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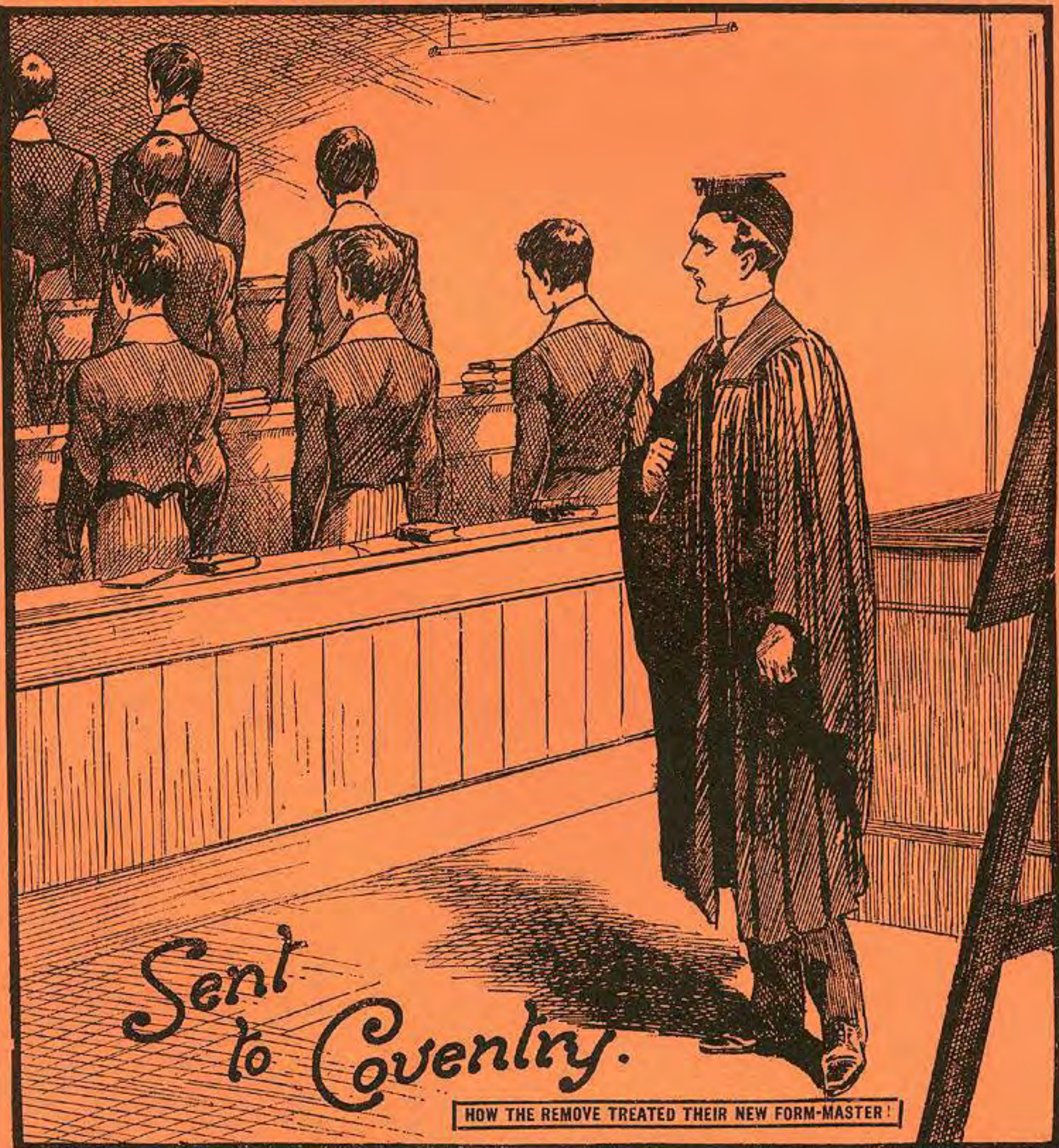
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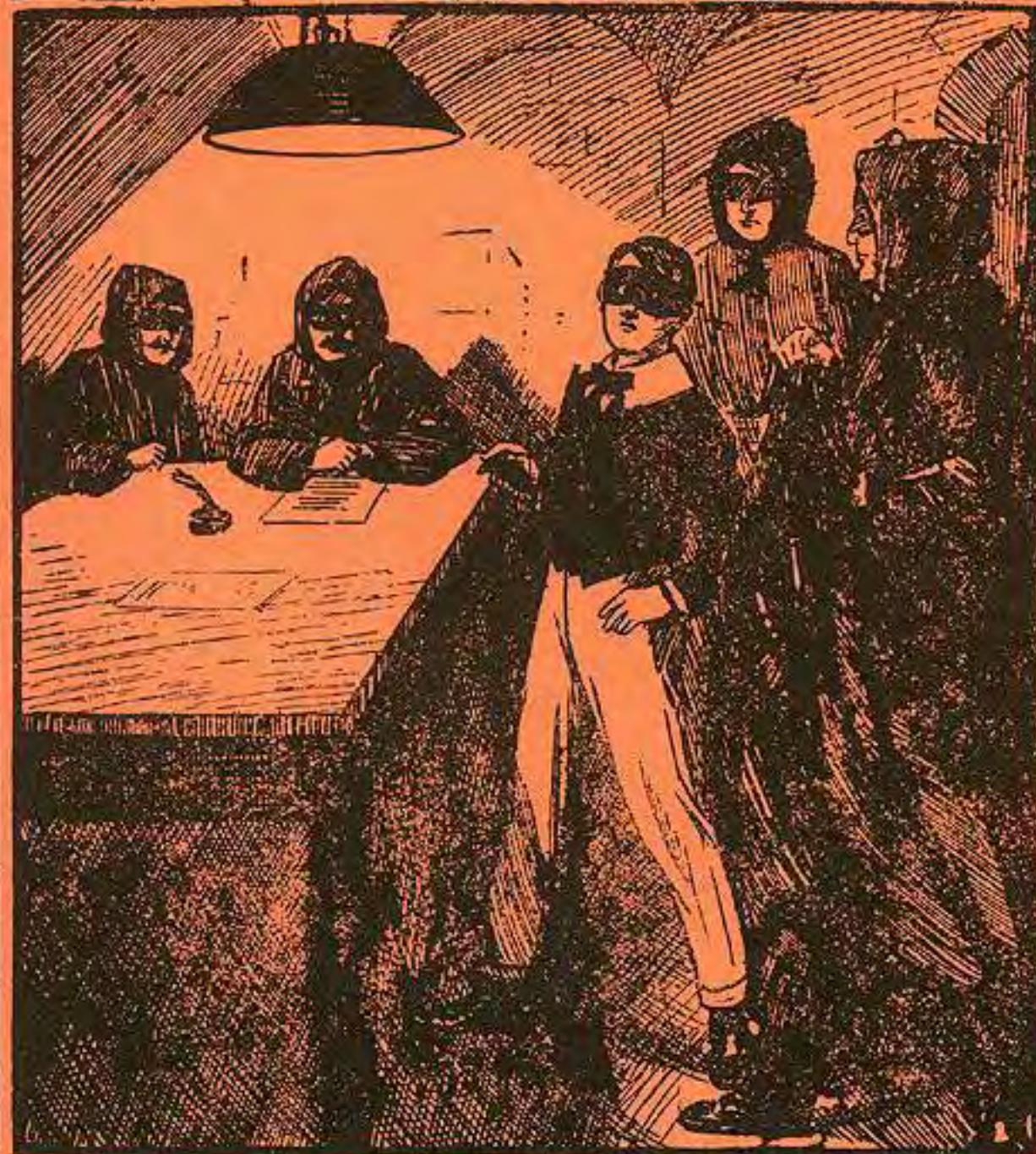
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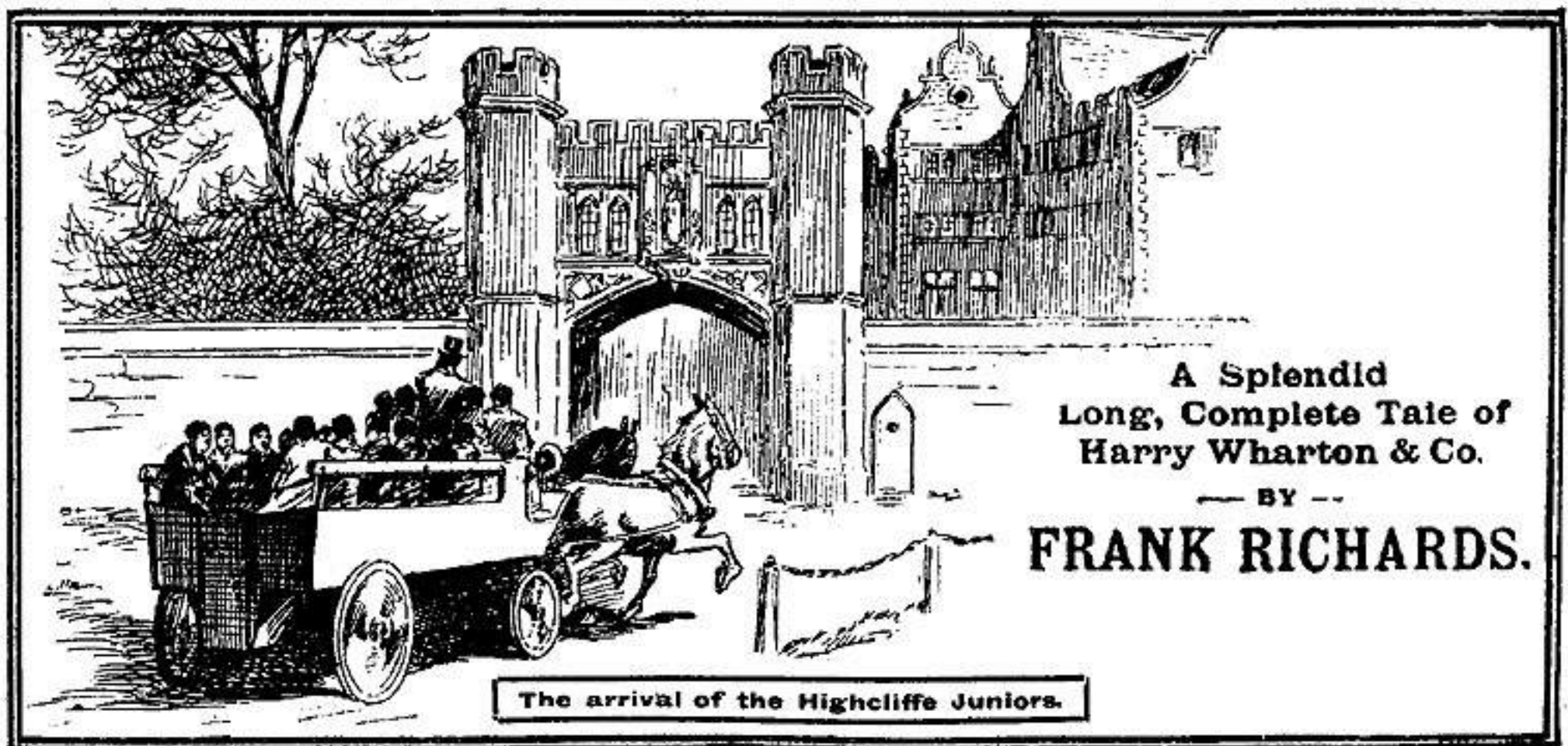
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Knocked Down!

"TEN o'clock!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.
"My hat!"
"Ten!"

Ten strokes had boomed out from the clock-tower at Greyfriars. Through the open windows of the junior common-room the strokes came in clearly, borne upon the night breeze.

Ten o'clock!

At Greyfriars, half-past nine was the bedtime of the juniors. At half-past nine Wingate, of the Sixth, had looked into the junior room, and called to the Upper Fourth, and the Upper Fourth had gone to bed. Wingate had not said a word to the Remove—the Lower Fourth.

For that week it was the duty of Courtney, the prefect, to see lights out for the Remove, and Courtney had not put in an appearance. The Remove, naturally, did not go to bed without being told. When the Fourth Form were gone, the Remove continued their various occupations, waiting till Courtney should turn up. And Courtney did not. But when ten o'clock struck, and the Remove were still up, there was considerable excitement in the room.

It was but seldom that a junior Form had stayed up to such an hour of the night. The juniors could not understand it. And they rejoiced in their unaccustomed freedom. While the cat is away, the old proverb declares, the mice will play, and the Remove were making the most of their opportunity. At an hour when they were usually in the arms of Morpheus, as Frank Nugent classically put it, they were now playing leap-frog in the common-room, with a din that could be heard for a considerable distance through the house. But there was a general pause when ten struck. The juniors could not make it out.

"Ten o'clock!" said Bob Cherry. "What's up, I wonder?"

Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove, made a suggestion.

"We ought to go to bed," he remarked.

There was a growl of dissent at once.

"Rats!" said John Bull. "If the prefects aren't ready to see lights out, that's their bizney, not ours."

"Hear, hear!"

"I guess you're right, Johnny," said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I reckon it's rot, too, for us to go to bed before the Sixth, anyhow. We'll freeze on here until we're turned out—some."

"That's what!" said Bolsover emphatically. "I'm not going to bed, for one."

"Nor I!"

"No fear!"

"Well, we shall be jolly sleepy in the morning if we don't," Harry Wharton remarked in his practical way.

"Rats!"

"Never mind that!"

"Now, then, Bunter, tuck in your tuppenny!" roared Bolsover. "Don't stand there jawing, you chaps; let's get on with the game."

"Right-ho!"

"Hurrah!"

"Wharton and Bulstrode can go to bed, like good little boys, if they like," said Bolsover, with a sneer. "I'm not going."

"Same here!"

"Faith, and ye're right, Bolsover darling!" said Micky Desmond. "Tuck in your tuppenny, you fathead, Bunter!"

And a stream of juniors "processed," as Fish called it, along the common-room, with stamping and shouting that echoed far down the passage. Wharton and Bulstrode did not go to bed; they joined in the game again. After all, it was no business of theirs to do the prefect's duty for him.

But Harry Wharton could not help feeling puzzled. Courtney, of the Sixth, was not the fellow to neglect his duties in this way unless something had happened. And if Courtney were detained somewhere, why did not another prefect—Wingate, for instance—take his place, and see that the Lower Fourth went to bed? It was extraordinary! And the master of the Remove, too—where was he?

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, it was true had been called away from Greyfriars, but his place had been taken at the school by another master—a man new to Greyfriars—a young Cambridge man named Lang. The Remove had heard about him, but they had not seen him yet, and they were curious about the new master who was to have the doubtful pleasure of instructing them for a week or more. It was known that he was very young for such a position, and many of the more unruly spirits in the Remove were looking forward to the fun of "ragging" him, as far as he would stand it. And the Removites were adepts at "ragging." And certainly Mr. Lang was not beginning well with the Form. He might be trusting to the prefect to see the Remove off, but it was a Form-master's duty to see that it was done, all the same. Where was Mr. Lang? What would the Head say if he found that the new Form-master was leaving his Form to their own devices in this way?

Bump!

Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, came down heavily upon Billy Bunter, instead of clearing him, and Bunter rolled over on the floor with a gasp and a yell. That was Bolsover's idea of a joke, which he would not have ventured to play upon Harry Wharton or John Bull or Bob Cherry. Bunter roared as he lay on the floor:

"Ow, ow! Help!"

Bolsover sat up and roared, too, but with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I'm hurt! Yow!"

"That was a beastly trick, Bolsover," said Bob Cherry, looking at the bully of the Remove with a flash in his eyes. "You've hurt Bunter."

Bolsover grinned.

"Oh, it was an accident, of course!" he said.

"I know jolly well it wasn't," said Bob Cherry angrily. "Are you hurt, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter groaned deeply. The slightest injury always brought terrific groans from Bunter, and it was not safe to show him any sympathy; it always made him very much worse.

"I—I think I'm killed!" he moaned. "I—I mean I'm frightfully injured. My spinal column is broken in three places, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"I dare say I can mend it," said Bolsover, getting up, and applying his heavy boot to Bunter's ribs. "Now see if you can get up."

"Yaroo!"

"Another kick or two, and—"

"Yow! Beast!"

Billy Bunter jumped up with surprising agility for a fellow whose backbone was broken.

Bolsover gave him a final kick that sent him staggering across the room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There, I told you I could set you right again!" grinned the Remove bully. "Come on, you fellows, let's go round again!"

Bolsover bent down to make a back in his turn. Bob Cherry came along, and put his hands on Bolsover's back, but did not clear him. He bumped down upon him, as the

bully had bumped down upon Bunter, and rolled him over on the floor.

"Yaroo!" roared Bolsover. "You clumsy ass!"

Bob Cherry picked himself up off the burly junior.

"Sorry!" he said blandly. "It was an accident, of course, just as much as in your case, you know."

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Bolsover jumped up, his eyes blazing and his fists clenched. Ever since a terrific combat in the gym, in which the burly Bolsover had fallen under the prowess of Bob Cherry, the bully had been careful to avoid personal conflict with the champion fighting-man of the Remove. But he was too furious to think of that now. He rushed at Bob Cherry with his fists lashing the air, and Bob put up his hands at once.

"Hold on, you duffers!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "We may have a prefect in here any minute!"

"Chuck it, Bolsover!"

"Order!"

But Bolsover did not heed. He was upon Bob Cherry in a moment, and the two juniors were fighting, hammer and tongs, at once. Bob had to give ground before the heavy rush, and he was driven back as far as the door, and there Bolsover closed with him. But Bob's grasp was like iron when he got it upon his adversary. Bolsover was swung round, twisted off his feet, and flung to the floor.

Bump!

Bob Cherry panted.

"Hurrah!" shouted Frank Nugent.

Bolsover lay for a few moments dazed. Then he leaped up, blind fury in his face, and dashed at Bob Cherry again. At the same moment the door opened, and a young man in cap and gown came in—a slim young man, with a fair face and somewhat handsome features. It was the new Form-master. Although the Removites had not seen him before, they knew at once whom it must be, and a warning was shouted to Bolsover.

"Look out!"

"Cave!"

"Stop it, you ass!"

But Bolsover was blind with rage. He did not even see Mr. Lang. He dashed on. Bob Cherry had dropped his hands and stepped back at the sight of the master, and the latter strode in, just in time to receive Bolsover's attack.

Right at the new master the burly junior went, hitting out like a madman.

"Take that!" he roared. "Take that—and that—and that!"

Crash!

Hubert Lang, the new master of the Remove, "took that." He had no choice in the matter, and the furious attack swept him off his feet, and he fell heavily in the doorway.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Bad Beginning.

BOLSOVER staggered back.

As the new master fell, the Remove bully realised what he had done, and he dropped his hands and stood staring blankly at the new master.

Mr. Lang lay in the doorway, quite dazed.

Bolsover's blows had been terrifically hard, and they had not been stopped by any defence, and they had taken full effect upon the master's face. Mr. Lang's lip was cut, and one of his eyes was closing. He seemed so dazed by what had happened that he lay there, in the doorway, gasping.

"Great Scott!" muttered Bob Cherry. "Bolsover's done it now!"

"My hat!"

"Phew!"

Harry Wharton was the only fellow who seemed to keep his presence of mind. He ran forward, and assisted the new master to rise. Mr. Lang staggered up dazedly, leaning heavily upon Wharton's shoulder.

He was evidently not an athlete. The "pale cast of thought" in his face showed that he was a scholar, and it was easy to see that he was a man who cultivated the mental side at the expense of the physical side of his character. His attainments might be very great, but he was not the man to inspire respect in a rough-and-ready Form like the Greyfriars Remove.

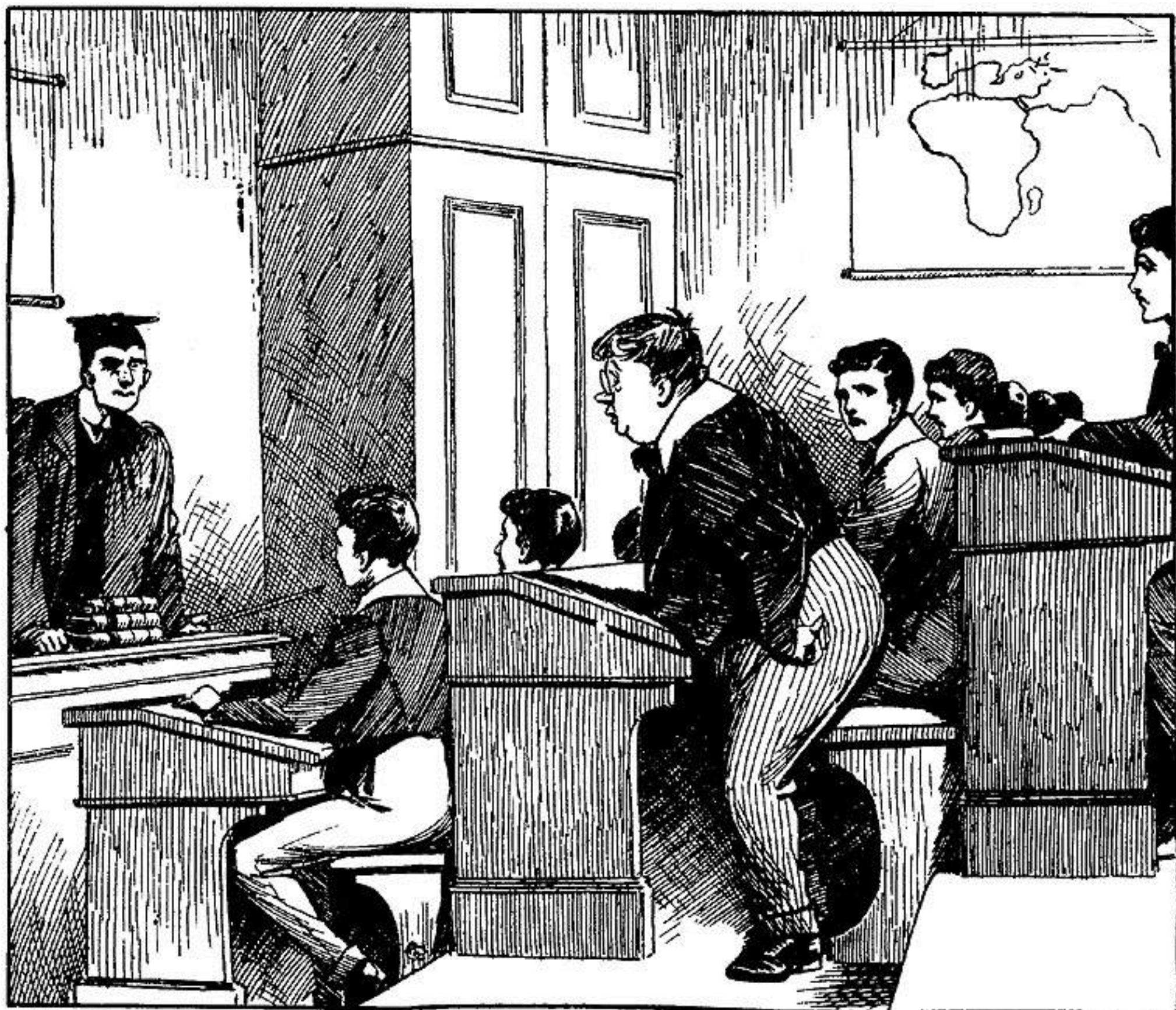
"What—what—" he stammered.

Bolsover was crimson. He frequently ventured upon as much insolence as he dared with masters and prefects. But he had never dreamed of felling a Form-master in this way. It was a little too "thick" even for Bolsover.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" he stammered.

"What—what—" Mr. Lang gasped weakly.

"It was an accident, sir," said Harry Wharton. "He



Mr. Lang was seated at his desk, and he looked round sharply as the Owl of the Remove took his place. "Who are you?" he exclaimed acidly. "I—I—I'm Bunter, sir." (See Chapter 4.)

didn't see you coming in, sir; you came in so suddenly and quietly."

The last word seemed to irritate the new master. He turned upon Wharton with an angry frown.

"Hold your tongue!" he exclaimed sharply.

Wharton bit his lip.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Which of you boys struck me in that manner?" said Mr. Lang, looking round, and pressing one hand to his eye.

Bolsover was silent. If Mr. Lang, in the confusion of the moment, had not observed who had attacked him, the Remove bully did not intend to give himself away. Neither did anybody else mean to give the required information, either. It was no business of theirs to betray Bolsover, unpopular as he was.

Mr. Lang gasped for breath, and gradually recovered himself. A fixed look of anger was on his face; a cold, steely expression in his eyes that was not pleasant or encouraging to see.

"I have asked you a question," he said. "Which of you boys struck me as I came in? I did not see him, I was so taken by surprise."

"It was an accident, sir," said Bob Cherry respectfully.

"Was it you?"

"No, sir."

"Who was it?"

Silence.

The new master's eyes gleamed as he looked over the crowd of startled and dismayed juniors. He had not begun well with his Form, but certainly they had not begun well with him.

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"Perhaps you do not know who I am," he said, in low, distinct tones. "I am your new Form-master—Mr. Lang. I am taking Mr. Quelch's place here at present. You are under my authority, and in case of any disobedience I shall report matters to the Head."

