-Smith's face fell as he watched. He had a keen eye for form, and he knew that Harry Wharton was out of condition. He had hoped to see Wharton go down helplessly before Bulstrode's attack.

But Wharton, like the war-horse sniffing the battle from afar, seemed to be reinvigorated by the breath of conflict.

He was all himself now, keen and quick and full of energy. Would it last? If it did, Bulstrode was as good as beaten already.

"Time!" said Temple.

The round was over.

Bob Cherry drew Wharton back to the edge of the ring, and dabbed his heated face with a damp sponge.

Bob was grinning with delight. The outcome of the first round had relieved him of all his fears upon Wharton's account.

"Jolly good, old chap!" he said. "You've got him now, and he's done. Keep it up like that, and he won't have the ghost of an earthly."

Wharton nodded.

He had an inward feeling that his energy would not last, that it was merely a flash in the pan, as it were, and would die out. A strange feeling was coming all over him, a feeling that he could hardly define, but which he knew meant that he was utterly out of sorts.

But he braced himself.

So long as he could stand he would fight; that he was determined upon.

"Time!"

The fight began again. Bulstrode came on more cautiously, keeping to careful sparring.

Wharton attacked. He felt that if the fight was not over soon, his strength would not last, and he forced the fighting. Bulstrode retreated before his keen attack.

Wharton followed him round the ring, and penetrated his guard at last with a jarring blow on the cheek; but Bulstrode countered quickly, and this time Wharton's defence left a weak spot. He reeled back from a crashing blow on the chest, and before he could recover, Bulstrode rushed on, and gave him right and left in quick succession full in the face.

Wharton dropped as if he had been shot.

Bulstrode stood with flushed face, breathing hard, his eyes glittering with triumph. From his partisans came a ringing shout.

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

"Hurrah!"

Wharton lay for six seconds, and then he staggered up. He feebly defended himself.

Bulstrode showed no mercy; he attacked every inch of the way. But the captain of the Remove managed to hold his own till Temple called time.

Bob Cherry vainly tried to look cheerful as he made a knee for his principal, and Tom Brown sponged Wharton's scarlet face.

Wharton was breathing hard, and his eyes were strangely uncertain, and his head seemed to be turning round.

"How do you feel, Wharton?" Tom Brown asked.

Wharton smiled in a ghastly way.

"Pretty rotten," he said.

"You were seedy when you started."

"I suppose so."

"Look here," said the New Zealand junior anxiously, "it's not fair. Call it off. I'll tell Bulstrode you're not fit, and—"

"You won't!"

"But—"

"I'm going on."

"You're not fit to stand up to Bulstrode."

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"I'm going on, fit or unfit."

"You'll be badly hurt if you go on."

"I shall go on if it kills me."

"Time!" said Temple.

Wharton staggered rather than walked into the ring.

Bulstrode swaggered forward to meet him. He could afford to swagger now. It was pretty clear to Bulstrode that victory was in his hands, if he fought hard for it. And the Remove bully meant to put every ounce of strength he had into that conflict.

"Go it, Bulstrode!"

"Play up, Harry!"

"Buck up!"

Wharton looked neither to the right nor the left. He had eyes only for his enemy. He faced him steadily, trying to keep his throbbing brain from reeling. But in spite of himself his senses seemed to swim, and half his blows now were struck at random.

Bulstrode simply played with him in that round.

He drove in blow after blow, heavy and merciless, and Wharton staggered under them, but managed to keep his feet.

But his defence was growing weaker every moment. His chums looked on with concerned faces. What was the matter with Wharton?

Bulstrode's friends were openly gleeful now.

"He's done!" said Skinner.

"About another round, I should say," Stott remarked.

"He's quite done in. Looks pretty sick, doesn't he?"

"It's sheer funk," said Snoop.

"Shouldn't wonder."

"Anyway, I'm jolly glad to see him taken down a peg or two. He was always too cocky by half."

"Yes, rather!"

Some of the remarks came to Harry Wharton's ears, but he did not heed them. The third round ended, and he sank exhausted upon Bob Cherry's knee.

Bob fanned him in silence.

He knew that it was useless to advise Harry to give up the contest, and he knew, too, that Wharton had no chance of winning.

It was Bulstrode's fight, and every moment it was prolonged only added to the punishment the vanquished champion would receive.

John Bull came forward, with a grim look on his face. He tapped Wharton on the arm.

"You'd better chuck it, Wharton," he said.

Wharton shook his head without replying.

"You're not fit, you know."

"I know."

"Then draw out. You've put up a good fight; there's nothing to be ashamed of in chucking it when you've done that," John Bull urged.

Another shake of the head.

"Time!"

Harry Wharton stepped up to meet his enemy. Bulstrode advanced upon him with a grin of swaggering confidence. Bob Cherry gritted his teeth.

"Oh, I'd give a term's pocket-money to see that swanking outsider knocked into the middle of next week," he muttered to Tom Brown. And the New Zealand junior nodded assent. He felt that wish just as keenly as Bob Cherry did.

And they were destined to be gratified to some extent. Wharton, as if his strength had suddenly returned, picked up wonderfully in that round; and perhaps Bulstrode was over-confident, and gave him a chance.

The captain of the Remove made a sudden and very hot attack, and Bulstrode's guard was knocked to pieces, and Wharton's right, and then his left, came crashing home upon the face of the bully.

Bulstrode staggered back.

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Go it!"

"Buck up, Bulstrode!"

But Bulstrode was not able to buck up. Wharton was following up his attack resolutely, almost desperately. He knew that all depended upon that round. His fists beat upon the bully's face like hammers, and Bulstrode, unable to recover or to defend himself, crashed to the floor.

He lay there, dazed and gasping, unable to rise. Wharton stood unsteadily, waiting for him.

Temple began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—"

Bulstrode's friends watched breathlessly.

Was he beaten after all?

With a tremendous effort, the bully of the Remove sprang to his feet, as Temple was counting eight.

Had Wharton been in anything like condition, the Remove bully would have had no chance, but as it was, Bulstrode managed to hold his own till "Time!" was called.

"My word!" said Snoop, gnawing his thin lips. "I

shouldn't wonder if that beast Wharton pulls out ahead after all."

Skinner shook his head.

"You take my word for it," he said, "Wharton's done. That was the finish; Bulstrode will smash him in the next round."

"Well, I'm sure I hope so."

Snoop had his charitable wish.

In the next round, it was easily to be seen that Harry Wharton was on his last legs. He attacked almost blindly, and defended himself with feeble hands, and Bulstrode again and again drove home heavy blows into his face.

Wharton finished the round lying on his back, with Bulstrode standing over him.

"Time!"

The Remove bully burst into a harsh laugh.

"I fancy your man's done, Cherry!" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry did not reply. He picked Wharton up, and made a knee for him, and Wharton sagged to and fro as he sat there. Bull and Tom Brown caught him, and held him in a sitting posture.

It was evident that Wharton was "done."

"Time!" said Temple quietly.

Bulstrode came forward, looking very much the worse for the combat, but ready to go on. Wharton made an effort to rise, and sank back again. He made another effort, but Bob Cherry held him.

"You can't go on," he said.

"I—I—"

Wharton groaned under his breath. He realised that he could not go on—for the moment, he could not even rise to his feet.

"Your man done?" asked Vernon-Smith, with a sneer.

"Yes," said Bob quietly.

"Bulstrode wins," said Temple, closing his watch and putting it in his pocket. "Wharton's licked."

"Wharton's licked!"

The word ran through the crowd in the gym.

"Wharton's licked!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Victory of Bulstrode.

"WHARTON'S licked!"

It was repeated in varying tones—of triumph, and wonder, and indifference. Curiously enough, any fellow there who did not back up Bulstrode did not seem sorry that Harry Wharton had got the worst of the combat. There was a feeling among many of the Remove that Wharton had been cock of the walk too long.

Harry Wharton's downfall caused surprise and excitement—little else. And it was easy to see how Bulstrode's victory strengthened the hold he had upon the Form. There was a roar of cheering for him as Vernon-Smith helped him on with his jacket.

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"Up with him!" shouted Skinner. "Up with Bulstrode! Carry him back to the house!"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

A rush was made for Bulstrode.

He was hoisted upon the shoulders of a crowd of juniors, and they rushed him out of the gym in triumph.

It was the hour of Bulstrode's glory. His face was flushed, his eyes sparkled, as the juniors bore him out of the gym.

Harry Wharton was leaving the gym, leaning on Bob Cherry's arm. They stood aside for the excited rush of juniors to pass them.

Wharton, his face bruised and cut by the stress of the fight, looked on at the triumph of his rival.

A bitter smile curled his lips for a moment.

He, too, had been shouldered by the Remove, and on the occasion when he had licked Bulstrode, and the bully of the Remove had fallen from his high estate.

Now they were chairing Bulstrode in his place.

Was it worth while, after all, to be leader? What was it worth?

"Come on, old chap," said Bob Cherry.

He led Harry Wharton apart from the noisy crowd. They entered the house quietly, and made their way to the Remove dormitory.

There Harry Wharton bathed his face, while Bob Cherry, in grim silence, selected a clean collar for him, and brushed him down.

Wharton glanced at Bob as he towelled his burning face.

"I suppose I've made a pretty exhibition, this time, Bob."

"It was a jolly good fight," said Bob stoutly. "You did your best. If you'd been in condition you'd have walloped Bulstrode."

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"I'll do that yet, Bob."

Bob Cherry nodded.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Not yet," he said. "You must be awfully seedy, Harry, to be knocked about like that. You should have put the fight off, whatever the fellows said."

"I suppose I was playing into Bulstrode's hands," said Harry Wharton bitterly. "But I don't care. I don't want to be Form-captain, for that matter. I know Bulstrode will have a shot for that, now, and I don't intend to stop him."

Bob looked anxious.

"You won't let him step into it without a struggle!" he exclaimed.

"I sha'n't interfere!"

"But—but think of the Form."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, the Form will get on all right with Bulstrode. I dare say! If they don't, it's their own look-out. I suppose they won't elect him captain unless they want him."

"It means cricket lickings for the Remove."

"I can't help that."

"Bulstrode will mess up the eleven—and mess up everything," said Bob Cherry. "I wish you'd make a fight for it, Harry."

Harry shook his head.

"I won't say a word. They can have what captain they choose. If they choose Bulstrode, let them have him. It's their own business."

A bell rang downstairs.

"Dinner!" said Bob Cherry. "Buck up!"

They hurried down.

When the Remove gathered at the dinner-table, Mr. Quelch glanced at Harry Wharton, and then at Bulstrode.

It was not difficult to see that a fight of unusual obstinacy had been on, and the Form-master would not have judged, from the appearance of the combatants, that gloves had been used.

But he made no remark.

There were times when it was more judicious not to see things, and Mr. Quelch thought that this was one of those times.

There was no doubt that the two juniors had been punished enough by one another, without requiring any further punishment that Mr. Quelch could inflict.

During afternoon school, Harry Wharton felt heavy and dizzy. He was not well, and the effects of the fight dazed and confused him. He managed somehow to stammer through his work, though more than once Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp glance.

When the Remove was dismissed, the juniors poured out into the bright, sunny Close. The days were growing long now, and there was ample time for cricket before tea. Most of the Remove went down to the cricket-pitch.

Wharton did not join them.

He went upstairs to his study in the Remove passage.

A bar of golden sunlight fell in at the study window, across the table and the unlighted grate.

The room seemed strangely empty and desolate.

Hurree Singh was far away, by this time, on the sea. Frank Nugent was in the sanatorium. Wharton went unsteadily into the empty, desolate room.

He pressed his hands to his throbbing head.

"Oh, hang it!" he muttered desperately. "I can't give in now. If I let myself be ill, they'll think it's the result of the licking. Bulstrode will crow, and the rest of them—Hang it! I won't give in."

But even as he said so, there came a sudden blackness over his vision, and his head spun round, and he fell—crashing helplessly to the floor, and there he lay face downwards upon the rug, without motion.

He had fainted.

There was no sound in the study; no sound, save the low, monotonous ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece.

From afar, through the open window, came the echoing shouts from the cricket-fields—merry voices and merry laughter.

But Harry Wharton did not hear them.

He lay deaf to all.

"Wharton!"

A voice called out his name; he did not move.

"Wharton! Are you here, Wharton? Great Scott!"

A startled face looked in at the door.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Ordered Out!

JOHN BULL—it was he who had called to Wharton—ran into the study. He bent over Harry Wharton, and raised his head from the rug.

"Good heavens! What's the matter, Wharton?"

Wharton's eyes opened dazedly.

"Who—what—what's this? Who is it?"

"Wharton, old man, you're ill!"

Wharton struggled into a sitting posture.
 "I'm all right, Bull. I—I think I fell down."
 "You're ill."
 "Rot!" said Wharton irritably. "I tell you, I'm all right. I felt a little queer in the head, that's all, and tumbled over. I'm all right now."

Bull looked at him dubiously.
 "My opinion is that you ought to be under a doctor," he said.

"Oh, rats!"
 Wharton staggered up, and sat down in the armchair. He tried hard to collect himself. His head was throbbing painfully.

"You came here to speak to me?" he asked.
 "Yes."

"Go ahead!"
 "Haven't you better go and lie down a bit?"

"No," said Wharton savagely; "I'm not an invalid! I tell you, I'm all right. I suppose you didn't come here for a row, did you?"

"No," said Bull quietly.
 "Well, then, keep off that subject."

Bull nodded. As a rule, he was quick-tempered enough, and by no means slow to take offence. But he did not take offence at Wharton's words. He only felt a deep compassion for the fallen captain of the Remove. He knew what Wharton's feelings must be like at the moment, and he could make allowances for him.

"What did you want to speak about?" asked Wharton, collecting himself with a great effort.

"I want to speak as your friend, Wharton. The fellows are talking of a new election for Form-captain, and of coming in a body to you to ask you to resign, and stand for a second election."

"Let them."
 "Will you resign?"

"Yes; if as many as half the Form ask me."

"Very well. Then there will be another election?"

"I suppose so."

"That's what I want to know. We'd better get to work at once," said Bull.
 "Of course, you will stand for re-election?"

"No."
 "What?"

"If I resign, I resign for good. I don't care a rap about being Form-captain. I shall not oppose Bulstrode."