The Removites looked at one another.

Those words alone were a confession of weakness of character. Mr. Quelch was always quite able to manage his Form without invoking the assistance of Dr. Locke.

The silence grew painful.

It was left to Mr. Lang to break it. He did not make an imposing figure as he stood there taking in short, quick breaths, and rubbing the eye where the heavy fist of Bolsover had struck.

"Will one of you boys satisfy me?" he exclaimed.

Silence.

"Very well," said Mr. Lang, setting his teeth. "Tomorrow, I believe, is a half-holiday at this school?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry Wharton, while some of the Remove sniffed audibly. It seemed to them as if everybody ought to know that Wednesday afternoon was a half-holiday at Greyfriars.

"The whole Form will be detained for the afternoon tomorrow," said Mr. Lang.

There was a general gasp.

Mr. Lang was a young man—a very young man—but he had evidently lived long enough to learn how to ride the high horse. Gating a whole Form for a half-holiday was a measure that the Head would have hesitated to take, but it came quite easily to this young man, and he dealt out the

severe sentence as if he had been giving out impositions of fifty lines apiece.

As Frank Nugent murmured to Wharton, it was a case of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread.

The gasp of the Remove was followed by a murmur, and the murmur grew into a growl, and then into a howl.

Gated for a half-holiday, the whole Form, and, as it happened, that afternoon was the afternoon selected for the first footer match of the season—the first regular fixture. Mr. Lang did not know that, but probably he would not have cared if he had known. It was easy to see that Mr. Lang was not great on sports.

"Oh, sir!" said Bulstrode, in dismay. "We're playing Higheliffe to-morrow, sir."

"What?"

"We're playing Higheliffe juniors to-morrow afternoon, sir."

"Who are you?" demanded Mr. Lang, looking directly at Bulstrode.

"I'm Bulstrode, sir; captain of the Form."

"Oh! Then it is your duty to report to me who it was that struck me as I entered the room," said Mr. Lang.

"Oh, sir!"

"Who was it?"

"It's not a Form-captain's duty to sneak, sir," said Bulstrode.

"Do you refuse to obey me?"

Bulstrode was silent. He did not like Bolsover more than anybody else did, but he would have suffered any penalties rather than betray him.

"Very well," said Mr. Lang. "Take five hundred lines, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode snorted. The Remove glared. It was pretty clear that Mr. Lang had a heavy hand in dealing out punishment. Probably, in the course of time, he would learn to go a little more lightly, but at present the Remove were getting the benefit of his inexperience.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "It looks as if we're going to have a high old time with this giddy merchant. What did old Quelch want to buzz off for?"

"It's rotten!" muttered Wharton. "I suppose this is the first Form the chap's ever taken, and he doesn't know how to handle it."

Nugent chuckled.

"Then we shall put him through it if he begins like this," he said.

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "We're not goin' to be gated to-morrow afternoon. Why, the Higheliffe fellows would say we got it up on purpose because we spunked the match. You know what they are."

"Yes, rather!"

"Give him a groan!" said Bolsover.

"Hold on!" said Wharton. "That's not the way to get off the gating. We ought to talk to him gently, like Dutch uncles—"

But Bolsover's suggestion, in the present humour of the Remove, "jumped" more with their inclinations. It was taken up at once. The Remove gave their new master a groan—a most terrific groan, that rang through the common-room.

Mr. Lang started.

"Cease that noise at once!" he exclaimed.

Groan!

"Boys! Be silent!"

Groan!

Mr. Lang clenched his hands wildly. How to make the Remove leave off groaning when they were determined to groan was a puzzle to him. And the Remove, detecting with the keen instinct of schoolboys in such matters his indecision, groaned all the more, and began to enjoy the scene. Terrific groans rang and echoed through the junior common-room and down the passage.

"Once and for all," shouted Mr. Lang, "I command you to be silent!"

Groan!

"Boys—"

Groan!

The last groan was simply deafening. The door of the junior room was pushed open, and the stalwart figure of Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, appeared. There was an angry frown upon Wingate's face.

"What does this row mean?" he exclaimed. "I— Oh, I did not see you, Mr. Lang. I beg your pardon!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mind Your Eye!

WINGATE stared in blank amazement at Mr. Lang. He had never seen a Form-master with a black eye before, and Mr. Hubert Lang's damaged eye was rapidly becoming black. The juniors could see at once, too, that the captain of Greyfriars was already on far from good terms with the new Form-master. Doubtless that accounted for Wingate's not having interfered with their staying up so late.

Mr. Lang bit his lip hard.

"I—I did not come in here to interfere, sir," said Wingate quietly. "I heard a terrific row, and came along to stop it. I did not know you were here."

Mr. Lang became crimson.

"I think I have already told you that I can manage my Form without interference from the prefects," he said. "I explained the same thing to Courtney."

"Yes, sir. Courtney understood, and he has not interfered," said Wingate respectfully. "But the usual bedtime for the Remove is half-past nine, sir, and it is now a quarter-past ten."

"I—I am afraid I forgot to notice the time," said Mr. Lang. "I was working in my study, and in the interest of reading Cicero I allowed the time to pass unheeded. The boys knew their own bedtime, however, and certainly should have gone to bed of their own accord."

Wingate smiled.

"That would be a great deal to expect of juniors, sir," he said.

"I do not see it," replied Mr. Lang tartly. "I shall expect a great deal of my Form, and it will be better for them not to disappoint me. Boys, go to bed at once."

The Remove hesitated.

They had seen irresolution in Mr. Lang's character, and they were inclined to disobey him, and see what he would do. But Wingate was there, and nobody cared to try conclusions with the captain of Greyfriars. Wingate made a gesture, which was enough for the Remove. They filed out of the Room, and the groans were heard no more.

Mr. Lang was left there with the Greyfriars captain. Wingate could not help looking at the discoloured eye. He wondered how Mr. Lang had come by it.

"A beefsteak would do that good, sir," he suggested.

"Oh, it is nothing!"

"It will be jolly black to-morrow, sir."

"Never mind."

"I—I suppose it was an accident, sir?"

"Accident or not, it will be severely accounted for," said Mr. Lang. "Someone rushed at me and struck me violently in the eye as I entered the room. I did not see who it was, and the other boys refuse to give me his name."

"They would not like to do so, sir."

"I have sentenced the whole Form to detention for to-morrow afternoon," said Mr. Lang. "I think, perhaps, that will bring them to their senses."

Wingate looked dismayed.

"The whole Form, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly!"

"They are playing a footer match to-morrow afternoon, sir," said Wingate. "It's a rather important match to the youngsters. They will feel it very keenly if they're not able to play, sir."

Mr. Lang's lip curled.

"A football match?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir, with the juniors of Higheliffe School."

"You do not seriously suggest, Wingate, that I should rescind a punishment for the purpose of allowing the Lower Fourth to play a childish game?" said Mr. Lang, with unconcealed contempt.

Wingate looked at him steadily.

"A childish game?" he echoed.

"That is how I regard it—football, cricket, childish games, which may have a certain amount of value as providing exercise for the limbs, but nothing beyond that," said Mr. Lang tartly; "and I certainly should not allow any nonsense of that sort to interfere with any decision I had come to."

And Mr. Lang walked out of the room.

Wingate looked after him, and then thrust his hands deep into his pockets and walked away. He joined Courtney in the Sixth-Form passage. Courtney's usually sunny face was clouded. He gave the Greyfriars captain an inquiring look.

"Well, what was the trouble?" he asked. "I kept clear of the room, as Lang told me he didn't want my assistance in looking after his blessed Form. I never knew a chap looking for trouble so keenly as that young man."

Wingate grinned.

"Somebody biffed him in the eye," he said. "He's gated the whole Remove for to-morrow afternoon, and when I

ANSWERS

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gently pointed out to him that they'd be cut up if they couldn't play Highcliffe, he said that he couldn't allow childish games to interfere with his noble decisions."

"My hat!"

"The Remove will be very wild if they're really gated to-morrow, but perhaps he won't stick to it. He's making a rotten bad beginning—getting on the wrong side of the prefects is!" said Wingate, laughing, "and then gating the juniors on the day of their first footer match of the season. If he keeps on like this he'll find himself sent to Coventry worry the ass—I hadn't seen him ten minutes when he was by the whole school, I imagine."

"And serve him jolly well right!" said Courtney. "What did he want to snub me for? I hadn't done anything to started."

"He's very young," said Wingate, "and inexperienced."

"He'll get some experience with the Remove, anyway."

And both the prefects laughed. There was no doubt on that point. No master could deal with a Form like the Greyfriars Remove without learning things, and it was likely enough that his hair would grow grey in the process.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lang had gone up to the Remove dormitory. He was still very angry, and his eye was paining considerably. He put his hand over it when he passed anybody; he was very much ashamed of its discoloured state. As he did not yet know his way about Greyfriars, he did not find the Remove dormitory easily. Any prefect would have guided him with pleasure, but Mr. Lang had one of the faults of early youth—he was extremely independent, and believed in doing things unaided, with a conviction that he knew better than anybody else in the wide world. Authority was new to him, and it had something of the effect upon him that wine might have upon those unaccustomed to it. He was jealous, too, of parting with a fraction of his authority, though an older master would have been glad enough to leave a part of his work to the prefects.

Mr. Lang walked into the Fourth-Form dormitory, and felt for the switch and turned on the light. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, woke up, and blinked at the Remove-master in the sudden light.

"Ah! In bed already!" said Mr. Lang. "Very good!"

"Eh?" said Temple.

"I am glad to see that you are all in bed," said Mr. Lang.

"Been in bed half an hour or more," grunted Fry. "Who are you?"

"What?"

"I think you've made a mistake, sir," said Temple, with polite irony. "We're the Upper Fourth, sir."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Mr. Lang coloured.

"Ah! Indeed!" he said. "I have certainly been in error. Where is the Remove dormitory?"

"Next door along the passage," yawned Temple.

"Thank you."

Mr. Lang turned off the light and withdrew. A chuckle passed up and down the Fourth Form dormitory before the juniors settled down to sleep again. The general opinion was that the new master of the Remove was an ass.

Mr. Lang, feeling a little confused by his mistake, went along to the Remove dormitory, where he found the light on, and the juniors not yet undressed. Some of them had taken their boots off, and some hadn't. A few were removing their collars. But the preparations for bed had not gone very far.

Mr. Lang looked in frowningly.

"Now, boys, to bed—at once!"

The Remove looked at him, and undressed with provoking slowness. Harry Wharton, who was generally quite a model, was as refractory as the rest. The whole Form were annoyed with their new master, and suffering under a sense of injury, and they had discovered, too, that Mr. Lang had not a firm hand, in spite of his authoritative manner; he was something in the nature of a lath painted to look like iron.

Mr. Lang waited.

Exactly what to do he did not know. He could not punish the Remove for slowness, for he did not really know how long he should allow them, and besides, he had already punished them so heavily that further punishments might not be heeded. He had fired off, as it were, his biggest gun to start with, and the small arms were not likely to be much regarded after that. Lines were nothing to juniors who were already sentenced to detention for the afternoon upon which they had planned to play their first footer match of the season.

The Remove were in bed at last. Skinner gave Mr. Lang a look of great solicitude as he said good-night.

"I hope your eye will be better in the morning, sir," he said.

Mr. Lang looked sharply at him. He felt certain that Skinner was poking fun at him, but Skinner was looking quite grave and anxious.

"Thank you," said Mr. Lang stiffly. "Good-night."

"Good-night, sir. Mind your eye!"

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ONE
PENNY.

Mr. Lang swung round.

"Who said that?" he exclaimed.

"I did, sir," said Frank Nugent.

"What do you mean by such a remark?" demanded the Form-master angrily.

"I only meant what I said, sir," said Frank innocently.

"Your eye seems to be damaged, sir, and I was suggesting that you should mind it, sir."

Mr. Lang breathed hard through his nose.

"Very well," he said. "Good-night."

And he closed the door of the Remove dormitory—very hard!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Chance!

THE Remove were looking very heavy-eyed when they turned out on the following morning. It was fun, doubtless, staying up till a quarter past ten, but the want of the usual allowance of sleep told upon their tempers. The rising-bell, like time and tide, waited for no one, and they had to turn out at seven. They did not look amiable when they came down. Billy Bunter, indeed, did not get up. The Owl of the Remove always wanted more sleep than anybody else, and generally some other fellow kindly dragged him out in the morning, but on this particular morning they let him alone. Bob Cherry shook him to wake him up, and Bunter blinked at him savagely.

"Look here," he exclaimed. "I'm not going to get up. I'm too tired. I've got to think of my constitution. You can tell Lang I'm ill."

"Rats!" said Bob.

"Well, tell him to go and eat coke, then!"

Bob laughed. He was not likely to give Mr. Lang that message. But he left the fat junior in bed, and Bunter stayed there when the Form went down. When the Remove came in to breakfast, Billy Bunter had not yet put in an appearance. Mr. Lang, naturally, did not know how many boys there were in the Remove, and he did not notice the fat junior's absence.

The other fellows noticed it, but they made no remark on the subject. It was not their business to attend to Mr. Lang's affairs for him. They were thinking of the afternoon, and the forbidden football match. What was to be done was a puzzle. If the match was not to be played the Highcliffe fellows would have to be told, and that was a most unpleasant thing. Ponsonby, Gadsby & Co., of Highcliffe, were a most unpleasant set of fellows, and they would be certain to think that the Remove were faking the match. It was very late in the day to scratch, that was certain. But unless Mr. Lang relented there was nothing else to be done.

"We must beg off somehow," said Bulstrode, who was most worried of all, as captain of the Remove. "We can't let the Highcliffe cads think we are afraid of them."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry. "But Lang doesn't understand. I doubt if we shall be able to make him understand."

"We've got to, somehow."

"What are you going to do about it, Bulstrode?" Wharton asked.

"Tackle him on the subject after morning school," said the Remove captain, after a little thought. "I think a deputation of a lot of us might have some effect."

Wharton looked grave.

"That's leaving it rather late," he remarked. "If we can't get leave, we shall have to wire to Highcliffe almost at the last moment."

"I don't see how it can be helped," said Bulstrode.

Harry Wharton said no more. Bulstrode was a little jealous of his position as captain of the Remove, and he did not care much for advice. And Wharton, who had been Form captain a short time ago, felt a certain delicacy about proffering advice unasked. It might look as if he wanted to act in his old capacity, and override the new captain. But certainly Bulstrode's plan was not likely to improve matters very much.

The Form went into the class-room without Billy Bunter. Bunter came downstairs after they had gone in. He had been turned out of the dormitory by the maids coming up to make the beds. He came down very sulkily, realising too late that there would be no breakfast for him. He could have obtained refreshment at the school shop, if he had had any funds, but Bunter was in his usual state of impecuniosity. And as all the boys were in the Form-rooms, the fat junior had no chance of borrowing. He wandered disconsolately about the passages, till Wingate came across him on his way to the Sixth Form-room. The Greyfriars captain stopped, and beckoned to Bunter.

"What are you doing out of your Form-room?" he asked. Bunter blinked at him.

"I—I've only just come down," he stammered. "I—I've been ill, and I couldn't get up this morning, please, Wingate."

Wingate pointed to the Remove-room.

"Go in!" he said.

"But I—I haven't had any brekker, Wingate."

"It will do you good to miss it for once," said Wingate with a laugh. "If you've been ill, I expect it's from over-feeding, you fat gormandiser. Go in."

"Oh, really, Wingate—"

"Go in at once."

"But I'm hungry," said Bunter. "I say, Wingate, would you mind lending me a bob to get something at Mrs. Mimble's? I'll let you have the bob back out of my postal-order to-night."

Wingate did not reply in words. He took the fat junior by the back of the neck, and marched him to the Remove Form-room, opened the door and pushed him in and pulled the door shut behind him.

Billy Bunter rolled into the Form-room, and gasped. Mr. Lang was seated at his desk, and he looked round sharply as the Owl of the Remove took his place.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed acidly.

"I—I—I'm Bunter, sir."

"What do you want here?"

"N-n-nothing, sir."

"Then go out again at once. Stay!" exclaimed Mr. Lang. "Do you belong to this Form, Bunter?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then why did you not come in with the rest?"

"If you please, sir, I—I've been ill, sir."

Mr. Lang looked concerned at once. He did not know Bunter yet, and undoubtedly he had a kind heart.

"Oh! I am sorry for that," he exclaimed. "What is the matter with you, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter blinked keenly at the master. He was in the habit of pretending to be ill, but that, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it in the beautiful American language, "cut no ice" with the Remove. But here, evidently, was someone who was ready to believe in him at last.

"If you please, sir, I—I feel weak and—and tired," he said. "A—a general disinclination to work, sir, and that sort of thing."

"That's a complaint he's had a jolly long time," Frank Nugent murmured.

And the juniors grinned.

"I missed my breakfast this morning, sir," said Bunter, encouraged by the Form-master's sympathy. "I—I suffered from loss of appetite, sir. Now I'm getting fearfully hungry, but the breakfast has all been cleared away, and I can't get any."

"That will never do," said Mr. Lang. "I will give you a note to the housekeeper, Bunter, and she will provide for your wants."

"Oh, thank you, sir. You're very kind, sir."

"I hope," said Mr. Lang, "that you, and all the other boys of my Form, will come to look upon me as a friend, and a man to come to in any difficulty or distress."

"Good!" murmured Bulstrode. "I'll go to him about the footer match."

Mr. Lang wrote a note, and handed it to Bunter. The Owl of the Remove, hardly able to believe in his good luck, took it in his fat hand.

"Oh, thank you, sir," he exclaimed effusively. "You are very kind indeed, sir."

"Not at all, Bunter."

"But you are, sir," said Bunter, scenting out the fact that flattery was not disagreeable to Mr. Lang. "You must really allow me to say it, sir. I think you are very kind indeed, sir, and I want you to feel that I am grateful, sir."

"Very well, Bunter. You may go."

"Thank you, sir. Thank you very much."

And Billy Bunter went, gleefully enough. Outside the Form-room door, he looked round to make sure that Wingate was not in sight, and then indulged in a soft, cunning chuckle.

"My word!" he murmured. "Of all the soft asses—!"

Bunter did not finish the reflection, but that was sufficient proof of the depth of his gratitude to his new master. He rolled away towards the housekeeper's room, with the Form-master's note in his hand.

In the Form-room, Mr. Lang resumed his seat at his desk. The Remove were not in a good temper. If Mr. Lang thought of making a good impression upon them by his kindness to Bunter, he was likely to be disappointed. Bunter was too unpopular for anybody to care whether the Form-master was kind to him or not, and they despised his simplicity in being taken in by the champion humbug of Greyfriars. And they were feeling too anxious about the

afternoon's match with Highcliffe to feel kindly towards the man who was the cause of their anxiety.

Mr. Lang showed that, whatever might be his other shortcomings, he was a sound scholar, but that did not make him any more popular. Fellows who were caught in mistakes in construing, or who were spoken to sharply for carelessness, were not pleased thereby.

Upon the whole, the Remove were in a vile temper at the end of the morning lessons, and they marched out with sulky faces. Mr. Lang spoke to them, as he dismissed them, in a tone that admitted of no argument.

"I shall be here this afternoon," he said. "I am sorry it has been my duty to detain you, but you will realise upon reflection, I hope, that the punishment is deserved. I shall be here at two o'clock, and shall expect you."

There was no reply from the juniors, excepting in the form of black looks.

They left the Form-room in silence.

Outside, in the passage, they looked at one another.

"What do you think of the rotter?" said Bolsover.

"Oh, he ought to be boiled!" said Nugent.

And the whole Form concurred in that opinion.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Deputation.

THE Remove were looking very grim when they came in to dinner. Mr. Lang had not yet been approached upon the subject of rescinding the detention. Bulstrode was beginning to feel that it was hopeless, and he hesitated to put the matter to the test. And the other fellows felt that they had to leave it to Bulstrode, as captain of the Form.

Billy Bunter rolled up to join the Remove at the door of the dining-room. The fat junior had not turned up for morning lessons at all, and there was a fat smile of contentment upon his plump face.

"I say, you fellows, what are you looking gium about?" he asked.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I've had a jolly good brekker!" said Bunter, with much satisfaction. "Mrs. Kebble looked and sniffed like anything, but she had to give it me. Lang seems a bit of a softy, doesn't he?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Bit of an improvement on Quelchy—hey?" said Bunter.

"No, you ass!"

"Well, I like him better. He's soft, and——"

"Er-r-r!"

The juniors went in to dinner. Mr. Lang was at the head of the Remove table, his eye being by this time an art shade in dark green, and looking very peculiar. But he was looking good-tempered. Probably he had an equable temper, and was chiefly wanting in tact and in experience of boys.

After dinner, the Remove wandered out disconsolately into the Close. The fellows who were to play in the footer match surrounded Bulstrode.

"What are you going to do?" Bob Cherry demanded.

"I guess something will have to be done," Fisher T. Fish remarked. "We shall have to put it straight to the blessed guy!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"A deputation is the only thing," said Bulstrode, looking as determined as he could. "All the eleven had better come with me to the beast!"

"Good egg!"

And Bulstrode marshalled the Remove eleven, and they marched off to Mr. Lang's study, where they were certain to find him. Mr. Lang, it had already been discovered, did not spend much time in the open air. He was generally buried in his books when he was not working. Some of the masters at Greyfriars played in the games, and those whose age did not allow of it generally took plenty of exercise. A man who stayed indoors from choice was not the man to inspire respect in the Lower Fourth.

Tap!

It was with considerable uneasiness that Bulstrode tapped at the door of the Remove-master's study. But Mr. Lang's voice was quite mild and soft as he bade him come in.

Bulstrode opened the door, and walked in. The rest of the football eleven followed him, and Mr. Lang rose to his feet at the sight of that unexpected invasion of his study.

"What is it?" he asked.

Bulstrode coughed.

"If you please, sir——" he began.

Then he broke off, hesitating.

Mr. Lang looked over the expectant faces of the Removites, and a hard expression came over his own countenance. He evidently guessed for what purpose the eleven youngsters had visited him.



In an instant there was a wild and whirling scrimmage. The juniors were tumbling out of bed on all sides, catching up pillows and bolsters to join in the conflict against the three masked men. (A thrilling incident taken from the grand, long, complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. and Lumley-Lumley at St. Jim's, entitled "The Dormitory Secret," by Martin Clifford, which is contained in this week's issue of The "Gem" Library. Out on Thursday. Price One Penny.)

"I trust," he said, very distinctly, "that you have not come to me with any intention of asking me to rescind the detention of this afternoon."

"If you please, sir, that's just what we've come for!" Bulstrode blurted out.

"Then you may as well retire at once! It is quite useless!"

"But, sir—"

"You may go!"

Bulstrode bit his lip, and turned towards the door. Harry Wharton remained facing the master, with a steady look.

"Please, Mr. Lang, we have a very important match on this afternoon—"

"I cannot help that!"

"It's very late to give Highcliffe warning that the match is off, sir."

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"You could surely have written last night," said Mr. Lang.

"Well, yes, sir; but—"

"You have only yourselves to blame for your negligence, in that case!" said Mr. Lang. "I shall expect you in the Form-room at two. You may go!"

"Please allow me to speak, sir. Could you possibly allow the eleven who are playing to have time off for the match, if the rest of the Form are detained?"

"I should hardly be likely to show favouritism in that manner, Wharton."

"The Form would not regard it as favouritism, sir. The fellows would be all glad if you would make that concession to the football eleven, sir."

"It is quite impossible!"

"It's the first match of the season, sir."

"Indeed!"

"We've been looking forward to it a long time, sir, and counting on it, and thinking of it more than anything else," said John Bull.

The master's lip curled slightly.

"You would have been much better occupied in thinking of your lessons!" he said.

"Mr. Quelch never complained of the way we did our lessons, sir!" said Nugent, with spirit, but rather unluckily.

Mr. Lang flushed.

"If you have come here to institute comparisons between your present master and your former one, Nugent, you may as well cease at once!" he exclaimed sharply.

"I didn't mean that, sir. I—"

"You have said quite enough! It is futile to prolong this discussion!"

"It will be a great disappointment to us, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"You have yourselves to thank. You deliberately refused to obey my orders last evening."

"We couldn't sneak, sir."

"I regarded it as rank disobedience."

"Suppose, sir—" began Bulstrode.

"You may go!"

"Suppose, sir, that the chap who biffed you—I—I mean, the chap who landed you in the eye, sir, came and confessed of his own accord, would that make it all right?"

"That would not excuse the general insubordination and disobedience of the whole Form," said Mr. Lang. "That is what you are being punished for."

"We could make the chap own up, sir."

"That would make no difference in this case."

Bulstrode set his lips hard.

"Does that mean, sir, that we've got to be detained this afternoon, in any case?"

"Exactly."

The juniors were silent. They were furious, but there was evidently nothing to be done with Mr. Lang. He believed himself to be in the right, and he was resolute.

"I—I think, sir, that the Head would let us off, on such an occasion as this," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior.

Mr. Lang frowned.

"I can manage my Form in my own way!" he said. "And I may as well make it plain to you, now, that I think a great deal too much time is devoted to outdoor sports here. I have no patience with the devotion you show to foolish games."

"Foolish games, sir!"

"Yes; that is my opinion of them!"

Bulstrode gritted his teeth. The other fellows looked to him to do something in the matter, but, for the life of him, Bulstrode did not know what to do. There was no reasoning with a man who held views like Mr. Lang's.

The Form-master sat down at his table again.

"You may go!" he said. "And please do not approach me on this subject again! I have no desire to hear any more about it! You may go!"

"Please, sir—"

"Not another word!"

"But—but we must play Highcliffe, sir!" said Bulstrode desperately. "They'll think we're afraid of them if we don't."

"You can explain to them that you are detained by the orders of your Form-master. I suppose?"

"They'll think it's got up. They're a set of cads, and—"

"I am surprised at your associating with a set of cads!"

"We—we don't associate with them exactly, sir; but there's always been a fixture with Highcliffe."

"In one word, Bulstrode, you and the rest are detained for the afternoon, and I do not desire to hear any more of the matter!" said Mr. Lang. "If this falls heavily upon you it will doubtless be a warning to you to behave better on future occasions. Because I omitted to send you to bed last night at the usual hour, you turned the common-room into a bear-garden, and I was assaulted and disobeyed. Many masters would request the Head to flog the whole Form as a punishment. You may go!"

"But—"

"Another word, Bulstrode, and I shall detain you for Saturday afternoon as well!" said Mr. Lang, with asperity.

Bulstrode gave the juniors a hopeless look, and went to the door. There was nothing more to be done. The Removites filed out of the study with gloomy brows and burning eyes.

They stopped in the passage, furious and helpless.

"It's all up," said Bulstrode.

"The beast!"

"The cad!"

"The unsportsmanlike outsider!"

"The rotter!"

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"Hallo," exclaimed Wingate, coming along the passage with Courtney, the latter with a football under his arm.

"Hallo! What are you kids grouching about?"

Harry Wharton turned to him with new hope in his face. It was possible, after all, that the captain of the school might be able to do something for them. In a moment the juniors, all talking at once, were pouring out their grievance.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Thinks of a "Dodge."

WINGATE listened patiently.

"I understand," he said, at last. "It comes rough on you kids. But after all, you ought not to have rioted in the common-room last night."

"It's really your own fault," said Courtney.

Wharton gave him an indignant look.

"Is it?" he exclaimed. "If you had seen lights out as usual, Courtney, it wouldn't have happened."

Courtney laughed.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I was acting under orders. Mr. Lang told me that he could manage his Form himself. Then he appears to have buried himself in a book and forgotten your bedtime. It's very unfortunate, but it was really too rough to get up a riot and bung your Form-master in the eye."

"That was an accident," said Bob Cherry. "Bolsover meant that biff for my eye, and Mr. Lang came in suddenly and got it instead. We didn't hear him coming, either—he moves about so jolly quietly."

"Yes, I've noticed that about him," said Wingate, with a curl of the lip. "Look here, I'll do what I can for you, but don't let your hopes rise. I don't suppose it will amount to much. I'll speak to Mr. Lang, anyway."

"Oh, thanks, Wingate."

"Wait here," said Wingate.

He knocked at Mr. Lang's door and entered. He closed the door behind him. Mr. Lang looked up from his book a little irritably. Mr. Lang, probably, had a slight attack of indigestion, due to studying indoors immediately after his midday meal, and it did not improve his temper.

"Yes, Wingate?" he said, inquiringly.

"I'm come to speak to you on behalf of the Remove, sir," said Wingate, in his blunt, direct way.

The Form-master frowned.

"Please explain yourself," he said coldly.

"The Remove are detained this afternoon, sir—"

"Exactly."

"Of course, I know they're an unruly set of little rascals," said the Sixth-Former. "I do not mean to hint, sir, that they don't deserve their punishment—"

"I'm glad of that," said Mr. Lang, satirically.

"But I should like to point out to you, sir, that it is a special occasion," said Wingate quietly. "The kids have been looking forward very much to the first regular match of the season, and they take it very much to heart. If you could see your way, sir, to letting off the eleven, they'd be very grateful."

"Impossible."

"It's only a question of eleven fellows out of forty—"

"That would be favouritism, and I could not countenance it for a moment," said Mr. Lang. "Besides, if the boys could be excused punishment on account of a silly game, there would never be any lack of excuses for similar concessions. I cannot allow the fact that they intended to play football this afternoon to make any difference to me."

"It's a special occasion, sir—"

"I fail to see anything special in it, Wingate. I am very sorry to see that a perfect has undertaken to interfere between my Form and myself," said Mr. Wingate severely.

Wingate bit his lip.

"I don't want to do that, sir—I was only pointing out, as you are new to Greyfriars, that on an occasion like this—"

"In short, you have undertaken to teach me my duty towards my Form," said Mr. Lang. "I thank you, but I really do not require the assistance of the perfects in teaching me my duty."

"If you look at it like that, sir, I have nothing more to say," said Wingate. "I think you might go easy with the kids this once, that's all, sir."

"The fact that they have appealed to a perfect, against their Form-master, would prevent me from doing anything of the sort, even if I were so inclined," said the master.

"That is not exactly—"

"It is useless to argue, Wingate. You are wasting my time and your own. Please let the subject drop."

"Very well, sir."

"And remember in future, Wingate, that I do not desire—and will not tolerate—any interference between my Form and myself," said Mr. Lang, in sharp tones. "You will have

the kindness to let the Remove entirely alone, so long as that Form is in my charge."

Wingate was pale with anger.

"Very well," he replied. "That is enough, sir."

And he quitted the study.

Outside, in the passage, the juniors were waiting eagerly. Wingate's expression, as he came out, showed that he had failed.

"No go?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wingate shook his head.

"No; I'm sorry. You'll have to grin and bear it."

And he walked away with Courtney. The latter looked at him curiously.

"Been jawed?" he asked.

"Yes. I've been told to mind my own business, and never interfere between Mr. Lang and his Form again," said Wingate, between his teeth. "I'll do it, too—as far as I'm concerned, I'll never speak to the rank outsider again."

"He will have trouble with his Form, especially if the prefects don't back him up," Courtney remarked.

"Let him!"

Courtney laughed.

"Oh, let him, by all means," he replied. "I shall be interested to see how he gets on with the Remove. There will be trouble."

That there would be trouble it was easy to see from the looks of the Remove footballers as they came out into the Close. Nearly all the Form joined them in the wood-shed, and there were loud groans from all of them when they learned the result of the visit of the deputation to Mr. Lang's study.

"Are we going to stand it?" demanded Bolsover loudly.

"Oh, you shut up," said Bob Cherry. "You're the cause of all the trouble."

"Look here—"

"Shut up, Bolsover," exclaimed Bulstrode. "we don't want your swank now. The question is, what's going to be done."

"There's still time to send a wire to Highcliffe," Frank Nugent remarked. "It's a quarter to two, and they won't leave till half-past."

"Oh, it's rotten!"

"But what else can we do?" asked Leigh.

"Nothing," said Russell.

And that was the general opinion. A wire to Highcliffe was the only thing; and yet—

They knew that Ponsonby & Co. would grin and chuckle over that wire. Whether they believed the Remove's statement or not, they would pretend they didn't; and the Greyfriars fellows would never hear the end of the matter.

Accusing glances were turned on Bulstrode from all sides. He was captain of the Form, and he ought to have thought of some dodge. There was a general impression that Harry Wharton would have been able to find a way out of the difficulty, if he had still been captain of the Remove.

"Something ought to be done, somehow," Mark Linley observed.

"And Bulstrode ought to do it," said Hazeldene.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

"What can I do?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know—think of something."

"I can't!"

"Lot of blessed good you are for a Form-captain," growled Tom Brown. "Take a back seat, then, and let somebody else think of something."

"Hear, hear."

Bulstrode flushed.

"I'm quite willing to let anybody suggest anything," he exclaimed. "Has any fellow got anything to suggest?"

"Yes," said Bob Cherry, abruptly, "I have."

"Go it, Bob!"

"Get it off your chest, old chap."

"Out with it."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Yes, go it," said Bulstrode. "I'm willing to back up any fellow who can get us out of this fix."

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath. His rugged face was very determined.

"We're being badly treated," he said, "whether Lang means to be a tyrant, or whether he hasn't sense enough to understand, makes no difference. He's treating us rottenly, and we're not called upon to put up with it."

"We know that. But what are we to do?"

"Refuse to stand it!"

"But—"

"That's my idea!" said Bob Cherry firmly. "Refuse to stand it! Lang has said that we shan't play Highcliffe! Let him go and eat coke! We'll play Highcliffe all the same!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Desperate Device.

BOB CHERRY'S voice rang out as he spoke. A thrill passed through the crowd of juniors. They were in a mood for almost anything; ripe for revolt almost. But—there was a but! Bob Cherry's proposition was a wild one.

"We can't do it," Bulstrode muttered. "We can't walk out of the Form-room under the man's eyes. He would call in the Head! You don't suggest bucking up against the Head himself?"

"Oh, no!"

"Besides, the prefects—"

"The prefects won't interfere," said Bob Cherry. "Lang has got their backs up already, and I believe they'd enjoy seeing us give him a fall."

"I shouldn't wonder! But the Head—"

"That's the question. We can't buck up against the Head; and it would be rotten bad form if we could! I don't propose marching out of the Form-room under Lang's eyes, either. That would be too thick. My idea is to get rid of him for the afternoon somehow, and then simply keep out of the Form-room."

"Get rid of him."

"That's it."

"But how?" demanded Bulstrode. "There isn't much time, either; we've got to get in in ten minutes. What do you propose to do?"

Every eye was fixed upon Bob Cherry. The juniors seemed to hang upon his words. At that moment the Remove had one leader, and that was Bob Cherry.

"We've got to get rid of him somehow," said Bob. "The footer match will last till half-past four. He's got to be disposed of till then, that's all."

"That's all!" echoed Nugent. "A jolly big 'ail,' I think."

"Faith, and ye're right."

"I guess we'd lynch him, over there, the scallywag," said Fisher T. Fish. "But we can't lynch him here, Bobby."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"No; he ought to have something lingering, with boiling oil in it," he said. "But we must draw the line at that. The question is, what's to be done with the man till half-past four? He will have to be got into some quiet place and locked in."

"Phew!"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Draw it mild, old chap."

"I mean it," said Bob Cherry, firmly, "and if you fellows like to back me up, I'll take the lead, and we'll manage it somehow. Just think it out."

The Remove were silent. Unpopular as the new master was, sorely as he had tried them, the most reckless Form in Greyfriars hesitated at that reckless step. But Bob Cherry meant business. He had not spoken without thinking.

"Who's going to back me up?" he exclaimed. "Hands up!"

"I will for one," said Harry Wharton, holding up his hand.

"And I," chimed in Nugent, and Bull, and Mauleverer together.

"And I!" "And I!" "And I!"

It was a general shout and raising of hands then. The Remove had made up their minds. Bob Cherry's eyes gleamed.

"Then it's settled!" he exclaimed.

"Excepting how to do it," sneered Bolsover.

"Yes, that's what we've got to settle now," Bob Cherry wrinkled his brows in an effort of reflection. "Look here, if we could get him locked in somewhere, he couldn't make himself heard—the House will be quite empty on a fine after-

noon like this—there won't be a soul to hear him if he yells."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about the top box-room, Bobby darling?" asked Micky Desmond.

"Ripping—if we could get him there?"

"We can't carry him," Bulstrode remarked.

"We shall have to decoy him there somehow," said Nugent.

"My hat! There's Bunter."

"Bunter!"

"Yes, Bunter."

"He couldn't do it. He hasn't sense enough, or nerve enough," said Bulstrode, with a snort of contempt.

"I know he hasn't. I wasn't thinking of giving him the job. But he's ill—"

"Malingering, you mean."

"Exactly; but Lang believes in him. Suppose we take Bunter to the top box-room, and bump him—hard—what will be the result?"

"I suppose he will yell," said Wharton, puzzled. "But what on earth good will that do?"

"Exactly. And suppose one of us goes to the Lang beast, and tell him that Bunter is lying in the top box-room, groaning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'll buzz off to see him, as sure as a gun," said Nugent triumphantly. "One of us will be hiding on the landing. The key will be in the outside of the lock ready, and he'll be locked in."

"With Bunter?"

"Exactly. Bunter can keep him company there till half-past four."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a daring plan. But it made the Removites roar with laughter. The idea of Mr. Lang being locked in the top box-room with the Owl of the Remove was decidedly funny. That there would be trouble afterwards was pretty certain. But the Remove expected trouble with their new Form-master, anyway, as Bulstrode pointed out. The more the juniors thought of the scheme, the better they liked it. And they had very little time to hesitate. In ten minutes they were due in the Form-room, and it would be too late.

"Where's the Bunter bird?"

"In the tuckshop, of course," said Bob Cherry. "It's easy enough to find Billy Bunter when we want him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on," said Harry Wharton abruptly. "The time's getting pretty close now."

A crowd of the Removites streamed off towards the tuckshop across the Close. There, sure enough, Billy Bunter was found. He was standing outside the tuckshop, looking at the goods within with longing glances. Like the Peri at the gates of Paradise, he gazed upon the joys that he could not share. Harry Wharton slapped him on the shoulder, and the Owl of the Remove swung round with a start.

"Ow! Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Come on, Billy!"

Bunter started at once for the shop door.

"Right-ho, Wharton! I'm fearfully hungry, and there's just time for a bit of a feed before school."

"Ha, ha, ha! Not that way!"

"Eh!" Bunter's face fell. "Where then?"

"Up to the box-room."

"The—the box-room! What for?"

"You're wanted there."

"Feed on?" asked Bunter eagerly. "I don't mind coming if there's a feed. I'll risk being late for class with pleasure."

"May as well get the beast some buns," said Nugent. "Go on, Billy, and I'll bring the tarts."

"Good!" said Bunter.

And he walked off with Harry Wharton quite cheerfully. They ascended to the top box-room—a little room in a very out-of-the-way corner in the School House above the dormitories. If anyone should be locked up in that room there was little chance of his making his voice heard in any other part of the house. Frank Nugent joined them in a few moments with a bag of tarts in his hand.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed.

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his big spectacles.

"Good!" he said. "Is that all the feed, Wharton?"

"Yes; but it's all for you. Are you ill?"

"Ill! No!"

"You can't have the tarts if you're not ill," said Nugent, with a shake of the head.

Bunter looked alarmed.

"Oh, really, Nugent!"

"Then you were lying this morning when you said you were ill?" Nugent demanded sternly.

Bunter groaned.

"Ow! I can feel my pain coming back again! Ow! I'm ill!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's rotten to laugh at a chap for being ill. I'm suffering frightfully. I've got a pain in my tummy, and an ache in my back. Ow!"

"You're not groaning," said Nugent.

"That's because I'm manfully suppressing my agony," said Bunter, and he began to groan. "Ow, ow! Oh dear! Yow! I'm dreadfully ill! Ow!"

"You can have the tarts, then," said Harry, laughing.

"Thanks! Ow! Yow! Oh!"

Wharton and Nugent quitted the box-room, putting the key on the outside of the lock. Frank Nugent hurried downstairs to Mr. Lang's study. The new master of the Remove was preparing to go to the Form-room to take the detention class.

Nugent knocked at the door, and burst in excitedly.

"Oh, sir!" he gasped.

Mr. Lang looked alarmed.

"Goodness! What is the matter, Nugent?" he exclaimed.

"Bunter, sir!" gasped Nugent.

"Bunter! The boy who was ill this morning?"

"Yes, sir! Oh, sir!"

"Is he worse?" exclaimed Mr. Lang anxiously. "Where is he?"

"In the top box-room, sir—up the stairs past the dormitory, sir. He's groaning like anything, sir—hair-raising groans!"

"Dear me! I will go to him at once."

And Mr. Lang rushed off without another word. Nugent winked at the ceiling. The Remove-master dashed upstairs, and reached the dormitory passage, and ascended the narrow stairs to the top box-room. He opened the door, and dashed in.

"Bunter!"

A shadowy form came out of a dark corner on the landing, and jerked the box-room door shut behind the master. The key clicked faintly in the lock. Harry Wharton smiled softly, and descended the stairs.

Nugent met him at the foot of the staircase.

"Well?"

"All serene."

"Locked in?"

"Yes."

"Where's the key?"

"In my pocket."

"Hurray!"

And Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent joined the rest of the Remove in the Close.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Locked In.

"BUNTER, my poor boy!"

"Hoy?"

Bunter was on the tenth of the tarts. There were two more in the bag, and there was a great deal of jam on Bunter's face and fingers. Not that Bunter minded that. It would not put him to the trouble of washing. It was always easy to wipe his fingers down the sides of his trousers, and to smudge his sleeve across his mouth. That was Bunter's simple way of cleaning himself after a hasty feed.

He blinked at Mr. Lang in astonishment through his big spectacles. Mr. Lang, on his side, gazed at Bunter in equal surprise. He had expected to find a groaning invalid, and instead of that he found a fat junior travelling at express speed through a bag of tarts. If Bunter was ill, it had not made any difference to his appetite, that was certain.

"Bunter!" repeated Mr. Lang, but in a different tone.

"Ye-es, sir," said Bunter.

"I heard that you were ill!"

An expression of agony immediately made its appearance upon Billy Bunter's fat face. It consorted ill with the fact that his jaws were still working. If Bunter had been in danger of his life, he would still have finished that tart.

"Ye-es, sir!" he groaned. "I'm ill, sir—fearfully ill. Some of the fellows have got me some tarts, sir, out of sympathy, to buck me up."

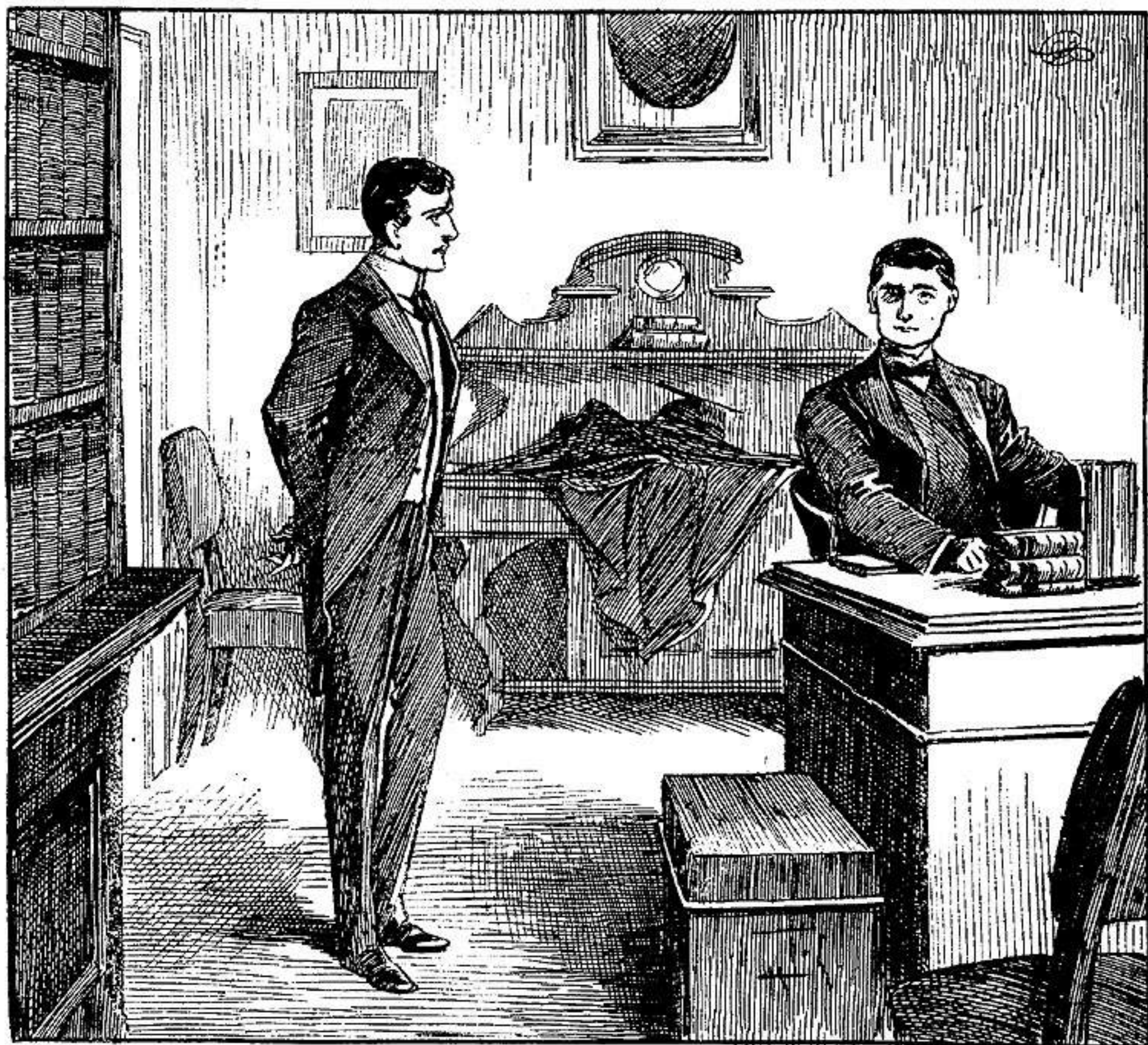
Mr. Lang looked very doubtful.

"That was very kind of them, Bunter, but certainly it was not a very judicious thing to do. Tarts are hardly diet for an invalid."

"I find them very good for—for my complaint, sir," said Bunter eagerly. "It's a sort of—a sort of gnawing emptiness in the inward regions, sir, that makes me feel as if I want to have some extra meals, sir. I find that I am very much better since I have had some tarts, sir. All I need now is a thorough rest, and no brain fag, such as—as lessons, sir."

Mr. Lang glanced at his watch.

"Dear me! It is close upon two o'clock," he said. "It is time you were in the Form-room, Bunter. I am glad to find you so much better. Nugent looked very alarmed when he came and told me that you were ill."



"Remember in future, Wingate, that I do not desire—and will not tolerate—any interference between my Form and myself," said Mr. Lang, in sharp tones. "You will have the kindness to let the Remove entirely alone, so long as that Form is in my charge." Wingate, pale with anger, stared at the new master in amazement. (Chap. 6.)

"I am ill, sir, and—"

"Follow me downstairs, Bunter," said Mr. Lang, going towards the door of the box-room.

"Ye-es, sir," Bunter rose with a groan. "I—I thought perhaps you might excuse me this afternoon, sir, as it's a half-holiday, sir."

"I cannot make exceptions."

"I feel very queer, sir."

"Follow me at once," said Mr. Lang; and he pulled at the handle of the box-room door. The door did not open.

Mr. Lang looked very puzzled, and pulled at it again. Still the door did not budge. It dawned upon the master of the Lower Fourth that it was locked upon the outside. His face went pale with anger.

"This is a trick!" he exclaimed furiously.

"Eh?" said Bunter, who was gazing into the bag in the fond hope of discerning a crumb or a fragment of jam.

"What did you say, sir?"

"The door is locked, Bunter."

"Is—is it, sir? That's very queer, sir," said Bunter. "Did you lock it when you came in, sir? What did you do that for, sir?"

"Don't be insolent, Bunter!" thundered Mr. Lang.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"The door has been locked on the outside while I have been in here talking to you, Bunter," said the Form-master furiously. "This is a trick, and you are a party to it."

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Billy Bunter staggered back in dismay.

"A p-p-party to it, sir!"

"Yes, certainly. You have not been ill—you have been shamming, sir!" thundered the Form-master. "This is a device."

"Oh, sir!"

"Open this door at once."

"But I c-c-can't, sir, if it's locked!" stammered Bunter, in dismay. "I can't unlock a door with my fingers, sir. It's impossible, sir. And I was really ill, sir. I was suffering from acute pains and gnawing hunger, sir. I—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Lang rapped on the door with his knuckles.

"Open this door at once," he called out, addressing the boy whom he supposed to be on the outside of the door.

But there came no reply from the landing. Harry Wharton was gone. It seemed incredible to Hubert Lang that a junior should have the nerve to lock him in the room, and then depart, leaving him there, and he rapped again on the door, and again.

"Boy, whoever you are, unlock this door immediately!" he exclaimed, in a choking voice. "Otherwise, I shall cane you most severely."

No reply!

Rap, rap, rap!

Mr. Lang rapped so hard that he hurt his knuckles. He

sucked them, and foamed with rage. His face was flushed, and his eyes were gleaming, and certainly he did not look at that moment as calm and dignified as a Form-master should have looked. He gave the door a kick, and shouted through the keyhole.

"You young scoundrel! Open this door!"

His voice rang over the landing, and echoed down the narrow stairs, and there was a faint echo of it in the dormitory passage. But there was no one there to hear it. The maids had long ago finished their work upstairs, and the fellows were all out of doors on that bright and sunny autumn afternoon. Mr. Lang might have shouted with the voice of Stentor, and no one would have heard.

Billy Bunter stood in fear and trembling. He could guess now that the master had been locked in the box-room to get him out of the way during the Highcliffe match, and he was pretty certain that the door would not be opened till half-past four at the earliest. Bunter had been shut up in that box-room before, and he knew that it was useless to call out. He trembled at the prospect when Mr. Lang should realise that he was a prisoner for the afternoon. He was pretty certain to turn his wrath upon the only junior who was within reach. That, as Bunter dimly realised, was the way of masters.