John Bull looked dismayed.

"Hang it all, Wharton!" he exclaimed. "That's not the proper spirit to take it in, you know. You ought to think of the Form."

"Hang the Form!"
 "Wharton!"

"I'm fed up with the whole bizney!" Wharton exclaimed savagely. "If Bulstrode's so anxious to be Form-captain, and the Form want him, let them have him, for goodness' sake, and let me hear the end of it!"

Bull compressed his lips.

"If you make anything like a struggle for re-election, I don't believe Bulstrode would get a majority of votes even now," he said.

"Well, I'm going to do nothing of the kind. If the Remove want me, they can elect me without my asking them."

"You'll accept the post if you're elected?"
 Wharton hesitated.

"Hang it all, Wharton!" Bull exclaimed warmly. "You can't refuse it."

"Very well," said Harry. "I take the post again if I'm elected, but I don't ask a single chap for his vote. I don't take a hand in the proceedings at all."

"You've got some friends who will stand by you, though," said John Bull. "Look here, I wish you'd let me take you up to the dorm, to lie down for a bit."

"Oh, rats!"
 "You're not fit."

"Bosh!"
 Wharton was evidently not in a mood to be argued with.

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John Bull quitted the study, and went slowly and thoughtfully down the stairs. Harry Wharton rose to his feet. His head was still throbbing painfully, and he had a weak and sick feeling. He looked round the empty study with a despondent glance.

"If Nugent and Inky were here —"

It would have made a great difference to him. He looked out of the study into the passage. Billy Bunter at one time had been an inmate of No. 1 Study, and Wharton could almost have wished for him to be back there just then.

He walked along the passage to Bunter's study, and looked in.

An appetising smell proceeded from the study. Billy Bunter, apparently, was not in his usual state of impecuniosity.

There was a fire in the grate, and a kettle singing. On the table was a very substantial meal—fried bacon and poached eggs, ham and kidneys, and a large cake. Bunter was evidently in funds.

The fat junior was just sitting down to his tea when Wharton looked in. Bunter, as a rule, was fond of the company of others at meal-times—but that was because others stood the meals. When he stood the feed himself, Bunter was quite satisfied with his own company.

He blinked up at Harry Wharton through his big spectacles, and sniffed.

"Hallo!" said Harry.
 Bunter sniffed again.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I was going to ask you to tea in my study," said Harry mildly.

Bunter snorted.

"Yes; you'll get me believing that," he remarked.

"What do you mean, you fat young rascal?" asked Wharton.

Another snort.

"You know I've had a remittance, that's what it is, and you've come to tea," said Billy Bunter. "Rats! Do you think you can take me in?"

Wharton coloured angrily.

"I decline to invite you," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I don't recognise you as a friend, Wharton."

"Eh?"

"Your disgusting meanness in refusing to subscribe to the keepsake for Inky has placed a bar between us," said the fat junior. "You will oblige me by leaving my study."

"What!"

"I don't want to know you."

"You—you cheeky young rascal!"
 Bunter rose to his feet, swelling with dignity.

He raised his fat white hand, and pointed to the door.

"Go!" he exclaimed.

Wharton stood transfixed.

"Go!"

"What!" roared Wharton.

"Outside!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I don't recognise you as a friend. I consider you unfit to include in the list of my acquaintances. Go!"

"You—you——"

"Outside!"

Wharton made an angry step forward. He had been beaten by Bulstrode; he was to be turned out of his captaincy by the Remove. But he had not fallen low enough to be hectored by Billy Bunter.

Bunter promptly dodged round the table.

"G-get out!" he gasped.

"You fat rascal!"

"Oh, really, Wharton— Keep off! I—I mean, you know, you—you can have some of the cake if you like, only——"

Wharton burst into a laugh.

"You are a wretched worm, Billy!" he said. "Do you think I would touch your grub? I won't touch you, either; you're not worth licking."

And he quitted the study, and jerked the door shut after him.

Billy Bunter gasped and blinked.

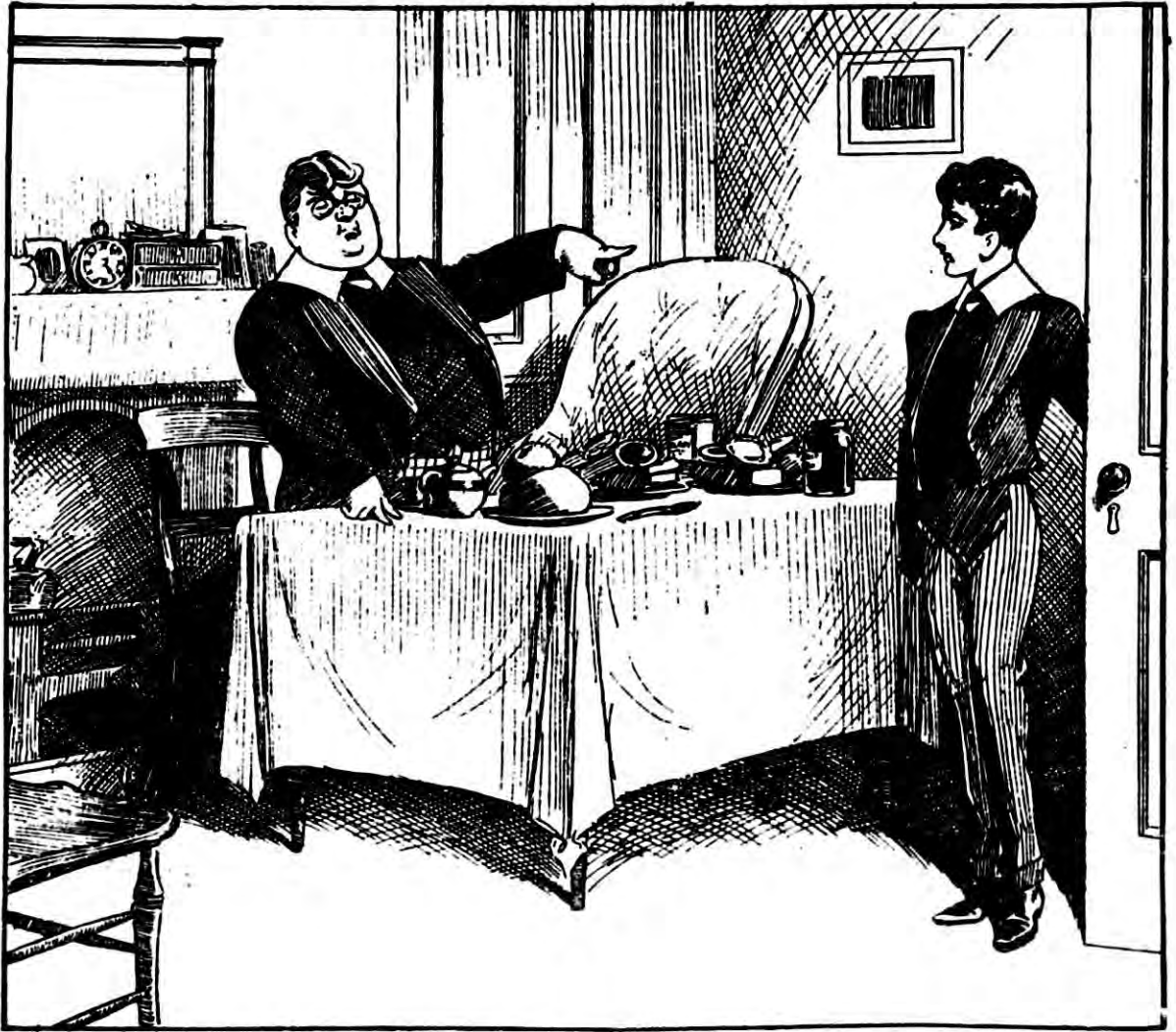
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Billy Bunter rose to his feet, swelling with dignity. He raised his fat white hand and pointed to the door. "Go" he exclaimed. Wharton stood transfixed. (See page 14.)

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Harry Wharton Resigns the Captaincy.

"HERE he comes!"
"Here's Wharton!"
Harry Wharton heard the exclamations as he descended the stairs. He appeared not to hear, however, and walked on quietly to the junior common-room. It was dusk in the Close, and the cricketers had come in, and the room was pretty well crowded with juniors.

"Here he is!"
"You're wanted, Wharton."
"This way!"
Wharton walked straight on.
"Deaf?" asked Skinner unpleasantly.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton went into the common-room. He had not answered, and the juniors were somewhat puzzled. It was not like Wharton to take insolence quietly. There were a good many things about Harry Wharton that puzzled them lately.

Bob Cherry came over towards Harry, and so did Bull and Tom Brown. Fisher T. Fish and Mark Linley followed him in. If there was to be trouble, Wharton had true and steady friends to stand by him.

"Here he is!"
"Put it to him, Bulstrode."
Bulstrode hesitated, and shook his head.

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"I think I'm not the right chap to put it to him, as I'm interested in the matter," he said. "Somebody else, please."

"Oh, I'll be spokesman!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Go it, Bouncer!"

"Put it straight."

Vernon-Smith stopped in front of Harry Wharton. There was an insolent smile upon his face. It was the first time the Bouncer of Greyfriars had really had the Remove captain at a disadvantage, and he enjoyed it. He meant to take the fullest advantage of Harry Wharton's downfall.

"We want a few words with you, Wharton," he said.

"Will you attend to us for a few moments?"

"We won't keep you long," grinned Skinner.

Wharton made a weary gesture.

"Oh, go ahead! What is it?"

"We want a new captain for the Remove."

"Yes?"

"And so we want you to resign."

"Yes?"

"Well, blessed if you don't take it calmly!" Vernon-Smith exclaimed, in astonishment. "Perhaps you don't care whether you're captain or not?"

"No, I don't."

"You don't care?"

"Not a rap!"

There was a growl from the crowd of Removites. Whether

they wanted Wharton for captain or not, they did not like having their suffrages despised in this way.

"Well, if he doesn't care, he can go!" said Ogilvy crossly. "We don't want a captain who isn't pleased with the job."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Anything more?" asked Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

"Will you resign?"

"Yes; that's the question."

"Will you resign, Wharton, and stand for re-election against Bulstrode?"

Wharton shook his head.

"I'll resign, but I won't stand for re-election," he said.

"Oh!"

"My hat!"

"Cheek!"

"I guess I'd say the same, in Wharton's place," said Fisher T. Fish. "If there ever were a set of silly guys, it's you chaps! You've got a good skipper; why can't you let well alone, you slab-sided growlers?"

"Oh, cheese it, Fishy!"

"Shut up, Yank!"

"Ring off!"

"I guess——"

"Shut up!" roared a dozen voices.

"I'll resign," went on Wharton calmly. "If as many as twenty fellows in the Remove want me to, I'll take it that the Form wants to have a fresh election."

"And you won't stand for re-election?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"No."

Bulstrode's eyes gleamed. That was exactly what he wanted. He could not understand Wharton's motives, but this suited him excellently well.

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed the Bounder. "As for twenty fellows to ask you to resign, I'll soon find them. I fancy nearly all the Form is fed up with your nerve!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Twenty signatures wanted," said Vernon-Smith, tearing a leaf out of his pocket-book. "I'm writing here: 'We, the undersigned, request Wharton to resign, so that there can be a fresh election for Form-captain.'"

"Good!"

"That's all right."

"I'll sign, for one!"

"And I, for another!"

"And I!"

"And I!"

"Gimme the paper."

"Hand over the pencil."

Wharton stood and looked on with a bitter smile on his lips. The attitude he was taking in the matter exasperated fellows who were otherwise well disposed towards him, and there was no doubt that the desire to give "Wharton a fall" was spreading. But he did not care. He was prepared to stand alone.

"Silly asses!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "They'll be sorry for this later."

"I guess so!"

"We shall have to get Wharton in again, whether he stands as candidate or not," said John Bull.

"H'm! That won't be easy!"

Vernon-Smith laid the paper on the table before Harry Wharton. A trail of straggling signatures ran down to the very edge of it.

"There you are!" exclaimed the Bounder of Greyfriars, triumphantly. "There are twenty-four there, and I dare say I could get others."

Wharton glanced carelessly at the paper.

"Twenty-four who will vote for Bulstrode!" exclaimed Skinner.

"Oh, hold on!" said Morgan. "I've signed that paper, but I'm not going to vote for Bulstrode. I think there ought to be a fresh election to settle the matter once for all, that's all."

"Twenty-four signatures," repeated Vernon-Smith, unheeding. "You can count them for yourself, Wharton, if you choose."

"I'm satisfied."

"Then——"

"I resign!" said Wharton quietly.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wanted, a Captain.

"I RESIGN!"

The words were very quietly spoken. But they meant a great deal. Wharton had resigned! He was no longer captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

Bulstrode could not restrain the satisfaction and triumph that glowed in his face and gleamed in his eyes.

It was his chance at last!

He had been captain of the Form once—before Wharton came! That Wharton made a better captain he did not admit, and he would not have cared for a consideration of that sort, in any case. It was his ambition—it had always been his ambition—to oust Wharton and regain the position he had lost. He was at last within measurable distance of success. And once he was in, once he had the place within his grip, once he was Form captain, he would take good care that he did not lose it again.

"Wharton's resigned!"

The word ran through the crowd.

"Then there'll be a fresh election!" said Bulstrode.

"When?" asked Bull.

"Oh, to-night. No good leaving it over."

"To-night's the time!" said Skinner.

Bull did not know what to do. He could not very well oppose getting the matter finished and settled. But he knew very well that it was the object of Bulstrode's party to take advantage of the present feeling in the Remove—that of admiration of Bulstrode for his victory, and pique and annoyance with the late captain. Wharton's high-handed way had touched the Remove on the raw, so to speak, and if the election was held now, many more votes would be recorded against the late captain than would be the case a day or two later. But Bull had no adequate reason to advance for postponing the election. Indeed, as there was an away cricket match fixed for Saturday, and it was already Thursday, it was advisable to get the matter settled as early as possible.

"We'll have the election in the Form-room," said Skinner. "We shall have it to ourselves, without any blessed fags coming in. Suppose we say eight o'clock?"

"That's all right," said Ogilvy.

Faith, and I'm wid ye intirely!"