Mr. Lang turned from the door at last. He comprehended that the fellow who had locked him in was gone, and that there was no one near enough to hear him shouting. He gave Billy Bunter a glance that sent the fat junior scuttling into a corner, and strode to the window. The box-room window was a little square opening, looking out upon a slanting slate roof. That roof cut off all view from below, and it ended in a gutter overlooking a sheer drop of more than a hundred feet. It was more than a man's life was worth to get out of the window on those smooth, slanting slates.

Mr. Lang did not think of doing it. The most active and daring athlete would have hesitated; and Mr. Lang was certainly not active, and not an athlete. He turned away from the window without even thinking of making the attempt.

He realised that he was a prisoner. That his kidnappers would dare to keep him in captivity for any length of time he did not believe. But for the present, at all events, there was no escape from the box-room. He turned his burning eyes upon Bunter.

"You are a party to this!" he exclaimed, in choking tones. Bunter shook like a jelly.

"Oh, sir! No, sir!" he gasped. "They—they asked me to come here and have a feed, sir, and they left me here with the tarts, sir, and then you came in, sir, and that's all I know about it, sir. It is, really, sir—really and truly, sir!"

Mr. Lang looked hard at him. The fat junior was too terrified to tell anything but the truth, and the Form-master believed him. His face cleared a little.

"Very well, Bunter, I excuse you," he said.

Bunter gasped with relief. He had not expected to be excused; he had expected to be licked because he was the only junior within reach. It was evident, however, that the young master, enraged as he was, had a sense of justice.

"I shall not punish you, Bunter, but the others will be severely punished," said Mr. Lang. "Who was it brought you here?"

"Nugent and Wharton, sir. I—I don't want to mention their names, sir, as—as that would be sneaking," gasped Bunter.

"Nugent and Wharton," said Mr. Lang, compressing his lips. "And it was Nugent who came to my study to tell me that you were ill, and doubtless Wharton who was waiting on the landing to lock the door. Very well! Nugent and Wharton will hear of this."

And Mr. Lang, finding a box to sit upon, sat down, and drew a little volume of Horace from his pocket, and proceeded to read, while waiting for the time of his release. Billy Bunter watched him disconsolately. Now that all the tarts were gone, he did not like being shut up in the box-room; but he dared not grumble. He sat in a corner, and nodded off to sleep; he always had that resource. Mr. Lang sat and read Horace, and in the engrossing interest of his favourite author he forgot where he was, and did not notice how the time passed on. It was just as well for him, for he was booked for a long stay in the isolated box-room.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Highcliffe Match.

BULSTRODE met Harry Wharton as he came out into the Close. Bulstrode was looking keen and eager, and a little alarmed. The device suggested by Bob Cherry might be successful, but it was a desperate one. To lock a Form-master up in the box-room was a step nobody outside the Remove would have dreamed of taking; and they would not have dreamed of it in the case of their old master,

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Mr. Quelch. But this interfering young man, fresh from the University, was on a different footing. All the same, trouble was bound to follow, and the ringleaders, if discovered, might very possibly be expelled from Greyfriars. That footer match with Highcliffe might be very dearly paid for.

"All right?" asked Bulstrode.

"Yes."

"He's locked up in the top box-room with Bunter," said Nugent. "He can't get out till we choose to let him, and he can't make his voice heard. He's safe."

Bulstrode gave a low whistle.

"It's a risky bizney," he said.

Wharton laughed.

"Rather late in the day to think of that," he said.

"I guess so," said Fisher T. Fish, "and I guess that it won't come to expelling anybody, either. We'll all own up that we had a hand in it, and the Head can't expel the whole of the Remove. Besides, I guess expelling ain't so popular in these days, when headmasters are competing for pupils—hey?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's something in that," grinned Bob Cherry. "Anyway, we're in for it now, and that's a fact. The Highcliffe cads will be here soon, and we'd better get ready for them."

"Right-ho!"

And the Remove footballers prepared for the match. Nearly all the Remove went down to the footer ground with the eleven. The first footer match of the season—the first outside match, that is—was a matter of very keen interest to the whole Form. And the Remove eleven had been hard at practice for some time, and were in very good form—quite good form enough to beat Highcliffe hollow, they all believed.

The team was composed thus: John Bull; Ogilvy, Desmond; Bulstrode, Bob Cherry, Tom Brown; Mark Linley, Cecil Leigh, Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Russell. The best footballers in the Remove were certainly in that team, and there were some very good reserves that could be called upon if necessary, such as Morgan and Treluce, and Smith minor. That the Highcliffe juniors could put an equal team into the field, was an idea that the Removites laughed to scorn. Highcliffe prowess was chiefly shown in swanking.

The team changed, and amused themselves punting an old ball about while waiting for the arrival of the Highcliffe team. Wingate came striding towards the junior ground, with a very puzzled expression on his face.

"You kids let off for this afternoon, after all?" he exclaimed.

The Removites exchanged glances.

"Well, you see," said Bob Cherry cautiously, "here we are."

"Yes, I see you are here," said Wingate. "But weren't you all detained for the half-holiday?"

"Yes, we were."

"Then Mr. Lang has let you off?"

The juniors did not reply.

"Come, come," said the Greyfriars captain, "what does it mean? If Mr. Lang hasn't rescinded your detention, how is it that he doesn't fetch you in?"

"Can't explain, Wingate," said Bulstrode. "But I suppose you don't want to interfere, after what he said to you?"

Wingate laughed.

"Do you mean to say that he has gone out, and that you have left the Form-room without permission while he's away?" he exclaimed.

"We'd rather not say anything, Wingate," said Harry Wharton. "But you know Mr. Lang said that he didn't want any prefects to interfere between him and his Form."

"I know that quite well," said Wingate grimly, "and I don't mean to interfere. All the prefects have decided to let Mr. Lang's Form severely alone. I expect he will have plenty of trouble dealing with you young sweeps; but I suppose he knows his own business best. I shall not interfere."

And Wingate walked away.

The Remove were greatly relieved. If Wingate had ordered them back into the School House, they could not have disobeyed. But they had depended on the captain of Greyfriars. After Mr. Lang had told the prefects that he did not want any assistance or advice from them, they were not likely to interfere. Mr. Lang had put their backs up, so to speak, and they meant to leave him and his Form severely alone.

"Good old Wingate," said Bob Cherry, in relief. "I thought he'd have sense enough to keep off the grass—and he has!"

"And the other prefects won't chip in, either, I guess," said Fisher T. Fish, with a chuckle. "I reckon they'll be glad to see Lang done in."

"Yes, rather."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Highcliffe!"

A big brake rolled in at the gates of Greyfriars. The crowd of fellows seated in it were easily recognisable as Ponsonby & Co., of Highcliffe. Ponsonby & Co., as usual, had their noses very high in the air. Repeated lickings at cricket and football never had the effect of bringing down their noses to a normal level. Ponsonby's manner was always that of a fellow who condescended to play out of good nature towards an insignificant team, and it was a manner that made the Greyfriars fellows extremely ratty. They would have cut the fixture with Highcliffe off their list altogether but for the fact that Highcliffe would have concluded that they were afraid, and would have crowed without end on the subject.

"We're a little late, dear boys," Ponsonby drawled. "Pray excuse us."

"Had to stop for refreshments on the way," Gadsby explained. "Just a cigarette or two, that was all."

"We knew you chaps wouldn't mind waiting a few minutes," said Vavasour.

"Oh, all right!" said Bulstrode shortly.

"Of all the howling idiots!" murmured Bob Cherry to Nugent. "A cigarette or two just before playing football! Where will their wind be?"

Nugent chuckled.

"We shall wipe them out even more easily than usual, that's all," he said.

"Yes, rather—the silly asses!"

Vavasour was looking very pale, probably the result of the cigarette or two. Gadsby had a sickly look, and so did two or three others in the team. Ponsonby, the captain, looked the most fit of all, and certainly he had more sense than the others. The Highcliffe fellows prided themselves chiefly upon being extremely up-to-date and doggish, but it was very probable that on this occasion their doggishness would cost them dear. It seemed to the Greyfriars fellows incredible that anybody should be duffer enough to smoke just before playing footer. But there was evidently no folly that the gay dogs of Highcliffe were not capable of.

Bulstrode and Ponsonby tossed for choice of goal, and Ponsonby had the best of it, and chose a goal. The sun was somewhat in the faces of the Greyfriars team, giving a considerable advantage to Highcliffe. But Bulstrode's team did not care. They were quite confident. Indeed, after looking over the Highcliffe crowd, Bulstrode would have been willing to risk a match with two players short.

Greyfriars kicked off as Coker's whistle rang out. Coker, of the Fifth, was referee, having graciously consented to recognise the existence of the Lower Fourth for that occasion.

Bob Cherry chuckled as the match started. He was thinking of the afternoon's detention, and wondering how Mr. Lang was getting on in the top box-room. He was evidently still there, as the Remove had seen nothing of him.

But there was no time now to think of Hubert Lang. He and his detention were dismissed from the minds of the Remove footballers as they sailed into the game.

Ponsonby & Co. soon had reason to regret that cigarette or two on the road to Greyfriars.

The Remove footballers walked all over them, so to speak, and two or three of the Highcliffe fellows, all the time, were panting and gasping instead of running. Vavasour especially was a pitiable object.

Within five minutes of the start, the Greyfriars centre-forward put the ball into the net, and there was a roar from the crowd of juniors round the field.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Goal! Hurrah for Greyfriars!"

That was only the start. Before the first half had finished, three more goals were added to the list, to the credit of Linley, Leigh, and Russell. Then the teams went off for the brief interval, the home team chuckling, and the visitors looking as black as thunder.

Ponsonby was in a savage temper.

"If you asses don't buck up, we shall be licked to the wide, the worst licking we've ever had," he growled. "Four goals to nil already! Pah!"

"The beasts are so rough!" said Vavasour. "That beast Cherry pushed me off the ball quite roughly, you know. I was quite startled."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, Pon—"

"You'll have to buck up," growled Ponsonby. "We haven't come here to be walked over by these cads. And if I ever see you smoking before a match again, Vav., I'll alter the shape of your nose for you."

"Look here—"

"Oh, shut up! Time's up!"

And the Highcliffians turned out somewhat disconsolately to the second half. The crowd of juniors greeted them with grins. Highcliffe football always amused the Greyfriars fellows, coupled as it was with an airy assumption of superiority.

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Highcliffe did "buck up" a little in the second half, and succeeded in scoring a couple of goals. But three more fell to Greyfriars, and by the time the whistle went at the end of play, the total was Greyfriars seven, Highcliffe two. Highcliffe were beaten to the wide.

The juniors cheered the victory, and laughed as much as they cheered, as they saw the scowls upon the faces of Ponsonby & Co. The Highcliffe fellows did not pretend to take their licking good-humouredly. They mounted into their brake with sullen faces and drove away in grim silence.

They left the Remove laughing.

"Beaten hollow!" said Bob Cherry, with much satisfaction. "My hat! What faces they made about the thing, too!"

"I guess they'd have been pleased to have had a wire scratching the match, instead!" grinned Fisher T. Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton became grave.

"It's a quarter-past four," he said, "and Lang's still in the box-room."

"H'm!"

"Who's going to let him out?"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Facing the Music.

THE football match was over, and Highcliffe had been defeated, and sent bootless home. That much was to the good. Now is was a question of facing the music.

The juniors were not afraid of the consequences of what they had done, but they were serious enough about it. It was a serious matter, and it seemed more serious to them now than it had seemed at first. It is frequently the case that the true recklessness of a reckless action is not realised till too late. Locking a Form-master up and dodging detention might be very great fun, and might be quite justifiable from the Remove point of view. But now was the time to pay the piper.

Who was to let Mr. Lang out? What was to be said to him? What would happen?

"Well, it's got to be done," said Harry Wharton resolutely. "I locked him in, and I'll let him out."

"Better toss up for it," said Russell. "The chap who lets him out will get the first edge of his temper."

"I guess so."

"I'm captain of the Remove," said Bulstrode. "It's my place to do it, and I'll do it."

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "Leave it to Bulstrode."

And Bulstrode walked off to the School House.

The rest of the juniors followed him slowly. The nearer the time came for facing the music, the more serious they felt the matter to be. What would the Head say, if Mr. Lang brought him into the matter? And surely he would! Hubert Lang would be too furious to think of anything but punishing his rebellious Form in the most severe manner possible. There might be a flogging all round, or fellows might be expelled. No one could tell. The Removites were in a grave state of mind, and feeling very uneasy. And their dislike of their new master augmented in proportion to their uneasiness.

Bulstrode ascended the box-room stairs. The rest of the Form went into the Form-room. Now that the football match was over, they were willing to go in for their detention. They waited there for what would transpire. Bulstrode reached the door of the top box-room, and unlocked it.

There was a movement within. The door was flung open immediately after the key clicked, and Mr. Lang appeared in view, a "Horace" in his hand, and an angry flush upon his face. He fixed his eyes upon Bulstrode.

"Ah, it is you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"You have decided, after all, to release me."

"Yes, sir."

"Were you a party to locking me up here, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir; we all were."

Mr. Lang ground his teeth.

"Do you mean to say that it was a plot of the whole Form?" he exclaimed.

"We were all in it, sir," said Bulstrode quietly.

"And—and you dare to own it to me?"

"We don't want to tell any lies about it, sir."

Mr. Lang breathed hard through his nose. It was evidently as much as he could do to keep his hands off the junior, but he was trying to control himself.

"Was Bunter in this plot, Bulstrode?"

"No, sir; we made use of him, that was all."

"Very well. You may go, Bunter. Go into the Form-room, Bulstrode, and wait for me there."

"Yes, sir."

Bulstrode went down. His face was gloomy enough as he went into the Remove Form-room. The juniors all looked at him.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Lang is coming down."

"Is he ratty?" asked Russell.

"Frightfully."

"What's he going to do?"

"Blessed if I know."

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him do what he likes!" he exclaimed. "We're all standing together in this, and whatever he chooses to do, we can stand it. Hang him!"

"Yes, hang him—with pleasure!" said Frank Nugent. "After all, it's all his own fault; and he can't get a whole Form expelled. And even if it turns out to be a flogging all round, we can stand it."

"Oh," said Skinner, "can we? Look here, we weren't all in this, you know. Lots of fellows in the Form had nothing to do with it—myself, for one—and Snoop, and Stott—"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!"

"Yes, but—"

"Dry up!"

"My dear fellow," said Mauleverer, "we must all stand and fall together!"

"Oh, bosh!" said Snoop. "I'm jolly well not going to be flogged, anyway!"

"Shut up!" said Bulstrode.

"Cave!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Here he comes!"

The Form-room door opened and Mr. Lang entered. His face was pale and set with deadly anger. The Remove had sometimes seen their old master, Mr. Quelch, look very angry, but they had never seen an expression like that upon his face. It gave them a cold feeling all over to see it.

There was trouble, serious trouble, ahead, for all the fellows who had been concerned in the locking up of the Remove-master.

Mr. Lang went to his desk, and faced the Remove. There was a dead silence in the Form-room. A pin might have been heard to drop.

"Boys!" said Mr. Lang, in a quiet and penetrating voice. "Boys, I have been treated in an outrageous manner by certain members of this Form. I do not know how many of them have been concerned in the matter, but I shall ascertain. I have been locked up in a box-room, to which I was decoyed by a trick. While I was there, as I have since learned, a football match was played by this Form."

Silence!

"I call upon all the boys who were concerned in the matter to step out before the class!" said Mr. Lang.

Harry Wharton & Co. rose to their feet and walked out. Many other fellows followed them. Only half a dozen of the Remove remained in their seats.

Mr. Lang looked surprised.

He had certainly not expected to see the whole Form own up to the delinquency in this manner—practically the whole of the Remove.

He glanced over them with a steely eye.

"Boys! Were all of you parties to this outrage?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" replied the juniors, in chorus.

"Have you any excuse to offer for your conduct? You speak, Bulstrode, as you are captain of the Form."

"Yes, sir, I—I think we've an excuse," said Bulstrode.

"I shall be pleased to hear it," said Mr. Lang satirically.

"Yes, sir. We had to play that match with Highcliffe, or they would have crowed over us. It's been a fixture for a long time. Mr. Quelch would never have detained us this afternoon, under the circumstances, sir. That's our excuse."

"We think it's a good one, sir," said Bob Cherry.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked Mr. Lang.

"No, sir."

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"Very well. You may go, Bunter. Go into the Form-room. You have acted in an utterly outrageous manner, and you deserve to be expelled from the school," said Mr. Lang. "If I could find out the ringleader, I should certainly have him expelled; but I suppose that it is useless to expect to get the truth from you."

Harry Wharton flashed angrily.

"It is useless to expect us to betray a comrade, sir," he exclaimed hotly.

"Silence, Wharton. As you all confess yourselves equally guilty, you will all be punished in the same way. Each of you will be caned severely."

The juniors listened breathlessly. Was Mr. Lang going to take them before the Head? At Greyfriars the masters had the power of the cane, but only the headmaster could administer floggings. Not that the juniors minded a flogging much more than a caning. But they did not want to get into disgrace with the Head. They liked and respected Dr. Locke, and they would have been very sorry to do anything to forfeit his good opinion. So long as Mr. Lang dealt with them himself, they did not care so much.

But in this matter, as it happened, their inclinations were the same as Mr. Lang's. The angry master had thought at first of a flogging all round, and two or three expulsions. But he had taken a little time to reflect, and he realised that it would make an exceedingly bad impression upon the Head, if, on the second day he was at Greyfriars, he sent in nearly every member of his Form to be flogged. The Head was, indeed, likely to form the opinion that a master who wanted his whole Form flogged on his second day at the school, was hardly capable of managing a Form at all. And in that the Head would certainly have been quite right; and Mr. Lang dimly realised it. He realised, too, that the less he drew the Head into the troubles of his Form-room, the better it would be for himself.

In the deep silence of the Form-room, Mr. Lang's voice went on sharply and cuttingly.

"I shall cane each of you most severely, beginning at the top of the Form. Bulstrode, come here!"

Bulstrode's jaw set squarely, and he walked up with a firm step to take his punishment.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Licked.

MR. LANG took a cane from his desk, and stepped forward. Bulstrode faced him, with a hard and dogged expression upon his face. His look showed his thoughts—that he was being punished unjustly, but was prepared to endure it with fortitude. The rest of the fellows, looking on, had much the same expression. That was not at all the impression Mr. Lang wished to produce upon the Remove. He was a just man, though a weak and inexperienced one, and he wanted the delinquents to realise that they deserved their punishment.

"Hold out your hand, Bulstrode."

The captain of the Remove held it out.

"Before I punish you," said Mr. Lang, in a milder voice, "I should like you to say, Bulstrode, that you realise the seriousness of what you have been guilty of."

Bulstrode was doggedly silent.

"Are you sorry for what you have done, Bulstrode?"

"No, sir."

There was a murmur of approval from the Remove. Bulstrode had plenty of courage, at all events.

Mr. Lang frowned.

"I am sorry to hear you say that, Bulstrode," he said. "You have been rebellious, disobedient, disrespectful."

"It wasn't our fault, sir."

"That is the same as saying that it was mine!" exclaimed Mr. Lang angrily. "I will waste no more words upon you, you obstinate boy!"

Lash!

The cane came stingingly down, and Bulstrode winced as it lashed across his palm. He received six strokes, on either hand alternately, and he was white with pain by the time the infliction ceased. But he had uttered no cry. He

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"Who's going to back me up?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Hands up!" "I will for one," said Harry Wharton, holding up his hand. "And I," chimed in Nugent, and Bull, and Mauleverer together. "And I!" "And I!" It was a general shout and raising of hands then. The Remove had made up their minds. (See Chapter 7.)

endured the castigation with dogged fortitude, and when it was over he retired without a word.

"Wharton!"

Harry Wharton came forward, and took his punishment. He took it as quietly as Bulstrode had taken his.

"Cherry!"

And so on it went, junior after junior, till Mr. Lang's arm must have been aching with exertion, though his blows did not diminish in force.

The last of the culprits retired, and Mr. Lang, breathing very deeply, laid the cane on the desk.

Some of the juniors had exclaimed with pain, but most of them took it with set teeth and silence. Their bitter anger and indignation could be read in their faces. Mr. Lang glanced over the Form.

"The matter is now ended," he said. "I shall not report your conduct, at present at all events, to your headmaster. I trust that, after this lesson, I shall have no more insolence from my Form, and that we shall get on better."

"Yes; that's likely—I don't think!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You may go now!" said Mr. Lang. "The Form is dismissed!"

The Remove filed out.

Mr. Lang lingered in the Form-room, with a dissatisfied expression upon his face as soon as he was alone. He wanted to be on good terms with his Form; he wanted the boys to like him. He was evidently not going the right way to work to effect his purpose; yet he could not see where he was wrong. He was wrong in being obstinate, hasty, and headstrong, and in failing to understand, or trying to under-

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stand, the boys he had taken charge of. He could not see that. He would doubtless learn in time, but there would be a great deal of trouble for him before he gained sufficient experience to save him from such blunders as he had already committed.

His present view was that his Form were entirely in the wrong, and that they were a set of unruly and unreasonable fellows, whom only severity could bring to their senses. Yet Mr. Quelch had ruled the same Form without severity, and was liked by his boys, who had never even thought of treating him with disrespect. If Mr. Lang had known that, he might have realised that part of the failure, at least, must lie in himself.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form, looked into the room. There was a curious expression upon Mr. Prout's face.

"No trouble with your Form, I hope, Mr. Lang?" he remarked.

Mr. Lang started out of a gloomy reverie.

"Why do you ask?" he said, rather tartly.

The Fifth Form-master bit his lip. He had spoken kindly enough, with the natural desire of an older master to help a younger one, and a new-comer, if it was in his power to do so. He could have given Mr. Lang a great deal of advice that would have been very good for him. But Mr. Lang was evidently not the kind of gentleman to give advice to.

"I have just seen your Form in the passage, that is all," he replied. "They looked as if there had been a general punishment."

"That is the case."

"You will find the Remove rather an unruly Form, I am afraid," said Mr. Prout. "But the boys are very well intentioned, if treated with tact."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed!" retorted Mr. Prout, beginning to get angry. "But I see that you do not require any advice from me, Mr. Lang. As an older man, almost old enough to be your father, I should have been glad to give you any little assistance I could."

"Thank you, I am not in need of assistance!" said Mr. Lang. "I think I know how to manage my own Form!"

"Very good!" said Mr. Prout. "It is permitted, I suppose, for me to remark that Mr. Quelch managed them without caning the whole Form on a half-holiday?"

And with that Parthian shot, Mr. Prout withdrew.

"What an insufferable young puppy that fellow Lang is!" Mr. Prout confided to Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth, over his tea-table. "He had the confounded impertinence to snub me—me, sir!"

Mr. Capper smiled.

"He has snubbed me, too," he replied; "and I hear that he is already on the worst possible terms with all the prefects. He is a young man with ideas of his own—mostly mistaken ones."

"I agree with you. I shall certainly not speak another word to him," said Mr. Prout. "I am not accustomed to impertinence from young men!"

"And I shall leave him severely alone," said the Fourth Form-master.

Mr. Lang left the Remove Form-room, and went slowly down the passage. The door of the junior common-room was open in the distance, and a sound of buzzing voices came from it. That the juniors were discussing their grievances, and probably planning vengeance, it was easy for Mr. Lang to guess.

He walked towards the junior-room. His footfall, whether intentionally or by chance, was very light. He reached the open door of the common-room without anybody within the room knowing that he was there. Bob Cherry's voice was raised above the others, and Mr. Lang heard it quite distinctly.

"I think we ought to get level with the rotter somehow!"

"Hear, hear!"

Mr. Lang strode into the room, his face scarlet with rage. There was a sudden hush as he came in.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "The beast must have heard me! Oh!"

"Cherry!" thundered Mr. Lang.

"Yes, sir?"

"How dare you refer to your Form-master in those terms?"

Bob looked at him steadily. Mr. Lang, in his haste, had given the junior the advantage, and Bob used it without mercy.

"I didn't know you were listening at the door, sir," he said, very distinctly.

Mr. Lang turned quite pale.

"Cherry! How—how dare you say such a thing!" he panted. "How dare you imply that I was listening at the door!"

"You heard what I said, sir, didn't you?"

"I was coming in, and—and—"

"We generally hear people coming down that passage, sir, quite a long way off!" said Bob Cherry.

Some of the Remove grinned. One of the most objectionable things about Mr. Lang was that he had shown a tendency to move about quietly, and hear things spoken unguardedly that were not intended for his ears.

"Cherry! You are insolent! As for the expression you used—"

"What expression, sir?"

"You remember perfectly well the expression you used, Cherry!"

"But I don't see why you should think I was referring to you, sir," said Bob Cherry, with calm deliberation. "Why should you fancy that you were the rotter I was speaking of, sir?"

There was a chuckle from somewhere. Mr. Lang clenched his hands.

"Were you speaking of me, or were you not, Cherry?" he demanded.