"That suit you, Wharton?" asked Bulstrode, who wished to appear—perhaps wished to be—quite fair in the matter.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care twopence!" he said.

And he swung round on his heel and left the common-room.

There was a growl from the juniors.

"Don't ye care, bedad!" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

"Perhaps we'll make ye care, thin!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess Wharton's about finished his chance, himself," Fisher T. Fish remarked to John Bull, as they went out, leaving Bulstrode & Co. eagerly discussing the matter.

"That's not the way to get votes."

John Bull grinned ruefully.

"You're right, Fishy; though I can understand Wharton's feelings in the matter. He's being treated pretty badly."

"I guess so!"

"We've got to make the running, somehow," said Bob Cherry, joining them. "Wharton has enough friends to give him a show, anyway."

"Yep."

Bull looked dubious.

"We'll do our best, of course," he said; "but I can't help thinking that Bulstrode will romp in by a big majority. If we could persuade Wharton to put up, you see, and ask the fellows for their votes——"

"That would make all the difference in the world, I guess!"

"Hallo—hallo—hallo, Micky!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, catching the Irish junior by the shoulder. "Which way are you going to vote?"

"Faith, I don't think I shall vote at all," said Micky.

"Not for Wharton?"

"If he asks me, perhaps."

"You can vote for him just as well without his asking you, can't you?"

"Faith, no! If my vote's worth having, it's worth asking for, ain't it?" demanded Micky.

"Well, I'll ask you," said Bob.

"Rats!"

"I'll ask you," said Tom Brown.

"Rats!"

"I guess I'll ask you, too!"

"More rats!"

"Look here, Micky——"

ANSWERS

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"Faith, I'll vote for Wharton if he asks me, and I won't vote for him if he doesn't ask me, and that settles it intirely!" said Micky Desmond.

And he walked away whistling.
The chums of the Remove looked at one another.
"I'm afraid a lot will look at it like that," said Bob, ruefully.

"Yep."
"Suppose we go and ask Wharton to reconsider what he said about standing out of the election?" John Bull suggested. "I don't think there's any other way of having a chance with the election."

"Come on, then. Where's Harry?"
"I think he went upstairs. Seen Wharton, Hazel?"
"In his study," said Hazeldene. "Are you fellows voting for him? I'm going to."

"Yes, rather!"
"Good! I asked him about it, and he won't say a word for himself. It will be a difficult thing to get him elected without his saying a word."

"We're going to tackle him about it now."
Harry Wharton was in his study when they looked for him there. He was standing by the window, looking out into the dusky quad.

He turned round as the juniors entered.
"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "I hope you haven't come to tea? I'm going to have tea down in Hall this evening."
"You're going to have tea in my study," said Bob Cherry. "Marky's gone to get some grub in, and it will be a decent feed. But that isn't what we've come to speak about."

"No? What is it?"
"About the election."
Wharton's brow clouded.
"Well, what about it?" he asked.
"It's coming off this evening in the Form-room."

"I know that."
"Won't you put up for captain, Harry—come and say a few words to the fellows, I mean, and ask them for their votes?"

Wharton shook his head.
"I can't, Bob."
"Why can't you?"

"For one thing, I've said I won't, and I can't eat my words in public, I suppose. But, besides that, I'm sick of the whole bizney. There has been too much carping and growling lately. Let the Remove have Bulstrode for captain, and make the best of him. I tell you I'm sick of it!"

"But look here—" said John Bull.
"It's no good, Bull. My mind's made up."
"I wish you'd alter it," said Bob.
"I can't!"

"Then I'm afraid Bulstrode's booked to be captain of the Remove."

"Let him be!"
There was evidently nothing to be done with Wharton. Right or wrong, he had made up his mind. The juniors quitted the study, leaving the late captain of the Remove staring gloomily out of the window.

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry.
And John Bull nodded, and Fisher T. Fish said that he guessed it was.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Change.

MARK LINLEY looked into Study No. 1 as he came along, with a big parcel under his arm. The gas was not alight, and the Lancashire lad could only dimly make out the form of Harry Wharton standing at the window.

"You there, Wharton?" he called in.
Wharton looked round.

"I'm here. That you, Linley?"
"Yes. All in the dark?" said the Lancashire lad, cheerfully. "I've got the things for a feed in the study. Will you come and lend a hand?"

"Certainly, Linley!"
Wharton followed the Lancashire lad down the passage to No. 13. He was feeling very queer, but he was keeping himself well in hand. Even to his own friends he did not want to betray how unwell he was.

The gas was burning brightly in No. 13, and there was a big fire burning. The day had been warm, but the evening was cold. Bob Cherry was frying bacon at the fire, and there was a very savoury odour in the study. It was somewhat late for tea, but that made the feed all the more acceptable. Wharton was hungry. Troubles and worries did not interfere with his healthy appetite to any great extent.

Mark Linley put the parcel on the table.
"Bull and Fish are coming to tea," said Bob, looking

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round. "I wish old Todd were still here, and he could come, too. Hallo—hallo—hallo, Wharton! Cut the bread-and-butter, will you, old man?"

"Yes," said Harry, laughing.
He was soon busily at work. The juniors imagined themselves to be very deep, but Harry saw easily through the friendly device. He was to be occupied and kept busy amid cheery chatter, with the view to cheering him up, and putting him into a more normal and amicable frame of mind.

It was a cheery enough party in Bob Cherry's study. Bob had had a remittance, and he had expended it royally. Mark unwrapped the precious parcel, and turned out good things that might have made any junior's mouth water.

"My hat!" said John Bull. "This is ripping! And I'm hungry!"

"I guess I can peck a little, too," Fish remarked.
"Pile in!" said Bob Cherry hospitably. "Make the tea, Marky. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's that at the door?"

"I say, you fellows—" "Bunter! Get out!" "Oh, really, Cherry—" "Outside!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Cherry, I only want to say that—that—" Bob Cherry was transferring rashers of bacon from the frying-pan to a dish by means of a fork. He paused with a fat rasher on the fork, and glared at the Owl of the Remove.

"Are you going, Bunter?" "I've something rather important to say. I think you might let a chap come to a feed, especially after the way I've been backing up Wharton."

Harry stared at Bunter. The fat junior was very short-sighted, and he did not see for the moment that Wharton was in the study.

"Oh, you've been backing up Wharton, have you?" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather! He came to my study begging for a feed, and—"

"What!" roared Harry.
Bunter jumped.
"I—I mean, he looked—you looked into my study in a friendly way, and—and declined to join me in a feed—"

"You fat fraud!" "Oh, really, Wharton—" "I suppose he's telling lies," said John Bull.
"Oh, really, Bull—" "Of course he is!" said Harry. "I looked into the study, and he fancied I wanted a feed, and he behaved like a pig—like Bunter, in fact."

"Oh, really, Wharton—" "Get out, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.
"I'm willing to pass over Wharton's ingratitude," said Bunter. "But—but I'm hungry, you see. I don't want to stay to tea if you're crowded, Cherry, but I think you might let a chap have a rasher of bacon."

Bob Cherry grinned.
"You'll be satisfied with a rasher of bacon?" he asked.
"Oh, yes!" "Well, perhaps—" "Of course, I think you might let me have an egg as well."

"Oh, an egg as well!" said Bob musingly.
"Yes, certainly! I don't think you ought to be greedy, Cherry. I consider greediness a very disgusting fault."

"My hat!" said John Bull.
"Will this rasher do?" asked Bob Cherry, holding up his fork with the rasher of bacon impaled upon the end of it.

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles.
"Yes, rather; that's all right!"

"And an egg—hand me an egg, Linley—a raw one."
Mark Linley laughed as he handed an egg to Bob Cherry. He could see by the gleam in Bob's eyes that fun was coming.

"Here you are!" he said.
"Thanks! This rasher and this egg, Bunter, and then you'll go!"

"Certainly!" "Very well—take 'em!"
Bob Cherry's arm swept into the air, and the fork jerked forward, and the rasher of bacon shot off it and smote the Owl of the Remove full in his fat face.

Bunter staggered back, his face running with warm grease.
"Ow!" he yelled.
Squelch!

The egg followed the bacon with unerring aim. It broke on Bunter's nose.
"Gerrooh!" Bob Cherry roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Anything more you want, Bunter?" "Groo! Yoop! Yarooop!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oh! Yah! Groooooop!"

"Gimme another egg!" said Bob Cherry. "He wants another egg. He shall have another—under the chin this time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Billy Bunter did not wait for the other egg. He rolled out of the study and slammed the door with a violent bang. The chums of the Remove roared.

"Now we can have tea," Bob Cherry remarked.

The door opened cautiously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter again!"

Bob Cherry grasped an egg.

But Bunter did not come in.

A fat hand and wrist were inserted to grasp the rasher of bacon that had fallen on the carpet, and the rasher was seized and withdrawn. The juniors watched the proceedings with great interest.

The door was slammed as soon as Bunter had extracted the rasher. It was evident that the fat junior meant to eat it after all.

Through the keyhole came a yell in Bunter's tones.

"Beasts!"

Then hasty footfalls pattered away down the passage.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

The juniors were all grinning as they sat down to tea. Wharton was laughing as much as anyone, and there was quite his old expression upon his face. The juniors were careful to keep up cheery talk, in order to keep Wharton in the same humour, in the hope of tactfully approaching the subject of the election after tea, and getting Harry to take their view of the matter.

But it was a vain hope.

"Jolly good feed!" said John Bull, as he drew his chair away from the table at last, and put his feet on the fender.

"Thanks, Bob!"

"Ripping!" said Wharton.

"I guess it was O.K.," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "Quite up to the feeds I used to stand over there, you know."

"And now to come to bizney!" said Bob Cherry. "The fellows downstairs will be starting the election. It's jolly near eight."

"Let them start," said Harry. "We've got our prep. to do."

"That can be done afterwards. The election comes first, old chap. If we're not jolly careful, Bulstrode will get in as captain of the Remove, and you know what that means for the cricket, if for nothing else. We're playing Courtfield School on Saturday, and I suppose you don't want Trumper, Solly & Co. to lock us."

"No," said Harry slowly.

"Now, what you've got to do is to put up for re-election," said Bob persuasively.

Wharton shook his head.

"All your friends are of the same mind," said Bob Cherry. "That's the case, isn't it, you chaps?"

"Certainly!" said Mark.

"Yes, rather!"

"I guess so."

Wharton's mouth was very firm. Whether he admitted the weight of Bob Cherry's arguments or not, it was clear that he did not mean to yield.

"Now, what do you say, Harry?"

"I can't stand for re-election."

"Look here, why not?"

"I've said I wouldn't."

"You can change your mind."

"It can't be done. Besides—"

"Well, besides—"

"There has been too much carping and growling lately. The fellows are tired of me as Form-captain. Most of them want a change. Let them have it."

Bob Cherry looked very glum.

"You've made up your mind about it?" he asked.

"Yes, Bob; I'm sorry!"

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Well, I suppose if you have, you have," he said, "and that's all there is about it. We shall have to try and win the election for you without your assistance, that's all; but it will be jolly uphill work."

"Let it alone, Bob!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you I'm quite content to retire!"

"More rats!"

"The Remove want a change—"

"Blow the Remove!"

"Well, Bob, you can do as you like; but I think it will be trouble for nothing," said Harry. "Anyway, I don't say a word."

"Come on, you chaps!" said Bob, rising. "We had better

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get on the scene, or Bulstrode will be looking us out of the Form-room, or something of the sort."

And the juniors left the study. Harry Wharton glanced after them for a moment, and then sat down by the fire. He had intended to do his preparation, but he did not feel up to it now. He sat by the fire, staring unseeing into the blaze, with a strange dizziness in his head, and more than once the room seemed to swim before his eyes. Was he really ill at last?

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Quite a Success.

BULSTRODE & Co. were very busy.

Bulstrode's chance had come at last, and neither he nor his friends meant to let it slip. They were all shoulder to shoulder now, in a great effort to get Bulstrode in as Form-captain.

It meant a great deal to them. A Form-captain of Greyfriars was in something of the position of a monitor, for one thing. Besides that, the Form-captain was also captain of the Form Cricket Club. That meant a very great deal. All the fellows who had been kept in the reserves, or excluded altogether, under Wharton, hoped for a chance under Bulstrode. Fellows who, like Vernon-Smith and Snoop, were addicted to smoking, and even to paying visits to the Cross Keys in Friar-dale, knew that they would not be interfered with by Bulstrode; while Wharton had always been very heavily "down" on such practices. Bulstrode was willing to promise anything to anybody, as a matter of fact, to get the fellows to elect him.

As eight o'clock drew on, almost all the Remove had gathered in the Form-room. Harry Wharton was not there, nor his immediate friends, but almost all the rest of the Form had turned up.

The hour of the election had been fixed for eight, and Skinner had stolen into the Form-room much earlier, and put the clock on, so that it now indicated eight o'clock, while, as a matter of fact, it really wanted yet ten minutes.

Skinner was the only one who knew what had been done with the Form-room clock; even Bulstrode did not know. Bulstrode was ready to take almost any advantage of his opponents; but he would probably have drawn a line at a trick of that sort.

"Doors to be locked at eight o'clock," said Bulstrode.

"Everybody here?"

"Wharton's not here."

"Oh, he said he was standing out, you know."

"Where's Cherry—and Bull—and Fish—"

"If they can't come to time, they can stay out," said Skinner. "It was agreed that the election was for eight, and we can't put it off to suit late-comers. We've got our prep. to do yet, or there will be trouble with Quelch in the morning."

"Quite right!"

"Look the door."

"Faith, and there's enough of us here."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "Give the chaps a chance! I dare say they've forgotten the time."

"They've no right to forget it. We can't stick here all night."

"Of course not."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Look the door," said Vernon-Smith. "They can't expect us to wait."

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter. He was blinking up at the Form-room clock, and then blinking at his watch. "I say, it ain't—"

Skinner pushed against him, and Bunter staggered and fell on the floor. Skinner contrived to fall upon him, and there was a painful yelp from Bunter.

"Ow! Wow!"

"You fat duffer, you're always in the way!" growled Skinner.

"Ow! Beast!"

Bunter sat up and gasped. He had forgotten all about the difference between the Form-room clock and his watch. He had something more important to think about now.

"Look here, it's five minutes past eight," Bulstrode exclaimed. "The door ought to be locked now, and we can get to business."

"Well, I suppose they'd be here if they wanted to come," said Hazeldene.

"Of course they would."

"I suppose so," agreed Tom Brown.

"Let's get on, then."

Skinner locked the door. Then Vernon-Smith mounted on a form.

"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

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"Hear, hear!"
 "I beg to propose my friend Bulstrode as captain of the Remove, in the place of the late captain, resigned."
 "Hear, hear!"
 "I beg to second the motion," said Skinner.
 "Hear, hear!"
 "As there is no opposition—" went on the Bounder of Greyfriars.

Tom Brown jumped on a form.
 "There jolly well is!" he exclaimed.
 "Get down, Brown!"
 "Shut up!"
 "I propose Harry Wharton—"
 "Why ain't he hero to speak for himself?" roared Bulstrode.

"Yes, answer that!" shouted a score of voices.
 Bump!
 It was a heavy blow at the door, which made it shake and ring. It interrupted the proceedings. A voice bawled through the keyhole.

"Open this blessed door!"
 "You're too late!" Skinner shouted back.
 "Rats! It's not eight yet!"
 "It's six minutes past," said Snoop.
 "Rats! It's four minutes to eight," replied Bob Cherry through the keyhole. "That's what it is by my watch. Look at the Form-room clock, you chump!"

"The clock says six minutes past—seven minutes past."
 "Rats!"
 "You're too late!" said Bulstrode. "You know the time agreed upon, and you can stay out in the passage. We can't keep the blessed election going all night to please you."
 Bump—bump—bump!

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, John Bull, and Fisher T. Fish were hurling themselves against the door.

"Go away!" roared Bulstrode. "You're too late!"
 "Open this door!"
 "Sha'n't!"
 "It's not eight yet."
 "It's nearly ten past."
 "Rats!"

"It's quite right, Bob," called out Tom Brown. "The clock here says nearly ten past."
 "The clock's wrong, then!" roared Bob Cherry. "You open the door, Brown."

"Better let them in," said Tom hesitatingly.
 There was a roar of denial.
 "They're too late."
 "They should have come early."
 "Keep the door shut."
 "It's not eight yet," Bob Cherry shrieked through the keyhole. "I tell you it's barely eight even now."

"Rats!"
 "Somebody's put that clock on."
 "Rubbish!"
 "Hark!" shouted John Bull.

Clearly through the air, audible in every corner of Greyfriars, came the chimes from the clock-tower.

The four quarters rung out, and then the hour came in steady strokes—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight! Eight o'clock!

"My hat!" muttered Bulstrode, in dismay.
 Bob Cherry kicked at the door.

"You hear that?" he shouted. "What time is it?"
 "The clock's fast!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Open the door! Why, look at your watches—you can see it yourselves!"

Some of the juniors consulted their watches. It was easy enough to see that the clock was ten minutes fast. It was hardly possible even for Bulstrode and Skinner to raise any further objection to the admission of the voters outside. Skinner's little plot had failed.

Tom Brown unlocked the door, and the four juniors rushed in.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Election.

"GETTING on nicely without us, I suppose?" Bob Cherry remarked sarcastically.

"Oh, let's get to business!" growled Bulstrode. "There's too much time been wasted already."

"Who put the clock on?"
 "I suppose it's gained."

"Rats! It always keeps good time, and it was right when we were dismissed this afternoon. Somebody put it forward on purpose."

"I suppose it was a lark," said John Bull.
 Bob snorted.

"A lark that jolly near made us miss the election," he said. "I don't like that kind of lark—it's a bit too much like rotten trickery."

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NEXT TUESDAY: "THE GREYFRIARS TYRANT."

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"If you mean that I put the clock on—" began Bulstrode hotly.

"I don't say you did, but someone here did—and I suppose it was someone on your side."

"More likely one of your gang," said Skinner, "so as to plead it afterwards as an excuse for another election."

"Very likely," said Bulstrode.
 "Pretty certain," said Snoop.

"Oh, rats! Let's get to bizney," said Bob Cherry. "I've got my own opinion about it, but it's no good jawing. You've started, I suppose?"

"Bulstrode's been proposed and seconded," said Vernon-Smith. "Brown has proposed Harry Wharton."

"Good! I second."
 "Then we'd better have a show of hands," said Bulstrode.

"But in the first place, why isn't Wharton here to speak for himself?"

"I'm speaking for him."
 "I think the voters have a right to know why he isn't here," said Bulstrode, pursuing his advantage. "How do they know that he's really putting up at all?"

"Faith, and ye're right!"
 "Why can't he come?" asked Trevor.

Bob Cherry reddened. It was a terrible disadvantage, and he knew it. It was like asking the juniors for their votes and at the same time telling them that the candidate disdained them. Electioneering on the lines of Coriolanus was not likely to be successful in the Greyfriars Remove. The "sweet voices" were not to be so easily won.

"Well, he's seedy, for one thing," said Bob.
 "Is that why he isn't here?"

"Well, no."
 "Then I don't see what his seediness has to do with it at all," said Bulstrode tartly. "The question is, why doesn't he come?"

"Because he doesn't choose to."
 "And he wants to be elected without taking the trouble of even asking a chap for his vote?" demanded Elliott wrathfully.

"Not exactly. We want him more than he wants it himself. The Remove will go to the dogs—at least, as far as cricket is concerned—if Bulstrode gets in," said Bob.

"Oh, rats!"
 "Let him run on," said Bulstrode scornfully. "The fellows know I mean to do my best, and a chap can't do more than that. If they choose to vote for a fellow who stays in his study and turns up his nose at them, let them, that's all!"

There was a roar.
 "No votes for Wharton!"

"Let him come here and say so if he wants our votes."
 "Hang his cheek!"

"Hands up for Bulstrode!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith, striking the iron while it was hot.

Hands went up on all sides.
 "Count!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

Skinner began to count. As Skinner was extremely likely to overdo it, John Bull went through the counting with him. Skinner made the total twenty-four, and John Bull made it twenty-two, which necessitated a recount. The correct number turned out to be twenty-two.

"My mistake!" said Skinner blandly. "Twenty-two for Bulstrode."

Bulstrode's eyes gleamed. If all the rest of the Form voted for Wharton he would get in by only a very narrow majority. But would they? Many fellows there who had not voted for Bulstrode showed plainly enough by their looks that they did not intend to vote for Wharton either. The general view was that if he wanted their vote he could take the trouble to come and ask for it.

"Twenty-two," said Vernon-Smith. "Do you fellows want a count?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bull.
 "I guess so!"

"Go ahead, then!"
 "Yes, go ahead," said Bulstrode, "if anybody here wants to vote for a chap who doesn't think it worth while to turn up for the election."

"Oh, shut up!"
 "Hands up for Wharton!" called out Bob Cherry.

"Faith, and how do ye know that Wharton wants to be captain at all, at all?" demanded Micky Desmond.

"That's it!" said Ogilvy. "Are we going to elect a fellow in the dark, and perhaps be told afterwards that he doesn't care for it, anyway?"

"It's all right," said Bob Cherry. "Wharton has told me that if he is re-elected he will accept the post. You can take my word for it, I suppose?"

"Yes, but—"

"Accept it, will he?" said Vernon-Smith. "How kind of

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Another splendid, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

him! I suppose a deputation of the Remove will have to go to him on their bended knees and ask him?"

And there was a laugh.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Hands up for Wharton!"

Eight or nine hands went up at once, and others followed more slowly. Bob Cherry, Bull, Linley, Fish, Brown and Hazeldene, Russell and Wun Lung put up their hands at once. Micky Desmond followed their example after some hesitation, and then slowly up went Ogilvy's hand, and then Treluce's and Morgan's.

"Twelve for Wharton!" said Vernon-Smith, with a sneering grin.

"Oh, come, give us a show!" Bob Cherry exclaimed.

Two more hands went up.

But that was all.

"Look here, Elliott!" exclaimed John Bull.

Elliott put his hands into his pockets.

"I'll vote for Wharton if he asks me," he said. "I'm not voting for a chap who doesn't think a Form election worth attending."

"My view exactly," said Smith minor.

"And mine," added Banks.

"Twelve for Wharton, twenty-two for Bulstrode," said Vernon-Smith. "Bulstrode is elected captain of the Remove."

Bulstrode's eyes gleamed.

Captain of the Remove!

He had won at last!

Bob Cherry's face was clouded. He could not gainsay it; there was no valid objection to be entered. Bulstrode had been duly elected, and he was captain of the Lower Fourth Form!

"Well, you'll be sorry for it, that's all," he said, turning away.

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"Hurrah for Bulstrode!" shouted Skinner.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"We'll celebrate this!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "We'll have the biggest feed in the dorm. to-night that ever was had in the Remove dorm."

"Hurrah!"

"I say, you fellows, I voted for Bulstrode——"

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry and his friends left the Form-room. They felt miserable and sick about the whole business.

Bob's face was very gloomy as he looked into his study again. Wharton, who was pale and unquiet, looked round as he came in with the others.

"Election over?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And how has it gone?"

"Bulstrode's in."

"I expected it," said Wharton quietly.

Bob Cherry grunted.

"You don't seem to mind it much," he said.

"I don't!"

"There will be trouble. There will be no holding Bulstrode now—he will swank about as if all Greyfriars belonged to him."

"I guess you've hit it!"

"Well, the Remove have a right to elect any captain they please," said Harry mildly.

"It would have been different if you had turned up there."

"Well, I'm sorry, but I think I was right."

"Well, I don't," growled Bob.

And there the matter dropped, uncomfortably enough.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The New Captain.

THERE was a beaming smile like unto a full moon upon the fat face of Billy Bunter.

Bulstrode's idea of standing a tremendous feed in the Remove dormitory, to celebrate his election, and to cement, as it were, his hold upon the Remove, had been acclaimed on all sides; and Bunter's services were requisitioned. Bunter was undoubtedly the best cook in the Remove, and the best bargainer at shopping—so long as someone watched him to see that he did not immediately eat all that he purchased. Bunter took a prominent part in preparing the feed, and many a "snack" did he contrive to take for himself during the preparations. But Bulstrode did not mind. Bulstrode was well in funds just now, and Vernon-Smith, who was hand-in-glove with him in the matter, was willing to spend money freely. Money was of little account to the millionaire's son. The juniors stared at the packages

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and parcels that were conveyed to the Remove dormitory before bedtime, and stowed away under the beds or in the cupboards. There was no doubt that the election feed would make a record.

Wharton did not appear in the common-room.

He did not feel well enough to come down, and he had no desire to appear at the triumph of his rival.

But he was not missed. The Remove were busy enough, and they were quite satisfied with their new captain—so far, at least.

Bulstrode had certainly commenced his captaincy by a popular movement. The feed in the dormitory recommended itself to everybody.

The new captain, too, bore no grudges. Those who had voted against him, and those who had not voted at all, were invited with equal hospitality to the feast. And the general opinion naturally was that Bulstrode was awfully decent.

Harry Wharton sat in his study, busy with his prep. His head was aching, and he could scarcely concentrate his mind upon his work.

As he sat there, he could hear the footsteps of the fellows in the passage, and cheery voices and laughter.

There came a tap at the door of the study.

Harry Wharton looked up.

"Come in!" he called out, thinking that it was Bob Cherry or another of his friends who had looked in.

Bulstrode entered.

"Oh!" said Harry.

He half-rose from the table. He was ready for trouble, though feeling far from fit. But Bulstrode's look was not hostile.

"Can I come in?" he asked.

"Certainly."

Bulstrode closed the door behind him, and came towards Wharton. The late captain of the Remove sank back into his chair, and looked steadily at the new captain.

"I want to speak to you," said Bulstrode.

"Sit down."

Bulstrode sat down.

Harry Wharton waited. There was a cold, grim expression upon his face, which was very discouraging to the new captain of the Remove.

"The election's over," said Bulstrode awkwardly, after a pause.

"I know that."

"The Remove have elected me cap'tain."

"I know that, too."

"It might have been different if you'd tried hard," said Bulstrode, with unusual frankness, "but you didn't seem to care how it went."

"I didn't care—much."

"Well," said Bulstrode, "I'm captain now."

Wharton's lip curled bitterly.

"Have you come to swank about that here?" he asked.

The burly Removite reddened.

"I don't want to swank," he said. "I came here to speak to you in a friendly way, but it doesn't seem to be easy."

"We're not friends," said Harry coldly. "We never have been. You've been working for this for a long time, as you know perfectly well, and now you've got your wish, I don't see what there is to be said about it."

Bulstrode bit his lip.

"Well, I was captain of the Remove before you came," he said. "I don't see why you should complain at my trying to get it back."

"I don't complain."

"You seem to take it as a personal injury, all the same."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Not at all. I've let you and the Form have your way. I don't feel fit for a tussle about it, and I don't care. That's all."

There was a pause.

"What about the future?" Bulstrode said, at last. "I suppose you think that now I've succeeded in getting in, I shall let everything slide, and muck up things generally?"

"I sha'n't be surprised if you do."

"Well, I don't intend to do anything of the sort. I want to make a decent captain, and—and that's what I want to speak to you about. Will you help me?"

Wharton looked at him hard.

"Help you!" he repeated.

"Yes."

"How can I help you?"

"By backing me up."

"That's a rather peculiar request to make of a chap you've just turned out of the captaincy, isn't it?" he asked.

"Perhaps it is. But I mean it all the same. I want to do the best I can for the Remove. You can give me lots of trouble if you like, if you choose to sulk."

"I sha'n't do that," said Harry, colouring.

"You've got such a blessed uncertain temper——"

"Leave my temper alone, for goodness' sake," said Harry impatiently.

"Very well," said Bulstrode, who seemed determined to be patient. "Never mind that. Only if you choose to pocket your injuries, real or not, you can help to make things go smoothly. I'm captain now, and you're not. But I suppose you want the Remove to beat Courtfield, all the same?"

"Of course."

"The Upper Fourth chaps are saying already that they'll lick us in the next Form match," went on Bulstrode. "They seem to think you will stand out of the cricket altogether, just to let the Lower School see me come a mucker."

Wharton paused.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked. "Do you want me to play in the Form eleven all the same?"

"Of course I do."