"Well, sir, as a matter of fact, I was, but I didn't know you were listening, sir, and I never guessed that you'd recognise the description as your own, even if you were listening at the door, sir."

Mr. Lang's face was scarlet, and the Remove were all grinning.

"Cherry, take two hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Lang retired from the room. Too late he realised that he would have done much better not to have entered it.

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Sent to Coventry.

"OH!"
"Ow!"
"Groo!"
"Yow!"

Remarks of this kind were audible in the junior-room for a long time. The caning had been severe, and the unhappy Removites rubbed and squeezed their hands, and twisted themselves into all sorts of inelegant attitudes to alleviate the pain, but without much success.

Mr. Lang was not an athlete, but he had a strong arm when it came to laying on the cane.

"The beast!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I really don't see how I can stand this, my dear fellows. The pain is most unpleasant!"

"Go hon!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"It's rotten!" said Harry Wharton. "The cad ought to be made to sit up somehow! We can't take this lying down!"

"Rather not!"

"What are we going to do?" groaned John Bull, wetting his palms and rubbing them. "I should like to scalp him, but it's not allowed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess we'd lynch him over there!" grunted Fisher T. Fish.

Wharton's eyes were gleaming.

"My opinion is that he ought to be sent to Coventry," he said.

There was a general exclamation of surprise.

Fellows had certainly been sent to Coventry at Greyfriars, and a most unpleasant time they had had of it while it lasted; but the idea of sending a Form-master to Coventry was something new.

"Oh, don't talk out of the back of your head!" growled Bolsover.

Wharton took no notice of the bully of the Remove.

"I mean it, you fellows," he said. "Lang has got his ears up, and he means to ride rough-shod over us. We can't lynch him, as Fish suggests, and we can't ask him into the gym, and dust him down. But we can offer passive resistance. We can send the rotter to Coventry. I don't see why a master can't be sent to Coventry. As a matter of fact, the prefects have sent him to Coventry already. I noticed that Courtney wouldn't say 'Good-morning!' to him in the hall this morning."

"By Jove!" said Nugent. "If we could work it——"

"I don't see why we couldn't. Sending a chap to Coventry is simply not speaking to him, not taking any notice of his presence, and not recognising his existence in any way. We can do that with a master as easily as with a kid. Of course, in lessons we shall have to relax it a little, but only just enough to give him no excuse for punishing us. And all other communication between us will cease. We're not bound to say 'Good-morning!' to a Form-master unless we choose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're not bound to do anything but learn our lessons. We can make him look an utter ass before all Greyfriars if we like," said Wharton, his eyes sparkling as the idea grew in his mind. "A master being sent to Coventry by his Form—why, it's enough to get the fellow laughed out of the school!"

"It's a ripping wheeze!" exclaimed Leigh. "There's only one thing—he may take it as cheek, and cane us."

"Well, if he does, he'll soon get tired of caning us."

"I expect we shall get tired first," said Hazeldene, with a grimace.

"We can stand it."

"I don't see it," said Skinner, who was looking quite comfortable, not having been caned in the Form-room. "I don't like whackings, for one."

Wharton turned upon him with flashing eyes.

"You deserted the Form just now," he said—"you and Snoop and Stott, and two or three more, sneaked out of the caning, instead of standing up for the Form, like decent fellows! But if we decide on sending Lang to Coventry, you won't be allowed to sneak. You'll stand by the Form, or you'll get a Form licking all round, and that will be a bit worse than anything you'd get from Lang."

"Yes, rather," said Bulstrode. "I think it's a ripping idea, and all the Form have got to stand by it. You hear that, Skinner?"

"That's all very well——" began Skinner.

"Exactly! Now shut up!"

The scheme of sending the Remove-master to Coventry was caught up at once. The very novelty of the idea appealed to the juniors. It was such a thorough way of "getting their own back," and it seemed as if it was a way that the master could not resist. He would look ridiculous

if he punished the boys for omitting to say "Good-morning!" or "Good-afternoon!" But, while it was a method of vengeance that the master could not punish without exposing himself to ridicule, it was likely to be a telling method all the same. Mr. Lang evidently desired, above all things, to be treated with profound respect, if not reverence, by his Form. And it was exactly upon that tender spot that the Remove were going to hit him hard.

"When are we going to begin?" asked Tom Brown.

"No time like the present," said Wharton cheerfully. "Let's all have tea in Hall, instead of having tea in our studies. Lang will take the head of the Remove table, and we can start on him at once."

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the juniors, as soon as the tea-bell rang, marched into the dining-room, nearly the whole of the Remove turning up. As a rule the juniors, when they had any funds, had tea in their own studies, and tea in Hall was boycotted—it was not quite so tasty a meal as the juniors could prepare for themselves in their own quarters. But in the present instance it was a case of making a sacrifice for the sake of avenging the Form. Mr. Hubert Lang was at the head of the table, and he was to be the victim.

He came like a lamb to the slaughter, as it were. Mr. Lang had recovered his good-humour, and he meant to make a good impression upon his Form by showing them that bygones were bygones, and that he did not bear any malice at all. He was going to act just as if nothing had happened.

But he forgot one circumstance, and that was that he had inflicted the injury, not received it. It was easy enough for him to resolve to bury in oblivion what had happened in the Form-room; it was not so easy for the juniors, whose hands were still smarting. They did not intend to let bygones be bygones until the accounts had been squared a little.

Mr. Lang beamed upon his class with a kind smile. He was going to be very genial that tea-time, and he was gratified to see so many of the Form come in. He knew that, as a rule, half the Form had their tea in their studies.

He smiled genially. Nobody smiled back. The juniors sat down and fixed their eyes upon their plates.

Mr. Lang was a little taken aback.

"Good-evening, my boys!" he said pleasantly. "I am glad to see so many of you in to tea."

Silence.

"Tea," resumed Mr. Lang, "should be a sociable meal; and I consider it infinitely better to have tea together like this, than to have it separately in little rooms. I hope that while I am at Greyfriars my Form will always come here to tea."

No reply.

Mr. Lang coloured a little.

"Do you not think so, Wharton?" he asked.

Harry did not look up.

"Wharton!"

Silence.

Mr. Lang's face flushed very red.

"Wharton!" he exclaimed again.

Silence.

"Wharton, I order you to reply to me."

Then Harry Wharton raised his eyes from his plate. He did not intend to put himself in the wrong by disobeying an order of the Form-master.

"Yes, sir?" he said most respectfully.

"Why did you not reply to me before, Wharton?"

"I had nothing to say, sir."

"It was impertinent not to reply when I spoke to you, Wharton."

"Indeed, sir?"

"You will take fifty lines."

"What for, sir?"

"For impertinence!" exclaimed Mr. Lang angrily.

"Very well, sir."

"And now, as you have chosen to be silent, you may remain so. Do not let me hear you speak again during tea-time, or you shall be caned."

Wharton closed his lips.

Mr. Lang, who was feeling and looking very irritated, turned to Nugent, who was nearest to him on the other side of the table. Frank Nugent as a rule was sunny and cheerful, and ready to chat with anybody. But just now there was a grim and forbidding expression upon his handsome face, and his eyes were fixed upon his plate with a stony glare.

"Do you usually have your tea in Hall, Nugent?" asked Mr. Lang agreeably.

Nugent did not speak.

"Nugent, I addressed you."

Silence.

"Will you answer me, Nugent?"

Frank looked up.

"Do you order me to do so, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, certainly!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Very well, sir. No, I do not as a rule have my tea in Hall; as a rule I have my tea in my study, sir," said Nugent, in a recitative, sing-song voice, as if he were repeating a lesson.

There was a chuckle somewhere along the table, instantly suppressed.

A gleam of anger came into Mr. Lang's eyes.

"You must not answer me like that, Nugent."

"No, sir."

"I suppose," said Mr. Lang, turning his glance upon Bulstrode, the captain of the Form—"I suppose this is what you call a rag, is it not?"

Bulstrode did not reply. He seemed to be very intent upon munching thick bread-and-butter, and as all his attention was taken up by it he had none left to bestow upon the Remove-master.

Mr. Lang rapped the table with his knuckles sharply.

"Bulstrode!" he jerked out.

Silence.

"Bulstrode!"

The Remove captain started, and looked away from his bread-and-butter.

"Did you address me, sir?"

"Yes, Bulstrode. I understand that you boys have planned a trick—what you would call a rag," the Form-master exclaimed angrily.

"Do you, sir?"

"Yes."

"Very well, sir."

"I shall not allow anything of this sort," said the Remove master, breathing hard. "I repeat, I shall not permit it."

"No, sir."

"You will cease this impertinence at once."

"What impertinence, sir?"

"You understand very well what I mean."

Bulstrode did not reply. Neither did anyone else. Mr. Lang opened his lips to speak again, but closed them without any words coming forth. For the moment he felt hopeless to deal with the Remove; and tea was over, and the Form walked out of the dining-room without another word being exchanged between master and pupils.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Cut by His Form.

MR. LANG came up the stairs into the Remove passage. There were lights under the doors of the studies, and some of the doors were open. The Remove were nearly all in their quarters, busy with their preparation.

The master of the Lower Fourth paused as he came into the passago, and hesitated. There were voices proceeding from No. 1 Study, and the door of that study was wide open. But Mr. Lang did not listen. Perhaps it had dawned upon him, after Bob Cherry's plain speaking, that it was an injudicious thing to do; and perhaps he had come to realise that it was mean. At all events, he walked to the study and entered.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, to whom the study belonged, were there, chatting in a pause of their work. They knew the Form-master's step, and did not look round as he came in. Apart from other grievances, they were annoyed at his entering without knocking. The masters at Greyfriars always knocked at study doors before opening them.

"Yes, we gave them a jolly good licking, there's no doubt about that," Frank Nugent was saying. And he went on calmly and unconsciously, as if Mr. Lang were a thousand miles away: "I don't think Highcliffe will do much crowing on the subject of footer for some time to come—eh?"

"Quite so," said Harry. "It was about the biggest licking we've ever given them—"

"Wharton!" said Mr. Lang, who was hesitating very awkwardly just inside the study.

"And they won't get over it in a hurry," said Wharton serenely. "Ponsonby was the only one of the crowd who put up anything like a game—"

"Wharton!"

"Vavasour was the worst of the lot; but that was due to his smoking on the way over, the silly ass! Did you ever hear of such a shrieking duffer?"

"Wharton!"

"I dare say he's been pretty well ragged by Pon for it," Wharton went on, taking not the slightest notice of Mr. Lang's presence. "Under the circumstances— Oh!"

Mr. Lang seized the junior by the shoulder and shook him.

"Hallo! Leggo! Chuck it!"

"Wharton, answer me!"

"Certainly, sir."

"Do you mean to say that you did not hear me speaking to you before?" almost shouted Mr. Lang.

"I don't mean to say anything, sir."

"Wharton!"

"I have nothing to say, sir," said Harry. "You couldn't expect us to know that you were in the study, sir, as you did not knock."

Mr. Lang bit his lip.

"I do not consider that necessary in entering a junior study!" he exclaimed.

Wharton was silent.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why do you not reply?"

"I have nothing to say, sir."

"Does that mean," said Mr. Lang, in a very concentrated voice—"does that mean, Wharton, that you do not wish to speak to your Form-master unless you are ordered to?"

"Yes, sir."

"You dare to tell me so?"

"You asked me, sir."

"This is a scheme—a rag—a plan of yours to revenge yourselves for your very just punishment to-day, I presume?"

No reply.

"Answer me, Wharton."

"What do you want me to say, sir?"

"Is this a scheme on the part of the Remove?"

"Yes, sir."

"You—your dare—"

"I am bound to answer you truthfully, sir, if I answer you at all," said Harry Wharton. "I hope you do not wish me to tell you untruths, sir?"

Mr. Lang nearly choked.

"Wharton, how dare you! I—I—I hardly know how to deal with you!" said Mr. Lang. "I came up here to speak to you in a friendly way—to tell you that, in my opinion, there should be good feeling between a Form-master and his Form. This is the way you have received me."

Wharton was silent.

"I can see that concessions are useless," said Mr. Lang—who had, indeed, not made any concessions. "I shall be severe, as that appears to be the only method of dealing with you. Take a hundred lines, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

"Nugent!"

Frank Nugent had his eyes fixed upon his Latin grammar. Never had a Latin grammar seemed so intensely interesting to Nugent. His eyes seemed to be unable to leave it, and apparently he could not even hear Mr. Lang speak, let alone heed him.

"Nugent!" shouted Mr. Lang.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Answer me!"

"Yes, sir."

"I have had enough of this impertinence! More than enough! Nugent, take two hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Lang stamped out of the study. He was a very young man, and had not yet learned to control his temper. The two juniors exchanged a grin, and went quietly on with their work.

The new master had ridden the Remove hard, but it began to look as if the Remove would succeed in keeping their end up, after all.

Mr. Lang paused in the passage to recover himself a little. Then he went to the door of the second study, No. 2, belonging to Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and Tom Brown. He knocked at the door before opening it, having already learned a lesson at No. 1.

Bulstrode, Hazel, and Brown were all there, and they saw the Form-master the moment he opened the door, as was evident from the fact that the sound of voices ceased instantly, and the three juniors became engrossed in their books.

Tom Brown plunged into a Latin grammar, Hazel into a Cæsar, and Bulstrode caught up Horace, and began to study him, in his haste holding the volume upside down. Horace is a difficult enough subject at any time, and upside down he quite baffled Bulstrode, but the captain of the Remove kept his eyes fixed intently upon the page.

Mr. Lang looked at them, and breathed hard through his nose. The attitude of the three juniors showed that they were all in the game. The Form-master coughed, but it did not make the juniors look away from their books. Never were three such intent readers seen within the walls of Greyfriars before.

"Bulstrode!" rapped out Mr. Lang.

"Mæcenas stavis," murmured Bulstrode.

"Bulstrode!"

"Oh! Yes, sir."

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"Ah, you are studying Horace, I see!" said Mr. Lang, as genially as he could. "That, I believe, is the first book."

No reply.

"Is that the first book of Horace's Odes, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir."

"He is my favourite author," said Mr. Lang, with a smile. "If you would care for it, Bulstrode, I should be very pleased to give you any aid you required in studying that great author."

No answer.

"Would you like me to help you, Bulstrode?"

Silence.

"Answer me at once, Bulstrode."

"Certainly, sir. No, sir."

Mr. Lang bit his lip.

"This is insolence, Bulstrode."

"Oh, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines."

"Thank you, sir."

"Hazeldene!"

"Yes, sir," said Hazeldene.

"Very good. I see that you are not a party to this wretched scheme for treating your Form-master with impertinence, Hazeldene."

Hazel did not speak.

"What book are you reading now, Hazeldene?"

No answer.

"Hazeldene!"

"Yes, sir."

"Answer me at once!"

"Julius Cæsar, sir."

"Ah! You like Cæsar?"

"No, sir."

"Hazeldene! Come, you must let me point out some of the beauties of Cæsar to you—the clear, direct style, the—"

"Excuse me, sir," said Hazeldene, very respectfully, "but this isn't lesson time, sir. Mr. Quelch never made us study in the evenings, sir, outside prep."

Mr. Lang set his lips.

"I was not regarding this in the light of a lesson, Hazeldene; I was going to afford you instruction and pleasure combined. But if you do not care for it—"

Hazeldene was silent.

"Do you care for it?" exclaimed Mr. Lang, raising his voice.

"No, sir."

"I see that you are as insolent as the rest," said Mr. Lang. "You will take a hundred lines, Hazeldene, and bring them to me to-morrow tea-time!"

"What for, sir?"

"For impertinence."

"But—but is it impertinence not to want extra tuition in the evenings, sir?" asked Hazeldene, with great innocence.

"As a rule, sir, we don't have extra tuition unless we're going in for exams., sir, and I'm not going in for any exams., sir. And, besides, a fellow never has to have extra tuition, sir, unless he likes; it's a rule here for a chap to ask for it if he wants it at all, sir, and—"

"Silence, Hazeldene!"

"Very well, sir, but—"

"Take two hundred lines, Hazeldene."

"What for, sir?"

"Impertinence!" roared Mr. Lang. "Now, hold your tongue, or I will cane you as well!"

"But, sir—"

"Three hundred lines!" said Mr. Lang angrily, and he went out of the study and closed the door after him with a bang.

The three juniors grinned at one another. They were the richer by hundreds of lines, but that really did not matter, for in their campaign against the new master they expected to have more lines imposed upon them than they could possibly write out, and so it was of very little consequence how they piled up. That was another lesson Mr. Lang had to learn, that too heavy punishments defeat their own object.

Mr. Lang paused next at Skinner's study. Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were in that study, and they all looked round with agreeable smiles as the Form-master came in. Two or three fellows were in the passage, and they stopped outside Skinner's study to look on. If the cads of the Remove did not "play up," there was punishment awaiting them from their Form-fellows.

Skinner caught sight of John Bull and Bob Cherry and Mark Linley in the passage, and he felt very uneasy. Between his desire to keep on good terms with the Form-master, and his fear of vengeance from the Remove, he was in a decidedly awkward situation.

"Ah, my boys, and how are you getting on with your prep?" asked Mr. Lang, in the most genial manner possible.

"Very well, sir," said Skinner.

John Bull shook his fist at him from the passage. Skinner pretended not to see him. He came round to close the door, but Bob Cherry put his foot in the way.

"No, you don't!" he murmured.

"Look here, Cherry—"

Mr. Lang looked round, and frowned.

"Cherry—"

Bob Cherry vanished, and Skinner closed the door. But he did not feel very comfortable in his mind. He knew that the Remove would be ready for him when Mr. Lang left the study, and he was right. Mr. Lang chatted very pleasantly to the cads of the Remove, and they answered him cheerfully enough, and the Form-master left the study very much cheered up by the talk, and feeling that he would get on very well with his Form after all. But as soon as his footsteps had died away downstairs, Skinner's door was opened again, and Skinner knew that the time of trouble had come.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Lesson for Blacklegs!

BOB CHERRY had called up the Remove. Nearly the whole Form crowded round the door of Skinner's study, and Skinner and Stott and Snoop looked very much alarmed. They would have felt so nice and comfortable in their minds if it had been possible to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, but that, unfortunately, was not possible for them.

They had either to throw in their lot with the Form or to throw in their lot with the Form-master, and either choice meant discomfort in one way or the other. But as they looked at the threatening faces of the juniors outside the study, it dawned upon them that it would have been wiser to throw in their lot with the Form.

Bob Cherry, and Bulstrode, and Wharton, and Nugent, and John Bull, and several more of the leaders of the Form came in. The other fellows crowded in the doorway and the passage with grim faces. Skinner turned a sickly smile upon his visitors. Stott sat and stared at them grimly, and Snoop sneaked into a corner, beginning to whimper already.

"You cads!" said Bulstrode.

"You've been crawling up to Lang!"

"We—we haven't!" said Skinner.

"We—we had to answer him, you know. You can't let a Form-master jaw without answering him, can you?"

"You'll have to learn how, then," said Bulstrode. "Lang's sent to Coventry, and he's going to stay there, and no chap in the Remove is going to speak to him excepting when specially ordered to speak. That was the agreement."

"That's all very well, but I didn't agree to it, and—"

"You can't stand out from the Form, as I warned you. You've got to stand in, and if you don't want to you'll be ragged till you do want to. Mind, you've got to toe the line along with the rest of us!"

"Look here, Bulstrode—"

"We're all of the same mind," said Harry Wharton. "We don't want any blessed blacklegs going behind our backs when we go on strike."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We don't want any sneaks spoiling the game," said Bob Cherry. "I dare say there were a few more weak-kneed rotters in the Form who would like to crawl to the master, and spoil the whole wheeze. It is our duty to make an example of these three cads."

"Hear, hear!"

"I guess you're right on the nail."

"Look here—" began Skinner, in alarm.

"Collar them!" exclaimed Bulstrode.

And the three "blacklegs" were collared.

They did not resist. It was not of much use trying to resist the whole Form. Many hands grasped them, and they were whirled over, and bumped on the floor, and three loud yells rang through the study.

"Ow! ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then the avengers set to work in earnest. The table was pushed over Skinner, and he was flooded with books and papers and ink. The bookcase was turned out, and the ashpan emptied over the three rascals, and Nugent, having found a large bottle of ink, drew the cork, and scattered the contents over them with wide sweeps of the bottle.

Skinner & Co. roared and yelled. They made a frantic attempt to dash from the study, and were promptly collared and hurled back.

The room was wrecked.

The din of overturning furniture and breaking glass and

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yelling juniors rang down the Remove passage, amid roars of laughter from the raggers.

"There!" panted Bulstrode, at last. "I think that is something like a lesson. I wonder if they've had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Have you had enough, Skinny?"

"Yaroo!"

"Have you had enough, Snoopy?"

"Yowp!"

"How do you feel, Stott?"

"Groo!"

The three blacklegs sat up disconsolately, smothered with ink and dust, amid the wreck of their study. The raggers crowded out, satisfied with their vengeance. Bob Cherry shook an admonitory finger at the miserable three.

"Mind," he said, "you've got to back up the Form. This is mild compared with what you will get if you play the traitor again."

"Groo—oh! Ow!"

"Are you going to back us up in sending Lang to Coventry?"

"Ow! Yes."

"No more blacklegging?"

"Yow—no!"

"Good! Mind you stick to that."

"Cave!" came a sudden warning from the passage.

The juniors melted away.

Mr. Lang was coming up the stairs two at a time. The din in the Remove passage had reached his ears at last, and he was hurrying upon the scene. The passage was empty by the time he reached it, however, the juniors all being in the studies and apparently hard at work.

The Remove-master glanced along the passage, and saw an overturned chair half-way in Skinner's doorway, and a stream of ink on the linoleum. That showed him where the trouble was, and he came running along the passage.

He stopped at Skinner's doorway, and stared into the study in blank amazement.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"What has happened?"

The inky and dishevelled trio gazed at him without speaking. The lesson they had had, had not been lost upon them. They knew that keen ears were listening at the other study doors to ascertain whether there was any more treachery.

"Skinner, answer me!"

"Ow!"

"Explain to me at once, Skinner, how your study came to be in this state. I insist upon an immediate explanation!" exclaimed Mr. Lang.

"I—I—I—"

"What has happened here?"

"It's all right, sir."

"What do you mean, Skinner? It does not look all right. Has your study been wrecked in this manner by your Form-fellows?"

Silence.

"Answer me, Skinner!" thundered Mr. Lang.

"Oh, sir!"

"Who did this to your study?"

"S-s-some of the fellows, sir. It's—it's all right; we don't complain, sir," stammered Skinner. "It was only a rag, sir. It's all right."

"I demand the names immediately of the raggers."

No answer.

"Tell me the names of all the boys who were concerned in this outrage, Skinner," exclaimed Mr. Lang angrily. "I shall severely punish all of them."

Only too gladly Skinner would have given him the names, if he had dared. He would have been extremely pleased to see the raggers punished severely. But he feared the vengeance of the Remove too much.

"It's all right, sir," he muttered.

"The names—immediately!"

"I c-c-can't, sir."

"Take five hundred lines, Skinner," thundered Mr. Lang.

"Oh, sir!"

"Stott, give me the names of the boys concerned in this unprecedented, this unheard-of outrage," exclaimed the Remove-master.

"I c-c-can't, sir," stammered Stott.

"Take five hundred lines. Snoop, give me the names."

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"I order you to give me the names at once, Snoop."

"I c-c-can't, sir."

"Take five hundred lines."

And Mr. Lang stamped from the study. He went down

the passage with a face crimson with anger. He felt baffled and beaten on all sides. The three cads of the Remove groaned. They had fifteen hundred lines between them, as well as a wrecked study. Truly, they would have done better to back up the Remove in the campaign against the unpopular new master.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Open War!

MR. LANG saw lights out for the Remove that night, instead of Courtney. He was still dispensing with the services of the prefects, and the prefects were letting him severely alone. Mr. Lang was looking very clouded, and he did not attempt any geniality towards his Form. He was beginning to learn how it would be received. But as he turned towards the door, he said good-night.

There was no reply from the Remove. They did not appear to hear him. Mr. Lang turned back towards the Form with a very flushed face, and a glitter in his eyes. His temper was being sorely tried.

"Good-night, boys!" he said, very distinctly.

Silence.

"I cannot allow this insolence," said the Form-master, breathing hard. "If you cannot observe the commonest rules of courtesy, I shall punish you all."

Silence.

"Every boy in this dormitory will take five hundred lines, in addition to the impositions already given out," shouted Mr. Lang.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, I can't do five hundred lines, you know. It's impossible. Upon the whole, I'm going to say good-night. Good-night, sir!"

"Cad!"

"Worm!"

"Blackleg!"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Lang furiously. "You have acted quite properly, Bunter, and I will not allow you to be terrorised by the others."

"Thank you, sir. I say, you fellows——"

"Cad!" shouted the juniors.

"Silence!"

"Rotter!"

"Worm!"

"Sneak!"

Mr. Lang clenched his fists. But he was powerless to stay the storm. He had given out so many lines that it was useless to give out more. The juniors could never write out so many as they had received. There was nothing for it but to fetch up a cane and lay about him. And that was a very desperate step to take.

"Boys! Silence! I will cane every boy in the dormitory——"

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

"Sneak!"