"I didn't expect that. Of course, if I'm wanted, I suppose I shall play," said Harry slowly. "I never expected you to ask me."

"I want the Remove to win, and I'm going to make up the best eleven I can," said Bulstrode. "I don't suppose I shall make many changes in the team."

"A lot of your backers expect you to make changes—in their favour."

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"That's their look-out!" he said.

Wharton laughed.

"You will play yourself, I suppose?" he said.

"A cricket captain isn't likely to leave himself out of the team," said Bulstrode, "and I've a higher opinion of my powers than you had. But I suppose I sha'n't make more than two or three changes at the most. If you care to play after stepping down from being captain, I shall be glad to play you."

"I suppose I could."

"And in other matters, I know a lot of the fellows will stick to you, in spite of the election. If you choose to make trouble, you can muck things up for me as captain, to a great extent."

"As you've done for me," said Harry.

Bulstrode looked uncomfortable.

"Well, I'm thinking of the Form," he said. "If you sulk and cause trouble, things will not go to rot."

"I sha'n't sulk, and I sha'n't cause trouble if I can help it. So long as you play the game, I'm willing to back you up."

Bulstrode rose.

"That's all I want," he said. "You'll find that I can be decent, I hope. By the way, Wharton, you're looking horribly seedy."

"It's nothing."

"I—I'm sorry I hammered you so much," Bulstrode said hesitatingly.

Wharton's lip curled ironically.

"It wasn't that," he said. "If I'd been fit, you wouldn't have hammered me at all, I can promise you that."

"You mean to say—"

"Oh, I don't want to talk about it!"

Wharton turned to his work again, and Bulstrode, after a moment's hesitation, left the study. There was a very dubious and dissatisfied expression upon the new captain's face.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Great Expectations.

HARRY WHARTON rose from the table in the study at last. The room seemed to be very stuffy, though the window was wide open. The gaslight danced before his unsteady eyes. He put his hand on the table to support himself.

Nine o'clock rang out from the clock-tower.

Half an hour yet to bed-time.

Gladly enough Harry Wharton would have gone to bed then. But he did not want the Remove to say that he had crept off to bed to hide his chagrin at his defeat. He was almost morbidly sensitive upon that point.

He resolved to go down.

He quitted the study, and passed Billy Bunter and several other fellows in the passage. They were carrying cricket-bags stuffed with good things from Mrs. Mimble's shop.

Bunter blinked at Wharton in a patronising way.

"Have you been invited?" he asked.

"What do you mean?"

"There's a big feed in the dorm. to-night," said Bunter; "I'm arranging things—"

"You fat fibber," said Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"You mean you're going to do the lion's share of the eating?"

"I'm helping to arrange things," said Bunter, with dignity.

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"I'll use my influence with Bulstrode, if you like, Wharton, and get you an invitation."

Wharton walked on without replying.

Billy Bunter grunted.

"Blessed if I'll let him come now," he said. "What I can't stand about Wharton is his rotten ingratitude, you know. It's no good being kind to that fellow."

Harry Wharton went downstairs.

There was a crowd of fellows in the junior common-room, gathered there for a chat before going to bed. They all looked at Wharton as he came in, in a very peculiar way. Some of his old friends had voted against him, or had not voted, looked somewhat sheepish.

"Hallo, Wharton," said Ogilvy, "you're looking rocky!"

Wharton made an irritable gesture.

"Oh, do let my looks alone!" he said.

"Certainly. But—"

"Oh, rot!"

Ogilvy coloured.

"Well, you needn't take it like that," he said. "I voted for you, though I'm blessed if I'm not half sorry I did, now. Not that it would make any difference, as Bulstrode has got in."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"It was your own fault, Wharton," said Morgan. "Why didn't you turn up at the election, look you?"

"Because I didn't choose," Harry snapped.

"Faith, and then it's your own look out intirely, and ye've no call to look so sick about it," said Micky Desmond.

"I'm not looking sick about it."

Micky grinned.

"Ye're looking sick about something, thin," he said.

"Sure, and I thought it was the election. But I may be mistaken intirely."

"You are! I don't care twopence for the election. Do let the subject drop, and let a chap have a rest from it," said Wharton angrily.

"Sure, and ye might keep your temper, if ye don't care about the matter, as ye say," retorted the Irish junior.

"Oh, rats!"

Wharton turned his back on the juniors, leaving them looking far from pleased. Several other fellows, who were going to speak to him to condole with him on his defeat, changed their minds about it, and held their tongues. The late captain was evidently not in a humour to be consoled with.

Wharton crossed over to the fire, and looked for a book he had left on the mantelpiece. His hand trembled as it groped there, and he could hardly see. It seemed to him that a fever was rising in his veins, but he would not let it get a grip upon him.

Bulstrode was standing on the other side of the hearth talking to Skinner and Vernon-Smith. The latter cast a triumphant glance at Wharton. He had no idea that Wharton was ill, and he thought that the defeated Form-captain was taking his defeat very badly indeed. He had expected Wharton to feel it keenly enough, but he had not expected him to look so sick as this in public.

"Blessed if I'm not surprised at Wharton giving himself away like this," the Bounder remarked, in a low voice to Bulstrode. "I should have expected the chap to keep a stiff upper lip over it."

"He was always so jolly lofty, too," Skinner said; "but the thing seems to have knocked him completely over."

"Well, there was the licking in the gym, as well."

"True."

"I don't think you'll have much trouble with Wharton in the future, Bulstrode, if he takes it like this," the Bounder observed.

Bulstrode cast an uneasy glance towards Harry Wharton.

"He does look pretty sick," he remarked.

"Sick as he can be, and no mistake. I'm surprised at it."

"Looks to me as if he were ill," said Bulstrode uneasily.

"Stuff; he's well enough!"

"He as good as hinted that he was only licked in the gym, because he was seedy at the time, and not fit to stand up in a tussle," Bulstrode said slowly.

The Bounder laughed scoffingly.

"Rot!" he said emphatically.

"You don't believe it?"

"No."

"He looks bad now."

"Well, it was a bad licking, and he's been through it since then," said Vernon-Smith with a grin. "You don't expect a chap to look particularly cheerful, under the circumstances."

"Well, no, I suppose not. Hang it," said Bulstrode uneasily, "I wish he wouldn't take it so badly, Smith!"

The Bounder stared at him.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"I don't know; it makes me feel uncomfy."
"Oh, that's rot!" said the Bounder. "You've nothing to be sorry for. The Form want you to be captain, and you've got them their wish. Wharton has no right to complain."

"No; but—"
"Besides, the harder you hit, the better," said Vernon-Smith. "Wharton has lorded it over the Remove long enough, I imagine."

"That's true. But—"
"Hang it; you're all but this evening," said Vernon-Smith impatiently. "It seems to me that there's cause for congratulation all round. Wharton's done in for good, if we're careful; and we're rid of his blessed goody-goody preaching for one thing. A chap will be able to smoke a fag in his study without having a chap poking in to see what he's doing."

Bulstrode started a little.
"You think so—because I'm captain?" he asked.
"Certainly. It's Liberty Hall now, I suppose."
"Nothing of the sort. Look here, Smithy, I may as well speak plainly—there's not going to be a lot of blackguardism in the Form just because I'm captain."

"What?"
"You heard what I said."
The Bounder sneered bitterly.
"You don't mean to say that you're going to follow the same goody-goody tack as Wharton, and make us as sick of you as we are of him," he exclaimed.

Bulstrode looked uneasy.
"I'm going to be a decent captain if I can work it," he said. "I don't see why you should expect me to be a rotter, because—"

"Then you'll have a hard row to hoe, that's all," said Vernon-Smith, closing his lips. "You will get about as pleasant a time as Wharton had."

"Just about," agreed Skinner, with a grin.
"With the disadvantage of having Wharton and the goody-goody set against you as well," added the Bounder. "You'll be between two stools, and you'll come to the ground—come a big cropper, I fancy."

Bulstrode did not reply. It was pretty clear, already, that his captaincy was not to be a path of roses. He crossed over towards Harry Wharton, leaving Vernon-Smith and Skinner talking in low tones.

"We're having a bit of a celebration in the dorm. to-night, Wharton," Bulstrode said.

Wharton looked at him and nodded. He was holding on to the corner of the mantelpiece, for his head was swimming—a giddiness was coming over him that he could no longer control. He could not speak.

"I hope you'll take part in it," said Bulstrode; "I'm sure you're welcome. I think it's a good idea to have no ill-feeling, and—to let bygones be bygones. I shall be glad if you'll join the feed, Wharton."

Harry stood motionless.

Bulstrode waited a few moments, a disappointed and chagrined look coming over his face. In the hour of his triumph his better nature seemed to have come uppermost, and he had never seemed more honest and manly than he did at the present moment.

"Haven't you anything to say, Wharton?" he asked at last.

Wharton did not speak. He was reeling.
It had come at last.

That strange giddiness had seized him, and he could not resist it. His head was spinning; the lights danced before his eyes.

He reeled and fell.

Bulstrode uttered a startled exclamation. He sprang forward at once, and caught Wharton as he fell, holding him in his arms.

"Good heavens," he exclaimed, "he's fainted!"

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Bulstrode's Triumph.

BULSTRODE held Wharton in his arms. Harry lay motionless, his face deadly white. There was no doubt about it, he had fainted.

"My word, it's genuine, then!" Vernon-Smith muttered, as he looked at the colourless face, and perhaps a pang of remorse stirred even in the hard heart of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

There was an excited crowd round in a moment.

Bulstrode lowered Harry gently to the floor, and tore open his collar.

"Bring some water!" he said.

Tom Brown soon had a glass of water at hand. Bulstrode dashed it into Harry's face, and the boy's eyes opened wide and wildly.

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"Wha—what is it?" he muttered, in bewilderment.

"What—Oh!"

He tried to rise, and Bulstrode helped him up. There was sympathy in most of the faces round him. Harry held on the shoulder of Bulstrode to keep himself from falling again.

"I—I fell down!" he muttered thickly.

"You fainted, old chap."

"Did I?"

"Let me help you upstairs," said Bulstrode anxiously; "you're in a bad way, I think. I—I never knew you were queer like this, Wharton. I wouldn't have thought you if I'd known—honour bright!"

Wharton did not reply. His senses were still reeling strangely. He allowed the burly Remove to take him upstairs. Bob Cherry joined them on the stairs, and gave Wharton an arm into the dormitory.

Bob undressed Harry and put him to bed.

Bulstrode lingered.

"It's all right," said Bob shortly; "I'll look after him!"

"I hope it's not very bad," said Bulstrode.

"Blessed if I know what it is! You needn't stay!"

Bulstrode left the dormitory.

When the Remove bedtime came, and the juniors came up to the dormitory, Wharton was lying still in bed, with a flushed face and very bright eyes. He was not asleep, but he was evidently not himself. There was no doubt now, to the dullest of the juniors, that Wharton was in a low state of health.

Bulstrode came to his bedside at once.

"Feel any better?" he asked.

"I'm all right," said Harry faintly.

"Feel well enough to sit up and help us with the feed?"

"I—I think not. Thank you all the same!"

"Look here, we won't have it, if you think the noise will bother you," said Bulstrode impulsively.

Wharton smiled slightly, and shook his head.

"I'm all right," he said. "It won't hurt me. I can't sleep. Go ahead!"

"If you're sure you don't mind—"

"I don't mind in the least."

"Right—ho, then!"

Loder looked into the dormitory to see lights out. The juniors by that time were all in bed, looking very quiet, and some of them were snoring.

If Loder had wasted any thought on the subject, he might have seen something suspicious in the unusual orderliness of the Remove. But he didn't.

His only object was to get rid of his duties as soon as possible. He turned off the light, grunted in response to the juniors' good-night, and left the Remove dormitory.

The juniors waited a couple of minutes for the prefect to get clear, and then Bulstrode gave the signal to turn out.

"Up with you!" he exclaimed.

"What—ho!"

"Get a light!"

"Here you are!"

Matches flared out up and down the long dormitory.

Bicycle lanterns were lighted, and candle-ends and Chinese lanterns. In a minute or less the Remove dormitory was illuminated from end to end.

Bunter was the first to drag a parcel from under his bed. But the others were not far behind.

Bulstrode waved his hand with a princely air.

"Turn out, all of you!" he exclaimed. "Everybody's welcome! Get out of bed, Cherry! You are not going to miss the feed, are you?"

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, get up! Don't be a pig!"

Thus adjured, Bob Cherry turned out with the rest. Bull and Fish and Linley and the rest of Wharton's chums joined in. Bulstrode's manner was very hearty, and it would have been surly to refuse.

And certainly it was a ripping feed.

All good things that delighted the hearts of the juniors were there—cold chicken and game pies and ham patties and pork pies and doughnuts, and fruit of all kinds, and cakes and biscuits and jams and jellies.

Bulstrode and Vernon-Smith had spent money right and left, and there was plenty to show for it.

Sitting on the floor, or sitting on the beds, the juniors started operations on that royal feed.

The whole Form, with the exception of Harry Wharton, joined in. There was no refusing Bulstrode. And Wharton would have joined if he had felt fit. It was not his way to bear malice, and he did not now grudge Bulstrode his victory.

Bulstrode's health was drunk with suppressed cheers, in ginger-beer and lemonade and currant-wine.

As the feast progressed the cheers grew less guarded, and

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there was considerable danger that some prefect might hear them, and visit the dormitory.

"Hurray for Bulstrode!"

"Bravo, skipper!"

"I say, you fellows, pass the jam!"

"Doughnuts this way!"

"Where's the chicken?"

"Faith, and it's finished!"

"Pass the ham, then."

"Here you are!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Wharton lay and listened to it all. Every dog has his day, the old saying goes, and it really seemed as if Wharton's day were done, and Bulstrode's had dawned. But the late captain of the Remove had no bitter feelings. He was content to let Bulstrode have his chance, and see what he would make of it.

Ogilvy jumped up.

"Chaps, Bulstrode has done us down splendidly! I propose a triumphal march round the dorm., with Bulstrode in the chair."

"Good egg!"

"Hurray!"

"I say, you fellows, you might pass the cake!"

"Bulstrode! Bulstrode!"

"Oh, hold on!" said Bulstrode. "Draw a line, you know!"

"No objections allowed!" said Ogilvy. "Here's the chair! Shove him in it!"

They had the chair ready—an ordinary chair, fastened to two poles to enable it to be carried on the shoulders of the juniors. Bulstrode was forced into the chair, and the poles were raised to the shoulders of four sturdy fellows, and Bulstrode sat high in the air in great state, but in great danger of taking a tumble if the bearers were in the least degree careless.

"Look out!" he exclaimed. "Don't break my neck, you know!"

"Faith, and what does it matter, so long as we're jolly?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March!" shouted Ogilvy.

It was a scene of wild enthusiasm. There was no doubt that the new captain of the Remove was popular. Ogilvy's idea was a torchlight procession, and the juniors gathered round the triumphal car, waving bike lanterns and candles, and banging trays and blowing tin whistles and mouth-organs with a horrid din.

"Hurray!"

"Bravo, Bulstrode!"

Rocking to and fro on his dangerous eminence, Bulstrode was marched the length of the dormitory, amid the din of cheering and clattering. A paper crown had been jammed on his head by some humorous junior, and it was quite a royal progress.

"Look out!" he gasped, as they reached the windows at the end. "Don't pitch me over! My hat! Oh! Look out!"

"That's all right!"

"Faith, and ye'll fall on ye're feet, Bulstrode darling!"

"Ow! Mind!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"More likely to fall on my head, you ass!"

"Sure, and the flure would be damaged if ye did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March!" shouted Ogilvy. "'See the conquering hero comes!' Hurray!"

"Hurray!"

The dormitory door opened, and Wingate, the captain of the school, put his head in. The procession came to a sudden halt, and the triumphal chair swayed, and Bulstrode shot out of it.

"Oh!" he roared.

He flung out his arms wildly to save himself. He caught Ogilvy with one arm round the neck, and Vernon-Smith with the other. The three of them rolled over on the floor together, and knocked over Bob Cherry and Micky Desmond.

Wingate stared grimly at the scene.

"What do you call this?" he demanded.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Yow!"

"Yah!"

"Faith, and I'm kilt intirely!"

"Yarrah!"

"It's all right!" grinned Bull. "It's only a Form celebration, Wingate! There's been a new election to-day!"

"Oh, has there?" said Wingate. "Well, you'd better stop celebrating, unless you want me to wade in with a cane. Get to bed—sharp!"

And the Remove got to bed—sharp. Wingate watched them in, and then retired; and the Remove dormitory was in darkness.

"Well," said Ogilvy, "it was a ripping celebration! Anybody hurt?"

"Ow!" groaned Bulstrode. "I've got a fearful bump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean, I'm sorry! Never mind, it was a jolly feed and a jolly celebration. And Wingate's very decent not to give us lines."

And the Remove settled down to sleep.

"Feel any better, Wharton?"

It was a quiet voice—Bulstrode's voice—as the chatter died away. Wharton was not sleeping.

"Thanks!" he said. "Much the same!"

"I'm sorry you're not fit!"

"It's all right!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, Bulstrode!"

The next morning Wharton joined Frank Nugent in the school sanatorium, instead of taking his place in Form. They left it together, three days later. Most of the Form anticipated trouble, but, to their surprise, there was no open sign of hostility between Harry Wharton and Bulstrode, though the latter was now captain of the Remove.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

Another splendid long complete school tale, dealing with the adventures of **HARRY WHARTON & Co.**, entitled:

"THE GREYFRIARS TYRANT," By FRANK RICHARDS,

And another long instalment of our thrilling adventure serial,

"THE WOLVES OF THE DEEP," By SIDNEY DREW.

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NEXT TUESDAY: "THE GREYFRIARS TYRANT."

Another splendid, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

[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.]

A THRILLING TALE OF AMAZING ADVENTURE!

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 learns that Scaroff has built a submarine similar to his own, and, accompanied by Rupert Thurston, sets out on the track of the Russian. One day Thurston is walking at the bottom of the sea with Ferrers Lord and Horton, the diver, when he strays from his friends and is picked up by the Tsaritza, Scaroff's submarine, on which Lady Violet, Ferrers Lord's niece, is being kept a prisoner. Scaroff attempts to bribe Thurston to betray his master, but Rupert refuses to have anything to do with the Russian's suggestions. Thurston becomes acquainted with a little Chinese boy named Ching-Lung, who decides to help Rupert to escape from the vessel. Ching-Lung tells Thurston that they are nearing port and that Scaroff is going ashore. "By Jove," says Rupert at length, "we're afloat! I can smell the sea."

(Now go on with the story.)

The Escape from the Tsaritza.

"Dat soce," squeaked Ching-Lung, solemnly wagging his pigtail. "It smellee mighty gooddee—eh? No hully, yet, for a bitee. We waitee some timee and den you sendee Ching-Lung for dinner. Chinese boy goce, and dey no lockee dooree. By-me-by he clawed back, when yaller man no lookee, and—he, he, he!—stickee dat in um's ribs. Dat makes um squealee—eh? He, he, he!"

He flourished a murderous knife, with a blade two inches broad and sharp as a razor. Thurston stared at him in horror.

"You little fiend!" he gasped. "Surely you don't mean to stab the man from behind? I'd sooner stay and rot where I am than have you do that! Don't you know that life is a sacred thing? You bloodthirsty little wretch!"

The knife was pointed like a needle, but, nevertheless, the Chinese boy balanced it, point upwards, on his nose, just as if that little flat blob of yellow had been made of india-rubber. His innocent, childlike smile broadened.

"Dat allee rightee," he said. "You no wolly 'bout dat. Yaller man bad man. If Ching-Lung no makee him squealee, him makee Ching-Lung squealee velly muchee, and we no skeddaddlum. Me justee jab him so in um's ribs, and him donee squealing. You knowee nuffing. You goce and eatee cookee. Ching-Lung mighty cleeber. He, he, he! Savvy?"

"Give me that knife!" said Thurston firmly.

The Chinese boy handed it over with a good grace, and, placing it under the folded blankets, Rupert sat upon it for safety. It was Ching-Lung's skilful juggling that made him put it there. To remove it, the Chinese boy had to remove nearly twelve stones of flesh and bones. Rupert lighted a cigarette as the fresh, salt air filled the stifling cell.

"You must think of some other plan, Ching," he said. "A plan without any murder in it. I won't have that!"

The Chinese boy sighed resignedly, and pocketed Shakespeare Willyum. Then the yellow face brightened.

"Me likee killee dat ole yaller chap," he said, "fo' him de manee ole Scaloff get do wackee-wackee, and him wackee velly hardee. Chinese boyee got big blains. We does dis. You sendee me for dinner, and I goce. De boat sailee all in hully, and lot of tings not unpacked. De fat ole cook openee to-day two big boxes of glasses. De boxes full of sllaw and papers. I sayee to cook, foleign debbil wantee dinner, and den etickee some lightee matches in boxes. Dey burnee and makee great smokee. Me yelle out: 'De ship's on fire!' And dey allee lun to puttee it out, yaller man withee dem. Den we boltee for deck and skeddaddlum. Savvy?"

It was a clever scheme. But for a moment Rupert pondered, for he wished to harm no one, except in fair fight. A little blaze could do no damage, for there was little to

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burn in the ship, even if the fire spread—and she was afloat, too. So the smoke could not stifle any of the crew, who could easily reach the fresh air. With the men on deck, and the manholes closed, the fire could not burn for ten minutes, for fire cannot burn without air.

"You're a smart little imp, Ching," he said—"almost too smart! How old are you?"

"Two huddled and folty-three," said Ching-Lung calmly. "My eldest bluvver's justee nine and a qualter."

Grinning, he tapped at the door and spoke to the sentry. The Mongolian nodded, and, grounding his rifle, let the little Celestial pass. The door was not barred or locked, for Rupert listened eagerly. The time had almost come.

Strangely enough, he was quite calm now, though the first hope of escape had excited him tremendously. For all that, the moments were terribly long. He strained his ears to catch any unusual sound, but he could hear nothing except the far-away lapping of water, and the regular beat of the sentry's tireless feet.

"It's a toss-up, now," he thought. "Some of these Chinese beggars can swim like seals, and though he said we were quite close to port, four or five miles may seem quite close to him; but it would be a tough job for me if the sea is anyway choppy. Anything is better than this, and I'll take my chance. Thank goodness I feel pretty fit!"

A shrill cry rang through the ship, and a few wisps of smoke came curling through the chinks of the door. Rupert leapt up, but the chain dragged him back. His heart sank, and he cursed himself for a fool. Throughout all their plottings and plannings they had forgotten the most important thing of all—forgotten that he was shackled, penned down, powerless to move a yard. All hope had vanished now, and he threw himself down with a bitter groan.

Footsteps—hurried footsteps—raced past the door and rattled upon the steel rungs of the companion ladder, shout answered shout, and the smoke grew denser. Something fell with a clatter at Rupert's side, followed by some other metal object that rebounded from the floor and bruised his hand. Then Ching-Lung's voice cried:

"Dere hammer and chisel! Chop 'um off! Be velly quicke!"

Bravo, Chin-Lung! Thurston laid the edge of the chisel against the horrible chain, and with a few ringing hammer blows sent it crashing through the links.

Cautiously he opened the door of his prison and peered out into the wreathing smoke. A man hurried past him, and he darted back. With a spring like the spring of a wild-cat the yellow-robed figure of Ching-Lung shot from behind the pillar and clutched the gaoler's throat from behind.

The rifle fell, and the brawny Mongol staggered.

Even the fabled Old Man of the Sea, who, in the quaint Persian fairy-tale, was first made drunk and then killed by the famous Sinbad the Sailor, had not a more tenacious grip than Ching-Lung. His little ignorant, heathen heart hungered for revenge against the man who had lashed him so cruelly at the bidding of Michael Scaroff. His yellow fingers closed the man's windpipe, stifling his mad cry, and choking back his breath.

He tried to crush his unknown assailant against a pillar by hurling himself backwards, but tripped and fell. No one but the Chinese boy could tell by what amazing acrobatic feat he changed his perilous position, and, instead of being crushed by the Mongol's massive weight, or having his brains dashed out against the steel floor, he appeared kneeling on the chest of the prostrate man, still clutching the swollen throat in a grip like a vice.

Thurston had turned white when he saw the sentry stumble, for he had given Ching-Lung up for lost. Tho

"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE," is the title of the grand complete school tale of TOM MERRY & CO., in this week's "Gem" Library. Order the "Gem" to-day. Price One Penny.

sight of the Chinese boy in his new position startled him even more. It was so weird, so incomprehensible, that for a moment he could only stare helplessly through the thickening smoke. The Mongol's face was rapidly blackening, and his yellow eyeballs protruded horribly. Luckily for Ching-Lung, the fall had dazed him, and his strong arms hung useless at his sides.

The flash of a knife brought Rupert back to himself. He darted forward, and caught Ching-Lung's arm.

"What did I tell you?" he cried, his eyes blazing with anger. "I said I would have no murder."

Ching-Lung sighed, and wagged his pigtail sorrowfully. Then, bending down, he kissed the Mongol's swollen forehead.

"Allee lightee," he said, grinning. "Me velly sofly to be so rude to pore pal or mannee. Chinese boyee kiss um better, and no makee him squealee dis afternoon. Make squealee, dough, if Chinese boy catchee him again when de foleign debil not here to stopee him. Good-bye, Mr. Yaller Chapee!" Then the Chinese boy's voice changed. "We better lookkee sharp!" he cried. "Come 'longee, or we no skedaddlum. Lun—lun!"

He ran towards the companion-ladder, with Rupert close to his heels. The atmospheric-pump was clanking away, but the alarm of fire had sent the men scurrying below. Smoke was pouring out of the manhole in huge white billows that rose in a column through the breezeless aid. Ching-Lung pointed to the east. Far away, like dim points of yellow on the dark sea, hung the lights of the port.

"How farce you can swimme?" asked the Chinese boy.

"How far is it away?"

Ching-Lung extended the fingers of his right hand. Five miles to the shore. It was a long swim, but Thurston was not dismayed. The weather had been hot, and the water, with the late June sun upon it, had lost its chill. It heaved round the vessel, and swished over her low deck, but not a ripple broke its placid surface even a yard from the ship. The Chinese boy quickly produced a coil of whippcord, tied it to a lifebuoy that hung on the rail of the conning-tower, and placed Shakespeare Willyum, the rat, upon his crown.

"You hangee on lightee to de topee of dat waggler, Shakespeare Willyum," he squeaked, "or elsee you gettee drowned, and tuinee up your toes." He shook his fist towards the manhole. "Good-bye, ole wicked Scaloff; me going. He, he, he!"

He waved his hand to Thurston, and, flinging the buoy into the sea, seized the low, outer rail of the deck, and lowered himself cautiously into the water. Rupert was quickly after him, after freeing himself of everything except his trousers and under-vest, and, side by side, with Shakespeare Willyum squatting unconcernedly upon Ching-Lung's head, they set out for the shore, leaving the hateful vessel-prison, to both, behind them.

Ching-Lung still wore his blouse and his amazingly wide trousers, but he did not feel at all hampered by them. Rupert soon found that as a swimmer he was no match for the youthful Celestial. Even the drag of the lifebuoy which he towed behind him made no difference to Ching-Lung.

"What have you brought that buoy with you for?" he asked, as the vessel behind them melted into the gloom.

"Dat for you to lestee on," said thoughtful Ching-Lung. "We goee milee, two milee, den you gettee velly tired. You swimme allee lightee, but you no Chineee boyee. Me boln on a sampan on Yang-tse-Kiang. Just de dayee I boln de ole mudder havee nothing for de dinner, so she gettee fishing-rod, and sit on de boatee to catchee lilly fish. What-ho! She velly soonee get big bitee, and overboard she go kerwallopee in de water. De ole mudder havee Chinese boy in her arms, and I goee kerwallopee, too. I see de big fish going downee to bottom wile de ole galee hangee on to rod. I grab him tailce, and sayee: 'You slimy ole fool, you runnee away with my mudder—eh?' He velly big fish, and he talk vely lude, so I punchee him in de eye, and fetchee him back. Yah Chinese boy knowee how to swim!"

A shrill hoot came drifting over the dark waters—the siren of a tug!

Searching for the Traitor—A Terrible Passage—The First Appearance of Eric Hagensen—On the Island.