The Remove bawled out the words in chorus. Mr. Lang rushed out of the room to fetch a cane.

Bob Cherry bounded out of bed, and shut the door of the dormitory, and jammed the back of a chair under the lock. The door could not be opened now from the outside with anything short of a battering-ram.

"Now, then, have Bunter out!"

Juniors were already clawing the Owl of the Remove out of bed. Billy Bunter was shrieking with terror.

"Ow, ow! Leggo! Stop! Yow! Look here, I didn't mean to say good-night to the beast; I—I only meant to say go and eat coke. That was what I really meant. Ow!"

Bump!

"Yaroo!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Groo-oo! Ow! Oh!"

Bump, bump!

The handle of the door rattled. Mr. Lang had returned. There was a sounding crack as he smote the door furiously with his cane.

"Open this door immediately!" he shouted through the key-hole.

There was a yell of defiance. Safe behind the secured door, the juniors were not in the least inclined to obey. Bunter was dragged to the door, and Bulstrode held up a leather belt over him. Bunter blinked at the belt in terror.

"Now," said Bulstrode, "you said good-night to the cad, when we had all agreed to send him to Coventry."

"Ow! I didn't! It wasn't me!" howled Bunter. "I—I think it was Wharton; his voice is very like mine, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And—and I really meant to say go and eat coke, you

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know, or go and fry your face in lard," moaned Bunter. "I did really, you know. Ow!"

"Very well," said Bulstrode, "say it now."

"Eh?"

"Say it now. Lang's on the other side of the door, and he can hear you," said Bulstrode grimly. "Say that to him now, or I'll lather you. Mind, we mean bizney! Every chap who goes back on the Form gets it in the neck. Say that to him now, or I'll cut the skin off your fat carcase."

Bunter writhed in the grasp of half a dozen Removites. But there was no escape for him.

"I—I say, you fellows——" he panted.

"Are you going to do as you're told, Bunter?"

"I—I can't! You see, he'll go for me to-morrow, and—— Yaroo!"

Whack! The leather belt came down across Bunter's pyjamas, and he gave a wild yell that woke every echo in the Remove dormitory. Bulstrode was certainly in deadly earnest. He swung the belt in the air again.

"Now, then, are you going to——"

"Hold on!" shrieked Bunter. "I—I'll say it! I say, sir—I—I say, sir, you can go and—and eat coke, sir! You can go and fry your face in lard, sir! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter!" Mr. Lang's voice came back through the key-hole, sounding suffocated with wrath. "I shall cane you severely for that!"

"It wasn't me, sir! Ow! Yow! Yah!"

Bunter went rolling along the floor, with several feet helping him in his progress. The Remove had given him his lesson, and they were done with him. Outside in the passage Mr. Lang was hammering on the door. But he could not move it. In case of any insubordination on the part of the Form, he had removed the key from the lock. But the door was just as fast as if it had been locked.

He hammered upon the panels, and thrashed the wood with his cane, unavailingly. He was baffled; he could not get into the dormitory again unless the juniors chose to open the door. And that, evidently, they did not choose to do.

"Bed!" said Harry Wharton calmly. "Let's go to bed, and he can hammer there as long as he likes. It's no business of ours."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove turned in, and Wharton switched off the light. Hammer, hammer, hammer came Mr. Lang's furious blows upon the door; but there was no notice taken from within. The juniors left him to tire himself out. At the worst, he could only cane them in the morning; and as he certainly intended to cane them if he obtained an entrance, there was nothing to lose by keeping him out.

Mr. Lang desisted at last. Red with rage, he rushed downstairs in search of assistance. He found a group of prefects in the passage. The din had drawn them out of their studies, but they did not intend to interfere. The Remove-master came up to them panting, and they affected not to see him.

"Wingate!" exclaimed Mr. Lang breathlessly.

The captain of Greyfriars gave him a look.

"The Remove have fastened the door of the dormitory," said Mr. Lang. "I require assistance to get it open."

"Indeed!"

"I call upon the prefects to help me!"

Wingate looked him steadily in the face.

"You have told the prefects that you don't want their help, and insulted them quite enough over it," he said.

"I am head prefect, and I decline to help you. If the other fellows are of my opinion, they will follow my example."

"I certainly shall, for one!" said Courtney.

"And I!" said North.

The other prefects were silent, but it was clear that they meant to stand by Wingate.

Even Loder, who generally backed up against the captain when he had an opportunity, felt that it would not do to act against the general feeling of the Sixth. Mr. Lang was baffled. He had certainly refused help from the prefects rudely enough on more than one occasion, and he could not be surprised at the attitude they took. But it was decidedly awkward for him, under the circumstances.

"Very well," he said, between his teeth, "I shall not forget this."

"I don't want you to forget it, sir. You cannot insult us one minute, and ask for our aid the next; it's not cricket."

"I shall complain of this to the Head, Wingate."

"I'm quite ready to explain matters to Dr. Locke, sir, if you care to carry it to him," said the Greyfriars captain firmly.

Mr. Lang turned away. What to do he had no idea. To allow the Remove to keep on as they had begun seemed impossible; it would surely be the end of all authority in his Form-room.

He tapped at the door of Mr. Prout's study, and entered. It dawned upon him that, after all, he was a young and inexperienced master, and that the advice of an older head

might be useful to him. But he did not find Mr. Prout in a genial humour. The Fifth Form-master had not forgotten Mr. Lang's high tone on the occasion of their last talk together.

He glanced coldly enough at the Remove-master as he entered. He knew that there was some disturbance going on in the Remove, but he did not interfere. His cold and steady look somewhat disconcerted Mr. Lang.

"Can I speak to you for a minute?" the young master exclaimed hurriedly.

"Most certainly, sir!" said Mr. Prout, with elaborate politeness. "Pray take a seat."

The Remove-master did not do so. He was far too agitated to sit down.

"My Form have fastened the door of the dormitory against me," he said. "Under the circumstances, can you advise me?"

"I dare say I could," said Mr. Prout deliberately, "but I do not intend to do so. You treated me with rudeness when I proffered my advice on one occasion, and I have no intention of offering it a second time."

Mr. Lang bit his lip.

"Very well!" he said.

He turned on his heel and quitted the study. He hesitated in the passage for two or three minutes, and then he went to his own room. The matter was impossible to deal with, and he did not return to the Remove dormitory. The juniors remained undisturbed, and vengeance slept till morning—and so did the Remove.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Form-room.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. turned out in the morning at the sound of the rising-bell, wondering what was to happen when they went down. To refuse to open the dormitory door at the direct order of their Form-master was an act, certainly, of the most flagrant disobedience. But they were not sorry for it. Mr. Lang had started the trouble, and they were keeping it up. That was how they looked at it. And most of the Remove were prepared to "stand the racket," as Fisher T. Fish expressed it. And those who were afraid were more afraid of the rest of the Form than of the Form-master.

Mr. Lang's face was very thunderous at the breakfast-table. He did not speak a word to his Form until they were in the Form-room for first lesson. Then he took a cane from the desk and held it in his hand while he addressed the Remove.

"Last night," he said, "the dormitory door was fastened, and you refused to open it at my order. I shall cane every boy in the Form for that act of rebellion. You will come up to my desk in turn, beginning with the head boy of the Form."

The Remove did not stir.

"Any further insubordination," said Mr. Lang, very distinctly, "will be referred to the Head to be dealt with. You can take your choice of being caned by me or flogged by Dr. Locke."

Bulstrode set the example of walking up to the desk. If the Head were called in, the Remove would have to take their punishment. They knew that Mr. Lang did not want to call the Head in, but if they refused to be caned he would have no other resource. And they did not want Dr. Locke to be mixed up in the trouble.

Mr. Lang caned the whole Form in turn, as he had done the previous day. The juniors bore it with fortitude for the most part. That was where Mr. Lang came in, as Bob Cherry expressed it. He could cane them as much as he liked. They had various means of getting their own back, and they did not mean to neglect one of them. The Form and the Form-master were at open warfare now, and it was a case of no quarter on either side.

At all events, the caning took up the whole of the time usually devoted to first lesson, and the Remove scored there. Mr. Lang went on with second lesson, which happened to be geography. But he found that passive resistance on the part of his Form had a very stupefying effect upon giving instruction. The boys replied to him when they had to, and they replied just sufficiently to give him no excuse for punishing them. But their answers were mostly very wide of the mark. If Mr. Lang had believed them genuine, he would certainly have thought himself in charge of the stupidest Form in any school in the country. But he did not believe them. He knew that they intended to send him to Coventry, and that when they were forced to speak they deliberately affected ignorance.

When Bob Cherry stated that Pekin was the capital of Russia, Mr. Lang lost his patience. He called Bob Cherry

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out before the class. Bob walked out with his hands in his pockets. Mr. Lang fastened a withering glance upon him. "Cherry, take your hands out of your pockets immediately!"

Bob took them out.

"Now, Cherry, you have stated that Pekin is the capital of Russia."

Bob did not reply.

"Answer me, Cherry!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you really believe that Pekin is the capital of Russia? I order you to reply!"

"No, sir."

"Then why did you make such an answer—such an absurd answer, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry looked at the ceiling, and then at the floor, and then at the window, as if in search of inspiration. He did not reply. Apparently the inspiration was lacking.

"Cherry, answer me at once!" exclaimed Mr. Lang.

"Yes, sir."

"Explain your ridiculous answer!"

"Is it ridiculous, sir?"

"Are you not aware that it is ridiculous, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you make it?"

"For fun, sir."

The Remove gasped. Bob Cherry certainly was cool. The Form-master could scarcely believe his ears. He had insisted upon a reply, and now he had had it. But he was not satisfied—perhaps naturally.

"You—you dare to tell me that you make fun of your master in the Form-room?" he exclaimed, in choking tones.

Bob Cherry did not speak.

"Answer me at once, Cherry!"

"Yes, sir."

"You—you admit it? You have the unparalleled audacity to admit it, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Boy, hold out your hand!"

Bob Cherry held out his hand. He took the caning without a word, and went back to his place. Mr. Lang looked at him as he sat squeezing his hands, his face pale but hard.

"Cherry, what is the capital of Russia?"

"Pekin, sir."

"What?"

"Pekin."

"Stand out here, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry came out again. The Form-master took a hard grip on the cane. He was almost beside himself with rage.

"This is deliberate insolence, Cherry!"

"Yes, sir."

"You—you certainly could not have treated your last Form-master in this manner, Cherry!" said Mr. Lang, rather unfortunately.

"Our last Form-master wasn't a bully, sir," said Bob Cherry, very distinctly.

"Hear, hear!" shouted two or three voices.

"Silence! Cherry, do you mean to hint that—that—Boy! Insolent boy! Hold out your hand!"

Bob Cherry put his hands behind him.

"Cherry, do you intend to disobey me?"

"Yes, sir."

"What—what!" Mr. Lang could hardly credit his hearing. "What—what did you say, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the Remove-master.

Bob Cherry did not speak and he did not move. Only his steady blue eyes met the furious glance of the Form-master, hard as steel.

"Very well," said Mr. Lang chokingly. "I shall take you in to the Headmaster, Cherry, and you will be flogged."

"Very well," said Bob Cherry. "And when Dr. Locke sees my hands, sir, how they're swollen and blistered, he'll know how you've been treating us. I'm ready."

Mr. Lang started.

For a full minute he stood nonplussed, and then he pointed to the form Bob had left.

"Go back to your place!" he said, harshly.

Bob Cherry went without a word.

Mr. Lang did not use the cane again that morning, but impositions flew about as thick as hail. When the Form were dismissed after morning lessons were over, Harry Wharton computed that, as a total, every fellow in the Remove had an average of two thousand lines to do. And as it was impossible to do so many the juniors decided to do none at all.

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THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Many Lines.

"I HAVE made a mistake!" Mr. Lang muttered the words to himself as he paced in his study after school was over that day. The afternoon had been a repetition of the morning. Lines had fallen thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, as Frank Nugent expressed it poetically. And as the Remove were already laden up with lines, so to speak, the matter was becoming comic. Mr. Lang realised, himself, that he had given out more impositions than could possibly be done. He could hardly cane his Form again. He felt that the cane had been too much used already. To bring the delinquencies of the Form before the Head was a resource; but it was confessing that he could not manage the Remove by himself, and that was what he did not wish. He was taking a Form at Greyfriars, as much as anything else, for experience, and he was to leave when Mr. Quelch returned, and hoped to get an appointment at another school, with a strong recommendation from Dr. Locke. The doctor was not likely to recommend strongly a man who had to admit that his Form was in uproar and mutiny before it had been two days under his management.

Mr. Lang had another reason, too. He was a kind-hearted man, hasty as he was, and he did not wish to get the juniors into trouble with the Head. He did not wish to see the Remove flogged. He was far kinder than his boys gave him credit for, as a matter of fact. They had only seen the unpleasant side of his character; but there was a pleasant side, too, which he wished to show. He had not left himself an opportunity of showing it, and it was borne in upon his mind, now that matters had come to this pass, that he had made a mistake in his manner of dealing with the Lower Fourth.

"I've made a mistake!" He muttered the words again and again, pacing his study. "But how to rectify it—that is the question."

It was indeed a question, and one that Hubert Lang could not answer.

His intentions were certainly good, but how was he to make the Remove understand that? How was he to remove the bad impression he had already made? The juniors were in no mood to grant him even a hearing now. If he were kind and considerate and just, even, they would probably believe that they had ragged him into it.

What was he to do to gain the good opinion of his Form, the confidence of the prefects, the tolerance of the other masters?

It seemed that there was nothing he could do. He had made a bad beginning, and it looked as if he would have to follow the same path to the end.

There was a sudden noise in the passage, and loud shouts of laughter. Mr. Lang stopped in his hurried pacing to and fro, and listened.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wheel it on!"

"Go it! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Remove-master's brows wrinkled in a frown.

He recognised the voices and the laughter as belonging to his Form, and he had no doubt that there was a Remove jape in progress. Was it directed against himself? It was only too probable.

The noise in the passage was undoubtedly approaching his study. There was a peculiar creaking sound as if a wheelbarrow was being wheeled along and tramping of feet, amid the shouts of laughter. Yet surely it was impossible that a barrow was being wheeled along the passage upon which the masters' studies opened.

Bump!

It was a heavy blow upon the door from the outside.

Then came a sharp tap, and the door was opened, and a crowd of juniors appeared in view.

John Bull and Bulstrode were wheeling a gardener's barrow, recognisable as one that belonged to Gosling, the school porter. Juniors surrounded them, helping to push on the barrow, and grinning and laughing.

Mr. Lang stared at the barrow in amazement. On it were great piles of manuscript, scribbled over on the top sheets. Whether the under sheets were written on he could not see. There were whole quires of foolscap piled on the barrow, and spread out to make as great a show as possible.

The juniors wheeled the barrow right into the study. It crashed against the doorposts as they wheeled it through, but it came right in, and the juniors halted, panting.

Mr. Lang stared blankly at them.

"What—what—what does this mean?" he panted.

"The lines, sir!"

"What!"

"The lines, sir," said Bulstrode. "We had about two thousand lines each, sir. That makes about eighty thousand

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for the whole of the Remove, sir. We couldn't carry the lot, so we borrowed Gosling's barrow to wheel them in, sir!"

"I guess that's the how of it, sir," said Fish.

And the juniors in the passage roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lang stared, too utterly taken aback to say another word, or to move a hand. Bulstrode and John Bull tipped the barrow over, and the heaps of paper shot off it upon the floor, and flooded Mr. Lang's study.

Papers, in rolls and batches and sheets, flew over the study, settling about it like a flock of white birds.

"Good—good heavens!" gasped Mr. Lang.

"Out you go!" said Bulstrode.

The wheelbarrow crashed through the doorway again, and Bob Cherry drew the door shut. Mr. Lang was still standing speechless.

Amid roars of laughter, the wheelbarrow was trundled down the passage. Mr. Prout, of the Fifth, came to the door of his study and looked out.

"Goodness me! What are you doing with that garden-barrow inside the House?" he exclaimed.

"We had to have it, sir," said Nugent.

"Why? What for?"

"To carry our lines to Mr. Lang, sir."

"W-what!"

"We had eighty thousand lines to do, sir——"

"Bless my soul!"

"And we couldn't carry them all, sir, so we borrowed Gosling's barrow to take them into Mr. Lang's study, sir," said Nugent meekly.

Mr. Prout tried not to laugh; and he succeeded in shutting the door of his study before he burst out. But the juniors heard him chuckling behind the closed door.

The wheelbarrow was trundled out of the House, amid yells of merriment from juniors and seniors as well.

Mr. Lang looked out of his study, and then closed the door again. He was extremely angry; and the sight of the scattered sheets of paper upon his study floor made him angrier. But what could he do?

More lines were impossible—it would be farcical. Canings he could have inflicted, but there had been enough canings. Only bringing the matter before the Head would have brought the Remove to their senses—even if that had done it.

"The young rascals!" muttered Mr. Lang. "The—the impertinent young rascals!"

He kicked the papers angrily away from his feet.

But a little later a smile broke out over his face. He had a sense of humour, and the ridiculous joke appealed to it.

"The young rascals! But perhaps I have been a little hard on them in some respects. At all events, the lines shall be cancelled, and I will judge what effect leniency has upon them."

Mr. Lang wrote a note, and took it out into the hall and pinned it on the notice-board. A good many juniors saw him do so, and as soon as he was gone back into his study there was a crowd round the board to read what he had written.

"The Remove are excused all lines imposed to-day and yesterday.—Signed, H. LANG, Form-master."

The Removites burst into a general chuckle.

"Scared, by gum!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish.

"Beaten to the wide!" said Nugent. "That's the first symptom of surrender. He evidently doesn't like lines in barrow-loads."

"Faith, and he's baten, the baste!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, and we'll make him sing small before long, my darlings!"

"I think we're making him sing pretty small now," said Bulstrode. "Old Quelch would have cut us to pieces before he'd have surrendered like that."

"Old Quelch would never have got himself into such a pickle," said Harry Wharton. "He had too much sense to drive his Form too hard."

"Yes, that's so!"

"The silly ass is beginning to put his ears down," said Bob Cherry. "and a little more experience of the delights of being sent to Coventry will make him quite tame. In two or three days he'll be tame enough to feed out of your hand."

It was pretty clear that leniency came too late. Mr. Lang had put it off too long, and the Remove were no longer in a mood to meet him half-way.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

In Peril!

THE next day was Saturday, a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the Remove were playing the Upper Fourth at football in the afternoon. The juniors mostly expected that the afternoon would be invaded by Mr. Lang. If he wanted to hit them hard, he had only to detain them for the afternoon, and the footer match would have to be aban-

done. They could not hope to lock their Form-master up in the box-room a second time.

But they were not detained. They worried their master all through the morning, with all the worries they could devise. But Mr. Lang was singularly patient.

They were not given impositions, and they were not detained, and they poured out of the Form-room after morning lessons in high good-humour, and in a mood of the most complete triumph and satisfaction.

"Licked!" said Bulstrode. "Licked to the wide!"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Completely dished and done!" said Bob Cherry. "We've tamed him."

It was natural that the juniors should think so. Mr. Lang was, as a matter of fact, trying the effect of kindness upon his pupils. He wished to see if he could win their hearts by consideration. But he could not expect the Remove to understand that. His kindness had not commenced until they had sent him to Coventry; and it was only to be expected that they would attribute it to their tactics. They were reducing him to reason—that was the way they looked at it; and so far from thinking of abandoning their plan of campaign, they only determined to push it harder.

After dinner the juniors crowded down to the football-field, and they found Mr. Lang following them there. They stared at him pointedly. They had heard him declare more than once that in his opinion football was a foolish and childish game, to which too much attention was devoted at Greyfriars and other schools; and they wondered what he wanted on the footer-ground. It was natural that they should suspect that he came there to bother them. How were they to guess that their Form-master, after the previous attitude he had taken up, was trying to understand them, and to take an interest in their pursuits?

"You have beautiful weather for your match, Bulstrode," he remarked, with a genial nod to the captain of the Remove.

Bulstrode stared at him.

It had turned out a very hot afternoon, with a blazing sun in a cloudless sky—a real summer's day in late autumn. It was a good day for cricket, certainly, but the keenest footballers at Greyfriars were growling at the heat.

"Did you hear me speak, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it not a fine afternoon?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"I hope you will enjoy your match."

"I hope so, sir."

Mr. Lang paused, baffled. Bulstrode confided to Harry Wharton, in a low voice, that he firmly believed that the Form-master had a screw loose.

"The utter idiot thinks we want a blazing sunny day for footer," he said.

"He's mad! He must be!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Looks to me as if he's trying to be pleasant," he said.

Bulstrode snorted.

"What's his little game, then? He's been jolly unpleasant so far."

"Turning over a new leaf," said Nugent. "He's tired of Coventry, I suppose. But we haven't done with him yet."

"No fear!"

Mr. Lang made several attempts to exchange genial remarks with the juniors. But all of them failed. No one would reply unless compelled to do so, and then the replies had a brevity and directness that Lycurgus would have praised highly, but which were by no means gratifying to Hubert Lang.

The Remove-master walked off the ground presently, leaving the Remove and the Upper Fourth hotly engaged in urging the flying ball, as the poet expresses it. The juniors completely forgot the existence of their obnoxious Form-master for the next hour and a half.

They would have been surprised if they had known that Mr. Lang was pacing by the river, on the towing-path along the Sark, thinking over the problem of dealing with the Remove; realising the mistake he had made in setting the boys against him, and wondering how he could set matters right.

The Form-master threw himself down at last on the green-sward by the river, under the shade of the trees, gazing out with pensive eyes over the shining waters of the Sark. His favourite Horace dropped into the grass beside him unheeded.

Faintly, from the distance, he could hear the shouts on the playing-fields. Clearly on the wind came a roar from a hundred throats.

"Goal!"

Then the shouting died into distant faintness again.

Mr. Lang wondered.

Surely a game which could evoke such enthusiasm in young and old was something more than a "childish" game, as he

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ONE
PENNY.

had termed it—something more than a game of marbles or draughts. Was it possible that he was wrong, and that a set of boys of fourteen and fifteen were right? It was a somewhat humiliating reflection for the young Form-master. And yet—

A sound closer at hand caught his ears. It was a voice raised in bullying tones—the voice of Bolsover, of the Remove. Bolsover was not playing footer—he was too overbearing to be played in the team, and too conceited to be content to stand and look on. And the tone of his voice showed that he had another amusement—a favourite one with the bully of the Remove—that of ragging a weaker boy.

Bolsover was on the towing-path, not a dozen paces from the recumbent master, but he did not see Mr. Lang, who was quite hidden by the bushes. The other fellow with Bolsover was Cecil Leigh, of the Remove—a somewhat peculiar and sensitive lad, a very easy victim for the bully. Mr. Lang's face grew pink with wrath as he heard Bolsover speaking. Although he had certainly driven the Remove with a hard hand, there was nothing the young master detested so much as bullying.

"You'll hand me that letter," said Bolsover.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," said Leigh, in low, passionate tones. "What right have you to read a letter from my father?"

Bolsover chuckled.

"I don't want to read the blessed letter," he said. "But I want to see the spelling. My dear chap, it's no good your taking that tone. Didn't your pater come to Greyfriars the other day and give you away? You are a blessed impostor, and your name isn't Leigh at all—it's Hopkins!"

"Shut up!"

"Rats! Who's going to make me shut up?" grinned Bolsover. "Hand me that letter, I tell you! If you give me the trouble of taking it, I'll take it by force, and read it out in the Form-room to all the fellows. Do you hear, you beggarly son of a village inn-keeper—"

Crash!

Leigh, crimson with rage, leaped at his tormentor. Leigh had been a "swanker" in the Remove, and much ridicule had fallen upon him since the truth had come out about his people. He was very sensitive about it, and Bolsover, with a kind of demoniac instinct, knew how he could torture the weak-natured lad. But his last taunt had gone too far, and Leigh, goaded beyond prudence, had sprung straight at his enemy. His two fists came crashing together into Bolsover's face with a heavy thud.

"Oh!"

The bully of the Remove reeled back. Mr. Lang was just springing to his feet to interfere, when Leigh leaped and struck; the Form-master was too late. Bolsover was standing on the edge of the bank, at a point where it sloped down abruptly to the Sark. He staggered on the verge, and Mr. Lang shouted to him in alarm.

"Bolsover! Take care!"

But it was useless. The burly Removeite had overbalanced himself on the steep bank, and he went rolling heavily down the slope.

Splash!

The water closed over Bolsover as he plunged headlong in, and bubbled and sang over the bully of the Remove.

Leigh stood transfixed.

He had meant to strike the bully down, to silence him, somehow, anyhow; but he had not meant this! He gazed in fixed horror at the water. They were close to the pool—the dangerous pool which Greyfriars swimmers always avoided. Mr. Lang dashed to the edge of the steep bank.

Leigh caught him by the arm.

"Stop! It's dangerous!"

The Form-master cast off his hold. He tore off his hat and coat, and waistcoat, and kicked off his boots, waiting for Bolsover to rise.

"Can he swim?" he asked, without turning his head from the water.

"I don't know."

Bolsover's head appeared a dozen yards out upon the shining, whirling water. Mr. Lang put his hands together, and dived.

He disappeared into the river, and rose, and swam towards Bolsover. He reached him in less than a minute. The bully of the Remove had been under again and had risen, and Mr. Lang's grasp fastened upon him just as he was about to sink for the third time. The burly fellow turned a white and terrified face upon the master.

"Oh! Save me!" he gasped.

Mr. Lang grasped him, and set his teeth. If Bolsover was a swimmer, he was a very feeble one, and fear, and the whirl of the water, had overcome him. He lay helpless in the grasp of the Form-master; only Mr. Lang's hold held him back from death in the gleaming waters.

The Form-master supported him, and struggled towards the bank. But in the deep pool was a whirl that came from deep currents, and he was torn away towards the middle of the stream.

Leigh, watching from the bank, grew deadly white. For it was plain to his eyes that the Remove-master had no chance against the current, and that unless help came, both he and Bolsover were doomed. A shriek burst from Leigh's white lips.

"Help! Help! Help!"

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Three Cheers.

MR. LANG fought hard against the current that whirled him out to the gleaming centre of the pool. But he fought in vain. The strongest swimmer so burdened might have failed. And the young master was not a strong swimmer. He was no athlete; great efforts soon exhausted him. He had plenty of courage, as could easily be seen, but he had not the physical strength to back it up. His eyes were growing dim and dizzy now, his brain was in a whirl; he tried to shout for help, but his tongue seemed tied with bands of iron. The water roared over his head and Bolsover's, and he struggled to the surface again. But he knew that he was near the end.

Yet he did not even think of releasing the heavy burden that was dragging him to his doom.

He held on to Bolsover, who was unconscious now, and fought on the losing fight. From the bank came Leigh's wild cries, ringing shrilly through the trees.

"Help! Help! Help!"

There was a shout from the river, and a splash of oars.

"What's the matter?" shouted a voice from the boat.

Leigh gasped with relief. A boat with four seniors in it was pulling towards the pool from the direction of Greyfriars. Wingate was standing up in it, looking towards him. Leigh, panting, pointed out to the middle of the stream.

Wingate followed his glance, and started as he saw the two heads just above the whirling water. They dipped under even as he looked.

"Good heavens! This way, you fellows."

The oars flew. In a few seconds the boat was upon the spot, and Wingate, leaning over the gunwale, grasped the hair of the Remove-master. Courtney seized hold of Bolsover's collar, and dragged him into the boat.

Mr. Lang gazed blindly at Wingate, as the latter held him. He was too far gone to recognise the captain of Greyfriars.

"Help!" he murmured.

"Safe now, sir."

Wingate lifted the young man into the boat. In a couple of minutes they were ashore, and Mr. Lang and Bolsover were laid in the grass, and the fellows were trying artificial respiration to restore them. Bolsover was soon quite himself again. His powerful frame was little affected. But the more delicate victim of the pool was a harder subject. But he came to himself at last.

He blinked queerly enough at Wingate.

"Ah! Is the boy safe?" he gasped.

"Bolsover! Oh, yes, he's all right, sir," said Wingate. "He's walked back to the school. How do you feel now, sir?"

"Somewhat weak," murmured Mr. Lang. "But I shall soon be all right."

"It was plucky of you to go in for Bolsover, sir," said Wingate. "Leigh's told me how it happened. There are precious few fellows here who'd care to dive into the Pool."

Mr. Lang smiled faintly.

"I could hardly see the boy drown before my eyes," he said.

"Well, no! And you ain't a first-class swimmer, either, I take it," the Greyfriars captain remarked.

"Rather poor, I am afraid," said Mr. Lang ruefully. "I fear that we should both have been drowned if your boat had not come on the scene."

"Not much doubt about that, sir," said Wingate. "You were at the last gasp. But—but it was splendid pluck to go in, under the circumstances, sir, and—and I—I want to say—" The Greyfriars captain paused. He never was much of a hand at talking, as he would have expressed it himself, and he found it difficult to go on. However, he made an effort and plunged into it. "I—I want to say, sir, that—that I'm sorry for having been a bit—well, for having

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cut up rough about things. You are a different kind of man from what I fancied, and—and if I can back you up in any way while you're at Greyfriars, sir, you can depend on me."

"Same here," said Courtney.

Mr. Lang smiled.

"I had already come to the conclusion that I had made a mistake in the way I started here," he said. "I am only too glad that you have given me an opportunity of saying so, Wingate."

And he shook hands with the captain of Greyfriars. Ten minutes later the fellows in the Close were surprised to see Mr. Lang, the unpopular master, coming in, leaning upon the arm of George Wingate. They were evidently on the best of terms; and Greyfriars, after the first gasp of astonishment, wanted to know all about it. And they gasped still more when the story was told—especially the Remove. Mr. Lang went up to his room to change into dry clothes, and while he was gone the Remove heard all about it. The footer match was over, the Upper Fourth were beaten, and the Remove had come off the field in high good humour. They simply stared when they heard from Wingate what Mr. Lang had done.

"M-my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "But he's a giddy hero!"

"It was splendid," said Harry Wharton. "I've been in that Pool, and I know what it's like. And for a rotten poor swimmer to dive in—"

"Oh, it was ripping!"

"Faith, and ye're right."

"Splendid!"

"I should think it was splendid," said Wingate. "You kids ought to be proud of your Form-master. I should recommend you to give him a chance—there's more good in him than meets the eye. A fellow as plucky as that must be pretty decent. Give him a chance."

And that the Remove resolved to do. To continue to send a man to Coventry, after he had just risked—and nearly lost—his life to save one of their Form, was impossible. Besides, his action had made them respect him; and respect was the beginning of esteem and liking.

Half an hour later Mr. Lang came downstairs, looking somewhat pale, but otherwise little the worse. He was met at the foot of the stairs by a throng of juniors, nearly the whole of his Form. He looked at them in surprise, and coloured a little, his expression showing that he expected some new jape.

Bulstrode stepped forward.

"If you please, sir," he said, "may I speak a few words, sir?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Lang.

"We've heard about your saving Bolsover's life, sir. Bolsover seems to have brought it on himself by being a bully and a cad; but it was splendid of you, sir. All the school agrees that it was splendid of you, and—and we're a deputation—"

"But—"

"A giddy deputation, sir," said Bob Cherry. "to explain to you that we're sorry we didn't understand you better, sir—"

"That we didn't understand you better at first, sir," went on Harry Wharton, taking up the tale. "If we'd known what a splendid chap you were, sir, we—"

"We'd have stood all that you did to us, sir," pursued John Bull, "and—"

"And wouldn't have sent you to Coventry, sir," said Mark Linley. "We're all sorry about that, sir, and we all beg your pardon."

"That's it," chimed in all the juniors together. "We're sorry, sir, and we beg your pardon."

Which was really very handsome of the Remove, for they still believed that they were perfectly in the right in that little dispute. Mr. Lang tried to speak, but for the moment he could not. There was a suspicious moisture upon his eyelashes. The frank, direct words of the juniors had gone straight to his heart—a kind and generous heart, in spite of his little faults of temper.

"My dear, dear boys," he exclaimed at last, "I am only too glad to be on better terms with my Form—only too glad! If I have been too severe with you, I am sorry! I trust that we shall pull together much better while I remain at Greyfriars—in fact, I am sure we shall."

"Yes, rather sir!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lang!" sang out Bob Cherry.

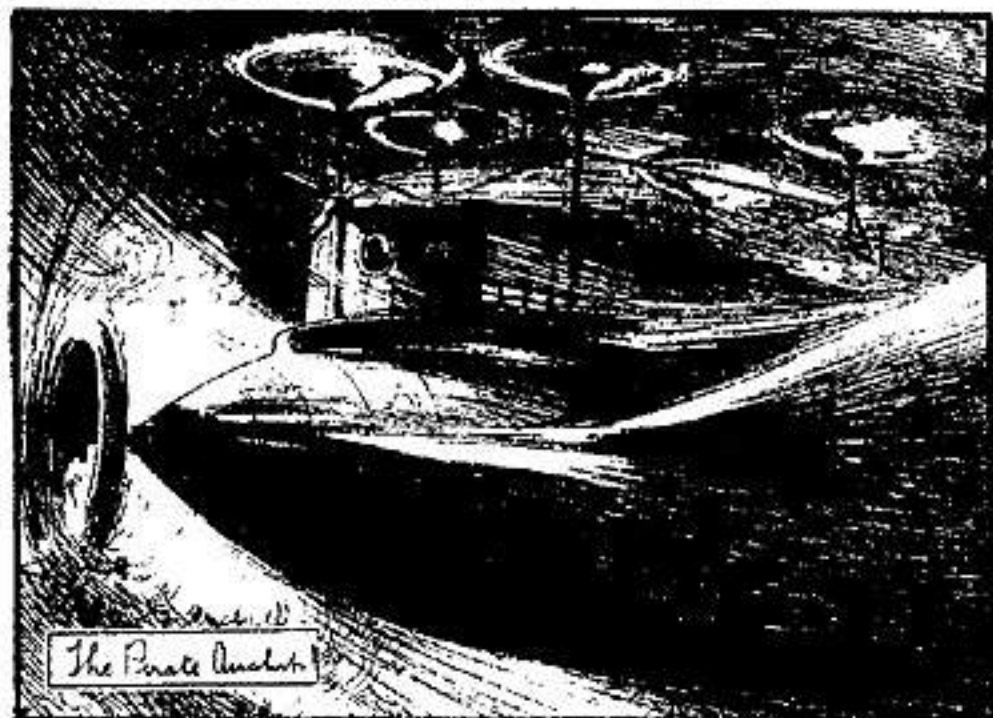
And the Remove gave them with a will; and the School House rang with the hurrahs for the Form-master who had been sent to Coventry!

THE END.

("THE OUTLAWS OF THE SCHOOL!" is the title of next week's long, complete tale of Harry Wharton and Co. at Greyfriars.)

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THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Professor Hugley, the renowned American scientist, startles the world by announcing that he is off to find the North Pole in his wonderful air-craft, the Cloud King, there is only one man who dares to enter the lists against him on behalf of Old England, and that man is Ferrers Lord, the famous millionaire and inventor. Lord pits his wonderful submarine, the Lord of the Deep, against the Cloud King in the most amazing race the world has even seen; the goal is the North Pole, and the prize of a million pounds!

The preliminaries are soon settled, a judge is appointed to accompany each of the competitors, and the great race commences.

With Ferrers Lord are Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga, an Eskimo, while Hugley is accompanied by Pariara, a Cuban, and Estebian Gacchio, a huge negro. These latter soon show themselves in their true colours, and the Cloud King no sooner reaches the region of ice than Hugley, and such of the crew as are loyal to him, are murdered, and Pariara and Gacchio assume control of the airship.

The position of Sir Clement Morwith, the British judge on board the Cloud King, becomes desperate, and he holds his revolver ready night and day. In the meantime, Ferrers Lord and his party are also in sore straits. They are floating through the mysterious, half-submerged caves on a raft made from giant fungi, towing after them a smaller raft on which was blazing a fire made of chips of fungi.

(Read on from here).

A Flight of Bats—Drifting—The Ebb of the Tide—The MHI-race—Darkness Again.

Gan-Waga was kept busy cutting fuel. Every time the fire began to wane, the mushroom was drawn in by means of the line, and the fire replenished. Ferrers Lord poled the raft steadily along, seldom finding more than four or five feet of water.

"Why all this exertion?" asked Thurston, at last. "We might just as well stay where we are."

"Just what I thought," remarked Van Witter.

The same words had been on Ching-Lung's lips a dozen times, but he held them back. Ferrers Lord, as he had learned long ago, did nothing without a purpose.

"I am afraid, Rupert," drawled the millionaire, "that I must hire a tutor to teach you to reason for yourself. You are a dear brainless fellow, one of the best in the world. Try and think why I am working hard."

"I give it up, old chap."

"I guess I do, too," said Van Witter. "I can't see why we don't hitch up and wait."

Ferrers Lord looked affectionately at Ching-Lung, who was teaching one of the dogs to sit on its haunches.

"I'll wager the prince can give you the information, eh, prince?"

"I can now, old chap," said Ching-Lung, "but I confess I have only just found it out. You are trying to get us somewhere near the place where we came in at. This beastly water will leave a couple of feet of mud everywhere, and we can't take the fire with us when the tide goes down. That's the idea, isn't it?"

"Exactly, prince. We cannot wade through mud."

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Rupert pulled his comrade's pigtail approvingly, and said "Bravo!"

"Fancy not thinking of that," drawled Van Witter. "Of course, not being born eels, we can't very well go floundering through two feet of mud. By hokey, as that chap Prout with the whiskers says, I'm getting a bigger thirst than ever. I could even drink water, at a pinch. Putting joking aside, I'm parched. I suppose none of you carry a flask?"

"I have some brandy," said Ferrers Lord. "But neat brandy is no drink for a thirsty man. Does not the air seem fresher?"

"I have been thinking so for some time."

"Then we must be nearing the opening in the hill, or——"

"Or what, Lord?" asked Ching-Lung.

"The sea."

He slipped, and except for Ching-Lung's ready hand, would have fallen headlong into the water. The pole had found no bottom. They had passed beyond the verge of the forest. Ferrers Lord sat down, the dripping pole lying across his knees, and gazed dreamily at the fire.

"Gentlemen," he said, after a pause, "our fate is in the hands of Heaven. I have blundered again, and, instead of piloting you in the right direction, I have taken you into deep water. We cannot return unless some friend current drifts us back. If we did, it would only be to die in a bed of ooze and slime. The receding tide is now our only hope."

"The receding tide? What do you mean?"

Ferrers Lord waved his hand to indicate the raft—the strangest raft on which human beings had ever taken refuge.

"This is a clumsy affair," he said dreamily. "If your case is not empty, I will have another cigar, Ching. Thank you again. We have no oars, and there is no wind to aid us, even if we had a sail. Naturally, when the tide recedes, we shall recede with it. There is no chance of being stranded now. The tide came from the open sea, it must return to the open sea. I cannot mince matters. It will go out at a fearful pace. If there is room to pass through the subterranean channel, and we can keep ourselves from being dashed to splinters against some rocks, we may see the sun again. If not—well, we only die once."

He shrugged his shoulders, and puffed his cigar into a glow.

"What a cheerful fellow you are," said Ching-Lung, "and what a cheerful prospect!"

"Fancy the joy of only having to die once!" added Thurston. "That's something to be thankful for, anyway."

He spoke lightly, as Ching-Lung had spoken, but his heart was heavy enough.

"You are married, Van Witter?"

"Yes," answered the Yankee.

"So am I," said Ferrers Lord harshly and bitterly.

Ching-Lung and Thurston stared. Married! They had never guessed this. The note of bitterness went straight to Ching-Lung's heart. In the half darkness his hand met the millionaire's and pressed it. So Ferrers Lord had a secret sorrow. He sat staring at the fire, his brow knitted, the cigar smouldering between his fingers. And the strange raft with its castaways drifted on over the black tide, deeper and deeper into the unknown cavern.

It was seven o'clock by Thurston's watch. Gan-Waga was sleeping, curled up amongst his dogs. Ching-Lung had taken over his duties at the fire. It was a small fire now, for the store of fuel could not be replenished. Time after time

the millionaire plunged the pole into the water, but he could feel no bottom. Van Witter was tortured with thirst.

"Lord," he said, "I'm parched. I must have a drink. Give me the flask."

"Not one sip. It would be madness. Let the abominable poison go. One taste of it would make you a thousand times worse. Brandy is a poison at a time like this."

He tossed the silver flask into the water, and it sank out of sight.

"I suppose you know best," said the Yankee, licking his dry lips. "It's agony, though."

Another dreadful hour passed. Whether the raft moved or not, it was impossible to tell. It passed in dreary silence, for they were too tired and woebegone to speak. Gan-Waga woke, stared about him with dilating eyes, and shivered. Then Ching-Lung took out his tiny tin whistle and began to play a lively tune.

"Good 'nough!" gurgled the Eskimo. "You not 'fraid?"

"Not a lillee bit," said Ching-Lung promptly. "What gotee be affaid of?"

"Me hungry!" said Gan-Waga.

Ching-Lung burst into a laugh as the Eskimo took out a bundle of candles, and Ferrers Lord echoed the laugh.

"What's up now?" asked Thurston.

"Nothing, except that we deserve to lose our lives for being such fools," drawled Ferrers Lord. "We must blame ourselves, not Gan-Waga. Look at those candles. There is enough light there to have taken us out of the cavern twice over, if we had only had sense enough to remember his weakness for such delicacies. It cannot be helped now. What idiots we were! I actually remember him offering one to Van Witter, and who could forget Ching-Lung's horrible attempt at punning? I suppose Gan-Waga thinks it is a waste to burn them?"

"Good 'nough to eat!" gurgled Gan-Waga. "Have one."

Strangely enough, nobody seemed hungry. He munched one, and looked happy. Then came a flapping of countless wings. A flock of huge bats flew out of the darkness, and began to fly round the raft, uttering shrill squeals.

They came in tens, in hundreds, and then in thousands.

"A good omen!" said Ferrers Lord.

Thurston looked puzzled. He had always looked upon bats as things of evil, haunting graveyards, tombs, and haunted ruins. Dazzled by the light, they dashed here and there in clouds.

"Why did I say they were a good omen?"

Ferrers Lord seized a bat that had flown against his chest, and held the struggling thing whilst he examined it.

"They bring good news. They are just about to retire now for their long winter sleep, but their eyes tell me that they go out into the open air. Even here, in the far north, flies swarm in the summer months, and these bats feed upon them. A little knowledge, they say, is a dangerous thing; but it is an excellent thing very often. Bats never roost far from the open air in any cave. Darkness and seclusion is all they ask. The further you penetrate into a cavern, the rarer the bats are. Therefore we are near the outer air. Hark! The tide has turned again!"

Again came the distant roar of water. Ferrers Lord plunged in his hand. The flood seemed dead and still, but he knew they were drifting rapidly. The cavern was beginning to pour back its torrent into the sea. They were in its remorseless clutch. It would take them with it now, to death or salvation.

And yet another witness bore testimony that the race to the sea had begun—the floating fire. It no longer trailed behind them as when Ferrers Lord had poled the raft along, or rocked lazily on the water. It was floating beside them, and keeping pace with them. Now and again they had to push it away with the pole.

"More fuel," said the millionaire. "We must burn the uprights if the worst comes to the worst."

Ching-Lung pulled in the line and piled on the fire. A bright glare shot up, and threw weird shadows like giants on the roof of the cavern. The torrent roared deafeningly as the channel narrowed.

"Look!" said Ferrers Lord.

Walls of rock shut them in on either side. They could see now that they were travelling at a fearful pace, their shadow flying before them. The water was white with foam. Its thunderous clamour hurt their ears. The roof, dripping with ooze, and gleaming like blood in the light of the tossing fire, seemed rushing down to crush them.

Faster, faster! The fire rocking and dancing on the mill-race was behind them now. The raft was spinning round and round dizzily. More than once they threatened to strike, but Ferrers Lord swept them clear with the pole. They clung to the uprights.

Faster, faster! Their heads were bursting, and their eyes

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swam. An upright raised arm could have touched the roof. Faster, faster! The raft tossed like a cork, and threatened to break apart. Again the fire was ahead of them.

Horrors! The raft overtook it, struck it, crushed it down. And darkness, impenetrable and awful, fell once more.

Whirled Through the Darkness—Gan-Waga is Lost—The Fire of the Rocks—The Dwarfs of the Cavern and the Open Sea.

"Hold on for your lives!"

High above the roar of the torrent, loud above the crash of the seething waters against the rocky walls, rang the millionaire's warning cry.

He flung away the useless pole and clutched at the upright. The raft tilted sickeningly, horribly. Every instant he expected it to be hurled against some jagged point and be ripped to pieces by the rocks.

Faster—faster! Ching-Lung's and Thurston's hands were firmly clasped together. They seemed to have no time to think or be afraid. The raft spun dizzily as it tore upon its wild voyage.

Once it grazed the rocky wall and quivered terribly. Faster—faster into the blackness, and faster still. Blinding spray, that tasted salt upon their lips, fell around them in showers, and a damp wind hissed round their ears.

Suddenly the millionaire's muscles grew hard and rigid as steel. A deeper, more threatening, roar mingled with the clamour of the seething floods. Ching-Lung heard it, too. Horror was being piled upon horror. The raft was rushing down on some hidden fall or rapid. They were flying to their doom.

"Hold on for your lives!"

Again Ferrers Lord's voice rang out like a bugle-call. They were in the very midst of a whirling vortex. The raft was tossed here and there, up and down, round and round, until their brains reeled. Water deluged over it, sweeping away their rifles, axes, and some of the dogs. They lay flat on their faces, their arms clenched round the uprights. The flimsy craft seemed to drop to pieces. They shouted aloud, but the crash of water drowned their cries.

They were falling—falling!

Van Witter fainted, but the millionaire's strong hand kept him from being swept away. The next moment the icy waters had closed above their heads. Ferrers Lord rose first, still grasping the unconscious Yankee. They seemed to have played their last card, and to have lost.

The current whirled the millionaire along on its foaming bosom. The wild roaring of the cascade swiftly died behind him. Almost a silence came, for the tide no longer thundered and lashed. Where was Ching-Lung? Where was Rupert? Where was Gan-Waga? Ferrers Lord groaned aloud. If they had gone to their last home, he would soon join them. He could not hold up for long in this black pit of horror and death.

A chorus of barks aroused him, and he felt the warm breath of a dog on his face. Other dogs were swimming beside him. If they had escaped why should such intrepid swimmers as Ching-Lung and Gan-Waga be lost? He turned over on his back and shouted. A cry reached him, long drawn and distant:

"Coo-ee! Coo-ee-ee!"

It was Ching-Lung's voice. Ferrers Lord's heart swelled with joy.

Then came a shout in deeper tones:

"Ahoy! Ahoy!"

So Thurston, too, had not perished. They were far behind him, but coming closer. The millionaire tried to struggle against the current, but his helpless burden hampered him.

"Where are you, old chap?" asked Ching-Lung.

"Here!" said the millionaire hoarsely. "I've got poor Van Witter with me. Come and give me a hand!"

Guided by his friend's voice, Ching-Lung advanced through the darkness. As he brought his right arm over he struck a human head.

"Steady on!" said Thurston's voice. "My head's jolly sore. I got a nasty knock just now."

"Where's Gan-Waga?"

They called in vain, the hollow echoes alone repeating their cries.

"He's gone, poor chap!" said Ching-Lung huskily. "Dear old Gan! It would need deep water to drown him, unless he got stunned. What must we do?"

There was no need to answer the question. They must struggle on gamely to the end, and die gamely when they could struggle no longer. The dogs kept close to them, sometimes barking, and Van Witter struggled back to consciousness. He was utterly helpless, and Ching-Lung and the millionaire buoyed him up between them.



Faster, faster! Their heads were bursting, and their eyes swam. An upright raised arm could have touched the roof. Faster, faster! The raft tossed like a cork, and threatened to break apart. Again the fire was ahead of them. Horrors! The raft overtook it, struck it, crushed it down. And darkness, impenetrable and awful, fell once more. (See page 26.)

Oh, for one gleam of light—for one glimpse of heaven's sunshine! They seldom spoke as they drifted down the sluggish current, until Thurston gave a cry of joy.

"The raft!" he said. "I have run against it. I believe it's intact!"

There was a pause.

"By Jove, it is intact!" went on Thurston. "I've felt all round it. I'm aboard now. Give me Van Witter."

Again the hope came back to them—the hope of life. Rupert dragged the helpless American into safety, and Ching-Lung and the millionaire joined him. One by one they lifted up the dogs, seven in all. The others had perished.

"We shall escape yet!" drawled Ferrers Lord quietly. "I am convinced of it now. The sea cannot be far away, and we are moving steadily towards it. My poor Gan-Waga!" he added sorrowfully. "I'm afraid we must give him up for lost. What do the dogs scent?"

They were barking loudly, and sniffing the air. The speed of the current had increased, showing that the passage sloped down to the sea.

"Down!" cried Ching-Lung. "Down, boys, down!"

They barked louder still.

"Curious!" said Ferrers Lord thoughtfully. "As a rule these dogs are not noisy for nothing."

"Perhaps there are seals on the rocks," suggested Thurston.

"I don't think so. Seals are not fond of the dark. No doubt they use this channel for migrating north, but they would not rest here. Something they can smell is making them uneasy. When—"

"Look!" gasped Ching-Lung.

The raft swept round a bend in the channel. They stared forward with amazed faces and starting eyes. The current ran through a circular cavern, with massive walls and lofty arched roof.

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NEXT TUESDAY'S
Grand Complete Tale:

"THE OUTLAWS OF THE SCHOOL!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Order your copy early.

And from the centre of the pillared roof a mighty tongue of dazzling white flame shot downwards, hissing and roaring. Its glare filled the vast cavern with the brightness of day, and the air was soft, fresh, and balmy. Had ever mortal eyes seen such a sight before?

At the foot of the cliffs, sloping downwards, were narrow fields covered with some yellow grain. A few rough canoes were tethered in a little bay. And above, on the natural terrace, were a few scattered huts. Faint shouts sounded. People, almost naked, rushed from the huts and pointed down at the moving raft.