If Ferrers Lord felt any uneasiness for Rupert Thurston, he did not show it. Not for a moment did he doubt that Thurston, like Lady Violet, had fallen into the clutches of Michael Scaroff. All along, until that day, the Russian had beaten him at every move of the game. Chance had brought him then within striking distance of Scaroff, but the crushing blow had never fallen, for he had been betrayed.

There was a traitor on board the Lord of the Deep!

Ferrers Lord hid the wild rage in his heart. He went through the vessel alone, and made his search alone. The reason the gun had failed to explode was easily found. One of the massive rubber-coated wires, as thick as a man's arm, that conveyed the deadly fluid to the gun, had been filed through. No doubt the same hand had flashed on the search-

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ONE PENNY.

light, and warned Scaroff just in time that his foe was upon him. But who was the traitor?

It was in the dead of night that Ferrers Lord explored the ship. Stripped to the waist, he repaired the gun, and then, prising up one of the plates of the floor, he worked for hours, surrounded by coils of insulated wire.

"Once bit, twice shy!" he muttered, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "Heaven help the traitor if he tries to play the game twice."

With a strange smile on his dark face, he donned his coat, and opened the door. Then he chalked on the iron panel:

"STOP!"

"Any man opening this door will be shot.—Ferrers Lord."

At dawn the Lord of the Deep was racing northward at a depth of sixteen fathoms. Ned Horton took his swim every morning as usual, but since he had been relegated to the forecabin he was careful, as a rule, to leave the water before the millionaire appeared.

On the morning after his duel with Nathan Trethvick, he ran full tilt against the dwarf at the door of the swimming-bath. Trethvick had a bandage round his head, and, as Horton tried to pass him, he barred the way.

"Not so fast, Mr. Horton," he croaked. "I want to talk to you. You ain't in no mighty hurry—eh?"

"I am not in a hurry," said the diver.

Trethvick rubbed his hairy hands, and puffed at his evil-smelling pipe.

"Look here," he said, "I'm a queer sort of chap, and the more you get to know me the more you'll think so. We've had a row, you and me, and my head's going like a donkey-engine to keep me from forgetting it. I tell you straight, it takes a good man to best me, and if I'd bested you I'd have knifed you right away. I like you for beating me. I like any man who can beat me, and I bear no malice. You acted real generous, and I got up early just to meet you on the quiet. Let's be friends, Mr. Horton."

If the diver had been any judge of character, he would have hesitated, but honest Ned thought no evil of anyone. He held out his hand at once.

"I don't wish anything else," he said, "and I hate to be at loggerheads with anyone. There's my fist."

The dwarf pressed his hand in a clammy, fish-like grasp, and waddled away, humming the old tune about the hanging of the skipper and the murder of the mate. As the door closed upon the diver, Trethvick turned, with a snarl, and shook his clenched fist.

It was barely five o'clock, and most of the men were still in their hammocks, except those in the engine-room and conning-tower. There was little need to keep a watch as on board an ordinary ship, no decks to be scrubbed, no coal to be trimmed or stoved, and little work of any kind to be done. As Trethvick often said, the cook was by far the busiest man aboard the Lord of the Deep.

Like a cat, often glancing behind him, often pausing to listen, Nathan Trethvick stole down the lower companion-ladder to the storage-chamber. He pulled aside a heap of lockers as he reached the bottom of the steps, and took out a roll of insulated wire. He tried to switch on the light, but the wire of the electric bulb had fused, so, with a curse, he struck a match.

For an instant his ugly face paled as he read the startling notice Ferrers Lord had chalked upon the door. Then, with a soft chuckle, he replaced the wire in its hiding-place, and crept away.

Ned Horton was drying after his swim when the millionaire entered the bath.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" said the diver hastily. "I didn't think you'd be so early."

"I do not intend to bathe this morning," said Ferrers Lord. "But Trethvick told me you were here, and that you had made the peace. I want someone to accompany me today. Come to me at eight o'clock."

"Yes, sir," answered the diver, saluting.

Just as the hands of his big silver watch pointed to the hour, Ned Horton knocked at the door of the saloon. Ferrers Lord rose from the table, while the Chinese servant filled a bag with cartridges, and carefully wiped the barrel and stock of a fowling-piece.

"Go to the purser, Horton," said the millionaire. "and get a pair of boots with rubber soles. We may have to climb. I will wait for you on deck. Carry the gun for me, please."

Horton speedily returned, and entered the conning-tower. To port, over the glistening waters, rose a low, circular island, utterly treeless, and most inhospitable to look at. Its rocky walls rose sheer from the sea, and crowds of birds flapped and shrieked around it. From its heart, as if from the crater of a volcano, rose a column of yellow smoke.

"Take the helm," said the millionaire's quiet voice.

Ferrers Lord, holding the oars, was seated in a dinghy.

Horton scrambled in, laid the gun across the thwart, and seized the helm. The oars dipped into the water, and, forced onwards by powerful strokes, the dinghy danced away towards the strange island.

"A queer-looking sort of place that, sir," said the diver, breaking the silence.

"Yes," answered Ferrers Lord. "I bought it from the Norwegian Government some years ago. It is hard to approach, and quite useless to anyone but myself and a few adventurous wildfowlers. No one comes here now, and vessels give it a wide berth. In the season there is some fishing to the south, but I allow no boats here. You will need all your nerve in a moment. Obey every gesture and word as promptly as you can, or we may come to grief. Listen! The tide is running in."

Horton bent his head. A dull, hollow moaning, increasing in intensity, reached his ears. Ferrers Lord shipped the oars and lighted a cigar. The boat gathered speed and moved on rapidly, as if it were drawn to the island by some gigantic magnet. The dull murmur swelled into a deafening roar.

"There is the entrance to my island citadel," said Ferrers Lord.

He pointed to a dark opening in the grey cliff, through which the water gushed at headlong speed. Fast in the clutch of the current, the boat rushed towards the mouth of the narrow cavern with increasing velocity. Bending forward lazily, the millionaire threw a rope over the tiller.

"Pull hard against that," he said, "when I give the word. The moment we are inside I am going to row like a madman, for, of course, unless the boat travels faster than the current, the helm will be of no use. It is pitch-dark in there, but I know the way. You see this little electric lamp in my buttonhole, which I am manipulating with my teeth? Watch it well, and obey it instantly, or we may come to grief. One flash means a point to starboard, two a point to port, if the two follow each other almost instantaneously. Two, with a second's interval, a couple of points to starboard, and so on. Do you understand?"

The roar of the waters almost drowned his voice, but the diver nodded. Then the flying boat dashed onward like a cork in a millrace, leapt into the cave, and all was dark. The thunderous roar of waters seemed to shake the island. On, on they raced through the pitchy gloom, while the mad thunder grew louder and louder, and the oars dipped faster and faster.

"Hold on for your life," cried the calm voice of Ferrers Lord, "and keep the tiller amidships!"

Even in the darkness the raging foam gleamed white under the bows, and the chaos of tumbling water seemed to shriek aloud. Down went the nose of the boat, almost flinging Horton from his seat. Down, down, still, till his brain swam dizzily, and his ear-drums seemed bursting with the awful uproar of the torrent.

Two quick flashes shot through the darkness, and he put the helm over. The uproar dwindled, a flood of light poured down from above, and the boat was floating placidly on a dark, waveless lake.

"Christopher!" muttered the diver, mopping his forehead. "The maelstrom is a fool to that!"

Ferrers Lord tossed his cigar away.

"You did not do so badly, Horton," he said, "though the passage is fairly comfortable with the tide as it is."

"Comfortable, sir—oh?" answered the diver, with a laugh.

"Then what is it like on ordinary occasions?"

"Pretty bad. The rapids we have just shot are a great deal steeper and longer, though the current is slightly less rapid. I blasted out the opening myself, and some day, when I have less business on my hands, I intend to light the passage with electricity, and blow up the rapids. As far as

I know, only three people have ever made the trip—yourself, Friedrich Hagensen, and myself. I have done it scores of times, but poor Hagensen did it once too often. He steered me on my first journey. He lies there."

The boat's keel grated against the shelving white sand of the cavern, and Ferrers Lord pointed to the rocks above. High over their heads a shaft of sunlight pierced the arched roof, and its shafts fell slantwise on a slab of white stone let into the wall of rock. Carved on the slab were the words:

"FRIEDRICH HAGENSEN.

A faithful servant and a brave man.

Drowned February 8th, 1891."

The sight of the lonely grave in the grim cavern damped Horton's spirits. He looked round him as the millionaire made fast the boat. The cave was a vast storehouse. Piled on the beach were masses of steel, iron-bound trunks, and cases streaked with red, which told they were filled with explosives, chests of biscuits, and tinned provisions, cases of wine, chests containing clothing, and a hundred other things.

"Christopher!" thought the diver. "How did they get these things down here? There's enough for a small army!"

The shrill peal of Ferrers Lord's whistle startled the echoes of the cave. The sunlight faded for a second as a little boyish figure slipped through the funnel in the roof of the cavern, and swung in mid-air, one naked foot thrust through the loop of a wire rope. Unwound from above, the wire hawser descended rapidly. The urchin held a second cord in his hand, whose other end was attached to an iron ring let into the rock a few yards to the left of the grave. As he dangled over the dark water, he pulled himself forward until he reached the beach.

"Well, Eric," said Ferrers Lord with a smile, "you are still alive, I see."

"Dot is so," said the urchin, scratching his fiery head. "Very pleased you to see; dank you very mooch."

He was a sturdy, well-grown lad of fifteen, with a freckled, mischievous face, and a mane of vivid red hair. He wore a pair of tattered blue knickerbockers, a ragged shirt, and nothing else, except a good-humoured grin. This was Eric Hagensen, the only son of the man who lay in his last sleep embedded in the rock.

"You are getting on with your English famously," said Ferrers Lord, smiling again.

Eric grinned again, scratched his fiery head again, and said once more:

"Dot is so. Dank you very mooch."

"I am going to take you away with me, Eric," went on the millionaire. "You are getting too big to be idling your time away here. They have been giving me very bad accounts of you, you ragged little villain. I have bought you nice clothes, but you will not wear them, and books, but you will not learn. They tell me you will do nothing but fish and rob birds' nests. That is bad going, youngster. I want you to become a brave, honest man, and a good sailor, like your father. This is Mr. Horton, a great diver, and a splendid seaman. Mr. Horton will take care of you. If you do not do what you are told, you will find that Mr. Horton knows how to use a rope's-end."

Young Hagensen lifted his white eyelashes, and his blue eyes examined the diver's smiling face. Then he held out a dirty hand, and grinned.

"I him mooch like," he said. "Him big. I for him got present. Dank you very mooch."

In the fulness of his heart the youngster emptied his bulky trouser-pockets, and thrust his gift upon the diver. It consisted of six or seven gulls' eggs, a cork bristling with fish-hooks, a cartridge, a knife with only one sound blade, and last, but not least, a young fledgling jackdaw, which opened its red mouth hungrily. Horton laughed merrily.

"Christopher!" he said. "You're a queer little brat; but I'm not taking presents just now, thank you all the same. I dare say we shall be good friends by-and-by. I beg your pardon, sir. Did you speak, sir?"

"Yes," answered the millionaire. "We are going above. Come after me."

He slipped his foot into the noose, and, clutching the rope, blew the whistle again. The rope ran swiftly over the drum above, and he shot upwards, and vanished through the opening. As the sling came down young Hagensen pulled it in, and Horton prepared to make the novel ascent. Eric gave the signal with a shrill cry, and almost before he knew it the diver was standing in the sunlight beside his master.

He was in a circular valley, surrounded by cliffs. A row of zinc and wood buildings ran down the centre of the treeless valley, and a tall chimney belched out smoke. He heard the roar of machinery and the dull clang of hammers. Under a long, low shed lay the framework of Ferrers Lord's new submarine boat, like the skeleton of some long-extinct

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"FOR THE HEAD'S SAKE," is the title of the grand complete school tale of **TOM MERRY & CO.**, in this week's "Gem" Library. Order the "Gem" to-day. Price One Penny.

monster. Men were toiling at it, swarming over it, hammering, sawing, filing, riveting.

The millionaire went forward lazily, and Horton relinquished the gun to Eric, and followed him.

"What do you think of my figure-head?" asked Ferrers Lord.

A glance at the framework of the new vessel showed the diver that she was larger than the Lord of the Deep. The figurehead, made of steel, and wonderfully modelled, was half the body of a gigantic negro. The waist rose flush from the pointed prow, and two mighty arms were extended, the huge hands clasping the hilt of a sword that must have weighed two or three tons at least, and formed the vessel's ram.

But it was the face of the steel figure that fascinated the diver. Never had he seen a face so full of malignancy and terrible cruelty. The eye-sockets, each two feet in diameter, were covered with thick glass for searchlights; the mouth, half open, revealed two rows of grinning teeth. He dreamed of the horrible thing for weeks after.

"It is a clever piece of work, sir," he said slowly; "but, by Christopher, it's a bit of a nightmare!"

Ferrers Lord laughed his quiet laugh.

"Perhaps it is," he answered, "for it was designed by a madman. I think it fits in well with the name of the vessel—the Destroyer. When she is finished, our friend the Russian will not have it all his own way."

Two quick reports, that made the diver almost jump out of his shoes, rang out close behind him.

"Your head mind!" cried the youngster's voice.

Something came hissing through the air, and struck the diver with a thud upon the shoulder. Grinning, the youngster swung the smoking gun over his left arm, and bravely picked up the wild-duck he had shot as it was flying overhead. Ferrers Lord hid a smile as he turned away.

"Dot him hit hard," chuckled the youthful Norwegian, as he picked up the spoil. "I another you shoot soon. Hope no hurt when she bumped. Dank you very mooch."

Horton rubbed his shoulders, and looked down thoughtfully at his new pupil.

"Don't mention it, my friend. Ducks are all very well in their way; but I don't care for it to rain ducks, thank you very much, when I've left my shell-proof umbrella at home. I think I'll carry the gun, if you don't mind. Christopher! I'm beginning to think you're a caution!"

Eric handed over the gun, and scratched his fiery head. All the workmen were grinning, and the millionaire, walking with rapid strides, was fifty yards ahead.