"Dwarf cavern dwellers," muttered the millionaire. "A new race."

The shouts grew louder; the light flashed out stronger. Uttering cries of terror, two of the dwarfs, who were fishing, paddled hastily to the shore. The raft rode past, and one of the dwarfs rose and poised a spear. It hissed through the air, transfixing one of the dogs.

More dwarfs swarmed on the terraces, and spears began to fall round the raft. Their shrill, harsh war-cries rang through the cavern. They flung their skinny yellow arms up towards the hissing flame, as if invoking it, as a god, to destroy the intruders.

A great rock came hurtling down, and, grey with horror, they watched it topple from the crags. It fell only a foot behind them, tossing up a cloud of spray. Vicious yells of anger and disappointment broke from the dwarfs.

"They're launching canoes!" said Ching-Lung hoarsely.

He pointed back. Twenty-five or thirty of the spiteful yellow imps had waded waist deep in water, and were scrambling into their canoes. Van Witter raised himself feebly on his elbow.

"Waal, Lord," he drawled, with a ghost of a smile on his face. "I reckon a couple of these chaps and a stuffed mam-

moth would make a fine start for a wild-beast show—eh? They'd draw a crowd anywhere!"

The millionaire watched the advancing canoes calmly. They had no weapons except their hunting-knives—feeble weapons indeed against the gleaming spears that flashed like burnished gold in the strange light. He dragged his from its sheath.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "We have found both darkness and flood kinder than human beings. It will be a fight against odds. Now, Ching, Rupert, rouse yourselves, and do as I do! No, Ching, to take three will be too risky. Take one."

He cut away one of the stems of the mast and lashed his knife to it. Ching-Lung severed a second. It was dangerous work, for it weakened the stability of the raft immensely, but it gave them two long spears.

The canoes were close upon them and gaining swiftly. A stunted figure rose in the first one, and bent his arm ready to throw a spear. Quick as thought, Ching-Lung snatched up Van Witter's knife and hurled it through the air as only he could throw it. The blade struck the man, and he gave one shriek—the last that ever broke from his lips—and staggered overboard.

Then yelling like fiends they clustered round the raft. A stab in the arms brought Ching-Lung to his knees. Even then, his quick unerring hand closed on the haft of the spear that would have pierced Thurston's heart. He sent it hissing back on its errand of death, killing a man.

Ferrers Lord fought like a tiger, though his leg was gashed, and the dogs joined in the battle gallantly. But it could not last. More canoes were sweeping down the channel. One of the dwarfs gained the raft and grappled with Van Witter. The Yankee uttered a smothered cry of pain.

"I'm stabbed," he gasped—"I'm stabbed! Stick to 'em, my boys, and die game! Don't mind me. I'm—I'm—"

Ferrers Lord sprang round, his face distorted with rage. The spear was shortened to strike again. The millionaire's arm closed round the yellow imp. His bones cracked under the awful pressure. Ferrers Lord raised the writhing body above his head and flung it at the nearest canoe. The canoe turned over, and the gallant dogs plunged among the swimming dwarfs.

The others drew back in terror.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried Ching-Lung weakly. "Buck up, Rupert, old chap. Well done, Lord! Good dogs!"

But the snarling shouts grew louder and more savage as the canoes rushed in once more. Ching-Lung felt sick and faint from loss of blood. The millionaire was panting, and great beads of perspiration oozed out on his forehead.

"Good-bye, old fellow!" said Ching-Lung. "We can't keep this pace up much longer!"

A blow from the shaft of a spear sent Thurston reeling on hands and knees. Ferrers Lord alone was on his feet—thrusting, stabbing, slashing. And still he kept them at bay. Spear after spear hissed by him, and left him unarmed. But the evil faces closed in, and the flashing blades narrowed into a circle round the raft.

A red mist rose before the millionaire's eyes—the "fighting mist," as the Afghans call it. Shrieking, the dwarfs closed in. Then came a cry of despair from Ching-Lung. Ferrers Lord was weaponless, for the knife had broken away from the stem. And still he beat them back with his fork.

"Good-bye, lads," he shouted—"good-bye!"

His foot slipped, and he fell. The dwarfs poured on to the raft, and their yellow fingers were at his throat. Three times he flung them off, but he could not rise. It was over.

Then came a miracle of miracles. The great flame went out, leaving the cavern in inky darkness. The triumphant vells of the victors changed into shrieks of panic. Drums and tomtoms began to beat and rattle.

Like rats they abandoned the raft and scuttled into the water.

Ferrers Lord felt the strangling weight lifted from him, and struggled up. Hundreds of tuneless voices were chanting some hymn or prayer in the darkness. The raft drifted on, and the noise grew fainter and fainter.

"Ching," asked Ferrers Lord at last, "are you all right?"

"Yes; though I bled a good bit."

"And you, Rupert?"

"Stiff and mauled," answered Thurston. "That was a miracle, Lord."

The millionaire touched Van Witter's face, and found it icy cold. He shrugged his shoulders, and stifled a sigh.

"Perhaps," he said calmly. "I think I can account for the light very easily. No doubt the cavern is full of petroleum wells, and the gas escapes from that fissure in the roof of the cavern. It may have been burning for hundreds of years."

"But why should it go out just in time to save us?"

"Well, call it a miracle if you like," drawled Ferrers Lord. "You must remember that this has been an exceptionally high tide. Perhaps the sea managed to find its way into the oil reservoirs, and temporarily cut off the supply of gas. Those bloodthirsty little wretches imagined, I suppose, that their god was angry with them for trying to kill us. By Jove, I never want to be in such a fix again!" He lowered his voice, and added: "I fear Van Witter has left us."

"A good fellow," muttered Ching-Lung; "and he fought well."

They were silent and worn out. Even the darkness and the horror of their position, and the memory of their grim struggle, could not keep Thurston from sleeping. Only three dogs were left out of the fourteen harnessed to the sledge. They swam after the raft, and the millionaire lifted them up.

Then Ching-Lung's head dropped upon his arm, and he sank into a restless slumber. But the millionaire watched with sleepless eyes and thought with untiring brain.

To bring the Lord of the Deep through the underground passage would be a heavy task. He would have to blow up the rocks of the waterfall. But he would do it and gain the Pole, even if he had to blast a passage at every yard.

"Northward ho!" he murmured bitterly. "It has cost me two gallant lives already. We must pay in human lives, for the eternal ice claims its harvest of bones. Are you awake, Ching?"

There was no answer. Suddenly a long shaft of light cut through the gloom and rested upon the raft. Ferrers Lord shielded his eyes. He could hear the noise of surf beating against the ice. Then he saw the green waves tossing and dancing in the sunlight.

Myriads of birds flapped in and out of the sunlight, and their noisy cries awakened Ching-Lung. He sat up as the raft sailed out into the open.

"The sea!" he cried. "The sea!"

Ferrers Lord knelt, and raised Van Witter in his arms. A joyous shout rang over the water:

"There they are! Ahoy—ahoy!"

The launch was racing towards them.

"He is still alive," said Ferrers Lord calmly; "and I fancy we shall pull him through."

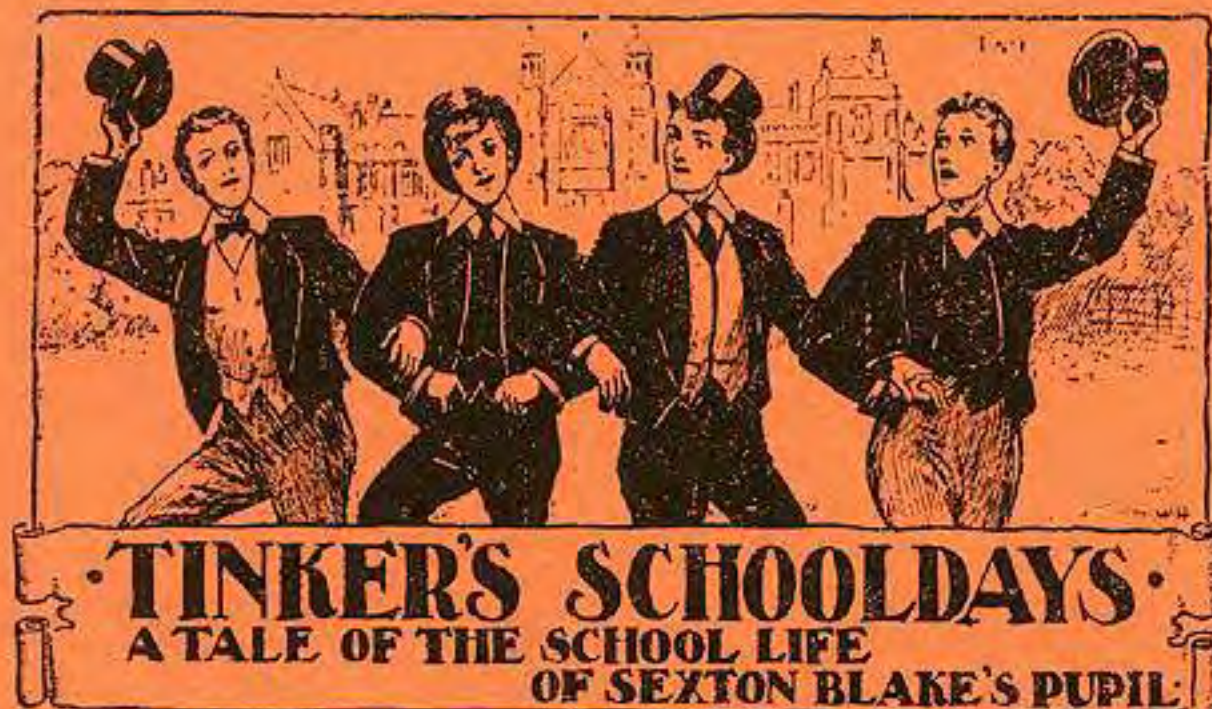
The next moment the rescuers were beside them.

(This thrilling adventure story will be continued in next week's number of "The Magnet" Library. Order early. Price 1d. "The Ghost Ship," by Sidney Drew, now appearing in the "Boys' Friend," 1d., should be read by all readers interested in "Beyond the Eternal Ice!")



Next week there is more trouble in the Remove Form at Greyfriars, and the sturdy juniors again raise the standard of revolt, not against the masters this time, but against the high-and-mighty seniors of the Sixth Form! "Things move some," as Fisher T. Fish would say, and there is a lively time in store for "THE OUTLAWS OF THE SCHOOL."

The Editor



CHAPTER 1.

Tinker bags an empty reserved carriage and takes a prisoner.

The station platform was littered with piles of luggage—iron-bound playboxes—shouting porters, and a few scores of boys of varying ages.

The bigger ones were mostly strolling about in small groups of threes and fours, swapping yarns about the holidays; junior boys were ragging in and out the luggage heaps, and a few solitary and rather disconsolate-looking specimens eyed the rest askance, and got deftly out of the light when the ragging came their way.

They were the new kids—too shy to speak to anyone, and mostly in a state of bluish-green funk.

There was one exception, however, a slight-built boy, with a bright, cheery face, who sat on a couple of boxes with his hands in his pockets, swinging his legs unconcernedly, and taking in all that went on round about him.

He wore a peculiar hat, which seemed to bother him a bit, for it would slide over on to one ear, giving him a rakish appearance; and he was conscious that his clothes were painfully new. He detested new clothes; they felt too stiff.

"Rummy lot of beggars," he said to himself speculatively. "Hallo! Who's the giddy bridegroom?"

A tall, lanky figure was coming striding down the platform in a tremendous hurry, and in the matter of clothes it was certainly a feast for the eye.

The boy on the box heard a youngster near him say:

"My hat, here's Rosie! Isn't he sweet?"

Mr. Rose—otherwise "Rosie"—wore a beautiful light-grey morning-coat, which hung in bags from his slender shoulders, an immaculate double-breasted white waistcoat, and a pale lavender tie. An eyeglass on a black ribbon was perched in his off eye, and in one hand was a pair of yellow gloves, and a silver-mounted walking-stick, in the other a slip of paper.

He bore down straight on the nearest group, and began hustling them into carriages of the waiting train.

Presently he caught sight of the boy on the box, who was still swinging his legs unconcernedly.

"You are for Telford's?" he asked.

"That's me all the time," said the boy. "D'you live there yourself?" he added ingratiatingly, without any idea of who or what the radiant vision might be.

"Ah, a bew boy—I mean, a new boy—I perceive! I'm a master at Telford's, so say 'Sir' when you speak to me. You may find your schoolfellows

a little rough and out of hand at first, so you and the other new boys had better get a parriage acart—carriage apart—that is." And without another word he had descended on the next group.

"Rummy bird!" said the boy to himself; and, slipping off the boxes, he sauntered across the platform. "Travel with the other new kids, indeed! Not much! There's one of 'em blubbing already—leaving home and country, and faithful Fido—pore little dear!"

He saw an empty carriage near by, on the window of which was a piece of rather grimy paper, fastened with a bit of stamp edging, and bearing in big, sprawly blue lettering, which ran all skew-wise, the magic word "Reserved."

"Now, I call that thoughtful," said the boy. "I didn't tell 'em I was coming, but I like travellin' in state."

He got in, slammed the door, wedged a coin in the lock to prevent the handle turning as he saw someone making for the compartment, and then when that danger was past, repocketed the coin, took off the long-faced hat, which he tossed into the rack, and putting his feet on the cushions opposite, prepared to make himself comfortable, and devote his attention to the study of a paper.

Just as the train was starting he heard a yell from a scandalised porter, who went spinning round and collapsed amongst some empty milk cans. The carriage door was wrenched violently open, and a dark-haired, thick-set boy scrambled in, panting.

"Near squeak!" said the newcomer to himself, slamming the door again, and leaning out to make faces at the porter—"deuced near thing! Hang it. I've dropped that melon, after all! What a rotten—Hallo!" He had turned away from the window, and for the first time realised that he was not alone. "Here, I say," he burst out indignantly, "you can't come in here, you know!"

"Did you observe the notice on the window?" asked the first-comer sweetly. "The managing director of the line thoughtfully labelled this carriage reserved, and—"

"You silly young ass, I put it there myself. I and two pals who get in at the next stop, always keep a carriage to ourselves at the beginning of term, and you'll jolly well have to clear out. Who are you—new kid, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Don't answer in that cheeky tone! What's your name?"

"Tinker, please, sir," said the boy, with mock humility.

"I told you not to cheek; don't say 'sir' to me."

"Sorry! I thought p'raps you

were a master—or the Duke of Wellington."

The dark boy's fist shot out, but by a seeming miracle his victim's head moved ever so slightly in the last fraction of a second, and the dark boy's knuckles came crash against the wood-work.

"Ouch!" he said, surveying them ruefully. "Look here, Stinker, you've jolly well got to get out at the next stop. Understand?"

"My name is Tinker."

"Tinker what?"

"Plain Tinker."

"Oh, you're plain, right enough; you'd frighten a decent-looking codfish!"

"Tom, Tom, the tinker's son, stole a —" Here, who are your people who's sending you to Telford's?"

"My boss."

"Boss—what do you mean?"

"My boss—a man called Blake. He's sending me, and here I am."

"Well, you won't be here long, duckie; at the next station out you go, jolly sharp, and don't you forget it!"

"My doctor says—" began Tinker languidly, but the other fellow flew at him in a royal rage.

"You infernal little beast! I don't hold with thrashing new kids, as a rule—bad form—but unless you do as you're told, I'll give you the finest hiding you ever had in your life."

"My word, you must be a terror!" said Tinker, grinning.

The bigger boy leapt at him, and as he leapt he realised that something had hit him twice, not very hard, but on the same tender spot under the chin. His head jerked backwards, and instead of grabbing his opponent he only grabbed empty air, and came down squelch on the dusty carpet.

He picked himself up, and dashed in again, but again something so quick that he couldn't see it, caught him on precisely the same place, and he fell backwards, hitting his head a nasty crack against the heavy metal door-handle.

For a moment he felt very sick, and more than half-stunned. It wasn't the force of the blows that had done the damage so much as his fall against the door.

Tinker bent over him, still grinning.

"Naughty—naughty," he said, "losing its temper like that! How's a pore, infernal little beast like me to protect himself from a savage terror like you? 'Orrible Outryge in a Railway Train! The evening papers are sure to have a full description. And you called me Stinker, too. I'm all on my lonesome, and I must take precautions, dearest."

As he spoke, he unfastened the straps which held his rug and overcoat in a neat bundle, and, with a few deft turns, had fastened his assailant's ankles, and bound his arms tightly to his side.

"You say we're going to have company at the next stop, don't you, darlin'? I'm sorry, but you might scream and alarm 'em, and that would never do."

"You little beast, I'll pay you out for this!" said the other, scowling.

"Quite so," said Tinker; "but this is my turn, my lambkin." And snatching a handkerchief from his helpless victim's pocket, he crammed it into its owner's mouth just as the latter worthy had opened it, and got as far as "Stin—"

"Hush a bye, baby!" cooed Tinker. "Now let's have it's little ticket to give to the nice, kind guard."

He dived into the fallen hero's waistcoat pockets, and found the bit of blue pasteboard which he transferred to

his own keeping. The boy on the floor glared as though he would have liked to rend Tinker limb from limb.

Tinker nodded at him genially, and whistling a soothing lullaby between his teeth, sat down, and, using both feet at once, gave a vigorous shove, and the scowler disappeared from view amongst the dust and stale cigarette-ends under the opposite seat.

Stretching out, Tinker pushed him hard up against the compartment wall, as far back as possible; then he took the victim's hat, stick, and overcoat, and shoved them under the seat, too, just as the train began to slow up.

Tinker, spread out on the corner seat above his victim, watched the platform eagerly. There were some twenty boys waiting for the train's arrival, and two of them, spotting the blue-pencilled label on the carriage window, made a dash for the compartment.

Tinker sought concealment behind his comic papers, and awaited developments.

"Hallo, old man," said the foremost boy, wrenching open the door. "Here we are again, Micky and I—" Tinker lowered the papers, and the other two gasped.

"Here I say, where's Maxwell?" asked the first boy. "He said he was going to reserve this carriage. Where the deuce has he got to, and who are you?"

"I'm only a new boy, please," said Tinker meekly. "I don't know any of the other fellows."

"Oh! New kid, are you? Micky, cut along and see where Mac has got to—he must be in another carriage."

But it was too late to investigate. The guard's whistle had blown, and the train was already on the move, so there was nothing left but for the two friends to jump in.

"Can't understand about Mac," said the first one, a boy called Orford. "He told me we'd be sure to know his carriage by the faked 'reserved' label."

"Shure, an' it's his writin'," answered Micky, scratching a red-thatched head in perplexity.

"Hang him! I've got an awful lot I want to jaw about before we get there," said Orford.

"Perhaps if you could describe him," said Tinker meekly, "I could tell you—"

"You shut your head!" said Orford sharply. "We don't want any new kid butting into our affairs. You read your papers, and don't bother us. You've no right to be here at all."

The train whirled through a tunnel, and there came the sound of a muffled sneeze from under the seat. Tinker barked out a cough to try and drown it, but too late.

"Don't snuffle and sneeze like that again," said Orford, as the train dashed out into the sunlight again.

"I beg your pardon," said Tinker. "I only coughed."

"You didn't; you sneezed. Didn't he, Micky?"

Tinker sat still, and wondered what would happen if the chap under the seat sneezed again, or managed to work his gag loose.

He needn't have worried, however, for the missing Maxwell was lying as still as a mouse. Not for worlds would he have allowed his two friends to know where he was, or that he had been put there by a new kid. He would rather have been smashed to pieces in an accident, or lain doggo till the crack of doom.

"Yelstead Junction," said Orford, after a long pause, as they flashed through a station. "Only ten minutes

to Telford now—next stop. I've bagged number five octagon study for us this term. I fixed it with Woodford just before he left, and gave him thirty bob for the furniture. That'll be ten bob from you, Micky, and ten from Mac. Hallo! Look! There's the old diving-pool, and there's the first of the old coll. buildings. Here, you thingamyjig in the corner, be'old your 'appy 'ome, where, for new kids, there are three rules—do as you're told; do it at the jump, and don't check. Savvy?"

"Yes, sir," said Tinker. "Thank you!"

"Not such a bad little beast, as new kids go," said Orford under his breath.

"Seems civil enough, and doesn't blub as most of them do. Confound you, you sneezed again! I told you not to!"

"I didn't, really," said Tinker, chuckling inwardly.

The dust from the carriage floor was getting into Maxwell's nostrils, and he was making frantic efforts to keep quiet.

"Telford! Telford! Tickets please!" roared a raucous voice, and a collector appeared at the door.

Orford and Micky Doran gave up theirs, and began collecting their things. Tinker, with an eye to an early escape, had already grabbed his.

"Now, then, young gents, 'urry up," said the collector.

Tinker edged to the door, and solemnly handed over two tickets.

"'Ere, wot's this?" said the collector. "I only want one o' these."

"The other," said Tinker gravely, "belongs to a gentleman under the seat."

"Under the seat? Why, what do you mean?"

"Being a comparative stranger," said Tinker, edging one foot on to the platform, "I can't explain his peculiar tastes, but you'll certainly find him there, and he—er—entrusted me with his ticket."

"Atishoo! Atishoo!" came in an explosive wail from under the seat Tinker had just quitted.

"Great Scott!" said Orford; and dived to investigate. "My jumping aunt, it's Mac," he said, "trussed up like a bloomin' chicken! What the—"

Tinker saw his prisoner being dragged into light, and waited for no more. With a dive he was through the barrier, and perched on a vacant seat in one of the school flies. Glancing back, he saw three very angry and excited figures in pursuit, shaking their fists at him. Then a crowd of boys surged in between, and the fly having been filled up, went off at a shambling trot.

Chapter 2.

"ALL new boys to the Head's study. Follow me!" shouted a voice, and the second prefect, having headed in a round dozen of dazed, bewildered, and rather scared boys, hurried them down a long, covered passage through a stone-flagged hall, and up a broad oak staircase.

There they found themselves in a big room, in the centre of which was a table. Around it were placed high-backed chairs, and in front of each chair was a square of blotting-paper, foolscap, and pen and ink.

"Sit down, please!"

A door at the far end of the room had unexpectedly been opened, and the Head appeared in cap and gown. He was a tall, powerfully-built man, a trifle over six feet, and broad in proportion, with bushy, black eyebrows, dark, piercing eyes, a well-cut nose, and a dark beard and moustache which effectually hid his mouth. In his left

hand he carried a small sheaf of papers, and his eyes swept slowly from face to face as if he were taking a mental photograph of each one in turn. Without a word he laid a short, general examination-paper in front of each boy. Then, with a nod to the second prefect, he said "Half an hour. I shall be back by then. Meanwhile, you will keep order."

Tinker glanced down the list of questions ruefully. It was his first taste of an examination, and he didn't like it. One or two of the questions seemed scarcely intelligible. He looked round at the other boys, to see how they were taking matters. Two had subsided hopelessly into tears, two more were staring stoically in front of them in resigned despair, and one, a beaky-nosed, ferrety-eyed youngster, was simply revelling in the questions, writing as if his very life depended on it.

"Dirty little swot!" said Tinker; and, reaching out under the table, he hacked him on the shin.

"Ouch!" squeaked the ferrety boy; and gave a start which sent half an ink-potful splashing over a page he had just completed.

Tinker gurgled, and the ferrety boy heard him.

"Please, that boy over there kicked me severely," he squeaked, "and he's ruined my answers to questions two and three."

The second prefect, who was rather a nice-looking chap, eyed him with cold contempt.

"Do you good, you pink-eyed swot," he said. "Can't you take a little ragging without making a song and dance about it?" Then he turned sharply to Tinker. "Here, you, what's your name, leave him alone, or I shall have to see you in my study afterwards."

Tinker reluctantly occupied himself with the papers in front of him. Some half dozen of the questions seemed fairly sensible, and to these he scrawled the answers. The rest he left severely alone, and, finding time hang heavily on his hands, made darts out of some spare sheets of foolscap, armed the point of each with pieces of broken nib, and looked for a suitable target. The ferrety boy was forbidden fruit, but the two next to him, fat pink and white kids, looked tempting.

With a deft jerk, Tinker fired his missiles under the table in the fashion of the late lamented Captain Kidd, of buccaneering fame. There were two simultaneous screeches, and the fattest of the two went over backwards, chair and all.

Corbett, the second prefect, looked up sharply.

"What was that?" he asked.

"Something stung me on the legs!" wailed the fat boy.

"And me, too!" bleated his neighbour. "It was a wasp."

"I find it impossible to write with concentration amidst this uproar," said he of the ferret eyes.

Tinker, apparently intent on his papers, said nothing. He was busy trying to recover the tell-tale darts from under the table with his feet.

The second prefect eyed him critically, then, rising slowly, he looked over his shoulder. "You seem to have finished your paper already," he said drily.

(The continuation of this fine story of the school-life of Sexton Blake's pupil will be found in the issue of "The Boys' Friend" on sale at all newsagents on Tuesday next. Every reader of the MAGNET LIBRARY should make a point of ordering a copy of next Tuesday's "Boys' Friend" in advance.)