"Why don't you tan the little imp, sir?" asked a voice.

The voice belonged to a lanky youth of eighteen, who was passing, carrying a box of rivets. Hagensen's right hand disappeared into the pocket of his ragged trousers, and, before the diver could stop him, a couple of eggs of doubtful age and odour had flattened themselves upon the grimy features of the lanky youth, thrown with unerring aim. Two more found a resting-place in the nape of his neck as he bolted for shelter.

"Dank you very mooch," said the Norwegian. "Now we go!"

Ching-Lung Speaks Words of Wisdom, and Tells the Story of Hwang-Hio, the Soup-Maker—Is It Treachery?—Billy Buttons Makes His Bow—Ashore at Last.

Again the siren of the tug hooted, and Rupert peered eagerly through the darkness. The tug was not to be seen as yet, for sound travels far over the sea. Ching-Lung churned along with his rapid, telling strokes.

"Hadt'n we better yell?" asked Rupert. "Ten to one they'll hear us and pick us up."

The Chinese boy shook his head slowly and emphatically, taking care not to upset the balance of his pet Shakespeare Willium. Then he winked knowingly to himself, and shook his head again.

"No yellee," he squeaked—"no yellee at allee."

"Why not? Great Scott! Why should we miss the chance of being picked up?"

"Me tellee you. Chinese boy gotee big blaine. You no t'inke for nuts, you silly ole foreign debbil! De tug come along, and de man in de tug sayee: 'Hallo, you yaller chapee, and you whitee trash, wheree you comee from?' We say some lie. We sayee: 'We fallce off boat.' He sayee: 'What boat?' Den we no can tellee, and dey say we desert, and ole Scaloff hearce de biggee noise, and collal us again. Ching-Lung gotee big blaince."

Thurston grasped his meaning. If they were picked up and brought into harbour, they would certainly be closely questioned, and the news of the castaways would make "biggee noise," as the crafty Celestial had said. What reason could they give for being found in such a perilous position? If they told the truth no one would believe them, though rumours of submarine boats filled the air. Besides,

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to tell the truth, whether they were believed or not, would offend Ferrers Lord, he felt certain.

"Perhaps you are right, Ching," he said, after a moment's thought; "but I don't fancy the idea of swimming all the way, and taking the chance of sneaking ashore unseen. I'm getting fagged already."

"Have a leste, den," squeaked the Chinese boy.

Thurston hooked his arms over the lifebuoy with a sigh of relief.

"You're a genius, Ching. How's Shakespeare Willium getting on?"

"Oh, him allee lightee, taking de sea bleeze! Him a plesent from de Shah of Persy."

The brief rest was doing Rupert good. He laughed.

"Draw it mild, Ching," he said. "Shah of Persia—eh? When did you see him? And what did he give you that magnificent present for? It sounds a bit like that wonderful yarn about your mother and the fish."

Ching-Lung's face bore an expression of deep sadness, and two more tears trickled down his yellow cheeks.

"You no believe poor Chinese boy," he sighed. "Allee lightee, you do what you best likee. I tellee you de Empelol of Molocco givee me Shakespeare Willium."

"You said the Shah of Persia just now."

"You shutee up!" said Ching-Lung sharply. "Your ears allee gone bustee! I tellee dat yannee 'nuther dayee. You just leste for a bit till your legs no stiffce, and I tellee 'nuther yannee 'bout my Uncle Hwang-Hio, de soupe-maker. Hwang-Hio livee in Pekin, and makee soupee for de Empelol of China. My uncle him velly lich, and velly fatee. Allee de pletty gals smilee at himce when he goes down de steeet in um's litter, callied by fifty slaves. Allee at oncee dere come a dogee-famino—"

"A what?" asked Rupert.

"You not knowee your own lingo," said Ching-Lung irritably. "De dogeees what makee de soupee got scarcee. Oh, dat loubly soupee!"—the Chinese boy smacked his lips in ecstasy at the thought—"dat lubly, joocy soup, allee blown glavee and fat! Ah me! I sayee de dogeees getee scarcee, and de ole uncle sayee to me: 'Ching, my yaller boyee, de empelol wantee him soupee, and if him no getee it off goes your ole uncle's napper—chopee, chopee! You lun away and findce me lilly dog.'"

"Me velly solly for ole Hwang-Hio, and huntce allee Pekin for a dogee, but none lettee. As I comee back velly sadee to Hwang-Hio's palace, a man comee 'long with a lot of lats likee Shakespeare Willium. I tink better lat soupee dan chopee-chopee, so I buy de lotee."

"Ole Hwang-Hio him sitee on de matee with big lazor leady to cut um's windpipe. I showee him de lats, and he feelee velly bad, but we skinee dem and makee soupee. De next day Hwang-Hio sitee shivelling, waiting for de guards to comee from empelol and chopee um's head off. At lastee de empelol comee himself and kisse ole Hwang-Hio. 'Your soupee lubly, ole pal,' him sayee, smacking um's lips. 'I goodee mind to chopee your fat head off for not sending soupee likee dat before. You sendce me ten quarts evely dayee. Here's tuppence for you.'"

"Ole Hwang-Hio mighty joyful, you bet," squeaked on Ching-Lung, "and de plice of lats goee up velly muchce. Evely day de empelol dlink um's soupee, and allee go well. At lastee de empelol begin to lookee funny. His ears grow long, whiskers comee on his facee, and his teethee getee velly sharpe. De doctols no usee to tellee what wrongce, and allee have their heads chopee off. While this happen- ing, and de empelol getting mole likee a lat after his soupee, de dogs lun shortee again, and we havee to makee de soupee for other people out of lats. Ole Hwang-Hio havee five hundled cats in a loom, and I feedce dem. One nightee de empelol comee 'long on de quiet to askee my uncle if he thoughtee it was the soupee he so fond of that makee him so funny. I feedce de cats, and somebody knockce at de dool. I yellee: 'Come in!' and in walkce de empelol."

Ching-Lung paused in his thrilling story, and sobbed.

"Well," said Rupert, "what happened after that? I'm quite interested."

"Me notee know 'jackly,'" said the Chinese boy, heaving a bitter sigh. "Allee de five hundled cats howce at once, and lush at the empelol, and hangee on to him. I goce out to see de time, and comee back later. Allee de cats lookee velly fatee and happy, but de empelol gonee. I findce a pairee of slippers, one sixpence, sourcee fardens, tlee black buttons, and two glass marbles on de floor. De empelol mustee have been velly muchce like a lat, for he never comee back, and de cats say nothing. Allee I knowce is dat evely- body who boughtce ole Hwang-Hio's cat soupee comee back to askee for mole of de same kindee. Dat's allee. Now we go."

The tug flashed past only a few cables' length to port as

Another splendid, long, complete story of
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the Chinese boy ended his harrowing story. Refreshed and highly amused, Thurston abandoned the lifebuoy, and struck out again for the distant shore.

Ching-Lung, with the cord of the buoy attached to his belt, swam a little ahead. He was more like an otter or a seal than a human being, for he had been born on a Chinese sampan, and was quite as amphibious as an alligator.

Somehow, Thurston was beginning to like the untutored little savage more and more, and Ching-Lung returned that feeling. Suddenly, Thurston said:

"Have you any idea what port that is, Ching?"

"New York," replied the Chinese boy promptly. "Me got a bluther keep opium-shop dere."

"Rats!" said Rupert, with a smile. "We're thousands of miles from New York!"

"Den it's Margate," squeaked Ching-Lung promptly. "Me got a bluther dere keepee flied-fishee shop."

Rupert smiled again, and wondered how many relations his yellow friend had scattered all over the universe. He saw clearly that Ching-Lung was absolutely ignorant of their whereabouts, and he felt, too, that once ashore Ching-Lung would have to abandon the leadership. For all he knew himself, the lights that were at last creeping dimly into sight might as easily be the lights of Cape Town as of any other place. True, Michael Scaroff had spoken about Hamburg, but he did not trust the Russian.

Merry Ching-Lung warbled a song in most melancholy tones, and in a strange tongue, but that steady breast-stroke never slackened, and those sturdy arms and legs worked like the beat of a locomotive's piston-rods. Thurston began to pant.

"Hold on, Ching!" he said at last. "I'm pumped for a spell! Go slow!"

"You thiksty, old chapee?" inquired Ching-Lung. "You tleece dlop of dat p'izer."

While Rupert rested on the buoy, Ching-Lung produced a silver flask containing brandy, and unscrewed the stopper with his teeth. Thurston took a sip, and felt his muscles grow more vigorous.

"You're a wonder, Ching," he said. "Aren't you going to drink some yourself?"

The Chinese boy wagged his head negatively.

"Me no dlinkee spilitis," he squeaked. "Me only dlinkee wine, and notee velly nuheck. Ole Shakespearee Willyum him no dlinkee. Ole magpie!"

Ching-Lung broke off short, with a wail of sorrow that startled Thurston.

"What's the matter?" he cried.

"Me forgotten Billee Buttonee!"

"Billy Button? Who the dickens is he?"

Ching-Lung's yellow face was the picture of woe and regret, and his squeaky voice revealed it. Then he snapped his white teeth together, and thrust his pig-tailed head close to Thurston's. The rat scrambled from one head to the other, and again proceeded calmly to wash its face.

"Billee Buttonee he my magpie," said Ching-Lung rapidly, "and me not loose him for fifty thousand soveleigns! Oh, me big foollee to folgetee him! You stayee with Shakespearee Willyum, and me goee back. Me no longee tince. You waittee."

"What! Risk your life for a magpie?"

"Me likkee twenty lives for Billy Buttonee."

Thurston gasped, and tried to catch the Chinese boy's arm, but he was too late. Ching-Lung turned over on his side, and, with his head almost submerged, flung himself forward with amazing speed, his right arm working like a flail. Thurston called him despairingly, but there was no reply. The darkness had swallowed him.

Some time passed. The breeze freshened, and the waves curled higher, till the tossing buoy, as it rose, showed Rupert the lights more clearly. As he saw them his spirits rose again. They were certainly nearer.

"By Jove," he said, "this looks healthy again! There's an inshore current, for when I looked last those lights seemed miles away. Poor little Ching! I'd give a lot to have him here."

The moments dragged on, and the water, though warm, was beginning to numb his limbs. Shakespearee Willyum, not at all disconcerted by the novelty of his position, sank into slumber.

And moment by moment the gleaming lights grew clearer as the buoy drifted in on the current. Though his position was so perilous, Rupert's mind was full of the foolhardy little savage who had faced death and recapture for the sake of a miserable magpie.

Suddenly the true pluck and manliness of the whole thing dawned upon him. As we have said, Rupert was passionately fond of animals. He remembered the day at school when he had gone tooth and nail at a great, hulking tramp who was thrashing a half-starved donkey, and had been almost murdered for his pains.

Ching-Lung rose wonderfully in his estimation. He might be a heathen and a savage; but every man and every boy who loves God's dumb creatures and treats them with kindness is a true gentleman at heart.

Rupert turned and glanced over his shoulder, his heart beating more loudly, as he heard a splash of oars. He was about to utter a shout, when a horribly inhuman voice croaked:

"Punch him in the eye! Punch him in the eye! Ha, ha! Ha, ha!"

A second later the boat slid into view, and a hand gripped his collar.

"You getee rightee in here," squeaked the owner of the hand.

It was Ching-Lung. Wet, bedraggled, gasping, Rupert was dragged into the boat. As he sank down upon the thwart, the same weird voice croaked from the bow:

"Punch him in the eye! Punch him in the eye!"

Ching-Lung grinned, and hugged himself joyously.

"He, he, he!" he squeaked. "Dis allee lightee—savvy? You take no notice of ole Billee Buttonee; he allus say dat. Dat's him a-talking. Dey still pumpsee bleff when I goee back, but dey not yetee puttee de file out. I sneakee downee, and findee Billee Buttonee in um's boxee, and fetchee him. When I getee back I collal dis boatee. Oh, yes, Chineee boy gotee big blaine!"

"Ching," said Rupert Thurston fervently, "you're a real jewel! I'll never forget this!"

"Punch him in the eye! Punch him in the eye!" croaked the magpie.

Ching-Lung was pulling with a will, and the shadow of the town rose clearly before them specked with lamps. Suddenly Rupert bent down and seized a canvas bag that lay with a dozen others at the bottom of the boat. It was sealed, but he broke it open, and the dim light flashed yellow into his eyes.

"Gold!" he cried — "gold!"

He had found some of the spoils of Michael Scaroff's piracy. To the very brim the bag was filled with English sovereigns. Ching-Lung's yellow face turned greenish-white.

"Chuckee dem ovelboald!" he said, with chattering teeth. "Do not touchee dem! Me sawee how dey gotee!"

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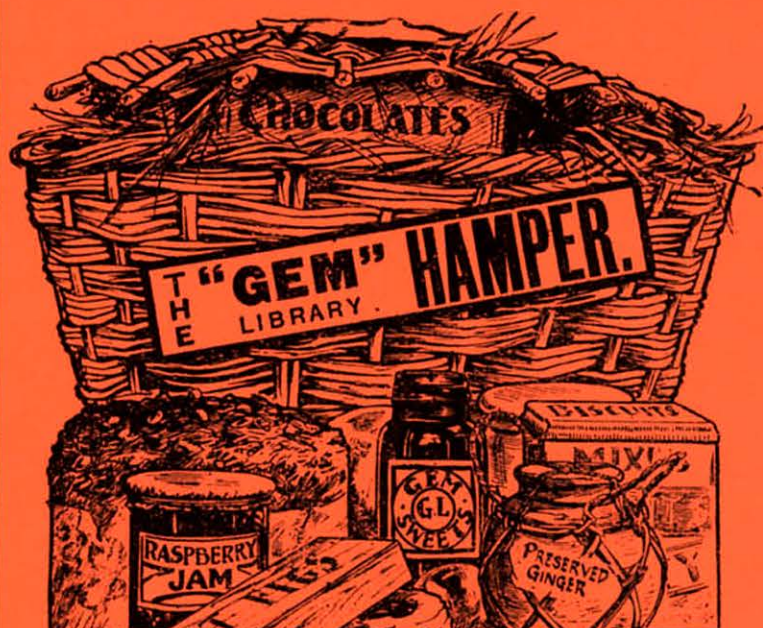


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